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UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE
CLASSROOM POLITICAL CLIMATE

By

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

University Students' Perceptions of the Classroom Political Climate

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University students across two samples ($n_{\text{total}}=937$) perceived conservatives to be the disproportionate recipients of hostility from university faculty. In an assessment of student experiences in the classroom related to their political beliefs, conservative students reported experiencing greater levels of hostility than their liberal and moderate peers, and participants perceived instructors to exhibit more hostility toward conservative students than liberal students. Additionally, conservative students reported greater anticipated stigma than their liberal and moderate peers (context: if instructors knew their political beliefs), lower levels of belonging in the classroom, and in Study 2 the strength of their political identity moderated reported experiences of hostility, anticipated stigma, and belonging. Implications related to viewpoint diversity, pipeline issues for conservatives in academia, and the chilling effect this may have in classrooms and on university campuses are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Is college a different experience for liberal versus conservative students in at least some ways? Little research has directly investigated student experiences on university campuses as related to their political beliefs, and their perceptions of the political beliefs of those around them. To remedy this, the present research investigated student experiences of hostility and belonging in the classroom, as well as anticipated stigma related to their political beliefs. It also examined how hostility, anticipated stigma, and belonging in the classroom may differ as a function of participants' political ideology, and as a function of the strength of their identity with their political in-group.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Faculty members of institutions of higher education are commonly found to be more liberal in their political attitudes when compared to the general public (Cardiff & Klein, 2005; Gallup, 2017a). Further, Inbar and Lammers (2012) reported that among liberal personality and social psychologists in their national sample, "More than one in three would discriminate against [Conservatives] when making hiring decisions" (p. 501). Additional research conducted by Honeycutt and Freberg (2017) showed that this willingness to discriminate is not exclusive to personality and social psychologists, but extends to faculty across academic areas, and goes both directions. Though many consider ideological imbalance to be (at minimum) a hindrance to modern educational strategies and credibility, and to have critical costs to teaching, research, and society

(e.g., Duarte et al., 2015; Funder, 2015; Haidt, 2011; Jussim, 2012; Maranto, Redding, & Hess, 2009; Redding, 2001; Tetlock, 1994), it is unclear whether students share in any experience of hostility based on their personal political orientations.

A casual reading of the news suggests that being in a political minority (i.e., being non-liberal on most university campuses) can have weighty consequences. At Middlebury College, Vermont professor Allison Stanger—who self-identifies as liberal—was attacked and injured during the course of a speaking event she was co-hosting with an invited conservative speaker (Seelye, 2017). In the aftermath of the event Stanger (2017) wrote about her “divided campus” where most of the students and faculty are liberal, and the small minority of conservative students fear that speaking up to share their views will only result in being “denounced as reactionary bigots.” Stanger (2017) further claims that Middlebury’s moderate students also fear speaking up, and “students have expressed fear that they are not allowed to disagree with their professors, who might punish them with lower grades.” Similar controversies also ensued during the 2016-17 academic year at University of California, Berkeley (Fuller & Saul, 2017), the Claremont Colleges (Jaschik, 2017a), and many other institutions in the time following.

Often it is the case that faculty take the initiative in creating a hostile climate, such as in the case of English professor Susan Douglas at the University of Michigan who stated openly in a published editorial that she “hates Republicans” (Douglas, 2014). But, with incidences reported in the news, or with incidences that rise to widespread awareness, it is often difficult to disentangle sensationalism from fact, and to determine if the events reflect a systematic underlying issue for students in the political minority on college campuses, or if these are simply one-offs.

Students can be relatively successful at identifying the political beliefs of their professors, at least in academic areas where politics are a relevant topic of discussion (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009a). Further, students typically give more favorable course evaluations to professors perceived to be political allies as opposed to political foes (Kelly-Woessner & Woessner, 2006), and in general put more effort into courses where they perceive their professors to share their views (Kelly-Woessner & Woessner, 2008). Moreover, a student's college experience has great potential for inducing changes beyond growth in knowledge and skills, and easily extends to influencing changes in values, attitudes, aspirations, and beliefs (Astin, 1993). Within this context, university faculty have a powerful effect on the learning environment for students (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005), and are in an obvious position of authority over students (Inbar & Lammers, 2015). The presence of an ideologically hostile climate could easily impact student aspirations and the growth, development, and formation of their beliefs (Kelly-Woessner & Woessner, 2006). Campus and classroom dynamics that are hostile—whether subtly or overtly—also may contribute to belonging uncertainty for conservative students (Walton & Cohen, 2007), cause them to “hide in the closet” or entirely avoid further study or a career in academia (e.g., Everett, 2015), and correspondingly lead the pipeline of conservative (or perhaps generally, non-liberal) graduate students closer toward drying up (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009b).

The “Bennington Study” (Newcomb, 1943) stands as a classic investigation of student political attitudes, and concluded that any changes in student political beliefs were attributable to peer influence, and the impact of faculty was mostly negligible. More recent investigations have come to similar conclusions, arguing that though faculty in the United States may be predominantly registered Democrats and politically liberal, there is

little evidence of an association between faculty political ideology and changes in student political ideology (Mariani & Hewitt, 2008). But, most research on this question is weak and unable to get directly at the question of interest, often due to the reliance on large national data sets instead of direct longitudinal investigations, and due to the inability to disentangle faculty influence from other forms of influence. Further, this research fails to tap into the student experience within the classroom—the more micro-level dynamics at work.

Little research has examined in-depth student experiences within university classrooms related to their political beliefs. When it comes to grading in the classroom, some research has tentatively concluded that political bias in grading is minimal to non-existent (Musgrave & Rom, 2015). Prior research conducted for the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (2004) involving students at the top 50 colleges and universities in the United States revealed that classroom dynamics lean heavily left and that there is a “deeply troubling lack of intellectual openness on America’s elite campuses” (p. 2), but this report is relatively dated, and small sample sizes and questionable sampling methods used by this study leave its conclusions particularly vulnerable to criticism. Nonetheless, self-identified conservative students perceived more political bias in the classroom than their peers (Linvill & Havice, 2011). Furthermore, student academic entitlement and grade orientation predicted perceptions of ideological bias (Linvill & Grant, 2016).

Arguably students should not be protected from ideas with which they don’t agree (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2015). Some have even argued that an ideologically lopsided classroom environment shouldn’t necessarily be cause for concern for conservative (or non-liberal) students, as the nature of their numerical minority status leads them to be directly challenged, forced to think, and forced to make clear and cogent arguments to

support their ideas—to “learn to play chess” (Munger, 2014). Conversely, liberal students, as argued by Munger (2014), are robbed of an education and doomed to complacency because they are deemed to supposedly “already know what they need to know.” But, this view operates on the assumption that students are willing to speak up and share their opinions—to stick their neck out. Given that more college-aged youth today identify as Republican and conservative than predecessors from previous generations (Twenge, Honeycutt, Prislin, & Sherman, 2016), and given that a common contemporary theme seems to be the presence of a hostile climate toward the conservative political minority on university campuses—hostility could potentially morph into outright discrimination—greater understanding and further investigation becomes necessary.

In this context, it is important to consider possible stigma that may be associated with participants’ ideological self-categorizations, and how the strength of student political identities may relate to experiences within the classroom. In some contexts, political ideology could be considered a concealable stigmatized identity as—consistent with the definition of a concealable stigmatized identity—it is typically an identity only disclosed to others at the discretion of the individual, and can often carry with it social devaluation which renders individuals vulnerable to prejudice and discrimination because of the identity (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009). Duarte et al. (2015), for example, concluded that given the reality of political discrimination in academia (their focus being primarily the discipline of psychology), “conservative graduate students and assistant professors are behaving rationally when they keep their political identities hidden... [and] moderate and Libertarian students may be suffering the same fate” (p. 11). This is, in part, also supported by a collection of examples and lived

experiences—anecdotal evidence—of political bias as reported by social psychological faculty and graduate students across situations involving publication, admissions, hiring, funding, and other professional activities (Stevens et al., 2017).

Individuals are often hostile toward political out-groups (e.g., Brandt, Reyna, Chambers, Crawford, & Wetherell, 2014; Chambers, Schlenker, & Collisson, 2013; Crawford, 2014; Crawford & Pilanski, 2014), and this hostility is symmetrical between liberals and conservatives. When this is combined with the lack of stigmatization surrounding political prejudice, in addition to the common belief of political prejudice as reasonable, rational, and justified (e.g., Kristof, 2016) despite modern social norms discouraging demographic biases (Ashby & Devine, 1998), potential stigma could quickly become salient for conservatives given their minority status within academic environments (Eagan et al., 2017; Honeycutt & Freberg, 2017). Correspondingly, a narrative of disparagement of conservatives in academic outlets may exacerbate this stigma. It has been concluded, for example, that compared to liberals, conservatives are less creative (Dollinger, 2007), less intelligent (Hodson & Busseri, 2012; Kanazawa, 2010), antiscientific (Mooney, 2012), and less cognitively complex (Jost, Glasser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). They are “authoritarian, punitive, ethnocentric, militaristic, dogmatic, [and] superstitious” (Wilson, Ausman, & Mathews, 1973, p. 286), or more generally just inflexible, rigid, and dogmatic (Jost et al., 2003). Conservatism has been labeled “a syndrome” (Wilson et al., 1973), and conservatives’ higher levels of happiness has been explained away as a manifestation of their endorsement of inequality (Napier & Jost, 2008). Whether these conclusions reflect the realities of the political psychology of laypeople, or the political psychology of the biases of researchers is itself a

matter of substantial controversy (see, e.g., Duarte et al., 2015, the commentaries on that article, and their reply to commentaries).

A concealable stigmatized identity forms the first component, but the second consists of anticipated stigma. Anticipated stigma, as articulated by Quinn & Chaudoir (2009), involves the strength of the expectation an individual holds that they will be stigmatized by others if their concealable stigmatized identity becomes known. Prior research on anticipated stigma has traditionally focused on concealable stigmatized identities related to mental illness, traumatic experiences, substance abuse, chronic illness, previous incarceration, or sexual orientation (e.g., Moore & Tangney, 2017; Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009). Likely hostility and possible prejudice and discrimination make anticipated stigma critical to assess and consider as a predictor or correlate for experiences within the classroom. While some research has shown that hiding (as opposed to revealing) a concealable stigmatized identity may actually contribute to a reduction in belonging and an impairment of interpersonal interactions (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014), for stigmatized political minorities the desire to belong may fail to outweigh the desire to avoid potential hostility, prejudice, and discrimination.

