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Examining the Influence of Political Affiliation and Orientation on Political Tolerance

Christopher R. H. Garneau[1] and Philip Schwadel[2]

Abstract

Political identities are strongly associated with political tolerance. Specifically, previous research shows that American liberals report higher levels of tolerance toward marginalized groups than conservatives. Political orientation, however, varies more among Democrats than Republicans, which might mean that Democrats are relatively diverse in their levels of political tolerance. In this article, the authors ask how the association between political orientation and political tolerance varies across political parties. Using General Social Survey data, the authors find that tolerance is highest among liberals, followed by moderates and conservatives. Regression models with interactions between party and orientation demonstrate that political orientation is consequential for tolerance levels among independents, and especially Democrats, but is far less so for Republicans. Additional analyses demonstrate how the party-contingent association between political orientation and tolerance varies by the outgroup in question. This research demonstrates the complexity of political dimensions when considering support for the rights of marginalized outgroups.

Keywords

political tolerance, political affiliation, political orientation, populism

Social scientists define political tolerance as the willingness to support the civil rights of others, including historically stigmatized groups such as communists, atheists, racists, and gays and lesbians. As a fundamental concept in social science, political tolerance is crucial for the functioning of democracy as it serves as a social metric for the ability of all citizens to engage in civic life. Furthermore, political tolerance is a global concept that transcends party and ideology, and it can be applied more universally than other political measures of social ingroup/outgroup acceptance such as liberalism or authoritarianism (Gibson 2008). In the American context, political tolerance is also pluralistic: "not putting up with" disliked groups is not solely the work of conservatives, and being tolerant is not simply a by-product of professing a left-leaning orientation (Gibson 2008; Sullivan, Pierson, and Marcus 1982). Political tolerance and pluralism are hallmarks of a free society and a buffer against authoritarian backsliding (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018; Walter 2022). To this end, scholarship on political tolerance is important for assessing the vitality of American democracy.

Beginning with Stouffer's ([1955] 1992) seminal work on Americans' attitudes toward communists, a large body of literature has examined the factors that influence political tolerance, including gender (Golebiowska 1999), income (Bobo and Licari 1989; Katnik 2002; Schwadel and Garneau 2017), education (Loftus 2001; Nunn, Crocket, and Williams 1978), religious belief and affiliation (Beatty and Walter 1984; Djupe and Calfano 2013; Schwadel and Garneau 2019), geographic region (Ellison and Musick 1993), and age-period-cohort changes among segments of the American public (Schwadel and Garneau 2014). We build on this body of research by examining the associations between political identities and political tolerance, specifically, how the association between political orientation and tolerance varies across political parties.

Political orientation is the positioning of oneself along an ideological continuum (e.g., liberal, moderate, conservative). Political affiliation, on the other hand, denotes membership in or identification with an organized political party

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(e.g., Democratic or Republican). Although party identification and political orientation often overlap, there is notable variation in political orientation within parties (Carmines and Berkman 1994; Noel 2016; Schiffer 2000). In this article, we consider the complex interplay of political orientation and partisan identification as equally important concepts by using survey data to investigate how the intersections of orientation and partisanship motivate support for the civil rights of outgroups that have been traditionally marginalized in the United States. Following research suggesting that Democrats are quite diverse in terms of orientation and coalition composition (e.g., Coggins and Stimson 2017; Neiheisel 2016; Schiffer 2000), while Republicans have become far more unified in their policy positions (e.g., Hacker and Pierson 2016; Thomsen 2014), we test the overarching hypothesis that political orientation is strongly associated with political tolerance among Democrats but less so among Republicans.

We expand on previous research in four ways using data from the 1976–2018 General Social Survey (GSS). First, we use ordinary least squares regression models to examine differences in political tolerance on the basis of both political orientation (conservative, moderate, liberal) and partisan identification (Republican, independent, Democrat). Second, we model interactions to assess how the associations between political orientation and political tolerance vary by party. Third, we split the sample into two time periods (1976–1998 and 2000–2018) to explore temporal shifts. Finally, we replicate the focal analyses using six tolerance subscales that assess tolerance toward specific outgroups. We conclude with a discussion of how the influences of ideology vary across groups of Americans, by highlighting nuances in measuring political dimensions, and by emphasizing the importance of considering how "political crossovers" affect the way researchers think about political orientation and affiliation in social science scholarship.

An Overview of Political Orientation and Affiliation

Political orientation is the positioning of oneself along an ideological continuum. In the contemporary American context, this generally means that individuals use the terms *liberal*, *moderate*, and *conservative* to best describe their ideological positions on a political spectrum. This spectrum is useful for political actors because it provides a reference to interpret political events in their lives (Robinson and Fleishman 1988). The "left-right" spectrum is especially useful in the modern media age where news cycles change quickly. As Malka and Lelkes (2010) noted, "conservative–liberal identity functions as a readiness to adopt beliefs and attitudes about newly politicized issues that one is told are consistent with the socially prescribed meaning of conservatism–liberalism" (p. 157).

Americans typically derive their political orientation from a set of policy positions that map onto a liberal-moderate-conservative spectrum. Noel (2016) summarizes the basic policy positions of modern American political orientations as follows:

> Liberals favor government economic intervention to encourage equality and labor interests; policies that advantage ethnic, religious, sexual, and racial minorities and disadvantaged groups; women's rights; a multi-lateral and often less militaristic foreign policy.…Conservatives favor free markets, business interests, a color-blind approach to race and ethnic issues, traditional religious and sexual norms, a foreign policy informed by American exceptionalism, and a number of other positions. (p. 168)

In addition to policy alignment, identification with a political orientation is also a symbolic act. Most of the American electorate "derive their ideological self-identification evaluatively through the symbols associated with each of the labels" (Schiffer 2000:297). In other words, for most Americans, political orientation is largely symbolic; identifying with an orientation such as "liberal" or "conservative" reflects a positive connotation of the self-identified label (Conover and Feldman 1981).

According to a poll in May 2020 (Gallup 2020), a small plurality of Americans (36 percent) identifies as politically moderate, followed closely by those who self-identify as conservative (34 percent), with fewer identifying as liberal (26 percent). Although political liberals constitute the smallest group on the political continuum, support for liberal policies in the United States is much higher (Coggins and Stimson 2017). The discrepancy between liberal identity and support for liberal policies potentially stems from the stigmatization of the term *liberal* (Neiheisel 2016; Schiffer 2000).

In contrast to political orientation, political affiliation denotes membership in or identification with an organized political party (e.g., Democratic or Republican). Party membership reflects the perspectives and attitudes of the electorate (Noel 2016). Individuals in a democratic political system cognitively orient themselves on a left-right spectrum that then informs their views on social issues and party support when they vote (Conover and Feldman 1981). In the contemporary American political system, this often leads left-oriented individuals to identify as Democrat and right-oriented individuals to identify as Republican. Nonetheless, research suggests that partisan identities are constructed from social coalitions that represent a wide array of interests spanning from economic and social positions to minority and worker rights (Bawn et al. 2012; Noel 2016).

Political Orientation/Affiliation and Political Tolerance

Popular conceptions of the American political landscape suggest that liberals are more tolerant than conservatives,

and Democrats are more tolerant than Republicans. Empirical research provides some support for these assumptions. Research on the psychological dimensions of politics and tolerance show that support for authoritarianism and social dominance (preference for hierarchy vs. equality) correlate with political conservatism (Van Hiel and Mervielde 2002) and party affiliation (Satherly, Sibley, and Osborne 2020).

