

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# “And Here’s What I Think About Tariffs...”: What Happens When Politics Enters Supply Chain Decisions?

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## ABSTRACT

As supply chain topics like tariffs have become increasingly prominent in public and political discourse, the influence of potential biases from politics has also grown. This study investigates how differences in political ideology influence supply chain management decisions. We use a between-subjects vignette experiment with a final sample of 216 supply chain professionals who evaluated a new sourcing plan proposed by a manager in response to tariffs. Participants were randomly assigned to conditions where the proposal by the manager included statements that were conservative (pro-Trump), liberal (anti-Trump), or politically neutral. These statements influenced participants’ view of the manager’s political ideology and resulted in different levels of support for a tariff-related plan and the manager. Our findings include three key insights. First, conservatives were more likely to support a tariff-related sourcing plan. Second, a manager including a political statement did not significantly impact employee support for the plan, but it did decrease employee support for that manager. Third, ideological dissimilarity between an employee and their manager strongly decreased the support for both the plan and manager—even in the neutral condition. Overall, political ideology biases supply chain decision making, suggesting an important new stream of research.

## 1 | Introduction

For many years, supply chains have remained relatively hidden from the public sphere—quietly delivering goods and services from complicated networks of firms across the globe. Yet over the last decade supply chains have become a central part of the public discourse as events such as disruptions from COVID-19 (Swanson and Suzuki 2020), semiconductor shortages (Burkacky et al. 2022) and other supplier-induced disruptions (Cheng et al. 2020), or shipping disruptions like the Suez Canal blockage (Lee and Wong 2021) emphasized the reliance of supply chains on complex global networks of production, and businesses attempted to develop continuity programs in response to supply chain disruptions (Kulpa et al. 2026). Most recently, significant hikes in import tariffs for US companies and consumers that were imposed by the Trump administration have vaulted the topic of supply chains back into the public sphere. As supply chain managers reevaluate their sourcing plans to account for

the increased taxes on imported products, this has also introduced politics into supply chain decision making (Sheffi 2025), and with it a wide range of potential biases.

As supply chains have taken a more prominent role in politics, we set out to uncover what role politics has taken in supply chains. The motivation for our study stemmed from this observation made by a manager who attended a recent supply chain management executive council meeting held at the university of one of this paper’s authors: “I’m surprised by how often political comments enter our discussion when we make decisions.” This statement, along with follow-up conversations with the manager and other attendees, suggested that political conversations have now become commonplace in supply chain decision making as US managers confront the issue of tariffs, sometimes choosing to share their strong beliefs about President Trump—either pro or con—or to withhold their political positions when making supply chain decisions in

response to tariffs. This posed an interesting and timely question that has not been studied in supply chain management: *How do differences in political ideology influence supply chain decision making?*

Although political ideology in organizations is a relatively new research topic (Swigart et al. 2020), recent work highlights how differences in political ideology can impact a variety of decisions. For example, CEOs with stronger political ideologies are more likely to engage in corporate misconduct (Fewer and Tarakci 2025), executive teams with different mixes of political ideology have different frequencies and speed for medical recalls (Wowak et al. 2025), and employees view others as significantly different based on differences in political ideology (Solomon 2025). Recently, Rosen et al. (2024) find that ambient political conversations (overhearing but not participating in workplace political discussion) can lead to negative affect, particularly when the political conversation espouses viewpoints that differ from those of the employee who overhears the conversation. There is strong evidence that cognitive biases and emotions affect decision making (e.g., Dobra and Tombazos 2020), including supply chain management decisions (e.g., Polyviou et al. 2022). Interestingly, there is a dearth of research that examines the potential biasing effects of direct political discussion on supply chain management decision making.

To understand how political ideology and political statements influence supply chain decisions, we conducted a three-level between-subjects experiment with supply chain management employees to ask participants to consider a new sourcing plan due to tariffs that included a political statement expressing a positive or negative sentiment about a political figure. Participants were randomly assigned to conditions where the manager proposes a new sourcing plan to address tariffs and includes no political statement, an anti-Trump, or a pro-Trump statement with the plan. The findings identify that political ideology influences the individual support from employees to implement a new sourcing plan, and strong political statements from a manager can harm the organization, reducing the support from individuals who perceive an ideological difference between themselves and their manager. Notably, this effect occurred even when a manager did not make a strong political statement—suggesting discussions involving a political topic intended to be neutral might inadvertently activate human biases around political ideology.<sup>1</sup>

## 2 | Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Political ideology is a “set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved” (Erikson and Tedin 2003, 64). Political ideology can generally be expressed as a continuum of liberal versus conservative ideology based on whether one “(1) advocates for social change versus tradition, (2) advocates for equality versus hierarchy, and (3) emphasizes contextual factors versus personal agency in explaining outcomes and circumstances (Erikson and Tedin 2003; Jost et al. 2009; Skitka and Tetlock 1993)” (Swigart et al. 2020, 1067). We consider political ideology from three supporting theoretical perspectives: heuristics and biases, social identity theory, and person-organization fit.

### 2.1 | Business Decisions Are Influenced by Political Biases

Biases—violation of the rationalistic paradigm in economics that leads to suboptimal results (Gilovich et al. 2002; Tversky and Kahneman 1974)—are omnipresent in daily human decision making (Kahneman et al. 1982; Thaler 1985; Bazerman 1998). Research has found that political bias in decision making is commonplace, affecting not just the decisions of voters (Huber et al. 2012) but also policy makers (Butler and Vis 2022), judges (Harris and Sen 2019), and the overall perceptions of individuals (Lerman and Acland 2020). Further, political bias may become more prevalent as liberal and conservative political ideology in the US continues to become more polarized (Brenan 2025).

Differences in political ideology can influence decision making across organizational levels. For example, politically conservative CEOs engage less in corporate social responsibility compared to politically liberal CEOs (Chin et al. 2013), and this same effect is observed in firms with more conservative workforces compared to more liberal workforces (Gupta et al. 2017). Organizational policies can be shaped by ideology, with liberal-leaning organizations more likely to adopt inclusive diversity and labor practices (Carnahan and Greenwood 2018).