In addition to considering anticipated stigma, strength of ideological self-categorization may also prove to be a relevant variable. It is logical to assume that individuals who do not place value or importance in their political beliefs may report different experiences within the classroom when compared to individuals who consider their political beliefs to be an important part of their self-identity. It is possible when asked to report experiences of prejudice or discrimination individuals may fall victim to perceptual biases resulting in an over-reporting (vigilance bias), or under-reporting (minimization bias) of what is actually occurring (Kaiser & Major, 2006). Further, there

may be costs associated with reporting prejudice or discrimination, such as retaliation or damage to one's reputation (Kaiser & Major, 2006), which in turn may exacerbate the minimization bias.

Individuals holding high or strong identities (i.e., high identifiers) often report perceiving or experiencing more discrimination, raising the question of whether this is because these individuals are more sensitive to discrimination, or because they are actually experiencing more discrimination. In a controlled experiment Kaiser and Pratt-Hyatt (2009) found that, in the context of race, highly identified racial minorities experience more actual discrimination than weakly identified racial minorities—the strongly identified actually do bear the brunt of racial prejudice, subsequently described as “the prejudice distribution account” (Kaiser & Wilkins, 2010). Given the minority status of conservatives within academic contexts, it follows that highly identified conservatives may generally report more frequent experiences of prejudice and hostility within the classroom. Consistent with the prejudice distribution account, this may result from more actual experiences of prejudice and hostility within the classroom. In tangent, it is also possible that highly identified liberal individuals may report experiences of prejudice and hostility within academic areas considered to be traditionally conservative, such as agriculture (Lipset & Ladd, 1971). It is critical, then, to consider strength of ideological self-categorization as a predictor or correlate for experiences within the classroom, as it may help explain variance in reported experiences found among students.

PRESENT RESEARCH

Therefore, the purpose of the current studies was to investigate the student experience within the classroom relevant to their personal political beliefs and the perceived political beliefs of instructors. To supplement this investigation, measures of

anticipated stigma and strength of in-group identification were included with the expectation that they would help explain and account for relevant findings. The current studies sought to extend the investigation by Honeycutt and Freberg (2017) of the campus political climate by asking students about their perceptions of the political persuasions of their instructors, the extent to which instructors expressed political opinions in the classroom, and what effects, if any, the political persuasions of instructors have on the classroom climate for students. These topics, with corresponding pre-registered predictions, were first investigated in Study 1 using a convenience sample of undergraduate students, and were replicated in Study 2 using a sample of older, more advanced undergraduates.

CHAPTER 2

STUDY 1

Study 1 sought to investigate student experiences in the classroom related to their political beliefs using a college sample in a pre-registered test of hypotheses (Blinded--Anonymous, 2018c). Specifically, I predicted that participants (i.e., Rutgers students) would be predominantly liberal (H1), and would perceive their instructors to be predominantly liberal (H2). Additionally, I predicted that conservative students at Rutgers would report experiencing significantly more hostility in their classes than their moderate and liberal peers (H3), and that this effect would be moderated by in-group identity, such that the stronger a participant's identity with their political in-group, the more likely they would report experiences of hostility (H4). Next, I predicted that conservative students at Rutgers would report significantly higher anticipated stigma (H5) than their liberal and moderate peers, and that this effect would be moderated by in-group identity, such that the stronger a participant's identity with their political in-group, the more likely they would report higher anticipated stigma (H6). I also predicted that conservative students at Rutgers would report significantly lower belonging (H7) than their liberal and moderate peers, and that this effect would be moderated by in-group identity, such that the stronger a participant's identity with their political in-group, the more likely they would report lower belonging (H8). Lastly, I expected that Rutgers students, having perceived their instructors to be predominantly liberal, would indicate that instructors are more likely to exhibit hostility toward conservatives than liberals (H9). The raw data from this study is available online (Blinded--Anonymous, 2018a).

METHOD

Sample

454 participants were recruited from a department participant pool at Rutgers University in exchange for partial fulfillment of a course requirement. 20 participants were excluded for failing to answer 50% of the questions (pre-specified data exclusion criteria), resulting in a final sample of 434 participants (159 male, 275 female). 199 (45.9%) participants were Asian, 104 were White/European American, 47 were Hispanic/Latino/a, 40 were Black or African American, 26 were Multiracial, 17 were Middle-Eastern/North African, and 1 was American Indian or Eskimo. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 55 with an average age of 19.18 years. 68.9% indicated they had completed only "1" semester at Rutgers, and 69.8% identified as a first-year student.

Measures

Using a questionnaire implemented by Honeycutt and Freberg (2017) as a guide, a modified and expanded instrument was constructed to assess student experiences in the classroom related to their political beliefs (for complete measures see appendix, or see OFS project: Blinded--Anonymous, 2018a).

Political ideology

Respondents indicated their overall political ideology (1= *Very liberal*, 7 = *Very conservative*), followed by the political ideology they identified most strongly with (1= *Liberal*, 2 = *Moderate*, 3 = *Conservative*). In all pre-registered analyses involving political ideology—with the exception of those for H1—participant's responses on the 1-3 political ideology scale were utilized¹. Participants were also asked to indicate their political party preference (e.g., Democrat, Republican, No Preference). Respondents

used the 1-7 political ideology scale and the political party scale to rate their perception of the political ideology and political party preference of their instructors.

Group identification

Identification with their political in-group was assessed using a 14-item in-group identification measure (Leach et al., 2008). Depending on their political group membership, participants were directed to one of three versions of this measure (i.e., a version for either liberals, moderates, or conservatives), assessing the strength of their identification (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*) with their ideological group (e.g., “Being liberal is an important part of how I see myself”). For analysis, the mean of each set of 14 questions formed a composite scale for strength of group identification (α 's > .87). Participants' scores were then collapsed into one general measure of group identification. Higher scores reflect stronger identification with their political in-group.

Hostility (personal)

Next, a set of questions sought to address participants' personal experiences of a hostile environment due to political ideology, specifically related to experiences in their classes. Items were adapted versions of questions from Honeycutt and Freberg (2017), and used a minimally balanced question format (Shaeffer, Krosnick, Langer, & Merkle, 2005) such that the wording of the question left open the possibility that whatever was asked may have never occurred (e.g., with balanced wording italicized, asked “overall, how hostile of a climate have instructors created toward your political beliefs, *or has there been no hostility?*”). As such, participants were asked how much/often (1 = *Never*, 3 = *Occasionally/sometimes*, 5 = *All the time*; 1 = *Not at all hostile*, 3 = *Moderately hostile*, 5 = *Extremely hostile*, for the hostility questions): instructors ever created a hostile climate toward their political beliefs, if participants ever refrained from expressing their political

beliefs to instructors for fear of negative consequences, if instructors would actively discriminate against participants on the basis of their political beliefs, or if instructors have actively discriminated against participants on the basis of their political beliefs. For analysis, the mean of the previous four questions formed a composite scale for personal experience of hostility (“hostility”; $\alpha = .84$). Higher scores reflect having experienced more hostility related to their political beliefs.

Anticipated stigma

A set of 14 questions were used to assess stigma participants anticipate to be associated with their political ideology—the extent to which participants believed they would be socially stigmatized by instructors if their political ideology were to be revealed. Items were adapted from Quinn and Chaudoir's (2009) anticipated stigma measure, with instructions specifying “instructors” instead of “others,” and items irrelevant to instructor-student interactions replaced with relevant items. Directions stated: “If instructors knew that you are [insert participant-reported political ideology], how likely would your instructors:” and were followed with statements such as “Act as if you are not smart,” “Be unwilling to write you a letter of recommendation,” or “Be unwilling to advise you on independent study projects” (1= *Very unlikely*, 4= *Neither likely nor unlikely*, 7= *Very likely*). For analysis, the mean of the 14 questions formed a composite scale for anticipated stigma ($\alpha = .96$). Higher scores reflect a greater expectation of being stigmatized by instructors if their (participants’) political beliefs were to be revealed.

Belonging

A set of 9 questions were used to assess participants’ feelings of belonging and inclusion—the extent to which participants had a sense of belonging in their classes.

Items were adapted from Chaney, Sanchez, and Remedios (2016), and the frame of reference was changed to “general experience in your classes.” Using a minimally balanced question format (Shaeffer et al., 2005), participants were asked how often (1= *Never*, 3= *Occasionally*, 5= *All the time*), for example, they “feel accepted” and “feel comfortable” in their classes. For analysis, the mean of the nine questions formed a composite scale for belonging ($\alpha = .85$). Higher scores reflect a greater sense of belonging in their classes.

Hostility toward conservatives/liberals

Honeycutt and Freberg (2017) asked faculty participants to speculate about the amount of hostility conservative and liberal colleagues would experience from others in their field. This inquiry was adapted to include a set of questions asking participants to speculate about the amount of hostility a liberal student and a conservative student would experience from instructors. Using a minimally balanced question format (Shaeffer et al., 2005), participants were asked how often (1= *Never*, 3= *Occasionally*, 5= *Very frequently*; or 1= *Never*, 3= *Occasionally/sometimes*, 5= *Every time*), if at all, instructors have: made negative comments about liberals/conservatives, mocked liberals/conservatives, presented or told jokes that made fun of liberals/conservatives, or formed a negative impression of a student because they expressed a liberal/conservative point of view in a classroom discussion. For analysis, the means of the previous four questions formed two composite scales for perceptions of hostility instructors exhibit (hostility toward conservatives, $\alpha = .91$; hostility toward liberals, $\alpha = .86$). Higher scores reflect perceiving greater hostility.

