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PERCEIVED THREAT AND LEFT-WING AUTHORITARIANISM: THE EFFECT OF

FRAMING ON PERSUASIVE MESSAGES

By

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Perceived Threat and Left-Wing Authoritarianism: The Effect of Framing on Persuasive Messages

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  Past research reveals a strong connection between feeling threatened and Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA). This relationship is considered to be an integral part of authoritarianism and the nature of its presence in the left-leaning populace is still being fully explored. This study examined the relationship between perceived threat and Left-Wing Authoritarianism (LWA) through the framing of persuasive messages. Participants ($n = 256$) were recruited through Amazon's *Mechanical Turk* (MTurk) and given a list of reward- or threat-framed statements concerning the possible ramifications of voting in future elections and then asked to rate the quality and persuasiveness of the respective statements. Participants then completed one of two measures of authoritarianism (LWA or RWA). Regression analysis found no significant interactions between the measures of authoritarianism and the perception of message persuasiveness/quality. Patterns of the results and possible future directions for the research are discussed.

Perceived Threat and Left-Wing Authoritarianism: The Effect of Framing on Persuasive Messages

The term authoritarianism has been strongly associated with the political right since its inception, likely in no small part due to the fascist regimes the early research was based on (Adorno, et al., 1950; Fromm, 1941). Loosely defined as the propensity to endorse strong delineated authority to the detriment of others, authoritarianism was once largely considered a personality trait (Adorno et al., 1950; see also Allport, 1954; Wilson, 1973), however now it is more broadly seen as an attitudinal dimension influenced by both innate tendencies and specific situations (e.g., Duckitt, 2001; Jost, et al., 2003).

The idea that authoritarianism was uniquely correlated with right-wing ideology quickly gained a strong following and led to the creation of the current most widely used measurement of authoritarianism, the Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scale (Altemeyer, 1996; for evidence of its continued use as the most important authoritarianism questionnaire, see Conway et al., 2017a). Up until recently there have been relatively few efforts to identify or examine authoritarianism on the left side of the political spectrum as it was largely concluded that such a relationship could not be maintained due to the strong egalitarian values held by a politically left-leaning populace (Altemeyer, 1996; Jost et al., 2003; Stone, 1980).

While the majority opinion that there are no left-wing authoritarians has sporadically been questioned over the years (e.g., McFarland et al., 1996; Mullen et al., 2003; Ray, 1983; Van Hiel et al., 2006), recent evidence now suggests that authoritarianism is indeed present and can be identified in ordinary samples of the left-leaning populace. Researchers have recently developed a Left-Wing Authoritarianism (LWA) scale that is parallel to the original RWA scale in language and intent, but

focused on liberal authoritarian issues instead of conservative ones (Conway et al., 2017a; Conway & McFarland, 2018). By altering the focus of the authoritarian language from conservative to liberal, the LWA scale maintains the structure and integrity of Altemeyer's popular RWA scale (1996). This new LWA scale has since been validated in multiple studies matching the RWA scale in terms of inter-item reliability and effect sizes, as well as in its positive relation to prejudice, dogmatism, political liberalism (in contrast to RWA and political conservatism), and attitude strength (Conway et al., 2017a). As such, the new LWA scale can now allow researchers to more fully examine left-wing authoritarian attitudes and behaviors using the same methodologies employed in the past by RWA researchers.

In the present study, the LWA scale was used to examine the relationship between message framing and left-wing authoritarianism. I identified and repurposed a series of threat- and reward-framed messages used in prior research on RWA (Lavine et al., 1999), and randomly assigned them to 256 participants recruited from Amazon's *Mechanical Turk* (MTurk). After reading the short list of statements (either threat or reward), participants filled out a short questionnaire that indicated how persuasive and how high of quality they found the statements to be. Then participants were given either the LWA or RWA scale to fill out. Regression analyses were run on each authoritarianism measure condition (LWA and RWA) and the associated threat- or reward-framed statements. It was expected that the findings for both LWA and RWA would be similar to prior studies where high RWA persons perceived threatening messages being more persuasive, and while patterns were identified for both LWA and RWA, neither condition was found to contain any significant interactions.