Individuals with different political beliefs vary in how they respond to framing effects and risks, leading to biases in decision making when making decisions with uncertainty (Quattrone and Tversky 1988). Although concerns about the uncertainties associated with the changing cost structures due to tariffs have been largely universal as tariffs can create increased complexity (Chae et al. 2019), the subsequent support for tariffs generally aligns with political ideologies, with conservatives having greater support compared to liberals for the tariffs. Brutger and Guisinger (2025) found that conservatives were less likely to blame the government for layoffs that were attributed to higher tariff costs due to tariffs imposed by President Trump.

Given that the tariffs came from the Trump administration and would be more closely aligned with conservative ideology in the current political environment, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 1.** *Conservatives will have higher levels of support than liberals for a new sourcing plan related to tariffs.*

### 2.2 | Politics at Work Can Lead to Identity Conflict, Reducing Employee Commitment and Support of Other Employees

Social identity theory (Turner et al. 1979, 1987) explains how individuals view themselves and those around them based on group membership. Individuals tend to view those in their ingroup more favorably and those in their outgroup more negatively. Political identity is a key part of one’s social identity (Greene 2004) and explains how an increase in partisanship has led to greater dislike of opposing parties over time (Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018). Although political identities tend to rank high in salience when individuals balance

multiple identities (Zschau et al. 2025), it is also an identity that is not always active at work. Instead, political identity is often suppressed in workplace environments (Swigart et al. 2020), where even overhearing political conversations can lead to negative outcomes (Rosen et al. 2024).

In organizational environments, individuals are often part of many different groups and so balance multiple social identities. When identities do not align, this can lead to role conflict that is resolved by individuals selectively identifying with different identities or decoupling the identities from one another (Ashforth and Mael 1989). Individuals with conflicting individual and organizational identities compartmentalize their identities (Creed et al. 2010). When those identities are kept separate, there is no conflict, as “conflict is perceived only when the disparities are made salient” (Ashforth and Mael 1989, 31).

Many organizations have institutionalized avoiding politics (Swigart et al. 2020), and individuals might compartmentalize their political and work identities, which can minimize identity conflict between work and personal identities. When political statements are part of a business context where it is unexpected, such as in entrepreneurial fundraising, it can reduce support (Chandler et al. 2024). Politics being introduced into the workplace might create conflict as they are viewed as something that should not be included in supply chain decision making. Political language in the workplace environment, independent of what specific political viewpoint is expressed or held by the others, can result in a negative view of the person expressing a political view.

But avoiding political conversations for supply chain managers might not be possible given that tariffs, driven by the Trump administration, have required supply chain managers to completely reevaluate their sourcing plans (Sheffi 2025). In navigating the uncertainty around tariffs, political connections can lead to firms distancing themselves from firms with higher political entanglement (Fan et al. 2024). Similarly, political statements might be perceived as a potential risk. This has led to a new challenge in supply chain management, where workplace identity and political identity can be brought into conflict—bringing us back to the concern of the supply chain executive mentioned earlier about how frequently political statements are part of supply chain decisions.

Political statements from a manager might lead to lower group identification as identities are brought into conflict, reducing both support of plans associated with political statements and the manager. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 2.** *A manager expressing a political statement alongside a sourcing plan will (a) decrease employee support of that plan and (b) decrease employee support of that manager.*

### 2.3 | Dissimilarity Between an Individual's Political Ideologies and Their Supervisor Can Reduce Employee Support and Perceptions

Political ideology has been identified as one key dimension of social identity theory and person-organization fit, although research

on its influence in organizational environments between managers and employees has been scarce (Roth et al. 2017). Research on person-organization fit emphasizes value congruence, which explains that a variety of positive employee outcomes can occur when individuals have similar values to their organization, group, or leader (Edwards and Cable 2009; Kristof 1996). When individuals view their values as matching their organization (person-organization fit) or their supervisor (person-supervisor fit), this can result in a variety of positive outcomes, such as job satisfaction, job performance, and well-being (Kristof-Brown et al. 2005).

Greater dissimilarity between an individual and supervisor can lead to a decrease in perceived performance (Tsui and O'Reilly III 1989). Surveys of employees have found that even simply overhearing ambient political conversations at work can lead to adverse outcomes such as negative affect, but this only impacted employees who viewed themselves as more dissimilar to their coworkers (Rosen et al. 2024). Employees who had a different political view than their coworkers experienced adverse effects in interpersonal interactions (He et al. 2019). When employees consider decisions at work, misalignment between their political ideology with that of their manager will likely influence the employees' response to a supply chain decision, especially when that decision is related to politics such as decisions related to tariffs.

Based on value congruence, we hypothesize that dissimilarity in ideological views between an employee and a manager will lead to reduced support of a plan presented by that manager and reduced employee support of that manager.

**Hypothesis 3.** *Ideological dissimilarity between a manager and an employee in considering a sourcing plan will (a) decrease employee support of a plan and (b) decrease employee support of that manager.*

Figure 1 summarizes the predicted relationships.

## 3 | Methodology

The hypotheses were tested with a vignette experiment (Eckerd et al. 2021; Carter et al. 2024). Participants were instructed to take the role of an employee at a firm that manufactured industrial pumps. The product was chosen to be intentionally neutral to minimize individual biases tied to the specific type of product or firm. Participants read a short introduction to their role and then were provided with an email from a supervisor about new

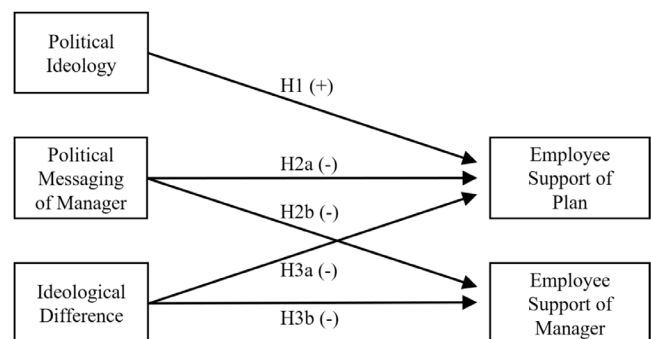


FIGURE 1 | Overview of hypotheses.

tariffs with a suggested new sourcing plan. The plan presented by the manager consisted of changing suppliers from China to other suppliers located in Asia and was designed intentionally to be close to cost neutral, with a slightly positive expected organizational outcome. The specific plan presented by the manager was the same for all three conditions and was designed as a neutral shift within the same region to avoid introducing conflating factors, such as different ideological viewpoints regarding manufacturing domestically.

