

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

AMID POLITICAL POLARIZATION, CULTURAL CHANGE, AND ECONOMIC ANGST: WHAT DOES IT  
MEAN TO BE AN AMERICAN TODAY?

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. DIONNE: Good morning, everyone. I am E.J. Dionne. I'm a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution. And I'm really happy to welcome everyone today. In my role as Senior Fellow one of the favorite things I have gotten to do over the last 12 years is work with Robbie Jones and now Natalie and PRRI on a series of surveys that are truly insightful about what is happening in our country.

I will be joined later by my partner in this work, Bill Galston who will concern-moderate the session with me. The report today is extraordinarily timely and is full of -- sorry, I just heard a voice from the machine. The meeting today -- the report today is extraordinarily insightful and is chockfull of findings. You're going to want to read the whole report, but I know from experience that Robbie and Natalie do the very best PowerPoints. And again, there's a large end for that. As I said, 12 years we have been doing this.

I also want to say two things. One, I apologize. I'll be taking my glasses on and off because I will be reading. I've never caved to bifocals. Although, a friend recently said I might feel better about them if I call them progressive lenses. And will also -- we will also by the way being including your questions as quickly and as often as we can.

I want to tell everybody out there how to get your questions into us. We are joined also by an extraordinary panel later in whom my colleague, Bill, is going to introduce. So if you want to ask a question on Twitter put it with the hashtag, #AVS2021, Albert, Victor, Sam. #AVS2021. Or you can send it to us by email at [events@brookings.edu](mailto:events@brookings.edu). We truly welcome your questions.

Robbie Jones is an extraordinary sole. A great bolster, a greater thinker and a great moral voice. He is the CEO and Founder of the Public Religion Research Institute, PRRI. A leading scholar and commentator on religion, culture and politics. He is the author more recently of a very important book, *Wait Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*. He also wrote, *The End of White Christian America*. I recommend both of these books to everyone out there.

He writes regularly on politics, culture, and religion for the Atlantic Online, NBC Think and many other outlets. He has frequently appeared on major national media including CNN, MSNBC and

beyond has written in the New York Times and the Washington Post and has written or been frequently quoted in -- I should say the New York Times, the Washington Post and others.

Natalie Jackson is the Director of Research at PRRI. Her research on how people form opinions as well as on election polling and forecasting has appeared in peer review journals and she teaches graduate level research methods at American University. I should take one of your courses, Natalie. I would love to learn methods from you.

And is currently editing a book on nonacademic career options for people in the social sciences who have Ph.D.s. Before joining PRRI, she held senior positions at JUST Capital, HuffPost, and the Marist Institute for Public Opinion. For one of the best PowerPoints you will ever see in your life, I introduce my dear friend, Robbie Jones.

MR. JONES: Thank you, E.J. Yes, Natalie and I will be dividing up the presentation today. So I'll take you through the first half of it and then Natalie will pick up.

But let me just say a quick word of gratitude for, yes, 12 years of partnership. One of these days, we'll back at Falk Auditorium at the Brookings Institution in person. I definitely miss not only the comradery but the cookies which you don't get in the virtual events. But, you know, next year, I'm hoping we'll be back there.

And just so a couple of words before I jump into the findings. But just to say like this is our 12<sup>th</sup> year and I think we're seeing the outgrowth of what we're seeing today is divisions in the country and update on kind of where those divisions have gone, how they've shifted, how they found their way and what we're really living with today including, I think some troubling findings around political violence.

And then also a few places of hopefulness that we'll point out as well about what all Americans want and share. We do have a few places of those in addition to the divisions that we'll get to. So with that let me kind of share my screen and we'll kind of walk you through the main findings of this year's American value survey.

You see we've entitled the report. And the full report is up and available at PRRI.org. And we are live Tweeting the event if you want to join us on Twitter #AVS2021. You see hashtag there.

And also, the Twitter handles for PRRI and myself and Natalie for the presentation.

You see the title, *Competing Visions of America and Evolving Identity or a Culture Under Attack*. And we are struggling with ways to kind of express what we thought the fault lines are really about, and I think that is it. I mean is America -- and I think increasingly this is what American elections have been about. Less about the particular policies and more about who we are and big picture.

And are we kind of an evolving identity? Or are we a culture that's been under attack and under duress? So just a couple of details here. This is a survey, a fairly large survey as national surveys go, of 2,500 adults and it's a probability-based panel. From the knowledge panel from Ipsos. We were in the field the last half of September and want to make sure that we give a shout out and a great thank you to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Wilber and Hilda Glenn Family Foundation and the Unitarian Universalist Veatch program at Shelter Rock who supported this survey and peerized work generally.

So I'm going to start. I'm going to do a couple of sections. This one is around some central findings of cultural anxieties, conspiracies and political violence. And again, there's a lot more in the report. We're just kind of touching the surface here, but let me give you some highlights here.

On a question that we've been tracking a while actually back since 2013 is a question about whether American and culture and way of life have changed for the better or changed for the worse since the 1950s? And I'm going to give you one side of this question so we can trace the trends over time. These are biparty Americans who say things have changed mostly for the better since the 1950s.

So I'm going to put Republicans up here first because we see the most changes among Republicans. And essentially, what we found is that prior to former President Trump's time in office, we saw about only three in ten Republicans saying that American culture and way of life have changed for the better since the 1950s.

Now, what we saw is during -- from Trump's presidency particularly towards the 2020 election, those numbers actually came up as Trump was in office, but now that Trump is no longer in office. Biden is in office. Those numbers have dropped right back down to where they were really to pre-

Trump levels. Only three in ten saying that American cultural way of life had changed for the better since the 1950s.

These are independents. They look pretty close to the country as a whole. And you'll see basically, where again, we're kind of back in many ways where we were in 2016. But half -- this question divides the country kind of in half. And then democrats here are actually fairly steady across this time period. A little more than six in ten saying things have changed for the better. But note the gap here. The partisan gap, it's about twice as many of democrats as Republicans who say things have changed for the better than say things have changed for the worse. Compared to those who say things have changed for the worse since the 1950s.

So part of this kind of big picture, I think is a kind of harkening back. And this is part of what we're struggling over I think in many of the bigger debates in the country is, you know, what is America about? Was there a golden age, right, for America? And we're seeing this very different vision among democrats and Republicans.

And further to the threat theme, we have several questions that get to this in the new survey. I'll show all three of them by Republicans. And also, in this survey, you'll see as we go that we also have Republicans broken by media that they trust, particularly those who most trust Fox News and those who most trust far right media sources. And we see among many, many questions particularly around those around cultural identity, cultural threats differences by which media source Republicans most trust.

So here are three questions. Things have changed so much that I often feel like a stranger in my own country. Today, America is in danger of losing its culture and identity. The American way of life needs to be protected by foreign influence.

Here all Americans and Republicans breaks on the first one. Things have changed so much that I often feel like a stranger in my own country. Four in ten Americans and the big divide here is 56 percent of Republicans versus 31 percent of Democrats down at the bottom. But you can really see the impact of those who most trust Fox News jumps to 61. Those who most trust fair right media, here

these are outlets like Newsmax, One American News, for example, that it jumps way up to nearly eight in ten.

