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Attribution and Ideology in American Politics: Causal Reasoning, Political Cognition, and Partisan Polarization in the Age of Trump[1]

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Abstract: This research reports two Q-studies addressing the possibility that the partisan political divide defining contemporary American politics derives from differences in the way the Right and Left reason causally in addition to the more obvious content-specific contrasts in policy positions and the like. Attribution theory, the study of lay explanatory styles emphasizing either "internal" considerations — dispositional predilections of actors or "external" factors — broader environmental/contextual considerations — is employed in concourse compilation for two political controversies (economic inequality and electoral success in the 2016 presidential election), and two studies are reported. Results from the first demonstrate sharp differences between ideological and partisan opponents: Republican respondents display clear tendencies to employ dispositional attributions in accounting for economic inequality, praising the well-to-do as diligent and deserving for their success while denigrating the poor for their failure to compete in free-market capitalism. The second study amplifies and extends these findings by comparing Republican and Democratic accounts of the 2016 election results. Again, those on the Right are found to overdo dispositional attributions in a manner consistent with the "fundamental attribution error" first identified by Fritz Heider and extended by Thomas Pettigrew to inter-group prejudice as "the ultimate attribution error." A concluding discussion seeks to contextualize these partisan-based differences with reference to the divisive nature of President Trump's leadership while identifying a way forward for further research.

Keywords: actor-observer bias, American politics in the Age of Trump, causal reasoning, fundamental attribution error, political cognition

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Introduction: Politics Through an Attributional Lens

In this research we explore the possibility that the extreme ideological and partisan polarization that has become the defining feature of American national politics in the twenty-first century, based as it is on antithetical views on the major public policy issues of the day, is, at least in part, a consequence of *the way the warring parties think and reason* about such matters in addition to — if not as much as or even more than -- the substantive differences in *what they believe.* The theoretical vehicle for this exploration is a branch of social cognition, itself a sub-field of social psychology more generally, known as attribution theory. With roots in Fritz Heider's (1958) *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations,* attribution theory rests on the proposition that humans are motivated to assign causes to their choices and behaviors (Moskovitz, 2005). In so doing, their causal reasoning is depicted as systematically confronting a "fork in the road," so to speak, upon which the decision is made to assign primacy in their explanations of their own or others' behavior either to "internal" psychological characteristics of the actor — e.g., "she is an extrovert; hence her outspoken behavior in social situations" — or to "external" factors deriving from the setting or situation in which the person finds herself — e.g., "her outspoken behavior in the graduate seminar, untypical for her, was due to the fact that 40% of one's grade in the course was based on class participation."

As Jones and Nisbett (1971) demonstrated initially, the binary choice between the person or the situation as holding primary causal importance stems at least in part from the simple difference in perspective between *actors* and *observers*. For the former, the field of vision is the situation in which one finds oneself; hence the unlikely post-hoc explanation for one's own behavior in "a dispositional attribution" to the effect that "I behaved in such-and-such a manner" in situation X because I am an extrovert by nature." Observers, on the other hand, assume a field of vision focused on the behaving actor, not on the situation seen from the latter's vantage point. Hence the greater likelihood that the observer's account of the actor's behavior will give emphasis to an internal, *dispositional attribution* featuring the actor's distinctive attributes.

For our purposes, two additional notions from elementary attribution theory warrant special attention. In the first place, we are referring to the prevailing bias in so-called individualistic cultures known as *the fundamental attribution error* (Schwarz, 2006). Actually, an implication of the actor-observer difference, the FAE constitutes a robust finding, replicated many times, demonstrating that Americans tend to exaggerate the importance of *dispositional* attributions in accounting for *others'* behavior, while resorting to the use of *situational* attributions in explaining their own actions. As such, the dynamics of the fundamental attribution error are typically subject to explanation by researchers in terms of the differential salience to observers of information bearing on the actor whose behavior is witnessed as opposed to the situational stimuli more salient to the actor alone (Heider, 1958). The second addendum of consequence to attribution theory per se derives from Pettigrew's (1979) extension of attributional principles to group-targeted prejudice. The particular contribution at issue here Pettigrew labels as *the ultimate attribution error and* is indicated when observers over-emphasize negative dispositional attributes in their "explanations" of the behavior of people belonging to disliked out-groups.

Attribution Effects in American Politics: Previous Research

There is an immense volume of empirical evidence testifying to the notion that the typical American voter, to the extent that he or she exhibits the electoral behavior of a genuine "rational actor," does so in the form of what Samuel Popkin (1994) has termed "low-information rationality". For Popkin, ordinary American voters employ a series of information short-cuts or heuristics that minimize the costs of becoming well-informed on each and every issue for each and every candidate in each and every election. In other words, when it comes to electoral politics and the demands of time and energy required to assess vast quantities of conflicting campaign messages, most members of the American electorate operate as "cognitive misers" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). As such, voters negotiate the political world by conserving valuable resources of time and energy through reliance on a host of heuristics (e.g., party identification) as well as certain attributional biases. That being the case, one would expect the literature on prevailing political-attributional biases to be rather substantial. However, that is clearly not the case. In fact, our own bibliographic search for pertinent prior research has produced only a small handful of studies, the most relevant of which for our purposes was designed as a study of media framing effects rather than attribution per se.

The research in question is contained in Shanto Iyengar's 1991 volume *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues*. Iyengar's principal interest was in the difference, if any, such framing made to television viewers who were exposed to news stories reporting equivalent information — in the case at hand, news concerning the economic downturn in the early 1980s following Ronald Reagan's electoral victory over incumbent president Jimmy Carter. The media frames were altered experimentally to feature the typical "human interest"/case study — also termed "episodic" — frame utilized by virtually all broadcast news programs, on the one hand, and a "macro-economic"/societal — or "thematic" — frame of the sort typically employed in a "talking heads" format by PBS's News Hour, on the other. Viewers from these differing treatments were then asked to respond spontaneously, in an open-wording format, by listing what they deemed to be the principal causes for the economic distress being reported, and there were dramatic differences in the nature of the responses by viewers in the alternative frames. Those in the customary human interest/case study frame, after being shown clips of a struggling bread-winner and his family, attributed causation to what they witnessed to the individual featured in the case study; that is to say, they engaged in "dispositional attributions" that were tantamount to "blaming the victim." By way of contrast, viewers assigned to the other, "societal" condition, which featured reference to recessionary macroeconomics — labor markets, fiscal and monetary policy conflicts, and the like — refrained from issuing dispositional attributions, and instead emphasized factors responsible for the economic woe depicted to circumstances properly seen as lying beyond the control of those suffering from the economic downturn. Iyengar proceeded to draw upon these findings to take issue with then-president Ronald Reagan, who famously criticized the media generally for his poor approval ratings at the time with the lament: "It seems that every time some poor sucker from South Suckatash loses his job, someone is there to stick a microphone in his face to ask him how he feels" (Iyengar, 1987, p. 816).

