

**Updating Supreme Court Legitimacy:
Testing the “Rule, Learn, Update” Model of Political Communication***

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Abstract

One of the more important innovations in the study of how citizens assess the U.S. Supreme Court is the ideological updating model, which assumes that citizens grant legitimacy to the institution according to the perceived distance between themselves and the Court on a unidimensional ideological (liberal-conservative) continuum. Moreover, citizens are thought to update this calculation with every new salient Supreme Court decision. The model's requirements, however, do not seem to square with the long-established view that Americans are largely innocent of ideology. Here, we conduct an audit of the model's assumptions using five empirical tests applied to a nationally representative sample. Our general conclusion is that the ideological updating model, especially when supplemented with the requirement that citizens must become aware of Court decisions, simply does not square with the realities of American politics. Students of Supreme Court legitimacy may therefore want to search for other theories of legitimacy updating.

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How do citizens update their views of the legitimacy of the U.S. Supreme Court? This question has of late become interesting to legal scholars and political scientists, as researchers have moved away from attempting to understand cross-sectional variability in legitimacy to the question of legitimacy's dynamics. This interest also reflects a concern for understanding how blockbuster decisions by the Court affect the public's view of the institution.

The implicit model of political communication used in much of this research is quite simple. The updating process begins with the Supreme Court making a decision. Citizens learn about the decision via the mass media and perhaps via interest groups as well. In turn, they compare their understanding of the ruling with their preferences on the public policy issue at stake in the litigation, and then they update their views of the legitimacy of the Court as an institution. In this sense, assessments of the performance of the institution (specific support) are thought to influence willingness to grant legitimacy to the institution (diffuse support). The implication of this model is that citizen support for the Court is constantly changing, as people learn about new rulings by the justices.

Recently, scholars have considerably complicated this simple model. Rather than focusing on *policy* agreement and disagreement, both Bartels and Johnston (2013) and Christenson and Glick (2015) introduce "*ideological* satisfaction/dissatisfaction" as the main driver of change in institutional support. The overall approach of their ideological model is similar to the policy model: institutional support is contingent upon satisfaction with the performance of the institution. But these authors have added another, crucially important stage to the evaluative process, one centered on *the ideological distance between the citizen and the*

institution (with greater distance implying greater dissatisfaction). Their model assumes that citizens learn about court decisions; they then encode them on a unidimensional liberal-conservative continuum; one on which they have already located themselves; thus making the calculation of the ideological distance between the citizen and institution possible. New Court decisions stimulate the recalculation of the ideological distance. If distance increases, dissatisfaction rises, and support is withdrawn. If distance decreases, additional support is provided. According to this model, policy is important not in and of itself but rather because it provides information about the Supreme Court's ideological location. The fundamental process of evaluating the Court is therefore encased in an ideological framework.

This ideological model of evaluation places great demands on the American people. One must have an ideology; perceive the Court in ideological terms and understand its ideological location; judge policies by ideological criteria; hold attitudes toward the institution; and update those attitudes continuously. Moreover, this process is especially difficult and confusing in a context in which the Court's decisions are roughly one-half conservative and one-half liberal (Bartels and Johnston 2013). It may well be that scholars judge the Supreme Court according to this model; but that ordinary people do so runs deeply counter to a long tradition in political science suggesting that Americans are largely "innocent of ideology" (Converse 1964).

Indeed, even the simple model of policy evaluation and updating makes a number of heroic assumptions that few students of political communication would accept. Althaus et al. (2011, 1065), for example, are particularly critical of such simplistic models, complaining that: "Political science scholarship that touches on public opinion processes often assumes that social,

political, and economic facts are routinely transmitted to the mass public, presumably through mainstream media channels.” In fact, according to these authors, that is not so.

The importance of studying and describing these information flows is little appreciated within our field. Their continued neglect calls into question a wide range of theories about system- and individual-level processes rooted in the *unlikely assumption* that the observable facts serving as inputs to our models are communicated widely enough through a political system that they could serve as a proximal influence on individual-level opinions. (Althaus et al. 2011, 1077, emphasis added)

The very first step in every model of updating – that citizens learn of, understand, and evaluate the outputs of the U.S. Supreme Court – seems suspect from the viewpoint of scholars like Althaus and his colleagues.

Our purpose in this paper is specifically to investigate the assumptions of the ideological updating model, with an eye toward determining whether many of the American people – indeed, even whether a majority of the American people – update their Supreme Court views via the process envisaged by advocates of this new ideologically grounded model. We do so in the context of the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling on Obamacare.¹ We ask, for instance, to what degree are the basics of Court-citizen communication met; how common is it for citizens to learn of important Supreme Court rulings and to understand even in general terms what the Court

¹ *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius*, 132 S. Ct. 2566 (2012).

decided? Most importantly, to what degree does the frame of ideology guide citizens in calculating how much legitimacy to give the Supreme Court?

To investigate many of the micro-level mechanisms that undergird the updating model we utilize a nationally representative internet panel survey, The American Panel Study (TAPS). Based on an analysis of this highly salient Court decision² – the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) – our overall conclusion is that few Americans can update their views of the Court in the presumed fashion. In the end, we suggest that the “rule, learn, update” model of change in Supreme Court attitudes is much too demanding of the American people and therefore that it can claim little empirical support for its basic assumptions about the mechanisms involved in updating attitudes toward the U.S. Supreme Court.

Learning About Supreme Court Opinions and Legitimacy Theory

There can be little debate over the proposition that most Supreme Court decisions have no effect on the Court’s legitimacy because the mass public never learns that the Court has ruled. Much of

² For example, Johnston, Hillygus, and Bartels (2014, 963) exclaim: “If ever there were a case to shed light on [the crucial question of to what extent is public opinion about the Supreme Court legitimacy shaped by ideological agreement or disagreement with a particular Supreme Court ruling], the Court’s ‘instant landmark’ health-care ruling in June 2012 . . . would be that case.”

the Court's work is conducted outside the glare of public opinion. To most people, most Supreme Court rulings pass by unnoticed.

Blockbuster cases may be an exception. Indeed, several recent papers have directed their attention to the Court's decision on Obamacare, under the assumption that the ruling on the Affordable Health Care Act was salient and important to the American people. These studies are significant, in part because they conclude that the Court's judgment on this case affected its institutional legitimacy.

Bartels and Johnston (2013) were the first to introduce an important modification to research on the effect of Court rulings on its own legitimacy. Traditionally, scholars have focused on evaluations of individual decisions, such as *Roe v. Wade* (e.g., Franklin and Kosaki 1989), under the hypothesis that policy dissatisfaction can undermine institutional support. A slightly more general approach is to consider overall satisfaction with the body of rulings by the Court – which is often termed “specific support” (see Easton 1975). However, Bartels and Johnston have moved even a step further by focusing on *ideological dissatisfaction*, which is the distance between the citizen's own ideological position and her perception of the ideological position of the Court (see also Bartels, Johnston, and Mark 2015). In doing so, these authors have complicated the communication model considerably, understanding it not simply as based on policy satisfaction and dissatisfaction but rather as enveloped in a demanding process of ideological assessment and calculations of ideological distance.

