Research Report.
Replication of Studies of Liberal and Conservative Worldview Facets;
Analysis of Random Sample Data on 1201 Oregonians' Political Opinions

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Abstract: A sample of over 1100 Oregon citizens polled by Policy Interactive is analyzed and compared to data measuring similar political attitudes in other studies by Political Psychology Research, Inc. Similar significant correlations with liberal and conservative worldviews are found, as are similar closeness between mean scores for strong liberals and strong conservatives as groups. Some wider differences between these two groups are found on some variables. The data are discussed as an example of how public opinion poll results could provide an agenda for national political focus to help resolve stalemates between conflicting liberal and conservative agendas.

Studies in the present author (McConochie, 2010ff) have documented consistent differences between liberal and conservative worldviews across literally scores of psychological attitude measures, consistent with findings of other researchers in more than 40 nations around the world (Jost studies). The author's studies have compared strong liberals with strong conservatives on these same traits, finding that the mean score for these two groups is virtually always rather close together, with liberals slightly higher on traits that correlate positively with liberalism and conservatives slightly higher on traits that correlate positively with conservatism. These findings have appeared initially on samples of community college and university students, church members, occupy members and other groups, primarily in Oregon. Analysis of General Social Survey data on large random samples of Americans reveals the same phenomenon: liberals and conservatives are significantly different on facets of political attitudes, but the mean scores for strong liberals and strong conservatives are relatively close together on these same facets (McConochie, 2014, study report #39).

The present study is an analysis of survey data gathered by policy directive, an Oregon public opinion polling company, Policy Interactive, Inc., headed by Tom Bowerman and located in Eugene, Oregon (Bowerman). Tom has been doing public opinion polling on political issues, in Oregon for several years and in 2012 did an extensive study of current citizen opinions in Oregon, in conjunction with Adam Davis of DHL, a Portland for profit polling company. This study was conducted in several phases, totaling over 9000 citizens. An Internet version of this study obtained responses from 1201 citizens. This data was available for the present examiner to examine after becoming familiar with these studies at a Eugene city club presentation by Tom and Adam in January of 2014.

Method.

The data file provided by Tom Bowerman in SPSS format was analyzed to compute correlations between liberal and conservative worldviews and variables measuring citizen political attitudes. The mean scores for the strong liberals and strong conservatives in the study were also compared. The proportion of strong liberals, strong conservatives and moderates was also computed. Analysis of three-item clusters of items measuring religiousness and healthcare issues were also analyzed.

Results.

Liberalism and conservatism were measured with two five-option Likert scale bipolar items, one asking in the context of social issues and the other in terms of economic issues. The scales ranged from "very liberal" through "middle of the road/Moderate" to "very conservative". These two items correlate .74 with each other. For the present analysis, these were combined by adding them and dividing by two to form a measure of liberalism-conservatism, the LibCon2 scale, which has a Cronbach alpha reliability of .85. Republican and democratic orientation was also measured in the original data file with a single item that included as options Republican, Democrat, Independent, Another party and Other party (Specify). For the present analysis, this item was converted into a bipolar three-option item, DemRep3, ranging from 1(Republican), to 2 (Independent) and 3 (Democrat). This item correlated .66** with the LibCon2 scale, consistent with the notion that republicans tend to be conservative and democrats liberal.

In this random sample of 1201 Oregonians the LibCon2 scale frequency distribution was as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of liberal (low) and conservative (high) political orientations of 1185 Oregonians (16 persons missing), by Conlib2 scores.

Score	Frequency	Percent of total
1.00	87	7.4
1.50	71	5.9
2.00	125	10.6
2.50	130	10.9
3.00	234	19.7
3.50	109	9.2
4.00	218	18.4
4.50	96	8.1
5.00	116	9.8

"Strong liberals" were defined for analyses as those with LibCon2 scores of 4.50 or 5.00. This constitutes 212 persons or 17.9 percent of this group. "Strong conservatives" were those with scores of 1.00 o 1.50. This totals 158 persons, or 13.3 percent of the group. The remaining middle group, those from 2.00 through 4.00 constitute 68.8 percent of the sample, consistent with data from GSS national survey

for government to address while conservatism and Republican Party membership are associated with lesser endorsement of government's role in promoting these issues.

Another cluster of additional issues for government to address consisted of items framed as choices between two policy options. The correlations between these choices and the LibCon2 and DemRep3 measures of political orientation are presented in Table 3. As several persons in the sample gave "I don't know" responses to these items, scores were based only on cases that indicated choices between the options. These scores ranged from 1 to 4 across the option pairs.

Table 3. Pearson product moment correlations between liberalism-conservatism (LibCon2), democratic/republican (DemRep3 and policy options for government attention. Samples ranged from about 1050 to 1180. ** significant at .01, * at .05 levels, two-tailed. Negative correlations mean liberals and Democrats disapprove. Positive correlations mean they approve.

