

COULD I EVER LOSE YOUR SUPPORT?

UNCONDITIONAL POLITICAL BIAS IN THE AMERICAN PUBLIC

2/14/2026

John V. Kane¹

Ian G. Anson²

ABSTRACT

Partisan bias poses serious challenges for democracies. Yet scholars rarely study the determinants of partisan bias directly, and without regard for its most extreme manifestations. We propose that extreme partisan bias in favor of a political elite is best defined as *unconditional support*, wherein a citizen's support will persist regardless of that leader's actions. Using nationally representative data, we first explore individual-level correlates of partisans' unconditional political bias (UPB). Second, we engage literature on injunctive norms to identify distinct pathways toward *mitigating* UPB. Using three survey experiments (n of 4,632), we find that both Republicans and Democrats substantially reduce their own UPB when they are made aware of others' political bias, though not for hypothetical outcomes. In all, our results contribute to our understanding of partisan bias in its most extreme form and highlight the role that social norms can play in shaping the conditionality of citizens' support for elites.

Key words: Motivated reasoning, partisan bias, injunctive norms, political support, belief perseverance

Word Count: 9,408

¹ Clinical Associate Professor, Center for Global Affairs, New York University, USA.

Corresponding author: jvk221@nyu.edu

² Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, USA

Partisan bias poses serious challenges to democracy. When political partisans are motivated by their desire to maintain support for their preferred party, a variety of negative consequences emerge (Ditto et al. 2025). Such political bias can engender misinformed and incorrect perceptions of social and economic reality (e.g., Bartels 2002; Bisgaard 2015), hostile views of the opposition (Abramowitz and McCoy 2019), and support for candidates who propose controversial and antidemocratic policies (e.g., Bartels 2018). Further, such biases can erode support for Constitutional provisions for democratic governance when those provisions stand in the way of party leaders (Graham and Svobik 2020; Krishnarajan 2023). Political bias can even strengthen partisans' willingness to support political violence in pursuit of their political goals (Kalmoe and Mason 2022). Altogether, a wealth of literature indicates that political bias lowers partisans' willingness to push back against actions by inparty politicians that might substantially harm the body politic.

And yet, though rarely studied as such, partisan bias exists along a spectrum of intensity. In this study, we posit that, at the most extreme end of this spectrum, bias is imbued with a unique attribute: *unconditional* support for in-group allies. In contrast to extant theories of partisan motivated reasoning that assert partisans balance directional and accuracy goals, this unconditional political bias (UPB) is categorically distinct. UPB implies that citizens' support for a leader will never diminish in light of new policy stances taken by inparty leaders (e.g., Bisgaard and Slothuus 2018). Further, and precisely because it is *unconditional*, even the most egregious violations of the public trust committed by party leaders cannot deter these partisans' support, regardless of negative consequences for the public, policy, institutions of governance, or the individual in question (Funck and McCabe 2022; Rothschild, Keefer, and Hauri 2021; Schönhage and Geys 2022). To

the extent that UPB exists in the public, therefore, processes of accountability and power-sharing in a democracy face greater risk of erosion (e.g., Levendusky and Stecula 2021).

Yet despite its importance, both the nature and consequences of UPB remain understudied. Our study aims to address this gap in several unique ways. First, we situate UPB as a distinct attitudinal *outcome*, rather than—as is often the case in existing literature—a theoretical *mechanism* driving downstream political behavior (e.g., Kane and Anson 2025; Pink et al. 2021), or as a theoretical moderator that is measured via a proxy (e.g., party identification strength; see Huddy, Davies, and Sandor 2020). Second, and as a result, we identify both the predictors and prevalence of UPB among both major parties in the American public. In doing so, we study UPB as both a *general disposition* (that is, a broad expression of unconditional support towards an allied political actor), and applied to a variety of hypothetical scenarios. Third, drawing upon theories of injunctive norm enforcement (e.g., Hornsey and Fielding 2020), we investigate the potential mutability of UPB.

To accomplish these aims, we first combine several nationally representative survey datasets from the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) that span from 2017 to 2023. We find that large shares of both Biden and Trump supporters exhibit UPB as a general disposition, with Trump supporters exhibiting a sharp increase in more recent years. We also find that while UPB is strongly predicted by partisan strength in both parties, other factors—most notably, education and age—do not operate symmetrically across parties.

Next, having found UPB to be both prevalent and predictable, we fielded three pre-registered survey experiments to examine whether partisans adjust their own levels of UPB when made more aware of extreme partisan bias by others. Given that exhibiting political objectivity (i.e., appearing unbiased) is widely regarded as desirable social norm (e.g., Gavrilets 2020), we tested whether

citizens' own inclination to engage in UPB is affected when UPB is (1) exhibited by members of the opposing party (the *outparty*), and, alternatively, (2) denounced by a member of the *inparty*. We find that, when citizens are exposed to partisan opponents who are engaging in UPB (and thereby *violating* the norm of political objectivity), partisans' own willingness to exhibit UPB is meaningfully reduced. Similarly, when citizens are exposed to a co-partisan who is denouncing UPB (and thereby *enforcing* the norm of political objectivity), partisans' willingness to engage in UPB is, again, significantly reduced. These findings hold across alternative measures of UPB, and among both Democrats and Republicans, though Democrats and Republicans do show notable differences in their baseline levels of UPB. Finally, while our experiments show clear effects on measures of UPB as a *general disposition*, we also show that, when applied to *specific* scenarios, more targeted interventions are likely needed in order to shift partisans' support for a given leader.

In sum, our study provides a novel examination of a particularly extreme and rigid form of political bias, while also shedding light on how and when it can be potentially reduced via social norms. By rediscovering that UPB violates widely held political objectivity norms, citizens can be motivated to eschew a cult-like devotion to political leaders and, instead, make their support more conditional. Such dispositional shifts raise the prospect for greater elite accountability via retrospective performance voting.

POLICY STANCES & PERSONAL CONDUCT THROUGH A PARTISAN LENS

The tendency for partisans to engage in motivated reasoning is explained by partisans' needs to achieve a variety of goals (e.g., Flynn, Nyhan, and Reifler 2017; Kunda 1990). Among these goals, unwavering loyalty to one's *inparty*—even when confronted with a challenge to one's own prior assumptions—can reduce uncomfortable cognitive dissonance (e.g., Bisgaard 2019; Kunda

1990) and strengthen social ties (e.g., Connors 2023; Tyler and Iyengar 2023). Consequently, a partisan may change their own political stances to conform with an elite's evolving stance on a political issue (Barber and Pope 2019; Bisgaard and Slothuus 2018). Citizens may also resolve dissonant beliefs by denying or downplaying scandals involving the inparty (Lee et al. 2023). In short, partisan allegiances can often undermine the value of two common metrics by which citizens evaluate political leaders: leaders' policy stances (e.g., Costa 2021) and their personal conduct while in office (e.g., Funk 1996; von Sikorski, Heiss, and Matthes 2020). When presented with politically inconvenient information that runs counter to their goals, contemporary political science scholarship shows us how partisans can readily "explain it away" (Bisgaard 2015).