After reading the manager's email and plan, participants were provided with a follow-up, independent estimate that identified that the plan would result in a projected 4% cost savings. The additional estimate was to help anchor the plan as a minor improvement and provide an independent analysis that did not come from the manager. All participants saw the same general context, email, plan, and decision variables except for the manipulation on the manager's political statement.

### 3.1 | Sample

Data were collected in July 2025. We collected a sample from Prolific ([www.prolific.com](http://www.prolific.com)), which performs well in terms of overall data quality (Douglas et al. 2023; Albert and Smilek 2023; Peer et al. 2022). Participants were prescreened by requiring participants to be (1) currently residing in the United States, (2) working in operations, and (3) having decision making responsibility in either "operations/production" or "supply chain/logistics", based on pre-screening criteria through Prolific. Because the research question involves studying divergent political opinions, we strategically sampled participants that had identified as "Liberal" or "Conservative" and recruited a similar sample size from each group. Sample characteristics are in Table 1.

### 3.2 | Measures

Manager Political Statement was manipulated by assigning participants to one of three different political values espoused by

the manager: no political statement (neutral), anti-Trump, or pro-Trump. Participants in all three conditions saw the statement: "This whole tariff thing is creating a lot of uncertainty" as uncertainty was one of the primary drivers of conversations around tariffs (Miller et al. 2025). Those assigned to pro- or anti-Trump conditions saw an additional statement for or against President Trump.

The specific language in the manipulation was developed through interviews with supply chain managers. The manipulation was intentionally specific to a political figure, rather than a specific ideology because supply chain managers identified that the discussions around tariffs referenced President Trump and typically referenced him informally as "Trump". In addition, based on the interviews with supply chain managers, the phrasing included intentionally strong statements to match the conversations around President Trump when discussing tariffs. We further balanced the language between the pro- and anti-Trump conditions to ensure consistency between the framings by framing pro- and anti-Trump language as mirroring effects. The statements are included in Table 2.

Employee political ideology was measured using Inbar and Lammers (2012) 7-point scale: "Which of the following best represents your political views?" (1 = strongly liberal, 7 = strongly conservative), which is aligned with approaches that measure political ideology using a value-based or social-identity lens (Swigart et al. 2020).

Manager political ideology was measured using the same 7-point scale (Inbar and Lammers 2012) as employee political ideology with the framing adjusted to be about the manager by asking: "Which of the following do you think represents your manager's political views?" (1 = strongly liberal, 7 = strongly conservative).

Ideological dissimilarity was measured using the generalized Euclidean distance between employee political ideology and manager political ideology similar to previous research on ideological dissimilarity, which can be operationalized as the absolute value of the difference for two items (Barber IV and Blake 2024; He et al. 2019). Ideological dissimilarity ranged

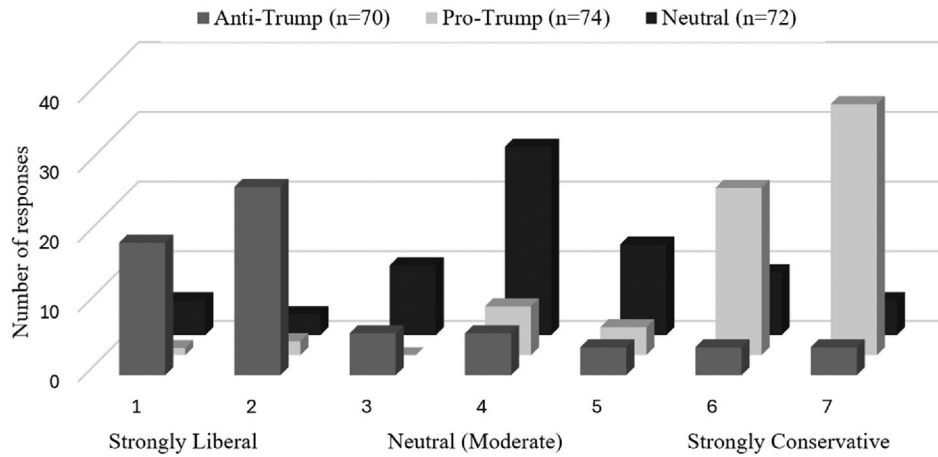
TABLE 1 | Sample characteristics.

Sample information	
Initial sample	231
Removed for missing data	4
Removed for failed attention check	11
Final sample	216
Demographics of final sample	
Compensation	\$3
Median completion time (minutes)	11.0
Median age	39.5
Female/Male/Other	89/127
SCM knowledge (median/mean)	3/2.6
Country of birth (USA/Global)	211/5

TABLE 2 | Manager political statement<sup>a</sup>.

[Neutral]	
This whole tariff thing is creating a lot of uncertainty.	
[Anti-Trump]	[Pro-Trump]
... We cannot trust Trump.	... But we need to trust
He's a terrible businessman	Trump. He's a great
and doesn't know what he's	businessman and knows
doing. He's going to make our	what he's doing. He's
country worse than before.	going to make our
	country great again.

<sup>a</sup>These statements were developed through interviews with attendees at a supply chain management executive council meeting and an open discussion with the group of attendees and are based on the attendees' experiences in their organizations. We acknowledge the concerns of an anonymous reviewer that these statements could be viewed as "very extreme", and we encourage additional research on political ideology using additional approaches to measure and manipulate political ideology.



**FIGURE 2** | Histogram of perceived manager political ideology by manipulation.

from 0 to 6, with a larger value representing a larger difference between employee and manager political ideology.