Authoritarianism and Perceived Threat

A prominent element of RWA identified in past research is its relationship with perceived threat (see Duckitt, 2013 for a review). Elevated levels of RWA have long been seen as a product of, or being triggered by, threatening circumstances (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; Crawford, 2017; Duckitt et al., 2010; Feldman, 2003; Jost et al., 2003; Peterson et al., 2005; see Choma & Hanoch, 2017; Conway & McFarland, 2018, for discussions) resulting in the tendency for people to gravitate towards authoritarian leaders and policies during times of uncertainty. These circumstances include a wide range of perceived threats from social (e.g., threats towards ingroup) to personal (e.g., risk of harm to self or child; Shaffer & Duckitt, 2013). These threats are suggested to produce an affinity towards conservative (traditional) values, rigid authority figures, and established hierarchies to help combat the potential loss. These associations with (and reactions to) threat is one of the reasons authoritarianism has long been firmly associated with the conservative right-wing.

But can threat produce authoritarianism on both sides of the political spectrum? More recently, research suggests that this relationship with threat is not exclusive to RWA but has an integral role in LWA as well (Conway & McFarland, 2018; Conway & McFarland, under review).–For example, two studies (Conway & McFarland, under review) revealed that both RWA and LWA are associated with feelings of threat. The first study used the original *Belief in a Dangerous World* (*BDW*; Altemeyer, 1998) alongside an ideologically-balanced version of the same scale (rewritten with a more liberal-focus) to predict LWA and RWA. Results found strong positive correlations between the ideologically-balanced BDW scales and their respective LWA and RWA

counterparts; with the conservative-focused BDW scale positively correlating with RWA and the liberal-focused BDW scale positively correlating with LWA. The second study reported that even ideologically neutral threats such as air-borne pathogens and disruptive climates were also found to positively correlate with both LWA and RWA attitudes at roughly equal levels. By asking non-ideological questions about how threatening participants felt their respective environments (e.g., climates) were, this second study found that a general presence of fear and perceived threat appears to have a strong role in authoritarian attitudes on both sides of the political aisle. And indeed, in both studies, key effects held when controlling for self-reported political identification (Conway & McFarland, under review).

This relationship between threat and authoritarianism (for both RWA and LWA) can have important implications. For example, in another recent study by Conway and McFarland (2018), RWA was more predictive of conservative candidate support in a presidential election that occurred after 8 years of liberal executive rule (2016 election), but LWA was more predictive of voter support for a liberal candidate after 8 years of conservative executive rule (2008 election). These effects held when controlling for self-reported political ideology. To the degree that the constituents of the party *not* in power perceive themselves to be under a greater level of threat than do the constituents of the incumbent political party, both high RWA and LWA persons show higher levels of candidate support than do low RWA and LWA persons. These results help bear out past research on RWA as well as affirm that LWA is also positively correlated with perceived threat. Taken as a whole, these recent studies serve as an impetus to forge new areas of research into the nature of authoritarianism and how it reacts to threat.

The Present Project: Authoritarianism and Threat-Based Message Framing

While historically speaking, the majority of past work on authoritarianism has focused on the relationship between RWA and threat, current research provides a solid foundation to revisit these past findings and possibly identify the similarities and differences between LWA and RWA. The focus of the present study is to better understand one such important link in the threat-authoritarianism relationship: Specifically, how does authoritarianism affect situational perception when the framing of the material is construed positively (reward-based) versus negatively (threat-based)? Although prior work suggests that LWA and RWA are both more predictive of voting outcomes when their own political ideology is threatened (Conway & McFarland, 2018), that work assumed – but did not directly measure – threat. Thus, the present work borrows from a previously used experimental paradigm to provide a clearer test of the moderation of the threat-voting relationship by LWA and RWA.

In 1999, Lavine et al. found that, in a political voting scenario, high RWA participants were more likely to view threat-related messages as containing stronger and higher quality arguments than reward-related messages. This is in contrast with low RWA participants who indicated the reward-related messages to be more persuasive. While it has now been shown that both LWA and RWA are positively correlated with a heightened awareness of danger, it has not been clearly established whether LWA has a similar reaction towards threat-based messages as has been found with RWA. Replicating Lavine et al.'s work using both measures of authoritarianism (LWA and RWA) allows for a more holistic understanding of authoritarianism, as well as possibly draw out some of the unique propensities of the political left and right in their

authoritarian attitudes and behaviors.

Expectations for LWA and Threat-Based Messages

Should persons high in LWA show a pattern similar to persons high in RWA for threat-based messages? Prior research provides potentially conflicting hypotheses. On the one hand, Crawford (2017) proposed a Compensatory Political Behavior (CPB) Model which suggests variations in liberals' and conservatives' reactions to threat. This model proposes that while liberals and conservatives maintain a fairly equal response to *ideological* threat (contradictory values, identities, and purpose), conservatives are more likely to have a heightened response to physical threats (physical risks to one's safety, well-being, or life) in comparison to liberals. For example, Oxley et al. (2008) found that individuals holding conservative beliefs tend to have heightened levels of physiological arousal (compared to their liberal counterparts) following exposure to threatening images and loud unexpected noises, suggesting that innate biological responses to physical threat may be higher in the conservative population than in the liberal population.

