

**IMPACT OF CONSUMERS' POLITICAL IDEOLOGY
ON THEIR EVALUATION AND RESPONSE TO
BRAND TRANSGRESSIONS**

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CHAPTER I:
OVERVIEW OF DISSERTATION

More so than ever before, brands must wade into troubled political waters to meet their stakeholders' expectations. 63% of consumers and 69% of employees want brands to support the values that they support (Edelman Trust Institute, 2023). This process of selecting and communicating the values that a brand supports is dynamic and needs constant learning, as more and more issues get politicized and fall in and out of favor with consumers. For example, attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community (and many other historically disempowered communities) have increasingly grown positive in the U. S. in the last couple of decades. Hence, some brands express support for such marginalized communities, not just through their advertisements, but also in their business practices and product offerings. However, some such initiatives, such as LGBTQIA+ pride month merchandise and social media promotions with transgender representation have received significant consumer backlash in recent years. And brands cannot respond to this fallout by simply aborting the transgressive act, as these rollbacks are themselves likely to be seen as transgressions by the other end of the political spectrum. Hence, marketers, more so than ever, need a deeper understanding than just who, liberals or conservatives, are more likely to be offended by the brand's actions. They need to understand how the two might differ in their response to these perceived offenses, and how brands can avoid triggering offense in the first place.

Through the next two chapters, the two essays that comprise my dissertation, I investigate these key differences in motivations that liberals and conservatives have in how they express their frustrations with the transgressing brand, and also what sort of brand actions might trigger such frustrations. These two essays conceptualize perceived brand offensiveness as more than just a binary construct where the action is either offensive or not. Instead, I approach offensiveness as a continuum on which different consumers might find themselves to be more offended or less offended than others. This is an important distinction because, as I demonstrate, consumers are able to differentiate between harmful transgressions and benign transgressions. Harmful transgressions are the ones which have caused or have the potential to cause actual harm to the consumer or to others. Benign transgressions are more complex and require consumers to simultaneously recognize that something has the potential to be harmful but is not actually harmful. These benign transgressions are often, in fact, found funny (McGraw and Warren 2010). For example, a Nike ad featuring the athlete Colin Kaepernick was considered a harmful transgression due to his decision to kneel during the national anthem (which many conservative consumers believed to be anti-American). However, a Nike ad with another African-American athlete, Charles Barkley, that depicted him competing with the monster Godzilla who is destroying a city is considered funny (a benign transgression). This is because consumers do not associate him with any controversial values and the portrayed destruction of a city is fictional. My two essays investigate each of these transgression types in turn and demonstrate how liberals and conservatives differ in how they respond to them.

In my first essay (chapter 2), I focus on harmful transgressions, particularly moral transgressions committed by brands, and investigate how politically liberal and conservative consumers differ in how they respond to them. I also investigate how these differences in response (being more punishment-focused or more education-focused) are driven by differences in how they think transgressions should be disciplined. In my second essay (chapter 3), I focus on benign transgressions and investigate how politically liberal and conservative consumers differ in their humor preferences, particularly humor that denigrates other individuals or societal groups, and when and how brands that create humor in line with these preferences are rewarded by consumers. I briefly describe both essays below.

Essay 1: Punish Or Educate –

Political Ideology’s Impact on Consumer Motivations in Regulating Brand Morality

My first essay builds on recent scholarly endeavors to assimilate our understanding of consumers’ responses to perceived brand transgressions, particularly immoral transgressions (Khamitov, Gregoire, and Suri 2020; Valor, Antonetti, and Zasuwa 2022). To understand how these responses might differ among liberal and conservative consumers, I leverage Moral Politics Theory (MPT; Lakoff, 1996) and hypothesize that conservative consumers tend to be more focused on punishing the brand than to educate it, while liberals are more likely to be driven by both motivations. In line with MPT, I predict that this stronger punitive-focus of conservatives is due to their adherence to the ‘strict father’ worldview, which posits that there are absolute moral

rights and wrongs (also called ‘deontology’), that are set by a higher authority, which are not open to discussion, and any deviation from which must be punished. I find converging supportive evidence for these two predictions in five studies, including one large-scale (N=60,000+) secondary dataset.

In study 1, I ask online participants (N=239), prescreened to be either Democrats or Republicans, to recall either a moral transgression or a non-moral transgression that a brand had committed. I then asked them to report how important was the motivation to punish the brand and how important was the motivation to educate the brand, in their response towards the transgression. I find that Republicans were significantly more likely to report being driven by a need to punish the brand than to educate it when they recalled a moral transgression. Democrats did not differ in how important they considered the two motivations in response to the recalled moral transgression. Neither Republicans nor Democrats differed in relative importance of the two motivations for the non-moral transgression either. This suggests that conservatives might be more punitive-focused towards recalled moral transgressions.

In study 2, I investigate the causal role of consumers’ political ideology, and also whether these motivations impacted behavioral intentions. I manipulated how politically moderate Prolific workers (N=300) perceived their political position (Ordabayeva and Fernandes 2018) and asked them to recall a liberal-harming transgression (Starbucks not supporting its pro-Palestine workers’ union) and a conservative-harming transgression (Bud Light partnering with a transgender influencer). For each transgression (total

N=599), they reported their punitive socializing intentions (likelihood of taking punitive actions like boycotting and divesting stocks) and educative socializing intentions (likelihood of taking educative actions like petitioning and joining advocacy groups). I find that those who considered themselves more conservative also had stronger punitive-intentions than educative intentions when they perceived the transgression (committed by Starbucks or Bud Light) to be more harmful. Those who were made to consider themselves more liberal and those who did not engage with the manipulation did not differ as much in their relative brand socializing intentions. This suggests that conservatism plays a causal role in relatively higher punitive-focus in consumer response to real brand transgressions.

In study 3, I investigate whether this impact of conservatism extends to new, fictitious brand transgressions that consumers would have no prior attitude towards. In this study, online participants (N=202), prescreened to be liberal or conservative, saw three ‘ad concepts’, depicting either a liberal-harming transgression, a conservative-harming transgression, or a both-harming transgression, that a brand they are loyal towards is considering for an ad campaign. Participants first wrote a tweet about each ‘ad concept’ and reported whether they directed the tweet towards the transgressing brand or not (an educative socializing behavior), which would allow the brand to ‘listen’ to their concern on social media. They then reported how much they think the brand should be fined for the ad (a punitive socializing behavior). I find that liberal participants were more likely to tweet at the brand, but only for the liberal-harming transgression, suggesting they were more likely to engage in this educative behavior. I do not find any

differences in probability of directing the tweet towards other audiences, such as friends or family, or a consumer protection bureau. Also, conservative participants were more likely to levy higher fine amounts, but only when it commits a conservative-harming transgression. This suggests that conservatives engage in punitive behaviors more and liberals engage in educative behaviors more.

In study 4, I investigate the mediating role of socialization approaches. I predicted that conservatives' higher punitive focus is due to their stronger 'strict father' beliefs, which posits that the absolute standards that are set by an authority must be obeyed, and any deviance should be punished. I test for this mediation in a study design similar to study 3, but with different vignettes. Online participants (N=201), prescreened to be either liberal or conservative, saw three 'ad concepts', reported their educative motivation (need to educate relative to need to 'discipline') and punitive behavior (suggesting fine amounts). They also completed the Consequentialist Thinking Scale (Piazza and Sousa 2014) which measures how much they believed in absolute moral standards, a measure of their 'strict father' beliefs. I find that conservatives levy higher fines, but only for the conservative-harming transgression, and that liberals report a higher educative motive, but only for the liberal-harming transgression. I also find that conservatives' higher punitive behaviors are mediated by their belief in absolute moral standards, but liberals' higher educative motivations are not. This supports my theorized process mechanism, one's socialization approach, i.e., how one believes transgressions should be dealt with.

In study 5, I use a large-scale dataset, the World Values Survey (WVS Wave-7; Haerpfer et al. 2022), to test the generalizability of my predictions. The WVS Wave-7 surveyed over 60,000 respondents in 64 countries between 2017 and 2022 about their political and moral attitudes. To test my mediation hypothesis, I considered how WVS respondents' conservatism impacted their willingness to justify punitive actions, their preference for an autocratic leader, and the importance they place on autonomy in children. I then investigated whether these three proposed mediators impacted WVS respondents' relative socializing intentions (willingness to participate in a boycott relative to willingness to participate in a petition-signing). I find significant mediating indirect effects, suggesting that the more conservative WVS respondents were more willing to justify punitive actions, had a higher preference for an autocratic leader, and placed lower importance on autonomy in children. I also find that these three mediators did independently predict a relatively higher punitive intention. I also controlled for other related demographic markers (age, gender, education level, income level, religiosity level, and interest in politics), along with relevant country-level predictors (income inequality and freedom of expression) and region-level fixed effects. This suggests that my predictions about ideological differences in socializing motivations are generalizable beyond the U. S. consumer context and is indeed driven by my proposed mechanism.

Essay 2: That's (Not) funny:

Political Ideology driven differences in Humor Appreciation and Production

My second essay focuses on a setting where the brand's actions (particularly, its communications) can be considered more labile in terms of transgression, ranging from harmful to benign. The latter, as I demonstrate, results in humor that brands can leverage to forge deeper connections with their consumers. Humor is generated when a situation is perceived as a 'benign violation' (McGraw and Warren 2010), i.e., the audience not only perceives that something is wrong, but also that whatever is wrong is not harmful. For example, a person falling out of a window is funny only if the person is not injured. Hence, there is a 'Goldilocks zone' of humor that the humor producer and the audience must agree on for a joke to be successful. Therefore, brands must carefully test what type of humor resonates with their consumers, since consumers likely will not appreciate humor that is not consistent with their values.

However, not all humor has the ability to convey social values. A brand making a pun ("DONUT ruin their fun") or making fun of an object or a taboo topic ("this pasta was so bad that it made cancer look more appealing") is unlikely to ruffle feathers on either side of the political aisle. However, 'aggressive humor', i.e., jokes that denigrate an individual or a social group lowers the target's status in the eyes of the audience. This is a form of information that can be used to not only let others know how one perceives the targeted group, but also helps one identify whether the audience also shares this view or not based on whether they appreciate the joke or not. For example, when a loyal sports fan makes fun of a rival sports team, they are not only sharing information (that the rival team is socially inferior) but also checking their audience's allegiance (based on whether the audience laughs along or not). Hence, such jokes should be more likely to be

appreciated by those who desire to see their own group as superior (as opposed to seeing all groups as equal) and who are more focused on these ingroup-outgroup boundaries. Conservatives are known to have a stronger desire to see their ingroup as more socially superior to others, also called Social Dominance Orientation (SDO; Pratto et al. 1996). Thus, I predict, they should be more open to ‘aggressive humor’. I also predict a boundary condition. If the aggressive humor targets someone who is reinforcing social inequity, then this humor is more in line with liberals’ egalitarian values (that all groups should be socially equal), and thus, this particular type of aggressive humor should be more appreciated by them (compared with other instances of aggressive humor). I find evidence for these predictions in five studies, including a large-scale (N=1100) field experiment as well as an analysis of consumers’ humorous tweets.

In study 1, attendees at a large mid-western state fair (N=1100) rated five brand-related jokes (randomly assigned to have either an ‘aggressive’ punchline or an inoffensive, ‘affiliative’ one) in terms of funniness and offensiveness. They also completed the Humor Styles Questionnaire (Martin et al. 2003) as a measure of the extent to which they used aggressive humor (and affiliative humor) themselves. I find that not only were the more conservative participants more appreciative of the jokes with the ‘aggressive’ punchlines, but they also reported using more aggressive humor themselves. These results hold even after controlling for age, gender, education level, and income level. This suggests that conservative consumers might be more appreciative of aggressive brand-related humor.

In study 2, I asked online participants (N=200), prescreened to be either liberal or conservative, to share their own tweets with me that they think are humorous. A coder blind to my hypotheses classified these tweets as either humorous or not humorous. The coder then, along with another blind coder, classified the humorous tweets as either ‘aggressive’ or affiliative. I find that ‘aggressive humor’ tweets were a significantly higher proportion of the conservatives’ humorous tweets, compared with liberals. This further suggests that conservatives are more likely to use aggressive humor themselves¹.

In study 3, I used different, more humorous stimuli from an actual comedian (Bill Burr), who online participants (N=116) were told was a brand ambassador for three fictitious brands. These brands shared jokes of his on their social media that either denigrated men, women, or both. I find that conservatives appreciated the joke targeting women (the lower-status social group) more than liberals, but the two groups did not differ in how funny they found the joke targeting men (the higher-status group) or the joke targeting both (status-irrelevant). I also find that conservatives have an overall higher willingness to share aggressive humor than liberals (particularly for the joke targeting women). This again demonstrates that conservatives appreciate aggressive humor more than liberals.

¹ Consumers can socialize one’s ingroup by not just denigrating the outgroup, but also by denigrating undesired behaviors or characteristics of the ingroup as well (e.g., making fun of an outgroup members’ weight vs. teasing a friend about their hairstyle). The two coders also classified these ‘aggressive humor’ tweets on whether they targeted the outgroup or the ingroup. I find that liberals and conservatives did not differ in what proportion of their humorous tweets were ‘aggressive humor’ tweets that targeted the ingroup, but conservatives did have more ‘aggressive humor’ tweets that targeted the outgroup as a proportion of their total humorous tweets, compared to liberals. This provided preliminary evidence that SDO mediated my main findings.

In study 4, I manipulate online participants' (N=132) SDO and investigate how it impacts their appreciation of the men-denigrating and women-denigrating jokes from Study 3. I find that in the control conditions, I replicate my main finding (i.e., conservatives appreciate the two jokes more than liberals). However, when I manipulate their SDO to be high, liberals appreciate the aggressive humor jokes as much as conservatives (who have chronically high SDO). This evidence supports my hypothesis that SDO drives conservatives' higher appreciation of aggressive humor.

In study 5, I test my predicted boundary condition by showing online participants (N=401) three brands using aggressive humor (or affiliative humor) to deal with a social media commentor who is either reinforcing social-inequity or is raising a universal concern. I find that liberals find the response funnier (and like the brand more) when it uses aggressive humor in response to a commentor reinforcing social inequity than in response to a commentor raising a universal concern. This supports my boundary condition, that there are specific instances of aggressive humor that are also enjoyed by liberal consumers.

The rest of my dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter II contains my Essay 1, covering its introduction, theoretical framework, empirical findings of five studies, and a general discussion. Chapter III, similarly, contains my Essay 2, covering its introduction, theoretical framework, empirical findings of five studies, and a general discussion. Chapter IV then concludes my dissertation with a summary of the empirical evidence across essays and a discussion of limitations and directions for future research.

CHAPTER II:

ESSAY 1 – PUNISH OR EDUCATE: POLITICAL IDEOLOGY IMPACTS

CONSUMERS' MOTIVATIONS BEHIND REGULATING BRAND MORALITY

- *Bud Light Is No Longer America's Top-Selling Beer After boycott...over a promotional post by a transgender influencer*

New York Times, June 14, 2023

- *Target loses \$9B in week following boycott over LGBTQ-friendly kids clothing*

New York Post, May 25, 2023

- *Conservatives think Chick-fil-A is woke now? (It hired a VP of DEI)*

Vox, May 31, 2023

These vignettes demonstrate that consumers evaluate a brand's conduct not just in terms of its product and services, but also its promotional and business practices, which consumers expect to be consistent with the brand's societal role. Bud Light, Target, Chick-fil-A, Starbucks, Nike, Disney, and a host of other brands have been targeted by consumers because they violated some value or norm that some consumers hold dear, and caused serious damage to the transgressing brand's sales, profits, and brand equity. Some of this damage can also be long-lasting. Bud Light, which drew consumers' ire when it partnered with a transgender influencer for a marketing campaign in April 2023, reported 14% lower sales even six months after the campaign ended (Halff, 2023; Toh, 2023). Such negative consequences can stem not just from the brand's actions, but also inaction. Facebook's share prices fell 8.3% in June 2020 following calls for advertiser boycott due to CEO Mark Zuckerberg's silence regarding then U. S. President Donald Trump's

incendiary remarks about the Minneapolis protests against police brutality (Kareparambill, 2020).

Additionally, irate consumers often air their grievances on social media, divest stocks, pursue legal or political action, and even threaten violence against the brand and its employees. For example, the Bud Light 2023 controversy was further amplified by influential consumers, such as country musician Kid Rock, shooting cans of Bud Light (Huppke, 2023). Conservative politicians also threatened investigations and civil lawsuits (Benen, 2023; McGowan, 2023). Several Bud Light facilities received bomb threats (Weiner-Bronner, 2023). These adverse outcomes can also extend to brand ambassadors and other partnering brands, who will try to distance themselves from the transgressing brand. It therefore behooves brands to be highly vigilant regarding the potential repercussions of their actions and/or inaction towards sensitive socio-political issues.

These repercussions can be attributed to consumers expecting their preferred brands to align with their own *moral* worldview. About 53% of consumers believe that brands should be involved in at least one social issue that does not directly impact their business (Edelman Trust Institute, 2019). In contrast, only 34% expect the brands they patronize to “do what’s right”, suggesting a large gap in the ideal conduct expected from brands and their actual conduct. In a 2020 consumer survey, 38% of respondents reported that they were currently boycotting a brand, up from 26% just a year prior (Holmes & Sherrier, 2020). To make matters worse, on some highly divisive issues, there is no correct position that a brand can take. For example, the 2020 consumer report found that of the 38% boycotting a brand, 19% were boycotting a brand that supported the Black

Lives Matter (BLM) movement, while 18% were boycotting brands that weren't doing enough to support black lives. Similarly, 15% of boycotters were boycotting brands that mandated masks as a COVID-19 prevention measure, while 16% of boycotters were boycotting brands that were not doing so. Furthermore, brands nowadays can be the object of criticism from both sides of the political spectrum for their actions and subsequent response. For example, Target suffered backlash from conservatives after adding LGBTQ+ clothing in its stores during pride month (Meyersohn, 2023). On removing the product line in the face of the backlash, they were subject to further backlash from liberal pro-LGBTQ+ activists (Zahn, 2023).

In this chapter, I conceptualize such backlash as part of a *corrective* political socializing process. Through such backlashes, consumers attempt to influence the political values that brands espouse and the socio-political conduct that brands deem appropriate to engage in. While there can be more continuous, long-term forms of political socializing (such as brands learning what type of jokes they are allowed to make or corporate social work they are expected to do), I call these consumer retaliations *corrective* form of political socializing because consumers engage in them when the brand commits a transgression that they deem harmful, which must be corrected. However, this corrective form of political socializing need not be restricted to just consumer backlashes. In this chapter, I integrate the role of other, less punitive actions that consumers can also take in response to a brand's moral transgression. These can include actions like signing petitions and joining advocacy groups and social media campaigns targeted towards the brand. What differentiates these actions from the

consumer tactics discussed earlier is that they are relatively less punitive towards the brand and are more likely to explicitly detail desirable next steps. While the former set of tactics are more likely to get media and brand attention, they do not provide the brand credible long-term feedback that it can use to develop strategies that will prevent future adverse consequences.

Consumers' political ideology is an important determinant of a moral worldview. While conventional wisdom and past research suggests that liberals are more likely to boycott and complain (Jost, Langer, & Singh, 2017; Jung et al., 2017), recent research has demonstrated that conservatives are just as likely to engage in these behaviors (Fernandes, 2020; Shepherd, Athar, and Zaboli, 2023). My conceptualization of differences in moral perspectives between liberals and conservatives allows me to parse the circumstances under which a brand's violation will yield extreme or muted punitive responses. In particular, recent attempts at synthesizing the considerable scholarship regarding brand transgressions has focused primarily on the punitive aspects of consumer response (Khamitov, Gregoire, and Suri 2020; Valor, Antonetti, and Zasuwa 2022). Relatively little work has examined less punitive actions designed to provide constructive feedback to the brand (Heijnen & van der Made, 2012; Withey & Cooper, 1989; Andreasen, 1985). Even less is known about how these two types of actions vary systematically among consumer segments, a topic to which I turn next in my review of the literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

A need to influence and correct a brand's conduct arises when said conduct is seen as incongruent with one's own moral worldview. Once this need is identified, consumers, depending on their underlying motivations, will choose which actions, individual or collective, to engage in to help the brand correct its future conduct. In the sections that follow, I will detail each of these components of the consumer influence process, starting with what triggers this need for correction (moral transgressions), what motivations consumers might have while finding suitable actions to satisfy this need (punitive motivation and educative motivation), and how these motivations might differ in line with how consumers view morality, contingent on their political ideology.

Moral Transgressions

Morality can be defined as the set of standards² against which one's conduct can be judged to be 'right' or 'wrong'. A transgression occurs when consumers are dissatisfied, which itself stems from either a high-probability positive outcome not occurring, or a low-probability negative outcome occurring (Oliver, 1981). Typically, consumers expect the brands they like and purchase to conduct themselves in line with their own moral standards (a high-probability positive outcome) and expect these brands to not do something that goes against their moral standards (a low-probability negative

² What constitutes these standards is hard to define as they might not be universally consistent (Gert & Gert, 2002; Sinnott-Armstrong, 2016). Different societies have widely different standards not just in terms of how rigid or loose these standards are, but also in terms of what behaviors are covered under these standards. For example, while a significant number of Western societies today might consider same-sex attraction to not be 'immoral', i.e., morally wrong, that was not the case few decades ago. However, our current understanding of ancient Greek society suggests that same-sex sexual attraction back then was considered 'amoral', i.e., neither moral nor immoral. This means that a moral standard cannot be applied to it. Hence, most descriptive definitions of morality are relativistic, as they describe the moral standards of a particular society at a particular time.

outcome). Hence, when the high-probability positive outcome doesn't occur (e.g., liberal consumers seeing Disney be silent about Florida's HB-1557 'Don't say gay' bill), or the low-probability negative outcome occurs (e.g., conservative consumers seeing Bud Light partner with a transgender influencer), they perceive a moral transgression.

Past research exploring how consumers' political ideology impacts their response to transgressions in general has focused on the probability of complaining about the brand or boycotting the brand as their central inquiry. Jung, Garbarino, Briley, and Wynhausen (2017) found that liberals are more likely to complain than conservatives. Jost, Langer, & Singh (2017) found that liberals are more likely to boycott and propose that it is driven by their lower likelihood to believe that the world is a just and fair place. Furthermore, personality traits commonly associated with conservatism have been found to be associated with a lower likelihood to boycott (Ackermann & Gundelach, 2020), which carry with them an inherent social risk of being considered disagreeable by others (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004). However, more recent work posits that both liberals and conservatives might be equally likely to boycott, should the values they care about be violated, and might be more likely to complain, should the transgression be in a service context (Fernandes, 2020; Shepherd, Athar, and Zabouli, 2023). Further, nearly half of the boycotts (48.73%) in the past were centered around liberal concerns, such as human or animal rights, or environmental protection, with another quarter (26.44%) being partisan issues, such as Obamacare and Israel-Palestine tensions (Makarem & Jae, 2016). This is in contrast to a 2020 consumer report, which reported that 41% of Republicans and 40% of Democrats are currently boycotting at least one brand (Holmes & Sherrier,

2020). Thus, recent scholarly findings about political ideology's impact on consumers' responses might just be reflecting the increasing political divide, suggesting a need for a deeper investigation into the underlying motivations.

Beyond Punishing

Extant research on how consumers impact brands' moral decision-making has focused mostly on consumer responses like divesting stocks, switching to a competitor (Bougie, Pieters, & Zeelenberg, 2003), curtailing consumption, boycotting (curtailing consumption till the brand changes transgressing behavior), or "buycotting" (increasing consumption to reward the brand for 'good' behavior). In nearly all of these situations, the scope of the consumer's involvement is relatively narrow and provides only sparse feedback to the brand, judging the outcome based on whether the response was punitive or non-punitive. No feedback is provided to the brand on how its overall decision making process should change or what actions it ought to take to appease its consumer-base, beyond just ceasing its immediate transgressive action. It is possible for consumers to play this broader, more engaged role in guiding brand behavior through social media campaigns, petitions, and other forms of activism, which articulate consumers' expectations more concretely. Relatively little consumer behavior research has explored similar distinctions, such as whether a boycott had clearly stated goals that a brand can address or was primarily used to vent consumers' outrage (Ettenson and Klein, 2005). However, other streams of research investigating how individuals deal with transgressions have a more well-developed understanding of these underlying

motivations that I leverage in my research. For example, employees dissatisfied with the brand employing them can choose to either accept the brand conduct, voice their concern and engage with the brand, or punish the brand by just switching to another employer (Exit-Voice-Loyalty model; Hirschman 1970). Similarly, a parent responding to a transgression committed by their child can either not do anything about it, discuss and negotiate expectations with the child, or punish the child to instill obedience with non-negotiable standards (parenting styles; Maccoby and Martin 1983).

Thus, past research into consumer motivations in guiding brand conduct (particularly through boycotting) can be understood as a spectrum between a focus on punishing the brand (a *punitive* motivation) and a focus on educating the brand (an *educative* motivation). However, to my knowledge, researchers have not investigated whether these foci systematically differ between consumers and whether these unobservable moral motivations can be identified through observable demographic markers. I next explore political ideology, a demographic marker that I propose can help marketers understand how their consumers might respond to moral transgressions.

Political Ideology and Moral Socialization Motivations

According to the Moral Politics Theory (Lakoff, 1996), when deciding on how to discipline transgressors, people fall back on their childhood experiences. This theory suggests that one's experience and views about child-rearing and authority figures impact all social judgments, including in the domain of politics, morality in general, and, as I posit, brand morality in particular. On the one hand is the '*strict father*' worldview

according to which children are flawed and should be taught discipline and obedience, so that they follow the strict father unquestioningly. On the other hand is the ‘*nurturant parent*’ worldview according to which children are naturally good and are autonomous moral agents who ought to be guided by nurturant parents and should develop an individual sense of morality. Research shows that conservatives are more likely to believe in the ‘strict father’ worldview that calls for unquestioning obedience, and are more likely to believe in the existence of absolute right and wrong. Liberals, on the other hand, are more likely to subscribe to the ‘nurturant parent’ worldview and believe that parents should teach children how to be better through demonstration and discussion. They are less likely to believe in absolute right and wrong, that children must obey unquestioningly, but instead prefer to evaluate each instance of behavior individually while keeping context in mind. This is also reflected in parenting styles, where conservatism is linked with a more punitive style (Peterson, Smirles, and Wentworth 1997).

These observations can be linked to a vast supporting literature in political psychology. Jost’s social cognition view of political ideology (Jost et al., 2003) argues that conservatives are more susceptible to threats, ambiguity, and uncertainty. They also have larger right amygdalae and less gray matter volume in their anterior cingulate cortex, the brain regions associated with emotions and complexity processing, respectively (Kanai et al., 2011). They are also more likely to form and maintain opinions more quickly, to rely on ingroup norms, and to understand situations in simplistic terms (De Zavala, Cislak, and Wesolowska, 2010). This tendency also makes it less likely that

conservatives will seek additional information that context provides and instead subscribe to simpler judgments that absolute standards of right and wrong provide. They are also more likely to punish moral transgressions (Hofmann, et al., 2018) and believe in absolute moral rights and wrongs (Piazza and Sousa, 2014). Furthermore, conservatives have a higher need to identify with their ingroup and share a common idea of ‘reality’ with them (Jost et al., 2018), which is easier with clear predetermined rights and wrongs. Thus, taken together, conservative consumers might be more motivated to punish the offending brand than to educate it, compared to liberals, for whom both motivations should be comparatively equally important. I expect these motivations to be not differ as much in importance to liberals as in order to educate the brand, they would need to pose as a credible threat to it, which will require them to be equally open to punishing the brand as well. Without the threat of punitive actions, liberal consumers are unlikely to be taken as serious authority figures by brands who they are trying to educate. Formally:

H1: Conservative consumers are relatively more motivated to punish a brand that has violated a moral expectation, than to educate it. Liberal consumers do not differ between the two motivations.

H2: This difference in conservatives’ motivations should be driven by their parenting (‘strict father’) worldview.

To substantiate my claims, I report five studies, including one employing secondary data (see Table 1 for more details). I report my experimental procedures and findings next.

- - Insert Table 1 here - -

STUDY 1: RECALLED TRANSGRESSIONS & REPORTED MOTIVATIONS

Sample and Procedure

To investigate whether liberals' and conservatives' motivations differed in how they responded to a moral transgression, I conducted a 2 (partisan identity: Democrats vs. Republicans) X 2 (recalled brand transgression: moral vs. non-moral) between-subjects design study. Partisan identity, i.e., which political party one identifies most strongly with, is strongly correlated with one's political ideology, particularly in the U. S. I recruited 302³ Prolific workers (56.6% female, mean age = 41.87 years) and randomly assigned them to recall a time when a brand either "did something very wrong, from a moral point of view" (*moral transgression recall* condition) or "did something very wrong, but not from a moral point of view" (*non-moral transgression recall* condition). After writing a few sentences about this recalled experience (see Appendix 1A for examples), participants provided open-ended responses detailing how they would respond to this recalled transgression and what motivated their responses. Participants reported on two seven-point (1=not at all important to 7 = very important) scales how important a need to punish the brand and a need to educate the brand was in their response decision. Participants finally completed some demographic questions, as part of which they

³ The data collection for this study was done in two waves. However, no relevant analyses were conducted between the two waves. Results reported here do not vary substantively when data collection wave is added as an additional factor (see Appendix 1A for more details). I included a manipulation check in one of the two waves. Participants who recalled a moral transgression reported feeling significantly more outraged ($F(1,114)=13.595, p<.001$), but not surprised ($F(1,114)=1.456, p=.230$).

reported their partisan identity (Democrat, Republican, Independent, or Other). Those who chose Independent or Other were then asked which party, the Republican party or the Democratic Party, they leaned towards, or neither. These participants were then treated as a Democrat or Republican, depending on their leaning, consistent with prior research. Only those who didn't lean towards either party were labeled as true Independents.

Analyses and Results

I excluded 46 participants who failed to recall a transgression. I also excluded 17 participants who identified as true independents. The remaining 239 participants (54.8% female, mean age = 41.89 years) were included in further analyses.

Relative socializing motivations: I conducted a repeated-measures ANOVA with partisan identity and the recall condition as independent variables and the self-reported need to punish and need to educate scales as the repeated measures. Focusing on the planned contrasts of interest, I find that while recalling a moral transgression, Republicans self-report having relatively higher punitive motivation than educative motivation ($M_{\text{punitive}}=4.85$, $M_{\text{educative}}=4.06$, $F(1,235)=4.571$, $p=.034$, $\eta_p^2=.019$), while Democrats do not ($M_{\text{punitive}}=4.37$, $M_{\text{educative}}=4.60$, $F(1,235)=.505$, $p=.478$, $\eta_p^2=.002$). I also observe that, while recalling a non-moral transgression, there is no relative socializing motivation (punitive vs. educative) difference among Republicans ($M_{\text{punitive}}=3.65$, $M_{\text{educative}}=4.02$, $F(1,235)=1.141$, $p=.287$, $\eta_p^2=.005$) or Democrats ($M_{\text{punitive}}=3.17$, $M_{\text{educative}}=3.61$, $F(1,235)=1.732$, $p=.189$, $\eta_p^2=.007$). Thus, Republicans, who are highly

likely to be politically conservative, have a higher need to punish a brand than to educate it for moral transgressions, supporting my hypothesis H1 (see figures 1A and 1B).

-- Figures 1A and 1B --

Discussion

This study finds preliminary evidence that conservative consumers are more likely to punish firms than educate them for moral transgressions (H1). However, there are three main limitations of this study. First, I am focusing on partisan identity, not political ideology, *per se*. Second, as the participants recalled their own personal experiences with any brand, the differences I observe might be driven by differences in brand loyalty or how immoral the brand's actions were. Finally, it is possible that Democrat and Republican participants might be thinking of different responses when they report their motivations behind responding to the brand, and might view those actions differently in terms of punitive or educative orientation. I address these three limitations in study 2.

STUDY 2: RECENT TRANSGRESSIONS, MANIPULATED IDEOLOGY, AND SOCIALIZING INTENTIONS

In this study, I build on the procedure and findings of study 1 in four ways. First, I employ real transgressions that brands had committed in the year 2023. As liberal and conservative consumers are known to differ *a priori* at least in their boycotting likelihood based on whether they care about the type of moral value being violated, I include a brand transgression that harms a moral value that liberals care about (Starbucks suing its

pro-Palestine worker union) and a transgression that harms a moral value that conservatives care about (Bud Light partnering with a transgender activist)⁴. By using specific brands, I can measure and control for participants' prior attitudes towards the brands, which might have differed between liberals and conservatives in study 1. Second, I measure how harmful participants find these two transgressions, which enables me to compare liberal and conservatives' socializing motivations at different levels of perceived harm (when there's no harm, when there is little harm, and when there is significant harm). Third, I test whether a two-factor conceptualization of political socializing matches how participants see a broad set of responses they might have towards a brand transgression. I do so by presenting participants with a broader set of nine actions, and asking participants not only their intentions (their likelihood of taking the actions), but also how punitive or educative they consider them to be. And finally, I investigate the causal role of political ideology on consumers' socializing motivations by manipulating participants' political ideology, allowing me to rule out hidden, confounding factors. While consumers' political preferences are stable, they perceive their positioning on the left wing – right wing continuum relative to others around them. Consumers in a Republican state who report being a 3 on a 1 (extremely liberal) to 9 (extremely conservative) scale tend to be more liberal than consumers in a Democratic state who also report being 3 on the same scale (Feinberg et al., 2017). This difference in self-perceived

⁴ These two brand transgressions were selected based on a pretest with undergraduate students (see Appendix 1B), who were equally likely to recall both. However, as I report in the results and analyses section, politically moderate Prolific workers in this study were more likely to recall the Starbucks boycott and also found it more harmful. Hence, instead of analyzing these transgressions at the brand-level, I analyze them at the perceived harm-level. I address this limitation of this study in studies 3 and 4.

political ideology relative to others has been used in recent research to manipulate how consumers perceive their relative political ideology (Ordabayeva and Fernandes, 2018).

Study Design

To investigate whether the political socializing intentions among liberal-identifying vs. conservative-identifying consumers differed in response to real moral brand transgressions, I conducted a 2 cell (manipulated political ideology: liberal-identifying vs. conservative-identifying) between-subjects study. Participants were informed that the study will investigate how their social memory impacts their judgment and decision-making. Under the guise of this cover story, I asked them to share a ‘social memory’ with me, which was my political ideology manipulation procedure. This was followed by prompting them about the two recent transgressions: the liberal-harming transgression (the Starbucks incident) and the conservative harming transgression (the Bud Light incident) in a counterbalanced presentation. They reported their behavioral intentions (likelihood) of taking certain socializing actions against the brands and then rated each action in terms of how punitive or educative they considered the action to be. They also reported how wrong they considered each transgression to be and how loyal they were towards Starbucks and Bud Light. Then finally, they completed some demographic questions. I describe the study population and each task in the procedure below in more detail.

Sample and Procedure

Prolific workers (N=301, 58.1% female, 34.3% Democrat-leaning, 27.1% Republican-leaning (and 38.6% true Independents), mean age=41.03 years, age range=18-78 years) who were prescreened to be politically moderate were recruited to participate in a ‘social memory study’ in exchange for monetary compensation. I chose politically moderate consumers as I expected them to be more labile in their political positions (Brandt, Evans, and Crawford, 2015).

Political Ideology Manipulation: Participants were randomly assigned to either the *conservative position* condition or the *liberal position* condition. Participants assigned to the conservative position condition were asked to recall and write about a time when they were interacting with someone who was more politically liberal than they were, putting them in a more conservative position. Conversely, participants in the liberal position condition were asked to recall and write about a time they were interacting with someone who was more conservative than they were, putting them in a more liberal position. By contrasting themselves with someone with a more liberal or conservative set of values and thinking style, I expected participants to focus more on the values and thinking styles that align with their assigned ideology condition. After recalling these experiences, participants reported their political positions on three 1 (extremely liberal) to 9 (extremely conservative) scales corresponding to their overall position, position on social issues, and on economic issues.

Transgressions and Socializing Intentions: Participants were then reminded about the liberal-harming (Starbucks boycott) and conservative-harming (Bud Light boycott)

transgressions in a counterbalanced manner. They first reported whether they recalled the boycott or not (binary response). Then, for each boycott (assuming that it was still ongoing), I asked them their likelihood of taking nine actions (detailed next) against the brands on 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (very likely) Likert scales.

Set of Socializing actions: Eight of these nine actions were ‘boycotting the brand’, ‘writing negative reviews about the brand’, ‘joining social media campaigns against the brand’, ‘signing petitions to the brand’, ‘selling your shares in the brand (or asking others to sell theirs)’, ‘take or support legal actions against the brand’, ‘join advocacy groups targeting the brand’, and ‘buy products from the brand’s competitors’. I also added a ninth action, ‘buy more to support the brand’, to test whether my two-factor conceptualization of moral socializing was accurate and to control for participant inattention.

Perceived socializing motivation behind actions: After the participants had reported their likelihood of taking these actions against the two brands, I asked them to report how they viewed each action on a 1 (only punishing the brand) to 5 (only educating the brand) scale. They then reported how wrong they found each brand’s actions and how loyal they were towards each on 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) Likert scales. They finally answered some demographic questions, including a measure of partisan identity (same as in Study 1) and completed the survey.

Analyses and Results

Political Ideology Manipulation: I averaged the three manipulation check items into one ‘political positioning’ index ($\alpha=.806$) and conducted a one-way ANOVA with the manipulation condition (conservative-identifying position or liberal-identifying position) as the independent variable. Though the difference did not reach significance ($F(1,300)=1.925, p=.166$), it was in the expected direction. Past research suggests that political moderates can be moderates not only due to their ambivalence on political issues but also due to their political apathy (Rao, 2017). To account for this disinterest in politics, I used their self-reported partisan identity as a proxy. Those who reported being Democrat, Republican, or leaning towards either party were coded as interested in politics. True Independents, i.e., those who were not Democrat, Republican, or leaning towards either, were coded as not interested in politics. Of the 298 participants who had reported their partisan identity, 181 were coded as interested in politics and 117 were coded as not interested. To control for this interest in my manipulation check analysis, I conducted a mixed-effects ANOVA with the ideology manipulation condition (liberal-identifying or conservative-identifying) as the independent variable, their ‘political positioning’ index score as the dependent variable, and their interest in politics as the random factor. Looking at planned contrasts, I find that interest in politics did impact my manipulation. Among participants interested in politics, those in the ‘conservative-identifying’ condition rated themselves as significantly more conservative ($M_{\text{liberal}}=4.83, M_{\text{conservative}}=5.25, F(1,294)=4.681, p=.031$; see Figure 2A) than those in the ‘liberal-identifying’ condition. I do not find similar difference across conditions for the participants who are not interested in politics ($F(1,294)=.384, p=.536$). Hence, in the

analyses that follow, I focus only on the participants who were interested in politics (N=181)⁵.

-- Insert Figure 2A here --

Factor Analysis of response motivations: I conducted an exploratory factor analysis (see Appendix 1B for details) of the nine actions' underlying motivations using Principal components extraction method and Direct Oblimin rotation (delta=0) which converged in five iterations and extracted three components, which together explained 69.25% of the variance. I labeled the first factor (eigenvalue=3.569, %variance explained = 39.66%) 'punitive actions' as boycotting, selling shares, taking legal action, and buying more from competitors loaded the highest (loading > .7) on it. I labeled the second factor (eigenvalue=1.632, %variance explained = 18.14%) 'educative actions' as joining social media campaigns, signing petitions, and joining advocacy groups had the highest loadings on it. Finally, the third factor (eigenvalue=1.031, %variance explained = 11.45%), had only 'buy more to support the brand' load highly on to it, providing evidence for my two-factor conceptualization of consumers' socializing motivations. This third factor was excluded from further analyses, as was the action 'writing negative reviews' which did not load highly enough on any factor. Conducting similar analyses separately for self-reported Democrats (factor-1: eigenvalue=3.673, %variance explained = 40.81%; factor-2: eigenvalue=1.490, %variance explained = 16.56%) and Republicans (factor-1: eigenvalue=3.483, %variance explained = 38.70%; factor-2: eigenvalue=1.806,

⁵Analyses including the excluded responses did not substantively differ from those reported here (see Appendix 1B).

%variance explained = 20.70%) resulted in substantively the same two-component structure, suggesting that liberals and conservatives did not differ in terms of how they viewed these actions. The likelihood of responses to the actions that loaded on to the first two factors were averaged into a ‘punitive actions’ index ($\alpha=.835$) and an ‘educative actions’ index ($\alpha=.880$).

Boycott Recall and Perceived harm: Participants were significantly more likely to recall ($F(1,360)=173.176, p<.001; \eta_p^2=.325$) the Starbucks transgression (suing its pro-Palestine worker union) than the Bud Light boycott (partnering with a transgender influencer). They also found the Starbucks transgression to be significantly more harmful ($F(1,359)=10.254, p=.001; \eta_p^2=.028$) than Bud Light’s. This means that brand-level analyses, comparing Bud Light and Starbucks, will be comparing a less harmful conservative-harming transgression with a more harmful liberal-harming transgression. Any significant differences in socializing intentions observed in these brand-level analyses could thus be attributed to either the brands or to the differences in perceived harm of their transgressions. To eliminate this confound, instead of conducting brand-level analyses, I conducted perceived harm-level analyses. I classified each participant’s two transgression responses based on perceived harm. I had a total of 361 responses to transgressions⁶. I categorized these responses based on perceived harmfulness of the transgression (not harmful, less harmful, and more harmful). These were based on how wrong the respondent rated the brand’s actions (i.e., ‘not harmful’ if wrong=1 (not at all);

⁶ Each participant (N=181) provided responses to two transgressions, but one of the participants did not report how harmful they found the Bud Light transgression. This left me with 181 Starbucks transgression responses and 180 Bud Light transgression responses.

‘less harmful’ if wrong=2 or 3; ‘more harmful’ if wrong=4 or 5 (very much)). Hence, I had 361 responses coded as either not harmful (N=82), less harmful (N=151) or more harmful (N=128). These transgressions also did not differ in the extent to which they were recalled ($F(2,358)=1.807, p=.166; \eta_p^2=.010$), further suggesting that this perceived harm-level analysis would be more appropriate than a brand-level analysis.

Differences in Socializing Intentions: I then conducted a three-way ANCOVA with their averaged intention (likelihood) of taking punitive or educative actions as the dependent variable, and the type of action (punitive vs. educative), the perceived harmfulness (not vs. low vs. high) and manipulated ideology (liberal-identifying vs. conservative-identifying) as the fixed independent variables. I added their loyalty towards the brand as a covariate to control for attitudinal differences. Looking at theoretically-justified planned contrasts, I find that conservative-identifying participants reported significantly higher punitive intentions than educative intentions when they perceived the transgression as more harmful ($M_{punitive}=2.22, M_{educative}=1.83, F(1,709)=5.753, p=.017; \eta_p^2=.008$). This difference was marginally significant among liberal-identifying participants who also perceived the transgression as more harmful ($M_{punitive}=2.26, M_{educative}=1.95, F(1,709)=3.836, p=.051, \eta_p^2=.005$). Among those who perceived the transgression as less harmful, this difference was not significant for conservative-identifying participants ($M_{punitive}=1.53, M_{educative}=1.34, F(1,709)=1.312, p=.252, \eta_p^2=.002$), but was marginal for liberal-identifying participants ($M_{punitive}=1.55, M_{educative}=1.30, F(1,709)=3.306, p=.069, \eta_p^2=.005$). Those who did not perceive the transgression as harmful at all also had no significant differences in their socializing

intentions (conservative-identifying: $M_{\text{punitive}}=1.21$, $M_{\text{educative}}=1.14$, $F(1,709)=.084$, $p=.772$, $\eta_p^2=.000$; liberal-identifying: $M_{\text{punitive}}=1.38$, $M_{\text{educative}}=1.23$, $F(1,709)=.719$, $p=.397$, $\eta_p^2=.001$). Hence, conservative-identifying participants who perceived the transgression as more harmful are more punitive-focused than educative-focused in their behavioral intentions, while their liberal-identifying counterparts did not. Hence, manipulating participants to think more like conservatives seems to have increased their punitive motivations. This provides further evidence for H1 (see figures 2B, 2C, and 2D).

- - Insert Figure 2B, 2C, and 2D here - -

Discussion

This study provides evidence for my hypothesis H1 by replicating my findings with a different population and a different experimental design, which employs a different type of brand transgression and observes a different set of response actions. I also provide evidence for the two-factor conceptualization of brand socializing through an exploratory factor analysis. One potential limitation of my two studies so far is that they investigate how consumers respond to real-life brand transgressions, which consumers might have prior attitude towards, including whether the brand is liberal or conservative (Netzer and Schoenmueller 2019). These differences might bias their responses. I address this concern by investigating how consumers respond to novel, fictitious brand transgressions (Rao, Qu, and Ruckert 1999). I also measure actual socializing behavior, not just intentions.

STUDY 3: IMAGINED TRANSGRESSIONS AND SOCIALIZING BEHAVIORS

A common limitation of extant research is its reliance on pre-existing transgressions and on behavioral intentions. I addressed these two limitations in this study by employing novel, fictitious brand transgressions and by investigating behavioral correlates of the two socializing motives. The novel brand transgressions I use in this study were adapted from extant research on Moral Foundations Theory (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek 2009; Clifford et al. 2015), which posits that liberals and conservatives differ in terms of the moral values they care about. Liberals tend to value preventing harm to others and ensuring fair treatment of everyone (the ‘individualizing’ moral foundations) more than conservatives, who instead value respecting authority figures, being loyal to the ingroup, and keeping oneself physically and religiously ‘pure’ (the ‘binding’ moral foundations) more so than their liberal counterparts. I used three vignettes (see figures 3A, 3B, and 3C) to operationalize a liberal-harming transgression (‘boy throwing rocks at cows’), a conservative-harming transgression (‘woman spray-painting graffiti across the steps of the local courthouse’), and a ‘both-harming’ transgression (‘a teenager urinating in the pool at a crowded amusement park’). This *control* vignette allows me to observe a baseline transgression response and hence, investigate how the other two transgressions impact liberals and conservatives independently (instead of just against each other). I presented these vignettes to the participants under the guise of being ‘unusual ad concepts’ that a brand they are loyal towards is considering using in its next ad campaign. Many ads have led to consumer boycotts, such as Nike’s ad with Colin Kaepernick and Gillette’s ad targeting toxic masculinity, suggesting that consumers do evaluate the

morality of a brand's ads. Hence, I used evaluation of ad concepts as the cover story in the following pair of studies.

