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The Psychological Underpinnings of Ideology: How the needs for closure and cognition impact ideology and media consumption

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The Psychological Underpinnings of Ideology: How the needs for closure and cognition impact ideology and media consumption

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, whose love and support have kept me afloat throughout my graduate career. Thank you.

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I would like to acknowledge the great efforts of my committee members. Tom Johnson, my chairman, has been a wonderful resource throughout this process. He has helped me sift through an enormous amount of literature concerning selective exposure and guided my research. Similarly, I would like to thank Talia Stroud for her contributions to the field. They say as scholars we stand on the shoulders of giants. This is especially true of my committee members. I also wish to thank Max McCombs and Nick Lasorsa for their theoretical insights. I developed the idea for this project under Lasorsa's tutelage and McCombs helped me expand on my ideas. Lastly, I wish to thank Renita Coleman for her endless support these past few years. She is an incredible mentor and scholar. I am lucky to have worked with these five inspiring individuals.

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Abstract

The Psychological Underpinnings of Ideology: How the needs for closure and cognition impact ideology and media consumption

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Little attention has been paid to the psycho-cognitive factors that drive selective exposure of politically partisan media. This study tests the impact of need for cognition and need for closure on conservatism and selective exposure. A model of media use employing a hierarchical regression shows that need for closure drives conservatism, but does not have an effect on one's tendency to consume likeminded media. Need for cognition did not have a significant impact on media exposure or conservatism. Implications are discussed.

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Introduction

The state of American politics depends upon one's perception. Is the nation headed in the right direction? Will America's legislative policies improve or safeguard citizens' quality of life? Conservatives and liberals often disagree. They maintain different views of American politics and offer varying prescriptions for change. This study examined the source of these differences and contends that ideological variance largely stems from two factors: One's individual disposition and media exposure.

Though social factors, such as one's familial upbringing, undoubtedly influence one's perception of the world, these factors do not operate independently of one's personality. Following the work of John Jost and his colleagues (Jost, 2006; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003a, 2003b; Jost & Amodio, 2012), this study assumes one's individual needs partially direct his or her ideology. If one has a need for safety, for example, one may wish to loosen firearm restrictions, and thus, one may advocate legislative policies that allow him or her to carry a concealed weapon. Jost and his cohort introduced the theory of ideology as motivated social cognition (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003b) to explain how psychological needs operate within a social context to create one's political attitude. This theory contends that conservative attitudes, in particular, are adopted to satisfy some psychological needs, such as the need to reduce uncertainty or improve safety. These needs influence ideology above and beyond political rhetoric and media exposure.

This study examined two specific psychological needs – the need for closure and

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the need for cognition – and their influence on ideology and subsequent viewership. Need for closure (NFClosure) – pioneered by Arie Kruglanski – is the tendency to prefer a concrete answer to chaos or confusion (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Webster & Kruglanski, 1995). Individuals with a high need for closure avoid or mitigate ambiguity, preferring *any* answer as opposed to the unknown. In short, these individuals prefer the devil they know to the one they do not. They wish to reach an end state as quickly as possible and often employ mental shortcuts to achieve this goal.

Conservatism is positively associated with the need for closure (Jost, et al., 2003b) . In general, conservatives have a greater need for closure than liberals. Perhaps, this is why they tend to prefer the status quo. John Jost and his cohort (2007) suggested that while progress is inherently ambiguous and potentially fraught with risk, the certainty of the status quo allows one to maintain his or her position in the social hierarchy. As a result, social and political relationships are stable and unchanging; they are a known entity and thereby reduce uncertainty and provide closure.

One's psychological needs may not only predict one's ideology, but also direct one's media consumption. Individuals high in NFClosure tend to be dogmatic (Jost, et al., 2003b) and cling to their initial assessment; thus, they may be more attracted to media outlets that offer a congenial point of view. Moreover, these individuals prefer mental shortcuts that expedite one's judgment (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Thus, they may prefer partisan news stations or political websites that serve "quick" answers and limit elaboration. These news outlets confirm the individual's political predisposition. As such, viewership does not prompt additional analysis.

This study contends that because conservatives have a higher need for closure than liberals, they may have a greater tendency to select media that agree with their existing opinions (Klapper, 1960). This tendency may be stronger in conservatives than liberals because attitude change requires that an individual reconsider his or her views – an activity that may open the door to ambiguity.

In contrast, those with a high need for cognition may be *less* likely to consume partisan media because they prefer to think for themselves. Need for cognition (NFCognition) is the tendency to engage in and enjoy cognitively effortful activities (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Those with a high (vs. low) need for cognition like thinking; thus, they may prefer "balanced" media outlets that present multiple ideological perspectives and encourage thoughtful consideration.

This is important because media exposure shapes political opinion (McCombs, 2004; Stroud, 2011a). Media outlets create vastly different versions of American affairs. Consequently, those that watch FOX or listen to conservative radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh may see a different "America" than those who watch MSNBC or read liberal news website *The Huffington Post*. Ultimately, exposure affects political perception (Stroud, 2010, 2011a) and order to understand why partisans can't see eye-to-eye, it is important to understand what kind of media they are using and why.

This study tested a series of relationships. First, it assumes that psychological factors partially drive ideology (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003a; Jost, et al., 2003b). Second, it predicts that ideology drives media consumption of ideologically similar content (Klapper, 1960). Third, this study predicts that those with a high need for

closure may prefer congenial media and those with a high need for cognition may prefer

"balanced" media. Fourth, these psychological factors may drive media exposure

indirectly via conservatism. This final prediction is based on the notion that if the need

for closure drives conservatism (Jost, et al., 2003b), and conservatism drives exposure to

congenial media (Pew, 2010), then NFClosure indirectly drives selective exposure

through conservatism.
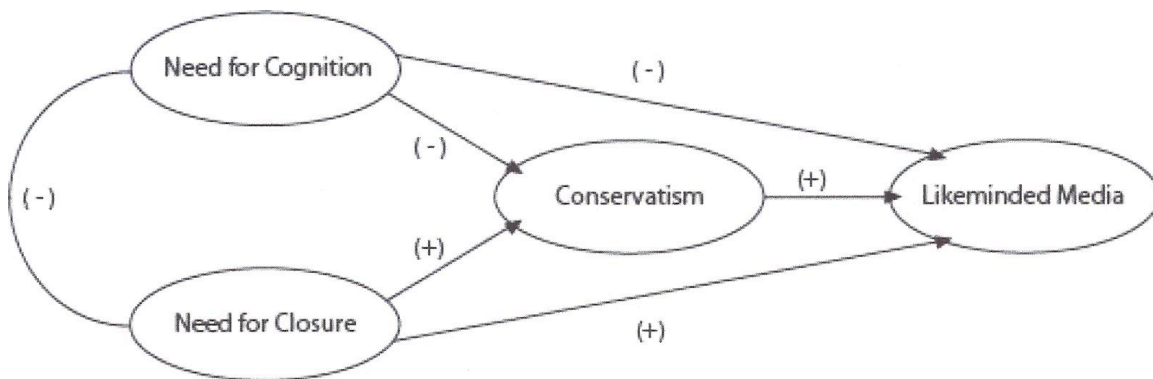
Figure 1.1. The impact of Need for Closure and Need for Cognition on conservatism and selective exposure to likeminded media.

This study tested five predictions: (1) Need for closure positively predicts

selective exposure of partisan media; (2) Need for cognition negatively predicts selective

exposure of partisan media; (3) Conservatism positively predicts selective exposure of

partisan media (4) Need for closure positively predicts conservatism; and (5) Need for

cognition negatively predicts conservatism. Additionally, this study explored the

potential relationship between NFClosure and NFCognition.

The relationship between the NFClosure and the NFCognition is unclear, though

they are not necessarily at odds. Those with a high need for closure often shy away from

elaboration in favor of a quick answer. However, this does not mean that they abhor thinking – merely that they wish to reach an end state as expeditiously as possible. This study examined these factors to see what relationship exists between NFClosure and the NFCognition.

A hierarchical regression was used to determine whether NFClosure and NFCognition predict conservatism and selective exposure of congenial media (likeminded media). It is expected that NFClosure will positively predict selective exposure of likeminded media and that NFCognition will negatively predict selective exposure – both directly and indirectly through conservatism.

The current chapter serves as an introduction. Chapter Two discusses the literature regarding conservatism, need for closure, need for cognition, and selective exposure. In chapter three, the study will outline the methodology used to analyze the path analysis. Chapter four will provide the results of the study and the final chapter will discuss the work here embodied here.

Literature Review

Ideology is conceived to be on a left-right continuum in which liberalism lies at one end and conservatism lies at the other. Whereas liberals tend to be open-minded and pursue egalitarian interests, conservatives tend to appreciate the status quo, favoring traditional ways of living and meritocracy (Jost, et al., 2003b). Some scholars suggest that conservatives have difficulty with change (O'Hara, 2011). Whereas change is fraught with risk, the status quo offers a degree of certainty. Thus, individuals that support conservative politics may prefer traditional policies to progressive ones.

One's political orientations may reflect one's psychological makeup. Scholars suggest that certain psychological needs, such as the need for closure, may push individuals to adopt various attitudes or issue positions (Jost, et al., 2003b). Jost and his colleagues (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003a) argued that the need for closure predicts a preference for stability and that those with a heightened need for closure would gravitate toward any ideology that minimizes change. This may explain why conservatism is associated with the need for closure (Jost, et al., 2003b); conservatism privileges stable, traditional hierarchies.

This study tests whether need for closure elicits selective exposure of likeminded partisan media. As mentioned, selective exposure is the tendency to select attitudinally consistent media (Klapper, 1960). These media provide ready-made answers, thus, expediting closure. This study also tests another psychological need: The need for cognition. Those with a high need for cognition prefer to think hard about issues or

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problems. Therefore, they may prefer media outlets that offer balanced coverage and encourage consumers to juggle multiple perspectives.

This chapter will define conservatism and why conservatives may be more likely to practice selective exposure. It will then outline the relationship between conservatism and need for closure. Next, it attempts to explain why those with a high need for closure may be more likely to practice selective exposure. Finally, the chapter will explain the need for cognition and how it relates to the media model outlined above.

Ideology

Ideology is at the heart of politics. It is a driving force that separates the left and right, igniting passions about the direction of the nation. Though studies vary in their definitions, most consider ideology to be a shared social framework and a prescription for political action (Denzau & North, 1994; Erikson & Tedin, 2003; Maio, Olson, Bernard, & Luke, 2011). Thus, ideologies articulate how the world should be and how we get there. O'Hara (2011) asserted that ideologies are '"pure thought about how societies work, what values should be transmitted and protected, what roles the state and other institutions should play" (p. 5). This definition involves choices; denizens must consider what direction to take and how the environment should be structured. Similarly, Maio and his collaborators (2011) posited that ideology contains an avenue for reinforcement or change. In other words, beliefs dictate actions. For example, a person who values democracy may feel duty-bound to vote. Here, ideology regards an appreciation for democracy and a prescription to democratic participation.

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Other scholars focus on the cognitive aspect of ideology. Denzau and North (1994) said ideology is a shared framework of mental models that help people interpret their environment. Jost et al. (2003b) asserted that ideologies describe the world and make assumptions about human nature, as well as, current and future realities. In this sense, ideology is both conceptual and social. It provides a way of understanding within a social context.

Some suggest that ideology is a cognitive process – the consequence of one's ability to process incoming information (Eidelman, Crandall, Goodman, & Blanchar, 2012). Here, ideology is seen as a result of systematic or heuristic processing. Eidelman et al. (2012) found that high-effort thinking lead to liberal leanings and low-effort thinking lead to conservative leanings, above and beyond self-reported ideology. They speculated that cognitive misers prefer to make determinations quickly without much effort or strain and tend to rely on norms to accomplish this task. Verily, it is much easier to think within the box, than outside it. In contrast, those who enjoy thinking tend to engage in systematic processing. As such, they are not bound by normative or institutionalized ways of thinking and may reach conclusions that detour from the status quo.

O'Hara (2011) argued that ideology is not simply a matter of political party, saying that even those in the same party have different views. Indeed, attitudes of moderate Republicans do not represent those of Tea Partiers. Further, he postulated that ideology cannot be determined by looking at legislative decisions. To explain, O'Hara illustrated that while the Conservative Party in Britain supports free markets, right-

wingers in continental Europe are opposed to free markets. Thus, his work suggests that ideas about policies are rooted in history, tradition, and experience.

Other scholars take a heritable approach – a position that advocates genetic determinants, but does not negate other factors (Bouchard & McGue, 2003; McGue & Bouchard, 1998). Jost and his colleagues (2003b), for example, defined ideology as "an interrelated set of moral and political attitudes that possesses cognitive, affective, and motivational components" (p. 653). They suggested that political orientation is driven by one's needs, such as the need for safety (Jost, et al., 2003b). In this sense, ideology can be understood as motivated cognition (Jost, et al., 2003b). It is a cognitive pursuit aimed at satisfying one's needs. Those with a need for safety, for example, may gravitate toward conservative politics because they wish to maximize self-defense and loosen firearm restrictions. Thus, ideology is a cognitive effort to satisfy the need for safety.

This study follows the work of Jost et al. (2003b) and envisions political ideology as a value-laden belief system with cognitive and motivational components. It asserts that ideologies subsume values and attitudes (Maio, et al., 2011). Values are ideals that guide our decisions. Attitudes are positive or negative evaluations that vary in strength and extremity. Thus, ideologies prescribe ways of understanding and ways of being, based upon our ideals and needs.

The left and right. Most scholars think of ideology in two dimensions: Fiscal and socio-political. Under this conception, the left and right share the same framework, but come at issues from opposite sides. Conover and Feldman (2004) argued that this bipolar conception of ideology is problematic for two reasons. First, citizens cannot

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always determine liberal from conservative issue positions. One study in the 1970s, for example, found that when examining issues, voters could not determine the liberal position compared to the conservative position (Erikson, Luttbeg, & Tedin, 1980). Arguably, this task is easier, today, as citizens' views become increasingly polarized (Stroud, 2010).

Second, people's understandings of left/right labels differ. Some people view conservatism as lack of change and others see it as elitist (see Brown and Taylor, 1973). Conover and Feldman (2004) support Kerlinger's theory of criterial referents, which suggests that the left/right are distinct belief systems. They noted, "liberal and conservatives view the political world not from different sides of the same coin, but rather… from the perspective of entirely different currencies" (p. 204). Kerlinger (1967) claimed that attitudes are based on their referents and that the content of liberals and conservative discussion varies. As such, liberalism and conservatism are not opposites, but rather, orthogonal. For example, conservatives may be consumed by values of freedom and self-enhancement, whereas liberals might be focused on universal rights and benevolence. These values are not opposite, merely different.

Conover and Feldman (2004) found evidence that political labels are largely symbolic. Their work suggests that there is a core understanding, or prototype, of what it means to be liberal and conservative – one that revolves around change versus preservation of traditional values, respectively. Further, they discovered that self-identification largely results from evaluations of the left and right. Those who believe that the left is good self-identify as "liberal," absent of any specific issue position.

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Similarly, those who evaluate the right as "good," self-identify as "conservative."
Though these labels often coincide with issue positions within a specific socio-historical
period, they are not wholly tied to any issue. Thus, attitudes may change, even though
ideology does not (Jost, Krochik, Gaucher, & Hennes, 2009). Ray (1973) explained,
"radicalism of today becomes the conservatism of tomorrow" (p. 20).

Following the footsteps of Jost and his colleagues, this study views political
ideology as unipolar, falling on a left/right continuum. These distinctions allow
comparisons with previous research and statistical analysis of ideology as a single
variable: Conservative. Under this conception, conservatism is not tied to any specific
issue position; rather, it is form of self-identification. The scale goes from "1" "to 5,"
where lower scores indicate more liberal views and higher scores indicate more
conservative views.

Conservatism. The notion of conservatism is not a new concept, but it became a
unique focus of scholarship after a groundbreaking article by Adorno and his colleagues
(Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). This group of pioneers
believed that certain traits, such as rigidity and opposition to innovation, characterized the
authoritarian personality, which they believed was a form of pathology. Similarly,
Wilson (1973) viewed authoritarianism as a syndrome. He argued conservatism – the
root of the authoritarian personality – is a "generalized susceptibility to experiencing
threat or anxiety in the face of uncertain*y*" (p. 259). In his seminal book *The Psychology
of Conservatism*, Wilson wrote that conservative attitudes serve as a defense function and

help one order a chaotic world. Thus, conservatism is not simply a matter of preference; it is a mode of protection.

Two studies indicate that conservatives are more sensitive to fear and threat than liberals (Inbar, Pizarro, & Bloom, 2009; Oxley, et al., 2008; Vigil, 2010). The preference for certainty over unpredictability is not solely a conservative trait; however, conservative individuals may have a stronger need to minimize threat and reduce anxiety (Davis, Walker, Miles, & Grillon, 2010). In one study, sensitivity to threat predicted one's attitudes on specific issues (Oxley, et al., 2008). Respondents that were more sensitive to sudden noise and threatening visual imagery were more likely to support capital punishment, patriotism, defense spending, and the Iraq War (Oxley, et al., 2008). In contrast, those with less sensitivity were more likely to support liberal immigration policies, gun control, foreign aid and pacifism. The authors noted that these issue positions align with a need to support the current social structure or an ability to handle change, respectively.

The notion of *change* is a common thread among scholars. As mentioned, Wilson viewed conservatism as "resistance to change and the tendency to prefer safe, traditional and conventional forms of institutions and behaviour" (1973, p. 4). He believed the fear of uncertainty would manifest as a dislike towards novelty, complexity, social disorganization and an avoidance of conflict and risk. Among other contributions, Wilson is famous for the C-Scale, which has been used the past 40 years to measure conservatism. It includes "yes" or "no" responses to attitudes concerning white superiority, suicide, socialism, and birth control, among other social issues.

Other scholars share this view and see conservatism as a motivation or need to increase certainty and reduce threat (Jost, et al., 2003b; Smith, et al., 2012; Smith, Oxley, Hibbing, Alfred, & Hibbing, 2011). Jost and his collaborators (2007) found evidence that political conservatism is marked by uncertainty avoidance (e.g. intolerance of ambiguity, need for order) and threat management (e.g., perceptions of a dangerous world). In a series of writings – which will be discussed in subsequent sections – they argued that conservatism consists of two key components: Resistance to change and opposition to equality – both of which minimize risk. Whereas change carries the inherent risk of the unknown, equality (vs. meritocracy) carries the risk that one's wealth and associated power will be redistributed. Jost et al. claimed conservatives tend to prefer a hierarchical arrangement because it provides a measure of stability and reassurance.

Like the scholars before him, O'Hara (2011) viewed conservatism as an idea that problematizes change. However, unlike others, O'Hara believed conservatism is about change management, rather than fear. He wrote, "You can still admit the danger of change, and wish to manage it and ameliorate the associated risks" (p. 16). In this light, conservatism is more a matter of pragmatism than a biological response to uncertain stimuli.   Further, O'Hara argued that conservatism is not interchangeable with "right-wing." Like Rokeach (1956), he believed that individuals on both the left and the right struggle with change. Thus, he posited that conservatism might be found at both ends of a political spectrum – a phenomenon known as the ideologue hypothesis (Rokeach, 1956).

Lakoff (1996) posited that one's political motivations stem from competing moral

models: The nurturing parent and the strict father. The nurturing parent model assumes that children become capable adults when showered with love and support. It suggests that democracy requires empathy for others and may lead to liberal leanings. In contrast, the strict father model assumes that the world is a dangerous place and that one must follow stern rules in order to avert the perils of everyday life. Thus, obedience is more than a matter of good behavior; it is a matter of safety. Further, the model assumes that competition is the key to personal and financial success. As such, this model advocates capitalism and suggests an authoritarian point of view.

Each notion of conservatism outlined above rests on the idea that conservatism originates from feelings of threat and anxiety. These feelings are muted by following a strict code of conduct and prescribing a similar code for others. Wilson (1973) claimed that rules and order are the central defense against anarchy. They provide structure and reassurance in an uncertain world. Moreover, these laws and codes allow individuals to manage threat and avoid uncertainty (Jost, et al., 2007). Whereas change is fraught with potential harm, the certainty of the status quo quells anxiety and preserves one's power position.

Right Wing Authoritarianism. The term "conservative" is often used interchangeably with "right wing authoritarianism" (RWA). Ray (1973) argued that these concepts are nearly identical and that there is no theoretical basis for discernment. Others disagree (e.g., O'Hara, 2011; Rokeach, 1956; Crowson et al., 2005). For example, Crowson, Thoma, and Hestevold (2005) found that while related, these concepts were distinct; thus, they suggested that conservatism is not synonymous with RWA. Similarly,

Rokeach (1956) argued that authoritarianism might exist on both the left and the right, rather than being solely a right-wing phenomenon.