Moral boundaries also have consequences for political expression and tolerance. Edgell, Gerteis, and Hartmann (2006) found that Americans show significantly less tolerance for groups (such as atheists) that fall outside of society's acceptable moral boundaries, and conservatives are far more stringent than liberals with their boundaries for acceptable ingroups (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek 2009; Sibley and Duckitt 2008). Conservatives also have stronger preferences for things they perceive as familiar, stable, and predictable (Jost, Nosek, and Gosling 2008). Additionally, compared with liberals, conservatives are more on guard against potential threats to social order and they are more to likely support limitations on personal liberties in exchange for security (Altemeyer 1996). Liberals, on the other hand, are relatively likely to tolerate both extreme left- and right-wing groups (Sniderman et al. 1989). Liberals are also more likely than conservatives to protect speech directed against marginalized groups (e.g., Linder and Nosek 2009). Given the consistency in prior research demonstrating greater tolerance of liberals relative to conservatives, we hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Compared with political liberals, moderates and especially conservatives demonstrate lower overall levels of political tolerance.

Although there is less explicit work on how partisanship affects tolerance, research suggests important distinctions on the basis of party preference. For instance, the demographic makeup of both Democratic and Republican Party coalitions suggest that Democrats are more tolerant than Republicans. As noted earlier, partisan identifications emerge from coalitions (Noel 2016), and the coalition groups that constitute the Democratic Party are often more tolerant than Republican coalitions. Some Democratic-based coalitions that have shown higher levels of tolerance in prior research include women (Golebiowska 1999), the religiously unaffiliated (Schwadel and Garneau 2019), and those with higher levels of education (Bobo and Licari 1989; Schwadel and Garneau 2017). Conversely, Republican-friendly groups tend to demonstrate lower levels of political tolerance, including men (Golebiowska 1999), older Americans (Schwadel and Garneau 2014), southern residents (Ellison and Musick 1993), and those with conservative religious affiliations or worldviews (Beatty and Walter 1984; Davis and Perry 2018; Djupe and Calfano 2013; Froese, Bader, and Smith 2018; Schwadel and Garneau 2019).

Party leadership and coalition messaging further suggest that tolerance toward outgroups varies by partisan identification. In the past half century, the Democratic Party has openly used identity politics to signal its allegiance to a broad coalition of groups such as women (Pimlott 2010), racial minorities (Carmines and Stimson 1989), gays and lesbians (Frank 2017), and the nonreligious (Claassen 2015). Conversely, Republican leadership and candidates often use language that negatively portrays marginalized groups such as Muslims (Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner), immigrants (Brown 2016), racial minorities (Bonilla-Silva 2013; Carmines and Stimson 1989; Hacker and Pierson 2016), and gays and lesbians (Fetner 2008). Taken together, the research on party leadership shows that whereas Democratic leadership promotes tolerance toward stigmatized groups, Republican leadership has used strategies to distance their constituents from traditionally stigmatized groups. Thus, we hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 2: Compared with Democrats, Republicans exhibit lower levels of political tolerance.

Not All Democrats Are Liberal and Not All Republicans Are Conservative

Although political orientation is associated with party preference, there is a notable amount of interparty variation in orientation, especially among Democrats. In fact, there is a sizable proportion of Americans who identify as either conservative Democrats or liberal Republicans, whom we refer to as "political crossovers." Our analysis using GSS data shows that at the aggregate (1976–2018), 21 percent of Democrats identify as conservative and 13 percent of Republicans identify as liberal. Although the proportion of Republicans who identify as liberal decreased in the decades leading up to the turn of the twenty-first century, the proportion of Democrats who consider themselves conservative remained relatively stable (Schiffer 2000). As Figure 1 shows, about a quarter (24 percent) of Democrats identified as conservative from 1976 to 1998. Although this declined in the twenty-first century, still 16 percent of Democrats considered themselves conservative from 2000 to 2018, and another 38 percent identified as moderate. In contrast, by the twenty-first century, only 9 percent of Republicans identified as liberal, a decline from 16 percent from 1976 to 1998.

Research shows that conservative Democrats are unique to the electorate in a few ways. They are often ideologically consistent with Republicans on many policy positions but use the label *Democrat* as a symbolic political identity to connect with coalitions within the Democratic party (Carmines and Berkman 1994). For example, they may identify with the Democratic party on the basis of geographic residence, social class, or union membership even though they are ideologically more conservative. Carmines and

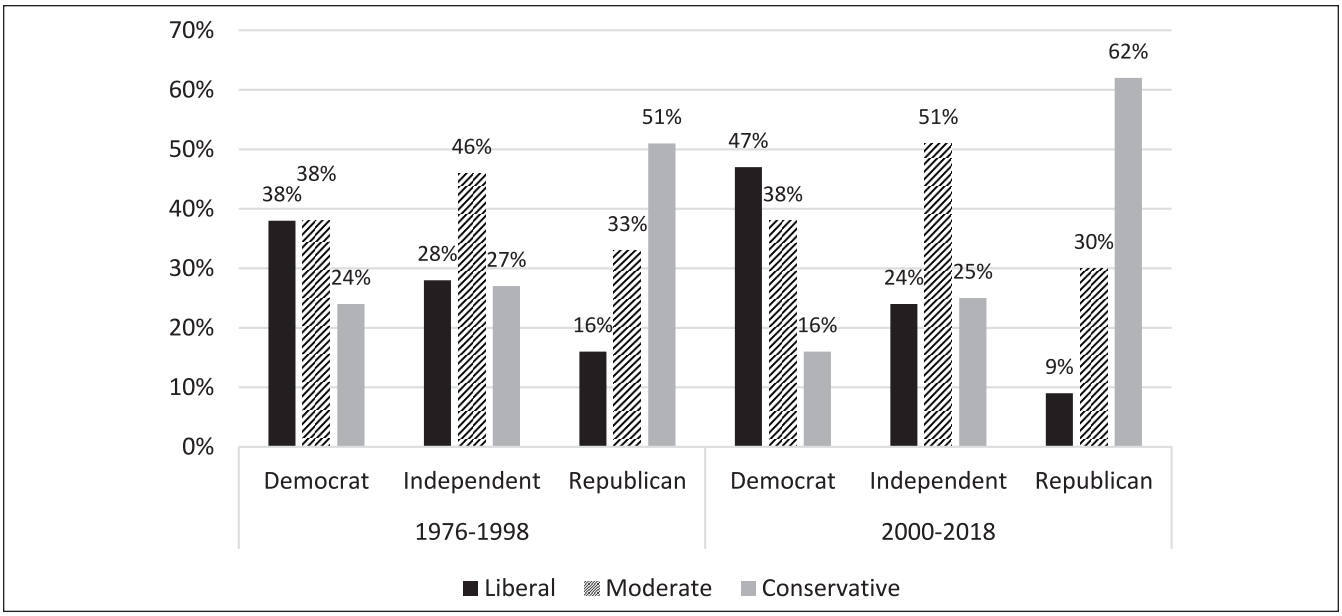


Figure 1. Political orientation by party, 1976 to 1998 and 2000 to 2018.

Berkman (1994) asserted that "conservative Democrats identify their party with the working class and economically and socially underprivileged and disadvantaged groups, while they identify Republicans with big business, Wall Street, and the well-to-do" (p. 216).

In addition to divergent ideological perspectives, some Democrats may self-identify as moderate or even conservative because of the growing stigmatization of the term *liberal* over the past few decades (Coggins and Stimson 2017; Neiheisel 2016). This trend is even more prevalent for southern Democrats (Schiffer 2000). Republican voters and politicians have increasingly used the "L word" to denigrate Democrats politically, and in response, Democratic candidates have largely retreated from self-identifying as liberal while campaigning (Neiheisel 2016; Schiffer 2000). Coggins and Stimson (2017) asserted that the *liberal* label derives its negative connotation from divisive identity politics that focus on issues of race, religion, and feminism despite the popularity of liberal policies such as Medicare and Social Security.

