

Supplemental Appendix for Ideology and Specific Support for the Supreme Court

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¹When the article is no longer *Forthcoming*, this will be replaced with the appropriate citation and consistent page numbers. The content will be identical.

1 Introduction

In our article, “Ideology and Specific Support for the Supreme Court,” an analysis of longitudinal data from Gallup polls shows that aggregate approval of the Supreme Court is more strongly related to perceptions that the Court is “too liberal” than perceptions it is “too conservative.” This result is consistent with the asymmetrical response hypothesis—our expectation that conservatives react more strongly to disfavored Supreme Court decisions than liberals. In this supplementary appendix, as a robustness check, we also estimate an individual-level model of Supreme Court approval using data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES).

In particular, we estimate a model of individual-level approval of the Supreme Court by respondent’s self-reported ideology as well as subjective perceptions of the Court’s ideology. This allows us to measure individuals’ perceived ideological distance from the Court. With these data, we test whether liberals and conservatives punish the Court asymmetrically for being “too conservative” (if the individual is liberal) or “too liberal” (if the individual is conservative). These results are reported below.

2 CCES Micro-Level Models

We use data the Cooperative Congressional Election Studies from 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018. In these surveys, respondents are asked to place themselves and a number of political institutions, including the Supreme Court, on the same 1 to 7, “very liberal” to “very conservative,” scale. Respondents are then prompted to indicate their approval of the Court on a scale of 1 to 4 (strongly disapprove to strongly approve).

We borrow the same basic approval model from Ansolabehere and White (2020). Specifically, we interact the difference between respondent’s self-reported ideology and their perception of the Supreme Court’s ideology (squared, to account for the increasing intensity respondents should feel from the institution as their distance increases) with whether the respondent believes the Court is more conservative than their own ideological position. This allows us to test whether the Court is punished differently for being too liberal versus too conservative. The results are shown in Table 1; the interaction is illustrated in Figure 1.

In Figure 1, each panel is arranged identically. Responses are predicted for a “very liberal” (self-ideology = 1) on the far left, “moderate” in the middle (self-ideology = 4), and “very conservative” (self-ideology = 7) on the far right. We then plot by character if the respondent believes the Court is “way too conservative” (i.e. if the respondent’s ideology is a 1 [very liberal] and they rate the Court as a 7 [very conservative]), “too conservative” (a three-unit ideological difference), “just right” (identical ideological placements for the respondent and the Court), “too liberal,” and “way too liberal.” Of particular interest are the “very liberal” and “very conservative” groups: we expect approval to decline more precipitously among these conservatives than liberals.

That is exactly what we see. Consider the top-right panel, predicted approval in 2016. Very

Table A. 1: Predicted Approval of Supreme Court

Predictor	2015	2016	2017	2018
House Approval	0.304*	0.300*	0.408*	0.390*
	(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.010)	(0.005)
President Approval	0.247*	0.232*	0.079***	0.236*
	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.009)	(0.004)
Born Again	-0.094*	-0.069*	-0.032*	-0.027*
	(0.017)	(0.008)	(0.016)	(0.008)
Female	0.017	0.021*	0.002	-0.036*
	(0.015)	(0.007)	(0.014)	(0.007)
Age	-0.003*	-0.0003	0.003*	0.005*
	(0.0005)	(0.0002)	(0.0004)	(0.0002)
Income	0.001	0.010*	0.008*	0.011*
	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Education	0.032*	0.025*	0.045*	0.038*
	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.002)
Party ID	-0.0001	0.014*	0.008	0.013*
	(0.005)	(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.002)
Self Ideology (Liberal)	-0.071*	-0.037*	-0.038*	-0.022*
	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.008)	(0.004)
SCOTUS Too Conservative (Dummy)	0.032	-0.008	0.076*	0.026*
	(0.026)	(0.012)	(0.024)	(0.012)
SCOTUS Too Liberal (Dummy)	-0.040	-0.073*	0.069*	0.072*
	(0.027)	(0.012)	(0.026)	(0.012)
SCOTUS Distance (Squared)	-0.025*	-0.030*	-0.038*	-0.026*
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)
SCOTUS Too Conservative (Dummy):	-0.013*	-0.002*	0.009*	0.004*
SCOTUS Distance (Squared)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Constant	1.696*	1.481*	1.436*	0.871*
	(0.059)	(0.028)	(0.048)	(0.024)
Observations	9,752	45,374	11,793	43,475
R ²	0.432	0.370	0.302	0.516
\sqrt{MSE}	0.706	0.706	0.745	0.658

Note: * $p < 0.05$.

conservative individuals lower their approval of the Court by about 0.3 points if they feel the Court is three units too liberal, and they punish the Court by over a point (on a 1-4 scale) if they feel the Court is six units too liberal. Very liberal individuals, conversely, lower their approval by less than 0.2 points if they feel the Court is three units too conservative. Across years, conservatives punish liberalism in the Court more than liberals punish conservatism. In addition, in each of the four years presented in Figure 1, individuals self-identify as very conservative and who also feel the Court is way too liberal (the maximum ideological distance) have the lowest approval of the Court in absolute terms across all groups. In

