

Appendix: Rigid Religious Faith Promotes Selective Exposure to Attitude-Congruent Political Information

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Gun-control arguments used in information-search tasks

Pro-gun-control arguments:

1. *A study in a prominent medical journal found that you or a member of your family are 43 times more likely to be killed by your own gun than by an intruder's. Guns aren't the protection many people think they are. We need stricter gun control.*
2. *In one poll of imprisoned felons, only 27% report buying guns on the black market; the rest got their weapons through legal channels. Obviously, tougher gun controls are needed to keep these 'legal' guns out of criminal hands.*
3. *A study of 743 gunshot deaths reports that 398 occurred in a home where a gun was kept. Only 9 of the 743 were deemed to be justified by the police. It follows that gun owners are not as responsible as they claim to be.*
4. *A gun should be fired only if one's life is in danger and all other options have been exhausted. Most 'self-defense' shootings do not meet these criteria. Thus use of guns in self-defense only contributes to the crime rate.*
5. *Several recent school tragedies highlight the fact that guns have become a menace to our children. It's very simple: our schoolyards should not be battlefields. We need to reduce access to guns; we need stricter gun control.*
6. *Recent trials against gun manufacturers have consistently found them guilty, and have forced the gun industry to pay out huge sums of money. If the courts can find good reason to rein in the gun industry, then it is high time for Congress to follow suit.*
7. *Self-defense arguments for the need of guns are silly: guns only become necessary for self-defense because there are so many guns out there. Thus, guns should be outlawed outright – then we won't need to worry about self-defense.*
8. *The United States has the highest murder rate of all industrialized nations. It is also the only industrialized country that has lenient gun laws. We therefore say: bring down the number of guns, bring down the murder rate.*

Anti-gun-control arguments:

1. *The Bill of Rights guarantees the right of all citizens to bear arms. Quite simply, gun control measures are unconstitutional infringements on a basic right of citizenship.*
2. *Most privately-owned guns in America are owned by sportsmen and are used for completely peaceful purposes. These guns pose no risk to society, but they are unfairly targeted by gun control legislation.*
3. *A national council reported in a recent year that handgun accidents killed less than 15 children under the age of 6. This number is minuscule when compared to the total number of accidental deaths of young children. It simply is not worth outlawing guns to save just a handful of lives.*
4. *Gun control legislation can only regulate guns sold through legal outlets. But these days, many criminals buy their guns illegally. Gun control legislation therefore cannot regulate the most dangerous guns in society.*
5. *The liberal media distort gun issues: they only talk about tragedies involving guns. Yet guns were used defensively 2.5 million times last year. The real tragedy would be to outlaw guns – crime would spiral out of control.*
6. *A main reason why our murder rate is so high is that most crime victims do not resist. These victims are twice as likely to be injured compared to those who defend themselves. Carrying a gun is thus one's ultimate protection against violent crime.*
7. *Stricter gun control laws have not passed Congress, reflecting serious misgivings the American people have about gun control. However, the courts have repeatedly ignored the will of the people, finding gun manufacturers in the wrong. We need to limit the power of the courts in gun control cases.*
8. *Laws that require guns to be locked up defeat the purpose of gun ownership: how can I protect my family if I must first retrieve my gun from its locker? We thus need to repeal laws regulating guns in private homes.*

Scrambled sentences used in faith-priming task

Faith-prime condition:

1. *appreciated presence was see her*
2. *felt she eradicate spirit the*
3. *more paper it once do*
4. *dessert divine was fork the*
5. *send I over it mailed*
6. *evil faith have God in*

7. *yesterday it finished track he*
8. *sacred is book refer the*
9. *prepared somewhat I was retired*
10. *sermons believed the simple she*

Neutral condition:

1. *appreciated presence was see her*
2. *fall was worried she always*
3. *more paper it once do*
4. *shoes give replace old the*
5. *send I over it mailed*
6. *saw hammer he the train*
7. *yesterday it finished track he*
8. *sky the seamless blue is*
9. *prepared somewhat I was retired*
10. *predictable he shoes his tied*