Employee support of plan was measured using a three-item, 7-point scale to measure affective commitment. We modified the previously established scale on affective commitment (Gattiker and Carter 2010; Wichmann et al. 2016) by changing the language to “plan” instead of “initiative” and removing a measure that was part of the established context in the vignette (the item “this initiative is necessary” was removed to avoid conflation with the manipulation where tariffs necessitated a new sourcing plan). The scale included the three items: “This plan is good for our organization”, “Things would be worse without this plan”, and “I believe in the value of this plan”.

Employee support of manager was measured using a similar three-item scale for affective commitment from previous research (Gattiker and Carter 2010; Wichmann et al. 2016) by modifying the language to “this manager”. The scale included the three items: “This manager is good for our organization”, “Things would be worse without this manager”, and “I believe in this manager”.

Control variables included supply chain expertise, social desirability bias, gender, and age. Supply chain expertise was measured as a count variable for the number of correct answers across three multiple choice questions about general supply chain management topics. Social desirability bias was measured using the 11-item scale used by Pournader and Kach (2024). Gender and age were provided by Prolific for the sample.

### 3.3 | Manipulation Check

We confirmed the manipulation's efficacy by asking participants about their manager's political ideology. Participants perceived the manager's political ideology in line with expected directions for the assigned conditions. For the neutral condition, the manager's political ideology was near the center of the scale (mean = 4.21) with a normal distribution around the

mean, suggesting the neutral condition did not have a strong bias in either direction. When the manager included a political statement, there was a significant difference in the mean values for the anti-Trump (mean = 2.67,  $t = 5.59$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) or pro-Trump language (mean = 6.07,  $t = 8.01$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Combined, this indicates that the manipulation resulted in the desired effect for all three conditions. The distribution of responses by group are presented in Figure 2 which shows a relatively normal distribution for the neutral condition and distributions that differed for the two political statements in the expected direction.

## 4 | Results

### 4.1 | Estimation Procedure and Model Fit

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis for the two DVs: employee support of plan and employee support of manager by estimating a two-factor measurement model. The resultant fit statistics demonstrate a high level of fit, with RMSEA = 0.069, CFI = 0.992, TLI = 0.985, and SRMR = 0.025. We report the results using the average sum scores for each DV to enhance interpretability and replicability in future studies using similar measures (Widaman and Revelle 2023), and to enhance interpretation of the results given the use of standard likelihood scales measured from 1 to 7.

We estimated the models using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) with Huber-White standard errors. The full model estimations for the employee support of the plan and employee support of the manager are:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Employee Support}_{\text{plan}} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Employee Political Ideology}) \\
 & + \beta_2(\text{Manager Political Messaging}) \\
 & + \beta_3(\text{Ideological Dissimilarity}) \\
 & + \beta_4(\text{Supply Chain Expertise}) \\
 & + \beta_5(\text{Social Desirability}) + \beta_6(\text{Gender}) \\
 & + \beta_6(\text{Age}) + \epsilon
 \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

**TABLE 3** | Correlation table.

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Employee support of plan	1.00									
2. Employee support of manager	<b>0.61</b>	1.00								
3. Employee political ideology <sup>a</sup>	<b>0.17</b>	0.06	1.00							
4. Manager political messaging <sup>b</sup>	0.01	0.02	-0.01	1.00						
5. Manager political ideology <sup>a</sup>	-0.03	-0.01	0.13	<b>0.67</b>	1.00					
6. Ideological dissimilarity	<b>-0.25</b>	<b>-0.51</b>	<b>-0.20</b>	0.07	-0.02	1.00				
7. Social desirability bias	<b>0.15</b>	<b>0.15</b>	0.08	-0.04	-0.12	<b>-0.16</b>	1.00			
8. Supply chain expertise	0.07	-0.01	-0.08	-0.01	-0.11	0.02	0.04	1.00		
9. Gender (0 = female, 1 = male)	<b>-0.17</b>	-0.04	0.05	0.03	<b>0.14</b>	-0.08	<b>-0.20</b>	-0.02	1.00	
10. Age (years)	-0.01	-0.11	-0.10	-0.09	-0.01	<b>0.15</b>	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	1.00
Mean	5.04	4.97	3.94	1.02	4.35	2.18	-1.07	2.61	0.59	41.86
Standard deviation	1.13	1.30	2.31	0.82	2.07	1.94	3.00	0.67	0.49	11.65

Note:  $p < 0.05$  (in bold).

<sup>a</sup>1 = liberal, 7 = conservative.

<sup>b</sup>Coded as a continuous variable for the correlation table (anti-Trump = 0, no statement = 1, pro-Trump = 2).

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Employee Support}_{\text{Manager}} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Employee Political Ideology}) \\
 & + \beta_2(\text{Manager Political Messaging}) \\
 & + \beta_3(\text{Ideological Dissimilarity}) \\
 & + \beta_4(\text{Supply Chain Expertise}) \\
 & + \beta_5(\text{Social Desirability}) + \beta_6(\text{Gender}) \\
 & + \beta_7(\text{Age}) + \epsilon
 \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

In addition to the regression examining the direct effects of ideological dissimilarity as measured based on previous research where it is treated as the absolute value of the difference between the ideological view between individuals (Barber IV and Blake 2024; He et al. 2019), we additionally examine ideological dissimilarity using the method outlined by Edwards and Parry (1993). This method involves estimating a polynomial regression (using a bootstrap estimation of 10,000 samples to generate robust standard errors) to generate a response surface estimation. Prior to estimation in the polynomial regressions, all independent variables were standardized and mean-centered. Specifically, we estimated the polynomial regressions as follows:

$$Z_{\text{plan}} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(X) + \beta_2(Y) + \beta_3(X^2) + \beta_4(XY) + \beta_5(Y^2) + \epsilon \tag{3}$$

$$Z_{\text{manager}} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(X) + \beta_2(Y) + \beta_3(X^2) + \beta_4(XY) + \beta_5(Y^2) + \epsilon \tag{4}$$

where  $Z_{\text{plan}}$  is the employee support of the plan,  $Z_{\text{manager}}$  is the employee support of the manager,  $X$  is the employee political ideology, and  $Y$  is the manager's political ideology.

