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Contents

The Nazi War on Modern Art Blakeleigh Delgado, History Student	3
Public Opinion on Big Tech and Internet Censorship Aaron R. McFall Political Science Student	25
Juvenile Justice in an International Context Arianna Navarrete, Criminal Justice Student	56

The Nazi War on Modern Art

Blakeleigh Delgado

History Student

The great German city renowned for Oktoberfest, political upheaval under the Weimar Republic, and the Beer Hall Putsch, Munich, was also a cultural center of expression and experimentation in the arts between the world wars and ultimately witnessed the downfall of Modern art under the Third Reich. Munich attracted Modern artists of numerous movements and was home to one of the founding groups of German Expressionism, *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider) from 1911 to 1914. The other founding group was called *Die Brücke* (The Bridge) from 1905 to 1913. These two progressive art movements, known respectively for their search for spiritual truth in visual expression and the socio-political faction concerned with critical thought, comprised the foundation of German Expressionism. The Nazis, with their aesthetic vision imbedded in the Greco-Roman ideal, refused to reconcile with the abominations they saw in Modern art. The Nazi doctrine of conservatism and the Expressionists' manifesto based in liberalism were antithetical to one another. The Expressionist vision to overturn traditional society in favor of a progressive one made them a target of the Third Reich.

From 1933-1937, the Nazis not only suppressed Modern art they found crude and insulting, but also managed to eradicate all outward public support for cultural change in the visual arts through a mixture of fear tactics, indoctrination, and prejudice, culminating in the *Entartete Kunst* ("Degenerate" Art) exhibition and the House of German Art in Munich, which poignantly showed which art would and would not be tolerated in the Third Reich. The Nazis

threatened through words and deeds, persuaded through media and propaganda, and appealed to various prejudices, to the German public to shun forms of Modern art expression and accept the ultra-conservative, narrow-minded, traditional aesthetics deemed appropriate and healthy.

Historians, art historians, and researchers alike have explored the role art plays in the Nazi Era. Historians of this field typically fall into one of two camps, either examining the Nazi pursuit of pure culture and beautiful art and architecture, or the perspective of the victims, the cast-out and suppressed artists, professors, and nonconformists who opposed fascism.

Scholars from the first group include Mary-Margaret Goggin who recognizes in “Decent’ vs. ‘Degenerate’ Art” the role of artistic censorship by governments to pacify “large segments of the population” that feared a loss of tradition and engaged in highly prejudiced advances against radical, uncomfortable, or offensive artworks.¹ She notes that American administrations were just as guilty as the Third Reich in censoring and suppressing certain art forms, albeit in a dramatically different manner.² Similarly, John Heskett offers the field an intensive study of Nazi aesthetics and notes the remarkable ability of the Nazis to place “degenerate” artwork in their social context.³ Placing artwork in its social context creates an atmosphere of politicization, which was successfully used by authorities to manipulate

¹ Mary-Margaret Goggin, “Decent’ vs. ‘Degenerate’ Art: The National Socialist Case,” *Art Journal* 50, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 84-92.

² *Ibid.*, 90.

³ John Heskett, “Art and Design in Nazi Germany,” *History Workshop* 1, no. 6 (Autumn 1978): 139-153.

propaganda. Another study of social and cultural contexts is provided through Megan M. Fontanella, who gives an illuminating account of Karl Nierendorf.⁴ Nierendorf was a German art dealer who supported progressive art movements and came to America during the Nazi era. Fontanella observes that the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition in Munich and Modern art in general, “became imbued with a political context” which Americans saw as equating to “the art of democracy.”⁵

Joshua Hagen’s research analyzes the effectiveness of Nazi parades as a form of visual indoctrination and propaganda fueled by “mythical images of prehistoric, pagan, and medieval times representing national unity, military valor, and racial purity... embodiment[s] of these supposedly timeless Germanic national values.”⁶ Such national values were disseminated throughout Germany to indoctrinate society. Alan Joshua Itkin gives an enlightening comparative essay on uncovered Modern art hidden by the Nazis and the uncovering of Pompeii from the volcanic ash. Itkin argues classical and cultural traditions in arts and aesthetics “are capable of being appropriated for any number of political purposes, even the most sinister, and therefore remain a highly unstable ground for establishing cultural identity.”⁷ Nazism demanded a strong cultural identity curated specifically to promote ideology of a purified Aryan race.⁸ In “Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity,” Mark Antliff builds on the

⁴ Megan M. Fontanella, “Unity in Diversity’ *Karl Nierendorf and America, 1937-47*,” *American Art* 24, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 114-125.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁶ Joshua Hagen, “Parades, Public Space, and Propaganda: The Nazi Culture Parades in Munich,” *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 90, no. 4 (2008): 349-367.

⁷ Alan Joshua Itkin, “Restaging ‘Degenerate Art’: The Politics of Memory in the Berlin Sculpture Find Exhibit,” *The German Quarterly* 87, no. 4 (Fall 2014): 395-415.

⁸ Goggin, “Decent’ vs. ‘Degenerate’ Art,” 86.

arguments of Itkin and Hagen, analyzing the relationship of suppressive government to modern forms of artistic expression and modernizing economy and society. Antliff remarks that Nazism “posited ethnic, regional, and religious forms of national identity, antithetical to political democracy’s universalist and rationalist precepts.”⁹

Historians Peter Adam, Henry Grosshans, Jonathan Petropoulos, and Neil Levi center their research specifically on Nazi policy, action, and aesthetics regarding art. Adam’s *Art of the Third Reich*, offers a detailed examination of Nazi art. Adam debunks generalizations and clichés about art of the Third Reich while exploring art’s role in representing their “barbaric ideology.”¹⁰ Grosshans’ *Hitler and the Artists* focuses exclusively on Hitler’s intense interest in controlling the permeation of “true” German art while denouncing and suppressing art that opposed his ideal of pure culture.¹¹ Petropoulos, in *The Faustian Bargain*, evaluates the various institutional roles of members of the art world in collaboration with, or submission to, the Nazis. Petropoulos notes how “Nazi leadership elicited the cooperation of ... ideological zealots” and “many who were ostensibly apolitical.”¹² Levi adds some insight into the chaotic and intentionally disorganized and unflattering “curatorial structure” of the 1937 *Entartete* exhibition in Munich as both a counter-exhibit to the *Great German Art Exhibition* and a “function [of] propaganda.”¹³

⁹ Mark Antliff, “Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity.” *The Art Bulletin* 84, no. 1 (March 2002): 148-169.

¹⁰ Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, inc. Publishers, 1992): 9.

¹¹ Henry Grosshans, *Hitler and the Artists* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1983): xii, 8.

¹² Jonathan Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): 6.

¹³ Neil Levi, “Judge for Yourselves! – The ‘Degenerate Art’ Exhibition as Political Spectacle,” *October* 85, no. 1 (Summer 1998): 41-64.

Extensive research has been done explaining *why* the Nazis, specifically Adolf Hitler, were obsessed with creating pure culture and beautiful art. Not much research has been done on *how* the Nazis accomplished their goal of complete suppression in the cultural sphere. The Nazi control of propaganda, their incessant patrolling of media, and their attacks on radical forms of expression in the cultural sphere play a significant role in this chapter of history.

The most effective way to silence opposition is to use fear, a tactic well used by the Nazis. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, one of Hitler's first goals was to name Munich the city of German art and establish a museum dedicated to art of the Third Reich. In his speech laying the foundation stone for the House of German Art, Hitler brandished his desire to build a "new society" while "reigning in [its] enemies with an iron fist."¹⁴ Any divergent thought was automatically seen as a "pernicious" threat to German existence.¹⁵ This rhetoric of a threat to society, posed by "diseased" individuals, served the Nazi notion to "create freedom for the healthy."¹⁶ This purging philosophy developed in all spheres of German life and targets included, but were not exclusive to, political opponents, Jews, homosexuals, the mentally impaired, and Modern artists (of all forms). The suppression in other sectors of German society, paired with the constant indoctrination efforts by Nazi propagandists, fueled public fear and influenced decisions to submit.

¹⁴ Adolf Hitler, Speech at the laying of the foundation stone for the House of German Art in Munich. October 15th, 1933. [Hitler Rede Haus der Kunst 1933 \(worldfuturefund.org\)](https://worldfuturefund.org/hitler-rede-haus-der-kunst-1933).

¹⁵ Adolf Hitler, Speech at the Opening of the "Great German Art Exhibition" in the House of German Art, Munich, July 18, 1937. [GHDI - Document \(ghi-dc.org\)](https://ghi-dc.org/).

¹⁶ Wilhelm Furtwangler and Joseph Goebbels, Correspondence about Art and State, April 11, 1933. [GHDI - Document \(ghi-dc.org\)](https://ghi-dc.org/).

The Third Reich implemented hostile policies to expressions of modernity and socio-political commentary, subjects which were central to German Expressionist art. Modern artists were subject to both subtle and obvious threats by Nazi authorities in speeches, on posters, and in the forced acquisition of thousands of “degenerate” pieces of artwork from museums and private property. Warnings were given to artists to “not try to solve tasks that lie outside the assets of art.”¹⁷ In other words, the artist’s function in society was supposed to be a passive one that adhered to social mores and positively represented the Reich’s administrative efforts. Modern art’s experimentation with socio-political themes was about to end in Germany. Hitler perceived Modern art as “bother[ing] the nation with humbug... such conduct would fall within the realm of criminal justice,” thus transferring a cultural dilemma into a political one with ominous repercussions.¹⁸ Fear was easily disseminated through statements like “the hour of elimination will come.”¹⁹ Joseph Goebbels, chief overseer of cultural affairs, justified his philosophy of removing all traces of “degenerate” art by saying “if the means achieves the end then the means is good.”²⁰ The ruthless nature of the Nazis was especially recognizable in other areas of German life like the political sphere, ethnic and foreign policy, and of course any minority group deemed unsuitable for the “Aryan” empire. The pivotal changes in German society, produced by the Third Reich, made cultural concessions, like

¹⁷ Adolf Hitler, Address to the Culture Conference on the NSDAP, Nurnberg, September 6, 1938. [HITLER REDE AUF DER KULTURTAGUNG DES PARTEITAG DER NSDAP IN NURNBERG 1938 \(worldfuturefund.org\)](https://www.worldfuturefund.org/HITLER%20REDE%20AUF%20DER%20KULTURTAGUNG%20DES%20PARTEITAG%20DER%20NSDAP%20IN%20NURNBERG%201938).

¹⁸ Hitler, Speech at the Opening... in the House of German Art, 1937.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Joseph Goebbels, Speech to the Press on the Establishment of a Reich Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, March 15, 1933. [GHDI - Document \(ghi-dc.org\)](https://www.ghi-dc.org/GHDI-Document).

turning away from modern artistic expressions to traditional art forms, relatively easy for people confronted with the alternative of “elimination.”²¹

The Nazi institutional power over the art sector during the 1930s was impressive. The emphasis on art reflecting the ideals of its culture were staunchly propagated under the Third Reich. Hitler’s government had taken steps beginning in 1933 to ban and monitor music, movies, and art. Nazi efforts cracked down when Goebbels, Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, appointed Adolf Ziegler to head the Reich Chamber of Visual Art in 1937. Ziegler led a committee “authorized to confiscate” any art from museums or collections “deemed modern, degenerate, or subversive.”²² Thousands of works were confiscated across Germany by Nazi representatives under the direction of Zeigler’s committee backed by Hitler’s support. Sympathizers of Modern art at both local and national levels were dismissed from jobs and teaching posts and were replaced with loyal Nazi officials.

