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The role of national identification and system justification

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Introduction

In recent decades, incidental news exposure has attracted large attention from communication scholars around the world. The increasing availability of news on different platforms such as TV, newspapers, radio, billboards, posters, public transport displays, etc. has changed how people get information not only on purpose but also unintentionally. With the proliferation of the Internet and new media technologies, chances of stumbling across news accidentally have increased even further. This is so much that communication scholars have coined the term “ambient news” to convey the omnipresent and pervasive nature of news in today’s society (Hargreaves & Thomas, 2002; Hermida, 2010). It has become important, therefore, to study not only intentional news consumption but also incidental news exposure reinforced by the ambient news environment.

Purposeful news consumption as an important way of getting information about current events and public affairs has been studied broadly in relation to many political outcomes such as political and civic participation (e.g., Norris, 2000; Bachmann & Gil de Zúñiga, 2013.), political trust and distrust (e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1996; Avery, 2009; Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre, & Shehata, 2016), social and political efficacy (e.g., Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Tewksbury, Hals, & Bibart, 2008), political interest (e.g., Strömbäck & Shehata, 2010; Boulianne, 2011), and so on. However, incidental news exposure and its political effects have been studied less, especially in non-Western societies.

When it comes to authoritarian regimes, such as China and Russia, where the political and the media systems are organized in very different ways, incidental news exposure has received much less attention. One common feature of these regimes is that governmental institutions to a greater or lesser extent restrict media freedom and regulate Internet content (Boas, 2006; Vendill Pallin, 2017; Farnsworth, 2011). While in Western societies journalists serve as watchdogs over elected officials, under President Putin, journalists in Russia have been assisting the elites to promote nationalist news discourse

and build an image of a strong development state (Jakubowicz & Sükösd, 2008). Similar has been happening in China under the Chinese Communist Party — patriotic and nationalist rhetoric has been used by the controlled media as an instrumental manipulation to augment the party's legitimacy (Zhao, 2000). In restricted media environments, citizens of both countries are highly likely constantly and unintentionally exposed to the nationalist discourse and mostly positive information about their government.

Another commonality both countries share is that their citizens seem to trust their leadership on a continuous basis despite increasing control, surveillance, and other unfavorable actions exercised by their governments. Russian people have been persistently supporting Putin and his allies in elections for as long as 20 years now, while only a few protesters showed their discontent with the regime. Even less protest or disapproval of the government has been seen in China for the past 30 years. System justification theory sheds light on this phenomenon by offering a psychological explanation on why people perceive the system they belong to as legitimate and fair even if it works against their own interests (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost, 2019). An important antecedent of system justification beliefs is national identification, which in the case of China and Russia is constructed by implementing patriotic and nationalist news discourse on a daily basis. This study is concerned with its possible impact not only on those who are interested in politics and actively consume news but also those who encounter information about current events and public affairs accidentally.

When it comes to Western societies, the literature examined incidental news exposure more extensively, especially in the United States (e.g., Tewksbury, Weaver, & Maddex, 2001; Kim, Chen, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2013). However, it has not been studied in relation to political trust or any mediating mechanism that leads to trust in the government. In a democratic country like the United States, the freedom of the speech is critical for the society where journalists function as watchdogs of the public interest, and citizens gain

access to a wide range of diverse information. It is, therefore, valid to expect a high degree of pluralism in news coverage across all media platforms functioning independently of sources of power. However, with the rise of populist nationalism across liberal democracies, the visibility of nationalist ideas and rhetoric became more prominent in the news coverage in the United States, e.g. during Donald Trump's presidential campaign, Brexit, or global refugee crisis (Bonikowski, 2016; Kellner, 2016; Anderson-Nathe & Gharabaghi, 2017). Therefore, it is possible that the US public could be exposed to nationalist news discourse incidentally. The question is whether it is enough to have an effect on national identification and system justification beliefs in order to affect peoples' political trust.

This study proposes a serial mediation model that might help to determine whether mere incidental news exposure can have an impact on political trust in authoritarian states like China and Russia through strengthening people's national identification which in turns contributes to shaping their system justification beliefs, which finally leads to greater levels of trust in the government and the president. Additionally, the question of whether the same mediation model might work in a democratic society like the United States where nationalist rhetoric has become more prominent is addressed. Furthermore, this study attempts to analyze the results from a comparative perspective to provide a deeper understanding of the mediating mechanism and fill in a gap of the current Western-dominant research on incidental news exposure.

Incidental news exposure and national identification

While some people are actively seeking news on a regular basis, some are not that interested in being informed about current events and public affairs. However, oftentimes when people are using media for reasons not necessarily related to information seeking, in the process they end up exposed to various news content anyway (e.g., Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992; Erdelez, 1995). The main characteristic of this type of information acquisition is that it occurs at a specific moment in time and tends to be passive and unexpected (Erdelez, 1999). In this study, incidental news exposure is defined as encountering or coming across news and information on current events and public issues while watching TV, listening to the radio, reading a newspaper, on social media, or the Internet.

In the United States, incidental news exposure has been associated with several political outcomes such as gaining political knowledge (Tewksbury, Weaver, & Maddex, 2001), generating internal political efficacy (Ardèvol-Abreu, Diehl, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2019), fostering heterogeneous political discussion (Yoo & Gil De Zúñiga, 2019), and taking part in political activities online and offline (Kim, Chen, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2013; Yamamoto, & Morey, 2019; Yoo & Gil De Zúñiga, 2019). While in China, incidental exposure to news on social media was found to be connected to increased support for the government's foreign policymaking (Wang & Cai, 2018).

Unlike the democracies, where the media operates without restraint or censorship, authoritarian regimes tend to restrict media freedom and censor communicated content, be it for traditional news media, social media, or the Internet as a whole. The Russian government, for instance, waging a campaign to gain complete control over the Internet in the country, so the public's activity is constantly monitored, and the government has an option to shut down the Internet access when necessary (Duffy, 2015). The situation is

more serious in China, where the media and the Internet have been under ever-increasing state's control for many years (e.g., Guo, Cheong, & Chen, 2007).

Scholars argue that under the control of the Chinese Communist Party, news media in China acts as primary agents in delivering nationalism through emphasizing national unity and pride in the news (He, 2018; Huang & Lee, 2003; Shen & Guo, 2013). Nationalism as a schema of thoughts that frames individual's aspiration to feel a sense of belonging to a nation (Guibernau, 2013) in this sense works as an instrumental manipulation exercised by the Chinese elite (Zhao, 2000). New media was not left aside in the party's endeavor to direct public nationalist energy to enhance its own legitimacy (Zhao, 2004). It even gave a rise to "cyber-nationalism" with a pro-regime character in China (Tok, 2010). The term is also known as "digital nationalism" in the case of Russia, where it aims to "bolster the country's resurgent great power self-identification" (Budnitskiy, 2018, p. 7).

Human beings have a psychological need to experience a sense of belongingness to a group or a community (Maslow, 1943). There are different approaches to satisfy this need. Agenda melding argues that people can move toward groups by adopting agendas from various media and through learning issues and values of the community in order to avoid the dissonance of being alone (Shaw, McCombs, Weaver, & Hamm, 1999). Incidental news exposure is one of the ways to satisfy this need as it provides a possibility to learn about important issues of a community, though passively and unintentionally. In other words, if people are constantly exposed to patriotic and nationalist sentiment through different media channels, they can feel more affiliated with others in a large community – the nation.

According to Anderson (2006), nation is an "imagined political community" members of which do not necessarily know each other but believe that they share cultural,

social, and historical commonalities. Moreover, they identify themselves as part of the same nation. In this study, national identification is defined as “the categorization of people within a country as members of a national in-group, regardless their class, ethnicity, and so forth” (Vargas-Salfate, Paez, Liu, Pratto, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2018, p. 4). National identification as a form of social identification can be cultivated by the state or media in a top-down direction (Anderson, 2006) or by ordinary citizens in a bottom-up direction by means of social media (Chen, Su, & Chen, 2019).

The role of incidental news exposure in the construction of national identification is crucial for China and Russia where the media and the Internet to a greater or lesser extent are censored and regulated by the government (Boas, 2006; Vendill Pallin, 2017; Farnsworth, 2011). It means that the citizens of these countries are very likely to be unintentionally exposed to nationalist discourse on traditional media, social media, or while browsing the Internet whether they want it or not. This experience fosters gratification of the need to belong to a large community, in this case the need for national identification. Therefore, the following hypotheses will be tested:

H1a: Incidental news exposure will be positively associated with national identification in China.

H1b: Incidental news exposure will be positively associated with national identification in Russia.

Given that the state’s control over the Internet is stricter in China, it is assumed that the public in Russia will be incidentally exposed to more diverse news. Russian bloggers, for instance, were found to be exposed to more independent, international, and oppositional news content than Russian Internet users in general, and far more so than non-Internet users, who mostly consume state-controlled federal TV channels (Etlin,

Alexanyan, Kelly, Faris, Palfrey, & Gasser, 2010). Consequently, this indicates a weaker but still positive connection between incidental news exposure and national identification in Russia.

In the United States, however, the relationship might not be as prominent. Even though the visibility of nationalist ideas and rhetoric has become more common with the rise of populist nationalism across liberal democracies, it is not as prevalent as in authoritarian regimes. Although the American public is considered to be patriotic and showing strong national attachment especially in the face of a grave crisis (e.g., Li & Brewer, 2004), the media environment in the United States differs drastically from that in mainland China and Russia. For example, according to the 2019 World Press Freedom Index, the United States is ranked 48th while Russia is placed at 149th and China at 177th out of 180 countries.¹ Being watchdogs for the public, covering stories that should be covered, verifying facts, helping people, and giving them a chance to express their views are considered to be fundamental tenets of journalism in the United States (Gil de Zúñiga, & Hinsley, 2013). Therefore, American citizens are exposed to more diverse, independent, and transparent information than citizens of authoritarian regimes which makes their chances to encounter nationalist discourse incidentally much fewer. Due to this media diversity and pluralism, the following research question is raised:

RQ1: Will incidental news exposure have an effect on national identification in the United States?

¹ Source: 2019 World Press Freedom Index, <https://rsf.org/en/ranking/2019>

Incidental news exposure, national identification, and system justification

System justification theory proposed by Jost and Banaji (1994) addresses a psychological process which enables people to fulfill their needs in certainty, order, and shared commonalities through justification of the status quo, even in the face of social inequality (Jost, 2017, 2019; Kay & Friesen, 2011; Friesen, Kay, Eibach, & Galinsky, 2014). According to system justification theory, people perceive the social, political, and economic systems to which they belong as legitimate and fair, even if they work against their own interests (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost, 2019). The theory explains the psychology of the social order and its impact on individuals and groups (Jost, Badaan, Goudarzi, Hoffarth, & Mogami, 2019). Moreover, it can be applied to Western countries and can be generalized cross-culturally to non-Western societies (Osborne, Sengupta, & Sibley, 2019). In the case of this study, system justification theory might help to explain psychological processes taking place after incidental news exposure in individuals from China, Russia, and the United States.

This study proposes that incidental news exposure will lead to system justification beliefs rather indirectly through a mediator — national identification. Indeed, national identification was found to be one of the main predictors of system justification which works as a cognitive tool enabling people to justify the system they belong to (Feygina, Jost, & Goldsmith, 2010; Carter, Ferguson, & Hassin, 2011; Van der Toorn, Nail, Liviatan, & Jost, 2014; Vargas-Salfate et al., 2018). In China, nationalist attitudes were found to be strongly associated with system support (Hyun & Kim, 2015). Moreover, the highest values of system justification were observed in China compared with 18 other nations, while Russia scored the third (Vargas-Salfate et al., 2018). It can be explained by high levels of national identification among the citizens of both countries as nationalist ideas are easily channeled in authoritarian systems by political elites through different media platforms (Dekker, Malova, & Hoogendoorn, 2003).

