

3

Attitudes in a Polarized World

Sociological and Psychological Processes of Reinforcement of Social and Political Worldviews

Angelita Repetto and Dolores Albarracín

On March 13, 2022, Google returned 55,900,000 entries associated with *political polarization*, and Google Trends showed that, in the United States, searches for this term had tripled since the creation of the application in 2004. Similarly popular has been the term *echo chamber*, which had 52,300,000 Google entries on March 13, 2022, and whose Google Trends index had doubled since 2004. Americans are polarized on such diverse topics as policing of African Americans, immigration, abortion, and the COVID-19 vaccine. For example, an analysis of the General Social Survey showed that, in 1985, 34% of Democrats and 33% of Republicans supported abortion “for any reason.” In contrast, the gap widened in 1998, when 40% of Democrats and 29% of Republicans supported abortion “for any reason.” By 2018, the gap had widened even more, when 62% of Democrats and 29% of Republicans supported abortion “for any reason” (see Kane, 2020; for an earlier analysis, see Dimaggio et al., 1996).

But what are the sociological and psychological processes that foster political polarization and the cultural wars that dominate American politics and other democracies in the world? This chapter concerns these issues and integrates sociological and social psychological perspectives to understand the complex interplay of de facto and self-initiated processes that allow individuals to maintain consistent, and often polarized, worldviews. Segregation and attitudinal selectivity provide a framework to consider how people develop social and political attitudes that are maintained by de facto (Sears & Freedman, 1967) selective exposure to attitudinally consistent information (Festinger, 1954; Hart et al., 2009).

A complete understanding of the processes that maintain attitudinal polarization must first address the sociological and structural determinants

of the attitudes and information circulating within a group. In the case of political ideology and polarization, over time, segregation by education, socioeconomic status, as well as race and ethnicity separates the views of these demographic groups and causes ideological polarization through lifelong processes. In the United States, populations are physically segregated by education, socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity. Thus, different groups interact primarily with others who are like them not only demographically but also in beliefs. This societal structure creates a perfect environment for psychological processes that further support attitudinal polarization in many areas but chiefly on social and political issues. For instance, in the United States, higher education is associated with being more liberal, higher socioeconomic status with being more conservative, and being a racial or ethnic minority with a Democratic affiliation and liberal ideology. Segregation that produces ideology is then aptly maintained by the media. Psychologically, selective exposure, selective attention, selective judgment, and selective dissemination are four processes that can help people to maintain their worldviews and uphold preestablished attitudes associated with segregated groups. Research has documented selective exposure to attitudinally agreeable information, as well as biased judgment and dissemination of information. These processes, which we review here, are relevant to social and political attitudes.

Figure 3.1 presents a theoretical integration of the sociological and psychological factors implicated in the maintenance of polarized attitudes. As shown, sociologically (see top part of the model), segregation among social groups (i.e., socioeconomic, educational, and racial/ethnic groups) creates attitude polarization. At the psychological level of the individual (see bottom part of model), these attitudes are thus maintained through selective exposure, selective judgment, and selective dissemination.

Sociological and Structural Processes

People are born into different zip codes and demographic groups that then instill core values aligned with ideology. They then espouse attitudes that are consistent with those values, which are also maintained through exposure to media after individuals are socialized. We begin with the processes by which segregation influences ideology and then continue with a brief analysis of the effects of the media.

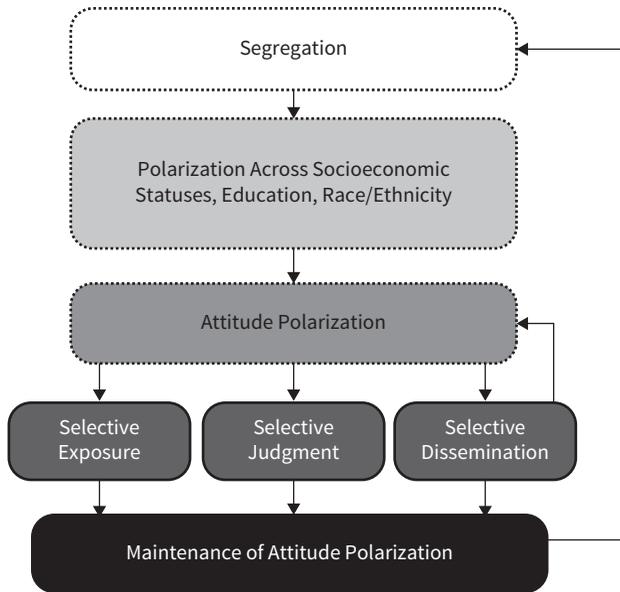


Figure 3.1 Chart visualizing the sociological and psychological processes that create attitude polarization.

Segregation by Socioeconomic Status, Education, and Race/Ethnicity

The people with whom you interact influence your attitudes and life outcomes, but in the United States, these interactions are not random (Baldassarri & Bearman, 2007). Spatial segregation by income, social class, and race/ethnicity influences with whom a person interacts and has been on the rise for decades (Massey & Denton, 1989). This increasing spatial segregation provides the sociological foundation for people interacting with similar others, even more now than in the past. In this section, we analyze how socioeconomic status and education as well as race/ethnicity drive polarization within a structural context of segregation.

