Social Identities and the Illinois Pension Problem:
Constructing a "Just-in-Time" Model of Belief Development

Aaron S. Veenstra
Benjamin A. Lyons
Zachary Sapienza
Cheeyoun Stephanie Kang

Southern Illinois University Carbondale
School of Journalism
College of Mass Communication and Media Arts

Contact lead author at asveenstra@siu.edu
Please do not cite without permission

Abstract

For years, Illinois and Chicago have underfunded their employee pension systems, leading to significant recent controversy over the extent of the problem. This study proposes a "just-in-time" social identity influence model to identify salient social identities (union membership, political affiliations, region of residence) and test their influence on pension beliefs. Findings show that despite being strongly related, influences on beliefs about Illinois and Chicago differ based on demographics and media use.

Over the last several years, the state of Illinois and hundreds of its municipalities have struggled under the cost of paying for long-underfunded public employee pension programs. That the programs are underfunded is not in dispute; however, the size and nature of the pension crisis is a matter of considerable debate among political officeholders and activists on both sides of the issue.

The questions of whether the pension system is in crisis, whether it is bankrupting the state, and whether it could be fully funded under a new policy regime are hypothetical ones without answers. There is little consensus about the pension problem, with activist media on both sides using the word "stealing" to describe the actions of, alternately, public employees (Andrzejewski, 2011) or the state (Rosenfeld, 2013). Illinois residents' beliefs about the situation and its possible solutions, however, may shed light on the role of social identity and identity-driven media use in how they understand the pension issue and its public policy implications.

Recent research has identified effects among social identity, media and information use, and beliefs about contested issues that exist above and beyond that which would typically be attributed to motivated reasoning (Braman, Kahan, & Grimmelmann, 2005; Hindman, 2009; Veenstra, Hossain, & Lyons, 2014). This model of social identity influence suggests that group affiliation and norm adherence provide additional motivation to express particular beliefs about contested, identity-salient topics. The pension issue in Illinois is one such topic that has important ramifications for vote choice, and ultimately for public policy decisions. Because it pits various classes of stakeholders against each other, it also suggests a number of salient social identities whose activation might have effects on how relevant information is processed and

ultimately incorporated into a belief structure. This study explores the distribution of beliefs about the Illinois pension problem, and examines the roles of political, labor, and geographic identities in guiding how those beliefs are formed.

Literature Review

Social Identity Influence

Several distinct lines of research have recently begun to examine the influence of social group membership on the beliefs and knowledge held by individuals within those groups. Specifically, studies examining the belief gap hypothesis (Hindman, 2009; Veenstra, Hossain, et al., 2014) and the cultural cognition model (Braman et al., 2005; Kahan, Braman, Slovic, Gastil, & Cohen, 2009) have looked at the impact of political ideology and partisanship on beliefs and knowledge about a variety of contested but factual topics. These include anthropogenic climate change (Hindman, 2009), the Affordable Care Act (Hindman, 2012), rumors about Barack Obama (Veenstra, Hossain, et al., 2014), gun violence (Braman et al., 2005), and nanotechnology (Kahan et al., 2009), among others.

Each of these approaches builds on the concepts of biased processing (G. L. Cohen, 2003) and identity bolstering (Kahan, 2013), and examines the impact of a particular social attribute on beliefs or knowledge about a particular topic. However, individuals' connections to social groups may often be in conflict when it comes to any given contested issue (Barkan, 2014; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). This may be explicit, as in the case of a Catholic Democrat seeking guidance on questions related to reproductive rights. It may also be more latent if a given identity characteristic lacks the strong group structure of political parties or religions.

Beliefs and attitudes are products of social processes. According to a long line of research (Brewer, 2007; Huddy, 2013; Tajfel, 1981), some of the most influential factors in these processes are individuals' various social identifications, which act both independently and interactively (Barkan, 2014; Clayton, 2003; McCall & Simmons, 1966; Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Rosenberg, 1979; Veenstra, Hossain, et al., 2014). Models of social identity influence posit that individuals who both acknowledge and value belonging to a group are influenced toward similar beliefs as other members via the transfer of attitudes from elites, within general membership, and through communication channels (Huddy, 2013).

The process of identity influencing beliefs appears to be a highly idiosyncratic one. Hindman (2009) found different influences on the seemingly related beliefs that global warming is occurring and that it is primarily caused by human activity. A subsequent study found considerably different patterns of effects on a handful of "culture war" science topics (Veenstra, Hossain, et al., 2014). Narrowly defined beliefs about the benefits and risks of vaccines (Veenstra, Jurkowski, et al., 2014), and the risks of fracking to the environment and individuals (Veenstra, Lyons, & Fowler-Dawson, 2015) have also shown different patterns of influence.

One recent study (Veenstra, Jurkowski, et al., 2014) suggests thinking of the influence of social identity on belief as working indirectly through media exposure or information reception, and also starting from a construct accounting for both group affiliation and adherence to group norms. For example, in a religious identity, this might be a combination of attending religious services and expressing religion-backed attitudes.

For other identities, such as partisanship, it may be more difficult to separate affiliation and attitudes.