As people learn about the world throughout their lives, the information they obtain and process becomes important in shaping their worldview and attitudes. Information about one's nation can be obtained from different sources including social ties, history textbooks, or naturally the media. Eventually, some people might form a strong attachment to their nation. Continuous incidental exposure to nationalist discourse or even mere symbols of nation or reminders of national norms and goals can bolster national identification on a subliminal level (Butz, Plant, & Doerr, 2007; Hassin, Ferguson, Kardosh, Porter, Carter, & Dudareva, 2009). This implicit activation of information about one's nation ultimately leads to system justification through the endorsement of national identification (Carter et al., 2011).

National identification is a phenomenon that can be observed with different extents in individuals from different countries regardless of regime type. Citizens of the United States tend to express national identification and unity, especially when responding to outside threats (Li & Brewer, 2004). Some scholars argue that a sense of US national identity was promoted by government and military officials in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks to unite and mobilize the public (Hutcheson, Domke, Billeaudeaux, & Garland, 2004). Given that national identification was a positive predictor of system justification at the collective level regardless of regime type (Vargas-Salfate et al., 2018), it is further assumed that national identification will be positively associated with system justification in all three countries:

H2a: National identification will be positively associated with system justification in China.

H2b: National identification will be positively associated with system justification in Russia.

H2c: National identification will be positively associated with system justification in the United States.

National identification, system justification and political trust

Political trust can be defined as “the belief that the government is operating according to one’s normative expectations of how government should function” (Miller, 1974, p. 989). Political trust is essential for any society as it allows for more effective governance and legitimates its acts (Hetherington, 1998). Even autocratic rulers need their followers to trust them in order to secure efficient way of retaining the political power (Newton, Stolle, Zmerli, 2018). It is only natural that any government would hope for higher public’s trust and take measures in order to achieve or maintain it.

Political distrust, on the contrary, is related to apathy, public demands for radical political reforms, or protest behavior during periods of social or economic discontent (Miller, 1974). Interestingly, the expansion of democracy in the world has been followed by increasing political distrust and skepticism among the public (Bennett et al., 1999; Catterberg & Moreno, 2006). It is very problematic and dangerous as the consequences of political distrust could threaten the stability and effectiveness of democratic political systems. For example, individuals with low levels of political trust were found to be more likely to accept illegal behavior than respondents with high levels of trust (Marien, & Hooghe, 2011).

Therefore, it is highly important to understand how political trust is built in different societies and what factors can potentially influence political trust either positively or negatively. It is also of great interest to compare these mechanisms in established democracies such as the United States where political trust is declining and authoritarian regimes such as China and Russia where political trust remains relatively high for many years.

Scholars differentiate political trust toward incumbents from trust toward political institutions where the first is termed as “specific support” and the latter is termed as “diffuse support”. More precisely, specific support refers to satisfaction with government

outputs and the performance of political authorities while diffuse support refers to the public's attitude toward regime-level political objects regardless of performance (Easton, 1965; Citrin and Green 1986; Hetherington, 1999). For the purpose of this study, political trust is considered as specific support for the government and is operationalized as trust in the national government, local government, and the president.

According to previous studies, people in mainland China and Russia show high levels of trust in government, which was found even higher than their trust in governing bodies (Gil de Zúñiga, Ardèvol-Abreu, Diehl, Patiño, & Liu, 2019). Moreover, political trust in China is not explained by the public's fear to criticize the authorities as it might seem — the Chinese public does criticize some aspects of their society but also expresses high levels of confidence in the national government (Wang, 2005). In Russia political trust is maintained on a high level partly by allowing citizens to do what was considered to be forbidden — even opposition voters update their beliefs about the trustworthiness of the government when it unexpectedly allows them to protest (Frye & Borisova, 2019). In the United States, on the contrary, political trust has been declining over decades (Miller, 1974; Bennett et al., 1999; Catterberg & Moreno, 2006) and was found to be lower than the scale midpoint in the recent study of Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2019).

Prior studies have also found that one of the positive predictors of political trust is general system justification beliefs (Vainio, Mäkinen, & Paloniemi, 2014; Tan, Liu, Huang, Zheng, & Liang, 2016). It can be explained by the psychological importance of system justification for people who perceive their individual interests as greatly related to the given political system (Kay et al., 2009; Van der Toorn, Tyler, & Jost, 2011; Shepherd & Kay, 2012). As noted by Kay, Jimenez, and Jost (2002), people tend to make cognitive adjustments to minimize negative emotional outcomes in the face of threat and maximize the pleasant emotional gain from what happens to them. Accordingly, for people who justify the status quo, trust in the national system and the government comes naturally as

they perceive the status quo as legitimate and fair. It can explain why Russian citizens consistently vote for Putin and his allies or why Chinese citizens are at peace with the governance of the Communist Party. The recent study of Azevedo, Jost, and Rothmund (2017) showed that those who strongly justified economic system and gender-based inequalities also supported Donald Trump in the 2016 US presidential election.

Based on the importance of system justification beliefs to political trust regardless of the political regime, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3a: System justification will be positively associated with political trust in China.

H3b: System justification will be positively associated with political trust in Russia.

H3c: System justification will be positively associated with political trust in the United States.

Previous studies have also found that national identification is positively related to political trust (Shen & Guo, 2013) and diffuse support for the political regime in mainland China (Chen, 2004). Earlier, Miller (1974) proposed that trust in government is closely associated with identification with political institutions, symbols, and values in the United States. Scholars from Europe found that civic national identification is positively associated with political trust in 18 European countries (Berg and Hjerm, 2010) while some argue that it happens only in countries where national identity is inclusive and political system is welcoming of immigrant incorporation (McLaren, 2017). Uslaner (2018) argues that in general, those who share a national identity are more likely to trust each other as they can understand the intentions of each other and therefore reduce the vulnerability risk. In other words, government officials and citizens who have a strong common national identity, in theory, should trust each other. Moreover, high levels of social trust are usually accompanied by high levels of political trust (Newton, 1999).

Based on this broad research body supporting a positive relationship between national identification and political trust in different societies and different contexts, this study assumes that in the serial mediation model, national identification will also be positively associated with political trust in all three countries:

H4a: National identification will be positively associated with political trust in China.

H4b: National identification will be positively associated with political trust in Russia.

H4c: National identification will be positively associated with political trust in the United States.

The mediating path from incidental news exposure to political trust

Academics have been studying the effects of the news consumption on political trust since at least the 1970s when increasing TV news use in the United States was associated with the declining trust in government and termed “videomalaise” (Robinson, 1975, 1976). Later, more researchers supported the notion that news consumption can lead to political distrust and cynicism mostly due to the negative news framing (Patterson, 1993; Cappella & Jamieson, 1996; Nye & Zelikow, 1997; Valentino, Beckmann, & Buhr, 2001; De Vreese, 2004; Mutz & Reeves, 2005). This line of research emphasizes the importance of the content of news and how the issues are framed at a particular period of time. In other words, exposure to critical and negative information about politics can lead to lower trust in government.

Interestingly, under different circumstances, other scholars found a positive association between news consumption and political trust (Holtz-Bacha, 1990; Newton, 1999; Norris, 2000; Moy & Pfau, 2000; Camaj, 2014; Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre, & Shehata, 2016). This line of work suggests that exposure to objective and positive information can lead to higher levels of political trust. Shepherd and Kay (2012) found similar tendencies in their experiment where negative news articles were perceived as challenging the government’s power while positive news articles had no such effect.

Finally, several studies showed that the impact of news consumption on political trust can vary across contexts and sometimes there might be no effect at all (Moy & Scheufele, 2000; Avery, 2009; Ceron, 2015; Strömbäck et al., 2016). These conflicting findings indicate the necessity of studying media effects in different contexts and probing complex models that can explain the impact of various types of news consumption on trust in government. It is also important to always account for all possible confounding variables to better understand the relationship between news exposure and political trust.

Incidental news exposure as a common type of news acquisition has not been studied specifically as an antecedent of political trust. However, the findings regarding the general news consumption suggest that inadvertent encounters with political content might have conflicting effects on trust in government depending on context as well. This study argues that that incidental news exposure will lead to political trust indirectly through national identification and system justification beliefs in authoritarian countries such as China and Russia. The proposed serial mediation model is illustrated in Figure 1. More precisely, it is proposed that in these countries, incidental news exposure will be positively associated with national identification which in turn will lead to heightened motivation to justify the system which will positively influence political trust. However, it is not clear whether incidental news consumption will lead to stronger national identification in the United States in the first place due to media diversity and pluralism inherent in developed democracies. Therefore, the following hypotheses and the research question are raised:

H5a: The effect of incidental news exposure on political trust will be mediated by national identification and system justification in China.

H5b: The effect of incidental news exposure on political trust will be mediated by national identification and system justification in Russia.

RQ2: Will the serial mediation model work the same way in the United States?

Previous research has shown that intentional news consumption from traditional and social media has a positive indirect effect on system justification beliefs but does not have a direct effect (Hyun & Kim, 2015). Another study found that terrorism salience leads to increased system justification (Ullrich & Cohrs, 2007). However, whether other salient issues have the same effect on the justification of the status quo is unknown. Furthermore, it appears that incidental news exposure has not yet been studied in relation to system justification theory in detail. It is also proposed by the present study that

stumbling across news accidentally will rather have an indirect effect on system justification through national identification.

Therefore, due to the lack of empirical studies about the relationship between incidental news exposure and system justification beliefs, the present study will additionally answer the following research question:

RQ3: Will incidental news exposure have a direct effect on system justification beliefs?

As discussed above, it still remains unclear whether unintentional news exposure can lead to political trust directly. The conflicting findings show that both positive and negative effects are possible. However, it might also indicate that the effect can be suppressed, or other cognitive and psychological processes might be involved. Therefore, the following question will be addressed:

RQ4: Will incidental news exposure have a direct effect on political trust?

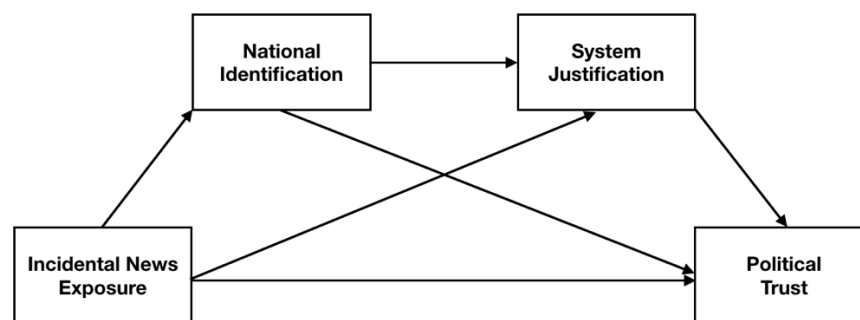


Figure 1. Proposed mediation model

Method

Sample

This study draws on an online survey data gathered from September 14 to September 24, 2015, in mainland China ($N = 998$), Russia ($N = 1144$), and the United States ($N = 1161$). The survey is a part of the *World Digital Influence Project*, an international collaboration between two research groups based at Massey University in New Zealand, and the University of Vienna in Austria. Survey items were translated into Standard Mandarin Chinese and Russian by a group of academics in respective countries, and back translation into English was performed by research teams to increase the accuracy and quality of translation (see Behling & Law, 2000; Cha, Kim, & Erlen, 2007). Survey administration was performed by the MiLab at the University of Vienna in partnership with Nielsen, a reputed media polling company based in the United States. The final sample was generated based on stratified quota sampling techniques to create a sample with demographics that closely match official census numbers (Callegaro et al., 2014). Since Nielsen applies a combination of panel and probability-based sampling methods, the limitations of web-only survey designs are minimized (Bosnjak, Das, & Lynn, 2016). Nevertheless, some parameters of the panel invites are unknown, and therefore, traditional response rates are not calculated (AAPOR, 2016).

Measures

Incidental news exposure. The main independent variable of the study measures the level of unintended consumption of news on both traditional and new media platforms. Participants were asked how often they encounter or come across news and information on current events and public issues (a) “while watching TV, listening to the radio, or reading the newspaper”, and (b) “while on social media or the Internet”. The two items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = never and 7 = always) and the answers were averaged to create the final variable (China: Spearman-Brown Coefficient = .57, $M = 5.0$,

$SD = .94$; Russia: Spearman-Brown Coefficient = .61, $M = 4.6$, $SD = 1.18$; US: Spearman-Brown Coefficient = .45, $M = 4.0$, $SD = 1.31$).

