

**The National Identity Divide:
A Mixed-Methods, Social Representations Approach to
Political Identity and Polarisation in the United States**

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Abstract

Evidence indicates that US partisan and ideological identities shape political outcomes including the recent increase in affective political polarisation. As predicted by social identity theory, self-placement as a US liberal or conservative, or as a Democrat or Republican, is associated with favouritism toward the ideological in-group and negative attitudes and behaviours toward the outgroup. The theory also holds that the link between self-categorisation and behaviour is mediated by the content of that identity, by what an individual believes it means to be a member of that group (Huddy, 2001). This thesis employs a mixed methods sequential design to investigate the meanings of US political identities and the relationship of these meanings to affective political polarisation. It builds on social identity theory work by drawing on the social representations approach (Elcheroth et al., 2011), conceptualising social representations as the building blocks of social identity content (Breakwell, 1993b).

Four empirical studies comprise this investigation. Study 1 is a qualitative analysis of lay representations of US liberal and conservative identities. A number of asymmetries were identified, including a difference in national attachment which contrasted a conservative group-centric, symbolic attachment (named national reverence) with a liberal individual-centric, instrumental attachment (named individual support). These organising principles of national reverence and individual support identified in Study 1 were then operationalised in Studies 2a and 2b through exploratory and confirmatory analyses. The principles were found to be significant and substantive descriptors of ideological identity and predictors of political outcomes including voting behaviour and affective political polarisation. In addition, national reverence and individual support were superior predictors of these variables

as compared to right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and nationalism. Study 3 examined national identity attachment on the political left through a qualitative analysis of Democratic candidate speeches during the 2019/2020 primary season. This work revealed a fractured representation of national attachment across the Democratic ideological spectrum with tensions between individual-centric and group-centric representations of the nation. Finally, Study 4 explored the causal role of the principles in affective political polarisation in the presence of issue positions and group demographic information. The study pointed to the substantive role of the principles in affective political polarisation, but noted that the contribution of the principles, issue positions, and demographic information varied by party. Overall, the studies suggest that the meanings of US national and ideological identities are highly intertwined and that these meanings are predictive of political outcomes, including affective political polarisation.

This programme of investigation contributes new measures (national reverence and individual support) that are not only useful descriptors of US political identities, but also strong predictors of political outcomes. In addition, this thesis contributes theoretically and methodologically to the study of political identity and affective political polarisation. By framing social representations as elements of identity content, the political identities that drive outcomes are conceptualised as dynamic, contextual, and changeable. The implications of this framing, and of the findings related to the dominance of conservative representations of national identity, are discussed. Overall, this thesis underscores the need to study political outcomes using a theoretical framework that prioritises the issues of identity content and context—what political identities mean to people in particular socio-political environments.

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Published Articles

Parts of this thesis related to Studies 1, 2a, and 2b have been published in the following peer-reviewed academic journals:

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Themes identified in Study 3 have been the basis of the following out-reach articles:

Hanson, K. (2020) In this election, the Democrats are facing an uphill battle to reclaim patriotism for the left. *London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) US-APP Blog*.
<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2020/03/13/primary-primers-in-this-election-the-democrats-are-facing-an-uphill-battle-to-reclaim-patriotism-for-the-left/>

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General overview

In the United States, affective political polarisation (APP) has been rising for decades. The consequences of this interparty animosity for democracy, for citizens, and for the American political system may have only begun to be witnessed.

Although APP is not a uniquely American phenomenon, among 12 OECD countries (including six G7 countries), it is the United States that has experienced the fastest growth in this type of division (Boxell et al., 2020). The status of the US as a world superpower as well as the world's oldest and second most populous democracy has prompted a great deal of interest in the origins, drivers, and consequences of this trend. Inquiry into this phenomenon is in its infancy, however, with the germinal study on APP published by Iyengar et al. in 2012. This thesis aims to contribute theoretically and methodologically to the study of APP and of political identity generally through a mixed methods investigation framed by the social representations approach (Elcheroth et al., 2011). The thesis proposes that APP can be framed as an intra-group schism whereby differences in American national attachment contribute to intergroup political animosity.

Iyengar et al. (2012) highlighted the correlation between APP and the strength with which an individual identifies with their political group, interpreting this finding within social identity theory, which asserts that identification with a social group shapes behaviour (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The connection between social identification and behaviour is however mediated by the *meaning* or *content* that an individual ascribes to that particular group (Huddy, 2001). Specifically for inter-group conflict, Elcheroth et al. (2011, p. 735) assert that: “before we can ask how two groups inter-relate...we have to ask how we represent the groups in the first place”. The first aim of this thesis is therefore to identify

meanings associated with US political identities. The investigation of US political identity content and its effect on APP has been largely limited to divisions between the two groups related to issue preferences and social evaluations. I assert that this limited conceptualisation of political identity meaning is insufficient and that meaning is found through the investigation of lay representations.

The second aim of this thesis is to contribute theoretically to the study of APP and US political identities through the explanations offered by the application of a social representations approach. The investigation of social identity meaning requires a theoretical perspective that speaks to where relevant meaning is located on the spectrum from individual cognitions to social construction. To build on current literature that has invoked social identity theory, and to capture meaning that is congruent with the conceptualisation of political ideology as existing as a space in-between the individual and society, I have adopted a social representations approach (Elcherath et al., 2011) to this inquiry. A social representations approach not only allows for this congruence by conceptualising social representations as the building blocks of identity (Breakwell, 1993b), but also proposes social psychological processes surrounding the construction of identity meaning and therefore offers a more fulsome account of APP.

A difference in national attachment between liberals and conservatives was identified in the first empirical study of political identity meaning in this thesis. Although a difference in national attachment between the political left and right is not new, research on the meanings of national identity has been largely limited to differing conceptualisations of patriotism and nationalism and has not directly addressed differences along political lines. The third, and primary, aim of the thesis

is to contribute to the study of the drivers behind APP through the investigation of differences in national identity attachment as a contributing cause of the phenomenon. This thesis positions political identity as a subgroup of American national identity and investigates an intragroup difference in the meaning of national identity as a potential driver of APP.

Thesis Overview

Chapters 1 through 5 form the literature review of this thesis and detail the background of the investigation. I first review the literature on affective political polarisation (APP, **Chapter 1**). In particular, I critically review the application of social identity theory in the current literature. I introduce a central debate surrounding the cause of APP: whether it is down to the effects of issue preferences or of other social identities. Backgrounding this debate is an intuitive—but difficult to substantiate—belief that messaging from political elites, cable news, and social media has catalysed this division between the political left and right. These viewpoints offer insight into the behaviour of the public, but neither are satisfactory nor complete. I argue that we may advance our understanding of the drivers behind APP by interrogating political identity from a lay perspective, specifically, political identity *meaning* in accordance with social identity theory.

In **Chapter 2**, I review the literature related political identity in the US and its measures. Here, I observe that the APP research has not fully explored elements observed in political identity research, particularly values. In addition, within the political identity research, although there are a number of elements that have been associated with ideological identity, these are rarely examined in conjunction with one another. I conclude that a qualitative approach to political identity meaning would allow for both identification of relevant elements and their relative importance to each group.

The initial empirical investigation in this thesis—an analysis of political identity content (Study 1)—identified a difference in national attachment. Therefore, in **Chapter 3** I introduce national attachment differences as a potential driver for

APP. I review literature related national identity—primarily discussed in terms of patriotism and nationalism—as well as the concept of intra-group schisms that provide a theoretical backdrop for national attachment as a contributor to APP. I observe the conflation of political identity and national identity, proceeding to a description of the relationship between patriotism and groups on the political right and left.

In **Chapter 4**, I discuss the theoretical approach that underpins this investigation: a social representations approach. I argue that this approach, which incorporates elements from social representations theory (Moscovici, 1961) with the social identity approach, provides a framework that is not only congruent with the investigation of political identity meaning, but that it also provides additional descriptive value that can enhance understanding of the APP phenomenon.

In the final introductory chapter (**Chapter 5**), I provide an overview of the exploratory sequential mixed methods approach I have selected for this investigation. Within this overview, I outline the methods selected for each of the empirical studies, arguing that a mixed methods approach suits the objectives of this thesis, and that a pragmatic epistemological approach is the most appropriate philosophy within which to locate this work. I conclude with a discussion of the consistency between the methods selected and the social representations approach as well as a reflection on my own positioning within this work.

Chapter 6, the first empirical chapter, is a qualitative study that seeks to identify US political identity meaning (**Study 1**). I interrogate the political identity content of US liberals and conservatives through the thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews. An analysis of semantic and latent meanings in the data

highlighted a number of asymmetries in the representations of liberals and conservatives including the importance of issue positions and a difference in national identity attachment. While the left appeared to conceptualise the nation as a collection of individuals, the right more clearly identified with the nation in the abstract, with its symbols and founding doctrines.

The second empirical chapter (**Chapter 7**) is a quantitative survey-based investigation that assesses the extent to which the perspectives identified in Study 1—named ‘**individual support**’ and ‘**national reverence**’—are distinct (using exploratory factor analysis) and can be found in a wider population (**Study 2a**). The study also assesses the predictive ability of these new measures with APP and voting behaviour as outcome variables.

In **Chapter 8, Study 2b** confirms the factor analysis in Study 2a, replicates its findings, and situates these measures in the literature by comparing them to right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation and comparing national reverence to nationalism.

The strong predictive ability of national reverence in studies 2a and 2b highlighted the clear national identity story held by conservatives as compared to liberals. Therefore, in the next empirical chapter (**Chapter 9**), I turn to the question of national identity on the political left (**Study 3**). I employ qualitative analysis to interrogate the representations of national identity in Democratic candidate speeches during the 2019/2020 primary season.

The final empirical chapter (**Chapter 10**) returns to the question of which identity elements may be driving APP. I employ a discrete choice experiment to

assess the extent of any causal contribution to APP from three identity elements: demographics (religion and race), national identity attachment (individual support and national reverence), and issue positions (**Study 4**).

The last chapter in this thesis (**Chapter 11**) is a general discussion of the findings, the practical, theoretical, and methodological implications, and the limitations of the study programme undertaken. I end with some directions for future research and concluding thoughts regarding APP and democratic norms.

Chapter 1: US Political Polarisation

1.1 Chapter Overview

The politics of mid-twentieth century America is one that may be difficult to imagine for today's political observer. In the aftermath of the Great Depression and the Second World War, there was little to clearly separate the two major US political parties (Democrats and Republicans) in the eyes of the public. Indeed, by 1950, the dulling effect of agreement and centrism was felt so keenly that the American Political Science Association (APSA) advocated for what they called a 'responsible government', submitting that "popular government...requires political parties which provide the electorate with a proper range of choice between alternatives of action" (American Political Science Association, Committee on Political Parties, 1950, p. 15). The APSA was, in essence, arguing for an increase in the political polarisation of the Democratic and Republican parties.

Seventy years on, a version of the APSA's 'responsible government' has been realised: Democrats and Republicans clearly drive differentiated issue platforms. But by many accounts, this cleavage may have now gone too far. In the US, it has become increasingly apparent that polarisation has extended beyond political preferences for a particular 'alternative for action'. With growing intensity, the politically engaged electorate dislikes and distrusts their political opponents. From 1994 to 2017, the share of Democrats and Republicans with a 'very unfavorable' view of the opposing party more than doubled, rising from 16% to 44% for Democrats and from 17% to 45% for Republicans (Pew Research Center, 2017b).

Commonly referred to as *affective political polarisation* (APP, the dislike of the political outgroup), this phenomenon has received a great deal of media and political research focus. The dislike for those on the other side of the political aisle shows no sign of abating, and academic research into the subject has offered little hope that it soon will (e.g., Iyengar et al., 2012; Levendusky, 2009; Mason, 2018a). APP raises concerns about the impact of polarisation on deliberative democracy: APP is associated with stifled debate, lack of compromise, and political behaviour that is more significantly impacted by group loyalties than by issues positions (MacKuen et al., 2010; Mason, 2018a; Settle & Carlson, 2019; Strickler, 2017).

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the relatively recently identified phenomenon of APP, to analyse its theoretical underpinnings, and to propose that inquiry into identity meaning and construction is not only a natural extension of previous work but is also necessary to identify the dynamics of APP's increasing presence in the US. In particular, I analyse the extent to which the polarisation literature has invoked particular facets of its declared theoretical framework, *social identity theory* (Tajfel, 1974, 1981, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to form current arguments. I then argue that identity meaning beyond the currently identified drivers of APP—'identity', issue preferences, and demographics—might be elucidated by directly interrogating the meaning of the identities involved.

1.2 The Problem of Polarisation

From the outset, it is important to acknowledge that to a certain extent political polarisation is not putatively a 'problem' in need of rectification. Like many social trends, it is a matter of degree, and there are certainly positive political outcomes associated with political polarisation. Issue polarisation—a difference in

stances on political issues—fuels contestation of political ideas and positions; this competitiveness generally increases the general public’s interest, and consequently involvement in, politics (e.g., Abramowitz, 2010; Levendusky, 2009; Saunders & Abramowitz, 2004). Issue polarisation also remedies the concerns set out by the 1950 APSA report by offering clear choices for the American electorate. Participation is a central tenet of democracy, and this benefit is not to be discounted. Most pundits and scholars are however less inclined take a wholly optimistic view of polarisation, and of affective political polarisation in particular. They are wary of the effect polarisation has had on political relationships and on the ability to compromise that is so integral to democracy, as well as the impact on personal relationship and everyday interactions.

A deliberative democracy depends on debate, on social interactions between those who disagree, and on compromise. The US system of government, with its split between the executive branch and bicameral elected legislature, is particularly dependent on agreement between opposing sides to pass legislation. Without 60 seats in the Senate to avoid filibuster, and/or two-thirds majority in both houses to overturn a presidential veto, anti-majoritarian features of the US system mean that compromise is required even when one party holds both houses and the presidency. While a well-functioning democracy requires that politicians are willing to engage respectfully with each other even on controversial topics (Lipset, 1959), affective polarisation is associated with intolerance (Layman et al., 2006) and fewer opportunities for collaboration and compromise (MacKuen et al., 2010).

Not only is antipathy apparent in political elite discourse and its effects of non-compromise observed in increasingly polarised congressional voting (McCarty

et al., 2016), but the effect of animosity on decision making can also be seen in the mass publics. Evidence that today's US partisans demonstrate outgroup dislike and discrimination at unprecedented levels has been found across a number of attitudinal and behavioural measures. Survey data indicates that partisans increasingly attribute positive characteristics (e.g. intelligence, honesty) to their in-party and negative characteristics (e.g. close-mindedness, hypocrisy) to the out-party (Iyengar et al., 2012); economic games have been employed to demonstrate the tendency to award in-party bonuses and out-party financial penalties (Carlin & Love, 2013; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Whitt et al., 2021); and implicit association measures have indicated that bias against an out-party member in the US was more prevalent than racial bias (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015).

The effects of this dislike in the general polity, like at the elite level, have implications for democracy. Indeed, American citizens today are increasingly likely to vote against the opposing party's candidate as opposed to vote for their own party's candidate (Abramowitz & Webster, 2018), and animosity exists even when opponents agree on issues (Mason, 2018b). APP has been found to undermine support for democratic norms (Kingzette et al., 2021) and experimental work has demonstrated that these social attachments to political identity (but not to issue preferences) drive an unwillingness to deliberate with the opposing side (Strickler, 2017). In addition, although a certain level of polarisation encourages political participation, continued polarisation—whether issue or affective—may eventually lead to those who do not identify with one extreme or the other becoming politically disengaged (Levendusky, 2009). Polarisation therefore limits the ability to solve pressing political problems, an impact that may be felt to a greater degree by the

most vulnerable in society. And finally, polarisation has led to instances of extremist, anti-democratic action, including political violence (Kalmoe & Mason, 2022).

The antipathy of APP may also extend into the everyday lives of the general public as partisan cues appear to influence non-political attitudes. Close personal relationships with out-party members are increasingly rare (Huber & Malhotra, 2017; Iyengar et al., 2018) and experimental work shows that the general public are more likely to favour their political ingroup in a variety of contexts, from online transactions for goods and services (McConnell et al., 2018) to the awarding of scholarships and jobs (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; A. F. Johnson & Roberto, 2019). Recent research has also highlighted the key role of polarisation in the motivation behind sharing fake news (Osmundsen et al., 2021) and in COVID-19 attitudes (J. N. Druckman et al., 2021).

The consequences of polarisation warrant investigation into this trend, if not to ameliorate it, then to at least understand its components and drivers. In the following sections, I review the debated relationship between issue positions, affect, and political identification that is the focus of a number of the current affective political polarisation investigations, and locate this work within the social identity theoretical framework (Tajfel, 1982; Turner et al., 1987).

1.2.1 Affect, the New Polarisation

The extremity and consistency of individuals' issue positions (*issue polarisation*) has traditionally been the basis for political polarisation discussion (e.g., DiMaggio et al., 1996). More recently, scholars have argued that issue polarisation measures are inadequate to describe and investigate the phenomenon.

Instead, they assert that political behaviour can be more accurately understood measuring the increase in the dislike of the political outgroup: *affective political polarisation* (Iyengar et al., 2012; Mason, 2013, 2018a).

The paper by Iyengar et al. (2012) is a landmark in the study of political polarisation. The researchers argued for a new definition of political polarisation to capture a ‘more diagnostic’ measure of polarisation in the public. The term ‘affective political polarisation’ was conceived to capture the *social* distance (as opposed to issue position distance) between partisans and is typically measured using ‘feeling thermometers’—such as those employed in the American National Election Surveys (ANES)—on a 0-100 scale ranging from ‘coldest’ to ‘warmest’. The ANES asks how participants feel about various social groups (measured in response to the question “how do you feel towards X?”) including Democrats, Republicans, liberals, and conservatives.

In a series of studies, Iyengar et al. (2012) demonstrated the existence and extent of the phenomenon using a variety of surveys and measures. Although APP is most commonly tested using feeling thermometers as indicated above, the researchers also sought to capture this growing animosity in other measures of social distance, recognising the social impact that this prejudice may have on everyday lives. For example, measures have included: “How would you feel if you had a son or daughter who married someone who votes for the Democratic/Republican Party?”, ranked on a 5-point scale from ‘very happy to very unhappy’. The researchers also noted that, compared to 1960, when five percent of Republicans and four percent of Democrats reported that they would be ‘displeased’ if their son or daughter married outside the party, in 2010 49% and 33% of Republicans and Democrats, respectively,

would be ‘somewhat or very unhappy’. And finally, through comparison of ratings of selected traits, the paper demonstrated that partisans found the out-party less intelligent and more selfish in 2008 as compared to 1960. This widely cited paper placed the phenomenon of APP at the centre of current political polarisation research.

1.3 APP and Social Identity

Integral to the conceptualisation of APP is the idea that affect is rooted in social identity (Iyengar et al., 2012, 2019; Mason, 2016, 2018a, 2018b). The social nature of political identity has long been recognised: Campbell et al. (1960) recognised the influence of the social groups to which we belong on our partisanship, and Green et al. (2002) promoted the idea of partisanship as a social identity (but stopped short of adopting social identity theory in their analysis, see further discussion in Chapter 2). In regard to the phenomenon of political polarisation however, it was Iyengar and colleagues’ 2012 paper that re-conceptualised polarisation by recognising the explanatory power of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Social identity theory is a social psychological theory of intergroup relations and is therefore well placed to explain APP as a feature of conflict between two political groups, US Democrats and Republicans. The theory grew out of Tajfel’s ambition to understand the intergroup animosity that was the predominant feature of the Second World War; to understand why a person’s national or religious group label was enough to provoke inhuman treatment at the hands of an outgroup (Tajfel, 1981). The principal theories of conflict at the time included frustration-aggression theory (Dollard et al., 1939)—an explanation of intergroup conflict based on

individual levels of frustration—and realistic conflict theory (Sherif, 1954) which centred on conflict over limited resources. In contrast, social identity theory proposed that intergroup conflict is the consequence of membership in the social groups to which we belong. These social groups may include gender, geographic, racial, national, professional, and religious groups. Individuals may think of themselves as members of a great many of social groups, but the way a person behaves will be shaped by the social identity or identities that may be most salient in a particular context (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity theory posits that when a person sees themselves as a member of a social group, this self-categorisation forms part of their self-concept, leading them to favour and defend their ingroups as an extension of themselves, to adopt the attitudes and beliefs of a prototypical member of those groups, to demonstrate bias against, and to derogate outgroups (Tajfel, 1982; Turner et al., 1987). People strive to achieve and maintain a favourable view of themselves, and by extension, of the groups they belong to.

1.3.1 Political Identities as Sub-groups of National Identity

Before turning to the current APP literature, an important distinction must be made between the positioning of the social groups who are party to the conflict. In the current literature, political groups (Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives) are positioned as separate groups who differ on particular measured variables, primarily their issue positions or evaluations of/membership in certain demographic groups. The phenomenon of APP is treated as an *intergroup* conflict, and therefore focuses exclusively on political identities.

In this thesis however, I propose that the conflict may also be seen as an *intragroup* conflict within the common national group. Social identities are defined,

in part, by the existence of a common project (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999). As the subjects of the current research, political identities (partisan or ideological) are integrally related to national identity: these groups exist to allow individuals to express views on how the nation should be run, what should be expected of fellow citizens, and what priorities matter. The nation is the common project, and the common identity, for the political groups that are the subject of APP research.

1.3.2 Natural Animus

In the application of social identity theory to APP, a point of focus has been the ‘natural’ ingroup favouritism and outgroup derogation that can be a consequence of identifying with a particular group. Mason (2018a) for example, grounds the urgency of her argument in these “natural, even primal human tendencies toward group isolation and group comparison” (p. 12). Consequently, APP researchers argue, the polarising behaviour (ingroup favouritism and outgroup derogation) evident in today’s US political context is a natural consequence of self-categorising as either a Democrat/Republican or liberal/conservative. It is this natural tendency, demonstrated in Tajfel’s minimal group paradigm experiments (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel et al., 1971), that forms the focus of some of the most influential APP research (e.g. Iyengar et al., 2012; Mason, 2018a).

The minimal group paradigm is the outgrowth of a series of laboratory studies (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel et al., 1971) in which the researchers demonstrated that even when participants were acting as members of groups to which they were assigned solely for experimental purposes, they exhibited ingroup favouritism and outgroup discrimination. In these experiments, participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups, sometimes ostensibly based on an

unimportant tendency (e.g., their preference for Klee or Kadinsky paintings, or whether they over- or under-estimated the number of dots they were shown) or were explicitly randomly assigned. Participants were then asked to allocate monetary awards to their ingroup and the outgroup. Not only did participants favour their ingroup over their outgroup in this allocation, but they tended to opt for allocation strategies that maximised the difference in the awards between the group, sacrificing ingroup awards to do this. In other words, it was the ‘win’ that mattered, not the award.

This tendency for humans to categorise, identified by Allport (1954) in his work on stereotypes, is a foundational cognitive aspect of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981); and ingroup and outgroup comparisons are recognised as natural human processes. In the current APP literature, this evidence has been held up as support for the inevitability of intergroup political conflict. The focus on this facet of social identity theory however reduces the theory to a psychological dynamic that Tajfel referred to as the “‘mechanics’ of categorisation” (p. 254). Tajfel considered these mechanics to be only a starting point on which to layer the many *contextual* features in the real world (Duveen, 2001/2013; Reicher, 2004) such as the meanings or content of these group identities (Turner, 1999).

1.3.3 Reified and Static Identities

The reduced, de-contextualised application of social identity theory reflects a conceptualisation of social identities as reified and static groups. Like minimal groups little meaning is ascribed to these identities, a conceptualisation apparent in the definitions of social identity put forth by APP researchers. For example, Mason (2018a), notes that “identity does not require values and policy attitudes; it simply

requires...a sense of inclusion and a sense of exclusion” (p. 281). Iyengar and colleagues (2012) offer a similarly pared-down definition of identification when they state that “The definitional test of social identity...requires not only positive sentiment for one’s own group, but also negative sentiment toward those identifying with opposing groups.” (p. 406). Not only is identity stripped of meaning, but when applied to APP, this definition becomes circular: the outcome (‘negative sentiment’) is a requirement of self-categorisation (the reason given for APP).

The current conceptualisation of the social groups of party, ideology, race, and religion as ‘static categories without meaning subject to natural tendencies of outgroup animosity’ means that current APP theory can therefore envision only further polarisation; it offers little hope for social change. This application of the social identity approach, by reifying the groups in which individuals self-categorise, and locating the polarisation process primarily within the individual may be curbing the full explanatory power of the theory and therefore limiting possibilities for understanding APP. I suggest that an appreciation of the meanings associated with the identities involved in APP will advance understanding of the phenomenon; and framing these identities as dynamic and mutually constructed opens them to the possibilities of social change.

1.3.4 Meaning

The current application of the social identity approach neglects a number of contextual features that mediate between social categorisation and behaviour—including the *meaning* related to these social categorisations (Duveen, 2001/2013; Huddy, 2001, 2002; Reicher, 2004). Social identity theory and self-categorisation theory (refer below) are process theories, and “require the incorporation of *specific*

content into their analyses before they can make predictions either in the laboratory or the field and are designed to require such incorporations” (Turner, 1999, p. 34).

Definitions of identity devoid of meaning are in conflict with the idea that it is identity meaning that shapes the behaviour of those who self-categorise as a particular identity. For example, outgroup hate does not necessarily follow from ingroup love (Brewer, 1999, 2001); the process is contextual and depends on perceived meanings associated with the identities in question such as moral superiority, threat, common goals and values, and political competition (Brewer & Pierce, 2005). Brewer (1999) specifically decouples ingroup love from outgroup hate, noting that group attachment may be a precursor to outgroup hate, but is not by itself enough to explain such hostility. The importance of subjective identity content for behaviour has been demonstrated in a number of scenarios. Livingstone and Haslam's (2008) study of Protestant and Catholic students in Northern Ireland concluded that personal interpretations of the meaning associated with these identities—in this study, whether the meaning associated with the identity included aggression toward the outgroup—impacted the degree to which this behaviour was manifested. Likewise, identity content differences have been shown to be significant in contrasting outcomes in studies as diverse as the role of students' racial identity content in academic performance (Altschul et al., 2006) and American national identity content in attitudes towards immigration (Citrin et al., 1994, 2012; Schatz et al., 1999).

The content of social identities is multidimensional and subjective, reflecting an individual's perception of the norms of the group (Ashmore et al., 2004). Norms for politicised identities like ideological, partisan, and national identities may include

the personal characteristics, behaviours, and values ascribed to group members, political issues and beliefs, objectives ascribed to the group, and the positioning of groups in relation to others (Ashmore et al., 2004; Goncalves-Portelinha et al., 2017; van Dijk, 2006). The individual's perspective of their membership in these social groups is constructed with reference to both the acceptance of ingroup identity content and the resistance to outgroup identity content.

Huddy (2001) has argued that more attention to the meaning of identity is required to understand the development and implications of political identities. In her critique of the application of social identity theory to political identities, she contends that, "it is the meaning of...identity, not its existence, that determines its political consequences" (p. 130). Huddy makes the point that the consideration of group meaning—as opposed to simply group boundaries—is particularly relevant to understanding choices related to acquired identities (such as partisan or ideological identities); noting that "an emphasis in social identity research on groups that lack meaning may seriously hamper our understanding of both identity acquisition and its consequences" (p.142).

To understand the importance of meaning in how an individual comes to self-categorise with a political group, we turn to social identity theory's companion theory, self-categorisation theory (Turner et al., 1987). Self-categorisation theory was elaborated by Turner to address the mechanisms that underpin social identity theory: how individuals come to see themselves as members of particular social groups that may be party to intergroup conflicts. Social identity theory and social categorisation theory comprise what is referred to as the *social identity approach*,

where social categorisation theory is essentially the first step of social identity theory.

Self-categorisation theory attempts to specify how subjective identification happens, and though not directly addressed in the theory, the meaning of group membership is a central component of this process (Oakes, 2002). When determining whether and to what degree they may fit in any particular social group, individuals employ an assessment of both *comparative* and *normative* fit (Turner et al., 1987). In a comparative fit assessment, particularly relevant to the generally bi-modal choice of partisan or ideological identification, the individual determines in which group they are a better fit, taking into consideration a number of facets including norms, beliefs, and values associated with each party as well as an evaluation of the social groups with which they are associated: the *representation* of the group's *meaning* that the individual holds. While comparative fit is an assessment of into which party or ideology one may fit, normative fit is an assessment of the degree of one's fit within this identity. A normative fit, in which the individual compares their own beliefs and values to that of the meaning they associate with the group, completes the assessment. Self-categorisations are not simply cognitive computations, but are processes of contestation in which the individual compares and re-defines meanings attached to the self and the group (Reicher & Hopkins, 1996).

1.3.5 Social Sorting: The Influence of Demographics

The ANES provides evidence that over the past 50 years the general public's social identities—ideological, racial, religious, and geographic identities in particular—have become more aligned along party lines. Commonly referred to as social sorting, Democrats have become more aligned with liberal ideology and are

more primarily urban, secular, Hispanic, and Black; Republicans are principally conservative, rural, church-going, and White.

Figures drawn from the 1972 and 2012 ANES show that the difference in the percentage of Republicans versus Democrats who were White increased from approximately 13% in 1972 to 30% in 2012, and the difference in percentage of Democrats versus Republicans in who felt close to Black people increased from approximately 11% to 20% in the same period (Mason, 2018a). While the difference in percentages of Protestants identifying as Republican over Democrat has changed little (14% in 1972, 12% in 2012), the 12% difference of Catholics identifying as Democrat over Republican in 1972 has all but disappeared in 2012 (approximately 1%).

Mason's (2018a) application of social identity theory to APP points not only to ingroup favouritism and outgroup derogation as an inevitable consequence of political group membership (discussed above), but also to the theory of social identity complexity proposed by Roccas and Brewer (2002). The theory of social identity complexity is based on the idea that when an individual perceives that there is little overlap between the multiple social identities that they hold, their social identities are 'cross-cut' and are therefore complex, leading to more tolerance of outgroups. Conversely, when a person perceives that there is a high degree of overlap between their social identities, their identity structure is simplified, and they become less tolerant of outgroups. Mason therefore proposes that APP is a consequence of the simplification of Americans' social identities: the elimination of cross-cutting identities in the electorate intensifies citizens' identification with their Republican/conservative or Democratic/liberal identity, raising the stakes in any

situation that threatens these identities. To position the social sorting explanation for the increase in APP in social identity theory vernacular: the implicit argument is that there is a growing trend of partisan self-categorisation according to comparative fit, and that these comparisons are made on the basis of the religious, geographic, and racial social groups associated with each party. Individuals associate certain social groups with one or the other party, and through this work out where it is that they ‘fit’. How individuals feel about these demographic groups (*social evaluation*) therefore drives the strength of their identification with the political identity. The quantitative overlap of social identities according to the ANES appears to support the intolerance of outgroups predicted by Roccas and Brewer (2002): drawing from decades of ANES data, Mason demonstrates that APP is most prevalent for those for whom these identities have become aligned. She provides evidence that the disappearance of cross-cutting identities—as geographic, religious, and racial identities have aligned with party identification—is correlated with APP as well as other political outcomes such as anger and what she refers to as ‘blind activism’.

As sorting and the resulting behaviours are positioned as the consequence of humans’ natural propensity to categorise, she asserts that this decrease in party identity complexity shows no signs of reversing and contends that consequently, there is little hope of reducing APP. The quantitative analysis of reduced social identity complexity based on demographic elements (geography, race, religion, class) may however be somewhat limited in that the theory is dependent on an individual’s *perception* of identity overlap (as opposed to simply the existence of overlap) that cannot be obtained from national surveys. Brewer and Pierce (2005) state:

it is not just the objective reality of overlapping group memberships that will determine whether cross-cutting identities promote tolerance and prevent intergroup conflict. More important is how these multiple identities are represented subjectively by individuals when they think about their social group memberships (p. 441).

Therefore, the observation that the nation is sorting along demographic lines while the nation has polarised is an important first step, but additional insight may be afforded through an assessment of the meanings associated with these identities.

The influence of social groups on partisan identification has long been recognised (e.g., Campbell et al., 1960), and undoubtedly Mason's theory is a significant contribution towards understanding the dynamics of APP. However, this social sorting theory acknowledges the social categorisation process of category 'fit' only to the extent that a person's race, geography, and religion provide indicators as to in which party they may best fit. This perspective takes these categories as givens, that the category itself drives identity fit. It is however the location of the identity "within the representational structure of the social world...which gives categorisations their power, not categorisations which determine identities" (Duveen, 2001/2013, p. 192). It is this representational structure of political identities that this thesis seeks to address to extend current theory.

1.3.6 APP Identity-based Interventions

Consistent with the theory of intergroup emotions (Mackie et al., 2000), stronger political identifiers react with greater emotion. Because APP is correlated with how strongly one identifies with a party or ideology (identity strength; Iyengar

et al., 2012), certain interventions to lessen outgroup animosity have focused on reducing the importance of citizens' political identity. APP researchers have sought to employ approaches that have worked in other conflicts to reduce identity strength and consequently ameliorate antipathy. Self-affirmation techniques and the priming of partisan ambivalence have failed to reduce APP (Levendusky, 2018; West & Iyengar, 2020). Shifting respondents' salient identities from their partisan identity to a common ingroup identity (Gaertner et al., 1993), namely American national identity, has shown mixed results. In a natural experiment, Levendusky (2017) found that proximity to the Fourth of July holiday (expected to prime national identity) led to decreased animosity towards the political outgroup's presidential nominee in 2008. However, in a conceptual replication of this study, Brandt et al., (2020) found no such effect around the 2019 holiday.

The latter paper notes that "it is possible that growing differences between Democrats and Republicans limit the effectiveness of the American identity to function as a common ingroup. Democrats and Republicans have different ideas about what American identity *means*" (p. 7, emphasis added). This suggests that even if national identity is primed in the current environment, the political left and right may see the outgroup as less representative of American identity than in previous years, therefore failing to include them in the American ingroup. I return to the contested nature of American identity and its implications for APP in Chapter 3. But for now, I observe that researchers' focus on manipulating the strength or centrality of political identities has been able to offer little insight into what may allow for a change in the tide away from increasing polarisation. This circumstance presents an imperative to assess the current conceptualisation of APP, to perhaps adjust focus and analyse the phenomenon through another perspective.

1.3.7 The Social Identity Approach: Further Explanations

In addition to the limited application of social identity theory to the problem of APP noted above, there are at least two other areas in which the social identity approach may provide theoretical explanation: elite and media messaging, and in the explanation of increasing polarisation. Discussion of messaging in the context of social identity theory is limited with the exception that both Levendusky (2009) and Mason (2018a) argue that elite cues have been an impetus for citizens' social identity alignment: that members of ideological, geographic, religious, and racial social groups more clearly understand in which party 'people like me' are located, and consequently identify with that party. This connection between exposure to elite and media messaging and affective political polarisation is theoretically consistent with the social identity approach. The polarising and homogenising of elite and media messaging along ideological lines has a cascading effect on the wider public, both in terms of self-categorisation with an assessment of categorical and normative fit and in terms of *mobilisation* (the behaviour expected of a group member). In both cases, individuals will look to those who they believe best exemplifies the category (*group prototypes*) for cues (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Turner et al., 1987).

To the extent that the political elite and the media pundits are seen as prototypical of a political category, they offer to the politically engaged cues as to whether one fits comparatively or normatively with this group. Being seen as a group prototype endows highly visible personalities with mobilisation leadership. They are consequently in a position to give an authoritative definition of the *meaning* or *content* of the group identity: what it means to be a Democrat or Republican. In turn, identity content shapes the behaviour of the group members, as those for whom a

social group is important will strive to mirror the norms and behaviours of a prototypical member of the group (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Turner et al., 1987). In this case, if prototypical group members are antagonistic to the political outgroup, so too will group members strive to be. Such ‘institutionalised dissemination’ is a key catalyst in situations of intractable conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007). The ability to control the meaning of group identity therefore “confers a world-making power” (Reicher et al., 2005, p. 626).

The social identity approach and the integral role of group representations offers further theoretical explanation for the nature of polarisation. While elite and media messaging can be seen as the active construction of the group representation (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a), the nature of group representations in a two-party system in particular can exacerbate polarisation. Members of an ingroup actively construct a representation of the group norm (attitudes and behaviours that define group membership) from the positions held by group members in relation to those positions assumed or known to be held by the outgroup (Hogg et al., 1990). Representations of the norms of these groups are therefore not simply the average of the norms of the members, but a more polarised version (Turner et al., 1989). In the case of US political identities, conservatives will construct a group representation that is purposely differentiated from liberals, and vice versa. The same would be true for Democrats and Republicans. Self-categorisation as a member of these groups encourages conformity to the ingroup representation of these norms—the group prototype; therefore, if the representations of norms are polarised, so the members become as well.

1.4 Issue Positions

In contrast to the identity-based, social identity theory explanations of APP discussed above, other researchers have sought to argue that it is not identity, but more extreme or ideologically consistent issue positions that are the primary driver of APP. Advocates for the identity-based theory of APP assert that outgroup animosity and ingroup favouritism does not necessarily correspond to differences in issue preferences (Iyengar et al., 2012; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Mason, 2013, 2018a, 2018b). Iyengar et al. (2012) posit that APP is “inconsistently (and perhaps artifactually) founded in policy attitudes” (p. 405), while Mason (2018a) asserts that APP exists in spite of a general consensus on issue preferences. Iyengar et al. (2012) specifically addressed issue preference changes as a potential cause of increased APP. Comparing ANES-captured issue positions for social welfare (healthcare, job guarantees, more government services, and spending of social security) and for cultural issues (abortion, laws, gay rights, and gender equality) to feeling thermometers for the periods 1988 and 2004, they find only moderate to weak effects of policy preference on net partisan affect. The researchers therefore conclude that there is little reason to believe that APP is driven by issue-based “spillover” (p.420). Mason’s (2018b) study takes the assertion of identity primacy in APP a step further on from partisan identity (that theoretically may be more salient and have more symbolic objects available to it) by analysing APP in relation to ideological self-categorisation, an identity long assumed to be closely tied to issue preferences. Mason demonstrates the greater predictive ability of ideological identification over issue consistency (and issue divergence) on a variety of APP measures including feeling thermometers and social distance measures. Mason therefore concludes that APP related to ideological identity is primarily the product of ‘identity’. The

identity-based element of the model is not specifically defined, it instead refers to that part of a political identity—either party or ideological—that is not seen as specifically issue-related.

In contrast, proponents of the issue-based proposition have argued that it is citizens' increasingly extreme or ideologically consistent (whether individuals hold consistently conservative or liberal views) policy preferences that drive APP (Bougher, 2017; Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017). Webster and Abramowitz (2017) have employed ANES data from 1984 to 2012 to argue that the four social welfare issues consistently included for those years demonstrated a significant increase in (Pearson's r) correlation with ideological self-categorisation, from .20 to .39, and between the questions themselves, from .25 to .41. The researchers therefore argue that it is the change in attitudes towards these particular issues that is driving APP. Further supporting this assertion that issue positions *do* influence APP, and employing issue divergence as opposed to issue consistency, Rogowski and Sutherland (2016) found that participants responded to perceived increased issue position differences in the political elite with increased dislike towards the outgroup. Indeed, Hobolt et al., (2020) found that APP can be built around specific issues.

In a review that argues against the theory of issue polarisation as a driver for APP, Lelkes (2018) found that the relationship between issue consistency and APP is weak but reciprocal, that APP is as much of a driver of issue consistency as issue consistency is a driver of APP. This finding, while primarily serving to assert the weak influence of issue preference on APP also, in its recognition of the reciprocal nature of APP and issue consistency, recognises that issue preference and outgroup

affect can be both dependent and independent variables related to political self-categorisation. This observation not only speaks to the interdependent link between these elements, but the link between behaviour (APP) and cognitive assessment (issue preferences) also alludes to the interdependent and dynamic nature of identity content.

A good deal of the work supporting both sides of the APP identity/issues debate rests on the analyses of the ANES (Iyengar et al., 2012; Mason, 2018a; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017). As an alternative, more recent work (Dias & Lelkes, 2021; Orr & Huber, 2020) has sought to employ experimental surveys to clarify the causal contribution of issue positions (as well as demographics) on APP. However, the results of experimental work are also inconclusive: while Orr and Huber (2020) find that there is little influence of partisan identity (or demographics) once issue preferences are accounted for, Dias and Lelkes (2021) assert the primacy of partisan identity over issue preferences as a driver of APP.

In spite of the lack of consensus, and although issue preference consistency does not necessarily reflect ideological identification (discussed further in the next chapter), the intuitive appeal of a driver related to ideological identification remains. Indeed, although Mason (2018a) contends that it is primarily the tendency to dislike outgroups that is fuelling APP in spite of policy preferences, in her own work the alignment of demographics pales in comparison to the alignment of ideological identity with party identity. The difference in percentage of Republicans over Democrats who also identify as conservatives increased from approximately 20% in 1972 to 49% in 2012, while the difference in the percentage of Democrats over Republicans who self-categorised as liberals increased from approximately 10% to

36% (Mason, 2018a). The alignment of left/right ideology and partisan identity is most commonly attributed to the civil rights movement of the 1960's. When the Democratic Party aligned themselves with this movement, White Southern conservative Democrats were prompted to gradually move to the Republican party (Carmines & Stimson, 1989). A second social cleavage in the form of Christian morality emerged in the early 1990's. The influence of the conservative Christian group calling themselves the Christian Coalition found fertile ground in Republican party leadership, and successfully lobbied to have their 'family values' issues (including items such as the discontinuation of government funding for family planning) in the Republican platform. Thus, a religious/secular divide was added to the racial social divide within the political elite.

1.5 Political Elite and Ideological Alignment

The proliferation of ideologically aligned cable news outlets and social media, as well as the increased clarity and polarity of elite political messaging are commonly implicated in the rise of affective political polarisation (Iyengar et al., 2019). There is, however, little consensus regarding the role of messaging in the process of APP and the nature of the messages that have contributed to it.

At the level of the political elite in the US (those elected officials who have some influence over policy [Zaller, 1992]) there has been substantial alignment between party and ideology in the last 50 years: based on their voting records, Congressional Democrats and Republicans are now more ideologically divided; Democrats are now almost exclusively liberal on issue positions, and Republicans, conservative (McCarty et al., 2016; Theriault, 2008). Elite messaging has inevitably reflected this alignment. Putatively, this messaging would involve support for more

polarised issue positions to reflect elite ideologic alignment. However, Iyengar et al. (2012) conclude that “the more plausible explanation [for APP]...lies in the rhetoric of political campaigns” (p. 427), referring to evidence documenting the increasing negativity in campaigns between 1960 and 2004. This negativity has coincided with proliferation of politically aligned cable news networks: both Fox News (conservative) and MSNBC (liberal) were established in 1996 and are now the two most viewed cable news networks with millions of viewers each. These channels (and others) tend to present content and analysis that is not only ideologically aligned, but also employs mockery, misrepresentative exaggeration, insulting language, and name-calling that casts the outgroup as deviant (Berry & Sobieraj, 2013).

The causal link between media exposure and polarisation is far from clear, however. Although Levendusky (2013) has presented some experimental evidence that exposure to cable news increases issue polarisation, there is evidence that it is the most polarised citizens who tune in to networks consistent with their already-present attitudes (Arceneaux & Johnson, 2013), casting doubt on the extent of any causal relationship between exposure and political attitudes. In addition, the motivation for the exposure itself can vary: while many may seek attitude-consistent exposure, few are likely to exclusively do so (Iyengar et al., 2019). In keeping with much of the APP literature, the negative media rhetoric hypothesis is situated primarily at the individual level, where exposure to extreme views and aggressive rhetoric has a direct impact on individual cognitions and behaviour.

1.6 Conclusion

Affective political polarisation is pervasive throughout American political and private decision-making and prejudices. The existing research designed to identify the drivers and dynamics behind APP based on social identity theory positions US APP as a natural phenomenon of groups catalysed by elite and media rhetoric, and as standing apart from the influence of polarising issue positions. In the review of current APP research, it is clear that the quantitative evidence supporting arguments for the primacy of various proposed drivers of APP—of ‘identity’, issue preferences, demographics, and media exposure—are limited and often arrive at contradictory conclusions. This uncertainty surrounding the drivers of APP also limits the ability to devise interventions that may alleviate the effects of polarisation.

This chapter identified debate within the APP literature that considers whether outgroup affect is driven by ‘identity’ or by elements framed as factors outside of identity: issue positions and demographics. In the critical analysis of these proposals, I argued that the social identity approach ideas of identity meaning and content are not fully exploited in the current APP research. While demographics and issue preferences may be important elements of identity meaning, the current research is primarily limited to these two assumed content variables. Until inquiry is made into the subjective meaning of the identities subject to the conflict—a perspective integral to the application of the social identity approach—theoretical support regarding the causes of APP and insight into its potential drivers are incomplete. In the next chapter, I lay the groundwork for this inquiry by reviewing the literature related to political identification, with a view to identifying elements of political identity content.

2 Chapter 2: US Political Identity

2.1 Chapter Overview

The previous chapter identified debate within the affective political polarisation (APP) literature as to whether outgroup affect is driven by ‘identity’ or by elements framed as factors outside of identity, such as issue positions and demographics. I argued that although the social identity approach recognises the important role of subjective identity meaning when understanding identity-related behaviour, little account had been taken of political identity content when looking for drivers of APP. In this chapter, I therefore review literature related to political identification with a focus on political identity content.

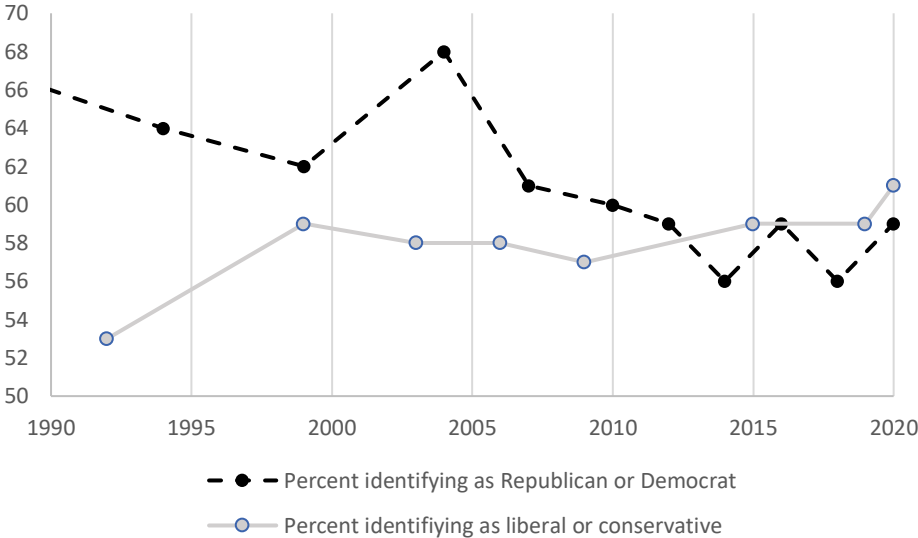
The review of the literature in the previous chapter highlighted the central role of political (partisan and/or ideological) identity in APP. APP is a relatively recent addition to a list of political outcomes attributed to citizen’s political identities, most prominently including voting behaviour and issue preference. While the natural association between *party identity* and voting behaviour is as old as the party system itself, *ideological identity* is now a powerful indicator of voting as well (Jost, 2006). Similarly, the observation that party identity influences issue support (Campbell et al., 1960) is found with ideological identity too (Malka & Lelkes, 2010).

Although some research on political polarisation (e.g., Iyengar et al., 2012) does not clearly differentiate between party and ideological social identities, these identities are structurally different. A political party has clearly designated actors, platforms, symbols, and leaders, while ideology has no such structure. Although

party continues to be the most powerful predictor of many political behaviours, the initial focus of this thesis will be on ideological identity. The aim is to concentrate research on the construct that appears to be driving the increasing influence of political identity on American political behaviour. Ideological identity is the social identity whose alignment with partisanship has shown the greatest increase (Mason, 2018a), and is therefore a key variable in partisan sorting. Lending evidence to the importance of ideological identity, P.H. Gries's (2017) analysis of 2010 American National Elections Studies (ANES) and 2008 General Social Survey data found that ideological identity had a greater impact than partisanship on policy preferences. He hypothesised that ideological identity is more “psychologically fundamental” (p. 139), while party identity is more akin to cheering on a sports team. And finally, party affiliation has decreased in recent years while ideological identification has steadily increased and has now surpassed party identification (refer **Figure 1** below).

Figure 1

Percentage of Americans Identifying with Partisan or Ideological Groups. Figures from January of the indicated survey years (Gallup data)



Indeed, Noel (2013) remarks that "...in the late twentieth century, an ideological package that was developed in contrast to the party system has exerted itself on the party system. The liberal-versus-conservative division has succeeded in reshaping parties" (p. 36). It is therefore not only increasingly important to understand ideological identity in itself, but also to understand ideological identity for its influence on, and its meaning as part of, party identification. The focus of this chapter therefore centres on literature related to ideological identification. I trace the development of political identity research, beginning with briefly reviewing the development of party identity models before moving on to ideological identity content research. The discussion of party identity models provides context for the research on ideological identity that followed and highlights the parallels between the two identities.