An example of this impressive institutional power is the inventories of Modern art taken by the Nazis in a few weeks for preparation for summer exhibits in Munich during 1937. One can scroll through page after page of artists whose work was confiscated by the hundreds; German Expressionists like Kirchner, Nolde, and Heckel are especially noticeable.²³ Artists of all

²¹ Hitler, Speech at the Opening... in the House of German Art, 1937.

²² Nikola Budanovic, “Degenerate Art Exhibition – When Hitler Declared War on Modern Art,” *War History Online*, January 27, 2018, [Degenerate Art Exhibition - When Hitler Declared War on Modern Art \(warhistoryonline.com\)](https://warhistoryonline.com/degenerate-art-exhibition-when-hitler-declared-war-on-modern-art/).

²³ “Entartete” Kunst: digital reproduction of a typescript inventory prepared by the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, ca. 1941/1942. ["Entartete" Kunst. Digital reproduction of a typescript inventory prepared by the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda ca. 1941/1942. Volume 1: Aachen – Görlitz \(vanda-content-assets.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com\)](https://vanda-content-assets.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Entartete-Kunst-Digital-reproduction-of-a-typescript-inventory-prepared-by-the-Reichsministerium-für-Volksaufklärung-und-Propaganda-ca-1941-1942-Volume-1-Aachen-Görlitz/).

trades who were not immediately targeted as “degenerate” were forced to become members of the Reich Chamber of Culture and Nazi monitored art associations.²⁴ The curating of a rigid environment for acceptable art forms, whilst suppressing undesirable art movements, aided public indoctrination efforts and allowed for successful appeals to cultural unity and purity.

Nazi officials tended to use democratic rhetoric to describe and downplay their fascist actions. For example, Goebbels, in a speech about the creation of the ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, promoted the notion that Nazis were “in the truest sense of the word a people’s government,” much like a democracy, existing to “execute the will of the people.”²⁵ Goebbels twisted popular views into believing the Reich was serving popular best interests. In the same speech, however, Goebbels says it is the duty of the leader to “tell the masses what they [the leader] want[s]... in such a way that they understand it too.”²⁶ At the same time Goebbels preaches the importance of the German people’s power and participation, he imparts that popular opinion is only good when it directly correlates and supports Nazi doctrine. Nazism’s goal regarding art, was to impart Hitler’s aesthetic ideal on a willing public.

Hitler’s obsession with ancient art largely stemmed from his desire to associate himself and Germany with the “golden age of Classical Greek history,” that embodied rational perfection, realism, and beauty such as the Parthenon and Myron’s famous Discobolus (“discus

²⁴ Extracts from the Manual of the Reich Chamber of Culture, 1937. [GHDI - Document \(ghi-dc.org\)](https://ghdi.org/ghi-dc.org).

²⁵ Goebbels, Speech on the Establishment of a Reich Ministry, 1937.

²⁶ Ibid.

thrower”).²⁷ Nazism curated a specific language for aesthetics to distinguish between mighty and “degenerate” art forms.²⁸ To Hitler, “everything right and natural is beautiful,” and art, the greatest form of cultural expression, was to be strong and heroic in nature.²⁹ However, Progressive art movements were denounced as “simply the stilted stammering of people whom God has denied real artistic talent and has given instead the gift of blather and deception,” and is especially ironic, coming from the most famous failed artist himself, Adolf Hitler.³⁰ Hitler’s rejections from the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna must have been a source of resentment and bred a philosophy of his own superiority in the arts. The Nazis succeeded in indoctrinating public opinion against modern art movements like the German Expressionists, which they were previously open-minded to in the first two decades of the 20th century, through constant discrediting and verbal (as well as physical) attacks. The Third Reich constructed the myth that Modern art was a con used by malcontent artists to fool their contemporaries.³¹

A measure of Nazi success in establishing supremacy over public opinion on culture would be the popularity and effectiveness of both Munich art exhibitions in 1937. Hitler noted how remarkably crowded the exhibits stayed.³² He attributed successful indoctrination to simple, consistent, and repetitive propaganda. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler recognized that “all

²⁷ Alastair Stooke, “The Discobolus: Greeks, Nazis and the Body Beautiful,” *BBC Culture*, March 24, 2015, [The Discobolus: Greeks, Nazis and the body beautiful - BBC Culture](#).

²⁸ See Appendix A.

²⁹ Hitler, Address on the Culture Conference, Nurnberg, 1938.

³⁰ Hitler, Speech at the Opening... in the House of German Art, 1937.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Hitler, Address on the Culture Conference, Nurnberg, 1938.

propaganda must be popular... and adjusted to the most limited audience.”³³ The less intellectuality among the audience, the more poignant appeal to emotion, and the better effectiveness of the message. The creation of a specific dialogue to attack Modern art values, insinuate against its artists, and display it in a derogatory way, all contribute to shaping public perception around “acceptable” and “degenerate” art.

The accumulative result of the Nazi attack on modern art and their projection of appropriate art was the “*Entartete Kunst* and *Great German Art Exhibitions* in the summer of 1937.³⁴ Here, the language of indictment or praise, respectively, was reflected in the art exhibitions. Art in the “*Entartete Kunst* exhibit was defined as “representational barbarism,” full of “abysmal vulgarity,” and examples of “complete lunacy.”³⁵ In lofty comparison, the *Great German Art Exhibition* afforded the public a “secluded refuge for a certain type of German dream.”³⁶ Heroic depictions of “glorious achievement,” valiant struggle, and defeat of one’s enemies were common themes.³⁷ In stark contrast, modern German art, “with its fragmented images... disordered landscapes, and its suggestions of violence,” opposed the new Nazi standard of acceptable content for the public and thus was subject to persecution.³⁸ The depictions of “absinthe drinkers, blowsy nudes, dull witted peasants... hypercritical patriots,” were antithetical to the Greco-Roman ideal of perfection and beauty and the Nazi vision of a

³³ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, translated by Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943): chapter 6. [Hitler on Propaganda \(usf.edu\)](#).

³⁴ See Appendix B.

³⁵ Guide to the “Degenerate Art” Exhibition, 1937, [GHDI - Document - Page \(ghi-dc.org\)](#).

³⁶ Henry Grosshans, *Hitler and the Artists*, 116.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

pure Aryan race which was being disseminated to the public.³⁹ Nazism could easily tap into existing German prejudices in society. Prejudices of race, cultural identity, and aesthetics could be used to manipulate public opinion against progressive, experimental, socio-political art expressivity.

If one excuses, for a moment, the perverted context in which Nazi art was produced and glorified, one can see that indeed, its formal qualities are beautiful and stylistically appealing. As citizens of Western society, like Hitler, we are taught from a young age that Greco-Roman art and sculpture are representative of idyllic and proportional beauty. What is much harder to argue, and to admit, is that Emil Nolde's *The Last Supper* of 1909, and Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* of 1498, are both inherently equal and legitimate interpretations of the same subject matter.⁴⁰ Both works merit attention and thought, but one appeals to our conditioned prejudices as being superior to the other. Nazi era art, while appealing to the eye, is devoid of radical expression in a formal (compositional) sense. German Modern art, perhaps less appealing to our conditioned aesthetic spectrum, is imbued with explosive emotive qualities, spiritual expression, and socio-political commentary that is equally as important as statues of the Greco-Roman pantheon.

Hitler's obsession with the Mediterranean aesthetic of the proportionate body and architecture, stemming from his desire to be associated with the ancient conceptions of power,

³⁹ Ibid., 9 and 68.

⁴⁰ See Appendix C.

prestige, and beauty, permeated into an obsession of appropriating specific qualities of Greco-Roman art to suit Nazi art agenda. The German arts, according to Hitler, were the inheritors and purveyors of the rich, but narrowly defined, legacy of the archaic western civilizations.⁴¹ It is a great irony that Hitler so enjoyed the art of the archaic Greeks, who famously engaged in social and political acts such as homosexual relationships, mystical cults, and constant internal warfare, which were condemned by Nazis. The Greeks presented an image far from the unifying and homogenous pursuits of the Third Reich.

Suppressive concepts around visual art instigated that art should be immediately and unquestioningly understood and not “require a pompous user manual.”⁴² Another remarkable irony reveals itself. Greek art is often deeply complex and requires extensive knowledge of mythology, culture, and social politics to understand. German Expressionism and sister art movements ironically addressed very universal topics like modernizing society, society’s ills, pain and grief, and individual strength, but in a radically divergent style. The friction of Expressionists’ desire to usher in change and modernize society competed with Nazism’s creed of uplifting the traditional past.

Prejudices in art, its stylistic expressions, its composition, and its themes, are deeply prevalent in society. A very enlightening example of prejudice against radically progressive art is offered by Alan Joshua Itkin. He reveals that the German word for “degenerate,” *entartete*,

⁴¹ Adolf Hitler, Speech on Art, Nuremberg, September 6, 1938, [Hitler Speech on Art - September 6, 1938 \(worldfuturefund.org\)](https://www.worldfuturefund.org/Hitler-Speech-on-Art-September-6-1938).

⁴² Hitler, Speech at the Opening...in the House of German Art, 1937.

translates to mean “a biological term, defining a plant or animal that has so changed that it no longer belongs to its species.”⁴³ In the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition in Munich, this terminology marked the rebellious artists as something antithetical to concepts of Germanness. Labeling right art from wrong art, or “true” German art from “diseased,” plus the encouragement of racial and cultural prejudice, allowed the Nazis to exploit an almost “unbridgeable chasm of incomprehension between the public and modern art,” creating an *us vs. them* complex.⁴⁴ Hitler recognized early on in his political career that the “receptivity of the masses is very limited.”⁴⁵ Hence, his insistence on simplistic, invariable forms of propaganda.

A large demographic of Hitler’s supporters included lower class proletariat and rural conservatives. Both groups would generally have lacked extensive education and enthusiasm to see depictions of society’s ills or metaphysical expressions. The socio-politic faction of Expressionism is jarring to the novice viewer because of its shocking confrontational and emotive qualities.⁴⁶ Expressionism does not offer pacifying beauty and sensible landscapes or romantic life. Instead, the forms are “persistent, challenging, and even sinister” which “force themselves upon us, without heroic overtones of historical consolation.”⁴⁷ The unwillingness of the German people to understand, sympathize with, or defend “degenerate” art, much in the same way they failed to stand up to other socially potent suppressions of minority groups, like

⁴³ Alan Joshua Itkin, “Restaging ‘Degenerate Art,’” 401.

⁴⁴ Mary-Margaret Goggin, “Decent’ vs. ‘Degenerate’ Art,” 85.

⁴⁵ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, chapter 6.

⁴⁶ See Appendix D.

⁴⁷ Grosshans, *Hitler and the Artists*, 125.

the Jewish community, ensured Nazi control over the cultural sphere and the art forms that would represent it.