The second question. So similar patterns but at higher frequencies here. Today America is in danger of losing its culture and identity. This divides the country almost basically in half and Republicans and Democrats are nearly 50 percentage points different from one another on this. Eighty percent of Republicans, only 33 percent of Democrats, but here you see both Fox News media and more far right news sources nine and ten and nearly all of those who trust far right media sources saying America is in danger of losing its culture and identity.

A similar question. American way of life needs to be protected by foreign influence. We see again very similar patterns here. The big thing to notice is just the big gaps between Republicans and Democrats and then its effect across all of these questions.

So that one of the things that really Fox News, One America, Newsmax, you can see the effect of it kind of driving this narrative of America as a culture under attack here. And we see it again as nearly unanimous among those who trust -- Republicans who trust far right media agreement with those statements.

The next question that we found is, you know, again sort of stunning that we have more than two thirds, in fact, nearly seven out of ten Republicans saying that they believe that the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump. We've asked this question a number of times over 2020 and it has remained fairly steady. I'm sorry, 2021 across 2021 and you just see the, you know, a 60-point gap. Almost no Democrats believe this. About a quarter of independents but nearly seven out of ten Republicans.

You see the numbers jump a little bit here as were news sources. Eighty-two percent for those who most trust -- Republicans who most trust Fox News. And again, nearly unanimous among Republicans who trust far right media. This has actually been the drum beat on many of these media stations so it's maybe not that surprising to see that.

A minimum religious groups. I've put in here the three largest religious groups that voted

in majority for President Trump. White Anglican Protestants voted more than eight in ten for Trump in 2020. White male Protestants and white Catholic voted a little bit less than six and ten for President Trump. But here you see some real differences. In fact, white Anglican Protestants are the only religious group of which a majority believes that the election was stolen from Donald Trump. And here it's 60 percent of white Anglican Protestants who say, they believe that the election was stolen from President Trump, former President Trump.

And here is perhaps to my mind maybe the most disturbing finding of the survey and is this statement an agree/disagree statement. True American patriots might have to resort to violence in order to save our country. That's the reading of the question.

Of 18 percent of Americans who agree with that, but these big divides by party fully 30 percent are Republicans today believe that the true American patriots might have to resort to violence in order to save our country. And 17 percent of independents. Only one in ten Democrats. And again, we see a little bit of a move among those who trust Fox News is essentially the same, but we see a bigger jump among Republicans who most trust far right media sources. Again, One American News. Newsmax, for example. Of those basically, twice the levels in the country.

But I think this 30 percent of one of our major political parties saying that they may have to resort to violence is truly, I think a stunning finding and one, you know, we should probably come back to in the discussion period.

Among religious groups, we see the numbers less. And this is -- that are a little bit lower than this. And we do see the group that voted most for Donald Trump are white Anglican Protestants. About a quarter of all of them, I believe that true American patriots may have to resort to violence to save the country. But if we look at among the subset. And this is because each of these religious groups really has a mix of Democrats and Republicans in them.

But if we look among a subset of those who believe that the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump, we see much higher numbers. And so, it really is that belief that the election was stolen that is driving this propensity to think that violence maybe justified. So among white Anglican



Protestants, again, it's 60 percent of that group that agrees that the election was stolen and among that 60 percent, four in ten, 39 percent of them believe that true American patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save the country.

There are lower levels of each of these groups that agree that the election was stolen. So it's a smaller proportion of each of these groups. But again, among the subset that believes that the election was stolen, you can see about four in ten of most of these white Catholics, a little bit lower. A belief that true American patriots may have to resort to violence to save the country.

If we isolate just with attitudinal questions to demonstrate this, you can see that the biggest driver here really is this belief that the 2020 election was stolen. We also see some correlation though among those who feel like they're a stranger in their own country. That earlier question about three in ten who agree with that statement. A belief that true American patriots may have to resort to violence.

And also, effect of essentially having a Christian nationalist view here that God has granted America a special role in human history. Those who agree with that statement, 27 percent believe that a true American patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save the country. And again, the country as a whole, it's 18 percent. So all these are considerably higher than that 18 percent.

So those are big divisions. We do find some places on the question, what does it mean to be, quote, unquote, truly American? We had a big battery of options that we allow people to pick from. Among five of those out of that battery, there's virtually unanimous agreement.

So these five across the left here. Believing in individual freedoms such freedom of speech. Believing that every citizen should be able to vote. Accepting people of diverse racial and religious backgrounds. Respecting American political institutions and laws and being able to speak English.

So I'm going to put all of these up at once here because really not a great amount of partisan disagreement on these statements or in the country as a whole. The only one where there's a sizeable partisan gap is on being able to speak English. And even there, we've got nearly seven in ten

Democrats agreeing with that statement. So a fair amount of consensus there.

But also, some other items in the battery. We did see some bigger divides where Democrats and Republicans are actually on the opposite sides of this question. So here are Republicans who kind of strong majorities believe that these top four attributes are important for being truly American, believing capitalism is the best economic system, believing in God, being born in America, being Christian. So six in ten are more. It's almost eight in ten for believing in God and believing capitalism is the best economic system among Republicans.

The only one of these traits that Republicans don't say -- the majority don't say is important to being truly American is being of Western European heritage. They don't look different than all Americans on this question.

And here are Democrats. You can see, you know, these gaps start to appear here. About half of them are grads, you know, versus 77 percent of Republicans believe capitalism is the best economic system. That belief is important for being truly American.

And then it stops dropping. Less than half of Democrats say that believing in God or being born in America are important for being truly American. And only a little more than a third say that being Christian is important to being truly American. And then there is this kind of basic partisan agreement about being of Western European heritage.

But on these again, a kind of Christian nationalism sorts of measures that kind of meld a belief in God or being Christian, you could see the kind of partisan gaps really open up on these questions.

We also had two questions where we asked -- actually allowed people to put themselves on a scale. And we had two polls on this question about what kind of nation do you want to live in? What would you prefer?

And so, the question asked people would you prefer the U.S. be a nation made primarily up of -- and while one poll we had people from all over the world. On the other poll, we had -- other in the scale, we had people of Western European heritage. And we allowed people to put themselves kind of

where on the scale. And then we've kind of sorted people to whether they put themselves near the poles or more towards the middle of the scale.

And this one is really about racial and ethnic diversity in the country. Here is -- so the country is sort of -- about half of the country says they prefer people from all over the world. But again, you see this kind of big partisan gap. About a margin of two to one, more Democrats said they prefer to live in a country with people from all over the world. Only like 30 percent of Republicans say this.

But if I put in the rest, you basically see there's very few people again consistent with the previous question saying that they want to live in a country made up of people of Western European heritage. We just find that Republicans are more ambivalent in the middle. The Democrats are -- with Democrats more solidly saying definitely, they would rather live in a country with people from all over the world.

The next question we had is setup very similarly. It was about religious diversity in the country. On one end of the poll, we had would you prefer that the U.S. be a nation made primarily up of people belonging to a wide variety of religions? Or on the other poll, people who follow the Christian faith. And the people again could put themselves where they want.

On the scale, here is -- if you just look at one side of it, the Americans -- the people who belong to a wide variety of religions that four in ten of all Americans. Not surprising, those who are religious but not Christian, seven in ten there. Religiously and affiliated about two thirds. Then it drops a little more among Christian groups. But note the 13 percent among white Anglican Protestants down there at the bottom, only a little more than one in ten said that they prefer to live in a nation made primarily up of people belonging to a wide variety of religions.