Christenson and Glick (2015) also investigated the effects of the Supreme Court's decision on Obamacare on the institution's legitimacy, searching in particular for possible

consequences of ideological disagreement with the Court and of the switch in vote by Chief Justice Roberts from finding the law unconstitutional to judging it constitutional. Following Bartels and Johnston, the basic hypotheses of their research are that citizens use the Court's ruling to reassess the ideological location of the institution, and also that the American people see Roberts' actions as strategic and politicized behavior, thereby undermining the view that the Court is not an ordinary political institution (which is an assumed bedrock belief of institutional legitimacy).³

Christenson and Glick conclude that “the decision provides new information that people can use to *update their assessments of the Court's ideology*, and that these updates affect assessments of legitimacy” (Christenson and Glick 2015, 414, emphasis added). According to the authors, it is not so much disagreement with the policy that is important to citizens, but is rather what the decision reveals about the overall ideological position of the U.S. Supreme Court. Ideological distance from the Court is crucial, the researchers claim, to determining whether to extend legitimacy to the institution.

Johnston, Hillygus, and Bartels (2014) posit a similarly complicated model in which political sophistication plays a key moderating role in the model of ideological updating.

³ We are little concerned with addressing the consequences of strategic behavior for institutional legitimacy, in part because some of their empirical findings run contrary to their expectations, requiring post-hoc explanations that are not entirely persuasive (e.g., in some circumstances, the Roberts strategic treatment actually *increased* support for the Court – p. 411).

Following Zaller (1992), they argue that updating requires both awareness of the decision and legitimacy attitudes that are sufficiently weak that they are susceptible to change. They report that their ideological updating model seems to pertain most to those with relatively uncrystallized attitudes toward the Court, but who knew about the Obamacare ruling. We suspect that this is a fairly small part of the total population (although it is not possible from their published material to determine exactly what portions of their respondents fall into which categories). Still, for at least some people, ideological updating drives institutional support.

Thus, an important modification has been offered to conventional theories about how citizens evaluate the U.S. Supreme Court. Instead of simply reacting to the Court's policy outputs, citizens are assumed to use Court decisions to infer whether and how the ideology of the Court has changed. This process of awarding legitimacy to the institution is thus highly dependent upon citizens being able to learn about Court decisions and to make these ideological reassessments.

The Micro-Mechanics of the Ideological Updating Model

There are quite a number of moving parts in this ideological updating model, especially in contrast to a simple policy agreement/disagreement model. In the latter, citizens are thought to perceive a ruling and determine whether they agree or disagree with it by comparing the Court's policy with the citizen's own policy preference. This is a classic "running tally" mechanism of specific support (Gibson and Nelson 2015a). Depending on the body of decisions the citizen pays attention to, this tally may bounce around a bit. This is the measure that the *New York*

Times' Adam Liptak and others have observed when they write about the Court losing the support of its constituents (e.g., Liptak 2011).

In contrast, the ideological model requires a complicated process of encoding decisions and using them to recalculate the Court's ideological position. These categorizations can often be difficult (even for Harold Spaeth⁴): how, for instance, should one code a decision that allows local governments to take private property from citizens (often poor citizens because the taking is done within the context of a redevelopment policy) and give that property to private developers for projects such as shopping malls (e.g., *Kelo*)? One might also argue that a decision expanding the free-speech rights of unions is a liberal decision, even if it also expands the free-speech rights of corporations (e.g., *Citizens United*). Citizens no doubt have difficulty with this encoding process, often winding up with idiosyncratic and highly variable characterizations of the same Court decision.

And what of moderates, who make up a substantial proportion of the American electorate? It is difficult to know what a "moderate" Supreme Court decision is. Moreover, it is not clear that the mass media uses the term "moderate" very often to characterize Court decisions. Perhaps moderates are displeased by *both* liberal and conservative Court decisions. It is also unclear how much dynamic force is available for this model in contemporary American

⁴ Note that Epstein, Landes, and Posner (2013, 149-151) take issue with how Spaeth codes certain categories of Supreme Court decisions. It seems that even scholars have difficulty implementing the ideologically based "rule, learn, update" model.

politics, inasmuch as the Court is currently almost evenly split between making liberal and conservative decisions (Bartels and Johnston 2013; Bartels, Johnston, and Mark 2015, 778).

Moreover, not everyone organizes her or his policy preferences in the assumed ideological space – it is not obvious where, for instance, libertarians fit on the liberal-conservative continuum. And, even if people can locate themselves, not everyone is capable of locating the Court in that space. There are, no doubt, citizens who reject altogether the characterization of Court decisions as ideological, instead believing that the Court makes its decisions on the basis of what the law commands in individual cases.⁵ Finally, one wonders how informative citizens find a single decision when trying to estimate the ideological location of the Court. And, are all decisions weighted equally? Furthermore, it seems unlikely that judgments of the Court’s legitimacy are based exclusively on ideological distance, without regard to process considerations and a host of other factors (Nelson and Gibson 2016; Gibson and Nelson 2015a). Thus, current research on legitimacy updating seems to rely upon an unrealistically complicated and quite incomplete model of public opinion.

More generally, the ideological framework of this model seems incompatible with an extensive body of research on public opinion concluding that many Americans are largely innocent of ideology. The original statement of this position is Converse’s (1964) “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics.” According to Converse, most citizens are not politically

⁵ According to the measure of legal realism used by Christenson and Glick (2015, 414), 52% of their sample views the Court as a primarily legal institution.

sophisticated; they do not conceptualize politics through the lens of ideology, and are frequently unable to interpret the socio-political connotations of ideological concepts. Only a small portion of the American electorate is classified in the high sophistication, ideologically minded stratum.

Less politically and informationally sophisticated citizens may rely on “more obviously recognizable social groupings” such as partisan identification, or immediate experiences such as “family, job, and immediate associates” to form political preferences (Converse 1964, 213).

Citizens who are even less sophisticated utilize easily accessible, established cues such as following current trends (the “nature of the times”) or group interests in a haphazard attempt to form policy preferences (Zaller 1992). Since each political opinion stems from disparate experiences, low sophisticates have a more difficult time reconciling their political attitudes under a singular ideology and therefore exhibit more compartmentalized opinions. If citizens are able to form policy opinions, most do so without a fundamental ideological foundation that informs their general preferences toward a wide array of policies (Kinder 1983).

On the other hand, a revisionist school has emerged that asserts that ideology does play some role in the formation of political opinions for typical citizens. From this perspective, scholars claim that the initial sentiment that citizens are devoid of ideological thinking “was too extreme and that people generally do think, feel, and behave in ideologically meaningful ways, even if they are not perfectly articulate about their ideological proclivities” (Jost, Nosek, and Gosling 2008, 127).

