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Party Identification at Western Michigan University

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Party Identification at Western Michigan University

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ABSTRACT

A high self-monitor is an individual who changes his/her political views to improve an impression made to others. This past election contained very controversial candidates making individuals very reluctant to show strong support for either party. My thesis topic examines the link between self-monitoring and party identification after the controversial election. I will be testing to see Western Michigan University students’ willingness to disguise political views based on what others think of them by using three different versions of the same survey. Many students are in positions on campus as well as off campus that require them to present themselves in a non-biased way in order to represent the university or other corporation. The surveys conducted will contain questions pertaining to students’ occupation as well as other demographic areas.

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I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Party identification remains to be a topic that is widely avoided by citizens across America. Bipartisanship is the foundation of America’s governmental system, yet individuals’ personal affiliation to a party can be seen as undesirable. This phenomenon is greatly represented in a quote from Independent Politics: “Over the past century, the American political parties have - by most measures – been moving further and further away from each other. Democratic politicians have become more liberal and Republicans have become more conservative” (Klar Krupnikov 38). Looking back to the 2016 presidential election with Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton, it can be hypothesized that individuals were less likely to publicly affiliate with either party due to their controversial nature. Klar and Krupnikov, authors of Independent Politics, defines a self-monitor to be an individual who changes his/her political views to improve an impression made to others (Klar and Krupnikov 40). This past election contained very controversial candidates making individuals very reluctant to show strong support for either party. My thesis topic examines the link between self-monitoring and party identification after the controversial election. I will be testing to see students’ willingness to disguise political views based on what others think of them. Using a survey Klar and Krupnikov used in their book Independent Politics, I was able to recreate a similar study to test self-monitors. The interesting topic of self-monitoring among WMU students can reveal the number of students who are shielding their true political identity and aim to understand the potential reasons behind the reluctance to strong partisanship across younger voters.

I will be collecting information to write a thesis on the party identification of Western Michigan University students. The proposed research will extend work on partisanship and
political behavior, specifically recent survey work by Klar and Krupnikov (2016). They find that individuals who high self-monitors are likely to identify themselves as independents, even if they have strong partisan preferences. This reluctance to reveal partisan attachments has consequences for political behavior and engagement. We are replicating a brief survey developed by Klar and Krupnikov to see if WMU students exhibit the same behaviors as the national sample recruited for the 2016 book. Given the polarizing political discourse in 2016 and 2017, we expect that partisans may be even more reluctant to claim or reveal a partisan attachment. Overall, the political culture at Western Michigan University is primarily Democrat. Across the WMU student population high self-monitors when exposed to the disagreement survey are more likely to stay away from strong partisanship. Overall, the political culture at WMU is primarily Democrat. I also found that Western Michigan University student employees are slightly more likely to be a high self-monitor than non-employees potentially due to their impartiality while at work.

II. INDEPENDENT POLITICS

I replicated the self-monitoring survey that Klar and Krupnikov did in their book Independent Politics in chapter three: How Do You Like Me Now? The Desirability of Political Independence. The social desirability of certain actions drives people to act in that way. This desirability to fit in with society creates high self-monitors. Partisanship is a social identity that people feel the need to shield. As Klar and Krupnikov point out, people believe that identifying as an independent is more desirable than strong partisanship, and that is exactly what their study showed.
There were three testing groups; the control group, the unity group, and the disagreement group. The control group included an introduction at the beginning of the survey that was neutral. It read,

“Every February, Americans wait for Groundhog Phil in the little town of Punxsutawney, Pa. According to folklore, Phil’s sighting of his own shadow means there will be 6 more weeks of winter. If Phil does not see his own shadow, it means ‘there will be an early spring.’ The official website of Punxsutawney Phil, perhaps not impartial, claims the Groundhog has issues a correct forecast 100% of the time” (Klar and Krupnikov 173).