The relationship between society and its artists is important and a revealing sphere for historical research. One can examine the relationship between cultural communities and their societies, government responses to public concerns over tradition and modernity, the conversion of art into political weapons, and the discrimination against movements that are different from orthodox institutions. The elimination of antagonistic voices to the regime, instructional hate-speech, derogatory language, and prejudiced xenophobia contributed to the denigrating attacks on Modern art movements in Nazi Germany. The institutionalized atmosphere of distrust, hate, and discrimination created under the Third Reich stands as a staunch reminder to the modern individual to celebrate, appreciate, protect, and learn from various forms of cultural and artistic expression that enrich the world we live in.

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Appendix

Appendix A:

Arno Brecker, *Berietschaft* ("Readiness"), bronze, 1937. Displayed at the House of German Art.



Appendix B – 1:

“Dadaist Section of ‘Degenerate’ Art,” 1937, photograph. *Entartete Kunst* Exhibition in Munich in the Summer of 1937. Note the overcrowding of the walls and the derogatory statements directed towards the artists, art movements, and the works themselves.



Appendix B – 2:

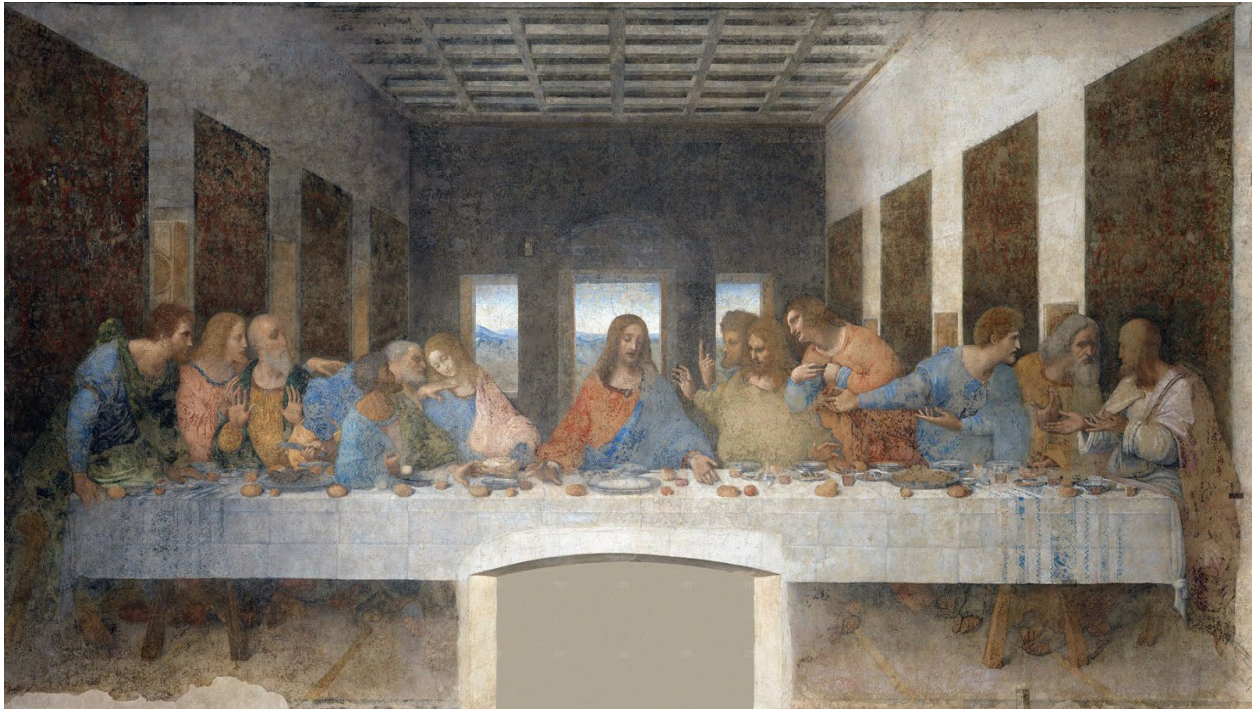
“House of German Art Exhibit,” 1937, photograph. Nazi commissioned art was made to emulate the Greco-Roman ideal in showcasing a powerful, healthy, and beautiful body.



Appendix C – 1:
Emil Nolde, *The Last Supper*, 1909, oil on canvas.

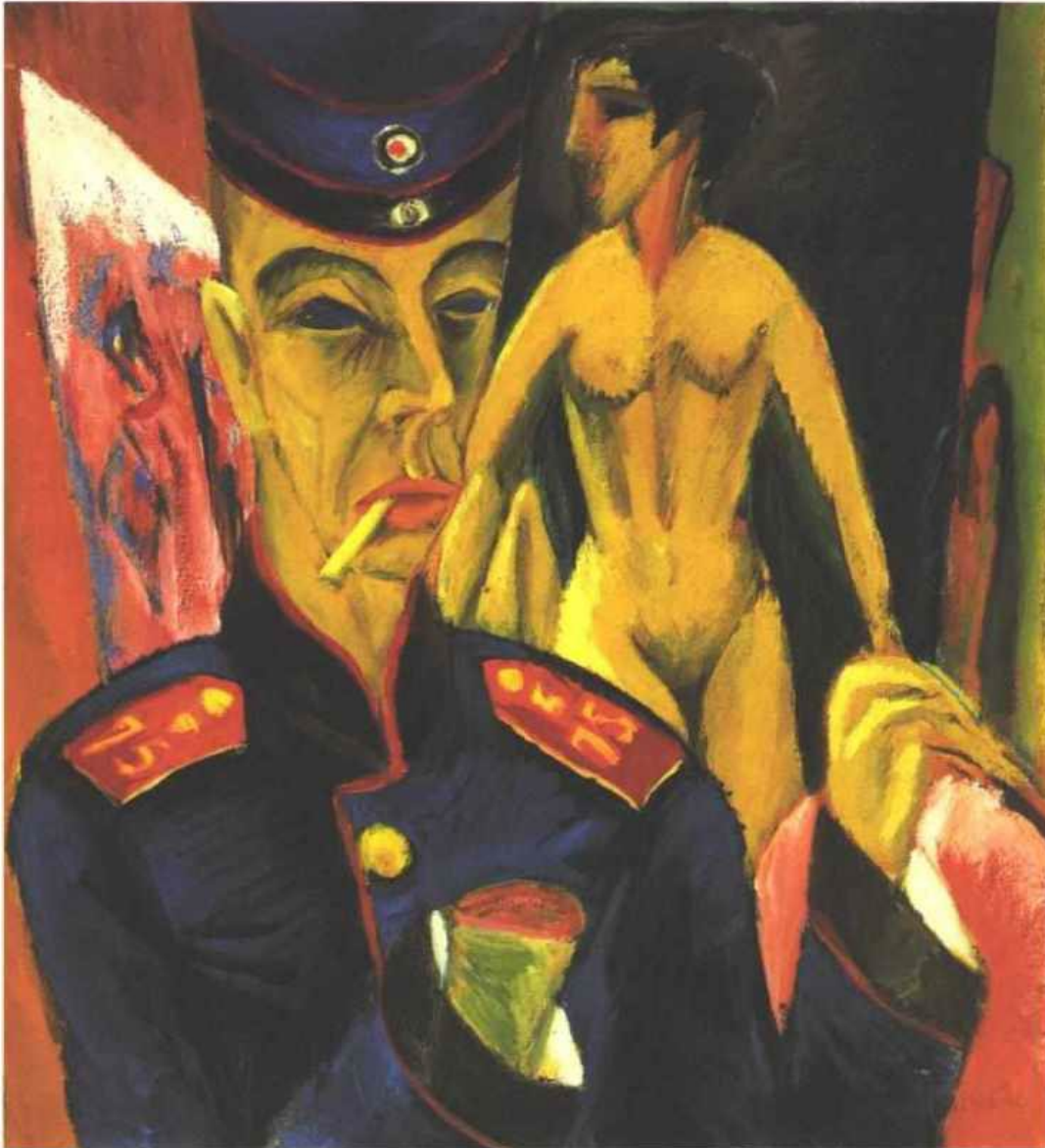


Appendix C – 2:
Leonardo da Vinci, *Last Supper*, c. 1495-1498, tempera.



Appendix D:

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. *Self-Portrait as a Soldier*, 1915, oil on canvas. Painted as a response to experiences in World War I.



Public Opinion on Big Tech and Internet Censorship

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The current marketplace of ideas for the United States and much of the rest of the world takes place on social media. Social media companies have established platforms in which we engage in communication, trade, and have organized others for political causes. Currently, social media companies have taken a more aggressive stance to protect their trademarks and their product from political extremism. However, social media companies and the platforms that they present to the world have grown in power and scope beyond what anyone could have predicted. Each social media platform has become what is the new town square. At a legacy town square, citizens gather and engage in political discourse at their local coffee shops, attend group meetings for organizations that they believe in, and buy and sell goods. The problem is now the town square is privately owned and the owner can ban or restrict anyone that they see fit for any reason and claim it is because they breached some obnoxiously long and ambiguously worded terms of service. This study seeks to gauge public opinion of this issue from five different perspectives in the form of questions presented to the public via a survey.

Literature Review

The most cherished American tradition is the ability to live one's life in the state of liberty, free from interference from outside powers. This tradition is the cornerstone of what is considered American liberalism. One potential threat to liberty in today's technological age comes in the form of censorship, where a multinational billion-dollar company can warp and

manipulate their terms of service to remove users from their platform for simply stating an opinion that the company finds distasteful. While private companies are not obliged to grant the protections of the First Amendment to its users, should these companies make more of an effort to honor the spirit of free speech? Where is the line between the spirit of free expression and a private company taking actions to protect their product?

What has really made this issue such a high-profile story is how former President Donald Trump extensively used social media platforms to spread his messages to the public rather than using a press secretary to make the statements for him. After the 2020 election, Trump repeatedly and falsely stated claims that the election was stolen and was rigged. During this time, Twitter would include a message with each of his tweets that said that his claim about election interference was not credible. After the insurrection on January 6th, Twitter and other social media outlets removed him from their platforms and banned him indefinitely. For the purposes of this study, Trump and the insurrection on January 6th will not be analyzed or discussed. The reason for this is because the situation surrounding Trump and the day of the insurrection are extreme outliers. Trump is a political figure who is so outside the median that we are likely to never have another president like him. Therefore, bringing him and his situation into the study is likely to skew the results.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Rosenzweig, Paul, Chris Riley, Mary Brooks, and Tatyana Bolton. "Donald Trump and the Facebook Oversight Board," *Report. R Street Institute*, 2021.

