8-8-2023

# The Automaticity of Partisanship: Archetypal Expression and Expressiveness in an Age of Polarization

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# The Automaticity of Partisanship: Archetypal Expression and Expressiveness in an Age of Polarization

by

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Under the Direction of Judd Thornton, PhD

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2023

ABSTRACT

An excess of partisan enthusiasm is putting American democracy under strain. At least that has been the prevailing narratives around the rise of affective polarization in the last two decades. Behaviors that boil politics down to a game of winning and losing and downplay problem-solving are on the verge of capsizing democratic ships around the world. In the following work, I empirically test that narrative using a manual content analysis of partisan free expression and experimental designs operationalizing mindless partisan expressiveness. I find that automatic partisanship is not the clear flagship behavior adopted by the public both in terms of free expression and as a reaction to expressive partisans. Still, I unearth a few troubling tendencies throughout these studies. First, the general public is increasingly diametrical in its perceptions of what presidential candidates have to offer. More respondents behave like tried-and-true partisans by not finding any redeeming qualities in the other side's representatives even if they may not identify as strong partisans. Second, Democratic respondents in one experiment identify uncivil or confrontational behavior as representative of Republican behavior and report lower willingness to interact. Finally, an experimental study of threat perceptions resulting from partisan extremism shows that partisan threats are divorced from threats to democracy and Americans. These findings are all indicative of how polarization and its consequences can spill over seamlessly into the rest of the American public who automatically adopts the framework of partisanship to make sense of its political reality.

INDEX WORDS: Affective polarization, Mass behavior, Expressive partisanship, Political Merchandising

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August 2023

## DEDICATION

I could not have finished this Ph. D program without the great friendships I made along the way. Many thanks to my graduate school friends including Monique, Efe, Mark, Lexie, Busra, Kristian, Hamza, and mi hermano del doctorado Juan. I am also immensely grateful for the support of the Staelens and Roseros, my Atlanta families.

Despite an ocean of distance, my best friends Johan and Matthieu have provided six years of unceasing friendship, lame jokes, and support. I am also grateful for all those who pushed me to do more with my life and enroll in this program including Alexandra, Liz, Elena, Nacho, Ricardo, Narimene, Bastien, Alexis, as well as my former language students and so many of my horrible insurance customers that convinced me to change paths.

Finally, I dedicate this to my family. My mother and grandparents taught me the value of education, curiosity, and reading. I would not have done any of this without their help. The last words go to my two brothers. Nicolas, I am infinitely proud of you. Maxime, you are a source of inspiration, and I will always miss you.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I am very grateful for the quality teaching I received throughout my years at Georgia State University – particularly from Dr. Judd Thornton, Dr. Sarah Gershon, Dr. Toby Bolsen, Dr. Andrew Wedeman, Dr. Ryan Carlin, Dr. Amy Steigerwalt, Dr. Susanne Schorpp, and Dr. Mario Feit who gave me the confidence necessary to avoid falling under the bouts of impostor syndrome.

Special thanks go out to professors who piqued my interest before this program: Professors Steven Sarson at the University of Lyon 3, Catherine Maignant, Philippe Vervaecke, and Yves Macchi at the University of Lille 3, and Déborah Vandewoude in high school.

I want to thank Dr. Toby Bolsen, and Dr. Judd Thornton, for the personal and professional advice they gave me throughout the years.

Finally, I am thankful for the great opportunities I got throughout the years through Dr. Robert Howard, Pat Brown, and Dr. Rich Engstrom at SPSA as well as the Politics Department at Wake Forest University. Believing in me, you provided the boost I needed to put the finishing touches on this work.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

*"Politics, as a practice, whatever its professions, had always been the systematic organization of hatreds."* (Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*, 1907)

The transformation of political conflict as a set of ironbound hatreds is crippling democratic systems. Normatively, moderation, critical thinking and open-mindedness are vital given the inevitable compromise requirement in policymaking. Cycles of ideological and interpersonal distancing at the elite and activist level do not bode well for productivity in government. At the mass level, the manifestations of partisanship entail a decrease in thorough political engagement – taking either the form of retreat or intolerant engagement. Under a partisan system, ideology becomes rote learning and cue following takes over. The degree of affect for or against political actors intensifies. In parallel, views about what politicians can achieve are more cynical than ever (Citrin and Stoker 2018). Engaging with the substantive outcomes of politics becomes less marketable. Down the line, the full realization of partisan animosities negates the fit between democratic politics and policymaking. If we subscribe to a reality starring "political animals" (Shenkman 2016) thoughtlessly caving to the worst psychological instincts of human nature, it becomes critical to reform modes of political involvement to stay within the bounds of democratic acceptability. In the following studies, I empirically question that apocalyptic picture by looking first at what transpires from citizens' open political expressions. Then, I zero in on the reactions to some of the worst that partisanship has to offer - namely uncivil and unruly expressive behavior. The empirical picture of a democracy revolving around archetypal images of the opposition and automatically triggering intergroup friction among the masses faces ominous challenges.

Throughout these studies, I contend that in an era where showing your colors is central to political action, partisanship can no longer be operationalized as a mere self-reported measure. Its pervasive presence warrants greater attention to the three following research questions. Looking

at open-ended evaluations and reactions to caricatural expressive partisanship, I ask the following questions:

- Are partisan rationalizations automatically conjured when evaluating political elites?
- Do displays of partisanship in public contribute to polarization?
- Are such actions seen as run-of-the-mill or unusual partisan behavior by out-partisans?

Pragmatically, these questions should help gauge how reluctant the public has been in embracing the framework of partisan politics. As I develop below, several reasons could indicate under-identified resistance among the masses. If verified, this perspective does not entail that we should pull the brakes on efforts to depolarize the electorate. Elite and activist polarization play a disproportionate and worrying role in our current dynamics. However, the masses may not belong at the forefront of depolarization drives. This alternative polarization perspective can also suggest the urgency of toning down a rhetoric that the public is not embracing and sees as foisted upon itself.

In exploring these issues, I also question the degree to which the measurement of preferences in American politics encourages an interpretation playing up the leverage of mass partisanship. If standard measurement misses out a degree of reluctance to engage in partisan judgment, the concerns at hand may result from a political structure that forces polarized behaviors.

Concretely, if polarization is more affective and group-based than in the past, the way voters freely express preferences and aversion should have evolved. Returning to more complex forms of individual expression of preferences is the object of the first chapter of this dissertation. I reintroduce the ANES open-ended candidate likes/dislikes and tap its wealth to analyze the degree of polarization that has emerged in individual expression between 1984 and 2020. I gauge

the degree of automatic partisan expression based on response patterns and a content analysis looking at the complexity and tenor of evaluations.

Such an approach begs the question of whether partisan identities automatically induce a dualistic and mindless framework when respondents expand on their rationales for support/opposition? If the answer is positive, this study will adduce further evidence to the record suggesting that polarization has not been forced on the public against quixotic demands for a political higher ground.

I find that response patterns are clearly indicative of an acceptance of the polarization framework but that the answers across the sample – regardless of party identification – show a mixed picture when it comes to the degree of automaticity. In relatively unguided behavior, there are signs that the electorate comports with the acute polarization projected by elites even if voters may bemoan the paralysis that it induces in policymaking.

In the second and third chapters, I assess whether expressive partisan behavior triggers threat perceptions and interpersonal distance upon sight. Prime exemplars displaying their political colors like overcommitted sports fans are commonly used to represent our political era. If in turn, they contribute to political and social polarization, it is critical to understand why. Empirically, I present an operationalization of "expressive partisanship" as behaviors that project the primacy of in-group love and/or out-group hatred to a bystander audience – more specifically the partisan out-group. In the first experiment, I use partisan merchandising and protest behavior to probe whether interpersonal distance immediately arises from the most cosmetic displays of partisanship. In the second one, I investigate whether public displays of numerical partisan strength result in more vivid threat perceptions.

I find that for the most part, expressive partisanship from visible exemplars fails to elicit social distancing or major changes in threat perceptions. However, I suggestively find that such behaviors are indirectly relevant to the degree of polarization by providing uncivil exemplars as baselines to picture the typical partisan. This is ominous insofar as it plays into self-sustaining and exaggerated meta-perceptions of inter-partisan tension (see Levendusky and Malhotra 2016). Given that partisan abrasiveness is increasingly prevalent in popular culture, this can be taken as a foreboding sign.

The methodological contribution is two-pronged. First, most conclusions about affective polarization have been drawn from measures that are not tapping into the most fine-grained forms of partisan attitudinal expression. These variables – such as feeling thermometers, trait ratings or voting intentions - narrow the room for complexity. In combining a study of a state-of-the-art observational dataset and custom-made laboratory experiments, I confirm that existing measures capture a real increase in affective distance between partisan groups. Yet, they also gloss over the thought structure of affectively polarized individuals which seems more complex on the surface but also less issue-grounded than in the rest of the electorate.

Moreover, in spite of group-centric redefinitions of partisan identification, the outcomes monopolizing the empirical limelight remain predominantly limited to individual-level private displays. Nonetheless, politics happens in public. Expressive partisan treatments add some weight to this reflexive 'script' of partisanship and confirm that the visibility of partisanship in American society has consequences. Therefore, in chapters 2 and 3, I focus on reactions to two displays of expressive partisanship and political behavior - namely partisan merchandising and protest. The fallout likely includes changes to the definition of conflict, alterations to how political communication is conducted and the perpetuation of a self-sustaining cycle of polarization. To

gain some insight into the veracity of such expectations, I look at displays of partisan identity that earned comparisons to the rowdy world of sport fandom (e.g.: Klein 2020; Mason 2018a). This approach proposes a different approach to the question of whether the partisan American public aligns with an uncivil agreement (Mason 2015; 2018b) or a deep divide perspective (Rogowski and Sutherland 2016; Webster and Abramowitz 2017).

The following work is divided into four sections.

First, I lay out the stakes central to the literature on polarization. I introduce the different perspectives about the depth and the behaviors of partisanship, including a discussion of the expressive perspective. I show how the debate around the strength and manifestations of partisanship has strayed away from a myopic political and instrumental focus and how my research adds depth to the new perspectives adopted.

My first chapter presents the results of an observational study focusing on partisan free expression in ANES open-ended evaluations of presidential candidates. This approach allows to investigate the content of partisan considerations when these are not limited to valence-based measurement that favors intergroup analysis.

Chapters 2 and 3 summarize the preliminary results of the experiments I have designed and conducted. First, I focus on the impact of wearing a Make America Great Again (MAGA) hat on the processing of information and the likelihood of inter-party communication.

Then, I tackle the threat perceptions and emotions that arise following a display of collectively expressive partisan behavior in the form of protests. I look at whether forms of expressive partisan behavior in groups activate group-based reactions and emotions among

respondents from the out-group. I conclude with a few words about the direction of this research agenda about free expression and expressiveness among partisans.

# 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Polarization is the great political question of this era in Western democracies. In the U.S., the degree of political strife has a substantial portion of the public ranging from 40 to 50% convinced that a civil war is afoot (Orth 2022; Wintemute et al. 2022) - even though the pre-Civil War and Progressive eras have arguably seen greater polarization according to various historical anecdotes and metrics (e.g.: Chatfield et al. 2021; Freeman 2018; Jensen et al. 2012). Collectively, behaviorists have projected that politics have become more systematically dualistic, intense, and emotionally charged. Taken as a whole, recent findings about behavioral polarization point to a degree of partisan automaticity in the expression of preferences. In turn, this contributes to foreboding, yet overblown perceptions of how prevalent partisan stereotypes are (Moore-Berg et al. 2020; Rothschild et al. 2019; Shafranek 2021). Headline-grabbing conclusions about the knee-jerk, "sectarian" (Finkel et al. 2020) nature of partisan expression and expressiveness are legitimately at the forefront of public concerns. Recent survey evidence shows that this concern about (meta-)polarization now ranks third as the most important issue facing the country only behind the ever-present economic and fluctuating crime concerns (Skelley and Fuong 2022). The proliferation of academic studies (Baron et al. 2021; Fishkin et al. 2021; Hartman et al. 2022; Kubin et al. 2021; Levendusky 2018b; Levendusky and Stecula 2021; McCoy et al. 2022; Stanley et al. 2020) and broader initiatives (Democracy for President 2023; Stanford PACS 2023; Unify America 2023) seeking ways to depolarize a mindless electorate speaks volumes about the pragmatic relevance of the issue. Yet, there are a few reasons why polarization concerns may have been overstated.

Substantively, mass polarization has its upsides. Elite-level ideological polarization does not mean suboptimal issue representation in Congress (Ahler and Broockman 2018) and allows masses to clearly parse out political choices (Levendusky 2010). Polarization also enables

discussion of acute issues that a less combative polity would not broach (Kreiss and McGregor 2022). Politically unaligned cooperation shows a degree of promise (Bak-Coleman et al. 2022; Shi et al. 2019). In short, a small intake of polarization could have beneficial outcomes (Heltzel and Laurin 2020). The fear is that we are currently far exceeding the standard of manageable partisan polarization in the U.S. However, existing methods may also have contributed to an overblown tendency to cry wolf over the phenomenon.

Methodologically, I contend that the extensive reliance on measures that assume a partisan structure among the masses – such as feeling thermometers or trait ratings - overstate how automatic and thoughtless partisanship has become. Beyond their internal comparability shortcomings (Green 1988; Wilcox, Sigelman, and Cook 1989), their potentially overwhelming granularity (Winter and Berinsky 1999), and the inequities between negative and positive emotionality in influencing reported attitudes (Cacioppo and Berntson 1994; Marcus 1988), such measures do not tender much details about the exact sources of the evolution of the affective differences in the US public. A self-sustaining view of mass polarization as embraced by the public and/or simply unavoidable ensues despite promising empirical alternatives (e.g.: Druckman et al. 2022; Klar et al. 2018; Uscinski et al. 2021). I address these concerns in my first chapter through analyses of partisan free expression. The evolution of choice rationalization in the electorate and its partisan subgroups remains unclear and can teach us a great deal about both the degree of acceptance of partisan duality and the resilient debate over the ideological tenor of the new partisan gap (Abramowitz and Webster 2018; Fowler 2020; Mason 2015; Rogers 2020). To what extent are citizens following an intergroup framework that clearly establishes a Manichean, emotional, and more automatic construal of events? If these patterns are not clearly exhibited, the degree to which automatic partisanship has emerged may be partly artifactual.

Empirically, the abundance of theoretical perspectives on polarization since the turn of the millennium has also featured the public as condoning or even enjoying partisan hostilities. Yet even though there is little debate about the spread of electoral polarization, the nature and causal sequence of mass polarization remain the object of protracted debate. Partisan thinking may be supplied to the electorate against its will. This has been an important beacon of hope for depolarization optimists. Open-ended expression provides a framework that differs a bit from the one built from affective measures. I envision this chapter as testing the automaticity of partisan thinking among the masses. Before doing so, an overview of what we currently know about the reach of polarization is necessary.

Once envied as improving the quality of public policy (APSA 1950), the prospect of cohesive, ideologically constrained national parties that present themselves as clear alternatives has been fully realized (Hetherington 2001; Layman and Carsey 2002). The days when "the consensus of the powerful represented (…) a reasonable process in which everyone gets some small piece of the action" (Sharlet 2008; 288) seem long gone. There is indeed an impressive stockpile of evidence germane to elite polarization and its causes. A non-exhaustive list includes the increasing polarization of roll call voting records in Congress (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Poole 2007), the downfall of ideological moderates (Fleisher and Bond 2004; Kabaservice 2012; Thomsen 2014), the growing authority of party leadership over rank-and-file members especially in the House (Aldrich and Rohde 2000; Jacobson and Carson 2004), declines of nonpartisan unpredictability in electoral outcomes (Abramowitz and Webster 2016; Jacobson 2015a; Pildes 2011; Smidt 2017), the recurrence of governmental shutdowns and structural impasses (Mann and Ornstein 2016), the incentives members of Congress have to grandstand in

public (Stasavage 2007), and the inability of Congress to pass major bills under divided government (Coleman 1999; Howell et al. 2000).

Whether the blame for the extension of polarization lies at the feet of elected officials (Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005; Hetherington 2001; Levendusky 2009), and/or activists (Bawn et al. 2012; Hunter 1992; Layman et al. 2010) or whether the masses demand polarized choices out of genuine coherence (Abramowitz 2010; Ahler and Broockman 2018; Bougher 2017; Federico and Malka 2021; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Weber and Klar 2019) and/or coalitional expediency (Malka and Federico 2023; Pinsof, Sears, and Haselton 2023), the distance between the two sides of the spectrum among US masses has extensive behavioral reverberations. Americans now perceive partisanship as the main source of social conflict in the country far ahead of divisions based on race or socioeconomic status (Schaeffer 2020). Indeed, the visibility of polarization and extreme prototypical partisans in our public and media environment has a self-reinforcing effect (Druckman et al. 2019a; Levendusky and Malhotra 2016) and leads to inflated perceptions of polarization in the US (Ahler and Sood 2018; Enders and Armaly 2019; Westfall et al. 2015). While actual polarization could theoretically lead to beneficial upticks in political engagement, perceived polarization makes partisan behavior too rabid for the sake of democratic well-being (Enders and Armaly 2019).

Realistically, even though combating misperceptions (Ahler and Sood 2018; Druckman et al. 2022; Mernyk et al. 2022), enrolling partisans in uncontrolled deliberation (Balietti et al. 2021; Fishkin et al. 2021), stressing superordinate identities (Levendusky 2018a), common bonds (Levendusky 2020), everyday friendships and mundane contact (Levendusky and Stecula 2021; Wojcieszak and Warner 2020) all have limited potential to de-polarize the electorate, current trends do not point toward the implementation of these correctives. First, the “culture wars” turn

that conflict took since the 1980s and 1990s (Finkel et al. 2020; Hunter 1992) under favorable media incentives (Hmielowski et al. 2016; Wilson, Parker, and Feinberg 2020) reinforce more intolerant partisanship among the masses (Cassese 2019; Garrett and Bankert 2020; Martherus et al. 2021; Skitka et al. 2021). Given free rein, these tendencies could translate to political violence down the line (Cassese 2019; Kalmoe and Mason 2019; 2022; but see Mernyk et al. 2022; Westwood et al. 2022). Second, some factors make the dynamics difficult to roll back. The much-touted intergroup contact theories hold limited promise for the predicament at hand due to bounded empathy for the in-group (Simas et al. 2020). Likewise, risk averseness in intergroup relations during economic uncertainty makes undoing polarization more difficult than worsening it (Stewart, Bryson, and McCarty 2020). Third, none of the proposed experimental de-polarizing remedies occurs in an environment purged of polarizing encounters that may mitigate or mute the depolarizing effects. Finally, polarization is not an exogenous curse. A substantial part of the American public responds to socio-psychological needs when indulging in "rabid" partisan behavior. It is a reflexive, natural, and most importantly, alluring form of engagement.

Indeed, affective polarization scholars hold that if you actively engage into partisan cheerleading, it is with a side that you wholeheartedly embrace as part of who you are (e.g.: Mason 2018a). In this respect, political scientists have revived a strand of early literature that views partisanship as a deep emotional attachment rooted in socialization and unlikely to undergo variation once solidified as part of individual identities (Campbell et al. 1960). Straying away from a long strand of literature viewing partisan attachments as cognitive considerations based on a thin version of (economic) rationality (Downs 1957), they have applied tenets of social identity theory (SIT) to partisanship. According to that theory, group identity has become a pervasive part of self-identification from which individuals derive "value" and "emotional significance" (Tajfel 1981).

It revolves around "the group in the individual" instead of insulated rationality (Abrams and Hogg 1990). This is buttressed by the idea that belonging to a group is an existential need shared universally to different degrees. In Baumeister and Leary's words (1995), it "can be almost as compelling a need as food." Besides, belonging to groups that are distinct from alternatives also responds to another critical human need: optimal distinctiveness from others (Brewer 1991; 1999). In doing so, partisan identification fuels group-based politics and negative partisanship dynamics.

Partisan belongingness meets all the criteria established in the field of social psychology to elicit both in-group solidarity and out-group derogation. These factors include the presence of leaders who contribute to identity cleavage lines across the spectrum (Haslam, Reicher and Platow 2011; Hogg and Reid 2006) when seeking to rally the rest of public opinion (Simon and Klandermans 2001). Partisanship also calls for strong emotional involvement into the outcome of competition (Valentino et al. 2011) and tends to bring forth rigid homogenous groups (Suhay 2015) motivated by fire-and-brimstone moralized stakes (Leach, Ellemers, and Barreto 2007; Parker and Janoff-Bulman 2013; Skitka et al. 2021). Besides, partisanship is a strong candidate for identity-based extremism since as Huddy (2013, 40) notes: "acquired identities, adopted by choice, are likely to be stronger than ascribed identities." Therefore, intense partisan conflict is a good substitute (or conduit) for other forms of less desirable animosity such as race-, gender- or sexual orientation-based conflicts (Iyengar and Westwood 2015). Ensuring partisans that ""their kind" of person belongs to that party" makes identity superimposition a central dynamic (Achen and Bartels 2017, 307; Ahler 2018). In a nutshell, politics far surpasses the minimal conditions found to activate intergroup bias in psychology (Pinter and Greenwald 2004; Sherif 1961; Tajfel et al. 1979).

Given these conditions, partisanship is more than an instrumental alignment between issue preferences and party platforms. It is less about what one's in-party in government does and more about what one's in-party status means in terms of self-esteem, identity coherence, and feelings of belongingness. Hence, ideological congruence has its explanatory limits especially in a two-party system where both parties sometimes adopt ad hoc ideological packages that suit variegated coalitions – even if they do so to different degrees (Hacker and Pierson 2014, 654; also see Grossmann and Hopkins 2015; Lelkes and Sniderman 2016). In such a context, eventually, a heuristical affective picture of the groups associated with each coalition eventually becomes more instructive than issue-positions to understand partisan behavioral dynamics (Elder and O'Brian 2022; Kane, Mason, and Wronski 2021; Mason and Wronski 2018; Mason, Wronski, and Kane 2021). Besides, the input of partisan social identity theory adduces more evidence that partisan identity fits in a position of "unmoved mover" or exogenous independent variable with multiple behavioral consequences extending far beyond voting (Green and Palmquist 1990; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002).

For instance, behavioral consequences of partisan identification have been reported outside the realm of politics with for instance a rejection of inter-party marriage (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012), a preference for partisan residential homogeneity (Bishop 2009; Brown and Enos 2021; Motyl et al. 2014; Munis 2022; although see Mummolo and Nall 2017), biased dating preferences (Huber and Malhotra 2017), social avoidance of unaligned relatives (Chen and Rohla 2018), motivated information processing and sharing (Barberá et al. 2015; Bolsen and Palm 2019; Ditto et al. 2019; Leeper and Slothuus 2018), the rare but documented possibility of changing other identities to conform to the prototype of the in-partisan (Egan 2020) and altered preferences in dictator games and economic experiments (Iyengar and Westwood 2015; McConnell et al. 2018;

Whitt et al. 2020). Within the political realm, social scientists found that operationalizing partisanship as a social identity instead of a mere self-categorization better predicts partisan engagement (Greene 1999; 2004; Huddy, Mason, and Aaroe 2010; 2015). Consistent with patterns found for other social identities, partisanship, and its biases originate at an implicit, knee-jerk level (Theodoridis 2017). Besides, Mason (2013; 2015) finds that affective polarization has been independent from and more salient than issue-based polarization since the turn of the millennium. Using feeling thermometers as the main dependent variable, proponents of affective polarization document a rise in negative affect for the out-group in the last four decades that is neither rivaled by a similar rise in positive in-group affect (Druckman and Levy 2022; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012) or a movement of issue-positions in the mass public (Iyengar et al. 2019; Mason 2013; 2015; although see Abramowitz and Webster 2018; Costa 2020; Orr and Huber 2020). Much remains to be explored when it comes to other measurements and attitudes. One example comes with the untapped potential open-ended answers to furnish reliable evidence about issue reliance v. affect. Another would be the operationalization of partisan behaviors where issues are secondary such as partisan cheerleading.

Beyond these findings, affective polarization puts unusual types of behavior at the heart of politics. There is a degree of irrationality to partisan behavior that democracy idealists have overlooked (Achen and Bartels 2017). The substantive goals of mass political involvement are hard-pressed to provide rationales to justify some partisan actions. An important piece to complete the puzzle comes in the form of expressive motives. Defining expressive partisanship is an exercise in creativity given the recency of the shift away from instrumental rationality.

In the second half of the 20$^{th}$ century, behavioral research revolved around a unitary framework borrowed from economics that views optimally rational citizens who act politically

with instrumental motives in mind (Green and Shapiro 1994, 3). The obsessiveness with Downs' rational voter theory and formal model – which, by the author's own admission, was stylized not to accommodate other behavioral motives (see Downs 1957) - encouraged political scientists to treat public opinion – sometimes blindly - as a mass of rational beings (Schuessler 2000; Simon 1985; 2000; Green and Shapiro 1994). In short, even if the concept received major criticism lately (Achen and Bartels 2017), instrumental rationality has been brandished as a realistic view of mass political behavior. The concept was even floated around as a benchmark to deserve enfranchisement - or more cynically justify selective disenfranchisement (see Brennan 2017; Caplan 2011; Kruglanski and Boyatzi 2012; MacLean 2017).

Realistically, it is difficult to reconcile the focus on instrumental centrality with the lack of interest and incentives that citizens have shown in making the right 'informed' decision (Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Zaller 1992). This admission paves the way for a vision of mass political action less grounded in attitude-behavior consistency and better captured by straying away from rational expectations (Bakker, Lelkes, and Malka 2020; Hamlin and Jennings 2011; 2018). By bringing expressive partisanship to the fore, I focus on some alternative partisan behaviors that do not prioritize the instrumental policy benefits expected from engagement and instead stress partisan engagement as central to identity expression.

Individuals engaging in expressive behavior forgo the prospect of consumption benefits for the sake of symbolic ones - even though these two perspectives are more compatible than mutually exclusive. Exploring expressive voting Schuessler pinpoints the two facets of the symbolic benefits of expressive voting: identification and attachment: "first and foremost, [expressive voting] is a form of identification and attachment. It is identification, because it is through expressing your preference for a Democratic candidate that you yourself become

Democrat. It is a form of attachment, because in establishing yourself as a Democrat through your electoral action, you attach to a collective of Democrats" (Schuessler 2000, 90). In so doing, expressive voters satisfy their need to belong (Baumeister and Leary 1995) and to be distinct from those who act differently (Brewer 1991). These needs inform a range of other behaviors.

Existing studies of expressive partisan behavior (EPB) have emphasized different behaviors such as displaying campaign yard signs (Kenny 1992; Laband et al. 2009; Makse and Sokhey 2012; 2014; Makse et al. 2019), policy- or value-related yard signs (Kristian 2020), bumper stickers (Endersby and Towle 1997), participating in demonstrations (Barker, Nalder, and Newham 2021; Croco et al. 2023; Gutting 2020), attending rallies (Feinberg, Branton, and Martinez-Ebers 2022), buying and wearing partisan clothing, hats (Graham et al. 2021), paraphernalia, displaying the American flag (Laband et al. 2009), and taking part in political buycotts and boycotts (Endres and Panagopoulos 2017; Kam and Deichert 2020)….

This record of evidence helped establish a list of consequences that result from EPB. The list includes driving further activism (Huddy, Mason and Aaroe 2015) leading to basking in a political victory (Bernhardt, Calhoun, and Creegan 2014; Miller 2009), reminding residents of political division (Makse, Minkhoff, and Sokhey 2019, 65), and occasionally triggering aggressive behavior (Feinberg, Branton, and Martinez-Ebers 2022; Makse et al. 2019, 3).

However, extant literature faces several shortcomings. First, most studies are observational and yield correlational conclusions. In other words, expressive partisanship has yet to be taken to the lab. Moreover, apart from Makse et al.'s (2019) study of yard signs based on nationally representative data, they are often limited to convenience and local samples (e.g.: Bass 2009; Endersby and Towle 1997; Makse and Sokhey 2014). Third, some studies incorporate campaign buttons or yard signs by using the ANES scale of nonvoting participation (e.g.: Andolina et al.

2003; Bankert 2020b; La Due Lake and Huckfeldt 1998.; Simien and Hampson 2020). This approach fuses acts of canvassing together with expressive political behavior into a scale of nonvoting participation. Nonetheless, the use of this scale tends to be myopically focused on episodic electoral outcomes which does not help with appraising the more permanent consequences on polarization. A fourth limitation comes with the range of behaviors studied. Studies about major political brands such as the MAGA hat are almost nonexistent despite its importance in popular culture. A recent exception is Graham et al.'s study (2021) which uncovers a link between white nationalism and a willingness to wear the hat. Finally, these studies focus overwhelmingly on the motivations of the expressive partisans and gloss over the consequences of expressive partisanship on those who witness these acts. Establishing the motivations of this expressive and affective partisanship is undeniably a major contribution to our understanding of partisan politics but assessing the consequences that they imply constitutes the obverse of the empirical coin. I argue that this gap needs attention and I strive to provide part of the answers through the designs described below.

I appraise whether expressive partisan behavior in the public sphere plays a role in reinforcing the cycle of partisan polarization in the country. To provide some empirical evidence of this trend, I design two experiments operationalizing a form of expressive partisan behavior as the stimulus triggering reactions typical of affective partisans. I first endeavor to study whether visibly partisan merchandising can be a sufficient reason to tune out of political conversations with a member of the out-party. To do so, I leverage the symbolism of one of the most iconic yet trivial form of expressive partisan behavior in the recent political cycle: wearing the MAGA hat. Then, in a second study, I focus on January 6$^{th}$ as a form of expressive partisanship and look at whether

perceptions of protests as being partisan behavior contribute to greater polarization between the groups and greater threat perception.

To close this section, I point out that my studies speak to the central paradox of polarization in the US: its ability to combine a crisis of trust in the political process and its actors (Citrin and Stoker 2018; Hetherington and Rudolph 2015; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995; 2002) with an unprecedented level of animosity for the rival political group among partisan masses (Abramowitz and Webster 2018). Uncontrolled polarization becomes a thorn in the flesh of liberal democracy. Increasingly, elites and masses display an openness to deviations from democratic norms of accommodation for the sake of victory and in-group promotion (Bartels 2020; Lelkes and Westwood 2017; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018; MacKuen et al. 2010; Svolik 2019; Wintemute et al. 2022). This weakens the much-needed resolve among citizens to buck the trend towards worldwide democratic backsliding (Miller 2021; Orhan 2022; Repucci 2020).

Yet, how automatic is the paradigm of partisan tension? Do American citizens and more specifically partisans endorse it when left to think freely about politics? Do they perceive the worst partisans to represent what politics has become? Answering these questions is important. Little information is available about the room left to deflate the hold of partisanship. My studies contribute to filling that vacuum. Exploring whether the sport of partisanship is adopted in free attitudinal expression, and whether expressive displays of partisanship have an impact on the public supplement each other. It is reasonable to expect that the latter feeds into dominant meta-perceptions that worsen polarization and thus make free political expression more constrained to a foreboding perception of the partisan picture. Let us know have a look at the first question.

# 3 POLARIZATION DYNAMICS AND FREE EXPRESSION ABOUT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

## 3.1 Literature and Significance

Mass political decisions happen within the structural limitations of institutional politics. As a result, they are confined to a range of viable electoral choices and often expressed as dichotomic preferences. Choices come in the form of a predetermined "menu of choices" (Sniderman 2000). These realities in mass political behavior favor an automatically polarized framework that downplays the nuances and complexity of mass opinion. Ultimately, no matter the actual level of emotional involvement, ideological depth, or nuance informing the decisions, citizen preferences are often captured as poorly informative 'yes' or 'no' answers. Such a myopic focus on the measures that can most directly fit the duality of electoral politics glosses over the reluctance behind manifestations of polarization. Down the line, this can result in exaggerations, oversimplifications, and overgeneralizations forced on an electorate that calls for better conceptualization. Given the role of exaggerated meta-perceptions in the perpetuation of mass polarization (Ahler 2014; Ahler and Sood 2018; Lees and Cikara 2020; Moore-Berg et al. 2020; Ruggeri et al. 2021), attempting to empirically verify and potentially deflate the narratives about caricatural polarization seems crucial.

