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A Study of the Relationship Between the Principles of Distributive Justice and Political Ideology

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Introduction

Ideology plays a very important role in every day life, and even more so in a President's term in office. Ideology can be defined as a "body of doctrine, myth, belief, etc., that guides an individual, social movement, institution, class, or large group" ("Ideology Definition," 2006), and it is based on these doctrines or beliefs that a President carries out his duties of running the country. If he is more conservative, then he will pass and veto bills accordingly; the same goes for a more liberal President, as well. By looking at and examining a person's ideology, one can predict how that s/he will vote and will therefore allocate funds.

There are many viewpoints that influence how a person thinks and how s/he believes money should be distributed when it comes to social services, like healthcare and Social Security. These viewpoints can be measured with the aid of the principles of Distributive Justice. These principles are "normative principles designed to guide the allocation of the benefits and burdens of economic activity" ("Distributive Justice [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy]," 2007). By utilizing these principles of Distributive Justice, one can see how beliefs regarding dispersal of funds for Social Services vary based on complicated, convoluted ways of thinking:

Distributive principles may vary in numerous dimensions. They can vary in what is subject to distribution (income, wealth, opportunities, jobs, welfare, utility, etc.); in the nature of the subjects of the distribution (natural persons, groups of persons, reference classes, etc.); and on what basis distribution should be made (equality, maximization, according to individual characteristics, according to free transactions, etc.) ("Distributive Justice [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy]," 2007).

This study will attempt to decipher and untangle how different people view the importance of various social issues based on their answers to a series of questions

regarding their political positions. By doing so, there will be a clearer understanding of how the ideologies of a certain political party directly influence those party's members beliefs and stances on where funds should be allocated.

This study will also focus on particular presidents in the last century to explain its assumed findings: Conservative Republicans believe in less funding to Social Services; Liberal Democrats believe in more funding to Social Services. By taking a historical, factual look at what has happened under different terms, this theory can be proven, and can also educate about the future with the upcoming election.

By educating social workers about how social services have been influenced by various presidencies, they can be better prepared for the next four years, and can therefore be better able to serve their client base, as well. If services are cut in one particular area, such as funding for aging out youth (foster care), then social workers need to know what is available, what is not, and what they can do in order to provide their client with the best options. It is only in looking towards the past that one can adequately and knowledgeably look towards the future, and this study will attempt to look to both in order to educate those in the field of social work. By being educated, social workers will be able to serve their clients to the best of their ability.

By employing the use of the principles of Distributive Justice, this study will attempt to unravel and shed a little light on the intricate web that is how a person thinks and how those thoughts influences their stances on social services and the Federal government, particularly in regards to healthcare and Social Security. In addition, it will also take a closer look at specific presidents in order to show how the trends do not just pertain to the Providence College community, but to the general

population of the United States, as well.

Literature Review

The Principles of Distributive Justice are “normative principles designed to guide the allocation of the benefits and burdens of economic activity” (Lamont & Favor, 2007). Each of these influence how a person thinks and therefore how s/he distributes funds towards Social Services, such as Healthcare. There are seven principles, each of which are found in varying political ideologies from Communism to Libertarianism. Each differs on what constitutes “wealth,” how that “wealth” should be distributed, and how a population of people should earn its right to that “wealth.” By understanding and coming to recognize these differing principles, one can understand their role in a President’s ideology, and thusly the consequent actions and policies that both positively and negatively affect Social Services.

First, there is Strict Egalitarianism. This principle states that every person is entitled to rights and equality, and should also receive an equal level of resources. Since people are owed the same amount of respect, then material goods and services are the best way in which to pay this respect. However, there are two problems that arise from this principle automatically: (1) what is a proper way of measuring what constitutes adequate goods/services and (2) in what proper time frame must those goods/services be distributed in order to best serve the people?

The first question, often given the name of the “index problem,” needs to be addressed because the principles states that everyone deserves an equal level of resources. Complications arise when one attempts to define what a “level” is and how that is given to a person in need. However, as Lamont and Favor (2007) suggest, the idea

of a “level” would best be replaced by the concept of a “bundle,” though this in itself poses problems, as well. If every person was given a bundle that included five oranges and two bananas, for example, but not everyone liked oranges and therefore had to exchange their oranges for the bananas from other people’s bundles, this would make everyone materially worse off due to the expenditure of time, effort, and energy. The downfall of Strict Egalitarianism is quickly defined – not everyone will benefit from the same bundle, as not everyone will require the same goods and services as others.

Regarding time frames, there are some variations as to what patterns should be used or aimed for in terms of distribution. Those who follow a “starting-gate” principle believe that everyone should be given the same amount of wealth, for instance, in the beginning. After that, everyone is entitled to use that wealth however they see fit. Those that are opposed to them are not given specific titles, but believe that everyone should be given an equal amount of *income* (“levels,” in this case, are measured in terms of money) in *each* time frame. However, this may lead to a wide gap between wealthy and poor if each spend and save this income differently.

The main moral arguments *against* this principle are that it restricts freedom, does not actually provide equal respect for all people, and that they directly conflict with what people deserve, despite its attempt to provide equality.

There is a strong undertone of Communism in the Strict Egalitarianism principle. Karl Marx, the main component of Communism, stated that “Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other -- bourgeoisie and proletariat” (“The Communist Manifesto,” 2008). Originally written as a protest for the extremely impoverished, Marx calls for ten, distinct

planks, which include centralization of credit by the State, free education for all children, and the abolition of property in land (“The Communist Manifesto,” 2008). The United States government is fiercely opposed to this anti-capitalist idea, as shown in the Cold War, which was fought from the mid 1940’s until the early 1990’s. Since the United States government would never allow itself to turn into a Communist Party in this present day and time, this first principle seems to have little influence on Social Services and its funding in the US, though perhaps it would have more elsewhere.