BIAS AS A CONTINUUM

While the aforementioned literature documents a clear tendency for partisans to reason in a party-congenial fashion, extant online processing theories also assert a "tipping point" model in which most partisans will eventually admit to their party's wrongdoing in the presence of sufficient evidence (e.g., Redlawsk, Civettini, and Emmerson 2010). Indeed, a great deal of current research studies how to "tip" partisans away from biased positions by exposing them to subsidies of new disconfirming information. For example, cue-giving, inoculation, and news exposure approaches often find (at least short-term) success in changing partisans' minds to be less aligned with their preferred party (e.g., Flynn, Nyhan, and Reifler 2017; Mernyk et al. 2022; Saveski et al. 2022; Traberg et al. 2022 Vidigal and Jerit 2022). For instance, stimuli communicating that partisan leaders have violated democratic norms and practices can weaken partisans' support for those allied politicians going forward (Aarslew 2023). Further, signals that an inparty politician has

alienated members of one's political party have also been shown to lower inparty members' support for that politician (Kane 2019).

Yet while such stimuli have been shown to exert average effects among partisans *as a whole*, the existing literature often overlooks the potential for heterogeneous responses to these various forms of information. Put simply, there are likely some citizens whose partisan bias is so strong that the aforementioned information will have scarcely affected their political allegiances. Indeed, the existence of such extreme bias may help explain why, for example, some efforts to correct factual misperceptions struggle to demonstrate reliable effects on downstream political attitudes and behaviors in the aggregate (e.g., Dias et al. 2024; Druckman 2023). Due to their existing social and psychological commitments, such committed partisans' directional goals overwhelm inconvenient information.³

Unconditional Political Bias

We propose that bias in its most extreme form would, by definition, take the form of *unconditional* loyalty. In practical terms, this *unconditional political bias* (UPB) amounts to a tacit resistance, under any circumstances, to diminish one's evaluation of a political target within their party. UPB may arise from multiple psychological motivations (e.g., external social pressures to openly express allegiance to one's party (e.g., Connors 2023; Franzen and Mader 2023; Suhay 2015)). Much like in classic sociological accounts of cult membership, learning disconfirming news about a co-partisan can force partisans to choose between either rejecting the party or raising the stakes of commitment (Festinger et al. 1956). For example, rejecting the party may incur a

³ This discussion may bring to mind the question of "backfire effects," in which partisans' biases lead them to adopt even more party-congenial positions in the face of disconfirming information. However, research to date often shows that backlash effects are surprisingly rare (e.g., Wood and Porter 2019).

variety of social costs for partisans who have previously signaled their commitment to the party (Marques and Yzerbyt 1988; Marques and Paez 1994). Thus, such partisans may instead choose to “double down,” maintaining support for inparty politicians no matter the policy stances that the latter adopts, nor the (mis)conduct they engage in.

POLITICAL OBJECTIVITY AS A COUNTER TO UNCONDITIONAL BIAS?

As a wealth of research demonstrates, partisan motivated reasoning is difficult to overcome (e.g., Stanley et al. 2020); this is likely to be even more so for citizens who exhibit UPB. We propose that extreme bias is not merely a case of heightened party attachment *strength*, but rather a prevailing *stance* of unconditional support towards inparty politicians. In order to make this support become more *conditional*, partisans must commit to a new goal that counters the directional motivation of maintaining loyalty to, and agreement with, an inparty leader. We posit that one means by which partisans might acquire such a countervailing goal is in adapting to social expectations. The inculcation of injunctive norms and, in particular, the tendency to regard *political objectivity* as a positive social norm, should create incentives for partisans to express more conditional loyalty.

Objectivity and Injunctive Norm Violations

Injunctive social norms can be defined as the beliefs one holds about how others in society expect them to behave (Gavrillets 2020; Prewitt-Freilino et al. 2012). Such norms can be enforced through social pressure, rely upon social transmission to remain prevalent in the public (Mesquita and Shadmehr 2023), and pertain to a wide array of topics such as public health and political participation (e.g., Wu and Huber 2021). Importantly, injunctive norms have also been shown to

influence a variety of political attitudes and behaviors (Bischof et al. 2024), including voter turnout, expressions of incivility, and willingness to endorse partisan violence (e.g., Fieldhouse, Cutts, and Bailey 2022; Muddiman et al. 2021; You and Lee 2024).⁴

To the extent that citizens desire to observe the norm of *political objectivity*—and, equivalently, generally wish to avoid appearing politically biased—UPB should be regarded as socially undesirable when recognized as such (e.g., Schudson 2001).⁵ That is, insofar as citizens are mindful of an injunctive norm to express political flexibility, consideration, and impartiality, it follows that they should be less inclined to exhibit unconditional bias themselves. Indeed, this logic is consistent with research on the so-called “bias blind spot”—a phenomenon wherein individuals tend to perceive others as being significantly more biased than themselves, in part because doing so “can serve to enhance a generally positive view of the self” (Pronin et al. 2002, 370). Thus, we reason that *the desire to appear unbiased* represents a motivational force that can potentially counterbalance partisans’ desire to demonstrate political fealty to leaders in their party.

Might partisans become more conscious of this injunctive norm—and, therefore, alter their political support—if exposed to unconditional bias committed by others? As is the case with various other types of political stimuli, the *source* of this stimulus is likely to matter a great deal (Chong and Druckman 2011). If an inparty member demonstrates unconditional political bias (thus acting as a “norm violator”), inparty solidarity may lead to the bias as not being interpreted as bias at all. Further, because partisans tend to see inparty members as morally superior, politically expert,

⁴ Partisans can also react to events that implicate the in- and outparty in ways that condition their support for political violence. For instance, Trump supporters became less supportive of political violence in the wake of the 2024 assassination attempt against Trump .

⁵ A longstanding literature on civics education proposes that most Americans receive information and values from their primary school civic curriculum, and that this pedagogy serves to inculcate shared beliefs that support the social desirability of actions like civic participation and reciprocity (e.g., Lin 2015).

and justified in their actions relative to members of the outparty (e.g., Rothschild et al. 2019), inparty norm violators may be viewed merely as “good partisans” (Connors 2023).

But if the norm violator were, instead, a member of the political *outparty*, we reason that the opposite pattern should occur. An outparty member’s unconditional allegiance to an outparty politician should be far more recognizable as a clear violation of the political objectivity norm, which should motivate inparty members to avoid exhibiting UPB themselves. In a similar vein, insofar as partisans possess negative stereotypes of the outparty (Myers and Hvidsten 2024), inparty members should desire to contrast their own behavior with that of outparty members. A partisan may thus reflect upon their own attitudes and practices *in contrast to* those of the (unconditionally biased) outparty member, ultimately concluding that exhibiting unconditional bias is “bad” behavior that should not be committed by members of their own party.

By the same token, what if the objectivity norm were instead *enforced by the inparty*? In this case, a cue of this nature coming from an inparty member should serve as a counterweight to a position that an a partisan might otherwise adopt (e.g., Pink et al. 2021), lowering the perception that criticism of an inparty leader is inconsistent with one’s inparty. The result should be a revision to the partisan’s belief about what defines a “good” partisan, potentially leading to a stronger desire to eschew UPB and exhibit greater political objectivity rather than appear unconditionally biased.

In sum, we anticipate that when exposed to injunctive norms (alternately, *violations by outparty members*, and *enforcement from inparty members*), partisans will become less likely to endorse unconditionally politically biased positions in favor of their own party’s politicians (**H1**).