In this respect, measurement tendencies have played a major role in coloring the picture of polarization that political scientists have painted. In the last two decades, behaviorists have revamped their approach to partisanship and polarization measurement. The effort to better capture partisanship comprises partisan social identity and its focus on the value attached to group membership in a given party (Greene 2002; 2004; Huddy, Mason, and Aaroe 2015; Mason 2015; 2018; Weisberg and Greene 2003), partisan-ideological and social sorting which stress the superimposition of identities that could theoretically differ (Brown and Enos 2021; Egan 2020;

Halliez and Thornton 2021; Levendusky 2009; Mason and Wronski 2018; Weber and Klar 2019) and negative partisanship that highlight valence-based obstruction to the out-party (Abramowitz and Webster 2016; Bankert 2020a; Lee et al. 2022; Ridge 2022).

Meanwhile, typical attitudinal metrics of polarization include the use of feeling thermometers, emotional self-reports, and trait evaluations (Abramowitz and Webster 2018; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Mason 2013; 2015), psychological indicators such as the IAT (Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Theodoridis 2017; Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018), and perceptual variables such as stereotypes or meta-polarization (Ahler and Sood 2018; Carlson and Settle 2022, Chapter 4; Clifford 2020; Enders and Armaly 2019; Graham, Nosek, and Haidt 2012; Levendusky and Malhotra 2016; Moore-Berg et al. 2020; Westfall et al. 2015).

Behaviorally, inquiries into the social (Chen and Rohla 2018; Frimer and Skitka 2020; Hetherington and Weiler 2018; Huber and Malhotra 2017; Lee 2021; Mummollo and Nall 2017; McConnell et al. 2018; Shafranek 2021) and professional spillover of polarization (Honeycutt and Freberg 2017; Inbar and Lammers 2012; Munro, Lasane, and Leary 2010) also added a lot of depth to the discussion.

These approaches have brought important nuances to bear on the national understanding of polarization. They transformed the age-old debate between "hollow" polarization "without persuasion" (Baldassarri and Gelman 2008; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005; Levendusky 2009; Prior 2013) and "deep" ideological polarization (Abramowitz 2010; Abramowitz and Saunders 2005; 2008; Bafumi and Shapiro 2009; Brewer 2005; Jacobson 2012b) into a more complex picture of behavior connecting emotional intensity and constraint. However, even if the new behavioral measures tap into more sophisticated dimensions, the conflation of these measures into the same research agenda obfuscates some important differences in what is measured (Kubin and

von Sikorski 2021; Lelkes 2016; Druckman and Levendusky 2019; Druckman et al. 2022; Kingzette 2021; Klar et al. 2018). On the whole, this picture still requires information to better understand the nature of the increase in polarization. Lelkes (2016) speaks to the issue of using polarization as a catch-all concept and makes great strides in determining that its levels have increased exclusively because of partisans as opposed to the whole electorate. Further enriching that perspective, Klar, Krupnikov, and Ryan (2018) show that a large part of what is measured and understood as affective polarization would be better captured as a general disdain for current partisan politics. This record of evidence is valuable. Taking the question of partisan complexity to the realm of free expression can further elucidate some dynamics in the rise of mass polarization. By giving greater room to respondents to flesh out their adhesion and/or rejection of the clearer choices they face, open-ended expression overcomes some concerns highlighted earlier.

## 3.2 Theory and Hypotheses

In this project, I will examine the evolution of impressions about presidential candidates in the last forty years and whether these evaluations reflect the rise of partisan polarization in the electorate by becoming more politically dualistic and diametrical. My theoretical contribution revolves around three crucial research agendas: the overtime evolution, the degree of partisan automaticity, and the potential asymmetry of – relatively – free partisan expression. My methodological strategy is two-pronged.

### *3.2.1 Overtime Evolution and Timing*

I rely on an aggregate typology of answer patterns in the ANES sample to determine whether partisan reflexes have become more internalized by the electorate in the last forty years. Prior to each presidential election, the ANES asks participants to provide reasons to like/dislike each candidate. Respondents who only provide a positive statement about their in-party and a

negative one about their out-party candidates are categorized as archetypal. By choosing to provide only two diametrical answers, these respondents choose not to deviate from the script of liking one side and disliking the other. Ambivalent partisans are those who provide answers that include positive or negative considerations for both candidates or positive and negative consideration for either candidate. Finally, negative and positive respondents are those where dislike and like answers respectively outnumbered like and dislike answers regardless of the responses provided (see Table 7.1).

Similar approaches have been used for the study of ambivalence, sophistication, and constraint in the electorate. I deviate from these perspectives for two main reasons. First, my primary interest is not in partisan ambivalence but in archetypal response patterns. The parallelism between a positive perception of the in-party candidate and a negative take on the out-party candidate is central here. To the best of my knowledge, this approach focusing on the partisan implications of parallelism in open-ended expression is novel. It provides greater purchase on the prevalence of automatic partisan interpretations far from measures that tend to paper over complexity and potential attitudinal ambivalence. Second, given that I add a content analysis of the statements in my analysis, I shirk the assumption that the number of statements is a good proxy for intensity. I assume that the choice to answer positively to the in-group like and negatively to the out-group dislike prompts is a sufficient baseline for archetypal categorization without factoring in the number or intensity of statements. This allows for distinct degrees of sophistication to fit within the category. For more information, my four respondent sub-types are described in Table 7.1.

In essence, an increase in the share of archetypal partisans would be a logical offshoot of the rising prevalence of affective polarization at the macro-level. These answer patterns in partisan

evaluations of the two presidential candidates could speak to more effective negative campaigning and/or a greater preeminence of negative partisanship considerations in the masses' decision making. Regardless of the potential mechanisms and based on the empirical record discussed earlier, a significant rise in the share of archetypal partisans should be visible in the data.

$H_{Archetypal}$

*In recent election cycles, the share of respondents who became archetypal in their like/dislike presidential evaluations has increased significantly and substantially.*

If the data corroborates the increase, the timing of that shift would also provide valuable information about the dynamics of why the country has polarized. Formulating clear expectations that a given election had an enduring impact on the electorate is a daunting challenge.

$RQ_{Timing}$

*Which electoral contest(s) saw substantial increases in the proportion of archetypal respondents?*

Several competing possibilities exist here. First, the Reagan era itself is often considered as the building block for a new presidential order built on a deep identity-based (Domke and Coe 2008; Fea 2018) and ideological bedrock that stuck with conservativism for the ensuing three decades (Limbaugh 2004; Kabaservice 2012; Wilentz 2009; Perlstein 2020). Given limitations in the availability of the data in the desired format prior to 1984, I am not able to test whether an increase in diametrical partisan answers is traceable to 1980. Nonetheless, the documented delay between the elite supply of ideology or partisan style and its eventual embrace among the masses would likely disqualify that timing scenario (see Noel 2012).

Second, another usual suspected timing for mass embrace of polarization comes with the changes in the media landscape in the late 1990s. The popularization of talk radio, cable news and eventually skewed Internet pockets responded to new market incentives (Mullainathan and Shleifer 2005; Prior 2013; Lelkes, Sood, and Iyengar 2017) and could have played some causal

role in spurring a rise in archetypal voters through mechanisms such as selective exposure (Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Messing and Westwood 2014), and motivated reasoning (Flynn, Nyhan, and Reifler 2017; Taber and Lodge 2006). However, given how gradual the media process has been and how media consumption varies across the American public, identifying a turning point based on media dynamics is methodologically tricky. The debate about whether the impact of media changes is minimal (Prior 2013) or just inadequately captured (Druckman, Levendusky, and McLain 2018) also impedes clear causal associations. Saying with certainty which election would best capture when the polarizing impact of talk radio, cable TV, or online atomization of news provision started to cause discernible polarization in mass answers is daunting.

Instead, empirical work identifies 2008 as the key polarizing presidential election for several reasons. The 2004 contest already saw a marked increase in the salience of partisan concerns in decision making, a widening distance on issues and a decrease in the number of battleground contests on the electoral map (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008). Besides, the eight years of George W. Bush's presidency were marked by a noticeable rise in the role of the President as a party leader (Jacobson 2009). Policy-wise, some domestic decisions during his presidency have been identified as inducing polarization (Hacker and Pierson 2005) while other authors point to his style of politics (Edwards and King 2007, 2). In terms of development within the electorate, Bush's tenure has reinforced the connection between presidential performance and the use of partisan evaluative lenses (Jacobson 2012a) especially in the aftermath of the war in Iraq (Edwards and King 2007; Hetherington 2009; Jacobson 2010) and Hurricane Katrina (Kimball and Gross 2007). At the mass level, an initial period of resistance to the transition to greater partisanship could account for existing findings about greater ambivalence prior to 2008 (Lavine et al. 2012).

### *3.2.2 Automaticity of Partisan Perspectives*

Beyond aggregate distribution, partisans – measured based on the different theoretical arguments in the recent literature – can either articulate their answers more automatically or be constrained to formulate more profound answers to the like/dislike questions. This should be visible on a myriad of different elements that I measure through a textual analysis of the full answers.

Incivility, dualistic comparisons, statement length, and proxied complexity can be assessed in the data. Besides, the emphasis laid on the candidate's personalities, programs, or ideological labels is also part of what a manual analysis allows. Together, these elements provide ways of adjudicating between two dissenting perspectives that arose in the recent literature on mass behavior in the electorate: the mindless, shallow, and label-based v. the constrained, informed and ideology-based partisan.

On the one hand, elites are more distant from one another due to incentives to stray away from appeals to the median general voter (Abramowitz 2010; Bawn et al. 2012; Hacker and Pierson 2014; Layman et al. 2010). In practice, candidate efforts to appeal beyond their expected voting base are becoming more limited, or at least objectively remiss. For instance, Donald Trump's effortless appeals to the Democratic 'captured constituency' of black voters (Chideya 2016; LoBianco and Killough 2016) or Hillary Clinton's dismissive references to a "basket of deplorables" beyond salvation (Reilly 2016) speak to the rise in strategies that do not actively court voters seen as unreachable. Instead, hostility towards the out-group becomes a campaign pitch of its own. These partisan campaign diatribes have a polarizing impact on the public (Huddy et al. 2015; Sood and Iyengar 2016). Beyond campaigns, simple, mindless, and predictable polarization patterns are visible at every level of institutional communication from Congressional (Ballard et al. 2022; Frimer and Skitka 2018; Gelman 2021; Gelman and Wilson 2022; Russell 2018) to

judicial (Hasen 2019) to presidential dynamics (Rhodes and Vayo 2019). These polarized messages supply clear attitudinal cues to the electorate (Barber and Pope 2019a; Cohen 2003; Levendusky 2010) which then inform the primacy of in-party membership over issue-position congruence in explaining voter behavior (Mason 2013; 2015; 2018; Miller and Conover 2015). Still, at no point does deep, organic mass ideological discord play a primary role in that narrative. Instead, other simultaneous developments such as distrust for politics (Citrin and Stoker 2018; Hetherington and Rudolph 2015; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; Webster 2018), low involvement and knowledge levels in the electorate (Brennan 2011; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Somin 2013) make it even likelier that the affective aspect of partisan social identity conditioned partisans to think more mindlessly about politics. A corollary to these developments is that free partisan opinion should instantly trigger the constraints of parallelism that automatic partisanship entails.

On the other hand, depolarization skeptics have shed doubts on the theories of shallow intergroup polarization. They highlight a deeper-level issue-based form of polarization playing out in the electorate. Democrats (liberals) and Republicans (conservatives) have the potential for deep ideological disagreement for a long list of reasons. Established personality differences (Carney et al. 2008; Jost 2017; Jost, Glaser, and Kruglanski 2003) – rooted in early age socialization (Block and Block 2006) and genetic differences (Alford, Funk, and Hibbing 2005; Hibbing, Smith, and Alford 2013; Schreiber et al. 2013) are central correlates of discord. Value differences (Goren 2005; Haidt 2012; Jacoby 2014) and issue alignment (Bougher 2017) make the fault lines more preponderant. This translates into social (Abramowitz and Webster 2018; Achen and Bartels 2017; Mason and Wronski 2018) and partisan-ideological sorting (Halliez and Thornton 2021; Levendusky 2009; Weber and Klar 2019). These different elements point to constrained

partisanship. According to that playbook, elite supply of clear ideological positions finds an echo in the public's attitudes (Abramowitz and Saunders 2005; 2008; Bafumi and Shapiro 2009; Evans 2003). Based on that perspective, ideologically consistent partisans and high sophisticates should be the ones who buy the most into this increased issue alignment and clarity (Jewitt and Goren 2016; Lupton, Myers, and Thornton 2015). These arguments about the existence of deeper and more readily accessible issue divisions inform the following expectations about open-ended expression. In this theoretical framework, ideology provides complex issue-based rationalizations to justify opposition to the out-group in a convincing fashion. This entails more sophisticated attitude rationalization. Concretely, this takes the form of longer justifications with more dimensions, greater issue reliance and less expressed duality. A similar perspective has found limited support in a local and experimental context (Craig, Cossette, and Martinez 2020) but remains to be tested on the scale that I am using here.

Recent studies have endeavored to disentangle these perspectives and evidence has accrued on both sides. On the mindless side, Barber and Pope's creative experimental design (2019a) showed that forms of mindless partisan cue-taking documented by Cohen (2003) were mostly impervious to ideological inconsistencies as long as the messenger was deemed a credible elite mouthpiece by the partisans. Dias and Lelkes (2022) have shown in different experimental settings that ideology plays a secondary role by activating partisan identity among respondents. In contrast, Costa (2020) uses a conjoint experiment with fictional Congressional candidates who had last tweeted either a message of animosity towards the out-party or support/opposition for different policy proposals. She found that the affective stimulus of the aggressive tweet did not outweigh the policy concerns when it came to choosing a candidate among the respondents. Lelkes (2021) provides empirical evidence of the primacy of ideological considerations over mere partisanship

in in- and out-group evaluations. Finally, results from Orr and Huber (2020) are congruent with Costa's findings in favor of partisan constraint. They use a design exposing respondents to profiles of unknown people and asked them how warm they felt toward these individual profiles. By manipulating partisanship, policy positions, and social cues (such as leisure preferences and professional occupation), the authors find that "(some) policy positions are more important to interpersonal evaluations than partisanship, and that the apparent effect of partisanship when presented in isolation is likely the combination of party and a collection of inferences made on the basis of party" (Orr and Huber 2020, 584; also see Orr, Fowler, and Huber 2023). Here, I highlight expectations from these two theoretical vantage points:

$H_{Mindless}$

*Affective polarization among partisans leads to automatic partisan expression. When compared to less affectively polarized respondents, this takes the form of:*

- *Shorter justifications with less dimensions.*
- *Greater reliance on comparative judgments.*
- *A more pronounced reliance on ideology and partisanship labels.*
- *A weaker degree of issue-based/ideological tenor.*

$H_{Constrained}$

*By contrast, under constrained partisanship, affective polarization will lead to more complex rationalizing. As a result, when compared to less affectively polarized respondents, statements should contain:*

- *Longer answers with a greater number of considerations.*
- *Independent judgments specific to each candidate.*
- *Greater emphasis on issues and/or ideology.*
- *Less references to party labels.*

#### *3.2.3 Elite and Electorate Asymmetries*

Finally, a third question naturally arising from a focus on partisan expression is the expectation of symmetry across the aisle. Based on existing insights from political psychology and the study of ideology, I contend that the expectations laid out above are not applicable equally to

Republican and Democratic respondents. Several considerations should lead to important discrepancies.

First, differences in the salience of distinct psychological needs across the spectrum should inform the degree of receptiveness to the knee-jerk partisan intergroup framework among respondents. Conservatives show a greater need for a perspective allowing for cognitive rigidity and closure (Baron and Jost 2019; Jost 2017; Jost et al. 2003; 2018; Jost, Sterling, and Stern 2017). Behaviorally, scholars have linked these needs with negativity in out-group perceptions (De Zavala et al. 2010; Ganzach and Schul 2021) and potential for violent release (Webber et al. 2020). Additionally, structural features incentivize deviations from democratic 'fair play' to a greater extent among Republicans (Jacobson 2013a; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018) who are said to benefit more from the republican "auxiliary precautions" than the democratic elements of US constitutional democracy. In turn, rank-and-file identifiers show a greater degree of accommodation for strategies that satisfy programmatic preferences at the expense of democracy (Bartels 2020; Gans-Morse and Nichter 2021; Gidengil et al. 2021; Graham and Svolik 2020; Grossman et al. 2022; Jardina and Mickey 2022; Krishnarajan 2023; Miller and Davis 2021). Explicit demands for deviations from democratic norms do not appear in the respondents' contributions. Yet, these insights, when measures in free expression, should be captured by more straightforward expression and greater propensity to be uncivil.

Besides, the documented tendency to factor in negative information more than its positive counterparts (Baumeister et al. 2001; Rozin and Royzmann 2001) unequally informs the response behavior expected in the analysis. There is evidence – albeit from limited samples – showing that conservatives are physiologically more attentive to risks (Oxley et al. 2008), pay more attention to aversive stimuli (Dodd et al. 2012) and show a propensity to focus on the negative in their

surrounding environments with greater emphasis than liberals (Hibbing et al. 2014). Nevertheless, these approaches suffer from two serious shortcomings. Recently. Leong et al. (2020) even find differences in neural processing of the same information between liberals and conservatives (also see Zmigrod 2022). First, studies tying psychological traits to ideology may have overstated the automaticity of the relationship (Federico and Malka 2018; Johnston and Madson 2022). Evidence of ideological symmetry has abounded to contest the asymmetric perspective (Brandt et al. 2014; Crawford 2014; Guay and Johnston 2022; Wetherell, Brandt, and Reyna 2013). Second, empirical information about the negativity bias has yet to extend to free partisan expression. Based on that part of the empirical record, Republicans could devote greater attention to their "dislikes" answers whereas Democrats would be more garrulous in their "likes."

Conversely, from a more political perspective, the historical development and polarization of the party coalitions varies primarily because of elite strategies. The asymmetry in party strategies with Republicans prioritizing a deep coalition and Democrats aiming at a broad one (Grossmann and Hopkins 2015; Jost, Baldassarri, and Druckman 2022; Klein 2020; Lelkes and Sniderman 2016) should lead to more issue-based considerations when evaluating Republican candidates while group-based concerns should be more prominent when evaluating Democratic candidates. The extant scholarship discussed in this paragraph suggests discrepancies in the ways that the entire electorate evaluates candidates with different partisan labels. The asymmetry would reveal itself in the entire sample based on the target of the responses.

Based on these asymmetric tendencies, I anticipate the following differences in the expression of partisans from the different ends of the spectrum:

$H_{ElectorateAsymmetry}$

*Republican identifiers will rely on issue-based considerations, comparative judgment, ideological/party labels, and incivility with greater frequency than Democratic*

*respondents. Likewise, given the group-based nature of the Democratic coalition, mentions of groups and ambivalence in Democratic answers will be significantly more present in Democratic answers than Republican ones.*

$H_{EliteAsymmetry}$

*These same differences could also stem from differences in how all respondents construct their evaluations of the different targets. In such a case, Republican targets elicit issue-based considerations, comparative judgment, ideological/party labels, and incivility at a greater rate than Democratic targets in the entire sample. Group-based references go in the opposite direction.*

I now turn to a brief discussion of the data used in this study and the existing approaches to open-ended questions.

### 3.3 Methods and Data

Open-ended answers to the ANES remain an arguably under-explored and under-exploited resource. The evolution of survey research seems likely to continue to confine open-ended answers to scarce mentions. Close-ended questions present many advantages especially when it comes to predict actual voting behavior. After all, voting decisions are constrained and the close-ended format better reflects the restrictions on electoral agency among citizens (Miller Shanks, and Shapiro 1996). Behaviorists almost exclusively rely on close-ended questions despite clear evidence of the value and validity of the open-ended format (Converse 1987; Krosnick 1999; Lupia 2018). Dredging up open-ended questions constitutes a way to shed a new sidelight and avoid some of the problems posed in general survey measurement. The ANES open-ended answers are not a new discovery, but that section of the studies suffers from a dearth of popularity. Other measures in the same dataset provide greater clarity, brevity, and ease of interpretation (Schuman and Presser 1996).

Nonetheless, Berinsky (2017, 311) points out that "there is often a mismatch between the level of specificity in the attitudes that we would like people to have and in the attitudes they actually possess." Instead of assuming a degree of sophistication among respondents, the open-ended format leaves room for unfettered expression, which will undoubtedly suffer from recency and recall biases (Kahneman 2011; Lodge, Steenbergen, and Brau 1995). Despite fears of inadequacy for uninformed respondents, open-ended answers have been relatively unconnected to respondent education (Geer 1988). Open-ended questions offer clearer and more direct insights into what respondents have on their minds at the moment of asking (Iyengar 1996, 64). Specific answers may not reflect the entirety of considerations made at the time the actual behavior happens (Achen 1975; Zaller 1992) and can suffer from social desirability bias (Berinsky 1999). As a result,

polls only provide an approximation of actual behavior such as voting choices (Lodge, McGraw, and Stroh 1989).

Still, the open-ended format offers a freer platform of expression about behavioral choices without constraining it entirely to the bipolarity of forced choices (Reja et al. 2003). This freedom is particularly valuable in the study of elements that do not directly pertain to predicting the electoral outcome such as the degree of partisan automaticity in respondent behavior. It allows researchers to analyze not only the answer but the intensity, complexity, and ideological tenor of the response. Even if they differ from generic measures of affective polarization (Ahn and Mutz 2023), I choose presidential candidate evaluations because they are most likely to activate and structure partisan concerns (Grant, Mockabee, and Monson 2010; Jacobson 2012a; Rudolph 2011; Singh and Thornton 2018; Valentino et al. 2011). The salience of out-party candidates and the attention they receive increases the likelihood of partisan expression beyond what judgments of out-party members (Bolsen and Thornton 2021; Druckman and Levendusky 2019) or the party organization can generate. It also stands to reason that individual candidates take a particularly salient position in these presidential elections as opposed to midterms – or any less salient context (Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen 2012, 2) – where party evaluations could be more informative.

Two empirical strategies have been common in previous studies of ANES open-ended questions: content analysis and analyses of the number of mentions for each side. I use both in this chapter. I will start with the latter. Among others, Lavine (2001), Basinger and Lavine (2005, 571), Rudolph and Popp (2007), and Lavine et al's (2012, 4-5) relied on the number of like/dislike statements and computed partisan ambivalence as: $\frac{D+R}{2} - [D - R]$ where D is the number of positive reactions to the Democrats added to the number of negative reactions to the Republicans and R is the opposite. Thornton (2013) uses a modified version of that scale to show that

ambivalent evaluations of parties have increased alongside elite polarization. Steering away from ambivalence to archetypicality, I focus on the response patterns to categorize the electorate. I consider that regardless of the number or intensity of mentions, mere decisions to answer are revealing of the respondents' evaluative structure.

Content analysis has also enabled important breakthroughs. Converse's (1964) five-category coding scheme provides a foundational example of the wealth of information gleaned from more complex answers. He used the answers to establish a relatively uninformed and unconstrained American voter which relied mostly on group considerations, circumstantial conditions, or apolitical concerns to develop their perspectives about the candidates (see Lewis-Beck et al. 2009). That conclusion of "ideological innocence" has not been the only conclusion drawn from these answers. Grossmann and Hopkins (2015) tap into the data to establish the asymmetry between "group benefit" Democrats and "ideological" Republicans. Besides, structural topic models show great promise – at least as complements to manual coding – of future discoveries about ANES open-ended answers (Roberts et al. 2014). Still, within the scope of this project, I adopted a manual coding approach for practical and theoretical reasons.

First, the prior theoretical assumptions developed above seem more approachable using the manual method over automatic content analysis. The analysis calls for a pre-existing codebook to be established *ex ante* instead of mining the data to associate topics *ex post facto* as structural topic modeling does. The tradeoff entails that prior assumptions may be consciously or unconsciously subjectively driven by my reading of the evolution of partisan behavior over the last few decades. This is a risk that I deliberately accepted for this first iteration of the project. In addition, automatic content analysis still has some reliability issues (De Graaf and van der Vossen 2013; van Atteveldt, van der Velden, and Boukes 2021) and works best when monosemic iterations are central to the

theoretical approach (Boumans and Trilling 2016) – which is not the case in the relatively free expression dataset that I analyze. Second, the pragmatic and financial constraints of a graduate dissertation stand in the way of extensive training in machine learning or automated methods and impede hiring assistants for intercoder reliability. These directions are the clear steps to enrich the current project. To assuage some valid subjectivity concerns, I inform my coding based on the existing perspectives in the literature as discussed in and below Table 7.2. I also coded the data twice to limit internal inconsistencies in the approach across the nine elections.

In what follows, I make deliberate methodological choices that are worth clarifying from the get-go. First, all results – except at the aggregate level – focus on the responses, not the respondents. Respondent profiles are instructive, but the research questions require a response-level focus. This part of the analysis focuses on the sample of 64,971 actual responses and excludes nonresponses. Second, I use affective polarization as my main independent variable to test the second part of my hypotheses about mindless or constrained partisanship. Affective polarization is more in line with recent findings about the dimensionality of partisan identification and it affords a more granular analysis than the alternative measurements. Indeed, even though ideological, partisan self-identification and partisan-ideological sorting are included in the models, the meaning imbuing these metrics sparks debate (Camobreco 2016; Conover and Feldman 1981; Ellis and Stimson 2012; Jost 2006; Kalmoe 2020; Levitin and Miller 1979; Treier and Hillygus 2009). I switch back to more traditional measures of partisan identification to test expectations about asymmetry in the third part of the results section. In both cases, I am fully aware that the debate about the causal direction between partisan identity and behavior remains open (Abramowitz 2010; Carsey and Layman 2006; Franklin and Jackson 1983) and that my approach here does not allow

to make causal inferences. I therefore refrain from making arguments about the sequence of events undergirding the results I highlight in what follows.

Table 3.1: Descriptive Sample Characteristics for ANES Open-Ended Answers (1984-2020)

| Year | Total Possible Answers | Actual Answer Rate | Percentage of Total Actual Answers |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1984 | 9,028 | 53.7 | 7.46 |
| 1988 | 8,160 | 49.6 | 6.22 |
| 1992 | 9,940 | 55.7 | 8.52 |
| 1996 | 6,852 | 53.6 | 5.66 |
| 2000 | 7,228 | 48.1 | 5.35 |
| 2008 | 9,288 | 50.5 | 7.22 |
| 2012 | 23,656 | 52.9 | 19.26 |
| 2016 | 17,080 | 54.4 | 14.31 |
| 2020 | 33,120 | 51.0 | 26.00 |
| Total | 124,352 | 52.2 | 100 |
| Gender | | | |
| Male | 56,688 | 53.1 | 46.30 |
| Female | 67,188 | 51.6 | 53.33 |
| Race | | | |
| White | 86,252 | 54.0 | 72.23 |
| Black | 15,664 | 46.0 | 11.09 |
| Hispanic | 14,308 | 48.9 | 10.78 |
| Asian | 2,664 | 52.3 | 2.15 |
| Partisanship | | | |
| Independent | 16,100 | 43.6 | 10.79 |
| Republican | 47,160 | 55.3 | 32.41 |
| Democratic | 61,092 | 52.1 | 49.03 |

## 3.4 Results

### *3.4.1 Evolution and Timing*

To tackle the aggregate-level quantitative question of overtime patterns, I use a typology of respondents based on how they responded to the four iterations of the like/dislike questions. I anticipated that archetypal respondents would be more numerous in recent years). Respondents were divided into sixteen categories based on whether they provided answers to the different

questions (see Table 7.1). Archetypal respondents group together the respondents who only provided parallel answers liking a preferred candidate and disliking the other.

What stands out in the general electorate is the rising trend in diametrical partisan expression – with the glaring exception of 2016. The drastically higher levels on that indicator in 2012 and 2020 can point to either an increase in automatic like/dislike patterns and/or greater agreement with the in-party candidate's programmatic proposals (and disagreement with the out-party candidate's platform). Besides, the sample points to a substantial downtick in the proportion of ambivalent respondents in 2012 and 2020 as well as positive respondents since 2012.

Table 3.2: Voter Sub-Types in the General ANES Sample

| Election | 1984 | 1988 | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | 2008 | 2012 | 2016 | 2020 | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Archetypal | 35.44 | 30 | 31.51 | 32.17 | 35.8 | 37.94 | 50.07 | 18.93 | 52.24 | 39.78 |
| Ambivalent | 41.16 | 38.69 | 46.88 | 42.49 | 32.94 | 34.66 | 27.33 | 49.94 | 28.96 | 35.87 |
| Negative | 24.46 | 22.9 | 26.97 | 27.09 | 20.53 | 17.75 | 20.09 | 28.31 | 23.92 | 23.52 |
| Positive | 14.01 | 17.11 | 15.49 | 16.98 | 20.09 | 20.88 | 12.28 | 12.3 | 11.2 | 14.05 |
| No type | 8.9 | 15.4 | 9.3 | 8.8 | 13.0 | 10.7 | 8.9 | 20.7 | 5.1 | 10.4 |

Restricting the sample to strong partisans from both parties reinforces these impressions. As shown in Table 3.2, and in line with Rudolph's findings (2011), the room for ambivalence through in-party candidate criticism or out-party candidate redeeming qualities is considerably reduced. Even the exceptional 2016 spillover that could be imputable to perceived candidate quality (Collins 2016; Roper 2016) disappears in the 2020 typology which nearly reaches the level of prototypical partisanship of 2012 despite the disturbance of a populist candidate being common to both contests. It remains to be seen whether the 2016 election represents more than an outlier in which low candidate likeability across the board halted the tailspin toward more prototypical free

expression in the electorate. The similarities between the 2012 and 2020 figures seem to indicate a trend across elections but incumbency may serve as a confounding variable here.