Other

Additionally, to further probe classroom dynamics, participants were asked how often (1= *Never*, 3= *Occasionally/sometimes*, 5= *All the time*) “political issues that have nothing to do with the class material [have] ever been brought up during class by instructors,” how often “instructors in courses where political material is a relevant topic [have] ever presented evidence from more than one side,” and lastly how often they “have ever attempted to get a better grade in a class by pretending to share the same political beliefs as the instructor.” Further, participants were asked to indicate in their courses the kind of grade they perceived a student’s paper expressing a liberal/conservative point of view would generally receive (1= *a significantly lower grade than objectively deserved*, 4= *a fair, objective grade*, 7= *a significantly higher grade than objectively deserved*).

Procedures

Upon agreeing to the informed consent, participants completed the aforementioned measures online. The instrument was hosted on a secure *Qualtrics* site. All study materials received prior approval by the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pre-Registered Analyses

Tests of pre-registered hypotheses about political ideology. A one-sample t-test compared participants’ political ideology to the midpoint of the scale (i.e., moderate, “4”). Participants leaned liberal ($M=3.30$, $SD=1.39$), $t(433)=-10.46$, $p<.001$, 95% CI [-0.83, -.57] (H1). 54.1% of participants identified as somewhat liberal, liberal, or very

liberal, 30.2% as moderate, and 15.6% as somewhat conservative, conservative, or very conservative. The political ideology distribution using the 1-3 variable can be seen in Table 1. Additionally, a one-sample t-test comparing participants' perceptions of the political beliefs of their instructors to the midpoint (i.e., moderate, "4") indicated that participants perceived them to lean liberal ($M=3.12$, $SD=.98$), $t(407)=-18.11$, $p<.001$, 95% CI $[-.97, -.78]$ (H2). 63.9% of participants perceived their instructors to be somewhat liberal, liberal, or very liberal, 30.5% perceived them to be moderate, and 5.6% perceived them to be somewhat conservative, conservative, or very conservative.

| Table 1 Political ideology and political party preference distribution | | |
|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | Study 1 Count (Percent) | Study 2 Count (Percent) |
| Liberal | 169 (38.8%) | 237 (47.1%) |
| Moderate | 221 (50.9%) | 187 (37.2%) |
| Conservative | 44 (10.1%) | 79 (15.7%) |
| Democrat | 200 (46.1%) | 222 (44.1%) |
| Green | 5 (1.2%) | 6 (1.2%) |
| Libertarian | 7 (1.6%) | 17 (3.4%) |
| Republican | 51 (11.8%) | 82 (16.3%) |
| No preference | 165 (38%) | 162 (32.2%) |
| Other | 6 (1.4%) | 14 (2.8%) |

Tests of pre-registered hypotheses about hostile climate. Participant political ideology correlated with reported personal experience of hostility, $r(433)=.31$, $p<.001$ (Table 2). More conservative participants (see Table 3 for means) reported having personally experienced more hostility from instructors because of their political beliefs (H3).

Table 2 Intercorrelations among, and means and standard deviations of measures, Study 1

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | <i>M (SD)</i> |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|----|----------------|
| 1. Political Ideology (1-3) | -- | | | | | | | | | | 1.71 (.64) |
| 2. Hostility | .31** * | -- | | | | | | | | | 1.50 (.74) |
| 3. Anticipated Stigma | .23** * | .45** * | -- | | | | | | | | 2.28 (1.07) |
| 4. Belonging | -.19** * | -.46** * | -.37** * | -- | | | | | | | 3.81 (.63) |
| 5. Group Identification (IGI) | -.24** * | .07 | -.01 | .11* | -- | | | | | | 4.50 (.82) |
| 6. Hostility toward conservatives | .08 | .50** * | .21** * | -.23** * | .20** * | -- | | | | | 1.96 (.93) |
| 7. Hostility toward liberals | .02 | .45** * | .19** * | -.22** * | -.001 | .55** * | -- | | | | 1.49 (.61) |
| 8. Pretend—attempt to get better grade | .23** * | .59** * | .30** * | -.36** * | .03 | .43** * | .31** * | -- | | | 1.66 (1.03) |
| 9. Politics brought up by instructor when not related to class | .10* * | .45** * | .14** | -.24** * | .07 | .47** * | .34** * | .34** * | -- | | 2.15 (.95) |
| 10. More than one side presented by instructors in politics relevant classes | -.10* * | .07 | -.14** | .05 | .05 | .20** * | .18** * | .08 | .34** * | -- | 2.78 (1.23) |

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Notes: Higher scores reflect the following:

- Hostility: experiencing more hostility related to their political beliefs
- Anticipated stigma: greater expectation of being stigmatized by instructors if their political beliefs were revealed
- Belonging: greater sense of belonging in their classes

| |
|--|
| Group identification: stronger identification with political in-group |
| Hostility toward conservatives/liberals: perceiving greater hostility toward the group |
| “Politics brought up...,” “More than one side...”: greater frequency of behavior |

Table 3 Means and standard deviations for scales and individual items, by participant political ideology, Study 1

| | Liberals <i>M (sd)</i> | Moderates <i>M (sd)</i> | Conservatives <i>M (sd)</i> |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Hostility (1-5) | 1.29 (.51) | 1.53 (.78) | 2.14 (.92) |
| Anticipated Stigma (1-7) | 2.06 (.96) | 2.31 (1.05) | 2.96 (1.28) |
| Belonging (1-5) | 3.95 (.57) | 3.76 (.66) | 3.56 (.67) |
| Group Identification (IGI; 1-7) | 4.87 (.79) | 4.19 (.67) | 4.68 (.99) |
| Hostility toward conservatives (1-5) | 1.98 (.82) | 1.84 (.94) | 2.47 (1.12) |
| Hostility toward liberals (1-5) | 1.47 (.56) | 1.49 (.65) | 1.50 (.58) |
| Pretend—attempt to get a better grade (1-5) | 1.42 (.77) | 1.72 (1.07) | 2.25 (1.35) |
| Politics brought up by instructor when not related to class (1-5) | 2.11 (.91) | 2.10 (.94) | 2.57 (1.04) |
| More than one side presented by instructors in politics relevant classes (1-5) | 2.96 (1.20) | 2.66 (1.28) | 2.68 (1.05) |

Notes: Higher scores reflect the following:

Hostility: experiencing more hostility related to their political beliefs

Anticipated stigma: greater expectation of being stigmatized by instructors if their political beliefs were revealed

Belonging: greater sense of belonging in their classes

Group identification: stronger identification with political in-group

Hostility toward conservatives/liberals: perceiving greater hostility toward the group

“Politics brought up...,” “More than one side...”: greater frequency of behavior

Following this, a multiple regression model tested whether the association between political ideology and personal hostility experienced differed depending on the strength of in-group identification (H4). First, hostility was regressed on political ideology and strength of in-group identification (equation: $\text{Hostility}_i = b_0 + b_1\text{Ideology}_i + b_2\text{IGI}_i + \text{error}_i$). A significant main effect of ideology ($\beta = .34$; $B = .398$, $p < .001$; Table 4) provided evidence that more conservative participants were more likely to report having personally experienced hostility from instructors because of their political beliefs (H3). Following, the interaction term was added such that hostility was regressed on political ideology, in-group identification, and their interaction [equation: $\text{Hostility}_i = b_0 + b_1\text{Ideology}_i + b_2\text{IGI}_i + b_3(\text{Ideology}_i * \text{IGI}_i) + \text{error}_i$], but a significant interaction effect did not emerge ($B = .097$, $p = .114$; Table 5). Contrary to our prediction (H4), this analysis provided no evidence that the relationship between political ideology and personal hostility experienced differed as a function of the strength of participants' identity with their political in-group.

| Table 4 Main effects: Hostility Predicted from Political Ideology and in-group identification (IGI), Study 1 | | | | | |
|---|------|---------|--------|--------|-----|
| Predictor | B | β | p | 95% CI | |
| (Constant) | .22 | | = .343 | -.24 | .68 |
| Political Ideology | .398 | .34 | < .001 | .29 | .51 |
| IGI | .133 | .15 | = .002 | .05 | .22 |

| Table 5 Hostility Predicted from Political Ideology and in-group identification (IGI), adding interaction, Study 1 | | | | |
|---|-------|--------|--------|------|
| Predictor | B | p | 95% CI | |
| (Constant) | 1.041 | = .067 | -.07 | 2.16 |

| | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--------|------|-----|
| Political Ideology | -.062 | = .834 | -.64 | .52 |
| IGI | -.037 | = .746 | -.27 | .19 |
| Interaction | .097 | = .114 | -.02 | .22 |

Tests of pre-registered hypotheses about anticipated stigma. Participant political ideology correlated with anticipated stigma, $r(434) = .23, p < .001$ (see also Table 2). More conservative participants (see Table 3 for means) reported a greater expectation that instructors would stigmatize them if their political beliefs were known (H5).

Following this, a multiple regression model tested whether the association between political ideology and anticipated stigma differed depending on the strength of in-group identification (H6). First, anticipated stigma was regressed on political ideology and strength of in-group identification (equation: $\text{Stigma}_i = b_0 + b_1\text{Ideology}_i + b_2\text{IGI}_i + \text{error}_i$). A significant main effect of ideology ($\beta = .24$; $B = .396, p < .001$; Table 6) provided evidence that more conservative participants were more likely to report anticipating being stigmatized by instructors because of their political beliefs (H5). Following, the interaction term was added such that anticipated stigma was regressed on political ideology, in-group identification, and their interaction [equation: $\text{Stigma}_i = b_0 + b_1\text{Ideology}_i + b_2\text{IGI}_i + b_3(\text{Ideology}_i * \text{IGI}_i) + \text{error}_i$], but a significant interaction effect did not emerge ($B = .094, p = .302$; Table 7). Contrary to our prediction (H6), the relationship between political ideology and anticipated stigma did not differ as a function of the strength of participants' identity with their political in-group.

