Bonds of Iron and Partisanship: The Use of Partisan Cues and Oppositional Projection in Consumption Behavior

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Bonds of Iron and Partisanship:

The Use of Partisan Cues and Oppositional Projection in Consumption Behavior

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Abstract

Partisan cues are incredibly influential in evaluating public policy, and oppositional projection influences the way in which individuals estimate attitudes, beliefs, and preferences for in-group members as well as out-group members. The research at hand investigates the role of political cues and oppositional projection in the realm of consumption behavior. The present study measures how individuals craft music playlists for themselves and others when exposed to partisan cues for the ‘other’ person and the potential artists. The results from the multiple regression analysis suggest individuals use their own political stance to choose artists to listen to, use political cues from the ‘other’ person to craft a playlist for them, and if the individual matches with the ‘other’ person in political stance, then they will project their preferences onto the ‘other’ person. These findings suggest that political cues and groups influence life outside of the political realm and have ramifications for how the different groups perceive and interact with each other.
‘Some of us love music without the politics thrown in it’.

Oh, you want music without politics: so, no country, no rap, no folk, no rock, no reggae, and no punk? Yeah, so I guess elevator music; that’s your jam? Yeah, oh no, that shit is about the genocide in Rwanda. No, no so no music.”

– The Daily Show with Trevor Noah

Introduction

In the realm of politics, a political party’s influence is substantial. The role of the group is considerable to an individual’s identity; Republicans and Democrats represent two of the largest self-selected groups in the United States. Partisan identities are likely to be used in any context when political cues are salient. Cohen (2003) found that people evaluate policy by partisan support rather than content.

Furthermore, Biernat, Manis, & Kobrynowicz (1997) find that people believe those in the in-group to be more similar to themselves than those in the out-group. From such thinking, oppositional projection arises: wherein one’s own beliefs are positively correlated with estimates for members of the in-group while negatively correlated with estimates for members of the out-group1 (Gromet & Van Boven, 2014). Individuals assume that in-group members are like them, while those in the out-group are not.

Politics are an integral part of some consumption choices; some products, such as guns, have a strong basis in political views. In the contemporary United States, the Alt Right has appropriated certain brands and products: Papa Johns, New Balance, and Tiki Torches (Kalenderian & Owen 2017). This has also occurred abroad, with European Nationalists appropriating Burberry and bomber jackets. When brands and products become politicized it

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1 In the instance of consumption experiences, this may be considerate of someone to use their own preferences when selecting for those they think are like them while negatively weighting their preferences when selecting for those they think are unlike them.
makes a statement to members of the in-group, but not necessarily the out-group. On these grounds, it is imperative to know the influence of partisan cues\(^2\) on consumption behavior. This paper intends to explore just that with the following hypotheses:

1. People will weigh partisan cues when crafting consumption experiences for themselves, even when partisan cues are unrelated to the experience.
2. People will weigh partisan cues of other individuals when crafting consumption experiences for them.
3. If people perceive similarity between themselves and someone else in terms of politics, they will use their own preferences as a guide when choosing for them.

The research conducted will take place in the context of music; a sometimes blatantly political artform, that in many cases reflects a component of personal values and political stances. Music serves as the consumption experience for this study because the nature of ambiguous lyrics allows people to interpret meaning in their own way. A classic example of this is seen in Bernard Goldberg and Ronald Reagan’s interpretation of Bruce Springsteen’s *Born in the USA* as an anthem of classic American values as opposed to a criticism of the Vietnam War and the treatment of Vietnam veterans. Artists may or may not write a song with political motives, but people can interpret songs differently than the artists original intent; thus, if partisanship of the artist is manipulated, people may see different political themes in the song. The next sections will delineate previous research that informed these hypotheses.

**Identity – Based and Motivated Political Cognition.** In the context of politics, choice preferences are influenced by motivated reasoning, that is to say, our goals, needs, and desires

\(^2\) Partisan cues refer to when an individual knows the political affiliation or ideology of the individuals involved in the consumption decision as well as the *perceived* political associations of the product or consumption item.
influence the way in which we process information (Jost, Hennes, & Lavine, 2013). Individuals are motivated to act in ways that are identity congruent. Political ideology also serves as an identity\(^3\). In the context of consumption behavior, people may choose certain music for themselves and others because they believe it to communicate certain political identities about themselves, especially if partisanship is salient.

