

Running head: Conscientiousness, Political Ideology, and Fake News

**Of Pandemics, Politics, and Personality: The Role of Conscientiousness and Political
Ideology in Sharing of Fake News**

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In-press at *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*

Author note:

All supplementary information, data and materials are provided here: <https://osf.io/ahdsf/>

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Abstract

Sharing of misinformation can be catastrophic, especially during times of national importance. Typically studied in political contexts, sharing of fake news has been positively linked with conservative political ideology. However, such sweeping generalizations run the risk of increasing already rampant political polarization. We offer a more nuanced account by proposing that the sharing of fake news is largely driven by low conscientiousness conservatives. At high levels of conscientiousness there is no difference between liberals and conservatives. We find support for our hypotheses in the contexts of Covid-19, political, and neutral news across 8 studies (six pre-registered; two conceptual replications) with 4,642 participants and 91,144 unique participant-news observations. A general desire for chaos explains the interactive effect of political ideology and conscientiousness on the sharing of fake news. Furthermore, our findings indicate the inadequacy of fact-checker interventions to deter the spread of fake news. This underscores the challenges associated with tackling fake news, especially during a crisis like Covid-19 where misinformation impairs the ability of governments to curtail the pandemic.

Keywords: Fake news; Misinformation; Covid-19; Conservatives; Liberals; Conscientiousness

Since the 2016 US Presidential Election, researchers have found evidence of the far-reaching malicious impact of misinformation on public opinion (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Grinberg et al., 2019; Guess et al., 2020; Lazer et al., 2018; Vosoughi et al., 2018). However, the current “fake news pandemic” (Rajan, 2020) has implications beyond voting preferences. False and misleading advice on Covid-19 is both spreading the virus and claiming lives: Hundreds of people died in Iran after ingesting methanol in attempts to combat Covid-19, after reading erroneous medical advice on social media (The Associated Press, 2020).

Given the myriad negative consequences associated with the spread of misinformation, a growing body of research has examined factors that encourages sharing fake news (Guess et al., 2019). Factors such as less analytical thinking (Pennycook & Rand, 2019b, 2019a), prior exposure to a false story (Pennycook et al., 2018), and the absence of tags disputing a story (Pennycook, Bear, et al., 2020) have all been shown to predict the spread of fabricated stories. However, across multiple studies a positive association has emerged between conservative political ideology and dissemination of falsities (Bago et al., 2020; Bail et al., 2018; Grinberg et al., 2019; Guess et al., 2020; Lazer et al., 2018; Pennycook et al., 2018; Pennycook & Rand, 2019b, 2019a, 2019c; Scheufele & Krause, 2019; Vosoughi et al., 2018). Similarly, others have found that political conservatives flock to factually dubious news websites more than liberals (Guess et al., 2020). Research on “prebunking”—interventions aimed at pre-emptively combating the spread of misinformation — has found that while both liberals and conservatives learned to spot and resist misinformation at equal rates, conservatives rated fake headlines as more reliable than liberals pre-intervention (Basol et al., 2020; Roozenbeek & van der Linden, 2019).

Further research casts light on why conservative political ideology might be associated with sharing fake news. Political conservatives are more likely to endorse specific conspiracy theories and espouse conspiratorial worldviews in general (van der Linden et al., 2021). A tendency towards conspiratorial thinking could lead to misinformation seeming more feasible and relevant. Additionally, conservatives are more likely to associate the mainstream media with fake news, and dismiss contra-partisan news outlets (e.g., CNN) as fake at a higher rate than liberals (van der Linden et al., 2020). This greater distrust in ideologically opposed media could further increase the endorsement of ideologically concordant falsehoods among conservatives. In a similar vein, Jost et al. (2018) proposed that conservatives might be more motivated to endorse false content to satisfy their higher need for shared reality. Overall, this corpus of research provides convincing empirical evidence that on an average conservatives are more prone to sharing misinformation than liberals. This has led some to conclude that individuals associated with conservative political ideology are more prone to disseminating misinformation (Bago et al., 2020; Bail et al., 2018; Grinberg et al., 2019; Guess et al., 2020; Lazer et al., 2018; Pennycook et al., 2018; Pennycook & Rand, 2019b, 2019a, 2019c; Scheufele & Krause, 2019; Vosoughi et al., 2018).

However, such a conclusion runs the risk of denigrating all conservatives. Despite the main effect of conservative political ideology, it is possible that the effects are more nuanced, and that the above generalization is not applicable to everyone who identifies as a conservative. Whilst conservatives' emphasis on group loyalty and asserting the dominance of their group over others (Jost et al., 2003; Kugler et al., 2014), might increase their tendency to share fake news, conservatives' broad moral value system also respects authority, tradition, and the sanctity of institutions (Graham et al., 2009a; Jost et al., 2018). Hence, conservatives who regard themselves

as guardians of such values will be less likely to engage in the spread of rumors that could compromise the system. In short, conservatives are a heterogeneous group. Additionally, both liberals and conservatives display equal levels of partisan bias with regards to ideologically concordant information (Ditto et al., 2019). Thus, it is unlikely that the members of one political group are on average more likely to engage in motivated cognition than the other. Therefore, general statements about all conservatives behaving in a counterproductive manner, in our opinion runs an unnecessary risk of furthering political polarization and intergroup conflict. A more balanced approach in studying the role of political attitudes in the sharing of fake news is required not only to combat political polarization, but also to allow for greater political diversity in scholarly research (Duarte et al., 2015). To that end, we draw on principles from the personality literature, as personality is a key determinant of individual behavior beyond one's political or general attitudes, to offer a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between conservative political ideology and the sharing of fake news.

The Moderating Role of Conscientiousness

One of the most studied and accepted personality taxonomies – The Big Five (McCrae & Costa, 2008; Soto & John, 2017) – organizes personal traits into five factors: Open-mindedness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Negative emotionality. The Big Five personality traits have been shown to influence a range of attitudes and behaviors including prejudice (Sibley et al., 2012), cooperation (Koole et al., 2001), intergroup conflict (Koehn et al., 2019), and morality (Tybur et al., 2009). Despite the generality of all five personality factors in predicting individual behavior, we limit our focus to conscientiousness. Conscientiousness is defined as “individual differences in the propensity to follow socially prescribed norms for impulse control, to be goal directed, to plan, and to be able to delay gratification and to follow

norms and rules” (Roberts et al., 2009, p.369). Conscientiousness consists of a broad domain of positive traits such as orderliness, impulse control, conventionality, reliability, industriousness, and virtue (Roberts et al., 2009). Unsurprisingly, highly conscientious individuals follow the rules of society, maintain social decorum, and think before acting (Jackson et al., 2010). Higher conscientiousness is associated with less drug abuse (Bogg & Roberts, 2004), less counterproductive behavior at work (Roberts et al., 2007), better management of relationships that are prone to conflict (Finkel & Campbell, 2001), and greater exhibition of integrity and moral character (Cohen et al., 2014).

Individuals who are high on conscientiousness tend to be orderly, and their ability to delay gratification confers a whole host of life benefits. Specifically, conscientiousness leads to better control over one’s behavior. Such people report higher levels of perceived control over intended actions (Courneya et al., 1999), a stronger locus of control (Saklofske et al., 2007), and better self-management (Gerhardt et al., 2007). Conscientiousness is strongly related with guilt proneness but not guilt experience – highly conscientiousness people feel guilt more acutely when they misbehave, but are less likely to act in a way that triggers the experience of guilt (Fayard et al., 2012). Importantly, a recent meta-analysis found guilt proneness to be one of the most reliable indicators of prosocial behavior (Thielmann et al., 2020). In sum, both the dimensions of orderliness and impulse control suggest that individuals who are associated with greater conscientiousness should be less inclined to behave irresponsibly by sharing fake news, which sows disorder and reflects a lack of personal control (Petrocelli et al., 2020).

While political conservatives on an average might be more inclined to share fake news relative to political liberals, conservatives who are higher in conscientiousness and thus more likely to control their impulses should be less likely to share fake news. We argue that the

diligent and prudent attributes of highly conscientious individuals will curtail the tendency to propagate falsehoods. Such individuals will rely less on their subjective assessment of news accuracy and expend greater effort and care in discerning news veracity, which may reduce the likelihood of sharing false stories. Highly conscientious people are also more likely to engage in like-minded discussions with contra-partisans (Boulianne & Koc-Michalska, 2021), which might discourage them from participating in negative partisanship behaviors. Conversely, low conscientiousness conservatives who are reflexively driven by their partisan loyalties and assertion of their group's supremacy over others, and less restrained by other conservative values, are more likely to share fake news. Accordingly, we predict a negative interaction between political ideology and conscientiousness on the likelihood of sharing fake news, such that higher conscientiousness weakens the positive association between conservative political ideology and the sharing of fake news. We expect no differences in sharing behaviors among liberals and conservatives at higher levels of trait conscientiousness.

Low Conscientiousness Conservatives and the Desire for Chaos

We further contend that behavior of low conscientiousness conservatives is motivated not only by vehemently promoting the interests of their group, but also by denigrating other rival groups. Such a staunch inclination to elevate one's group at the expense of other political outgroups is an act of negative partisanship — a reality that has become increasingly common due to the exponential rise of intense political polarization since the start of the 21st Century (Abramowitz & Webster, 2016; Van den Bos et al., 2007; Westwood et al., 2018). As conservatives generally score higher on social dominance orientation — a set of beliefs that acknowledges and supports hierarchical differences in society (Kugler et al., 2014) — they may be more likely to criticize other groups to defend their own (Jost et al., 2003). Conservatives in

comparison to liberals are also more vigilant in perceiving social threats to their group (van Leeuwen & Park, 2009), which can further increase their tendency to actively denounce other groups and outgroup members. This desire to promote the status of one's group at the expense of other groups and outgroup members can lead to a generally hostile mindset, labelled a "need for chaos" (Arceneaux et al., 2021). The need for chaos is described as a drive to disrupt and destroy the existing order or established institutions in an attempt to secure the superiority of one's own group over others. Such a mindset is especially salient when dominance-oriented individuals feel they are being marginalized and rejected by the broader cultural environment (Arceneaux et al., 2021; Krizan & Johar, 2015; Twenge & Campbell, 2003).

Given the lack of orderliness, diligence, and self-control associated with low conscientiousness individuals, coupled with the high social dominance orientation and group loyalty among conservatives, we contend that low conscientiousness conservatives will be more likely to entertain beliefs and engage in behaviors that seek to cause chaos, as a means to defend their group. Indeed, existing research has shown that people are more willing to believe and share outlandish conspiracy theories when it helps them to achieve a positive image of their group, its dominance, and its existence (Douglas et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2009). Likewise, the desire to cause chaos also leads to less support for outgroups such as immigrants, and a greater desire to increase one's social status and alter the current power structure, especially when political polarization is rampant (Arceneaux et al., 2021; Van Bavel & Pereira, 2018). Consequently, we predict that the interaction effect of conservative political ideology and conscientiousness on sharing of fake news will be mediated by this desire for chaos.

Furthermore, recent research has highlighted that the dissemination of fake news is largely driven by people's inattention to accuracy. Once accuracy beliefs are primed either

implicitly or explicitly, individuals are relatively more judicious when it comes to the sharing of fake news (Pennycook, McPhetres, Zhang, & Rand, 2020; Pennycook et al., 2021). However, our proposed effect, where low conscientiousness conservatives share fake news due to an elevated desire for chaos, is indicative of a motivated process. Specifically, when low conscientiousness conservatives perceive fake news as a means of furthering their social goals (Douglas et al., 2017) and sowing seeds of destruction (Arceneaux et al., 2021), the accuracy of news stories should play a smaller role in determining their intentions to share such stories. In other words, people who pursue general destruction to defend their ingroup should indicate higher subjective assessments of the accuracy of fake news, as long as it serves the agenda of their group, which in turn will predict the sharing of such news. Thus, when motivated to believe false information as accurate, priming individuals with accuracy beliefs might not be enough to deter the spread of misinformation. Rather, such motivated individuals will perceive false news as subjectively more accurate and hence share falsehoods at a higher rate regardless of accuracy primes. Thus, in all our studies and consistent with recent work that has demonstrated reduced sharing of misinformation after participants are reminded of news accuracy (Pennycook, McPhetres, Zhang, Lu, et al., 2020), we test our interaction hypothesis after priming individuals with accuracy beliefs. Additionally, to further demonstrate that sharing of fake news is a motivated process, we also examine whether subjective accuracy mediates the interactive effect of political ideology and conscientiousness on the sharing of fake news. In so doing, we offer a conservative test of our hypothesis and find evidence extending beyond a well-known cognitive mechanism based on accuracy, in favor of a motivated process as the underlying driver.

Finally, we also examine whether sharing of fake news is driven by *news concordance* i.e., when a news story aligns with one's political ideology is it shared more; or *news*

discordance i.e., is news shared less when it is misaligned with one's political ideology. Previous research has suggested that news concordance increases the proliferation of fake news as opposed to discordance reducing it (Bago et al., 2020; Martel et al., 2019). However, much of that research was conducted in the domain of political news with analysis lacking comparison to a neutral condition. Without a neutral condition, one cannot reliably distinguish whether concordance increases or discordance decreases the proliferation of fake news. Using Covid-19 as backdrop, we also examine the effects of news concordance and discordance on the sharing of fake news.

Overview of Studies

To offer greater robustness and confidence in our findings, we also account for existing explanations focused on deliberative thinking, by including participants' scores on the Cognitive Reflection Test (Frederick, 2005) in our regression analyses. Across eight studies (six preregistered and two conceptual replications), consisting of 4,642 participants and 91,144 unique participant-news observations, we examine the joint effect of political ideology and personality on fake news sharing behavior. These studies primarily sampled online participants from Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform (MTurk), which has been shown to be a reliable resource for research into political ideology (Coppock, 2019; Krupnikov & Levine, 2014; Mullinix et al., 2015). Furthermore, researchers have suggested that online samples such as MTurk contain the people who are most likely to come across fake news stories – and therefore constitutes the appropriate population in which to study fake news behavior (Pennycook & Rand, 2019a). However, given the documented decrease in data quality on MTurk since 2018 (Chmielewski & Kucker, 2020; Kennedy et al., 2020), we implemented a battery of additional steps to ensure the quality of our MTurk samples, and included an additional replication of our

interactive effect of political ideology and conscientiousness on the sharing of fake news using a different platform (Prolific) in our supplementary materials (see Study S1).

