Divided We Feel

Partisan Politics Drive Americans' Emotions
Regarding Surveillance of Low-Income Populations

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"...EVEN MORE PROVOCATIVE IS THE FINDING THAT CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS ARE FAR MORE LIKELY THAN LIBERAL DEMOCRATS AND MODERATE INDEPENDENTS TO ... RESPOND THEY FEEL HAPPY, PLEASED, SAFE, AND UNTHREATENED ... REGARDING SURVEILLANCE ACTIVITIES MOST LIKELY TO AFFECT LOW-INCOME AMERICANS..." (SEE PAGE 4)

"OUR STUDY AT ITS CORE...SPEAKS TO THE DEEP, SUBTLE WORKINGS OF POWER AND HIERARCHY AT MANY LEVELS OF SOCIETY SO THAT SURVEILLANCE BECOMES NORMALIZED EVEN AMONG GROUPS WHERE THAT MIGHT SEEM SURPRISING." (SEE PAGE 5)

A Report from the Annenberg School for Communication
University of Pennsylvania

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Overview

We report here on the first national survey that examines Americans' emotional responses to surveillance practices that disproportionately affect low-income populations. In the US, low-income individuals and people of color are more likely than others to experience commonplace monitoring by government and business. In the digital era these activities can exacerbate social tensions as they contribute to a new frontier of social profiling. Our findings show that the political divide manifests itself in the emotions Americans associate with everyday institutional surveillance. Party affiliation and political ideology impact how Americans feel about all these activities far more than do income, age, gender, and race/ethnicity.

Our innovative nationally representative telephone (cell and wireline) survey was carried out for The University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication by SSRS during January and February 2018. We presented 1,499 adults with real-life surveillance scenarios that potentially affect any Americans as well as scenarios more likely to impact those with low annual household incomes. After briefly describing each scenario we presented respondents with what psychologists describe as basic emotional pairings: happy or sad, pleased or angry, unbothered or creeped out, safe or threatened, and expected or surprised. We asked respondents to tell us which feeling in each paired emotion every scenario provoked.

We found that many Americans from across the political spectrum are not troubled by the everyday surveillance practices described in the survey. Yet Democrats and Independents are almost always substantially more negative than Republicans in their feelings about surveillance. For example:

- Firms' use of credit histories in hiring decisions make 42% of Republicans angry compared to 69% of Democrats and 56% of Independents.

- When it comes to police surveillance of people "who [police] think have characteristics that are common among criminals," 26% of Republicans say they are sad compared to 58% of Democrats and 41% of Independents.

- Government surveillance of the grocery purchases people make with food stamp (or EBT) cards gets a "creeped out" response from 22% of Republicans but 41% of Democrats and 33% of Independents.

- Approximately twice as many Democrats as Republicans feel sad and angry about apartment owners subscribing "to a computer database that lists past rental behaviors of potential tenants."

These differences are accentuated when we look at political orientation, an indicator which combines political party with ideology. For example:

- Conservative Republicans almost always have warmer responses to the surveillance scenarios, liberal Democrats cooler responses, with moderate Republicans and Independents falling somewhere in the middle.

- Moreover, although Americans in low-income categories do feel somewhat more negative toward most of these surveillance activities than higher-earning Americans with the same political orientation, political orientation is nevertheless the main predictor of their responses.

- Remarkably, this pattern holds even when low-income Americans say they or their immediate relatives have experienced economic hardships that would have made them especially vulnerable to the negative consequences of particular forms of surveillance.

- Even more provocative is the finding that conservative Republicans are far more likely than liberal Democrats and moderate Independents to express positive emotions toward surveillance that disproportionately affects low-income Americans than they are to express positive emotions with respect to the scenarios that could affect anyone. That is, conservative Republicans more consistently respond they feel happy, pleased, safe, and unthreatened than liberal Democrats and moderate Independents regarding surveillance activities most likely to affect low-income Americans.

In view of the increasingly central role data gathering will play in twenty-first century life, the US cannot afford to ignore emotional biases that support income-based surveillance. Unequal treatment of social groups is a major ethical concern. Moreover, society risks severe backlash as the costs in status and opportunity (e.g., restricted access to housing, credit, and jobs as well as unfair policing) mount for people who are disproportionately subject to monitoring. Various groups that care about one or another side of these issues must come together to confront these feelings and discuss whether and how any aspects of everyday surveillance can be justified if a nation is to bring people together rather than push them apart.

Here lies the vexing dilemma revealed by our study: Political divisions in the United States are deep and, by some accounts, are deepening. If, as we found, emotional responses are tied to a set of increasingly polarized political identities, it is hard to see how a serious conversation between different sides about the implications of current surveillance policies – particularly practices that disproportionately intrude on specific communities – is possible. Our survey, however, does suggest ways out of this conundrum. We found, for example, that a scenario related to Facebook's ad targeting does not connect to political orientation. Public conversations about why this scenario's emotions come from a different place than other scenarios can yield important insights on alternative frameworks for feeling and talking about surveillance.

More fundamental, though, is the following question our findings raise: How is it that politics, emotions, and surveillance became so intertwined, and why? Our study at its

core therefore speaks to the deep, subtle workings of power and hierarchy at many levels of society so that surveillance becomes normalized even among groups where that might seem surprising. It points to the challenges of engaging people on issues that are filtered through different world views and related—often unexpectedly—to both emotions and political beliefs. Our findings present the elements to start discussions about answers.

Background

Public opinion surveys consistently find that Americans are concerned about organizations watching them.[1] In a 2015 survey, the Pew Research Center found that 93% of adults reported that "being in control of *who* can get information about them" is important.[2] In the same survey, 90% said "controlling *what* information is collected about them" is also important. A 2017 Reuters poll found a majority of Americans are unwilling to give up privacy to assist the US government's national security initiatives. In one example, 76% of Americans reported being unwilling to give up information about their internet activities even if it would help the US government foil foreign terrorist plots.[3]

The overwhelming concern about public and private sector surveillance in the United States has led some to refer to privacy as a uniquely bipartisan issue. In the face of deep and growing political divisions,[4] privacy persists as an issue that pundits and politicians sometimes describe as unique in its ability to unite Republicans and Democrats in Congress.[5] But although representatives from across the political aisle occasionally come together to support bi-partisan legislation designed to strengthen Americans' privacy rights, the basic premise of national bipartisanship is wrong: research shows that public opinion on surveillance is considerably divided.

Some evidence, in fact, suggests it is through their political lenses that people arrive at their differing opinions about high-profile surveillance issues. Consider a 2016 Reuters poll of Americans after iPhone maker Apple refused government requests to write a new software program that would allow it to unlock an iPhone for the FBI. The phone, which had belonged to a gunman who had opened fire at an office party in San Bernardino, California killing 14 people and seriously wounding 22 others, was thought by the FBI to contain information crucial to their investigation. Reuters found that 46% of respondents agreed with Apple, 35% said they disagreed, and 20% were unsure.[6] But when Reuters considered the data by political affiliation, it learned 54% of Democrats agreed with Apple's position compared to only 37% of Republicans. In a 2011 study Pew researchers found as well that Republicans were consistently more likely than Democrats to describe the *Patriot Act* – which gives the US government broad domestic surveillance powers – as "a necessary tool that helps the government find terrorists."[7]

Researchers have not found, however, that Republicans consistently offer support for government surveillance programs at higher levels than their Democratic counterparts. According to a Pew poll conducted in spring 2014, 47% of Democrats approved of the National Security Agency's surveillance program compared to only 41% of

Republicans.[8] Additional Pew research found that between 2007 and 2012 the percentage of Republicans "concerned that *business* is collecting too much personal information" rose from 58% to 72% while concern among Democratic respondents dropped from 80% to 74%.[9] Similarly, the percentage of Republicans "concerned that *government* is collecting too much personal information" rose from 39% to 72% while concern among Democratic respondents dropped from 70% to 66%. So, while Americans of different political persuasions are often divided in their concern regarding surveillance, the patterns in those divisions do not appear to be consistent over time.

