

FYTing with science: Ideological differences on the nature and origin of truth



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Key Takeaways

- Political liberals and conservatives evaluate disagreeing scientific and non-scientific perspectives on one of four apolitical topics
- Conservatives more welcoming to non-scientific perspectives. We hypothesize this is in part due to differences in the tendency to extend individualism to truth, a multi-dimensional construct we term Finding Your Truth, or FYT
- This political split on evaluation of perspectives is mediated by conservatives scoring higher than liberals on the Intuitions Reveal Truth (IRT) sub-scale of FYT
- However, liberals and conservatives are not split on the Reality Is Subjective (RIS) sub-scale of FYT, which also predicts acceptance of science rejecting perspectives

Introduction

Are there political divides on science acceptance?

- Conservatives more opposed to climate science, and less trusting of science in general
- However, both liberals and conservatives react negatively to science and distort data that would contradict their values. Few studies have addressed reactions to apolitical scientific topics
- So, both groups at times are resistant to science, with conservatives perhaps being more resistant overall
- The FYT framework identifies meta-beliefs about truth and reasoning to explain how liberals and conservatives converge and diverge on factors that lead people to equate scientific and non-scientific evidence

Conceptualizing FYT

IRT	RIS	MRB
Intuitions Reveal Truth	Reality Is Subjective	Moral Right to Believe
Measures extent to which people think gut feelings and intuition tend to be true and should be on equal or greater level with facts.	Measures extent to which people think truth is a subjective concept, and everyone has to figure out a truth for themselves.	Measures extent to which people believe what you want is a moral right. Included for future use.

Hypotheses

- H1:** Three-factor structure of FYT scale validated. FYT sub-scales correlated with evaluation of researcher and rejecter, as well as CRT and REI scales
- H2:** Conservatives, compared to liberals, are more likely to see “both sides” as equivalent- evaluate researcher less positively, rejecter more positively
- H3:** Conservatives are higher than liberals on IRT; small/no difference on RIS
- H4:** Political split on rejecter evaluation are mediated by IRT, even when controlling for CRT, REI, age, gender

Methodology

Pilot Study & Study 1

- Respondents read an excerpt of an article on four apolitical topics wherein a researcher debunks a popular product/experience



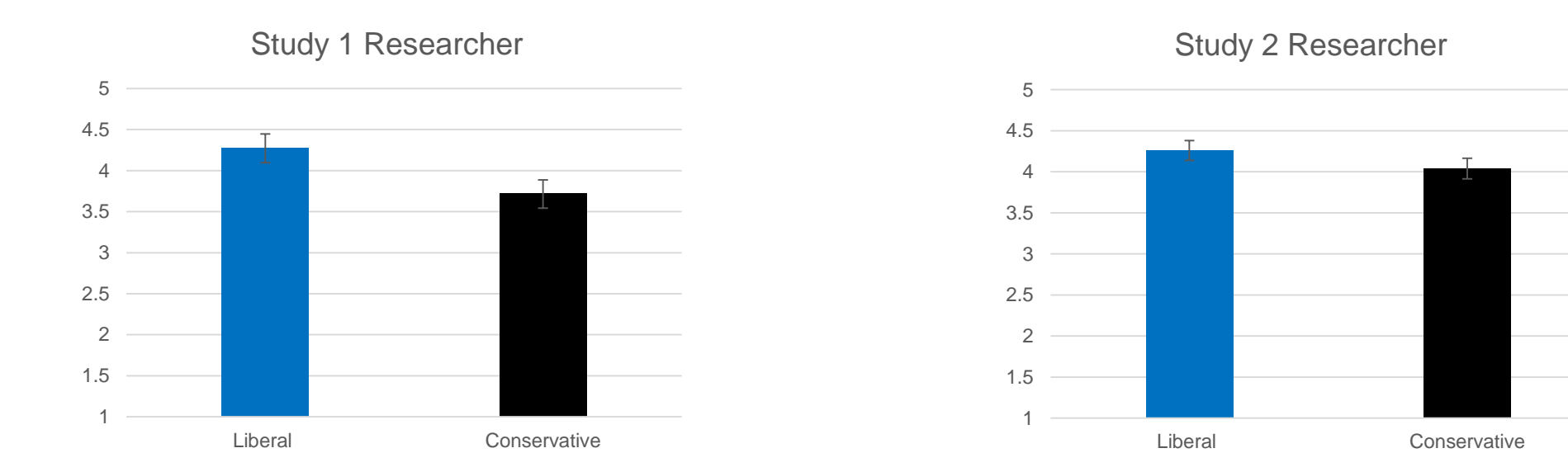
- Respondents also read a disagreeing point of view from a professional in the field
- Respondents evaluate researcher and rejecter, as well as fill out FYT scale questionnaire

