

Reflection

During the winter of 2020, I was expecting to have a very different project for the summer. COVID was not something that was on everyone's minds all the time, and I was spending time looking and applying for internships in a lab performing biological research. Biology has always been of great interest to me, and I want to pursue biomedical engineering in the future. When the pandemic hit, my summer plans were upended. Labs everywhere were closed and not accepting any interns. Worried that I would not have a project for the following school year, I realized that I needed to shift gears.

I was suddenly tasked with coming up with an idea for a project that I could perform almost completely independently on my computer at home. I also had to find a mentor to answer any questions I had. As I watched the media cover stories about anti-masker protests and COVID deniers, I started to think about the psychology of the crisis that we were in. Why did the United States, one of the countries best equipped to deal with a pandemic, have such a dismal response? I started to research the psychology behind crisis responses, especially the theory of reasoned action, and that led me to my politics-focused question. I thought that it was possible that people were looking to sources of information that they trust, and as a result were consuming partisan information with conflicting messages, resulting in the disastrous first few months of the pandemic.

Once I had my idea fleshed out a little, I reached out to psychology professors working at local universities. Dr. Nancy Frye, psychology professor at LIU Post, was the first to respond to my email. She and another psychology professor, Dr. Michele Dornisch, met with me weekly on Zoom. They answered any questions I had and helped clean up my ideas. They helped me develop my survey to make sure the responses I got were thorough. I learned a lot from my

mentors and am eternally grateful for their help. I had never done a psychology project before, so there was a bit of a learning curve on how to turn my qualitative survey data into graphs and analyze it with statistical tests. I spent a lot of time fiddling around in Excel and becoming frustrated when it did not do what I wanted it to. I got the hang of it after a while, but it was tedious.

As annoying as my data analysis was, I did not mind the work. It had become my way to cope with the crisis unfolding around me. As I continued reading and understanding the reasons for human behavior, I was able to explain the weird stuff people were doing that I was seeing on the news. It felt less scary and unknown. My project also gave me something to do, which prevented the all-consuming boredom and isolation from getting to me. I realized that I could have scientific interests other than biology. The psychology project that I did not see coming proved to be completely worthwhile. I am incredibly grateful for my research experience last summer. I learned so much about our society and even about myself.

To current high school researchers, I cannot stress this enough, take your time. Make sure your data is thorough and your question is researched. I had a ton of time because of COVID, and in place of that I recommend breaking up your project as much as you can. You will be prouder of the outcome if you gave it your all and you really know your topic inside and out. Make sure you are interested in your topic! If you want to learn about your topic and find a solution to the problem you are investigating, it will not feel like work.

The Effect of Political Division on Compliance with COVID-19 Health Guidelines

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Disclaimer: The following article contains large excerpts from the full version of my paper published in the *Journal of Secondary Psychological Studies* which can be found here: <https://jofsps.weebly.com/2021-journal.html>

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Abstract:

Politically, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States is a nation divided, with different information coming from either side of the aisle (Jurkowitz, 2020) (Motta, 2020). Information plays a large role in decision making, as detailed in the theory of reasoned action (Madden, 1992). People seek out information from sources that they already agree with and trust, and will behave accordingly (Horrigan, 2017). Because left-wing and right-wing information is different, I hypothesized that people on the left and right sides of the political spectrum will behave differently. More specifically, people who are more liberal will be more likely to follow guidelines than those who are more conservative. To test this, I fielded a survey using Amazon Mechanical Turk that asked participants about their compliance with health guidelines, where they get their news from, and their political alignment. I conducted Pearson's correlation matrices between those variables for responses from the entire nation and regionally. The nationwide results were not significant, but the results from regional groups did show that liberals are more likely to comply with guidelines on a regional scale. These findings are representative of a lack of a unified federal response. People in different regions are behaving differently based on their immediate perceptions of danger, and their own personal feelings about it, which prevents the entire nation from controlling the outbreak. This is problematic for the future of the pandemic, which will only improve if everyone complies.

Introduction:

The COVID-19 pandemic is truly the first of its kind. It is the first global pandemic in the digital age, and it caused the world to stop. Both political officials and news media play an important role in disseminating information about the pandemic to the public because they act as trusted sources (CDC, 2019). Because the pandemic almost immediately became politically polarized, it has been shown that information from officials and the news media has varied

depending on the source's political lean (Jurkowitz, 2020). This has implications for the future of the pandemic, considering that the public needs to unify and comply with health guidelines to ultimately contain it (CDC, 2019). Are people on different sides of the political aisle acting in a divided way based on the different information they have received?

The media plays an important role in the response to the pandemic, but most media outlets fall victim to a political lean that changes the information they present to their viewers. The coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic has been different depending on the politics of the media outlet in question (Jurkowitz, 2020). This is indicative of a disparity in the information presented to viewers. Also, the media has been shown to play a role in increasing dislike among the electorate for the opposing party (Levendusky, 2016). Because people will usually revisit and engage with trusted sources before making a decision (Horrigan, 2017), Republicans and Democrats have been receiving different information about the coronavirus pandemic, and this may lead to differences in behavior.