Still, key components of the ideological story remain unresolved, such as whether ideology can be appropriately captured in a unidimensional model (Feldman and Johnston

2014). Even if citizens do utilize ideology to form political attitudes and the “rule, learn, update” model is useful, considerable evidence questions the assumption that a common unidimensional ideological continuum fits both the American people and their Supreme Court.

Traditionally, the political attitudes of elites and their efforts at political messaging do in fact align along a unidimensional policy space ranging from liberal to conservative. Many ordinary citizens, however, maintain multidimensional ideological structures (e.g., Carmines, Ensley, and Wagner 2012b; Ellis and Stimson 2009). For example, citizens may think of themselves as ideologically conservative on an economic dimension, while simultaneously liberal along a social dimension. When forced to place themselves on a singular ideological continuum, these citizens are likely “to self-identify as moderate (or say ‘Don’t Know’) in response to the standard liberal-conservative scale” (Treier and Hillygus 2009, 680). This poses an obstacle to the “rule, learn, update” model since it relies heavily on the ability of citizens to place themselves and the Supreme Court on a common unidimensional ideological scale.

The mapping of ideology along a single continuum is a non-trivial issue. Approximately 30-40% of respondents in the American National Election Survey (ANES) have traditionally labeled themselves as “moderates” (Carmines, Ensley, and Wagner 2012a). It is difficult to know whether these citizens are truly moderates or whether they hold other ideological views but label themselves as moderates for the sake of convenience. Generally, in studies on ideology among the American people, it is hard to find evidence to support the assumption that citizens are sufficiently adept at using ideological criteria to be able to evaluate the Supreme Court’s

legitimacy. The lessons that Treier and Hillygus (2009, 697-698) draw about voting behavior most likely apply with equal force to perceptions of the U.S. Supreme Court:

Our results show that failing to account for the multidimensional nature of ideological preferences can produce inaccurate predictions of voting behavior for the plurality of Americans who do not call themselves liberal or conservative. As such, we recommend that future research use distinct measures of social and economic preferences in empirical models of mass behavior.

Consequently, our purpose in this paper is to investigate each step in the communication process. First, do citizens think in ideological terms and are they able to locate themselves on a unidimensional liberal-conservative continuum? Second, do citizens hold opinions on the general issues that the Supreme Court decides?⁶ Third, do citizens know that the Supreme Court has ruled on the issue and comprehend the Court's decision? Fourth, can citizens match their policy preferences and the Court's policy ruling to the unidimensional ideological continuum on which they place themselves? Fifth, can citizens locate the Supreme Court on this ideological continuum? Sixth, do citizens hold views about the legitimacy of the Supreme Court? Finally, a dynamic updating model actually requires that a citizen be able to do all of these things at least twice (if not continuously) – before the Court's ruling on a salient case and after the Court's

⁶ We do not believe the “rule, learn, update” model requires that citizens have views on the legal issues involved in Supreme Court cases (e.g., does the Commerce Clause pertain to the Affordable Care Act?) but rather that they have preferences on the underlying policy issues.

ruling. Generally, we seek to estimate the proportion of the American people that can reasonably be said to meet the various requirements of the ideological updating model.

The Survey Data

We base our analysis on data from The American Panel Survey (TAPS), a monthly online survey of up to 2,000 people, modeled on the KN KnowledgePanel. Panelists were first recruited as a national probability sample with an address-based sampling frame in the fall of 2011 by Knowledge Networks for the Weidenbaum Center at Washington University. Individuals without internet access were provided a laptop and internet service at the expense of the Weidenbaum Center. Like the KnowledgePanel, the compound response rate for any given survey is difficult to calculate but is undoubtedly low (typically in the single digits). More technical information about the survey is available at taps.wustl.edu.

In our empirical analysis, we focus on TAPS respondents from three adjacent waves conducted around the Supreme Court ruling on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on June 28th, 2012. The surveys were conducted in May (wave 1: 1,511 respondents⁷), June (wave 2: 1,475 respondents), and July (wave 3: 1,458 respondents).⁸ In order to guarantee that all analyses are

⁷ All the Ns we report in this section are unweighted.

⁸ The full sample in wave 3 included 1,712 respondents but 254 of these were first-time respondents included in the panel as part of the first replenishment conducted by TAPS. Given the nature of our study, we naturally exclude them from all of our analyses.

based on the same respondents, we restrict our study to the subset of 1,363 respondents who answered all three waves.⁹

Although commonly used in studies with panel data, this empirical strategy raises concerns about attrition. We address this issue in Appendix A, in which we demonstrate that non-respondents in wave 3 (July) do not differ in any substantively relevant way from those wave 1 panelists who responded in wave 3.

Analytical Strategy

The empirical objective of this paper is to determine whether the assumptions of the ideological updating model square with the attributes of the American people. We therefore identify several specific tests, and use the TAPS data to determine the percentage of the sample able to satisfy the model's requirements on each of the tests. In the end, we cumulate these results so as to be able

⁹ All of the data in this paper are drawn from waves 1 and 3. The May survey was conducted prior to the Court's ruling; the July survey, after the Court's ruling. The June survey (wave 2) was conducted during the run-up to the ruling, and, for a relatively small number of respondents, *after* the Court had ruled. We believe the cleanest way to test the conditions under which the ideological updating model apply is to use data prior to and after the ruling. Because other scholars are examining this database (e.g., Gibson 2015), we add as a criterion for inclusion in our study completion of the June (wave 2) interview, resulting in an N of 1,363 respondents (which we hope becomes the standard for analyses of these data).

to draw an overall conclusion about the utility of the model. Following Johnston, Hillygus, and Bartels (2014), we also take one additional step to try to determine the types of respondents able to perform ideological updating, using (loosely) the Elaboration Likelihood Model (see Petty, and Cacioppo 1986).

Testing the Model's Assumptions

The Basics of Ideological Distance

The first empirical question we must consider is whether the respondents in our sample are able to identify their own location on a unidimensional liberal-conservative continuum. The TAPS panelists were asked: “In terms of your political views, do you think of yourself as very liberal, liberal, slightly liberal, moderate, slightly conservative, conservative, or very conservative?” Recall that in the ANES surveys, somewhere around 20+ % of the respondents refuse to accept this continuum (Carmines, Ensley, and Wagner 2012a, 3). In the TAPS data, however, the figure is 8.9%, which includes 8.7% of the respondents who said they did not know their own ideology and 0.3% who refused to answer the question.¹⁰

This much larger percentage of respondents accepting the self-categorization in the TAPS survey is no doubt a function of the experience of these respondents in answering earlier survey questions, including a wide variety of policy items and questions about their ideology. Semi-professional respondents often differ from naïve respondents in many important ways (see

¹⁰ The failure of these figures to sum properly is due to rounding errors.

Hillygus, Jackson, and Young 2014), and this is just another example of that difference. Still, we conclude that almost 9% of the TAPS respondents do not fit the ideological updating model because they cannot or do not use the unidimensional liberal-conservative continuum the model presupposes.

