

**Empowerment's Influence on the Use of Shortcuts as Opinions are Formed**

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### **Abstract**

Empowerment can influence many parts of a person's psychology, including the use of in/out group short-cuts when forming an opinion. Looking at this relationship when it comes to political opinions and political parties, subjects were randomly assigned to be given one of three versions of a description of a farm subsidy policy where one version contained a cue suggesting Democrats support & Republicans oppose the policy, another version contained a cue suggesting Republicans support & Democrats oppose the policy, and the third version did not indicate which political party supports or opposes the policy. They then had to rate their own support for that policy. It was found that higher levels of empowerment are generally related to higher use of such short-cuts, meaning that subjects would indicate more support if they were assigned to the condition that indicated that the political party they self-identify with were said to support the policy and indicated less support for the policy if they were assigned to the condition that indicated that the political party they self-identify with were said to oppose the policy. These results were inconsistent with the original hypotheses I developed for this study. In addition to this counter-intuitive finding, it was found that subjects who feel like they are less influenced by their political leaders' opinions are actually more influenced by the part-support cue given during the experiment.

## Introduction

Throughout every day, the brain is constantly being bombarded with more information than you can consciously process. Therefore, it makes sense that the brain has come up with short-cuts for processing information, such as tuning out information that happens continuously. These short-cuts can be used to process information and to aid in opinion formation and decision making. Examples of these short-cuts include the use of generalizations, which will be discussed later. In order to form an opinion on something, one would hope to have all of the information about the topic before forming the opinion. However, human beings form too many opinions in a day to actually gather all of the necessary information, so the brain then uses short-cuts to aid in this task.

An excellent example of the use of opinion-formation short-cuts for routine activities is when individuals evaluate products while shopping. Kirchler and colleagues (2010) demonstrated the use of the short-cut where consumers assume that higher prices indicate better product quality. Using questionnaires to measure participants' estimations of the quality and price of various products (e.g. food & beverage items and computers), it was found that a participants' estimation of a product's price was positively correlated with their estimation of the product's quality.

A similar phenomenon can be seen when one looks at how we, as humans, often use social cues to help up form opinions. This concept was studied by Kleef and colleagues (2015), who investigated whether the emotional facial expression of an individual providing persuasive information affected the attitudes and opinions about that information of individuals receiving it. These researchers did several experiments, one of which had participants read two articles about kite surfing. The first provided background information about the possibility of this becoming

part of the Olympics. All of the participants were then shown a phone number, though only some of them were instructed that they would later be asked to recall it. Those were the high cognitive load group while those who were not told about recalling the phone number were in the low cognitive load group. All of the participants then read another article about kite surfing with similar information, though this time framed as part of an interview with a sports journalist. Alongside the article, participants were randomly assigned to view a photograph of the journalist that either displayed a happy or sad facial expression. The participants had to rate their opinions of kite surfing being added as an Olympic event on both a positive scale and a negative scale. Relative to the group that were assigned to view the photograph displaying a sad facial expression, participants in the group that viewed the photograph displaying a happy expression reported more positive attitudes and less negative attitudes toward kite surfing being added (though, this was only observed in the high cognitive load group). This shows that individuals use facial expressions as a social cue to guide opinion formation, especially in cases when cognitive resources are limited due to concurrent information processing.

An additional way that opinions are influenced by social factors include using in-group vs out-group categorizations as a short-cut when forming opinions, as discussed by Han and Federico (2018). This short-cut is essentially identifying whether the information being presented is framed in a way that benefits a group that one considers themselves to be a part of. Framing a news story about an egg-freezing policy in terms of a conflict existing across gender-lines (e.g. the news article expresses female sources supporting the policy and male sources opposing it) led female subjects to judge that females, in general, are in more agreement with it and led male subjects to judge that males, in general, are in less agreement with it. Similarly, framing the same story about egg-freezing in terms of a conflict across political-lines (e.g. the news article

expresses Democrat support and Republican opposition toward the policy) led Democrat subjects to judge that Democrats, in general, are in more agreement with the policy and Republican subjects to judge that Republicans, in general, are in less agreement with the policy.