There is a significant difference between the message coming from each side. The right tends to avoid and downplay the severity of the virus, likening it to a mild flu. For example, Fox News leans to the right, and anchors like Sean Hannity made claims that the coronavirus is a hoax created by the left and that a vaccine already exists (Motta, 2020). In March 2020, a poll found that only 38 percent of Fox News viewers were worried about coronavirus (Motta, 2020). Republicans were also found to believe that the coronavirus was equally as deadly as the flu (Jamieson, 2020). This is likely due to the information that they received from right-wing sources; Fox News medical correspondent Marc Siegel compared it to the flu (Ingraham, 2020). In actuality, the global death rate for COVID-19 is 3.4%, and it is less than 1% for the flu

(WHO, 2020). Republicans may be less likely to comply with health guidelines based on the information they have been receiving.

The leftist media has been doing the opposite. They have been trying to emphasize the importance of wearing masks and staying home. Sources like the New York Times have made all their COVID-19 articles accessible without a subscription and have focused on reporting on science rather than opinion. Additionally, CNN has had Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, on their programming constantly to inform their viewers about the severity of the virus. Seventy-one percent of CNN viewers were found to be concerned about the coronavirus (Motta, 2020), which shows that they were receiving different information than Republicans. Democrats thus may be more inclined to follow health guidelines based on left-wing information.

Contrary to popular belief, people do not usually panic during a crisis, but make decisions that they think are reasonable based on the information that they have sought out (CDC, 2019). The theory of reasoned action can be applied here; people take their attitude about a situation, combined with what they perceive to be the norm, form a behavioral intention, and then perform a behavior (Madden, 1992). During the pandemic, people form their own attitudes based on the media and the information that they seek out. Their perceived norms can vary based on which political officials they follow and which behaviors they are seeing other people perform.

Because much of the response to the pandemic was left up to individual states and regions, (OECD, 2020) it is possible that behavior is not consistent across the nation. As a result, it is worth investigating the regional responses around the country. There are a few regions that present interesting information regarding people's behavior, including the sunbelt and

midwestern states. This regional classification is a novel approach to research on the response to the pandemic.

Sunbelt states, which include most southern states (Britannica, 2020), have a potentially interesting relationship with COVID-19. For the most part, the average age of people who became infected with SARS-CoV-2 in sunbelt states was lower, resulting in a lower death rate (Dunleavy, 2020). Additionally, most of the sunbelt states have a Republican majority and Republican leadership (Ballotpedia, 2019). People may perceive the pandemic as less severe because of social norms set by the Republican majority and the lower death rate, and may be less likely to comply, resulting in a significant correlation.

Coastal states and midwestern states also had very different responses to COVID-19. Coastal states included New York and California, and Midwestern states were chosen based on agreed upon borders (Simpson, 2020). At the beginning of the pandemic, coastal states were affected much more significantly by the virus. Case numbers on the east coast and in California skyrocketed in March of 2020, sparking mass panic and closures (Coronavirus Map and Case Count, 2021). Because people are typically consistent with their behavior from their initial attitude (Madden, 1992), people living in coastal states will be more likely to comply. People in Midwestern states, however, may have been able to form their own opinions based on their political alignment and news sources without many consequences. There could be a significant correlation between news source, alignment, and compliance in midwestern states.

Research that helps quantify people's response to the pandemic is beneficial in a few ways. Firstly, it helps find patterns within people's behavior during a crisis, which is important for the prediction of behavior in future crises. Additionally, it can help quantify the effects of political division and the consequences of disunified information. There also has not been much

investigation into the long-term psychological causes, like the previous establishment of trusted news sources based on political alignment. This research, in investigating the correlations between alignment, news source, and compliance is novel. Previous study has linked people who vote for Democrats with being more likely to wear a mask (Bruine de Bruin et al., 2020), but has not investigated that regionally or looked at more than one political alignment. Regional differences are important to consider, especially when taking into account the role individual states had in creating their own responses.

In sum, the problem presented with this topic is whether or not political affiliation predicts the way people are behaving during the pandemic. I hypothesized that if political affiliation affects behavior based on the theory of reasoned action, and people seek out news that aligns with their political views, then Republicans will be less likely to follow guidelines than Democrats. In regard to the regional experiments, I predicted that there would be a significant correlation between news source liberalness, political alignment, and compliance in sunbelt states, midwestern states, and in red and blue states. In other words, people will act in a politically divided manner across the country and in select regions. To test this, I surveyed 1,000 people across the United States using Amazon Mechanical Turk to determine which health guidelines people are following, where they see themselves on the political spectrum, and where they get their news from.