The respondents were also asked to specify where the U.S. Supreme Court is located on this ideological continuum. “Where would you place each of the following on this liberal-conservative scale? [the majority of justices on the U.S. Supreme Court].”¹¹ Nearly 21% of the respondents were unable to score the Court on this ideological continuum. Because they cannot locate the Court’s position, the ideological updating model fails.¹² Moreover, the requirement of jointly locating oneself and the Court on a common unidimensional continuum cannot be satisfied for 24.3% of the sample. We reiterate that this figure is based on a unusually large percentage of the respondents able to score themselves on the liberal-conservative continuum.

¹¹ Note that a “don’t know” option was explicitly provided to the respondents.

¹² Perhaps surprising is the finding that fully 61.3% (N = 119) of those who don’t know where they stand on the continuum were nonetheless able to locate the Supreme Court. This finding seems to confirm the suspicion that the respondents are using some other sort of alternative continuum to classify themselves, and, as a consequence, no common ideological space jointly contains the Court and the individual.

Policy Opinionation

One might imagine that practically all Americans hold a view on Obamacare. The TAPS data suggest otherwise. When asked “Do you approve or disapprove of the requirement that every American must buy health insurance or pay a fine?”, 14.5% of the sample was unable to offer an opinion. If respondents hold no view on an issue before the Supreme Court it does not seem that a Court ruling on that issue can affect their judgments of the institution, one way or the other.

Mapping Healthcare Preferences Onto the Liberal-Conservative Continuum

The ideological updating model assumes that people can readily understand whether a Supreme Court decision is liberal or conservative. After encoding the Court’s new policy decisions, people are able to reassess the ideological location of the Court. Most would surely assume that a decision in favor of government-sponsored healthcare is a liberal decision. So, the model assumes that a conservative would understand the Court’s ruling as a liberal decision; would therefore conclude that the Court has become a more liberal institution¹³; then recalculate the distance between herself and the institution; and adjust legitimacy accordingly.

TAPS did not ask the respondents whether the Court’s decision on Obamacare was a liberal or conservative decision so no direct means of assessing the model’s fit with public views of the decision is possible. It is possible, however, to determine how well the issue of healthcare

¹³ Of course, for some conservatives, the decision would merely confirm that the Court is a liberal institution, making no reassessment of the Court’s position necessary.

fits with the ideological predispositions of the people. Is it in fact the case that conservatives routinely oppose Obamacare and liberals uniformly support it?¹⁴ Figure 1 provides the data necessary to assess this possibility. Because a non-trivial number of respondents was unable to form a view on Obamacare (as we have just noted), the percentage of people supporting the law is not the mirror obverse of the percentage opposing the law. We therefore report both support and opposition in Figure 1.

[PLACE FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The data reveal that those who are “very conservative” fit the ideological updating model quite well, with nearly all of these people opposing Obamacare. At the opposite extreme, however, the model seems to breakdown among those who are “very liberal” inasmuch as the percentages supporting and opposing the law are roughly the same. Across the three degrees of liberalism, more than one-third of the respondents *oppose* Obamacare. Generally, there is a

¹⁴ Christenson and Glick argue that the Court’s decision on Obamacare was difficult to categorize because it included both liberal and conservative components (2015, 409). Thus, they focus on subjective assessments of the Court’s location without regard to whether people understood the decision as favoring any particular ideological preference. In their model, conservatives could easily view the Court as moving to the right as a result of the decision and therefore increase their support for the Court. Indeed, because the model relies upon subjective perceptions and classifications, virtually any movement is compatible with the theory (as we discuss in more detail below).

considerable asymmetry in how healthcare maps onto ideology, with conservatives seeming to understand the law as a liberal law, but with liberals being confused.¹⁵

The ideological updating model seems to assume that Court decisions are readily encoded by the American people. However, perhaps the model does not really require that Court decisions be accurately understood. Because the model does not actually examine how decisions are encoded – instead, it simply asks the respondents where the Court stands before the decision and where it stands after the decision – it is possible that ideological dissatisfaction with the Court among liberals grew as a result of the Court’s decision on Obamacare. Regrettably, we know very little about how people reach their judgments about the location of the Court on the liberal-conservative ideological continuum.

In our audit of how well the ideological updating model fits with the American people, we score *no respondents* as unable to encode the decision. If the respondent has an ideological identity, and if he or she has a preference on government-sponsored healthcare, we assume updating can take place. We remain skeptical, however, about a model that places no reality constraints on how citizens view and judge individual Court decisions.¹⁶

¹⁵ A portion of this confusion most likely has to do with liberals who oppose Obamacare because it is not liberal enough. It is unclear how these people viewed the Court’s ruling.

¹⁶ Indeed, Zilis (2015, 44) goes one step further in arguing: “Given the complex nature of legal decisions, it is difficult to characterize them along an ideological spectrum, particularly for reporters, who face considerable constraints . . .” Presumably, ordinary citizens have an even

The Court Decision as the Causal Agent

If we apply three criteria to the respondents – that they are able to locate themselves and the Court on the liberal-conservative continuum and that they hold an opinion on healthcare – we find that 33.4% of the sample does not meet the requirements of the ideological updating model. It remains to determine, however, whether the requirement that one knows how the Court ruled on the case is widely satisfied.

As we noted above, some public opinion scholars are reluctant to assume that the facts of political life readily penetrate the consciousness of the American people. This same skepticism can be applied to Supreme Court pronouncements, even on issues that should be highly salient. Thus, the next portion of our analysis asks whether the American people were aware of the Court's decision and understood its policy position.

TAPS asked the respondents:

The Supreme Court ruled on whether it is constitutional to require Americans to have health insurance. Do you know how the Court ruled on that issue?

[For those who answered yes] According to the Supreme Court, is the requirement that Americans have health insurance or pay a penalty constitutional or unconstitutional?

These two questions, although slightly awkward in their format, allow us to derive two figures:

more difficult time than do reporters.

the percentage of the sample aware that the Court had ruled on the issue and the percentage who correctly understood that the Court had ruled the law constitutional.

We derived our estimate of knowledge that the Court had ruled from those who said they did not know on the first question and those, while claiming to know “how the Court ruled on that issue” were nonetheless unable to answer the follow-up question on the nature of the Court’s ruling. From these two questions, we determined that about one-third of the respondents (33.8%) were unaware that the Court had ruled in the case. This is not surprising inasmuch public opinion research routinely reports widespread inattentiveness to even the most dramatic political events.¹⁷

The follow-up question asked the respondents how the Court ruled in the case. A total of 56.9% of the sample – which includes those unaware that the Court had ruled in the denominator – correctly asserted that the Court found the law constitutional; 43.1% did not.¹⁸

¹⁷ For example: “On the night of the 9/11 attacks, Nielsen Media Research found that 79.5 million viewers – nearly four in ten American adults – were tuning into any of the eleven broadcast or cable networks that were showing news coverage of the attacks. As impressive as this level of attention seems, about the same number of viewers watched the January 2001 Super Bowl. Indeed, an audience of this size assembles just about every year to watch the Super Bowl.” (Althaus 2008, 184-185, footnotes omitted).