Table 6 Main effects: Anticipated Stigma Predicted from Political Ideology and in-group identification (IGI), Study 1

| Predictor | B | β | <i>p</i> | 95% CI | |
|------------|-------|---------|----------|--------|------|
| (Constant) | 1.340 | | < .001 | .66 | 2.02 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|------|-----|--------|------|-----|
| Political Ideology | .396 | .24 | < .001 | .24 | .55 |
| IGI | .058 | .04 | = .359 | -.07 | .18 |

Table 7 Anticipated Stigma Predicted from Political Ideology and in-group identification (IGI), adding interaction, Study 1

| Predictor | B | <i>p</i> | 95% CI | |
|--------------------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| (Constant) | 2.133 | = .012 | .48 | 3.79 |
| Political Ideology | -.05 | = .909 | -.91 | .81 |
| IGI | -.108 | = .532 | -.45 | .23 |
| Interaction | .094 | = .302 | -.09 | .27 |

Tests of pre-registered hypotheses about belonging. Participant political ideology correlated with belonging, $r(432) = -.19, p < .001$ (see also Table 2). More conservative participants (see Table 3 for means) reported a lower sense of belonging in their classes (H7).

Following this, a multiple regression model tested whether the association between political ideology and belonging differed depending on the strength of in-group identification (H8). First, belonging was regressed on political ideology and strength of in-group identification (equation: $\text{Belonging}_i = b_0 + b_1\text{Ideology}_i + b_2\text{IGI}_i + \text{error}_i$). A significant main effect of ideology ($\beta = -.18$; $B = -.176, p < .001$; Table 8) provided evidence that more conservative participants were more likely to report lower belonging in their classes (H7). Following, the interaction term was added such that belonging was regressed on political ideology, in-group identification, and their interaction [equation: $\text{Belonging}_i = b_0 + b_1\text{Ideology}_i + b_2\text{IGI}_i + b_3(\text{Ideology}_i * \text{IGI}_i) + \text{error}_i$], but a significant

interaction effect did not emerge ($B = -.018, p = .738$; Table 9). Contrary to our prediction (H8), the relationship between political ideology and belonging did not differ as a function of the strength of participants' identity with their political in-group.

| Table 8 Main effects: Belonging Predicted from Political Ideology and in-group identification (IGI), Study 1 | | | | | |
|---|-------|---------|--------|--------|------|
| Predictor | B | β | p | 95% CI | |
| (Constant) | 3.862 | | < .001 | 3.46 | 4.27 |
| Political Ideology | -.176 | -.18 | < .001 | -.27 | -.08 |
| IGI | .055 | .07 | = .141 | -.02 | .13 |

| Table 9 Belonging Predicted from Political Ideology and in-group identification (IGI), adding interaction, Study 1 | | | | |
|---|-------|--------|--------|------|
| Predictor | B | p | 95% CI | |
| (Constant) | 3.709 | < .001 | 2.72 | 4.70 |
| Political Ideology | -.089 | = .733 | -.61 | .43 |
| IGI | .087 | = .396 | -.12 | .29 |
| Interaction | -.018 | = .738 | -.13 | .09 |

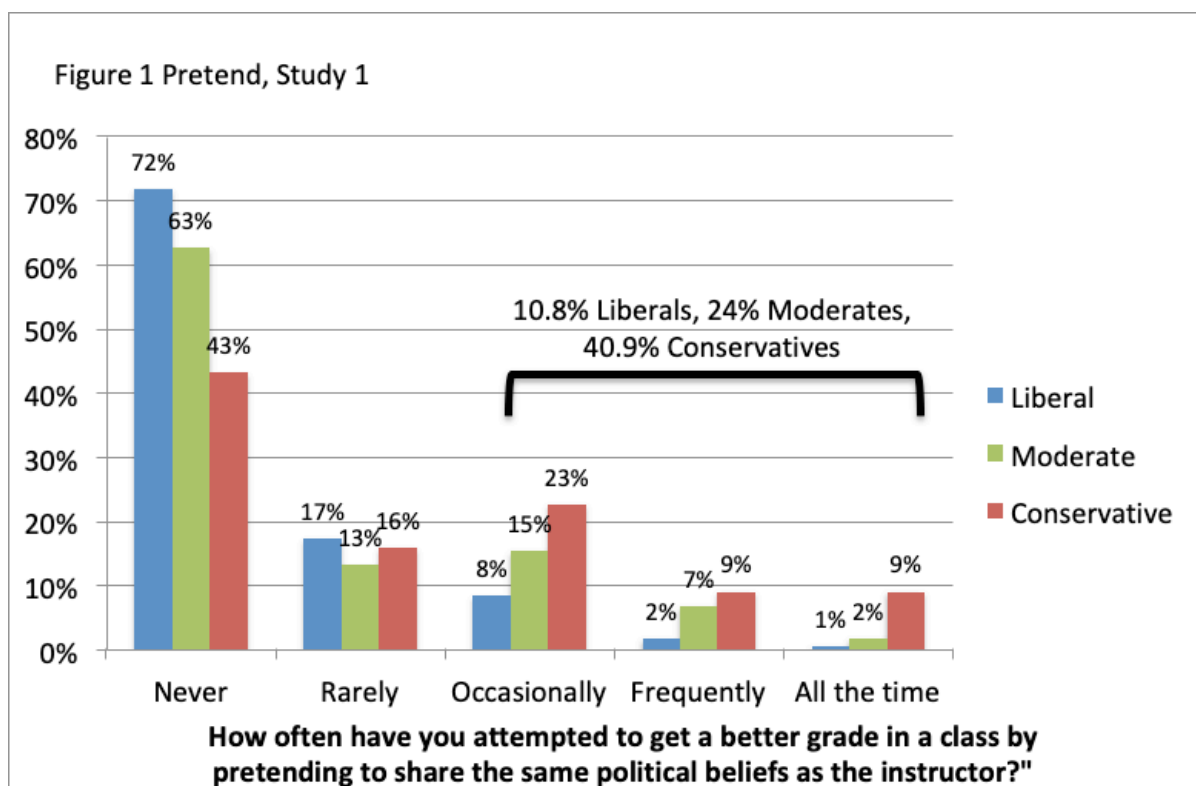
Tests of pre-registered hypotheses about hostility toward conservatives and liberals. A paired-sample t-test compared student perceptions of hostility instructors exhibit toward liberals and conservatives (H9). Participants' perceptions of hostility instructors would exhibit toward conservatives ($M = 1.96, SD = .93$) was greater than the amount of hostility they perceived instructors would exhibit toward liberals ($M = 1.49, SD = .61$), $t(433) = 12.70, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [.40, .55], d = .61$. That is, participants indicated

that they perceived instructors to exhibit more hostility toward conservatives than liberals.

Exploratory Analyses

To further probe classroom dynamics, participants were asked how often “irrelevant issues” are brought up in class by instructors, how often “more than one side” is presented by instructors during political discussions, and lastly how often participants “have ever attempted to get a better grade in a class by pretending to share the same political beliefs as the instructor” (“passing”). Additionally, participants were also asked to indicate in their courses the kind of grade they perceived a student’s paper expressing a liberal/conservative point of view would generally receive.

Significant correlations emerged for the first three items (Table 2). There were weak tendencies for more conservative participants to perceive political issues being brought up in classes where they are not germane ($r = .10, p = .042$), and to perceive that instructors infrequently present arguments from more than one side in classes where political topics are germane ($r = -.10, p = .035$). Furthermore, the more conservative the participant, the more often they indicated that they pretended to share their instructors’ political beliefs in an attempt to get a better grade ($r = .23, p < .001$). 72% of liberal participants reported that they never do this, compared to 63% of moderates and 43% of conservatives (Figure 1). At the other end of the scale, 41% of conservative participants reported they either occasionally, frequently, or always attempted to get a better grade in class by pretending to share the same political beliefs as the instructor, compared to 11% of liberals and 24% of moderates (Figure 1).



Last, a paired-sample t-test compared student perceptions of the kind of grade they thought a student's paper expressing a politically conservative point of view would generally receive in their classes, compared to a student's paper expressing a politically liberal point of view. Overall, participants perceived a paper expressing a politically conservative point of view would generally receive a lower grade ($M=3.74$, $SD=.72$) compared to a paper expressing a politically liberal point of view ($M=4.03$, $SD=.74$), $t(432) = -6.01$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-.39, -.20]$, $d = -.40$. The mean for a paper expressing a conservative point of view fell between "a slightly lower grade than objectively deserved" (3) and "a fair, objective grade" (4); for a paper expressing a liberal point of view, the mean fell between "a fair, objective grade" (4) and "a slightly higher grade than objectively deserved" (5).

Lastly, a series of significant correlations emerged between hostility, stigma, and belonging (Table 2). The more hostility a participant reported experiencing, the greater their expectation that instructors would stigmatize them if their political beliefs were known ($r=.45, p<.001$), and the lower belonging they reported ($r= -.46, p<.001$). Further, the greater the expectation participants had that instructors would stigmatize them if their political beliefs were known, the lower belonging they reported ($r= -.37, p<.001$).

Discussion

Overall, Study 1 provided preliminary support for nearly all predictions on student experiences in the classroom related to their political beliefs. Study 1 found that conservatives reported more personal experiences of hostility a greater expectation that instructors would stigmatize them if their political beliefs were known (i.e., greater anticipated stigma), and a lower sense of belonging in their classes than their more liberal peers. One major exception to this general pattern of support was that, contrary to expectations, none of these were moderated by the strength of participants' political in-group identity. It is possible the lack of moderation may result from the sample being younger—primary first year freshmen students—who have not yet spent much time in college, and as such have not taken as many classes or interacted with as many instructors as older students. As such, their responses are based on more limited experience. Consistent with predictions, though, participants reported perceiving that instructors exhibit more hostility toward conservatives than they do toward liberals, lending evidence that greater hostility conservatives personally report experiencing isn't a figment of their imagination—their peers recognize it is occurring too. Last, conservatives were more likely to report bias in the classroom, in the form of politics being brought up by instructors where it isn't relevant, or in relevant political discussions

instructors not presenting arguments from both sides. Notably, conservatives also reported pretending to share their instructors' political beliefs in an attempt to get a better grade significantly more often than their peers—a defensive behavior, and in many ways perhaps a tangible outcome of their heightened anticipated stigma.

CHAPTER 3

STUDY 2

Study 1 was critically limited by the youth of the participants—the majority of participants were students in their first year of college who may not have had sufficient time and experience to adequately inform their responses about classroom dynamics. Therefore, the primary aim of Study 2 was to recruit a sample of older (i.e., more advanced) college students to complete the measures, the logic being that having spent more time in college, more advanced students may have better insight to dynamics in the classroom. A secondary aim was to examine whether findings of Study 1 would replicate with this sample. Pre-registered hypotheses from Study 1 (Blinded--Anonymous, 2018c) guided analyses and predictions. The raw data from this study is available online (Blinded--Anonymous, 2018a).