**Party Over Everything, Party on my Mind.** Partisanship serves as both a filter and a lens\(^4\) through which all political information we receive is interpreted; for this reason, it produces systematic biases in how individuals process political information (Jost et al., 2013). These filters and lenses manifest themselves in several ways: individuals are biased in their information seeking by engaging in selective exposure (Westerwick, Johnson, & Knobloch-Westerwick, 2017), halting information searches when their desired conclusion is reached (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996), interpreting information in such a way to confirm pre-existing beliefs (Gaines, Kuklinski, Quirk, & Peyton, 2017; Vallone, Loss, & Lepper, 1985), readily accepting belief congruent information while counterarguing incongruent information (Ditto & Lopez, 1992; Taber & Lodge, 2006), and improved recall for belief congruent information (Conway & Ross, 1984; Jost et al., 2013). Motivated cognition is pervasive, especially regarding politically charged information. It stands to reason that these same processes used to maintain an individual’s beliefs in the political realm extend outside of the political realm to exert influence on other behaviors when salient political cues exist.

\[^3\]Marketing campaigns can effectively elicit responses from either conservatives or liberals if they are displayed in an identity congruent manner and ideology is made salient (Oyserman & Schwarz, 2017; Shavitt, 2017).

\[^4\]Lens is how one would interpret information while filters are biases that influence how one selects or rejects ideas relating to pre-existing beliefs.
Cohen (2003) found that people evaluate policy differently depending on which political party supported it, even when content was the exact same. Van Boven, Ehret, & Sherman (2017) replicated the party over policy effect in the context of cap-and-trade policy. Gains for one side usually translate into losses for the other side, it makes strategic sense to devalue the opposing side, however, in contexts of climate change, in-group affiliation alters decision making (Van Boven et al., 2017). Despite this behavior Cohen (2003) and Van Boven et al. (2017) both find that people believe policy evaluations should be based on content rather than partisan support and people exaggerate the extent to which the opposing side is influenced by partisan cues.

Political attitudes are malleable, that is people construct them depending on the context (Oyserman & Schwarz, 2017; Schwarz, 2007), despite this, people tend to believe their attitudes are a result of careful consideration of all available evidence. Despite this belief, partisan framing strongly influences attitudes in the context of policy (Cohen, 2003). In the context of consumption behavior, the partisan cues may exert a strong influence on choice that goes unnoticed by the selector; individuals may select consumption activities that align with their political identity without realizing the impact of partisan cues on their choices.

With respect to the hypotheses of this study, partisanship serves as a heuristic that reduces the difficulty of personally evaluating the themes of the music. Heuristics ignore information in order to make quick and easy decisions, judgments arrived at through the use of heuristics do not empirically evaluate all necessary evidence. Two processes are put forth as to

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5 Political attitudes are constructions based on value systems, perception, and other things, but political attitudes do not necessarily correlate with reality.

6 Krishna & Sokolova (2017) find that partisanship increases voter turnout as it reduces the decision difficulty by informing individuals of a candidate’s values and interests; without these cues voters resort to likability, expressiveness, and incumbency of candidates to determine choice.
why partisanship affects behavior and attitudes, those are a heuristic\(^7\) and motivated reasoning (Krishna & Sokolova, 2017). Party over policy effect is a heuristic, a way to inform oneself of a candidate’s position without the difficulty of evaluating their political stance (Krishna & Sokolova, 2017).

People use heuristics to make decisions (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). As observed in Cohen (2003), partisan support is used as a heuristic; this effect of interpreting information differently based on (possibly irrelevant) traits has been replicated in Van Boven et al. (2017). It is expected that the use of politics as a heuristic would hold sway in the realm of consumption because political cues affect agents’ willingness to engage in transactions (Mcconnell, Margalit, Malhotra, & Levendusky, 2017) as well as boycott or purchase products (Jost, Langer, & Singh, 2017). However, given the prevalence and strength politics exerts over individuals in as well as outside of the political realm it is reasonable to assume that political cues will influence a consumer’s choice in consumption. As the next section will elaborate, we expect political cues to impact decisions made for others in the consumption domain.