The Difference Principle carries some of the trends from Strict Egalitarianism. However, its approaches to achieve “equality” are very different. The Difference Principle was inspired partly from the idea that wealth can be produced and that those who are the most productive have the right to earn higher incomes than those who do not contribute. John Rawls, an American Philosopher and author, proposed two principles of justice in his work, *A Theory of Justice*, originally published in 1971. Rawls (2005) stated:

First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.

Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all. (Rawls, 2005, p. 60)

Rawls (2005) goes on to say that there are basic liberties to which everyone is entitled:

political liberty (the right to vote and to be eligible for public office) together with freedom of speech and assembly; liberty of conscience and freedom of thought; freedom of the person along with the right to hold (personal) property; and freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined by the concept of the rule of law. (p. 61)

He emphasizes these freedoms in regard to how they affect a person's wealth and income. However, his second principle can be found in most conservative, Republican ideologies in the form of "trickle-down economics."

Ronald Reagan, who served as the United States President from 1981 – 1989, is the most notorious for this economic theory, though it had been proposed earlier on in other presidencies. The basis of trickle-down economics is that if top income earners invest more in businesses and are given higher tax cuts, then this will, in turn, produce more affordable products from that company, which will then create more jobs for middle and lower class citizens ("Trickle-down economics," 2008).

This theory often does not pan out the way supporters of it believe it will. Robert H. Frank (2007) is quick to dismantle trickle-down economics in his New York Times article:

... when researchers track the data within individual countries over time, they find a negative correlation. In the decades immediately after World War II ... income inequality was low by historical standards, yet growth rates in most industrial countries were extremely high. (Frank, 2007)

By taking a closer look at this economic theory, one can see its negative impacts on Social Services rather clearly. If the wealthy and those in the high-income brackets are given more tax cuts, then the middle and lower class population must make up for the difference. If the middle and lower classes do not have the surplus money to spend in order to make up for the difference, and as those against the Difference Principle state: "being materially equal is an important expression of the equality of persons" (Lamont & Favor, 2007), then the government will suffer and will look to satiate the deficit by cutting programs. President Ronald Reagan was a perfect example of this, having believed in less government involvement and promoted Reaganomics, which was closely

identified with trickle-down economics. He vowed to cut “the outlays for social programs by targeting ‘waste, fraud, and abuse’” (“Ronald Reagan presidential library,” n.d.). He cut the “outlays” through his budget proposals that cut things such as “education, food stamps, low-income housing, school lunches for poor children, Medicaid ... and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)” (“Ronald W. Reagan,” 2008). Being a true supporter of the Difference Principle, and also a conservative Republican, Reagan cut funding to important Social Services programs that had once benefited the impoverished and needy.

The resource-based principle is slightly more liberal in the sense that it is “endowment-sensitive,” meaning that it acknowledges that there are some social circumstances that people cannot control that negatively affect earning capacities. However, supporters of this principle believe that people’s fates are ultimately determined by the individual’s utilization (or lack thereof) of resources. Everyone has the same chance but through wasteful uses of what s/he is given, end up in varying states of wealth and adequacy.

Ronald Dworkin, professor of Jurisprudence at University College London and the New York University School of Law, and former professor of Jurisprudence at the University of Oxford, is a major resource-based theorist. He believes that “no person has a right to a greater share of resources than anyone else” (Guest, 1991, p. 15). And, in accordance with the majority of resource-based theorists, suggests that “people begin with equal resources but end up with unequal economic benefits as a result of their own choices” (Lamont & Favor, 2007).

The resource-based principle is somewhat Socialist in that everyone deserves the same when it comes to resources, and that it supports the concept that natural variances are not due to people's choices (having a handicap, for instance). There are major flaws with this theory, all the same: how does one go about measuring differences in people's variances?; talents versus handicaps cannot be equally compared; and what categories would be used in order to divide these talents and differences?

President William J. Clinton can be seen as a fairly good example of the resource-based principle. Voted in as a Democratic President following Republican President George H. W. Bush, he had initially vowed to help the suffering country in all major aspects, such as the growing deficit, healthcare, and welfare. When the summer of 1996 came to pass, he had finally fulfilled his 1992 campaign promise of ending "welfare as we know it" ("American president," 2008).

The legislation replaced the long standing Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program with a system of block grants to individual states. It also dropped the eligibility of legal immigrants for welfare assistance during the first five years of their residency. ("American president," 2008)

President Bill Clinton is an example of a person who does not follow his political affiliation (Democrat), but rather his ideology which, in this case, was conservative. He had an extremely negative effect on Social Services, leaving less as a resource for Social Workers who had been trying to assist needy and low-income clients.

Fourth is the welfare-based principle. This states that the primary concern is the level of the welfare of a population of people. It also states that every distributive question should reach an answer based on what would maximize welfare. The welfare-based principle is tied very closely to the philosophical concept of Utilitarianism.

One of the most famous philosophers in this field was John Stuart Mill (1806 – 1873). In his work *Utilitarianism* (1861), he says that everyone “ought to aim at maximizing the welfare of all sentient creatures, and that welfare consists of their happiness” (“John Stuart Mill,” n.d.). However, many dilemmas arise when the principle is viewed under the light of Utilitarianism, mainly because it fails to acknowledge, earnestly, the individuality of a person. In other words, what is adequate for one person may not be adequate for all, and what can be applied to an individual circumstance cannot be applied to a larger, wider picture of society. Also, most of those following Utilitarianism cannot agree on what material or resource should be distributed evenly.

The welfare-based principle is vaguely found in most liberal, Democratic ideologies. Liberal ideology, in this sense, is the concept that “freedom is normatively basic, and so the onus of justification is on those who would limit freedom, especially through coercive means” (Gaus & Courtland, 2007). In the modern age, liberalism has taken on a similar meaning, though it is represented by the “left-wing,” meaning *more* government intervention, more assistance to the middle and lower classes, and the classic idea of greater freedoms, particularly to individuals (such as a woman’s right to choose or decline abortion).