Political trust. The dependent variable of the study reflects respondents' trust for their government. Particularly, it measures the 'specific support' for the government rather than the larger regime-based 'diffuse support' (Miller, 1974; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2019). The measurement was adapted from previous research (Citrin, 1974; Bennett, Rhine, Flickinger, & Bennett, 1999; Catterberg & Moreno, 2006) and based on the World Values Survey. The respondents were asked to rate their feelings of trust towards (a) "national government", (b) "local government", and (c) "your president". The three items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = do not trust at all and 7 = trust completely) and the answers were averaged to create the final variable (China: Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$, $M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.42$; Russia: Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$, $M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.46$; US: Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$, $M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.31$).

National identification. The first mediator of the study captures respondents' strength of identification as members of a national in-group. The items were adapted from the National Identification Scale (Huddy & Khatib, 2007). The respondents were asked how much they agree or disagree with the following statements: (a) "Being [Nationality] is very important to me", (b) "I feel that I am a typical [Nationality]", (c) "The term [Nationality] describes me well", and (d) "I identify with my nationality". The four items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = disagree completely and 7 = agree completely) and the answers were averaged to create the final variable (China: Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$, $M = 5.27$, $SD = 1.18$; Russia: Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$, $M = 5.32$, $SD = 1.51$; US: Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$, $M = 5.43$, $SD = 1.38$).

System justification. The second mediator of interest assesses respondents' system justification beliefs. The measurement was adapted and modified based on previous studies on the system justification theory (Kay & Jost, 2003). The respondents were asked

how much they agree or disagree with the following statements: (a) “In general, I find society to be fair”, (b) “In general, my country’s political system operates as it should”, (c) “Everyone in my country has a fair shot at wealth and happiness”, (d) “My country’s society is set up so that people usually get what they deserve”. The four items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = disagree completely and 7 = agree completely) and the answers were averaged to create the final variable (China: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .91$, $M = 4.22$, $SD = 1.28$; Russia: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .82$, $M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.34$; US: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .80$, $M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.30$).

Control variables. In order to investigate the mediation model more accurately, the following control variables were added as potential confounders: *traditional media news use, alternative media news use, social media use for social interaction, social media use frequency, political interest, political self-efficacy, political discussion online, political discussion offline, network size, strength of ideology, age, gender, race (ethnicity), education, and income.*

Traditional media news use. Consumption of news on traditional media has long been associated with political trust (Avery, 2009; Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre, & Shehata, 2016; Ceron, 2015). For the purpose of this study, it is important to isolate the effect of intentional news consumption on traditional media from the effect of incidental news exposure. The variable was measured by capturing how often the respondents get news from the following media sources: (a) television news, (b) printed newspaper, (c) online news websites, (d) radio, (e) social media to get news about current events from mainstream media (e.g., professional news services). The five items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = never and 7 = always) and the answers were averaged to create the final variable (China: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .73$, $M = 4.63$, $SD = 1.00$; Russia: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .63$, $M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.03$; US: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .54$, $M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.12$).

Alternative media news use. Access to news from alternative media sources such as social media and citizen journalism sites has been associated with lower political trust (Ceron, 2015). Therefore, it is also important to account for the effect of this variable in the mediation model. The respondents were asked how frequently they get news from the following media sources: (a) social media, (b) citizen journalism sites, (c) social media to stay informed about current events and public affairs, (d) social media to stay informed about my local community. The four items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = never and 7 = always) and the answers were averaged to create the final variable (China: Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$, $M = 5.02$, $SD = 1.05$; Russia: Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$, $M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.34$; US: Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$, $M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.50$).

Social media use for social interaction. Incidental news exposure often happens during social media use for the purpose of social interaction. The model controlled for it in order to separate the effects of unintentional news exposure from the potential influence of social media use for interaction with other people. The variable was obtained by asking respondents how often they use social media for the following purposes: (a) "to stay in touch with friends and family", (b) "to meet new people who share my interests", and (c) "to contact people I wouldn't meet otherwise". The three items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = never and 7 = all the time) and were averaged to create the final variable (China: Cronbach's $\alpha = .71$, $M = 4.66$, $SD = 1.01$; Russia: Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$, $M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.45$; US: Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$, $M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.51$).

Social media use frequency. The model controlled for the overall social media use frequency to account for the effects of social media use for other remaining purposes. The respondents were asked: (a) "On a typical day, how much do you use social media?" and (b) "How often do you use instant messaging (e.g., text, SMS, social media) to stay in touch with family and friends". The two items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = never and 7 = always) and were averaged to create the final variable (China: Spearman-

Brown Coefficient = .65, $M = 5.23$, $SD = 1.09$; Russia: Spearman-Brown Coefficient = .45, $M = 4.53$, $SD = 1.33$; US: Spearman-Brown Coefficient = .64, $M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.74$).

Political interest. The variable reflects the respondent's interest in politics and public affairs and was measured with two items adapted from previous research (Prior, 2010). The respondents were asked the following questions: (a) "How closely do you pay attention to information about what's going on in politics and public affairs" and (b) "how interested are you in information about what's going on in politics and public affairs?" The two items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not at all and 7 = very closely) and were averaged to create the final variable (China: Spearman-Brown Coefficient = .93, $M = 4.60$, $SD = 1.32$; Russia: Spearman-Brown Coefficient = .92, $M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.37$; US: Spearman-Brown Coefficient = .95, $M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.62$).

Political self-efficacy. Individuals' political self-efficacy or internal efficacy has long been associated with political trust (Craig, Niemi, & Silver, 1990). The measurement was adapted from previous research and aimed to measure internal efficacy rather than external (Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991). The respondents were asked about how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: (a) "People like me can influence government" and (b) "I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics." The two items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = disagree completely and 7 = agree completely) and were averaged to create the final variable (China: Spearman-Brown Coefficient = .71, $M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.40$; Russia: Spearman-Brown Coefficient = .75, $M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.40$; US: Spearman-Brown Coefficient = .63, $M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.50$).

Political discussion online. Online political expression has been positively associated with both nationalism and system justification (Hyun & Kim, 2015). People express their political views in political discussion and this behavior was measured by four items adapted from prior studies (Valenzuela, Kim, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2012). The

respondents were asked how often they talk about politics or public affairs online with (a) “spouse or partner,” (b) “family, relatives, or friends,” (c) “acquaintances,” and (d) “strangers”. The items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = never and 7 = always) and were averaged to create the final variable (China: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .87$, $M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.33$; Russia: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .88$, $M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.32$; US: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .86$, $M = 1.92$, $SD = 1.23$).

Political discussion offline. Similarly, political discussion offline was measured by asking participants how often they talk about politics or public affairs face to face with (a) “spouse or partner,” (b) “family, relatives, or friends,” (c) “acquaintances,” and (d) “strangers”. The items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = never and 7 = always) and were averaged to create the final variable (China: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .83$, $M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.23$; Russia: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .84$, $M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.32$; US: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .76$, $M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.29$).

Network size. As talking about politics with others was associated with both nationalism and system justification (Hyun & Kim, 2015), it is also important to account for respondents’ network size in the model. Two open-ended questions were asked about the number of people the respondents talked to about politics or public affairs (a) face-to-face and (b) online. The two items were added to create the variable but the descriptive statistics revealed high skewness and kurtosis (China: $M = 14.53$, $Mdn = 5.00$, $SD = 41.24$, Skewness = 8.49, Kurtosis = 87.67; Russia: $M = 10.31$, $Mdn = 4.00$, $SD = 24.82$, Skewness = 7.57, Kurtosis = 76.92; US: $M = 9.80$, $Mdn = 3.00$, $SD = 34.16$, Skewness = 14.51, Kurtosis = 295.24). The natural logarithm was then performed to bring the distribution closer to the normal curve (China: $M = 1.26$, $Mdn = 1.24$, $SD = 1.02$, Skewness = .65, Kurtosis = .15; Russia: $M = 1.11$, $Mdn = 1.04$, $SD = .90$, Skewness = .88, Kurtosis = .84; US: $M = .90$, $Mdn = .69$, $SD = .89$, Skewness = 1.10, Kurtosis = .89).

Strength of ideology. The strength of ideology has been closely linked to nationalism (Freedman, 1998) and political trust (Rudolph & Evans, 2005) and therefore was added to the model. The participants were asked where on the scale from 0-10 (0 = strong liberal, 10 = strong conservative) they would put themselves on (a) “political issues”, (b) “economic issues”, and (c) “social issues”. The items were recoded, so that they reflect the strength of ideology ranging from 1 = low to 5 = high, and then averaged to create the final variable (China: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .93$, $M = 1.60$, $SD = 1.37$; Russia: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .89$, $M = 1.38$, $SD = 1.41$; US: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .95$, $M = 2.12$, $SD = 1.73$).

Demographics. The model also accounted for the respondents’ age (China: $M = 38.68$, $SD = 11.99$; Russia: $M = 38.15$, $SD = 12.80$; US: $M = 49.76$, $SD = 16.43$), gender (China: 44.4% females; Russia: 50.9% females; US: 59.5% females), race or ethnicity (China: 96% Han; Russia: 92% Russian; US: 83.3% White). Education was operationalized as highest level of formal education completed (China: $M = 4.62$, $SD = .81$; Russia: $M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.05$; US: $M = 4.36$, $SD = 1.01$). Finally, income was measured based on five categories related to annual household income: 0 to 10, 11 to 30, 31 to 70, 71 to 90, and 91 to 100 percentiles (China: $M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.10$; Russia: $M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.11$; US: $M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.09$).

Analysis

Before proceeding to the mediation model analysis, zero-order and partial correlation tests were conducted across three countries followed by factor analysis (principal component analysis) and hierarchical ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions predicting political trust. In order to assess the proposed serial mediation, bootstrapping mediation tests were performed for each country using the PROCESS macro version 3.4 model 6 provided by Hayes (2018). The bootstrapping method was applied instead of the Sobel (1982) test to probe the mediation. As argued by Edwards & Lambert (2007), the Sobel test relies on the assumption that population indirect effects would be normally distributed, which is usually false, even when the variables composing the product of indirect effects are normally distributed. The bootstrapping method helps to avoid power problems occurring due to non-normal distributions and is a better method for testing hypotheses about mediation (Shrout & Bolger, 2002; MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Thus, the bootstrapping of 5000 samples was performed. All variables that define the product were mean-centered, and heteroscedasticity consistent covariance matrix version HC0 was implemented (Huber, 1967; White, 1980). Results are reported for each country separately to enable examination of findings individually as well as from a comparative perspective.

Results

First, zero-order and partial correlation tests were conducted across the three countries to examine the correlations between incidental news exposure, political trust, national identification, and system justification. As shown in Table 1, significant positive zero-order correlations among all four variables were found in China and Russia.

Furthermore, when controlling for fifteen potential confounders, significant positive partial correlations between incidental news exposure and national identification ($r = [.12, .21], p < .001$), national identification and system justification ($r = [.27, .55], p < .001$), system justification and political trust ($r = [.29, .65], p < .001$) were observed in all three countries.

Table 1

Zero-order and Partial Correlations Among the Variables of Interest

Variable	1	2	3	4
<i>China</i>				
1. Incidental news exposure	—	.32***	.35***	.21***
2. Political trust	.15***	—	.54***	.62***
3. National identification	.21***	.49***	—	.55***
4. System justification	.11**	.59***	.55***	—
<i>Russia</i>				
1. Incidental news exposure	—	.14***	.21***	.13***
2. Political trust	.05	—	.52***	.66***
3. National identification	.12***	.51***	—	.48***
4. System justification	.04	.65***	.49***	—
<i>United States</i>				
1. Incidental news exposure	—	.12***	.06	.05
2. Political trust	.003	—	.05	.38***
3. National identification	.15***	.07	—	.27***
4. System justification	.03	.29***	.27***	—

Note. Cell entries are two-tailed zero-order Pearson's correlations (top diagonal) and partial correlations (bottom diagonal) with controls for traditional media news use, alternative media news use, social media use for social interaction, social media use frequency, political interest, political self-efficacy, political discussion online, political discussion offline, network size, strength of ideology, age, gender, race (ethnicity), education, and income. China: $N = 738$ for partial correlations; $N = 965$ for zero-order correlations. Russia: $N = 784$ for partial correlations; $N = 1103$ for zero-order correlations. US: $N = 784$ for partial correlations; $N = 1110$ for zero-order correlations. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Second, factor analysis (principal component analysis) was performed to confirm that the variables of interest are distinct from one another. As presented in Table 2, all items loaded on the major components with sufficiently large factor loadings (above .50) and the factors were clearly distinguishable across all three countries.