DATA & METHODS

In this section, we first explore correlates of unconditional bias using nationally representative survey data from the Public Religion Research Institute's (PRRI) recurring American Values Survey. We then test, experimentally, whether injunctive norm exposure (from both outparty and inparty sources) can meaningfully reduce the likelihood that partisans will exhibit unconditional political bias (UPB) themselves.

Study 1: Exploratory Analyses with PRRI Data

Our first set of analyses combines data from nationally representative surveys fielded by the PRRI. In multiple survey years (2017, 2019, 2020, and 2023), the PRRI featured a survey item that asked respondents to indicate how favorably they viewed Donald Trump (N = 2,916); they asked the same about Joe Biden in 2023 (N = 1,020). Respondents who indicated that they viewed Trump (Biden) favorably were then asked the following question: "Which better describes your opinion: 'Donald Trump (Joe Biden) could do something to lose my support,' or 'There's almost nothing Donald Trump (Joe Biden) could do to lose my support.'" Using this item, we constructed a binary measure for which any respondent who selected the latter statement was coded as 1 (unconditionally politically biased (UPB)), while any respondent who selected the former statement was coded as 0 (a supporter, but not UPB). For the first three surveys (2017, 2019, and 2020), approximately one-third of Trump supporters indicated being UPB. For the final survey wave available (2023), 45% of Trump supporters indicated being UPB, and 39% of Biden supporters indicated being UPB.⁶

⁶ Of course, social desirability pressures likely lead some respondents to indicate that they are not unconditionally biased when, in fact, they are. We thus acknowledge that these figures may represent *underestimates* of the actual level of UPB. That said, our key interest is less in the absolute *level* of bias and more in the factors that stand to *raise* or *lower* it.

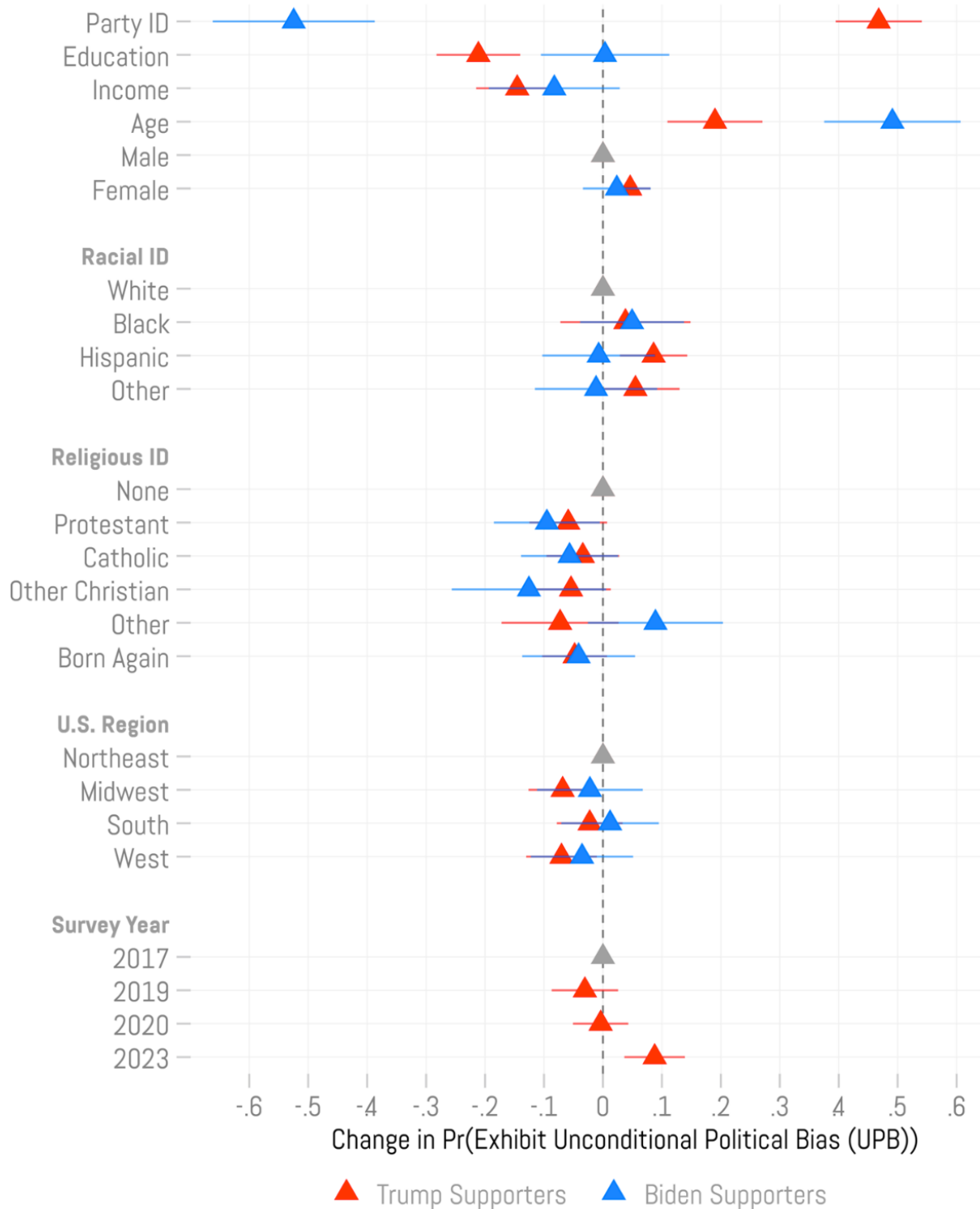
A number of socio-demographic and theoretically relevant measures were also included in all four survey years: party identification (measured on the canonical 7-point scale), educational attainment, household income, respondent's age, gender identification, racial identification, religious identification, and geographical region. Using these measures, we specified logistic regression models to predict respondents' probability of exhibiting UPB.⁷ All predictors were recoded to range from 0 to 1 for interpretive ease, and separate models were fitted for Trump and Biden supporters.⁸ In the case of Trump supporters, we also include a fixed effect for the survey year to account for differences between samples, as well as to analyze changes in Trump supporters' UPB over time.

The results of these analyses are featured in Figure 1. Beginning with Trump supporters, unsurprisingly, changing from strong Democratic identification to strong Republican identification yields the largest increase in probability of exhibiting UPB (47 percentage points, $p < .001$). But beyond the (predictably) large effect of party identification, there are several other patterns worth highlighting. Most notably, all else equal, the change from least educated Trump supporters to most educated Trump supporters yields a 21 percentage-point decrease in the probability of exhibiting UPB ($p < .001$). Similar to the result for education, the change from lowest to highest income predicts a 14.5 percentage-point decrease in the probability of exhibiting UPB. Age, on the other hand, predicts a significant increase (19 percentage points; $p < .001$). Perhaps more surprisingly, female and Hispanic identification both predict significant *increases* in the probability of exhibiting UPB in our model (4.6 and 8.6 percentage points, respectively; $p < .01$ in both cases)

⁷ See the Supplemental Appendix D for tabular output of these results.

⁸ Although it is technically possible that the same individual could express support for both Trump and Biden (and thus be included in both analyses), 0 respondents in the sample expressed support for *both* politicians.