Study 1 tested whether conscientiousness and political ideology interactively predict the sharing of fake news related to Covid-19. Study 2 replicated this effect using political stimuli from the 2016 Presidential election. Studies 3–4 demonstrated the robustness of our effects in the presence of explicit fact-checker warnings, and whether participants updated their intended behaviors in response to such warnings. Studies 5–6 revealed desire for chaos as the mechanism driving the interaction. We pre-registered six of the eight studies (Study 2 and Study S2 were conceptual replications), determining sample sizes, exclusion criteria, and the analytical approach in advance. The study materials, pre-registration, data, and analysis code is available here: https://osf.io/ahdsf/?view_only=9029566f8c47437485d9e4f2827e2382. All research was approved by the appropriate Institutional Review Board.

Sample Selection and Exclusion Criteria. Across all our studies, we restricted our samples to only US participants on both Qualtrics and CloudResearch (Litman et al., 2017), and those who were not using mobile devices to respond to our surveys. We further excluded non-US IP addresses using a manual lookup of the sample IPs. This latter manual exclusion was not pre-registered. In the supplementary materials, we provide results using no exclusion criteria, as well as extended exclusion criteria that removed participants flagged as suspicious by the application developed in Kennedy et al. (2020) to mitigate concerns about data quality among online samples. None of our conclusions were affected (Table S21). Further, using the CloudResearch platform we limited potential participants to those with a HIT acceptance rate of 94% or more. Automatic bots that produce low quality data will likely have lower acceptance rates. We also limited access to users who had completed between 50 and 50,000 HITs on MTurk and posted

all of our HITs on a weekday between 10am and 11am EST to ensure participants were more representative of the broader US population. Finally, we included a comprehension check, where participants were asked to identify which item was not out of a list of several items (e.g. ‘toaster’, ‘pillow’, ‘road’). Failure to identify ‘pillow’ as the correct answer would screen out potential bots and low quality participants. Overall, our sample selection procedure identified US participants and we took several steps to screen out bots and low quality data.

Study 1

Study 1 tested our key hypothesis: Whether conscientiousness and political ideology interactively predict the tendency to share fake news. We also examined if news concordance increases the sharing of fake news, news discordance decreases it, or both, in comparison to a control condition containing ideologically-neutral news.

Method

The pre-registration including information on sample size, exclusion criteria, hypotheses and analysis can be found here:

https://osf.io/mvu2r/?view_only=46d73b1fa77c45998a70e205ef9d05f1

Participants. We recruited 499 participants from MTurk. We excluded 11 participants for having a non US IP address resulting in a final sample of 488 participants ($M_{age} = 39.6y$, 55.1% females, 1% non-binary). Participants were paid \$1.01.

Procedure. Participants rated the accuracy of 12 real and 12 fake Covid-19 news stories, and how likely they were to share them on social media. Within each group of 12 real and fake stories, 4 were conservative-leaning, 4 liberal-leaning and 4 neutral respectively. In all, there were 8 each of conservative-leaning, liberal-leaning and neutral news stories. These stories were found by searching fake news fact-checker websites (e.g., Snopes) and mainstream media

outlets. An example of a fake conservative-leaning headline is “Even during coronavirus crisis, liberal media can’t resist spreading lies”, whereas an example fake liberal-leaning headline is “Trump is planning to bail out his corporate pals for pandemic losses – and leave taxpayers with the bill: columnist”. The full list of news stories can be found here (https://osf.io/ahdsf/?view_only=9029566f8c47437485d9e4f2827e2382).

Pretest. To validate this classification of stories by ideological content, we conducted a pretest (N = 99) where participants rated the ideological alignment of all of the 24 stories. Following prior research, participants were asked to assume the stories were entirely accurate (Pennycook & Rand, 2019a) and then judge “how favorably aligned would it be with Democrats’ versus Republicans’ ideology” (on a 5-point scale from “more favorable to Democrats” to “more favorable to Republicans”). This methodology aimed to separate participants’ views of the veracity of stories from their views regarding the ideological alignment of stories (i.e., a Republican might view a Democratic-leaning story as very untrustworthy, but still be able to identify that it is aligned with Democratic ideology). Participants’ ratings supported our classification of stories ($M_{\text{Dem}} = 2.27$, $M_{\text{Neutral}} = 2.98$, $M_{\text{Rep}} = 3.48$): Liberal-leaning stories were more aligned with Democratic ideology and conservative-leaning headlines were more aligned with Republican ideology. Neutral stories were rated very close to the center of the scale³ and were significantly different from both Democratic aligned ($t = 6.23$, $p < .001$) and Republican favoring ($t = -6.07$, $p < .001$) news stories. Whilst the perceived ideological alignment of the Democrat-consistent stories (i.e., their distance from the neutral stories) was slightly greater than the perceived alignment of Republican-consistent stories, this difference was not statistically

³ A one sample t-test comparing the neutral ratings to the null hypothesis $M = 3$ was not significant ($t = -.493$, $p = .623$), supporting the neutral classification of these stories.

significant ($t = 1.71, p = .090$). Overall, analysis of the pre-test supported our ideological classification of the news stories.

We randomly presented the 24 news stories and also counterbalanced such that half of the participants responded to personality questionnaire before seeing the news stories, and the other half after seeing the news stories. After rating the 24 stories and responding to personality measures, participants answered items corresponding to the cognitive reflection test (CRT), their attitudes towards Covid-19, political orientation, and other demographic information.

Measures. We measured participants' personality using the BFI-2 personality inventory (Soto & John, 2017). This 60-item questionnaire classifies individuals on Big-5 personality factors using 12 items for each factor based on their responses on a five-point scale ranging from "Disagree strongly" to "Agree strongly". We aggregated participants' responses into the five factors of open-mindedness ($\alpha = .87$), conscientiousness ($\alpha = .89$), extraversion ($\alpha = .85$), agreeableness ($\alpha = .87$), and negative emotionality ($\alpha = .92$). Political orientation was measured using two instruments. First, participants reported their political orientation on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 = "Very liberal" to 7 = "Very conservative" (Graham et al., 2009). Thus, higher values on this measure represented individuals who identified more with conservative ideology. Second, participants in a forced choice indicated: "If you had to choose between Democrats and Republicans, who would you prefer?" This measure is consistent with existing procedures (Pennycook, Bear, et al., 2020; Pennycook et al., 2018; Pennycook & Rand, 2019a). Our primary analysis relied on participants' ideology as measured by identification on a left-right continuum (Jost, 2006; Jost et al., 2008), however, obtaining an additional measure of partisanship as a proxy for left-right ideology allowed us to distinguish between politically concordant and discordant news stories. While scholars have rightly noted that partisan

commitments differ from ideology and are associated with party affiliation and political identities (e.g., Krishna & Sokolova, 2017; Oyserman & Schwarz, 2017), empirically the two are highly correlated in the contemporary, polarized United States (Jost, 2017). We report our results with the continuous measure of ideology (in line with our pre-registration), but the results remained consistent and significant with the categorical measure as well.

Before indicating their tendency to share a news story, participants first rated their subjective accuracy of news stories on a four-point continuous scale (1 = “Not at all accurate” to 4 = “Very accurate”) by responding to the following item, “To the best of your knowledge, how accurate is the claim in the above headline?” Directing participants’ focus to news accuracy in this manner reduces the likelihood of respondents sharing fake news due to inattention (Pennycook, McPhetres, Zhang, Lu, et al., 2020). Following this, participants indicated their desire to share the news using a single item: “Would you consider sharing this story online (for example, through Facebook or Twitter)?” The responses for this item were “No”, “Maybe” and “Yes”. Consistent with prior research (Pennycook, Bear, et al., 2020; Pennycook et al., 2018; Pennycook & Rand, 2019a), the variable ‘share’ took the value of 0 if a respondent indicated “No”, and 1 if they indicated “Maybe” or “Yes”. We followed this convention for two primary reasons. First, to facilitate meaningful comparison of our results to that of extant research. Second, both “Maybe” and “Yes” indicate an openness to sharing a falsehood.

We also included several control variables. We collected responses to the CRT (Frederick, 2005), a three-item scale measuring the extent to which participants’ cognitive styles are deliberative. An example item of the CRT is the bat-and-ball problem, “A bat and a ball cost \$1.10 in total. The bat costs \$1.00 more than the ball. How much does the ball cost? (in cents)”. We also measured the CRT-2, a non-numeric test of respondents’ cognitive styles. The CRT-2

(Thomson & Oppenheimer, 2016) is a four-item scale including items such as, “If you’re running a race and you pass the person in second place, what place are you in?” This scale is similar to CRT but removes the heavy dependency on numeracy. We collapsed these two scales to make a 7-item measure of general cognitive reflection, with scores ranging from 0 to 7. We measured participants' attitudes towards the Covid-19 virus to account for any variance in sharing of news based on such attitudes. Our items fell into two categories: how personally worried they were, and their beliefs about the extent to which the virus was dangerous. We collapsed all six items to create a single measure of attitudes towards Covid-19, where a higher score indicated a greater perception of Covid-19 severity ($\alpha=.92$). We added two additional questions; the extent to which the threat of the virus was exaggerated, and support for federally mandated quarantining to account for any partisan differences. Finally, we controlled for participants’ age and gender (1 if male, 0 otherwise).

Results

Since each participant saw 24 different news stories of varying ideological content, we wanted to take into account any variance based on story level factors (i.e., the ideological content of the story, and its alignment with the participant’s ideology). Thus, we pre-registered our intention to perform analysis at the news story level, resulting in 11,712 observations. Notably, all of our results replicated when using linear regression to predict the total number of stories shared out of 24 (see Table S22 in the supplement for further details). Our key dependent variable – the sharing of news – was categorical in nature, hence we ran logistic regression analysis⁴. To provide a more conservative test of our hypothesis, we used cluster-robust standard

⁴ We pre-registered our intentions to estimate our regression models using Generalized Estimation Equations. However, when following scholarly guidelines to minimize the Quasi Information Criterion (QIC), as per Hardin & Hilbe (2003), this procedure implied an “independence” correlation structure within clusters, which is equivalent to logistic regression.

errors that only assume independence between clusters (Liang & Zeger, 1986). Our main variables (political ideology and conscientiousness) were not mean-centered; this choice does not affect statistical inference regarding the significance of the interaction term, which was our effect of interest. We kept this procedure constant across studies.

Participants who identified as conservative were more likely to share news stories, ($b = .154, p < .001$, Model 1, Table 1), whereas participants who were higher on conscientiousness were less likely to do so, ($b = -.648, p < .001$, Model 1). These effects were robust to the inclusion of several control variables (Model 4), including cognitive reflection.

Interaction effect. The interaction between political ideology and conscientiousness was statistically significant and negative, with ($b = -.191, p < .001$, Model 5) and without ($b = -.231, p < .001$, Model 2) the inclusion of several control variables. The interaction was also robust after including interactions between political ideology and all of the other big five personality variables (see Table S1 in supplementary information (SI)). Figure 1 plots the interaction pattern from Model 2. We used simple slope analysis across all our studies to interpret the interaction. The resulting analysis revealed that the effect of political ideology on the likelihood of sharing a story was significant at one standard deviation below the mean level of conscientiousness ($b = .07, p < .001$), but not at one standard deviation above the mean ($b = -.01, p = .44$).

We also found that political ideology and conscientiousness interactively predicted participants' accuracy beliefs both without ($b = -.070, p < .001$, see Table S3 in SI) and with control variables ($b = -.062, p < .001$). We next examined whether subjective accuracy mediated the interactive effect of political ideology and conscientiousness on sharing of fake news (Figure 2; Table S2). A moderated mediation analysis using a WLSMV estimator (a robust version of diagonally-weighted least squares) and Huber-White robust standard errors revealed

conservative political ideology had a significant positive indirect effect via subjective accuracy at low levels of conscientiousness ($b = .018, p < .001, CI_{95} = [.015, .021]$), but a negative indirect effect at high levels of conscientiousness ($b = -.013, p < .001, CI_{95} = [-.016, -.009]$). In short, the moderated mediation model evidenced the role of a motivated process leading to higher perceived accuracy, which in turn increased the likelihood of sharing falsehoods. If inattention was driving these results, we would not have expected political ideology and conscientiousness to interactively predict accuracy perceptions.

News concordance vs. discordance. We next conducted pre-registered tests on the relationship between the ideological concordance of the news and its likelihood of being shared. We classified news as concordant or discordant news based on the news content (Democrat-leaning, Republican-leaning or neutral) and whether the participant indicated that they preferred the Democratic or Republican party. The dummy variable ‘concordant’ took a value of 1 if respondents indicated that they preferred the Republican party and the news was classified as Republican-leaning (e.g., Breitbart), or if they indicated a preference for Democrats, and the news was Democrat-leaning (e.g., The Raw Story). Similarly, the dummy variable ‘discordant’ was 1 if the news leaned towards the opposing party. This procedure was similar to prior work studying the effects of the ideological concordance of fake news (Pennycook et al., 2018; Pennycook & Rand, 2019). However, unlike past work our concordance and discordance categories were defined relative to the neutral category, where the news was not laden with any political content. This enabled us to tease apart the effects of news alignment with political ideology beyond the difference between concordance and discordance.

We tested whether the alignment of a news story with a participant’s political beliefs predicted their likelihood of sharing the story. There was no main effect of politically

‘concordant’ news on the likelihood of sharing ($b = .017, p = .76$, Model 6), but there was a negative main effect of the news being ‘discordant’ ($b = -.428, p < .001$, Model 6). This suggests that differences in participants’ sharing behavior of political news was driven by a reduced propensity to share discordant news rather than an enhanced propensity to share concordant news. Previous designs lacking a neutral news condition have precluded this insight. Model 7 examined the interaction between conscientiousness and news-alignment variables. This was intended to test whether conscientiousness had different effects on the likelihood of sharing a news story contingent on ideological alignment. We found a significant main effect of conscientiousness ($b = -.622, p < .001$), no significant main effects of ‘concordant’ or ‘discordant’, but a significant negative interaction between discordant and conscientiousness ($b = -.192, p = .016$) (see Figure S3 in SI). Combined with the results of Model 6, this suggests that higher conscientiousness participants were driving the negative effect of news discordance on sharing behavior. In other words, highly conscientious people were averse to sharing discordant political news and not biased towards sharing concordant news.

