

True Tolerance: A Reexamination of Political Tolerance Survey Methods

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Abstract

Three different survey methods are commonly used to measure political tolerance. While each method has its distinct advantages and disadvantages, many surveys continue to use questions on practical situations of tolerance to assess respondents' political tolerance. These applications of tolerance questions, however, have numerous validity issues. Using any one question on tolerance demonstrates only the level of tolerance towards the act of a particular group, not necessarily the respondent's overall level of tolerance. Therefore, I present a new measure that combines the results of multiple applications of tolerance questions to better approximate true levels of political tolerance among the general population. This measure was created based on a reexamination of the concept of political tolerance as a principled commitment to extend political rights to all people, regardless of their beliefs. I demonstrate through multiple analyses that this new measure is identifying truly tolerant respondents better than a single application of tolerance question. Using this measure, I find significantly lower levels of political tolerance than current methods.

In the past few years the political vitriol on TV and in the news seems to be turned up to a fever pitch. However, one has to wonder to what extent the on-air animosity is reflective of general American public opinion. Is political tolerance truly declining in America? Do average Americans respect the political rights of those they disagree with less now than in the past? For over fifty years political scientists have used surveys and polls to measure these important questions of change in political tolerance in the United States. In order to address this issue systematically, researchers need valid data upon which to base observations. However, to collect this data, they must use valid methods to find the true level of tolerance in American society.

Throughout the history of political tolerance research three different methods have been used to measure this concept: theoretical measures, the pre-selected group method, and the content-controlled method. Theoretical measures are a blanket term used to describe survey questions asking participants about political tolerance in abstract terms. For example, these measures include questions such as “Should minority groups be allowed to speak?” or “Do you agree with freedom of speech?” Next, the pre-selected group method refers to questions in which the survey writer chooses one or more groups and creates items about specific applications of tolerance towards these groups. For example, a question may ask whether a communist should be allowed to hold a public rally. In these questions, applications of tolerance towards certain groups are used as a proxy for the respondent’s overall level of tolerance. Finally, the content-controlled method describes a survey technique in which the respondent first identifies the group he or she likes the least. Once the respondent’s least liked group is established, the surveyor then asks questions about the respondent’s tolerance of this group.

Each of these methods has been used throughout the history of political tolerance research and has distinct positive and negative aspects. Which method is most valid has long

been debated by political tolerance researchers. Some have suggested that the content-controlled method is most valid as it addresses the group to which a respondent is most likely to deny rights (Sullivan, 1979). Despite this assertion, many surveys continue to use the pre-selected group method in order to maintain historical comparability between current and previous questions. For example, the General Social Survey (GSS) currently includes 18 questions on political tolerance, asking about respondents' tolerance of three acts by six different groups. This survey has used the same pre-selected group format since its beginning in 1972, prior to the development of the content-controlled method. If the GSS were to now implement the content-controlled method, it would be impossible to compare current results to those from 1972.

Due to this constraint, the pre-selected group method is still used in the GSS. However, the important validity issues raised by the content-controlled method can be used to improve the reporting of data from surveys using pre-selected groups. Currently, when researchers report results from surveys that use the pre-selected group method, they often report the results of one or more groups. For example, Orces (2008) uses the current levels of tolerance for homosexuals as an indicator of national political tolerance¹. In this paper I will refer to this measure as the single act, single group (SASG) measure. Though researchers may report multiple questions of tolerance towards a group or even multiple groups, these results are referred to here as a single act, single group measure because each question presented to the respondent only discusses one single act by a single group. This data reporting method is flawed as a person may be tolerant of the particular act of the group discussed but intolerant of other acts or groups and incorrectly labeled as tolerant. Therefore, using any one tolerance question shows only the level of tolerance towards the act of a particular group, not the individual's overall level of tolerance. As

¹ For additional examples of this data reporting style, see Stouffer, 1955; Prothro & Grigg, 1960; Davis, 1975; Nunn, Crockett, & Williams, 1978; Gibson, 1987; Mueller, 1988; Bobo & Licari, 1989; Golebiowska, 1999; Peffley, Knigge, & Hurwitz, 2000.

individuals are tolerant of different acts and groups, the results can vary greatly based on which act and group is used in the question. Therefore, the use of any single act, single group question to represent overall tolerance presents significant validity problems.

In order to address this validity issue within pre-selected group data, I have developed a new data reporting method which I will refer to as the any group intolerant (AGI) measure. This measure was created based on a reexamination of the concept of tolerance. Political tolerance, in its essence, is the choice of citizens to allow the political rights of those with whom they may not agree. In this conceptualization the group an individual opposes is immaterial. Political tolerance is not group specific, but rather, the underlying concept of a principled commitment to extend political rights to all people, regardless of their beliefs. Therefore, an individual who would deny rights to any group on the basis of their views, does not fit this understanding of tolerance and is therefore intolerant. Based on this concept, the any group intolerant measure combines all of the political tolerance questions discussed on a survey to identify if the respondent is intolerant toward any of those groups. If the participant answers intolerantly toward any group, then he or she is marked as intolerant. If he or she tolerates all groups, then the respondent is marked as tolerant. The percent of respondents intolerant of any group can then be used to approximate a closer estimate of the true level of political tolerance. In this thesis, I will demonstrate through multiple analyses that the any group intolerant measure is identifying truly tolerant respondents better than a single act, single group political tolerance question.

In order to create a context for this argument, I will begin by clarifying the concept of political tolerance and explaining its role and impact on American democracy. Next, I will provide a history of the different political tolerance survey methodologies. I will then discuss the

advantages and disadvantages of each method, drawing on the extensive body of political tolerance research. After this review, I will explain in detail the any group intolerant measure and discuss four analyses used to support my hypothesis. I will then present the results of these analyses, comparing the any group intolerant and single act, single group measures. Finally, I will discuss my conclusions based on these findings and suggest avenues for future research.

Theoretical Framework

Before I begin an exploration of recent literature on this topic, I will first need to clarify the concept of political tolerance as it will be understood for this research. While I recognize that there are many definitions of political tolerance in both the arenas of political science and sociology, I intend to use the definition developed by researchers Sullivan, Pierson, and Marcus (1979). They define political tolerance as a “willingness to permit the expression of those ideas or interests that one opposes” (p. 784). They further explain that “one is tolerant to the extent one is prepared to extend freedoms to those whose ideas one rejects, whatever these might be” (p.784).

As this definition is quite broad, it is necessary to specify how these concepts will be understood in this paper in order to create an operational definition of political tolerance. The individuals discussed will refer to all United States citizens, both native-born and naturalized at the time the relevant research was performed. For the purposes of this paper, political rights will be defined as the rights and freedoms guaranteed to individuals in the American Constitution, Bill of Rights, and Constitutional Amendments, as well as applicable federal, state, and local laws pertaining to individual rights and freedoms. While certain measures may ask about specific rights, such as freedom of speech or freedom of assembly, when talking of political rights in general, it is this broader range of applicable rights to which I refer. Additionally, while

some members of groups may engage in illegal activities, such as inciting violence, the political tolerance discussed in this paper refers to actions of group members while engaging in legal acts such as holding a public rally in which opinions are expressed without inciting violence.

Furthermore, a definition of political tolerance would be incomplete without a mention of the distinction between political tolerance and political agreement. Whereas political agreement requires that all citizens concur on issues, political tolerance simply denotes the acceptance and respect for the political rights of others, whether one agrees with them or not. As I will illustrate in the next section, political agreement is not necessary in democracies, so long as the rights of minority opinion groups are protected.

Finally, it is necessary in this section to explain the type of political tolerance being discussed in this paper. For the sake of clarification in this paper, I would like to make a distinction between political tolerance of identity groups and ideological groups. Identity groups are groups formed based on a primary definition of what an individual identifies him or herself as, including, but not limited to, racial, gender, and ethnic self-definitions. Throughout the history of the United States, debates have occurred on whether political rights should be extended to certain identity groups including African-Americans, Native Americans, and women. While changing opinions on these topics have been the study of many past sociological investigations, I feel that belief in the enfranchisement of these groups has been so broadly accepted by Americans that further investigation would not be valuable. Ideological groups, on the other hand, represent people who come together primarily on the basis of agreement on certain subjects or issues. Socialists, racists, atheists, and Islamic extremists are all examples of ideological groups in which individuals voluntarily join together on the basis of shared beliefs. It is the political rights of these ideological groups that this research will focus on.

The Importance of Political Tolerance in American Democracy

When looking at a topic such as the validity of survey methods, one might ask why this is worth investigating. It could be said that the minutia of how researchers ask political tolerance questions is of no importance to those outside a small subset of academics. I would, however, argue that how well political tolerance is measured impacts the quality of the data reported. Poor measurement techniques can lead to confusing, misleading, or even incorrect results. Using data that truly reflects citizens' acceptance of political tolerance helps inform debate on minority rights and how those rights are being interpreted through the actions of ordinary citizens as well as our political representatives.

Political tolerance holds a vital role in the effective functioning of democracy in America. Kent Greenawalt (1989) outlines some of the major arguments for the freedom of speech, writing, "a liberal democracy rests ultimately on the choices of its citizens. Free speech can contribute to the possibility that they, and their representatives, can grasp truths that are significant for political life; it can enhance identification and accommodation of interests; and it can support wholesome attitudes about the relations of officials and citizens" (p. 145). Though he specifically addressed freedom of speech, his ideas can be more broadly applied to the range of political freedoms that are encapsulated in the previous definition of political tolerance. His arguments for freedom of speech are supported by political philosophers as well as Constitutional law experts.

John Stuart Mill (1859) explained the importance of free speech by stating that if a government suppresses an opinion they may be suppressing a truth, even though it is not a truth accepted by the majority yet. This argument of truths that began as minority opinions has been demonstrated in America through opinions on slavery and women's right to vote. Mill went on

to explain this line of reasoning, stating the democratic concept that even if the opinion is not true, the discussion that results from the presentation of a dissenting opinion will help to further and deepen general understanding of the truth on an issue. Next, Bunker (2001) raised the argument that freedoms of speech and communications provide an important check on governmental abuses of power. In Farber's (1998) analysis of the Constitution, freedom of speech was promoted as a way to expose individuals to a wide variety of opinions. He suggested that this exposure to multiple points of view may lead to more thoughtful and informed decision making on the part of citizens. Finally, Bollinger (1986) discussed the importance of the freedom of speech as an exercise for developing the self-discipline necessary for overall tolerance of others in a diverse society.

As Greenawalt and numerous others have shown, freedom of speech (and more broadly political rights) is important to the functioning of a democracy. However, these freedoms must be applied to all citizens, not only the majority or to those currently in power. When the governmental structure of the United States was being designed, the founders recognized the need for freedom of speech for many of the reasons stated above (Bunker, 2001). They believed government should primarily exist for the benefit of the people, echoing Locke's views of the government as a social contract in which citizens choose to give up absolute freedom for certain levels of security and protection (Gerrard, 2002). Yet, they recognized that shifting the decision making power from a monarch or a small group of leaders to the population at large would lead to disagreement on governance as people would inherently have differing views. (Madison, 1788). The founders feared the influence of demagoguery and the tyranny of the majority (Carrese, 2000). In an unchecked democracy the majority would rule and could, through legislation and police action, silence any dissenting opinions in order to keep themselves in

power. A need was recognized, therefore, for legally allowing minority opinions to be permitted and expressed. This recognition led to the creation of the Bill of Rights, particularly the development of the First Amendment (Matsusaka, 2004). By clearly stating that no law could infringe upon the freedom of speech, of the press, the right to assemble, and to petition for redress of grievances, the founders demonstrated that all citizens, regardless of their ideology, have a right to these freedoms. In reviewing the reasons that these rights were created, it is clear that a belief in extending these rights to all citizens is important for the functioning of the American democracy. As this issue is so important to our country, it is clear that the use of valid methods to monitor the public's commitment to political tolerance is critical.

The History of Political Tolerance Research

Now that a definition of political tolerance has been explained and its importance to democracy has been discussed, it is possible to move on to a review of the fundamental literature in the field of political tolerance research. During the 1940s and early 1950s the United States went through a time of extreme political repression, known today as the period of McCarthyism (Bogle, 2001, p. 247). Oshinsky (1998) explained that during this time Senator Joseph McCarthy was the most prominent figure in a group of governmental investigators that accused many government workers, entertainers, educators, and union organizers of having communist sympathies (p. 549). While the United States was in the throes of the Cold War with communist Russia, his accusations of secret communists working to bring down the nation from within led to an atmosphere of fear and hostility both within the government and general population. It was in this atmosphere that the first major research on political tolerance in America was conducted. Samuel Stouffer (1955) conducted surveys on national attitudes towards Americans who held

communist beliefs. He found a disturbingly high majority of Americans wanting to revoke the basic constitutionally protected rights of communists, including the right to speak and assemble.

