5-1-2022

Political Discussion and Disagreement: Seeking Validation Through News Media

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POLITICAL DISCUSSION AND DISAGREEMENT: SEEKING VALIDATION THROUGH NEWS MEDIA

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Bachelor of Arts - Journalism and Media Studies
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2018

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts - Journalism and Media Studies

Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 2022

UNLV | GRADUATE COLLEGE

Thesis Approval

The Graduate College
The University of Nevada, Las Vegas

April 8, 2022

This thesis prepared by

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entitled

Political Discussion and Disagreement: Seeking Validation Through News Media

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts - Journalism and Media Studies
Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies

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Abstract

This study explores how often individuals discuss politics with family/friends and acquaintances, how often individuals are exposed to disagreement during those discussions, the strategies they use to respond to political disagreement, and the use of news media following those disagreements. Through the lens of Uses and Gratifications theory, this study examined these elements through an online survey of U.S. adults. The results of this study did not support Hopmann's, Bjarnøe's, and Wonneberger's findings about the relationship between the frequency of political disagreement and the strategies for responding to that disagreement. This study highlights how the discussions and disagreements we have about politics can affect why we use the news.

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I. Introduction

Individuals have conversations about a variety of political topics, such as gun control and abortion (Adamic & Glance, 2005). When conversations about these controversial topics occur, the results of those discussions can become complicated. For politics, people prefer to discuss it with those they agree with significantly more than people they disagree with (Cowan & Baldassarri, 2018). One of the reasons for this is that people want to avoid "social controversy" (Hopmann, 2012).

In his study, Hopmann (2012) indicates that individuals want to avoid uncomfortable situations, such as being stuck in the middle of an argument between two people in the same group and thinking of it as a no-win situation (Green, Visser, & Tetlock, 2002) that can come with disagreeing about politics. When faced with disagreements, individuals may turn to news media because they prefer to reinforce their political predispositions instead of changing them (Kim, 2017).

Individuals use specific media, news included, in order to fulfill a specific gratification (Katz, 1974). In this approach to media consumption, the audience is aware of their needs and is active in satisfying them (Ruggerio, 2009). Lee (2013) noted that individuals use the news for one of four motivations. The four motivations for using news is to seek out information, to be entertained, to socialize with others about it, or to have their opinions validated. When it comes to the opinion-validation motivation, people prefer news media that align with their own beliefs (Lee, 2013).

This research is important because while individuals avoid disagreements about it, researchers state that political discussion needs to remain a major part of American public discourse (Scheufele, 2000). If individuals refuse to communicate their political differences with

each other, then democracy is unable to function (Conover, Searing & Crewe, 2002). The most recent example is the discourse that emerged following hundreds of Trump supporters storming the U.S. capitol (Barrett, Raju, & Nickeas, 2021).

Political disagreement has direct effects on different aspects of individuals' political participation. Hopmann (2012) found that individuals who face political disagreement find it more difficult to determine who to vote for. Following political disagreement, individuals' positive perception of their preferred presidential candidate decreased (Parsons, 2010). Parsons also found that individuals' negative perception of the opposing candidate also decreased. These changes lead to depressed turnout in presidential elections (Nir, 2011). What these studies have in common is that political disagreement affects political attitudes. What these studies do not examine is how political disagreement is related to individuals' news-consumption habits afterwards.

PEW Research Center (2018) conducted a national survey about political discussion and disagreement. Specifically, they surveyed individuals about discussing politics with those they disagree with in March 2016 (prior to Trump's presidency) and in October 2018 (two years into Trump's presidency). In March 2016, 46% of individuals stated that discussing politics with those they disagree with was stressful and frustrating; this number increased to 53% in October 2018. The percentage of Republicans who feel stressed and frustrated discussing politics with people they disagree with was mostly unchanged, from 48% in 2016 to 49% in 2018. The percentage of Democrats who feel stressed and frustrated discussing politics with people they disagree with saw a sharp increase, from 45% in 2016 to 57% in 2018.

Within that same survey, Pew Research Center asked individuals in 2018 how much they have in common with those they disagree with politically. When discussing politics with

someone they disagree with, 63% of people had less in common with the other person than they thought. Breaking it down by political affiliation, this number is nearly the same for both Democrats and Republicans. When discussing politics with someone they disagree with, 64% of Democrats and 63% of Republicans found that they had less in common with the other person than they thought.

The focus of my research is that the disagreements people have about politics and the news media they choose to consume afterwards are connected. My hypothesis is that how often individuals are exposed to political disagreement, moderated through how they choose to respond to that disagreement, influences how often they use political commentary from news outlets for opinion validation. This thesis will be conducted through a uses and gratifications perspective.

II. Literature Review

A. Interpersonal Communication

i. General Overview

Interpersonal communication is when at least two individuals are engaged in a conversation (Cathcart & Gumpert, 1983). One key element is the roles individuals play in the conversation (Fearing, 1962). The roles Fearing (1962) described in his research are communicator and interpreter. Communicators are those who send information with the intent to begin conversation. Interpreters are those who receive information with the intent to provide a response (Fearing, 1962). As the conversation goes on, individuals can serve as both communicator and interpreter.

Larrosa-Fuentes (2020) broadly defines interpersonal communication as the practice of exchanging information and symbolic forms between two or more individuals. Muslicha et al. (2022) states that the nature of interpersonal communication is spontaneous, individuals receive mutual feedback, and participants play a flexible role in the discussion. Laksana and Fadhilah (2021) conceptualize interpersonal communication as communication that occurs in various systems or contexts that affect what is happening and the meaning in the interaction. What separates interpersonal and group communication is that while group communication involves one person speaking to a group of people at the same time, interpersonal involves one person addressing each person individually (Larrosa-Fuentes, 2020). Interpersonal communication also differs from organizational communication in that individuals conduct interpersonal communication for a myriad of goals (Larrosa-Fuentes, 2020) while individuals conduct organizational communication for the specific goal of benefiting the business they work for (Apine & Sunday, 2021).

One factor of interpersonal communication is the social context the conversation takes place in. The context is split into two categories: the public sphere and the private sphere (Brennan, 2017). The public sphere is the sphere of community, complex arenas where individuals, who may not be related with each other, interact with each other (Johansen & Andrews, 2016). The private sphere is the sphere of the household, the domain of an individual's family and/or intimate life (Johansen & Andrews, 2016). Individuals consider certain topics to be specific to the public sphere and other topics specific to the private sphere. For example, Wyatt, Katz, and Kim (2000) conducted a nationwide survey to ask individuals what topics they consider public and what topics they consider private. Individuals consider topics such as government and the economy to be public matters and topics such as family matters and religion to be private matters (Wyatt et al., 2000).

The political topics that individuals discuss in the public or private sphere depend on how individuals feel about the topic themselves. For example, Lobera and Portos (2022) analyzed what spheres left-wing and right-wing individuals feel comfortable revealing their political preferences. Left-wing individuals feel comfortable revealing their political preferences in both public and private spheres; right-wing individuals more comfortable doing so in the private sphere than the public (Lobera & Portos, 2022). This indicates that there are certain topics, such as politics, that are discussed in both the public and private spheres. The sphere that discussion occurs in is not the only factor of interpersonal communication.

Another factor of interpersonal communication is the strength of the relationship the individual has with their discussion partner. The strength of the relationship can be separated into two categories: strong tie and weak tie (Croes & Antheunis, 2021). In their study on relationship intimacy, Croes & Antheunis (2021) asked participants who they have a strong relationship with

and who they have a weak relationship with. Friends, family, and romantic partners are considered to be strong-tie relationships; acquaintances and colleagues are considered to be weak-tie relationships (Croes & Antheunis, 2021). In that same study, Croes & Antheunis (2021) also asked participants how often they discussed with others. Individuals have discussions more frequently with those they have a strong-tie relationship with than those they have a weak-tie relationship with (Croes & Antheunis, 2021).

The type of relationships people have can affect how willing they are to have conversations about various topics. Researchers often group friends and family together as strong relationships individuals are willing to have conversations with (Ai & Zhang, 2021; Walgrave & Ketelaars, 2019). For example, Ojala and Bengtsson (2019) examined the types of conversations have about climate change with those they have a strong relationship with. Individuals are willing to discuss both the positive and negative aspects of climate change with friends and parents (Ojala & Bengtsson, 2019). Morey and Yamamoto (2020) examined what motivates individuals to discuss politics with friends and family. Individuals discuss politics with friends and family primarily to educate themselves, express their opinions, or to influence others (Morey & Yamamoto, 2020). Therefore, individuals are willing to discuss politics if their discussion partner is a friend or family member.

One more aspect of interpersonal communication is the type of conversation that individuals engage in. The two types of interpersonal communication that will be focused on here is informal and deliberative. Informal interpersonal communication is spontaneous (Larrosa-Fuentes, 2020) conversation that occurs between friends, family, and peers (Andersen & Hopmann, 2018). Andersen and Hopmann (2018) conducted a survey about individuals who use informal communication to discuss politics. Informal political talk is used as a means to learn

new information by those who do not frequently consume news media (Andersen & Hopmann, 2018). In deliberative interpersonal communication, on the other hand, individuals go into the conversation expecting to, and willing to, discuss arguments (Larrosa-Fuentes, 2020). This suggests that individuals enter deliberative conversations expecting to disagree with the discussion partner.