¹⁸ The respondents could simply have searched the internet for the answers to the TAPS questions while they were completing the interview. Internet surveys generally over-estimate

The implications of the accuracy of knowledge about a Supreme Court decision for the updating model are somewhat clouded. One might assume that knowledge must be accurate (the Court found Obamacare constitutional) in order for the ideological model to apply, or one might relax entirely any requirement of accuracy under the assumption that what people believe is more important for assessing the institution than what may be in fact true.¹⁹

Holding Views on the Supreme Court's Legitimacy

Crucial to the ideological updating model is the dependent variable – institutional support for the U.S. Supreme Court. The indicators of support are typically asked with a Likert response set that includes some sort of center category (such as “uncertain” or “neither agree nor disagree”).

Because that center category can be scored on an ordinal/interval response scale, those giving these “don’t know” responses do not get excluded from the resulting index of support.

It turns out, however, that 7.5% of the respondents provided a “don’t know” answer to *all six of the indicators of diffuse support*.²⁰ From the point-of-view of the ideological updating

true levels of political knowledge. Our analysis also makes no correction for the possibility that some respondents were simply guessing in providing their answers.

¹⁹ As political scientists have long noted (e.g., Kuklinski et al. 2000), citizens often make important decisions on the basis of information they believe to be true but that is unequivocally false.

²⁰ Care must be taken with the TAPS data, as with all data sets relying on semi-

model, these folks seem to have no attitude to update – they have no substantive views toward the Supreme Court’s legitimacy, one way or the other. Without an opinion to update, the model cannot apply.²¹

Summing Up

The foregoing analysis has reported what are essentially a series of bivariate tests of the updating model. Obviously, one cannot assume that each test is independent of the others, so that the percentages passing or failing the tests can be easily summed. We therefore present the results of each test and the cumulative “pass” rate, under two different conditions, in Table 1.

professional respondents who (a) agree to be questioned repeatedly over months and years, and (Fb) learn from their experience how to engage in satisficing behavior when answering surveys. Semi-professional respondents learn that there are no consequences of answering questions with a “don’t know” reply, or even not answering questions at all. RDD samples typically report considerably fewer “don’t know” responses, although some analysts believe that this is a function of social desirability pressures that mitigate against admitting ignorance to a live interviewer.

²¹ Although the data are insufficient to assess whether updating could actually take place in July, after the Court’s decision, we do note that the legitimacy questions were asked in wave 3. A total of 11.6% of the respondents, a larger percentage than in wave 1, gave “don’t know” answers to all 6 legitimacy items in wave 3.

[PLACE TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The two cumulative rates reported in Table 1 pertain to whether or not the model is assumed to require accuracy in perceptions of the Supreme Court’s opinion. If we assume that it is irrelevant whether the “rule, learn, update” model posits that citizens accurately learn of the content of the Supreme Court’s opinion, then about one-half of the respondents satisfy the requirements of the model. This is a remarkably small proportion. If we impose the requirement that citizens must learn accurately what the Court has ruled, then the percentage declines to less than a majority of the American people – 43.7%. From the point-of-view of the ideological updating model, these findings are disconcerting, to say the least.

We readily acknowledge that our findings could well be issue specific. Despite what some researchers have claimed, Obamacare is in some ways a difficult issue, as, for instance, in the fact that some liberals oppose the law because it does not go far enough. Further, the initial announcement of the ruling was botched a bit by the media, even if only for a fairly short period of time.²² The winning coalition was unexpected and confusing because one of the most far right-wing justices voted to uphold the legislation. Discussions of the grounds of the decision (“no” on interstate commerce, “yes” on taxation) may have confused some people. Indeed, perhaps the effects of Supreme Court decisions are curvilinear, with cases that generate too much information winding up being just about as confusing for the mass public as cases generating too

²² As Zilis (2015, 97) documents, both CNN and Fox News initially broadcast reports claiming that the Court had overturned Obamacare.

little information. Perhaps this case is not as ideal for testing the ideological updating model as some authors claim.

Still, advocates of the ideological updating model will no doubt find these findings sobering. If the model's assumptions are so poorly met for the Obamacare ruling, one wonders what proportion of Court decisions would generate a better fit, even what proportion of the Court's decisions that are highly salient and controversial.

The Attributes of Those Available to Update Their Views

Finally, we know from decades of research that not all citizens are susceptible to updating their views. According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (e.g., Zaller 1992), two conditions are necessary for attitudes to change. First, there must be exposure to an exogenous factor – in this case, a ruling by the Supreme Court. Second, the attitudes under consideration must be malleable. The problem for attitude change is that those with the least malleable attitudes are those most likely to be attentive to the rulings of the Supreme Court. This in turn has given rise to the conventional curvilinear hypothesis that change is most likely in the Goldilocks zone – those who have a moderate level of attentiveness and moderately malleable attitudes – and that change in attitudes is unlikely at the two extremes. This is the hypothesis that Johnston, Hillygus, and Bartels (2014) tested in the context of the Affordable Health Care litigation.

As the final step in our investigation of the plausibility of the ideological updating model, we consider the percentage of those passing these earlier tests on ideology and awareness who are likely to be susceptible to attitude change. Our filtering of the data so far mainly addresses

the lower end of the distribution – those unlikely to be exposed to a Court decision. We therefore ask whether those passing all of these tests hold attitudes so entrenched that they are unlikely to change as a result of a Supreme Court decision.²³ As a simple test of this notion, we consider the percentage of Court legitimacy responses for which the respondent gave a “strongly” reply – either “agree strongly” or “disagree strongly” – as an indicator of attitude crystallization and hence resistance to change.

Of the 50.8% of the sample passing all of the tests without an accuracy requirement, 6.5% issued six “strongly” answers to the Supreme Court measures and another 11.1% gave five “strongly” answers. Of the 43.7% also passing the accuracy test, 6.7% gave six “strongly” replies and 11.8% gave five such replies. Thus, from the summary figures reported in Table 1 (above), one might subtract another 8 or so percentage points²⁴, which, of course, lowers our estimate of the percentage of Americans capable of updating their views toward Supreme Court legitimacy to roughly four in ten. With the requirement that citizens must understand how the Court actually ruled, nearly two-thirds of the American people seem to be disqualified from ideological

²³ We note that Bartels, Johnston, and Mark (2015, 791) have shown that ideological disagreement with the Court does not undermine the institution’s legitimacy among legal elites, presumably because attitudes within this group are highly crystallized.

²⁴ About 18% of the one-half of the sample passing the tests hold crystallized attitudes. However, if we were to add attitude crystallization to Table 1, it would be necessary to use the total sample as the denominator, not the one-half of the sample passing the tests.

updating because they are unaware of Court decisions, do not use the liberal-conservative ideological continuum, or hold such strong attitudes toward the Court that they are unlikely to be affected by Court decisions, one way or the other.

