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Attitudes towards Trump Policies and Climate Change: The Key Roles of Aversion to Wealth Redistribution and Political Interest

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Both psychological and political science researchers have pointed out that Trump policies embrace right wing and authoritarian dispositions. In turn, such dispositions have been related to climate change denial and aversion to wealth redistribution. Nevertheless, little is known about the mechanisms underlying the relationship between individuals' favorable attitude towards Trump and climate change skepticism. We aimed to understand two cruxes in this relationship: (i) whether the favorable attitude towards Trump influences climate change skepticism through the aversion to wealth redistribution and (ii) whether people's interest in politics interacts in the relationships between attitude towards Trump and two social outcomes—climate change denial and aversion to wealth redistribution. We considered a representative sample of the US electorate (ANES 2016 database, $N = 4271$), assessing attitudes towards Trump by aggregating several indicators concerning respondents' evaluations of Trump. Interest in politics, aversion to wealth redistribution, and climate change skepticism had also been assessed. Results showed that favorable attitudes towards Trump related to climate change denial through the aversion to wealth redistribution. Moreover, the link between such attitudes and both climate change skepticism and aversion to wealth redistribution was stronger for people showing a greater interest in politics.

Although there is a consensus with regard to the risks of climate change in the scientific community (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2014), dismissal of the reality of climate change and skepticism over its alleged

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anthropogenic causes are widespread (Weber & Stern, 2011), particularly in the United States (McCright, Marquart-Pyatt, Shwom, Brechin & Allen, 2016).

In the present work, we explore some crucial factors underlying the associations between populism, as a consequence of the neoliberal approach, and climate change denial.

Neoliberalism might be considered a historical condition by which populist movements are rising today (e.g., Hallin, 2018; Laclau, 2005). Even though Trump's policies may be considered in line with Republican neoliberalism, such as strong attacks on the regulation of business as well as reduction of public intervention on an array of social programs, some of his political proposals (e.g., the opposition to free trade agreements and the effort to keep manufactured production within US borders) represent antineoliberal elements that capture the consensus among populist forces. Such populist forces, as a reaction to negative consequences of neoliberalism (e.g., wages stagnation, economic insecurity), fostered the election of Donald Trump to the highest office in the United States. The election has prompted further concerns about the risks of diverting from proenvironmental policies on climate change (e.g., Sedlak, 2017). As a consequence, the prospects of repealing most environment-friendly regulations (McGuffey & Timble, 2017), reducing funding for climate change research (Nisbet, 2017), and undermining the public's concern on climate change (Vernon, 2017) appear to be clear and present eventualities under Trump's presidency. Contingently, via choices on environmental policies, the Trump administration could affect the public health worldwide (McKee, Greer & Stuckler, 2017).

Reliable predictors of such skepticism of climate change and its causes are conservative ideology, right-wing leaning attitudes, as well as neoliberal economic approaches (e.g. Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008; Klinsky et al., 2017; McCright et al., 2016; Panno et al., 2018; Panno, Carrus, Maricchiolo & Mannetti, 2015; Stanley, Wilson & Milfont, 2017). On the one hand, Trump has been described by political science and psychological research as embracing right-wing attitudes, prominent among them was authoritarianism (e.g., Choma & Hanoch, 2017). On the other hand, Hallin (2018) claims that "his government represents a continuation of the Tea Party movement, which can be described as a radical populist neoliberalism" (Hallin, 2018, p. 4). In turn, either authoritarian dispositions or neoliberal elements have been linked with climate change denial and antienvironmentalist attitudes (e.g., Jylhä & Akrami, 2015; Klinsky et al., 2017; Milfont, Richter, Sibley, Wilson, & Fisher, 2013; Milfont & Sibley, 2014; Rossen, Dunlop & Lawrence, 2015; Stanley et al., 2017). President Trump has also been described as the latest incarnation of the recurrent populist wave in American politics (e.g., Oliver & Rahn, 2016). Although populism cannot be tout-court identified with conservatism and right-wing ideology, as it is not explicitly related to any particular political content (e.g., Eiermann, 2016; Kazin, 2016), it has also been emphasized that present-day American populism features a strong aversion-to-change component

(Brewer, 1993), which is consistent with a general conservative mindset (e.g., Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski & Sulloway, 2003).