METHOD

Sample

646 participants advanced undergraduates (i.e., junior or senior standing) at Rutgers University were recruited via email for participation. After obtaining after obtaining permission from the university, the university provided a list of undergraduate students of junior or senior standing to contact to solicit their participation in the study. 143 participants were excluded using the same pre-specified data exclusion criteria from Study 1, resulting in a final sample of 503 participants (285 female, 218 male)². 241 participants (47.9%) were White/European American, 120 were Asian, 56 were

Hispanic/Latino/a, 33 were Black or African American, 34 were Multiracial, 18 were Middle-Eastern/North-African, and one participant was unspecified. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 56 with an average age of 22.76 years. 91.3% indicated they had completed "5+" semesters at Rutgers, and 70.2% identified as either a fourth or fifth year student.

Measures

The same demographic information obtained in Study 1 was again obtained. Furthermore, as in Study 1, group identification (α 's $> .86$), hostility ($\alpha = .86$), anticipated stigma ($\alpha = .97$), belonging ($\alpha = .87$), hostility toward conservatives ($\alpha = .92$), and hostility toward liberals ($\alpha = .83$), and the other standalone questions were administered to participants (for complete measures, see OFS project: Blinded--Anonymous, 2018a).

Procedures

As with the prior study, upon agreeing to the informed consent, participants completed the aforementioned measures online. The instrument was hosted on a secure *Qualtrics* site. All study materials received prior approval by the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pre-Registered Analyses

Tests of pre-registered hypotheses about political ideology. Mirroring the prior study, a one-sample t-test comparing participants' overall political ideology to the

midpoint of the scale (i.e., moderate, “4”). Participants were primarily liberal ($M=3.15$, $SD=1.56$), $t(502)=-12.18$, $p<.001$, 95% CI $[-.99, -.71]$ (H1). 63% of participants identified as somewhat liberal, liberal, or very liberal, 16.5% as moderate, and 20.5% as somewhat conservative, conservative, or very conservative. The political ideology distribution using the 1-3 variable can be seen in Table 1. Additionally, a one-sample t -test comparing participants’ perceptions of the political beliefs of their instructors to the midpoint (i.e., moderate, “4”) indicated that participants perceived them to be primarily liberal ($M=2.66$, $SD=1.02$), $t(479)=-28.67$, $p<.001$, 95% CI $[-1.43, -1.24]$ (H2). 82.3% of participants perceived their instructors to be somewhat liberal, liberal, or very liberal, 13.8% perceived them to be moderate, and 4% perceived them to be somewhat conservative or conservative (none perceived instructors to be very conservative).

Tests of pre-registered hypotheses about hostile climate. Participant political ideology again correlated with reported personal experience of hostility. More conservative participants (see Table 11 for means) reported having personally experienced more hostility from instructors because of their political beliefs (H3, $r(476)=.51$, $p<.001$, Table 10).

| Table 10 Intercorrelations among, and means and standard deviations of measures, Study 2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----|----|---|---|---|---|----|----------------|
| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | $M (SD)$ |
| 1. Political Ideology (1-3) | -- | | | | | | | | | | 1.69 (.73) |
| 2. Hostility | .51** * | -- | | | | | | | | | 1.70 (.88) |
| 3. Anticipated Stigma | .52** * | .74** * | -- | | | | | | | | 2.27 (1.27) |
| 4. Belonging | - .29** * | - .65** * | - .61** * | -- | | | | | | | 3.78 (.67) |
| 5. Group | - | .07 | .07 | .02 | -- | | | | | | 4.64 (.98) |

| | Identification (IGI) | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 6. Hostility toward conservatives | .16** * | .36** * | .64** * | .53** * | - .45** * | .10* -- | -- | | | 2.50 (1.02) |
| 7. Hostility toward liberals | | -.10* * | .06 | .05 | -.06 | .04 | .31** * | -- | | 1.63 (.58) |
| 8. Pretend—attempt to get better grade | | .41** * | .68** * | .57** * | - .52** * | .00 | .49** * | -- | | 1.70 (1.18) |
| 9. Politics brought up by instructor when not related to class | | .22** * | .48** * | .34** * | - .31** * | .08 | .52** * | .15** * | .38** * | -- (1.08) |
| 10. More than one side presented by instructors in politics relevant classes | | - .33** * | - .31** * | - .36** * | .29** * | -.01 | - .21** * | .15** * | - .25** * | -.13** -- (1.12) |

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Notes: Higher scores reflect the following:

- Hostility: experiencing more hostility related to their political beliefs
- Anticipated stigma: greater expectation of being stigmatized by instructors if their political beliefs were revealed
- Belonging: greater sense of belonging in their classes
- Group identification: stronger identification with political in-group
- Hostility toward conservatives/liberals: perceiving greater hostility toward the group
- “Politics brought up...,” “More than one side...”: greater frequency of behavior

Table 11 Means and standard deviations for scales and individual items, by participant political ideology, Study 2

| | Liberals <i>M</i> (sd) | Moderates <i>M</i> (sd) | Conservatives <i>M</i> (sd) |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Hostility (1-5) | 1.34 (.51) | 1.72 (.84) | 2.71 (1.07) |
| Anticipated Stigma (1-7) | 1.76 (.85) | 2.29 (1.13) | 3.77 (1.44) |
| Belonging (1-5) | 3.92 (.61) | 3.79 (.61) | 3.31 (.67) |

| | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Group Identification (IGI; 1-7) | 4.95 (.92) | 4.16 (.80) | 4.64 (.98) |
| Hostility toward conservatives (1-5) | 2.23 (.76) | 2.48 (1.04) | 3.37 (1.19) |
| Hostility toward liberals (1-5) | 1.67 (.57) | 1.64 (.58) | 1.48 (.56) |
| Pretend—attempt to get a better grade (1-5) | 1.26 (.68) | 1.88 (1.26) | 2.63 (1.51) |
| Politics brought up by instructor when not related to class (1-5) | 2.37 (1.05) | 2.53 (.99) | 3.11 (1.20) |
| More than one side presented by instructors in politics relevant classes (1-5) | 3.63 (1.01) | 3.16 (1.09) | 3.31 (1.12) |
| <i>Notes:</i> Higher scores reflect the following: Hostility: experiencing more hostility related to their political beliefs Anticipated stigma: greater expectation of being stigmatized by instructors if their political beliefs were revealed Belonging: greater sense of belonging in their classes Group identification: stronger identification with political in-group Hostility toward conservatives/liberals: perceiving greater hostility toward the group “Politics brought up...,” “More than one side...”: greater frequency of behavior | | | |

A multiple regression model then tested whether the association between political ideology and personal hostility experienced differed depending on the strength of in-group identification (H4). As in Study 1, hostility was regressed on political ideology and strength of in-group identification (equation: $\text{Hostility}_i = b_0 + b_1\text{Ideology}_i + b_2\text{IGI}_i + \text{error}_i$). A significant main effect of ideology ($\beta = .53$; $B = .642$, $p < .001$; Table 12) provided evidence that more conservative participants were more likely to report having personally experienced hostility from instructors because of their political beliefs (H3). Following, the interaction term was added such that hostility was regressed on political ideology, in-group identification, and their interaction [equation: $\text{Hostility}_i = b_0 +$

$b_1\text{Ideology}_i + b_2\text{IGI}_i + b_3(\text{Ideology}_i * \text{IGI}_i) + \text{error}_i]$. Ideology and in-group identification interacted ($B = .125, p = .008$; Table 13), confirming that the relationship between political ideology and personal hostility experienced differed as a function of the strength of participants' identity with their political in-group (H4). Simple effects were computed (Table 14) and graphed at ± 1 standard deviation of the moderator (i.e., IGI; Figure 2). As seen in Figure 2, there was a main effect for ideology, such that conservatives reported experiencing more hostility than liberals, paired with an interaction such that the increase in hostility was stronger for those who were more strongly identified with their political in-group ($B = .735, p < .001$; Table 14) than for those more weakly identified with their political in-group ($B = .493, p < .001$; Table 14).

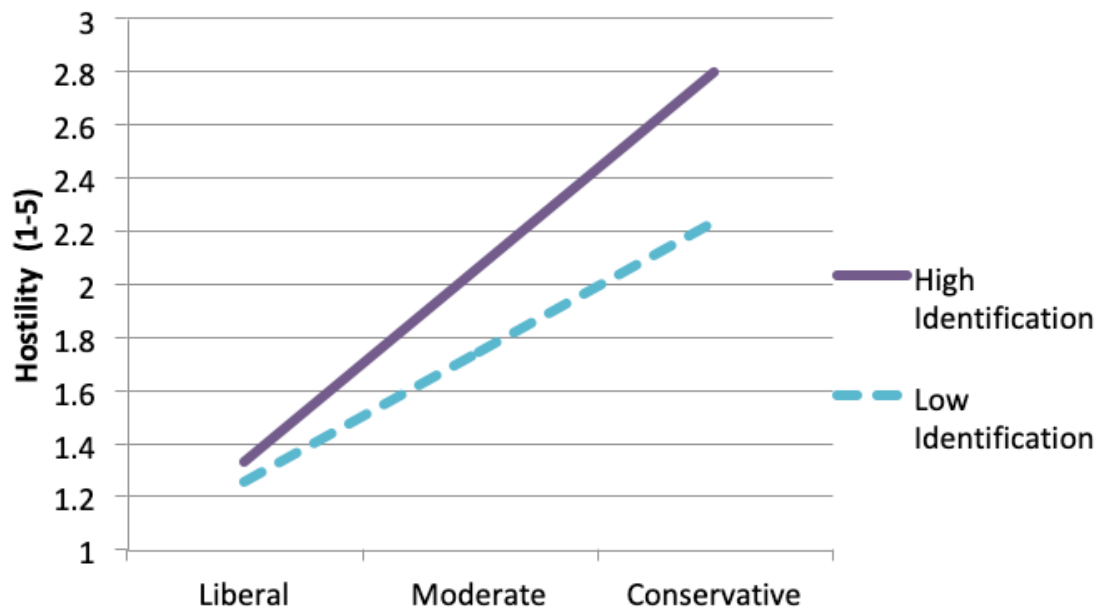
| Table 12 Main effects: Hostility Predicted from Political Ideology and in-group identification (IGI), Study 2 | | | | | |
|--|-------|---------|----------|--------|-----|
| Predictor | B | β | <i>p</i> | 95% CI | |
| (Constant) | -.005 | | = .982 | -.40 | .39 |
| Political Ideology | .642 | .53 | < .001 | .55 | .74 |
| IGI | .134 | .15 | < .001 | .06 | .21 |

| Table 13 Hostility Predicted from Political Ideology and in-group identification (IGI), adding interaction, Study 2 | | | | |
|--|-------|----------|--------|------|
| Predictor | B | <i>p</i> | 95% CI | |
| (Constant) | 1.08 | = .018 | .19 | 1.98 |
| Political Ideology | .033 | = .889 | -.43 | .49 |
| IGI | -.087 | = .339 | -.26 | .09 |
| Interaction | .125 | = .008 | .04 | .22 |