Socioeconomic Status and Education

As mentioned, socioeconomic status is a demographic characteristic associated with political ideology (Argyle, 1994). Generally speaking, people with higher socioeconomic status are more likely to vote conservative (Gelman et al., 2005), to align with right-wing ideology, and to vote against programs that would increase their taxes (Barreto & Pedraza, 2009; Gelman et al., 2005).

This phenomenon is typically explained with self-interest theory, according to which people with a higher socioeconomic standing have conservative views to preserve their own economic interests (Dunn, 2011).

The general consensus about the United States is that education pushes individuals toward the liberal side of the ideological continuum (Dunn, 2011). There are two leading theories that can explain this phenomenon. According to the first, *developmental thesis*, education strengthens liberal attitudes by expanding students' frames of reference and stimulating their cognitive and personality growth (Phelan et al., 1995). However, increases in cognitive ability do not always mediate the link between education and liberal ideology (Kingston et al., 2003), implying that intellectual sophistication plays a role for some attitudes but not others.

The developmental thesis, however, has been criticized for emphasizing personality and cognitive abilities while ignoring attitudes and values. In response, the *socialization thesis* purports that education liberalizes political ideology not through cognitive development and personality growth but through modeling and reinforcement of ideologically relevant attitudes (Phelan et al., 1995). Ultimately, this theory assumes a more iterative process in which, if a society's values lean right, then education moves students toward the ideological right. In contrast, if a society's values lean left, then education moves students toward the ideological left. That is, education transmits political attitudes through the transmission of *core values* (Phelan et al., 1995). Even though, in theory, education instills values, not political identification, value priorities in the United States are such that a person's value priorities are associated with their liberal–conservative identification (Jacoby, 2006). According to Dunn (2011), core values of a country affect the direction of education's influence on political ideology. Moreover, education increases openness and cognitive flexibility, which in turn creates fertile ground for students to learn the core values instilled by the educational system (Dunn, 2011).

Regardless of the emphasis of each school of thought, it is clear that educational attainment influences political ideology. Considering the extreme educational inequality present in the United States, education is thus critical to American political polarization. In fact, according to an analysis of many nationally representative samples of American residents born between 1908 and 1995, educational inequality has increased largely as some populations continue to accumulate graduate degrees while many others cannot finish high school. These increasing educational inequalities are a potentially critical determinant of ideological polarization in the United States.

Race and Ethnicity

In the United States, the feeling of a shared fate associated with racial minorities is often stronger than party affiliation or political ideology (Kinder & Sanders, 1996). Accordingly, race and ethnicity directly influence political ideology, with members of particular racial and ethnic groups leaning toward political parties in ways that cannot be fully explained by other demographic characteristics such as education (Wolfinger, 1965). Lewis-Beck and colleagues (2008) studied ingroup identity and partisanship, verifying that African Americans vote for Democratic candidates. Nonetheless, racial and ethnic groups alone do not necessarily affect vote choice unless group membership is internalized as a collective identity (Barreto & Pedraza, 2009). Apart from members of racial and ethnic groups having similar disadvantages that influence voting interests, campaign messaging often targets voters by race and ethnicity. For example, campaign materials often appear in English and Spanish, with important Latinx officials promoting candidates and immigrant themes being present in campaign materials directed at Latinx households (De la Garza et al., 2010). Thus, campaigns remind Latinx voters of their ethnic identity in ways that strategically connect this identity to political attitudes (De la Garza et al., 2010).

The polarization associated with race appears in not only partisanship but also ideologically driven beliefs. For example, racial and ethnic identity can shape attitudes toward climate change in ways not accounted for by political ideology (Schuldt & Pearson, 2016). In a survey of US adults conducted by Schuldt and Pearson (2016), political ideology influenced White respondents' support for federal regulation of greenhouse gas emissions independently of whether or not they believed that climate change was real. In contrast, the climate change attitudes among non-White respondents were relatively unaffected by political ideology (Schuldt & Pearson, 2016). Beyond climate change, racial and ethnic identities predict support for a wide range of policy issues like education and unemployment spending (Chong & Rogers, 2005; Kinder & Winter, 2001). For example, a racial divide demarcates attitudes toward racial inequality and social services, as shown by the 1992 American National Election Study (Kinder & Winter, 2001). Furthermore, racial identification and racial consciousness affect political participation in the form of campaign activities, petitioning government officials, and participating in protests and boycotts more than they do turnout (Chong & Rogers, 2005), suggesting that specific issues energize activism among American racial and ethnic minorities.

Media Influences Once Ideology Is Established

The effects of demographic segregation on ideology go beyond socialization. In fact, in the United States, much of the news media are also separated by ideology, and partisan sites are disproportionately populated by partisan audiences (Shore et al., 2018). For example, liberals and conservatives overlap in only 51% of the accounts they follow (Eady et al., 2019). Interestingly, data collected by the Pew Research Center suggest that conservatives more frequently follow left-leaning accounts than liberals follow conservative-leaning accounts (Eady et al., 2019; Jurkowitz et al., 2020).