In addition to establishing the types of short-cuts individuals use when developing opinions and attitudes, prior research has further demonstrated the existence of individual differences in the use of such short-cuts. For instance, the strength of the effect of “in-group” versus “out-group” framing on opinion formation is influenced by the type of group an individual most closely identifies with (Han & Federico, 2018). In relation to the study described in the prior paragraph, it was found that gender-conflict framed-news had a greater impact on the strength of the opinion formed than political-conflict framed-news. Participants also responded to questions assessing how favorable they found the following groups to be: Democrats, Republicans, men and women. Based on the results, the researchers suggested that the increase in strength of opinion (higher or lower ratings of agreement) were caused by the participant identifying more strongly with their gender group than their political group, essentially leading to a stronger attachment to the “in-group” for gender than for political belief.

Another individual difference that may influence the use of short-cuts when forming opinions and attitudes could be an individual's sense of empowerment. For the purpose of the study I am proposing to conduct, a sense of empowerment is defined as one's belief in their own abilities and competence, their autonomy, and their ability to take action & enact change within their lives/community.

Forming an opinion is guided by gathering new, relevant information in addition to weighing relevant opinions that were already held. In order to have an opinion on a political policy or someone running for office, one has to have some degree of awareness of the political

information relevant to the formation of the opinion. However, individual differences exist with respect to such awareness, as some individuals are more aware/informed about facts and perspectives relevant to the opinion than others. Bleck and Michelitch (2018) observed how socioeconomic empowerment, defined as having more household agency along with being able to move outside of the village with more freedom, is positively correlated with political awareness and engagement after studying and surveying a population of women in a village in rural Mali. The researchers suggested that a greater sense of this form of empowerment could lead to engaging in a greater amount of discussion, decision making, and participating in households that are pro-women. This may explain the relationship between empowerment and political awareness. Socioeconomic empowerment is essentially the beginning steps to a sense of the type of empowerment defined for my proposed study. The socioeconomic empowerment was shown to be an important factor for being aware of political occurrences, which then suggests that further empowerment, such as was defined for the study I am proposing, would aid in being aware and making informed opinions about policies instead of relying on group-based short-cuts.

A sense of empowerment can be similar to the confidence one feels in their ability to do something and can also impact one's use of others when forming an opinion and making decisions. Fadda and colleagues (2015) conducted semi-structured interviews in order to evaluate parents' knowledge and beliefs about a measles vaccine, their self-perceived degree of psychological empowerment, their confidence in their ability to wisely decide whether or not to vaccinate their child, and their perception of the risks/benefits associated with the vaccine. It was found that parents who weren't confident in their ability to make such a decision (analogous to having a weak sense empowerment) would be more likely to defer to the expert's decision (e.g. a pediatrician). In another study (Hall et al., 2015), it was found that individuals who judge

themselves to be more self-reliant when making medical decisions (analogous to having a strong sense of empowerment) use online sources to search for medical information more frequently than individuals who judged themselves to be more reliant on doctors when making such decisions (analogous to having a weak sense of empowerment). Thus, this suggests that individuals with a stronger sense of empowerment rely more on gathering/evaluating facts themselves and less on the opinions of others when forming their own opinion, and thus, may be less likely to use the types of opinion-formation short-cuts described earlier in the proposal. In contrast, individuals with a weaker sense of empowerment rely less on gathering/evaluating facts themselves and more on the opinions of others when forming their own opinions, and thus, may be more likely to use relevant opinion-formation short-cuts.

The study I am proposing would look at the impact of individual differences in a person's sense of empowerment on the short-cuts used when developing opinions relevant to a political policy. Their opinions will be based on how much they agree or disagree with the policy described in a news article that details reasons to support and oppose it. The article will be manipulated so that it frames the policy as being supported by lawmakers that said to be either Democrats, Republicans or non-identified with respect to their political party affiliation.

A study conducted by Malka and Lelkes (2010) showed evidence that, regardless of which political ideology that one identifies with (conservative or liberal), people are more likely to support a policy when it appears to be supported by individuals who share their political ideology. This experiment utilized an article that described a farm subsidy policy and reasons why different lawmakers support and oppose it. The researchers manipulated this article to create three different versions that subjects were randomly assigned to read just one of. One version explained that conservatives supported & liberals opposed the policy, another version expressed

that liberals supported and conservatives opposed it, and the control version did not indicate the adopted political ideology of individuals said to support and oppose it. Without an indication of either liberals or conservatives supporting the policy, there was no difference in support of the policy between the liberal and conservative participants. However, when it was indicated that liberals supported the policy, the liberal participants more strongly supported the policy than conservatives. When it was indicated that conservatives supported the policy, conservative participants supported the policy more strongly than liberals. These results provide another demonstration that individuals use political-based “in-group” vs “out-group” short-cuts when forming political policy opinions.