This topic is important because the Internet is efficiently removing radio and television from sources people use to become informed. According to Pew Research Center, eight in ten Americans get their news from digital devices.⁴⁹ This study also found that 53% of U.S. adults get their news from social media. Of that 53%, America's younger adults ages 18 through 29 account for the lion's share of social media usage at 42%. This effect is likely to increase over time. A 2019 Pew Research Center performed a study that concluded that 72% of the United States population uses some type of social media with 90% of America's young adults using social media.⁵⁰ While considering how much the Internet and social media have grown and affect political discourse, it can be logical to conclude that Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms have become the town square. Before the Internet, Americans would go to the town square to converse with one another, engage in political discourse with each other, and in some cases the town square is where justice was rendered because that is where the courthouse was. The difference between then and now is that today the town square is not owned and governed by the people, it is owned and operated by a company with shareholders. Do these companies and their owners have political preferences and policy goals that they believe in so fervently that they would be willing to weaponize their product? Even if major social media companies were to use their platforms to push a specific political agenda, this would be within their right. The Supreme Court said that corporations are entitled to the

⁴⁹ Elisa Shearer, "*More than eight-in-ten Americans get news from digital devices*," Pew Research Center, January 12, 2021, accessed April 24, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/12/more-than-eight-in-ten-americans-get-news-from-digital-devices/>

⁵⁰ "Social Media Fact Sheet," *Pew Research Center*, April 7, 2021, Accessed April 24, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/>

protection of the First Amendment⁵¹ and have the right to express their opinions on political viewpoints in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*.⁵²

With so many Americans using social media to engage with one another and use as their primary news source, this study must answer two questions. The first question to look at is, are social media companies using Internet censorship and removing users en masse? In the first month of 2021, Twitter removed 70,000 accounts that they defined as those associated with far right or extremist Q-Anon. According to the BBC, there were several times that a single individual operated multiple accounts.⁵³ This creates another unique problem. Using the historical town square analogy from earlier in the study, this is essentially like one person sending in multiple public speakers to preach a narrative in order to change public discourse. It is one thing to remove people for using a platform to spread disinformation in order to undermine the confidence of an election or to organize an insurrection upon the seat of a democracy.

It is an entirely different issue when Twitter suspends the New York Post for reporting on the Hunter Biden scandal during the 2020 election's October Surprise and issue suspensions

⁵¹ Yoshino, Kenji. "A New Birth of Freedom?: *Obergefell V. Hodges*." *Harvard Law Review*, 2015: 149-179.

⁵² Hasnas, John. "Does Corporate Moral Agency Entail Corporate Freedom of Speech?" *Social Theory and Practice* 43, no. 3 (July 2017): 589 – 612.

⁵³ "Twitter Suspends 70,000 accounts linked to QAnon," BBC, January 12, 2021, Accessed April 24, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-55638558>

if anyone else reported on the story.⁵⁴ Twitter claimed that they were acting in order to prevent hacked and inaccurate information from spreading across their platform. However, critics on the right have made the argument that there has not been a single time that Twitter has ever prevented CNN or MSNBC from reporting on a story about Donald Trump using a single or unnamed source or unverified information that cannot be corroborated. Two excellent examples of this are the Trump resistance White House staffer⁵⁵ and the now debunked story of Trump pressuring Georgia election officials.⁵⁶ This leads many people to conclude that personal bias leads to inconsistencies in how Twitter enforces its policies. If Twitter and other social media companies began restricting content based upon political preferences and to keep conversations in line with a specific narrative, then they are a danger to the social fabric of the world.⁵⁷ Standard Oil was a threat to the nation because they engaged in monopolistic business practices. Perhaps it is time to consider breaking up companies like Facebook and twitter because they engage in monopolistic business practices in the marketplace of ideas.

⁵⁴ Shannon Bond, “Facebook And Twitter Limit Sharing ‘New York Post’ Story About Joe Biden,” NPR, October 14, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/2020/10/14/923766097/facebook-and-twitter-limit-sharing-new-york-post-story-about-joe-biden>

⁵⁵ Matt Stieb, “Anonymous ‘Resistance Inside the Trump Administration’ Guy Is Former DHS Staffer Miles Taylor,” New Yorker, October 28, 2020. <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/10/anonymous-trump-resistance-guy-is-dhs-staffer-miles-taylor.html>

⁵⁶ Samantha Putterman, “What Trump told Georgia election officials,” *PolitiFact*, March 16, 2021. <https://www.politifact.com/article/2021/mar/16/what-trump-told-georgia-election-officials/>

⁵⁷ Ma, Veronica. “Propaganda and Censorship: Adapting to the Modern Age.” *Harvard International Review* 37, no. 2 (Winter 2016): 46 - 50

The second question to ask is, what are American's opinions on Internet censorship and can these social media companies be trusted to remove people from their platforms without political bias? A study conducted by Gallup used responses from 3,000 survey participants and concluded that 65% of Americans favor people being able to express their views on social media, including views that are offensive instead of restricting what people say on social media.

⁵⁸ The study also noted that there are limits to this, as the majority of respondents believed that things like child pornography, hate speech, misleading information should not be available. Do Americans have faith that the owners of their highly profitable town square can remove harmful content and foster positive civil discourse without bias? A study from Rasmussen Reports found that 68% of Americans are either less confident or not confident at all that social media companies would censor content in an unbiased manner. ⁵⁹

A strong majority of Americans enjoy engaging in social media, and for some people, social media is how they make a living. Also, Americans believe the people should be able to express their own opinions on social media while a majority of Americans are not confident in corporations determining when to censor content. The question becomes, are Americans willing to let the federal government develop guidelines for social media deplatforming? A

⁵⁸ “*Free Expression, Harmful Speech and Censorship in a Digital World*,” Gallup and The Knight Foundation, December 6, 2020. https://knightfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/KnightFoundation_Panel6-Techlash2_rppt_061220-v2_es-1.pdf

⁵⁹ “*Voters Don’t Trust Social Media Censorship*,” Rasmussen Reports, February 12, 2020. https://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/lifestyle/general_lifestyle/february_2021/voters_don_t_trust_social_media_censorship

move on the part of the federal government to develop guidelines on how social media companies are supposed to operate would mark a massive milestone in what was once the Wild West of the Internet. Unfortunately for themselves, big tech elites set the stage to have their companies broken up themselves when they conspired together to remove Parlor from the Internet. After the January 6th insurrection, both Apple and Google removed Parlor from their stores, citing moderation issues. Within twenty-four hours of Parlor's removal, Amazon Web Service removed the site's access to their servers without warning. The reasoning all of this is being done is because they claimed that the coordination for the Capitol riot took place on Parlor. However, it has come to light that Facebook may have played a larger role in the coordination of the attack than Parlor. Where is Facebook's removal? This is exactly why Americans do not trust these companies to enforce the rules of our town square. So how many Americans would like the federal government to set the rules for social media networks? A Harvard CAPS/Harris poll⁶⁰ found that a slight majority of 54% of Americans want elected officials to set in stone the rules for removal of content and access to social media. Which would also mean that 46% of Americans would like to see social media companies continue to set these rules for themselves.

There is another conflict at work in this narrative, which is the fact that breaking up big tech companies is bad for property rights for everyone. If the federal government were to step

⁶⁰ Max Greenwood, "Poll: Most Americans want legislation governing social media policies," The Hill, January 19, 2020. <https://thehill.com/policy/technology/534840-poll-most-americans-want-legislation-governing-social-media-policies>

in and break up big tech companies or legislate their actions and speech or account removal procedures, then theoretically many businesses, large and small, would be faced with the same potential outcomes. Big tech companies have not made things easy for themselves, with the Cambridge analytical scandal being just one example of big tech companies taking steps to increase their profits at the cost of privacy of their users.⁶¹ To make matters worse, major social media companies do not adhere to the same ethical standards other organizations do pertaining to personal data when it comes to profiting off of user data.⁶²

'Hypothesis

The question this study is seeking to answer is, what is the American public's perception on Internet censorship and deplatforming? To build an understanding of the terms used in this study going forward, some terms will need to be defined. First, this study focuses exclusively on social media and not on the broader Internet. This study defines censorship as the conscious action to suppress or remove comments or statements for any reason. When the term Internet censorship is used, it pertains strictly to social media. Another term that needs defining is deplatforming, which can best be described as the conscious removal of a person or an organization from a position where they can freely express their opinions or comments as it pertains to social media. The final term this study seeks to define is the term cancel culture,

⁶¹ O'Shea, Lizzie. "Invisible Handcuffs." *The Baffler* 47, (Sep – Oct 2019): 12 - 21

⁶² Richterich, Annika. "*Big Data: Ethical Debates*." University of Westminster Press. (April 13, 2018)

which is defined as the conscious and coordinated effort of removing a person from their public and private lives through ostracism and intimidation from others who hold power over that person. This effort is most commonly engaged when it is discovered that the person who is targeted to be cancelled has said or done something in their past (between the time that they are a child to present) that is deemed to be morally and socially repugnant. Cancel culture has become a very politically loaded term, recently mostly because some on the right overuse the term cancel culture to include things that are really not cancel culture, and some on the left actually like it because it tends to remove their political opponents because it is most commonly those on the right being cancelled.

The first hypothesis to be tested is whether or not Americans are concerned about Internet censorship. This study presents a two-tailed hypothesis that respondents who are identified as Democrat or left-leaning will be less concerned about Internet censorship and that respondents that are identified as Republican or right-leaning will be more concerned. This is because there is a growing narrative on the right that social media companies are taking more hostile action against Conservatives on social media. There are countless videos about Fox News pundits speaking about this and right-wing podcasters have been crying foul for years about their mistreatment on social media. This type of environment could fuel a growing fear on the right that the deck would be stacked against them. The null hypothesis would result in virtually no statistical significance between Republicans or Democrats pertaining to personal concern about Internet censorship. The reason this null hypothesis may come into fruition would be because Republican respondents have more faith or trust in the social media

institutions than what most analysts give them credit for. These people would most likely perceive that if a significant rule changes that it would be rational for the social media organization to inform their users about this rule change in order to keep their active users on their platform.

The next hypothesis to be tested comes in the form of conflict resolution or the use of the legislature to help social media companies clearly define the rules and regulations for Internet censorship. This study presents a single-tailed hypothesis that a moderate majority of identified Republicans and Democrats favor the use of the legislature to define the rules for deplatforming and censorship for social media companies. The reason Democrat respondents would favor legislature involvement would be because for three years after the 2016 presidential election, leaders in the Democrat party were advocating for exactly that because of claims that Russia had hacked or interfered with the election using disinformation on social media. Republican respondents too would likely agree that the legislature should clearly define the rules of censorship and deplatforming for these organizations because they feel under attack by the left and that their viewpoints are being suppressed in a partisan manner. The null hypothesis here is that both Republican and Democrat respondents are unsure whether or not to grant Congress this power. There is a strong possibility that the null hypothesis would present itself in this situation. This is because the one thing Americans value as much as their right to speak freely is their belief in property rights and the right that an individual or an organization has to operate their business in a manner that is in their best interest. Another key element that works to strengthen the null hypothesis is that Americans broadly speaking have

virtually no faith in Congress as a whole. As much as they are likely to distrust social media companies, they distrust the legislature even more.

The third and final hypothesis to be tested pertains to cancel culture and whether or not respondents perceive it to be a reality. This study understands that even the term “cancel culture” has become somewhat loaded recently. However, if a culture were to normalize censorship and deplatforming, and if they were to become desensitized every time a prominent pundit was to be silenced or removed from political discourse, the next logical step is actually cancel culture. If someone were to Google whether or not cancel culture is real, countless articles would populate that argue how cancel culture is actually an illusion or a false narrative developed from the right. Almost every week, serious journalists at both CNN and MSNBC talk about how there is actually no such thing as cancel culture. This study will seek to determine the existence of cancel culture based upon whether or not respondents believe it exists. This is because belief or faith in the existence of cancel culture is something that the term cancel culture shares with the dollar. The only reason the dollar has any buying power is because the global population and global monetary organizations believe it has buying power, and the same can be said for cancel culture. In terms of a hypothesis, this study has a two-tailed hypothesis which says that respondents who identify as Democrat will overwhelmingly respond in the negative and that respondents who identify as Republican will overwhelmingly respond in the positive for the exact reasons discussed above.