In the light of his findings, Iyengar argued that realities were not so simple as the President believed. What mattered, according to the experimental findings, was how television news told the stories of economic woe. And with the notable exception of the PBS News Hour, the stories told by broadcast news stations did not feature extended

analysis of macro-economic trends or unintended consequences of fiscal or monetary policy. The latter, of course, are the stuff from which viewers could legitimately reason about the plight of the poor in a manner that eschewed "blaming the victim" and instead enabled them to "feel the pain" of society's downtrodden in the spirit of "there but for the grace of God, go I." Iyengar's research randomly assigned subjects to the two news-frame conditions, thereby permitting him to focus attention on the nature of television's framing of bad news economically. In the book-length version of his research, however, Iyengar conducted a series of correlational analyses, thereby enabling him to amend the original design to permit what Pedhazur (1997) terms an *Attribute X Treatment Interaction.* Findings from this and a series of subsequent survey analyses were consistent with expectations underlying the present investigation: conservatives and Republican-identified respondents were significantly more apt to engage in dispositional attributions for poverty than were liberals and Democratic party identifiers. This discovery offers precisely the kind of support one would need to defend the claim that ideological conviction and cognitive explanatory styles tend to differ systematically and more generally, especially in this era of intense partisan polarization.

Finally, it bears mention that the relationship we are seeking to investigate here in the first of the two studies — namely, that between the use of dispositional attributions and the explanation of severe economic distress and ideological conservatism — has received additional, albeit somewhat dated, empirical support in research by Zucker and Weiner (1993), Cozzarelli, Wilkinson and Tagler (2001), and more recently by Thomas and Baas (2013).

Study 1: Explaining Economic Inequality

Economic inequality is an increasingly salient political issue and focus of academic scholarship (Piketty, 2014; Reich, 2014; Atkinson, 2015; Milanovic, 2016). Empirically, economic inequality is growing. Thirty-six percent of the wealth in the US is held by the richest one percent of the population, a six percent increase from 1992 (Bricker et al., 2014; Wolf, 2012). From 1978 to 2012, the top tenth of one percent has seen their share of the wealth increase from seven to twenty-two percent (Saez & Zucman, 2016). Accompanying this real growth in inequality is an increase in media coverage regarding economic and income inequality. A Nexis Uni (formerly Lexis Nexis) search showed an increase in newspaper mentions of "economic inequality" from 387 to 2,151 between 2007-2017. Mentions of "income inequality" increased from 953 to 4,312 during the same time period. *The New York Times* saw a similar increase, during the same time period, with mentions of "economic inequality" going from 15 to 199 and "income inequality" from 71 to 259.

Inequality Concourse, Q sample, and P set

This undeniable salience of economic inequality makes it a prime topic for understanding how people causally understand political issues and how the cognitive processes giving rise to such understandings may differ as a consequence of ideology. Our first study thus seeks to add to the existing literature on how voters understand economic inequality (Page & Jacobs, 2009; Thomas & Bass, 2013). The concourse for this study was compiled during the Fall of 2015 from interpretive essays produced by political journalists, books by academics, and social media comments on news articles with economic/income inequality as the main subject. In sampling from this concourse, we utilized a 3 X 3 factorial design with three levels for the attribution effect (dispositional, mixed/neutral,

external) and three levels for the valence effect (pro, neutral, and negative). The 9 cells in the design were replicated four times each for a final Q sample of n = 36 statements.

Participants were solicited utilizing a snowball technique, which eventually produced a final P set of n = 26, comprised of roughly equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats. The 26 x 26 correlation matrix was subjected to principal components analysis via PQMethod (Atkinson & Schmolck, 2014). Two strong factors were extracted and rotated by varimax criteria to a position approximating simple structure. The adequacy of the two-factor solution is demonstrated by the fact that 25 out of the 26 participants were loaded significantly at .36 or higher (p < .01) on just one of the factors. The factors bore a clearly orthogonal relationship to one another, with a correlation of r = -.12. A table containing the final factor matrix along with relevant demographic information for all participants can be found in Appendix 1.

Study 1 Results: The Factors and Their Interpretation

Factor A: *Inequality is the Product of Policy and "Structural" Causes*

The first factor is defined by the purely-loaded Q sorts of 15 participants. Twelve participants identified as Democrats and/or Liberal, while three negatively-loaded definers identified themselves as either moderate or conservative Republicans. The skewed ideological identity of factor 1 as leftist leads one to expect a critical, pro-egalitarian substantive content along with evidence of a situational or external rather than dispositional flavor to its understanding of the nature and causes (implicit as well as implicit) of economic inequality. By and large, these expectations are borne out as the statements found at the factor's positive and negative extremes indicate. (For comparative purposes, scores given to the same statement by factor B participants appear in brackets following each statement.)

+4 (12). Differences in income in America are too large. [-2]

+3 (30). It's time for an economy that works for everyone. [-1]

-4 (13) The current distribution of money and wealth is fair. [0]

-4 (16). There is no class war. [-3]

Clearly, economic inequality is problematic for factor A participants. It is regarded as excessive and unfair, and the unnatural consequence of a class war. That its preeminent causes are structural rather than dispositional — due to the failure of the poor to compete in the capitalist game of free markets — is revealed most strongly in the rankings given the following statements:

+4 (33). No one who works 40 hours per week should be beneath the poverty line. [+1]

+3 (22). Many of our schools are inadequate and college is not always easy to afford.[2] [+2]

[2] This statement does not differ significantly between factors. This is most likely due to the majority of participants currently pursuing a four-year degree at a private college.

+3 (27). Citizens do not have an equal voice in policy making. [+1]

-4 (3). Worship the rich — it could be me.[3] [-4]

-3 (23). Why should Social Security taxes on the wealthy be raised to pay the benefits for people who failed to accumulate enough personal savings to fund a decent standard of living for themselves after retiring. [+2]

To borrow from the common vernacular, factor A participants believe that the U.S. economy is rigged and thus is systematically tilted against the interests and well-being of non-wealthy groups. As a result, hard work is not sufficient for economic success, as suggested by statement 33. Consistent with its belief in structural inequality, factor A participants harbor skepticism about the contemporary viability of the American Dream. In fact, they ranked statement 18 — "I believe in the American Dream" — as -1, echoing their doubts about the contemporary viability of genuine inter-generational socio-economic mobility. As one participant put it in a post-sorting interview, "l feel that politics and the effects of the past 40 years of bad political action have made the middle class, the heart of the American Dream, almost disappear." As noted, factor A participants also feel that the voice of the average citizen is not being heard in the formulation of public policy nowadays. If it were, these participants believe, there would be greater support among policy-making elites for structural solutions to economic inequality.