Need for cognitive closure

Six items taken from the Need For Closure Scale:

1. *When I am confronted with a problem, I'm dying to reach a solution very quickly.*
2. *I enjoy having a clear and structured mode of life.*
3. *I feel irritated when one person disagrees with what everyone else in a group believes.*
4. *When I have made a decision, I feel relieved.*
5. *I don't like situations that are uncertain.*
6. *I do not usually consult many different opinions before forming my own view.*

Participants report their level of agreement with each statement on a 7-point scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree" (coded to range from 0 to 6). The sum of the six items forms a need-for-closure score for each participant with a possible range from 0 to 36 and an observed range from 6 to 35.

Modified Cognitive Reflection Test (CRT)

1. *A concert ticket and the transportation to get to the concert cost \$110 in total. The ticket costs \$100 more than the transportation. How much does the transportation cost? (Intuitive response: \$10. Correct response: \$5.)*
2. *A large crowd of people are gradually arriving for a big event. Some people arrive early and camp out to reserve the best spots, while others arrive later. Each hour the crowd doubles in size. If it takes 18 hours for the crowd to cover the entire event area, how many hours does it take for the crowd to cover half of the event area? (Intuitive response: 9 hours. Correct response: 17 hours.)*
3. *If it takes 5 machines 5 minutes to make 5 widgets, how long would it take 100 machines to make 100 widgets? (Intuitive response: 100 minutes. Correct response: 5 minutes.)*

Each question is displayed on a separate page to prevent participants from going back to change their answers on previous questions. The number of items on which the participant gives the correct answer forms the CRT score for each participant.

Partisan leaning

Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican party or closer to the Democratic party?

- Forced dichotomous choice (coded as 0 for *Democratic* or 1 for *Republican*)

Self-assessed conservatism

Are your political views liberal or conservative...

1. *on economic issues?*
2. *on social issues?*
3. *in general?*

Each of the three items is a continuous slider ranging from "*Extremely liberal*" to "*Extremely conservative*" (coded to range from -1 to +1). "*Social issues*" conservatism is strongly correlated with "*economic issues*" conservatism ($r=0.68$). The sum of these two items is even more strongly correlated with the "*in general*" item ($r=0.95$). The models presented in the paper include only the "*in general*" item.

Political knowledge test

We are also interested in seeing how much information about U.S. politics gets out to the public. Please answer the following questions without searching for the answers and without asking anyone for assistance. Most people don't know the answers to these questions. If you don't know the answer, you should guess.

- *Which job or political office is currently held by each of the following individuals?*

1. *John Roberts*
2. *Mitch McConnell*
3. *Jeff Sessions*
4. *Rex Tillerson*
5. *Betsy DeVos*

– *How long is a single term for each of the following elected offices?*

1. *President*
2. *Senators*
3. *House of Representatives*

Each question is a multiple-choice item with forced response. The number of questions answered correctly forms the political-knowledge score, ranging from 0 to 8.

Political interest

- *How interested are you in information about current events in government or politics?*
- Continuous slider from "*Not at all interested*" to "*Extremely interested*" (coded to range from 0 to 1)

Education

What level of education have you completed?

1. *Less than high school*
2. *High school graduate or equivalent*
3. *Some college*
4. *Trade school or community college degree (or more than two years at university)*
5. *Bachelor degree*
6. *Some graduate studies*
7. *Master degree*
8. *Professional degree*
9. *Doctoral degree*

In the data analysis presented in this paper, this is treated as an interval variable ranging from 0 to 8. However, using a set of 8 dummy variables in place of the single education-level variable does not reduce the estimated effects.