Therefore, for various reasons (Trump's explicit policy positions, Trump's ideological outlook, ideological build-up of Trump supporters, and change aversion common to both populist and conservative positions) it could be expected that, among the general public, favorable attitudes towards Trump would be connected to stronger climate change denial, and skepticism of its anthropogenic causes. This is the general proposition, which we will qualify further with more specific hypotheses that we aim to investigate here relying on the American National Election Studies (ANES, 2016). The first very general hypothesis was thus:

H1: Favorable attitudes towards Trump will be connected to climate change denial and skepticism of the notion of anthropogenic climate change.

We would nonetheless anticipate that the relationship between attitudes towards Trump and skepticism of the notion of anthropogenic climate change would be moderated by interest in politics. Specifically, we anticipate that the association of attitudes towards Trump and antienvironmentalism stances would be stronger among individuals with a greater interest in politics. The rationale of such a hypothesis relies on the notion that interest in politics drives polarization and fosters attitude constraint (Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008). Such an effect would also be consistent with the general finding that the effects of dispositions on political criteria are stronger among those more interested in politics (e.g., Leone, Chirumbolo & Desimoni, 2012; Osborne & Sibley, 2012). Similar results have been observed in the specific instance of environmentalism-related attitudes, where interest in politics has been shown to enhance the association with conservatism (e.g., Carrus, Panno & Leone, 2018; McCright & Dunlap, 2010). Such effects are generally explained as stemming from the combined effects of exposure to elite cues (Krosnick, Holbrook & Visser, 2000), and the sorting of attitudes into left- and right-wing clusters by the general media and partisan media outlets (Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008; McCright & Dunlap, 2010). Thus, our second hypothesis was:

H2: Increased political interest will strengthen the association between attitudes towards Trump and climate change skepticism.

Finally, we attempted to differentiate the *direct* effect of attitudes towards Trump on antienvironmentalism, from the *indirect* effect, which is *mediated* by the aversion to wealth redistribution. This is consistent with a view that interprets favorability towards Trump as reflecting the respondent's adherence to the traditional social arrangement (Choma & Hanoch, 2017). Consistent with consequences of a neoliberal approach, the pillar of the social arrangement is its unequal distribution of resources (Feygina, Jost & Goldsmith, 2010; McCright & Dunlap, 2010) and, hence, attempts at redistributing resources and increasing equality of

outcomes should be resisted. Such a resistance to altering the unequal social arrangements should be shared both by conservatives and populists (e.g., Brewer, 1993). Therefore, we expected that at least a portion of the attitudes towards Trump effect (and of its interaction with interest in politics) would be mediated by an antiredistributionist stance that represents a neoliberal feature of Trump's policies. Such mediation would lend support to the notion that what is at stake for conservatives or American populists in opposing proenvironmental policies is not just the right of humans to exploit nature, as suggested by some scholars (Dohnt, Hodson, & Leite, 2016; Milfont et al., 2013), but rather the hierarchical inequalities embedded in the dominant social system (primacy of production, capitalist system, economic freedom, unrestrained consumption), and in the traditional way of life (Jylhä & Akrami, 2015; Milfont & Sibley, 2014; Rossen et al., 2015; Stanley et al., 2017). Therefore, we anticipated that:

H3a: Aversion to redistribution will mediate the association of attitudes towards Trump with climate change skepticism; and (H3b) the shape of the direct and indirect effects will vary as a function of interest in politics (see Figure 2). That is, we expected that the relations between positive attitudes towards Trump and climate change skepticism through aversion to redistribution would be stronger among those respondents who declared a greater interest in politics.

To the best of our knowledge, there is no evidence linking attitudes towards Trump to climate change skepticism through aversion to wealth redistribution, and particularly, that sheds light on the moderating role of political interest in these relationships. The present work attempts to fill this gap.