Conservative Democrats Hold a Unique Historical Position in American Politics

Research suggests that conservative Democrats have maintained a "populist DNA" that dates to the late nineteenth century. Historically, the strongest elements of populist movements in the United States have been predominantly (although not exclusively) associated with the Democratic Party (Frank 2005, 2017; Goodwyn 1978; Howell and Moe 2020; McMath 1993; Nicholson and Segura 2012). Beginning with the nomination of populist candidate William Jennings Bryan in the 1896 presidential election, the Democratic Party developed a progressive economic agenda that advocated for labor rights along with the use of government to curtail the power of big business (Goodwyn 1978; McMath 1993), a cornerstone idea of the Democratic Party that persisted through the New Deal era up until the southern realignment in the 1960s (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Frank 2020).

The populist faction of the Democratic Party was uniquely intolerant, as their economic positions stemmed from politics of resentment that targeted minorities and immigrants, even as the more progressive wing brought socially liberal ideas into the party during the civil rights era (Frank 2017; Howell and Moe 2020). The notion that populist-oriented Democrats are intolerant is supported by research highlighting key elements of populism, which include authoritarianism and nativism (Howell and Moe 2020; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018; Norris and Inglehart 2019). Furthermore, supporters of American populism tend to be working class, rural, religiously adherent, and less educated and are more likely to be union members (Carmines and Berkman 1994; Frank 2017; Howell and Moe 2020; McMath 1993), all characteristics that would be typical of Democrats in the first half of the twentieth century (Carmines and Berkman 1994). Although the Democratic Party maintained an economically progressive platform through much of the twentieth century, the southern, rural (and agrarian) faction of the party was overwhelmingly culturally conservative (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Hacker and Pierson 2016; Howell and Moe 2020).

Regardless of whether they identify as populists, contemporary conservative Democrats adhere to populist principles (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Frank 2017, 2020; Schiffer 2000). Empirical research on conservative Democrats lends

support to the notion that they carry populist sentiments that are both culturally conservative and economically progressive. Carmines and Berkman (1994), for example, found that conservative Democrats were more likely than other Democrats to express conservative cultural values such as support for military spending, opposition to abortion, and opposition to more government assistance to minorities. When it comes to economic issues such as the government providing jobs and related services, conservative Democrats' views align more with other Democrats than they do with Republicans (Schiffer 2000). Despite recent claims that populism in American politics has moved to the right (e.g., Howell and Moe 2020; Norris and Inglehart 2019), research shows that most Americans still view the Democratic Party as "the people's party" (Nicholson and Segura 2012). Overall, the populist roots of conservative Democrats likely make them uniquely intolerant. Furthermore, for Democrats, party identity is often linked to group and coalition membership and less about left-right positioning (Noel 2016), and conservative Democrats' perspectives on tolerance are probably more in line with those of other conservatives. Consequently, we hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 3: Conservative Democrats are less tolerant than liberal and moderate Democrats.

In contrast to Democrats' relative diversity in political orientations, Republicans have increasingly embraced the conservative label (Coggins and Stimson 2017; Schiffer 2000). Political polarization between the two parties is well documented, but this polarization has been asymmetrical, with Republicans becoming consistently more conservative (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Hacker and Pierson 2016; Howell and Moe 2020; Thomsen 2014). This trend is reflected in electoral politics as the movement of Republican lawmakers to the right has been largely attributed to a growing conservative base that has pulled Republican candidates further away from the ideological center (Hacker and Pierson 2016; Howell and Moe 2020). Republican constituents coalescing on the right is also associated the Republican Party's connections to conservative, sectarian Christianity (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018; Phillips 2007; Schwadel 2017). Although the Democratic Party remains a party of more diverse orientations and coalitions, Republicans have become more politically homogenous. The research on asymmetrical polarization (Bartels 2016; Noel 2016; Thomsen 2014) and Republican identity convergence (Coggins and Stimson 2017; Schiffer 2000) suggests that conservative, moderate, and liberal Republicans likely agree on policies and attitudes far more than Democrats, and this trend should also extend to political tolerance. Thus, we hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 4: Liberal and moderate Republicans are not notably less tolerant than conservative Republicans.

Our analysis incorporates two additional considerations. First, the American political landscape has changed greatly over the past half century, largely because of polarization and party realignment (Carmines and Berkman 1994; Carmines and Stimson 1989; Frank 2005; Noel 2016; Thomsen 2014). Moreover, differences in political tolerance between social groups often change over time (Schwadel and Garneau 2017, 2019). Consequently, we account for temporal shifts in our analyses. Second, tolerance levels differ by the stigmatized outgroup in question (Davis and Perry 2020; Schwadel and Garneau 2014). Political affiliations and orientations are often composed of group coalitions (Noel 2016), which could predispose them to support the rights of ingroup members more than the rights of those not well represented in their coalition. Thus, we conduct additional analyses to test for differences in tolerance toward various stigmatized outgroups, representing those popularly associated with the left (e.g., atheists) and the right (e.g., militarists).

Data and Methods

We use data from the 1976–2018 GSS. The GSS is a nationally representative survey of noninstitutionalized adults living in the United States. The survey has been administered annually or biennially since 1972. The full battery of questions about political tolerance (not including tolerance of Muslims) was added to the GSS in 1976, though it was not included in the 1978, 1983, and 1986 surveys.[1] The survey is administered primarily in person. The response rate ranges between 59 percent and 82 percent according to Response Rate 5 as defined by the American Association for Public Opinion Research. After deleting cases with missing data,[2] the sample size is 25,624. When examining the tolerance subscales using the 2008–2018 surveys, the sample size is 6,377.

The focal dependent variable is a political tolerance scale that includes tolerance of five outgroups: gays and lesbians, communists, antireligionists, racists, and militarists. Respondents are asked if they approve of each of those groups making public speeches (0 = no, 1 = yes) and teaching in colleges and universities (0 = no, 1 = yes) and if they

[1]The political tolerance questions were included on every survey since 1988, though only a subset of respondents were asked the questions on political tolerance since 1988 (they were included on two of three ballots each year).

[2]There are 29,381 respondents who provided valid responses to the political tolerance, political party, and political orientation questions. Excluding family income, there are only 307 cases with missing data on the control variables. Another 2,259 cases are missing data on family income. The mean of the political tolerance scale is lower for those with missing data on income (.605) than for those without missing data on income (.663). Those with missing data on income (45 percent) are also less likely than those without missing data (50 percent) to affiliate with the Democratic Party. Finally, those with missing data on income (24 percent) are less likely than those without missing data (29 percent) to identify as liberal.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

	Mean	*SD*	Cronbach's α
Political tolerance scale	.659	.316	.913
Antireligionist tolerance subscale[a]	2.254	1.011	.680
Homosexual tolerance subscale[a]	2.588	.863	.783
Racist tolerance subscale[a]	1.764	1.174	.727
Communist tolerance subscale[a]	2.116	1.149	.788
Militarist tolerance subscale[a]	2.069	1.153	.779
Muslim tolerance subscale[a]	1.361	1.280	.827
Republican	.400		
Independent/other	.139		
Democrat	.501		
Conservative	.337		
Moderate	.371		
Liberal	.292		
Age	45.059	16.856	
Female	.536		
African American	.137		
Other race	.055		
White	.808		
Bachelor's degree	.252		
Family income	10.390	.983	
Married	.522		
Children in home	.362		
Large urban	.227		
Small urban	.380		
Suburban	.270		
Rural	.123		
South	.354		

Note: $N = 25{,}624$.
[a]$N = 6{,}377$ for subscales.

favor removing books by the group from public libraries (0 = remove, 1 = do not remove). The political tolerance scale is an additive scale of all 15 variables, which is divided by 15 so that the scale ranges between 0 (nontolerant on all measures) and 1 (tolerant on all measures). Cronbach's α for the scale is .913 (descriptive statistics for all variables are reported in Table 1). The questions about tolerance of Muslims were not added to the survey until 2008 and thus were not included in the overall political tolerance scale. Additional analyses examine six outgroup-specific tolerance scales, including tolerance of Muslims, using the 2008–2018 surveys. Each outgroup-specific scale consists of the three variables (allow speech, allow teach, do not remove books) about a specific outgroup, and ranges from zero for intolerance on all three measures to three for tolerance on all three measures (Cronbach's α ranges between .680 and .827). Although not without problems, which we address in the "Discussion" section, these items are regularly used in empirical research on political tolerance (e.g., Schafer and Shaw 2009; Schwadel and Garneau 2014). Moreover, analyzing smaller political groups, such as liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats, requires a large sample, and few surveys with large samples include measures of political tolerance.