Correlations with LibCon2 and DemRep3	Policy options in order presented.
-.43**, -.30**	Criminals should be locked up vs. rehabilitate and job train them.
-.51**, -.39**	Economic growth stimuli vs. protect the environment.
-.35**, -.29**	Invest in roads for cars vs. public transit systems.
.29**, .19**	Develop within vs. develop outside urban growth boundaries.
-.58**, -.48**	Government has too many services vs. increase govt. services.
.22**, .15**	Better to consume less vs. stimulate buying to boost economy.
.53**, .44**	Climate change means we should change our ways of living now vs. deal with possible climate problems later.
.53**, .41**	Govt. should spend to create jobs and improve infrastructure vs. focus on reducing deficit spending.
.38**, .31**	How positively are you with Oregon Public Broadcasting?

Analysis of the Table 3 data shows liberalism and Democratic Party membership more than conservatism and Republican Party membership are associated with rehabilitating criminals, protecting the environment, developing public transit, developing land within urban boundaries, increasing government services in general, consuming less, changing our ways in response to climate change, spending to improve infrastructure and create jobs and endorsement of public broadcasting. Conservatism/Republican Party more than liberalism/Democratic Party are associated with the alternative options in each pair, e.g. locking up criminals, stimulating economic growth, investing in roads for private cars, etc.

All of the correlations in Tables 2 and 3 are consistent with similar correlation findings in prior studies by the author. The liberal and conservative worldviews are diametrically opposed across a wide range of political issues.

The frequencies at which political orientations and issues are endorsed by citizens in the present study are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Frequency in percentage points with which political issues from Tables 3 and 4 are endorsed by citizens, e.g. with Agree or Strongly Agree, Very Important or Somewhat Important responses. The sample sizes vary from about 800 to 1200 depending on how many persons replied "I don't know" or otherwise seemed disinterested in an issue.

Percent endorsing	Group, or Political issue
212, 18 percent of total sample of 1201 citizens	Strong Liberalism
158, 13 percent	Strong Conservativism
483, 40 percent	Democrats
291, 24 percent	Republicans
287, 24 percent	Independents
Percent of 1201 citizens endorsing:	Issue: Note: L = correlates positively with liberalism, C = correlates positively with conservatism.
63 %	L. Emergency disaster preparation.
76	C. Public safety, fire and police.
80	L. K-12 public education.
58	L. Vocational and Technical training/retraining.
67	L. Community colleges.
63	Neither L nor C. The justice system, courts and jails.
72	Neither L nor C. Road and highway maintenance.
54	L. Public transportation, like buses and trains.
41	Neither. Economic development via subsidies and tax breaks to companies that produce jobs.
73	L. Protection of air and water quality.
50	L. Support services for low-income citizens.
50	L. Publicly funded health insurance for all citizens.
56	L. Energy efficiency programs, promoting conservation.
59	L. Government cost control measures on health care essentials.
62	L. Health system rewards for promoting healthy behavior and wellness.
67	L. Public facility infrastructure, like water and sewer programs.
42	L. Renewable energy incentives and investments.
44	L. New roads and highways.
62	L. Four-year colleges and universities.
65	L. Protection of farm and forest land from development.
29	C. Criminals should be locked up vs. rehabilitate and job train them.
35	C. Economic growth stimuli vs. protect the environment.

34	C. Invest in roads for cars vs. public transit systems.
69	L. Develop within vs. develop outside urban growth boundaries.
50	C. Government has too many services vs. increase govt. services.
61	L. Better to consume less vs. stimulate buying to boost economy.
76	L. Climate change means we should change our ways of living now vs. deal with possible climate problems later.
43	C. Govt. should spend to create jobs and improve infrastructure vs. focus on reducing deficit spending.
72	L. How positively are you about Oregon Public Broadcasting?

The data in Table 4 shows the percent of liberals (17) and conservatives (13) in the present sample to be similar to percentages of liberals and conservatives in national samples (McConochie, 2014), at about 1/6 (17%) for each group. The percentage of democrats (40) is larger than for conservatives (24), for unclear reasons.

Of the 29 issues, 16 are endorsed by more than 50 percent of the citizens and also correlate positively with liberalism, while only 1 is endorsed by more than 50 percent and also correlates positively with conservatism. Of the 29 issues, then, 17 (59 percent of the issues) are endorsed by more than 50 percent of this sample of 1201 citizens.

The findings in Table 4 are consistent with prior findings of the author in a study of Occupy movement members (McConochie, 2014, Report #40) and other groups of citizens that indicate that the majority of all citizen groups studied, including both liberals and conservatives, want improved government services in a wide range of areas, from education to health care, infrastructure to public safety, protection of the environment to land use planning. From these findings, the citizen voices in the media that denounce big government or no government at all appear to be a very small minority.