The differing characteristics mirror the complexity of the beliefs that might be examined in this framework. Because contested social issues relate to different identities differentially (Veenstra, Hossain, et al., 2014), we cannot construct a general influence model that has a particular identity at the outset, and a particular set of related media or information sources in the middle. Rather, the model must be self-reflective; that is, the specific nature of the independent and mediating variables must be derived from the specific nature of the dependent belief variable. In this sort of "just-in-time" model of influence, existing literature and exploratory analysis can be used to make a determination of what social identities are relevant to the belief at hand, and subsequently what media and information sources are relevant to those identities. From there, a model can be specified within the general framework of social identity influence, allowing the particular identity-belief relationship at hand to be tested.

In the particular case of the hotly contested pension issue, political and labor identities have special relevance. Political parties and ideological affiliations are often cited as particularly powerful social identities, and exert a large influence over individuals' attitudes and beliefs (Conover & Feldman, 1981); union membership creates a similarly powerful identity (Cregan, Bartram, & Stanton, 2009; C. Kelly & Kelly, 1994; J. Kelly, 1998).

Union Membership as Social Identity

Studies of union members' behavior suggest that, like political partisanship, union-identity influence is driven by leadership (e.g., Fullagar, McCoy, & Shull, 1992),

through attitudes of solidarity (Cregan et al., 2009; Twigg, Fuller, & Hester, 2008). Indeed, union organizations employ leadership strategies and group-based mobilizing to create collective, value-oriented socialization in place of individual orientations (Cregan et al., 2009; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). So, through mutual "on-site struggles" and "inspirational leadership," union workers come to a social identification with the union, "strengthening collective attitudes and behavior" (Cregan et al., 2009, pp. 701-702; see also J. Kelly, 1998).

Social identity theory proposes that individuals affiliate with groups that they perceive as distinct from others, in order to raise their self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Kelly (1998) and Cregan et al. (2009) suggest that workers' involvement with workplace struggles, against perceived injustices and management disputes, strengthens this identity, following the process of group distinction, where "'we' is defined in opposition to 'them'" (Badigannavar & Kelly, 2005, p. 527; Cregan et al., 2009, p. 704). Logically, others make sense of union identity as derived from the organizational space in which members work and associate. Such communal interaction builds collective identity (e.g., Yu, 2014).

Likewise, certain scholarship suggests unions are a balance of "market-based, class-based, and social identities" (Hyman, 1996, 2001; Yu, 2014, p. 504). To achieve this balance, scholars suggest that unions and members form a "covenantal relationship," which surpasses economic and social exchange, and psychological contracts on their own (Twigg et al., 2008). Covenantal relationships combine both mutual welfare concerns and shared values (Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994). This is described as a "bond

between parties" (Twigg et al., 2008, p. 28), where members sometimes sacrifice self-interest for "superordinate goals" (Barnett & Schubert, 2002, p. 280).

Because "social identity plays a major role in determining the strength of collectivism" (Cregan et al., 2009, p. 704; C. Kelly & Kelly, 1994; Metochi, 2002), high union-identifiers would be more likely to hold beliefs that are both more common to the group and serve the group's interests (e.g., unions are not bankrupting the state). We suppose that in addition to collectivist attitudes and behaviors, union membership also results in holding shared beliefs about issues that may impact unions.

Place-Based Identity

Identities are derived from and shaped by the contexts, including geographical, in which individuals find themselves (Adams & Marshall, 1996). According to Lalli (1988), this concept is sometimes called "place identity" (Proshansky, 1978; Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983), "sense of place" (Buttimer & Seamon, 1980; Relph, 1976), and "place dependence" (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981). At a grand scale, this may be seen in nationalism or even trans-nationalist attitudes (e.g., Nisbet & Myers, 2010), but also in rural/urban splits (e.g., Ching & Creed, 1996; Hummon, 1986; Landini, 2012), or in any case, subordinate and supra-ordinate areas (Gil de Zúñiga, 2008).

Research in fields such as environmental psychology supports colloquialisms such as "country mouse, city mouse," as Hummon (1986) finds in a study of the persistence of community identity. While some individuals reject the stigma or constraint of such identities, others readily identify as city, suburban, small-town, or country people, out of a sense of belonging "based on ties of sentiment, interest, value, or knowledge" (p. 1). Importantly for public opinion, this may result in "place-based" cognitions and

attitudes (Stedman, 2002), which may result in opinions reflecting regional economic interests (R. E. Cohen, 1992; Joskow & Schmalensee, 1998; Kraft, 2010), but not always (Delshad & Raymond, 2013).

Finally, mass communication scholars have looked at the relationships among place-based orientations, media exposure, and democratic outcomes such as knowledge and participation. McLeod and his colleagues (1996) explored the dimensions of community integration, finding that psychological attachment, discussion networks, city vs. group orientation, localism versus cosmopolitanism, and city vs. neighborhood orientation all play a role. Research in this line has shown strong links among identifying with one's community, consuming local media, and civic engagement (McLeod et al., 1996; Paek, Yoon, & Shah, 2005). Similarly, Gil de Zúñiga (2008) explored the interplay of geo-identity and media use, and their influence over orientation toward the European Union, and ultimately different forms of participation.