Following Stouffer's seminal work, other researchers began to investigate Americans' attitudes towards the political rights of others. Stouffer had used survey questions about perceptions of freedom of the mass public in America as well as perceived personal freedom. He also asked about specific applications of rights for communists, atheists, and socialists. Prothro and Grigg (1960) demonstrated the importance of this differentiation between political rights in theory and in practice five years later. Their research confirmed Stouffer's findings and found that while the majority of respondents could agree that minority rights should exist, they had difficulty in extending rights to groups when asked about specific situations involving communists, atheists, and socialists. Future political tolerance surveys would use applications of tolerance to measure political tolerance as Prothro and Grigg's findings illustrated the wide gap between opinions on theoretical and practical applications of political tolerance.

While Prothro and Grigg had used theoretical measures to assess levels of political tolerance, Stouffer utilized the pre-selected group method, using tolerance of communists, atheists, and socialist as a proxy for overall political tolerance. In 1979, researchers Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1979) questioned whether these methods were valid measures of tolerance or were confounded by the popularity of these proxy groups. They felt that these questions could be identifying a respondent's affinity towards that specific group, not only their overall political tolerance. For example, if a respondent with liberal beliefs approves of extending rights to homosexuals but not to a conservative group, he or she would be incorrectly marked as politically tolerant when he or she, in fact, is not. This issue led Sullivan and his colleagues to develop a new methodology for measuring political tolerance known as the content-controlled

method. Using this technique, interviewers first asked respondents which group they liked least and then discussed their willingness to extend rights to this group. Sullivan and his colleagues argued that this method was able to control for group affinity in order to more accurately measure political tolerance.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Each Methodology

Having presented a brief overview of the development of these techniques, I can now discuss in greater detail the merits and problems of each technique. In discussing these points, the advantages of the alternative methodology I am proposing will be more clear in relation to previous methods.

The first and most direct methodology is the theoretical measure. Using this method, respondents are asked questions about their agreement with specific principals of democracy and minority rights. This method has the advantage of directly addressing the question of political tolerance without the need for any proxy or secondary measures. The major problem with this method, however, lies in the large difference between political tolerance in theory and tolerance of groups in practice. While this contradiction may seem irrational, it underscores the complexity of gauging opinions on this topic. Individuals may simultaneously hold seemingly incongruous opinions. However, in political tolerance research, the central issue to be assessed is how citizens will react when faced with an opportunity to oppress the rights of others. Would they use their majority power to silence others or would they recognize the importance of allowing differing opinions to be presented? This is the purpose of political tolerance research and therefore this data needs to demonstrate what a person would actually do in such a situation, not his or her general beliefs on civil liberties. As there is a demonstrated discontinuity between

general beliefs and specific actions of political tolerance, this method is widely regarded as invalid and not generally used in current political tolerance research.

Next, we move on to the pre-selected group method in which the surveyor selects groups to discuss and then asks specific questions of tolerance for these groups. This method is a widely used technique of approximating general political tolerance which has been applied in both academic research (Stouffer, 1955; Prothro & Grigg, 1960; Davis, 1975; Nunn, Crockett, & Williams, 1978; Gibson, 1987; Mueller, 1988; Bobo & Licari, 1989; Golebiowska, 1999; Peffley, Knigge, & Hurwitz, 2000) and major national and international public opinion surveys (GSS, Americas Barometer Survey, Freedom and Tolerance National Survey). Fundamental to this method is the selection of groups that are generally unpopular. The definition of tolerance as it has been defined above indicates that tolerance is a measure of a respondent's ability to permit the ideas of groups he or she opposes. This is logical, as an individual is unlikely to deny rights to a group he or she agrees with. Therefore, in order to correctly identify tolerance, one must be asked about the groups one disagrees with. Surveys have tried to approximate this by asking about groups that are largely unpopular in the overall population. The challenge of this technique has been that generally unpopular groups change over time. While communists and atheists were highly unpopular in the 1950s and therefore a good group against which to measure, they were not as unpopular in the 1970s. Some surveys have tried to modify their groups over time in response to this issue. For example, in 1976, the GSS added new conservative groups, racists and militarists, that they believed were generally unpopular. In 2008, the GSS further added the highly unpopular group of Islamic extremists. In doing this, they attempted to use groups that a large majority of respondents would disagree with in order to better estimate political tolerance.

The pre-selected group method has many advantages. It is a practical way of getting information on what respondents are likely to do in real situations of intolerance. The questions used are also fairly easy to explain and understand as they are practical scenarios as opposed to hypothetical quandaries. The method allows for standardized questions that are asked of all participants. The validity of this method, however, has been questioned by Sullivan and his colleagues. In their 1979 paper, Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus, explained that Stouffer's original research using pre-selected groups only addressed certain leftist groups (communists, atheists, and socialists). As those groups were organizations that the majority of Americans disliked and feared in the 1950s, individuals' willingness to extend political rights to these groups was, most likely, a good measure of political tolerance at the time. However, when researchers Nunn, Crockett, and Williams (1978) used the same groups in the 1970s to suggest that political tolerance was improving over time, Sullivan and his colleagues questioned whether their research was truly addressing political tolerance or simply demonstrating changes in the popularity of these groups. A general political population shift to the left and therefore an increase in the popularity of these leftist groups could cause these supposed increases in tolerance. Also, a general decrease in the importance and fear of those groups could lead to the increases in tolerance of these groups. Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus felt that the changes in the popularity of these groups could be impacting the results of political tolerance measures as the popularity of the group was being confounded with the tolerance of the group. This issue is the major disadvantage of the pre-selected method in that a surveyor must find groups that are disliked by all respondents.

The final method, the content-controlled method, was developed by Sullivan and his colleagues in response to their criticism of the pre-selected group method. In order to measure

their understanding of intolerance Sullivan, Feldman, and Piereson (1982) asked questions related to levels of tolerance and perceptions of threats regarding whichever group the respondent disliked the most. Though this method does not produce information on tolerance of specific groups, it did allow the researchers to control the content of the responses. In this way, Sullivan and his colleagues were able to assess individuals' tolerance of the group they would most likely give the least freedom to, their 'least liked' group.

There are many advantages of the content-controlled method. Based on Sullivan's arguments and evidence in his 1979 paper and 1982 book, his measure appears to be methodically more valid as it is addressing that group towards which a respondent is most likely to deny rights. However, it is unclear to what extent his method may have improved the validity of the results as little research was done to support his claims using large-scale samples (Gibson, 1992). As such, the debate on the validity of different political tolerance survey methodologies has continued. The content-controlled method also has specific disadvantages. It is more time consuming and complex than the pre-selected group method. The method requires a surveyor to first ask the respondent about his or her least-like group. This idea is not always immediately evident to participants and may require additional clarification. Furthermore, special instructions need to be developed to indicate how far to push a respondent who is having difficulty identifying his or her least-liked group. The surveyors, therefore, will need additional training on how to address these requests for clarification. These complications, along with the uncertainty of the amount of improved validity, make it unclear which methodology is the best.

A New Methodology

As we have seen above, there are many reasons that the content-controlled method may be more valid than the pre-selected group method. And yet, there are sometimes very good

reasons that the pre-selected group method is used. The first, and perhaps most important, reason is for historic comparability. For example, the GSS has measured political tolerance using pre-selected groups since 1972. It would be impossible to compare current results to previous results if the content-controlled method were now put in place. One of the most useful characteristics of the GSS is its long history of comparable data. The use of the content-controlled method would lose this quality. Next, as discussed above, the content-controlled method is more time consuming, expensive, and complex than the pre-selected group method.

One could argue that, from a purely methodological standpoint, the most valid method must be used in all circumstances. However, in reality, surveys must balance good methodology with the realities of time and money constraints. Due to these practical concerns, some surveys continue to use pre-selected groups, despite the existence of a potentially more precise method. As many large-scale surveys use this method, the question then becomes how researchers can use this type of data to generate the most accurate information possible about political tolerance.

As I have alluded to above, this question led me to develop the any group intolerant (AGI) measure. This method was developed by addressing the underlying purpose of political tolerance questions, whether the respondent has a principled commitment to political rights regardless of a group's opinions. Therefore, the issue is whether the respondent would tolerate any group, not just the one being discussed. While the AGI measure does not address every possible group, as it derives from pre-selected group data that uses a finite number of groups, it utilizes multiple groups and acts to better assess respondents' true level of tolerance.

While I contend that this method is better than comparing the results of a single political tolerance question, it is not a perfect method. It still has the constraints of the pre-selected group method. A respondent could be inaccurately labeled as tolerant if he or she is not asked about

one of the groups he or she would not tolerate. This method, therefore, will not produce the precise level of political intolerance in populations that took surveys using pre-selected groups. It will, however, produce a better estimate of political tolerance than a single act, single group question. In order to demonstrate that the AGI measure is identifying tolerance better than the SASG measure, I will present four analyses using data from the political tolerance variables on the GSS.

Description of Data Set and Variables

The General Social Survey (GSS) is a large-scale, nationally representative sociological survey of demographic and attitudinal questions. The survey is conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago through in person interviews. NORC uses a random sample of non-institutionalized² Americans over the age of 18. The survey began in 1972, and was administered annually until 1994, with exceptions in 1979, 1981, and 1992, due to funding issues. Starting in 1994, the survey has been performed on a bi-annual basis, with its most recent data available from 2010 (NORCa, 2012).

The questionnaire has two sections, a core section of questions that have remained nearly unchanged since the beginning of the survey, and a module section of questions specific to that year, dealing with contemporary issues. The survey has now been given 28 times, with a total of 55,087 respondents. The average number of participants has been 1,967, though samples have ranged from 1,372 to 4,510. The survey has a good overall response rate, between 70% to 82% over various administrations (Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2011, p. 3105-3106).

In this paper, I will be primarily investigating variables on applications of political tolerance in the GSS. Over the entire course of the GSS, seven different groups have been

² The non-institutionalized population refers to those freely accessible to interviewers and does not, therefore, include those in the military, hospitals, mental health facilities, colleges, or the incarcerated.

discussed: atheists, communists, socialists, homosexuals, racists, militarists, and Muslim clergyman preaching hatred of the United States. For each group, three questions are asked. First, one of the groups is described to the respondent. Then, the respondent is asked, “if such a person wanted to make a speech in your (city/town/community) about [the group’s views], should he be allowed to speak, or not” (Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2011, p. 240). For these items, the possible responses are either that the situation should be allowed or should not be allowed. Next the interviewer asks, “should such a person be allowed to teach in a college or university, or not” (Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2011, p. 241). On this question, respondents chose either that the member should be allowed to teach or that the member should not be allowed.³ Finally, the respondent is asked “if some people in your community suggested that a book he [the member of the group in question] wrote on [the group’s views] should be taken out of your public library, would you favor removing this book, or not” (Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2011, p. 241). Respondents are given the option of either indicating that the book should be removed or that it should not be removed. These three questions are then repeated for all groups. For all of the variables discussed above, there are also a number of categories for non-responses, including, “don’t know,” “no answer,” and “inapplicable.”

Different groups have been discussed throughout the history of the GSS. Questions on tolerance of communists and atheists have been included in the GSS through its entire history of administration, from 1972 to 2010. Tolerance of socialists was only discussed from 1972 to 1974 and was therefore not included in any of my analyses. Measures on tolerance of homosexuals were included in 1973 and have continued through 2010. In 1976, items about more conservative groups, racists and militarists, were added in an attempt to politically balance

³ The wording on this question in relation to communists is slightly different than other groups. It asks, “suppose he [the communist] is teaching in a college. Should he be fired, or not” (Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2011, p. 244). The responses available are “yes, fired” or “not fired”.

the questions. This battery of five groups (communists, atheists, homosexuals, racists, and militarists) remained unchanged from 1976 until 2008, when new items were introduced on tolerance of Muslim clergymen preaching hatred toward the United States. Questions on this group were included in both the 2008 and 2010 surveys.

The GSS is a very large survey, with a substantial number of topics to investigate but only a 90 minute time limit for interviews. In order to accommodate the time limit, some questions were skipped in certain years, though they were still considered part of the official core section of questions. Political tolerance variables were skipped in 1975, 1978, 1983, and in 1986. Starting in 1988, the GSS utilized a new survey length reduction method, splitting the population into three sections and giving different sets of questions to each section. As such, in 1988 and after, political tolerance variables only include two thirds of the entire population, with one third having skipped the section (NORCb, 2012). Due to these constraints, the number of respondents who were asked political tolerance questions from 1972 to 2010 was 34,899 out of the total 55,087.