What people learn from media can affect the content of the conversations they take part in. For example, Vu and Gehrau (2010) conducted a field study on how an article in a community magazine can affect what people talk about. The results of that study indicate that people are more likely to talk about a certain issue after reading about it than those who do not (Vu & Gejrau, 2010). Another example is an analysis Scheuffle (2002) conducted on an American Citizen Participation survey about political participation. The survey was focused on the relationship between hard news and political participation. Results from that survey indicate that interpersonal communication is a significant mediator between processing hard news and considering political participation (Scheuffle, 2002). Hwang (2010) analyzed a Legacy Media Tracking Survey about the effects of “The Truth" campaign. The survey in question was about how the advertising campaign affected conversations about smoking behavior. The results of the survey indicate that the amount of conversations about smoking behavior increased in areas where “The Truth" advertisements aired (Hwang, 2010). These studies show that media may not change what people think, but media can change what people discuss about.

The type of relationships people have can affect how willing they are to have conversations about politics. For example, Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers (2009) analyzed a University of Michigan study about political socialization within families. The survey is about discussing politics in families across three generations. The results show that people are more

willing to discuss politics if their parents talked to them about it (Jennings et al, 2009). Another example is when Östman (2015) conducted a field study about instances where adolescents discuss politics. He found that adolescents are more willing to talk about politics publically if they already discuss it privately with family (Östman, 2015). This shows that the family environment plays a role in how willing people are to discuss politics.

People are selective in who they discuss politics with because they want to avoid disagreements (Cowan & Baldassarri, 2018). This is because political disagreements in interpersonal communication can have a negative effect on those who participated. For example, Hopmann (2012) compared two surveys in order to find the effects these disagreements have on voters. The results of this analysis are that disagreements increase ambivalence in political attitudes. The reason for this is so that future confrontations about those topics can be avoided (Hopmann, 2012). This leads to a question of how political disagreements can survive in interpersonal communication. Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague (2002) answered this by examining a survey about political discussion during the 1996 presidential election. The results of that study indicate that people are willing to disagree because they have other social networks that agree with them (Huckfeldt et al, 2002). This shows that when faced with disagreement, people seek other avenues for validation.

ii. Types of Interpersonal Communication

Fearing (1953) also described another key element of interpersonal communication is that those involved are meeting face-to-face. In face-to-face communication, the content of the conversation can be adjusted based on the responses of those involved. For example, Nelson (2016) performed an experiment on the effect that positive moods can have on interpersonal communication. She found that people with a positive mood, such as feeling enthusiastic or

inspired, communicated more than people with a neutral mood (Nelson, 2016). Another example of conversation content being impacted by response can be seen in Burgers and Buekeboom's (2016) study that compared instances of literal statements being used in conversations to instances of ironic statements being used. They found that people find literal comments to be more appropriate for conversations than ironic comments (Burgers & Buekeboom, 2016).

Interpersonal communication does not always have to be face-to-face; it can be mediated as well. Cathcart and Gumpert (1983) define mediated interpersonal communication as any instance where technology is introduced into face-to-face interaction. What separates mediated from face-to-face is knowledge of the medium used for conversation. Phone calls, texting, email and social media are some of the mediums used for interpersonal mediated communication (Petrič, Petrovčič, and Vehovar 2011). Whether it be face-to-face or mediated however, the medium of conversation can impact the extent of participation in political discussions (Herrig et al., 2020).

iii. Political Communication, Discussion, and Disagreement

Raekstad (2021) compares the works of two different political theorists, Bernard Williams and Raymond Geuss, and how they define politics. Both theorists agree that politics involves social organization, coordination, and carrying out of actions (Raekstad, 2021). Where the theorists differ is the scope in what they consider as politics. Williams suggests that politics is limited to the actions of the state/government, whereas Guess indicates that politics should also encompass matters between family/families and friends. This article examines politics in a broad, philosophical sense instead of which topics and subjects are considered political.

Görtz and Dahl (2021) examine how the breadth of what individuals consider to be politics affects political participation. Their results suggest that individuals with a wide breadth

of topics they consider to be politics are more likely to participate in politics than those with a narrow perception of politics. Some concepts Görtz and Dahl present include one way of thinking where politics is "limited to what governments and related central institutions do" and another where politics goes beyond governments and other central institutions. Görtz and Dahl not only discuss a broad definition of politics, but they also provide topics that individuals consider to be political as well. In their survey, the topics that many participants selected as being political include elections, housing, taxes, childcare, and income inequality (Görtz & Dahl, 2021).

Eveland, Morey and Hutchens (2011) utilize past literature to reflect on how politics and political conversation should be defined. In the article, Eveland et al. are critical of researchers who do not provide a definition of politics for participants to consider, instead letting participants think of their own definition. Eveland et al. (2011) define political conversation, on an interpersonal level, as a form of small talk about shared public information. With this definition, they imply that political conversation does not need to be, but can be, deliberative. Eveland et al. state that the most common political conversation partners are those that individuals have a strong tie to: spouses, family members, and close friends. Eveland et al. also note four common strategies for responding to disagreement: dominating the conversation, avoiding disagreement, yielding to the conversation partner, and compromise.

Political communication can be conceptualized as individuals or groups of political influence speaking about issues salient to the public (Walton, 1990). This type of communication is most common during election years, but it can occur at any time (Eveland, 2004). During election years, opposing political parties engage in contests, debates as one example, where candidates allocate their resources strategically (Amorós & Puy, 2013). For example, when

speaking on the same subjects, candidates try to highlight where their opponent(s) fall short on the issue (Amorós & Puy, 2013). As a result, the manner and tone of political communication often ends up being negative (Druckman, Kifer, & Parkin, 2010). This suggests that, since debates between political candidates are frequently negative, individuals often expect discussions about politics to potentially turn out negative as well.

In order to spread their message to as many people as possible, politicians and political parties launch campaigns. Some of the mediums used for campaigns include newspapers, television, and the Internet. For example, Stier, Belier, Lietz, and Strohmaier (2018) studied how campaigns utilize different social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. For Facebook, political campaigns use the platform to accumulate support, via likes, on their messages (Stier et al., 2018). For Twitter, political campaigns use posts to encourage discussion between users in their replies (Stier et al., 2018). This suggests that the goals that political campaigns want to achieve depend on the medium they elect to use. The overarching message, however, is the same regardless of the platform used. Druckman et al. (2010) found that political campaigns design their messages with the mass audience in mind. This suggests that individuals are not given the opportunity to respond to politicians or political parties, regardless of whether or not they disagree with them.

Political discussions are conversations that focus on matters of public concern and issues dealing with the common good (Conover, Searing, & Crewe, 2002). Some examples of topics mentioned in these discussions include abortion, gun control, impeachment, and COVID-19 (Adamic & Glance, 2005; ANES, 2020). Research has focused on political discussions during election years, but these types of conversations can occur at any time (Eveland, 2004). The contents and outcomes of these conversations can differ whether the conversation occurs in

public or in private (Conover et al., 2002). This suggests that where the discussion happens can play a role in how the discussion plays out.

Political discussion can occur through a variety of mediums, face-to-face, phone calls, texting, and email (Petrič, Petrovčič, & Vehovar, 2011). The medium of discussion can influence the extent of participation in political discussion (Herrig, Vultee, Prough, & Sweet-Cushmanm, 2020). Research has also been conducted to examine the influence political sophistication, or the level of political awareness, has on how individuals choose to respond to disagreement. Political sophistication does not influence individuals' responses to political disagreement (Parsons, 2010). This indicates that while how aware individuals are of politics may not affect their participation in political discussion, how the discussion is conducted can affect that participation in political discussion.

However, the type of relationships individuals have influences who they share their political opinions with. Through their survey, Morey, Eveland and Hutchens (2012) found that individuals are more likely to share political opinions with someone they have a strong tie to than someone they have a weak tie to. Individuals have a strong tie with family and friends; they have a weak tie with co-workers and acquaintances (Morey et al., 2012). Likewise, people are more willing to discuss politics if their parents talked to them about it (Jennings et al., 2009). For instance, adolescents are more willing to talk about politics with others if they have previously discussed it with family (Östman, 2015). This indicates that individuals choose who to discuss politics with by what their relationship is with them. One way these conversations can end is with the participants agreeing with each other, but these discussions can end with the participants disagreeing with each other as well.

Political disagreement refers to conversations individuals participate in where they are exposed to viewpoints that differ from their own (Klofstad, Sokhey & McClurg, 2013). Individuals are exposed to these viewpoints when they face opposition from the person they are engaging in discussion with (Valenzuela & Bachmann, 2015). These political disagreements can occur for a variety of reasons. For instance, Valenzuela and Bachmann (2015) found that these disagreements can occur due to a difference in their preferred presidential candidate. Differences in preferred political party is another way that disagreement can occur (Feldman & Price, 2008). These disagreements can also occur because of a difference in opinion on a political issue, such as immigration (Valenzuela & Bachmann, 2015). This shows that political disagreement can occur regardless of the subject discussed.

Research has found that how frequently individuals discuss politics with others is influenced by how likely they are to disagree with others. Individuals will discuss politics with others less frequently if they think they are likely to disagree with them (Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2012). For example, Cowan and Baldassarri (2018) found that some individuals avoid political disagreements because they do not want to face conflict with the person they are speaking with. As a result, individuals may feel inclined to share political opinions primarily with others they are unlikely to disagree with (Cowan & Baldassarri, 2018). This would suggest that individuals avoid engaging in discussions with people they expect to disagree with politically.

This does not mean that individuals never discuss politics with those they disagree with. Huckfeldt, Mendez, and Osborn (2004) analyzed the 2000 National Election Study to examine how frequently individuals discuss politics with those they disagree with. More than half of respondents indicated that they disagreed with at least one person they discussed politics with

(Huckfeldt et al., 2004). This shows that political disagreement occurs more frequently than expected.

iv. Responding to Disagreement

Testa, Hibbing, and Ritchie (2014) state that the individual's orientation toward conflict should be considered when examining the effects of disagreement on political knowledge, tolerance toward those with differing views, and participation. Testa et al. (2014) separate conflict orientation into two categories, positive (i.e. the individual considers disagreement as a positive experience and something worth engaging in) and negative (i.e. the individual considers disagreement as a negative experience and something that should be avoided). For exposure to disagreement, Testa et al. (2014) found that the type of orientation does not affect the individual's amount of exposure to disagreement. When exposed to disagreement, individuals with a positive orientation were more likely to be knowledgeable about politics, more likely to show tolerance, and more likely to engage in political participation (Testa et al., 2014). When exposed to disagreement, individuals with a negative orientation had no change in likelihood of being knowledgeable about politics, less likely to show tolerance, and less likely to engage in political participation (Testa et al., 2014).