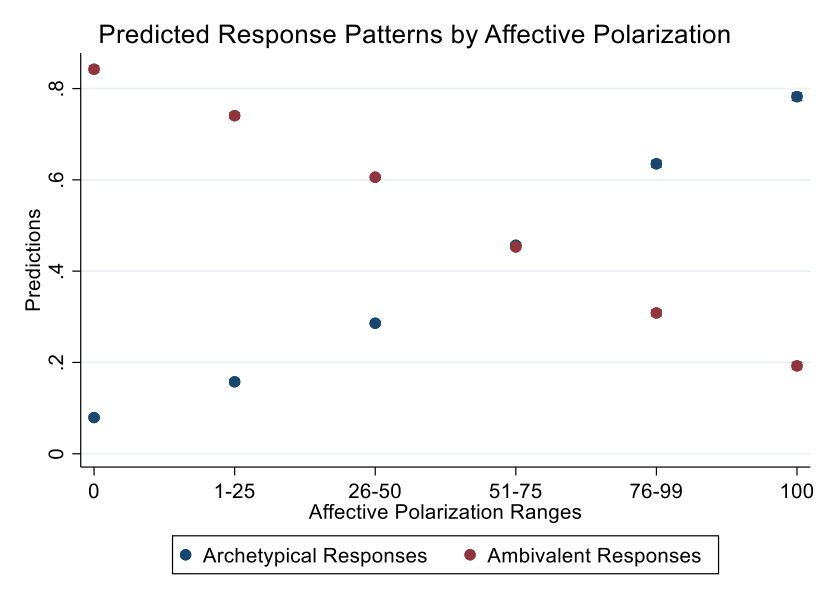
Table 3.3: Voter Sub-Types among Strong Partisans in the ANES

| Election | 1984 | 1988 | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | 2008 | 2012 | 2016 | 2020 | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Archetypal | 51.37 | 43.06 | 45.61 | 48.99 | 56.35 | 55.43 | 70.31 | 33.08 | 69.44 | 57.92 |
| Ambivalent | 33.85 | 33.61 | 40.2 | 34.8 | 25.42 | 26.92 | 15.18 | 48 | 18.08 | 26.62 |
| Negative | 18.91 | 18.77 | 23.93 | 21.73 | 16.15 | 14.07 | 11.54 | 30.05 | 12.75 | 17.28 |
| Positive | 13.11 | 16.57 | 15.02 | 15.84 | 16.32 | 20.37 | 11.52 | 14.66 | 11.38 | 13.58 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Further exploration shows that the emergence of archetypal partisan response patterns is traceable to affective polarization of the electorate. Using a logit regression model shown in full in Table 7.3, I show a substantial difference between the probabilities of archetypal answer patterns as the degree of affective polarization among respondents increases. Going from the least to the most affectively polarized respondents in the sample increases the probability of an archetypal answer pattern by .67 (see Figure 3.1). This finding adds a layer of substance to the concept of affective polarization by showing that it does not merely establish symmetrical intergroup dynamics in the electorate. It also strongly constrains the expression of any form of cross-pressured preferences in a freer measurement setting without forced choices. I also briefly tested the expectations of an asymmetrical embrace of partisan typicality across the partisan spectrum. As shown in Figure 7.2, there is a significant difference in the propensity to offer parallel answer patterns between Republicans and Democrats. Democrats seem to have internalized the parallel framework to a greater extent than Republican respondents in the pooled sample. This seems to indicate a partisan asymmetry in an unexpected direction. I further explore that question at the end of the results section. Besides, archetypal response patterns are concentrated among strong partisan identifiers

which suggests that the room for cross-pressure or non-parallel partisanship remains high among weaker partisans.

Figure 3.1: Affective Polarization and Prototypical Response Patterns in the Electorate



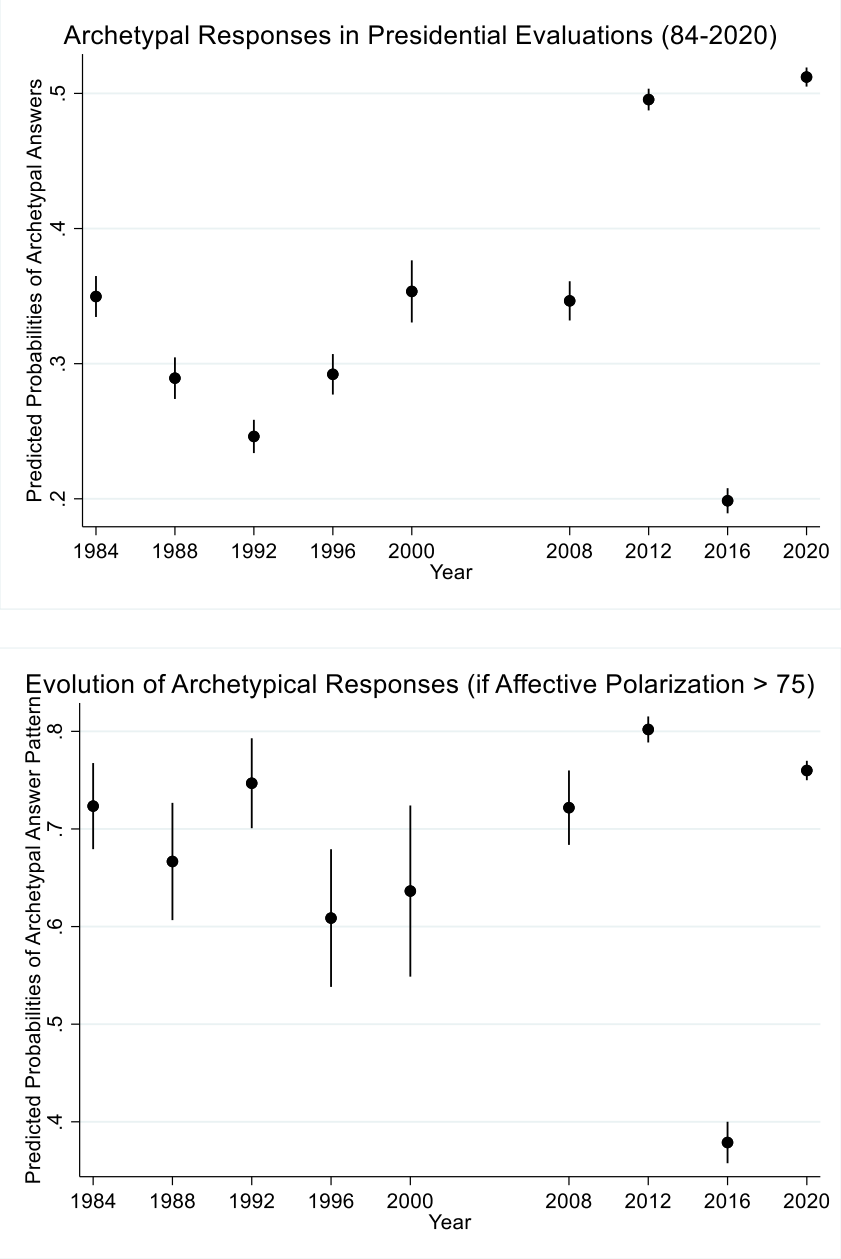

Hence, response patterns confirm the propensity among affectively polarized respondents to use a more automatic, almost heuristical intergroup frame of reference with bolstering of the in-group and rejection of the out-group. The results above are clear across the nine elections in the sample. However, clearer choices and greater partisan division have emerged gradually in recent decades. This has led to more predictably partisan electoral attitudes and behavior (Jacobson 2015a; Levendusky 2010; Smidt 2017). In this respect, I asked when the sway of polarized evaluations increased (see $RQ_{Timing}$). Figure 3.2 provides a response. If archetypal partisan answers are any indication, the hold of a polarized evaluative framework in the electorate did not grow significantly and unidirectionally between 1984 and 2008.

Clear signs of an empirical breaking point come with Obama's reelection campaign in 2012. The four years of intentional obstructionism (Grunwald 2016; Mann and Ornstein 2016)

seem to be the turning point for a substantial change in the electorate's evaluative methods (see Kohut et al 2012). Substantively, the likelihood of diametrical answers has increased by over .01 from 2008 to 2012/2020 across the sample. As descriptive trends indicate (see Figure 7.1), the influx of high scorers on the affective polarization scale contributed to symmetrical concerns being expressed in open-ended format. 2012 is thus the most credible election for the timing question posed in the hypothesis section if we accept the premise that 2016 is an absolute outlier instead of a trend-setting election[1]. This is consistent with earlier findings pointing to the growing relevance of partisanship in electoral outcomes encroaching upon performance evaluations such as the state of the economy (Jacobson 2013b, 3) or local policy concerns that could provide incentives to deviate from the national party line (Abramowitz and Webster 2016; Jacobson 2015b). Compellingly, the increase did not hail from the ranks of affectively polarized respondents who were already archetypal in their answer patterns in elections before 2012. Respondents who score in the upper quartile of the affective polarization scale were already at high levels of archetypal content in their responses. The pattern shown on the left side of Figure 3.2 is thus primarily driven by the inescapability of more polarized choices being accepted – albeit reluctantly – by a greater share of the electorate. Beyond partisanship shifts in the electorate, the possibility of an artifactual result due to interview modes and the consequences of wide discrepancies in candidate quality cannot be fully dismissed. Yet, I include a secondary independent variable to account for interview mode in the logit models. Moreover, the partial switch to online interviews happened in 2012 and the patterns for 2016 show that the interview method is clearly not predetermining answer patterns and content.

[1] 2004 remains to be ruled out as the turning point election, but the open-ended data is missing from the ANES website.

Figure 3.2: Archetypal Respondent Answers across Presidential Elections




### *3.4.2 Automaticity of Partisan Perspectives*

I now turn to the questions revolving around the mindless v. constrained partisan debate outlined above (see $H_{Mindless}$ and $H_{Constrained}$). As a reminder, partisans under the 'mindless' hypothesis internalize the diametrical intergroup framework of partisanship to a greater degree than partisans comporting with the 'constrained' perspective. For the former to emerge from the

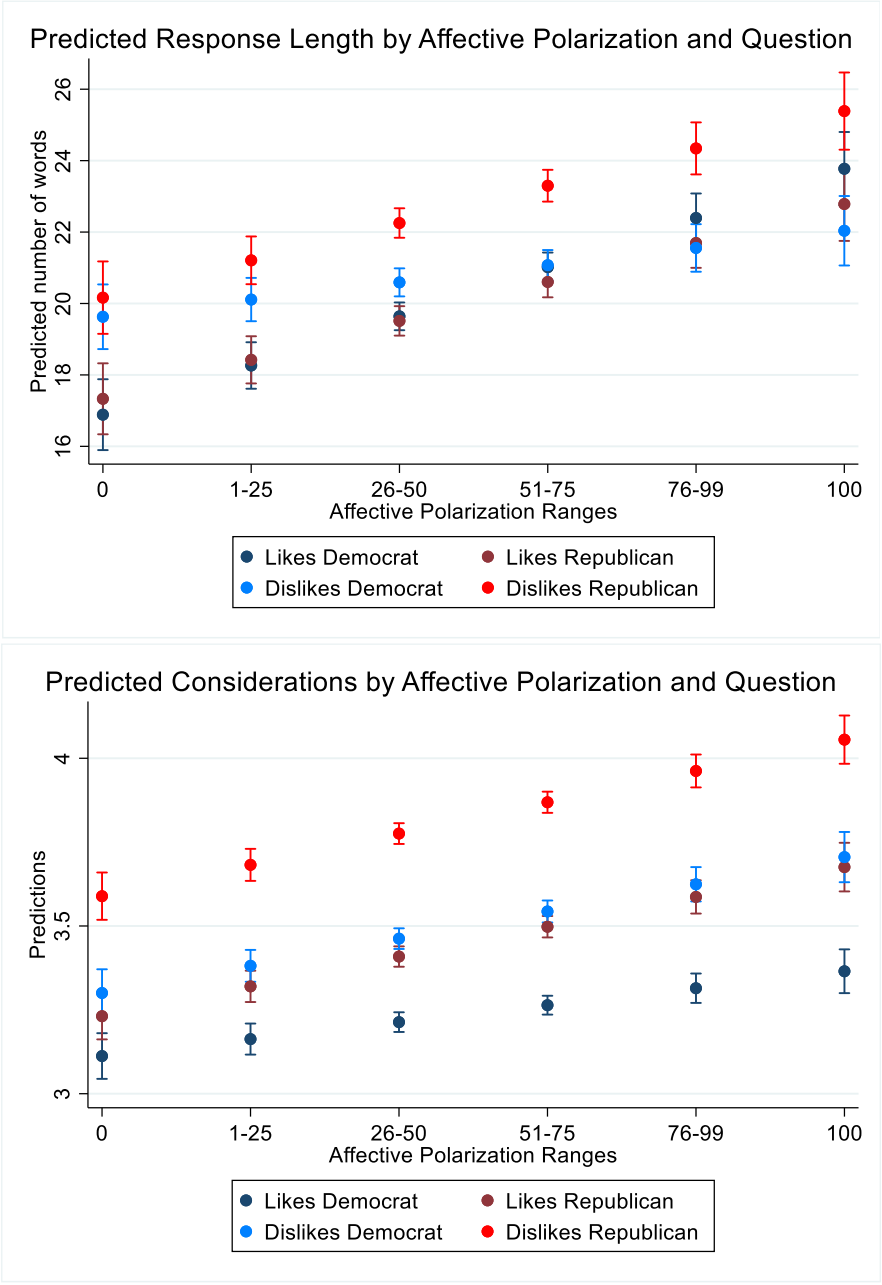
data, responses need to be significantly shorter than less partisan replies. Typical 'mindless' partisan answers are comparative and elaborate only a limited number of considerations (e.g.: "It's just the opposite. His honesty and his character." "He's just the opposite of Bush." "She's not Donald Trump/Democratic party traditionally has been more open programs (economic distribution).") I first use a proxy for complexity in the form of the number of words and different coded categories in the answers. As we will see later in this section, not all words and considerations voiced by the respondents are equal. Some point to greater complexity in the answers given. Still, the number of words and coded categories provide instructive yet imperfect proxies for complexity.

First, descriptive statistics reveal a limited degree of difference between the average response length for intense partisans (21.43) compared to the average for the rest of the sample (20.89). That difference is statistically significant at the .05 level but substantially minor. Besides, the modal number of words for both categories is four words.[2] This indicates that most answers are short and unidimensional. A full regression model switching back to affective polarization as the independent variable highlights a few additional discrepancies. The results of the ordinary least squares regression models are shown in Table 7.3. Predicted word counts computed based on the model are plotted in Figure 3.3 below. Interestingly, both the length and the number of considerations in the answers increase rather linearly as affective polarization increases among respondents. The increase is clearer in answers involving assessments of Republicans while negative evaluations of Democratic candidates barely reach a statistically significant difference across the entire range of affective polarization in the sample. Likewise, the results for the number

[2] This modal number seems low, but respondents – whether online or in person - were not asked to formulate sentences of grammatically correct utterances. Top-of-the-head considerations are common in these ANES evaluations.

of considerations also reveal more muted increases this time for “like Democrat” answers. On the contrary, fully affectively polarized respondents evaluating why they dislike Republicans are predicted to add about half an additional consideration compared to those who are not affectively polarized. In practical terms, affective polarization significantly enriches the rationalization for candidate evaluation both through lengthier and more complex statements. Respondents low on affective polarization concentrate on fewer different arguments to justify their choices. This points to the greater validity of the constrained perspective on partisanship over the mindless one.

Figure 3.3: Answer Complexity and Affective Polarization in the ANES




Using the typologies described above to divide the sample shows a similar tendency for archetypal answer patterns to be richer in terms of words and considerations (see Figure 7.2). Full results are shown in Table 7.3 and reveal a few interesting dynamics underlying the answer patterns. Partisan-ideological sorting does not play a consistent role across the different questions. This seems to indicate that sorting does not lead to either long-winded or shorter evaluative

expression. Internet surveys significantly diminish the complexity of the answers both in terms of length and evaluative diversity when compared to face-to-face surveys. Finally, perceiving a greater gap between the two candidates in terms of ideology – a proxy for perceived polarization – leads to significant increases in diversification of considerations, but the effect is not fully generalizable across the four questions and the effect sizes, when significant, are less substantial than for affective polarization.

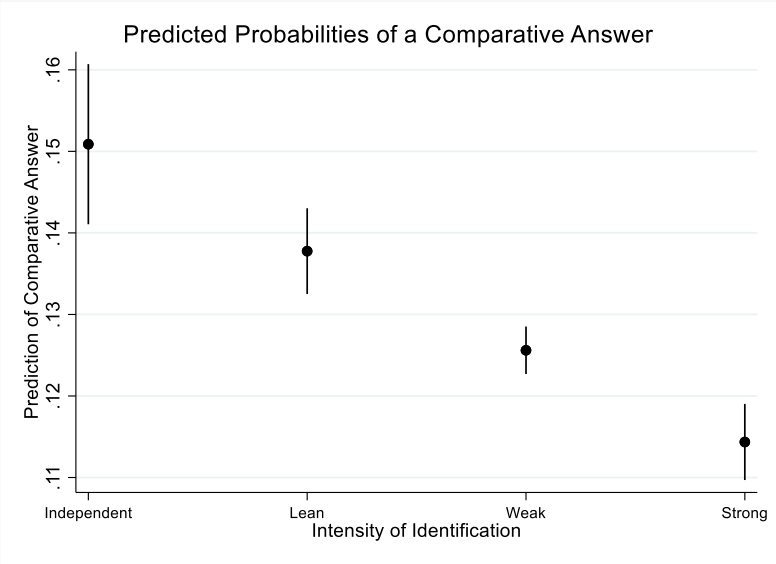
To continue this exploration, I turn to the content of the answers that I coded following the guidelines shown in Table 7.2. Even if it bears reiterating the shortcomings of the current version which lacks intercoder reliability, I provide a cautious overview of the findings in what follows. I start with a keystone of the perspective of knee-jerk partisanship that I highlighted in my hypotheses: comparative judgments. I coded any imbalanced comparison, comparative or superlative adjectives, and/or indication of relative considerations using the same dichotomous indicator[3]. Even though these comparative judgments may differ in countless other ways, they all present a thinking structure that relies on evaluating one candidate against the other. Do partisans do it more than non-partisans? Among partisans, does affective polarization isolate the considerations to focus myopically on the candidates separately or does it trigger a greater proclivity towards comparative observations?

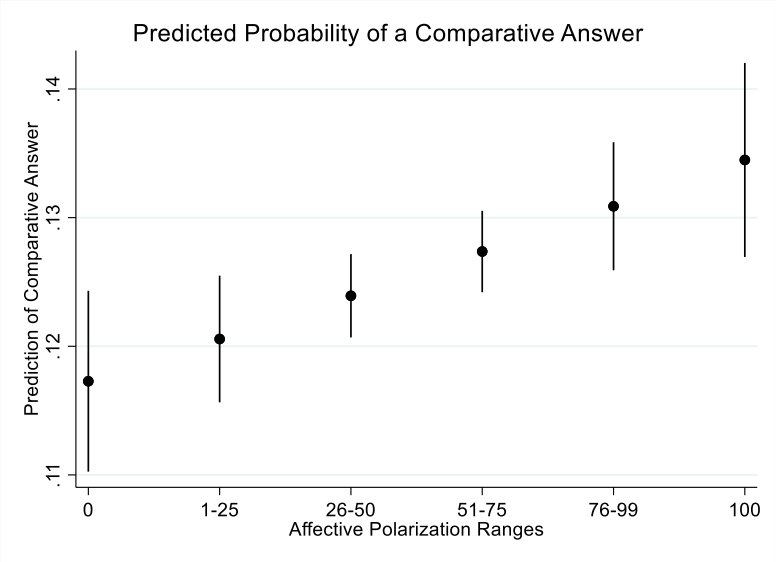
As shown in Figure 3.4, as partisan intensity increases, the propensity to make comparative judgments decreases. Independents are significantly more likely than strong partisans to explicitly base their evaluations of a candidate on how they compare to their opponents. Affective polarization points to a more muted effect in the opposite direction. Therefore, the evidence in

[3] Comparative responses that reflected ambivalence more than a clear comparative preference were coded using the 'ambivalent answer' variable that I will use later in the analysis.

favor of mindless partisans automatically formulating binary judgments is present. Yet, it is substantively limited. Comparative answers are both a greater part of the less partisan and the more affectively polarized parts of the sample. Results about ambivalent answers (shown in Figure 7.5) confirm the logic that partisanship reduces doubt in the evaluations. On the metric of comparative answers, neither the mindless nor the constrained perspective capture the trends in the sample's answers.

Figure 3.4: Probabilities of Comparative Answers in the ANES Sample



Now, the actual substance of answers could help to further dissociate these two perspectives. From the mindless partisan theoretical perspective, a greater dependence on labels in making judgments about candidates is theoretically intuitive. To the contrary, greater issue tenor as partisanship increases would be in line with the constrained partisan perspective. Descriptive trends are shown in Table 3.4. At first glance, mentions of personality are present in most responses from the pooled sample. This buttresses findings for elections prior to 1984 (Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk 1986). Issue-mentions come close to a majority while group-based concerns are scarcer in the responses. Interestingly, breakdowns by partisan identification do not reveal substantial differences across the sample in the content of the answers except for the reliance among Democrats on group-based considerations. This is in line with the asymmetric polarization literature which posits that the Democratic coalition is less ideologically rooted and more reliant on group-based interests (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016). More than partisan differences, the descriptive breakdown shows that those who score high (over 75) on the affective polarization scale are less likely to rely on issues in their evaluations and more likely to look at personality and group-based interests than those who score low (under 25) on that scale.

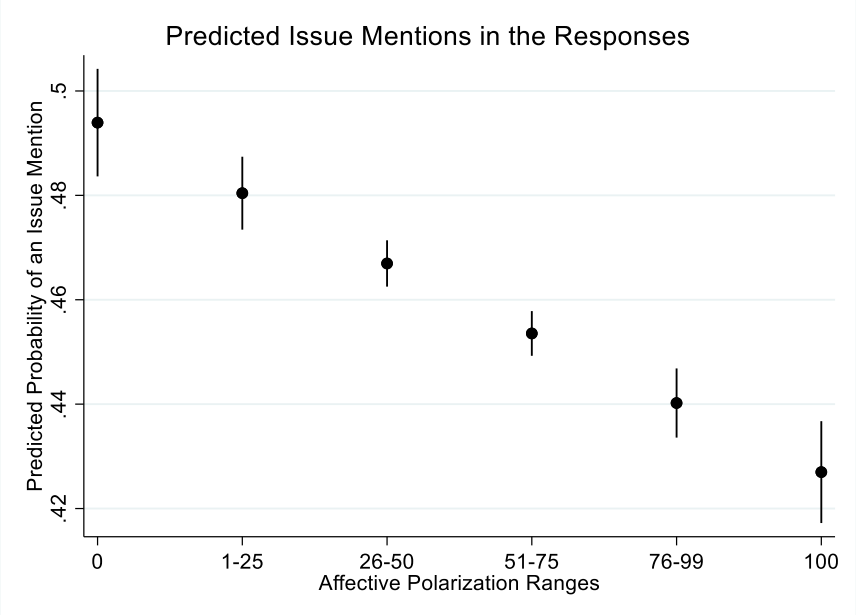
Table 3.4: Descriptive Distribution of Answer Content in the Sample

| Mentions in the Answers | Sample Size | Percent | Share of Total Republican Responses | Share of Total Democratic Responses | Share of Total Independent Responses | Respondents high on affective polarization (> 75) | Respondents low on affective polarization (< 25) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other Categories | 10,647 | 16.39 | 16.7 | 15.7 | 18.2 | 14.6 | 15.9 |
| Only Personality | 15,891 | 24.46 | 25.1 | 23.5 | 26.4 | 26.6 | 22.8 |
| Only Issues | 7,483 | 11.52 | 13.0 | 10.2 | 11.9 | 6.5 | 15.5 |
| Only Group | 2,249 | 3.46 | 3.7 | 3.4 | 2.7 | 4.7 | 2.6 |
| Personality and Issues | 6,695 | 10.30 | 11.8 | 9.1 | 10.1 | 6.4 | 13.3 |
| Personality and Group | 4,687 | 7.21 | 6.9 | 7.6 | 6.6 | 12.1 | 4.2 |
| Issues and Group | 7,649 | 11.77 | 10.4 | 13.0 | 11.4 | 9.2 | 13.8 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All Three | 9,670 | 14.88 | 12.4 | 17.4 | 12.7 | 19.3 | 11.9 |
| Total Mentions | 64,971 | | | | | | |
| Total Personality | | 56.85 | 56.2 | 57.6 | 55.8 | 64.4 | 52.2 |
| Total Issues | | 48.47 | 47.6 | 49.7 | 46.1 | 41.4 | 54.5 |
| Total Group | | 37.32 | 33.4 | 41.4 | 33.4 | 45.3 | 32.5 |

The results of a logit regression model confirm the significant decrease in the reliance on issue considerations for judgment as affective polarization rises among respondents. Furthermore, the effect is substantively notable with a .07 decrease across the range of affective polarization in the sample (see Figure 3.5). This provides support for the mindless partisan perspective. Further investigation is necessary to distinguish whether issues are less present in the free expression of affectively polarized partisans because they are genuinely less relevant or because they are internalized as part of a script that comes with partisan-ideological sorting and the clarity of the positions of each party coalition.

Figure 3.5: Issue Reliance at different levels of Affective Polarization

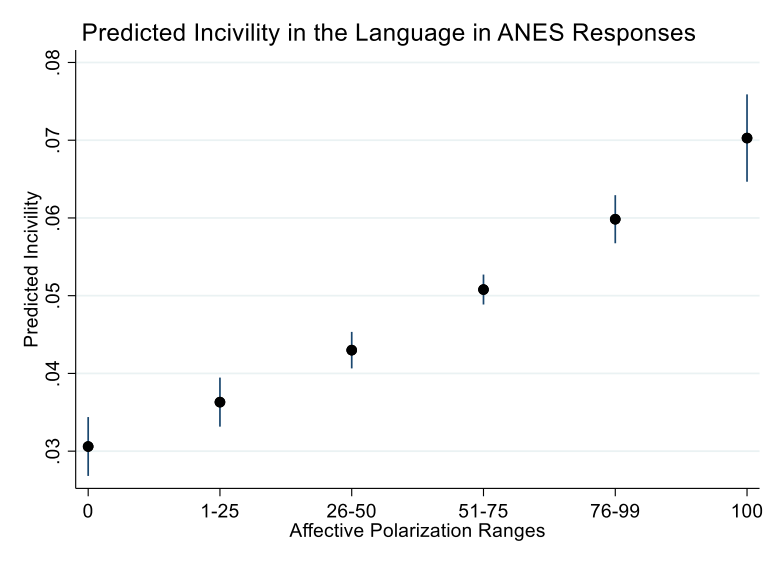


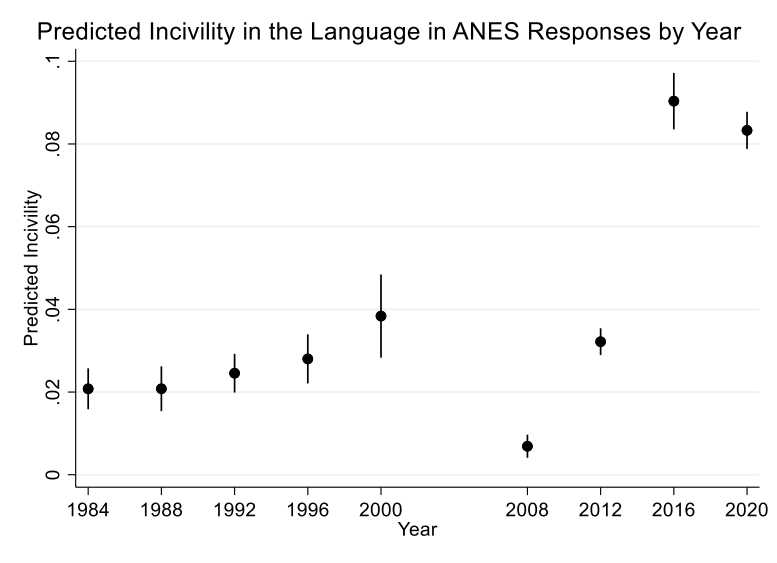

Nevertheless, as shown in Figure 7.4, automatic reliance on party or ideology labels has a low baseline (as shown previously in Lewis-Beck et al. 2009, 261) and is not significantly more

pronounced among the most affectively polarized respondents in the sample. Explicit references to labels in judgments are thus not more present among respondents who score high on affective polarization.

Finally, mindless partisanship combines more fervent involvement with more automatic responses. This provides a recipe for incivility to be more prevalent in the responses of affectively polarized respondents. Running a logistic model including the same set of secondary independent variables as above, I find this to be the case. Along with the decrease in issue centrality discussed above, the results for incivility support the mindless perspective on partisans. The predicted probabilities of an uncivil open-ended response double between the lowest and highest categories of the independent variable. Two caveats must be issued about these results. First, absolute probabilities remain relatively low, but this may be due to the conditions of the interviews. More tellingly, the 2016 and 2020 elections are almost exclusively driving the results as shown on the right side of Figure 3.6.

Figure 3.6: Incivility at different levels of Affective Polarization and by Election Year

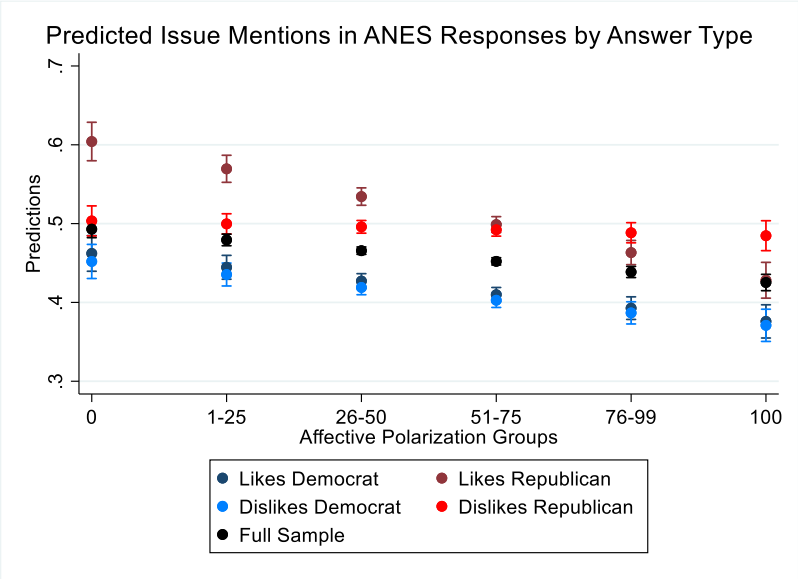



With these results in mind, there is limited support for the prototype of a mindless partisan in free expression. Respondents high on affective polarization are more loquacious, offer more complex justifications and are only marginally more reliant on comparative judgments when assessing candidates. They are not more likely to rely explicitly on partisan and ideological identity labels (Figure 7.4). The only metric pointing to a more mindless electorate is issue-centrism which is negatively correlated with affective polarization. However, these effects are primarily driven by

the ‘like Republican’ answers and provide only limited buoying to the mindless perspective (see Figure 3.7). The results buttress instead the idea that partisans who buy into the intergroup framework (proxied through affective polarization) enrich their rationalization of how they evaluate candidates. 2024 will provide an instructive test about whether that trend is continuing.

Figure 3.7: Issue Reliance at different levels of Affective Polarization and by Answer Type

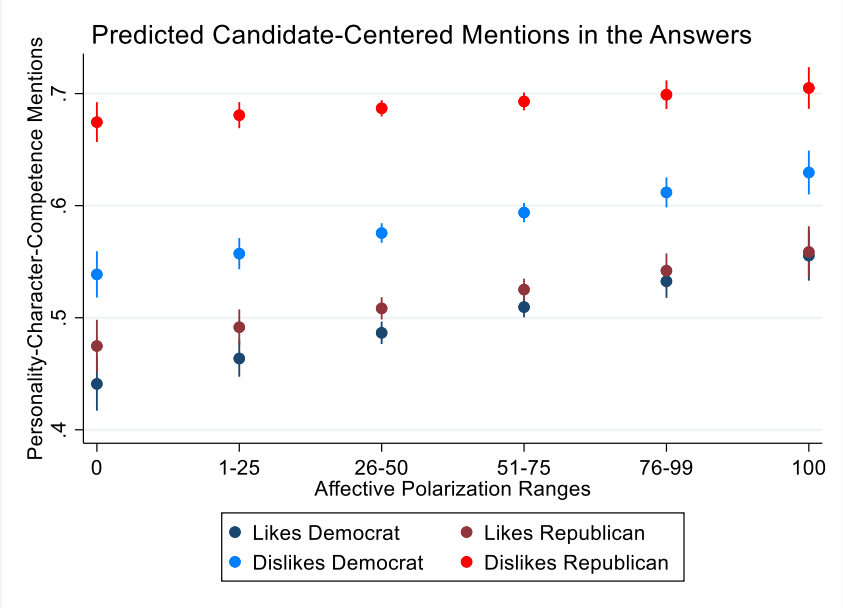



Overall, these results add nuance to depictions of mindless partisan fandom that we could see in arenas and stadiums around the country. Some cautionary words are in order before closing this section. As I highlighted before expanding on these results, the study is purely correlational and the current claims about mindlessness and constraint are not backed up by clear psychological insights into the response construction patterns at the individual level. Further research is needed to fully confirm that what I emphasized here is traceable to automatic thinking. The 2016 election also deviates from the empirical picture I provided. I surmise that this election reflected a momentary adaptation to the new partisan reality but my approach in this first chapter does not allow for an empirical test. Promising avenues for the confirmation of these mechanisms include looking into the time spent thinking prior to the formulation of the responses or conducting priming experiments with treatments seeking to increase or decrease partisan thinking before free expression.