Table 2

Factor Analysis Results of the Measuring Items of the Variables of Interest

	China				Russia				US			
	Factor loading				Factor loading				Factor loading			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<i>Incidental news exposure</i>												
While watching TV, listening to the radio, or reading the newspaper	-.08	.10	.04	.83	.14	.06	-.06	.81	.14	.13	-.08	.79
While on social media or the Internet	.07	-.10	-.04	.85	-.12	-.03	.06	.89	-.13	-.12	.08	.81
<i>Political trust</i>												
National government	-.001	.02	.94	-.01	.02	.04	.90	.02	.02	.06	.90	.002
Local government	-.17	.24	.80	-.02	-.18	-.01	.96	-.02	.10	.07	.81	-.05
President	.17	-.19	.89	.02	.23	-.06	.77	.03	-.05	-.22	.85	.04
<i>National identification</i>												
Being [Nationality] is very important to me	.83	.11	-.02	-.01	.86	-.01	.07	-.02	.91	-.04	.01	.01
I feel that I am a typical [Nationality]	.94	-.10	-.01	.01	.95	.001	-.06	.01	.84	.04	.002	.03
The term [Nationality] describes me well	.94	-.03	-.01	-.01	.94	.07	-.07	-.01	.94	-.02	-.01	-.03
I identify with my nationality	.78	.13	.05	-.02	.95	-.09	.003	.01	.85	-.01	.05	-.001
<i>System justification</i>												
In general, I find society to be fair	.001	.88	.01	.02	.03	.75	-.04	.02	.06	.66	.17	.02
In general (my country's) political system operates as it should	.24	.62	.09	.05	.20	.52	.28	-.07	-.11	.59	.42	.01
Everyone in my country has a fair shot at wealth and happiness	-.06	.97	-.05	-.03	-.03	.89	-.07	.01	.01	.91	-.24	.01
My country's society is set up so that people usually get what they deserve	.03	.92	-.01	-.01	-.10	.87	.04	.01	-.03	.90	-.03	-.02

Note. Extraction method: principal component analysis. Rotation method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. Factor loadings above .50 are in bold. China: *N* = 943. Russia: *N* = 1085. US: *N* = 1077.

Third, the study applied a set of hierarchical ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions predicting political trust for each country. Model 1 included variables entered in 3 separate blocks: demographics, sociopolitical orientations, and media consumption. Model 2 included an additional block consisting of mediator variables — national identification and system justification. The results are presented in Table 3. Incidental news exposure was positively associated with political trust only in Model 1 in China ($\beta = .176, p < .001$). The effect, however, disappeared when national identification and system justification were introduced as the fourth block in Model 2. Nevertheless, this result does not preclude the indirect effects of incidental news exposure on political trust. System justification was the strongest predictor of political trust in China ($\beta = .447, p < .001$), Russia ($\beta = .530, p < .001$), and the United States ($\beta = .297, p < .001$). National identification was positively associated with political trust in China ($\beta = .224, p < .001$) and Russia ($\beta = .263, p < .001$) but not in the United States.

The socio-demographic variables accounted for 0.9% of the variance in China, 0.3% in Russia, and 5.1% in the United States for the second Model. Sociopolitical orientation mattered more than demographics in China ($\Delta R^2 = 12.6\%$) and Russia ($\Delta R^2 = 3.6\%$) but less in the United States ($\Delta R^2 = 3.0\%$) for Model 2. Media consumption variables explained less variance in political trust than political antecedents in China ($\Delta R^2 = 4.4\%$) and Russia ($\Delta R^2 = 1.9\%$) but slightly more in the United States ($\Delta R^2 = 3.3\%$) for Model 2. National identification and system justification explained more variance than other blocks in all three countries: China ($\Delta R^2 = 30.6\%$), Russia ($\Delta R^2 = 43.5\%$), and the United States ($\Delta R^2 = 7.4\%$). The overall predictive values were greater for Russia ($\Delta R^2 = 49.3\%$) and China ($\Delta R^2 = 48.5\%$) than in the United States ($\Delta R^2 = 18.8\%$). It implies the importance of national identification in predicting political trust for Russia and China and a lack of its relevance for the United States.

Table 3*OLS hierarchical regression models predicting political trust in China, Russia, and the US*

	China		Russia		US	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<i>Block 1 - Demographics</i>						
Age	.005	.026	-.003	-.015	.007	-.008
Gender (female)	.118**	.061*	-.013	-.016	.023	.028
Race (majority)	-.021	.033	.040	-.034	-.132***	-.105**
Education	-.086*	-.055	.036	.014	.153***	.147***
Income	-.079*	-.060*	.030	.021	.020	-.022
ΔR^2	0.9%	0.9%	0.3%	0.3%	5.3%	5.1%
<i>Block 2 – Sociopolitical Orientation</i>						
Political interest	.186***	.169***	.081	.070*	-.079	-.060
Political efficacy	.063	.004	.158***	.056	.204***	.127**
Strength of ideology	-.100**	-.037	-.050	-.005	-.036	-.013
Political discussion online	-.086	-.138*	-.021	-.089*	.072	.074
Political discussion offline	.097	.147**	.029	.043	.032	.028
ΔR^2	12.1%	12.6%	3.7%	3.6%	3.0%	3.0%
<i>Block 3 – Media use</i>						
Traditional media news	.068	-.036	.135**	-.028	.148**	.117**
Alternative media news	-.024	.001	-.157**	-.095*	.065	.040
Social media for social interaction	.149**	.074	.083	.041	.026	.008
Social media overall	-.063	-.032	.087	.109**	-.063	.002
Network size	.030	-.003	-.077	.007	-.150**	-.092*
Incidental news exposure	.176***	.063	.054	-.003	.002	-.013
ΔR^2	4.6%	4.4%	2%	1.9%	3.0%	3.3%
<i>Block 4 – Mediators</i>						
National identification	–	.224***	–	.263***	–	-.009
System justification	–	.447***	–	.530***	–	.297***
ΔR^2	–	30.6%	–	43.5%	–	7.4%
Total ΔR^2	17.6%	48.5%	6%	49.3%	11.3%	18.8%

Note. Cell entries are final standardized regression coefficients (β). China: $N = 775$ for Model 1; $N = 755$ for Model 2. Russia: $N = 823$ for Model 1; $N = 801$ for Model 2. US: $N = 783$ for Model 1; $N = 765$ for Model 2. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Fourth, to test the proposed hypotheses and answer the research questions, bootstrapping mediation tests for each country were performed using the PROCESS macro model 6 (Hayes, 2018). First, the hypotheses for China were addressed. H1a posed that incidental news exposure will be positively associated with national identification in China. The analysis revealed support for this hypothesis ($\beta = .34$, $SE = .06$, $t(738) = 5.96$), $p < .001$). This means that the more the respondents consumed news incidentally, the more they identified with being Chinese. Overall model predicting national identification was significant ($F(16, 738) = 9.02$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .17$). Other significant predictors of national identification in China were social media use for social interaction ($\beta = .19$, $SE = .07$, $t(738) = 2.83$), $p < .01$), political discussion offline ($\beta = -.15$, $SE = .07$, $t(738) = -2.02$), $p < .05$), network size ($\beta = .11$, $SE = .07$, $t(738) = 2.16$), $p < .05$), and strength of ideology ($\beta = -.09$, $SE = .04$, $t(738) = -2.61$), $p < .01$). In other words, the more the respondents consumed social media for socialization and the larger network they had, the more they identified with their nation. However, more frequent face-to-face political discussions and having strong ideological beliefs made them identify as Chinese less.

It was further hypothesized that national identification will be positively associated with system justification in China (H2a). This hypothesis was also successfully tested ($\beta = .60$, $SE = .04$, $t(737) = 16.42$), $p < .001$). The stronger respondents identified themselves with their nation, the more they justified the status quo. Overall model predicting system justification was also significant ($F(17, 737) = 30.90$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .40$). However, addressing RQ3, there was no direct relationship found between incidental news exposure and system justification beliefs ($\beta = -.02$, $SE = .06$, $t(737) = -.36$), $p = .72$). Significant predictors of system justification included traditional media news use ($\beta = .13$, $SE = .07$, $t(737) = 2.02$), $p < .05$), political efficacy ($\beta = .14$, $SE = .03$, $t(737) = 4.18$), $p < .001$),

political discussion offline ($\beta = .15$, $SE = .06$, $t(737) = 2.50$), $p < .05$), age ($\beta = -.01$, $SE = .004$, $t(737) = -2.40$), $p < .05$), and gender ($\beta = .23$, $SE = .08$, $t(737) = 2.93$), $p < .01$).

The next hypothesis posed that system justification will be positively associated with political trust in China (H3a). The result demonstrated this to be true ($\beta = .49$, $SE = .04$, $t(736) = 11.20$), $p < .001$). Similarly, in support of H4a, national identification was also positively associated with political trust in China ($\beta = .27$, $SE = .04$, $t(736) = 6.14$), $p < .001$). Overall model predicting political trust was significant ($F(18, 736) = 54.39$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .50$). Nevertheless, addressing RQ4, incidental news exposure had no direct effect on political trust ($\beta = .10$, $SE = .06$, $t(736) = 1.61$), $p = .11$). According to the model summary, significant predictors of political trust were political interest ($\beta = .18$, $SE = .04$, $t(736) = 4.45$), $p < .001$), political discussion online ($\beta = -.15$, $SE = .06$, $t(736) = -2.51$), $p < .05$), political discussion offline ($\beta = .18$, $SE = .07$, $t(736) = 2.61$), $p < .01$), gender ($\beta = .18$, $SE = .08$, $t(736) = 2.17$), $p < .05$), and income ($\beta = -.08$, $SE = .04$, $t(736) = -2.10$), $p < .05$). The standardized beta coefficients for the direct associations between the variables of interest are shown in Figure 2.

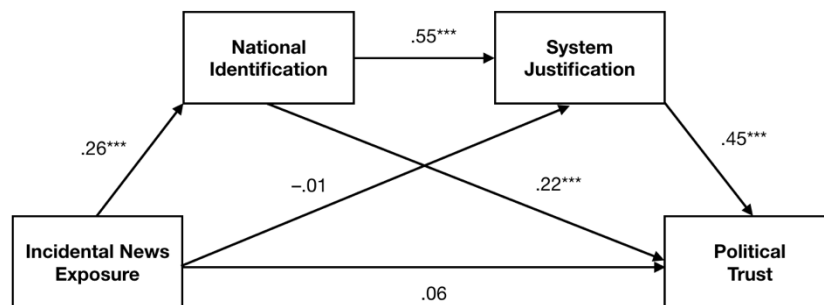


Figure 2. Direct relationships between the proposed variables in China. *Note:* standardized coefficients; all control variables were included in the analysis. *** $p < .001$.

Finally, the last hypothesis claimed that the effect of incidental news exposure on political trust will be mediated by national identification and system justification in China

(H5a). The total effect of incidental news exposure on political trust was positive and significant ($\beta = .28$, $SE = .07$, $t(738) = 3.83$, $p < .01$). As demonstrated in Table 4, national identification alone mediated the relationship between incidental news exposure and political participation, but system justification did not. However, in line with H5a, the mediating effect of incidental news exposure on political trust through national identification and system justification was found to be significant ($\beta = .10$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI = [.06, .14]). Thus, H5a was supported. This suggests that the more people in China are unintentionally consuming news, the more they identify with their nation, which leads them to justify the system they belong to, and which eventually results in a stronger trust in the national government, local government, and the president.