Method

Participants and Procedure

We analyzed the ANES 2016 Time Series Study data. The ANES databases are freely available to researchers and comprise measures of political attitudes, demographics, and personality aimed at studying the dynamics of the American electorate during the presidential campaigns. The population included US citizens over 18 years of age. The ANES 2016 Time Series Study featured a design with both traditional face-to-face interviewing ($n = 1181$) and surveys conducted on the Internet ($n = 3090$), totaling a sample size of 4271. Respondents were interviewed between September 7, 2016 and January 8, 2017. Because according to the ANES sampling plan not all the questions were administered to the whole sample, the valid N for the analyses reported herein varied between 2450 and 2495. In this subsample, women made up 48.5% of the sample. Age ranged from 18 to 90 ($M_{age} = 50.13$; $SD = 17.32$). As for education, 3.8% did not have a high school diploma; 13.3% had a high school diploma; 20.1% attended some college

without getting a degree; 28.1% had a bachelor degree; and 20.9% had a Master's degree, a PhD, or a professional schools degree (13.8% of the respondents had associate degrees). Participants' income in US \$ was 9.8% less than 15,000, 7.6% between 15,000 and 24,999, 11.5% between 25,000 and 39,999, 23.2% between 40,000 and 69,999, 18.2% between 70,000 and 99,999, 15.1% between 100,000 and 149,999, 9.9% between 150,000 and 249,999, and 4.5% over 250,000. Most participants, 63.4% were employed; the remainder included 6.3% unemployed, 20.5% retired, 4.1% disabled, 2.3% students, and 5.0% homemaker. Finally, 48.8% of respondents reported having voted for Clinton and 43.5% for Trump. These figures are not excessively off the mark as compared with the official results of the popular vote: 48.2% for Clinton and 46.1% for Trump (and 5.1% to other candidates, such as Gary Johnson, Jill Stein, Evan McMullin).

Measures

Interest in politics. One item (i.e., Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs?) assessed interest in politics. Responses were coded on a scale from 1 (*Most of the time*) to 4 (*Only now and then*). We reversed the scale, so that higher scores indicate more interest in politics.

Attitudes towards Trump. We aggregated several indicators of respondents' evaluations of Donald Trump. We considered two feeling thermometer ratings of Donald Trump on a 100-point scale. We relied also on ratings of Trump's character and of the emotions elicited by Trump. As for the character descriptions, respondents were asked to rate how well a series of descriptions described Trump: "provides strong leadership," "really cares about people like you," "is knowledgeable," "is honest," "speaks his mind," "is even tempered." Responses were recorded on a scale of 1 (*Extremely well*) to 5 (*Not well at all*). As for the emotions elicited by Trump, respondents were asked to indicate "How often would you say you've felt . . . because of the kind of person Donald Trump is," on a series of emotional terms: angry, hopeful, afraid, proud, disgusted, and with ratings from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Always*). The standardized (a factor score) aggregate of these indicators proved highly reliable ($\alpha = .95$). Responses were coded so that higher scores reflect more positive attitudes towards Trump.

Liberal/conservative ideology. Respondents were asked "When it comes to politics, would you describe yourself, and these groups, as liberal, conservative, or neither liberal nor conservative?" on a scale from 1 (*Very liberal*) to 7 (*Very conservative*).

Party identification. Participants responded on a 7-point scale to "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat,

an independent, or what?" (1 = *Strong Democrat*, 2 = *Not very strong Democrat*, 3 = *Independent-Democrat*, 4 = *Independent*, 5 = *Independent-Republican*, 6 = *Not very strong Republican*, 7 = *Strong Republican*); higher scores represent stronger identification with the Republican Party.

