Quote of the Day:

"I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn't lose any voters."

-- Donald Trump, during the 2016 primaries

1ˢᵗ and 2ⁿᵈ paper updates

Recap of the course so far

Readings for next time

NEW EDITION

EXPERT POLITICAL JUDGMENT

HOW GOOD IS IT?
HOW CAN WE KNOW?

PHILIP E. TETLOCK

WITH A NEW PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

284 credentialed experts, thousands of predictions between 1988 and 2003

Examples:

fall of apartheid in South Africa
election outcomes
central bank interest rates
budget deficits
outbreak of war in former Yugoslavia
acquisition of nuclear weapons by certain countries
unemployment rate in postcommunist countries
outbreak of war in Persian Gulf

Tetlock asked them to quantify their degree of uncertainty

Overall the predictions were poor (prediction is hard), but some experts were better than others. Can you guess the qualities of the best ones?

Foxes: many ideas, flexible, willing to revise. Had some predictive accuracy.

Hedgehogs: one big idea, rigid, resistant to acknowledging error. Performed no better than chance.

Tetlock also found that experts with the poorest records (disproportionately hedgehogs) were most likely to get media attention.

Jerry Taylor, "The Alternative to Ideology"

● Ideologies give pre-packaged answers to complex issues

● Ideologies encourage confirmation bias and motivated reasoning

● Ideologies encourage focusing on one value (e.g., liberty) to the exclusion of others

● People will be better able to discover truth if they either abandon ideology entirely, or hold their ideologies loosely

Experts and other political elites often hold coherent political ideologies based on unifying principles (e.g., Jerry Taylor used to be a libertarian). However, the political system as a whole arguably has the opposite problem—a lack of principles to tie together disparate issues.

What is the logical connection between the full set of positions on each side of the table?

stronger gun control	weaker gun control
higher minimum wage	lower minimum wage
pro-choice on abortion	pro-life on abortion
aggressive action on climate change	minimal action on climate change
more gov. support for health care	less gov. support for health care
less military spending	more military spending
require masks to fight Covid	mask mandates are gov. overreach

In "Our Big Fight over Nothing," Hyrum Lewis cites a large body of research indicating that political positions get packaged for contingent historical reasons involving group identities, not because of underlying principles.

Language of "left" and "right": During the French Revolution, the king's supporters in the National Assembly happened to sit on his right, with supporters of the revolution on his left.

In contemporary American politics, there is no logical connection among the positions grouped together as left and right, or liberal/progressive and conservative

big government vs. small government?

individual rights?

the people vs. the powerful?

egalitarian vs. hierarchical?

change and progress vs. order and the status quo?

In the last few years, people have often defined their political views through their reactions to one person, Donald Trump:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PHQKiNZu_0&ab_channel=RyanLong

tribalism, as used in a political context: "the behavior and attitudes that stem from strong loyalty to one's own tribe or social group"

That loyalty can shape a person's beliefs in sometimes surprising ways:

Medical researchers have developed a new cream for treating skin rashes. New treatments often work but sometimes make rashes worse. Even when treatments don't work, skin rashes sometimes get better and sometimes get worse on their own. As a result, it is necessary to test any new treatment in an experiment to see whether it makes the skin condition of those who use it better or worse than if they had not used it.

Researchers have conducted an experiment on patients with skin rashes. In the experiment, one group of patients used the new cream for two weeks, and a second group did not use the new cream.

In each group, the number of people whose skin condition got <u>better</u> and the number whose condition got <u>worse</u> are recorded in the table below. Because patients do not always complete studies, the total number of patients in each two groups is not exactly the same, but this does not prevent assessment of the results.

Please indicate whether the experiment shows that using the new cream is likely to make the skin condition <u>better</u> or <u>worse</u>.

Result

	Rash Got Better	Rash Got Worse
Patients who <u>did</u> use the new skin cream	223	75
Patients who did <u>not</u> use the new skin cream	107	21

What result does the study support?

○ People who used the skin cream were more likely to <u>get better</u> than those who didn't.

○ People who used the skin cream were more likely to <u>get worse</u> than those who didn't.