With the past election resulting in the choice of President-elect Barack Obama, a liberal Democrat from Illinois, one can expect his policies to reflect much of the Welfare-based principle throughout his term. It will be reflected particularly in his support of what is termed Pro-Choice, regarding abortion. He has said that “a woman's ability to decide how many children to have and when, without interference from the government, is one of the most fundamental rights we possess. It is not just an issue of choice, but

equality and opportunity for all women” (“Sen. Barack Obama,” 2008). And just as many of the school of Utilitarianism cannot decide on what constitutes “welfare” and what resources must be distributed in order to achieve that vague definition of “welfare,” many liberal Democrats are feeling the same disjointedness; some are in support of universal healthcare, while others believe in the privatization of healthcare, while others believe that it is not a pressing issue . With President-elect Barack Obama’s term to begin in January of 2009, one can only wait and see what his choices bring us and how his ideologies will affect Social Services, whether it be for the better or for the worse.

The desert-based principle claims that people deserve particular benefits, despite their actions. Behind this claim is the idea that welfarism treats “people as mere containers for well-being, rather than purposeful beings, responsible for their actions ...” (Lamont & Favor, 2007). Under the umbrella of “desert-based principle” are three distinctions of what is identified as the basis for deserving: (1) Contribution, or the idea that people ought to be rewarded in relation to their contributions to the social product; (2) Effort, or the idea that people ought to be reward in correlation with the effort exerted towards the social product; and (3) Compensation, or the idea that people ought to be rewarded in relation to the costs experienced while working towards the social product (Lamont & Favor, 2007).

Philosopher John Locke (1632 – 1704) “argued people deserve to have those items produced by their toil and industry, the products ... being a fitting reward for their effort” (Lamont & Favor, 2007). There is a twinge of conservative, Republican doctrine in terms of supporting a completely capitalist state. In Communism, everyone works towards benefitting the State without actually having anything that “belongs” to the

individual; everything belongs to everyone else. Capitalism, however, “is a social system based on the principle of individual rights” (“The capitalism site,” 2004). In a capitalist society, everyone “owns” what s/he produces and obtains. Locke was, in a sense, supporting a free, capitalist society, regardless of whether or not he fully understood it at the time.

The best example of a conservative, Republican president who supports capitalism and a free market would be the current leader of the United States, George W. Bush. Even now, while the world is facing a global economic crisis (crashing stocks, falling value of currency, etc.), Bush stated that “world leaders should rely on capitalism and free markets to see them through the financial turmoil that grips the global economy” (Marshall, 2008).

George W. Bush has, through various economic and foreign policies (such as the Iraq War), brought the country to the worst deficit in history. Because of the trillions of dollars spent abroad fighting the Iraq War, local state governments are finding themselves strapped for funds. Rhode Island has been hit particularly hard in terms of social services and cuts have made to various Social Service programs, such as Head Start, which helped 3- and 4-year olds living in poverty (Peoples, 2007). In addition to Head Start, the Rhode Island government, headed by conservative, Republican Governor Donald L. Carcieri, has also cut funding back from virtually all aspects of life: “[f]rom postponing bridge repairs -- about half of bridges are considered deficient -- to cutting back hours at the Department of Motor Vehicles, to raising fees at senior citizen centers” (Harris, 2008). Again, an example of a conservative, Republican government which has taken more away from Social Services, rather than provided more.

The libertarian principle of distributive justice holds to the idea that “just outcomes are those arrived at by the separate just actions of individuals [and that] a particular distributive pattern is not required for justice” (Lamont & Favor, 2007). This holds true to what is typically given as the definition of Libertarianism:

... each person owns his own life and property, and has the right to make his own choices as to how he lives his life - as long as he simply respects the same right of others to do the same. (“What is Libertarianism?,” 2003)

Robert Nozick, a political philosopher and author of *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974), proposes a three-part “Entitlement Theory,” which is as follows: (1) A person to acquires a holding in accordance with the acquisition principle of justice is entitled to the holding; (2) A person who acquires a holding in accordance with the transfer principle of justice is entitled to the holding; and (3) No one is entitled to a holding except through the parameters set by (1) and (2). “A distribution is just if everyone is entitled to the holdings they possess under the distribution” (Nozick, 1974, p. 151).

As Will Kymlicka, Queen's University, Ontario, Canada, further explains, everyone “owns themselves,” which is what extreme, conservative Republicans (Libertarians) believe. Kymlicka also goes on to say that “once private property has been appropriated, a free market in capital and labor is morally required” (as cited in Lamont & Favor, 2007). Again, this brings the focus back to a President such as George W. Bush, who has continued to promote and push for a free market, capitalist society, despite its short-comings and negative effects on Social Services in particular, over the last eight years.

Last is the feminist principle, which is perhaps one of those most difficult to narrow down and define. John Stuart Mill, who was previously discussed regarding his

work *Utilitarianism*, also penned *The Subjection of Women* in 1869, which serves as one of the earliest feminist critiques. He argued that:

the principles associated with the developing liberalism of his time required equal political status for women ... [and that there should be] a rejection of the aristocracy of birth, equal opportunity in education and in the marketplace, equal rights to hold property, a rejection of the man as the legal head of the household, and equal rights to political participation (Lamont & Favor, 2007).

Using this as a jumping board, and coming to a somewhat hypocritical conclusion, most feminist supporters believe that women should be allowed identical rights as men (liberal), yet also believe that government regulation should not prevent women from competing against men fairly (conservative – *laissez-faire*, or hands off, policy). As Lamont & Favor (2007) put it, “the problem ... is not liberalism but the failure of society and the State to properly instantiate liberal principles.”

Having had the prospect of Hillary Clinton as a hopeful Democratic Party Candidate during the primaries, there was also a conflicting situation amongst women voters, as seen in the Feminist Principle of Distributive Justice. Some women were very much in support of the concept of the first female president, while others loitered in the middle ground, unable to choose, while still others vehemently supported Barack Obama over a fellow woman. “Clinton captured the over-65 vote, and Obama won over younger women. But women in the middle split almost evenly between the two” (Sullivan, 2008). Some of those who did not vote for Hillary simply believed that sexism would never be defeated in the country, and decided to vote for a candidate who had a better chance of winning. Others did not want her being a woman to influence their voting.