We also estimated all of our regression models using subjective assessments of accuracy as the dependent variable (see Table S3). Notably, for each of our studies we report this analysis for subjective accuracy in the supplementary materials. Additionally, for all studies we tested whether conscientiousness and other control variables differed based on political affiliation. We found no differences in conscientiousness based on party affiliation, except for Study S1 and Study 6 where Republicans were slightly higher on conscientiousness (see Table S20).

Discussion

Overall, Study 1 revealed that the effect of political orientation on the sharing of fake news is more nuanced, such that higher conscientiousness weakened the positive association

between conservative ideology and the sharing of fake news: the observed association was largely driven by low conscientiousness conservatives. Furthermore, unlike past work (Pennycook et al., 2018; Pennycook & Rand, 2019a), we found an aversion to discordant news rather than a preference for concordant news as the motivation behind the dissemination of news.

Additional replications. Several scholars have suggested analyzing data from multiple online panels in order to test the generalizability and robustness of findings (Chandler et al., 2019; Paolacci & Chandler, 2014; Stewart et al., 2017). We therefore performed an additional replication of these results using the online panel Prolific to test our interaction effect in a different population (see Study SI in supplementary information (SI)). We replicated the negative interaction between political ideology and conscientiousness on the sharing of fake news in the Prolific sample, both with and without control variables (Table S4). Additionally, we also ran a study testing our core interaction hypothesis without asking participants to report the subjective accuracy of news stories (Study S2 in SI). Using 20 new false stories, we again replicated the interactive effect of political ideology and conscientiousness on the likelihood of sharing fake news (Table S5 in SI).

Study 2

Study 1 found support for our interaction hypothesis with respect to Covid-19 news stories. However, the use of Covid-19 stories raises concerns regarding the generalizability of our findings with respect to the political news that has been the main focus of investigation when it comes to sharing of fake news. Thus, in Study 2, we performed a conceptual replication of our core result using political news stimuli from the 2016 Presidential election taken from previous research (Pennycook, Bear, et al., 2020).

Method

Participants. A total of 502 US MTurk participants completed the study in exchange for \$1.01. 18 participants were excluded for having a non-US IP addresses. The final sample consisted of 484 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 39.3\text{y}$, 46.3% females, .6% non-binary).

Procedure. The procedure for this study was similar to Study 1 except participants rated the accuracy and their tendency to share 12 real and 12 fake political news stories taken from Pennycook and colleagues (Pennycook, Bear, et al., 2020). Within each group of 12 real and fake stories, 6 were conservative-leaning and 6 were liberal-leaning. In all there were 12 each of conservative-leaning and liberal-leaning. We randomly presented the 24 news stories and counterbalanced the positions of the stories such that half of the participants responded to personality questionnaire before seeing the news stories, and the other half after seeing the news stories. Following this, participants reported their political orientation, CRT, and other demographic information.

Measures. Our measures were similar to those of Study 1, with exceptions listed below. Personality was measured using the same BFI-2 personality inventory; open-mindedness ($\alpha = .89$), conscientiousness ($\alpha = .91$), extraversion ($\alpha = .87$), agreeableness ($\alpha = .85$), and negative emotionality ($\alpha = .91$). We used the same continuous measure of political orientation. For the categorical measure, participants chose whether they voted / would have voted for Donald Trump or Hilary Clinton in the 2016 election (Pennycook & Rand, 2019b). The measurement and coding of our dependent variables was identical to Study 1. We included a similar set of control variables as Study 1, with the exclusion of attitudes towards Covid-19.

Results

We followed an identical modelling procedure to Study 1. The results are reported in Table 2. Conscientiousness had a negative main effect ($b = -.864$, $p < .001$, Model 1) and

political ideology had a positive main effect ($b = .256, p < .001$, Model 1) on the likelihood of sharing a news story both without (Model 1) and with control variables (Model 4). More importantly, political ideology and conscientiousness negatively interacted to predict the likelihood of sharing a news story. The interaction effect ($b = -.292, p < .001$, Model 2) was robust to the inclusion of control variables ($b = -.158, p = .005$, Model 5). The simple effect of conservative political ideology on the likelihood of sharing a story was significant at low values of conscientiousness ($b = .081, p < .001$), but not when conscientiousness was high ($b = -.006, p = .33$, Figure 3).

We also found support for the moderated mediation model (Table S7 in the SI). There was a positive indirect effect of a more conservative political ideology via subjective accuracy at low levels of conscientiousness ($b = .030, p < .001, CI_{95} = [.027, .033]$), but a negative indirect effect at high levels of conscientiousness ($b = -.010, p < .001, CI_{95} = [-.013, -.007]$).

News concordance versus discordance. As in Study 1, we investigated the effect of the political alignment of a news story on its likelihood of being shared. We found a significant positive effect of news being politically concordant on the likelihood of sharing a story ($b = .439, p < .001$, Model 6), and a significant interaction between conscientiousness and news being politically concordant ($b = .262, p < .001$, Model 7). These results replicate previous findings that discussed concordant news to be shared more than discordant ones (Bago et al., 2020; Martel et al., 2019). However, this positive relationship between news concordance and its sharing should be interpreted with caution *without a neutral control condition*. The control condition in Study 1 allowed us to test the composition of this effect: i.e., whether concordance increased or discordance decreased the sharing of fake news. Without a control condition one would invariably infer that concordance increases sharing of fake news.

Discussion

Study 2 replicated our findings from Study 1 using political stimuli that have been used in prior research. Taken together, Studies 1-2, and S1-2 demonstrate the robustness of our effects across four large samples from two online platforms (MTurk and Prolific) and four sets of news stimuli (two related to Covid-19, one containing both Covid-19 and neutral news, and one set of political stimuli).

Study 3

Having found support for our hypotheses across both Covid-19 and political news, in Study 3 we tested if our effects on the sharing of misinformation persist *even* in the presence of explicit fact-checker warnings. If low conscientiousness conservatives read and trusted fact-checker warnings, we would expect the effects to disappear. If, however, low conscientiousness conservatives share fake news as an act of negative partisanship against their political outgroup—a motivated process—we would not expect fact checker warnings to have a large impact on their behavior. Accordingly, participants were explicitly warned with a message analogous to those used by Facebook’s fact-checking system whether a story was true or false.

Method

We pre-registered our study design, sample size, exclusion criteria, hypotheses and analysis (https://osf.io/bv2yg/?view_only=fa04d06fdcef41f78f35292067c12526).

Participants. 493 US MTurk participants accepted taking part in our study for a payment of \$1.26. 14 participants were removed after data collection for having a non-US IP address), resulting in a final sample of 479 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 40.4\text{y}$, 51.6% women).

Procedure. The study design was similar to Study 1, with the exception that stories were (accurately) tagged with fact-checker warnings. The 12 fake Covid-19 news stories had the

warning “Disputed by 3rd Party Fact-Checkers. Learn why this is disputed”. The 12 real Covid-19 news stories had the message “Supported by 3rd Party Fact-Checkers. Learn why this is supported”. Similar to Study 1, participants indicated their accuracy perceptions of the news, their willingness to share it, self-reported personality, answered CRT items, reported their attitudes towards the Covid-19 virus, and submitted demographic information.

Measures. Our measures were identical to Study 1. Personality was measured using the BFI-2 personality inventory (Soto & John, 2017) and the constructs displayed reasonable reliability – open-mindedness ($\alpha = .88$), conscientiousness ($\alpha = .89$), extraversion ($\alpha = .84$), agreeableness ($\alpha = .85$), and negative emotionality ($\alpha = .91$). Similarly to Study 1, a higher score on attitudes towards Covid-19 indicated a greater perception of Covid-19 severity ($\alpha = .91$). We also controlled for CRT and demographic information.

Results

Consistent with our theory, we pre-registered several hypotheses, including a negative two-way interaction between conscientiousness and political ideology. We additionally predicted a negative effect of a ‘false warning’ on the likelihood of sharing a story and a negative two-way interaction between conscientiousness and a false warning, such that a false warning will have a greater negative impact on likelihood of sharing when conscientiousness is higher.

As in our other studies, we performed analysis at the news level using logistic regression with standard errors clustered within each individual. The results are presented in Table 3. We found support for our first hypothesis both with (Model 4) and without the control variables (Model 1). Political ideology positively predicted the sharing of fake news ($b = .128, p < .001$, Model 1) whereas conscientiousness was negative ($b = -.560, p < .001$, Model 1).

Interaction effect. The interaction effect was significant with ($b = -.114, p = .008$, Model 5) and without ($b = -.170, p < .001$, Model 2) the inclusion of control variables. The effect of political ideology on the likelihood of sharing a story was significant at low levels of conscientiousness ($b = .056, p < .001$), but not at high ($b = -.002, p = .76$, Figure 4). We further found a significant negative interaction between conscientiousness and a conservative political ideology on accuracy ($b = -.064, p < .001$, Table S11). This is a noteworthy finding, as the participants were provided explicit judgments of accuracy, yet the interaction of conscientiousness and political ideology *still* played a key role in their subjective evaluation of news stories. In support of our theory, we again found a positive indirect effect of a more conservative political ideology via subjective accuracy at low levels of conscientiousness ($b = .016, p < .001, CI_{95} = [.013, .019]$), and a negative indirect effect at high levels of conscientiousness ($b = -.013, p < .001, CI_{95} = [-.016, -.009]$).

Stories that were associated with a false warning were shared at a lower rate than stories that were indicated as true ($b = -.868, p < .001$, Model 3). Moreover, in support of our second interaction hypothesis, we also found a significant negative interaction between conscientiousness and a story explicitly labelled as false ($b = -.529, p < .001$). In other words, the fact-checker warnings were more likely to be effective in curtailing the spread of misinformation for people higher in conscientiousness.

Discussion

In Study 3, we provided participants with explicit warnings regarding the veracity of each story they were asked to evaluate. We found that the interactive effect of political ideology and conscientiousness on the sharing of fake news persisted even in the face of these warnings, consistent with our contention that low conscientiousness conservatives are motivated by

furthering the interests of their group, regardless of the news veracity. The significant interaction despite the fact check warnings not only highlights the robustness of this effect, but also points out the inability of such warnings to curtail the spread of misinformation, especially among low conscientiousness conservatives.

Study 4

Study 4 aimed to offer an even stricter test of our hypothesis that conscientiousness weakens the link between political ideology and sharing of misinformation. After participants decided to share a fake story, we explicitly warned them that the news was probably false and asked if they would still like to share the story. If the effect was driven by lazy or inattentive responding, we would expect it to be mitigated when participants had another chance to indicate their intentions to share the falsehoods. But if low conscientiousness conservatives willingly engage in sharing misinformation, they will be unlikely to dynamically update their preferences in response to explicit fact-checker warnings.

Method

We pre-registered our study design, sample size, exclusion criteria, hypotheses and analysis (https://osf.io/ku6fq/?view_only=764a4010807840349b35a7558834f40b).

Participants. Of the 997 US MTurk participants that completed our study, 30 were excluded for not having a US IP address, resulting in a final sample consisting of 967 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 39.2\text{y}$, 51.8% female). Participants were paid \$1.51.

Procedure. The study design was similar to Study 1, with the difference that subjects were offered a chance to revise their decision to share a fake news story by informing them that the news was likely false. Thus, the first part of the study was identical to Study 1 and the second part included an intervention only for the fake news stories that participants were willing to

share. We hoped that offering targeted interventions for fabricated news might be a more effective strategy to dissuade people from sharing falsehoods. As per our other studies, participants indicated the stories' subjective accuracy and their likelihood of sharing the news for each of the 24 news stories on Covid-19. These stimuli were identical to Studies 1 & 3 and comprised of neutral, liberal and conservative-leaning stories. Following that, participants responded to the BFI-2 personality inventory and CRT measures. At this point, we introduced our intervention only for fake news stories that participants indicated they were willing to share.

Participants saw the following message, "Prior to making your ultimate decision regarding your views of the accuracy and your likelihood of sharing these stories, you have the chance to see the results of an independent fact checker. If none of the stories you indicated you may share were disputed by third party fact checkers, the survey will automatically move on to asking questions about yourself." Participants then learned whether the news stories that they were willing to share were disputed by 3rd party fact-checkers and asked if they would still like to share them. Finally, participants reported their political ideology, their attitudes towards the COVID-19, and demographic information. Given this study design, we expected to replicate our interaction effect at story level before the intervention. Following the intervention, we examined the average change in participants' willingness to continue sharing false stories despite the warning. This latter analysis was performed at the participant level.

Measures. Our independent measures were identical to Studies 1 and 3. Personality was measured using the BFI-2 personality inventory (Soto & John, 2017) – open-mindedness ($\alpha = .87$), conscientiousness ($\alpha = .88$), extraversion ($\alpha = .85$), agreeableness ($\alpha = .86$), and negative emotionality ($\alpha = .90$). As per our pre-registration, we created a variable 'change', which indicated the extent to which participants changed their mind to share fake stories after seeing an

independent third-party fact-checker warning. For example, consider a situation where a participant had selected “Maybe” or “Yes” to the sharing question for three fake stories initially and after seeing the warning participant chose to share 1 of those stories again. The variable ‘change’ in this case would take the value $(3 - 1)/3 = .67$. Thus, this variable ranged from 0 to 1, with 0 representing no change in preference and 1 representing total change in preference to not share fake news. Hence, a higher value on this variable represented a *greater reluctance* to share fake news. Overall, this variable captured aggregate reduction in the sharing of fake news at a participant level.

Similar to Study 1, we created a composite measure reflecting Covid-19 attitudes, ($\alpha = .93$), and also controlled for CRT and other demographic information.