Another finding by the author in prior studies has been that strong liberals and strong conservatives as groups are rather close together on all major dimensions of political discourse, in spite of the fact that they differ on these same dimensions in terms of correlations, as evident in the present data, Tables 2 and 3, above. To check whether this closeness of means would be evident in the present data, the means for strong liberals and strong conservatives were calculated, as presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Means for strong liberals _L_ and strong conservatives _C_ on political issues. Means for the entire sample of 1180 +/- are indicated by "T"

Issue	Range	of		scores
	1Endorse	2	3 Neutral	4 Not endorse 5
Emergency disaster preparation.		2.07L 2.44C 2.22T		
Public safety, fire and police.	1.93C 1.87T	2.08L		

K-12 public education.	1.31L 1.70T	2.46C		
Vocational and Technical training/retraining.		2.02L 2.80C 2.34T		
Community colleges.	1.84L	2.73C 2.17T		
The justice system, courts and jails.		2.17C 2.34L 2.22T		
Road and highway maintenance.	1.99L	2.17C 2.08T		
Public transportation, like buses and trains.	1.79L	2.49T	3.41C	
Economic development via subsidies and tax breaks to companies that produce jobs.		2.50C 2.85T	3.09L	
Protection of air and water quality.	1.4L 1.96T	2.77C		
Support services for low-income citizens.	1.71L	2.58T	3.53C	
Publicly funded health insurance for all citizens.	1.56L	2.62T	3.99C	
Energy efficiency programs, promoting conservation.	1.81L	2.47T	3.46C	
Government cost control measures on health care essentials.	1.93L	2.35T	3.15C	
Health system rewards for promoting healthy behavior and wellness.	1.99L	2.33T	3.03C	
Public facility infrastructure, like water and sewer	1.96L	2.27C		

	1	2	3	4
programs.		2.10T		
Renewable energy incentives and investments.	1.94L	2.60T	3.55C	
New roads and highways.		2.67C 2.76L 2.73T		
Four-year colleges and universities.	1.78L	2.94C 2.28T		
Protection of farm and forest land from development.	1.65L	2.95C 2.21T		
	Range		of	scores
	Endorse 1st option.	Endorse 1st	Endorse 2nd option.	Endorse 2nd
	1	2	3	4
Criminals should be locked up vs. rehabilitate and job train them.		2.17C 2.87T	3.48L	
Economic growth stimuli vs. protect the environment.	1.97C	2.79T	3.43L	
Invest in roads for cars vs. public transit systems.		2.09C 2.72T	3.22L	
Develop within vs. develop outside urban growth boundaries.	1.48L 1.95T	2.46C		
Government has too many services vs. increase govt. services.	1.51C	2.31T	3.29L	
Better to consume less vs. stimulate buying to boost economy.	1.71L	2.46C 2.12T		
Climate change means we should change our ways of living now vs. deal with possible climate problems later.	1.24L 1.82T		2.80C	
Govt. should spend to create jobs and improve infrastructure vs. focus on reducing deficit spending.	1.83L	2.72T		3.71C
How positively are you about Oregon Public Broadcasting?	1.29L 1.78T	2.49C		

For 17 of these 29 issues the means of strong liberals and strong conservatives are relatively close together, as in prior studies by the author. However, for 12 of the issues, the difference between the two groups is rather large, specifically for: public transportation, support services for low-income citizens, publicly funded health insurance for all citizens, energy efficiency programs, promoting conservation, health care issues, renewable energy incentives and investments, economic growth stimuli vs. protecting the environment, government having too many services vs. increasing services, climate change policy and spending for economic stimulus versus reducing the federal deficit.

The mean scores for the entire sample of over 1100 citizens in this study tend to fall between those for strong liberals and strong conservatives, as indicated by the "T" figures in each line of Table 5. Thus, if government politically empowered the common citizen by respecting their preferences as measured by the present poll, then government would be charged by citizens to promote all of the first 20 of these issues. Government would also be charged with siding with the majority and strong conservatives on locking up criminals, economic growth, building roads for cars, and perhaps believing that government has too many services. Government would be charged with siding with the majority and strong liberals on the remainder of the last 8 items in Table 5: Develop within vs. develop outside urban growth boundaries, Better to consume less vs. stimulate buying to boost economy, Climate change means we should change our ways of living now vs. deal with possible climate problems later, Government should spend to create jobs and improve infrastructure vs. focusing on reducing deficit spending, and Government should support public broadcasting of radio and television shows.