**Perceived Impact of Partisanship on Others.** Selecting consumption experiences for others is important and often times easier than selecting for yourself as it does not result in decision fatigue\(^8\) (Polman & Vohs, 2016). Political stances of others are often exaggerated. Robinson, Keltner, Ward, & Ross (1995) demonstrated using the Abortion Debate and the ‘Howard Beach’ Incident that people overestimate the extremity and ideological position of their political

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\(^7\) A heuristic is a strategy that ignores some information with the intention to make quick decisions. Rational models can be less accurate than heuristics; this is known as the less-is-more effect, an inverse U-shaped relationship exists between accuracy and information; more known information can negatively impact the accuracy of judgements. (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011)

\(^8\) A source of bias which describes the limited stamina humans have for making decisions, decision fatigue leads to poor self-control (Vohs et al., 2008).
adversary as well as their political ally. We expect that when making decisions for others, political cues will be used.

The perception of political polarization results from people overestimating the extremity of their political opponent (Van Boven, Judd, & Sherman, 2012). Van Boven et al., (2012) find that individuals fail to properly consider the outside perspective and instead engage in a self-referential process, that concludes with the individual believing others possess an equal amount of extremity in their views, albeit the other direction. Those who perceive the most polarization are the most active politically (Westfall, Van Boven, Chambers, & Judd, 2015).

This overestimation is partly due to Naïve Realism: the notion that agents believe that they see reality objectively, and other rational agents will share those same interpretations of reality (Ross & Ward, 1996). Ross & Ward (1996) further elaborate that the agent assumes others fail to share their interpretations of reality because others draw from different samples of information or the individual in question is irrational or biased. The politically active who project extreme polarization assume that their views are objective and other rational agents, drawing form the same sample, will arrive at the same conclusions.

The overestimation of others’ partisan stance is a result of the bias blind spot, where individuals observe motivated reasoning in others but not themselves (Pronin, Lin, & Ross, 2002), the illusion of objectivity, where people believe that they are more objective than is true (Armor, 1999), and the third person effect, where individuals believe persuasive messages will affect the masses, but not themselves (Davison, 1983). People believe that they are objective and rational when others are not.
In many contexts, people must make decisions for others. Individuals tend to overestimate the political ideology of others due to their failure to take an outside perspective. We expect individuals to factor political cues in their consumption decisions. We also expect that the exaggeration of partisan bias in others will result in individuals weighting partisan cues for others.

**Social, Differential, and Oppositional Projection.** People use themselves as a basis for others’ when estimating, attitudes, beliefs, and preferences. Individuals often falsely believe that their own beliefs are common (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977). Individuals project their own attitudes, beliefs, and preferences onto others. Ames (2004) argues that when individuals feel that there are higher levels of similarity\(^9\) between themselves and a target group they project their own attitudes onto the target group.

Individuals project to in-groups more than to out-groups (Clement & Krueger, 2002; Holtz & Miller, 1985), this is known as differential projection. People’s attitudes positively correlate with their estimates of in-group’s attitude, but not estimates of out-group attitudes (Robbins & Krueger, 2005). There is stronger projection to those whom reside in the in-group, because of perceived similarity.

In highly contentious contexts, oppositional projection occurs wherein members estimates of attitudes regarding in-group members positively correlates with their own attitudes, while estimates of the out-group negatively correlate with their own (Gromet & Van Boven, 2014). In terms of consumption behavior, when someone matches with another in group affiliation they will use their own preferences to guide the choices they make for another. People

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\(^9\) Perceived similarity is not necessarily actual similarity between an individual and target, this is because individuals only use a small subset of features to infer other qualities (Ames, 2004).
assume those in their group are similar to themselves while those in the outgroup are different (Biernat et al., 1997).