2.2 Theories of Party Self-categorisation

The American Voter (Campbell et al., 1960) is considered a landmark study on partisanship. Based on a 1956 survey of election data, the authors offered what came to be known as the 'Michigan model' of party identification. In this model, partisan loyalties are formed early in life (largely inherited from parents) and remain stable throughout adulthood; specific political attitudes and behaviours then adapt to align with this partisanship (Bartels, 2002). The Michigan model recognised the role of social groups in influencing initial partisan self-categorisation and the role of party identity in the on-going motivated cognition that aligns issue preference with party identity. The theory leaves little room for identity change however, and the proposition of party identification as having the consistency of a personality trait is

unable to account for the partisanship changes that came in the decades that followed.

Inspired by Downs's (1957) rational choice perspective, Fiorina (1977, 1981) later challenged the Michigan model, proposing what is known as the 'running-tally' perspective. This model argues that partisanship is a cognitive assessment of "retrospective evaluations of party promises and performance" (Fiorina, 1981, p. 84), where citizens change party over time based on issue preferences and past party performance. By eschewing social influence and instead prioritising issue choices, this model—while able to account for changes in party allegiances such as the move of Southern Democrats to the Republican party due to civil rights issues in the 1960s (discussed in Chapter 1)—is unable to incorporate the influence of party identity on political issue preferences identified in *The American Voter*. The running-tally model was nonetheless the prevailing view of party identification in political science when Green et al. (2002) published *Partisan Hearts and Minds*.

The work by Green et al. (2002) broke with the current view of partisanship by re-conceptualising US partisan identity as a social identity. The model developed by these researchers recognises the reciprocal nature of the attractiveness of a party's policy positions on party identification as well as the influence of party identification on how attractive policies are perceived to be, thereby addressing the shortcomings of both of the previous theories. This is, however, where the researchers claim that the similarity with a social identity approach ends; the authors take pains to clarify that their theory of partisan affiliation is not in line with social identity theory, as the motivation of self-esteem maximisation is inconsistent with their findings of the resistant nature of partisan affiliation. After all, if self-esteem is the primary

motivating factor they reason, citizens would change party allegiances to align with the winner after each election. This distancing from social identity theory may not have been entirely necessary. Interpretations of social identity theory have pointed out that not only is self re-categorisation to the ‘winning’ group not the only way to enhance self-esteem when group identity is threatened (Branscombe et al., 1999), but also that self-esteem may not be the sole or even primary motivation in behaviours related to social identities (distinctiveness, continuity, and meaning are proposed alternatives [Vignoles et al., 2006]).

Regardless, Green et al. (2002) were concerned primarily with what may precipitate a self-categorisation change. On this point, they conclude that it is only the slow process of a *change in perception* of the party that impacts party self-categorisation on a large scale. For example, the mobilisation of Christian fundamentalists on behalf of a conservative social agenda during the early 1990’s altered the Republican platform and how the party was perceived. According to these researchers, this evaluation of a party’s image comprises both *issue positions* and *evaluations of the social groups* that form the stereotype party image. They note:

As people reflect on whether they are Democrats or Republicans (or neither)...they ask themselves two questions: What kinds of social groups come to mind as I think about Democrats, Republicans, and Independents? Which assemblage of groups (if any) best describes me? (p. 8).

Their findings that party identity rests on the psychological processes of self-categorisation (evaluation of a party’s ‘image’ and an individual’s fit with this stereotype) is in keeping with Turner et al.’s (1987) self-categorisation theory discussed in the previous chapter.

The Michigan model (Campbell et al., 1960), the running-tally model (Fiorina, 1977, 1981) and the social identity model (Green et al., 2002) of partisan identification variously prioritise and discuss the relationship between party identity, issue preferences, and evaluation of social groups—elements that are paralleled in ideological identity research.

2.3 Ideological Identity

Since 1936, national polls have asked US citizens to self-categorise themselves on a political left-to-right spectrum from ‘liberal’ to ‘conservative’ (Ellis & Stimson, 2012). The measure, however, has historically appeared to be of limited use: party identification is a better indicator of voting intent, and ideological self-placement is only moderately correlated with expert-designated sets of ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’ policy preferences (Converse, 1964; Kinder & Kalmoe, 2017). Converse’s (1964) landmark *The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics* brought the incongruence between Americans’ self-categorisation as a liberal or conservative and their political issue preferences into the spotlight. Converse determined that less than 15% of the American public held consistently liberal or conservative issue positions in line with their ideological self-categorisation and could therefore be considered to be ‘ideological’. This finding led him to declare that—unlike the political elite—the American public knew little about what it means to be a liberal or conservative and was therefore ‘innocent of ideology’. Along with support from other contemporary studies (e.g., Bell, 1960) ideological self-categorisation was considered of little relative value and the ‘end of ideology’ was generally declared by the academy (Jost, 2006).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Jost (2006) proclaimed the “end of the end of ideology” (p. 651). He argued that the significant predictive ability of ideological self-categorisation along with the large number of asymmetries between liberals and conservatives in their individual differences and attitudes points to ideological identity being a substantive construct in political psychology not to be so easily abandoned. Soon thereafter, Malka and Lelkes (2010) showed that—similar to party identity—ideological identities were subject to motivated cognition. Self-identified liberals and conservatives altered their issue preferences to align with their ideological identities as participants responded to cues for what issues their ideological group supported. In this work, ideological identity was demonstrating conformity behaviour previously thought to be the sole purview of party identification.

The relatively recent recognition of ideological identity as a consequential political identity contrasts with the long-recognised significant role of party identification. The research that models how one comes to identify as a liberal or conservative is therefore less developed, and the relationship between partisan and ideological identifications little explored. In the following discussion, I look at elements that are typically seen to be associated with ideological identity: evaluation of social groups, issue preferences, and values.

2.3.1 Social evaluations and demographics

Against widely accepted discrediting of ideological identity in the latter half of the twentieth century, little focus was given to this topic for decades. There were however important exceptions. Holm and Robinson (1978) made a case for the influence of ideological identity on American voting behaviour; and work on

American liberal/conservative identities (Levitin & Miller, 1979) and the political left/right internationally (Kerlinger, 1984), began to look at possible conceptualisations of ideology beyond issue consistency, their work suggesting that the public associated a great deal of meaning to these labels beyond specific issues. Recognising that ideological identity had consequences for political behaviour, but was minimally related to issue support, Conover and Feldman (1981) attempted to bridge this gap.

These researchers sought to explore what they referred to as the *meaning* that liberal and conservative identifications held for members of the public. Eschewing qualitative methods and open-ended questions for reasons of consistency with prior studies and ease of interpretation, Conover and Feldman (1981) settled on a quantitative analysis of the association between ideological identity and feeling thermometers for 27 social groups. These groups were selected to represent ‘major cleavages’ in society clustered as follows: status quo, radical left, capitalism, reformist left, disadvantaged, social control. Finding that these feeling thermometers for social groups (*social evaluations*) were stronger predictors of ideological identity than were issue positions, they concluded that social evaluation was the more immediate determinant of ideological self-categorisation. This work has since been replicated using a variety of social groups over the years. Both the positive and negative evaluations of groups are important sources of US liberal and conservative self-identifications, with more recent evidence indicating that labour unions, feminists, and environmentalists are more positively evaluated by those who self-categorise as a member of the political left, while big business, Christian fundamentalists, and the military are more positively regarded by those who self-categorise on the right (Zschornt, 2011). Throughout the decades since the original

study, Conover and Feldman's quantitative methods and data selection of close-ended questions to investigate meaning have persisted in ideological identity research.

2.3.2 Issue Positions

The results that led Converse (1964) to declare the end of ideology have been replicated through the decades, with recent work (Ellis & Stimson, 2012; Kinder & Kalmoe, 2017) affirming that Converse's position from over 50 years earlier is still relevant in the current context. The persistent inconsistency between ideological self-identification and citizens' issue positions led Ellis and Stimson (2012) to resurrect terminology Free and Cantril (1967) used to bifurcate ideological self-categorisation. The researchers draw a distinction between *operational* (issue-based) ideological identity and *symbolic* (non-issue) ideological identity. Operational identity reflects the support for issue positions traditionally considered to be either the 'liberal' or 'conservative'; symbolic identity is what is 'leftover'—the part of ideological identity that is not tied to specific issue support. As the 'non-issue' portion of ideological identity—the content of symbolic identity—is not specifically defined and has not been fully explored. It is on this divide that the APP debate regarding the contributions of 'identity' or 'issues' discussed in Chapter 1 is based.

Ellis and Stimson (2012) also highlight an asymmetry between self-identified liberals and conservatives. The tracking of operational and symbolic ideological identities over a number of decades reveals a paradox: while a majority of Americans are operationally liberal, only a minority are symbolically so; and although more than 70 percent of self-categorised liberals hold operationally liberal social and economic views, less than 30 percent of self-categorised conservatives hold

conservative views on both social and economic dimensions (Ellis & Stimson, 2012). This distinction between the relative importance of issue positions as identity content highlights an imperative for political identity structure to be addressed by separately investigating identities on the political left and right. One interpretation of the self-categorisation/issue support paradox is that while certain liberal issue positions can be palatable to conservatives, those who self-categorise as conservative may possess a representation of the conservative group that includes elements other than the issue positions ascribed to their identity by political scientists, and that they identify with this other representation.

Ellis and Stimson (2012) theorise that the existence of the ‘conflicted conservatives’ (someone who self-categorises as a conservative yet does not consistently support conservative issue positions) can be explained by the greater popularity of the term ‘conservative’ in everyday language as compared to the liberal label. The researchers posit that liberalism became increasingly unpopular as the majority of Americans disassociated themselves from the social groups with which this label became linked in the 1960s: Black people, labour unions, and the unrest in urban environments. Conversely, Ellis and Stimson believe that the term ‘conservative’ as applied to other positive aspects of citizens’ lives transfers to a positive assessment of the conservative ideological identity. They concluded that individuals who describe themselves as conservative may do so due to a “transfer of labels and concepts” (p. 133) from their religious or morally traditional lifestyle choices, as opposed to stemming from political perspectives. Regardless of the cause, this dissociation by conservatives between ideological identity and issue preferences raises questions about the structures of the conservative versus liberal identities and

the relative importance of issues (as measured by political scientists) to their ideological identities.

Ellis and Stimson's (2012) explanation of conflicted conservatives, by invoking explanations of social evaluation (e.g., of Black people, unions, conservative Christians) and values (moral choices) in addition to issue preferences speaks to the multi-dimensionality of ideological identification. However, in APP research where debate has largely focused on whether operational identity (issue preference) or symbolic identity (something else, largely considered to be social evaluation) influences this behaviour, values have been largely overlooked. In social identity theory, Tajfel et al. (1971) noted the important role of values (and apparent value incongruence) in self-categorisation and outgroup prejudice; their role in APP may therefore warrant further investigation.

2.3.3 Values

Research has demonstrated associations between ideological identity and broader belief system elements of values, morals, and worldviews (J. Graham et al., 2009; Jacoby, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2010). In the following sections, I discuss these belief systems in terms of their contexts: political, American, and cross-national values.

2.3.3.1 Political Values

US political ideology is commonly defined by the 'peripheral values' that are embodied by the political issues that each side supports. In mid-twentieth century America, the political left and right generally reflected support for, versus opposition to, government intervention, respectively (Downs, 1957). Like other Western

democracies, this link between left/right divisions and economic redistribution policy weakened in the US as post-materialist issues gained political attention (Dalton et al., 2013; Inglehart, 1997). Consequently, the left and right in America have increasingly polarised over a broader set of (primarily social) issues over the last 50 years (Layman & Carsey, 2002). From the 1960s, liberalism became more saliently associated with the Civil Rights Movement, the Equal Rights Amendment, and Vietnam anti-war protests; social issues continued to become attached to ideological labels with abortion, gay rights, affirmative action, immigration, and gun control creating political divides.

As noted earlier, Converse (1964) defined political ideology as consistency—a constrained set of issue positions. Using this definition, those whose issue preferences do not wholly align along either the right or left were not considered to be politically driven by a particular set of beliefs—a conceptualisation that excluded about 85% of the electorate. In the work by APP scholars to disassociate operational identity from APP (e.g., Iyengar et al., 2012; Lelkes, 2018; Mason, 2018b), it is this measure that is commonly used to capture operational identity. Peffley and Hurwitz (1985) broadened the idea of ideological coherence to allow that ideology may be considered not just coherence amongst political issues, but coherence within political value areas such as race (measured as assistance to Black people), welfare, social-moral (women's role, homosexuality, abortion), and foreign policy (military spending and attitude towards Russia). By broadening the realm within which ideological coherence was assessed, the researchers were able to provide evidence that the public was more coherent, and therefore more ideological than previously determined. Of additional note is that these 'political values' clearly implicate

attitudes towards particular groups, further supporting the interdependence of operational and symbolic identities.

2.3.3.2 Cross-country Values

In the current literature, left/right political ideology is most commonly and parsimoniously described in two core value dimensions: The acceptance or rejection of inequality, and the acceptance or rejection of the status quo—where the left is associated with the rejection both of inequality and of the status quo (Jost et al., 2003). Often measured using the right-wing authoritarianism (RWA, Altemeyer, 1996) and social dominance orientation (SDO, Pratto et al., 1994) scales, these core values—first established in American samples—have been found to be features of left/right ideology internationally where support for the political right correlates with higher scores on both measures. The SDO scale aims to capture the acceptance of the societal hierarchy of groups, that these hierarchies are natural and inevitable; the RWA measure aims to capture the attitude that societal stability is desirable. While SDO scales measure support for inequality and group dominance; RWA measures reflect attitudes towards authority.

Asymmetries between liberal and conservative identifiers have also been noted in personal values. Exploring the relationship between ideological identities and personal values in an Italian sample, Schwartz et al. (2010) employed the Schwartz Values Survey (Schwartz, 1992), finding that liberals and conservatives occupy opposite ends of the personal values circumplex structure, where liberalism is connected with the basic values of universalism, benevolence, and self-direction (collectively the ‘openness’ and ‘self-transcendence’ values), while conservatism is linked to the basic values of security, conformity, and tradition (collectively the

‘conservation’ and ‘self-enhancement’ values). In an analysis of ANES data from 1988 to 2016, Lupton et al. (2020) concluded that the increasing alignment between ideology and partisanship is rooted in personal values differences; in addition, Enders and Lupton (2020) found that the extremity of individuals’ egalitarian and moral traditionalism values contributed to ideological outgroup APP.

Separate from (but related to) personal values, a distinction has also been made between the types of morals espoused by liberals and conservatives. Moral foundations theory (J. Graham et al., 2009) has asserted that liberals are guided by the morals of fairness and care; conservatives are likewise guided by these two, but are also directed by morals of loyalty, purity, and authority. Fairness and care are considered to be ‘individuating’ morals—morals that focus on individuals as the locus of moral value; while purity, loyalty and authority are considered ‘binding’ morals as they focus on the group (J. Graham et al., 2011). Unlike divisions based on RWA and SDO or on personal values—which consider liberal and conservative positions to be opposite sides of the same coin—moral foundations theory—like Tetlock (1983)—describes content as orthogonal: where content by one ideological identification is not as central to the content of the other. This observation speaks to the potentially differing structure of liberal and conservative identities.

2.4 Different Kinds of Identity?

The content of social identities refers to the norms—the beliefs, values, and behaviours—associated with that particular identity. I have discussed issues, evaluation of groups, and political values as potential ideological identity content. It is important to state that it is not simply a contrast in these various dimensions that makes for the meaning of ideological identity, even if considered simultaneously

(though, in fact, little work has been done to understand the relative values of these facets [Feldman, 2013]). It is also the identity *structure*—the relative importance of each element—that may affect behaviour, and there is some evidence that the ideological identity structure of liberals and conservatives differs.

The asymmetrical value structures noted by Rokeach (1973) and Graham et al. (2009) above are in keeping with classic work from Kerlinger (1967) who also noted the orthogonal nature of liberal and conservative identities. His theory of ‘critical referents’ hypothesises that particular categories or sets of phenomena tend to be central for the members of these groups, but what is critical for one is not necessarily critical for the other. Similarly, Grossmann and Hopkins (2016) argue that the two US parties are not mirror images of each other; instead, they are different *kinds* of parties: while the Republican party serves as a vehicle for an ideological movement, the Democratic party is a coalition of social groups. Decades of ANES open-ended question responses regarding what participants like and don’t like about each of the main political parties reveal differing ‘levels of conceptualisation’ about the political group representations. Using a method initiated by Converse (1964) and updated most recently with the 2000 ANES (Lewis-Beck et al., 2008), the content of participants’ answers to these questions have been categorised according to whether they invoke ideological (relying on a relatively abstract dimension) or ‘group benefits’ (expected treatment of different social groups) talk in their descriptions. In these analyses, there has been a clear difference in how Democrats and Republicans describe the two parties: Republicans have consistently described both parties in terms of ideology while Democrats describe the parties in terms of group benefits (Grossmann & Hopkins, 2015). Recent work has provided further evidence that Republicans are more ideologically aware and

oriented than Democrats, linking this to the mobilisation strategies of the two parties (Lelkes & Sniderman, 2016), and an increase in the use of ideological language between 1984 and 2016 in the mass public, but primarily by Republican partisans (Allamong et al., 2020).

Evidence of asymmetrical partisan identity structure was also found when Democrats and Republicans were asked to provide descriptive words that were then sorted into ‘traits’ and ‘groups/issues’, where Democrats used personal trait terms far more than Republicans (Rothschild et al., 2019) indicating a more personal representation of ideological identity on the left and congruent with the ‘liberal illusion of uniqueness’ identified by Stern et al. (2014). Although political parties may be a more tangible basis for self-categorisation (as a group with designated actors, platforms, and symbols), it is possible that these partisan differences may also be apparent in ideological identities. Regardless, it is clear that any investigation into the content of ideological identity must anticipate not only differences within particular elements that give identity meaning, but their relative importance as well.

2.5 American Values

The asymmetry in the political identity structure and content related to values may be extended to understand American values as a potential source of conflict, of different views of intragroup norms that may be causing a schism in the common national group (discussed further in the next chapter). Work on higher order values (an individual’s abstract, general conceptions about desirable and undesirable end-states of human life) can be traced to Rokeach’s (1973) landmark book *The Nature of Human Values*. Rokeach proposed a two-dimensional model of international political ideological values centred on equity and freedom. Tetlock (1983, 1986) subsequently

submitted that, in the US, equality and freedom were both important; but, where the left valued both, the right prioritised freedom. This suggests a division between left and right that can be traced to the putatively core ('creedal') American values such as freedom, equality, and individualism (self-reliance) (Huntington, 1981). In Huntington's view, while both the left and right are associated with the idea of freedom, the left is more typically associated with the value of equality and the right with individualism. The difference in priorities is what Huntington refers to as the American 'promise of disharmony'.

The traditional perspective of US national identity is that it is an identity based on creedal values (as opposed to ethnicity), and that there is a general consensus regarding fundamental political values. In the literature however, support for political values can be dependent on whether citizens are asked about support for the value directly or whether the value is measured as a latent variable. For example, operationalisations of equality demonstrate a greater support for the value in liberal identifiers (Jost et al., 2003; Rokeach, 1973). In contrast, other researchers have found a high level of support for the principle of equal treatment on both the American left and right when participants are asked about the value directly (Citrin et al., 1990; Hanson & O'Dwyer, 2019; Theiss-Morse, 2009). Such inconsistencies suggest that Americans, in keeping with their national identity, support the idea of creedal values, but there is a disconnect between how researchers and (particularly conservative) participants define these values.

This apparent lack of consensus among American citizens regarding creedal values dovetails with a school of thought proposing that a culture war is brewing in the US and is a key contributor to political disharmony (e.g., Layman & Carmines,

1997). Building on his 2006 study that demonstrated issue preference association with the values of liberty, equality, social order, and economic security, Jacoby (2014) sought to assess the extent of the asserted culture war. He fitted a rank-order model to seven core values on the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study: Freedom, equality, economic security, social order, morality, individualism, and patriotism. The values were defined for the participants (for example, patriotism was “looking beyond our own personal interests and doing things that honor, respect, and protect our nation as a whole” and individualism was “everyone getting ahead in life on their own, without extra help from government or other groups.”). Using a geometric model, Jacoby concluded that there exists a significant preference for patriotism, social order, and morality by conservatives and for equality, freedom, and economic security by liberals. Patriotism was found to be most directly opposed to freedom and equality. This introduction of patriotism into traditional and creedal American values is uncommon but was a significant differentiator in the study. Little work has pursued patriotism as a significant value difference between the US political left and right. In addition, neither patriotism nor American values generally have been empirically linked to APP. Potential divides over American values will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed the various perspectives of the structure and content of liberal and conservative ideological identities, highlighting that the focal point of political identity and APP research has been in the division between the contributions of issue preference and evaluations of social groups with little attention paid to values. These elements are clearly inter-related however: Katz and Hass

(1988) have demonstrated the association between racial attitudes and the values of equality and individualism, while Peffley and Hurwitz (1985) have provided evidence that issue positions are organised through higher order political values integrally related to social groups. Indeed, Conover and Feldman (1981) highlight the close association between social evaluations and issue positions when they describe social evaluations as symbolic representations of social issues. Little other work has sought to explore the association between these elements, however. And although values have been shown to be correlated with political identity, they have not been specifically investigated in the presence of demographics and issue preferences for their contribution to APP. An inquiry into ideological identity structure and content may produce a more diagnostic model of political behaviour if we were not to purposely exclude particular elements, but to consider them together. Indeed, to comprehend ideological identity meaning, it is necessary to allow that the identity content and structure of liberals and conservatives is likely to be orthogonal.

As noted above, in the next chapter I expand on the idea of orthogonal national values on the political left and right as a contributor to APP. To address this potential, I begin by reviewing the current literature related to the meaning of national identity.

3 Chapter 3: National Attachment

3.1 Chapter Overview

In the preceding chapters, I drew attention to the increasing affective political polarisation (APP) in the US, highlighting its association with citizens' political identity. Arguing that such APP is shaped by the content of identity, the following chapter reviewed the current literature surrounding the content of US political identities: issues, group evaluations, and values. In this chapter, I explore the proposal that current division may not be limited to the traditionally measured differences between the US left and right; that the battle to define American national identity itself may be contributing to political polarisation.

National identity is a powerful and ever-present social identity, and differences in how this identity is defined can have profound implications for political behaviour (Billig, 1995; Tajfel, 1974; Turner et al., 1987). At a group level, these understandings shape domestic and foreign policy (Lieven, 2004; O'Dwyer et al., 2016) and define the boundaries of the 'imagined community' of a nation (Anderson, 1983). At an individual level, they influence attitudes towards political policy, candidates, and levels of civic participation (e.g., Sullivan et al., 1992; Theiss-Morse, 2009). National identity is a lens through which an individual understands "who they are, the nature of the world they live in, how they relate to others and what counts as important for them" (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a, p. 3).

People are chronically aware of their national identities, of the country in which they live, and of the implication of that position on their lives. The stories of the nation are taught from an early age, people are aware of the national orientation

of the news from crises to the weather, the nation's laws and administrative requirements reach into their daily lives, and holidays are celebrated nationally. In the US, the national reminders are plentiful: national flags are a common sight in front yards and on cars, busses, and trains. The national anthem is played at most sporting events, not just international matches. Membership in this social group is hard to ignore and becomes part of how a person sees themselves. Acting in accordance with this definition—demonstrating patriotism—is looked upon favourably by society and provides individuals with a positive social identity.

The power to influence the meaning of any nation's national identity is significant. National identity is a great mobiliser in elections, and politicians regularly vie to cast themselves and their policies as being the most representative of the nation (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a). Political elites directly influence national identity content as they command the national stage, and lay representations contribute to the meaning of this identity in each national election which is, in essence, a referendum on national identity.

In seeking potential points of contrast between the US political left and right identities, the current literature consists primarily of intergroup analyses: liberals and conservative identities are positioned as being two groups who differ on measures particular to their political group. These groups, however, also share a common identity: they are sub-groups within the American national group. Reframing APP as an *intragroup* as opposed to an *intergroup* phenomenon brings additional theoretical guidance to bear on the problem (Dovidio, 2013), particularly as schisms within a common group identity may also contribute to conflict (Sani & Todman, 2002).

I therefore begin this chapter by briefly reviewing literature related to intragroup conflict. I then turn to the literature on national identity content—which primarily consists of a distinction between patriotism and nationalism—highlighting the conflation between national identity and ideological identity. And finally, I bring this theoretical analysis back to the political context; arguing that the disparate relationships the American right and left have with patriotism has the potential to be a significant intragroup cleavage that may contribute to APP.

3.2 National Identity as Intragroup Conflict

The meaning of national identity is contested in nations throughout the world. One of the sources of this contestation is that the content or meaning of political ideological identity and national identity are naturally interrelated. Both identities are influenced by larger world views; and an individual's representations of their ideological identity and their national identity content are shaped, populated, and restricted by one another. America may be predisposed to a particularly close relationship between ideological and national identity: where other nations most commonly have had an ethno-cultural basis of nationhood, America is seen as a nation founded on civic values (Huntington, 2004; R. M. Smith, 1988). Ideology, centred on a set of values referred to as the American Creed, is therefore putatively central to American national identity (Huntington, 1981).

In the preceding chapter, I discussed research that identified differences between the left and right in their prioritisation of American values (e.g., Jacoby, 2014; Rokeach, 1973; Tetlock, 1986), proposing that a disagreement over the fundamental values of the national group would create tension between the subgroups of the nation. Indeed, the current political environment in the US is

primed for disagreement over fundamental values. Conditions that threaten ethno-racial status hierarchies, including the increase in non-European immigration and civil rights equalisation that began in the last half of the twentieth century, bring the disputes about national values into stark relief, making them highly salient in political rhetoric and preferences. This ‘creedal crisis’ that Huntington (1981) foretold, is in fact a time of flux for the meaning of American national identity. The political battle in the US is now more than ever not simply between the traditional policies of the left and right, but also a dispute over the content of American national identity. This possibility suggests that the basis for APP may not only include the intergroup content considered in the current literature, but also intragroup conflicts over national identity meaning.

3.2.1 Common ingroup identity

For both US partisans and ideologues, American national identity is a common ingroup identity—these political subgroups may be considered to be within the national social identity that is common to them both. The power of common ingroup identities to promote co-operation between sub-groups is a bedrock of social psychology. Prominently demonstrated in Sherif’s (1954) work, the Rattlers and the Eagles found common identity as fellow campers that enabled them to set aside their differences and accomplish common goals. The common ingroup identity model (Gaertner et al., 1993) addresses groups between which there exists intergroup prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination. It states that when members of these groups instead see themselves as members of a common group, these outgroup biases will be reduced. This model builds on the social identity approach principles

of identity and self-categorisation and the central role of the categorisation process in shaping intergroup behaviour and attitudes (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

In APP research, interventions have attempted to induce the common ingroup identity of American national identity in Democrats and Republicans, anticipating that when the US left and right perceive their outgroup as sharing an American identity, the processes that lead to favouritism toward their own political group would be redirected towards their American ingroup (which includes the political outgroup), therefore reducing APP. As discussed in Chapter 1, however, interventions that have attempted to prime American identity as a common ingroup identity have shown mixed results in ameliorating APP (Brandt et al., 2020; Levendusky, 2017).

One explanation for the ineffectiveness of the common ingroup identity model as applied to US political APP is captured in the ingroup projection model (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). The ingroup projection model posits that when a positively valued common identity (like national identity) is made salient for groups in conflict, group members will project their own subgroup's characteristics onto that common identity. In doing this, the subgroup casts themselves as being more prototypical of the common ingroup identity when compared the outgroup. When this 'ingroup projection' happens between US political partisan or ideological groups, American identity is cast in the image of either the political left or right. Indeed, when asked what defines a 'true American', Democrats and Republicans cast the national group in their own image (Hanson & O'Dwyer, 2019). By defining the national group this way, the political subgroups create a basis for judging their opposition to be deviant according to these projected norms, thereby leading to

greater bias between the political groups (Waldzus et al., 2004). For example, conservatives may feel that liberals are un-American if they do not demonstrate a similar reverence for the national anthem, and liberals may feel conservatives violate American identity norms because they do not express the need for greater equality in line with liberal norms. Ingroup projection such as this is thought to be more likely to occur when the common identity represents a dimension directly relevant to the subcategory identities (Hall & Crisp, 2005), as would be the case with national and political identities.

This incompatibility within the common identity of American national identity was recognised by the research team that led a failed conceptual replication of the common ingroup identity model which primed American identity in an effort to decrease APP. Brandt et al. (2020) attributed the inability of common ingroup identity to ameliorate out party antipathy to the growing difference in the *meaning* of national identity between the left and right in the US. In other words, as the meaning projected onto American identity by each of the political subgroups diverges, the ability of American identity to unite the political left and right is reduced.

3.2.2 Schisms

Relatedly, schisms in groups can be traced to differences in what one group believes is a violation of a key norm of the common group. Schism theory (Sani & Todman, 2002) has been used to explain the dynamics of splits within communities such as the Church of England (Sani & Reicher, 2000) and within the Italian communist party (Sani & Reicher, 1998). According to the authors, such group schisms occur when a whole-group norm advocated by a subgroup is perceived to fundamentally change a central aspect of the whole-group identity. When this

happens, they propose that a subgroup “will tend to believe that the group identity as a whole have been subverted” (p. 1648). Schism theory therefore points to the importance of common ingroup meaning, and norm violation as a driver of intragroup conflict.

The implication is that to the extent that fundamental norms of American identity differ for liberals and conservatives, and that they see the other group as in violation of important norms, tension between the two will follow. There is evidence that the left and right in the US do differ on important national norms. Not only are there differences in what patriotism means, but there is increasing evidence that these conceptualisations align with political ideology. For example, a recent poll highlighted differences between what Democrats and Republicans felt was patriotic; while a majority of Democrats felt that refusing to serve in a war they opposed (55%) and disobeying a law they think is immoral (51%) were both patriotic, Republicans disagreed (with only 25% and 33% agreeing that these were patriotic, respectively; YouGov, 2018). In addition, Hanson and O’Dwyer (2019) provide evidence that opinion in what makes a ‘true American’ differs between the American left and right. This Q-methodology study of national identity asked participants to sort 56 statements derived from common patriotism/nationalism survey items according to those that were most important to being a ‘true American’ to those that were least important. While consensual items included agreement with ‘a true American votes in elections’ and disagreement with ‘a true American believes that the world would be a better place if people from other countries were more like Americans’, participants on the political left were more likely to prioritise statements such as ‘a true American criticises America out of love of country’, while those on the right highly ranked statements such as ‘a true American is proud to be an

American'. These studies are limited however in that the YouGov poll of seven items and the Q-study of 56 items are restricted to a priori items. The evidence can therefore only highlight the possible extent of some differences; the studies can not necessarily represent what citizens believe are the 'fundamental norms' of American national identity.

3.3 National Identity Content

National identity is a product of discourses regarding the nation's history, its current place in the world, and its future (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a); it reflects an individual's understanding of the nation's institutions, values, and responsibilities, and of the appropriate behaviour for members of the national group—the group's norms (Theiss-Morse, 2009). These norms reflect an understanding of the attitudes and behaviours that members of the nation share and of how these differ from those of other nations. In contrast to other collective identities, norms for a national identity must also include rules for relating to government rule (Schildkraut, 2014). To understand where it is the political left and right may conflict within the content of their national identities, in this section I review the literature that has sought to explicate the differences in national identity attachment.

National identity content is traditionally bifurcated into measures of patriotism and nationalism. As discussed further below, these self-understandings are commonly assessed through conceptualisations that are devised to measure differences in the types of content individuals attribute to their national identity: membership (e.g., ethnic/civic), affective (e.g., pride/chauvinism), and relational (e.g., blind/constructive). No one measure is consensually accepted, however, and the terms *patriotism*, *nationalism*, and *national identity* are used inconsistently and

even conflated (Bonikowski & DiMaggio, 2016; Schildkraut, 2014; Theiss-Morse, 2009).

Acknowledging the limitations of current operationalisations of patriotism and nationalism, some scholars have either expressed the need to elaborate on measures of national identity (e.g., Blank & Schmidt, 2003; Schildkraut, 2014) or have proposed to conceptualise national identity strength (to what degree one identifies with America) as separate from national identity content (Bonikowski & DiMaggio, 2016; Huddy & Khatib, 2007; Theiss-Morse, 2009). This latter proposal is a departure from a number of patriotism and nationalism measures that include identity strength within their measures. For example, Bar-Tal (1993) views patriotism as “an attachment of group members towards their group and the country in which they reside” (p. 45), De Figueiredo and Elkins (2003) include ‘How close do you feel to your country?’ in their measure of patriotism, while (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989) include a number of items that measure attachment including ‘the fact that I am an American is an important part of my identity’ in theirs.

Employing social identity theory, Huddy and Khatib (2007) argue for a conceptual distinction between national identity and patriotism (and nationalism) in line with Huddy's (2001) identification of the separate, but related, social identity facets of identity strength (national identity) and meaning (patriotism). They define national identity as “a subjective or internalized sense of belonging to nation” (p. 65), while patriotism, as captured by the various measures, is an element of national identity’s meaning: “content that is created over time and across situations as a function of cultural and historical factors” (Huddy, 2002, p. 829). Huddy acknowledges the strong relationship between these two in her earlier article,

asserting that identity strength is understood only through identity meaning (Huddy, 2001). The self-categorisation process of normative fit is reflected in this observation of the dependent nature between the strength and content of national identity, in that the strength of a person's group identity will depend on the extent to which they feel they fit with the content of that identity, and the strength of a person's identity shapes the extent that they will behave in accordance with group content.

Theiss-Morse (2009) too, argues for the separate treatment of national identity strength and patriotism, but her proposal of the relationship between patriotism and national identity differs from Huddy and Khatib's (2007). Theiss-Morse specifically conceptualises patriotism as a norm of American national identity but restricts this content to a measure of patriotism that consists of a three-item scale combining pride and chauvinism. She posits that, in accordance with social identity theory, people who identify strongly with the national group will be more likely to be patriotic because they will want to realize the group norms (i.e., strength of identification with the country is the cause of patriotic behaviour). Although this causal connection is in line with social identity theory, Theiss-Morse's conceptualisation can be considered too simplistic as it does not problematise patriotism; it simply assumes that there is one meaning of patriotism for all Americans: a combination of pride and chauvinism that for some scholars may more closely resemble nationalism. This assertion is inconsistent with literature that has identified differences in citizens' conceptualisations of patriotism (e.g., Hanson & O'Dwyer, 2019; Sullivan et al., 1992; YouGov, 2018).

Theiss-Morse also departs from Huddy's work (and others who employ the General Social Survey question of 'How close do you feel to America?') by

conceptualising the nation, not in the abstract ‘America’, but specifically as a ‘group of individuals’. She characterises national identity and its relationship to patriotism as “feeling part of one’s national group—in this case the American people—and holding that national group as part of one’s sense of self” (p. 23). According to Theiss-Morse, national identity is an attachment to the *people*, while patriotism is a norm of national identity the target of which is the *country*.

I suggest that this conceptualisation of national attachment being only to the country’s inhabitants is too exclusive. Rather, I agree that the strength of identity—the degree to which one identifies with a social category—is, as Huddy (2002) asserts, intrinsically related to the content of that identity and may therefore comprise whatever may be in that individual’s subjective understanding of the category (e.g., people, symbols, history, behaviours, values, the land). However, Theiss-Morse (2009) does highlight an important distinction in the meaning/content of a national identity: that between the nation as the people of the country, and a more abstract idea of the nation. Indeed, this distinction may underlie a difference between the American left and right. Hanson and O’Dwyer (2019) suggest that the difference in the representation of the nation as an abstraction and the nation as a group of individuals may be associated with citizens’ ideological identification. The findings of their Q-sort produced two factors consisting of participants whose national identity understandings were either ‘for the people’ or ‘for the nation’. The ‘for the people’ factor was characterised by a high level of agreement that it was citizens’ responsibility to push government towards providing greater equality, while ‘for the nation’ participants ranked pride in the nation and respect for its creedal values and symbols as most important. Such divisions are not, however, traditionally measured as national identity content.

I review the current conceptualisations—nationalism and patriotism—in the next section, briefly touching upon other related conceptualisations of national attachment. None of these conceptualisations to my knowledge has been empirically associated with APP.

3.3.1 Patriotism and Nationalism

Ever since Kosterman and Feshbach (1989) called for a “sharp discrimination between patriotism and nationalism” (p. 273), researchers have turned to measures of these constructs to describe the content and consequences of American national identity. Patriotism is widely described as a ‘love of country’, a benign, positive, beneficial, and even necessary attachment to the nation (Adorno et al., 1950). Patriotism’s ‘evil twin’, nationalism, has been said to reflect an orientation to national superiority and dominance beyond a love of country (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989). It is perceived as a negative and even dangerous attachment, evident in its extreme in Nazi Germany, but also apparent in certain present-day anti-immigration propaganda, and even in more subtle everyday symbols and interactions (Billig, 1995).

Scholars have sought to disentangle patriotic from nationalistic attitudes by conceptualising and measuring particular a priori dimensions of these phenomena, analysing *membership* (who is considered a member of the nation; e.g. Citrin et al., 1990; Theiss-Morse, 2009), *affective* (how an individual feels about their country; De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989), and *relational* (how an individual regards their role in relation to the nation; Rothì et al., 2005; Schatz et al., 1999) aspects. Each of these dimensions has been parsed to produce measures that differentiate between patriotic and nationalistic attitudes. Contrasting patriotic

and nationalistic attitudes has been shown to predict attitudes towards ethnic minorities (Li & Brewer, 2004), nuclear armament (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989), and immigration (Citrin et al., 2012), as well as behaviours such as political involvement (Huddy & Khatib, 2007; Schatz et al., 1999).

3.3.1.1 Membership: Ethno-cultural or Civic Creedal

The most widely discussed conceptualisation of American national identity is the way in which Americans define membership for their ingroup as either *ethno-cultural* (on the basis of the common heritage) or *civic* (on the basis of having a common purpose and shared goals) (Citrin et al., 1990; Li & Brewer, 2004; R. M. Smith, 1988). Civic membership requires only that a person espouse certain values or behave in a certain way; such membership may theoretically be acquired by anyone and is therefore seen as patriotic. Alternatively, the endorsement of ethno-cultural membership norms indicates a nationalistic perspective.

As a ‘new nation’ America’s national identity has historically been considered to be bound, not by a shared history or ethnicity (ethno-cultural membership), but by the ‘American Creed’, an agreed understanding of the ideals of freedom, democracy, individualism, and equality of opportunity (Citrin et al., 1990; Huntington, 2004). This ethno-cultural/civic conceptualisation has, however, been criticised for its lack of dichotomy. Not only are creedal values bound with Anglo-Protestant ethno-cultural values, but scholars now agree that American identity includes *both* civic and ethno-cultural norms (Schildkraut, 2014). Indeed, recent work has concluded that only about half of the American population can be described as having *either* an ethno-cultural or a civic attachment to the nation,

strongly suggesting that this conceptualisation is a significantly limited descriptor of national identity (Bonikowski & DiMaggio, 2016).

R.M. Smith (1997) has long challenged the purity of the civic creedal basis of national identification. He has argued that America has never been a simple creedal nation in which there was a consensus on the values of liberalism. He instead argues that the meaning of American national identity is drawn from ‘multiple traditions’ including republicanism (responsibilities of membership) and ethnoculturalism as well as liberalism. Indeed, a clear bifurcation is difficult to support. Until the mid-twentieth century, America and America’s immigrants were primarily ethno-culturally Anglo-Protestant, a culture and belief system that informed the values and constitution on which the country was founded and upon which civic membership is based (Huntington, 2004; R.M. Smith, 1988). This ethnocultural national identity has met with growing challenges from an increase in non-European immigrants and birth rates and the rise in popularity of the ideas of multiculturalism and diversity (Huntington, 2004). These influences affect and make salient both America’s ethno-cultural and creedal bases of identity and have been the basis of much conjecture as to the impact on the future of American identity and democracy (Huntington, 2004; Lieven, 2004; R.M. Smith, 1988). To the extent that the Anglo-Protestant majority perceives the erosion of national identity norms, they may seek to enforce these. As a consequence, the civic basis of American national identity has also been challenged in recent years as certain of the creedal values can be increasingly seen as ethno-cultural (e.g., individualism as a feature of Protestantism, Huntington, 2004; Lieven, 2004). What may, under the ethnocultural/civic dichotomy register as support for a civic definition of national identity, may actually be carrying ethnocultural sentiment.

3.3.1.2 *Affective: Pride, Chauvinism and Symbolic Patriotism*

Affective attachment to one's nation is primarily associated with the emotions of love and pride. While love of the nation is found equally across the political ideological spectrum, pride appears to manifest differently. De Figueiredo and Elkins (2003) analysed national pride based on the assertion that the central distinction between the concepts of patriotism and nationalism is their point of reference. National *pride* (patriotism) is self-referential, a positive regard for one's country, while *chauvinism* (nationalism) stems from comparison between one's own and other countries and is almost exclusively downward. Chauvinism has been associated with hostility to immigrants (De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003) and negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities (Bonikowski & DiMaggio, 2016). Survey items related to pride and chauvinism (along with ethnocultural patriotism, discussed above) are included in the national General Social Survey and are therefore commonly used in American national identity research.

Symbolic patriotism taps an individual's affective attachment to the nation through symbols. In the US, the principal symbols associated with national identity include the national anthem, the American flag, and the Pledge of Allegiance. Whether symbolic patriotism contributes to patriotism as well as nationalism is a matter of debate. On one hand, attachment to national symbols have been associated with nationalism in certain correlational (Schatz & Lavine, 2007; Sullivan et al., 1992) and experimental (Kimmelmeier & Winter, 2008) studies; but others have found evidence for a patriotic attachment, defined as support for free speech (Parker, 2010) and racial tolerance (DeLamater et al., 1969).

3.3.1.3 *Relational: Blind or Constructive, Instrumental, or Sentimental*

In contrast to most collective identities, national identity has inherent in it an authority (the government) that can make legal demands of its members. The way in which individuals perceive their relationship with this authority has offered yet another contrast between patriotism and nationalism.

Nationalism has been described as *blind* patriotism, characterised by an intolerance of criticism and an unquestioning positive evaluation of, and staunch allegiance to, one's own nation. Blind patriotism is juxtaposed with *constructive* patriotism which manifests as the questioning and criticism of current group practices with an intent to bring about positive change (Schatz et al., 1999). Although there is a shared ideology between blind and ethno-cultural patriotism as well as between constructive and civic patriotism, Rothì et al. (2005) found support for the orthogonality of each of the bilateral conceptualisations in a study of British students and have asserted the importance of looking at all four components when assessing national attachment. In addition, Parker (2010) found support for separately assessing blind patriotism and symbolic patriotism.

In a separate approach to national attachment, two types of national attachment were initially identified in exploratory work by DeLamater et al. (1969). These researchers defined national attachment according to an individual's *functional* or *symbolic* role relationship with the nation. DeLamater et al.'s functionally committed individual defines their role according to political and social responsibilities and shows low affect for national symbols; while a symbolically integrated individual has a strong affective attachment to the nation and its values and gives a high priority to his or her role as an American. Kelman (1969, 1997)

continued this line of reasoning, proposing that national identity be seen on a continuum from a citizen's *instrumental* to *sentimental* relationship with the nation. According to this theory, and in keeping with the social identity approach, individuals who are sentimentally attached see the nation as a representative of their personal identity and are motivated to protect the group's traditions and defining values. Those who are motivated by an instrumental attachment perceive the purpose of the nation as meeting the needs and interests of the individual and those of fellow citizens.

3.3.1.4 Conflation

In Sullivan and colleagues' 1992 Q-study of patriotism with a Q-set derived from contemporary political discourse, the two primary factors identified were symbolic patriotism (reflecting a strong, emotional view of the nation) and iconoclastic patriotism (reflecting support for civil disobedience and a rejection of symbols). In this work, both the average ideological and the average partisan identification of those participants included in each factor was moderate. Average ideological and partisan identification (on a 7-point scale) for the iconoclastic factor was 4.7 (for both) and for the symbolic factor was 3.8 and 4.4, respectively. Varying little from the central Likert-scale measure of 4, this work does not indicate a large discrepancy between the left and right in their views of the nation on these factors.

Due to increasing partisan sorting over the past decades (discussed in Chapter 1), ideological division along national identity content lines is likely to have become more pronounced since that time. Indeed, in the time since the initial conceptualisation of the primary patriotism and nationalism scales (e.g., Citrin et al., 1990; De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Schatz et al., 1999), certain of the patriotism

and nationalism conceptualisations have been criticised for their ideological conflation. Measures of national pride, chauvinism (De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003), symbolic patriotism (Schatz & Lavine, 2007), and blind patriotism (Schatz et al., 1999) have been found to be more common in conservatives (Billig, 1995; Hanson & O'Dwyer, 2019; Huddy & Khatib, 2007; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989), and constructive patriotism (Schatz et al., 1999) has been more often attributed to liberals (Hanson & O'Dwyer, 2019; Huddy & Khatib, 2007). Adding to these individual critiques, Schildkraut's (2007) analysis of various 'traditions' of American identity (including ethnoculturalism, liberalism, civic republicanism, and incorporationism) found that the primary lines of contestation in American identity were not these measures of patriotism and nationalism, but partisanship and ideology. Most recently, work by Hanson and O'Dwyer (2019) suggests that there is little independence of nationalism and patriotism measures over and above left/right political divides. In their Q-study, nationalism, as currently defined, did not significantly differentiate the two factors, but was consensually dismissed as being unimportant to American identity. It was instead differences in the particularities of patriotism that defined the two factors. For example, civic and ethno-cultural norms did not differentiate the factors, but how civic values and responsibilities were prioritised and interpreted by each factor did.

This conflation of national and ideological identity implicates the limited utility of patriotism and nationalism constructs, undermining their descriptive value. I agree with scholars who assert that our current measures that attempt to bifurcate patriotism from nationalism are inadequate measures of national identity content (e.g., Blank & Schmidt, 2003; Brubaker, 2004; Condor, 2001; Hopkins, 2001). As Brubaker states, "attempts to distinguish good patriotism from bad nationalism

neglect the intrinsic ambivalence and poly morphism of both” (p. 120). But at the same time, conflation points to interdependency: that membership in a political ideological group and understanding of the content of national identity are associated. Ideological conflation suggests that the political left and right think about their American national identity in different ways, suggesting that one’s national attachment should be considered when analysing ideological rifts.

3.4 National Identity in the Current Context

While the preceding discussion has argued from a social psychological perspective that the battle over the content of national identity is a contributor to APP, it is important to situate these underlying forces within the current political context to appreciate their relevance. In this section, I will discuss the context in which American patriotism has come to be ‘owned’ by the political right. Indeed, it has become so intertwined with the political right over the decades that a recent survey found that while 72% of Republicans describe themselves as ‘very patriotic’ only 29% of Democrats do (YouGov, 2018).

3.4.1 The Patriotism of the Political Right

To the casual observer, it may seem that Donald Trump was able to single-handedly redefine what it meant to be a good American during the 2016 campaign. In reality, the political right in the US has gained ownership of the definition of American patriotism not overnight, but over decades. Along with the ideological/partisan alignment discussed in Chapter 2, the foundations of the right’s influence over American identity can be traced to the 1960s. In the midst of a decade of racial tensions that were dividing the country, the burning of American flag during

Vietnam War protests may have been a key turning point in the association between liberals and un-patriotic behaviour. As liberals defended the right to this expression of dissent, Republican US presidential candidate Richard Nixon made the defence of this national symbol part of his 1968 campaign, initiating the now common wearing of American flag lapel pins. Some researchers assert that the language of and behaviours around patriotism are essentially supplanting the now more socially unacceptable racial or ethnocultural positions of decades past, that these are simply modern code for an exclusionary content of national identity (Mellow, 2020) and racial suppression (López, 2015); a perspective that dovetails with the rise of the political right's association with patriotism as well as the race riots of the 1960s.

Certainly, by the presidential election of 1988, when George HW Bush successfully 'wrapped himself in the flag' as he cast doubt on his opponent's (Michael Dukakis) patriotism, the Republican hold on patriotism was secured. As governor, Dukakis had vetoed a state law that would have required the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in schools, prompting Bush to speculate at a campaign speech "I wonder what his problem with the Pledge of Allegiance is?". This grip was galvanised after 9/11. The association between the military (national defence being more strongly associated with the right), flag, and anthem has been routinely enforced—particularly at sporting events—since 2001, such that lack of allegiance is commonly characterised as a slight to the men and women who serve. The historical ideal of American patriotism as one united by the American creed has been increasingly usurped by a performative nationalism. Empirical analysis bears out this confluence: since 9/11 the difference between patriotism and nationalism has shrunk (McDaniel et al., 2016) and there has been an increasing alignment of nationalism

and Republican self-categorisation among Whites from 1996 to 2014 in the General Social Survey (Huddy & Del Ponte, 2021).