Following their Q-sorting, participants were asked which statement(s) they agreed and disagreed with most and why. One theme was consistent in all responses. Factor A individuals were not so much frustrated with the type of economic system that exists in the US per se as they were convinced that the system was broken. Two statements at the negative end of the factor 1 array clearly convey this belief:

-3 (5). There should be inequality, that's what capitalism is about. [0]

-3 (10). In order to get people to work hard, large differences in pay are probably necessary. [+1]

Despite being frustrated with the government, they feel that government intervention is necessary to solve the problem.

Factor B: *A Dispositional Account: Hard work is all you need.*

The second factor is defined by the Q-sorts of 10 participants, including eight self-identified Republicans, one independent, and one moderate Democrat. For persons sharing this viewpoint, one's standard of living stands as a fair and fairly reliable metric of what one deserves based on one's effort and ability to compete in a capitalist economic system. This is indicated by the following statements and their scores at the factor's extremes:

+4 (6). Income is not distributed, it is earned. [-2]

[3] This statement also did not differ significantly between factors. The difference is more nuanced than statement 22; it therefore will be discussed subsequently.

+4 (4). If you are hard-working, if you can apply yourself, I believe you can make your own luck. [-2]

+3 (36). Getting a good education is a matter of individual effort. [-1]

-4 (25). It makes sense to give back since my success is largely based on good luck. [0]

The causal reasoning of factor B participants insofar as inequality is concerned is rather straight forward. Whereas factor A participants considered economic inequality as the consequence of a host of factors, many of which were viewed as outside the control of individuals — poor schooling due to shortfalls in funding, lack of genuine opportunity, inadequate compensation for those in minimum wage jobs, and the like — for factor B participants, such considerations are relegated to the status of alibis and excuses used by "losers" who, in an honest reckoning, have no one to blame for their economic woes but themselves. In accord with the portrait of conservatives' socialization drawn by UC-Berkeley cognitive linguist George Lakoff (1996), one's position in the socio-economic status hierarchy is believed by those on the right to be fundamentally deserved and, as such, an appropriate marker of a person's moral worth. That being the case, hostility toward government intervention designed to mitigate the effects of alleged, pernicious uncontrollable — e.g., racism, sexism, poor schools, inadequate minimum wages — becomes the order of the day. Indeed, all public policy aimed at leveling the economic playing field is castigated by factor B as "socialism" and therefore unacceptable in an American context. By the same token, since any and all wealth is earned and therefore deserved, the wealthy are under no obligation — ethical, political, or otherwise — "to give anything back" by acknowledging the logic of genuinely progressive marginal tax-rates:

+3 (34). Americans aren't ready for socialism. [-1]

-4 (21). The minimum wage should be raised. [+1]

-3 (17) I would pay more in taxes to help with schools, jobs, wage supplements, old-age pensions, and aid to the poor. [+2]

-3 (24) Only government action can provide a measure of equal opportunity and create the conditions to exercise that opportunity. [0]

When queried in post-sorting interviews about their most- and least-favored statements, most of the ten persons defining factor B cited statement 18 as the former and statement 3 as the latter. In justifications for their preference of the item declaring their belief in the American Dream, a common comment was to the effect that "hard work pays off. Many say they want to live the American Dream, but they need to remember that they need to earn it!" As for the third item's disfavor, the comments justifying its negative placement were along the lines of remarks given by one individual who stated, "worshipping the rich is unnecessary because they worked hard for their money so time would be better spent working than fantasizing about where they want to end up."

+4 (18). I believe in the American Dream. [-1]

+3 (14). People in occupations that require more responsibility and skills should be paid more. [+1]

-4 (3). Worship the rich — it could be me. [-4]

-3 (16). There is no class war. [-4]

As for the remaining two items (statements 14 and 16) above, the endorsed belief in the former that differences in income due to different skill and responsibility requirements are just hardly requires elaboration. After all, these are participants currently enrolled in a four-year college doing exactly what factor B participants' philosophy would advise: working to acquire the kinds of skills that will equip them for a well-compensated livelihood. The sentiment expressed about a class war, on the other hand, deserves commentary because its score suggests that it is shared by both factor A and B participants. The apparent agreement is illusory, however, when we consider who is responsible for the class warfare from their respective vantage points: For A, the guilty party was the wealthy, by virtue of the preponderance of policy-making influence they wield in a rigged political economy. For B, in contrast, it is those in the Democratic coalition and their elected representatives who "play the class warfare card" whenever debates over fiscal policy or campaigns for office take place.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that the explicit defense of prevailing levels of economic inequality, essentially as a by-product of a Darwinian struggle wherein success is earned, carries with it — albeit implicitly, given the composition of the Q sample for Study 1 — a profoundly *dispositional* style of causal reasoning. Politically, one might argue, it could hardly be otherwise. Why would winners — or young adults in training, so to speak, to join the ranks of winners — be inclined to question the rules governing that competition when, to them, the major threat to those rules is posed by parties deemed as consciously unwilling to abide by an outcome based solely on the fruits of the own labors? In this way, do members of factor B resort to a form of dispositional attribution that arguably borders on a partisan-induced commission of the fundamental/ultimate attribution error?

Study 2: Retrospectives on the 2016 Election

The robust relationship reported above between self-identified political ideology, on the one hand, and causal attributions for economic inequality, on the other, need not occasion great surprise. Indeed, one need not be an inveterate skeptic to regard such findings as doing no more than confirming the obvious. After all, as Iyengar's (1987, 1991) initial application of attribution theory to news stories conveying an increase in economic difficulties in society forcefully demonstrates, the simple optics of commercial television news's conventional portrayal of economic misfortune inadvertently leads viewers to the dispositional attribution that holds those suffering the greatest economic woe individually responsible for their fate, an account far more hospitable to conservative than liberal or progressive points of view. Accordingly, there can be no denying that what we have found in Study 1, reduced to essentials, simply corroborates extant research (Cozarrelli, Wilkinson & Tagler, 2001; Zucker & Weiner, 1993) while confirming common sense.

Taken together, such caveats suggest that a more adequate effort to address the question posed by our subtitle would require extending the focus of our research to a

topic without direct or implicit affinities to individual economic success or failure. In our search for such an issue — where ideology is implicated along with causal reasoning — we could think of no better topical focus than that provided by the host of post-mortems on the 2016 presidential election. Our choice in this regard can be attributed to two related facets of this option that bolsters its attractiveness given our interests in causal reasoning: (1) aggregate election results are almost always inherently ambiguous; and (2) the outcome of the 2016 presidential election, in particular, was — to virtually all observers — totally unexpected.