Online and offline media integrate a large media ecosystem (Benkler et al., 2018). Media ecosystems can maintain segregated attitudes through several mechanisms such as persuasion, cultivation, and familiarity. Persuasion entails internalization of media advocacies due to arguments that are perceived as convincing or originating from a trustworthy communicator (Albarracín, 2002, 2021; Albarracín & Shavitt, 2018; Albarracín & Vargas, 2010; Chaiken, 1980; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Cultivation entails the natural inclination to take an event's frequency in the media as evidence that the event is common in real life (Morgan & Shanahan, 1997; Wyer & Adaval, 2004; Wyer & Shrum, 2015). Cultivation also entails repeated presentation of an issue or statement in the media, creating perceptions that an issue is real or that a statement is accurate (De Keersmaecker et al., 2020; Hasher et al., 1977; Prentice & Miller, 1993). Thus, exposure to homogeneous realities or claims within one's segregated media can maintain social and political attitudes that were initially based on demographic segregation.

A series of studies on partisan beliefs and conspiracy beliefs analyzed associations with social influence in the United States (Albarracín et al., 2022). Media use influenced beliefs in political facts such as Obama's inaction contributing to the Syrian crisis during his presidency. For this belief, exposure to conservative media correlated with stronger endorsement of these beliefs, whereas exposure to both liberal and mainstream media correlated with weaker belief in these facts (Albarracín et al., 2022). In contrast, conspiracy beliefs were associated almost exclusively with conservative media exposure (Albarracín et al., 2022). This association was present for the belief that Obama faked his birth certificate to become president, the belief that the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine causes autism, and the belief that immigrants voting illegally swayed the 2016 popular vote from Donald J. Trump to Hillary Clinton. Informal social influence can also help to maintain attitudinal homogeneity within segregated demographic groups. For example, discussing a vaccination conspiracy theory with acquaintances and people online is

correlated with these conspiracy beliefs (Albarracín et al., 2022), supporting the notion that weak ties are key sources of information (Granovetter, 1983).

Psychological Processes

Groups and their segregation within society create and maintain our social and political attitudes. But these attitudes are also sustained through social information processing mechanisms that start with the information we choose to consume and end with the information we disseminate to others. According to Albarracín (2021), having a prior attitude is among the most consequential factors in determining how external information is processed. To begin, people who have a prior attitude toward an issue have already made up their minds and may thus dismiss information that may seem redundant. Furthermore, even if they do seek out further information, the decision of what to seek and the processing of that information are largely driven by a person's attitudes. In the end, selective exposure, selective judgment, and selective dissemination can each reinforce prior attitudes, strengthening commitment to segregated worldviews and maintaining informational homogeneity within demographic groups.

Selective Exposure

Hart et al. (2009) meta-analyzed the experimental literature on selective exposure to determine the effects of preexisting attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in a variety of contexts. The meta-analysis revealed a moderate to large and robust effect by which people chose more agreeable than disagreeable information, particularly for political and religious attitudes. Evidence regarding selective exposure is quite extensive. Therefore, we concentrate on social and political attitudes, presenting evidence about intergroup and political attitudes in turn.

Intergroup Attitudes

Intergroup attitudes and exposure to prejudice in informal and formal communication with others are intimately connected. The United States has seen a considerable shift in terms of legal equality for minority groups, and open bigotry against them has subsided. However, economic, educational, and health inequalities persist (Melican & Dixon, 2008). To begin, White Americans generally do not support public policies that would close racial gaps and continue

to endorse racial stereotypes and negative intergroup attitudes (Entman & Rojecki, 2001; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993). These racial stereotypes include Whites' perception that Black people have a poor work ethic, low self-reliance, inadequate impulse control, and low levels of obedience to authority (Melican & Dixon, 2008).

Prejudice against out-groups is not due solely to race but also to immigrant status. Anti-immigrant attitudes are typically aimed at groups with high visibility as a result of dense settlements in major cities, distinct patterns of dress and religious/cultural patterns, and/or darker skin tone (Timberlake & Williams, 2012). According to Timberlake and Williams (2012), stereotyping and perceptions that immigrants pose a threat are partially derived from framing by news media. Also, political rhetoric and image-making activities of anti-immigration groups that target Mexican and other Latin American immigrants as a “problem” have effectively influenced popular opinion (Timberlake & Williams, 2012). Media focus on immigration is higher in states on the US–Mexican border, and this heightened media coverage leads residents in border states to label immigration as a “highly important” issue (Dunaway et al., 2010).

Not surprisingly, the contents of American media reflect prejudices and stereotypes in the American population (Monk-Turner et al., 2010). More or less subtle portrayals of ethnic and racial minorities and relevant policies often reinforce prejudice and stereotypes (Sears et al., 2000). Media coverage and population prejudice are an iterative process. The media increase prejudice in the population, and then members of that population seek media that confirm their media-based attitudes (Melican & Dixon, 2008).