Dan Kahan et al., "Motivated Numeracy and Enlightened Self-Government"

	*crime went up	crime went down
cities that passed a gun control measure	223	75
cities that did not pass a gun control measure	107	21

*labels flipped for some subjects

Greater math skills predicted likelihood of answering the question correctly if and only if the correct answer matched the person's partisan and ideological dispositions.

What lessons would you draw from the Kahan et al. study?

Some events from recent years that are hard to understand as anything other than tribalism:

● Republican opposition to the Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare"), especially Republican governors who rejected federal Medicaid money

● Democratic opposition to reopening schools after Trump came down strongly in favor during the summer

Tribalism affects how people evaluate the behavior of people inside and outside their group. David DeSteno and Piercarlo Valdesolo (2007)

● Key finding: People were hypocritical in judging immoral actions by a person in their arbitrary group versus a person in the other arbitrary group.

● We would expect people to be even more hypocritical in a real-life setting based on deeply held group affiliations.

Tribalism can help explain why Donald Trump's approval rating since taking office has fluctuated within only a narrow band:

https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/trump-approval-ratings/

Some of Donald Trump's strongest support has come from white evangelicals (80% in 2016 election, roughly the same since then).

What would you put on a list of Trump's behaviors that, if done by someone else, would upset white evangelicals?

So have those behaviors jeopardized Trump's support among white evangelicals?

"An elected official who commits an immoral act in their personal life can still behave ethically and fulfill their duties in their public and professional life." Agree/disagree?
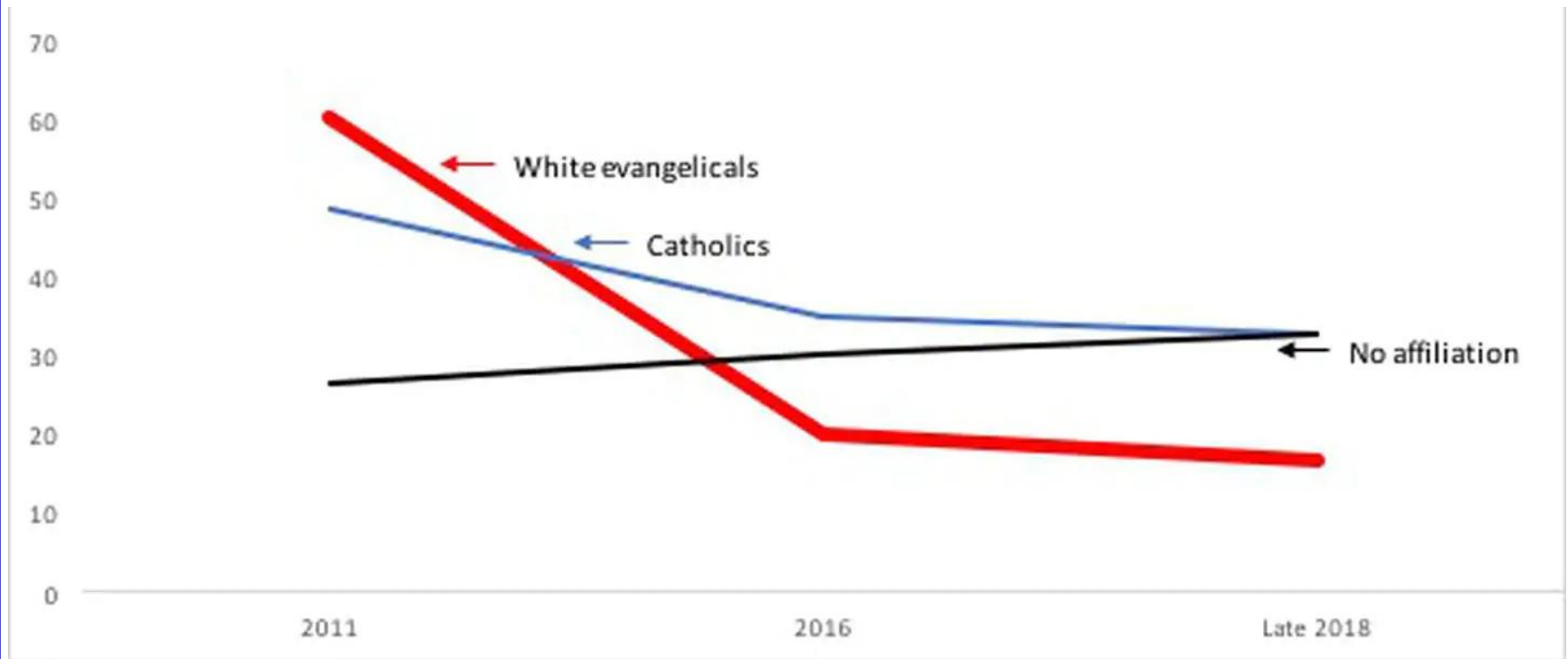
As of 2011, here's the % disagree among three large religious groups in America:

white evangelicals: 60%
Catholics: 48%
no religious affiliation: 25%

% disagreeing over time

Cognitive dissonance: white evangelicals could either reduce their support for Donald Trump, or give up their belief that elected officials must be moral in their private lives. They did the latter.

Yes, but wouldn't liberals/progressives also stick with one of their politicians no matter what? What follows below suggests no.

Moral foundations theory. An attempt to identify the different cross-cultural dimensions on which people make moral judgments.

The five main dimensions in moral foundations theory:

- harm: was anyone hurt?

- fairness: equality, proportionality, is anyone cheating?

- ingroup: loyalty to members of your group

- authority: obedience vs. resistance

- purity: sanctity/degradation, are some things inherently wrong?

moral foundations questionnaire

Part 1. When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent are the following considerations relevant to your thinking? Please rate each statement using this scale:

[0] = not at all relevant (This consideration has nothing to do with my judgments of right and wrong)

[1] = not very relevant

[2] = slightly relevant

[3] = somewhat relevant

[4] = very relevant

[5] = extremely relevant (This is one of the most important factors when I judge right and wrong)

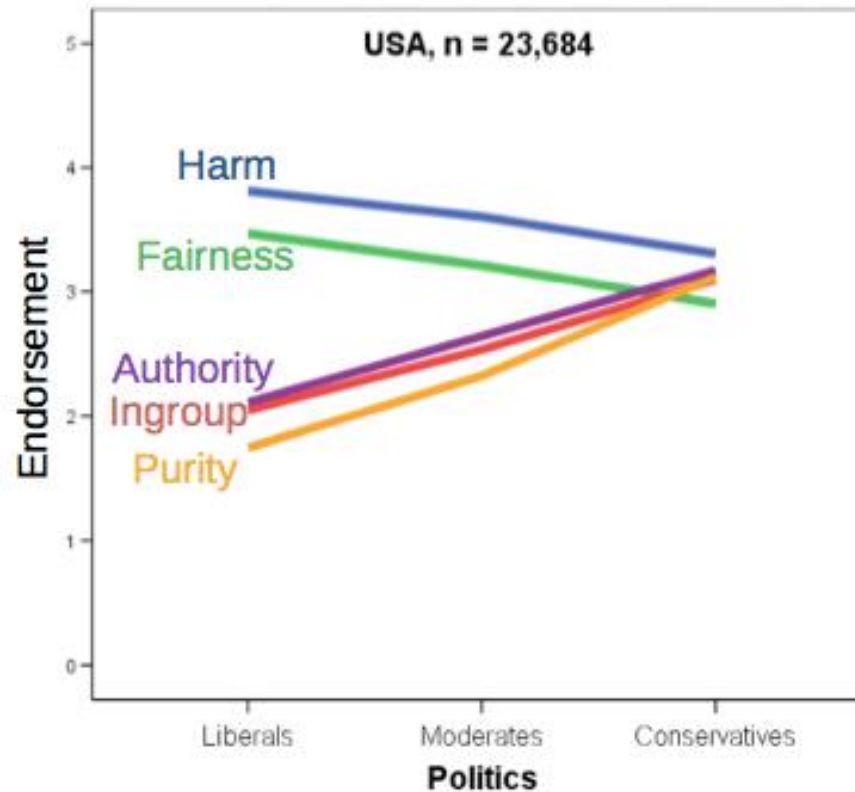# ingroup questions below highlighted with ***