The null hypothesis to this question would reflect that Americans are strongly unsure how to answer the question and there would be virtually no statistical significance between Republicans and Democrats. This hypothesis would most likely occur because of two possible reasons. Firstly, respondents may either disagree with the use of term cancel culture or they may not even know what the term means. Secondly, respondents may not feel politically informed enough to be able to answer that question accurately.

Methodology

The study is seeking to find what public opinion is on the subject of internet censorship and deplatforming by social media companies. This study will be conducted in a five-part method which consists of the development of hypothesis, constructing a survey, distribution of the survey, data analysis, discussion of findings, and conclusions. The survey will be constructed and analyzed through Qualtrics. Qualtrics was selected because it was highly recommended by various academic social media influencers who specialize in the Social Sciences. Their recommendations were based upon the perceptions that Qualtrics was free, intuitive, and is easily distributed. Also, Qualtrics runs a thorough data analysis through their website at no additional cost which eliminates the need to export the data to Microsoft Excel run a data analysis.

Next is the most difficult task for any small-scale survey distribution. Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) was selected to distribute the survey because it provided the best opportunity to get a strong and diverse number of respondents from all over the United States.

MTurk is essentially a social media platform for employers to hire employees to do a various number of small-scale tasks that work towards a bigger project. In theory, this study would act as an employer and hire each respondent as a contractor and pay a respondent a small amount of money to complete the survey. While at first glance this can seem unethical and could bias responses, however, as long as the survey is constructed as to not be leading respondents to answer the study's desired response, there is actually no conflict of interest to pay someone a small amount of their time to give their honest opinion. In hindsight, it is the position of this study that this method is actually more ethical then asking someone to participate in a survey for the same amount of time and they receive no monetary compensation for their time.

Determining how much to pay each respondent turned out to be one of the more complex and ethically confounding questions that needed to be answered. First, the type of labor required to perform a survey of ten questions was determined to be low skill labor which would require no on-the-job training. The survey was tested on three separate individuals and the completion times ranged from thirty to forty-five seconds. The study is based in Oklahoma so the wage base was built on Oklahoma City because wages vary radically across the U.S. The typical starting wage for low skilled untrained labor in Oklahoma City is around \$9.50 an hour. \$9.50 an hour is the same as .00263889¢ a second, which calculates to 0.11875¢ for forty-five seconds of labor. For simplicity's sake, 0.11875 cents were rounded up 0.12¢ for each completion, or each respondent was paid 12¢ to take and complete the survey.

The study placed limitations on who could take the survey in order to ensure that all respondents' opinions would be valid in the survey. For example, the study is seeking to find public opinion for U.S. citizens, thus the study inserted a filter on MTurk to only allow U.S.-based contractors to respond. The only other filter that the survey used was age. The study filtered out anyone who is under the age of 18 because they are ineligible to vote.

Since MTurk and Qualtrics are two separate entities that work independently of each other, once a contractor was hired, MTurk would issue them a link to take the Qualtrics survey and the two sites would not communicate to verify a task was completed. It is possible for a contractor to lie to MTurk informing them that the task was completed, and they were ready to be paid when in reality they did not respond to any of the questions. To counter this, the last block that respondents would see when they accessed the survey on Qualtrics was this statement:

“Please make note of the following code. You will input it through M-Turk to indicate your completion of the study. Then click the button on the bottom of the page to submit your answers. You will not receive credit unless you click this button.”

(Random Code)

The study made Qualtrics generate a randomly generated four-digit code between 0000 – 9999. The respondent would write down their randomly generated code from Qualtrics and input that code into MTurk, then they would acknowledge that the work was completed. Once

the survey was completed, the study would compare the codes Qualtrics generated against the codes in MTurk to verify task completion before distribution of payment.

Now that the hypothesis had been developed, survey platform and method of distribution had been roughly sketched out, the next step is determining what questions would help accurately measure Americans' public opinions of Internet censorship and deplatforming. The independent variables would pertain to perception of problems and appeal of solutions. The dependent variables would be the people themselves and their how they view things positively or negatively. It is the position of this study that identifying respondent demographics and their personal predetermined political preferences would prove to be valuable tools to analyze. The following two-part questions were asked to determine political preference:

- "What is your party ID?"
- "Who did you vote for in the 2020 election?"

The question for party ID gave respondents four choices, Democrat, Republican, Independent, or Other. The question that asked respondents who they voted for in the 2020 election gave them three options of Donald Trump, Joe Biden, or other, in order to help the study more accurately place respondents in a binary category categorical system to isolate and reenforce party ID.

The next area that would help the study better identify public opinion of the respondents, is to isolate respondents by demographics, to do this this study asked respondents to identify themselves in accordance with their age, ethnicity, and gender by asking:

- “What is your age?” (options ranged by 10-year brackets)
- “What is your ethnicity?” (White, Black, Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Other)
- “What is your gender?” (Male, Female, Non-binary / third gender, Prefer not to say)

Unfortunately, respondents did not have the opportunity to mark Latino or Hispanic as an ethnicity. Qualtrics gave default settings when establishing responses on their surveys, so when asking respondents for race or ethnicity, those were the choices. Qualtrics automatically presented these choices when the survey was constructed, and this error was not discovered until the survey was live. At that point it was already too late to make changes because some respondents had already completed the survey.

Next the study settled on five questions that would help measure public opinion of Internet censorship and deplatforming:

- “How important is free speech in modern U.S. society?”
- “Does a private business have the right to refuse service to any person for any reason?”
- “Are you concerned about Internet censorship?”
- “Do you feel that the government should intervene to create clear guidelines for deplatforming?”
- “Do you believe "cancel culture" is real?”

Results

This study was fortunate to gather data from 244 respondents, which is a respectable amount, but it is not enough responses from which to draw firm and strong conclusions. Due to the study's use of MTurk and errors with the construction of the survey, there were several problems that need to be addressed. The first and most troublesome issue is that the question, "Do you feel that the government should intervene to create clear guidelines for deplatforming?" should have been worded differently. The study member who constructed the survey showed the questions to his spouse. When his spouse saw that particular question, she said, "What does deplatforming mean?" At that point in time, the survey was live and had already gathered responses. If the question were edited in the middle of collection, the data that had already been gathered would have been corrupted. This demonstrates how diligent political scientists and researchers need to be to ensure that they are using language that all respondents understand. They must also constantly take steps to ensure the accuracy of the data they gather. Another thing to remember is that it is not out of the question to define terms for respondents at the beginning of a survey.

Another problem that was discovered pertains to an additional error in the construction of the survey itself. Question number four asks respondents to identify their ethnicity. Qualtrics does not allow the survey builder to have complete autonomy easily. There are default answer options that survey builders must select and edit if necessary. When the ethnicity question was developed, the answers Qualtrics presented as the default choices were White, Black, or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander,

or other. When these choices were presented, the survey builder approved these because they were in fact a list of ethnicities. The list did not include Hispanic or Latin Americans, which account for 16.7% of the U.S. population. This error may be a key contributor for the next problem of the survey which is that the demographics of the respondents are not reflective of the U.S. population as a whole.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau,⁶³ 76.3% of the U.S. population are White or Caucasian, 80% of the respondents of this survey identify as White or Caucasian. Black or African Americans make up 13.4% of the U.S. population but are heavily underrepresented with 8% of the respondents of this survey. American Indian or Alaska natives make up 1.3% of the population but are slightly underrepresented in this survey as well, only making up 0.41% of those surveyed, or 1 respondent. Asian Americans are 5.9% of the U.S. population but are slightly overrepresented with 7.3% of respondents surveyed. Finally, native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders make up 0.2% of the total U.S. population but are overrepresented with 0.8% of the respondents who were surveyed. All things considered, with only having 244 responses, the demographics are fairly close but are still nonreflective.

Another error that was identified was that some ethnicities were in such low volume that they tended to invalidate or skew the data. This is because demographics such as Native American or Alaska Native only had one respondent. There is no way that one respondent can

⁶³ US Census Bureau, *Quick Facts*, Accessed April 17, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US#>

reflect the views of an entire ethnicity or their life experiences. Thus, viewing their perspectives as a reflection of their ethnicity as a whole must be taken with a grain of salt. This type of error is unavoidable for a study of such small funding and sample sizes and speaks to the importance of gathering as many respondents as possible in order to ensure accuracy. This is particularly important for research in Social Science. These minority ethnicities are American citizens and have viewpoints that matter. It is important that their voices and opinions be heard and accounted for.

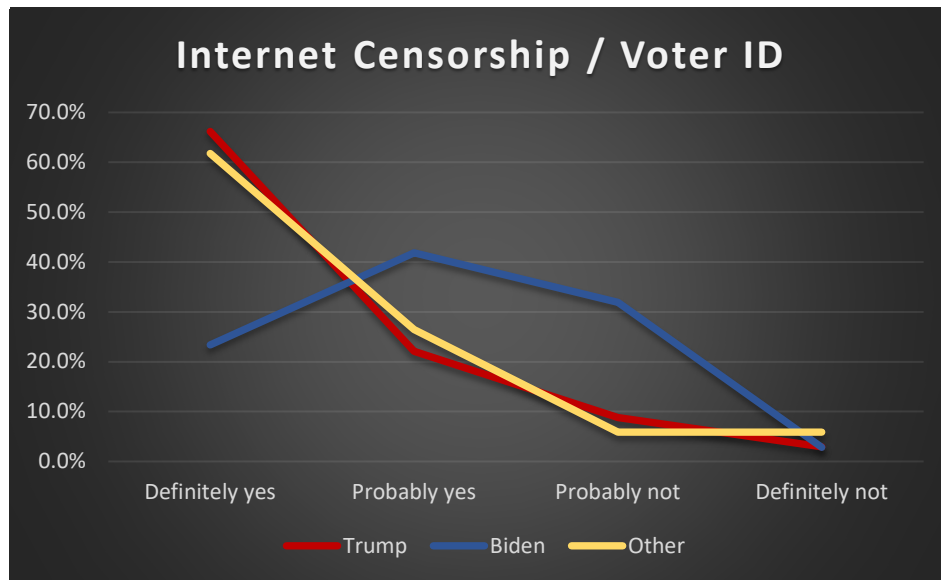
The final error with the data that was identified pertains to distribution of political ideology. In the 2020 election, Joe R. Biden Jr. won 51.3% of the popular vote and defeated Donald J. Trump, who won 46.8% of the popular vote. The respondents in this study indicated that 58% voted for Biden and 28% voted for Trump. Additionally, 14% of this study's respondents indicated that they voted for a third-party candidate. Third-party candidates won 1.8% of the popular vote in the national election. This problem could stem from a variety of unknown and unidentifiable issues such as a majority of respondents could be residing in urban areas. This could be the result of the infamous shy Trump voter effect that has plagued every polling organization over the last five years. The possibilities for the reasons behind this are endless but will remain unknown. What is clear, though, is that this sample is not reflective of the United States as a whole. However, this particular problem can be mitigated by using percentages when using party ID or voter ID rather than raw data.