3.4.2 The Patriotism of the Political Left

As Republicans gained ownership over patriotism, Democrats have been left to answer for their ‘love of country’ according to the right’s definition of the term. Although the left has rejected Republicans’ exclusionary version of national identity, they have struggled to articulate an alternative with a similar mobilising power.

The nature and ‘value complexity’ (Rokeach, 1973; Tetlock, 1986) of the political left means that liberal ideology as compared to conservative ideology does not align as neatly with traditional patriotism. For example, patriotic support for the military must be differentiated from supporting war, public demonstrations of ritual patriotism are difficult to reconcile with the right to criticise, and the argument for protecting borders sits uneasily with promoting the rights of immigrants. The reconciliation of these positions is not impossible, but this value plurality makes supporting traditional patriotism less straightforward for the left. In addition, remembering that the strength of national identity is reciprocally related to its content (Huddy, 2002), the content of liberal national identification makes identity fusion more difficult. Because those on the left are more likely to assert that American national identity includes a right and responsibility to criticise the country (Hanson & O’Dwyer, 2019; Huddy & Khatib, 2007), there may be a natural tendency to distance oneself from the object of criticism to preserve self-esteem. The ability of the right to align with national identity has been abetted by the political left who—by not providing a consistent national identity narrative of their own—has ceded patriotism to the right.

3.5 Conclusion

In these introductory chapters, I have argued for the importance of understanding political identity content in seeking answers to the drivers and processes behind APP. This chapter discussed elements of national identity meaning, reviewing the common attribution of identity content to patriotism and nationalism constructs. I have argued that these constructs—and national identity content generally—are ideological in nature, and that therefore, acknowledging a reciprocity between the two may provide a new perspective on the contributors to affective political polarisation.

In this thesis, I assert that the content of national identity is integrally related to ideological identity and argue that the differences in national identity content have a causal impact on APP. Ideas surrounding the objective of ‘taking back patriotism’ is, in social identity approach vernacular, gaining the control over the meaning of national identity, where what it means to be patriotic is an important element of this content. In the next chapters, I set out the theoretical and methodological bases on which the investigation into this possibility proceeds.

4 Chapter 4: A Social Representations Approach

4.1 Chapter Overview

In the previous chapters, I set out the current theoretical context in which the study of US affective political polarisation (APP) has been undertaken to date. APP is considered to be largely driven by political identity, though specifically what it is about these identities that promotes animosity is debated. In the critical analysis of the application of the social identity approach to APP undertaken in Chapter 1, I described the current literature as limited primarily to individually located cognitions. I also observed that the theoretical catalyst for this alignment—elite and media rhetoric—while intuitive, lacks theoretical and empirical support. I argued that a focus on identity content may elucidate identity elements in which lay persons may anchor their animosity toward the political outgroup. The chapters that followed provided a critical review of the current literature on political and national identity content, noting weaknesses in the application of the current measures to an examination of identity meaning, and the conflation of ideological and national identity content.

This thesis focuses on US political identity content differences with a view to identifying the location of contributors to APP. The social identity approach (social identity theory along with self-categorisation theory [Tajfel, 1974; Turner et al., 1987]) serves as the core theoretical structure of this investigation. The thrust of the work, however, is borne out of more recent interpretations and extensions of the theory. In particular, I make focused use of Huddy's 2001 observation that the investigators of political identities have neglected the idea that identity meaning lies at the core of understanding the connection between self-categorisation and

behaviour. To address this idea of meaning as shaping behaviour, I locate the work in this thesis in what has been proposed as the *social representations approach* (Elcheroth et al., 2011), a proposal that brings together the social identity approach with elements of *social representations theory* (Moscovici, 1961). In this novel approach to US ideological identity content, I not only assert that political identity meaning is inherently linked to political behaviour, but also that political identities are subjective, dynamic, and informed by the social representations held by those groups. This proposed approach aims to supplement, as opposed to supplant, the existing literature on APP by building on the current application of the social identity approach.

In this chapter, I set up the methodological approach to this thesis (covered in the next chapter) by establishing the theoretical basis and assumptions on which I will proceed. The chapter builds to an explanation of the social representations approach as the most theoretically congruent lens through which to conduct the exploratory analyses and explain the results in this thesis. I begin with a further discussion of the concept of meaning and political identity content that was touched upon in earlier chapters.

Underlying my approach is the assertion that the alignment of ideological identity with partisan identity is a significant contributor to the increased APP the US has experienced over the past few decades (Mason, 2018a); I therefore then critically discuss the conceptualisation of ideology, focusing on its nature as neither entirely top-down or bottom-up, but instead constructed between the individual and society. I argue that the conceptualisation of political identity content in APP research—which has been largely limited to issue positions and demographics as separate from

“ideological identity”—must be expanded to allow for additional identity content, particularly values.

I assert that research in this area has been bound due to both the limited consideration of context as well as the primacy of quantitative research in this area. I conclude that a more fulsome perspective on US political identity and insight into the social processes shaping identity content may be gained through a mixed methods approach that centres a direct qualitative investigation of ideological identity from a lay perspective.

4.2 Meaning and the Identity Process

Like other APP researchers, West and Iyengar (2020) have placed meaning outside of the identity process, referring to ideological disagreement and the incorporation of elite cues as “non-identity processes” (last paragraph). I argue that this position is antithetical to the social identity approach literature—that these processes relate to the very content of the identities under analysis. In the social identity approach, identity meaning is involved in the identity process at various points. As discussed in preceding chapters, it is key to determining self-categorisational comparative and normative fit in accordance with social categorisation theory; it shapes how one behaves once this self-categorisation is made because identification with a social group causes the individual to act according to what they believe to be that identity’s content or meaning. Although not discussed in terms of meaning specifically, the role of meaning is evident throughout the original social identity literature in the role of individuals’ perception of the ‘prototypical members’ of the group. In the process of self-categorisation, individuals will look to those members who they consider to be prototypical of the

group to assess their own fit within the group; and identified members will seek out these same prototypical members to guide their behaviour (Turner et al., 1987). These prototypical members are the personification of the members' subjective perception of the group's identity.

Through the lens of social identity theory, the positions and behaviours of prototypical members become norms as the identity content of as politicised social identity evolves over time. In political social identities, group identifiers take their cues from political elites and strive to emulate prototypical members. Political identities are subject to an active process of influence from those who wish to mobilise these groups—entrepreneurs of identity (Reicher et al., 2005)—and the meaning of political identities change in response to these cues. For example, during the 1980s and 1990s the US partisan identities moved from largely economic ideological divisions to incorporate more social issues including race, abortion, and gun-control due primarily to Republican partisan coalitions with groups such as the Christian Coalition. This conflict extension phenomenon (Layman & Carsey, 2002) changed the meaning of a political identity in response to the representation of the group perpetuated by the group leadership.

4.3 Locating Identity Meaning

Diverging from political identity research that contrasts issue positions and demographics with 'identity', I assert that demographic characteristics, issue preferences, and values are not distinct from political identity, but instead form the meaning associated with that identity. While some research has recognised the reciprocally reinforcing nature of self-categorisation and measures such issue preferences (Lelkes, 2018) and demographics (Mason, 2018a), little explicitly

recognises demographics, issue preferences, and values as political identity meaning. I argue that identity meaning is not limited to either psychological predispositions or social constructions of the elite, but—like ideology itself—exists between the individual and society.

A criticism of the social identity approach is that it says little about the influence of individuals: why individuals categorise themselves in certain ways (Duveen, 2001/2013) for example, or the influence of the individual on group norms. The social identity approach primarily focuses on the movement between the individual and social identities—the process when our behaviour is governed more by our social self than by our individual self—as a motivational drive to maintain a positive self-concept; it speaks only to the consequences of categorisation. I contend that identity meaning is formed through an iterative dialogue between the individual and society; throughout this meaning-making process there is also a level of reciprocity: while group norms influence the individual, the individual has the potential to influence what are considered to be the group norms. In this way, both individuals and norms may change over time, and a political identity is “both a product of social or political action and is a basis for further action” (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 8). The meaning attributed to identity is self-referential. That is, identity includes a set of self-understandings, a cognitive and emotional sense that individuals have of themselves and their social world (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). These identities are dynamic and shaped by both society and individuals; they are reflective of events over time, of the current environment, and of the propensities of the individuals who ascribe to that identity. This assertion is more in line with identity process theory (Breakwell, 1986), a theory of individual identity that complements social identity theory (Breakwell, 2015). Identity process theory

disassociates from the social identity approach by forgoing the dichotomisation of identity into the social and individual selves, instead viewing identity as one impacted by both our individual and social selves. Political identity—like any social identity—is therefore not an exclusively individual *or* social phenomenon. It occurs at the space in-between the individual and society, drawing upon both our individual differences and our social influences (Pehrson & Reicher, 2014).

4.4 The Nature of Ideology

The left-right divide in politics is pervasive throughout the world. The association of the term ‘left’ with greater equality and of ‘right’ with preserving the status quo continues in similar form to its original coinage in the French parliament of the Revolution, when those in the National Assembly who supported the revolution sat on the left of the house, while those who supported the king sat on the right (Bobbio, 1996). Over time and geographies, the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ have taken on meanings particular to their respective countries as the labels have become associated with specific issues, groups, and values.

Due to the prominent role of ideological identity (Mason, 2018a), and of ideology generally (Lelkes, 2018, 2021; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017) in the APP literature, I focus on this aspect of political identity as a potential driver of APP that warrants further explanation. To address ideological identity as a social identity and ideology as identity content, we must first address the way in which the current literature invokes the nature of ideology.

According to Kalmoe (2020), the political psychological literature offers two opposing viewpoints demarcated by the ‘limited’ and ‘maximal’ perspectives of

ideology. The limited paradigm refers to the model made famous by Converse (1964); it emphasises the top-down, socially constructed organisation of ideology as a constrained set of elite issue positions. To Converse, the creation and diffusion of belief systems, happens as follows:

First, the shaping of belief systems of any range into apparently logical wholes that are credible to large number of people is an art of creative synthesis characteristic of only a minuscule proportion of any population.

Second, to the extent that multiple idea-elements of a belief system are socially diffused from such creative sources, they tend to be diffused as “packages,” which consumers come to see as “natural” wholes, for they are presented in such terms. (p. 211).

In this perspective then, the level of constraint is evaluated based on elite-determined definitions of left and right political positions; whether or not one is a liberal or conservative is defined by how close the individual’s rational reasoning reflects that of the political elites who determined these measures. Such a conceptualisation is similar to Downs’ (1957) rational choice theory of partisan identification discussed in Chapter 2. Also discussed in Chapter 2, researchers using measures of ideology based on this perspective have concluded that only a minority of the American general public are ideological. This conceptualisation of ideology stands apart from the idea of ideological identity meaning in that it speaks to ideological political reasoning alone, devoid of norms that may be otherwise derived. Like partisan identification, it is clear from recent literature that there is more to ideological identity than what might be considered to be a rationally constrained set of political issue positions (Huddy et al., 2015; Malka & Lelkes, 2010; Mason, 2018b).

In contrast, the maximalist perspective emphasises a belief system that is driven from psychological predispositions and posits a broader idea of ideology, one that is a “close fit between personality traits, cognitive processes, values, morals, motives, moods, emotions, and physiology” (Kalmoe, 2020, p. 771). From the maximalist perspective, ideology is broadly structured and influences more than just political issue preferences. The maximalist viewpoint has been hugely influential, and a great deal of the study of ideological identity has been conducted at the *individual* level from which these beliefs are deemed to emanate. Researchers have examined psychological traits and developed scales for particular constructs that speak to ideological asymmetries. In addition to the RWA (right-wing authoritarianism) and SDO (social dominance orientation) scales discussed in Chapter 2, asymmetries are apparent in the Big Five personality traits (openness is more associated with liberalism and conscientiousness with conservatism), the need for cognition (liberalism), and dogmatism and intolerance of uncertainty (conservatism) (Jost et al., 2003). This work is underlain with the idea that ideology derives from psychological needs and motives that determine the electorate’s receptivity to elite political positions.

Although the emphasis is different—with research fore-grounding either top-down or bottom-up influences—both limited and maximal paradigms shape ideology. From yet another perspective, Nelson (1977) critiques the very idea of political ideology as logical and psychological constraint, arguing that such constraint conflates ideology with rationality. To recover the distinction between being ideological and being politically rational, he contends that inquiry should instead focus on the “character of ideology revealed by the statements and actions of that individual or group” (p. 422); that instead of asking to what degree citizens are

ideological based on elite criteria, we should be asking what it is that these self-identified ideologues believe. Although he does not use the language of the social identity approach and meaning, with this assertion Nelson is essentially proposing that the individuals' subjective interpretation of their identity can be seen as their particular ideology, refocussing the evaluation of ideology from a measure of alignment with either elite-driven criteria (top-down) or as a predisposition (bottom-up).

Such a re-focusing would begin with understanding the lay perceptions of those who claim the identity. The meaning that individuals attribute to their ideological identities may reflect a variety of social objects—to various degrees—the political issues, social evaluations, values, and morals in previous research discussed earlier, as well as other elements of this belief system. This approach aligns with the social identity approach contention that we behave according to what we *believe* the norms of our identities to be; it asserts that it is therefore less important that our policy preferences hold together in a logical ideological model, than it is that we have a clear belief of what our identity is. It also aligns with the broad and widely cited definition of ideology offered by Gerring (1997, p. 980): “Ideology, at the very least, refers to a set of idea-elements that are bound together, that belong to one another in a non-random fashion”.

Like Nelson (1977), I assert that much can be gained by positioning individual discourse at the centre of ideological analysis. Political thinking is naturally constrained by the social environment and the linguistic norms in which it is embedded. Indeed, Gerring (1997) observed that “‘Ideological thinking’ is inseparable from—and perhaps even secondary to—‘ideological language.’” The

idea that ideology is bound up with the linguistic symbols employed clearly speaks to the shared nature of ideology and its construction. To Nelson's proposal therefore, I add a clarification that political ideology, and therefore political identity content, reflects a belief system that is socially shared and mutually constructed. The idea of being socially shared is in line with definitions of ideology such as "an organisation of beliefs and attitudes—religious, political, or philosophical in nature—that is more or less institutionalised or shared with others, deriving from external authority" (Rokeach, 1968, pp. 123–124). These definitions, although recognising the shared nature of ideology, clearly prioritise social influences.

Jost et al. (2008) describe ideology as an elective affinity that marries individual differences (personal values, personality traits) and socially created representations of what the labels mean. T. Gries et al. (2020) conceptualise this affinity between individual psychology and the social context as a transaction between buyers and sellers of ideologies, driven by the individual's expected utility of ratifying their particular needs, interests, and motives. Although the model accounts for interaction, it presupposes the individual and society as separate entities. In contrast, I propose that their construction is intertwined. Such positioning recognises not only individual predispositions, but also the socially shared nature of both ideology and social identities. The idea that ideology is shared contrasts with the measurement of collective predispositions (e.g., RWA and SDO) as ideology. Even when these attitudes are aggregated, they are not collective—they remain the property of individuals. The investigation of a decidedly social phenomenon like APP as something that is individually located is limited: it does not allow for possibilities for social change and is unable to account for changes over time.

Like political identities then, the nature of ideology is influenced by both individual predispositions and socially constructed elements. To capture the meaning of identity and its nature, it is therefore necessary to employ a theoretical framework that speaks to the dynamism of the content, to the ‘space in-between’ individuals and society in which ideology and political identity content is created (Pehrson & Reicher, 2014).

4.5 A Social Representations Approach

While social identity theory focuses on individual needs and motivations (such as self-esteem) to explain intergroup relations, social representations theory points to social representations as the means by which individuals make their world meaningful. Although these are considered two separate paradigms, there are those that have, over the years, argued for their integration (e.g., Breakwell, 1993a, 1993b; Howarth, 2006). In response, others have sought to integrate insights from social representations theory with social identity concepts of identity construction in what is referred to as the *social representations approach* (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999, 2008; Elcheroth et al., 2011). The social representations approach conceptualises the representation process and representations of social groups as fundamental to group relations. Elcheroth et al. (2011) specifically propose that accounting for social representations allows for original political psychological perspectives by recognising social-psychological processes to overcome “the duality between psychology and politics” (p. 730). In particular, they suggest that *collective understandings*—including meta-representations (what we believe others believe)—are integral to comprehending the group. A social representations approach holds that the meaning of a social identity is not a given, instead it is ‘represented’ as an

understanding between people. Situated in language, it is through shared representations that meaning is elaborated and that social groups establish their identities, differentiating themselves from other groups within society.

Specifically regarding identity content, Wagner et al. (1999) assert that people's understandings of social phenomena "constitute their social identity" (p. 97). Likewise, Breakwell (1993a) identifies social representations as the building blocks of the structure and content of belief systems. She argues that that social representations are "fundamentally important in establishing the potential universe of elements" (2015, p. 252) that constitute the content of identity as well as shaping social identities by defining identity content and boundaries (Breakwell, 1993a). Understanding the social representations of political identities is therefore vital if we are to appreciate the multitude of elements that may comprise contemporary political identities, elements that may be contributing to increasing APP. Social representations—as cognitive structures that are intrinsically social—are aligned with the conceptualisations of identity and ideology expressed earlier. Exploring political identity content through a social representations approach is therefore more epistemically congruent than an approach prioritising psychological predispositions or schemas. With this approach, I aim to interrogate of the common-sense meanings that shape political behaviour.

4.5.1 Social Representations

Social representations theory (Moscovici, 1961/2008) is both a way of looking at social phenomena and a system for describing and explaining them (Moscovici, 1988). It has been regarded as a counter to the North American style of social psychological research that tends towards more individualistic explanations

for behaviour empirically supported by experiments (e.g., Jahoda, 1988), a challenge to the “dichotomy of mind and society” (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005, p. 443). As a process theory, it allows for the study of how old representations influence those related to new ideas, how those representations are modified or amended, and how new ones are formed. As an example, Moscovici (1961/2008) famously introduced social representations theory by analysing representations of psychoanalysis; more modern applications have been in the analysis of cloning, of terrorism, or of climate change (e.g., Bauer & Gaskell, 1999; Kilby, 2017; N. W. Smith & Joffe, 2009).

Social representations “concern the content of everyday thinking and the stock of ideas that gives coherence to our religious beliefs, political ideas and the connections we create as spontaneously as we breathe” (Moscovici, 1988, p. 214). Although there is no standard definition of what social representations are (Verheggen & Baerveldt, 2007), a commonly referenced definition describes social representations as:

A system of values, ideas and practices with a twofold function; first, to establish an order which will enable individuals to orientate themselves in their material and social world and to master it; and secondly to enable communication to take place among the members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world and their individual and group history (Moscovici, 1973, p. xiii)

The reference to “values, ideas and practices” suggests an overlap with the concepts of identity and ideology discussed in the previous sections. Social representations are forms of common sense that people draw upon in order to make sense of the world

around them and to act towards it in meaningful ways (Sammut et al., 2015). In this way, they are psychological organisations, but are specific to one's social environment (Moscovici, 1961/2008). Like ideology, social representations are embedded in communicative practices: dialogue, debate, behaviours, and symbols. What makes these representations 'social' is that they are collectively validated through communication and are constructed from the social context (Howarth, 2006). Their shared nature facilitates communication, and they are used by groups to increase cohesiveness and position themselves in relation to other groups. Notably, social representations also serve to confine thought and actions by determining "the field of possible communications, of the values and ideas present in the visions shared by groups" (Moscovici, 1961/2008, p. 10).

According to Moscovici, representations serve to make the unfamiliar, familiar. To do this, social representations are produced through the mechanisms of *anchoring* and *objectifying*. Anchoring brings the unfamiliar into the 'known' by connecting it to familiar representations. Objectification accomplishes the same purpose by transforming the unknown into something more concrete. For example, in a study of Brazilian middle-class adults, in order to understand the Covid-19 outbreak in 2020, representations of the virus were anchored in traditional religious beliefs about 'original sin', while the unknown threat became objectified as an anthropomorphic beast (Souza et al., 2021). The distinction between the processes of anchoring and objectification is not precisely defined and is seen to be overlapping. Indeed, foremost among the criticisms of social representations theory is its lack of conceptual clarity (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005), and Moscovici himself was reluctant to pin down specifics. This means that the theory suffers from a lack of

guidance but offers the flexibility necessary to capture the dynamic relationship between social structure and individual agency put forth in the theory.

Social representations differ from the attitudes or opinions commonly sought in US political science research to explain political behaviour. In contrast to the shared, social nature of social representations, attitudes, and public opinion—even in their aggregate—are intrinsically a cognitive attribute of the individual (Sammut, 2015). In contrast to an individual difference approach, Moscovici (1961/2008) takes the position that there exists no definite boundary between the individual and the outside world; social representations have therefore been conceptualised as existing across minds rather than inside individual minds (Wagner et al., 1999). Like the perspectives of identity and ideology discussed above, social representations are not understood from an exclusively individual or social perspective but are conceptualised as being situated “at the crossroad between the individual and society”, a space in-between (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999, p. 167), as co-constructed by the individual and society. As Wagner et al. note, “in this sense, lay knowledge is more than knowledge in the heads of individuals. Quite the opposite, it is knowledge produced by a community of people, in conditions of social interaction and communications, and therefore excessive of identities, interests, history and culture” (p. 104). Indeed, Howarth (2014) positions social representations as mediating between the intertwined processes of ideology and identity construction. In turn, ideology is conceptualised between what Moscovici refers to as two universes: the consensual (where social representations are created, negotiated, and changed) and the reified (inhabited by ‘experts’ who base their judgements on rational choice) (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005). In this way, social representations fit with the above discussions regarding the reciprocal nature of political identities and ideology.

In addition—and importantly for alignment with Nelson’s (1977) perspective on ideology—social representations embrace the concept of cognitive polyphasia, the idea that they may be characterised by un-constrained, sometimes contradictory, elements. What elements themselves may consist of are not rigidly defined. As Bauer and Gaskell (2008) note, a social representations approach “invites us...to think at a higher level of abstraction”, and the concept of a social representation “functions as an umbrella term for notions like opinion, perceptions, attitudes, values, stereotypes, and risks” (p. 348). Such an approach therefore allows for investigation without a priori distinction regarding the specific psychological variables that a social representation may contain, a framework that opens possibility to new perspectives.

4.6 Conclusion

The theoretical approach to this thesis has been dictated by the research question of how political identity content impacts APP. In this chapter, I have argued that extending social identity theory beyond its current application, both in seeking the meaning of identity and in employing a theoretical framework provided by the social representations approach is appropriate to match the nature of political identity content. This approach is positioned to allow insight into drivers and processes that have heretofore eluded researchers.

In the first instance, the social representations approach allows the examination of representations without the constraint of having to designate whether these elements are values, morals, cognitions, issues, or emotions. In addition, by framing these elements within the social representations approach, the theoretical framework conceptualises these representations as dynamic elements that, while undergoing negotiation between the individual and society, have the potential to

change (Staerklé et al., 2011). This approach is therefore set apart from the current conceptualisations of the drivers behind APP as individually motivated and inevitable or as driven by the elite. At the same time, it finds a place for the influence of both the individual and the elite in APP as shapers of social representations, a role that is absent from the social identity approach structure as applied to APP.

In the next chapter, I integrate this theoretical approach with the methodology selected to address the research question.

5 Chapter 5: Methodology

5.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I present the mixed methods approach selected for this study programme. Within this discussion, I seek to reconcile the research questions and theory discussed in the previous chapters with the philosophical and methodological selections and considerations that were involved in this work.

This thesis aims to expand on political psychological theory—in particular the study of political identity and the phenomenon of affective political polarisation (APP). The objective is to explore identity meaning with the goal of gaining further understanding of the elements contributing to APP. This research is therefore driven by the central question of “How do political identity differences in (national attachment) meaning contribute to affective political polarisation?” and presents itself in two parts. In the first instance, the aim is to interrogate the content/meaning of US political identity. The second part of the question suggests a hypothesis: that identity content will be related to APP. Note that because the investigation of political identity content (Study 1) was exploratory, the identification of the difference to be investigated (national attachment) was only made once data from Study 1 had been analysed.

While previous literature has primarily handled questions related to both the content of identity and the drivers of APP quantitatively, the purpose of the current study programme is to provide additional perspective on the relationship between identity content and APP than is accessible by using quantitative analysis alone. The research question was a key driver for the choice in methodology, so too was the

theoretical approach proposed in the previous chapter. The social representations approach, a framework that brings together the concepts of social identity and social representations, carries certain philosophical perspectives that must be considered in the research design. In particular, the concept of social representations is focused on the social construction of shared meaning created between the individual and society. A pragmatic philosophical perspective was taken both to allow practical solutions to selecting the most appropriate research methods in pursuit of this question, and to accommodate the theoretical stance selected. This chapter therefore argues for the consistency between the pragmatic paradigm, the theoretical lens of a social representation approach, a mixed methods methodology, and the specific qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection.

The chapter begins by presenting the method selected for each study in the thesis. I first discuss the pragmatic philosophical paradigm under which this research design was constructed; the theoretical and pragmatic reasoning behind each selection is then highlighted within an overall argument for a mixed method approach. The chapter ends with a reflection on the researcher's position and integral role in the research conducted.

5.2 Philosophical paradigms

Either implicitly or explicitly, research methodology is conceived within particular research paradigms. Morgan (2007) defines paradigms as “systems of beliefs and practices that influence how researchers elected both the questions they study and methods that they use to study them” (p. 49). Within each paradigm, there are assumptions about ontology (the study of being) and epistemology (what can be known as real). The ontology of a study speaks to the reality that will be

investigated—whether it is stable or dynamic and flexible—and therefore determines how the reality is investigated. Epistemology (the study of knowledge) often follows from this ontological perspective as it deals with how that reality can be accessed.

Philosophical paradigms regarding the acquisition of knowledge in social psychology can range from the *positivist*—which posits that knowledge exists in the world, and we learn by acquiring this knowledge—to *constructionist*—which assumes that all knowledge is created by the individual or society (is socially constructed). While quantitative methods are most often associated with the positivist end of the spectrum, qualitative methods are more commonly conducted within a constructionist paradigm.

Positivism is associated with the ontology of realism—the belief that reality is governed by a set of universal laws that exist independent of individuals; that there is a direct correspondence between these ‘real’ things and individual perception. The epistemology often associated with positivism is objectivism and empiricism (Onwuegbuzie, 2002). Objectivism is the belief that we should remain distant and objective from the subject of our research; empiricism holds that the only authentic knowledge is scientific knowledge and arises from collecting and categorising our perceptions. A positivist approach to social psychology therefore relies on verification based on the scientific method; working, as Creswell and Plano-Clark, (2018) describe, from the “top-down” (p. 37)—from theory to data. Although few adopt a pure positivist approach, positivism—or even the post-positivist view that recognises the limits of researcher objectivity—is most clearly associated with the natural sciences and with quantitative research (research that collects and analyses numerical data). Much of the political science literature which is aligned with the

idea that the development of knowledge relies on the collection and analysis of verifiable data can be seen as relying to some degree on positivism.

At the other end of the philosophical spectrum, constructionism embraces ontological relativism (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018), and often works from the “bottom-up” (p.36), from individual understandings to broad patterns. For a relativist, what is real is dependent on our interaction with the world and is based on interpretation. Because there therefore exist multiple realities, the world can never become known in one single way. Knowledge does not exist independent of the individual, it is constructed. The subjectivist epistemology associated with this ontology assumes that research findings are co-constructed, that the researcher influences the participants in the study. Such a perspective means that research invoking this philosophy is not concerned with discovering a universal reality, but instead tends to focus on individual accounts that construct social objects in particular ways and perform certain social functions. As such, the social constructionist philosophy at this end of the spectrum is aligned with qualitative research methods such as discourse analysis.

While there exists an *incompatibility thesis* (Howe, 1988; e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that suggests that a combination of paradigms on this spectrum is not possible, an overarching philosophy of *pragmatism* is often embraced as a stance for mixed method research to address this concern (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Pragmatism shifts priority from philosophy to the theory and methods employed to address the research question; it is outcome-oriented and practical (R. B. Johnson et al., 2007). A pragmatic stance takes the position that the philosophical paradigms of positivism and constructivism, along with their related quantitative and qualitative

method choices, can be mixed as the assumptions are logically independent representing different aspects of inquiry (Greene & Caracelli, 1997). Pragmatism is a particularly attractive stance for this thesis due to its concern with determining the meaning of things and the prioritisation of study purpose (R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This thesis therefore adopts a pragmatic philosophical stance for purposes of research design, and the choices made at each stage of the study programme were informed by the most appropriate methods to answer the research question along with the theoretical implications of the social representations approach to social identity. It is within this theoretical framework that, regardless of the method employed, the results were analysed and interpreted.

5.3 Mixed Methods

The theory selected for this thesis is a social representations approach, an approach that combines elements of social representations theory with the social identity tradition (Elcherath et al., 2011). Social representations theory and social identity theory are associated with different roles, however. Social identity theory is what Breakwell (1993a) refers to as a “formal model” in that it “presents definitions of the constructs it uses and clearly describes their relationship to each other”, it “makes direct predictions of behaviour; it is an explanatory, not a descriptive, model” (p. 181). In contrast, she refers to social representations theory as a “functionalist model” (p. 181), primarily concerned with description. Social representations theory seeks to describe, while social identity theory makes testable predictions. Consequently, the two theories gravitate towards different methods. Like combining social identity and social representations theories, the central premise of a mixed methods approach to inquiry is that employing a combination of quantitative

and qualitative methods provides a better means by which to answer the research question than either approach alone (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2010).

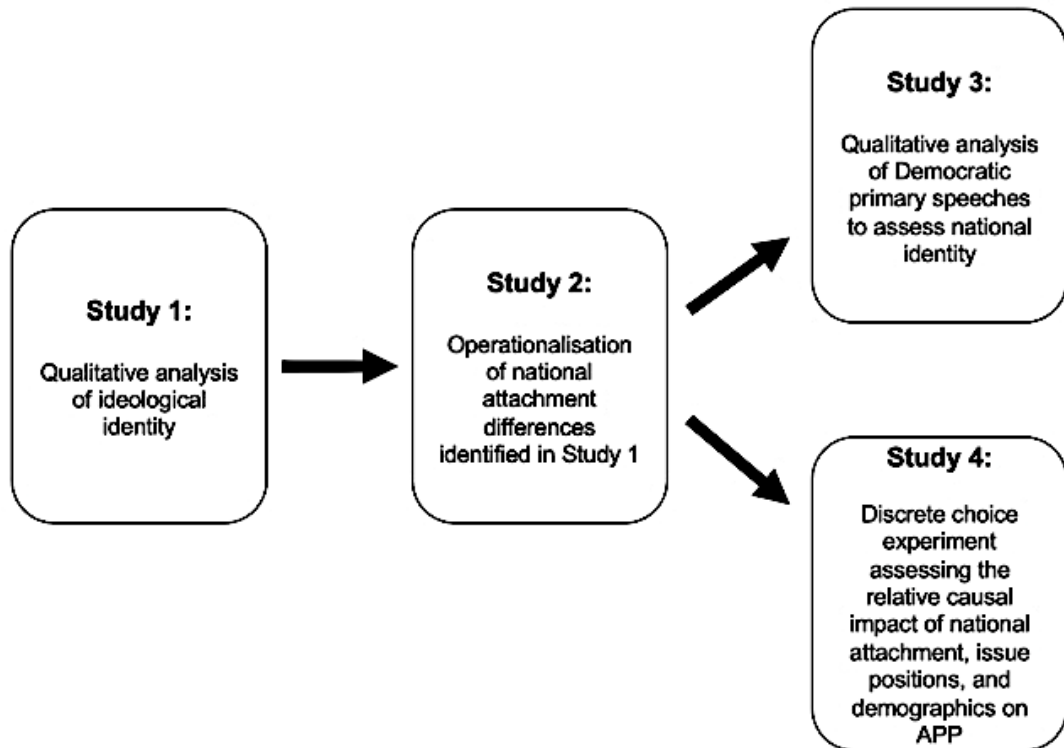
The selection of a mixed methods research design for this programme of inquiry is driven by the nature of the research question of how identity content is related to APP. In the first instance, the purpose of the research question is to expand on and complement an area of current research dominated by quantitative literature. In such a context, mixed-method research is positioned to provide additional insight (Greene et al., 1989). Secondly, the research question, as constructed within a social representations approach lens, requires both an inductive and deductive approach. In accordance with this lens, and discussed in the preceding chapter, political identity meaning as conceptualised in this thesis is subjective and constructed between the individual and society. This theoretical stance, as well as the pragmatic objective to capture the widest possible range of identity content, drives the selection of qualitative methods for the initial study. In contrast, the hypothesis involving a relationship between an independent variable (identity content) and a dependent variable (APP) suggests a deductive approach, typical of quantitative research methods.

The mixed-method approach in this thesis therefore primarily employs an *exploratory sequential design* (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). In this type of design, the study programme typically prioritises and begins with an exploratory phase and the collection of qualitative data (reflected in Study 1 of this thesis). These results are then subjected to a development phase in which a quantitative feature is developed based on the qualitative results, such as the generation of new measures (Studies 2a

and 2b). In the third and final phase, the quantitative feature is quantitatively tested (Study 4).

Figure 2

Schematic of Study Programme Design



An exploratory sequential design can range on a spectrum from *fixed* to *emergent* (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). On one end of the spectrum, the studies in fixed designs are predetermined at the start of the study programme; on the other, qualitative or quantitative studies are added because the alternative was determined to be inadequate. In this thesis, the mixed methods design emerged after the initial exploratory study (Study 1) as the best approach to exploring the qualitative results related to the differing attachments to the nation. The strength of the measurements developed in Studies 2a and 2b led to the testing of these measures in Study 4. However, the results of Studies 2a and 2b also pointed to a discrepancy in the

strength of the measures on the political left and right. An aspect of these results (Democratic national identity) was then explored qualitatively in a study that sought to contribute to the explanation of this difference. This study (Study 3) is therefore considered to be emergent and part of an *explanatory sequential design* (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). A schematic flow of the study programme is indicated in Figure 2 above.

5.4 Outline of the Study Programme

In the sections that follow, the progression of the study programme is outlined, and key considerations are discussed. Application of the specific methods are discussed in the related empirical chapters.

5.4.1 Study 1: Capturing Meaning Through a Qualitative Approach

The first part of the research question—the identification of political identity meaning—surrounds the perception of individuals as members of the political groups. The approach to this question must therefore be focused on the participants' group membership (as opposed to individual beliefs) and must also recognise that the object of research (meaning) is inherently subjective (Huddy, 2001), an interpretation of participants' reality. This approach stands apart from the reliance on survey data that deductively examines closed-ended questions and the interrogation of a fixed number of individual elements (e.g., issue preferences, values), methods that characterise much of the current literature and limit the current literature's ability to capture the multi-dimensionality of identity meaning.

As discussed in Chapter 1, previous research has attributed APP effects to political self-categorisation as a Democrat/Republican or a liberal/conservative. The

American National Election Studies (ANES) nationally-representative survey of registered voters is commonly drawn upon for theorising about the relationship between political polarisation and political identity, drawing upon correlations between issue positions, demographics, and feeling thermometers (Iyengar et al., 2012; Mason, 2018a, 2018b; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017). This quantitative approach based on national surveys has been valuable in framing the problem of APP and the centrality of political ideological and partisan identities in this conflict. But due to the closed-ended nature of the questions in these surveys, and that they are not specifically designed to seek identity content, traditional national surveys are likely to miss the subjective ambiguity of social phenomena, an ambiguity identifiable through social interactions and discussion. In addition, work based on these surveys represents interpretations of an aggregation of individual opinions. This individual perspective is inconsistent with the conclusion that a *social* identity is driving APP—it is specifically the group membership that drives APP, not individual opinion. This change in perspective is a change in the unit of analysis from aggregated individual opinion to a collective representation held by individuals, commensurate with the social representations approach. Although to some extent, certain collective representations may be captured in the quantitative national survey analysis that characterises much political research in the US, it is not specifically designed to do so.

Of course, US political identity has also been investigated outside of the APP context. As discussed in Chapter 2, the landmark work on the meaning of political identity is Conover and Feldman's (1981) research comparing the relevance of social evaluations and issue positions to ideological identity content. In this paper, the researchers specifically considered the methodological suitability of a qualitative or

quantitative approach to this question. Although they acknowledge that “open-ended questions—such as those asking respondents what the terms ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ mean—are a much more direct method of establishing the meaning of ideological label” and “allow for greater individual expression” (p. 626), they opted for closed-ended questions and a quantitative approach, reasoning that “open-ended questions...make it more difficult to identify patterns of *aggregate* meaning than is the case with close-ended measure ” (p. 626, emphasis added). Conover and Feldman also dismissed a qualitative approach due to their assertion that it is only through access a larger, more representative group that shared meaning can be identified. In electing this approach, I note that, although the authors purport to wish to address shared meaning, they settle on a method that aggregates individual meaning. I also propose that, not only are qualitative methods ideally situated to capture the shared (not aggregate) and subjective meaning that is more appropriately associated with group identity, but they are also an appropriate method by which to explore and identify patterns of meaning that are espoused by a larger, more representative group. The contrast in this interpretation is likely to lie in a difference in philosophical paradigms (as discussed above). Studies undertaken in the positivist tradition are generalised through quantitative probabilistic generalisation (Polit & Beck, 2010), while the constructivist paradigm allows for generalising from data to higher levels of abstraction that contribute to theory (Carminati, 2018). Nonetheless, Conover and Feldman’s methodological stance has been the one primarily employed in the identity content literature in the forty years that have followed.

In the area of identity content, it is typical to investigate the existence of particular elements such as values, personality traits, morals, issues, or a particular perspective that is the subject of the study’s inquiry (e.g., Conover & Feldman, 1981;

Converse, 1964; Ellis & Stimson, 2012; Jost et al., 2003; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz et al., 2010). These measures have captured a number of asymmetries between identities discussed in previous chapters. This content has however been investigated facet by facet; little work has sought to cast wide the net of inputs, to assess a number of facets together, and to understand the priorities of the identity holders that may well change over time (Feldman, 2013). Therefore, little account has been taken of the individual's subjectivity beyond their perception of one particular dimension at a time. There exists then the possibility that some elemental asymmetries and asymmetries in identity structure (the subjective prioritisation of these identity elements) have not yet been fully explored.

I propose that a qualitative analysis of lay representations of political identification is ideally placed to gain access to the elements that Ashmore et al. (2004) identify as the "content and meaning" (p. 83) element of collective identities. These researchers argue that content and meaning are comprised of self-attributed characteristics, ideology, and narrative (the internally represented story regarding self and the social category). Employing lay representations is particularly relevant for contested constructs in which subjectivity is inherent, such as political identity. In contrast to the current literature, which is largely derived from a combination of survey data and a priori assertions about what political identities may mean, work that is open to lay interpretations may also highlight differences between ideological identity content observed from a lay perspective and the measures employed by experts. Study 1 represents an exploratory phase of this mixed methods approach. It interrogates US ideological identity, focusing on the descriptions of the system of beliefs by those who hold liberal and conservative identities.

Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2020) was selected to analyse the qualitative data. Although some forms of thematic analysis are codebook driven (Braun & Clarke, 2021), reflexive thematic analysis is inductive, deriving themes from an unstructured coding of data segments. These are specifically defined as “patterns of shared meaning underpinned by a central organising concept” (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 39), thereby being a close reflection of a social representations approach. In addition, coding is recognised as an inherently subjective process, one in which the researcher is intimately involved. A reflection on the impact of the researcher’s involvement in the execution of this study programme is therefore included towards the end of this chapter.

5.4.2 Studies 2a and 2b: From Identity Content to APP

Once political identity content was identified through the rich data and open possibilities of qualitative research in Study 1, the next step in the exploratory sequential mixed methods model was to develop a contextually relevant measure informed by the qualitative data. These studies employed exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis as well as correlational and regression analysis to establish the reliability and validity of two constructs identified in Study 1: *national reverence* and *individual support* (reflecting conservative and liberal national attachments, respectively). These constructs are framed as *organising principles* (Doise et al., 1993) of US political identities.

The procedures involved in the development of a measure from qualitative data also serve to triangulate the qualitative findings and address the second element of the research question by assessing the relationship between this content and APP. Triangulation can refer to the application of a combination of different approaches to

a phenomenon or to studying different aspects of a phenomenon in a systematic way (Flick, 1992). It can take the form of a combination of data forms or a combination of methods. In Studies 2a and 2b, a quantitative approach provides a contrasting method that allows for an assessment of the qualitative findings from Study 1 in a wider sample using survey methods. The studies also lay the groundwork for a possible causal connection between the national attachment constructs and APP.

In addition, Study 2b positions the measures in relation to traditional measures of nationalism and of ideology (right-wing authoritarianism [RWA] and social dominance orientation [SDO]) to offer a contrast between the contextual (national reverence and individual support) and individualised measures.

5.4.3 Study 3: A Deeper Dive into National Identity on the Political Left

The quantitative results from Studies 2a and 2b that pointed to a high degree of integration between the conservative ideological and national identities prompted a question regarding how national identity was represented on the political left. Study 3 therefore augments the primary trajectory of the exploratory sequential research design programme by interrogating Democratic national identity. This study returns to qualitative methods in an analysis of the construct of national identity in the speeches of Democratic primary candidates. A reflexive thematic analysis was again selected in light of the desire to detect latent and unanticipated forms of representation; in addition, the consistency of messaging in campaign speeches meant that the data was not so large as to require quantitative method of analysis.

The study illustrates another form of triangulation; it contrasts different data forms to study different aspects of a phenomenon (Flick, 1992), an approach

considered particularly fruitful in the study of social representations (Flick et al., 2015). Bauer and Gaskell (1999) argue that a highly institutionalised social object (such as US political identities) has a greater degree of formalised mediums through which social representations are communicated; and that acknowledging this fact calls for the triangulation of different data sources that include the analysis of both formal and informal communications. The study also offers an additional contrast: the data analysed is naturally occurring (would have existed despite the research) as compared to the created data in the first study. The analysis of candidate speeches therefore compliments the analysis of lay representations analysed in Study 1.

5.4.4 Study 4: Content causality

Prompted by the significant and substantial correlations and the predictive strength of the national attachment variables developed in Studies 2a and 2b, Study 4 moves on to assess the causal relationship between the measures and APP, representing the final stage in the exploratory sequential mixed methods structure. To establish causality, an experimental study was undertaken in the form of a discrete choice experiment that employed the factors derived in Study 2a. These measures, alongside demographics and issue preferences, were assessed for their impact on outgroup antipathy.

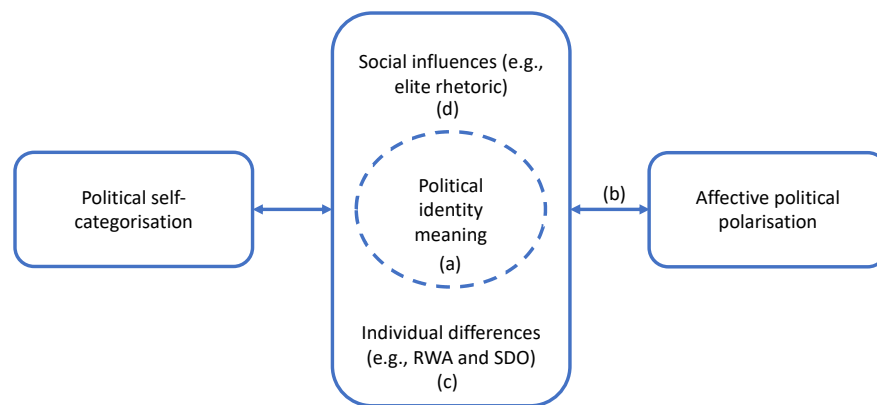
5.4.5 Summary

This thesis focuses on the meaning of US political identities and their role in shaping the connection between self-categorisation and political outcomes such as affective political polarisation (Figure X below). Specifically: Study 1 identified the major understandings of ideological identity as differences in national attachment

(a); Study 2 correlated these meanings with affective political polarisation (b) and with individual differences (c); Study 3 identified important variations in political national attachment rhetoric along ideological lines within the Democratic party (d); and Study 4 supported the causal role of national attachments alongside other meanings attributed to US political identities including demographics and issue positions (b).

Figure 3

Schematic of Areas Addressed by Empirical Studies



5.5 Mixed methods, theory, and methods

Pragmatism is the research paradigm in which the methods for this study programme were determined for reasons of allying the concerns over incompatibility of qualitative and quantitative methods. The social constructionist leanings of the social representations approach, however, also informed the research design and

guides the analysis and interpretation of the study results. In this section I therefore discuss the methods selected in relation to this approach.

Research guided by social representations theory is not just open to, but encourages, a pluralism of methodological approaches to address the complexity of social representations (Flick et al., 2015). Indeed, “virtually every method known to the social sciences” has been used in the study of social representations (Breakwell & Canter, 1993, p. 6). The methods employed in this thesis include a reflexive thematic analysis of qualitative data (Studies 1 and 3), exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (studies 2a and 2b), and a discrete choice experiment (Study 4).

In reflexive thematic analysis, data are coded to build themes that are shared amongst the participants regarding a particular social object. In Study 1, the data took the form of semi-structured interviews between the researcher and participants regarding the liberal or conservative identity, while Study 3 data were comprised of transcripts from the Democratic primary campaign speeches regarding national identity. Bauer and Gaskell (1999) propose that social representations are created in the presence of an individual, a social object, and an ‘other’. The structures of the data in both of these studies offer all three of these elements, where the other in Study 1 is the researcher, and in Study 3 is the candidate’s audience. This qualitative analysis that aims to identify common themes within language is a cornerstone of social representations research in assessing the representational field (Flick et al., 2015).

Factor analysis (as employed in Studies 2a and 2b) is a means to assess the consensual items that comprise social representations. Doise et al. (1993) have promoted the use of factor analysis to assess the *organising principles* (the core

representational structure) of groups. Factor analysis, by describing the common variation in a set of variables and loading them on dimensions, reflects a “readily accessible view of how the variables covary, oppose each other or are independent of each other” (p. 70). Consistent with the social representations approach, this method mirrors organising principles as the core elements over which groups may take stances.

Experiments in social representations work is less common. Indeed, social representations as dependent variables in a lab experiment would be inconsistent with the conceptualisation of social representations as a consensual part of the fabric of society (Wagner et al., 1999). As independent variables however, the exploration of a social representations’ characteristics can be addressed with experimentation. Consistent with this requirement, Study 4 addressed the characteristic of social representations of particular elements of political identity content (national reverence and individual support) as independent variables that drive APP (the dependent variable).

5.6 Reflexivity

Researchers, regardless of the method employed, are always positioned culturally, historically, socially, and theoretically. Theiss-Morse et al. (1991) note that “the imagined ‘Archimedean point’ from which the researcher establishes his or her measures is really no more than the research’s constructed reality” (p. 91). This perspective that recognises the interdependence of study construction, execution, and interpretation of findings and the researcher is considered integral to qualitative work. Qualitative researchers’ development of findings comes from immersion in the data and is refined organically. In this close relationship between researcher and data,

the importance of researcher reflexivity is more often recognised. Indeed, the method of qualitative analysis used in this thesis, reflexive thematic analysis, conceptualises the role of the researcher as a central part of the analytical process (Braun & Clarke, 2020, 2021).

Researcher reflexivity acknowledges the fact that researchers are part of the social world they study and that, in being part of that world, researcher interpretations are subject to the influence of the researcher's subjective perspective on the world. Researcher reflexivity therefore involves the acknowledgement of that perspective as well as an active assessment of that perspective on the work undertaken.

Most relevant to this thesis is therefore my political and national background. I was born in the US but moved to the UK in 1997. My move to the UK broadly coincides with the beginning of the precipitous rise in political polarisation in the US. Over the years, there have been indications of increasing polarisation among family and friends in the US, but the Trump campaign followed by the Covid-19 pandemic clarified the divide. The impetus for this research was therefore to understand what had happened to my country in my absence. Politically, I primarily voted Republican in my younger years, but have voted Democrat for decades now. With my roots on one side of the political divide and my current experience on the other, as a researcher, I feel able to connect with both perspectives. I also believe that my recollection of a time before this extreme polarisation lends perspective, and I am more readily able to identify the changes over the years having not been immersed in the culture.

I have however been aware that throughout this research, this recollection and my political position have influenced my work. My perspective that there is a driver that is not primarily individually located is clearly influenced not only by theory, but by my belief and hope that these differences are socially constructed, and therefore can be changed. In addition, my political position means that my frustrations with the inability of the Democratic party to better mobilise the electorate was likely a significant factor in the design of Study 3 in which the Democratic campaign speeches were analysed to understand where they differ from the successful identity entrepreneurship of the Republicans.

