

**Like, Share, and Comment #SCOTUS:
Public Engagement with the U.S. Supreme Court on Facebook**

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Dedication

To my boys Stephen, Nolan, and Nathaniel.

Abstract

Chapter 1: Where's SCOTUS?: An Exploration of News about the U.S. Supreme Court on Facebook

Decades of scholarship reveal that the public learns about the U.S. Supreme Court through media and, particularly, through traditional media like newspapers and television. However, new media, such as Facebook, have not been explored as means for how people may learn about the Court. In this paper, I consider people's interactions with the Court through Facebook. Specifically, I examine whether, and to what extent, users of this platform are exposed to the Court on their Facebook Feeds and whether this exposure influences users' perceptions of the Court's legitimacy. This is an important inquiry, as Facebook may play a role in shaping the public's support for the Court and offer a new and unique way for the public to engage with, and learn about, the nation's court of last resort.

Chapter 2: Framing Support for the Court: The Role of Media Frames on Facebook News Feeds

In today's social media environment, Americans learn more and more about federal institutions on Facebook. This includes the U.S. Supreme Court, a branch of government that is typically not on the minds of citizens. In this chapter, I argue that Facebook posts about the Court's decision-making process have the ability to shape people's support for it. To make this argument, I expose individuals to mock Facebook Feeds to determine how exposure to various decision-making frames affect people's support for the Court. This study has significant implications for the Court's legitimacy moving forward, as Facebook is a powerful force that has the ability to shape public attitudes toward a federal institution.

Chapter 3: Cue the Court Support: The Effects of Partisan News and Social Endorsement Cues on Facebook

As Facebook users scroll through their Feeds, they rely on cues to make decisions about what information to process and how deeply to process it, which ultimately contributes to what they learn through the platform. There are two primary cues that users rely on when processing news on Facebook: source cues and social endorsement cues, such as likes, shares, and comments. In this chapter, I seek to answer two main research questions. First, are individuals more likely to engage with political Facebook posts about the U.S. Supreme Court when the news source of the information aligns with their partisanship and when the post contains social endorsements? Second, do news source and social endorsement cues influence the extent to which people process political information about the Court in the form of its legitimacy? To answer these questions, I expose individuals to mock Facebook posts about the Court, varying the news source and whether the posts contain social endorsements. Ultimately, this study provides a more

detailed look at how cues unique to the Facebook environment influence (or do not influence) Court support.

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Introduction

Social media has transformed how people communicate with one another. It is used as a tool for people to interact with their friends and family as well as keeping in touch with those who live far away. Gone are the days where people had to wait months or even years to get in touch with others. Because the most common social media platforms are freely available to the public, and easily accessible, it is not surprising that about 72 percent of Americans now use at least one social media site to connect with those around them (Pew Research Center 2021).

While its main purpose has been to “give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together,” social media has had effects that expand beyond peer-to-peer interactions (Facebook 2004). In particular, it has changed how people are exposed to news content by making content available—from peers, media outlets, and other organizations—and readily sharable with only a few clicks. While around 18 percent of Americans *primarily* get their news from social media (Gottfried and Shearer 2016), many more casually encounter news on their social media feeds. According to Pew, 52 percent of Americans receive news on Facebook whether they actively seek it out or not, which is higher than the share of Americans who encounter news on Instagram (14%), Twitter (17%), and LinkedIn (8%) (Grieco 2020). The point is that social media, and most importantly Facebook, is growing as a highly significant source of news for Americans.

Facebook, then, may also be a key source for many Americans to learn about the U.S. Supreme Court and its decisions. There is a lack of public knowledge about the Court compared to the other federal branches of government (Slotnick and Segal 1998). The Court, unlike Congress and the president, tends to shy away from the public. Its decision-

making process is behind closed doors, the justices tend to interview only when they are invited to speak at universities, and oral arguments are not publicly broadcasted. This means that the public primarily gains access to the Court through media (Linos and Twist 2016; Sill, Metzgar, and Rouse 2013). Since 52 percent of Americans receive news on Facebook, and the public tends to know little about the Court, Facebook may be a place that fosters Court learning.

On Facebook, users may intentionally seek out, or be incidentally exposed to, news stories and commentary about the Court. This includes status updates, news stories, video links, and picture posts. For instance, when the Court announces a decision in a case, a Facebook user may be exposed to a friend or family member's shared post of a news story about the decision or to a status update that either supports or disapproves of the Court's decision. The user may also decide to actively seek out stories and commentary about a Court decision on their own by using the search function on Facebook.

Despite the pervasiveness of social media, however, scholars know very little about how, and to what extent, the American public learns about the Court through social media, and, in turn, whether this knowledge has the ability to influence their opinions about the nation's court of last resort—including their general support for it as an institution. Indeed, when people learn about the Court they tend to increase their support for it (Gibon and Caldeira 2009). That said, it is unclear how this applies in a social media environment. This leads to my question of interest: *Do people see information about the U.S. Supreme Court on Facebook? If so, does this information influence how they perceive the Court in the form of its legitimacy?*

This is an important line of inquiry for several reasons. First, social media is fundamentally different from traditional media and deserves special attention. While a wide body of literature analyzes how people learn about the Court through media (Sill, Metzgar, and Rouse 2013; Slotnick and Segal 1998) and the effects this learning has on public's perceptions of the Court (Hit and Searles 2018; Gibson and Caldeira 2009), it is a leap to assume these learning habits and effects apply to a social media environment in the same ways.

Second, most people are only exposed to the Supreme Court through media (Linos and Twist 2016). The justices tend to stay out of the media spotlight. This means the media plays a more important role in shaping public opinion about the Court. Indeed, if people consume social media content about the Supreme Court in ways that differ from traditional news, then this may matter for variance in broader public support for the Court.

Finally, and most importantly, social media use continues to increase. This suggests that an increasing number of people may now learn about the Court through social media. As traditional forms of media for news consumption decrease in popularity (Gottfried and Shearer 2016), social media may grow to be the dominant source of political information, and information about the Court, for many people. If there are differences between traditional media and social media in terms of how people learn about the Court and form opinions about it, then we may see these differences expand as more people take part in social media networks.

This dissertation proceeds as follows. In the first chapter, I focus on the nature of the public's exposure to the Court through Facebook using a survey instrument. In the second chapter, I employ a survey experiment to examine how different types of Court

messaging on Facebook may influence individuals' support for the Court. This includes political messaging and legitimizing messaging about the Court. In the third chapter, I conduct another experiment to explore how likes, shares, and comments on Facebook posts about the Court influence people's support toward it.

Chapter 1: Where's SCOTUS?: An Exploration of News about the U.S. Supreme Court on Facebook

Introduction

July 1st, 2021 marked the final day of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2020 October term. In the weeks leading up to this day, the Court handed down some of its most high-profile cases, including ones that focus on the Affordable Care Act, LGBTQ+ rights, and the Voting Rights Act. There was also speculation that Justice Stephen Breyer would retire at the end of the term.¹

With the confluence of these events, thousands of status updates, videos, and “shares” of news stories and commentary appeared on Facebook. This information came from many different sources, including users' friend networks, news outlets, politicians' pages, and interest group pages. For example, Fox News posted a Facebook story with the headliner, “Breyer retirement watch: Supreme Court term's final decisions mark crucial milestone in justice's choice.”² Thousands of people reacted or commented on the post, with remarks such as, “Breyer please hang in there. We the people need you to defend the Constitution! My relative George Soule. Came over on the Mayflower and signed the Mayflower Pack [sic], the first official legislation in America.”³ In terms of users' friend networks, one user posted the status, “With Trumps [sic] stacked court, you

¹ See, e.g., <https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/01/politics/breyer-retirement-watch-supreme-court-end-of-term/index.html>.

² See https://www.foxnews.com/politics/breyer-retirement-watch-supreme-court-terms-final-decisions-crucial-milestone-justices-choice?cmpid=fb_fnc&fbclid=IwAR0Rzfo-koFIMCCw_qKVVMZJIHayB9M4WhxJ2j0J1mvEZFEDBuakNQZD-b8.

³ This comment was retrieved on Facebook on July 3rd, 2021.

knew this was bound to happen . . .” along with a CNN story attached to the post.⁴ A user commented on this post and said, “That’s [sic] total BS!!”⁵ These are just a few (very small) examples of how people use Facebook to interact with the Court.

In this article, I argue that Facebook helps facilitate a new type of interaction between the public and the Court based on two important differences between traditional media and Facebook. First, people may encounter information about the Court on Facebook whether or not they intentionally seek it. In contrast, when people use traditional media, they often must seek out news (specifically political news) to learn about the Court. Second, Facebook provides opportunities for the public to communicate with one another about the Court. As the above examples suggest, people do not have to passively read about the Court like they do when reading a newspaper or watching a news network; on Facebook they can talk with one another and provide commentary about what they see or hear. While other social media platforms can be used to learn about the Court – and distinguish themselves from traditional media in both of these ways – Facebook should be the primary focus, as it is the most widely used social media platform, it is popular among all demographic groups, and more U.S. adults get news from Facebook than any other social media platform, including Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Reddit, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Tumblr, and Youtube (Gramlich 2021).

Together, Facebook provides an ample opportunity for the public to engage with the Court. Indeed, the Court’s own lack of transparency has meant that the public

⁴ Similarly, these comments were also retrieved on Facebook on July 3rd, 2021. “The Supreme Court rules two Arizona voting rules that restrict how ballots can be cast do not violate the historic Voting Rights Act.” See <https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/01/politics/voting-rights-act-supreme-court-ruling/index.html>.

⁵ The names are not listed for anonymity because Facebook users do not have “handles” or “account names” like they may have on other social media platforms.

generally has a dearth of knowledge about it and its decisions (Davis and Strickler 2000; Haltom and Cadwallader 1998; Slotnick and Segal 1998), which can ultimately hurt its legitimacy. Facebook, I argue, could be incredibly important for the Court, as exposure to, and interactions about, it can lead people to adjust their general support for it (Gibson and Caldeira 2009b; Gibson, Caldeira, and Spence 2003). Thus, it may be the case that exposure to the Court on Facebook can boost its legitimacy.

However, there is limited literature that focuses on the public's exposure to the Court through Facebook. In fact, because of Facebook's own lack of transparency, there is generally little research about how people use it as an information source (see e.g., Settle 2018, Asghar 2015, Turcotte 2015). As such, this article offers a unique opportunity to assess how users gather information from this social media giant. Specifically, it considers the following empirical questions: How often do people encounter the Court on their Facebook Feeds? What information do people see about the Court on their Feeds? What individual attributes make people more likely to see Court content on their Facebook? Does exposure to the Court on Facebook influence people's perceptions of the Court's legitimacy? To explore these questions, a survey is conducted to gauge people's exposure to the Court through Facebook.

Several findings are clear from this initial analysis. First, those who are politically interested tend to see more information about the Court on Facebook. However, political knowledge—whether political knowledge in general or Court knowledge in particular—does not influence the likelihood that someone sees Court information on their Facebook Feeds. Second, and more importantly, there is a significant positive relationship between people's perceptions of the Court's legitimacy and their exposure to the Court on

Facebook. There is also a positive relationship between Court support and people's *willingness* to see Court content. This supports Caldeira and Gibson (1992)'s positivity bias theory, as those who encounter the most content about the Court on Facebook have the most support for the Court. The implications of this will be discussed in the conclusion.

This article proceeds as follows. First, an overview is provided of our current understanding of the relationship between the Court, traditional media, and the public. Facebook is introduced as a new avenue to explore the relationship between the Court and the public – specifically by serving as a platform to help people learn about the Court. Individual attributes are looked at that may make some people more inclined than others to see and learn about the Court through Facebook, and literature is discussed about the potential implications of this exposure. This confluence of literatures leads into the hypotheses. Following this, the data used to test the hypotheses is described and the results of the analysis are presented. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of the main findings and the broader implications of this research for how people grow to know and love the Court.

Current Understanding of the Traditional Media, the Public, and the Court

The Court, despite shying away from the media, depends on coverage more than the elected branches of government, which makes studying Facebook even more important (Johnson and Socker 2012; LaRowe and Hoekstra 2014). While the elected branches are held accountable to the public through elections, the Court is not. This means that the public must show its support for the Court through believing it is a legitimate institution. In other words, the public must support the Court or else the justices' decisions may not

be enforced or taken seriously. Many scholars have studied factors that influence public support for the institution, including exposure to the Court and gained knowledge about it (Gibson and Caldeira 2009b; Gibson, Caldeira, and Spence 2003). The media certainly influences people's support for the Court in both ways: it can expose the public to the Court and its decisions while also helping the public to gain knowledge about it.

However, compared to the other branches of government, the Court is not as frequently covered by television and print media (Hoekstra 2003; Slotnick and Segal 1998). This is at least in part because the justices rarely attempt to communicate directly with journalists about their decisions, personal lives, and what it means to be a justice. Journalists feel this lack of communication from the Court as well. As Steve Bensen from MSNBC said, "the Court is set in its old ways, and justices feel quite comfortable ignoring outside pressure for change since they don't really answer to anyone."⁶

Without direct communication between journalists and the Court (and even clear opposition to it at times), journalists either have to secure one of the limited in-person seats for journalists to report on its arguments, wait until the recording of the argument is put online the Friday after argument, or read through lengthy opinions handed down by the Court to report on its decisions.⁷ These tasks can be extremely time-consuming, especially if journalists are under tight deadlines. Collectively, this evidence suggests that

⁶ See <https://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/expensive-seat-the-supreme-court-msna583941>.

⁷ This was disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, oral argument was live-streamed and available in real time for journalists and the public alike (see e.g., Jacobi et al. 2020).

Highly salient cases will also be posted sometimes before the Friday. For example, oral argument recordings of *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010) and *Bush v. Gore* (2000) were posted the day of argument.

the public is more shut off from the Court compared to elected branches, as journalists have a much more difficult time covering the Court and its decisions.

And yet, most citizens come to understand the Court's decisions and its makeup *nearly entirely* through this limited news media (Leighley 2004; Davis 1994; Davis and Strickler 2000). Without media reporting on the Court, the public would only be able to learn about it through reading lengthy opinions or listening to hour-long oral arguments. This heavy reliance on the news media and the Court's own lack of transparency has meant the public is generally less knowledgeable about it compared to the elected branches (Davis 1994; Davis and Strickler 2000; Haltom and Cadwallader 1998; Slotnick and Segal 1998). In addition, the number of people seeking news about the Court on traditional platforms, including television and newspapers, is declining.⁸ Since fewer people are reading newspapers and watching network television for news, this suggests even fewer people are being exposed to and learning about the Supreme Court through traditional media. Perhaps, then, people are learning about it through other media.

The New Kid on the Block: Facebook

Facebook has expanded the quantity and variety of information to which citizens have access. While its main purpose has been to “give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together,” Facebook has had effects that expand beyond peer-to-peer interactions (Facebook 2004). It has changed how people are exposed to information by making content available—from peers, media outlets, and other organizations—and readily sharable with only a few clicks. While about eighteen percent

⁸ See <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/02/14/fast-facts-about-the-newspaper-industrys-financial-struggles/> and <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/five-years-network-ratings-declines-explained-1241524>.

of Americans *primarily* get political information from social media (Gottfried and Shearer 2016), many more casually encounter it on their social media feeds. According to Pew Research Center, fifty-two percent of Americans receive political information on Facebook whether they actively seek it out or not, which is higher than the share of Americans who encounter news on Instagram (14 percent), Twitter (17 percent), and LinkedIn (8 percent) (Grieco 2020).⁹ The point is that social media, and most importantly Facebook, is growing as a highly significant source of political information for Americans. Facebook, then, may also be an alternative for many Americans to learn about the Court and its decisions for at least several reasons.

First, Facebook serves as a platform for users to easily engage with political information. While traditional media has struggled to better engage audiences with political information (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, and Nielsen 2018), Facebook is able to attract people to information and hold their attention because its posts are typically very short and contain photos. In other words, they take less time to read, or view compared to a full article or video segment. This has prompted many major news outlets to create their own Facebook pages and encourage the sharing of links to news articles on the platform (Ju, Jeong, and Chyi 2014; Kümpel et al. 2015). For my purposes this means the posting of links to news articles about Breyer’s retirement or end-of-term decisions. Second, Facebook leads other platforms as a source for news because of its large user base, its easy accessibility, and its cost-free platform. According to Pew,

⁹ This number fluctuates depending on the methodology used. For example, Owen (2020) collects the top 10 posts on 173 people’s feeds to find that less than half see a news story within the top 10 posts. See <https://www.niemanlab.org/2020/11/how-much-political-news-do-people-see-on-facebook-i-went-inside-173-peoples-feeds-to-find-out/>.

around seven in ten U.S. adults (69 percent) use Facebook.¹⁰ Third, Facebook users can express affirmation of content with a variety of emojis, voice their opinion with a comment, or share content within their network (Gerlitz and Helmond 2013; Gerodimos and Justinussen 2015). These social buttons allow people to have a political voice about content they see on their Feeds rather than having to simply digest information while withholding their opinions.

Finally, Facebook can facilitate exposure to information that users do not actively seek (Baum 2002, Baum 2003, Baum and Jamison 2006; Prior 2007). With traditional media, a user can be exposed to news by either turning on the television to a particular network or seeking out a newspaper. Users of Facebook, however, hardly ever visit Facebook with the primary intention to find political information. They mostly use Facebook to seek out entertainment content, keep in touch with friends and family, relax, or distract themselves (Smock et al. 2011; Raacke and Bonds-Raacke 2008). Yet, Schäfer, Sülflow, and Müller (2017) find that, from the Facebook users they sampled, about a quarter of the posts their sample receive contain political information. This illustrates that news is oftentimes presented to Facebook users without users actively seeking it out, as people have had to do in the past with traditional media.¹¹ These reasons collectively suggest people see content about the Court on their Facebook Feeds and learn from it, even if they do not actively search for it.

Individual Attributes Affecting Court Exposure

¹⁰ See <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/16/facts-about-americans-and-facebook/>.

¹¹ This is not to say that this incidental exposure does not happen on other social media platforms. See e.g., Fletcher and Nielsen (2018).

However, not every Facebook user encounters political information, yet alone the same political information. While there is scant information available about what exactly people see on their Facebook Feeds (i.e., “the algorithm”), Facebook consistently mentions four ranking signals as the most important when it comes to how high up in the News Feed a post appears.¹² The algorithm considers users’ relationships with others, the content type (e.g., video, link, image, etc.), popularity (how many likes/engagements the post gets), and recency. Based on these signals, each post is assigned a ranking to determine where it appears in the News Feed and which stories appear first. This means, then, that when people see political information on their Feeds, Facebook uses these criteria. Again, however, it is unclear what specific political information users see on their Feeds. What is known, though, is that a majority of Facebook users do encounter political information on their Feeds. This, then, is the impetus for my study as it seeks to uncover how people see such information in the context of a federal institution.

With this in mind, there may be several individual attributes pulled from the communications and political science literatures that suggest why people may be more likely to see Court information on their Facebook Feeds. First, political interest is a strong predictor of intentional exposure to political news (Tewksbury, Weaver, and Maddex 2001; Delli Carpini 2004; Drew and Weaver 2006; Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre, and Shehata 2013; Strömbäck & Shehata 2010; Lecheler and De Vreese 2017; De Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006, Strömbäck, Jenssen, and Aalberg 2012).¹³ This means that the extent

¹² See <https://www.facebook.com/formedia/solutions/news-feed>. There are scholars who have tried to better understand the algorithm as well. See e.g., Rader and Gray (2015); Birkbak and Carlsen (2016); DeVito (2017) and Hargreaves et al. (2018).

¹³ Recent research in communication has paid increased attention to developing reciprocal models of media effects. Reciprocal models are where both contextual and individual variables may function as predictors of

to which an individual seeks out political news depends heavily on preexisting levels of political interest. There is also ample evidence that knowledge predicts the use and processing of political news (e.g., Eveland et al. 2005). For instance, Strömbäck and Shehata (2010) find that political interest strongly predicts attention to news while Möller and de Vreese (2015) show a strong influence of political knowledge on news use. Based on this confluence of these literatures, individuals who are politically interested and knowledgeable may also see more political news on their Facebook Feeds. In this context, they will be more likely to see Court information on their Facebook Feeds than individuals who are not politically interested and knowledgeable.

***Hypothesis 1:** Individuals who are politically interested and knowledgeable will see more content about the Supreme Court on their Feeds than those less interested and knowledgeable.*

Additionally, those who consume more news generally should be more likely to see Court news on Facebook. This is intuitive, as these individuals expose themselves to more news, and thus have a higher likelihood of seeing news specifically about the Court. Based on the Facebook algorithm, these individuals may have more posts appear on their Feeds that are news stories compared to those who do not often consume news.

Relatedly, I also expect that people who use Facebook the most often will be more likely to see Court information on their Feeds. This is because they scroll through more content on a given day compared to others who use Facebook less frequently. In sum, individuals who consume the most news and spend the most time on Facebook will be more likely to encounter Court information on their Facebook Feeds.

news media effects, but may also be influenced by them (e.g., Möller and de Vreese 2015; Slater 2007; Valkenburg and Peter 2013).

***Hypothesis 2:** Individuals who consume more news and use Facebook more often will see more content about the Supreme Court on their Feeds than those who consume less news and use Facebook less often.*

Court Exposure Affecting Attitudes Toward the Court

While political interest, knowledge, news consumption, and Facebook use frequency may influence how likely an individual is to see the Court on their Feeds, this does not tell us anything about the *effects* of the exposure. As such, I turn to Gibson and Caldeira (2009)'s positivity bias theory. This theory addresses how exposure to the Court can lead people to extend legitimacy to it because when people become attentive to the Court, they are exposed to legitimizing symbols of it such as the justices' long black robes and the temple-like Court building itself (Resnik 2012).¹⁴ These judicial symbols frame the context of the Court's decisions and send the message that it is different from other political institutions. This message, then, helps shape people's perceptions of the Court's legitimacy. In the context of Facebook, people who are exposed to the Court on the platform may see the justices' robes, the Court building on the front of headlines, and other legitimizing symbols of the Court that increase their support for the Court. For those who see the Court most often on their Facebook Feeds, they should have the greatest support for the Court. These individuals should also be more willing to subscribe to see more Court information on their Feeds, as they will have the greatest support for the institution.

***Hypothesis 3:** Individuals who see the Court more often on their Feeds will have greater support for the Court than those who see the Court less often.*

¹⁴ This theory is often described with the phrase "to know it is to love it" (Gibson and Caldeira 2009b, 437).

Hypothesis 4: Individuals who have greater support for the Court will be more willing to subscribe to see more content about the Court on their Feeds than those who have less support for the Court.

Data and Methods

To test these hypotheses, I put a survey in the field on July 2nd, 2021 using Lucid.¹⁵ I chose this this date because it was the day after the Court's October 2020 term ended.¹⁶ The survey included 1,130 respondents.¹⁷ Of 1,111 respondents, 47.88 percent identify as male, and 52.12 percent identify as female.¹⁸ The average age of participants is around 35-44 years. In terms of race/ethnicity, of 1,127 respondents, 72.76 percent of the sample identifies as white or Caucasian, 11.18 percent identify as Black or African American, 6.21 percent identify as Asian, 6.74 percent identify as Hispanic or Latino, and 1.77 percent identify as Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander, Native American, or Alaska Native.¹⁹ A majority of participants, 75.34 percent ($n = 846$), have at least completed

¹⁵ Lucid's demographic and experimental findings track well with U.S. national benchmarks (Coppock and McClellan 2019).