Scholars have surmised about the origins of RWA; many believe it is instigated by perceptions of threat. Among other things, RWA is characterized by aggression toward out-groups and submission to authority. Thus, it is easy to see why threat would trigger defensive posturing and authoritarian attitudes. One study found that those high (vs. low) on RWA responded more quickly to threatening words, such as "crime," than benign words such as "potato" (Lavine, Lodge, Polichak, & Taber, 2002), indicating that authoritarians are generally more sensitive to threat. Another study by Lavine et al. (2004), found that under threat, participants became highly defensive of their previous attitudes and increasingly close-minded.

While some believe that threat directly causes RWA, others believe that threat merely strengthens existing authoritarian attitudes (Lavine, et al., 2004). Thus, "threat" acts as a moderator, lying dormant until triggered by social cues. It alters *how* authoritarians think, not *what* they think. Lavine and colleagues suggested that perceptions of threat cause changes in cognitive strategies used to navigate the world, such as information seeking or exchanges. They found that under threat, authoritarians had a greater tendency to search for congenial media. This information reduced anxiety, allowing subjects to better defend the validity of their prior beliefs.

Uncertainty-threat model. The theory of ideology as motivated social cognition predicts that fears and anxieties largely manifest in conservative attitudes. Further, it suggests that conservatism results from a psychological attempt to reduce uncertainty and

manage fear (Jost, Krochik, Gaucher, & Hennes, 2009b; Jost, et al., 2007).   A study by

Thorisdottir and Jost (2011) found that when threatened, individuals reported greater

degrees of conservatism. In a series of experiments, the authors presented subjects with

threats to themselves, the group, or the system. They found that under threat, subjects

responded with greater degrees of close-mindedness. Moreover, these individuals

reported more conservative attitudes and indicated a greater preference for the

Republican Party. Thorisdottir and Jost (2011) concluded that existential needs (threat

management) increase epistemic needs (e.g., uncertainty avoidance), which in turn,

increase conservatism.

Similar results have been found with authoritarians. A study by Lavine et al.

(1999) tested voting intentions before the 1996 U.S. presidential election and found that

authoritarians were more responsive to threatening messages than to those framed in a

positive light. Evidence revealed that messages outlining the costs of not voting were

more effective than messages that outlined the benefits of voting. The same was not true

for those low on authoritarianism. In contrast to authoritarians, these individuals were

slightly more responsive to messages that emphasized rewards of voting.

Jost and his collaborators (2007) created to the uncertainty-threat model to

describe the relationship between uncertainty avoidance, threat management, and

conservatism. They found that both of these factors (avoidance and threat management)

independently contribute to conservatism. Uncertainty avoidance is operationalized in

terms of the need for order and openness to new experiences. Some evidence suggests

that conservatives are less open to new experiences than liberals (Carney, Jost, Gosling,

& Potter, 2008; Jost, et al., 2003b). Threat management is operationalized as death

anxiety, perceptions of a dangerous world, and system threat. Though related, evidence

shows that these are independent constructs. Together, they account for 28%-36% of the variance in political orientation (Jost, et al., 2007).

The authors (Jost, et al., 2007) found that uncertainty avoidance was correlated with centrism and conservatism, but not with liberalism. Thus, they failed to find evidence supporting the ideologue hypothesis (Rokeach, 1956). Though scholars like Rokeach (1956) have asserted that individuals on both ends of the political spectrum are more similar to each other than to those at the center of the left-right continuum, evidence falls short. This study, among others (e.g. Jost, et al., 2003a), found no relationship between threat/anxiety and political extremity.

Change and inequality. Jost and his colleagues (2003a, 2003b) proposed two core dimensions of ideology: Advocacy vs. resistance to change and rejection vs. acceptance of inequality. Conservatives are said to have an "affinity" for resistance to change and acceptance of inequality because both serve to minimize threat (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). The former (resistance to change) eliminates the uncertainty of the unknown. The latter (preserving the inegalitarian status quo) "allows one to maintain what is familiar and known while rejecting the risky, uncertain prospect of social change" (Jost, et al., 2009, p. 312).

Jost et al. (2009; 2003b) explained that resistance to change is content free. In this case, an individual wishes to preserve the status quo – whatever that may be. For example, if a culture has a long-standing tradition of advocating birth control, then a social conservative may also support birth control. In this case, the actual content does not matter and one must examine the socio-historical context to determine one's

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preferences.

Notably, Jost et al. (2009) posited that conservatives will eventually adopt liberal political policies, once these policies become the norm. Jost et al. took their cue from Sugar et al. (1992) who found that modern conservatives and liberals equally endorsed historical policies that were considered liberal or progressive when they were originally introduced. For example, though conservatives may have originally been opposed to admitting women into universities, most support the practice today.

Some evidence suggests that conservatives are largely resistant to change, though not always – especially if change means reverting to the old ways (Jost, et al., 2003a). For example, if the current regime is socialist, then conservatives may advocate change in order to return to the old ways of government. Jost and his colleagues explained, people who are highly motivated to reduce uncertainty and threat may end up defending a system that is different from what they would have preferred initially (2003a, p. 385). In this case, conservatives advocate change, while liberals resist change.

The second dimension – acceptance vs. rejection of inequality – is contextually based (Jost, et al., 2009); therefore, one's specific position on certain issues (e.g. civil rights legislation) directly depends upon one's standing. Jost and his colleagues (2003a) argued that, "a love of meritocracy justifies a preference for inequality" (p. 391). This mentality is related to social dominance order and suggests that one deserves what one has earned. Of course, this perspective also implies that those at the bottom have not earned a higher position in the hierarchy.

Jost et al. (2009) suggested that an individual could be conservative on one

dimension, but liberal on another. To illustrate this point, they examined a group of communist supporters that were conservative regarding "resistance to change" and liberal regarding "inequality." These individuals appreciated communism because it promotes equality, but were reluctant to change, preferring to maintain the status quo because the current political climate endorsed communism.

As a general rule, conservatives may resist change to avoid uncertainty and advocate a meritocracy to minimize fear and threat (Jost, et al., 2003b). Though a general rule, this is not always the case. The socio-historical context largely determines whether one wishes to resist change or revert back to the old ways.

Need For Closure

The need for closure (NFClosure) has been defined as a desire to possess a definite answer on some topic – *any* answer – as opposed to confusion or uncertainty (Kruglanski, 1989, 1990). Those with a high need for closure wish to "close the book" on the case and often rely on simple cognitive shortcuts – called heuristics – to make relatively swift decisions (van Hiel & Mervielde, 2003). These individuals tend to consider fewer competing hypotheses or limit information that is inconsistent with their beliefs or predictions (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). They leap to judgment, are reluctant to consider multiple perspectives, and lack cognitive flexibility (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Indeed, need for closure predicts a preference for simplified judgment (van Hiel & Mervielde, 2003; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994) and reduces the likelihood of systematic processing (Leone, Wallace, & Modglin, 1999).

The need for closure is considered a latent variable that manifests in five major ways: A preference for order and structure, a desire for predictability, discomfort with ambiguity and chaos, decisiveness, and a tendency towards close-mindedness (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). NFClosure tends to rise under time pressure or in environments in which cognitive processing is difficult, such as a noisy room (Kruglanksi & Webster, 1996). These environmental factors increase the desire to reach an end state, regardless of an individual's disposition. NFClosure is also considered a dispositional factor (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Some individuals have a higher need for closure than others.

Those with high (vs. low) NFClosure largely rely on stereotypic information and preconceived notions (van Hiel & Mervielde, 2002). This tendency may lead to erroneous conclusions because the individual fails to give the matter much thought or scrutiny. Further, they may be more likely to employ heuristic processing when seeking solutions (van Hiel & Mervielde, 2003). Conversely, those with a low need for closure tend to expand their informational search and consider a wide range of facts before rendering a decision; thus, they may be likely to engage in systematic processing.

Need for closure continuum. The need for closure is thought to be on a bipolar continuum, with a high need for closure at one end and an avoidance of closure at the other end of the spectrum (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Those with a high need may leap to judgment, regardless of inconsistent information. These individuals are often impulsive and fail to consider the views or opinions of others (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994).

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In opposition, those who avoid closure tend to postpone judgment (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). These individuals refrain from making a firm decision and entertain multiple perspectives. The need to avoid closure may arise when the processing task is enjoyable. Thus, for those that intrinsically enjoy thinking – such as those with a need for cognition – suspending judgment may be a preferable course of action.

The need to avoid closure may also arise when the individual is concerned with making an erroneous judgment (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). At these times when validity is essential, the individual may resist forming an initial opinion and engage in an extensive informational search to generate a correct conclusion. For example, if an individual is motivated to succeed, he or she may be highly invested in choosing the right college. This individual may search through schools' websites and take several campus tours in order to make the perfect decision. In this scenario, this individual obviates closure in hopes of selecting the right school. Similarly, if a citizen is concerned with choosing the right candidate, he or she may pay close attention to election coverage and carefully weigh the pros and cons of each platform. Such a move postpones judgment in favor of accuracy, allowing citizens to systematically consider what's at stake and where they stand.

Heuristic systematic model and need for closure. The need for cognitive closure is a "motivated tendency or proclivity" (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994, p. 1049). Motivation is a key component in Shelly Chaiken's (1980) heuristic systematic model. This model asserts that cognition occurs via two routes: Systematic or elaborative processing and heuristic or simple processing. Those who systematically process

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information carefully weigh the facts and arguments. They expend great cognitive energy to scrutinize information and generally arrive at a well-thought conclusion. In contrast, processing through the heuristic route involves simple cues and rules of thumb. These individuals largely rely on stereotypical cues and undergo a cursory analysis. While systematic processing may rely on the whole spectrum of information about a specific topic, heuristic processing ''may involve the use of relatively general rules (scripts, schemata) developed by individuals through their past experiences'' (Chaiken, 1980, p. 753). Chaiken (1980) posited that when possible, individuals employ heuristic strategies. However, when concerns about reliability predominate, individuals employ systematic strategies to guide decision-making.

Chaiken's dual processing model is largely similar to Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) elaboration likelihood model (ELM); both pose a relationship between motivation, ability, and cognitive processing. These theories assert that if one has the ability (time, mental resources) and motivation, one will engage in higher levels of cognitive processing. The major difference between these two models is that the systematic-heuristic model (HSM) allows for concurrent processing of both heuristic and systematic cues, whereas ELM does not. Thus, HSM suggests that one may rely on systematic cues to process a concept or event, while simultaneously looking to heuristic cues for confirmation (Bohner, Crow, Erb, & Schwarz, 1992). In contrast, ELM asserts that central and peripheral processing are antagonistic (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and that one may undergo only one style of processing at a time.

Petty and Cacioppo (1986) developed ELM to explain how stimuli are interpreted

and processed under persuasive conditions, such as media exposure. They theorized that people systematically filter information through one of two routes: The central route, known as high elaboration, and the peripheral route, known as low elaboration. As the name implies, high elaboration requires extensive thought and focused concentration. Incoming information is carefully analyzed and weighed for logical integrity. Additionally, attitudes formed under high elaboration are more resistant to change. Alternatively, attitudes formed under low elaboration require minimal cognitive effort. Instead of scrutinizing information, media consumers who make decisions under low elaboration rely on learned knowledge structures, or mental shortcuts (Zhongshi & Moy, 1998). These shortcuts are often employed when the individual is distracted, when they trust the source, and when they lack the time, motivation or comparative knowledge to analyze the persuasive claim (Petty, Briñol, & Tormala, 2002; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Zhongshi & Moy, 1998).

Both models suggest that as motivation decreases, reliance upon heuristic or peripheral cues grows (Chaiken, 1980; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Further, involvement increases informational scrutiny. Those that are involved with the case tend to scrutinize messages, thereby taking the central/systematic route (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981), whereas subjects with low involvement rely on abstract, stereotypical cues, thereby taking the heuristic/peripheral route. Though both models are equally applicable, Chaiken's heuristic systematic model is more commonly used in psychological research. Thus, it was selected as the model for this study.

Persuasion and need for closure. Klein and Webster (2000) found that

NFClosure moderates the path taken to persuasion. Studies indicate that when given prior information, such as stereotypes, those high on need for closure (vs. low) were more resistant to others' opinions (Kruglanski, Webster, & Klem, 1993; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). The authors surmised that prior information helps the individual make up their mind ahead of time so that when exposed to a persuasive message, he or she already had a desired conclusion. Kruglanski et al. (1993) found that when given information ahead of time, thus, allowing the subject to crystallize an opinion, subjects with a heightened need for closure were more resistant to persuasion. They were less likely to consider the oppositional views of their partner and more likely to advocate their original position. However, in the absence of prior information and before a belief was formed, those high in the need for closure were more likely to accept their partner's opinion. It was presumed that these individuals were ready to embrace any opinion, as long as it provided a definitive answer.

Webster and Kruglanski (1994) examined the need for closure and found similar primacy effects. When given information prior to experiment, those high on need for closure were more resistant to persuasion. However, when not given prior information, these individuals were less resistant to persuasion. Webster and Kruglanski (1994) concluded that without a firm decision in advance of the persuasive message, the message, itself, provided a desired conclusion.

These studies suggest that those with a high need for closure may be more resistant to propagandistic messages – if given information prior to exposure. Because these individuals have already reached a conclusion, they are less likely to accept new messages and less likely to alter their judgment. Although this line of thinking exceeds

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the current study, it may be an important area for future research.

Correlations with need for closure. The need for closure is closely related, but distinct, from several other psychological constructs (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). It has a low, positive association with authoritarianism. Both the need for closure and authoritarianism are related to rigidity, conventionalism, and an intolerance of those that break from the norm, however, authoritarians tend to assert their power, whereas those with a high need for closure are not necessarily apt to do so. Similarly, NFClosure is related to, but distinct from, dogmatism. Dogmatism is defined as, "the extent to which one's belief systems are open or closed" (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994, p. 1054). Neither those high on dogmatism nor the need for closure wish to reconsider their position, however, dogmatics may do so in order to maintain power and status, whereas those high on NFClosure wish to avoid uncertainty. In other words, dogmatics are hesitant to reconsider their position because it may weaken their social standing or undermine their argument. In comparison, those high on NFClosure simply wish to ameliorate the inherent risks associated with ambiguity or change.

As suggested, NFClosure is positively related to an intolerance of ambiguity. These individuals prefer certainty – even when the news is bad – over the unknown. Thus, predictability is of upmost importance. Those with an intolerance for ambiguity, including those with a high need for closure, prefer secure information that cannot be challenged or disputed. They like to know what will happen and what they can expect. Those with a high need for closure also tend to have a high need for personal structure. Indeed, five items on the Need for Closure Scale (NFCS) were taken from the Need For

Personal Structure Scale, such as, "I think that having clear rules and order at work is essential for success." These individuals have a high need for order in their environment.

A key factor in the need for closure is the tendency to be decisive (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Because those high (vs. low) on need for closure wish a definitive decision, they are often confident in themselves and their initial determination. Thus, this need has a negative relationship with the fear of invalidity. The fear of invalidity is the fear of being wrong or making some kind of judgmental error. Whereas the fear of invalidity is marked by indecisiveness, the need for closure is marked by a desire for resolute answers and a predictable outcome. In general, individuals with high NFClosure are assured in their analysis and lack a sense of doubt that they could be wrong.

The need for closure may be at odds with cognitive complexity – the "capacity to interpret social behavior in a multidimensional way or to use a greater number of dimensions in making judgments" (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994, p. 1054). Webster and Kruglanski (1994) explained that the use of simple cognitive rules might expedite the decision process and allow the individual to render decisions quickly and efficiently.

The need for cognition – developed by Cacioppo and Petty in 1982 – is commonly referred to as the tendency to engage in and enjoy thinking. It is considered a personality trait or a predisposition toward high-effort thinking. Those with a high need for cognition are motivated to think about situations or messages that require deliberation (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). In contrast, those with a high need for closure are motivated to reach an end state or draw an alacritous conclusion (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Because the quickest way to reach an end state is often through cursory, limited

processing, these two needs appear self-contradictory: A higher need for cognition means a lower need for closure. However, this is not true in every case. Webster and Kruglanski (1994) noted that when a cursory analysis is unsuccessful at reaching an end state, the individual often engages in high-effort deliberation (Kruglanski, Peri, & Zakai, 1991). Thus, while the need for closure usually results in superficial thinking, it may result in high-effort thinking when initial efforts are unrewarding.

This type of cognitive switch may occur when a citizen is considering which candidate to support. Citizens tend to select candidates from the favored political party. This type of heuristic strategy allows them to form a quick impression and make a decision without much thought, thus, it satisfies the need for closure. However, political platforms do not always agree with constituents' values. For example, a conservative voter may not agree with a conservative candidate that supports women's abortion rights. Conversely, a liberal voter may not agree with a liberal candidate that takes a "pro-life" stance. When issue positions differ, the citizen may postpone judgment for fear of selecting the wrong candidate. In this case, concerns about invalidity prompt additional analysis. Previous work by Webster and Kruglanski (1994) found a moderate negative relationship between NFClosure and NFCognition. This study seeks to replicate their findings.

RQ1: What is the relationship between need for closure and need for cognition?

Conservatism and need for closure. Jost et al. (2003b) argued that the need for closure predicts a preference for stability and that those with a heightened need for closure would gravitate toward any ideology that minimizes change. Further, they

suggested that conservatism is the ideology that most closely reflects a need to secure current or past relations. Thus, people that wish to preserve the social order are likely to develop a traditional or conservative point of view. Notably, they argued (2003a) that there are exceptions to the rule. For instance, supporters in the post-communist Soviet regime are thought to possess a liberal ideology, but wish for the politics of the past; they are both traditionalists and liberal. Still, Jost et al. (2003b) claimed that this is a rare exception and that those who typically avoid ambiguity assume a conservative view.

Greenberg and Jonas (2003) argued that the need for closure is not necessarily related to conservative beliefs. They claimed that it is content free and that people will gravitate to *any* ideological belief system as long as it satisfies the need to avoid ambiguity. Golec and van Bergh (2007) found support for both of these positions. First, they found a significant connection between the need for closure and support for conservative beliefs. Second, they discovered that the need for closure might, in certain cases, predict a preference for modern, rather than traditional worldviews. Traditional views reflect support for the past and reject deviations from the correct path. Modern views are typically anti-traditional and support progress and change. Golec and van Bergh argued that both modern and traditional worldviews support absolute truth. Whereas traditionalists rely on religion and historical social truths, modernists rely on scientific, rational truths. Golec and van Bergh (2007) claimed that both worldviews support absolute knowledge, however, they approach knowledge from different vantage points: Traditionalists look to the past; modernists look to the future. In contrast, a post-modern view is based in relativism and discards the notion that absolute truth exists. Golec and van Bergh found that the need for closure is related to both traditional and modern worldviews, but negatively related to postmodern worldviews. Thus, they found that the need for closure might predict conservative or non-conservative beliefs

depending upon one's worldviews. Despite this second finding, however, they conceded that conservatism is the most likely path for those with a high need for closure, noting that traditional worldviews had a much stronger correlation with NFClosure than modern worldviews.

Other studies have found modest, positive correlations between need for cognitive closure and conservatism. For example, Jost et al. (1999) found evidence that self-reported conservatism is positively related to NFClosure. Similarly, Chirumbolo (2002) found need for closure was a powerful predictor of right-wing attitudes. He found that both participants on the right and center-right had a higher need for closure than those on the left – showing a lack of support for the ideologue hypothesis, which indicates that individuals who hold extreme views on either side of the spectrum will have a higher need for closure than those in the center. Chirumbolo suggested that psychological motivations are antecedent to political orientation. Though definitive evidence is lacking, he wrote the need for closure might predict authoritarian attitudes, which in turn, predict right-wing attitudes.

A more recent study by Chirumbolo and Leone (2008) found a linear relationship between the need for closure and the tendency to vote for a conservative candidate. In a two-part study, participants were tested on their need for closure. Four weeks later, they reported their votes in two European elections. Results showed that those who scored higher on the NFClosure Scale were more likely to cast their vote in favor of the conservative party. Like the 2002 study, no evidence was found to support the ideologue hypothesis. Left-wingers had significantly lower NFClosure scores than those on the

right. The authors concluded that those with a high need for closure prefer parties that reduce uncertainty and ambiguity because these parties match their individual needs.

A study by Kemmelmeier (1997) suggested a similar finding, though the analysis failed to reach significance. In this study, students at a German university were asked whom they would vote for if the election were tomorrow. Results were then correlated with self-reported party identification. A trend analysis indicated that the need for closure increases with right-winged attitudes. No evidence was found to support a curvilinear relationship.

Though evidence is mixed, the majority of studies suggest that NFClosure is tied to a conservative orientation. Thus, this study presents a confirmatory hypothesis:

H1: Need for closure positively predicts conservatism.