A practice of reflexivity has however allowed insight into how my own position may be reflected in the design and analysis. To support a reflexive practice, I kept memos as I analysed the qualitative data and notes on key decisions as I planned and executed the studies. This was particularly important during the analysis of data in Study 1 which served as a starting point for identifying the key differentiating variables. While a number of themes were identifiable as differences between the political left and right, I was conscious of my bias towards a national-identity driven theme. The memos I took as I refined the themes helped me reflect on my position and give additional scrutiny to the codes that were identified as evidence for these themes. This awareness of the need to rigorously evince the position led to a more fully integrated explanation of differential individual- and group- attachment.

5.7 Summary of approach

Building on work that employs social identity theory in the explanation of APP, I first interrogated the content of ideological group identification through individual interviews in Study 1. Extracting the primary themes from this data using

reflexive thematic analysis, novel content was identified that lent itself to operationalisation. These primary themes were subsequently referred to as the organising principles of national reverence and individual support (“the principles”).

In Study 2a and 2b, I operationalised the identified principles and explored the extent of their presence in a wider and more representative population. This work was undertaken by employing survey methods and exploratory factor analysis. Study 2a also initiated the exploration of the relationship between the principles and APP (as well as voting behaviour) using correlational and regression analyses. Study 2b extended these findings with confirmatory factor analysis and replication of Study 2a. To position these newly constructed measures and their predictive power in the current literature Study 2b also located the principles among other measures of ideological identity (namely, RWA and SDO) and national identity (nationalism). The results of Studies 2a and 2b highlighted the key role of national reverence in both conservative ideological identity and in APP related to both the left and right.

The fact that the left was more reactive substantively to conservative, as compared to liberal, identity content raised a question regarding how the political left invokes national identity. I therefore turned to a qualitative analysis of campaign speeches made during the 2019-2020 Democratic primaries for Study 3. In this analysis, I analysed how those Democrats seeking to represent their party in the office of President constructed the representation of the nation.

Study 4 returned to the hypothesis that the contestation within national identity is a driver of APP. In this study I therefore established evidence of causation by employing a conjoint analysis experiment in which the principles, issue positions, and demographics were randomised to create profiles for hypothetical others.

5.8 Conclusion

The mixed methods approach underpinned by a pragmatic philosophical position is considered the most appropriate methodology for this thesis. It suits the ambition of the research question: on one hand, it allows for both the depth of inquiry necessary to solicit the field of representations that may comprise identity content from individuals; on the other it provides the reach of quantitative survey analysis required to understand the prevalence of such content elements in a broader sample and for the quantified association between content and affect towards the out party.

6 Chapter 6: Interrogating Ideological Identity

6.1 Chapter Overview

In the preceding chapters, I presented a critical analysis of the study of US affective political polarisation (APP). In Chapter 1, I argued that social identity theory advises that the content of identity should be interrogated if we are to understand the link between identification and political behaviour. Work that has been undertaken to address potential components of ideological and partisan political identities was reviewed in Chapter 2. And in Chapter 4, I proposed that the most theoretically congruent way to address the question of political identity content is from the perspective of a social representations approach, due to the social shared and dynamic nature of this content. In the current chapter, I present a study aimed at interrogating the content of US ideological identity, the purpose of which is to identify those elements that lay persons believe to be integral to these political identities they hold. The study identifies notable differences in both content and structure. I argue that these differences may be encapsulated in differing perspectives on national attachment.

6.2 Background

The empirical work of this thesis begins with the investigation of US political identity meaning and represents the first stage of the exploratory sequential mixed methods design. This is accomplished by interrogating the subjective meanings citizens attribute to two of these categories: liberals and conservatives. As discussed in preceding chapters, although there exists significant evidence of the consequences of US political self-categorisation (self-identification as a Democrat or Republican,

or as a liberal or conservative), the understanding of what citizens *mean* when they self-categorise as one of these political identities remains less clear. These meanings—or identity content—according to social identity theory are integral to understanding the link between self-categorisation and political behaviour (Huddy, 2001): the theory posits that individuals who self-categorise with an ideological group will be driven to behave in accordance with what they believe it means to be a member of that group.

Previous work—although perhaps not articulated as seeking ‘identity meaning’ specifically—has commonly described clusters of attitudes that correlate with political self-categorisation. The most influential is the description of political identities in terms of the issue positions associated with them (operational ideology). The core meanings of political self-categorisation have long been centred on the degree to which individuals support the issue positions that are seen by researchers to be associated with that identity. Because the majority does not hold consistent issue positions, this definition of meaning has prompted some to assert that the American public is without ideology (e.g., Converse, 1964; Kinder & Kalmoe, 2017). Identity content defined as issue positions is potentially problematic: it assumes an objective and rational choice selection of political self-categorisation based on a discrete set of stances on selected political issues that align with expert ideas of ‘right’ and ‘left’ political positions, while the self-categorisation process is likely to be more subjective, dilemmatic, and social, encompassing a wider range of considerations. For example, research has consistently pointed to asymmetries at a higher level of abstraction that contribute to political self-categorisation (Ellis & Stimson, 2012; Mason, 2018b). In particular, significant contributions to the study of political identity content have been made relating self-categorisations to social group

evaluations (Conover & Feldman, 1981; Ellis & Stimson, 2012; Mason, 2018a; Zschirnt, 2011), and to values (Jacoby, 2014; Peffley & Hurwitz, 1985; Rokeach, 1973; Tetlock, 1986). However, little work has addressed these dimensions simultaneously and questions therefore persist as to the structure of US political identities and the relationship among the elements posited to comprise these labels (Feldman, 2013).

The research question posed by the current study—*how lay persons construct their ideological identities*—is addressed by interrogating the participants' social representations of their ingroup, of the outgroup, and of the nation. In accord with work that brings together social identity theory and social representations theory (e.g., Breakwell, 1993b, 2015; Elcherath et al., 2011), social representations—the shared common sense held by group members—are conceptualised as integrally related to identity content. This study therefore seeks to describe how these groups are understood in common sense terms. In particular, it aims to identify representations that express understandings of self-categorisation; for example, how the individual relates to the group, how the groups are positioned in relation to each other, and what elements (e.g., traits, values, issues) participants employ in these representations.

This study offers a new perspective on the current literature through both its method and theoretical approach. As discussed in the preceding chapter, a qualitative approach to the exploration of political identity captured a lay person's point of view on this question of content and allowed for the consideration of a number of potential identity elements simultaneously. By conceptualising meaning as shared social representations, the process of how these identities are negotiated in everyday

language is highlighted. Understanding how the mass public rationalises its political identities is a perspective into the crossroads of these individual differences and the socially constructed constraints of the political elite. If ideology drives political party composition, to understand the future of the parties and polarisation, we must not only consider the rhetoric of those driving the change (elites, according to Noel, 2013), but also the extent to which this rhetoric is taken up by the mass public. Such an analysis may elucidate not only the messages that mobilise the voting public to the ideologues' purposes, but also the elements that lay persons consider to be relevant to their role in the political process.

The study sought to identify the core representations over which those who identify as liberal or conservative take a stance—the *organising principles* of US ideological identity. Organising principles are anchored in ideological values and are the representations through which social evaluations and issue positions are objectified (Staerklé, 2009).

Ideological—as opposed to partisan—identities were selected as the primary focus of the investigation. As discussed in Chapter 2, although partisanship is the primary indicator of a number of political outcomes including vote choice and APP, the increasing alignment between partisan and ideological identities over the past decades appears to be a significant factor driving polarisation (Mason, 2018a). In addition, parties have more entitativity than ideological groups. While parties have more concrete associations (e.g., party platforms, official members, organisational structure, candidates, and office holders), how the more abstract ideological groups are objectified is less established. This study therefore leads with ideological identity but explores the perceived differences between ideological and partisan identities.

Through a reflexive thematic analysis of 40 interviews, this study identified central themes in the meaning self-identified US liberals and conservatives attribute to these labels. The liberal participant group's identity construction revolved around identification as, and concern for, individuals, supported by reference to personal values and political issues and underpinned by motivation to move toward a more equal society. Conversely, the conservative participant group understood their identity as directly connected to the political ideology of the nation through a thread of self-reliance and reverence for the national group.

6.3 Method

This study examined representations of the primary US ideological identities (liberals and conservatives) through semi-structured online synchronous and asynchronous text interviews. A qualitative approach was selected to best capture the complexity and subjectivity of these social identities.

6.3.1 Participants

A sample of 40 participants was recruited for this study (20 self-categorised liberals and 20 self-categorised conservatives) using opportunistic and snowballing sampling methods. Although not meant to be a representative sample, the aim was to achieve a balance gender and to ensure participation of a variety of generations, geographies, and income levels. Liberal participants were from six different states (California, Iowa, New York, Oregon, Texas, Virginia) and Washington D.C., while conservative participants were from ten different states (Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, New York, North Carolina, Montana, Texas, and Virginia). The two

groups were relatively demographically balanced in relation to one another as indicated in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Participant Demographics, in Number of Participants

	Liberal group	Conservative group
Gender		
Women	12	7
Men	8	13
Generation		
Silent	2	1
Baby Boomer	3	5
Gen X	11	10
Millennial	4	4
Mean age (SD)	<i>M</i> = 45.9 (15.5)	<i>M</i> = 48.6 (12.6)
Income		
< \$50,000	2	1
\$50,000 - \$100,000	3	5
\$100,000 - \$200,000	11	10
> \$200,000	4	4
Race		
White	17	19
Hispanic	3	1
Asian	1	0

Employing a convenience sample as a basis for understanding perspectives in a population as wide as the US electorate has several limitations. Such a participant group, although geographically and generationally diverse, is not a nationally representative sample. For example, in comparison to voter turn-out, Gen X voters are over-represented (52% of participants in this study/26% of voters), with the Silent (8% of participants/14% of voters) and Boomer (20% of participants/35% of voters) generations underrepresented by the same (Pew Research Center, 2017a); likewise, the participants' average income is higher than a nationally representative sample. A convenience sample, particularly one in which a high level of motivation is required to complete the study task (the interview), may also over- or under-represent certain perspectives.

Potential participants were identified through the researcher's extended contact network; they were solicited initially via e-mail and asked to indicate their interest and informed consent by completing a survey that collected demographic and contact information via a web link. No participants were considered to have specialist political knowledge. In partial compensation for their participation, \$10 per participant was contributed to one of four charities selected by the participant on the survey. Upon receipt of the survey, the participant was contacted to arrange an interview time. The research received a favourable ethical opinion from Kingston University London.

6.3.2 Procedure and Materials

Seeking to gain a multi-dimensional and person-centred perspective on the content and structure of political ideologies, the study collected qualitative interview data. The aim was to explore participants' representations of ideological labels by asking them to engage in a certain level of reflexivity about their ideological identity and attachments. Aware of the current contentious political US environment, it was deemed important to employ a format that minimised the threat of direct confrontation and the social pressure of response that exists in a face-to-face interview. Because ideological identities are voluntary social identities created through social interaction, the interview context (as social interaction) has the potential to affect the data collection if the participant would seek to establish social confirmation of their opinions either directly or from the interviewer's feedback and mannerisms. To this end, the researcher's own ideology was not communicated to the participants directly, and the interview context was de-personalised by conducting interviews via instant messaging platforms (except in four cases where e-

mail was used at the participants' request). The medium of text-based interviewing also benefits from greater visual anonymity which has been shown to increase self-disclosure and alleviate some of the influence of social desirability on participant response (Joinson, 2001). This choice also supports the objective of the "disinterested observer" in the study of social representations as recommended by Bauer and Gaskell (1999, p. 179). To further advance the objectives of comfort and reflexivity, and based on pilot testing of the questions, sample questions were included in the recruiting letter. Although the contra-argument for anonymity is that text-based interviewing does not allow for subtleties of facial expressions and mannerisms to be collected as data, these were not considered integral to the aims of this study. The format is also limited in that it requires some level of typing ability and there is little control over participant distractions.

The first part of the semi-structured interview schedule included approximately 10 open-ended questions that focused on participants' representations of the ingroup and the outgroup. Typical questions were, "what is a liberal?", "what is a conservative?" and "do you consider yourself to be a typical liberal/conservative?". Reflecting the idea that US partisan and ideological identities exist in relation to the nation, the second part of the interview focused on participants' views of the country. Typical questions in this section included "what are your hopes for America's future?" and "how do you think conservatives would describe American values?". An example of the full schedule of interview questions that guided the semi-structured interviews can be found in Appendix A. By allowing the participants to discuss both their own and the opposing ideology, the interview schedule aimed to capture what participants felt were valued differentiators between the two ideological identities and to include meta-representations (what participants

believe others believe) integral to identity (Elcheroth et al., 2011). Interviews were most commonly completed after 60-75 minutes, although some took up to 2 hours. Most interviews were completed using iMessage and Skype (35), but email (4) and Google Hangout (1) were also used. Two participants completed the interview using their phone, while all others used a laptop to participate.

The data were collected in January and February 2018, one year into Donald Trump's presidency. Both the Senate and the House were held by the Republicans. Although there were no particular prominent issues in the media during this period, in Trump's first year he had failed to deliver the Republican healthcare reform bill to repeal the Affordable Healthcare Act ("Obamacare", Glenza, 2018), but had removed certain environmental protections (National Geographic, 2019), cut taxes for corporations (Drucker & Tankersley, 2019), estates and individuals, and signed an executive order to limit immigration from certain countries for security purposes (the "Muslim ban", Department of Homeland Security, 2017). There was little evidence that any particular current issue had an impact on this study as none explicitly surfaced in the participants' discourse.

6.3.3 Data Analysis

The interview transcripts were imported into MAXQDA 2018, a qualitative analysis software application, for organisation and coding. A form of thematic analysis (later renamed 'reflexive thematic analysis [Braun & Clarke, 2020, 2021]) was chosen to explore the data. Due to its epistemological and analytical flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and like the pragmatic epistemology adopted for this thesis, it allows for both essentialist and constructionist theoretical perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Its flexibility means that this method is congruent with the objective

of capturing a construct like ideology: it has the ability to address the ‘space in-between’. Reflexive thematic analysis allows for both inductive and deductive approaches to the data coding and analysis; and both a critical and experiential orientation to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In light of the objective of understanding the representational field for ideological identity content, an inductive approach was taken. This approach employs a bottom-up analysis of the data rather than one driven by particular theoretical objectives. Attention was, however, given to the idea-elements that would constitute the content and structure of a political identity including political policy preferences, values, and social evaluations, as well as other items that might comprise a shared representation including the positioning taken by participants in relation to their own group and to the outgroup.

Prior to initial coding, the data corpus was read and re-read. Initial thematic codes were then generated using a line-by-line approach, ensuring that all of the data were given equal attention. With a view to capturing both the underlying structure of the ideological identity and its content, coding identified both semantic and latent items. In this initial coding, codes were assigned to the entire collection of data, participant by participant. The data were again reviewed by grouping the responses by ideological identity. This review generated additional codes related to areas of consensus as well as those that distinguished between the ideologies, and the body of data was re-reviewed in light of these additional codes. Codes were then pruned to identify and consolidate themes, and these themes were reviewed based on their relevance to the research question. Lexical searches were employed to enhance theme interpretation. The themes were then named, defined, described, and interpreted.

Primary themes, including the ingroup norms and positioning for each group (liberals and conservatives), are discussed in an integrated fashion below. These themes collectively create a narrative for the content and structure of each ideological identity.

6.4 Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the content and structure of US liberal and conservative ideological identities through the social representations participants attributed to them. I found that participants constructed their identities through a number of elements: self-attributions, interpretations of the group ideology, and the positioning of their ingroup identity in relation to the outgroup and to the nation. The extent to which the descriptions invoked differing *types* of content—personal attributes, political issues, personal and political values, and representations of the nation—followed certain patterns within the two ideological identifications. The liberal narrative generally revolved around the individual while the conservative narrative most often reflected political ideology and symbols of the nation. Liberal participants constructed their ideological identity from a personal perspective, citing personal values, morals, and attributes together with a motivation to progress toward a more equal society. Conversely, conservative participants' ideological identities were constructed as stemming directly from an American political philosophy, a perspective that equated conservatism and American national identity.

Three main themes were identified in the representations made by each of the two groups. For the liberal group, these themes were *Issues make a movement*; *My politics, myself*; and *Don't label me* for the liberal group. For the conservative group,

the themes were and *It's political, I'm with the group*, and *Conservatives, to me, are really true Americans*. These themes are supported by sub-themes as indicated in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
<i>Liberal group</i>	
Issues make a movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of political ideological and values terms • Issue-centred talk • Movement towards a better life of individual freedom
My politics, myself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of personal attributes in response to ideological identity question • Openness as connection with people and as critical thinking • Conservatives depicted as in thrall of a system
Don't label me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prototypicality resistance • Group defined by similarity of personal attributes • Instrumental view: Democratic party is the "only game in town"
<i>Conservative group</i>	
It's Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear political ideological talk • Self-reliance as a key value tied to personal and national success
I'm with the Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered themselves to be prototypical • Adhering to typical issue stances or demographic not required for prototypicality • Conservative identity more important than party identity
Conservatives to me are really true Americans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservative values are American values • Liberals support anti-American socialism • Conservative values are necessary for a strong nation

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- The nation and its history should be revered
-

6.4.1 The Liberal Identity: Individuals and Issues

Liberal participants articulated representations of ideological identities that included few specifically political values. Indeed, liberal participants generally resisted categorising themselves as a typical liberal. Representations were largely comprised of a collection of political issue positions and personal attributes that centred on concern for individuals.

6.4.1.1 Issues Make a Movement

Political values were not primary in liberal participants' representations of their ideological identities. When asked to define a liberal in this study, only one liberal participant noted the broad principles commonly attributed to US liberalism of either 'civil rights' or 'equal rights', and the word *equality* was mentioned by just six of the liberal participants in the whole of the data. That is not to say that these principles were not important to the participants, but that it is not in broad political principles that the liberal participants represented their ideological identity. They did however often cite a variety of political positions that could be seen as having their purpose in achieving a more equal society. A lexical search indicated that about half of the participants referred to expanding healthcare and the same proportion referenced education in their talk (both longstanding central issues of the US political left); there was otherwise a wide diversity in the issues represented as core to the liberal ideology, varying from intersectionality (how different types of discrimination interact) to job retraining for the new economy, and from Native American issues to the environment.

While the liberal participants appeared to represent themselves as proponents of specific issues, their link between these issues and a national political ideology was rarely articulated—and perhaps even resisted. Participant 7L described her position as follows:

The liberal ideology itself is not important to me, because it is the SYSTEM of ideas and ideals. I look at each individual issue rather than the whole system.

This talk clearly puts issues ahead of a stated ideology. In fact, “*what defines a liberal will inherently change because of the progressive nature of the beliefs*” (Participant 5L). This response abrogates an opportunity to represent ‘liberal’ in terms of core values, but instead links the group meaning to progress in general, presumably linked to support for certain issues. This statement also suggests that heterogeneous issues may be connected in a common vision of the strategic project that is broader than national political ideology—progress toward a better world, without impediment to individual expression: “*People just need to be able to be who they are. Without judgements.*” (Participant 4L), “*I think it’s wanting to make sure all people have what they need to be the best version of themselves.*” (Participant 10L). These representations speak to a value of freedom—freedom for citizens to realize their true self through a greater degree of equality. Rokeach (1973) proposed that both liberals and conservatives hold freedom in high regard, while liberals also highly value equality. Building on this, Tetlock (1983, 1986) proposed that holding these two conflicting values drives the more complex decision-making and communications of the left. The participants’ representations here demonstrate a process that liberals may use to reconcile these values: by defining freedom not as ‘freedom from government intervention’ (as is typical of conservatives) but as

‘freedom of expression’ and foregrounding equality as the means to provide this freedom.

These representations of shared vision provide little expressed evidence of a commonly employed national political doctrine, common phrases, or vernacular in liberal participants’ discussion of their ideological identity. Yet the common project was evident: liberal participants positioned themselves as moving toward a shared representation of a better way of life, while specific political issues were conceptualised as the milestones that are to be achieved in moving toward this ideal. It is possible that this heretofore unknown world state is difficult to visualise and agree upon, and therefore remains unarticulated. Alternatively, some researchers speculate that a persistent absence of political ideological talk in American left-leaning discourse may be intentional, undertaken to purposely avoid ideological conflict with self-categorised conservatives by focussing on the liberal issues that appeal to this group as operational liberals and to appeal to liberals’ group interests (Grossmann & Hopkins, 2016).

6.4.1.2 My Politics, Myself

In addition to issue positions, liberal identifiers often represented their ideological label in terms of personal values and behaviours. The extent to which these elements were equated with being a liberal was notable not only because of its semantic consistency within the liberal participant group, but for its latent meaning. This talk was often in response to the prompt, “What is a liberal?” (a question ostensibly about political ideology, not personal attributes). By invoking personal attributes in response to this question, the participants brought forth the importance of these elements and positioned the individual at the centre of the identity meaning.

This structure indicates a ‘bottom-up’ influence on political beliefs: the individual, not a prescriptive group ideology, was represented as informing liberal political values.

Participants represented the US liberal ingroup as open, caring, and outward-looking; they saw themselves as self- and societal- improvers, “*seeking to better themselves and society*” (Participant 10L). Consistent with research that correlates measures of the value of openness with liberal self-identification (Schwartz et al., 2010), being ‘open’ was represented by participants as core to the American liberal identity. Participant 17L connected his personal outlook to being a liberal in this way:

I know I enjoy a variety of cultures, a variety of people, I still love to learn and explore, and I think that is the basis of who I am. I find humor in the absurd and as my mother always said it is better to laugh than cry. I seek to find solutions and don't see most things in life as insurmountable but instead to find ways to solve problems and meet people part way without either having to capitulate.

This multifaceted description has openness at its core, defined both as tolerance and as learning. Such a representation reflects the personal values of self-direction and universalism between which liberal political values were found to be positioned in an Italian sample (Schwartz et al., 2010). Openness was most often represented as intellectual curiosity, as described by Participant 8L:

For me, a liberal equates to being open to an array of ideas and perspectives. Continually exposing yourself to new ideas, ways of thinking, etc., with the

express intent of broadening your perspective. Challenging yourself to avoid the trap of egocentricity by tapping into views that may differ from your own, experiencing different cultures and being open to adapting, continually seeking new information/learning, etc.

Participants frequently discussed the critical evaluation that openness affords. This positioning has the effect of validating not only the attribute of openness (because it allows for better reasoning), but it also lends validity to the liberal issues that are the outcome of critical thinking. Importantly, it sets critical-thinking liberals against conservatives who were represented as blindly following ideology. Frequent references were made to the perception that American liberals are “educated” – not necessarily formally, but in the sense of being informed on historical or political issues. Liberal participants represented themselves as thinkers who are hungry for information, and as being in control of their ideas.

I think a liberal is someone who is balanced, uses their intellect, values that consider the best outcomes for making life decisions and is open to possibilities that go beyond ones (sic) own limiting life experience. I think openness is the key. (Participant 17L)

Here, we again note that political ideas and behaviours are driven by the individual. Liberals represented themselves as being more in touch with people, with being more aware, outward-looking, and personally in control of their values. Liberal participants also constructed their positions as morally superior/evolved. Several participants noted that liberals have historically been on the “*right side of history*” (Participant 9L) and aligned themselves with historical figures such as suffragettes

and civil rights activists. A number of participants directly interpreted the difference in liberals and conservatives as a choice between right and wrong. Participant 9L:

Overall, fighting with a conservative on issues is futile if your goal is to sway them. If your argument boils down to “How can you be so cruel?” You will never win. You can’t impart empathy.

Conservatives, on the other hand, were represented by liberal participants as either selfish or as victims of their upbringing, their religion, and their geography – factors that were seen to keep conservatives from the advantages of experience or education that would open them to more liberal ideas. Overall, conservatives were represented by liberal participants as less evolved, as frightened, and pitiable.

Conservative values were positioned as “*a carryover from our relatively recent frontier and agrarian days when everyone pretty much had to shift for themselves*” (Participant 1L), and were seen as hiding their self-interest behind their religion and the Constitution:

It foments a lack of accountability...it’s hard to be wrong when no matter what you do, God is on your side... the God part makes my blood boil because in the name of God you can justify literally any behavior. And delude yourself into shirking any responsibility because God is always going to forgive you. It’s the height of hypocrisy.” (Participant 8L)

Conservatives were seen as “*crazy uninformed*” (Participant 12L), but were empathised with, represented as having been duped by those in power and their doctrines, their religion and (rural) culture.

And, honestly, I really don't think it's 100% their fault; when you trust the wrong politicians or the wrong religious doctrines or believe incorrect facts and figures, this is what happens. They're scared and angry because people have promised them things or told them things aren't true. They don't understand that the people they trust are actually the people that are making money off of the lies they tell them. They don't understand that they are being kept where they are because it benefits the people who put them there and are keeping them there. It's actually pretty sad, really. (Participant 10L)

This positioning by liberal participants of US conservatives as being blinded by socially constructed belief systems is set in contrast to the liberal individual-driven beliefs. The representations cast conservatives as either allowing themselves to be dictated to by societal constructs or as victims of their environment and of elites, setting this against liberals' self-positioning as the more aware, outward-looking, and personally in control of their values. Attributing conservatives' positions to their environment also serves to invalidate conservative positions while allowing liberals to not violate their value of openness to all perspectives. This observation also offers an interesting comment on the 'ideo-attribution effect' phenomenon wherein liberals have been noted to make situational attributions for social problems, while conservatives tend to make personal attributions (e.g., Sniderman et al., 1986). Liberals' tendency to ascribe conditions such as poverty and unemployment to environmental causes has been attributed to reasoning motivated by the need to eliminate the cognitive dissonance that personal responsibility for one's social or economic woes would create for liberal egalitarian values (Skitka et al., 2002). For the liberal participants in this study, there should be no such value conflict related to the idea that conservatives may be responsible for their own political attitudes—yet

the situational attribution persisted. This continuity of attribution type where there is little political ideological value conflict suggests a driver not confined to the political realm.

6.4.1.3 *Don't Label Me*

The importance of individuality to the US liberal identity also came through in liberal participants' representation of their prototypicality. Of the 20 participants who identified as liberal in this study, only four gave an unqualified "yes" when asked if they were a *typical* liberal. Generally, participants expressed an uneasiness with defining typical members of the group (e.g., "*Is there a typical liberal?*" [Participant 7L]). Participants represented the group as having such diversity that a prototype was impossible to imagine: one-quarter of the liberal participants indicated that they were not sure what a typical liberal was or if one actually existed. This perceived ingroup heterogeneity (as compared to the conservative participant group, described below) again speaks to a greater personal, over group, identity (Brewer, 1993). Participants commonly qualified their typicality for their geography, age, or social group:

HA! I don't consider myself too typical in any way. But among the people that I live around in NYC [New York City] and identify with I would be somewhat typical. As part of a larger nation, less typical. (Participant 3L)

Other participants qualified their typicality for their level of political sophistication: being "*more pro-business*" (Participant 1L), "*more informed*" (Participant 10L), "*further along on the advancement of social issues*" (Participant 3L), "*more aware*" (Participant 18L) or more "*active*" and "*intersectional*" (Participant 12L) than most.

Again, few of these qualifications revolve around a discrepancy in beliefs, they are primarily personal attributes, behaviours, and environmental influences, consistent with the higher level of trait attributions by Democrats (Rothschild et al., 2019). This positioning speaks to the perception of the American liberal group as a collection of individuals rather than a group of shared national political ideology; it also supports Ellis and Stimson's (2012) assertion that there is a reluctance to identify with the liberal label in the US—even those who do embrace this label tend to deny typicality. Ellis and Stimson attribute the reluctance to identify as liberal to the negative symbols of Blacks, unions, and urban unrest associated with the label, but the current work offers an additional explanation regarding the incongruences between operational and symbolic ideological identities. The persistent theme of individual expression and the condemnation of blind acceptance in liberal participants' talk raises the possibility that their political identity is seen as a personally derived set of issue positions consistent with the liberal tendency to see themselves as unique (Stern et al., 2014). Such an individual identity construction might defy ascription to a pre-ordained set of political values or beliefs and could be more resistant to political ideological labelling of *any* kind regardless of the symbolic associations.

The relationship between liberal participants and their political labels was further illuminated in representations regarding their related political party. Although some participants represented the Democratic party as too slow and subject to the corrupting influences of power and money, most participants cited little difference between being a liberal and being a Democrat, noting that, although not highly aligned with the participants' beliefs, the party is the "*only game in town*" (Participant 11L).

There really isn't much of a choice at this juncture to be other than [D]emocrat if you are a thinking human being with a concern for the welfare of others. My moderate tendencies are to take people as they are and help them move forward without hard line absolutes. For me the [D]emocrat thing is by process of elimination and the independents are often coming from an unrealistic place that has no hopes of accomplishing something. (Participant 17L)

Together, these observations position both the liberal and Democratic identities as simply “best fit” conduits for what these participants generally described as a personal ideological identity. In sum, liberal participants represented their identity first and foremost as a confederation of individuals who possess particular personality attributes, personal values, and a vision of a better, more equal, world where individuals are able to fully express their personalities and talents. Political ideology was positioned as the result, not the driver, of these representations.

6.4.2 The Conservative Identity: Ideology and the Nation

Unlike liberal participants in this study, conservative participants represented themselves as typical group members and clearly articulated their ideological group’s political beliefs and goals—a system closely linked to the nation.

6.4.2.1 *It's Political*

The conservatives in this study characterised their ideological identity as consisting of a defined set of national political values: limited government, adherence to the constitution, and self-reliance. As Participant 17C concisely expressed, a conservative is...

An individual who respects the constitution of the United States, believes in a society where if you work hard you are allowed to keep the gains of your efforts and you are not unnecessarily burdened by federal or state interference

In contrast to liberal participants' 'personal values' definition of their group, these representations are clearly political: Participant 17C refers to the US, to society, and to federal and state governments. The most common directly noted political belief was limited government, characterised as a founding and Constitutional American value (the alignment of the conservative and American identities is discussed in the section below).

Although not generally referred to directly when prompted to define a conservative, woven throughout participants' talk was the central and pervasive representation uniting the conservative identity: self-reliance. Participant 7C put it this way: *"I believe in personal responsibility. First and foremost get your own house in order before you worry about anybody else's house"*. Self-reliance was seen to be demonstrated at an individual level with personal fiscal responsibility and a sound work ethic. Participant 20C explains the personal importance:

As I grew older and had kids I more and more thought about what things would be like for them when I'm gone from this earth. It became more evident to me that the work ethic that my parents and grandparents instilled in me was THE most important gift they ever gave me. It is the key to success. I wanted my children to know and understand that they were the masters of their own destiny and did not need the government to help succeed. If they worked hard enough they could do/become whatever they desired.

Similar to the liberal participants' valued traits of openness and tolerance, self-reliance was a behaviour that conservative participants valued in themselves and expected of others and of their country. Participant 1C illustrates this by contrasting herself and a colleague:

I worked with a guy named Matt. I was talking with he [sic] and his wife at a dinner one night. They just found out they were expecting and had already decided his wife was not going back to work after having the baby. I was surprised. I knew that they could not live on one salary. Neither of them went to college. He said he couldn't afford it and he didn't want to have tons of loans to pay back. I explained that I went to college and my parents didn't pay for anything. I worked all through school and had financial loans. It took me about five years to pay off the loans but I had a degree that allowed me to have a career instead of just a job. Yes it took time and it was very hard at times but it was worth it. They both said that was stupid and that they could get jobs anytime they wanted. I in a very nice way asked how they would manage with one income. They said that they could get assistance because he only made so much and that she wasn't working. They were only 23 yrs old. I couldn't understand why they were married and having a child when they could not afford to live on their own. This is not what they were thinking?????

This passage supports the narrative of benefits recipients choosing to rely on the state for support, a scenario that is in direct opposition to the conservative principle of self-responsibility. Participant 1C's talk may be seen as constructing the threat posed by assistance programs as an issue of proportional "unfairness". This is consistent

with research that has often linked conservatives' resistance to welfare programmes to concern about free riders (when people take advantage of being able to use a collective good without paying for it). Haidt (2012) explains this reticence through moral foundations theory, arguing that conservatives value fairness as proportionality while liberals value fairness as equality. Participant 1C however goes on to highlight a second aspect of the perceived threat posed by assistance programs: one of societal degradation. This facet of the threat posed by government assistance programs served as a focal point for a number of conservative participants' representations of self-responsibility and were constructed as enabling the systematic removal of citizens' self-reliance. The programmes were variously characterised as supporting "*a destructive lifestyle*" (Participant 1C), noting that "*recipients never learn to fend for themselves*" (Participant 13C), as "*detracting from that [work] ethic and reducing the individuals [sic] feeling of self-worth*" (Participant 20C), and as taking away from our children the "*opportunity to succeed or fail or to make it on their own*" (Participant 9C). This line of argument positions US liberal policy as robbing current citizens and future generations of an important personal characteristic that is represented as the key to both personal and national success. This position takes the welfare debate beyond a simple 'free-rider' issue to a discussion about personal and national character.

6.4.2.2 *I'm With the Group*

The majority of conservative participants considered themselves to be typical without qualification. In participants' descriptions, there was a clear prototype of a conservative. If participants did not consider themselves to be prototypical, the reasons they cited were differences in political issues. Notably, the majority of

conservative participants, without prompting, indicated that they considered themselves to be socially moderate/liberal, most often citing being “*ok with gay marriage*” (Participant 4C), but there were also single instances of varying from prototype on abortion (Participant 6C) and by being irreligious (Participant 17C). None of these positions were represented as being in conflict with seeing themselves as a typical conservative. Such a definition stands in contrast to what is generally regarded as conservative values, including those positions used to assess operational ideological identity. Not unusually—yet in contrast to the liberal participant construction—the conservative ideology was represented as a social group defined primarily by members’ beliefs in the conservative political philosophy.

Ellis and Stimson (2012) describe self-identified conservatives who hold liberal political positions ‘conflicted conservatives’. The researchers attribute this conservative peculiarity to self-interest: in spite of their ascribed ideological identity of limited government spending, citizens prefer liberal policies that confer benefits and services (e.g., Medicare) when they are asked to make decisions on a policy-by-policy basis. The current analysis indicates that the phenomenon may not be limited to a policy-by-policy context. Participants’ conscious acknowledgement of their liberal social stances did not keep them from identifying as a typical conservative, and their fiscal concerns revolved around fiscal responsibility, not simply less spending. This inconsistency not only attests to the strength of the conservative group identification, but also raises a question regarding the operational definition of generally accepted ‘conservative’ positions. If the majority of conservatives do not hold conservative policy positions, perhaps the positions considered to be conservative by political scientists (often based on the willingness of citizens to spend more or less government money or on particular social issues) do not reflect

those considered to be conservative by the general public. Indeed, social representations theory argues that lay thinking does not follow the same rules as expert thinking (Jovchelovitch, 2007). This area requires additional work for a fuller understanding of this incongruence, but the current analysis suggests that there may be space in the content of the conservative identity for what is currently considered to be liberal policy. The content of issue positions held by the political right is discussed further in relation to the analysis in Study 4 (Chapter 9).

In contrast to their readily embraced ideological group membership, there were a significant number of conservative participants who distanced themselves from the Republican party. In line with conservatives' traditional support of limited government, this reluctance to identify with the party appeared to be primarily due to participants' distaste for politicians generally, noting that they felt closer to their ideology than to their party. Participant 1C noted *"I used to consider myself a [R]epublican but feel that the word is more about power than it is about what is best for our nation"*. Such representations are consistent with the right's traditional distrust of government, but they may also be due in part to participants wishing to distance themselves from the unpopular actions of the then current Republican president. However, Participant 15C put it this way: *"Being a conservative is about principles. Being a Republican is about policy"*, where principles are seen as closer to the identity of the right.

6.4.2.3 "Conservatives, to me, are really true Americans"

Conservative beliefs, as represented by the study participants, were commonly equated with American values, success, and strength. A number of conservative participants positioned themselves as the defenders of American

political philosophy, while liberals were often equated with or seen as “*heading toward*” (Participant 18C) socialism: “*Today's liberal in the USA reminds me of what I would call socialism.*” (Participant 9C). By assigning liberals this political ideology, conservative participants both carry over the strong ideological framing of their ingroup to discuss the outgroup and position the outgroup as un-American.

The left has gone so far now that its (sic) as if they don't understand our Constitution or the principles of Capitalism. They, for some bizarre, ideological reason, believe Venezuela or Cuba are a better model. They crave socialism. They live in the wrong country if that is what they want. The 'left' (liberals) in our country, at this point, are pushing socialism/communism with thought control, speech control, etc. (Participant 8C)

Socialism as a threat was mentioned specifically by seven of the conservative participants (note that no liberal participants mentioned the word *socialism*), indicating that it was an entire ideology, not just particular issues or values, that was perceived as a threat. By representing the US political conflict as a battle between two ideologies (American and non-American), conservatives firmly position themselves as the defenders of the country. Participant 3C described the conflict as follows:

our society has been infected with socialism and entitlement. those that are holding true to American values are fighting back. we need to remind ourselves what it means to be an American. and those that can't support who we are need to either move or frankly shut up/back off. this is our constitution and who we are. those socialist views don't belong here. we need to eradicate socialism.

This talk directly links the US conservative self to the nation, with conservative political beliefs at the epicentre. Conservative values were represented, not as an independent political philosophy, but as *the same as* the American founding philosophy.

Positioning conservative and American political philosophies as one in the same allows conservatives to gain a moral high ground as defenders of the nation against the invading philosophy, it increases the importance of fighting for conservative values against the un-American liberal aggressor. The association of socialism with liberalism is clearly embedded in the conservative representation. The anti-American connotations of this ideology may offer another reason for operational liberals to distance themselves from the liberal label: Democrats as well as Republicans highly value their American identities (Huddy & Khatib, 2007).

Conservative participants' American identity was represented as an important social identity and talk linked conservative principles to the country's perceived strength, position in the world, and success:

It is more about creating a country that you are proud of and you want to be a part of. I think conservative values allow the United States to continue down a similar path of those who founded our country. In my opinion it will make us stronger as a country than if we were to adopt more liberal principles. like when the United States is seen as a world power who will help those who need it, but will still stand up against those whose values are in direct opposition to ours. (Participant 6C)

Conservative values were also credited as providing the political philosophy for allowing for “*a strong foundation for innovation*” (Participant 20C). America’s past success was often attributed to the ‘freedom’ afforded by conservative policy:

a while ago, i did some research on inventors. I found that most of the great inventors came from America. I find that fascinating. it means, to me, that in a truly free society, you have the ability to create and rise above all else. and, society will benefit great inventors don't come from places like north korea....which means someone is giving them the technology (Participant 3C)

It is in talk of this type, citing past success as a validation of conservative values, that conservative participants’ reverence for what they represented as their conservative/American political philosophy becomes apparent. American history was seen as “*something that should be honored and revered not changed for the sake of change or change because it’s of popular opinion or simple fallen out of favor*” (Participant 7C). This representation of liberal change as short-sighted and as lacking in respect for the nation was common and is consistent with positioning conservatives as the defenders of the nation. Most conservative participants discussed US liberals as naïve:

As a group I think they mean well, but don’t see the limits as to there (sic) direction or the impact of there (sic) decisions, particularly to the spending. The situation or results of their spending never seems to improve the underlying condition or circumstance. (Participant 18C)

They were generally represented as having little awareness of the threat their policies pose to the nation and to the freedoms of other Americans, they were seen as well-

intentioned but ignorant. There was little attempt to try to account for differences in political orientation through environmental reasons. Liberals were generally seen to allow their emotion overcome their rationality “*screaming at the sky*” (Participant 11C); but some conservatives represented liberal motives as suspicious and selfish: “*They will give away govt money in exchange for votes*” (Participant 14C). By attributing liberal motives to personal emotional and moral flaws, the liberal perspective is discredited.

Conservative participants appeared to revere and to identify with the concept of the American nation, its political philosophy, and its strength and position in the world. By self-identifying as conservatives, they are also identifying as defenders of the American political philosophy. This pervasive alignment speaks to a value that moves beyond, and may operate at a different level than, the traditional political values of freedom, equality, and individualism. Reverence for the nation was a key component of the conservative ideological identity representation. This finding is in line with the moral foundations theory of conservatives tending to support group-enhancing morals (Graham et al., 2009). The group, in this case, is the nation. The finding is also congruent with Jacoby’s (2014) conclusion that support for patriotism was a key differentiator between liberals and conservatives, and that this group-enhancing value stood in opposition to the individual-oriented values of equality and freedom.

6.5 Discussion

The representations liberal and conservative participants offered in this study point to ideological identities that differ in both structure and content, and ultimately in their representations of the nation. Liberal participants’ talk centred on the

individual, represented in terms of the values and characteristics that define the liberal identity as well as the concerns for individual freedoms (defined as personal expression). They represented themselves as a highly diversified group that eluded prototypicality, often eschewing the ‘typical liberal’ label, but they found commonality in personal values and the shared ambition of a better world. It is this nation of individuals upon which this group’s strategic project appeared to be centred. Conservative participants were more apt to embrace their ideological label and to discuss group norms and concerns in ideological terms, both political and national. They positioned themselves as defenders of the nation against the threat of socialism and the weakness of character that it engenders. These participants closely linked their personal, political, and national identities through the thread of self-reliance – seen as the key to the nation’s past and future success – and reverence for the nation. The nation for this group was more abstract and comprised of symbols and ideology.

6.5.1 Distinctions

The first key distinction made in this work is the left’s focus on issues contrasted with the right’s more ideological talk. These observations are consistent with the longstanding but recently revived observation that Democrats represent their position in terms of issues while Republicans represent theirs in terms of ideology (Converse, 1964; Grossmann & Hopkins, 2015).

The second distinction is the readiness with which the right embraces their political ideological identity in contrast to the left. This well-substantiated outcome is often attributed to negative associations with the liberal identity label (Ellis & Stimson, 2012), but moral foundations theory (Graham et al., 2009) also points to a

divide between group- and individual-centric moral reasoning. Building on this work, the conservative participants in this study were better able to envision and align with their group prototype. The conservative group may therefore demonstrate greater group cohesion and entitativity than the liberal identity does, making conservative mobilisation easier. Although there was a unifying personal and world perspective within the liberal group, an ideology as a collection of evolving issues may offer less opportunity for cohesiveness than one with a unifying message.

The third distinction is that of a differing relationship with—and perhaps conceptualisation of—the nation on the right and left. In keeping with the individual- and group-centric divide, the left centred the discussion of their political group around the individual and appeared to conceptualise the nation as an aggregation of individuals; the right conceived the nation as a symbolic community. This position is neatly juxtaposed by Participant 2L: *“We do not think that our military is the most important part of our country’s defense, but that health care, fair wages and education will make our country stronger”*. Although little work has addressed the differing relationship with the nation between the American left and right, this contrast can be gleaned from earlier works on patriotism and nationalism—concepts that seek to conceptualise differing relationships with the nation. Studies employing these concepts have found that the right is more drawn to symbolic representations of the nation (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Schatz et al., 1999; Sullivan et al., 1992), while the left values the right to criticise and to protest government, seeking progress in individual rights (Huddy & Khatib, 2007; Sullivan et al., 1992). Indeed, the right and left appear to have differing ideas of what defines a ‘true American’ along these same lines (Hanson & O’Dwyer, 2019). The primacy of the conflict between these two is similar to Jacoby’s (2014) argument that there currently exists an American

‘cultural war’ where the group-enhancing value of patriotism was directly opposed to the individual-enhancing values of equality and freedom. The current study adds detail to the nature of these opposing forces.

The three distinctions can be seen to re-enforce and support one another through their group- versus individual-centricity; the focus on policies by the left reflects an instrumental relationship with the nation, the purpose of which is to improve the lives of its inhabitants, and the right’s symbolic ideological discussion revolves around group preservation. I propose that in sum, the two perspectives represented by the groups can be most efficiently construed as a contrast in their constructions of the nation. The left’s individual-centric perspective on their ideological identity reflects content that is seen as stemming from the individual (cognitions, traits, and values) and is primarily concerned with the individual needs of the inhabitants of the nation; the right’s group-centric perspective reflects the sanctity of, identification with, and need to support, the nation’s symbols (including the Creed and Constitution), founding design/ideology, and culture. This proposal brings together previous literature on the contrasts between the two groups as noted above, and re-centres possibilities for understanding a common national identity.

6.5.2 Conservative National Attachment

The clear centring of representations on the individual by the liberal participant group is a novel finding. In addition, the finding of the extent to which national identity was invoked by conservative participants to discuss their ideological identification was not anticipated and is not regularly invoked in the study of ideological or partisan identities in the US.

Conservative participants' ideological adherence enabled them to readily envision a prototypical member and to provide clear and consistent meaning for the conservative identity. This engagement with the US conservative identity suggests that this group would lend itself more easily to mobilisation. In addition, with national identity being one of the most accessible and powerful identities for mobilisation (Billig, 1995), the alignment with national values gives conservatives and the Republican party access to a social identity that is highly and chronically salient. By 'owning' American values, conservatives are able to easily cast liberals as the un-American outgroup, and associating conservatism with the country's strength implies that alternative policies may be a threat to this strength. This narrative offers the conservative identity a means by which citizens may express their support for American values. Not only does this positioning give an advantage during settled times, but any external threat to the country is likely to result in citizens moving toward conservatism as a way to express their American identity, such as in the period following September 11, 2001 (Li & Brewer, 2004).

These findings also highlight the importance of the sacred rhetoric that invokes the transcendent authority of the nation. It is possible that sacred rhetoric, which has been shown to decrease the prospects of meaningful deliberation and increase political intensity on particular issues (Marietta, 2008), is a contributor to political polarisation. In addition, these sacred convictions not only galvanise the ingroup but can be used to cast doubt on the moral standing of the outgroup (Marietta, 2008).

The conservative participants' simpler messaging is consistent with previous research (e.g., Tetlock, 1983) and has been associated with a less complex style of

issue evaluation by conservatives (Tetlock, 1986). From a group perspective, this nationally linked, consistent messaging also promotes unification of the US conservative group and stands in contrast to liberal messaging. The conservative participants' association between conservative and American values faced little counter-narrative from liberal participants, a pattern that exists in the wider public (Gidron, 2018). The lack of liberal ideological talk provides no counter for the conservative discussion: US liberals may have little national or political ideological language with which to engage conservatives in what conservatives might feel is the central debate. While conservative participants appeared to prefer to discuss political values, liberals were more likely to focus on issues. When no ideological counter-narrative is offered by those on the left, those on the political right may fill this void—as the conservative participants in this study did—with their own choice of ideological vernacular: socialism.

6.6 Conclusion

This study begins to build an analysis of US political identity from a lay perspective. The findings in Study 1 point to the following contrasts: i) a greater prioritisation of issue positions on the political left, ii) a group-centric expression of political beliefs for conservatives and an individual-centric expression for liberals, and iii) the extension of these expressions to the groups' national attachments, where conservatives tend to conceive the nation in the abstract and rely on symbolic representations and liberals conceive the nation as a collection of individuals for whom the government serves an instrumental function.

These findings of orthogonal identity structure and contrasting national attachments have implications for the study of APP. For example, they elucidate

findings of differential effects on the left and right political groups of APP interventions. The centring of the self in the liberal identity may explain the finding that self-affirmation treatments increased liberal ideological identity, but decreased their partisan identity, and that Democrats were overall more responsive to the treatment than Republicans (West & Iyengar, 2020). They also suggest reasoning for the null effect of priming American identity on political polarisation found by Brandt et al. (2020) by suggesting that national attachment is construed differently by each group, therefore not necessarily prompting cohesion through ingroup meaning. In the next chapter, the next stage of the exploratory study sequence operationalises the Study 1 findings as quantitative measures and assesses their presence in the general population.

7 Chapter 7: Operationalising National Attachment

7.1 Chapter Overview

Through qualitative analysis, Chapter 6 identified particular differences in the way lay persons represented their US ideological identities. The themes for each participant group were distinct, but through them ran a common thread: on the left, representations that centred on the nation as a group of individuals; on the right, representations that centred on a more abstract, group-based, idea of the nation. In this study I argue that these differences in national attachment are core representational structures (*operating principles*) of US ideological identity. In particular, I assert that representations of US ideological identity are currently organised by the distinct and contested principles of *national reverence* (NR) and *individual support* (IS) (together “the principles”); that these principles are the content dimensions towards which those who self-categorize as a conservative or liberal take a stance. The current chapter presents a study that operationalised these two organising principles and quantitatively related them to political outcomes including affective political polarisation.

7.2 Background

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, previous work exploring the link between political identity content and US political polarisation has been largely limited to attempts to understand the relative contributions of issue positions, demographics, and what has been called ‘identity’ (all other factors) (e.g., Dias & Lelkes, 2021; Lelkes, 2021; Mason, 2018b; Orr & Huber, 2020). Without pre-supposing the content of US ideological identities, the first empirical study of this thesis (Study 1,

Chapter 6) identified the representational field of these identities, particularly those elements that differentiated between the two groups. I argued that these elements can be broadly construed as differing perspectives of the nation: one that is individual-centric on the left, and one that is symbolic group-centric on the right.