Regardless of the reasons as to why Hillary Clinton failed to secure to Democratic Party’s nomination, one must wonder what changes would have come about had she been

the next President of the United States in regards to Social Services. Hillary Clinton has been a very vocal supporter of universal healthcare. Of course, with this proposal comes a large price tag (around \$110 billion a year), and the benefits of both sides must be carefully weighed. While universal healthcare would solve many suffering families' crises of not being able to afford a doctor or a dentist, it would also put further strain on the United States economy. With the country already in a deficit of over \$400 billion, an additional \$110 billion per year could create more problems than solutions. Had she been elected to become the next President, it would have been interesting to see how social services were affected, and whether her healthcare reforms left a positive or negative legacy.

These Principles of Distributive Justice allow one to attempt to better understand those who are similar- and different-minded and how these principles are utilized in every day life, particularly when it comes to voting.

Opposing Points

There are clear distinctions amongst these Principles that can clearly identify whether each falls under a more Conservative or a more Liberal category, however, there may be other reasons for a person's choosing a particular political candidate that are not influenced by these Principles. For instance, a person who is identified as a Republican may vote for a Democratic presidential candidate because of a particular issue that person feels is most important, or visa versa.

In this past presidential election, about 54% of Catholics, who are typically viewed as Conservative, voted for the now President-elect Barack Obama ("Local exit polls," 2008), despite Obama being a pro-choice supporter. Those who usually voted for

Conservative candidates may have realized that pro-choice/pro-life debates were not as serious as the current status of the United States economy, or that of the world.

Another factor that may have swayed Conservative voters to change their minds was George W. Bush's public endorsement of the candidate. Bush is currently hovering around a 23% approval rating, which is below the worst approval rating President Richard Nixon ever received (Langer, 2008). His public endorsement of John McCain may have hurt McCain's chances more than it helped, since the majority of the country no longer supports its current leader's actions and decisions. McCain has also voted with Bush about 95% of the time, which may have led voters to believe that he would only continue the policies that so many disapprove of now ("CQ member profiles," 2007).

A third factor that may have influenced the Conservative vote to morph into a Liberal one would be McCain's choice of Sarah Palin as his running mate. She did not have the experience that many voters were looking for in a Vice President; she had only negotiated with one leader of a foreign country, Canada, and had only met one other, the leader of Iceland ("By the numbers," 2008). She also had only obtained a passport in 2007 before she traveled to Kuwait in order to visit soldiers who were stationed there (Cooper & Bumiller, 2008). With the country deeply involved in fighting overseas, having a second-in-command with very little foreign policy experience may have deterred many Republicans and Conservatives from supporting McCain and Palin.

Democrats, typically liberal, may have also switched their vote for McCain in the past election for a variety of reasons that were not related to the Principles of Distributive Justice. One such reason would be the issue of race surrounding Barack Obama. While the country has made many advances, such as allowing inter-racial marriage or allowing

women to vote, there are still many who can not come to terms with the idea of a half African-American, half-Caucasian man as President. His race came under an even more intense scrutiny after his pastor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright, made many controversial statements.

Rev. Jeremiah Wright, a pastor at Barack Obama's Church, the Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, caused many to re-think their support of a bi-racial Presidential hopeful. Wright said things such as "God damn America [instead of "God Bless America"]" and that the United States caused 9/11 through its own acts of terrorism (Ross & El-Buri, 2008). This, understandably, caused many to view him as a liability, something that would harm a successful Obama campaign, rather than help it. Rev. Jeremiah Wright's controversial statements, as well as the Conservative media's portrayal of him, may have caused some voters who would have normally voted for a Democratic candidate to switch and vote for John McCain.

Obama is similar to Sarah Palin in that they both lack experience; Obama is only 46 years-old, which McCain often used on the campaign trail to shy people away from him: "So I appreciate-with his very, very great lack of experience and knowledge of the issues, he's been very successful" (Oinounou, 2008). However, his younger age also appealed to many of the college-aged voters who tended to identify with the younger Democratic candidate: "they have bypassed her [Hillary Clinton], flocking instead to her rival, Senator Barack Obama" (Seelye, 2008). All the same, 16% of the voters were aged 65 and older, and 53% of them voted for John McCain due to their common identification in relation to age ("Local exit polls," 2008). All of these factors may have played a part in swaying Democratic voters to the Republican ticket.

Lastly, for those voters who were not able to clearly choose a major party candidate, some decided to opt for an Independent party candidate or decided not to vote at all.

A person's vote may not be influenced by his/her ideology, political affiliation, or the Principles of Distributive Justice, but may be due to the fact that there are sometimes more pressing issues which need to be addressed about a particular candidate. For John McCain, his downfalls included his public endorsement from George W. Bush, his voting record that was in agreement with Bush's policies 95% of the time, the failing world economy, and his choice of Sarah Palin as a running mate. For Barack Obama, it was the issue of his mixed race, his controversial pastor, and his age and lack of experience. These factors may have ultimately decided the fate of the Presidential election of the United States on November 4th, during which Barack Obama emerged victorious

Hypothesis

This study will explore how the Principles of Distributive Justice influence and directly affect what a person believes and how these beliefs play a role in how s/he votes in an election. Based on the review of the literature, it can be concluded that people who believe in the more ideologically conservative Principles of Distributive Justice (Desert-Based Principles and Libertarian Principles) will vote accordingly for conservative Republican candidates. For those who believe in the more ideologically liberal Principles of Distributive Justice (Resource-Based Principles and Welfare-Based Principles) will also vote accordingly for liberal, Democratic candidates. Those who believe in the others which are not so easily defined (Strict Egalitarianism, Difference Principle, and Feminist Principles) will vary on their ideologies based upon personal

opinions, experiences, and beliefs. Due to this conclusion, I hypothesize that males will tend to believe in more conservative (Republican or Libertarian) principles, whereas females will believe in more liberal (Democratic or Socialist) principles.