And then when you fill in the rest, you know, we see essentially this kind of polarity in most of the Christian groups in that middle category, somewhere in the middle of the scale, kind of ambivalent. Here, we see higher measures among African-American Protestants and white Anglican Protestants, but no group has a majority saying they preferred the U.S. to be a nation primarily made of people who follow the Christian faith. The only religious group in the country who says are white Anglican

Protestants. And they say that quite strongly, nearly six in ten, 57 percent saying that they would rather live in a nation made up primarily of Christians.

With that I am going to turn it over to my colleague, Natalie, who will walk us through the rest of the survey findings.

MS. JACKSON: Right. Thank you. So turning to the economic side of things. We see considerable stress about costs of living. These are particular acute among Black and Hispanic Americans. We see that more than half of Black Americans and nearly half of Hispanic Americans are at least somewhat concerned about paying for basic goods like groceries in the coming months.

Less than half but still around four in ten are worried about paying rent or mortgage. And then we still see substantial that are worried about paying their credit card debt and paying off their student loans.

We've seen consistent slow decline over the last five years in the proportion of Americans who think college is a good investment in the future. So fewer than half now say so and the decline who has been consistent across most demographics including party. So we see that only 37 percent of Republicans and 42 percent of independents think college is a good investment. Whereas a majority of Democrats, but that's still down from where it was five years ago. That slide has been very consistent across demographic groups.

Moving onto views of the parties. We do see evidence of educational polarization. We see that gap in believing college is a good thing. Kind of shaking out in how people view their own partisanship. So asked people to assess how their partisanship has shifted over the last five years. More than one third of white Americans without a four-year college degree say they've become more likely to think of themselves as Republicans pathing those who say that they have become more likely to think of themselves as a Democrat by quite a bit.

And then we see the same thing on the other side reversed. White Americans with a four-year college degree have swung more towards the democratic side than they have towards Republican. So this is consistent with a lot of election analysis that shows educational polarization

increasing over the last few years. It's kind of remarkable though that people see it in themselves. And we did specify the last five years in this question to kind of cover the Trump era so we found that very interesting.

Partisans tend to take the worst possible views of each other continuing on the theme of polarization. A slim majority of Americans say the Republican party has been taken over by racists. This is the first time that figure has crossed into majority territory in polling, but it's been a slow gradual increase. Ninety percent of Republicans say, they're just trying to protect against outside threats, but 85 percent of Democrats say the party has been taken over by racists.

On the other side, 44 percent of Americans say the democratic party has been taken over by socialists including 84 percent of Republicans. Not surprisingly, most democrats say they're just trying to make capitalism work for everyone.

In the final section, we're taking a look at some of the critical issues facing the country. When we ask people to rate what issues they think are critical, the only issue a majority of Americans agree is critical is the pandemic. But partisans exist in essentially completely different states of what they worry about as far as critical issues.

Republicans are most likely to say terrorism, immigration and crime are critical issues. Independents are kind of a mix. You can see that kind of general give everything kind of average ratings. The pandemic and healthcare are at the top by a narrow margin. Democrats are more likely to say the pandemic, climate change and healthcare are critical with racial inequality and the growing gap between the rich and the poor also reaching majority critical status. It's also interesting to note here that Democrats are generally more likely to say more issues are critical than Republicans or independents.

On the issue of abortion, we find that most Americans support abortion remaining legal in most or all cases and think that Roe v. Wade was decided correctly and should be upheld. Those numbers obviously drop among Republicans, although there is significantly more Republican support for upholding Roe than for abortion legality. That holds true for Republicans who most trust Fox News and those who most trust the far-right media sources.

However, Republicans who rely on mainstream news sources are much more moderate on this issue in particular including 61 percent who say Roe should be upheld, which is similar to all Americans and independents on this question.

Of course, independents are roughly where all Americans are and more than eight in ten Democrats say both that Roe should be upheld and abortion should be legal in most or all cases.

We asked a question about critical race theory. How much people have heard about it? Only 19 percent of Americans say they've heard a lot about critical race theory. Forty-four percent say they've heard a little and 34 percent nothing at all. Immediately after that question, we asked what the focus of teaching American history should be.

In a bit of positive news, everyone aligns in theory on including both our best achievements and our worst mistakes as a country showing up when the misused jargon of critical race theory is removed, there is common ground. At the same time, it is likely that opinions do differ on what constitutes our best achievements and our worse mistakes, but in theory there is plenty of agreement here.

We've tracked views on police killings of Black Americans for several years now and there have been declines in the proportion of Americans who say these are isolated incidents as opposed to a pattern of how police treat Black Americans. Republicans however, have not moved at all looking at white Republicans which is where we -- upon white Americans is where we see most of our movement.

Republicans haven't moved at all. But these changes are driven by white independents and white Democrats moving more in line with people of color on this issue. There has been a slight rebound in the numbers as we move further away from the protests and events of 2020, but we do see that in particular white Democrats have aligned now with most Black Americans in saying that police killings are not isolated incidents. They are a pattern of how police treat Black Americans.

Finally, there are big differences in how partisans view voting access and issues. Seventy percent of Americans want Congress to pass a voting rights law including nearly half of Republicans. The divide is much larger though on whether the bigger problem is eligible voters being

denied the right to vote versus ineligible voters voting. More than half of all Americans but only 18 percent of Republicans and 87 percent of Democrats say, eligible voters being denied the right to vote is the bigger problem.

Again, Republicans divide by their media use, single digits for proportions of Republicans who trust Fox News or a far right media say, eligible voters being denied is the bigger issue. Interestingly, 67 percent of Republicans who say they trust mainstream news say Congress should pass a voting rights law.

There's plenty more in the report but we will wrap the presentation there and turn to our panel for more insights and discussion. We'll take just a moment to get our panelist back online.

MR. GALSTON: Sorry for the tech delay. My name is Bill Galston. I'm a Senior Fellow in Governance Studies at Brookings and E.J.'s long-time partner in crime along with Robbie and Natalie and others in the American value survey in the admiration of which I join E.J. and am second to none.

We now turn to the panel phase of our conversation and presentation. You've already heard brief snippets of the distinguished bios of Robbie Jones and Natalie Jackson.

Now, let me very quickly introduce our three panelists in the order in which they will be presenting their comments. And each has been allotted a maximum of five minutes. It's my sad duty to be the enforcer of that time table, but I'm sure it will give us no problem. And after they make their remarks, we will have a panel discussion for about half an hour followed by the audience question phase of this presentation.

So in order, we have Nazita Lajevardi who is -- if my information is correct -- an Assistant Professor at Michigan State University. She has a Ph.D. from the University of California at San Diego where many of my friends have been teaching for a very long time. I bet we have some people in common, Nazita.

And she also has a J.D. from the University of San Francisco School of Law. The list of her publications is lengthy. Suffice it to say, that they have included publications in the most distinguished presses and journals of the American Political Science Association. So good to have you,

Nazita.

Our second panelist is Eric McDaniel. Again, if my information is correct, he's an Associate Professor at the University of Texas at Austin where I taught for 10 years. So another connection. He's the author of *Politics in the Pews: Political Mobilization of Black Churches* and he is also a coauthor of the *Every Day Crusade Religious Nationalism in American Politics* and perhaps by now it has been published or perhaps it is still awaiting publication, I'm not sure.