Methods

Participants

For this experiment, I fielded a survey of a sample of people using Amazon Mechanical Turk. Participants who were interested in completing the survey were compensated ten cents for

their time. Mechanical Turk did not collect the names or IP addresses of the participants, allowing for complete anonymity and very little risk for the participant. The survey should have taken about 5-7 minutes to complete. None of the questions asked for personal or private information and should not have had any damaging mental effects on the participant. The first question acted as an informed consent form for the participant. If the participant declined to give their consent, they were not directed to the questions page. They were also permitted to leave the page at any time if they were uncomfortable with answering the survey questions, but they would not receive the ten cent compensation.

Because MTurk ensured that participants' identities remained anonymous, and they were compensated for completing the survey, some do not take the questions seriously or use bots to answer as many surveys as possible. To mitigate this, I asked two questions that limited the number of insincere responses and made the collected data more reliable. Question 1 asked if the participant was blind or had a serious vision impairment (Ahler, 2020). Question 2 asked if the participant usually answered survey questions dishonestly (Lopez, 2018). If the participant answered "yes" to question 1 and "always" or "usually" to question 2, their responses were flagged as internet trolling or insincere (Ahler, 2020), and were removed from the final data set. 1,713 people completed the survey, of which 713 responses had to be rejected for insincerity or were from countries outside the United States, leaving 1,000 responses. At this point the survey was removed from MTurk.

The next question asked for the participants' Mechanical Turk Worker ID. This was used to match the responses to the participant during analysis. The following questions asked for general information from the participant that may influence their responses regarding compliance. These questions acted as controlled variables to provide other insight in the way

people are behaving. Questions 4, 5 and 6 asked for age, state of residence, and previous COVID-19 testing experience, respectively. Age could have had an effect on the participant's likelihood to comply with certain health guidelines. Those who are older are more at risk and will likely want to protect themselves regardless of their political affiliation. Also, it was a short answer question to increase engagement with the participant and prevent the use of bots. State of residence can influence the likelihood that the participants follow health guidelines, especially if mask wearing and social distancing were required by state officials. If participants had been previously infected with the virus, it could lead them to believe that they are immune and do not have to follow health guidelines.

Measures

Following CDC guidelines. Questions 7-10 asked about how frequently the participant has been following CDC health guidelines for the duration of the pandemic. These questions measured the dependent variable which was compliance with health guidelines. The guidelines targeted in the survey include public mask wearing, social distancing, and hand washing. A five-point Likert scale was used, and it was adapted from a study that asked similar behavioral questions to Chinese citizens at the start of the pandemic (Wang, 2020). To condense the separate health guideline compliance data, I conducted a Cronbach's alpha test to determine if people were more often than not following all guidelines as opposed to only some of them. This also determined the internal reliability of the data set. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to be 0.73. $0.73 > 0.7$, so internal reliability was present. I was then able to calculate the average behavior for each participant, which will act as their overall compliance "score." That compliance score was used in the remainder of the statistical analyses.

News source and political affiliation. Both Question 11 and Question 12 were used to measure the political liberalness of the participant. More specifically, where they get their news from and where they see themselves on the political spectrum. News liberalness and political alignment are the independent variables. The sources were ranked on the political spectrum from the far right, to slightly right, neutral, slightly left, far left. The political lean of each source chosen was determined using a Pew Research Center study (Gottfried, 2014) and information collected by All Sides. This question used a “select all that apply” feature to account for people most frequently getting their news from varied sources. The political lean of each news source was ranked on a scale of liberalness, and is represented as such in the results. Participants then used a 7-point scale that ranked options from strongly liberal to strongly conservative (Graham, 2012) (Pew Research Center) to self-report their political alignment. Asking participants to self report as opposed to trying to gauge their affiliation through opinions on policy, like other political alignment tests (Pew Research Center), kept the length of the survey down. This option also accounts for the 38 percent of American voters who are independent (LaLoggia, 2019), and those who affiliate themselves with another party entirely. The answers to these two questions served as the two independent variables in this study.

Procedure

The survey was developed using Google Forms and disseminated with Amazon Mechanical Turk. Each participant, or “worker,” after clicking on the survey, was shown the informed consent form. If they decided to participate, they clicked forward and were taken to the survey questions. Google Forms presented the questions in a list. As participants completed the questions, their responses were recorded by Google Forms and Mechanical Turk. After 1,000 responses were collected, I downloaded an Excel file that listed each of the participants

responses and their Worker ID. I then filtered the responses based on negative answers to the anti-tampering questions and those that listed foreign countries as their state of residence. I used Mechanical Turk to reject those responses by their Worker ID, which put the survey back up on the site. I repeated this process until I had 1,000 responses that passed the anti-tampering questions and were from the United States. A copy of the survey can be found in the Supplemental Materials Section.

Results

Firstly, I analyzed the demographics of the data I collected. Most notably, the majority of people are following CDC sanctioned health guidelines. Most respondents selected that they “always” or “usually” wear a mask, stay six feet apart from others, avoid large social gatherings, and wash their hands upon returning home (Figures 1a-d). Although the majority of respondents identified as liberal to some degree, all political alignments are represented. (Figure 2).