_____1. Whether or not someone suffered emotionally

_____2. Whether or not some people were treated differently than others

_____3. ***Whether or not someone's action showed love for his or her country

_____4. Whether or not someone showed a lack of respect for authority

_____5. Whether or not someone violated standards of purity and decency

_____6. Whether or not someone was good at math

_____7. Whether or not someone cared for someone weak or vulnerable

_____8. Whether or not someone acted unfairly

_____9. *** Whether or not someone did something to betray his or her group

_____10. Whether or not someone conformed to the traditions of society

_____11. Whether or not someone did something disgusting

_____12. Whether or not someone was cruel

_____13. Whether or not someone was denied his or her rights

_____14. *** Whether or not someone showed a lack of loyalty

_____15. Whether or not an action caused chaos or disorder

_____16. Whether or not someone acted in a way that God would approve of

Part 2. Please read the following sentences and indicate your agreement or disagreement:
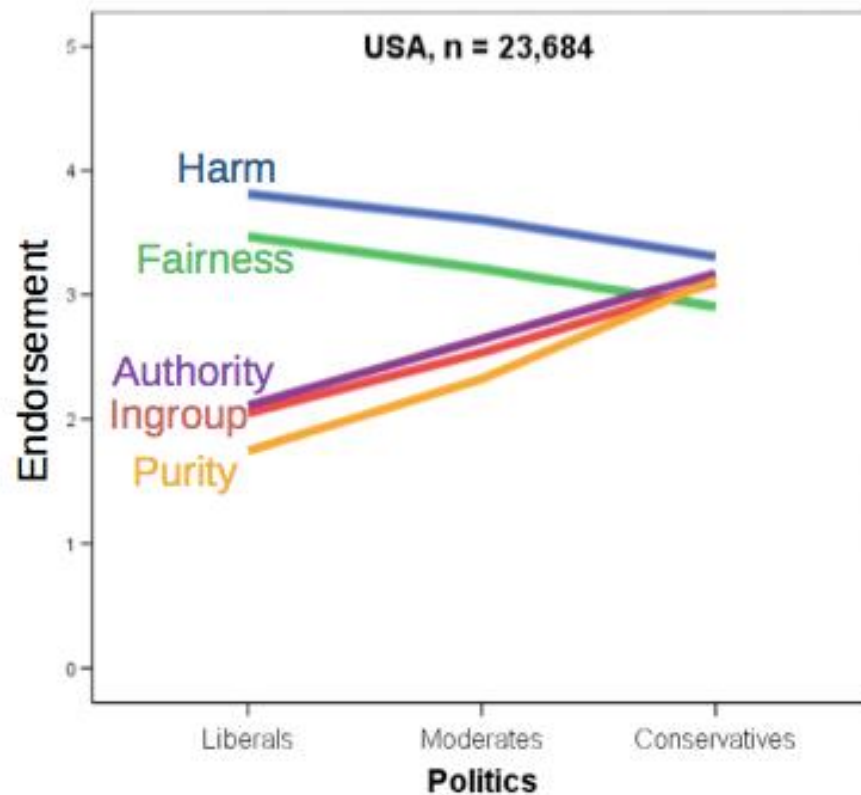
[0]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
strongly disgree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

ingroup questions highlighted with ***

_____17. Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial virtue.

_____18. When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly.

_____19. *** I am proud of my country's history.

_____20. Respect for authority is something all children need to learn.

_____21. People should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed.

_____22. It is better to do good than to do bad.

_____23. One of the worst things a person could do is hurt a defenseless animal.

_____24. Justice is the most important requirement for a society.

_____25. *** People should be loyal to their family members, even when they have done something wrong.

_____26. Men and women each have different roles to play in society.

_____27. I would call some acts wrong on the grounds that they are unnatural.

_____28. It can never be right to kill a human being.

_____29. I think it's morally wrong that rich children inherit a lot of money while poor children inherit nothing.

_____30. *** It is more important to be a team player than to express oneself.

_____31. If I were a soldier and disagreed with my commanding officer's orders, I would obey anyway because that is my duty.

_____32. Chastity is an important and valuable virtue.

● **Liberals rely primarily on the harm and fairness dimensions.**

● **Conservative rely somewhat less on the harm and fairness dimensions. Instead, they use all five dimensions about equally.**

USA, n = 23,684

Most importantly for our purposes: conservatives score higher than liberals on the ingroup dimension. One might therefore hypothesize that conservatives (now largely in the Republican party) would stick longer with a misbehaving politician.