And third, Karlyn Bowman who in these quarters literally needs no introduction. She's been a Senior Scholar of the American Enterprise Institute for decades and she is known as the go-to person on American public opinion and not just now but going back decades. Ask her question. Are you, you know, ask her a question about a particular issue and she'll be able to tell you how political opinion in the United States has evolved since the 1970s, an invaluable resource.

So with that background, Nazita, the floor is yours.

MS. LAJEVARDI: Thank you so very much for the opportunity to be a part of this panel today. Today, I'm going to focus my comments on the findings surrounding American identity.

American identity undoubtedly has shaped the American citizenries' policy preferences as an outgroup attitudes for centuries. And at no time in modern history has understanding the role of American identity with respect to race relations and partisanship been so crucial to dismantling years of systemic differences towards Americans who do not necessarily fit the Anglo Saxon narrative than it is today.

And given the rise of the racial tensions in America today which of course stem from years of inequity in the United States, some Americans have been growing increasingly uncomfortable associating with an American identity and its symbols believing that American identity is not traditionally included. You know, for instances people of color or individuals from other religious backgrounds aside from Christianity.

And so, I found it really interesting to look at the findings of American identity and to focus on where there might actually be agreement between partisan groups in terms of what it means to truly



be American. And so, strikingly first I want to focus on the fact that Democrats and Republicans according to the survey actually agree quite a bit on a number of different traits in what it means to be American.

So as a reminder, Democrats agreed 96 percent of the time and Republicans 98 percent of the time that being truly American is believing in individual freedoms like freedom of speech. Democrats agreed 96 percent of the time and Republicans 94 percent of the time that being truly American is believing that every citizen should be able to vote in American elections.

According to the survey, Democrats also agreed 96 percent of the time and Republicans 92 percent of the time that being truly American is accepting people of diverse and racial and religious backgrounds. Moreover, Democrats agree 93 percent of the time and Republicans 96 percent of the time that being truly American is respecting American political institutions and laws.

And finally, moreover only 20 percent of Republicans and 17 percent of Democrats agreed that being of Western European heritage matters as a trait for being truly American.

And so, to me it seems quite interesting to in fact why it maybe that we see so much agreement on these particular items particularly because you might actually expect differences on some of these items across partisan lines. For instance, in terms of accepting people from different racial backgrounds or for instance agreement on the fact that every citizen should be able to vote. Given that much of our national discourse is divided along partisan lines when it comes to how we should be determining how people get the right to vote. And, in fact, can show up at the polls and in which ways.

An agreement on these items is especially noteworthy given the massive partisan differences between what the other out party might actually be seen in terms of protecting the American way of life. So to be clear. The same survey that we just heard findings from found that only 14 percent of Democrats agree that the Republican party is trying to protect the American way of life against outside threats. And similarly, only 15 percent of Republicans agree that the democratic party is protecting the American way of life from outside threats.

So taking all of these points together then I found it rather remarkable that there seems to

be rather a great deal of agreement among Americans of all partisan stripes on some of the factors that meaningful shape American identity. But importantly, it seemed that there was not enough trust in how partisans to maintain the American way of life.

So I look forward to our discussion and I appreciate the opportunity to serve as part of this panel.

MR. GALSTON: Thank you, Nazita. Eric, the floor is yours.

MR. MCDANIEL: Sure. Thank you for allowing me to join you today being here with Robbie and Natalie is always great even if it is virtual. And being able to work with Brookings is also a great honor.

And thinking about the reports, I want to focus on some of the things that Nazita talked about in regards to American identity. And specifically, that the fight we're seeing is really an issue of heroes and villains. And if you think about critical race theory, if you think about who is an American, it's every story has a hero and a villain.

And as we know the most intriguing stories have villains who are outside as well as those who are inside. So we're concerned about the villains who are foreign and domestic. And so, if you think of like one of the greatest stories of old time, the Godfather. So in part one, you have Carlo betray son, and you have Tessio betray Michael.

Godfather, part two, we think about Fredo betraying Michael. And because I respect everybody here, I won't mention part three. But what's important here is, you know, we talk about critical race theory and we talk about the idea that I don't feel like I belong in my nation. It's the belief that now I'm the villain. And we have a number of people who felt that they were the heroes and now they're being cast as the villains. And we're seeing this again right now. If you think of the number of people who were the kind of go granted t-shirts.

The idea that no, he was a hero. He was not a villain here. And this is kind of recasting who's good and who's bad. But along with this idea of heroes and villains is that if the people who are classically seen as heroes are now the villains that means the nation must be stolen. Something is

wrong. The world has been flipped upside down.

And while we see that Americans are more likely to embrace what we think of as liberalism. The belief that you can be an American because of certain beliefs that you hold. This is not an issue of genealogy or genetics that we see that clearly there is much more support for liberalism than there is for ethnocentrism or ethnoculturalism but it's still there and it's still held by a significant portion and the rhetoric is still used.

I mean if you can think about, you know, the calls for, you know, we need people coming from Western democracies. The rhetoric of Ron Haidy and other African nations. This is coming. But also, with this is the sense of stolen nation is this pushback against expertise. And so, this populism that's come about from, you know, both the left and the right is populism said that the elites have failed us and that the people need to take over.

And so, because of this you're seeing a rejection of expertise. And this is probably why you're seeing, you know, this dip where Democrats have gone from 66 percent to 58 percent and believe that college is a good investment. Or Republicans who have gone from 52 percent to 37 percent. And is also you see this in reaction to the Corona virus vaccine. And it didn't necessarily help having before President Obama who, you know, had all these academic accolades and talked like a professor to further enforce this.

So these are things that we need to be aware of, but also we're focusing on the different types of media sources. It's clear people selected themselves with the media sources. But one of the things we also need to be aware of is that even the mainstream media sources whether intentionally or not the way in which they tell these stories is kind of inflaming these partisan divisions.

And a great book to take a look at is *Combative Politics* by Mary Layton Patterson which talks about how they tell these stories could really play a big role in separating these people that would not necessarily be separated. Thank you.

MR. GALSTON: Thank you, Eric. Karlyn?

MS. BOWMAN: Thank you, Bill. And it's a pleasure to be with you again today on this

new PRRI study. I want to congratulate Robbie and Natalie. It's just such a rich survey and it's always a privilege to be included as a commentator on it.

I want to go back to Robbie's very first slide. His title slide in which he asked a question. Competing visions and evolving identity or a culture under attack. I don't underestimate our differences or the divisions many of which Robbie outlined in his slides, but at the risk of being Polly Annish, I tend to be a glass half full person.

I'd like to suggest that an enormous number of the responses in this survey suggest an evolving identity that's more inclusive, more accepting and much more diverse. And the way that I decided to look at these questions was to look at the attitudes of young people on all of the questions in this survey.

The young people tend to lead change whether it's in fashion or whether it's in politics. And they tended to be the most accepting, the most diverse, the most inclusive on a whole series of questions. And I actually thought the overall responses to these questions were quite positive. Ninety-two percent said that accepting people of diverse racial and religious backgrounds was very or somewhat important to being an American up from 86 percent in 2018.

Sixty-one percent said that immigrants strengthen the society because of their hard work and talents, up from 45 percent in 2010. Sixty-five percent said that our diversity makes the country much stronger or moderately stronger. Only nine percent said it made it weaker.