Another cluster of poll items included in the data sample provided by this Policy Interactive 2013 study measures religious attitudes with these three items:
Q64: How religious do you consider yourself to be?
Q65: Is religion important in your daily life?
Q66: How often do you attend religious services?
For the present analysis these items were re-scored such that high scores reflect greater endorsement of religion. The three items correlate strongly with each other and form a very reliable three-item measure (RelHRA3) of what seems best termed simply "religiousness" (Cronbach alpha of .87). The total score made up of the three items correlates -.40** with the LibCon3 score, indicating that the more conservative one is, the more likely he is to be religious and conversely, that the more liberal one is, the less religious he is likely to be. Similarly, RelHRA3 correlates -.34** with the DemRep3 score, indicating that religiousness is stronger among republicans and weaker among liberals. These findings are consistent with those of prior studies by the author which show that religiousness is positively correlated with religious fundamentalism and fundamentalism is correlated positively religiosity and with conservatism.

This cluster of items is interesting as an example of the value of measuring a political opinion or politically relevant trait with more than one poll item. Using multiple items enables one to measure the reliability of the measure. Unreliable measures are less likely to correlate significantly with other variables, and insignificant correlations provide

no meaningful information. If polls are to be used to measure public opinion on important matters, they should yield reliable measures.

As another example, one could check the clustering and reliability of the three healthcare items measuring endorsement of a publicly funded health care system for citizens, government cost control of essential health care technologies, and promotion of wellness programs: items (17, 19 and 20) / 3. These three items form a scale (Healthcare3) that ranges from 1 to 5 with a mean of 2.95, standard deviation of 1.10 and alpha reliability coefficient of .72 in the present sample of 1150 persons. The items are measuring rather different aspects of healthcare, or we might expect a higher alpha reliability. Again, carefully crafted and chosen items are recommended for opinion questionnaires to maximize the reliability and utility of their measures.

General Discussion:

Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Republican from Washington, gave the Republican Party response to President Obama's State of the Nation speech of 1/28/14. She was summarized by The Associated Press on 1/29 as offering "a kinder, gentler vision of Republicans who want to empower Americans, not the government, and 'close the gap between where you are and where you want to be'."

Former Republican governor of Utah Jon Huntsman, via his *No Labels* initiative (Huntsman), was at the same time urging cooperation between the President and the opposition party leader, believing that they should agree on common goals for government to get things moving. Huntsman was unclear on how one could get such cooperation between these opposing leaders to agree on national goals, but the idea of agreeing on a common agenda was noble.

Findings such as those in the present research paper suggest that empowering Americans and setting national goals might be realized by letting citizens voice their desires via public opinion polls for "where they want to be" politically and where they want government to go. Citizen attitudes and goals can be accurately measured with sophisticated public opinion polls of the sort cited in the present research report. Modern polling technology makes this a practical option for communities, states and nations.

As Tom Bowerman of Policy Interactive, the polling agency that generated the data analyzed above, notes on his web site (Bowerman), "Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail. Without it nothing can succeed. —Abraham Lincoln". While some governments can and do succeed in some fashion without strong and widespread public support, most governments seem to fail eventually when public sentiment is strongly oppositional for several years. Such government failures can lead to tragic civil wars, as seen in Syria at present. Recent record low public opinion ratings of the U.S. Congress may reflect a public desire for a better way to set national agendas than by current congressional processes, which for the past three years in particular have been characterized by vigorous Republican opposition of the President's agendas. It would

seem wise to listen to and measure public political sentiment and find constructive ways to respond to it.

Polls of random samples of as few as 1500 Americans can provide accurate measures of citizen desires. Such poll results could define public opinion regarding the size of government, how it manages its budget and which specific programs it should promote. It is hard to imagine a better way to politically empower Americans, or citizens in any nation. Whether any current governments are democratic enough in spirit to politically empower its citizens in this manner remains to be seen, but such a process would seem an essential component of government that is "of, by and for the people".

Perhaps in fairness to all citizens we should keep in mind that the mean score for the majority of citizens on political public opinion polls probably falls between that of the extreme positions represented by the one third of the population that is divided between strong liberals and strong conservatives. Fully two thirds of the population falls in this middle range.

If public policy were driven by majority citizen opinion, as could be determined by polls, then a score falling between those of strong liberals and strong conservatives would seem to be a point of fair compromise and sincere respect for a fundamental principle of democratic government: that the majority interests of informed, concerned citizens should determine government policies.

In addition to the United States, polling companies could also serve other nations to measure public political opinion and adjust their government policies accordingly. Failure to listen to citizen dissatisfaction can lead to disastrous consequences in the form of coups, civil wars and worse. The United Nations could develop conduits between polling companies and nations to this end, as Article 21 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights endorses citizen voice in the government under which he/she lives:

- (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
- (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Further public opinion polling on political issues and research on the polling process itself are encouraged by the present author. The work of Tom Bowerman of Policy Interactive is an exemplary model.

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