¹⁶ This date was also chosen close to the end of the term so that participants would be able to recall events happening at the Court, as these events do not keep in headlines for very long. It is difficult to measure the lifespan of news stories because it is largely dependent on the topic area (politics and elections, social issues, environment, etc.) and how lifespan is measured (readership, distribution, etc.). However, "The Lifespan of News Stories" uses Google Trends API (see <https://www.newslifespan.com/>) to quantify the evolution of search interest across a 60-day window surrounding each event. According to their calculations, most politics and elections stories have a lifespan of 0-1 days.

¹⁷ While 1,130 respondents opted to take the survey, each question in the survey itself was optional which explains the variation in frequency of respondents.

¹⁸ Another 12 individuals identify as non-binary/third gender or prefer not to say, while 7 respondents skipped this question. To ensure that bots did not complete the survey (Coppock and McClellan 2019), respondents were screened to make sure that they completed the survey in no less than one minute. The average time it took respondents to complete the survey was around 5.68 minutes.

¹⁹ 1.33 percent of participants ($n=15$) responded with, "Other."

some college. The full questionnaire, with means and standard deviations for these demographic variables, can be found in Appendix A.²⁰

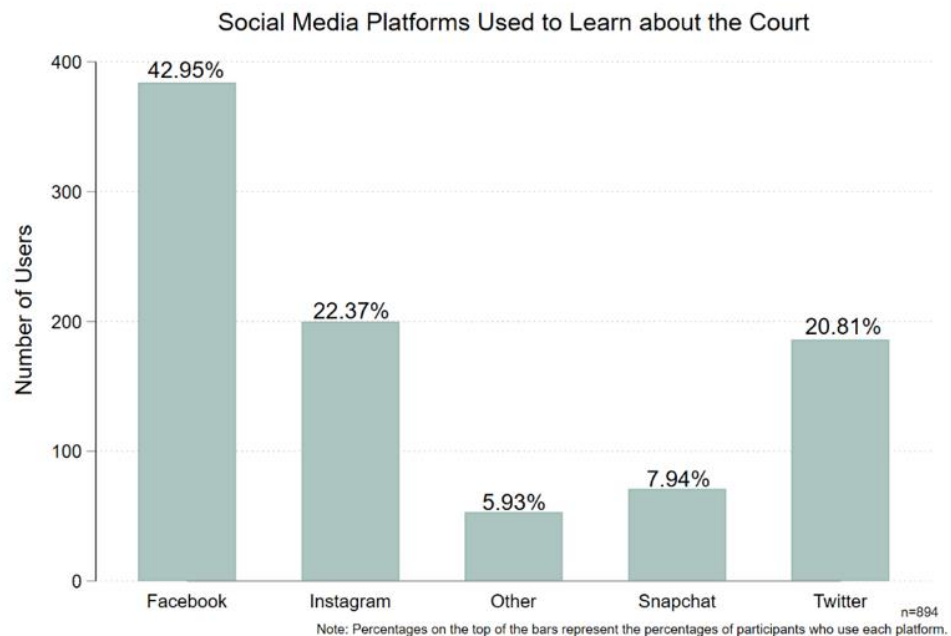
I asked these participants how they learn about the Supreme Court with the question, “If something happens at the U.S. Supreme Court, how do you hear about it? Check all that apply.”²¹ Of 2,615 responses (since participants could check more than one option), 30.32 percent of participants learn about the Court through television and 11.31 percent learn about the Court through newspapers. Social media, while not as influential as television, does garner a meaningful audience. 19.96 percent of the sample learns about the Court through social media, while another 17.46 percent uses online news outlets to learn about the Court. 10.71 percent said that their friends and family also help them stay updated about the Court. In the “Other” response, participants listed YouTube, podcasts, magazines, and work colleagues as places where they learn about the Court. The 19.96 percent that learn about the Court through social media parallels Gottfried and Shearer’s (2016) findings that 18 percent of Americans primarily get political information from social media.

²⁰ Of course, in a perfect world it would make sense to collect data about people’s Facebook behavior through Facebook directly. However, Facebook only offers data through Facebook Advertising and CrowdTangle. Facebook Advertising displays audiences of people with particular interests, behavior, demographics, job title, location, etc. See <https://www.facebook.com/business/ads/ad-targeting>. Individual Facebook users can also use Audience Insights. See <https://www.facebook.com/ads/audience-insights/>. However, this only captures data for those who are in a person’s friend network, and again does not include specific content that people see on their Feeds. CrowdTangle is Facebook’s data hub for academics. However, scholars have to apply to receive data, and topics that will be accepted are limited. See <https://help.crowdtangle.com/en/articles/4302208-crowdtangle-for-academics-and-researchers>.

²¹ Recall through a survey to gauge exposure has its limitations (Infante-Rivard and Jacques 2000; Vrijheid et al. 1992; White 2003). Scharrow (2016) and Prior (2009) find that people tend to overreport their media use in terms of frequency and duration. However, self-reports for specific content are more accurate (Scharrow 2016; Scharrow 2019). In the context of Facebook, and this study, self-reporting is the best possible option at the moment to capture whether people see the Court on Facebook, and the type of information people see about the Court.

Of the participants who selected that they learn about the Court through social media ($n = 530$) I asked from what social media platforms, with the option to select more than one. As Figure 1 illustrates, Facebook is the most common social media platform participants use to learn about the Court, which further supports Pew evidence that people learn the most about political news on Facebook compared to other social media platforms (Grieco 2020).

Figure 1: Social Media Platforms Used to Learn about the Court



The survey additionally filtered a set of questions to be applicable only if respondents have a Facebook account since this study is examining people’s exposure to the Court through Facebook. Of 1,130 respondents, 81.15 percent ($n = 917$) have a Facebook account, and almost half ($n = 447$, 48.80 percent) of these respondents have encountered information about the U.S. Supreme Court on their Facebook Feeds.²²

²² Of the sample who have Facebook accounts, 71.28% ($n=273$) identify as white or Caucasian, 12.01% ($n=46$) Black or African American, 6.25% ($n=25$) Asian, 1.04% ($n=4$) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 1.83% ($n=7$) Native American or Alaska Native . There are more females (58.95%, $n=224$) than males (40.26%, $n=153$) who use Facebook as a source to get information about the Court. The age

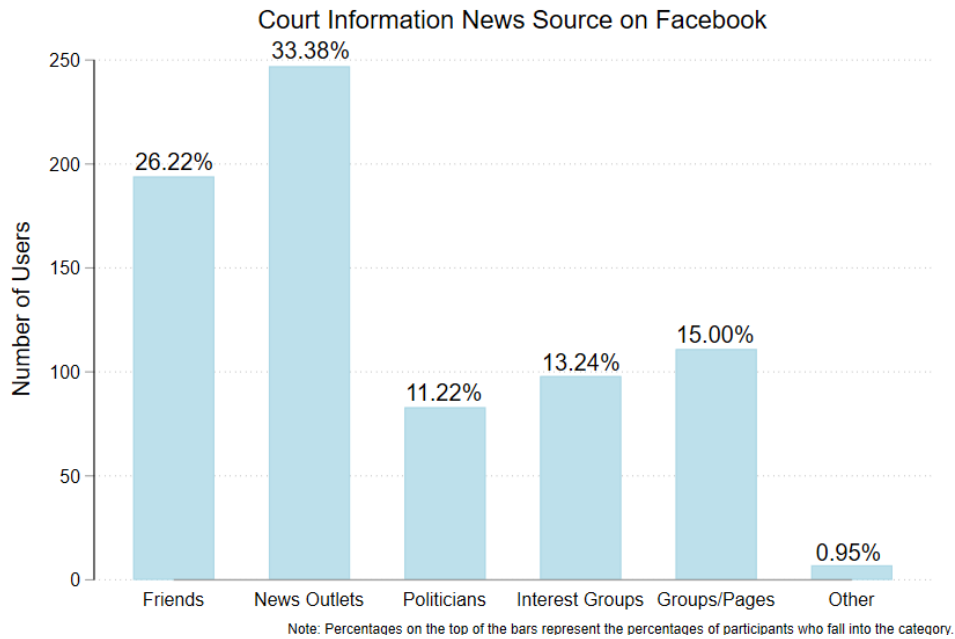
Interestingly, of these respondents, around 29 percent ($n = 131$) stated that they have seen Court information on their pages in the past week, while another 31 percent ($n = 140$) said in the last month. This could be explained by the Court ending its October 2020 term at the time the survey was administered. I also asked participants a similar question of how often they see content about the Court on their Feeds. Of 446 respondents 17.81 percent see Supreme Court content daily on their Feeds, 29.15 percent see the Court weekly, 23.99 percent see content at least once a month, and another 36.13 percent see content every 2-3 months or more.

Next, I inquired about the latest information they saw about the Court on their Feeds. About 50 percent ($n = 207$) of participants last saw information about a Court decision, 16 percent ($n = 66$) saw information about oral argument for a case, 21.71 percent ($n = 89$) saw information about one or more of the justices, and 10.73 percent ($n = 44$) saw information about the Court's role in the federal government. In the "Other" response category, participants wrote COVID issues (possibly the transition from in-person to telephonic arguments as a result of the pandemic) and packing the Court.

I then asked to recall where the information about the Supreme Court comes from on their Facebook Feeds. As Figure 2 illustrates, the most common sources are news outlets and friends on Facebook. This is followed by Facebook Groups/Pages, interest groups, then politicians. For the "Other" category, participants gave responses such as journalists and Facebook News.

breakdown is as follows: 18-24 years (10.99%, $n=42$) 25-34 years (31.41%, $n=120$), 35-44 years (25.13%, $n=96$), 45-54 years (16.49%, $n=63$), 55-70 years (12.83%, $n=49$), and above 70 years (2.88%, $n=11$). The breakdown for education attainment is as follows: 12th grade or less (2.62%, $n=10$), graduated high school or equivalent (24.67%, $n=94$), some college no degree (25.20%, $n=96$), associate degree (10.76%, $n=41$), bachelor's degree (23.36%, $n=89$), post-graduate degree (13.39%, $n=51$).

Figure 2: Court Information News Source on Facebook



As prior literature suggests, Facebook can facilitate exposure to information that users do not actively seek out (Baum 2002, Baum 2003, Baum and Jamison 2006, Prior 2007). To see if this is the case for Court information, I asked participants whether they intentionally seek out information about the Supreme Court on Facebook. Somewhat surprisingly, 40.54 percent ($n = 180$) of participants said yes, while the other 59.46 percent ($n = 264$) said no. Relatedly, I asked about whether they have encountered information about the Court they did not seek out. A majority of the sample (82.70 percent, $n = 368$) had seen information about the Court they did not seek out, while only 17.30 percent ($n = 77$) did not self-report encountering news about the Court that they did not seek out. These percentages are much higher than Pew’s findings that 52 percent of Americans receive political information on Facebook whether they actively seek it out or not (Grieco 2020). This finding contributes to the existing literature, as it suggests a

majority of the information people see on Facebook about the Court is information they do not intentionally seek.

Of those participants who have a Facebook account I asked, “If given the opportunity, how likely would you be to subscribe to see more information about the Supreme Court on your Facebook Feed?” On a 5-point Likert scale, the average for this question is 3.07, indicating that most people did not have a strong preference one way or the other. Interestingly, however, about 41.67 percent ($n = 380$) said that they were extremely likely or somewhat likely to subscribe to see more content about the Court. This should be very positive news for Court, as many Americans are willing to see more information about the institution!

Finally, I asked participants about their exposure on Facebook to salient Supreme Court decisions from the end of the October 2020 term and their exposure to the rumors of Breyer’s retirement. Participants were asked about *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee* (2021), *Mahanoy Area School District v. B.L.* (2021), *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia* (2021), and *California v. Texas* (2021).²³ Respondents were asked, “Did you hear about [INSERT CASE NAME] on your Facebook Feed?” then provided with a short description of the case. The full descriptions can be found in Appendix A. Surprisingly, of those who have seen Court content on their Facebook Feeds, 55.71 percent ($n = 239$) heard about *Brnovich*, 52.75 percent ($n = 230$) heard about *Mahanoy*, 49.43 percent ($n = 217$) heard about *Fulton*, and 51.81 percent heard about *California*. Slightly less participants ($n = 218$, 48.88 percent) heard the rumors about Justice Breyer’s retirement on Facebook.

²³ These cases were chosen because they are salient and made headlines in the news.

These data tell a compelling story about what people see about the Court on Facebook. But they do not test the hypotheses I posited above. To do so, I invoke several linear and logit regression models. First, to measure exposure to Court content, I employ four main dependent variables including *CourtNewsOnFacebook*, *FreqSeeCourt*, *TotalDecisions*, and *BreyerRetire*. *CourtNewsOnFacebook* captures whether participants have ever seen Court information on their Facebook Feeds. This dichotomous variable takes on a value of 0 if participants have never seen information and 1 if they have seen information. The mean is 0.48, indicating that, on average, about half of the sample has seen Court information and the other half has not seen information. *FreqSeeCourt* measures how often participants see Court information on their Feeds. It takes on a value ranging from 1-5, with 1 indicating the least frequent exposure and 5 indicating the most frequent exposure. The mean of this variable is 3.21, indicating that, on average, people see the Court around once a month on their Facebook Feeds.

While these variables speak to the frequency of exposure, they do not provide any information about the type of exposure. For this I use *TotalDecisions* and *BreyerRetire*. These two variables capture exposure for individuals who claim to have seen the Court on their Facebook Feeds before (coded as 1 for *CourtNewsonFacebook*). *TotalDecisions* takes on a value from 0 to 4. It captures whether each respondent heard about several salient decisions following the October 2020 term (*Brnovich*, *Mahanoy*, *Fulton*, and *California*). For each of these cases, respondents were coded as 1 if they heard about each decision on Facebook. Then, I totaled them and divided by four for a mean score for each respondent. The mean of this variable is 2.06, indicating that, on average, respondents saw two of the four cases on their Facebook Feeds. Finally,

BreyerRetire captures whether each respondent heard about Breyer’s retirement rumors on Facebook. As a dichotomous variable, it takes a value of either 0 or 1. The mean is 0.48, indicating that about half of the sample saw the rumors while the other half did not.

With dependent variables in hand, I employ a series of independent variables to test my four hypotheses. Specifically, I create *Political Interest*, *General Political Knowledge*, *Court Knowledge*, and *CourtSupport*. *Political Interest* is measured with the question, “How interested would you say you are in politics?” with a 5-point Likert scale of interest. The mean for this variable is 3.38, indicating that participants are, on average, moderately interested in politics. *General Political Knowledge* is measured using five political knowledge questions from the American National Election Studies.²⁴ I coded participants for whether they were correct for each question (1) or incorrect (0). These were then collapsed into a single scale ranging from 0 to 5. The average is 3.03, indicating that the average respondent answered 3 of the 5 questions correct. The *Court Knowledge* questions are three closed-ended multiple choice questions (see Mondak 2001; Tedin and Murray 1979) used by Gibson and Caldeira (2009).²⁵ Again, they were coded whether they were correct or incorrect, and then these totals were collapsed into a single scale ranging from 0 to 3. The mean is 1.65, indicating that

²⁴ The questions are as follows: (1) How many years is the term of office of a United States Senator? (2) How many justices (judges) are there on the U.S. Supreme Court? (3) Do you happen to know how many times an individual can be elected president? (4) How much of a majority is needed for the Senate and House of the U.S. Congress to override a presidential veto? (5) Do you happen to know what political office John G. Roberts holds? Full question wording and responses are available in Appendix A.

²⁵ The questions are as follows: (1) Some judges in the U.S. are elected; others are appointed to the bench. Do you happen to know if the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court are elected or appointed to the bench? (2) Some judges in the U.S. serve for a set number of years; others serve a life term. Do you happen to know whether the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court serve for a set number of years or whether they serve a life term? (3) Do you happen to know who has the last say when there is a conflict over the meaning of the Constitution – the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. Congress, or the President?

participants, on average, got at least one of the questions correct, but no more than 2 correct. *CourtSupport* is used to capture how supportive participants are of the Court. This variable captures responses from Gibson and Caldeira's (2009) five questions measuring diffuse support. For each participant, these five responses are summed then divided by five for an average measure of support for each participant. On a scale from 1-5, the average of this variable is 2.81, indicating that support for the Court, on average, is moderate.

Finally, I use variables to capture respondents' time consuming news and their time on Facebook. In particular, *TimeConsumingNews* captures how much time during the day participants consume news. The mean of this variable is 2.30, indicating that participants, on average, spend a little more than 1/2 hour – 1 hour consuming news a day. *TimeOnFacebook* captures how much time participants spend on Facebook, as those who are exposed to more content may be more likely to see Court information. The mean of this is 2.31, indicating that participants, on average, spend a little more than 1/2 hour – 1 hour on Facebook every day as well. Sociodemographic control variables are used in the modeling as well, including race, gender, age, and ideology.²⁶

Results

The first hypothesis posits individuals who are politically interested and knowledgeable will see more content about the Supreme Court on their Feeds than those less interested and knowledgeable. To explore this hypothesis, I use several measures of exposure: *CourtNewsonFacebook*, *FreqSeeCourt*, *TotalDecisions*, and *BreyerRetire*. This ensures that the models capture exposure frequencies – including whether participants

²⁶ For the coding of these variables, see Appendix A.

have ever seen Court information and if so how often – and exposure to specific stories about the Court. Because *CourtNewsonFacebook* and *BreyerRetire* are dichotomous, I use logit regression. In contrast, I invoke linear regression for the models that use the dependent variables *FreqSeeCourt* and *TotalDecisions* because they are continuous variables. Table 1 displays the results.

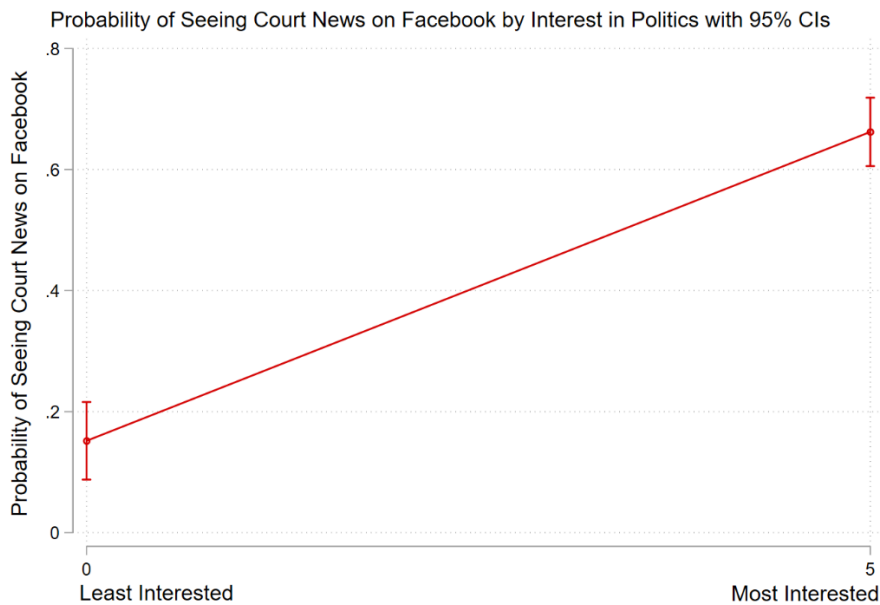
Table 1: Linear and Logit Regressions of Individual Attributes Affecting Court Exposure

	<i>Dependent variables:</i>			
	Court News on Facebook (Logit)	Frequency of Seeing the Court (Linear)	Breyer Retire (Logit)	Total Decisions (Linear)
Political Interest	0.478*** (0.069)	0.413*** (0.052)	0.791*** (0.120)	0.515*** (0.060)
General Knowledge	-0.073 (0.059)	-0.200*** (0.042)	-0.142 (0.091)	-0.054 (0.048)
Court Knowledge	0.185 (0.0115)	0.036 (0.061)	0.134 (0.169)	-0.000 (0.091)
Court Support	-0.046 (0.090)	0.249*** (0.061)	0.486*** (0.137)	0.280*** (0.071)
Time Consuming News	-0.062 (0.068)	0.040 (0.049)	0.173 (0.106)	0.133** (0.056)
Time on Facebook	0.228*** (0.058)	-0.031 (0.042)	0.046 (0.092)	-0.039 (0.049)
Race	0.109 (0.171)	0.116 (0.118)	0.209 (0.250)	-0.058 (0.135)
Gender	-0.295* (0.155)	-0.216 (0.112)	-0.307 (0.235)	-0.439** (0.129)
Age	-0.038*** (0.057)	-0.006 (0.044)	-0.123 (0.092)	-0.015 (0.050)
Ideology	-0.030 (0.043)	-0.091** (0.029)	-0.074 (0.064)	-0.031 (0.033)
Constant	0.090 (0.548)	1.855 (0.382)	-3.960 (0.855)	-0.333 (0.439)
Observations	894	433	433	433

Note: Robust standard errors clustered around case citations are included in the parentheses.
*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01, two-tailed tests.

The first model captures whether respondents have ever seen Supreme Court information on their Facebook Feeds. According to this model, with *CourtNewsOnFacebook* as the dependent variable, there is a highly significant and positive relationship between political interest and whether an individual has seen the Court on their Facebook Feeds. In short, those who are politically interested are more likely to have seen the Court on their Feeds. This is visually illustrated in Figure 3. As interest increases, the probability of seeing any Court news increases from .15 to .66.

Figure 3: Probability of Seeing Court News on Facebook by Interest in Politics



However, *GeneralKnowledge* and *CourtKnowledge* do not have a significant relationship with my dependent variable of interest, meaning that one's knowledge about politics generally, and about the Court specifically, does not impact their likelihood of being exposed to the Court on Facebook. The relationship is very similar between *FreqSeeCourt* and the independent variables of interest. Individuals who are interested in politics are significantly more likely to see the Court more frequently on their Feeds

compared to those who are less interested. Compared to the first model, this model shows a significant relationship between general politics knowledge and how frequently people see the Court, except in a negative direction. Those with less general politics knowledge tend to see the Court more on their Feeds.

I further explore the hypothesis in columns three and four with the dependent variables *TotalDecisions* and *BreyerRetire*. Similarly, political interest has a highly significant and positive relationship with both of these dependent variables. Those who are politically interested were more likely to see information on Facebook about the Court's October 2020 term decisions and the speculation of Breyer's retirement. However, *GeneralKnowledge* and *CourtKnowledge* again are not significant predictors in the models. From these four models, some support is found for the first hypothesis. While political interest predicts the likelihood an individual will see Court information on their Feed, prior general political knowledge and Court knowledge are not significant predictors.