Design for Study 2: Context, Concourse, Q Sample

The application of Q methodology to study election post-mortems — in a quest to decipher what opinion leaders and ordinary voters saw as a message or "mandate" for governing in the aggregate election returns — has a brief but instructive history (Thomas & Baas, 1996, 2008, 2009). One consequence is a rather firm precedent for the extraction of pertinent concourses, drawn principally from the host of interpretive essays produced by political journalists, aided by readily available exit polls, in the interim between election day and Inauguration Day in the aftermath of a presidential election. In addition to supplying the subjective raw material of interpretive commentary, these essays also house suggestions for main effects that can be used as design elements in the composition of Q samples from concourses typically reaching several hundred statements. In the case of the 2016 retrospectives, our design consisted of a 3 X 5 factorial with three levels for the attribution effect (dispositional, mixed/neutral, external) and four levels for the valence effect (pro-Clinton, anti-Clinton, neutral pro-Trump, anti-Trump). Initially, we sought to replicate the 15 cells in this design three times each; after scanning the items for undue duplication, however, we were able to remove five that were redundant, leaving us with a final Q sample of n = 40 statements.

Participants were solicited by the lead author utilizing a snowball technique, which eventually produced a final P- set of n = 30, comprised of roughly equal numbers of liberals and conservatives. The 30 x 30 correlation matrix was subjected to a principal components analysis via PQMethod (Atkinson & Schmolck, 2014), and four factors were extracted and rotated using varimax criteria to a position approximating simple structure. Factor loadings and relevant demographic information for all participants can be found in Appendix 2.

Study 2 Results: The Factors and their Interpretation

Factor 1: *A Resentment-Driven Referendum on "Deep-State" Systemic Dysfunction*

The first factor is starkly bipolar and by far the most populous of the four extracted. At the positive end it is defined by the Q-sorts of eight Republicans. The opposite end is defined by the Q-sorts of five Democrats, thus accounting for nearly half (13 of 30) of the total P set for this study. The factor's polarized, partisan cast, where the subjectivities — and, presumably, opposing ideological foundations — are so cleanly separated gives the factor special status insofar as its ability to address our over-arching research question is concerned. With ideological antagonists anchoring antithetical retrospectives on the 2016 presidential election, we would expect the character of causation assigned to the outcome to fit the same attributional pattern displayed above in Study 1.

In spite of the fact that the positive, Republican end of factor 1 sees the overall outcome as reflecting a system-wide indictment, this retrospective is nonetheless rooted in dispositional attribution as its causal claims and implications turn on the symbolic

potency of the candidates themselves. Indeed, the dissatisfaction it expresses with the prevailing political status quo is so deep that "resentment" is not too strong a word for it. Moreover, the prevailing status quo is personified in the view of factor 1+ participants by none other than Hillary Clinton:

> +5 (18). Hillary may well have won the popular vote — by running up the score in heavily populated metropolitan centers on both coasts. But the county-level electoral map shows that the vast heartland went overwhelmingly for Trump. And while coastal elites consider this fly-over country, it's about time that the common sense and old-fashioned values of this America prevailed.
>
> +4 (16). Voters resented Hillary's out-of-touch insinuation that anyone who preferred Trump was a jerk. Truth is, if any candidate was a jerk, it was Mrs. Clinton.
>
> +3 (24). Hillary was the perfect symbol of everything that was wrong with America. At times, Trump and Sanders would act as the right and left speakers of a stereo blaring a chorus on repeat: Hillary's a corrupt insider who has helped rig the political and economic systems in favor of the powerful.

Not surprisingly, this indictment spilled over into partisan divisions. And, again, HRC is seen as embodying if not exacerbating the partisan polarization.

> +3 (25). The Democrats seem to fall over themselves pandering to elements of their base — gays, African-Americans, Latinos — while forgetting the blue-collar working families that formed the core of the original New Deal coalition.
>
> +3 (27). Hillary had been running for president for almost a decade and still didn't really have a rationale. She seemed to believe it was "her turn", that the White House was hers by Divine Right.

In the face of an unacceptable status quo signified by the Democratic standard bearer, Donald Trump's unconventional character as the GOP nominee is ascribed a virtuous identity as a perfect antithesis to politics and politicians-as-usual. Indeed, this sensibility extends so far as to encompass Trump's aggressive, "counter-punching" style as a worthy antidote to the perceived excesses of "political correctness".

> +5 (39). Trump embodied the qualities of the "Anti-politician" at a time when virtually all politicians are crooks and liars. His election says more about professional politicians than it does about him.
>
> +4 (11). Trump's win is due to his willingness to shake things up, unlike a typical politician.
>
> +4 (35). Trump was the only candidate willing to defy political correctness and put "America first".

Looking at the opposite end of Factor 1+, we find sentiments embraced strongly by the Democrats defining Factor 1- and strongly rejected by the dominant Republican retrospective. Noteworthy in these scores is the interaction, suggested above, between political sentiment and attributional style. When Trump's win is seen, for example, as a

product of sources other than Trump's clear superiority as a system-saver to Clinton as poor-system perpetrator and perpetuator — as in statements 7 and 14 below — the external attribution is rejected by the political right of Factor 1+ at the same time as it is endorsed by the left anchoring the polarized alternative.

> -4 (7). Part of Hillary Clinton's loss should be attributed to the Russians interfering in favor of Trump.
>
> -4 (14). Trump's election, truth be told, is based to an unknowable yet not insignificant degree on sexism and racism. The alt-right, represented by Steve Bannon, is the bastion of white (male) nationalists in the U.S.
>
> -3 (21). The global wave of populist discontent, signaled earlier in the year by the British "Brexit" vote, helped fuel the rise of both Trump and Bernie Sanders.
>
> -3 (32). Media performance in the 2016 elections was, by any measure, pathetic: too much undeserved attention to Hillary's email and Benghazi; too little critical coverage of Trump's lack of qualifications and refusal to release tax returns.

The message then from Factor 1 with respect to our overarching question regarding the association of attribution and ideology is, literally, mixed. On balance, the emerging evidence appears to point to a more nuanced version of the simple correlation posited by the question in our subtitle. If so, the apparent association between subscription to an attributional style heavily steeped in dispositional tendencies on the part of conservatives can itself be attributed to the "special case" of economic inequality or economically-based metrics such as reliance on welfare or food stamps. To the degree that the subjectivity at issue is confined to the relatively rarified confines of cognition — insulated from the more primitive influences impulse, emotion or affect — a more accurate reformulation of the relationship between political belief and attributional style would take into account the apparent interaction between the latter and the former. When one's side emerges victorious, by this account, dispositional attribution is attractive, suggesting a *self-serving bias* (Forsyth, 2007; Pal, 2007; Suhay and Erisen, 2018). By the same token, when the self or self-identified idea or entity fails, it is self-serving to displace blame by resorting to external attribution to explain away this shortcoming.