However, recent studies involving LWA and RWA (Conway & McFarland, 2018; Conway & McFarland, under review) provide mixed support for the CPD model. While RWA was found to be positively associated with an ideologically-balanced BDW scale that emphasized physical threats (thus supporting the CPD model), LWA was similarly found to be positively associated with its ideologically-balanced version of BDW scale. Since the scales retained much of the same physically threatening verbiage and the only substitutions were liberal ideological issues in place of conservative ones, it suggests that LWA can also be sensitive to physical threats, at least in the context of the general belief that the world is a dangerous place. In a follow-up study constructed specifically to be as

ideology free as possible, RWA and LWA were again both found to be positively associated with physical threat (e.g., pathogens, harsh climate, etc.). This said, it must be acknowledged that the elements that comprise authoritarianism may very well be unique and separate from the formation and maintenance of political ideologies, and that research in this area is still in its early stages.

Given this uncertainty surrounding physical threat, I opted in the present study to focus on the form of threat that prior work suggests similarly affects both liberals and conservatives: Ideology threat (see Crawford, 2017). To do this, I borrowed from a Lavine et al's (1999) paradigm that tested the effects of threat on message quality and persuasiveness. While the messages in Lavine et al's (1999) study did not use explicitly ideological messages, the messages did, by and large, contain an ideological slant. As such, this study was meant to replicate Lavine et al.'s findings and to expand upon them by including the LWA scale alongside the RWA scale; Specifically, I expected high (versus low) LWA persons to view ideologically-threatening messages as being of higher quality and more persuasive than rewarding messages of the same type.
My prediction fit well with the CPD model, which expects ideology threats to operate identically in liberals and conservatives. However, given prior studies' mixed results in whether high RWA persons are more sensitive to physical threats than high LWA persons, it is still uncertain how physical threats might play out within a similar context.

Hypothesis for LWA and Message Framing

Hypothesis 1: It was expected that LWA would have a positive relationship with quality/persuasiveness of *threat*-framed statements but have no relationship with quality/persuasiveness of *reward*-framed statements.

Hypothesis 2: It was expected that RWA would have a positive relationship with quality/persuasiveness of *threat*-framed statements but have no relationship with quality/persuasiveness of *reward*-framed statements.

Method

Overview of Design

Participants were asked to read a short list of either threat- or a reward-framed statements concerning the institution of voting. Following this, participants were presented with a short questionnaire asking them to rate the quality (persuasiveness) of the statements they just read. Next, participants were given either the LWA or RWA scale. This was then followed by a short manipulation check to determine if the participants found the threat/reward statements to be reflective of their intended meaning. The remaining questionnaires included measures inquiring about participants' intentions on voting in future elections, a two-item political ideology measure, and relevant demographic information.

Participants

A total of two hundred and fifty six U.S. adults were recruited using Amazon's *Mechanical Turk* (MTurk). This number of participants was based on precedents set by published research in the field on authoritarianism and perceived threat, as well as a power analysis using the software GPower. GPower analysis suggests that a sample size of 55 participants per condition has a 90% power to detect a small effect size of .2 with a significance level of 0.05 (two tailed). MTurk has been validated for use as a representative sample for research related to politics and political ideology (see, e.g., Clifford, Jewell, & Waggoner, 2015), generally shows similar results as other samples

(for an example, see Conway et al., 2017; Houck, Conway, & Repke, 2014), and has been used in recent work evaluating authoritarianism and Trump support during the 2016 election (Choma et al., 2017; Ludeke et al., 2018).

Ten participants were excluded from analysis for failing the attention check question, leaving two hundred and forty-six participants. One hundred and twenty-four participants were randomly assigned to the RWA condition while one hundred and twenty-two were in the LWA condition. The final sample ranged from 18-70 years of age with a mean age of 35. The majority identified as Caucasian (85%), and contained a slightly higher distribution of males (52.8 %) to females (47.2 %). Politically, the sample contained a nearly equal number of self-identified liberals and conservatives.

Independent Variables

LWA/RWA. Participants were randomly assigned to receive either the RWA scale (Altemeyer, 1996) or the LWA scale (Conway et al., 2017).