Race has a nuanced effect on selective media exposure. Although White audiences do not necessarily avoid movies with largely Black casts, those who identify as “color-blind” are more interested in watching movies with White casts (Weaver, 2011). Because group membership and race play critical roles in a person's self-concept, social identity theory can explain these patterns of exposure (Archer et al., 2021; Hewstone et al., 1991; Tajfel, 1978; Weaver, 2011). First, because people strive to maintain a positive self-concept (Tajfel, 1978), they seek out media that paint their in-group in a positive light (Harwood, 1997; Mastro, 2003). Second, because people prefer their own groups and discriminate against out-groups, individuals are drawn to media that elevate the position of their in-group (Weaver, 2011).

Audiences can be divided into one group that intentionally seeks media because they support their discriminatory views and another that intentionally avoids the same media because they perpetuate racial and ethnic prejudices. Accordingly, the racial/ethnic group to which the audience belongs is an

important predictor of media viewing (Archer et al., 2021; Rubin, 1982, 2002). Specifically, ethnic identity predicts both selection and avoidance of television for ethnic identity reasons (Abrams & Giles, 2009). Some of these choices, however, can be detrimental when the media present negative views about their social group. For example, Latinx and Black adults who are exposed to negative or oversexualized depictions of their racial group have less positive feelings toward their group (Tukachinsky et al., 2017).

Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory has been used to suggest that people are drawn to media featuring their in-group because they seek similar behavioral models, rather than due to the need to elevate their in-group (see also Knobloch et al., 2005). Accordingly, audiences are motivated to seek contents featuring people of their same race because those models are useful for intergroup comparisons (Trepte, 2006; Weaver, 2011). Also, people are driven to create a positive social identity and elevate their in-groups. As such, they are partial to content that both references their in-group and depicts their in-group in a positive light (Trepte, 2006). Thus, the race of the actors impacts media choices among White audience members. The higher the percentage of Black actors in a film, the less likely White audiences are to be interested in watching the movie (Weaver, 2011).

Political Attitudes

Much of the work regarding political attitudes, selective exposure, and political polarization comes from survey research that assesses media exposure, political partisanship, and attitude polarization. Using methods designed to reduce self-report bias, survey research supports the idea that exposure to congenial political information increases political polarization. In a study of Israeli elections conducted by Tsfaty and Chotiner (2016), three measures of media exposure, including direct report of the political leaning of the content participants encountered, showed that attitudes influenced exposure decisions. Specifically, exposure to agreeable media created the perception that more Israelis supported building new settlements in the West Bank among conservatives but did the opposite among liberals. That is, people chose attitude-consistent media and then derived social norms based on the contents of that media, which further increased the polarization of Israelis' attitudes.

Longitudinal approaches remain the strongest method when it comes to surveys because they can examine both the influence of ideology on media choices and the reciprocal influence of media on ideology. A panel study of Swedish elections conducted by Dahlgren et al. (2019) found reciprocal associations between media choices and ideology. The effect of attitudes on

selection of ideologically consistent materials was more prevalent for online media than for other media. However, the degree of selective exposure was very low. Generally, people receive a variety of media, both in line with and opposite to their points of view.

One question is whether Democrats and Republicans show similar levels of selective exposure. Using an induced compliance paradigm, Vraga (2015) asked a sample of college students to write a counter-attitudinal essay and to then report their intentions to seek information about their own (vs. other) party and to discuss issues with people from their own (vs. other) party. Writing a counter-attitudinal essay should produce dissonance, but this hypothesis received no support. More generally, Republicans who wrote a counter-attitudinal essay selected more agreeable political information, suggesting that they were prone to selectively approach pro-attitudinal information. Democrats did not show this bias.

Selective exposure to partisan information does not always occur. For example, using an experimental design, Johnson et al. (2020) found selective exposure for only one issue. The phenomenon is also moderated by the probability that one's political party will win or lose. For example, in one experiment, participants made choices of articles that were presented in either print or online form (Pearson & Knobloch-Westerwick, 2019). Liberals, who were expected to win the election, chose liberal-leaning articles but only when the information appeared online rather than in print. Furthermore, conservatives, who were expected to lose the election, showed no bias in information exposure for either the online or print presentation.

Wojcieszak (2021) examined exposure to political information as a function of the ideological slant of the information, as well as the race and expertise of the source. Supporting the selective exposure notion, participants chose to read congenial information. They also chose to read information ostensibly coming from experts on gun control. However, race of the source was inconsequential. In fact, participants were as likely to seek information from same-race sources as they were to seek information from other-race sources.

Selective Judgment

Selective judgment occurs when messages aligned with people's beliefs and attitudes are easily accepted and contradictory messages are scrutinized and critiqued (Lord et al., 1979; Stroud, 2017). For example, people who believe that climate change is due to humans read congenial research less critically than they do research arguing that climate change is due to natural climatic

patterns (Stroud, 2017). That is, judgments about information are biased by perceivers' attitudes (Lord et al., 1979). In fact, people often dismiss empirical evidence if it contradicts their previously held attitudes but readily accept evidence of the same quality if it supports their worldviews (Dursun & Tumer Kabadayi, 2013; Lord et al., 1979; Owenby, 2014).