The purpose of this chapter's study is to operationalise these latent themes as organising principles to enable a quantitative exploration of the relationship between the principles and APP. The quantitative analysis employed in this study (exploratory factor analysis) draws on the social representations theory concept of organising principles (Doise et al., 1993). Doise et al. proposed that by understanding how social objects are defined, structured, and objectified by lay people, it is possible to identify the organisation of the representational field for such an object. These organising principles reflect the core structure that “constitutes the stable and meaningful linkage” of all of the social representation's elements; they identify the content dimensions towards which individuals take a stance (p. 13). When different groups put different weights on the various elements of a representational field (as may be identified in factor analysis), the systematic variations captured by the organising principles provide insight into the nature of these groups. As discussed in Chapter 4, as social representations are the ‘building blocks’ of identity content (Breakwell, 1993a), these organising principles should also serve to predict behaviour related to political identities (Huddy, 2001). This work also serves to extend and triangulate the findings of Study 1 and determine the extent of these national attachment differences in a wider population.

The study first selects items for inclusion that are considered to reflect the hypothesised operating principles—named national reverence (NR) and individual

support (IS) ('the principles'). The principles are then explored by assessing their relationship with ideological identity and political outcomes. The refined items are then subjected to factor analysis to arrive at the final items that are proposed to comprise the organising principles of US ideological identity (Doise et al., 1993).

7.2.1 The Proposed Principles

The proposed principles conceptualise the nation as a symbolic community whose common myths, ideologies, and symbols are revered (NR) on one side; and as a collection of individuals whose equal right to thrive is a priority (IS) on the other. As social identities are constructed in reference to both the acceptance of ingroup identity content and the resistance to outgroup identity content (Turner et al., 1987), both measures are important in understanding the structure of US ideology and the relationship between the identities.

The principles juxtapose the representations of ideological identity identified in Study 1. The conservative group's representations reflected a group-centric concern in which the nation as a symbolic community was regularly invoked. Their talk reflected an affective attachment to the nation and its tangible and intangible symbols, including the flag, the anthem, the founding documents, the 'American system', and the founding fathers. In contrast, the liberal group's representations centred on the individual and reflected talk that described personal attributes of the group members and actions that focussed on promoting issues that, in turn, allow for progress towards self-realisation through equality.

The items selected to comprise the NR organising principle reflect the unassailable high regard with which individuals may hold the symbols, ideas, and

founding of the nation. They link this with the tendency for the political right to speak in terms of ideology and to readily accept group membership found in Study 1 (see also Converse, 1964; Ellis & Stimson, 2012; Grossmann & Hopkins, 2016). NR therefore alludes to the concept of ‘nationalism as religion’ (Brubaker, 2012; Durkheim, 1995; A. D. Smith, 2003) with its sacred texts, symbols and the ‘glorious dead’ (A. D. Smith, 2000). It aims to capture the sacred rhetoric—“non-negotiable convictions grounded in transcendent authority” (Marietta, 2008, p. 767)—with which conservative values may be communicated. NR differs from other measures of conservatism in that it does not rely on explicit reference to subservience to the government or its representatives (e.g., right-wing authoritarianism: Altemeyer, 1996), to outgroups either through reference to domestic others (e.g., social dominance orientation, Pratto et al., 1994), to foreign countries (chauvinism: De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003), to membership criteria of the group (Americanism: Citrin et al., 1994), nor to the people who hold an opposing view (blind patriotism: Schatz et al., 1999). NR aims to capture a more banal—and therefore perhaps more commonly expressed—perspective than ethnic, chauvinistic, or blind ‘hot’ nationalism (Billig, 1995). The principle retains only elements of symbolic patriotism (Schatz & Lavine, 2007) and expands on these to include more intangible symbols including the founding fathers, the ‘American system’, and the Constitution. NR is clearly connected to the traditional idea of American patriotism, thereby potentially imbuing American national identity with conservative identity content.

The IS principle attempts to capture the primacy of the individual and of a movement aimed at promoting issues that allow greater self-realisation for citizens through progress towards equality. The items in the IS principle reflect both equality and the change necessary to achieve it, therefore addressing what is commonly

considered to be the attitudinal dividing lines in ideological identity: the support versus rejection of inequality and the support versus rejection of the status quo, often measured using the right-wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1996) and social dominance orientation (Pratto et al., 1994) scales (Jost et al., 2003). Unlike previous measures, the operationalisation of IS captures both the idea of equality and change in single items, as Study 1 indicated a dependency: a desire for equality and individual expression that underlies the impetus for criticism and change. The principle also attempts to capture the pervasiveness of the centrality of the individual in how the left represents themselves: liberals tended to speak about their identity in terms of character traits as identified in Study 1 (see also Rothschild et al., 2019), view political positions as self-directed (Study 1; Stern et al., 2014) and distance themselves from ideological group labels (Study 1; Ellis & Stimson, 2012). The IS narrative is less about affect towards the nation, than it is about what the nation owes to its people.

To a degree, these constructs echo Kelman's (1997) national attachment theory that juxtaposes sentimental (perception of the group as representative of personal identity) and instrumental (perception of the group as meeting personal needs and interests) involvement with the nation. As the name implies, sentimental involvement is an affective attachment in which the self and group are highly intertwined. Conversely, an instrumental attachment is more affectively detached and instead focuses on the nation as a provider to the individual. This distinction was operationalised by Schatz and Lavine (2007) by contrasting measures that reflected the physical symbols and ceremonial activities of the nation with the "functioning of the nation's social, political, and economic systems, and concern for the nation's capability to provide instrumental benefits to its citizens" (p. 334). The NR principle

expands on this idea of symbolic representations to include non-physical symbols of the nation including the Constitution and founding fathers, and the perceived founding ideology of the nation. Schatz and Lavine's operationalisation of instrumental involvement amended Kelman's definition to focus not on benefits to the self, but on benefits to all citizens and on the functioning of governmental systems. The IS principle drops references to government systems, but continues this focus on the benefits to citizens, expanding on this to include intangible benefits of equality and the idea of progress.

7.2.2 Research Questions

This study sought to operationalise the organising principles of ideological identity found in Study 1. Specifically, the aims were to determine (i) whether the items comprising the two proposed organising principles were empirically distinct and internally reliable, (ii) whether the resultant factors were valid substantive reflections of these identities by assessing the extent to which the principles were significantly and substantively associated with liberal and conservative self-categorisations, (iii) to what extent the identified principles were significant and substantive predictors of political outcomes, including APP and voting behaviour, and (iv) whether there were any asymmetries in these analyses when comparing the results on a sub-group (liberal/conservative) basis.

7.3 Method

This study explores the proposal that, in the current US context, NR and IS are conceptually distinct factors that describe lay persons' understandings of US liberal and conservative identity content.

7.3.1 Construct Validity

Items that reflect each organising principle were selected and subjected to construct validity and pilot testing. A survey of 30 statements (see Online Appendix A) was newly constructed to reflect the theoretical organising principles of ideological identity representations. The construct related to liberals was named individual support (IS), and the construct related to conservatives was called national reverence (NR). The items comprising these measures were sourced from previous research that spoke to facets of the hypothesised principles, taking wording from the Study 1 study as well as others (e.g., Hanson & O'Dwyer, 2019; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Schatz et al., 1999; Sullivan et al., 1992). Five individuals (PhD students and staff) were asked to match the statements with the principles' definitions as follows:

Individual support: the personal importance of, concern for, or identification with the welfare of the individual inhabitants of the nation.

National reverence: the personal importance of, concern for, or identification with the nation's symbols, doctrine, ideology, strength, and culture.

These statements also provided the basis for an 11 January 2019 survey pilot of 50 participants (recruited using the online recruitment platform Prolific). The pilot participants were asked to rate their agreement with each item on a scale from 0 to 6 and were also asked to comment on the wording of the questions and the questionnaire's overall ease of use. Based on the construct validity feedback, the pilot participants' feedback, and analysis of item internal consistency, the survey items were pared, and wording was amended to more appropriately reflect the principles under enquiry. In particular, questions intended to capture the perspective that political positions stem from the individual (e.g., "my political positions are a

reflection of my personal character”) proved inconsistent and were eliminated from the IS measure to increase internal reliability. Eighteen items (eight IS and ten NR items) were retained to form the survey for the main study (refer Table 4).

7.3.2 Participants

The survey data for the main study was collected online using Qualtrics and participants were recruited through the online participation platform, Prolific (<https://prolific.ac>). MacCallum et al. (1999) suggest that the necessary sample size in common factor analysis depends on several aspects of the study, including the level of communality of the variables (the proportion of the variable that is accounted for by the common factors) and the level of overdetermination of the factors (the degree to which the factor is clearly represented by a sufficient number of variables). Highly overdetermined factors are considered to be factors that have high loadings on at least three to four variables and exhibit good simple structure. Other considerations included that, for wide communalities (varying from .2 to .8), sample size has little difference for samples with at least 5 variables per factor and 20 participants per variable (Hogarty et al., 2005; Osborne et al., 2008). In addition, a ratio of 20 variables to three factors produces no increase in accuracy in sample sizes over 200, even with low communality (MacCallum et al., 1999). Without knowing the communalities until data were collected, a wide communality was conservatively estimated, and given the 8:1 and 10:1 variable-to-factor ratios for the original principles, it was reasonable to project a minimum of five variables per factor loading. A conservative initial sample size of 360 (20 participants/variable x 18 variables) was therefore selected.

Because the objective was to describe the social representations of ideological identity, participants were restricted to those who indicated that they considered themselves to be either liberal or conservative with the recruiting platform. To ensure the authenticity of this filter, the question as to participants' ideological identification was asked again within the survey. Any participants who indicated an ideological identity that did not match their profile were removed and replaced (a total of one 'liberal' and ten 'conservative' participants. Table 3 below provides selected demographic characteristics of the participant group; it also indicates sample statistics for a nationally representative sample.

Table 3

Participant Demographic Information

	Conservatives	Liberals	Total	Benchmark
	<i>n</i> = 180	<i>n</i> = 182	<i>n</i> = 362	
<i>Age</i>				
<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	38.22 (13.89)	34.50 (12.73)		
Range	18-75	18-69		
<i>Ethnicity</i>				
White	155 (86%)	139 (76%)	81%	69% ^a
Black	6	9	4%	11% ^a
Hispanic	13	7	6%	12% ^a
Asian	3	15	5%	
Other	3	12	4%	
<i>Income</i>				
< \$50,000	84	81	46%	42% ^b
\$50,000-\$100,000	61	78	38%	30% ^b
\$100,000-\$200,000	27	23	14%	21% ^b
>\$200,000	8	0	2%	7% ^b
<i>Education</i>				
Some high school	0	2	1%	9% ^a
High school graduate	20	12	9%	29% ^a
Some college	69	73	39%	31% ^a
College degree	67	62	51% ^c	31% ^{a, c}
Post-graduate degree	24	33		

Note: ^a2016 American National Election Studies survey of registered voters. ^b2016 American Community Survey. ^cat least college graduate.

The sample was less ethnically diverse and less affluent than a representative sample, and the participants were more educated. Although more educated citizens tend to have more coherent political belief systems (Delli Carini & Keeter, 1991; Kinder & Kalmoe, 2017), as the primary purpose of this study was to compare sets of attitudes—not the extent of these attitudes in the population—this more educated population was considered adequate for the purposes of this study. However, because the principles assume a level of political understanding (e.g., “Today’s Constitutions says...” and “Our country’s policies...”), the descriptive power of the principles may be reasonably expected to be weaker in a less politically engaged sample. The main study was conducted in the week beginning 1 April 2019.

7.3.3 Measures

A copy of the full survey is included in the Online Appendix B to this thesis.

National reverence (NR) and individual support (IS). Participants indicated their agreement or disagreement with the 18 items indicated on Table 4 on a 7-point Likert scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

Ideological identity. Participants indicated their ideological self-categorisation on a 7-point Likert scale from *strong liberal* to *strong conservative*.

Operational identity. Operational identity represents the conceptualisation of political ideology as a set of issue positions (Ellis & Stimson, 2012). Measures of operational identity vary widely. Aiming for consistency within the research topic, operational identity was measured in line with Mason’s (2018b) paper on the relative

contributions of operational and symbolic identity to ideological identity. Six items assessed participants' support for political issues: abortion, same-sex marriage, gun control, healthcare, the relative importance of reducing the deficit or unemployment, and immigration. The six issue items were rescaled from 0 to 1 and recoded with higher scores indicating greater conservatism. The items for this operationalisation of operational identity are included in Appendix B.

Affective political polarisation. Participants indicated their feelings towards liberals and conservatives (separately) on a sliding scale from 0 (coldest) to 100 (warmest). A number of dependent variables have been used over the years to measure APP, the most common of which are feeling thermometers (e.g., "how warmly do you feel towards X?") and social distance measures. Social distance measures refer to measures related to, for example, how happy the participant would be having their child marry someone from the other party, or about having close friends or neighbours that are members of the opposite party. The ability of these social distance measures to accurately capture APP has been questioned however, with experimental evidence suggesting that the measure regarding children marrying a person from the other party is more about not wanting to talk politics with the new in-law than it is about having an in-law from a different political party, therefore conflating the dislike of political discussion with dislike of the group member (Klar et al., 2018). Druckman and Levendusky (2019) compared measures of trust, trait allocation, and feeling thermometers to social distance measures. Feeling thermometers were highly correlated with trust and the positive and negative traits allocated to the other party; the social distance measures correlated with these measures at less than half the rate. Social distance measures are therefore considered useful tools for perhaps predicting particular discriminatory behaviours; the

measures however appear to include elements other than a tendency to dislike and distrust the opposing political group. Druckman and Levendusky conclude that the general measures such as feeling thermometers “seem optimal for understanding citizens’ self-images and prejudicial feelings” (p. 119). Feeling thermometers do have some inherent limitations, however. For example, such measures may reflect individual differences in warmth or coolness towards ‘outsiders’ generally; they also only account for approach and avoidance (two emotions), not a must-faceted response.

Vote. Participants indicated whether they 1) voted for Hillary Clinton, 2) voted for Donald Trump, 3) voted for a third-party candidate, or 4) didn’t vote in the 2016 presidential election.

Cultural threat and national security threat. These constructs were each assessed using three items. Cronbach’s alpha for cultural and security threat were .90, and .79, respectively (MacDonald’s $\omega = .90$ and $.81$, respectively). All scales were constructed for the purpose of this study, borrowing some items from previous studies (Schatz & Lavine, 2007; Schatz et al., 1999). Cultural threat items were: “Widespread adoption in the US of cultural practices from foreign countries would trouble me because it might change or water down American culture too much”, “As the population make-up of the US changes, it is increasingly important to support the traditional American way of life”, and “These days, I am afraid the American culture is threatened by immigration”. National security threat items were: “America's weak borders are a serious security threat”, “The US is more vulnerable to foreign attack than it has ever been”, and “Any weakening of US defences increases the likelihood of attack”. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with

each statement on a standard 7-point Likert scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

Control variables. Information regarding age, education level, race, and income were collected to use as control variables in regressions.

7.3.4 Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis was employed to determine that the items comprising each principle were empirically distinct. The study assessed pre-proposed factors that were designed to identify inter-group variations through a summary of identified inter-individual differences. As the analysis was aimed at describing opposing sides to a conflict, the exploratory factor analysis had the potential to produce a single factor with both pro-traits and con-traits, which would be in keeping with the traditional idea of ideology being on a continuum of opposing opinion. The analysis therefore included a fit comparison between a two-factor and a one-factor model.

The construct validity of these factors/organising principles were tested through correlational and regression analysis to assess their relationship with their ingroup and outgroup political identities. Conservative national attachment of varying definition is linked to needs for security and exclusion (Bonikowski & DiMaggio, 2016; De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Kinnvall, 2004; Schatz et al., 1999). Convergent and divergent validity is therefore assessed by investigating the relationship between measures for ‘cultural threat’ and ‘security threat’ (Schatz et al., 1999). National reverence was expected to be positively correlated with and to significantly predict both cultural and national security threat. Because cultural threat

involves oppression of the individual, individual support was expected to be negatively related to cultural threat, but not related to security threat.

As the purpose in identifying the constructs was to elucidate the connection between self-categorisation and political behaviour, the analysis concluded with the identified principles employed to predict political behaviours including APP and voting behaviour. Within social identity theory, the extent to which prejudice is precipitated by ingroup love or outgroup hate is debated (Amira et al., 2019; Lelkes & Westwood, 2017; Tappin & McKay, 2019), and little work has been undertaken to identify any asymmetries between the left and right. In addition, West and Iyengar (2020) recommend examining out-party animus separately as in-party affect is more responsive to saliency and timing. The relationship between the principles and APP was therefore explored on a sub-group (liberal/conservative) as well as a whole-group basis. Affect towards liberals and conservatives for the whole sample is presented, and subsequently the extent to which feeling towards the ingroup and outgroup could be described in terms of the principles is explored.

7.4 Results

Unless otherwise noted, all analyses were conducted in JASP (JASP Team, 2019). Sampling adequacy (assessed using SPSS, version 24) was excellent with KMO of .95 (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999), Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated that the correlation matrix was not random ($\chi^2(153) = 4879.97, p < .001$), and there were no missing data.

7.4.1 Factor Analyses

The NR and IS items were submitted to an unconstrained exploratory factor analysis. Parallel analysis with Promax rotation indicated a two-factor model. Because it was anticipated that the factors would be correlated, an oblique rotation was selected. To confirm this extraction, an exploratory factor analysis in SPSS using maximum likelihood estimation produced two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00 (9.3 and 2.4). A scree-plot under both analyses clearly suggested a two-factor model.

As shown in Table 4, with three exceptions (discussed below), the NR items loaded on the first factor and the IS items loaded on the second factor. The two factors explained 65% of the variance (as calculated in SPSS). The latent IS factor explained 13% of the observed variance in its items, while latent NR factor accounted for 52% of the observed variance.

Table 4

Exploratory Factor Analysis of NR (Factor 1) and IS (Factor 2) Items

		Factor 1	Factor 2
Individual support items:			
1	For too many people in this country, the chance to make the most of themselves is limited	-.37	.55
2	Our country's policies need to evolve to reflect the needs of the current population	-.21	.68
3	We cannot have equality of opportunity in this country with so many starting life at a disadvantage	-.36	.60
4	Actively supporting political change shows that you care about this country's people	.06	.63
5	It is important to progress American society toward a better way of life for all	-.01	.79
6	We should do more to make sure every American has an equal chance to get ahead in life	-.02	.83

7	To make the nation stronger, we need to take better care of our people	-.06	.71
8	It is important to ensure that all Americans have the liberty to act and think as they consider most appropriate	.31	.32
National reverence items:			
9	It is important to preserve the American way of life	.83	-.03
10	By design, the American system provides equal opportunity for all Americans	.70	-.27
11	The strength of America depends on citizens' self-reliance	.78	.04
12	The founding fathers have given us a complete guide to run the country	.74	-.13
13	The American flag and national anthem should be revered as the sacred symbols they are	.85	.00
14	The great success of individuals and business in America shows that the American system works	.80	-.14
15	My political beliefs simply reflect American founding values	.75	-.02
16	Honoring the flag says a lot about who I am	.87	-.01
17	Today's Constitution is all we need to know about what is right for the country	.72	-.15
18	The American values of self-reliance, equality, freedom, and free market are equally important	.74	.08

Note: items in bold were retained.

Items with loadings of at least .32 on the specified factor, no cross-loading (Osborne et al., 2008), and a difference in factor loading across the group and individual perspective factors of at least .3 were retained. According to these criteria, all ten of the NR and five of the original eight IS items were retained, refining IS to primarily represent support for progress (change), equality, and action ('doing more') for citizens, broadly reflecting the egalitarianism on which liberal ideology is based.

The reasons for the non-retention of items are, in themselves, interesting findings. Items 1 ("For many too many people in this country, the chance to make the most of themselves is limited") and 3 ("We cannot have equality of opportunity in this country with so many starting life at a disadvantage") loaded positively on Factor 2, but also loaded significantly negatively on Factor 1. Both of these items

represented a view that equality of opportunity is not available for all American citizens—a clear dividing line between the two factors—but the cross loading required elimination of the items. This issue is captured less directly in item 6 (“We should do more to make sure every American has an equal chance to get ahead in life”), and in item 10 (“By design, the American system provides equal opportunity for all Americans”), but the idea of opportunity as ideological difference may warrant further investigation. In addition, item 8 (“It is important to ensure that all Americans have the liberty to act and think as they consider most appropriate”) had low loadings on both factors and had an average communality (calculated in SPSS) of less than .2 (Child, 2006), so was removed. Removal of the item that represents the value “freedom” due to agreement on the value lends support to Rokeach’s (1973) assertion that liberals and conservatives equally support freedom values, but conflicts with Jacoby’s finding that this value is of relatively low importance to conservatives (Jacoby, 2014).

As expected, the two factors were highly correlated ($r = -.58$). A two-factor model fit of the data ($\chi^2(76) = 254.62$, $\chi^2/df = 3.35$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = 0.08, TLI = .94, 90% CI = 0.07 – 0.09) is far superior to a constrained one-factor model ($\chi^2(90) = 896.65$, $\chi^2/df = 9.96$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .16, TLI = .76). These findings support the contention that the two principles, though related, are empirically distinguishable.

The retained items (IS: items 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, NR: items 9-18) are highly reliable with Cronbach’s alpha equalling .87 (MacDonald’s $\omega = .87$) for IS, and .95 ($\omega = .95$) for NR. These items form the multi-item scales used in the following analyses. As NR ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.56$) skewness (-0.25) is approximately symmetric (absolute

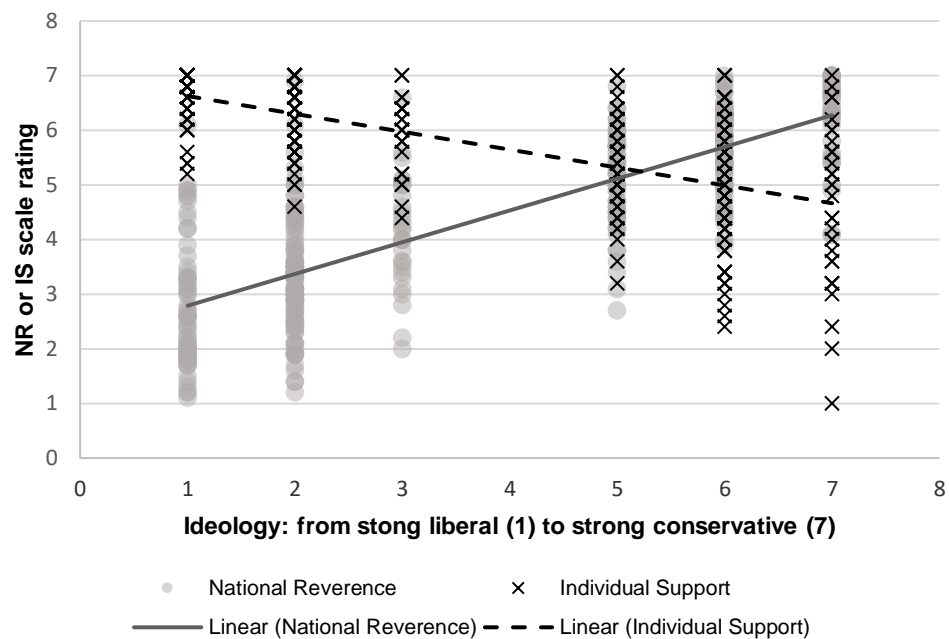
value of skewness $< .5$), and IS ($M = 5.70$, $SD = 1.11$) skewness (-0.97) is moderate (absolute value < 1.0), calculations were made based on normal distribution.

7.4.2 Construct Validity: Ideological Identity

To assess construct validity, relationships between the principles and participants' ideological self-categorisations were calculated. Both the NR and IS principles were highly and significantly correlated with ideological identity, though NR was the stronger of the two. IS was highly correlated with the more liberal ($r = -.63$) self-categorisations, while NR was highly correlated with the more conservative ($r = .80$) self-categorisations. A similar—though slightly less substantial—relationship was found between the principles and party identity: correlations were $R^2 = .73$ and $R^2 = -.56$ ($p < .001$) for NR and IS respectively Figure 4 below illustrates the ideological distribution of responses to the NR and IS scales ($n = 362$, 180 liberals, 182 conservatives).

Figure 4

Scale Responses by Ideology



The extent to which the identified perspectives may provide description of political self-categorisation was further assessed through a linear OLS regression that included the two principles along with controls for operational ideology, race (white = 1), age, income, and education. OLS regression estimates for these identities are in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Regression of NR and IS Principles on Ideological Identity Measure (n = 362)

	Principles		With controls		
	B (SE)	β	B (SE)	β	
NR	.89 (.05)	0.65 ***	.69 (.05)	0.50 ***	
IS	-.56 (.07)	-0.29 ***	-.36 (.07)	-0.19 ***	
Operational identity			.60 (.08)	0.30 ***	
Ethnicity			-.05 (.06)	-0.03	
Age			-.01 (.01)	-0.04	

Income			.18 (.08)	0.07	*
Education			-.05 (.07)	-0.02	
Intercept	3.11 (.52)	***	1.86 (.60)	1.86	**
Adjusted R^2		.70	***	.75	***

Note: Identity measures scaled such that more conservative is more positive. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The principles significantly predicted ideological identity (adjusted $R^2 = .70$, $p < .001$), with NR contributing more than twice the predictive value of IS. The principles are therefore considered to be useful descriptors of ideological identity content. The two principles explained less of the variation between the two parties (adjusted $R^2 = .57$, $p < .001$).

The second model demonstrates that the principles contributed descriptive value over and above operational identity and demographics. NR was the most significant predictor of ideological identification ($\beta = -0.50$, $p < .001$), followed by operational identity ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < .001$), and IS ($\beta = -0.19$, $p < .001$). Income was the only other significant, though minor, predictor of ideological identity ($\beta = 0.07$, $p = .016$).

An analysis of this model within ideological groups is set out in Table 6 and Table 7 below.

Table 6

Regression of Principles and Controls on Ideological Identities within the Conservative Group

	B (SE)	β		B (SE)	β	
NR	0.36 (.05)	0.44	***	0.39 (.06)	0.47	***
IS	-0.10 (.04)	-0.16	*	-0.12 (.04)	-0.19	**
Operational identity				-0.09 (.07)	-0.10	
Ethnicity				0.02 (.06)	0.02	
Age				-0.00 (.00)	0.07	

Income		0.05 (.06)	0.06
Education		-0.02 (.06)	-0.03
Intercept	4.34 (.39) **	4.66 (.53) ***	
Adjusted R^2		.23 **	.22 ***

Note: Identity measures scaled such that more conservative is more positive. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 7

Regression of Principles and Controls on Ideological Identities within the Liberal Group

	B (SE)	β		B (SE)	β	
NR	-0.17 (.04)	-0.30 ***		-0.13 (.04)	-0.22 **	
IS	0.36 (.08)	0.33 ***		0.27 (.08)	0.24 ***	
Operational identity				-0.28 (.07)	-0.29 ***	
Ethnicity				-0.02 (.04)	-0.04	
Age				0.00 (.00)	0.02	
Income				-0.05 (.06)	-0.05	
Education				0.08 (.05)	0.10	
Intercept	-3.57 (.53) **			-3.02 (.59) ***		
Adjusted R^2		.23 **		.29 ***		

Note: Identity measures scaled such that more conservative is more positive. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The results affirm the significant descriptive value of NR and IS identified in the first analysis within both conservative (adjusted $R^2 = .23$) and liberal (adjusted $R^2 = .23$) identities. This analysis also indicates two primary ideological asymmetries. In the first instance, the relative predictive values of the principles differ. For conservatives, the predictive value of NR ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < .001$) was substantially greater than IS ($\beta = -0.16$, $p = .015$), while the predictive values for liberals were much more similar ($\beta_{NR} = -0.30$, $p < .01$, $\beta_{IS} = 0.33$, $p < .001$). In addition, the relative predictive value of operational identity and principles varies substantially between the ideological groups. For conservatives, NR was the largest contributor ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < .001$) and operational identity was non-significant ($\beta = -0.10$, $p = .07$). In contrast,

for liberals, operational identity was the largest predictor ($\beta = -0.29, p < .001$) and is similar in predictive value to IS ($\beta = 0.24, p < .001$) and NR ($\beta = -0.22, p < .01$). This finding quantifies the prominent role of issues in the liberal identity identified in Study 1 and in previous literature (e.g., Grossmann & Hopkins, 2016).

7.4.3 Convergent and Divergent Validity

Additional validity testing of the measures was undertaken by analysing the constructs' convergence and divergence with perceived threats to the country as set out in

Table 8 below. As a construct related to both conservatism and nationalism, cultural and security threat were used (as Schatz et al. [1999] did to validate 'blind patriotism') to assess the principles.

Table 8

Cultural and Security Threat: Pearson Correlations and Regression Coefficients (Standard Error in Brackets)

	Cultural			Security		
<i>Person correlations:</i>						
National reverence	.80	***		.77	***	
Individual support	-.61	***		-.46	***	
<i>Regression coefficients:</i>						
	<u>B (SE)</u>	<u>β</u>		<u>B (SE)</u>	<u>β</u>	
National reverence	0.81 (.04)	0.67 ***		0.80 (.04)	0.72 ***	
Individual support	-0.44 (.06)	-0.26 ***		-0.13 (.06)	-0.09 *	
Intercept	2.38 (0.46)		***	1.05 (0.48)		*
Adjusted R^2		.69	***		.59	***

Note: * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

As predicted, correlations and linear regressions indicate that NR is positively and significantly related to both cultural and security threats. IS is, to less of an extent, negatively related to cultural threat, and minimally related to security threat.

Because cultural threat involves oppression of the individual, it is reasonable that individual support is negatively related to this measure. The measure of security threat, on the other hand, stands apart from individual expression and is therefore less strongly related to individual support.

7.4.4 Political Outcomes

The predictive utility of the principles was assessed by exploring their relationship with APP and voting behaviour.

7.4.4.1 Affective polarization

Descriptive statistics for the liberal and conservative thermometers by group are in Table 9 below:

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics: Mean and (Standard Deviation)

Conservatives' feelings towards:		Liberals' feelings towards:	
Conservatives	Liberals	Conservatives	Liberals
80.2 (15.6)	20.5 (22.4)	14.9 (18.9)	77.9 (19.1)

Although there is a similar range of ratings between the ingroup and outgroup, conservatives indicated a smaller difference between mean ingroup and outgroup feelings (59.7 'degrees') than the liberal group did (63.0 'degrees'), and the mean outgroup ratings from the liberal group is significantly lower than the outgroup ratings by conservatives of liberals ($t(360) = -2.56, p = .01, d = -.27$). For the sample as a whole and then by group, the correlation and regression coefficients for the principles and feelings towards conservatives and liberals are set out in Table 10 and

Table 11 below. Correlations with ideological identity are displayed for comparative purposes.

Table 10

Pearson Correlations and Regression on Outgroup Feeling Thermometers, Whole Sample

	Feelings towards conservatives			Feelings towards liberals		
<i>Person correlations:</i>						
NR	.78	***		-.68	***	
IS	-.56	***		.57	***	
<i>Linear regression:</i>						
	<u>B (SE)</u>	<u>β</u>		<u>B (SE)</u>	<u>β</u>	
NR	0.16 (0.88)	0.68	***	-11.82 (0.97)	-0.52	***
IS	-6.82 (1.23)	-0.21	***	9.61 (1.36)	0.30	***
Intercept	15.37 (9.68)			46.94 (10.69)		
Adjusted R^2	.64		***	.52		***

Note: *** $p < .001$

Table 11

Pearson Correlations and Regression on Outgroup Feeling Thermometers, by Group

	Conservatives towards liberals			Liberals towards conservatives		
<i>Person correlations:</i>						
NR	-.33	***		.27	***	
IS	.22	**		-.16	*	
<i>Linear regression:</i>						
	<u>B (SE)</u>	<u>β</u>		<u>B (SE)</u>	<u>β</u>	
NR	-8.17 (1.81)	-0.31	***	0.25 (1.19)	0.25	***
IS	3.75 (1.40)	0.19	**	-0.10 (2.30)	-0.10	
Intercept	47.45 (12.97)			20.84 (16.09)		
Adjusted R^2	.14		***	.07		***

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

For the whole sample ($n = 362$), both principles were significantly correlated with and were significant predictors of feelings towards conservatives and liberals.

NR was significantly and strongly correlated with feelings towards both ideological groups; the principle was positively correlated with feelings towards conservatives ($r = .78, p < .001$) and negatively correlated with feelings towards liberals ($r = -.68, p < .001$). IS correlates were lower, being moderately negatively correlated with feelings towards conservatives ($r = -.56, p < .001$) and moderately positively correlated with feeling towards liberals ($r = .57, p < .001$). Similarly, NR was a better predictor of these thermometer ratings than was IS. On a full sample basis, the two principles significantly predicted feelings towards conservatives and liberals (adjusted $R^2 = .64, p < .001$; adjusted $R^2 = .52, p < .001$; respectively), with both principles contributing to the equations in partial opposition. The principles are therefore considered significant predictors of ideological affect.

In the breakdown by group (liberals: $n = 180$; conservatives: $n = 182$), NR played a significant role in how both conservatives and liberals regarded their outgroup ($r = -.33, r = .27, p < .001$), closely mirroring correlations between self-categorisation and outgroup affect ($r = -.37, r = .29, p < .001$, respectively). IS was a significant, though smaller, correlate of outgroup affect for both groups ($r = .22, p = .01$; $r = -.16, p = .031$; respectively). Together, the variance in affect explained by the principles (conservative group: $R^2 = .14, p < .001$, liberal group: $R^2 = .07, p < .001$) was similar to that explained by ideological identity (conservative group: $R^2 = .13, p < .001$, liberal group: $R^2 = .08, p < .001$), suggesting a strong predictive value for the principles.

7.4.4.2 Voting

The logistic regressions on participants' 2016 presidential vote for either Donald Trump ($n = 130$) or Hillary Clinton ($n = 130$) are laid out in Table 12 below.

Table 12*Logistic Regression on 2016 Vote*

	Estimate	SE	Odds ratio	z	p
National reverence	1.58	0.22	4.87	7.27	< .001
Individual support	-1.20	0.27	0.30	-4.52	< .001
Intercept	-0.44	1.80	0.65	-0.24	0.81

Nagelkerke's $R^2 = .74$ *Note:* Vote level 'Donald Trump' coded as class 1.

The principles together significantly predicted voter presidential choice: $\chi^2(257) = 210.142$, $\chi^2/df = 0.81$, $p < .001$, AIC = 156.29, and both principles were significant contributors to the prediction. The model has a sensitivity of .91 and a specificity of .85. Nagelkerke's R^2 of .74 indicates a strong relationship between the predictors and presidential vote choice in 2016. For comparative purposes, simple logistic regressions using ideological identity and operational identity result in Nagelkerke's R^2 of .85 and .62, respectively. The odds ratio indicates that when NR was raised by one unit the odds of voting for Donald Trump became 4.87 times more likely (95% CI = 3.18 - 7.45). Conversely, when IS was raised by one unit, the odds of voting for Trump became less likely by about one-third (odds ratio = .30, 95% CI = .18 - .51). This regression not only highlights the predictive power of the principles, but also their nature as oppositional perspectives predicting political behaviour.

7.5 Discussion

Drawing on a social representations approach, in this chapter two measures (NR and IS) were constructed to reflect the organising principles of the social representation of US ideological identity and found them to be valid and reliable. NR

reflects a regard for the nation as symbolic community whose common myths, ideologies, and symbols are revered; IS captures a perspective that the nation is a collection of individuals whose equal right to thrive is a priority that is accomplished through progress towards equality. The principles were employed by both groups—strongly supported by one and resisted by the other—in predicting ideological self-categorisations and the political behaviours of 2016 presidential voting and affective political polarisation. The principles were recognised by both sides as being content dimensions towards which they take a stance, and therefore appear to be important discourses in mobilising political support.

This work supports and extends previous literature that asserts that Democrats and Republicans are different kinds of parties (e.g., Grossmann & Hopkins, 2016), that conservatives tend toward binding morals and liberals toward individuating morals (Graham et al., 2009), and that patriotism is construed differently by the US right and left (Hanson & O’Dwyer, 2019; Huddy & Khatib, 2007). The identification of these organising principles contributes a new perspective to the study of US ideological identity and not only provides insight into what US citizens mean when they identify as a liberal or conservative, but also into how these representations relate to each other and to political behaviour.

A primary finding in this study is the significant role that NR played in both the conservative identity content and the political outcomes under examination. Conservatism is often described in terms of moral traditionalism, economic libertarianism, and national-security hawkishness, but the current study clearly identifies NR as a facet of conservatism that is important to self-categorisation. In addition to having a significant role in voting preference, NR significantly influenced

positive views of conservatives, both by the ingroup and the outgroup, and in conservatives' negative feelings towards liberals. This construct offers significant descriptive power for ideological identity and a novel predictive measure for political outcomes.

Because national identity is one of the most accessible and powerful social identities in the influence of political behaviour (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a; Sullivan et al., 1992), an alignment of conservative and national identity representations is potent. It reinforces conservative identity and gives conservatives the power to shape representations of national identity, casting the political left as outsiders. From an ideological identity perspective, an alignment of national identity imbues the conservative identity with the moral project of preserving the nation, a highly motivating and a putatively selfless objective. Inherent in the power to shape national identity representations is the power to influence who is perceived as the outgroup. The corollary of a national identity anchored in conservative identity is a liberal identity in conflict with national identity. The consequence is that both the liberal identity and the related representations of equality and progress captured in IS are positioned as being unpatriotic. The left, with a different conception of patriotism (Hanson & O'Dwyer, 2019; Huddy & Khatib, 2007; YouGov, 2018), and lacking a similar influence over national identity, remains to defend themselves against a conservative definition of patriotism. Casting the opposition as unpatriotic has consequences for the prospects for conflict resolution. Common identities such as national identity can foster cooperation, and conflict resolution has long sought common ground in common identity; but if the representations related to the common identity is divisive, the power of national identity to ameliorate conflict is diminished.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter's study (Study 2a) is a first step in validating and exploring two measures (NR and IS) that reflect the organising principles of the social representations of US ideological identity. In addition to demonstrating the descriptive and predictive utility of the principles, the work in this chapter identified structural differences in conservative and liberal identity content; the relative prioritisation of issue positions in the liberal identity versus the conservative identity is particularly notable. The primary finding however was the influence of NR as a contested construct that was strongly supported by conservatives and resisted by liberals, a construct that reflects an American identity that is exclusively conservative. In the next chapter, I position these measures in the literature by exploring the relationship between these measures and more traditional and universal measures of political and national identities: right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and nationalism.

8 Chapter 8: Positioning the Principles

8.1 Chapter Overview

Chapter 7 (Study 2a) successfully operationalised two organising principles of US ideological identities and demonstrated that they were substantive and significant predictors of both affective political polarisation (APP) and voting behaviour. The current chapter extends this work by replicating these findings and by positioning the principles in relation to measures traditionally associated with ideological identity (right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation) and national identity (nationalism).

8.2 Background

Study 2a identified two organising principles of social representations related to US ideological identities: national reverence (NR) and individual support (IS) ('the principles'). In doing so, the study also established the viability of two measures aimed at capturing this content of US liberal and conservative identities. The measures were highly correlated with and significantly predicted ideological identity as well as a number of outcomes commonly attributed to ideological identity including perceived threats, warmth towards the ideological ingroup and outgroup (APP), and presidential vote. The measure of NR proved to be a particularly strong predictor of attitudes and behaviour. This preliminary analysis employed a sample restricted only to self-categorised liberals and conservatives (i.e., moderates and 'leaners' were excluded).

The purpose of the current chapter's study was, in the first instance, to replicate and extend the findings in Study 2a. To do this, the two-factor structure of

IS and NR was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis and the general predictive utility of the measures in a sample that was not restricted to only self-identified liberals and conservatives was assessed.

The second objective was to position the constructs in relation to measures that are traditionally employed to explain and predict political identity-related behaviour: right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and nationalism. As measures that capture ideological identity content as an orientation to the nation, NR and IS organising principles are likely to be significantly related to these dispositions (NR positively and IS negatively). This study compares the predictive ability of the principles to that of right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation, and of NR to measures of nationalism.

8.2.1 Right-wing Authoritarianism and Social Dominance Orientation

Although commonly measured on a continuum from left-to-right, the primary components of ideological identity are widely recognised as reflecting the attitudes captured by measures of right-wing authoritarianism (RWA, Altemeyer, 1996) and social dominance orientation (SDO, Pratto, et al. 1994). They correlate positively with conservative ideological identity and predict a number of political behaviours including conservative issue positions and prejudice (Altemeyer, 1996; Crawford et al., 2013; Pratto et al., 2006). SDO aims to capture the acceptance of the societal hierarchy of groups, that these hierarchies are natural and inevitable. The measure captures the two primary subdimensions of SDO: ‘intergroup dominance’ and ‘intergroup anti-egalitarianism’ (Ho et al., 2012). RWA aims to capture the attitude that societal stability is desirable; its origins can be traced to Adorno’s *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al., 1950). In this work, Adorno theorised

authoritarianism as an individual difference between conservatives and liberals; a trait measured by way of child-rearing preferences. The measurement of this individual difference has evolved over the decades, with today's authoritative measure stemming from Altemeyer's (1996) operationalisation of RWA. According to the authors, the measure used in this study combines three primary facets of RWA: 'conservatism or authoritarian submission', 'traditionalism or conventionalism', and 'authoritarianism or authoritarian aggression' (Bizumic & Duckitt, 2018).

NR and IS are not mirror images of RWA and SDO. While IS and SDO both measure support for equality, SDO also focuses on group dominance, while IS includes indicators related to 'progress'. Likewise, while NR invokes the nation in the abstract as authority, RWA reflects attitudes on the authority of "God's laws", "our leaders", "the government" and "law and order". While IS closely resembles the support for equality and rejection of the status quo traditionally associated with the political left, NR does not speak directly to the other side of that scale: the preservation of social hierarchy or the status quo. It is instead constructed as national belonging and revolves around regard for national symbols. The support for the status quo captured by RWA exists both in NR (as reverence for the American "founding" and "system") and in IS (as the reverse of items related to "progress"); likewise support for inequality is captured in the NR items related to self-reliance, and inversely related to the equality items in IS. Likewise, Jost et al. (2003) note that RWA scales measure a combination of resistance to change and endorsement of inequality. In recognition of the overlap between RWA and SDO and between NR and IS, as well as the recognition of the influence of both ingroup and outgroup

identity content on self-categorisation (Turner et al., 1987), this study compared the combination of NR and IS to the combination of SDO and RWA.

8.2.2 Nationalism

Study 2a established that there exists a significant relationship between NR and outcomes also highly associated with measures of nationalism (security and cultural threat). As discussed in Chapter 3, although correlations between political self-categorisation and nationalism have been noted, the study of nationalism has been primarily directed at identifying and measuring attitudes that predict measures of prejudice, attitudes towards immigration and foreigners, and national security (Bonikowski & DiMaggio, 2016; Citrin et al., 1994; De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Schatz et al., 1999; Sullivan et al., 1992). The extent to which political self-categorisation employs these nationalistic attitudes is less explored. In this thesis, NR is presented as a representation of conservative ideological identity. A commonality between nationalism, NR, and outcomes traditionally attributed to nationalistic attitudes would underscore the novelty of the proposal emerging from this thesis thus far: that nationalistic attitudes are not simply more likely to be associated with those who identify with the political right but are central to conservatives' political identity. It is therefore important to more precisely understand how NR relates to established measures of nationalism.

National reverence, in its extensive references to national symbols and founding values, reflects a particular schema of the nation based on the evaluation of tangible (e.g., 'flag') and intangible (e.g., 'American system') objects. As noted in the preceding chapter, NR retains some elements of symbolic patriotism (Schatz & Lavine, 2007) and expands on these to include more intangible symbols including

the founding fathers, the ‘American system’, and the Constitution. It may reflect a facet of blind patriotism (referred to throughout this study by the variable name ‘Blind’), being the “unquestioning positive evaluation of the United States” (Schatz et al., 1999, p. 156). It does not, however, directly invoke blind patriotism’s other facets of “staunch support for its actions, and intolerance of criticism” (Schatz et al., 1999, p. 156), nor the particular nationalist attitudes captured in other traditional measures of nationalism such as ‘chauvinism’ (‘Chauv’)—a downwardly comparison with other nations (De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003), and ‘ethno-cultural’ patriotism (‘EC’)—defining the nation based on ethnic and cultural criteria (Citrin et al., 1994; Rothì et al., 2005), although there is an NR item that refers to the “American way of life”. NR, separately derived as conservative ideological identity, does not directly reflect any particular academic conceptualisation of nationalism. It is possible, however, that it may capture the attitudes identified in these traditional measures.

8.2.3 Attitudes and Social Representations

As discussed in the Chapter 4, attitudes such as RWA, SDO, and nationalism—as individually-based cognitions—are conceptually distinct from the shared nature of social representations. The measures of RWA and SDO are understood to capture the primary divides in left/right ideological attitudes (Jost et al., 2003). Likewise, measures of nationalism correlate with ideological identity and have been shown to predict prejudice and negative attitudes towards outgroups and increased support for national defence (Citrin et al., 1994; De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Schatz et al., 1999). These dispositional measures seek to identify particular internalised perspectives that are held

universally, and the cross-national utility of SDO, RWA, and nationalism in predicting political behaviour and attitudes is well established (e.g., Blank & Schmidt, 2003; Rothì et al., 2005).

In contrast, the NR and IS measures are contextual, they are constructs derived from the expressed lay representations of ideological identity content data collected in Study 1 (Chapter 6). These representations reflect the content of US ideological identity as expressed by members of the ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ ideological groups; they reflect the current and socially shared context of these identities and the common sense parameters within which the phenomena of political communication and behaviour are performed (Reicher, 2004; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b). The operating principles may therefore serve to support implicit theories that allow the individual to explain their environment, to justify their actions and to maintain differences between groups (Staerklé, 2009; Voelklein & Howarth, 2005).

By theorising about and analysing the positioning of RWA, SDO, and nationalistic attitudes as compared to measures derived from current, contextual, lay understandings, we can begin to assess how these well-documented attitudinal antecedents of political outcomes may be expressed in the current US environment, how people who score high or low on RWA, SDO, and nationalism understand and express their political identities, the nature of the language used to enforce and promote these attitudes and mobilise the electorate, and how these self-narratives differ from the constructs captured in traditional political psychological measures.

As lay representations, NR and IS may suggest the means by which individually-located conceptualisations—such as the desire for a particular societal structure reflected in RWA, SDO, and nationalism measures—are expressed in

everyday language and therefore how they are socially exchanged. By identifying the social vehicles through which these attitudes are exchanged, it is possible to gain insight into the process that maintains political identities and drives political behaviour.

8.2.4 Research Questions

Building on the findings in the previous chapter, this study aimed to confirm the factor structure of the organising principles and to position the measures in relation to common measures employed in the prediction of political behaviour. The study specifically sought to determine (i) whether, in an unrestricted sample, the NR and IS principles continue to present as distinct factors, and to provide substantial and significant predictive strength in relation to political identities and behaviours; (ii) the extent to which the principles are related to measures of RWA and SDO, including an assessment of their relative predictive power and the extent to which the principles capture these dispositions when predicting political outcomes such as APP and voting behaviour; and (iii) the extent to which NR is related to measures of nationalism, including an assessment of its relative predictive power and the extent to which NR captures these dispositions when predicting political behaviour and attitudes traditionally associated with nationalism.

8.3 Method

This study (Study 2b) was conducted in the week beginning August 19, 2019.

8.3.1 Participants

Participants for the study were recruited through the Prolific (<https://www.prolific.co>) website. The sample size for the confirmatory factor analysis was selected to match the exploratory factor analysis sample in Study 2a. The objective was therefore to recruit 362 participants (363 were ultimately recruited). Unlike Study 2a, the participant group was not restricted to only self-identified liberals and conservatives, recruitment was instead opened to include those of any ideological identification. The restriction was lifted to more accurately reflect the American voting population of which (according to the 2016 ANES) approximately 40% identify as neither liberal nor conservative. The sample was however filtered to include only those whose pre-screening information indicated that they had voted in the 2016 Presidential election. Ideally, a registered voters screen (to simulate the ANES) would have been employed, but such a filter was not available on Prolific at the time of the study. Using a screen for previous voting as opposed to a 'registered voters' screen results in a more restricted population than the ANES, and by definition, more politically active one. However, in contrast to no filter, the 'previous voter' filter is considered appropriate to eliminate unregistered voters from the sample.