Table 14 Conditional effects of Political Ideology on Hostility, Study 2

| IGI | B | <i>p</i> | 95% CI | |
|-------|------|----------|--------|-----|
| -1 SD | .493 | < .001 | .35 | .64 |
| Mean | .614 | < .001 | .52 | .71 |
| +1 SD | .735 | < .001 | .62 | .85 |

Figure 2 Hostility, Study 2



Note: higher scores reflect experiencing more hostility related to their political beliefs

Tests of pre-registered hypotheses about anticipated stigma. Participant political ideology again correlated with anticipated stigma. More conservative participants (see Table 11 for means) reported a greater expectation that instructors would stigmatize them if their political beliefs were known ($H5, r(503) = .52, p < .001$, Table 10).

A multiple regression model then tested whether the association between political ideology and anticipated stigma differed depending on the strength of in-group identification ($H4$). As in Study 1, anticipated stigma was regressed on political ideology

and strength of in-group identification (equation: $\text{Stigma}_i = b_0 + b_1\text{Ideology}_i + b_2\text{IGI}_i + \text{error}_i$). A significant main effect of ideology ($\beta = .54$; $B = .941$, $p < .001$; Table 15) provided evidence that more conservative participants were more likely to report anticipating being stigmatized by instructors because of their political beliefs (H3). Following, the interaction term was added such that anticipated stigma was regressed on political ideology, in-group identification, and their interaction [equation: $\text{Stigma}_i = b_0 + b_1\text{Ideology}_i + b_2\text{IGI}_i + b_3(\text{Ideology}_i * \text{IGI}_i) + \text{error}_i$]. Ideology and in-group identification interacted ($B = .141$, $p = .032$; Table 16), confirming that the relationship between political ideology and anticipated stigma differed as a function of the strength of participants' identity with their political in-group (H4). Simple effects were computed (Table 17) and graphed at ± 1 standard deviation of the moderator (i.e., IGI; Figure 3). As seen in Figure 3, there was a main effect for ideology, such that conservatives reported experiencing more anticipated stigma than liberals (i.e., greater expectation that instructors would stigmatize them if their political beliefs were known), paired with an interaction such that the increase in anticipated stigma was stronger for those who were more strongly identified with their political in-group ($B = 1.048$, $p < .001$; Table 17) than for those more weakly identified with their political in-group ($B = .772$, $p < .001$; Table 17).

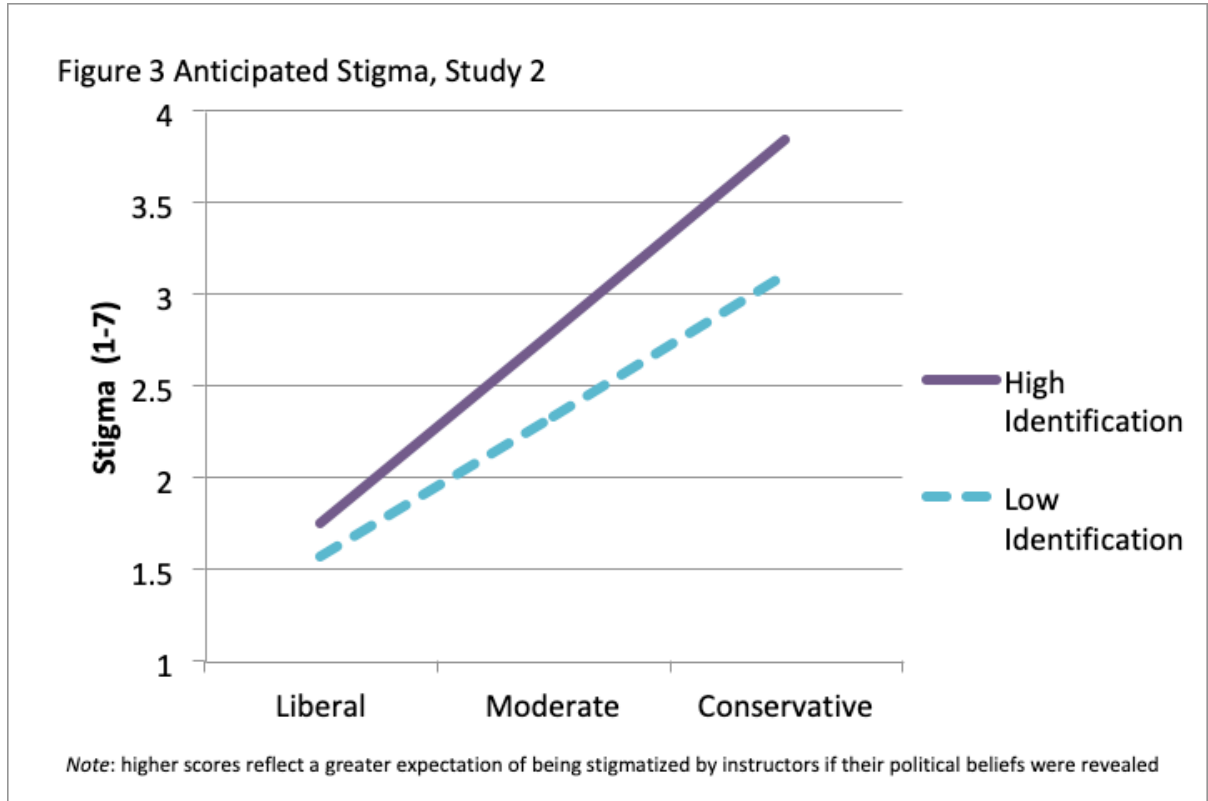
| Table 15 Main effects: Anticipated Stigma Predicted from Political Ideology and in-group identification (IGI), Study 2 | | | | | |
|---|-------|---------|--------|--------|------|
| Predictor | B | β | p | 95% CI | |
| (Constant) | -.234 | | =.396 | -.78 | .31 |
| Political Ideology | .941 | .54 | < .001 | .81 | 1.07 |
| IGI | .198 | .15 | < .001 | .10 | .30 |

Table 16 Anticipated Stigma Predicted from Political Ideology and in-group identification (IGI), adding interaction, Study 2

| Predictor | B | <i>p</i> | 95% CI | |
|--------------------|------|----------|--------|------|
| (Constant) | .983 | = .119 | -.25 | 2.22 |
| Political Ideology | .257 | = .431 | -.38 | .90 |
| IGI | -.05 | = .691 | -.30 | .20 |
| Interaction | .141 | = .032 | .01 | .27 |

Table 17 Conditional effects of Political Ideology on Anticipated Stigma, Study 2

| IGI | B | <i>p</i> | 95% CI | |
|-------|-------|----------|--------|------|
| -1 SD | .772 | < .001 | .57 | .97 |
| Mean | .910 | < .001 | .78 | 1.04 |
| +1 SD | 1.048 | < .001 | .89 | 1.21 |



Tests of pre-registered hypotheses about belonging. Participant political ideology again correlated with belonging. More conservative participants (see Table 11 for means) reported a lower sense of belonging in their classes (H7, $r(457) = -.29, p < .001$, see also Table 10).

A multiple regression model then tested whether the association between political ideology and belonging differed depending on the strength of in-group identification (H4). As in Study 1, belonging was regressed on political ideology and strength of in-group identification (equation: $\text{Belonging}_i = b_0 + b_1\text{Ideology}_i + b_2\text{IGI}_i + \text{error}_i$). A significant main effect of ideology ($\beta = -.29$; $B = -.269, p < .001$; Table 18) provided evidence that more conservative participants were more likely to report lower belonging in their classes (H3). Following, the interaction term was added such that belonging was regressed on political ideology, in-group identification, and their interaction [equation:

$\text{Belonging}_i = b_0 + b_1\text{Ideology}_i + b_2\text{IGI}_i + b_3(\text{Ideology}_i * \text{IGI}_i) + \text{error}_i$. Ideology and in-group identification interacted ($B = -.119, p = .004$; Table 19), confirming that the relationship between political ideology and belonging differed as a function of the strength of participants' identity with their political in-group (H4). Simple effects were computed (Table 20) and graphed at ± 1 standard deviation of the moderator (i.e., IGI; Figure 4). As seen in Figure 4, there was a main effect for ideology, such that conservatives reported experiencing lower levels of belonging than liberals, paired with a cross-over interaction such that the decrease in belonging was steep for those who were more strongly identified with their political in-group ($B = -.359, p < .001$; Table 20), and approaching flat for those more weakly identified with their political in-group ($B = -.126, p = .0504$; Table 20).