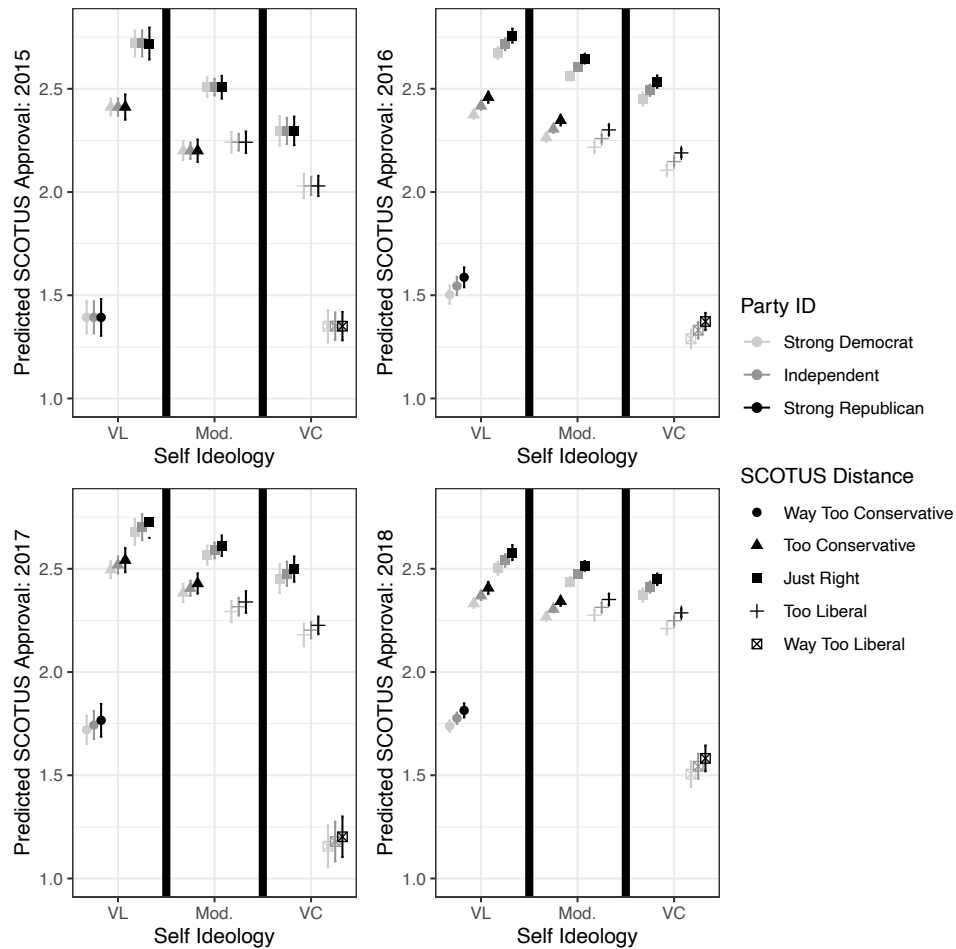


Figure A. 1: Predicted Approval of the Supreme Court Across Years and Ideological Distances.

2017, very conservative individuals who feel the Court is very liberal approve of the Court a 0.5 points (18% of the scale) lower than very liberal individuals who feel the Court is very conservative.

3 Ideological Asymmetries in Evaluations of Congress?

Are ideological asymmetries in evaluations of governing institutions specific to the Supreme Court, or do they influence evaluations of Congress as well?

On the one hand, patterns of political behavior rooted in ideological values and moral commitments might play out in similar ways in the evaluation of different kinds of institutions. On the other hands, the Supreme Court occupies a unique role in the American political system that may activate different kinds of considerations when citizens judge its actions compared to Congress.