We use a hierarchical regression modeling approach to present the results including employee political ideology and manager

political messaging in models 1–2, adding the effect of ideological dissimilarity in models 3–4, and a final model including all control variables in models 5–6. Correlations are included in Table 3 with relationships in bold when  $p < 0.05$ . The regression results are presented in Table 4.

Hypothesis 1 stated that conservatives would have higher levels of support for a new sourcing plan related to tariffs. Because employee political ideology was a covariate, as opposed to randomly assigned, we use all three models to test hypothesis 1 and report the effect across all models. Participants that identified as more conservative were more likely to support changing a sourcing plan related to tariffs than participants that identified as more liberal ( $B = 0.092$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ;  $B = 0.066$ ,  $p = 0.065$ ; and  $B = 0.073$ ,  $p = 0.038$  in models 1, 3, and 5 respectively). Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Hypothesis 2, which posited that a manager expressing a political statement would (a) decrease employee support of that plan and (b) decrease employee support of that manager, had mixed support. As the manager's political messaging was randomly assigned, we present the mean values for each of the dependent variables in Figure 3 for each group and test Hypothesis 2 in models 1–2 when it was introduced into the model and use the findings from models 3–6 for further discussion.

Including a political message from a manager did not decrease the overall support of a plan for either the pro-Trump ( $B = -0.088$ ,  $p = 0.655$ ) or anti-Trump conditions ( $B = -0.138$ ,  $p = 0.498$ ). Thus, hypothesis 2a was not supported.

However, including a political message from a manager did decrease the overall support of a manager, reducing the level of support of the manager when political statements were included for both the pro-Trump ( $B = -0.524$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ) and the anti-Trump ( $B = -0.589$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ) conditions compared to the

**TABLE 4** | OLS regression results for employee support of plan and employee support of manager.

Employee support of ...	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Plan	Manager	Plan	Manager	Plan	Manager
Main effects						
H1 Employee political ideology	0.09 (0.04)*	0.04 (0.04)	0.07 (0.04) <sup>†</sup>	-0.02 (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)*	-0.02 (0.04)
H2 Pro-trump	-0.09 (0.20)	-0.52 (0.21)*	0.06 (0.20)	-0.16 (0.18)	0.04 (0.19)	-0.17 (0.18)
Anti-trump	-0.14 (0.20)	-0.59 (0.23)*	-0.04 (0.20)	-0.34 (0.20) <sup>†</sup>	-0.09 (0.19)	-0.35 (0.20) <sup>†</sup>
H3 ideological dissimilarity			-0.15 (0.05)**	-0.36 (0.05)**	-0.15 (0.05)**	-0.36 (0.05)**
Supply chain expertise					0.14 (0.12)	0.00 (0.16)
Social desirability bias					0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
Age (years)					0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Gender (1 = male)					-0.45 (0.16)**	-0.22 (0.17)
Intercept	4.75 (0.19)**	5.17 (0.20)**	5.09 (0.20)**	6.00 (0.21)**	4.85 (0.48)**	6.29 (0.58)**
Sample size	216	216	216	216	216	216
R <sup>2</sup>	0.031	0.040	0.080	0.269	0.128	0.280

Note: Reported coefficients are non-standardized. Standard errors are reported in parentheses.

\*\*p < 0.01.

\*p < 0.05.

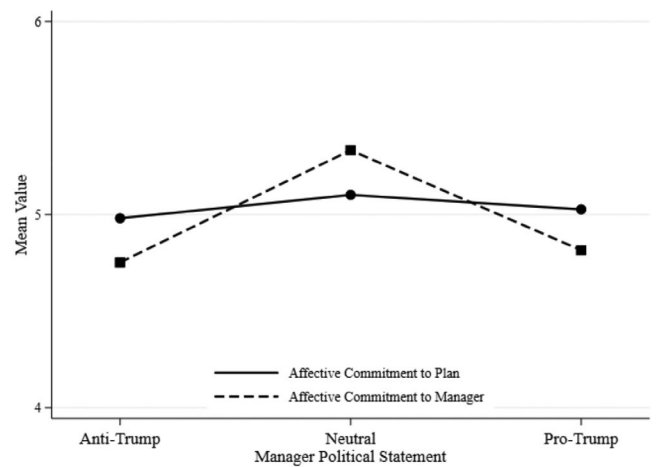
<sup>†</sup>p < 0.10.

baseline neutral condition. Thus, we find that hypothesis 2b was supported.

Notably, this effect does not remain significant after introducing ideological dissimilarity as the effect size observed is smaller in those models. This suggests that a significant portion of the negative effect of a political message in organizational environments is due to how different that political message is from the employee's ideological viewpoint. In summary, Hypothesis 2b is supported in model 2, but the strength of the relationship was lower after introducing ideological dissimilarity, resulting in largely insignificant or marginally significant effects in models 4 and 6.