Though political tolerance variables are the primary focus of investigation and thus the dependent variables, 13 additional demographic and opinion variables were used in certain analyses as independent variables. I will briefly explain these variables and how they are used in the GSS. I will also describe the academic research on each variable's association with political tolerance. This explanation will serve both to highlight research on this link and justify the use of each variable in my analyses. Though many articles have been published linking these variables to political tolerance, in the interest of brevity, I will only highlight a few significant papers for each variable.

First, the education variable measures the number of years of education the respondent has obtained with a range of 0 to 20 years. Education has been associated with political tolerance in many studies. In his work on political tolerance Stouffer (1955) theorized that increasing levels of education would increase political tolerance. Davis (1975) and Nunn, Crockett, and Williams (1978) found a positive correlation between education and tolerance, with higher levels of education associated with tolerance. More recently, Golebiowska (1995) found significant associations between education and political tolerance. Other researchers have tried to identify which element of education drives this relationship. Bobo and Licari (1989) investigated cognitive sophistication, or the quality of an individual's reasoning process, as the link between education and political tolerance. They used the wordsum variable in the 1984 GSS as a valid measure of cognitive sophistication, finding a strong positive correlation with political tolerance. This variable, wordsum, is a ten-word vocabulary test that is designed to tap an individual's reasoning process. The value listed for each respondent corresponds to the number of vocabulary words he or she answered correctly. The greater the number of vocabulary words correctly identified, the greater the respondents' cognitive sophistication.

The next variables to be used in my analyses are prestige and prestg80, which are used to represent social status. These items are occupational prestige variables that measure the perceived prestige of the respondent's occupation based on the Hodge-Siegel-Rossi Prestige Score Scale and U.S. Census occupational codes. This measure is split into two variables, prestige and prestg80, due to changes in the 1980 U.S. Census occupational codes. Though the total sample is split between these two variables, both items measure the same concept. The prestige variable was measured on a scale from 9 to 82 with higher numbers corresponding to more prestigious occupations. The prestg80 variable was based on a similar scale with

occupational prestige values between 17 and 86. Social status has been shown to have a relationship with political tolerance. Korman (1975) theorized about this relationship, proposing that those individuals that had jobs with higher occupational prestige would be more likely to support the rights of others. Sullivan (1981) found this theory to be true. In his paper analyzing the sources of political tolerance he used the prestige variables on the GSS as a measure of social class, finding significant associations between political tolerance and higher social status. Finally, age is a continuous variable indicating the respondent's age at the time of the survey. Age has been shown to have a negative correlation with tolerance, with younger respondents more likely to be politically tolerant. Bobo and Licari (1989) found strong negative associations between age and tolerance. Cutler and Kaufman (1975) used the 1972 GSS data to observe this relationship, finding younger cohorts to be more tolerant than older generations.

While the previous six variables are all demographic variables concerning the respondent's background, the next eight variables are opinion variables reflecting the participants' views on a variety of subjects. First among these are the child trait desirability variables, including obeys and manners. These variables are part of a 13 item set of questions that asks respondents to rank which qualities in children are most desirable. The values are then recoded into categories for each variable with a value of one for the most desirable quality, two indicating that it is one of the three most desirable qualities, a value of three if the quality was not mentioned, four for one of three least desirable qualities, and five indicating the least desirable quality. This recode established an ordinal scale of traits with lower values listed for more desirable traits in children.

These variables on which qualities are most desirable are designed to distinguish different personality types. One of these types, the authoritarian personality has been discussed

extensively in psychological and political tolerance literature as a potential source for intolerance. This personality is identified as strongly believing in obedience to authority, having a need to command subordinates, intolerance for ambiguity, and aggression toward non-conformists (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). Though the theory and measurement of the authoritarian personality are controversial, the concept has been posited as a major psychological factor in intolerance. Stouffer (1955) looked at respondents who believed in authoritarian parenting techniques, valuing obedience and respect for elders. These respondents were considerably less tolerant of the ideological groups discussed. Research into the relationship between the authoritarian personality and political tolerance has continued, with researchers finding a negative correlation, with those who have authoritarian personality traits less likely to extend rights to others (McCloskey & Brill, 1983). Stenner (2005) used the GSS variables on desirable qualities in children to investigate tolerance. She identified a number of qualities as being associated with the authoritarian personality, including the obedience and good manners variables. She then linked these signs of authoritarian personality with intolerance towards others.

For the next variable, fear, respondents are asked if there is any area around their neighborhood where they would be afraid to walk alone at night. The available responses are yes, no, don't know, and no answer. Fear is also a psychological characteristic associated with political tolerance. It has been shown to be negatively associated with political tolerance as those with higher levels of fear were less likely to be politically tolerant (McCloskey and Brill, 1983). Next, the trust and anomia variables tap into the respondent's level of trust in other people. The trust variable asks respondents "generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people" (Smith, Marsden, Hout, &

Kim, 2011, p. 339). The response categories include “most people can be trusted” and “can’t be too careful”, as well as the accepted if volunteered category of “it depends”. The anomia8 and anomia9 variables are part of a larger section on anomie or normlessness due to a breakdown of societal standards. This section asks a number of questions on interpersonal trust and faith in other people to assess an individual’s level of anomie. Anomia8 states “these days a person doesn’t really know whom he can count on” (Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2011, p. 381) to which the respondent can agree or disagree. Trust of other people has been discussed as a source of political tolerance. Gibson (1987) researched tolerance towards the Ku Klux Klan and found strong correlations between trust and political tolerance. Sullivan, Marcus, Feldman, & Piereson (1982) found a similar relationship between trust and tolerance in their research.

Finally, the last three variables, fair, helpful, and anomia9, address the respondent’s faith in others. The variable fair asks if the respondent believes that most people try to take advantage of others or try to be fair. The response options are the two statements given in the item as well as the accepted if volunteered category of “it depends”. The helpful variable similarly asks “would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves” (Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2011, p. 338). The response options are the same, including the statements in the item as well as the “it depends” option. Finally, the anomia9 is an agree/disagree item stating that “most people don’t really care what happens to the next fellow” (Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2011, p. 372). These three variables, fair, helpful, and anomia9 are used to address a respondent’s faith in other people. McCloskey and Brill (1983) performed extensive research on attitudes towards others and political tolerance, investigating many aspects of individuals’ faith in others. They found significant positive associations between faith in others and political tolerance. Sullivan, Marcus, Feldman, &

Piereson (1982) found similar results with those respondents displaying faith in others more likely to be politically tolerant. These 13 variables, along with the political tolerance variables, were used in my analyses to investigate the effectiveness of the AGI method in identifying truly tolerant respondents.

Descriptive Statistics

In order to provide a context for the analyses that will be presented in the methodology section, it is helpful to have an understanding of the nature of dependent variables, the political tolerance variables, as well as the independent variables. Chart 1 illustrates the overall rates of approval of the three different acts for all six groups⁴. These levels are the averaged values over the time period each question was included in the survey. This chart shows that different acts and groups are tolerated at different levels. Homosexuals are the most tolerated group with the highest levels of approval. Atheists and communists are less tolerated, followed by racists and militarists. Islamic extremists are the least tolerated group with the lowest tolerance levels on all three measurements. Groups are also differentially tolerated by act. Public speech is the most allowed act for atheists, communists, homosexuals while having a book in a public library is the most allowed act for racists, militarists, and Islamic extremists. Being a college professor is by far the most restricted act for all groups. While many theories as to why the acts are differentially accepted could be presented, these findings demonstrate the multi-dimensional and complex nature of political tolerance.

While these approval rates give us some insight into which groups and acts are tolerated by Americans, they do not allow us to see a broader picture of tolerance through the lens of time. Charts 2, 3, and 4 illustrate changes in tolerance for the different acts over time. Each chart has

⁴ In the GSS, the political tolerance questions discussing Muslim groups ask about the rights of “a Muslim clergyman who preaches hatred of the United States” (Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2011, p. 246). In the interest of brevity, this group is labeled as Islamic extremists in the charts and throughout the paper.

all available data for each group. However, as different groups were introduced into the survey at different times, trend lines for groups begin at different times. Among all three acts, tolerance is generally increasing over time, though the pace and relative positions of the trend lines are different by group and act. Homosexuals have seen the largest increase in tolerance over time, followed by communists, atheists, and militarists. Tolerance for Islamic extremists has only been measured twice, though tolerance seems to have remained static, shifting up and down by one or two points across the three acts. Finally, tolerance for racists seems to have deviated from the general upward trend. While most groups have made 10 to 20 point gains in tolerance between 1972 and 2010, approval of racists has only increased by six points for the college professor item and four points on the library item. On public speeches, approval for racists has actually decreased by three points between 1976 and 2010, the only variable to do so.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the 13 independent variables, encompassing all years each variable was included in the GSS. These statistics include the number of observations, the mean, standard deviation, and the minimum and maximum value observed for each variable. Finally, Chart 5 presents respondents' characterizations of their political ideology. This chart demonstrates that the largest percent of respondents classify themselves as moderates, with slightly liberal and slightly conservative constituting the next largest groups. Similar, though fewer numbers of respondents categorized themselves as liberal or conservative, with very few (6%) identifying as extremely liberal or extremely conservative. Overall, the total sample is slightly more conservative, with 6.7% more conservatives than liberals. These charts and tables, along with these findings, help us to better understand the nature and history of political tolerance as recorded in the General Social Survey.

Methodology

Now that an understanding of the data and the variables has been clarified, we can move on to using this information to demonstrate that the any group intolerant (AGI) measure is identifying truly tolerant respondents better than a single group, single act (SASG) political tolerance variable. In order to do this, I have created four different analyses, a direct measure, a variable average value comparison, a logit regression analysis, and a Pseudo R-squared analysis.

Before discussing the details of these analyses, I will provide a description of the modifications made to the data for these analyses. All of these analyses operated on a comparative basis, contrasting the AGI measure with SASG variables. Therefore, it was vitally important to ensure the target and comparison groups were equivalent. The political tolerance variable groups were introduced in the GSS at various times with the racists and militarists groups added in 1976. The sample was limited to results from 1976 to 2010 so that all comparisons had approximately similar sample sizes⁵.

In addition to standardizing the sample size, modifications were also made to some variables to make them easier to compare and interpret. All the political tolerance variables were placed on a standardized scale with all tolerant responses recoded as a 1 and intolerant responses coded as a 0. All non-response categories, including “don’t know”, “no answer”, and “inapplicable” were recoded as missing values. As the valid non-response answers were few⁶, this did not present a methodological issue. The AGI measure was then created by identifying those who responded intolerantly to any of the 18 political tolerance variables. Those who had skipped all political tolerance variable questions were marked as missing.

⁵ Sample sizes for each group are from the same time period, 1976 to 2010, incorporating 21 survey administrations. However, the sample sizes are slightly different between groups as non-responses answers such as “don’t know” were slightly different for each variable.

⁶ Less than 4% for all responses were valid non-responses on all political tolerance variables, except tolerance for communist college professors, which had a 6% valid non-response rate.

In addition to modified political tolerance variables, the independent variables were also recoded. As explained above the occupational prestige measure is divided into two variables, prestige and prestg80. Though the variables overlapped in a few years, I recoded these values to be distinct variables for comparative purposes. In my analyses, the prestige variable was recoded to include the results from 1976 to 1990, the last year of the prestige variable. The prestg80 variable includes results from 1991 to 2010. Three variables, trust, fair, and helpful, had an additional category of “it depends” which was not presented as an option but allowed to be marked if volunteered by the respondent. As this category did not provide any usable information for analysis, it was recoded as a missing value. The numbers in this category were fairly small at 5-7% of the total sample. Next, each of the child trait desirability variables were asked as three different variables, an original version asked in most years, a Y-version asked in a few years, and a Z version asked in other years. In order to utilize as much data as possible, the original and Y versions of these questions were combined into a new variable. The Z version of the variable could not be included as it was asked in a substantially different format.

Finally, research has shown that all of the independent variables used in the analyses have a certain positive or negative correlation with tolerance. For example, education is positively associated with tolerance, with higher levels of education associated with higher percentages of tolerance. Age, however, is negatively associated with tolerance, with lower ages being associated with tolerance. In certain opinion variables, due to the question’s wording, responses do not reflect the observed association with tolerance. In these cases, the variable was recoded to preserve the correct correlation with tolerance. For example, fear has been shown to be negatively associated with tolerance. The responses to the item on fear were recoded so that low responses on this variable were associated with high levels of political tolerance, preserving

the correlation. This process was repeated for six other independent variables. Once all data were recoded and targeted for the correct time period, they were able to be used in my analyses.

The first analysis created is the most direct measure, using the data to illustrate examples of my main argument. This argument asserts that using a single act, single group (SASG) measure, those respondents who are marked as tolerant are only known to be tolerant of the one act by the one group discussed. Therefore, labeling respondents who are tolerant of this act as tolerant overall may be incorrect. It is possible that these respondents would be intolerant towards another act or group. In the past, this argument has only been a hypothetical assertion. However, using the full set of GSS data, I am able to illustrate concrete examples of respondents who do not fit the definition of tolerance as a principled commitment to extend political rights to all ideological groups, though they are marked as tolerant in the survey.