A half-century ago, University of Michigan political scientist John W. Kingdon (1968) observed an analogous but more nuanced version of this phenomenon in the tendency of winning candidates and campaigns to differ dramatically in their appraisals of the electorate (superficially, the likely source of an external attribution) than losing candidates and campaigns. Winning candidates, according to Kingdon, engage in a self-congratulatory ritual by insisting that voters were competent and, accordingly, had cast issue-based, well-informed ballots. In effect, then, winning candidates are engaging — albeit in a back-handed way — in a self-serving, "dispositional" attribution while claiming to credit the wisdom of voters. Losers, in contrast, were prone to rationalize their defeat on the basis of external factors ostensibly beyond their control: inadequate turnout, misinformed or ill-informed voters, radically gerrymandered electoral districts, and/or voter suppression efforts by the winning party. These dynamics have not gone unnoticed in political psychology. Indeed, taken together, they account in part for the rise to prominence among students of information-processing by voters during

campaigns of what has come to be called "motivated reasoning" (Redlawsk, 2006; Redlawsk, Civettini, & Emmerson, 2010).

Factor 2: *Imperfect Electorate and Archaic Electoral College Produce Perfect Storm*

The six persons defining factor 2 comprise an interesting mix. Their partisanship is divided equally into three pairs each of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. Despite this diversity, all but one (a male Independent who voted for Trump) voted for Hillary Clinton. All six disapproved of Trump's performance in office at the time this study was conducted. It is therefore not surprising that the account of the 2016 election result shared by these individuals begins with the premise that Trump's victory was entirely illegitimate. The basis for this view can be found in the placement of statement 23 at the very top of the factor 2 array:

> +5 (23). News flash: Trump lost the popular vote by a ton. He won due to the fluke in the Electoral College; therefore, the claim of a mandate is nonsense.

The same defect in the Electoral College that was responsible for George W. Bush's election in 2000 — despite the fact that his opponent, Al Gore, received a half-million more votes nationally than the winner — was again responsible for Republicans gaining control of the White House. While fewer than a thousand votes in Florida spelled the difference between the winner and loser in 2000 — an outcome ratified when a closely-divided Supreme Court ruled 5 to 4 that recount efforts in that state be terminated — in 2016, a total of 77,000 votes across three states expected to go for Clinton (Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin) gave Trump the razor-thin margin needed for an electoral college victory despite Hillary Clinton's compiling three million more votes nationwide.

Quite apart from an attributional context are structural considerations pertaining to the U.S. Constitution. The framer's "design flaw" in the electoral college — one of a number of concessions to secure slave-state support — made a Trump victory possible, but it alone was not the sole cause of the illegitimate outcome, according to factor 2 participants. Instead, the "perfect storm" character of the 2016 election could be more accurately traced to the confluence of a series of additional factors, ranging from problems with the Democratic nominee exacerbated by the stronger than expected challenge posed by Senator Bernie Sanders, the Vermont socialist who ran to Clinton's left in the Democratic primaries, to the political environment at the end of a two-term Democratic presidency and to international ascendance of right-wing populism (shown in the surprising "Brexit" leave vote in the United Kingdom) to media obsession with alleged Clinton misdeeds with respect to Benghazi and her use of a private server for email to, last but not least, outright and repeated prevarication on the part of Trump himself.

> +5 (26). The outcome may have been different had Bernie Sanders been the Democratic nominee instead of Hillary.

> +4 (5). History shows that it's hard for candidates from the party controlling the White House for two consecutive terms to win a third term. Trump was in the right place at the right time in a "change election."

+4 (21). The global wave of populist discontent with the status quo, signaled earlier in the year by the British "Brexit" vote, helped fuel the rise of both Trump and Bernie Sanders.

+3 (8). Voters could never get past the email scandal and Benghazi with Hillary Clinton.

+3 (36). When all the analyses are over and we have the benefit of added historical perspective, we'll have to conclude that Trump won because he lied. He's already broken a dozen promises from his campaign.

As important as these considerations may be, individually and in concert, they arguably fall short of sufficient as parts of the toxic mix culminating in the perfect storm that brought Donald Trump to the White House. The missing ingredient, the one element that activates and energizes such factors as "causative" in the case of 2016, is the quality — or lack thereof — of the American voter himself or herself. This appraisal, again from the standpoint of factor 2 participants, is registered with straight-forward clarity by the score given statement 37:

+4 (37). Whoever said that the "masses are asses" was right: If voters were rational, Trump would not be in the White House.

Returning to the question of attributional style, the simple fact that the composition of factor 2's defining variates literally spans the ideological/partisan spectrum — despite being unanimous in its negative performance appraisal of Trump — renders it problematic as a replication for the associations discovered in Study 1. However, the modification suggested in the wake of the bipolar first factor is still in play: when complex events (like a presidential election) with winners and losers are viewed by individuals with a stake in the outcome and who are therefore identified with one party or the other, those on the losing end are apparently inclined to resort to "motivated reasoning" that best preserves their subjective sense of self-esteem. In the case at hand, the contentious nature of Trump's candidacy outweighs broader considerations of ideological or partisan affinity. That said, we would argue further that factor 2 represents a subjective viewpoint that tilts toward external attribution. Trump's victory, then, is ascribed essentially to a host of uncontrollable factors rather than to the simple merits or demerits of the candidates and their campaigns.

Factor 3: *Hillary — Beset with Misfortune or Inherently Off-putting?*

The third retrospective on 2016 is bipolar, with the positive end defined by two liberal Democrats and the negative end by a moderate male Republican who expressed approval of Trump's performance at the time of the study while admitting he did not vote in the election. It bears noting that this factor is inversely correlated with factor 1 at $r = -.41$ ($p<.01$). Obviously, the association is easily accounted for by the reverse-order of partisanship among defining variates compared to factor 1. The latter, it will be recalled, had Republicans at its positive end and Democrats at the negative end of a bipolar factor. Thus, the two factors bear a mirror-image relationship to one another. While reaching the opposite conclusion on the ultimate merits of a Trump victory, the two factors also differ appreciably in how they get to their respective bottom lines. Whereas factor 1 was driven by differing partisan assessments of the national political

system's overall condition, the difference between the two ends of factor 3 rests on antithetical appraisals of Hillary Clinton and the fairness (or lack thereof) of her treatment at the hands of the mainstream media along with the timing of FBI Director James Comey's public statement about the discovery of hundreds of yet-to-be-examined Clinton emails on the personal computer of Huma Abedin's husband, Anthony Wiener. Comey's declaration, made before the contents were determined to be copies of already scrutinized messages, occurred just ten days before the election took place.

> +4 (3). The electorate was motivated as much by the dislike of Hillary Clinton as it was enthusiasm for Trump.
>
> +4 (9). Voters were undecided until the very end of the campaign. But when FBI Director Comey announced that Anthony Weiner's computer had possibly incriminating evidence bearing on Hillary's email fiasco, voters knew they couldn't tolerate four more years of Clinton scandal stories.
>
> +3 (10). Trump was nothing if not lucky: Comey's statement about possible new emails on Huma Abedin's husband's laptop could not have come at a better time for him and a worse time for Hillary.

From factor 3 participants' vantage point, the electoral landscape was already tilted against Clinton by the excessive news coverage devoted by media to her emails (Patterson, 2017) in addition to the then-newly discovered evidence pointing to significant Russian interference in the campaign on behalf of Donald Trump.