This process of oppositional projection aligns with Van Boven et al. (2012), in that people use themselves as reference points for others and that those who have an aligned political ideology and partisan stance perceive greater polarization (Westfall et al., 2015). Each of these perspectives on projection are related, but have different predictions regarding the pattern of personal preferences and the selection for others. Consumption behaviors around products that communicate political ideology, such as music, will exhibit oppositional projection because of the alignment of identity and politics. Those who select artists to listen to because of their political stances will perceive those who reside in their in-groups to listen to similar artists and those who reside in out-groups to listen to different artists.

Methods

We examined the role politics in consumer choices and oppositional projection in one study, in which participants create a music playlist for themselves and for another anonymous student. Participants report their own political ideology and partisan affiliation and see the same information for the person for whom they are making the playlist. Partisanship of the playlist is measured as the number of conservative songs in a playlist over the total number of songs in the playlist. We expect that when constructing playlists for themselves, participants will use their own partisanship as a guide, they will use the political information regarding the anonymous student to guide the construction of the student’s playlist, and finally, an effect of oppositional projection will occur in which those who perceive political similarities will use their playlist as a guide for the other student and those who do not will not.
Sample. 85 participants (35% male; age range = 18, 31; M_{age} = 19, SD = 1.95) completed the study as a requirement for the general psychology course. A 7-point scale ranging from strong liberal (-3) to strong conservative (3) was used to measure participant’s ideology along with another 7-point scale ranging from strong democrat (-3) to strong republican (3) to measure partisan affiliation. These scores are later averaged together as a measure of political stance. 49% of the sample identified as liberal, 28% as conservative, and the rest as independent. 6 participants were excluded for failing to input the correct student or artist profile number that was provided to them.

Materials and Procedure. Subjects came into the lab and told that the research is concerned with how people make entertainment decisions for themselves and others. Subjects are instructed that they will make a music playlist for themselves and another student with the goal to maximize both their enjoyment and the other student’s enjoyment of the playlist. Subjects begin the survey on Qualtrics, where they answer questions concerning their beliefs and personality. Only the questions regarding political ideology and affiliation are used in the analysis. Upon completion of that portion of the survey, participants return to the research assistant who hands out two items: a booklet of ten artist’s responses to the same questionnaire participants completed as well as the other anonymous student’s (hereafter referred to as the target student) response to the same questionnaire. Responses of both materials are fabricated. Participants could receive one of two versions of each material they are handed; each arbitrarily labeled and manipulated to be either very liberal or very conservative. Participants are given one minute to review the material before returning to the computer to complete the survey. To proceed they must enter the student and artist profile ID into Qualtrics provided to them on the booklet. This

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10 See Appendix for example
allows us to identify the partisanship of the target student as well as the partisanship of each artist included in the playlists.

Participants then have an additional 15 seconds to review the artist’s profile before listening to a 30 second sample of the first song in the booklet; they are given this 15 seconds review period followed by a 30 second sample for each artist. After listening to all the samples, participants construct two playlists: one for themselves, and one for the target student whose profile they read earlier. Participants choose 6 of the 10 songs they listened to include in a playlist for themselves. They then follow the same procedure for the target student. The order of playlist construction is randomized.

Participants are asked a series of personality questions related to the target student’s profile to ensure that participants read and comprehended the profile. These are to what extent they feel the following traits describe the target student: Loves music, open to new experiences, follows the news, Liberal, Conservative, relaxed, and kind. All traits are measured on a 7-point scale ranging from ‘Not at all’ to ‘Very much’. These questions reflect the same traits in the handouts that participants received for the target student.

A few final questions are asked regarding how much participants enjoyed the artists, they think the other student would have enjoyed each artist, to what extent they perceived political themes in each artist’s song, the importance of factoring of political views into consumption behavior, and other demographics. Subjects are then thanked for their participation and promptly leave.