Socio-Economic Differences and the Experience of Surveillance

During the past couple of decades, high-profile surveys regarding surveillance have been similar to those just mentioned in highlighting topics relevant to broad segments of society, to business, and to government—asking Americans, for example, the attitudes toward online advertising, consumer loyalty card tracking, the collection and analysis of cell phone metadata, and legal protections such as the European Union's Right to Be Forgotten law. This focus, however, has meant survey researchers have tended to ignore a critical issue for the twenty-first century: the widespread use of surveillance by governments and corporations to control and sometimes even abuse low-income Americans and others at the margins of society.

The problem is well known to scholars who study the poor. Gilliom, for example, finds that for those living in poverty, surveillance is woven into their daily lives in a way that is fundamentally different from those who do not to require government assistance. In their daily lives, Gilliom writes, low-income Americans are "watched, analyzed, assessed, monitored, checked, and reevaluated in an ongoing process involving supercomputers, caseworkers, fraud control agents, grocers, and neighbors."[10] Bridges further considers the ways welfare recipients, particularly women, are subject to routine privacy invasions that might otherwise be considered to violate their constitutional rights. Poor mothers, Bridges argues, face an impossible choice: choosing to enroll in government assistance programs requires routine invasion of their personal lives, while the decision not to participate means risking probing investigations into their ability to provide for their children.[11] In either case, they are subject to monitoring that invades the most personal aspects of their lives.

With a similar perspective, Eubanks explores three major state programs as case studies to probe the problems introduced by digital surveillance campaigns that purport to help those they track.[12] She considers how the use of databases to make decisions about access to food, shelter, and health care serve to perpetuate cycles of poverty and ensure that those receiving assistance are subject to what Eubanks argues is invasive, demeaning, and stigmatizing observation. Gilliom, Bridges, and Eubanks all stress that the experience of surveillance among low-income populations is further complicated by factors including gender, race, and ethnicity. Each of these authors describes the experience of persistent and omnipresent observation as an emotional process – alternately pointing to fear, anxiety, embarrassment, and anger at being given little choice about when, how, and to whom the details of their lives are made visible. Madden and

her colleagues sum up that "low-income communities have historically been subject to a wide range of governmental monitoring and related privacy intrusions in daily life." They point out that today, "In the 'big data' era, . . . low-status internet users may be further differentially impacted by certain forms of internet-enabled data collection, surveillance, and marketing."[13]

Madden herself carried out a national survey in 2015 that explored Americans' broad concerns and knowledge about the security of their information.[14] She found that people in low earning households (those making below $30,000 annual income) and those with less than a high school degree show greater concern than higher-earning Americans about the loss or theft of personal information. They also demonstrate lower levels of knowledge about how their personal information is used. Another survey, by Li, Chen, and Straubhaar, suggests privacy concerns are a primary reason low-income Americans avoid going online.[15]

The useful policy implications of these findings suggest there is much more that can be learned from national surveys centered on low-income populations. Our aim here is to go beyond comparing low earners' surveillance concerns with those of higher earners. It is instead to compare what Americans across the socioeconomic spectrum think of the predicaments in which low earners are often placed. Advocates and policymakers need to be able to gauge the extent to which and ways in which the population at large cares about those circumstances and can be persuaded to change them.

Studying Emotional Responses to Surveillance

Studying whether and how people care about surveillance in order to find openings for dialogues requires going beyond asking them binary (yes-no, good-bad) questions that reveal none of the subtleties that suggest ways forward as a society. A growing area of scholarship suggests an especially useful and nuanced way to approach the challenge of comparing Americans concerns about surveillance is to explore the feelings people associate with particular surveillance activities.[16] To our knowledge, no quantitative studies have done that. Qualitative studies have, however, investigated in varying ways the emotions people associate with the subject.

In a series of online focus groups, for example, Pew researchers looked at people's responses to a range of surveillance practices, including the use of office surveillance cameras and the placement of smart thermometers in the home.[17] Over the course of the focus group, the researchers write, "participants gave voice to a range of emotions about the state of privacy and its future."[18] These emotions – including feeling uncertain, resigned, annoyed, and creeped out – shaped conversations about worrying surveillance trends.

Other studies have considered the role that emotions play in shaping the experience people have of surveillance. In their article *A Theory of Creepy*, Tene and Polonetsky argue the word "creepy" has become "a term of art" in privacy research to refer to instances when norms and new technologies are misaligned.[19] In their research on

responses to online behavioral advertising, Ur et al. encountered contradictory emotional responses: respondents often described targeted content as smart and useful, but also scary and creepy.[20] Participants, they observed, found this targeted content simultaneously useful and troubling.

Working with a similar notion of contradictory feelings, Ellis, Tucker, and Harper point to theories in surveillance studies about the production of fear, anxiety, and suspicion in response to being watched. Few studies, they point out, have considered the multi-dimensional emotions elicited by surveillance.[21] They point to Koskela's work, which considers the contradictory emotions people experience when they are subject to video surveillance, as an exception. Describing the power-relations implicit in surveillance as influencing the relationships people have to public space, Koskela describes being watched as an "emotional experience" that most people neither entirely welcome nor fully reject. "Quite often," she writes, "people's feelings are ambivalent. Surveillance can evoke simultaneously positive and negative feelings: on the one hand, surveillance cameras increase security but, on the other, they induce feelings of mistrust."[22] Similarly, Ellis et al. suggest the difficulty people have explaining their feelings regarding surveillance is due to their complex and often conflicting emotional responses.[23]

Both Ellis et al. and Koskela point out that social categories such as race, gender, and socio-economic status inform the ways people experience surveillance. Ellis et al. refer to this as the work of "atmospheres of surveillance" to produce "underlying embodied tensions owing to their affective impacts upon a multitude of everyday phenomena."[24] During research on the lived experience of welfare clients, introduced above, Gilliom observed a range of emotional responses to systems that traced benefits and eligibility including fear, degradation, need, and struggle.[25] These responses, argues Gilliom, are not informed by abstract fears about privacy, but are the result of pressing concerns often informed by routine experiences with systems that enforce regimes of inequality.[26]

Surveillance as a Reflection of Political Power

Inequality raises the subject of social power, and so it isn't surprising that the crucial importance of understanding social power as a major force driving digital surveillance is a theme that runs through many writers from institutional researchers such as Eubanks to feminist geographers such as Koskela to several survey studies. A 2015 national public opinion telephone survey from the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication emphasized commercial resignation as a reflection of that social power.[27] In the Annenberg survey, 84% agreed with the statement "I want to have control over what marketers can learn about me online." That same survey found 65% of respondents agreed with the statement "I've come to accept that I have little control over what marketers can learn about me online." Those respondents who agreed with both statements–a total of 58%–were described as resigned. It is a dark response by people who feel their options for autonomy are severely limited with respect to an important aspect of their identity.

The statements that evoke commercial resignation to surveillance reflect rather abstract thoughts about possibilities within the evolving business environment. In their everyday lives, though, people must work within the specific institutional power structures in which they exist to make repetitive and often quick decisions about how to think about, and deal with, surveillance. Often, these decisions are made without prior experience or in-depth knowledge of the situation. In the media and elsewhere in the public sphere issues regarding surveillance may also come up that implicitly or explicitly ask people to have opinions. This is what survey researchers do when they ask people to approve or disapprove, agree or disagree with specific surveillance practices. These responses, however, may obscure the conflicted emotional responses researchers argue inform experiences of surveillance.

In these environments, we suggest, the emotional associations, logical considerations, and memories from experience converge.[28] Political researchers argue people's partisan identities can drive powerful emotions regarding campaigns;[29] the same may well be true for their emotions regarding surveillance. Those self-understandings, in turn, may be cultivated by intellectual and emotional presentations, often in various media, from individuals who they consider political authorities. The process of "making sense" of everyday digital surveillance issues may, then, involve emotional reactions informed, perhaps fundamentally, by political identity.

The building blocks of prior research, then, highlight the importance of comparing low and higher income Americans' approaches to issues of everyday surveillance in terms of their emotions, their personal characteristics, and their politics.