- - Insert Figures 3A, 3B, and 3C - -

While the two studies so far have demonstrated differences between punitive and educative motivations among conservatives through both self-reported motivations and behavioral intentions, it is plausible that these do not reflect actual socializing behavior. To address this concern, I investigate behaviors that reflect a punitive or an educative motive. However, real punitive and educative behaviors might not be directly comparable. For example, while the financial penalty a brand should incur for a transgression that a consumer suggests might serve as a behavioral measure of their punitive motivation, it is less obvious what comparable financial measure can serve as a behavioral measure of their educative motivation. Conversely, while 'tweeting' about a transgression and deciding whether one directs it towards the brand or not can serve as a measure of voicing one's concern with the brand, it is not apparent what its punitive counterpart will be. Hence, when investigating actual punitive and educative behaviors, I reformulate my hypothesis H1 as follows:

H1a: Conservative consumers should be more likely to punish a brand for its transgressions than liberal consumers.

H1b: Liberal consumers should be more likely to educate a brand for its moral transgressions than conservative consumers.

H1c: These differences should be more pronounced when the transgressions harm a moral value that the consumer (liberal or conservative) cares about.

An additional concern that using behavioral measures can address is the potential for self-presentation bias in the two studies so far. It is possible that liberals and conservatives might differ in how they perceive words like ‘punish’ and ‘educate’, with the former more likely to hold a negative connotation and the latter more likely to hold a positive connotation. Hence, participants might be under-reporting their punitive motivations and over-reporting their educative motivations. I also address this concern by using the projection technique of asking participants to estimate how individuals similar to them will respond to these measures.

Sample and Procedure

To investigate whether liberals and conservatives differ in actual socializing behaviors in response to moral transgressions, I conducted a 2 (ideology: liberals vs. conservatives) X 3 (transgression: liberal-harming vs. conservative-harming vs. both-harming) mixed-factor design, with participants’ ideology varying in a between-subjects manner and the transgressions varying in a within-subjects manner. Participants (N=202 Prolific workers, 58.41% female, mean age = 46.15 years) were informed that they will be evaluating three ‘ad concepts’. They were first asked to think of a brand towards which they were loyal, and then evaluate three ‘ad concepts’ that the brand is considering for its upcoming campaign. These vignettes were either a liberal-harming transgression, a both-harming (neutral) transgression, or a conservative-harming transgression, with all

three presented in random order. For each ad concept, participants first reported how they expected ‘people similar to [them]’ will rate the ad concept on a five-point (1=not at all wrong to 5=extremely wrong) Likert scale.

Educative behavior (tweeting ‘at’ the brand): Next, the participants wrote a tweet about the ad and what they felt. After writing the tweet, I asked them to pick who all the tweet was directed towards: close friends and family, general public, the brand, some politicians, some consumer protection activists, or some consumer protection government agency. Participants could choose as many sets of audiences as they wanted. Typically, such tweets about the negative experience (negative Word-of-Mouth) are a way for consumers to express their dissatisfaction with the brand. However, depending on who the tweet is directed towards, it has the potential to be punitive and/or educative. When directed towards potential customers (close friends and family or the general public) or authorities (politicians or government agency), such tweets can be a punitive action, but the odds that the brand will face any consequences from these other stakeholders will typically be quite low and the consequences, if any, might not be visible to the consumer themselves. Hence, though plausible, it is not highly likely that consumers would consider these tweets a punitive action. On the other hand, should they be targeting their tweet directly towards the brand (e.g., by mentioning the brand by name), there is a significant chance the brand might ‘listen’ to them on social media. Hence, the binary action of directing the tweet towards the brand was my behavioral measure of educative motivation.

Punitive behavior (levying fines): As a behavioral measure of their motivation to punish the brand, I asked them how much of a monetary fine people similar to them would levy on the brand for each transgression. They were informed that similar past transgressions were fined an amount of \$100,000, to anchor their responses. Finally, participants, as part of demographic questions, reported their political ideology on a 1 (extremely liberal) to 9 (extremely conservative) scale.

Analyses and Results

No participants were excluded in this experiment. Participants were median-split on the basis of their political ideology (liberals and conservatives; median=4).

Manipulation check (Perceived Harm): Conducting a two-way ideology*transgression ANOVA with the wrongness ratings for the three vignettes as the dependent variable and the transgression and participants' political ideology as the independent variables, I find a significant ideology*transgression interaction ($F(1,605)=8.518, p<0.001$). The simple effects of the transgressions suggest that liberals and conservatives did not differ in how wrong they found the both-harming transgression ($M_{\text{liberal}}=3.76, M_{\text{conservative}}=3.74, p=.898$), but differ marginally significantly for the liberal-harming transgression ($M_{\text{liberal}}=4.34, M_{\text{conservative}}=4.07, p=.073$) in the expected direction, and significantly for the conservative-harming transgression ($M_{\text{liberal}}=3.18, M_{\text{conservative}}=3.78, F(1,600)=15.064, p<.001$). Hence, the vignettes manipulate transgressions as intended (see figure 3D).

- - Insert Figure 3D here - -

Educative Behavior (Probability of tweeting 'at' the brand): I conducted a logistic regression with participants' probability of tweeting at the brand as the dependent variable, and their ideology and the transgression as the independent variables. The regression yielded a marginally significant interaction ($p=.051$). Looking at simple effects (see Figure 3E), I find that liberals have a higher probability of tweeting at the brand than conservatives, but only when it commits a liberal-harming transgression ($p=.043$), but not when it commits a both-harming transgression ($p=.408$) or a conservative-harming transgression ($p=.321$). I do not find a significant interaction for tweeting at close friends ($p=.825$), the general public ($p=.550$), politicians ($p=.491$), consumer protection activists ($p=.692$), or a consumer protection agency ($p=.376$). This unique, significant interaction for only the brand provides further support for my hypotheses H1b and H1c.

Punitive Behavior (Fines levied): As a behavioral measure of the need to punish, participants reported how much they think the FTC should fine the brand for each of the three transgressions. Using these fine amounts (log-transformed) as the dependent variable in a two-way ideology*transgression ANOVA yielded a significant ideology*transgression interaction ($p=.022$; see Figure 3F). Looking at simple effects, conservatives levied higher (log-transformed) fines than liberals, but only for the conservative-harming transgression ($M_{\text{liberal}}=6.59$, $M_{\text{conservative}}=8.24$, $p=.010$), but not the liberal-harming transgression ($M_{\text{liberal}}=9.93$, $M_{\text{conservative}}=9.08$, $p=.190$) or the both-harming transgression ($M_{\text{liberal}}=7.19$, $M_{\text{conservative}}=7.49$, $p=.638$). This supports my hypotheses H1a and H1c.

- - Insert Figures 3E and 3F here - -

Discussion

Study 3 provide further evidence for ideology-driven differences in socializing motivations, using measures of actual behaviors⁷, particularly when the transgression harms the moral value that that ideologue cares about. In the studies that follow, I provide evidence for my mediation hypothesis H2, which posits that this difference is driven by differences in moral socializing worldviews (‘strict father’ vs. the ‘nurturant parent’ worldview).

STUDY 4: PROCESS MEDIATION

The studies so far have provided evidence, through both self-reports and behavioral measures, that conservative consumers are relatively more likely to be driven by a need to punish brands for moral transgressions than to educate them, while liberals are equally motivated to do both. In this study, I investigate the proposed underlying mechanism, that conservatives’ have a stronger belief in the ‘strict father’ worldview which is predicated on the notion of absolute moral right and wrong. These absolute standards must be enforced through punishment and cannot be addressed through discussion. Hence, I expect to see this belief in absolute moral standards to mediate the impact of ideology on punitive behaviors, but not educative behaviors.

⁷ See Appendix 1C for an additional study that provides further converging evidence of liberals being more likely to be educative-focused, based on the instances of word of mouth (WOM) that they are likely to share.

Sample and Procedure

Similar to study 3, I conducted a 2 (ideology: liberals vs. conservatives) X 3 (transgression: liberal-harming vs. conservative-harming vs. control) mixed-factor design study, with participants' ideology varying in a between-subjects manner and the transgressions varying in a within-subjects manner. I recruited 201 Prolific workers, prescreened to be either liberal or conservative (55.9% female, 50.7% conservative, mean age=40.86 years, age range = 18-78 years) to participate in this study judging three 'unusual ad concepts' in exchange for monetary compensation. Similar to study 3, participants were first asked to think of a brand towards which they are loyal and then judge three 'unusual ad concepts' that the brand is considering for its next ad campaign (see Figures 4A, 4B, and 4C). These two vignettes depicted transgressions of either a liberal moral value (care: a man canceling a blind date after seeing a woman) or a conservative moral value (authority: girl disobeying her fathers' curfew) presented in a counterbalanced manner. The control vignette depicted a social norm transgression, not a moral norm transgression (reading the ending of a spy novel before reading the beginning). For each vignette, participants reported how they expect people similar to them would rate the vignette (1=not at all wrong, to 5=extremely wrong scale) and how much of a monetary fine people similar to them would suggest that the Federal Trade Commission levy on them if other similar firms were fined \$100,000 for similar transgressions. This fine amount, similar to study 3, was my punitive behavior measure. Participants also reported on a seven-point (1=need to DISCIPLINE the brand, to 7=need to EDUCATE the brand) bipolar scale which point best described the motivations of

people similar to them when they choose the most appropriate way to respond to such wrongdoing. By using the word ‘discipline’ instead of ‘punish’ in this study, I rule out the alternate explanation that my findings are driven by negative connotations attached to the word ‘punish’. This scale, serves as my measure of the educative motive. After evaluating the three vignettes, participants completed the Consequentialist Thinking scale (Piazza and Sousa 2014) which measures how context dependent one’s moral decision-making is by asking participants to rate thirteen morally-dubious acts on three-point Likert scales (1=’never morally permissible’, 2=’if doing so will produce greater good than bad, then it is morally permissible’, and 3=’if doing so will produce greater good than bad, then it is morally obligatory to do so’). These thirteen acts were: breaking a promise, killing, assisted suicide, torture, incest cannibalism, malicious gossip, stealing, lying, deception, betrayal, and treason. Participants finally answered a few demographic questions, including their political ideology, similar to prior studies, and reported their gender.

- - Insert Figures 4A, 4B, and 4C here - -

Analyses and Results

Manipulation check (perceived harm): No participants were excluded in this study. I conducted a two-way ANOVA with participants’ median-split political ideology and the type of transgression as independent variables, and perceived harm as the dependent variable. This ANOVA yielded a significant ideology*transgression interaction ($F(2,603)=9.402, p<.001$). Planned contrasts suggest that liberals and

conservatives differed in how harmful they found the conservative-harming transgression ($M_{\text{liberal}}=2.96$, $M_{\text{conservative}}=3.48$, $F(1,597)=12.778$, $p<.001$) and the liberal-harming transgression ($M_{\text{liberal}}=3.67$, $M_{\text{conservative}}=3.29$, $F(1,597)=6.539$, $p=.011$), but not the social norm transgression ($M_{\text{liberal}}=1.57$, $M_{\text{conservative}}=1.63$, $F(1,597)=.180$, $p=.672$). Hence, the manipulation worked as intended (see Figure 4D).

- - Insert Figure 4D here - -

Educative motivation ('Discipline' to 'Educate'): I conducted a similar two-way ANOVA with participants' self-reported educative motive (ranging from 'discipline' to 'educate'). Planned contrasts reveal that while there is no difference between liberals' and conservatives' educative motive when the transgression violates a social norm ($M_{\text{liberal}}=4.61$, $M_{\text{conservative}}=4.73$, $F(1,597)=.261$, $p=.609$) or a conservative moral value ($M_{\text{liberal}}=4.67$, $M_{\text{conservative}}=4.64$, $F(1,597)=.016$, $p=.900$), liberals do have significantly higher relative educative motive when the transgression violates a liberal value ($M_{\text{liberal}}=4.79$, $M_{\text{conservative}}=4.13$, $F(1,597)=7.902$, $p=.005$). This is consistent with my hypotheses H1b and H1c that liberals are relatively more likely to educate a brand than conservatives, particularly for a liberal-harming transgression (see figure 4E).

- - Insert Figure 4E here - -

Punitive behavior (suggested fine amount): Log-transforming the fine amount suggested by each participant for each transgression I conducted a two-way median-split-ideology*transgression ANOVA. Looking at planned contrasts, I find that liberals and conservatives do not significantly differ in log-transformed suggested fine amounts when

the transgression violates a social norm ($M_{\text{liberal}}=1.05$, $M_{\text{conservative}}=2.10$, $F(1,597)=2.552$, $p=.111$) or a liberal moral value ($M_{\text{liberal}}=4.57$, $M_{\text{conservative}}=5.38$, $F(1,597)=1.506$, $p=.220$), but conservatives do suggest significantly higher fine amounts when the transgression violates a conservative value ($M_{\text{liberal}}=3.70$, $M_{\text{conservative}}=5.28$, $F(1,597)=5.770$, $p=.017$). This is consistent with my hypotheses H1a and H1c that conservatives are relatively more likely to punish a brand than liberals, particularly for a conservative-harming transgression (see figure 4F).

- - Insert Figure 4F here - -

Mediation through belief in absolute moral standards: I combined the thirteen-item CT scale ($\alpha=.850$) into one belief in ‘absolute moral standards’ measure, with lower values suggesting a stronger belief in absolute moral standards. Conducting mediation analyses (model 4) using Hayes PROCESS with 5000 bootstrapped samples, I find that the belief in absolute moral standards has a significant indirect effect on punitive behavior (indirect effect $=-.5192$, $SE=.1536$, 95% $CI=(-.8432, -.2453)$), but not educative motive (indirect effect $=.0269$, $SE=.0381$, 95% $CI=(-.0489, .1009)$). This is consistent with my proposed mediation hypothesis H2, that conservatives relatively stronger punitive motives are driven by their adherence to the ‘strict father’ worldview, operationalized here as belief in absolute moral values that must be followed without question (see Figures 4G and 4H).

- - Insert Figures 4G and 4H here - -

Discussion

In this study, I find evidence for both my predicted main effect as well as my predicted process mechanism. I find that conservatives recommend a higher fine amount, suggesting a higher punitive motivation, and also report a relatively lower focus on educating the brand. I find that the former is mediated by conservatives' stronger belief in absolute moral standards, evidence of their 'strict father' worldview. A limitation of this study is that the punitive behavior measure and educative motive measure are not comparable and hence it is plausible that the difference in mediation results might be due to differences in measurement. In the next study, I provide converging evidence for my process mechanism through a large-scale secondary data set, that spans a number of countries and years, and records respondents' actual behavior (boycotting and petitioning), allowing me to further explore the generalizability of my predictions.

STUDY 5: EVIDENCE FROM WORLD VALUES SURVEY

While the studies so far provide converging evidence from the U. S. marketplace and political landscape, it is questionable whether my findings can be generalized beyond this context. I investigate greater external validity of my experimental findings through secondary data analysis, using the World Values Survey (WVS) wave 7, which surveyed representative samples in 64 countries/territories between 2017 and 2022.

Selected Measures

I detail below the independent variable, covariates, dependent variable, and the three mediators I identified in the World Values Survey which I believe to be germane to my research.

Independent variable and covariates: Respondents located their political ideology on a ten-point (1=left wing to 10=right wing) Likert scale. I also controlled for other demographic markers such as age, gender, income level, education level, interest in politics and their level of religiosity. I also controlled for two country-level⁸ predictors, income inequality and freedom of expression, as well as region-level fixed effects (seven regions: Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, North America, Middle East and North Africa, Latin America and Caribbean, Europe and Central Asia, East Asia and Pacific).

Dependent variable: WVS respondents were asked if they have (or considered) signed a petition or joined a boycott in the past 12 months on three-point Likert scales (1='have done', 2='might do', and 3='would never do'). By reverse-coding both and subtracting the likelihood to petition from the likelihood to boycott, I created a scale of relative likelihood of engaging in boycotting vs. petitioning (-2=have petitioned but won't boycott to 2=have boycotted but would never petition) which I use as the operationalization of relative socializing motivation. Based on my predictions, I expect the relative punitive motivation to increase with conservatism.

Mediating variables: WVS respondents completed a 23-item Ethical Values measure, a 5-item Political Culture and Political Regimes scale, and an 11-item Children Qualities battery. I picked relevant items from these as my mediating variables as I detail below.

⁸ I opt to control for relevant country-level predictors and region-level fixed effects, instead of country-level fixed effects, due to technical constraints. The mediation analysis package I use, Hayes PROCESS for SPSS, only allows up to 15 covariates, and thus, cannot be used to estimate fixed effects for 64 countries.

Openness to justifying punitive actions: Nineteen items in the Ethical Values measure asked participants to rate on ten-point (1=never justifiable to 10=always justifiable) Likert scale how justifiable they found certain morally-ambiguous actions. I identified five of these actions, 'for a man to beat his wife', 'parents beating children', 'violence against others', 'terrorism as a political, ideological, or religious mean', and 'political violence' as punitive in nature. Exploratory factor analysis (principal components extraction with direct oblimin zero-delta extraction) for all nineteen items converged in five iterations and yielded three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, explaining 60.84% of the total variance. The first of these factors seemed to have a common theme of economic immorality, with an eigen value=6.915, and explained 36.40% of the total variance. The five items ($\alpha=.812$) that loaded heavily on this factor were 'Claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled', 'Avoiding a fare on public transport', 'Stealing property', 'Cheating on taxes', and 'Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties'. The second factor extracted reflected the theme of economic immorality, had an eigenvalue=3.443, and explained 18.12% additional variance. Eight items loaded heavily (i.e., loading > 0.6) on this factor. These items ($\alpha=.910$) were 'homosexuality', 'prostitution', 'abortion', 'divorce', 'sex before marriage', 'suicide', 'euthanasia', and 'having causal sex'. The final factor that emerged, with eigenvalue=1.202 and explaining 6.33% additional variance was the set of actions I had identified as punitive immorality, which I combined into a punitive motivation index ($\alpha=.833$). The item 'death penalty' had less than 0.6 loading on all three factors and was hence excluded from further analyses. Correlating it with the respondent's political

ideology, I find that factor-3 (justification for punitive immorality; $r=.065$, $p<.001$, $N=68103$) increased with an increase in conservatism. This is in line with prior literature, which suggests that conservatives, who hold the ‘strict father’ worldview, should be relatively more open to justifying punitive actions as a means of governance or discipline (Lakoff, 1996). I use this ‘willingness to justify punitive actions’ as a mediator, predicting that such willingness should increase with conservatism, and this increase in willingness should lead to higher relative punitive motivation (boycotting vs. petitioning).

Preference for Autocratic Leader: I used two of the five items from the Political Culture and Political Regimes scale, ‘Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections’ and ‘Having the army rule’ as another measure of operationalizing the ‘strict father’ worldview. Participants responded to both these items on four-point (1=very good to 4=very bad) Likert scales, which I reverse-coded and averaged to represent their preference for an autocratic leader. I predict that this preference for autocratic leader would increase with conservatism, and relative punitive motivation would increase with increase in this preference.

Importance of Autonomy in Children: Participants were asked to choose up to five qualities, from a battery of eleven qualities, that they considered important for children to learn at home. These eleven qualities are ‘Good manners’, ‘Independence’, ‘Hard work’, ‘Feeling of responsibility’, ‘Imagination’, ‘Tolerance and respect for other people’, ‘Thrift, saving money and things’, ‘Determination, perseverance’, ‘Religious faith’, ‘Not being selfish (unselfishness)’, and ‘Obedience’. Three of these qualities, ‘Imagination’,

‘Independence’, and ‘Obedience’ (reverse-coded), are combined together in WVS to form the Welzel Autonomy index, which represents participant’s stated importance of autonomy as an important quality in children. As an important component of moral governance beliefs is fostering autonomous moral decision-making in children, I consider this index to be germane to my research. I expect that this importance given to autonomy in children will decrease with conservatism, and relative punitive motivation would decrease with increase in importance given to autonomy in children.

Mediation analyses

I conducted three mediation analyses through Hayes PROCESS (model 4; 5000 bootstrapped samples) with participants’ political ideology as the independent variable, their relative punitive motivation (likelihood to boycott compared to likelihood to petition) as my dependent variable, and one of the three identified mediators (openness to justifying punitive actions, preference for an autocratic leader, and importance of autonomy in children) as my mediating variable. I also added the demographic markers, country-level predictors and respondents’ region (dummy-coded) as covariates. I discuss each mediation model’s result below.

Openness to Justifying Punitive actions: Adding participants’ openness to justifying punitive actions (N=49,828) as the mediating variable yielded a significant indirect effect of justifying punitive actions (indirect effect=.0011, SE=.0001, 95% CI=(.0009,.0014)), even after controlling for the aforementioned covariates. I find that willingness to justify punitive actions increases with conservatism (path-a: β =.0394,

$p < .001$) and relative punitive motivation increased as willingness to justify punitive actions increases (path-b: $\beta = .0286$, $p < .001$). This provides further, more generalizable evidence, for my mediation hypothesis H2 (see figure 5A).

Preference for an Autocratic Leader: I conducted a similar mediation model 4 analysis with participants' ($N=49,342$) preference for a strong autocratic leader as a mediating variable. I find a similar significant indirect effect for the preference for the strong autocratic leader (indirect effect = .0014, $SE = .0002$, 95% $CI = (.0011, .0018)$) even after controlling for the covariates. I find that the preference for an autocratic leader increases as conservatism increases (path-a: $\beta = .0389$, $p < .001$), and that relative punitive motivation increases with the preference for an autocratic leader (path-b: $\beta = .0372$, $p < .001$), providing additional evidence for H2 (see figure 5B).

Importance of Autonomy in Children: Conducting similar mediation with the participants' ($N=49,136$) Welzel Autonomy Index as the mediating variable, I find a significant mediating effect (indirect effect = .0001, $SE = .0001$, 95% $CI = (.0000, .0003)$). I find that the importance given to autonomy in children decreases as conservatism increases (path-a: $\beta = -.0058$, $p < .001$), and that relative punitive motivation decreases with the preference for an autocratic leader (path-b: $\beta = -.0245$, $p = .032$). This provides further evidence for my mediation hypothesis H2 (see figure 5C).

12- - Insert Figures 5A, 5B, and 5C here - -

Discussion

Using the latest wave of World Values survey (wave 7; N=over 60,000 respondents, 64 countries, 4 years), I find mediation evidence that conservatives' relatively higher punitive motivations can be explained by their stronger belief in the 'strict father' worldview, as seen by their openness to justifying punitive actions, their preference for an autocratic leader, and the lower importance they give to autonomy in children. I next discuss the theoretical and managerial implications of my findings.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I provide a broader conceptualization of consumer backlash to moral transgressions as part of a long-term political socializing process, in which consumers are trying to influence the values and practices that brands exhibit in the socio-political context. I also include in this conceptualization, other, more educative actions that consumers engage in to influence brands' political socializing. I hypothesize and find evidence that liberal and conservative consumers differ in how much they are driven by these socializing motivations. I predict that conservatives are driven more by a punitive motive than an educative motive, while the two are equally important for liberal consumers. I also predict that these differences in conservatives' relative socializing motivations emerge from their socializing approach, the 'strict father' worldview, according to which any transgression against the standards set by the higher authority needs to be punished, not discussed.

Across five studies, I find converging evidence for these predictions. In study 1, Republican participants who recalled a moral brand transgression reported stronger

punitive motivations than educative motivations. Democrats did not report any such difference in their socializing motivations. In study 2, I manipulate participants' political ideology and observe their socializing intentions across a broad set of actions for two recent brand transgressions. I find that conservative-identifying participants who found the transgression to be more harmful reported the most significant difference in their socializing motivations. In study 3, I use novel, fictitious brand transgressions to investigate individual socializing motivations (independent of ingroup influences or prior attitudes). I find that conservatives engage in significantly more punitive behavior (levying fines) and liberals engage in significantly more educative behavior (tweeting 'at' the brand), particularly when their own revered moral value is the one violated in the brand transgression. In study 4, I demonstrate mediation evidence by showing that conservatives' higher levied fine amounts are driven by their higher adherence to absolute moral standards, which are a necessary pre-requisite for the 'strict father' worldview, which posits that any deviance from such absolute standards must be punished, not discussed. I provide further converging evidence, and demonstrate the generalizability of my findings, through the World Values Survey wave-7. I show that conservative WVS respondents were more willing to justify punitive actions, had a stronger preference for an autocratic leader, and gave less importance to autonomy in children. These attitudes are in line with a 'strict father' worldview, and I show that these mediators result in higher punitive behavior (compared to educative behavior). Hence, across five studies, I find evidence suggesting that conservatives have a relatively stronger need to punish the brand for its moral transgressions than to educate it, and that

this is driven by their socialization approach, according to which there are absolute moral standards, that need not be discussed, and any deviation from which must be punished.

Theoretical Contributions

I expect this dissertation chapter to make four important contributions to our understanding of consumer psychology. First, I add to the growing set of evidence for the causal impact political ideology has on consumers' decision-making. The role of political ideology in consumer behavior has recently begun to receive considerable scholarly scrutiny in marketing and consumer behavior research, featuring articles in our major journals (cf., Winterich, Zhang and Mittal 2012, Jung et al. 2017, Ordabayeva & Fernandes, 2018, Han et al. 2019, Fernandes et al. 2022), as well as Special Sessions in high profile conferences. This interest is driven in part by the "sheer volume of money spent on political campaigns" (Kim, Rao and Lee, 2009, p. 877) and in part by the role political ideology has come to play in brand preferences. Second, this dissertation chapter also provides a more comprehensive understanding of how consumers respond to moral transgressions, complementing other recent works of a similar vein (Khamitov, Gregoire, and Suri 2020; Valor, Antonetti, and Zasuwa 2022). Third, this chapter deepens our understanding of boycotts and other consumer responses to moral transgressions, by shifting the focus from their short-term likelihood to long-term, socializing motivations. While extant research has focused on how political ideology predicts boycott likelihood, in the current politically divisive climate, regular consumers as well as political elites, such as news media personalities, activists, and politicians are at the helm calling for

these boycotts. Though these elites might dictate who is boycotted, they do not dictate the motivations individuals have for participating in these or other relative tactics. My research makes a unique contribution through investigating precisely this question. Fourth, I contribute to extant consumer behavior literature by investigating moral decision-making as a complex, learned process, dependent on more than just moral values, which have been the focus so far in consumer psychology.

Relevance for Practitioners

Conservative backlash to corporate activities aligned with progressive views, particularly diversity and LGBTQ+ inclusivity initiatives have been estimated to have cost the U. S. economy \$28.7 billion in just the month of April 2023 (David, 2023). Despite experts suggesting brands should continue to work and talk about these progressive efforts (Bradley, 2023), more and more brands are choosing to not engage. For example, more and more brands are keeping quiet about their sustainability goals and efforts (Lundstrom, 2023) and are choosing to “play things safe” when advertising during Super Bowl 2024 (Steinberg, 2024). However, many fear that such punitive backlashes might be devaluing these tactics themselves. Hence, it is in the interest of not just marketers and consumers, but also policymakers and consumer activists to reconsider how consumers socialize brands as moral agents. My research brings attention to the broader scope of consumers’ motivations, not just the short-term backlash but also the long-term socializing, that will allow all stakeholders to play a richer, more engaged role

in the discourse. I detail the managerial, policy, and activist implications of my work below.

For marketers, my research provides four broad recommendations. First, my ‘socialization process’ view opens up new avenues for marketers and consumer behavior researchers exploring how brands should deal with irate consumers. The rich literature on parenting styles and parent-child conflict resolution (for example, see Maisel 2018) can help brands like Bud Light and Target decide whether they should remain silent (limiting contact), be respectful but firm, call out the disproportionate outrage, apologize to minimize short-term punishment (engage), or recruit other conservative voices or even liberal consumers (seek support). Second, my broader view of consumer tactics as not just punitive but also educative suggests that marketers can explore strategies that shift consumers’ focus and preference from punitive tactics like boycotting to educative tactics like petitioning or social media campaigns. Such shifts might be more easily accomplished for liberal consumers, while conservative consumers might need more incentives or persuasion. Third, my finding that liberal consumers are more likely to engage with brands to educate them can also be leveraged in how brands can preemptively contain a boycott. As liberals are more likely to tweet ‘at’ the brand directly, liberal boycotts might be easier for brands to predict. Confidential documents from Facebook reported that its AI-powered predictive engine ‘FBLearner Flow’ can help advertisers identify consumers ‘at risk’ of switching to a competitor (Biddle, 2018). Similar predictions for consumers ‘at risk’ of being outraged and boycotting might be easier to develop for liberal consumers. Fourth, my long-term view of these tactics as

socialization processes can also help marketers determine how they can rebuild their reputation in the long-run. When British Petroleum was implicated in the 2010 Gulf Oil Spill crisis, it was able to leverage the event in later years as an opportunity to learn from consumers. Such a campaign might have been successful because the audience for it was politically liberal consumers. My research suggests that such long-term branding efforts might not be as appreciated by conservative consumers, who are less motivated to educate the brand.

For policymakers and consumer activists, my research provides three broad recommendations. First, conservatives' stronger motivation to punish than educate suggests that conservative boycotts might be relatively more damaging to brands and the economy at large than their liberal counterparts. Hence, both policymakers and activists might need to engage and intervene more with conservative boycotters to seek feedback and mitigate disproportionate harm. Second, as conservatives are less educative motive-driven (and less likely to tweet 'at' the brand), it is important for policymakers and good-faith activists to step in sooner and engage with conservative consumers to identify educative opportunities for the transgressing brand on their behalf. Third, as conservative consumers are less educative motive-driven, they would be less likely to appreciate dialogue with the transgressing brand. Hence, policymakers, activists, and maybe even product category associations might need to intervene more on behalf of a brand that commits a conservative-harming transgression than a liberal-harming transgression.

Limitations and Future Research

There are four main limitations of this work that I would like to acknowledge as potential avenues for future research. First, in line with all political ideology research, it is possible that my findings might be driven by some unobserved construct instead. Two important ones would be religiosity and cultural differences, as both are strongly correlated with political ideology. However, by manipulating political ideology (study 2), and controlling for other demographic markers (study 5), I reduce the likelihood of these alternate explanatory variables⁹. Though I do not test whether the political ideology manipulation that I have adapted from extant research necessarily impacts the moral governance beliefs the participants held, I believe there is a significant likelihood that it should as many political issues that liberals and conservatives differ on are related to how transgressors (or perceived transgressors) should be dealt with, such as crime and punishment, social safety nets, etc. (Feinberg et al. 2020). It is also possible that my assumption that participants at the midpoint of my ideology scale are disinterested in politics is inaccurate. However, since including these participants in additional analyses does not change my findings, I believe this assumption is not critical to my findings. Second, consumers might have other motivations for participating in consumer boycotts or other forms of backlash, such as protecting other consumers from the brand's transgression. However, as these are not directed towards the brand, I do not consider them a part of the socialization process that I have conceptualized in this research. Third, the list of socializing actions that I have investigated in my studies are not an exhaustive

⁹ See Appendix 1D for the distributions of self-reported political ideology and partisan-identity in each study.

list of all consumer responses to brand transgression and their classification as punitive and/or educative and as a behavioral intention or actual behavioral outcome might not be universally accepted. Though, I have tried to address this concern by investigating a wide range of behavioral intentions and using measures other than likelihood scales (such as tweeting and suggesting fines), future research, particularly studies using more representative consumer samples, could better address this concern by identifying and incorporating additional socializing actions and scrutinizing whether my predicted differences in conservatives' relative socializing motivations still hold for these actions. Finally, in this research I do not address the other end of political consumerism, which is when consumers buy more of the brands that they support morally (called *boycotting*). As this action does not stem from corrective political socialization, but rather continuous political socialization, I anticipate future research will disentangle how liberals and conservatives might differ in their openness to boycotting and their motivations behind doing so.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I conceptualize the typical consumer responses to moral transgressions by brands as part of a long-term socializing process in which consumers are trying to influence the values that brands espouse and the conduct they deem acceptable. I expand this set of socializing actions to include not just punitive-focused actions, like boycotting or brand-switching, but also more educative-focused actions, like petitioning and advocacy. I predict that these punitive and educative motives to socialize

brands might differ along political lines due to differences in the socializing approaches which each ideology subscribes to. Across five studies, I demonstrate that conservatives are relatively more punitive focused than educative focused while liberals are equally driven by both socialization motives. I also demonstrate that this higher punitive focus of conservatives stems from their ‘strict father’ worldview, as seen in their stronger belief in absolute standards, their preference for autocratic leaders, and willingness to justify punitive actions. Overall, I believe this broader conceptualization of such actions can help marketers and consumer behavior researchers devise better interventions to help leverage consumer dissatisfaction with brand conduct more productively and also create space to promote the more educative-focused actions that provide brands credible feedback on how to navigate their newfound societal role.

CHAPTER III:

ESSAY 2 – THAT’S (NOT) FUNNY: POLITICAL IDEOLOGY-DRIVEN DIFFERENCES IN HUMOR APPRECIATION AND PRODUCTION

Humor often plays an important role in brands’ communication strategy, particularly with consumers who like the brand (Chattopadhyay and Basu, 1990). Humorous ads generate positive affect (Eisend, 2009), boost persuasion (Gelb and Zinkhan 1986), and reduce counterarguing (Shabbir & Thwaites, 2007). A recent industry report found that 50% of award-winning ads in their sample were humorous; humor made these ads 27% more expressive, 14% more engaging, and 11% more distinct (Jones, 2022). However, a survey of 12,183 consumers in 14 countries indicated that while 91% of consumers want brands to be funny (Oracle Fusion Cloud Customer Experience, 2022) 85% of marketers feel that they lack the insights or tools to effectively deliver humor. When asked to describe brands on Twitter, sixteen thousand consumers in eight countries indicated that all brands were “playful” and “funny”, yet only one in three respondents was able to correctly identify a brand based on its tweet, if all identifiers, such as names, logos, keywords, and hashtags, were removed (Twitter, 2022). Seemingly, marketers need to develop a more sophisticated understanding of humor.

One way in which humor helps brands differentiate themselves is when they buck the prescription to “be nice” (Warren & McGraw, 2016). When Wendy’s started humorously mocking its own consumers and other brands on Twitter in 2017, the number of its followers increased from 2.1 million to 2.4 million, and net income increased from \$129.6 million to \$194 million (Thorne, 2020). Many brands on social media have also

started “roasting” other brands. For example, when Old Spice taunted Taco Bell on Twitter by tweeting “Why is it that ‘fire sauce’ isn't made with any real fire? Seems like false advertising.” Taco Bell responded: “Is your deodorant made with really old spices?” (Tran 2018). Seemingly, there are circumstances under which this “not nice”, and more “aggressive” form of humor works.

Consumers use such aggressive humor when interacting with brands online. For instance, Pepsi’s ad featuring Kendall Jenner amid the Black Lives Matter protests was humorously mocked by consumers (Rahman, 2017). Recently, a parody account of Eli Lilly cost the firm over \$15 billion in market value when the account claimed on the firm’s behalf that “insulin is free now” (Mitra, 2022). Hence, in this dissertation chapter, I address the twin questions of consumers’ appreciation and production of aggressive humor. In particular, I draw on the benign violations theory of humor (McGraw & Warren, 2010) according to which humor occurs when a potentially threatening situation turns out to be non-threatening. For example, slapstick comedy typically involves a portrayal of injuries to induce humor, such as a character slipping on a banana peel, but these injuries are never life-threatening. Thus, the audience can identify the situation as a potentially threatening one while recognizing that it is not so in this particular instance, resulting in it being funny.

I investigate whether marketers can predict consumers’ preferences for aggressive versus non-aggressive humor based on their political orientation. Political ideology is associated with consumers’ thinking style as well as their moral disposition (Graham et

al. 2013), and might therefore influence what people of different political orientations might find amusing. Further, political ideology is a demographic variable whose principal features such as domicile (rural/urban), gender, education level, ethnicity and income are largely observable. Hence, political ideology is a viable segmenting variable. For these and other reasons, the role of political ideology on consumer behavior has begun to receive considerable scholarly scrutiny (cf., Winterich, Zhang and Mittal 2012, Jung et al. 2017, Ordabayeva & Fernandes, 2018, Fernandes et al. 2021, Farmer, Kidwell and Hardesty 2021, Kidwell, Farmer and Hardesty 2013).

Consider that the 2004 U. S. Presidential campaign cost over \$1 billion (Kim, Rao and Lee, 2009), while the 2024 U. S. Presidential campaign is expected to cost \$10 billion (Adams and Cunningham 2023). In addition, parties and candidates will spend substantial amounts of money in down-ballot races for the Senate, House, Governorships, and state and municipal elections. Much if not all these expenditures will involve messaging through traditional, social, and paid media. The ubiquitous and incessant nature of political advertising will likely impact peoples' thinking (Xu, Moorman, Qin and Rao, 2020) and might make individuals' political ideology particularly salient. That is, political ideology will likely play a role in how people process information and develop preferences, not just in the political realm, but in the commercial realm as well. In particular, I theorize that the political ideology of the consumer will impact their receptivity to and usage of certain types of humor in messaging, as humor can communicate values and norms that might be viewed differently by both sides of the aisle. Consistent with this thinking, I show across five studies that politically conservative

consumers appreciate and produce aggressive humor more so than politically liberal consumers, because of a stronger “social dominance orientation”.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Humor manifests when people encounter anomalies that turn out to be benign (Chafe, 1987). “The benign-violation hypothesis suggests that anything that is threatening to one’s sense of how the world ‘ought to be’ will be humorous, as long as the threatening situation also seems benign” (McGraw and Warren, 2010, p. 1141)¹⁰. Psychologically distant stimuli can also be benign (McGraw, Williams and Warren 2014). For example, a falling Wile E. Coyote cannot possibly be suspended in mid-air, and his subsequent descent into a canyon is clearly not life-threatening, because he has survived similar and worse hazards in the past, and the cartoon character is itself psychologically distant. Such stimuli generally yield physiological responses such as a smile, laughter, release of endorphins, increased blood oxygenation, and other positive emotions. Individuals can share the experience with others, and the others can convey their appreciation through a smile or laughter. Marketers have benefited from this feature of humor appreciation, since amused consumers might be more likely to engage with and purchase brands that tickled their funny bone (Madden and Weinberger 1982).

I incorporate Warren, Barsky, and McGraw’s (2018) conceptualization of humor as anything considered amusing, or at least intended to be. Humor appreciation is a

¹⁰ Not all benign stimuli will be deemed humorous, but may simply yield relief, because the perceived threat turned out to be a false alarm (Chen and Rao, 2002). Nevertheless, most humorous stimuli tend to feature a benign element.

psychological state. The behavior of smiling or laughing, the emotion of amusement and the cognitive appraisal of something as funny characterize this state. This psychological state is distinct from the act of humor production, which is the creation of a stimulus with the intention of being funny, e.g., telling a joke, or sharing a funny meme. In this chapter, I focus on consumers' humor appreciation of (a brand's humor) as well as their production of humor (targeting brands), both of which constitute the individual's sense of humor, a stable individual trait (Hehl & Ruch, 1985).

Humor Types

Consumers' sense of humor can be categorized using the Humor Styles typology (Martin et al., 2003). This typology employs two dimensions: a) one incorporates the motivation behind the produced humor (for one's own enjoyment vs. for others' enjoyment), and b) the content of the humor (uplifting vs. disparaging). This yields four distinct styles of humor: the affiliative humor style (others-uplifting), the self-enhancing humor style (self-uplifting), the aggressive humor style (others-disparaging), and the self-defeating humor style (self-disparaging). The affiliative style of humor is characterized by humor that will be appreciated by most everyone, e.g., puns, wordplay, etc. The self-enhancing humor style is used when consumers uplift themselves by making light of oddities and patterns they notice in their own lives, e.g., someone amused by the fact that they always check their front door three times when they leave home. The aggressive humor style uses humor that targets an individual or a group to generate amusement among other audience members, e.g., a mocking joke. Finally, the self-defeating humor

style also aims to generate amusement among others, but by denigrating oneself instead of another, e.g., joking in front of others about one being overweight.

Self-enhancing humor is designed to amuse oneself (monadic), and affiliative and self-defeating humor are designed to amuse others (dyadic). Aggressive humor is the only triadic form of humor, as it involves a source (humor producer), a receiver (an audience) and a target who is an “other”, another individual or social group. Hence, aggressive humor enforces social norms (Hodson, Rush, & MacInnis, 2010), boundaries and hierarchies (by targeting an outgroup or its member). For example, a fan of a particular sports team can determine if another individual is also a fan of the team by making fun of a rival team. The other individual’s response will indicate to the humor producer whether their audience appreciates the joke and is therefore a part of the in-group. It can also act as a form of “vocal grooming”, allowing in-group members to influence each other (Barrett, Dunbar, & Lycett, 2002) by letting others know what actions might be considered a violation of the in-group’s norms and values, e.g., men’s usage of homophobic jokes to malign homosexuality (McCann, Plummer, & Minichiello 2010). Such humor also raises the social status of the in-group compared to the target of the humor, which improves in-group ties (Alexander, 1986). These conclusions are consistent with the notion that individuals’ values, particularly moral values, impact their appreciation of humor (Ruch & Hehl, 1987; Koszałkowska & Wróbel 2019). Hence, consumers who care more about connecting with similar others (the in-group) should appreciate aggressive humor. In the next section, I identify one such group, politically conservative consumers.

Linking Political Ideology with the appreciation of aggressive humor

Conservatism is a form of motivated social cognition that helps individuals perceive and manage threats. Right-leaning individuals place relatively high emphasis on group conformity, loyalty, and cohesion, and distinguish friends from foes swiftly (Purkayastha, Schwartz, and Davidov 2011; Graham, Haidt and Nosek 2009; Jost 2017). Conservatives also pay greater attention to in-group/out-group boundaries (Janoff-Bulman, 2009) and social hierarchy (Pratto et al., 1994), while liberals extend their moral regard to seemingly distant groups such as plants and animals (Fernandez 2020). Consequently, a humor style that targets out-group members through the employment of mockery, or putting the other down – aggressive humor – is more likely to sit well with conservatives than with liberals.

Academic investigations of the nexus between political ideology and humor (chiefly in psychology and political science) have primarily focused on humor appreciation and on specialized themes, such as political humor, satire, and disparaging or stereotypical humor (see Table 1). My qualitative survey of the literature reveals that liberals and conservatives might have similar assessments of what constitutes humor, but their interpretations of the type of humor they encounter – satire versus literal – differ. These differences in interpretation could yield differences in appreciation when the type of humor is readily apparent. Extant research demonstrates that consumers appreciate the form of humor that matches their own values and beliefs. Conservatives have been found to be more appreciative of disparaging (aggressive) humor overall (Buie, Ford, Olah,

Arguello, & Mendiburo-Seguel 2022), as it maintains the status quo, social hierarchies and traditions. Aggressive humor has been found to be negatively correlated with agreeableness and conscientiousness (Vernon, Martin, Schermer, and Mackie 2008; Plessen, et al. 2020), both of which are positively associated with conservatism. Further, as Baltiansky, Craig and Jost (2020) demonstrate, high-system justifiers (conservatives) appreciate humor that targets low-status groups. Conversely, liberals (low system justifiers) also appreciate this form of humor, but only when it targets high-status groups (Baltiansky, Craig, & Jost 2021). These findings are consistent with my thesis, though my explanation for the effect relies on social dominance orientation (SDO), not system justification, which is one of the most defining attributes of conservatism.

-- Insert Table 2 about here --

Because liberals value caring for others (Graham et al., 2013), a joke at somebody else's expense – aggressive humor – will conflict with their values, and since individuals are more likely to reject humor that does not align with their values, liberals ought not to appreciate aggressive humor as much as conservatives do (Ruch & Hehl, 1987; McGraw & Warren, 2010). A recent study did investigate how political ideology impacts individuals' humor styles and reported that both affiliative and aggressive humor was higher amongst liberals (Kfrerer, Bell, and Schermer 2021). But, this correlational study with a largely female sample (84.5% female), may not be generalizable.

The literature on humor styles focuses primarily on its psychological antecedents (such as Big-5 personality traits) and its psychological consequences. Most of the

correlational studies find negative attitudinal and behavioral consequences of aggressive humor, including lower well-being (Dyck & Holtzman 2013; Kuiper et al. 2004), happiness (Ford, McCreight, & Richardson 2014; Yue et al. 2014), empathy (Hampes 2010), and social desirability (Cann & Matson 2014; Kuiper & Leite 2010). However, aggressive humor was found to improve social togetherness among employees (Terrion and Ashforth 2002) and improve engagement among online communities (Milner 2013). Clearly, the examination of aggressive humor requires a more theoretically nuanced approach that accounts for the role of ingroup-outgroup boundaries in the employment and appreciation of aggressive humor.

My review of the literature on the nexus between political ideology and humor yields several insights. First, there is no research in marketing or consumer behavior that examines this relationship, a lacuna that I seek to address, since the employment of humor in advertising is fairly commonplace, yet which type of humor will be appreciated by which segment is a question that has yet to be addressed. Second, much extant research has utilized correlational approaches to discern the linkage between humor, humor types, political ideology and sundry dependent variables that are not central to marketing and consumer behavior. Third, there appears to be a crying need for a theoretically rigorous approach to deduce the linkage between appreciation for different types of humor and political ideology, with a compelling explanation for any observed effect. I turn to that topic next.