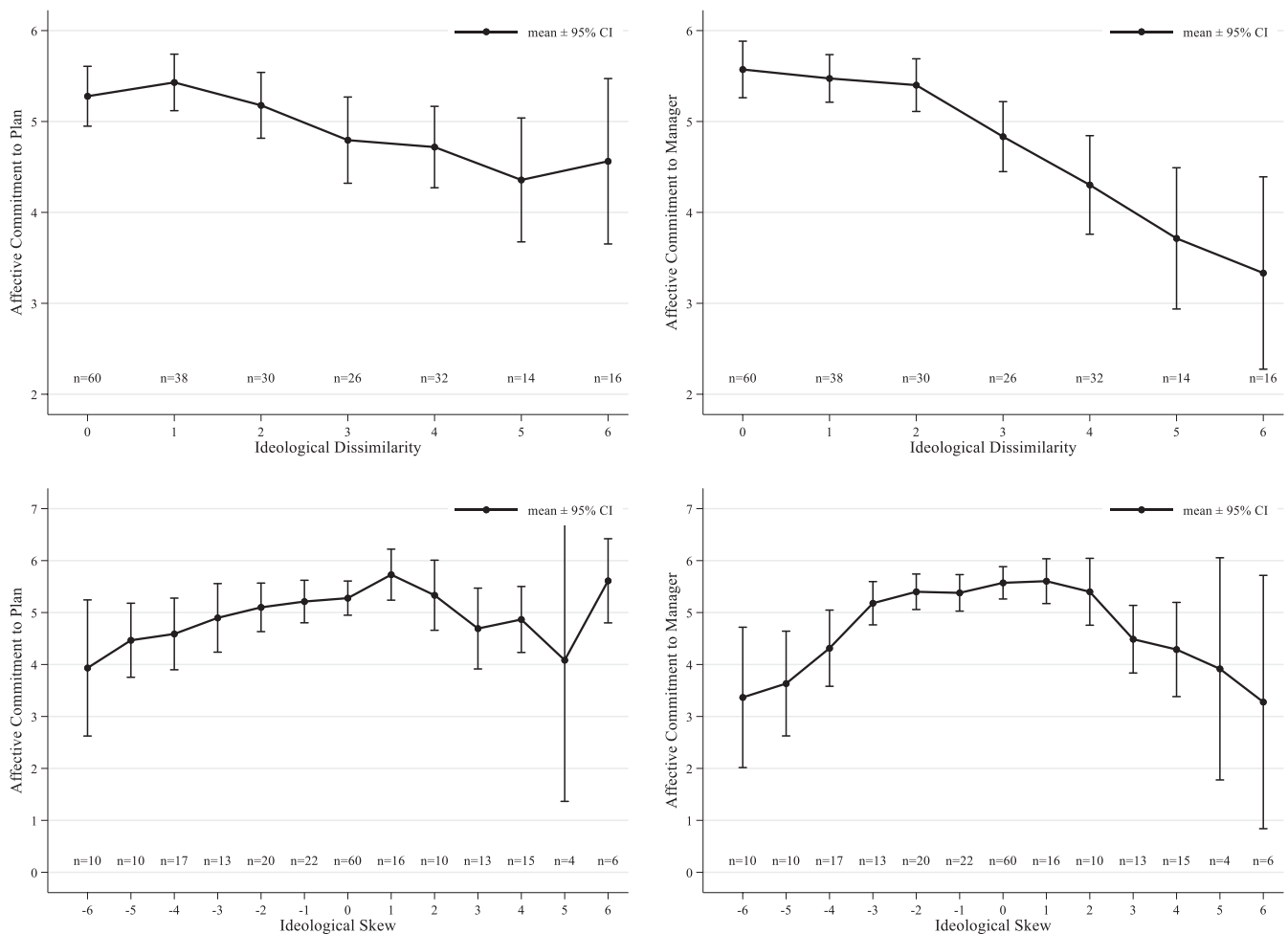
Hypothesis 3 hypothesized that the ideological dissimilarity between a manager and an employee in considering a sourcing plan would be negatively related to (a) employee support of a plan and (b) employee support of that manager. Like H1, H3 was not randomly assigned and so was tested in models 3–6. Ideological dissimilarity was negatively related to affective commitment to the plan and affective commitment to the manager, with p-values less than 0.01 in all models. Figure 4 shows the means and estimated confidence intervals for the two dependent variables for each level of ideological differences.

Interpreting Figure 4 shows that ideological dissimilarity decreases support for the plan, and especially that support for the



**FIGURE 3** | Mean values for employee support for the plan and manager by condition.

manager decreases quickly. There is a notable upward effect on employee support of the plan when those employees were strongly conservative, which might indicate that conservative employees were willing to support changes to sourcing plans because of tariffs even when their manager was liberal because the plan being implemented was a response to an event associated with their political ideology. Additionally, Figure 4 shows the possibility of curvilinear and interactive effects, supporting



**FIGURE 4** | Means including confidence intervals for dependent variables by ideological dissimilarity and ideological skew. Lower values for ideological dissimilarity here represent similar views, and higher levels represent dissimilar views. The top graph shows the absolute value of the difference between employee and manager ideology, while the bottom shows the directed effect, labeled as ideological skew. Positive values indicate the employee is more conservative than the manager, and negative values mean the employee is more liberal than the manager.

further investigation using the polynomial approach that follows:

We estimated both dependent variables using a polynomial regression using a surface plot which explores ideological dissimilarity as an interaction variable between employee political ideology and manager political ideology. The surface graph and contour map for the two estimations are presented in Figure 5.

The results from the surface level analysis similarly add further support for Hypothesis 3, demonstrating that the interaction between political ideology of the employee and manager was significant for both employee support for the plan and employee support of the manager. The effects can be visually identified in Figure 5 for both dependent variables. *Combined, we find support for Hypothesis 3.*