An excellent illustration of the impact of prior beliefs and attitudes on intergroup judgments is the impact of the activation and application of a stereotype, which comprises the knowledge about a social group a person has stored in memory (Dijksterhuis et al., 2000; Krieglmeier & Sherman, 2012; Kunda & Spencer, 2003). Stereotyping members of a social group can have extremely harmful effects, especially when the group is oppressed. For instance, evidence abounds that young Black men are stereotyped as aggressive, violent, dangerous, and likely to commit crimes (Trawalter et al., 2008), leading to implicit and explicit associations with threat (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Payne, 2001). Due to being stereotyped as threatening, Black men have a higher likelihood of being wrongfully shot when holding regular objects than when holding weapons (Correll et al., 2006) and are often misperceived and misremembered as the aggressor in an interaction (Eberhardt et al., 2004; Essien et al., 2017).

One curious case of congenial judgment occurs when people hold conspiracy theories. People justify these beliefs due to the processes of (a) historic similarity, (b) psychological similarity (i.e., the audience's ability to understand the motives of others), and (c) normative plausibility (i.e., the audience's knowledge that others hold these beliefs) (Albarracín et al., 2022). According to Albarracín and colleagues (2022), people who believe that history has many examples of people falsifying documents to achieve power (i.e., historical plausibility) are more likely to also believe that Obama faked his birth certificate to become president. People who believe that people like them think that people fake documents to achieve power (i.e., normative plausibility) are also more likely to endorse the belief in Obama's cover-up. In fact, this form of normative plausibility correlated with conspiracy beliefs more strongly than it did with partisan but accurate beliefs, such as the belief that Obama's inaction caused the Syrian crisis or that the Tuskegee study occurred. Therefore, norms, inferred from discussions with others, are a key source of segregated information that maintains and even strengthens people's attitudes.

Another example of congenial judgment is unfalsifiability, the defining feature of conspiracy theories. Albarracín et al. (2022) measured perceived falsifiability by asking people to report whether, for example, any information could be used to determine if a belief was true or false. In the case of conspiracy beliefs, unfalsifiability was either uncorrelated or positively correlated

with stronger endorsement of the beliefs. In contrast, beliefs in accurate events such the existence of the Tuskegee study were positively correlated with the possibility of falsifying the belief.

Selective Sharing

While biases in exposure and judgment can perpetuate the attitudes of an individual, selective information-sharing and activism can also promote attitude homogeneity within a group (see Figure 3.1). Of course, people who share an article on social media must first receive that article. For this reason, Weeks et al. (2017) studied incidental exposure, intentional exposure, and selective sharing in a longitudinal study. They found that incidental exposure drives partisans to seek more partisan information and to then share it with others. Thus, exposure and sharing are clearly related to each other.

Experimental research has also been able to compare patterns of information exposure with patterns of information-sharing. A study conducted in Norway (Johannesson & Knudsen, 2021) showed that, although participants were unbiased in their choices of reading materials, sharing was determined by their attitudes. The probability of sharing agreeable materials was 13% higher than the probability of reading the same material. Clearly then, selective sharing can be a vehicle to ensure agreement within one's social network.

The likelihood of both reading and sharing information was also higher when the source of the information was knowledgeable but was unaffected by the source's gender, religion, or popularity on social media (Johannesson & Knudsen, 2021). With respect to partisanship, participants are more likely to read news with which they agree and from sources within their own political party. For sharing, the political party of the source matters considerably but only when people have no knowledge of the direction of the advocacy. When the partisan position of the materials is known, it is the position of the news story, and not the source, that matters.

It is, however, reassuring that the patterns of political information-sharing do not always produce homogeneity. A study by Liang (2018) found that political messages are likely to travel across the ideological spectrum. That is, political messages can simply become viral and are widely shared regardless of ideology instead of being broadcasted in a top-down fashion. This diversity is likely to reduce the probability that networks will encounter congenial information just by virtue of homophily, which is the tendency to affiliate with like-minded others.

Closing Note

A combination of sociological and psychological processes appears to reinforce attitudes and maintain social and political polarization. For starters, social segregation creates intergroup boundaries across socioeconomic status, education, and race or ethnicity. The effects of segregation are then maintained through exposure to different media enclaves that support different worldviews in accordance with political ideology. The greater the segregation among groups, the greater the attitudinal polarization one observes; but these segregated attitudes are also maintained through the psychological processes of selective exposure, selective judgment, and selective dissemination of information.

One contribution of this chapter has been to integrate sociological and psychological determinants. This fruitful integration, however, should continue. For example, the links between physical segregation and the tendency to engage in selective information-processing has not been investigated. However, physical segregation may limit our capacity to reconcile conflicting information about the world, and this limitation may preclude some of the socialization benefits of education. Also, demographic variables interact to create intersectionality (Acker, 2006; Cole, 2009; McCall, 2005). In some cases, those intersectional identities dominate over and above race and ethnicity. For example, the ideological pathway for White gay men from religiously conservative families is not a straight line, and the impact of their different identities and the dynamic activation of these identities are yet to be ascertained.