In the present case, the split between Chicago, the third-largest city in the U.S., and the rest of the mostly rural state may promote the development of identification with the distinct areas and drive residents' beliefs in favor of their area. Though less strictly "groups," these geographic areas may act similarly in aligning norms and making salient different forms of information and media, resulting in disparities in beliefs about objective realities like the pension plans in both Chicago and the state of Illinois.

Media and Social Identity

Understanding media in terms of their features, functions, and audiences can help one gain an insight into why and how sub-groups with peculiar interests in society communicate and engage with each other (Anastasio, Rose, & Chapman, 1999; Bennett,

2012; Eveland & Shah, 2003; Stroud, 2008). The interfaces between media and individuals are, nonetheless, intricately intertwined: National media, with more professional and profitable instruments, can reach and manipulate audiences at the macro level (Barker-Plummer, 1995; Viswanath & Arora, 2000). Local media tends to provide one with regional and unique messages concerning contextual issues (Grindle, 2007; Mahrt, 2008; Schiffer, 2006). Digital media embrace multifaceted media types and topics; traditional media (e.g., newspaper, TV, and radio) with participatory media, local or national media, liberal or conservative media, converging or fragmented media and much more to be counted (Bennett, 2012; Morley & Robins, 2002).

Despite the rapid growth of national media, such media often dismiss regional issues that can greatly influence one's community as well as social identity (Liebes & Curran, 2002). What national media focus primarily on is general issues and mass audiences with collective identity. In contrast, local media is concerned about individuals who seek to sustain their unique social identities through solidarity with regional and political aspects in their community (Anastasio et al., 1999; Bennett, 2012; Eveland & Shah, 2003). Not surprisingly, in a community, local media play a substantial role in influencing individuals who strive to maintain their distinctive social identity by promptly conveying their situational information. While national media tend to spread out general information, local media deliver messages that pertain to their own uniquely relevant issues.

In addition to the distinction between local and national media, the emergence of digital media has shaped media effects at the local and national level, due to its multidimensional attributes. While different types of media converge at the same spot

through digital media, fragmented media with varying topics (e.g., liberal vs. conservative, solidarity, local interests, marginalized values) can be more selectively and individually chosen by diverse individuals at the same time (Bennett, 2012; Morley & Robins, 2002).

Expressions of political identity can often be seen at the national level in the burgeoning partisan media sector (Eveland & Shah, 2003; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Niven, 2003; Schiffer, 2006). National cable news networks, such as Fox and MSNBC, exemplify how partisanship in the US has become polarized through media (Levendusky, 2013). The US prestige press – the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal* – can be another example of national media that are widely used among people who prioritize their social identity (e.g., class), rather than local values (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004).

Regardless of the role and effect of national media, the links between local media and their social identity in the community are fairly pertinent and essential (Gil de Zúñiga, 2008; Grindle, 2007). Local media, including local newspapers, radio, and TV, have been often considered as storytellers in our neighborhood (Gürses, 2015). They provide the venue in which people with distinctive social identities can selectively and contextually prioritize their own social and political attributes, partly because of its ability to cover stories related to those attributes in a more thorough way than national media can do (Mahrt, 2008). Benefiting from the timely and regional availability of local media, those sub-groups that strive to sustain and strengthen their solidarity with members, stand up together in their community and are eventually able to stand out in society (Grindle, 2007; Mahrt, 2008; Morley & Robins, 2002).

Understanding the relevance of online media to local issues and social identity can also help to discover what is happening with the members in the community (Bennett, 2012; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Couldry, 2012). Digital media is the place where all kinds of people with various identities can get connected (Varnelis, 2012). Although a single media platform may not wide a broad audience defined by varying social identities, online media can provide a great variety of media contents and contexts for different types of people. People with distinguished identities can choose particular media; whether local or national, liberal or conservative, propagandized or participatory, publicized or privatized in independent and selective ways. Online media lead people to converge or disperse, depending on their varying social and political interests and needs (Couldry, 2012; Varnelis, 2012). Consequently, those who are motivated to interact with local media online, in accordance with their social identity (e.g., political affiliation) can considerably bolster their political attitudes about local issues, compared with passive information-seekers.

<center>**Hypotheses and Research Questions**</center>

The nature of the just-in-time model of social identity influence requires exploration and, ideally, multiple iterations of analysis. Though we have good reason to expect that political and labor identities will be related to beliefs expressed about the Illinois and Chicago pension systems, we lack a clear understanding of how demographic and geographic identities might influence those beliefs. Thus, this analysis begins with two exploratory research questions and two hypotheses related to a broad range of potentially relevant social identities.

RQ1. What demographic characteristics predict belief that public employee pensions are bankrupting Illinois and Chicago?

RQ2. Do such beliefs differ among residents of Chicago, the Chicago suburbs, and the rest of Illinois?

H1. Union members are less likely than non-members to believe that public employee pensions are bankrupting Illinois and Chicago.

H2. Belief that pensions are bankrupting Illinois and Chicago is related to a) Republican partisanship, and b) conservative political ideology.