Results

Consistent with other studies, we replicated all our findings before the fact-checker intervention. There was a negative interaction of conscientiousness and political ideology (see Figure 5). This was robust to the inclusion of controls ($b = -.162, p < .001$, Table S12) and the inclusion of all other personality interactions ($b = -.117, p = .007$, Table S13).

Next, we present our analysis examining whether fact checker warnings revised individuals’ tendencies to share fake news after learning the news was false. Of the 651 participants who initially indicated their willingness to share one or more fake story, their average willingness to share false information reduced from 4.58 to 2.78 stories ($p < .001$) after seeing the fact-checker warning. This is encouraging as it shows that fact checkers were somewhat effective in reducing the sharing of misinformation. We next examined whether conscientiousness and political ideology predicted this change.

Conscientiousness had a positive main effect on participants' tendency to update their choices ($b = .06, p = .003$, Model 1, Table 4), whereas political ideology was negatively associated with changing ($b = -.059, p < .001$, Model 1). We also observed a significant positive interaction between political ideology and conscientiousness ($b = .034, p = .001$, Model 2). This interaction was robust to the inclusion of control variables ($b = .024, p = .024$, Model 5). The simple effect of political ideology on 'change' was significant at one standard deviation below mean conscientiousness ($b = -.084, p < .001$), and also at one standard deviation above ($b = -.033, p = .003$). However, the two slopes were significantly different ($b = -.051, p = .001$), suggesting that low conscientiousness conservatives changed their news sharing behavior significantly less than high conscientiousness conservatives (Figure 6). Overall, our hypothesis was supported: Political ideology and conscientiousness interactively predicted participants' responsiveness to fact-checker warnings.

Discussion

Study 4 revealed that conscientiousness and political ideology jointly predicted participants' tendency to update their fake news sharing behavior in response to fact checker warnings. Whilst political conservatives were less likely to change their behavior in general, this was even more pronounced for low conscientiousness conservatives. These results are consistent with our assertion that conservatives share fake news to further the interests of their group, and this tendency is enhanced for conservatives who are low in conscientiousness. Importantly, we also replicated results from the other studies pre-intervention.

Study 5

Having established the robustness of this effect to fact checker interventions, we next examined whether low conscientiousness conservatives exhibited a greater need for chaos.

Accordingly, we tested the interactive effect of political ideology and conscientiousness on participants' desire for chaos. At the same time, this study also ruled out other mechanisms that could be pertinent, such as support for social and economically conservative issues, support for Donald Trump, trust in the media, and whether the time participants spent on social media accounted for any meaningful variance.

Method

The pre-registration containing information on study design, sample size, exclusion criteria, hypotheses and analyses can be found here:

(https://osf.io/6rsx5/?view_only=c95d35808b6a422f8c3f8c991d0c66a7).

Participants. On MTurk, we recruited 300 US participants in exchange for \$1.01. We excluded 15 participants for not having a US IP address, resulting in a final sample of 285 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 40.1\text{y}$, 51.2% female).

Procedure. Participants first responded to the personality questionnaire and indicated their political ideology, before responding to other scales. We randomly administered five different measures—desire for chaos (Petersen et al., 2020), support for social and economically conservative issues (Everett, 2013), support for Donald Trump, trust in the mainstream media, and time spent on social media. Following this, participants reported their demographics.

Measures. Consistent with other studies, political ideology was measured using a one item continuous measure and personality via the BFI-2 inventory. The reliability coefficients for the Big Five factors were acceptable; open-mindedness ($\alpha = .88$), conscientiousness ($\alpha = .89$), extraversion ($\alpha = .83$), agreeableness ($\alpha = .84$), and negative emotionality ($\alpha = .90$).

We measured desire for chaos using an eight-item scale (Petersen et al., 2020) on a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”. This scale allowed us to

measure people's desire for anarchy ($\alpha = .95$). Another possible mechanism we wanted to rule out was whether low conscientiousness conservatives reported greater support for traditional social and economic conservative issues. To that end, we measured participants' alignment with both social and economic conservatism via the 12-item SECS scale (Everett, 2013). This scale captures participants' opinion on a number of social (e.g., abortion) ($\alpha = .85$) and economic (e.g., welfare benefits) issues ($\alpha = .68$). We also measured support for Donald Trump as another alternate mechanism using a four-item scale. An example item was "President Trump has been very effective in his presidency" ($\alpha = .97$).

It is important to note that participants' support for social and economically conservative issues may have some overlap with political ideology, but they are not identical constructs. Support for social and economic conservatism reflects beliefs associated with specific policies, rather than one's identification with a position on the left-right continuum. Whilst in our sample support for these policies and institutions (e.g., Abortion, Welfare benefits) correlated highly with left-right identification, this does not have to be the case. These correlations likely reflect the polarized climate in the United States, where people uncritically align with the views of their party/political group. Regardless, we wanted to test whether political ideology and conscientiousness interactively predict need for chaos, rather than specific policy issues that might be important to the majority of conservatives, including those high in conscientiousness.

Finally, we measured participants' trust in the mainstream media. Prior research has established that there is declining trust in mainstream media (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; van der Linden et al., 2020), and this has been touted as a possible reason for the advent of the present fake news pandemic (Allen et al., 2020). Four items assessed participants' trust in the mainstream media. Sample item: "What is reported in the news is often not true" ($\alpha = .83$). We

also controlled for time spent on social and digital media in our analysis. Participants indicated the number of hours they spent on social media in a day and their reliance on news sources — adding up to 100% — from the following choices; social media, digital media, print press, friends and family, and other.

Results

We interacted political ideology and conscientiousness to predict need for chaos, social conservatism, economic conservatism, support for Donald Trump, and trust in the mainstream media while controlling for participants' media diet composition, other personality factors and demographic information. The results are reported in Table 5. We found a statistically significant negative interaction of political ideology and conscientiousness on desire for chaos ($b = -.136, p < .001$, Model 1) indicating that low conscientiousness conservatives reported an elevated desire for chaos. The interaction of political ideology and conscientiousness was also statistically significant for trust in the mainstream media ($b = -.088, p = .017$), suggesting contrary to our expectations, low conscientiousness conservatives reported greater trust in the mainstream media. Notably, the political-ideology-conscientiousness interaction did not predict social conservatism ($b = .072, p = .30$), economic conservatism ($b = .003, p = .96$), or support for Trump ($b = .046, p = .23$).

Discussion

Study 5 revealed that political ideology and conscientiousness interactively predicted desire for chaos. Specifically, low conscientiousness conservatives reported a greater desire for chaos compared to high conscientiousness conservatives and liberals. At the same time, this study also ruled out other alternate explanations.

Study 6

Study 6 tested the full model to ascertain whether desire for chaos mediated the interactive effect of political ideology and conscientiousness on the sharing of fake news.

Method

The pre-registered information on study design, sample size, exclusion criteria, hypotheses and analyses is available here:

(https://osf.io/98wx2/?view_only=b36170f2f67f46e2964c9522c1bf6a74).

Participants. 498 US MTurk workers signed up for a payment of \$1.01. We excluded the responses of 7 participants for a non-US IP address. Our final sample consisted of 491 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 40.4\text{y}$, 54.4% female). Participants were paid \$1.01.

Procedure. The procedure was identical to that of Study 1, with the exception that we measured three additional variables; desire for chaos, trust in the mainstream media, and participants' media use. Participants faced either the 24 news stories or BFI-2 personality inventory in a counterbalanced order, before responding to the desire for chaos, trust in the mainstream media and social media use measures in a randomized order. Participants then reported their political ideology, attitudes towards Covid-19, and demographic information.

Measures. We measured our independent variables in line with Studies 1-5. All reliability coefficients for the Big Five personality dimensions fell in the acceptable range; open-mindedness ($\alpha = .88$), conscientiousness ($\alpha = .90$), extraversion ($\alpha = .85$), agreeableness ($\alpha = .85$), and negative emotionality ($\alpha = .90$). We measured our mediating variable desire for chaos using the same 8-item scale as in Study 5, ($\alpha = .91$) (Petersen et al., 2020). We included participants' concern with the virus Covid-19, ($\alpha = .93$), and trust in the mainstream media as control variables ($\alpha = .86$).

Results

We replicated all of our findings for sharing of fake news (see Table 6, Table S16). The interaction of political ideology and conscientiousness on sharing of fake news was statistically significant without ($b = -.116, p = .023$, Model 2) and with the inclusion of control variables ($b = -.107, p = .04$, Model 5). The interaction pattern revealed that the simple slope was significant at both low ($b = .07, p < .001$) and high values of conscientiousness ($b = .02, p = .002$, Figure 8). A possible reason for the significant simple slope observed at high values of conscientiousness was Republicans' higher average levels of conscientiousness in Study 6 (Table S20). However, the difference in the two slopes was negative and statistically significant ($b = -.05, p = .001$), implying that low conscientiousness conservatives were even more likely to share.

Additionally, we replicated our findings from Study 5 with a statistically significant interaction of political ideology and conscientiousness in predicting desire for chaos both without ($b = -.123, p < .001$, Table S17) and with controlling for the other four personality dimensions, trust in the mainstream media, attitudes towards Covid-19, age, gender, time spent on social media, and the proportion of news received from social media ($b = -.083, p < .001$, Table S17).

Mediation by desire for chaos. Finally, we tested a pre-registered moderated mediation model (Figure 9, Table S18), where political ideology was the independent variable, conscientiousness was the moderator, desire for chaos was the mediator and the likelihood of sharing a story was the dependent variable. We found that there was a positive indirect effect of political ideology on the likelihood of sharing a news story via the mediator of desire for chaos at low levels of conscientiousness ($b = .034, p < .001, CI_{95} = [.031, .037]$), but that the indirect effect was negative and did not attain statistical significance at a 5% level for high levels of conscientiousness ($b = -.001, p = .279, CI_{95} = [-.002, .0001]$). Note also that in Model 8 (Table 6) with the inclusion of desire for chaos, the interaction between political ideology and

conscientiousness was no longer statistically significant ($b = -.036, p = .49$). This gives further weight to our contention that the interactive effect of political ideology and conscientiousness on the likelihood of sharing stories was mediated by a desire for chaos.

Discussion

Study 6 further replicated the interactive effect of political ideology and conscientiousness on people's desire for chaos. Furthermore, low conscientiousness conservatives' need for chaos emerged as the underlying mechanism that mediated the interactive effect of political ideology and conscientiousness on the sharing of fake news. All of these analyses were robust to controlling for trust in the media.

General Discussion

Our goal was to demonstrate that trait conscientiousness weakens the positive effect of conservative political ideology on the spread of misinformation. At the same time, we focused on news stories related to Covid-19, as it provided a context with the potential to harm anyone, irrespective of their political beliefs. This allowed us to shed light on why even in a pandemic, misinformation may spread like wildfire, impairing our ability to combat the virus.

Across eight studies with a sample of 4,642 participants and 91,144 news level observations, we found that political ideology and conscientiousness interactively predicted the likelihood of sharing of fake news, such that differences in sharing behavior across party lines were driven by conservatives who were low in conscientiousness. We found no differences among liberals and conservatives at high levels of conscientiousness. This effect was consistent both for news articles regarding Covid-19 (Studies 1, S1, S2, 3, 4, & 6), the 2016 Presidential Election (Study 2), and neutral topics (Study S2), and across samples from two different online populations, MTurk (Studies 1-4 & 6) and Prolific (Study S1). The interaction was robust to

alternative explanations based on inattention, accuracy primes, and also to the inclusion of several control variables, including cognitive reflection and the interaction of political ideology with other personality factors. This underscores the reliability of our effect in predicting the dissemination of misinformation.

Theoretical contributions

Our findings advance the literature by moving beyond studying the main effect of conservative political ideology on the sharing of fake news, and thus providing a more nuanced and balanced opinion. In this way, our theory and findings avoid denigrating all conservatives and offer empirical evidence that aligns with the general observation of greater heterogeneity among conservatives. Notably, the size of our interaction effect across our studies is also of practical relevance. In Table S22, we used linear regression to predict the total number of stories participants' shared, and report regression predictions for "Slightly Liberal" and "Slightly Conservative" participants at low and high levels of conscientiousness. At high levels of conscientiousness, the predicted proportion of stories shared varied little between these political groups (.004-.047 across Studies 1-4, & 6), but at low levels of conscientiousness the gap widened vastly (.113-.166). This gap was even more pronounced for those who were at the more extreme ends of political ideology. In summary, disparities in sharing behavior across the political aisle were nearly exclusively driven by low conscientiousness respondents. In order to curtail the spread of misinformation, policymakers should focus on low conscientiousness conservatives.

Furthermore, we find that our effects were driven by an indiscriminate desire to cause chaos, as opposed to alternative explanations based on the promotion of social or economic conservative policies, supporting Donald Trump, distrust in the mainstream media, or time spent

on social media (Studies 5-6). This explanation underscores the negative effect of political polarization, which leads a subset of individuals (low conscientiousness conservatives) to promote the interests of their political group by actively subverting other groups through the sharing of falsehoods— a form of radical political activism (Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009). Our data suggest that higher trait level conscientiousness may be a key factor in mitigating the likelihood of political conservatives engaging in such negative partisanship behaviors. Additionally, we did not find that respondents have a preference for sharing ideologically concordant news, but rather they have an *aversion* to sharing discordant news (Studies 1-2). Comparing participants' behavior concerning our politically neutral Covid-19 news stories to overtly political news allowed us to tease apart this effect.

More broadly, our findings demonstrate the importance of studying personality in relation to understanding fake news as a phenomenon. Our focus on a single personality trait responds to calls in the personality literature to identify the impact of specific traits rather than investigating all Big 5 personality attributes simultaneously (Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009; Paunonen & Ashton, 2001). Future research can benefit from studying the relationship between other facets of personality and the sharing of fake news. We observed a positive main effect of extraversion on the likelihood of sharing stories, and some evidence of a negative effect of open-mindedness.