For the study I am proposing to conduct, participants will be randomly assigned to be exposed to one of the three manipulated versions of the article about farm subsidies that were used in Malka and Lelkes (2010). Further, we will measure participants' political ideology/affiliations and sense of empowerment in order to determine if individual differences in empowerment affect the use of political based “in-group” vs. “out-group” short-cuts when forming an opinion about the policy described in the article. I hypothesize that a lower sense of empowerment would be related to more short-cut usages and therefore more opinion variation between the two ideological groups. Since the prior research discussed has shown indications those with a stronger sense of empowerment are more politically aware, this prediction is based on the idea that those with a stronger sense of empowerment would focus more on the facts and perspectives relevant to the policy, and less on the political-cues indicating which ideological group supports/opposes the policy, when developing their opinion to either support or oppose the policy. It is also based on the idea that those with a weaker sense of empowerment would be



more likely to utilize the political-based “in-group” vs “out-group” short-cut to form their opinion.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

There was a total of 405 people who participated in this study, 300 of which took the MTURK version and 105 took the survey through Stockton University's SONA system. Those who participated through Stockton's system were compensated using class credits, while the MTURK participants were compensated with \$3.00 for their time. Of those 405 participants, the average age was 32.32 years, with a standard deviation of 10.50 years. 47.7% of them were female, the remaining 51.6% being male. The education of the participants was broken up as follows: 0.7% did not graduate high school, 19.3% completed high school, 22% attended some college, 32.8% earned a college degree, 2% attended some graduate school, 22% had a graduate degree, and 1.2% attended a trade school. The racial breakdown of the participants was as follows: 15.1% were Black, 2.7% were Native American, 69.1% were White, 6.4% were Asian, 4.9% were Hispanic, and the remaining 1.7% identified as other. 59.8% of the participants described themselves as Democratic, 27.7% described themselves as Republicans, and the remaining 12.6% identified themselves as Independents.

### *Materials*

*Empowerment.* A participant's sense of empowerment is being defined as their belief in their own abilities and competence, their autonomy, and their ability to take action and enact change within their lives/community. It will be measured using the empowerment scale

developed by Rogers and colleagues (1997) which contains five factors: self-efficacy—self-esteem, power-powerlessness, community activism, righteous anger, and optimism-control over the future. This scale contains 28 statements which are rated by participants on a four-point Likert scale. These are averaged for each subscale, resulting in five separate scores. The breakdown of each sub-factor can be found in Appendix B.

*Policy Description.* Participants will be instructed to read one of three versions of the farm subsidy policy description that was used by Malka and Lelkes (2010). One version will show Democrats as being supportive, the second version will show Republicans being supportive, and the third control article will not have any party mentioned as being supportive or against the policy. All three versions of the article can be found in Appendix A. Participants will then be asked for their opinion on the policy presented with the question “Do you support or oppose the U.S. government policy of giving money to American farmers?” Participants answered using a 7-point scale ranging from strongly support to strongly oppose.

*Miscellaneous Questions.* These questions will assess how often the participant follows the news using a 5-point scale ranging from “less than once a week” to “multiple times per day”. Additionally, it will ask the participant “How much do you believe your opinion is influenced by the opinions of political leaders in the Democrat and Republican party.” Answers will be given using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 being not at all and 5 being extremely influenced. Using another 5-point Likert scale, participants will be assessed for how important they believe it is to follow the news. Participants will also be asked to rate “How much prior awareness did you have about the government providing farm subsidies,” on a 5-point scale. In addition to the rating of their prior knowledge, they will be asked to describe the prior knowledge of government provided farm subsidies in an open-ended question. Participants will also be asked

to identify which political ideology they belong to, which will also be ranked using a seven point Likert scale.