### *3.4.3 Elite and Electorate Asymmetries*

Besides, the effects shown above are pooled. This begs the question of whether they are driven in part by partisan asymmetries within the electorate or evaluative differences when liking/disliking Republican/Democratic candidates. I reran the models separately for the four questions. Results shown above in Figure 3.7 add some nuance to the picture painted earlier. Yes, affective polarization decreases issue considerations, but issue centrality also seems more important when judging Republicans than Democrats. This is also supported with candidate-centric concerns as the dependent variable (see Figure 3.8).[4]

Figure 3.8: Candidate-Centered Considerations by Affective Polarization for the Four Questions



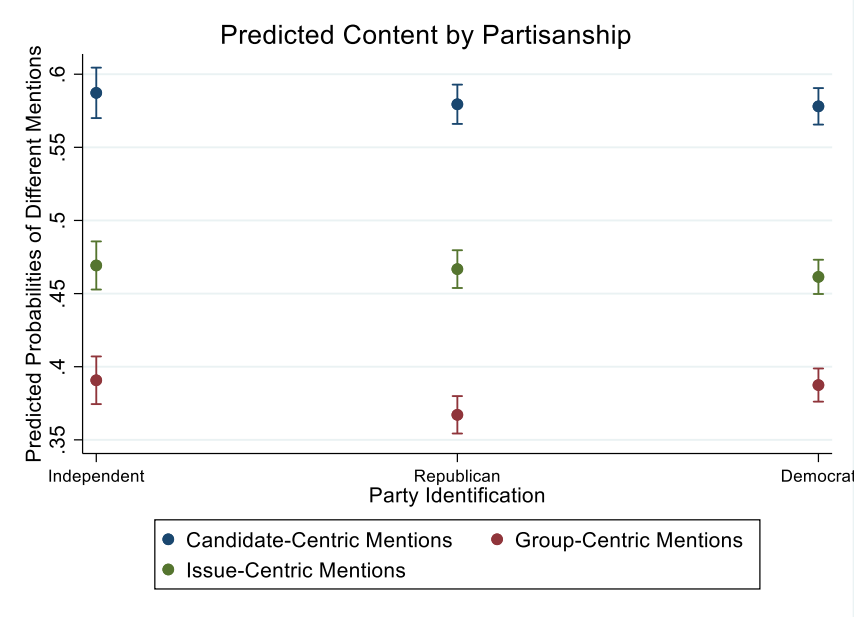

The record suggests that the asymmetry in issue tenor comes from elite packages. Republican candidates elicit more considerations across the board and more tellingly, they differ – for better or worse – insofar as the electorate evaluates them on issues to a greater extent than Democrats. Republican candidates elicit significantly more candidate-centered responses than

[4] It is worth mentioning that affective polarization positively correlates with a tendency to focus more heavily on candidate-centered characteristics across the board. Whether this reveals a broader pattern in which being affectively polarized leads to personalizing political questions is an interesting question for an extension.

Democratic candidates in dislike answers. Once again, the Republican ideological package is seen as more integral to what candidates bring to the campaign table. This shores up the elite asymmetry hypothesis.

These findings are not replicated when looking at partisan differences within the respondent sample. There is no significant difference across the sample based on partisan identification as shown in Figure 3.9 below. Only group-based evaluations are significantly more prevalent among Democratic respondents. There are signs that evaluative criteria are changing for the whole sample. Yet, using interaction terms between the eras and partisan identification reveals that these changes are not distinct across the partisan spectrum.

Figure 3.9: Considerations by Party Identification in ANES Answers




On the question of evaluative guidelines, I can conclude confidently that there is an asymmetry in what the parties are viewed as offering, but it is not paralleled in the evaluative framework used by partisans on different ends of the spectrum

## 3.5 Conclusion

Candidate choice in a two-party system escapes the logic of proliferation of options that characterizes modern decision making (Schwartz 2004). We could therefore expect that rationalizations for the preferences would be better developed. The empirical conclusions emerging from this study of freer expression entail complex ramifications. There is no clear theoretical fit based on relatively objective standards of quality that would account for the evaluations given by respondents across the sample. The main lessons drawn from this initial foray are threefold.

First, elite polarization restricts the dimensionality of candidate evaluations to parallel valence patterns. The "menu of choices" is becoming better tailored for partisan taste buds, but the packages delivered by the political elite are the only restaurant in town. Recent elections (2012 and 2020) reveal an accustoming to the political diet on offer – not exclusively imputable to affectively polarized respondents. The 2012 election best captures the shift. Contrary to expectations, it was not Obama's mere candidacy that triggered the evolution in answer dimensionality. Rather, the reaction to and dynamics during Obama's first four years consecrated a form of politics that left less room for non-parallel evaluative dimensionality. Somewhat ominously, citizens seem to be adopting partisan reflexes even when the question format leaves elbow room for different patterns to develop in response to more polarized choices on offer. This finding substantiates the that the electorate hardly resists the appeal of the partisan framework of options even if it may have been an overresponse to limited demand in the general electorate in the first place. The intensity and dimensionality that have defined politics in the last decade find an echo in the patterns of free expression by the masses.

Nonetheless, the constraints on the content of what respondents express reveal varying shades of automaticity. Automatic rationalization of partisan preferences finds support in the form of lower issue reliance, slightly greater comparative considerations, and greater fondness for occasional incivility in their expression of dislike. Still, affective polarization positively correlates with superficial indicators of more complex rationalizing. These include a greater quantitative wealth in the expression (word and consideration counts) and the absence of mindless reliance on identity labels. Qualitatively however, the findings that preference rationales are less issue-grounded, and more laser-focused on single candidates sketch the contours of an affective polarization that imposes blinkers on the respondents' judgments.

In conclusion, the free expression of political preferences is colored by the elite backdrop we have seen develop in recent decades. Given free rein, respondents – not only partisans – constrain their view of politics to the parallelism of the group-based interparty framework. They also adapt the rationalizations for their choices using considerations that are not issue-based or ideological.

In this chapter, I have helped confirm the degree to which the partisan framework has penetrated mass opinion in the U.S. Inferences that affective polarization permeates the thinking of the – engaged – electorate are borne out in an analysis of free expression. The room to a less polarized public seems to involve a return to pre-2012 menus of presidential options in which the room to deviate from archetypal polarization was wider.

Part of the content that fuels the perspective of public opinion comes from expressive partisans who display their preferences and enact their politics in public. This form of behavior has yet to receive sustained empirical attention. In what follows, I briefly introduce the concept of

expressive partisan behavior as a complement to partisan expression and present two experimental designs looking into the wider consequences of public expressive partisan behavior.

# 4 MAKE AMERICA GRATE AGAIN: EXPRESSIVE PARTISAN BEHAVIOR AND ITS EFFECT ON CONVERSATION AVOIDANCE

## 4.1 Literature and Significance

Wearing or using political merchandise is a typical example of expressive political behavior with underexplored ramifications. Expressing partisan politics is a deliberate choice to project an identity to the world. Such an action strays far away from instrumentally motivated actions and deserves an empirical look. In an era of polarization that anchors stereotypical partisan brands in our minds (Lee 2021; Shafranek 2021), partisan politics are creeping more and more into our daily lives. Sure, every street corner is not teeming with political messaging yet. Nevertheless, evidence of geographical stereotyping and the politicization of the landscape has abounded – especially during campaign seasons (Makse et al. 2019; Munis 2022). The spread of visible politics in the public threatens to emulate in real life the growth in group saliency that social media enabled online (Settle 2018).

Political merchandising has been a clear scholarly oversight in a deluge of partisanship studies. There exists journalistic evidence that candidate merchandising played an important role in campaign efforts especially for Obama in 2008 and Trump in the last two presidential elections. Data about the profitability of merchandise is quite elusive with no official figures being released but campaign communications can provide an indication of the scale of the phenomenon. For instance, the Trump camp has spent $10.5 million on merchandise between the start of 2017 and the spring of 2020. The former President's campaign gloated of having reached the bar of 1 million MAGA hats sold in April 2019, raking in an estimated $45 million in total before the 2020 (Brennan 2019). Besides, consistent with the idea that "people buy things not only for [the function of covering the body], but for what they mean," (Levy 1959, 118) a quick look at official Trump merchandising reveals 27 different items on sale with seven products attacking Joe Biden (Trump

Campaign 2023).[5] A "MAGA" search on Amazon results in 263 products ranging from unofficial MAGA hats to "Only You can Prevent Socialism" shirts to baby clothes stamped with the campaign slogan[6]. This could reflect an arguably one-sided need to show partisan colors and there does seem to be an asymmetry in enthusiasm which translates to more expressive partisanship on the Republican side. However, the boom of partisan merchandising took off in the 1990s (Small 2020) and coincides with the increase in elite and – to a lesser extent – mass partisanship documented above. Both sides have shown greater care in carefully crafting brands with strong expressive potential to foster a sense of community among in-partisans (Winther Nielsen 2017, 128). Even if Biden swag has had a lackluster popularity, recent creations lionizing figures such as Jack Smith, Anthony Fauci, or Robert Mueller show that the other side of the spectrum still has a market for expressive partisanship (Kurtz 2023; Thompson 2023). Besides, Obama's reliance on campaign merchandising testifies to the value found by elites in developing expressive partisanship (Lee 2011).

In turn, visible displays of partisanship can cause heated reactions. Comparisons between the MAGA hat and the KKK hood in the wake of the Charlottesville events (Wolf 2019) and inferences drawn about the high school students involved in the '2019 Lincoln Memorial confrontation' provide examples (CNN Staff 2019; Neville-Shepard and Neville-Shepard 2022). Beyond politics, these items have seeped into American entertainment. For instance, in a recent episode of "Curb your Enthusiasm," Larry David uses the hat as a form of expressive behavior to

[5] Official Biden merchandising is hosted on the Democratic party's online store which offers 23 products in its "Biden-Harris collection" including half that revolve around the figure of the President. There are no attack products available for sale in that section of the collection. Both the "Anti-Trump T-shirts" and "Anti-Biden T-shirts" Amazon searches yield over 1,000 results that vary in their degree of acrimony against the current and former Presidents. A few examples of the designs are included in Appendix 7.2.

[6] All searches (official websites and Amazon searches) were conducted on April 7th, 2023. As the election nears, more taglines will become part and parcel of the collection.

create discomfort in the people around him to get away from unwanted prior commitments (Curb your Enthusiasm 2020). Skits by *The Daily Show* correspondent Jordan Klepper at Trump-related events have also shown the centrality of expressiveness to these forms of political cheerleading (Comedy Central 2022). Using a simple experimental design, I measure whether that visible and affectively charged expression of partisanship actually functions as a people repellent by diminishing the likelihood of interparty communication.

Existing studies test the prospects for interpersonal communication across the spectrum. A long list of experiments finds that the prospect of inter-partisan conversations is a prospect that partisans balk at and find costly, whether in real life situations (e.g.: Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Settle and Carlson 2019; Shafranek 2021; Wells et al. 2017) or online (e.g. : Bessi et al. 2016 ; Garimella et al. 2018). None of these designs makes use of a visible form of partisanship during the Trump era. Hence, my main contribution is to assess the impact of a form of partisanship visible before any interaction can start.

### 4.2 Theory and Hypotheses

Partisanship is becoming more and more visible and stereotypical. Even in the absence of a deep divide, studying the effects of conspicuous signs of expressive political behavior is vital, especially for the prospects of future interaction. Indeed, as established in the cross-pressure literature, if the goal is to ratchet down the feistiness of polarization, the most beneficial political conversations are the ones we are most averse to (Huckfeldt 2007, Huckfeldt and Mendez 2008, Klar 2014). Heterogeneous discussion networks leave more room for attitudinal change than homogenous ones (Amsalem, Merkley, and Loewen 2022; Visser and Mirabile 2004). Unfortunately, the modern political structure and media diets discourage exposure to discord and cross-pressure (Hutchens, Hmielowski, and Beam 2019; Slater 2007; 2015; Thürmer and McCrea

2023). Real-life partisan residential sorting adds a layer of partisan insulation (Brown and Enos 2021).

Still, there are signs that the trend is reversible. First, public opinion professes an openness to reverting to more open discourse (Pew Research Center 2016) although political conversation elicits greater restiveness (Pew Research Center 2019). Second, the role of online echo chambers and selective exposure has been somewhat exaggerated because of dominant methodological approaches for its study (Bail 2022, Chapter 1; Barberá 2020; Guess et al. 2018; Nelson and Webster 2017). Lastly, Silver and Shaw (2022) find that the prospect of contentious conversation is not always shunned by the public. This glimmer of hope serves as a crutch in efforts to depolarize the electorate. For instance, Wojcieszak and Warner (2020) establish that the prospect and reality of intergroup contact can serve to de-polarize the electorate by eliciting empathy, perceived commonality, and curtailing anxiety between opposed partisans (see Baron et al. 2021; Fishkin et al. 2021; Hartman et al. 2022; Kubin et al. 2021; Parsons 2010; Rossiter 2021; although see Santoro and Broockman 2022). This hope is not doomed to the lab setting since Americans cannot and do not always screen out unwanted political conversations in their lives (Long, Eveland, and Slater 2019; Mutz and Mondak 2006; Wojcieszak and Mutz 2009). Yet, I theorize that the expressive display of partisan colors is more likely to make cross-party interaction a nonstarter.

Inspired by theories of differential processing in the presence of interpretable cues (Chaiken 1980; Petty and Cacioppo 1979; 1984; 1986**),** I expect that the reaction to the visible sign of partisanship among politically interested respondents will facilitate a form of system-one processing (Kahneman 2011) that hinges on the affective effects triggered by the hat. The mere presence of the hat will make the processing of the information a backseat concern especially in the absence of incentives to pay close attention. The discourse of the confederate in the video will

thus be processed based on the peripheral cue provided by the hat rather than on the actual content of the message. Therefore, the hat conditions will have stronger deterring effects on the respondents' willingness to communicate with a fellow or opposed group member:

$H_{Evaluations}$

*Compared to conditions without the MAGA hat, conditions featuring the item will have a negative impact across the sample on trait evaluations of the partisan in the video and feeling thermometers.*

$H_{Emotions}$

*The presence of the MAGA hat in the treatment will also increase self-reported negative emotions.*

$H_{Conversation}$

*The general perception of conversation as a solution to conflict and the specific willingness to have a political conversation with John will decrease in the presence of the MAGA Hat.*

Besides, I anticipate that the greater centrality of the partisan group identity to the self-concept will fuel greater internalization of symbols representing the out-group. This will intensify the interpersonal distancing hypothesized above.

$H_{PSI}$

*H igher levels of partisan social identity interact with the treatment and compound the negative evaluations and conversation avoidance effects hypothesized in the first two hypotheses.*

Finally, following the inputs of social categorization theory (Turner 1985; Turner et al. 1987) and out-group homogeneity theory (Judd and Park 1988; Ostrom and Sedikides 1992), we can expect that the clear communication of social group belonging will trigger a de-personalization of the out-group member (Hogg and Reid 2006; Hogg and Williams 2000). Perceptions of conformity to established partisan archetypes have behavioral consequences (see Ahler and Sood 2018; Egan 2020; Enders and Armaly 2019; Goldman and Hogg 2016). The salience of archetypes should thus be greater when the individual sports visible signs of partisanship. This would confirm

the role of casting the most extreme partisan exemplars as representatives of the out-party on meta-perceptions of polarization (Homola et al. 2023; Lees and Cikara 2020; 2021; Ruggeri et al. 2021). As a result, intraparty discord (Groenendyk 2018; Groenendyk, Sances, and Zhirkov 2020) and moderates get lost in the out-group homogenization process. Given these existing findings, I expect that:

$H_{Typicality}$

*Conditions where the MAGA hat is visible will lead respondents to categorize the individual as more typical of the Republican out-group[7] than when the confederate is stripped of the MAGA hat.*

Beyond the main effects of interest revolving around the hat, the other conditions can also be instructive. First, differences across the "no hat" conditions serve as a manipulation check on the strength of the treatments. Conciliatory conditions ought to lead to greater willingness to interact and less negative perceptions of the out-group and its members.

Furthermore, I specifically designed the 2022 version to play around the distinction between run-of-the-mill confrontational and uncivil criticism among partisans. I included an example of incivility through tone and the use of cursing in the video treatments. The treatment follows the conceptualization of personal incivility offered by Muddiman (2017) which revolves around violations of politeness. This dimension of incivility has been validated in and fits within the "utterance" cluster of Stryker et al.'s (2016, 548) study about public perceptions of incivility. The existing record about uncivil partisan behavior is primarily centered around online behavior and teaches ambivalent lessons (see Wang and Silva 2018). On the one hand, the penalty suffered by elites for uncivil political rhetoric has been documented (Carraro and Castelli 2010; Druckman

[7] Given the prevalence of Democratic and liberal identifiers in the sample, I do not dwell on the in-group dynamics that could result from the treatments. I would expect a similar rise in perceived prototypicality among in-group respondents, but I delay this exploration to further iterations of the study.

et al. 2019b; Frimer and Skitka 2018). Yet, the intoxication of engagement and the emboldening effects that uncivil behavior entails for strong partisans is alluring (Dryzek et al. 2019; Frimer et al. 2023; Kalmoe, Gubler, and Wood 2018; Lyu 2023; Muddiman and Stroud 2017; Newman et al. 2021; Yu, Wojcieszak, and Casas 2023). Even among elites, the same reasons partially explain why incivility often emerges as a deliberate political strategy (Harcourt 2012; Herbst 2010). Finally, incivility, no matter how normatively undesirable, is self-sustaining – especially online – and here to stay as a central part of our political discourse (Gervais 2014; Nithyanand et al. 2017). We know a little less about the penalty suffered by uncivil partisans compared to those adopting confrontational yet measured discourse. The current design allows for some insight into whether mere opposition is enough to induce social distancing or whether more substantial (verbal) aggressiveness is a mandatory added spark. I thus hypothesize that:

$H_{Incivility}$

> *Differences in willingness to talk to the out-partisan in the video will be more pronounced between the conciliatory and uncivil conditions than between the conciliatory and confrontational treatments. Spillover effects on general perceptions of the value of conversation should follow suit to a more limited substantive degree.*

This effect should be especially visible when the dependent variable focuses on political conversations (see Settle and Carlson 2019). However, the incivility conditions were only included in the second iteration of the experiment fielded in 2022. Hence, the effects may be too muted to emerge from the reduced sample size.

### 4.3 Methods and Design

To test these hypotheses about out-group avoidance and obfuscation effects induced by expressive partisanship, I have designed a 2*3 video experiment. Respondents watched a clip averaging thirty seconds in which a confederate was prompted to share thoughts on camera about the "state of polarization in this country."[8] Video treatments are fairly rare in political science because of concerns of mundane realism (e.g.: Dunning and Harrison 2010, 28). Nevertheless, they present advantages that text-based ones do not entirely match in terms of realism and persuasion (Wittenberg et al. 2021). They engage a greater range of our "sensual imagination" (Bates 2015, 2) and are better representative of the media era most of us evolve in (Postman 2005 [1985]). Specifically, younger generations who make up the bulk of the student samples are more familiar with video formats in their news and entertainment consumption (Twenge et al. 2019; Hari 2023).

I manipulate expressive partisanship by having the fictional partisan in the video wear a MAGA hat while delivering the message in half of the conditions. Selecting the MAGA hat was an obvious decision because it embodies the trend towards expressive partisanship. Nonetheless, this decision can be the object of valid criticism. As I demonstrated in Chapter 1, the 2016 race stands as a major outlier in terms of partisan automaticity. By selecting a treatment that focuses on an outlier, I run the risk of failing to capture neatly aligned partisan dynamics. The occasional salience of the rift between Always Trumpers and Never Trumpers within Republican elite circles points to the same direction (Amira et al. 2020; Barber and Pope 2019b; Siders and McGraw 2023). Yet, I maintain that selecting the MAGA hat is an acceptable tradeoff for four reasons. First, 2016

[8] To limit potential demand effects in the sample (see Lonati et al. 2018), I showed the following cover story prior to treating the respondents: "We organized politics roundtables around the state of Georgia ahead of the 2022 midterm elections. We invited partisans to have conversations to understand the other side a little better. We then gave participants ten minutes to prepare an answer to the question of what polarizes the country in 30 seconds. Those who agreed were then recorded on camera."

may have been an outlying election but there is now clear evidence of overwhelming Republican alignment with the figure of Trump (Amira 2022; Galvin 2020; Hopkins and Noel 2022; Murray 2023; Stevens 2021). Second, there is no equally popular alternative to the MAGA hat (see Appendix 7.2). I initially considered using hats that would make supportive references to Republicans or conservatives as groups but there are currently no examples that have made a remotely similar splash in popular culture as the MAGA hat. I also pondered using attack hats that insult Democratic elites (Let's Go Brandon) or lampoon Democratic or liberal masses (e.g.: "Libtard", "Liberal Snowflakes" references…) but introducing an attack on the respondent in-group has different psychological implications from bolstering the out-party. Third, exploratory data from a 2021 field study supports the idea of full-fledged rejection of the MAGA hat among non-Republicans (see Appendix 7.2). Finally, any distortion of the effects that would result from selecting this hat would tend to skew downwards rather than exaggerate the findings.

The messaging variation falls into three different conditions. In 2020, I used a conciliation and a confrontation treatment, as well as a placebo condition in which respondents were treated with the confederate giving a statement about college sports. In 2022, I switched the focus to effects across conditions and replaced the placebo with an uncivil treatment. Greater sample sizes would allow to adopt more recommended approaches such as including both a placebo and a baseline condition on top of the actual experimental treatments (Gerber et al. 2010; Porter and Velez 2022). I take great care in making across-condition comparisons in presenting the results without assuming a real-world baseline of 'untreated' behavior. However, the three conditions in 2022 are valuable insofar as they entail different democratic implications given the degree and tenor of the interpersonal interaction they conjure up. Table 4.1 presents the study population. Full scripts of the treatment are available in Table 7.5

Table 4.1: Experimental Conditions with n-sizes and Fielding Details

| 2020 | Message Type | Conciliation | Confrontation | Control |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No Hat | Condition 1 (18) | Condition 2 (18) | Condition 8 (21) |
| | MAGA Hat | Condition 4 (30) | Condition 5 (27) | Condition 7 (16) |
| 2022 | Message Type | Conciliation | Confrontation | Uncivil |
| | No Hat | Condition 1 (31) | Condition 2 (23) | Condition 3 (33) |
| | MAGA Hat | Condition 4 (26) | Condition 5 (34) | Condition 6 (21) |
| | | Total Sample Size | Fielding Dates | Fielding Method |
| | 2020 Student Sample | 130 | 3/24/2020 – 4/27/2020 | Online Political Science Research Pool |
| | 2022 Student Sample | 168 | 09/06/2022 – 10/9/2022 | Online PSRP |

*Conditions 5 and 6 were added in the 2022 version of the study. The 2020 version includes two placebo conditions with a non-political video message (Conditions 7 and 8).*

For both Chapters 2 and 3, the laboratory experiment method presents important flaws. The crisis of replication in social sciences that undermined the validity of foundational findings made a dent in the viability of convenience samples (e.g.: Chang and Li 2015; Hensel 2021; Shrout and Rogers 2018). Questions of external validity are unavoidable (Levitt and List 2007; Druckman and Kam in Druckman et al. 2011, 41-42; Druckman et al 2021; Peterson and Merunka 2014). A field experiment variation of this study would add a lot of value (Druckman et al. 2011, 7) and merchandise sales at rallies could provide a perfect setting. For pragmatic reasons of funding, I stuck to the designs presented below.

Despite those caveats, some elements in the study provide a degree of confidence about the leads being explored. First, as shown in Table 4.1, multivariate tests on means reveal that the mean values in the different conditions are likely not different on partisanship and demographic variables. Randomization is not perfect numerically, but this is to be expected in randomization processes (Mutz and Pemantle 2015, 198). Second, external validity is not the strong point of convenience samples (Druckman and Kam in Druckman et al. 2011, 44-45) but the internal

validity of the design established here will allow for future extensions to samples better able to generalize. In addition, students taking part in these chapters' experiments were not probed to react to arcane political concepts. The MAGA hat and January 6th have been salient elements of popular culture and news. There is little reason to expect major confounding effects that would make the effect of the treatment widely distinct from what a better-quality sample could reveal (Kam, Wilking, and Zechmeister 2007, 420-421). The universal nature of the effects can placate part of the validity concerns (McDermott 2013, 608). Finally, research has shown that convenience samples from student bodies "can play a fruitful role as research agendas progress" (Mullinix et al. 2015, 111) while low-cost alternatives such as Mturk do not necessarily represent a tangible improvement over student samples (Krupnikov and Levine 2014, 77-78; Kees et al. 2017). Published articles fully relying on undergraduate samples are on the decline (Krupnikov, Nam, and Style in Druckman et al. 2021, 168) but they remain useful first steps. Getting to a more generalizable partisan American public is in order but I treat the current work as theoretical and practical rehearsing.

I fielded two sessions of the experiment on undergraduates enrolled in the Political Science Research Pool (PSRP) at Georgia State University. Participation was incentivized with 0.5% extra credit. Over two thirds of the 2022 sample is female (66.1%), and self-identified Asian Americans (33.3%), and African Americans (41.1%) make up a greater share of the sample than their presence in the general population while white respondents are underrepresented compared to the population (20.2%). Besides, the sample is overwhelmingly young (97% of the sample is under 29) as can be expected with an undergraduate sample. Finally, the partisan and ideological distribution in the sample does not allow for enough variation to test potential positive or reinforcing effects of the MAGA hat on Republican respondents. Indeed, only 6.6% of the sample

identifies as Republican. 70.2% of the sample used here self-identifies as Democratic with different levels of intensity while 65.2% self-report liberal leanings. This is a blessing in disguise insofar as I am interested primarily in out-party effects among Democratic respondents. I run the models shown below without Republican identifiers. Independents are included because they exhibit attitudinal responses mostly indiscernible from Democrats. Attention checks show a good degree of student engagement with the study. First, I embed a Qualtrics module to the treatment to check the time between the first and last click on the treatment page. The check confirms the reception of the treatment.[9] Asking the respondents for the name and clothing style of the confederate in the video shows a good degree of attention. Only 12% of respondents failed both manipulation checks. Excluding them from the analyses shown below does not alter the results discussed.

To test my hypotheses, I administer the same post-treatment survey questionnaire across conditions. First, I include a manipulation check probing whether respondents correctly associate the MAGA hat with Republican partisan identity.[10] Then, I turn to my main dependent variables of interest: trait ratings, self-reported feelings, conversation variables, as well as feeling thermometer evaluations of the partisan in the video, Donald Trump, and the Republican Party. I include these three targets to gauge whether the effects of expressive partisanship extend from masses to elites. Previous studies have pinpointed that partisan disdain is much more developed when looking at elites compared to mass-level targets (Druckman and Levendusky 2019; Kingzette 2021). I measure the willingness to have a conversation with the partisan in the video

[9] Participants who spent an excessively long time on the page were excluded. The option to skip to the next page only appeared after the respondents had spent 40 to 45 seconds on the page (ten seconds longer than the duration of the video treatment.)
[10] 91% of the sample in 2022 identified John as a Republican showing a reliable reception of the treatment.

on two five-item Likert scales (one about politics, the other about sports, travel or entertainment). Five-item self-reports of anger, fear, disgust, and pride shown in the video follow.

For the perceptions of prototypicality and homogeneity of the out-group, I use a measure of agreement with the statement: "The man in the video looks like a typical Republican." I also probe spillover effects by asking the respondents' agreement with a more general statement: "Republican supporters all think the same way."

I include an original 8-item partisan social identity scale to revamp partisan measurement. Political scientists often use unidimensional scales of partisan social identity in which the questions allegedly tap into a single factor. Building upon previous work by Brown et al. (1986), Cameron (2004) empirically establishes the benefits of conceptualizing social identity as being made up of "cognitive centrality" (the prominence of the group in how we perceive ourselves,) "ingroup affect" (emotional attachment to the group construct,) and "ingroup ties" (proximity to other ingroup members). I follow that lead in my scale and disaggregate the partisan social identity scale (summarized in Table 4.2).

I add a last component to that scale based on the evidence that partisanship can serve as a negational identity that seeks to maximize distinctiveness from a loathed other side (Abramowitz and McCoy 2019; Zhong et al. 2008; Webster and Abramowitz 2017). The effects of negative partisanship differ from the ones uncovered for positive partisanship (Bankert 2020a). To account for these different partisan profiles, I add Bankert's (2020a) questions tapping into negational identity in my social identity questionnaire.

Table 4.2: Partisan Identity Scale and its Components

| Concept | Measurement (5-item Agreement with): |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| Cognitive Centrality | "When talking about [Democrats/Independents/Republicans], how often do you use "we" instead of "they"?"<br><br>"How important is being a [Democrat/Independent/Republican] to you?" (Huddy et al. 2015) |
| Ingroup Affect | "In general, I'm glad to be a [Democrat/Independent/Republican]."<br><br>"Generally, I feel good when I think about myself as a [Democrat/Independent/Republican]." |
| Ingroup Social Ties | "I have a lot in common with other [Democrats/Independents/Republicans]"<br><br>"I really "fit in" with other [Democrats/Independents/Republicans]" |
| Negational Identity | ""When people criticize the [out-party], it makes me feel good."<br><br>"When I meet someone who supports [the out-party], I feel disconnected." |

Despite the limited sample sizes, exploratory factor analysis remains valuable (Hair et al. 2010; Sapnas and Zeller 2002). The results reveal the prevalence of a single factor. Even though the negative partisanship items load relatively poorly on the main factor in the scale (see Table 7.4) and display distinct trends in a correlation matrix of the eight variables, I leave them in the scale in this first iteration of the work given that comprehensively, the 8-item scale reaches a respectable degree of internal validity among partisans: $\alpha = .83$ for Democrats ($\alpha = .77$ for Republicans). Rerunning the models shown below with the 6-item scale does not alter the results shown.

Lastly, I include more traditional independent variables. Partisan-ideological sorting is calculated following Mason's methodology (2013).[11] Although these post-treatment measures could be biased by the treatment itself, feeling thermometer differences are included for affective polarization (both at the candidate and party level). To control for the respondents' perceptions of polarization in the country along racial and partisan lines, I include two novel perceptual measures

[11] The self-reported position on the ideological scale is subtracted from the partisan position and then reverse coded to provide an index of sorting.

of racial and partisan polarization.[12] Finally, the study features the traditional 3 and 7-item partisan and ideological self-identification. I add usual demographic variables (age, education, income, gender, race/ethnicity) as well as questions tapping into political knowledge, trust in government, rankings of issue importance, propensity to share political views with friends, and an index of political participation in the ballot box and beyond modeled after Huddy et al. (2015). Guarding against the declining quality of answers near the end of the questionnaire, demographics are in the last part of the survey (see Galesic and Bosnjak 2009).