Following on recent social identity research, we expect identity-relevant media to track with the influence of the identities themselves. For place-based identity, we propose research questions about the relevance of local media and highly ego-centric social media to pension beliefs.

H3. a) Use of conservative media is related to greater belief that pensions are bankrupting Illinois and Chicago, while b) use of liberal media is related to lesser such belief.

RQ3. How do a) local newspaper use, b) local TV news use, and c) social media use for news relate to beliefs that pensions are bankrupting Illinois and Chicago?

Methods

This study uses data collected by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute in its annual Illinois-wide poll. Data were collected through live telephone interviews with 1,000 registered voters, from February 28 to March 10, 2015. A Spanish language version of the questionnaire and a Spanish-speaking interviewer were made available. The sample included 30.7% cellphone respondents. Participants were drawn 20% from

the city of Chicago, 50% from the remainder of Cook County and the five "collar"

counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, Will), and 30% from the remainder of the

state. The sample was 51.3% female and 74.2% white, with a median education of an

associate's degree, and a mean age of 58.1 ($SD = 17.4$) (Paul Simon Public Policy

Institute, 2015).

Variable Construction

Political and union affiliations. Two political orientations were measured with

single items. Partisanship was measured by asking respondents to place themselves on a

scale running from strong Democrat (1) to strong Republican (7). Those who indicated

they belonged to another party were placed at the midpoint (4) of this two-party

partisanship scale ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.96$). Political ideology was measured by asking

respondents to place themselves on a scale from very liberal (1) to very conservative (5)

($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.22$). Another single item asked respondents whether they were

members of a labor union (15.9% union members).

Media use. Five types of media use were measured with items asking respondents

how many days in a typical week they use such media: social network sites to get news or

news headlines ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 3.10$); local newspapers, including online ($M = 3.49$, SD

$= 2.90$); local TV news, including online ($M = 4.89$, $SD = 2.67$); conservative online

political commentary ($M = 1.36$, $SD = 2.21$); and liberal online political commentary (M

$= 1.38$, $SD = 2.22$).

Beliefs about pensions. Two beliefs about the impact of pension underfunding

were measured with single items asking respondents whether they agree or disagree with

the statements, "Pensions for public employees are bankrupting the state" (54.5%

agreed), and "Pensions for public employees are bankrupting the City of Chicago" (55.8% agreed). These two variables were highly correlated ($r = .81$); however, because this study seeks to demonstrate minor differences between measures that seem to be tapping similar cognitive concepts, they are each modeled as dependent variables in separate analyses.

Results

Two identical ANCOVA models were used to test influences on the two outcome beliefs. Geographic area (city of Chicago, Chicago suburbs, downstate Illinois) and union membership were included as factors, with nine variables included as covariates: age, race (coded as white), gender (coded as female), education, political partisanship (coded as Republican), political ideology (coded as conservative), social media use for news, conservative online media use, and liberal online media use.[1] Because of missing values on some variables, total usable N was 649 for the Illinois model and 588 for the Chicago model.

In order to establish some context for the pension dispute, which has received little attention from public opinion scholarship, our first research question asks what demographic characteristics predict beliefs about Illinois and Chicago pensions. Gender, coded as female, negatively predicted both beliefs – that is, women were less likely to believe that pensions were bankrupting the state and city (Illinois: $F(1, 634) = 13.37$, p < .001; Chicago: $F(1, 573) = 11.14$, p < .001). Race, coded as white, positively predicted both beliefs (Illinois: $F(1, 634) = 14.07$, p < .001; Chicago: $F(1, 573) = 21.53$, p < .001).

---

[1] The original analyses included income, which was not significant in either model. Because the variable had nearly 20% missing cases, thus considerably reducing the statistical power of the models, it was removed from the final analyses.

Age positively predicted the belief that pensions were bankrupting Chicago ($F(1, 573) =$ 6.72, p < .01), but was not a significant predictor of beliefs about Illinois pensions.

The second research question asks how pension beliefs are distributed across three differentiable regions of the state: the city of Chicago, the Chicago suburbs, and "downstate." The main effect of region was not significant in either model (Illinois: $F(2, 634) = 2.76$, p < .1; Chicago: $F(2, 573) = 2.59$, p < .1). However, similar patterns of differences in estimated margin means emerged in both models, with Chicago residents ($M_{IL} = .57$, $M_{Chi} = .59$) expressing greater belief that pensions were bankrupting the state and city than did suburbanites ($M_{IL} = .49$, $M_{Chi} = .49$) or downstate residents ($M_{IL} = .44$, $M_{Chi} = .47$).

Our first two hypotheses proposed that while union membership would be related to less belief that pensions were bankrupting the state and city, Republican partisanship and conservative ideology would be related to greater such belief. Union members did have less that belief for both Illinois ($F(1, 634) = 21.43$, p < .001, $M = .38$ vs. .61 for non-members) and Chicago ($F(1, 573) = 20.39$, p < .001, $M = .40$ vs. .63). Republican partisanship was related to greater belief (Illinois: $F(1, 634) = 4.10$, p < .05; Chicago: $F(1, 573) = 7.39$, p < .01). However, conservative ideology was not significantly related to greater or lesser belief (Illinois: $F(1, 634) = 2.99$, p < .1; Chicago: $F(1, 573) = 1.39$, p < .3). These results support H1 and H2a, but not H2b.