Climate change skepticism. Five items assessed climate change skepticism. They included: (1) "You may have heard about the idea that the world's temperature may have been going up slowly over the past 100 years. Do you think this has probably been happening, or do you think it probably has not been happening?" (*Yes* or *No*); (2) "Do you think a rise in the world's temperatures would be caused mostly by human activity, mostly by natural causes, or about equally by human activity and by natural causes?" (1 = *Mostly human*, 2 = *About equally human and natural causes*, 3 = *Mostly natural*); (3) "Do you think the federal government should be doing more about rising temperatures, should be doing less, or is it currently doing the right amount?" (1 = *Should be doing a great deal more* to 7 = *Should be doing a great deal less*); (4) one item asking respondents to indicate their position on the trade-offs between jobs and environmental regulation, with a response scale from 1 (*Regulate business to protect the environment and create jobs*) to 7 (*No regulation because it will not work and will cost jobs*); and (5) one item asking respondents whether the Federal budget devoted to protect the environment should be increased, kept the same, or decreased. The factor score summarizing common variation among items was used as a standardized score, with higher scores indicating stronger climate change skepticism. This composite score showed satisfactory reliability ($\alpha = .71$).

Aversion to redistribution. We used six items ($\alpha = .80$) relating to government spending and regulation, and that are generally considered as aiming to redistribute resources to the less affluent strata of US society assessed aversion to redistribution. The items were (1) "Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose requiring employers to pay women and men the same amount for the same work?"; (2) "Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose requiring employers to offer paid leave to parents of new children?" with both items assessed on a scale of 1 (*Favor a great deal*) to 7 (*Oppose a great deal*); (3) "Do you favor an increase, decrease, or no change in government spending to help people pay for health insurance when they cannot pay for it all themselves?"; and (4) "Do you favor an increase, decrease, or no change in government spending to help working parents pay for child care when they cannot pay for it all themselves?" with both items assessed on a scale of 1 (*Increase a great deal*) to 7 (*Decrease a great deal*); (5) "Should federal spending on welfare programs be increased (1), decreased (3), or kept the same (2)?"; and (6) "Should federal spending on aid to the poor be increased (1), decreased (3), or kept the same (2)?" A

factor score summarizing the common variation among the items was used for the analyses.

Results

We first tested the notion that attitudes towards Trump would be associated with climate change skepticism (H1), and that such an effect would be moderated (strengthened) by interest in politics (H2). We used the PROCESS macro (model #1; see Hayes, 2013, for more details) that runs under the SPSS software and we specified a moderated regression model including main effects for interest in politics, favorable attitude towards Trump ratings, and covariates for ideology (liberal/conservative) and party identification, along with the crucial Interest \times attitude towards Trump interaction. All variables were standardized (z scores) (Aiken, West & Reno, 1991).

The model accounted for 50% of the variance in climate change skepticism, $F(5, 2489) = 501.62, p < .0001$. The covariates of party identification and ideology were both significantly related to antienvironmentalism, replicating a well-known pattern: the more one identifies as a Republican, the stronger the skepticism about climate change ($b = .10, SE = .02, p = .0001$), and the more one self-describes as conservative, the stronger the skepticism on climate change ($b = .31, SE = .02, p < .0001$). Once these effects were taken into account, attitudes towards Trump provided a further unique contribution in accounting for climate change skepticism ($b = .33, SE = .02, p < .0001$), providing support for H1. Interest in politics was also uniquely related to the dependent variable ($b = .07, SE = .02, p < .0001$). More germane to H2, the interest in politics \times attitude towards Trump interaction was significant ($b = .13, SE = .02, p < .0001$). Simple slope effects revealed that the interaction was as expected. At low levels of interest in politics (1 SD below the mean), there was a relatively small association between attitudes towards Trump and climate change skepticism ($b = .24, SE = .03, p < .0001$), but as interest in politics increased and reached its mean value the association became stronger ($b = .36, SE = .02, p < .0001$), and for those more interested in politics (1 SD above the mean) the association was twice as strong compared with the one observed for low levels of interest in politics ($b = .48, SE = .03, p < .0001$) (See Figure 1).

We moved, thus, to test our third hypothesis, that is, that the effects of favorable attitudes towards Trump and its interaction with interest in politics would be mediated by an indicator of aversion to economic redistribution. This pattern would be consistent with a framework that interprets the association of favorable ratings of Trump and climate change dismissal as pivoting on the notion that climate change concerns are perceived as implying policies favoring redistribution of resources and equality of outcomes. We added then to the previous model tested above the indicator reflecting aversion to redistribution, as a mediator of the association between attitudes towards Trump and climate change skepticism.