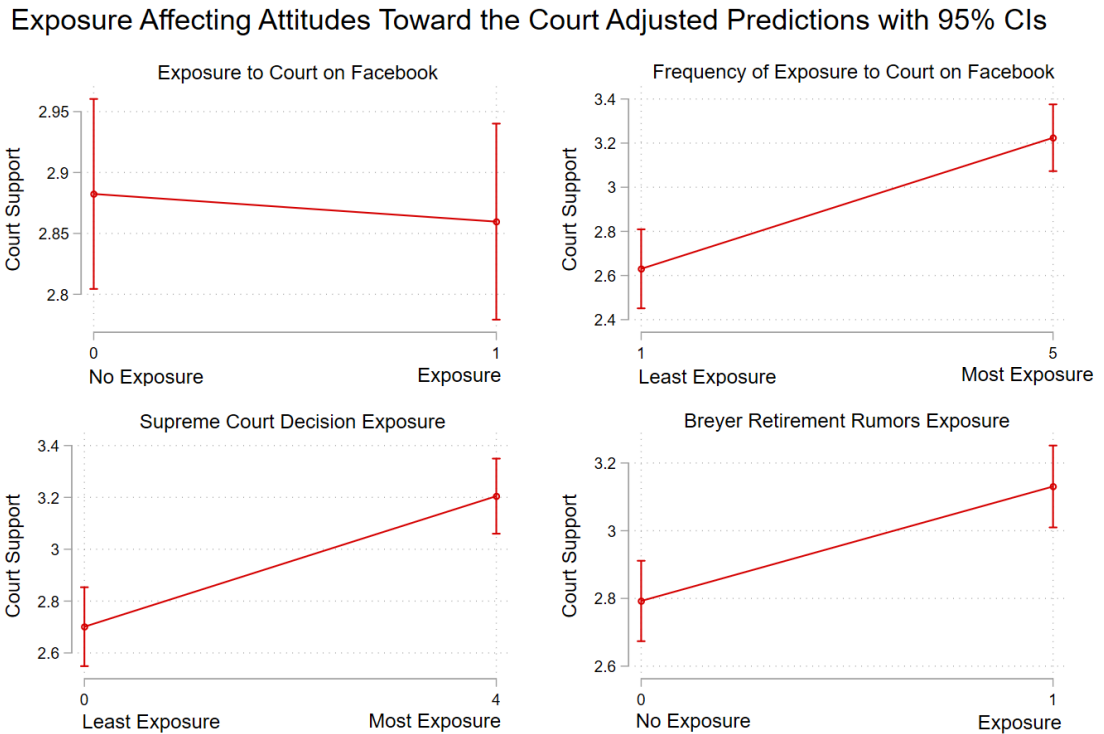
For the second hypothesis, I expect individuals who use Facebook more often and consume news more will see more content about the Court on their Feeds than those who use Facebook less often and consume less news. This hypothesis relies on the same four models in Table 1. From these models, the amount of time an individual is on Facebook significantly influences their likelihood to have seen Court information on their Feed at least once but does not significantly influence how frequently they see information or their exposure to the Court's term decisions and Breyer's retirement. An individual's time spent consuming news does not impact their likelihood of seeing Court news on their Feeds either, with the exception of seeing Court decisions.

Testing Court Exposure Affecting Attitudes Toward the Court

My third hypothesis states that individuals who see the Court more often on their Feeds will have greater support for the Court than those who see the Court less often. To model this relationship, *CourtSupport* is the main dependent variable and the four exposure variables as described above are the independent variables of interest:

(*CourtNewsOnFacebook*, *FreqSeeCourt*, *TotalDecisions*, and *BreyerRetire*). For each model I employ linear regression and the key relationships are displayed in Figure 4. The full models are available in Appendix A.

Figure 4: Exposure Affecting Attitudes Toward the Court Adj. Predictions with 95 percent Cis



In the top left corner of Figure 4, I examine the relationship between *CourtSupport* and whether participants have ever seen information about the Court on Facebook (*CourtNewsOnFacebook*). From this model, there is not a significant

relationship between at least one time exposure to the Court on Facebook and participants' support for the Court. That is, participants' support for the Court does not increase when they identify that they have seen the Court at least once on their Facebook Feeds. This may suggest that a single incident of exposure does not influence people's attitudes toward the Court.

However, repeated exposure may have an effect on such attitudes. The second exposure measure examines the frequency that participants see the Court on their Facebook Feeds. As the top right panel in Figure 4 suggests, there is a positive and significant relationship between the frequency of seeing the Court and Court support. That is, those who see the Court more often on their Facebook Feeds extend more support to the Court, even controlling for political interest, time on Facebook, and other covariates. Those who see the Court the least on Facebook support the Court around 2.63 on a 5-point scale, while those who see the Court the most support the Court almost a full percentage point more (3.22).

This relationship remains when considering exposure to Court decisions and Breyer's retirement as well when examining the bottom panels on Figure 4. Interestingly, the relationship between Court support and Breyer's retirement is stronger than the relationship between support and Court decisions, that is, those who were exposed to Breyer's retirement rumors increased support for the Court more than those who were exposed to the Court's decisions at the end of the October 2020 term. From respondents who saw no posts about the decisions to those who saw all four decisions on Facebook, their support for the Court increased from 2.70 to 3.20. For those who saw information about Breyer's retirement, their support for the Court increased from 2.13 to 2.79.

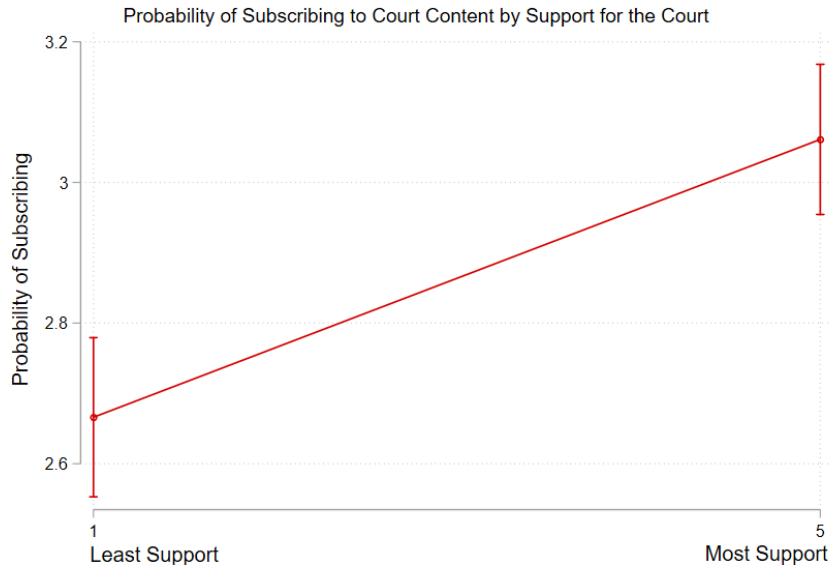
In line with the positivity bias theory, perhaps exposure to Breyer – a justice wearing his robe – was more influential on support than exposure to Court decisions that may be polarizing (see, e.g., Hitt and Searles 2018). Regardless, the main takeaway here is that exposure to the Court on Facebook can and does impact people’s support for the institution. The largest effect found is between frequency of exposure and support for the Court.²⁷

The final hypothesis states that individuals who have greater support for the Court will be more willing to subscribe to see more content about the Court on their Facebook Feed. *Subscribe* captures participants’ willingness to subscribe to see more content about the Court on their Feeds. The mean of this variable is 3.0 on a 5-point scale, indicating that respondents are, on average, impartial about subscribing to see more Court content. Figure 5 displays the results. The full model is available in Appendix A. There is a positive and significant relationship between Court support and willingness to subscribe.

Those who have more support in the Court are more likely to subscribe to see more content about it. Those who have the least amount of support for the Court have a likelihood of subscribing of about 2.66, while those who have the most amount of support for the Court have a likelihood of subscribing of about 3.06. Not surprisingly, political interest is also a strong predictor of likeliness to subscribe. Those on Facebook the most often are also significantly more likely to subscribe than those who visit Facebook less frequent.

²⁷ Interestingly, age is a significant predictor in these models in a negative direction, suggesting that young people are more likely to increase support for the Court after exposure. This aligns with Pew’s research that young people get the most news from social media. See <https://www.journalism.org/2020/07/30/americans-who-mainly-get-their-news-on-social-media-are-less-engaged-less-knowledgeable/>.

Figure 5: Probability of Subscribing to Court Content by Support for the Court



Conclusion

There are several main findings that this paper presents. First, this study provides the first evidence that people can and do learn about the Court on Facebook. Not only this, but social media is right behind television in terms of where people get their information about the Court. This is incredibly important, as the findings suggest that people typically do not go on Facebook to seek out information about the Court, yet many of them see the Court on their Feeds! Before this inquiry, it was unclear whether, and to what extent, people use social media to learn about the Court. This finding alone should open the door for scholars to investigate whether and to what extent other social media platforms help people gain knowledge about the Court, and even other political institutions. Second, the findings in this paper support much of the prior literature about individual-level characteristics that influence how likely someone is to consume political news. Those who are more politically interested are more likely to be exposed to news about the Court. Interestingly, however, is that people do not control what content they see on

Facebook. This may suggest that those who are politically interested engage with more content on Facebook about politics, which, in turn, may mean that they see more Court content. A follow-up study should be done to compare Facebook Feeds of politically interested and politically uninterested individuals. Third, while seeing at least one story on Facebook does not predict support for the Court, support is predicted by the frequency people see Court information on their Facebook Feeds and whether people are exposed to specific information about the Court, such as its decisions and its justices. Moving forward, this has incredible implications for the Court's legitimacy, as Facebook may in fact help members of the public gain support for the institution (and especially young people). While the data presented in this study does not parse out specific Court content, it does provide preliminary support and should be used as a framework for future research.

However, there are some limitations to this study. First, this study investigated how political interest and knowledge influence (or do not influence) likelihood of exposure. There may be other individual-level dispositions that also influence likelihood of exposure, like the perceived duty to keep informed (McCombs and Poindexter 1983; Poindexter and McCombs 2001) or the fear of missing out news information (Alt 2015). Future research should consider other individual-level factors. Second, while this analysis demonstrates a relationship between exposure to the Court and support for the Court, it is unclear whether the exposure *causes* increased support. Future research should expose participants to various Supreme Court Facebook posts to see whether direct exposure causes an increase or decrease in support. Second, while this study captures exposure to decisions and Breyer's retirement, it did not parse out different kinds of messaging on

Facebook about these topics and their effects on legitimacy. For example, *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee* (2021) is about Arizona voting laws. Depending on which side of the political aisle participants may be on, they could see messaging on Facebook about this case that is positive to their political party or negative. Fox or CNN could post about this case with entirely different viewpoints (see, e.g., Hitt and Searles 2018). Again, future research should parse out different types of messaging and how they may or may not be able to increase or decrease support.

What this study does, however, is provide such novel insights about how people use Facebook to learn about the Supreme Court and what individual characteristics make people more inclined to see Court posts. More importantly, it establishes for the first time a glimpse of how exposure to content on Facebook can increase support for a federal institution.

Chapter 2: Framing Support for the Court: The Role of Media Frames on Facebook News Feeds

Introduction

In December 2021, Scott Stewart, Mississippi Solicitor General, delivered his argument to the justices in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*: “*Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* haunt our country. They have no basis in the Constitution ... They’ve damaged the democratic process. They’ve poisoned the law.” Elizabeth Prelogar, U.S. Solicitor General, preceded Stewart and argued the exact opposite: “The court has never revoked a right that is so fundamental to so many Americans and so central to their ability to participate fully and equally in society.” This case attracted the attention of ordinary citizens – something the Court often does not achieve – because it challenged a Mississippi law that banned almost all abortions after the 15th week of pregnancy. As these arguments unfolded, many Americans tuned in to listen to the Court’s livestream or kept updated through live media reporting. People were anxious to hear arguments in this case, as it was the first abortion case the Court had put on its docket since obtaining a conservative super-majority with the confirmation of Justice Amy Coney Barrett.²⁸

News outlets posted about the case for their Facebook followers to see.²⁹ Many of them reported on particular aspects of the *Dobbs* case from particular viewpoints. In

²⁸ See https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/courts_law/senate-court-barrett-trump/2020/10/26/df76c07e-1789-11eb-befb-8864259bd2d8_story.html.

²⁹ While this chapter focuses on news reporting, ordinary people and public officials did indeed post about this case as well. Future research should look at the impact source cues have on how people process information about the Court on Facebook. In the following text I provide several examples. One Facebook user (identity kept anonymous) said, “Today, while the Supreme Court of the United States heard arguments on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, people from all over America rallied outside of America's Hall of Justice...It appeared that the pro-life side outnumbered the pro-choice side 3-1. It also appeared that the pro-life side was much younger and a lot more happier than the pro-choice side.

political science this is referred to as framing (Goffman 1974, Chong and Druckman 2007). For instance, in Figure 6 Fox News posted its analysis of the arguments directly to its News Feed, claiming the justices “grill[ed] lawyers, each other during arguments.”³⁰ *The New York Times* focused its coverage on “debunking” a claim made Scott Stewart made during the argument.³¹ Each of these sources focused on separate aspects of oral argument, with *Fox* using language such as “SUPREME COURT CLASH” and the *Times* focusing on a perceived flaw of the Mississippi Solicitor General’s argument. The point is that coverage of the Court, its arguments, and its decision-making process can look very different depending on the story a news outlet produces and disseminates.

Court watchers who spend time listening to live arguments and keeping up with Court highlights through live media reporting may also come across these kinds of news articles, videos, and posts as they scroll through on their Facebook News Feeds. However, as I find in Chapter 1, there are many others who are simply uninterested in politics and do not seek out information about the Court on their own. For these individuals, exposure to status updates and posts from news outlets on Facebook may be

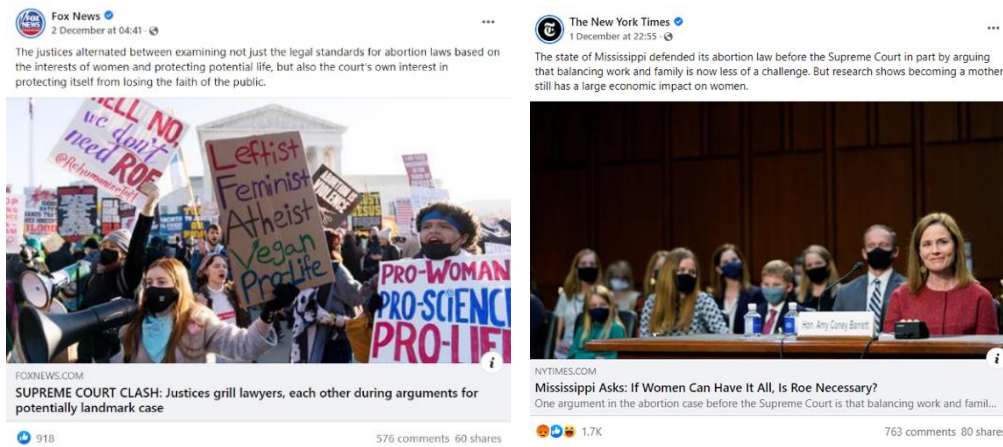
I have often heard the statement "the future is pro-life" but today I felt that in a way that I have never felt before. Roe v. Wade is as good as dead. #therighttolife #thefightforlife #fromconceptiontillnaturaldeath #unbornlivesmatter #loveoneanother.” To speak to public officials, Brett Fairchild, Kansas State Representative District 113, posted, “Today, the U.S Supreme Court heard arguments in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization...This is an opportunity for the U.S Supreme Court to overturn Roe v. Wade entirely, an immoral and barbaric Supreme Court decision which never had any basis at all in the U.S Constitution. The Roe v. Wade decision was never more than a judicial power grab and an act of judicial activism by the U.S Supreme Court back in 1973...”

³⁰ See https://www.foxnews.com/politics/supreme-court-abortion-case-mississippi-law-roe-v-wade?cmpid=fb_fnc&fbclid=IwAR2g3mXt4iChKDJDf1Nh5X0GyRP6VuqCeUbfj-ktZQBqQ6GVmBOT4UneORU.

³¹ See <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/01/upshot/mississippi-abortion-case-roe.html?smtyp=cur&smid=fb-nytimes&fbclid=IwAR2BxLcKydXLappjJUvYcKhB3TwyAv3KTtsF36PjPY35iNcGyBY7QxFzE>.

the only exposure they have to the nation’s high court. In this example, it means the *Fox* or the *Times*’ framing of the arguments may play a larger role in shaping these individuals’ attitudes toward the case and, over time, toward the U.S. Supreme Court as an institution.

Figure 6: Fox News and New York Times’ Posts About Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health



In this paper, I ask whether exposure to Facebook posts about the Court’s decisions, and the framing of these posts, shapes individuals’ views about the U.S. Supreme Court and its legitimacy, especially for individuals who do not have prior exposure to this branch of the federal government. More specifically, I argue that, as a social media platform, Facebook filters information about the Court to many people who may otherwise never hear about its decisions.³²

To make this determination I proceed as follows. First, I provide a broad overview of how decision-making frames affect the Court’s legitimacy including a

³² In Chapter 1, I find that about 20 percent of the sample learns about the Court through Facebook, and, of this percent, a majority (82%) had seen information about the Court on their Facebook Feeds that they did not seek. For these individuals, exposure on Facebook could be one of the only ways they come to “know and love the Court” (Gibson and Caldeira 2009b). However, the literature is unclear about whether direct exposure to posts on Facebook have the ability to shape people’s perceptions of the Court’s legitimacy and whether the framing of these posts matter as people scroll through their Facebook Feeds.

discussion of how various frames help or hinder the Court's legitimacy. Next, I describe how, through incidental exposure, Facebook characteristics set it apart from more traditional media which is why Facebook is deserving of its own study. I then develop a theory that posits *framing devices on Facebook may move people's support for the Court especially for those who do not have prior exposure to it*. Finally, I lay out my hypotheses, describe my experiment, and present the results. Broadly, I find that exposure to politicized frames about the Court's decisions on Facebook can and do influence people's support for the Court. However, it appears that prior exposure to the Court does not influence this support. Rather, political frames on Facebook seem to influence everyone regardless of prior exposure. I discuss the implications of these findings in my conclusion.

Framing Coverage of the Court

Much of the framing literature about the Court focuses on the political nature of Court coverage. This is because, as Gibson and Caldeira (2009) put it, the increasingly politicized nature of American politics threatens the Court's legitimacy. It is also no secret that the media has also become more politicized in recent years (Levendusky 2013) and empirical evidence suggests the Court is framed as a political institution by mainstream media outlets. Matthias (2016), for example, examines how news outlets like Fox News and MSNBC cover the Court's decisions. He finds that when a Court ruling reflects an outlet's ideological beliefs the Court is presented as being different from other political institutions. They achieve this goal by emphasizing the legal principles and the precedent on which the ruling is ground. This suggests partisan media outlets try to *legitimize* Court decisions with which they agree. However, if a ruling does not reflect an

outlet's ideological position, the Court is framed in a politicized manner, with frames like "the justices did not apply the law in a consistent manner but instead bent it to fit their preferred outcome." In many ways, these political frames *delegitimize* the Court's decision-making process.

The impact of these political and (de)legitimizing frames clearly affect people's support for the Court. For instance, Baird and Gangl (2006) use manipulated news vignettes to examine whether introducing information politicizing Court proceedings affects support for it as an institution. They find that people react more negatively to press reports of a politically motivated Court than they do to coverage portraying the Court as strictly following legal guidelines.

Several specific instances make the argument clearer. Christenson and Glick (2015) demonstrate exposure to information about politicized behavior during the Court's Obamacare deliberations caused people to withdraw support from the Court.³³ Further, Nicholson and Howard (2003) find that framing *Bush v. Gore* in terms of partisan decision-making influenced specific support for the decision but did not affect diffuse support.³⁴ Yet, framing the justices' motives in terms of ending the election, a specific consequence of the decision, *did* reduce diffuse support.

³³ There are also studies that look at how positive and negative frames of the Court influence people's perceptions of it. Linos and Twist (2016) find television news outlets were often more positive in their treatment of the ACA decision. In a follow-up experiment they conducted, they find that people exposed to these one-sided positive messages were more likely to support the Court's individual mandate ACA decision, and in turn increase people's specific support for the Court. In line with Druckman (2001) and Chong and Druckman (2007), they find that individuals who receive two-sided, competing frames were more likely to retain their original views.

³⁴ Diffuse support is an "unwillingness to make or accept fundamental changes in the functions of the institution" (Caldeira and Gibson 1992:638). Specific support is the "satisfaction with the performance of a political institution" (Caldeira and Gibson 1992:1126).

More recently, Hitt and Searles (2016) find that game frame coverage – meaning frames that focus on political winners or losers – about Supreme Court decisions reduces individuals’ acceptance of and agreement with decisions. These frames challenge the idea that the Court is especially principled or apolitical.³⁵ In turn, increases in game frame coverage in the aggregate lessen the perceived favorability of the Court in the mass public.

Collectively, these studies provide evidence that using politicized frames to discuss the Court have the ability to decrease public support for the Court, while legitimizing frames have the ability to increase public support for the Court. This reinforces Gibson and Nelson’s work (2017), who show that beliefs that the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision-making is politicized are much more harmful to the Court’s legitimacy than simple disagreement with the Court’s decisions.³⁶

The Role of Framing for Court Legitimacy

The Court needs to be seen as a legitimate institution by the public because, otherwise, its decisions will not be taken seriously and may not be enforced. For decades, scholars have

³⁵ According to Hitt and Searles (2016), “The game frame refers to news stories that portray Court decision-making as a game: who is winning or losing in regards to the decision, individual justices vying for individual power or attention, the battle for public opinion or institutional legitimacy, approval or disapproval from interest groups or particular constituencies or publics; or that speculate about the effects of decision on political stakeholders.”

³⁶ There is also tangentially related literature that looks specifically at the effects of legitimizing messaging about the Court on public support. Specifically, Court exposure literature that looks at how symbols of judicial authority affect public support after controversial decisions. Broadly, Gibson and Caldeira (2009) find that when people become attentive to the Court, they are exposed to legitimizing symbols of it (Resnik 2012). These judicial symbols frame the context of the Court’s decisions and send the message that the Court is different from other political institutions. While they do not find a direct effect of Court symbol exposure and legitimacy, they do find a three-way interaction between exposure to Court symbols, prior institutional support, and general exposure to the Court. What this means is that those who have prior institutional support and more exposure to the Court are more likely to have greater support for the Court and are less likely to shift their support for the Court after exposure to symbols. However, those with lower levels of institutional support and who have less exposure to the Court are more likely to increase their support for the Court after exposure.

analyzed factors that impact its legitimacy at an individual level, including knowledge about the Court (Gibson, Caldeira, and Spence 2003; Gibson and Caldeira 2006; Gibson, Caldeira, and Baird 1998), perceptions about the makeup on the Court in terms of demographic factors like race and gender (Scherer and Curry 2010; Bartels and Johnston 2013), and, more recently, exposure to media coverage of the Court (i.e., Nicholson and Howard 2003; Baird and Gangl 2006; Christenson and Glick 2015). In this paper, I focus on this final factor to explore how media coverage can influence peoples' perceptions of the Court and their support for it as an institution. This is of particular interest, as most people come to learn about the Court, almost entirely, through media exposure (Leighley 2004; Davis 1994; Davis and Strickler 2000).

Specifically, I analyze how the media frames the Court's decisions. Framing is defined as how something is presented to an audience (called "the frame") influences the choices people make about how to process that information (Goffman 1974). The most common analysis of frames is how media presents information they convey. Frames not only tell the audience what to think about (agenda-setting theory) but also *how* to think about that issue. As previous studies indicate, framing can also affect how the public evaluates political actors and institutions (Carlin and Winfrey 2009) and how the public understands certain issues (Pan, Meng, and Zhou 2010).

The media's use of framing in the context of the Court is crucial for understanding how people learn about it. Frames draw attention to some aspects of the Court's decision-making process while leaving out others in order "to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution" (Tannen 1993; Entman 1993). Historically, the Court has kept its distance from the media to ensure it is viewed

differently from the other two branches – meaning as *not* a political institution. However, this distance from media (e.g., not responding to interview questions and not allowing cameras in the Courtroom) has meant it has greater control over how the Court is presented to the public compared to the other two branches.

Indeed, because the president or members of Congress are often aired on the news, there is less need for the media to translate what they say because the public can hear messages directly from these officials. In contrast, justices do not voluntarily speak to the media at any stage of their decision-making process. The only access the media has to the justices is during oral argument (see e.g., Houston et al. n.d.) but this access is limited and does not offer opportunities for journalists to speak directly to the justices about a case. This elevates the media's role to that of a critical mediator in studies of Court influence on public opinion (Davis 1994; Franklin and Kosaki 1995; Johnson and Martin 1998). In turn, media cannot control the arguments justices develop to support their conclusions, but they can make choices about how to present, add to, or challenge the Court's arguments.