> +5 (8). Voters could never get past the email scandal and Benghazi with Hillary Clinton.
>
> +5 (7). Part of Hillary Clinton's loss should be attributed to the Russians interfering in favor of Trump.

When we add to these scores those for the flip-side of factor 3 — which of course would be reversed for the Republican non-voter who defines it — the attributional pattern anticipated at the outset clearly prevails. The Democrats' sympathetic support for Mrs. Clinton leads them to blame her loss on factors beyond her control, running the gamut from voter misogyny to misguided media to an effective campaign of cyber-warfare orchestrated by Vladimir Putin and the government of the Russian Federation. Dispositional attributions are systematically downplayed for either candidate — Trump in a positive sense, Clinton in a negative sense — and in the process produces a pattern which is turned on its head for the negative pole of the factor. In the latter case, a quick inspection of negatively-scored items makes the point, without elaboration, rather clearly:

> -5 (13). Hillary's campaign slogan "Stronger Together" made sense if you were a city-dweller, gay, the mom of a black son shot by police, or a Muslim. But for regular working-class white folks in small town America, there didn't seem to be a seat at her table.

-5 (26). The outcome may have been different had Bernie Sanders been the Democratic nominee instead of Hillary.

- 4 (6). Although Obama wasn't on the ballot himself, Hillary was running as his surrogate "third term". And the voters wanted a change.

-4 (28). Only someone like Trump, with no prior political experience had the ability to "clean the swamp" of the do-nothing professional politicians that waste our tax dollars while pretending to care about the American people.

-4 (25). The Democrats seem to fall over themselves pandering to elements of their base — gays, African-Americans, Latinos — while forgetting the blue-collar working families that formed the core of the original New Deal coalition.

-3 (35). Trump was the only candidate willing to defy political correctness and put "America first".

-3 (18). Hillary may well have won the popular vote — by running up the score in heavily populated metropolitan centers on both coasts. But the county-level electoral map shows that the vast heartland went overwhelmingly from Trump. And while coastal elites consider this fly-over country, it's about time that the common sense and old-fashioned values of this America prevailed.

Factor 4: *Stunned: The Plight of the White, College-Educated Female*

The three women who are pure-loaders on the fourth factor range in age from 21 to 69 years old. The youngest was a senior in college when these data were collected; she has since graduated, making all three defining variates college graduates. Two of these women voted for Clinton; the third (a 38-year-old secondary school teacher) cast her ballot for the Libertarian candidate. Despite this difference, they are unanimous in their disapproval of Trump's performance as president. When we inspect the factor scores for statements distinguishing this retrospective from the others, the pattern that emerges is one that fits with demographic profiles of the 2016 electorate: college-educated white women, particularly those residing in America's suburbs, displayed a definite aversion to Donald Trump. And, like most Americans, they were clearly unprepared for the outcome that occurred. In fact, Trump's victory left them so stunned that their retrospective is defined by an unfinished, still-uncertain quality that sets it apart from the viewpoints housed in the first three factors. On the one hand, they concur with factor 2 participants' judgment that voters generally were not enamored of Mrs. Clinton as much as they were enthusiastic about Trump. At the same time, however, they doubt that the full list of factors contributing to the upset could be determined with any degree of certainty or confidence for the foreseeable future.

+5 (3). The electorate was motivated as much by the dislike of Hillary Clinton as it was enthusiasm for Trump.

+5 (38). We cannot say with certainty why Trump was elected. We can say with certainty, however, that his election was a big mistake.

The same sense of skepticism is expressed toward the claim that the election contains a policy mandate, though a suspicion exists about the durability of Obama's legacy under a Trump Administration.

> +4 (4). He's the epitome of the "anti-Obama." He's no college professor; he uses plain language; and he communicates with those left behind in the Obama years.

> +4 (33). It's hard to see a policy message in this election, other than blue-collar white voters were unhappy with the status quo.

When statements at the negative end of the factor are examined, the same doubts and skepticism toward the idea of a President Donald Trump are again made manifest:

> -5 (35). Trump was the only candidate willing to defy political correctness and put "America first".

> -5 (40). Despite his critics — in the media and among Democrats — Trump is president because he is a better communicator than any of his rivals, be they Democrat or Republican.

> -4 (28). Only someone like Trump, with no prior political experience had the ability to "clean the swamp" of the do-nothing professional politicians that waste our tax dollars while pretending to care about the American people.

Discussion: Attributional Bias and American Politics in 2020

What are we to make of these findings? After due allowance is made for the customary disclaimers — particularly the small, non-random nature of our P sets and the imprecise self-identified surrogate used to measure ideology — we would argue that there is much in the above that should serve to satisfy skeptics vis-à-vis the notion that significant differences exist in the politically relevant causal cognitions of persons with sharply differing political convictions. While these differences may not be so clear-cut as Study 1 suggests, wherein conservative individuals predictably adhere to manifestly dispositional accounts — i.e., internal attributions — to explain economic inequality, the tendency to attribute causation for complex outcomes in ways that confirm one's existing political beliefs is nonetheless bestowed with abundant empirical support by Study 2 as well.

When things go well — whether the domain be one's economic status or the fate of one's preferred candidate in a contested election — the self-enhancing, belief-validating temptations of an internal attribution are too alluring to ignore. Conversely, when one suffers a personal and/or impersonal, political loss, the clear aversion to self-blame — "I failed" or "my judgment was in error" — leads one to resort to external attributions that assign responsibility for an undesired outcome to sheer misfortune in the form of factors whose influence lies far beyond reasonable doubt to alter. In this fashion do the findings from the preceding pair of studies focus attention on the crucial position of the self at the center of one's socio-economic and civic life. While this constitutes a claim that has gained renewed emphasis of late based on findings from surveys showing the rise to prominence of politics in the social identities of Americans (Bacon, 2018), its deeper

meanings and broader implications remain largely unexplored by contemporary social scientists.

One notable exception in this regard is the formidable, ostensibly dated, polemic by the late historian/social critic Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in An Age of Diminishing Expectations*. Published originally in 1979 and followed by an updated version with a new afterword in 1991, Lasch's application of psychoanalytic theories to an elevated macro-cultural level is arguably more apt as a source of insight into America in the age of Trump than it was to the US of the late 1970s — and for reasons reaching beyond the fact that the title contains reference to a clinical-diagnostic disorder attributed by informed professional observers (and political critics) to President Donald Trump (Lee & Lifton, 2017). To be sure, Lasch's volume is not without its critics, many of whom decry the paucity of evidence the author brings to bear to back up his bold assertions regarding the character and primary roots of cultural decline presumed to be well underway nearly a half-century ago. Wishing neither to ignore nor take up anew the controversies that inevitably attend an effort of such scope, we believe the titular claim of Lasch's work — namely, that the clinical phenomenon of narcissistic personality disorder deserves consideration as *the* essential component of post-industrial American *culture* gone awry — warrants serious consideration. Moreover, we believe the case for such scrutiny — which requires a suitable means of investigating human subjectivity — has been strengthened substantially of late by evidence supplied by Twenge and Campbell (2009 in their aptly titled volume, *The Narcissism Epidemic,* not to mention the "dispositional attributions" of mental health professionals convinced that a sitting US president, undeniably and repeatedly, demonstrates a host of qualities — including, in particular, obsessive self-preoccupation coupled with the complete absence of empathy — that fit narcissism's clinical profile to a tee (Lee & Lifton, 2017).