A more worrying aspect of our findings is the inadequacy of fact checker interventions. Though in Study 4 we found some reduction in the sharing of fake news after participants learned the news that they were willing to share was false, it was still not sufficient to stop low conscientiousness conservatives from widely spreading falsehoods. Another relevant comparison comes from comparing the results of Study 1 and Study 3, which used identical news stories, but Study 3 explicitly attached either fake or real tags to stories (Table S24). We found that attaching

a real tag to a story was more effective in increasing participants' likelihood of sharing a story than fake warnings were in deterring sharing behavior. This again suggests that individuals motivated to defend their ingroup at the expense of the outgroup will perceive higher subjective accuracy of news, regardless of a story's true accuracy. Notably, the interaction effect between political ideology and conscientiousness was robust to removing ambiguity regarding the veracity of news in both Studies 3 and 4.

Overall, these findings troublingly suggests that low conscientiousness conservatives were deliberately choosing to propagate false stories as a means to further the superiority of their group, and were particularly unwilling to acknowledge the falseness of Covid-19 stories, despite insistent warnings. This poses a serious challenge for policy interventions aimed at combating misinformation and effectively promoting public health guidance. Whereas previous intervention designs have focused on emphasizing the veracity of news (Pennycook, McPhetres, Zhang, & Rand, 2020; Pennycook & Rand, 2019c) or preserving access to reputable news (Allen et al., 2020), more effective interventions may need to target aspects of individuals' personality such as conscientiousness to reduce the spread of fake news (Magidson et al., 2014; Roberts et al., 2017).

Limitations and future directions

Despite providing extensive experimental evidence that higher trait conscientiousness weakens the positive association between conservative political ideology and the sharing of fake news, our work also suffers from several limitations that could be addressed in future research. Research has shown that MTurk samples can be liable to sampling and data quality issues, and thus may be prone to biased interpretations (Chandler et al., 2019; Stewart et al., 2017). We partially mitigated this concern by replicating our results in a separate sample on Prolific, but to further establish the generalizability of our results it may be necessary to collect a nationally

representative sample of participants. However, given that only a subset of the broader population are consistently exposed to fake news, specifically those who spent a lot of time on the internet, social media, and public forums, an MTurk sample may constitute the relevant population of study as individuals present on this platform spend a lot of time working online (Pennycook & Rand, 2019a). Similarly, while we presented participants with a mixture of concordant, discordant, and neutral news items, this may not be reflective of the context in which people face news in social media environments (Pennycook & Rand, 2019a). Given the increasing prevalence of online echo chambers, it may be more likely that individuals are overexposed to a subset of politically concordant stories (Bail et al., 2018; Bakshy et al., 2015). This could have implications for how people respond to the diverse stories they encounter online.

Another potential limitation is that we primarily relied on a single item measure of political ideology, as per Graham et al. (2009). It is possible that other measures of ideology might display different relationships with fake news sharing behavior. For example, in a different context, researchers have shown that anger leads to support for economic but not sociocultural conservatism (Kettle & Salerno, 2017). Yet whilst political views are multifaceted, a single liberal-conservative continuum has been shown to be a useful approximation with predictive validity across a wide range of issues (Jost, 2006; Jost et al., 2008). Further, the present research primarily concerns an interaction effect – namely, that higher conscientiousness weakens the positive association between more conservative political ideology and the sharing of fake news. We find evidence that this effect was mediated by need for chaos – a specific mindset associated with extreme negative partisanship. However, further research could expand the range of ideological measures to tease apart what specific values and facets of ideology lead to the sharing of fake news, and how those facets interact with conscientiousness.

Finally, we find support for desire for chaos as the mechanism using correlational mediation analysis. This method has limitations that have been noted in the literature extensively (Bullock et al., 2010; Green et al., 2010; Imai et al., 2011; Rohrer, 2018). Establishing causality is particularly difficult when studying the interaction of political ideology and personality – both relatively stable factors that are not easily manipulable. Thus, our analysis of the mechanism underpinning the interactive effect of political ideology and conscientiousness should be interpreted with caution.

Conclusion

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, publicly disagreed with President Trump's stance on the Coronavirus, leading to malicious backlash. Fake stories discrediting his expert opinion were shared millions of times on social media (Alba & Frenkel, 2020). The reconciliation of public opinion with scientific experts is paramount (Scheufele & Krause, 2019), and becomes even more critical during a crisis. For if expert opinions are dismissed as fake news, and such recommendations are ignored, the consequences can be palpable. Hence, it is not surprising that the United States catapulted into the number one location of Covid-19 infections in the world, with more than half a million dead and the count still rising. Our work provides further understanding of what leads to the spread of such malicious falsehoods, and offers a sobering perspective on the prospects of interventions aimed at counteracting the dissemination of fake news.

Context

Conservative political ideology has been identified as a key predictor for sharing of fake news. However, despite this empirical evidence, blaming all individuals on one side of the political divide runs the risk of further polarization and intergroup conflict that is already too high. We offer a more balanced perspective by demonstrating that low conscientiousness conservatives drive differences in the spread of misinformation across party lines. This was explained by their greater desire for chaos. There were no differences among liberals and conservatives high on conscientiousness. Our work therefore avoids denouncing all individuals who identify with conservative values. Finally, by testing our theory in the context of Covid-19, our results highlight the inadequacy of fact-checker interventions to curtail the dissemination of fake news and the partisan tribalism that drives these effects. This research advances our understanding of partisan differences and role of personality in sharing of fake news, and offers insights that can guide the design of effective interventions.

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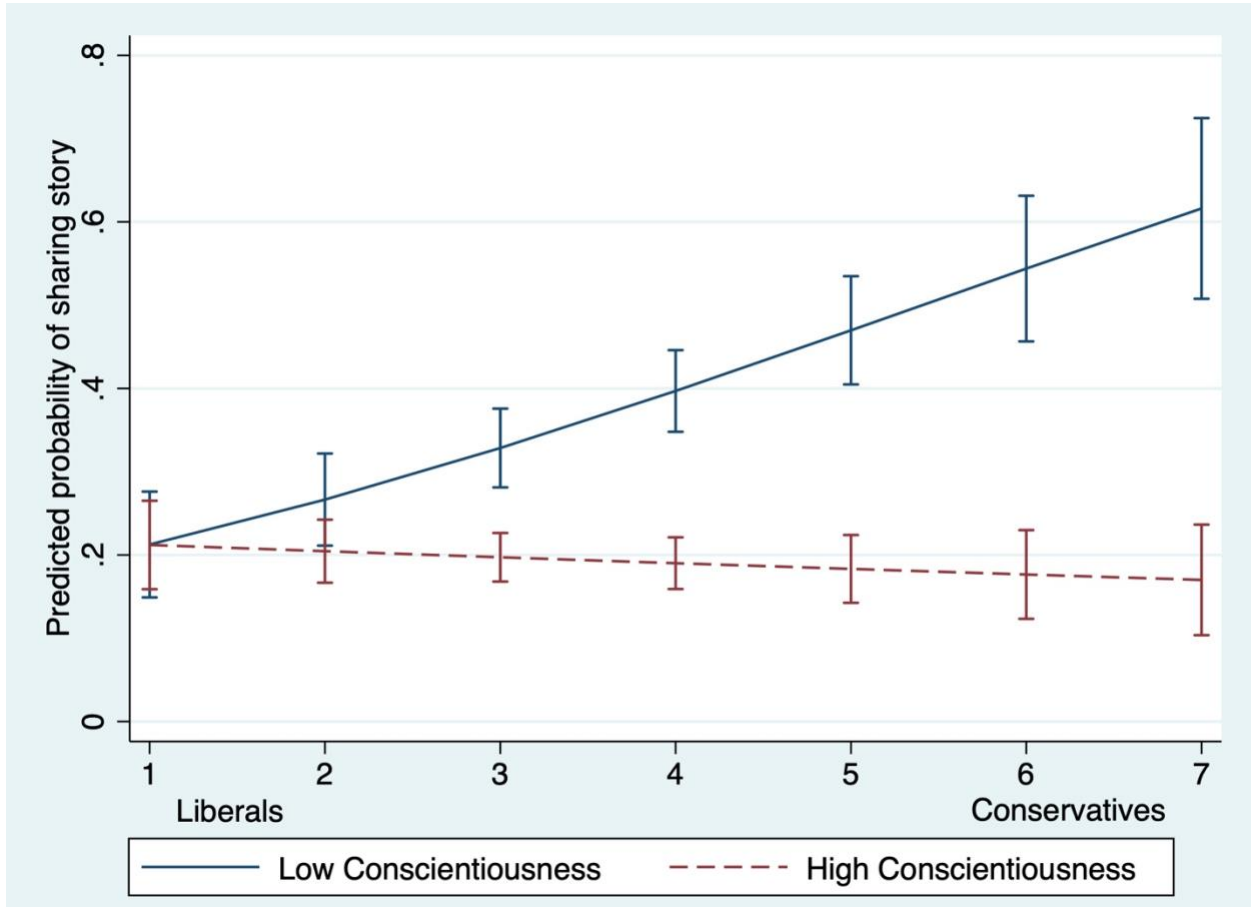
Figures and Tables

Table 1: Logistic regression models predicting binary outcome ‘share’ with clustered standard errors, unstandardized betas, and 95% confidence intervals (Study 1)

Model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Political Ideology (PI)	.154*** [.08,.23]	1.026*** [.54,1.51]		.118** [.04,.20]	.844*** [.44,1.25]			
Conscientiousness (C)	-.648*** [-.84,-.45]	.229 [-.22,.67]		-.687*** [-.91,-.46]	.023 [-.40,.45]	-.677*** [-.91,-.45]	-.622*** [-.86,-.38]	-.491*** [-.74,-.24]
PI x C		-.231*** [-.35,-.11]			-.191*** [-.29,-.09]			
Fake (F)			-.429*** [-.49,-.36]	-.446*** [-.51,-.38]	-.453*** [-.52,-.38]	-.444*** [-.51,-.38]	-.444*** [-.51,-.38]	.424 [-.21,1.06]
Extraversion			.451*** [.26,.65]	.471*** [.28,.66]	.478*** [.29,.67]	.512*** [.32,.71]	.512*** [.32,.71]	.515*** [.32,.71]
Agreeableness			-.298* [-.53,-.06]	-.056 [-.30,.19]	-.031 [-.28,.22]	-.065 [-.31,.18]	-.065 [-.31,.18]	-.065 [-.31,.18]
Negative emotionality			.144 [.03,.32]	-.034 [-.22,.15]	-.013 [-.20,.17]	-.016 [-.20,.17]	-.016 [-.20,.17]	-.015 [-.20,.17]
Openness			-.508*** [-.70,-.31]	-.320** [-.52,-.12]	-.315** [-.52,-.11]	-.396*** [-.59,-.20]	-.396*** [-.59,-.20]	-.398*** [-.59,-.20]
Attitudes towards Covid-19			.266*** [.11,.42]	.329*** [.17,.49]	.315*** [.14,.49]	.277*** [.12,.43]	.277*** [.12,.43]	.279*** [.12,.44]
General Cognitive Reflection			-.195*** [-.26,-.13]	-.180*** [-.24,-.12]	-.176*** [-.24,-.11]	-.193*** [-.26,-.13]	-.193*** [-.26,-.13]	-.194*** [-.26,-.13]
Age			.001 [-.01,.01]	-.000 [-.01,.01]	.000 [-.01,.01]	.002 [-.01,.01]	.002 [-.01,.01]	.002 [-.01,.01]
Male			.165 [-.12,.45]	.103 [-.18,.38]	.103 [-.18,.39]	.125 [-.16,.41]	.125 [-.16,.41]	.126 [-.16,.41]
Education			.117 [-.01,.24]	.116 [-.01,.24]	.092 [-.04,.22]	.109 [-.02,.24]	.108 [-.02,.24]	.109 [-.02,.24]
News - Liberal			-.143* [-.25,-.03]	-.148* [-.26,-.03]	-.151* [-.27,-.03]			
News - Conservative			-.241*** [-.34,-.14]	-.250*** [-.35,-.15]	-.254*** [-.36,-.15]			
Counterbalance			.061 [-.21,.33]	.012 [-.25,.28]	-.030 [-.30,.24]	.019 [-.25,.29]	.019 [-.25,.29]	.019 [-.25,.29]
Concordant						.017 [-.09,.12]	-.011 [-.53,.51]	-.117 [-.77,.53]
Discordant						-.428*** [-.54,-.32]	.291 [-.29,.87]	.495 [-.15,1.14]
Concordant x C							.007 [-.13,.15]	-.054 [-.22,.11]
Discordant x C							-.192* [-.35,-.04]	-.297*** [-.47,-.12]
Concordant x F								-.027 [-.86,.81]
Discordant x F								-.618 [-1.41,.17]
C x F								-.336*** [-.51,-.17]
Concordant x C x F								.205 [-.02,.43]
Discordant x C x F								.284** [.07,.50]
Intercept	.999* [.22,1.78]	-2.329* [-4.14,-.52]	-.175 [-1.63,1.28]	.618 [-1.07,2.31]	-2.142* [-4.28,-.00]	1.339 [-.31,2.99]	1.126 [-.52,2.77]	.791 [-.87,2.45]
N	11712	11712	11712	11712	11712	11712	11712	11712
AIC	13376.6	13142.2	12716.1	12350.7	12201.2	12371.7	12366.7	12313.7
BIC	13398.7	13171.6	12819.2	12468.6	12326.5	12482.3	12492.0	12475.8
Log likelihood	-6685.3	-6567.1	-6344.0	-6159.4	-6083.6	-6170.9	-6166.4	-6134.8

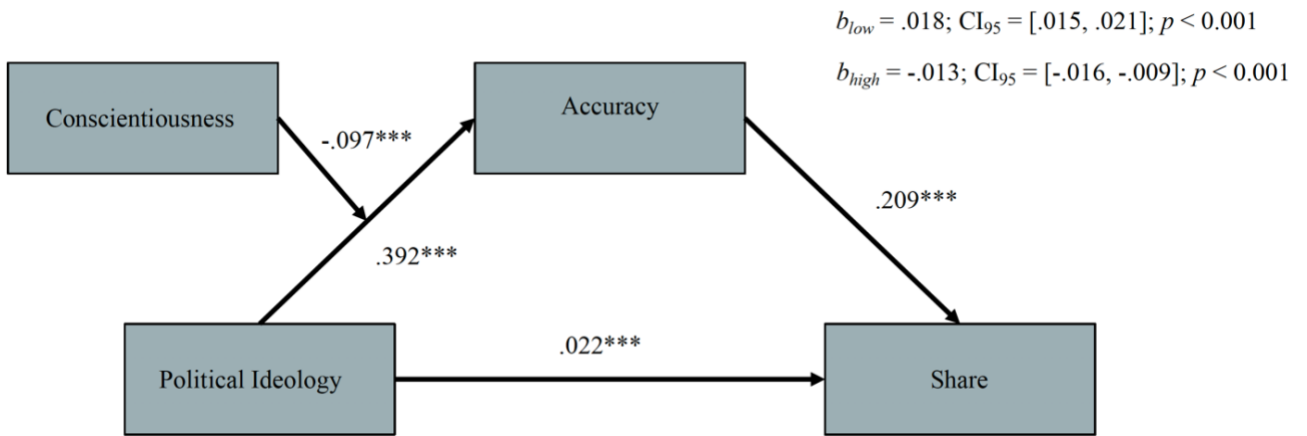
Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 1: The predicted probability of sharing a news story for high and low conscientiousness respondents across the range of political ideology in Study 1.



Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. These are calculated using the error intervals of the coefficients, rather than prediction intervals that are based on the error variance of fitting. This is true for all of the figures.

Figure 2: Moderated Mediation analysis



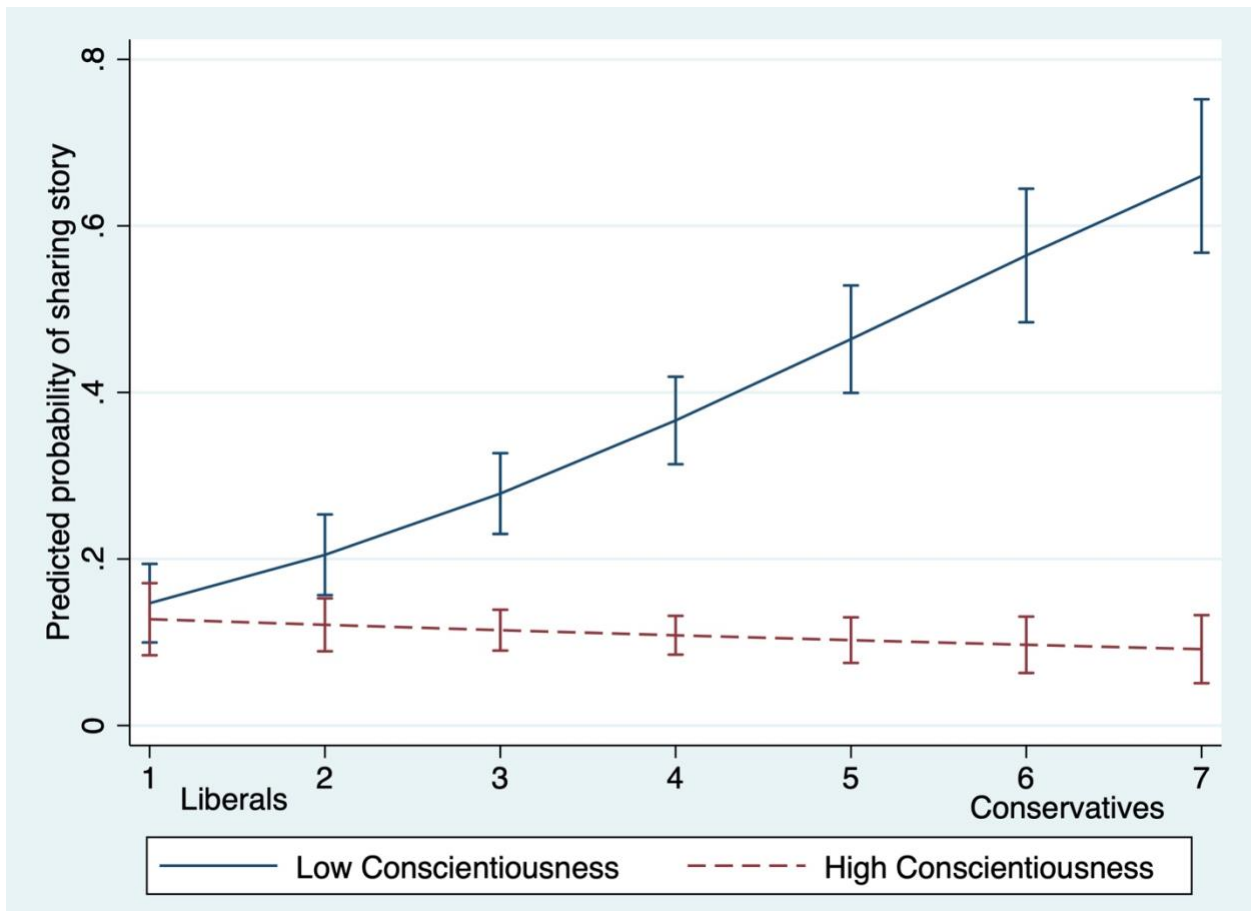
Note. We used a WLSMV estimator and Huber-White robust standard errors.

Table 2: Logistic regression models predicting binary outcome ‘share’ with clustered standard errors, unstandardized betas, and 95% confidence intervals (Study 2)

Model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Political Ideology (PI)	.256*** [.17,.34]	1.319*** [.93,1.71]		.133** [.05,.22]	.725*** [.30,1.15]			
Conscientiousness (C)	-.864*** [-1.07,-.66]	.190 [-.21,.59]		-.777*** [-1.05,-.51]	-.207 [-.73,.31]	-.781*** [-1.05,-.51]	-.924*** [-1.21,-.64]	-.760*** [-1.06,-.46]
PI x C		-.292*** [-.39,-.19]			-.158** [-.27,-.05]			
Fake			-.598*** [-.70,-.50]	-.628*** [-.73,-.53]	-.638*** [-.74,-.53]	-.624*** [-.72,-.52]	-.624*** [-.72,-.52]	.810* [.17,1.45]
Extraversion			.451*** [.21,.69]	.459*** [.22,.70]	.424*** [.18,.67]	.534*** [.29,.78]	.533*** [.29,.77]	.530*** [.29,.77]
Agreeableness			-.217 [-.47,.03]	-.003 [-.27,.26]	.019 [-.25,.29]	-.054 [-.31,.20]	-.054 [-.31,.20]	-.055 [-.31,.20]
Negative emotionality			.337** [.14,.54]	.046 [-.19,.29]	.079 [-.16,.32]	.010 [-.24,.26]	.011 [-.24,.26]	.013 [-.23,.26]
Openness			-.516*** [-.76,-.28]	-.296* [-.53,-.06]	-.255* [-.50,-.01]	-.393*** [-.62,-.16]	-.392*** [-.62,-.16]	-.392*** [-.62,-.16]
General Cognitive Reflection			-.234*** [-.30,-.16]	-.220*** [-.29,-.15]	-.202*** [-.27,-.13]	-.238*** [-.31,-.17]	-.238*** [-.31,-.17]	-.239*** [-.31,-.17]
Age			-.014* [-.03,-.00]	-.012 [-.03,-.00]	-.010 [-.02,-.00]	-.010 [-.02,-.00]	-.010 [-.02,-.00]	-.010 [-.02,-.00]
Male			.351* [.02,.68]	.236 [-.08,.56]	.219 [-.11,.54]	.248 [-.08,.57]	.248 [-.08,.57]	.248 [-.08,.57]
Education			.336*** [.18,.50]	.356*** [.20,.51]	.324*** [.16,.48]	.360*** [.20,.52]	.361*** [.20,.52]	.362*** [.20,.52]
News - Conservative			-.048 [-.15,.05]	-.050 [-.15,.05]	-.051 [-.16,.05]			
Counterbalance			.061 [-.26,.38]	-.014 [-.32,.30]	-.025 [-.34,.29]	.026 [.29,.34]	.025 [.29,.34]	.023 [.29,.34]
Concordant						.439*** [.35,.53]	-.526 [-1.08,.03]	-.526 [-1.16,.10]
Concordant x C							.262*** [.11,.41]	.274** [.11,.44]
Concordant x F								.042 [-.67,.76]
C x F								-.375*** [-.56,-.19]
Concordant x C x F								-.040 [-.25,.17]
Intercept	1.057** [.32,1.80]	-2.758*** [-4.35,-1.16]	-.444 [-2.14,1.25]	1.074 [-.91,3.06]	-1.278 [-4.13,1.58]	1.676 [-.28,3.63]	2.200* [.21,4.19]	1.561 [-.46,3.58]
N	11616	11616	11616	11616	11616	11616	11616	11616
AIC	11169.6	10808.7	10393.1	10007.2	9924.7	10018.7	10003.9	9969.6
BIC	11191.7	10838.2	10481.4	10110.3	10035.1	10114.4	10106.9	10094.7
Log likelihood	-5581.8	-5400.4	-5184.5	-4989.6	-4947.3	-4996.3	-4987.9	-4967.8

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 3: The predicted probability of sharing a news story for high and low conscientiousness respondents across the range of political ideology in Study 2.



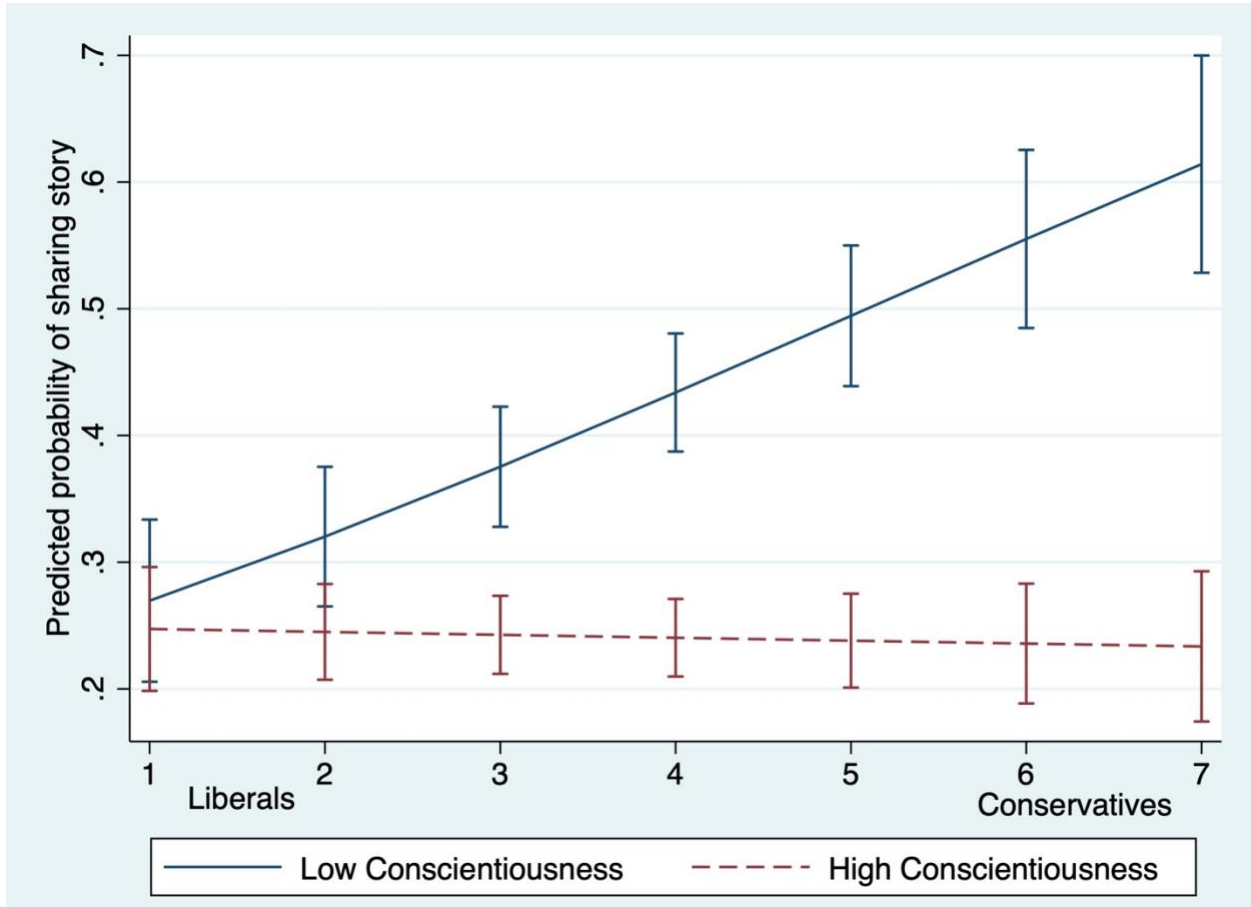
Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Table 3: Logistic regression models predicting binary outcome ‘share’ with clustered standard errors, unstandardized betas, and 95% confidence intervals (Study 3)