For instance, the *Fox News* story in the introduction claims the justices “grill lawyers, each other, during arguments.” This frame may have been used in an attempt to convince viewers that the case was contentious and that the Court and its justices are politicized. Similarly, *The New York Times* article “debunks” a claim made by the states, or the pro-life, side of the argument. This frame may have been used in an attempt to undermine, for the public, the state's position.

These frames are not without clear effects. While research tends to focus on how the public actually perceives of the Court (e.g., Scheb and Lyons 2001), a growing body

of literature explores how various media frames shape individuals' support for the Court as an institution. These studies tend to focus on political and legitimizing frames, partisan or ideological coverage of its decisions, and positive and negative messaging. In the next section, I explore these frames and their influence on support for the Court.

Incidental Exposure and Facebook

Historically, scholars have tested framing devices by exposing participants to a frame, which is typically a news story sometimes accompanied by an image, and then by measuring attitudes toward the Court after exposure. What this literature has left out, however, is the application of these frames in a social media environment (Lusk 2006; List 2006). Here I seek to fill this gap to determine how exposure to framing devices on *Facebook* influence people's support toward the Court. In the section below, I briefly discuss the need for extending the framing literature to Facebook.

The reality of it is that people are exposed to Court information in real life through many different media. Someone may see news about oral argument as they are watching a cable television station, or maybe they see the outcome of a decision on the front page of a newspaper. Approximately 30 percent of the sample learns about the Court through television, 11 percent learn through newspapers, 17 through online news outlets, and almost 20 percent through social media.³⁷ With all these media, people have the opportunity to decide whether to actively expose themselves to political news or not (Prior 2007). Perhaps someone wants to make a conscious decision to flip on a political cable television station that may talk about the Court or open up a daily newspaper with

³⁷ Other options included through friends and family and an "other" category.

political highlights. This is, of course, with the exception of social media, which includes Facebook, and is why this medium deserves its own study.

As Chapter 1 lays out, social media increases the chances of incidental news exposure due to the sheer vastness of political information available online (Tewksbury, Weaver, and Maddex 2001). Indeed, users of social media, and particularly Facebook, do not typically use Facebook to find political information. Instead, they use Facebook to seek out entertainment content, keep in touch with friends and family, relax, or distract themselves (Smock *et al.* 2011; Raacke and Bonds-Raacke 2008). And yet, Wells and Thorson (2015) find that even Facebook users who have not intentionally subscribed to a news outlet or whose previous Facebook behavior has not marked them as a suitable target for sponsored posts by news organizations still encounter political news articles in their Feed. Relatedly, Schäfer, Sülfow, and Müller (2017) find that, from the Facebook users they sampled, about a quarter of the posts their sample receive contain political information. This literature points to the fact that news is oftentimes presented to Facebook users without users actively seeking it out, as people have had to do in the past with traditional media. Facebook, then, is arguably becoming increasingly important to ensure that people remain connected to the political public sphere, engaging people with political news who may otherwise tune out of politics.

The Delivery of Content on Facebook

In addition to exposing people to political information on Facebook who may otherwise never be exposed, Facebook is unique in other important ways. For this study, I focus on *the delivery of content* two which users are exposed – specifically the frequency and variation of posts and the amount of time spent on each post. To speak to frequency, on

traditional platforms a person may read or see a handful of news stories. They may decide to read several stories from a newspaper, watch a 30-minute news segment, or listen to an hour-long news broadcast before switching it off.³⁸ On Facebook, this is far from how scrolling happens. The average person scrolls through 300 feet of Facebook content every day.³⁹ This implies that if users *are* exposed to a post about the Supreme Court, it is one of the hundreds of posts they scroll through in a given day on Facebook, mixed in with posts of puppies, memes, and other personalized content.

Turn to variation, Facebook posts differ from more traditional media because they are very short. While Facebook posts can be up to 63,206 characters long, the most successful posts, on average, are around 50-100 characters, or one to two sentences. This is in contrast to traditional media like newspapers that average about 500 words in length.⁴⁰ Of course, this suggests that, because Facebook posts are shorter, people spend less time with them. According to Facebook users spend, on average, 1.7 seconds with a piece of content on mobile compared to 2.5 seconds on desktop.⁴¹ This is far less time than it would take to read 500 words or watch a news segment on television which averages around 41 seconds.⁴²

³⁸ This aligns with the prior framing literature as well, in that people are also typically exposed to just a handful of treatments.

³⁹ This is equivalent to the size of the Statue of Liberty. See <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2017/09/26/creativity-meets-collaboration-marketers-find-new-ways-work-mobile-world-advertising>.

⁴⁰ See <https://www.slf.com/how-long-is-an-average-newspaper-article/>.

⁴¹ See <https://www.facebook.com/business/news/insights/capturing-attention-feed-video-creative>.

⁴² See <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2012/07/16/video-length/>.

Because of these differences, by the time people stumble across a post about the Court on Facebook, they may be processing an overabundance of information, which can be psychologically taxing on the average citizen (Koroleva et al. 2011). In fact, Lee et al. (2014) coin the term “social media fatigue” to describe this phenomenon—feelings of fatigue, annoyance, and boredom in connection with social media. According to their theory, social media fatigue leads to shorter social media browsing time, reduced usage and decreased enthusiasm when using social media, and negative impressions and attitudes toward social media. In other words, generally lower levels of engagement with social media posts.

This study will see whether and to what extent Court framing devices on Facebook can *still* influence people’s support for the Court, even when individuals may experience social media fatigue.

Theory and Hypotheses

To this point, it is unclear how people respond to framing devices about the Court on Facebook. The question then is whether *exposure to political and legitimizing frames about the Court’s decision-making process on Facebook influences peoples’ support toward the Court?*⁴³ I test a set of hypotheses in an effort to clarify this question.

I expect different frames will have varying effects on individual’s attitudes toward the Court. As the framing literature suggests, frames that couch the Court as political, or that its decisions are politicized, tend to exhibit decreased support. On the other hand, frames that emphasize legitimizing messaging about the Court, including exposure to

⁴³ It is important to note that Facebook is different from traditional media in ways that are not studied here. For example, Settle (2018) argues that Facebook Feeds facilitate psychological processes of polarization, identity formation and reinforcement, biased information processes, and social inference and judgement.

judicial symbols and the legal principles and the precedent on which rulings are ground, tend to exhibit increased support for the Court. I expect these relationships to remain; those who are exposed to political frames about the Court should decrease their support for the Court while those who are exposed to legitimizing frames about the Court should increase their support for the Court.

***Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Individuals who are exposed to political frames about the Court will decrease their support for the Court, while those who are exposed to legitimizing frames about the Court will increase their support for the Court.*

Of the individuals reached by Facebook posts about the Court, there are several individual attitudes that may influence the extent to which Court frames on Facebook influence people's support for it – one of which is prior support for the Court. People who tend to have low levels of prior institutional support are more affected than those with high levels of prior institutional support (Gibson and Caldeira 2009). In this context, I expect individuals who have low levels of initial institutional support will be the most likely to have their support influenced by the political and legitimizing frames about the Court presented to them on Facebook.

***Hypothesis 2 (H2):** Individuals who have initial low levels of institutional support will be the most likely to have their support influenced by political and legitimizing frames about the Court presented to them on Facebook.*

Similarly, if individuals are exposed to both types of frames, their support for the Court should not increase or decrease because the effects will cancel out one another. This is supported by Druckman (2001) and Chong and Druckman (2007) who find that individuals who receive two-sided, competing, frames are more likely to retain their original views.

***Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Individuals who are exposed to both legitimizing and politicizing frames will not increase or decrease their support for the Court because the effects will cancel out.*

Finally, because people are presented with an overabundance of information on Facebook, they can experience social media fatigue (Lee et al. 2014). This fatigue can cause people to spend less time on Facebook consuming posts and less time absorbing each post, as they become bored or uninterested. As such, I expect Court framing effects on Facebook are weaker compared to more traditional media frames. That is, those who are exposed to frames on Facebook should move their support for the Court to a lesser degree than those who are exposed to traditional media frames about the Court. This is because the treatments presented in this study will expose participants to dozens of Facebook posts, which may result in social media fatigue.

***Hypothesis 4 (H4):** Individuals who are exposed to frames on Facebook will move their support for the Court to a lesser degree than those who are exposed to traditional media frames about the Court.*

Data and Methods

To test these hypotheses, I launched an experimental survey on May 7th, 2022 using the survey platform Lucid.⁴⁴ Since this study is interested in how exposure to various frames

⁴⁴ Lucid's demographic and experimental findings track well with U.S. national benchmarks (Coppock and McClellan 2019). This survey was performed five days after the leaked SCOTUS opinion in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022). This brings forth the question of whether the leak itself or the substance of the leak has the potential to threaten the Court's legitimacy, thus influencing the treatment effects of this experiment in the form of the dependent variable *CourtSupport*. There is evidence to suggest that this event does not threaten this experiment for several reasons. To speak to the leak itself, using *Fulton v. Philadelphia* (2021) Strother and Carrington (2022, forthcoming) find that presenting respondents to versions of a Supreme Court news story where the information was obtained via a leak does not seem to matter for Court legitimacy. As for the substance of the leak, Nicholson and Howard (2003) assess the Court's legitimacy after the Court's decision in *Bush v. Gore* (2000). They find that the decision influenced individuals' specific support for the Court for a limited time, but not diffuse support. In this study, I measure individuals' diffuse support for the Court and *not* their specific support. Finally, most politics and elections stories have a lifespan of 0-1 days. Thus, this study is conducted five days after the initial story broke, which suggests that many people may have moved past it given the 24-hour news cycle (Pavlik 2001; Rosenberg and Feldman 2008).

on Facebook influences Court support, 900 participants are split into six groups that expose them to variations of Facebook News Feeds and news stories that alter how a mock Court decision is framed. I decide to focus on Court decisions because Chapter 1 finds that people are most exposed to decisions on their Facebook Feeds. Table 2 displays the six treatment decision variations (including one control group) and number of participants in each group used to test the four hypotheses posited above.

Table 2: Framing Conditions

Treatment Label	Treatment Description	Number of Participants
1. Facebook Political Frame (H1, H2, H4)	This treatment exposes participants to a mock Facebook News Feed with 16 posts. Four of these posts frame the Court’s decision-making process as political.	169
2. Facebook Legitimizing Frame (H1, H2, H4)	This treatment exposes participants to a mock Facebook News Feed with 16 posts. Four of these posts frame the Court’s decision-making process as grounded in legal principles and precedent.	164
3. Facebook Political and Legitimizing Frames (H3)	This treatment exposes participants to a mock Facebook News Feed with 16 posts. Two of the posts frame the Court’s decision-making process as political (abortion, gun laws). Another two posts frame the Court’s decision-making process as grounded in legal principles and precedent (campaign finance, aid for religious schools).	133
4. Traditional Political Frame (H4)	This treatment exposes participants to one traditional news story that frames the Court’s decision-making process as political.	148
5. Traditional Legitimizing Frame (H4)	This treatment exposes participants to one traditional news story that frames the Court’s decision-making process as grounded in legal principles and precedent.	143
6. Control (H1, H3, H4)	Participants are not exposed to any treatment.	143
Total		900

Within the three Facebook treatment conditions (1-3), participants are exposed to a mock Facebook Feed with 16 posts. Of the 16 posts, four of them contain content about the media’s portrayal of the Court’s decision-making process in 2-3 sentences. The other 12 posts are miscellaneous fake posts created about pets, memes, and friends. Appendix

B contains these fake posts. This quantity is selected because Schäfer, Sülflow, and Müller (2017) find that, from the Facebook users they sampled, about a quarter of the posts their sample received contain political information. For each of the Facebook treatment conditions, I create Facebook posts of mock media coverage describing how the Court deliberated the constitutionality of highly charged civil rights and liberties issues on their October 2021 docket: abortion (*Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*), gun laws (*New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*), aid for religious schools (*Carson v. Makin*), and campaign finance (*Federal Election Commission v. Ted Cruz*).⁴⁵ For abortion and aid for religious schools, the treatments frame the Court as deciding these cases in an ideologically conservative direction, while the gun law and discrimination treatments frame the Court as deciding these cases in an ideologically liberal direction to mitigate the effects of ideology.⁴⁶

The Facebook treatment groups portray the Court’s decision-making process as either political or legitimizing or include a combination of both political and legitimizing messaging. For each of the cases above, there are two separate treatments created – one political and one legitimizing. I follow Matthias (2016) in defining what constitutes a political frame and a legitimizing frame. According to Matthias (2016), media outlets tend to use political frames when a decision goes against the outlets’ ideology, and they use legitimizing frames when a decision aligns with the outlets’ ideology. For both of

⁴⁵ These cases have also been made salient in the media. See, e.g., <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/10/01/supreme-court-new-term-major-cases.html>.

⁴⁶ These Court decisions and how they are described in the Facebook posts are very loosely connected to the actual outcomes of the decisions. The case names are primarily used to make the Facebook posts seem believable to the participants.

these frames, media coverage tends to focus on *process* and *use of power*.⁴⁷ For political frames, Matthias (2016) finds that the process frame serves to define the Supreme Court's decision-making process as flawed and to claim that the majority consists of "the conservative majority" or the "liberal majority." The ruling's foundation is also attacked to cast doubt on the legal reasoning behind it. The justices' use of their powers is also defined as problematic. While the dissenting justices are presented as respecting the limitations of their office, parts of their opinions are used to rebuke the majority, such as Justice Scalia's remark that the Court has become a "threat to American democracy" in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015).

As for legitimizing frames, Matthias (2016) also finds that media outlets focus on *process* and *use of power* and does not define the Court's decision-making process as problematic. Instead, it evaluates it as fair and lawful and serves to explain the underlying reasons. For use of power the Court is also framed in a positive way. This frame addresses the entire Court, which emphasizes its function as the third branch of government. It also frames the Court as applying the law and ensuring that the other two branches of government do not impinge on the American people's rights. The Court, using this frame, serves as a branch of government dedicated to upholding and preserving the law.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ There are several other frames Matthias (2016) finds including "Dissenters," "Opposition," and "Legal Abilities." However, process and use of power are used here because they are consistently found across the Fox News articles that Matthias examines, while the other frames appeared in some MSNBC coverage of Court decisions and not others. Additionally, since Facebook posts are only around one or two sentences, the number of frames that can be used in a single post is limited for this study. Future research should consider extending this study.

⁴⁸ Manipulation checks were performed in a separate pilot survey to ensure that participants perceive the political framing posts as political, and the legitimizing framing posts as framing the Court's decision-making process as grounded in legal principles and precedent. Each treatment image was shown to a group of 152 respondents through MTurk. Respondents were asked, "Does this post about the U.S. Supreme Court discuss the institution as a political one or as one grounded in legal principles and precedent?"

To complement the text frames, images are also used to reinforce the political and legitimizing frames for the Facebook treatment conditions. Gibson and Caldeira (2009) use gavels, the Court building, and images of the justices in their black robes as legitimizing symbols. For political frames, media outlets tend to use images that symbolize conflict, such as images of the public protesting as seen in *The New York Times*' coverage of oral argument about the COVID-19 vaccine mandate for large employers as seen in Figure 7. As such, these types of images complement the text for each legitimizing and political frame presented to participants on the mock Facebook News Feeds.

Figure 7: Political Image Frame in *The New York Times* Coverage



Taken together, Figure 8 shows the two mock posts created for abortion (*Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*) – a political frame on the left and a legitimizing

Respondents could choose either “Political” or “Legal Principles and precedent” for each post. Using one-sample t-tests, the underlying means of the political posts are not equal to legal principles and precedent at the $p < 0.001$ level. The underlying means of the legitimizing posts are not equal to political at the $p < 0.001$ level as well.

frame on the right in a conservative direction.⁴⁹ These posts come from a fake news organization “News at Your Door” that is used throughout the study.⁵⁰ As the image to the left suggests, the Court and its decision-making are framed as “flawed,” with Justice Sotomayor quoted as saying that partisan politics are getting in the way of the Court upholding the Constitution. The Court is also discussed as having a “conservative majority,” which emphasizes that the Court is divided and leans ideologically right. For the legitimizing post, the Court is framed as a single unit, rather than being divided into two ideological camps. The Court’s reason for siding with the Mississippi Solicitor General, which is the conservative side, is framed as to uphold the U.S. Constitution and to protect state rights. All of the Facebook frames used in the treatment conditions can be found in Appendix B. To test Hypothesis 4, concerning the differences in support between exposure to a traditional media frame and Facebook posts, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* is used across the treatments. I create a mock news story for the political frame condition and for the legitimizing frame condition. The political frame treatment is 450 words while the legitimizing frame treatment is 415 words. A full description of these traditional media frame treatments, which are simply print mock news stories that provide more detail than the Facebook posts described in Figure 8, can be found in Appendix B as well.

⁴⁹ See <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-character-counter/> for average character lengths of Facebook posts.

⁵⁰ There is an abundance of literature about news source credibility (Miller and Kurpius 2010; Bracken 2006; Kim 2015; Visentin et al. 2019). However, I do not consider the news source in this study, nor do I consider peer influence or peer sharing (Lewis et al. 2012; Aral and Walker 2009). News at Your Door is not a real organization.

Figure 8: *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* Mock Treatment

Facebook Posts



Once participants are randomly exposed to one of the eight conditions (including the control), I ask them a series of questions about their support for the U.S. Supreme Court, which serves as the main dependent variable. This variable, *CourtSupport*, captures responses from Gibson and Caldeira’s (2009) five questions measuring diffuse support. Participants have to respond with how supportive they feel toward statements about the role of the federal courts. For each participant, these five responses are summed then divided by five for an average measure of support for each participant.⁵¹ The mean of this variable is 3.16 on a five-point scale.

Results

⁵¹ Participants responded with how supportive they feel toward the following statements about the role of the federal courts: (1) The power of the Supreme Court to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional should be eliminated. (2) If the Supreme Court continually makes decisions that the people disagree with, it might be better to do away with the Court altogether. (3) It would not make much difference to me if the U.S. Constitution were rewritten so as to reduce the powers of the Supreme Court. (4) The right of the Supreme Court to decide certain types of controversial issues should be limited by the Congress. (5) People should be willing to do everything they can to make sure that any proposal to abolish the Supreme Court is defeated.

To see how exposure to various Court frames on Facebook influence support for the Court, I carry out an experimental design with treatment groups and a control group. Table 3 breaks down the dependent variable by displaying the means across each treatment and control group. From an initial glance at Table 3, it appears that support for the Court is the highest after exposure to legitimizing frames on Facebook, whether they are standalone posts or are combined with political frames. This provides initial support for H1. Court support is lower in the treatment group that was only exposed to political posts on Facebook. But surprisingly, support for the Court is the lowest for the treatment group participants who were exposed to the traditional legitimizing frame treatment.

Table 3: Means of Dependent Variables Across Separate Treatment and Control Groups

Treatment Group	<i>Court Support</i>	<i>Political Interest</i>	<i>Court Knowledge</i>	<i>Court Hear</i>
Group 1: Facebook Political Frame	2.97	3.26	1.70	3.69
Group 2: Facebook Legitimizing Frame	3.27	3.37	1.66	3.87
Group 3: Facebook Political and Legitimizing Frames	3.28	3.28	1.64	3.78
Group 4: Traditional Political Frame	3.24	3.42	1.66	3.60
Group 5: Traditional Legitimizing Frame	2.99	3.44	1.48	3.61
Group 6: Control	3.22	3.16	1.57	3.67

While Table 3 provides valuable information, it does not speak to whether there are significant differences between each treatment group and the control group, nor does it clarify the effects of the treatment conditions on the dependent variables of interest. For this reason, t-tests and analyses of variance (ANOVA) tests are used to provide further evidence for the above hypotheses. Recall that H1 seeks to uncover whether political and legitimizing frames influence support for the Court in the context of Facebook. It is

posited that political frames should lead people to decrease their support for the Court while legitimizing frames should lead people to increase their support for the Court. By comparing *CourtSupport* across the political frame, legitimizing frame, and control conditions, I find that exposure to the political frame condition led people to decrease their support for the Court while the legitimizing frame condition led people to increase their support for the Court. However, only one is significant. To the former, using an unpaired t-test, those who were in the Facebook Political Posts group ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.82$) compared to the participants in the control group ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.91$) expressed less support for the Court $t(309) = 2.52$, $p = .012$. To the latter, those in the Facebook Legitimizing Posts group expressed more support for the Court ($M = 3.27$) compared to the control group ($M = 3.22$), but this difference is insignificant at the $p < 0.05$ level. Therefore, I find partial support for H1. While political messaging about the Court on Facebook does seem to influence Court support in a negative direction, legitimizing messaging does not have the same significant effect in the opposite direction. Perhaps legitimizing messaging is more subtle than political messaging, which will be discussed further at the end of this section.

Because H2 posits that support for the Court should be affected by participant's initial levels of institutional support, a random subset of participants ($n = 110$) across the first two treatment groups (Facebook Political Frame and Facebook Legitimizing Frame) are asked for their support for the Court (*CourtSupport*) before exposure to the Facebook frames (pre-test), and after exposure to the frames (post-test). These participants are further broken into two groups to compare: those with low levels of *CourtSupport* (below the mean of 3.16) and high levels of *CourtSupport* (at and above the mean of 3.16). For

those who were exposed to political frames, I use two unpaired t-tests to compare support for the Court after exposure to the political frames for those who have low initial levels of support and for those who have high initial levels of support. Of those who had initial high levels of support ($M = 4.01, SD = 0.58$), I find that there is a statistically significant difference in *CourtSupport* at the $p < 0.05$ level once exposed to political messaging about the Court ($M = 3.24, SD = 0.76$) $t(40) = 3.69, p = 0.0007$. For those who had low initial levels of support ($M = 2.70, SD = 0.36$), there is also a statistically significant difference in *CourtSupport* at the $p < 0.05$ level once exposed to political messaging about the Court ($M = 2.40, SD = 0.65$) $t(52) = 2.09, p = 0.0408$. Interestingly, these findings suggest that those who have initial high levels of institutional support are actually more likely to have their support influenced by political frames about the Court. However, both findings are statistically significant. Moving to the second part of this hypothesis, I perform similar unpaired t-tests on those who were exposed to legitimizing frames. For those who had initial high levels of *CourtSupport* ($M = 3.97, SD = 0.66$), I do not find a statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level once exposed to legitimizing messaging about the Court ($M = 4.00, SD = 0.72$) $t(56) = 0.16, p = 0.86$. I find the same for those who had initial low levels of *CourtSupport* ($M = 2.46, SD = 0.51$). I do not find a statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level once these participants are also exposed to the legitimizing messaging ($M = 2.56, SD = 0.63$) $t(62) = 0.69, p = 0.48$. Collectively, these data suggest that political messaging influences support for the Court, regardless of prior institutional support. Legitimizing messaging, however, is not influential on Court support generally.