### *Procedure*

This experiment will be conducted as an online survey, where participants will begin by being randomly assigned into one of three groups. Each group will read a version of the policy description. The first group will read a version that shows Democrats as supporting the policy described. The second group will read a version that shows Republicans as being supportive. The third group will be a control group and will read a version that does not indicate either group as supportive against the policy. Once that is read, all of the participants will go through the questionnaires in the same order. It will begin with the question about their opinion on the policy presented to them, followed by the empowerment scale, then the political ideology question, and will finish with the remaining miscellaneous questions. Once all of the questions are answered by participants, they will be informed that the policy they had read about had been manipulated to show certain parties as supportive and others as opposing the policy. They will be informed that what they read did not, in reality, reflect what either parties view on farm subsidies. They will also be informed of what the parties actual views on farm subsidies are, which is that Democrats are, generally, against the current versions of farm subsidies, and that Republicans generally support the subsidies.

## Results

### *Analysis for Replicating Malka & Lelkes (2010)*

*Democrats vs. Republicans in Control Condition.* In order to determine if the major effects of Malka & Lelkes (2010) were replicated in the current sample, I performed an analysis comparing Democrat and Republican participants with respect to their support or opposition to the farm subsidy policy when exposed to the control condition. I found that Democrats ( $M = 5.07, sd = 1.47$ ) and Republicans ( $M = 5.53, sd = 1.48$ ) did not significantly differ from each other with respect to the mean value of the farm subsidy support rating,  $t(111) = -1.47, p > .05$ .

*Party-Support Cue vs. Party-Oppose Cue.* For the remaining analyses, a new variable was created that identified if the subject was assigned to the condition in which the party they identified with was said to support the policy (the "In-Party Support Cue Group") or assigned to the condition in which the party they identified with was said to be against the policy (the "Out-Party Support Cue Group"). For the purpose of this, participants who were in the control condition and those who identified as Independent were excluded.

To further assess if the main effects observed by Malka & Lelkes (2010) were replicated, I performed a new analysis which compared the Party-Support Cue Group to the Party-Oppose Cue Group in respect to their support/opposition to the farm subsidy policy. Those who identified with the group who was said to support the farm subsidy policy were significantly more likely to show support for the policy ( $M = 5.29, sd = 1.46$ ) than those who identified with the group which was said to oppose the policy ( $M = 4.69, sd = 1.54$ ),  $t(239) = 3.14, p < .05$ .

### *Analysis for Determining if Measures of Empowerment Impact the Effect of In-Party vs Out-Party Support Cues on support for Farm Subsidy Policy*

*Righteous Anger.* A 2 (In vs Out Party Support Cue Group) x 2(High vs Low on Righteous Anger subscale) ANOVA was used to analyze the effect that the righteous anger subscale and the in/out party support cue group had on the support shown for the farm subsidy policy. In order to compare the high vs low score for the righteous anger subscale, a median split was used with median being 2.75. The main effect of righteous anger on the support shown for the policy was not significant,  $F(1, 236) = 1.90, p > .05$ . There was a significant effect of the in/out party cue on the support that participants showed towards the farm subsidy policy,  $F(1, 236) = 8.77, p < .05$ . Those who identified with the party that was said to support the farm subsidy policy showed more support for the policy ( $M = 5.28, sd = 1.46$ ) than those who identified with the party that was said to oppose the farm subsidy policy ( $M = 4.69, sd = 1.54$ ). There was a non-significant interaction found in this analysis,  $F(1, 236) = .045, p > .05$ . While the interaction was non-significant, there was a trend for subjects with low righteous anger scores to be more affected by the in/out party cue (*mean difference* = .65) than those with high righteous anger scores (*mean difference* = .55).

**Table 1**

*Means and standard deviations of righteous anger subscale*

		Righteous Anger Subscale	
		High	Low
Experimental	In-Party Support Cue	5.08 (1.69)	5.41 (1.28)
Condition	Out-Party Support Cue	4.53 (1.39)	4.76 (1.61)

*Self-Esteem/ Self-Efficacy.* Another 2 (In vs Out Party Support Cue Group) x 2 (High vs Low self-esteem/self-efficacy) ANOVA was used, this time to analyze the effect of the self-esteem/self-efficacy subscale and party cue impact the support that is shown for the farm policy. In order to compare the high self-esteem/self-efficacy vs the low self-esteem/self-efficacy, a median split was used, the median being 3.00. There was a non-significant main effect of self-esteem/self-efficacy on the support shown for the farm subsidy policy,  $F(1, 232) = .87, p > .05$ . The main effect of the in/out party cue was significant,  $F(1, 232) = 10.37, p < .05$ . Those who identified with the party that was said to support the policy showed more support for the policy ( $M = 5.31, sd = 1.48$ ) than those who identified with the party that was said to oppose the policy ( $M = 4.68, sd = 1.54$ ). There was a non-significant interaction found in this analysis,  $F(1, 232) = .44, p > .05$ . Though the interaction was non-significant, it did follow a trend with some of the later analysis, as those with high self-esteem/self-efficacy were more affected by the in/out party support cue (*mean difference* = .77) than those with low self-esteem/self-efficacy (*mean difference* = .45).