When asked about the likely impact of the new census finding that the white population had declined for the first time in our history, 59 percent said that it didn't matter and of the remainder more saw it as a plus than a negative by 23 to 17 percent. Seventy-five percent thought it was still possible for us to embrace the motto from many, one, E pluribus unum.

And in every PRRI poll since 2015, 60 percent or more said that immigrants living in the country illegally should be allowed to become citizens if they meet certain requirements. And another 15 percent said that they should have permanent legal residency overall.

Americans have never been particularly welcoming of refugees, but a solid majority in all

the surveys that PRRI has done this year wanted to prevent -- oppose preventing Afghanistan refugees from coming.

And the question I think that surprised me more than any other in the poll because of the use of the word, always, in the question. Nearly 74 percent said that America has always been a force for good in the world. On every single one of these questions, young people were either more accepting, again suggesting change, suggesting a positive evolving identity or they were very much like everyone as a whole.

I just wanted to touch on a couple of the issue questions overall. E.J. had a comment this morning suggesting that Democrats should take the wind and not look back. And I agree that that's very sage political advice, but I think that's going to be very hard to do if you take the people's responses in this survey to the three questions about inflation overall.

Inflation is such a powerful indicator and 85 percent in this survey agreed that the cost of housing and every day expenses was rising faster than their income. Forty-four percent were somewhat or very concerned about the cost of basic daily goods and daily life. And I think that was going up because of inflation.

As a critical issue concern was similar to healthcare and terrorism and I thought that was fairly significant. And then finally, and this is a slightly different interpretation from Eric, I thought the question about college was actually more a reflection of the people being concerned about the cost of college and in that sense maybe it is a gamble for a lot of people.

But to touch on the questions about violence and here I take Bill's admonition that I like to go back and look at historical questions on these kinds of topics. First of all, there are not a lot of questions in the polling literature about violence, but I thought that in PRRI's poll and again this is something that does worry me very greatly about the divisions in our society, when you have around five percent completely agreeing that because things are so far off in the wrong direction to patriots might need to resort to violence to save the country. And about 12 percent as Robbie said mostly agreed.

This is something I think we all should worry about. And nine percent in another question

thought it might be necessary to resort to violence to save the country. I went back to look at those questions from the 1970s and to look at questions about authoritarian regimes and whether or not it would be better to have authoritarian leaders or whether it was possible to resort to violence.

And the first questions I found were asked after Gabby Giffords was shot. And sure enough, the numbers were even higher than they are in this poll and particular Kaiser Family Foundation questions about is it ever necessary to resort to violence. So this is, I think a hardy perennial in our history and it needs to be interpreted in that context.

I think I've gone a little over my five minutes so I'll stop there and get to our questions and move along in the discussion.

MR. GALSTON: Thanks so much, Karlyn. E.J. are you on?

MR. DIONNE: I am.

MR. GALSTON: Okay. So why don't we go back and forth with questions to the panel?  
You first.

MR. DIONNE: Yeah, first of all, thank you all for an extraordinary presentation. I was on mute when I thanked several people at Brookings for being so important to getting this event done. And I want to make sure that before we end, I say thank you to Catalina Navarro who's out there feeding us questions and help to organize this. Meghan Bell and also Darrell West, the head of governmental studies who has always been a VP at Brookings who has always been very supportive. And thanks to the panel.

In a way, first more than anything I would like to ask Robbie and Natalie if they had response. Barack Obama once said that he was accused frequently of being a hope monger, and I think of that as a compliment. So I appreciated Karlyn being our hope monger here today.

I'm curious how people respond to Karlyn upbeat analysis to some of these numbers because I think when you look at so many of them, the divisions were so deep that it is hard to be upbeat. So I'd be curious before we go onto anything else perhaps how folks respond to what Karlyn said. Rob, why don't you start? If you -- go ahead.

MR. JONES: Sure. Well, thank you, Karlyn. I am always indebted to you both for your deep dive back in the trends and also kind of looking both within our own polling and outside polling. So thank you for that perspective.

And, you know, it's funny. Like I would say historically, I've also considered myself a glass half full optimist guy. I think I'm not there on these pollings. So I think you and I just may see the other side of it. I mean one of the ones I will hold up that you held up, Karyln, I think is really important because I think we are often caught between these ideological divides and they get in the way of actually some pragmatic policy solutions that might actually be shared, right, across both sides.

And I think you're pointing to a past citizenship for undocumented immigrants in the country is exactly that place. We have been asking this question really since, I think it's 2012 is the first time we asked this question. So, you know, long stretch, almost a decade. And we've asked it literally hundreds of times this question. Like we had a couple of years where we had like week to week tracking on this question.

And so, literally asking hundreds of times. As you said, as we kind of slow it down, say it again. Like we found more than six in ten Americans. It's been as high as 66. It's been down around 60 percent but somewhere in that range across hundreds of times all saying, when you ask what is their preferred solution to what we do with the 10, 11 million undocumented immigrants in the country?

Their preferred solution is to allow them a way to become citizens provided they meet certain requirements like that pragmatic solution has held. It's been about half of Republicans typically agreeing with that. Super majorities of Democrats and independents agreeing with that. We've seen some sliding of the Republican agreement on that question in the last four to five years. So it's a little less than half now.

But it's still in 40s so it's not like it dropped off a cliff. And I'll never forget like we were in a focus group. We were talking to Republican men in a focus group and we were probing about this question of deportation. And there was actually a Republican man who said, look, if we really were serious about a deportation program to deport 11 million people in this country that would be the biggest

government program that I've seen in my lifetime. I'm totally not for that, right?

We need a pragmatic solution that actually solves this problem and let's, you know, and he kind of went on. But I think the kind of -- the search for a kind of pragmatic solutions that kind of, you know, act as some solvent on these ideological divides is like really important at this moment in our history. So I want to thank Karlyn for kind of holding that up.

MR. GALSTON: Any other responses on that? I think one of the things that Karlyn underscored that's so important is this generation gap, which is so striking on so many questions. And that the younger generation is more open on a lot of these questions than older folks.

Anybody else want to jump in? Eric? Natalie? Nazita? And then I'll turn it over to Bill.

MS. JACKSON: I'll just say quickly that, you know, I tend to follow a little bit more onto like my disposition wants to follow more towards Karlyn's side as well. And I do see some hopeful things here in particular the younger generation.

You know, I think it's important to note that there's, you know, a lot of people can agree in theory on things, but then where it falls apart is the implementation. And that's where things get political and get messy and get ugly. I do think it's important to come back occasionally to in theory we have some agreement so that we don't forget that there are things that we have in common to kind of hold us together.

You can't ignore the things that make us different, of course by any means. But I do like to come back to those core principles every now and then as a reminder.

MR. GALSTON: Go ahead -- unless Nazita or Eric wants to come in on that?

MS. LAJEVARDI: I was just going to say that, you know, the results that we see by generation, I think is also, you know, a means to be hopeful. I guess I would agree with Natalie though that it's the implementation that's a bit harder, right?

So even when you look at how much trust they have, you partisans have for members of the other party, it's very low. And so, really the issue is -- seems like at least in terms of implementation.

MR. MCDANIEL: I guess in my addition is seeing these changes amongst the younger



generation. There's actually this is bright, but my concern is the -- I guess, if they see a failure to find success will they burn out and just disconnect?

And so, it's an issue of how do you get them to connect, but also understand that this is a long process. One thing young people aren't known for is patience. And so, while they are much -- they want progress in some of these things. They may not understand that this is how the process works. It's a long drawn-out process and that they maybe turned off by the process which will in turn make them more disenchanting with the political system.