Coffé and Bolzendahl (2017) analyze a survey conducted in Britain to study the effect gender differences have on avoiding conflict and how that difference impacts political participation. In their analysis, they found that women are more likely to avoid conflict than men. Coffé and Bolzendahl (2017) also found that women are less likely to participate in politics than men. There was no significant gender difference in how conflict avoidance impacts political participation (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2017). This shows that while gender is a factor in both

responding to conflict and political participation individually, it's not a factor in one impacting the other.

When faced with political disagreement, regardless of the subject discussed, individuals will respond in different ways. Eveland et al. (2011) and Hopmann, Bjarnøe and Wonneberger (2019) and identified four strategies individuals use to respond to this kind of disagreement. When faced with opposition, individuals may try to dominate, which involves taking control of the conversation and shutting down the other person from making their arguments. Individuals may also try to compromise, which involves hearing out the other person and finding common ground. To avoid an uncomfortable situation, individuals may try to avoid having disagreement emerge in the conversation. If it is considered the path of least resistance, individuals may also yield, or concede the conversation (Hopmann et al., 2019). Hopmann et al. (2019) found that these four categories of responses are based on the individual's level of political disagreement.

Hopmann et al. (2019) examined these four categories of response strategies through the framework of Dual Concern Theory. Dual Concern Theory states that individuals manage conflict based on two factors, a concern for self and a concern of others (Musenero, Baroudi, & Gunawan, 2021). This theory suggests that individuals respond to disagreement based on how concerned they are for both their own well-being and the well-being of others. For example, individuals may dominate if they have a high level of self-concern but a low level of concern for others (Hopmann et al., 2019).

To dominate during disagreement means to force control of the conversation away from the other person (Hopmann et al., 2019). Individuals try to dominate the conversation through a variety of means. Speaking more frequently and for longer than the other person during a disagreement are two examples of how individuals try to dominate the conversation (Palmer,

1989). Herring et al. (2020) studied how the medium of communication, face-to-face and mediated, affects how likely someone is to dominate during disagreement. The medium of communication does not affect how likely individuals are to dominate the conversation (Herring et al., 2020). While some individuals may insist on dominating the discussion, others may try to compromise with the person they disagree with.

Compromise is when the individuals that disagree with each other come to an agreement (O'Flynn & Setälä, 2020). In order to reach this agreement, each person has to concede one aspect of their argument. The reason for this is that while both individuals still feel that they are in the right, they feel that it's better to compromise than to stay at a standstill (O'Flynn & Setälä, 2020). For example, Renwick (1975) surveyed office workers on how the source of disagreement affects the strategy used to respond to disagreement. Compromise was the most common response type when the individuals in disagreement differ in personality. Compromise was also the most common response type when individuals differ in attitudes or opinions (Renwick, 1975). While some individuals may concede just one aspect of their argument, others may decide to concede their argument altogether.

To yield during disagreement means to concede the discussion to the other person (Hopmann et al., 2019). Research has been done on the different reasons individuals choose to yield the disagreement. For example, Sharma (2012) examined how students responded to disagreement during group discussions. One reason individuals yield the disagreement is because they feel they do not have enough information on the subject being discussed (Sharma, 2012). One other example is that Kotoff (1993) examined multiple interactions between students and lecturers. Individuals yield the disagreement because they see it as a means of ending the discussion (Kotoff, 1993). What these two studies have in common is that individuals show

reluctance in conceding the discussion. This suggests that while it's used to end discussion, yielding is not considered the preferred means of responding to disagreement.

While some individuals have different strategies for responding to disagreement, others try to avoid it altogether. Individuals avoid disagreement for a variety of reasons such as their lack of information on the subject, their lack of interest in politics, or the subject's lack of personal importance (Hayes, 2007). Individuals also avoid disagreement because they feel that if they spoke up on a certain subject, their opinion would be in the minority (Hayes, 2007). Paramasivam (2007) studied the effects of avoiding disagreement. Avoiding disagreement results in emotions being pent-up, decrease of personal integrity, and relationships becoming more uncomfortable (Paramasivam, 2007).

One of the goals of my research is to examine how often individuals are exposed to political disagreement and how they choose to respond to it. To this end, the following research questions are proposed.

RQ1abcd: What is the relationship between frequency of political disagreement with strong-tie relationships and a) dominate response strategies, b) yield response strategies, c) compromise response strategies, and d) avoid response strategies?

RQ2abcd: What is the relationship between frequency of political disagreement with weak-tie relationships and a) dominate response strategies, b) compromise response strategies, c) yield response strategies, and d) avoid response strategies?

RQ3abcd: What is the relationship between frequency of political discussion with strong-tie relationships and a) dominate response strategies, b) compromise response strategies, c) yield response strategies, and d) yield response strategies?

RQ4abcd: What is the relationship between frequency of political discussion with weak-tie relationships and a) dominate response strategies, b) compromise response strategies, c) yield response strategies, and d) avoid response strategies?

B. Uses and Gratifications

i. General Overview

Uses and Gratifications is the theory that people seek out media to have specific needs met. For example, Lazarsfeld (1939) did a meta-analysis of research done on the effects of listening to radio. What these pieces of early research have in common was that they were entirely focused on the gratifications of listening to radio (Lazarsfeld, 1939). There was not enough focus on the needs that would lead people to seek out media. Eventually, Katz (1974) formed a definition that provided a foundation for how Uses and Gratifications should be studied. Katz (1974) conceptualized uses and gratifications as social and psychological origin of needs generates expectations of media, leading to different patterns of media exposure, resulting in needs satisfied and other effects.

One key element that makes research utilizing Uses and Gratifications stand out is audience activity. The purpose of audience activity is to examine the role people play in the media they consume regularly (Ruggerio, 2009). Audience activity examines whether people are active or passive in the selection of media (Gunter, 1988). According to Rubin (1993), audience activity can be examined by breaking it down into a set number of categories.

The three main categories that Rubin (1993) provided are utility, intention, and selectivity. Utility is what motivates the audience, such as in Gerlich's, Drumheller's, and Sollosy's (2012) study on motivations of readers. They found that, of the motivations prior to reading, desire to relax was the most common (Gerlich et al, 2012). Intention is what the

audience plans to use the media for, such as in Perse's (1990) study on television-viewing motives. Her results showed that people watched TV with the intent of talking about it with others (Perse, 1990). Selectivity is how the audience chooses their media, such as in Levy's (1987) study on how people used VCRs. He found that VCR owners were selective in what TV programs VCR owners decided to record (Levy, 1987).

The issue with audience activity is thinking that the audience is either purely active or purely passive. This is why Rubin (1993) also brought up examining audience activity through levels of involvement. Levels of involvement indicate that there is a scale that ranges from being passive to being active. For example, in an experimental study examining news talk shows, Edgerly, Gotlieb, and Vraga (2016) argue that audience activity should also be measured on behavioral utility and cognitive involvement. The results of that experiment indicate that if the audience finds a piece of programming to be relevant, then they will be more involved with its content (Edgerly et al, 2016).

ii. Uses and Gratifications in Media Research

Another key component that makes Uses and Gratifications research stand out is media selection. In order to conduct research on motivations for selecting media, a typology needs to be developed. For example, Blumler (1979) conducted a meta-analysis of typologies utilized in Uses and Gratifications studies. He noticed that motivations commonly included in research are surveillance, curiosity, diversion, and personal identity (Blumler, 1979). Typology can be modified for the medium chosen as the focus of research. For example, Ruggerio (2009) examined why people select the Internet as their medium of choice. He found that people prefer the Internet because it is interactive, asynchronous, and its ability to demassify content

(Ruggerio, 2009). Motivations for selecting media are varied, but people share similar motivations.

Television is unique because of its ability to use a combination of visuals and audio to spread a message to a wide variety of people simultaneously. Entertainment is a category utilized for TV uses and gratifications. Rubin (2009) notes that entertainment was first included as a part of uses and gratifications research during the 60s. Research of TV uses and gratifications has been done without including entertainment in the typology. For example, Weaver (2003) examined television viewing motives in relation to personality traits. The typology utilized in this research includes pass time, companionship, relaxation, information, and stimulation (Weaver, 2003). Of these motivations, pass time and relaxation can be noted as explicitly passive. Information, on the other hand, is a motivation that can be noted as explicitly active. Companionship and stimulation are motivations that are not on either end of the passive-active spectrum. What this demonstrates is that audiences can be active in seeking gratifications from television.

The gratifications that people seek from television can vary depending on the type of program watched. For example, Brown, Lauricella, Douai, and Zaidi (2012) surveyed people about why they watch shows in the crime drama genre. They found that satisfying curiosity was the most prevalent motivation (Brown et al, 2012). Gratifications can differ not just by the genre, but by the programs that make up the genre as well. Barton (2009) distributed a survey to people who watched different shows in the competitive reality show genre about their motivations for watching them. The results of the survey show that different motivations were prevalent for different shows (Barton, 2009).

The Newspaper can be defined as a print medium distributed by news organizations to send information to a wide audience (Park, 1923). Elliot and Rosenberg (1987) conducted a survey about the different motivations individuals use newspapers for. Study findings revealed that surveillance and seeking information were the most common motivations for reading newspapers (Elliot & Rosenberg, 1987). Other gratifications that Elliot and Rosenberg (1987) found for reading newspapers were killing time and reading advertisements. News websites are treated as an extension of newspapers (Chyi & Lasorsa, 2002).