- What emotions do Americans associate with issues of surveillance?
- How varied are their reactions to different surveillance activities, and to what extent do those feelings shift when surveillance disproportionately impact low-income populations?
- Do people with low incomes, in fact, respond differently from people of other incomes—and what roles to gender, race, age, and ethnicity play in the emotions expressed?
- And what about the alleged emotion-politics relationship? Does it change based on a person's socioeconomic status and observation of potentially troubling surveillance first hand?

No one has yet explored these fundamental questions. That's what we're doing here.

The Study and Its Population

We explored these questions through a representative national phone (cell and wireline) survey of how Americans feel about surveillance activities that take place regularly in areas within the United States. We included people in our study if they were 18 years or older. Because of our interest in learning how Americans of low income feel about surveillance activities that disproportionately affect them—and comparing that to people

with higher incomes—we oversampled Americans between age 25 and 60 whose household income is less than $35,000.

The survey questions used in this report centered on four scenarios describing actual activities that disproportionately impact Americans with low household income and three scenarios describing actual activities that can involve Americans regardless of income. Because surveillance is about the exploitation of power imbalances, those with less social power are more vulnerable to most kinds of surveillance. Here, however, we consider four examples in which low-income populations are uniquely subject to the monitoring practices, more likely to experience these practices in their daily lives, or more likely to face negative consequences from the monitoring. We also note the close relationship in the United States between race and economics and note several of these scenarios describe practices that disproportionately impact non-White populations, specifically African Americans, as well as Hispanics. The "low-income" scenarios we used are:

Grocery: "The government tracks where people buy groceries with their Food Stamps or EBT card."[30]
Credit: "A company takes note of a person's credit history before deciding whether or not to hire that person."[31]
Police: "A police department uses surveillance techniques to closely monitor people who they think have characteristics that are common among criminals."[32]
Apartment: "Apartment owners can subscribe to a computer database that lists past rental behaviors of potential tenants."[33]

The "anybody" ones are:

Facebook: "Facebook sends ads to people based on the interests they express on their Facebook page."[34]
College: "College admissions officers turn down applicants because of the content they post on social media."[35]
Computer: "A company monitors what its employees do on their work computers."[36]

We intentionally described the scenarios without including reasons that would excuse or condemn them. Our aim was to allow individuals to impose their own frames or predispositions on the activities. In order to learn how Americans feel about the scenarios in ways we could compare, we presented our respondents with choices based on the six "basic emotions," those that Ekman and Friesen found to be universally recognized in facial expressions: happy, sad, disgusted, fearful, angry, and surprised.[37] We used synonyms for two of the emotions to better fit the digital-surveillance topic; instead of *disgusted* we said *creeped out*, and instead of *fearful* we used *threatened*. For every emotion we asked our respondents to choose it or its opposite.

It worked this way: Introducing the battery of scenarios in random order, the phone interviewer said, "I'd like to get your reactions about several activities carried out by different organizations." Then, for every scenario the interview asked "how do you feel when you hear that (INSERTS SCENARIO)? After reading a scenario, the interviewer

would ask about a paired emotion in a sequence that changed randomly by respondent. The order might be, for example, "Would you say (happy or sad)/(safe or threatened)/(unbothered or creeped out)/(pleased or angry)/(it's expected or it's surprising)?" After each pair, the interviewer would pause for an answer and then, before asking about the next pair, ask about the mentioned emotion, "Is that a little, somewhat, or very." If, for example, the respondent said "happy," the interview would ask, "Is that a little, somewhat or very happy?" In this manner, the survey was the first to use semantic differential measures to explore emotions people associate with everyday-surveillance issues.

The SSRS research firm carried out the study from January 3 through February 4, 2018. SSRS conducted telephone interviews with a nationally representative English or Spanish speaking sample of 1,499 adults living in the continental United States. The study used a random digit dial dual-frame design sample: For the major part of the sample, the firm contacted people through random dialing to cell phones (963 completed interviews) and wireline phones (450 completed interviews). For the oversampling aspect of the survey, the firm relied on data about people interviewed of its continuous SSRS Omnibus poll (which also uses random digit dialing) to identify 88 people between 25 and 60 years old with annual household incomes below $35,000. Respondents in this pre-screened sample were offered $5 to participate in the study. SSRS offered no other participants money.

The interviews averaged 20 minutes. Based on a 6-callback procedure and using the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) RR3 method, a standard for this type of survey, the overall response rate was a rather typical 11%.[38] Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is +/- 2.9 percent at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error is higher for smaller subgroups within the sample.

Table 1 provides an introductory snapshot of the population we interviewed. As the table indicates, women somewhat outnumber men; 72% designate themselves as White, and 12% identify themselves as Black or African American. Asian or Pacific Islanders comprise 4%, Native Americans comprise around 2%, and those identifying as "mixed race" make up 5%. Hispanics (White and Black) comprise about 15% of the sample. About 55% are under age 49, and most have at least some higher education. While 22% report over $100,000 annual household income, 14% report under $20,000, and 31% say they bring in between $50,000 and $100,000.

Table 1: Characteristics of US Adults in Sample (N=1,499)*

	%
Sex	
Male	48
Female	52
Other	1
Age	
18-24	14
25-29	7
30-49	34
50-60	20
61-64	5
65 and older	19
Refused	1
Race	
White	72
Black or African American	12
Asian or Pacific Islander	3
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2
Mixed Race	5
Other/Don't Know	4
Refused	3
Hispanic or Latino Background?	
Yes	15
No	84
Refused	1
Household Income Last Year	
Under $20,000	13
$20,000 to under $35,000	13
$35,000 to under $50,000	18
$50,000 to under $75,000	14
$75,000 to under $100,000	15
$100,000 and Over	20
Don't Know/Refused	8
Highest Education Level	
Less than high school graduate	10
High school graduate	28
Some college	17
Two year associate degree	12
College degree	17
Postgraduate courses or degree	14
Don't Know/Refused	1

These are the weighted data. In this and all other tables, when the numbers don't add to 100% it is because of a rounding error.

Everyday Surveillance—Especially Income-Linked Surveillance—Divides Americans Emotionally

Table 2 lays out the emotional responses Americans associate with our seven scenarios. The first four listed are the ones that disproportionately impact low-income Americans and people of color. Following that are the three scenarios that could impact anyone.

For each of the scenarios, we list the percentage of respondents who chose an emotion or who volunteered neither. A number of key points stand out:

- A small but consistent percentage of people volunteered "neither" when asked to choose between one or another emotion. Choosing neither seems to suggest that the person does not feel the positive or negative pole of the emotion pair when thinking about the situation. Different people responded neither depending on the scenario and emotion; only seven individuals said neither to all the questions about emotions.

- With almost every scenario there is greater disagreement on the happy/sad and pleased/angry emotions than there is on safe/threatened and unbothered/creeped out. The first two pairs indicate what might be called feelings of contentment (happy, pleased) or discontentment (sad, angry). The second two pairs indicate a feeling of security (safe, unbothered) or insecurity (threatened, creeped out). The respondents' choices between "It's expected" and "It's surprising" stand apart from the other emotions in that one feeling, "it's expected," is the majority response across all the scenarios. The percentage of people who indicate they aren't surprised by an activity does vary greatly, however. It ranges from 85% regarding a company that monitors employees on their computers at work to 61% regarding college admissions programs monitoring applicants' social media.

- The scenarios that provoke the most emotional division of the seven are two low-income ones: the police surveillance and the tracking of grocery purchases by EBT cardholders. The police scenario shows the most disagreement on happy/sad and pleased/angry of all seven cases. 41% of Americans say they are sad that police track people with criminal characteristics, and 39% are angry. But 45% of the respondents say they are happy this takes place, and 49% are pleased. With grocery tracking of EBT cardholders 44% say happy and 49% say pleased, while 38% answer sad and 35% angry.

- As the disagreements noted above suggest, a large percentage of Americans are happy with the "low-income" surveillance. In fact, in three of those four scenarios between 49% and 55% of Americans say they are pleased the activities are happening. The only higher consensus on *pleased* related to a company monitoring its employees on work computers; 59% say they are pleased to hear that.