The sample comprised 131 (36%) participants who indicated that they identified as 'liberal' or 'strong liberal' on the US ideological spectrum, 157 (43%) who marked themselves as 'moderate', 'lean liberal', or 'lean conservative', and 75 (21%) who identified as a 'conservative' or 'strong conservative'. One hundred and ninety participants (52%) voted for Hillary Clinton, 108 (30%) for Donald Trump, and 65 (18%) for a third party. Forty nine percent of the sample were men and 52

percent were women, average age was 35.11 ($SD = 11.60$). The demographic breakdown of the participants (along with benchmark measures) is set out in Table 13 below:

Table 13

Participant Demographic Information (in number of participants, $n = 363$).

	Study 2b	Representative sample benchmark
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
White	290 (80%)	69% ^a
Black	21 (6%)	11% ^a
Hispanic	22 (6%)	12% ^a
Asian	21 (6%)	
Other	9 (2%)	
<i>Income</i>		
< \$50,000	165 (45%)	42% ^b
\$50,000-\$100,000	131 (36%)	30% ^b
\$100,000-\$200,000	62 (17%)	21% ^b
>\$200,000	5 (1%)	7% ^b
<i>Education</i>		
Some high school	4 (1%)	9% ^a
High school graduate	30 (8%)	29% ^a
Some college	119 (33%)	31% ^a
College degree	145 (40%)	31% ^{a, c}
Post-graduate degree	65 (18%)	

^a2016 American National Election Studies survey of registered voters. ^b2016 American Community Survey. ^cat least college graduate.

Like Study 2a, the sample is more educated and less ethnically diverse than the ANES sample. And similarly, this more educated population is considered adequate for the purpose of comparing attitudes. In addition, education was not significantly correlated with any of the predictor variables except for blind patriotism ($r = -.11, p = .04$).

8.3.2 Measures

The measures of NR and IS, ideological identity, group affect, operational identity, cultural threat ($\alpha = .92$, $\omega = .92$) security threat ($\alpha = .82$, $\omega = .81$), and demographic information were the same as in Study 2a. In addition, the following measures (7-point Likert scales) were included in the current study ('R' indicates that items were reverse scored):

Right-wing authoritarianism ($\alpha = .80$, $\omega = .80$). This 6-item scale (Bizumic & Duckitt, 2018) aims to capture the construct of authoritarianism. Scaled from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, the following items were proposed to the participants: "It's great that many young people today are prepared to defy authority" (R), "What our country needs most is discipline, with everyone following our leaders in unity", "God's laws about abortion, pornography, and marriage must be strictly followed before it is too late", "There is nothing wrong with premarital sexual intercourse" (R), "Our society does NOT need tougher government and stricter laws" (R), "The facts on crime and the recent public disorders show we have to crack down harder on troublemakers, if we are going preserve law and order".

Social dominance orientation ($\alpha = .91$, $\omega = .91$). The SD07 scale (Ho et al., 2012) consists of six items that aim to capture the extent to which an individual rejects or accepts social hierarchies, a measure of inequalities. Scaled from *very negative* to *very positive*, participants were asked to provide their views on the following statements: "Some groups of people are simply not the equals of others", "Some people are just more worthy than others.", "To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on others", "Increased equality" (R), "If people were

treated more equally we would have fewer problems in this country” (R), “It is important that we treat other countries as equals” (R).

Blind patriotism (Blind, $\alpha = .89$, $\omega = .89$). This measure consists of four items taken from Schatz et al. (1999), as truncated by Parker (2010), scaled from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*: “I would support my country right or wrong”, “I believe that US policies are almost always the morally correct ones”, “I support the US policies for the very reason that they are the policies of my country”, and “There is too much criticism of the US in the world, and we its citizen should not criticize it”.

Ethno-cultural patriotism (EC, $\alpha = .85$, $\omega = .84$). This measure consists of three items taken from Wright et al. (2012) and Rothì et al. (2005), scaled from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*: “A true American has been born in America”, “A true American is a Christian”, and “A true American adheres to a traditional American way of life”.

Chauvinistic patriotism (Chauv, $\alpha = .92$, $\omega = .91$). This measure consists of three items taken from scales by De Figueiredo and Elkins (2003) and Huddy and Khatib (2007), scaled from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*: “The world would be a better place if other countries were more like the US”, “Generally, the US is better than any other country”, and “The world would be a better place if more people from other places were like Americans”.

8.3.3 Analysis

All analyses were conducted using JASP (JASP Team, 2019), unless otherwise noted. Confirmatory factor analysis, in which the researcher prescribes the

items and number of factors, was employed to affirm the two-factor structure of NR and IS identified in the exploratory analysis in Study 2a. The fit of a one-factor structure to the data, which would represent ideology as a continuum from left to right, was compared to the fit of a two-factor structure.

To compare the predictive power of and assess the relationship between the traditional measures (RWA, SDO, and nationalism) to those of the operating principles (NR and IS), the relative incremental predictive strengths were assessed using the comparison of R^2 effects as determined through simple and multiple regression analyses.

8.4 Results

8.4.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The exploratory analysis conducted in Study 2a indicated a two-factor (NR and IS) model of ideological identity content. In the current study, the items comprising these factors again demonstrated a high level of internal reliability with McDonald's ω and Cronbach's α of .89 and .86 for IS, and of .93 and .93 for NR, respectively. The two-factor solution was compared to a one-factor solution representing the left/right ideological continuum. The item loadings and primary fit indicators are shown in Table 14 below.

Table 14

Confirmatory Factor Models

	One factor model	One factor model with error covariances	Two-factor model	Two-factor model with error covariances
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	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
χ^2	1009	704	508	284
df	90	85	89	84
χ^2/df	11.21	8.28	5.71	3.38
CFI	.75	.83	.89	.95
RMSEA [90% CI]	.17 [.16, .18]	.15 [.15, .13]	.11 [.10, .12]	.08 [.07, .09]
SRMR	.10	.09	.06	.05
Factor covariance			-.65	-.66

Note: CFI = comparative fit index, AIC = Akaike index of comparison, RMSEA = Root mean square error approximation, SRMR = standardized root mean square residual

The two-factor model is clearly superior when comparing the raw one-factor model (column 1, $\chi^2(90) = 1009$, $\chi^2/df = 11.21$, CFI = .75, RMSEA = .17, SRMS = .10) to the raw two-factor model (column 3, $\chi^2(89) = 508$, $\chi^2/df = 5.71$, CFI = .89, RMSEA = .11, SRMS = .06). However, neither of these raw models, assessed using Hu and Bentler's (1999) combined criteria (CFI \geq .90, RMSEA \leq .06, SRMR \leq .08) is a good fit to the data.

In columns 2 and 4 the models were modified to allow the covariance of selected residual errors. This modification is to recognise that the factor has indicator variables that share components, a practice that is appropriate to the extent that it is theoretically supported and within a factor (Landis et al., 2009). In keeping with these criteria, the correlations were limited to those items within an indicator variable that were aimed at measuring similar attitudes. For example, residuals related to the items “honouring the flag says a lot about who I am” and “the flag and anthem should be respected as the sacred symbols they are” were allowed to correlate. In columns 2 and 4, correlated measurement error within NR was allowed between these “flag” items (items 10 and 13 [on Table 4, Chapter 7]), between “self-reliance” items 8 and 15, between “American system” items 7 and 11, and between “founding”

items 9, 12, and 14; it was also allowed within IS between “improving equality” items 4 and 5. The model indices for the two-factor solution with error covariances (column 4, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .08 and SRMR = .05) indicate an excellent fit for two of the three criteria, and again a fit superior to the one-factor model (column 2, CFI = .83, RMSEA = .15, SRMR = .09).

8.4.2 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for the organising principle variables (NR and IS), the ideological variables (RWA and SDO), and the nationalism variables (blind patriotism, ethno-cultural, and chauvinistic) are presented in Table 15 below.

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics for Principles and for Ideological and Nationalism measures (n = 363)

	IS	NR	RWA	SDO	Blind	EC	Chauv
Mean	5.81	4.02	3.25	2.57	2.89	2.50	3.55
Median	6.00	4.00	3.00	2.38	2.75	2.00	3.67
SD	1.11	1.48	1.32	1.36	1.59	1.60	1.75
Skew	-1.12	0.06	0.52	0.76	0.57	1.01	0.13

Note: IS = individual support, NR = national reverence, RWA = right-wing authoritarianism, SDO = social dominance orientation, Blind = blind patriotism, EC = ethno-cultural, and Chauv = chauvinism

Central means and medians and little evidence of skew suggest that NR and chauvinism are fairly normally distributed. IS and EC are highly negatively and positively skewed, respectively; this study’s correlations will therefore employ Spearman’s rho correlations where these variables are involved. The remaining variables (RWA, SDO, and blind patriotism) are moderately positively skewed. Again, verifying the constructs’ criterion validity, the NR and IS scales were highly and significantly correlated with ideological identity (NR: $R_s^2 = .75$, $p < .001$, IS: $R_s^2 = -.69$, $p < .001$).

8.4.3 Correlations

8.4.3.1 RWA and SDO

The study first examined the relationship between the principles and the RWA and SDO measures through correlation analysis. In Table 16 below, Spearman's and partial correlations (holding ideological identity constant due to the potential influence of this identity on each of the sets of variables) are indicated.

Table 16

Spearman's rho and Partial Correlations

	NR	IS
RWA		
r_s	.68 ***	-.57 ***
$r_{RWA.ideology}$.30 ***	-.12 *
SDO		
r_s	.57 ***	-.70 ***
$r_{SDO.ideology}$.28 ***	-.51 ***

Note: *** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$

While all measures are substantially and significantly correlated, partial correlations reveal that NR is similarly correlated with RWA and SDO, while IS is more substantially correlated with SDO. As discussed in section 8.2.1, for the purposes of this study, the combined effects of RWA and SDO will be compared to the combined effects of NR and IS.

8.4.3.2 Nationalism

Partial correlations (holding ideology constant, performed in SPSS) between NR and blind patriotism ($r_{NRblind.ideology} = .62, p < .001$), ethno-cultural nationalism ($r_{NREC.ideology} = .44, p < .001$), and chauvinism ($r_{NRChauv.ideology} = .50, p < .001$) indicated that NR was moderately-to-strongly related to the other measures of

nationalism, most highly correlated with blind patriotism, and least highly correlated with an ethno-cultural perspective.

8.4.4 Incremental Predictive Ability

To more fully understand the predictive utility of NR and IS as compared to existing measures, regressions for ideological identity, operational identity, outgroup feeling thermometers, and voting behaviour were performed. In Table 17 below, the first two columns indicate the effect sizes for regressions that employ only the traditional measures (column 1), and then the additional effect gained by adding NR and IS to the regression (column 2). Similarly, column 3 indicates the effect sizes for regressions that employ only the principles, and column 4 indicates the incremental effect of then adding SDO and RWA to the regression.

Table 17

Incremental Predictive Validity Comparisons between ‘NR and IS’ and ‘RWA and SDO’. Multiple Linear (n = 363) and Logistic (n = 298) Regressions.

	R^2 for RWA and SDO	ΔR^2 adding NR and IS to RWA and SDO	R^2 for NR and IS	ΔR^2 adding RWA and SDO to NR and IS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ideological identity	.55	.13	.63	.05
Operational identity	.61	.09	.64	.06
Warmth towards conservatives	.49	.10	.54	.05
Warmth towards liberals	.32	.06	.35	.03
2016 presidential vote (Nagelkerke’s R^2)	.48	.17	.63	.02

Note: The larger incremental predictive contribution is indicated in bold

Compared to the combination of RWA and SDO (column 1), the combination of NR and IS (column 3) provides a greater level of explanation for these dependent variables on their own; they also provide greater incremental predictive ability. This

is particularly evident in the regression on ideological identity (NR and IS: $R^2 = .63$, $\Delta R^2 = .13$, $p < .001$; RWA and SDO: $R^2 = .55$, $\Delta R^2 = .05$, $p < .001$) and voting behaviour (NR and IS: Nagelkerke's $R^2 = .63$, $\Delta R^2 = .17$, $p < .001$; RWA and SDO: Nagelkerke's $R^2 = .48$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p = .03$). The significant incremental predictive value over and above RWA and SDO attests to the utility of the principles.

As with the ideological variables, the incremental predictive ability of NR was assessed in relation to nationalism variables. In addition to the dependent variables assessed above, outcomes that are commonly seen to derive from nationalism were assessed including immigration policy, cultural threat, and security threat (De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Schatz et al., 1999). Because the assessment compares three factors (Blind, EC, and Chauv) against one (NR), this is a particularly robust test of the predictive validity of NR. R^2 and ΔR^2 effect sizes are set out in Table 18 below.

Table 18

Incremental Predictive Validity Comparisons between Nationalism Measures ('Blind Patriotism', 'Ethno-Cultural Patriotism' And 'Chauvinism') and 'NR'. Multiple Linear ($n = 363$) and Logistic ($n = 298$) Regressions.

	R^2 for Blind, EC and Chauv	ΔR^2 adding NR to Blind, EC and Chauv	R^2 for NR	ΔR^2 adding Blind, EC and Chauv to NR
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ideological identity	.49	.10	.57	.02
Operational identity	.51	.09	.53	.06
Warmth towards conservatives	.47	.07	.51	.03
Warmth towards liberals	.26	.05	.29	.03
Immigration policy	.24	.05	.28	.01
Cultural threat	.72	.03	.59	.16
Security threat	.53	.07	.75	.04

2016 presidential vote (Nagelkerke's R^2)	.46	.11	.56	.01
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Note: the larger incremental predictive contribution is indicated in bold

NR (column 3), as compared to nationalism measures (column 1) was the superior predictor of all outcomes except for cultural threat (NR: $R^2 = .59$, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p < .001$; nationalism measures: $R^2 = .72$, $\Delta R^2 = .16$, $p < .001$). The representations captured by NR are therefore not only significant and substantial predictors of certain outcomes that have been attributed to so-called “hot” nationalism (Billig, 1995), but exceed the predictive ability of a robust nationalism measure in these areas. These results suggest that the NR construct is highly aligned with nationalistic attitudes, particularly chauvinism and blind patriotism. The lower correlation of NR with ethno-cultural nationalism, which specifically measures cultural threat, may lend explanation to the fact that the nationalism measures were better able to predict cultural threat (NR: $R^2 = .59$, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p < .001$; nationalism measures: $R^2 = .72$, $\Delta R^2 = .16$, $p < .001$).

8.5 Discussion

This study further supports the validity and the utility of the national reverence (NR) and individual support (IS) organising principles and extends our understanding of the relationship between RWA, SDO, nationalism and political outcomes by demonstrating the degree to which the ideological identity content reflected in the measures of NR and IS also captures the predictive value of these more traditional measures.

Confirmatory factor analysis supported the two-factor model of NR and IS identified in Study 2a over a one-factor model, providing further evidence of the non-linearity of ideological identity in the US. This two-factor model accords with

the long-standing proposition that US ideological identity is comprised of (at least) two separate but related components such as RWA and SDO (Duckitt, 2001; Jost et al., 2003).

Incremental predictive analysis demonstrated that NR and IS capture a significant proportion of the relationship between RWA and SDO measures and ideological identity, operational identity, affective political polarisation measures, and voting behaviour. NR and IS were together superior predictors of political outcomes than the combined RWA and SDO ideological initial variables. In addition, NR's predictive ability exceeded that of the nationalism measure for the outcome variables of ideological identity, operational identity, and voting behaviour, and of attitudes towards immigration, security threat, and cultural threat.

The substantial overlap in the predictive contribution of the ideological (RWA and SDO) and nationalistic (Blind, EC, and chauvinism) attitudinal variables with the NR and IS measures suggests that the social communications captured by NR and IS carry with them RWA, SDO, and nationalistic attitudes. It indicates that the constructs captured by NR and IS account for a significant part of how authoritarianism, social dominance, and nationalism are communicated and used to mobilise the voting public.

8.6 Conclusion

Study 2b provided further evidence of the predictive utility of both NR and IS and confirmed the structure of the two measures. It can be concluded that the measures operationalised in Studies 2a and 2b provide significant descriptive value in assessing the content of US ideological identity, further supporting a close

relationship between national attachment and political identity. In addition, this chapter's finding of the significant overlap in the predictive contributions of RWA, SDO, and nationalism with the principles highlights the role of these organising principles in the communication of attitudes of authoritarianism, social dominance, and nationalism, suggesting that these attitudes can be communicated through the language captured by the NR and IS measures. The intertwining of political and national identity, along with the activation of these divisive attitudes may be contributing to APP. This possibility will be investigated in Study 4 (Chapter 10) with an assessment of the causal role of NR and IS in APP.

This chapter documented the continued predictive strength of NR as compared to the IS measure. This persistent difference points to a relative weakness in the national attachment captured by IS and invites further inquiry into how national identity is conceptualised by the political left. In the next chapter, I therefore redirect temporarily from the three-step exploratory sequential sequence to expand on liberal national identity representations. Study 3 (Chapter 9) documents the analysis of national identity representations from an elite perspective, conveyed in the speeches of Democratic presidential primary candidates in the 2020 election cycle.

9 Chapter 9: Democratic Candidates and National Identity

9.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents Study 3, an analysis of national identity representations made by Democratic political elite. The findings are offered as an exploratory extension into a potential counter-narrative to conservatives' national reverence (NR) style of national attachment. In Studies 2a and 2b (Chapters 7 and 8), both the left and right responded more strongly to the measure of NR than to the measure that was designed to capture the left's national attachment style: individual support (IS). By exploring representation of the left's national identity through a qualitative analysis of speeches given by Democratic presidential primary candidates, this study provides insight into the tensions inherent in elite constructions of national identity on the US political left.

9.2 Background

The organising principles of national reverence (NR) and individual support (IS) juxtapose core representations of the nation with different foci. The contrast between the symbolic group-centric conceptualisation of the nation captured in the organising principle of NR and the individual-centric conceptualisation of the nation of IS was identified in Study 1 (Chapter 6). On the right, NR presents a perspective of the nation that promotes deference to the patriotic symbols of the country infused with conservative ideals. The measure of NR devised in Studies 2a and 2b (Chapters 7 and 8) to capture this perspective proved to demarcate a strong division between the right and left, indicating that NR is a potent operating principle for both sides of

the political divide. The measure of IS—an operationalisation of liberal national attachment—was a weaker predictor of political identity and behaviour.

As discussed in Chapter 3, increasing political polarisation may have been accompanied by a growing ‘ownership’ of patriotism by the political right in the US and the distancing of political left from traditional patriotism (Greenberg, 2008; YouGov, 2018) as the difference between patriotism and nationalism has diminished (McDaniel et al., 2016). The left’s lack of engagement with patriotism has been identified as a gap in Democratic political messaging (Gidron, 2018; Mellow, 2020; R. M. Smith, 2020). Although the conservative construction of national attachment appears to be something that the left strongly resists, it is not clear that Democrats offer a strong counter narrative to the particular type of patriotism captured in NR, and to what extent there exists an opposing version of patriotism that might reflect the values and norms of the left.

There may be a natural incompatibility between current conceptualisations of US patriotism and the liberal ideology. The group favouritism that defines patriotism more easily sits with the conservative group-centric national attachment identified in this thesis. Conversely, patriotism may be more difficult for the political left to reconcile.

These differences in national attachment, along with the ambiguity of the political left’s patriotic commitment, raise questions regarding the left’s construction their national identity. In particular, the extent to which national identity is actively constructed by the left and what elements and narratives are employed to invoke the ingroup is unclear. This study therefore seeks to understand representations of

national identity on the political left to identify the content of—and the tensions within—this group’s national attachment.

9.2.1 The Democrats’ national identity dilemma

The historical structure of the Democratic party as a coalition of groups (Grossmann & Hopkins, 2016) contributes to the left’s constant struggle in creating a unified message. The analysis of liberal identity content in Study 1 suggests that the left may share a global vision of a better world as well as a perspective that political values are an extension of personal values. Such commonalities may be fertile ground for creating unity within the party and may even appeal to some who do not identify as being on the political left. However, these commonalities suffer in their intangibility and conceptual heterogeneity as compared to national identity.

As noted previously, national identity has a number of advantages in unifying the group and mobilising the voting public. The findings of a less clearly articulated national identity definition within the Democratic party therefore also points to a theme that is revisited upon the party by pundits during national election cycles: that the left has little answer to the Republican’s definition of what it means to be a true American. A number of scholars and pundits have offered that the way to gain support is to appeal to national identity in a way that offers a counter to conservatives’ conceptualisation (Kusnet, 1992; Mellow, 2020; Mounk, 2018; Nunberg, 2006; Reich, 2019; R. M. Smith, 2020).

Kusnet (1992), the former chief speechwriter for President Bill Clinton, observed that Democrats should hold on to their traditional concerns but should make them more mainstream though embracing American symbols. Chosen based on

what he perceived as those themes that resonate with Republicans, Kusnet specifically identified American exceptionalism (the idea that America is special, and Americans are special people), biblical references, and individual achievement as values that Democrats should look to speak to. Such ‘American’ values reframing is similar to the political framing studies that commonly seek to measure the receptivity of a Republican audience to issues that are framed in terms of RWA/SDO framing (Crawford et al., 2013), or moral framing (Day et al., 2014; Voelkel & Willer, 2019) that would reflect Republican preferences on these scales (i.e., higher RWA and SDO, morals of purity and loyalty). These framing studies demonstrate that liberal policies framed in conservative values are more attractive to the political right. However, the Republican touchstones such as biblical references and American exceptionalism do not fit easily into the Democratic vernacular of freedom of religion and universal equality. More importantly, these framing tactics speak to short-term election wins. I assert that the focus of change must be on the content of national identity, and that any change to national identity is perforce a gradual and protracted process; it must take a long-term view.

Reich (2019) agrees that employing Republican values to reframe policy issues is inadequate for political persuasion in the US. He asserts that it is not just Republican values, but the American *narrative* that Democrats have not tapped into. He identified four main themes of the American narrative: (i) ‘the triumphant individual’, (ii) ‘the benevolent community’, (iii) ‘the mob at the gates’, and (iv) ‘the rot at the top’ into which he recommends that Democrats bend their narrative. Nunberg (2006) explicates the depth of the problem, noting that “‘having a narrative’ involves something more than fashioning new campaign themes, even broadly coordinated ones—it means making that story part of the fabric of American political

discourse” (p.15). He argues that, as long as the right owns patriotism, the Democrats will be unable to change the conversation, and that this has not happened because “Democrats have tried to reclaim the word in its dictionary meaning while ignoring the narrative it’s embedded in” (p. 195). R.M. Smith (2020) too advocates for a liberal narrative that also takes into consideration the power of patriotism, citing the Declaration of Independence as a founding document that epitomises liberal ideals yet holds a privileged position among the founding sacred documents, therefore speaking to the right’s conceptualisation of patriotism.

9.2.2 Elite Rhetoric

This thesis revolves around the interrogation of US political self-categorisations. As indicated in Chapter 1, the current affective political polarisation literature seeks to parse the extent to which citizens are connected to these categorises through issue positions, demographics, and ‘other’ symbolic attachments. In contrast, this programme of study specifically views the categorisations themselves as dynamic, as subject to continual contestation and as renegotiated through both informal and formal communications. One of the most high-profile re-negotiations of political categorisations happens during the presidential campaign season, when the contest between candidates allows a broad and public forum for argument. As is the nature of election speeches each is putting forth their representation of the nation (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a).

Presidential electoral campaigns directly pit divergent depictions of the nation against one another throughout the cycle. Successful candidates frame themselves and their policies as being in the best interest of the nation (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a). In doing so, they present a challenge to the current meaning of the

nation, offering new content and arguing that other content is not appropriate for inclusion in the national identity. In these roles, the candidates aim to create a united identity, frame their political agenda as a reflection of the norms of this identity, and frame themselves as a prototypical member of this group (Reicher et al., 2005; Reicher & Haslam, 2017; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996). Political elites therefore regularly inject national identity with meaning that suits their cause, actively representing the nation. Reicher and Hopkins (2001) undertook a series of studies to illustrate this process in the context of Scottish politics. In an analysis of candidate speeches, members of both the left-wing Labour Party, and the Conservative Party presented themselves as prototypical Scots; the meaning they assigned to Scottish identity differed, however. Each candidate described a Scottishness that aligned with their party's values: the Labour party candidate characterised their countrymen as egalitarian, while the Conservative party candidate described hardworking and entrepreneurial compatriots.

In the party primary elections, candidates are required to simultaneously attend to multiple identities. They must attend to the immediate audience, whether that be on a farm in Iowa, in a city centre in South Carolina, or in their hometown. They must attend to their party identity, for which they hope to serve as candidate in the presidential election; and because speeches are widely broadcast and candidates must always keep an eye on that ultimate election, they must attend to their national identity. As previously asserted in this thesis, the constructions of national identity and ideological or partisan identities are highly intertwined. This intertwining becomes even more apparent during the primaries as candidates propose that it is they who are best set to represent the party, who is in turn, best placed to lead the

country. The 2020 Democratic primary therefore offers an opportunity to interrogate representations of national identity across the Democratic ideological spectrum.

9.2.3 The Current Study

To build on the findings in Study 1 regarding the liberal identity, and to specifically explore the left's construction of national identity, this chapter turned to an alternative source in which national identity should be highly salient: the rhetoric of Democratic presidential primary candidates. The purpose of Study 3 was two-fold. In the first instance, this study sought to investigate national attachment on the US political left with a view to identifying this group's counter-narrative to NR. In addition, and as discussed in Chapter 5, through examination of formal, elite communication Study 3 offers a triangulation of the Study 1 (Chapter 6) findings related to liberal ideological identity based on lay representations. As asserted in Chapter 3, constructions of national attachment are integrally related to ideological identity. The primary themes related to the Democratic candidates' construction of national attachment are therefore embedded in discussions of their political identities. By virtue of the inter-reliance of ideology and national identity, this study's analysis invoked the construction of partisan and ideological identities as well as national identity. The analysis therefore allows for a reflection on the lay representations of liberal ideological identity identified in Study 1 to the extent that elite rhetoric may reflect, enhance, or contradict these findings.

9.3 Method

In this study, the focus was on elite communications as sources of political identity content for the mass public. Positions taken by the leaders of a political

group are integral to the identity content for members of the group, and therefore for the lay representations that were the subject of the preceding studies. Campaign speeches offer an ideal opportunity for candidates to re-present the nation, thereby actively influencing the public's common-sense understandings of their country. As noted in Chapter 5, social representations related to highly institutionalised social objects (like political identities) have a greater degree of formalised mediums through which social representations are communicated, and a thorough examination of a social phenomenon should include these mediums (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999). Therefore, to more fully understand both the left's construction of political identity generally, as well as their conceptualisation of national identity specifically, Democratic primary speeches were selected to gain an additional aspect on these questions through an analysis of formal communications.

9.3.1 Data Selection

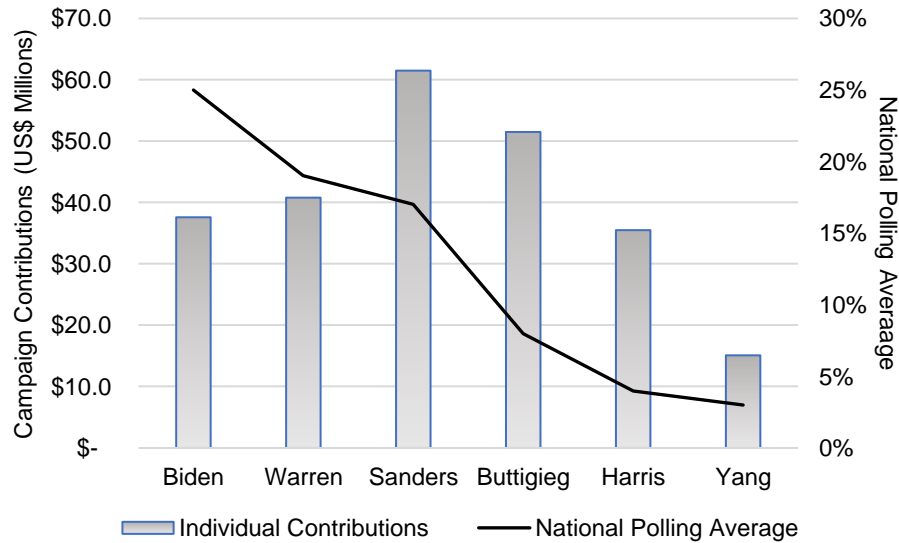
In November 2019 there were three front-runners in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination: Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren, with Pete Buttigieg in a clear but distant fourth place. Although there were no definitive ideological placements for each of the candidates, Senators Sanders and Warren were considered to be progressives, or the left-most leaning of the candidates, while Vice President Biden and Mayor Buttigieg were more moderate (Masket, 2020). The division between the progressives and moderates was apparent in their different proposals related to healthcare (the two progressive candidates support a single-payer system and abolishing private healthcare, while the moderates supported a public health insurance option) and education (the progressives supported tuition-free public 4-year universities), and whether the military budget

should be decreased. The Sanders' and Warren's positions on major issues were largely similar, but between the moderates, Buttigieg appeared less conservative/more progressive than Biden regarding the legalisation of drugs and electoral reform.

In spite of Buttigieg's low national polling numbers, his speeches were selected for analysis for a number of reasons. First, like Biden, he was considered to be more ideologically moderate and therefore balanced the sample that already included two progressives. Second, at the time of the study design (20 November 2019), Buttigieg's campaign had secured \$51m of individual contributions (more than either Warren or Biden). And finally, he had recently become the front-runner in both Iowa and New Hampshire, the first two sites of voting (to take place in February 2020). The fifth-place candidate, Kamala Harris, was not included for the following reasons: Harris's polling was half that of Buttigieg's, she had less in individual contributions than the other four competitors, and she had recently cut staff and offices in New Hampshire, indicating a dwindling campaign at the time of selection. Indeed, Harris dropped out of the race on 3 December 2019; Buttigieg and Warren dropped out on 1 and 5 March, respectively. National polling averages and individual contributions as of 20 November 2019 are indicated in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5

National Polling Averages and Individual Campaign Contributions as of 20 November 2019 (source: The New York Times)



As the showpieces of the candidates’ campaign, their respective launch speeches anchor this study’s analysis, augmented with two of each of the candidates’ ‘stump’ speeches (speeches of similar content repeatedly given throughout a campaign) given at the New Hampshire Democratic convention (7 September) and the Iowa Liberty and Justice Celebration (7 November). As candidates announced their candidacy at different times, these latter selections allowed for balance related to length of speech, context, and time in the campaign. To control for topic, a foreign policy speech by each candidate was included; and to provide breadth, the study included one ‘other’ significant speech for each candidate. The ‘other’ speeches were identified by searching on Google for the candidate’s name and ‘speech’ in November 2019. The most readily available result—to mirror the speech most likely to be accessed by the public—was included. Together, this selection includes five speeches for each candidate, 20 speeches in total. The full list of speeches and transcript sources can be found in Appendix C. The speech transcripts

were primarily sourced from the Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network (C-SPAN), but transcripts were also obtained from the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), from Senator Sanders’s own website, and from Boston Globe Media Partners’ [boston.com](https://www.boston.com). Each of the transcripts were downloaded into MAXQDA2020 qualitative analysis software for analysis. Where the transcripts were unclear, inaccurate, or incomplete, these were edited these to comply with the video recording. Data corpus word counts for each candidate are indicated in Table 19 below:

Table 19
Data Corpus Word Count by Candidate

Candidate	Word count
Sanders	13,064
Warren	14,870
Buttigieg	19,117
Biden	13,631

9.3.2 Procedure and analysis

Like Study 1 in Chapter 6, this study employed reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021). As noted in that chapter, reflexive thematic analysis allows for both an inductive and deductive approach to be taken when coding the data corpus. Study 1 took an inductive approach to allow a wide set of alternatives to be identified in the data without the restraint of pre-defined categories or themes. While the analysis in the current study also took a broadly inductive approach, unlike Study1, Study 3 more clearly drew on elements of a deductive approach. In Study 1, questions about ideological identity were specifically solicited, and an inductive approach was taken towards the resulting data. In the current study, which employed a data corpus not specifically tailored to the construct under query (national identity), deductive analysis was guided by the study’s research aims of i) identifying to what

extent the candidates orient towards national identity, and if so, what content they employ to construct this identity; of ii) understanding the relationship between this national identity and the political identity construction; and of iii) comparing and contrasting the elite representations of national identity between candidates and with the lay representations in Study 1.

In this regard, and in line with the national identity background provided in Chapter 3, the analysis was framed to identify representations of the national ingroup and outgroup, to the values ascribed to these groups, to the symbols of the nation including national history and historical figures, and to the political project to be undertaken. The ingroup and outgroup membership includes discourse concerning the construction of these groups: their characteristics and values and how these are positioned with regard to other groups. The analysis focussed on the rhetoric that the candidates employed in order to ‘flag’ the nation (Billig, 1995). While national symbols include those addressed by the measure of national reverence (i.e., founding documents, the flag and anthem, mottos), they may also refer to any other evocation of America’s past and the ordination of its heroes and villains. The content of national identity may also refer to what the objective of the nation should be (the political project [Bauer & Gaskell, 1999]), and in this way overlaps with ideological identity.

The analysis proceeded as follows. Familiarity with the data was gained by both watching the videos and reading the transcripts. Initial codes were then inductively generated focussing on what identities and what national identity content was being invoked. Building on this coding, initial narratives across and between the candidates were identified, noting patterns and themes in how the codes interrelated

and how the candidates positioned themselves, their audience, and the nation. Based on this coding, themes were refined to reflect the most salient ‘constellation’ of meanings in the text (Joffe, 2012) across the candidates. Within these themes the variation between candidates was noted; codes were created to capture not only the social objects employed in candidates’ talk, but also their approach to national identity. For example, in conducting the analysis, it was observed that two primary techniques were employed by the candidates when communicating representations of the nation. To varying degrees, the candidates constructed American identity through either *re-imagining* or *re-claiming* the identity, where re-imagining refers to a change to a meaning that the social object has not had, reclaiming to a change in the ownership of the established social object. This identification of process lends additional perspective to understanding a candidate’s positioning towards the nation.

Once themes were identified, lexical searches were used to enhance the interpretation. A word frequency analysis was run on MAXQDA, selecting for lemmatised words and a minimum of four-character words. A total of 34,120 words comprised this list. Throughout discussion of the findings in the following section, references are made to the use frequency of particular words to illustrate certain themes. For this metric to be useful, frequencies must be observed using a similar base figure. Therefore, based on candidate word proportions on the word frequency list, weights were calculated to be applied to frequency observations (Monroe et al., 2008). All frequencies reported in the findings are adjusted for the weights indicated in Table 20 below:

Table 20*Weighted Word Count by Candidate*

Candidate	Word count	Weighting
Sanders	7,606	1.12
Warren	8,556	-
Buttigieg	10,447	.82
Biden	7,511	1.14

9.4 Findings

Three themes reflecting the primary ways in which the nation was evoked in the data set were identified: *The Progress Imperative*, *The United Values of America*, and *The Individual and the Nation*. A summary of the themes with illustrative subthemes is set out in Table 21 below.

Table 21*Summary of Themes with Illustrative Subthemes*

	The Progress Imperative	The United Values of America	The Individual and the Nation
Sanders	<p>Revolution: a re-imagined America.</p> <p>Movement of working people for economic equality.</p> <p>America must be “transformed”.</p>	<p>Values referenced in regard to what America should be.</p> <p>Universal values.</p>	<p>Nation is cast as a government that presides over an unacceptable status quo.</p> <p>National symbols invoked almost exclusively as unachieved promises.</p>
Warren	<p>Revolution: America has a broken system that needs to be re-claimed.</p> <p>“Big structural change” is required.</p>	<p>American values generally referenced, not explicitly indicated, except for ‘democracy’.</p>	<p>Nation is equated to ‘our democracy’.</p> <p>The term ‘American’ is reserved for those who fight for civil rights.</p>
Buttigieg	<p>Evolution: change is inevitable.</p> <p>America re-imagined for the future.</p>	<p>Reclaimed American values ‘owned’ by the right.</p> <p>Positioned liberal values as US strength.</p>	<p>Referred to America as a symbolic group.</p> <p>Embraced the flag but re-defined its representation.</p>
Biden	<p>Evolution: to “re-claim the soul of America” from Trump.</p>	<p>Explicitly defined national ingroup values.</p> <p>Re-claimed American symbols.</p>	<p>America represented as a symbolic group in which tension is natural, and casts national symbols as dynamic</p>

Change is part of the
American narrative.

and in keeping with
progress.

Tension embraces as a
strength.

These overlapping themes highlight an overall focus on the close alignment between representations of the nation, change, and of the assumed commonality of values. At the same time, the findings point to contestation within the political left's primary messages of progress and unified values, a tension that is reflected in the differentiated evocations of the individual and the nation. The themes are discussed below, highlighting the tensions between the representations made by the candidates—particularly between the progressive (Sanders and Warren) and the moderate (Buttigieg and Biden) candidates—where variances were identified within the themes in conceptualisations of the nation, in the particular elements invoked, and the extent to which national identity was central to the candidates' message. Throughout the themes discussed, reference is made to two techniques candidates employed: re-imagining or re-claiming national identity.

9.4.1 The Progress Imperative: Revolution or Evolution?

The first theme speaks to a position traditionally associated with the political left: progress. Similar to the findings in Study 1, there was a common imperative among the candidates to move forward to a 'better place'. There was however less consensus regarding whether this change should be a matter of *revolution* or *evolution*. For the progressives, change from the unacceptable current status was big and urgent; for the moderates, change was represented more often as part of the country's character and a reason for optimism.

9.4.1.1 *Revolution*

The progressives—Senators Sanders and Warren—re-imagined American identity, one that breaks from elements of the country’s history and from the current state of affairs. In their talk, they proposed significant, systemic change and their campaigns were framed as a fight, as movements and revolutions within the country. To a certain extent this framing simply reflects the nature of an election, which is inevitably a fight. The fight they referred to was however not with Republican or even with other Democratic candidates but was positioned as being between an ingroup who supports economic equality and outgroups that were cast as ‘the wealthy and powerful’ and ‘the system’, which included the US government. As compared to the liberal political identification described in Study 1, this particular version of identity is more economically focused; it more directly takes issue with American capitalism and the influence corporations and the wealthy have on the government.

For Sanders, it was in the particular context of America’s wealth that “*economic rights are human rights*”, and he promoted changes to circumstances that were represented as “*unacceptable*” including that “*people are living paycheck to paycheck*”, that “*our childcare system is a disaster*”, and that “*87 million Americans are either uninsured or underinsured*”.

Sanders and Warren both defined a good government and economy as one that “*works for*” all people, not the rich and the corporations. Their common ingroup was “*working people*”. For example, Warren stated that “*Hard working people are up against a small group that holds far too much power, not just in our economy, but also in our democracy*”. While ‘*working people*’ was mentioned 20 times across

Sanders' and Warren's speeches, the term was not mentioned in either of the other two candidates' speeches. Likewise, 'movement' appeared only in the speeches of the two progressive candidates.

In this study's data, Sanders typically represented the ingroup and outgroup in a manner similar to his June 2019 "Democratic Socialism" speech:

On one hand, there is a growing movement towards oligarchy and authoritarianism in which a small number of incredibly wealthy and powerful billionaires own and control a significant part of the economy and exert enormous influence over the political life of our country. On the other hand, in opposition to oligarchy, there is a movement of working people and young people who, in ever increasing numbers, are fighting for justice.

Sanders names the ingroup as the young and working people and links them in a movement for justice that is not necessarily confined to America. This alliance of issues, individuals, and a movement aligns clearly with the description of the liberal identity in Study 1 and is likewise not directly linked with notions of the nation.

In order to bring about the America that Sanders envisioned, the nation must be transformed: "*thank you for being part of a political revolution which will transform America*". Sanders uses the word "*transform*" twelve times in his speeches, as compared to Warren's twice and Buttigieg's once, while Biden did not use the word. This positioning is clearly forward-looking with little anchoring in historical or group-centric national representations.

Like Sanders, Warren's rhetoric cast her campaign as a fight. Such talk clearly signals that America is not the country that it should be in the eyes of the

candidate. Unlike Sanders's discourse of 'transforming' America—of making America into something it hasn't been—Warren's re-presentation of the nation was re-claimed:

There's a story we tell as Americans, about how we built an international order – one based on democracy, human rights, and improving economic standards of living for everyone. It wasn't perfect – we weren't perfect – but our foreign policy benefited a lot of people around the world. It's a good story, with long roots. But in recent decades, something has changed.

In Warren's representation of America, the fundamentals are good, but the system has, over the decades, been intentionally abused by bad actors: "*the man in the White House is not the cause of what's broken, he's just the latest—and most extreme—symptom of what's gone wrong in America.*" The change she sought was institutional: "*big structural change*", and "*changing the rules*". In this way, she directed the negative rhetoric about the nation towards a broken system, a pragmatic approach that focuses on instrumental issues in the country, and therefore stands apart from Sanders's more universal value-focused world movement (a distinction discussed further in the themes below). In both Senators' discourse, the future referred to by the progressives is something to be saved from the current trajectory, and both visions require a willingness to change long-standing elements of the American system.

Like Sanders, for Warren the outgroup is the wealthy. While Sanders' rhetoric focused on strict economic differences, Warren's rhetoric more often connected wealth and power with such phrases as "*rich and powerful*". In keeping with the instrumental orientation of her rhetoric, Warren frames the campaign as a

battle for “*Washington*”, through which lives are in turn improved: “*We need to take power in Washington away from the wealthy and well-connected and put it back in the hands of the people where it belongs!*”. For both Senators therefore, the revolution is within the country and against a national sub-group, and little rhetoric is anchored in references to the national group.

A lexical analysis proved to be a concise reflection of the progressive candidates’ narrative construction. The analysis identified words employed by the two progressive candidates as compared to the two moderate candidates. Words that occurred more than 20 times in the whole of the data were identified, and the number of times each was employed by the progressives was compared to the number of times employed by the moderates on a weighted basis. The report was sorted to identify those words that were used by one group more than twice as often as the other. Selected relevant words are shown in Table 22 below (the full report is located in the Online Appendix C).

Table 22

Weighted Word Frequencies

	Progressives [a]	Moderates [b]	Difference [(a – b) / b]
workers	51	16	219%
Economic	55	13	323%
economy	34	16	113%
Money	36	10	360%
income	22	6	267%
wealth	48	6	700%
rich	34	16	113%
wealthy	37	3	1133%
power	49	32	53%

powerful	26	9	189%
Movement	34	0	N/A
justice	30	7	457%
corporation	33	0	N/A
corporate	24	0	N/A
system	36	15	140%
fight	87	16	444%
struggle	25	1	2400%

Compared to the moderates, the progressives' focus was more clearly on economic equality than was the moderates. The words '*economic*', '*economy*', '*workers*', and '*money*' were used by progressives from twice to over four times more than their moderate counterparts. The outgroups were the rich and powerful as well as corporates (notably absent from moderates' rhetoric), and 'the system'. The work towards progress represented as a fight and the current position as a struggle is also apparent here.

9.4.1.2 Evolution

The theme of a better future continued in the moderate candidates' talk. In contrast to the progressives—whose future is a necessary improvement on the poor condition of today—the moderates' future is represented as a great opportunity.

Like Biden, and in contrast to the progressives, Buttigieg's message was not about a revolution or a fight, but a less disruptive '*change*': "*I am ready to gather up an American majority that is hungry for change, that is done with the division*". In an additional contrast to the progressives, this message is aimed to unite. He did, however, agree with the progressives that there is a systemic issue: "*you don't even get a presidency like this unless something's wrong*", though he was less explicit

about what exactly is wrong than the progressive candidates were, and in this way avoided disparaging the nation.

Buttigieg's talk centred firmly on the promise of the future. This narrative contrasts with the progressives' representation of the present as morally unacceptable. In his discussion of the future, he re-presented a vision of the nation that eschews the idea of returning to anything in the past: "*there is no such thing as an honest politics that revolves around the word 'again' "*". Buttigieg framed change not as something that needs to be a point of division, but as an inevitability: "*so if America today feels like a confusing place to live, it is because we are on one of those blank pages in between chapters. Change is coming, ready or not.*" Change was represented as an exciting part of the American journey: "*are you ready to turn the page and start a new chapter in the American story?*" and invited re-imagining America's future.

Biden also positioned change and progress as part of the American narrative:

The American creed that we're all created equal was written long ago, but the genius of every generation of Americans has opened it wider and wider and wider to include those who have been excluded in a previous generation.

The change that Biden appeared to seek was more narrowly focussed than the other candidates' visions. The change with which his talk was most concerned was in regard to the current (Trump) administration. He advocated reclaiming "*the soul of America*" from the damage done by the political right. Biden appeared to share Buttigieg's enthusiasm for the future but linked this directly to points of national

pride—America’s economic and research success—and rallied the whole of the nation.

I have never been more optimistic about America’s chances than I am today. We are better positioned than any nation in the world to lead the 21st century. We have the world’s most powerful economy. We have the greatest research universities than all of the rest of the world combined. We find ourselves with a workforce that is three times as productive as workers in Asia. So ladies and gentlemen, it is time to get the hell up. It is time to stop walking around with our heads down. This is the United States of America, we can do anything. We can do anything at all we set our minds to. Anything.

The moderates both weave the prospect of change with a narrative of America as a symbolic group—one in which the nation, as an abstract entity is given character and agency. In these representations, the ingroup is not a sub-group of, but is the whole of the nation, and change is part of the American narrative.

A lexical analysis similar to that conducted for the progressives in Table 22 was conducted for the moderates but proved to be less revealing. An extract of relevant words is shown in Table 23 below (the full report is located in the Online Appendix C).

Table 23

Weighted Word Counts

	Progressives	Moderates	Difference
	[a]	[b]	[(b – a) / a]
nation	20	80	311%
national	7	20	180%

value	13	59	365%
freedom	14	45	209%
future	14	36	161%
hope	3	29	844%
threat	13	37	172%
hate	3	23	579%
leadership	4	19	238%

This analysis reflects the tone of the moderates as less about the poor state of the present and directed more towards a positive future. In contrast to the progressives' use of '*struggle*', the moderates more often used '*challenge*', and words like '*hope*'. The high-use word '*freedom*' can be attributed to Buttigieg's particular message, more fully discussed below. The listing reveals little about an overall narrative among the moderates as compared to progressives, though the high frequency of '*value*' and '*nation*' are taken up in the next two themes.

9.4.2 The United Values of America

For all the candidates, the preceding theme of change for progress implicitly assumed an ingroup that holds similar values of equality. Progress as part of a value-driven movement was identified as part of lay representations of liberal identity in Study 1. In the current study, the term '*values*' was referenced throughout candidate speeches as a unifier of both Democrats and Americans. Explicitly which values these were often remained unidentified, although each candidate appeared to embrace a favourite. For Sanders, it was justice; for Warren, democracy. Buttigieg spoke most often of freedom; and Biden, decency.

For Sanders, America was represented as a vehicle for wider world justice, but that it must be transformed in order to meet that ideal. He constructed the American outgroup—billionaires and corporations—as representative of universal structures, of “*oligarchy and authoritarianism*”. He did not explicitly invoke the nation in his value references, and any connection between American “*justice*” and un-American, “*oligarchy and authoritarianism*” must be assumed. Sanders did not however necessarily associate the US with unique positive values. The passage “*The United States must reject that path of hatred and divisiveness — and instead find the moral conviction to choose a different path, a higher path, a path of compassion, justice and love*” indicates that the US is currently on the path of the former. In keeping with the transformational narrative, these value assertions highlight Sanders’s vision of what America *should be*, with little reference to what it *is*, or to the American narrative.

There were a number of instances in which Warren referenced American values, though she seldom elaborated on what they might be: “*American security and American values should come ahead of the profit margins of these private companies*”, “*...too pleased with his judicial appointments and tax cuts for the wealthy to stand up for fundamental American values*”, and “*Our movement won’t be divided by our differences. It will be united by the values we share*”. The idea that her proposition reflects a moral imperative is clear however: “*it was the right thing to do*”, “*it’s not right*”, “*That’s dangerous and it’s wrong*”, though again specifics as to the values to be upheld were largely absent. The value Warren clearly did endorse was democracy. It was, however, not something that America currently had claim to; this particular representation of the country was to be reclaimed: “*Our democracy has been hijacked.*”

Buttigieg also referred to shared values: “*improving everyday lives and doing it in the name of shared values that light the way to a better future*”, “*to change our lives for the better, to call us to our highest values*”. He forthrightly presented the values he stood for: “*the principles that will guide my campaign for president are simple enough to stick on a bumper sticker. Freedom, security, and democracy*”, two of which—freedom and security—are not familiar liberal talking points. Buttigieg reclaimed these terms that have been commandeered by the right by redefining ‘*security*’ and ‘*freedom*’ to include economic and civil rights (“*Freedom from want, freedom from fear.*”), and arguing that ‘*supporting the military*’ is not just standing for the flag, but also respecting the lives of soldiers.