News websites are a medium, owned and operated by news organizations, that spread news to a wide audience (Himelboim & McCreery, 2012). Himelboim and McCreery (2012) also noted the multimedia nature of news websites, the combination of text, audio, and video for the purpose of sharing information. Chyi and Lasorsa (2002) found that there is considerable overlap between newspaper readership and news website readership. Newspapers and news websites also share the same gratifications (Payne, Dozier, Nomal & Yagade, 2010). The gratifications that Payne et al. (2010) identified for both newspapers and news websites were surveillance, interaction, and diversion.

Radio can be conceptualized as a purely auditory medium that can spread messages to a wide audience simultaneously (Dunn, 2003). Towers (1987) conducted a telephone survey asking participants about the different gratifications they use radio for. The various gratifications could be grouped into two major categories, information and entertainment (Towers, 1987). Information gratifications studied include to understand what is going on, to get information to pass on to other people, and to find issues affecting people like myself (Towers, 1987). Entertainment gratifications examined include to pass the time and to feel happy (Towers, 1987). Albarran et al. (2007) distributed a questionnaire asking individuals about their use of radio in

comparison to new media technologies, such as satellite radio, mp3 players, and internet radio. Radio was used more than these media technologies for access to news and information. However, in terms of overall use, radio was used less than new media technologies (Albarran et al., 2007). Therefore, research reveals that while individuals still use the radio to learn about the news, use of radio overall has decreased over time.

One example of a new media technology is social media. Social media, like other mediums, fulfill a variety of gratifications, such as information seeking, expression of opinion, and convenience (Whiting & Williams, 2013) that people use them for. Research has been conducted on both specific social media platforms and social media as a whole. For example, Krause, North, and Heritage (2014) distributed an online questionnaire to find out what motivates individuals to use Facebook. The most common motivations found were to communicate with others, to be entertained, and to distract people from their problems (Krause et al., 2014). Sundar and Limperos (2013) however, surveyed university students on what motivates them to use social media regardless of platform. Among the gratifications found are activity, interaction with others, and control over what they see (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Studies done on these mediums indicate that the gratifications that people seek depend on not only the medium itself, but the content of the medium as well.

These mediums are not used alone; each medium is used in conjunction with other media in order to have gratifications met. For example, Yuan (2011) examined what media people use in order to build their media repertoire. She found that people utilized combinations that include Internet, mobile phone, television, and radio (Yuan, 2011). The reason for this combination is because some media provide content not seen on other platforms. Another example comes from a survey Wolf and Schnauber (2015) distributed to mobile phone users about the mediums they

use to seek out information. They found that people build a news repertoire consisting of mobile phones, computers, radio, and television (Wolf & Schnauber, 2015). These studies indicate that people utilize multiple mediums to have their needs satisfied.

While these media share general content, the presentation is unique to each medium. An example of this is a study Cheong and Park (2015) conducted on media habits of social media users. Cheong and Park (2015) examined what traditional media users paired with social media for the purpose of information consumption. Their results showed that magazines, newspapers, radio, and television are the media most paired with social media (Cheong & Park, 2015). When it came to reliance for information, television scored the highest among their survey participants. This reliance may be a factor when it comes to political media.

Typologies are developed not only for individual mediums, but types of media shared across mediums as well. For example, Lariscy, Tinkham, and Sweetster (2011) examined the uses and gratifications people of voting age have of political media. The typology they utilized include surveillance, excitement, and political reasons. (Lariscy et al, 2011). Excitement refers to the competitive aspect of political elections, seeing which party will be victorious. Political reasons include reinforcement of beliefs (Lariscy et al, 2011). Social media is appealing to political campaigns because of the interactive nature of the medium. For example, Freelon (2017) examined how the Obama and Romney Facebook pages were handled during the 2012 presidential election. He found that the campaigns encourage users to discuss on those pages, but controlled what could be seen (Freelon, 2017). This allows political campaigns to organize supporters through mediated communication.

Boulianne and Theocharis (2020) conducted a meta-analysis to examine how young people's use of digital media impacts their political and civic participation. Their primary

conclusion is that use of digital media (e.g. following politicians on social media, reading the news) is positively related with political and civic participation. This suggests that use of digital media results in offline political activity. Boulianne and Theocharis (2020) also note that some studies suggest the reverse; participation in political and civic life causes digital media use. This suggests that offline activity, such as chatting about politics, results in use of media, such as the news. Their definition of political use of media includes consuming news about politics or current affairs, election information, e-mailing or chatting about politics, and following political candidates or elected officials.

iii. Psychological and Social Factor of the Audience

The psychological aspect involves the personality traits of those who choose to consume media. Weaver (2003) developed three categories for personality traits when comparing them to tv watching motivations. These categories are extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism (Weaver, 2003). Extraversion is associated with an individual's level of sociability. Neuroticism is connected to shyness and anxiety. Psychoticism is related to autonomy and egocentricity (Weaver, 2003). Rubin (2009) describes other factors than can make up one's psychological state. Other factors that can determine media behavior include life satisfaction, mobility, loneliness, and mood (Rubin, 2009). It is because of these psychological traits that people can become dependent on media. These aspects can be affected by the social circumstances of audience members.

The social environment people are a part of influences their motivation for media selection. In instances with a lack of social environment, people may turn to media for interpersonal communication. Rubin (2009) provides an example of how someone can use radio to fulfill that need. Someone can telephone a talk-radio host in order to have a conversation with

them (Rubin, 2009). Another example Rubin suggests is people using the Internet in order to engage in conversation. The needs that some people depend on media for may be connected to interpersonal communication they want to partake in.

iv. Opinion Validation

Individuals have different motivations for why they select and use their preferred news outlets. Lee (2013) conducted a survey to find out what the most common motivations were for selecting news. The most common motivations were to acquire information, to be entertained, other individuals watch the same news outlets, and opinion validation (Lee, 2013). This opinion validation comes from a desire to reinforce pre-existing attitudes (Slater, 2009). Iyengar and Hahn (2009) conducted research on why individuals choose news outlets for reinforcing attitudes. Individuals choose certain news outlets because they anticipate political agreement from these outlets (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009). This suggests that people select certain news media if they expect it to fulfill their need for validation.

Individuals choose certain news outlets that are likely to reinforce their opinions and avoid other news outlets that are likely to challenge their opinions (Garrett, 2009). For example, Knobloch-Westerwick and Lavis (2017) studied how political affiliation influenced use of political and satirical news. Liberals preferred political and satirical news that provided liberal opinions and conservatives preferred political and satirical news that provided conservative opinions (Knobloch-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017). As for challenge avoidance, Jamal and Melkote (2008) distributed a survey to find out why some individuals avoid certain television news outlets. Individuals avoid specific outlets because they feature individuals who hold beliefs they disagree with (Jamal & Melkote, 2008). Garrett (2009b) does note that opinion reinforcement and challenge avoidance should be treated as different motivations.

The reason those two behaviors are considered separate is because individuals who use news for opinion reinforcement may not avoid news that challenges their opinions. For example, Garrett, Carnahan, and Lynch (2013) found that individuals who seek out opinion-reinforcing news outlets do not explicitly avoid opinion-challenging news outlets. However, individuals' interactions with others may encourage challenge-avoiding behavior. One of the motivations for an individual's opinion challenge avoidance is political disagreement (Skoric, Zhu, & Lin, 2018). For example, Skoric et al. found that individuals unfriend and unfollow others on social media because of political disagreement. Individuals do this to avoid future disagreements with those people.

Individuals are more likely to select articles that appeared to reinforce their opinions than articles that challenged them (Garrett, 2009a). Garrett noticed this when he had participants choose different news articles to read about political topics. Garrett (2009a) also found that even if individuals select articles that challenge their opinions, they will spend less time reading them than articles that reinforce their opinion. The variety of options for obtaining news the Internet provides has only encouraged this desire to select news for opinion reinforcement (Jang, 2014). While this increased variety has also encouraged opinion challenge avoidance, it is less significant than the desire for opinion reinforcement (Jang, 2014).

Individuals select news media that aligns with their attitudes regardless of the political subject of discussion. For example, Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng (2009) studied how individuals use news media for the topics of minimum wage, abortion, health care, and gun control. For all four of these subjects, individuals selected news stories that they perceive to be similar to their beliefs (Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2009). Individuals also select news media that aligns with their attitudes regardless of the medium used. For example, Stroud (2008)

found that individuals prefer newspapers, political talk radio, cable news, and political websites that align with their beliefs. These two studies show that regardless of the subject or medium, individuals prefer news media that reinforces their opinions.

Individuals who receive opinion validation from specific news media will continue to get their news from them. For example, Feldman, Myers, Hmielowski, and Leiserowitz (2014) studied how attitudes toward global warming affect news media use. Individuals continued to use news media that reinforced their beliefs on climate change (Feldman et al., 2014). This suggests that if people have their beliefs validated through specific news media, they will continue to use that media to keep receiving that validation. Opinion validation from news media also affects political participation. Exposure to news media that provides like-minded commentary increases political participation (Dilliplane, 2011). Conversely, exposure to news media that provides counter-attitudinal commentary decreases political participation (Dilliplane, 2011).

The other goal of this research is to examine how exposure to and response strategies for political disagreement is related to the use of news media for like-minded commentary. To this end, the following research questions are proposed.

RQ5: What are the relationships between types of response strategies and news media use for political opinion validation?

RQ6: What is the relationship between strength of political party affiliation and news media use for political opinion validation?

RQ7: What is the relationship between level of political interest and news media use for political opinion validation?