- The one "low-income" scenario that doesn't generate a high percentage of Americans who say they are pleased involves firms using a person's credit history for hiring

purposes. There only 28% are pleased and only 26% are happy. A possible reason for these feelings lies in their expression of insecurity and surprise regarding the activity. Fully 48% of Americans say they feel threatened and creeped out that firms do that—the highest levels of these emotions among the seven scenarios. Moreover, respondents also register the highest level of surprise that the activity takes place—45%. It seems safe to suggest that a substantial number of respondents worried when our interviewers presented them with the scenario that could affect them directly even if they aren't low-income.

Table 2: Percentage of Americans Who Give Particular Emotional Responses to the Scenarios

	SCENARIOS						
	Grocery	Credit	Police	Apartment	Facebook	College	Computer
	N=1495	N=1498	N=1492	N=1496	N=1478	N=1490	N=1494
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Happy	44	26	45	51	32	33	55
Sad	38	57	41	31	46	49	27
Neither	17	15	13	18	21	16	19
Pleased	49	28	49	55	35	39	59
Angry	35	56	39	30	46	46	25
Neither	16	15	12	15	18	15	16
Safe	57	40	59	64	45	49	69
Threatened	27	48	36	26	40	37	20
Neither	14	12	6	10	14	15	10
Unbothered	61	45	54	67	50	55	73
Creeped out	32	48	41	27	43	38	22
Neither	6	7	5	7	7	8	5
Expected	67	57	71	67	70	61	85
Surprised	30	45	27	31	27	37	13
Neither	3	3	2	2	4	2	1

Table 2 should be read in this way: When presented the Grocery scenario, 44% of Americans say they are happy as opposed to 38% who say they are sad and 17% who reply they feel neither happy nor sad. For the same scenario, 49% say pleased, 35% angry, and 16% say they are neither happy nor pleased. The Ns vary because some people didn't respond to particular questions; the N in each column refers to the smallest number of people who answered the questions for each scenario.

- While nearly 50% of Americans say they feel threatened and creeped out by the credit example, the other low-income scenarios do not generate nearly that level of insecurity. In fact, the percentages of Americans who respond threatened ranges from

around 26% in the apartment-database scenario to 27% in the Grocery scenario and 48% in the credit case. Of the three scenarios that could affect anyone, only the company's monitoring of employees had a lower level of people feeling threatened (20%). Americans' largest disagreements regarding the low-income scenarios tended to center on the divisions between happy-sad and pleased-angry; the divisions were particularly deep in response to the police and grocery scenarios.

- Our data also suggest another kind of division—an internal conflict—taking place among some Americans. In all the scenarios the percentages of people responding safe and unbothered are consistently somewhat higher than those who say happy or pleased. For example, even though 45% of respondents say they are happy with the police scenario, more (59% and 54%) say they feel safe and unbothered. To illustrate the internal conflict a bit differently, while 31% of the respondents answer sad about the apartment database, a smaller percentage (26% and 27%) say they feel threatened and creeped out. Clearly a portion of the population feels perturbed regarding what they hear about surveillance but at the same time acknowledges not feeling directly involved or insecure about it.

- More surprising is our finding that small percentages of respondents feel contentment but also insecure when confronted with the scenarios. For example, 15% of Americans who say they feel happy about the apartment database also say they feel creeped out about it. And 14% of those who say they are pleased about the grocery tracking also say they feel threatened.

The arguments taking place around the scenarios, then, reflected differences *between* individuals as well as conflicts *within* them. Although the intrapersonal divisions are relatively small, they indicate cracks—openings—that we will suggest can be used to encourage social dialogue about the thorniest divisions that drive the differences we have seen.

Politics is the Key Driver of Feelings about Surveillance

Now that we know how divided Americans are emotionally on different types of everyday surveillance, what social and economic factors influence their feelings? Do the influences vary with the type of surveillance, and if so how? Most especially, do income, race, and politics especially associate with people's reactions to the surveillance scenarios that predominantly affect low-income people and other minority groups?

We approached these basic questions in two steps. First, we created seven *emotion indices*. These are measures that bring all the positive, neutral, and negative feelings expressed across the four emotional pairings—happy-sad, pleased-angry, safe-threatened, and unbothered-creeped out—into one index for each scenario. That allows us to answer the questions posed as they relate to particular scenarios without having to explore them in relation to the many emotional reactions. Despite variation in emotional responses between scenarios, the emotional responses within each scenario are correlated highly

with one another. (Because the *expected-surprised* pairing is theoretically distinct from the other emotional couplets and not well correlated with them, we left it out of the index.) The emotional indices that correspond to the seven scenarios are scaled so that positive emotions (e.g., happy, safe) have positive values and negative emotion (e.g., angry, creeped out) have negative values. Thus, positive values on the indices reflect favorable emotions and negative values reflect unfavorable emotions.

Figure 1 shows the correlations between the surveillance indices. They are moderate. That is consistent with the patterns of the individual items we found in Table 1: While Americans' feelings that make up the emotional indices for specific scenarios are highly correlated with one another, the indices are not highly correlated with each other. That means that knowing an index value of one specific scenario is not highly predictive of knowing the value of an index for a different scenario.

Figure 1: Correlations Among the Scenarios' Emotion Indices

Grocery Index						
0.386	Credit Index					
0.394	0.396	Police Index				
0.399	0.357	0.347	Apartment Index			
0.258	0.268	0.236	0.249	Facebook Index		
0.308	0.420	0.328	0.328	0.263	College Index	
0.401	0.324	0.349	0.407	0.262	0.348	Computer Index

All correlations greater than |.051| are significant at the .05 level or less. Correlations around .10 are considered small, around .30 considered medium, and around .5 considered large.[39]

Our second step toward answering these questions involved exploring how well important social categories—gender, age, race, and education, household income, and specifically low household income (defined as less than $35,000 annually)—correlate with each scenario's emotion index. As Table 3 shows, we found that Americans'

gender, education, age, and even income and their being African American or Hispanic are not correlated well to differences in their emotional reaction to surveillance. Nonetheless, because income and race/ethnicity (specifically, African American and Hispanic) are key considerations in our choice of the four "low-income" scenarios, we explore their role in relation to politics' influence on people's emotional assessment of the scenarios.

Table 3: Correlations of Demographics and the Scenarios' Emotional Indices

Demographic	Surveillance Index						
	Grocery	Credit	Police	Apartment	Facebook	College	Computer
Male v Female	0.14	0.14	0.02	0.03	0.10	-0.02	0.03
Income	0.13	0.09	0.06	0.18	-0.02	0.16	0.08
Low v High Income	-0.17	-0.13	-0.07	-0.17	-0.02	-0.19	-0.12
Age Group	-0.03	0.04	0.12	0.00	-0.08	-0.04	-0.04
Education	-0.04	-0.05	-0.14	0.00	-0.05	0.00	-0.02
AA/Hispanic v White	-0.19	-0.16	-0.13	-0.16	0.11	-0.14	-0.16
Entries are polychoric correlations. N = 1326. With this sample size, all correlations greater than |.054| are statistically significant at the .05 level or less. AA=African American. The chart shows, for example, that there is a low correlation (.14) between gender and the emotion index relating to the grocery scenario. (Males are a slightly higher than females.)							

And politics is quite clearly the key predictive variable here. As an example, Table 4 shows differences in negative feeling between Republicans, Democrats, and Independents with respect to the seven scenarios. Note that Democrats and Independents are substantially more upset than Republicans on every emotional measure for every scenario. In many circumstances, the difference between the Republicans and Democrats is more than twenty percentage points. That includes the two surveillance activities that made most Americans happy, the apartment database and company's monitoring of its employees on work computers. In the apartment case, for example, while only 22% of Republicans were sad, 41% of the Democrats chose that emotion. There, as elsewhere, Independents consistently stand between Republicans and Democrats.

The Facebook scenario is the only one where Independents and Democrats both feel sad in equal portions. It is also the only surveillance case where Republicans come close to voicing the range of negative feelings in nearly the same percentages as Democrats. The Facebook ad-targeting case may indicate that anger about marketing intrusions cuts across political-party identification in a way not evident in other domains of everyday life.

We set out to test this divisive power of political identity further. We did it by combining party identification with ideology (belief ranging from conservative Republican to liberal Democrat) to create a measure of a person's *political orientation*. We then investigated how Americans' political orientation stacks up against income and race to influence the emotional indices for the seven scenarios.