Our third hypothesis proposed partisan media relationships that would track with the partisanship findings. H3a and H3b were both supported, as conservative online media use was related to greater bankruptcy belief (Illinois: $F(1, 634) = 6.63$, p < .01;

Chicago: $F(1, 573) = 6.23$, p < .05), while liberal online media use was related to lesser

such belief (Illinois: $F(1, 634) = 5.25$, p < .05; Chicago: $F(1, 573) = 5.31$, p < .05).

Finally, our third research question explored the role of local television, local

newspaper, and social media news-seeking. Two of these were significantly, negatively

related to belief that pensions are bankrupting Illinois (TV: $F(1, 634) = 5.96$, p < .05;

social media: $F(1, 634) = 4.33$, p < .05). However, none of the three were significantly

related to belief that pensions are bankrupting Chicago.

Discussion

These findings provide some support for the notion of a "just-in-time" model of

social identity influence, in which exploratory analysis is able to pick out minor

differences between two closely related beliefs. Although these two beliefs are likely to

be close to each other in one's cognitive network, and likely to share many of the same

cognitive connections (perhaps thoughts about public employees, the history of public

corruption in Illinois and Chicago, one's opinions of the governor and mayor, etc.),

demographic and media use differences emerge that provide a way to find separation

between the two concepts. Most notably, local TV news use and social media use for

news only play a significant role in predicting beliefs about the Illinois pension system,

failing to significantly predict beliefs about the Chicago pension system; age works in the

opposite fashion. This suggests key differences in the information environment around

these two related stories, perhaps owing to the varying relevance of the Chicago pension

story to other media markets around the state.

That Chicago residents differ from the rest of the state on these beliefs, but

moreso on the Chicago-specific belief, also suggests there may be a cognitive interactive

effect at play. Both pension systems have some direct relevance for this group of people, and their thinking about these two problems may compound on itself to make them see each as worse than other Illinoisans do. Another potential factor is that they are more acutely aware of the dangers of underfunded pensions and the potential implications that it could have on the state of Illinois based on current issues that the city of Chicago is experiencing. Moody's downgraded the Chicago's debt rating in February 2015, for example.

Similarly, the finding that local television news use and social media news use are relevant factors for beliefs about Illinois pensions, but that local newspaper use is not, suggests that perhaps the story has been framed on television, and the make-up of Illinoisans' social networks, above and beyond their own political identities, is skewed in some way toward the view that the state's pension problem is overblown, or that solutions to it can be found.

In terms of understanding the cognitive networks from which we formulate beliefs, the geographic, union, and partisan associations that we find overlap – but differently across the two related outcomes – shed more light on the complex nature of social identity influences and how they might be derived through analysis. And in terms of public policy, they help those hoping to mobilize opinion on the pension situations understand the origins of beliefs among different classes of stakeholders.

Not surprisingly, union identity is highly relevant to pension beliefs. Individuals who belong to labor unions are substantially more likely than other Illinoisans to believe that pensions are not bankrupting that state. This belief reflects the collective, value-oriented socialization that unions attempt to foster through mobilization at the expense of

individual orientation. Additionally, our findings suggest that unions are already highly

mobilized around the issues of pensions in Chicago. Logically, this would seem to imply

that union members are much more likely to think pensions are not bankrupting the state

or the city, but rather the state's gross negligence in oversight and funding. In this

scenario, it implies that even if pensions are serious problems, union members would be

more likely to see governmental oversight and negligence as the primary issue, but not

the pensions themselves.

As expected, Republican partisanship, though not conservative ideology,

predicted beliefs that unions were bankrupting the state. Moreover, partisan media were

found to reinforce this position. This matches findings of previous literature (Veenstra,

Hossain, et al., 2014) examining partisanship and ideology as social identities, and their

influence over beliefs about objective realities that have nonetheless become contested

along deeply political lines. Like this study, we find that party plays a stronger role than

ideology, perhaps because the issue is more topical and policy-oriented than

representative of a deeply ingrained worldview, as climate change has come to be, for

example. The findings also support the model of belief formation that flows from elites

through largely internal communication channels to rank and file members.

As with any single study, there are a number of limitations to consider. First,

social identity is sometimes difficult to operationalize and measure. That is true of some

of our measures as well. Specifically, our study more accurately measures union

membership than social identity per se. Separating private and public union membership

may allow clearer view of this mechanism. Likewise, place-based identities pose

difficulties to researchers. Our study trifurcates place-based identities as those of the city

of Chicago, the suburbs, and the rest of the state. However, these categories are not mutually exclusive when it comes to individuals' complex sense of themselves – individuals can identify with multiple place-based identities. Many people live in the suburbs, but work in the city and vice-versa. Relocation is another significant factor in multiple place-based identities. Over a lifetime, an individual might live in all three places. Additionally, many southern Illinois residents align themselves more with St. Louis than Chicago due to its proximity. Regardless of the number of place-based identities that one has, there can be differing levels of the strength of those claims between individuals.