It can also be concluded that those in political power with particular ideological affiliations will act in accordance with the related Principles of Distributive Justice.

Methodology

Sample (Participants)

In this quantitative study, I will be looking at how the Principles of Distributive Justice are found in the convictions of a particular population (Providence College student body) based on gender, class year, and home state. I will analyze any correlations that are found among these four variables (including political beliefs) for trends or results that go against my original hypothesis.

The population studied will be Providence College undergraduate students, who are between the ages of 17 and 22. They will agree to partake in this study by signing a consent form which will be provided along with the survey. I will attempt to obtain as many participants as possible in order to provide the most diverse pool from which to gather data, therefore decreasing the chance of internal error. Since I wish to find the most diverse group, participants will not be weeded out based on sex, academic year, location, or age.

Data Gathering

In order to do this, this will construct a questionnaire that will be composed of statements which participants will rate (Likert Scale) from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree (See Appendix A). These statements will be formed by examining the various

ideologies' websites and taking specific beliefs or policies from each. For example, after looking at the Libertarian party, I would write a statement on the survey such as, "The federal government should not be involved in the allocation of services such as welfare," with the options from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree underneath. There would be three or four statements that coincide with each political affiliation (Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, and Socialist), and the Likert Scale would leave room for those who are not strongly tied to any particular group, such as an Independent party.

Data Analysis

The data gathered will then be analyzed with the assistance of Dr. Michael Hayes, Assistant Professor in the Social Work Department at Providence College. With his expertise, I will be able to either confirm or deny my hypothesis that males will believe in more conservative principles, whereas females will believe in more liberal principles.

Findings/Results

This study looked at political ideology and its relation to the Principles of Distributive Justice as seen through the Providence College student body. A total of 41 surveys were collected. Out of those 41 participants, 34.1% were male and 65.9% were female. The majority (73.2%) was comprised of members of the senior class and there was an equal amount (26.8%) of participants from Connecticut and Massachusetts. In addition, most participants were either 21 or 22 years of age (46.3% and 34.1%, respectively).

The data gathered from the completed and collected surveys was analyzed for correlations. The primary focus was gender in comparison with the varied ideological statements (related to Socialists, Democrats, Republicans, and Libertarians). The method

used was to look at Frequencies (under Descriptive Statistics), as well as an Independent T-Test to look for trends and patterns between Gender and each ideological statement.

In the Independent T-Test, where a significant difference is anything greater than 0.05, one would not expect to see much significant difference due to the small sample size of this study. However, there is one variable that is statistically significant ($t=0.017$, $p < 0.05$): a Socialist question regarding the elimination of corporate influence in the Federal Government.

Table 1

Sig. Difference of the Independent T-Test Regarding Corporate Influence in the Federal Gov't

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		F	Sig.			
Socialist	Equal variances assumed	.116	.735	2.486	39	.017
	Equal variances not assumed			2.353	22.808	.028

Two other variables approach 0.05; one is a Republican statement and one is a Democrat statement.

Table 1.2

Sig. Difference of the Independent T-Test Regarding Higher Military Spending and Support of Affirmative Action in Colleges

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		F	Sig.			
Republican	Equal variances assumed	3.838	.057	1.786	39	.082

	Equal variances not assumed			1.623	20.602	.120
Democrat	Equal variances assumed	.283	.598	-1.910	39	.064
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.030	31.222	.051

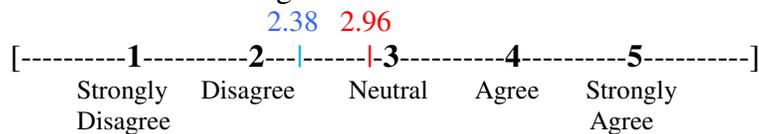
Mean scores were also compared using a One-Way ANOVA test, however, as with the Independent T-Test Sample, one would not expect a significant difference between variables due to the small population size.

The mean scores between genders were analyzed and plotted in a similar fashion to how the survey questions were presented (See Appendix B), where the blue line represents males and the red line represents females and how they scored on each question.

Example 1

Analysis Based on Gender for Each Individual Statement

1. I believe that *individuals*, and **not** states/groups, should be *solely* in charge of their freedoms and rights.



Despite there being more females than males (27 to 14, respectively), males generally tended to have higher mean scores for each statements, obtaining a higher score for 10 out of the 17 questions.

However, there were some specific questions that affirmed some underlying assumptions. In the case of Gay Marriage, for example, females obtained a higher mean score (showing more support) whereas males obtained a higher mean score on the conversely stated Republican statement (“I believe that marriage is defined as being

between a man and a woman only”), meaning they supported a traditional definition of marriage.

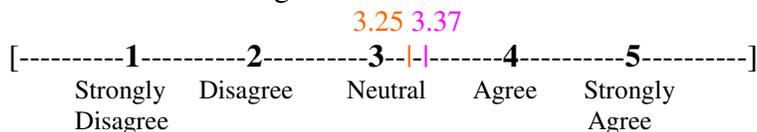
When comparing the mean scores of each ideological variable according to home state, there were some surprising findings (See Appendix C). Rhode Island was fairly inconsistent, having high mean scores on at least one variable of each political ideology. However, Rhode Island obtained the highest mean score of five Democratic statements of the total 17. Massachusetts did not have a high mean score on any Libertarian or Republican statements, but had a high mean score on two of the Democrat and Socialist statements for a total of four. Connecticut, typically identified as a blue (Democrat) state, did not have a high mean score on any Democrat or Socialist statements, but rather on four Republican statements and one Libertarian statement. New York was spread fairly evenly across all four ideologies with one in each, except for Republican (two high means). The Other category, which included two from Pennsylvania, one from Tennessee, and one from Canada, obtained high mean scores on four Democratic statements, three Socialist statements, and only one Libertarian statement.