Seizing and freezing. The need for closure instills two tendencies: Seizing and freezing (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Individuals with a high need for closure feel an urgent need to "seize" an answer (pre belief-crystallization). They cannot wait. Once the answer is obtained, the individual "freezes" so that the conclusion is permanent, thereby removing the potential threat of ambiguity (post belief-crystallization). Thus, permanency offers certainty. Individuals that have reached a definitive answer are adverse to let go. As a result, these individuals are often close-minded, engage in heuristic processing, and neglect new information that may reignite an ambiguous state. The following sections will outline how the need for closure impacts these various cognitive processes.

Abstractions and heuristics. The tendency toward seizing and freezing impacts

one's cognitive style (Kruglanski & Freund, 1983). Those with a high need for closure (vs. low) are more likely to use heuristics and generate fewer competing hypotheses. Kruglanski and Webster (1996) noted that seizing and freezing drives one's linguistic style, causing one to use labels or simplified terms when describing others (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). These abstractions allow the individual to form a stable opinion. This tendency is even higher when dealing with members of an out-group. One study, in particular, found that subjects with a higher need for closure adapted and used more abstract terms when describing negative behaviors of the out-group (Webster, Kruglanski, & Pattison, 1997).

Those high in need for closure are also more likely to rely on mental shorts cuts and demonstrate less ideational fluidity – a measure of creativity. One study found that those high in NFClosure were less creative in group-situations and produced lower quality decisions than those low in NFClosure (Chirumbolo, Livi, Mannetti, Pierro, & Kruglanski, 2004). These individuals were more sensitive to group norms and groupthink.

Another study by Kruglanski and his colleagues (1993) discovered that those high in need for closure generated more heuristic than systematic thoughts. Heuristic thoughts were those unrelated to a logical argument, such as "I feel I am right" or "My partner seems to know what she is talking about" (p. 871). Systematic thoughts were classified as those dealing directly with the argument. For example, when deciding which university to choose, an individual low on NFClosure might consider the school's ranking or its job placement service. In contrast, someone high on NFClosure might

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simply rely on his or her friend's advice.

Further, those high (vs. low) in NFClosure are less likely to assimilate new information (Ford & Kruglanski, 1995). One study revealed that subjects with a high need for closure had a higher tendency to rely on existing belief systems and crystallize their beliefs once formed (Ford & Kruglanski, 1995). These individuals were hesitant to entertain new ideas or generate original hypotheses.

Social environments contain more information than one can process; consequently, individuals simplify their understanding of the world around them (Neuberg & Newsom, 1993). This is especially true of those high in NFClosure. These individuals are more likely to categorize people or events in ways that align with existing stereotypes. Moreover, they are more likely to use simplified notions when comprehending what they experience.

Stereotyping. Those high on NFClosure are more likely to rely on stereotypes when processing behavioral information (de Dreu, Kooke, & Oldersma, 1999; Neuberg & Newsom, 1993). De Dreu, Kooke, and Oldersma (1999) found that when given stereotypic information prior to a negotiation, those high on NFClosure were more likely to use that information during the negotiation. In contrast, those lower in need for closure showed a greater tendency towards systematic processing. De Dreu and colleagues (1999) claimed that those high (vs. low) in NFClosure were more likely to "seize" on incipient cues about their partners, then "freeze" on that information during negotiations. As stereotypic-inconsistent information begs reconsideration, stereotypic-consistent information allows for swift closure. In other words, stereotypes corroborate

one's initial judgment, while nuanced or complex information may push that the individual revisit or reconsider previous judgments.

With this in mind, Dijksterhuis and his colleagues (1996) tested participants to see if those higher in NFClosure would pay more attention and show better recall of stereotypical information. Specifically, subjects were given information about a presumed group of soccer hooligans and asked to make assessments about the group. It was predicted that those high in NFClosure would rely on stereotypes and attribute negative characteristics to all members of the group. In contrast, those low in NFClosure would be more comfortable with ambiguity, and thus, would have no preference for stereotypical information or sweeping generalizations. Expectations were confirmed. Subjects high (vs. low) in NFClosure paid more attention to stereotypic information and deemed individual soccer players as aggressive hooligans, despite conflicting information.

The authors (1996) found that informational processing of these two groups differed, both at the levels of encoding and elaboration. First, those high in NFClosure paid more attention to information that was consistent with their beliefs. Second, they spent less time considering inconsistent information. Further, those high in need for closure were less likely to remember inconsistent information. This final finding may yield clues about how subjects will make judgments in the future. If subjects with a high need for closure remember more stereotypic information, this information will be more salient in future determinations. Thus, it was concluded that those with a high need for closure would be more likely to make stereotypical judgments in subsequent cases.

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Fundamental attributional errors. Evidence indicates that stereotypes are formed when individuals fail to use complex inferential logic (Schaller, 1994). In these cases, nuanced information about groups is not integrated sufficiently, causing erroneous generalizations (Maass & Arcuri, 1992). For example, racial stereotypes form when people attribute characteristics to an individual without recognizing the multitude of social factors that lead to the individual to act in a certain way. This phenomenon is known as a fundamental attribution error – a tendency to underestimate situational factors and overestimate personal characteristics when explaining behavior (Ross, Green, & House, 1977).

To illustrate this finding, consider right-wing rhetoric about President Barack Obama. If economic policies are failing, an individual may blame the President, saying that he is generally unprepared or incapable of handling affairs. Rather than examine the myriad of factors leading to an economic down turn, these individuals attribute the failure to the President; they see the failure as the result of his consistent character flaws. Consistency is important to those with a high need for closure because it provides secure knowledge. Thus, describing the President as generally "incapable" supports a definite conclusion and helps the individual draw closure.

Several studies indicate that those with a heightened need for closure are more likely to commit attributional errors (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Webster, 1993). Webster (1993) suggested that these individuals are more likely to make erroneous judgments because they are more prone to using simple cues. Other studies have found mixed support (Stalder, 2009a), wherein those high (vs. low) on NFClosure were *less*

likely to commit these errors. To explain these confounding results, Neuberg et al. (1997) posited that NFClosure is made up of two subsets: Decisiveness and the need for personal structure – thought to be orthogonal factors. Decisiveness results in the tendency to seize an answer. Questions on the decisiveness scale include items such as "I usually make important decisions quickly and confidently." In contrast, the need for structure manifests as a need to freeze upon an answer – presumably because the individual craves order and predictability.

The reason why the variable 'decisiveness' may reduce judgmental errors is related to the fear of being wrong. Decisiveness is negatively correlated with fear of invalidity (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Neuberg et al. (1997) proposed that individuals who are indecisive are less likely to seize an answer for fear of making erroneous judgments. To avoid being wrong, these individuals may reconsider the matter at hand and spend more time processing information (Stalder, 2009b). Thus, while the need for structure predicts a positive relationship with making attributional errors, indecisiveness may promote open-mindedness and accuracy. As such, Stalder (2009b) posited that using one single measure of NFClosure might overlook underlying causes of cognitive failure.

Correct judgment. Those with a need for closure tend to rely on cues such as stereotypes because these cues offer definitive knowledge without much processing effort (Chirumbolo, et al., 2004; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Individuals then freeze on these cues, becoming cognitively immobile. These cues serve as anchors and define one's initial response. Any new information is compared with the anchor and often dismissed

if incompatible (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Thus, those with a need for closure are unlikely to correct judgment, even when new evidence is presented (Skitka, Mullen, Griffin, Hutchinson, & Chamberlin, 2002). These beliefs are preserved and activated in future situations.

One study found that conservatives are less likely to correct judgmental errors than liberals (Skitka, et al., 2002) – a finding which supports the motivated correction hypothesis. This hypothesis states that conservatives and liberals are equally likely to make simplistic decisions in their primary assessments. These decisions are often automatic and rely on one's expectations or experiences. For example, when initially considering why a man is obese, both liberals and conservatives are likely to attribute personal factors; they may believe that the man is lazy and refuses to exercise. This assessment ignores the possibility that social factors, such as race, may have limited the man's income potential, which may have limited his ability to purchase healthy choices such as fresh vegetables. Whereas conservatives may stop here, liberals may revise their initial conclusion and consider situational factors. This secondary analysis may yield a greater number of correct judgments. Thus, while both liberals and conservatives are equally likely to engage in stage one of reasoning, liberals are more likely to embark upon stage two: Integrative reasoning and correction.

A series of experiments by Skitka and cohort (2002) found that conservatives were more likely to attribute personal factors than liberals and less likely to consider social complexities. Further, conservatives were less likely to correct simplistic decisions. Skitka et al. (2002) found that liberals were twice (18%) as likely as

conservatives (9%) to correct errors in judgment.   Skitka et al. (2002) also asked subjects

whether governments should offer subsidies or not. Though initial decisions were

comparable, liberals ended up endorsing aid – which indicates that they considered

situational factors. Conservatives maintained their initial attitudes. Why might this

occur? The value pluralism model (Tetlock, 1986) suggests that liberals equally value

freedom and social equality, whereas conservatives privilege personal freedom, and thus,

personal responsibility. Because liberals believe freedom and equality are of equal

importance, they are often forced to engage in value-trade offs, which demand greater

levels of complex reasoning. For liberals, the decision to privilege one value over

another requires higher levels of differentiation; they must juggle multiple perspectives,

factors, and loyalties to reach a reasonable or justifiable decision. In contrast, the belief

that one value is of more importance than another simplifies decision-making and

requires less cognitive effort. Interestingly, liberals came to the same conclusion as

conservatives when mental resources were taxed (Skitka, et al., 2002).

In the case of governmental aid, liberals were balancing personal

freedom/responsibility with their egalitarian values (Skitka, et al., 2002). Although their

initial assessment may have only considered personal responsibility, their secondary

analysis involved complex value trade-offs in which they had to consider both personal

attributions (denoting personal responsibility) and social responsibility. As a result, they

were more motivated to process a greater number of factors and ultimately more likely to

endorse aid.

Despite the potential of making an incorrect judgment, those high in NFClosure

tend to feel assured that they have come to the right conclusion. Evidence reveals that

confidence is elevated when the need for closure is induced (Kruglanski & Webster,

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1991; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994; Webster, 1993). Because individuals seize on information early, they are often processing less information, overall. However, despite an incomplete information search, these individuals often feel assured that their judgment is correct (Kruglanski & Webster, 1991; Mayseless & Kruglanski, 1987). Kruglanski and Webster (1996) explained that these individuals consider fewer competing hypotheses (Mayseless & Kruglanski, 1987). As such, the few under consideration appear more plausible.

Group centrism. Group centrism is the degree that the group values collectivity (Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Kruglanski, Pierro, Mannetti, & Grada, 2006; Sani & Reicher, 1998). It is a "shared-reality surface unperturbed by dissents and disagreements that threaten the breakup of the group and the eruption of schisms" (Kruglanski, et al., 2006, p. 87). Opinions of the group are paramount and realities are shaped as a function of inter-subjective knowledge. This knowledge is created as a result of interactivity with those who are deemed important. Thus, opinions are grounded in uniformity and group consensus (Kruglanski, et al., 1993, 2006).

The need for closure stimulates group centrism and heightens the perceived value of collectivity (Kruglanski, et al., 2006; Shah, Kruglanski & Thompson, 1998). In order to maintain the group, members must accept common beliefs; they must preserve the status quo, traditions and group norms. Further, they must delineate between themselves and others. Kruglanski and his colleagues (2006) posited that both those high on need for closure and group centrism have an intolerance of diversity because it may obstruct a group consensus; opinions that deviate from those of the out-group are derogated or

dismissed, in favor of an autocratic group structure (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996).

Moreover, deviants may be punished. One study (Jost, et al., 1999) found a positive

relationship between NFClosure and advocacy of the death penalty – a position largely

supported by political conservatives. Indeed, group centrism is tied to both NFClosure

and conservatism (Jost, et al., 2003a, 2003b; Kemmelmeier, 1997; Kruglanski, et al.,

2006).

In general, those high (vs. low) on NFClosure value group norms and tend to

reject dissenting voices. One study found evidence to support this claim (Kruglanski &

Webster, 1991). In this study, boy and girl scouts were asked to choose a location for

their annual retreat. Most preferred a rugged location, thus, forming a consensus. A

deviant was selected and asked to vocalize a preference for the less favorable, urban

location. Kruglanski and Webster (1991) induced the need for closure via time constraint

and tested to see if a heightened need for closure would prompt greater support for the

consensus. Evidence supported their hypothesis. As a mandatory deadline approached

and the need for closure increased, subjects expressed a greater preference for the

consensus (i.e., the rugged location). In study two, the authors induced the need for

closure via an unattractive noise. It was presumed that cognitive processing would be

unpleasant in a noisy environment, thus, increasing the need for closure. Under these

conditions, subjects rated the deviant more negatively. Compared to the no-noise group,

these subjects were more likely to reject the dissenter.

Selective Exposure

The theory of selective exposure is, 'the tendency of people to expose themselves

to mass communication in accord with their existing opinions and interests and to avoid

unsympathetic material" (Klapper, 1960, p. 19). Research indicates that people generally

prefer information that matches their pre-existing beliefs (Garrett, 2009; Johnson, Bichard, & Zhang, 2009; Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2009). Whether consciously or subconsciously, these individuals prefer likeminded material. Moreover, they may fail to perceive or remember discrepant information (Jacobson, 2010).

A study by Iyengar and Hahn (2009) found that people select media largely based on anticipated agreement. Consistent with Festinger (1957), people like news that agrees with their own point of view. Conservatives selected FOX and avoided CNN and NPR while liberals consumed CNN and NPR and avoided FOX. This tendency was even stronger among those with high political engagement.

Studies indicate that people practice selective exposure to satisfy their need for information (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Shah, Cho, Eveland, & Kwak, 2005; Shah, Kwak, & Holbert, 2001). This need pushes individuals to learn about political happenings and fulfill their duties as citizens. Individuals also have needs for diversion, self-esteem, or the assurance that one is right (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974), among others. Katz et al. (1974) developed the uses and gratifications model to explain why people turn to various media sources. Uses and gratifications theory assumes a positivistic approach and asks *why* people use various media. It assumes that individuals take an active role in their media consumption and select specific media to fulfill specific needs. Katz et al. claimed that these sources satisfy individuals' needs by providing useful information – information that helps them reaffirm their values or promote social affiliations. They wrote, Ïseeking reinforcement of one's attitudes may derive from a need for reassurance that one is rightÓ (Katz et al., p. 513) or protect valued group membership. Thus, the theory predicts that Democrats and Republicans consume

political content to reaffirm political conclusions and assure membership in their respective parties. These partisan media sources may fulfill the need to be right and the need to belong.

This study asserts that media may also fill a need for closure or cognition. Need for closure is the tendency to prefer a concrete answer to chaos or confusion (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Webster & Kruglanski, 1995). The need for cognition is the tendency to engage in or enjoy cognitively effortful activities (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Partisan media provide attitudinally consistent information, allowing individuals to cement their attitudes and reach a swift conclusion. Furthermore, media coverage provides food for thought. Individuals may consider or reconsider political issues and ponder what's at stake. Though this study does not directly test whether the needs for closure and cognition cause partisan selective exposure, it may provide information about the relationship between one's media choices and their psychological motivations.

Selective Exposure vs. Avoidance. Selective exposure suggests that people conduct a directional information search for a specific answer (Kunda, 1990). In other words, they wish to find partisan news sources that share or confirm their political beliefs (Stroud, 2008) while avoiding discrepant information. While there is a lot of evidence documenting selective exposure of likeminded media (e.g. Lowin, 1967), few studies have documented selective avoidance of counterattitudinal materials– especially online (Chaffee, Nichols, Graf, Sandvig & Hahn, 2001; Iyengar, Hahn, Krosnick & Walker, 2008; Johnson, Bichard, & Zhang, 2012; Johnson, et al., 2011). Garrett (2009) noted a difference between selective exposure to likeminded media and selective avoidance of counterattitudinal media. He found that while people may display a preference for

opinion-reinforcing content, they might not systematically avoid opinion that challenges their beliefs. Thus, selective exposure to likeminded media and selective avoidance of counterattitudinal media may be measured separately. Chaffee and his colleagues (2001) came to a similar conclusion. They found that individuals do not necessarily shy away from content that challenges their beliefs. Thus, selective exposure does not necessarily predict selective avoidance. Because of this difference, this study deals only with selective exposure and not selective avoidance.

Selective Exposure Theory. The theory of selective exposure evolved from the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) – which suggests that individuals experience adverse feelings when confronted with things that are psychologically inconsistent and strive to reduce these feelings by searching for confirmatory evidence. In this way, selective exposure was advanced as a way to reduce cognitive dissonance. Whereas inconsistent information generates unpleasant or noxious feelings, consistent information reinforces the notion that one has come to the right conclusion. Thus, the theory suggests that one will select information perceived to be amenable to existing attitudes (Klapper, 1960). This type of information allows individuals to justify their viewpoints and feel good about their decisions (Fischer, Fischer, Weisweiler, & Frey, 2010).

Scholars have viewed Festinger's propositions as mixed (Donsbach, 2009) and question whether selective exposure, in fact, reduces cognitive dissonance. Sears and Freedman (1967) considered the conditions under which selective exposure might occur and suggested that when people need information to refute oppositional views, they are

more likely to select oppositional content. Thus, utility plays an important role. Though people often seek media that match their political leanings, this is not always the case. At times, information utility overrides the tendency or need to confirm that one is right (Sears & Freedman, 1967). Information utility is defined as "the degree to which information can aid individuals in making future decisions, in political contexts and beyond" (Knobloch-Westerwick & Kleinman, 2012, p. 171). The more useful information is perceived to be, the more likely one will engage with it, regardless of whether or not that information is consistent or inconsistent with preexisting beliefs. Knobloch-Westerwick and Kleinman found that prior to an election, individuals of the party likely to lose – Republicans in 2008 – preferred attitude discrepant messages, while individuals affiliated with the winning party – Democrats in 2008 – preferred attitude consistent messages. The authors posited that their results were connected with information utility, which consists of four components: Likelihood, magnitude, immediacy, and efficacy. They explained that when an oppositional president is poised to win, the magnitude of political "danger" is fairly high. The threat is both immediate and likely. However, political efficacy is also high; concerned citizens have the opportunity to refute political claims and cast their votes accordingly. Thus, they have the ability to change the political landscape.

Knobloch-Westerwick and Kleinman (2013) found that when these four components of information utility were high, media users were likely to look for oppositional messages – messages that would be useful for refutation. When these

components of information utility were low, such as when a preferred candidate is likely to win, individuals sought congenial information.

These results may shed light on previous findings. In 2008, Iyengar, Hahn, Krosnick, and Walker found that conservatives were more likely than liberals to seek supportive messages. However, at the time of the study, President Bush was likely to win the election. Therefore, conservatives had little to lose. In contrast, liberals stood to see another four years of President Bush. In their case, the magnitude of political threat, likelihood of threat, immediacy and potential to change the political tide were high. Liberals sought information on Bush and Gore, while conservatives focused on material from Bush.

Questions remain about whether conservatives are more or less likely to practice selective exposure. In the study above, Republicans were more likely to selectively expose themselves to congenial information. However, other studies have found different results. For example, Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng (2009) found that those with conservative ideological preferences were more likely to choose counter attitudinal materials.

Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng (2009) found people with high defense confidence appreciate conflicting information and surmised that conservatives may have higher defense confidence. Albarracin and Mitchell (2004) partially defined defense confidence as the ability to maintain an opinion in the face of conflicting information. If conservatives have higher defense confidence, then they may not avoid discrepant information; rather, they may seek messages from the opposing party, knowing that they

have the power to eschew unfavorable information. This line of thinking concurs with

Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski and Sulloway (2003). These authors proposed that conservatives

are resistant to change per Rokeach's theory of dogmatism (1960), and might thus,

possess a certain immunity to counter attitudinal messages. Indeed, research indicates

that dogmatism predicts conservative attitudes (Jost et al., 2003b). The argument follows

that conservatives feel generally confident that opinion change is unlikely – thus

displaying dogmatic tendencies – and may therefore feel safe from cognitive dissonance,

resulting in less selective exposure.

Hart, Albarracin, Eagly, Brechan, Lindberg, and Merrill (2009) also found one's

defense confidence and the perceived utility of information drive selectivity. These

scholars posited that defense confidence is strengthened by a multitude of factors

including: Commitment to one's attitude (attitude strength), value relevance (when

attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors are linked to individuals' enduring values like abortion),

and close-mindedness. They found support that all three are linked with congeniality bias

and concluded that motivation guides exposure. They found support that congenial bias

is higher when people have a strong commitment to their attitudes or beliefs, when the

value relevance of the issue is high, and among those that are closed-minded. In contrast,

congeniality bias decreased when discrepant information was perceived to be useful.