Beyond our audit of the basic assumptions of the ideological updating model are four additional issues, none of which directly affect our empirical estimates, but all of which provide some context for our findings.

Updating Must be Done Continuously

Although it is beyond the limits of the available data, we simply note that the updating model assumes that citizens can undertake this complicated process *at least twice* – before and after a Supreme Court ruling. It seems unlikely that 100% of those who pass the tests once are able to pass them a second time (see footnote 21, above).²⁵ Indeed, were one to think of this as a truly dynamic process taking place, let us say, across an entire Supreme Court term, including multiple salient decisions, then the model's requirements of ordinary citizens become even more demanding and less realistic.

²⁵ We acknowledge that some Supreme Court decisions may actually create opinions for some citizens where they previously had none. It is unclear to us, however, how these newly created opinions affect the process of updating.

Accounting for Findings of Ideological Updating

Our argument is not that no citizens engage in ideological updating; instead, we contend that the proportion of the American population able to do so is relatively small and therefore that a supplemental model of updating is necessary. Still, extant literature seems to have documented this updating process. Is there a way to reconcile the arguments of this paper with the findings of extant research?

Although a full exegesis of our concerns about extant findings is well beyond the scope of this paper, we offer several observations. (1) Some of these findings have been directly challenged – e.g., Gibson and Nelson (2015a) contest the findings of Bartels and Johnston (2013) and Gibson and Nelson 2015b assert that the findings of Christenson and Glick (2015) are frail. (2) Some earlier research (e.g., Christenson and Glick) is based upon opt-in samples (e.g., MTurk) strongly biased in favor of highly politically knowledgeable individuals. As we have noted, we have no doubt that political sophisticates can engage in ideological updating. Whether these findings generalize to representative samples is entirely unclear. (3) Some research seems to solve the problems we raise here by simply excluding respondents from their analysis. That is, if respondents without ideological identifications, who are unable to locate the Court in ideological space, and who have never heard that the Court has ruled on an issue are excluded from the analysis, then in fact it is possible that the remaining portion of the sample is capable of engaging in ideological updating. (4) Scholars definitely disagree about whether coefficients/effects should be understood as small, medium, or large, but it is possible that there is no conflict at all between our contentions in this paper and the findings of earlier research. If

only a minority of respondents engage in ideological updating, with the majority judging the Court on other criteria, then the correlation between ideological dissatisfaction and legitimacy should not be zero, but should be relatively weak. Some evidence that this is so exists.²⁶ (5) If the ideological updating model is correct and useful, then efforts to understand its micro-level mechanisms are essential.

Is Policy Updating A Superior Model of Public Opinion?

We have implied at several points that a policy-based approach to specific support is easier to imagine than an approach based on ideological updating. At the simplest level, if we were to remove two factors from our audit of the assumptions of the ideological model— whether the respondents could locate themselves and the Supreme Court on the liberal-conservative ideological continuum – the plausibility of the model would obviously improve.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to conduct a thorough empirical comparison of policy updating and ideological updating. However, Gibson (2015) reports a revealing re-analysis of some of the Bartels and Johnston (2013) data in his Tables 5.1 and 5.2 (pp. 89-90) that is directly

²⁶ For example, we investigated the bivariate correlation between ideological distance (absolute value) in the June TAPS survey and institutional legitimacy. We discovered a correlation of $-.039$ ($N = 1,223$; not significant at $p < .05$; weighted by June2012), indicating that ideological distance accounts for 0.15% of the variance in legitimacy. Removing the post-ACA respondents from the sample raises this correlation slightly, to $.06$.

relevant to the question of the relative virtues of policy versus ideology. Bartels and Johnson used an experiment in which respondents were told of a Supreme Court decision, with some told of a liberal Court decision (opposing government monitoring of citizens' internet communications) and others told of a conservative ruling (allowing monitoring). Gibson simply assumed that liberals preferred a liberal decision on the hypothetical case, just as conservatives preferred a conservative decision, and that "winning" or "losing" on the case could therefore be easily calculated. One might expect that those who were told of an ideologically pleasing Court decisions would differ from those told of an ideologically displeasing decision in terms of their support for the institution. According to difference of means tests, the difference in legitimacy across winners and losers on the Court's decision according to the respondents' own ideological positions are:

Extremely liberal, legitimacy difference between winners and losers: $p = .098$, $\eta^2 = .32$, $N = 28$

Liberal, legitimacy difference between winners and losers: $p = .027$, $\eta^2 = .20$, $N = 126$

Slightly liberal, legitimacy difference between winners and losers: $p = .975$, $\eta^2 = .00$, $N = 113$

Moderate, legitimacy difference between winners and losers: $p = .124$, $\eta^2 = .08$, $N = 378$

Slightly conservative, legitimacy difference between winners and losers: $p = .682$, $\eta^2 = .04$, $N = 139$

Conservative, legitimacy difference between winners and losers: $p = .408$, $\eta = .06$,

$N = 213$

Extremely conservative, legitimacy difference between winners and losers: $p =$

$.188$, $\eta = .21$, $N = 40$

Thus, when preferences in the case are derived from ideology, only for self-described “liberals” is there a statistically significant difference in legitimacy between those getting a Supreme Court decision they wanted and those getting a decision they opposed.

In Table 5.2, Gibson reported the same analysis after replacing ideological self-identification with the respondents’ policy preference on the issue at stake. The purpose of this analysis was to determine whether Court support is more dependent upon policy satisfaction than it was on ideological dissatisfaction. The results are:

Strongly oppose monitoring, legitimacy difference between winners and losers: p

$= .000$, $\eta = .33$, $N = 127$

Oppose monitoring, legitimacy difference between winners and losers: $p = .003$,

$\eta = .20$, $N = 235$

Support monitoring, legitimacy difference between winners and losers: $p = .280$,

$\eta = .06$, $N = 382$

Strongly support monitoring, legitimacy difference between winners and losers: p

$= .000$, $\eta = .23$, $N = 302$

In three of the four comparisons, a statistically significant difference exists between winners and losers, when winning is defined by policy preferences rather than ideology. Thus, based on

ideology, the legitimacy scores of 126 respondents out of 1,037 (12.2%) seemed to be affected by the Court's ruling, as compared to the 664 out of 1,046 (63.5%) respondents having their legitimacy scores affected based on the satisfaction of their policy preferences. The effect of policy dissatisfaction on institutional legitimacy seems to be considerably greater than is the effect of ideological dissatisfaction.

A Brief Note on Experimental Research Designs

All who work on public reactions to Supreme Court decisions understand that the “learn” part of the model is quite demanding. Of course, in the laboratory, we can force this process on respondents. We can tell them about a Supreme Court decision, so that 100% of the sample learns there is a Court ruling. And we can then instruct them to update their views of the Court. That is the research design used in some prominent studies (e.g., Bartels and Johnston 2013; Gibson, Caldeira, and Spence 2005).