Study 2

- Same as Pilot Study and Study 1, but rejecter is no longer a Professional, instead a commenter on the article with relatively no experience in the field
- This was done to ensure effects were robust to different non-expert sources

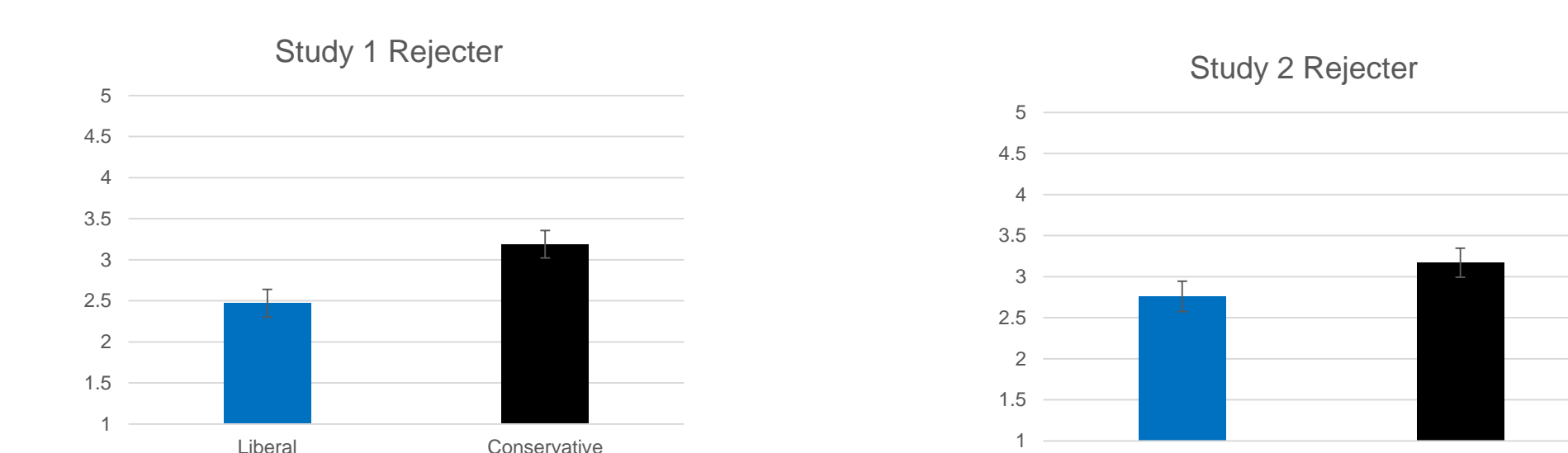
Results

H2: Ideological group comparisons on researcher evaluation