[Insert figures 1a-2 with caption and figure 2 with caption about here]

Initially, I conducted two Pearson’s correlation matrix tests, one for political alignment and the other for news sources. Using a correlation accounts for the fluidity of the data collected. People fall on a scale of liberalness and their behaviors also fall on a scale of compliance, assessed by the survey. I assigned each response for the dependent variable questions (health guideline compliance) and for the independent variable questions (political alignment and news sources), a number that corresponds to the degree of compliance or the degree of liberalness. So, for the health guideline questions, “Always” corresponds with 5, and 1 corresponds with “Never.” For the political alignment questions, 1 represents “Strongly conservative” and 7 represents “Strongly liberal.” For the news source questions 1 represents the most conservative

news source, Breitbart, or the Daily Wire, and 5 represents the most liberal, MSNBC or The Huffington Post.

[Insert table 1 and caption about here]

A Pearson correlation matrix was conducted to determine the relationship between average health guideline compliance and how participants saw themselves on the political spectrum. This was not found to have a significant correlation. (Table 1). This does not support my hypothesis that people would be less likely to comply with guidelines if they are more conservative. The data suggest that there is not a significant relationship between people's compliance with health guidelines and their political alignment for all the data collected.

For the news source experiment, I first had to find the average of each participant's response since they could choose multiple sources. The greater the average of the participants' responses, the more liberal their news consumption is. I ran a Pearson's correlation matrix for the average health guideline compliance and the average news source consumption for each participant. The results of this experiment are not significantly correlated (Table 1). The data suggests that where people get their news from does not have a significant effect on their compliance with health guidelines. This refutes my hypothesis that the people who got their news from more conservative sources would be less likely to comply with health guidelines because conservative sources have consistently downplayed the severity of the pandemic. There was also a correlation run between political alignment and average news source liberalness, which was significant (Table 1). This means that people who identify as more liberal read more liberal news sources, which aligns with the original rationale. This was also seen in every other correlation performed.

[Insert figures 3a-d with caption about here]

After performing this analysis, I decided to section the data by region of the country to try and examine the effect of state of residence on average compliance. The regions are: sunbelt states (Figure 3a), midwestern and coastal states (Figure 3b), The results of the statistical analyses for these regional groups were different when compared to the results for the entire country. This may be an indication of how divided and region-specific the response to COVID-19 was.

[Insert figures 4a-d with captions about here]

For the sunbelt states, midwestern states, and red and blue state groups, I conducted a Pearson's correlation test to determine if there was a significant difference in behavior for responses that came from those areas. Sunbelt states had a different response to the COVID-19 pandemic than those on the East Coast and in the Midwest. There was a total of 432 responses that came from sunbelt states. I conducted a Pearson's correlation matrix test between sunbelt states and the other states. While news source liberalness and political alignment did not have a significant effect on compliance in sunbelt states, in non-sunbelt states the correlation was significant ($p < .001$) (Figures 4a and 4c). These findings do not support my hypothesis that more conservative people will be less likely to comply and that there would a significant correlation in sunbelt states.

[Insert figures 5a-b with caption about here]

I grouped the data into coastal and midwestern states, and ran a Pearson's correlation matrix between them. The correlations for average compliance, average news liberalness, and political alignment are significant for midwestern states (Figure 5a), but not coastal states (Figure 5b). These findings supported my hypothesis that midwestern states would have a significant correlation between news liberalness, alignment, and compliance.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of political alignment and news source liberalness on COVID-19 health guideline compliance. I hypothesized that there would be a significant correlation between news source liberalness or political alignment and health guideline compliance, which would imply that Democrats, and people who read liberal news are more likely to comply with health guidelines. My hypothesis was not supported after I analyzed the data on a national level. My hypothesis that there would be significant correlations between alignment, news liberalness, and compliance regionally was not supported by sunbelt state data, but was supported by red and blue state and midwestern state data.

My hypothesis was supported after I organized the data into smaller groups. It likely did not come up as significant during my original testing because there were too many different data points to suggest anything about the entire sample. Because the American response was so different from state to state, it makes sense that there would not be significant findings in the entire country. This also indicates that because the federal government left it up to the states to decide on the response, case numbers and behavior across the country is different. This can likely help explain why the U.S. has had so much trouble getting case numbers, testing and deaths under control. These behavioral patterns are demonstrative of a nation divided. During a pandemic, it is incredibly important that nations decide what is best for their people to save the most lives. The lack of federal leadership has caused people in different regions to behave differently.

More specifically, most sunbelt states happen to have Republican leadership and Republican majorities (Pew Research Center, 2020). Based on my prediction, the correlation

between news source, alignment and compliance would have been significant. However, their experience with COVID-19 was unique based on these conditions. Republican leaders were typically slower to react to the crisis (Green, 2020). Additionally, the South was hit harder by the subsequent economic shutdown, and fewer southerners have adequate health insurance, resulting in a greater number of deaths (Newkirk II, 2020). Many people living in those sunbelt states were likely perceiving the virus in a much more firsthand way. Because they were seeing friends and neighbors be affected by the virus, they were more likely to put aside their personal beliefs and what they had been seeing on the news, and were thus more likely to comply. This would explain the insignificant correlation between political alignment, news source and compliance. (Figures 8a-b).