Table 4

Indirect effects of incidental news exposure on political trust through the mediators in China

Indirect Paths	Effect	SE	95% CI	
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Incidental news exposure → National identification → Political trust	.09	.02	.05	.14
Incidental news exposure → System justification → Political trust	-.01	.03	-.07	.05
Incidental news exposure → National identification → System justification → Political trust	.10	.02	.06	.14

Note. CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit. CIs are based on the bootstrapping of 5000 samples. $N = 738$.

A separate bootstrapping mediation test was conducted to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions for Russia. H1b posed that incidental news exposure will be positively associated with national identification in Russia. The test provided support for this proposition ($\beta = .17$, $SE = .05$, $t(784) = 3.15$, $p < .01$). Overall model predicting national identification was significant ($F(16, 784) = 10.89$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .18$). Among all control variables in the model, seven were found to have significant relationship with

national identification. The strongest contributor to the model was, naturally, ethnicity ($\beta = 1.01$, $SE = .20$, $t(784) = 5.04$), $p < .001$) — ethnic Russians identify themselves more with their nation than ethnic minorities. Another strong predictor of national identification was consumption of traditional media news content ($\beta = .36$, $SE = .07$, $t(784) = 4.91$), $p < .001$). As may be expected, alternative media news use was negatively associated with national identification in Russia ($\beta = -.13$, $SE = .06$, $t(784) = -2.00$), $p < .05$). Other significant factors were political interest ($\beta = .14$, $SE = .05$, $t(784) = 2.50$), $p < .05$), network size ($\beta = -.15$, $SE = .07$, $t(784) = -2.01$), $p < .05$), strength of ideology ($\beta = -.09$, $SE = .04$, $t(784) = -2.19$), $p < .05$), and age ($\beta = .02$, $SE = .004$, $t(784) = 3.80$), $p < .001$).

The second hypothesis stated that national identification will be positively associated with system justification in Russia (H2b). This was also found to be true ($\beta = .46$, $SE = .03$, $t(783) = 16.66$), $p < .001$) — the more respondents identified themselves with their nation, the more they tended to justify the existing system. Overall model predicting system justification was also significant ($F(17, 783) = 24.09$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .30$). Additionally, RQ3 aimed to determine if incidental news exposure had a significant influence on system justification beliefs. The test revealed no direct relationship between these two variables ($\beta = -.03$, $SE = .04$, $t(783) = -.66$), $p = .51$). Nevertheless, there were three variables among controls that had a significant association with system justification: political discussion online ($\beta = .15$, $SE = .05$, $t(783) = 2.96$), $p < .01$), political efficacy ($\beta = .12$, $SE = .04$, $t(783) = 3.12$), $p < .01$), and age ($\beta = -.01$, $SE = .004$, $t(783) = -2.98$), $p < .01$). This means that the more respondents discussed politics online and the more they perceived themselves politically efficacious, the more they justified the system they belong to. Moreover, younger people in Russia tend to justify the status quo stronger than older people.

It was further hypothesized that system justification will be positively associated with political trust in Russia (H3b). The analysis provided support for this proposition ($\beta = .58, SE = .04, t(782) = 16.58, p < .001$) — the more respondents justified the system, the more they trusted the government. The next hypothesis posed that national identification will be positively associated with political trust in Russia. This proposition was also supported ($\beta = .26, SE = .03, t(782) = 8.28, p < .001$). Interestingly, system justification was found to be a stronger predictor of trust in Russian government than national identification. Overall model estimating political trust was significant ($F(18, 782) = 56.67, p < .001, R^2 = .51$). RQ4 sought to reveal if there was a direct relationship between incidental news exposure and political trust. Results showed there was no such relationship ($\beta = -.001, SE = .04, t(782) = -.03, p = .98$). Among control variables, social media use frequency ($\beta = .12, SE = .04, t(782) = 2.84, p < .01$) and political interest ($\beta = .08, SE = .04, t(782) = 1.99, p < .05$) had a positive association with political trust. In contrast, consumption of alternative media news ($\beta = -.10, SE = .05, t(782) = -2.20, p < .05$) and online political discussion ($\beta = -.10, SE = .04, t(782) = -2.25, p < .05$) were found to have a negative relationship with trust in Russian government. Figure 3 depicts the standardized beta coefficients for the direct associations between the variables of interest.

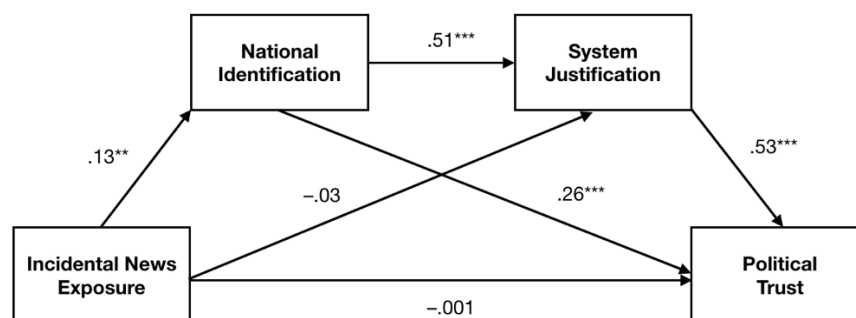


Figure 3. Direct relationships between the proposed variables in Russia. *Note:* standardized coefficients; all control variables were included in the analysis. ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Finally, the fifth hypothesis predicted that the effect of incidental news exposure on political trust will be mediated by national identification and system justification in Russia (H5b). Results revealed that despite insignificant total effect of incidental news exposure on political trust ($\beta = .07$, $SE = .05$, $t(784) = 1.30$), $p = .07$), as illustrated in Table 5, the mediating effect of incidental news exposure on political trust through national identification and system justification was found to be significant ($\beta = .04$, $SE = .01$, 95% CI = [.02, .08]). Interestingly, the almost equal significant mediating effect was found through national identification alone while the indirect effect through system justification was found to be insignificant. This indicates that just like in the case with China, the more people in Russia are unintentionally exposed to news, the more they identify with their nation, which leads them to justify the status quo, and which finally results in a higher trust in the national government, local government, and the president. However, in the case of Russia, the indirect effects appear to be weaker than in mainland China and it occurs that national identification plays a significant role in the mediation model for Russia.

Table 5

Indirect effects of incidental news exposure on political trust through the mediators in Russia

Indirect Paths	Effect	SE	95% CI	
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Incidental news exposure → National identification → Political trust	.04	.02	.02	.07
Incidental news exposure → System justification → Political trust	-.02	.03	-.07	.03
Incidental news exposure → National identification → System justification → Political trust	.04	.01	.02	.08

Note. CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit. CIs are based on the bootstrapping of 5000 samples. $N = 784$.

The last bootstrapping mediation test was performed to address the hypotheses and research questions for the United States. RQ1 aimed to determine if incidental news exposure had an effect on national identification in the United States. The result demonstrated a positive and significant association between incidental news exposure and national identification in the US ($\beta = .18$, $SE = .04$, $t(751) = 4.40$, $p < .001$). The finding is consistent with those in China and Russia. Overall model predicting national identification was also significant ($F(16, 751) = 16.72$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .24$). Just like in case with Russia, the strongest predictors of national identification in the US were race ($\beta = .39$, $SE = .13$, $t(751) = 2.94$, $p < .01$) and consumption of traditional news ($\beta = .35$, $SE = .06$, $t(751) = 6.33$, $p < .001$). White people and those who intentionally get news from traditional sources identified themselves as Americans more strongly than racial minorities and those who consume less news from traditional media. Other significant contributors to national identification in the US were overall network size ($\beta = -.17$, $SE = .07$, $t(751) = -2.35$, $p < .05$), political discussion online ($\beta = -.15$, $SE = .06$, $t(751) = -2.38$, $p < .05$), social media use frequency ($\beta = .10$, $SE = .04$, $t(751) = 2.27$, $p < .05$), and age ($\beta = .03$, $SE = .004$, $t(751) = 7.81$, $p < .001$). This means that older people and those who frequently use social media identified themselves as Americans more than younger people and those who use social media less often. In contrast, those who had smaller network size and rarely discussed politics online identified themselves as Americans less than people who had larger network size and discussed politics online more often.

It was further hypothesized that national identification will be positively associated with system justification in the United States (H2c). The test revealed support for this hypothesis ($\beta = .26$, $SE = .04$, $t(750) = 7.26$, $p < .001$). The more respondents identified themselves as Americans, the more they justified the existing system. Overall model estimating system justification was significant ($F(17, 750) = 12.64$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .21$). Interestingly, the strongest antecedents of system justification in the US were race

(minorities) ($\beta = -.40$, $SE = .14$, $t(750) = -2.87$, $p < .01$) and network size ($\beta = -.29$, $SE = .07$, $t(750) = -4.11$, $p < .001$) followed by national identification, whereas in China and Russia national justification was the stronger predictor of justifying the status quo. RQ3 further inquired whether incidental news exposure had an effect on system justification beliefs. The result demonstrated that there was no significant effect ($\beta = -.01$, $SE = .04$, $t(750) = -.20$, $p = .84$). Remaining factors contributing to system justification were political efficacy ($\beta = .18$, $SE = .04$, $t(750) = 4.77$, $p < .001$), social media use frequency ($\beta = -.17$, $SE = .04$, $t(750) = -4.32$, $p < .001$), social media use for social interaction ($\beta = .11$, $SE = .04$, $t(750) = 2.49$, $p < .05$), and income ($\beta = .16$, $SE = .04$, $t(750) = 3.75$, $p < .001$).

The next hypothesis posed that system justification will be positively associated with political trust in the United States. This proposition was also supported ($\beta = .29$, $SE = .04$, $t(749) = 7.90$, $p < .001$). The more respondents justified the system, the more they supported the government. It was also hypothesized that national identification will be positively associated with political trust in the US (H4c). Interestingly enough, the test revealed no support for this proposition ($\beta = -.01$, $SE = .03$, $t(749) = -.23$, $p = .81$). Therefore, H4c must be rejected. This finding contradicts those for mainland China and Russia. RQ 4 further aimed to determine if there is a direct relationship between incidental news exposure and political trust. The result demonstrated no direct relationship ($\beta = -.01$, $SE = .04$, $t(749) = -.16$, $p = .87$). Overall model predicting political trust, however, was significant ($F(18, 749) = 9.77$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .20$). The strongest predictor of trust in government was not system justification like in China and Russia, but race ($\beta = -.38$, $SE = .13$, $t(749) = -2.96$, $p < .01$). Ethnic minorities in the US were found to trust the government more than the racial majority. Other significant contributors to political trust were education ($\beta = .19$, $SE = .05$, $t(749) = 4.13$, $p < .001$), consumption of news from

traditional media sources ($\beta = .12$, $SE = .05$, $t(749) = 2.29$, $p < .05$), and political self-efficacy ($\beta = .11$, $SE = .04$, $t(749) = 2.70$, $p < .01$). The standardized beta coefficients for the direct associations between the variables of interest are shown in Figure 4.

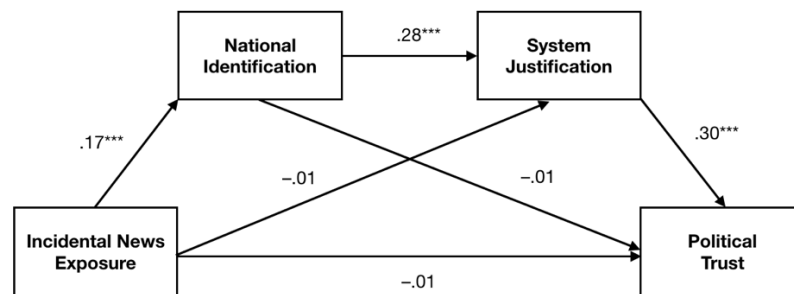


Figure 4. Direct relationships between the proposed variables in the US. *Note:* standardized coefficients; all control variables were included in the analysis. *** $p < .001$.