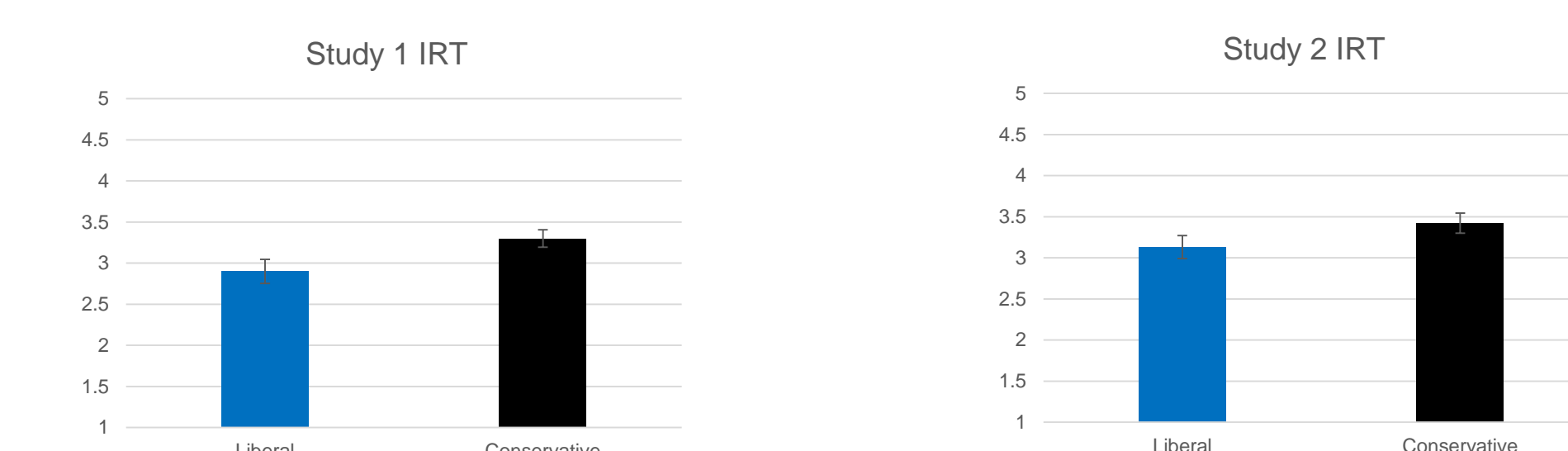
Liberals evaluate researcher more positively. (Meta-analytic Hedges' $g = .35, p < .001$)

H2: Ideological group comparisons on rejecter evaluation



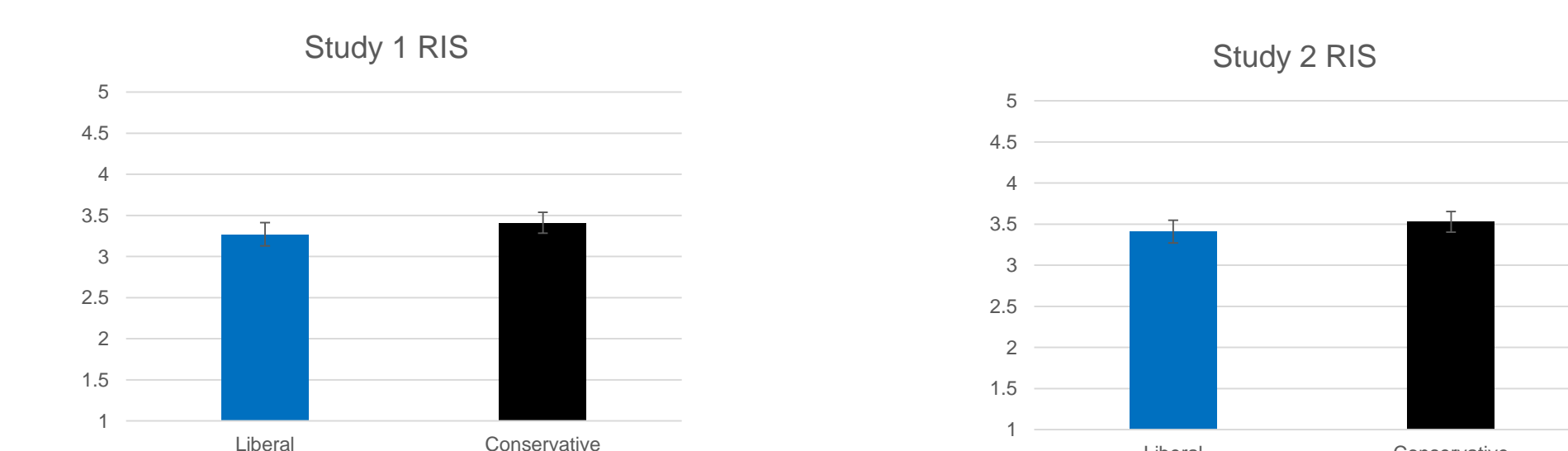
Conservatives evaluate rejecter more positively. (Meta-analytic Hedges' $g = .42, p < .001$)