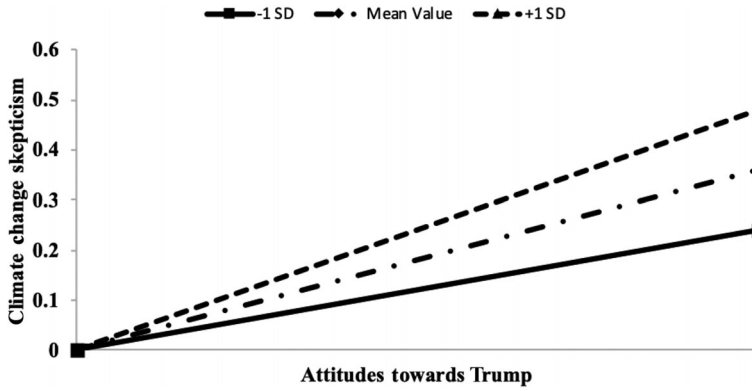


Fig. 1. Moderation of the effect of positive attitudes towards Trump on climate change skepticism by political interest.

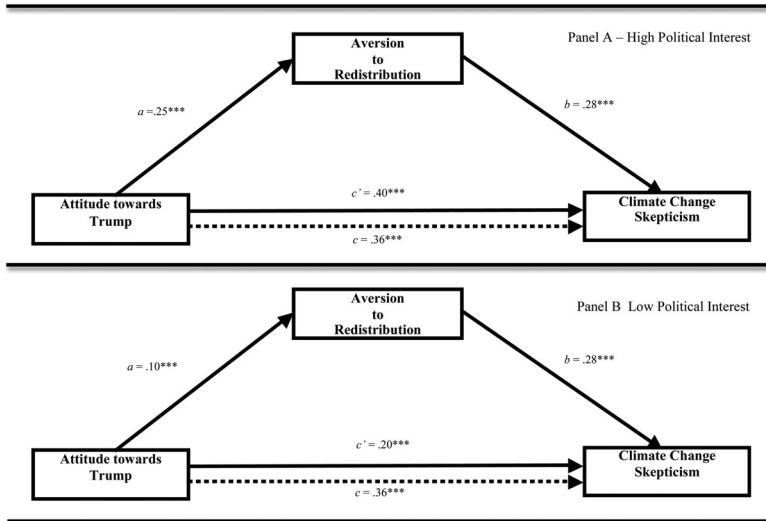


Fig. 2. Path coefficients for moderated mediation analysis of climate change skepticism. Panel A shows the effects of the mediation model when political interest is equal to +1SD. Panel B shows the effects of the mediation model when political interest is equal to -1SD. The dotted line denotes the effect of favorable attitudes towards Trump on climate change skepticism, when mediator and moderator are not included in the analysis. a, b, c, and c' are standardized OLS regression coefficients. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 2 depicts graphically the moderated mediation model tested, and summarizes the findings.

Results for the model could be described as focusing first on the effects detected on aversion to redistribution (the proposed mediator), and second on climate change skepticism (the final dependent variable in our model). As for

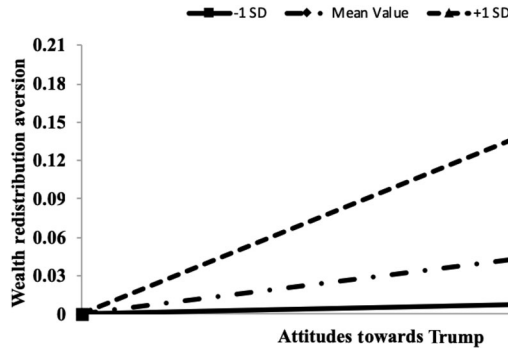


Fig. 3. Moderation of the effect of positive attitudes towards Trump on aversion to wealth redistribution by political interest.