In total, the study asked respondents five questions that would assist in measuring concern for deplatforming and internet censorship. The first question to be evaluated measures how important freedom of speech is in the United States. Respondents were asked, “How important is free speech in modern U.S. society?” In total, 92% of respondents said that freedom of speech is either very important or extremely important, while 8% of respondents said that free speech is either moderately important or slightly important. Less than 1% of respondents said that free speech was not important at all. One key distinction that came out of this data was that respondents who identified as Democrats or as Biden voters were less likely to select extremely important in lieu of very important than Republican voters or Trump supporters. 73.5% of Trump voters compared to 53.2% of Biden voters said free speech was extremely important and 22.1% of Trump voters compared to 37.6% of Biden voters said free speech was very important. Another interesting result is that African Americans showed hesitancy to mark free speech as extremely important. Around 52.6% of African Americans said that free speech is extremely important compared to 62.1% of white respondents. Also, 42.1% of African Americans said that free speech is very important compared to 30.3% of white Americans.

The next question that was posed to respondents was, “Does a private business have the right to refuse service for any reason?” This question in particular is relevant to Internet censorship because it gauges the public's opinion in balancing whether a private business can make decisions in their own self-interest against the interest of a consumer. Three choices were presented to respondents because the study wanted respondents to choose binarily. However,

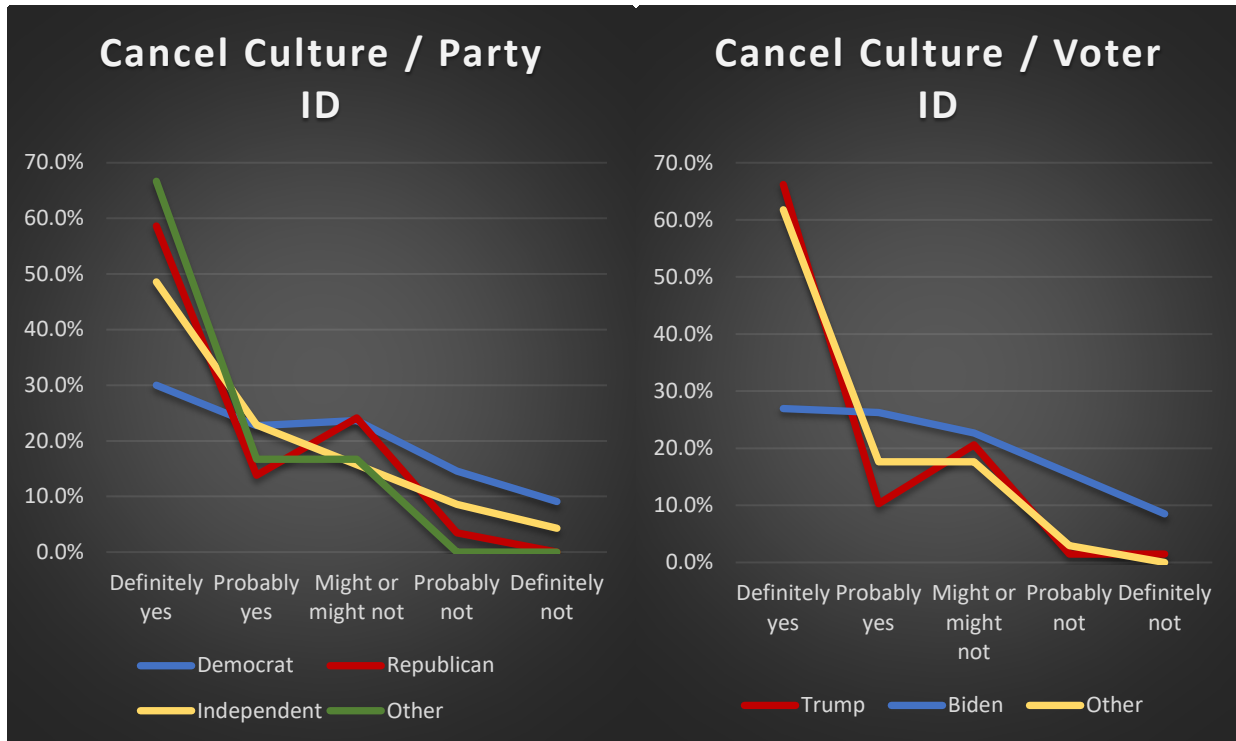
if they were unsure, there was a way out by selecting maybe. Almost half respondents said yes at 49%, 17% said no, and 34% said maybe. The strongest conflict in responses came in three key areas: party ID, ethnicity, and gender. The difference in opinion based upon party ID was the most expected, as 38.2% of Democrats responded maybe compared to 17.2% of Republicans. Females were more likely to respond with maybe than males, with 40.4% of females compared to 25.7% of males. The most surprising statistic pertained to ethnicity, with over half of Asian Americans responding maybe at 55.6% with 38.9% responding yes and 5.6% responding no.

The next question targets a key hypothesis of the study and the principal aspect of the study directly with the question, “Are you concerned about Internet censorship?” Three in four respondents indicated that they are concerned about Internet censorship with 75% responding with either definitely yes or probably yes and 25% responding with probably not or definitely not. Also, while a majority of Democrats are concerned about Internet censorship, the degree of concern is far less than Republicans or Independents. Over half of Republican respondents and exactly half of Independents responded “definitely yes” they are concerned, compared to 25.5% of Democrats. This effect is demonstrated again in voting preference, where 66.2% of Trump voters and 61.8% of third-party voters are “definitely yes” concerned, compared to 23.4% of Biden voters. One unexpected statistic that was shown pertains to race. Black or African American respondents were the least concerned with Internet censorship, with 31.6% responding in the negative compared to 26.2% of Caucasians responding in the negative.



After a majority of Americans responded that they were concerned about censorship they were presented with one solution in which to give their opinion. Respondents were asked, “Do you feel that the government should intervene to create clear guidelines for deep platforming?” The total respondents who indicated that they “might or might not” be supportive of this move was 37%. Respondents who viewed this proposal positively were 34%, whereas 29% of the respondents perceived this proposal negatively. Interestingly, Democrats and Biden supporters were the most unsure about whether or not to use the legislature, with over 46% indicating that they were unsure and 35% were either definitely or probably supportive. This comes in stark contrast with Republican respondents who were much more aggressive, with only 24% indicating that they were unsure and exactly half of Republicans indicating that they were definitely or probably supportive. It should also be noted that the hypothesis pertaining to this question was incorrect. A majority of Democrats and Independents were either unsure or did not support the legislature stepping in. Furthermore,

Republicans were equally ununified and were unable to scrape out a majority. It is likely that the level of indecisiveness could be a direct result of the poor word choice of the question.



The final question that was asked focused on this paper's third hypothesis and centered around the controversial term "cancel culture." The question was presented with a key focus upon whether or not the respondents perceive this concept to be real. Respondents were asked, "Do you believe that 'cancel culture' is real?" Surprisingly, 64% of all respondents indicated in the affirmative or either definitely or probably yes, with 21% being unsure and only 15% responding definitely or probably no. As predicted, 66.2% of Trump voters responded definitely yes, and 27% of Biden voters responded definitely no. However, 26.2% of Biden voters also responded "probably yes," which means 53.2% believe cancel culture exists. This trend extends across all age groups, ethnicities, and genders. This paper proposed a two-tailed hypothesis that theorized Democrat respondents would strongly indicate that they did not

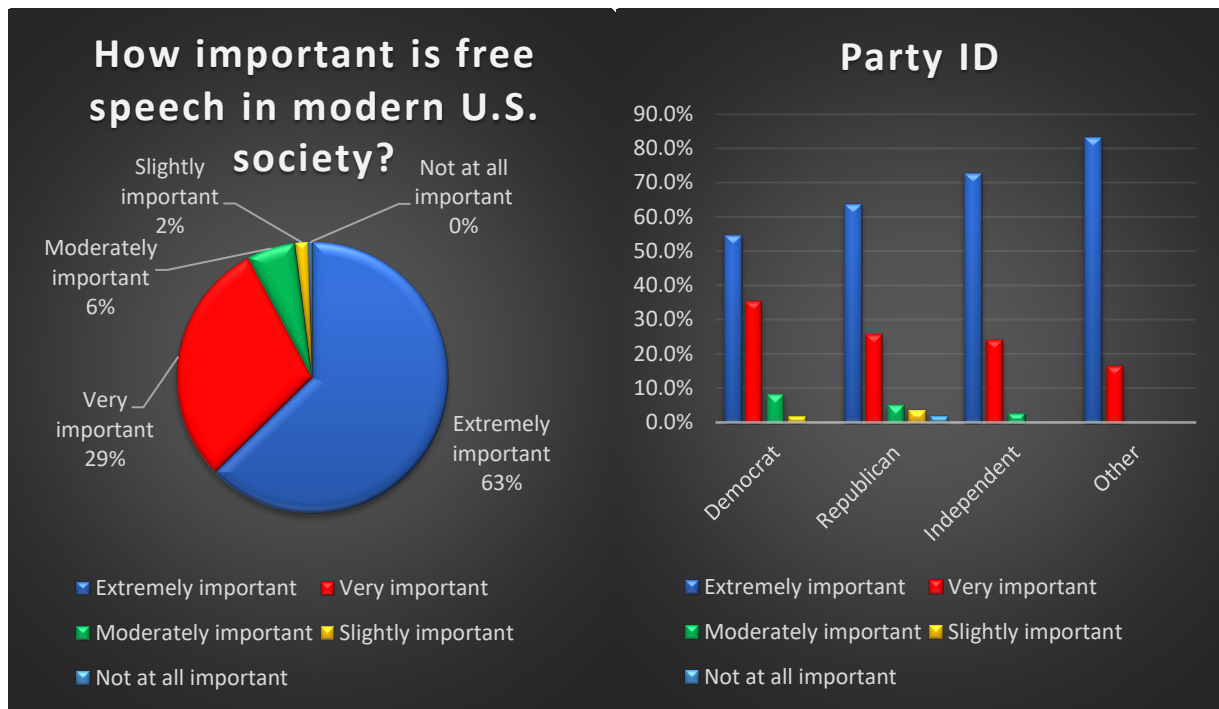
believe cancel culture exists and Republicans would indicate that they did believe cancel culture exists. This paper was incorrect because a small majority of Democrat respondents indicated that they do believe cancel culture exists.

Discussion

From this data, a few things can be asserted. First, an extremely strong majority of Americans clearly still view freedom of speech as extremely or very important. What the respondents consider the meaning of freedom of speech is unclear. It could mean freedom of expression, the freedom for citizens to say what they want without government oppression, or the American spirit of liberal good faith discourse. Respondents could mean one, multiple, all, or none of those definitions and future research would benefit from seeking to discover what the term freedom of speech means to Americans. What is clear, though, is that this was the most strongly agreed upon view that crossed racial, generational, gendered, and ideological boundaries.