H3: Ideological group comparisons on FYT



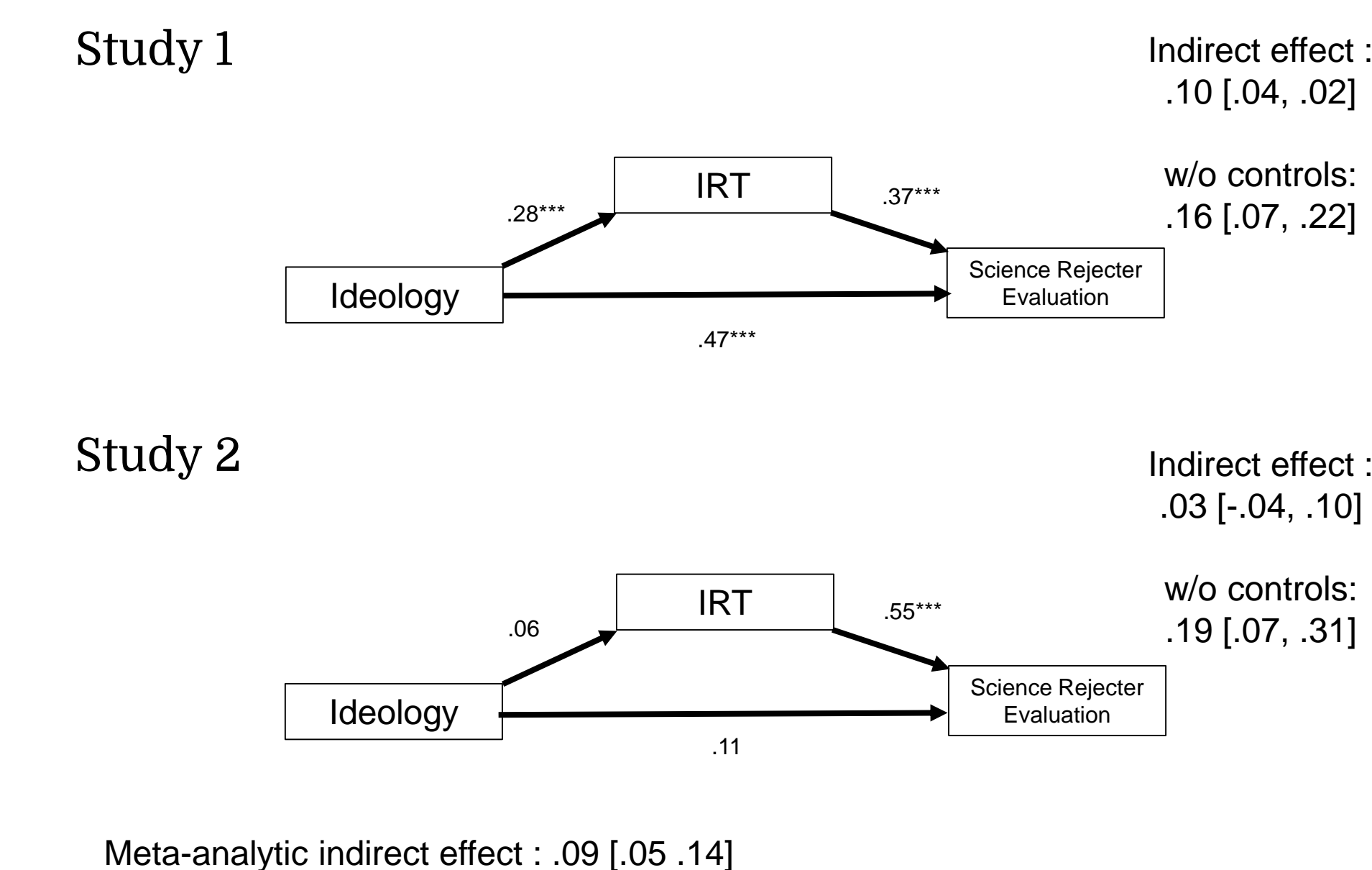
Conservatives higher than liberals on IRT (Meta-analytic Hedges' $g = .46, p < .001$)

H3: Ideological group comparisons on FYT



No difference on RIS (Meta-analytic Hedges' $g = .11$)

H4: PROCESS model results



Discussion

Why do we love bullshit products?



MYERS-BRIGGS® TYPES			
ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENFJ

- Conservatives and liberals still about likely to see Reality as Subjective
- Some liberals can certainly endorse non-scientific viewpoints without seeing such endorsement as contradictory
- Lifestyle branding seems to target the idea that people have a loose sense of what's real and what's not (e.g., if I feel like this soda is adventurous, it'll make me adventurous)
- Next topic: How is endorsement of bullshit products correlated with FYT scale?

Selected References

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