In order to show this, I looked at participants who were tolerant in a SASG variable and investigated their responses to the other political tolerance questions. These results are found in Tables 2a, 2b, and 2c. For example, for the question on allowing an atheist to give a public speech, 71% (21,375) allowed this act. Of those 21,375 respondents, 6,058 were tolerant of all acts by the six groups. Therefore, these 6,058 individuals fit the definition of a truly tolerant individual, one having a commitment to the rights of others. The other 15,317 participants who responded tolerantly on this item responded intolerantly to one or more of the other political tolerance questions. Thus, these individuals, though marked as tolerant by this question on public speech for atheists, are not tolerant as they refuse to extend political rights to other ideological groups. Therefore, these 15,317 respondents are being incorrectly labeled as tolerant when they are not. This example demonstrates that using this SASG variable will produce a result that is at least 50% incorrect.

Next, for the secondary level of analysis, I wanted to demonstrate that the AGI measure was identifying truly tolerant respondents better than a SASG variable. In order to illustrate this, it was necessary to show that those marked as tolerant in this methodology were, in fact, more likely to be tolerant. This analysis, therefore, used the independent variables described above that have been shown in previous research to be associated with political tolerance. If the AGI measure is correctly identifying truly tolerant people, these respondents should have higher values on these independent variables than those who are labeled as tolerant on a SASG variable, as those respondents may actually be intolerant of other groups.

In the following analyses, I used 13 variables that represent eight different areas shown to be associated with political tolerance. These areas are education (as shown by the EDUC variable in the GSS), cognitive sophistication (WORDSUM), social class (PRESTIGE, PRESTG80), age (AGE), authoritarian personality (Child Trait Desirability Variables: OBEYS, MANNERS), fear (FEAR), trust of others (TRUST, ANOMIA8), and faith in others (FAIR, HELPFUL, ANOMIA9). In my data section, I have explained the wording and responses available for these variables. I have also explained each variable's correlation with political tolerance, thereby justifying its use in these analyses.

The body of political tolerance research helped me to identify which variables to use in my analyses. However, as there were 18 political tolerance variables, 13 independent variables, and three analyses, the results would have been too numerous to list and examine clearly. Therefore, I chose nine political tolerance questions (three acts on three groups) to compare to the AGI measure. In choosing the comparison variables, I wanted to use groups that were spread throughout the political spectrum and therefore show that my method was robust across different ideological groups. I further wanted to demonstrate that my results were not being biased by

using questions about a comparison group that was skewed liberally or conservatively. I therefore selected comparison groups by examining differences in tolerance across ideological lines. For those who were intolerant on each political tolerance variable, I compared those identifying in the liberal and conservative categories. I then subtracted the liberal results from the conservative results in order to get a measure of which variables were most spread over political lines. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 3. In identifying comparison groups, the Islamic extremist group was removed from consideration as it was only used in two surveys and would have not provided significant amounts of data. In this analysis, I found the racist variables to be most stable, having the least difference in being tolerated by conservative and liberals. Among liberal groups, I found homosexual variables to have the largest differences, demonstrating a liberal bias for tolerating homosexuals. The questions on militarists had the largest differences among the conservative groups. These nine variables were therefore used to compare against the AGI measure.

The next analysis, the variable average value comparison (Table 4) was used to examine if the AGI measure is identifying truly tolerant respondents better than a SASG measure. In order to perform this analysis, I used the 13 independent variables shown to be correlated with tolerance and the nine comparison variables. I found the average value of each independent variable in the population labeled as tolerant using the AGI method and those indicated as tolerant using the nine SASG variables. For each variable, I then compared the results of the measures to the literature on tolerance. For certain variables, tolerant individuals should have higher values, while for other variables lower values are associated with tolerance. Therefore, the method that is best identifying truly tolerant individuals should be the method that produces average levels of independent variables in populations labeled as tolerant that are higher for

variables positively associated with tolerance and lower for variables negatively associated with tolerance. The results, as well as the expected direction of association between the variables and tolerance, are presented in Table 4.

Next, the logit analysis used single variable logistical regressions with the tolerant variable (the variable generated using the AGI method) as a dependent variable and the various associated variables as independent variables. The results (Table 5) show the relationship between each independent variable and the log-odds of a respondent being tolerant. In these regressions a single variable model was used for each logistical regression. While controls are usually used in these types of regressions, a number of characteristics of the data made this difficult. Firstly, not all variables were given in the same time frame. Some variables were asked each year while others were asked only occasionally. As such, all 13 questions were never asked in the same year, therefore creating no observations. Furthermore, even for those variables that were asked on a more frequent basis, the sample sizes were reduced due to the use of the survey length reduction method⁷. Using this method, each respondent only saw two of three survey question sections, known as modules. The variables were split across these modules. Due to these problems, the independent variables were not able to be used as controls for the logit regressions. Though this is an issue in this particular analysis, it is important to note that the purpose of this analysis is not to determine the absolute value of the coefficient of the independent variables but rather to use the same regression model to compare one measure to another. As such, any impact that the lack of control variables would have on the regression of the AGI measure would also impact the regression of the SASG variables. Therefore, although the lack of control variables is an issue, as long as the analysis used in all comparisons is the same, the principal of the analysis is not undermined.

⁷ A more detailed explanation of this method is provided in the Description of Data Set and Variables section.

The final analysis was the Pseudo R-squared analysis in which a logit was run with the intolerant variable and the independent variables. I then compared the results using the AGI measure to those produced using the SASG variables. The results, as seen in Table 7, illustrate how much of the variance in tolerance is being explained by the associated variables. Although the results of a logit do not generate a true R-squared measure, they do produce a Pseudo R-squared result that can be compared against other Pseudo R-squared results in order to determine which logit is most effective in explaining the variation in a dependent variable.

As discussed earlier, due to the nature of the GSS, the independent variables were used at different times. As such, there were no years in which all the variables overlapped. There was, however, one single year, 1976, when 12 variables overlapped. A logit was run on this year that included all the independent variables except `prestg80`. As the `prestige` and `prestg80` recoded variables do not overlap, these 12 variables represent all available variables. By comparing the Pseudo R-squared results of the AGI measure and the SASG measures using the 1976 data, it is possible to illustrate how much of the variation in tolerance is being explained by the associated variables.

While this 12 variable model compares the Pseudo R-squared results between measures by identifying how well the independent variables are explaining the variation in tolerance, it utilizes data from a single year. However, in creating additional models without certain infrequent variables, the sample size can be increased to include more years. While this technique increases the sample size, it also reduces the number of variables. Therefore, models with fewer variables will decrease the amount of variation in tolerance found in the results. However, as these additional models are being used to compare the AGI and SASG measures, the results should be used comparatively. These models with less variables, but larger sample

sizes, can be used to reinforce the results of the measure comparison, showing which method is identifying tolerance better even in larger samples. As such, multiple models were created, using a decreasing number of variables, while generating increasing sample sizes. Table 6 lists the variables used in each model. Each model was then used to generate the Pseudo R-squared (PRS) results in Table 7 which can be used to compare the effectiveness of the measures in identifying truly tolerant individuals.

Results

Using the four analyses described above, I found results that supported my hypothesis that the AGI method was identifying truly tolerant respondents better than the SASG variables.

The results of the direct measure are seen in Tables 2a, 2b, and 2c. Each table shows tolerance for one of the three acts by each group and lists those respondents who were correctly labeled as tolerant, correctly labeled as intolerant, and incorrectly labeled as tolerant. The main result of interest is the percent of the population that is being incorrectly labeled as tolerant, as it reflects the inaccuracy of the SASG measures and the strength of the AGI measure that correctly labels such respondents. The results show that using the SASG variables on the GSS incorrectly identifies between 24 and 56% of respondents as tolerant⁸ on the public speech question. On the college professor item, the analysis found between 13 and 48% of respondents incorrectly identified as tolerant. For the question on the removal of a library book written by a member of an ideological group, between 31 and 48% of respondents were wrongly marked as tolerant. On average, across all 18 variables, 39% of respondents were incorrectly labeled. Finding nearly

⁸ As stated above, this data has the limitation that it is derived from pre-selected group data and only discusses a finite number of groups. Therefore, the participants who responded tolerantly on all variables may be intolerant of another group not used in the GSS. However, in this analysis, this situation would work to underestimate the results, as some of those tolerant on all variables may be intolerant of other groups. This would indicate that the 24 to 56% of the sample incorrectly marked as tolerant is a minimum known estimate and the true level of inaccuracy of the SASG variables may be higher.

40% of participants measured inaccurately is a major finding. This result demonstrates that using the SASG variables causes significantly incorrect results. While this analysis shows the problems of the SASG measure, it also demonstrates the strength of the AGI method. The 13 to 56% of respondents who were incorrectly identified as tolerant using the SASG variables would be correctly identified as intolerant using the AGI method. This, in itself, is strong evidence for the usefulness of the AGI measure as it corrects a major issue found in up to half of the sample.

The next analysis, the variable average value analysis (Table 4) shows the results of the average levels of the independent variables for the respondents identified as tolerant by each method. It also shows the direction of the correlation between the variable and tolerance, as well as the direction of values associated with tolerance. If the correlation is positive, then the measure that has the highest value of the variable is best identifying truly tolerant individuals as these individuals should have higher values of this variable associated with tolerance. Conversely, for those variables with a negative association with tolerance, the method that produces the lowest level of the variable is most accurately identifying truly tolerant individuals. Table 4 shows that the AGI measure (shown as the variable named tolerant) is consistently producing higher values of variables positively associated with tolerance and lower values of variables negatively associated with tolerance. Of particular note is the finding on education. In this analysis, the results find that the average level of education in a person who was tolerant on all 18 political tolerance variables (the AGI method) was 14.54 years. The variable with the next highest educational value was tolerance of militarists teaching in college, with an average value of 13.73. The difference between these two values is nearly a year of education, indicating that those who are tolerant of all variables discussed have, on average, nearly a year more of education than any of the other comparison groups. As more years of education are correlated

with tolerance, this, along with the other variables with similar results, indicates that the AGI method is identifying truly tolerant individuals better than the SASG variables as the respondents identified as tolerant using the AGI measure have higher or lower values of variables associated with tolerance.

Next, the results of the logit analysis are shown in Table 5. The results show the relationship between each independent variable and the log-odds of being tolerant. For example, in this GSS dataset, for each additional word a respondent answered correctly on the vocabulary quiz, there is a 0.21 increase in the log-odds of that respondent allowing a racist to speak at a public rally. Thus, whichever method is consistently showing a greater impact of the variables known to be associated with tolerance is better identifying true tolerance. Throughout Table 5 the AGI measure is more consistently showing a larger impact of the independent variables than the other SASG variables. All of the variables were shown to be statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Though nearly all results showed larger effects using the AGI method, a few outlier results did not. Out of 140 results, four results had an effect that was 0.01 larger than the AGI impact. Three of these outliers were in items about tolerance of homosexuals, while one relates to tolerance of militarists. The differences between these outliers and the AGI measure results, however, are quite small. Furthermore, the outliers are very infrequent. Therefore, their presence does not undermine the overall finding that the AGI measure is more consistently showing a larger impact of the independent variables than the SASG variables.

Finally, Table 7 shows the results of the Pseudo R-Squared analysis, demonstrating how much of the variance in intolerance is being explained by the independent variables. As discussed above, the use of a logit regression creates a Pseudo R-squared result that allows for a comparison of model fitness rather than a precise calculation of the variation is being addressed

by the variables. In the full 12 variable model, the AGI measure is picking up approximately 23% of the variation in tolerance while the closest SASG variable, tolerance for homosexuals giving a public speech, is only identifying 17%, a difference of 6 percentage points. Across all of the variable models, the AGI measure is consistently generating higher Pseudo R-squared results than the SASG variables, indicating that the AGI measure is accounting for the variation in tolerance better than the SASG variables. This finding shows that the results of Pseudo R-Squared analysis are robust among larger samples.