aversion to redistribution as a criterion, the model accounted for 43% of the variance in the supposed mediator, $F(5,2444) = 370.40$, $p < .0001$. Significant regression coefficients were found for the controls (party identification $b = .23$, $SE = .03$, $p < .0001$, ideology $b = .32$, $SE = .02$, $p < .0001$) and for attitude towards Trump ($b = .17$, $SE = .02$, $p < .0001$). This latter main effect was qualified by levels of interest in politics ($b = .06$, $SE = .02$, $p = .0002$). Simple slope analysis revealed that for higher levels of political interest (1 *SD* above the mean), the association of attitude towards Trump with aversion to redistribution policies became stronger ($b = .19$, $p < .0001$) compared with the nonsignificant association found ($b = .01$, *ns*) at lower levels (1 *SD* below the mean) of political interest (Figure 3).

Moving to the final criterion, climate change skepticism, we found significant effects for the proposed mediator (aversion to redistribution, $b = .29$, $SE = .02$, $p < .0001$), ideology ($b = .22$, $SE = .02$, $p < .0001$), and Trump attitudes ($b = .28$, $SE = .02$, $p < .0001$); for party identification a nonsignificant coefficient was found ($b = .03$, $SE = .02$, $p = .223$). The Trump attitudes \times interest in politics interaction remained significant and directly linked with antienvironmentalism ($b = .11$, $SE = .02$, $p < .0001$); notwithstanding, a portion of the total effect of such interaction was significantly mediated by aversion to redistribution (indirect effect: $b = .02$, $SE = .01$, 95% confidence interval (CI) [.009, .029]). The mediation effect of the aversion to redistribution, therefore, showed different shapes for varying levels of interest in politics, yielding a moderated mediation pattern of associations. As shown in Figure 2, both the direct and indirect effects of attitudes towards Trump on climate change skepticism varied as a function of political interest. While for low levels of interest in politics (1 *SD* below the mean) both the indirect and the direct effects were lower (b 's = .20, and .04, respectively, p 's < .01), as interest in politics increased both the direct and indirect effects increased (b 's = .30, and .05, respectively, p 's < .01); eventually, for high levels

of interest in politics (1 *SD* above the mean) both the direct and indirect associations were about twice the size (b 's = .41, and .07, respectively, p 's < .001) as those observed for low levels of interest in politics.

To summarize, as anticipated, aversion to redistribution mediated the effects of attitudes towards Trump and their interaction with interest in politics (a moderated mediation pattern)—as anticipated in H3 and H3b. Of note, most of the total effects of favorable attitudes towards Trump related in a direct fashion to climate change skepticism, while a smaller, albeit still significant, proportion of the effects operated indirectly through aversion to redistribution.

Discussion

Results generally fitted nicely with our expectations. More favorable attitudes towards Trump were associated with climate change skepticism. Furthermore, as anticipated, this association was stronger among those more interested in politics. Finally, the association between Trump favorability and climate change skepticism followed both a direct and an indirect path, through neoliberal elements, such as negative attitudes towards Government-led redistribution policies. The effects found for attitudes towards Trump could be considered consistent with previous findings that established reliable associations of right-wing ideology and neoliberal elements with climate change skepticism (e.g., Klinsky et al., 2017; McCright et al., 2016; Stanley et al., 2017). Results appeared also consistent with the moderating role of interest in politics in further polarizing environmental issues and attitudes towards environmental policies (Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008). Consistent with a neoliberal worldview, results are in line with an interpretation that, to some extent, favorability towards Trump is associated with climate change skepticism via a path through aversion for redistribution and an active role of the Government in social programs. Interestingly, though, a slightly larger portion of the effect of attitudes towards Trump was direct, suggesting that motives other than the economic-centered approach espoused by reflexive modernization research and its emphasis on conservatives' aversion to tackling inequality (e.g., McCright & Dunlap, 2010; see also Carrus et al., 2018) might underpin the association between support for Trump and antienvironmentalism. We discuss the main implication of our findings next.