FIGURE 1. Predictors of Unconditional Political Bias (Trump and Biden Supporters)



Notes: Estimates indicate change in probability of exhibiting blatant bias (model=logistic). Blatant bias indicates nothing target (Trump or Biden) could do would cause respondent to lower support. Blatant categories shown in gray. Blatant bias question asked for Biden only in 2023. Total N for Trump Supporters = 2,916. Total N for Biden Supporters = 1,020. Data = PRRI American Values Surveys (2017, 2019, 2020, and 2023).

relative to their baseline categories (male and White identification, respectively). Identification with a particular religion does not reliably predict UPB in favor of Trump. In fact, relative to no religious identification (“None”), any type of religious identification predicts slightly *lower* probabilities (though not at the conventional (.05) level). Regionally, it appears that—relative to the Northeast—respondents from the Midwest and West are roughly 7 percentage-points *less* likely to exhibit UPB ($p < .05$ in both cases). Finally, the figure reveals a nearly 9 percentage-point increase in UPB among Trump supporters compared to 2017 ($p = .001$).

Though the sample size is substantially smaller for the analysis of Biden supporters, the results nevertheless provide two notable asymmetries vis-à-vis the results for Trump supporters. First, whereas greater educational attainment predicted a substantially lower likelihood of UPB among Trump supporters, among Biden supporters, education has virtually no association with UPB ($p = .949$). Second, while age is positively associated with UPB among Trump supporters, this positive relationship is dramatically larger in magnitude among Biden supporters. Going from youngest to oldest age predicts a 49.1 percentage point increase in the probability of exhibiting UPB ($p < .001$). The remaining demographic and regional variables do not reliably predict which factors among Biden supporters are associated with higher or lower UPB.

Figure 1 thus establishes several important points. First and foremost, UPB appears to be a construct that is *predictable*, both by political variables that should theoretically be associated—though not *perfectly* so—with greater bias (e.g., party identification strength), as well as by socio-demographic variables (e.g., education and age). Second, the factors associated with UPB among Trump vis-à-vis Biden supporters are not necessarily identical nor symmetrical (e.g., education is a strong predictor among Trump supporters, but not for Biden supporters, whereas age is a substantially stronger predictor among Biden supporters when compared to Trump supporters).

Third, UPB is not necessarily most prevalent among groups that are most commonly associated with each party's base (e.g., Rothschild et al. 2019). For example, residents of the U.S. South, Whites, and Born-Again Christians are, *ceteris paribus*, not the Trump supporters who are most inclined to exhibit UPB. Similarly, it is not the case that non-White and female Biden supporters are substantially more likely to exhibit UPB.

Finally, while our present focus is on UPB as an attitudinal *outcome*, in the Supplementary Information (Appendix B) we further investigated whether UPB is significantly predictive of theoretically downstream attitudes and behavior. Conditioning on the same set of covariates featured in Figure 1, we do not find—for either Biden supporters or Trump supporters—that unconditional bias is significantly predictive either of turnout intentions or views on democracy. Interestingly, this suggests that, all else being equal, those who are unconditionally biased may not be more politically active, despite being more politically committed to a particular leader. However, unconditional bias does appear to be far more consequential for outcomes involving political norms, with UPB Trump supporters significantly more likely (vis-à-vis Biden supporters) to accept democratic rule-breaking and political violence—outcomes that are of increasing concern to both citizens and scholars (Druckman 2023b; Kalmoe and Mason 2022; Muddiman et al. 2021).

In sum, we believe UPB to be a theoretically valuable construct, and the results in Figure 1 confirm that it is indeed empirically predictable. Thus, our exploratory analyses not only provide informative descriptive findings, but also serve as important tests of UPB's construct validity and conceptually distinct nature.

Study 2: Experimentally Altering UPB: Outparty Norm Violators

UPB represents a willingness to openly admit that no information—irrespective of its accuracy—will affect one’s support for a politician. Can heightened awareness of the norm of political objectivity help to lower UPB? More specifically, can exposure to extreme bias serve to lower partisans’ willingness to engage in it themselves—i.e., make their support for a politician *more conditional* in nature?

Per **H1** above, we first explore what happens when partisans observe *outparty* members engaging in UPB, with the expectation that they should perceive this as a violation of political objectivity and, thus, become less likely to exhibit UPB themselves.

To test this proposition, we fielded two substantively similar experiments. In December of 2023 we fielded a study via Prolific (hereafter Experiment 1) that featured quotas for age, gender, race/ethnicity, and geographical region, to ensure that the sample was nationally representative ($n=1,107$). This study was preregistered on the OSF.io platform.⁹ Following this study, we fielded a replication via Lucid Theorem (hereafter Experiment 2) in March of 2024. This study also featured quotas for race/ethnicity, gender, age, and geographic region to ensure national representativeness ($n=3,270$).

Both studies measured partisanship at the start of the study (well before the experiment itself). Using this measure, respondents were randomly assigned to read a (fabricated) statement from a purported member of the outparty. Specifically, all Democrats were assigned to read a statement by a Trump voter, while all Republicans were assigned to read a statement by a Biden voter.¹⁰

⁹ The verbatim text of each preregistration can be found in the Supplemental Appendix Section G.

¹⁰ Respondents who indicated that they “lean” toward one party were classified as partisans and included in the experiment.

In both experiments, subjects were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. The two primary conditions of interest are detailed in Table 1, below. In these conditions, subjects read one of two statements by a purported outparty member: one indicating political support but not UPB (“Supporter” condition), and one statement indicating UPB (“Unconditional Political Bias” condition). Because both Donald Trump and Joe Biden served as president, the vignette language in both treatments was virtually identical for both Democratic and Republican respondents alike. And, because the UPB condition involves a substantial amount of political information, the *Supporter* condition serves as a valuable baseline: it also communicates political support for a politician, but not with the same degree of bias as in the UPB condition. The contrast between the Supporter and UPB conditions, therefore, help to cleanly isolate the violation of the political objectivity norm by an outparty member.

To investigate levels of UPB absent any political information—both for the sample as a whole as well as between partisan groups—both studies also featured a third, “pure control” condition that included no information.

Following treatment randomization, respondents were asked three outcome questions (also detailed in Table 1). The first two items were designed to probe UPB more deeply than the PRRI item featured above. Specifically, we see an important distinction between policy-related actions versus otherwise inappropriate behavior in office. While policy-based differences between a leader and their party might be expected in any democracy (Groeling 2010; Kane 2019), inappropriate conduct by political leaders (e.g., corruption) arguably poses a greater threat to the democratic health of a country. As such, one outcome item in our experiment focuses specifically on policy-related actions, while the second outcome focuses on “corruption or...other inappropriate behaviors while in office.” (Indeed, as we note below, we find significantly higher levels of Policy

TABLE 1. Experimental Vignettes & Outcomes (Study 2: Prolific & Lucid Samples)