Buttigieg continued this acknowledgement of the left-right differences in values rhetoric by re-claiming the patriotism secured by the right: “*They speak of patriotism but surely patriotism lies in defending our beliefs as well as our country*”, re-presenting the act of defending principles as an American norm. Indeed, it is a norm that proposes who the rest of the world needs America to be. This positioning retains America in a position of strength: “*the world does need America to model our values into the world*” but warns that the continuation of the status quo may damage this strength “*if gross inequality and declining social mobility persist in our country, our economic and political system will become less and less respected on the world stage*”, thereby positioning political values of the left as a source of strength for the US.

Biden specifically identified less traditional values as the norms of the national ingroup:

In this nation, we believe, when we're at our best, we believe in honesty, decency, treating everyone with respect, giving everyone a fair shot, leaving nobody behind, giving hate no safe harbor, demonizing no one, not the poor, the powerless, the immigrant or the other, leading by the power of our example, not by the example of our power. That's allowed us to stand as a beacon to the world, being part of something bigger than ourselves. It's a code. It's uniquely American code. It's who we are.

This listing begins with values that are traditionally associated with individuals ('honesty' and 'decency') and builds through those that straddle what could be individual attributes or those of a nation ('leaving nobody behind') through to the 'power' rhetoric in which the nation is clearly invoked. In this way he fuses the individual and the nation's values while also tapping into national pride. He reinforces the exceptional status of ingroup membership through these united values. The references to a 'code' allude to the idea that these are agreed upon principles and are therefore uniting; the exclusivity of this group is enforced by representing these values as unique and as integral to identity: "it's who we are". Biden employs rhetoric that speaks to both the individual and the nation here, a difficult balance in bridging a tension that is discussed in the net theme.

9.4.3 The American Narrative: The Individual and the Nation

As peripherally identified in the themes above, throughout the data set the extent to which the nation was represented as an instrument of the individual or as a symbolic group varied across the ideological spectrum. Within the framework of ideological narrative, national identity was constructed by progressives primarily as an instrumental attachment (wherein the purpose of the nation is to meet the needs of

the individual), characterised by a government that “*works for everyone*”. The moderates on the other hand, more freely invoked the nation as a symbolic group characterised by a strong affective attachment where individuals may see the group as representative of their personal identity; they made efforts to reclaim more traditional symbols of American patriotism.

The instrumental perspective was most apparent in the progressives’ narratives. In these messages, the nation was most clearly seen as a collection of individuals and the trappings of traditional patriotism were rarely invoked. They did not take cues from the right’s patriotism, but instead offered a representation of the nation that was a union of individuals with the purpose of securing peoples’ rights. They tied their representations of change to the American story by citing their particular, less traditional, historical American heroes. For Warren, it was the individuals who fought against the system for workers’ and civil rights. Sanders connected most strongly with Franklin Delano Roosevelt and positioned his own campaign as an extension of Roosevelt’s New Deal.

When the nation was invoked in Sanders’s speeches, it was generally in terms of “*government*” and was employed to call attention to what he considered to be an unacceptable status quo: “*the underlying principles of our government will not be greed, hatred and lies. It will not be racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia and religious bigotry*”. Likewise, Warren’s rhetoric regarding the nation was specific, speaking about “*our democracy*” and “*our government*”. These are intentionally instrumental references when the more neutral ‘*our country*’ or symbolic ‘*our nation*’ might have been an option.

This instrumental representation of the nation was reinforced by Warren's repeated references to the prospect of a democracy/America/government/economy that "*works for*" the people. The concept of the nation represented by Warren was invested in individuals and the system: "*I believe in us. I believe in what we can do. I believe in democracy and in what we must do to save it.*" Restrictions related to this representation of the national ingroup, of who comprises this "we" can be inferred not only from shared values, but also in how she conferred national identity. The adjective '*American*' was bestowed on those who feature in her anecdotes in which workers or individuals organised to improve their condition, whether that was mill workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, or garment workers in New York City. Unions taking on corporate America through the government were used as an allegory for her campaign wherein Warren's supporters are also referred to as Americans. Inherent in this allegory is a representation of the nation in need of change and of real Americans as agents of this change, a representation that restricts this identity.

In contrast to the representation of America as instrumental and as comprised of a group of individuals, the candidates all to some extent represented the country as a symbolic group—one that has its own character and responsibilities. The symbols and history of the nation were invoked—though for differing purposes—in the representation of the nation.

When national symbols were employed in Sanders's rhetoric they were almost exclusively with a negative valence: "*the American Dream of upward mobility is in peril*". Sanders's positive evocation of America's past was limited to aligning his mission with that of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. References to America's place in the world represented the nation as lagging behind: Sanders

referred to the “*international embarrassment*” of “*having more people in jail than any other country on earth*” and “*of being the only major country on earth not to guarantee health care to all people as a human right.*” Indeed, the current moral state of America was represented as all the more egregious because of its success: “*tens of millions of working-class people, in the wealthiest country on earth, are suffering under incredible economic hardship, desperately trying to survive*”. When national symbols were positively invoked, the progressives tied the transformation of America to more peripheral elements of the American narrative. Sanders referred to his own proposal for “*a 21st Century Economic Bill of Rights*”, a framing that evokes the Constitution—a symbolic founding document—but is specific to the amendments to that document, the elements associated with change and individual rights. He refines another symbol in the following example:

We must see ourselves as part of one nation, one community and one society — regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or country of origin. This quintessentially American idea is literally emblazoned on our coins: E Pluribus Unum. From the many, one.

Here, Sanders plays on one of the de facto mottos of the US—originally expressing the union of the 13 original colonies (i.e., governing groups)—to move its meaning to one more reflective of individual identity by interpreting the phrase as a coming together of people as opposed to governing groups. Warren likewise makes an exception to her instrumental characterisation when she refers to a specific inscription on a governmental building: “*It’s time to live our values. Look at the four words etched above the Supreme Court: Equal Justice Under Law*”. These

references, while indisputably part of America's symbols, appear to be selected to remain firmly within the progressive narrative.

Buttigieg, in a marked contrast to the progressives, frequently referred to the US as a symbolic group: "*America deserves our optimism, deserves our courage, and deserves our oath*", "*I have seen what America can do, and so have you*", and "*do we not live in a country that can overcome the bleakness of a challenging and divided moment?*". This rhetoric clearly confers agency to the nation. America is positioned as a being with its own attributes and history, an entity deserving of our faith and support. He did not shy away from the traditional symbols of American identity. While Warren disparaged Trump for "*wrap[ping] himself in the flag*", Buttigieg was the only candidate to offer an alternative meaning for the American flag, again attempting to reclaim the symbol for the Democrats:

the flag that was on my shoulder when I stepped off that airplane that took me to Afghanistan was not a Republican flag but an American flag.

Symbolizing our responsibility to speak up when our leaders do wrong. That is an act of loyalty to the republic for which it stands

These reclaiming attempts by Buttigieg weave together liberal 'progress' with abstractions and symbols anchored in the American national narrative. They reflect a long-term vision of the nation: one in which an instrumental and individual vision of the nation sits easily with the historic symbolic representations currently embraced by the political right.

Biden also foregrounded American symbols in this rhetoric but did not directly re-claim these. Instead, he represented the symbolic group as an entity in

which a natural tension exists, his rhetoric often oscillating between this symbolic group and the individual in his character description. Biden re-presents an America that is trying its best, but is flawed (like humans), and his rhetoric freely incorporates American symbols. He casts these symbols as dynamic, in contrast to the reverence with which they appear to be regarded by the right, thereby imbuing these with the possibility of progress. Biden positions the unease with which liberal ideals sit with traditional symbols as natural by employing the frame of the American experiment, thereby establishing an American narrative of progress towards an ideal that it has never achieved:

We the people is the most unique experiment in the history of the world and ladies and gentlemen, the genius of every generation, up to this one with this president, of every generation is we have opened our arms wider and wider to include more people in that arc. That is why it has never gathered dust in our history books. It is still alive today more than 200 years after its inception.

In this passage, the tension between what America ‘stands for’ and the need for progress is framed as a positive characteristic, one that infuses American citizens and symbols with greatness. His audience is made to feel special through their role in this ‘unique experiment’ and can cast themselves as part of the next ‘genius’ generation to continue to the progress of reconciling the country’s values with its current position.

Although Biden at times recognised the contrast of the individual and the nation: “*as individuals and as a nation, we have to prove to the world the United States is prepared to lead*”, he more often fused the individual and the abstract

nation's values and personality "*it's a time for us to tap into the strength and audacity that took us to victory in two world wars and brought down the iron curtain*". Inherent in this fusion is that both the individual and the nation are exceptional ("*I believe America has always been special*"); he directly appealed to pride and history: "*let's remember who in God's name we are. Not have -- this is the United States of America. There's not a damn thing we've been unable to do when we've done it together*", and to strength: "*We are the United States of America. There is not a single thing beyond our capacity if we stand together and get up and remember who we are. This is United States of America. Period*", thereby both empowering and uniting his audience and, by extension, the nation.

9.5 Discussion

This study set out to understand how members of the Democratic party elite represent the US nation. The primary themes of change, equality and the individual—as identified in Study 1 and other literature as being integral to the liberal identity—backgrounded representations. Throughout the findings, various tensions were apparent. While the progressives offered a coherent narrative of change that was only loosely tied to the symbolic nation, tensions between the narratives of the left and the symbolic national group were more apparent in the rhetoric of—but were embraced by—the moderate candidates. The themes of *The Progress Imperative*, *The United Values of America*, and *The Individual and the Nation* were all salient in the overall representations of the nation made by the candidate group. The variance between candidate re-presentations of the nation laid bare the difficulties the left may have in presenting a consistent representation of the nation that effectively counters the right's national reverence.

Sanders's revolutionary narrative took in individuals and particular identities as an ingroup and connected them directly to wider ideals; he made little direct reference to American identity content, however. Likewise, Warren's idea of the nation was clearly instrumental and the national ingroup was restrictive. The progress that she proposed was plainly linked to America as individuals. For the progressives, the values of justice and democracy foregrounded their ideas of the nation. These representations were more tentatively linked to the traditional symbolic conceptualisations of America as they were principally employed to re-imagine the nation. The result is an ideological message that is divorced from highly salient elements of American national identity.

In contrast, both Buttigieg and Biden aimed to take in both the individual and the more symbolic nation whether that was through national symbols or the symbolic group. This balancing act meant that the progress they sought was more evolutionary than it was revolutionary, and that this change was something to be seen as an opportunity as opposed to a necessity. The candidates re-claimed both values and symbols. Buttigieg's tactic sought to directly re-define patriotism. It allowed 'patriots' to hold on to symbols that they recognise as American, while providing new meaning in concert with the positions held by Democrats. Such language may not only have the potential to reach across the political aisle but may also begin to affect a re-definition of American patriotism for the long term. Similarly, Biden redeployed American symbols and infused them with values that were more directly relevant to the current context: employing 'decency' and 'dignity' as American values to contrast with Donald Trump. Biden most strongly invoked national pride and sought to bridge the symbolic group and liberal ideals by recognising the inherent tension that exists between them.

The themes invoked by all the candidates (progress, values, and the individual) are concordant with the narratives offered by the lay representations in Study 1. However, the lay descriptions were more clearly representative of the value and movement narratives offered by the progressives in this study as compared to the moderates. One reason for this mirroring may be the clarity of the progressive narrative as compared to the more tension-filled narrative of the moderates. However, the representations of the nation offered by the moderates clearly resonate with a number of voters. National attachment research may therefore be enhanced in the future through efforts to conceptualise a variety of national attachment that captures a more moderate understanding.

9.6 Conclusion

This study's findings illustrate the dilemma inherent in the alignment of the US liberal and national identities, where the left-most candidates' representations were most distant from traditional representations of the nation. The findings add nuance to scholarship that asserts the absence of alignment of the US political left with the American narrative (e.g., Gidron, 2018; Mellow, 2020; R. M. Smith, 2020). This study primarily highlights the division between the progressive and moderate elements of the party, but it also provides evidence of the diversity among candidates. The fragmentation supports the claims made earlier in this thesis that the national reverence organising principle embraced by the political right in the US does not have an equal counter narrative on the US political left, and the analysis highlights the intertwining of ideology and national attachment representations within the Democratic party that contribute to these differences.

The next chapter returns to the primary exploratory sequential pathway of this thesis. The influence of the organising principles will be examined further by subjecting them to an experiment that will assess their relative influence against issue positions and demographics in the cause of affective political polarisation.

10 Chapter 10: The Causal Connection

10.1 Chapter Overview

The empirical work in this thesis began with an exploration of the subjective meanings attributed to ideological and partisan political identity labels in Study 1 (Chapter 6). A key contrast identified in this Study—reflecting two versions of *national attachments*—was operationalised in Study 2 as national reverence (NR) and individual support (IS). These national attachment measures reflect lay language and offer a parsimonious measure of their social psychological correlates including nationalism, right-wing authoritarianism, and social-dominance orientation. While Studies 2a and 2b established that NR and IS were significantly correlated with APP, the issue of causality remained open due to the cross-sectional nature of these data. This chapter presents Study 4, the final empirical chapter which explored this causal link through a novel application of a pre-registered, conjoint analysis experiment.

10.2 Background

Previous literature provides substantial evidence that a person's self-categorisation as a member of either of the two US political parties serves to organise attitudes, and that this political affiliation drives both ingroup support and outgroup dislike (e.g., Iyengar et al., 2012). However, as discussed in Chapter 1, what exactly it is about this political identification that provokes such reactions remains a subject of inquiry. Primary in this debate is a question as to whether the animosity between the political right and left in the US is driven by policy preference (Dias & Lelkes, 2021; Lelkes, 2021; Orr & Huber, 2020; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017) or by party members' 'identity'—a concept that broadly refers to the non-issue preference

element of affiliation, but is generally conceived of as social affiliations (e.g. religious and ethnic groups, Huddy et al., 2015; Mason, 2018a). I have argued that issue preference is not outside of identity, but instead that both issue preference and social evaluations are but two facets of political identity content (Chapter 4). The empirical work in this chapter proposes to insert itself in this debate by assessing not only the degree to which a third content element (national attachments) may contribute to APP, but also how this driver might compare to those of social evaluation and issue preferences.

Social affiliation has long been the subject of political identity content exploration (Conover & Feldman, 1981; Ellis & Stimson, 2012; Green et al., 2002; Mason, 2018a), particularly on the basis of race and religion. Mason (2018a) provides evidence of the correlation between the growing alignment of racial, religious, and political identities alongside growing affective political polarisation (APP) over the decades. This analysis suggests that such sorting has caused the increase in APP and has substantially added to the argument that group affiliation drives polarisation. However, causal evidence in the form of experimental work remains scant.

In large part, this may be due to the difficulty in capturing the influence of group *affiliation* as an experimental variable: the underlying structure of a person's identity is the product of a life's worth of experience and therefore eludes manipulation. In research, the influence of demographic groups is therefore often based on reified conceptualisations of the group, a driver absent of strength and content. As an alternative, the evidence for the influence of group identities on political behaviour has largely relied on correlation between identity and

participants' *evaluations* of social groups (e.g., Conover & Feldman, 1981). In an experimental design, if it is not possible to manipulate the groups to which the participants belong (group affiliation), it is at least possible to manipulate the group identities of hypothetical others as a proxy (group evaluation). As the variable of 'group evaluation' is not the same as the 'group affiliation' driver asserted by Mason (2018a) and others, it is not possible to directly address the debate between the dominance of social identity or issue preference in APP.

However, as the purpose of the current study is to understand the relative contribution of national attachments as compared to other known identity content, the relative contribution between issue preferences and social evaluations in previous work is relevant. This is consistent with approaches assumed in recent work aimed at disentangling the drivers of APP. In a vignette evaluation experiment, Orr and Huber (2020) assessed warmth of feelings towards laypeople according to the presence or absence of particular attributes including issue preference, party identification, race, and religion. When the attributes of a hypothetical other included an issue position and party identification, the difference in warmth (between in party and out party) decreased by 60% from party identity alone; when race and religion were presented with party identification, warmth difference decreased by 26%. This work has two key implications. First, it suggests that issue position and race and religion group evaluations are key elements of partisan identification. Second, it implies that the effect of the issue preference content on APP is approximately double that of race and religion partisan identity content.

The current study is however concerned with understanding the simultaneous influence of multiple identity elements on APP: demographics/group evaluations,

issue positions, and national attachments. Similar work has been conducted outside of the APP literature when political scientists have employed discrete choice experiments—a specific type of conjoint analysis—to measure the effect of various attributes on candidate choice (e.g. Bansak et al., 2021; Hainmueller et al., 2014). Similarly, the current study employed a conjoint experimental design to examine whether national attachments (NR and IS) have causal effects on the warmth felt towards lay persons in the presence of issue preferences and racial and religious group information. The purpose of the current study was two-fold. In the first instance, it was to test the assertion that national attachments are causal contributors to APP. Secondly, the simultaneous assessment of these identity elements also provides insight into the Democratic and Republican identity structures and their connection to political outcomes by highlighting and contrasting the identity elements by party that drive APP.

There are a number of influences that may affect the relative impact of national attachments in this study. In the first instance, the saliency and stability of race, religion, and issue preferences suggest an expected greater effect on warmth as compared to the undeclared values of national attachments. However, evaluations of race and religion are potentially subject to social desirability bias in a way that the other components may not be. There is, however, evidence that conjoint designs (where a number of attributes are all randomised) mitigate social desirability bias as compared to partially randomised designs (where say, only race is manipulated), (Horiuchi et al., 2020).

10.3 Method

The design and analysis for this study was pre-registered on 2 February 2021 at https://aspredicted.org/SQF_6YD.

10.3.1 Design

This study employed a type of conjoint analysis known as a discrete choice experiment. Since the publication of Hainmueller et al.'s (2014) paper on the application of this experimental design to political science, discrete choice experiments have been more widely employed in this field (Bansak et al., 2021) including applications to voting preference, public policy design, and immigration attitudes. The analytic advantage of a discrete choice experiment is the fully random assignment of content *elements* (e.g., demographics, national attachment styles, issue positions) across a variety of *dimensions* (e.g., specific ethnicities or religions within the demographics element) which enables the unbiased estimation of effects of each dimension on the choice (Leeper, 2018). The discrete choice experiment design allows for the estimate of the causal effects of multiple treatment elements (in this study: demographics/social evaluations, national attachments, and issue positions) and the assessment of causal hypotheses related to these simultaneously. The design thereby allows for an evaluation of the relative explanatory power of different theories by moving beyond unidimensional tests of a single hypothesis. By varying the levels of the identity content elements across the alternatives and the choice tasks, the responses collected through a discrete choice experiment can identify the factors that shape affect towards individuals as well as their relative importance.

In the common administration of a discrete choice experiment, participants select one of two alternative profiles or vignettes where each has randomly varied attributes. In this study, the causal link between the selected elements and APP was explored by manipulating the profiles of hypothetical lay persons and measuring the effect on participants' feelings towards these various profiles. By offering national attachments as part of profiles that include social demographics and policy preferences, it is possible to determine which identity elements causally increase or decrease warm feelings towards a person on average when varied independently of the other identity content elements.

The application of a discrete choice experiment to the question of APP is novel. A discrete choice experiment is commonly employed to identify the particular features within an attribute that appeals most and least to a target group (e.g., does a car offering in red increase or decrease the probability of a customer selecting it?). In this study however, items commonly associated with one group or the other were balanced, allowing for sets of ingroup and outgroup items. This means that Democrats were expected to rate particular issue positions higher than others, and to rate IS statements higher than NR statements. Indeed, for both parties, the average effect size for each of the elements (demographics, national attachment, and issue positions) was .50, indicating a balanced set of dimensions that comprise each of the elements. Little is therefore gained from the observation of each dimension's effect size in isolation. It is instead the interpretation of the *range* of effects (contrasting the pre-determined left- and right- items) that is relevant to this study. The range speaks to how *polarising* particular facets of these identities are.

10.3.2 Procedure

The data were collected in Qualtrics. Participants were asked to act as if they are just meeting several pairs of people. For each pair of people, they were asked to indicate who they felt most warmly towards based on the limited information provided: a social demographic (the person's race or religion), a national attachment statement (national reverence [NR] and individual support [IS] items, derived from Study 2a), and their position on political issues that are known to be polarising. The design relies on the assumption that the affect towards the laypersons included in this analysis (based only on identity content) would translate to affect towards an identity (partisanship or ideological identity) that includes this content. The selection of lay persons as a target of warmth is considered to provide a more robust test of APP causes than would warmth towards a hypothetical candidate as the polity appears to dislike party elites more than they do their fellow lay person (J. N. Druckman & Levendusky, 2019).

The profiles were presented in tables as opposed to narratives as the profile format has been found to be less taxing on participants (Bansak et al., 2021). The dimensions of each of the three elements of these profiles were randomly assigned employing a javascript randomisation example for conjoint experiments (Leeper, 2018). The items and probability allocations can be found in Appendix D, and the code for the randomisation in the Online Appendix D. Each pair of profiles was presented separately, and participants were first shown an example pairing to familiarise them with the experimental setup. After selecting the profile they felt warmest towards, participants were asked to rate—on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 = *very cold*, 10 = *very warm*)—how warmly they felt towards each of the people in the

profiles. This second question was included for two purposes. In the first instance, the presentation of a follow-up question regarding the participants' profile choice aimed to encourage deeper engagement with the task. Secondly, a comparison of the rating and the profile choice enabled an assessment of participant attention as measured as consistency between these two responses. For example, a choice set that indicated the participant selected Person A as the one they felt most warmly towards, but then rated their feelings towards Person B more highly on the feeling thermometers, would be considered an inconsistent choice. Figure 6 illustrates how the profiles were presented to participants.

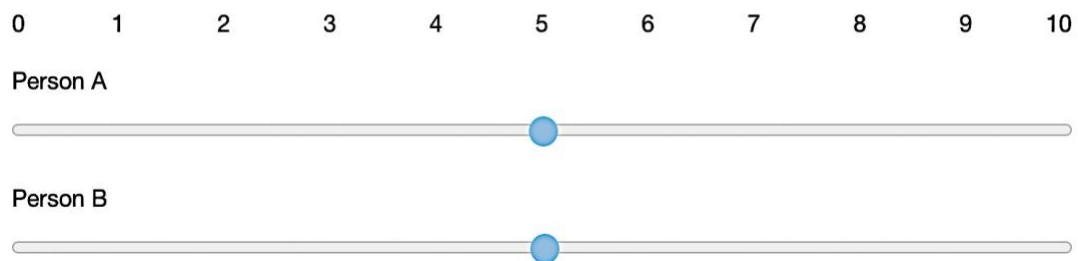
Figure 6

Illustration of Survey Layout

Which person do you feel most warmly towards?

<p>Person A</p> <p>Jewish</p> <p>We should do more to make sure every American has an equal chance to get ahead in life</p> <p>Abortion should only be permitted in cases of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger</p>	<p>Demographic</p> <p>Belief</p> <p>Issue position</p>	<p>Person B</p> <p>Black</p> <p>To make the nation stronger, we need to take better care of our people</p> <p>Immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children should be allowed to live and work in the U.S. under strict regulation</p>
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; width: 100%;"> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px 10px; border-radius: 5px;">Person A</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px 10px; border-radius: 5px;">Person B</div> </div>		

Please rate how you feel towards each person on a feeling thermometer using a scale from 0 to 10 (0 = very cold, 10 = very warm).



To reduce the possibility that partisan identity might prime partisan conflict, the request for demographic information and feelings towards the parties and ideologies as groups followed the treatment.

10.3.3 Materials

Participants were presented with 15 sets of two candidate profiles, items for which were from listings as follows (item wording and probability allocations can be found in Appendix D):

Demographics: As some of the most commonly studied social associations for political behavioural impact, nine items related to ethnicity and religion were included. Given the white ethnic majority in the US, ethnicities were weighted to reflect reality more accurately.

National attachments: The full scales of national reverence (NR) and individual support (IS) from Study 2 consisted of nine and five items each. For balance, only five NR items were included. The four excluded items were covariants of the five selected items (refer Study 2b, section 8.4.1) to ensure all aspects of NR were represented. An additional item to serve as a neutral, reference item for AMCE

analysis was also included (Table 4 in Study 2a, “It is important to ensure that all Americans have the liberty to act and think as they consider most appropriate”).

Issue positions: To provide a robust test of the contribution of national attachments to APP, highly salient and polarising issues have been selected. Issue positions reflect various positions on five common and polarising issues in the US: abortion, gun control, immigration, welfare spending, and adoption by same-sex couples. Positions were identical to those used by Orr and Huber (2020) to study the relative impact of party identity and issue position on APP. They reflect the wording of American National Election Studies (ANES) questions and (except for the same-sex marriage issue) include an ostensibly ‘left’, ‘right’ and middle ground position (the same-sex question has only a ‘right’ and ‘left’ option). The prominence of these issues is likely to strongly signal party affiliation, the strongest predictor of APP.

The survey also collected participants’ demographic information and feelings towards the parties and ideologies as a group. In addition, for the purpose of assessing the robustness of the main analysis, political knowledge (and its proxy, education) and political interest were assessed as these have been demonstrated to be correlated with ideological consistency and APP, respectively (Converse, 1964; Delli Carini & Keeter, 1991; Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016). For the purpose of analysis, these variables, along with education, were bifurcated into ‘high’ and ‘low’ indicators as follows (all items were pre-registered, demographic and question wording can be found in the full survey included in the Online Appendix E).

Education: High school or less (low)/Some college and above (high).

Political knowledge: a score of 0-2 on a 5-point scale (low)/ a score of 3-5 (high). Knowledge questions included “What is the term of a US Senator?” and “Who is the Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court?”.

Political interest: a score of 0-1 on a 3-point scale (low)/a score of 2-3 (high). Interest questions included agreement with statements such as “I was very interested in the 2020 US elections”.

10.3.4 Participants

A pilot of 30 participants was run prior to the main study. The purpose of the pilot was in the first instance to ensure that the code and method proposed for capturing the data and analysis was appropriate. The data collected were also used to gauge the proportion of respondents by political identity (i.e., how many Democrats and Republican responded) and to gauge whether exclusions are required to ensure reliable data. Of the 30 participants who responded to the participation request, only five were Republicans. There were also a number of instances of inconsistency between the profile preference indicated and thermometer ratings of the profiles. Based on this data, it was decided that the main study would consist of separate recruitments of Democrats and Republicans to attempt to add balance to the sample. To promote consistency between choices and feeling thermometer ratings, wording was added to the information sheet to implore participants to ensure that these are consistent, and a filter of high-quality participants was requested as part of the sample request from Prolific. In accordance with the pre-registration, exclusion criteria were set to remove participants who had inconsistencies for more than two profiles or who completed the survey faster than two standard deviations below the average completion time.

The participants for this study were recruited using Prolific.com and were paid in line with the site guidelines: an average of approximately £8.25 per hour. As the purpose was to assess distinctions between Democrats and Republicans, the sample requested was restricted to self-identified partisans. A filter US 2020 election voters was also applied to access the population whose attitudes manifest in a political behaviour of interest. Although the participant group was less diverse, more educated, and less affluent than would be a representative sample of the US population (refer Table 24 below), experimental studies have found equivalent results with representative and non-representative samples (Berinsky et al., 2012; Krupnikov et al., 2021).

Table 24

Participant Demographic Information (in number of participants)

	Democrats <i>n</i> = 247	Republicans <i>n</i> = 227	Total <i>n</i> = 474	Representative sample benchmark
<i>Gender</i>				
Female	146	98	244 (51%)	
Male	97	129	226 (48%)	
<i>Age</i>				
<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	32.5 (10.6)	39.3 (14.0)	35.8 (12.8)	
Range	18 - 72	18 - 73	18 - 73	
<i>Ethnicity</i>				
White	167 (68%)	139 (76%)	347 (73%)	69% ^a
Black	20	14	34 (7%)	11% ^a
Hispanic	21	14	35 (7%)	12% ^a
Asian	32	16	48 (10%)	
Other	7	3	10 (2%)	
<i>Income</i>				
< \$50,000	104	72	176 (37%)	42% ^b
\$50,000-\$100,000	80	78	158 (33%)	30% ^b
\$100,000-\$250,000	56	70	126 (27%)	21% ^b
>\$250,000	7	7	14 (3%)	7% ^b

<i>Education</i>				
Some high school	1 (0%)	2 (1%)	3 (1%)	9% ^a
High school graduate	18 (7%)	27 (12%)	45 (9%)	29% ^a
Some college	67 (27%)	62 (27%)	129 (27%)	31% ^a
College degree	101 (41%)	83 (37%)	184 (39%)	31% (at least college grad) ^a
Post-graduate degree	60 (24%)	53 (23%)	113 (24%)	

^a2016 American National Election Studies survey of registered voters ^b2016 American Community Survey, the Census Bureau's most recent estimate of the characteristics of the U.S. population.

Orme and Johnson (2006) recommend sample sizes of at least 300 in conjoint analysis with a minimum of 200 respondents per group for subgroup analysis.

Sawtooth Software (a leading provider of conjoint analysis software) also provides a guideline—adapted from some simulation work done on logistic regression (Peduzzi et al., 1996)—which recommends that the minimum sample size should equal $1000c/qa$, where q is the number of questions shown to each respondent, a is the number of alternatives per question, and c is the maximum number of levels of any attribute. This study presented each participant with 15 questions, well within the recommended maximum (Bansak et al., [2018] found that even after 30 tasks, participants consistently process conjoint profiles). With two alternatives per question for this proposed design (a), and the maximum number of levels of 14 (issue position component, c), the formula recommends a sample of 467.

Six hundred participants (300 Democrats and 300 Republicans) were recruited. In accordance with the pre-registration plan, all participants who were inconsistent between their profile choice and feeling thermometer ratings more than twice were excluded. This parameter resulted in the exclusion 111 participants. The sample received did not always meet the criteria of the sample requested. As party subgroup analysis is integral to the study, an additional fifteen participants were

excluded because they identified as ‘Pure Independent’ as opposed to either of the political parties. An additional fifteen participants who indicated that they did not vote in the 2020 presidential election were not excluded as this was not a parameter integral to the analysis. The final sample of 474 was considered adequate.

The data were collected in February 2021. President Biden had been elected in November 2020 and had just taken office in January 2021 amidst accusations of voter fraud from the outgoing President Trump and his supporters. While this messaging was predictably not popular with Democrats (91% disapproved, (Pew Research Center, 2020)), approximately one-third of Republicans also said this messaging was wrong. In addition, an insurrection of far-right protesters forcefully entered the US Capitol Building on 6 January 2021. Such Republican-focused negative press may serve to fuel the dislike of Republicans by Democrats but may also cause Republicans to distance themselves from their own group.

10.3.5 Analysis

The data were transformed for analysis using Excel and the `cj_tidy` package and were analysed using the R `cregg` conjoint analysis package (Leeper, 2018). The code employed for analysis is included in Online Appendix F. As each participant was presented with 15 paired choices; there were 7,110 (15*474) possible profile choices to analyse. For each presented profile, the outcome variable was the choice made by the participants regarding which profile in each pair they felt the most warmly towards (1 = chosen, 0 = not chosen). This outcome variable was regressed on variables that indicate whether each level of the randomly assigned profile attributes is included or excluded in the profile. The `cregg` package employs ordinary

least squares (OLS) regression that clusters standard errors at the participant level to account for the non-independence of each participant's choices. The use of OLS is in keeping with methodological guidance on the analysis of discrete choice experiments (Hainmueller et al., 2014).

The above analysis allowed for the calculation of marginal effects for these models. In the case of OLS, marginal effects translate the coefficients in these conditional models into the marginal contribution of a variable to the outcome (i.e., the value expressed by coefficients in unconditional models. Conjoint analysis commonly discusses results either in terms of the marginal means (MM) or the average marginal component effect (AMCE) associated with each dimension included in the profiles. Both MMs and AMCEs are causal estimands that measure the change in the probability that a profile will be chosen when it includes a given attribute value. MMs represent the mean outcome across all appearances of a particular dimension, averaging across all other dimensions. In a discrete choice experiment with two profiles per task, MMs by definition average 0.5 with values above 0.5 indicating attributes that increase profile favourability and values below 0.5 indicating attributes that decrease profile favourability. While MMs measure the change in probability in relation to the otherwise 50/50 probability of selection, AMCEs measure the average change compared a baseline dimension (e.g., the impact on Democratic APP of the demographic 'Black' as compared to 'Catholic'). The preregistration document refers to an analysis of both AMCE and MM measures. However, while both MM and AMCE results are useful for assessing the impact of element dimensions against one another, AMCE measures were subsequently determined to less suited than were MM measures for this study. This study is less interested in the contribution of particular element dimensions (e.g.,

each item within the issue positions element) than in the relative contribution of the overall attribute (e.g., issue positions generally). In addition, this study's interest is also in a comparison of the Democratic and Republican sub-groups. For these purposes (element comparison and sub-group comparison), MM analyses are better suited: because items are measured in relation to a 50/50 probability baseline as opposed to baselines particular to each element; it is difficult to accurately make comparisons using AMCE statistics as the regressions in AMCE analyses will vary according to the baseline attribute that is selected (Leeper et al., 2020). Therefore, the levels of favourability differences for this study's analyses focus solely on MM measures, and particularly on the differences in MMs between parties, to discuss polarisation.

10.4 Results

National attachments had a substantive causal effect on the probability that Democrats and Republicans felt more or less warmly towards an individual. The relative impact of the three elements (social evaluations/demographics, national attachments, and issue positions) differed by party. Democratic participants demonstrated a markedly greater response to issue positions than to national attachments, and a smaller response to social demographics. While the response to social demographics was also the smallest of the three components for Republicans (and similar to Democrats), the response to national attachments and issue positions for Republicans was greater than demographics, but broadly similar. The substantive effect of national attachments on APP and the pattern of influence exerted by each of the elements are supported by the marginal effects results discussed below.

10.4.1 Marginal Means Tables

Error! Reference source not found. and Figure 7 indicate the estimated MMs for each of the element dimensions included in the analysis along with their 95% confidence intervals (Supporting table of MMs included in Appendix F). The distance of the MMs from the 0.5 midpoint indicates the change in probability that the hypothetical person's position on the included content element had on how warmly the participant felt about a person they just met. The overall pattern of the influence exerted by each of the demographic and issue preference components appears to be reasonable as compared to previous work discussed in the background to this study (e.g., Orr & Huber, 2020). This figure illustrates the substantive contribution of national attachments to APP: contributions from this element are generally greater than that from demographics, though less than issue positions. This by-party analysis revealed that although the elements are significant, there are structural differences between the Republican and Democratic groups.

Figure 7

Marginal Means by Party: Democrats

Demographic

- Asian
- Atheist
- Black
- Catholic
- Hispanic
- Jewish
- Not religious
- Protestant
- White

National attachment

- Liberty
- IS: Active Support
- IS: Better way of life
- IS: Current population
- IS: Better care
- IS: Equal chance
- NR: Am way of life
- NR: Sacred symbols
- NR: System works
- NR: Self-reliance
- NR: Constitution

Issue position

- Abortion: always
- Abortion: never
- Abortion: permitted cases
- Welfare decreased
- Welfare increased
- Welfare same
- Immigrant children citizens
- Immigrant children restricted
- Immigrant children sent back
- Same-sex adoption: yes
- Same-sex adoption: no
- Gun rules same
- Ease gun rules
- More gun rules

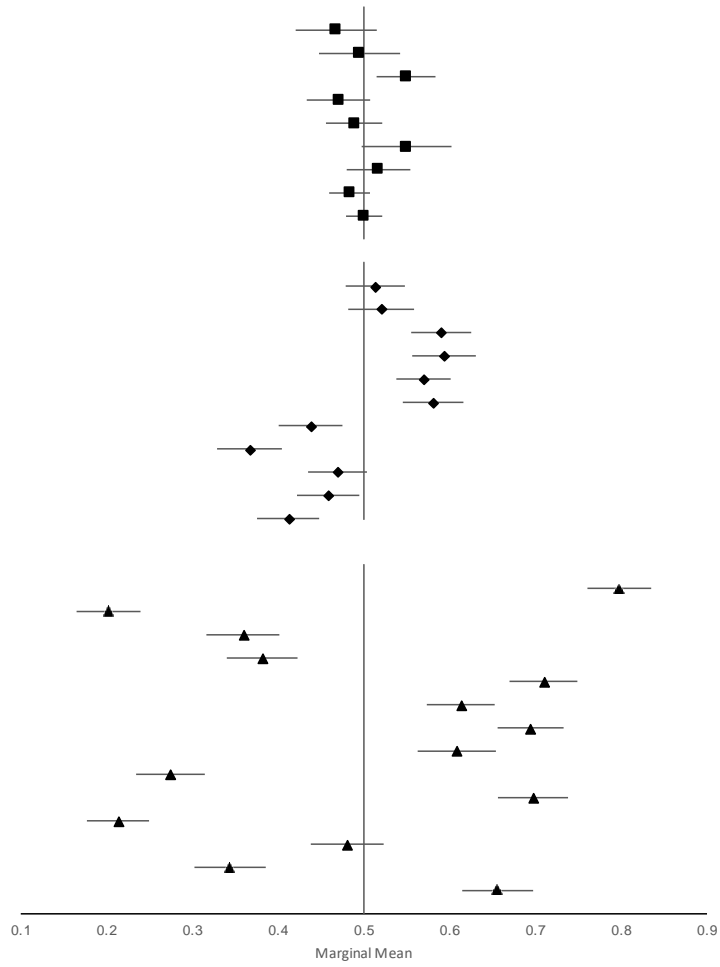
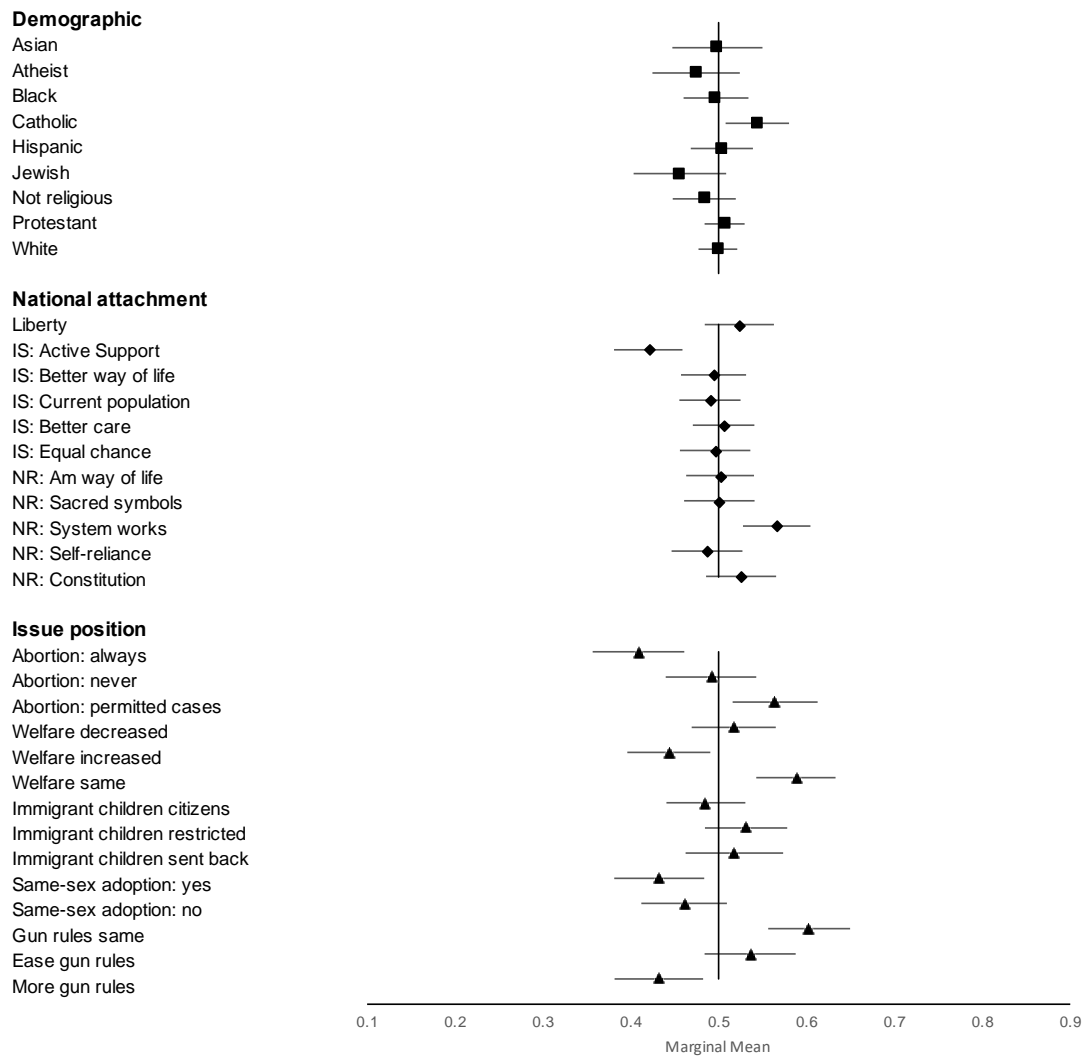


Figure 8

Marginal Means by Party: Republicans



These figures indicate that national attachment contributed substantively to how warmly both Democrats and Republicans felt about another person, even in the presence of race, religion, and issue positions. It is also clear that the pattern of influence on these feelings was different for Democrats as compared to Republicans. For Democrats, the impact on the probability of warmth towards a person increased significantly between demographics, national attachments, and issue positions. In contrast, the effect of each element for Republicans was not as disparate, increasing

slightly more from demographics to national attachments, than from national attachments to issue positions.

10.4.2 Overall Range of Effect

The overall range of effect is greater for Democrats than for Republicans, a pattern consistent with feeling thermometers towards Democrats and Republicans that the participants responded to after the treatments. Although average ingroup ratings for the two groups were largely similar for Democrats ($M = 72.4$, $SD = 20.17$) and Republicans ($M = 74.1$, $SD = 18.7$), $t(472) = -0.99$, $p = .32$, $d = -.09$, outgroup ratings varied significantly. Democrats rated their feelings for Republicans as lower ($M = 17.9$, $SD = 17.5$) than Republicans rated their feelings for Democrats ($M = 33.8$, $SD = 25.1$), $t(472) = -7.95$, $p < .001$, $d = -.73$. It would therefore be expected that in general, Democrats would have more negative feelings for all proxies of the outgroup than would Republicans. The overall greater breadth of ranges for the Democratic group—indicating that this group was generally more responsive to the profile elements presented—may also reflect the more personal nature of political identity on the left revealed in Study 1. In Study 1, the political left viewed political identity as an extension of personal identity, making the dislike of a hypothetical other's national attachment or policy position more easily transferable to the dislike of that person as opposed to just a dislike of their views. These factors lend explanation to an overall wider range of MMs for Democrats, though the observation of the differing structures of the responses still stands.

If they differed substantially between the two partisan groups, levels of political interest, political knowledge, and education may account for the more extreme polarisation indicated by the Democratic participants. While political

interest is associated with more extreme affective political polarisation (Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016), differences in education level or political knowledge are known to be associated with ideological belief consistency related to issues (e.g., Converse, 1964; Kalmoe, 2020). Political interest levels varied between the two groups of participants, with a higher percentage of Democrats having high political interest (84%) than the Republican participant group (75%), and the difference in political interest scores, though small, was significant $t(472) = 2.32, p = .021, d = .21$. Levels of education and political knowledge were even more similar between the partisan subgroups. While the Democratic subgroup split between high and low education was 65%/35%, the Republican subgroup was split 60%/40%. Likewise, the percentage of Democrats who demonstrated high political knowledge in this survey was 25% as compared to 29% of Republicans and the difference in political knowledge scores was insubstantial $t(472) = 0.72, p = .472, d = .07$. Therefore, the greater political interest in the Democratic group may lend some explanation to the more extreme responses. Note however that MM estimate ranges were also calculated for high and low political interest, political knowledge, and education by party. The patterns of polarisation noted in these calculations (ranges included in the Online Appendix G) did not vary substantially from the overall results on which the conclusions in this study are based.

10.4.3 Specific Dimensions

For the national attachments, the five IS statements increase the probability that Democrats would feel more warmly, while the five NR statements decrease the probability. The results for the Republican group were less consistent. While four of the NR statements increase the probability of warmth, self-reliance actually

decreased the probability warmth. This result is surprising given the strength of the self-reliance theme found in Study 1. Likewise, only four of the five IS items decreased warmth. The assertion that the country must take better care of its people increased the probability that Republicans would feel warmly towards a hypothetical person.

Within the Republican group, there were also noted differences from what is considered traditional conservative ideology within the issue positions element. For four of the five issues presented to the participants (all except same-sex adoption), three issue positions were presented: a putatively left-leaning view and right-leaning view and a position occupying the middle ground. For example, for gun control the issue positions included making buying a gun harder (left), easier (right), or keeping the laws the same (middle). The range of MMs for Democrats took in the right (low end of the range, decreasing the probability of selection) and left (high end, increasing the probability of selection) positions. In contrast, the range for Republicans take in the left (low end) and middle (high end) positions. In other words, the Republicans in this sample aligned themselves more closely with the middle positions than with the ostensibly right positions.

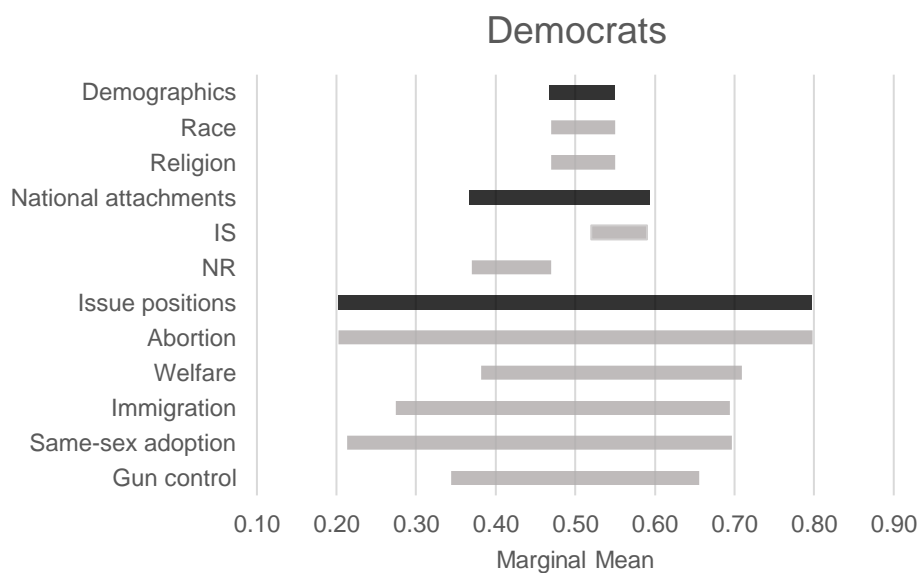
10.4.4 Range of Marginal Means

The ability of an element to polarise is captured here by identifying the *range* of MMs for the dimensions that were presented to the participants, calculated as the difference between the dimension that affected participant choice most negatively and the choice that affected choice most positively. A wider the range indicates a greater response to that particular facet. For example: for Republicans, the abortion stance dimension had the ability to influence an average participant's feeling of

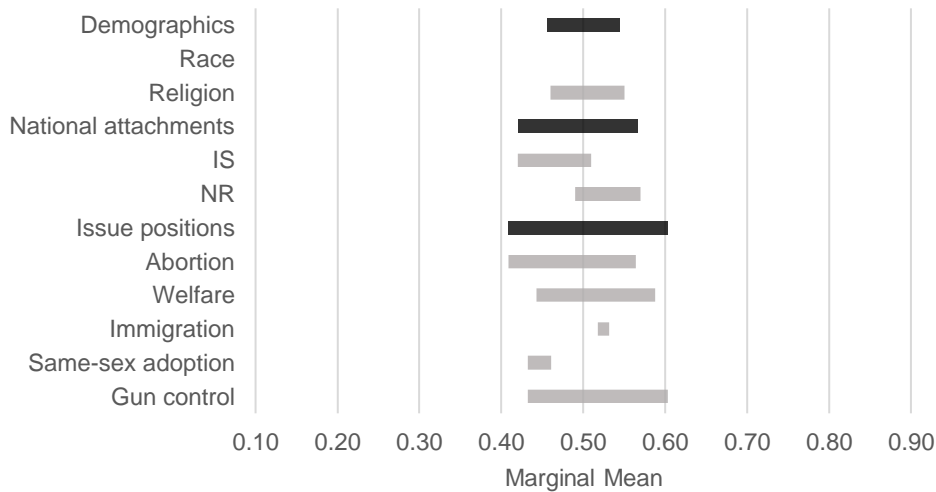
warmth by 15%, commensurate with the range from a hypothetical person's most agreeable (MM = .56, 'permitted only in certain cases') and least agreeable (MM = .41, 'always permitted') positions on abortion. In turn, the range for the issue position element as a whole (19%) ranges from the hypothetical person's most agreeable position on any of the proposed issues (MM= .60, 'gun laws should be kept the same') to the least agreeable (MM = .41, 'abortion should always be permitted'). Figure 9 below presents the MM range for each of the demographic, national attachment, and issue position elements along with dimension subgroups.