Threat Versus Reward Persuasive Messages. Participants were randomly assigned to receive a short list of either reward- or threat-framed statements. The reward-framed statements were designed to draw participant's attention towards the positive gains or rewards that can arise from voting in future elections, while the threat-framed statements were designed to focus on the possibility of loss or threat from not voting in future elections. Both lists provide a general framework that was supportive of voting in future elections.

Participants in the reward-framing condition read the following instructions and statements (adapted from Lavine et al., 1999):
"Below, we present a list of reasons for voting in elections. Please read each item and we

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will then ask you some questions about your reactions to the items.

1. People who vote help ensure their values are fully represented.

2. Voting provides a way for you to express and live in accordance with important values.

3. Voting enables people to translate their attitudes and beliefs into action.

4. Voting allows one to be heard.

5. Voting enables one to bring about the kinds of public policies a person believes in.

6. Voting allows one to play an active role in the direction taken by your government."

Participants in the threat-framing condition read the following instructions and statements (adapted from Lavine et al., 1999):

"Below, we present a list of reasons for voting in elections. Please read each item and we will then ask you some questions about your reactions to the items.

1. If you do not vote, you increase the risk that cherished values will be taken away by putting the wrong people in power.

2. Voting provides a way for you to prevent basic American values from being undermined.

3. Voting enables you to act on your beliefs by preventing the other side from advancing their political agenda.

4. Voting prevents your values from being silenced by powerful people.

5. If you do not vote, it allows others to take away your right to express your values.

6. There is no better way to defend your beliefs than by voting against a congressional or presidential candidate who stands in opposition to what you

believe."

Dependent Variables

Perceptions of Message Quality (adapted from Lavine et al., 1999)**.** Following the presentation of the Threat versus Reward Persuasive Messages, participants completed a short questionnaire asking them to evaluate the overall quality of the list of six statements they just read. Items in this questionnaire include: "I found the reasons for voting to be convincing," and "The reasons for voting did not contain persuasive arguments." Participants were then asked to indicate their level of agreement with the list of six statements using a 7 point Likert-type scale where 1 = "I completely disagree," and 7 = "I completely agree."

Voting Intentions (adapted from Lavine et al., 1999)**.** Participants were asked if they intended to vote in future elections, and to indicate on a 1-7 Likert-type scale how sure they were of that intention, where 1 = "No intention to vote in any of the upcoming elections," and 7 = "I will most definitely be voting in all of the upcoming elections" (see Table 2 for descriptive statistics on key questionnaires).

Analytic Strategy

The hypotheses were tested by running regression analyses using PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2013) in the statistical software SPSS. This produced interaction terms revealing whether LWA/RWA operated differently on the quality/persuasiveness of statements within the reward versus the threat conditions. This type of simultaneous regression analysis has been successfully used in recent studies where the relationship between two continuous variables was suspected to be moderated by another continuous variable. For example, Chan and Conway (2018) found legal restrictions on culture-level

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variables to be moderated by the level of autocracy (versus democracy) in the government. While another study using similar analytical procedures found that support given to political candidates who employed "politically incorrect" language was moderated by reactance and informational contamination (Conway et al., 2017).

Results

Manipulation check

A one-way ANOVA was conducted on the manipulation checks in the threat- and reward-framed conditions. The results suggest that the participants correctly understood the intended meaning of the reward-framed statements ($M = 6.76$, $SD = 2.20$) and the threat-framed statements ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 2.52$), $F(1, 244) = 45.95$, $p = < .000$.

LWA condition

Inconsistent with H1, there was a weak negative interaction ($b = -.14$, $p = .636$; 95% CI lower = -.72, upper = .44) between LWA and threat/reward on the persuasiveness of the statements. LWA showed non-significant effects for both reward-framed statements ($b = .03$, $p = .872$; 95% CI lower = -.31, upper = .37) and threat-framed statements ($b = -.11$, $p = .641$; 95% CI lower = -.58, upper = .36). There was no significant main effect found of LWA on persuasiveness ($b = -.04$, $p = .786$; 95% CI lower = -.31, upper = .37) with results weakly trending in a positive direction. Results suggest that framing (reward or threat) may have a weak effect on high LWA persons' perception of message quality/persuasiveness, and this pattern trends in the opposite direction as posited by H1 (please see Table 1).

Similarly inconsistent with expectations, there was a weak negative interaction ($b = -.44$, $p = .280$; CI lower = -1.24, upper = .36) between LWA and threat/reward on the

intent to vote in the 2020 elections. LWA showed non-significant effects for both the reward-framed condition ($b = .31$, $p = .186$; CI lower = -.15, upper = .78) and the threat-framed condition ($b = -.12$, $p = .705$; CI lower = -.78, upper = .53). There was no significant main effect found of LWA on the intent to vote in the 2020 elections ($b = .10$, $p = .602$; 95% CI lower = -.15, upper = .78) with results trending in a positive direction. Results suggest that threat-framed messages may have a slightly deleterious effect on high LWA persons' intent to vote in the 2020 elections, and this pattern trends in the opposite direction than expected (please see Table 1).