Experimental Text	
Supporter	<i>Earlier this year, voters across America were interviewed by the nonpartisan American Politics Research Organization (APRO). The APRO has published some of the statements made by ordinary Americans in their interviews. Below is one statement from a supporter of [outparty president]:</i> "I voted for [outparty president] in the last election. I follow news about him pretty regularly and generally pay attention to what he says and does. Personally, I think he has helped people. He did some good things during his presidency, even if it wasn't perfect. I haven't made up my mind yet, but I am leaning toward voting for him again in the next election."
Unconditional Political Bias	[Same introductory text as in Supporter Condition] "I voted for [outparty president] in the last election and will support him no matter what he says or what he does. Whenever I hear something bad about him, I just don't believe it. He has helped people more than any other president ever will. Everything he did during his presidency was perfect and should not be criticized. He has my vote in the next election no matter what!"
Outcome Measures	
Policy Bias	<i>Politicians sometimes change positions on policies, taking a position we do not agree with.</i> <i>When thinking about [inparty president], is there any policy position Joe Biden could take that would cause him to lose your vote? (0="Yes, there is a policy position he could take that would cause him to lose my vote"; 1= "No, there is no policy position he could take that would cause him to lose my vote")</i>
Behavior Bias	<i>Politicians also sometimes engage in corruption or in other inappropriate behaviors while in office.</i> <i>When thinking about [inparty president], is there any corrupt or inappropriate behavior that Joe Biden could engage in that would cause him to lose your vote? (0="Yes, there is a behavior that would cause him to lose my vote"; 1= "No, there is no behavior that would cause him to lose my vote")</i>
Voluntary Criticism	<i>Would you be willing to tell us something that, personally, you don't really like about Joe Biden? If so, please write it in the space below. If not, please type "NO" in the space below. (0=No answer; 1=Wrote a criticism)</i>

Notes: Table features all experimental conditions, vignette and outcome wording.

Bias than Behavior Bias and, for the latter, significantly higher levels among Republicans than Democrats.) For both items, respondents were asked if there were any such actions that Joe Biden (if the respondent is a Democrat) or Donald Trump (if the respondent is a Republican) "could

engage in...that would cause him to lose your vote?” As with the PRRI measure above, respondents could choose one of two outcomes. Respondents who indicated “No” were assigned a 1 (UPB), while respondents who indicated “Yes” were assigned a 0 (not UPB).

Per our preregistration, one additional outcome was also explored. Respondents were asked if they would be willing to provide an open-ended response to communicate “something [they] really don’t like” about the politician in question. Though a more difficult test because it asks respondents to volunteer effort, it nevertheless enabled us to explore an extension of **H1**: if the manipulation serves to reduce unconditional bias, it may also make respondents more willing to voluntarily communicate something negative about their preferred party’s leader.

Results of Study 2

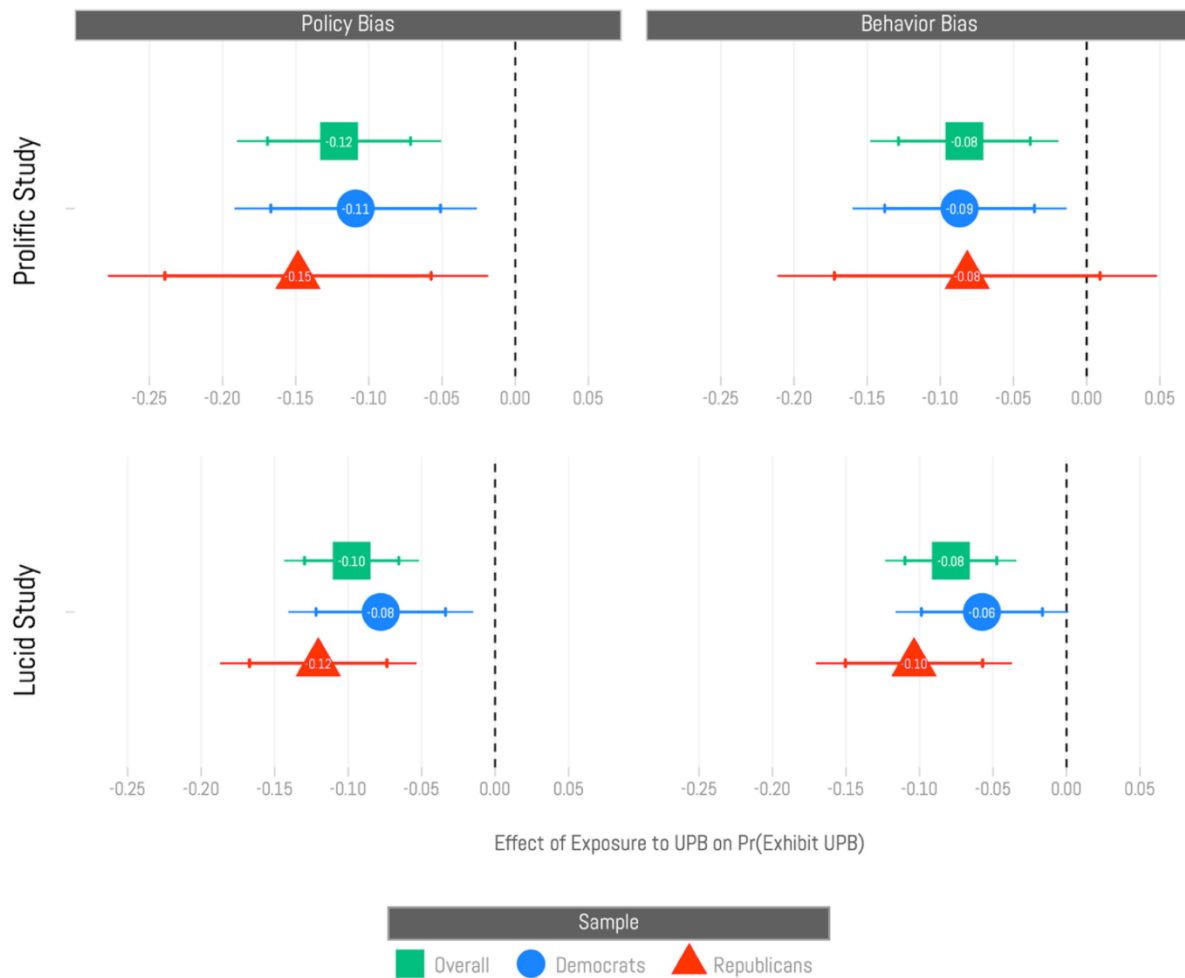
To reiterate, the primary aim of both experiments was to manipulate the level of perceived bias of the outparty target featured in the vignette. When more extreme bias is perceived in the outparty, it should motivate partisans to exhibit less bias themselves. To confirm that this manipulation was successful, we asked respondents in the Lucid study to indicate how biased they perceived the target to be (1= “Not biased at all”; 5= “Extremely biased”). We contrast the *Supporter* condition to the UPB condition on this outcome (recoded to range from 0 to 1; see the Supplemental Appendix C for more details). As intended, this manipulation greatly increases the perceived level of bias. For the sample as a whole (i.e., all partisans), this effect amounts to approximately 25 percentage points (pp) ($p < .001$). Thus, respondents in the UPB condition recognized unconditional support for a politician as being far more biased than the statements that were shown in the *Supporter* condition. We also conducted a factual manipulation check (Kane and Barabas 2019) and confirmed that partisans were far more likely to report that the outparty politician was

mentioned in the vignette vis-à-vis the inparty (or other) politician. Approximately 87% of respondents answered this item correctly (see the Supplemental Appendix C for details).