The Hart et al. study (2009) may partially explain why findings are mixed

regarding conservatives and selective exposure. Conservatives may have higher defense

confidence – the desire to defend one's existing attitude – because they have high value

relevance (Lakoff, 1996). Conservatives also tend to hold right-winged attitudes, which

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are correlated with closed-mindedness (Jost, et al., 2003b). These qualities may boost selective exposure because conservatives are apt to defend their point of view and may potentially experience cognitive dissonance when "unfriendly" content is consumed. On the other hand, conservatives may seek attitudinally inconsistent information if that information is deemed useful. Hart et al. (2009) found that information utility drives exposure. Thus, conservatives may practice less selective exposure because discrepant information is deemed useful for refutation.

The above studies show that selective exposure is also affected by one's level of political engagement (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009), attitude importance and party preference (Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng, 2009), and information utility (Knobloch-Westerwick & Kleinman, 2012). Another factor may play a key role: Anxiety. This may be an important factor if NFClosure is related to anxiety. Though more research is needed, it may be fair to believe that those high in need for closure also tend to be more anxious. These individuals are uncomfortable with ambiguity and may feel anxious when ambiguous situations are encountered. Reaching a cognitive end-state may reduce these anxious feelings because it provides a measure of certainty. Though scholars don't know for certain if anxiety drives NFClosure or vice versa it may be fair to conclude that they are related factors.

Several studies explore the relationship between anxiety (fear) and selectivity. For example, Valentino Hutchings, Banks, and Davis (2008) found that anxiety promotes exposure of counter attitudinal materials when such information is deemed useful. When a realistic political threat is encountered, individuals will seek quality information about a

campaign – information that will help them make decisions that are beneficial to democracy. In contrast, anger reduced overall media exposure.

Similarly, Valentino, Banks, Hutchings, and Davis (2009) posited that the relationship between anxiety and selectivity is conditional and depends upon utility. These authors surmised that anxiety promotes exposure to balanced information when that information is deemed useful for defending one's principles or dealing with a political threat. However, when information is not deemed useful, they proposed that individuals would prefer consonant messages. Evidence supported their propositions. When anxiety was accompanied by perceptions of utility, individuals sought balanced information. When utility was low, individuals avoided discrepant messages. Interestingly, anger had no such effect; anger did not promote a balanced information search regardless of utility. The authors concluded that anxiety has different effects than that of anger or moral indignation.

Other work supports these findings. In line with Sears and Freedman (1967), Valentino, Hutchings, Banks and Davis (2007) found that anxiety triggers a balanced information search under special conditions – when information is deemed useful. This was especially true of strong partisans. However, when not deemed useful, partisans sought information in accordance with their political predispositions.

Affect not only plays a unique role in selective exposure, but political learning, as well. Marcus, Neuman and Macuen (2000) suggested that anxiety motivates informed voting and increases systematic processing of information. Despite oppositional claims that fear promotes political disengagement, evidence supports their proposition (Civettini

& Redlawsk, 2009). Civettini and Redlawsk, for example, found that anxiety supports the ideal of the informed voter – one that systematically processes a variety of information in meaningful ways. Similarly, Parker and Isabell (2010) found that anxiety promoted thoughtful consideration of candidates. Notably, anger had the opposite effect. Angry subjects were more likely to rely on heuristics and vote for candidates that were recognizable, regardless of their beliefs. These latter findings actually go against Marcus, Neuman, and Macuen (2000), who believed that anger and anxiety are a single dimension of affect. A large amount of research, like the studies mentioned above, indicate that anger and anxiety are, in fact, different dimensions.

Some studies have found that conservatives are more sensitive to threat than liberals (e.g., Amodio, 2012), which may evoke more anxiety. If conservatives are indeed more anxious than liberals, they may conduct a more balanced information search, if the information is deemed useful. Further, they may demonstrate more systematic processing (vs. heuristic processing) when selecting a political candidate.

Correlations with selective exposure. Selective exposure is positively correlated with political activism, political knowledge, strength of party affiliation, and reliance on digital media, such as blogs and websites (Johnson, Bichard & Zhang, 2009; Johnson, Zhang, & Bichard, 2011). Although selective exposure is linked with strong political preferences, it is unknown whether this tendency is specifically linked with conservatism. In general, most studies fail to find a significant difference between people of varying political affiliations or ideologies (e.g., Johnson et al., 2012).

Lavine, Lodge, and Freitas (2004) found that those with an authoritarian

orientation were more likely to look for confirmatory messages than those low on authoritarianism. They discovered that when threatened, authoritarians increased attention to material that confirmed their beliefs. Presumably, threats to one's beliefs increase one's defense motivation to secure those beliefs.

The tendency toward selective exposure may also be linked to one's personality. Evidence indicates that a bias towards congenial information is stronger in those that are closed-minded (Hart, et al., 2009). Recent studies show that conservatives are more likely to be close-minded than liberals (Jost, et al., 2003b). As mentioned, this dispositional trait may trigger a directional informational search, thus, limiting exposure to foreign ideas.

It may be difficult to predict whether conservatives are more or less likely to expose themselves to like-minded media. Certainly, some of the evidence above suggests that conservatives may have a lower tendency to search for congenial media. However, theoretical concerns cannot be neglected. Conservatism is highly correlated with authoritarianism, which is positively associated with selective exposure (Lavine, et al., 2005). Moreover, authoritarianism predicts simple cognitive processing (Kemmelmeier, 2010) – a type of processing facilitated by exposure to like-minded media. These types of media provide ready-made answers, thus, requiring little additional cognitive effort. Furthermore, both conservatism and authoritarianism are positively correlated with a need for closure (Chirumbolo, 2002: Crowson, et al., 2005; Oranet, Kruglanski, & Webster, 1994; Oranet, van Hiel, Roets, & Cornelis, 2011; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), which is associated with a shallow informational search (van Hiel & Mervielde, 2003).

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Those with a high need for closure tend to prefer media that offer "quick" answers –

those agreeing with the individual's predisposition. These answers limit ambiguity

because they mirror conclusions drawn prior to exposure. And finally, right-wing

attitudes are correlated with close-mindedness (Jost, et al., 2003b), which drives

congeniality bias (Hart et al., 2009).

Despite conflicting evidence, theory suggests that conservatives may be more

likely to expose themselves to like-minded media than liberals – expect under certain

conditions, such as when perceived utility of information is high. As a reminder,

perceptions of information utility are strengthened when the magnitude of political

"danger" is fairly high, immediate, and likely, such as when a favored political candidate

is likely to lose. In cases such as these, those with conservative orientations may select

counterattitudinal material instead of favoring like-minded media. In contrast, these

same individuals may select attitudinally consistent messages when perceived

informational utility is low, such as when a favored candidate is poised to win the

election. Because this study was not conducted during the time of an election, it predicts

that conservatives will indicate greater consumption of supportive material. Further, it

asks which political orientation is more likely to promote selective exposure.

H2: Conservatism positively predicts selective exposure of likeminded partisan

media.

RQ2: Are liberals or conservatives more likely to practice selective exposure?

Selective exposure effects. Selective exposure increases the political divide

between partisans (Stroud, 2008). Over time, greater exposure to partisan media both

strengthens one's level of partisanship (Stroud, 2008) and widens the gap between

liberals and conservatives (Stroud, 2010). Though there is some evidence that the reverse causal order is true – namely that polarization leads to greater levels of selective exposure – strong evidence suggests that consumption of partisan media aggravates the divide betweens liberals and conservatives, creating and "us vs. them" mentality and limiting tolerance for those who disagree (Stroud, 2010, 2011b).

Increased polarization may be problematic for a democratic society (Stroud, 2011a). First, it may be extremely difficult for citizens to reach a consensus. Partisans may have difficulties seeing eye-to-eye if views or values appear oppositional. Thus, partisan selective exposure "impedes the development of common goals and interests" (Stroud, 2011a, p. 176).

Second, Stroud (2011) noted that selectivity might widen the gap in political participation. As mentioned, selective exposure is positively correlated with political activism (Johnson, Bichard & Zhang, 2009; Johnson, et al., 2011). The more people practice partisan selective exposure, the more likely they are to join the political conversation. While this may be beneficial, it also increases the inequity between those who are active and those who avoid politics. Ultimately, those with depressed engagement may be underrepresented in the political sphere (Stroud, 2011a).

Third, Stroud (2011a) noted that partisan selective exposure does not enable critical thinking. Media consumers are spoon-fed political opinion. As such, they are not prodded to weigh arguments for logical integrity. Rather, partisans are bombarded with persuasive claims about the political landscape. These claims are limited in scope and fail to provide comprehensive coverage. Thus, partisan selective exposure both

intensifies political beliefs and widens the knowledge gap, highlighting select nuggets of political information that support a specific ideological perspective. Although knowledge is restricted and skewed, Stroud (2011a) argued that "some" knowledge is better than "none." Selective exposure tends to increase overall consumption of political news. Thus, partisans may know more about the political arena than non-partisans.

The digital impact. Selective exposure – and its effects – may be on the rise. First, the diverse media environment increases the accessibility of partisan content (Mullainathan & Schleifer, 2005); it is now easier to find material that agrees with one's predisposition due to the explosion of partisan websites, social media, and cable programming. Certain websites such as *The Huffington Post* and cable outlets such as FOX draw media consumers, specifically, by branding themselves "liberal" and "conservative" hubs (Stroud, 2008). These media brands call to like-minded individuals with a promise to deliver supportive material and cater to their niche needs (Stroud, 2010).

Second, exposure to partisan media increases the tendency to find agreeable content (Mullainathan & Schleifer, 2005). Not only are the media, themselves, more partisan (Stroud, 2006), but increased viewership or use of partisan sources increases the likelihood of repeated exposure (Bennett, 2002; Best, et al., 2005; Hollander, 1996). This may be especially true of political websites, compared with traditional forms of media that strive for objectivity (Johnson, Zhang, & Bichard, 2011). One study found that reliance on websites positively predicted selective exposure (Johnson, et al., 2011).

Others argue that selective exposure has minimal effects (Bennett & Iyengar,

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2008; Klapper, 1960). For example, Bennett and Iyengar (2008) claimed that the notion

of the "mass media" as a powerful ideological force is no longer relevant due to audience

fragmentation and increasing media accessibility. They asserted that individuals have

more control over what they watch and read than in pre-digital times. Thus, consumers

are no longer captive to one dominate media message. Instead, they can select from a

growing number of political websites and channels that each offer a unique spin on

political affairs. In sum, these authors argue that while citizens may have originally taken

their cue from the media (McCombs, 2004), they now tell the media what to think

(Chaffee & Metzger, 2001).

Others suggest that selective exposure effects may weaken over time. Though the

tendency towards selective exposure is highest when a decision is initially made, it may

gradually reside (Fischer, et al., 2011). Fischer and his colleagues (2011) explained that

supportive evidence is necessary to bolster one's self-concept and prepare the individual

for the onslaught of threatening messages. However, "after the self has been sufficiently

affirmed, the cognitive system is stable enough to be confronted with any inconsistent

information" (p. 39). Thus, while initial phases of an informational search may be

confirmatory, latter stages may include non-supportive media.

Need for closure vs. selective exposure. Selective exposure assumes that an

individual is looking for supportive material that matches his or her convictions;

therefore, the individual has determined his or her beliefs prior to exposure. In contrast,

the need for closure rests upon the idea that people conduct a non-directional

informational search. That is, they wish for an answer – any answer – as long as it offers

a definitive conclusion. For this reason, the need for closure is not often studied with selective exposure. Though both are biased processes, selective exposure is a directional search, whereas informational searches that result from a need for closure are not – at least not initially.

Kruglanski (1989) asserted that people acquire knowledge and arrive at beliefs through a motivated informational search. This is not considered selective exposure because beliefs are obtained via a media search, not prior to one. Though individuals with a need for closure tend to be close-minded (Kruglanski & Webster, 1994), they have not, yet, found a definitive answer. Thus, they scan media in search of information that will provide a quick resolution.

As mentioned, NFClosure has two phases: Seizing and freezing. Arguably, those that search for congenial media have past the freezing phase in which beliefs are crystallized "and turned from hesitant conjecture to a subjectively firm fact" (Webster & Kruglanski, 1996, p. 266). These individuals have made up their minds and are now searching for like-minded sources. Once an answer is reached, they firmly hold on, protecting what they believe to be true.

Future searches may be considered selective exposure because once an answer is seized, the individual aims at permanency. Like-minded sources may be selected specifically because they confirm what the person already believes to be true. Thus, the mechanism of selective exposure occurs after beliefs are formed. In contrast, the need for closure relates to the process of belief formation. It involves the notion of urgency, in which the individual desperately searches for an answer that will provide closure. Any

media may be selected, as long as it serves this purpose. In this sense, informational

searches are non-directional because beliefs are not yet solidified. Once the answer is

found, however, the individual clings to their beliefs and subsequent informational

searches may be confirmatory.

This study assumes that participants already have a political orientation. It relies

on self-reports of liberalism and conservatism. Thus, it assumes that participants have

past the seizing phase and entered the freezing phase. As such, this model tests specific

need for closure rather than non-specific need for closure. Thus, results gleaned reflect

phase two (freezing) and not phase one (seizing).

Need for closure and information seeking. Those with a high need for closure

tend to conduct a shallow informational search (van Hiel & Mervielde, 2003). In general,

they expend less energy hunting for new information and process less information,

overall. Kruglanski and his cohort (1991) claimed that NFClosure prompts an

informational search before one's judgment has been crystallized. However, once a

conclusion has been drawn, NFClosure hinders the process and individuals cease looking

for new information (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2009). Conversely, those with a low need

for closure tend to expand their informational search and consider a wide range of facts

before rendering a decision.

The need for closure not only impacts the amount of information consumed, but

also the type of information. An experiment by Mayseless and Kruglanski (1987)

showed that those who scored high on the NFClosure Scale sought prototypical

information – material that supports the use of broad generalizations. In contrast, those

who wished to avoid closure were more likely to search for diagnostic information – material that helps a person distinguish between perspectives.

Individuals high in NFClosure may actively avoid new information in order to safeguard their initial conclusions (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Thus, these individuals are highly motivated to protect their judgments. Once closure has been obtained, those with a high (vs. low) need for closure shift from informational searches that are non-specific to ones with a specific answer in mind. These directional (specific) searches preserve one's prior beliefs (Kunda, 1990), allowing the individuals to achieve and maintain an end state (a.k.a. closure).

Others suggest that NFClosure stems from a lack of motivation; those with a need for closure are simply unmotivated to search and process new information (van Hiel & Mervielde, 2002). These individuals largely rely on stereotypic information and preconceived notions – a tendency which may lead to erroneous conclusions (van Hiel & Mervielde, 2002). Further, they may be more likely to employ heuristic processing when seeking solutions (van Hiel & Mervielde, 2003). Notably, these functions lie outside of the individual's awareness (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2009) and are employed subconsciously.

A study by van Hiel and Mervielde (2002) suggests that those with a high need for closure are not motivated, in general, and that shallow searches result from a desire to restrict cognitive effort. These individuals are known as cognitive misers and generally aim to reduce their cognitive workload – a trait associated with conservatism (Eidelman, et al., 2012). Some scholars believe that cognitive misers are more likely to search for

like-minded media (Stroud, 2011b).   Thus, while selective exposure tends to result from a motivation to defend one's values or beliefs, it may also result from a desire to conserve mental effort. Similarly, while NFClosure tends to be driven by a need to reach and protect a specific conclusion, it may also result from indolence.

Despite these varying antecedents, studies on selective exposure and need for closure (phase two) both predict consumption of like-minded media.

H3: Need for closure positively predicts selective exposure of likeminded media.

Need For Cognition

Need for cognition (NFCognition) is a personality characteristic or trait, rather than a biological necessity (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). It is "a stable individual difference in the tendency to engage in and enjoy cognitively effortful activities across a wide range of domains" (Petty, Brinol, Loersch, & McCaslin, 2009, p. 319). Some have described it as an intrinsic motivation to seek cognitive stimulation (Fleischhauer, et al., 2009). Others describe NFCognition as a desire to seek cognitive satisfaction and the tendency to engage in thoughtful endeavors (Petty, et al., 2009).

Those with a high need for cognition search for relevant information and engage in careful consideration and reflection (Cacioppo & Petty, 1996). These individuals tend to elaborate and systematically process information (Petty, et al., 2009); their judgments are rooted in empiricism and rationality. Those high in NFCognition are strongly influenced by the quality of a message argument and typically employ complex cognitive strategies to solve problems – even when mental shortcuts are available (Cacioppo & Petty, 1996). As scholar Gardner Murphy (1947) once noted, such individuals believe it is "fun to think."

In contrast, those with a low need for cognition tend to avoid effortful cognitive activity, placing a greater reliance on heuristic processing (Fleischhauer, et al., 2009). Rather than fully process a message or consider potential causes, attributions and outcomes, these individuals are "cognitive misers" (Cacioppo & Petty, 1996) and tend to reduce mental effort, unless the issue is personally relevant or the source is uncertain (Axsom, Yates, & Chaiken, 1987). Those low in NFCognition consider complex thinking a "chore" and perform only a cursory analysis (Petty, et al., 2009). They are largely guided by peripheral cues, such as the attractiveness of an anchor or celebrity, and look to 'trusted' others when forming opinions or judgments (Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein, & Jarivs, 1996; Haugtvedt, Petty, & Cacioppo, 1992).

In the groundbreaking article, "The need for cognition," Cacioppo and Petty (1982) discovered that those with high NFCognition preferred complex tasks to simple ones. These individuals said that tasks requiring complex cognitive activity were more enjoyable than ones that relied on simple cues. In opposition, those with low NFCognition reported that complex tasks were more frustrating. The authors theorized that those with a low need for cognition tend to rely on heuristics, such as the likeability of the experimenter.

The notion that people have a need for cognition developed in social science research by scholars such as Maslow and Katz, but wasn't established as a distinct concept until 1955 by Cohen and his colleagues. These scholars believed that people – to varying degrees – have a need to make sense of the world around them (Cohen, 1957; Cohen, Stotland, & Wolfe, 1955). They posited that tension builds when messages or

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experiences appear unreasonable and that thinking reduces these frustrations. Though everyone has a need for understanding, Cohen et al. asserted that some individuals have a higher need than others. Similarly, Katz (1960) suggested that people have a need to understand. He proposed that attitude formation occurs when one's need to understand is either stunted or satisfied.

Cacioppo and Petty (1982) took their cue from Cohen and his colleagues and developed the Need For Cognition Scale, which was originally a 45-item questionnaire. Notably, their conception of NFCognition differed from that of Cohen et al. Unlike their predecessors, they did not view need for cognition in terms of tension or dissonance, rather, they saw NFCognition in terms of *enjoyment*. Those with a strong need for cognition take pleasure in thinking and have a greater tendency to engage in complex cognitive activity.

Need for cognition has been used as a theoretical foundation in advertising (Haugtvedt, et al., 1992; Verplanken, Hazenberg, & Palenewen, 1992), psychology and personality (Fleischhauer, et al., 2009), politics (Condra, 1992), and education (Bertrams & Dickhäuser, 2009). Since its conception in 1982, the NFCognition Scale has been revised from 45-items to only 18-items. Questions include, "I would prefer complex to simple problems," "Thinking is not my idea of fun," and "I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems." This shorter version of the questionnaire has high internal consistency (Cacioppo, Petty, & Kao, 1994) and has provided reliable results in numerous studies (see Cacioppo, et al., 1996 for review).

Need for cognition origins. Although no one knows the origins of need for cognition, scholars speculate that it has both social and genetic antecedents. Bizer and his cohort (2000) suggested that familial upbringing might play a pivotal role and point to the theory of operant conditioning (Skinner, 1957). This theory predicts that behavior is conditioned through reward and punishment; thus, when a child receives lavish praise or gifts for problem solving or ingenuity, the child is likely to expend more cognitive effort in the future.

The theory of operant conditioning suggests that when thinking is paired with reward, children are more likely to develop a general orientation toward thinking and that this orientation sustains throughout their lifespan. Conversely, if the child is frustrated or punished for his or her efforts, the child may avoid cognitive endeavors. Again, this tendency may last a lifetime and result in low need for cognition.

Other scholars point to personality (Bouchard & McGue, 2003). One's personality is comprised of several factors such as intellect, temperament, and character and manifests in tendencies such as altruism, aggression (Rushton, Fulker, Neale, Nias, & Eysenck, 1986), and willingness to achieve (Digman, 1990). Scholars surmise that curiosity – a dispositional trait with genetic antecedents – is one factor leading to need for cognition (Bizer, et al., 2000; Digman, 1990). Thus, those who undertake complex cognitive tasks are genetically inclined to do so, due to their innate curiosity.