MS. LAJEVARDI: If I may add one more point to that just to follow up is that there are partisan differences by generational cohorts as well, right? So you're going to have, you know, younger people lean more Democrat than their older counterparts. So that's something also to keep in mind.

MR. JONES: Yeah, just one quick thing, E.J. And I know we didn't have this chat this year but you and I have talked about this.

But this does present different challenges for the two political parties, though because if we look at, for example, the kind of diversity racial or religious diversity of the two political parties and we kind of compare them to the racial and religious diversity of their racial cohorts, and we kind of overlay those.

What we find is that Republicans in terms of race and religious diversity look about like 70-year-old America and Democrats look about like 30-year-old Americans in terms of their own internal composition. So the bar is higher among Republicans, right? To kind of connect with this kind of younger sense of accepting change there.

And sure, in the religious world as well, the median age for white Angelicos is 57, right, in the country today? And so, that also -- and it has been going up over the last decade.

MR. DIONNE: Bill, come on in.

MR. GALSTON: Okay. Here is my omnibus question for the entire panel and here's the way I'll frame it. We have spent a lot of time in recent years focusing on the Republican party and the changing balance of attitudes over the past five or six years under the influence of the Trump campaign

and Trump presidency, et cetera.

We spent less time focusing on the Democratic party and we have a picture in our heads of the Democratic party that I have tested against this iteration of the American value survey. And I was really surprised by this little historic experiment.

Let me put it on the table and ask anyone on the panel who is interested to respond. You know, we tend to think of Democrats as the circular party, but we find that fully 45 percent of Democrats say that believing in God is essentially to being, quote, truly American. We think of the Democratic party as the procedure-immigrant party but 43 percent of Democrats say that you have to have born in America to be truly American.

We think of the Democratic party as the religiously pluralist party but more than a third of Democrats say that you can't be truly American unless you're a Christian, which I'm not. Am I less than truly American in the eyes of my fellow party members? You know, we think of, you know, we know of the Democratic party as open and procedure-change, but we find a third of Democrats say that America is in danger of losing its culture and identity.

We think of Democrats as the internationalists party but 37 percent of them say that is that the American way of life needs to be protected from foreign influences.

So that was a bit of a surprise. Was anybody else surprised? And if so, what's the right interpretation of these data?

MR. DIONNE: I just want to make -- I'll make one quick point which is I think what this shows is -- and correct me if I'm wrong -- there's more diversity of use still inside the Democratic party now than there is inside the Republican party and I think that's one of the things you're seeing here.

But maybe I'm wrong. Robbie or Natalie and anyone else come on in.

MS. BOWMAN: Well, just an aside. There maybe more Christian sentiments and Joe Manchins than we think in the Democratic party based on those responses.

MS. JACKSON: So Bill dropped us an email about this about 20 minutes before the panel. And so, I took a very quick look at some of the demographics on some of these issues of, you

know, in particular Democrats who say being Christian is important to being truly American.

I think it's important to note that when we talk about any group in surveys, you know, we're looking at lots of very different people together in the name of getting enough people to say something, you know, generalizable. No group is a model. Democrats are perhaps especially not a model and we're seeing that --

MR. GALSTON: As Will Rogers once said.

MS. JACKSON: Yes. It is Democrats do -- are kind of a big tent. One of the main issues. The group most likely to say that being Christian is important to being truly American are Black Protestants. And in particular Black Americans who are conservative in many ways will still align with the Democratic party for many historic reasons that others could probably speak better to.

But, you know, that I think is the interpretation here is that Democrats are both the source of progressive views and a source of some of the same views that we see elsewhere.

MR. JONES: Well, I'll jump in on the question about people thinking about Democrats as the secular party which is your opening in this big question. But I think that's part of the key, you know, here as well is that, yeah, that, you know, that is a sentiment that's never been based on great data you hear.

I'll give you a couple of examples. You know, we think about that but if you look at the number of Democrats that are actually religiously unaffiliated, it's only a quart of Democrats, right? It's actually 23 percent in our 2020 data here, and two-thirds are Christian. Now, the big difference is between the Republican party and Democratic party in terms of person identity is that the Democratic party is only about four in ten white and Christian. Whereas the Republican party is like seven in ten white and Christian and with very, very few persons of color in that coalition.

Whereas, the Christians of color are nearly as big as white Christians are in a Democratic party. So that gives you even within a kind of, you know, one religious family much more diversity, you know, there. And so, I think that's one of the biggest differences.

One of the thing, I'll say too though is that gap has been getting bigger over time. So

kind of go back to kind of the mid-2000, the Republican party was eight in ten white and Christian. Today, it's seven in ten, white and Christian. So it's diversified mostly by picking up more unreligiously unaffiliated folks in it's coalition. That number has tripled from only four percent to 13 percent since the mid-2000.

So today, inside the Republican party -- whereas the Democratic party has become more racially and ethnically diverse. It was about half white and Christian in the mid-2000 and now it's down to four in ten. Most of that has -- some of that has been unaffiliated but also that's been a greater proportion of persons of color in the coalition as well. But that all leads to a lot of diversity, right, within the party. It also means that it's much harder to put together an issue coalition, right, among a group like that, right? Because it's just a very broad set of interests that you're trying to hold together.

MR. DIONNE: Bill, could I just go to some of the audience questions to make sure we get some of them in at the moment? Or do you want to reply that? Or does anyone else want to come in on that?

MR. GALSTON: No, no, no. No, I think this is -- we've each had a chance to offer an omnibus question to the panel. And we have a lot of audience questions. And so, I'm with you E.J. Fire away.

MR. DIONNE: Well, what I'd like to do is if people could scribble down the questions because I want to bring in a bunch of them. And each of you may have some you particularly want to answer. A Ted Promoter (phonetic) asks a basic question.

Is America more divided now than it was in the 1960s? So hang onto that question. There are a couple of very good media questions. One from a Curt Moling (phonetic) who asks, while I once blamed the Foxification of the country. What is the Republican base's willingness to detach from reality, the QAnon and the big lie and the reality and logic are out the window? How do you have conversations and make policy? David Hamilton asked about what is the identity and culture that some feel threatened by today? And related questions.

So there are a bunch of media questions on this. While Amy Zaron (phonetic) asks --

and I was curious about this too -- can you share the percentages of Republicans who consume the types of media that you presented data on? I was particularly interested in the comparison between Fox News on the one hand, One America on the other, but also, you know, the mainstream media.

And then Andrea Goodfriend asked, to what extent have social media exacerbated polarization enabling prospectus that had been seen as extreme or outliers to become amplified legitimized and squeezed out, the moderate voices. The appropriately named. Bless you, Mr. Goodfriend asked.

Who wants to start off on any of those questions? Nazita, you have a lovely smile on. I have a bad habit of calling on people in panels or classes who smile so go ahead. Why don't you start off?

MS. LAJEVARDI: I'm doomed then. You know, I found the question about social media really interesting because I think we're not talking enough in our national conversation about social media companies. About how there are algorithms that seem to favor and enhance misinformation especially on social media platforms, you know.

And we exist in these filter bubbles. You know, we self-select into certain social media venues and the information that we get is more and more polarized because those are getting more and more likes. And so, we are indeed in a crisis in our democracy that is exacerbating partisan divides because -- very much because of social media.