**Table 2**

*Means and standard deviations of self-esteem/self-efficacy subscale*

		Self-Esteem/Self-Efficacy Subscale	
		High	Low
Experimental	In-Party Support Cue	5.47 (1.55)	5.15 (1.40)
Condition	Out-Party Support Cue	4.70 (1.60)	4.65 (1.49)

*Optimism/Control Over the Future.* In order to analyze the effects of the in/out party cue and optimism, a 2 (In vs Out Party Support Cue Group) x 2 (High vs Low Optimism/Control Over the Future) ANOVA was used. A median split was again used to compare the high vs low optimism/control for the future groups, the median being 3.00. There was a significant main effect of optimism on the average support shown towards the farm subsidy policy,  $F(1, 234) = 8.19, p < .05$ . Subjects with higher scores of optimism showed more support for the farm subsidy policy ( $M = 5.35, sd = 1.44$ ) than those with lower optimism ( $M = 4.81, sd = 1.55$ ). There was once again a significant effect of the in/out party cue on the support shown towards the farm subsidy policy,  $F(1, 234) = 10.55, p < .05$ . Those who identified with the party that was said to support the policy showed more support for the policy ( $M = 5.31, sd = 1.47$ ) than those who identified with the party that was said to oppose the policy ( $M = 4.70, sd = 1.54$ ). The interaction was non-significant but did follow the trend of those with higher optimism being more affected by the in/out party cue (*mean difference* = .71) than those with lower optimism (*mean difference* = .57),  $F(1, 234) = .144, p > .05$ .

**Table 3**

*Means and standard deviations of optimism/control over the future subscale*

		Optimism/Control over the Future Subscale	
		High	Low
Experimental	In-Party Support Cue	5.72 (1.37)	5.08 (1.48)
Condition	Out-Party Support Cue	5.00 (1.43)	4.51 (1.59)

*Community Activism/ Autonomy.* Another 2 (In vs Out Party Support Cue Group) x 2 (High vs Low Score on Community Activism & Autonomy subscale) ANOVA was used to investigate the impact of the in/out party support cue and community activism/autonomy has on the amount of support that subjects displayed towards the farm subsidy policy. To compare the high vs low groups of community activism/autonomy, a median split was used, the median being 3.37. There was no significant main effect caused by community activism/autonomy,  $F(1, 204) = 1.06, p > .05$ . The main effect of the in/out party support cue was significant,  $F(1, 204) = 8.05, p < .05$ . Those who identified with the party that was said to support the policy showed more support ( $M = 5.28, sd = 1.50$ ) than those who identified with the party that was said to oppose the policy ( $M = 4.72, sd = 1.53$ ). There was also a significant interaction between the amount of community activism/autonomy and the in/out party support cue with respect to their effects on the farm subsidy support rating,  $F(1, 204) = 7.59, p < .05$ . This interaction indicated that those with higher community activism/autonomy ratings were significantly more affected by the in/out party cues (*mean difference* = 1.16) than those with lower community activism/autonomy ratings (*mean difference* = .02).

**Table 4**

*Means and standard deviations of community activism/autonomy subscale*

		Community Activism/ Autonomy Subscale	
		High	Low
Experimental	In-Party Support Cue	5.70 (1.46)	4.92 (1.45)
Condition	Out-Party Support Cue	4.54 (1.54)	4.90 (1.52)