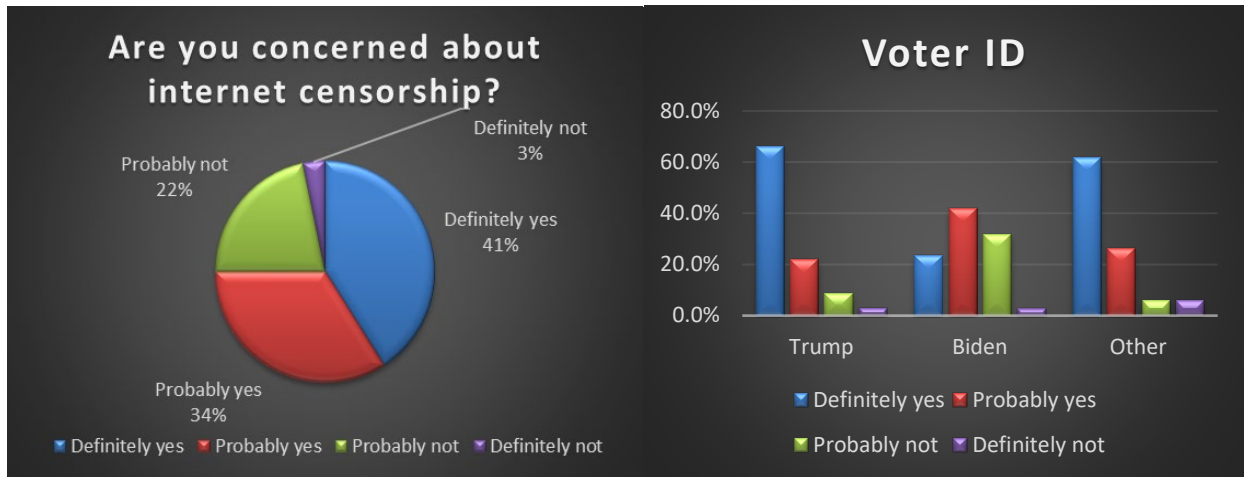
One finding that was interesting is that 62.1% of Caucasian respondents found freedom of speech to be extremely important and 30.3% found freedom of speech to be very important. Compare those statistics against 52.6% of African Americans who believe freedom of speech to be extremely important and 42.1% believing freedom of speech to be very important. This study only had 19 African American respondents, so conclusions and speculation are extremely limited as to why this would occur, but future researchers really need to look into this because it is critically important. Without the freedom of speech, there may have not been the abolition

of slavery or a Montgomery Bus Boycott. Without the freedom of speech, we would not know the names of Fredrick Douglas, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, or had a Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. This fundamental right granted to all American citizens at birth should be especially important to African Americans right now, as our nation is in a reckoning with racial justice and police brutality. According to this data, African Americans still value freedom of speech, just not to the same degree as Caucasians, and it cannot be stressed enough how important the answer to that question is.



The second thing that can be asserted is that a strong majority of Americans are concerned about Internet censorship, with 75% of respondents indicating a yes and 25% of respondents indicating a no. Trump voters predictably showed the highest level and degree of concern. This was expected, considering the former president's removal from all social media platforms following his incitement of the January 6th insurrection, a move that some world leaders, such as Angela Merkel and Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, have called problematic.

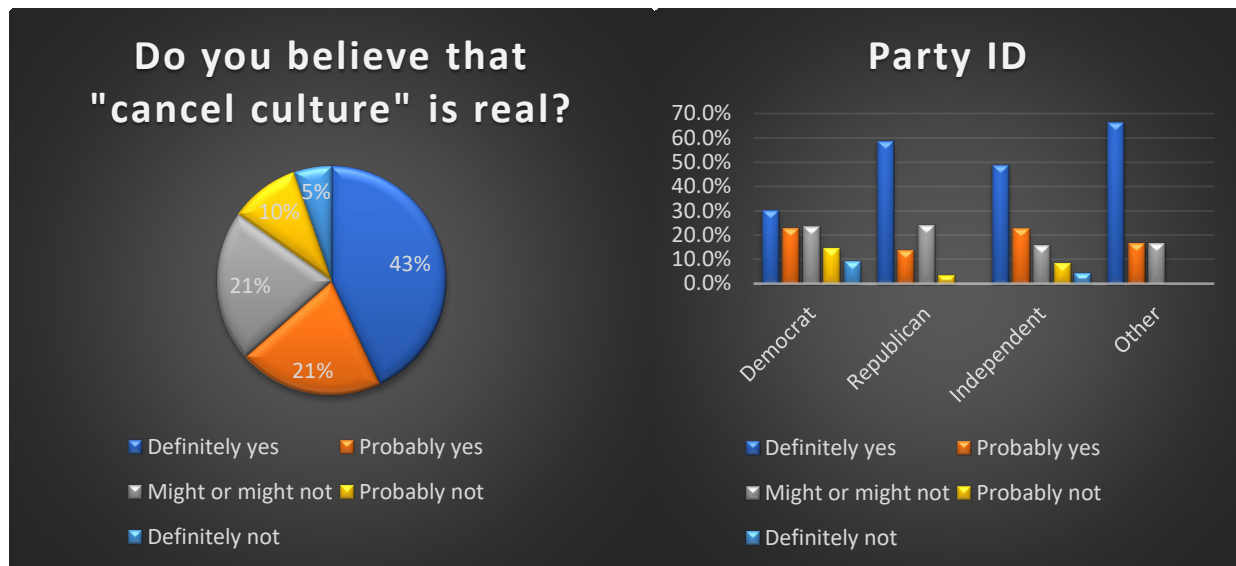
Other world leaders, such as British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, have acknowledged that they see the rationality behind it but say that these standards must be consistent and transparent. Eduardo Bolsonaro made the statement that, “A world where Maduro is on social media, but Trump is suspended cannot be normal.”



Of the respondents who voted for Biden, 65% indicated that they were concerned about Internet censorship but to a lesser degree than Republicans. While 66.2% of Trump voters were definitely concerned, only 23.4% of Biden voters were definitely concerned. However, 41.8% of Biden voters were probably concerned, compared to 22.1% of Trump voters were probably concerned. Biden voters had a large number of probably not concerned responses with 31.9% compared to 8.8% of Trump voters. All of this demonstrated that the study’s primary hypothesis was correct.

One of the most surprising discoveries from this question is that one would assume that Biden voters would have a much higher percentage of respondents indicating that they were definitely not concerned about Internet censorship. However, the percentage of Trump voters and Biden voters who responded with definitely not concerned is almost identical, with 2.9% of

Trump voters responding with definitely not concerned, compared to 2.8% of Biden voters responding the same. This could mean several things, one of which is that respondents may perceive social media companies as applying censorship standards unequally between the left and the right, as Johnson and Bolsonaro previously pointed out. Inconsistency and perceived favoritism can absolutely erode trust and sow doubt. Another interesting aspect of this question is that of the 2.8% of respondents who indicated the least concern with Internet censorship, 75% of them were women. Admittedly, this study only had eight respondents who selected that option, which is not nearly enough to make assumptions or draw conclusions, but this could prove fruitful for future researchers.

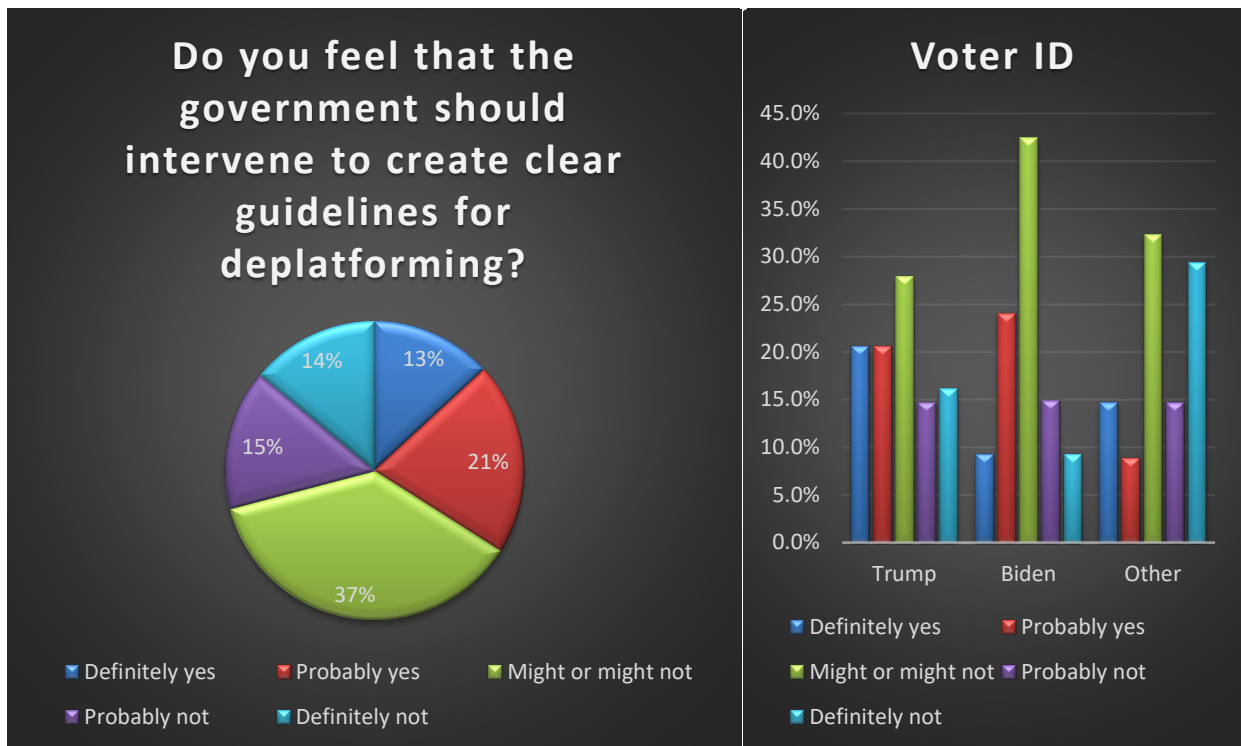


The third issue that can be asserted is that a majority of Americans do believe that cancel culture exists. 64% of Americans responded that cancel culture definitely or probably exists, compared to 15% that said cancel culture definitely or probably does not exist. This study hypothesizes that Democrat respondents would overwhelmingly respond in the negative and Republican respondents would overwhelmingly respond in the positive. However, the

study was wrong to think that Democrat respondents would be negative. When analyzing the respondents who were definitely sure cancel culture exists, only 30% of Democrats indicated that opinion compared to 58.6% of Republicans, 48.6% of Independents, and 66.7% of respondents who identified as other. Democrats then went and broke the halfway point for positive responses with 22.7% responding probably yes. Democrats also had the highest response rate for the definitely does not exist response, not as high as one might expect with 9.9%, but compared to a shocking 0% Republican, only 4.3% of Independents, and 0% other. Respondents who were unsure did take a very prominent role for the first time in this study with Republicans surprisingly having the most at 21.4%, followed by Democrats with 23.6%, other with 16.7%, and Independents with 15.7%. Future researchers would benefit from looking at how respondents define cancel culture and whether or not they view it as a positive or a negative thing. Current mainstream media outlets grant a negative connotation to cancel culture but it does not have to be negative. There are legitimate arguments for both sides.