The external validity of this sort of experiment is low in many senses, however, ranging from the failure to acknowledge selective attention to particular policy areas to selective awareness of any given Supreme Court decision to positing a process of updating attitudes outside the context of any elite cues or discussion and deliberation. It seems likely that any effect observed in the artificial laboratory context represents the *maximum possible influence* of the intervention (the ruling) and that, in nature, the influence of such an intervention on the

population as a whole is dramatically smaller.²⁷ We agree with the thoughts of Christenson and Glick (2015, 416) on this point:

Thus, while portraying the Court as “not different” from other institutions affects legitimacy, real events of this nature are rare and even when they do happen, few people are naturally exposed to the details. All of this suggest that while seeing the Court in a strategic and political light can undermine legitimacy, this mechanism is rarely actually activated, which further contributes to stability [in the Court’s legitimacy].

Discussion and Concluding Thoughts

These simple findings present some significant challenges to the “rule, learn, update” theory of attitude change. We do not assert that citizens are oblivious to Supreme Court rulings; obviously, some do in fact penetrate public consciousness. We do not assert that citizens never update their views toward Supreme Court legitimacy; nor that legitimacy attitudes are impervious to exogenous events (such as confirmation campaigns – Gibson and Caldeira 2009). Nor do we

²⁷ Some research questions how experimental effects should be understood. For example, Barabas and Jerit’s (2010) research indicates that experiments capture the *maximum possible treatment effect*. Thus, even if one accepts the “rule, learn, update” experimental results, one must remember that the magnitude of the observed effects represents the maximum possible influence, and that the effect in “nature” is almost certainly substantially smaller.

assert that what the Court rules is irrelevant for how people judge the institution. But we are persuaded by Gibson and Nelson (2015a) that this updating process rarely results in significant short-term change in legitimacy attitudes.

What we think is most wrong about the ideological updating model is ideology. The model undoubtedly adds a layer of complexity to earlier understandings of the dynamics of Court opinions. In this new manifestation, after perceiving decisions, citizens must encode them on a liberal-conservative continuum, update their estimate of the Supreme Court's ideological location (and the model is entirely silent about the arithmetic of this calculation), and rescore the distance between themselves and the institution. And, citizens must think ideologically about the Court; those who view it as a legalistic institution, largely impervious to ideology, would have even more difficulty with this model. Ideological updating is a herculean task for a mass public that has often been described as largely bereft of ideology.

A simpler way to understand this process is to take one step back in the model and to posit that citizens evaluate Court opinions, when they learn of them, in terms of whether they like the opinion or dislike it (a sort of a "likeability heuristic"). Some may use ideological criteria in this assessment process; others may use simple group benefits – "is the opinion good for groups with which I identify?" (e.g., public unions). Still another group may do nothing more than take cues from respected opinion leaders – "does the church tell us that it is a good decision?" Under the best of circumstances, the Supreme Court is not a highly salient institution. To expect citizens to conduct their assessments of the Court in the way that a judicial politics scholar might is to expect too much of the American mass public.

Our purpose in this paper has been limited. We have simply asked whether the micro-level mechanisms assumed by the ideological updating model fit the empirical reality of the American mass public. We find that, by and large, the assumptions do not square with the data. Were they to fit, additional questions about the updating process would still need to be answered (see, for example, Gibson and Nelson 2015a, 2015b). Because the fit is so poor, we conclude that the model seems to have limited utility for understanding how the Supreme Court and its constituents interact.

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TABLE 1 Summary of the Tests of the Micro-Level Rule, Learn, Update Model

Criterion	Percentage*	
	Pass	Fail
Have/use liberal-conservative ideological dimension (May)	91.1 (1215)	8.9 (119)
Able to locate the Supreme Court on the dimension (May)	79.1 (1055)	20.9 (279)
Hold an opinion on Obamacare (May)	85.5 (1140)	14.5 (194)
<i>Summary of Ideology and Opinionation</i>	66.6 (888)	33.4 (446)
Hold an opinion on Supreme Court Legitimacy (May)	92.5 (1235)	7.5 (99)
Aware that the Supreme Court ruled on Obamacare (July)	66.2 (883)	33.8 (451)
Understood the decision accurately (July)	56.9 (759)	43.1 (575)
<i>Summary of Decision Awareness and Understanding</i>	56.9 (759)	43.1 (575)
Satisfies all criteria except accurate understanding of the decision	50.8 (678)	49.2 (656)
Satisfies all criteria including accurate understanding of the decision	43.7 (583)	56.3 (751)

* The percentages are based on the 1,334 respondents who answered all three waves of the TAPS survey and sum to 100% across columns (except for rounding errors). The data are weighted by post-stratification May weights with internet adjustment. The numbers of respondents are shown in parentheses. After each criterion, the source (month) of the TAPS survey is shown.