And so, it is the fact, you know, it is the case that it is social media that is amplifying more extreme viewpoints to be louder and more visible. And so, that is clearly having an effect on public opinion and public attitudes. And so, I think if that is the question, you know, how do we want our social media platforms to operate? And, you know, are we as a country okay with this?

MR. DIONNE: Eric, you want to come in? And then I'd love Karlyn to particularly take on the are we more divided in this than in the '60s? But Eric, do you have something out of this potpourri of questions?

MR. MCDANIEL: Yeah, I think one of the important things is people talked about folks

who kind of bagged into conspiracy theories. There has been a lot of research on this about telling somebody they're wrong is basically the equivalent of punching them in the face and they're going to react the same way.

And really to kind of walk them through this, they need to explain these things to you. You've got to get down to the heart of what's driving this belief. And that is the way to do it. It's almost, you know, you've got to slowly walk somebody through it. You can't tell somebody they're wrong and walk.

You have a group of people who feel like they're under siege and who talk about the identity threats, things like that. They believe that they're under siege. And so, they're more likely to hold onto conspiracy beliefs and believe that somebody is out to get them.

And, you know, we can think about this when we think about Black nationalist groups and some of the problems in the Black Panther party had where, you know, there is evidence that they were under siege and there were people out to get them, but they may have bought into things that they probably should not have.

I think what's going on now is social media has allowed that to -- has exacerbated these things. We're getting false information left and right and it's to the point now where I have tried to explain to people like, no, that's not how things work.

Such as, you know, somebody argued, you know, if you had a place -- if you had a planet that was 70 percent water is it reported to be on a flat plane or a round plane? And my argument was gravity. And like gravity is a proven to exist. I was like, I don't have time to explain gravity to you.

But it is one of these things where these things kind of jump in and kind of -- there's just an underlying belief and they feel like they have been left behind. They feel like they can't trust anybody. And this is really has been part of the American (inaudible). Individualism, you can't trust government. This is nothing new. It's just that the volume has been turned up drastically. And social media has helped turn that volume up.

MR. DIONNE: Karlyn, on the 60s question because I feel like we're more divided now

but then I ask myself maybe I was young in the 60s and I'm not young anymore. And maybe that shapes my perception. But I'm curious what you think the data show on that question of division.

MS. BOWMAN: Well, I'm not young anymore either and I remember the 60s as a pretty divided time. But with that said, let me just comment.

First of all, there are far more pollsters in the field. They are taping our pulse on a regular basis and we're just getting a lot more data than we got in the 1960s. Also, the polls are much more emotional today than they were, let's say, prior to the early 1970s. There aren't questions about anger, let's say. And I think there's only one question before. I can't remember the date right now about anger before, let's say, 1960.

There are all sorts of lying that's just a heart -- you see it in the polls all the time now. The pollsters didn't use to ask those kinds of questions. But there were two extraordinary surveys done in the mid-80s. One by Ankylo which -- and the other by Peter Harford, Rolling Stone. And they were surveys that asked Baby Boomers to think back to the late 60s. Were they involved in the demonstrations? Those kinds of questions. And then what did they think as they were in middle age in the mid-1980s?

And first of all, it surprises me looking back at those polls that hardly anybody remembers being involved in the violence. But all of them said they had become more conservative but not more Republican. And the reason they've become more conservative was because of family responsibilities, but they didn't change their political identification. And I thought that was an interesting point about those surveys.

So are we more divided? I'm not sure the polls can really answer that question since we just don't have enough data. It's hard to find questions about violence before some of the ones that I mentioned earlier overall.

MR. DIONNE: You just proved Bill Galston's excellent point about you, Karlyn. That was great.

By the way, I would put on the table and then I want to go to Robbie and Natalie on some

of the sort of factual underpinnings from our poll particularly on that Republican media consumption question.

I am really struck by the research of Alan Abramowitz and his colleagues about the rise of negative polarization, which is it's not that we really love our own parties more. It's that we really can't stand and deeply mistrust the other party, which maybe partly why I'm feeling what I feel about polarization and not just my age.

But, Robbie and Natalie, come on in on some of those really good questions.

MR. JONES: Yeah. Just one comment on that. And I want to just like as someone in the profession like note that there are questions that we up here I have written over the last five years that I never would have imagined as a social scientist that we would write, right?

And we're doing that because of what we've seeing on the ground and what we're trying to understand on the ground, right? About, you know, we asked, for example, in a previous set of polls whether people saw Donald Trump as assisting white supremacists? And I would never have thought that we would need to ask a question about whether a sitting president was, you know, assisting white supremacists or encouraging white supremacists? The word was encouraging in the poll.

And at the end of his time in office, we had 57 percent of Americans saying that they thought that President Trump was encouraging white supremacist groups. I mean that's just I never thought I would write that question. I never thought we'd see those kinds of results, you know, in the surveys. We do have a whole battery of QAnon -- I'll pivot to that here -- questions, you know, in the survey.

Again, you know, did I think we'd have to do serious polling about conspiracy theories on the kind of level that we've had? I wouldn't have predicted that but, you know, here we are. So we do have a battery there that follows some work that we've done throughout the year because this answers one of the other questions so I'll just kind of --

MR. DIONNE: Yeah, thank you.

MR. JONES: -- hit that real quickly. So they basically held steady throughout the year.



We base this question on -- we built a composite scale based on three questions that we built out of QAnon literature. So I actually spent a lot of time reading QAnon literature and message boards to kind of get the right language.

But even when we ask it in a fairly extreme way. So we had three questions. One of them is that political violence question, but the other two are there's a storm coming soon that will sweep away or lead to power and restore the rightful leaders. With 21 percent of the country believing that. The second one is the government media and financial worlds in the U.S. are controlled by a group of Satan worshipping pedophiles who run a global sex trafficking operation. So we pulled that language straight off the QAnon world. Eighteen percent of the country. Again, when we wrote that question, I was kind of shaking my head that we really were going to ask this question. Eighteen percent of the country agrees.

And then the other one was the question about whether true American patriots may have to resort to violence. Eighteen percent again there. We combine all those together though they all hold together very well. And we have 17 percent of the country that completely or mostly agree with all those statements so which we've dubbed AQnon believers.

And then there's, you know, kind of a partisan set of differences. A quarter of Republicans are AQnon believers by that definition compared to 15 percent of independents and 10 percent of Democrats, right, who believe in all three of those statements. So that's kind of where we are.

Again, these are minorities but, you know, they're significant minorities of major political parties. And I do think, you know, this is too often written off as fringes. And I think we are to kind of sit back and pause and, you know, take that in and take that seriously that this level of conspiracy theory is that frequent again among kind of major political party.

MR. GALSTON: E.J.?

MR. DIONNE: Yeah?

MR. GALSTON: Over the past 12 years, we've settled into our assigned roles. You're the genial good cop, I'm the stern bad cop. And so, it's my duty to remind everybody we only have 11 minutes left on this panel before I absolutely have to ring the bell.

So I'd like to cut in with another tranche of questions from the audience which will be the last if that's okay?

MR. DIONNE: And could I say, Mr. G, you're a very genial Bill. And I just -- and before we close, I really would love to answer Amy's question if I may. I called you Amy about the breakdown of Republicans on the media because I thought that was an interesting factual question. Go ahead, Bill.