Model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Political Ideology (PI)	.128*** [.07,.19]	.777*** [.43,1.13]		.083* [.02,.15]	.525** [.18,.87]			
Conscientiousness (C)	-.560*** [-.73,-.39]	.093 [-.26,.45]		-.369*** [-.56,-.18]	.040 [-.31,.39]	-.366*** [-.55,-.18]	-.333*** [-.52,-.15]	-.153 [-.36,.05]
PI x C		-.170*** [-.26,-.08]			-.114** [-.20,-.03]			
False Warning (FW)			-.868*** [-.98,-.76]	-.881*** [-.99,-.77]	-.887*** [-1.00,-.78]	-.883*** [-.99,-.77]	-.884*** [-.99,-.78]	.624 [-.24,1.48]
Extraversion			.336*** [.15,.53]	.322*** [.13,.51]	.325*** [.14,.51]	.349*** [.16,.54]	.349*** [.16,.54]	.352*** [.16,.54]
Agreeableness			-.425*** [-.64,-.21]	-.338** [-.55,-.12]	-.338** [-.55,-.13]	-.367*** [-.58,-.15]	-.367*** [-.58,-.15]	-.368*** [-.59,-.15]
Negative emotionality			.108 [-.06,.27]	.016 [-.17,.20]	-.002 [-.18,.18]	-.007 [-.19,.17]	-.007 [-.19,.17]	-.007 [-.19,.17]
Openness			-.277** [-.46,-.09]	-.162 [-.35,.03]	-.131 [-.33,.06]	-.218* [-.41,-.03]	-.217* [-.41,-.03]	-.215* [-.41,-.02]
Attitudes towards Covid-19			.227** [.08,.37]	.278*** [.13,.43]	.266*** [.11,.42]	.250** [.10,.40]	.250** [.10,.40]	.252** [.10,.40]
General Cognitive Reflection			-.140*** [-.20,-.08]	-.121*** [-.18,-.06]	-.110*** [-.17,-.05]	-.134*** [-.19,-.08]	-.134*** [-.19,-.08]	-.134*** [-.19,-.08]
Age			-.004 [-.01,.01]	-.003 [-.01,.01]	-.003 [-.01,.01]	-.001 [-.01,.01]	-.001 [-.01,.01]	-.001 [-.01,.01]
Male			.517*** [.26,.78]	.464*** [.21,.72]	.433** [.17,.69]	.458*** [.20,.72]	.458*** [.20,.72]	.461*** [.20,.72]
Education			.243*** [.13,.36]	.217*** [.10,.33]	.212*** [.10,.33]	.224*** [.11,.34]	.224*** [.11,.34]	.223*** [.11,.34]
News - Liberal			-.129* [-.24,-.02]	-.131* [-.25,-.02]	-.132* [-.25,-.02]			
News - Conservative			-.146** [-.24,-.05]	-.148** [-.25,-.05]	-.149** [-.25,-.05]			
Counterbalance			-.081 [-.33,.17]	-.060 [-.31,.19]	-.051 [-.30,.20]	-.058 [-.31,.19]	-.059 [-.31,.19]	-.061 [-.31,.19]
Concordant						.098 [-.01,.20]	-.268 [-.81,.28]	-.281 [-.94,.37]
Discordant						-.393*** [-.49,-.29]	.436 [-.09,.96]	.228 [-.43,.88]
Concordant x C							.095 [-.05,.24]	.009 [-.16,.18]
Discordant x C							-.220** [-.36,-.08]	-.232** [-.40,-.06]
Concordant x FW								-.496 [-.139,.40]
Discordant x FW								.068 [-.76,.90]
C x FW								-.529*** [-.76,-.30]
Concordant x C x FW								.348** [.11,.59]
Discordant x C x FW								.146 [-.08,.38]
Intercept	.965** [.27,1.66]	-1.531* [-2.99,-.07]	-.129 [-1.61,1.35]	.316 [-1.38,2.01]	-1.315 [-3.42,.79]	.995 [-.59,2.58]	.868 [-.73,2.46]	.352 [-1.27,1.97]
N	11496	11496	11496	11496	11496	11496	11496	11496
AIC	14037.3	13884.6	12971.0	12830.9	12773.5	12790.3	12774.2	12677.6
BIC	14059.3	13914.0	13073.9	12948.5	12898.5	12900.5	12899.1	12839.3
Log likelihood	-7015.6	-6938.3	-6471.5	-6399.5	-6369.8	-6380.1	-6370.1	-6316.8

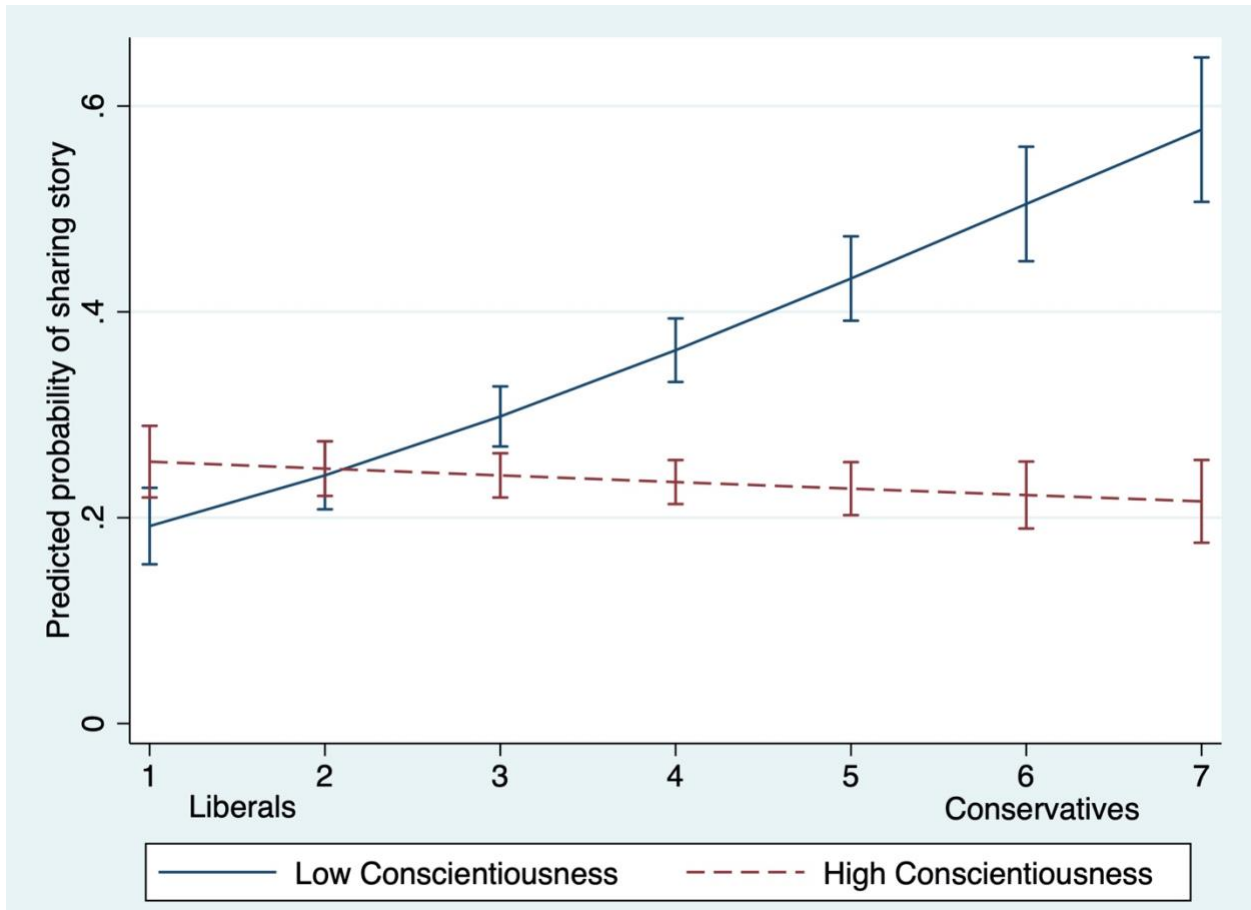
Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 4: The predicted probability of sharing a news story for high and low conscientiousness respondents across the range of political ideology in Study 3.



Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 5: The predicted probability of sharing a news story for high and low conscientious respondents across the range of political ideology in Study 4.



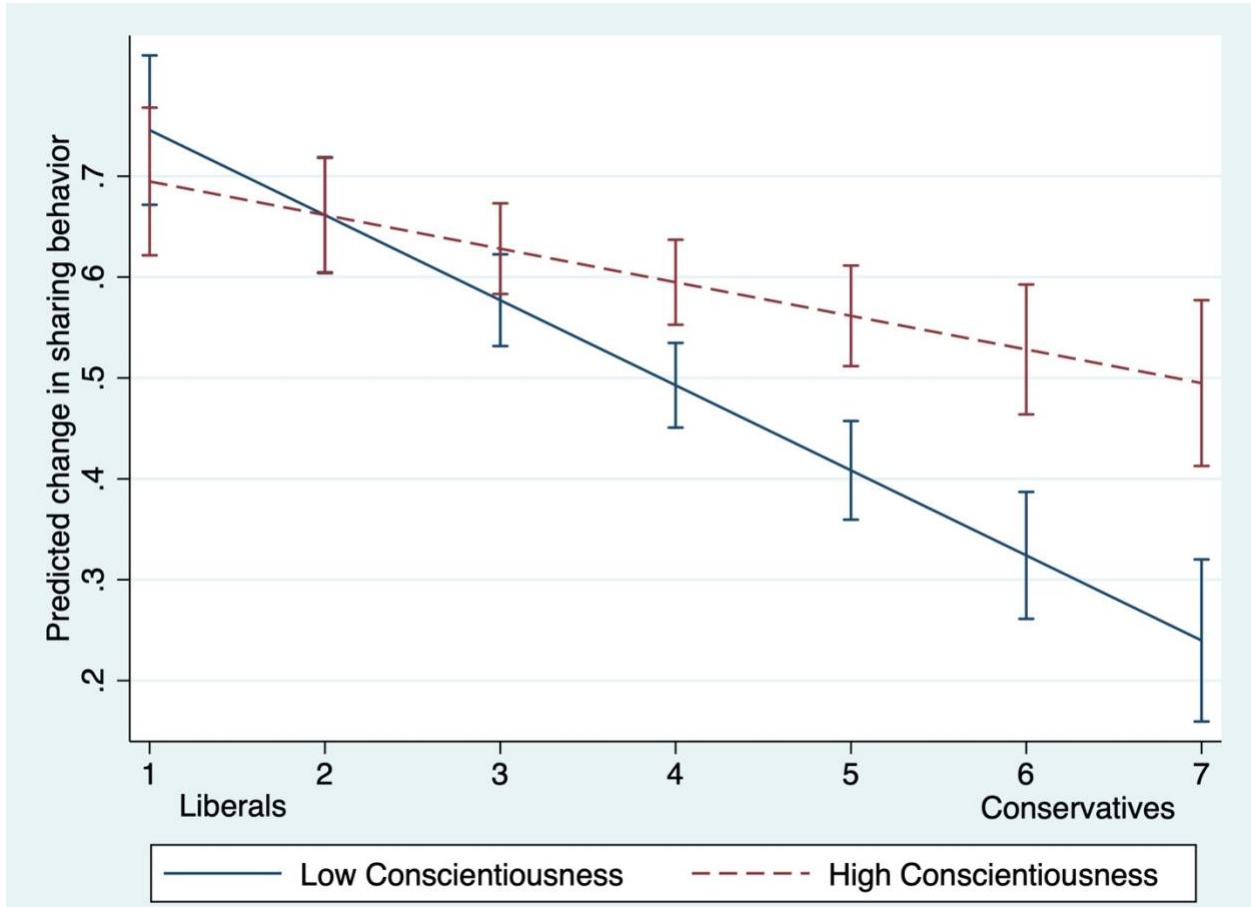
Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals

Table 4: The change of intent to share fake news stories using linear regression with 95% confidence intervals (Study 4)

Model	1	2	3	4	5
Political Ideology (PI)	-.059*** [-.07,-.04]	-.188*** [-.27,-.11]		-.041*** [-.06,-.02]	-.132** [-.21,-.05]
Conscientiousness (C)	.060** [.02,.10]	-.068 [-.15,.02]		.031 [-.02,.09]	-.056 [-.15,.04]
PI x C		.034** [.01,.05]			.024* [.00,.04]
Extraversion			-.005 [-.05,.04]	-.005 [-.05,.04]	-.000 [-.04,.04]
Agreeableness			.059* [.01,.11]	.043 [-.01,.09]	-.044 [-.01,.09]
Negative emotionality			.045* [.00,.09]	.045 [-.00,.09]	.045 [-.00,.09]
Openness			.102*** [.06,.15]	.066** [.02,.11]	.059* [.01,.11]
Attitudes towards Covid-19			.005 [-.03,.04]	-.007 [-.04,.03]	-.005 [-.04,.03]
General Cognitive Reflection			.036*** [.02,.05]	.029*** [.01,.04]	.027*** [.01,.04]
Age			-.001 [-.00,.00]	-.000 [-.00,.00]	-.000 [-.00,.00]
Male			-.085** [-.15,-.02]	-.081* [-.14,-.02]	-.080* [-.14,-.02]
Intercept	.550*** [.38,.72]	1.038*** [.70,1.37]	-.219 [-.56,.12]	.050 [-.34,.44]	.397 [-.10,.89]
N	651	651	651	651	651
AIC	614.3	605.5	606.6	586.1	582.9
BIC	627.8	623.4	646.9	635.4	636.6
Log likelihood	-304.2	-298.8	-294.3	-282.1	-279.5

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 6: The predicted change in sharing behavior for high and low conscientiousness respondents across the range of political ideology in Study 4.