In Example 2, Rhode Island is orange, Massachusetts is green, Connecticut is purple, New York is dark blue, and Other is pink.

Example 2

Analysis Based on State for Each Individual Statement

1. I believe that *individuals*, and **not** states/groups, should be *solely* in charge of their freedoms and rights.



Data could not be analyzed according to class year due to the overwhelming lack of participants in the freshman and sophomore class levels (2.4% for each) and the domination of members of the senior class (73.2%).

Conclusion

Providence College is typically seen as a conservative and therefore Republican and/or Libertarian school with Catholic affiliation. However, these results show that the population is much more varied than originally believed. The student body is not overwhelmingly encompassed of conservative Republicans or Libertarians, nor is the majority of the student body liberal Democrats or Socialists. The findings of this study attest to the diversity which the school is attempting to achieve, though admittedly, the diversity for which the school strives is in terms of race and not political association.

However, these results may be biased due to the fact that freshmen and sophomores are underrepresented. There may be further bias in the fact that over half (27) of the 41 participants were female, meaning that males were also, like the freshman and sophomores, underrepresented in this study.

Further limitations include the lack of information regarding the participants' political affiliation: there was no question on the survey where a participant could identify him-/herself with a particular party (Republican, Democrat, Independent, etc.).

Political ideologies are much more complicated than one or two straightforward statements and are also comprised of many interwoven issues which come together to formulate what a person believes. This study was an attempt to simplify this web of dogmas and convictions so that one can begin to better understand individual people through the lens of politics. It is important for social workers across the world to

remember how these principles play such an integral part in people's lives, as well as how they influence their decisions and the resulting actions.

Implications for Social Work Practice, Policy, and Research

It is imperative for social workers to be better prepared in their particular fields of practice (e.g., Adoption Services, Nursing Home Care, Private Practice, etc.) so that they can serve their clients to the best of their abilities. However, one cannot further educate him/herself if s/he does not pay attention to the intricate and important relationship of politics, ideologies, and individualized dogmas for each and every person, including the social worker him/herself.

As this study shows, these beliefs influence how a person interacts with others (such as how a heterosexual person would relate to someone who homosexual if the heterosexual person does not believe in Gay Marriage) who are similar and different from him/herself. Everyone is an individual who is a product of his/her environment and family system. Identifying and validating these differences, even if they are subtle, are necessary to being the most competent social worker one can possibly be.

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Appendices

Appendix A

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

(circle one)

Age: 17 18 19 20 21 22+

Gender: Male Female

Home State: Rhode Island Massachusetts Connecticut New York Other

Year: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

(1 is Strongly Disagree, 3 is Neutral, and 5 is Strongly Agree)

1. I believe that *individuals*, and **not** states/groups, should be *solely* in charge of their freedoms and rights.

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

2. I believe that the Constitution should be interpreted *narrowly* and should adhere to its *original intent*, rather than in a more flexible model.

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

3. I believe that the *war in Iraq* was a **mistake** and that we should *pull out* as quickly and as safely as possible.

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

4. I believe in *higher* spending on the military.

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

5. I believe in a *less militaristic* foreign policy.

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

6. I believe that *individuals* own themselves and have the moral *right* to acquire property.

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

7. I believe in a *laissez-faire free market* (**no** Government involvement or interference in business).

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

8. I believe that the **Federal Government** should play a role in alleviating *poverty and social injustice*, even if it means a *larger* role for government and *progressive taxation*.

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

9. I believe that *corporate influence* in the **Federal Government** needs to be *eliminated*.

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

10. I believe that *any government* involvement or restriction *impedes* on an individual's right to freedom.

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

11. I believe that *affirmative action* is needed in order to keep schools well-balanced and diverse.

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

12. I believe in the *legalization of marijuana* beyond medicinal use.

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

13. I believe that *marriage* is not solely a religious ceremony but a civil one, too, and should be allowed between **any** two consenting adults, regardless of gender.

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

14. I believe that the **Federal Government** should have *less power* and that the **States** should have *more power*.

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

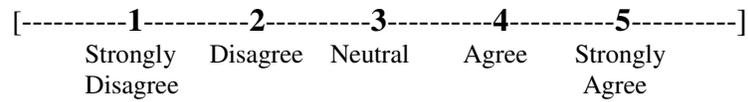
15. I believe that *marriage* is defined as being between a *man and a woman* only.

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

16. I believe in *fair trade*, or the paying of a **fair price** for labor and goods in foreign countries (e.g., coffee).

[-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----]
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

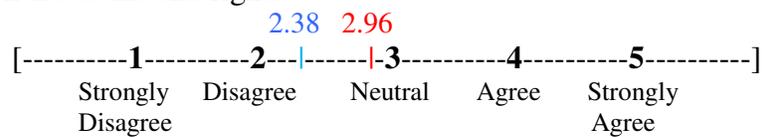
17. I believe in *Universal Healthcare*, which extends coverage to **all** eligible citizens of a particular country.



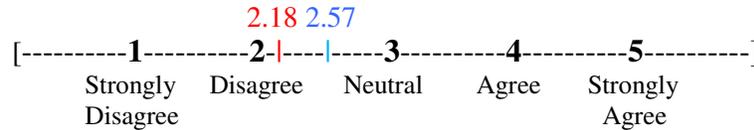
Appendix B

Red: Female; Blue: Male

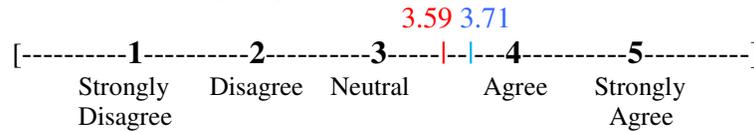
1. I believe that *individuals*, and **not** states/groups, should be *solely* in charge of their freedoms and rights.