Neoliberal and Populist Motives against Climate Change Concerns

Reflexive modernity theory and cultural theory (McCright et al., 2016) attempted to account for how environmentalism was perceived as threatening by those defending the current social and productive arrangements of the capitalist system (McCright & Dunlap, 2010), and how values and psychocognitive processes linked to support for hierarchy and individualism would be opposed

to climate change discourses *because* the proenvironmental policies would entail large-scale economic redistribution (Campbell & Kay, 2014; Feygina et al., 2010). Our results lend some support to such a process, and are, therefore, consistent with the notion that Trump and his supporters could be logically labeled as peculiar conservatives, fearing redistribution and aimed to avoid government spending for an environmental agenda. Therefore, the portion of the “Trump effect” that passed through aversion to redistribution could be interpreted as evidence that some conservative aversion to “Big Government” and redistributionist interventionism was effectively embodied by Trump.

Hallin (2018) put forward the idea that Trump represents a radicalization rather than a rejection of neoliberalism, differently from Sanders who could be considered an antineoliberal populist. Thus, one can argue that Trump policies that combine right-wing attitudes with a traditional Republican neoliberalism represent a tough barrier in coping with the climate change phenomenon and its consequences for human well-being at the global scale. To some extent, the Trump effect on climate change skepticism followed a direct route, over and above the impact of aversion to redistribution. Such a direct effect could be consistent with Trump being considered someone ideologically distinct from classical American conservatism. Some political science scholars have interpreted Trump as the latest incarnation of a long tradition of American populism, a tradition that could have historically risen from the negative consequences of neoliberalism (e.g., Brewer, 1993; Hallin, 2018; Kazin, 2016; Zakaria, 2016). Indeed, the rising of populism in different areas of the world (e.g., the “Brexit” case, or the current Italian and many Eastern European governments) can be considered a product of neoliberalism (e.g., Gusterson, 2017).

Laclau claims that the incapacity of political systems to cope with an increasing number of demands represents a fertile soil for populist movements to invoke equality (Laclau, 2005). In the US case, for example, Trump might have found a fertile soil to advocate a greater equality among Americans threatened by economic insecurity, wage stagnation, and other negative conditions. Thus, one can argue that neoliberalism undermined the social solidarity that was the basis of social democratic policies, which accordingly, might have caused individuals’ marginalization and political alienation, giving rise to populist movements. Such movements generally pit a virtuous and homogeneous “people” against insensitive elites and dangerous “others” (e.g., Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2007). Trump rhetoric fits this mold nicely, relying also on the typical despise for the experts, and distrust for experts’ advice that is key in populist movements (Oliver & Rahn, 2016). The media provide several instances of such populist-inspired mistrusts concerning experts (e.g., rise of antivaccination stances and climate change skepticism). Thus, to sum up, one might argue that the “Trump effect” is related to climate change denial through two distinct paths: (i) one direct path that takes place from the populist electoral rhetoric that he adopted to come to power, and

(ii) an indirect route that passes through neoliberal elements, such as aversion to redistribution and avoiding of public interventions to address environmental issues, which might be considered as paradoxical given Trumps' asserted populist stance.

Concerning the direct path, one should observe that antielitism and despise for experts and intellectuals might be of particular importance in bringing about the connection between acceptance of Trump rhetoric and climate change skepticism. Distrust of expert- and science-driven opinions has also become important in current conservative thinking, and such distrust has been exploited to counteract proenvironmental policies in the eye of the conservative portion of the public (e.g., McCright & Dunlap, 2010; Stanley et al., 2017). The backlash against elite culture (experts, scientists) is a cultural feature key in both conservative and populist discourses and appears to reveal a resistance to change and a nostalgic sense of loss for a cherished way of life, because experts and scientists often propose, promote, and manage change (Brewer, 1993). Environmentalism plays a role in such a clash among cultures of change and habits of tradition, as the environment became associated with other attitudes challenging the status quo (e.g., gender and racial relations, consumerism) among the younger generations in the 1970s (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Therefore, the backlashes against environmental concerns are not only channeled through a conservative neoliberal outlook against equality and redistribution (the indirect effects we found); but also by cultural motives concerning intergroup relations and the "American Way" (Zakaria, 2016). Such cultural motives centering on resistance to change and nostalgia for the golden years are arguably shared by both populists and conservatives (Brewer, 1993), and possibly materialized in the direct "Trump" effects we reported.