## **4.4** Results

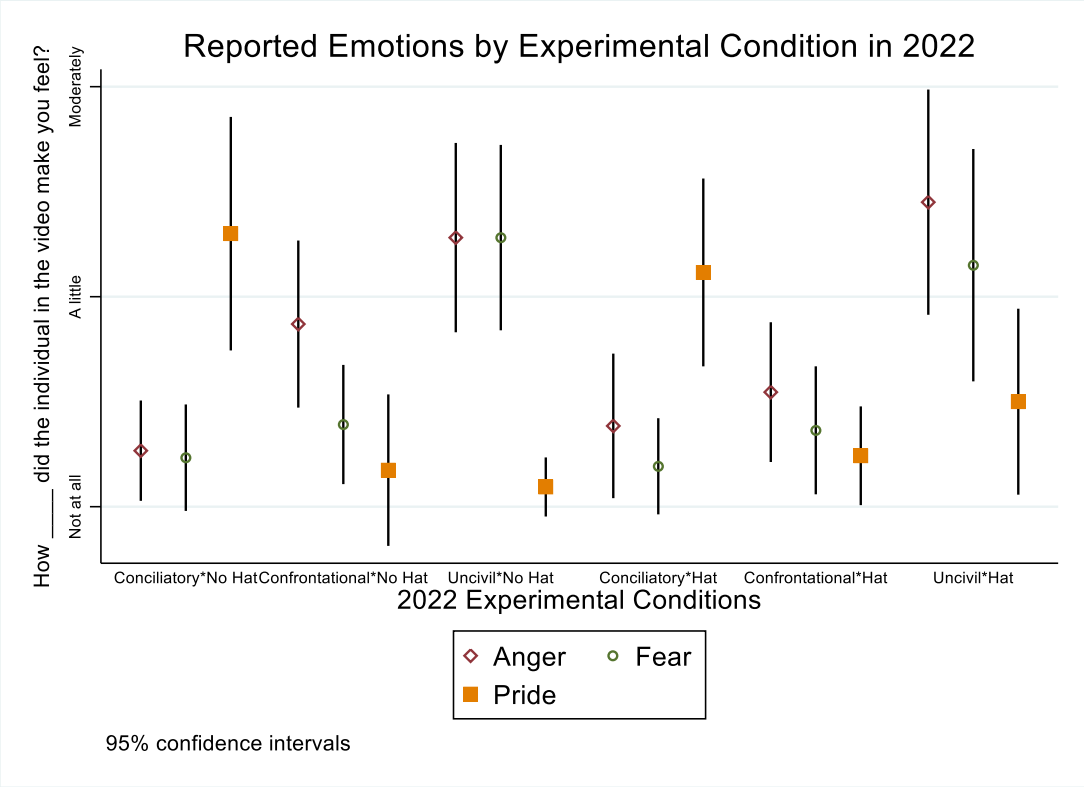
With these limitations in mind, the data allows for an exploratory test of the effect of the MAGA hat on the Democratic out-group. In what follows, I discuss most of the results of the 2022 version of the experiment because of its greater sample size and cleaner experimental categorization. The gap between the two studies begets a degree of uncertainty about whether the experimentally induced variations lead to differences or whether intervening variables confound the relationships. I present descriptive results for the variables of interest in Table 7.6. Three main takeaways are discussed in what follows. Most importantly, the effect of expressive partisanship in the form of the hat is not significant. Interestingly, messaging reveals much more significant and sizable effects on the variables of interest. Finally, the effects uncovered are specific to the target in the experiment and do not spill over to elite targets and/or general questions.

To test the hypothesis about the effects of the hat on confederate evaluations and respondent emotions, I plot the averages for emotions reported in the 2022 sample (see Figure 4.1).

[12] The measure is an original 0 to 10 barometer rating answering the questions: "Some journalists and academics claim that the country is divided politically/along racial lines. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is not divided at all and 10 is extremely divided, how divided would you say American society is divided politically/along racial lines?"

First of all, it bears mentioning that the average emotions reported here cluster in the lower half of the 5-point scale with most averages in the 1 to 3 range. This suggests a limited treatment effect across the board in both studies.

Figure 4.1: Average Reported Emotions in the 2022 Experiments




Based on these results, the hat does not elicit significantly different reported levels of pride, anger, or fear when compared to the same conditions from which it is absent. More than expressive posturing seems to be needed to whip up the expected distance. Furthermore, uncivil messages in 2022 (and confrontational ones in 2020 (see Figure 7.8)) do seem to increase self-reported anger and fear as well as lower levels of pride.

I then used logistic regressions with three different dependent variables: trait attributions, feeling thermometers and respondent self-reported feelings. Starting with the trait attributions, the

data tenders complex yet interesting results. In each of the models presented below, I re-code the dependent variables as dichotomous with the moderate options being included as positive values. The 0 values are made up of "not at all" and "slightly" responses. I opted for that breakdown for practical and theoretical reasons. Responses at and above the midpoint indicate a degree of hope for depolarization prospects that below-average responses do not. Besides, on these different variables, the samples' answers tended to cluster below the midpoint. Table 4.3 shows the effects of exposing respondents to the different experimental conditions. The full models include demographic (age, gender, education, income, and dummies for race) and political variables (ideology, political knowledge, assessments of political and racial division, and frequency of political talk). Once more, there is little evidence showing a direct causal effect of the MAGA hat on most of the dependent variables. The only statistically significant exception comes in the form of an increase in reported anger between the two conciliatory conditions. When it comes to reported emotions, trait ratings, or feelings, the takeaway is that using the MAGA hat as a prime of expressive identity does not single-handedly cause evaluative rejection or emotional tension on a Democratic sample. It bears reiterating that the design of the treatments could be to blame. Perhaps the treatment is too subtle to trigger the rejection effects hypothesized, but I designed it on purpose to be a minor nudge towards peripheral processing. These results are in line with other behavioral studies that show that partisan affective distance has its limitations and would require clearer triggers than mere imagery to spur prejudice (Broockman, Kalla, and Westwood 2020; Lee et al. 2022; Lelkes and Westwood 2017; West and Iyengar 2022; Westwood, Peterson, and Lelkes 2019; Westwood et al. 2022).

Nevertheless, the experiments reveal consistent evidence of a substantial effect of uncivil messaging in expression. With the exception of the racist trait rating, incivility consistently elicits

significantly and substantially more negative evaluations of the partisan target and self-reported emotions when compared to the conciliatory conditions. These results do not extend as clearly to confrontational conditions and empirically bespeak the need to separate confrontational and uncivil messaging. For instance, the size of the effects shown in the OLS feeling thermometer model show a sizable increase in the penalty incurred by individuals indulging in uncivil rhetoric compared to those who are merely confrontational. Besides, contrary to uncivil messaging, confrontational stances do not induce fear and anger and there is no evidence of an effect on the 'racist' trait ratings.

Table 4.3: Shortened Models for the 2022 Experiment (excluding Republican Respondents)

| | Term Intelligent | Term Racist | Fear | Anger | FT John | Typical Republican | Political Conversation | Non-Political Conversation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Logit Model (1) | Logit Model (2) | Logit Model (3) | Logit Model (4) | Ordinary Least Squares Model (5) | Logit Model (6) | Logit Model (7) | Logit Model (8) |
| Experimental Conditions (Baseline Condition: Conciliatory*No Hat[13]) | | | | | | | | |
| Confrontational *No Hat | -1.47** | 0.86 | 1.279 | **1.960**** | **-25.83***** | **2.77***** | **-3.11***** | *-1.365** |
| | (-0.67) | (-0.99) | (-1.27) | (-0.99) | (-7.18) | (-0.67) | (-0.74) | (-0.723) |
| Uncivil*No Hat | **-2.27***** | *1.416** | **3.30***** | **2.63***** | **-34.72***** | **2.14***** | **-3.48***** | **-2.02***** |
| | (-0.73) | (-0.859) | (-1.095) | (-0.912) | (-7.41) | (-0.66) | (-0.74) | (-0.663) |

[13] Since I removed the placebo condition in the 2022 version, comparisons to this baseline category represent comparisons to a democratic ideal of behavior instead of an actual baseline of untreated behavior.

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Conciliatory*Hat | 0.115 | 0.386 | 1.018 | 1.355 | -2.608 | 0.58 | -1.666** | -0.532 |
| | (-0.63) | (-1.018) | (-1.336) | (-0.97) | (-6.878) | (-0.743) | (-0.707) | (-0.689) |
| Confrontational*Hat | **-1.87*** ** | 0.541 | 0.25 | 0.201 | **-21.67*** ** | **2.257** * | **-2.669*** ** | -0.518 |
| | (-0.64) | (-0.92) | (-1.5) | (-1.13) | (-6.15) | (-0.67) | (-0.66) | (-0.65) |
| Uncivil*Hat | **-2.6*** ** | 1.279 | **3.64*** ** | **2.64*** ** | **-34.61*** ** | **2.94*** ** | **-3.94*** ** | -1.739 |
| | (-0.84) | (-0.95) | (-1.05) | (-0.941) | (-8.31) | (-0.73) | (-0.88) | (-0.70) |
| Constant | 1.89 | -2.56 | -6.72** | -2.57 | 47.25** | -2.78 | 0.95 | -0.36 |
| | -1.81 | -2.25 | -2.73 | -2.32 | -21.47 | (-1.88) | (-2.17) | (-1.97) |
| Observations | 156 | 156 | 156 | 156 | 156 | 156 | 156 | 156 |

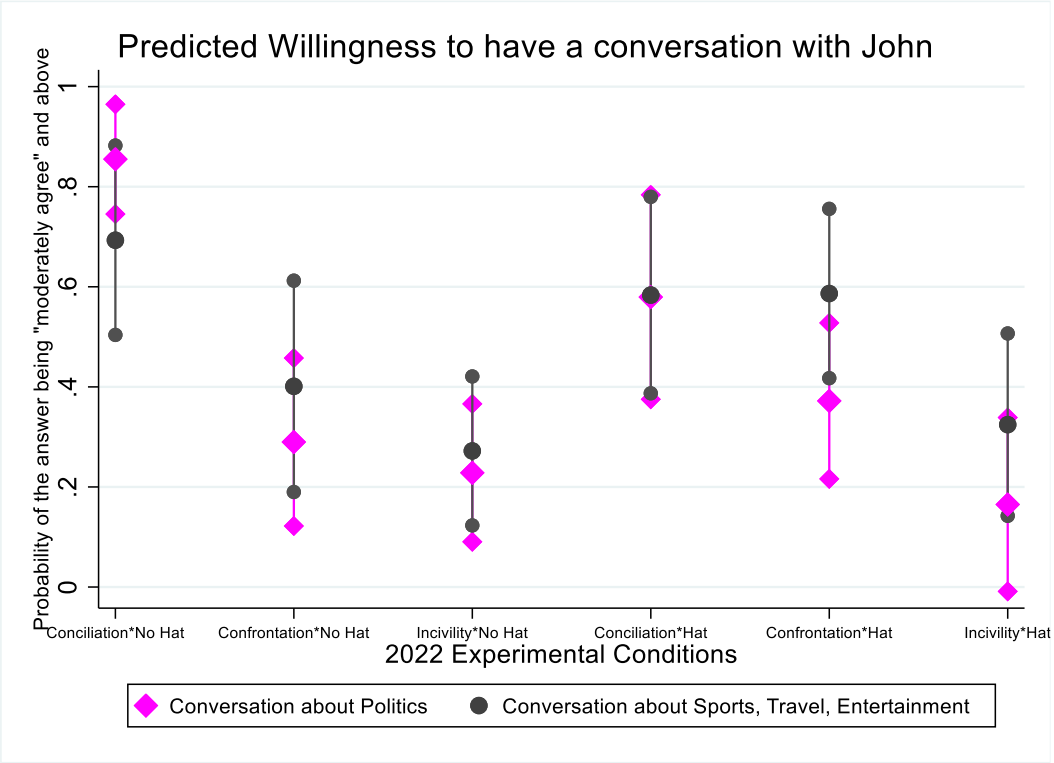
Robust standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The results on the conversation variables for the Democratic/Independent sub-sample point to a similar direction. No significant differences across similar messaging conditions with and without the hat except for a difference between the two conciliatory conditions when it comes to the willingness to have a political conversation. The hat does seem to induce a decrease in willingness to talk politics with the out-partisan (significant at the .05 level). This does provide limited support for $H_{Conversation}$. Further research is needed for confirmation here.

Once again, differences in messaging between conditions are conducive to significant decreases in the willingness to interact with the out-partisan. However, these effects are not significant on non-political conversations or general perceptions of the value of conversation as a problem solver (see Figure 4.2). This suggests that there are limitations on the potential of a single encounter with an expressive partisan to spill over into generalized prospect of intergroup conversation. The absence of significant effects of the different treatments on elite feeling

thermometers corroborates the difficulty of triggering spillover effects with such treatments (see Table 7.6).

Figure 4.2: Predicted Probabilities of Conversation Openness in the Democratic/Independent Sub-Sample



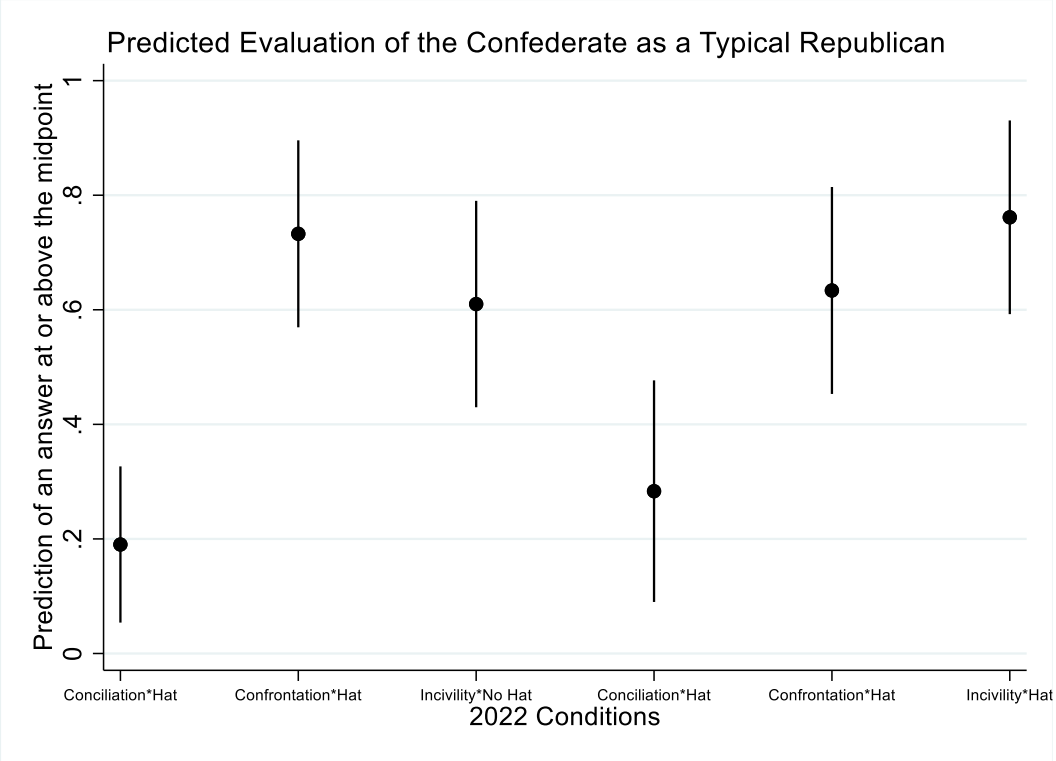

Interestingly, across the different models, the political variables also fail to reach conventional levels of significance for the most part. Perceived racial division in the U.S. correlates positively with reported anger and fear, which indicates a degree of racial spillover into political considerations. Strikingly, the effect of perceived political division goes in the opposite direction and correlates with a decrease in reported fear among respondents.

Additionally, I hypothesized that the hat would lead to perceptions of the partisan in the video as typical of Republicans in general (HTypicality). Again, that hypothesis can be safely rejected. Empirically, the messages of animosity significantly increase perceptions of

prototypicality compared to conciliatory messages. The predicted probabilities of perception of average or greater than average prototypicality show a steady increase across the range of messaging abrasiveness in the conditions. Going from the conciliatory*no hat to the uncivil*hat condition sees a massive .67 increase in the predicted probability of perceiving typicality (see Figure 4.3). This is revealing that in the minds of Democratic and Independent respondents in the sample, an uncivil partisan is more typical of Republicans as a whole than an individual pronouncing words of conciliation or even run-of-the-mill confrontation. In line with Druckman et al.'s (2022) findings, exemplars of partisan extremism are more preeminent in the mental pictures that partisans draw of rank-and-file out-partisans. Here, the results are even more specific with the norm of perceiving partisan incivility as typical of the out-group being quite empirically clear despite the study's shortcomings.

To summarize, if these results are taken at face value, they indicate that reasonable messages of conciliation or even sometimes confrontation offset the potential impact of a partisan cue on the willingness to talk to partisans. This lack of effect makes the likelihood of an interactive effect with partisan social identity spelled out in the second hypothesis implausible. Still, there are some interesting dynamics revealed by that scale that traditional measures do not reveal.

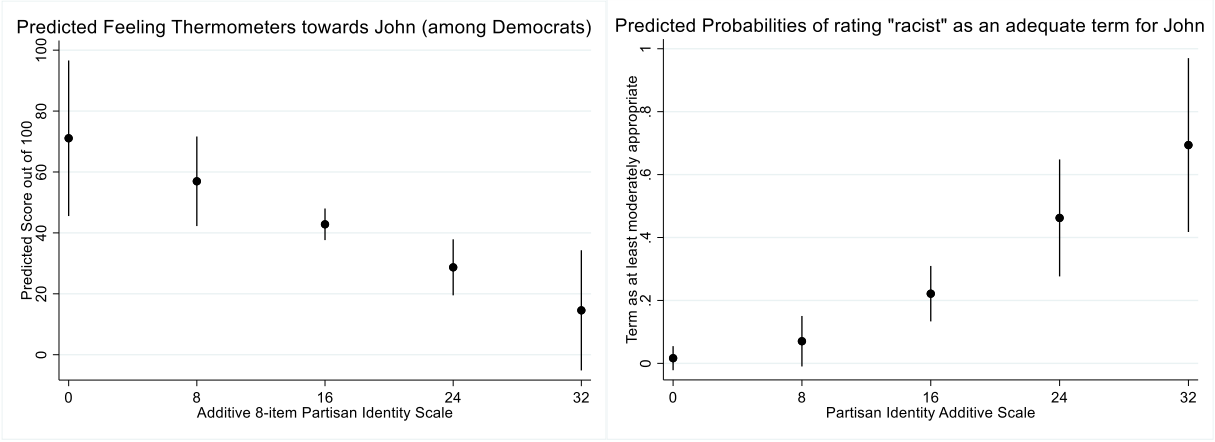
Figure 4.3: Predicted Probabilities of viewing the confederate as a typical Republican




Due to issues with some of the partisan identity questions in the first version of the experiment, the full partisan identity scale is only available in 2022 for 106 out of 118 total Democratic respondents. Interactions with the treatment conditions were not significant at this stage. In spite of these limitations, there are interesting signs that the partisan identity measure plays a role that was not captured by partisan intensity or ideology in the previous models. Figure 4.4 show the predicted feeling thermometers evaluations by partisan social identity. The full additive scale goes from 0 to 32. Those who score above the midpoint show a considerably greater tendency to reject the fictional partisan. The measure also positively correlates with the propensity to think that the term ‘racist’ fits John’s description, but the significant result is based on a sample size of 78 Democrats. Besides, the impact of partisan social identity on the perceived adequateness of the term ‘intelligent’ for John does not reach statistical significance among the same sub-sample. Caution is thus warranted in generalizing these results. An interaction term between a dichotomous

variable for high partisan social identity scores and the hat conditions fails to reach statistical significance. This further reinforces the conclusion that within the conditions of this project, the hat is viewed as a cosmetic prop of limited importance when weighed against different forms of actual partisan rhetoric.

Figure 4.4: Predicted Confederate Feeling Thermometer Scores/Racist Trait Rating by Partisan Social Identity among Democrats




## 4.5 Conclusion

Pragmatically, this study outlines the contours of a bitter ambivalence in the dynamics of interpersonal mass polarization. On the one hand, except for a couple of exceptions, a visual prop of expressive partisanship fails to elicit significant decreases in social evaluations, prototypical perceptions of, or the willingness to have a conversation with an out-partisan. That unexpected finding is reassuring practically because it indicates that interpersonal judgment is not automatic because of the presence of cosmetic expressions of partisanship. The absence of significant differences in the results also suggests that the MAGA hat is regarded as an integral part of Republican identity. This confirms the earlier focus on the increasing irrelevance of Never Trump conservativism post-2016. On the other hand, the rest of the results is quite ominous when considered in conjunction. The null results for the MAGA hat would be reassuring if a baseline of

good will in interpersonal relations was the norm to come out of the other manipulations. That is clearly not the case for two reasons. First, incivility has a negative impact on perceptions of the out-partisan and prospects of interaction with him. Second, non-Republicans deem the out-partisan in the incivility conditions to be more typical of the Republican out-group than the same partisan who issues a conciliatory message. Incivility seems to be expected as the on-brand behavior of the out-group member. In addition, incivility leads to less willingness to interact with that same partisan. As a result, the real prospects of deflating partisan animosity are slim. The basic expectation among non-Republicans facing the prospect of interacting with a Republican partisan is to encounter an uncivil conversation partner. When unpleasant conversations become the prototypical norm expected, the likelihood of engagement logically dwindles and that is equally the case whether or not the partisan displays his/her identity expressively.

Additionally, the absence of an effect of any of the treatments on elite evaluations further underlines the need to clearly separate conclusions about interpersonal contact from evaluations of party elites.

Now, there are clear limitations in the current experiment which also open the door to valuable corrections and extensions in the future. Obviously, resource-related constraints are at the forefront here. Despite the bottomless value of free student samples for graduate students, the desire to generalize results naturally calls for an extension to more representative samples. Besides, some of the choices in the design can legitimately be mulled over and revamped for future iterations. First, even though the results seem to show that this did not stand in the way of the empirical validity of the study, the conditions in the treatment need to be entirely symmetrical. Not having an actual actor in the videos can have benefits of realism but it also entailed minor

asymmetries across the conditions. Second, I made the deliberate choice of having a white male confederate wearing the hat in the video treatments. Given limited resources and the factorial nature of the design, this choice was designed to be most representative of the Trump electorate. Variations on the identity of the messenger in terms of race, gender, age, tone, language as well as changes in the hat selection are all very promising. For example, a treatment using a counter-stereotypical Trump supporter could be processed differently. Another future extension that holds some promise would be to play around the prop of the hat itself. I plan on taking the design in two directions on that front. First, the more aggressive alternative of a Let's Go Brandon Hat can lead to differentiating between positive and negative expressive partisanship. Second, the cohesiveness and enthusiasm around the leadership of Donald Trump is unparalleled on the Democratic side and it would therefore be interesting to see Republican reactions to signs of support for Joe Biden on the one hand, and for more policy- or group-related displays of support such as Black Lives Matter (Blue Lives Matter in the opposite direction) or the LGBTQ cause for instance. Finally, there is a need to go beyond out-group effects and see the impact of expressive partisanship on in-party respondents. I have designed a conjoint experiment taking advantage of these different variations that I plan to implement in the near future.

I have now highlighted some promising results about the consequences of expressive partisanship on interparty interaction. Yet, the MAGA hat, despite its importance in popular culture has not been the only form of EPB in recent years. In what follows, I look at another type of behavior that has been gaining traction in recent years; namely protests.

# 5 EXPRESSIVE PARTISAN PROTESTS: THREAT PERCEPTIONS FOLLOWING JANUARY 6TH EVENTS

## 5.1 Literature and Significance

Protests are another valuable instance of expressive partisan behavior. By merging the collective with the individual and fusing instrumental and expressive motivations, political demonstrations represent a trove of underexplored mass behavior. Their societal reverberations remain particularly mysterious (Barrie 2021). Getting a better perspective on their spillover effects of mass protests grows timelier. Indeed, the trodden paths of electoral participation increasingly fail to quell the thirst for involvement and cede territory to more direct forms of action – whether in a pro- or anti-democratic direction.

Of course, motivations to engage in protest behavior are variegated. Instrumental, ideological, and emotional rationales provide the spark for engagement to different degrees in different individuals (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2009; Van Zomeren et al. 2004). Instrumentally, protests allow individuals and groups to exist politically between elections and provide a way of temporarily leveling the playing field of political influence (Lipsky 1968) – thus providing solutions to "the problem of the powerless" (Wilson 1961). Protests can lead to substantive outcomes such as securing tangible political benefits (Gause 2022; Htun and Weldon 2012), putting certain questions on the agenda (Wasow 2020), increasing electoral representation or competitiveness (Gillion and Soule 2018), creating new coalitions (Van Dyke and Amos 2017), penetrating the national political consciousness (Amenta et al. 2010; Gamson 1975; Giugni 2008) or simply gaining cultural recognition (Amenta and Polletta 2019). One of the mechanisms to achieve these goals is a triangulation strategy treating public opinion as the decisive third party (Simon and Klandermans 2001).

Yet, the instrumental returns are not always guaranteed (Amenta et al. 2010, 293) and in any case do not fully exhaust the rationales accounting for involvement in protests. Besides, regardless of whether the benefits abound, the gains are only achieved on a collective basis which leaves the question of individual dynamics open. Social movements are also innately expressive. They are the visible enactment of a political force that fails to adequately express itself within the staid framework of electoral politics. The expression and emotional release they involve is central to the motivations undergirding the movement (Della Porta and Giugni 2013; Kemper 2001).

Indeed, in 2020, American politics made a comeback to the streets across the country. Black Lives Matter (BLM) mobilization has reached unprecedented heights with an estimated 15 to 26 million participants by the summer of 2020 (Buchanan, Bui, and Patel 2020). Its effect on public opinion, although constrained by pre-existing partisan lines, was indubitable (Reny and Newman 2021). On the other end of the spectrum, the visibility of the Republican rank-and-file supporters of Donald Trump was strategically put on display throughout the 2020 election. In a typically populist fashion, Trumpian politics thrived on visible support to enact that he had won the support of a crystallized and active majority (or mere winning coalition) (Aslanidis 2016; Urbinati 2019). This became particularly conspicuous when contrasted with the Biden campaign which had decided to curb rally capacity and hold some drive-in events (Reuters Staff 2020). Another example of how Trump emphasized crowd size include his press secretary's claim that the crowd at his inauguration was "the largest audience ever" in 2017 (Schaffner and Luks 2018; Van Bavel and Pereira 2018). Now in his reelection campaign two and a half years after January 6th, Donald Trump reasserted the connection between crowd size and the natural, 'un-rigged' electoral outcome of 2020 (CNN Staff 2023). Hence, the expressive enactment by partisan supporters is central to political strategies premised upon the idea that what you see in public

reflects what you should get in the polls. To this date, there is a shortage of evidence pertaining to the impact of protests on public perceptions of partisans. Contributing to caulk that dearth is critical in an era when conflictual and expressive politics.

## 5.2 Theory and Hypotheses

In this study, I take advantage of the indeterminate readings on January 6th. As media framing battles illustrate, there is a lot of leeway in the portrayal of these events (Booker 2021; Mastrine 2021). Indeed, the gray area between run-of-the-mill Republican sympathizers and more objectionable political imagery in the January 6th insurrection (Rosenberg and Tiefenthaler 2021) provides an interesting contrast in a visible form of expressive politics (Valentino-De Vries et al. 2022). Fueled by the desire to prevent an outcome they deemed illegitimate and egged on by the public speeches of their leader, the rioters entered the Capitol and proceeded to violently disrupt the proceedings in the capital (Lonsdorf et al. 2021). The events that transpired in D.C. on the day of the certification of the results caused five deaths and an estimated 140 injuries. They revealed the fragility of democratic principles in the face of strong polarization (see Castañeda and Jenks 2023; Graham and Svolik 2020; Svolik 2019) and highlighted the need to obstruct full democracy as part and parcel of the Republican path to maintain electoral viability (Espinoza 2021; Pepper 2021). Beyond these normative implications, interpreting the event as partisan or extreme has clearly distinct consequences. On the one hand, a partisan appraisal of the events casts the tactics of the riot as part of the partisan tit-for-tat struggle. On the other hand, a view of the events as extremist has the potential to downplay the possibilities of future emulations of this 'abnormal' behavior. Some empirical findings buttress expectations of an extremist interpretation outshining the partisan view. Trump-related events have been connected with rises in extremist behavior (Feinberg, Branton, and Martinez-Ebers 2022). Besides, the aftermath of January 6th saw a

divestment from Republican partisan identity among social media users (Eady, Hjorth, and Dinesen 2021) echoed in actual voter registration trends (Loving and Smith 2022). Still, the real-world evidence that the Republican rank-and-file and elites are accommodating Trumpism as the new standard for Republicanism suggests that a partisan reading of January 6th could prevail. These signs include the parroting of elements of Trump's rhetorical strategy by other Republicans (Frimer et al. 2023), the former President's unique position to displace old and play up new concerns in the public (Armaly and Enders 2021; De Vries and Hobolt 2020; Enders and Uscinski 2021; Lee and Hosam 2020; Mutz 2018; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018; Uscinski et al. 2021) as well as the comfortable edge that he enjoys over potential primary challengers in 2024 (FiveThirtyEight 2023; Yokley 2023). In light of this ambiguity, elucidating whether January 6th demonstrators are readily identified as Republicans or cast out of the body politic as extremists is important. Furthermore, if there is a difference in categorization, its traceability to partisan dynamics could prove quite interesting.

I look at the effects of three main variables that I expect to have effects on the respondents' perceptual screens when it comes to January 6th. Two of these are present in the respondents' priors while the third is the object of the experimental manipulation described later.

First, I vary partisan societal support for the events experimentally. This is meant to induce perceptions of the events as more or less uniformly supported or split by the partisan in-group. This treatment is inspired by experimental manipulations of ethnic groups' size in immigration studies. Group threat theory and immigration studies have shown that larger out-groups trigger aversive reactions – including threat perceptions – with the caveat that perceived or relative group size leads to dynamics that differ from actual group sizes (Blalock 1967; Earle and Hodson 2019; Hopkins 2010; Meuleman 2018; Newman and Velez 2014; Semyonov et al. 2004; although see

Hjerm 2007). Here, the manipulation differs to the extent that it takes the form of partisan support in broader society. I detail the manipulation in the following section. Since the stimulus used here is a form of Republican expressive partisanship, the hypotheses formulated revolve around the effects on the sub-sample of Democratic partisans. As a main hypothesis, I expect that:

$H_{Manipulation1}$

*Those who are exposed to conditions where expressed Republican support is higher will perceive greater levels of threat than those who receive treatments with lower Republican support – particularly when probed as partisan threat.*

$H_{Manipulation2}$

*Those who are exposed to conditions where expressed Republican support is higher will will also perceive greater uniformity of the Republican out-group and use partisan terms to describe January 6th at a higher rate than those who are exposed to low levels of Republican support for the events.*

I am mostly agnostic about the effects on the partisan in-group given the outlook of the sample I present below. This would constitute a first logical extension of the design.

Then, unless the events are universally seen as extreme, I suggestively explore whether the respondents' partisan self-identification influences categorizations and threat perceptions that January 6th participants elicit. The sample limits the validity of the conclusions drawn but I report preliminary results that will warrant further attention in the future. Threat levels should be higher among Democrats across the board because of the political tenor of the events. In terms of categorization, we can expect the results to go in two different directions. On the one hand, there is an incentive among Democrats to frame the events as the work of extremists to reflect badly on the out-group. On the other hand, using partisan terms may be more natural for strong partisans and would allow them to view January 6th as part of the partisan battle they are waging. Similarly, Republicans may be divided over the need to distance themselves from the January 6th demonstrators.

$RQ_{PID}$

*Do Democrats and Republicans identify the participants in January 6th as partisans or extremists?*

By the same token, partisan intensity, measured in the traditional self-reported fashion, and partisan social identity, measured using the scale detailed in Table 4.2, could correlate positively with the propensity to perceive the events as partisan instead of extreme. This is informed by earlier findings showing the tendency of group identity to act as a buffer against potential threats (Huddy, Feldman, and Weber 2007). In the presence of a strong in-group, individuals experience more empowering collective emotions (anger, fear) that lead to downplaying and seeking to actively respond to the threat (Miller and Krosnick 2004; Stephan et al. 2015, 51). Individuals who identify less strongly with a partisan group are more likely to lack the buffering protection provided by co-partisans. Negative emotions such as anxiety and fear typically arise at the individual level when the threatening event breaks out (e.g.: Huddy et al. 2007).