The unity group included an introduction claiming that Republicans and Democrats are more unified than ever. It read,

“As President Barack Obama begins his second term, the Democrats and Republicans in Washington appear to be more unified than ever. Political experts predict that Americans can expect a new era of bipartisanship in Washington. The profound debate that has raged between the two parties appears to be settling. The next two years may very well bring progress towards two parties cooperating in Washington” (Klar and Krupnikov 174).

The disagreement group contained an introduction that showed strong disagreement between the Democrats and Republicans. It read,

“As President Barack Obama begins his second term, the Democrats and Republicans in Washington appear to be as divided as ever. Political experts predict that Americans can expect even more of the partisan bickering that has characterized Washington in recent years. The profound debate that has raged between the two parties has not been
settled in the least. The next two years may very well bring a continuous cycle of two parties battling it out in Washington” (Klar and Krupnikov 174).

The control group representing the true political identity and the disagreement group representing the high self-monitors are compared closely. Individuals who are high self-monitors and individuals who are low self-monitors represent themselves differently when they are exposed to disagreement. The three versions of the survey I conducted gave that exposure to a third of the group. Klar and Krupnikov explain that most Americans monitor their political beliefs when directly exposed to political disagreement or debate. When exposed to such disagreement, people believe that independence is more favorable over a strong partisanship. The party disagreement paragraph was intended to reflect the current media coverage of politics in America. Klar and Krupnikov explain that “exposure to disagreement leads high self-monitors to shift the way they present their partisan identities” (Klar and Krupnikov 52).

After doing a series of studies, Klar and Krupnikov concluded that “people generally believe that avoiding partisanship makes for a better impression than does being partisan. They maintain this belief when exposed to political debates” (Klar and Krupnikov 53). After being exposed to debate and disagreement between political parties, high self-monitors are more likely to report that they are independent and that their partisanship is not important. As shown in the figure 3.3 graphs pictured below, the low self-monitors were much more likely to identify as a strong partisan over high self-monitors. And the high self-monitors were more likely to identify as an independent overall.
III. MOTIVATION

My motivation for surveying WMU students was to find out the true political culture across the student body. I made sure to visit classes that reached a wide variety of studies. I
conducted surveys from areas of arts and sciences, health and human services, and music. That way, I was able to make sure that my data could be used to make inferences about the student population as a whole. Having gone to Western Michigan University for three years, I was always curious about how transparent other students were about their party identification. College is a time where young people are trying to find their professional identity and networking in order to find their dream job leading many to monitor their true political beliefs.

IV. HYPOTHESIS

Going along with my motivations for replicating Klar and Krupnikov’s survey, I wanted to evaluate the overall political culture of Western Michigan University students over a wide range of majors and departments. By being a student on WMUs campus during the Presidential campaign time and during the election, I saw the widespread support for the Democratic party and for Bernie Sanders. When Bernie lost in The Democratic Primary to Hilary Clinton the political culture across WMU students shifted. I did not see as much support for either party. Because of the shift, I hypothesized that currently, the desirable political identity would be independent.

As a Western Michigan University student employee, I also wanted to look at the number of self-monitors across students who are employed by WMU. I hypothesized that student workers would have a larger percentage of high self-monitors over students who are not employed by WMU. As a student worker, I would not want my strong partisanship to cause any tension within my job position. Hearing that I am a political science student, many coworkers assume that I am very versed in political news and culture and that I have a strong
affiliation to one party and are very curious to hear my views. In that professional social setting, I feel that many are high self-monitors and will not showcase a strong partisanship in order to avoid potential conflict between professionals.

Using the same personality questions as Klar and Krupnikov did to determine self-monitoring, I used a numbering system to distinguish between high and low self-monitors. The three personality questions were: When you are with other people, how often do you put on a show to entertain or impress them? When you are in a group of people, how often are you the center of attention? and How good or poor of an actor would you be? If the student answered ‘always’ or ‘excellent’ they would be assigned a three and would be the highest self-monitor. If the student answered ‘never’ or ‘very poor’ to all of the questions they would be assigned a fifteen and would be the lowest self-monitor. I found that across the WMU students I surveyed one was the highest self-monitor scoring a three out of fifteen and five were amongst the lowest self-monitors scoring a fifteen.