The results, in Figures 2, 3, and 4 are consistent with and extend what we have seen so far. Figure 2 and 3 display the emotional indices (from very negative to very positive) in relation to Americans' incomes and their political orientation. The graphs show whether the emotional differences seen between Americans' political orientation and between

Table 4: Percentage of Americans by Political Party Who Express Negative Feelings Regarding the Scenarios

			SCENARIOS						
			Grocery	Credit	Police	Apartment	Facebook	College	Computer
			N=1,460	N=1,463	N=1,458	N=1,460	N=1,443	N=1,460	N=1,461
			%	%	%	%	%	%	%
EMOTIONS BY POLICTICAL PARTY	Sad	Republicans	27	42	26	22	43	36	17
		Democrats	52	67	58	41	48	64	40
		Independents	37	59	41	32	48	49	26
	Angry	Republicans	23	42	23	20	44	33	16
		Democrats	47	69	53	40	48	59	38
		Independents	35	56	40	30	47	45	23
	Threatened	Republicans	19	36	20	20	35	25	13
		Democrats	35	57	48	35	44	46	29
		Independents	29	50	37	25	42	39	20
	Creeped	Republicans	22	29	23	20	38	26	15
		Democrats	41	62	53	37	49	48	33
		Independents	33	50	44	35	42	38	21
	Surprised	Republicans	27	35	20	20	27	30	8
		Democrats	36	49	29	38	26	40	16
		Independents	30	47	29	33	27	40	15

Table 4 should be read this way: When presented the Grocery scenario, 27% of Republicans say they are sad as opposed to 52% Democrats who say they are sad and 17% of Independents who reply they feel sad. For the same scenario, 23% of Republicans say angry compared to 47% of Democrats and 35% of Independents. The Ns vary because some people didn't respond to particular questions; the N in each column refers to the smallest number of people who answered the questions for each scenario.

their incomes are significant statistically. Each index reflects the average of all four pairs emotional responses from the most negative (-3) to neutral (0) to the most positive (+3). (Each graph shows the index only to the highest and lowest average for that situation, so the Y axes are different in order to show the political orientation/income grouping.) The graphs also note whether the power of political orientation to explain the emotional responses is higher or lower than the power of income to explain it. This power is reflected in the ESR—the effects size ratio. An ESR of 1 indicates equal influence of political orientation to income. The higher the ESR, the more powerful political orientation over income.

Figure 2 shows that the consistency of relationship between political orientation, income, and emotion is strong. In the grocery, college, and work computer cases, the different types and levels of emotion that people of different income categories mention are statistically significant. In every scenario the lowest earning group holds the lowest percentage of positive feelings towards the activity, and as income categories rise the percentages of positive feelings rise with them. Nevertheless, in every surveillance scenario the influence of political orientation on Americans' emotional choices is far greater than income. That is indicated by the strongly positive ESRs as well as by steepness of the lines from left to right on the graph, which emphasizes the impact of political orientation. (The more horizontal the lines, the less political orientation is important.) These are shorthand ways of noting that people in different income categories but the same political orientations are relatively closer together than they would be if they had different political frameworks. So, for example, conservative Republicans who bring in household incomes of less than $20,000 are closer in their responses to the grocery scenario to conservative Republicans in other income categories than they are to people of their income brackets who are moderate Independents or liberal Democrats.

Four departures from the pattern above also show up in Figure 2. The credit and police scenarios looks similar to grocery, college, and work, but with credit and police the influence of income is not statistically significant at all; Americans in all the income categories respond fully based on their political orientations. The apartment and Facebook scenarios in Figure 3, by contrast, show income as interacting with political orientation. That means that in some cases people in particular income categories relay feelings quite different from others with their political tags. In the apartment case, people in the lower income categories depart substantially from both conservative and liberal categories they typically align with in order to stand by people of similar socioeconomic status who might be harmed by landlords using databases. The interactions in the Facebook case are harder to explain. They may reflect the split negative reactions we saw earlier that Americans of all three party affiliations had toward the firm's activity.

While income has a small, but consistent, influence on people's feelings toward the scenarios, we found no connection between African American/Hispanic and emotional responses. Figure 4 presents examples of this lack of relationship as seen in the police and apartment scenarios. These are two cases where one might expect that negative sensibilities toward the scenarios based on a person being African American or Hispanic would especially show up. In both cases, though, we find no statistical significance when the combined category is added to the picture. Moreover, the ESRs are very high. It means that in both cases political orientation has the dominant association with the feelings people choose.

Figure 2: To What Extent Do Political Orientation and Income Predict the Emotions on the "Low-Income" Scenarios? (See text for more information.)
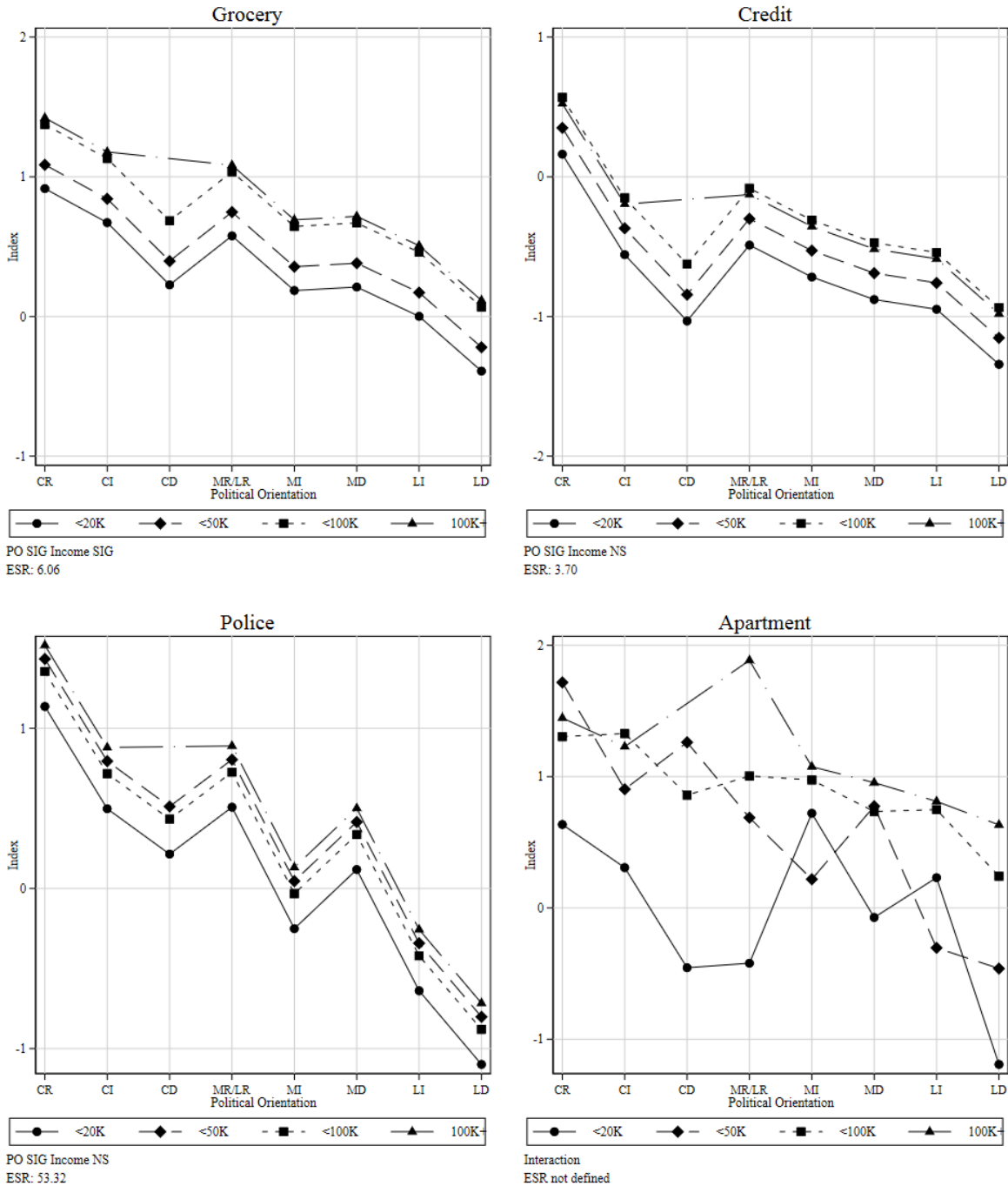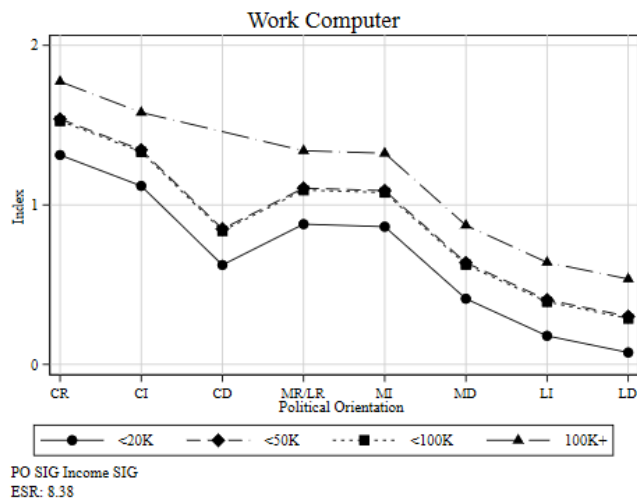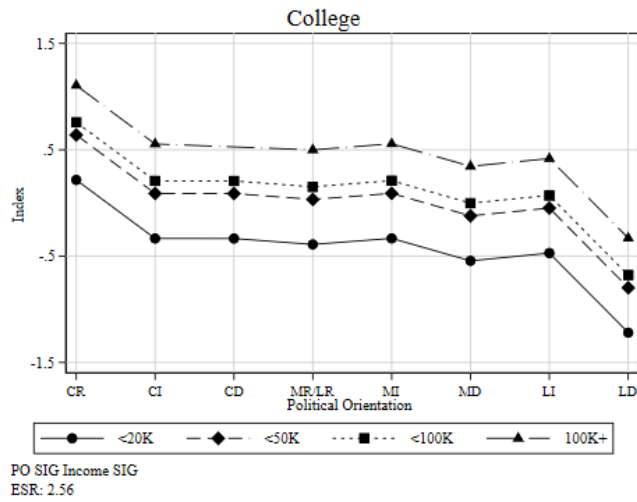