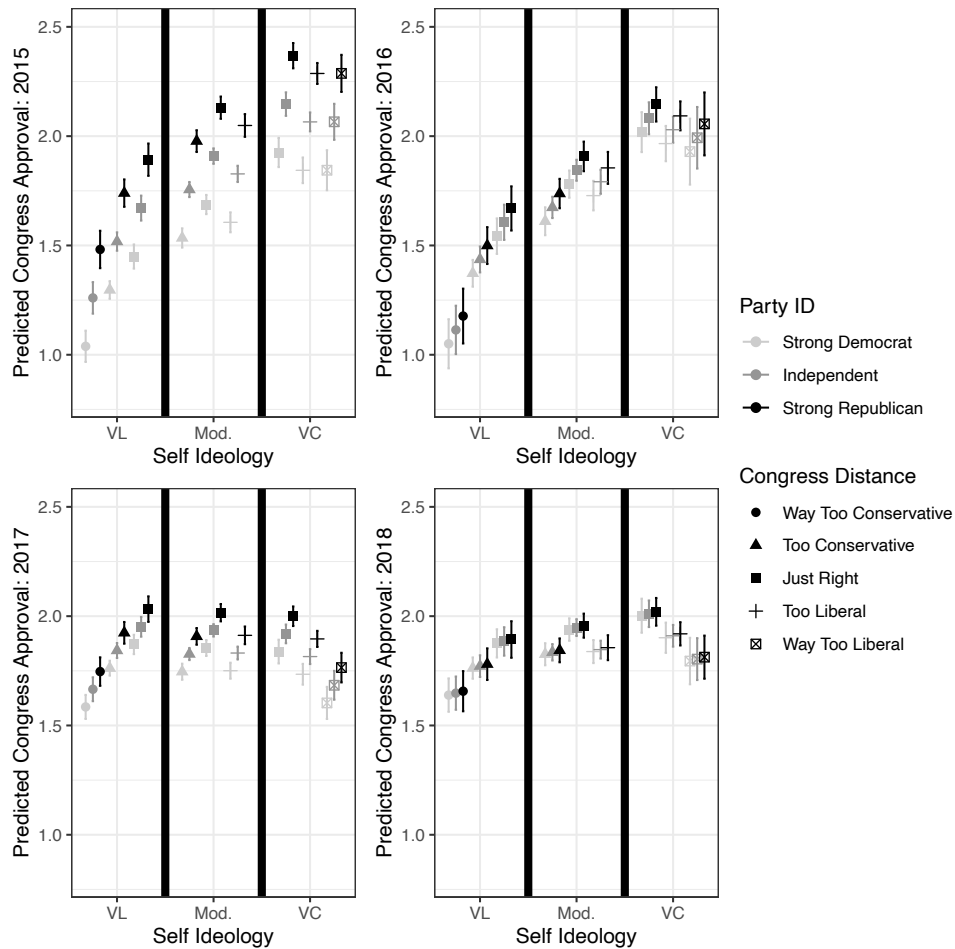


Figure A. 2: Predicted Approval of the House/Congress Across Years and Ideological Distances.

If evaluations of Congress are based in the same behavioral process as evaluations of the Supreme Court, we should observe similar exhibit the same distinct patterns in approval of Congress among liberals and conservatives, respectively, that we observe for evaluations of the Court. If the Supreme Court’s decisions especially activate ideological core values and moral commitments, then individuals’ ideological distance from another national institution, such as Congress, should not operate as asymmetrically between liberals and conservatives in determining approval. We evaluate these competing predictions. To do so, we run identical regressions in Table 2, this time predicting the respondent’s approval of Congress or their House representative (the CCES asked these questions in alternating years: see Table 2). Again, the results are presented graphically in Figure 2.

In Figure 2, *liberals* tend to punish ideological divergence more severely; in 2015 (the top-left panel), for instance, there was no predicted change in approval based on ideological distance for conservative respondents at all. And in the other years, although both groups approved of distant members less than proximate ones, this process was more or less symmetric among liberals and conservatives. The results of Figure 2 are consistent with the

Table A. 2: Predicted Approval of Congress or House Member

Predictor	2015	2016	2017	2018
SCOTUS Approval	0.324*	0.379*	0.319*	0.384*
	(0.009)	(0.013)	(0.007)	(0.011)
President Approval	0.081*	0.012	0.265*	0.169*
	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.007)	(0.011)
Born Again	0.224*	0.224*	0.124*	0.069*
	(0.017)	(0.024)	(0.014)	(0.020)
Female	0.111*	0.047*	0.137*	0.125*
	(0.015)	(0.021)	(0.012)	(0.017)
Age	-0.007*	-0.010*	-0.008*	-0.009*
	(0.0005)	(0.001)	(0.0004)	(0.0005)
Income	-0.013*	-0.009*	-0.011*	-0.010*
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Education	-0.055*	-0.040*	-0.035*	-0.032*
	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Party ID	0.074*	0.021*	0.027*	0.003
	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Self Ideology (Liberal)	0.079*	0.079*	-0.005	0.021*
	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.008)
House Too Conservative (Dummy)	-0.067*	-0.062*	-0.049*	-0.072*
	(0.023)	(0.032)	(0.019)	(0.026)
House Too Liberal (Dummy)	-0.082*	-0.040	-0.060*	-0.065*
	(0.023)	(0.032)	(0.019)	(0.026)
House Distance (Squared)	0.00001	-0.001	-0.005*	-0.004*
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)
House Too Conservative (Dummy):	-0.010*	-0.011*	-0.002	-0.001
House Distance (Squared)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Constant	0.901*	1.191*	0.982*	1.091*
	(0.060)	(0.087)	(0.036)	(0.049)
Observations	9,701	5,360	11,747	6,124
R ²	0.251	0.249	0.430	0.446
\sqrt{MSE}	0.727	0.770	0.647	0.644

Note: 2015 and 2017 predict approval of Congress.
2016 and 2018 predict approval of House member. * $p < 0.05$

view that the Supreme Court uniquely motivates ideological evaluations of its behavior among conservatives as a result of its particular role in the American political system. This role is a result of the strong symbolic connections between its decisions and the nation's ideological and moral commitments.

References

Ansolabehere, Stephen D., and Ariel White. 2020. "Policy, Politics, and Public Attitudes Toward the Supreme Court." *American Politics Research* 48 (3): 365–376.