Research on identical twins suggests that personality is largely driven by one's genetic code (Bouchard & McGue, 2003). Indeed, one study found that genes account for 50% of one's personality and play a determining role in one's level of extroversion,

neuroticism, and consciousness (Tellegen, et al., 1988). Based on this research, it is likely that need for cognition has a biological component, as well as, a social component. Ultimately, people with a high need for cognition may have a predisposition toward thinking and are then subjected to social conditioning that reinforces the tendency to achieve at cognitive endeavors.

Dual processing. Individuals with a high need for cognition do not necessarily form judgments that are more rational than those low in NFCognition. Though they are less likely to rely on heuristics, these individuals are also subject to their emotions and temperament. These factors may impact their interpretations and conclusions.

Scholars theorize that judgment depends on dual processes – one based in emotion and the other in rationality (Cacioppo, et al., 1996; Petty, et al., 2009). These systems are independent, distinct, and presumably unrelated (Cacioppo, et al., 1996; Petty, et al., 2009). Epstein's (2003) theory of the experiential self describes the affective system as impulsive and intuitive. Judgments are made according to one's emotional response and are often triggered by imagery. Petty and his colleagues noted that these judgments are consistent with one's attitude: Positive or negative.

The need for cognition is rooted in the cognitive system (Petty, et al., 2009). Judgments are rational, deliberative, logical, and reflexive. In contrast to the affective system, these judgments are often triggered by verbal accounts of the world. Though these two processes are distinct, they may occur simultaneously (Petty, et al., 2009). Thus, a person with a high need for cognition may have an affective response or one that incorporates both emotion and logic. This appears especially true for those with a high need for cognition. One such study in persuasion found that mood impacted high NFCognition subjects more than low NFCognition subjects (Wegener, Petty, & Klein,

1994). Individuals who were placed in a good mood during high elaboration conditions believed that positive outcomes were more likely than negative ones, resulting in favorable attitudes. When individuals were placed in a negative mood, subjects believed negative consequences were more likely than positive ones. Again, this effect was more pronounced in those with a higher need for cognition. For those with low NFCognition, mood was not a factor in judgment.

Personality. The need for cognition is positively associated with two personality traits: Openness and conscientiousness (Digman, 1990; Fleischhauer, et al., 2009). These traits are part of the "Big Five" – a psychological model that characterizes dimensions in one's personality. The five traits are: Conscientiousness (organized vs. careless); Openness (curious vs. cautious); Neuroticism (confident vs. nervous), Extroversion (outgoing vs. solitary); and Agreeableness (compassionate vs. cold). As mentioned, the need for cognition is most closely related to conscientiousness and openness. Not surprisingly, conscientiousness is tied to thinking, logic, and organization (Digman, 1990). Similarly, openness has a strong positive association with intelligence (Digman, 1990).

A study by Fleischhauer et al. (2009) found that NFCognition was not only associated with openness, but also goal orientation. Indeed, those high in NFCognition tend to be goal orientated and search for accurate information. In contrast, the need for cognition had a negative relationship with the fear of uncertainty and harm avoidance. The role of anxiety and fear appears prominent. In general, the need for cognition is negatively related to anxiety and positively related to defense confidence (Albarracin & Mitchell, 2004). Heppner et al. (1983) proposed that individuals who are low in

NFCognition are more anxious because they have less confidence that they will be successful in problem solving. Thus, they are more likely to give the matter thought.

The need for cognition is also negatively related to stereotyping and dogmatism (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Cacioppo, et al., 1996). Cacioppo and Petty (1982) suggested that those low in NFCognition are less willing to consider a broad range of ideas or positions. These individuals have a higher need for closure and less cognitive complexity (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). The need for closure is characterized by a need to obtain an answer – any answer – as quickly as possible (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). The data suggest that those with a low need for cognition wish to seize upon the first available answer, regardless of its veracity.

Interestingly, one study found a negative relationship between need for cognition and social conservatism (Albarracin & Mitchell, 2004). Much more evidence must be obtained, however, we do know that conservatism is largely associated with a need for closure (Jost, et al., 2003a). As mentioned above, the need for closure is related to a narrow information search. Those with a high NFClosure do not wish to endlessly consider facts and weigh evidence. Rather, they prefer a quick answer. Thus, a lower need for cognition might be prompted by a higher need for closure. Moreover, those who have a high need for closure may have a lower need for cognition.

Conservatism. Though research is limited, a couple of studies have found a negative correlation between NFCognition and social conservatism (Albarracin, et al., 2004). These studies indicate that those with a conservative attitude may have a lower need for cognition (Crowson, 2009). Further, NFCognition has an inverse relationship

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with several variables thought to predict conservatism. For example, while conservatives are more likely to support the death penalty, those with a heightened need for cognition are less likely to advocate punitive measures (Sargent, 2004).

Further, the need for cognition is inversely related to low effort thinking – a tendency correlated with political conservatism (Eidelman, et al., 2012). By nature, those with high NFCognition (vs. low) enjoy thinking and have a predilection for complex cognitive processing. In contrast, a conservative orientation is related to simplistic processing and presents a lower cognitive load. The following sections will outline the relationships between conservatism and cognitive engagement.

Low effort thinking. The need for cognition is the tendency to engage in high-effort or systematic thinking. On the contrary, conservatism is linked to low-effort thinking (Eidelman, et al., 2012). Eidelman and his colleagues (2012) found that when systematic thinking was compromised, subjects were more likely to endorse conservative issue positions. In a four-part experiment, they tested whether restricting deliberative thought would engender conservative attitudes or values. The results of their study provided ample support.

In the first experiment, Eidelman et al. (2012) tested the effect of cognitive impairment induced by alcohol consumption. The researchers went to a bar and solicited subjects who were drinking. After obtaining self-reports of political orientation, they monitored the subjects' blood alcohol levels. Results indicated a positive correlation between blood alcohol level and the endorsement of conservative attitudes. As bar patrons became increasingly drunk, they were more likely to adopt a conservative point

of view, even if they had originally reported a liberal orientation.

In a second experiment, Eidelman et al. (2012) found that a heavy cognitive load reduced liberal attitudes. Subjects were asked questions about their political attitudes while completing a secondary mental task. As cognitive load increased, subjects were more likely to report conservative attitudes. Eidelman et al. posited that cognitive load depletes resources and pushes subjects to rely on heuristics as a way to conserve mental energy.

In a third experiment, Eidelman and his colleagues (2012) tested the impact of time constraint. They found that decreasing the time for deliberative consideration created a conservative shift. Under time constraint, liberals had a greater tendency to adopt conservative attitudes. A fourth experiment mirrored these results. When asked to casually process messages in a cursory way, subjects were more likely to endorse conservative positions. When asked to consciously examine a matter ("think hard"), they were less likely to agree with conservative positions.

A couple of earlier studies offer further support. Skitka et al. (2002) showed that a heavy cognitive load interferes with one's ability to reason. They found that under normal conditions, liberals were more likely than conservatives to endorse policy measures that provide medical assistance to AIDS patients. However, when liberals were distracted with a second mental task, thereby taxing their mental resources, liberals assumed a conservative attitude that was contrary to their normal egalitarian values. Skitka et al. (2002) posited, the liberal tendency to take into account more complex, extenuating circumstances involves a correction process requiring cognitive effort, which can be fairly easily disrupted (p. 187). They implied that when mental resources are

taxed, such as a heavy cognitive load or time constraint, liberals are unable to engage in complex processing, and tend to favor conservative issues positions. Eidelman et al. were quick to point out that these types of results do not indicate that conservatives are more likely to engage in low-effort thinking. Rather, low-effort thinking generates conservative attitudes.

Integrative complexity. Research suggests that conservatives are not high on integrative complexity (Jost, et al., 2003b). Integrative complexity is the tendency toward complex thinking, akin to Chaiken's (1980) notion of systematic processing. Those with a predisposition toward integrative complexity tend to consider multidimensional constructs when making decisions (Tetlock, 1984). However, this does not mean they employ systematic processing in every situation. In fact, evidence indicates that people may engage in systematic and heuristic processing at the same time (Todorov, Chaiken, & Henderson, 2002). Integrative complexity is, thus, considered a psychological *predisposition* and not a measure of intelligence, cognitive capability, or effort.

Philip Tetlock (1984) explained that integrative complexity is based on differentiation and integration. Differentiation is the ability to recognize multiple perspectives, factors, nuance, and conditional outcomes when making evaluations (Gruenfeld, 1995); further, the ability to integrate these factors. In contrast, those without differentiation tend to rely on salient, one-dimensional cues that are often fixed or normative. These individuals tend to categorize things as good and bad. For example, a citizen may determine that a president is bad, while failing to consider the myriad of

factors that impacted his presidency, such as inflation, the deficit, national disasters, and international conflicts.

Adorno et al. (1950) proposed that a lack of complexity results from a need to reduce threat and restore order. They proposed the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis to explain why conservatives gravitate toward black and white thinking. This approach suggests that conservatives adopt a structured, dichotomous interpretation in order to control a chaotic or threatening world (van Hiel & Mervielde, 2003).

Tetlock (1983) tested the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis by examining speeches of United States senators. He discovered that liberal senators demonstrated more complexity and flexibility than their conservative counterparts. A second study (1984) provided partial support for the rigidity theory. Tetlock found that extreme leftists showed more complexity than extreme rightists. However, he also found evidence that weakens the rigidity theory. Tetlock (1984) discovered that both extreme leftist and extreme rightists demonstrated less complexity than moderates.

This second finding gives weight to the ideologue theory. The ideologue theory (Rokeach, 1956) suggests that liberals and conservatives are similar in levels of complexity and that differences only emerge at the ends of the political spectrum. Thus, it asserts that neither liberals nor conservatives are more prone to heuristic processing, rather, *ideological extremism* drives black and white thinking.

Despite this study, some research indicates a negative correlation between NFCognition and social conservatism (Albarracin, et al., 2004). Furthermore, conservatism is related to low effort thikng (Eidelman, et al., 2012) and a lack of

integrative complexity (Jost, et al., 2003b). This study asserts and tests the relationship between NFCognition and conservatism. It predicts:

H4: Need for cognition negatively predicts conservatism.

RQ3: Which ideological orientation (conservative or liberal) has a higher need for cognition?

Intelligence. One's need for cognition is not the same as one's intelligence (Petty, et al., 2009; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), though these factors may be related (Cacioppo, et al., 1996). Cacioppo and Petty (1982) found a positive correlation between NFCognition and general intelligence. In this study, the authors found a positive association between NFCognition and scores on the ACT. Notably, NFCognition was not related to abstract reasoning. Another study found similar results. Bertrams and Dickhäuser (2009) discovered that students with a high need for cognition achieved better grades in school and were better problem solvers. Studies indicate that NFCognition is also related to memory (Cacioppo, et al., 1983). A meta-analytic review found that those with high NFCognition generally have better memories than those with low NFCognition (Cacioppo, et al., 1996).

The need for cognition may be associated with certain types of cognition, but not others. Fleischhauer and other scholars (2009) found evidence that NFCognition is related to fluid intelligence, but not crystallized intelligence. Fluid intelligence is characterized by one's ability to adapt and one's problem-solving abilities, which require mental efficiency. In contrast, crystallized intelligence is regarded as the sum of one's knowledge. Though the authors did not argue for a causal relationship, they found a positive relationship between NFCognition and one's fluid ability, including verbal, numeric and figural reasoning. Additionally, those with high NFCognition devoted a

larger amount of cognitive resources and expended more effort on tasks than those with low NFCognition.

Need for cognition pioneers Cacioppo and Petty (1996) proposed that variations in intelligence might result from life experiences rather than genetics. They argued that "positive feedback increases the likelihood of cognitive exploration" (p. 246). They asserted that those who have found success in problem solving feel more competent in their abilities. These feelings of mastery increase the inclination to systematically or centrally process information. Thus, those who are "intellectually gifted" are not naturally smarter, but have increased the motivation to think via positive feedback.

Cognitive effort and schema. Individuals with a low need for cognition generally expend less effort on problem-solving than those with a higher need for cognition (Enge, Fleischhauer, Brock, & Strobel, 2008) – even more so under time constraints (Verplanken, 1993). These individuals tend to feel less personally involved in social issues (Thompson & Zanna, 1995) and lack the motivation to elaborate (Haugtvedt, et al., 1992). It is believed that a lack of motivation increases the reliance on peripheral cues. Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann (1983), for example, found that subjects who lacked motivation were more likely to rely on heuristics than those in the high motivation group. Another study found that subjects with low NFCognition only increased mental effort when the source was deemed untrustworthy (Priester & Petty, 1995). In contrast, those with high NFCognition scrutinized the message irrespective of source credibility.

Although subjects with low NFCognition tend to allocate fewer cognitive resources (Enge, et al., 2008), research shows they increase mental effort if the message

is personally relevant (Axsom, et. al., 1987). Petty and Cacioppo (1979) found that relevance provided a reason to elaborate. Subjects who found a message personally relevant were more apt to generate thoughts that pertained to the message. Under these conditions, they acted more like subjects with high NFCognition.

It might appear as though those with high NFCognition elaborate more than those with low NFCognition, however, this is not always the case. First, need for cognition is not the same construct as mental effort. Pillai and his cohort (2011) found that while need for cognition and effortful thinking are positively related, the relationship is moderated by self-efficacy. In other words, there is a strong relationship between cognitive effort and NFCognition, but only when self-efficacy is low. More research is needed to fully explore this relationship, however, we do know that individuals with high NFCognition tend to have more confidence in their judgments (Petty, et. al., 2009). Second, when mentally taxed or distracted, subjects with a high need for cognition perform similarly to those with a low NFCognition. In one such study, Dudley & Harris (2002) found that when forming impressions about others, both those high and low in need for cognition saw what they expected to see; judgments were ruled by stereotypes and schema. Despite a predisposition toward cognitive complexity, those with high NFCognition were not able to overcome their reliance on heuristics. When distractions were removed, however, those with high NFCognition showed a greater likelihood of moving past their expectations.

While those with a low need for cognition tend reduce elaboration and expend less effort, factors such as time, relevance and distraction impact their motivation to

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think. Moreover, while those with a high need for cognition tend to prefer systematic processing, they, too, are subject to heuristics when mentally taxed.

Persuasion and need for cognition. Persuasive appeals are often more effective on those with a low need for cognition – though, again, this is not always the case (Zhang, 1996). Individuals with low NFCognition are often guided by their emotions and swayed by the attractiveness of the source and perceptions of credibility (Petty, et al., 2009). Though these people can discern strong from weak arguments, research reveals that they are not bothered by poor message quality – at least not to the extent of those with high NFCognition (Haugtvedt, et al., 1992).

Haugtvedt and his colleagues (1992) argued that a preference for low cognitive effort makes individuals with low NFCognition more agreeable to emotional arguments or those based on heuristics, such as "the consensus must be right." One study found that those with a low need for cognition are more receptive to emotional arguments, whereas those with a high need prefer factual information (Haddock, Maio, Arnold, & Kuskinson, 2008). Haddock and his colleagues (2008) discovered that affect-based messages were most effective on those that have a high need for affect, but a low need for cognition. As expected, cognitive-based appeals were most effective on those with a high need for cognition. If preferences guide news consumption, then we may infer that those with a low need for cognition are attracted to sources that privilege feeling over fact and vice versa. Moreover, those with low NFCognition might be more susceptible to fear-based appeals, due to their reliance on emotional and peripheral cues (Averbeck, Jones, & Robertson, 2011).

Studies show that those with low NFCognition, "tend to show greater amounts of bias when that bias is created by a reliance on mental shortcuts. Alternatively, when the bias is created through effortful thought, individuals high in NFCognition tend to be more strongly affected" (Petty, et al., 2009, p. 321). The authors of the above study proposed that elaboration taps into personal schema (Petty, et al., 2009). These schema provide a cognitive framework, allowing one to organize and interpret information (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Petty et al. (2009) surmised that more thoughtful activity increased the interplay of schema and the message in question, resulting in a priming effect. They argued that this effect might lead to greater levels of bias – or even create false memories. Thus, judgment may be *less* accurate than those with low NFCognition. It is important to note, however, that when those with high NFCognition were made aware of their biases, they were more quick to correct their judgment that those with a low need for cognition (Wegener, et al., 1994). In general, those with a high need for cognition tend to be more concerned with accuracy than those with a low need for cognition (Bailey, 1997).

Need for cognition and need for closure. The need for cognition is believed to be one of several factors that sway an individual from heuristic to systematic processing (Chaiken, Lieberman, & Eagly, 1989; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). One study found that individuals high on NFCognition (vs. low) were more likely to engage in high level thinking and discriminate between strong and weak arguments (Cacioppo, Petty, & Morris, 1983). Another study found that those low on NFCognition were more likely to engage in the heuristic route to persuasion (Axsom, Yates, & Chaiken, 1987). Thus, both needs for cognition and closure impact the tendency to use the heuristic or systematic

path to persuasion.

The need for closure appears opposite to the need for cognition (Klein & Webster, 2000). If an individual lacks the need for cognition, he or she may approach informational processing in a similar manner as those with a high need for closure; both wish to end processing as quickly as possibly and may undergo a cursory analysis. Indeed, researchers induce situational closure by making cognitive possessing unattractive, via loud noise (Kruglanski, Webster, & Klem, 1993). The hypothesis states that if processing is uncomfortable, individuals will increase their need for closure, despite a need for cognition. Thus, if thinking is no longer enjoyable, subjects have a higher NFClosure. Moreover, those who possess a high need for cognition may delay closure in order to think as long as possible. Thus, a higher need for cognition may predict a lower need for closure.

Webster and Kruglanski (1994) argued that the needs for closure and cognition are two separate constructs. The need for closure "refers to a desired cognitive end state that might be obtained by either extensive processing or by limited processing. Hence, the relationship between need for closure and need for cognition is not simple or straightforward" (p. 1055). They claimed that when possible, those with a high need for closure wish to draw a conclusion as quickly as possible. However, when that is not possible, those with high NFClosure pursue systematic processing in order to obtain secure knowledge. Evidence supported their claim. A study of college students (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994) produced a moderate negative correlation between the needs for closure and cognition. This line of thinking is also supported by the evidence produced

by Kruglanski, Webster and Klem (1993). They found that in the absence of prior information, high NFClosure subjects increased scrutiny to obtain closure. Thus, those high in need for closure may systematically or heuristically process information, depending upon the information available and whether or not a previous judgment has been crystallized.

Need for cognition and exposure. Those high in the need for cognition tend to conduct a more expansive information search and are more politically active than those low in NFCognition (Bizer, et al., 2000; Curseu, 2011; Haugtvedt, et al., 1992). Consumer research indicates that those high in NFCognition actively seek information and tend to think carefully about what they have learned before reaching a conclusion (Haugtvedt, et al., 1992). One such study found that those with a high need for cognition expended more energy when seeking information and produced more relevant thoughts (Verplanken, et al., 1992). These individuals are more likely to turn to the media for information – including digital media (Ahlering, 1987; Condra, 1992). One study found a positive association between need for cognition and all web activities (Tuten & Bosnjak, 2001). In contrast, those low in NFCognition tend to expend less energy and rely on heuristic strategies when seeking information (Bertrams & Dickhäuser, 2009; Verplanken, et al., 1992).

A recent study showed that individuals high in the need for cognition are swayed by message quality (Winter & Kramer, 2012). In this particular study, parents were asked to seek information on the effects of violent media on children. The authors found that parents with a high need for cognition preferred "high quality" messages – those

containing information both espousing the harmful effects of media exposure and those touting the benefits. In contrast, those with low NFCognition sought "low quality" messages with a one-sided argument. The authors concluded that NFCognition impacts media selection via perceived message quality.

Individuals with a higher (vs. lower) need for cognition tend to value those with a different point of view (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). These dissimilar 'others' are considered to be unique sources of information. Accordingly, one study found that those with a high NFCognition were better able to bridge the gap between their own group and other groups (Curseu, Schalk, & Schruijer, 2010).

Though individuals with a high need for cognition value others' opinions, they also tend to have more confidence in their abilities to defend their arguments (Albarracin & Mitchell, 2004). As mentioned, defense confidence is related to a balanced informational search. Those who are assured in their refutational abilities tend to have a lower preference for congenial or supportive information. As such, they may be less likely to avoid non-supportive content. The logic goes as follows: If the need for cognition is positively related to defense confidence (Albarracin & Mitchell, 2004) and defense confidence is positively related to balanced informational searches (Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2009), then it is possible that those with a high need for cognition may be more likely to conduct a search for balanced information.

On the other hand, NFCognition may trigger a *less* balanced information search. This is because NFCognition is negatively related to anxiety and anxiety may trigger a search for balanced information – if that information is deemed useful (Valentino,

Hutchings, Banks & Davis, 2008). As mentioned, one study (2008) found that anxiety promotes exposure of counter attitudinal materials when such information is deemed useful. Those with a high need for cognition may not experience as much anxiety as those low in cognition, and as such, they may not elect to seek oppositional material.