*Power/Powerlessness.* The final subscale was investigated along with the in/out party support cue in another 2 (In vs Out Party Support Cue Group) x 2 (High vs Low Power/Powerlessness) ANOVA. Another median split was used to compare the high vs low power/powerlessness groups, the median being 2.63. There was a significant main effect with the in/out party cue, once again showing that those who identified with the party that was said to support the farm subsidy policy tend to show more support ( $M = 5.28, sd = 1.46$ ) than those who identified with the party that was said to oppose the farm subsidy policy ( $M = 4.69, sd = 1.54$ ),  $F(1, 235) = 11.82, p < .05$ . There was also a significant main effect of the high vs low power/powerless on the support shown for the farm subsidy policy,  $F(1, 235) = 7.65, p < .05$ . Those who believed themselves to be less powerful showed more support for the policy ( $M = 5.22, sd = 1.41$ ) than those who believe themselves to be more powerful ( $M = 4.68, sd = 1.63$ ). Additionally, a significant interaction was found,  $F(1, 235) = 7.60, p < .05$ . Those who believed themselves to be more powerful were more affected by the in/out party cue (*mean difference* = 1.18) than those who believed themselves to be less powerful (*mean difference* = .13).

**Table 5**

*Means and standard deviations of power/powerlessness subscale*

		Power/Powerlessness Subscale	
		High	Low
Experimental	In-Party Support Cue	5.28 (1.53)	5.20 (1.53)
Condition	Out-Party Support Cue	4.10 (1.52)	5.15 (1.40)

*Follow-up Analyses Investigating Reasons for Higher Power Subjects to be More Influenced by In-vs-Out-Party Support Cues than the Low Power.*

The results found the in the ANOVA looking at the power/powerlessness subscale of empowerment were counter-intuitive, as prior research discussed earlier led to the prediction that the opposite would occur with respect to which group would be more affected by the in vs out party support cues. It was determined, based on prior research, that those with higher empowerment (i.e. higher power/powerlessness in this case) would focus more on the facts and perspectives relevant to the policy, and less on the political-cues indicating which ideological group supports/opposes the policy, when developing their opinion to either support or oppose the policy. That prediction was also based on the idea that those with a weaker sense of empowerment would be more likely to utilize the political-based “in-group” vs “out-group” short-cut to form their opinion. However, the opposite ended up occurring.

*Power/Powerlessness and Belief in How Effected Participants are by Political Leaders Cross Tabs Analysis.* To begin investigating this counter-intuitive result, an analysis seeking to determine the relationship between senses of Power & Powerlessness and feelings of how influenced or not they are by political leaders was conducted. Cross-Tab analysis shows that there is a greater percentage of those with a low sense of power who believe themselves to be extremely influenced by political leaders (20.3%) than those with a greater-sense of power (3.6%). Also, there is a smaller percentage of those with a low sense of power who believe themselves to be not at all influenced by political leaders (16.9%) than those with a greater sense of power (34.3%). These differences are statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (2) = 33.02, p < .001$ .

**Table 6**

	Not at all Influenced	Somewhat Influenced	Extremely Influenced
Low Power	39 (16.9%)	145 (62.8%)	47 (20.3%)
High Power	58 (34.3%)	105 (62.1%)	6 (3.6%)

*Power/Powerlessness and Belief in How Affected Participants are by Political Leaders*

*ANOVA Analysis.* A 2(In vs Out Party Support Cue Group) x 3 (Not at all vs Moderately vs Extremely Influenced) ANOVA was run to test for effects on the support ratings for the farm subsidy policy. There was a significant main effect of the in vs out party support cue found, indicating that those who were in the in-party support cue group would, on average, show more support ( $M = 5.29$ ,  $sd = 1.46$ ) than those who were in the out-party support cue group ( $M = 4.68$ ,  $sd = 1.54$ ),  $F(1, 234) = 7.75$ ,  $p < .05$ . The interaction in the analysis was not significant,  $F(2, 234) = 2.62$ ,  $p > .05$ , but the non-significant interaction did follow the trend for those who claimed to be not at all influenced by political leaders' opinions were more influenced by the in/out party support cue ( $mean\ difference = 1.39$ ) than those who claimed to be moderately influence by political leaders' opinions ( $mean\ difference = 0.47$ ), who were also less influenced by the in/out party support cue than those who claimed to be extremely influenced by political leaders' opinions ( $mean\ difference = 0.07$ ). This is consistent with the findings relevant to the interaction between power/powerless and in-vs-out-party support cues, as those who express higher senses of power (when looking at the individual items, meaning that they feel they rely less on experts, rely less on "going with the group") exhibit behaviors that are evident of feelings of low power.

