Stephanie Ternullo
Interview Guides for “I’m Not Sure What to Believe”

As described in the manuscript, I collected four rounds of interviews with participants from June 2019-November 2020. The questions that were most relevant to the analyses presented in this article were the following (also listed in Appendix Table A2):

Have you found any source particularly trustworthy about the pandemic?
How trustworthy do you find the media in reporting about the pandemic?
(If low trust) Do you worry the media is inaccurately reporting the data, or are you worried about “spin”?
How trustworthy do you find the federal government in reporting data about the pandemic?
(If low trust) Are you worried the government is deliberately misreporting something, or do you think it’s inaccurate because of human error?
How might you go about figuring out if the vaccine is safe to take?
Will you trust Dr. Fauci, the FDA, or President Trump?

I also asked interviewees dozens of other questions over the course of data collection for a larger project. Below I include all questions that were relevant to this article.

Interview Guide I (June-October 2019)

1. Do you participate in any community organizations?
2. Outside of your immediate family and work, who do you spend the most time with these days?
3. In general, how do you think things are going in the country?
4. If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about the country, what would it be?
5. What do you think are the most divisive issues in politics today?
6. What do you think the national democratic party stands for? The republican party?
7. How well do you think the national political conversation reflects the kinds of things that your community or you need?
8. When you think of a republican voter, what do you think of?
9. When you think of a democratic voter, what do you think of?
10. Are you a registered voter?
11. Do you vote regularly?
12. Can you tell me about the first time you voted?
13. In general, do you think of yourself as someone who is closer politically to the Democratic or Republican Party?
    a. [If they have a party affiliation] What appeals to you about that party?
    b. [If they have a party affiliation] Are there any areas where you disagree with your party?
14. What changes have you seen in the two parties in your lifetime?
15. As best you can recall, do you remember the party your parents liked best?
    a. Did you talk about politics much growing up? [If so] What did you talk about?
16. Do you consider yourself a liberal or a conservative, or do you feel that those labels don't apply? Why is that?
17. How do you get your news nowadays?
    a. Do you watch the local news?
        i. If so, what channel?
        ii. How often do you watch?
    b. Do you watch the national news?
        i. If so, what channel?
        ii. How often do you watch?
        iii. Why that channel?
    c. [If both] Do you prefer local news or national news? Why?
    d. Do you read any newspapers?
        i. Which ones?
        ii. How often?
    e. Do you read news from Facebook or other social media sites?
        i. Which ones?
        ii. How often?
18. Have you thought much about the upcoming presidential election?

    a. Have you been speaking to any friends, family, or coworkers about the presidential elections? [If yes] Who are you talking to? What are you talking about?
    b. Have you tried to seek out information about any of the candidates?
19. Is there anyone whose opinion you particularly trust when it comes to politics?
20. If you had to choose who to vote for today, what would you choose?
    a. Tell me more about that. Why would you vote for him/her?
21. Can you think of the top 2-3 issues you'd really like the candidates to discuss during the campaign this year?

<u>Interview Guide II</u> (February-April 2020)

1. Since we last met, is there anything that's changed locally that you're concerned about?
2. Since we last met, is there anything that's changed nationally that you're concerned about?
3. How concerned are you about the coronavirus outbreak?
4. How has the coronavirus outbreak affected you and your family?
5. What measures are you taking personally?
6. What measures are being taken in the community?
7. Have any local leaders spoken up to address the outbreak?
8. How do you feel about how the federal government is handling the virus?
9. What else do you think we could be doing as a country?
    a. [Based on their answer] Who do you think should be doing this? [The government companies/states/everyday people?]
10. Are you aware of the impeachment process that just took place in Congress? [If yes] How do you feel about it?
11. Have you been paying attention at all to the Democratic primary since we last spoke?
    a. *For Dems:* Now that the field has narrowed and you will vote soon, who are you thinking of voting for?
    b. *For Reps:* Now that the field has narrowed, is there anyone you like more among the group of Democratic candidates? (Is there anyone you like less?)
12. If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about the country, what would it be?
13. What do you think is the biggest difference between the two political parties?
14. Do you think things are getting easier, more difficult, or staying the same for the younger generations relative to older generations?
    a. What do you think has changed?
15. What do you think it means to be a good citizen?
16. What does the label conservative mean to you?
17. What does the label liberal mean to you?
18. Can you think of 2-3 issues you'd really like the candidates to discuss during the campaign this year?
    a. Have you heard any of the candidates or parties talking about that?
    b. What would you like to see being done to address that?
19. What kinds of policies or stances do you associate with the "left"?

20. What kinds of policies or stances do you associate with the "right"?
21. What do you think is the best way that, as a society, we can make sure everyone has their basic needs met?