RWA condition

Descriptively consistent with H2, there was a weak positive interaction ($b = .13$, $p = .436$; CI lower = -.20, upper = .47) between RWA and threat/reward on the persuasiveness of the statements. However, RWA showed non-significant effects for both reward-framed statements ($b = .01$, $p = .953$; CI lower = -.24, upper = .26) and threat-framed statements ($b = .14$, $p = .227$; CI lower = -.09, upper = .37). There was no significant main effect found of RWA on persuasiveness ($b = .07$, $p = .395$; CI lower = -.24, upper = .26). Results suggest that framing (reward or threat) may have a weak effect on high RWA persons' perception of message quality/persuasiveness, and this pattern (although not statistically significant) trends in the direction posited by H2 (please see Table 1).

There was essentially no interaction ($b = .01$, $p = .956$; CI lower = -.37, upper = .39) of RWA on the intent to vote in the 2020 elections. Instead, RWA showed descriptively similar and significant effects for both the reward-framed condition ($b = -.28$, $p = .045$; CI lower = -.56, upper = -.01) and the threat-framed condition ($b = -.27$, $p = $

.037; CI lower = -.53, upper = -.02). Inconsistent with expectations, there was a significant negative main effect found of RWA on the intent to vote in the 2020 elections ($b = -.28$, $p = .004$; CI lower = -.56, upper = -.01). Results suggest that high RWA persons have lower intentions to vote in the 2020 elections, but the framing of messages (reward or threat) has little to no effect on those intentions (please see Table 1).

Discussion

In general, the main hypotheses were not supported by the data. The only significant main effect was the (unpredicted) negative correlation between RWA and an intention to vote in the upcoming 2020 elections, and the framing of the message (reward/threat) did very little to alter that relationship. This lone significant finding is not consistent with the expectation that persons high in both LWA and RWA would both have greater intentions to vote for threat-based (versus reward-based) messages. Overall the data as a whole is inconclusive, yet the pattern of results could help shape the conversation going forward.

Although most of results fell far below statistical significance, there were certain patterns and trends that may be of interest in this line of study. For example, in the LWA condition a pattern was beginning to emerge that suggests (counter to the original hypothesis) that persons high in LWA respond in the opposite way than persons high in RWA might respond to similar conditions. Namely, there seems to be a decrease in both voting intentions and in the perception of the argument's quality while in the threat-framed condition. This could indicate a fundamental difference between LWA and RWA: It may be that reward-framed messages are inherently more appealing to authoritarians on the political left and threat-framed messages are more appealing to

authoritarians in the political right. Or it could be an indication that the specific type/nature of the threat holds greater salience to RWA than it does for LWA. These questions can help sharpen the focus in designing future studies in this area.

While it failed to reach significance, the pattern of RWA on persuasiveness is consistent with prior studies (Lavine et al., 1999), in that persons high in RWA tend to rate the threat-framed messages as being higher in persuasiveness and argument quality. However, the lack of a significant interaction of RWA on voting intentions is inconsistent with what was hypothesized going into the study, as well as somewhat contradictory to the findings by Lavine et al. (1999). There was, in fact, a significant negative main effect found of RWA on intention to vote in the 2020 elections; however, it was in the opposite direction than expected ($b = -.28$, $p = .004$). This could be a fluke of this specific data set, or it might be something specific to the current political climate surrounding the 2020 elections. Recent studies do suggest that the constituents of the incumbent party inherently feel less threat and are less motivated to vote in upcoming elections (Conway & McFarland, 2018). Either way, it is possible this counter-finding surrounding RWA on voting intentions may in the future lend itself in isolating the specific nature of the type of threats that are salient enough to motivate people on one side of the political spectrum but not the other.

As can be expected, the political left and right are motivated by different values and concerns that drive their focus and attitudes. Moral Foundations Theory (Haidt & Joseph, 2004) posits that there are five to six different dimensions of morality that each have various levels of salience depending on one's political orientation. Liberals tend to place stronger emphasis on the dimensions of Care/Harm and Fairness/Cheating, while

conservatives place strong emphasis on these two as well as the remaining three: Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation (Graham et al., 2011; Graham et al., 2012). While the research in this area is primarily concerned with moral judgment, it may be that the respective salience of these dimensions between political ideologies is equally at play when evaluating danger and in eliciting authoritarian responses.