References

- Abrams, J. R., & Giles, H. (2009). Hispanic television activity: Is it related to vitality perceptions? *Communication Research Reports*, 26(3), 247–252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08824090903074456>
- Acker, J. (2006). Inequality regimes: Gender, class, and race in organizations. *Gender and Society*, 20(4), 441–464. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243206289499>
- Albarracín, D. (2002). Cognition in persuasion: An analysis of information processing in response to persuasive communications. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 34, 61–130.
- Albarracín, D. (2021). *Action and inaction in a social world: Predicting and changing attitudes and behaviors*. Cambridge University Press.
- Albarracín, D., Albarracín, J., Chan, M.-p. S., & Jamieson, K. H. (2022). *Creating conspiracy beliefs: How our thoughts are shaped*. Cambridge University Press.
- Albarracín, D., & Shavitt, S. (2018). Attitudes and attitude change. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 69, 299–327. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-122216-011911>

- Albarracín, D., & Vargas, P. (2010). Attitudes and persuasion: From biology to social responses to persuasive intent. In S. T. Fiske, D. T. Gilbert, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 394–427). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470561119.socpsy001011>
- Archer, J., Rackley, K. R., Broyles Sookram, S., Nguyen, H., & Awad, G. H. (2021). Psychological predictors for watching television: The role of racial representation. *Psychological Reports*, 125(5), 2571–2590. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003329412111025266>
- Argyle, M. (1994). *The psychology of social class*. Psychology Press.
- Baldassarri, D., & Bearman, P. (2007). Dynamics of political polarization. *American Sociological Review*, 72(5), 784–811. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240707200507>
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. *Media Psychology*, 3(3), 265–299. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0303_03
- Barreto, M. A., & Pedraza, F. I. (2009). The renewal and persistence of group identification in American politics. *Electoral Studies*, 28(4), 595–605. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ELECTS.TUD.2009.05.017>
- Benkler, Y., Faris, R., & Roberts, H. (2018). *Network propaganda: Manipulation, disinformation, and radicalization in American politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Chaiken, S. R. (1980). Heuristic versus systematic information processing and the use of source versus message cues in persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 39(5), 752–766. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.39.5.752>
- Chong, D., & Rogers, R. (2005). Racial solidarity and political participation. *Political Behavior*, 27(4), 347–374. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S11109-005-5880-5>
- Cole, E. R. (2009). Intersectionality and research in psychology. *American Psychologist*, 64(3), 170–180. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014564>
- Correll, J., Urland, G. R., & Ito, T. A. (2006). Event-related potentials and the decision to shoot: The role of threat perception and cognitive control. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 42(1), 120–128. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JESP.2005.02.006>
- Cottrell, C. A., & Neuberg, S. L. (2005). Different emotional reactions to different groups: A sociofunctional threat-based approach to “prejudice.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88(5), 770–789. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.88.5.770>
- Dahlgren, P. M., Shehata, A., & Stromback, J. (2019). Reinforcing spirals at work? Mutual influences between selective news exposure and ideological leaning. *European Journal of Communication*, 34(2), 159–174. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323119830056>
- De Keersmaecker, J., Dunning, D., Pennycook, G., Rand, D. G., Sanchez, C., Unkelbach, C., & Roets, A. (2020). Investigating the robustness of the illusory truth effect across individual differences in cognitive ability, need for cognitive closure, and cognitive style. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 46(2), 204–215. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167219853844>
- De la Garza, R. O., DeSipio, L., & Leal, D. L. (Eds.). (2010). *Beyond the barrio: Latinos in the 2004 elections*. University of Notre Dame Press.
- Dijksterhuis, A., Aarts, H., Bargh, J. A., & van Knippenberg, A. (2000). On the relation between associative strength and automatic behavior. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 36(5), 531–544. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jesp.2000.1427>
- DiMaggio, P., Evans, J., & Bryson, B. (1996). Have Americans’ social attitudes become more polarized? *American Journal of Sociology*, 102(3), 690–755.
- Dunaway, J., Branton, R. P., & Abrajano, M. A. (2010). Agenda setting, public opinion, and the issue of immigration reform. *Social Science Quarterly*, 91(2), 359–378. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1540-6237.2010.00697.X>
- Dunn, K. (2011). Left–right identification and education in Europe: A contingent relationship. *Comparative European Politics*, 9(3), 292–316. <https://doi.org/10.1057/cep.2010.17>
- Dursun, İ., & Tümer Kabadayi, E. (2013). Resistance to persuasion in an anti-consumption context: Biased assimilation of positive product information. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 12(2), 93–101. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.1422>