On another note, construing the out-group as being homogenous tends to happen more as in-group identification increases (Judd and Park 1988; Oakes and Turner 1980; Ostrom and Sedikides 1992). Threat perceptions can in turn be conducive to a tendency to perceive a more homogenous out-group (Rothgerber 1997). These insights inform the following hypotheses:

$RQ_{Intensity}$

*Does partisan intensity correlate with a decrease in threat levels and does it lead respondents to view the out-group as being more homogenous?*

## 5.3 Methods and Design

In the experiment, I use real and fictional differences across surveys of Republican support for the Capitol insurrection to change the threat level. The manipulation I will use here is typical of priming experiments. Priming seeks to change the salience of "what we bring to the occasion" (Hastorf and Cantril 1954, 133) when we witness an event or process information. In political science, studies have looked at how fact presentation can change evaluative criteria in political evaluations and decision making among respondents (e.g. Druckman and Holmes 2004; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Krosnick and Kinder 1990; Mendelberg 2000). Protests have already been studied in a priming experiment that varied policy congruence with the protesters. Kahan et al. (2012) found that perceptions of legal facts changed based on the respondent's congruence with the protesters' message. Croco et al. (2023) echo that finding using indications of in- or out-partisanship as their experimental manipulation. Recently, Barker, Nalder, and Newham (2021) echo previous scholarship (Gutting 2020; McCright and Dunlap 2008) by confirming that conservatives generally oppose protests more than liberals. However, priming conservatives to protest movements they support moderates that finding. Besides, tolerance for protest among conservatives was greater when the tactics are perceived as peaceful (Gutting 2020). Finally, perceptions of extreme protest action have an adverse impact on willingness to condone the behavior initiated by the protesters (Feinberg, Willer, and Kovacheff 2020). Yet, the dependent variables and experimental treatments in these studies were instrumental and the study did not focus on threat perception given the fictional character of the protest used in some studies (e.g.: Feinberg et al. 2020; Kahan et al. 2012).

To test whether manipulations of partisan support alter the categorization of January 6th and the ensuing perceptions of and punitiveness toward the out-party, I take a standard article

about the riots from the *Wall Street Journal* and vary the last paragraph by including different levels of Republican support for the events. On January 6th, YouGov conducted a poll of 1,397 registered voters and found that a plurality of Republican identifiers (45%) supported the storming of the Capitol building (Smith, Ballard, and Sanders 2021). In comparison, a Marist poll commissioned by PBS NewsHour and conducted on January 7th with a sample size of 831 registered voters found that "approximately 18% of Republicans support the pro-Trump rioters who stormed the Capitol" on the previous day (Marist Poll 2021). Although the methodological approaches diverged to some limited extent, these two surveys provide a widely different picture of partisan support behind the events. To add a third manipulation, I mention results from a fake Rasmussen survey that find that a majority of 72% of Republicans approve of the events. Even though no polls have revealed such a high baseline of support for the January 6th demonstration itself, the number is inspired by the share of Republican respondents who believe that the election was somehow rigged which has consistently neared 70% (Dickson 2021; Khanna and De Pinto 2021). Going from 18% of supportive respondents to a plurality of 45% to a majority of 72% should increase threat perceptions, negative emotions, and pessimism about the political future of the country. The different manipulations are available in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Experimental Conditions for the January 6th Design

**Text in Common:**

**"**Rioters breached the Capitol on the afternoon of Wednesday January, 6th as both the House and Senate were meeting inside after President Trump urged supporters to march there and pressure Congress to overturn President-elect Joe Biden's win.

Hundreds of people could be seen walking through the building's famous Statuary Hall after pushing aside barricades and shoving police out of the way, waving Trump and American flags and cheering from the balconies of the Capitol building. Thousands of rioters surrounded the Capitol on all sides, and some climbed up the outside walls.

The police presence appeared to be minimal, though there were some police in riot gear on the east side of the Capitol by the Senate entrance.

A mob chanted "Take the building!" and "Stop the steal!"—a popular refrain as Mr. Trump's supporters challenged the results of the November presidential election.

The rioting took place as Congress was set to ratify President-elect Joe Biden's Electoral College win.

**Manipulations in the last paragraph:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| "On the next day, a Marist Poll released on January 7th found that **18% of Republicans** approved of the insurrection." | "On the next day, a YouGov Poll released on January 7th found that **45% of Republicans** approved of the insurrection." | "On the next day, a Rasmussen Poll released on January 7th found that **72% of Republicans** approved of the insurrection." |

To test the different hypotheses outlined above, I rely on four different threat perception questions. I ask respondents to assess how much they agree with the following statements: "Protesters present at these events pose a clear threat to all Americans (superordinate threat) / American democracy (political threat) / to Democrats (partisan threat) / you (individual identity)."

For categorization, I follow the methodology of the YouGov survey used as part of the treatment (Smith et al. 2021), I ask respondents to pick the adjectives that best describe those who took part in the Capitol events with three target words getting at partisanship ("Republicans," "conservatives," "Trump supporters") and three target words getting at extremism ("criminals,"

"extremists," "domestic terrorists.") I also include terms that reflect more positively on the protestors: "patriots," "protestors," and a moniker meant to get at the racial implications of the movement: "white supremacists." Arguably, the lines between extremist and partisan terms can be blurred especially with the term "Trump supporters" but Trump's control over the Republican Party warrants the inclusion of the term on the partisan side of the dichotomy. The expectation in $H_{Intensity}$ is essentially that high-PSI identifiers will refer to the protesters in more partisan terms than low-PSI identifiers who will instead use the more extreme qualifiers.

To appraise consequences on out-party perceptions, I ask respondents their agreement with two prototypicality measures. First, I probe the respondents' agreement with the statement: "Republican supporters all think the same way." Then, I ask respondents to provide estimations to the following prompts: "Out of a 100 Democrats/Republicans, how many support gun rights legislation (reverse coded)/are pro-life/are Evangelical Christians/support BLM (reverse coded)/earn more than $100.000 annually?" to tap into some of the stereotypical measures found to be excessively associated with Republican social identity (Ahler and Sood 2018; 2022; Rothschild et al. 2019).

Behaviorally, I measure punitiveness against the demonstrators in two ways. First, I ask responds their level of agreement with the statement that: "Police violence against any of these protesters would have been justified." Then, I ask them to select the most appropriate punishment for a protestor with the following question: "Any insurrectionist present on the grounds of the capital should receive: [a long prison sentence (over 5 years)/a short prison sentence (under 5 years)/a hefty fine (over $1000)/a small fine (under $1000)/a warning not to engage in those activities and a temporary ban from the Capitol premises/no punishment whatsoever.] Finally, I ask respondents their support for freedom of demonstration with agreement with the following

statement: “Freedom of demonstration is a sacred right in this country and should not be limited under any circumstances.”

Due to limited resources, I once again rely on the Political Science Research Pool (PSRP) at Georgia State University. From September to November 2021, 281 students enrolled in introductory political science classes took the study for extra credit. The student sample limitations highlighted in the second chapter are still relevant here. First, twenty-eight answers are discarded due to incomplete participation. Second, the sample underrepresents the male population (22.62%). Ethnic and racial minorities are more prominent in the sample than in the population with over forty percent of the sample identifying as African American (40.5%) and 23.4% identifying as Asian. 89% of the sample is under 25 years old which partly accounts for a reported turnout rate of only 55% in the sample for the 2020 Presidential election. Finally, the partisan and ideological distribution is also lopsided with 73.1% identifying as Democrats (including Independent leaners) as opposed to 11.5% selecting a Republican identification and 15.4% pure Independents. As was the case in the previous chapter, these enervating factors condition the results and warrant a restrained embrace of/dismissiveness toward the findings or their absence.

## 5.5 Results

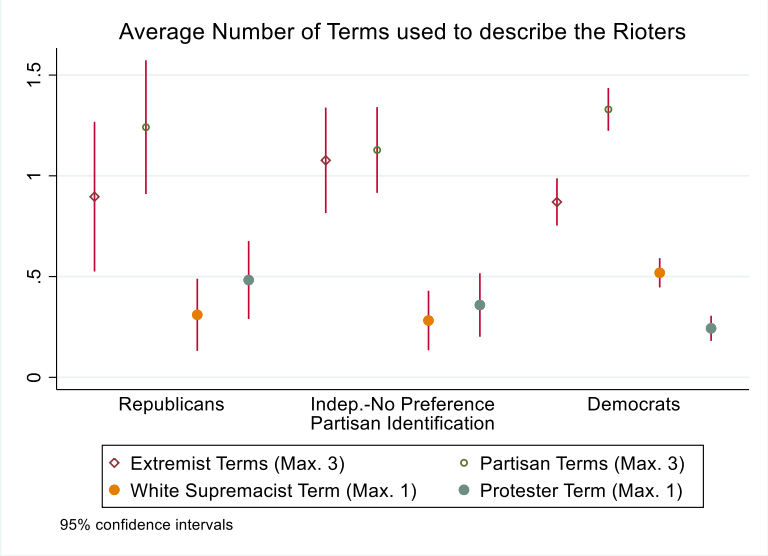
### *5.5.1 Partisan and Extremist Categorization:*

As discussed earlier, January 6th has been studied for its partisan and extremist ramifications. The event could be the harbinger of the impending culmination of the cycle of partisan dysfunction accelerated twelve to ten years earlier (see Chapter 1) or the beginning of a more extreme descent into democratic backsliding. Understanding how public opinion perceives the event has cardinal implications if we hope to be able to respond to its plausible future replicas.

First and foremost, the experimental treatments do not produce major differences across conditions in the appraisal of the events. These null results reveal that contrary to expectations, higher out-partisan support for expressive behavior does not significantly move the in-partisans to view the event as less extremist. Still, while the differences across conditions are not comporting with the hypotheses, it is noteworthy that within the higher Republican support conditions (45 or 72%), the differences between the selected number of partisan and extremist terms do not overlap as opposed to the condition low on partisan support (see Figure 7.9).

In Figure 7.9, I show the average number of extremist/partisan words used by respondents to label those who partook in the events on Capitol Hill. Democratic respondents in the student sample select on average about an additional 0.4 partisan term compared to extremist terms. Independents and apolitical respondents do not seem to follow suit and select partisan and extremist terms at a similar frequency. Democrats are also more likely to imbue the events with racial significance by selecting “white supremacists” as one of their three descriptors for the rioters. This is in line with the greater group- or identity-based sensitivity of Democrats explored in the discussion of asymmetric polarization in Chapter 1. Partisan intensity fails to have an impact on the categorization patterns (see Figure 7.9).

Figure 5.1: Average Number of Terms used in Categorization Question by Party ID




### *5.5.2 Threat Dynamics*

As I outlined in the theory section, the perceptions of threat in the case of January 6th have multiple ramifications. The event can be perceived differently for its normative, generalized, targeted, or intergroup implications. Respectively, these different threats can put democracy, Americans, the respondents themselves, or the Democratic political out-group in the crosshairs. I ran ordinal logistic models including secondary demographic and political independent variables (see full models in Table 7.7). The results are instructive in three main respects.

First, the perception that the events pose a threat to Democrats is sensitive to the experimental treatments. A more sizable Republican support increases the perception of a partisan threat to Democrats. Although the moniker "Democrats" may mean different things to different respondents (Druckman and Levendusky 2019), it is clear that partisan threat follows a different pattern from the other threat items in the study. Figure 5.2 shows predicted strong agreement with

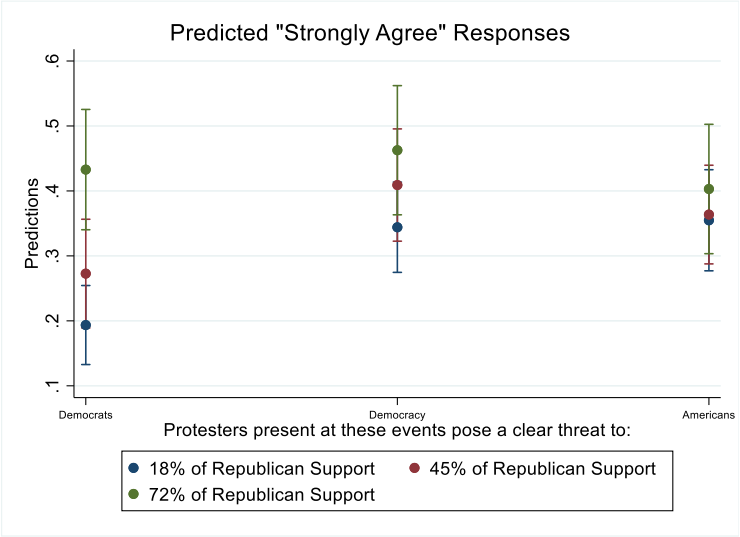
the threat items by experimental condition.[14] Going from the 18 to the 72% experimental conditions shows an increase in the predicted probability of about .33 to strongly agree that protesters pose a threat to Democrats. Interestingly, when the experimental conditions are included as a categorical variable, the results suggest that the 72% condition drives the effect shown in Table 5.2 with the conditions are included as continuous. In other words, the effect on threat to the Democratic in-group increases more intensely after reaching a tipping point of over 50% Republican support for the events. Priming respondents to think of the event as partisan does not induce increases in generalized or targeted threat perceptions.[15] Regardless of the reported Republican support, threat to democracy/all Americans/respondents remained similar. Whether this belies a broader pattern where only partisan threat can be induced by group size needs more robust replication.

Congruent with prior surveys (e.g.: Anderson and Coduto 2022; Galston 2023), partisanship colors the perception of the threats posed by January 6th. Democrats are significantly more likely to report greater threat levels across all indicators as shown in Figure 5.2 except when it comes to threat to their ingroup.

[14] I chose strong agreement in my visual representations because the results are most compelling when restricting it to the most extreme – and modal - answer choice. Rerunning the models with the two greatest levels of agreement, the differences between treatment categories shown for the "threat to democracy" question remains significant although at the marginal .01 threshold.

[15] The marginally significant effect on perceived threat to democracy warrants further attention beyond this pilot study.

Figure 5.2: Predicted Strong Agreement with the Threat Statements by Experimental Condition




Interestingly, the buffering effect of intensity of partisan identification is borne out in the data for threat to democracy and Americans. Stronger partisan identifiers perceive significantly lower levels of generalized threat when reflecting on January 6th than their weaker counterparts. Threat to Democrats follow distinct dynamics altogether. The cushioning effect of intense partisanship does not extend to perceived threats to the ingroup.[16]

[16] Alternative versions using the 8-item scale of partisan social identity instead of intensity fail to show significant effects. This could be blamed on the slightly lower internal reliability than in Chapter 2 ($\alpha = .74$) or the fact that partisan social identity is less central when it comes to threat perception mechanisms.

Table 5.2: Shortened Versions of the Models for Threat Perceptions

Type of threat: 1-to-7 Agreement with "January 6th Protesters Pose a Clear Threat to:"

(Logistic Regression Models)

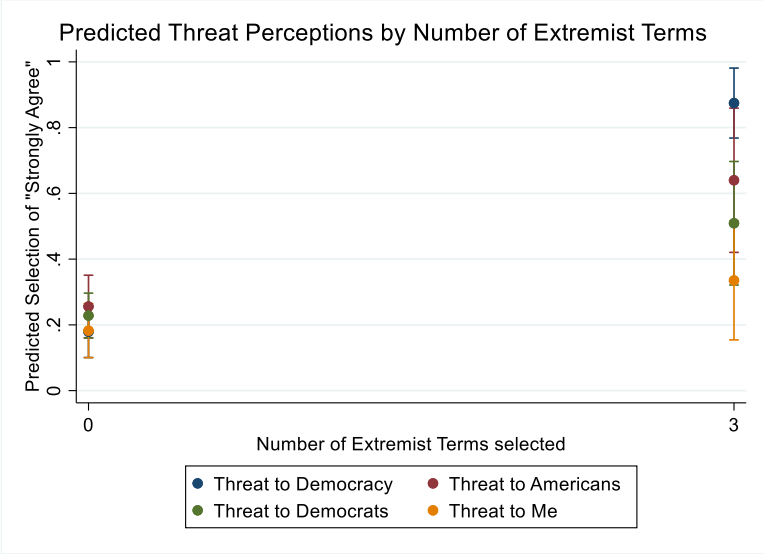
| | Americans (Full Sample) | Americans (Reps. Excluded) | Democracy (Full Sample) | Democracy (Reps. Excluded) | Democrats (Full Sample) | Democrats (Reps. Excluded) | Me (Full Sample) | Me (Reps. Excluded) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental Treatment 1: 18% / 2: 45% / 3: 72% | 0.114 (-0.163) | 0.0565 (-0.176) | *0.304** (-0.162) | 0.181 (-0.167) | **0.426*** (-0.15) | 0.400** (-0.164) | 0.149 (-0.153) | 0.115 (-0.163) |
| PID 1-to-7 Scale | **0.838*** (-0.184) | 0.404** (-0.161) | **0.787*** (-0.179) | 0.392** (-0.17) | 0.229 (-0.142) | 0.145 (-0.173) | **0.507*** (-0.188) | -0.0201 (-0.159) |
| Intensity 1-to-3 Scale | -0.457** (-0.229) | | -0.470** (-0.232) | | -0.103 (-0.208) | | *-0.479** (-0.244) | |
| Sample Size | 247 | 220 | 246 | 219 | 246 | 219 | 245 | 218 |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | 0.1340 | 0.1225 | 0.1078 | 0.0960 | 0.0818 | 0.0767 | 0.0951 | 0.0832 |

Robust standard errors in parentheses ***** p<0.01**, ** p<0.05, * *p<0.1*

Lastly, I reran the models with the addition of a count variable for the number of extremist and partisan terms used by the respondents in their answers. Although this presents the methodological limitation of using a post-treatment measure to predict another one, Figure 5.3 shows suggestive trends that are worth a pause. Going from selecting none of the extremist terms to selecting all three leads to a substantial and significant increase of .7 in the predicted probability of strongly agreeing that the events posed a threat to democracy. The increases tail off to .38 for threat to Americans and Democrats while the increase predicted on threat to the self is not significant. The effects of the number of partisan terms on threat perceptions near marginal .1 levels of significance in three of the four models but cannot claim the same significance as the

extremist terms. This may reveal categorization issues and cannot be taken at face value given the limitation of this pilot study. Those findings in mind, I safely conclude that the extremist reading of the events that transpired during the certification of the 2020 election increases the perception of threat across the board.

Figure 5.3: Predicted Threat Perceptions by Number of Extremist Terms




### *5.5.3 Typicality and Punishment*

In Chapter 1, I revealed rising patterns of archetypal partisan attitudes in the American population since the 2012 election (see Figure 3.1). In Chapter 2, I discovered that Republicans using an uncivil or – to a lesser extent – confrontational attitude toward their partisan enemies were seen as more representative of the prototypical Republican (see Figure 4.3). The design in Chapter 3 offers an additional opportunity to examine the contours of the baseline conceptualization of the Republican party identity and see whether experimentally induced unity on a given issue shapes these views of the out-group among Democrats.

Across the sample, the experimental manipulation fails to produce the expected increases in perceived uniformity of the Republican partisan group. The only exception to that pattern of null results comes in the form of a marginally significant increase in the perceived number of

Republicans who make over $100.000 in a year. Nonetheless, that effect disappears when the analysis is restricted to the non-Republican sub-sample. The pre-existing "parties in our heads" are fairly impervious to changes in group size.

Briefly, as highlighted in Ahler and Sood (2018), patterns of wide overestimations about how partisans fit certain stereotypes are borne out in this pilot study. The Democratic sub-sample indeed estimates that among Republicans, a whopping 64% are Evangelical Christians, 57% make over $100.000 a year, and 58% are over 60 years old when the latest actual estimates place the figures respectively at 38% (Pew Research Center 2023), 25% (Hanson and Chen 2020) and 25% (over 65 years old) (Pew Research Center 2020). Although this is not the primary purpose of the study, these trends provide further confirmation of the meta-perception discrepancy that has dire aggravating consequences for societal polarization (Enders and Armaly 2019; Lees and Cikara 2020; Moore-Berg et al. 2020).

Finally, the visibility of January 6$^{th}$ as an ambiguously partisan or extremist event can lead to important differences in the willingness to sanction the protesters. First, when respondents are given the choice between different gradations of punishment going from nothing to verbal warnings to fines to prison sentences, Democrats are significantly more likely to choose a 1-year or 5-year prison sentence as the standard consequence they'd mete out on the protesters (see Figure 7.10).

## 5.6 Conclusion

Overall, the results tend to corroborate the expected partisan dynamics outlined in the hypotheses section in terms of threat perception, punitiveness and perceived similarity of the Republican out-group on some of the questions. The dynamics of categorization require greater variation in partisan intensity to be fully investigated but there are some signs that intensity of partisan identification acts as a shield that diminishes general threat perceptions (democracy/Americans) but not targeted intergroup threats (Democrats). The experimental treatment fails to have most of the hypothesized effects. A quite robust tendency to increase the perception of threat to Democrats shapes up as the number of Republicans supporting Jan. 6th protesters rises. The absence of an impact on most of the other variables of interest can be interpreted in three ways. First, the impact of greater partisan support for the events may merely activate a partisan intergroup framework that solely influences perceptions of partisan strife. More outcome variables tapping into inter-partisan considerations would confirm this potentially intriguing tendency. Alternatively, these results about partisan out-group size genuinely mirror previous null findings about the effects of perceived out-group size on prejudice in ethnic intergroup dynamics (Hjerm 2007; Schlueter and Scheepers 2010). More robust replications of the pilot study are needed to confirm this mostly null effect. Finally, respondents may have failed to attend to the experimental manipulation which was specifically designed as minor and placed at the end of the text they were prompted to read. A more flagrant introduction of the variation through statistical infographics that take centerstage would provide a less subtle manipulation that may lead to more variation.

Given the uniqueness of the Jan. 6th events and the limited ability to explore effects symmetrically with this sample, this design could and should be extended to manipulations

concerning protests that are less tinged with the seal of extremism such as anti-mask protests or less partisan protests if an unlikely topic of bipartisan compromise fuels mobilization in the near future. Left-wing demonstrations have already received more attention (Reny and Newman 2021; Wasow 2020) but not with the novel threat framework that I employed here. Besides, this could help test a possible partisan asymmetry in susceptibility to threat perceptions (see Jost et al. 2003; Matthews et al. 2009). Still, the project presented above provides a preliminary exploration of threat generation and consequences after exposure to expressive political behavior. As I have emphasized throughout this overview of my work, there is a dire need to go beyond merely asserting that partisanship is amenable to the consequences laid out in social identity theory. To supplement these efforts, looking at how partisan groups are put on display and how the broader public reacts to that visibility is of prime importance. I will now discuss the current implications and future directions of this research agenda and its potential to reshape our understanding of the partisan/extremist porous border as well as more detailed partisan dynamics that could revitalize or lead democracy astray.

# 6 CONCLUSION

*"This, then, is the legacy of the last thirty years: a polarized politics that highlights symbolic issues, short-circuits genuine political debate, gives discontent few real outlets, allows money a paramount role in the electoral process, and leaves the country alarmed over whether it can maintain its standard of living. Is it any wonder that Americans have come to hate politics?"*
(Dionne 1991)

Loathing is not a mark of disengagement. Indifference is. Two years after "the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" was trumpeted (Fukuyama 1989, 4), columnist E.J. Dionne sounded the alarm on the impending problems that would plague this optimistic prognosis with remarkable foresight. Contrary to what he prophesized however, a political landscape that fails to attract is not one that fails to engage. You can hate institutional politics and still enjoy engaging in "hate politics." That paradox is a key remedy to the failures of the reinvention of democracy away from its party cartelization (Katz and Mair 1995; 2009) and gripping immobilism (Bakker, Jolly, and Polk 2020; Mouffe 2000, 2018; Reid 2022, 316). Starting in the 1990s, various US politicians – most notably conservatives[17] - have contributed to remake mass political behavior into a more automatic and expressive version of itself – which in turn poses significant questions for the viability of democratic traditions. Negating the other side's legitimacy in the contention for power, moralizing the outcomes of the game and cultivating cheerleading instead of critical accountability are both recipes to durably deepen yet temporarily set aside a crisis of model legitimacy. This reinvention of partisanship as more automatic and less critical has not suffused the entire population. Part of the electorate remains issue-driven or subscribes to party identities because of deeper ideological concerns (Costa 2020; Groenendyk 2018; Orr and Huber 2020; Webster and Abramowitz 2017). Yet, as I have shown in these three studies, automatic partisanship is on the rise. As a result, we need to

[17] Flagbearers of these tendencies include Newt Gingrich and his Contract for America, Rick Santelli and Sarah Palin's Tea Party movement, and of course Donald Trump's takeover.

move beyond studies of potential electoral consequences of mass behavior. The attention reclaimed by explorations of activism is a step in the right direction. As much as lobbying and interest groups have marshaled attention among institutionalists due to their disproportionate influence over political outcomes, political science behaviorism has to factor in the engagement level of the electorate. Viewing the contribution of masses as more than their episodic ballot is more pressing than ever for various reasons. First, events such as January 6th or the Summer of 2020 protests testify to a willingness to (re)take some political concerns outside the trodden paths for political agency. Second, the U.S. is facing conjoint dynamics:

- Decreasing trust in the political process as well as abating concrete support for democracy are structurally worrisome.
- By the same token, the vocal, loyal, and visible partisan minorities that prioritize favorable outcomes over regime stability provide the ground-level fuse for gradual backsliding or sudden collapse.

Given these trends, it is necessary to consider expressive partisans as more than oddities who clad themselves in their partisan or political causes. Yes, they can be valuable faces for modern political satire. More significantly, they are also the ones who pose the eventual threat to the regime and understanding the roots and forms of their enthusiasm is critical to fathom and potentially rein in their impact on U.S. politics. Although the efforts presented here provide mere first steps in such a research agenda, the ways in which expressive partisanship is marketed have ramifications for the very near future. Here is what I have learned in this primary exploration:

In the first part, I used an existing large study and showed the increasing prevalence of automatic partisan behavior in relatively unconstrained attitudinal expression. Not only are constrained political outcomes such as voting increasingly correlated to partisanship, but the

mindset of partisans is also growing more predictable and dualistic. In terms of complexity of expression, the results were mixed. Some elements indicated the induction of mindlessness in choice rationalization among stronger partisans while other features denoted more complex constraint in the partisan answers. This confirms the relevance of ideological packages in individual subscription to partisan patterns of behavior. Practically, this testifies that the grip of partisan perspectives is growing especially among those who shun partisan identification themselves. This bodes ill for a reinvigorated political system in which moderate and disaffected citizens would suddenly rise in opposition to a partisan framework that they now consider to be the norm.

In the second part, I focused on a less prevalent form of behavior which encapsulates the ways in which partisanship could become fully automatic. The consequences of displaying partisan merchandising have yet to be established and richer experimental and observational designs are needed to investigate the reach and impact of these forms of expressive cheerleading. Still, the design used here provided a first foray into the question. For the most part, the mere presence of a MAGA hat does not seem to induce immediate rejection by the Democratic out-group. The actual message in the experimental treatment played a much more significant role in sparking these negative reactions. This could be a normatively positive indication that partisanship is not as automatically and affectively processed as we may think. However, negative impressions about the out-group seem to be ingrained quite deeply, with or without partisanship being expressively on display.

Finally, I looked at the January 6$^{th}$ events with the theoretical lenses of expressiveness. Playing on the event's ambivalence and the complexity of potential threat it arose, I uncovered indicative partisan dynamics in the interpretation of the event. Artificially increasing support for

the expressive politics of January 6th did not alter perceptions of the event except in the case of perceptions of threat to the political out-group. Descriptively, I showed the slight prevalence of a partisan categorization of the rioters over an extremist one which conveys the sense that the events were part of the logical continuance of partisan expression in the eyes of respondents instead of an outlying display of extremism universally condemned.

With these preliminary findings in mind, I conclude that the changes in partisan expression and expressiveness cannot be discounted and warrant further empirical exploration ranging from the sales figures of political merchandising, crowd dynamics at rallies and conventions (with 2024 providing an ideal context).

Beyond design issues with the projects currently presented, future extensions will include a few additional theoretical questions. ANES open-ended answers will be very instructive in 2024 to confirm that the trends documented for 2012 and 2020 are more established than the 2016 outlier. Besides, intercoder reliability and structural topic modeling (STM) seem like natural extensions for the current design to confirm the validity of the findings. Elite-level and comparative studies of automaticity in speech are also in order. A longitudinal analysis of automatic partisan rejections in Congressional speeches and committees would be very instructive both about elite behavior and the timing of partisan intensification in elite behavior.

As far as merchandising is concerned, the room for extension is almost limitless given the current scarcity of empirics. Observationally, data about sales both in general and at rallies are direly missing from the existing picture. Experimentally, a conjoint experiment – which was initially part of this project – is the next step I will take to pit expressive partisanship considerations against its ideological counterparts. Variations on the hat messages (political, identity-based, issue-based…), the messengers' identities (gender, race/ethnicity, age…) and outcome variables (work,

residential interactions…) are all included in the conjoint design to capture a more complex survey of the effects of partisan expressiveness.

Finally, protest behavior also calls for more work. January 6th has limitations. The extremist/partisan dichotomy and its effect on threat perceptions may be better teased out using entirely fictional setups. Beyond protests, rallies hold a lot of promise to establish the causes and consequences of expressive partisan behavior.

Sadly for democracy, dynamics of mass politics shorn of or at least short on conviction but replete with enthusiasts are edging us closer to a world in which a President "could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and (…) wouldn't lose any voters" (Dwyer 2016). There is no silver bullet to break away from an increasingly automatic acceptance of partisanship. Far-fetched structural changes (e.g.: Drutman 2020), an unlikely comeback of the moderates and/or a general wholesome realization of the risks of hyperpartisan dynamics are not in the offing. In light of the perspectives I highlighted, we may legitimately ask whether the dominant lifestyles and branding strategies around partisanship play up a spectacle of politics that does not reflect what the public wants. Here, I am not making any arguments about ideological tenor. I have outlined how the debate remains raging. I instead contend that the behaviors supposedly anchored in human nature and leading to rabid partisanship could be expressed differently or avoided altogether. Instead, the narrative of partisanship both journalistically and academically adds to the allure of expressive yet destructive political engagement. Market incentives to show the MAGA rallygoer over the deliberative town hall attendee provide a movie script in which partisanship is ever on the rise. Putting some different options as the faces of democratic behavior has yet to be tried as a depolarization mechanism. In the meantime, and while these behaviors keep growing,

expressive partisans deserve more than the attention that I have started to give them in these projects.

# 7 APPENDICES

## 7.1 Chapter One

Table 7.1: Full Respondent Typology

| Voter Type | Response Pattern: Likes Dem./Likes Rep./Dislikes Dem./Dislikes Rep. | Broader Sub-type(s)[18] |
|---|---|---|
| Disinterested | No/No/No/No | No Type |
| Negative Anti-Rep | No/No/No/Yes | Negative |
| Positive Pro-Rep | No/Yes/No/No | Positive |
| Ambivalent Rep | No/Yes/No/Yes | Ambivalent |
| Negative Anti-Dem | No/No/Yes/No | Negative |
| Ambivalent Negative | No/No/Yes/Yes | Ambivalent/Negative |
| Archetypal Pro-Trump | No/Yes/Yes/No | Archetypal |
| Ambivalent Pro-Trump*Anti-Biden | No/Yes/Yes/Yes | Ambivalent/Negative |
| Positive Pro-Biden | Yes/No/No/No | Positive |
| Archetypal Pro-Biden | Yes/No/No/Yes | Archetypal |
| Ambivalent Positive | Yes/Yes/No/No | Ambivalent/Positive |
| Pro-Biden*Ambivalent about Trump | Yes/Yes/No/Yes | Ambivalent/Positive |
| Ambivalent Pro-Biden | Yes/No/Yes/No | Ambivalent |
| Ambivalent Pro-Biden*Anti-Trump | Yes/No/Yes/Yes | Ambivalent/Negative |
| Pro-Trump*Ambivalent about Biden | Yes/Yes/Yes/No | Ambivalent/Positive |
| Ambivalent about both | Yes/Yes/Yes/Yes | Ambivalent |

[18] The archetypical category is the only one to be mutually exclusive. Ambivalent/negative and ambivalent/positive answer patterns were coded as being both.