V. METHODS/PROTOCOL

In order to get my data, I reproduced a study from the book Independent Politics by Klar and Krupnikov in their chapter of “How Do You Like Me Now? The Desirability of Political Independence”. The study I chose to replicate using the WMU student population as my subjects was to test self-monitoring within party identification and to identify the socially desirable affiliation for the WMU student population.

I reached out to Western Michigan University faculty from many departments to request a visit in order to conduct my survey to their classes. I received a great deal of interest
from faculty and professors who were very interested in my topic. I had an original goal to conduct a total of 200 surveys, leading to having just over 60 of each version to analyze. Because of the strong interest from faculty and students, I conducted just fewer than 400 surveys on WMU’s campus and in classrooms. In front of the entire class, I would read the HSIRB approved consent statement and proceeded to hand out an evenly distributed number of each survey version. After collecting all of my surveys, I recorded the data into a spreadsheet which I would later use to analyze the results using SPSS.

Once in classrooms, I performed a systematic distribution. I layered the three survey versions in a 1,2,3,1,2,3 order to ensure that there would be a close to even distribution of each version in each class. In total, I distributed 117 version 1 surveys, 117 version 2 surveys, and 124 version 3 surveys across six different classroom environments reaching different academic departments.

For my three different survey introductions, I followed the same format as Klar and Krupnikov did in Independent Politics only changing relevant political information. My control introduction was:

“Every February, Americans await for Groundhog Phil in the little town of Punxsutawney, Pa. According to folklore, Phil’s sighting of his own shadow means there will be 6 more weeks of winter. If Phil does not see his shadow, it means “there will be an early spring.” The official website of Punxsutawney Phil, perhaps not impartial, claims the Groundhog has issued a correct forecast 100% of the time.”
My unity introduction was:

“The U.S. economy is booming and the stock markets are at record highs. Record numbers of Americans are working. Despite some well-publicized disagreements, President Donald Trump and the Democrats and Republicans in Washington appear to be committed to a course of action that will stimulate the economy in the future. In fact, political experts predict that Americans can expect a new era of bipartisanship in Washington as these economic gains continue. The next two years may very well bring progress towards two parties cooperating in Washington.”

Finally, my disagreement introduction was:

“As President Donald Trump begins his second year, the Democrats and Republicans in Washington appear to be as divided as ever. Political experts predict that Americans can expect even more of the partisan bickering that has characterized Washington in recent years. The profound debate that has raged between the two parties has not been settled in the least. The next two years may very well bring a continuous cycle of two parties battling it out in Washington.”

VI. RESULTS

Self-monitoring is calculated based off of three different personality questions on the survey. The questions include: When you are with other people, how often do you put on a show to impress or entertain them? When you are in a group of people, how often are you the
center of attention? And How good or poor of an actor would you be? If the student answered, “Always or Excellent” to all three questions, they would be the highest self-monitor. If the student answered, “Never or Very Poor” to all three questions, they would be the lowest self-monitor. For my grouping, students whose answers calculated to being below nine were considered high self-monitors and those whose answers calculated to above eleven were considered low-self monitors. In total, my study has 78 high self-monitors and 81 low self-monitors out of a total of 354 surveys. This strategy for grouping people leaves me with about ⅗ of the survey labeled as low self-monitors and ⅗ of the survey labeled high self-monitors.

Below is the full scale of surveyors’ personality responses.

Table 1: Distribution of social monitoring types at WMU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monitor</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>89.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>95.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>98.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>97.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Party Identification

Overall my data shows that in the first cut WMU students identified as 15% Republican, 50% Democrat, and 35% independent for their true party identification. There were 171 Democrats in the first cut and an additional 77 out of 122 independents that lean Democratic. That is a total of 248 out of a total of 354 survey takers that are in some way Democratic (70%).