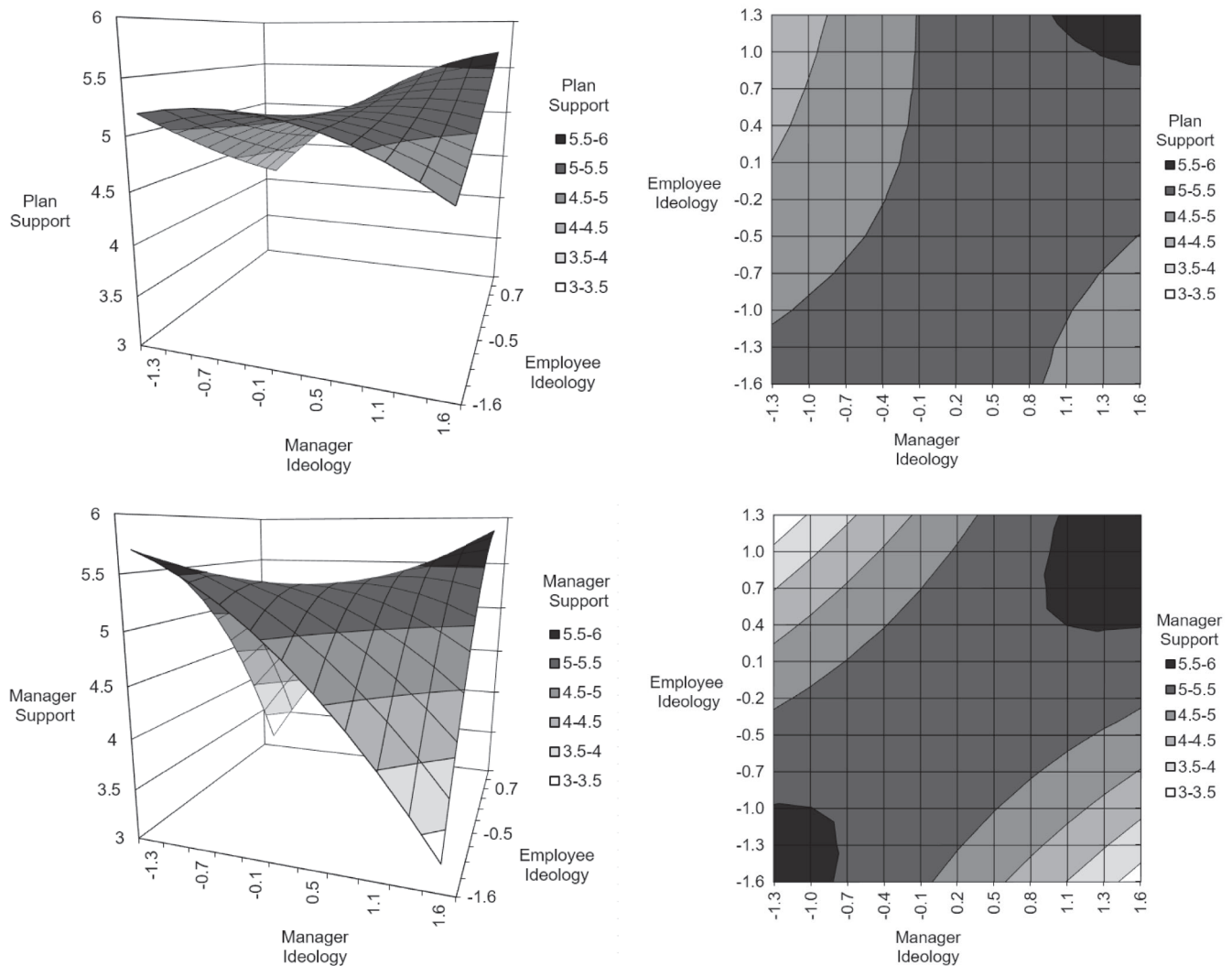
#### 4.2 | Robustness Tests and Post Hoc Analyses

As the two dependent variables were related, we conducted an additional robustness check for the model by estimating the two regressions simultaneously and allowing the error terms

to covary using seemingly unrelated regression (Zellner 1962). Given that the two equations include the same list of independent variables, the coefficients observed are identical and standard errors in the seemingly unrelated regression are slightly lower than those reported here. The results are consistent between estimation approaches.

Given that there is some debate about whether sum scores or factor scores are more appropriate for statistical analysis (cf. McNeish and Wolf 2020; Widaman and Revelle 2023; and Sijtsma et al. 2024), we conducted an additional robustness test estimating the regressions using factor estimated scores. We used the CFA results validated above for the two dependent variables to estimate latent variables scores (McNeish and Wolf 2020). These scores were then used as the dependent variables in OLS regressions as an additional robustness check. The results were consistent with the findings in the paper with minor variance in *p*-values that did not change the interpretation of the results.

An additional post hoc test found that the relationship between ideological dissimilarity and each of the dependent variables remained significant even when running the model using the neutral condition where no political message was included (*n* = 72)



**FIGURE 5** | Surface graph and contour maps for employee support of plan and employee support of manager. Values for manager and employee political ideology are mean centered and standardized.

despite the much smaller sample size. In other words, even when the statement was neutral without an overt political statement, participants still perceived differences between their ideology and that of their manager (see also Figure 2), and the effect of ideological dissimilarity significantly influenced employee support of both the plan and manager even without an overt political statement.

An additional supplemental analysis was done to investigate the direction of political dissimilarity using the surface plot estimation to disentangle directional effects based on the suggestions of one of the anonymous reviewers. Although political ideology research primarily examines the construct by measuring the magnitude of difference, it's possible that conservatives and liberals react differently when confronted with ideological differences for both plan and manager support. A bootstrap polynomial regression (10,000 replications) following Edwards and Parry (1993) was used for the surface analysis, with linear combination tests of coefficients along the incongruence assessing the direction and magnitude of incongruence across plan and manager support. The results show that plan support had

marginally significant effects for the directional slope along the incongruence line ( $a_3 = 0.268, p = 0.055$ ) and a marginally significant negative curvature ( $a_4 = -0.382$  and  $p = 0.069$ ), providing some support that respondents who were more conservative showed increased support for a plan to address tariffs, but as political ideologies diverge, the support is reduced. In other words, employee support of a plan was a combination of both conservatism and political dissimilarity, though both effects were only marginally significant. In contrast, the results for the support of the manager were instead dominated by the magnitude of the ideological mismatch, with no significant effect observed for the directional slope ( $a_3 = 0.196, p = 0.221$ ) but had a highly significant negative curvature ( $a_4 = -1.152, p < 0.001$ ). Combined, we interpret this to suggest that political ideology as a difference score might be sufficient in some contexts where the effects are driven primarily by symmetrical effects (e.g., support of a manager with divergent political beliefs) but might be inadequate to capture some of the nuance when that effect does have an asymmetric effect (e.g., the support of a politically aligned plan implemented by a manager with divergent political beliefs).

## 5 | Discussion

In this research, we set out to uncover how political statements and political ideology might influence supply chain management decision making. The findings show that political ideology can have a strong impact on decisions made by employees, both in terms of how they support new sourcing plans related to tariffs and their support for the managers that propose the plan.

Employees with more conservative political ideology had higher levels of support for a new sourcing plan related to tariffs, even though the plan presented was identical across all scenarios. Political ideology might therefore bias decision making as politics becomes increasingly integrated into supply chain decision making. Although it's not certain that this effect is generalizable to other topics without further research, political ideology could also bias support for other supply chain decisions (e.g., sustainability or diversity equity and inclusion policies), especially when those topics are politically relevant or are politically polarized.