The correlations were significant in the Midwest and were not significant in states outside the Midwest. This is likely due to the delayed effect COVID-19 had in the Midwest. Coastal states, like New York and California, almost act as outliers in the data set. They had such a severe onset of the virus in March that people were more likely to comply based on the state policy. However, the Midwest did see a spike in cases during the summer when data were collected. Coastal states were experiencing flattened curves and stagnant numbers during this time (New York Times, 2020). Because the Midwest had that delayed response, their personal perceptions may have played more of a role in the reasoning behind their behavior instead of strict state-set policy. This could have caused the significant correlation between political alignment, news source liberalness, and compliance with health guidelines, which was not seen in coastal states. According to the theory of reasoned action (Madden, 1992), people living on the coast were taking the virus more seriously because it posed a more immediate danger. People

on the coast were more likely to put their own personal beliefs aside when behaving to protect themselves and others due to the grave tone of the information presented to them.

In red and blue states, people from opposite ends of the spectrum were almost as equally likely to comply (Figure 6a-d). Their compliance did increase with increased news source liberalness and was found to be significant in both groups. This is probably because the states were split into two smaller groups, red and blue. This would have caused a smaller spread in the data, which could have caused a significant correlation. The average compliance was greater in blue states than in red states. This could just be a result of the increased amount of liberal responses from blue states.

The theory of reasoned action can be widely applied to the behavior demonstrated in this experiment. People across the nation have been reading the news about the virus and have been acting as they see fit based on their perception of its danger. This caused the overwhelming “Always” and “Usually” responses for specific health guideline questions (Figures 1a-d). People have been more often than not perceiving the situation as dangerous and have been acting accordingly. However, this does not align with sensationalist media coverage and misinformation perpetuated by political leaders. Donald Trump was found to be the greatest perpetrator of COVID-19 misinformation (Bergengruen & W.J. Hennigan, 2020). The media has also been found to misreport scientific findings. It presents them as fact, when more often than not, they are only theory or part of a larger idea (Ransohoff, 2001). This suggests a further nuance to the way people are perceiving and processing information. They are using their judgement to decide what information is trustworthy and what is not, which is something that has likely come up more during the digital age. People, since they are so bombarded with information every day, have had to learn how to distinguish between accurate and inaccurate

information. This would explain people reporting compliance when media coverage and political leaders have not always stressed its importance.

Why are case numbers still astounding in this country if people are saying that they are complying? There are a few potential sources of error in this study that could help explain this finding. Firstly, it is possible that some usage of bots did occur even with the addition of anti-tampering questions. A bot could have answered the questions and not been flagged by chance. This, however, would have a small chance of occurring and may have contributed to a few random errors, likely not enough to throw the whole study.

An additional source of error could be that participants were dishonest about their compliance or were not paying attention to the questions they were answering. It is possible that some participants lied on purpose and increased their compliance with health guidelines to make themselves feel better about their behavior. They also could have lied about which sources they get their news from or their political alignment to make themselves seem less radical. This has been seen in other scientific studies and especially in political polling. During the 2016 election season, a significant number of polls projected Clinton's win, but were shown to be inaccurate due to dishonesty from participants. People tend to answer questions dishonestly when the true answer is not socially acceptable (Mercer et al., 2016). In 2016, it was admitting your support for Trump. In the context of this experiment, it is admitting that you have not been complying with guidelines, since compliance has been emphasized as the social norm. People typically do not want to be a part of the out group, so it is possible that they lied on this survey to make themselves feel like part of the in group.

A final source of error could be the lack of specificity when asking about news sources. The information covered on television is presented differently and can vary from the information

presented in print or on the internet. TV news has been shown to frame its programming around stories that the viewer may find more entertaining than informative, while print media can go more in depth about specific policy or other details. For example, when Al Gore and George W. Bush were running for president in 2000, TV news covered more about their personalities than their beliefs and ideas (Pew Research Center, 2000). This type of media coverage can change the public's perception of the pandemic, which ultimately will influence their behavior. On the internet, articles typically have sensationalized headlines to capture attention and make the viewer click on the story, known as clickbait (Frampton, 2015). In neglecting to ask which way people get their news, being on the internet, TV, or print, the survey loses some reliability.

In future studies, I would like to examine the political bias in modern journalism and how that has changed over time. News sources play a big role in cementing people's opinions, and now with the Internet, people can always find someone to agree with. In bringing people together, the Internet has divided them. I also want to examine how people perceive their political leaders and their parties, and how they perceive those across the aisle. Examining how people feel about those they do not agree with politically can provide insight into the depth of political division.