RQ8: What is the relationship between level of political knowledge and news media use for political opinion validation?

III. Method

For this choice of topic, quantitative methods were utilized in order to conduct the research. The reasoning for this was to have a sample that can consist of a wide variety of individuals. Specifically, the type of research method that was utilized for this study was a questionnaire. The survey was effective because of its ability to have a wide sample respond to the same set of questions.

A. Survey

The survey itself was split into four sections; each focusing on a different aspect of the research topic. Section one focused on conversations involving politics; respondents answered questions on who they discuss politics with, how frequently they discuss politics with those individuals, and how frequently they disagreed with those individuals. Section two asked participants how likely they are to use different strategies for responding to political disagreement. Section three focused on respondents' use of different news mediums for like-minded commentary. Lastly, section four was entirely questions pertaining to demographic data. Based on Qualtrics's estimations, the average completion time of the questionnaire was eight minutes.

The survey was split into five pages. Section one was split into two pages. This is because page one asked about strong-tie relationships (friends/family) that participants discuss politics with, while page two will ask participants the same questions about weak-tie relationships (acquaintances). Sections two, three, and four of the survey each had their own page. Respondents were encouraged, but not forced, to answer all of the questions on each page before moving to the next. By doing this, the goal was to ensure that none of the questions were left blank. Before moving on from the fifth page, participants could go back to any of the

previous sections to change their answers if they wished to do so. Respondents were also encouraged, but not required, to complete the survey in one sitting. The survey was designed to save their progress, so participants could fill out the rest of the questions later if they chose not to complete it in one sitting.

Prior to distribution of this survey, a pilot test was conducted at a large southwestern university. A class of eight students participated in the pilot test, which was conducted on November 18, 2021. Following the pilot test, additional changes were made prior to the proper distribution of the survey. In response to the students' feedback, the changes were mainly to the demographics portion of the survey. For example, in the question about religious affiliation, one of the answer choices was changed from "Christian" to "Christian/Protestant".

B. Participants and Distribution

Selecting possible participants for this survey was done through random sampling. The sample size was 150 individuals from the website Prolific. All participants were at least 18 years of age and based in the United States. Prolific was selected because, due to its pool of potential participants, would allow the results of the survey to be generalizable to the wider public. Recruitment was done via a recruitment message potential participants received in their inbox on the Prolific website.

Prolific users that received the study recruitment message were under no obligation to participate in the survey. They were incentivized, however, by receiving monetary payment upon completing the survey. Participants received their payment through Prolific, via the funds the researcher added to their account. Survey responses are kept entirely anonymous, as to avoid the possibility of responses being traced back to specific individuals. Those who filled out the survey were identified by a number instead.

Data were collected on February 14, 2022 through a web-based survey on Qualtrics. A total of 150 valid responses were collected through Prolific. Respondents were paid $1 for the completion of the questionnaire. After reading the informed consent form, which was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), participants answered a series of questions measuring predictor and outcome variables. Results of the online questionnaire were analyzed through SPSS.

Of the 150 participants, 56% were female (n = 84), 40% were male (n = 60), 3.3% were nonbinary (n = 5), and 0.7% chose not to disclose (n = 1). The average age of the participants was 36.13 years old (SD = 13.49). Racial background of the participants is as follows: 87.3% were White/Caucasian (n = 131), 6% were Black/African-American (n = 9), 6% were Asian (n = 9), and 4% were Hispanic/Latino (n = 6). For highest level of education completed: 33.3% were 4-year university (n = 50), 24.7% were graduate college (n = 37), 16.7% were some college (n = 25), 9.3% were high school/GED (n = 14), 9.3% were 2-year college (n = 14), and 6.7% were some graduate college (n = 10). Employment status of the participants is as follows: 73.3% were employed (n = 110), 22% were unemployed (n = 33), and 4.7% were in an internship (n = 7). Annual income of the participants is as follows: 21.3% were between $35,000 and $49,999 ($n$ = 32), 20.7% were less than $15,000 ($n$ = 31), 14.7% were between $15,000 and $34,999 ($n$ = 22), 20% were between $50,000 and $74,999 ($n$ = 30), 10% were between $100,000 and $149,999 ($n$ = 15), 7.3% were between $75,000 and $99,999 ($n$ = 11), and 6% were $150,000 or more ($n$ = 9). For marital status: 36.7% were married (n = 55), 34% were single (n = 51), 21.3% were in a relationship, but not married (n = 32), 7.3% were divorced (n = 11), and 0.7% was widowed (n = 1). For religious affiliation: 38% were Christian/Protestant (n = 57), 36% were other (n = 54), 15.3% preferred not to say (n = 23), 8.7% were Catholic (n = 13), and 2% were Jewish (n = 3).

Of the 150 participants, 54% were Liberal (n = 81), 27.3% were Moderate (n = 41), 14.7% were Conservative/Right (n = 22), and 4% were Other (n = 6). Of the 6 participants that selected Other: 33.3% were Libertarian (n = 2), 16.6% were Anarchist (n = 1), 16.6% were Mutualist (n = 1), and 16.6% were Independent (n = 1). For affiliation with a political party, 56.7% were Democrat (n = 85), 18.7% were Republican (n = 28), 13.3% were Independent/Other (n = 20), and 11.3% were no affiliation (n = 17). Among the 20 participants that selected Independent/Other: 10% were Socialist (n = 2), 10% were Libertarian (n = 2), and 10% were Green (n = 2). For strength of party affiliation, of the 85 participants that selected Democrat, 31.7% were somewhat strongly (n = 27), 22.3% were neither strong nor weak (n = 19), 21.1% were somewhat weak (n = 18), 20% were very strongly (n = 20), and 4.7% were very weak (n = 4). For strength of party affiliation, of the 28 participants that selected Republican, 35.7% were very strongly (n = 10), 21.4% was somewhat weak (n = 6), 28.5% were somewhat strongly (n = 8), 10.7% were neither strong nor weak (n = 3), and 3.5% was very weak (n = 1). The total sample indicated that the participants were somewhat interested in politics (M = 2.89, SD = 0.853), they sometimes engage in politics (M = 2.98, SD = 0.893), and they consider themselves fairly knowledgeable about politics (M = 3.25, SD = 1.082).

C. Measures

Frequency of Political Discussion and Disagreement. Adapted from Feldman & Price (2008), this 12-item measure asks participants to name, using only their initials, two friends/family members (strong-tie relationships) and two acquaintances (weak-tie relationships) that they discuss politics with. For each person, participants will be asked to state how many days in a typical week they discuss politics with them (responses range from zero to seven); [strong-tie relationships (M = 3.12, SD = 1.19) and weak-tie relationships (M = 2.36, SD = 1.04)]

and how often they disagree with that person's point of view (almost never = 1, almost all the time = 5); [strong-tie relationships (M = 2.68, SD = .80) and weak-tie relationships (M = 2.69, SD = .78)].

Strategy for Responding to Political Disagreement. Adapted from Hoppman et al. (2019), this 16-item measure asks participants to state how likely they are to use different strategies to respond to political disagreement. These items will be gauged on a five-point likert scale (very likely = 1, very unlikely= 5). Sample item: When faced with disagreement during those political discussions, I emphasize that we should find common ground. Strong-tie (family and friends) and weak-tie (acquaintances) relationships were combined to form a composite variable for each response strategy: Compromise (α = .88, M = 2.82, SD = .93), Avoid (α = .83, M = 2.31, SD = .87), Dominate (α = .78, M = 2.96, SD = .89), and Yield (α = .76, M = 3.61, SD = .77).

Using News for Opinion Validation. Modified from Lee (2013), this 8-item measure asks participants to state how often they use news from different mediums for opinions from like-minded commentators. The mediums that will be asked about are newspapers/news websites, television, radio, and social media. The purpose of this measure is to see which news mediums individuals use as a means of opinion validation. These items will be gauged on a four-point likert scale (never = 1, often = 4). Sample item: How often do you watch television news to expose yourself to opinions that are similar to your own? (α = .85, M = 2.11, SD = .64).

Demographics This 9-item measure asks participants to select the options that best reflect who they are. Characteristics participants were asked about include political affiliation, race, gender, and age group.

IV. Results

Research question 1a inquired about what the relationship is, if there is one, between frequency of political disagreement with strong-tie relationships and dominate response strategies. A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between frequency of disagreement with strong-tie discussion partners and the response strategies, which is presented by table one. Frequency of disagreement with strong-tie discussion partners was not found to be significantly correlated with dominate response strategies, $r(150) = -.098$, p = n.s.

Research question 1b asked about the relationship between frequency of political disagreement with strong-tie relationships and yield response strategies. As shown by table one, frequency of disagreement with strong-tie discussion partners was not found to be significantly correlated with yield response strategies, $r(150) = .023$, p = n.s.

Research question 1c examined what the relationship is, if there is one, between frequency of political disagreement with strong-tie relationships and compromise response strategies. As shown by table one, frequency of disagreement with strong-tie discussion partners was not found to be significantly correlated with compromise response strategies, $r(150) = -.083$, p = n.s.

Research question 1d looked at the relationship, if there is one, between frequency of political disagreement with strong-tie relationships and avoid response strategies. As shown by table one, frequency of disagreement with strong-tie discussion partners was not found to be significantly correlated with avoid response strategies, $r(150) = .047$, p = n.s. The above findings imply that frequency of political disagreement with strong-tie discussion partners may not be related with any of the response strategies.

Research question 2a inquired about what relationship there is, if any, between frequency of disagreement with weak-tie relationships and dominate response strategies. A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between frequency of disagreement with weak-tie discussion partners and the response strategies, which is presented by table one. Frequency of disagreement with weak-tie discussion partners was not found to be significantly correlated with dominate response strategies, $r(149) = -.032$, p = n.s.