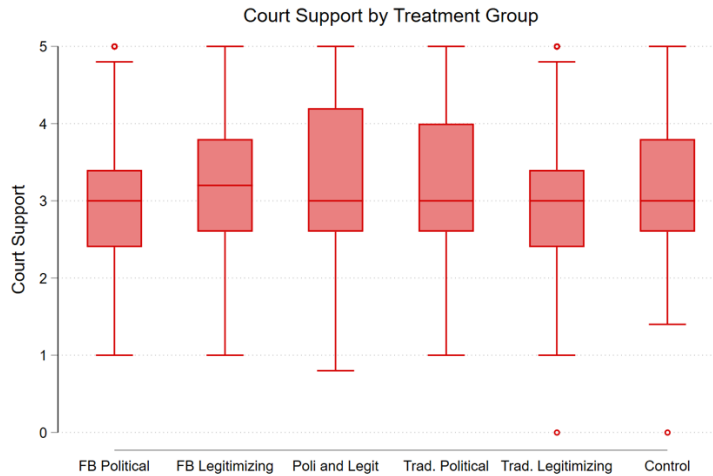
Moving forward, the third hypothesis states that individuals who are exposed to both legitimizing and politicizing frames will not increase or decrease their support for the Court because the effects will cancel out. Using an unpaired t-test again, I compare the responses for *CourtSupport* between the Facebook Political and Legitimizing Frames group to the control group's responses. I find that there is not a statistically significant difference in *CourtSupport* at the $p < 0.05$ level when comparing the Political and Legitimizing Frames group ($M = 3.28, SD = 0.99$) to the control group ($M = 3.22, SD = 0.91$) $t(274) = 0.52, p = 0.60$. Put simply, the political and legitimizing messaging combined did not seem to influence people's attitudes toward the Court, therefore providing support for H3.

Finally, the fourth hypothesis investigates individuals' exposure to frames on Facebook compared to exposure to traditional media frames about the Court. I first begin with political frames by comparing the exposure effects of political frames on Facebook to a traditional political frame using a one-way ANOVA. It reveals that there are statistically significant differences in *CourtSupport* between at least two groups ($F(2,456) = [4.61], p = 0.01$), that is, at least between the Facebook Political Frames group, the Traditional Frame group, and the control group. Tukey's HSD Test for multiple comparisons finds that the mean value of *CourtSupport* was significantly different between the Facebook Political Frames group and the Traditional Frame group ($p = 0.01, 95\% CI = [0.034 to 0.504]$). *CourtSupport* was also significant between the Facebook Political Frames group and the control group ($p = .035, 95\% CI = [0.013 to 0.486]$). There is no statistically significant difference in *CourtSupport* between the Traditional Frame group and the control ($p = 0.97, 95\% CI = [-0.264 to 0.224]$). Collectively, this

evidence suggests that the effects on *CourtSupport* are stronger through Facebook frames than traditional frames. That is, Facebook posts that frame the Court as political have a more consequential effect on the Court's legitimacy than traditional political frames about the Court. This runs counter to H4. This is very surprising, given the literature described about social media fatigue!

The final question that needs to be addressed is whether exposure to legitimizing frames on Facebook have a greater effect on the Court's legitimacy than traditional legitimizing frames. Again, I test the exposure effects of these two treatments (along with the control) using a one-way ANOVA. Similarly, there are statistically significant differences in *CourtSupport* between at least two of the three groups ($F(2,448) = [4.20]$, $p = 0.01$). Tukey's HSD Test finds that the significant differences are between the Facebook post treatment and the traditional framing treatment ($p = 0.01$, 95% CI = [-0.518 to -0.041]) and between the traditional framing treatment and control, although the latter relationship is only mildly significant at the $p < .10$ level ($p = 0.07$, 95% CI = [-0.017 to 0.477]). What this suggests is that actually the opposite of what the hypothesis puts forward. When it comes to legitimizing messaging, traditional frames are more influential on *CourtSupport*. Further, they are more influential in a negative direction. Those who were exposed to the traditional legitimizing frame, on average, scored 2.99 on the *CourtSupport* measure after exposure, compared to an average of 3.27 for the Facebook legitimizing frame participants. The relationships between *CourtSupport* and the various treatment groups are visualized in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Court Support by Treatment Group



Collectively, these results can be summarized with two main findings. First, political posts on Facebook about the Court can and do influence people’s diffuse support for it as an institution, regardless of prior institutional support for the Court. These posts frame the Court’s decision-making processes as political, which seems to directly influence the extent to which people extend legitimacy to the institution itself. On the other hand, legitimizing posts about the Court on Facebook do not have the opposite effects. That is, I do not find support that exposure to legitimizing messaging about the Court on Facebook has the potential to increase individuals’ support for the Court. This reinforces Gibson and Caldeira (2009) finding that direct exposure to legitimizing symbols alone do not influence people’s support for the Court. However, I interestingly find that exposure to the traditional legitimizing treatment resulted in individuals extending *less* support for the Court. This could be because the traditional treatments used *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Org.* (2022) when describing the Court’s decision-making. Perhaps individuals viewed the legitimizing treatment as inherently political because of this, or legitimizing messaging is more subtle than political

messaging. Future research would need to inquire further. Second, it appears that, coupled with legitimizing messaging on Facebook, political frames lose their effects on Court support. This is an interesting finding, given that legitimizing posts alone do not have significant effects on Court support. Legitimizing messaging on Facebook is only influential on increasing Court support when it is coupled with political messaging.

Conclusion

This study began with the simple question of how exposure to information about the Court on Facebook influences people's support toward the Court. In particular, I examine how political and legitimizing frames about the Court's decision-making process on Facebook influence the Court's legitimacy. The analysis presented here confirms my expectations that Facebook has the potential to influence the public's support toward a federal institution. Indeed, political framing devices used on Facebook tend to decrease people's support toward the Court regardless of prior institutional support for the Court. While traditionally seen as a platform used to connect with friends and family, Facebook may be playing a stronger role in preserving our federal institutions than what was once thought.

These results highlight the importance and influence of social media platforms and the role of content curators in shaping public opinion toward the U.S. Supreme Court. As Matthias (2016) finds, media outlets do not have an incentive to use legitimizing frames in their coverage of the Court. Most outlets have ideological leanings that lead them to use political frames when the Court makes decisions with which the outlet disagrees. This is extremely problematic, as this study and others (Baird and Gangl 2006; Nicholson and Howard 2003; Christenson and Glick 2015) find that not only do political frames move support for the Court, but they move support in a negative

direction. This is potentially because political frames tend to frame judicial decision-making as politically driven rather than grounded by precedent and legal principles. In a time where support for the Court, and federal institutions more broadly, are at an all-time low, this should serve as a warning bell for the media, as their framing devices are also influencing the public's support for the Court on Facebook.

However, there are several limitations to this study. First, while this study gets us one step closer to understanding the influence of Supreme Court Facebook posts on people's attitudes toward the Court there is still much uncertainty about how exactly people are exposed to Facebook posts about the Court in their daily lives. In this study, participants were exposed to various Supreme Court posts that either were framed as political or legitimizing, and a mixture of liberal and conservative posts. There are other frames that this study does not capture that people may be exposed. Additionally, in several of the treatments participants are exposed to 4 posts about the Court in a series of 16 posts. Because scholars do not have access to Facebook's algorithms, it is unclear exactly how many posts about the Court people see as they scroll through their Facebook Feeds daily—and how exactly these posts differ based on characteristics of the individual user (gender, political affiliation, race, etc.). Second, this study does not consider source cues. As Clark and Kastellec (2015) find, source cues significantly influence the public's support for the Court. In the context of this study, this could suggest that the news outlets who post each story could additionally influence the extent to which support for the Court moves after exposure to a post or story. Third, this study does not consider peer influence or peer sharing (Lewis et al. 2012; Aral and Walker 2009). It is unclear whether the findings here would be affected if a participant's peer—for example—posted about the

Court rather than a mock news outlet. Social cues such as likes, shares, and comments on the Facebook posts are not considered here.⁵² Fourth, the Facebook posts displayed here for participants are static. Participants cannot click on them to see additional information about the stories, which may further influence their support for the Court. Finally, it is unclear how long these framing effects last, though there is reason to suspect that consistent exposure would make the effects last longer (Lecheler and de Vreese 2016). Regardless, this analysis suggests that exposure to Facebook posts about the Court over time could directly affect the effectiveness and ultimately the power of the Court.

⁵² Anspach (2017) shows that those who see political information from their friends and family on Facebook are more likely to engage with it in the form of reading, sharing, and endorsing as compared to content from fictional individuals.

Chapter 3: Cue the Court Support: The Effects of Partisan News and Social Endorsement Cues on Facebook

In recent remarks delivered at the University of Louisville, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett pushed back against media characterizations of the Court's decision-making process as politically motivated. Rather, she insisted that "judicial philosophies are not the same as political parties." She pressed the public and the media "to evaluate what the Court is doing on its own terms," noting that there is a difference between criticizing the Court's reasoning and accusing the justices of "acting in a partisan manner."⁵³ Barrett's remarks echo similar sentiments expressed recently by her colleague, Justice Stephen Breyer. He has argued that the Court's legitimacy depends upon the public perceiving that its decisions are based on the rule of law rather than partisan politics.⁵⁴ These justices' concerns are valid, as the increasingly politicized nature of American politics does threaten the Court's legitimacy (Gibson and Caldeira 2009a).

It is also no secret that media coverage has become more politicized in recent years (Levendusky 2013), which includes coverage of the U.S. Supreme Court. Empirical evidence suggests the Court is now more commonly framed as 'another political institution' by mainstream media outlets (Matthias 2016) and its procedures and decision-making processes are discussed as if they benefit one political party over the other.

⁵³ See <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/politics/mitch-mcconnell/2021/09/12/justice-amy-coney-barrett-supreme-court-decisions-arent-political/8310849002/>.

⁵⁴ See https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/courts_law/justice-breyer-says-expanding-the-supreme-court-will-erode-trust/2021/04/06/cabc95c4-9730-11eb-a6d0-13d207aadb78_story.html.

Perhaps the most politicized aspect of the Court is the process of confirming justices to the bench. For example, most recently, the confirmation hearings for Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson included little to no controversy about her background, yet her hearing was still plagued by partisan politics. This is in part because of how elected officials use confirmations to their political advantage (Martinek, Kemper, and Van Winkle 2002) and also in part because of the manner in which these hearings are discussed by the media. Partisan media outlets, such as CNN and Fox News, provided politicized commentary about Jackson’s confirmation hearing, as seen in Figure 10.

Figure 10: CNN and Fox News Posts about Ketanji Brown Jackson’s Confirmation Hearings



On Facebook, CNN posted Justice Jackson’s opening statement video and provided text that Jackson addressed “a divided Senate,” emphasizing that her confirmation would be split down party lines. Similarly, Fox News quoted Jackson’s remark that “[j]udges should not be speaking into political issues and certainly not a nominee for a position on the Supreme Court.” Fox News then provided the following subtext at the bottom of the post: “POLITICAL PIVOT: Judge Jackson cites Justice Barrett as she dodges question on court-packing during hearing.” The term “political

pivot” suggests that Jackson was making a political move through her responses to court-packing questions.

These posts are not without consequences. In Chapter 2, I find that Facebook posts that frame the Court as political, or its decisions as politicized, have the potential to negatively affect public support for the Court. Based on this prior finding, exposure to the Facebook posts in Figure 10 may also negatively affect public support for the Court. These posts discuss the Supreme Court’s confirmation process in a similar manner to which actions and decisions are discussed by Congress and the Executive Branch. This is very problematic, as it is recognized that the Court and its operations cannot be viewed as a part of the political process because when people believe a justice is just another politician, or that its decisions are politicized, support for the Court directly declines (Gibson and Caldeira 2009a).

What the previous chapter does not consider, however, is how Facebook posts like these may influence public support for the Court *when also considering the news source cues and social endorsement cues of the posts*. Put simply, does it matter that the news in these posts comes from Fox News or CNN, two media outlets with very different partisan-leanings? Further, does it matter that CNN’s post has more likes and shares than Fox News’ post? Prior literature suggests it does. As people scroll through Facebook, they are not only exposed to the text and photos provided in Facebook posts. Rather, they also see the source of the content (i.e., the identity of the user who posted) and a host of social endorsements underneath the post, which include how many likes, comments, and shares the post received.

Turning to the former, people may rely on news source cues, like CNN and Fox News, to determine whether and how to process information about the Court. When exposed to the Fox News post that frames the Court politically, Republicans and Conservatives may be more likely to decrease their support for the Court because they see Fox News as a credible news source (Stroud and Lee 2013; Stroud 2011; Ladd 2012). On the other hand, Democrats may discount the message entirely from Fox News without moving their support for the Court because they do not view Fox News as a credible news source. They may also be more willing to skip over the post without taking the time to digest its content. As for social endorsements, the CNN post in Figure 10 has over 2,500 ‘likes’ while the Fox News post has 756 ‘likes.’ The CNN post may attract and hold people’s attention more, as it has garnered more social endorsements than the Fox News post. People may also view the CNN post as more ‘popular’ than the Fox post. This points toward the assertion that there may be individuals who take more or less time to view content on Facebook based on how popular it appears.

Prior literature demonstrates people utilize news source cues (e.g., Althaus and Tewksbury 2002; Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Sundar, Knobloch-Westerwick, and Hastall 2007) and social endorsement cues (e.g., Knobloch-Westerwick, Sharma, Hansen, and Alter 2005; Messing and Westwood 2012) for a plethora of purposes, such as to determine information credibility (Fogg et al. 2003; Metzger, Flanagin, and Medders 2010) and to select traditional news media articles (Knobloch-Westerwick, Sharma, Hansen, and Alter 2005). What the literature has not explored, however, is whether news source cues and social endorsement cues influence how people engage with information about the Supreme Court, how these cues interact with one another in this context, and

the extent to which both types of cues can help or hinder the Court's legitimacy. Broadly, this paper seeks to answer the following questions. *First, are individuals more likely to engage with political Facebook posts about the U.S. Supreme Court (1) when the news source of the information aligns with their partisanship and (2) when the post has social endorsements? Second, do news source and social endorsement cues influence the extent to which people process political information about the Court in the form of its legitimacy?*

While the literature suggests that both of these cues do matter for people's willingness to engage with news, my findings actually do not provide support for this in the context of the U.S. Supreme Court. In fact, both cues seem not to influence people's willingness to engage with political posts about the Court, nor do they influence the extent to which people extend support for the Court.

The paper will proceed as follows. The first section provides an overview of the general heuristics and cue literature that explains how cues broadly influence how people process information. The second section provides more detailed literature about news source and social endorsement cues specifically, and how these cues function together. The third section discusses the theory and hypotheses. The fourth section describes the experiment used to test the hypotheses and presents the results of the analysis. The paper concludes with a discussion of the main findings and concluding remarks about news source cues and social endorsement cues.

Heuristic Processing and Cues on Facebook

When individuals are exposed to messages, such as the Facebook posts above, they process that information. There are two different modes of processing in which

individuals can engage and audiences make social judgments based on the process chosen and the result (Chaiken 1980). The heuristic-systematic model (HSM) labels the two modes of processing as heuristic and systematic (Chen et al. 1999). Heuristic processing involves quick mental judgment rules stored in memory that provide shortcuts for information processing (Sundar 2008). This limited activity occurs when people lack motivation or cognitive resources to engage with information and leads them to evaluate messaging using only a subset of information (even a single cue) to form a judgment (Todorov, Chaiken, and Henderson 2002).⁵⁵ In the context of Facebook this means users often take shortcuts in assessing the posts they see on their Feeds by relying on heuristics to process messages when they can which, in turn, lightens their cognitive loads (Chaiken 1980). In practice this means that, rather than reading every news post on the platform, users may quickly look at the news source of each post and/or the number of social endorsements it contains to determine whether they want to read and engage with the story, “clicking on a post only if it crosses some threshold of curiosity that justifies the investment of time to read the full post or link” (Settle 2018, 60). Alternatively, if a user decide to spend a significant amount of time with the story, they will process it systematically. Systematic processing involves attempts to thoroughly understand any available information through careful attention, deep thinking, and intensive reasoning (Chen et al. 1996). For my purposes, perhaps a user reads through the comments on a Facebook post or clicks on the story to read the whole thing in its entirety.

⁵⁵ A cue is simply a piece of information provided by a medium that allows for evaluation of content, by triggering heuristics (Sundar 2008). Note that systematic processing and heuristic processing can occur at the same time (Chaiken and Maheswaran 1994).

I focus on heuristic processing, and not on systematic processing, for two primary reasons. First, Facebook users process an overabundance of information, which can be psychologically taxing on the average person (Koroleva et al. 2011). Consider that users on Facebook spend about 58 minutes a day on the platform⁵⁶ and scroll through over 300 feet of content every day on average.⁵⁷ This suggests users see hundreds, if not thousands, of posts every single day. With so much content at their fingertips, there is no possibility users can systematically process every piece of information that they are exposed to. That is, users cannot devote the time to carefully read and reflect on every Facebook post that comes across on their Feeds. As discussed in Chapter 2, users can also easily feel overwhelmed with all of the information on Facebook and experience social media fatigue (Lee et al. 2014), which leads to feelings of fatigue, annoyance, and boredom. This, then, causes users to spend less time browsing social media, reduces usage and decreases enthusiasm when using social media, and cultivates negative impressions and attitudes toward social media. In other words, social media fatigue leads to generally lower levels of engagement with social media posts. With this confluence of factors, it would be unreasonable to expect users to engage in systematic processing with every single post they encounter on Facebook. Users have to rely on shortcuts to reduce the costs associated with sifting through hundreds of posts every day (Downs 1957).

Second, beyond the number of posts users see every day, this study focuses on political news posts – specifically political news about the Court. Users are exposed to an

⁵⁶ See <https://www.forbes.com/sites/petersuciu/2021/06/24/americans-spent-more-than-1300-hours-on-social-media/?sh=4a4b93b72547>.

⁵⁷ See <https://www.facebook.com/ogilvy/posts/the-average-person-scrolls-through-300-feet-of-mobile-content-every-day-thats-eq/10155968756602994/>.

intermixture of social and personally relevant information alongside political news. Most Facebook users receive their news passively on the platform (Matsa and Mitchell 2014), coming across news when using Facebook for other purposes (Settle 2018). This further suggests that, in reality, most users engage in heuristic processing when they see information about the Court on Facebook, as it is not information that they tend to actively seek. Moving beyond these arguments, I now turn to two cues individuals may use as they sort through news posts on Facebook: news source cues and social endorsement cues.

News Source Cues

As discussed in Chapter 1, the number of people seeking news about the Court on traditional platforms, including television and newspapers, is declining in favor of online media. This trend seems likely to continue, as the number of people who are seeking news generally through digital media is increasing.⁵⁸ Because of this, traditional broadcast news networks, such as CNN and Fox News, have had to adapt by growing their online presence, particularly their presence on Facebook. These networks use Facebook to direct users to their online print and broadcast coverage. In fact, Facebook is now the fastest growing source of referrals to major news websites.⁵⁹

Users of Facebook often come across news on their Feeds. Schäfer, Sülflow, and Müller (2017) find that, from the Facebook users they sampled, about a quarter of the posts their sample received contain political information. This often includes news from traditional broadcast news networks, as these networks (CNN and Fox News,

⁵⁸ See <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/12/more-than-eight-in-ten-americans-get-news-from-digital-devices/>.

⁵⁹ See <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2011/05/09/navigating-news-online/>.

specifically) post content on Facebook roughly every thirty minutes. Besides these news posts, users also see posts from friends and family, groups they follow, public officials, and a whole host of other miscellaneous pages. With thousands of posts at their disposal, users have to cope with the overload of information. Again, they often have to rely on heuristics to determine what information to consume as discussed in the previous section. This applies to news posts as well. When individuals decide whether to consume a news story, they use heuristics based on source (Althaus and Tewksbury 2002; Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Sundar, Knobloch-Westerwick, and Hastall 2007), story placement, the presence of a photograph, and other editorial cues (Graber 1988). These four heuristics help individuals judge the relevance, credibility, and importance of a news story (Jo 2005; Schmierbach and Oeldorf-Hirsch 2012; Westerman, Spence, and Van Der Heide 2014).

This traditional conceptualization of news consumption also applies to news consumption on Facebook. However, on Facebook, the *source* is the main applicable decision criteria. Source cues convey information about the reputation and possibly the ideology and/or partisanship of the organization that produced the story in question. The source can influence how deeply individuals process news content and what they learn from it, serving as a heuristic when processing the information contained in the posts (Chaiken 1980). I expect people to factor the attributes of the source into their decision of whether to consume news – and particularly news about the Supreme Court on Facebook.

Individuals judge the credibility of information by considering the source (Jo 2005; Schmierbach and Oeldorf-Hirsch 2012; Westerman, Spence, and Van Der Heide 2014). Credibility is an assessment of whether some aspect of information is trustworthy

(Flanagin and Metzger 2000), objective (Sundar and Nass 2001), current (Yale, Jensen, Carcioppolo, Sun, and Liu 2015), and authentic (Appelman and Sundar 2016). It is the most widely studied variable by communication scholars (Saleh 2016). Experimental research has found that individuals also make credibility judgments of news stories based on source cues (Jo 2005; Schmierbach and Oeldorf-Hirsch 2012; Westerman, Spence, and Van Der Heide 2014) and pay more attention to content presented from credible sources (Winter and Krämer 2014). Users on Facebook may pay more attention, and engage more deeply with, stories about the Court if they extend credibility to the news source.

This literature also extends to *partisan* news sources. There is a long line of literature suggesting that people impute a political slant to a wide variety of media sources (Settle 2018) and have strong partisan preferences in news sources (Stroud 2008, 2011; Taber and Lodge 2006; Prior 2007). As Settle (2018) points out, "...the public has polarized along ideological lines as to which sources are trustworthy" (55). This finding is particularly strong among Republicans, who tend to view the mainstream media as more liberal and are more likely to only trust Fox News (as far as mainstream outlets) as a credible information source (Stroud and Lee 2013; Stroud 2011; Ladd 2012). Because the media environment has fragmented, and the number of partisan news options is growing, it is easier for audiences to intentionally select sources that reinforce individual biases, with partisans deliberately seeking sources that they believe share their views (Prior 2007; Arceneaux and Johnson 2013; Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Coe et al. 2008; Stroud 2008). Here, it could suggest that users on Facebook will be more willing to

engage with Facebook news stories about the Court if the news source aligns with their prior ideological and partisan beliefs.

While there is not literature that specifically addresses how partisan news sources influence people's perceptions of the Court's legitimacy, scholars do know low credibility sources typically produce no change in attitude, while sources that people perceive as credible have the potential to change attitudes (Milburn 1991). Further, partisanship has the potential to influence the extent to which people extend support to the Court. For example, Clark and Kastle (2015) argue political source cues, such as partisanship, influence how much independence people extend to the Court, a form of diffuse support. They show partisans are much less likely to support curbing the independence of the Court when a proposal is endorsed by the member of the out-party, but more likely to support the same measure when the proposal is endorsed by a member of the in-party. Similarly, Nicholson and Hansford (2014) find that the positions adopted by party leaders often serve as cues for the public and cause people to sort based on their ideology or partisan identification. Partisans are more likely to accept a decision, a form of specific support, when it is attributed to public officials (e.g., justices) of their party and less likely to accept a decision attributed to public officials of the other party.

Two main points emanate from this confluence of literatures. First, people are more likely to consume news stories if they find the news source to be credible. For partisans, this suggests they are more likely to consume news stories from news sources that align with their partisanship. For Democrats this could mean opting to consume a story from CNN rather than from Fox News because they perceive the story from CNN to be more credible. Second, the partisan leaning of a news source may influence the extent

to which individuals change their attitudes about how much support to extend to the U.S. Supreme Court. Partisans are more likely to give and take away their support based on their in-party's position. Here, this suggests that partisans may be more willing to move their levels of support if they are exposed to a political news story about the Court that aligns with their partisanship. However, the news source, and whether its partisan, is only one heuristic for the credibility of information that individuals encounter on Facebook.