Supplemental Materials

Survey Questions:

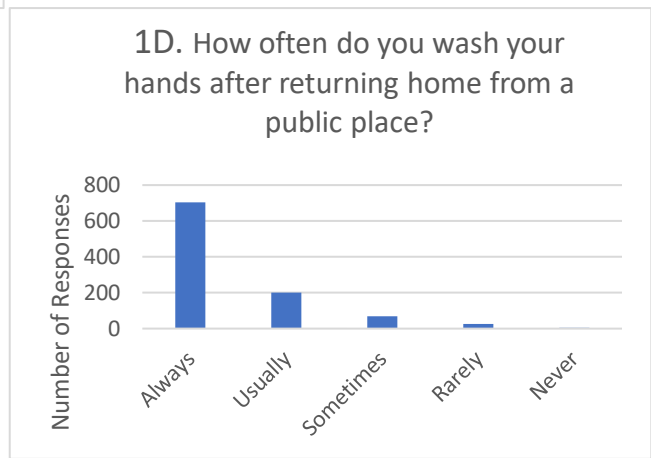
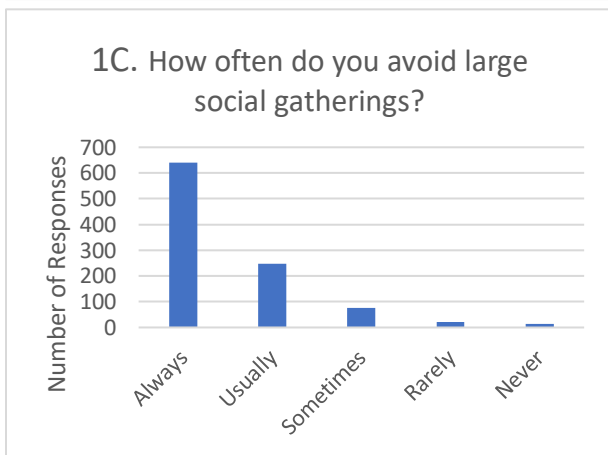
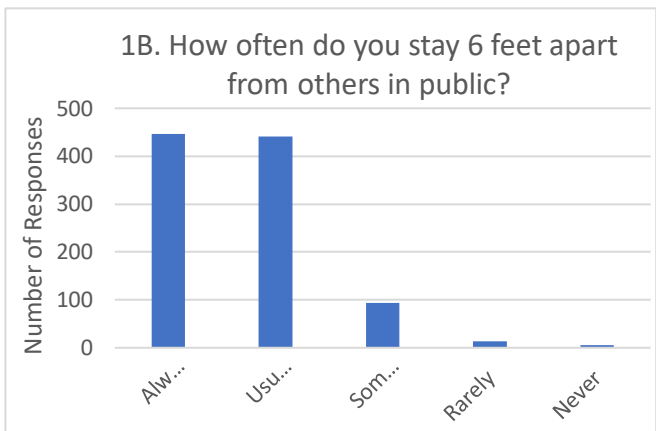
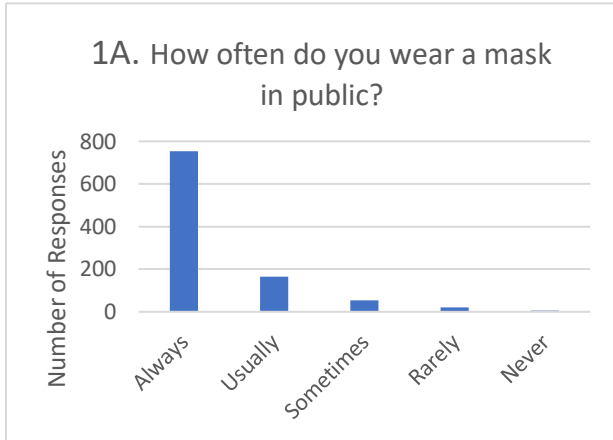
1. Are you blind or do you have a serious vision impairment?
 - Yes
 - No
2. We sometimes find people don't always take surveys seriously, instead providing humorous, or insincere responses to questions How often do you do this?
 - Always
 - Usually
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never

3. Please provide your Mechanical Turk Worker ID
Short answer response
4. How old are you?
Short answer response
5. What state do you live in?
Short answer response
6. Have you previously tested positive for COVID-19?
 - Yes
 - No, I was tested and it was not positive
 - I have not been tested
7. How often do you wear a mask in public?
 - Always
 - Usually
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never
8. When in public, how often do you make sure to stay at least six feet away from others?
 - Always
 - Usually
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never
9. How often do you avoid large social gatherings?
 - Always
 - Usually
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never
10. How often do you wash your hands after returning home from a public place?
 - Always
 - Usually
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never
11. Please select all the sources you most frequently get your news from
 - Breitbart or the Daily Wire
 - Fox News
 - BBC News or USA Today
 - The New York Times or the Washington Post
 - The Huffington Post or MSNBC
12. Where do you see yourself on the political spectrum?
 - Strongly Liberal
 - Liberal
 - Moderately Liberal
 - Centrist
 - Moderately conservative
 - Conservative
 - Strongly Conservative

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I would like to acknowledge the help of LIU Post psychology professors Dr. Nancy Frye and Dr. Michele Dornisch for their continued assistance throughout my research process. They assisted me with any questions I had regarding survey development, analysis, and clarified the details of psychological principles I read about during my research. They also read the drafts of my paper and made suggestions regarding clarity and organization. I am very thankful for their guidance.