In this and other figures, CR= Conservative Republican, CI=Conservative Independent, CD=Conservative Democrat; MR/LR=Moderate Republican and Liberal Republican. MI=Moderate Independent, MD=Moderate Democrat, LI= Liberal Independent, and LD=Liberal Democrat. PO=political orientation. SIG=significant statistically. NS=not significant. ESR=effects size ratio. Please note: Each graph shows the index only to the highest and lowest average for that situation.

Figure 3: To What Extent Do Political Orientation and Income Predict Emotions on the "Any-Income" Scenarios? (See text for more information.)

Facebook

Interaction
ESR not defined

College

PO SIG Income SIG
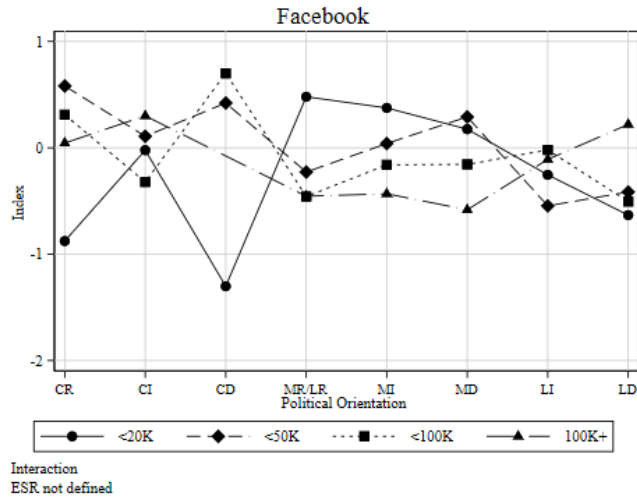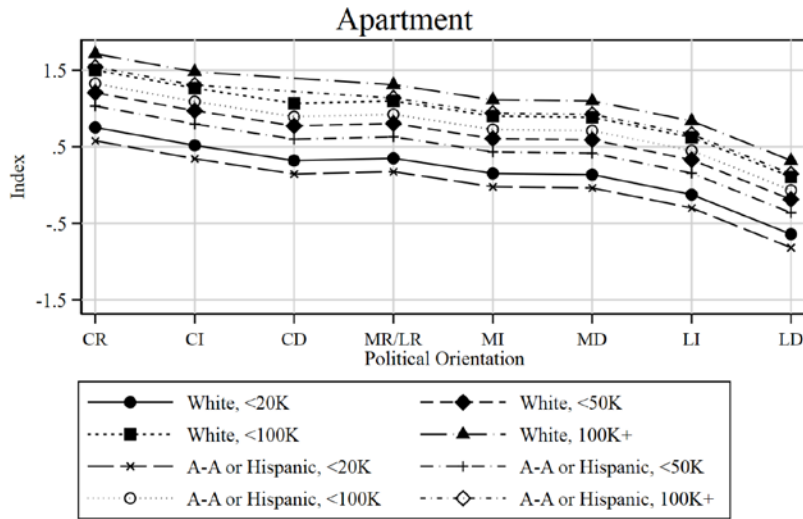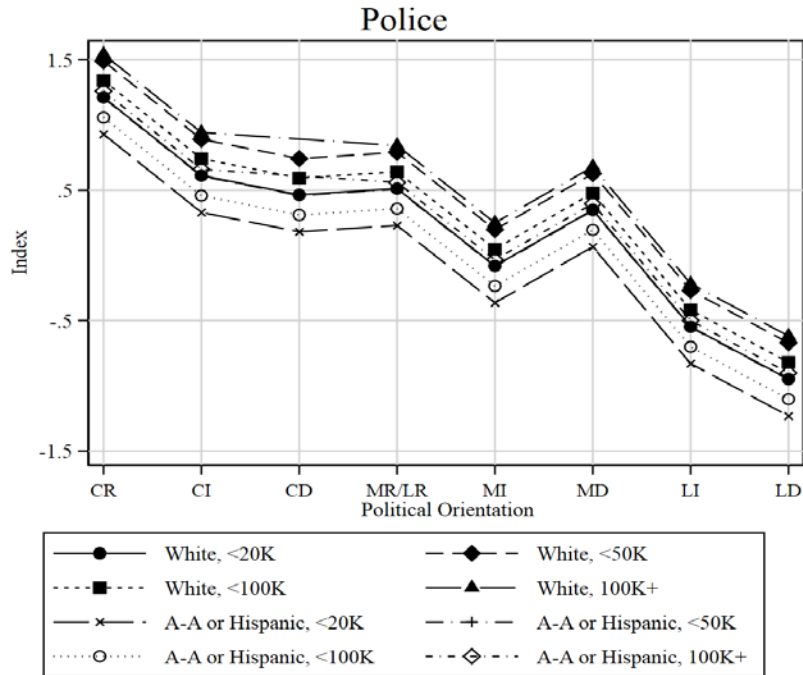ESR: 2.56

Work Computer

PO SIG Income SIG
ESR: 8.38

Figure 4: To What Extent Do Political Orientation, Income, and Race/Ethnicity (White and African American or Hispanic) Predict Emotions on the Police and Apartment Scenarios? (See text for more information.)