Social Endorsement Cues

Social endorsements serve the same purpose as news source cues, functioning as an important heuristic when determining the credibility of information and selecting content with which to engage (Messing and Westwood 2012; Kim and Sundar 2014, Knobloch-Westerwick et al. 2005; Sundar and Nass 2001). They signal to individuals that their peers have engaged with the endorsed content which, in turn, provides social validation for the content (Griskevicius et al. 2009) and serves as a signal of the quality and credibility (Chaiken 1987; Yang 2016; Knobloch-Westerwick, Sharma, Hansen, and Alter 2005; Fogg et al. 2003; Metzger, Flanagin, and Medders 2010) and salience of the information (Mummolo 2016). Put simply, social endorsements make an individual think that, if others think something is good, then they should as well (Sundar et al. 2008; Sunstein 2009). There is prior evidence that people use social endorsement cues in the context of browsing the Internet with respect to selecting and endorsing articles that friends endorse (Sen and Lerman 2007) and selecting traditional news media articles (Knobloch-Westerwick, Sharma, Hansen, and Alter 2005). On Facebook, users are able to rely on how many people liked, commented, and shared posts, which “has paved the

way for new, unprecedented forms of social influence” (Y. J. Kim and Hollingshead 2015, 164).

These interactions are forms of social endorsement (Thai and Wang 2020; Bernritter, Verlegh, and Smit 2016), signaling to users the extent to which their peers have engaged with content on the platform (Fu and Sim 2011). For example, one post may have 1,000 likes, 40 comments, and 80 shares, while another post may have 10 likes, 8 comments, and 3 shares. The first post should attract the most attention because it has a greater social influence. For the purposes of this study, a greater number of likes, shares, and comments on a news story about the Court could lead to a greater number of people engaging with it.

The Confluence of News Source and Social Endorsement Cues

What happens when Facebook users see news stories on Facebook with source cues *and* social endorsement cues? There is reason to expect the social endorsement cues dominate news source cues as a heuristic criterion when selecting and exposing oneself to news stories on Facebook. This is because social media’s attributes differ from those of traditional media (Eveland 2003; Settle 2018) – specifically its ability to facilitate personal influence through the sharing, endorsement, and discussion of content. This personal influence dampens partisan selectivity (Mummolo 2016). What this means is that an individual who might ignore news about politics from traditional media sources may opt to read such information on Facebook if she sees her friends discussing the article on her News Feed or if the article has many likes, comments, or shares. Messing and Westwood (2012) highlight this point by finding that Facebook users are more likely to select information based on social endorsements rather than the partisan affiliation of

the information's source. In the context of being overwhelmed with choices, they find that people will favor social endorsements and simply disregard source cues. "Social endorsement cues convey explicit assertions of social relevance and interest; sources necessarily must host a wide variety of content and thus cannot convey as much discriminating information" (Messing and Westwood 2012, 7).

Theory and Hypotheses

Recall that I focus on two research questions: whether individuals are more likely to engage with Facebook posts about the U.S. Supreme Court when the news source of the information aligns with their partisanship and when the post has social endorsements. Based on the existing literature, people tend to engage in selective exposure when deciding whether to consume news, holding strong partisan preferences in news sources (Stroud, 2008, 2011; Taber and Lodge 2006; Prior 2007). Partisans deliberately seek sources that they believe share their views (e.g., Prior 2007; Arceneaux and Johnson 2013). Given these findings, I expect that individuals will be more likely to engage with news stories about the Court that align with their partisanship.

***Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Absent social endorsements, individuals will engage with Facebook news stories about the Court that align with their partisanship.*

However, social endorsements also function as an important heuristic when selecting content to engage (e.g., Messing and Westwood 2012; Sundar et al. 2008; Kim and Sundar, 2011). People use social endorsements in the context of browsing the internet with respect to determining information credibility (Fogg 2003; Metzger, Flanagin, and Medders 2010), selecting and endorsing articles that friends endorse (Lerman 2007), and selecting traditional news media articles (Knobloch-Westerwick, Sharma, Hansen, and Alter 2005). To address the second

part of my first research question, individuals may be even more likely to engage with news stories about the Court if the stories align with their partisanship *and* contain social endorsements in the form of likes, shares, and comments.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): *Individuals will engage with Facebook news stories about the Court that align with their partisanship at a higher rate if the stories contain social endorsements in the form of likes, shares, and comments.*

Then again, social endorsements may dampen partisan selectivity (Mummolo 2016; Messing and Westwood 2012). An individual who might ignore news about politics from traditional media sources may opt to read such information on Facebook if they see the article has many likes, comments, or shares. Given this, I expect that individuals will be more likely to engage with a political news story about the Court that comes from a news source that does not align with their partisanship if the story contains social endorsements.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): *Individuals will engage with Facebook news stories about the Court that do not align with their partisanship at a higher rate if the stories contain social endorsements in the form of likes, shares, and comments.*

The second question I seek to answer is whether news source and social endorsement cues influence the extent to which people process political information about the Court in the form of its legitimacy. While Chapter 2 finds that individuals who are exposed to political frames about the Court decrease their support to the Court, this finding does not consider the party leaning of the news source. Considering the findings from Clark and Kastle (2015) and Nicholson and Hansford (2014), I expect that political news stories about the Court that come from sources that align with an individual's partisanship to negatively influence the amount of support individuals extend to the Court. This is because

the partisan news source serves as a party cue for individuals, with individuals extending more trust and credibility to sources that align with their party (Stroud and Lee, 2013; Stroud, 2011; Ladd 2012).

***Hypothesis 4 (H4):** Individuals will extend less support to the Court if exposed to political Facebook news stories about the Court that align with their partisanship.*

In contrast, I expect that political news stories that do not align with an individual's partisanship will not influence the amount of support individuals extend to the Court, as individuals will be less likely to trust and provide credibility to the source.

***Hypothesis 5 (H5):** An individual's support for the Court will not be influenced by political Facebook news stories about the Court if the news sources do not align with their partisanship.*

Finally, I consider the news source *and* social endorsements. The literature demonstrates that social endorsement cues dominate news source cues (Mummolo 2016; Messing and Westwood 2012). In this context, I expect that individuals who are exposed to a political Facebook news story about the Court that does not align with their partisanship will extend less support to the Court *if* the post contains social endorsement cues.

***Hypothesis 6 (H6):** Individuals will extend less support to the Court if exposed to political Facebook news stories about the Court that do not align with their partisanship if the posts contains social endorsement cues.*

Data and Methods

To test these hypotheses, I launched an experimental survey on May 16, 2022 using the survey platform MTurk.⁶⁰ Upon removing participants who did not consent, were not

⁶⁰ Research assessing characteristics of MTurk workers as social science research participants concludes that workers represent a large and diverse population, yet MTurk workers are a convenience sample. For

eligible, did not finish, and were debriefed after the experiments, responses from 484 participants were recorded. These participants were exposed to one of four treatment conditions (or a control group) described in Table 4.

Table 4: Treatment Conditions




Treatment Label	Treatment Description	Number of Participants
1. CNN News Source (H1, H4, H5)	This treatment exposes participants to three mock political posts about the Court from the news source CNN.	97
2. CNN News Source and Social Endorsement (H2, H3, H6)	This treatment exposes participants to three mock political posts about the Court from the news source CNN. The posts also include social endorsements in the form of likes, shares, and comments.	97
3. Fox News Source (H1, H4, H5)	This treatment exposes participants to three mock political posts about the Court from the news source Fox News.	98
4. Fox News Source and Social Endorsement (H2, H3, H6)	This treatment exposes participants to three mock political posts about the Court from the news source Fox News. The posts also include social endorsements in the form of likes, shares, and comments.	96
5. Control	This group is exposed to three mock political posts about the Court without a news source cue and social endorsements.	96
Total		484

Three mock posts are used across all treatment conditions that highlight three different types of political Supreme Court coverage: (1) political posts of the confirmation process generally; (2) oral argument coverage of a fake Second Amendment case, *Settles, LLC v. Harrison* (2022); and (3) decision coverage of a fake death penalty case, *Pennsylvania v. Smith* (2022). Again, *political* news stories about the Court are used because messaging that couches the Court as political, or that its decisions are politicized,

example, MTurk workers tend to be young and well-educated. They also tend to be students or people without full-time jobs (Paolacci and Chandler 2014).

tend to decrease support (e.g., Baird and Gangl 2006; Christenson and Glick 2015; Nicholson and Howard 2003). Fake cases are used to ensure that participants do not have prior knowledge of or exposure to the cases. Ultimately, these are political posts without partisan leanings in the messaging to ensure that the text of the posts do not interfere with the partisanship of the news sources. Figure 11 displays the content of each post.

Figure 11: Treatment Political Posts

Topic	Text	Image
Confirmation	‘BLOODBATH’: Duchovny warns that Democrats and Republicans are in for a bloodbath in November as they fight to secure a majority in the Senate, in hopes of ultimately picking who will replace Justice Clarence Thomas after he retires.	
Argument	‘FOCUS WASN’T POLITICAL’: In a 5-4 decision on Wednesday, the majority of the U.S. Supreme Court made a controversial ruling in the long-awaited death penalty case <i>Pennsylvania v. Smith</i> . In their majority opinion, the justices say the ‘focus wasn’t political.’	
Decision	‘POLITICAL PUSHBACK’: After arguments in the gun rights case <i>Settles, LLC v. Harrison</i> this past Monday, Wilkinson said the Supreme Court is behaving in a ‘political way,’ so it deserves ‘political pushback.’	

The posts displayed in Figure 11 stay consistent across treatment groups. What changes, however, is the news source (either CNN or Fox News) and social endorsements. For the treatment groups that contain social endorsements, the Facebook posts include roughly 8,000-10,000 engagements across likes, shares, and comments. This is taken from Messing and Westwood (2012), who determined this number by

monitoring the typical number of “recommends” by Facebook users for the top-rated story from CNN and Fox News and the typical number of “recommends” for ordinary stories over a 3-day period. All mock Facebook posts used in the experimental conditions can be found in Appendix C.

Within each treatment group, participants are exposed to the three posts (Confirmation, Argument, Decision) one at a time. Underneath each post, participants are asked if they would engage further with it, creating the variables *ConfirmEngagement*, *ArgueEngagement*, and *DecideEngagement*. These variables capture whether participants would like, share, or comment on each post if it showed up on their Facebook Feed. The question asks, “How likely would you read, like, share, or comment on this post if it showed up on your Facebook Feed?” with a five-point Likert scale.⁶¹

Once participants move past the Facebook posts, they are asked a series of questions about their support for the U.S. Supreme Court. I create the dependent variable *CourtSupport*. *CourtSupport* captures responses from Gibson and Caldeira’s (2009) five questions measuring diffuse support. Participants have to respond with how supportive they feel toward statements about the role of the federal courts. For each participant, these five responses are summed then divided by five for an average measure of support for each participant.⁶² *Partisanship* is measured using the seven-point partisanship scale

⁶¹ These engagement items are kept separate because as Chapter 1 finds, people are not exposed to different types of Court information at the same frequencies. In Chapter 1, about 50 percent of participants last saw information about a Court decision, 16 percent saw information about oral argument for a case, and 21.71 percent saw information about one or more of the justices. It may be the case, then, that different types of information about the Court may invoke different levels of engagement from participants.

⁶² Participants responded with how supportive they feel toward the following statements about the role of the federal courts: (1) The power of the Supreme Court to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional should be eliminated. (2) If the Supreme Court continually makes decisions that the people disagree with, it might be better to do away with the Court altogether. (3) It would not make much difference to me if the U.S. Constitution were rewritten so as to reduce the powers of the Supreme Court. (4) The right of the Supreme

employed by the American National Election Survey (ANES), then collapsing the scale into two categories: Republicans (1) and Democrats (2). 27 participants were dropped from this question because they identify as independents. All survey questions can be found in Appendix C.

Results

Recall that the first set of hypotheses investigate how variations in news source and social endorsements influence people's willingness to engage with political news about the Court. The first hypothesis states that individuals will engage with Facebook news stories about the Court that align with their partisanship. Specifically, Republicans will be more likely to engage with stories by Fox News and Democrats will be more likely to engage with stories by CNN. To explore this hypothesis, I perform several unpaired t-tests. First, I compare *ConfirmEngagement*, *ArgueEngagement*, and *DecideEngagement* across the first and second treatment conditions (CNN conditions) for Republicans and Democrats. I find a statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level in engagement across *DecideEngagement* for the CNN treatment group without social endorsements when comparing Republicans ($M = 3.87, SD = 1.18$) to Democrats ($M = 3.33, SD = 1.36$) $t(90) = 2.00, p = 0.04, d = 0.42$. This difference remains significant between Republicans ($M = 3.71, SD = 1.29$) and Democrats ($M = 3.16, SD = 1.27$) when social endorsements are included in the treatment $t(92) = 2.05, p = 0.04, d = 0.42$. Interestingly, this finding runs counter to my hypothesis. Republicans are more likely to engage with political coverage of a Supreme Court decision that comes from CNN. Perhaps this is because Republicans

Court to decide certain types of controversial issues should be limited by the Congress. (5) People should be willing to do everything they can to make sure that any proposal to abolish the Supreme Court is defeated.

are more prone to counterargue using motivated reasoning when exposed to messages that conflict with their own attitudes (Bail et al. 2018). Engagement, as it is captured in this study, could in fact be *negative* engagement for these Republicans. Indeed, they may engage with the story, but it could be in the form of an anger emoji, or an anger-fueled comment. Future research should investigate affective engagement with political posts such as the ones used in this study.

The results of the Fox News treatments, however, lend some support to my first hypothesis. Across the treatment conditions that use Fox News (treatment groups 3 and 4), there is not a statistically significant relationship between Republicans and Democrats using the variables *ConfirmEngagement* and *ArgueEngagement*. However, there is a slightly significant relationship between Republicans ($M = 3.81, SD = 1.04$) and Democrats ($M = 3.35, SD = 1.30$) across *DecideEngagement* for the Fox treatment group without social endorsements $t(92) = 1.90, p = 0.07, d = 0.39$. This finding suggests that Republicans are more likely to engage with Fox political posts about Court decisions than Democrats. But, once social endorsements are included, there is not a significant difference between Republicans and Democrats. In fact, Democrats become more likely to engage with the content when social endorsements are included (with a $M = 3.63$ compared to $M = 3.6$ for Republicans).

The second hypothesis states that individuals will engage with Facebook news stories about the Court that align with their partisanship at a higher rate if the stories contain social endorsements in the form of likes, shares, and comments. To test this, I compare Republicans' likelihood to engage (*ArgueEngagement*, *DecideEngagement*,

ConfirmEngagement) across each Fox treatment condition with and without social endorsements. Table 5 displays the means across the treatments and control groups.

Table 5: Means for Engagement Variables Across Treatments for Republicans

Party	Treatment	Variable	Mean	Number of Participants
Republican	Fox News	ConfirmEngagement	3.64	37
		DecideEngagement	3.81	37
		ArgueEngagement	3.89	37
	Fox News with Social Endorsements	ConfirmEngagement	3.46	30
		DecideEngagement	3.6	30
		ArgueEngagement	3.46	30
	CNN News	ConfirmEngagement	3.53	41
		DecideEngagement	3.87	41
		ArgueEngagement	3.58	41
	CNN News with Social Endorsements	ConfirmEngagement	3.71	39
		DecideEngagement	3.71	39
		ArgueEngagement	3.51	39
	Control	ConfirmEngagement	3.82	40
		DecideEngagement	3.67	40
		ArgueEngagement	3.55	40

From an initial glance, social endorsements on the Fox News posts actually *decreased* the amount of engagement Republicans had with the posts across all three dependent variables when comparing the Fox News treatment group to the Fox News treatment group with social endorsements. However, one-way ANOVAs comparing both treatment groups to the control for each of the three engagement variables confirm that none of these relationships are statistically significant.

I perform the same tests for Democrats. Table 6 displays the means for the engagement variables across the treatment and control groups for Democrats. For Democrats, the results are mixed. Social endorsements increased the amount of engagement Democrats had with the confirmation and argument posts but decreased the amount engagement with the decision post when comparing the treatments side-by-side.

This is very interesting, given that to this point, the literature has not teased out the differences between Democrats and Republicans and how they perceive social endorsements. However, one-way ANOVAs revealed that these differences are not statistically significant, either. Further inquiry is needed into this question of how partisans perceive political messages that contain social endorsements.

Table 6: Means for Engagement Variables Across Treatments for Democrats

Party	Treatment	Variable	Mean	Number of Participants
Democratic	Fox News	ConfirmEngagement	3.63	57
		DecideEngagement	3.35	57
		ArgueEngagement	3.49	57
	Fox News with Social Endorsements	ConfirmEngagement	3.77	61
		DecideEngagement	3.63	61
		ArgueEngagement	3.54	61
	CNN News	ConfirmEngagement	3.33	51
		DecideEngagement	3.33	51
		ArgueEngagement	3.50	51
	CNN News with Social Endorsements	ConfirmEngagement	3.58	55
		DecideEngagement	3.16	55
		ArgueEngagement	3.60	55
	Control	ConfirmEngagement	3.80	45
		DecideEngagement	3.26	45
		ArgueEngagement	3.57	45

The findings are similar for the third hypothesis which states that individuals will engage with Facebook news stories about the Court that do not align with their partisanship at a higher rate if the stories contain social endorsements in the form of likes, shares, and comments. While one-way ANOVAs revealed that none of these differences are statistically significant, Republicans engaged more with the confirmation post once social endorsements were included but engaged less with the decision and argument posts. Contrarily, Democrats engaged more with all the Fox News posts once social endorsements were included. The largest difference is between Democrats who would engage with the Fox post about a Court decision with ($M = 3.63$) and without ($M = 3.35$)

social endorsements. Again, however, the results are not statistically significant across groups. Collectively, this evidence suggests that social endorsements and news source cues may not matter for how partisans engage with political news stories about the U.S. Supreme Court on Facebook.

Moving forward, the next set of hypotheses focus on the extent to which these political posts influence (or do not influence) people’s support for the Court in the form of its legitimacy. The fourth hypothesis claims that individuals will extend less support to the Court if exposed to political Facebook news stories about the Court that align with their partisanship. Table 7 displays the variable *CourtSupport* across the treatment groups for Republicans. For Republicans, I do not find any support for the fourth hypothesis. In fact, exposure to the Fox treatment groups increased participants’ support for the Court compared to the control. However, using one-way ANOVAs to compare treatment groups, the results show that the differences are insignificant.

Table 7: Court Support Across Treatments for Republicans

Party	Treatment Group	Court Support	Number of Participants
Republican	CNN News Source	2.82	41
	CNN News Source with Social Endorsements	2.45	39
	Fox News Source	2.73	37
	Fox News Source with Social Endorsements	2.76	30
	Control	2.66	40

Table 8 displays the same table for Democrats. Interestingly, Democrats extended more support to the Court after exposure to the CNN treatment groups compared to the control.

However, these differences are not significant, either.

Table 8: Court Support Across Treatments for Democrats

Party	Treatment Group	Court Support	Number of Participants
Democratic	CNN News Source	2.69	51
	CNN News Source with Social Endorsements	2.65	55
	Fox News Source	2.68	57
	Fox News Source with Social Endorsements	2.51	61
	Control	2.58	45

The fifth hypothesis states that an individual’s support for the Court will not be influenced by political Facebook news stories about the Court if the news sources do not align with their partisanship. I do find support for this, as one-way ANOVAs confirm that the differences between *CourtSupport* for Republicans and Democrats across both platforms are statistically not significant. This finding holds for the final hypothesis as well, that individuals will extend less support to the Court if exposed to political Facebook news stories about the Court that do not align with their partisanship if the posts contain social endorsement cues. Ultimately, the conclusion drawn from this second set of hypotheses is simple – social endorsements and the news source do not affect the amount of support people extend to the Court.

These results can be summarized with two main findings. I do not find support for the claim that partisan news cues and social recommendations influence people’s willingness to engage with political posts about the U.S. Supreme Court on Facebook.

There were no real differences between those who saw posts from CNN or Fox, or who saw posts with a couple to a few thousand likes, shares, and comments. This is particularly interesting, given that the prior literature suggests that these heuristics matter for people's willingness to engage with news content. Similarly, these heuristics do not influence the amount of support people are willing to extend to the Court.

There may be several reasons for these findings. As for news cues, while Republicans rely heavily on Fox News, and while Democrats turn most to CNN, these are not the only two sources that partisans receive news. In a recent Pew report, around 53% of Democrats get political and election news from CNN and 60% of Republicans get the same kind of news from Fox News.⁶³ A future iteration of this study should consider particular characteristics of those who factor into these percentages, such as the strength of their partisanship, gender, and age. Stronger partisans, for example, may be more likely to rely on these traditional media outlets as source cues, or those who are older or identify with a particular gender. Perhaps young individuals may extend less credibility generally to news sources such as CNN and Fox compared to older individuals as well. Future research should also consider using other partisan sources to cast a larger net around partisan media.

Regarding social recommendations, this study conceptualized them in the form of the number of likes, shares, and comments a post received. However, there is evidence to suggest that this form of social recommendations is the weaker form – social recommendations from friends and family are much more influential on people's willingness to engage with content, and particularly content on social media. Anspach

⁶³ See <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2020/01/24/americans-are-divided-by-party-in-the-sources-they-turn-to-for-political-news/>.

(2017), for example, finds that social recommendations serve as heuristics when people decide what to consume on Facebook only when the activity comes from friends and family. He finds no effect when the recommendations are attributed to fictional individuals. Future research should investigate how friends and family influence people's willingness to engage with information about the Court.

Conclusion

While Justice Amy Coney Barrett and other justices have touted that the “Court is not comprised of a bunch of partisan hacks,” it is difficult to convince the public of this, especially when the media often covers the Court in a political manner. Because of this, it is worth studying how this political coverage influences people's perceptions of the Court, and whether characteristics unique to the Facebook environment affect how individuals process this type of information about the U.S. Supreme Court. Specifically, I investigate how news source cues and social endorsement cues influence an individual's likelihood of engaging with political news about the Court and whether these cues affect the amount of support people extend to the Court of last resort. Using an experiment where I expose participants to Facebook posts that manipulate the news source and social endorsements of mock political news stories about the Court, I find that these cues *do not* influence people's willingness to engage with political news about the Court and the amount of support they extend to the Court.

There are important conclusions that can be drawn from these findings. I find in Chapter 2 that political posts on Facebook can influence support for the Court. This study adds to this by finding that news source cues and social endorsement cues on these types of posts do not affect people's willingness to engage with the content, nor the amount of support they are willing to extend to the Court. This could very well suggest that these

cues do not matter for the purpose of the Court's legitimacy. When people are exposed to political messaging, whether it comes from CNN or Fox, or if it has many likes or shares or does not, these cues do not outweigh the effects of the political messaging contained in the posts. This, in fact, is even more damaging for the Court because it suggests that cross-cutting political messages, such as a Democrat reading a political post about the Court from Fox, can still influence the extent to which people extend support to the Court. Perhaps even in a negative direction. Or, for that matter, this finding suggests that Republicans will still extend less support for the Court after exposure to a political post from CNN. In the context of one's social media feed, this suggests that there are more opportunities for political messaging about the Court to damage one's perceptions of the Court – as the source of the information does not seem to matter for one's willingness to engage with the content or for the amount of support they extend to the Court.

Additionally, I find that there is a *not* a social element to people's decision of selecting news about the Court to engage with and the extent to which the information influences their perceptions of the Court. Again, this could be more damaging for the Court than if I found that there is a social element. An individual's resharing of a political post about the Court with 2 likes, for example, can still garner the attention of an individual. Similar to the news cue finding, this means that there are even more opportunities for people to be influenced by political messaging about the Court on Facebook, as it does not matter how many likes, shares, and comments the posts contain.