For students of political psychology, this historical moment is tantamount to a call for a revitalized look at the psychodynamics at play in the classical Lasswellian formula for Political Man, wherein the latter is best understood as the product of a series of subjective transformations involving the displacement of private motives onto the public arena which thereafter undergo rationalization in terms of the public interest (Lasswell, 1930). Americans now find themselves in a cultural context in which an American president, with consistent job approval ratings falling short of 50% — when economic metrics were highly favorable and even at the early, "rally event" stage of the Coronavirus pandemic — who repeatedly casts aspersions on the press, former associates, and partisan opponents for calling attention to the Administration's or the President's failures; in short, in a place of political time in which "unprecedented" as a term used to describe it loses its meaning by overuse. At the core of this moment in US political culture is a Chief Executive whose fragile ego and dramatic deficits in empathy gain vivid and disconcerting display in his daily use of White House coronavirus briefings to drone on for hours replacing useful information with an endless quest for scapegoats — most recently the World Health Organization for mishandling the crisis that he himself has undeniably and profoundly failed to manage. In this spectacle we are witness to the fact that the permeable border between attributional bias at a cognitive level and political-psychological pathology of clinical proportions has been breached. In the wake of such breaches, the prospects for democracy and for the cultural re-ascendance of democratic character — resting, again in Lasswell's words, on "the commonwealth of mutual deference" — are deeply in peril. To cite such risks, of course, promises no guarantee of their curtailment. But to ignore their persistence and thereby underestimate their threat constitutes a concession to forces that would willingly trade

truth and its pursuit for a self-serving bias dead set on bypassing the democratic fork in the road ahead, blissfully and impulsively taking an authoritarian path instead.

A Concluding Postscript: The Pandemic, Impeachment, and the 2020 Election

The research reported above was completed well before the presidency of Donald Trump was completed. In fact, the two studies were finished before the 2018 mid-term elections, marking the halfway point in Trump's tenure as the 45th president of the United States, took place. It is therefore worth calling attention to the major events transpiring prior to and immediately after the 2020 election that, in the aggregate, contribute to the unusual atmospherics that define the Age of Trump in American political history. Necessarily compressed due to space considerations, this overview begins with the aforementioned 2018 congressional elections, noteworthy for the Democrats' success in regaining majority control of the House of Representatives. In consequence, Nancy Pelosi again became Speaker of the House and her party reclaimed leadership of the chamber's committees, thereby positioning anti-Trump partisan forces to exercise congressional oversight in a manner clearly intended to counterbalance Mr. Trump's authoritarian tendencies. Eventually, the most extreme case of such oversight conceived by the framers — i.e., *impeachment* — was brought to bear by Pelosi and the Democrats, when in December, 2019 the House impeached President Donald Trump for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress for withholding military aid from Ukraine for its president's failure to announce a formal investigation of Hunter Biden, and by implication, his father Joe Biden, as part of an illegal scheme to garner foreign assistance to boost Trump's chances for re-election in 2020. Trump was acquitted by the Senate in the trial to follow, by a strict party-line vote except for Utah Republican Mitt Romney's vote to convict.

Well before his impeachment, Trump's authoritarian tendencies were on prominent display in place after place, but particularly noteworthy was the Administration's virulent anti-immigrant stance on the southern border along with the president's obsessive demands for loyalty to him personally on the part of all appointees, from Attorney General to Secretary of State. Initial occupants of both positions under Trump — Jeff Sessions and Rex Tillerson, respectively — became early victims of Trump's demands for obsequious compliance and personal loyalty via the very public, ritualized use of Twitter as the preferred mode of political communication. The sender of such messages was of course no ordinary citizen but a POTUS whose unrelenting pursuit of a divisive leadership style had already been established as a core element of his brand. The rate and number of administrative firings under Trump quickly achieved record levels, an historical achievement accompanied by the excessive use of negative *dispositional attributions* in the President's accounts via Twitter of his displeasure with former associates. The situation with respect to critical members of the press and with Democrats generally followed the same, yet much more severe pattern: as portrayed in Trump's Twitter feed, such persons were without any redeeming qualities whatsoever. And if the objects of Trump's wrath happened to be women and/or members of non-white minority groups, the prevailing attributional pattern of dispositional negativity was at its most pronounced level of pique, lending credence to those among Trump's critics who had ascribed to the former president the dispositional attributions of sexist and racist.

Trump's credentials with respect to the latter were reflected in the demographic composition of the coalition of voters responsible for his electoral-college victory in 2016 and, indeed, even earlier when he devoted inordinate energy and sponsorship to the false claim that Barack Obama was in fact born in Kenya and therefore an illegitimate POTUS. Countries occupying the African continent were disparagingly referred to as "shit-hole countries" long before the late summer of 2017 when Trump infamously asserted that "fine people" were to be found among white nationalist groups descending on Charlottesville, Virginia to participate in a so-called "Unite the Right" rally and to protest their alleged unfair treatment at the hands of non-white elements of the population. These predilections became even more poisonous in the wake of George Floyd's death under the knee of white Minneapolis policeman Derek Chauvin on May 25, 2020. Thereafter, all hell seemed to break loose as nationwide protests took place in the major cities of the US only months after the initial outbreak of the Covid-19 virus had assumed pandemic proportions. For his part, Trump did little as president to marshal federal resources to counter the coronavirus, confiding in recorded interviews with Bob Woodward (2020) that, although he knew the virus was "deadly stuff," he deliberately sought to downplay the severity of the pandemic "to avoid public panic." The toll taken by the pandemic in terms of avoidable deaths, not to mention the devastation exacted on the economy, was therefore massive. And it carried political costs for a sitting president as well. Polls tracking the issues and candidates for the 2020 presidential election consistently showed that clear majorities faulted Trump for his failure to control the virus, thus contributing to the lopsided odds given by statistical modeling sites like 538.com that Trump would serve only as single term as president.

In this environment, as if aware that his defeat by Joe Biden was inevitable, Trump began to assert the Big Lie: that the only way he could lose his bid for re-election would be if the election was rigged. Indeed, to this day Trump insists that Biden was not the legitimate winner of the presidency. Rather, the election was stolen by virtue of widespread voter fraud on the part of Democrats. Put forward without a scintilla of evidence and rejected in more than 60 lawsuits, the Big Lie's survival and persistence as a piece of the post-election discourse defies rational explanation. Even so, it remained an integral part of the alternative political universe of Republican-base voters throughout the entire calendar year of 2020. The Big Lie thus remains, at this point any way, an unfinished story.