The broad media exposure measures typical to public opinion surveys are also rather blunt. For instance, in terms of actual content, there is no clear distinction between local and national media. Local media always carry national news and national news will often pick up local news stories. Additionally, "social media" further blur the lines between local and national media by spreading content through social networks not constrained to geographical boundaries.

Question wording might also be seen as a limitation concerning our dependent variables. The term "bankrupting" is problematic due to its semantic connotations and artificial restrictions. Respondents might believe that pensions are a serious problem, but not bankrupting the state. Other respondents might believe that pensions are merely one variable out of many that are responsible for the city of Chicago's and the state of Illinois financial problems. In these cases, respondents may or may not answer that pensions are bankrupting the state of Illinois due to pensions being just one of many variables. Others might believe that bankruptcy is simply not a serious concern because the city and state

can always cut other services, generate new revenue streams through taxation, or ask for federal assistance. While these people might have answered no, that does not deny that they still might consider pensions a serious problem for both the city and state. Future studies can build upon our findings by addressing some of the identity, media, and belief measurement shortcomings mentioned above, by comparing beliefs about pension struggles in states and municipalities around the nation, and by conducting analysis of the actual content in local news.

Additionally, more study is needed to understand how broadly applicable a "just-in-time" model of social identity influence might be. Because it relies on specification derived from dependent variable characteristics, and because the dependent variable is a cognition related to a contested social topic, examination of the model might begin with a thorough explication of the concepts that could be found and characterized in such contested topics. Figuring out what sorts of topic characteristics relate to individuals' social identities may provide a short-cut to the kind of exploratory analysis we conducted in this study by allowing researchers to more easily predict the relevance of social identities, and moving a step closer to a unified model.

References

Adams, G. R., & Marshall, S. K. (1996). A Developmental Social Psychology of Identity: Understanding the Person-in-Context. *Journal of Adolescence, 19*(5), 429-442.

Anastasio, P. A., Rose, K. C., & Chapman, J. (1999). Can the Media Create Public Opinion? A Social-Identity Approach. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 8*(5), 152-155. doi: 10.1111/1467-8721.00036

Andrzejewski, A. (2011). Illinois Labor Union 'Leaders' Are Stealing Millions From

       Taxpayers. *Breitbart*. http://www.breitbart.com/big-

       government/2011/10/13/illinois-labor-union-leaders-are-stealing-millions-from-

       taxpayers/

Badigannavar, V., & Kelly, J. (2005). Why Are Some Union Organizing Campaigns More

       Successful Than Others? *British Journal of Industrial Relations, 43*(3), 515-535.

       doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8543.2005.00367.x

Barkan, S. E. (2014). Gender and Abortion Attitudes: Religiosity as a Suppressor

       Variable. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 78*(4), 940-950. doi: 10.1093/poq/nfu047

Barker-Plummer, B. (1995). News as a Political Resource: Media Strategies and Political

       Identity in the U. S. Women's Movement, 1966–1975. *Critical Studies in Mass

       Communication, 12*(3), 306-324. doi: 10.1080/15295039509366939

Barnett, T., & Schubert, E. (2002). Perceptions of the Ethical Work Climate and

       Covenantal Relationships. *Journal of Business Ethics, 36*(3), 279-290. doi:

       10.1023/A:1014042613106

Bennett, W. L. (2012). The Personalization of Politics: Political Identity, Social Media,

       and Changing Patterns of Participation. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of

       Political and Social Science, 644*(1), 20-39. doi: 10.1177/0002716212451428

Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2013). *The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media

       and the Personalization of Contentious Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge

       University Press.

Boykoff, M. T., & Boykoff, J. M. (2004). Balance as Bias: Global Warming and the US

       Prestige Press. *Global Environmental Change, 14*(2), 125-136.

Braman, D., Kahan, D. M., & Grimmelmann, J. (2005). Modeling Facts, Culture, and

Cognition in the Gun Debate. *Social Justice Research, 18*(3), 283-304. doi:

10.1007/s11211-005-6826-0

Brewer, M. B. (2007). The Importance of Being We: Human Nature and Intergroup

Relations. *American Psychologist, 62*(8), 728-738. doi: 10.1037/0003-

066X.62.8.728

Buttimer, A., & Seamon, D. (1980). *The Human Experience of Space and Place*. New

York: St. Martin's Press.

Ching, B., & Creed, G. W. (1996). *Knowing Your Place: Rural Identity and Cultural

Hierarchy*. New York: Routledge.

Clayton, S. (2003). Environmental Identity: A Conceptual and an Operational Definition.

In S. Clayton & S. Opotow (Eds.), *Identity and the Natural Environment* (pp. 45-

65). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Cohen, G. L. (2003). Party Over Policy: The Dominating Impact of Group Influence on

Political Beliefs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85*(5), 808-822.

doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.85.5.808

Cohen, R. E. (1992). *Washington at Work: Back Rooms and Clean Air*. New York:

Macmillan Publishing Company.

