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Abstract:

We are interested in determining whether citizens' variations in defensive confidence—the degree to which individuals perceive that they can defend their attitudes from attack—predict polarization of their political attitudes over time. During the proposal stage of the ANES Pilot Study, we proposed several items to measure defensive confidence as well as several items measuring exposure and attention to partisan information. Of the proposed items, only one could be included to measure defensive confidence, and none to measure exposure to and attention to partisan information. Despite this limitation, findings provided support for our hypothesis that defensive confidence would lead to increased attention to information and potential change in attitudinal positions.