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Appendix 1: Study 1 (Economic Inequality) Q Participants[4]

Participant Characteristics						Factor Loadings[5]	
Age	***Gender***	***Major***	***ID[6]***	***Ideology***	***Support[7]***	***A***	***B***
20	M	Sociology/Political Science	D	L	Clinton	**0.8695**	-0.1703
21	F	Political Science	D	L	Sanders	**0.8466**	-0.1955
20	M	Computer Science	D	L	Undecided	**0.7184**	0.0789
22	F	Speech Pathology	R	M	N/A	**0.6941**	0.2743
22	M	Political Science/Economics	R	M	Sanders	**0.6326**	0.1541
26	M	Environmental Science	D	L	Sanders	**0.8579**	-0.1282
18	M	International Relations	D	L	Sanders	**0.3996**	-0.1171
21	F	Communication Arts	D	L	Sanders	**0.6036**	0.0981
69	M	Political Science (Professor)	D	L	Clinton	**0.8105**	-0.0542
22	F	Psychology/Sociology	R	C	N/A	**0.3996**	0.2427
20	F	Psychology/Sociology	D	L	N/A	**0.8773**	0.0062
21	M	Spanish	D	L	Sanders	**0.6185**	-0.0690
22	F	Psychology/Sociology	--	L	N/A	**0.8240**	-0.0176
21	F	Sociology	D	L	Sanders	**0.8691**	-0.1270
20	F	Psychology	D	M	N/A	**0.7072**	-0.0820
21	M	Industrial Tech	R	C	N/A	0.1456	**0.5663**
19	F	--	R	C	Undecided	0.0853	**0.6637**
18	F	Political Science/Business	R	C	Trump	-0.1561	**0.8311**
20	F	Communication Arts	R	C	Undecided	0.0146	**0.8049**
19	F	Education	R	C	Trump	0.0064	**0.8345**
20	M	Education	D	M	N/A	0.0283	**0.3658**
21	F	International Relations	R	C	Cruz	-0.1341	**0.5619**
21	F	Psychology/Sociology	R	C	Trump	-0.2067	**0.8441**
24	M	Sociology	R	C	Rubio	0.1003	**0.8194**
20	F	Sociology	I	M	Cruz	0.3315	**0.5096**
18	M	International Relations	--	M	N/A	0.1985	0.1748

[4] " — " means that data was not given by participant
[5] Significant factor loadings are bolded. Not all participants loaded significantly on a factor.
[6] D – Democrat; R – Republican; I – Independent
[7] Candidate support in the Iowa Caucus. Those marks "N/A" indicated they would not be participating in the caucus

Appendix 2: Study 2 (2016 Post-Mortem) Q Participants[8]

Participant Characteristics								Factor Loadings[9]			
Age	***Sex***	***Occupation***	***Highest Degree***	***ID[10]***	***Ideology***	***Voted[11]***	***Trump***	***A***	***B***	***C***	***D***
22	F	Grad Student (Biochem)	B.A.	SD	VL	C	D	**-0.5718**	0.2482	0.4789	0.1048
62	M	Pastor & Book Sales	M.Div	D	L	C	D	**-0.6022**	0.4658	0.2815	0.0537
57	F	Accountant	B.A.	D	M	O	D	**-0.6523**	0.3361	0.0555	0.3718
22	M	Army Officer	B.A.	R	C	T	A	**0.6808**	-0.1799	-0.3623	-0.2273
21	F	Student	B.A.	R	C	T	D	**0.5195**	0.4689	0.0561	-0.0692
49	M	Retired Veteran; Veteran Service Officer	A.A.	R	C	T	D	**0.6760**	0.0282	-0.1812	0.1124
54	F	Education	M.A.	I (R)	M	T	A	**0.8227**	0.0409	0.0611	-0.1907
56	M	--	B.A.	R	C	T	A	**0.6472**	-0.0503	0.0137	-0.0532
66	F	Retired Teacher	M.A. +30	R	C	T	Ambivalent[12]	**0.8190**	0.1158	-0.1224	0.1101
24	M	Maintenance	Some College	R	C	T	A	**0.7636**	-0.1664	-0.2845	-0.0424
48	M	Research Analyst	J.D.	SR	C	T	A	**0.7820**	-0.1747	-0.2448	-0.0135
22	F	Corrections Officer	B.A.	D	L	O	D	-0.3539	**0.7023**	0.0849	0.0969
21	F	Student	Some College	D	VL	C	D	0.1551	**0.7298**	0.0215	0.0683
23	M	Molecular Biologist	M.S.	R	C	C	D	-0.2090	**0.8006**	0.2661	0.0613
22	M	Grad Student	B.A.	I (R)	M	C	D	0.1812	**0.7146**	0.1013	0.1576
34	M	Manager	BA	I	C	T	D	-0.2382	**0.7755**	0.1769	0.0678
35	M	College Administrator	PhD	R	M	C	D	-0.2369	**0.6875**	-0.1728	0.3698
24	M	Grad Student	B.A.	D	L	C	D	-0.2794	0.2333	**0.6779**	0.1704
24	M	Camp Director	B.S.	I (D)	L	C	D	-0.0403	0.4083	**0.6768**	-0.1010
23	M	C.C. Student	B.A.	R	M	DNV	A	0.1750	0.2695	**-0.6972**	-0.0135
21	F	Student	Some College	SD	VL	C	D	-0.1481	0.1302	0.0419	**0.6171**
69	F	Retired Librarian	B.A.	SD	L	C	D	-0.1615	0.1109	0.2567	**0.6731**

[8] " — " means that data was not given by participant

[9] Significant factor loadings are bolded. Not all participants loaded significantly on a factor.

[10] D – Democrat; SD – Strong Democrat; R – Republican; SR – Strong Republican; I – Independent; (R) – Lean R; (D) – Lean D

[11] O – Other; DNV – Did not vote.

[12] Participant created the category.

38	F	H.S. Teacher	B.A. (+18)	I (R)	C	O (not Sanders)	D	0.3586	0.0927	-0.0302	**0.7314**
20	M	Student	Some College	I (D)	L	C	D	-0.4588	0.3764	0.1293	0.2319
64	F	Gov't Ed. Consultant	M.A.	SD	L	C	D	-0.1903	0.5260	0.4684	0.3163
24	M	Grad Student	B.A.	D	L	C	D	-0.5244	0.3449	0.4038	-0.0015
20	F	Student	Some College	O (Socialist Dem.)	L	C	D	-0.2799	0.3869	-0.0490	0.3547
23	M	Student	B.A.	R	M	C	D	-0.4014	0.3800	-0.1413	0.2817
22	F	Grad Student	B.A.	I (R)	L	C	D	-0.0294	0.4887	0.2873	0.4078