Now that the effectiveness of the AGI measure has been demonstrated through multiple analyses, the results of the AGI measure itself will be briefly discussed. Chart 6 shows Chart 1, Tolerance of Minority Groups by Act, with the addition of the results of the AGI measure. This additional variable identifies those individuals who were tolerant of all political tolerance variables. As this measure combines all groups, the value is the same for all groups. Only 20% of the population was tolerant of all groups, a much lower value than any of the other SASG variables, illustrating the large difference in political tolerance results depending on methodology used. Chart 7 is a replica of the Chart 2 data from 1976 to 2010 on the tolerance of public speeches by ideological groups, with the AGI measure isolated per year. Charts 8 and 9 show the results of the AGI measure on the college professor and library items in the same time period. These charts show a great difference between the SASG variables and the AGI measure with a difference of 13 percentage points between allowing Islamic extremist college professors and 67 percentage points for allowing a homosexual to speak at a public rally. Using these charts, we can also see how overall tolerance has changed over time as measured by different methods. In general tolerance does not seem to be significantly increasing over time as has been suggested by researchers such as Davis (1975) and Nunn, Crockett, and Williams (1978). However, there was

a decline in 2006 with the introduction of the Islamic extremist variable. This change is due to the introduction of a highly unpopular group and demonstrates the importance of including unpopular groups in the pre-selected group method, as the method is only accurate to the extent that it uses groups to which respondents are likely to deny rights. Charts 6 through 9 illustrate the large difference in the picture of political tolerance in America between using the SASG variables to represent overall tolerance and utilizing the full set of available political tolerance data to identify respondents who are truly tolerant.

Conclusions and Avenues for Future Research

The findings discussed in the results section illustrate the effectiveness of the AGI measure over the SASG variables in a number of ways. In the direct measure, evidence was presented that nearly 40% of respondents were being incorrectly labeled as tolerant using SASG variables. Using the AGI method, these respondents are correctly identified as intolerant. Next, the variable average value comparison showed that using the AGI method respondents marked as tolerant had higher values of variables associated with a tolerance and lower values of variables associated with intolerance. Furthermore, the logit analysis demonstrated that the AGI measure was generally showing a larger impact between the independent variables and tolerance than the SASG variables. Finally, the Pseudo R-squared analysis illustrated that the AGI measure was explaining more of the variation in tolerance than the SASG variables. These findings, when viewed together, provide strong evidence that the AGI measure is better identifying truly tolerant individuals than the SASG variables.

Though in this thesis I have demonstrated the effectiveness of the AGI measure through a number of analyses, there remains much to be done to fully investigate the validity of political tolerance measurement on surveys. Firstly, I would like to investigate the effect of adding partial

controls to the logit results. Though a full 12 variable model would not produce enough data for effective results, it would be interesting to use the various models shown in Table 6 to compare the different measures using control variables. This research would, however, require additional methodological and theoretical decisions; balancing which variables need to be included while maintaining a large enough sample size.

Additionally, I would like to compare other data reporting methods to the AGI measure. In this paper, the AGI method was compared exclusively against the SASG variables. While reporting the SASG variables is common, researchers also use other methods to report the results of political tolerance data using the pre-selected group method. Some researchers combine all three acts for each group, while others combine all groups for each act, or combine all acts and groups. One method is to create a scale by adding all 18 responses together and to produce a respondent's total intolerance score with values from 0-18. This measure is flawed for many reasons. Firstly, the interpretation of the scale is suspect. If a person scores an 18, does that indicate that he or she is 100% intolerant? If scoring a 9 is the respondent 50% intolerant? Or more correctly, are they intolerant of 50% of the groups discussed? This measure seems especially vulnerable to the group selection problem inherent to the pre-selected group method. Furthermore, there is the difficulty of defining tolerance. If an intolerant person is willing to deny the rights of others to any group, then what is the definition of someone willing to deny rights to three of six groups discussed? This person can hardly be called 50% tolerant. Though this method is severely conceptually flawed, it is used among some political tolerance researchers (Ellison and Musick 1993; Gay and Ellison 1993; Cigler, 2002). As such, I would be interested to compare this method to the AGI method. All of these analyses would allow me to go into greater detail in demonstrating the effectiveness of the AGI measure in identifying truly

tolerant respondents. In showing the effectiveness of the AGI measure, political tolerance data can be more effectively used.

In conclusion, though some of the SASG variables in the GSS would provide an optimistic picture of tolerance, finding 85% of respondents tolerant on a certain variable, the AGI measure shows a more bleak picture of tolerance, with only an average of 20% of respondents being tolerant of all 18 groups. Furthermore, this figure is a minimal estimate. If questions on additional groups were added, the number of respondents who were known to have a principled commitment to allowing the rights of all groups, regardless of belief, would decrease further. These findings are quite revealing. While some may suggest that concern over political tolerance is unwarranted in this modern age, these findings suggest it is not. If 80% or more Americans will admit that they would deny the constitutionally protected rights of others, then there is a major failure to connect the principles on which our country was based to real-life situations. These findings demonstrate that there is still much work to be done in living up to the principles of the founders of our country. It is only through the effective measurement of political tolerance that progress can be assessed on the vital goal of the understanding and acceptance of the extension of freedoms and liberties for all people, regardless of race, gender, and belief.

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Chart 1. Tolerance of Ideological Groups by Act