**Selecting Songs and Creating Materials.** To find songs for participants to listen to 8 genres of music were chosen based on the assumption that they were tolerable to listen to: Country,
Bluegrass, Folk, Southern Rock, Ethereal/Spiritual, Jazz, Progressive Metal, and Synthwave. Then, 5 to 6 songs from lesser known artists were selected from each genre. Research assistants then listened to a 30 second sample of each song and rated the songs on perceived political themes, enjoyment, and whether they had heard of the artist before, this process was used to filter the list. Again, to filter the list further, mTurk workers were used to assess the remaining songs on the same attributes. This process resulted in 10 songs, pre-tested to be politically neutral, enjoyable, and from an unknown artist.

Two handouts were made for the participants with two versions each. One was the student profile and the other was a booklet of the artist profiles. The profiles were a printed screenshot of the same personality survey the participants had taken. However, the target students’ profile was marked as either strong liberal and strong democrat or strong conservative and strong republican. The other questions on the profile were randomly selected. The same process was used for creating the artists profiles. In addition to artists being strong liberal as well as strong democrat or a strong conservative as well as strong republican there was two artists in each booklet who were identified as either a liberal and democrat or a conservative and republican. Each set of artists profiles was constructed in such a way that partisanship of one artist in a booklet was opposite that of the same artist in the other booklet.11

Results

Hypothesis 1

We first tested hypothesis 1, that partisan cues would influence an individual’s construction of their own playlist. We regressed subjects’ own playlist on their ideology. We also included

11 See Appendix for the profiles
whether participants constructed their own or the target student’s playlist first. As seen in Table 1, there was an effect of one’s own ideology on the playlist for themselves. In constructing the playlist for oneself, own politics ($\beta = 0.03922$, SE $\beta = 0.01173$, $p < 0.05$) had a significant main effect. The more conservative a participant was, the more conservative artists would be included in their playlist. The order of playlist construction ($\beta = -0.05013$, SE $\beta = 0.03432$, $p = 0.148$) had no significant main effects.

**Model 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>SE $\beta$</th>
<th>T-Value</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own Politics</td>
<td>0.03922</td>
<td>0.01173</td>
<td>3.344</td>
<td>0.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-First</td>
<td>-0.05013</td>
<td>0.03432</td>
<td>-1.461</td>
<td>0.148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Factors Determining Composition of Own Playlist (Model 1)*

Figure 1 depicts subject’s own partisanship graphed against the playlist they constructed for themselves. The more a participant identifies as conservative the more conservative songs are included in their playlist.

*Figure 1: Visualizing of Model 1*

**Hypothesis 2**

We then tested hypothesis 2, that partisan cues from the target student would influence how the individual constructed the playlist for the target student. We regressed target student’s playlist on their ideology. When constructing the playlist for the target student, the order of playlist construction had no significant effect ($\beta = 0.6512$, SE $\beta = 0.0026$, $p = 0.115$), however
the target student’s politics \((\beta = 0.27694, \ SE \beta = 0.04039, \ p < 0.05)\) had a significant main effect, in that the more conservative the target student, the more conservative songs would be in their playlist.

### Model 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>(\beta)</th>
<th>SE (\beta)</th>
<th>T-Value</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other Politics</td>
<td>0.27694</td>
<td>0.04039</td>
<td>6.856</td>
<td>1.28e-09***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-First</td>
<td>0.06512</td>
<td>0.04026</td>
<td>1.618</td>
<td>0.115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2: Factors Determining Composition of Target Student's Playlist (Model 2)*

Figure 2 depicts target student’s partisanship graphed against the target student's playlist. Participants constructed playlists with more conservative songs if the target student was conservative, and used more liberal songs if the target student was liberal.

**Figure 2: Visualizing Model 2**

Within the survey, participants had a chance to delineate how they constructed a playlist for the target student, below is a table providing supplemental evidence that people use political cues when making decisions for others, this table is not representative of all responses from participants:
Model 2 fails to allow for an interpretation of matching with the target student or an effect of oppositional projection.