Despite this line of reasoning, evidence suggests that NFCognition is positively related to balanced informational searches. If individuals with a heightened need for cognition have more defense confidence, value others' opinions, and conduct a more exhaustive informational search, then they may consume more media, overall – including political messages. Several studies show that those high in NFCognition tend to express more political interest and interaction than those low in NFCognition (Condra, 1992; O'Hara, Walter, & Christopher, 2009). Thus, they may expose themselves to more political messages containing a two-sided argument. Moreover, they may be less attracted to partisan media that offer a one-sided argument and spend less time with partisan media, overall.

H5: Need for cognition negatively predicts selective exposure of likeminded partisan media.

Method

This study examined the impact of need for cognition and need for closure on media use, as well as, the interplay of conservatism. It asked questions such as: Are those with a higher need for closure more likely to be conservative? Are conservatives drawn to ideological programs; are they more likely to consume congenial media? A survey assessed participants' conservative orientation and determined their needs for closure and cognition. Further, it discovered what participants are watching and how much ideological media they consume.

Survey.

This study tested five predictions: (1) Need for closure positively predicts conservatism; (2) Conservatism positively predicts selective exposure of likeminded partisan media; (3) Need for closure positively predicts selective exposure of likeminded media; (4) Need for cognition negatively predicts conservatism; and (5) Need for cognition negatively predicts selective exposure of likeminded partisan media. Further, it asked: (1) What is the relationship between need for closure and need for cognition; (2) Which political orientation (conservative or liberal) is more likely to promote selective exposure of likeminded partisan media; (3) Which ideological orientation (conservative or liberal) has a higher need for cognition?

Data Collection

A survey using UT's web services – conducted by the Office of Survey and Research in Spring 2013 – was employed to test the impact of the dispositional factors (NFClosure and NFCognition) on media use and conservatism. Additionally, it tested the influence of conservatism on media use. This study relied on responses obtained from a

semi-representative sample of the US adult population.   Compared to the 2010 US Census, this study was representative of gender (49.5% vs. 49.2% male) and median income ($40,000-$60,000 vs. $50, 046).   However, the sample in this study skewed toward a younger demographic with 66.8% younger than 45 years vs. 40.7%. However, a X^2 test revealed no significant difference between age groups [$X^{2(}(4) = 6.38$, p=.173]. It is also important to note that age ranges slightly differed in this study vs. the US Census. This study employed the category "18-29 years" – which follows Nielsen data – compared with the US Census, which employs the category "15-29 years." This study only polled those 18 years or older. (See Appendix B)

Also, Latino/Hispanics were under represented in this survey with only 12.4% compared to 16.9% in the general population (US Census 2010). However, a X^2 test also revealed no significant difference between racial groups [$X^2(5)=1.82$, p=.873]. Additionally, the sample in this study had more education than the general population with nearly 80% completing some college education or more vs. roughly 50% in the general US population. A X^2 tested revealed a significant difference between groups [X^2 (4)=13.1, p<.05.] (See Appendix B).

The web service solicits participants using random digit dialing.   These individuals then opt to join a panel. The response rate was not calculated because this study did not utilize traditional email invitations and was available to respondents only when they logged into their panel "dashboard." This is called "dynamix." Participants were paid a minimal fee for their cooperation: $1-$5.00. The cooperation rate was 87%. Cooperation rate is defined at the number of respondents who have provided a useable response divided by the total number of initial personal invitations requesting participation (AAPOR, 2013). A total of 516 people completed the survey. (See Appendix A: The Survey)

Study Variables

Conservatism.   Respondents were asked to self-identify on a five-point scale whether they were 'very liberal' to 'very conservative.'   An ideology variable was created so that those who chose "very liberal" or "liberal" were coded as "1" those who chose "very conservative" or "conservative" were coded as "2."   Those who chose moderate were excluded from analysis.

Need for Closure.   To test the need for closure, this study used an abridged version of the need for closure scale (Roets & Van Hiel, 2011). The scale was originally created by Webster et al. (1994) and included 41-questions regarding ambiguity, intolerance, closemindedness, decisiveness, and predictability.   The abridged scale contains 15-questions. Research by Roets and Van Hiel (2011) showed that the scale is internally consistent (Cronbach's a.=.87). Questions on the scale include, "When I have made a decision, I feel relieved;" "I dislike unpredictable situations;" and "I don't like situations that are uncertain." Respondents were asked to mark a "1" if they strongly disagree; "2" if they somewhat disagree; "3" if they are neutral; "4" if they somewhat agree; and '5' if they strongly agree. Some questions were reverse coded.

Need for Cognition. This study used an 18-item version of the original need for cognition scale created by Cacioppo et al. (1984). The scale has high internal consistency (Cronbach's a=.83). It includes questions such as "I would prefer complex to simple problems;" "Thinking is not my idea of fun;" and "The notion of thinking abstractly is appealing to me." Respondents were asked to mark a "1" if they strongly disagree; "2" if they somewhat disagree; "3" if they are neutral; "4" if they somewhat agree; and "5" if they strongly agree. Like the need for closure scale, some item were reverse coded.

Media Use. In today's fragmented media environment, it is often difficult to reliably measure what people are actually watching. Traditionally, researchers have

asked respondents to self-report how many days or hours of programming they watch per week (Bartels, 1993). However, self-reports of this nature place a heavy burden on the consumer to remember the media they have recently consumed – especially in a media environment with literally hundreds of choices (Dilliplane, Goldman, & Mutz, 2012). Furthermore, respondents may disagree about what counts as "news."

Dilliplane, Goldman, and Mutz (2012) found that the "programs list approach" was a valid and reliable way to measure audience exposure to political media. Using a three wave nationally representative sample of panel data, they discovered that respondents were able to reliably report media they consume regularly. Moreover, this technique had high predictive validity of over-time change in political knowledge.

The programs list approach offers a list of political programs and asks respondents to check the ones they watch regularly. Unlike the study by Dilliplane et al. (2012), that drew its list from the Nielsen ratings in 2007, the list used in this study was chosen for inclusion based on the Pew Research study (2010) on ideological media. This technique not only defines "news" for viewers, but also decreases cognitive demands on viewers because it does not require that viewers remember which programs they regularly consume. Dilliplane et al. noted that their approach may miss incidental exposure, however, they argued that respondents are unable to accurately respond to questions about incidental exposure anyway.

This study looked at ideological programs such as *The Rachel Maddow Show* and *The O'Reilly Factor*. It also examined consumption of the "daily newspaper," the *New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Additionally, it asked about exposure to two radio programs: Conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh and the PBS news show NPR.

Prior (2013) argued that construct validity for the programs list approach is poor because the approach doesn't measure amount of exposure to news media. While he agrees that the method is an improvement over self-reports that ask about amount of exposure, he maintains that the method is nonetheless insufficient. It still requires people to remember the names of programs or newspapers they consume and what they consume within a certain time period – all while ignoring amounts of exposure. Dilliplane, Goldman, and Mutz countered, however, that recognizing program names is much less taxing than mental recall. Additionally, they argued that to be a "regular" viewer, one would have to at least recognize the name of a program.

Prior argued that the programs list technique does not act as "a good proxy for the extent of news exposure" (621). For example, one person may watch MSNBC daily, while another only watches the network once a month. Under the programs list technique, both of these respondents would receive the same media "score" despite large differences in exposure. Respondents may over-estimate exposure. Thus, the "new" approach is susceptible to the same flaws as previous approaches that rely on self-reports and respondents' memories.

Prior also questions the measure's predictive validity. He states, "Someone can learn about the candidates without watching television news and watch television news without learning about the candidates" (628). Thus, one cannot determine political knowledge gains due to exposure – especially with the likelihood of interpersonal political discussion. While this is an important concern, the current study is not preoccupied with predictive validity of political knowledge gains – only whether people prefer likeminded media based on psychological determinants. Such factors are key for future studies, but not the work here.

In response to Prior, Dilliplane, Goldman, and Mutz argued that there is currently no better methodology. Although Prior suggested using techniques that monitor passive viewing, these scholars insist that passive techniques are, too, prone to measurement error. Though Prior did not specifically mention what constitutes "passive viewing," he mentioned that "cable and satellite providers track media use passively and automatically" (631), pointing to digital technologies that capture viewership in a natural setting.

Furthermore, Dilliplane et al. insist technologies developed by audience measurement companies do not currently exist in the United States. Even if these technologies were available, measuring the frequency of exposure in minutes or days would not accurately predict attitude change because, conceptually, what scholars really want to know is how many positive or negative arguments to which a person was exposed or how much novel information a person received. Due to inherent limitations, "knowing the programs that a viewer watched at least gets us closer to ascertaining the kind of content to which a person was exposed" (636). Still, these authors cite a Dutch 2012 study (the same study cited by Prior) that showed that the number of programs viewed and the duration of viewership tap the same construct, thereby indicating that their technique does, in fact, demonstrate construct validity.

Media Bias. To define "media bias," this research looked to several studies. Groseclose and Milyo (2005) of UCLA estimated media bias by ranking media outlets based upon ideological scores. A political quotient of "100" indicated highly liberal leanings and a score of "0" indicated conservative leanings. To compute these scores, the authors compared the number of times media outlets cited think tanks with the number of times members of Congress cited the same think tanks in political speeches. Centrist members of congress were given a score of "50." Groseclose and Milyo found a strong

liberal bias in most major media outlets, except for FOX and the *Washington Times*. *New York Times*, *LA Times*, and the *Washington Post* were deemed liberal. CNN and *USA Today* were largely centrist. In contrast, Jamieson and Cappella (2008) recognized the editorial pages of the *Wall Street Journal*, FOX, and Rush Limbaugh as having a conservative point of view.

Other studies have found ideological balance in the media industry (Graham & Lichter, 2013). For example, D'Alessio and Allen (2000) found no clear net bias when looking at presidential campaigns – at least in the newspaper industry. They looked at three types of bias, "gatekeeping bias, which is the preference for selecting stories from one party or the other; converge bias, which considers the relative amounts of coverage each party receives; and statement bias, which focuses on the favorability of coverage toward one party or the other" (p. 133).

D'Alessio and Allen wrote, "there is no evidence whatsoever of a monolithic liberal bias in the newspaper industry… The same can be said of a conservative bias: There is no significant evidence of it" (148). Bias in favor of Democrats was offset by bias in favor of Republicans. This is not to say that one individual newspaper does not contain bias, but that various newspapers balance each other. For this reason, the daily newspaper was deemed "neutral."

It appears that NPR is seen (at least by conservatives) as a liberal hub. Iyengar and Hahn (2009) found that conservatives tend to avoid NPR while liberals may seek NPR. The theory of selective exposure states that people tend to seek likeminded media while avoiding media with which they disagree. This indicates that conservatives see

NPR as holding as uncongenial point of view while liberals imagine NPR as holding a congenial point of view. Thus, this study maintains NPR as a liberal source of media.

This study examined 18 sources of media. FOX and its respective shows were considered "conservative," along with radio talk show host *Rush Limbaugh* and the *Wall Street Journal*. MSNBC and its respective shows were considered "liberal," as well as NPR and *The New York Times*. CNN was deemed neutral. This created an equal number of liberal and conservative media outlets. Liberal media included: NPR, MSNBC, *Rachel Maddow*, *Last Word*, *Chris Hayes* and *The New York Times*. Conservative media included Rush Limbaugh, FOX, *On the Record*, *The O'Reilly Factor*, *Hannity* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

Data Analysis

Frequencies. Frequencies were run on all variables. For example, how many respondents reported high levels of NFClosure/NFCognition? How many respondents reported a conservative orientation? (See Appendix C)

A "likeminded" variable was made by first creating a "liberal media" index. As mentioned, this included NPR, MSNBC, *Rachel Maddow*, *Last Word*, and *Chris Hayes*. This meant that if a respondent was liberal, likeminded media equaled using the preceding liberal choices. A conservative media index was also created including Rush Limbaugh, FOX, *On the Record*, *The O'Reilly Factor*, and *Hannity*. This meant that if a respondent was conservative, likeminded media equaled the preceding conservative choices. A new "likeminded" media variable was created representing likeminded choices of both groups. For example, if a respondent was liberal and he/she checked *Rachel Maddow* the individual got a "1" or if the respondent was conservative and he/she

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checked *Hannity* the individual also got a "1." Scores ranged from 1-5. If the participant was liberal and he/she checked both NPR and *Last Word* the individual got a "2." Similarly, if the respondent was conservative and he/she checked both Rush Limbaugh and *The O'Reilly Factor*, the individual also got a "2."

Hierarchical Regression. A hierarchical regression was run using "ideology (values ranged from 1-2, indicating liberal or conservative), likeminded media (values ranged from (0-5), need for cognition (values ranged from 1-5, where "5" indicated a high need for cognition), need for closure (values ranged from 1-5, where "5" indicated a high need fro closure), and the control variables: Age, income, race, gender, education, political knowledge (values ranged from 1-10, where "10" meant the respondent answered all 10 questions correctly) and political interest (values ranged from 1-5, where "5" indicated very interested). Conservatism (ideology) was regressed on NFClosure and NFCognition, as well as, the control variables. Likeminded media was regressed on conservatism, NFClosure, NFCognition, and the control variables. This answered hypotheses 1-5 (the model pathways) and RQ1: What is the relationship between need for closure and need for cognition. The demographic variables (age, income, race, gender and education) along this the political variables (political comprehension and political interest) were entered in block one. The psychological variables (NFCognition and NFClosure) were entered in block two. Conservatism (ideology) was entered into block three.

T-tests were run to answer RQ2 and RQ3, which asked: Which political orientation (conservative or liberal) is more likely to promote selective exposure of likeminded partisan media and which ideological orientation (conservative or liberal) has a higher need for cognition, respectively.

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Results

The sample in the study was fairly well distributed with 49.5% female and 50.5% male respondents. A total of 12.4% were of Hispanic or Latino descent. Of those that did not check "Hispanic/Latino," 75.4% were Caucasian; 9% were African American or black; 1.1% were American Indian or Eskimo; 7.4% were Pacific Islander; and 3% were multi-racial. (See Appendix B)

Ages ranged from 18 to 79 years. The sample was fairly young with 64.4% ranging between the ages of 18-44. A total of 35.6% were between the ages of 18-29; 28.8% were between the ages of 30-44; 22.2% were between the ages of 45-59; and 13.4% were between the ages of 60-79. Most had some college education or more. Only one fifth (18.9%) had a high school diploma or less; 64.3% had some college education or a 4-year degree. A total of 16.8% had a master's degree or Ph.D. Additionally, 44% estimated that their income for 2013 would be under $40,000; 15.7% expected an income between $40,000 and $60,000; 24.2% estimated their income to be between $60,000 and $100,000; and 16.1% estimated an income of more than $100,000. (See Appendix B)

Ideology was evenly split (49.3% liberal vs. 50.7% conservative). However, when it came to party identification, the sample shifted more towards the Democratic Party. Nearly 4 in 10 (38.4%) claimed to be Democrat, while only 24.7% claimed to be Republican. Also, 5.3% said they were Libertarian, 27.6% said they were 'independent," and 4% claimed "other." (See Appendix C)

A total of 35.9% indicated that they had a low need for cognition; 28.1% indicated that they were "moderate;" and 35.9% indicated they were high in

NFCognition.   A total of 35.7% indicated that they have a high need for closure; 33.7% were moderate; and 30.7% indicated they have a low NFClosure. (See Appendix C)

Nearly half (49.8%) of respondents indicated that they watch the local TV news. Cable news had the second highest appeal, with 43.2% indicating viewership of the FOX network and 43.3% indicating viewership of CNN. Comparatively, the MSNBC network drew 29.1% of respondents. When looking at individual cable programs, FOX was in the lead.   Nearly one fifth (18.4%) watch *The O'Reilly Factor* – the highest of any individual cable news program. *Hannity* scored second highest (9.7%) and *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren* came in third (7.4%). MSNBC drew the fewest number of viewers*: Rachel Maddow* (5.3%); *Last Word* (3.8%) and *Chris Hayes* (3.4%). About the same number of respondents that watch MSNBC also read the daily newspaper (30.6%).

The following table shows consumption rates.

Table 4.1
Percentages of Media use

Media	Percentages	Media	Percentages
Local TV News (neutral)	49.8%	Wall Street Journal (conservative)	16.3%
CNN (neutral)	43.3%	Sunday Shows (neutral)	13.3%
FOX (conservative)	43.2%	NPR (liberal)	12.9%
Daily Newspaper (neutral)	30.6%	Hannity (conservative)	9.7%
MSNBC (liberal)	29.1%	Rush Limbaugh (conservative)	8.7%
USA Today (neutral)	24.5%	On the Record (conservative)	7.4%
New York Times (liberal)	21.9%	Rachel Maddow (liberal)	5.3%
Evening News (neutral)	20.7%	Last Word (liberal)	3.8%
The O'Reilly Factor (conservative)	18.4%	Chris Hayes (liberal)	3.4%

Hierarchical Regression
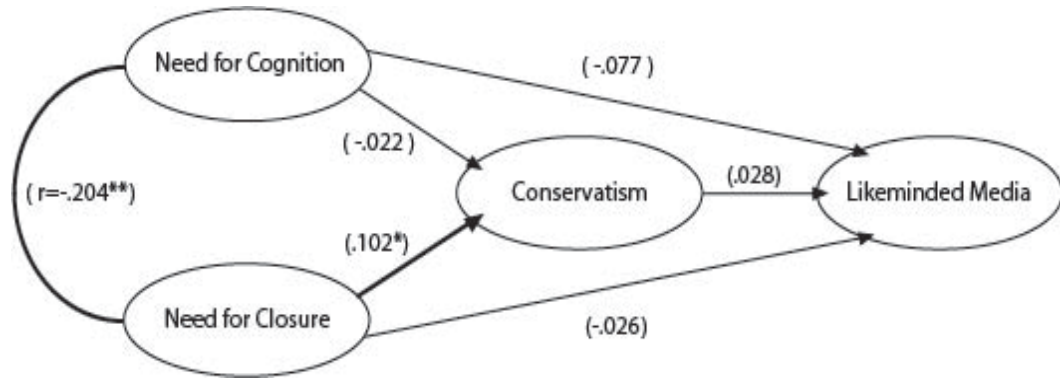
Figure 4.1. The impact of Need for Closure and Need for Cognition on conservatism and selective exposure to likeminded media.

Hierarchical Regression

Hypothesis 1: Previous findings show that conservatism is tied to the need for closure. Hypothesis one sought to confirm these findings. Hypothesis one stated that the need for closure positively predicts conservatism. Like previous studies, need for closure had a significant positive relationship with conservatism (beta=.102, p<.05). However, overall the relationship did not explain a significant percentage of the variance (ΔR^2=.012, F(7, 435)=.2.704, p=.068). An investigation of residuals revealed no violations of normality, homoscedasticity or linearity. Table 4.2 summarizes these relationships.

An independent samples t-test was also used to determine which orientation (conservative or liberal) had a higher need for closure. Previous research indicated a strong relationship between conservatism and NFClosure (Jost, et al., 2003b). This study yielded similar findings [t(258)=-2.449, p<.01; conservative mean 3.47, s.d. .617, liberal mean 3.28, s.d. .608).

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Hypothesis 2: Hypothesis two stated that conservatism positively predicts selective exposure of likeminded partisan media. This was not supported (beta = .028, p=.646) and a significant portion of the variance was not explained (ΔR^2=.001., F(1,225)=..212, p=.646). (See Table 4.3)

When the control variables (age, gender, education, income, race) and the political variables (political interest and comprehension) were removed the relationship between conservatism and likeminded media approaches significance (beta=.125, p=.053). This indicates a spurious relationship between conservatism and likeminded media. Although a t-test, reported below, indicates a positive relationship between conservatism and likeminded media, this relationship disappears when you control for strong variables such as age (beta=.172, p<.01) and political interest (beta=.363, p<.001). These predictors strongly influence whether or not one consumes likeminded media. As age increases, so does the tendency to practice selective exposure. Similarly, as political interest grows, so does one's likelihood of consuming likeminded media. Gender also showed to be a significant variable (beta=-.148, p<.05). Men were less likely than women to practice selective exposure [t(269)=3.03, p<.01; male mean = 1.007, s.d. 1.33; female mean = 1.541, s.d. 1.56) Because this is an unusual finding in the literature, more research must be conducted before any serious claims can be made.