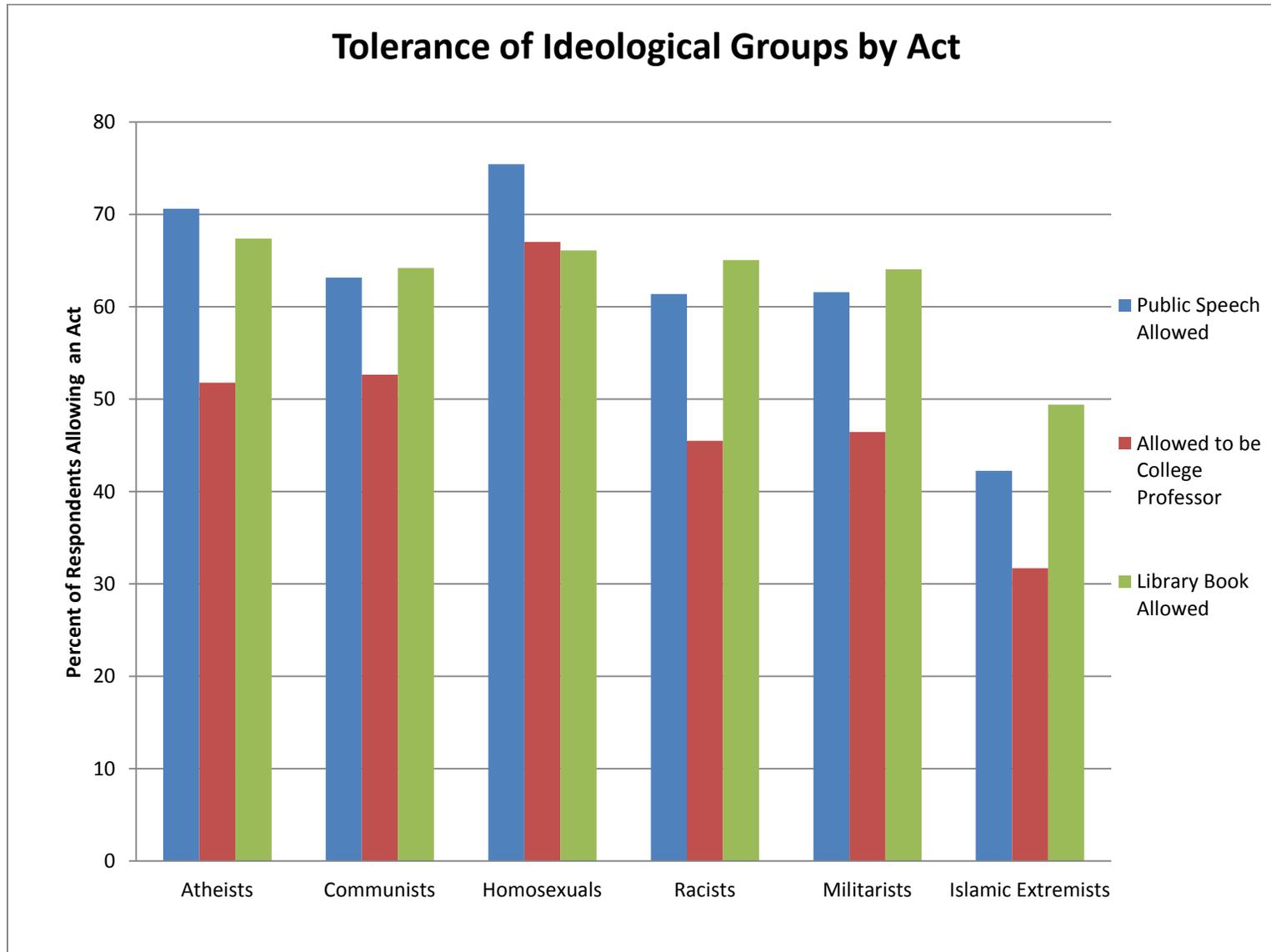


Chart 2. Tolerance of Public Speeches by Ideological Groups over Time

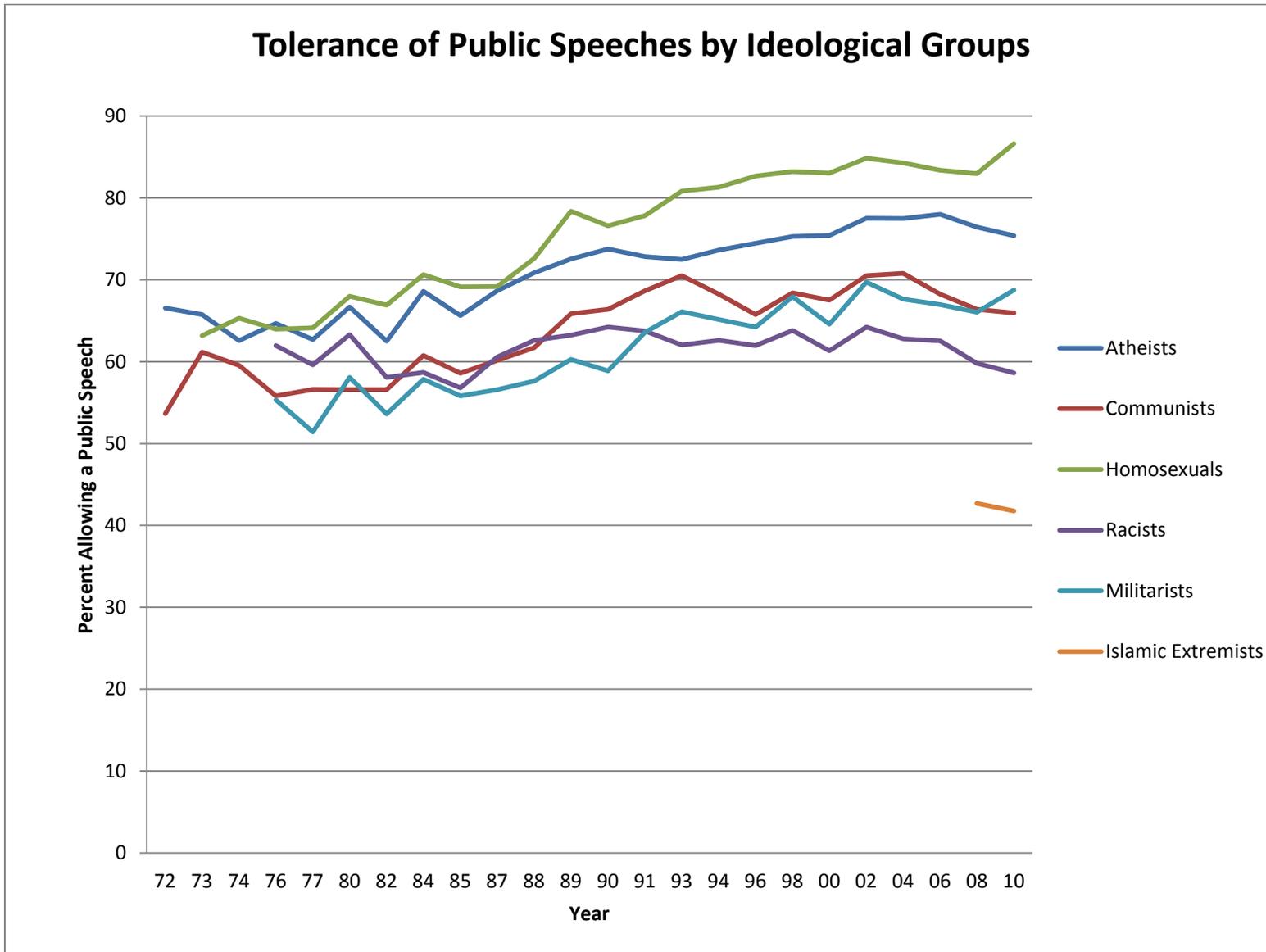


Chart 3. Tolerance of Ideological Group Members as College Professors over Time

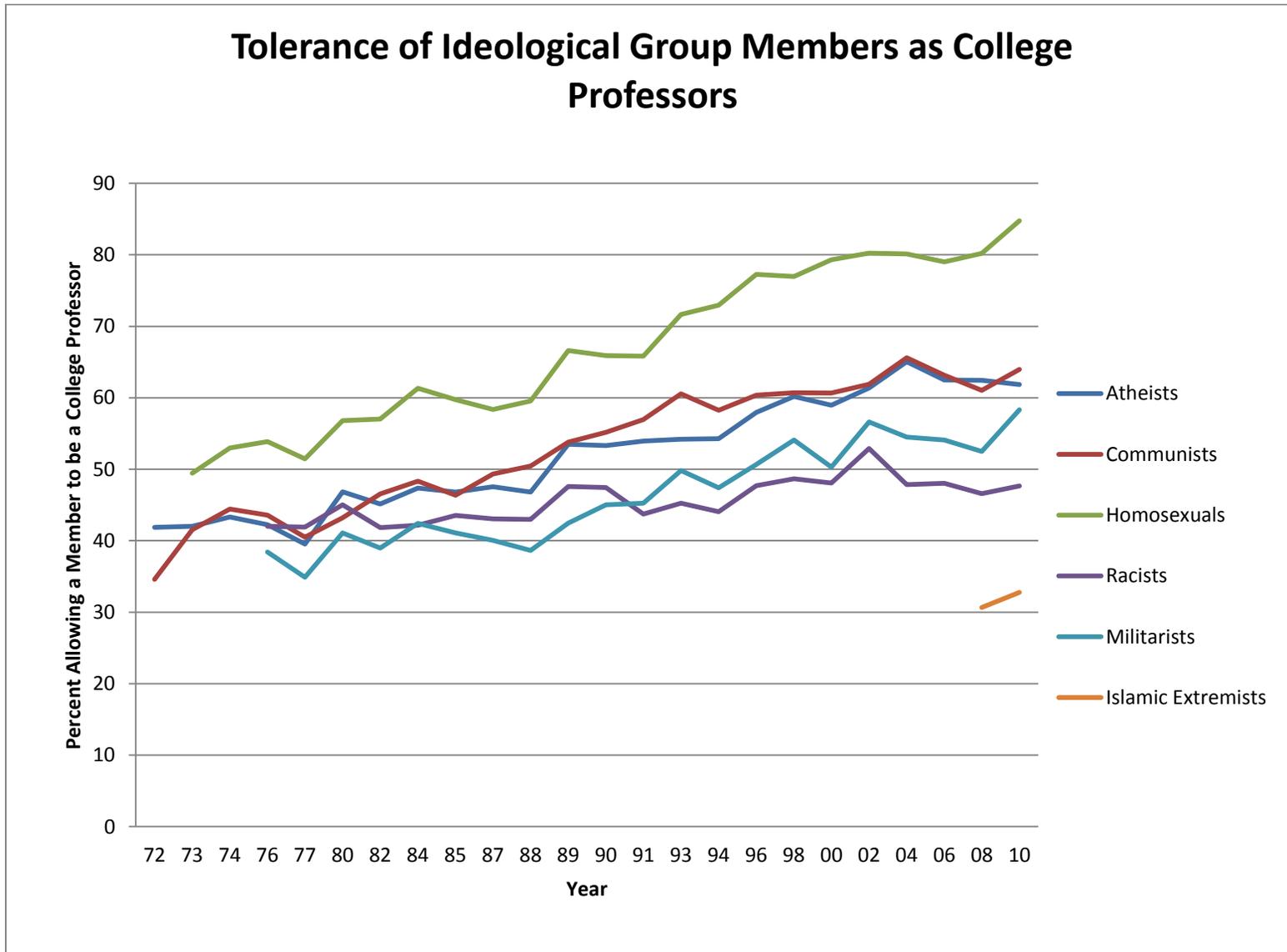


Chart 4. Allowance of Books Written by Ideological Group Members in a Public Library over Time