FIGURE 1A Support for Government-Sponsored Healthcare by Respondent's Ideology

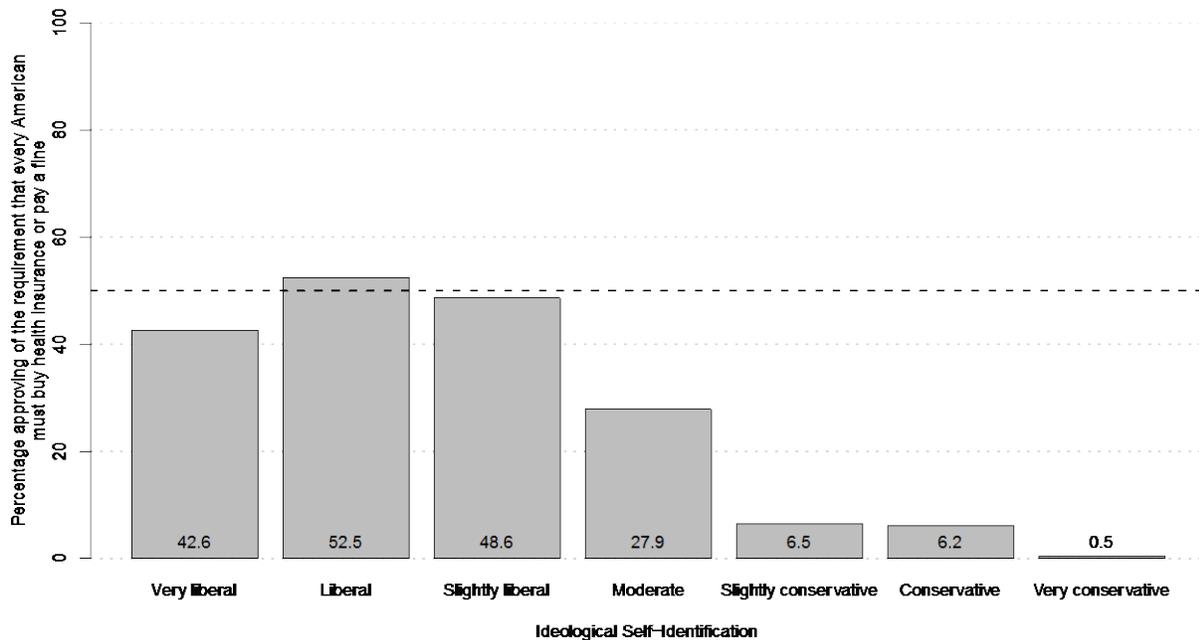
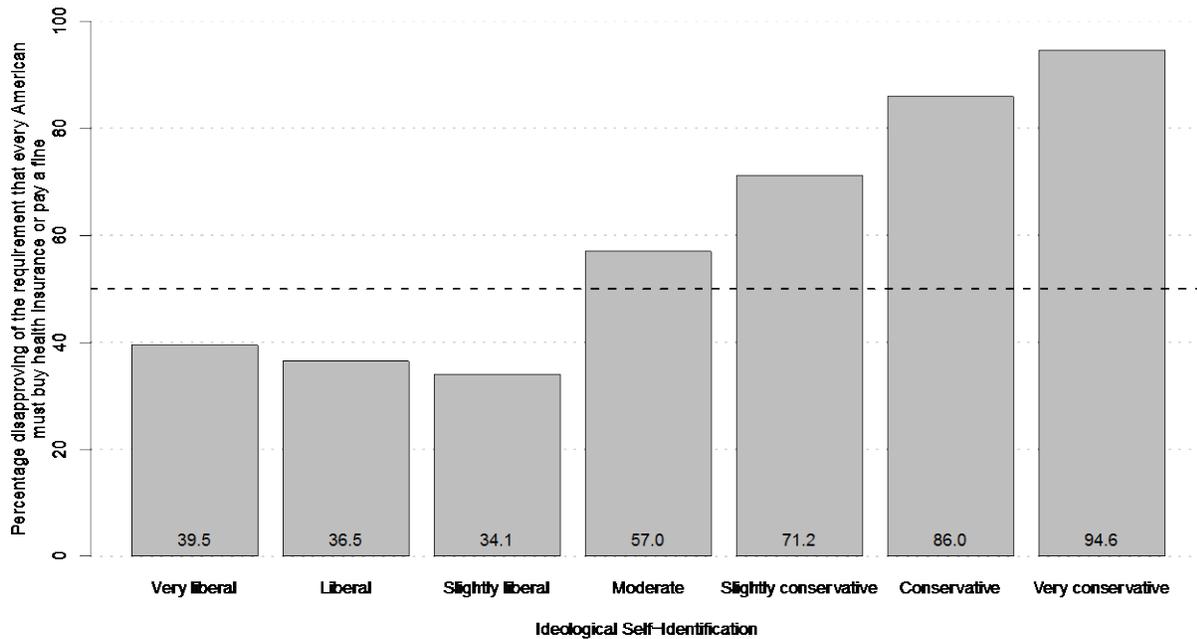


FIGURE 1B Opposition to Government-Sponsored Healthcare by Respondent's Ideology



Notes: N = 1,216. 117 respondents unable to provide their ideological self-identification were excluded from these figures. The data are weighted by post-stratification May weights with internet adjustment.

Kendall's tau-b = .378 (p < .000)

“Approving” represents the percentage of respondents within a given ideological group (i.e. “Very liberal”) who chose “approve” or “approve strongly” when asked: *Do you approve or disapprove of the requirement that every American must buy health insurance or pay a fine?*

“Disapproving” represents the percent of respondents within a given ideological group who chose “disapprove” or “disapprove strongly” when asked the question. The numbers in these two figures do not add to 100% owing to those without an opinion on the law. The dashed line represents the 50% threshold.

Appendix A: Analysis of Attrition

In our empirical analysis, we restrict the sample to the subset of respondents who responded in all three waves of the TAPS panel: May, June, and July 2012. In order to test for attrition as a result of this design, we examine the relationships between answering wave 3 (July) and three variables of interest in our study: support for the Affordable Care Act, Court legitimacy, and ideological self-identification. These variables were all measured in wave 1. To account for other potential confounders, we also estimate the probability of answering wave 3 (July) conditional on these same three variables and several demographic controls. Since the outcome variable is dichotomous, we estimate a logistic regression equation. Table A1 presents the results of two different specifications.

The first model reveals that, at the 95% confidence level, none of the relevant variables is significantly related with the likelihood of remaining in the panel between May and July.²⁸ This

²⁸ We note that the bivariate correlation between ACA support and remaining in the panel between May and July 2012 is .04 ($p = .11$, $N = 1,352$), while the correlation between Court legitimacy and wave 3 participation is .05 ($p = .05$, $N = 1,352$). Finally, the correlation between one's own ideology and remaining in the panel is .01 ($p = .76$, $N = 1,352$). (The difference in the number of observations between the bivariate correlations and the models presented in table A1 is due to rounding error.) Thus, there is a slight tendency for those with higher legitimacy scores in the first survey to have participated in the third survey. This relationship is obviously extremely weak, and is indistinguishable from zero in the multivariate case (see Table A1).

pattern for the main variables of interest persists with the inclusion of demographic variables.²⁹

Thus, it seems unlikely that panel attrition has any substantive impact on our analysis.

A final issue concerns whether respondents with missing data on the three variables of interest participated at the same rate in wave 3 as those without missing data. We created dichotomies for the three main variables indicating whether a valid response was given to the question or not. Of course, because there is no missing data on these variables, the number of cases available for analysis is 1,511. None of the three variables displays a statistically significant relationship with participation in wave 3.³⁰

²⁹ We note that whether one is a Hispanic is itself statistically significant, which of course means that the average level of participation in wave 3 for Hispanics is lower than that of non-Hispanics. However, this finding does not affect our conclusions about the substantive variables of interest in our research.

³⁰ The bivariate correlation between remaining in the panel and giving a valid response to the ACA Support item is **Error! Main Document Only.**-.00 ($p = .87$). The equivalent coefficient for Court legitimacy is **Error! Main Document Only.**-.04 ($p = .09$), and for ideological self-placement, the correlation is **Error! Main Document Only.**-.01 ($p = .629$).

TABLE A1 Logistic Regression with Wave 3 Participation as the Outcome Variable

Wave 1 Predictor	Model 1			Model 2		
	b	s.e.	p	b	s.e.	p
ACA Support	.61	.34	.075	.43	.35	.220
Court legitimacy	.80	.45	.074	.79	.48	.099
Ideological self-identification	.42	.32	.273	.13	.40	.751
Own house	-	-	-	.19	.21	.382
Male	-	-	-	-.06	.20	.761
Hispanic	-	-	-	-1.07	.23	.000
Black	-	-	-	.46	.39	.229
Intercept	1.47	.35	.000	1.77	.39	.000
N	1,353			1,353		
-2*Log-Likelihood	810.47			784.35		

Notes: the data are weighted by the post-stratification May weights with internet adjustment.

b = unstandardized regression coefficient from a logistic regression with wave 3 participation as the outcome variable;

s.e. = standard error of unstandardized regression coefficient;

p = statistical significance of the regression coefficient;

-2*Log-Likelihood = measure of fit for nested models. Smaller values are associated with an improvement in model fit.