Foundational Prediction

Since conservatives are more focused on maintaining ingroup values and social hierarchy than liberals, I predict that conservatives will appreciate aggressive humor to a greater degree than liberals. Furthermore, conservatism is a form of motivated social cognition that helps individuals perceive and manage threats, potentially from outgroup members. Hence, conservatives can employ humor targeted at an outgroup member(s) to minimize the perceived threat they pose. Based on this theorizing, I predict:

H1: Conservatives will be more likely to appreciate and produce an aggressive style of humor relative to liberals.

The mediating role of social dominance orientation

Aggressive humor, I argue, conveys information about the humorist *vis a vis* a target. Specifically, the humorist, by belittling the target, establishes his/her (higher) status relative to the target, and the amusement of the audience identifies the audience members' status as a member of the humorist's ingroup. That is, the humorist and sympathetic audience members both support a hierarchy among social groups and share a desire to display their ingroup's higher status at the expense of the target (or outgroup), a phenomenon known as Social Dominance Orientation (SDO; Pratto et al., 1994). SDO tends to be chronically high amongst conservatives. Particularly in the U. S., where conservatives tend to represent the majority demographics, by being white, Christian, heterosexual, cisgender, or male, aggressive humor can be used to convey their majority power, and assess whether their audience subscribes to their ingroup's superior status, when the audience appreciates the aggressive humor targeted at an outgroup member.

Indeed, past research suggests that conservatives are more likely to appreciate sexist, racist, and other types of minorities-denigrating humor, particularly when in the company of similar others, the ingroup (Greene 2019). Hence, I expect conservatives' greater appreciation of aggressive humor, which conveys their higher social status, to be driven by their higher social dominance orientation. Formally, I predict:

H2: The impact of political ideology on the appreciation of aggressive humor will be mediated by social dominance orientation.

Identifying a Boundary Condition

My thesis thus far has relied on higher social dominance orientation-driven ingroupism on the part of conservatives that ought to drive their appreciation of aggressive humor. Implicit in this view is the premise that liberals would find the denigration of low-status groups and individuals distasteful. However, since aggressive humor is a tool for vocal grooming and punishing individuals who violate the ingroup's values, I expect that liberal consumers might also appreciate aggressive humor, but only when the aggressive humor targets an individual who violates liberal values, e.g., someone who reinforces social hierarchies such as sexism or racism, consistent with evidence that liberals appreciate aggressive humor, but only when it targets high-status groups (Baltiansky, Craig, & Jost 2021). Formally, I predict:

H3: Aggressive humor will be appreciated by liberals when they believe that the individual being targeted is violating liberal values by reinforcing social hierarchies.

Next, I turn to a description of my empirical efforts to assess support for my predictions. I report five studies (the appendices provide further details and robustness checks along with three additional studies). The first study is a large-scale field experiment in which participants were recruited at one of the largest state fairs in the U. S. during the summer of 2022. My second study investigated tweets posted by liberal and conservative consumers, enabling me to identify differences in how they produce humor in a more externally valid setting. Study 3 provides initial evidence for the role of SDO by investigating how the target of aggressive humor impacts differences in appreciation. My penultimate study formally tests for the role of SDO by manipulating it. My final study examines a boundary condition, according to which liberals appreciate aggressive humor when the target of the humor violates their values.

STUDY 1: FIELD EXPERIMENT (STATE FAIR)

To establish my foundational prediction regarding conservatives' higher usage and appreciation of aggressive humor, I conducted a large-scale field experiment amongst visitors to one of the best-attended state fairs in the U. S., in August of 2022.

Sample, Stimuli and Design

The field study was conducted under the aegis of the University at its dedicated research facility at a large mid-western state fair. I acquired one of several booths at this facility. Each booth displayed its research objective prominently and curious visitors to the fair could approach a booth for a more detailed pitch, and if interested, could participate in the research in exchange for a small gift item (a university-branded tote-

bag, in my study). The study was run in either the morning shift (from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.) or the afternoon shift (2:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.) on alternate days of the study period. My booth accommodated eight participants at a time. Participants completed the study in 12.76 minutes on average (SD = 8.58 minutes).

My study employed a two-factor design: humor type (aggressive versus affiliative) x political ideology (extremely liberal to extremely conservative). Eleven hundred participants (54.95% female, mean age = 44.50 years, age range = 13-80) took part in my study. Visitors who approached my booth were told that the objective of this study was to understand how individuals differed in their preferences for humor, and that they would be completing a survey in which they would evaluate four jokes and answer a few questions about how they use humor in their daily lives. The jokes had been pretested online to assure that, while humorous, they were not overly offensive (see Appendix 2A1). The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) was used to investigate the use of humor in daily life (see Appendix 2A2 for scale items and two online pretests that offer preliminary evidence for conservatives' greater usage of aggressive humor). Those who agreed to participate were given an iPad and directed to a quiet place to complete my survey. Then, participants were thanked, awarded the gift item, and dismissed.

Procedure

Humor Appreciation: Participants were randomly assigned to humor conditions in which they rated four aggressive or affiliative humor-based jokes. Three of the four jokes featured a well-known brand: McDonalds, Dunkin Donuts, or Facebook, while the fourth

featured a fictitious Italian restaurant. For each joke, participants rated how funny and how offensive they found the joke on a 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much) Likert scale (see Appendix 2A3 for each joke and its average funniness and offensive ratings among liberal and conservative fairgoers).

Humor Production: After rating the jokes, participants completed the affiliative humor style and aggressive humor style subscales of the HSQ (Appendix 2A2). I also embedded an attention check in this scale. Finally, participants responded to demographic items including their age, gender, education, income level, political orientation (1=extremely liberal to 9=extremely conservative), and partisan identity (Democrat, Republican, Independent/Other).

Analysis and Results

One hundred twenty-eight participants who failed my attention check were excluded from further analyses, leaving 972 participants (56.5% female, mean age = 43.74).

Humor appreciation: I first investigate offensiveness ratings as a manipulation check of the aggressive versus affiliative humor stimuli, and then conduct similar analyses for my main dependent variable of interest, funniness ratings. Both were used as dependent variables in joke-level multiple linear regressions with the type of humor (dummy-coded as 1=aggressive; 0=affiliative), the participant's political ideology, and their mean-centered interaction as the predictor variables. I controlled for the target of humor (McDonalds, Dunkin Donuts, Facebook, and a fictitious restaurant). The overall

models were significant ($F_{\text{offensiveness}(4,3883)} = 146.754, p < .001, R^2 = .131$; $F_{\text{funniness}(4,3883)} = 65.620, p < .001, R^2 = .063$). Regression results parameters were:

$$\text{Offensiveness} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \textit{Humor_Type} + \beta_2 \textit{Ideology} + \beta_3 \textit{Humor_Type} * \textit{Ideology} + \beta_4 \textit{Target} + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Funniness} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \textit{Humor_Type} + \beta_2 \textit{Ideology} + \beta_3 \textit{Humor_Type} * \textit{Ideology} + \beta_4 \textit{Target} + \varepsilon$$

All italicized terms were significant at $p < .05$ or better. The aggressive humor jokes were deemed more offensive than the affiliative humor jokes confirming that my manipulation was successful. Additionally, target played a role, suggesting that (unsurprisingly) offensiveness varied across jokes. For funniness ratings, the significant interaction between ideology and humor type indicates that appreciation for aggressive humor jokes increased with conservatism. Additionally, the significant main effect of humor type suggests that aggressive humor was found to be funnier than affiliative humor. Again, target played a role suggesting that (unsurprisingly) funniness varied across jokes. I ran additional models including controls for age, gender, income and education, and found similar results (see Figures 1A and 1B; see Appendix 2A3 for details). This supports my hypothesis H1 that conservatives appreciate aggressive humor more than liberals do.

Humor Production: Items in both the aggressive humor style subscale ($\alpha = .718$) and the affiliative humor style subscale ($\alpha = .830$) were averaged. I find that the affiliative subscale does not share significant correlation with participants' ideology ($r(972) = -.020$,

$p = .524$), however, the aggressive humor subscale does ($r(972) = .142, p < .001$).

Regressing these scores onto political ideology with age, gender, education, and income level as covariates yielded substantively similar results (see Figure 1C; see Appendix 2A3 for details). This indicates that the tendency to produce aggressive humor, but not affiliative humor, increases with conservatism. This further supports H1.

-- Insert Figures 1A, 1B, and 1C here --

Discussion

This field study provides evidence from a large sample that comprises individuals other than students and online participants, that conservatives have a higher tendency to employ and appreciate aggressive humor. Clearly, political ideology is an important factor that marketers and political campaigns should pay attention to while crafting their humorous appeals. Next, I examine whether consumers' *production* of aggressive humor in a non-experimental setting is also contingent on political ideology, such that politically conservative individuals will tend to produce aggressive humor to a greater degree than politically liberal consumers do.

STUDY 2: ANALYSIS OF HUMOROUS CONSUMER TWEETS

I analyze consumers' humorous tweets as an index of their humor production. This approach allows me to study real-life, ecologically valid instances of consumer behavior.

Sample and Procedure

I recruited 100 liberals and 100 conservatives who had self-reported to Prolific that they had posted an original tweet on Twitter at least four times in the previous twelve months. Participants (35% female, mean age = 34.45 years, age range = 18-67 years old) received \$1.75 as compensation. These participants were informed beforehand that my study was investigating individual differences in humor preferences and that they would be asked to share a few recent tweets of theirs that they considered to be funny. Each participant shared six tweets, yielding a total of 1200 original tweets. They were asked to remove any identifiable personal information. Demographic information, including political orientation (3-items, 1 (extremely liberal) to 9 (extremely conservative) scales) and party affiliation (a binary variable), were also collected. As the prescreening was based on the demographic information the participants had provided to the platform when they registered on it, I collect participants' political preferences again at the end of my study to ensure that these preferences have not shifted in the time period between their registration with the platform and participating in my study.

Analysis and Results

The three continuous political orientation scales were combined ($\alpha=.982$) and median-split (median=4). As I had prescreened my participants to be either liberals or conservatives, median-split is an appropriate practice for analyzing such bimodal distributions (DeCoster, Gallucci, and Iselin 2011). A coder blind to my hypotheses coded the tweets as either humorous or not, resulting in 272 humorous tweets from the set

of 1200¹¹. The humorous tweets were further coded as either aggressive or not aggressive, depending on whether the tweet “makes fun of someone” or “does not demean anyone”. Of the 272 humorous tweets, 113 tweets were categorized as aggressive, and the remaining 159 tweets were categorized as non-aggressive.

Aggressive Humor Production: I compared the humorous tweets provided by liberals and conservatives, to determine what proportion of the humorous tweets relative to the total were based on aggressive humor and whether this proportion differed between liberals and conservatives. My categorization divided the sample into 137 tweets from conservatives and 135 tweets from liberals. Chi-square analysis of all the 272 humorous tweets revealed that conservatives’ aggressive humor tweets were a significantly greater proportion of their total humorous tweets compared with liberals’ proportion of aggressive tweets relative to their total humorous tweets ($\chi^2(1,272)=3.958, p =.047$). Sixty-five of the 137 funny tweets by conservatives (47.4%) were aggressive, compared with 48 of the 135 funny tweets by liberals (35.6%). Hence, conservatives are more likely to employ aggressive humor when they tweet¹² (see Figure 2).

-- Insert Figure 2 about here --

Overall, participants’ social media behavior seems consistent with their responses to the HSQ. Conservatives are indeed more likely to produce aggressive humor than

¹¹ Subsequently, two other coders blind to the hypotheses also evaluated the humorous tweets (N=272). They agreed with the original coder in 86.4% and 85.3% of cases. See Appendix 2B for more details..

¹² I further categorized aggressive tweets as “offensive” or “teasing” to develop preliminary insights on whether SDO might account for a greater number of offensive relative to teasing tweets by conservatives, when compared to liberals. Details of that analysis are available in Appendix 2B.

liberals. This study further adds to the external validity of my results by investigating actual behavior conducted without any bias due to an artificial experimental setting. I next turn to an online experiment where I replicate my findings of conservatives' higher appreciation of aggressive humor and add further nuance based on my theorized mediation through SDO.

STUDY 3: ROLE OF TARGET'S RELATIVE STATUS

In this preregistered study, I test H2, using new stimuli, in a new context, by displaying social media posts by brands. I provide additional evidence for the role of SDO by investigating the impact the target of denigration has on aggressive humor appreciation. Further, I refine my experimental approach by a) employing a within-subjects study design to control for individual differences in humor preferences, b) using two different sets of stimuli, including one from a professional comedian, rated to be more funny than stimuli used in prior studies¹³, and c) examining consequences of humor appreciation on sharing intentions.

Denigrating low-status vs. high-status groups

Famous comedians are often recruited by brands as their ambassadors, such as Kevin Hart for Mountain Dew (Sweeney, 2018) and Quinta Brunson for Olay (Gaitan, 2022). Employing this context allows me to study humorous appeals by brands in the context of social media and allows me to test my hypotheses using a different media

¹³ On a 5-point scale, the comedic stimuli in this Study were rated .564 higher than the stimuli in the State Fair Study ($p < .001$).

format. Further, since I theorize that my findings are driven by SDO, liberals, who are typically low on this trait, should be less likely to appreciate humor that targets a group lower on the social hierarchy. However, this effect should attenuate when the higher-status group is the target of denigration or when both groups are targeted.

In this study, I chose gender as the operationalization of social hierarchy. Women are traditionally seen to be lower on the social hierarchy than men. Hence, I expect jokes targeting women to be appreciated less by liberals, but the ones targeting men or both men and women should not yield ideology-aligned difference in appreciation. Three jokes, by Bill Burr, a famous male comedian, targeted either men (*high-status group condition*), women (*low-status group condition*), or both men and women (*both groups condition*).

Sample and Procedure: This study employed a 2 (partisan identity: Democrats vs. Republicans) X 3 (humor target: high-status group vs. low-status group vs. both) design. One hundred and sixteen Prolific workers (49.13% female, mean age = 43.64 years, age range = 18-75 years) were recruited in exchange for monetary compensation. These workers were prescreened by Prolific to be either liberal or conservative. Participants were informed that they would be reviewing three social media posts by three (fictitious) brands, each of which had hired Bill Burr, a famous comedian, as their ambassador. Each post consisted of the brand name, the product category, a caption for the clip, and finally the video clip of the jokes. The three jokes had either men (*high-status group condition*), women (*low-status group condition*), or both men and women (*both groups condition*) as their target (see Appendix 2C1 for more details; I also report a fourth joke, not from Bill

Burr and in print format. Adding this joke does not substantively change the results I report below). Participants rated all three posts (1=not at all to 5=to a large extent Likert scales) on funniness, offensiveness, and their likelihood to share it on WhatsApp/Telegram with a close set of friends (as well as likelihood to share these on X/Twitter with a public audience, which produced substantively similar results, as I report in Appendix 2C1). Afterwards, they answered demographic questions, which included a measure of political ideology and partisan identity, similar to previous studies.

Funniness Ratings Analyses: As the jokes targeted men and women, I included participants' gender as a covariate. Hence, I excluded six participants who self-identified as neither male nor female, leaving me with a final sample of 110 participants.

Conducting one-way repeated-measures ANCOVA with the three clips' funniness ratings as the dependent variables, political ideology (median split at 5) as the independent variable, and gender as a covariate, I find a significant two-way interaction between political ideology and humor target ($F(2,214)=4.001, p=.020$). I also find a significant ideology*target interaction in a repeated-measures ANOVA that does not use gender as a covariate and includes responses from the six gender-non-conforming participants ($F(2,228)=4.101, p=.018$). Planned comparisons for the repeated measures ANCOVA model suggest that conservatives found the clip making fun of women to be significantly more funny ($M=2.78, SD=1.20, F(1,107)=6.285, p=.014$) than liberals did ($M=2.08, SD=1.28$). However, I do not find any significant differences in their appreciation of the clip targeting men ($F(1,107)=.853, p=.358$) or the one targeting both men and women

($F(1,107)=.000, p=.999$). This supports H2, according to which liberals should be open to aggressive humor as long as it does not conflict with their values (see Figure 3A).

Sharing likelihood Analyses: A similar one-way repeated-measures ANCOVA with the three clips' private-sharing likelihood as dependent variables did not find a significant two-way ideology*target interaction ($F(2,214)=.723, p=.486$), but I do find a marginally significant main effect of political ideology ($F(1,107)=3.148, p=.079$). Planned comparisons suggest that conservatives were significantly more likely to privately share the clip targeting women ($M=2.78, SD=1.20, F(1,107)=5.643, p=.019$) than liberals ($M=2.08, SD=1.28$). I do not find any significant differences in their private-sharing likelihood of the clip targeting men ($F(1,107)=2.139, p=.147$) or the one targeting both ($F(1,107)=1.203, p=.275$). This suggests that, apart from mere appreciation, conservatives are also more likely to share aggressive humor, but this difference is attenuated when the target is not a low-status group.

Offensiveness Ratings Analyses: Conducting a similar repeated-measures ANCOVA with offensiveness ratings, I find a significant two-way interaction between political ideology and humor target ($F(2,214)=9.220, p<.001$). I also find a significant ideology*target interaction in a repeated-measures ANOVA that does not use gender as a covariate and includes responses from the six gender-non-conforming participants ($F(2,228)=10.601, p<.001$; see Figure 3B). Planned comparisons for the repeated measures ANCOVA model suggest that liberals found the clip targeting women to be significantly more offensive ($M=2.85, SD=1.27, F(1,107)=10.689, p=.001$) than

conservatives ($M=2.02$, $SD=1.12$). I do not find any significant differences in offensiveness ratings for the clip targeting men ($F(1,107)=.378$, $p=.540$) or the one targeting both ($F(1,107)=.380$, $p=.539$).

-- Insert Figures 3A and 3B here --

Discussion

I find that aggressive humor targeting a group higher in status on the social hierarchy is appreciated equally by liberals and conservatives, but aggressive humor targeting a lower-status individual or group is appreciated more by conservatives than by liberals. Hence, this study provides further evidence for H2¹⁴. Furthermore, since the jokes targeting men and targeting both genders were not found to be appreciated by liberals any less than by conservatives, this study also helps rule out a potential alternative explanation, that liberals just do not appreciate any form of disparaging humor that targets social groups, as they are more ‘politically correct’. My next study provides more direct evidence for my hypothesized mediation through SDO by using a novel manipulation approach.

STUDY 4: MANIPULATING PROPOSED MEDIATOR, SDO

I theorize that aggressive humor, more so than other forms of humor, enables sharing of social information that communicates and reinforces the ingroup’s higher

¹⁴ In another study (Appendix 2C2), I find further support for H2. I predict, and find, that conservatives’ appreciation of aggressive humor (but not liberals’) increases when social information is relevant (when they focus on the comedian) compared to when it is not relevant (they focus on the joke itself).

status. Hence, social dominance orientation (SDO) should mediate the impact of political ideology on humor appreciation. The standard approach to testing such mediation would be to measure the construct and test for the mediation path, an exercise I do conduct (see Appendix 2D1). However, such an exercise is correlational, and not causal. To overcome this limitation, I manipulate SDO in this preregistered study to assess the impact of political ideology on humor appreciation.

SDO Manipulation

SDO ought to increase when one is primed to think of oneself as part of a superior group. I leveraged this intuition to increase Prolific workers' SDO scores by asking them to read ten statements that made Prolific look better compared with other survey platforms (e.g., "*Compared to MTurk and other platforms, Prolific sets a higher minimum hourly reward of £6.00 or \$8.00 for all participants*"). Participants in the control condition read analogous statements where Prolific was described as similar to other platforms (e.g., "*Similar to MTurk and other platforms, Prolific sets a minimum hourly reward of £6.00 or \$8.00 for all participants*") (see Appendix 2D2 for the statements). I conducted a pretest with Prolific workers who, according to the platform, were using only Prolific, to confirm the efficacy of this manipulation by examining the effect of the manipulation on the trait dominance subscale from SDO₇ (Ho et al., 2015) (see Appendix 2D2 for details of the pretest). I then used this manipulation to test the role of SDO in this study. Increasing SDO should increase liberals' appreciation of aggressive humor. As conservatives already have high chronic SDO, I predict a null effect.

Sample and Procedure

Prolific workers (n=132, 44.7% female, 55.3% Democrats, mean age = 42.43 years, age range = 20-80 years) participated in a 2 (SDO: high vs. control) X 2 (ideology: liberal vs. conservatives) between-subjects design study, where respondents were randomly assigned to SDO conditions, and participants were prescreened to be a) either liberals or conservatives, and b) using only Prolific as a survey-taking platform (I excluded 73 other participants who self-reported using other platforms). Participants were informed that they were participating in a study investigating how social media impacts memory. They were first shown the ten SDO-manipulating statements and were asked to keep them in mind as they evaluated two ‘social media posts’, which were the jokes targeting men and women by Bill Burr that I used in study 3. They evaluated the jokes both on funniness and offensiveness using five-point Likert scales. Finally, they completed the demographics section, where they reported their age, gender, education level, political ideology, and partisan identity, similar to previous studies.

Analysis and Results

Because the jokes targeted men and women, gender was used as a covariate in the following analyses. I excluded participants who identified as neither male nor female (n = 3), yielding 129 responses. To account for differences between the two jokes, I added the jokes as a random factor. Hence, I conducted a mixed-effects ANCOVA with median-split political ideology (median=4) and the SDO as the independent variables, funniness and offensiveness ratings as the dependent variables, the two jokes as the random factor,

and participant's gender as a covariate. I found a significant ideology*SDO-condition interaction ($F(1,249)=115.744, p <.001$)¹⁵. Looking at pair-wise comparisons in the mixed-effects ANCOVA, I replicate my previous findings in the control condition ($F(1,249)=6.191, p =.013$), suggesting that conservatives ($M=2.72, SD=1.41$) did indeed appreciate aggressive humor more than liberals ($M=2.24, SD=1.22$). However, when SDO was high, this difference disappeared ($F(1,249)=.003, p =.958$). Increasing SDO increased liberals' appreciation of aggressive humor ($M=2.52, SD=1.49$) to the same level as conservatives ($M=2.67, SD=1.51$) (see Figure 4). Conducting a similar mixed-effects ANCOVA with offensiveness ratings as the dependent variable, I find a similar significant ideology*SDO-condition interaction ($F(1,249)=40.755, p <.001$). Looking at pair-wise comparisons, I replicate my previous findings in the control condition ($F(1,249)=8.931, p =.003$), suggesting that liberals ($M=2.86, SD=1.45$) did indeed find the aggressive humor more offensive than conservatives ($M=2.17, SD=1.37$). However, when SDO was manipulated to be high, this difference disappeared ($F(1,249)=2.438, p =.120$). I find that increasing SDO decreased liberals' offensiveness ratings ($M=2.68, SD=1.38$) to the same level as conservatives ($M=2.24, SD=1.36$), supporting H2.

-- Insert Figure 4 here --

Discussion

¹⁵ I also find a significant interaction in a similar mixed-effects ANOVA that does not use any covariates and includes the three non-binary participants' responses ($F(1,256)=267.825, p =.039$).

I find evidence for the role of SDO in appreciation of aggressive humor, through a manipulation exercise, in addition to the correlational exercise that yielded support for mediation. This indicates that conservatives' greater appreciation of aggressive humor is driven by their higher chronic SDO. I also demonstrate that liberals' SDO can be manipulated to yield an increase in appreciation of aggressive humor. This role of SDO explains why conservatives mock immigrants, and liberals mock especially religious people, because they feel socially dominant towards such people (Buie et al. 2022).

In the next study, I leverage this result in an attempt to reverse the effect. I have so far demonstrated that conservatives are typically more appreciative of aggressive humor, while liberals appreciate it more only when their SDO is increased. I argue that liberals should not appreciate aggressive humor that denigrates a target, *unless the denigrated target violates their values by reinforcing social hierarchies*. I test this prediction, as well as a downstream consequence of importance to marketing, in the study that follows.

STUDY 5: BOUNDARY CONDITION

My overall argument rests on the thesis that, in general, liberals are less likely to appreciate aggressive humor when it mocks someone lower on the social ladder. However, as I argue in H3, should aggressive humor be used to mock someone who violates their values by reinforcing social hierarchies, I would expect liberals' appreciation of aggressive humor to increase. Since liberals believe less in social dominance, a target that reinforces such hierarchies should be viewed unfavorably,

making their denigration through aggressive humor more palatable to liberals. This thinking is in line with the benign violations view of humor, which posits that humor is found in situations that threaten one's worldview, but that is ultimately seen as non-threatening. I theorize that liberals will view reinforcement of social hierarchies as a situation threatening their beliefs, and any form of humor that targets the reinforcer will help the threat seem more benign.

I also tested the downstream consequence of the use of aggressive humor on brand liking. Humor is often used to dilute tensions (such as a brand using a joke while responding to a confrontational commenter); aggressive humor in particular also helps identify friends from foes and upholds ingroup values (such as a brand mocking a rude commenter who espouses outgroup values). Since such actions could likely lead to losing customers from that outgroup, aggressive humor sends a costly signal of allegiance with the ingroup. Hence, I expect that aggressive humor should have a stronger impact on an ingroup member's brand liking than affiliative humor. For instance, when a consumer complained about their ad showing a same-sex couple, a parody account of Campbell told the complainer to "have some Campbell soup hot, so that it warms up [their] cold dead heart". The response went viral as it conveyed social information about the brand's stance on the issue, while disempowering the original complainant.

I tested this prediction by varying how three businesses, a bakery, a brewery, and a café, responded (affiliative humor vs. aggressive humor) to a commenter on their social media. This commenter either raised hierarchy-reinforcing social issues or universal

concerns. Hierarchy reinforcing issues included concerns about school indoctrination, disabled individuals, and the treatment of pets as humans. In the control condition, the commenter brought up universal concerns: high sugar and fat content in food, being out drunk at night, and the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in food. I expect that while the affiliative humor response might be appreciated by both liberals and conservatives for both the hierarchy-reinforcing and universal concerns, the aggressive humor should be appreciated more by liberals, but only when it is in response to the hierarchy-reinforcing concern. Furthermore, liberals should like a brand that denigrates the commenter reinforcing social hierarchies.

Sample and Procedure

The design was a 2 (ideology: liberals vs. conservatives) X 2 (brand response: aggressive humor vs. affiliative humor) X 2 (issue raised: hierarchy-reinforcing vs. universal, replicated in three scenarios) preregistered online study, in which political ideology was measured and the latter two factors were manipulated between-subjects. Four hundred and one Prolific workers (48.9% female, 51.6% liberals, mean age = 43.61 years, age range = 18 to 80 years) were recruited in exchange for monetary compensation. Participants were informed that they would be seeing three potentially humorous consumer-brand interactions and would be asked how they felt about it. After providing consent, these participants were shown the consumer-brand interaction in the form of three scenarios, each comprising two vignettes. The first vignette in each scenario consisted of a social media message by a business and a consumer comment on

it (hierarchy-reinforcing concern or a universal concern). For example, in one of the scenarios, the brand message read “*Calypso Bakery: "Woohoo! First day of school is here, everyone! Free donut for all school kids today! Our delicious treats will give you the energy to tackle even the most boring homework!"*” The comment that followed either read “*Stop pandering to schools! Their brainwashing our kids!*” (hierarchy-reinforcing concern including an intentional misspelling of “their”), or “*Stop it. Donuts are not healthy! Their full of sugar and fats!*” (universal concern including an intentional misspelling of “their”). The second vignette that followed in each scenario added the brand’s humorous response, which was either affiliative (“*Come on, Briar. DONUT ruin their fun! :)*”), or aggressive (“*THERE's no reason to be angry, Briar. We just want to make sure THEY'RE enjoying THEIR first day :)*”). Participants were then asked how funny they found the brand’s response and how much they liked the brand on seven-point (1=not at all to 7=very much) Likert scales. This procedure was repeated for two additional scenarios (a café offering beverages for pets, where the commenter either raises a concern over treating animals as humans or inquiring whether the beverages would have any GMOs in them; and a bar talking about their new accessibility ramps, where the commenter either disparages disabled people or is concerned about them getting drunk late at night). Finally¹⁶, demographic information, including political orientation (nine-point Likert scale) and partisan identity, were measured.

¹⁶ I also included a manipulation check to ensure that the hierarchy-reinforcing issues were indeed espoused more by conservatives and that the three issues used as controls were more universal. I also measured how offensive the humorous responses were and how threatening the commenter was perceived to be (see Appendix 2E1).

Analysis and Results

Funniness Ratings: I conducted a mixed-effects ANOVA on funniness ratings with median-split political ideology, issue raised, and brand response type as independent variables and the scenarios themselves as a random factor. I did not find a significant three-way interaction ($F(1,1179) = .799, p=.466$), but I do find a significant ideology*issue interaction ($F(1,1179) = 195.219, p=.005$), and a significant ideology*response interaction ($F(1,1179) = 30.983, p=.031$). Planned comparisons reveal that liberals found the aggressive humor response funnier in response to the hierarchy-reinforcing comment ($M=4.54, SD=1.94, F(1,1179)=20.940, p <.001$) compared with the universal issue comment ($M=3.55, SD=2.07$), while conservatives did not ($F(1,1179)=1.807, p=.179$). This finding supports H3, that liberals will appreciate aggressive humor, but only when it targets someone who reinforces social hierarchies (see Figure 5, analyses and similar graphs for affiliative humor results are available in Appendix 2E1).

-- Insert Figure 5 here --

Brand Liking: A similar mixed-effects ANOVA with brand liking as the DV did not reveal a significant three-way interaction ($F(1,1179)=.589, p =.523$), but I do find a significant ideology*issue interaction ($F(1,1179)=160.067, p =.006$), and no ideology*response interaction ($F(1,1179)=.001, p=.976$). Planned comparisons reveal that liberals liked the brand more when it used an aggressive humorous response to reply to the hierarchy-reinforcing comment ($M=5.75, SD=1.27, F(1,1179)=33.494, p <.001$)

compared with the universal issue comment ($M=4.73$, $SD=1.93$), while conservatives' brand liking didn't differ based on the comment ($F(1,1179) = 2.757$, $p=.097$). In line with my thesis, liberals' brand liking rose when the brand employed aggressive humor when the commenter used hierarchy reinforcing language, relative to when the commenter did not (see Figure 5; see Appendix 2E1 for analyses and graphs for affiliative humor, and Appendix 2E2 for a conceptual replication of this study).

Discussion

This study demonstrates a boundary condition to my theorizing (H3). While in general, liberals tend to not appreciate aggressive humor that targets an individual or a group, they do when the target reinforces social hierarchies, and deserves to be cut down to size. Further, these different levels of appreciation transfer to brand liking, a desirable marketing consequence.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Humor is a frequently used attention-grabbing device in marketing communications. In this research, I parse the types of humor available to marketers and demonstrate that aggressive humor may be attractive to the politically conservative consumer, and such consumers might employ such aggressive humor themselves. I further demonstrate that even liberals appreciate aggressive humor that targets an individual who threatens their worldview.

Empirically, I find that a) conservative fairgoers were more likely to appreciate and employ aggressive humor in their daily lives than liberal fairgoers (Study 1), and b)

produce aggressive humor to a greater degree than liberals (Study 2). Study 3 finds that conservatives appreciate all aggressive humor, while liberals appreciate it only when it makes fun of the high-status group or of both the high-status and low-status groups together, consistent with my SDO argument. Study 4 provides more direct evidence for the role of SDO by manipulating it (and through measurement, reported in Appendix 2D1). Finally, in Study 5, I find that liberal consumers will also appreciate aggressive humor but only when it helps counter social hierarchy. Study 5 also demonstrates that the appreciation of aggressive humor influences marketing relevant variables, such as brand liking. I discuss the contributions of this chapter next.

Theoretical Contributions

I add to the growing body of research that examines the influence of political ideology on consumer behavior (see Shavitt, 2017; Jost, 2017; and, Rao, 2017 for detailed commentaries), an area of increasing interest to consumer behavior scholars (Winterich, Zhang, and Mittal 2012; Han et al. 2019; Fernandes et al. 2021; Ordabayeva and Fernandes 2018). I identify an ideology-driven difference between liberal and conservative consumers in their appreciation of aggressive humor. Second, I contribute to an understanding of consumers' production of humor, a heretofore unstudied phenomenon in consumer behavior research. Third, I identify a new benefit of using humor. Consumers can use aggressive humor to identify friends from foes and to share and uphold their ingroup's values and status. Fourth, I identify a novel psychological mechanism for humor appraisal, SDO, which has not been studied in consumer behavior-

oriented research on humor appreciation. More broadly, similar to the research on morality, according to which liberals and conservatives have different priorities in how they appraise morality, and appreciate humor contingent on how sensitive they are to the five moral foundations (Kruschke and Vollmer 2024), I propose that liberals and conservatives might have different preferences and underlying motivations in how they appraise and employ humor.

Practical Contributions

As I noted earlier, 85% of business leaders do not believe they have the tools or insights to effectively deliver humor, despite 91% of consumers demanding it. This has led to safe, monotonous usage of humor by brands on social media, which consumers do not appreciate, because it feels ‘cookie-cutter’ and inauthentic. Through this dissertation chapter, I hope to provide a few guidelines for marketers that will help them deploy humor better.

First, a majority conservative audience will provide marketers the opportunity to employ aggressive humor that targets the outgroup. Second, because consumers appreciate humor more from brands that they have positive prior attitudes towards (Chattopadhyay and Basu, 1990), a familiar brand should find it easier to employ aggressive humor. Unfamiliar brands, however, should employ aggressive humor only when they are sure that the information they are communicating is in line with their consumers’ values. Third, while employing aggressive humor, marketers need to be cognizant of who they are targeting. As I demonstrate, liberals are appreciative of

aggressive humor that targets individuals reinforcing social inequity, who are typically from the powerful majority group (e.g., men and able-bodied individuals). Fourth, I demonstrate that aggressive humor can share social information, and when consumers expect brands to signal and uphold the values they hold dear, aggressive humor might be a way for brands to demonstrate their allegiance with consumers. Finally, as consumers develop parody accounts that increase the risk of brands' curated messaging getting contaminated, marketers would benefit from understanding how consumers produce humor. I not only differentiate between appreciation and production, but also observe the impact of humor on willingness to share information, and brand liking, both of which are marketing relevant variables in a social media world.

My investigation of political ideology as an individual difference variable that impacts humor appreciation also has ready implications for political campaigns choosing to employ humor in their messaging. And, it appears that my thesis is consistent with current practice. In March of 2024, a Political Action Committee associated with former President Donald Trump released an aggressive humor ad that targeted President Biden's age (Haberman, 2024), with conservative voters being the likely intended audience. In contrast, the Biden/Harris campaign tackled the same issue by releasing a self-deprecating humor ad, featuring Biden addressing the issue of his age in a self-deprecating manner (Navarro, 2024), instead of an equivalent aggressive humor ad, targeting Trump's own age. Based on my research, the Biden/Harris campaign response is more appealing to their liberal audience preferences, but should they choose to employ aggressive humor in their future advertising, they should consider either enhancing the

SDO of their audience or specifically target high-SDO liberal voters, e.g., college-educated men.

Limitations and Future Research

My conclusions are limited by the samples I recruited and the stimuli I employed. Nevertheless, my large-scale field study, coupled with my experiments, provides considerable internal and external validity for my thesis. In this chapter, my focus was on an examination of aggressive versus non-aggressive humor. It is plausible that the degree of aggression (name calling versus subtle digs), the type of aggression (sarcasm versus direct opprobrium) and other nuances might yield different results, particularly if some types of aggressive humor emphasize cerebral versus non-cerebral features. This is a nuance that future research ought to explore.

An issue that bedevils research on humor is that people rarely agree about what is funny (Rosenbusch, Evans and Zeelenberg, 2022). I finesse this issue by focusing on the *differences* in humor appreciation by different types of people contingent on different types of humor, rather than attempting to develop stimuli that is universally considered funny. Such an approach would not have served me well, since I am interested in the appreciation of different types of humor.

The issue of in- versus out-groupism among conservatives is well established in political psychology (see Graham, Haidt and Nosek 2009), so I do not experimentally manipulate whether the target of aggressive humor is a member of the in-group or not. If the target of aggressive humor was identified as a member of conservatives' in-group, as

in study 5, I would expect the result to be reversed. Further, conservatives might define their ingroup more narrowly than liberals. While my study 4 explicitly examines group boundaries and still yields the same results, future research can examine how differing ingroup conceptualizations might impact my findings. Additionally, my findings are limited to the U. S. Whether my results would generalize to other cultures where conservatism is associated with prudence, leading to lower appreciation for aggressive stimuli, is a question I leave for future research.

Finally, in this chapter, I measure rather than manipulate political ideology. A lurking variable that distinguishes between conservatives and liberals (such as education) might account for my findings. However, through collecting and controlling for such demographic markers in study 1 (age, gender, education, and income level), I reduce the likelihood of such alternate mechanisms. Future research can further address this concern through additional, broader data collection and by manipulating participants' political ideology (cf. Ordabayeva and Fernandes 2018) as part of their experiment design.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In this dissertation, I have focused on how brands are navigating their increasingly prominent role in society and in political discourse. In particular, I focus on two types of transgressions: harmful and benign, and explore how liberal and conservative consumers differ in their response to them. When a transgression is perceived as harmful (e.g. those that violate moral values), consumers' response (punitive and/or educative) is based on how they think such transgressions should be dealt with. When the transgression is perceived as benign (e.g., those that invoke humor, particularly aggressive humor), consumers' response (in terms of appreciation, willingness to share, and brand liking) is based on whether it aligns with their view of relative status of groups (egalitarian or not). I demonstrate that marketers and consumer behavior researchers can use consumers' political ideology as an accessible lens to understand these socializing motivations and behaviors, as well as the underlying worldviews ("Strict Father" beliefs and egalitarian beliefs).

In Chapter 2, I explore how liberal and conservative consumers might differ in their motivations, and how these motivations relate back to the values in which they believe. I predict that conservatives might be more punitive-focused than educative-focused when dealing with a transgressing brand, while liberals might be equally driven by both motivations. I also predict that these stronger punitive motivations among conservatives stem from their stronger adherence to the 'strict father' worldview, which believes in absolute moral standards that are set by a higher authority, which are not up

for discussion, and any deviations from which must be punished. I find evidence for these two predictions in five studies, including a large-scale dataset. I show that not only do conservatives report relatively stronger punitive motivations (study 1) and punitive behavioral intentions (study 2), they also engage in more punitive behaviors (studies 3 and 4). I do not find any such differences in liberals' reported relative motivations, but I do find that they engage in educative behaviors more (study 3). I also demonstrate this effect holds for all types of transgressions, be they recalled (study 1), recent (study 2), or novel and fictitious (studies 3 and 4). I also find this effect when investigating political ideology through partisan identity (Study 1), as a manipulated variable with politically engaged moderates (study 2), through prescreened liberals and conservatives (study 3 and 4), and through a continuous ten-point scale used across 64 countries while controlling for other demographic markers (study 5). I also demonstrate that this increased punitive focus among conservatives stems from their stronger adherence to absolute moral standards (study 4), and willingness to justify punitive actions, their preference for autocracy, and the lower importance they give to autonomy in children (study 5). My findings not only recontextualize the consumer backlash, particularly conservative consumer backlash, that brands are increasingly falling prey to, but also provides managers, policymakers, and consumer activists new avenues to consider while designing interventions that can more productively channel this consumer response.

In Chapter 3, I focus on the more commonplace form of communication that brands engage in. In particular, I investigate how a specific style of humor, namely, the aggressive style of humor (which denigrates an individual or social group), can provide

information, and in what instances liberal and conservative consumers differ in their appreciation, as well as production of it. Across five studies, including a large field experiment and an analysis of consumer tweets, I demonstrate that conservatives are more open to this aggressive form of humor in general, and this increased appreciation stems from their desire to see their ingroup as superior to other groups. However, I also detail instances in which liberals are just as open to this form of humor, when it aligns with their worldviews. I find that conservative consumers are more appreciative of brand-related aggressive humor jokes (study 1), are more likely to have used aggressive humor in their own tweets (study 2) and are also more likely to appreciate aggressive humor that makes fun of groups with lower social status (study 3). I also find that liberals appreciate aggressive humor just as much as conservatives when it targets higher status groups (study 3), when liberals are made to feel that their ingroup is superior to others (study 4), and when the individual being denigrated through aggressive humor was the one who was upholding social inequity (study 5). I also find that this effect prevails when I operationalize political ideology as a continuous scale while controlling for other demographic markers (study 1), or prescreen participants to be either liberal or conservative (studies 2, 3, 4, and 5). I also find that this increased appreciation has a downstream impact on willingness to share (study 3) and on brand liking (study 5). I detail how my findings can act as guardrails for marketers to use to experiment and craft better, more strategically humorous communications that are less likely to be discordant with their consumers' preferences.

Hence, across ten studies, that look at political socialization of brands and the political ideology of consumers in multiple, converging ways, I find that both liberal and conservative consumers try to influence brand's socio-political conduct in both episodic and ongoing manners. However, I find that the two sets of consumers differ in what drives their socializing behaviors, in line with their views of governance and social hierarchy. I next discuss the broader implications of my research.

BROADER IMPLICATIONS

My dissertation, exploring how liberals and conservatives differ in their response to brand transgressions, both benign and harmful, helps consumer behavior researchers and marketers understand consumers not just on the oft-studied behavior-level, but also their underlying motivations. As consumers become more and more partisan, these differences would likely become even more important for marketers and policymakers to understand. I expect my dissertation to have three major theoretical contributions and three major managerial implications, as I detail below.

Theoretical Contributions

I expect my dissertation to have three major theoretical contributions. First, I contribute to the growing body of research investigating the role political ideology plays in the marketplace. Political ideology has received significant scholarly attention from consumer behavior researchers in recent years. My research reported here shows that liberals and conservatives differ in their responses to both harmful transgressions (being punitive-focused or educative-focused) and benign transgressions (being appreciative or

being offended). Second, my research demonstrates the need to investigate this difference not just in terms of behavior, but also in terms of underlying motivations. The conventional view in the U. S. posited that liberal consumers were more easily offended and thus, more likely to chastise brands. More recent events and academic scrutiny has challenged this narrative, suggesting that our conventional understanding of these behaviors was based on a political climate that no longer exists. Hence, as I suggest in these two essays, there is a greater need to understand the underlying motivations (such as, moral governance beliefs and social dominance orientation), which are more likely to remain stable despite the increasing volatility and polarization in the political climate. And third, my research demonstrates that consumers' moral decision-making is a complex process beyond just the moral values they care about. Not only can consumers differ in how rigid their moral standards are (i.e., deontology), these standards and moral norms are also learned by consumers over time, such as, through the aggressive humor they use or are exposed to.

Managerial Implications

I expect my research reported here to have three broader managerial implications. First, I demonstrate the usefulness of political ideology as a demographic marker for marketers, as it allows them to segment their consumers on the basis of the social and moral beliefs they would be more likely to hold. Second, my research demonstrates that marketers should consider consumers, particularly politically-engaged consumers, to be a more active stakeholder than they are traditionally assumed to be. Consumers can play a

broader, more-educative role in the long-term for brands through petitioning, advocacy groups, and other engagement tactics, but can also single-handedly punish a transgressing brand (such as Eli Lilly) through a humorous tweet that goes viral. And third, my research provides marketers (as well as policymakers and consumer activists) with actionable guidelines on how to engage with morally dissatisfied consumers and how to avoid creating such dissatisfaction in the first place. I next discuss a few limitations of my current research as well as provide a few directions for future research.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several limitations of the research I have reported in this dissertation that I would like to acknowledge as avenues for future research. First, as political ideology is an individual difference variable, it is difficult to rule out the influence of other, related demographic markers. I address this limitation through controlling for these markers and manipulating self-perceived political ideology; however, further research can help rule out other potential correlates, such as religiosity and cultural factors. Second, as consumers' political ideology and the related behaviors they engage in can shift over time, it is plausible that my findings might be driven by the current U. S. political climate. However, my use of disparate population samples should somewhat address this concern. Third, while I do demonstrate that my findings impact real behaviors (such as consumer tweets), it is less clear which behaviors my findings apply to. Future research can address this concern by investigating a wider range of behaviors that consumers engage in. Fourth, my current research does not rule out all alternate

explanations, such as conservatives' behavior being driven by less effortful, more simplistic thinking or by their adherence to traditional practices related to expressing consumer outrage or humor. While my research does not address these issues, I recognize that the phenomena under investigation are multiply-determined.

I would also like to suggest three avenues for future research that emerge from my dissertation. First, by drawing inspirations from disparate research streams like employee dissatisfaction, parenting styles, and evolutionary psychology, I demonstrate the potential of these areas have to inform future consumer behavior research, particularly, in the area of how brands develop an identity. Second, while current research has almost exclusively portrayed brands as the transgressors, little is known about how consumers might respond to brands who themselves are victims of transgressions (e.g., Target's employees being threatened because of their pride collection). Future research can investigate how liberal and conservative consumers might differ in this regard. Third, while my current research conceptualizes how brands learn political values and acceptable conduct, consumers themselves also go through the process of political socialization, which can result in both adaptive and maladaptive attitudes and behaviors (e.g., recycling vs. vaccine hesitancy). Future research can explore how these politically socialized consumer attitudes and behaviors can be overridden for greater societal benefit, such as, decreasing conservatives' vaccine hesitancy and susceptibility to fake news (cf. Hao et al. 2022).