Hypothesis 3: Hypothesis three asserted that the need for closure positively predicts selective exposure of likeminded partisan media. This was not supported (beta= -.026, p=.676). Significance did not improve when the demographic and political variables were removed. (See Table 4.3)

Hypothesis 4: Hypothesis four predicted those with a higher need for cognition would be less likely to hold conservative attitudes. Thus, it stated that the need for

cognition negatively predicts conservatism. This was not supported (beta=-.022, p=.673).
(See Table 4.2)

Hypothesis 5: Hypothesis five asserted that the need for cognition negatively predicts exposure of likeminded partisan media. This was also not supported (beta= -.077, p=.254). (See Table 4.3)

Research Question 1: Research question one asked about the relationship between the need for cognition and the need for closure. Findings were both significant and negative. (r=-.204**). Need for cognition has an inverse relationship with need for closure. Higher levels of need for closure related to lower levels of need for cognition.

Research Question 2: Research question two asked about political orientation and selective exposure. Specifically, are conservatives or liberals more likely to practice selective exposure? In this study, conservatives were more likely than liberals to practice selective exposure [t(272)=-1.972, p=.050; conservative mean 1.47, s.d. 1.45; liberal mean 1.09, s.d. 1.48]. However, as mentioned above, conservatism did not predict likeminded media and the relationship between conservatism and selective exposure appears spurious.

Research Question 3: Research question three asked about political orientation and need for cognition. Specifically, are conservatives or liberals more likely to have a higher need for cognition?   Results were non-significant [t(254)=.687, p=.246; conservative mean 3.29, s.d. .51, liberal mean 3.42, s.d. .54] While liberal had a slightly higher need for cognition than conservatives, the results were not significant.

Overall, the model was not successful. Although need for closure predicted conservatism, conservatism did not predict selective exposure to likeminded media, nor did need for cognition. The only variables that reached significance were political interest, age, and gender, which predicted exposure to likeminded media. Furthermore,

need for cognition did not predict conservatism. Although a previous study indicated a negative relationship between social conservatism and need for cognition (Allbarracin & Mitchell, 2004), this did not prove to be the case in this study. However, need for cognition had an inverse relationship with need for closure; higher levels of NFClosure were associated with lower levels of NFCognition.

Table 4.2.
Hierarchical Regression Predicting Conservatism from Psychological Determinants and Individual Characteristics

	Conservatism	
	Model 1 ß	Model 2 ß
Individual Characteristics		
Race	-.033	-.032
Gender	-.157**	-.152**
Age	.175***	.163**
Education	-.022	-.022
Income	.015	.017
Political Interest	.019	.024
Political Comp.	.021	-.017
Psychological Determinants		
Need for Cognition		-.022
Need for Closure		.102*
R^2	.050	.062
Adj. R^2	.035	.043
Adj. R^2 Change	.050	.012

Note: *<.05 **<.01 ***<.001

Table 4.3.
Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Like-mined Media from Psychological Determinants and Individual Characteristics

| | Like-minded Media | | |
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	ß	ß	ß
Individual Characteristics			
Race	.010	.006	.007
Gender	-.157*	-.154*	-.148*
Age	.174**	.177**	.172*
Education	.109	.117	.117
Income	.051	.039	.038
Political Interest	.334***	.363***	.363***
Political Comp.	.041	.055	.056
Psychological Determinants			
Need for Cognition		-.079	-.077
Need for Closure		-.022	-.026
Conservatism			.028
R^2	.233	.237	.238
Adj. R^2	.209	.207	.204
Adj R^2 Change	.233	.005	.001

Note: *<.05 **<.01 ***<.001

Discussion

This study tested a model of media use to discover the impact of two psychological variables (NFCognition and NFClosure) on conservatism and selective exposure to likeminded partisan media. Five hypotheses were presented: (1) Need for closure positively predicts selective exposure; (2) Need for cognition negatively predicts selective exposure; (3) Conservatism positively predicts selective exposure; (4) Need for closure positively predicts conservatism; and (5) Need for closure negatively predicts conservatism.

Like previous studies, a positive relationship emerged between NFClosure and conservatism. No such relationship emerged between the NFCognition and conservatism. Moreover, the psychological variables did not predict exposure to likeminded media. Although the relationship between conservatism and likeminded media approached significance in the absence of the control variables, this relationship disappeared when political interest and age were introduced.

This model only held up, in part. Indeed, a significant negative relationship emerged between NFCognition and NFClosure and a significant positive relationship emerged between NFClosure and conservatism, thus, two of the paths were confirmed. The prediction is as follows:

Figure 5.1. The predicted impact of Need for Closure and Need for Cognition on conservatism and selective exposure to likeminded media.

However, the other paths were non-significant. Need for cognition did not have a significant path to either conservatism or likeminded media and conservatism did not have a significant path to likeminded media. One of the predictions made by this model was that NFClosure would drive media exposure indirectly via conservatism. This did not prove true. Although NClosure predicted conservatism, conservatism did not predict selective exposure to likeminded media. The results are as follows:

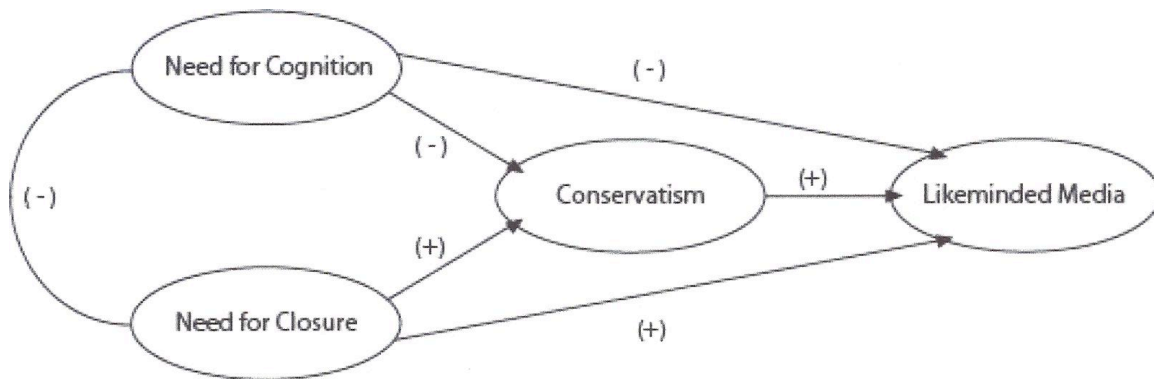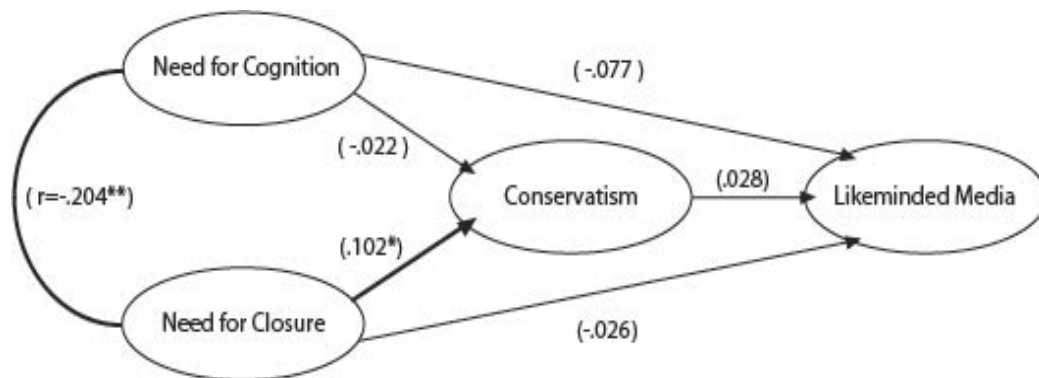

Figure 5.2. The impact of Need for Closure and Need for Cognition on conservatism and selective exposure to likeminded media.

NFClosure and Ideology

Though some scholars question the link between one's psychological profile and his or her ideological beliefs (e.g. Durrheim, 1997), evidence shows a connection between psycho-cognitive factors and one's attitude (Jost & Amodio, 2012; Smith et al., 2012). Hypothesis one predicted higher levels of NFClosure would lead to higher levels of conservatism. This was supported. Thus, the work here supports Jost et al.'s theory of political ideology as motivated social cognition. This theory assumes that one's personality combines with social elements to direct political orientation (Jost, 2006). In this study, NFClosure partially explained why individuals assume a conservative orientation. Thus, evidence supports the notion that ideology has psychological antecedents.

This may partially explain why not all conservatives think alike. For example, members of the Republican Party swing from moderate to extreme. While some are more "middle-road," others take an extreme conservative position, like those of the Tea Party. According to the theory of ideology as motivated social cognition and the threat-likelihood model presented by Jost and his colleagues, those who are more sensitive to threat and highly motivated to protect self-interests may assume an extreme conservative position – one that minimizes change and strengthens the current social hierarchy. In contrast, those with a moderate reaction to threat may assume a moderate position.

Theoretically, conservatives may have a lower threshold for political situations that produce anxiety. For example, a conservative may find a regime change – such as the change from Presidents Bush to Obama – extremely disturbing. Although regime change is disturbing for members of both political orientations (liberal and conservative) it may be especially so for conservatives because of a heightened threat response in the brain (Amodio, 2012). A study by Thorisdottir and Jost (2011) found that when

threatened, individuals reported greater degrees of conservatism, a preference for the Republican Party, and close-mindedness – a trait associated with conservatism.

Those with a need for closure also tend to consider fewer competing hypotheses or limit information that is inconsistent with their beliefs or predictions (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). They leap to judgment, are reluctant to consider multiple perspectives, and lack cognitive flexibility (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Indeed, need for closure predicts a preference for simplified judgment (van Hiel & Mervielde, 2003; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994) and reduces the likelihood of systematic processing (Leone, Wallace, & Modglin, 1999).

Those with high (vs. low) NFClosure largely rely on stereotypic information and preconceived notions (van Hiel & Mervielde, 2002). This tendency may lead to erroneous or ignorant conclusions because the individual fails to give the matter much thought or scrutiny. This phenomenon is known as a fundamental attribution error – a tendency to underestimate situational factors and overestimate personal characteristics when explaining behavior (Ross, Green, & House, 1977). To illustrate this finding, consider the right-wing rhetoric about President Barack Obama. If economic policies are failing, some blame the President, saying that he is generally unprepared or incapable of handling affairs. Rather than examine the myriad of factors leading to an economic down turn, these individuals attribute the failure to the President; they see failure as the result of his consistent character flaws.

Those with a high need for closure also value group norms and tend to reject dissenting voices (Kruglanski & Webster, 1991), which may explain the power of FOX Nation – the united viewers of the Fox News Channel. Overall, the need for closure stimulates group centrism and heightens the perceived value of the collectivity (Kruglanski et al., 2006; Shah, Kruglanski, & Thompson, 1998). In order to maintain the

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group, members must accept common beliefs. Thus, it may be fair to suggest that if the Republican Party stands united against environmental reform, for example, so too will the individual member. Similarly, if FOX news anchors dismiss these concerns, so too may the individual viewer. In contrast, there is no such thing as MSNBC Nation. Though programs like *The Rachel Maddow Show* have a loyal base of fans, there is no similar sentiment for the MSNBC network. Over the past decade, *The O'Reilly Factor* has proved to be the king of cable news, drawing the largest number of viewers, overall, On the whole, *The O'Reilly Factor drew 18.4%* of viewers in this study, compared to *The Rachel Maddow Show*, which only drew 5.3% of viewers. In general, FOX's ideological programs drew more viewers than MSNBC's ideological programs. Thus, if Nielsen ratings – and the figures in this study – are any indication of group centrism, then it might be fair to conclude that loyal viewership goes hand in hand with a desire to join the collectivity.

The need for closure may be problematic for democracy because it strengthens the tendency towards simplistic processing and limits the desire for reevaluation. Once an impression is formed of a particular candidate or issue, the book is closed; thus, those with a high need for closure may be reluctant to reconsider their issue position, regardless of new information. Furthermore, those with a high need for closure – including authoritarians – tend to be swayed by party interests. If the Party takes a strong stand, individual members will follow suit, primarily because they value group cohesion and possess intolerance for a diverse array of opinion (Kruglanski, et al,, 2006).

This is not to say that the need for closure doesn't have certain political benefits. At times, swift decisions are necessary. For example, when deciding whether or not to build a dam to satisfy immediate needs for energy or electricity.   Whereas liberals may wish to conduct a myriad of environmental impact studies, thereby delaying a legislative

vote, conservatives may push for prompt construction. In this case, juggling multiple perspectives and considerations delays legislative change and may ultimately fail to meet the immediate needs of the citizenry. It may be especially important to execute a plan of action during times of crisis, such as the aftermath of 9/11 or during a congressional financial meltdown. While those with a low need for closure may take time to gather information and weigh multiple perspectives, those with a high need for closure may take swift action. In this sense those with a high need for closure may be more "goal" oriented and those with a low need for closure may be more "process" oriented.

It is also important to note that although conservatism is associated with need for closure – and thus, a preference for the status quo – the issue of 'change' does not rest solely with conservatives. While research indicates that conservatives have a higher need for closure than liberals, it is a psychological trait that spans both political orientations. Thus, members of both parties (Republican and Democrat) are encouraged to reconsider previous convictions in lieu of new information and maintain a cool head in the face of uncertainty.

Selective exposure and conservatism.

Unlike previous studies, this study did not find that selective exposure is motivationally driven. Under its earliest conception, researchers noted that selective exposure was motivated by the need to reduce cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). In the 1970s, Katz et al. proposed that media consumption is an active endeavor to satisfy the need for useful information – information that may be used to reaffirm the self or promote one's beliefs within a societal framework. In contemporary times, researchers have examined selective exposure as a function of informational processing (Johnson, et al., 2012) and a way to reduce mental effort. As Edwards and Smith (1996) noted, it takes more energy to process information that challenges one's beliefs than information

that confirms one's viewpoint. Thus, selective exposure conserves mental resources. All three of these viewpoints support the notion that selective exposure is a motivational phenomenon. Whether intentionally or not, it suggests that people are motivated to consume media in order to reduce dissonance or to conserve mental effort.

Hart et al. (2009) proposed that defense motivation is partly driven by the strength of commitment to one's beliefs, which increase the search for congenial information. In general, conservatives tend to have unwavering beliefs. George Lakoff (1996) suggested that conservatives assume a strict moral code – one that leaves no room for compromise. Thus, attitudes formed in the political realm are likely to be strong – even severe. He posited that conservatives see the world in black-and-white terms, in which there is a war between the forces of good and the forces of evil.

Hart et al. (2009) discovered that those greatly committed to their beliefs were more likely to hunt for evidence that confirmed those beliefs. Further, confirmation bias – seeking out attitudinally consistent arguments while avoiding inconsistent arguments (Lodge & Taber, 2005) – increased when beliefs were linked to one's enduring values, such as patriotism. Thus, the authors proposed that individuals are more likely to seek supportive material when politics are personal. Similarly, Brannon et al. (2006) discovered that strong attitudes yielded more selective exposure to attitudinally consistent information. Generally, the more one favors an outcome or opinion, the more one will seek to support it.

This study failed to find a positive association between selective exposure of politically partisan media and conservatism. This may suggest that liberals and conservatives are equally committed to their beliefs. Whereas conservatives may be committed to legislation that supports the death penalty, liberals may be committed to legislation that supports universal healthcare, for example. Thus, they may be equally

likely to hunt for evidence that confirms their beliefs – one group is not more like practice selective exposure than the other. People of both orientations may be equally likely to search for information that confirms their beliefs or equally likely to conserve mental effort.

This line of thinking follows the conclusion outlined in Stroud's book *Niche News*. Research shows that political predisposition motivates media selection (2008). Those with strong political beliefs were more likely to practice selective exposure. This tendency was heightened during times of political conflict, such as during an election. Furthermore, strong partisans may avoid political outlets that disagree with their convictions or produce a negative affect because of this conflict. Stroud summarized that selective exposure may be contingent on feelings of personal relevance. If liberals and conservatives are equally committed to their beliefs because they find topics personally relevant, then they may be equally likely to practice selective exposure.

Selective exposure and need for closure

Though conservatism is positively related to need for closure, NFClosure does not drive selective exposure. Contrary to hypothesis three, a negative non-significant relationship emerged between the need for closure and selective exposure. It was hypothesized that those with a high need for closure would seize upon an answer and then rely on media to "freeze" that answer or solidify the answer. It appears that those with a high need for closure have already reached a definitive conclusion prior to exposure and do not require congenial media to confirm their beliefs. Perhaps such exposure is unappealing because it delays the freezing process or because it requires additional consideration. For example, if one has already decided that global warming is a myth or that the personal use of high-powered rifles threatens societal safety, one does not need additional evidence or discussion to know one is right. Such additives would be

a waste of energy and delay the inevitable conclusion. Indeed, it's faster to "close the book on the case" without any new information – even supportive information. In contrast, if one only has "seized" upon an answer, he or she may still need verification in order to "freeze" upon that answer.

In summary, the need for closure has two phases: Seizing and freezing. According to these findings, those who have passed phase two (freezing) do not turn to attitudinal consistent media. More research must be conducted to determine the consumption habits of those who have seized upon an answer, but have yet to freeze upon it. In short, future research should consider the "undecided voter."

Conservatism and cognition

Hypothesis four predicted those with a higher need for cognition would be less likely to hold conservative attitudes. This was not supported; results were non-significant. The results in this study are incongruent with the literature. Indeed, one study found a negative relationship between need for cognition and social conservatism (Allbarracin & Mitchell, 2004). Other studies have tied conservatism to low-effort thinking (Eidelman et al., 2012). As mentioned, Eidelman and his colleagues found that when systematic thinking was compromised, such as when subjects were intoxicated, individuals were more likely to endorse conservative issue positions. Similarly, Skitka et al. (2002) found that liberals assumed conservative attitudes when their mental resources were taxed.

Research also suggests that conservatives are not high on integrative complexity (Jost, et al., 2003b) – the tendency toward complex thinking. Philip Tetlock (1984) explained that integrative complexity is based on differentiation and integration. Differentiation is the ability to recognize multiple perspectives when making evaluations (Gruenfeld, 1985). While examining speeches of United States senators, for example,

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Tetlock discovered that liberal senators demonstrated more complexity than conservative senators and were more likely to reach a nuanced conclusion – one that integrated multiple factors, such as various points of view. Despite prior findings, results from this study do not support the hypothesis that conservatives have a lower need for cognition. This suggests that integrative complexity and systematic thinking are not the same construct as need for cognition. It also suggests that conservatives are no less likely than liberals to enjoy thinking.

Selective exposure and need for cognition

Hypothesis five asserted that the need for cognition negatively predicts selective exposure. It was assumed that those with a high need for cognition would prefer balanced or "traditional" media because these sources require more intellectual output in order to juggle multiple perspectives. Thus, those who prefer to think might also prefer media outlets that offer varying points of view. This was not supported.

The findings were in the predicted direction, but non-significant at the .05 level of probability (beta=-.077, p=.254). In this study, subjects with a high need for cognition were less likely to consume politically partisan media, as predicted. The reason why findings may not be significant is because those high in need for cognition may prefer both "traditional" and partisan media. It is possible that those with a high need for cognition enjoy juggling multiple perspectives, but also like the rich analysis that tends to accompany partisan media. Both sources may provide the opportunity for high-level consideration, thus, both may be appealing to those with a high need for cognition.

In addition, niche news – like the political coverage presented on ideological programs – may prod the viewer to deeply consider the values at stake. For example, when considering whether or not individual citizens should be able to possess high-powered rifles, ideological programs like *The Rush Limbaugh Show* may explore themes

such as personal safety and freedom. This may prompt listeners to weigh these values compared with the value of public safety, thus, juggling multiple values. In contrast, traditional media may only give cursory attention to these values, instead, focusing on legislative decisions and the facts of the case. Because juggling one's values requires more cognitive effort, it may appeal to those with a higher need for cognition.

Need for cognition and need for closure

This study asked about the relationship between two dispositional factors: Need for cognition and need for closure. Analysis reveals that this relationship is both significant and negative (r=−.204, p<.001). The higher one's need for closure, the more likely one will have a low need for cognition and vice versa.

Webster and Kruglanski (1994) made the case that these two factors are not necessarily at odds. They argued that while need for closure usually results in superficial thinking, it may result in high-effort thinking when initial efforts are unrewarding. This line of thinking was unsupported. In this study, evidence indicates that the need to reach a speedy conclusion (NFClosure) is at odds with enjoyment of deep thought (NFCognition). While those with a high need for closure wish for an end-state, those with a high need for cognition wish to delay an end-state, as to prolong the enjoyment of pensive consideration.

Conclusion

This study advances the theory of political ideology as motivated social cognition, advanced by Jost and his colleagues. This theory suggests that if one has a need for safety, for example, one will advocate the use of firearms, and thus, adopt a conservative attitude. The need for safety motivates a conservative ideology. Because their work specifically deals with conservatism – and not liberalism – a liberal example is not offered. Thus, this theory may be considered a work in progress.