MR. GALSTON: Okay. I have three questions from the audience to put on the floor for the panel. The first is from our long-time friend, Father Tom Reese, who asks, you know, what are the distinctive value orientations, if any, of white and Hispanic Catholics that may emerge from this survey?

Tranche number two, there were a lot of people who in classic American style were not content to wring their hands at the bad news in this survey, but asked versions of what can be done? And so, a couple of people asked what can be done to increase trust in the mainstream media? So other people asked, well, what about trust building institutions like Americore and the newly proposed civilian climate core? Can things like that help?

Another person asked, what's the most important thing that we could do right now to begin turning around? You know, what is bad news in this poll having acknowledged that there is some good news in this poll. And finally, if we have time, this is an under-the-hood question for Robbie and Natalie. Let's see now. Where is it?

Evan Luetis (phonetic) of the program for public consultation asks, were there new questions in the 12<sup>th</sup> AVS? And if so, what was the process for determining what new questions to ask? So over to the panel?

MS. JACKSON: All right. So I'll dive in on that last one as well as the media question so that I don't forget.

On that last one, there are quite a few new questions on this. If you go to our website and go to the report page on the right-hand side there's a download tab and you can download what's called the survey top line. That shows you all of the questions that had the basic results and it also shows you when we've asked the question before. It shows you what the prior results were. And so, you

can see what questions were new and which ones were not.

In terms of determining what we do? That's a negotiation amongst, you know, all of us involved, the Brookings' team, the PRRI team. We talk about where the country is? What the big factors are? In this case, we were discussing, you know, we have these big cultural cleavages, but we also have big economic issues that we need to address. As well as we have some issues that we -- like immigration and abortion, et cetera, that we always kind of take a look at.

So it's a discussion amongst multiple parties, you know, about what's important and what we need to know in order to tell the story of where the country is today.

On the media question. So if you go -- the way we ask questions, we traditionally have asked this question for a long time of saying, do you rely on -- what do you trust most when you're looking for information on news and current affairs? Broadcast media such as CBS, ABC, NBC, CNN, Fox News, NSMBC, local news, public news and then we have other, you know, fill in the blank.

What happened was in January we started picking up a lot of people answering in that other box. And the answers were almost entirely One America News or Newsmax. And so, we have tracked that throughout 2021 to the point that we finally have added that as a response category to the question. So that's kind of the genesis of that far right news category. It came very much from the respondents themselves writing that in. And if you don't look at surveys too often, you may not realize how unusual it is for people to write in. To take the effort to write in a response on question. So it's pretty remarkable.

The basic breakdown of Republicans about 25 percent say they trust Fox News most. About 12 percent fall into that far right news media. About 31 percent are in the mainstream, which we combined everything else into that mainstream category, those other sources I listed. And then we have about a third who say they don't rely on television news at all.

We do have another question that asks, you know, about social media, et cetera. But that does not define -- it does not delineate opinions quite as effectively as the Fox News conservative media, mainstream media verbatim. So that's the media skinny.

MR. DIONNE: So you're seeing basically a decline in the Fox number bleeding over into the new, you know, right wing or conservative sources, correct?

MS. JACKSON: On this survey a year ago, we had 40 percent in the Fox News category. That's 25 percent now with 12 percent in the far right. So pretty exclusively.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Who wants to take up some of the others that Bill asked there?

MS. BOWMAN: Just a quick observation on the trust question. I'd like to see fewer questions that ask how much do you trust the government in Washington to do what's right? That's the most popular question the pollsters ask and more questions of the kind that Robbie and Natalie asked. Like in this question about individual institutions such as the Supreme Court or FEMA or NASA or the postal service.

Because you get a very different picture of how well those institutions are or are not working by looking at individual agencies that are well known rather than the broad trust in government. I think that number is never going to go up significantly unless the economy is roaring along in a way that we haven't seen since late 1990's. So I would prefer much more focus on individual institutions.

MR. GALSTON: And, Karlyn, in that vein, I was really struck by the fact that business leaders were down at the very bottom at 22 percent. And I have a feeling that things were once different, but I can't prove it. What do you know about that?

MS. BOWMAN: Ever since 2008, 2009, business leaders have been in bad shape overall. There has been a decline, but again we don't have a lot of those questions from the 50s or 60s, but I expect you're right that business would have been much more positively regarded. At that time, big labor was the big threat and big business was not considered a threat or a concern at all.

MR. DIONNE: And I think historically our friends, Marty Lipp or the late Marty Lipp and Bill Schneider sort of reported years ago in an interesting book. They tended to go up and down together, business labor, government. I think it's more divided now in response than it used to be.

Could I just say we got a play, a semiback cop. We've got three minutes by my

computer. What I'd like if I could is, with Bill's lead, is to let Eric and Nazita say something and we'll let Robbie close. Could we do that just on this broad range of questions that have been put on the table. Eric and then Nazita and then I'll let Robbie have the last word.

MR. GALSTON: So be it.

MR. DIONNE: Or I'll let Bill have the last word actually, but go ahead, Eric.

MR. MCDANIEL: Yeah. I think one of the key things we've heard about is trust and how do we increase trust? And while we're talking about the need to increase trust, we also have to understand that people are incentivized to decrease trust. Because if you don't trust other individuals, you'll trust me more.

And so, we have to find a way to get around this disincentive for trust. And this is something that is very difficult to work on. The media contributes to it while it is intentional or unintentionally. Politicians do it. And, you know, this thing of trust is we all seem to focus on the individuals who benefit from distrust and how they benefit it.

MR. DIONNE: Nazita?

MS. LAJEVARDI: Yeah, I think Eric's point is well taken. And I think we need to have a look at our political leaks and how they explicitly so mistrust in institutions and in other leaks as well. And how that might trickle down to voters, every day voters. So it's not surprising at all that we have large amounts of mistrust in the American society today.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Robbie?

MR. JONES: Thank you. Well, I'm going to sneak in, in my closing remarks in answer to Tom Reese's question. There is absolutely fascinating to look at the difference between white Catholics and Latino Catholics. You know, from the vote we know their difference. Fifty-seven percent of white Catholics voted for Trump. Only 32 percent of Hispanic Catholics voted for Trump and we see some of that carrying over, you know, in our data here.

I'll just give you one number. There's a number of places you can go. But on that question like Republican party, you know, 66 percent of Hispanic Catholics believe the Republican party

has been taken over by racist versus only 36 percent of white Catholics. And on the question of whether our culture is in danger, it needs protecting? Sixty-four percent of white Catholics, only 43 percent of Hispanic Catholics believe that.

So there's this big kind of cultural divide inside the Catholic church and with the growing number of Latinos now. I think somewhere upwards around 40 percent of Catholics today are Latino Catholics. So it's heading towards kind of a 50/50 church before too long.

And I guess the last thing I'm going to say is just a big thank you to everyone here for a fantastic panel, for all the work that kind of went into it from the PRRI team and the Brookings' team. And, you know, I do think the thing we're to kind of highlight here again is this sense of like where are we as a country? The sense of are we protecting something that is there and solid? Are we an evolving identity that many of the fault lines come down to the answers of those questions? And I guess a wish for maybe we lean into the evolving identity side of that question that has room for everyone.

MR. GALSTON: And in the spirit of Yogi Berra, I'd like to thank the hundreds of millions of Americans who made this event necessary. And with that, I believe we are adjourned.

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