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, across ten studies that employ disparate methodologies and populations, I find evidence for not just a long-term socializing process at play, but demonstrate how liberals and conservatives behave differently. It seems like liberal consumers are more likely to be the ones politically socializing brands. Not only do they seem to be more discerning in what instances of aggressive humor they appreciate from brands, but they also seem to be relatively more open to engage in educative behaviors when brands commit major transgressions. Conservatives, on the other hand, seem to view political socialization of brands as a natural process that needs no interventions until it breaks down, in which case, conservatives take punitive actions to inform the brand that such transgressions should not be committed in the future. Hence, marketers, policymakers, consumer activists, and consumer behavior researchers need to better understand this political socialization process that consumers are engaging in, so that they can guide it in a more productive direction that benefits the brands, its multiple stakeholders, and the economy and society at large.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Chapter 2 – Empirical Overview

| Study and Hypothesis | Population (and Ideology operationalization) | Transgression | Socializing Motivations |
|-----------------------------|---|--|---|
| 1 (H1) | Prolific workers (Democrats and Republicans) | Recalled (brand did wrong morally vs. non-morally) | Punitive Motive and Educative motive (separate Likert scales) |
| 2 (H1) | Prolific workers (politically-engaged moderates) | Real Transgression (Starbucks and Bud Light boycotts) | Punitive intentions (Boycott, Divesting, Legal action, Switch) Educative intentions (Petition, Social Campaign, Advocacy groups) |
| 3 (H1) | Prolific workers (liberals and conservatives) | Imagined ('ad concepts' violating a non-moral norm, or care and authority foundations) | punitive behavior (levy fine); educative behavior (tweeting at the brand) |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>4 (H1 & H2)</p> | <p>Prolific workers (liberals and conservatives)</p> | <p>Imagined ('ad concepts' violating a non-moral norm, or care and authority foundations)</p> | <p>Educative motive (bipolar scale); Punitive behavior (levy fine)</p> |
| <p>5 (H1 & H2)</p> | <p>World Values Survey respondents (representative samples from 64 countries)</p> | <p>Recalled behavior</p> | <p>Relative (boycott vs. petition)</p> |

Figure 1A: Socializing Motivations for moral transgression (Study 1)

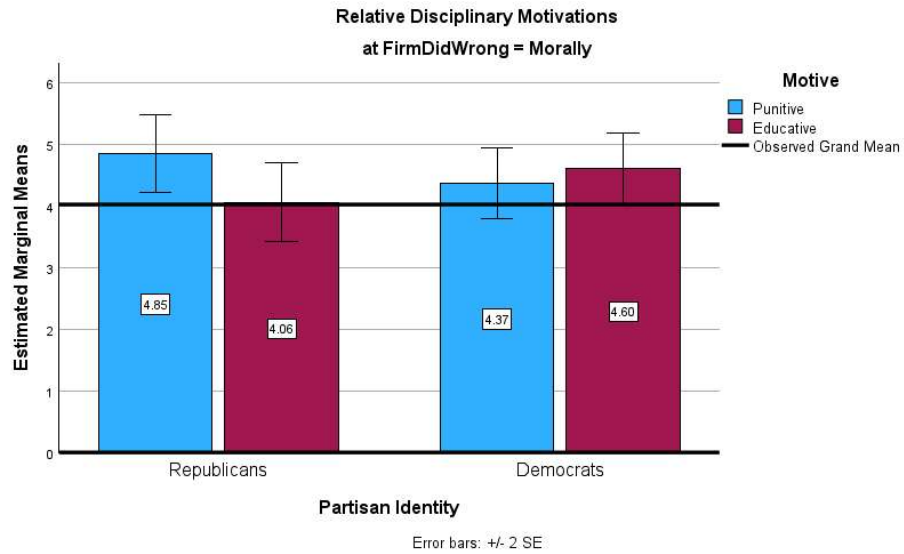


Figure 1B: Socializing Motivations for non-moral transgression (Study 1)

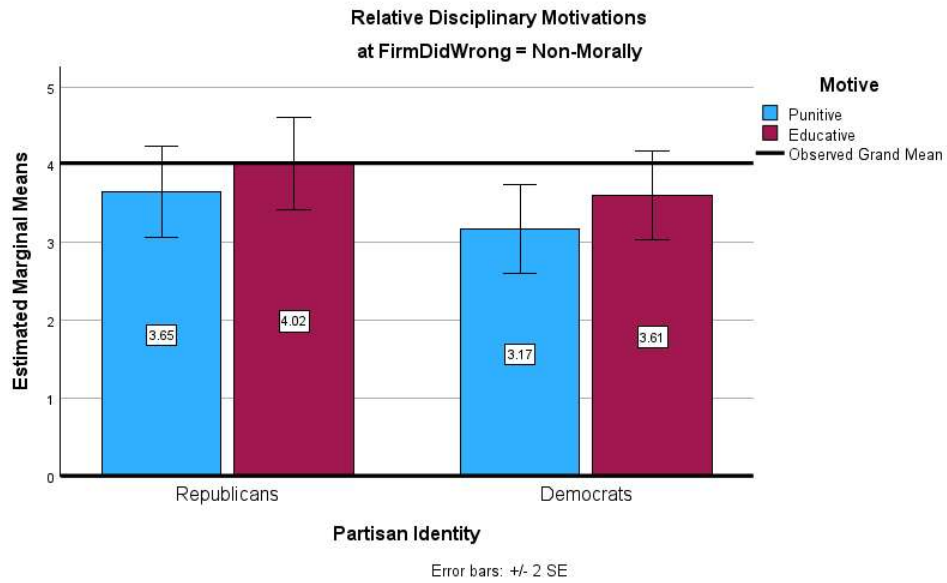


Figure 2A: Self-perceived Political Ideology manipulation check (Study 2)

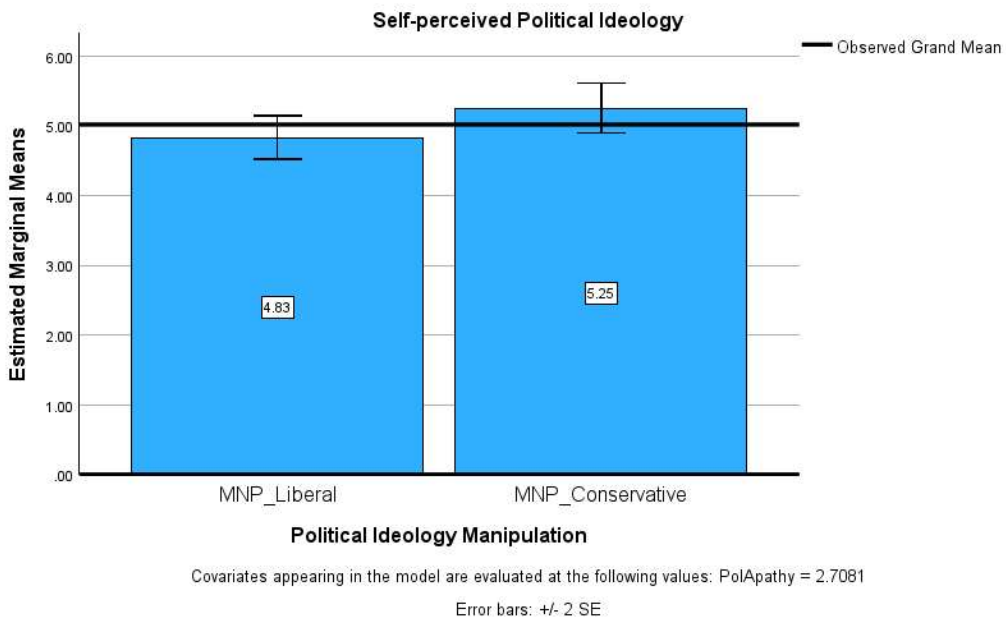


Figure 2B: Likelihood of Socializing actions for not harmful transgression (Study 2)

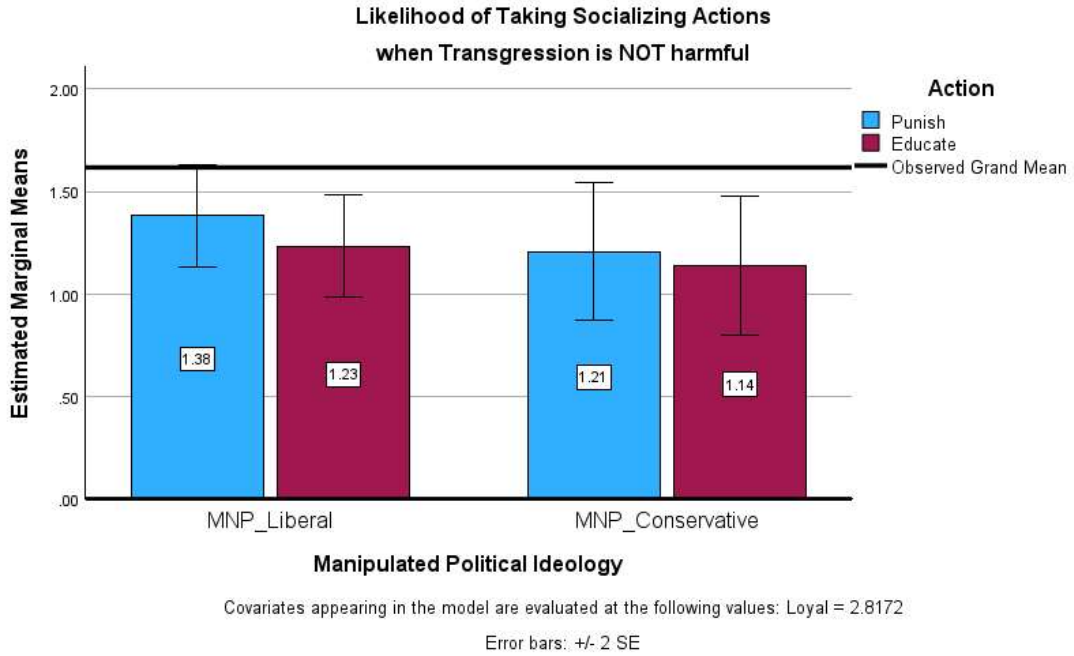


Figure 2C: Likelihood of Socializing actions for less harmful transgression (Study 2)

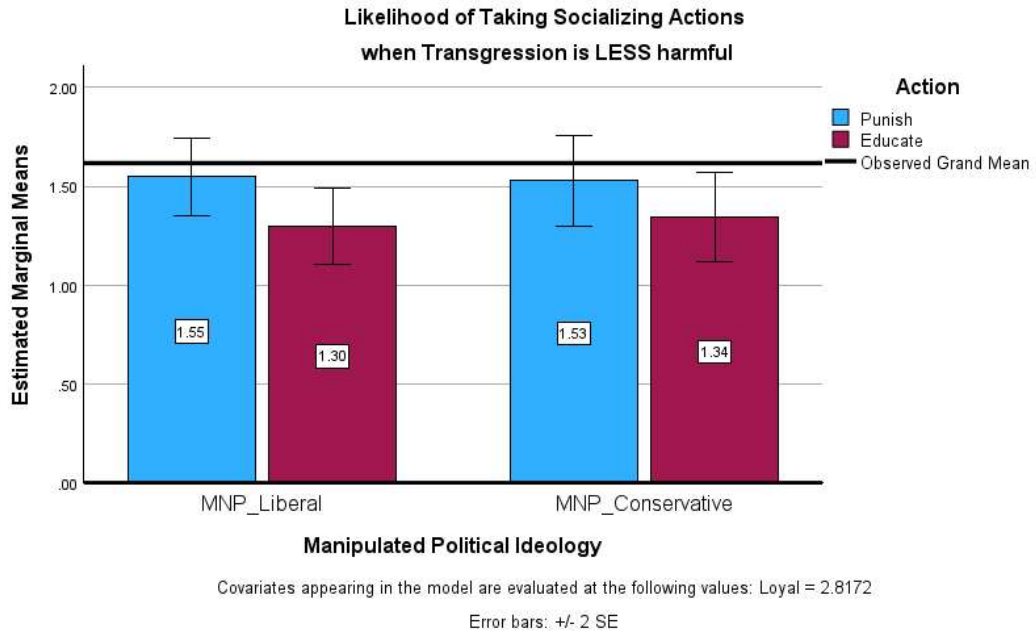
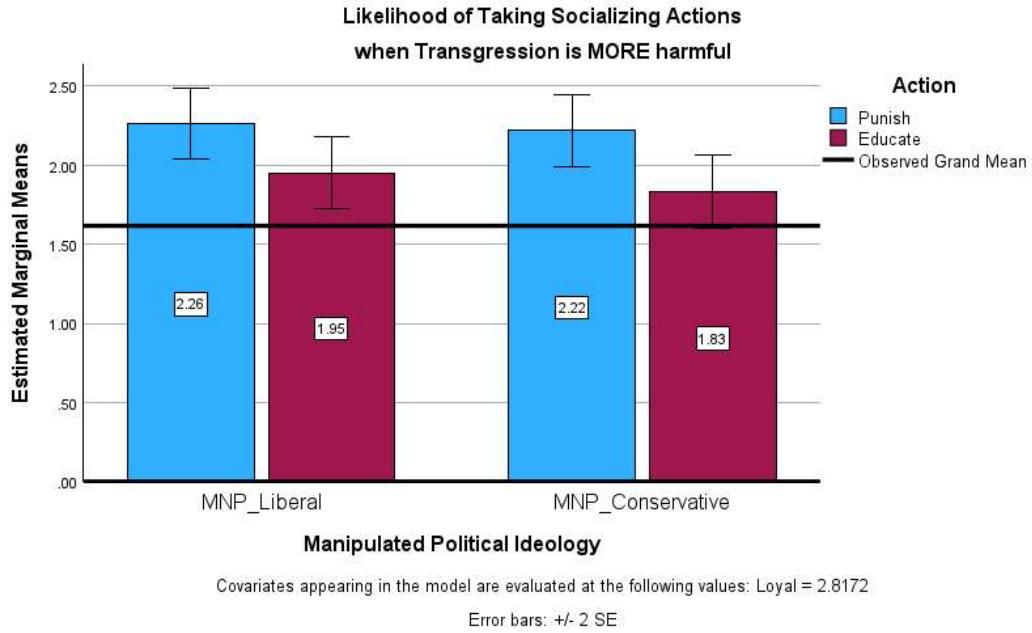


Figure 2D: Likelihood of Socializing actions for more harmful transgression (Study 2)



Figures 3A, 3B and 3C: Transgression manipulating ‘ad concept’ stimuli (Study 3)



Figure 3D: Perceived Transgression type Manipulation check (Study 3)

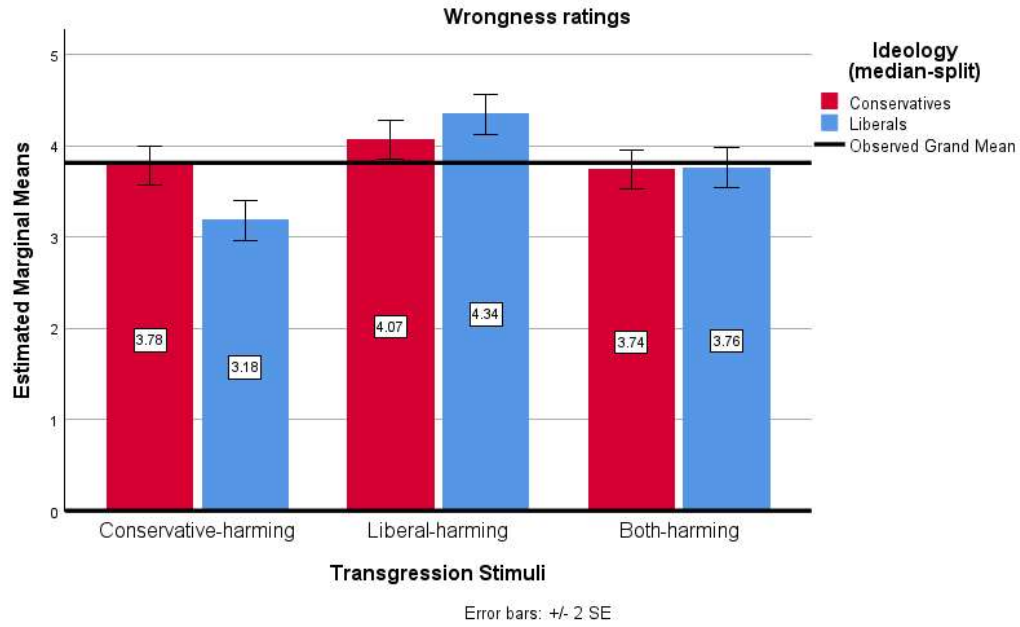


Figure 3E: Educative Behavior – Probability of Tweeting ‘at’ the brand (Study 3B)

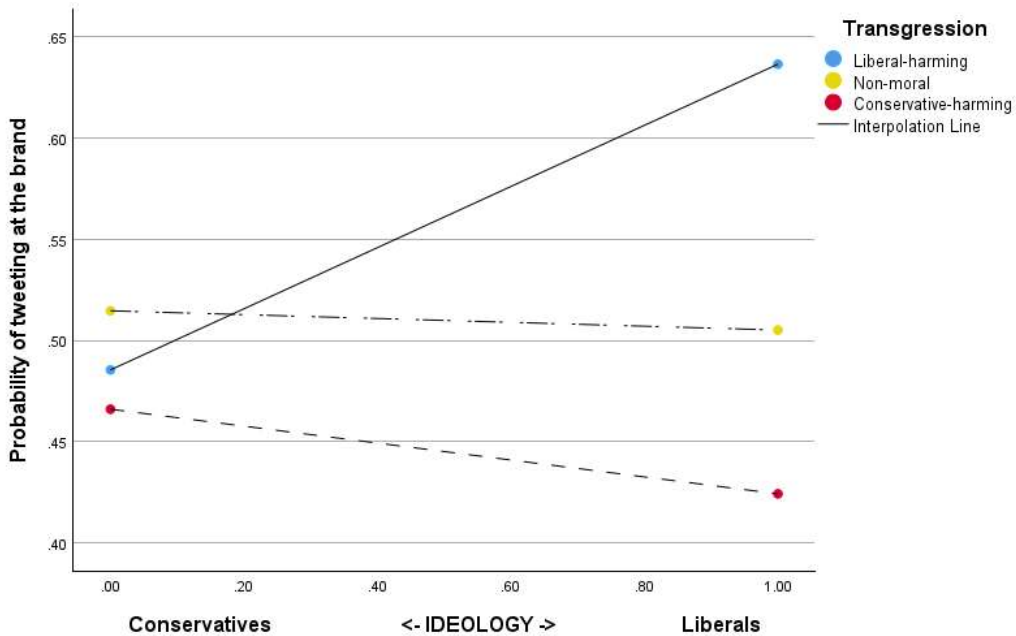
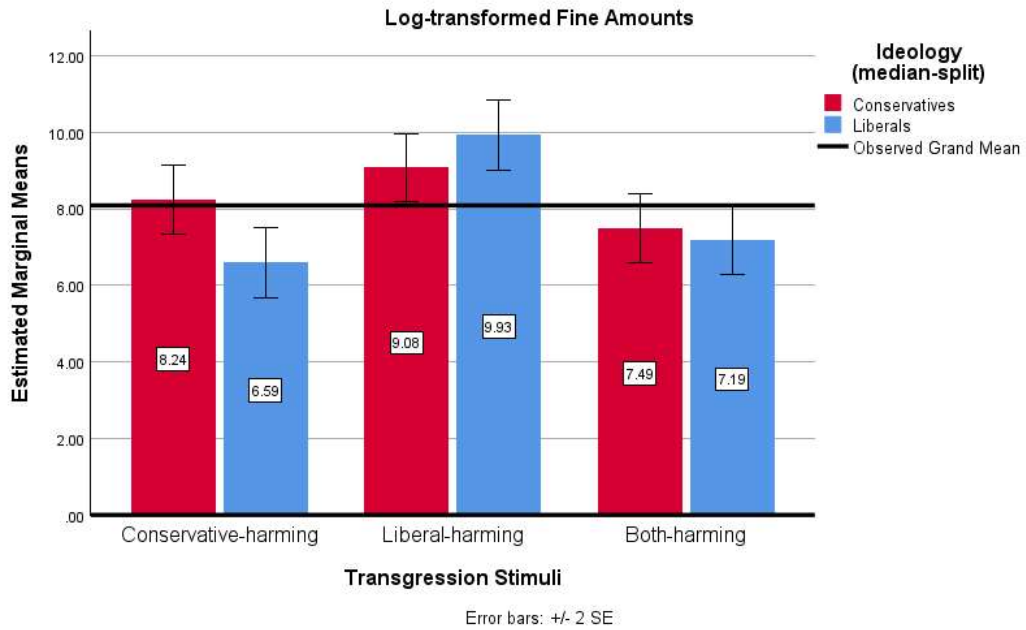


Figure 3F: Punitive Behavior – Fine levied (log-transformed) at the brand (Study 3B)



Figures 4A: Liberal-harming transgression ‘ad concept’ (Study 4)

| | | |
|---|--|---|
|  <p>You see a man quickly canceling a blind date as soon as he sees the woman.</p> |  <p>You see a girl ignoring her father's orders by taking the car after her curfew.</p> |  <p>You see someone reading the ending of a spy novel before reading the beginning.</p> |
| (Liberal-harming) | (Conservative-harming) | (Social-norm transgression) |

Figure 4D: Perceived Transgression type Manipulation check (Study 4)

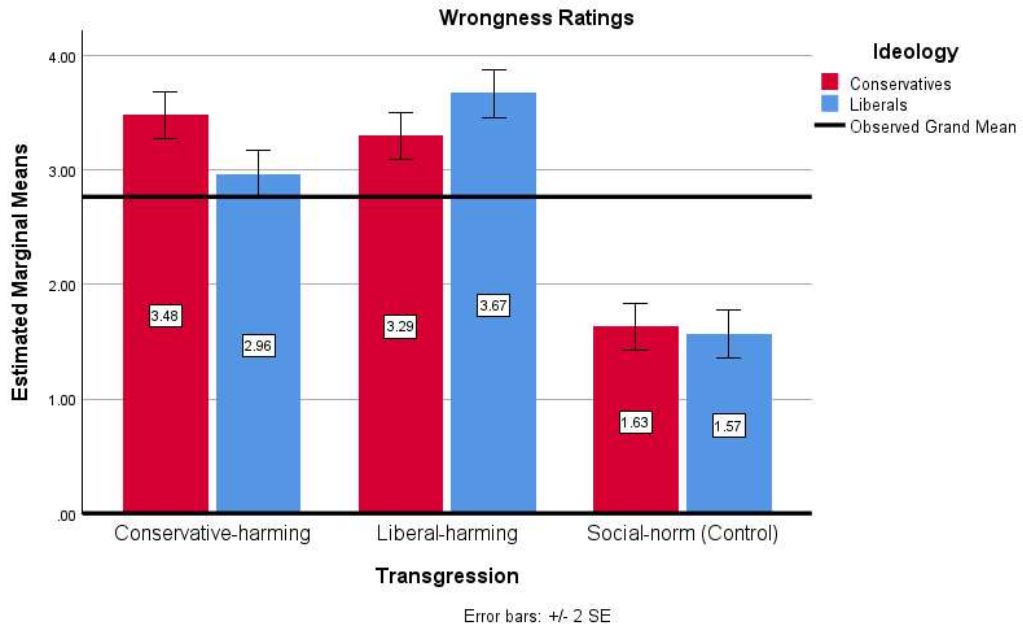


Figure 4E: Educative Motive (Study 4)

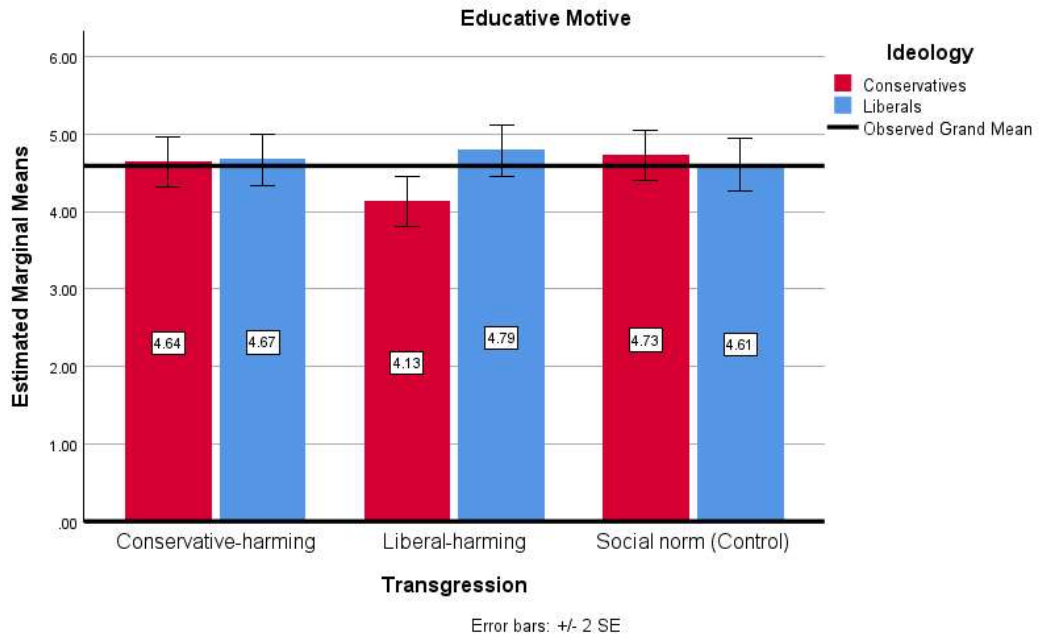


Figure 4F: Punitive behavior (Fine amount) for transgression (Study 4)

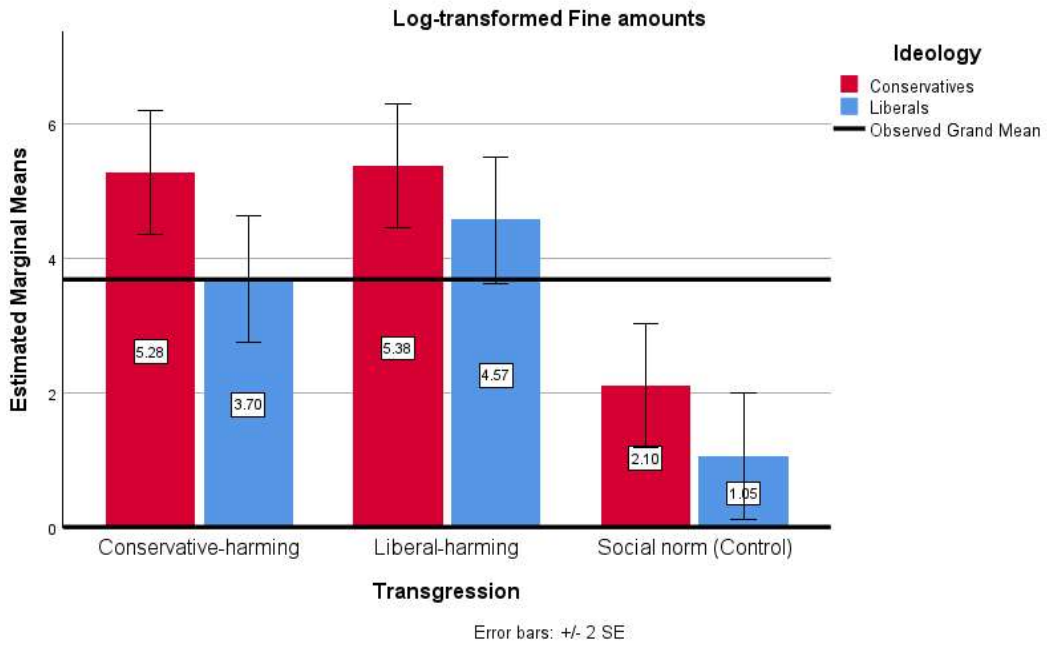
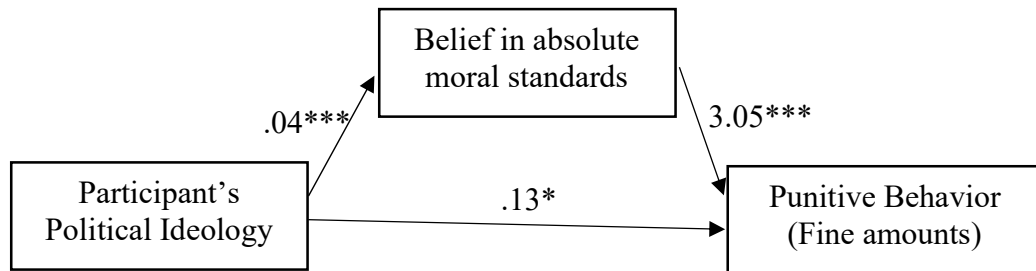
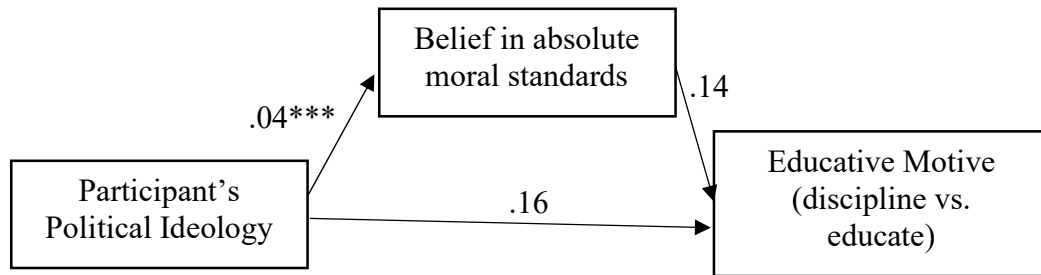


Figure 4G: Punitive Behavior Mediation Diagram Hayes Model (Study 4)



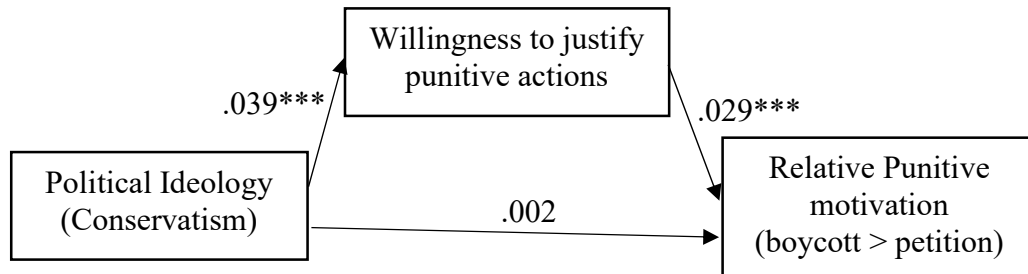
As conservatism increases, belief in absolute moral standards increases (path-a=.04, $p < .001$). As belief in absolute moral standards increases, the suggested fine amount also increases (path-b=3.05, $p < .001$). Consequently, the direct effect of conservatism on suggested fine amount is significant only at $p < .1$ level (path-c=.13, $p = .074$).

Figure 4H: Educative Motive Mediation Diagram Hayes Model (Study 4)



As conservatism increases, belief in absolute moral standards increases (path-a=.04, $p<.001$). As belief in absolute moral standards increases, however, educative motive does not significantly change (path-b=.16, $p=.491$). Conservatism also does not directly impact educative motive (path-c=-.02, $p=.461$).

Figure 5A: Mediation Diagram (Study 5)

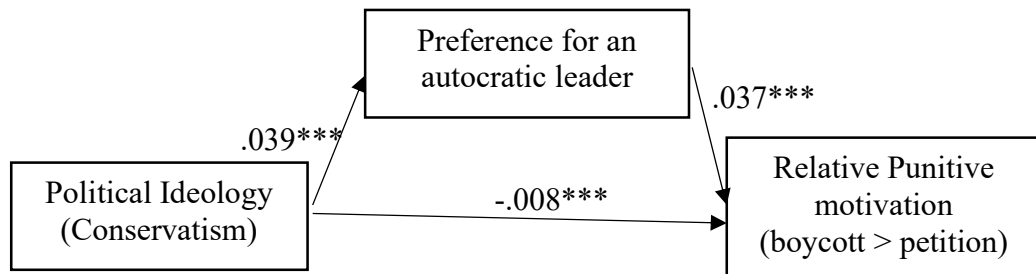


As conservatism increases, WVS respondents' willingness to justify punitive actions increased (path-a=.039, $p<.001$). This increased willingness to justify punitive actions was associated with a higher likelihood of having participated in (or openness to participate in) boycotts relative to petition-signings (path-b=.029, $p<.001$). The direct effect of ideology on relative punitive motivation was not significant (path-c=.002, $p=.1901$). I controlled for the survey respondents' age, gender, income level, education level, religiosity level, interest in politics, their

country's income inequality and freedom of expression, and their World Bank designated region.

[*** = significant at .001 α -level; ** = significant at .05 α -level; * = significant at .01 α -level]

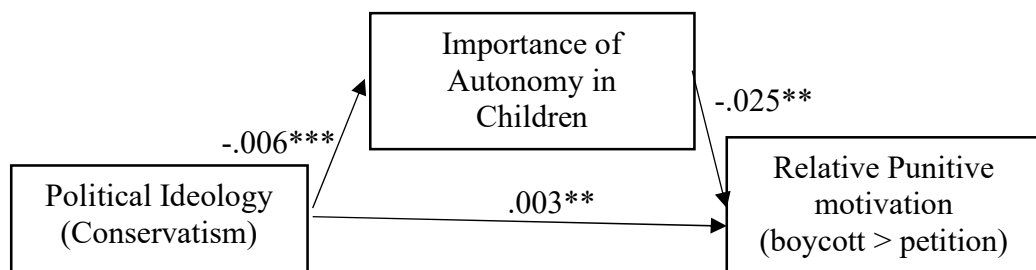
Figure 5B: Mediation Diagram (Study 5)



As conservatism increases, WVS respondents' preference for an autocratic leader increased (path-a=.039, $p<.001$). This increased preference for an autocratic leader was associated with a higher likelihood of having participated in (or openness to participate in) boycotts relative to petition-signings (path-b=.037, $p<.001$). The direct effect of ideology on relative punitive motivation was not significant (path-c=.001, $p=.3209$). I controlled for the survey respondents' age, gender, income level, education level, religiosity level, interest in politics, their country's income inequality and freedom of expression, and their World Bank designated region.

[*** = significant at .001 α -level; ** = significant at .05 α -level; * = significant at .01 α -level]

Figure 5C: Mediation Diagram (Study 5)



As conservatism increases, WVS respondents gave less importance to autonomy in children (path-a=-.006, $p<.001$). This lower importance given to autonomy in children was associated with a higher likelihood of having participated in (or openness to participate in) boycotts relative to petition-signings (path-b=-.025, $p=.032$). The direct effect of ideology on relative punitive motivation was also significant (path-c=.003, $p=.045$). I controlled for the survey respondents' age, gender, income level, education level, religiosity level, interest in politics, their country's income inequality and freedom of expression, and their World Bank designated region.

[*** = significant at .001 α -level; ** = significant at .05 α -level; * = significant at .01 α -level]

Table 2: Chapter 3 – Related Research

| Humor and Political Ideology | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Authors | Area of focus | Theoretical constructs | Key findings | Methodology and sample |
| LaMarre, Landreville, & Beam (2009) | Political Satire in late-night shows | Biased message processing, and perception of source's political opinions | Liberals and conservatives both found The Colbert Report funny, but liberals believed it was satire, while conservatives believed that Colbert meant what he said. This difference was mediated by their perception of Colbert's own political opinions. | One experiment (N = 332 midwestern undergraduates) |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Buie, Ford, Olah, Arguello, & Mendiburo -Seguel (2022)</p> | <p>Disparagement humor memes</p> | <p>Moral foundations (individualizing vs. binding), cavalier humor beliefs</p> | <p>Liberals and conservatives found memes more offensive and less funny when they disparaged the moral values they care more about (individualizing and binding respectively). Conservatives in general found the disparaging humor funnier as they had more cavalier humor beliefs.</p> | <p>Two experiments (N = 449 MTurk workers)</p> |
| <p>Strauts & Blanton (2015)</p> | <p>Political correctness</p> | <p>Political correctness</p> | <p>Political correctness was found to be more correlated with liberalism and lower right-wing authoritarianism.</p> | <p>Correlational (N=246 MTurk workers)</p> |

| | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| | | | Political correctness also predicted negativity towards politically incorrect humor. | |
| Young, Bagozzi, Goldring, Poulsen, & Drouin (2017) | Satire through irony and exaggeration | Appreciation and comprehension of satire, sense of humor, and need for cognition | Conservatives appreciate satire less than liberals do, in both its forms (irony and exaggeration). This effect is explained by conservatives' lower sense of humor and need for cognition. | One experiment (N=305 from a national sample) |
| Wilson & Patterson (1969) | Humor preferences | Humor categories (from formal to libidinal) | Conservative high school students appreciate safe, formal forms of humor (e.g. puns) more than liberal high school | Correlational (N=60 high school students) |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|--|---|---|
| | | | students, who appreciate more 'libidinal' (sick or sexual) forms of humor. | |
| Ruch & Hehl (1990) | Humor preferences | Humor categories | Conservatives appreciate jokes that resolve incongruity and reject non-sense forms of humor | Correlational (N=365 European undergraduates) |
| Baltiansky, Craig, & Jost (2021) | Stereotypical Humor | Stereotypical humor and system justification | High system-justifiers are more appreciative of stereotypical humor that targets low-status groups than low system justifiers. The inverse, that low system justifiers were more appreciative of stereotypical humor that targets high-status | Experimental (N=179 MTurk workers) |

| | | | group than low system-justifiers was true in only some cases. | |
|---|----------------------|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Humor Styles | | | | |
| Author | Area of focus | Theoretical constructs | Key findings | Methodology and sample |
| Vernon, Martin, Schermer, and Mackie (2008) | Behavioral genetics | Humor styles and Big-5 personality traits | Individual differences in adaptive humor (affiliative and self-enhancing) styles are primarily genetic, while differences in maladaptive humor (aggressive and self-defeating) styles are primarily environmental. The adaptive styles were | Correlational (N=456 adult twins) |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | <p>also correlated with extraversion and openness to experience, while the maladaptive styles were correlated with neuroticism, and negatively with conscientiousness. Aggressive humor was negatively correlated with agreeableness. These associations between personality and humor styles are influenced by genetics and by environmental factors not shared between the surveyed twins.</p> | |
|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| <p>Galloway (2010)</p> | <p>Patterns in humor preference s</p> | <p>Humor styles and Big-5 personality traits</p> | <p>Individuals can be clustered into four groups based on humor styles scores. Cluster 1 (those high on all styles) had higher extraversion and openness to experiences and low on agreeableness and conscientiousness. Cluster 2 (those low on all styles) had higher conscientiousness but low extraversion. Cluster 3 (high on adaptive styles, low on maladaptive styles) had high conscientiousness, extraversion, and</p> | <p>Correlational cluster-analysis (N=318 convenience sample of Australian undergraduate or graduate students or general community)</p> |
|----------------------------|---|--|---|--|

| | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|---|---|--|
| | | | agreeableness, but low neuroticism. Cluster 4 (low on adaptive, high on maladaptive) scored low on openness, extraversion, and agreeableness, but high on neuroticism. | |
| Plessen, et al. (2020) | Personality correlates | Humor styles and Big-5 personality traits | Adaptive styles are positively associated with openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness, and negatively with neuroticism. Maladaptive styles were positively associated with neuroticism, and | Systematic review (24 studies from 13 countries; N=11,791) |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------|--|---|------------------------------------|
| | | | negatively with agreeableness and conscientiousness. | |
| Dyck and Holtzman (2013) | Well-being | Humor styles, well-being, and social support | Higher adaptive (affiliative and self-enhancing) style scores predict better well-being. This is mediated by greater perceived social support. Conversely, the negative association of maladaptive (aggressive and self-defeating) humor with well-being is mediated by lower perceived social support. Aggressive humor style is associated with | Correlational (826 undergraduates) |

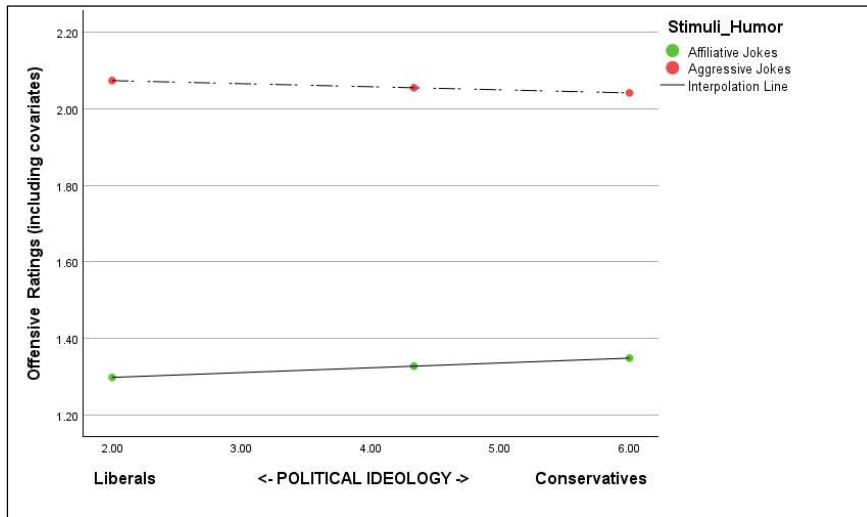
| | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| | | | stronger social support amongst men, but lower support amongst women. | |
| Cann & Matson (2014) | Social desirability | Humor styles and romantic and social desirability | Adaptive humor styles were rated as more socially desirable. Maladaptive styles were rated as more socially undesirable. | Correlational (N=100 undergraduates) |
| Hampes (2010) | Empathy | Humor Styles and Empathy | Affiliative humor was positively correlated with empathic concern. Negative correlations were found between aggressive humor and empathic concern, perspective-taking empathy, and personal distress. | Correlational (N=103 undergraduates) |

| | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| <p>Ford, McCreight, and Richardson (2014)</p> | <p>Happiness and affective styles</p> | <p>Dispositional motives, humor styles, and happiness</p> | <p>Adaptive humor correlated positively with approach motives and happiness. Maladaptive styles negatively correlated with happiness, but only self-defeating humor style was positively correlated with avoidance motives.</p> | <p>Correlational (N=109 MTurk workers)</p> |
| <p>Kfrerer, Bell, and Schermer (2021)</p> | <p>Humor styles</p> | <p>Humor styles</p> | <p>Left-wing orientation was found to be correlated with higher appreciation of affiliative and aggressive humor styles. Left-wing participants were no more humorous than</p> | <p>Correlational (N=452 adults, 84.5% women)</p> |

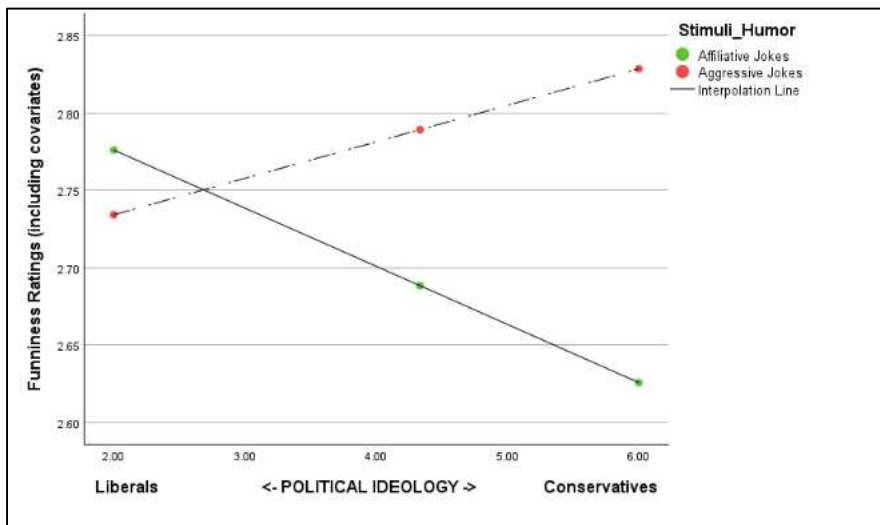
| | | | | |
|--|--|--|-----------------------------|--|
| | | | right-wing participants. | |
|--|--|--|-----------------------------|--|

FIGURE 1: Regression results, including covariates (Study 1 - State Fair)

a. Manipulation check: Aggressive vs. Affiliative Offensiveness



b. Interaction Effect: Political Ideology*Humor Type



c. Main Effect using HSQ

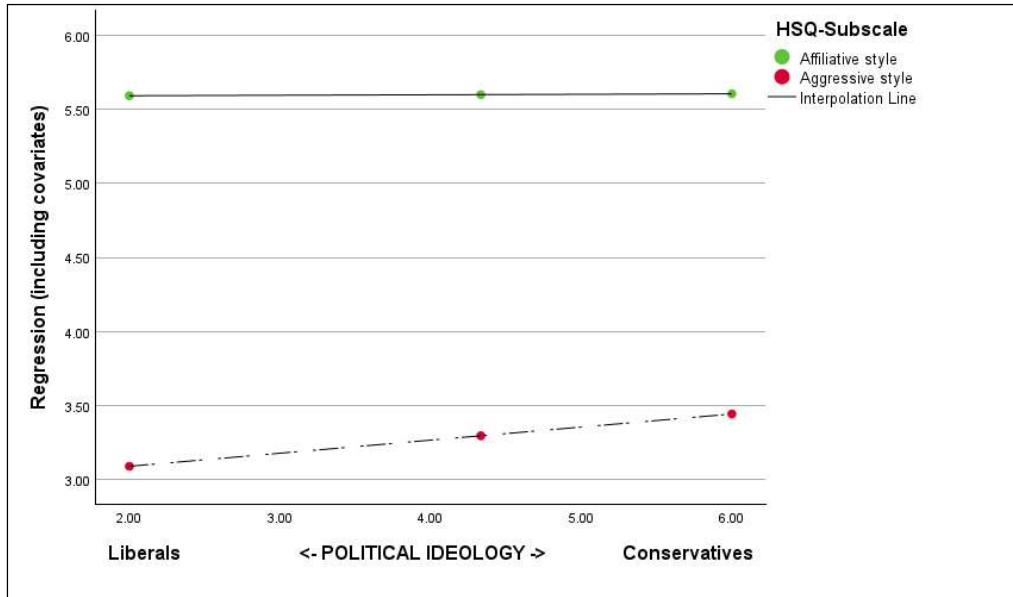


FIGURE 2: Participants' Tweets (Study 2)