A Proenvironmental Message Tailored for Trump Supporters

The populist or conservative tide that has submerged the US political landscape conquering its highest office could have long-lasting consequences for ecosystems' functioning and human wellbeing (Frum, 2017; Kazin, 2016). Therefore, it becomes pressing to envisage how to ameliorate the reception of climate change policies and proenvironmental stances in the current political and cultural predicament. Research has already supported the notion that conservatism opposes the specific solutions generally advocated by environmentalist organizations because they threaten the status quo (Campbell & Kay, 2014; Carrus et al., 2018). Therefore, framing the change brought about by new regulations as endorsing the system as it is (system justification) has been found to effectively weaken opposition to environmental policies among conservatives (Feygina et al., 2010). To date, such a strand of research has focused mainly on how to frame proenvironmental policies so as to appear consistent with an economically centered positive attitude towards inequality (Häkkinen & Akrami, 2014; Milfont & Sibley, 2014). Some work needs to be done on how to frame proenvironmental

policies in a frankly conservative-populist outlook, one emphasizing the value of tradition, the value of conservation, the perils of modernity and materialism, and the wisdom of the old ways. Such a message would profitably be expressed with moral nuances linked with an emphasis on the continuing flourishing of a community, and a religiously inspired or postmaterialist awe towards a created nature (Rossen et al., 2015). Such moral sources have indeed been found to inspire conservative-leaning individuals to political action (Milesi & Alberici, 2016). Also, given the strong antielitism and skepticism towards experts that features in the conservative-populist camp, such messages should strictly avoid reference to the consensus of scientific experts. Furthermore, recalling the moderator role of interest in politics, targeting those with more interest in public affairs could boost the purposed effects on reducing aversion to proenvironmental policies, provided that such messages carefully avoid emphasizing the authoritative opinion of experts and scientists, lest an even stronger backlash against proenvironmental policies ensue among conservative-populist keenly interested in politics.

Finally, nativists and nationalists, who appear paramount among Trump supporters (Brewer, 1993; Oliver & Rahn, 2016), could prove amenable to lending themselves to a proenvironmental discourse focusing on preservation of the homeland, its resources, and the prosperity of its next native generation. Moral appeals reverberating with the binding moral foundations of in-group loyalty and reliance on traditional national authorities (the Constitution, The Founding Fathers) could prove equally effective in fostering a much-needed conservative environmental conservatism (Scruton, 2012).

Some limitations of the present study must, however, be acknowledged. First, a full test of the mediation chain leading from support for Trump to aversion to redistribution policies and, in turn, to climate change denial, as well as the moderation pattern of interest in politics, could only be achieved through longitudinal panel data collections or experimental design. It is true that cross-sectional studies do not allow causal inferences; nonetheless, the results of the present study provide relevant insights into the relationships between political ideologies and interest, attitude towards policies aimed to reduce inequality and beliefs about climate change. In addition, an interesting point for future research could be that of disentangling the effect of Trump support from the simple effect of endorsing conservative worldviews and political stances, both within and outside the United States of America. Thus, future studies should aim at monitoring changes in climate change denial beliefs in relation to the evolution of United States and other countries' electorate political stances.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present research advances a model showing a relevant and broad potential mechanism underlying the relationship between attitude towards Trump's policies and climate change denial that could also be extended to other social issues such as immigration or public health policies. Based on these results, people's political interest and aversion to redistribution represent two cruxes playing a relevant role in the relationship between political attitude and current societal issues. Thus, the findings of the present study increase our knowledge about beliefs in climate change and are also relevant for research that relies on political attitudes. Broadly speaking, the results of this research promise novel insights into these connections across different disciplinary fields, including social psychology and political science. Further studies are needed to fill the gap among these disciplines, but the intersection between psychological and political science can represent a fruitful avenue to cope with relevant global issues peculiar to our time such as climate change or immigration phenomena.

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