Table 7.2: ANES Coding Table and Justifications

| | |
|---|---|
| **Personal Candidate Characteristics** | |
| Personality/Charisma | Good impression of a candidate's individual style. Anything related to personal characteristics |
| Competence | Good impression of a candidate's professional or interpersonal skills. Remarks about knowledge. |
| Honesty/Trustworthiness | Remarks about the candidate's sincerity, integrity, genuineness, honesty, straightforwardness…. |
| Rhetoric | Mentions of what the candidate says, rhetorical style, promises, public performances, campaign ads…. |
| Symbolism | Comments about the candidate's ethnic/racial/gender characteristics, about making history…. |
| Age | Remarks about the candidate's youth, maturity, or age. |
| **Issue Comments** | |
| Social Issues | Mentions of specific social concerns ranging from abortion, welfare, aid programs, gun control, culture war issues (e.g.: pledge of allegiance, prayer in school….) |
| Economic Issues | Specific comments about issues involving money such as welfare, the state of the economy, international trade, financial management, taxation policy…. |
| Foreign Issues | Specific allusions to issues of foreign policy, wars, diplomacy, international trade, terrorism…. |
| Racial/Gender Issues | Comments on specific issues related to racial/ethnic/gender/sex orientation questions. |
| Environmental Issues | Specific references to energy policy, environmental cleanup, regulation of oil companies, air quality…. |
| Crime/Immigration/Justice Issues | Targeted comments about sentencing policy, drug policy, capital punishment, prison-related questions…. |
| Vision | Generic or unspecified references to "issues," "policies," "preferences," "vision," "program…." |
| **Comparative Comments** | |
| Better/Worse Judgments | Use of comparisons, criticism of the other candidate, references to the candidate not being his/her opponent. |
| **Ambivalent Comments** | |
| Ambivalence/Nuanced Judgments | Comments in which respondents express sympathy or antipathy towards both candidates at the same time/in which they introduce a degree of nuance in their judgments about the candidate they're being asked about. |
| **Political Label Comments** | |
| Partisanship | References to the Republican/Democratic Party, claims of belonging/feeling close to the party. |
| Ideology | References to conservative/liberal/socialist/capitalist/communist/populist and to any other term understood to represent an ideological category. |
| **Past Career/Personal Life** | |
| Past | References to what the candidates did outside of politics in the past. E.g.: military service, business career, legal career…. |
| Experience | Mentions of the candidate's experience in politics in any national or state-level position. |
| Performance | Praise or criticism for their performance in the past as elected officials or in their professional endeavors. |
| Known/Unknown | Hints at how the candidate makes the respondent feel comfortable/uncomfortable based on the things they know or ignore about them. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Family | Mentions of the candidate's family (often allusions to the qualities/flaws of the first lady/husband) |
| **Group Mentions** | |
| Me/Us | Mentions about how a candidate will benefit/harm or falls close to/strays away from the personal preferences of the respondent. |
| Group/Class | Responses about how a candidate will benefit/harm an identified group or social class in the country (e.g.: Hispanics, the middle class, the unions, "a large part of the country," Texans….). |
| Nation/Country | Explicit references to the benefits or drawbacks of a given candidate for the "U.S." / "nation"/ "country." |
| Everyone | Comments about how a given candidate will benefit/harm everyone/the entire population in the US. |
| Against/For Disliked Group | Criticism/Praise for how a candidate approaches a group that the respondent dislikes. |
| **Civility** | |
| Insults | Use of curse words in the answer to talk about the candidates or their policies. |
| Incivility | Use of informal language, exaggerations, ad hominem attacks, very emotional language in the answers. |
| **Staff/Associates** | |
| VP/USSC Nominees | References to the qualities or flaws of the Vice-President. Discussion of the Supreme Court selections of the candidate. |
| Associated with | Mentions of other staff members working with the candidate/incumbent. Mentions of individuals that the respondents liken to the candidate. |
| **Values/Ethics/Morals** | |
| Values/Ethics/Morals | Comments about the candidate's deep-seated values, work ethic, moral pronouncements, and their positions on religious/culture war issues (meant to isolate questions of morality from other issues). |
| **Status Quo** | |
| Change | Praise/Criticism for the novelty brought by the candidate. |
| Status Quo | Praise/Criticism for the stability/immobility brought by the candidate. |
| **Other/Miscellaneous** | |
| Corrupt/Not corrupt | Mentions of professional cases in which the candidate has been embroiled/the cleanliness of a candidate in terms of professional conduct throughout their careers. |
| Scandal | Mentions of personal scandals related to their private lives. |
| Conspiracy | Mentions of conspiracy theories involving the candidates (e.g.: Pizzagate, New World Order, relations with the global Soros network, designs to destroy America….) |
| Everything | Responses in which participants assert that they like/dislike everything about a candidate. |
| Can't decipher/classify | Answers that were impossible to categorize or did not respond to the question asked. |

The main categories of interest used at this stage of the project are coded following precedents set in previous scholarship and minor deviations informed theoretically. Efforts to mine the wealth of considerations expressed in open-ended ANES answers have revolved around three major distinctions. Candidate-centered dimensions focus primarily on traits. My codebook mostly follows the patterns established by Kinder and Fiske (1986) and Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk (1986). Following the evidential record about the centrality of personal and moral traits

in presidential evaluations (Funk 1999; Goren 2002; Clifford 2018), candidate-centered criteria in the codebook revolve primarily around personality: personality, rhetoric, and honesty/integrity. I add competence as a more professional criterion for judgment that relates to the candidates as well as age and symbolic representation (being a historic 'first') because they come with the candidate package independently of issues, credentials, or political identification. I am not interested in disentangling the personal from the professional in this specific project. I depart from Kinder and Fiske (1986) and Kessel (2004) in setting aside considerations of previous credentials when they were not expressed in terms of candidate qualities (e.g.: a comment about "his lack of experience in public office" has no intrinsic or specific competence implications (as opposed to a comment like "just don't know that he's ready in terms of leadership")).

Issue-centric considerations are an aggregation of three major and three minor issues in terms of salience in the data. Social, economic, and foreign policy mentions are the major issues mentioned by respondents. I included the three less salient issues (crime/immigration/justice, race/gender, and environment) for future expansions of the project. All six categories are included in the dichotomous issue mention variable used in the analyses. This makes for a close replication of the original six-category scheme used in *The American Voter*. The main three alterations are the lumping of agriculture into the "economic" and/or "environmental" category (depending on the substance of the comment), the enrichment of the subdivision of the domestic category (into distinct social and an economic categories) and the addition of crime which is justifiable by the degree to which crime and punitiveness became central concerns for the electorate since the early analyses of the ANES data (Enns 2014; Roberts 2018; Balko 2021).

Finally, the group-based dichotomous variable used in the models above is based on the coding used by Converse (1964) in his ideological innocence theory and reshaped by Grossmann and Hopkins in 2015. I depart from these traditions in making distinctions between the identities at the heart of the respondents' considerations. In all, I include five categories in this subset of considerations: explicit mentions to the self or "us", to any given social/racial/economic group (no matter how socially salient or well-rounded the mention is: e.g.: "the poor people," "the little people," "hunters and gun owners"…), to the nation as a concept, to "everyone" or the overwhelming majority of people, and references to any given group in society that the respondent dislikes (e.g.: "He wants to let criminals out on weekends," "Just that he is a Republican and we have the idea that the Republicans help the rich and the Democrats help the poor.") This encompasses the groups included in Grossman and Hopkins' (2016) broader coding guidelines with an added emphasis on groups that are subjectively constructed in the respondents' frames of reference.

For the purposes of the current study, internal reliability in the three categories used plays a secondary role given that I focus on a variety of candidate-centered considerations that do not separate professional from personal qualities. Still, Cronbach's alpha for a four-item candidate category (excluding age and symbolism) reaches a suboptimal yet acceptable .65 whereas the complete six candidate items attain a more limited .52. The same score is attained by the full six-item issue grouping. Again, internal consistency is not a primary concern for the theoretical purposes of this study, but it warrants scale disaggregation for future extensions.

I code incivility based on the clusters that Stryker et al. (2016) reveal to be most consensual for respondents asked what qualifies as uncivil expression. They find that "personal attacks, insulting language, and slurs" as well as "outright lying and failures of omission" constitute commonly accepted deviations from civility. Even if they are limited to forms of incivility that can be perceived in written expression (Stryker et al. 2016, 549). That approach enjoys a substantial degree of consensus as evidenced by experimental operationalizations of the concept (Frimer and Skitka 2018) and other boundaries set in studies of incivility (Herbst 2010). My only deviation from this framework comes with the separation between ad hominem attacks about the candidates' honesty and integrity (e.g.: "conman," "crook," "liar," …) and generic statements about their propensity to lie which do not establish an inherent character-based flaw. Instead, these reflect an assessment of occasional actions that the target may commit within the rules of the political game. Mere references to the verb "lie" were thus not included as signs of an uncivil response in and of itself.

Table 7.3: Full OLS Models for the Number of Considerations and Words (excludes nonresponses)

| Variables | Model 1: Word Count (OLS with Sorting and Perceived Polarization) | Model 2: Word Count (OLS without Sorting and Perceived Polarization) | Model 3: Considerations (OLS with Sorting and Perceived Polarization) | Model 4: Considerations (OLS without Sorting and Perceived Polarization) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Election Variables** | | | | |
| Incumbent | **1.698*** ** | **1.556*** ** | **0.305*** ** | **0.274*** ** |
| Dichotomous | (-0.216) | (-0.186) | (-0.0205) | (-0.0175) |
| 1988.Year | **-8.816*** ** | **-9.751*** ** | -0.112 | **-0.197*** ** |
| Categorical (1984 Excluded) | (-0.856) | (-0.702) | (-0.0729) | (-0.0606) |
| 1992.Year | **-5.870*** ** | **-6.370*** ** | **-0.162*** ** | **-0.229*** ** |
| | (-0.75) | (-0.631) | (-0.061) | (-0.052) |
| 1996.Year | **-8.371*** ** | **-8.450*** ** | **-0.327*** ** | **-0.403*** ** |
| | (-0.88) | (-0.754) | (-0.064) | (-0.056) |
| 2000.Year | **-8.744*** ** | **-9.174*** ** | **-0.579*** ** | **-0.652*** ** |
| | (-1.224) | (-0.785) | (-0.086) | (-0.059) |
| 2008.Year | **-22.27*** ** | **-22.21*** ** | **-1.316*** ** | **-1.354*** ** |
| | (-0.763) | (-0.631) | (-0.064) | (-0.053) |
| 2012.Year | **-11.88*** ** | **-12.28*** ** | **-0.875*** ** | **-0.931*** ** |
| | (-0.772) | (-0.64) | (-0.062) | (-0.052) |
| 2016.Year | **-19.04*** ** | **-19.30*** ** | **-1.028*** ** | **-1.078*** ** |
| | (-0.801) | (-0.663) | (-0.066) | (-0.056) |
| 2020.Year | **-7.465*** ** | **-8.062*** ** | **-0.152** ** | **-0.225*** ** |
| | (-0.815) | (-0.684) | (-0.068) | (-0.058) |
| **Partisanship and Polarization Variables** | | | | |
| Partisan Intensity | **-0.369*** ** | **-0.296*** ** | -0.00354 | 0.00962 |
| (1-to-7 Scale) | (-0.122) | (-0.104) | (-0.0122) | (-0.0105) |
| Perceived Ideological Gap | **0.347*** ** | | **0.0583*** ** | |
| (Ordinal 0-to-7) | (-0.046) | | (-0.005) | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Part-Ideo Sorting | -0.222** | | **-0.0475*** ** | |
| (Ordinal 0-to-7) | -0.0992 | | -0.00986 | |
| 7-Item Partisanship | **0.587*** ** | **0.360*** ** | **0.0971*** ** | **0.0539*** ** |
| (Ordinal 1-to-7) | (-0.078) | (-0.049) | (-0.008) | (-0.005) |
| Affective Polarization Categories | **1.619*** ** | **1.620*** ** | **0.204*** ** | **0.203*** ** |
| (0-to-5 Categorical increments (0 < 1-24 < 25-49 < 50-74 < 75-99 < 100)) | (-0.105) | -0.0902 | -0.0104 | -0.00883 |
| **Demographic Variables** | | | | |
| African American | **-1.458*** ** | **-1.789*** ** | **-0.231*** ** | **-0.292*** ** |
| (Categorical (white excluded)) | (-0.371 | (-0.318) | (-0.0395) | (-0.0328) |
| Asian American | -1.496** | -1.033 | -0.0786 | -0.0811 |
| (Categorical (white excluded)) | (-0.703 | (-0.641) | (-0.0735) | (-0.0641) |
| Pacific Islander | 1.506 | 2.218** | 0.246** | 0.247** |
| (Categorical (white excluded)) | (-1.085) | (-1.073) | (-0.122) | (-0.106) |
| Hispanic | -0.187 | -0.646* | **-0.126*** ** | **-0.193*** ** |
| (Categorical (white excluded)) | (-0.385) | (-0.332) | (-0.0373) | (-0.0316) |
| Other | 1.638** | **1.613*** ** | 0.078 | 0.0554 |
| (Categorical (white excluded)) | (-0.712) | (-0.626) | (-0.076) | (-0.0645) |
| Education | **0.463*** ** | **0.529*** ** | **0.0291*** ** | **0.0374*** ** |
| (Ordinal (1-to-7 scale)) | (-0.0792) | (-0.0694) | (-0.0077) | (-0.0068) |
| Family Income | -0.0204 | 0.0843 | 0.0198* | **0.0197** ** |
| (Ordinal (1-to-5 scale)) | (-0.111) | (-0.097) | (-0.011) | (-0.010) |
| Age | **0.0315*** ** | **0.0365*** ** | **0.00267*** ** | **0.00266*** ** |
| Continuous | (-0.006) | (-0.0054) | (-0.001) | (-0.0006) |
| Gender | -0.158 | -0.342* | -0.0313 | -0.0439** |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dichotomous (Male Baseline) | (-0.225) | (-0.197) | (-0.0223) | (-0.0195) |
| **Answer Patterns** Categorical ("No Type" excluded) | | | | |
| Archetypal Answers | 1.244** | 1.186** | **0.793*** ** | **0.780*** ** |
| Categorical ("No Type" excluded) | (-0.597) | (-0.479) | (-0.0676) | (-0.0519) |
| Positive Answers | **-2.849*** ** | **-3.043*** ** | 0.00166 | 0.0149 |
| | (-0.701) | (-0.545) | (-0.0781) | (-0.0588) |
| Negative Answers | **-2.507*** ** | **-2.679*** ** | 0.141* | 0.077 |
| | (-0.764) | (-0.612) | (-0.0849) | (-0.0664) |
| Ambivalent Answers | 0.791 | 1.029** | **0.388*** ** | **0.435*** ** |
| | (-0.555) | (-0.44) | (-0.0638) | (-0.0484) |
| **Interview Type** Categorical (Face to Face excluded) | | | | |
| Telephone Interview | -1.009 | -1.114** | -0.0800* | -0.0924** |
| | (-0.618) | (-0.506) | (-0.0483) | (-0.0399) |
| Online Interview | **-12.34*** ** | **-11.93*** ** | **-0.698*** ** | **-0.654*** ** |
| | (-0.401) | (-0.337) | (-0.0393) | (-0.0335) |
| Video Interview | **-4.757*** ** | **-4.174*** ** | -0.17 | -0.0799 |
| | (-1.185) | (-1.082) | (-0.116) | (-0.105) |
| Constant | **26.84*** ** | **27.57*** ** | **2.435*** ** | **2.684*** ** |
| | (-1.027) | (-0.81) | (-0.0994) | (-0.0769) |
| Observations | 42,414 | 53,597 | 42,851 | 54,224 |
| R-squared | 0.125 | 0.128 | 0.099 | 0.095 |
| Robust standard errors in parentheses | | | | |
| ***** p<0.01**, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 | | | | |

Figure 7.1: Evolution of Affective Polarization over the Years

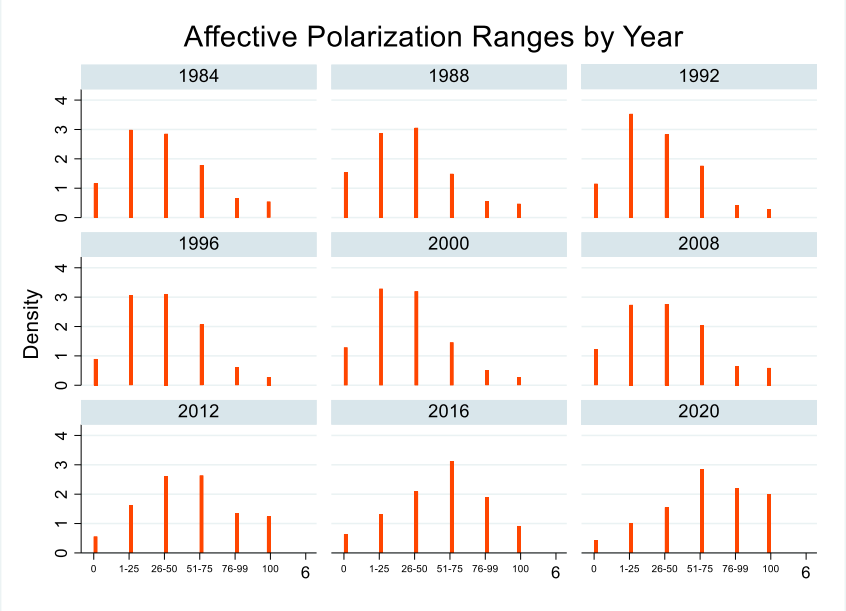
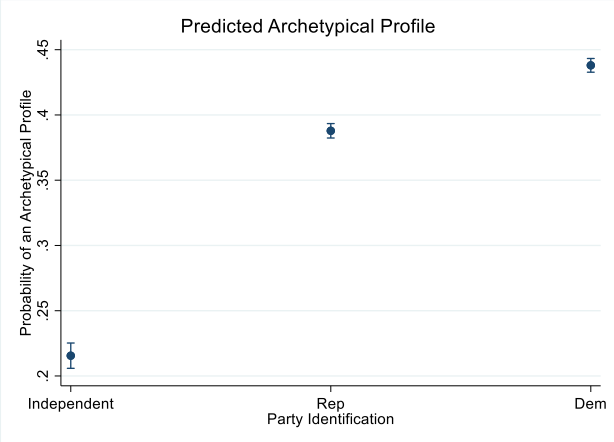



Figure 7.2: Prototypical Response Patterns to the ANES Likes/Dislikes by Party Identification



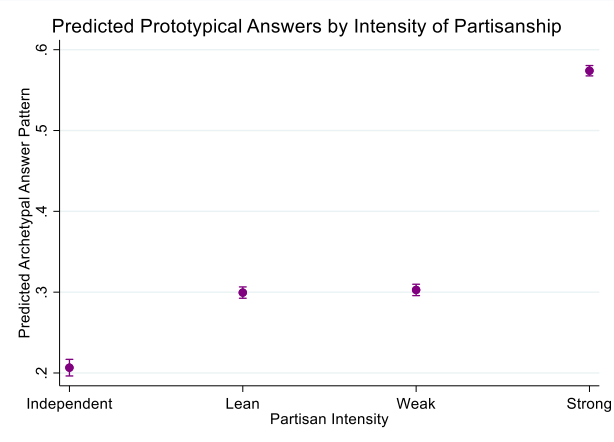



Figure 7.3: Respondent Type and Word Count / Considerations

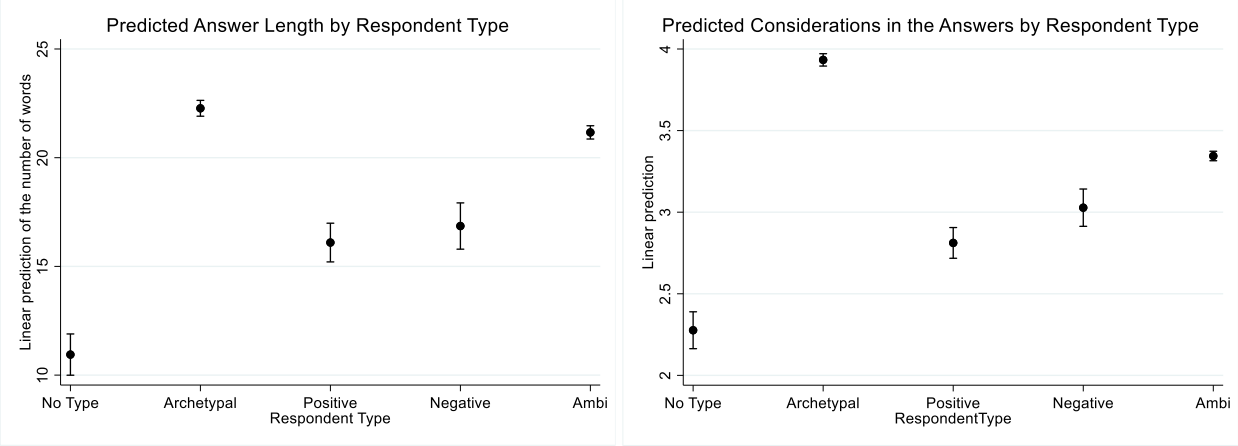



Figure 7.4: Probabilities of Explicit References to Political Identity in the Answers

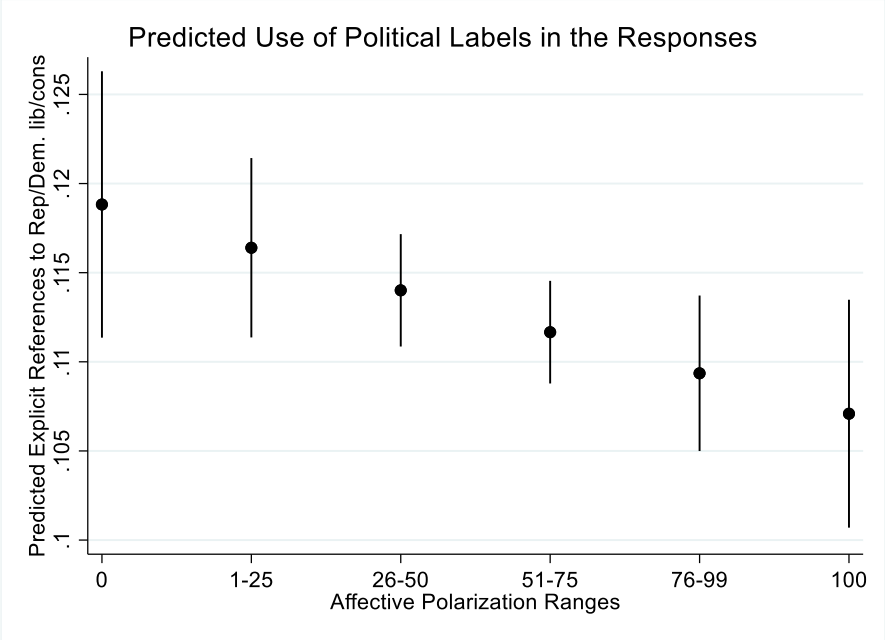


Figure 7.5: Probabilities of Ambivalence in the Answers at different Affective Polarization Levels

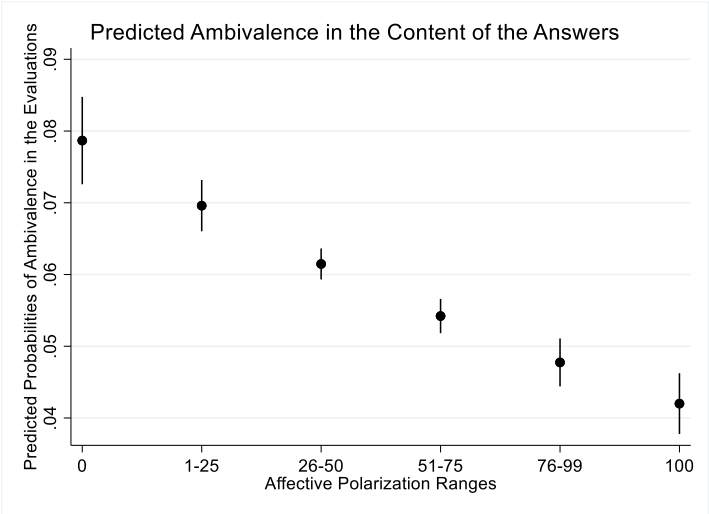
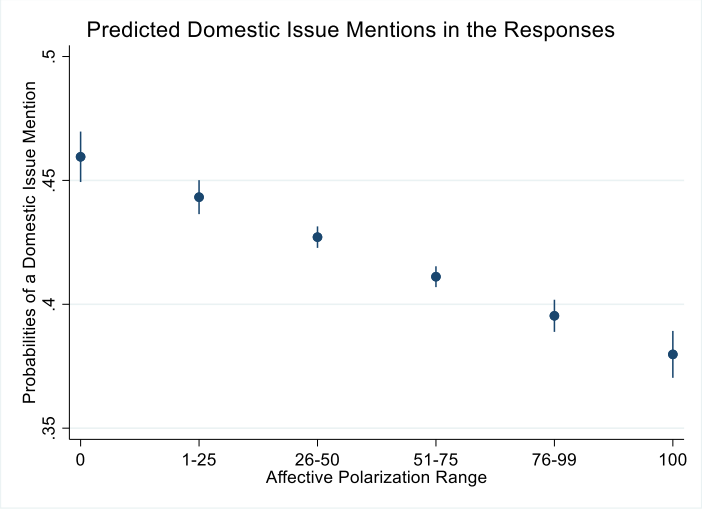
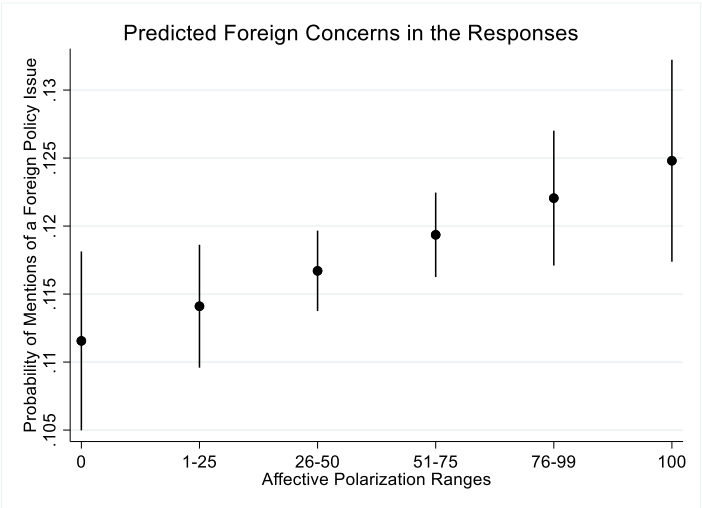



Figure 7.6: Probabilities of Domestic or Foreign Issue Mentions in the Answers



## 7.2 Chapter Two

Appendix 7.1: Gallery of anti-Trump and anti-Biden Merchandising



Table 7.4: Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for the Democratic PSI Scale

| Factor | Eigenvalue | Difference | Proportion | Cumulative |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Factor1 | 3.63917 | 3.04319 | 0.9096 | 0.9096 |
| Factor2 | 0.59598 | 0.35439 | 0.149 | 1.0586 |
| Factor3 | 0.2416 | 0.12627 | 0.0604 | 1.119 |
| Factor4 | 0.11533 | 0.1993 | 0.0288 | 1.1478 |
| Factor5 | -0.08397 | 0.0114 | -0.021 | 1.1268 |
| Factor6 | -0.09537 | 0.07654 | -0.0238 | 1.103 |
| Factor7 | -0.17191 | 0.06812 | -0.043 | 1.06 |
| Factor8 | -0.24002 | . | -0.06 | 1 |

| | Factor 1 | Factor2 | Factor3 | Factor4 | Uniqueness |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cognitive Centrality 1 | 0.59 | 0.0632 | 0.3437 | 0.0019 | 0.5298 |
| Cognitive Centrality 2 | 0.7297 | 0.0341 | 0.218 | 0.1066 | 0.4075 |
| In-Group Affect 1 | 0.8559 | 0.1306 | 0.0534 | 0.1888 | 0.2118 |
| In-Group Affect 2 | 0.8743 | 0.1177 | 0.0499 | 0.137 | 0.2005 |
| In-Group Ties 1 | 0.6062 | 0.1564 | 0.0706 | 0.1925 | 0.5659 |
| In-Group Ties 2 | 0.7713 | 0.1222 | 0.2266 | 0.1019 | 0.3284 |
| Negational Identity 1 | 0.4197 | 0.4891 | 0.1182 | 0.0381 | 0.5693 |
| Negational Identity 2 | 0.3509 | 0.5304 | 0.0152 | 0.0252 | 0.5947 |

Appendix 7.2: Preliminary Results from the MAGA Hat Booth Experiment

To confirm the validity of the hat choice, I draw on preliminary descriptive results from part of a different study design that I discarded at this stage of the project. Despite design and execution issues, the results illustrate the symbolism of the hat. In the Spring and Fall of 2021, I set up booths in a public area on the downtown and Clarkston campuses at Georgia State University with six to eight different political hats on display on a table. I incentivized participation in the study with a draw for a $20 Amazon gift card for every 50 participants. I directed respondents to fill in a 5-minute paper survey questionnaire before asking them to select which of the hats on display they would hypothetically be willing to wear in public and which one(s) they would actually wear to take a picture next to the booth. The choice was not numerically limited to a single hat. Neither of the outcomes entailed being seen with the hats on. This was meant to minimize legitimate social pressure concerns that may derive from the picture. Descriptive results for a sample of 127 Democratic or lean Democratic participants are shown below. They are instructive about the revulsion for the MAGA symbol and corroborate partisan dynamics that the hat symbolizes. In spite of a lack of real-world consequences, the overwhelming majority of respondents refused to wear hats that were not in line with their side of the political spectrum. Along with the Let's Go Brandon hat, the MAGA hat is the least popular option. Unfortunately, the lackluster results for a willingness to wear the Biden hat among in-partisans point to the absence of a similar counterpart that could be used to test for parallel intergroup dynamics on the other side of the partisan spectrum.

Descriptive Political Stigma Results from Preliminary Field Experiment among Democrats and Lean Democrats

| Hat | Make America Great Again | Biden 2020 | Black Lives Matter | Blue Lives Matter | Don't Tread on Me | Georgia State (Control) | Let's Go Brandon |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage willing to wear | 5.1 | 34.6 | 80.3 | 7.9 | 9.4 | 92.2 | 4.1 |
| Sample Size[19] | 118 | 127 | 127 | 127 | 127 | 102 | 73 |

[19] Differences in the total sample size are imputable to two factors. First, the Georgia State and Let's Go Brandon hats were added during the downtown experimental sessions (which was fielded after the Clarkston session). Second, the MAGA hat got stolen in Clarkston on the second day of the data collection which anecdotally speaks to the feelings it may trigger.