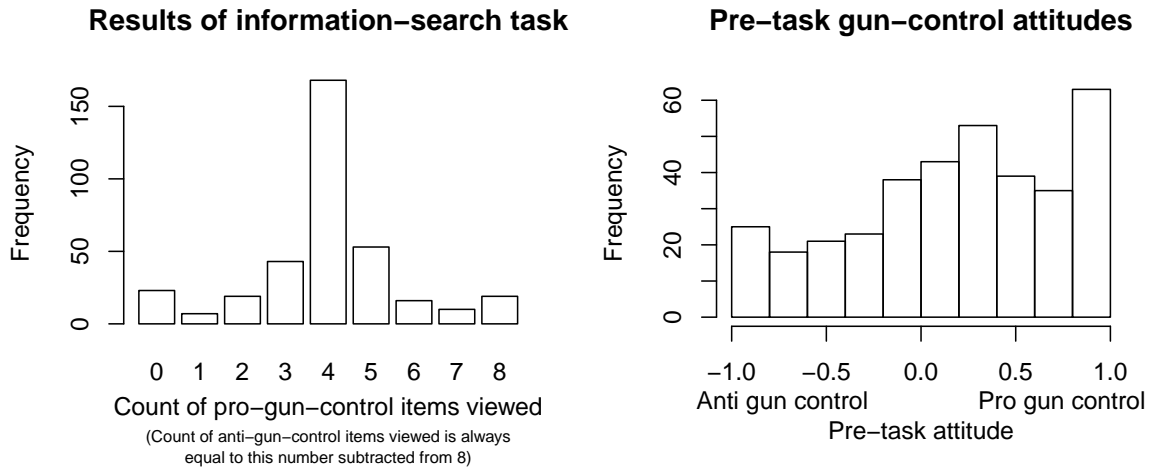


Figure 1: Distribution of outcome variable and of pre-task attitudes. A positive correlation between these two variables would indicate selective exposure to attitude-congruent information.

Table 1: Summary descriptive statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Rigid religious conviction	355	15.085	9.254	0	36
Self-assessed religiosity	358	0.468	0.378	0.00	1.00
Pro-gun-control items viewed	358	3.992	1.724	0	8
Anti-gun-control items viewed	358	4.008	1.724	0	8
Pre-task gun-control attitude	358	0.195	0.573	-1.00	1.00
Age	358	39.771	13.476	20	79
Woman (dichotomous)	358	0.589		0	1
Lean Republican (dichotomous)	358	0.425		0	1
Self-assessed conservatism	358	-0.029	0.546	-1.00	1.00
Political knowledge test	358	5.221	2.308	0	8
Political interest	358	0.602	0.267	0.00	1.00
Education	357	3.535	1.672	0	8
Need for closure	358	22.584	4.872	6	35
Cognitive Reflection Test (CRT)	358	1.285	1.208	0	3