Interview Guide III (April-May 2021)

1. How concerned are you at this stage about the virus?
2. How has [Iverson/Meriville/Williston] been doing in recent days?
    a. Have any people or organizations stepped up as leaders during the crisis?
    b. Is there anything else you would like to see the community doing locally?
3. Have you been watching much of the news coverage about the pandemic?
    a. What news have you been watching? [Probe if needed: gubernatorial/presidential press conferences]
4. How do you feel about the current timeline for reopening businesses and other activities?
    a. What are your concerns? [Probe if needed: Why don't you want to reopen? Why do you want to reopen now?]
5. How do you feel now about how the federal government is handling the crisis?
6. Is there anything else you want to see them doing?
7. Have you thought about how the response would've been different if it came more from the central government vs. the states?
8. Have you thought about how the response would've been different if we had a different kind of healthcare system?
9. How do you feel about the stimulus package that Congress passed a few weeks ago?
10. Have you found any source particularly trustworthy about the pandemic?
11. Has this made you think of any changes you would like to see in the country as a result of living through this experience?
    a. Does this raise any concerns for you about how connected we are to the rest of the world through trade and immigration?
    b. Does this make you think about making any changes to our social programs?
12. What do you think might be the long-term consequences of the pandemic?
13. What else would you like to see being done to support the country right now? [Either by regular people, the government, or the private sector?]
14. Is there anything else you're concerned about right now?

Interview Guide IV (September-November 2020)

1. First, have you been contacted by any political campaigns yet this year? [Local? State? National?]
2. Have you seen many political ads yet this year?
    a. Have they been mainly Democratic, mainly Republican, or a mix of both?
    b. Are you seeing them from the presidential candidates? Any other candidates? [Probe all levels]
    c. Where are you seeing them? [Mailers? On TV? In newspapers? On the radio? On social media?]

3. Sticking with social media for a minute…Are you on Facebook? Twitter? Instagram? Do you use any other social media?
4. [By platform] How many of your friends on [Facebook/Twitter/Instagram] would you estimate are from [Iverson/Meriville/Williston]? From the state?
5. Do you follow anyone on social media who is particularly vocal about politics? [If so] How do you know them?
6. Do you ever post any political content on social media?
7. Do you ever respond to other people's political posts on social media?
8. Do you follow any politicians? [If so] Which ones?
9. Thinking over the past few months, do you feel like the virus has been worse than you first expected it would be, not as bad, or about what you expected?
10. How do you feel about how the governor has handled the crisis?
11. Now that we've been living with this for a few months, how do you feel about the timing of the state's reopening process?
12. Thinking not just about the timing, but how the state decided what kinds of activities could reopen – did that process make sense to you?
    a. In particular, how do you feel about schools reopening for in-person classes this fall?
        i. Would you have been comfortable with revoking federal dollars from schools that didn't open?
    b. How much of a priority do you think it should be to keep hospitals and medical facilities open for elective procedures?
    c. How much of a priority do you think it should be to keep churches open?
    d. Did it make sense to you that we were able to go to big box stores but not independent shops during the spring?
13. In general, how well do you feel like the governor understands the needs of rural communities and smaller towns outside of the bigger cities?
14. Moving forward, would you trust people to just make the best decisions for themselves and without any mandates about things like masks and restaurant capacity? [If needed: How do you feel about a mandatory mask order?]
15. Is there anything else you would like to see the governor doing?
16. How has the community been doing since we last spoke?
17. And since then, have you seen any people or organizations step up to help out during the crisis? [Probe: city/county government? Churches? Local nonprofits? Regular people?]
18. Is there anything else you would like to see the community doing locally?
19. And how do you feel now about how the federal government has handled the crisis?
20. What role do you think the federal government should have played in directing the strategy to fight COVID?
21. How trustworthy do you find the government to be when it comes to reporting data about the outbreak?
    a. [If low trust] Are you worried the government is deliberately misreporting something, or do you think it's inaccurate because of human error?
22. How trustworthy do you find the media in reporting about the pandemic?
    a. [If low trust] Do you worry the media is inaccurately reporting the data, or are you worried about "spin"?
23. Have you found any source particularly trustworthy about the pandemic?

24. How do you feel now about the covid relief bill?
    a. Would you like to see additional relief passed?
    b. [only for people who didn't mention this] How do you feel like you or your family have benefited from it?
25. What else would you like to see Congress doing?
26. How do you think the response would've been different if it came more from the central government vs. the states?
27. Would you like to see the federal government providing more aid to states and cities or do you feel like they should figure out their budgets on their own?
28. Does the pandemic raise any new concerns for you about healthcare affordability or access?
29. How would you feel if the government were to impose a vaccine mandate?
30. Assuming there is no mandate, how might you go about figuring out if the vaccine is safe to take?
    a. What information will you seek out?
    b. Will you trust Dr. Fauci, the FDA, or President Trump?
31. Is there anything else you would like to see the Trump administration or the federal government doing right now?
32. What do you think the Democratic Party stands for?
33. What about the Republican Party?
34. Can you think of the top 2-3 issues you'd really like the candidates to discuss during the campaign this year?
    a. Have you heard any of the candidates or parties talking about that?
    b. What would you like to see being done to address that?
    c. How concerned are you about worker safety? Do you have any specific concerns about the pandemic?
    d. How concerned are you about healthcare affordability/access?
    e. How concerned are you about agricultural policy
    f. [Iverson] How concerned are you about the status of indigenous people in Wisconsin?
35. Have you decided who you're going to vote for in the election? [Walk through their choices at all levels of office.]
36. Is there anything else you're concerned about right now as we head into election season?