- Eady, G., Nagler, J., Guess, A., Zilinsky, J., & Tucker, J. A. (2019). How many people live in political bubbles on social media? Evidence from linked survey and Twitter data. *Sage Open*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019832705>
- Eberhardt, J. L., Purdie, V. J., Goff, P. A., & Davies, P. G. (2004). Seeing Black: Race, crime, and visual processing. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87(6), 876–893. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.87.6.876>
- Entman, R. M., & Rojecki, A. (2000). The Black image in the White mind: Media and race in America [Book Review]. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77(4), 921.
- Essien, I., Stelter, M., Kalbe, F., Koehler, A., Mangels, J., & Meli, S. (2017). The shooter bias: Replicating the classic effect and introducing a novel paradigm. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 70, 41–47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2016.12.009>
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7(2), 117–140. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872675400700202>
- Gelman, A., Shor, B., Bafumi, J., & Park, D. (2005, November). *Rich state, poor state, red state, blue state: What's the matter with Connecticut?* SSRN. <https://doi.org/10.2139/SSRN.1010426>
- Granovetter, M. S. (1983). The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. *Sociological Theory*, 1, 201–233. <https://doi.org/10.2307/202051>
- Hart, W., Albarracn, D., Eagly, A. H., Brechan, I., Lindberg, M. J., & Merrill, L. (2009). Feeling validated versus being correct: A meta-analysis of selective exposure to information. *Psychological Bulletin*, 135(4), 555–588. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015701>
- Harwood, J. (1997). Viewing age: Lifespan identity and television viewing choices. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 41(2), 203–213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838159709364401>
- Hasher, L., Goldstein, D., & Toppino, T. (1977). Frequency and the conference of referential validity. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 16(1), 107–112. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-5371\(77\)80012-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-5371(77)80012-1)
- Hewstone, M., Hantzi, A., & Johnston, L. (1991). Social categorization and person memory: The pervasiveness of race as an organizing principle. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 21(6), 517–528. <https://doi.org/10.1002/EJSP.2420210606>
- Jacoby, W. G. (2006). Value choices and American public opinion. *American Journal of Political Science*, 50(3), 706–723. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00211.x>
- Johannesson, M. P., & Knudsen, E. (2021). Disentangling the influence of recommender attributes and news-story attributes: A conjoint experiment on exposure and sharing decisions on social networking sites. *Digital Journalism*, 9(8), 1141–1161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2020.1805780>
- Johnson, B. K., Neo, R. L., Heijnen, M. E. M., Smits, L., & van Veen, C. (2020). Issues, involvement, and influence: Effects of selective exposure and sharing on polarization and participation. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 104, Article 106155. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.09.031>
- Jurkowitz, M., Mitchell, A., Shearer, E., & Walker, M. (2020, January 24). *Americans are divided by party in the sources they turn to for political news*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.journalism.org/2020/01/24/americans-are-divided-by-party-in-the-sources-they-turn-to-for-political-news/>
- Kane, J. (2020, August 7). *The political polarization of abortion*. The Politics Doctor. <http://thepoliticsdr.com/2020/08/08/the-political-polarization-of-abortion/>
- Kinder, D. R., & Sanders, L. M. (1996). *Divided by color: Racial politics and democratic ideals*. University of Chicago Press.
- Kinder, D. R., & Winter, N. (2001). Exploring the racial divide: Blacks, Whites, and opinion on national policy. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45(2), 439–456. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2669351>

- Kingston, P. W., Hubbard, R., Lapp, B., Schroeder, P., & Wilson, J. (2003). Why education matters. *Sociology of Education*, 76(1), 53–70. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3090261>
- Knobloch, S., Callison, C., Chen, L., Fritzsche, A., & Zillmann, D. (2005). Children's sex-stereotyped self-socialization through selective exposure to entertainment: Cross-cultural experiments in Germany, China, and the United States. *Journal of Communication*, 55(1), 122–138. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2005.tb02662.x>
- Krieglmeyer, R., & Sherman, J. W. (2012). Disentangling stereotype activation and stereotype application in the stereotype misperception task. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 103(2), 205–224. <https://doi.org/10.1037/A0028764>
- Kunda, Z., & Spencer, S. J. (2003). When do stereotypes come to mind and when do they color judgment? A goal-based theoretical framework for stereotype activation and application. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(4), 522–544. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.4.522>
- Lewis-Beck, M. S., Norpoth, H., Jacoby, W. G., & Weisberg, H. F. (2008). *The American voter revisited*. University of Michigan Press. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.92266>
- Liang, H. (2018). Broadcast versus viral spreading: The structure of diffusion cascades and selective sharing on social media. *Journal of Communication*, 68(3), 525–546. <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqy006>
- Lord, C. G., Ross, L., & Lepper, M. R. (1979). Biased assimilation and attitude polarization: The effects of prior theories on subsequently considered evidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37(11), 2098–2109. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.37.11.2098>
- Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1989). Hypersegregation in U.S. metropolitan areas: Black and Hispanic segregation along five dimensions. *Demography*, 26(3), 373–391. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2061599>
- Mastro, D. E. (2003). A social identity approach to understanding the impact of television messages. *Communication Monographs*, 70(2), 98–113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0363775032000133764>
- McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs*, 30(3), 1771–1800. <https://doi.org/10.1086/426800>
- Melican, D. B., & Dixon, T. L. (2008). News on the net: Credibility, selective exposure, and racial prejudice. *Communication Research*, 35(2), 151–168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650207313157>
- Monk-Turner, E., Heiserman, M., Johnson, C., Cotton, V., & Jackson, M. (2010). The portrayal of racial minorities on prime time television: A replication of the Mastro and Greenberg study a decade later. *Studies in Popular Culture*, 32(2), 101–114.
- Morgan, M., & Shanahan, J. (1997). Two decades of cultivation research: An appraisal and meta-analysis. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 20(1), 1–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.1997.11678937>
- Owenby, S. R. (2014). *Investigating the impact of general action and inaction goals on attitude polarization* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Montana State University-Bozeman, College of Letters & Science.
- Payne, B. K. (2001). Prejudice and perception: The role of automatic and controlled processes in misperceiving a weapon. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81(2), 181–192. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.81.2.181>
- Pearson, G. D. H., & Knobloch-Westerwick, S. (2019). Is the confirmation bias bubble larger online? Pre-election confirmation bias in selective exposure to online versus print political information. *Mass Communication and Society*, 22(4), 466–486. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2019.1599956>
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 19, 123–205. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(08\)60214-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60214-2)