Next, using responses in the pure control condition, we find significantly higher levels of Policy Bias than Behavior Bias. In the Prolific (Lucid) sample, the share exhibiting Policy Bias was 32% (50%) while the share exhibiting Behavior Bias was only 21% (35%). This difference was statistically significant for both samples ($p < .001$), and indicates substantially greater tolerance for shifts in policy that one might disagree with, echoing recent research on the limits of policy in affecting partisan support (e.g., Barber and Pope 2019). Second, and again illustrating the need to separate policy-related bias from behavior-related bias, we find that Republicans and Democrats exhibit similar levels of Policy Bias, yet Republicans exhibit significantly higher Behavior Bias compared to Democrats—a difference of 11 (16) percentage points in the Prolific (Lucid) study ($p < .001$ in both cases). This finding suggests that, though generally opposed to it, on average, Republicans may currently be more tolerant of an inparty leader behaving inappropriately while in office (e.g., engaging in corruption) compared to Democrats (see Supplemental Appendix F for details.)

We now turn to the main results of the experiments. First, we describe the effects of the treatment conditions on two expressions of unconditional bias: Policy Bias and Behavior Bias (as shown above in Table 1). Beginning with the results of Experiment 1 (shown in top panels of Figure 2), consistent with **H1**, the UPB treatment tended to significantly reduce both forms of unconditional bias compared to the *Supporter* conditions. Compared to the *Supporter* condition, the UPB condition significantly lowered the probability of exhibiting Policy Bias for the overall sample as well as for each partisan group. For the overall sample, we observe a 12 pp decrease

FIGURE 2. Experimentally Changing UPB via Outparty Norm Violations



Notes: Panels on the left feature the Policy Bias outcome, while panels on the right feature the Behavior bias outcome (1 (0) indicates respondent does (does not) exhibit blatant bias). Coefficients represent the effect of the outparty unconditional political bias (UPB) condition (compared to the Supporter condition). The x -axes indicate the change in probability of the respondent exhibiting UPB. Underlying models are logistic regression (one model for all partisans, one for Democrats only, and one for Republicans only). CIs are 83% and 95%. Prolific data (shown in top row): Total $n=908$ (641 Democrats and 267 Republicans). Lucid data (shown in bottom row): Total $n=2,696$ (1,438 Democrats and 1,258 Republicans).

($p=.001$), with Democrats exhibiting an 11 pp decrease ($p=.01$) and Republicans exhibiting a 15 pp decrease ($p=.03$).¹¹

¹¹ See Supplemental Appendix D for regression output underlying all figures. This appendix also contains estimates that include the pure control group (though, again, the control group differs in multiple ways from both of the primary experimental conditions).

Very similar patterns are observed for the Behavior Bias outcome (top-right panel of Figure 3), though the effects tend to be slightly smaller in magnitude compared to the top-left panel. Comparing the UPB condition against the *Supporter* conditions, we observe an 8.4 pp decrease in the probability of exhibiting unconditional political bias ($p=.01$) for partisans overall. Similarly sized effects were found for each partisan group, though given the relatively smaller size of the Republican sub-sample ($n=266$), the effect among Republicans did not attain statistical significance at the conventional level.

The bottom panel of Figure 3 presents the results for Experiment 2. Similar to the Prolific Study, we consistently observe that the UPB condition lowered partisans' willingness to exhibit unconditional political bias relative to the *Supporter* condition. The effect on Policy Bias for partisans overall is nearly 10 pp ($p<.001$) and is also significant for both Democrats and Republicans (though Republicans exhibit a slightly larger effect). The effect on the Behavior Bias outcome for partisans is approximately an 8 pp decrease ($p=.001$), with Democrats and Republicans again each exhibiting negative treatment effects.

Given concerns with data quality in Lucid samples (e.g., Stagnaro et al. 2024), we followed the strategy proposed by Kane, Velez and Barabas (2023), and tested whether the effects of the UPB condition (versus the *Supporter* condition) are stronger among those who performed better on a pretreatment measure of attentiveness. Providing even stronger support for **H1**, we find that the effect of exposure to UPB grows substantially more negative among respondents who were more attentive to pretreatment content. For example, for the Policy Bias and Behavior Bias outcomes, we estimate the effect of the UPB (versus *Supporter*) condition among the most attentive respondents to be a 14.3 and 10.5 pp decrease in the probability of exhibiting UPB, respectively (see the Supplemental Appendix E for details).

Finally, we did not observe any significant effects on the open-ended outcome. That said, additional tests of this open-ended measure's validity showed that respondents with stronger partisanship and more extreme ideological self-placement scores were either no less likely (Experiment 1) or significantly *more* likely (Experiment 2) to provide an open-ended criticism of their inparty politician compared to those with weaker partisanship and more moderate ideological self-placement. These latter patterns were unexpected, and suggest that unwillingness to offer a single open-ended criticism via a survey may not serve as a valid indicator of unconditional support or extreme political bias more broadly (see Supplemental Appendix E for descriptive statistics on the open-ended items for each partisan group and for partisans as a whole).¹²

Study 3: Experimentally Altering UPB: Inparty Norm Enforcement

The results presented above provide evidence that outparty norm violators can reduce partisans' willingness to express UPB. Yet citizens may also be motivated to exhibit greater political objectivity when such behavior is exhibited by inparty members. Further, *inter*-party interactions may be less prevalent in the current political climate than *intra*-party interactions, (e.g., Levendusky 2023), which elevates the utility of examining how partisans respond to members of their own party. Thus, the final experiment tests whether injunctive norm *enforcement* by partisan allies can also play a role in shaping expressions of political bias.

From May 6-7, 2025, we contacted a sample of 1,028 Americans (479 Republicans and 599 Democrats) using the Prolific participant recruitment platform. This sample also featured quotas

¹² In addition, it may be that our experimental treatment reduced the most egregious form of partisan bias, but not to the point that respondents were willing to expend effort toward constructing and communicating a criticism of their preferred politician.

that reflect Census demography for age, gender, region, and race/ethnicity. The analyses were again preregistered via OSF prior to data collection.

In this study (Study 3), subjects participated in a simple experimental design that randomized subjects into one of two experimental groups. As shown in Table 2, respondents were randomly assigned to a *Supporter* vignette that was similar in nature to that seen in Study 2 above, but that described an inparty member rather than an outparty member. In contrast, the other half of respondents received a *Norm Enforcement* condition, in which an inparty member urged fellow supporters to resist unconditional bias and, instead, “speak up” if the leader “does something wrong.” (In an effort to maximize statistical power, Study 3 did not include a pure control condition.)

Also in contrast to Study 2, Study 3 features Kamala Harris in place of Joe Biden (given her 2024 bid for the presidency) and a more extensive range of outcome variables. Some measures again tap expressions of general dispositions towards UPB, as seen in the Policy Bias and Behavior Bias items from Study 2. However, here we also include a measure of Unconditional Trust, in which respondents identify whether they trust “every word” uttered by their inparty leader, and a measure of Explicit Agreement, in which respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they agree with a real-world controversial stance either the Republican leader (Trump) or Democratic leader (Harris) has publicly taken.