Things that hold greater salience to us, by necessity, also command a greater portion of our attention and concern. In cases where individuals are presented with a reward- or threat-framed message, the Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) may suggest these dimensions of morality are likely influencing the individual's motivation to fully evaluate the danger within those messages. Messages may be relegated to peripheral status (decreased cognitive elaboration) when the framing (either reward or threat) does not correspond with one of the individual's moral foundations. This can give rise to simplistic heuristic processing that is incapable of facilitating complex long-lasting attitudinal changes. But if the framing of the message appeals to one of the moral dimensions the individual holds, they will likely show an increase in cognitive elaboration (the central route) as a response to the salient aspect of the message (e.g. the risk experienced by persons high in RWA at the prospect of loss) . However, this increase in cognitive elaboration may come with hidden costs. Studies suggest that increasing one's cognitive load significantly reduces the ability to evaluate and judge interpersonal interactions (Tenney et al., 2011). While the heightened salience of being faced with a moral danger may increase complex cognitive elaboration, it

simultaneously may diminish the ability to think holistically and critically about the specific situation at hand.

These situational aspects of moral salience may partly help explain why threat-framed messages about the dangers of not voting might seem less consequential to someone whose chosen party currently holds political power (such as the high RWA persons in the current study), or how a reward-framed message may be more salient to someone on the political left when their party is not in power. Respective differences in the relationship between political incumbency and what is salient and dangerous may help explain why authoritarianism sometimes appears differently on the political right than it does on the political left.

One possible angle to account for these danger/reward discrepancies in salience can be found in an old Irish proverb "Better the devil you know than the devil you don't know." Often the political right is accused of steadfastly holding to tradition regardless of new evidence and innovations, while the political left is seen as embracing each new wave of change as eagerly as they let go of the one that came before. These generalizations may give a clue to why, when, and how each side of the political aisle identifies their deepest fears. The political right may very be well holding to the old adage "better the devil you know" when deriving their primary sense of danger and threat. It is of course premature to over-interpret results that were largely non-significant. Nonetheless, with that caveat in mind, this "devil you know" perspective may account for the discrepancies of the responses in the current study where the threat-framed messages were seen by right-wing authoritarians as being higher in quality and more persuasive than reward-framed messages, whereas left-wing authoritarians continued to view

reward-framed messages as being higher in quality and more persuasive. The threat-framed statements largely had to do with loss of what is currently available (e.g. "If you do not vote, you increase the risk that cherished values will be taken away…"), while the reward-framed statements focused more on the possible changes that may occur (e.g. "Voting enables one to bring about the kinds of public policies a person believes in"). In the former instance, the possibility of a reward pales in comparison to the risk of "the devil you do not know", while in the latter the threat of loss is not as threatening as missing the opportunity to trade away the current devil for a new and possibly better version. Future studies using this angle of approach may help illuminate some of the reasons behind the political left and right's decisions on which "devils" constitute a salient threat and which ones are simply an acceptable facet of normal life.

Concluding Summary Thoughts

While there was a significant (albeit surprising) negative effect found of RWA on the intent to vote in the 2020 elections, the remainder of the study's conditions failed to reach significance. However, the patterns of the results may provide some insight in developing future studies. Both of the LWA conditions suggest that the hypothesized relationship of LWA and threat-framed messages may trend in the opposite direction than expected – with high LWA persons being less likely to view threat-framed messages as being persuasive. On the other hand, the RWA conditions (while not significant) did partially meet expectations in replicating Lavine's (1999) study which found persons high in RWA to rate threat-framed messages as being more persuasive. Finding a significant negative relationship with RWA on the intent to vote in the 2020 elections does not cleanly fit either narrative, yet those findings may still make sense given the

context of the current authoritarian right-wing regime. Within this context, persons high in RWA may possibly be more apathetic than they would be in moderate or authoritarian left-wing regimes. Moving forward, future studies could look at RWA and LWA persons' attitudes concerning this current regime and compare that to their voting intentions in the upcoming 2020 elections. Overall, the patterns found within these conditions are far from conclusive, yet they do provide small crucial steps towards better understanding of both LWA and RWA attitudes and behaviors.

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<center>**Appendix**</center>

Reward-framed messages (adapted from Lavine et al., 1999):

"Below, we present a list of reasons for voting in elections. Please read each item and we will then ask you some questions about your reactions to the items.