**Table 7**

Experimental Condition	Level of Influence		
	Not at all influenced	Somewhat Influenced	Extremely Influenced
In-Party Support Cue	5.23 (1.66)	5.18 (1.35)	5.94 (1.56)
Out-Party Support Cue	3.84 (1.34)	4.71 (1.54)	5.87 (.99)

*Misc. Analyses Unrelated to Main Research Question*

In order to investigate the relationship between race and empowerment, five separate One-Way ANOVAs were used, comparing White vs Non-White on each subcase of Empowerment. While this was not significant, it approached significance, ( $\lambda(5, 375) = .971, p = .053$ ). Due to how close to significance it was, I went forward to look at the individual comparisons across each subscale. The comparison between White and Non-White participants was closest to significance was comparing the subscale of power/powerlessness ( $F(1, 319) = 4.11, p > .05$ ) and the subscale of community activism/autonomy ( $F(1, 319) = 5.91, p > .05$ ). For the self-esteem/self-efficacy scale, righteous anger scale, and the community activism/autonomy scale, the White group showed more empowerment than the Non-White group. For both the optimism/control over the future scale, and the power-powerlessness scales, the Non-White group showed more empowerment than the White group. The means and standard deviations of each group can be found in Table 8. The remaining subscales did not near significance when comparing the empowerment between White participants and Non-White participants.

**Table 8**

	Sub-scale of Empowerment				
Racial Group	Self-Esteem/ Self-Efficacy	Power/ Powerlessness	Community Activism/Autonomy	Optimism/ Control Over the Future	Righteous Anger
White	3.11 (.55)	2.60 (.53)	3.33 (.46)	2.96 (.51)	2.70 (.56)
Non-White	3.07 (.53)	2.48 (.58)	3.20 (.51)	2.98 (.52)	2.59 (.56)

### Discussion

Overall, it was found that the in vs out party support cue has a significant effect on how much support individuals gave for the farm subsidy policy. In addition to this, it was found that both those with high score on the community activism subscale and those with high scores on the power/powerlessness subscale were more effected by the in/out party support cue than those with lower scores on the subscales. Also, those who felt like they had less power showed more support for the farm subsidy policy than their counterparts, and those with higher optimism showed more support for the farm subsidy policy than their counterparts. While the rest of the results involving the empowerment subscales were not significant, both the self-esteem analysis and the optimism analysis seemed to follow the trend of those with higher scores being more affected by the in/out party support cue than those with lower scores. The only subscale that did not follow this trend was the righteous anger subscale.

When looking further into the power/powerlessness, it was found that higher feelings of power was related to more influenced by the in/out party support cue, in addition to the

participant believing themselves to be less influenced by the opinions of their political leaders. This showed a disconnect between what a person believes influences them and what they are actually affected by when forming such an opinion.

While I had originally predicted that those with high empowerment would be less effected by the in/out party support cue, the opposite was found. According to Rogers (1997), each of the five empowerment subscales are positively correlated with each other, therefore it makes sense for so many of these subscales to follow that same trend of those with higher scores being more impacted than the those with lower scores. One of the subscales is self-esteem, which was shown to be related to in-group bias in a meta-analysis conducted by Aberson and colleagues (2000). In their study, they looked into how self-esteem can impact the use of the in-group bias by individuals. They found that indirect measures did not create a difference in the bias shown by either high or low self-esteem participants, but that when indirect measures are used, those with high self-esteem showed more in-group bias. This article also discusses how individual studies struggle to clarify this relationship between self-esteem and in-group bias, but that by using meta-analysis they were able to clarify it more.

In addition to in-group bias usually increasing with higher self-esteem, it has also been shown in a study done by Hansen and colleagues (2014) that people are likely to remain unchanged of how objective they believe themselves to be, even if they express they are aware of a bias in their judgement making strategies. This could help explain how those who believed themselves to be more influenced by political leaders were actually less influenced by the in/out party support cue than those who believed themselves to be less influenced by political leaders.

There were several limitations to this study, one of which is created by the use of the median split when separating the high and low groups of the empowerment sub-scales. This

treats all values above the median as equal, and all of the values below the median as equal and separates some subjects who had very similar scores of empowerments.

Another limitation involves the type of article used for the farm subsidy policy description. The description is short, and while it was chosen to minimize the existence of prior opinions, it also relies on the subject making assumption. There is minimal information about farm subsidies in the description. It is possible that a longer, more informative version would change the influence of the in/out party support cue.