Before analyzing the three different versions, there was already half of Western Michigan students that identified as a Democrat. The political culture at WMU does not favor being independent as much as it favors being Democratic.

Table 2: Overall student party identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Party Id</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking first to the control group coming from survey version one, 64% of Western Michigan Students purely identify as a Democrat with 28% identifying as an independent and 7% identifying as a Republican. Shifting to the disagreement survey version 3, the high self-monitors change their party affiliation from a strong partisanship of Democrat to independent. For version 3, there are 11.4% more independents compared to the control group. While being
exposed to the disagreement frame, high self-monitors drive away from strong partisanship. Like Klar and Krupnikov’s study, high self-monitors are also more likely to pick independent over a strong partisanship when exposed to the disagreement frame.

The highest number of surveyors’ that reported being independent came from the unity frame at 45%. There is a trend of high self-monitors avoiding any party identification when exposed to a political cue, not only when exposed to disagreement. Highlighting politics pushes high self-monitors to their political corners leaving them very reluctant to show any party identification.

Table 3: Party Identification of high self-monitors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Unity</th>
<th>Disagreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Democrat</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>53.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Independent</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Republican</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Low self-monitors are much more likely to identify as they truly are because they do not feel the need to impress or monitor their political beliefs because of what others might think about them as a result of their party identification. This can be seen by the increase in the number of Republicans over all three survey versions. Compared to the high self-monitors even in the control group, the low-self monitors identified as a Republican twice as many times as the high self-monitors. There is the same effect as it comes to students moving slightly towards
identifying as an independent when exposed to the disagreement frame. For the low self-monitors, the effect is not as strong as with the high self-monitors. The number of independents increases by only 5.2 percent. In Klar and Krupnikov’s data on low self-monitors, there is a bigger decrease in the number of independents and more of an increase in strong partisanship, which can be the result of having a much larger test group.

There is a massive drop in the amount of WMU students who identified as a Democrat between the control group and the disagreement group. The number of students who identified as a Democrat dropped by 18.9% in the disagreement frame. This drop is twice the difference for high self-monitors, which was 11.3%. Because low self-monitors do not monitor their political views because of what others might think of them, there was an increase in the number of students who identified as a Republican. It seems, from the data, that when the low self-monitors were exposed to the disagreement frame the responses of Democrat, independent, and Republican were more evenly distributed throughout. Disagreement leads low self-monitors to stay close to their party identification.

Table 4: Party identification of low self-monitors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Unity</th>
<th>Disagreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Democrat</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Independent</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Republican</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strong Partisanship

Looking at the two groups of high self-monitors and low self-monitors there is a large shift in the number of students who openly identify as Republican. Within the high self-monitors, only 6% of students answered that they were Republicans. Between the low self-monitors, the number of students who identified as Republican increased to 20%. This large increase shows that low self-monitors who do not monitor their political behavior in a social setting or when exposed to disagreement or debate report their true partisanship.

Splitting up the high self-monitors and the low self-monitors, the results show a similar trend to Klar and Krupnikov’s in that the number of strong partisans lowered across high self-monitors that were exposed to the disagreement frame. The number of low self-monitors did not show as much of an increase in strong partisanship but did not show as much of a difference between the control group and the disagreement frame as the high self-monitors did. There is a power issue when comparing Klar and Krupnikov’s data with my data. My data is not statistically significant because my testing groups are not large enough to make full inferences about the entire WMU student population. Looking at the chi-square test below referencing the high and low self-monitors and survey version, all p values are greater than .05 meaning it is not statistically significant. The treatment effect in the sample is in the expected direction, but there is a power issue when comparing Klar and Krupnikov’s findings with my findings. My data is not statistically significant because my testing groups are not large enough to make full inferences about the entire WMU student population.
Table 5: Chi-square of self-monitors by party by survey version