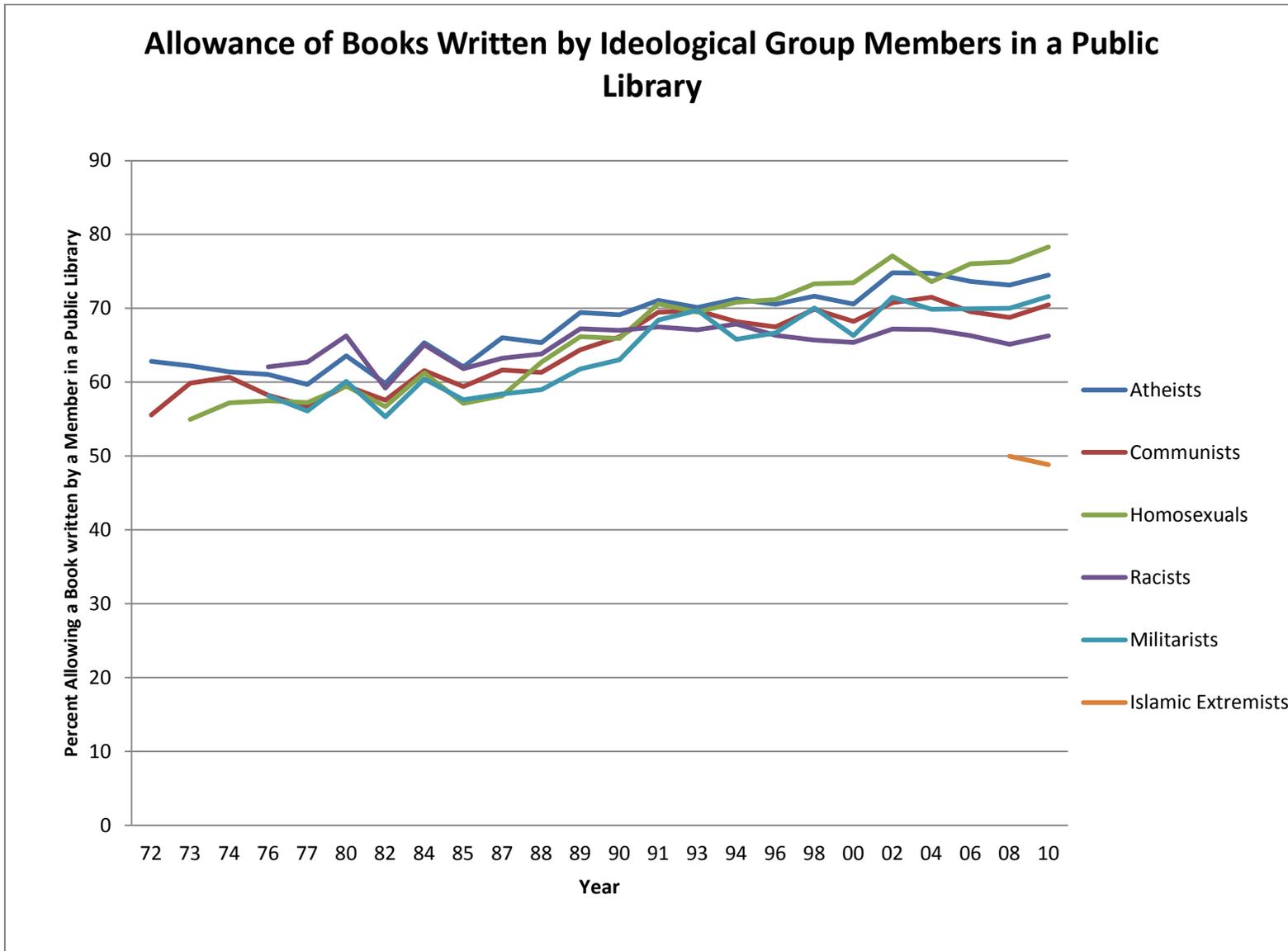


Chart 5. Respondents' Political Views

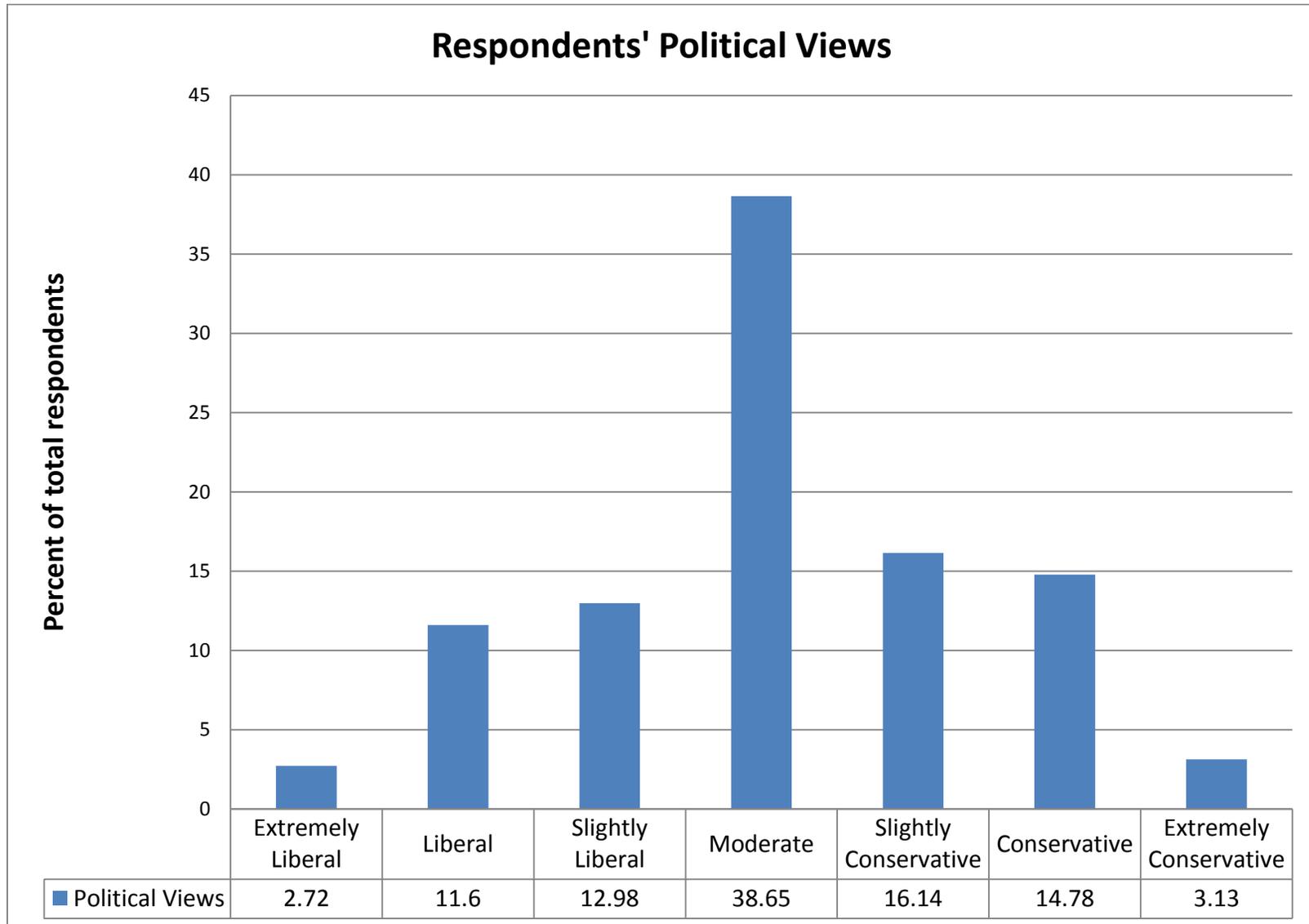


Table 6. Tolerance of Ideological Groups by Act with AGI Measure Included

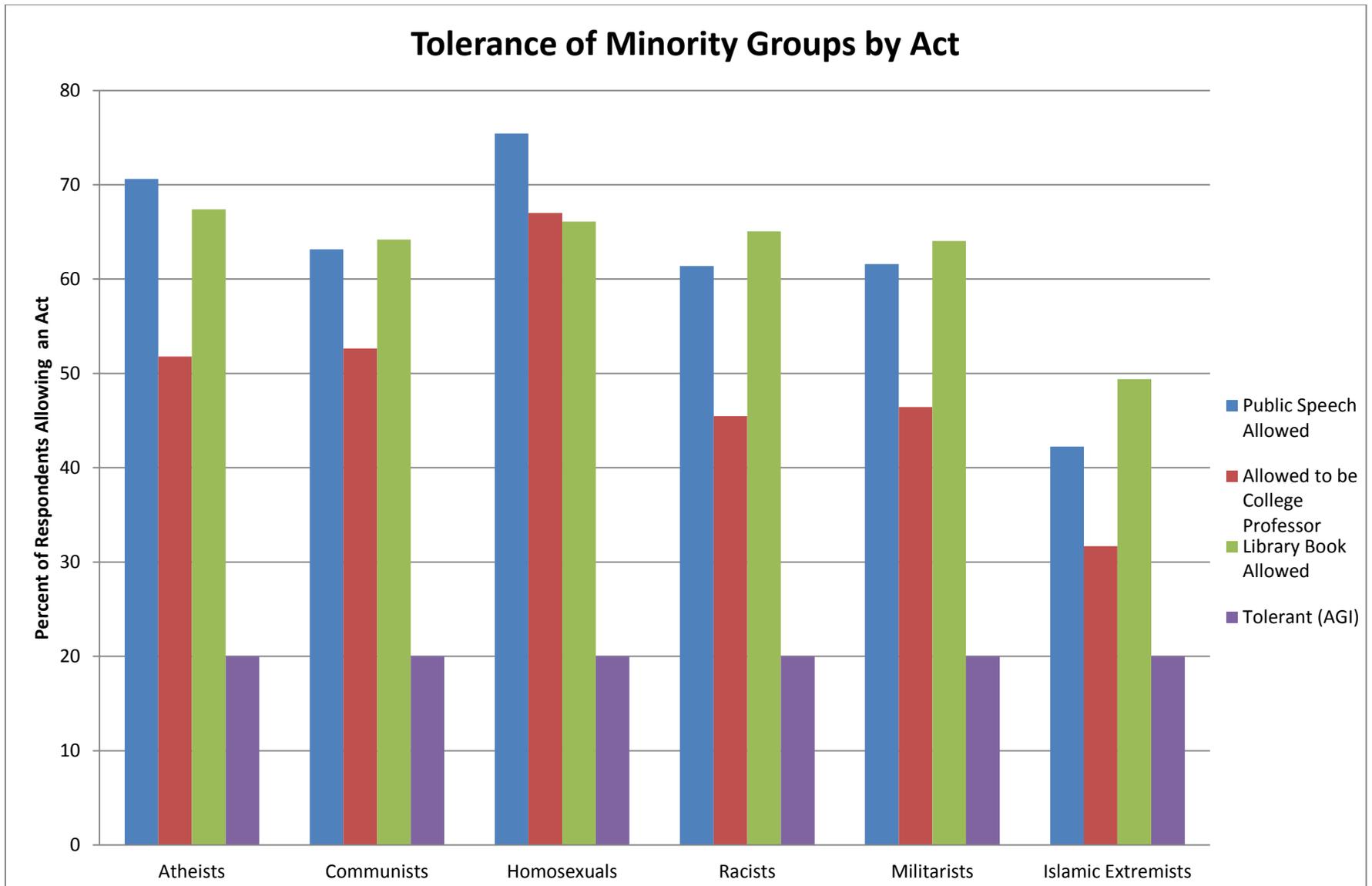


Chart 7. Tolerance of Public Speeches by Ideological Groups over Time with AGI Measure Included

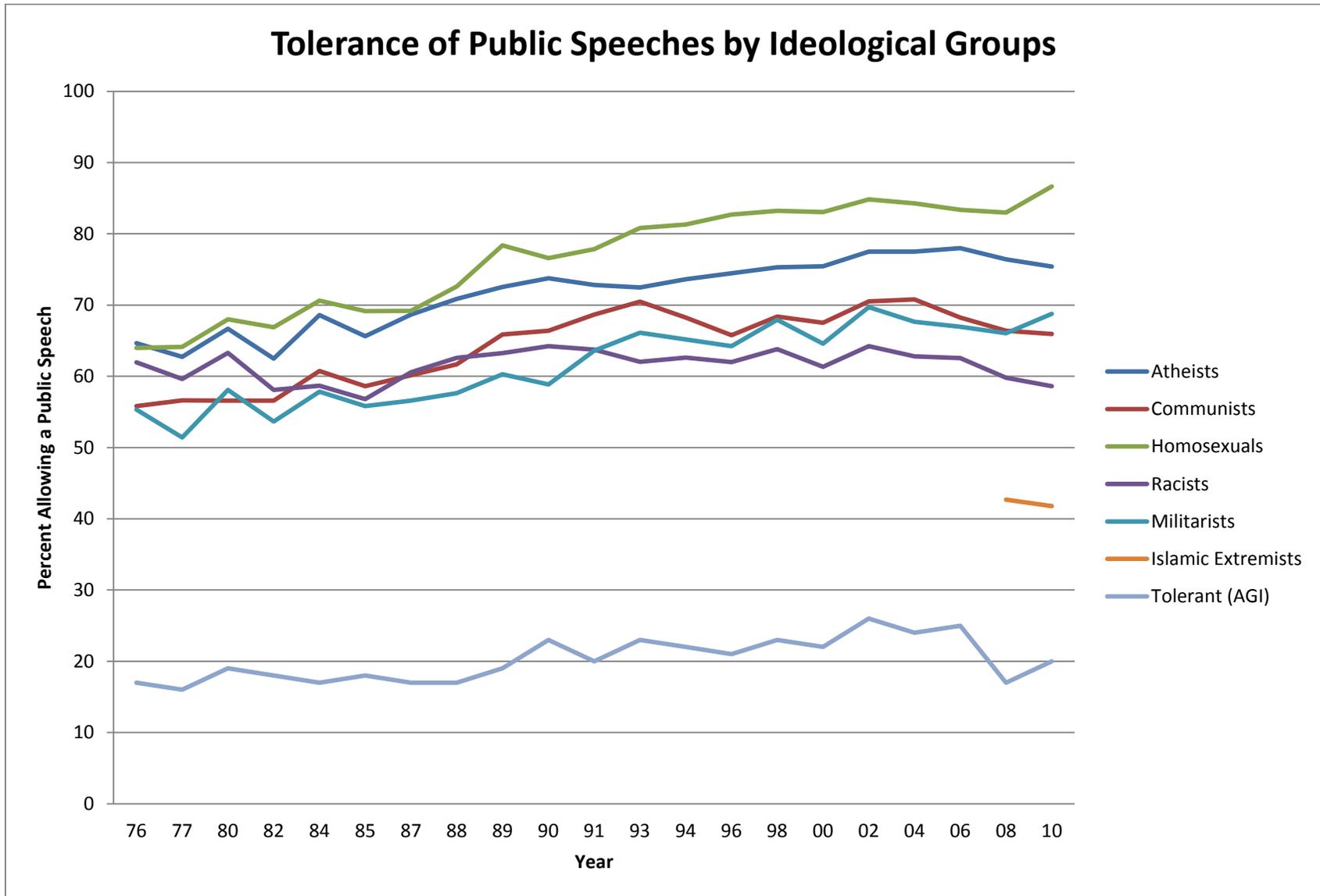


Chart 8. Tolerance of Ideological Group Members as College Professors over Time with AGI Measure Included

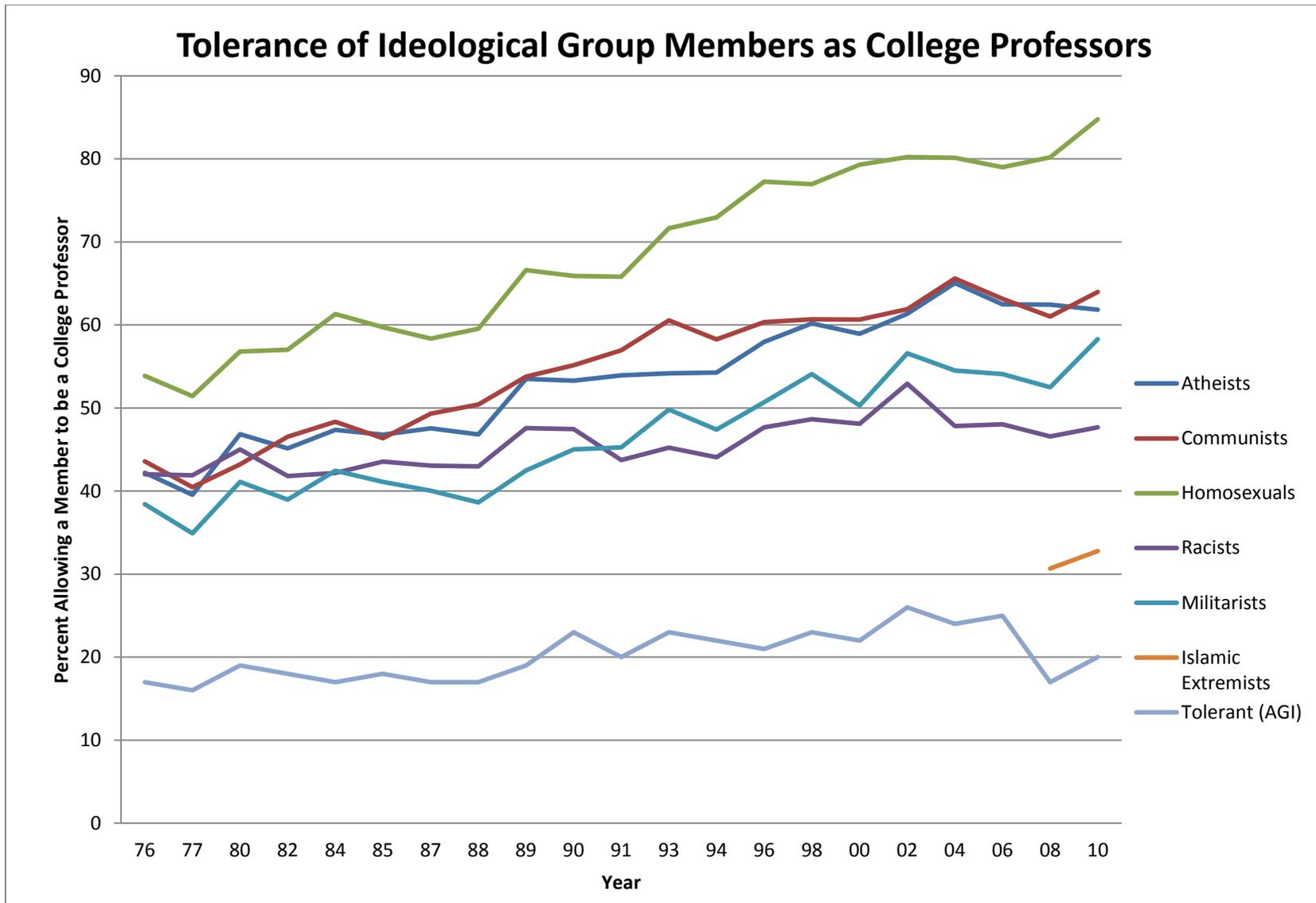


Chart 9. Allowance of Books Written by Ideological Group Members in a Public Library over Time with AGI Measure Included