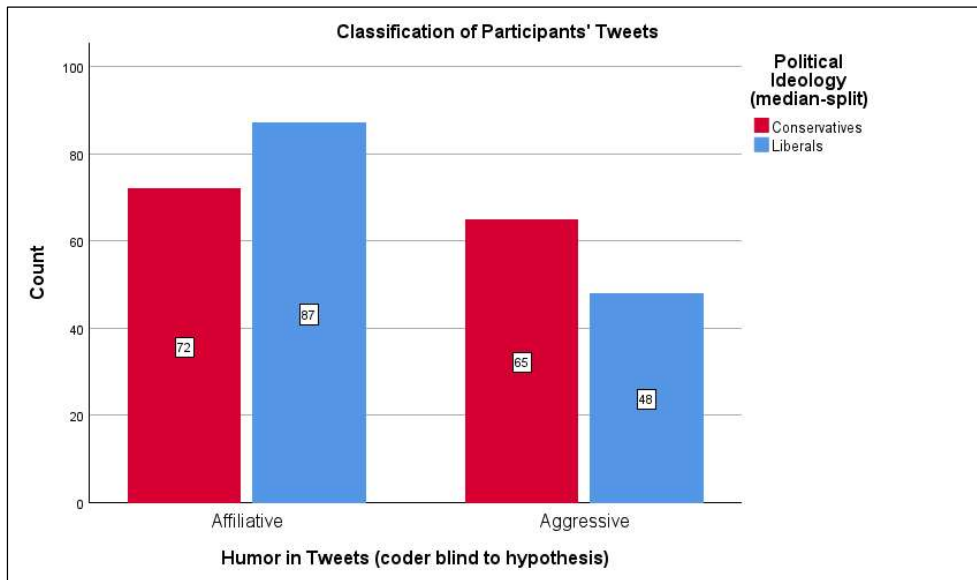
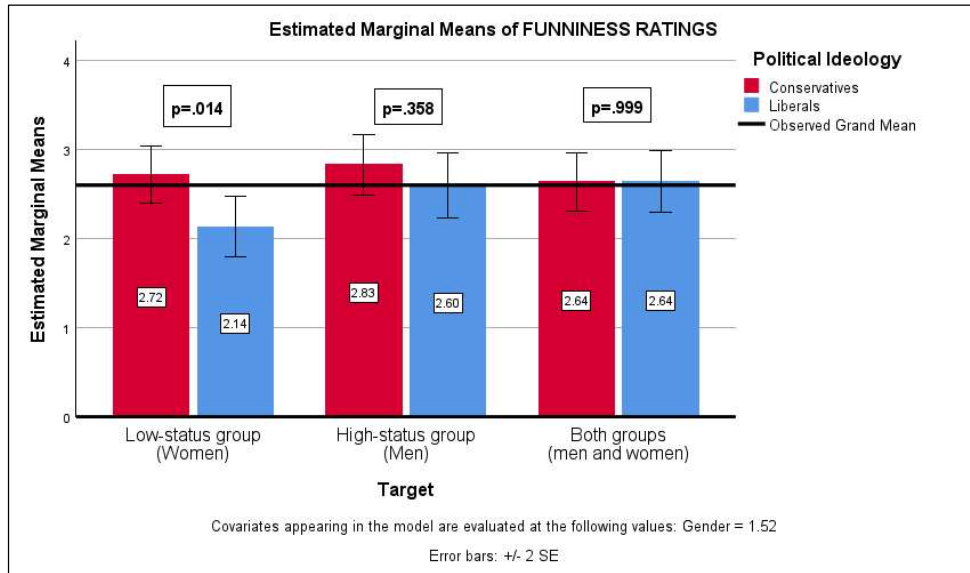


FIGURE 3: Role of Target (High-status vs. low-status group; study 3)

a. Funniness Ratings (Humor appreciation)



b. Offensiveness Ratings

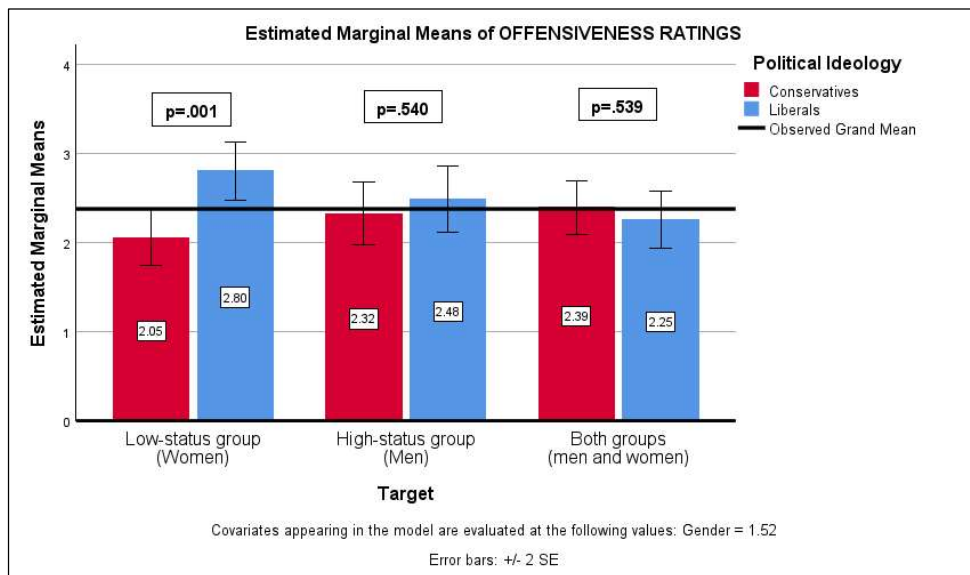


FIGURE 4: Effect of SDO on Funniness (Study 4)

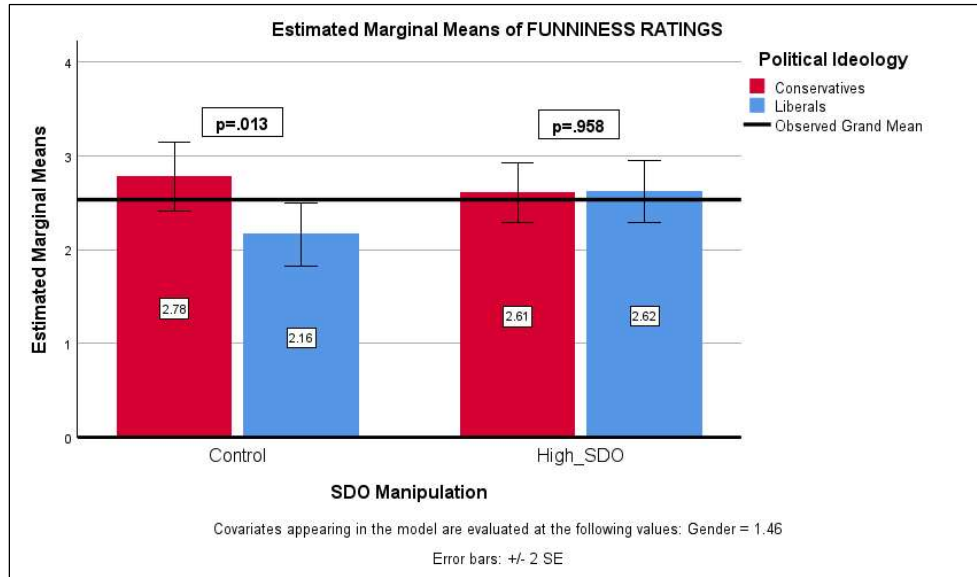
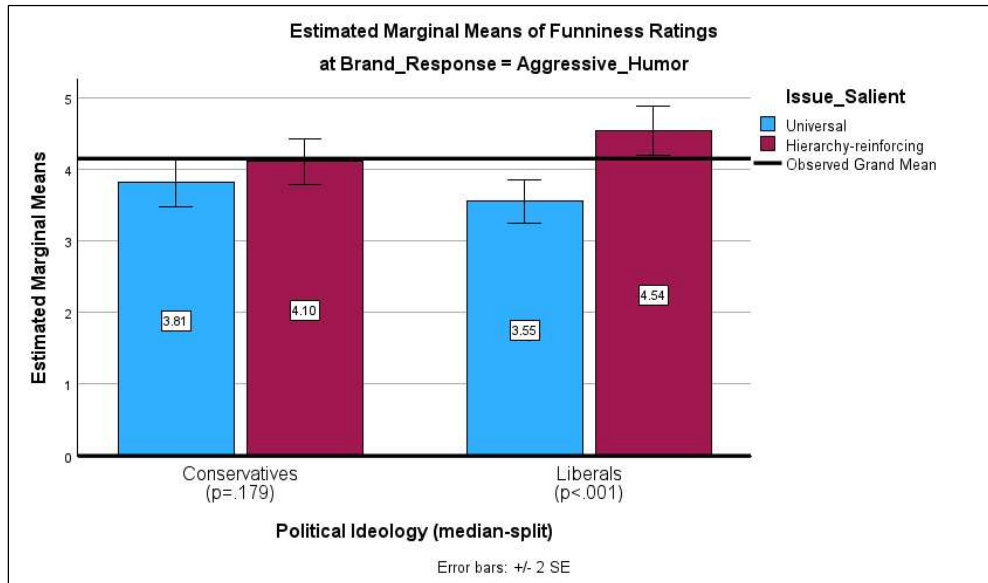
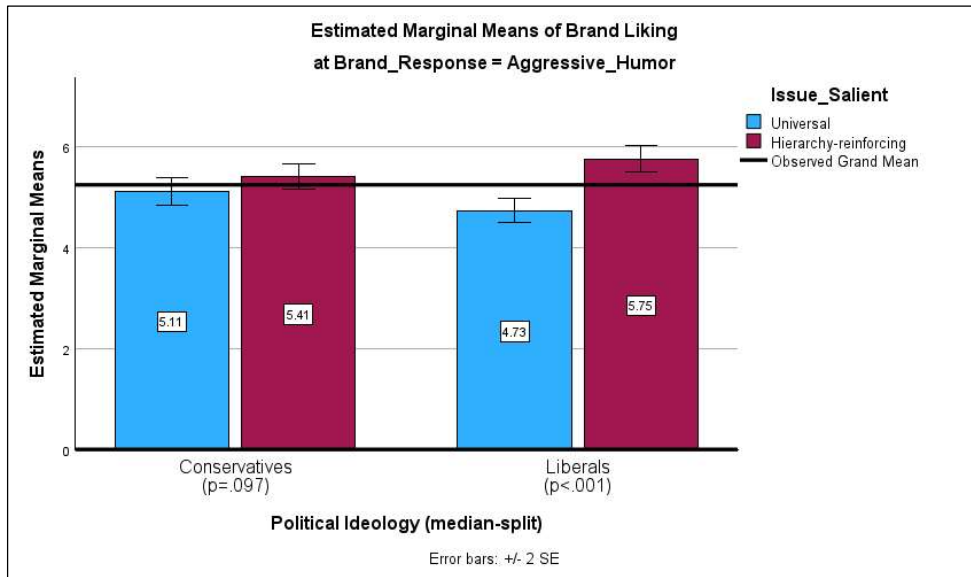


FIGURE 5: Effect of target's behavior on ratings of aggressive brand response (Study 5)

a. Funniness ratings



b. Brand Liking



APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1A (STUDY 1)

Sample responses from Transgression Recall task:

Non-moral Transgression recall condition:

1. “A brand I really like went public saying they had to increase their prices substantially. This was fine at first until I learned that the board members earned vast amounts of money and they didn't want to lose out, so they just passed the expense to the consumer. Very not cool.”
2. “A clothing brand that I bought for years suddenly started making their sizes much smaller. I don't know why this brand did this as it became confusing to buy their jeans without trying on different sizes. Not a moral issue but I found this to be wrong as it confused their customers.”
3. “Frito lay has put less and less chips in their bags for sometime. They still use the same bags for the same price which is deceiving and wrong. I love the brand but I feel very disappointed and cheated.”

Moral transgression recall condition:

1. “A brand that I have always used, despite portraying themselves as modern and progressive actually has subpar environmental practices. I felt kind of conflicted about it.”
2. “A brand that I really love was ChickfilA when I found out that they used funds to support groups that were anti-gay it made me very disappointed. I don't believe the persecution or harm of any group of people is at all right.”
3. “Disney promotes homosexuality. I am religiously against this. Because they own Star Wars, which I have loved for a long time, it hurts when they promote this.”

Robustness Check: Data Collection wave

The data collection for Study 1 was conducted in two waves. The two waves had a similar number of participants that were included in the reported results (wave-1 N=116; wave-2 N = 123). Including this data collection wave as a dummy-coded factor as another independent variable in the repeated-measures ANOVA with partisan identity and recalled transgression type, did not substantively impact reported differences in relative socializing motivations. Republicans were still more significantly punitive-

focused than educative-focused, but only when recalling a moral transgression ($p=.036$), not a non-moral transgression ($p=.286$). Democrats did not differ in socializing motivations when recalling either a moral transgression ($p=.491$) or a non-moral transgression ($p=.201$). Tables below summarize the within-subjects contrasts and between-subjects effects respectively.

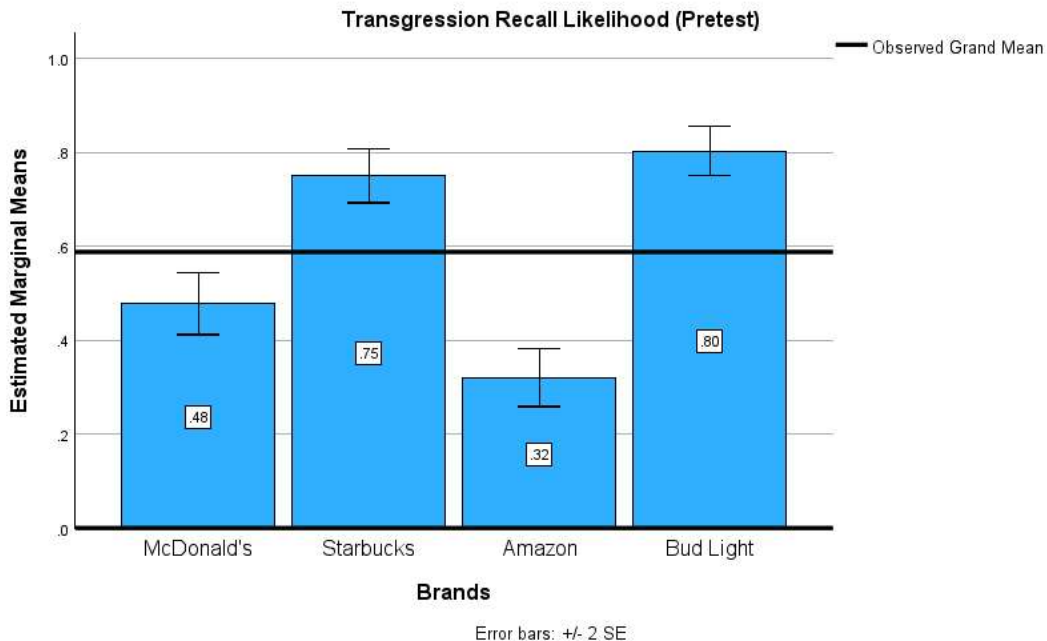
| Tests of Within-Subjects Contrasts | | | | | | |
|---|---------|-------------------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Measure: Motivations | | | | | | |
| Source | Actions | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Focus | Linear | .460 | 1 | .460 | .129 | .719 |
| Focus * partisan | Linear | 8.446 | 1 | 8.446 | 2.376 | .125 |
| Focus * transgression | Linear | 13.392 | 1 | 13.392 | 3.767 | .053 |
| Focus * Study | Linear | 6.077 | 1 | 6.077 | 1.709 | .192 |
| Focus * partisan * transgression | Linear | 6.745 | 1 | 6.745 | 1.897 | .170 |
| Focus * partisan * Study | Linear | 2.161 | 1 | 2.161 | .608 | .436 |
| Focus * transgression * Study | Linear | .756 | 1 | .756 | .213 | .645 |
| Focus * partisan * transgression * Study | Linear | .279 | 1 | .279 | .079 | .780 |
| Error(Focus) | Linear | 821.238 | 231 | 3.555 | | |

| Tests of Between-Subjects Effects | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-----|-------------|----------|-------|
| Measure: Motivations | | | | | |
| Transformed Variable: Average | | | | | |
| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Intercept | 7701.344 | 1 | 7701.344 | 1136.233 | <.001 |
| partisan | 4.458 | 1 | 4.458 | .658 | .418 |
| transgression | 86.886 | 1 | 86.886 | 12.819 | <.001 |
| Study | 7.227 | 1 | 7.227 | 1.066 | .303 |
| partisan * transgression | 7.297 | 1 | 7.297 | 1.077 | .301 |
| partisan * Study | 1.724 | 1 | 1.724 | .254 | .614 |
| transgression * Study | 32.145 | 1 | 32.145 | 4.743 | .030 |
| partisan * transgression * Study | .041 | 1 | .041 | .006 | .938 |
| Error | 1565.709 | 231 | 6.778 | | |

APPENDIX 1B (STUDY 2)

Transgression Pretest:

Under the guise of a ‘social memory’ test, I pretested four recent brand transgressions (listed below) with undergraduate students (N=227, 52.6% female, 40.8% liberal-leaning, 33.8% conservative-leaning, 25.0% true Independents, mean age=19.77 years, age range = 19 to 23 years) in exchange for partial extra-credit. These four brand transgressions centered around McDonald’s (“*McDonald’s was boycotted based on news reports that a franchise owner in Israel said that its restaurants would be providing free meals to Israel Defense Forces soldiers and Israeli hospitals.*”), Starbucks (“*Starbucks was boycotted after it sued its workers’ union of more than 9,000 employees after the union made a post on its X account saying “Solidarity with Palestine” after the Hamas attack.*”), Amazon (“*Amazon was boycotted for its services to fossil fuel giants, avoiding corporate taxes for over a decade, and union-busting tactics like firing activist workers.*”), and Bud Light (“*Bud Light was boycotted for its social media partnership with a transgender influencer, who promoted the beer on Instagram.*”). Participants reported whether they recalled each brand transgression as a binary (I recall this news=1 or I do NOT recall this news=0) variable. Repeated measures ANOVA with these binary recall ratings revealed that the brand transgressions were recalled to significantly different extents ($F(3,681)=65.215$, $p<.001$). However, the Starbucks transgression and the Bud Light transgression was recalled to a similar extent ($p=.180$; see figure below), Hence, these two transgressions were selected as stimuli for Study 2.



Confirmatory Factor Analysis – overall (N=181):

| Communalities | | |
|--|---------|------------|
| | Initial | Extraction |
| ForceMotive_1 (Boycott the brand personally) | 1.000 | .689 |
| ForceMotive_2 (Write negative reviews) | 1.000 | .432 |
| ForceMotive_3 (Join Social Media Campaigns) | 1.000 | .709 |
| ForceMotive_4 (Sign petitions to the brand) | 1.000 | .612 |
| ForceMotive_5 (Sell shares and ask others to sell) | 1.000 | .737 |
| ForceMotive_6 (Buy more to support the brand) | 1.000 | .974 |
| ForceMotive_7 (Take or support legal action) | 1.000 | .585 |
| ForceMotive_8 (Join advocacy groups) | 1.000 | .690 |
| ForceMotive_9 (Buy products from competitors) | 1.000 | .637 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | |

| Total Variance Explained | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Component | Initial Eigenvalues | | | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | | | Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings | | |
| | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1 | 3.635 | 40.388 | 40.388 | 3.635 | 40.388 | 40.388 | 2.758 | 30.649 | 30.649 |
| 2 | 1.422 | 15.801 | 56.189 | 1.422 | 15.801 | 56.189 | 2.278 | 25.309 | 55.959 |
| 3 | 1.008 | 11.203 | 67.392 | 1.008 | 11.203 | 67.392 | 1.029 | 11.433 | 67.392 |
| 4 | .717 | 7.964 | 75.356 | | | | | | |
| 5 | .612 | 6.799 | 82.155 | | | | | | |
| 6 | .500 | 5.552 | 87.708 | | | | | | |
| 7 | .401 | 4.457 | 92.164 | | | | | | |
| 8 | .366 | 4.067 | 96.231 | | | | | | |
| 9 | .339 | 3.769 | 100.000 | | | | | | |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

| Component Matrix^a | | | |
|--|-----------|-------|-------|
| | Component | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| ForceMotive_1 (Boycott the brand personally) | .718 | -.403 | .108 |
| ForceMotive_2 (Write negative reviews) | .652 | .082 | -.025 |
| ForceMotive_3 (Join Social Media Campaigns) | .639 | .520 | -.173 |
| ForceMotive_4 (Sign petitions to the brand) | .598 | .502 | .053 |
| ForceMotive_5 (Sell shares and ask others to sell) | .757 | -.403 | .047 |
| ForceMotive_6 (Buy more to support the brand) | .111 | .220 | .956 |
| ForceMotive_7 (Take or support legal action) | .714 | -.235 | -.139 |
| ForceMotive_8 (Join advocacy groups) | .614 | .540 | -.142 |
| ForceMotive_9 (Buy products from competitors) | .675 | -.415 | .092 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | | |
| a. 3 components extracted. | | | |

| Rotated Component Matrix^a | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Component | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| ForceMotive_1 (Boycott the brand personally) | .817 | .125 | .073 |
| ForceMotive_2 (Write negative reviews) | .454 | .475 | .026 |
| ForceMotive_3 (Join Social Media Campaigns) | .159 | .826 | - .043 |
| ForceMotive_4 (Sign petitions to the brand) | .156 | .747 | .173 |
| ForceMotive_5 (Sell shares and ask others to sell) | .844 | .159 | .015 |
| ForceMotive_6 (Buy more to support the brand) | .017 | .073 | .984 |
| ForceMotive_7 (Take or support legal action) | .693 | .292 | - .140 |
| ForceMotive_8 (Join advocacy groups) | .130 | .820 | - .010 |
| ForceMotive_9 (Buy products from competitors) | .791 | .091 | .052 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | | |
| Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. | | | |
| a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations. | | | |

| Component Transformation Matrix | | | |
|--|-------|-------|------|
| Component | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 1 | .778 | .626 | .054 |
| 2 | -.625 | .760 | .178 |
| 3 | .071 | -.172 | .982 |

| |
|--|
| <p>Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.</p> |
|--|

Confirmatory Factor Analysis – Democrats (80):

| Communalities | | |
|--|---------|------------|
| | Initial | Extraction |
| ForceMotive_1 (Boycott the brand personally) | 1.000 | .725 |
| ForceMotive_2 (Write negative reviews) | 1.000 | .473 |
| ForceMotive_3 (Join Social Media Campaigns) | 1.000 | .664 |
| ForceMotive_4 (Sign petitions to the brand) | 1.000 | .623 |
| ForceMotive_5 (Sell shares and ask others to sell) | 1.000 | .796 |
| ForceMotive_6 (Buy more to support the brand) | 1.000 | .907 |
| ForceMotive_7 (Take or support legal action) | 1.000 | .649 |
| ForceMotive_8 (Join advocacy groups) | 1.000 | .749 |
| ForceMotive_9 (Buy products from competitors) | 1.000 | .669 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | |

| Total Variance Explained | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Component | Initial Eigenvalues | | | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | | | Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings | | |
| | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1 | 3.616 | 40.183 | 40.183 | 3.616 | 40.183 | 40.183 | 3.009 | 33.436 | 33.436 |
| 2 | 1.536 | 17.062 | 57.245 | 1.536 | 17.062 | 57.245 | 2.139 | 23.767 | 57.203 |
| 3 | 1.104 | 12.264 | 69.509 | 1.104 | 12.264 | 69.509 | 1.108 | 12.306 | 69.509 |
| 4 | .753 | 8.372 | 77.881 | | | | | | |
| 5 | .635 | 7.056 | 84.937 | | | | | | |
| 6 | .453 | 5.029 | 89.966 | | | | | | |
| 7 | .372 | 4.133 | 94.099 | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------|-----------|-------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 8 | .340 | 3.77 3 | 97.8 72 | | | | | | |
| 9 | .192 | 2.12 8 | 100. 000 | | | | | | |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | | | | | | | | |

| Component Matrix^a | | | |
|--|-----------|-------|-------|
| | Component | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| ForceMotive 1 (Boycott the brand personally) | .789 | -.318 | -.033 |
| ForceMotive 2 (Write negative reviews) | .582 | -.066 | .359 |
| ForceMotive 3 (Join Social Media Campaigns) | .650 | .480 | .109 |
| ForceMotive 4 (Sign petitions to the brand) | .416 | .667 | .076 |
| ForceMotive 5 (Sell shares and ask others to sell) | .735 | -.505 | -.009 |
| ForceMotive 6 (Buy more to support the brand) | -.053 | -.096 | .946 |
| ForceMotive 7 (Take or support legal action) | .765 | -.083 | -.240 |
| ForceMotive 8 (Join advocacy groups) | .606 | .616 | -.049 |
| ForceMotive 9 (Buy products from competitors) | .751 | -.324 | -.021 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | | |
| a. 3 components extracted. | | | |

| Rotated Component Matrix^a | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Component | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| ForceMotive 1 (Boycott the brand personally) | .837 | .156 | .006 |
| ForceMotive 2 (Write negative reviews) | .504 | .283 | .372 |
| ForceMotive 3 (Join Social Media Campaigns) | .284 | .760 | .075 |
| ForceMotive 4 (Sign petitions to the brand) | -.012 | .789 | .023 |
| ForceMotive 5 (Sell shares and ask others to sell) | .890 | -.028 | .046 |
| ForceMotive 6 (Buy more to support the brand) | -.049 | -.046 | .950 |
| ForceMotive 7 (Take or support legal action) | .703 | .326 | -.221 |
| ForceMotive 8 (Join advocacy groups) | .183 | .841 | -.094 |
| ForceMotive 9 (Buy products from competitors) | .807 | .132 | .018 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | | |
| Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. | | | |
| a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations. | | | |

| Component Transformation Matrix | | | |
|--|-------|------|-------|
| Component | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 1 | .842 | .539 | .014 |
| 2 | -.536 | .839 | -.087 |
| 3 | -.059 | .066 | .996 |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis – Republicans (68):

| Communalities | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--|
| | | | | Initial | Extraction | | | | | |
| ForceMotive_1 (Boycott the brand personally) | | | | 1.000 | .722 | | | | | |
| ForceMotive_2 (Write negative reviews) | | | | 1.000 | .558 | | | | | |
| ForceMotive_3 (Join Social Media Campaigns) | | | | 1.000 | .815 | | | | | |
| ForceMotive_4 (Sign petitions to the brand) | | | | 1.000 | .649 | | | | | |
| ForceMotive_5 (Sell shares and ask others to sell) | | | | 1.000 | .666 | | | | | |
| ForceMotive_6 (Buy more to support the brand) | | | | 1.000 | .972 | | | | | |
| ForceMotive_7 (Take or support legal action) | | | | 1.000 | .584 | | | | | |
| ForceMotive_8 (Join advocacy groups) | | | | 1.000 | .594 | | | | | |
| ForceMotive_9 (Buy products from competitors) | | | | 1.000 | .680 | | | | | |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total Variance Explained | | | | | | | | | | |
| Component | Initial Eigenvalues | | | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | | | Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings | | | |
| | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | |
| 1 | 3.486 | 38.733 | 38.733 | 3.486 | 38.733 | 38.733 | 2.690 | 29.889 | 29.889 | |
| 2 | 1.749 | 19.430 | 58.164 | 1.749 | 19.430 | 58.164 | 2.510 | 27.892 | 57.781 | |
| 3 | 1.006 | 11.183 | 69.346 | 1.006 | 11.183 | 69.346 | 1.041 | 11.565 | 69.346 | |
| 4 | .668 | 7.426 | 76.772 | | | | | | | |
| 5 | .577 | 6.414 | 83.186 | | | | | | | |
| 6 | .513 | 5.695 | 88.881 | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------|-------|---------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 7 | .405 | 4.498 | 93.380 | | | | | | |
| 8 | .362 | 4.024 | 97.404 | | | | | | |
| 9 | .234 | 2.596 | 100.000 | | | | | | |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | | | | | | | | |

| Component Matrix^a | | | |
|--|-----------|-------|-------|
| | Component | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| ForceMotive_1 (Boycott the brand personally) | .646 | -.513 | .204 |
| ForceMotive_2 (Write negative reviews) | .710 | .230 | -.043 |
| ForceMotive_3 (Join Social Media Campaigns) | .625 | .620 | -.201 |
| ForceMotive_4 (Sign petitions to the brand) | .677 | .429 | .079 |
| ForceMotive_5 (Sell shares and ask others to sell) | .745 | -.328 | .050 |
| ForceMotive_6 (Buy more to support the brand) | -.012 | .304 | .938 |
| ForceMotive_7 (Take or support legal action) | .671 | -.346 | -.117 |
| ForceMotive_8 (Join advocacy groups) | .535 | .548 | -.089 |
| ForceMotive_9 (Buy products from competitors) | .651 | -.495 | .110 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | | |
| a. 3 components extracted. | | | |

| Rotated Component Matrix^a | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Component | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| ForceMotive_1 (Boycott the brand personally) | .845 | .028 | .082 |
| ForceMotive_2 (Write negative reviews) | .371 | .649 | .000 |
| ForceMotive_3 (Join Social Media Campaigns) | .029 | .900 | -.070 |
| ForceMotive_4 (Sign petitions to the brand) | .235 | .753 | .161 |
| ForceMotive_5 (Sell shares and ask others to sell) | .775 | .253 | -.030 |
| ForceMotive_6 (Buy more to support the brand) | -.065 | .070 | .981 |
| ForceMotive_7 (Take or support legal action) | .706 | .216 | -.196 |
| ForceMotive_8 (Join advocacy groups) | .027 | .770 | .024 |
| ForceMotive_9 (Buy products from competitors) | .823 | .059 | -.006 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | | |
| Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. | | | |

a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

| Component Transformation Matrix | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|
| Component | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 1 | .743 | .670 | -.011 |
| 2 | -.652 | .727 | .214 |
| 3 | .152 | -.152 | .977 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | | |
| Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. | | | |

Robustness Check: Including ‘politically unengaged’ responses (N=92)

Manipulation Check: I conducted a one-way ANCOVA with manipulation condition (three levels: liberal-identifying, conservative-identifying, and excl) as the independent variable, political apathy as the covariate, and the political positioning index as the dependent variable, I find a significant difference ($F(2,297)=3.526, p=.031; \eta_p^2=.023$), suggesting that my manipulation, was effective on politically-engaged moderates. Planned contrasts revealed that participants in the conservative ideology condition rated themselves as more conservative than those in the liberal ideology condition ($p=.034$).

Differences in Socializing Intentions: I then conducted a mixed-effects ANOVA (see model equation below) with their averaged intention (likelihood) of taking punitive or educative actions as the dependent variable, and the type of action (punitive vs. educative), the perceived harmfulness (not vs. low vs. high) and manipulated ideology (liberal-identifying vs. conservative-identifying) as the fixed independent variables. I also added their loyalty towards the brand as a random factor to control for the impact of prior attitudes.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Intention} = & \beta_0 + (\beta_1 \text{Ideology} + \varepsilon_1) + (\beta_2 \text{Harm} + \varepsilon_2) + (\beta_3 \text{Action} + \varepsilon_3) + (\beta_4 \text{Loyalty} + \varepsilon_4) + \\ & (\beta_5 \text{Ideology} * \text{Harm} + \varepsilon_5) + (\beta_6 \text{Ideology} * \text{Action} + \varepsilon_6) + (\beta_7 \text{Ideology} * \text{Loyalty} + \varepsilon_7) + \\ & (\beta_8 \text{Harm} * \text{Action} + \varepsilon_8) + (\beta_9 \text{Harm} * \text{Loyalty} + \varepsilon_9) + (\beta_{10} \text{Action} * \text{Loyalty} + \varepsilon_{10}) + \\ & (\beta_{11} \text{Ideology} * \text{Harm} * \text{Action} + \varepsilon_{11}) + (\beta_{12} \text{Ideology} * \text{Harm} * \text{Loyalty} + \varepsilon_{12}) + \\ & (\beta_{13} \text{Ideology} * \text{Action} * \text{Loyalty} + \varepsilon_{13}) + (\beta_{14} \text{Harm} * \text{Action} * \text{Loyalty} + \varepsilon_{14}) + \\ & (\beta_{15} \text{Ideology} * \text{Harm} * \text{Action} * \text{Loyalty} + \varepsilon_{15}) \end{aligned}$$

Looking at theoretically-justified planned contrasts, I find that conservative-identifying participants reported significantly higher punitive intentions than educative intentions when they perceived the transgression as more harmful ($F(1,662)=6.221, p=.013; \eta_p^2=.009$). This difference was not significant among liberal-identifying participants who also perceived the transgression as more harmful ($F(1,662)=2.403, p=.122, \eta_p^2=.004$).

Among those who perceived the transgression as less harmful, this difference was not significant for both conservative-identifying participants ($F(1,662)=1.074, p=.300, \eta_p^2=.002$) and liberal-identifying participants ($F(1,662)=2.348, p=.126, \eta_p^2=.004$). Similarly, those who did not perceive the transgression as harmful at all also had no significant differences in their socializing intentions (conservative-identifying: $F(1,662)=.045, p=.831, \eta_p^2=.000$; liberal-identifying: $F(1,662)=.718, p=.397, \eta_p^2=.001$). Hence, conservative-identifying participants who perceived the transgression as more harmful are more punitive-focused than educative-focused in their behavioral intentions, while their liberal-identifying counterparts did not. Hence, manipulating participants to think more like conservatives seems to have increased their punitive motivations.

APPENDIX 1C: ADDITIONAL EDUCATIVE BEHAVIORAL INTENTION

STUDY

While punitive motivation as a socializing motivation has received significant scholarly attention, the more benign, long-term-focused counterpart, educative motivation has not received much scrutiny. In study 1, I investigated this construct as a self-reported motivation based on a single phrase ('need to educate'), and through factor analysis of behaviors (venting, complaining to the brand, complaining to the consumer protection bureau). In study 2, I employed it as one end of a bipolar scale ('5=only educating the brand') that identified certain tactics as more educative (signing petitions, joining social media campaigns against the brand, and joining advocacy groups targeting the brand). To further add to the construct validity of this motivation, I investigate it in this study as word-of-mouth (WOM). Consumers frequently discuss brand transgressions with each other. These WOM messages can communicate how educative motivation-focused consumers are, as I describe in this study.

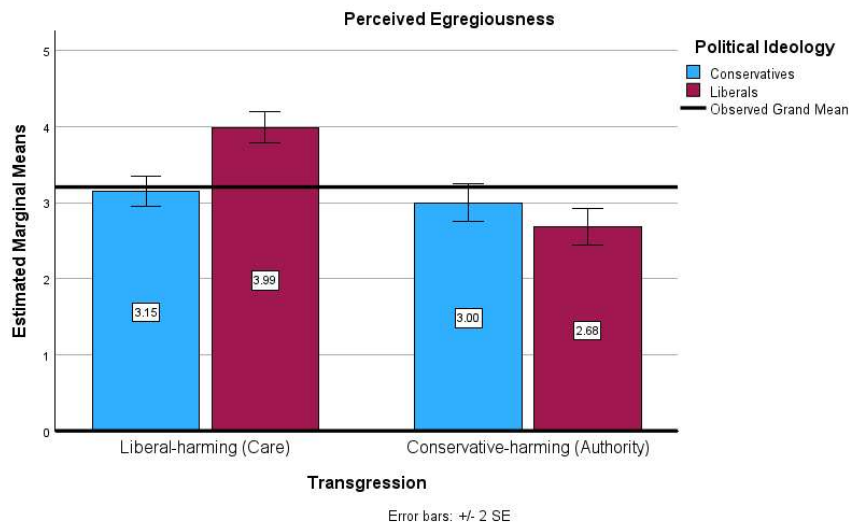
Sample and Procedure

I recruited 203 Prolific workers (63.5% female, 56.6% Democrat or Democrat-leaning, mean age = 27.61 years, age range = 18-70 years), prescreened to be either liberal or conservative, in exchange for monetary compensation. They were informed that the study was investigating how they viewed and judged the world around them as a consumer. They were first asked to think of a brand towards which they were really loyal. Then they were asked to judge the two 'ad concepts' which operationalized a liberal-harming transgression or a conservative-harming transgression (counterbalanced in order). The liberal transgression ('a man canceling a date after seeing the woman') violated the liberal-revered moral value of preventing harm to others, and the conservative transgression ('a girl disobeying her father's curfew orders') violated the conservative-revered moral value of respecting authority. For each ad concept, they were asked to imagine that they were discussing the ad with a friend. They were then presented with five statements and asked to rate their likelihood of using each statement or something similar to express how they were feeling in the moment. These statements operationalized exiting the relationship ('I would never associate with them after this'), not caring about the brand ('I don't really care about the brand or its actions'), not thinking that the brand did anything wrong ('I don't think the brand did any significant harm, so I will continue to purchase from them'), and most pertinent to my investigation, voicing their concern with the brand ('I would raise my concerns with them so that they would correct their behavior in the future') or not voicing concern ('I believe the brand will change their behavior for the better by themselves, so I need not change my purchase behavior'). I mention the context of 'a close friend' to reduce participants' self-presentational concerns, which might be more strongly influenced by their ingroup norms. Participants ranked their likelihood of using each statement on seven-point (1=not at all likely to 7= very likely) Likert scales, and also rated how each element on (1=not at

all wrong to 5=extremely wrong) Likert scales. They finally completed a few demographic questions, including the three-item political ideology measure used in study 2.

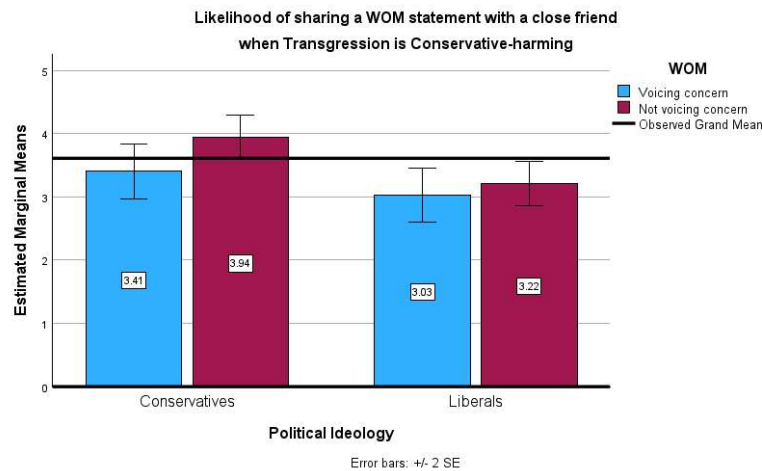
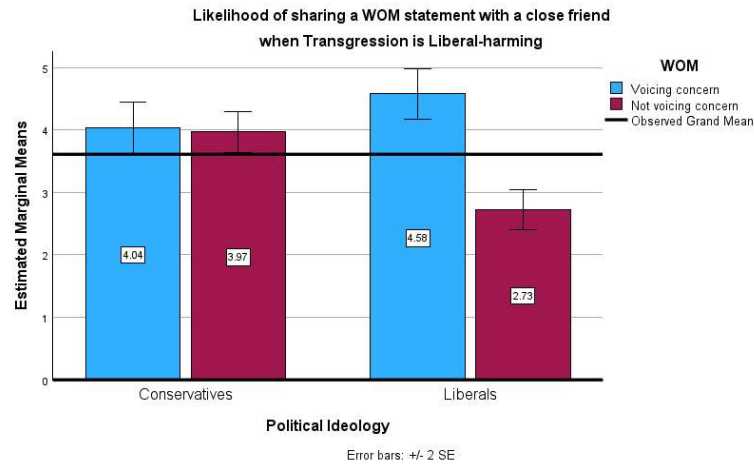
Analysis and Results

Manipulation check (Perceived Egregiousness): No participants were excluded in this study. I averaged ($\alpha=.972$) and median-split (median=4.33) participants’ political ideology to classify participants into liberals and conservatives. Median-splits are deemed acceptable practice for research with bimodal distributions (see Appendix 1D for political ideology distribution in each study) and for easier communication to practitioners and policymakers (DeCoster, Gallucci, & Iselin, 2011). Conducting a repeated-measures ANOVA with median-split political ideology as the independent variable, and the two perceived egregiousness scales for each transgression as the repeated measure, I find a significant ideology*transgression interaction ($F(1,201)=34.909, p<.001$). Planned contrasts reveal that liberal and conservative participants significantly differed in how egregious they found the liberal-harming transgression ($F(1,201)=34.450, p<.001$), and they differed, albeit marginally, in how egregious they found the conservative-harming transgression ($F(1,201)=3.579, p=.060$). Hence, the vignettes manipulated moral transgressions as expected (see figure below).



Educative Behavior Intention: I conducted a follow-up repeated-measures ANOVA with participants’ political ideology as the independent variable, and their likelihood of using the WOM voicing concern and the WOM not voicing concern about the transgression, for both the liberal-harming and conservative-harming transgression as repeated measures. I find a significant ideology*transgression*WOM interaction ($F(1, 201)=12.844, p<.001$; see figures below). Looking at pair-wise comparisons, I find that liberal participants are significantly more likely to voice their concern than not voice their concern when the brand commits a liberal-harming transgression ($F(1,201)=54.260, p<.001$) while conservatives are significantly less likely to voice concern when the brand

commits a conservative-harming transgression ($F(1,201)=3.973, p=.048$). There are no differences between likelihood of using either WOM when liberals see a conservative-harming transgression ($p=.486$) or when conservatives see a liberal-harming violation ($p=.794$). Hence, seeing a transgression that they care about makes liberals more likely to voice their concern, but it makes conservatives less likely to do so, which is in line with my hypotheses H1b and H1c that liberals have relatively higher educative motivation than conservatives, particularly when moral socializing as a result of a transgression that harms a moral value that they care about.

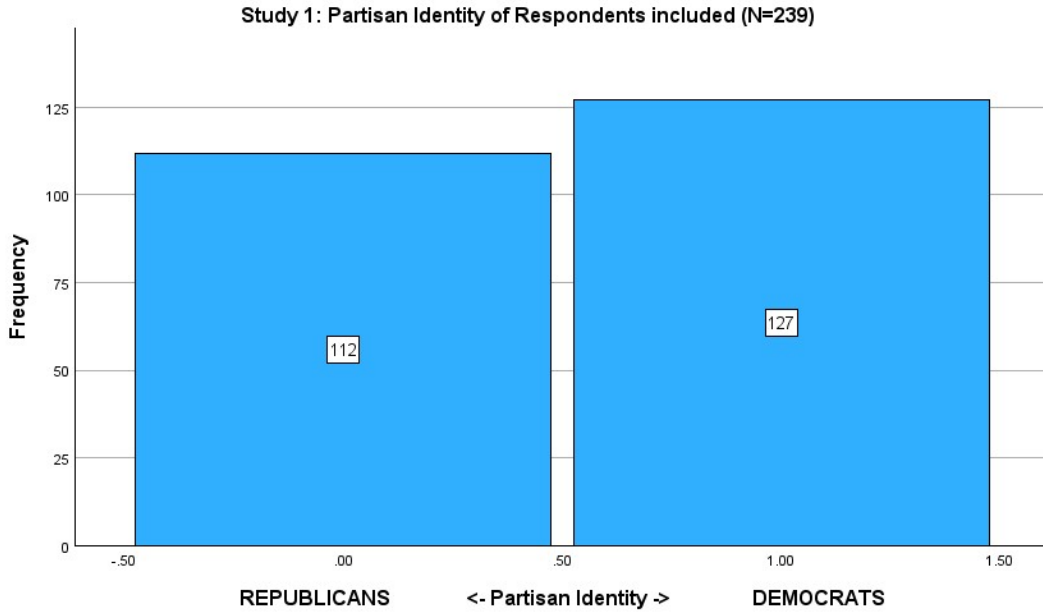


Discussion

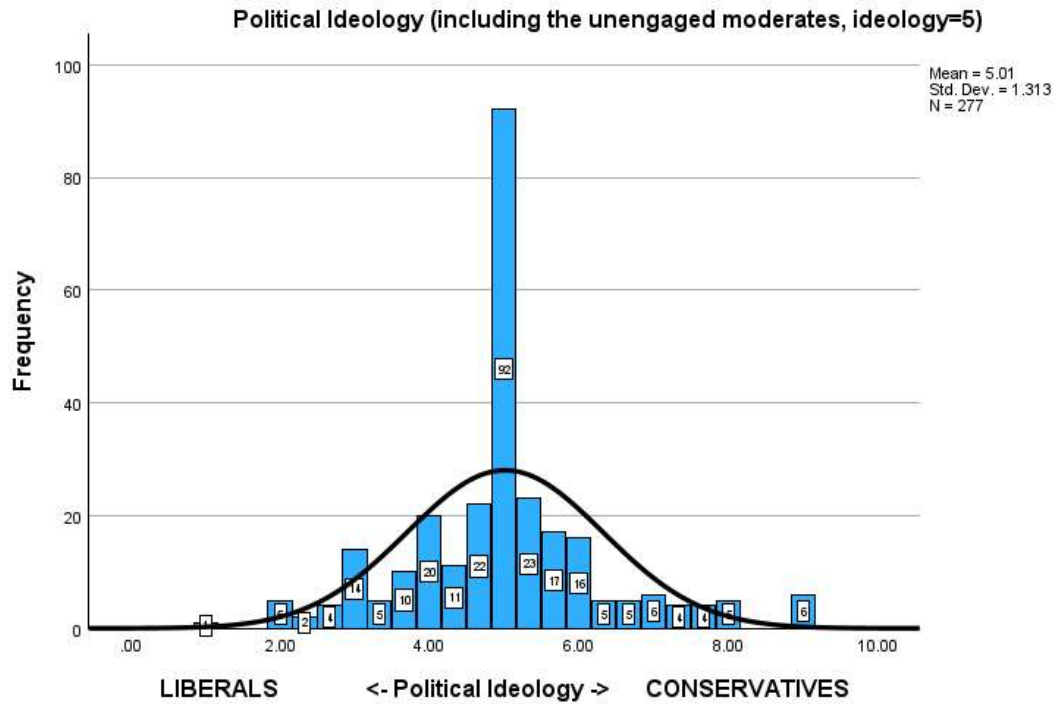
This study provides evidence for my hypotheses H1b and H1c by showing that liberals are more likely to be driven by an educative motive, particularly when the moral values they revere are being transgressed against. One limitation of this study might be my use of the private context. Though it can be argued that the private context of discussing a brand with a friend should promote more individual moral socializing, it can be argued that liberals and conservatives might differ in the types of friends they might visualize in this study and how close they feel to that friend.