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>version</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>.919b</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>.919</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>.901</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>2.381c</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>2.595</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>.633</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>4.985d</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>5.252</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>4.462</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>7.061a</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>7.363</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>5.605</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>156</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When comparing this data to the data that Klar and Krupnikov collected for *Independent Politics*, differences arise. When looking specifically at the low self-monitors, my findings show an opposite trend. My findings represented in the graph below show that low self-monitors in the control group are the least likely to be strong partisans where in *Independent Politics*, the low self-monitors in the control group were the most likely to be a strong partisan. Between the low self-monitors, the unity group showed the highest partisanship, where *Independent Politics* showed it to be the lowest group for strong partisanship. Comparing the high self-monitor date with Klar and Krupnikov’s, the trends match up. Comparing the control group and the
disagreement group of high self-monitors, the disagreement group is less likely to identify with a strong partisan. A potential reasoning to the difference in data results when comparing WMU students’ partisanship to the general population of what Klar and Krupnikov tested involves adults longtime devotion to their party. Many adults have been loyal to their political identity for many years leaving them less likely to monitor their political identity in a social setting. Students, who are mainly young adults, have not had the time to be familiar and gain devotion to a party leaving them less likely to shield their true political identity in a social setting.

Table 6: Mean partisanship by survey version by self-monitor

![Graph showing mean partisanship by survey version by self-monitor](image)

1 = Control Group  2 = Unity Group  3 = Disagreement Group
WMU Employee

Western Michigan University student employees are slightly more likely to be high self-monitors than low self-monitors. Looking at the percentages of high self-monitors and low self-monitors overall, there is a 3.5% increase in high self-monitors over low self-monitors of WMU employees. This minuscule difference was not what I predicted in my hypothesis. When students are in a professional environment, they are slightly more likely to monitor their political behavior. WMU student employees are possibly shielding their political identity completely in order to prevent unnecessary confrontation and conflict from arising.

Table 7: Self-monitoring WMU employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELF_MONITOR2</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Party identification among the WMU student employees shows the responses to be quite similar between high self-monitors and low self-monitors. Democrat remains to be the most frequent response mimicking the trend shown overall with the second most frequent response being independent. WMU student employees may change their party identification when in the workplace and increase self-monitoring when in a professional setting.
Table 8: Party identification of self-monitoring WMU employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELF_MONITOR2</th>
<th>DEMOCRAT</th>
<th>INDEPENDENT</th>
<th>REPUBLICAN</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.00</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VII. CONCLUSION

In summary, it is socially desirable to identify as a Democrat at Western Michigan University. Notice that after the most recent campaign, Western Michigan University students are extremely reluctant to identify as a Republican as seen by the survey results. Out of 354 surveys taken, there are 78 high self-monitors and 81 low self-monitors. When exposed to the disagreement frame, the high self-monitors were more likely to move away from strong partisanship while the low self-monitors were less likely to move away from strong partisanship. The overall party identification of Western Michigan University students is largely Democrat. The low self-monitor control group most closely represents the true party identification of WMU students as shown in the overall party identification data.

It might be the case that high self-monitors are uncomfortable with the ugliness of politics trapping them in their political corners unable to give their support to either party. Or that the low self-monitors are better informed about politics and therefore are more comfortable
openly talking in public about their views and support for their party. Political news is constantly changing and if students do not keep up with the news, they do not feel comfortable openly speaking about politics. Many people, students especially, think that identifying with one party means that you agree with everything that party stands for. The all-in phenomenon makes people reluctant to identify themselves with one single party. Identifying as an independent is a way for those who do not entirely agree with one party’s views the flexibility to agree and disagree with both parties. Another aspect to students staying away from strong partisanship could be due to students’ lack of political attachment in a new community. Moving from all over the world to attend college at Western Michigan University students may not have fully adjusted to the new culture and may not know if their political identity changed leading many to report that they are independent.