**Hypothesis 3**

We then tested Hypothesis 3, to examine the role of projection. To do this, the feature, match, was engineered, if participants were on the same side of the political spectrum as the

| political party and whether or not the political party had personality traits similar to the person |
| If the artist shared similar political views |
| Political views and political affiliation |
| Their stance on politics, strong democrat or strong liberal. |
| I looked mainly at the political views as well as how much news and music they listen to but I also did consider the personality |
| I just wanted to choose music that fit his political ideology. |
| I mostly looked at their political views |
| Their political stance and if they were open to new experiences. |
| I looked at their political views and how extroverted they were |
| I looked at how well their political views matched with the artists |
| I choose the ones I liked more because we had similar political views trying to decide whether they were liberal or conservative themselves. |
| By looking at political views as well as anxiety and emotional stability |
| political views |
| My main goal was to match the songs based on the political view of the person and if the song seemed to match then I put it in the playlist. |
| Since my student was very liberal, I assumed they would not enjoy county music. They also did no listen to music that much so I included songs that sounded more simple. |
| To create a playlist that would challenge their personal views and compliment it, but chose Democratic/liberal artists |
| political views |
|Song matched her personality traits |
| - Songs were not too republican or conservative |
| Tried to add the most country themed songs because that goes with the student's conservative political views |
| If I thought the song was stereotypically conservative, I tried to avoid it since my student is very liberal. |

| Political positioning. |

*Table 3: Comments Reflecting Use of Politics in Constructing Target Student’s Playlist*
target student they were identified with a 0.5, else a -0.5. We regressed target student’s playlist on the participant’s ideology, a match in politics, and an interaction between the two parameters. There was a significant main effect of Own Playlist (\(\beta = -0.67802, SE \beta = 0.12383, p < 0.05\)) on the construction of the target student’s playlist. A significant interaction also existed; the effect of own playlist construction on target student’s playlist construction is dependent on whether the participant matches in ideology to the target student. (\(\beta = 1.39727, SE \beta = 0.27759, p < 0.05\)). Those who match on ideology use their own playlist as a guide when constructing the target student’s playlist.

**Model 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>(\beta)</th>
<th>SE (\beta)</th>
<th>T-Value</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Match</td>
<td>-0.04432</td>
<td>0.13880</td>
<td>-0.319</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Playlist</td>
<td>-0.67802</td>
<td>0.12383</td>
<td>-5.475</td>
<td>4.98e-07***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match*OwnPlaylist</td>
<td>1.39727</td>
<td>0.27759</td>
<td>5.034</td>
<td>2.91e-06***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4: Effect of Matching, Own Playlist, and the Interaction on the Target Student’s Playlist*

![Figure 3: Visualizing Model 3](image-url)

Figure 3 depicts the extent to which a participant uses their own playlist to construct the target student’s playlist if they match in partisanship. If participants match with the target student, they use their own playlist as a guide. If they do not match, they make a playlist unlike their own.
The interaction is consistent with both oppositional and differential projection since both predict different slopes for the own playlist, depending on match. To determine the type of social projection the sample was divided into six groups by condition: participant’s partisanship and the partisanship of the target student. The following table reveals a negative correlation for those making a playlist for someone in the out-group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Partisanship</th>
<th>Own Partisanship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>0.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>-0.554</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5: Correlations of Each Condition*

The strong positive correlations between those in the in-group and the strong negative correlations for those in the out-group suggest an effect of oppositional projection.
Discussion

The present study demonstrated that people use partisan cues when selecting for themselves and others in a context other than policy evaluation. Additionally, when selecting consumption experiences for others, people negatively project to out-groups. The results supported the three hypotheses proposed.

The party over policy effect observed in Cohen (2003) and Van Boven et al. (2017) bleeds into settings removed from public policy. People elect to support their affiliated party even in situations when it may not serve them best to do so, in essence, we observed a party over product effect. A variety of forces induce the party over policy (product) effect; one being strong party cohesion (Russell, 2014). The use of partisanship as a heuristic allows for quicker decisions in all contexts and people engage in motivated reasoning when in the context of politics i.e. individuals are likely to support their political in-group without question and look for ways to devalue the political out-group (Ditto & Lopez, 1992; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979) even in consumption behavior.