In the future, a study looking at how the group bias that is often used by individuals can be mitigated should be conducted. In order to do this, further investigation into the cause behind phenomena such as those found in this study and those of which found in Aberson and colleagues' study. Another version of this study, using a longer, more informative version of the farm subsidy description may be used in order to see if the amount of information provided can influence the use of such shortcuts. This study found that the influence from the cue exists and that personal factors can influence the use of it, such as certain aspects of empowerment. How to minimize this, and if it was caused by a lack of information, should be looked into.

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## Appendix A

### *Supportive Democrats version of policy description.*

The U.S. government gives billions of dollars to American farmers every year. The reasons for this policy, which is supported by **Democrats**, are to protect American farmers from losing their jobs and to keep the cost of food low for Americans.

However, **Republicans** have argued that the government should stop giving money to farmers. They note that this policy prevents poor agricultural countries from growing economically and bringing their citizens out of poverty. Also, the money saved by Americans in food costs is taken from them in taxes anyway.

### *Supportive Republicans version of policy description.*

The U.S. government gives billions of dollars to American farmers every year. The reasons for this policy, which is supported by **Republicans**, are to protect American farmers from losing their jobs and to keep the cost of food low for Americans.

However, **Democrats** have argued that the government should stop giving money to farmers. They note that this policy prevents poor agricultural countries from growing economically and bringing their citizens out of poverty. Also, the money saved by Americans in food costs is taken from them in taxes anyway.

### *Neutral version of policy description.*

The U.S. government gives billions of dollars to American farmers every year. The reasons for this policy, which is supported by **various groups**, are to protect American farmers from losing their jobs and to keep the cost of food low for Americans.

However, **various other groups** have argued that the government should stop giving money to farmers. They note that this policy prevents poor agricultural countries from growing

economically and bringing their citizens out of poverty. Also, the money saved by Americans in food costs is taken from them in taxes anyway.

## Appendix B

## Factors derived from the Empowerment Scale

Factor and scale item <sup>1</sup>	Loading
Factor 1: Self-esteem–self-efficacy <sup>2</sup>	
I generally accomplish what I set out to do	.79
I have a positive attitude about myself	.74
When I make plans, I am almost certain to make them work	.72
I am usually confident about the decisions I make	.70
I am often able to overcome barriers	.56
I feel I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others	.47
I see myself as a capable person	.46
I am able to do things as well as most other people	.41
I feel I have a number of good qualities	.41
Factor 2: Power-powerlessness <sup>3</sup>	
I feel powerless most of the time	.69
Making waves never gets you anywhere <sup>4</sup>	.66
You can't fight city hall	.66
When I am unsure about something, I usually go along with the group	.66
Experts are in the best position to decide what people should do or learn	.63
Most of the misfortunes in my life were due to bad luck	.62
Usually, I feel alone	.60
People have no right to get angry just because they don't like something <sup>4</sup>	.43
Factor 3: Community activism and autonomy <sup>5</sup>	
People have a right to make their own decisions, even if they are bad ones	.68
People should try to live their lives the way they want to	.64
People working together can have an effect on their community	.62
People have more power if they join together as a group	.53
Working with others in my community can help to change things for the better	.52
Very often a problem can be solved by taking action <sup>4</sup>	.41
Factor 4: Optimism and control over the future <sup>6</sup>	
People are limited only by what they think possible	.78
I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life	.62
I am generally optimistic about the future	.58
Very often a problem can be solved by taking action <sup>3</sup>	.42
Factor 5: Righteous anger <sup>7</sup>	
Getting angry about something is often the first step toward changing it	.73
People have no right to get angry just because they don't like something <sup>4</sup>	.52
Getting angry about something never helps	.48
Making waves never gets you anywhere <sup>4</sup>	.40

<sup>1</sup> Items that are negatively worded were recoded for consistency before the factor analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Eigenvalue=6.85, variance explained=24.5 percent

<sup>3</sup> Eigenvalue=3.48, variance explained=12.4 percent

<sup>4</sup> This item loaded on more than one factor.

<sup>5</sup> Eigenvalue=2.13, variance explained=7.6 percent

<sup>6</sup> Eigenvalue=1.5, variance explained=5.4 percent

<sup>7</sup> Eigenvalue=1.12, variance explained=4 percent