Testing self-monitoring among students is interesting to see how affiliated young people are to political parties, or if they are affiliated at all. College is the main point that students can live on their own and start creating their own political identity that may or may not differ from their families. It was surprising and scary to realize that many college students are not familiar with political terminologies like partisanship or what liberal and conservative mean. This lack of common knowledge may be the reason young adults aren’t getting to the polls and voting.

I learned a great deal during the process of this thesis project. From coming up with the idea to defending my findings, I grew immensely as a student. I learned from the HSIRB modules and submitting the application. I learned the largest amount through using the SPSS software to help analyze my data. I was able to familiarize myself with creating cross tabulations, t-test, and making graphs that I used in my thesis defense and paper. If I were to do
anything different with my thesis I would give myself more time to conduct more surveys in order to make my data statistically significant. As a potential addition to my thesis project, I could have reached out to other Michigan public universities to conduct the three survey versions to a different student population and to compare them. Overall, I am very happy with how my thesis project turned out and the journey that went along with my thesis topic.
VIII. SOURCE


IX. APPENDIX

A. Surveys

Version 1: Control Group

Every February, Americans await for Groundhog Phil in the little town of Punxsutawney, Pa. According to folklore, Phil’s sighting of his own shadow means there will be 6 more weeks of winter. If Phil does not see his shadow, it means “there will be an early spring.” The official website of Punxsutawney Phil, perhaps not impartial, claims the Groundhog has issued a correct forecast 100% of the time.

Version 2: Unity

The U.S. economy is booming and the stock markets are at record highs. Record numbers of Americans are working. Despite some well-publicized disagreements, President Donald Trump and the Democrats and Republicans in Washington appear to be committed to a course of action that will stimulate the economy in the future. In fact, political experts predict that Americans can expect a new era of bipartisanship in Washington as these economic gains continue. The next two years may very well bring progress towards two parties cooperating in Washington.

Version 3: Disagreement

As President Donald Trump begins his second year, the Democrats and Republicans in Washington appear to be as divided as ever. Political experts predict that Americans can expect even more of the partisan bickering that has characterized Washington in recent years. The profound debate that has raged between the two parties has not been settled in the least. The next two years may very well bring a continuous cycle of two parties battling it out in Washington.
Please circle your class at WMU:

FR, SO, JR, SR

What is your age? (in years) ___________________

What is your major? _______________________ 

Please circle your preferred gender:

Male Female Non-binary Prefer not to respond

Please circle where you live:

on-campus residence hall on-campus apartment off-campus apartment/house

Please circle where you work:

on-campus off-campus both neither

WMU Employee? [circle one]

Yes No

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an independent or what? [circle one]

Democrat Independent Republican

If you answered Democrat or Republican would consider yourself: [circle one]

Strong Democrat Not a strong Democrat
Strong Republican Not a strong Republican

If you answered independent, would you say that you lean closer to the: [circle one]

Republican party Democratic party
Whether you identify as Democrat, Republican, or independent, how important is your political identity to you? [check one]

- Extremely Unimportant
- Unimportant
- Somewhat Unimportant
- Neutral
- Somewhat Important
- Important
- Extremely Important

Using the scale below, do you consider yourself a liberal, a conservative or moderate? [check one]

- Extremely Liberal
- Liberal
- Somewhat Liberal
- Independent
- Somewhat Conservative
- Conservative
- Extremely Conservative

When you are with other people, how often do you put on a show to impress or entertain them? [check one]

- Always
- Most of the Time
- Somewhat of the Time
- Once in a While
- Never

When you are in a group of people, how often are you the center of attention? [check one]

- Always
- Most of the Time
- Somewhat of the Time
- Once in a While
- Never

How good or poor of an actor would you be? [check one]

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Very Poor
B. HSIRB Approval

Date: February 22, 2018

To: J. Kevin Corder, Principal Investigator
    Melissa Heinz, Student Investigator for Honors Thesis

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 18-01-86

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “Party Identification at WMU” has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under “Number of subjects you want to complete the study.”) Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: February 21, 2019