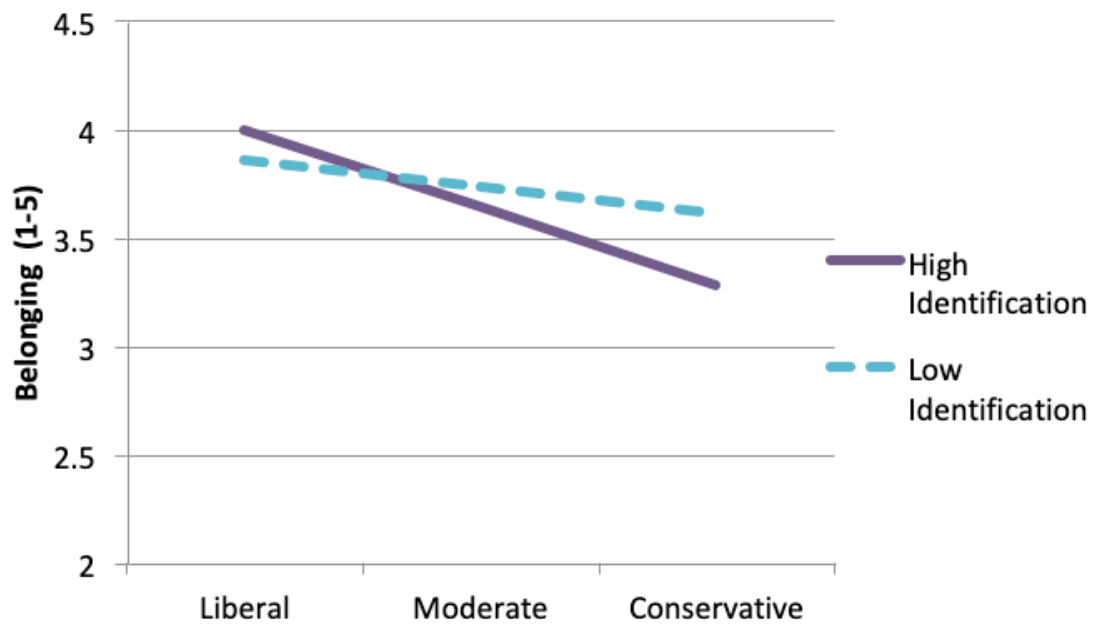
| Table 18 Main effects: Belonging Predicted from Political Ideology and in-group identification (IGI), Study 2 | | | | | |
|--|-------|---------|----------|--------|------|
| Predictor | B | β | <i>p</i> | 95% CI | |
| (Constant) | 4.336 | | < .001 | 3.99 | 4.68 |
| Political Ideology | -.269 | -.29 | < .001 | -.35 | -.19 |
| IGI | -.022 | -.03 | = .471 | -.08 | .04 |

| Table 19 Belonging Predicted from Political Ideology and in-group identification (IGI), adding interaction, Study 2 | | | | |
|--|-------|----------|--------|------|
| Predictor | B | <i>p</i> | 95% CI | |
| (Constant) | 3.299 | < .001 | 2.53 | 4.07 |
| Political Ideology | .312 | = .124 | -.09 | .71 |
| IGI | .187 | = .017 | .03 | .34 |
| Interaction | -.119 | = .004 | -.20 | -.04 |

Table 20 Conditional effects of Political Ideology on Belonging, Study 2

| IGI | B | <i>p</i> | 95% CI | |
|-------|-------|----------|--------|-------|
| -1 SD | -.126 | = .0504 | -.25 | .0002 |
| Mean | -.243 | < .001 | -.33 | -.16 |
| +1 SD | -.359 | < .001 | -.46 | -.26 |

Figure 4 Belonging, Study 2



Note: higher scores reflect a greater sense of belonging in their classes

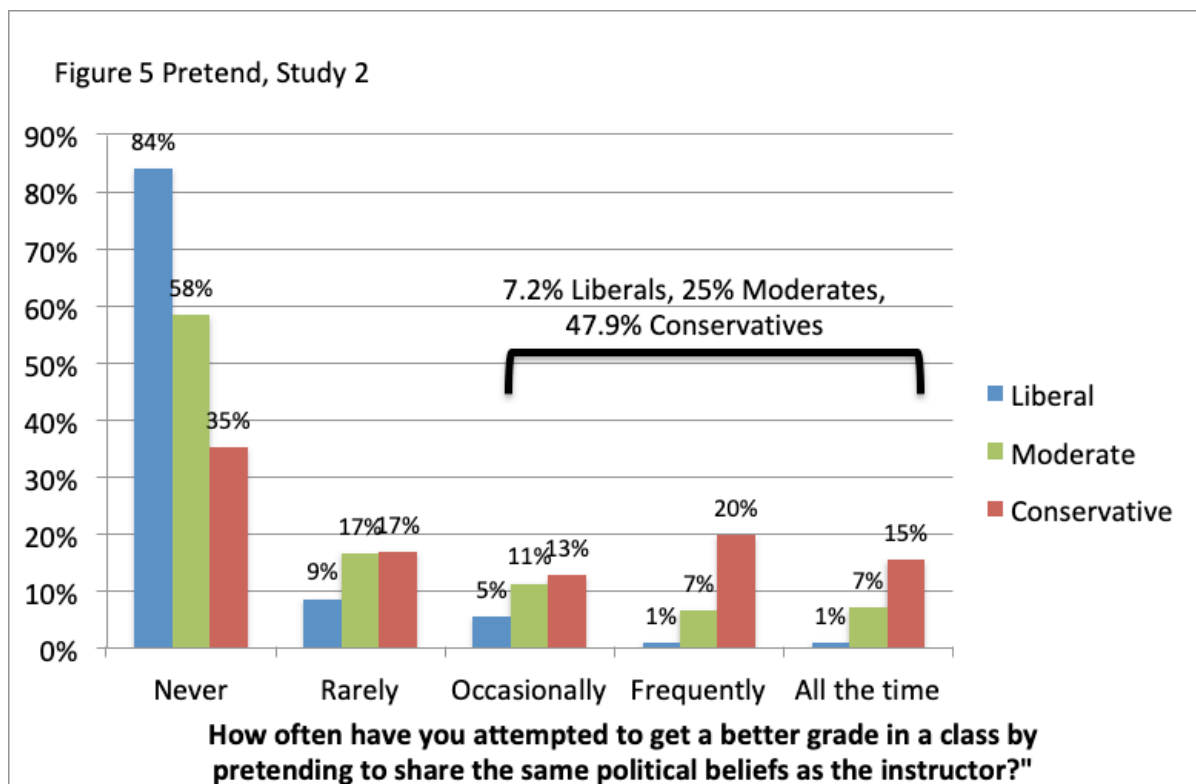
Tests of pre-registered hypotheses about hostility toward conservatives and liberals. A paired-sample t-test compared student perceptions of hostility instructors exhibit toward liberals and conservatives (H9). Participants' perceptions of hostility instructors would exhibit toward conservatives ($M=2.50$, $SD=1.02$) was greater than the amount of hostility they perceived instructors would exhibit toward liberals ($M=1.63$,

$SD=.57$), $t(490)=19.17$, $p<.001$, 95% CI [.78, .96] $d=1.05$. That is, participants indicated that they perceived instructors to exhibit more hostility toward conservatives than liberals.

Exploratory Analyses

As in Study 1, to further probe classroom dynamics, participants were asked how often “irrelevant issues” are brought up in class by instructors, how often “more than one side” is presented by instructors during political discussions, and lastly how often participants “have ever attempted to get a better grade in a class by pretending to share the same political beliefs as the instructor” (“passing”). Additionally, participants were also asked to indicate in their courses the kind of grade they perceived a student’s paper expressing a liberal/conservative point of view would generally receive.

Significant correlations again emerged for the first three items (Table 10). More conservative participants perceived political issues to be brought up more frequently in classes where they are not germane ($r=.22$, $p<.001$), perceived that instructors infrequently present arguments from more than one side in classes where political topics are germane ($r=-.33$, $p<.001$). Furthermore, the more conservative the participant, the more often they indicated that they pretended to share their instructors’ political beliefs in an attempt to get a better grade ($r=.41$, $p<.001$). 84% of liberal participants reported that they never do this, compared to 58% of moderates and 35% of conservatives (Figure 5). At the other end of the scale, 47.9% of conservative participants reported either occasionally, frequently, or always attempting to get a better grade in class by pretending to share the same political beliefs as the instructor, compared to 7.2% of liberals and 25% of moderates (Figure 5).



Last, a paired-sample t-test compared student perceptions of the kind of grade they thought a student's paper expressing a politically conservative point of view would generally receive in their classes, compared to a student's paper expressing a politically liberal point of view. Overall, as in Study 1, participants perceived a paper expressing a politically conservative point of view would generally receive a lower grade ($M=3.62$, $SD=.77$) compared to a paper expressing a politically liberal point of view ($M=4.26$, $SD=.75$), $t(480) = -9.96$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-.76, -.51]$, $d = -.84$. The mean for a paper expressing a conservative point of view fell between "a slightly lower grade than objectively deserved" (3) and "a fair, objective grade" (4); for a paper expressing a liberal point of view, the mean fell between "a fair, objective grade" (4) and "a slightly higher grade than objectively deserved" (5).

Lastly, a series of significant correlations again emerged between hostility, stigma, and belonging (Table 10). The more hostility a participant reported experiencing, the greater their expectation that instructors would stigmatize them if their political beliefs were known ($r=.74, p<.001$), and the lower belonging they reported ($r= -.65, p<.001$). Further, the greater the expectation participants had that instructors would stigmatize them if their political beliefs were known, the lower belonging they reported ($r= -.61, p<.001$).

Discussion

Overall, Study 2 replicated almost all findings from Study 1, and provided support for all predictions on student experiences in the classroom related to their political beliefs. Many of the effects were also stronger, perhaps due to the sample consisting of older and more advanced students who, interestingly, were also a bit more liberal than participants in Study 1 (though there were also more conservatives in Study 2 than Study 1 as well). As in Study 1, Study 2 found that conservatives reported more personal experiences of hostility a greater anticipated stigma, and a lower sense of belonging in their classes than their more liberal peers. But, unlike in Study 1, strength of participants' political in-group identity moderated each of these effects. Given the differences in age between participants in Study 1 and Study 2, this may suggest that the younger students in Study 1 have not spent a sufficient amount of time in college to have acquired an adequate understanding of the classroom political climate. Younger students—most in Study 1 having completed only one semester in college—have not experienced as many classes and interacted with as many instructors as more advanced undergraduates. Further, as in Study 1, there was consistent agreement across political ideology that that instructors exhibit more hostility toward conservatives than they do toward liberals,

indicating that it isn't just conservatives perceiving these dynamics—credibility of claims goes up when liberals recognize this, as again indicated here. Last, conservatives were again more likely to report bias in the classroom, in the form of politics being brought up by instructors where it isn't relevant, or in relevant political discussions instructors not presenting arguments from both sides. Notably, conservatives again reported pretending to share their instructors' political beliefs in an attempt to get a better grade significantly more often than their peers. And, in comparison to Study 1, the percent of conservatives reporting they "never" do this was 8% percentage points lower in Study 2 (S2=35% vs. S1=43%).