This study indicates that the need for closure spurs conservatism. Those that wish for an end-state gravitate towards a conservative ideology, supporting the notion that ideology is motivationally driven. Because the status quo is marked by stability, those with the need for closure (the need to mitigate ambiguity) gravitate towards a conservative ideology – an orientation that tends to favor the status quo. For example, conservatives may only support marriage between a man and a woman because this type of marriage is a tradition in the United States and is believed to support stable family relations. These same individuals may not support same-sex marriage because it opens the door to ambiguity and breaks from the status quo.

The theory of political ideology as motivated social cognition contends that ideology – specifically conservatism – is motivated by one's various needs. This was supported. Need for closure predicted conservatism.

Findings only marginally add to the theory of selective exposure. It was discovered that the two psychological variables neither directly nor indirectly drive selective exposure of likeminded partisan media. Thus, the presented model was only partially successful.

In the 1970s, Katz et al. proposed media consumption is motivationally driven as a means of satisfying the need for useful information. Future research showed that media is motivationally driven as a means to conserve mental effort. This study did not support the motivational hypothesis. Neither the needs for closure or cognition significantly motivated media use. Furthermore, although conservatism is partially motivated by the need for closure, it does not motivate media use. Therefore, NFClosure neither motivates selective exposure directly, nor indirectly.

This study found that political interest and age drive selective exposure of likeminded partisan media. The greater one's interest in politics and the older one gets, the more likely that one will consume congenial media. When these variables were removed, the relationship between conservatism and likeminded media improved, which indicates a spurious relationship between conservatism and likeminded media.

These findings are consistent with the literature. In general, studies do not find that political orientation guides selective exposure; conservatives are no more likely than liberals to hunt for supportive media. However, political interest is a predominate factor. For example, Stroud (2010) found that people that people that practice partisan selective exposure are more politically interested. It appears that the reciprocal is true. Greater levels of political interest predict greater levels of selectivity. Perhaps political interest relates to feelings of relevancy. It is possible that people search for congenial information because they find it more credible (Stroud, 2010), and thus, more relevant to their lives. If political interest is related to relevancy then it's possible that congenial information is more interesting because it's deemed relevant. Future scholars may wish to test the relationship between perceived relevancy and selective exposure.

This study indicates that politically interested individuals are more likely to consume supportive partisan media, and thus, are more subjects to its effects. This is

because that more partisan exposure leads to more selective exposure effects (Bennett, 2002; Best, Chmielewski, & Krueger, 2005; Hollander, 1996). Selective exposure is both beneficial and detrimental to democracy. As Stroud (2010; 2011b) found, media exposure of politically partisan media exacerbates the tendency toward political extremism and may reduce the likelihood of rational debate between partisans who can't see eye-to-eye. Furthermore, partisan selective exposure does not enable critical thinking (Stroud, 2011a). Media consumers are spoon-fed political opinion, and as such, are not prodded to weigh information or determine its integrity. Additionally, selective exposure is related to poor decision-making (Kray & Galinsky, 2003). In general, people tend to evaluate evidence in a manner that allows them to maintain their original position, regardless of any new or pertinent information (Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987). Thus, new information cannot be processed independently of one's prior convictions (Edwards & Smith, 1996; Kunda, 1990; Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1970), which may lead to biased conclusions.

If politically interested individuals gravitate toward programs like *The O'Reilly Factor* they may form more extreme beliefs and may experience elevated defense confidence. Those highly invested and involved in a political campaign, for example, may be unlikely or incapable of seeing the attributes of an oppositional campaign. Campaign contributions may similarly find it hard to believe the ethos of a rival candidate.

However, exposure to partisan media may also have certain benefits. As Stroud aptly noted, partisan exposure can be beneficial to democracy (2011). Selective exposure increases knowledge and political activism (Johnson, Bichard, & Zhang, 2009; Johnson, Zhang, & Bichard, 2011; Stroud, 2011). The more people practice selective exposure, the more likely they will join the political conversation. However, while this is

beneficial, it also increases the inequity between those who are active and those who avoid politics. Ultimately, those with depressed engagement may be underrepresented in the political sphere (Stroud, 2011).

Though increased exposure to partisan sources leads to polarization (Stroud, 2010), it does not appear to impact political tolerance (Johnson, Bichard, Zhang, & Kaye, 2010). While some studies show that less tolerant individuals tend to be more reliant on supporting information (Hardy, Scheufele, & Wang, 2005; Mutz, 2002; Pettigrew, 1997), the reciprocal may not be true. In fact, Johnson et al. (2009) found a positive association between tolerance and selectivity. Johnson et al. argued that for democracy to flourish, people must be tolerant to a range of political views. This is of utmost importance – especially now, as a wide range of partisan sources are available online, increasing the need and ability of citizens to selectively expose themselves to congenial media. Though the political divide may be growing due to the increased selection of ideological supportive content, it is possible that citizens may retain the ability to discuss political matters with a measure of openness, and therefore, reach a consensus (Stroud, 2011b).

It does not appear that those with a high need for closure consume more congenial media. This is generally good news because nearly one third (35.7%) of those surveyed indicated a high need for closure. This suggests that the need for closure won't necessarily exacerbate the political divide – at least not via selective exposure. Despite the fact that need for closure reduces the likelihood that one will entertain contrary thoughts (because those with a high need for closure readily settle on one conclusion), these individuals are no more likely to practice selective exposure or become subject to its effects than those low in need for closure. Indeed, they are no more likely to make poor political decisions than those with a high need for closure. It also does not appear

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that the need for cognition promotes selectivity. This is also good news because nearly one third (35.9%) indicated a low need for cognition.

This is the first study to test the impact of psycho-cognitive factors on selective exposure. In this study, the two psychological variables did not have a significant impact on media use. Future studies should test other psycho-cognitive factors such as the need for evaluation (those who hold strong opinions or have a need to evaluate) or the need for orientation (the need to be familiar with one's surroundings), to discover how these elements relate to the model.

One such element is "anxiety." Conservatives are more prone to feelings of threat and anxiety than liberals (Oxley, et al., 2008). Future research should test the relationship between anxiety and the need for closure and discover whether anxiety caused by a turbulent political environment increases the need for closure or reduces the tendency toward selective exposure. For example, if conservatives are anxious because their favored candidate is likely to lose, do they have a higher need for closure? If so, will they assume a more conservative orientation? The present study only hints at these answers. Much more research must be done before we can understand the weight of psychology on selective exposure.

Limitations

A major limitation in this study was the lack of significance in results. The model did not hold up as presented. Neither of the psychological variables significantly impacted media use. Though psychological factors such as defense confidence (Hart, 2009) appear to drive selective exposure, the needs for closure and cognition do not. Furthermore, need for cognition was not related to conservatism (conservatives are not less likely to enjoy thinking than liberals) and the relationship between conservatism and selective exposure appears spurious. Thus, the model was unsuccessful.

To adjust the model, future scholars should look at factors such as strength of party commitment. Hart et al. (2009) suggested that defense motivation is partly driven by the strength of commitment to one's beliefs, which in turn, predicts a search for congenial behavior. Though this study asked participants to self-rate their degree of conservatism, it did not test political affiliation. Knowing an individual's level of commitment to the Republican or Democrat Party may yield clues about their need for closure. Those who have settled on a particular party may have also settled on a particular belief system. By so doing, they have muted the ambiguity that accompanies indecision, thus satisfying the need for closure. Such questions may include: Are those with a strong need for closure more likely to report a strong commitment to a particular party? What is the relationship between political affiliation and selective exposure when considering the need for closure?

Though conservatism is related to low effort thinking (Eidelman et al., 2012), it may not be related to the need for cognition. This suggests that there is a difference between *how* someone thinks and how much he or she *desires* to think. In the Eidelman et al. study, they found that intoxicated individuals were more likely to endorse conservative issue positions. Essentially, they discovered that when mentally taxed, individuals assume conservative attitudes. However, they did not test the desire for deliberation or problem solving. Perhaps alcohol diminished motivation or made thinking undesirable. If so, then it is possible that bar patrons did not simply endorse conservative politics because they were "dumber." Rather, these individuals were not motivated to consider the values inherent in political legislation. Thus, alcohol may have reduced the need for cognition. This line of thinking suggests that alcohol predicts low-effort thinking and not conservatism, which may explain why this study did not find a significant relationship between conservatism and NFCognition. Another study found

that liberals assumed conservative attitudes when their mental resources were taxed (Skitka et al., 2002), however, like the previous study the authors did not test for motivation.

Also, this study used the programs list approach, which provided media choices for participants. One drawback is that there were a limited number of partisan programs, websites and newspapers – only those listed in the survey. If participants were to have more choices, would a stronger tendency towards selective exposure occur? This was a limitation is this study and a possible avenue for future research.

Future Research

The work here specifically tests selective exposure to likeminded media but does not test selective avoidance. Fewer studies have documented selective avoidance – especially online (Chaffee, Nichols, Graf, Sandvig,,& Hahn, 2001; Garrett, 2009b; Johnson, Bichard, & Zhang, 2011; Johnson, et al., 2011). Selective avoidance is the tendency to actively avoid unsympathetic material. Garrett (2009) noted a difference between selective exposure and selective avoidance. He found that while people may display a preference for opinion-reinforcing content, they might not systematically avoid opinion that challenges their beliefs. Thus, selective exposure and selective avoidance may be measured separately. Chaffee and his colleagues (2001) came to a similar conclusion. They found that individuals do not necessarily shy away from content that challenges their beliefs. Thus, selective exposure does not necessarily predict selective avoidance. Future scholars should run the model with a nod towards selective avoidance.

Conservatism and need for cognition. Albarracin and Mitchell (2004) found that NFCognition negatively correlates with social conservatism. They used Henningham's social-conservatism scale (1996). This study did not mirror their results, suggesting that there might be a difference between self-reported conservatism (used in

this study) and 'social' conservatism. Future scholars should test the model using a social conservatism scale that does not rely on self-reports. Alternatively, scholars could test economic conservatism, such as the scale created by Henningham (1997). Henningham argued that most conservative scales have a limited shelf life because values of the community change; what was radical in the past becomes the conventional wisdom of today. His scale looks at factors such as political activism and social welfare.

Conservatism and need for closure. As Jost et al. noted, individuals with a high need for closure gravitate towards a conservative orientation that favors the status quo. Greater needs for closure prompt greater levels of conservatism. When selecting a political representative, it might be helpful to understand a candidate's need for closure because it may hint as to where the individual may lie on the political spectrum. If the politician has a high need for closure, then he or she may gravitate towards legislation that support the status quo or traditional ways of living. Extreme needs for closure may indicate extreme political beliefs. Future scholars may wish to spend time understanding the psychological profiles of government representatives, if possible, to see if the extremity of one's beliefs corresponds with higher levels of NFClosure. Such information may be useful to citizens.

Liberalism. This study was based on the premise that conservatives value the status quo (Jost et al., 2003a) and struggle with change (O'Hara, 2011) because they have a need for closure. These scholars suggested that political orientation is driven by one's needs, such as the need for safety (Jost, et al., 2003b). In this sense, ideology can be understood as motivated cognition (Jost, et al., 2003b). Furthermore, Jost and his colleagues presented the uncertainty-threat model to describe the relationship between uncertainty avoidance, threat management, and conservatism. They found that both of these factors (avoidance and threat management) independently contribute to

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conservatism. Another study found that sensitivity to threat predicted one's attitudes on specific issues (Oxley, et al., 2008). Respondents that were more sensitive to sudden noise and threatening visual imagery were more likely to support capital punishment, patriotism, defense spending, and the Iraq War (Oxley, et al., 2008). Similarly, study by Thorisdottir and Jost (2011) found that when threatened, individuals reported greater degrees of conservatism.

Less is known about liberals. What motivates liberals to adopt various issue positions? If conservatives are motivated by socio-cognitive factors to reduce threat and ambiguity, what prompts a liberal orientation? Liberals are thought to entertain multiple perspectives under the belief that they have a lower need for closure and are, thus, better equipped to handle ambiguity. Indeed, liberals tend to favor progress over the stability afforded by the status quo. But some liberals also have a need for closure. What motivates these individuals to adopt a liberal point of view? Furthermore Rokeach (1956) argued that authoritarianism might exist on both the left and the right, rather than being solely a right-wing phenomenon. Is there such a thing and *left* winged authoritarianism, and if so, how would this impact the model?

Future studies should consider these questions and run the model with a nod towards liberalism or explore the psycho-cognitive factors that drive liberalism. It might be equally important to consider "moderates" or "undecided" voters. These individuals may be highly committed to their beliefs, even though they lack strong party ties. Though scholarly knowledge about selective exposure has grown over the years, many questions remain. Future work should consider a range of political orientations and motivating factors when studying selective exposure.

Appendix A

Which of the following sources of news do you watch or read regularly? Please check any that you watch at least once a month.

The O'Reilly Factor	_____
Daily Show	_____
New York Times	_____
Wall Street Journal	_____
Economist, etc.	_____
CNN	_____
FOX News	_____
MSNBC	_____
New Yorker, etc.	_____
News blogs	_____
Rush Limbaugh	_____
NPR	_____
Local TV news	_____
USA Today	_____
The Rachel Maddow Show	_____
Daily Newspaper	_____
On the Record with Greta Van Susteren	_____
Sunday shows	_____
Network evening news	_____
The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell	_____
Hardball	_____
Hannity	_____

Do you generally consider yourself to be…
       1) Very liberal
       2) Liberal
       3) Moderate
       4) Conservative
       5) Very conservative

In politics today, do you consider yourself…
       1= Republican
       2= Democrat
       3= Libertarian
       4= Independent
       5= Other_____

Now it's time to test your political knowledge of people and current events by taking our short 10-question quiz.

1. Do you happen to know if the national unemployment rate as reported by the government is currently closer to …
   a) 4%
   b) 9% (CORRECT)
   c) 15%
   d) 21%
   e) DK/ Refused

2. The Obama administration is proposing revisions to the "No Child Left Behind" Act. That legislation deals with which of the following issues?
   a) Education (CORRECT)
   b) Adoption
   c) Nutrition
   d) DK/Refused

3. Do you happen to know the name of the current Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives?
   a) Nancy Pelosi
   b) Newt Gingrich
   c) John McCain
   d) John Boehner (CORRECT)
   e) DK/Refused

4. Thinking about Congress, do Republicans currently have a majority in…
   a) The House of Representatives (CORRECT)
   b) The Senate
   c) Both the House and the Senate
   d) Neither the House nor the Senate
   e) DK/Refused

5. On which of these activities does the U.S. government currently spend the most money? Is it…
   a) Scientific Research
   b) Medicare (CORRECT)
   c) Education
   d) Interest on national debt
   e) DK/Refused

6. What job does Chuck Hagel currently hold?
   a) Secretary of Defense (CORRECT)
   b) A senator
   c) Secretary of State
   d) DK/Refused

7. Do you happen to know the name of the current President of Syria?
   a) Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud
   b) Jalah Talabani
   c) Bashar al-Assad (CORRECT)
   d) Mahmoud Ahmadinejab
   e) DK/Refused

8. Sequestration is under debate in Congress. Do you happen to know if "sequester" means…
   a) Targeted cuts to defense spending
   b) Expanding Medicare
   c) A general cut in spending (CORRECT)
   d) Lowering the federal interest rate
   e) DK/Refused

9. The use of semi-automatic weapons …
   a) Is subject to federal laws, but not state laws
   b) Is legal in some states, but restricted in others (CORRECT)
   c) Is banned in every state
   d) Is protected by the 4th amendment
   e) DK/Refused

10. Do you happen to know if the national minimum wage as reported by the government is currently closer to …
   a) $7.25/Hour (CORRECT)
   b) $9.16/Hour
   c) $10.00/Hour
   d) There is no federal minimum wage
   e) DK/Refused

In this section, you are asked to indicate your preferences regarding your routine and everyday situations. Please mark a "1" if you strongly disagree; "2" if you somewhat disagree; "3" if you are neutral; "4" if you somewhat agree; and "5" if you strongly agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I don't like situations that are uncertain.					
I dislike questions that could be answered in many different ways					
I find that a well-ordered life with regular hours suits my temperament.					
I feel uncomfortable when I don't understand the reason why an event occurred in my life.					
I feel irritated when one person disagrees with what everyone else in a group believes.					
I don't like to go into a situation without knowing what I can expect from it.					

When I have made a decision, I feel relieved.					
When I am confronted with a problem, I'm dying to reach a solution very quickly.					
I would quickly become impatient and irritated if I would not find a solution to a problem immediately.					
I don't like to be with people who are capable of unexpected actions.					
I dislike it when a person's statement could mean many different things.					
I find that establishing a consistent routine enables me to enjoy life more.					
I enjoy having a clear and structured mode of life.					

I do not usually consult many different opinions before forming my own view.					
I dislike unpredictable situations.					

Next, you will indicate how much you agree when it comes to problem solving and handling certain situations. Please mark a "1" if you strongly disagree; "2" if you somewhat disagree; "3" if you are neutral; "4" if you somewhat agree; and "5" if you strongly agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I would prefer complex to simple problems.					
I like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking.					
Thinking is not my idea of fun. REVERSE CODE					
I would rather do something that requires little thought than something that is sure to challenge my					

thinking abilities. REVERSE CODE				
I try to anticipate and avoid situations where there is a likely chance I will have to think in depth about something. REVERSE CODE				
I find satisfaction in deliberating hard and for long hours.				
I only think as hard as I have to. REVERSE CODE				
I prefer to think about small, daily projects to long-term ones. REVERSE CODE				
I like tasks that require little thought once I've learned them. REVERSE CODE				

The idea of relying on thought to make my way to the top appeals to me.					
I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems.					
Learning new ways to think doesn't excite me very much. REVERSE CODE					
I prefer my life to be filled with puzzles that I must solve.					
The notion of thinking abstractly is appealing to me.					
I would prefer a task that is intellectual, difficult, and important to one that is somewhat important but does not require much thought.					

I feel relief rather than satisfaction after completing a task that required a lot of mental effort. REVERSE CODE				
It's enough for me that something gets the job done; I don't care how or why it works. REVERSE CODE				
I usually end up deliberating about issues even when they do not affect me personally.				

What is your gender?
      1=male
      2=female

What is your age as of your last birthday?_____
      (range 18 to 110)

What is the highest grade or year of school you have completed?.
      1=less than high school
      2=high school graduate
      3=some college
      4=four-year college degree
      5=master's degree
      6=terminal degree (i.e. Ph.D., MD, JD, Ed.D)
      7=other

As closely as you can estimate, what will be your annual income for 2013?

1. Under $20,000
2. $20,000-$40,000
3. $40,001-$60,000
4. $60,001-$80,000
5. $80,001-$100,000
6. $100,001-$120,000
7. $120,001-$140,000
8. $140,001-$160,000
9. More than $160,000

What is your ethnicity?

1. Caucasian/White
2. African American/Black
3. American Indian/Eskimo Aleut
4. Asian/Pacific Islander
5. Hispanic/Spanish/Latino
6. Multi-Racial
7. Other

Appendix B

	Survey	US Census 2010
AGE		
	(18-29 years) 35.8%	(15-29 years) 20.9%
	(30-45 years) 31%	(30-44 years) 19.8%
	(46-54 years) 13.4%	(45-54 years) 14.6%
	(55-64 years) 12.7%	(55-64 years) 11.8%
	(65+ years) 7.1%	(65+ years) 13.1%
Median Age	30-45 years	37.2 years
SEX		
	(Male) 49.5%	(Male) 49.2%
RACE		
White alone	75.4%	77.9%
Black or African American	9%	13.1%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.1%	1.2%
Asian	7.4%	5.1%
Hispanic or Latino	12.4%	16.9%
Multi-Racial	3%	2.4%
INCOME		
Median Income	$40,000-$60,000	(2008-2012) $50.046

EDUCATION	Survey	US Census 2010
Less than high school	2.3%	8.3%
High school graduate	16.6%	28.5%
Some College	35.4%	21.2%
Four-year college degree	29.0%	17.7%
Graduate Degree	15.3%	10.4%

Appendix C

Percentages of Ideology

Very Liberal	8.9%
Liberal	17.1%
Moderate	47.2%
Conservative	18.9%
Very Conservative	7.9%

Percentages of Party Affiliation

Republican	24.7%
Democrat	38.4%
Libertarian	5.3%
Independent	27.6%
Other	4.0%

Political Comprehension Scores

Zero questions correct	1.5%
One question correct	5.0%
Two questions correct	11.2%
Three questions correct	11.0%
Four questions correct	12.2%
Five questions correct	10.8%
Six questions correct	12.2%
Seven questions correct	12.2%
Eight questions correct	11.8%
Nine questions correct	9.5%
All questions correct	2.7%

Percentages of Need for Closure and Need for Cognition

	Need for Closure	Need for Cognition
Low	30.7%	35.9%
Moderate	33.7%	28.1%
High	35.7%	35.9%

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