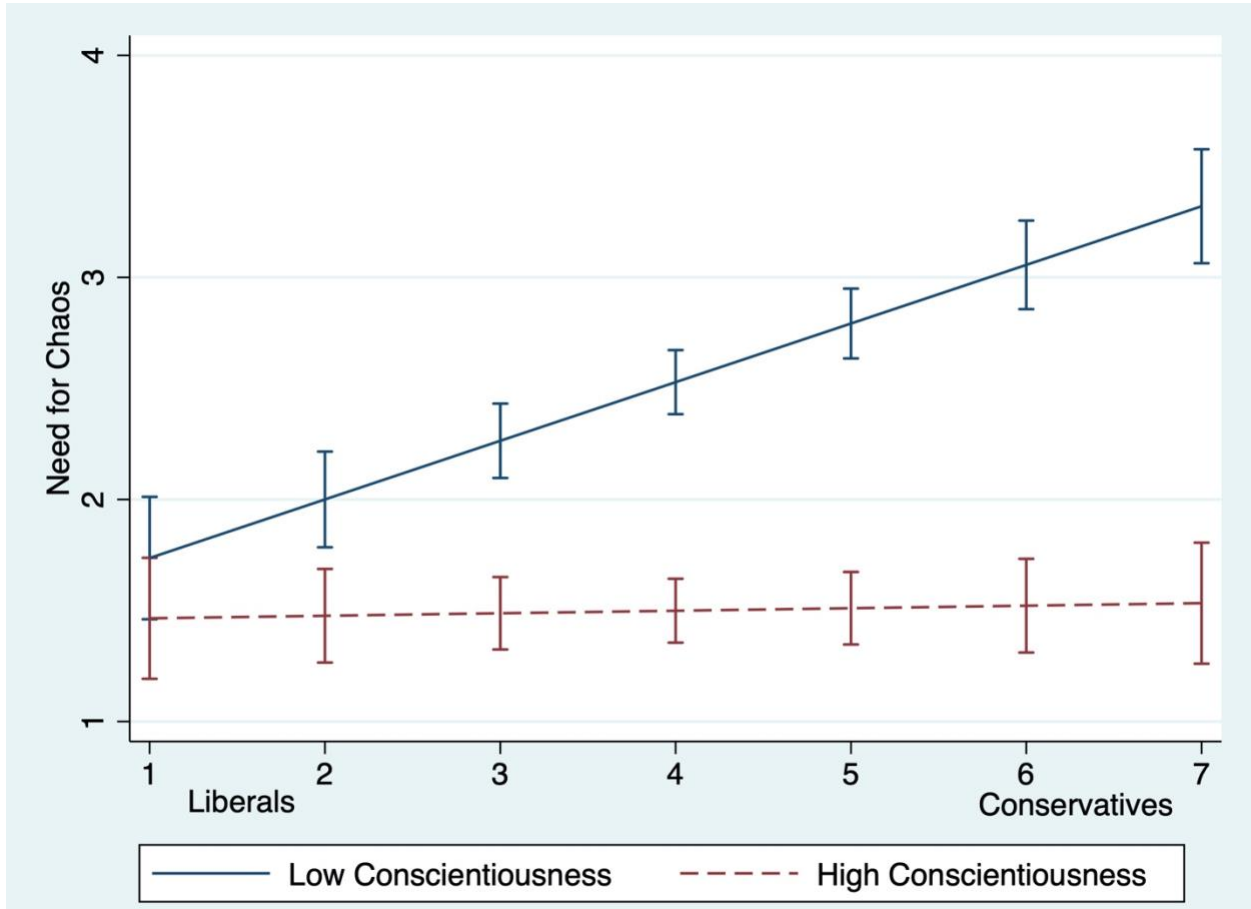
Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Table 5: The relationship between the interaction between political ideology and conscientiousness and a range of dependent variables using linear regression with 95% confidence intervals (Study 5)

Model	1	2	3	4	5
Dependent Variable	Desire for Chaos	Social Conservatism	Economic Conservatism	Support for Trump	Trust in the Media
Political Ideology (PI)	.581*** [.34,.82]	.544* [.03,1.06]	.597** [.19,1.00]	.409** [.12,.70]	.126 [-.15,.40]
Conscientiousness (C)	.318* [.02,.61]	-.476 [-1.10,.15]	.223 [-.27,.71]	-.196 [-.54,.15]	.269 [-.06,.60]
PI x C	-.136*** [-.20,-.07]	.072 [-.06,.21]	.003 [-.10,.11]	.046 [-.03,.12]	-.088* [-.16,-.02]
Extraversion	.085 [-.06,.23]	.352* [.04,.66]	.149 [-.10,.40]	.129 [-.05,.30]	-.022 [-.19,.15]
Agreeableness	-.556*** [-.73,-.38]	.680*** [.31,1.05]	.039 [-.25,.33]	-.190 [-.40,.01]	.263*** [.07,.46]
Negative emotionality	.003 [-.14,.15]	-.082 [-.39,.22]	-.046 [-.29,.19]	-.009 [-.18,.16]	.009 [-.15,.17]
Openness	-.208** [-.34,-.07]	-.221 [-.51,.06]	-.026 [-.25,.20]	-.112 [-.27,.05]	-.181* [-.33,-.03]
Age	-.004 [-.01,.00]	.012 [-.00,.03]	.010 [-.00,.02]	.002 [-.01,.01]	-.001 [-.01,.01]
Male	.280** [.08,.48]	-.487* [-.90,-.07]	-.215 [-.54,.11]	-.310** [-.54,-.08]	.088 [-.13,.31]
Social Media Time	.088*** [.05,.13]	-.041 [-.13,.05]	-.101** [-.17,-.03]	.035 [-.01,.08]	.028 [-.02,.08]
Social Media Proportion of News	-.001 [-.01,.00]	.000 [-.01,.01]	.003 [-.01,.01]	.001 [-.00,.01]	-.002 [-.01,.00]
Intercept	2.921*** [1.50,4.34]	2.907 [-.09,5.91]	3.283** [.91,5.65]	1.698* [.03,3.37]	2.348** [.75,3.95]
N	285	285	285	285	285
AIC	656.8	1084.4	949.9	750.9	726.4
BIC	700.6	1128.2	993.8	794.8	770.2
Log likelihood	-316.4	-530.2	-463.0	-363.5	-351.2

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 7: The predicted desire for chaos for high and low conscientiousness respondents across the range of political ideology in Study 5.



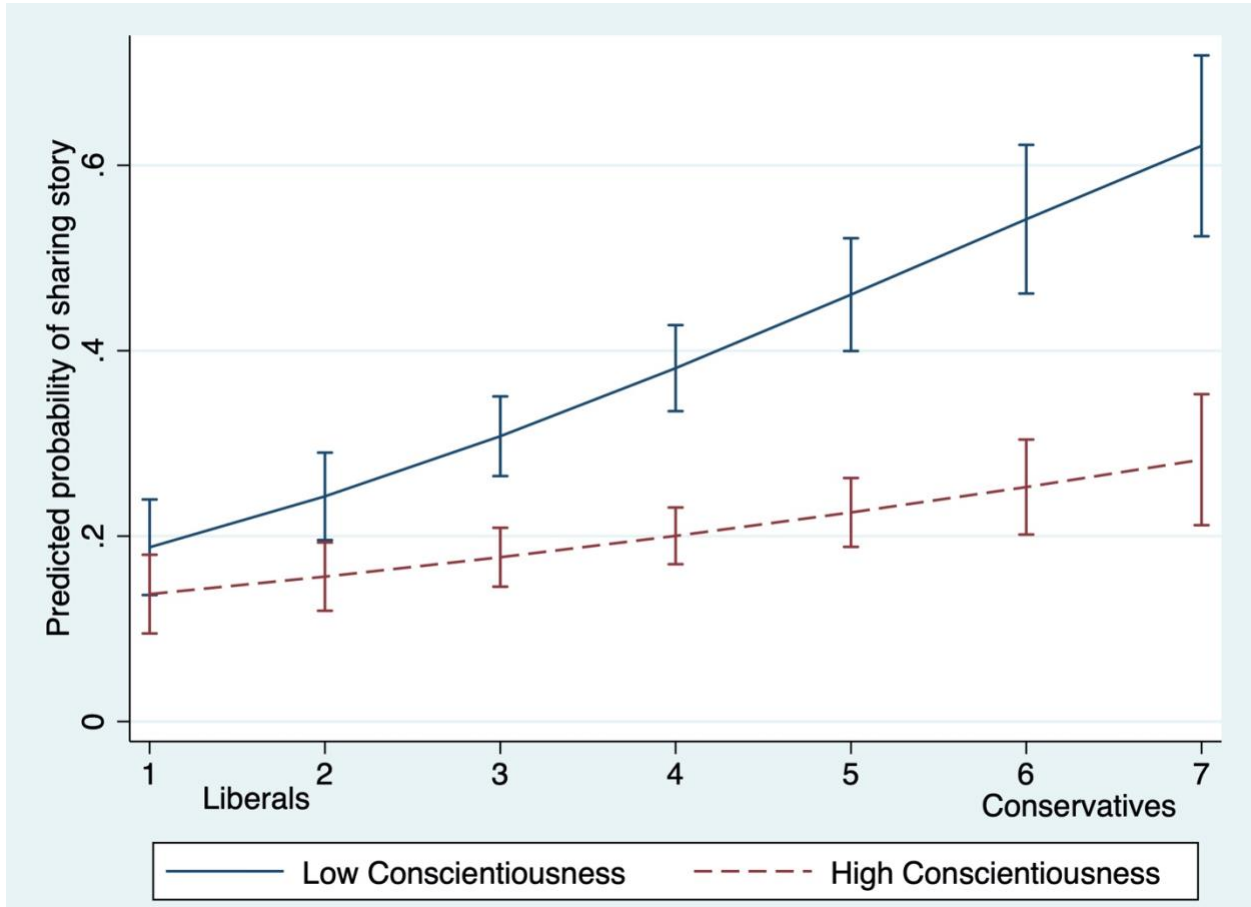
Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Table 6: Logistic regression models predicting binary outcome ‘share’ with clustered standard errors, unstandardized betas, and 95% confidence intervals (Study 6)

Model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Political Ideology (PI)	.249*** [.18,.32]	.683*** [.29,1.08]		.253*** [.17,.33]	.658** [.25,1.06]	.263*** [.18,.35]	.400* [.00,.80]
Conscientiousness (C)	-.574*** [-.76,-.39]	-.131 [-.55,.29]		-.504*** [-.73,-.27]	-.103 [-.55,.34]	-.236* [-.47,-.00]	-.109 [-.55,.33]
PI x C		-.116* [-.22,-.02]			-.107* [-.21,-.00]		-.036 [-.14,.07]
Fake			-.235*** [-.29,-.18]	-.246*** [-.31,-.19]	-.248*** [-.31,-.19]	-.263*** [-.33,-.20]	-.263*** [-.33,-.20]
Extraversion			.310** [.12,.50]	.317** [.11,.52]	.318** [.11,.52]	.245* [.04,.45]	.246* [.04,.45]
Agreeableness			-.200 [-.45,.05]	-.026 [-.28,.22]	.006 [-.25,.26]	.218 [-.04,.48]	.225 [-.04,.49]
Negative emotionality			.255** [.06,.45]	.135 [-.06,.33]	.155 [-.04,.35]	.216* [.02,.42]	.249* [.02,.42]
Openness			-.399*** [-.60,-.20]	-.178 [-.38,.02]	-.161 [-.37,.05]	-.011 [-.22,.20]	-.007 [-.22,.21]
Attitudes towards Covid-19			.055 [-.10,.21]	.181* [.03,.34]	.176* [.02,.33]	.071 [-.09,.23]	.074 [-.09,.24]
Age			-.002 [-.01,.01]	-.004 [-.02,.01]	-.004 [-.02,.01]	.001 [-.01,.01]	.001 [-.01,.01]
Male			.453** [.16,.75]	.340* [.05,.63]	.346* [.06,.63]	.282* [.01,.56]	.285* [.01,.56]
Education			.018 [-.11,.14]	.029 [-.10,.16]	.017 [-.11,.14]	-.076 [-.20,.05]	-.078 [-.20,.05]
News - Liberal			-.046 [-.16,.06]	-.048 [-.16,.07]	-.048 [-.16,.07]	-.051 [-.17,.07]	-.051 [-.17,.07]
News - Conservative			-.161*** [-.25,-.07]	-.169*** [-.26,-.07]	-.170*** [-.27,-.07]	-.180*** [-.28,-.08]	-.180*** [-.28,-.08]
Counterbalance			-.080 [-.35,.19]	-.155 [-.42,.11]	-.165 [-.43,.10]	-.070 [-.33,.19]	-.076 [-.34,.18]
Desire for Chaos						.725*** [.55,.90]	.716*** [.54,.89]
Trust in Media						.235** [.08,.39]	.226** [.07,.39]
Intercept	.255 [-.45,.96]	-1.386 [-3.02,.24]	-.506 [-2.06,1.05]	-1.104 [-2.78,.57]	-2.780* [-5.15,-.40]	-5.108*** [-6.89,-3.33]	-5.594*** [-7.94,-3.24]
<i>N</i>	11784	11784	11784	11784	11784	11784	11784
<i>AIC</i>	13135.9	13079.6	13341.5	12866.8	12822.1	12260.2	12257.4
<i>BIC</i>	13158.0	13109.1	13437.4	12977.4	12940.1	12385.6	12390.2
Log likelihood	-6564.9	-6535.8	-6657.7	-6418.4	-6395.1	-6113.1	-6110.7

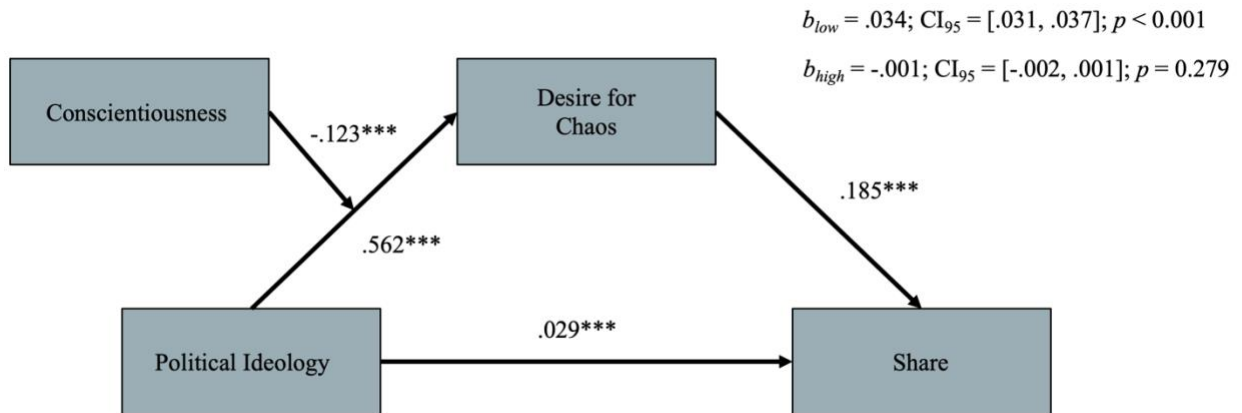
Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 8: The predicted probability of sharing a news story for high and low conscientiousness respondents across the range of political ideology in Study 6.



Note. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 9: Serial Moderated Mediation analysis (Study 6)



Note. We used a WLSMV estimator and Huber-White robust standard errors.