Appendix:



Figures 1a-d: Show the responses for survey questions that ask about compliance. N=1,000

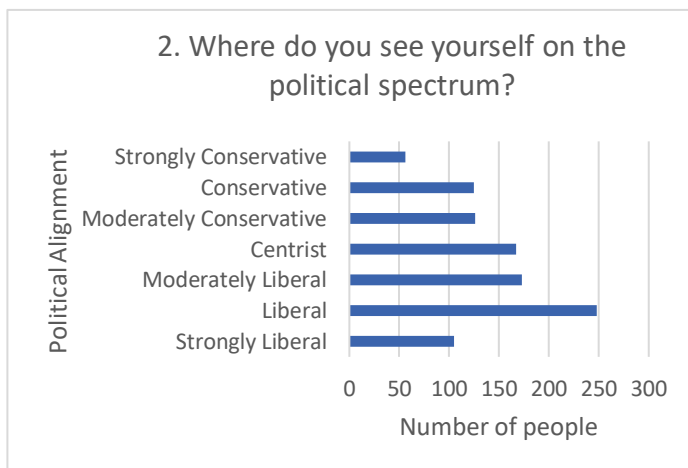


Figure 2: The frequency of each selected political alignment. N=1,000.

Table 1:		Average compliance all states	Political alignment all states
Political alignment all states	Pearson's r	-0.002	—
	p-value	0.95	—
Average news liberalness all states	Pearson's r	-0.061	0.399 ***
	p-value	0.052	<.001

Table 1: The results of the Pearson's correlation matrix for all states. Significant p values ($p < .001$) are marked with a (*). $N=1,000$.