1. People who vote help ensure their values are fully represented.

2. Voting provides a way for you to express and live in accordance with important values.

3. Voting enables people to translate their attitudes and beliefs into action.

4. Voting allows one to be heard.

5. Voting enables one to bring about the kinds of public policies a person believes in.

6. Voting allows one to play an active role in the direction taken by your government."

Threat-framed messages (adapted from Lavine et al., 1999):

"Below, we present a list of reasons for voting in elections. Please read each item and we will then ask you some questions about your reactions to the items.

1. If you do not vote, you increase the risk that cherished values will be taken away by putting the wrong people in power.

2. Voting provides a way for you to prevent basic American values from being undermined.

3. Voting enables you to act on your beliefs by preventing the other side from advancing their political agenda.

4. Voting prevents your values from being silenced by powerful people.

5. If you do not vote, it allows others to take away your right to express your values.

6. There is no better way to defend your beliefs than by voting against a congressional or presidential candidate who stands in opposition to what you believe."

Perceptions of Message Quality Questionnaire (adapted from Lavine et al., 1999)**.**

"For the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement on a 1-7 scale, where 1 = 'I disagree completely', 4 = 'neutral/undecided', and 7 = 'I completely agree'.

1. I found the reasons for voting to be convincing.

2. The reasons for voting did not contain persuasive arguments."

Voting Intentions Questionnaire (adapted from Lavine et al., 1999)**.**

"For the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement on a 1-7 scale, where 1 = 'I disagree completely', 4 = 'neutral/undecided', and 7 = 'I completely agree.

1. I have no intention to vote in any of the upcoming elections.

2. I will most definitely be voting in all of the upcoming elections."

Left-Wing Authoritarianism (LWA) Scale (Conway et al., 2017a)

"For the following questions, please answer on a 1-7 scale, where 1 = 'I disagree completely', 4 = 'neutral/undecided', and 7 = 'I completely agree'.

1. Our country desperately needs a mighty and liberal leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical traditional ways of doing things that are ruining us.

2. Christian fundamentalists are just as healthy and moral as anybody else.

3. It's always better to trust the judgment of the proper authorities in science with respect to issues like global warming and evolution than to listen to the noisy rabble-rousers in our society who are trying to create doubts in people's minds.

4. Christian Fundamentalists and others who have rebelled against the established sciences are no doubt every bit as good and virtuous as those who agree with the best scientific minds.

5. The only way our country can get through the crisis ahead is to get rid of our "traditional" values, put some tough leaders in power who oppose those values, and silence the troublemakers spreading bad (and so-called "traditional") ideas.

6. There is absolutely nothing wrong with Christian Fundamentalist camps designed to create a new generation of Fundamentalists.

7. Our country needs traditional thinkers who will have the courage to defy modern progressive movements, even if this upsets many people.

8. Our country will be destroyed someday if we do not smash the traditional beliefs eating away at our national fiber and growing progressive beliefs.

9. With respect to environmental issues, everyone should have their own personality, even if it makes them different from everyone else.

10. Progressive ways and liberal values show the best way of life.

11. You have to admire those who challenged the law and the majority's view by protesting against abortion rights or in favor of reinstating school prayer.

12. What our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush the evil of pushy Christian religious people, and take us forward to our true path.

13. Some of the best people in our country are those who are challenging our

government, supporting religion, and ignoring the "normal way" things are supposed to be done.

14. We should strongly punish those who try to uphold what they claim are "God's laws" about abortion, pornography, and marriage, when they break the actual laws of the country in order to do so.

15. There are many radical, immoral Christian people in our country today, who are trying to ruin it for their religious purposes, whom the authorities should put out of action.

16. A Christian's place should be wherever he or she wants to be. The days when Christians are submissive to the conventions of this country belong strictly in the past.

17. Our country will be great if we honor the ways of progressive thinking, do what the best liberal authorities tell us to do, and get rid of the religious and conservative "rotten apples" who are ruining everything.

18. With respect to environmental issues, there is no "ONE right way" to live life; everybody has to create their own way.

19. Christian Fundamentalists should be praised for being brave enough to defy the current societal and legal norms.

20. This country would work a lot better if certain groups of Christian troublemakers would just shut up and accept their group's proper place in society."

Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) Scale (Altermeyer, 1998)

"For the following questions, please answer on a 1-7 scale, where 1 = 'I disagree completely', 4 = 'neutral/undecided', and 7 = 'I completely agree'.

1. Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us.

2. Gays and lesbians are just as healthy and moral as anybody else.

3. It's always better to trust the judgment of the proper authorities in government and religion than to listen to the noisy rabble-rousers in our society who are trying to create doubts in people's minds.