CHAPTER 4

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Across two studies, the current research reinforced many of the observations made by Honeycutt and Freberg (2017) and Inbar and Lammers (2012), illustrating that conservative students perceive and report experiences and perceptions that are similar to those of conservative faculty. These experiences include hostility toward their political beliefs. Expanding on prior work investigating the political climate in universities, these experiences also include the expectation (of conservative students) that they will be stigmatized by faculty if their political beliefs were to become known, and conservative students reporting lower levels of belonging in their classes. The data point toward bona fide differences of experience in the classroom along ideological lines, and toward conservatism as a concealable stigmatized identity in the context of university classes and student-instructor interactions.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Often, the reliance on a student sample is posed as a notable limitation to a study, and to the generalizability of the results. Given that the context and aim of the present study is to understand a facet of the student experience, a student sample is highly relevant and appropriate. All the same, the present sample still cannot be considered representative of U.S. college students. Additional studies including students from other universities and/or geographic regions would be advantageous to determine if findings are consistent. In future studies, it may also be of interest to intentionally recruit student

participants from academic areas—such as agriculture—that have been found to be more conservative (Lipset & Ladd, 1971).

This study is also limited by its cross sectional and correlational design, and by its reliance on participants' self-reported experiences and perceptions. These perceptions may be inaccurate and biased. In future research it would be valuable to assess actual student behavior in contexts where hostility is manipulated—how do students respond toward differing degrees of hostility (or support) targeted toward their political identity, or targeted toward their political out-group? In future research it would also be valuable to directly assess instructor behavior toward students of differing political orientations—how do instructors behave toward students who do or do not share their political identity? It would also be valuable to study this topic under a longitudinal design, perhaps incorporating variables related to health and wellbeing. Additionally, specifically related to Study 1, the results may be limited by the surprisingly high proportion of participants that identified as Asian (45.9%, compared to 23.9% in Study 2, and 26% among Rutgers University Undergrads overall). It is possible that a not insignificant proportion of these participants may have been international students, and as such not completely understood the questions or measures used (e.g., the political ideology measure). Furthermore, the study, overall, was limited by its reliance on a single item and dimension for political ideology, which may fail to capture the complexities and intricacies tied up in this identity. Lastly, though the present proposed study focuses on experiences of hostility in classes overall, this could still fail to effectively capture all dynamics. It may be the case that hostility is experienced in some classes and not others (e.g., social psychology major class taught by professor A versus professor B), or in certain types of classes (e.g., sociology GE class) but not others (e.g., math GE class).

IMPLICATIONS

Despite these limitations, this study still raises at least two troubling possibilities:

(1) Should explicit hostility against particular political viewpoints be a real problem on the part of many instructors, conservative (or more generally, non-liberal) students may be more likely to become alienated and marginalized in their courses. This may stifle open exchange and free discussion of ideas and perspectives in classroom dialogues.

(2) Putting aside whether or not hostility against particular political viewpoints is actually occurring or not, students—particularly conservative and moderate students—still believe they are the target of prejudice in the classroom. Further, many reported engaging in defensive actions such as adopting counter-attitudinal positions in their coursework and refraining from sharing their points of view in class discussions. These elements on their own could be a cause for concern. Similar arguments have been made involving advocacy in response to issues such as microaggressions, where people's experiences and interpretations of verbal or non-verbal slights, snubs, or insults as hostile have sparked efforts to minimize or mitigate them from occurring (e.g., UCLA Diversity and Faculty Development, 2014; Volokh, 2015). Even though important questions have been raised about the validity of some of the microaggression research (Lilienfeld, 2017), the main principle that people's personal experiences matter is similar—a mirror image to microaggressions. As Honeycutt and Freberg (2017) articulated, “academia cannot allow selective or convenient diversity, inclusivity, and tolerance and should instead have a vested interest in alleviating all forms of discrimination” (p. 122). Conservative students, although a numerical minority in the current samples, are not necessarily afforded the same protection as other minorities. Speaking up and sharing their views and perspectives could come at a significant cost.

Implications may also be broader than those at the individual level. Between 1974 and 2010, conservatives' and moderates' trust in scientists has diminished (Cofnas, Carl, & Menie, 2017; Gauchat, 2012), and recent experimental research has suggested that there may exist a general skepticism about the ability of social science to be objective (Hannikainen, 2018). Further, between 2010 and 2017 opinion among conservatives on whether colleges and universities are having a positive/negative effect on the way things are going in the country switched from 52% positive to 55% negative, while among liberals the percent positive has slightly increased, and among moderates the percent negative has slightly increased (Pew Research Center, 2017). Comparable research by Gallup (2018) reported similar findings, such that between 2015 and 2018 Republicans who had a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in higher education dropped from 56% to 39%. Taken together, it is possible that personal or perceived experiences of political hostility and discrimination, as has been presented, may be contributing to declining trust and positive opinions conservatives (or generally, non-liberals) have about colleges and universities and the people that work in them. If academics (e.g., scientists) are often the perpetrators, and colleges and universities are their home turf, there may be a relationship between what the data here report, and broader cultural and social trends.

FREE RESPONSE

Included at the end of each study was a free response question where participants were offered the opportunity to share any additional thoughts or comments. Though the focus of this paper is the analysis and discussion of the quantitative data, the qualitative data offer some additional depth and personality, and largely mirror the findings of the quantitative data (see data for all responses Blinded--Anonymous, 2018a). Many responses from conservative participants reflected the increased hostility and anticipated

stigma, and lower belonging already discussed. One conservative stated “I can’t say anything [in my classes] in fear for my grades,” while another said “it’s not safe to express divergent views.” Other responses reflected more direct experiences of hostility. One participant stated that “my views are mocked by instructors,” another one reported that they were called a “race traitor” by an instructor, another said that “teachers have called me names” because they are a conservative, and another shared that “I had to change majors” because of the hostility experienced related to being conservative. One conservative participant discussed how she hates “the gang mentality and discrimination” she experiences in the classroom because she is conservative, where she gets “picked on by teachers [and] excluded by classmates in discussions,” and how to her “it’s sad and hurtful and I wish it would stop.”

Liberal participants, on the other hand, submitted comments that reflected, as seen in the quantitative data, much different experiences—essentially that their political beliefs are a non-issue, if not an advantage. One liberal participant reported that “usually people taking [a] class share the same general political beliefs,” underscoring a liberal norm and (albeit, indirectly) conservatives hiding or being unwilling to speak up and share their views. Another reported “I never feel like I have to hide my views,” while another stated “there is bias on campus and it suits me well.” Some liberal participants pushed back, one stating “this questionnaire is clearly biased,” presumably because merely asking if there is any hostility directed toward conservatives (even though exactly mirrored questions were asked about hostility toward liberals) is a biased endeavor.

Interestingly, many moderates offered measured responses. Some recognized that hostility in the classroom related to political beliefs is a problem, aptly captured by one moderate who said, “differences in opinion are discouraged.” But some directly

articulated that it shouldn't be an issue. One, for example, stated, "political bias has no place here." Many also articulated a need for viewpoint diversity. One moderate claimed "classes that don't show both sides hurt students," another stated "alternative arguments are important, no matter the topic," and a third argued that "students need to get comfortable with being uncomfortable."

Though the brief excerpts here reflect only selectively chosen partial responses from a small subset of those who left open-ended responses, they do paint an interesting picture. Conservatives described hostility and anticipated stigma, liberals did not report this and some took a 'nothing to see here' stance, while many moderates offered a balanced approach, recognizing that dynamics may be somewhat problematic, and changing things could lead to tangible benefits.

CONCLUSION

Prior research has raised concerns about the effect of a lack of role models on students in underrepresented groups, leading to concerns about faculty diversity in gender, race, and ethnicity (e.g., Dasgupta & Stout, 2014; Dee, 2004; Murphy, Steele, & Gross, 2007). If students—particularly conservative, and possibly moderate students—perceive their instructors as being predominantly liberal, and report experiences of hostility, anticipated stigma, and lower feelings of belonging, ipso facto it is logical for them to conclude the profession is not open to them, to refrain from furthering their studies (e.g., attending graduate school), and to avoid pursuing a career in academia. It also follows that in this climate some youth may even opt to avoid attending certain colleges, or college all together—whether on their own accord, or with pressure from their parents—to avoid participating in what is perceived to be a biased and hostile enterprise (e.g., Jaschik, 2017b; Routledge, 2017).

Some have argued that low numbers of conservative faculty reflect conservatives voluntarily self-selecting out of academia. For example, Gilbert (2011) has argued that “liberals may be more interested in new ideas, more willing to work for peanuts, or just more intelligent” (para. 3). Others have gone further stating, for example, that academics are predominantly liberal because “being liberal in the early 21st century is more compatible with the epistemic standards, values, and practices of academia” (Baron & Jost, 2018, p. 28). But these explanations may themselves be manifestations of political biases. As such, they may be convenient attempts to justify the status quo and explain away ideological disparities facing the academy today. Put another way, these may be attempts to legitimize existing social arrangements in academia, otherwise known as “system justification” (Jost & Banaji, 1994). This “academic system justification” may come at the expense of the academy’s interest in pursuing scientific truth that would otherwise be aided by the inclusion of diverse viewpoints and perspectives. Arguably, self-selection could be playing a role, but self-selection and experiences of ideologically hostility and prejudice are not mutually exclusive. Given the present data, experiences of ideological hostility and prejudice during undergraduate years may be playing a particularly salient roll in turning conservative students away from pursuing an advanced education and an academic career. Given that a sizeable proportion of college-aged youth today do identify as Republican and conservative (Twenge et al., 2016), the need to better understand this issue and related dynamics—all of which may be systematically isolating a significant segment of the student population and undermining viewpoint diversity in the academy—becomes all the more necessary.

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