Apartment

PO SIG Income SIG Minority Status NS
PO-Minority ESR: 17.45 PO-Income ESR: 2.02

Police

PO SIG Income NS Minority Status NS
PO-Minority ESR: 21.96 PO-Income ESR: 54.15

Political Orientation Remains Dominant Even for People Who Experienced Economic Hardships Linked to the Scenarios

In fact, political orientation is so important that it is the main guide to predicting the responses of even low-income Americans who say they or their immediate relatives have experienced economic hardships that would have made them especially vulnerable to the negative consequences of the low-income surveillance situations. The finding comes from asking our respondents "whether you or someone in your immediate family, that is your spouse or children, has ever experienced" any of the following and, if so, to say which ones: collected food stamps; lived in subsidized housing; or ever had a credit card or loan application denied due to bad credit. We also identified respondents who agreed with the statement (posed in a different part of the interview) "I consider the neighborhood where I live to be a high crime neighborhood." We related these hardships to the relevant low-income scenarios—Grocery to collected food stamps, Credit to denial based on bad credit; Apartment Database to living in subsidized housing, and Police to living in a high-crime neighborhood. We then looked at whether emotional responses move away from the political orientation if a person or the person's immediate family has experienced the relevant hardship.

The answer is: rarely. Figure 5 indicates that of the four scenarios associated with the economic hardships, only one—denial of credit—relates to emotions in a statistically significant manner. The graph shows that Americans who themselves or their immediate family were denied credit are most likely to reveal negative emotions compared to people of their income levels who were not denied credit. Yet the effects are relatively small compared to political orientation, which sets the pattern for emotional answers from conservative Republican to moderate Independent to liberal Democrat.

As for the other three scenarios, political orientation is key to understanding the responses, along with the small role played by income. The scenario in which police "use surveillance techniques to closely monitor people who they think have characteristics that are common among criminals" was again the one most driven by political identification: Neither income nor living in a high-crime neighborhood was statistically significant, and the ESRs were 162.62 for political orientation's power relative to income and 92.66 for its power relative to high crime neighborhood. The differences between respondents at different points on the political spectrum, were large, indeed.

Our Data Reveal a Link between Political Orientation and Emotional Bias against Low-income Americans

We also see a link between political orientation and emotional bias related to low-income Americans. Specifically, conservative Republicans are farther apart from liberal Democrats and moderate Independents when it comes to emotions about low-income surveillance than they are with respect to the more generalized forms of surveillance.

We arrived at this finding by calculating each the four emotional items (sad-happy, angry-pleased, threatened-safe, and creeped out-unbothered) for conservative Republicans (CR) , moderate Independents (MI), and liberal Democrats (LD) with respect to each of the seven scenarios. We then found the differences between MI and CR, LD and MI, and LD and CR for each of the scenarios. Finally, we found the average of those differences for the four scenarios that disproportionately affect low-income Americans (Grocery, Credit, Police, and Apartment) and for the three scenarios that can affect anyone (Facebook, College, and Computer). The results reflect the differences between the emotions by the various political orientations for the "low-income" and "anybody" scenarios.

Figure 5: To What Extent Do Political Orientation, Income and Relevant Economic Hardship Predict Emotions on the "Low-income" Scenarios? (See the text for more information.)
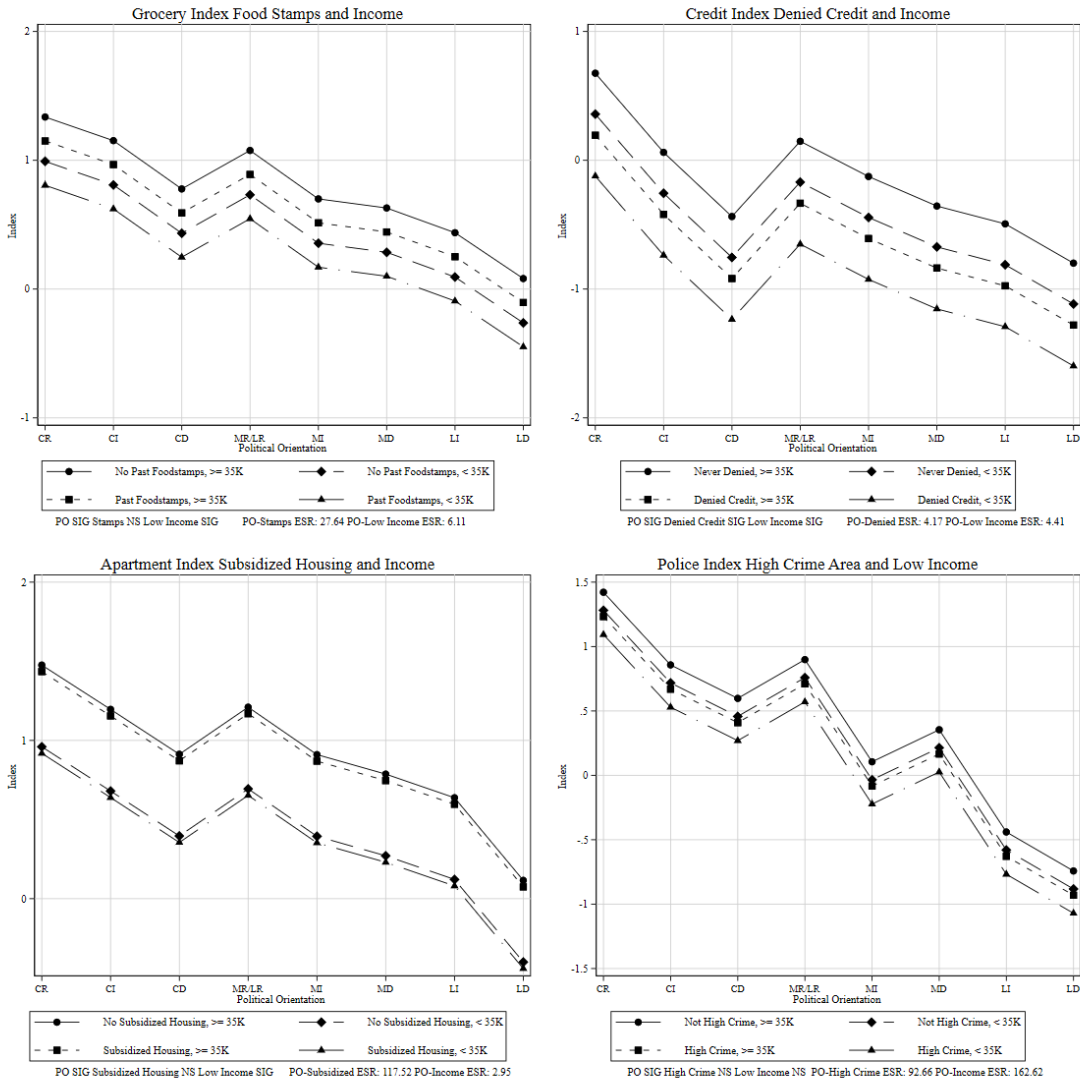
Figure 6 presents the results. It reveals that the liberal Democrats and moderate independents tend to show little difference between one another across the two groups of scenarios when it comes to three emotions: sad/happy, angry/pleased, and creeped/out. With respect to threatened/safe, moderate Independents *were* somewhat further apart from liberal Democrats in their positive feelings toward "low-income" surveillance. This difference pales when compared to the ones found between conservative Republicans and the two other groups. Conservative Republicans are far more positively inclined to surveillance (responding they feel happy, pleased, safe, and unthreatened) than liberal Democrats and moderate Independents when it comes to the low-income surveillance activities than they are with respect to the scenarios that could affect anyone.