Conover, P. J., & Feldman, S. (1981). The Origins and Meaning of Liberal/Conservative

Self-Identifications. *American Journal of Political Science, 25*(4), 617-645.

Couldry, N. (2012). *Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice*.

Maiden, MA: Polity Press.

Cregan, C., Bartram, T., & Stanton, P. (2009). Union Organizing as a Mobilizing

Strategy: The Impact of Social Identity and Transformational Leadership on the

Collectivism of Union Members. *British Journal of Industrial Relations, 47*(4),

701-722. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8543.2009.00733.x

Delshad, A., & Raymond, L. (2013). Media Framing and Public Attitudes Toward

Biofuels. *Review of Policy Research, 30*(2), 190-210. doi: 10.1111/ropr.12009

Eveland, W. P., Jr., & Shah, D. V. (2003). The Impact of Individual and Interpersonal

Factors on Perceived News Media Bias. *Political Psychology, 24*(1), 101-117.

Fullagar, C., McCoy, D., & Shull, C. (1992). The Socialization of Union Loyalty. *Journal

of Organizational Behavior, 13*(1), 13-26. doi: 10.1002/job.4030130103

Gil de Zúñiga, H. (2008). *Geo-identity and Media Use: A Model of the Process of

Political and Civic Participation in the European Union.* (Doctoral Dissertation),

University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Grindle, M. S. (2007). *Going Local: Decentralization, Democratization, and the Promise

of Good Governance*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Gürses, F. (2015). Democracy, Citizenship and Local Press: The Case of the USA "Local

Press in Boulder". *Advances in Journalism and Communication, 3*(1), 19-32. doi:

10.4236/ajc.2015.31003

Hindman, D. B. (2009). Mass Media Flow and Differential Distribution of Politically

Disputed Beliefs: The Belief Gap Hypothesis. *Journalism & Mass Communication

Quarterly, 86*(4), 790-808. doi: 10.1177/107769900908600405

Hindman, D. B. (2012). Knowledge Gaps, Belief Gaps, and Public Opinion about Health

Care Reform. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 89*(4), 585-605. doi:

10.1177/1077699012456021

Huddy, L. (2013). From Group Identity to Political Cohesion and Commitment. In L.

Huddy, D. O. Sears & J. Levy (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*.

New York: Oxford University Press.

Hummon, D. M. (1986). City Mouse, Country Mouse: The Persistence of Community

Identity. *Qualitative Sociology, 9*(1), 3-25. doi: 10.1007/BF00988246

Hyman, R. (1996). Changing Union Identities in Europe. In P. Leisink, J. Van Leemput &

J. Vilrokx (Eds.), *The Challenges to Trade Unions in Europe: Innovation or

Adaptation*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Hyman, R. (2001). *Understanding European Trade Unionism: Between Market, Class &

Society*. London: Sage.

Iyengar, S., & Hahn, K. S. (2009). Red Media, Blue Media: Evidence of Ideological

Selectivity in Media Use. *Journal of Communication, 59*(1), 19-39. doi:

10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.01402.x

Joskow, P. L., & Schmalensee, R. (1998). Market-Based Environmental Policy: The U.S.

Acid Rain Program. *Journal of Law and Economics, 41*(1), 37-84. doi:

10.1086/467384

Kahan, D. M. (2013). Ideology, Motivated Reasoning, and Cognitive Reflection.

Judgment and Decision Making, 8(4), 407-424.

Kahan, D. M., Braman, D., Slovic, P., Gastil, J., & Cohen, G. L. (2009). Cultural Cognition of the Risks and Benefits of Nanotechnology. *Nature Nanotechnology, 4*(2), 87-91. doi: 10.1038/nnano.2008.341

Kelly, C., & Kelly, J. (1994). Who Gets Involved in Collective Action? Social Psychological Determinants of Individual Participation in Trade Unions. *Human Relations, 47*(1), 63-88. doi: 10.1177/001872679404700104

Kelly, J. (1998). *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilisation, Collectivism and Long Waves*. London: Routledge.

Kraft, M. E. (2010). *Environmental Policy and Politics* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Longman.

Lalli, M. (1988). Urban Identity. In D. Canter, J. C. Jesuino, L. Soczka & G. M. Stephenson (Eds.), *Environmental Social Psychology*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Landini, F. (2012). Peasant Identity: Contributions Towards a Rural Psychology From an Argentinian Case Study. *Journal of Community Psychology, 40*(5), 520-538. doi: 10.1002/jcop.21479

Levendusky, M. (2013). *How Partisan Media Polarize America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Liebes, T., & Curran, J. (2002). *Media, Ritual and Identity* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Mahrt, M. (2008). Conversations About Local Media and Their Role in Community Integration. *Communications, 33*(2), 233-246. doi: 10.1515/COMMUN.2008.013

McCall, G. J., & Simmons, J. L. (1966). *Identities and Interactions*. New York: The Free Press.