Unfortunately, these findings do not provide good news for the Court. As media outlets continue to produce political stories about the Court, the Court's legitimacy could

continue to decline.⁶⁴ This study suggests that the media has a very powerful role in shaping people's views of our federal institutions, and perhaps it does not matter who creates the messaging or what sorts of likes, shares, and comments it receives. *All* media outlets must reconsider how they frame stories about the Supreme Court's decision-making processes. As media outlets continue to engage with political messaging, there is reason to expect that the public's consistent exposure to this messaging will reinforce and solidify negative feelings and attitudes toward the Court (Lecheler and de Vreese 2016).

However, there are several limitations to this study. First, I do not manipulate the political news stories to advantage one political party over another. Coupled with news source and social endorsement cues, this may influence an individual's willingness to engage with the story and the extent to which they extend support to the Court. Second, I only investigate two news sources: CNN and Fox News. It is unclear how other types of sources, including other broadcast media networks, newspapers, and online media sources would influence the findings. This also extends to sources that are not news specific. For instance, posts from public officials, interest groups, and individuals may also influence individuals' willingness to engage with, and the amount of support they extend to, the Court. Third, I do not manipulate real cases in the mock Facebook posts. Perhaps an individual's prior knowledge about a case would affect their willingness to engage with it. Fourth, I explore "engagement" with Facebook posts, but I do not address whether the engagement is positive or negative. Fifth, the sample in this study is recruited from MTurk, which has its limitations in representativeness of the population (Paolacci and Chandler 2014). The sample size is also small which affects the reliability of the

⁶⁴ See <https://news.gallup.com/poll/354908/approval-supreme-court-down-new-low.aspx>.

experiment results. Finally, the mock Facebook posts are static. Participants cannot click on them to see additional information about the stories, which may further influence their support for the Court. Despite these limitations, this study provides us with a glimpse of unique media characteristics of Facebook and their implications ultimately for the Court and its legitimacy.

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Appendix A – Chapter 1 Survey Questions

GENERALLEARN: If something happens at the U.S. Supreme Court, how do you hear about it? Check all that apply.

Television (1)

Radio (2)

Newspapers (3)

Social Media (4)

Friends and Family (5)

Online News Outlets (6)

Other (7) _____

If respondents selected “Social Media,” they were prompted with “ALLSOCIALMEDIA.”

ALLSOCIALMEDIA: From where have you received news about the Supreme Court on social media? Check all that apply.

Instagram (1)

Twitter (2)

Facebook (3)

Snapchat (4)

Other (5)

INTERESTPOLITICS: How interested would you say you are in politics?

Not at all interested (1)

Slightly interested (2)

Moderately interested (3)

Very interested (4)

Extremely interested (5)

HEARCOURT: Generally, how often do you hear about the Supreme Court?

Less than once a year (1)

Few times a year (2)

Few times every six months (3)

Few times a month (4)

At least once a week (5)

TIMECONSUMINGNEWS: On average, how much time do you spend consuming the news each day?

½ hour or less (1)

More than ½ hour – 1 hour (2)

More than 1 hour – 1 ½ hours (3)

More than 1 ½ hours – 2 hours (4)

More than 2 hours (5)

COURTKNOWLEDGE1: Some judges in the U.S. are elected; others are appointed to the bench. Do you happen to know if the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court are elected or appointed to the bench?

Elected (1)

Appointed (2)

Note: Question was then recoded for 1 if respondents selected the correct response and 0 if they selected an incorrect response. The correct response here is “Appointed.”

COURTKNOWLEDGE2: Some judges in the U.S. serve for a set number of years; others serve a life term. Do you happen to know whether the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court serve for a set number of years or whether they serve a life term?

Set number of years (1)

A life term (2)

Note: Question was then recoded for 1 if respondents selected the correct response and 0 if they selected an incorrect response. The correct response here is “A life term.”

COURTKNOWLEDGE3: Do you happen to know who has the last say when there is a conflict over the meaning of the Constitution – the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. Congress, or the President?

The U.S. Supreme Court (1)

The U.S. Congress (2)

The President (3)

Note: Question was then recoded for 1 if respondents selected the correct response and 0 if they selected an incorrect response. The correct response here is “The U.S. Supreme Court.”

TOTALCOURTKNOWLEDGE: This variable summed COURTKNOWLEDGE1, COURTKNOWLEDGE2, AND COURTKNOWLEDGE3 and then divided the total by three for an average Court knowledge for each participant.

GENERALKNOWLEDGE1: How many years is the term of office of a United States Senator?

2 years (1)

4 years (2)

6 years (3)

8 years (4)

Note: Question was then recoded for 1 if respondents selected the correct response and 0 if they selected an incorrect response. The correct response here is “6 years.”

GENERALKNOWLEDGE2: How many justices (judges) are there on the U.S. Supreme Court?

6 (1)

- 7 (2)
- 8 (3)
- 9 (4)

Note: Question was then recoded for 1 if respondents selected the correct response and 0 if they selected an incorrect response. The correct response here is “9.”

GENERALKNOWLEDGE3: Do you happen to know how many times an individual can be elected president?

- 1 time (1)
- 2 times (2)
- 3 times (3)
- Unlimited times (4)

Note: Question was then recoded for 1 if respondents selected the correct response and 0 if they selected an incorrect response. The correct response here is “2 times.”

GENERALKNOWLEDGE4: How much of a majority is needed for the Senate and House of the U.S. Congress to override a presidential veto?

- One-third majority (1)
- Two-third majority (2)
- Three-fourths majority (3)
- Simple majority (4)

Note: Question was then recoded for 1 if respondents selected the correct response and 0 if they selected an incorrect response. The correct response here is “Two-third majority.”

GENERALKNOWLEDGE5: Do you happen to know what political office John G. Roberts holds?

- Supreme Court Chief Justice (1)
- U.S. Senator (2)
- U.S. Representative (3)
- Secretary of Homeland Security (4)

Note: Question was then recoded for 1 if respondents selected the correct response and 0 if they selected an incorrect response. The correct response here is “Supreme Court Chief Justice.”

TOTALGENKNOWLEDGE: This variable summed GENERALKNOWLEDGE1, GENERALKNOWLEDGE2, GENERALKNOWLEDGE3, GENERALKNOWLEDGE4, and GENERALKNOWLEDGE5 then divided the total by five for an average general political knowledge for each participant.

Please respond with how supportive you feel toward the following statements about the role of the federal courts.

COURTLEGIT1: The power of the Supreme Court to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional should be eliminated. (1)

Unsupportive (1)	Somewhat Unsupportive (2)	Neither Unsupportive Nor Supportive (3)	Somewhat Supportive (4)	Supportive (5)
---------------------	------------------------------	--	-------------------------------	-------------------

COURTLEGIT2: If the Supreme Court continually makes decisions that the people disagree with, it might be better to do away with the Court altogether. (2)

Unsupportive (1)	Somewhat Unsupportive (2)	Neither Unsupportive Nor Supportive (3)	Somewhat Supportive (4)	Supportive (5)
---------------------	------------------------------	--	-------------------------------	-------------------

COURTLEGIT3: It would not make much difference to me if the U.S. Constitution were rewritten so as to reduce the powers of the Supreme Court. (3)

Unsupportive (1)	Somewhat Unsupportive (2)	Neither Unsupportive Nor Supportive (3)	Somewhat Supportive (4)	Supportive (5)
---------------------	------------------------------	--	-------------------------------	-------------------

COURTLEGIT4: The right of the Supreme Court to decide certain types of controversial issues should be limited by the Congress. (4)

Unsupportive (1)	Somewhat Unsupportive (2)	Neither Unsupportive Nor Supportive (3)	Somewhat Supportive (4)	Supportive (5)
---------------------	------------------------------	--	-------------------------------	-------------------

COURTLEGIT5: People should be willing to do everything they can to make sure that any proposal to abolish the Supreme Court is defeated. (5)

Unsupportive (1)	Somewhat Unsupportive (2)	Neither Unsupportive Nor Supportive (3)	Somewhat Supportive (4)	Supportive (5)
---------------------	------------------------------	--	-------------------------------	-------------------

TOTALCOURTLEGIT: This variable summed COURTLEGIT1, COURTLEGIT2, COURTLEGIT3, COURTLEGIT4, and COURTLEGIT5 then divided the total by five for an average support for the Court for each participant.

FACEBOOKACCOUNT: Do you have a Facebook account?

Yes (1)

No (2)

COURTNEWSONFACEBOOK: Have you ever encountered information about the U.S. Supreme Court on your Facebook Feed?

Yes (1)

No (0)

Note: THESE QUESTIONS BELOW BRANCHED FOR THOSE WHO RESPONDED “YES” to COURTNEWSONFACEBOOK.

LATESTINFO: What did the latest information about the U.S. Supreme Court on your Facebook Feed discuss?

A Court decision (1)

Oral argument (2)

One or more of the justices (3)

The Court's role in the federal government (4)

Other _____ (5)

FREQSEECOURT: How often do you see content about the U.S. Supreme Court on your Facebook feed?

2-3 times per year or less (1)

Every 2-3 months (2)

Once a month (3)

Weekly (4)

Daily (5)

COURTSOURCE: Where does your news about the Supreme Court come from on Facebook? Check all that apply.

Your friends on Facebook (1)

News outlets (CNN, Fox, etc.) (2)

Politicians (3)

interest groups (4)

Facebook groups/pages (5)

Other _____ (6)

FREQINTERACT: How often do you typically interact with Supreme Court content if you see it on Facebook? This includes, sharing, reading, or commenting on it.

Never (1)

Rarely (2)

Sometimes (3)

Often (4)

Always (5)

SEEKOUT: Do you intentionally seek out information about the Court on Facebook?

Yes (1)
No (0)

ENCOUNTERNOSEEK: Have you encountered information about the Court on Facebook that you did not seek out?

Yes (1)
No (0)

SUBSCRIBE: If given the opportunity, how likely would you be to subscribe to see more information about the Court on your Facebook Feed?

Extremely unlikely (1)
Somewhat unlikely (2)
Neither likely nor unlikely (3)
Somewhat likely (4)
Extremely likely (5)

TIMEONFACEBOOK: On average, how much time do you spend on Facebook every day?

½ hour or less (1)
More than ½ - 1 hour (2)
More than 1 hour – 1 ½ hours (3)
1 ½ hours – 2 hours (4)
More than 2 hours (5)

LASTTERMDAY: The Supreme Court's last day of their October 2019 term was yesterday (July 1st, 2021). This means that the Court finished handing down some of its decisions over the past few days. Did you see any information on your Facebook Feed about these decisions?

Yes (1)
No (2)

BREYERRETIRE: There is speculation that Justice Stephen Breyer is going to retire soon. Have you seen any information on your Facebook Feed about this?

Yes (1)
No (2)

BRNOVICH: Did you hear about Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee on your Facebook Feed? Description: The Arizona Legislature passed two voting restrictions in 2016. One required election officials to discard ballots cast at the wrong precinct, and the other prohibited most people from collecting ballots for delivery to polling places. (The law made exceptions for family members, caregivers and election officials.) The Democratic National Committee challenged these restrictions, arguing that they violated Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, a provision that has largely been used to prevent unlawful dilution of minority groups' voting power in redistricting cases. The Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that Arizona's voting restrictions did not violate Section 2 and upheld the restrictions.

Yes (1)
No (2)

MAHONNY: Did you hear about Mahanoy Area School District v. B.L. on your Facebook Feed? Description: A high schooler tried out for the varsity cheerleading team and made junior varsity instead. Over the weekend and away from school, she snapchatted people from her high school about the outcome of her tryout. She posted a picture of herself with the caption “Fuck school fuck softball fuck cheer fuck everything.” Several people approached the cheer coach with the image, and the coach suspended her from the junior varsity. The Court found that the coach was not allowed to suspend her for off-campus student speech.

Yes (1)
No (2)

FULTON: Did you hear about Fulton v. City of Philadelphia on your Facebook Feed? Description: The city of Philadelphia refused to work with Catholic Social Services (CSS) because the agency refused to comply with Philadelphia’s laws against anti-LGBTQ discrimination in adoption placements. CSS has a policy in place of not licensing same-sex couples to be foster parents. The Court ruled in favor of CSS, claiming that the city of Philadelphia cannot refuse to work with CSS.

Yes (1)
No (2)

CALIFORNIA: Did you hear about California v. Texas on your Facebook Feed? Description: This was the third challenge in the Supreme Court to the constitutionality of the 2021 Affordable Care Act (ACA). It challenged the individual mandate provision, which requires most Americans to have health insurance or pay a tax penalty, with few exceptions. The Court ruled that Texas did not have standing, or the ability to bring the lawsuit.

RACE: What is your race/ethnicity?

- White or Caucasian (1)
- Black or African American (2)
- Asian (3)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (4)
- Native American or Alaska Native (5)
- Hispanic or Latino (6)
- Other (7) _____

Note: Recoded. White or Caucasian coded as (0) and other races/ethnicities coded as (1).

GENDER: What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Non-binary / third gender (3)
- Prefer not to say (4)

Note: Recoded (1) is female and (0) is male. Non-binary/third gender and prefer not to say responses dropped.

AGE: How old are you?

Under 18 years (1)

18-24 years (2)

25-34 years (3)

35-44 years (4)

45-54 years (5)

55-70 years (6)

Above 70 years (7)

EDUCATION: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

12th grade or less (1)

Graduated high school or equivalent (2)

Some college, no degree (3)

Associate degree (4)

Bachelor's degree (5)

Post-graduate degree (6)

IDEOLOGY: On a seven-point scale about the political views people might hold, where would you place yourself?

Extremely conservative (1)

Very conservative (2)

Somewhat conservative (3)

Moderate (4)

Somewhat liberal (5)

Very liberal (6)

Extremely liberal (7)

Chapter 1 Means and Standard Deviations of Each Variable and Additional Models

Variable Name	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number of Observations
INTERESTPOLITICS	3.38	1.23	1,127
HEARCOURT	3.55	1.17	1,120
TIMECONSUMINGNEWS	2.30	1.23	1,123
COURTKNOWLEDGE1	1.68	0.47	1,155
COURTKNOWLEDGE2	1.66	0.47	1,151
COURTKNOWLEDGE3	1.46	0.72	1,155
TOTALCOURTKNOWLEDGE	1.65	0.67	1,132
GENERALKNOWLEDGE1	2.40	0.87	1,144
GENERALKNOWLEDGE2	3.09	1.13	1,143
GENERALKNOWLEDGE3	2.12	0.56	1,145
GENERALKNOWLEDGE4	2.26	0.75	1,142
GENERALKNOWLEDGE5	1.72	1.01	1,141
TOTALGENERALKNOWLEDGE	3.03	1.47	1,132
COURTLEGIT1	2.67	1.30	1,122
COURTLEGIT2	2.60	1.28	1,122
COURTLEGIT3	2.53	1.28	1,121
COURTLEGIT4	2.80	1.29	1,120
COURTLEGIT5	3.53	1.24	1,123
FACEBOOKACCOUNT	1.18	0.39	1,130
LATESTINFO	1.95	1.11	410
FREQSEECOURT	3.21	1.29	446
FREQINTERACT	3.14	1.27	446
SEEKOUT	0.40	0.49	444
ENCOUNTERNOSEEK	0.82	0.37	445
SUBSCRIBE	3.07	1.33	912
TIMEONFACEBOOK	2.31	1.31	913
BREYERRETIRE	0.48	0.50	446
BRNOVICH	0.55	0.49	429
MAHONoy	0.52	0.49	436
FULTON	0.49	0.50	439
CALIFORNIA	0.51	0.50	442
RACE	0.27	0.44	1,127
GENDER	0.52	0.49	1,111
AGE	4.37	1.54	1,123
EDUCATION	3.77	1.45	1,123
IDEOLOGY	3.67	1.66	1,121

Table 1: Exposure to the Court Affecting Attitudes Toward the Court

	<u>Dependent:</u> Court Support
Court News on Facebook	-0.022 (.0593)
Political Interest	0.143*** (0.025)
General Knowledge	-0.142*** (0.021)
Court Knowledge	-0.100 (0.043)
Time Consuming News	-0.048 (0.025)
Time on Facebook	0.023 (0.021)
Race	0.002 (0.064)
Gender	-0.106 (0.058)
Age	-0.075** (0.021)
Ideology	0.057 (0.016)
Constant	3.201 (0.167)
Observations	894

Note: Standard errors are included in the parentheses.
* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01, two-tailed tests.

Table 2: Frequency of Seeing the Court Affecting Attitudes Toward the Court

	<u>Dependent:</u> Court Support
Frequency of Seeing the Court	0.148*** (0.036)
Political Interest	0.144** (0.042)
General Knowledge	-0.148*** (0.032)
Court Knowledge	-0.039 (0.060)
Time Consuming News	-0.088 (0.038)
Time on Facebook	0.041 (0.032)
Race	-0.051 (0.091)
Gender	-0.174* (0.086)
Age	-0.113** (0.033)
Ideology	0.079*** (0.022)
Constant	2.781 (0.271)
Observations	433

Note: Standard errors are included in the parentheses.

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01, two-tailed tests.

Table 3: Exposure to Court Decisions Affecting Attitudes Toward the Court

	<u>Dependent:</u> Court Support
Total Decisions	0.125*** (0.032)
Political Interest	0.147** (0.043)
General Knowledge	-0.171*** (0.031)
Court Knowledge	-0.022*** (0.060)
Time Consuming News	-0.102** (0.038)
Time on Facebook	0.045 (0.032)
Race	-0.038 (0.090)
Gender	-0.139 (0.087)
Age	-0.119*** (0.033)
Ideology	0.067** (0.022)
Constant	3.088 (0.253)
Observations	433

Note: Standard errors are included in the parentheses.

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01, two-tailed tests.

Table 4: Exposure to Breyer’s Retirement Affecting Attitudes Toward the Court

	<u>Dependent:</u> Court Support
Breyer Retire	0.338*** (0.091)
Political Interest	0.152*** (0.042)
General Knowledge	-0.170*** (0.031)
Court Knowledge	-0.041 (0.061)
Time Consuming News	-0.093* (0.038)
Time on Facebook	0.032 (0.032)
Race	-0.049 (0.091)
Gender	-0.188* (0.086)
Age	-0.108** (0.033)
Ideology	0.070** (0.022)
Constant	3.172 (0.254)
Observations	433

Note: Standard errors are included in the parentheses.
* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01, two-tailed tests.

Table 5: Attitudes Toward the Court Affecting Subscription Behavior

	<u>Dependent:</u> Subscribe
Political Interest	0.470*** (0.033)
General Knowledge	-0.109 (0.030)
Court Knowledge	-0.024 (0.058)
Court Support	0.182*** (0.045)
Time Consuming News	-0.024 (0.034)
Time on Facebook	0.159*** (0.029)
Race	0.178* (0.087)
Gender	-0.155* (0.078)
Age	-0.136*** (0.028)
Ideology	-0.069** (0.022)
Constant	1.866 (0.264)
Observations	894

Note: Standard errors are included in the parentheses.
* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01, two-tailed tests.

Appendix B – Chapter 2 Facebook Treatment Conditions and Traditional Framing Conditions

Abortion, Conservative (*Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*)

Political Frame: At oral arguments in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the conservative majority appeared eager to drastically roll back abortion rights — and perhaps even to overrule Roe explicitly. During argument Justice Sotomayor said, "We cannot let partisan politics get in the way of what is protected in the U.S. Constitution."

Image:

 **News at Your Door**
Today at 8:56am · 🌐

At oral arguments in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the conservative majority appeared eager to drastically roll back abortion rights — and perhaps even to overrule Roe explicitly. During argument Justice Sotomayor said, "We cannot let partisan politics get in the way of what is protected in the U.S. Constitution."



👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👍 David and 4 others

 Write a comment... 😊 📷 GIF 🗨️

Abortion, Conservative (*Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*)

Legitimizing Frame: All nine justices were in agreement at oral argument this week during *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. They sided with Mississippi Solicitor General Scott Stewart who said that Roe and Casey essentially invented a nonexistent right and cordoned off authority typically reserved for states. Justice Sotomayor said, "As the Constitution suggests, we have to grant states the right to protect abortion."

Image:

The image shows a Facebook post from a page named "News at Your Door". The post is dated "Today at 8:56am" and contains the following text: "All nine justices were in agreement at oral argument this week during Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization. They sided with Mississippi Solicitor General Scott Stewart who said that Roe and Casey essentially invented a nonexistent right and cordoned off authority typically reserved for states. Justice Sotomayor said, 'As the Constitution suggests, we have to grant states the right to protect abortion.'" Below the text is a photograph of the United States Supreme Court building. The post includes interaction buttons for "Like", "Comment", and "Share". It also shows that "Sam and 6 others" have liked the post. At the bottom, there is a comment input field with the placeholder text "Write a comment..." and icons for emojis, photos, GIFs, and stickers.

Gun Laws, Liberal (*New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*)

Political Frame: This term the Court will hear a major Second Amendment case, *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association Inc. v. Bruen*, which deals with a New York law that limits a person's ability to carry concealed guns. Rumors at the Court report that the liberal majority will side with New York to limit gun rights. Justice Gorsuch said that if the Court does side with New York, "We are doing a disservice to our Constitution and to the American people, allowing policy preferences to get in the way of what the Founders intended when they wrote the Second Amendment."

Image:

News at Your Door
Today at 8:56am

This term the Court will hear a major Second Amendment case, *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association Inc. v. Bruen*, which deals with a New York law that limits a person's ability to carry concealed guns. Rumors at the Court report that the liberal majority will side with New York to limit gun rights. Justice Gorsuch said that if the Court does side with New York, "We are doing a disservice to our Constitution and to the American people, allowing policy preferences to get in the way of what the Founders intended when they wrote the Second Amendment."

Like Comment Share

Tim and 4 others

Write a comment...

Gun Laws, Liberal (*New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*)

Legitimizing Frame: This term the Court will hear a major Second Amendment case, *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association Inc. v. Bruen*, which deals with a New York law that limits a person's ability to carry concealed guns. All nine justices are guided by precedent to side with New York in this case, continuing a pattern of handing down more unanimous opinions than any time in at least the last seven years.

Image:



News at Your Door
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👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👍 Jason and 5 others

 Write a comment... 😊 📷 GIF 🗨️

Aid for Religious Schools, Conservative (*Carson v. Makin*)

Political Frame: After arguments in *Carson v. Makin* last month, it is obvious that the Court's Republican majority became a supermajority. In what will be a 5-4 decision, the wall between church and state will continue to lower. The bottom line is that the federal judiciary is fast transforming into a forum to hear the grievances of religious conservatives. And the Supreme Court is rapidly changing the rules of the game to benefit those conservatives.

Image:



News at Your Door
Today at 8:56am · 🌐

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👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👍 Lee and 3 others

 Write a comment... 😊 📷 📺 🗣️

Aid for Religious Schools, Conservative (*Carson v. Makin*)

Legitimizing Frame: After arguments in *Carson v. Makin* last month, it seems that the Court will come to a unanimous decision in this case by relying on prior case law such as *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue* and *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer*. “The Court will continue to protect religious liberty in our public schools and expand educational options for parents and students which is what the Constitution sets out to accomplish,” said Chief Justice John Roberts.

Image:



News at Your Door
Today at 8:56am · 🌐

After arguments in *Carson v. Makin* last month, it seems that the Court will come to a unanimous decision in this case by relying on prior case law such as *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue* and *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer*. “The Court will continue to protect religious liberty in our public schools and expand educational options for parents and students which is what the Constitution sets out to accomplish,” said Chief Justice John Roberts.



👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👤 Christina and 5 others

 Write a comment... 😊 📷 📺 🗣️

Campaign Finance, Liberal (*Federal Election Commission v. Ted Cruz*)

Political Frame: The Supreme Court seemed divided on Wednesday during arguments in *Federal Election Commission v. Ted Cruz* about whether to side with a challenge to a federal campaign finance law brought by Senator Ted Cruz, Republican of Texas. At first glance, it seems that the conservative majority is going to side with Ted Cruz, while the liberals are going to side with the Federal Election Commission. Justice Sotomayor said, “We know that Cruz is trying to recoup money from last election to use to retain his seat in the U.S. Senate. This is political, not at all about the Constitution. Period.”

Image:

The image is a screenshot of a Facebook post. At the top left is the profile picture of 'News at Your Door', a circular logo with an orange square. To its right, the name 'News at Your Door' is displayed in blue, followed by the timestamp 'Today at 8:56am' and a globe icon. The main text of the post is a paragraph summarizing the Supreme Court case *Federal Election Commission v. Ted Cruz*, mentioning Justice Sotomayor's statement. Below the text is a photograph of a man in a dark jacket holding two blue signs with white text. The sign on the left reads 'DEMOCRACY IS NOT FOR \$ALE' and the sign on the right reads 'PROTECT OUR DEMOCRACY'. In the background of the photo is the neoclassical facade of the United States Supreme Court building. Below the photo are three interaction buttons: 'Like' with a thumbs-up icon, 'Comment' with a speech bubble icon, and 'Share' with a share icon. Underneath these buttons, it says 'Michaela and 4 others' with a blue heart icon. At the bottom of the post is a comment input field with a circular profile picture on the left, the placeholder text 'Write a comment...', and icons for emojis, photos, videos, and GIFs on the right.

Campaign Finance, Liberal (*Federal Election Commission v. Ted Cruz*)

Legitimizing Frame: The Supreme Court jointly agreed on Wednesday during arguments in *Federal Election Commission v. Ted Cruz* that protections for political speech extend to campaign financing because effective speech requires spending money. Relying on prior case law, the justices claim that the loan-repayment limit intrudes on fundamental rights of speech and association without serving a substantial government interest. Justice Sotomayor said, “The law is clear. We are going to continue to protect fundamental rights.”

Image:

 **News at Your Door**
Today at 8:56am · 🌐

The Supreme Court jointly agreed on Wednesday during arguments in *Federal Election Commission v. Ted Cruz* that protections for political speech extend to campaign financing because effective speech requires spending money. Relying on prior case law, the justices claim that the loan-repayment limit intrudes on fundamental rights of speech and association without serving a substantial government interest. Justice Sotomayor said, “The law is clear. We are going to continue to protect fundamental rights.”



 Like  Comment  Share

 Anna and 5 others

 Write a comment...    

Traditional Framing Treatment Conditions

Abortion, Conservative (*Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*)

Political Frame (450 Words):



At oral arguments in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the conservative majority appeared eager to drastically roll back abortion rights — and perhaps even to overrule *Roe* explicitly. During argument Justice Sotomayor said, "We cannot let partisan politics get in the way of what is protected in the U.S. Constitution."

The Court is intermingling with politics again. It seems to be deviating from prior case law, instead letting their political preferences about abortion get in the way instead of interpreting what is unconstitutional under existing precedents. In *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the state of Mississippi is urging the Supreme Court to ban abortions after the first fifteen weeks of pregnancy, which would essentially overturn the court's previous decisions in *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. During those arguments in December, most of the justices in the court's new conservative majority seemed to question the constitutional foundation of the nearly 50-year-old precedent that guarantees the right to abortion nationwide.

If a majority answers yes to allowing Mississippi's ban at 15 weeks of pregnancy, "that undoes *Roe* and means that the justices are turning a blind eye to what is explicitly written in the Constitution about a women's right to privacy," says Sandra Cramer, a Supreme Court expert. Indeed, there is a precedent, of sorts, for the Supreme Court gradually rolling out a major change in its understanding of the Constitution rather than implementing that change abruptly with one definitive decision. With a 5-4 conservative majority, it seems at this point that Texas won. The state devised a scheme to evade judicial review, and five justices just blessed that scheme.

Even if the justices roll back *Roe*, pro-life and pro-choice groups still want Americans to come to a consensus on the abortion issue, but it may not be a national agreement. "But that's what consensus is, it's the consensus of people living in [each] state," she said. "So, it will be different in Alabama than in North Carolina, which will be different from the state of Washington, from Texas. This seems to be the same approach the justices are taking. Their preferences are different, but their reasoning in this case is not grounded in the Constitution. It's grounded in morals."

As we often see in contentious cases, rallies formed outside of the court, with the two opposing sides holding protests in tandem. "It doesn't feel real. There's so much hope and vibrancy and happiness and joy at this thing," said Jordan Smith of Minnesota. "I really do believe that we're in a post-Roe generation." Christina Atchison, a member of NARAL Pro-Choice America, contrarily said, "The justices are blatantly ignoring what is law. This isn't fair to any woman."

Abortion, Conservative (*Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*)

Legitimizing Frame (415 Words):



All nine justices were in agreement at oral argument this week during *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. They sided with Mississippi Solicitor General Scott Stewart who said that *Roe* and *Casey* essentially invented a nonexistent right and cordoned off authority typically reserved for states. Justice Sotomayor said, "As the Constitution suggests, we have to grant states the right to protect abortion."

Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization is about a Mississippi law that prohibits abortion after 15 weeks. *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 forced every state to legalize abortion before a baby was considered "viable," which was then assumed to be around 28 weeks but is now around 21 weeks. The *Dobbs* case will determine if states can protect the lives of children before "viability," which would strike at the heart of the *Roe* decision. Prior to the court's ruling in *Roe* 48 years ago, abortion was legal in a number of states, but not most states.

By overturning *Roe* and *Casey*, the Court can unanimously acknowledge that those decisions represented a cataclysmic break with the Constitution and have only undermined American law and politics since they were decided. For the sake of its own integrity, the Court will be able to recognize that the best course is to go back to what the Constitution itself says and allow the American people who possess those reserved rights under the Constitution to determine abortion policy.

Commentators suspect that the justices will decide this case using the plain meaning rule. The plain meaning rule dictates that statutes are to be interpreted using the ordinary meaning of the language of the statute. In this context, this means reading the Constitution exactly as it is written. In other words, the Court may not interpret any

clause in the Constitution but must simply apply it as written. The plain meaning rule is the mechanism that prevents courts from taking sides in legislative or political issues. In this case, it will pull the Court out of the partisan fray of abortion politics.

“It is a very good day when the Court unanimously grounds its decision-making in legal principles and the Constitution. Overturning *Roe* will only strengthen the court’s integrity, while perpetuating *Roe*’s constitutional error under outside pressure would confirm criticisms that the justices are behaving as politicians rather than judges. That is not the case here. It is clear that the justices are acting in good faith and upholding what the Framers intended,” said Sandra Cramer, a Supreme Court expert.

Chapter 2 Survey Questions

Please respond with how you supportive you feel toward the following statements about the role of the federal courts.

COURTLEGIT1: The power of the Supreme Court to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional should be eliminated. (1)

Unsupportive (1)	Somewhat Unsupportive (2)	Neither Unsupportive Nor Supportive (3)	Somewhat Supportive (4)	Supportive (5)
---------------------	------------------------------	--	----------------------------	-------------------

COURTLEGIT2: If the Supreme Court continually makes decisions that the people disagree with, it might be better to do away with the Court altogether. (2)

Unsupportive (1)	Somewhat Unsupportive (2)	Neither Unsupportive Nor Supportive (3)	Somewhat Supportive (4)	Supportive (5)
---------------------	------------------------------	--	----------------------------	-------------------

COURTLEGIT3: It would not make much difference to me if the U.S. Constitution were rewritten so as to reduce the powers of the Supreme Court. (3)

Unsupportive (1)	Somewhat Unsupportive (2)	Neither Unsupportive Nor Supportive (3)	Somewhat Supportive (4)	Supportive (5)
---------------------	------------------------------	--	----------------------------	-------------------

COURTLEGIT4: The right of the Supreme Court to decide certain types of controversial issues should be limited by the Congress. (4)

Unsupportive (1)	Somewhat Unsupportive (2)	Neither Unsupportive Nor Supportive (3)	Somewhat Supportive (4)	Supportive (5)
---------------------	------------------------------	--	----------------------------	-------------------

COURTLEGIT5: People should be willing to do everything they can to make sure that any proposal to abolish the Supreme Court is defeated. (5)

Unsupportive (1)	Somewhat Unsupportive (2)	Neither Unsupportive Nor Supportive (3)	Somewhat Supportive (4)	Supportive (5)
---------------------	------------------------------	--	----------------------------	-------------------

COURTSUPPORT: This variable summed COURTLEGIT1, COURTLEGIT2, COURTLEGIT3, COURTLEGIT4, and COURTLEGIT5 then divided the total by five for an average support for the Court for each participant.

INTERESTPOLITICS: How interested would you say you are in politics?

- Not at all interested (1)
- Slightly interested (2)
- Moderately interested (3)
- Very interested (4)
- Extremely interested (5)

HEARCOURT: Generally, how often do you hear about the U.S. Supreme Court?

- Less than once a year (1)
- Few times a year (2)
- Few times every six months (3)
- Few times a month (4)
- At least once a week (5)

COURTKNOWLEDGE1: Some judges in the U.S. are elected; others are appointed to the bench. Do you happen to know if the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court are elected or appointed to the bench?

- Elected (1)
- Appointed (2)

Note: Question was then recoded for 1 if respondents selected the correct response and 0 if they selected an incorrect response. The correct response here is "Appointed."

COURTKNOWLEDGE2: Some judges in the U.S. serve for a set number of years; others serve a life term. Do you happen to know whether the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court serve for a set number of years or whether they serve a life term?

- Set number of years (1)
- A life term (2)

Note: Question was then recoded for 1 if respondents selected the correct response and 0 if they selected an incorrect response. The correct response here is "A life term."

COURTKNOWLEDGE3: Do you happen to know who has the last say when there is a conflict over the meaning of the Constitution – the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S.

- Congress, or the President?
- The U.S. Supreme Court (1)
- The U.S. Congress (2)
- The President (3)

Note: Question was then recoded for 1 if respondents selected the correct response and 0 if they selected an incorrect response. The correct response here is "The U.S. Supreme Court."

TOTALCOURTKNOWLEDGE: This variable summed COURTKNOWLEDGE1, COURTKNOWLEDGE2, AND COURTKNOWLEDGE3.

FACEBOOKACCOUNT: Do you have a Facebook account?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Chapter 2 Miscellaneous Fake Facebook Posts

Image 1:



Anna Lark
Today at 8:56am · 🌐

This is hugely helpful but I gotta ask... how far is a "Hop, skip and a jump"?

In the South...

Next door = 1-2 minutes
Right up the road = 5-10 minutes
A couple miles = 10-20 minutes
Not too far = 20-50 minutes
A little ways = over an hour
A pretty good drive = 2 hours +



👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share


👤 Sam and 6 others



 Write a comment... 😊 📷 🗨️ 🗑️


Image 2:

 **Minnesota Now**
Today at 6:00am · 🌐

A strong, fast moving clipper system will deliver a bout of heavy snow to Minnesota on Thursday. It could make for a slow and slippery commute in the metro.



 Like  Comment  Share

 David and 4 others



 Write a comment...    

Image 3:

 **Michaela Ryhal**
Today at 6:00am · 🌐

Just made this mac and cheese recipe with my mom and it's absolutely insane!

www.thechunkychef.com/family-favorite-baked-mac-and-cheese/




 Like  Comment  Share


 Anna and 4 others

 Write a comment...    

Image 4:

 **Dakota Morgan**
Today at 6:00am · 🌐

😈😈😈



👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👍 Anna and 8 others


 Write a comment... 😊 📷 📺 🗨️

Image 5:

 **Barbara Long**
Today at 6:08am · 🌐

Reunited for the first time in yeeeeaaars! ❤️ Miss youuuu! So happy the timing worked out.



👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👍 Rachael and 3 others

 Write a comment... 😊 📷 🗨️ 🗑️

Image 6:

 **Rachael Dow** ▸ **Anna Lark**
Today at 6:24am · 🌐

We need to go back here with the whole group!



 Like  Comment  Share

 David and 4 others

 Write a comment...    

Image 7:

 **Stephen Hall**
Today at 6:44am · 🌐

Just a little PSA: If you happen to find yourself picking up one kid at school and have 2 more sick kids in the car who are minimally drinking and not eating AND you live in a rural area with no quick pick-up stores or delivery AND you don't want to drag sick kids into a store, McDonald's has Powerade on tap to help with that dehydration. And maybe a pop and/or cookies for the mom who has been dealing with vomit and poop for DAYS. Just in case you find yourself in this situation. 🙄



👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👤 Mattie and 8 others

 Write a comment... 😊 📷 🗨️ 🗑️

Image 8:



A screenshot of a Facebook post. The post is from a user named Mary Lewis, whose profile picture shows a group of people. The post text asks for local friends interested in sponsoring a soccer tournament or donating for a raffle, with proceeds going to a scholarship fund. It includes a deadline and offers to help with paperwork. The post has three interaction buttons: Like, Comment, and Share. Below these, it shows that Abby and two others have liked the post. At the bottom, there is a comment input field with a placeholder text 'Write a comment...' and icons for emojis, photos, GIFs, and stickers.

Mary Lewis
Today at 7:03am · 🌐

Any of my local friends interested in being a sponsor for the Michael Nash Soccer Tournament? Or willing to donate an item for the raffle? Proceeds benefit a Scholarship Fund for JFSHS Senior Soccer players. Deadline is Monday and Braydon would love to bring you the paperwork and pick up your sponsorship or raffle donation. Just let me know. Thank you in advance for always supporting the JFS Athletes. ⚽️💙⚽️💛

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👍 Abby and 2 others

Write a comment... 😊 📷 GIF 🗨️

Image 9:



A screenshot of a Facebook post. At the top left is a circular profile picture of a man. To its right, the name "Caleb Duggan" is written in blue. Below the name is the text "Today at 7:46am" followed by a globe icon. The main body of the post is a long paragraph of text. Below the text are three icons: a thumbs-up for "Like", a speech bubble for "Comment", and a share icon for "Share". Below these is a blue heart icon followed by the text "Eric and 14 others". At the bottom is a comment input area with a small profile picture on the left, the placeholder text "Write a comment...", and icons for emojis, photos, GIFs, and stickers on the right.

Caleb Duggan
Today at 7:46am · 🌐

My name is Caleb Duggan and I cheated on my girlfriend again I told everyone that she was crazy and played victim so they would feel bad for me and not tell her. Madeleine knew it was wrong I had pictures of my son hanging in my room and pictures of my girl all over so she would had to of been looking at my family while in my bed I would be on the phone with my girl and she would hear us talking so she knew we where together she would talk about Mj while around me and I noticed she would also dm her calling her pretty and goals whatever it was weird she had a boyfriend at the time and also messed with other people at Ucp that have serious relationships while barely graduated high school I was insecure and made a mistake that cost me my family so since the people at Ucp wanted to air out my dirty laundry I'm sharing there's Ultimate California Pizza hypocrites. Eric, Isaiah, Barbee are all just as guilty go behind honest with ur fam instead of mine.

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

❤️ Eric and 14 others

Write a comment... 🗨️ 📷 🎬 😄

Image 10:



Image 11:

 **Taylor Earnest**
Today at 9:13am · 🌐

I shared this girl a couple of months ago hoping she'd make it out of the shelter - but unfortunately, she is still there. Senior dogs sleep most of the day & just want love. They are typically surrendered because of their old age, their owner has passed, or their owner is no longer able to take care of them due to medical reasons. Our Molly girl was a senior adoption, and she has been one of the best decisions we've ever made in taking her in our home ♡ please please share so we can get this lady a warm, loving home!



👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👤 Sandra and 2 others

 Write a comment... 😊 📷 🎬 🗨️

Image 12:



Appendix C – Chapter 3 Facebook Posts

Facebook Treatment Posts without Social Recommendations

Confirmation

<p> CNN Today at 8:21am · 🌐</p> <p>'BLOODBATH': Duchovny warns that Democrats and Republicans are in for a bloodbath in November as they fight to secure a majority in the Senate, in hopes of ultimately picking who will replace Justice Clarence Thomas after he retires.</p>  <p>👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share</p>	<p> Fox News Today at 8:21am · 🌐</p> <p>'BLOODBATH': Duchovny warns that Democrats and Republicans are in for a bloodbath in November as they fight to secure a majority in the Senate, in hopes of ultimately picking who will replace Justice Clarence Thomas after he retires.</p>  <p>👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share</p>
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Argument

<p> CNN Today at 9:52am · 🌐</p> <p>'FOCUS WASN'T POLITICAL': In a 5-4 decision on Wednesday, the majority of the U.S. Supreme Court made a controversial ruling in the long-awaited death penalty case Pennsylvania v. Smith. In their majority opinion, the justices say the 'focus wasn't political.'</p>  <p>👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share</p>	<p> Fox News Today at 9:52am · 🌐</p> <p>'FOCUS WASN'T POLITICAL': In a 5-4 decision on Wednesday, the majority of the U.S. Supreme Court made a controversial ruling in the long-awaited death penalty case Pennsylvania v. Smith. In their majority opinion, the justices say the 'focus wasn't political.'</p>  <p>👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share</p>
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Decision

<p>CNN Today at 10:46am · 🌐</p> <p>"POLITICAL PUSHBACK": After arguments in the gun rights case <i>Sett LLC v. Harrison</i> this past Monday, Wilkinson said the Supreme Court behaving in a 'political way,' so it deserves 'political pushback.'</p>  <p>👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share</p>	<p>Fox News Today at 10:46am · 🌐</p> <p>"POLITICAL PUSHBACK": After arguments in the gun rights case <i>Sett LLC v. Harrison</i> this past Monday, Wilkinson said the Supreme Court behaving in a 'political way,' so it deserves 'political pushback.'</p>  <p>👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share</p>
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Facebook Treatment Posts with Social Recommendations

Confirmation

<p>CNN Today at 8:21am · 🌐</p> <p>"BLOODBATH": Duchovny warns that Democrats and Republicans are headed for a bloodbath in November as they fight to secure a majority in the Senate, in hopes of ultimately picking who will replace Justice Clarence Thomas after he retires.</p>  <p>👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share</p> <p>👍 🗨️ 📄 3.9K 4.7K comments 1.1K s</p>	<p>Fox News Today at 8:21am · 🌐</p> <p>"BLOODBATH": Duchovny warns that Democrats and Republicans are headed for a bloodbath in November as they fight to secure a majority in the Senate, in hopes of ultimately picking who will replace Justice Clarence Thomas after he retires.</p>  <p>👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share</p> <p>👍 🗨️ 📄 3.9K 4.7K comments 1.1K s</p>
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Argument

<p>CNN Today at 9:52am</p> <p>'FOCUS WASN'T POLITICAL': In a 5-4 decision on Wednesday, the majority of the U.S. Supreme Court made a controversial ruling in the long-awaited death penalty case Pennsylvania v. Smith. In their majority opinion, the justices say the 'focus wasn't political.'</p>  <p>Like Comment Share</p> <p>2.9K 4.1K comments 2.7K shares</p>	<p>Fox News Today at 9:52am</p> <p>'FOCUS WASN'T POLITICAL': In a 5-4 decision on Wednesday, the majority of the U.S. Supreme Court made a controversial ruling in the long-awaited death penalty case Pennsylvania v. Smith. In their majority opinion, the justices say the 'focus wasn't political.'</p>  <p>Like Comment Share</p> <p>2.9K 4.1K comments 2.7K shares</p>
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Decision

<p>CNN Today at 10:46am</p> <p>'POLITICAL PUSHBACK': After arguments in the gun rights case Seila LLC v. Harrison this past Monday, Wilkinson said the Supreme Court was behaving in a 'political way,' so it deserves 'political pushback.'</p>  <p>Like Comment Share</p> <p>4.9K 1.7K comments 1.9K s</p>	<p>Fox News Today at 10:46am</p> <p>'POLITICAL PUSHBACK': After arguments in the gun rights case Seila LLC v. Harrison this past Monday, Wilkinson said the Supreme Court was behaving in a 'political way,' so it deserves 'political pushback.'</p>  <p>Like Comment Share</p> <p>4.9K 1.7K comments 1.9K s</p>
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Chapter 3 Survey Questions

Please respond with how you supportive you feel toward the following statements about the role of the federal courts.

COURTLEGIT1: The power of the Supreme Court to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional should be eliminated. (1)

Unsupportive (1)	Somewhat Unsupportive (2)	Neither Unsupportive Nor Supportive (3)	Somewhat Supportive (4)	Supportive (5)
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COURTLEGIT2: If the Supreme Court continually makes decisions that the people disagree with, it might be better to do away with the Court altogether. (2)

Unsupportive (1)	Somewhat Unsupportive (2)	Neither Unsupportive Nor Supportive (3)	Somewhat Supportive (4)	Supportive (5)
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COURTLEGIT3: It would not make much difference to me if the U.S. Constitution were rewritten so as to reduce the powers of the Supreme Court. (3)

Unsupportive (1)	Somewhat Unsupportive (2)	Neither Unsupportive Nor Supportive (3)	Somewhat Supportive (4)	Supportive (5)
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COURTLEGIT4: The right of the Supreme Court to decide certain types of controversial issues should be limited by the Congress. (4)

Unsupportive (1)	Somewhat Unsupportive (2)	Neither Unsupportive Nor Supportive (3)	Somewhat Supportive (4)	Supportive (5)
---------------------	------------------------------	--	----------------------------	-------------------

COURTLEGIT5: People should be willing to do everything they can to make sure that any proposal to abolish the Supreme Court is defeated. (5)

Unsupportive (1)	Somewhat Unsupportive (2)	Neither Unsupportive Nor Supportive (3)	Somewhat Supportive (4)	Supportive (5)
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TOTALCOURTLEGIT: This variable sums COURTLEGIT1, COURTLEGIT2, COURTLEGIT3, COURTLEGIT4, and COURTLEGIT5 then divides the total by five for an average support for the Court for each participant.

FACEBOOKACCOUNT: Do you have a Facebook account?

Yes (1)

No (0)

PID1: Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or what?

Republican (1)

Democrat (2)

Independent (3)

Something else (4)

[IF 2 IS SELECTED FROM PID1] PID2: Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?

Strong Democrat (1)

Not very strong Democrat (2)

[IF 1 IS SELECTED FROM PID1] PID3: Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?

Strong Republican (1)

Not very strong Republican (2)

[IF 3 OR 4 IS SELECTED FROM PID1] PID4: Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party?

Closer to the Republican Party (1)

Closer to the Democratic Party (2)

Neither (3)

PARTISANSHIP: This variable takes the responses from PID1, PID2, PID3, and PID4 to create a 7-point partisanship scale ranging from “Not very strong Republican” to “Strong Democrat.”

CONFIRMENGAGEMENT: How likely would you be to read, like, share, or comment on this post if it showed up on your Facebook Feed?

Extremely unlikely (1)

Somewhat unlikely (2)

Neither likely nor unlikely (3)

Somewhat likely (4)

Extremely likely (5)

ARGUEENGAGEMENT: How likely would you be to read, like, share, or comment on this post if it showed up on your Facebook Feed?

Extremely unlikely (1)

Somewhat unlikely (2)

Neither likely nor unlikely (3)

Somewhat likely (4)

Extremely likely (5)

DECIDEENGAGEMENT: How likely would you be to read, like, share, or comment on this post if it showed up on your Facebook Feed?

Extremely unlikely (1)

Somewhat unlikely (2)

Neither likely nor unlikely (3)

Somewhat likely (4)

Extremely likely (5)

TOTALENGAGEMENT: This variable sums CONFIRMENGAGEMENT, ARGUEENGAGEMENT, and DECIDEENGAGEMENT then divides the total by three for an average level of engagement for each participant.