APPENDIX 1D (STUDIES 1, 2, 3, 4, AND 5)

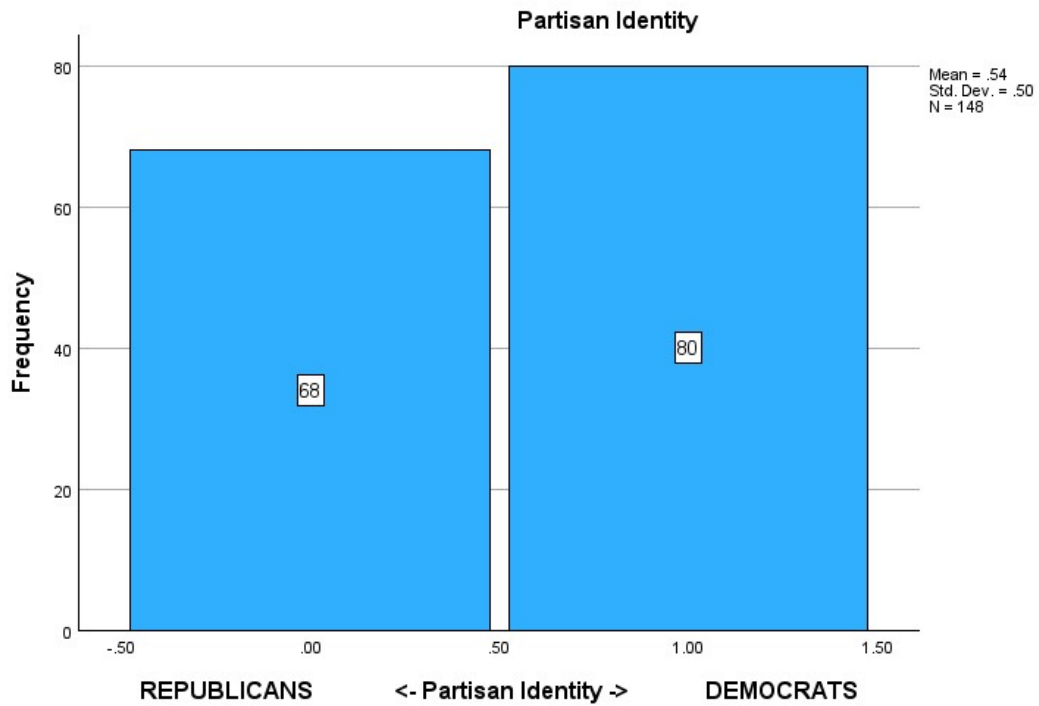
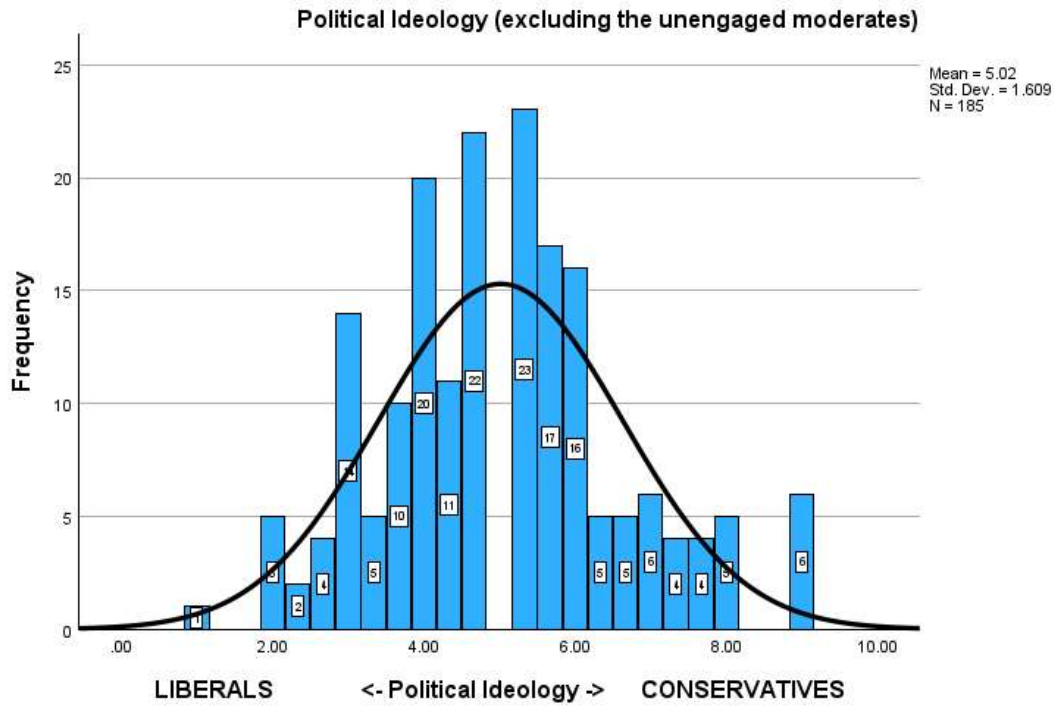
Study 1: Political Ideology Distribution



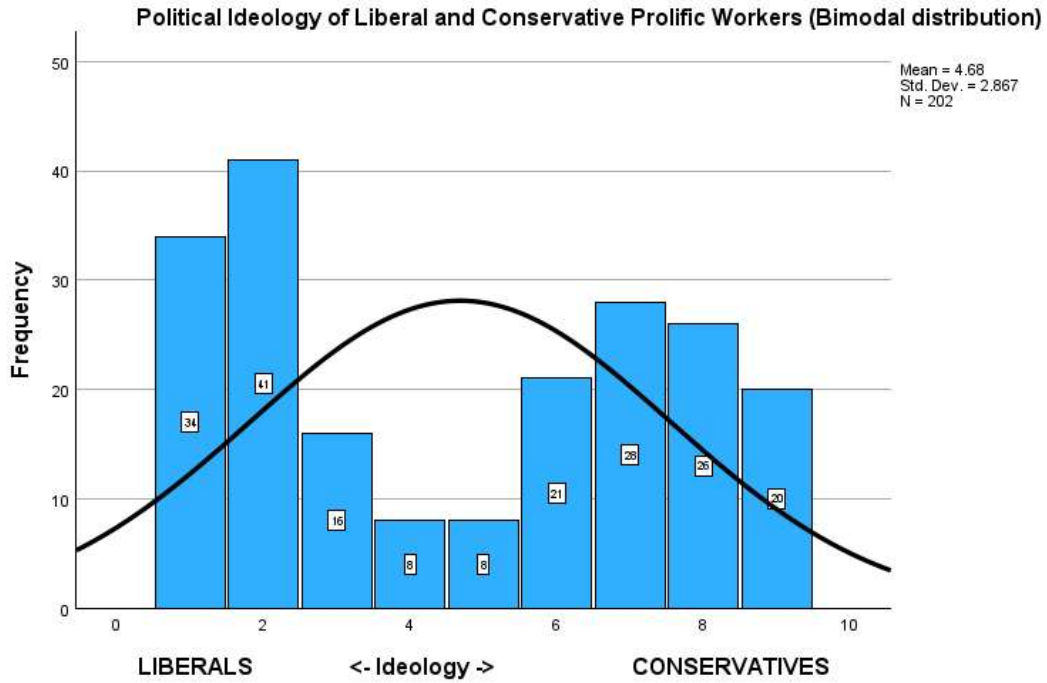
Study 2: Political Ideology Distribution



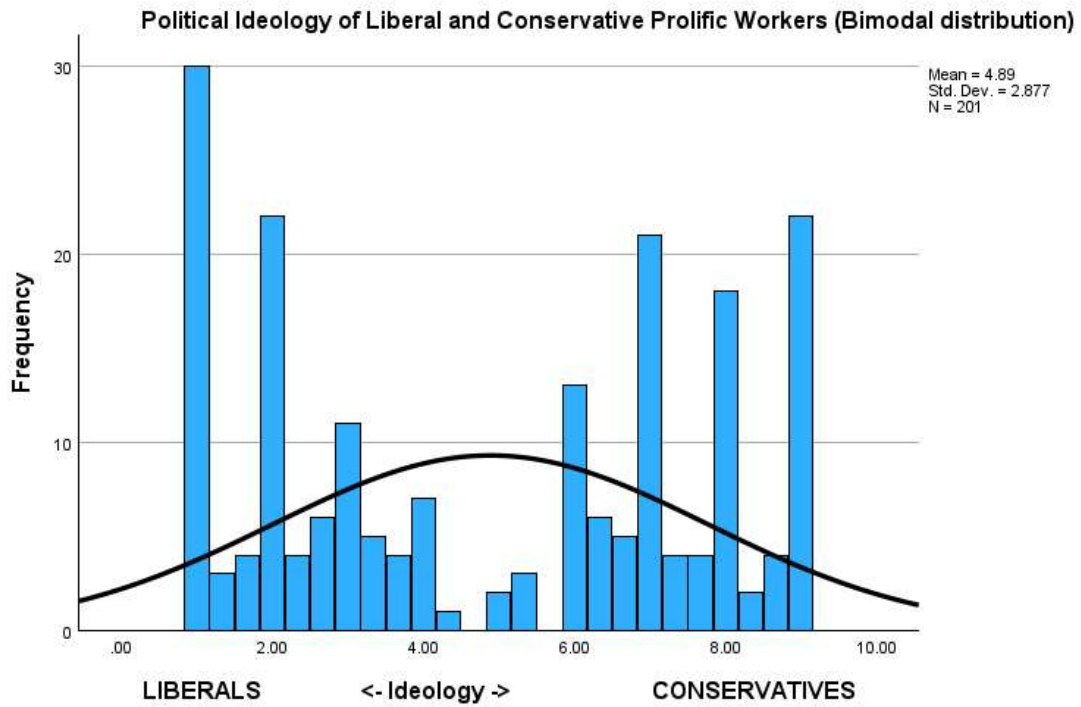
After excluding the unengaged moderates (N=92):



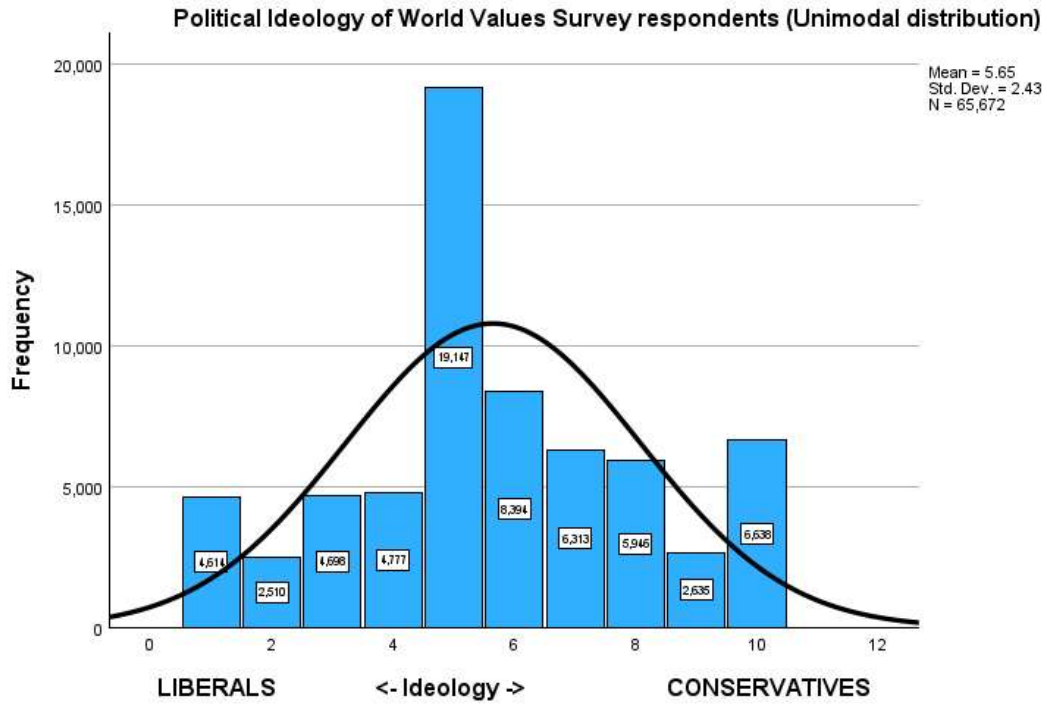
Study 3: Political Ideology Distribution



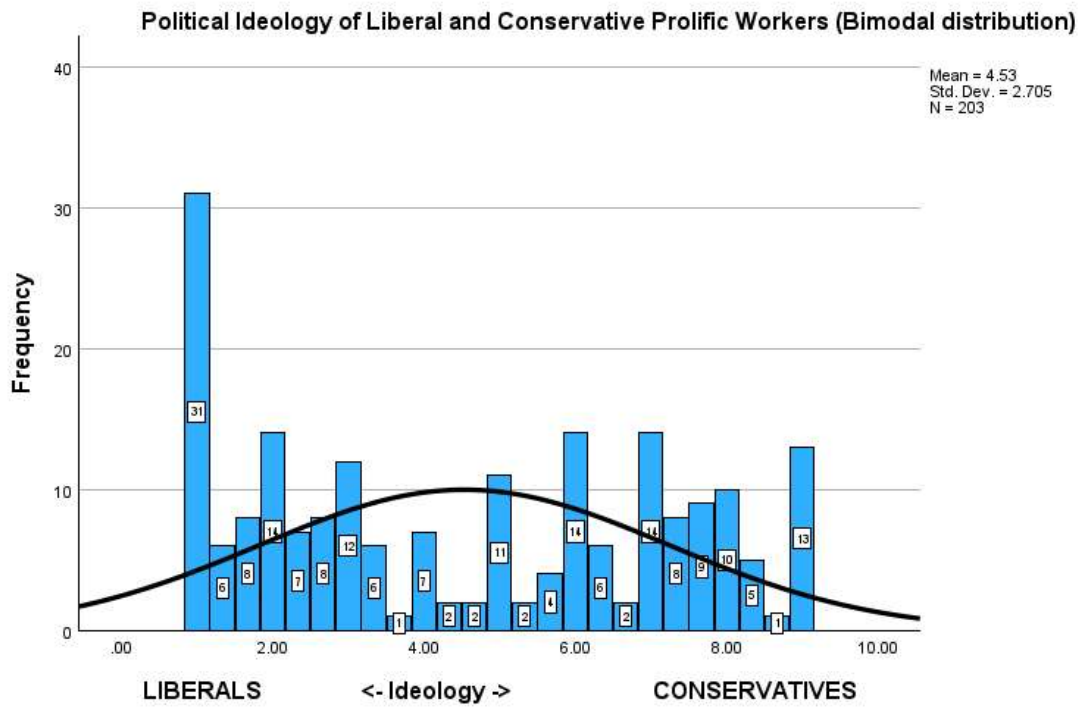
Study 4: Political Ideology Distribution



Study 5: Political Ideology Distribution



Additional Study (Appendix 1C): Political Ideology Distribution



APPENDIX 2A1: BRAND-TARGETING HUMOR STIMULI (ONLINE PRETESTS)

These pairs of stimuli were chosen from three earlier pretests because, in paired samples t-tests, they did not significantly differ in funniness ratings, but did differ in offensiveness ratings, except for the fictitious Italian restaurant pair, which differed on both funniness and offensiveness ratings. Including or excluding this pair does not impact our findings.

TABLE WA1AA: STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE IN DIFFERENCES IN RATINGS

| Pair of Jokes | Funniness ratings | Offensiveness ratings |
|----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| McDonald’s | $p=0.235$ | $p<0.001$ |
| The Onion | $p=0.504$ | $p=0.030$ |
| Facebook | $p=0.579$ | $p=0.024$ |
| Dunkin Donuts | $p=0.781$ | $p<0.001$ |
| Italian Restaurant | $p<0.001$ | $p<0.001$ |

TABLE WA1AB: RATINGS OF ALL JOKES.

| Aggressive Humor-based Joke (N=101) | Funniness | Offensiveness |
|--|------------------|----------------------|
| “ <u>McDonald’s</u> UK recently tried to sell their fillet-o-fish sandwiches by showing an ad with a young kid connecting it with the happy memories of his grandpa. I don’t relate to that. The first time my grandpa tasted Fillet-o-Fish, he was transported back to his own childhood, the bleakest years of World War I.” | 2.45 | 2.11 |
| “Honestly, I used to be glued to <u>Facebook</u> . Where else would you be able to find someone’s grandma’s chocolate chip cookie recipe, AND see your relatives fight over who the best American President is?” | 2.89 | 1.43 |
| Affiliative Humor-based Joke (N=101) | Funniness | Offensiveness |
| “ <u>McDonald’s</u> UK recently tried to sell their fillet-o-fish sandwiches by showing an ad with a young kid connecting it with the happy memories of his grandpa. I don’t relate to that. The first time my grandpa heard of Fillet-o-Fish, he thought it was a Harry Potter spell.” | 2.70 | 1.24 |
| “Honestly, I used to be glued to <u>Facebook</u> . Where else would you be able to find someone’s grandma’s chocolate chip cookie recipe, AND see your relatives fight over who the best baseball player is?” | 2.96 | 1.26 |
| Aggressive Humor-based Joke (N=106) | Funniness | Offensiveness |

| | | |
|---|------------------|----------------------|
| "Soft drink, company, Red Bull was sued for false advertising because their slogan, "Red Bull gives you wings" fooled consumers into thinking the drink would increase their performance abilities. Great. Now some moron is going to sue <u>Dunkin' Donuts</u> because they heard "America Runs on Dunkin,'" and went out and pumped their gas tank full of coffee and crullers." | 2.86 | 1.64 |
| Affiliative Humor-based Joke (N=106) | Funniness | Offensiveness |
| "Soft drink company, Red Bull, was sued for false advertising because their slogan, "Red Bull gives you wings" fooled consumers into thinking the drink would increase their performance abilities. Shame on Red Bull for misleading us all this time. And shame on <u>Dunkin' Donuts</u> for their misleading slogan, "America Runs on Dunkin.'" Who ruins a perfectly good donut with running?" | 2.81 | 1.27 |
| Aggressive Humor-based Joke (N=101) | Funniness | Offensiveness |
| "This was really the worst <u>pasta</u> I have ever had. It was overcooked till limp and drowned in sauce. I was like, "Sir, I get that you didn't pass college and only make minimum wage but do have some culinary standards!" | 1.99 | 5.01 |
| Affiliative Humor-based Joke (N=101) | Funniness | Offensiveness |
| "This was really the worst <u>pasta</u> I have ever had. It was overcooked till limp and drowned in sauce. I had to look up images of kittens wrapped in blankets like burritos to cheer myself up!" | 2.98 | 1.41 |

APPENDIX 2A2: HUMOR STYLES QUESTIONNAIRE (MARTIN ET AL., 2003)

Affiliative humor Items

- I usually don't laugh or joke around much with other people.*
- I don't have to work very hard at making other people laugh—I seem to be a naturally humorous person.
- I rarely make other people laugh by telling funny stories about myself. *
- I laugh and joke a lot with my closest friends.
- I usually don't like to tell jokes or amuse people. *
- I enjoy making people laugh.
- I don't often joke around with my friends.*
- I usually can't think of witty things to say when I'm with other people.*

Self-Enhancing humor Items

- If I am feeling depressed, I can usually cheer myself up with humor.
- Even when I'm by myself, I'm often amused by the absurdities of life.
- If I am feeling upset or unhappy, I usually try to think of something funny about the situation to make myself feel better.
- My humorous outlook on life keeps me from getting overly upset or depressed about things.
- If I'm by myself and I'm feeling unhappy, I make an effort to think of something funny to cheer myself up.
- If I am feeling sad or upset, I usually lose my sense of humor.*
- It is my experience that thinking about some amusing aspect of a situation is often a very effective way of coping with problems.
- I don't need to be with other people to feel amused – I can usually find things to laugh about even when I'm by myself.

Aggressive Humor Items

- If someone makes a mistake, I will often tease them about it.
- People are never offended or hurt by my sense of humor.*
- When telling jokes or saying funny things, I am usually not very concerned about how other people are taking it.
- I do not like it when people use humor as a way of criticizing or putting someone down.*
- Sometimes I think of something that is so funny that I can't stop myself from saying it, even if it is not appropriate for the situation.
- I never participate in laughing at others even if all my friends are doing it.*
- If I don't like someone, I often use humor or teasing to put them down.
- Even if something is really funny to me, I will not laugh or joke about it if someone will be offended.*

Self-defeating humor Items

- I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should.
- I will often get carried away in putting myself down if it makes my family or friends laugh.
- I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults.
- I don't often say funny things to put myself down.*
- I often go overboard in putting myself down when I am making jokes or trying to be funny.
- When I am with friends or family, I often seem to be the one that other people make fun of or joke about.
- If I am having problems or feeling unhappy, I often cover it up by joking around, so that even my closest friends don't know how I really feel.
- Letting others laugh at me is my way of keeping my friends and family in good spirits.

*Reverse coded.

Pretests

We conducted two pretests online to validate the measures to be used in the field study.

Pretest WAI

For the first pretest (N = 202, 45.04% Republicans, 57.43% female, mean age = 37.08 years, range = 19-79), participants who had self-identified as either liberals or conservatives when signing up on the platform were recruited from Prolific. Participants completed the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) (Martin et al., 2003) in exchange for \$1.50 as compensation. The 32-item HSQ measures participants' tendency to employ one of four humor styles: affiliative, self-enhancing, self-defeating, and aggressive. (See above for all scale items). Finally, to confirm that their original political identification had not changed, we measured participants' current party identification as a proxy for their political ideology, along with other demographic information. Those who identified as "Independent" or "Other" were probed to determine which party they leaned towards and were categorized accordingly. Eleven true independents were excluded, leaving 191 usable responses.

The four subscales displayed high reliability: affiliative ($\alpha=.861$), aggressive ($\alpha=.737$), self-enhancing ($\alpha=.871$), and self-defeating ($\alpha=.802$), so the item scores were averaged for each subscale, for subsequent analyses. One-way ANOVAs of participants' partisan identity on subscale scores yielded a significant effect for only the aggressive humor subscale. Republicans were more likely than Democrats to employ aggressive humor ($M_{\text{Republican}} = 3.77$, $M_{\text{Democrat}} = 3.32$; $F(1, 190) = 9.954$, $p = .002$). There were no

significant differences for affiliative humor ($M_{\text{Republican}} = 5.54$, $M_{\text{Democrat}} = 5.54$; $F(1, 190) = .000$, $p = .993$), self-enhancing humor ($M_{\text{Republican}} = 4.81$, $M_{\text{Democrat}} = 4.71$; $F(1, 190) = .395$, $p = .530$), or self-defeating humor ($M_{\text{Republican}} = 3.44$, $M_{\text{Democrat}} = 3.54$; $F(1, 190) = .480$, $p = .499$).

Pretest WA2

In a follow-up pretest ($n = 101$, 49.5% female, mean age = 38.24 years, age range = 19-79), rather than relying on party identification, we measured political ideology employing three items: general political orientation, stance on social issues, and stance on economic issues (Feldman and Johnston 2014). Consequently, we were able to include participants of various political stripes, and were not restricted to only Democrats and Republicans. All participants completed the HSQ and demographic items. The three-item political orientation scale was reliable ($\alpha = .985$) as were the four HSQ subscales ($\alpha_{\text{HSQ-affiliative}} = .836$, $\alpha_{\text{HSQ-aggressive}} = .738$, $\alpha_{\text{HSQ-self-enhancing}} = .800$, and $\alpha_{\text{HSQ-self-defeating}} = .867$). Measures were averaged to yield single scores and linear regressions were run with each of the humor styles subscales as the dependent variables and the political ideology score as the independent variable. A significant coefficient emerged for the aggressive humor scores alone ($\beta = .241$, $t = 2.095$, $F(1,99) = 4.390$, $p = .039$, $R^2 = .042$). The employment of aggressive humor increases with conservatism. Regressions employing the other subscales as dependent variables did not yield significant coefficients (all p 's $> .15$). These results support our thesis that political ideology likely plays a role in the employment of aggressive humor alone. Study1, described in the main text, examined this issue in the field.

APPENDIX 2A3: BRAND-TARGETING HUMOR STIMULI (STUDY 1)

TABLE WA1C: RATINGS BY POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

| | Funniness | | Offensiveness | |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| | Democ rats (N=580) | Republ icans (N=229) | Democ rats | Republ icans |
| Aggressive Humor-based Jokes | | | | |
| “ <u>McDonald’s</u> UK recently tried to sell their fillet-o-fish sandwiches by showing an ad with a young kid connecting it with the happy memories of his grandpa. I don’t relate to that. The first time my grandpa tasted Fillet-o-Fish, he was transported back to his own childhood, the bleakest years of World War I.” | 2.75 | 2.55 | 1.98 | 2.03 |
| "Soft drink, company, Red Bull was sued for false advertising because their slogan, “Red Bull gives you wings” fooled consumers into thinking the drink would increase their performance abilities. Great. Now some moron is going to sue <u>Dunkin’ Donuts</u> because they heard “America Runs on Dunkin,”” and went out and pumped their gas tank full of coffee and crullers." | 3.59 | 3.85 | 1.50 | 1.50 |
| “Honestly, I used to be glued to <u>Facebook</u> . Where else would you be able to find someone’s grandma’s chocolate chip cookie recipe, AND see your relatives fight over who the best American President is?” | 3.08 | 3.28 | 1.54 | 1.68 |
| “This was really the worst <u>pasta</u> I have ever had. It was overcooked till limp and drowned in sauce. I was like, “Sir, I get that you didn’t pass college and only make minimum wage but do have some culinary standards!” | 1.53 | 1.75 | 3.21 | 2.93 |
| | Funniness | | Offensiveness | |
| Affiliative Humor-based Joke | Democ rats | Republ icans | Democ rats | Republ icans |
| “ <u>McDonald’s</u> UK recently tried to sell their fillet-o-fish sandwiches by showing an ad with a young kid connecting it with the happy memories of his grandpa. I don’t | 2.76 | 2.47 | 1.26 | 1.21 |

| | | | | |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| relate to that. The first time my grandpa heard of Fillet-o-Fish, he thought it was a Harry Potter spell.” | | | | |
| "Soft drink company, Red Bull, was sued for false advertising because their slogan, “Red Bull gives you wings” fooled consumers into thinking the drink would increase their performance abilities. Shame on Red Bull for misleading us all this time. And shame on <u>Dunkin’ Donuts</u> for their misleading slogan, “America Runs on Dunkin.”” Who ruins a perfectly good donut with running?" | 3.57 | 3.43 | 1.21 | 1.19 |
| “Honestly, I used to be glued to <u>Facebook</u> . Where else would you be able to find someone’s grandma’s chocolate chip cookie recipe, AND see your relatives fight over who the best baseball player is?” | 2.75 | 2.70 | 1.19 | 1.25 |
| “This was really the worst <u>pasta</u> I have ever had. It was overcooked till limp and drowned in sauce. I had to look up images of kittens wrapped in blankets like burritos to cheer myself up!” | 1.79 | 1.83 | 1.65 | 1.53 |

Robustness Check: Controlling for other demographic factors

Age, gender, income, and education have been shown by past research to impact consumers’ humor, hence we controlled for these factors in our analyses (Martin et al., 2003; Navarro-Carrillo, Torres-Marin, and Carretero-Dios 2020). To control for gender, an additional 15 participants who did not identify as either male or female were also excluded, leaving a total sample of 957 fairgoers (57.36% female, mean age= 43.81). Including these demographic markers, the overall models were significant [$F_{\text{offensiveness}}(8,3819)=80.627, p<.001, R^2=.144$; $F_{\text{funniness}}(8,3819)=39.587, p<.001, R^2=.077$].

$$\text{Offensiveness} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Humor_Type} + \beta_2 \text{Ideology} + \beta_3 \text{Humor_Type} * \text{Ideology} + \beta_4 \text{Age} + \beta_5 \text{Gender} + \beta_6 \text{Income} + \beta_7 \text{Education} + \beta_8 \text{Joke_Target} + \varepsilon$$

In the model for offensiveness ratings, we find only a main effect of the type of humor ($\beta_0=.363, t=17.843, p<.001$), indicating that the offensiveness ratings were higher for the aggressive humor jokes than for the affiliative humor jokes. There was no effect of ideology ($\beta_1=.004, t=.205, p=.837$), or an interaction of the two ($\beta_2=-.020, t=-.968, p=.333$).

$$\text{Funniness} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Humor_Type} + \beta_2 \text{Ideology} + \beta_3 \text{Humor_Type} * \text{Ideology} + \beta_4 \text{Age} + \beta_5 \text{Gender} + \beta_6 \text{Income} + \beta_7 \text{Education} + \beta_8 \text{Joke_Target} + \varepsilon$$

In the model for funniness ratings, we find a significant interaction between ideology and the humor type ($\beta_2=.059, t=2.196, p=.028$), which indicates that appreciation for aggressive humor jokes increased with conservatism. We did not find a main effect of ideology ($\beta_1=-.013, t=-.482, p=.630$), but did find a marginally significant main effect of humor type ($\beta_0=.051, t=1.927, p=.054$), suggesting that aggressive humor jokes were found to be funnier than their affiliative humor counterparts.

$$\text{HSQ-Affiliative} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Ideology} + \beta_2 \text{Age} + \beta_3 \text{Gender} + \beta_4 \text{Income} + \beta_5 \text{Education} + \beta_6 \text{Joke_Target} + \varepsilon$$

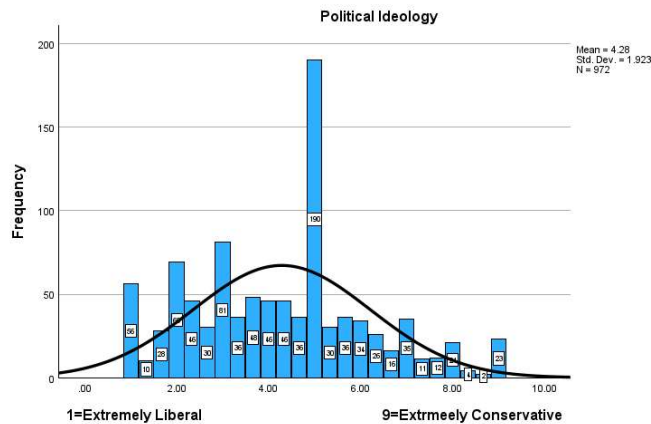
$$\text{HSQ-Aggressive} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Ideology} + \beta_2 \text{Age} + \beta_3 \text{Gender} + \beta_4 \text{Income} + \beta_5 \text{Education} + \beta_6 \text{Joke_Target} + \varepsilon$$

In addition to the original HSQ analyses, we conducted linear regression analyses for the two HSQ subscales with ideology as a predictor and age, gender, education, and income as covariates, and we find substantively similar results (affiliative: $\beta_0=.007, t=.426, p=.670$; aggressive: $\beta_0=.075, t=4.460, p<.001$). This provides further support for our hypothesis H1 despite controlling for other relevant demographic markers (see Figures 1A, 1B, and 1C in the manuscript for graphs).

Robustness Check: Political Ideology and Partisan Identity distribution

As we do not prescreen fair-goers to be either liberals or conservatives, our sample exhibits a normal distribution, with a liberal-leaning skew (see Figure WA1CD).

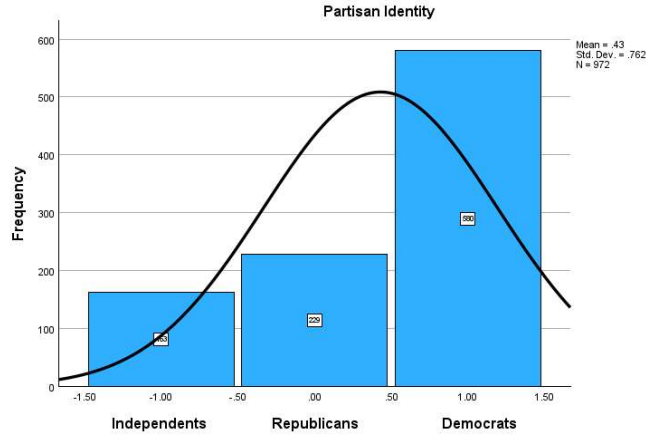
FIGURE WA1CA: Political Ideology Distribution



Of the 972 participants included in our analyses, 580 (59.7%) were Democrats, 229 (23.6%) were Republican, and 163 (16.9%) were Independents and did not lean towards either party as well (see Figure WA1CE). This Democrat-skewed sample can be partly explained by the fact that the study was conducted in a liberal-leaning city and was

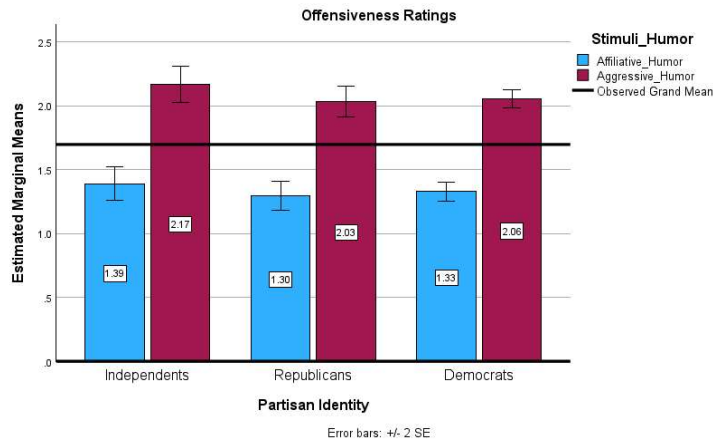
housed in a university-leased building in the state fair, which liberals might be more open to self-selecting themselves into.

FIGURE WA1CB: Partisan Identity Distribution



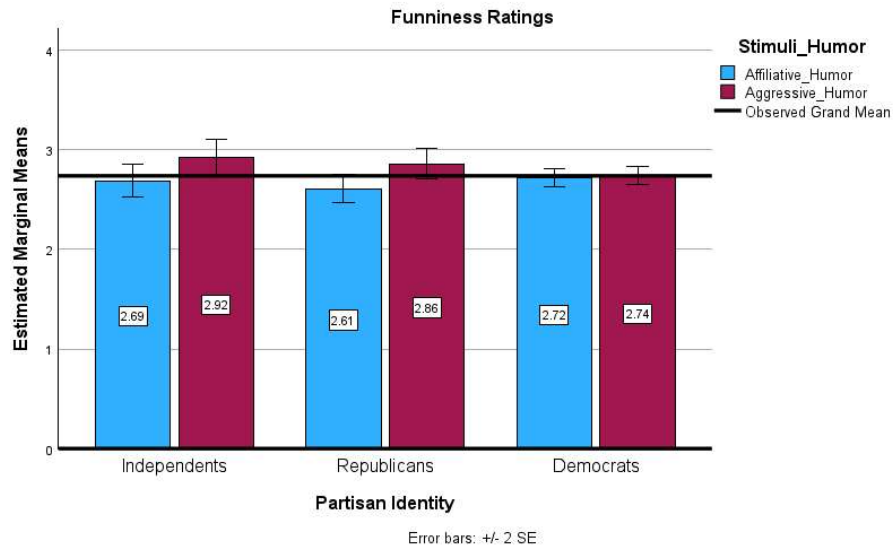
Offensiveness Ratings: We conducted follow-up analyses using mixed-effects ANOVA with partisan identity and humor type (affiliative vs. aggressive) as independent variables, joke target as a random factor, and offensiveness as the dependent variable. Controlling for the joke-level differences, we still find a marginally-significant main effect of the humor type ($F(1,3864)=6.195, p=.089$), suggesting that the aggressive humor jokes were marginally-significantly more offensive than the affiliative humor jokes. However, looking at the simple effects (see Figure WA1CF), this difference was significant for all three groups: Democrats ($F(1,3864)=205.006, p<.001$), Republicans ($F(1,3864)=82.741, p<.001$), and Independents ($F(1,3864)=64.756, p<.001$).

FIGURE WA1CC: Offensiveness Ratings and Partisan Identity



Funniness Ratings: Similar mixed-effects ANOVA with funniness as the dependent variable. Controlling for the joke-level differences, we still only a significant ideology*humor-type interaction ($F(1,3864)=10.686, p=.011$). Looking at the simple effects (see Figure WA1CG), the humor-type difference was not significant for Democrats ($F(1,3864)=.118, p=.731$), marginally-significant for Independents ($F(1,3864)=3.500, p=.061$), and significant for Republicans ($F(1,3864)=5.841, p=.016$). This supports our theorizing.

FIGURE WA1CD: Funniness Ratings and Partisan Identity



APPENDIX 2B: TWEETS CODING INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDY 2

Original instructions for coding:

1. First decide whether the tweet should be included in further analysis or not. Assign 1 if the statement is indeed a tweet that makes sense and not just gibberish. Assign 0 if it is gibberish, or the statement suggests that the participant did not provide a tweet.
2. Once you have coded all statements as 1 or 0 for Include, then code the Type column, only for the ones marked Include = 1. Assign *Not Humorous*, if you do not think the statement was meant as a joke and was actually just a serious tweet. Assign *Affiliative* if the tweet was something that everyone will find funny and does not demean anyone, e.g., a cat video or a knock-knock joke or someone talking about their baby. Assign *Teasing* if the tweet is making fun of someone but you do not think it is too harsh or derogatory, e.g., someone making fun of their partner's snoring. Assign *Offensive* if the tweet is derogatory and puts someone down severely, e.g., making fun of someone's weight.

Further elaboration:

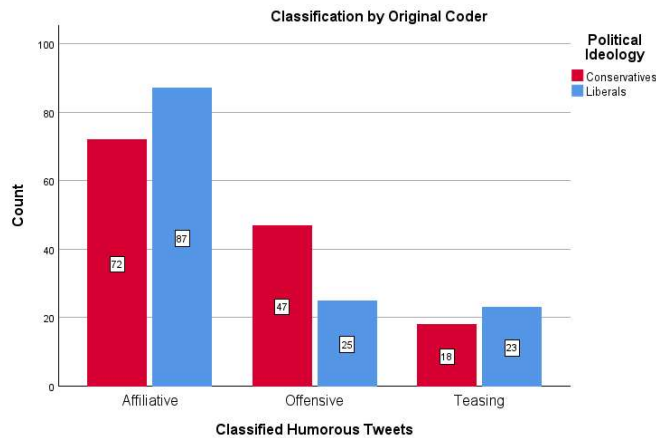
Affiliative is general, non-offensive humor. The type of humor that is not at anyone's expense. For example, wordplay, puns, funny videos of cats or puppies doing something silly. No reasonable person can feel targeted by this form of humor. On the other end of the spectrum is offensive humor. This form of humor actively puts someone down. For example, racist, sexist, homophobic, and fatphobic humor. Making fun of a politician you do not like by mocking their lisp or their behavior. Between these two ends is teasing, which is humor that does target someone (similar to offensive humor) but is not so biting or aggressive that the targeted person feels too bad. This type of humor is typically used among close friends. For example, making fun of a friend's new haircut.

Preliminary Evidence for the role of Social Dominance Orientation

We rely on the observation that aggressive humor exists on a continuum, ranging from “teasing” at one end (e.g., making fun of a friend’s haircut) and “offensive” at the other (e.g., making fun of someone’s weight or disability). Because conservatives’ greater appreciation of aggressive humor is driven by their social dominance orientation, we expect them to be more likely to use the more offensive form of aggressive humor, which is targeted towards outgroup members. However, the more benign form of aggressive humor, in which ingroup members might be teased, might be used by liberals as well, and therefore should be equally likely to be used by liberals and conservatives. Therefore, the aggressive tweets were further categorized as “teasing” or “offensive”. If the tweet “put someone down severely”, it was categorized as offensive, and if the tweet was deemed “not too harsh” in their targeting of an other, it was categorized as “teasing”. Among the 113 aggressive tweets, 72 were further categorized as offensive and 41 as teasing.

Examining differences between “offensive” and “teasing” forms of aggressive humor, we find that liberals and conservatives differ in the proportion of their offensively funny tweets ($\chi^2(1,272)=11.635, p<.001$), but do not differ in the proportion of teasing tweets ($\chi^2(1,272)=1.981, p=.159$). Forty-six of the 127 conservatives’ funny tweets (36.2%) were offensive, but only 26 out of the 145 liberals’ funny tweets (17.9%) were offensive. Further, 15 out of the 127 conservatives’ funny tweets (11.8%) were teasing, while 26 out of 145 liberals’ funny tweets (17.9%) were teasing. This provides preliminary evidence for our hypothesis H2, that conservatives’ higher SDO drives our effect.

FIGURE WA2A: Coded Tweets (ingroup vs. outgroup)



Robustness check using Partisan Identity (Democrats vs. Republicans):

Only those Independents who reported leaning towards neither Democrats or Republicans were excluded, and as a result, seventeen tweets, which were sourced from participants who identified as true Independents, were excluded from further analyses. Other Independents were re-categorized as Republicans or Democrats based on their reported leaning, yielding 131 funny tweets by Democrats and 124 funny tweets by Republicans.

Chi-square analyses indicate that Republicans and Democrats differed in their proportions of aggressive humor tweets to total funny tweets ($\chi^2(1,255)=3.592, p=.058$). Fifty-nine of the 124 funny tweets by conservatives (47.6%) were aggressive, compared with liberals’ proportion of 47 aggressive humor tweets out of the 131 total funny tweets (35.9%). This provides further evidence for H1.

Looking into ingroup vs. outgroup distinction in the aggressive humor tweets, we again find that Republicans and Democrats differ in the proportion of offensively funny tweets targeting outgroup ($\chi^2(1,255)=12.500, p<.001$), but do not differ in the proportion of teasing tweets targeting their ingroup ($\chi^2(1,255)=2.987, p=.084$). Forty-five of the 124 conservatives’ funny tweets (36.3%) were offensive, but only 22 out of the 131 liberals’ funny tweets (16.8%) were offensive. On the other hand, similar proportions of

conservatives and liberals’ funny tweets were teasing. Fourteen out of the 124 conservatives’ funny tweets (11.3%) were teasing, while 25 out of 131 liberals’ funny tweets (19.1%) were teasing. This again supports our theorizing.

FIGURE WA2B: Coded Tweets (ingroup vs. outgroup) with Partisan Identity

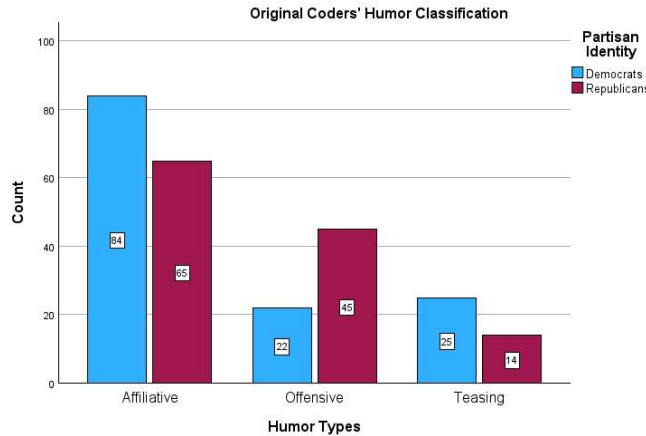


TABLE WA2: CLASSIFICATION OF HUMOROUS TWEETS (STUDY 2)

| Political Ideology | All funny tweets | Aggressive humor based (N & %age of all) | ‘Offensive’ humor-based (N & %age of all) | ‘Teasing’ humor-based (N & %age of all) |
|----------------------------|------------------|--|---|---|
| Total | 272 | 113 (41.5%) | 72 (26.5%) | 41 (15.1%) |
| Liberals | 145 | 52 (48.0%) | 26 (17.9%) | 26 (17.9%) |
| Conservatives | 127 | 61 (35.9%) | 46 (36.2%) | 15 (11.8%) |
| Liberals vs. Conservatives | | $\chi^2(1,272)=4.129$, p=.042 | $\chi^2(1,272)=11.635$, p<.001 | $\chi^2(1,272)=1.981$, p=.159 |
| Party Affiliation | All funny tweets | Aggressive humor based (N & %age of all) | ‘Offensive’ humor-based (N & %age of all) | ‘Teasing’ humor-based (N & %age of all) |
| Total | 255 | 106 (41.6%) | 67 (26.3%) | 39 (15.3%) |
| Democrats | 131 | 47 (35.9%) | 22 (16.8%) | 25 (19.1%) |
| Republicans | 124 | 59 (47.6%) | 45 (36.3%) | 14 (11.3%) |
| Democrats vs. Republicans | | $\chi^2(1,255)=3.592$, p=.058 | $\chi^2(1,255)=12.500$, p<.001 | $\chi^2(1,255)=2.987$, p=.084 |

Robustness Check (additional coders):

Two other coders, also blind to our hypotheses, classified the humorous tweets (N=272) into ‘affiliative’, ‘teasing’, and ‘offensive’ with the same instructions as the original coders. We also conducted chi-square analyses with their classifications (see figures WA2C and D below for classifications and chi-square test results). We also find substantively similar results when we consider only the tweets that all three coders agreed on (see figure WA2E).