The key independent variables assess political party and political orientation. Political party is a three-category categorical variable contrasting Democrats (includes strong Democrat, not strong Democrat, and independent near Democrat), independents or affiliates of other parties, and Republicans (includes strong Republican, not strong Republican, and independent near Republican). We group "leaners" (i.e., "near Democrat" and "near Republican") with their Democrat and Republican counterparts because most leaners' views on social issues are similar to those in the party they lean toward (Pew Research Center 2019a). Political orientation is also a three-category categorical variable, which contrasts liberals (extremely liberal, liberal, and slightly liberal), moderates, and conservatives (extremely conservative, conservative, and slightly conservative). We condense the original seven-category orientation measure into these three categories for both theoretical and empirical reasons. Empirically, very relatively few Republicans identify as extremely liberal (in our full sample, $n = 83$, or .9 percent of Republicans) and few Democrats identify as extremely conservative (in our full sample, $n = 263$, or 2.1 percent of Democrats). These cell sizes are even smaller when we examine tolerance subscales using the 2008–2018 data (e.g., only 15 Republicans identify as extremely liberal). Theoretically, identification as liberal or conservative has symbolic meaning—it is a "a declaration of group loyalty" (Conover and Feldman 1981:623)—that should apply regardless of the degree of liberalness or conservativeness with which one identifies. Liberal is a particularly unpopular label (Coggins and Stimson 2017), suggesting that the social, cultural, and political connotations of being liberal apply to those who identify as extremely liberal, liberal, and even slightly liberal.

All models include controls for age, race, sex, education, family income, marital status, children in the home, city size, and region. Dummy variables for African American, white, and other race respondents assess race. Age is a continuous variable (18–89 years) that is centered on the mean. Preliminary models included age-squared to assess nonlinear age effects. Age squared was not significant and is thus not included in the final models. Sex is a dummy variable indicating female respondents. A dummy variable for those with a bachelor's degree is used to measure education. Family income is coded in constant (year 2000) dollars and logged to adjust for the skewed distribution. Dummy variables for currently married respondents and those with children younger than 18 living in their homes gauge household composition and family formation. Dummy variables for large urban (100 largest standard metropolitan statistical areas), suburban (suburbs of 100 largest standard metropolitan

statistical areas), and rural areas control for city size, with smaller urban areas as the reference category. A dummy variable for respondents living in the South census region is used to control for regional variation.

Ordinary least squares regression models are used to examine the overall political tolerance scale. Ordinal logistic regression models are used to examine the four-category tolerance subscales. All models are weighted and conducted in Stata. The models include dummy variables for the moderate, conservative, independent, and Republican categories of the categorical political orientation and party variables using the .i function in Stata (liberal and Democrat are the omitted reference categories). The full factorial interaction (##) option in Stata is used to assess how the effects of political orientation vary by party. The postestimation margins command is used to estimate political tolerance for relevant groups, with other variables set at their means. To ease interpretation, figures depict political tolerance estimates with 95 percent confidence intervals on the basis of the regression models. The first results section presents findings for the overall political tolerance scale using the 1976–2018 GSS and then separately for the 1976–1998 and 2000–2018 surveys. The second results section presents findings for the outgroup-specific tolerance subscales using the 2008–2018 GSS.

Results

Overall Political Tolerance Scale

Given our focus on how the association between political orientation and tolerance varies by party, we begin by examining how political orientation varies within party. As Figure 1 shows, about half of independents identify as moderate, and the other half are close to evenly split between liberal and conservative. As expected, Republicans are relatively unlikely to be liberal, and Democrats are relatively unlikely to be conservative. Nonetheless, there is notable intraparty variation in political orientation, especially among Democrats. From 1976 to 1998, about a quarter of Democrats considered themselves conservative and 16 percent of Republicans considered themselves liberal. The connection between party and orientation became stronger in the twenty-first century. From 2000 to 2018, 16 percent of Democrats identified as conservative and 9 percent of Republicans identified as liberal. Overall, although there is a clear association between party and political orientation, partisans are not uniform in their political orientations.

Models of the overall political tolerance scale using the 1976–2018 GSS are shown in Table 2. Democrat is the omitted reference group for party, and liberal is the omitted reference group for political orientation. Model 2A includes party but not political orientation. As this model shows, Republicans ($b = –.011$) are moderately less politically tolerant than Democrats, and independents ($b = .043$) are markedly more politically tolerant than Democrats. Model 2B includes political orientation but not party. This model shows that moderates ($b = –.055$) and especially conservatives ($b = –.073$) are less politically tolerant than liberals. Model 2C includes both party and orientation. When political orientation is in the model, the coefficient for Republican switches directions. All else being equal, Republicans are moderately more politically tolerant than Democrats ($b = .011$). In contrast, the coefficients for political orientation do not change much when party is added to the model. These results suggest that Democrats' relatively high level of political tolerance is tied to their liberal and moderate political orientations. The control variables show that older adults, women, nonwhites, those who are married and/or have children in the home, rural Americans, and southerners are relatively politically intolerant, whereas the college educated, those with higher family incomes, and urban and suburban Americans are relatively politically tolerant.

Model 2D in Table 2 includes interactions between political party and orientation. The interactions indicate that the negative association between a conservative orientation and political tolerance ($b = –.123$) is reduced for Republicans ($b = .110$) and independents ($b = .061$). Similarly, the negative association between a moderate orientation and tolerance ($b = –.077$) is reduced for Republicans ($b = .055$) and independents ($b = .057$). Figure 2 depicts estimated political tolerance for liberal, moderate, and conservative Republicans, independents, and Democrats on the basis of model 2D. As this figure shows, political orientation has a strong, negative association with political tolerance among Democrats: estimated political tolerance is .71 for liberal Democrats, .63 for moderate Democrats, and .59 for conservative Democrats. Among independents, political orientation has a smaller but notable association with tolerance: estimated tolerance is .72 for liberal independents, .70 for moderate independents, and .66 for conservative independents. Among Republicans, political orientation has a negligible but significant association with tolerance, with liberal Republicans (.66) being slightly more tolerant than moderate Republicans (.64) but not any different from conservative Republicans (.65).

To assess change over time, Table 3 reports models of political tolerance separately for the 1976–1998 and 2000–2018 data. These models include the same control variables as the models in Table 2 (control variable results not shown). In both time periods, with political orientation in the models, Republican is not significantly associated with political tolerance. Independents are more politically tolerant than Democrats in both time periods, though more so from 1976 to 1998 ($b = .042$) than 2000 to 2018 ($b = .030$). Similarly, conservatives ($b = –.082$ from 1976 to 1998 and $b = –.069$ from 2000 to 2009) and moderates ($b = –.070$ from 1976 to 1998 and $b = –.043$ from 2000 to 2018) are les tolerant than liberals in both time periods, though the coefficients are larger in the 1976–1998 model.

Although the main effects of party and political orientation appear to decline some over time, the interactions between

Table 2. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Models of Political Tolerance, 1976 to 2018.