Research question 2b asked about the possible relationship between frequency of disagreement with weak-tie relationships and compromise response strategies. As shown in table one, frequency of disagreement with weak-tie discussion partners was not found to be significantly correlated to compromise response strategies, $r(149) = -.025$, p = n.s.

Research question 2c examined what relationship there might be between frequency of disagreement with weak-tie relationships and yield response strategies. Table one shows that frequency of disagreement with weak-tie discussion partners was not found to be significantly correlated to yield response strategies, $r(149) = -.022$, p = n.s.

Research question 2d inquired about what relationship there is, if any, between frequency of disagreement with weak-tie relationships and avoid response strategies. Frequency of disagreement with weak-tie discussion partners was not found to be significantly correlated to avoid response strategies, $r(149) = .011$, p = n.s. Similar to the first research question, this and the above findings implies that frequency of political disagreement with weak-tie discussion partners may not be related with any of the response strategies.

Research question 3a asked what the relationship is between frequency of political discussion with strong-tie relationships and dominate response strategies. A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between frequency of political discussion with

strong-tie discussion partners and the response strategies, the results of which is presented in table one. A moderate negative correlation was found for frequency of political discussion with strong-tie discussion partners and dominate response strategies, $r(150) = -.185$, $p < .05$. This finding suggests that the more often individuals talk about politics with friends and family, the less likely they may be to use the dominate response strategy.

Research question 3b inquired about the relationship between frequency of political discussion with strong-tie relationships will be positively related to compromise response strategies. Frequency of political discussion with strong-tie discussion partners was not found to be significantly correlated to compromise response strategies, $r(150 = .020$, $p =$ n.s. This finding suggests that frequency of political discussion with strong-tie discussion partners may not be related to the compromise response strategy.

Research question 3c asked what the relationship is between frequency of political discussion with strong-tie relationships and the yield response strategies. A moderate positive correlation was found for frequency of political discussion with strong-tie discussion partners and yield response strategies, $r(150) = .167$, $p < .05$. This finding suggests that the more often individuals talk about politics with friends and family, the more likely they may be to use the yield response strategy.

Research question 3d examined what relationship, if any, there is between frequency of political discussion with strong-tie relationships and avoid response strategies. Frequency of political discussion with strong-tie relationships was not found to be significantly correlated to avoid response strategies, $r(150) = .044$, $p =$ n.s. Similar to research question 3b, this finding implies frequency of political discussion with strong-tie discussion partners may not be related to the avoid response strategy.

Research question 4a looked at what relationship there is, if any, between frequency of political discussion with weak-tie relationships and dominate response strategies. A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between frequency of political discussion with weak-tie discussion partners and the response strategies. A strong negative correlation was found for frequency of political discussion with weak-tie discussion partners and dominate response strategies, $r(149) = -.221$, $p < .01$. Similar to research question 3a, this finding suggests that the more often individuals talk about politics with acquaintances, the less likely they may be to use the dominate response strategy.

Research question 4b examined what the relationship is, if any, between frequency of political discussion with weak-tie relationships and compromise response strategies. Frequency of political discussion with weak-tie relationships was not found to be significantly correlated to compromise response strategies, $r(149) = .081$, $p =$ n.s. Like with research questions 3b and 3d, this finding suggests that frequency of political discussion with weak-tie discussion partners may not be related to the compromise response strategy.

Research question 4c inquired about the relationship between frequency of political discussion with weak-tie relationships and yield response strategies. A moderate positive correlation was found for frequency of political discussion with weak-tie discussion partners and yield response strategies, $r(149) = .178$, $p < .05$. Like with research question 3c, this finding suggests that the more often individuals talk about politics with acquaintances, the more likely they may be to use the yield response strategy.

Research question 4d asked what the relationship is between frequency of political discussion with weak-tie relationships and avoid response strategies. Frequency of political discussion with weak-tie discussion partners was not found to be significantly correlated to avoid

response strategies, $r(149) = .134$, p = n.s. This finding implies frequency of political discussion with weak-tie discussion partners may not be related to the avoid response strategy. This finding is similar to the results of research questions 3b, 3d, and 4b.

To examine RQ5, which examined the relationship between types of response strategies and news media use for political opinion validation, correlations were conducted. Results for RQ5 showed that there was a significant relationship between news media use and dominate response strategies, $r(150) = -.328$, $p < .001$. This finding suggests that those with dominate response strategies are less likely to use news media to validate their political opinions. For yielding ($r(150) = .085$, p = n.s.), avoiding ($r(150) = -.007$, p = n.s.), and compromising ($r(150) = .001$, p = n.s.) response strategies, no significant relationships were found.

To examine RQ6, which examined the relationship between strength of affiliation with preferred political party and news media use for political opinion validation, correlations were conducted. Results for RQ6 showed that news media use and strength of party affiliation are negatively related with each other, $r(150) = -.223$, $p < .01$. This finding suggests that if an individual strongly affiliates with their preferred political party, they are unlikely to use news media to validate their political opinions.

To examine RQ7, which examined the relationship between level of political interest and news media use for political opinion validation, correlations were conducted. Results for RQ7 showed that there was a significant relationship between news media use and political interest, $r(150) = .291$, $p < .01$. This finding suggests that the more interested an individual is in politics, the more likely they are to use news media to validate their political opinions.

To examine RQ8, which examined the relationship between level of political knowledge and news media use for political opinion validation, correlations were conducted. Results for

RQ8 showed that there was a significant relationship between news media use and political knowledge, $r(150) = .214$, $p < .01$. This finding suggests that the more knowledgeable an individual considers themselves to be about politics, the more likely they are to use news media to validate their political opinions.

Table 1

Pearson's Correlation

	Disagree strong-tie	Disagree weak-tie	Discussion strong-tie	Discussion weak-tie	Avoid	Yield	Compromise	Dominate	News Media
Disagree strong-tie	1	.247**	.086	.096	.047	.023	-.083	-.098	.043
Disagree weak-tie	.247**	1	.126	.024	.011	-.022	-.025	-.032	-.083
Discussion strong-tie	.086	.126	1	.399**	.044	.167*	.020	-.185*	.191*
Discussion weak-tie	.096	.024	.399**	1	.134	.178*	.081	-.221**	.353**
Avoid	.047	.011	.044	.134	1	.173*	.227**	-.434**	-.007
Yield	.023	-.022	.167*	.178*	.173*	1	.532**	-.290**	.085
Compromise	-.083	-.025	.020	.081	.227**	.532**	1	-.191*	.001
Dominate	-.098	-.032	-.185	-.221**	-.434**	-.290**	-.191*	1	-.328**
News Media	.043	-.083	.191*	.353**	-.007	.085	.001	-.328**	1

Note: * indicates correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** indicates correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2

Pearson's Correlation

	News Media	Political Association	Political Party	Strength of Party Affiliation	Political Interest	Political Engagement	Political Knowledge
News Media	1	-.098	-.124	-.223**	.291**	.135	.214**
Political Association	-.098	1	.409**	.173*	-.074	.080	-.141
Political Party	-.124	.409**	1	.234**	-.075	-.030	.024
Strength of Party Affiliation	-.223**	.173*	.234**	1	-.294**	-.158	-.209*
Political Interest	.291**	-.074	-.075	-.294**	1	.535**	.641**
Political Engagement	.135	.080	-.030	-.158	.535**	1	.512**
Political Knowledge	.214**	-.141	.024	-.209*	.641**	.512**	1

Note: * indicates correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** indicates correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

V. Discussion

The current study examines how often individuals discuss politics with others, how often individuals are exposed to disagreement during those political discussions, what response strategies individuals use when faced with that disagreement, and the use of news media for opinion validation following those political discussions. This study also examined what the difference, if any, was if the discussion partner for those political discussions was someone the individual had a strong-tie relationship (friends/family) with or a weak-tie relationship (acquaintance) with. This study is a valuable addition to the literature because it shows how the political discussions and disagreements that people engage in impacts their motivation for checking news media.

A major factor of interpersonal communication is the strength of the relationship between an individual and their conversation partner (Croes & Antheunis, 2021). The types of relationships individuals have can affect how willing they are to discuss various subjects (Ojala & Bengtsson, 2019), including politics (Jennings et al., 2009; Morey & Yamamoto, 2020). If individuals think they are likely to disagree with their discussion partners on politics, then they may discuss politics less frequently (Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2012); but that does not mean individuals never discuss politics with those they disagree with (Huckfeldt et al., 2004). When faced with disagreement, individuals may use one of four response strategies, dominate, compromise, yield, and avoid (Eveland et al., 2011; Hopmann et al., 2019). Individuals use news media for a variety of motivations (Lee, 2013), including opinion validation (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Slater, 2009).

The present study found that there may not be a significant relationship between the frequency of disagreement and the dominate, compromise, yield, and avoid response strategies.

The lack of relationship between frequency of disagreement and the avoid response strategy is consistent with Hopmann et al.'s (2019) finding for that specific strategy. Hopmann's suggestion for this specific finding is that individuals avoid political disagreement not due to the frequency of said disagreement, but due to a lack of interest in politics. However, the findings for the other three response strategies (i.e., dominate, compromise, yield) are not consistent with Hopmann et al.'s (2019) results. A plausible explanation for this is that how often individuals are exposed to disagreement is not a factor in how they choose to respond to it. For example, Carlson (2020) examined the different factors that play into how individuals respond to political disagreement. The factors of a disagreement that Carlson (2020) found are its scope, domain, genealogy, and consequence. For example, Carlson (2020) notes that the wider the scope of a political disagreement is, the less likely an individual may be to conciliate, or pacify, their discussion partner. This suggests that while there are multiple aspects of political disagreement that affect how individuals respond, the frequency of disagreement may not be one of them.