Figure 6: How different are Conservative Republicans, Moderate Independents, and Liberal Democrats from Each Other on the Emotions of "Low-income" and "Anyone" Scenarios? (See the text for more information.)
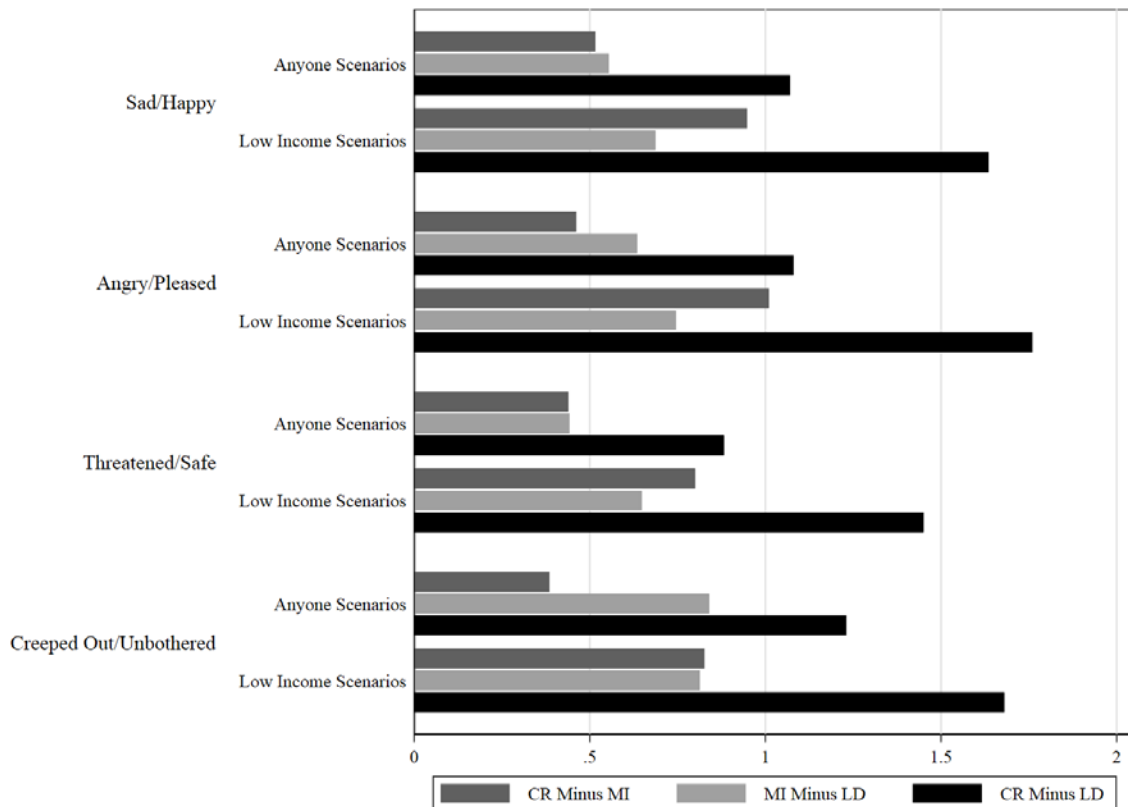
The original emotion scores could range from -3 points (very negative on a particular emotion) to +3 points (very positive on that emotion). The differences here between political orientations all fall in positive territory. *CR minus MI* means the difference between conservative Republicans' average scores of the emotions and moderate Independents' average scores on the emotions. Similarly, *MI minus LD* means the difference between moderate Independents' average scores of the emotions and liberal Democrats' average scores on the emotions. And *CR minus LD* means the difference between conservative Republicans' average scores of the emotions and liberal Democrats' average scores on the emotions. Positive numbers indicate that the difference reflects a positive emotion (happy, pleased, safe, unbothered). For example, when it comes to the low-income scenarios, conservative Republicans are 1.68 points more "unbothered" than liberal Democrats.

Conclusion

The results from our nationally representative survey shed new light on Americans'
responses towards an issue that politicians and pundits sometimes consider as having the
power to unite Americans across political lines. Far from finding that Americans are
united positively or negatively regarding surveillance, our data reveal deep divisions on
this pervasive feature of contemporary life. What's more, these fault lines are most
visible along a continuum of political orientation, with conservative Republicans
consistently describing warmer emotional responses toward a variety of surveillance
practices. That is especially the case when it comes to surveillance of Americans with
low household incomes.

It is important to underscore the significance of the method we used to explore this topic.
Our survey is not of Americans' "agreement" or "disagreement" with the everyday
surveillance practices. Rather, we asked about multiple feelings people associate with
these activities. Doing that allowed us to explore the extent to which individual
Americans hold nuanced, even contradictory, reactions to phenomena that likely go on
around them, phenomena that may or may not affect them but that certainly affect many
other Americans. Although positive emotional responses to the scenarios such as happy
or unbothered can't be read as direct endorsements or approval of the monitoring
behaviors, they clearly represent comfort with the practices. Given the use of tracking
and monitoring to analyze, profile and evaluate individuals, those who are concerned
about such social sorting will find these high percentages of comfort disconcerting.

Our finding that the sentiments safe and unbothered are especially common suggest that
Americans have absorbed the dominant narrative offered by those seeking to normalize
and justify surveillance as a necessary and beneficial part of American life: that some
erosion of personal privacy is necessary to ensure social stability. A more tenuous
suggestion based on the data is that being unbothered and unthreatened by scenarios even
when angry with them may allow the spread of surveillance practices to go unchecked.
Those who express warm emotions toward surveillance or don't see that their sense of
security is threatened in the face of these practices, including those particularly affecting
low-income Americans, may not change their feelings as forms of surveillance expand to
disproportionally impact other population segments (for example, those based on age,
gender, religion, race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identification, and the intersections
among these categories).

Coming up with suggestions to encourage society-wide discussion of Americans'
emotions regarding surveillance is made especially complex by the introduction of
political parties and ideology. While our findings suggest Americans as a whole are
divided around our scenarios, our closer examination reveals that much of what's going
on is rooted in differences between Republicans, Democrats, and Independents, and
between conservatives, moderates and liberals. These categories, which have become so
much a part of the schisms in American life, may seem to make the disagreements about
everyday surveillance intractable. What we have found is a consistent pattern of
Republican and conservative support of everyday surveillance, as well as a pattern that

departs even more from liberal and Democratic responses when it comes to surveillance disproportionately impacting low-income Americans, especially African Americans and Hispanics.

What can be done? Are there hints in our data of ways to ignite a dialog among people who appear to be driven by different ideological positions that reach into their emotions? We did find small but consistent percentages of Americans who indicated strong dissonance in their feelings—saying they were happy with a scenario but also threatened, pleased but also creeped out. While the gaps opened by these seemingly contradictory responses are small, they might be publicized as ways to encourage public discussions that shake up the consistent political perspectives that seem to drive public opinion on a wide range of surveillance issues. We also suggest there might be lessons to be learned from the rare instances where we saw bi-partisan agreement. Responses to the Facebook ad-targeting scenario, for example, may indicate that public discourse around consumer surveillance has managed to cut across political divisions in ways not apparent in other areas. Society has much to gain by discussing why this is so and how feelings of other types of surveillance can be uncoupled from their political moorings.

All of these considerations suggest the need to explore a fundamental question: How is it that feelings about surveillance have come to be assimilated as a political issue among so many Americans across so many different arenas of life? The beginning of a dialogue outside of politics may have to do with asking that question and why we really feel as we do about how we and others are tracked in society. We started our research with the hypothesis that income is the primary driver of the emotions people feel with respect to surveillance that disproportionately affects Americans with low household incomes. In view of our findings, however, we need to have a public conversation about why political ideology is the main predictor, with income playing a rather minor role. A number of authors, prominently Lakoff[40] and Hochschild,[41] have tried to explain the ways political orientations influence how people respond to a myriad of social issues. They argue that when people make associations, including emotional ones, these are filtered through often fundamentally different world views that map onto distinct political ideologies.

We need to talk publicly about how political power creates these frameworks of understanding that over time seem natural. We need to discuss how these frameworks get translated into emotional reactions that may not appear political even when they are deeply so. And we need to discuss whether and how these consistent, though quite complex, emotions affect people's decisions regarding policy more intuitively and therefore more profoundly than the political frameworks from which they spring. Our study presents the elements to stimulate this discussion.

Notes

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[11] Khiara M. Bridges, *The Poverty of Privacy Rights* (Stanford, California: Stanford Law Books, 2017), 10.

[12] See Virginia Eubanks, *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police and Punish the Poor* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018).

[13] Mary Madden, Michelle Gilman, Karen Levy, and Alice Marwick, "Privacy, Poverty and Big Data: A Matrix of Vulnerabilities for Poor Americans," *Washington University Law Review* 95:053 (2017): 53–125. Quote is on page 56.

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[23] Ellis, Tucker, and Harper, "The Affective Atmospheres of Surveillance."

[24] Ellis, Tucker, and Harper, 729.

[25] John Gilliom, "A Response to Bennett's 'In Defence of Privacy,'" *Surveillance & Society* 8, no. 4 (2011): 502.

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