Lastly, RQ2 sought to reveal if the mediation model works the same way in the United States as in China and Russia. Surprisingly, notwithstanding the insignificant total effect of incidental news exposure on political trust ($\beta = .004$, $SE = .04$, $t(751) = .08$, $p = .93$), as demonstrated in Table 6, the indirect effect of incidental news exposure on political trust through national identification and system justification was also found to be significant ($\beta = .01$, $SE = .004$, 95% CI = [.01, .02]). Nevertheless, unlike the Chinese or Russian case, the indirect effect through national identification alone was insignificant. Finally, similar to findings in China and Russia, the mediating effect through system justification alone was also found to be insignificant. This means that in the United States, incidental news exposure has an effect over political trust only in a serial meditation — through national identification and system justification. Nevertheless, the indirect effect, though significant, appears to be much weaker compared to those found in Russia and mainland China.

Table 6*Indirect effects of incidental news exposure on political trust through the mediators in the US*

Indirect Paths	Effect	SE	95% CI	
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Incidental news exposure → National identification → Political trust	−.002	.01	−.01	.01
Incidental news exposure → System justification → Political trust	−.003	.01	−.03	.02
Incidental news exposure → National identification → System justification → Political trust	.01	.004	.01	.02

Note. CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit. CIs are based on the bootstrapping of 5000 samples. *N* = 751.

Discussion

In the present era of ambient news, it has become increasingly common to encounter information about current events and public affairs unintentionally. The effects of such encounters have been mainly studied in Western societies despite the evident necessity of understanding this phenomenon in a non-Western context. In authoritarian states like China and Russia, the elites have more control over the media and the Internet, which enables them to set the public agenda in order to maintain the status quo. Patriotic and nationalist discourse is prevalently used in these countries across different media platforms to direct public nationalist energy in order to increase the government's legitimacy (He, 2018; Huang & Lee, 2003; Shen & Guo, 2013). In contrast, in democratic societies like the United States, the media functions independently of sources of power but the visibility of nationalist ideas and rhetoric has become more prominent with the rise of populist nationalism across liberal democracies.

This study aimed to determine whether mere incidental exposure to news can influence the public's trust in the government through strengthening national identification and system justification beliefs. The results of serial mediation tests show it to be highly likely not only for China and Russia but also for the United States. The effects, however, differ across the countries. The strongest total indirect effect was found in China, which was expected, given that the state's control over the media and the Internet is stricter in China. Russia showed a weaker total indirect effect which can be explained by greater access to different media platforms compared to China. The weakest but still significant total indirect effect was observed in the United States where the correlation between incidental news exposure and national identification was found to be strong enough even after controlling for fifteen potential confounders. This means that the public in the US can be unintentionally exposed to a significant amount of nationalist discourse to strengthen their national identity.

Intriguingly, national identification alone was found to mediate the relationship between incidental news exposure and political trust in China and Russia. This can be interpreted as a success of the regimes to nurture supportive sentiment among the public through nationalist news discourse. However, the mediating effect was still stronger when system justification was added as a second mediator. In contrast, national identification did not mediate the relationship between incidental news exposure and political trust in the United States. The role of system justification was essential for the mediation to work in the US. This can be explained by another valuable finding consistent with previous research (e.g., Jost et al., 2004): ethnic minorities in the United States justify the system and trust the government significantly more than White Americans. However, they also identify less with being American than the ethnic majority. Therefore, national identification did not have a direct effect on political trust in the United States. Another explanation could be that perhaps political trust mainly reflects how the government performs and whether this performance meets the expectations of American citizens. This is in line with the concerns expressed by Uslaner (2018) who advises scholars to be cautious about the assumption that national identification is an important precondition for political trust as there are many other prerequisites, especially in democratic societies.

This study contributes to the existing literature on media effects by implying that political trust may be an indirect consequence of simple incidental contact with information about politics and public affairs. Past studies illustrated that purposeful news consumption can have an impact on political trust (e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1996; Avery, 2009; Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre, & Shehata, 2016). However, this study was concerned with passive and unintentional news acquisition which happens more often in an ambient news environment. Not every individual is interested in politics or follows the news on a daily basis, some even might believe that they are well informed without having to actively seek news because news will find them through their social networks (Gil de

Zúñiga, Weeks, & Ardévol-Abreu, 2017; Gil de Zúñiga & Diehl, 2019). However, every individual is a part of the society accountable for fulfilling their civic duties and is expected to be informed about current events in order to contribute to the larger community. Incidental news exposure is a way of encountering important political information for a larger group of people than only those interested in politics and public affairs. What the findings of this study suggest, is that incidental news exposure can trigger a chain of psychological processes that eventually impact the public's trust in government.

For the elites in China and Russia, the public's trust in government is especially important. Individuals who have high levels of political trust are unlikely to demand political reforms or to be involved in riots (Miller, 1974; Paige, 1971). The present study shows that this goal is attainable through emphasizing patriotic and nationalist sentiment in news discourse because it can strengthen national identification and system justification beliefs which can lead to higher levels of political trust. Moreover, it is not necessary to exercise any action in order to make the citizens more interested in politics — mere incidental encounters with political information can do the trick. Prior research has shown that low-educated people and nonpartisans are those who are most affected by strategy-based news content (Valentino et al., 2001). Therefore, the main finding of this study is distressing, especially given the increasing control of the government over the media in both countries. In such a media environment, it is hard for the public to challenge the system, especially when many justify the status quo and trust the elites.

The findings of this study, however, should be interpreted with caution due to several important limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, even though the directionalities of the relationships of interest were established based on the literature, the cross-sectional survey data may limit the causal interpretations specified in this study. Future research may consider conducting longitudinal analysis or experiments

to investigate stricter causal relationships. Second, the self-reported measure of incidental news exposure could also undermine the validity of the measurement. Oftentimes, incidental news acquisition occurs unconsciously which makes it harder to recall exactly how often one encounters news unintentionally (Yoo & Gil De Zúñiga, 2019). Therefore, it is recommended to control the amount of news exposure in experimental settings to increase the validity of the measurement. Furthermore, the present study considered a more holistic approach in operationalizing incidental news exposure by considering different types of media in one construct. The findings of the present study, however, indicate that alternative media use is negatively related to political trust in Russia while traditional media use is positively related to political trust in both Russia and the United States. Future studies may differentiate between incidental news exposure on traditional and alternative media in order to achieve a clearer understanding of the mediating process.

Despite its limitations, the present study contributes to the existing literature on media effects by examining the complicated mechanism of the psychological and political effects of incidental news exposure. The mediation analysis provides a possible explanation of what happens after one gets exposed to political information unintentionally. It appears that national identification and system justification play a significant role in the strengthening people's trust in their government after incidental news exposure. Moreover, by investigating the indirect paths in three different societies, the study demonstrates that individual country context matters. Therefore, it is also suggested that future studies take the national and cultural context into account when examining the effects of incidental news exposure.

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Appendix

Analysis Output for China

Run MATRIX procedure:

***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.4 *****

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com
Documentation available in Hayes (2018). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

Model : 6
Y : gtrust
X : inexp
M1 : natid
M2 : just

Covariates:

Columns 1 - 14
tmnu amnu smsi smufrq polint poleff PDon PDoff
NetSize STideo Age Gender Race Edu
Columns 15 - 15
Income

Sample
Size: 755

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

natid

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F(HC0)	df1	df2	p
.4091	.1674	1.2471	9.0198	16.0000	738.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-1.7405	2.8273	-.6156	.5383	-7.2911	3.8100
inexp	.3413	.0572	5.9626	.0000	.2289	.4536
tmnu	.1266	.0721	1.7560	.0795	-.0149	.2682
amnu	-.0080	.0704	-.1142	.9091	-.1462	.1301
smsi	.1893	.0670	2.8264	.0048	.0578	.3207
smufrq	-.0107	.0545	-.1963	.8444	-.1176	.0962
polint	.0846	.0461	1.8364	.0667	-.0058	.1751
poleff	-.0113	.0348	-.3251	.7452	-.0795	.0569
PDon	-.0379	.0648	-.5846	.5590	-.1652	.0894
PDoff	-.1464	.0725	-2.0184	.0439	-.2888	-.0040
NetSize	.1140	.0529	2.1563	.0314	.0102	.2177
STideo	-.0931	.0357	-2.6096	.0092	-.1632	-.0231
Age	.0019	.0041	.4667	.6408	-.0061	.0099
Gender	.0966	.0863	1.1190	.2635	-.0729	.2661
Race	-.2232	.1876	-1.1896	.2346	-.5914	.1451
Edu	-.0618	.0618	-.9992	.3180	-.1832	.0596
Income	-.0547	.0419	-1.3052	.1922	-.1369	.0276

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
inexp	.2615
tmnu	.0889
amnu	-.0071

```

smsi          .1583
smufrq        -.0096
polint         .0930
poleff        -.0132
PDon          -.0416
PDoff         -.1477
NetSize        .0958
STideo        -.1058
Age           .0187
Gender         .0396
Race          -.0360
Edu           -.0404
Income        -.0491

```

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
just

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F(HC0)	df1	df2	p
.6324	.3999	1.0750	30.9040	17.0000	737.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-3.8355	2.4811	-1.5458	.1226	-8.7064	1.0355
inexp	-.0205	.0562	-.3641	.7159	-.1308	.0899
natid	.5959	.0363	16.4230	.0000	.5246	.6671
tmnu	.1310	.0650	2.0168	.0441	.0035	.2585
amnu	-.0461	.0578	-.7989	.4246	-.1595	.0673
smsi	.0465	.0601	.7740	.4392	-.0714	.1644
smufrq	-.0987	.0548	-1.8021	.0719	-.2062	.0088
polint	-.0293	.0410	-.7148	.4750	-.1099	.0512
poleff	.1396	.0334	4.1819	.0000	.0741	.2052
PDon	.0702	.0565	1.2409	.2151	-.0408	.1812
PDoff	.1505	.0602	2.4999	.0126	.0323	.2686
NetSize	-.0645	.0490	-1.3140	.1893	-.1607	.0318
STideo	-.0184	.0315	-.5861	.5580	-.0802	.0433
Age	-.0094	.0039	-2.4028	.0165	-.0170	-.0017
Gender	.2275	.0777	2.9272	.0035	.0749	.3800
Race	-.3539	.1937	-1.8271	.0681	-.7341	.0264
Edu	-.0589	.0533	-1.1058	.2692	-.1636	.0457
Income	-.0135	.0363	-.3710	.7108	-.0848	.0578

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
inexp	-.0143
natid	.5452
tmnu	.0841
amnu	-.0372
smsi	.0356
smufrq	-.0812
polint	-.0295
poleff	.1494
PDon	.0705
PDoff	.1389
NetSize	-.0496
STideo	-.0192
Age	-.0839
Gender	.0852
Race	-.0523
Edu	-.0352
Income	-.0111

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

gtrust

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F(HC0)	df1	df2	p
.7058	.4981	1.0767	54.3882	18.0000	736.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.3523	2.4039	.9785	.3281	-2.3671	7.0716
inexp	.0996	.0616	1.6148	.1068	-.0215	.2206
natid	.2681	.0436	6.1448	.0000	.1825	.3538
just	.4898	.0437	11.2027	.0000	.4040	.5757
tmnu	-.0765	.0603	-1.2674	.2054	-.1949	.0420
amnu	.0019	.0621	.0306	.9756	-.1201	.1239
smsi	.1016	.0617	1.6455	.1003	-.0196	.2228
smufrq	-.0423	.0562	-.7526	.4519	-.1528	.0681
polint	.1843	.0414	4.4473	.0000	.1029	.2656
poleff	.0043	.0350	.1225	.9026	-.0644	.0729
PDon	-.1497	.0596	-2.5125	.0122	-.2666	-.0327
PDoff	.1765	.0677	2.6079	.0093	.0436	.3093
NetSize	-.0046	.0469	-.0976	.9223	-.0966	.0875
STideo	-.0375	.0308	-1.2173	.2239	-.0979	.0230
Age	.0034	.0036	.9327	.3513	-.0038	.0106
Gender	.1784	.0824	2.1660	.0306	.0167	.3401
Race	.2453	.2359	1.0399	.2987	-.2178	.7084
Edu	-.0990	.0571	-1.7319	.0837	-.2112	.0132
Income	-.0782	.0373	-2.0965	.0364	-.1514	-.0050