Finally, as a further exploration, we also sought to investigate the extent to which the experimental treatment might also affect support for the inparty candidate on more specific (albeit hypothetical) scenarios. To that end, we include questions about five hypothetical instances of poor sociotropic performance or instances of misconduct during the inparty leader’s presidency:

TABLE 2. Experimental Vignettes & Outcome Measures (Study 3)

Experimental Text	
Inparty Supporter	<i>Earlier this year, voters across America were interviewed by the nonpartisan American Politics Research Organization (APRO). The APRO has published some of the statements made by ordinary Americans in their interviews. Below is one statement from a supporter of the [Republican / Democratic] Party presidential candidate, [Donald Trump / Kamala Harris]:</i> “I think 2024 was an especially important election for our country. I voted for [Donald Trump / Kamala harris] and, along with many other [Republican / Democratic] voters, really want [him / her] to [succeed in office / become the president in the future].”
Inparty Norm Enforcer	[Same introductory text as in Supporter Condition] “But it’s important that we don’t just follow [him / her] blindly, you know? If [he /she] starts doing things we don’t like, we can’t be afraid to speak up. It doesn’t matter that we voted for [him / her]. If [he / she] does something wrong, [he / she] needs to hear about it from us.”
Outcome Measures	
Policy Bias	<i>Politicians sometimes change positions on policies, taking a position we do not agree with.</i> <i>When thinking about [inparty president], is there any policy position Joe Biden could take that would cause him to lose your vote? (0=“Yes, there is a policy position he could take that would cause him to lose my vote”; 1= “No, there is no policy position he could take that would cause him to lose my vote”)</i>
Behavior Bias	<i>Politicians also sometimes engage in corruption or in other inappropriate behaviors while in office.</i> <i>When thinking about [inparty president], is there any corrupt or inappropriate behavior that Joe Biden could engage in that would cause him to lose your vote? (0=“Yes, there is a behavior that would cause him to lose my vote”; 1= “No, there is no behavior that would cause him to lose my vote”)</i>
Trust	<i>On a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 means “definitely don’t trust” and 10 means “definitely trust,” please indicate how much you think voters should trust every word that [Donald Trump / Kamala Harris] says.</i>
Explicit Agreement	<i>Since becoming president, Donald Trump has stated that federal judges who prevent him from doing what he wants should be removed from their positions and replaced. Which view comes closer to your own opinion? (0= “I DISAGREE with Donald Trump”; 1= “I AGREE with Donald Trump”)</i> <i>Kamala Harris has expressed willingness to expand the Supreme Court to include additional seats for new justices who will oppose the Court's current conservative majority. Which view comes closer to your own opinion? ? (0= “I DISAGREE with Kamala Harris”; 1= “I AGREE with Kamala Harris”)</i>

Notes: Table features experimental conditions, vignette and outcome wording for Study 3. Republicans saw vignettes referencing Donald Trump; Democrats saw vignettes referencing Kamala Harris.

skyrocketing gas prices, imprisonment of U.S. citizens, a ballooning national debt, bribes for Federal judges, and violent crime increases, respectively. We also combine these measures to form an additive index (see Supplemental Appendices D and F for full details and descriptive statistics on all outcomes featured in Study 3).

Results of Study 3

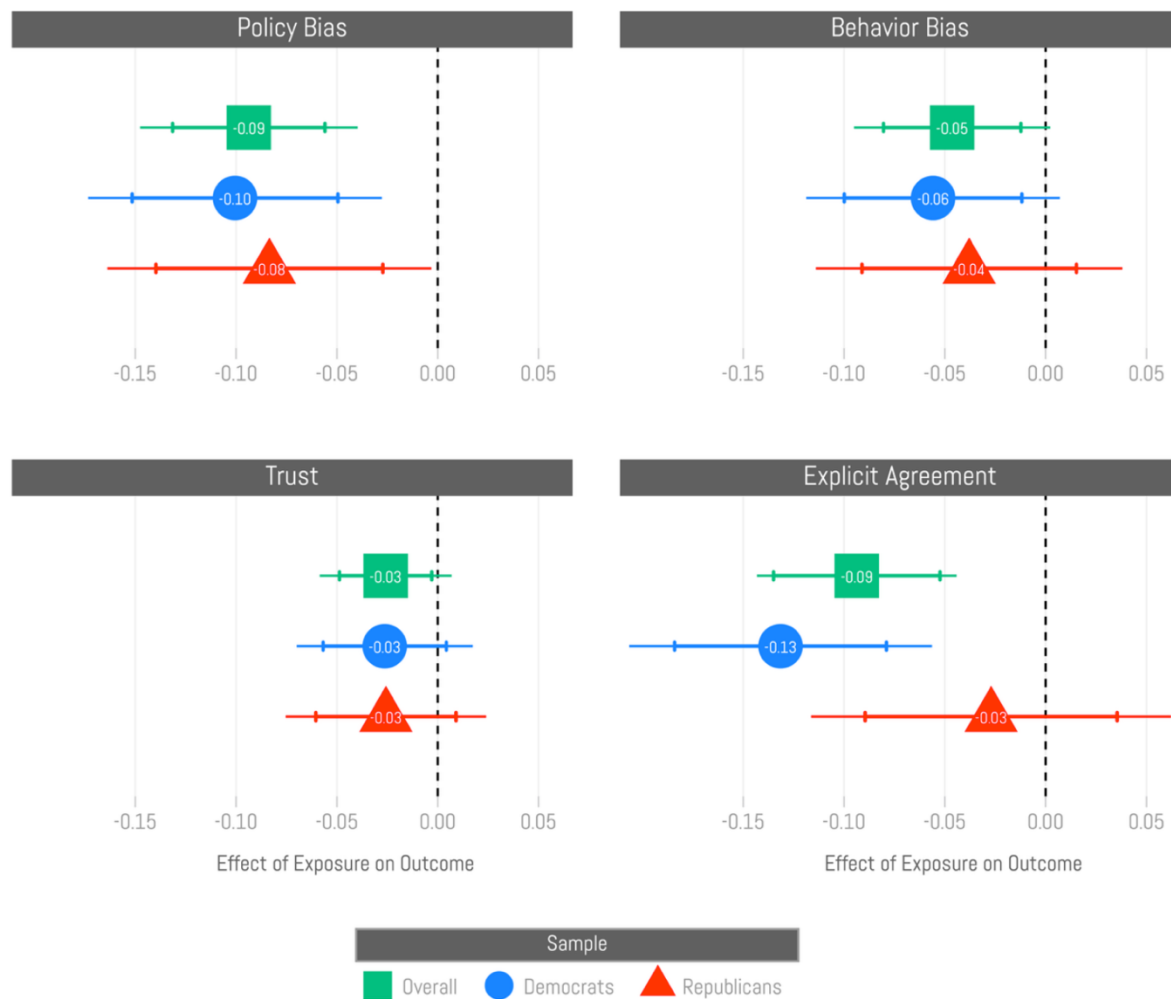
First, as in the previous two experiments, we included manipulation checks following the outcome measures. As detailed in Supplemental Appendix C, these checks confirm that respondents (1) were highly aware that the target featured in the vignette was a supporter of the inparty leader, and that, as intended, (2) perceived the “inparty norm enforcer” to be significantly less biased than the “supporter.”