4. Atheists and others who have rebelled against the established religions are no doubt every bit as good and virtuous as those who attend church regularly.

5. The only way our country can get through the crisis ahead is to get back to our traditional values, put some tough leaders in power, and silence the troublemakers spreading bad ideas.

6. There is absolutely nothing wrong with nudist camps.

7. Our country needs free thinkers who will have the courage to defy traditional ways, even if this upsets many people.

8. Our country will be destroyed someday if we do not smash the perversions eating away at our moral fiber and traditional beliefs.

9. Everyone should have their own lifestyle, religious beliefs, and sexual preferences, even if it makes them different from everyone else.

10. The "old-fashioned ways" and "old-fashioned values" still show the best way of life.

11. You have to admire those who challenged the law and the majority's view by protesting for abortion rights, for animal rights, or to abolish school prayer.

12. What our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush evil,

and take us back to our true path.

13. Some of the best people in our country are those who are challenging our government, criticizing religion, and ignoring the "normal way" things are supposed to be done.

14. God's laws about abortion, pornography, and marriage must be strictly followed before it is too late, and those who break them must be strongly punished.

15. There are many radical, immoral people in our country today, who are trying to ruin it for their godless purposes, whom the authorities should put out of action.

16. A "woman's place" should be wherever she wants to be. The days when women are submissive to their husbands and social conventions belong strictly in the past.

17. Our country will be great if we honor the ways of our forefathers, do what the authorities tell us to do, and get rid of the "rotten apples" who are ruining everything.

18. There is no "ONE right way" to live life; everybody has to create their own way.

19. Homosexuals and feminists should be praised for being brave enough to defy "traditional family values."

20. This country would work a lot better if certain groups of troublemakers would just shut up and accept their group's traditional place in society."

Manipulation Check

Please recall the original statements you read about voting at the beginning of the study and please answer the following question using a 1-9 scale where 1 = bad, 5 = neither bad or good, and 9 = good.

"1. Did the earlier messages focus more on bad things that might happen if you fail to

vote (e.g., loss of rights/freedoms), or did they focus more on good things that might

happen if you do vote (e.g., establishing and promoting rights/freedoms)?"

Political/Social Attitudes Quetionnaire (Conway et al., 2015)

"1. Politically, I would say that I am (indicate most appropriate answer):

Liberal   Conservative   Moderate   Independent   None/Cannot say

2. Politically, I would be most likely to vote (indicate most appropriate answer):

Democrat   Republican   Libertarian   Green Party   None/Cannot say

3. Based on what I know about politics, I am (indicate number that best

represents your political attitudes):

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9

  Liberal   Conservative

4. Based on what I know about politics, I am most likely to vote (indicate number

that best represents your political attitudes):

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9

  Democratic   Republican

5. My attitude towards organized religion is (indicate number that best represents

your attitude):

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9

  Very Negative   Very Positive

6. I believe in God (indicate number that best represents your beliefs)::

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9

Not true of me at all   Very True of Me

7. In the last presidential election, I voted for (indicate most appropriate answer):

[Clinton]   [Trump]   [Other]___   None/Cannot say"

General Background Questionnaire:

"1. Age:_____

2. Biological sex assigned at birth:

                    Male   Female   Intersex

3. How would you define your gender:

Male   Female   Transgender (Male to Female)   Transgender (Female to Male)

Non-binary   Genderqueer   Intersex   Agender   Another gender_____

4. Ethnic Background:_____

5. Religion:

( )	Buddhist	( )	Christian/Catholic
( )	Hindu	( )	Muslim
( )	Jewish	( )	B'ahai
( )	Christian/Protestant	( )	Other religion: _____

6. Describe in your own words what you think the experimenters were expecting

to happen in this study:

Table 1

Effect of Framing on Persuasive Messages

	Main Effect		Reward		Threat	
	LWA	**RWA**	**LWA**	**RWA**	**LWA**	**RWA**
Quality/Persuasiveness	.03	.01	.03	.01	-.11	.14
Voting Intentions	.31	-.28*	.31	-.28*	-.12	-.27*

Notes. $N = 246$. LWA $N = 122$. RWA $N = 124$. All metrics = standardized *betas*. *$p <= $.05.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

	LWA	**RWA**	**Message Quality**	**Voting Intent**
Alpha	0.85	0.96	0.86	0.86
Mean	3.74	2.94	5.49	5.73
Standard Deviation	0.95	1.42	1.38	1.79

Notes. $N = 246$. LWA $N = 122$. RWA $N = 124$.