The fourth and final claim that can be asserted from this study is that Americans in general are uneasy about letting the legislature create guidelines for deplatforming or regulate Internet censorship. The uncertainty and difficulty that respondents had uniting decisively could stem from the problems with the phrasing of the question as discussed earlier. Difficulty could also stem from the reality that they see for a viable and effective weapon that they do not want the government legislating. Several nations, including America's rivals such as Russia, China, and Iran, weaponized social media in the past in an effort to influence the outcome of U.S. elections. The thought of openly and legally handing Mitch McConnell, Chuck Schumer,

Nancy Pelosi, or Marjorie Taylor Greene the theoretical levers of power of public opinion should be troubling for everyone, no matter what their political preference. Or it could simply be that Americans are not enthusiastic about the thought of the federal government regulating social media. This study hypothesized that a moderate majority of Republicans and Democrats would favor the use of the legislature to establish rules for deplatforming and censorship, but this was simply not the case at all. A majority overall, by party or even by voter preference, could not be formed by either the respondents who viewed the use of the legislature positively or negatively. The only unifying variable that respondents were able to find was that they might or might not support the proposal.



Conclusion

In conclusion, there was several key areas that Americans had a unified response, the most notable was thaat Americans still hold very high value in supporting freedom of speech

and freedom of expression. This is excellent for our Democracy, and shows that this great Democratic experiment has retained its resilience through the tests and challenges it has undergone. Secondly, Americans do not have confidence that social media companies and big tech are able to regulate or moderate the digital town halls which our society operates and they are concerned about the weaponization of our marketplace of ideas for political purposes. However, Americans are just as uneasy about letting the legislature set guidelines for social media companies pertaining to censorship and deplatforming.

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Juvenile Justice in an International Context

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Around the world, there are children detained, punished, and even imprisoned for crimes all over the spectrum. For example, some delinquent acts include disobeying their parents and underage drinking while others are burglary and attempted murder. It is up to the jurisdiction of every country and state to develop the set of standards that dictate procedures for juveniles after the offense. Youth crime has been a growing concern internationally for a very long time now because there are so many different variables, legal frameworks, and workforces that affect the success or failure of the juvenile justice systems (Young, et. al., 2017). By taking a global perspective on juvenile justice, it is possible to compare the approach on the multidisciplinary nature of the field with the approach from the United States.

Juvenile justice is the area of criminal law and justice only pertaining to young persons. The juvenile justice system is made of several components that focus on laws, policies, and procedures all accustomed to children offenders because of views that youth are less culpable than adults (Abrams et. al., 2018). One of the most important parts of establishing a juvenile justice system is defining a juvenile. Generally, a juvenile is defined by multiple things: age, emotional state, intellectual maturity, and overall human development which is more clearly defined under The Age of Criminal Majority (Abrams et. al., 2018). Age determines social expectations especially in the context of global humanity. Because of this, there are different

expectations, behaviors, and levels of responsibility from children than from adults. Most places around the world set the age for maturation at 18 while other places are either set above or below. Setting this age of being lower than 18 to fall under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court is the same setting for countries such as Cuba, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Hong Kong, the Philippines along with other countries (*Children Behind Bars*, 2016). The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice, which is also known as The Beijing Rules, is a resolution that recognizes the importance of setting an age of criminal responsibility in accordance with the child's emotional, developmental, and cognitive maturity (Abrams et. al., 2018). In the resolution, it defines a juvenile as "a child or young person who, under the respective legal systems, may be dealt with for an offense in a manner which is different from an adult." It is hard to decipher at an international level as a whole because as seen in the definition of a juvenile by the Beijing Rules, it is under the jurisdiction of the respective legal systems to decide what and who is appropriate for the Juvenile system. Youth, defined by the United Nation ranges between 15-24 years of age (*United Nations Fact*, n.d.).

Along with defining a juvenile, it is important to determine rules and procedures after the juvenile is deemed fit for the system. In developing countries that do not have a strong enough juvenile justice system, young people are found in places of detention that are inappropriate for their age and development (*United Nations Fact*, n.d.). Following that fact, international law states the children must receive sentences proportionate to the conditions and severity of their crimes, as well as, taking into consideration the individual needs of the child by making sure they are detained or incarcerated for the shortest time (*Children Behind*

Bars, 2016). The global scope of the issues of defining juvenile delinquency has elicited a mixed reaction from governments and the media to demand better rehabilitation and support but also on the other hand there are voices urging for harsher punishment through more punitive approaches.

This differing view on juvenile justice around the world and the demand for justice, led to nearly all the countries voluntarily organizing themselves and fighting for human rights in all aspects. The United Nations has four major efforts to develop international standards relating to juvenile delinquency which are: The Convention on the Rights of a Child (1990), the Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice ("Beijing Rules," 1985), the Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty (1990), and the Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency ("Riyadh Rules," 1990). These four efforts give an age limit for juveniles, establishes protections against cruel and capital punishments, and promote a child's reintegration into society. The rules also outline how the deprivation of a juvenile's liberty should be the last resort and for the shortest amount of time as possible. There also must be training provided for juvenile justice officers and facilities to make sure adequate care is given. Guidelines point out the importance and roles of the family, school, community, media, legislation, and juvenile justice administration to hold everyone accountable in developing children.

There are three general principles and philosophies of the juvenile justice system which are rehabilitative, due process, and punitive. These principles lay down the foundation for the

system. The first and the underlying philosophy for the juvenile justice system is rehabilitative, which suggests that delinquency is a symptom of underlying family problems that just needed treatment for the welfare of the child (Dammer & Albanese, 2014). This type of justice was first seen in the United States and the founding philosophy was termed *parens patriae*. Some examples of countries that are frequently credited for having a strong welfare process are Belgium and France because they placed education and rehabilitation at the center of youth justice reform (Young, et. al., 2017). New Zealand is another great example because they established an internationally praised system of Family Group Conferencing. As the juvenile justice system evolved especially in places like Western Europe there was a shift toward a system that focused on the legal rights of the child. In other words, under the due process philosophy, the system needed to follow procedures that ensured the juveniles were dealt with fairly during interactions with criminal justice officials and that their legal rights as citizens were protected. The last shift happened when there was a rise in crime rates in several countries including the US (Dammer & Albanese, 2014). These high crime rates along with the poor success in rehabilitation led to the urgency for more punishment. This is the last philosophy called the punitive approach because the main goal was crime control, and it served the best interests of the public instead of the juvenile.

The two philosophies of rehabilitative and due process are widely held in comparison to the punitive philosophy. Even though punitive treatment is not necessarily recommended, some countries do utilize it. For example, the United States, at times, has resorted to treating juveniles as adults under the law because of the severity of their crimes. On the other hand,

countries like China and Pakistan have steered clear from punitive measures (Dammer & Albanese, 2014). There is, however, a general agreement that states should invest in a comprehensive set of welfare provisions to emphasize protection, care, rights, and treatment for children. (International Human Rights, 2004)

The United States has one of the most extreme and punitive criminal justice systems worldwide because there is far more violence, punishment, and incarceration for juveniles than is found in most other nations. Although the system is harsh, it still takes on a rehabilitative and due process approach for many juveniles. The first juvenile court was established in 1899 and it had the best interests of the child in mind under the doctrine *parens patriae* which means that the state could act as a parent. Shortly after the establishment, there were concerns for due process. In response, states like Massachusetts and California moved away from the incarceration of juveniles and instead made sure the courts offered a continuing ethos of rehabilitation (Young, et. al., 2017). All these efforts were short-lived because as crime rates went up for juveniles, and as the public and political platforms demanded a harsher justice system, the US made a shift to a punitive position. This was done so by changing laws, the severity of penalties for juvenile courts, and a lower age threshold for juveniles to be tried in adult courts (Young, et. al., 2017). Now the United States juvenile justice system differs from other countries in multiple ways because of youth as young as 16 can automatically be tried as an adult while other countries are persistent in mitigating the penalties (Abrams et. al., 2018). In comparison to other places around the world, it is appropriate to say that foreign nations view the US juvenile justice system as too harsh, cruel, and hard on the youth.

When looking into juvenile crime rates and statistics it is easier to see the similarities and differences between the United States from other countries. Right away the differences are evident because when there was a significant rise in crime rates in the US, there was a significant drop in countries like Canada and England at the same time (Dammer & Albanese, 2014). In some parts of the world, children are forced to take on more responsibilities than in other parts because of the development and state of their cultures and societies. These aspects affect the juvenile crime rates because in some third world countries the children are already taking on sibling care, work, marriage, and childbearing roles while other children, like in the United States, are mostly fully dependent on their parents (Natarajan, 2011).

The United Nations also reports other statistics, like between two-thirds and three-quarters of all offenses committed by juveniles are members of gangs or criminal groups (*United Nations Fact*, n.d.). Other crime rate reports indicate that in 2010 the US has over 6,000 children detained for status offenses while in other countries the numbers are much lower. There are also trends in gender. In Saudi Arabia, girls are more likely to be jailed and imprisoned than boys, while in Peru children face criminal charges for consensual sex, and Chile charges girls who seek abortion (*Children Behind Bars*, 2016). These differences exist in the juvenile justice system because of the differences in culture, politics, and economic resources available to the youth.

To examine international juvenile justice further I will examine three different countries individually in comparison to the United States. The United Kingdom is a member of the United Nations like the US and therefore also follows the Beijing Rules. Youth in England that are under the age of 18 can be tried in adult courts when the offense committed is serious enough to be deemed fit by the governing body. Children under age ten cannot be prosecuted for any kind of offense, those ages 10-13 can only be prosecuted for serious crimes, and youth 14 and older can be tried as adults. Overall, this is similar to the American system. Another aspect like the United States' system is that all juvenile court proceedings are held privately (Dammer & Albanese, 2014).

A country whose system is rather different to that of the United States is China. Although China also part of the United Nations it varies from the US system. Reflecting on the rules of the UN agreements, China passed its first comprehensive law to provide systematic protection of minors in 1991 (Dammer & Albanese, 2014). It was not until about ten years later when there were more laws passed focusing on the prevention of juvenile delinquency through treatment, education, and protection. The juvenile courts hear cases from youth ages 14-18 and none of them can be tried as an adult. China uses a combination of both rehabilitative and due process models for its juvenile justice system, which they call a "double process." China's system is also informal in the way that they utilize non-judicial approaches for rehabilitation and work-study schools.

The last country compared to the United States is the juvenile justice system of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is significantly different because there is no separate juvenile justice system from the regular, adult system (Dammer & Albanese, 2014). Therefore, there is no defined age of majority and youth is not considered in the court cases as a mitigating factor. The UN has expressed concern for the rights of children, women, and non-Muslims because of the nation's legal discrimination. Saudi Arabia has essentially failed to live up to the rules and agreements set forth by the United Nations. It is assumed that Saudi Arabian Islamic law has pressured the judges into making decisions based on trying to preserve religious purity.

In conclusion, studying comparative criminal justice is important because understanding the differences as well as similarities internationally helps strengthen the systems especially in a juvenile context. The United Nations plays a big role in the juvenile justice systems across the world because the rules and agreements set multiple standards for almost all countries to follow. Although international systems differ from one another in various ways they all are developed and carried out on the same philosophies and foundations. There is still much improvement needed for the juvenile justice system in the United States, as well as the systems all around the world. Such systems need to keep in mind that the best approach to make future advances in the juvenile system is by ensuring the best interests of the child.

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