Another finding from this study is that frequency of political discussion both strong-tie and weak-tie relationships and the dominate response strategy were negatively related with each other. This finding is not consistent with Hopmann et al.'s (2019) observation that the more often individuals discuss politics, the more willing they are to dominate. One reason why this might be the case is that if an individual frequently discusses politics with someone, then it means they might agree with that person often. This would suggest that the more often an individual talks about politics with someone they agree with, the less likely they may be to try to dominate the conversation. An example of this is Cowan's and Baldassarri's (2018) study on who individuals choose to discuss politics with. Individuals speak more frequently with those they are likely to agree with than those they expect to disagree with (Cowan & Baldassarri, 2018).

A surprising finding is that the relationships between frequency of disagreement and each of the response strategies (i.e. dominate, compromise, yield, avoid) was the same for both strong-tie (i.e. family and friends) and weak-tie (i.e. acquaintances) relationships. Not only that, but when it came to frequency of political discussion and each of the response strategies, the relationships were the same for strong-tie and weak-tie as well. This finding is not consistent with Croes' and Antheunis's (2021) finding that individuals talk more frequently with those they have a strong-tie relationship with than those with a weak-tie relationship. One possible explanation for this inconsistency is that how individuals communicate with others has changed. To provide an example, a Pew Research Center study conducted by Hampton, Goulet, and Purcell (2011) shows that the average American has 636 social ties on social networking services (i.e. Facebook and Twitter). Hampton et al.'s (2011) also shows that these ties consist of strong-tie and weak-tie relationships. Since SNS users are aware that their followers see their posts, this could suggest that individuals may feel comfortable responding to strong-tie and weak-tie relationships the same way.

Another noteworthy finding for this study was that there was a positive between frequency of political discussion and the yield response strategy. This finding is not consistent with Hopmann et al.'s (2019) observation that the more often an individual discusses politics with someone, the less likely they are to use yield response strategies. A plausible explanation for why frequency of discussion and the yield strategy are positively related with each other is that many people have stopped talking about politics. One example of this is a Pew Research Center study, conducted by Jurkowitz and Mitchell (2020), on that subject. 45% of adults in the U.S. have stopped talking about politics with someone because of something the other person said (Jurkowitz & Mitchell, 2020). This suggests that if one person said something (during a

political discussion) that the other person did not like, they may choose to yield the conversation just to end the discussion.

Also, the present study found that there was no significant relationship between frequency of political discussion and the dominate or avoid response strategies. This finding is not consistent with Hopmann et al.'s (2019) observation of the dominate and avoid response strategies. One explanation for why this is the case is that if an individual discusses politics frequently with someone, then they might frequently agree with them as well. If that is the case, they may not feel the need to respond to their discussion partner by trying to dominate the conversation nor avoid the subject of politics. This idea is supported by Cowan's and Baldassarri's (2018) finding that individuals frequently discuss politics with those they expect to agree with. This suggests that if an individual frequently discusses politics with someone, then they likely enjoy talking politics with them. This then implies that if individuals enjoy discussing politics with each other, they may not feel the need to dominate or avoid.

Looking at the use of news media for opinion validation, it and the dominate response strategy are negatively related with each other. One explanation for this finding is that if an individual feels the need to dominate the conversation, then they may feel confident about, or a sense of superiority in, what they believe in. This would suggest that, since they feel that sense of superiority about their opinions, individuals may not feel the need to use the news for opinion validation. An example of this can be seen in Hall's and Raimi's (2018) study on belief superiority. Individuals with a greater sense of superiority in their political beliefs select news outlets that aligns with their views; they do this because they feel that the information those outlets provide is superior than news outlets of differing beliefs (Hall & Raimi, 2018). This

suggests that while individuals do select news media whose beliefs align with their own, their motivation to do so may not be out of a need for opinion validation.

Continuing with the use of news media for opinion validation, there is a positive correlation between it and the frequency of political discussion with strong-tie discussion partners. That same type of correlation was also found for the use of news media for opinion validation and the frequency of political discussion with weak-tie discussion partners. This shows that there may be a significant relationship between using news media for opinion validation and discussing politics with both strong-tie and weak-tie relationships. Morey's and Yamamoto's (2020) findings in their study on the different motivations for political talk support this notion. What this suggests is that the more often individuals talk about politics with others, the more often they might use the news to hear from like-minded commentators. It's possible that if individuals regularly agree with those they frequently discuss politics with (Cowan & Baldassarri, 2018), then they might want that same type of agreement from news media as well.

In terms of results from correlations that looked at the use of news media for opinion validation and certain demographic questions, the use of news media for opinion validation and strength of affiliation with a political party are positively related with each other. This suggests that the more an individual associates with their preferred political party, the more likely they may be to use news media to validate their political beliefs. This finding is consistent with Knobloch-Westerwick's and Lavis' (2017) study on partisan alignment and partisan news. The more an individual leans Republican, the more likely they are to select partisan media that reflects conservative beliefs (Knobloch-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017). The more an individual leans Democrat, the more likely they are to select partisan media that reflects liberal beliefs (Knobloch-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017). What this may imply is news media that present

information with a clear ideological slant appeals to people that strongly identify with a specific political party.

Another finding from correlations that looked at the use of news media for opinion validation and certain demographic questions, the use of news media for opinion validation and level of interest in politics are also positively related to each other. This suggests that the greater an individual's interest in politics is, the more likely they might be to use news media to validate their political beliefs. Knobloch-Westerwick's and Lavis' (2017) study is consistent with this finding as well. The higher an individual's level of political interest is, the more often they selected partisan news that reinforced their political attitudes (Knobloch-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017). This observation suggests that people who are highly interested in politics may select news media that matches that level of interest.

One more observation from the correlations between the use of news media for opinion validation and certain demographic questions, the use of news media for opinion validation and the level of political knowledge are positively related with each other. This suggests that the more an individual considers themself knowledgeable about politics, the more likely they may be to use news media to validate their political opinions. This finding is consistent with Feldman's, Wojcieszak's, Stroud's, and Bimber's (2018) study on what influences media selectivity. In that study, Feldman et al. (2018) found that political knowledge predicted a preference for pro-attitudinal media. This finding suggests that people who feel that they know a lot about politics might select news media that supports what they know.

VI. Conclusion

People have conversations about a variety of topics for a variety of reasons. These topics can range from movies and music to food and fashion. These conversations are usually light-hearted; people feel free to agree or disagree in these situations. This light-hearted feeling extends to the media people choose about those topics (Krause et al., 2014). When it comes to controversial topics, politics specifically, that light-hearted feeling is not present. If people discuss politics with someone who disagrees with them, they feel unsatisfied afterwards (Hopmann, 2012). Following this, people choose news media that validates their beliefs (Kim, 2017). This study aims to explore how the discussions and disagreements people have about politics can affect their motivations for using certain news media and makes significant contributions in the areas of interpersonal communication and media use.

This subject of news media as a means of opinion validation was studied from a uses and gratifications perspective. Uses and Gratifications theory states that individuals select specific media depending on what needs they want fulfilled (Ruggerio, 2009). The needs individuals want to be satisfied can change depending on the medium they use (Rubin, 2009). The topics individuals have conversations about, such as government, the economy, and religion (Wyatt et al., 2000), can change depending on the relationships they have with those they converse. Conversations, and their outcomes, can vary between family, friends, and acquaintances. This research examined the role of politics in the conversations people have and how it affects why they choose their preferred news media.

While political discussions are common during election years, they can occur at any time (Eveland, 2004). Individuals may talk about politics with others less often if they expect to disagree with them (Gerber et al., 2012). As for responding to political disagreement, it can be

separated into four categories: dominate, compromise, yield, and avoid (Eveland et al., 2011). Dominate means to take control of the conversation, compromise involves the discussion partners reaching some kind of middle ground, yielding means conceding the disagreement to the other person, and avoid involves making sure political disagreement does not come up (Hopmann et al., 2019).

The results from this study showed no significant relationship between the frequency of political disagreement and the response strategies. This means that how often people are exposed to political disagreement may not be a factor in how they respond to it. In contrast, the frequency of political discussion is negatively related with the dominate strategy and positively related with the yield strategy. Of the four response strategies, only dominate had any significant relationship with the use of news media for opinion validation, there being a negative correlation between the two. This suggests that the more likely individuals are to try to dominate the political disagreement, the less likely they are to use the news to validate their beliefs.

These results contradict Hopmann et al.'s (2019) findings about the relationships between frequency of disagreement and each of the four response strategies. An explanation for this is that while there are a myriad of factors that influence how people respond to political disagreement (Carlson, 2020), how often people are exposed to disagreement may not be one of them. Study findings have practical implications for interpersonal communication and news media use. Its implications for interpersonal communication is that it may allow people to be more conscious of how they respond to others during a political disagreement and how others respond to them. This study's implications for news media use is that it provides a possible answer for why so many news outlets are partisan in presenting information; some people want sources of news that validates what they believe in.

Something to note, while dual concern theory was mentioned in the literature review for this study, it was not used as a framework for this research. The reason why is because dual concern theory assumes that individuals are conscious of both the concern for self and others when they decide how to manage conflict (Hopmann et al., 2019; Musenero et al., 2021). Individuals might not consider these concerns when responding to political disagreement; this is why the decision was made not to utilize this theory. With that said, it is a valid theory for studying conflict management and can be used as a framework to guide future research on this subject.

As mentioned in the 'participants and distribution' portion of the methods section, the survey was distributed on February 14, 2022. This is not a limitation of the survey, this period of time was selected intentionally. To reiterate Eveland's (2004) point, while conversations about politics are most common during election years, those types of conversations can happen at any time. This period of time was selected in order to examine how often individuals discuss politics with others when politics were not at the forefront of public discourse. Aside from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, there were no major political events occurring when the survey was distributed and responses were collected (Russia's invasion of Ukraine and President Biden's nomination of Judge Ketanji Jackson for the Supreme Court did not occur until 14 and 15 days later, respectively).