	Model 2A		Model 2B		Model 2C		Model 2D	
	b	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*
Republican[a]	−.011	.004*			.011	.005*	−.052	.009***
Independent/other[a]	.043	.006***			.053	.006***	.013	.010
Conservative[b]			−.073	.005***	−.077	.005***	−.123	.008***
× Republican[a]							.110	.012***
× Independent/other[a]							.061	.016***
Moderate[b]			−.055	.005***	−.059	.005***	−.077	.006***
× Republican[a]							.055	.012***
× Independent/other[a]							.057	.013***
Age	−.004	.000***	−.004	.000***	−.004	.000***	−.004	.000***
Female	−.010	.004*	−.011	.004**	−.010	.004**	−.010	.004*
African American[c]	−.072	.007***	−.078	.006***	−.072	.007***	−.071	.007***
Other race[c]	−.100	.009***	−.098	.009***	−.099	.009***	−.098	.008***
Bachelor's degree	.180	.004***	.172	.004***	.173	.004***	.168	.004***
Family income	.044	.002***	.043	.002***	.044	.002***	.043	.002***
Married	−.047	.004***	−.043	.004***	−.043	.004***	−.043	.004***
Children in home	−.027	.005***	−.025	.005***	−.025	.005***	−.025	.005***
Large urban[d]	.020	.005***	.016	.005**	.016	.005**	.015	.005**
Suburban[d]	.036	.005***	.035	.005***	.035	.005***	.034	.005***
Rural[d]	−.053	.007***	−.053	.007***	−.053	.007***	−.053	.007***
South	−.074	.004***	−.071	.004***	−.071	.004***	−.070	.004***
Constant	.227	.024***	.280	.024***	.265	.024***	.291	.024***
R^2	.194		.200		.203		.207	

Note: $N = 25{,}624$.
[a]Democrat is the omitted reference category.
[b]Liberal is the omitted reference category.
[c]White is the omitted reference category.
[d]Small urban is the omitted reference category.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, and ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

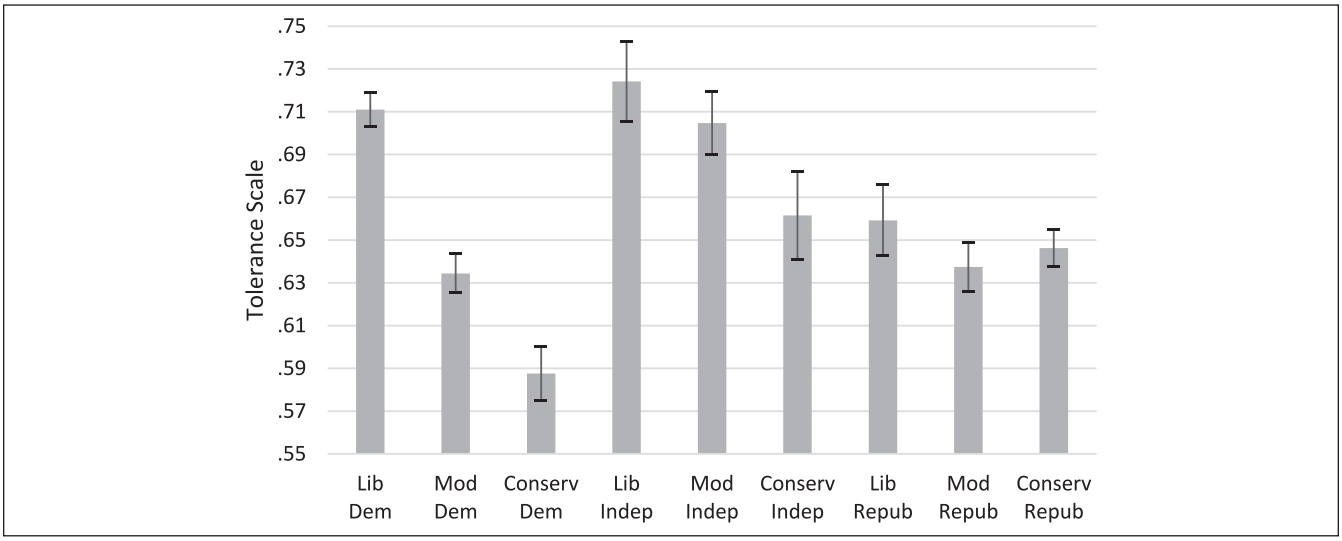


Figure 2. Estimated political tolerance scale by party and political orientation, 1976–2018.
Note: The figure is based on results from model 2D in Table 2; bars indicate 95 percent confidence intervals.

party and orientation become more consistent and robust over time. In the 1976–1998 model, the interactions between political orientations and Republican are significant but the interactions between political orientations and independent are not. These results are depicted in Figure 3a. Among Democrats from 1976 to 1998, estimated tolerance for

Table 3. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Models of Political Tolerance, 1976 to 1998 and 2000 to 2018.

	1976–1998		1976–1998		2000–2018		2000–2018	
	b	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*
Republican[a]	.006	.006	−.036	.011**	.003	.008	−.073	.168***
Independent/other[a]	.042	.008***	.021	.015	.030	.008***	−.014	.014
Conservative[b]	−.082	.007***	−.110	.009***	−.069	.008***	−.123	.013***
× Republican[a]			.073	.015***			.127	.022***
× Independent/other[a]			.025	.022			.079	.023***
Moderate[b]	−.070	.006***	−.082	.008***	−.043	.007***	−.062	.009***
× Republican[a]			.037	.015*			.073	.021***
× Independent/other[a]			.035	.019			.061	.019***
R^2	.234		.236		.171		.176	
n	15,249		15,249		10,375		10,375	

Note: Models control for age, sex, race, education, family income, marital status, children in the home, city size, and region.
[a]Democrat is the omitted reference category.
[b]Liberal is the omitted reference category.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, and ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