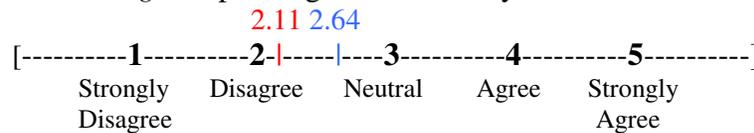
2. I believe that the Constitution should be interpreted *narrowly* and should adhere to its *original intent*, rather than in a more flexible model.



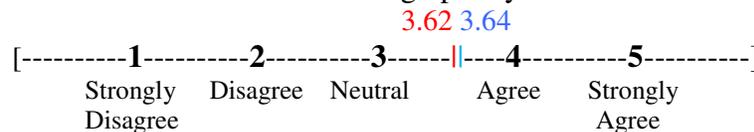
3. I believe that the *war in Iraq* was a **mistake** and that we should *pull out* as quickly and as safely as possible.



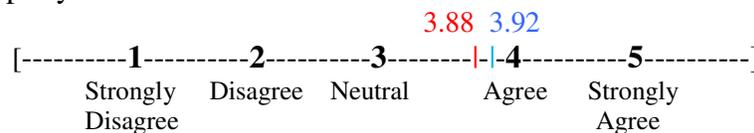
4. I believe in *higher* spending on the military.



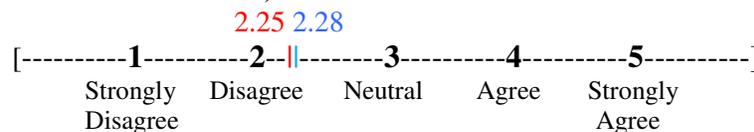
5. I believe in a *less militaristic* foreign policy.



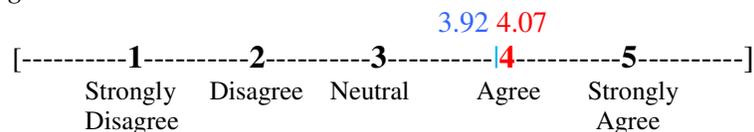
6. I believe that *individuals* own themselves and have the moral *right* to acquire property.



7. I believe in a *laissez-faire free market* (**no** Government involvement or interference in business).

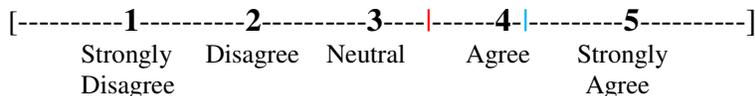


8. I believe that the **Federal Government** should play a role in alleviating *poverty and social injustice*, even if it means a *larger* role for government and *progressive taxation*.

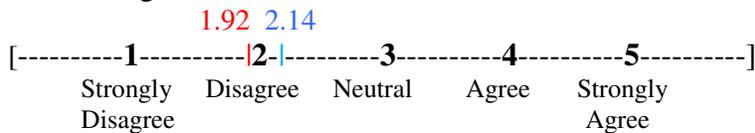


9. I believe that *corporate influence* in the **Federal Government** needs to be *eliminated*.

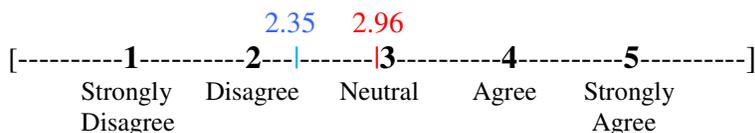
3.44 4.14



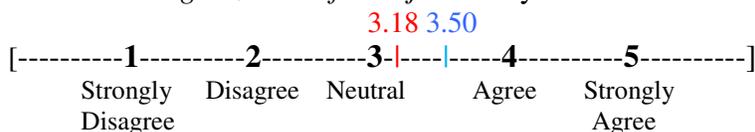
10. I believe that *any government* involvement or restriction *impedes* on an individual's right to freedom.



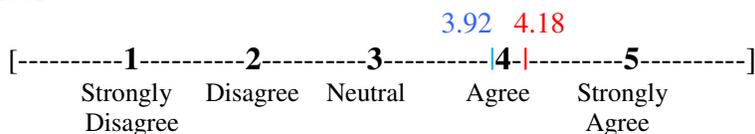
11. I believe that *affirmative action* is needed in order to keep schools well-balanced and diverse.



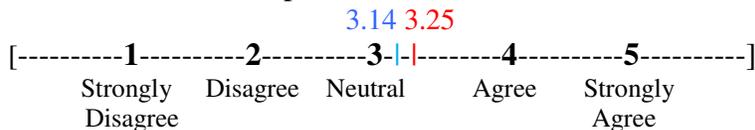
12. I believe in the *legalization of marijuana* beyond medicinal use.



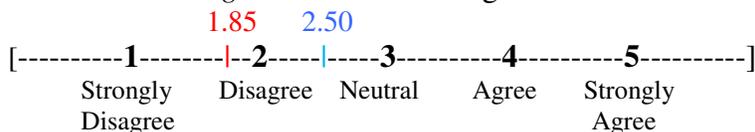
13. I believe that *marriage* is not solely a religious ceremony but a civil one, too, and should be allowed between **any** two consenting adults, regardless of gender.



14. I believe that the **Federal Government** should have *less power* and that the **States** should have *more* power.

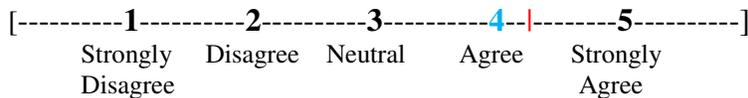


15. I believe that *marriage* is defined as being between a *man and a woman* only.

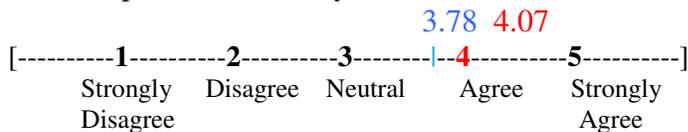


16. I believe in *fair trade*, or the paying of a **fair price** for labor and goods in foreign countries (e.g., coffee).