- Phelan, J., Link, B. G., Stueve, A., & Moore, R. E. (1995). Education, social liberalism, and economic conservatism: Attitudes toward homeless people. *American Sociological Review*, 60(1), 126–140. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2096349>
- Prentice, D. A., & Miller, D. T. (1993). Pluralistic ignorance and alcohol use on campus. Some consequences of misperceiving the social norm. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64(2), 243–256. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.64.2.243>
- Rubin, A. M. (1982). Television uses and gratifications: The interactions of viewing patterns and motivations. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 27(1), 37–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838158309386471>
- Rubin, A. M. (2002). The uses-and-gratifications perspective of media effects. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (2nd ed., pp. 525–548). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Schuldt, J. P., & Pearson, A. R. (2016). The role of race and ethnicity in climate change polarization: Evidence from a U.S. national survey experiment. *Climatic Change*, 136(3), 495–505. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S10584-016-1631-3>
- Sears, D. O., & Freedman, J. L. (1967). Selective exposure to information: A critical review. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 31(2), 194–213. <https://doi.org/10.1086/267513>
- Sears, D. O., Sidanius, J., & Bobo, L. (2000). *Racialized politics: The debate about racism in America*. University of Chicago Press.
- Shore, J., Baek, J., & Dellarocas, C. (2018). Twitter is not the echo chamber we think it is. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 60(1), 1–5.
- Sniderman, P. M., & Piazza, T. L. (1993). *The scar of race*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674043848>
- Stroud, N. J. (2017). Understanding and overcoming selective exposure and judgment when communicating about science. In K. H. Jamieson, D. M. Kahan, D. A. Scheufele (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of the science of science communication* (pp. 376–387). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190497620.013.41>
- Tajfel, H. E. (1978). *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*. Academic Press.
- Timberlake, J. M., & Williams, R. H. (2012). Stereotypes of U.S. immigrants from four global regions. *Social Science Quarterly*, 93(4), 867–890. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1540-6237.2012.00860.X>
- Trawalter, S., Todd, A. R., Baird, A. A., & Richeson, J. A. (2008). Attending to threat: Race-based patterns of selective attention. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 44(5), 1322–1327. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JESP.2008.03.006>
- Trepte, S. (2006). Social identity theory. In J. Bryant & P. Vorderer (Eds.), *Psychology of entertainment* (pp. 255–271). Routledge.
- Tsfati, Y., & Chotiner, A. (2016). Testing the selective exposure–polarization hypothesis in Israel using three indicators of ideological news exposure and testing for mediating mechanisms. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 28(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edv001>
- Tukachinsky, R., Mastro, D., & Yarchi, M. (2017). The effect of prime time television ethnic/racial stereotypes on Latino and Black Americans: A longitudinal national level study. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 61(3), 538–556. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2017.1344669>
- Vraga, E. K. (2015). How party affiliation conditions the experience of dissonance and explains polarization and selective exposure. *Social Science Quarterly*, 96(2), 487–502. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12138>
- Weaver, A. J. (2011). The role of actors' race in White audiences' selective exposure to movies. *Journal of Communication*, 61(2), 369–385. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1460-2466.2011.01544.X>

- Weeks, B. E., Lane, D. S., Kim, D. H., Lee, S. S., & Kwak, N. (2017). Incidental exposure, selective exposure, and political information sharing: Integrating online exposure patterns and expression on social media. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 22(6), 363–379. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12199>
- Wojcieszak, M. (2021). What predicts selective exposure online: Testing political attitudes, credibility, and social identity. *Communication Research*, 48(5), 687–716. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650219844868>
- Wolfinger, R. E. (1965). The development and persistence of ethnic voting. *American Political Science Review*, 59(4), 896–908. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1953212>
- Wyer, R. S., & Adaval, R. (2004). Pictures, words, and media influence: The interactive effects of verbal and nonverbal information on memory and judgments. In L. Shrum (Ed.), *The psychology of entertainment media: Blurring the lines between entertainment and persuasion* (pp. 137–159). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Wyer, R. S., Jr., & Shrum, L. J. (2015). The role of comprehension processes in communication and persuasion. *Media Psychology*, 18(2), 163–195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2014.912584>