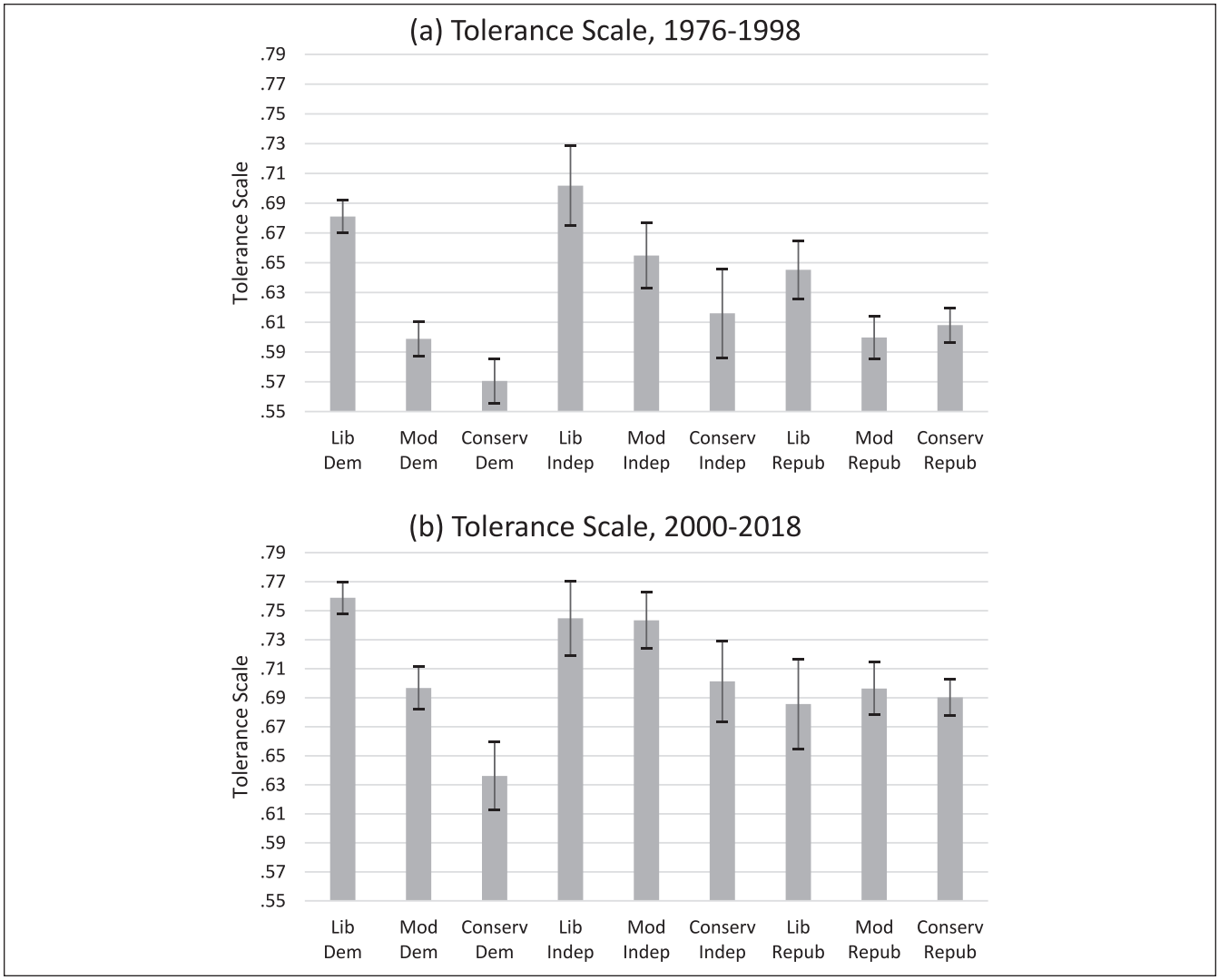


Figure 3. Estimated political tolerance scale by party and political orientation, 1976 to 1998 and 2000 to 2018.
Note: The figure is based on results from models in Table 3; bars indicate 95 percent confidence intervals.

Table 4. Odds Ratios from Ordinal Regression Models of Political Tolerance Subscales, 2008 to 2018.

	Antireligionists				Homosexuals			
Republican[a]	.725***		.930	.530***	.665***		.896	.656
Independent/other[a]	1.134		1.286**	.963	.934		1.057	.776
Conservative[b]		.527***	.544***	.434***		.451***	.475***	.387***
× Republican[a]				2.104***				1.652
× Independent/other[a]				1.440				1.439
Moderate[b]		.686***	.673***	.578***		.693***	.699***	.642***
× Republican[a]				1.877**				1.251
× Independent/other[a]				1.528*				1.529
	Racists				Communists			
Republican[a]	1.059		1.177*	.917	.738***		.941	.509***
Independent/other[a]	1.420***		1.510***	1.291	1.117		1.272**	.881
Conservative[b]		.870*	.790**	.621***		.539***	.553***	.419***
× Republican[a]				1.639*				2.284***
× Independent/other[a]				1.535				1.812*
Moderate[b]		.895	.824**	.800**		.682***	.669***	.566***
× Republican[a]				1.222				2.050**
× Independent/other[a]				1.163				1.605*
	Militarists				Muslims			
Republican[a]	.882		1.059	.562**	.803***		1.049	.480***
Independent/other[a]	1.164		1.276**	.880	1.085		1.262**	.863
Conservative[b]		.674***	.652***	.497***		.565***	.549***	.364***
× Republican[a]				2.280***				3.172***
× Independent/other[a]				1.918**				1.923**
Moderate[b]		.776***	.746***	.622***		.651***	.627***	.514***
× Republican[a]				2.207***				2.394***
× Independent/other[a]				1.610*				1.748**

Note: Models control for age, sex, race, education, family income, marital status, children in the home, city size, and region; $n = 6{,}377$.
[a]Democrat is the omitted reference category.
[b]Liberal is the omitted reference category.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, and ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

liberals (.68) is considerably higher than for moderates (.60), and moderates are somewhat more tolerant than conservatives (.57). The pattern is similar for independents, with liberals (.70) being more tolerant than moderates (.65), and moderates being somewhat more tolerant than conservatives (.62). For Republicans from 1976 to 1998, the difference in political tolerance between moderates and conservatives is not significant, but liberal Republicans are more tolerant than other Republicans. As Figure 3b shows, from 2000 to 2018, differences in tolerance among Democrats remain large: .76 for liberals, .70 for moderates, and .64 for conservatives. In contrast, liberal and moderate independents no longer differ from one another from 2000 to 2018, though conservative independents are less tolerant than other independents, and there is no significant difference in tolerance between liberal, moderate, and conservative Republicans from 2000 to 2018. Overall, the models in Tables 2 and 3 show that political orientation is more relevant to political tolerance for Democrats than for independents and especially Republicans, and these differences across parties are greater from 2000 to 2018 than from 1976 to 1998.

Political Tolerance Subscales, 2008-2018

Table 4 reports odds ratios from ordinal logistic regression models of each of the political tolerance subscales using the 2008–2018 data. All models include the same control variables as the previous models (control variable results not shown).

When political orientation is not in the model, Republican is negatively associated with tolerance of antireligionists, homosexuals, communists, and Muslims but not tolerance of racists and militarists. This suggests that partisan differences in political tolerance are dependent on the outgroup in question. The negative associations between Republican affiliation and tolerance of antireligionists, homosexuals, communists, and Muslims are fully mediated by political orientation. Conservatives are less politically tolerant than liberals in the models of all six subscales, and moderates are

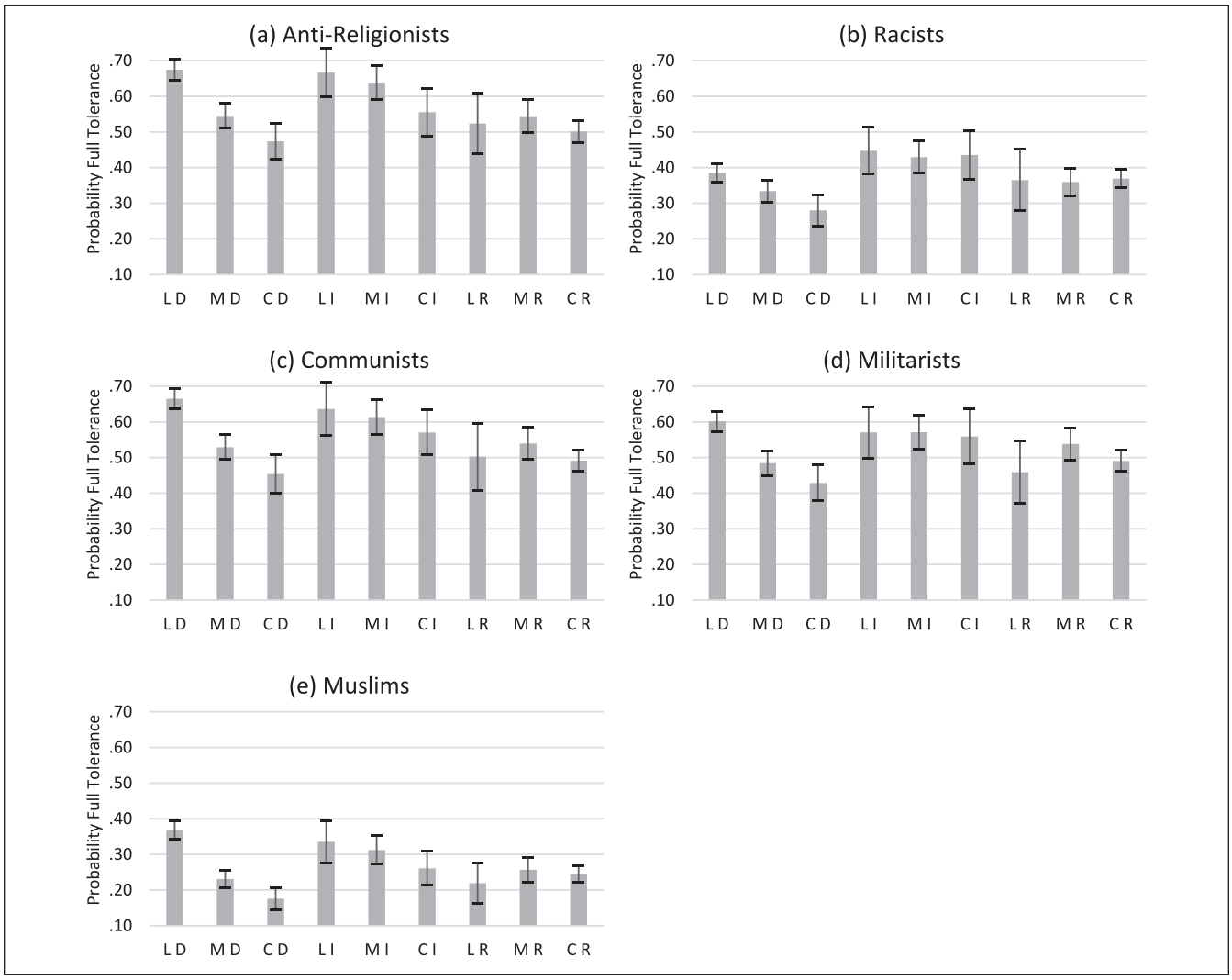


Figure 4. Estimated probability full tolerance on subscales by party and political orientation, 2008 to 2018.