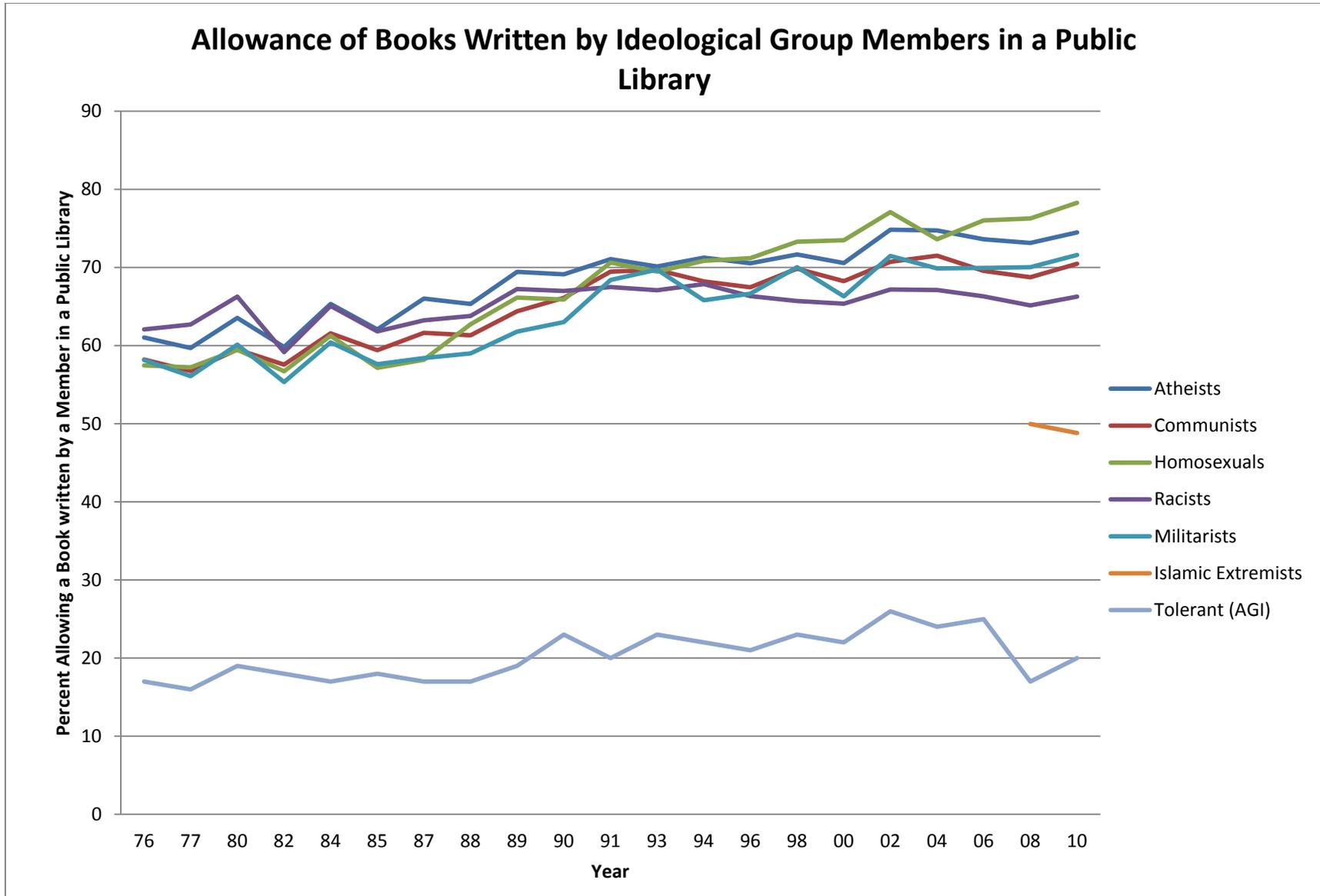


Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max
Education	54,925	12.73	3.18	0	20
Wordsum Vocabulary Test	25,638	6.01	2.15	0	10
Prestige (1972-1990)	24,267	39.36	14.04	12	82
Prestige80 (1991-2010)	27,299	43.82	13.81	17	86
Age	54,890	45.61	17.46	18	89
Important qualities in children: Good Manners	8,057	2.99	0.83	1	5
Important qualities in children: Obeys Parents	8,059	2.62	0.83	1	5
Fear	32,995	1.59	0.49	1	2
Most people can be trusted	36,162	1.66	0.56	1	3
A person doesn't know whom he can count on	4,438	1.28	0.45	1	2
Most people are fair	34,387	1.70	0.59	1	3
Most people are helpful	34,500	1.58	0.61	1	3
Most people don't care what happens to others	4,425	1.44	0.50	1	2

Table 2a. Responses on Tolerance of Public Speech in Relation to Other Political Tolerance Variables

	Public Speech				Total
	Response on this variable	Tolerant		Intolerant	
	Response to other variables	Tolerant on all variables	Intolerant on one or more variables		
Atheists	N	6,058	15,317	8,534	29,909
	Percent of total	20.3%	51.2%	28.5%	
Communists	N	6,031	12,809	10,619	29,459
	Percent of total	20.5%	43.5%	36.0%	
Homosexuals	N	6,046	16,437	6,895	29,378
	Percent of total	20.6%	56.0%	23.5%	
Racists	N	6,036	12,134	11,433	29,603
	Percent of total	20.4%	41.0%	38.6%	
Militarists	N	6,031	12,180	11,358	29,569
	Percent of total	20.4%	41.2%	38.4%	
Islamic Extremists	N	481	614	1,497	2,592
	Percent of total	18.6%	23.7%	57.8%	

Table 2b. Responses on Tolerance of Members of Ideological Groups being College Professors in Relation to Other Political Tolerance Variables

College Professor					
	Response on this variable	Tolerant		Intolerant	Total
	Response to other variables	Tolerant on all variables	Intolerant on one or more variables		
Atheists	N	5,899	9,607	13,631	29,137
	Percent of total	20.2%	33.0%	46.8%	
Communists	N	5,856	9,679	12,939	28,474
	Percent of total	20.6%	34.0%	45.4%	
Homosexuals	N	5,959	14,035	9,174	29,168
	Percent of total	20.4%	48.1%	31.5%	
Racists	N	5,839	7,412	15,884	29,135
	Percent of total	20.0%	25.4%	54.5%	
Militarists	N	5,873	7,602	15,543	29,018
	Percent of total	20.2%	26.2%	53.6%	
Islamic Extremists	N	470	346	1,759	2,575
	Percent of total	18.3%	13.4%	68.3%	

Table 2c. Responses on Tolerance of Allowing a Book Written by a Member of an Ideological Group in a Public Library in Relation to Other Political Tolerance Variables

Library Book Removal					
	Response on this variable	Tolerant		Intolerant	Total
	Response to other variables	Tolerant on all variables	Intolerant on one or more variables		
Atheists	N	5,994	14,065	9,354	29,413
	Percent of total	20.4%	47.8%	31.8%	
Communists	N	5,987	12,973	10,190	29,150
	Percent of total	20.5%	44.5%	35.0%	
Homosexuals	N	5,986	13,683	9,656	29,325
	Percent of total	20.4%	46.7%	32.9%	
Racists	N	5,997	13,053	10,230	29,280
	Percent of total	20.5%	44.6%	34.9%	
Militarists	N	5,996	12,749	10,520	29,265
	Percent of total	20.5%	43.6%	35.9%	
Islamic Extremists	N	480	801	1,312	2,593
	Percent of total	18.5%	30.9%	50.6%	

Table 3. Differences in Intolerance between Conservative and Liberals

Percent Intolerant by Political View			
	Conservatives	Liberals	Difference
Atheists			
Speech	36.8%	21.3%	15.5%
Professor	37.6%	20.8%	16.9%
Book	38.4%	20.5%	17.9%
Communists			
Speech	36.5%	20.6%	16.0%
Professor	37.6%	21.3%	16.4%
Book	37.1%	20.9%	16.2%
Homosexuals			
Speech	40.2%	19.9%	20.4%
Professor	41.1%	19.4%	21.7%
Book	38.9%	20.5%	18.5%
Racists			
Speech	34.5%	23.0%	11.5%
Professor	35.0%	24.2%	10.8%
Book	36.1%	22.7%	13.3%
Militarists			
Speech	36.1%	22.1%	14.0%
Professor	36.5%	22.5%	14.0%
Book	37.0%	22.1%	14.9%

Table 4. Variable Average Value Comparison

Average Value of Each Variable for Respondents Marked as Tolerant												
	Association with Tolerance	Values Associated with Tolerance	Tolerant (AGI)	Homosexuals			Racists			Militaryists		
				Speech	Prof.	Book	Speech	Prof.	Book	Speech	Prof.	Book
Education	Positive	Higher	14.54	13.39	13.54	13.54	13.34	13.39	13.36	13.57	13.73	13.56
Wordsum Vocabulary Test	Positive	Higher	7.13	6.32	6.37	6.41	6.34	6.36	6.38	6.43	6.46	6.45
Prestige (1972-1990)	Positive	Higher	45.48	41.32	41.65	41.88	40.86	41.15	41.34	41.73	42.02	41.83
Prestige80 (1991-2010)	Positive	Higher	48.12	44.74	45.04	45.12	45.25	45.27	45.24	45.59	45.93	45.50
Age	Negative	Lower	41.15	43.68	42.82	43.08	44.24	43.92	44.42	42.68	41.38	43.01
Important qualities in children: Good Manners	Negative	Lower	2.78	2.92	2.92	2.91	2.92	2.91	2.92	2.91	2.90	2.91
Important qualities in children: Obeys Parents	Negative	Lower	3.10	3.27	3.25	3.24	3.29	3.26	3.28	3.27	3.23	3.25
Fear	Negative	Lower	1.34	1.40	1.40	1.39	1.38	1.37	1.39	1.38	1.37	1.38
Most people can be trusted	Positive	Higher	1.56	1.46	1.46	1.47	1.47	1.47	1.47	1.48	1.48	1.48
A person doesn't know whom he can count on	Negative	Lower	1.62	1.73	1.73	1.71	1.72	1.71	1.71	1.71	1.70	1.70
Most people are fair	Positive	Higher	1.65	1.59	1.59	1.60	1.60	1.61	1.60	1.61	1.61	1.61
Most people are helpful	Positive	Higher	1.56	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.51	1.50	1.51
Most people don't care what happens to others	Negative	Lower	1.45	1.55	1.54	1.53	1.54	1.55	1.54	1.53	1.53	1.53

Table 5. Logit Analysis

	Logit Results									
	Tolerant (AGI)	Homosexuals			Racists			Militarists		
		Speech	Professor	Book	Speech	Professor	Book	Speech	Professor	Book
Education	0.25**	0.26**	0.26**	0.25**	0.14**	0.11**	0.16**	0.22**	0.19**	0.23**
Wordsum Vocabulary Test	0.36**	0.32**	0.28**	0.29**	0.21**	0.16**	0.24**	0.26**	0.20**	0.29**
Prestige (1972-1990)	0.04**	0.03**	0.03**	0.03**	0.02**	0.02**	0.03**	0.03**	0.02**	0.03**
Prestige80 (1991-2010)	0.03**	0.03**	0.03**	0.03**	0.02**	0.01**	0.02**	0.03**	0.02**	0.03**
Age	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.03**	-0.02**	-0.01**	-0.01**	-0.01**	-0.02**	-0.03**	-0.02**
Important qualities in children: Good Manners	-0.39**	-0.32**	-0.23**	-0.27**	-0.27**	-0.20**	-0.28**	-0.28**	-0.21**	-0.30**
Important qualities in children: Obeys Parents	-0.60**	-0.52**	-0.49**	-0.53**	-0.38**	-0.34**	-0.42**	-0.40**	-0.41**	-0.48**
Fear	-0.38**	-0.17**	-0.14**	-0.23**	-0.28**	-0.26**	-0.26**	-0.24**	-0.25**	-0.26**
Most people can be trusted	0.67**	0.56**	0.42**	0.52**	0.42**	0.32**	0.54**	0.52**	0.39**	0.56**
A person doesn't know whom he can count on	-0.82**	-0.46**	-0.38**	-0.63**	-0.54**	-0.40**	-0.71**	-0.58**	-0.52**	-0.74**
Most people are fair	0.38**	0.20**	0.14**	0.20**	0.19**	0.18**	0.22**	0.30**	0.17**	0.25**
Most people are helpful	0.42**	0.34**	0.25**	0.30**	0.25**	0.20**	0.30**	0.30**	0.16**	0.31**
Most people don't care what happens to others	-0.71**	-0.50**	-0.42**	-0.56**	-0.53**	-0.30**	-0.59**	-0.64**	-0.42**	-0.64**

Note: * Significant at 5 percent, ** significant at 1percent.

Table 6. Variables Used in Each Model

Variables Used in Each Model						
Model	12	10	8	5	4	3
	Education	Education	Education	Education	Education	Education
	Wordsum	Wordsum	Wordsum	Wordsum		
	Prestige (1976-1990)	Prestige (1976-1990)	Prestige (1976-1990)	Prestige (1976-1990)	Prestige (1976-1990)	Prestige (1976-1990)
	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age
	Good Manners	Good Manners				
	Obeys	Obeys				
	Fear	Fear	Fear	Fear	Fear	
	Trust	Trust	Trust			
	Anomia8					
	Fair	Fair	Fair			
	Helpful	Helpful	Helpful			
	Anomia9					

Table 7- Pseudo R-Squared Analysis

Pseudo R-Squared (PRS) Results Using Different Models												
# of Variables Used in Model	12		10		8		5		4		3	
	PRS	N	PRS	N								
Tolerant	0.23	1,141	0.20	2,350	0.18	3,779	0.17	7,049	0.13	12,929	0.13	13,027
Homosexuals												
Speech	0.17	1,115	0.16	2,288	0.13	3,694	0.13	6,855	0.11	12,528	0.11	12,616
Professor	0.14	1,111	0.14	2,287	0.13	3,675	0.13	6,818	0.11	12,446	0.11	12,529
Book	0.15	1,113	0.15	2,302	0.13	3,708	0.13	6,879	0.11	12,569	0.11	12,654
Racists												
Speech	0.13	1,124	0.08	2,314	0.06	3,717	0.06	6,925	0.04	12,658	0.04	12,751
Professor	0.08	1,109	0.06	2,290	0.04	3,679	0.04	6,830	0.03	12,465	0.03	12,549
Book	0.12	1,111	0.09	2,297	0.08	3,697	0.07	6,866	0.06	12,542	0.06	12,624
Militarists												
Speech	0.12	1,132	0.12	2,331	0.11	3,731	0.11	6,924	0.10	12,665	0.10	12,750
Professor	0.11	1,108	0.11	2,292	0.10	3,673	0.11	6,801	0.10	12,450	0.10	12,528
Book	0.14	1,112	0.13	2,302	0.12	3,695	0.12	6,869	0.10	12,546	0.10	12,628