FIGURE WA2C: Analysis of Second coders’ classification

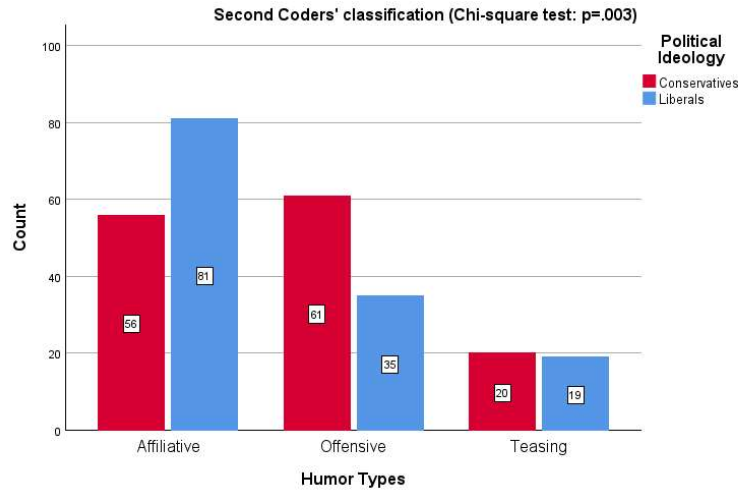


FIGURE WA2D: Analysis of Third coders’ classification

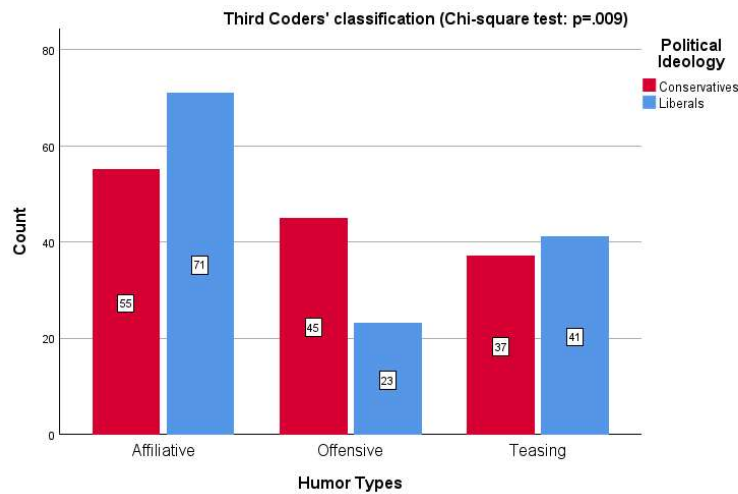
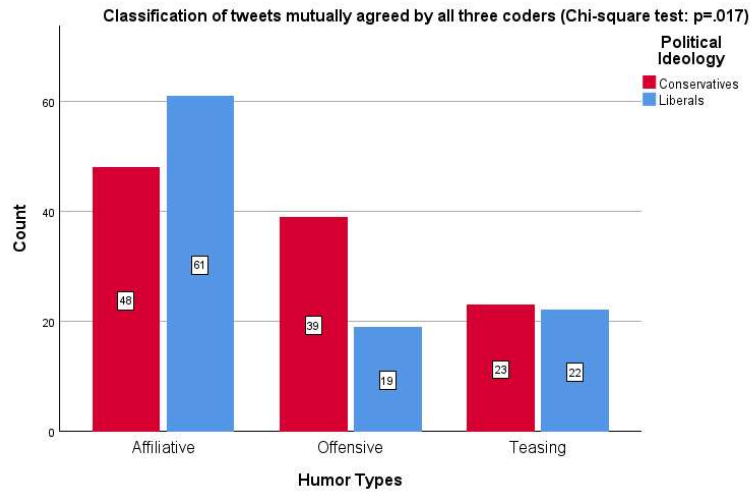


FIGURE WA2E: Analyses of only tweets that all three coders agreed on

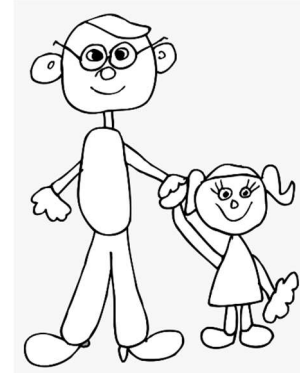


APPENDIX 2C1: FAMOUS COMEDIANS' AGGRESSIVE HUMOR STIMULI

Stimuli used:

We used three video clips from Bill Burr and a cartoon that was attributed to him:

- Bill Burr making fun of women
<https://youtu.be/IW2pXu97Yvo?start=191&end=208>
- Bill Burr making fun of men
<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/mFCltTmPVs4>
- Bill Burr makes fun of men and women at the same time
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1V23rDW7cw>
- A cartoon with a joke by Bill Burr that ostensibly “his dad told him.” (see side-panel)



A teenage girl had been talking on the phone for about half an hour, and then she hung up. 'Wow!' said her father, 'That was short. You usually talk for two hours. What happened?'

'Wrong number,' replied the girl.

Analysis with the fourth stimuli included:

We find substantively similar repeated-measures ANOVA results for offensiveness and funniness if we include this additional stimulus. We still find a significant ideology*humor-target interaction ($F(3,321)=5.442, p=.001$). Looking at simple effects, we find that this additional stimulus is indeed found more offensive by liberals ($F(1,107)=7.450, p=.007$). Conducting a similar repeated-measures ANOVA with funniness ratings as DV, we find a marginally significant ideology*humor-target interaction ($F(3,321)=2.214, p=.086$). Simple effect for the additional stimulus did not find any difference in funniness ratings ($F(1,107)=.954, p=.331$), suggesting that despite a high-status individual (a father) is making fun of a low-status group (a daughter), the joke is appreciated by both liberals and conservatives.

FIGURE WA3AA: Offensiveness Ratings

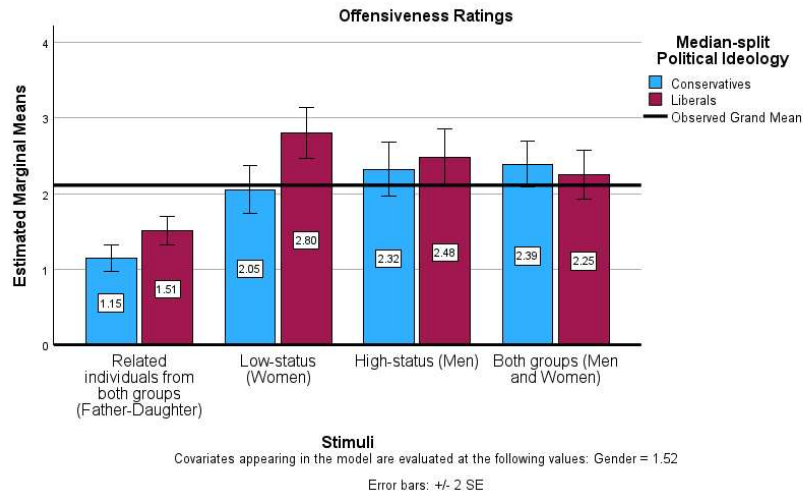
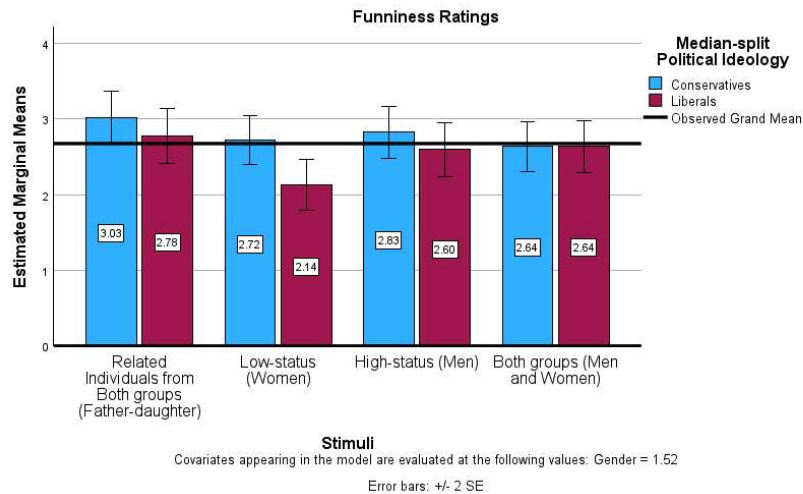


FIGURE WA3AB: Funniness Ratings



Differences in public sharing likelihood and average sharing likelihood:

Conducting a ideology*humor-target repeated-measures ANOVA with public sharing likelihood and the average of public sharing likelihood and private sharing likelihood, we find similar results to the likelihood of private sharing. We again find a main effect of ideology (public: $F(1,107)=4.025, p=.047$; average: $F(1,107)=3.711, p=0.057$), but no interaction effect (public: $F(2,214)=1.090, p=.338$; average: $F(2, 214)=1.019, p=.363$). Looking at simple effects, we find that liberals and conservatives did differ in their

sharing of the joke targeting the low-status group (public: $F(1,107)=6.538, p=0.012$; average: $F(1,107)=6.443, p=.013$), though we also find a marginally significant difference for the joke targeting men, the high-status group (public: $F(1,107)=3.143, p=.079$; average: $F(1,107)=2769, p=.099$).

FIGURE WA3AC: Sharing Likelihood (Public Sharing)

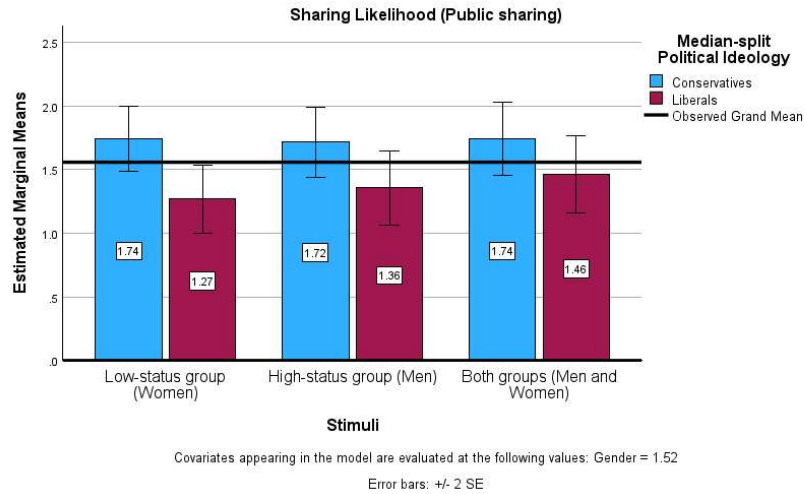
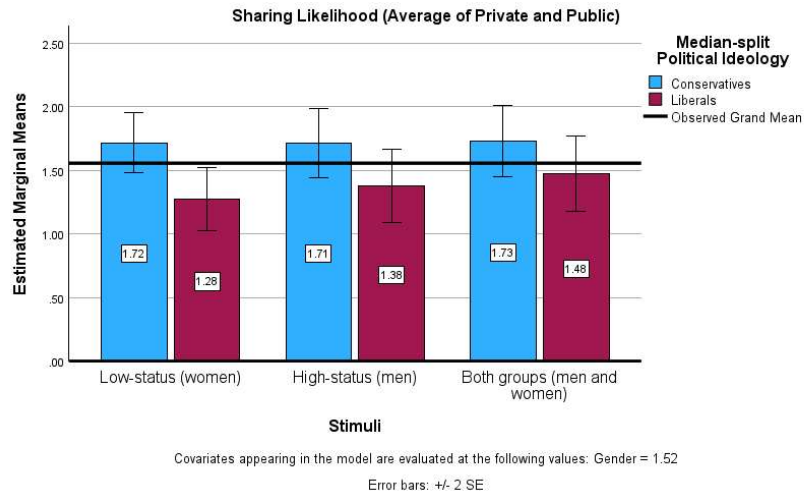


FIGURE WA3AD: Sharing Likelihood (Average of Public and Private)



Robustness Check with Partisan Identity:

We prescreened participants to be either liberals or conservatives, yielding a bimodal distribution for our continuous political ideology variable. This was median split in our analysis. Participants also completed a partisan identity measure. In analyses using

partisan identity, we hence exclude four participants who self-identified as independents and did not lean towards either party.

FIGURE WA3AE: Ideology Distribution

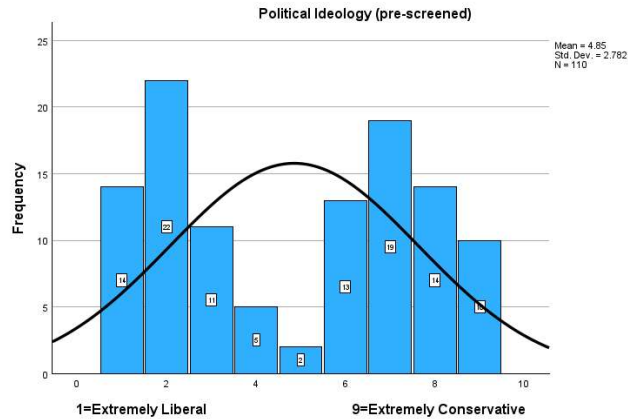
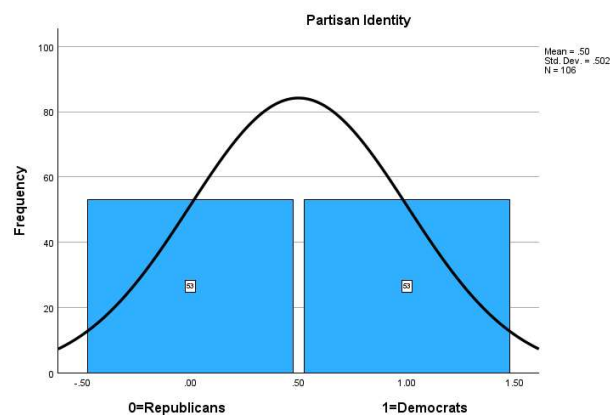


FIGURE WA3AF: Partisan Distribution



We find substantively similar results when we use partisan identity (Democrats vs. Republicans) instead of median-split political ideology (liberals vs. conservatives) as the operationalization of political ideology. Repeated-measures ANOVAs find a significant partisan-identity*humor-target interaction for offensiveness ($F(2,206)=4.510, p<.001$) and funniness ($F(2,206)=3.644, p=.028$). Looking at simple effects, we find that only the low-status group's ratings significantly differed between liberals and conservatives in terms of offensiveness ($F(1,103)=9.195, p=.003$) and funniness ($F(1,3.811), p=.054$). However, looking at the effect on private sharing, we do not replicate our reported findings with median-split political ideology when we use partisan identity instead (interaction: $F(2,206)=1.428, p=.242$; main effect of partisan identity: $F(1,103)=.233, p=.631$), though the results do trend in the expected direction (low-status targeted joke:

$F(1,103)=1.797, p=.183$; high-status targeted joke: $F(1,103)=.000, p=.999$; both groups targeted joke: $F(1,103)=.013, p=.908$).

FIGURE WA3AG: Offensiveness Ratings

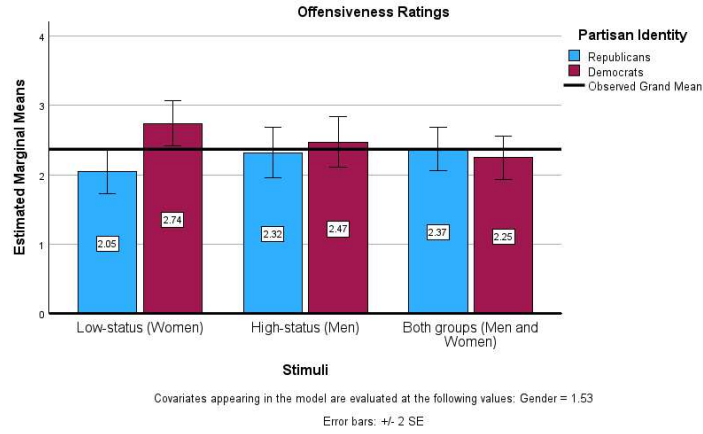


FIGURE WA3AH: Funniness Ratings

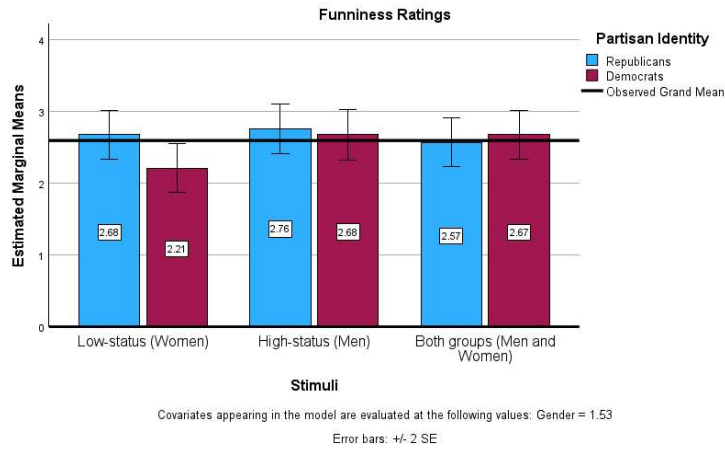
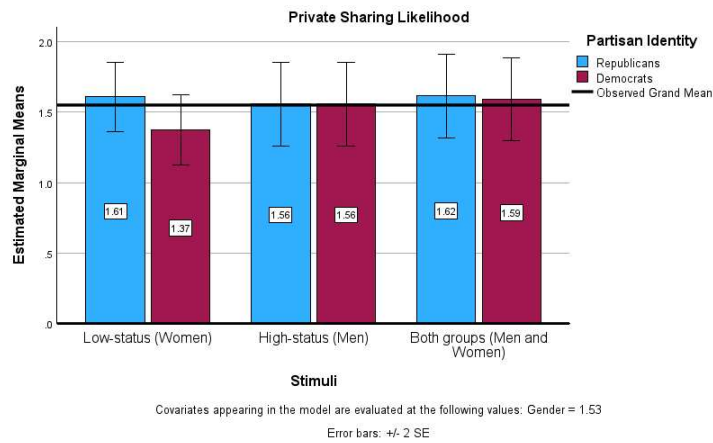


FIGURE WA3AI: Private Sharing Likelihood



APPENDIX 2C2: RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL INFORMATION (COMEDIAN VS. JOKE) ON AGGRESSIVE HUMOR

We theorize that conservatives' greater appreciation of aggressive humor is driven by its ability to convey social information, as this helps conservatives better identify the humor producer as a friend or a foe. This suggests that conservatives should appreciate aggressive humor more when social information is relevant, such as when determining if the humor producer is a part of one's ingroup, compared with when the social information is not immediately relevant, such as when focusing more on the humor itself. Hence, in this study, we expect that drawing consumers' attention to the comedian, instead of just the joke itself, should increase conservatives' appreciation of aggressive humor, but not liberals'.

Sample and Procedure: We recruited 212 Prolific workers (63.7% female, 50.9% Democrats, mean age=41.83 years, age range=19-76 years), prescreened to be liberal or conservative, for a 2 (ideology: liberals vs. conservatives) X 2 (social information: relevant vs. not relevant) between-subjects design. Participants were randomly assigned to either pay attention to the comedian (social information relevant condition) or the joke (social information not-relevant condition). We did so by changing the study title (Rate COMEDIANS vs. Rate JOKES), objective, and instructions that participants read before evaluating two aggressive-humor jokes. One of these jokes was a joke targeting women by Bill Burr (also used in study 3A) while the other one was a joke by Matt Rife targeting disabled and transgender individuals. Participants rated both on funniness and offensiveness on seven-point (1=not at all to 7=extremely) Likert scales. Participants finally completed demographic questions, including political ideology and partisan identity, as done in prior studies.

Stimuli: We used two video clips, both instances of aggressive humor. First, Bill Burr making fun of women (<https://youtu.be/1W2pXu97Yvo?start=191&end=208>) and second, Matt Rife clip making fun of trans individuals and people who are physically disabled (<https://youtu.be/tKsT8WJafpc?start=465&end=2013>)

Analysis and Results: We conducted a mixed effects ANOVA with participants' political ideology (median=5) and social information condition as the independent variables, the jokes themselves as a random factor, and offensiveness ratings as the dependent variable. We find only a significant main effect of ideology ($F(1,414)=2482.149, p=.013$) that suggests that liberals were more offended by the aggressive humor clips ($M=4.48, SD=1.96$) than conservatives ($M=3.06, SD=1.89$). There was no impact of the social information condition ($F(1,414)=.465, p=.619$) or their interaction ($F(1,414)=.123, p=.785$). Conducting a similar mixed-effects ANOVA for funniness ratings, we do not find a significant ideology*social-information-condition interaction ($F(1,414)=2.330, p=.369$), but planned comparisons do reveal that conservatives' appreciation of the aggressive humor jokes was significantly higher ($F(1,414)=4.312, p=.038$) in when social information was relevant ($M=3.92, SD=1.91$)

than when it was not relevant ($M=3.41$, $SD=1.83$). We do not find any such difference for liberals ($F(1,414)=.783$, $p=.377$).

FIGURE WA3BA: Offensiveness Ratings

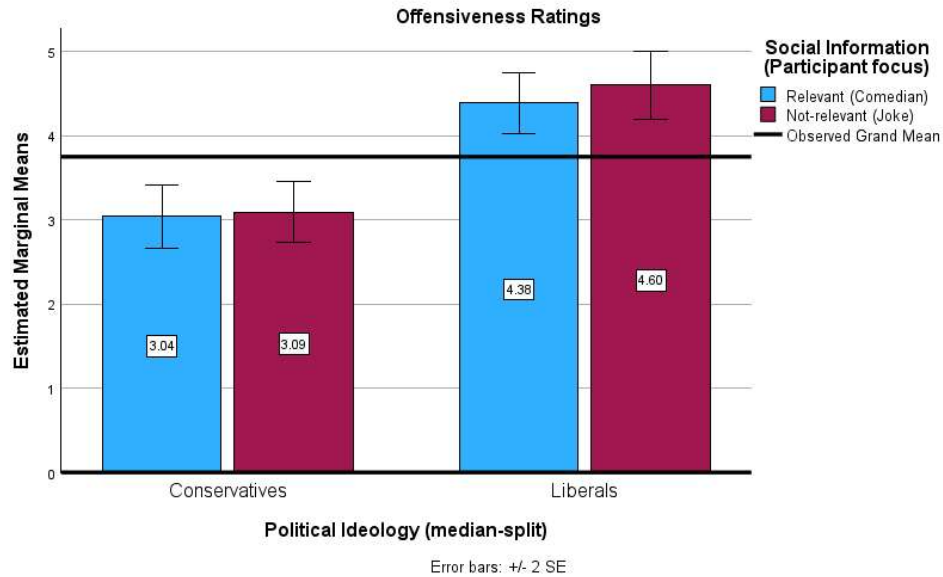
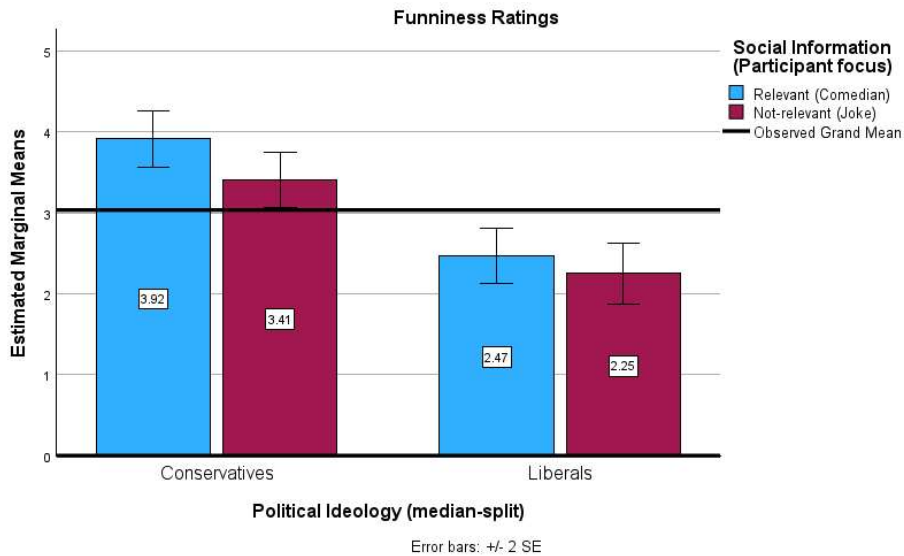


FIGURE WA3BB: Funniness Ratings



Robustness check using Partisan Identity:

We prescreened participants to be either liberals or conservatives, allowing us to median-split the bimodal distribution consequently yielded. To use partisan identity instead, we excluded eight participants who self-reported being independent and leaning towards neither political party.

FIGURE WA3BC: Political Ideology Distribution

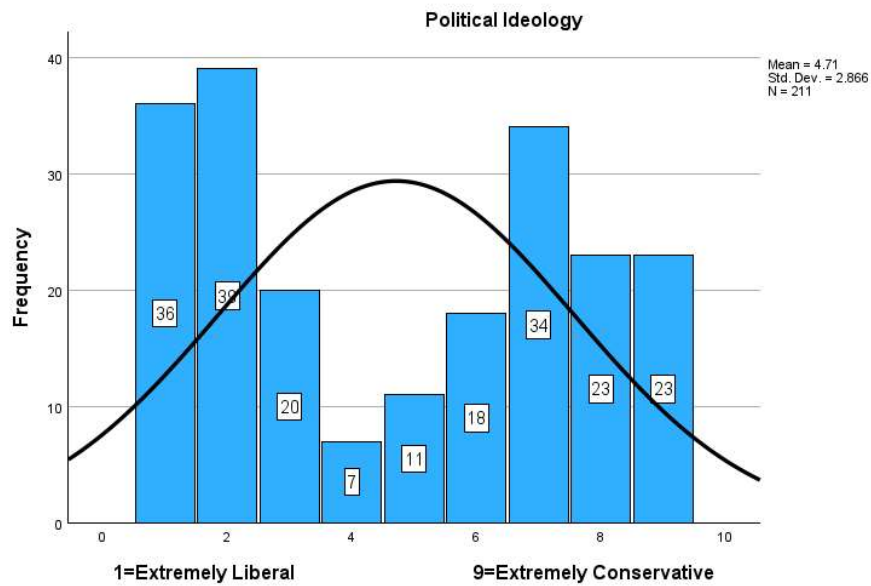
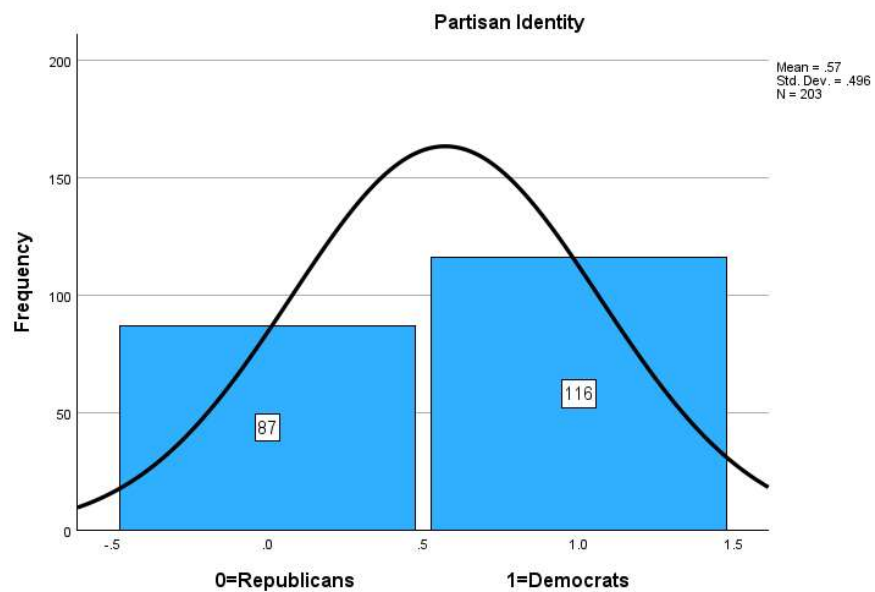


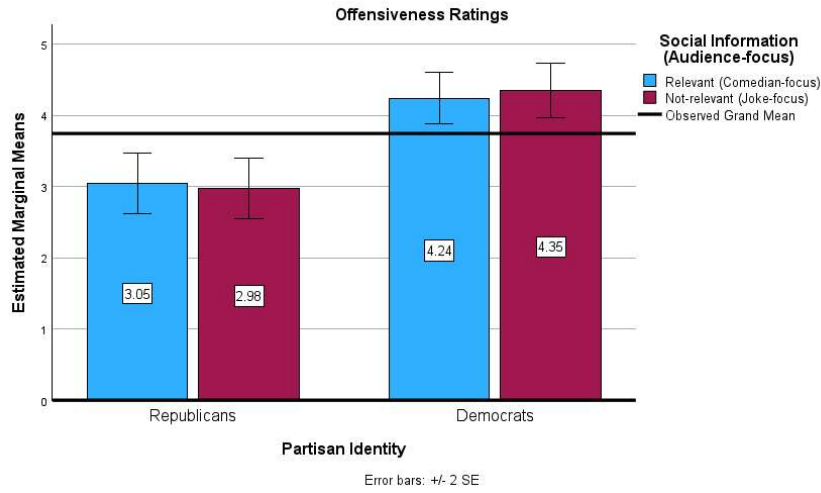
FIGURE WA3BD: Partisan Identity Distribution



Using partisan identity as our operationalization of political ideology instead in our mixed-effects ANOVAs, while the results are no longer significant, we do substantively similar trends not just on the Republican side, but also on the Democrat side. In terms of offensiveness, we find a significant main effect of ideology ($F(1,398)=81831.442$,

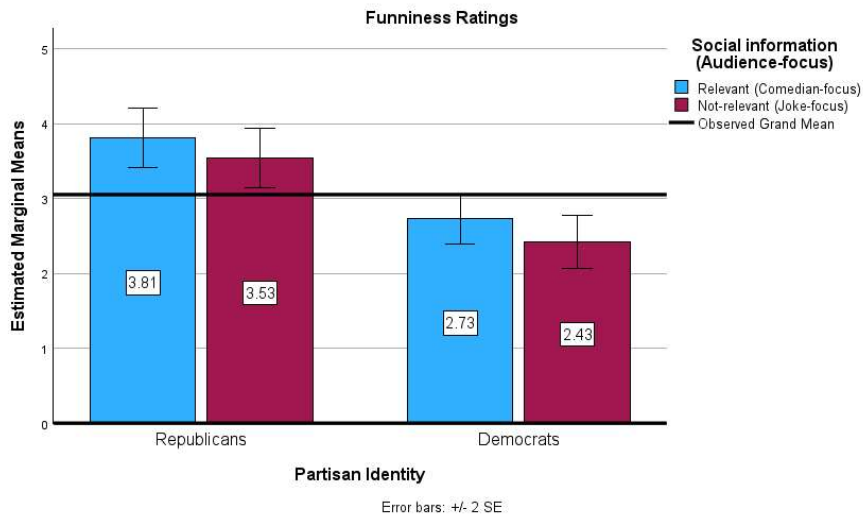
$p=.002$), but no main effect of the social information context condition ($F(1,398)=.021$, $p=.909$) or an interaction ($F(1,398)=.387$, $p=.646$).

FIGURE WA3BE: Offensiveness Ratings



In terms of funniness, we find again only a main effect of partisan identity ($F(1,398)=89730.429$, $p=.002$) and no significant effect of the social information context condition ($F(1,398)=9.738$, $p=.197$) or an interaction ($F(1,398)=.012$, $p=.932$). However, looking at the funniness ratings graph below, we observe that for both Republicans and Democrats, funniness is higher when the audience is focusing on the comedian, i.e., social information is relevant. This replicates our findings on the conservative/republican side, while also extending it to Democrats, who are also engaging in similar behavior to determine the partisan leaning of the two comedians.

FIGURE WA3BF: Funniness Ratings



Role of Familiarity (vs. Unfamiliarity) with the comedians

To test this further, we coded participants' responses to see if they had identified either comedian (Bill Burr or Matt Rife). If they had identified at least one, they were coded as 1, otherwise 0. Adding this as an additional factor to the mixed-effects ANOVA model above, we do not find a significant partisan-identity*context-condition*comedian-recalled three-way interaction ($F(1,368)=27.876$, $p=.119$), simple effects do support our theorizing. We find that both Republican ($F(1,368)=4.237$, $p=.040$) and Democrat ($F(1,368)=4.221$, $p=.041$) participants who did not recognize either comedian appreciate the jokes more when social information is relevant (comedian-focused) than when social information is not relevant (joke-focused). This difference is attenuated among the participants who identified either comedian (Republicans: $F(1,368)=.124$, $p=.725$; Democrats: $F(1,368)=.292$, $p=.589$). Though our data's per-cell sample size is below the recommended size of 40 participants per cell for this ANOVA, this additional analysis does support our hypothesis about the role of social information.

FIGURE WA3BG: Comedian Not Recalled

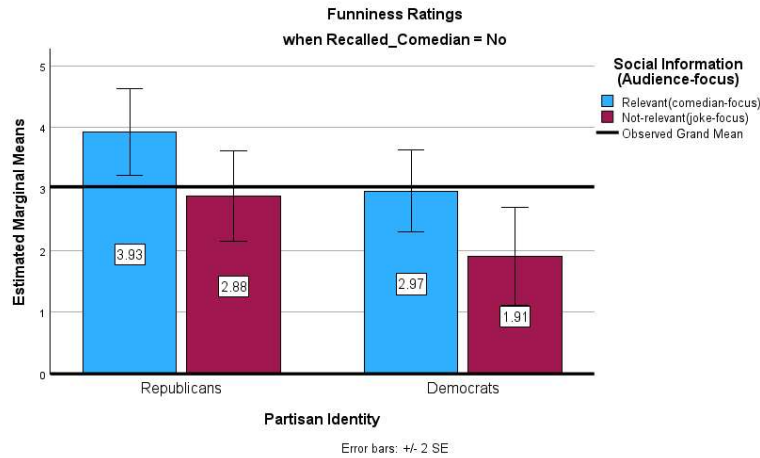
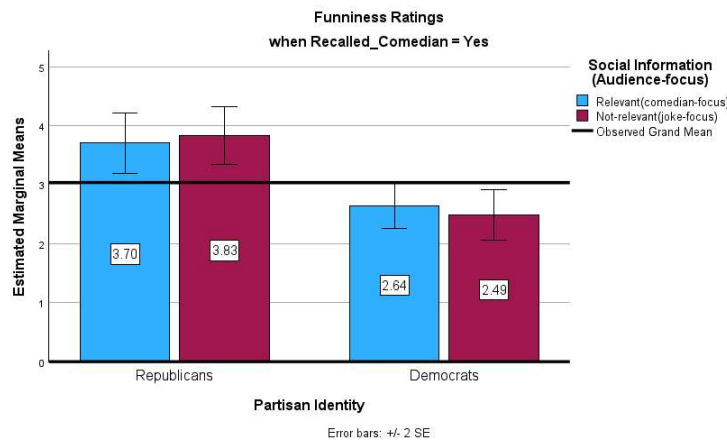


FIGURE WA3BH: Comedian Recalled



Role of Familiarity (vs. Unfamiliarity) with the comedians (Robustness Check)

This result is also supported when we conduct a similar analysis using median-split political ideology in our model instead of partisan identity. Conservatives appreciate the jokes more when they do not recognize the comedians and the social information is relevant (comedian-focus: $F(1,384)=12.133$, $p<.001$). Funniness ratings of liberals who did not identify the comedians show a similar trend when they do not recognize the comedians ($F(1,384)=2.506$, $p=.114$). This difference is attenuated among the participants who identified either comedian (Liberals: $F(1,384)=.082$, $p=.775$; Liberals: $F(1,384)=.588$, $p=.444$).

FIGURE WA3BI: Comedian Not Recalled (with Political Ideology)

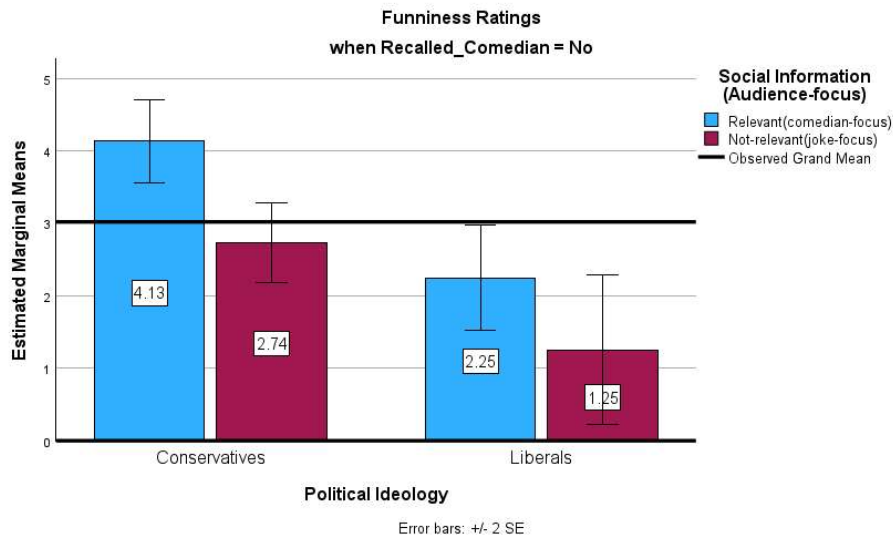
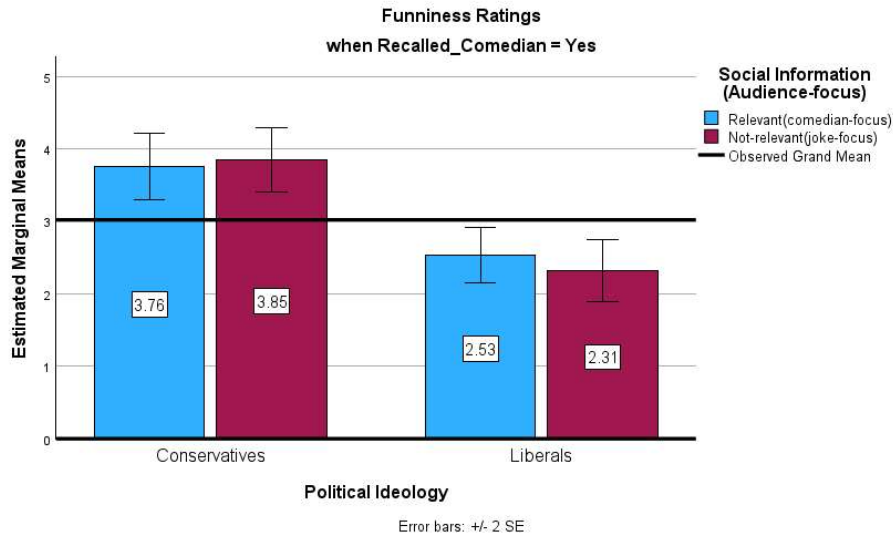


FIGURE WA3BI: Comedian Recalled (with Political Ideology)



APPENDIX 2D1: SDO MEDIATION ANALYSIS USING MEASUREMENT

We theorize that aggressive humor, more so than other forms of humor, provides useful social information to in-group members by targeting and penalizing out-group members as well as in-group members who might be in violation of in-group values and norms. Hence, as stated in hypothesis H2, consumers who are more focused on this hierarchy, i.e., those with higher social dominance orientation (SDO) should be more appreciative of aggressive humor.

We have provided preliminary evidence for this in prior studies. In study 2, we demonstrated that liberals and conservatives differ in the likelihood of making fun of their outgroup, but do not differ in the likelihood of making fun of their ingroup. In study 3, we demonstrated that liberals and conservatives differ in their appreciation of aggressive humor when a male comedian targets women (an outgroup), but not when he makes fun of men (his ingroup) or both genders. In this study, we provide more concrete evidence for this mediating role of SDO through measurement and also rule out alternate mechanisms like moral foundations. Study 4 demonstrates the role of SDO by manipulating the construct using a novel manipulation procedure. In other words, this web appendix study provides correlational evidence for the role of SDO as a mediator, while Study 4 provides causal evidence for the role of SDO.

Sample and Procedure:

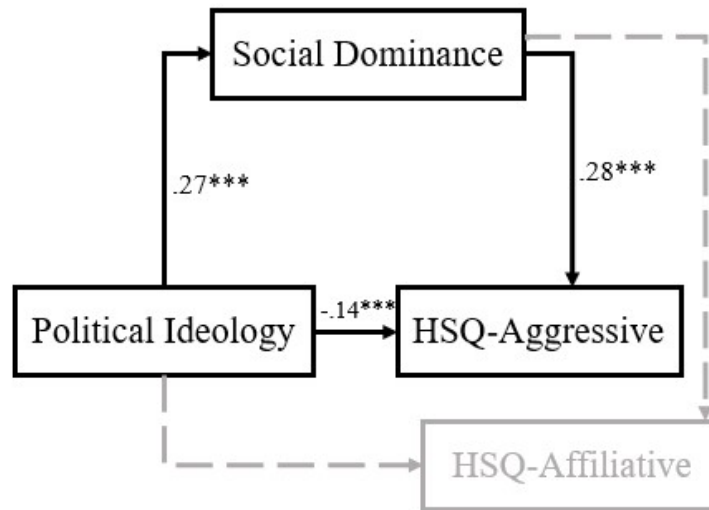
We recruited 202 Prolific workers (45% female, 49.3% Democrats, mean age=43.45 years, age range=19-80) in exchange for monetary compensation. They completed Martin et al. (2003)'s Humor Styles Questionnaire [affiliative (8 items; $\alpha=.921$) and aggressive (8 items; $\alpha=.921$) humor subscales], Pratto et al. (1994)'s Social Dominance Orientation scale (14 items, $\alpha=.921$), and Graham et al. (2011)'s Moral Foundations Questionnaire (we report only the moral relevance scale (15 items), as the moral judgements scale's inter-item reliability for the care and fairness foundations was unacceptably low ($\alpha<.3$); see the next section for all the scale items and further details). Finally, participants answered demographic questions, which included their political ideology. We included the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ) to rule out alternate mechanisms, such as conservatives' higher appreciation of aggressive humor being driven by their greater loyalty to the ingroup, trust in authority, or by their lower focus on caring for others.

Analyses and Results:

We combined each scale into single scores and tested for mediation of ideology's impact on the HSQ-Aggressive subscale using Hayes PROCESS (Hayes, 2017) model 4 with 5000 bootstrapped samples. We find evidence for mediation through SDO [indirect effect=.073, SE=.022, 95% CI=(.0327, .1177)], but not through MFQ-loyalty [3 items, $\alpha=.706$, indirect effect=-.009, SE=.018, 95% CI=(-.0453, .0278)], MFQ-authority [3 items, $\alpha=.765$, indirect effect=-.029, SE=.022, 95% CI=(-.0723, .0139)], or MFQ-Care [3 items, $\alpha=.768$, indirect effect=.013, SE=.008, 95% CI=(-.0030, .0285)]. We also do not

find any evidence of mediation of any potential effect of ideology on affiliative humor through SDO [indirect effect=-.032, SE=.020, 95% CI=(-.0714, .0074)]. This supports our hypothesis H2 (see mediation diagram below).

Figure WA4A: Mediation Diagram



Social Dominance Orientation Scale (Pratto et al., 1994)

Thank you for completing the previous section. In this section, we want to understand how you feel (positive or negative) about the following idea:

1. Some groups of people are simply not the equals of others.
2. Some people are just more worthy than others.
3. This country would be better off if we cared less about how equal all people were.
4. Some people are just more deserving than others.
5. It is not a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others.
6. Some people are just inferior to others.
7. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on others.
8. Increased economic equality.
9. Increased social equality.
10. Equality.
11. If people were treated more equally we would have fewer problems in this country.
12. In an ideal world, all nations would be equal.
13. We should try to treat one another as equals as much as possible. (All humans should be treated equally)

14. It is important that we treat other countries as equals.

Moral Foundations Questionnaire (Graham et al., 2011)

Relevance Scale: When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent are the following considerations relevant to your thinking?

1. Whether or not someone suffered emotionally (care foundation)
2. Whether or not some people were treated differently than others (fairness foundation)
3. Whether or not someone's action showed love for his or her country (loyalty foundation)
4. Whether or not someone showed a lack of respect for authority (authority foundation)
5. Whether or not someone violated standards of purity and decency (purity foundation)
6. Whether or not someone was good at math (attention check)
7. Whether or not someone cared for someone weak or vulnerable (care foundation)
8. Whether or not someone acted unfairly (fairness foundation)
9. Whether or not someone did something to betray his or her group (loyalty foundation)
10. Whether or not someone conformed to the traditions of society (authority foundation)
11. Whether or not someone did something disgusting
12. Whether or not someone was cruel (care foundation)
13. Whether or not someone was denied his or her rights (fairness foundation)
14. Whether or not someone showed a lack of loyalty (loyalty foundation)
15. Whether or not an action caused chaos or disorder (authority foundation)
16. Whether or not someone acted in a way that God would approve of (purity foundation)

Importance Scale: Please read the following sentences and indicate your agreement or disagreement.

1. Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial virtue. (care foundation)
2. When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly. (fairness foundation)
3. I am proud of my country's history. (loyalty foundation)
4. Respect for authority is something all children need to learn. (authority foundation)
5. People should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed. (purity foundation)
6. It is better to do good than to do bad. (attention check)
7. One of the worst things a person could do is hurt a defenseless animal. (care foundation)

8. Justice is the most important requirement for a society. (fairness foundation)
9. People should be loyal to their family members, even when they have done something wrong. (loyalty foundation)
10. Men and women each have different roles to play in society. (authority foundation)
11. I would call some acts wrong on the grounds that they are unnatural. (purity foundation)
12. It can never be right to kill a human being. (care foundation)
13. I think it's morally wrong that rich children inherit a lot of money while poor children inherit nothing. (fairness foundation)
14. It is more important to be a team player than to express oneself. (loyalty foundation)
15. If I were a soldier and disagreed with my commanding officer's orders, I would obey anyway because that is my duty. (authority foundation)
16. Chastity is an important and valuable virtue. (purity foundation)

| Reliability scores | Care | Fairness | Loyalty | Authority | Purity |
|---------------------------|------|----------|---------|-----------|--------|
| Relevance | .768 | .818 | .706 | .765 | .696 |
| Importance | .275 | .270 | .613 | .701 | .784 |
| Combined | .646 | .687 | .729 | .826 | .856 |

| HSQ- Aggressive mediation | Care | Fairness | Loyalty | Authority | Purity |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Relevance | Effect=.0125, (-.0022, .0282) | Effect=.0227, (.0068, .0446) | Effect=-.0082, (-.0317, .0124) | Effect=-.0239, (-.0586, .0059) | Effect=-.0459, (-.0871, -.0058) |
| Importance | Effect=.0177, (.0024, .0371) | Effect=.0003, (-.0213, .0185) | Effect=-.0005, (-.0367, .0381) | Effect=-.0166, (-.0624, .0307) | Effect=-.0759, (-.1299, -.0255) |
| Combined | Effect= .0219 , (.0043, .0426) | Effect= .0221 , (.0038, .0427) | Effect=-.0219, (-.0448, .0269) | Effect=-.0290, (-.0719, .0126) | Effect= -.0742 , (-.1250, -.0251) |

Hence, we find that aggressive humor is linked to SDO [indirect effect=.073, SE=.022, 95% CI=(.0327, .1177)], as well as the care, fairness, and purity moral foundations. However, these indirect effects of the moral foundations are in the opposite direction of our hypothesized alternate explanation. The mediation suggests that aggressive humor increases as one cares more about care and fairness foundations and decreases as one cares more about the purity foundation.

APPENDIX 2D2: SDO MANIPULATION STATEMENTS

SDO Manipulation Stimuli:

Participants were presented one of the following two sets of statements, based on their randomly assigned condition.

High SDO manipulation condition:

Please tell us which of the following facts you knew about Prolific. Please also try to memorize them so that we can ask you about them at the end of the survey.

1. Compared to MTurk and other platforms, Prolific sets a **higher minimum hourly reward** of £6.00 or \$8.00 for all participants.
2. Prolific **protects participant privacy better** than other platforms. Their research rules and anonymous in-app messaging system enable you to chat freely and safely about the studies you have participated in.
3. Prolific's Terms and Conditions explicitly state that **participants have to be at least 18 years old** to take part in studies on the platform, unlike other platforms.
4. Unlike MTurk and other platforms, Prolific has a rate-limiting mechanism in place that **distributes studies as evenly as possible** across the entire participant pool.
5. Participants on Prolific **do not have to deal with unpaid screeners or worry about rejections**. Other platforms do not provide this benefit.
6. Prolific surveys are typically **easier than other platforms**.
7. Prolific actually **protects its participants** if requesters act in bad faith (or just don't know what they're doing), unlike other platforms.
8. Prolific **does not have a steep learning curve**, compared with other platforms.
9. The **dashboard for available studies is set up on Prolific way better** than how it is on MTurk.
10. Compared with MTurk, Prolific **does not have intense competition** or a lot of people using scripts.

Control condition:

Please tell us which of the following facts you knew about Prolific. Please also try to memorize them so that we can ask you about them at the end of the survey.

1. Similar to MTurk and other platforms, Prolific sets a **minimum hourly reward** of £6.00 or \$8.00 for all participants.
2. Prolific **protects participant privacy** as well as other platforms. Their research rules and anonymous in-app messaging system enable you to chat freely and safely about the studies you have participated in.
3. Prolific's Terms and Conditions explicitly state that **participants have to be at least 18 years old** to take part in studies on the platform, just like other platforms.

4. Similar to MTurk and other platforms, Prolific has a rate-limiting mechanism in place that **distributes studies as evenly as possible** across the entire participant pool.
5. Participants on Prolific **do not have to deal with unpaid screeners or worry about rejections**. Other platforms also provide this benefit.
6. Prolific surveys are typically **just as easy as other platforms**.
7. Prolific actually **protects its participants** if requesters act in bad faith (or just don't know what they're doing), just like other platforms.
8. Prolific **does not have a steep learning curve**, comparatively similar other platforms.
9. The **dashboard for available studies is set up on Prolific just as good** as how it is on MTurk.
10. Prolific **does not have intense competition** or a lot of people using scripts. It has similar levels to MTurk.

Pretest

Respondents were workers who only used Prolific. This restriction was important as participants would not feel superior to others if they were also a part of the other platforms. We recruited 89 such participants (58.43% female, 58.43% Democrats, mean age = 37.45 years, age range = 20 to 77), prescreened to be liberal or conservative, in exchange for monetary compensation (in total, we recruited 163 participants, however, 74 participants reported using other platforms as well and hence were excluded from further analyses). They were randomly assigned to a condition in which they either read statements that made Prolific look superior (high SDO condition) or similar (control condition) to the other platforms. Then they completed the trait dominance subscale from SDO₇ (Ho et al., 2015) as a manipulation check. This subscale consists of four statements: “*An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom*”, “*Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups*”, “*No one group should dominate in society (reverse-coded)*”, and “*Groups at the bottom are just as deserving as groups at the top (reverse-coded)*”. Responses were recorded on seven-point (1=strongly oppose to 7=strongly favor) Likert scales. Finally, they completed demographic questions and indicated how many of the statements they read they believed to be true (1=one statement to 10=all statements).

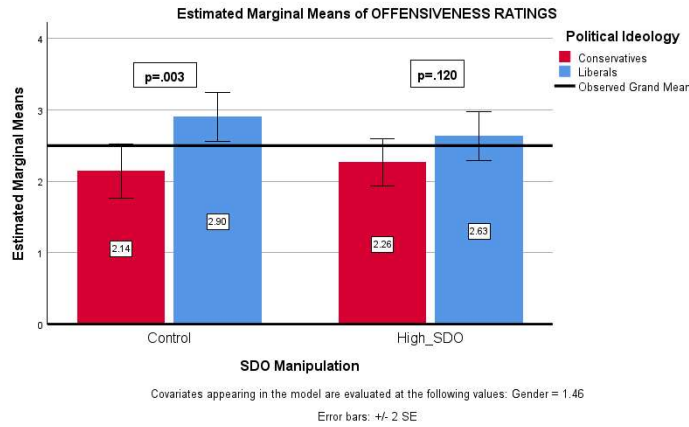
Averaging the four SDO₇ items ($\alpha=.842$) and conducting an ANOVA with the condition as the independent variable, we find that the high-SDO manipulation did significantly increase participants' trait dominance ($M=2.57$, $SD=1.33$, $F(1,87)=6.302$, $p=.014$) compared with the control condition ($M=1.90$, $SD=1.17$). As the participants we excluded due to self-reported usage of other platforms turned out to be significantly more conservative ($F(1,161)=8.268$, $p=.005$), we conducted a follow-up mixed-effects ANOVA for the 89 participants, with median-split political ideology as a random factor. We still find a significant main effect of SDO condition on trait dominance

($F(1,85)=4072.77, p=.010$). We find no difference in how many statements were believed to be true by participants in each condition ($F(1,87)=.547, p=.461$).

Offensiveness Ratings

We present below the offensiveness ratings for Study 4 reported in the manuscript.

Figure WA4BA: Offensiveness Ratings (Humor-Type manipulation check)



Robustness Check – Partisan Identity:

Looking at differences between Democrats and Republicans instead, we find substantively similar interaction effects (funniness: $F(1,239)= 191.873, p<.001$; offensiveness: $F(1,239)= 62.084, p=.027$). we find that we replicate the expected difference in funniness ratings ($F(1,239)=9.158, p=.003$) and in offensiveness ratings ($F(1,239)=17.184, p<.001$) in the control condition. However, these differences are attenuated when SDO is manipulated to be high (funniness: $F(1,239)=.000, p=.982$; offensiveness: $F(1,239)=.516, p=.473$).

Figure WA4BB: Political Ideology Distribution

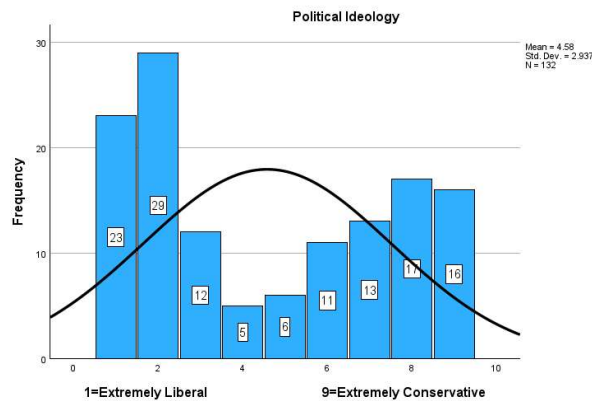


Figure WA4BC: Partisan Identity Distribution

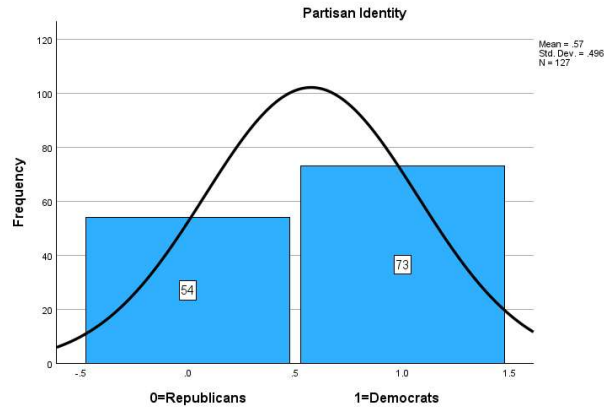


Figure WA4BD: Funniness Ratings

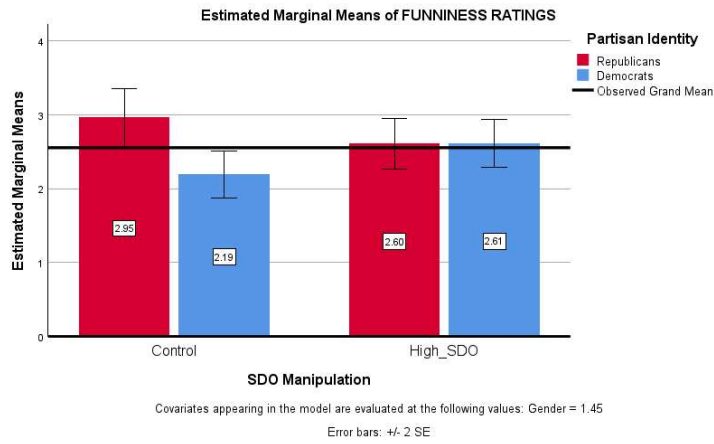
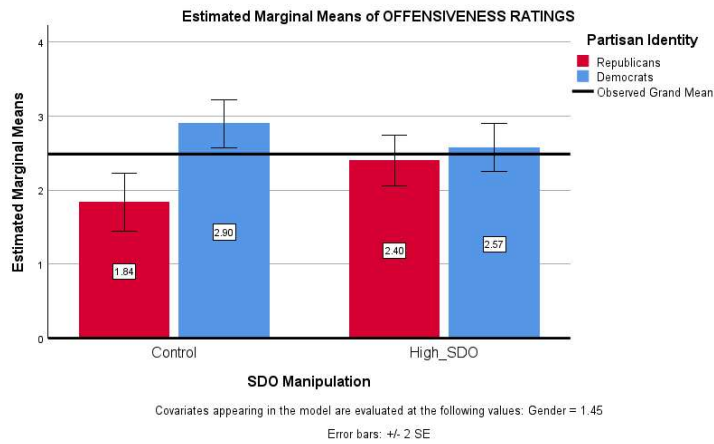


Figure WA4BE: Offensiveness Ratings



APPENDIX 2E1: HIERARCHY-REINFORCING STIMULI

TABLE WA5: SCENARIOS USED IN STUDY 5

| Scenario | Comment |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Scenario 1 Vignette (Bakery) – | <p>“Calypso Bakery: "Woohoo! First day of school is here, everyone! Free donut for all school kids today! Our delicious treats will give you the energy to tackle even the most boring homework!"</p> <p>Hierarchy-reinforcing: Briar: "Stop pandering to schools! Their brainwashing our kids!"</p> <p>Universal: Briar: "Stop it. Donuts are not healthy! Their full of sugar and fats!"</p> |
| Scenario 2 Vignette (Brewery) | <p>Hierarchy-reinforcing: “Best Brew Bar: "Great news, y'all! We will soon start construction on the new accessibility ramps around the building. We will still advise our wheelchair-using patrons to be responsible at night and not drink and ride ;)”</p> <p>Hierarchy-reinforcing: Daniel: "Who cares? Why would disabled people be out at night anyway?"</p> <p>Universal: Daniel: "I'm not sure if it's a good idea for them to get drunk, especially late night."”</p> |
| Scenario 3 Vignette (Café) – | <p>Hierarchy-reinforcing: “Buddy's Café: "Starting next month, bring your pets along and treat them to our new range of pet-friendly drinks. Specially designed for dogs and cats. Choose from refreshing coconut water, purifying veggie juice, and fortifying bone broth. They will paws-itively love it."</p> <p>Hierarchy-reinforcing: Jamie: "Drinks for pets? You have got to be freaking kidding me!"</p> <p>Universal: Jamie: "Can you confirm there won't be any GMOs in it?"</p> |

Manipulation check: Participants also reported how threatening they found each comment (hierarchy-reinforcing vs. universal) in the three scenarios (bakery, brewery, and café) on a 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much) Likert scale. Conducting a three-way repeated-measures ANOVA with political ideology, salient issue, and brand response as the independent variables and the threat ratings in the three scenarios as the repeated measure, we find only a significant main effect of the salient issue. Participants reported feeling significantly more threatened after seeing the comment with the hierarchy-reinforcing concern, compared to the universal concern ($F(1,393)=22.634, p<.001$). Participants also reported how important the issues raised by the comments were to them on a 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much Likert scales). Conducting a similar repeated measures

ANOVA, we only find a main effect of political ideology ($F(1,393)=34.380, p<.001$), main effect of issue ($F(1,393)=49.701, p<.001$), and a significant ideology*issue interaction ($F(1,393)=5.757, p=.017$), suggesting that the hierarchy reinforcing concerns were more important to conservatives than to liberals ($F(1,393)=34.680, p<.001$).

Figure WA5AA: Perceived Threat Ratings (Manipulation Check)

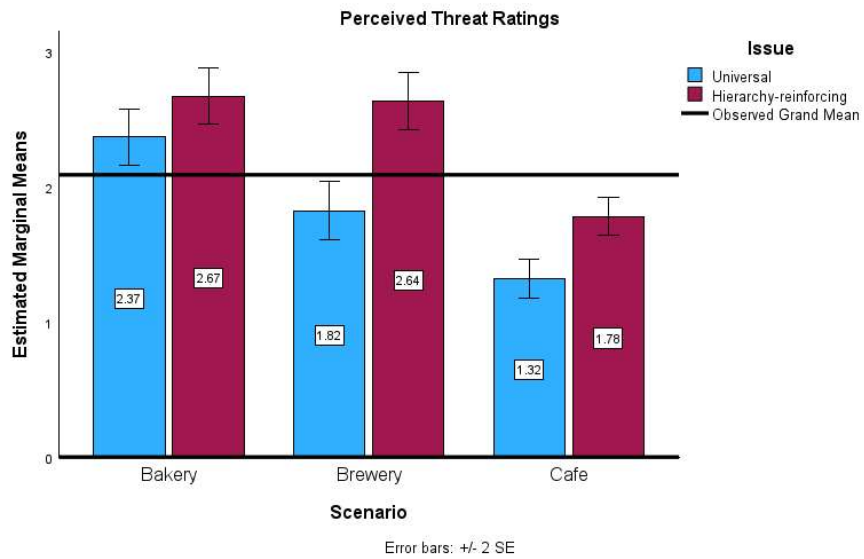
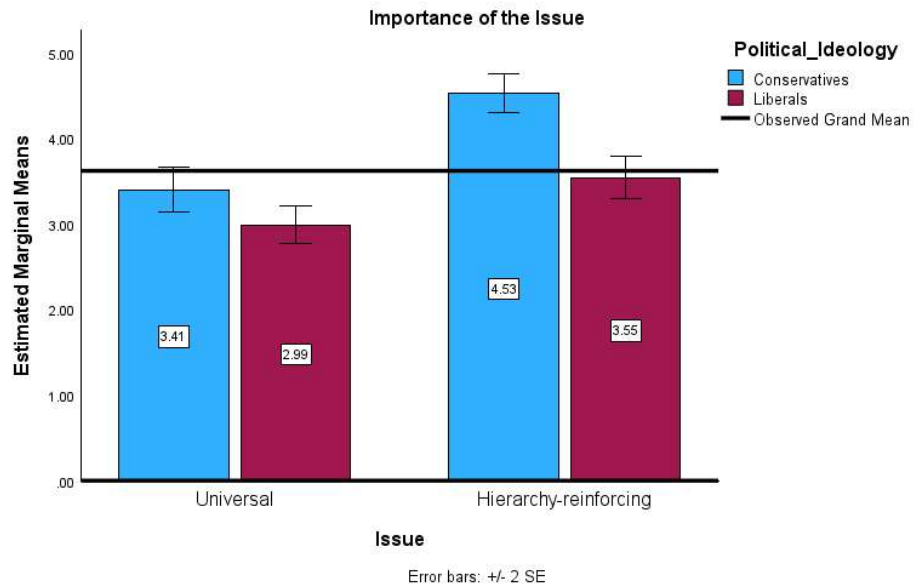


Figure WA5AB: Issue Importance (Manipulation Check)



Offensiveness Ratings: Conducting a mixed-effects ANOVA with political ideology, salient issue, and brand response as the independent factors, the three vignettes as the random factor, and offensiveness ratings as dependent variable, we find a marginally significant three-way interaction ($F(1,1179)=9.870, p=.088$). Planned comparisons reveal that both liberals ($F(1,1179)=9.140, p=.003$) and conservatives ($F(1,1179)=5.684, p=.017$) found the aggressive response to be more offensive in the universal comment context than in the hierarchy-reinforcing comment context. We find a similar marginally-significant difference for liberals for the affiliative response as well ($F(1,1179)=2.795, p=.095$), but not conservatives ($F(1,1179)=.100, p=.751$). This provides additional evidence for our hypothesis H3 that liberals are more context-sensitive in their humor appreciation.

Figure WA5AC: Offensiveness Ratings – Aggressive Humor Response

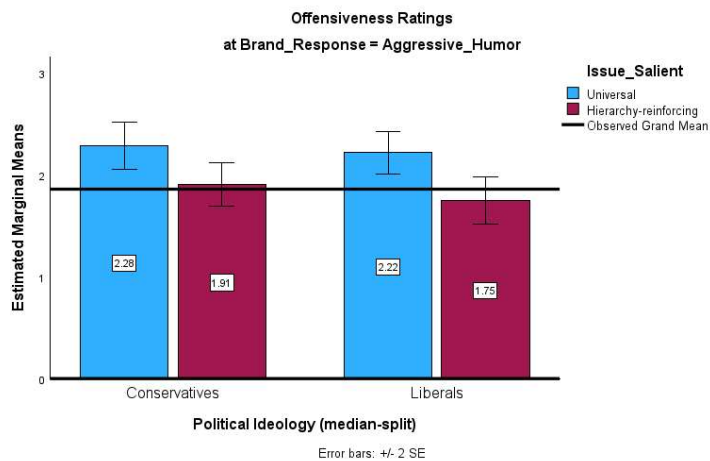
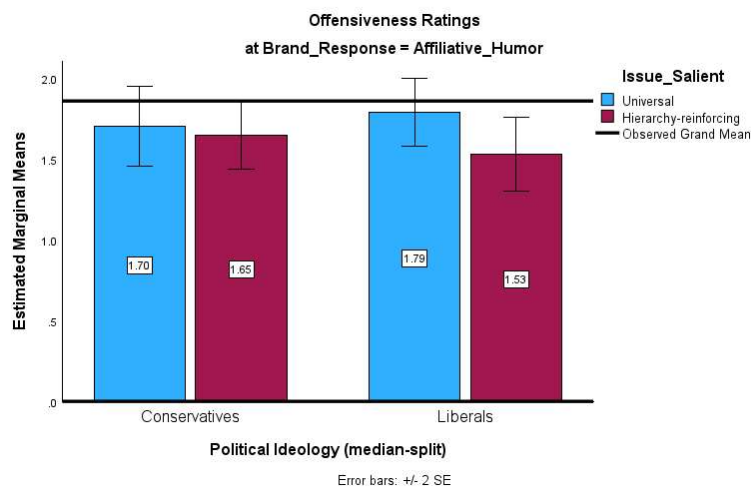
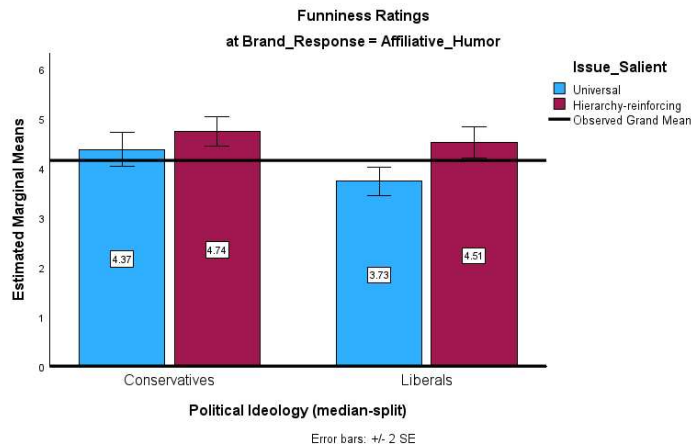


Figure WA5AD: Offensiveness Ratings – Affiliative Humor Response



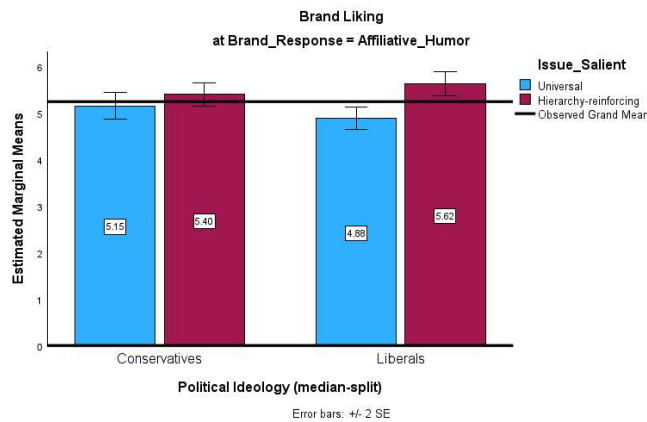
Funniness Ratings – Affiliative Humor Response: Focusing on the affiliative humor responses, we find a marginally-significant two-way ideology*issue interaction ($F(1,582)=11.172, p=0.079$). Planned comparisons reveal that both liberals and conservatives appreciated the affiliative response more when it was used to respond to the hierarchy-reinforcing comment than to the universal comment, though this difference is significant for liberals ($F(1,582)=14.402, p<.001$) but only marginally significant for conservatives ($F(1,582)=2.939, p=.087$). This provides additional evidence for our hypothesis H3 that liberals are more context-sensitive in their humor appreciation.

Figure WA5AE: Funniness Ratings – Affiliative Humor Response



Brand Liking – Affiliative Humor Response: Focusing on the affiliative humor responses, we find a significant two-way ideology*issue interaction ($F(1,582)=22.843, p=0.041$). Planned comparisons reveal that liberals liked the brand more when it used the affiliative response to respond to the hierarchy-reinforcing comment than to the universal comment ($F(1,582)=14.402, p<.001$) but there’s no such difference in conservatives’ brand liking ($F(1,582)=1.874, p=.172$). This provides additional evidence for our hypothesis H3 that liberals are more context-sensitive in their humor appreciation.

Figure WA5AF: Brand Liking – Affiliative Humor Response



Robustness check – Partisan identity:

As we prescreened participants, we had a bimodal distribution.

Figure WA5AG: Political Ideology Distribution

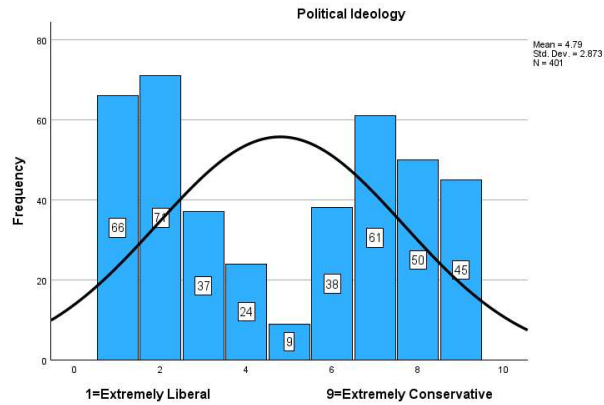
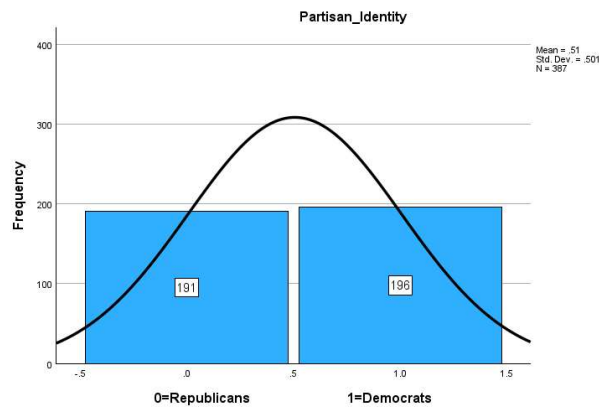


Figure WA5AH: Partisan Identity Distribution



Funniness Ratings and Brand Liking: We find substantively similar results in three-way mixed-effects ANOVAs. We find that Democrats’ appreciation of both responses significantly differed based on whether the commenter reinforced social hierarchies or not (aggressive: $F(1,1137)=16.202, p<.001$; affiliative: $F(1,1137)=14.433, p<.001$). Republicans appreciated the affiliative humor response significantly more ($F(1,1137)=6.117, p=.014$) when social hierarchy was being reinforced, but did not differ in appreciation of aggressive humor ($F(1,1137)=.771, p=.380$). We find substantively similar results for brand liking. We find that Democrats liked the brand more when they used either response, depending on whether the commenter reinforced social hierarchies or not (aggressive: $F(1,1137)=20.230, p<.001$; affiliative: $F(1,1137)=21.362, p<.001$). Republicans also showed similar differences in brand liking (aggressive: $F(1,1137)=5.093, p=.024$; affiliative: $F(1,1137)=3.783, p=.052$).

Figure WA5AI: Funniness Ratings – Affiliative Humor Response

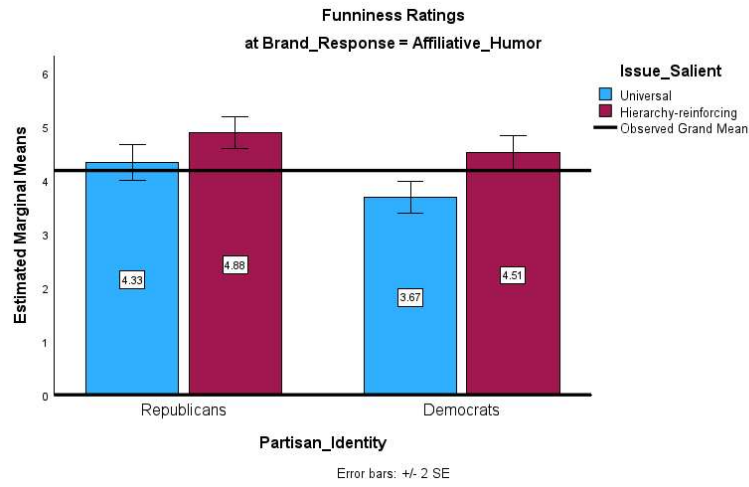


Figure WA5AJ: Funniness Ratings – Aggressive Humor Response

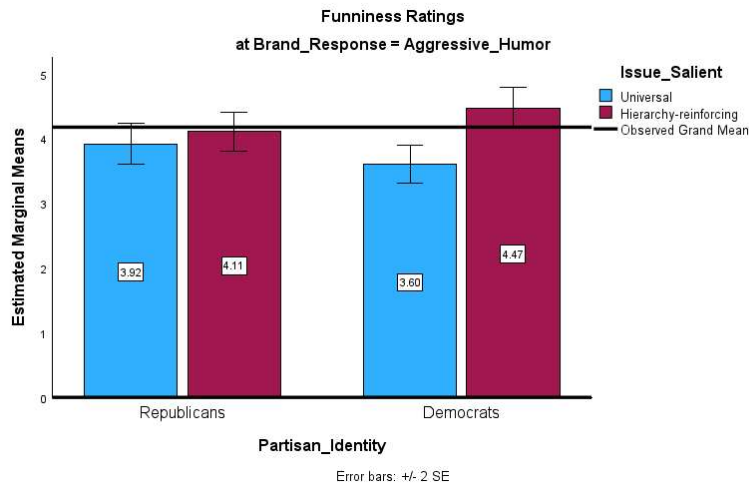


Figure WA5AK: Brand Liking – Affiliative Humor Response

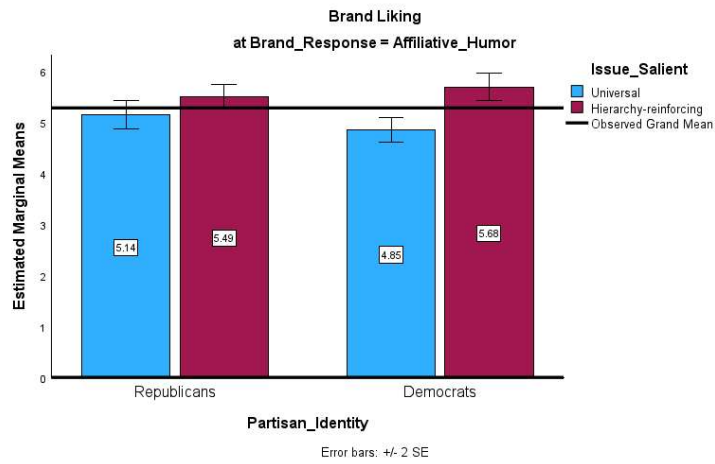
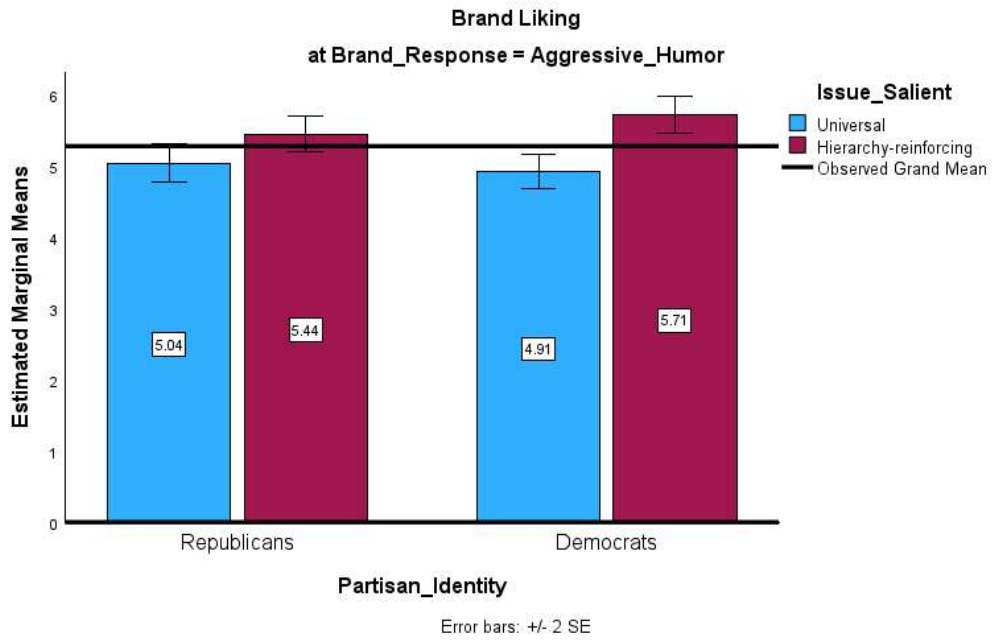


Figure WA5AL: Brand Liking – Aggressive Humor Response



APPENDIX 2E2: REPLICATION OF STUDY 5

We replicated Study 5 employing a similar design: 2 (ideology: liberals vs. conservatives) X 2 (consumer concern: hierarchy-reinforcing vs. universal) X 2 (brand response: aggressive vs. affiliative, replicated in three scenarios) in an online study. Unlike study 5, the factor “brand response” was a within-subjects factor, presented in randomized order. Three hundred Prolific participants (49% female, mean age = 39.09 years, age range = 18 to 79 years) were recruited. The rest of the procedure remained the same. In terms of offensiveness, our mixed-effects ANOVA finds a significant three-way political-ideology*consumer-concern*brand-response interaction effect ($F(1,1176)=21.092, p=.044$). Looking at consumers-concern*brand-response simple effects, we find the hypothesized ideology-driven differences. Liberals and conservatives differ in their offensiveness ratings, but only when the consumer concern was universal and the brand responded with aggressive humor ($F(1,1176)=4.411, p=.036$). There was no difference when the universal consumer-concern was responded to with affiliative humor ($F(1,1176)=.036, p=.849$), or when the concern was hierarchy-reinforcing (affiliative response: $F(1,1176)=.053, p=.819$; aggressive response: $F(1,1176)=1.705, p=.192$).

Figure WA5BA: Offensiveness Ratings – Universal Concern

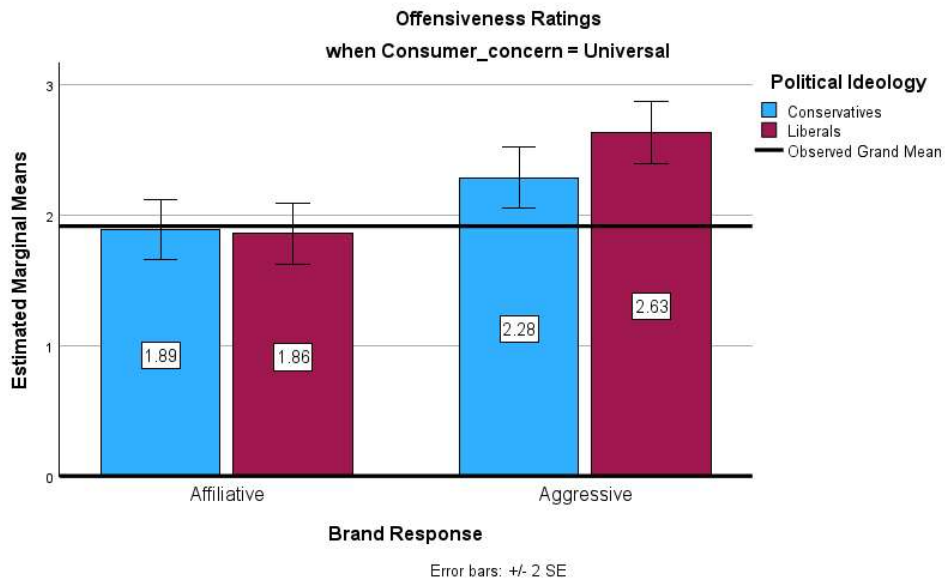
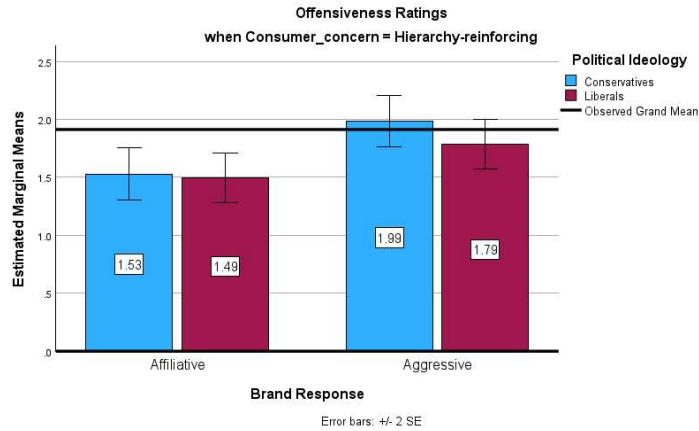


Figure WA5BB: Offensiveness Ratings – Hierarchy-reinforcing Concern



Funniness Ratings: In terms of funniness, our mixed-effects ANOVA model did not find a significant three-way political-ideology*consumer-concern*brand-response interaction ($F(1,1176)=3.334, p=.209$). However, looking at consumers-concern*brand-response effects, we find the hypothesized ideology-driven differences. For the universal consumer concern, there is no difference between liberals’ and conservatives’ funniness ratings for both the affiliative humor response ($F(1,1176)=.313, p=.576$) and the aggressive humor response ($F(1,1176)=.696, p=.404$). However, for the hierarchy-reinforcing consumer concern, we find a significant difference for the aggressive humor response ($F(1,1176)=11.639, p<.001$) and a marginally-significant difference for the affiliative humor response ($F(1,1176)=3.285, p=.070$). Hence, when the aggressive humor targeted someone reinforcing hierarchies, liberals were the ones significantly more likely to appreciate it.

Figure WA5BC: Funniness Ratings – Universal Concern

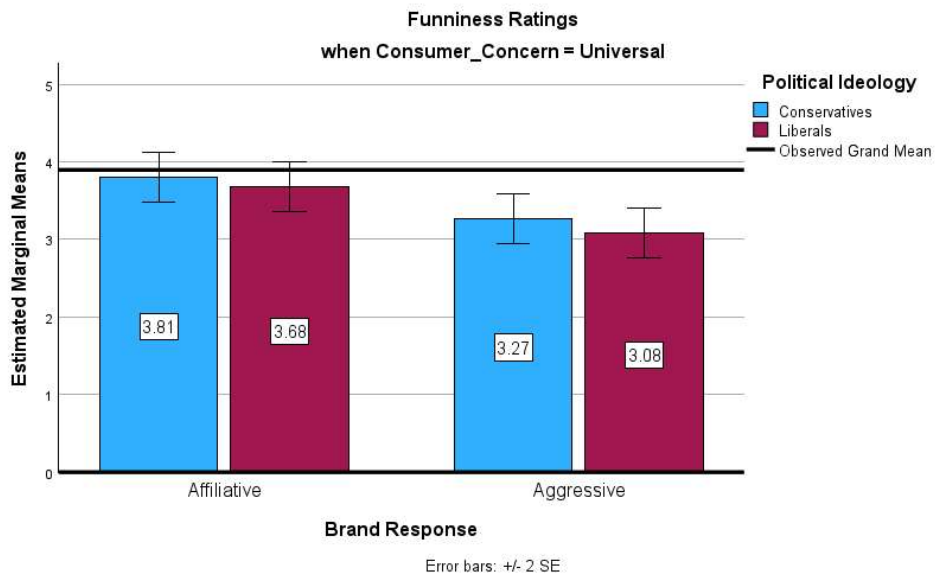
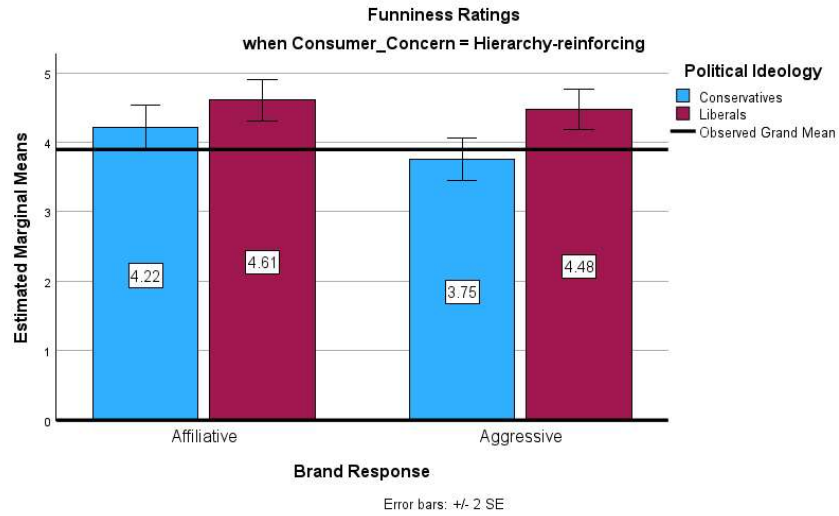


Figure WA5BD: Funniness Ratings – Hierarchy-reinforcing Concern



Brand Liking: We find similar results for brand liking, despite the three-way interaction not being significant ($F(1,1176)=4.736, p=.161$). Looking at consumer-concern*brand-response effects, we find similar ideology-driven differences. When the consumer comment mentioned a universal concern, there was no difference between the affiliative humor response ($F(1,1176)=.455, p=.500$) and the aggressive humor response ($F(1,1176)=.055, p=.815$). However, when the comment mentioned a hierarchy-reinforcing concern, liberals liked the brand more than conservatives, for both the aggressive humor response ($F(1,1176)=4.461, p=.035$) and the affiliative humor response ($F(1,1176)=4.884, p=.027$). This finding is in line with our prediction.

Figure WA5BE: Brand Liking – Universal Concern

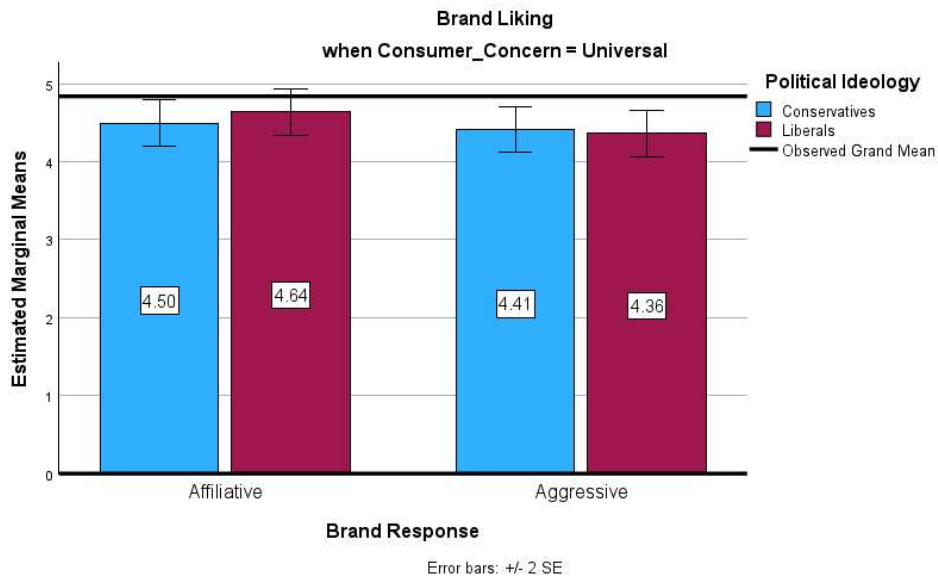
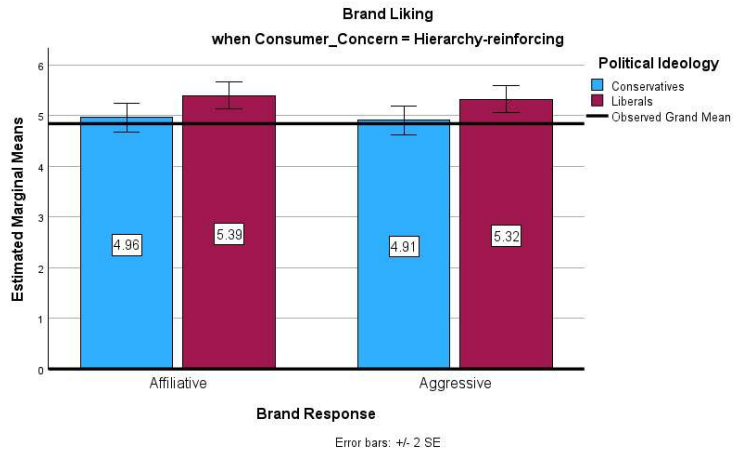


Figure WA5BF: Brand Liking – Hierarchy-reinforcing Concern



Political Ideology and Partisan Identity distribution: We prescreened participants to be either liberal or conservative, yielding a bimodal distribution.

Figure WA5BG: Political Ideology distribution

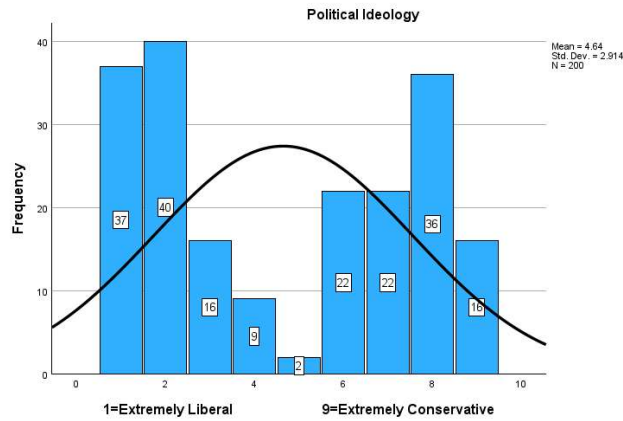
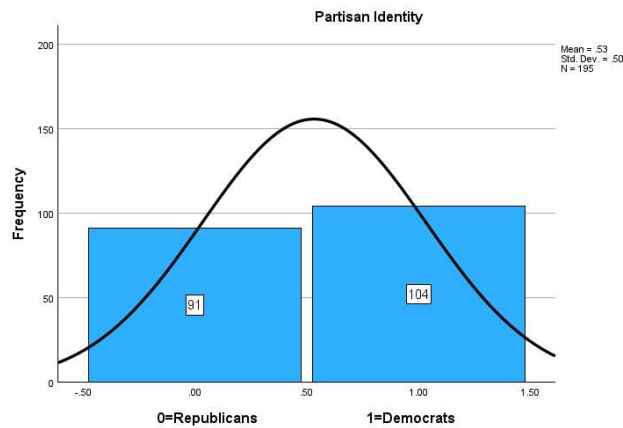


Figure WA5BH: Partisan Identity distribution



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