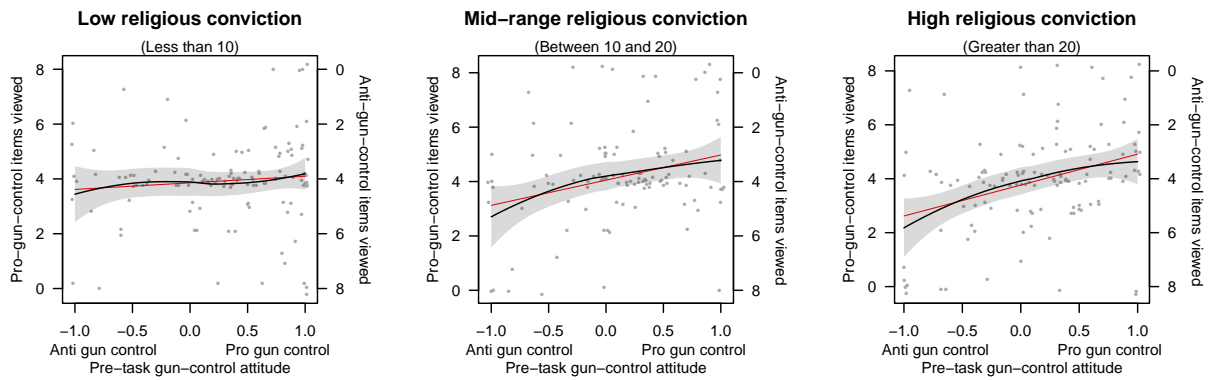


Figure 2: Count of pro-gun-control items viewed by each participant, plotted as a function of pre-task gun-control attitude, separated by tercile of rigid religious conviction. To enhance readability of the plots, values are jittered by up to 0.03 on the horizontal axis and by up to 0.3 on the vertical axis. Each plot includes a LOESS curve (black) and an OLS regression line of best fit (red). Because the total of all items viewed is constrained to be 8, the count of anti-gun-control items viewed is always constrained to be equal to 8 minus the count of pro-gun-control items viewed. The secondary vertical axis on the right side of each plot thus does not represent a completely separate variable but rather a simple reversal of the left-side axis.

Table 2: OLS estimates for linear regression models using self-assessed religiosity (on a continuous slider from 0 to 1) rather than a multi-item scale of rigid religious conviction. In each model the dependent variable is the quantity of pro-gun-control items viewed (which is always equal to 8 minus the quantity of anti-gun-control items viewed). Gun-control attitude is a continuous measure ranging from -1 to +1, with positive values representing support for gun control and negative values representing opposition to gun control.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Constant	3.997*** (0.150)	4.769*** (0.554)	5.545*** (0.692)	4.652*** (0.554)	5.413*** (0.703)
Gun-control attitude	0.187 (0.234)	0.446 (0.905)	-1.036 (1.094)	0.808 (0.903)	-0.388 (1.120)
Age		-0.014* (0.008)	-0.013 (0.008)	-0.016** (0.008)	-0.015* (0.008)
Woman		-0.027 (0.215)	0.098 (0.218)	0.024 (0.216)	0.112 (0.218)
Education		0.092 (0.060)	0.081 (0.060)	0.095 (0.060)	0.087 (0.059)
Political knowledge		-0.011 (0.048)	-0.017 (0.048)	-0.016 (0.051)	-0.016 (0.050)
Political interest		-0.607 (0.389)	-0.612 (0.385)	-0.525 (0.385)	-0.538 (0.383)
Conservatism self-assessed		-0.202 (0.273)	-0.102 (0.274)	-0.135 (0.273)	-0.067 (0.274)
Lean Republican		-0.214 (0.270)	-0.223 (0.268)	-0.265 (0.271)	-0.253 (0.269)
Need for closure (NFC)			-0.045** (0.021)		-0.041* (0.021)
Cognitive reflection (CRT)				0.047 (0.091)	0.013 (0.091)
Religiosity self-assessed		-0.085 (0.280)	0.005 (0.280)	0.012 (0.283)	0.063 (0.283)
Attitude*Age		0.009 (0.012)	0.005 (0.012)	0.010 (0.012)	0.006 (0.012)
Attitude*Woman		-0.096 (0.347)	-0.312 (0.352)	-0.286 (0.349)	-0.430 (0.353)
Attitude*Education		-0.132 (0.100)	-0.112 (0.100)	-0.136 (0.099)	-0.119 (0.099)
Attitude*Knowledge		-0.112 (0.083)	-0.093 (0.083)	-0.009 (0.088)	-0.012 (0.088)
Attitude*Interest		0.531 (0.645)	0.491 (0.640)	0.577 (0.638)	0.554 (0.636)
Attitude*Conservatism		0.063 (0.440)	-0.086 (0.439)	-0.210 (0.444)	-0.287 (0.443)
Attitude*Republican		0.256 (0.508)	0.213 (0.504)	0.503 (0.509)	0.421 (0.507)
Attitude*NFC			0.086** (0.033)		0.067** (0.034)
Attitude*CRT				-0.465*** (0.150)	-0.388** (0.154)
Attitude*Religiosity	1.167*** (0.394)	1.174*** (0.452)	0.984** (0.454)	0.880* (0.459)	0.795* (0.461)
Observations	358	357	357	357	357

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01