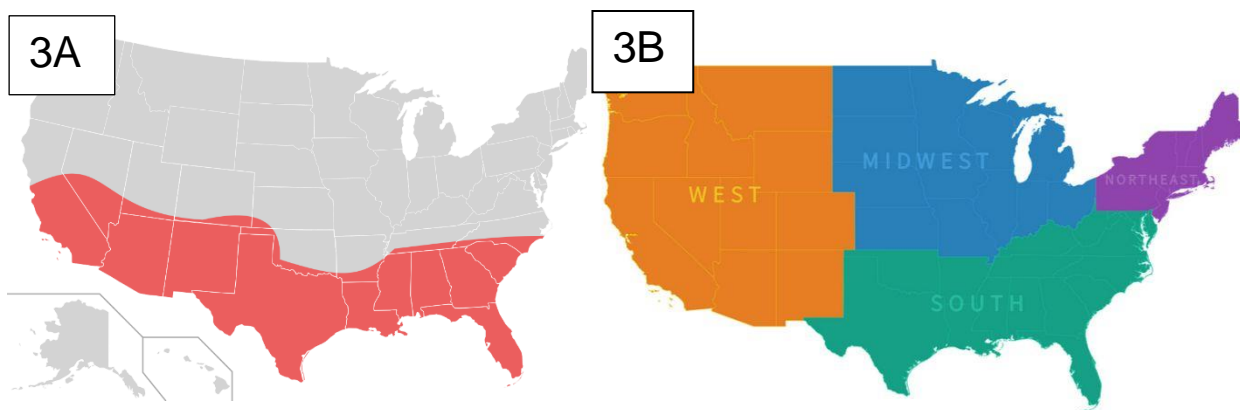
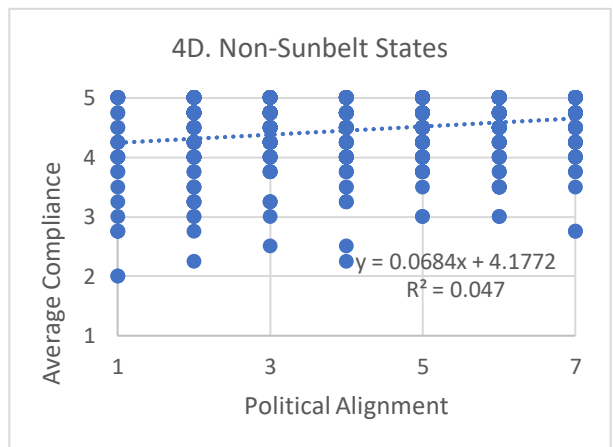
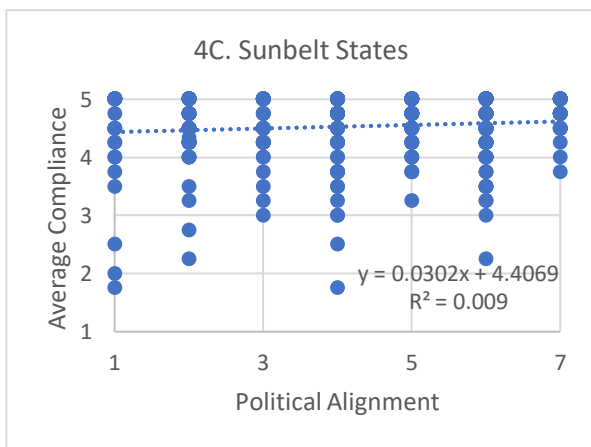
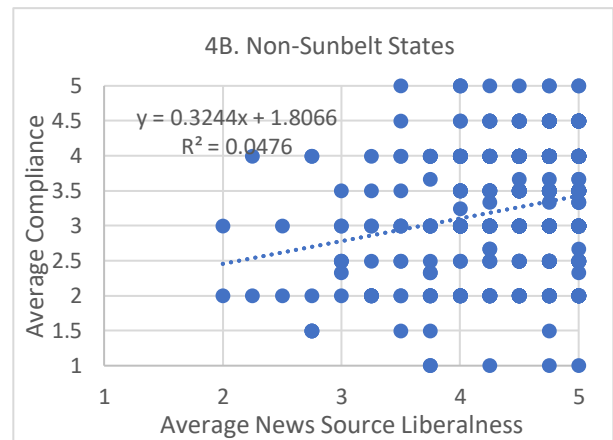
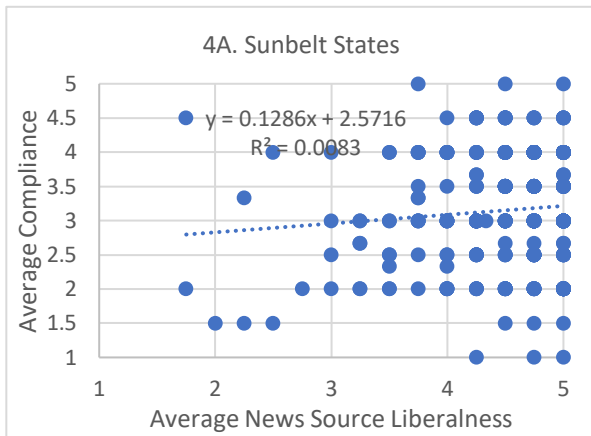
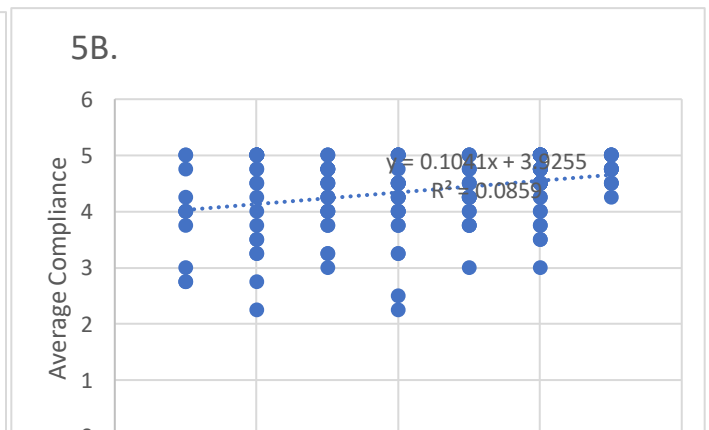
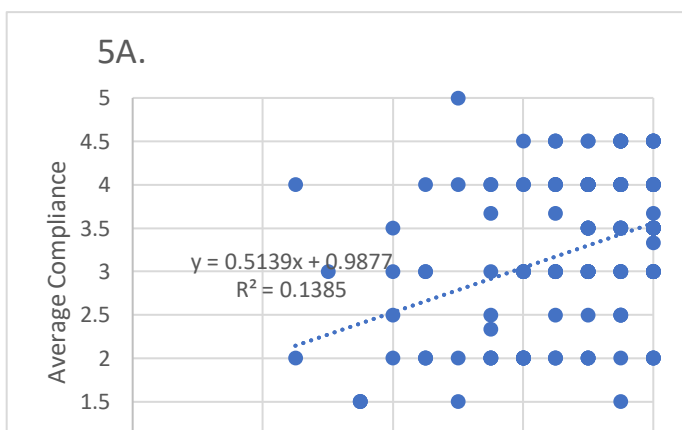


Figure 3a-b: (A) Sunbelt states. Sunbelt states include: Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, California, and Nevada (Wikipedia, 2020) **(B)** The Midwest and Coastal States. Midwestern states include: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin (Simpson, 2020)



Figures 4a-d: Correlation between news source liberalness and average compliance in (A) sunbelt and (B) non-sunbelt states. Correlation between political alignment and average compliance in (C) sunbelt and (D) non-sunbelt states. $p < .001$ for political alignment, news source liberalness and compliance in non-sunbelt states. $N = 432$ for sunbelt, $N = 568$ for non-sunbelt.



Figures 5a-b: Correlation between compliance and (A) average news source liberalness or (B) political alignment in midwestern states. $p < .001$. $N = 146$

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