Note: The figure is based on results from models in Table 4 and shows the probability of a 3 on 0-to-3 tolerance subscales. CD = conservative Democrat; CI = conservative independent; CR = conservative Republican; LD = liberal Democrat; LI = liberal independent; LR = liberal Republican; MD = moderate Democrat; MI = moderate independent; MR = moderate Republican. Bars indicate 95 percent confidence intervals.

less tolerant than liberals on each subscale except tolerance of racists. The associations between political orientation and tolerance subscales are not moderated much by party, and in some cases, such as tolerance of racists, are stronger when party is included in the model.

All four interactions between party and political orientation are significant in the models of tolerance of communists, militarists, and Muslims; three of the four interactions are significant in the model of tolerance of antireligionists; and the interaction between conservative and Republican is significant in the model of tolerance of racists. None of the interactions are significant in the model of tolerance of homosexuals. In other words, unlike the other five subscales, the association between political orientation and tolerance of homosexuals does not vary by party.

Figure 4 depicts the interactions from Table 4 (there is no frame for tolerance of homosexuals because the interactions are not significant). The figure shows the predicted probability of full tolerance (3 on the 0–3 subscale) for each subscale. As Figure 4a shows, liberal Democrats (probability = .67) are more likely than moderate (.55) and especially conservative Democrats (.47) to support antireligionists' civil rights. Liberal (.67) and moderate (.64) independents are both more tolerant of anti-religionists than are conservative independents (.56). In contrast, political orientation is unrelated to tolerance of antireligionists among Republicans. When it comes to tolerance of racists and militarists (Figures 4b and 4d), political orientation is associated with tolerance among Democrats but not among either independents or Republicans. Similarly, for tolerance of communists and Muslims (Figures 4c and 4e),

political orientation is primarily relevant for Democrats. Still, conservative independents are moderately less tolerant of communists than are liberal independents, and they are moderately less tolerant of Muslims than are both liberal and moderate independents. Overall, the results in Table 4 and Figure 4 indicate that for Democrats, political orientation is strongly associated with tolerance of all six outgroups. In contrast, political orientation is unrelated to tolerance of five of the six outgroups (all except homosexuals) for Republicans. For independents, political orientation matters for tolerance of some groups but not others.

Discussion and Conclusions

The GSS data clearly show that political crossovers are more commonly found among Democrats than Republicans, which supports previous research on political partisanship and orientation (e.g., Schiffer 2000). As Republicans increasingly consolidate ideologically (Hacker and Pierson 2016), Democrats remain somewhat disparate in their orientations. This aligns with work noting that the polarization of American politics has been asymmetrical (e.g., Bartels 2016; Hacker and Pierson 2016; Noel 2016; Thomsen 2014). We also find that political orientation is highly consequential for political tolerance, which supports hypothesis 1 and is in line with previous research on political tolerance (e.g., Satherly et al. 2020). Liberals are far more tolerant than conservatives. This comports with work in political psychology that suggests that conservatives exhibit higher levels of prejudice because of general agreement with authoritarianism and social dominance (Sidanius, Pratto, and Bobo 1996; Van Hiel and Mervielde 2002). Going beyond previous research, we show that these robust associations between political orientations and tolerance do not apply equally to Republicans, Democrats, and independents.

Results for the associations between party affiliation and political tolerance are not nearly as straightforward. Baseline results demonstrate that Democrats are slightly more tolerant than Republicans. This relationship, however, flips direction when orientation is included in the model, indicating that Republicans are slightly more tolerant than Democrats. Thus, we find mixed support for hypothesis 2: Republicans are less tolerant than Democrats, as we hypothesized, but not when we control for differences in political orientation. This finding suggests that the higher levels of tolerance among Democrats are driven by their disproportionately liberal and moderate orientations, not their party affiliation. Additionally, the results show that independents are uniquely tolerant compared with partisans, a finding we discuss in greater detail later in this section.

The most remarkable finding is that a conservative political orientation is negatively associated with tolerance among Democrats but has very little association with tolerance among Republicans. In other words, tolerance levels are highly disparate between liberal and conservative Democrats (supporting hypothesis 3), yet Republicans are relatively uniform in their tolerance levels, regardless of their orientations (supporting hypothesis 4). We believe these interaction results help explain why fully controlled models show that Democrats are less tolerant than Republicans overall. Although liberal Democrats exhibit high levels of tolerance, conservative Democrats are the least tolerant political group in the analyses. Indeed, conservative Democrats are less tolerant than Republicans, regardless of Republicans' political orientation. Although these findings reflect literature documenting a more ideologically uniform Republican party (Bartels 2016; Hacker and Pierson 2016; Noel 2016; Thomsen 2014), they are particularly relevant for explaining how tolerance is shaped by intersecting political identities. The large impact of political orientation among Democrats and negligible impact among Republicans may be specific to political tolerance due to continued political divergence among Democratic Party coalitions with different goals (Pew Research Center 2021). For example, it is not surprising to find high levels of tolerance among liberal coalitions in the Democratic Party that are concerned about minority rights and expanding the electorate. Conversely, more moderate and conservative coalition members in the Democratic Party such as union workers may be hesitant about expanding rights to immigrants and other groups who could be viewed as economic competition. Highly disparate coalitions that foster different levels of tolerance commonly found in the Democratic Party are likely not as prevalent for the modern Republican Party, which is becoming more uniform and ideologically conservative. These findings are more intuitive when considering how political orientation and affiliation differ. Liberal or conservative orientation is about how people see themselves on an ideological spectrum, while affiliation is more connected to group identity. The Democratic Party is far more diverse in general (Pew Research Center 2021), so it is not surprising to see such divergent worldviews among its members. Meanwhile, the relative homogeneity of the Republican Party likely limits the breadth and influence of political orientation on issues of tolerance.

The above findings align with prior research that emphasizes the unique position of conservative Democrats as ideologically very conservative while maintaining their Democratic affiliation, largely because of social positioning and political coalitions (Carmines and Berkman 1994; Noel 2016). Although we have clearly shown that conservative Democrats are particularly intolerant, additional research is needed to assess why they have uniquely low tolerance levels, even relative to conservative Republicans. This may be a holdover from prior eras of American politics when Democrats were particularly intolerant on cultural issues. As Hacker and Pierson (2016) noted, "Well into the 1960s, the most right-leaning region of the country—the South—was solidly Democratic" (p. 250). These southern Democrats were fervently opposed to progressive policies. Twentieth-century historical accounts of American political realignment suggest

that many conservative Democrats switched parties in the 1960s (Carmines and Stimson 1989). Nonetheless, our research, like that of Schiffer (2000), suggests that a sizable number of Democrats remain conservative. Additionally, as our temporal analyses show, differences in tolerance by orientation are persistent and robust for Democrats, a finding that does not hold true for Republicans or independents. Democrats are unique in this regard. Future research should investigate the ideological and policy positions of conservative Democrats to better explain their relative reticence to extend civil liberties to marginalized groups.