We also observed oppositional projection for participant’s selecting songs for the out-group. Participants use their own preferences as a guide for creating a playlist for someone they perceive to be like them, yielding strong correlations between participants playlists and target student playlists if a match in politics is present. When participants construct playlists for those in a different party than themselves we observe a strong negative correlation between own playlist and the target student’s playlist. When participants perceive similarity with the target student in terms of politics they assume the target student will like the same artist as they do. When they do not match, the participant uses different artists, suggesting that the participant believes the target student to be unlike them. These findings are consistent with Gromet & Van...
Boven (2014) findings in which in highly contentious partisan issues of cap-and-trade policy, the more people supported the policy the more the estimated the in-group would support the policy and the more the estimated the out-group would not support the policy. Similarly, participants in the present research made playlists more like their own for target students if they shared politics and made playlists very different from their own, if they did not share politics, as figure 4 shows. This suggests, in the realm of consumption behavior, politics alone are not an influential cue in selecting activities for oneself or for another, people also use their own preferences as a guide for another when they perceive similarity between themselves and the other, in this context when there is perceived similarity in political ideology held.

People continually fail to properly adopt a perspective outside of their own. This failure leads to a host of biased judgements, in which the individuals ostensibly assume that they observe reality objectively (Ross & Ward, 1996), are unaffected by motivated cognition when others are (Armor, 1999; Pronin et al., 2002), and one’s in-group is a reflection of their own values while the out-group stands in opposition (Biernat et al., 1997; Van Boven et al., 2012; Westfall et al., 2015). For these reasons, people go to great lengths to support their own party (Cohen, 2003; Van Boven et al., 2017) and in-group (Gromet & Van Boven, 2014), even when it is against their best interest to do so, this is why subjects in the present research used political cues to select music for themselves and others, even making playlists unlike their own for out-group members.

The results support the initial hypotheses concerning the influence of partisan cues on consumption behaviors, and additional evidence in table 3 further confirms that people use political cues to guide their selection of consumption goods for others. The study also demonstrated oppositional projection, in an area outside of politics. Playlists for target students
outside of one’s political in-group had a strong negative correlation with a participant’s own playlist.

**Limitations.** A few limitations hindered the study. Participants could not replay the song after the samples concluded; in some instances, the task at hand became a memory task, as student could not take notes. This added stress of not remembering artists could contribute to student’s confusion on artist’s traits, thus weakening the experiment’s main manipulation. Glitches in Qualtrics prevented some songs from playing some of the time.

Additionally, certain genres of music carry implicit associations with certain political ideologies (e.g., country is associated with conservatism), the manipulation presented may not have been enough to overcome the participant’s pre-existing beliefs about the genre, despite our best attempts in pre-testing to find unknown, non-partisan songs. In the example of country music, even if the artists were presented as liberal and the target student was liberal; the country song may be unincluded because of previous over-riding beliefs.

It should also be noted that the political manipulation provided in the survey provokes the use of political cues. The design of the study may yield the results we were seeking because of the suggestive nature of questions. The models in this study may not be generalizable to the real world if politics is not provoked.

**Future Research.** Future research should consider political influence on other consumption activities (ones with varying degrees of pre-existing political associations), these may include buying food/drinks, watching videos, or reading. One could examine whether political cues exert more influence when there are fewer attributes to evaluate a product by. For example, people have pre-existing preferences for genres of music, whereas a commodity like chips may lacks
that strong pre-existing belief. Additionally, future research in the context of music selection should include a group of subjects who are not exposed to the political manipulation and observe how they decide to construct playlists for themselves and others.

**Conclusion**

Like previous research on the party over policy effect, the present research demonstrates that people support their own party even in contexts where political cues seem irrelevant and people assume the out-group to be vastly different from themselves which further emphasizes partisan opposition. These observations outside of the political realm demonstrate the power of politics, and to truly bridge the partisan divide much work must be done both inside and outside of the political realm.

Of additional interest, in the context of music selection for others, individuals use themselves as a guide if they match in terms of a salient trait. When politics becomes salient and people begin to identify with each other on that trait they will recommend music that they like. This behavior could explain the propagation of certain music genres in political groups. For example, the subgenres of synth-wave known as fashwave and trumpwave may have proliferated in the alt-right circles of the United States because of projection and the processes captured in this study.
References