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
inexp	.0638
natid	.2243
just	.4479
tmnu	-.0449
amnu	.0014
smsi	.0711
smufrq	-.0318
polint	.1694
poleff	.0042
PDon	-.1375
PDoff	.1490
NetSize	-.0032
STideo	-.0356
Age	.0279
Gender	.0611
Race	.0331
Edu	-.0541
Income	-.0588

***** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL *****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

gtrust

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F(HC0)	df1	df2	p
.4416	.1950	1.7225	12.0447	16.0000	738.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-.5011	3.2172	-.1558	.8763	-6.8170	5.8148
inexp	.2806	.0732	3.8321	.0001	.1369	.4244

tmnu	.0586	.0831	.7048	.4812	-.1046	.2218
amnu	-.0252	.0809	-.3117	.7554	-.1839	.1335
smsi	.2304	.0815	2.8278	.0048	.0704	.3903
smufrq	-.0967	.0682	-1.4177	.1567	-.2305	.0372
polint	.2173	.0512	4.2412	.0000	.1167	.3179
poleff	.0663	.0427	1.5551	.1203	-.0174	.1501
PDon	-.1365	.0743	-1.8385	.0664	-.2823	.0093
PDoff	.1682	.0810	2.0752	.0383	.0091	.3273
NetSize	.0277	.0658	.4205	.6742	-.1015	.1569
STideo	-.0986	.0415	-2.3782	.0177	-.1801	-.0172
Age	-.0001	.0047	-.0249	.9801	-.0093	.0091
Gender	.3439	.1011	3.4017	.0007	.1454	.5424
Race	-.0530	.2324	-.2281	.8197	-.5092	.4032
Edu	-.1624	.0722	-2.2503	.0247	-.3041	-.0207
Income	-.1154	.0485	-2.3814	.0175	-.2105	-.0203

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
inexp	.1799
tmnu	.0344
amnu	-.0186
smsi	.1612
smufrq	-.0727
polint	.1997
poleff	.0649
PDon	-.1254
PDoff	.1420
NetSize	.0195
STideo	-.0937
Age	-.0010
Gender	.1178
Race	-.0072
Edu	-.0888
Income	-.0867

***** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_ps	c_cs
.2806	.0732	3.8321	.0001	.1369	.4244	.1939	.1799

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_ps	c'_cs
.0996	.0616	1.6148	.1068	-.0215	.2206	.0688	.0638

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL	.1811	.0441	.0924	.2648
Ind1	.0915	.0229	.0502	.1402
Ind2	-.0100	.0280	-.0666	.0455
Ind3	.0996	.0195	.0633	.1396

Partially standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL	.1251	.0303	.0637	.1833
Ind1	.0632	.0158	.0348	.0965
Ind2	-.0069	.0194	-.0460	.0316
Ind3	.0688	.0133	.0439	.0954

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL	.1161	.0283	.0588	.1696
Ind1	.0587	.0148	.0320	.0900

Ind2	-.0064	.0180	-.0430	.0291
Ind3	.0639	.0125	.0404	.0891

Indirect effect key:

Ind1 inexp	->	natid	->	gtrust	
Ind2 inexp	->	just	->	gtrust	
Ind3 inexp	->	natid	->	just	-> gtrust

***** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS *****

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:
95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:
5000

NOTE: A heteroscedasticity consistent standard error and covariance matrix estimator was used.

----- END MATRIX -----

Analysis Output for Russia

Run MATRIX procedure:

***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.4 *****

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com
Documentation available in Hayes (2018). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

Model : 6
Y : gtrust
X : inexp
M1 : natid
M2 : just

Covariates:

Columns	1 -	14							
tmnu	amnu	smsi	smufrq	polint	poleff	PDon	PDoff	NetSize	
STideo	Age	Gender	Race	Edu					
Columns	15 -	15							
	Income								

Sample
Size: 801

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
natid

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F(HC0)	df1	df2	p
.4214	.1775	1.9041	10.8892	16.0000	784.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-12.5272	2.8652	-4.3721	.0000	-18.1517	-6.9027
inexp	.1676	.0532	3.1497	.0017	.0631	.2720

tmnu	.3563	.0725	4.9146	.0000	.2140	.4986
amnu	-.1287	.0642	-2.0049	.0453	-.2547	-.0027
smsi	.0993	.0535	1.8554	.0639	-.0058	.2043
smufrq	-.0412	.0587	-.7018	.4830	-.1565	.0741
polint	.1351	.0541	2.4969	.0127	.0289	.2414
poleff	.0677	.0465	1.4569	.1455	-.0235	.1590
PDon	.0003	.0539	.0056	.9956	-.1055	.1061
PDoff	.0140	.0546	.2567	.7975	-.0932	.1212
NetSize	-.1456	.0725	-2.0075	.0450	-.2881	-.0032
STideo	-.0853	.0390	-2.1885	.0289	-.1618	-.0088
Age	.0170	.0045	3.7981	.0002	.0082	.0259
Gender	.0983	.1061	.9264	.3545	-.1100	.3065
Race	1.0081	.2002	5.0351	.0000	.6151	1.4011
Edu	.0429	.0476	.9007	.3680	-.0506	.1363
Income	-.0429	.0480	-.8928	.3722	-.1371	.0514

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
inexp	.1304
tmnu	.2012
amnu	-.1161
smsi	.0965
smufrq	-.0362
polint	.1189
poleff	.0639
PDon	.0003
PDoff	.0120
NetSize	-.0873
STideo	-.0790
Age	.1417
Gender	.0326
Race	.1708
Edu	.0295
Income	-.0315

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

just

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F(HC0)	df1	df2	p
.5472	.2994	1.2874	24.0915	17.0000	783.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-1.1099	2.2842	-.4859	.6272	-5.5939	3.3740
inexp	-.0280	.0424	-.6607	.5090	-.1111	.0552
natid	.4581	.0275	16.6598	.0000	.4041	.5120
tmnu	.0622	.0573	1.0854	.2781	-.0503	.1746
amnu	.0723	.0485	1.4915	.1362	-.0229	.1675
smsi	.0228	.0426	.5345	.5931	-.0609	.1065
smufrq	-.0444	.0454	-.9777	.3285	-.1336	.0448
polint	-.0797	.0430	-1.8537	.0642	-.1641	.0047
poleff	.1154	.0369	3.1243	.0018	.0429	.1878
PDon	.1472	.0497	2.9641	.0031	.0497	.2447
PDoff	-.0578	.0444	-1.3022	.1932	-.1450	.0294
NetSize	-.1065	.0602	-1.7675	.0775	-.2247	.0118
STideo	-.0138	.0341	-.4043	.6861	-.0807	.0531
Age	-.0107	.0036	-2.9812	.0030	-.0178	-.0037
Gender	-.0407	.0891	-.4569	.6479	-.2157	.1342
Race	-.2783	.1559	-1.7850	.0746	-.5844	.0278
Edu	.0289	.0400	.7235	.4696	-.0495	.1074
Income	.0653	.0361	1.8095	.0708	-.0055	.1360

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
inexp	-.0244
natid	.5145
tmnu	.0394
amnu	.0733
smsi	.0249
smufrq	-.0438
polint	-.0787
poleff	.1222
PDon	.1434
PDoff	-.0557
NetSize	-.0717
STideo	-.0143
Age	-.1001
Gender	-.0152
Race	-.0530
Edu	.0223
Income	.0539

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

gtrust

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F(HC0)	df1	df2	p
.7110	.5055	1.1010	56.6704	18.0000	782.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.1403	2.1706	.9860	.3244	-2.1206	6.4013
inexp	-.0011	.0414	-.0264	.9789	-.0825	.0803
natid	.2588	.0312	8.2848	.0000	.1975	.3201
just	.5829	.0351	16.5848	.0000	.5139	.6519
tmnu	-.0698	.0548	-1.2733	.2033	-.1774	.0378
amnu	-.1010	.0459	-2.2027	.0279	-.1910	-.0110
smsi	.0355	.0398	.8904	.3735	-.0427	.1137
smufrq	.1203	.0423	2.8403	.0046	.0371	.2034
polint	.0791	.0398	1.9881	.0472	.0010	.1572
poleff	.0584	.0333	1.7523	.0801	-.0070	.1237
PDon	-.1007	.0448	-2.2489	.0248	-.1887	-.0128
PDoff	.0508	.0412	1.2315	.2185	-.0302	.1317
NetSize	.0115	.0588	.1961	.8446	-.1039	.1269
STideo	-.0068	.0288	-.2372	.8126	-.0634	.0498
Age	-.0015	.0033	-.4492	.6534	-.0080	.0050
Gender	-.0450	.0774	-.5808	.5616	-.1970	.1070
Race	-.1972	.1403	-1.4056	.1602	-.4726	.0782
Edu	.0210	.0367	.5711	.5681	-.0511	.0930
Income	.0283	.0336	.8445	.3987	-.0375	.0942

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
inexp	-.0009
natid	.2643
just	.5299
tmnu	-.0402
amnu	-.0930
smsi	.0352
smufrq	.1078
polint	.0710
poleff	.0562
PDon	-.0892

PDoff	.0445
NetSize	.0071
STideo	-.0065
Age	-.0126
Gender	-.0152
Race	-.0341
Edu	.0147
Income	.0213

***** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL *****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

gtrust

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F(HC0)	df1	df2	p
.2679	.0718	2.0614	3.8076	16.0000	784.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-5.0935	2.8238	-1.8038	.0716	-10.6365	.4496
inexp	.0707	.0542	1.3041	.1926	-.0357	.1772
tmnu	.1538	.0715	2.1505	.0318	.0134	.2942
amnu	-.1265	.0648	-1.9534	.0511	-.2537	.0006
smsi	.1010	.0563	1.7942	.0732	-.0095	.2114
smufrq	.0727	.0586	1.2414	.2148	-.0423	.1877
polint	.1037	.0534	1.9415	.0526	-.0011	.2086
poleff	.1612	.0467	3.4511	.0006	.0695	.2529
PDon	-.0148	.0633	-.2336	.8153	-.1390	.1094
PDoff	.0244	.0564	.4331	.6650	-.0863	.1351
NetSize	-.1271	.0739	-1.7208	.0857	-.2721	.0179
STideo	-.0597	.0409	-1.4595	.1448	-.1401	.0206
Age	.0012	.0047	.2616	.7937	-.0080	.0105
Gender	-.0170	.1100	-.1550	.8769	-.2330	.1989
Race	.1706	.2139	.7978	.4252	-.2492	.5904
Edu	.0604	.0529	1.1417	.2539	-.0434	.1641
Income	.0438	.0466	.9417	.3467	-.0476	.1352

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
inexp	.0562
tmnu	.0887
amnu	-.1165
smsi	.1002
smufrq	.0652
polint	.0931
poleff	.1552
PDon	-.0131
PDoff	.0214
NetSize	-.0778
STideo	-.0565
Age	.0105
Gender	-.0058
Race	.0295
Edu	.0424
Income	.0329

***** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_ps	c_cs
.0707	.0542	1.3041	.1926	-.0357	.1772	.0479	.0562

Effect	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_ps	c'_cs
-.0011	.0414	-.0264	.9789	-.0825	.0803	-.0007	-.0009

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL	.0718	.0369	.0011	.1441
Ind1	.0434	.0150	.0162	.0743
Ind2	-.0163	.0255	-.0662	.0334
Ind3	.0447	.0148	.0164	.0752

Partially standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL	.0487	.0249	.0007	.0980
Ind1	.0294	.0102	.0109	.0503
Ind2	-.0111	.0173	-.0452	.0226
Ind3	.0303	.0100	.0111	.0507

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL	.0570	.0291	.0009	.1142
Ind1	.0344	.0117	.0129	.0585
Ind2	-.0130	.0202	-.0524	.0268
Ind3	.0355	.0116	.0130	.0589

Indirect effect key:

Ind1 inexp	->	natid	->	gtrust	
Ind2 inexp	->	just	->	gtrust	
Ind3 inexp	->	natid	->	just	-> gtrust

***** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS *****

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:
95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:
5000

NOTE: A heteroscedasticity consistent standard error and covariance matrix estimator was used.