Strong political statements by managers had a detrimental effect on employees' support of the manager. Compared to managers that had a pro- or anti-Trump statement, managers with a neutral statement were perceived more favorably. This effect only influenced the support for the manager directly, while the employees' support for the plan was not significantly related to the statement by the manager. Language expressing a specific political view for or against President Trump did not influence the overall support of a plan, but it did decrease the employees' view of the manager expressing that view.

Notably, once ideological dissimilarity was introduced into the model the effect of perceived ideological difference between an employee and a manager seemed to dominate the models. For both the support of the plan and support of the manager, the alignment between the participants' ideological view with that of their manager had a drastic effect on the employees' support of the manager as well as the employee support of the plan, though the impact of ideological differences for the employee support of the plan was more nuanced. This finding supports the tenets of social identity theory and identifies the importance of investigations into political ideology in supply chain decisions.

Although the most drastic differences are observed when strong political statements are made by managers that create a perception of ideological dissimilarity between an employee and manager, ideological dissimilarity was significant even when analyzing the data with only the neutral condition presented. In other words, even if managers try to remain politically neutral, it's possible that simply mentioning a political topic is sufficient to activate role conflict in individuals and lead to perceived differences in political ideologies.

As managers consider how to address complex situations, such as the increased uncertainty due to tariffs, political statements can have a direct impact on their employees' support. Yet it will not be enough to merely avoid the topic of politics—as managers and researchers in our field have largely been able to in the past—since the negative outcomes from ideological dissimilarity persisted even in the absence of a political statement. As politics

becomes increasingly polarized and increasingly influential in supply chain decision making, it might not be possible to avoid activating political biases.

Our work contributes to theory by introducing a new causal mechanism (Makadok et al. 2018)—political bias vis-à-vis political messaging and ideological differences—into the supply chain management decision making arena. The findings from our study can serve as a springboard for re-examining existing decision-making findings found in the supply chain management literature, as well as refining existing theoretical frameworks. As an example of the latter, political bias could be integrated as an additional moderator affecting the relationship between the expected tariff increase and supply base complexity proposed in Chae et al. (2019) conceptual framework.

### 5.1 | Limitations and Future Research

Although we initially expected that ideological dissimilarity would be driven by the political statements (and it was positively correlated with them), the negative effects from ideological dissimilarity persisted even when considering the model with only the participants in the neutral condition and who did not see any pro- or anti-Trump messaging. This suggests that ideological dissimilarity is an influential factor in supply chain decisions related to politics, even in the absence of a political statement. Additional research investigating this relationship is necessary to further explore this finding.

Because we set out to intentionally manipulate political biases, based on our discussions with supply chain managers, the statements from managers to show a political bias are strong statements. Given that the findings on ideological dissimilarity held for the participants in the neutral condition as well as in the full sample, we expect these findings are robust to different levels of political statements; though further research with additional levels of bias should be done to confirm and might identify additional curvilinear effects. Future research might also include a third group of more politically moderate participants.

Our study investigates decision making surrounding tariffs. There is strong evidence that the macroeconomic effects of US tariffs include a decrease in GDP and domestic production (e.g., den Besten and Känzig 2026) along with US tariff pass-through rates of close to 100% (e.g., Gopinath and Neiman 2026), with the majority of costs being paid by the US consumer (e.g., Fajgelbaum and Khandelwal 2022). Recent studies at the supply chain level have found that tariffs can decrease domestic (US) producer value (Rogers et al. 2024) and increase buyer-supplier transaction costs (Fan et al. 2024). Future research could investigate political discussion surrounding decisions where the macroeconomic and supply chain cost outcomes are less obvious, such as GhG emissions reduction or diversity spend.

This paper explores current US politics where political ideologies related to President Trump, republican/democrat, conservative/liberal ideologies, and/or protectionism policies have complex relationships with each other and which can change over time. As such, some of our findings might be context dependent. For example, employee support for a plan related to tariffs might be

situationally dependent on the specific plan—and whether it aligns with the political ideology of the individual. Additional research to explore the effect of political messaging and ideological dissimilarity in other cultures and contexts is necessary to extend the findings in this paper.

## 5.2 | Conclusions

Our findings address a real-world problem that many firms currently face: how supply chain leaders should communicate and make sourcing decisions in environments where tariffs and other policy shocks are closely tied to polarizing political ideologies. The results provide new insight into theory for supply chain management and identify political ideology as an important new stream of research that is becoming increasingly relevant.

We extend the research on heuristics and biases by identifying how political ideology can bias decision makers by acting as a negative heuristic or cognitive shortcut (Tversky and Kahneman 1974; Bazerman 1998) as employees relied on their own political ideology and their perceptions of their manager's political ideology rather than the objective savings in the presented plan which can lead to suboptimal decision making. Managers that navigate the complex decision making environment can benefit from being aware of potential biases related to politics and involving structured decision making processes to minimize the potential biases that could lead to suboptimal decision making.

The results contribute to social identity theory (Turner et al. 1979, 1987) by showing how a manager expressing a political statement can conflict with organizational identity leading to identity conflict (Ashforth and Mael 1989) when political statements are included, resulting in lower employee support when managers express a political statement. The research contributes to the person-environment fit literature (Kristof 1996) by identifying political ideology as a salient dimension of value congruence (Edwards and Cable 2009; Kristof-Brown et al. 2005)—especially when considering supply chain decisions that are influenced by politics.

Conceptually, this study introduces political ideology and ideological dissimilarity as key behavioral drivers in supply chain management decision making. Drawing on heuristics and biases, social identity theory, and person-organization fit, we theorize and find evidence supporting the importance of political ideology and perceived ideological dissimilarity for employee support of tariff-related plans and for the managers who propose them.

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### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

### Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Through the same mechanism we observe in our experiment, readers might perceive a political bias by the authors despite our best efforts to use politically neutral language. For example, the manipulations include pro- and anti-Trump statements that are intentionally provocative. Although they were developed from interviews with managers and are mirrored between the two conditions, the provocative nature of the statements and the political topic of the paper itself might be enough to activate perceptions of political biases inadvertently. Accordingly, we ask that readers keep an open and objective perspective when reading the paper.

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