4.00 4.25



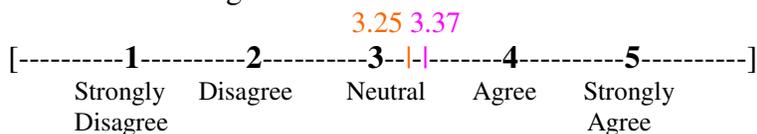
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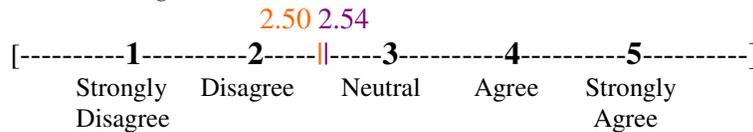
Appendix C

Orange: Rhode Island; Green: Massachusetts; Purple: Connecticut; Dark Blue: New York; and Pink: Other

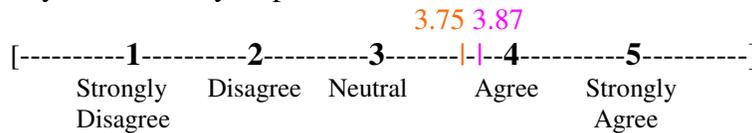
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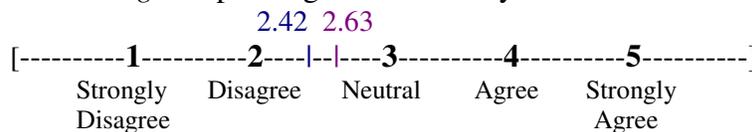
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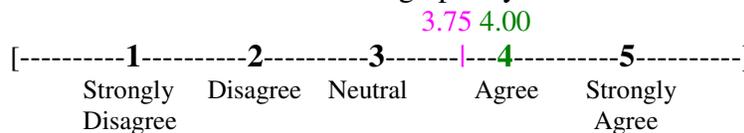
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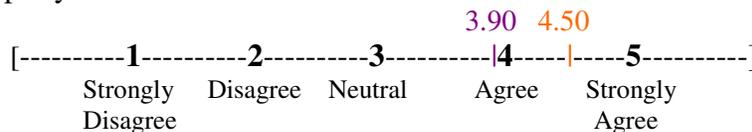
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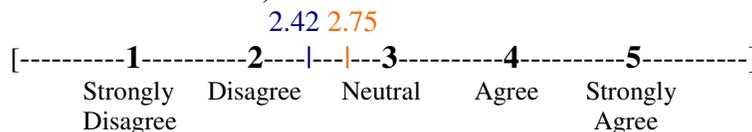
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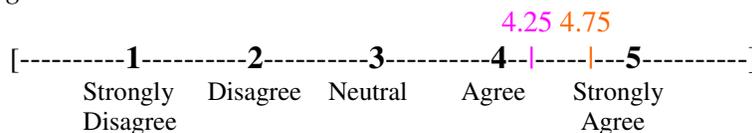
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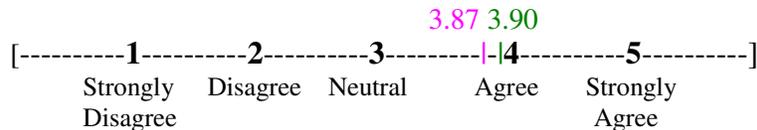
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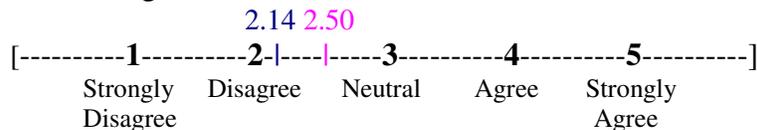
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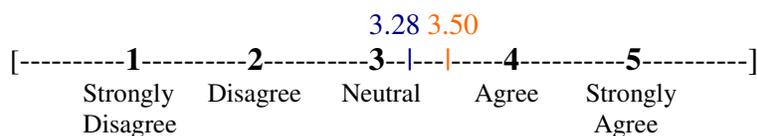
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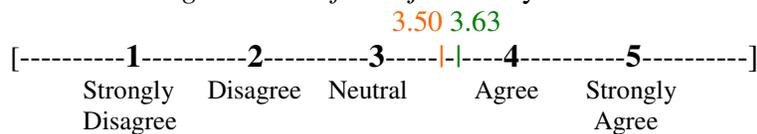
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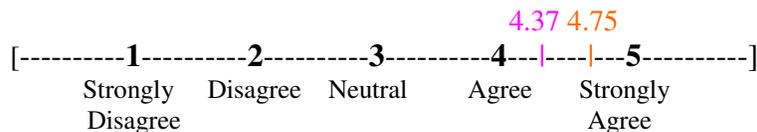
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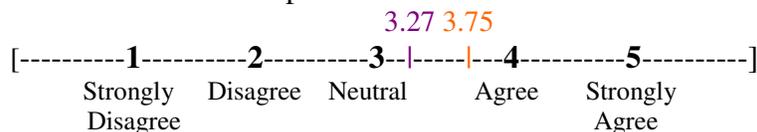
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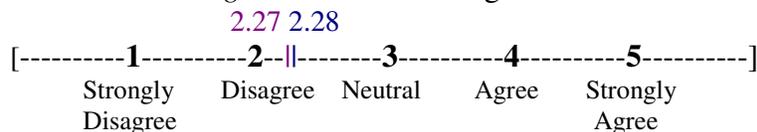
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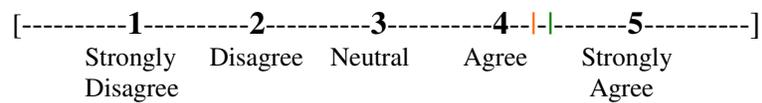


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16. I believe in *fair trade*, or the paying of a **fair price** for labor and goods in foreign countries (e.g., coffee).

4.25 4.36



17. I believe in *Universal Healthcare*, which extends coverage to **all** eligible citizens of a particular country.