----- END MATRIX -----

Analysis Output for the United States

Run MATRIX procedure:

***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.4 *****

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com
Documentation available in Hayes (2018). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

Model : 6
Y : gtrust
X : inexp
M1 : natid
M2 : just

Covariates:
Columns 1 - 14
tmnu amnu smsi smufrq polint poleff PDon PDoff NetSize
STideo Age Gender Race Edu
Columns 15 - 15
Income

Sample
Size: 768

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
natid

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F(HC0)	df1	df2	p
.4929	.2430	1.4526	16.7229	16.0000	751.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-11.3851	2.2151	-5.1398	.0000	-15.7335	-7.0366
inexp	.1786	.0406	4.3958	.0000	.0988	.2584
tmnu	.3544	.0560	6.3283	.0000	.2445	.4643
amnu	-.0091	.0600	-.1521	.8792	-.1269	.1087
smsi	-.0217	.0462	-.4694	.6389	-.1125	.0691
smufrq	.0964	.0425	2.2690	.0236	.0130	.1799
polint	-.0833	.0431	-1.9331	.0536	-.1679	.0013
poleff	.0714	.0394	1.8101	.0707	-.0060	.1488
PDon	-.1495	.0628	-2.3799	.0176	-.2728	-.0262
PDoff	.0384	.0502	.7639	.4452	-.0603	.1370
NetSize	-.1685	.0718	-2.3473	.0192	-.3094	-.0276
STideo	.0366	.0276	1.3274	.1848	-.0175	.0907
Age	.0273	.0035	7.8057	.0000	.0205	.0342
Gender	.1201	.1038	1.1580	.2472	-.0835	.3238
Race	.3858	.1314	2.9365	.0034	.1279	.6437
Edu	-.0907	.0481	-1.8860	.0597	-.1852	.0037
Income	-.0105	.0453	-.2314	.8171	-.0994	.0784

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
inexp	.1676
tmnu	.2535
amnu	-.0099
smsi	-.0239
smufrq	.1229
polint	-.0992
poleff	.0785
PDon	-.1270
PDoff	.0349
NetSize	-.1102
STideo	.0460
Age	.3116
Gender	.0431
Race	.0998
Edu	-.0655
Income	-.0083

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
just

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F(HC0)	df1	df2	p
---	------	-----	--------	-----	-----	---

	.4574	.2092	1.3539	12.6420	17.0000	750.0000	.0000
Model							
	coeff	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	-1.9130	2.1875	-.8745	.3821	-6.2073	2.3814	
inexp	-.0089	.0435	-.2040	.8384	-.0942	.0765	
natid	.2640	.0364	7.2584	.0000	.1926	.3355	
tmnu	.0892	.0553	1.6109	.1076	-.0195	.1978	
amnu	.0522	.0527	.9908	.3221	-.0512	.1556	
smsi	.1085	.0436	2.4895	.0130	.0229	.1941	
smufrq	-.1693	.0391	-4.3235	.0000	-.2461	-.0924	
polint	-.0164	.0393	-.4164	.6772	-.0935	.0608	
poleff	.1782	.0374	4.7681	.0000	.1048	.2515	
PDon	.0446	.0565	.7907	.4294	-.0662	.1555	
PDoff	.0343	.0484	.7099	.4780	-.0606	.1293	
NetSize	-.2907	.0707	-4.1096	.0000	-.4295	-.1518	
STideo	-.0523	.0270	-1.9398	.0528	-.1053	.0006	
Age	-.0045	.0035	-1.3122	.1899	-.0113	.0023	
Gender	-.1290	.0998	-1.2926	.1965	-.3249	.0669	
Race	-.3956	.1380	-2.8670	.0043	-.6665	-.1247	
Edu	.0429	.0450	.9541	.3404	-.0454	.1311	
Income	.1571	.0419	3.7487	.0002	.0748	.2393	

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
inexp	-.0088
natid	.2797
tmnu	.0676
amnu	.0599
smsi	.1266
smufrq	-.2284
polint	-.0207
poleff	.2076
PDon	.0402
PDoff	.0331
NetSize	-.2013
STideo	-.0697
Age	-.0549
Gender	-.0490
Race	-.1084
Edu	.0328
Income	.1318

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

gtrust

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F(HC0)	df1	df2	p
.4518	.2041	1.3366	9.7674	18.0000	749.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-4.1732	2.1167	-1.9716	.0490	-8.3285	-.0178
inexp	-.0062	.0383	-.1629	.8706	-.0815	.0690
natid	-.0083	.0353	-.2348	.8144	-.0775	.0610
just	.2931	.0371	7.8958	.0000	.2202	.3659
tmnu	.1247	.0544	2.2899	.0223	.0178	.2316
amnu	.0547	.0504	1.0856	.2780	-.0442	.1536
smsi	.0126	.0444	.2837	.7767	-.0746	.0998
smufrq	-.0006	.0381	-.0166	.9868	-.0755	.0742
polint	-.0410	.0384	-1.0670	.2863	-.1163	.0344
poleff	.1073	.0397	2.7039	.0070	.0294	.1852

PDon	.0820	.0553	1.4827	.1386	-.0266	.1907
PDoff	.0265	.0476	.5565	.5780	-.0669	.1199
NetSize	-.1352	.0715	-1.8916	.0589	-.2756	.0051
STideo	-.0113	.0257	-.4405	.6597	-.0618	.0391
Age	-.0007	.0034	-.2039	.8385	-.0073	.0059
Gender	.0759	.0973	.7808	.4351	-.1150	.2669
Race	-.3801	.1286	-2.9553	.0032	-.6326	-.1276
Edu	.1931	.0468	4.1296	.0000	.1013	.2848
Income	-.0245	.0434	-.5631	.5735	-.1098	.0608

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
inexp	-.0063
natid	-.0089
just	.2961
tmnu	.0955
amnu	.0635
smsi	.0148
smufrq	-.0009
polint	-.0522
poleff	.1263
PDon	.0746
PDoff	.0258
NetSize	-.0946
STideo	-.0152
Age	-.0084
Gender	.0291
Race	-.1052
Edu	.1491
Income	-.0207

***** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL *****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

gtrust

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F(HC0)	df1	df2	p
.3614	.1306	1.4562	6.2590	16.0000	751.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-5.5206	2.1969	-2.5129	.0122	-9.8333	-1.2078
inexp	.0035	.0405	.0864	.9312	-.0759	.0829
tmnu	.1753	.0560	3.1325	.0018	.0654	.2852
amnu	.0694	.0538	1.2885	.1980	-.0363	.1751
smsi	.0429	.0467	.9195	.3581	-.0487	.1345
smufrq	-.0436	.0402	-1.0838	.2788	-.1225	.0353
polint	-.0515	.0400	-1.2890	.1978	-.1300	.0269
poleff	.1645	.0399	4.1220	.0000	.0861	.2428
PDon	.0848	.0595	1.4253	.1545	-.0320	.2016
PDoff	.0392	.0506	.7743	.4390	-.0602	.1386
NetSize	-.2321	.0768	-3.0202	.0026	-.3829	-.0812
STideo	-.0241	.0265	-.9111	.3625	-.0761	.0279
Age	-.0001	.0034	-.0380	.9697	-.0068	.0065
Gender	.0464	.1024	.4537	.6502	-.1545	.2474
Race	-.4694	.1350	-3.4758	.0005	-.7345	-.2043
Edu	.1994	.0484	4.1206	.0000	.1044	.2943
Income	.0208	.0442	.4711	.6377	-.0660	.1077

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
inexp	.0035
tmnu	.1342

```

amnu      .0805
smsi      .0506
smufrq    -.0594
polint    -.0657
poleff    .1936
PDon      .0771
PDoff     .0381
NetSize   -.1624
STideo    -.0325
Age       -.0016
Gender    .0178
Race      -.1299
Edu       .1540
Income    .0177

```

***** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_ps	c_cs
.0035	.0405	.0864	.9312	-.0759	.0829	.0027	.0035

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se(HC0)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_ps	c'_cs
-.0062	.0383	-.1629	.8706	-.0815	.0690	-.0049	-.0063

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL	.0097	.0145	-.0198	.0382
Ind1	-.0015	.0065	-.0147	.0121
Ind2	-.0026	.0128	-.0290	.0221
Ind3	.0138	.0042	.0065	.0230

Partially standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL	.0076	.0113	-.0155	.0295
Ind1	-.0012	.0051	-.0115	.0094
Ind2	-.0020	.0100	-.0228	.0169
Ind3	.0108	.0033	.0051	.0179

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL	.0098	.0145	-.0198	.0377
Ind1	-.0015	.0066	-.0148	.0120
Ind2	-.0026	.0129	-.0292	.0219
Ind3	.0139	.0042	.0066	.0229

Indirect effect key:

```

Ind1 inexp    ->   natid      ->   gtrust
Ind2 inexp    ->    just      ->   gtrust
Ind3 inexp    ->   natid      ->   just      ->   gtrust

```

***** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS *****

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:
95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:
5000

NOTE: A heteroscedasticity consistent standard error and covariance matrix estimator was used.

----- END MATRIX -----

Abstract

In recent decades, incidental news exposure has been studied widely within Western societies. However, there is a lack of empirical research with regard to the effects of incidental news exposure on political outcomes such as political trust in non-Western countries. Drawing on a nationally representative survey collected in mainland China ($N = 998$), Russia ($N = 1144$), and the United States ($N = 1161$) in 2015, this study examines how incidental news exposure influences the public's trust in government through two mediators — national identification and system justification. Mediation analyses show that incidental news exposure has a significant positive indirect effect on political trust through strengthening national identification and system justification beliefs in all three countries. The strongest total indirect effects were found in China followed by Russia and the United States. Mediation also occurred through national identification alone in China and Russia. However, the effect was stronger when system justification was introduced as a second mediator. Interestingly, national identification alone did not mediate the relationship between incidental news exposure and political trust in the United States. Here the introduction of system justification in the model was crucial.

Keywords: incidental news exposure, national identification, system justification, political trust, China, Russia, USA

Zusammenfassung

In den letzten Jahrzehnten wurde die zufällige Verbreitung von Nachrichten in westlichen Gesellschaften umfassend untersucht. Es mangelt jedoch an empirischen Untersuchungen zu den Auswirkungen einer zufälligen Nachrichtenexposition auf politische Einflussfaktoren wie das politische Vertrauen in nichtwestliche Länder. Diese Studie basiert auf einer national repräsentativen Umfrage, die 2015 auf dem Festland China ($N = 998$), in Russland ($N = 1144$) und in den USA ($N = 1161$) erhoben wurde und untersucht, wie zufällige Nachrichten das Vertrauen der Öffentlichkeit in die Regierung durch die beiden Mediatoren nationale Identifikation und Systembegründung beeinflussen. Mediationsanalysen zeigen, dass zufällige Nachrichten einen signifikanten positiven indirekten Effekt auf das politische Vertrauen haben, in dem sie sowohl nationale Identifikation als auch Systembegründung in allen drei Ländern stärken. Die stärksten indirekten Effekte wurden in China festgestellt, gefolgt von Russland und den Vereinigten Staaten. Die Mediation erfolgte auch allein durch nationale Identifikation in China und Russland. Der Effekt war jedoch stärker, als die Systembegründung als zweiter Mediator eingeführt wurde. Interessanterweise beeinflusste nationale Identifikation allein die Beziehung zwischen zufälliger Nachrichtenexposition und politischem Vertrauen nicht in den Vereinigten Staaten. Stattdessen war hier die Einführung der Systembegründung im Analyse-Modell entscheidend.

Schlüsselwörter: zufällige Nachrichtenexposition, nationale Identifikation, Systembegründung, politisches Vertrauen, China, Russland, USA