Some limitations to the present study need to be noted here. One such limitation is the size of the sample, consisting of only 150 individuals. A wider sample in future research could allow for stronger correlations between frequency of political disagreement and the response strategies. Another limitation is the use of the word "talk" in the scenarios within the survey itself. Individuals may have a narrow view of the word "talk"; they may treat it as just verbal

communication, occurring only through in-person, phone calls, and video chats. Changing the verbage could give participants reason to consider conversations that occur through non-verbal means, such as texting, email, and social media threads (i.e. Twitter, Reddit, Facebook). Although a national sample was utilized for data collection, White individuals were over-represented in the sample, consisting of 87.3% of all respondents. A more representative sample could provide better insight into the discussions and disagreements people have about politics and how that affects why they choose certain news media.

A possible idea for future research is to include additional measures into the survey. One way this could be done is to include a question about how fatigued individuals are with political discourse. Pew Research Center found that, in 2020, 55% of all social media users are worn out by the amount of political posts and conversations they see (Anderson & Auxier, 2020). Another possible idea for future research is to revise the definition of politics included in the scenario within the survey. With the definition provided, participants may infer politics to only mean national politics. By modifying the definition to list state, national, and foreign politics, it could allow participants to consider other types of politics when answering the questions. One more idea for future research is to distribute this survey in the days or weeks leading up to a major election (either Presidential or midterm). As there is greater attention given to politics during these time periods, it could result in greater frequency of political discussion, greater frequency of disagreement, and possibly changes in which strategies individuals prefer in responding to disagreement.

Appendix

(Note: Respondents will receive this invitation message before they begin to fill out the survey.)

Hello, I am a Graduate Student in the Journalism and Media Studies program at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. The aim of this study is to examine what the relationship is, if there is one, between people's exposure to political disagreement, how they choose to respond to that disagreement, and their use of news media. This study is being conducted for research purposes.

For this study, you will fill out a 38-question survey, spread across 7 pages. You can go back and change your response to any of the questions before the end of the survey. It should take you around 8 minutes to complete this survey. Please complete the survey within two weeks (from 2/14/22 to 2/28/22).

For any questions, you may contact me via email at carmom1@unlv.nevada.edu or the Principal Investigator, Linda Dam, at linda.dam@unlv.edu.

(end of message)

Political Conversations & Media

UNLV Research Informed Consent Form

Please read through the attached Informed Consent Form before deciding whether or not you consent to participating in this survey.

- o I consent
- o I do not consent

What is your Prolific ID? (Note: This response should autofill with the correct ID.)

_____

From time to time, people discuss government, elections, and politics with other people. By politics, we mean issues, subjects, and topics that involve the government and other central institutions (i.e. stock market). We'd like to know who you talk with about these matters. These people might be from your family, from work, from some organization you belong to, or they might be from somewhere else. With this in mind, answer the following questions.

Q1 Name, with initials only, a friend or family member that you discuss politics with.

_____

Q2 How many days in a typical week do you discuss politics with that person?

- o 0
- o 1
- o 2
- o 3
- o 4
- o 5

- o 6
- o 7

Q3 How often do you disagree with that person's point of view?
- o Almost Never
- o Rarely
- o Sometimes
- o Often
- o Almost All the Time

Q4 Name, with initials only, another friend or family member that you discuss politics with.

_____

Q5 How many days in a typical week do you discuss politics with that person?
- o 0
- o 1
- o 2
- o 3
- o 4
- o 5
- o 6
- o 7

Q6 How often do you disagree with that person's point of view?
- o Almost Never
- o Rarely
- o Sometimes
- o Often
- o Almost All the Time

Q7 Name, with initials only, an acquaintance (people at work or others you see just going about your day) that you discuss politics with.

_____

Q8 How many days in a typical week do you discuss politics with that person?
- o 0
- o 1
- o 2
- o 3
- o 4
- o 5
- o 6
- o 7

Q9 How often do you disagree with that person's point of view?
- o Almost Never
- o Rarely
- o Sometimes
- o Often
- o Almost All the Time

Q10 Name, with initials only, another acquaintance that you discuss politics with.

_____

Q11 How many days in a typical week do you discuss politics with that person?
- o 0
- o 1
- o 2
- o 3
- o 4
- o 5
- o 6
- o 7

Q12 How often do you disagree with that person's point of view?
- o Almost Never
- o Rarely
- o Sometimes
- o Often
- o Almost All the Time

No matter who they talk to, everybody faces disagreement about politics at some point in their lives. Where people differ is how they choose to respond when faced with disagreement. For the prompts below, choose how likely you are to use each strategy to respond to political disagreement.

Q13 When faced with disagreement about politics...

	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Neither Likely nor Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely
I give in to their opinion.	o	o	o	o	o
I concur with them.	o	o	o	o	o
I try to accommodate them.	o	o	o	o	o

I adapt to their opinion.	o	o	o	o	o

Q14 When faced with disagreement about politics...

	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Neither Likely nor Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely
I try to realize a middle-of-the -road solution.	o	o	o	o	o
I emphasize that we should find common ground.	o	o	o	o	o
I insist that we both give in a little.	o	o	o	o	o
I strive towards a 50-50 compromise.	o	o	o	o	o

Q15 When faced with disagreement about politics...

	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Neither Likely nor Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely
I forcefully highlight my own point of view.	o	o	o	o	o
I search for arguments against their opinion.	o	o	o	o	o

I fight for my opinion.	o	o	o	o	o
I do everything to win a discussion against them.	o	o	o	o	o

Q16 When faced with disagreement about politics...

	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Neither Likely nor Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely
I try to avoid a confrontation with them.	o	o	o	o	o
I avoid differences of opinion as much as possible.	o	o	o	o	o
I try to make differences loom less severe.	o	o	o	o	o
I avoid a confrontation about our differences.	o	o	o	o	o

After talking about government, elections, and politics with others, people also check the news for the perspectives from like-minded commentators. By like-minded commentators, we mean individuals whose commentary and viewpoints on politics resonate with you. This includes like-minded commentators from newspapers, television, radio, news websites, and social media. With this is mind, answer the following questions.

Q17 After a disagreement, how often do you read newspapers / news websites (ex: The New York Times, The Washington Post, Las Vegas Review-Journal) for views from like-minded commentators?

- o Never
- o Seldom

- Sometimes
- Often

Q18 After a disagreement, how often do you read newspapers / news websites to expose yourself to views that are similar to your own?
- Never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often

Q19 After a disagreement, how often do you watch television news (ex: CNN, MSNBC, Fox News) for views from like-minded commentators?
- Never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often

Q20 After a disagreement, how often do you watch television news to expose yourself to views that are similar to your own?
- Never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often

Q21 After a disagreement, how often do you listen to radio news (ex: NPR, Radio America) for views from like-minded commentators?
- Never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often

Q22 After a disagreement, how often do you listen to radio news to expose yourself to views that are similar to your own?
- Never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often

Q23 After a disagreement, how often do you check news on social media (ex: Twitter, Facebook) for views from like-minded commentators?
- Never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often

Q24 After a disagreement, how often do you check news on social media to expose yourself to views that are similar to your own?

- o Never
- o Seldom
- o Sometimes
- o Often

For the following questions, choose the options that best match who you are.

Q25 What is your political association?

- o Conservative / Right
- o Moderate
- o Liberal / Left
- o Other (please specify) _____

Q26 Which political party do you affiliate with?

- o Republican Party
- o Democratic Party
- o Independent / Other (please specify)

  _____
- o No affiliation

Q27 How strongly do you affiliate with your political party of choice?

- o Very strongly
- o Somewhat strongly
- o Neither strong nor weak
- o Somewhat weakly
- o Very weakly

Q28 How would you rate your interest in politics?

- o Not at all interested
- o A little interested
- o Somewhat interested
- o Very interested

Q29 How often do you engage in politics (i.e. vote in elections, sign petitions, take part in town halls)?

- o Never
- o Seldom
- o Sometimes
- o Often

Q30 How knowledgeable do you consider yourself to be about politics?

- o Not very knowledgeable
- o A little knowledgeable
- o Somewhat knowledgeable

- o Fairly knowledgeable
- o Very knowledgeable

Q31 What is your ethnicity? (select all that apply)

- ▢ White / Caucasian
- ▢ Black / African-American
- ▢ Latino / Hispanic
- ▢ Asian
- ▢ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ▢ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ▢ Other (please specify) _____

Q32 What is your gender?

- o Male
- o Female
- o Non-binary / other gender
- o Prefer not to say

Q33 What is your age (in years)?

___

Q34 What is your marital status?

- o Single
- o In a relationship, but not married
- o Married
- o Widowed
- o Divorced

Q35 What is your highest level of education completed?

- o Some high school
- o High school / GED
- o Some college
- o 2-year college
- o 4-year university
- o Some graduate college
- o Graduate college

Q36 What is your employment status?

- o Unemployed
- o Internship
- o Employed

Q37 What is your annual income?

- o Less than $15,000
- o $15,000 - $34,999
- o $35,000 - $49,999

- o $50,000 - $74,999
- o $75,000 - $99,999
- o $100,000 - $149,999
- o $150,000 or more

Q38 What is your religious affiliation?

- o Christian / Protestant
- o Catholic
- o Jewish
- o Muslim
- o Other (please specify) _____

Prefer not to say

(Note: Respondents will receive the following message once they finish the survey.)

This is the end of the survey. Thank you for taking the time to see this through to the end! Your responses were a massive help. As stated before, your responses will be kept entirely anonymous. To confirm that you have completed the survey, please click the link provided: https://app.prolific.co/submissions/complete?cc=9BC36081.

- Michael Carmona

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