Additional research is also required to assess if conservative Democrats' intolerance stems from some sort of "populist DNA" held over from American politics prior to the mid-twentieth-century political realignment. There has been a renewed interest in examining both left- and right-wing forms of populism, as the label has been attributed to both highly progressive and conservative modern political figures, such as Senator Bernie Sanders and former president Donald Trump, respectively (e.g., Abromeit 2018; Cox, 2017; Frank 2020; Howell and Moe 2020; Norris and Inglehart 2019). We do not suggest that conservative Democrats, who express both progressive and conservative elements of politics, as noted in previous research (e.g., Carmines and Berkman 1994; Schiffer 2000), are the "true" populists of American politics but that they may embody a historical strand of populist sentiment that is still present in the American electorate. We recognize that in recent years, the Republican Party has been more willing to embrace populist candidates and that American populism is moving to the right (Howell and Moe 2020; Norris and Inglehart 2019). At the aggregate, from 1976 to 2018, however, we believe we may be capturing historically populist sentiments from the more conservative wing of the Democratic Party. Our findings, which illustrate a high level of intolerance among conservative Democrats, suggest that future research should further investigate the link between conservative Democrats and populism. In particular, we suggest researchers focus on the link between conservative Democratic identification, populist politics, and issues of race. Racial and ethnic minorities constitute a substantial portion of the Democratic Party (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Hacker and Pierson 2016) yet are largely absent from much of the literature that intersects historical populism and partisanship, with a few exceptions (see Ali 2013; Frank 2020; McMath 1993). It is possible that white and nonwhite conservative Democrats hold similar political positions (economically liberal and culturally conservative) but for very different reasons. Future scholarship should consider these distinctions.

The tolerance subscale results highlight important differences in political tolerance of various outgroups. In models without political orientation, we find that compared to Democrats, Republicans are less tolerant of the groups that might politically align with the left (antireligionists, communists, gays and lesbians, and Muslims), but they are no less tolerant of groups that are often seen as being more sympathetic to the right (militarists and racists). These findings could indicate that Democrats are relatively supportive of the rights of Americans more broadly, whereas Republicans are more inclined to use ingroup and outgroup boundaries when considering the rights of other Americans, which largely comports with prior research on political orientation and ingroup and outgroup perceptions (e.g., Graham et al. 2009; Sibley and Duckitt 2008). Many of the differences we find in tolerance between Democrats and Republicans are no longer significant when political orientation is added to the models. Even when controlling for orientation, however, independents remain more tolerant than partisans in all the models except tolerance of gays and lesbians. This finding supports other research showing increased societal tolerance toward gays and lesbians in recent decades (Schafer and Shaw 2009; Schwadel and Garneau 2014; Treas 2002). Aside from tolerance of gays and lesbians, the interaction effects in the models of subscales of marginalized groups largely mirror the primary findings: orientation matters far more for Democrats than Republicans when predicting political tolerance.

A notable finding in this article is that political independents are uniquely tolerant compared with partisans. Although liberal independents are similar to liberal Democrats in their overall levels of political tolerance, moderate independents are considerably more tolerant than moderate Democrats and conservative independents are far more tolerant than conservative Democrats. Although much of the modern political narrative focuses on partisans, a plurality of Americans identifies as independent (Gallup 2021). Findings from recent polling support our finding that independents are more tolerant than partisans. For instance, independents are relatively likely to hold proimmigration stances and to support egalitarian economic policies (Pew Research Center 2019a). Independents' relatively high levels of tolerance could be attributed to various factors. For example, political groups that fall outside of the American two-party system, such as libertarians and socialists, who may feel that independent is the most appropriate self-descriptor in a survey, could be particularly politically tolerant. It can also be argued that the political polarization of the two major parties over the past few decades has created an "empathy gap" among partisans, which could make independents more tolerant in comparison. Polling data show that partisans are more likely to prefer friends and neighbors from the same party (Pew Research Center 2014). Additionally, polling from Pew Research Center (2019b) shows that the majority of Republicans view Democrats as unpatriotic and immoral, and the majority in both parties, view members of the opposing party as close-minded. It is possible that the division inherent with "picking a side" in partisan politics leads to lower levels of tolerance in general, and in particular, tolerance toward those groups seen as being aligned with the opposing party.

There are important limitations to our research as well as implications that future research on political identities and/or

tolerance should consider. Although we show that the robust association between orientation and political tolerance is largely limited to Democrats, we cannot demonstrate causal effects with cross-sectional data. It is feasible that for some people, changes in tolerance lead to changes in party and/or political orientation. For example, within the Democratic Party, individuals might choose to identify as liberal because they are more tolerant, or conservative because they are less tolerant. We are, however, relatively confident that more often political characteristics affect tolerance given experimental research that demonstrates causally relevant political mechanisms that promote political tolerance (e.g., Ben-Nun and Courtemance 2015; Calfano and Djupe 2015). As such, it is more likely that liberals use a worldview that motivates them to profess more tolerant attitudes, while the opposite is true for conservatives. Still, social science scholarship would benefit from more studies using longitudinal data to examine how changes in political identities are related to changes in political tolerance.

Although the measures we used are widely employed in political tolerance research (e.g., Beatty and Walter 1984, Bobo and Licari 1989; Davis and Perry 2021; Ellison and Musick 1993; Froese and Smith 2008; Jelen and Wilcox 1990; Karpov 2002; Schwadel and Garneau 2014), the "least liked" approach to assessing political tolerance (Sullivan et al. 1981, 1982) may provide additional insights (Djupe 2015; Eisenstein 2006). As Sullivan et al. (1982) contended, a content-controlled or "least liked" measure of tolerance most accurately measures the concept of political forbearance, or the willingness to extend political rights to members of social groups that one finds threatening. Unfortunately, that measure is not available in the GSS or other large-scale surveys of Americans that we are familiar with, and our analysis required a large sample size to assess interactions between party and orientation. The GSS tolerance variables, however, do measure views toward target groups on both the left and right sides of the political spectrum, which likely captures some of the forbearance used in the content-controlled method. Another potential issue with using the GSS tolerance variables over large swaths of time is that the target groups become more and less salient with changes in politics and culture. For example, *communist* was a common pejorative term that held a great deal of negative public sentiment at the time of Stouffer's original writings in 1955 until the word became somewhat depoliticized after the end of the cold war. Additional research is required to address the potential problem of assessing the "moving target" over time when examining tolerance levels. The GSS also lacks measures of relevant psychological dispositions. Psychological measures including perceived threat, dogmatism, and authoritarianism have been shown to correlate with conservative orientation and right-wing party affiliation (Gibson 2006; Jost 2017; Satherly et al. 2020; Sullivan et al. 1981; Van Hiel and Mervielde 2002). The inclusion of these psychological variables in future research may help explain the associations between politics and tolerance.

Future research should also further consider the nuanced and complex interplay of political affiliation and orientation. This article demonstrates that Democrat is not a proxy for "liberal" in American politics. The historical complexities of party identification, particularly for Democrats, lends itself to further research examining the unique position of conservative Democrats in the modern electorate. Future research on political tolerance should also consider the role of both political orientation and affiliation as equally important yet distinct concepts as this study demonstrates unique associations between each and the willingness to grant civil liberties to stigmatized outgroups.

The findings in this article are particularly timely given the bitter partisan divides that accompanied the 2020 presidential election and a global pandemic that became highly politicized for many Americans (Christakis 2020; Halpern 2020). These recent trends in partisan polarization should encourage social scientists to consider the role of both partisanship and orientation in their work. Our examination of political tolerance is particularly relevant in this era that is witnessing increases in white nationalist group activity (Southern Poverty Law Center 2020), higher rates of discrimination against Latino Americans (Pew Research Center 2018), and elevated anti–Asian American sentiment in the wake of the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic (Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism 2020). A hallmark of American democracy is not only the ability to express oneself politically but the unwavering support that others in society be afforded the same opportunities. As such, scholarship examining the factors associated with political tolerance is vital for gauging the health of American democracy.

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