McLeod, J. M., Daily, K., Guo, Z., Eveland, W. P., Jr., Bayer, J., Yang, S., & Wang, H.
 (1996). Community Integration, Local Media Use, and Democratic Processes.
 Communication Research, 23(2), 179-209. doi: 10.1177/009365096023002002

Metochi, M. (2002). The Influence of Leadership and Member Attitudes in Understanding
 the Nature of Union Participation. *British Journal of Industrial Relations, 40*(1),
 87-111. doi: 10.1111/1467-8543.00224

Morley, D., & Robins, K. (2002). *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic
 Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries*. London: Routledge.

Nisbet, E. C., & Myers, T. A. (2010). Challenging the State: Transnational TV and
 Political Identity in the Middle East. *27, 4*(347-366). doi:
 10.1080/10584609.2010.516801

Niven, D. (2003). Objective Evidence on Media Bias: Newspaper Coverage of
 Congressional Party Switchers. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly,
 80*(2), 311-326. doi: 10.1177/107769900308000206

Paek, H.-J., Yoon, S.-H., & Shah, D. V. (2005). Local News, Social Integration, and
 Community Participation: Hierarchical Linear Modeling of Contextual and Cross-
 Level Effects. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 82*(3), 587-606. doi:
 10.1177/107769900508200307

Proshansky, H. M. (1978). The City and Self-Identity. *Environment & Behavior, 10*(2),
 147-169. doi: 10.1177/0013916578102002

Proshansky, H. M., Fabian, A. K., & Kaminoff, R. (1983). Place-Identity: Physical World
 Socialization of the Self. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 3*(1), 57-83. doi:
 10.1016/S0272-4944(83)80021-8

Relph, E. (1976). *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion.

Roccas, S., & Brewer, M. B. (2002). Social Identity Complexity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 6*(2), 88-106. doi: 10.1207/S15327957PSPR0602_01

Rosenberg, M. (1979). *Conceiving the Self*. New York: Basic Books.

Rosenfeld, S. (2013). America's Retirement Crisis Grows as Cities Raid Pension and Health Plans. *Alternet*. http://www.alternet.org/node/934912

Schiffer, A. J. (2006). Assessing Partisan Bias in Political News: The Case(s) of Local Senate Election Coverage. *Political Communication, 23*(1), 23-39. doi: 10.1080/10584600500476981

Shamir, B., House, R. J., & Arthur, M. B. (1993). The Motivational Effects of Charismatic Leadership: A Self-Concept Based Theory. *Organization Science, 4*(4), 577-594. doi: 10.1287/orsc.4.4.577

Stedman, R. C. (2002). Toward a Social Psychology of Place: Predicting Behavior from Place-Based Cognitions, Attitude, and Identity. *Environment & Behavior, 34*(5), 561-581. doi: 10.1177/0013916502034005001

Stokols, D., & Shumaker, S. A. (1981). People in Places: A Transactional View of Settings. In J. H. Harvey (Ed.), *Cognition, Social Behavior, and the Environment*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Stroud, N. J. (2008). Media Use and Political Predispositions: Revisiting the Concept of Selective Exposure. *Political Behavior, 30*(3), 341-366. doi: 10.1007/s11109-007-9050-9

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human Groups & Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior. In

　　W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (2nd ed.).

　　Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers.

Twigg, N. W., Fuller, J. B., & Hester, K. (2008). Transformational Leadership in Labor

　　Organizations: The Effects on Union Citizenship Behaviors. *Journal of Labor

　　Research, 29*(1), 27-41. doi: 10.1007/s12122-007-9039-5

Van Dyne, L., Graham, J. W., & Dienesch, R. M. (1994). Organizational Citizenship

　　Behavior: Construct Redefinition, Measurement, and Validation. *Academy of

　　Management Journal, 37*(4), 765-802. doi: 10.2307/256600

Varnelis, K. (2012). *Networked Publics*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Veenstra, A. S., Hossain, M. D., & Lyons, B. A. (2014). Partisan Media and Discussion as

　　Enhancers of the Belief Gap. *Mass Communication and Society, 17*(6), 874-897.

　　doi: 10.1080/15205436.2013.855791

Veenstra, A. S., Jurkowski, E. T., Lyons, B. A., Hossain, M. D., Park, C. S., & McClurg,

　　S. D. (2014). *Social Identity Influences on Health Beliefs: An Examination of

　　Identity Salience*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Midwest

　　Association for Public Opinion Research, Chicago, IL.

Veenstra, A. S., Lyons, B. A., & Fowler-Dawson, A. (2015). *Conservatism vs.

　　Conservationism: Differential Influences of Social Identities on Beliefs About

　　Fracking*. Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Viswanath, K., & Arora, P. (2000). Ethnic Media in the United States: An Essay on Their

　　Role in Integration, Assimilation, and Social Control. *Mass Communication and

　　Society, 3*(1), 39-56. doi: 10.1207/S15327825MCS0301_03

Yu, K.-H. (2014). Organizational Contexts for Union Renewal. *Relations Industrielles / Industrial Relations, 69*(3), 501-523. doi: 10.7202/1026756ar

Yu, K.-H. (2014). Organizational Contexts for Union Renewal. *Relations Industrielles / Industrial Relations, 69*(3), 501-523. doi: 10.7202/1026756ar