Table 7.5: Scripts in the Experimental Conditions

| Full Script in the Video Treatments | Link |
|---|---|
| *"Hi, I'm John, I'm 41 years old and I manage an office. As a Republican, I think that the best way to fix polarization in this country is for both sides to come together and stop talking down to one another. I think that if we showed respect to the Democrats and Democrats showed respect to the Republicans, we could really come to find some common issues, discuss them, and resolve our problems; perhaps even find some compromise. I think that we have some shared values and if we could discuss these values, we could come to some kind of a resolution in this country and fix polarization."* | No Hat – Conciliation: https://youtu.be/VVKHG6Pv110 |
| *"Hi, my name is John, I'm 41 years old and I manage an office. I really think the way to fix polarization in this country is if both sides could quit talking down to one another. If they would just show respect, if the Democrats could show respect to Republicans and Republicans to Democrats, we could find some common ground and discuss common issues. I really think that we probably have common values, that we can resolve issues if we can talk to each other respectfully."* | Hat – Conciliation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AolWLgXUwR4 |
| *"Hi, I'm John, I'm 41 years old and I manage an office. I really think that the problem with polarization in this country is the Democrats blaming the Republicans for all of the problems that exist. They're very disrespectful as it relates to the policy issues that might come up and they won't ever listen to our positions and where we are. They just talk down to us all the time. They don't even care about Republican values in any way at all. I just don't know how we can fix* | No Hat – Confrontation: https://youtu.be/O4HdqQnxoSE |

| | |
|---|---|
| *polarization if we can't resolve these problems. I just don't know what to do otherwise. They need to resolve these issues by talking and trying to discuss and find compromise. But they just have no real interest in that."* | |
| *"Hi, my name is John, I'm 41 years old and I manage an office. I really think the problem with polarization in this country is the Democrats blaming the Republicans for all the problems that exist. I think they're incredibly disrespectful. I think it's unreasonable for them to blame the Republicans for everything and they just don't seem to want to listen to anything Republicans have to say. They just don't care about or share any of our values. I just don't know how we can fix polarization if we can't resolve these problems. They need to talk to us and find compromise. But they're just not interested."* | Hat – Confrontation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdJiqrtmAiE |
| *"Hi, I'm John, I'm 41 years old and I manage an office. You know, I really think the problem with polarization in this country is the Democrats demanding that we just listen and take their positions as if that's what we should just do. They don't even care about Republican positions at all. I really think they're just evil. The goddamn Democrats; they just have nothing in common with Republicans at all. And I think it's f***ing rubbish. They need to listen to what we have to say. They need to respect our values. They seem to have no values. There's no principle at all within the Democratic Party. In fact, I think we should just get rid of the Democrats."* | No Hat – Incivility: https://youtu.be/JjckhaykBfQ |
| *"Hi, I'm John, I'm 41 years old and I manage an office. I think the problem with polarization in this country is the* | Hat – Incivility: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNBO2D7Gat4 |

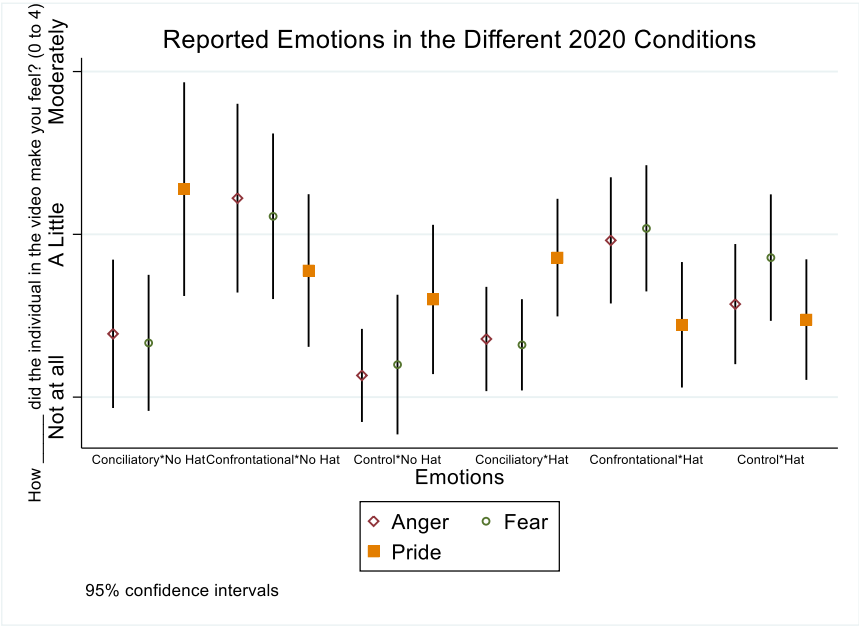
| | |
|---|---|
| *Democrats demanding that we listen to every position they have. I really think the Democrats are just evil. They want to turn the country into something, some kind of Democratic paradise. There is absolutely no common ground from the goddamn Democrats with Republicans. They have no values. They share no principles with us and really, we could just do away with all the Democrats and this country would be better off.* | |
| *"Hi, I'm John, I am 41 years old, and I am the manager of an office. I did watch the college championship football game this year. I did not really have a team in the game but it's just a social interaction that I find fun and interesting and so I like to watch it every year."* | Control Condition (2020) : https ://youtu.be/Hjf-xU8tAfQ |

Table 7.6: Descriptive Results for the 2022 Version of the Experiment

| | Hat Condition | No Hat | No Hat | No Hat | Hat | Hat | Hat |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Messaging Condition | | Conciliation | Confrontation | Incivility | Conciliation | Confrontation | Incivility |
| **Feeling Thermometers** | | | | | | | |
| FT John | Mean | 60.5 | 32.9 | 24.7 | 55.9 | 37.5 | 23.6 |
| | Standard Error | (4.6) | (4.71) | (4.5) | (4.84) | (3.2) | (6.43) |
| | 95% CI | [51.07-69.93] | [23.07-42.73] | [15.51-33.83] | [45.87-65.88] | [30.96-44.04] | [10.17-36.98] |
| FT Donald Trump | Mean | 22.1 | 20.4 | 29.3 | 20.4 | 14.1 | 19.1 |
| | SE | (5.62) | (5.41) | (5.13) | (5.63) | (3.27) | (6.77) |
| | 95% CI | [10.54-33.6] | [9.09-31.67] | [18.86-39.75] | [8.74-32.01] | [7.37-20.76] | [4.98-33.2] |
| FT GOP | Mean | 28.6 | 32.7 | 36.5 | 32.8 | 28.3 | 33.8 |
| | SE | (5.23) | (5.05) | (4.21) | (4.06) | (4.08) | (6.00) |
| | 95% CI | [17.91-39.37] | [22.14-43.2] | [27.86-45.05] | [24.39-41.20] | [19.99-36.68] | [21.28-46.34] |
| FT Joe Biden | Mean | 54.4 | 49.5 | 48.2 | 46.1 | 52.1 | 60.3 |
| | SE | (4.54) | (4.83) | (3.98) | (4.7) | (2.97) | (3.73) |
| | 95% CI | [45.11-63.74] | [39.44-59.60] | [40.15-56.34] | [36.36-55.80] | [46.03-58.17] | [52.55-68.12] |
| FT Politicians | Mean | 41.8 | 36.4 | 42.8 | 29.1 | 41.1 | 42.5 |
| | SE | (4.02) | (6.11) | (4.2) | (4.24) | (3.4) | (5.10) |
| | 95% CI | [33.58-50.07] | [23.64-49.12] | [34.29-51.41] | [20.30-37.86] | [34.12-48.01] | [31.88-53.17] |
| **Conversation Variables** | | | | | | | |
| Agree to Political Conversation (0 to 4) | Mean | 3.11 | 1.86 | 1.45 | 2.75 | 2.17 | 1.05 |
| | SE | (0.19) | (0.31) | (0.23) | (0.24) | (0.20) | (0.28) |
| | 95% CI | [2.72-3.49] | [1.21-2.51] | [0.99-1.92] | [2.26-3.24] | [1.75-2.58] | [0.46-1.63] |
| Agree to Non-Political Conversation (0 to 4) | Mean | 2.92 | 2 | 1.73 | 2.63 | 2.77 | 1.86 |
| | SE | (0.18) | (0.30) | (0.23) | (0.19) | (0.19) | (0.29) |
| | 95% CI | [2.55-3.31] | [1.37-2.63] | [1.26-2.19] | [2.23-3.02] | [2.38-3.16] | [1.26-2.46] |
| Conversation can depolarize (0 to 4) | Mean | 2.07 | 2.05 | 2.48 | 2.38 | 2.47 | 2.05 |
| | SE | (0.17) | (0.22) | (0.18) | (0.22) | (0.18) | (0.25) |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 95% CI | [1.72-2.42] | [1.58-2.51] | [2.12-2.85] | [1.91-2.84] | [2.10-2.83] | [1.52-2.58] |
| Conversation useful generally (0 to 6) | Mean | 4.32 | 4.33 | 3.55 | 4.04 | 3.97 | 3.48 |
| | SE | (0.22) | (0.24) | (0.29) | (0.29) | (0.24) | (0.36) |
| | 95% CI | [3.86-4.78] | [3.83-4.84] | [2.94-4.14] | [3.44-4.65] | [3.47-4.46] | [2.73-4.22] |
| Typicality Variable | | | | | | | |
| John is a Typical Republican | Mean | 1.57 | 2.95 | 2.7 | 1.75 | 2.4 | 3.14 |
| | SE | (0.22) | (0.20) | (0.20) | (0.21) | (0.16) | (0.25) |
| | 95% CI | [1.12-2.04] | [2.53-3.37] | [2.30-3.10] | [1.31-2.19] | [2.08-2.72] | [2.62-3.67] |
| Trait Ratings | | | | | | | |
| John is Intelligent | Mean | 2.26 | 1.14 | 0.81 | 2.17 | 1.03 | 0.65 |
| | SE | (0.25) | (0.26) | (0.19) | (0.29) | (0.19) | (0.23) |
| | 95% CI | [1.75-2.77] | [0.60-1.67] | [0.42-1.19] | [1.58-2.77] | [0.66-1.41] | [0.16-1.14] |
| John is Racist | Mean | 0.37 | 0.57 | 1.03 | 0.39 | 0.67 | 1.37 |
| | SE | (0.14) | (0.17) | (0.23) | (0.17) | (0.24) | (0.35) |
| | 95% CI | [0.08-0.66] | [0.20-0.94] | [0.56-1.50] | [0.03-0.75] | [0.19-1.14] | [0.63-2.11] |
| N-sizes | | 28 | 21 | 33 | 24 | 30 | 21 |

Figure 7.7: Average Reported Emotions in 2020 in the Different Conditions



## 7.3 Chapter Three

Table 7.7: Full Ordinal Logistic Threat Regression Models

| 1-to-7 Agreement with: "Protesters present at these events pose a clear threat to:" | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Americans | Americans (Non-Republican Subsample) | Democracy | Democracy (Non-Republican Subsample) | Democrats | Democrats (Non-Republican Subsample) | Me | Me (Non-Republican Subsample) |
| PID | **0.838*** ** | 0.404** | **0.787*** ** | 0.392** | 0.229 | 0.145 | **0.507*** ** | -0.0201 |
| (1-to-7 scale) | (-0.184) | (-0.161) | (-0.179) | (-0.17) | (-0.142) | (-0.173) | (-0.188) | (-0.159) |
| Intensity | -0.457** | | -0.470** | | -0.103 | | *-0.479** | |
| (1-to-3 scale) | (-0.229) | | (-0.232) | | (-0.208) | | (-0.244) | |
| Condition | 0.114 | 0.0565 | *0.304** | 0.181 | **0.426*** ** | 0.400** | 0.149 | 0.115 |
| (18/45/72% Support) | (-0.163) | (-0.176) | (-0.162) | (-0.167) | (-0.15) | (-0.164) | (-0.153) | (-0.163) |
| Political Variables | | | | | | | | |
| Trust In Gov. | 0.209 | 0.323** | 0.047 | 0.225 | -0.095 | -0.109 | *0.250** | 0.302** |
| (1-to-7 scale) | (-0.148) | (-0.159) | (-0.156) | (-0.168) | (-0.137) | (-0.157) | (-0.136) | (-0.147) |
| "Friends Know My Party" | -0.094 | -0.143 | -0.233 | -0.227 | -0.239 | -0.273 | -0.098 | -0.155 |
| (1-to-5 scale) | (-0.149) | (-0.168) | (-0.158) | (-0.182) | (-0.173) | (-0.187) | (-0.162) | (-0.179) |
| "Friends Know My Issue-Positions" | -0.373** | -0.396** | -0.074 | -0.098 | -0.232 | -0.185 | -0.405** | -0.444** |
| (1-to-5 scale) | (-0.165) | (-0.193) | (-0.156) | (-0.181) | (-0.177) | (-0.187) | (-0.174) | (-0.192) |
| Pol. Harm>Good | 0.146 | 0.122 | *0.208** | 0.13 | 0.125 | 0.159 | 0.0387 | 0.00315 |
| (1-to-7 scale) | (-0.106) | (-0.115) | (-0.106) | (-0.111) | (-0.111) | (-0.127) | (-0.12) | (-0.129) |
| Racial Division | 0.104 | 0.06 | 0.003 | 8.11E-05 | 0.107 | 0.091 | **0.177*** ** | 0.158** |
| (1-to-10 evaluation) | (-0.08) | (-0.09) | (-0.078) | (-0.089) | (-0.076) | (-0.085) | (-0.068) | -(0.076) |
| Political Division | 0.093 | 0.125 | 0.199** | 0.193** | 0.167** | *0.139** | -0.099 | -0.086 |
| (1-to-10 evaluation) | (-0.081) | (-0.091) | (-0.086) | (-0.096) | (-0.078) | (-0.084) | (-0.069) | (-0.073) |
| Frequency Pol. Talk | 0.044 | 0.047 | 0.0008 | 0.03 | -0.192 | -0.24 | 0.072 | 0.072 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1-to-5 Frequency Scale) | (-0.153) | (-0.149) | (-0.169) | (-0.167) | (-0.158) | (-0.162) | (-0.191) | (-0.192) |
| Pol. Knowledge (Combined four questions) | *0.223** | 0.295** | 0.0573 | 0.149 | -0.0964 | -0.0585 | 0.0381 | 0.0645 |
| | (-0.126) | (-0.134) | (-0.135) | (-0.139) | (-0.125) | (-0.132) | (-0.119) | (-0.127) |
| Participation index (1-to-7 Self-reported Political Activities) | 0.172** | *0.182** | 0.0672 | 0.0736 | 0.0121 | 0.0532 | 0.102 | 0.101 |
| | (-0.086) | (-0.093) | (-0.090) | (-0.099) | (-0.099) | (-0.101) | (-0.090) | (-0.099) |
| Individual-Level Demographics | | | | | | | | |
| Education (1-to-7 Highest Completed Level) | 0.006 | 0.126 | 0.177 | 0.267 | 0.237 | 0.266 | -0.076 | -0.02 |
| | (-0.227) | (-0.242) | (-0.237) | (-0.255) | (-0.247) | (-0.274) | (-0.237) | (-0.254) |
| Age Group (1-to-7 increments) | 0.003 | 0.052 | -0.142 | -0.107 | -0.327 | -0.218 | -0.0666 | -0.0398 |
| | (-0.224) | (-0.246) | (-0.181) | (-0.19) | (-0.319) | (-0.328) | (-0.236) | (-0.26) |
| Household Income (1-to-7 Categories) | 0.085 | 0.0464 | 0.101 | 0.046 | -0.0759 | -0.0452 | -0.0249 | -0.0435 |
| | (-0.077) | (-0.081) | (-0.082) | (-0.086) | (-0.068) | (-0.072) | (-0.081) | (-0.086) |
| Gender (Dichotomous (Male = 0)) | -0.047 | -0.137 | 0.044 | -0.066 | -0.212 | -0.218 | -0.0617 | -0.104 |
| | (-0.252) | (-0.288) | (-0.219) | (-0.232) | (-0.216) | (-0.228) | (-0.194) | (-0.199) |
| White (Dichotomous (Non-white = 0)) | -0.631 | -0.719 | 0.064 | 0.107 | -0.977** | -0.956** | -0.42 | -0.394 |
| | (-0.442) | (-0.485) | (-0.431) | (-0.481) | (-0.406) | (-0.412) | (-0.421) | (-0.461) |
| Black (Dichotomous (Non-black = 0)) | 0.289 | 0.35 | 0.491 | 0.512 | -0.131 | -0.0476 | 0.33 | 0.375 |
| | (-0.403) | (-0.425) | (-0.354) | (-0.382) | (-0.36) | (-0.358) | (-0.391) | (-0.412) |
| Asian (Dichotomous (Non-Asian = 0)) | -0.084 | -0.137 | 0.085 | -0.072 | -0.515 | -0.607 | -0.62 | *-0.742** |
| | (-0.444) | (-0.472) | (-0.384) | (-0.414) | (-0.396) | (-0.416) | (-0.394) | (-0.416) |
| Hispanic (Dichotomous (Non-Hispanic = 0)) | 0.05 | 0.068 | 0.292 | 0.311 | -0.208 | -0.142 | 0.234 | 0.208 |
| | (-0.439) | (-0.472) | (-0.414) | (-0.447) | (-0.393) | (-0.385) | (-0.437) | (-0.454) |
| Model Information | | | | | | | | |
| /cut1 | -5.000* | -7.934** | -2.298 | -2.684 | **-10.10*** ** | **-10.12*** ** | -7.495** | **-11.38*** ** |
| | (-2.921) | (-3.57) | (-2.785) | (-3.317) | (-3.23) | (-3.751) | (-2.91) | (-3.294) |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| /cut2 | -3.291 | -5.740* | -0.966 | -1.601 | **-9.086*** ** | -8.891** | -6.563** | **-10.30*** ** |
| | (-2.867) | (-3.397) | (-2.773) | (-3.321) | (-3.23) | (-3.77) | (-2.9) | (-3.279) |
| /cut3 | -2.651 | -5.376 | 0.0328 | -0.213 | **-8.506*** ** | -8.327** | -6.410** | **-10.11*** ** |
| | (-2.878) | (-3.366) | (-2.797) | (-3.343) | (-3.23) | (-3.8) | (-2.9) | (-3.28) |
| /cut4 | -1.369 | -3.638 | 1.176 | 0.697 | -7.145** | *-6.886** | *-5.253** | **-8.916*** ** |
| | (-2.874) | (-3.383) | (-2.82) | (-3.351) | (-3.23) | (-3.81) | (-2.92) | (-3.3) |
| /cut5 | -0.334 | -2.593 | 1.95 | 1.874 | *-6.121** | -5.841 | -4.141 | -7.754** |
| | (-2.881) | (-3.399) | (-2.829) | (-3.34) | (-3.23) | (-3.82) | (-2.93) | (-3.3) |
| /cut6 | 0.924 | -1.333 | 3.186 | | -4.772 | -4.63 | -3.247 | -6.882** |
| | (-2.891) | (-3.403) | (-2.822) | | (-3.22) | (-3.81) | (-2.93) | (-3.3) |
| Observations | 247 | 220 | 246 | 219 | 246 | 219 | 245 | 218 |

Robust standard errors in parentheses ***** p<0.01**, ** p<0.05, * *p<0.1*

Table 7.8: Group Proportions in Label Use across Partisan and Intensity Groups

| | Republican | Indep-No Preference | Democrat | Lean | Weak | Strong | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Partisan Terms: | | | | | | | |
| Republican Term | 31.03 | 28.2 | 37.3 | 43.4 | 30.4 | 20 | 35.2 |
| Conservative Term | 24.14 | 23.1 | 18.4 | 19.1 | 20.23 | 15 | 19.8 |
| Trump Supporter Term | 68.97 | 61.54 | 77.3 | 80.9 | 69.6 | 75 | 73.9 |
| Extremist Terms: | | | | | | | |
| Criminal Term | 13.79 | 28.2 | 15.14 | 13.04 | 16.5 | 20 | 17 |
| Domestic Terrorist Term | 24.14 | 33.33 | 37.84 | 29.56 | 41.78 | 50 | 35.57 |
| Extremist Term | 51.7 | 46.15 | 34.05 | 38.26 | 32.91 | 40 | 37.9 |
| Other Terms: | | | | | | | |
| White Supremacist Term | 31.03 | 28.2 | 51.89 | 46.95 | 51.9 | 50 | 45.85 |
| Protestor Term | 48.27 | 35.9 | 24.32 | 26.09 | 29.11 | 30 | 28.8 |
| Patriot Term | 6.9 | 15.38 | 3.78 | 2.6 | 7.6 | 0 | 5.92 |
| Sample Sizes | 29 | 39 | 185 | 115 | 79 | 20 | 253 |

Figure 7.8: Average Threat Perception by Party ID

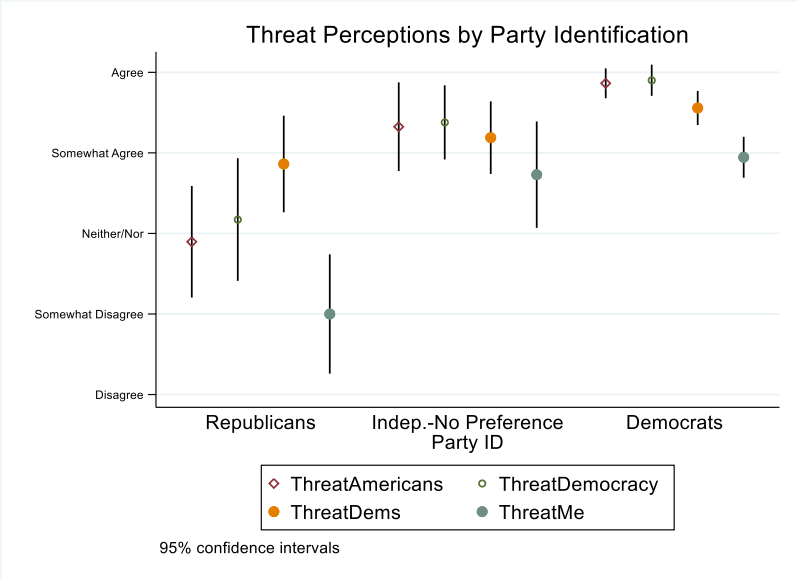
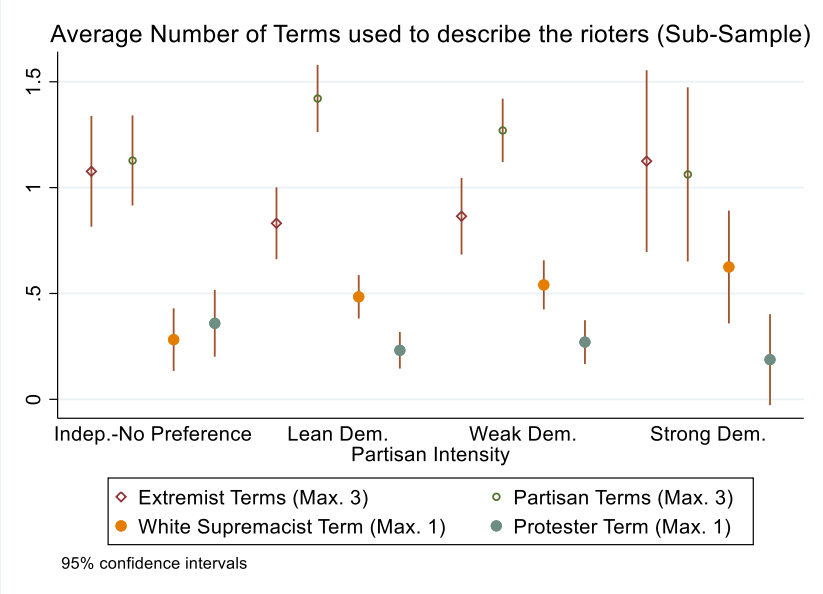


Figure 7.9: Average Number of Terms used by Partisan Intensity and Experimental Manipulation



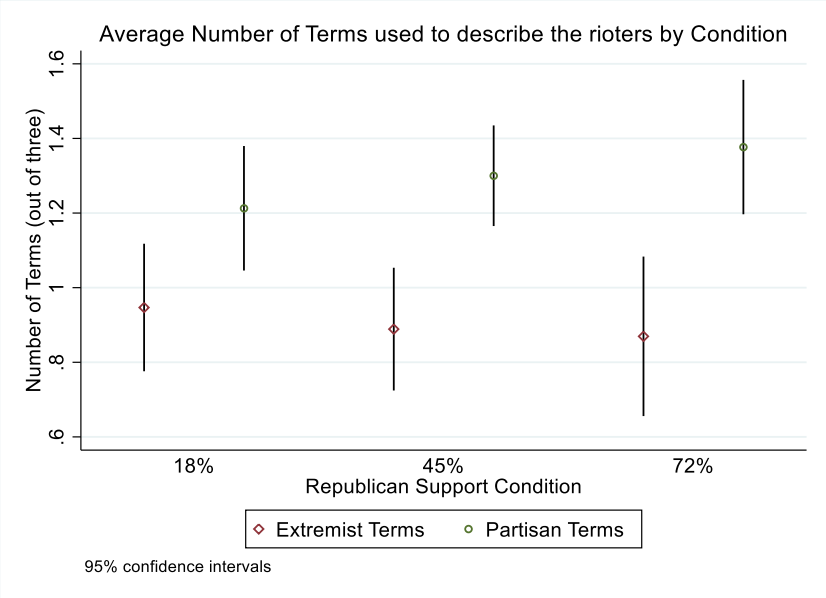



Table 7.9: Full Models for Punitiveness and Freedom of Demonstration Variables

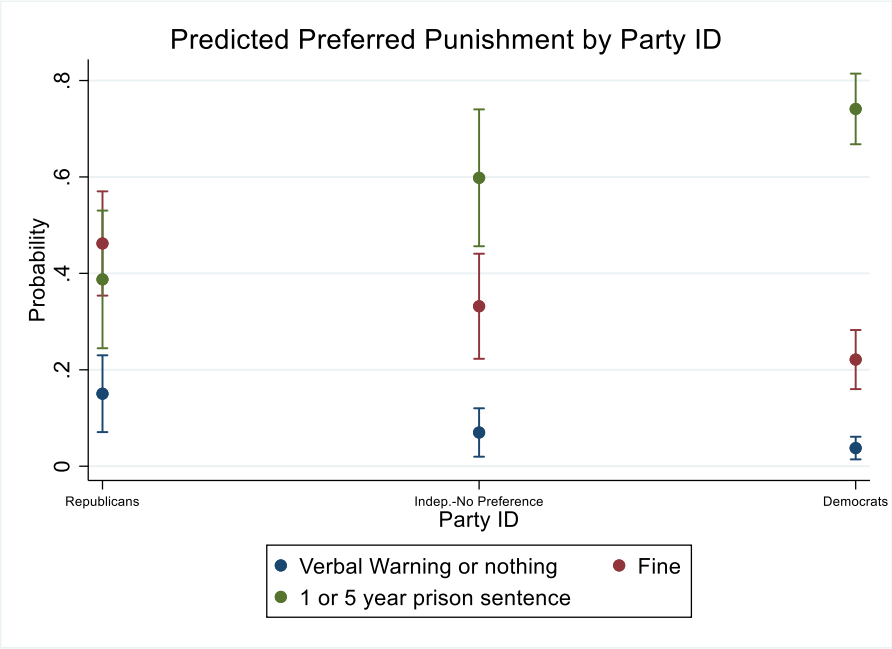
| | Sentence | PoliceViolence | SacredDemRight |
|---|---|---|---|
| | (Logistic Regression Models) | | |
| | 1 to 3 Ordinal Variable (Lenient → Fines → Prison) | 1-to-5 agreement with "Police violence against any of these protesters would have been justified." | 1-to-7 agreement with "Freedom of demonstration is a sacred right in this country and should not be limited under any circumstances." |
| Extremist Terms | 0.744** | -0.244 | -0.566** |
| (1-to-3 Count) | (-0.297) | (-0.221) | (-0.237) |
| Partisan Terms | -0.139 | 0.313 | *-0.461** |
| (1-to-3 Count) | (-0.329) | (-0.233) | (-0.257) |
| Party ID | **0.637*** ** | -0.172 | 0.22 |
| (0 to 2 (Rep./Indep.-No Preference/Dem.) | (-0.199) | (-0.168) | (-0.198) |
| Intensity | -0.065 | -0.144 | -0.085 |
| 0 to 3 (None-Lean-Weak-Strong) | (-0.214) | (-0.183) | (-0.156) |
| Condition | 0.174 | -0.103 | -0.218 |
| (Continuous (18/45/72% Support)) | (-0.191) | (-0.156) | (-0.157) |
| Political Variables | | | |
| Trust In Gov. | -0.175 | 0.0277 | -0.0136 |
| (1-to-7 Scale) | (-0.207) | (-0.156) | (-0.122) |
| "Friends Know my Party" | -0.003 | 0.097 | 0.004 |
| (1-to-5 Scale) | (-0.168) | (-0.149) | (-0.148) |
| "Friends Know My Issue-Positions" | -0.12 | 0.057 | -0.161 |
| (1-to-5 Scale) | (-0.183) | (-0.154) | (-0.164) |
| Pol. Harm>Good | 0.086 | -0.039 | -0.031 |
| (1-to-7 Scale) | (-0.12) | (-0.107) | (-0.117) |
| Racial Division | 0.064 | -0.01 | -0.0159 |
| (1-to-10 Evaluation) | (-0.086) | (-0.073) | (-0.07) |
| Political Division | 0.11 | *-0.141** | -0.0215 |
| (1-to-10 Evaluation) | (-0.083) | (-0.074) | (-0.073) |
| Frequency Pol. Talk | 0.28 | -0.00016 | 0.249 |
| (1-to-5 Frequency Scale) | (-0.219) | (-0.173) | (-0.159) |
| Political Knowledge | 0.0368 | 0.166 | 0.012 |
| (Combined four questions) | (-0.168) | (-0.135) | (-0.128) |
| Participation Index | 0.07 | -0.02 | -0.0003 |
| (1-to-7 Self-reported Political Activities) | (-0.107) | (-0.0951) | (-0.0825) |
| Individual-Level Variables | | | |
| Education | 0.514 | -0.17 | *-0.394** |
| (1-to-7 Highest Completed Level) | (-0.346) | (-0.24) | (-0.207) |
| Age Group | -0.074 | **0.679*** ** | 0.138 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| (1-to-7 increments) | (-0.227) | (-0.171) | (-0.229) |
| Household Income | 0.128 | -0.183** | 0.0286 |
| (1-to-7 Categories) | (-0.0952) | (-0.0831) | (-0.0683) |
| Gender | 0.178 | 0.0698 | -0.362 |
| (Dichotomous (Male = 0)) | (-0.371) | (-0.165) | (-0.227) |
| White | -0.567 | -0.0993 | 1.099** |
| (Dichotomous (Non-white = 0)) | (-0.506) | (-0.432) | (-0.471) |
| Black | 0.834 | -0.868** | 0.241 |
| (Dichotomous (Non-black = 0)) | (-0.513) | (-0.398) | (-0.401) |
| Asian | 0.133 | -0.0439 | 0.356 |
| (Dichotomous (Non-Asian = 0)) | (-0.543) | (-0.406) | (-0.448) |
| Hispanic | 0.649 | -0.995** | -0.132 |
| (Dichotomous (Non-Hispanic = 0)) | (-0.613) | (-0.464) | (-0.475) |
| Model Information | | | |
| /cut1 | 1.28 | 0.294 | **-8.887*** ** |
| | (-3.808) | (-2.794) | (-2.892) |
| /cut2 | 3.469 | 1.876 | -7.277** |
| | (-3.83) | (-2.781) | (-2.868) |
| /cut3 | | 3.075 | -6.021** |
| | | (-2.785) | (-2.868) |
| /cut4 | | 4.214 | *-5.067** |
| | | (-2.783) | (-2.857) |
| /cut5 | | | -3.627 |
| | | | (-2.839) |
| /cut6 | | | -2.293 |
| | | | (-2.891) |
| Observations | 248 | 247 | 248 |

Robust standard errors in parentheses

***** p<0.01**, ** p<0.05, * *p<0.1*

Figure 7.10: Predicted Punishment Preferences by Partisan Self-Identification



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