Figure 9

Marginal Mean Ranges by Party



Republicans



For both parties, the ability of national attachments to affect the feelings of warmth—to polarise—is substantive: a 23% change in probability for Democrats and a 15% change for Republicans. For Democrats, the national belief that most significantly increased the probability of a profile selection was “Our country’s policies need to evolve to reflect the needs of the current population”, an increase of 9%; the statement that would decrease the probability was “The American flag and national anthem should be revered as the sacred symbols they are”, a decrease of 13%. Republicans were more likely (by 7%) to select a profile if it included the statement “The great success of individuals and businesses in American shows that the American system works” and were less likely (by 8%) to select a profile if it included “Actively supporting political change shows that you care about this country’s people”.

The effects of national attachments on profile selection are more significant than those of race or religion for both parties. The demographic element of the profile as a whole—as compared to national attachments and issue positions—had

the least significant effect on the participants' selection of the profiles that they felt most warmly towards. The range of the impact on probability for Democrats around the 0.5 midline of .47 to .55 (8%) was similar to the influence on Republicans' choices (range: .46 - .54, 8%), indicating a similar response to the inclusion of demographic variables in the profiles. According to these results, race had no effect on warmth for Republicans ($MM = .00$). Social evaluation is therefore seen to have had some, but least significant effect on APP for both parties.

The MM range for national attachments as compared to issue positions differs more substantially by party, however. For the Democratic participants, the range of response to issue positions (.20 - .80, 60%) indicates that this element was significantly more likely to influence the warmth they felt towards a person than the element of national attachments did (range: .37 - .59, 23%). For Republicans, however, national attachments (range: .42 - .57, 15%) were more similar to issue positions as a whole (.41 - .60, 19%), and were similarly likely to influence their selection as a person's issue position on abortion (.41 - .56, 16%), welfare (.44 - .59, 14%), and gun control (.43 - .60, 17%), and substantially more than immigration (.52 - .52, 1%), and same-sex adoption (.43 - .46, 3%).

The exploratory hypothesis was that issue positions would clearly outweigh national attachments due to their salience. The results discussed here not only point to a different structure of the elements that drive Democratic and Republican APP, but also a lack of substantial difference between national attachments and issue positions for the Republican participants. This absence underlines the significance of national belief influence on the structure in light of the central role of issue positions

in partisan animus (Dias & Lelkes, 2021; Lelkes, 2021; Orr & Huber, 2020; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017).

The greater impact that issue position had on the Democratic profile preference is consistent with the left's more significant orientation towards issue positions identified in this thesis and other literature (e.g., Ellis & Stimson, 2012; Grossmann & Hopkins, 2015). These participants would therefore be expected to be more responsive to issue cues than would be Republicans, with a consequent increased range of MMs for issue positions. Because issue positions are more clearly recognisable as partisan proxies, it may also lend explanation to the significant difference between national attachments and issue positions for the Democrats. That national attachments remain substantive in the presence of issue cues for Democrats speaks to the significance of these constructs.

10.5 Discussion

This study provides evidence of a causal connection between American national attachments and the warmth of feeling toward laypersons, concluding that these attachments contribute to APP independent of the ostensibly more salient attributes of race, religion, and polarising issue positions. This finding speaks to the significant role that national attachments occupy in the minds of the American polity and the emotion with which these attachments are charged. In the debate as to whether APP is driven by issues or by partisanship, the introduction of national attachments—as integral partisan identity content—holds potential for a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. In addition, this study illustrates the connection between the political identity structures suggested by Studies 1, 2a and 2b

and political outcomes, lending support to the social identity theory assertion that identity content shapes behaviour.

The substantial influence that issue positions had on APP for both parties is in line with the argument in the current literature that APP is driven by political policy positions (e.g., Dias & Lelkes, 2021; Lelkes, 2021; Orr & Huber, 2020; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017). By separately evaluating Democratic and Republican participants, this study extends these findings to shed light on an asymmetry in the drivers of APP: Democratic participants responded to issue positions to a much higher degree, while the Republican response was less pronounced. While not directly addressed in the previous APP literature, this partisan difference is congruent with earlier findings regarding the content of US partisan identities: while Democrats tend to be issue-focused, Republicans are more ‘ideological’ (Converse, 1964; Grossmann & Hopkins, 2016; Hanson et al., 2019). The current study suggests that the pattern of APP response reflects this identity content structure: the Republican response was more evenly balanced between issue positions and the more abstract national attachments, while the Democratic participant response was clearly weighted towards issue positions, thereby connecting identity structures and political outcomes

Iyengar and Westwood (2015) drew what was considered at the time to be a surprising conclusion: that discrimination based on partisanship was more prevalent than discrimination based on race. This study’s finding that issue positions—a strong proxy for party—more strongly drove the probability that a participant would feel warmly towards an individual is therefore not unexpected. We must nevertheless be cautious when drawing conclusions regarding the role of racial and religious

discrimination. Although the study design is believed to mitigate social desirability bias (Horiuchi et al., 2020), the pattern of attributes in this study reflects the decision framework as represented by the participants. If a person tends to think of themselves as non-discriminatory on the basis of race or religion, this may impact the choices they made during this experiment. This ‘social’ element is in contrast to the two other elements which ask the participant more directly to match their beliefs with those of the hypothetical person (Conover & Feldman, 1981). Indeed, it is most likely the case that ‘social’ elements—race, in particular—is inextricable from ‘cognitive’ politics (Westwood & Peterson, 2020). Therefore, although the participants have represented that race and religion of the person matter least in their decision-making process, that is not to say that attitudes towards racial, religious, or other social groups matter little to the warmth of feeling. Indeed, national attachment representations may carry with them racial attitudes. The introduction of national attachments into the polarisation discussion therefore has the potential to enhance this area of research.

10.6 Conclusion

This final empirical study represents the last stage of an investigation into national attachments as drivers of APP in the US. The study established the causal effect of constructs theorised from the open-ended qualitative questions in Study 1 and operationalised and in Studies 2a and 2b on APP, thereby connecting social representations of identity content to political outcomes. The next chapter provides a general discussion of these findings.

11 Chapter 11: General Discussion

This thesis set out to identify drivers of US affective political polarisation (APP) through the analysis of political identity content or *meaning*. The purpose was not to argue for the primacy of one or more driver of APP, but to instead propose that the application of social psychological theory to this phenomenon has room to develop a more integrated theory in the social identity tradition. Specifically, in order to understand the role of political identity in this phenomenon, the process of identity construction and the concept of meaning must be attended to.

The focus on meaning guided the selection of the theoretical (social representations approach) and methodological (mixed methods) approaches. Through an exploratory sequential research design, novel core meanings were identified (Study 1), operationalised (Studies 2a and 2b) and tested for their causal relationship with APP (Study 4). The thesis therefore contributes new measures that capture important elements of US political identity which, in turn, have an impact on political outcomes. In addition, because of the novel approach taken, this work also contributes both theoretically and methodologically to understanding the relationship between identity meaning as everyday common sense, self-categorisation, and political outcomes. In this chapter I review results of the empirical work and discuss some of the key contributions of this thesis including theoretical, empirical, and methodological implications. I then note limitations of the work undertaken and point to future research opportunities. I end with directions for further research and some concluding thoughts.

11.1 Summary of Results

Empirical work commenced with a qualitative investigation of US liberal and conservative political identities aimed at identifying the *organising principles* for each identity—their core meanings. Study 1 (Chapter 6) delineated three themes within each ideological group. These themes were interpreted as coalescing around differing representations of national attachment. On the right, the nation was conceived as a symbolic group; good members of the group revered the group's symbols and sought to maintain the strength of the group. Conservatives conceived the political left as attempting to undermine the American system with socialism and as weakening the American character. On the left, the nation was represented as a collection of individuals; priorities centred on individuals' rights to make the most of themselves and on the particular policies that were seen to move the nation towards this goal. Liberals constructed the political right as blinded by religious loyalty and self-interest, and conservatives were seen as a threat to the nation insofar as they were a threat to individual rights. The national attachment related to the conservative identity was named *national reverence* (NR) and the national attachment related to the liberal identity was called *individual support* (IS).

Study 2a (Chapter 7) successfully operationalised the two theorised types of national attachment identified in Study 1. Through exploratory factor analysis and correlational and regression analyses, these organising principles were found to be valid and reliable in a participant group of conservatives and liberals. Study 2b (Chapter 8) confirmed the factor analysis and replicated the findings in Study 2a in a participant base that was expanded to include moderates. The organising principles significantly and substantially predicted APP and voting behaviour, supporting a link

between the identity content identified in Study 1 with political outcomes. Together, Studies 1, 2a, and 2b introduced new measures of political identity core meanings and demonstrated the predictive benefit of the derivation of measures from lay representations.

In addition, Study 2b explored the relationship between the principles and two measures traditionally seen to reflect ideological identity: right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO) (Jost et al., 2003). It also explored how NR, with its significant nationalistic content, might be related to measures of nationalism. This analysis supported conclusions related to the principles' predictive strength and their potential mediating roles in communicating particular attitudes of interest. The principles were shown to be better predictors of identity, APP, and voting than were RWA and SDO. Similarly, NR proved to capture traditional measures of nationalism with superior predictive ability as compared to its traditional counterparts. The superior predictive abilities of the measures add additional support to the Study 2a finding of their utility as predictor variables, and the overlap in predictive ability speaks to the position NR and IS representations play in perpetuating and maintaining particular world views.

The strong alignment of the conservative and national identities in Studies 1, 2a, and 2b gave rise to a question regarding the content of national identity on the political left. To explore this question, Study 3 (Chapter 9) analysed speeches from the Democratic presidential primary in 2019. By choosing these texts that are more formal communications than the interviews conducted with lay people in Study 1, additional perspective was afforded to the conceptualisation of identity on the political left. This qualitative analysis highlighted national identity representations

within the Democratic party elite which ranged from the progressives' primarily instrumental and individually focussed representation, to the moderates' mix of symbolic group and nation-as-individuals conceptualisations. While progressive candidates freely invoked 'democracy' as a group norm—and often as an equivalent of the nation—it was the rights of individuals on which their narrative centred. Their references to the nation were more limited and often more centred on particular historic individuals as opposed to the nation as a symbolic group. In contrast, the moderates were more apt to combine conceptualisations of the nation as both a symbolic group and as a collection of individuals. The references to historic and national symbols were intentional and more frequent for the moderates, often reclaiming representations of the nation that were seen as the purview of the right. The study therefore highlighted the tensions within which the left struggles to construct a simple national identity that could offer a counter to the NR proposed by the right.

Study 4 employed an experimental paradigm to explore the causal link between national attachment (NR and IS) and affective political polarisation; the conjoint design simultaneously compared the relative contribution to APP from demographic characteristics, national attachments, and issue positions. The results of this conjoint analysis supported a substantive contribution of NR and IS to APP for both Democratic and Republican subgroups. Secondly, the results reflected the asymmetric influence of the identity content elements proposed. While the contribution of the three elements of demographics, national attachment, and issue positions varied widely in how Democratic participants felt about a hypothetical other, the contribution of elements varied to a much smaller extent in the Republican participant group. This asymmetry of influence reflected the asymmetric identity

meanings identified in the earlier studies. Together, this work provides support for Huddy's (2001) assertion—based on social identity theory—that it is the meaning of political identity which drives political behaviour.

11.2 Theoretical, Empirical, and Methodological Implications

The construction of the NR and IS scales in this thesis was not primarily for the purpose of offering a generalisable operationalisation of US ideological identity, but as a means by which to capture the impact of identity meaning. Indeed, the nature of the measures as derived from contemporary lay representations means that they are likely to change with social influences over time. Instead, the primary aim was to demonstrate the important role of these representations, how they shape political behaviour, and how they may carry with them in their relative banality individual differences including right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and nationalism. The construction of the scales was a method by which to demonstrate identity meaning importance. Therefore, I submit that the primary contributions of this thesis are the theoretical, empirical, and methodological implications as discussed below.

11.2.1 Social Representations, Core Meaning, and Political Outcomes

In addition to the new measures of NR and IS, this thesis contributes to the study of political identity through its conceptualisation of a link between social representations, identity meaning, and outcomes. Methodologically and theoretically Study 1 stands apart from political identity content studies that typically quantitatively compare identities on one or two pre-determined identity facets—issue positions or social group evaluations, for example. The theoretical framing that

employed a social representations approach conceptualised shared common sense among lay people as the building blocks of political identity content and demonstrated their causal relationship with political outcomes. By enabling participants to define their identities through open ended questions and conceiving these responses as social representations, Study 1 was able to identify core contrasts free of the constraint of current definitions of ideological and partisan identity elements (e.g., issue positions, social evaluations, values, morals). This freedom allowed for the conceptualisation of national attachment orientations as core identity elements in US political identity self-categorisation. The identification of national attachment as political identity content highlights the benefit of considering common ingroups in identity research, bringing an additional perspective to a traditional ingroup/outgroup focus. The results suggest that this approach may be useful in other political psychological research that concerns areas of contestation between groups.

Beyond their predictive utility, the value of the measures as identity content is found in what they indicate about the processes related to political identification and behaviour. Conceptualising this content through its relationship with social representations provides insight into the process by which they are formed, changed, maintained, and employed by entrepreneurs of identity for political mobilization. For example, the representations captured in the organising principles serve as vehicles for RWA, SDO, and nationalistic worldviews. By identifying this overlapping relationship between worldviews, common-sense meanings/lay communications, and political outcomes, this thesis highlights the process by which worldviews that support authoritarianism, the maintenance of social hierarchies, and nationalism are translated into political behaviour.

NR—as an intertwining of conservative and national identities—was the primary principle endorsed and resisted by the opposing political sides, indicating that this is a potent contested construct in current political discourse. This conservative patriotism offers a straightforward route to being a good American. Along with deference to the country’s symbols, it promotes reverence for the nation’s origin story, constitutional originalism, the founding of the nation and founding fathers, and pride in the country’s national superiority and power. It has clear, recitable beliefs: limited government, self-reliance, security. This version of patriotism is attractive in that it provides a clear path for citizens to find their place in the American story and be what is thought of as a good member of this group, giving them a positive national and political identities.

Consequences are not limited to the impact of national identity representations on the ideological group level however: this alignment also provides the political right with the power to propagate a conservative worldview through shaping representations of American national identity. Because social representations are not elaborated in isolation but in dialogue with other social representations, conservatives’ representations of themselves as the ‘true Americans’ (Study 1) impacts the social representation of American national identity. Citizens for whom national identity is important—regardless of political engagement—receive cues that being conservative is being a good American and will strive to act in accordance with what they believe are the prevailing norms of national identity (Hogg, 2006; Theiss-Morse, 2009), and in line with what they believe other Americans believe (Elcheroth et al., 2011). The findings in Study 4 point to APP as related in part to this schism in national attachment created by allowing one side of the political divide to define US patriotism as imbued with RWA, SDO, and nationalism.

NR and IS, as core meanings derived from the shared common sense communicated in everyday language, serve to implicate the ways in which meaning is anchored in particular representations within everyday discussions and therefore how identity content is perpetuated, maintained, and changed. These everyday communications are the banal perpetuations of ideology—similar to that referred to by Billig (1995) in reference to banal nationalism—where ideology is ‘flagged’ in everyday life without being specifically discussed. The content of the measures themselves therefore provide understanding as to how the two ideological groups communicate their identities, and the social objects in which new information may be anchored. This level of detail beyond group labels may provide nuance to theories such as those discussed in Chapter 2 (e.g., Campbell et al., 1960; Fiorina, 1977, 1981; Green et al., 2002) of why individuals may take up the political labels of liberal, conservative, Democrat, and Republican. This new perspective also offers an opportunity to trace the origins of this content and theorise about possible changes.

Importantly for the study of APP, and for US social change generally, a social representations approach to identity conceives these political identities as dynamic and in constant negotiation. The organising principles are therefore but a starting point, they describe where these political groups are now, and point to the divisions between them. As powerful as these principles were demonstrated to be, they are also conceived as changeable. They are subject to influence from elites, from fellow ingroup members, and outgroup members, and therefore offer the possibility for change.

This thesis supports Theiss-Morse’s (2009) assertion that changing national identity content would be a fruitful avenue by which to promote greater equality and

progress. She concludes that it is through the prototype and norms of the American citizen that change to exclusionary national identity will be achieved. This assertion is consistent with research that demonstrates that identity content can change group members' behaviour (Huddy & Yair, 2021; Terry & Hogg, 1996), that normative change is a mechanism of social action (Cruwys et al., 2015; Prentice & Paluck, 2020), and that differing national identity content can determine the attitudes of its citizens towards important issues such as immigration (Citrin & Sears, 2014).

Therefore, the political left should consider that it is not only the fight against the right that could bring the progress they desire: a change in national identity meaning, in the content of what it means to be an American, could influence political outcomes. The work of changing the content of national identity is a cultural change and will only evolve over time and with consistent messaging that links American symbols and representations of the nation such as the American narrative (Reich, 2019) or the Declaration of Independence (R. M. Smith, 2020) with the desired American identity content.

11.2.2 Asymmetric political identity construction

The findings in Study 1 of the group-centric right in contrast to the individual-centric left are conceptualised as an asymmetry in national attachment. An asymmetry in the structure of the political identities on the left and right has implications for how we both research and theorise about political behaviour; it also has practical implications regarding mobilisation of the electorate. Awareness of ideological identity content and structure not only offers the means by which to mobilise and communicate with ideological identifiers, but also the opportunity to

activate potentially cross-cutting identities and change narratives surrounding policy and identity.

Grossmann and Hopkins' (2016) observation that the US Democrats and Republicans are different *kinds* of parties drew upon the open-ended questions in the ANES noting the 'ideological' Republicans and 'group basis' Democrats first observed by Converse (1964). This evidence, taken in tandem with the historical basis and make-up of the parties—with the Democratic party as more of a coalition of group interests than of a single ideological group—points to a party on the left more focused on particular issues. This thesis contributes qualitative and quantitative evidence of these asymmetries and expands on these findings to offer a parsimonious emergent theory for a key contrast between these two identities as a national attachment asymmetry. It refines Converse's 'group basis' hypothesis pertaining to the political left to one centred instead on the individual, and the 'ideological' hypothesis of the political right to one centred on the symbolic group of the nation. The identification of NR and IS as core meanings also builds on and extends previous work that has proposed asymmetrical identity content through more universal constructs of such as of morals, values, and worldviews. Study 1's description of political identity in terms of national attachment offers a new perspective on political identities by specifically engaging with contemporary, identity-specific content. It also foregrounds some differences that were inherent in previous measures. For example, the individuating versus group-enhancing asymmetry in Graham et al.'s (2009) moral foundations theory is central to the difference between group-enhancing NR and individual-centric IS.

Overall, the work supports research that indicates that operational identity (identity as issue positions) is an important, though incomplete, element of political identity meaning. It is congruent with assertions of the limitations of operational identity as both a descriptor of ideological identity (Ellis & Stimson, 2012) and as a predictor of political outcomes (Malka & Lelkes, 2010; Mason, 2018b). This thesis qualitatively and quantitatively highlights the limitation of operational ideology as an independent variable due to the significantly different role it plays in the political identities of the US left and right. The differing importance of issue positions to liberal and conservative identities first emerged in Study 1. Studies 2a and 2b quantitatively highlighted the significant role that issue positions had in the liberal as compared to the conservative identity: while operational identity was insignificant for the conservative participant group, for the liberal group it was the most significant contributor to self-categorisation (Chapter 7, Table 5). The link between this asymmetry and political outcomes was supported in Study 4 where the causal elements of APP reflected a Democratic ideological identity structure heavily weighted towards the importance of issue positions while the Republican structure was more balanced. Therefore, for research that seeks to link identity content to political outcomes, work in this thesis highlights the imperative to conduct analyses by political sub-groups in order to assert relevant conclusions. Because APP literature has largely not provided analysis by political group (e.g., Lelkes, 2021; Orr & Huber, 2020), there may be important differences that have not been identified. For example, in the current debate as to whether it is issue positions or ‘identity’ that primarily contributes to APP, light may be shed on this question by separately analysing the structures of identities on the right and left rather than an analysis of the polity as a whole.

The findings of asymmetry also lend themselves to political communication applications. The differing structures of the effects for demographics, national attachments, and issue positions between parties noted in Study 4 indicate that affect is not triggered in the same way for Democrats and Republicans. Party elites could potentially employ a combination of national belief and issue preference rhetoric to mobilise their base. For example, in the primary season, elites may choose to employ the national belief phrases embraced by the in-party (i.e., national reverence statements for Republicans and individual support items for Democrats). If, however, elites wish to reach beyond the party such as in the case of general elections or bipartisan legislation, it may be more prudent to avoid these and perhaps even embrace to the extent possible the opposing party's rhetorical preferences. Likewise for issue positions, rhetoric based on the finding that the Republican participants were not as negatively responsive to 'liberal' policies as Democrats were to 'conservative' policies. This again suggests one strategy for primaries, and another for general elections: while issue positions are likely to rouse the Democratic base, the focus is more evenly distributed between national attachments and issue positions in the Republican ranks.

11.3 Limitations

11.3.1 Supporting the Theoretical Trend

This thesis offers a nascent theory that an increasing alignment of the conservative political identity with American national identity may be a significant driver behind APP. The causal relationship between national attachments and APP suggests that increasing alignment may coincide with the growth in APP; NR and IS may therefore be useful in developing causal models of political polarisation. The

thesis does not however provide supporting evidence of this historical trend. The NR measure that captures this alignment is newly established, and retrospective application is therefore not possible. Therefore, as an instrument with which to measure historical change, both NR and IS are limited, and consequently what this thesis can say about such a trend is also restricted. It may, however, be possible to employ other means of investigation—a comparative analysis of elite political discourse, or to recast NR using questions from nationally administered historical surveys for example—to understand the changes over time that this work suggests.

11.3.2 Partisan and Ideological Identities

This thesis did not restrict the political identity of interest to either partisan or ideological identities, but broadly assumes a left/right divide, premised on the increasing alignment of US partisan and ideological identities (Levendusky, 2009). Throughout the thesis, the political right was at times explored in reference to the conservative identity (Studies 1, 2a and 2b), and at times in relation to the Republican identity (Study 4). Likewise, for the left, both liberal (Studies 1, 2a, and 2b) and Democratic (Studies 3 and 4) identities were explored. The relevance of NR and IS to both partisan and ideological identities reinforces the descriptive power of the organising principles. However, and despite their increasing alignment, ideological and partisan identities are separate identities and the findings in this thesis related to one do not necessarily apply to the other. Additional work may be able to tease apart the distinctions in these self-categorisations and their support for the organising principles identified.

11.3.3 Core meanings

The constructs of NR and IS as core identity meanings are limited in what they capture. They are specific to the US political context, and they reflect the contemporary political environment. These measures are intentionally differentiated from universal measures such as morals, values, and worldviews by being contextually derived. Although this contextuality no doubt contributes to the greater predictive strength of the principles over the universal measures (as demonstrated in Study 2b), it does also limit the measures' use in other contexts. The measures however highlight an *approach* that may be taken to identify behaviour drivers in varying contexts. Indeed, the approach employed in this thesis may serve as the foundation for future non-US work surrounding the conceptualisation and consequences of left/right ideological identities. The general finding of the nature of left/right identity content (of individual or group ideological perspectives) may provide a useful means by which to discuss other political ideological and party identities throughout the world.

In addition, the identity content that these measures—particularly IS—can capture is also limited. Identity content is a complex integration of individual and social influences. In the operationalisation of IS, the initial items tested included statements that were meant to capture the idea that the participants on the political left in Study 1 had represented their ideological identity as a more direct extension of their personal character than did the participants on the political right. These items, however, did not load sufficiently on a factor to be considered a coherent part of the liberal ideological identity. Responses to these items did not cohere sufficiently with the other items in either of the factors, nor were they sufficiently differentiated to

load on a factor on their own. The projection of personal character by liberal participants onto their political identity was sufficiently prominent in Study 1 to warrant further investigation of these elements of the liberal identity. Understanding this identity content, which may be independent of national attachment, could more clearly elucidate the nature of ideological identity self-categorisation on the political left.

11.3.4 Operational identity

In Study 4, when given the option of a left, a right, and a position in between, Republicans chose the centre position as the one they felt most warmly towards, not the right-most position. The pattern identified in this study of Republicans embracing more moderate positions than are typically ascribed to this group is consistent with earlier findings that conservatives hold more liberal positions than those that are routinely attributed to them in the political science literature. Ellis and Stimson (2012) referred to these citizens as ‘conflicted conservatives’. I have argued that from an identity perspective, it is not that conservatives are inconsistent, but that issue positions may be improperly included as conservative identity content by some research. The data in this study again supported an inconsistency between the way that conservatism is measured by political scientists and the way Republicans may perceive the content of their identity. In particular, although liberals’ social representation of their ideological identity is in line with academic measures, conservatives represent their identity differently. Therefore, like much of political research, conservatives are researched as an anomaly. A reassessment of conservative identity on its own terms may provide future research insights and a new perspective on previous literature. If, for example, Ellis and Stimson (2012) had

employed more moderate positions as representative of the conservative identity, there may be far fewer ‘conflicted conservatives’. Likewise, the portion of APP attributed to operational identity may be significantly larger had Mason (2018b) based her measure of ideological consistency on more moderate issue positions for conservatives. Similarly, a re-evaluation of presumptive Republican held issue-positions to reflect these more moderate positions would likely have an effect on the evaluation of party asymmetry in this thesis.

Beyond the issue of the accuracy of Republican issue positions, these findings are limited due to the nature of policy position measurement. For consistency with previous literature, this thesis employed measures of operational identity previously employed. Measures of operational identity abound however and can affect the outcomes of studies (Azevedo & Bolesta, 2021). The findings in this thesis are therefore limited by the same potential for measurement error. A more expansive or less divisive set of operational identity measures may have indicated different results. In Study 2 for example, the predictive ability of the principles over and above operating identity may have been less substantial with a more expansive operational identity measure. Relatedly, the large effect of issue positions on APP for Democratic participants in Study 4 may have been less substantial if less divisive issues were selected. On balance, however, the employment of these issue position measures drew out distinctions that are important to consider when interpreting findings that have also used these common indicators.

11.4 Future Directions

Because this work was designed to offer a novel perspective, the thesis only begins to interrogate the significance of the findings. The introduction of national

attachments as a driver of APP therefore suggests a number of avenues for future research. In the first instance, the work in this thesis lends itself to direct extension. Theoretical extension may see future work apply the social representations approach to other political identities or apply the concept of national attachment as an element of political identity in other national contexts. In the US, the issue of the political right's operational identity measurement, and the extent to which the traditional issue position attributions to conservatives are valid deserves attention. There are also areas in which the procedures undertaken in this thesis may be extended. For example, the findings in Study 4 that applied to warmth towards lay persons may be applied to political candidate selection. Likewise, the close relationship in the predictive abilities of NR and IS and RWA, SDO, and nationalism found in Study 2b may also be found regarding values and morals, perhaps offering a parsimonious means by which to capture these variables as well. And finally, this study suggests that framing effects may be identified for policy acceptance and candidate approval. Therefore, a fruitful avenue of investigation for political communication may include analysis of how these representations are and can be employed by the media and political elite, and what rhetoric related to national attachments resonates with lay persons.

The work in this thesis also suggests theoretical questions regarding the nature of the relationship between political left/right identities and national identity. For example, the relationship between the political left and national identity has only begun to be explored. While previous literature has sought to express the nature of the political left's national identity as a contrast to national identity on the right (e.g., 'constructive' patriotism, Schatz et al., 1999) or has identified the preferred descriptions of US national identity from current measures (Bonikowski, 2016;

Hanson & O'Dwyer, 2019), Study 3 is unusual in its specific research question on this topic. Qualitative analysis holds further promise for future research in this area. For example, further insight may be gained by comparing representations when the topic of discussion and/or the context is kept constant. Data from presidential debates are a potential source for such work, but another is primary speeches if there are both Republican and Democratic primaries for 2024.

And finally, future work may want to investigate more thoroughly what it is that is being communicated through the social representations captured in NR. It is possible that the measure of NR, with its quasi-religious and group-centric focus, and its close ties to nationalism, RWA, and SDO, is a version of patriotism that is the publicly acceptable face of an ethnic-diversity anxiety that is alleviated through group re-enforcement. Building on work by Westwood and Peterson (2020) which identifies a parallel updating of racial and partisan affect, an important future endeavour may be to analyse the relationship between the lay representations of common-sense captured in NR and racial anxiety to understand how racial anxiety might be communicated and perpetuated in the public sphere.

11.5 Concluding thoughts

Since commencing this thesis, affective political polarisation has not abated (Pew Research Center, 2021). There has, however, been an increase in anti-democratic activity, with false claims of a fraudulent presidential election, and an attack on the US capitol building in January 2021. Indeed, a recent report by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2021) included the US on the list of democracies that are considered to be 'backsliding' towards authoritarianism and academic research backs this up with evidence that shows that

Americans' tendency to prioritize democratic principles in their electoral choices is decreasing (M. H. Graham & Svobik, 2020). The willingness to take anti-democratic actions is made available by the strong affective political polarisation that exists. It is part of the trajectory of the battle that is becoming more entrenched on each side and has progressed to a willingness to sacrifice on the equity of the rules of the political game. It serves as a further warning about the perils of polarisation and the need for further research in this area. It also suggests a responsibility that must be taken up by these researchers: the polarisation literature should not implicitly (or at times explicitly, as in the case of polarisation interventions) be premised on the simple objective of ameliorating polarisation. In seeking to alleviate the negative effects of polarisation we must always be cognisant of the structure of the stability that is sought in ridding ourselves of polarisation. In any efforts to decrease polarisation we should appraise what groups have power in the resulting structure and to what extent this structure scarifies or promotes democracy and equality.

11.6 Conclusion

This work adds to the growing body of research that employs social identity theory to conceptualise political polarisation; it elaborates on the content of ideological identities and connects them to political outcomes while also contributing to the study of ideological asymmetries. Conceptualising ideological identities integrally and reciprocally related to social representations and as different *types* of identity may not only inform social psychological models of affective political polarisation by providing insight into the behaviours that are the consequence of ideological identification but may also offer new strategies for political communication and policy negotiation. Awareness of these identity constructions

and understanding that the two groups may be advocating different, but not opposite, elements allows more space for identifying areas that may be most available for negotiation and change.

Political identity and its effect on behaviours that are politically relevant is complex, multi-faceted and dynamic. The work in this thesis offers an approach and perspective on identity that, while linking with previous literature, also offers a novel take on US political identity. Political identities, while seemingly substantially static in that the same divides of ‘progress’ versus ‘the status quo’ persist, the common sense—the social representations—of what those identities mean can and do change over time.

The results paint a picture of the nature of the political conflict in the US whereby conservatives appear to have successfully aligned themselves with a particular type of patriotism, leaving the left to respond. The political left has more often influenced national identity through legislation (civil rights, Medicare) and through the Federal courts (abortion in *Roe v Wade*, and desegregation in *Brown v the Board of Education*, same-sex marriage in *Obergefell v Hodges*). These changes, achieved instrumentally, have had an indelible effect on American national identity and on the liberal progress of the nation over the last 50 years. With the advent of a now majority Republican-appointed Supreme Court, a central instrument of Democratic influence is less available, and it becomes now more important that Democrats are able to address and persuade a majority of people—to enact policy through the legislative and executive branches of the government. One possible route to mobilisation is to assert a liberal national identity content. While it is the case that the political left has made a good deal of progress in changing the issue positions

taken in the US over the last 50 years, the battle for the hearts and minds of self-identified patriots has not been won. In as far as this alignment contributes towards polarizing behaviour, it is in the interest of long-term depolarisation, and perhaps electoral success, for the left to attempt to provide a definition of patriotism in their own image.

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Appendix A

Study 1 Interview Schedule Example for Self-identified Conservative

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this interview. As you know, the interview should take about 60 minutes. What I'm looking for is simply your personal perspective, so there are no right or wrong answers here. The information you provide will be retained under a pseudonym and will be considered along with interviews from other conservatives, as a collective response. Please be assured that your opinions will be treated as confidential study data. The objective is to capture perspectives that are free of the constraints of the limited choices a survey offers. I am interested in your thoughts as they initially come to mind, just as if we were having a face-to-face conversation.

Obviously, the more you can say, the better; I am interested not only in what you think but also how you feel about the topics, and examples are a great help. The interview questions will arrive in three different e-mails: I will begin by asking you to describe conservatives, then liberals, and will then go on to how these two groups differ in their visions of America. If you have any questions before you begin, please send me a note.

1. You have indicated that you think of yourself as a conservative. In your own words, what is a conservative?
 - a. What do conservatives value?
 - b. What motivates conservatives?
 - c. How does being a conservative compare to being a Republican?
 - d. Do you consider yourself to be a typical conservative?
2. Is your conservative ideology important to you?
 - a. Is it more or less important to you now than it has been in the past?
 - b. Do you feel close to other conservatives?
3. To what extent are conservative values and priorities important to the future of the country?
4. How do you think liberals regard conservatives? How do you think liberals might describe a typical conservative?

5. In your own words, what is a liberal?
 - a. What do liberals value?
 - b. What motivates liberals?
 - c. How useful do you find discussing political positions with a liberal?
6. How do you feel about liberals as a group?
7. You've described differing values and priorities for conservatives and liberals. Why do you think there is a difference?
8. How would you feel if there were a clear advancement in the liberal agenda? Does this agenda pose a significant threat to the nation?
9. Can both conservatives and liberals achieve advances in their values and priorities, or is an advance for one side a loss for the other?
10. And finally, how do you see these differing interests playing out? Will there be compromise or will one side win out?

Thank you very much for all of your work on this, the interview is now complete! Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix B

Study 2a: Operational Identity Measure

There has been some discussion about abortion during recent years. Which one of the opinions below best agrees with your view?

1. By law, abortion should never be permitted.
2. The law should permit abortion only in case of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger.
3. The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger.
4. By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice.

In general, do you support or oppose the Affordable Care Act?

1. Strongly oppose
2. Somewhat oppose
3. Neither support nor oppose
4. Somewhat support
5. Strongly support

In general, do you support or oppose same-sex marriage?

1. Strongly oppose
2. Somewhat oppose
3. Neither
4. Somewhat support
5. Strongly support

Which is more important--reducing the federal budget deficit, even if the unemployment rate remains high, or reducing the unemployment rate, even if the federal budget deficit remains high?

1. Reducing the deficit is much more important
2. Reducing the deficit is a little more important
3. Both are equally important
4. Reducing unemployment is a little more important
5. Reducing unemployment is much more important

Do you think the federal government should make it more difficult for people to buy a gun than it is now, make it easier for people to buy a gun, or keep these rules about the same as they are now?

1. Make it a lot easier to buy a gun
2. Make it a little easier to buy a gun
3. Keep the rules about the same
4. Make it a little more difficult to buy a gun

5. Make it a lot more difficult to buy a gun

Do you think the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to the United States to live should be:

1. increased a lot
2. increased a little
3. left the same as it is now
4. decreased a little
5. decreased a lot

Appendix C:

Study 3: Speech Selection

Moderates

Speech	Date	Audience	Format	Approx length	Biden	Buttigiege
Campaign launch	Feb-May	Home state, region. National	Rally	45 min	Campaign Kick-off (Philly, PA). 18 May. https://www.c-span.org/video/?460548-1/joe-biden-launches-presidential-campaign-philadelphia	Campaign announcement. South Bend. 14 April. https://www.c-span.org/video/?459736-1/mayor-pete-buttigieg-officially-announces-presidential-candidacy
New Hampshire Democratic convention	7 Sept	NH. Swing state, first primary. (D) in 2016	All candidates, solo speech	15 mins each	https://www.c-span.org/video/?463579-2/joe-biden-hampshire-democratic-party-convention&playEvent	https://www.c-span.org/video/?463579-5/pete-buttigieg-hampshire-democratic-party-convention&playEvent
Iowa Liberty and Justice Celebration	1 Nov	Iowa. Swing state, first voting. (R) in 2016	All candidates, solo speech	10 mins each	Liberty and Justice Celebration. 1 November. https://www.c-span.org/video/?465865-3/iowa-democratic-party-liberty-justice-celebration	Liberty and Justice Celebration. 1 November. https://www.c-span.org/video/?465865-3/iowa-democratic-party-liberty-justice-celebration

'Other' speech					<p>Campaign Rally at State House. 8 November. https://www.c-span.org/video/?466179-1/joe-biden-holds-rally-filing-papers-hampshire-primary</p> <p>29 mins</p>	<p>https://www.pbs.org/video/mayor-pete-buttigieg-speaks-city-club-chicago-objvmk/</p> <p>City club in Chicago. 16 May, 2019</p>
Foreign policy					<p>https://www.c-span.org/video/?462515-1/vice-president-joe-biden-speech-foreign-policy</p> <p>11 July 2019</p>	<p>11 June 2019</p> <p>https://www.c-span.org/video/?461635-1/pete-buttigieg-delivers-speech-national-security-foreign-policy</p>

Progressives

Speech	Date	Audience	Format	Approx length	Sanders	Warren
Campaign launch	Feb-May	Home state, region. National	Rally	45 min	<p>Campaign announcement (Brooklyn) 2 March. https://www.c-span.org/video/?458403-1/senator-bernie-sanders-launches-presidential-bid-brooklyn-york</p>	<p>Launch (MA) 9 Feb, 2019. https://www.c-span.org/video/?457549-1/senator-elizabeth-warren-i-candidate-president-united-states-america</p> <p>https://www.masslive.com/politics/2019/02/read-elizabeth-warrens-2020-announcement-speech.html</p>

New Hampshire Democratic convention	Sept	H. Swing state, first primary. (D) in 2016	All candidates, solo speech	15 mins each	https://www.c-span.org/video/?463579-18/senator-sanders-hampshire-democratic-party-convention&playEvent	https://www.c-span.org/video/?463579-23/senator-warren-hampshire-democratic-party-convention&playEvent
Iowa Liberty and Justice Celebration	Nov	Iowa. Swing state, first voting. (R) in 2016	All candidates, solo speech	10 mins each	Liberty and Justice Celebration. 1 November. https://www.c-span.org/video/?465865-3/iowa-democratic-party-liberty-justice-celebration	Liberty and Justice Celebration. 1 November. https://www.c-span.org/video/?465865-3/iowa-democratic-party-liberty-justice-celebration
'Other' speech					https://www.c-span.org/video/?461581-1/senator-bernie-sanders-delivers-remarks-democratic-socialism Speech on democratic socialism	Washington Square Park. 16 September. https://www.c-span.org/video/?464314-1/senator-elizabeth-warren-campaigns-york-city
Foreign policy					https://www.sanders.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/sanders-speech-at-sais-building-a-global-democratic-movement-to-counter-authoritarianism 18 October 2018	https://www.boston.com/news/politics/2018/11/29/elizabeth-warren-foreign-policy-speech-american-university 29 November 2018

Appendix D

Study 4: Randomized Items and Weightings

Organising Principles (11 items, equal probability)

(from Study 2a, NR items reduced to match number of IS items)

National Reverence

It is important to preserve the American way of life

The strength of America depends on citizens' self-reliance

The American flag and national anthem should be revered as the sacred symbols they are

The great success of individuals and business in America shows that the American system works

Today's Constitution is all we need to know about what is right for the country

Individual support

Our country's policies need to evolve to reflect the needs of the current population

Actively supporting political change shows that you care about this country's people

It is important to progress American society toward a better way of life for all

We should do more to make sure every American has an equal chance to get ahead in life

To make the nation stronger, we need to take better care of our people

Baseline

It is important to ensure that all Americans have the liberty to act and think as they consider most appropriate

Issue preferences (14 items, equal probability)

(from Orr and Huber, 2020)

Abortion

a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a personal choice;

abortion should only be permitted in case of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger;

abortion should never be permitted;

Same-sex adoption

same sex couples should be allowed to adopt children;

same sex couples should not be allowed to adopt children;

Guns

the federal government should make it more difficult for people to buy a gun;

the federal government should keep rules for buying guns about the same as they are now;

the federal government should make it easier for people to buy a gun;

Immigration

immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children should be sent back to where they came from;

immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children should be allowed to live and work in the U.S. under strict regulation;

immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children should be allowed to live and work in the U.S. and eventually become citizens;

Welfare spending

federal spending on welfare programs should be increased;

federal spending on welfare programs should be maintained;

federal spending on welfare programs should be decreased

Social evaluation (9 items, probability as indicated)

Race

White (50% probability)

Black (20%)

Hispanic (20%)

Asian (10%)

Religion (equal probability)

Protestant

Catholic

Jewish

Atheist

Not particularly religious

Appendix E

Study 4: Supporting Tables for Figure 6:

Marginal Means by Party

Democrats

		Estimate	SE	z	p	lower	upper
Demographic							
Demographic	Asian	0.47	0.02	19.39	0.00	0.42	0.52
Demographic	Atheist	0.50	0.02	20.51	0.00	0.45	0.54
Demographic	Black	0.55	0.02	31.37	0.00	0.51	0.58
Demographic	Catholic	0.47	0.02	24.94	0.00	0.43	0.51
Demographic	Hispanic	0.49	0.02	29.14	0.00	0.46	0.52
Demographic	Jewish	0.55	0.03	20.61	0.00	0.50	0.60
Demographic	Not religious	0.52	0.02	27.28	0.00	0.48	0.55
Demographic	Protestant	0.48	0.01	39.68	-	0.46	0.51
Demographic	White	0.50	0.01	46.52	-	0.48	0.52
National belief	Actively supporting political change shows that you care about this country's people	0.52	0.02	26.59	0.00	0.48	0.56
National belief	It is important to ensure that all Americans have the liberty to act and think as they consider most appropriate	0.51	0.02	29.16	0.00	0.48	0.55
National belief	It is important to preserve the American way of life	0.44	0.02	23.11	0.00	0.40	0.47
National belief	It is important to progress American society toward a better way of life for all	0.59	0.02	33.07	0.00	0.56	0.63
National belief	Our country's policies need to evolve to reflect the needs of the current population	0.59	0.02	31.35	0.00	0.56	0.63
National belief	The American flag and national anthem should be revered as the sacred symbols they are	0.37	0.02	19.05	0.00	0.33	0.40
National belief	The great success of individuals and businesses in America shows that the American system works	0.47	0.02	26.77	0.00	0.43	0.50
National belief	The strength of America depends on citizens' self-reliance	0.46	0.02	24.80	0.00	0.42	0.49
National belief	To make the nation stronger, we need to take better care of our people	0.57	0.02	35.27	0.00	0.54	0.60
National belief	Today's Constitution is all we need to know about what is right for the country	0.41	0.02	22.33	0.00	0.38	0.45

National belief	We should do more to make sure every American has an equal chance to get ahead in life						
		0.58	0.02	32.23	0.00	0.55	0.62
Issue position	A woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a personal choice						
		0.80	0.02	42.03	-	0.76	0.83
Issue position	Abortion should never be permitted						
Issue position	Abortion should only be permitted in cases of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger	0.20	0.02	10.64	0.00	0.17	0.24
		0.36	0.02	16.55	0.00	0.32	0.40
Issue position	Federal spending on welfare programs should be decreased						
		0.38	0.02	18.12	0.00	0.34	0.42
Issue position	Federal spending on welfare programs should be increased						
		0.71	0.02	35.19	0.00	0.67	0.75
Issue position	Federal spending on welfare programs should be maintained						
		0.61	0.02	30.40	0.00	0.57	0.65
Issue position	Immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children should be allowed to live and work in the U.S. and eventually become citizens						
		0.69	0.02	35.32	0.00	0.66	0.73
Issue position	Immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children should be allowed to live and work in the U.S. under strict regulation						
		0.61	0.02	26.15	0.00	0.56	0.65
Issue position	Immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children should be sent back to where they came from						
		0.27	0.02	13.41	0.00	0.23	0.31
Issue position	Same-sex couples should be allowed to adopt children						
		0.70	0.02	33.44	0.00	0.66	0.74
Issue position	Same-sex couples should not be allowed to adopt children						
		0.21	0.02	11.53	0.00	0.18	0.25
Issue position	The federal government should keep rules for buying guns about the same as they are now						
		0.48	0.02	22.21	0.00	0.44	0.52
Issue position	The federal government should make it easier for people to buy a gun						
		0.34	0.02	16.21	0.00	0.30	0.39
Issue position	The federal government should make it more difficult for people to buy a gun	0.66	0.02	31.08	0.00	0.61	0.70

Republicans

		Estimate	SE	z	p	lower	upper
Demographic	Asian	0.50	0.03	19.03	0.00	0.45	0.55
Demographic	Atheist	0.47	0.03	18.68	0.00	0.42	0.52
Demographic	Black	0.50	0.02	26.33	0.00	0.46	0.53
Demographic	Catholic	0.54	0.02	29.56	0.00	0.51	0.58

Demographic	Hispanic	0.50	0.02	27.94	0.00	0.47	0.54
Demographic	Jewish	0.46	0.03	16.94	0.00	0.40	0.51
Demographic	Not religious	0.48	0.02	26.42	0.00	0.45	0.52
Demographic	Protestant	0.51	0.01	43.65	-	0.48	0.53
Demographic	White	0.50	0.01	44.45	-	0.48	0.52
National belief	Actively supporting political change shows that you care about this country's people	0.42	0.02	21.16	0.00	0.38	0.46
National belief	It is important to ensure that all Americans have the liberty to act and think as they consider most appropriate	0.52	0.02	26.11	0.00	0.48	0.56
National belief	It is important to preserve the American way of life	0.50	0.02	25.49	0.00	0.46	0.54
National belief	It is important to progress American society toward a better way of life for all	0.49	0.02	26.18	0.00	0.46	0.53
National belief	Our country's policies need to evolve to reflect the needs of the current population	0.49	0.02	27.59	0.00	0.46	0.52
National belief	The American flag and national anthem should be revered as the sacred symbols they are	0.50	0.02	24.50	0.00	0.46	0.54
National belief	The great success of individuals and business in America shows that the American system works	0.57	0.02	28.89	0.00	0.53	0.60
National belief	The strength of America depends on citizens' self-reliance	0.49	0.02	23.68	0.00	0.45	0.53
National belief	To make the nation stronger, we need to take better care of our people	0.51	0.02	28.30	0.00	0.47	0.54
National belief	Today's Constitution is all we need to know about what is right for the country	0.53	0.02	25.82	0.00	0.49	0.57
National belief	We should do more to make sure every American has an equal chance to get ahead in life	0.50	0.02	24.25	0.00	0.46	0.54
Issue position	A woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a personal choice	0.41	0.03	15.39	0.00	0.36	0.46
Issue position	Abortion should never be permitted	0.49	0.03	18.70	0.00	0.44	0.54
Issue position	Abortion should only be permitted in cases of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger	0.56	0.02	22.89	0.00	0.52	0.61
Issue position	Federal spending on welfare programs should be decreased	0.52	0.02	21.19	0.00	0.47	0.57
Issue position	Federal spending on welfare programs should be increased	0.44	0.02	18.42	0.00	0.40	0.49
Issue position	Federal spending on welfare programs should be maintained	0.59	0.02	25.54	0.00	0.54	0.63
Issue position	Immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children should be allowed to live and work in the U.S. and eventually become citizens	0.49	0.02	21.20	0.00	0.44	0.53

Issue position	Immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children should be allowed to live and work in the U.S. under strict regulation	0.53	0.02	22.27	0.00	0.48	0.58
Issue position	Immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children should be sent back to where they came from	0.52	0.03	18.28	0.00	0.46	0.57
Issue position	Same-sex couples should be allowed to adopt Children	0.43	0.03	16.57	0.00	0.38	0.48
Issue position	Same-sex couples should not be allowed to adopt Children	0.46	0.02	18.56	0.00	0.41	0.51
Issue position	The federal government should keep rules for buying guns about the same as they are now	0.60	0.02	25.37	0.00	0.56	0.65
Issue position	The federal government should make it easier for people to buy a gun	0.54	0.03	20.29	0.00	0.48	0.59
Issue position	The federal government should make it more difficult for people to buy a gun	0.43	0.03	16.82	0.00	0.38	0.48

Appendix F

Online Appendices

The Online Appendices referred to throughout this thesis can be found at

https://osf.io/9jxne/?view_only=7ff9c5c312944ccb94c66bc3ae5297f9. They include

the following files:

Online Appendix A_Study 2a_PilotedItems.docx

Online Appendix B_Qualtrics_Study_2_-_Main.docx

Online Appendix B_Qualtrics_Study_2_-_Main.docx

Online Appendix D_Study4_javascript.docx

Online Appendix E_Qualtrics_ConjointFinalFeb2021.docx

Online Appendix F_Study4_byEduPkPi.docx

Online Appendix G_ConjointScript.r