The results for the four main outcomes of Study 3 are shown in Figure 3. In the top row are the outcomes featured previously and, overall, these effects are similar to those observed in Study 2. Among the full sample of respondents, we see clear evidence in support of **H1** for the Policy Bias (a 9 pp reduction in UPB, $p=0.001$), and Behavior Bias (a 5 pp reduction; $p=0.06$) outcomes. Thus, just as exposure to an unconditionally biased outparty member is capable of reducing one’s own UPB, exposure to an inparty member who is vocally opposed to unconditional bias can also significantly reduce one’s UPB. Moreover, the effects are similarly sized for Democrats and Republicans, though tend to be smaller for the Behavior Bias outcome than for the Policy Bias outcome.

Turning to the bottom row of Figure 3, the Trust item shows a treatment effect that runs in the expected direction, averaging a 3 pp decrease. Given the directional prediction, this effect would be marginally statistically significant ($p=0.12$, one-tailed) but is not statistically significant at our

preregistered significance level of $p < 0.05$. In this case we observe similar effect sizes for both partisan groups.

FIGURE 3. Effect of Exposure to Inparty Norm Enforcement on UPB



Notes: Each outcome rescaled to range between 0 and 1. Point estimates indicate change in outcome given exposure to inparty enforcement of political objectivity (i.e., against unconditional political bias) compared to an inparty supporter. Estimates obtained via logistic regression in all cases except the “Trust” outcome, which used OLS regression. 95% and 83% confidence intervals shown. Total $n = 1,028$ (599 Democrats and 479 Republicans). Data = Prolific.

Lastly, the Explicit Agreement provides especially strong evidence that exposure to a co-partisan norm enforcer can reduce partisan bias. For the sample as a whole, we observe a 9 pp

decrease in willingness to explicitly agree with a controversial position taken by an inparty leader ($p < .01$). However, perhaps owing to the positions being of a different nature across partisan groups (i.e., Trump's position on federal judges and Harris's position on the U.S. Supreme Court may not have been perceived as equally controversial), here we observe a relatively large partisan asymmetry, with Democrats exhibiting a 13 pp decrease ($p = .001$) while Republicans only exhibit a 3 pp decrease ($p = .55$).

Altogether, the results of Study 3 generally indicate that inparty norm enforcement offers an additional means by which UPB can be meaningfully reduced. Though the evidence is weaker for trust in what a preferred leader says, we do find that the intervention featured in Study 3 is able to encourage partisans to explicitly disagree with their inparty leader, which similarly suggests that political support for a politician can be made more conditional.

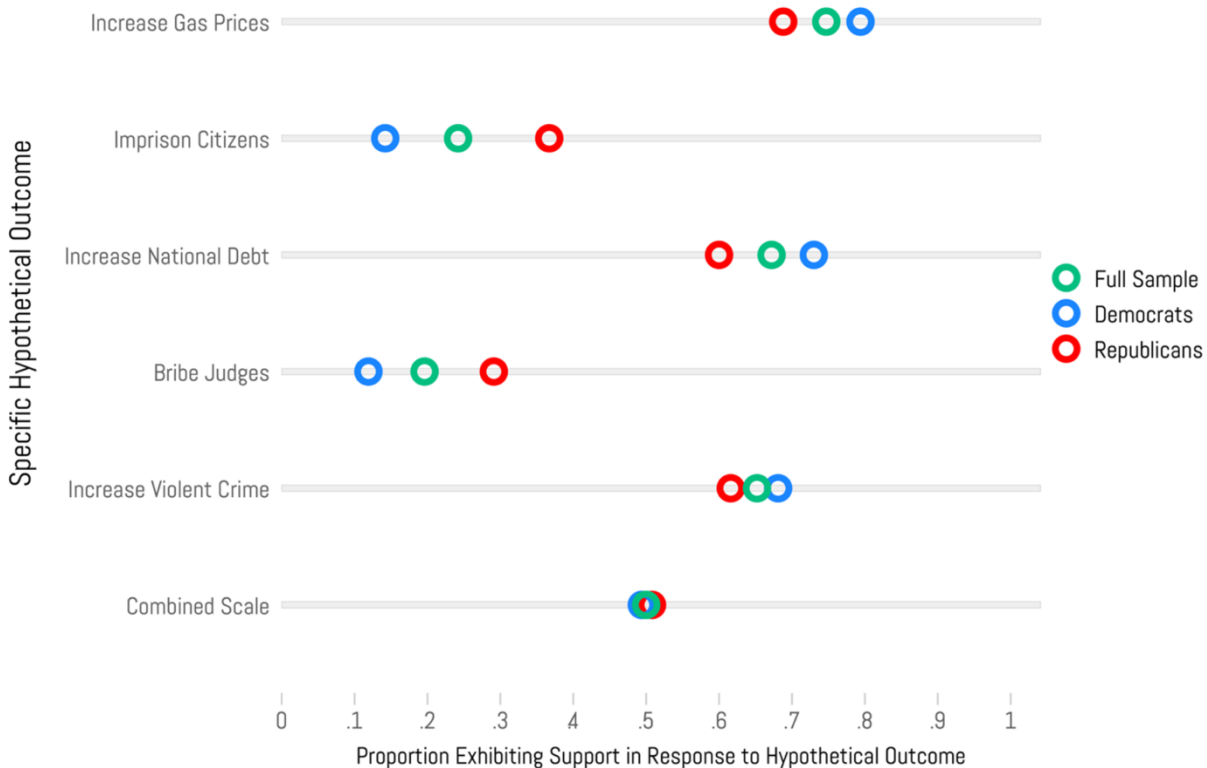
Leader Support Under Hypothetical Scenarios

Studies 2 and 3 confirm that a general tendency to unconditionally support an inparty leader can be diminished in the presence of injunctive norms. In the final set of analyses of Study 3, we sought to explore whether the inparty norm enforcement treatment can encourage partisans to indicate that they would lower support for a leader under more specified hypothetical scenarios.

Before turning to the results of these analyses, Figure 4 displays each item's average level of support for each partisan group as well as the overall sample. Several points are worth noting. First, regardless of partisan groups, substantial shares of citizens indicate that they would continue

to support their party's leader even if the hypothetical scenario were to happen.¹³ Second, levels of continued support depend a great deal upon the issue at hand: sociotropic issues (gas prices, the national debt, and rates of violent crime) tend to show higher levels of support across both

FIGURE 4. Proportion Supporting Leader in Response to Hypothetical Outcomes



Notes: Each outcome (except for “Combined Scale”) is a binary indicator of willingness to lower support for one’s party’s leader (0= “Yes, they would lose my support”; 1=“No, they would not lose my support”). The “Combined Scale” item is rescaled to range between 0 and 1. Dots represent each group’s average for each outcome shown on the y-axis. Higher values thus indicate greater unconditional political bias. In every case except the combined scale, the difference between Democrats and Republicans is statistically significant at at least the .05 level. Total $n = 1,028$ (599 Democrats and 479 Republicans). Data = Prolific.

partisan groups, while behaviors involving potential abuse of executive power (imprisoning citizens and corruption) find far lower levels of support. Third, within any given hypothetical

¹³ It is worth noting that, to the extent that partisans are engaging in “lip service” on these items—i.e., they indicate “No” on our measure but, were the scenario to actually happen, they would find a way to rationalize continued support—these estimates are likely too conservative.

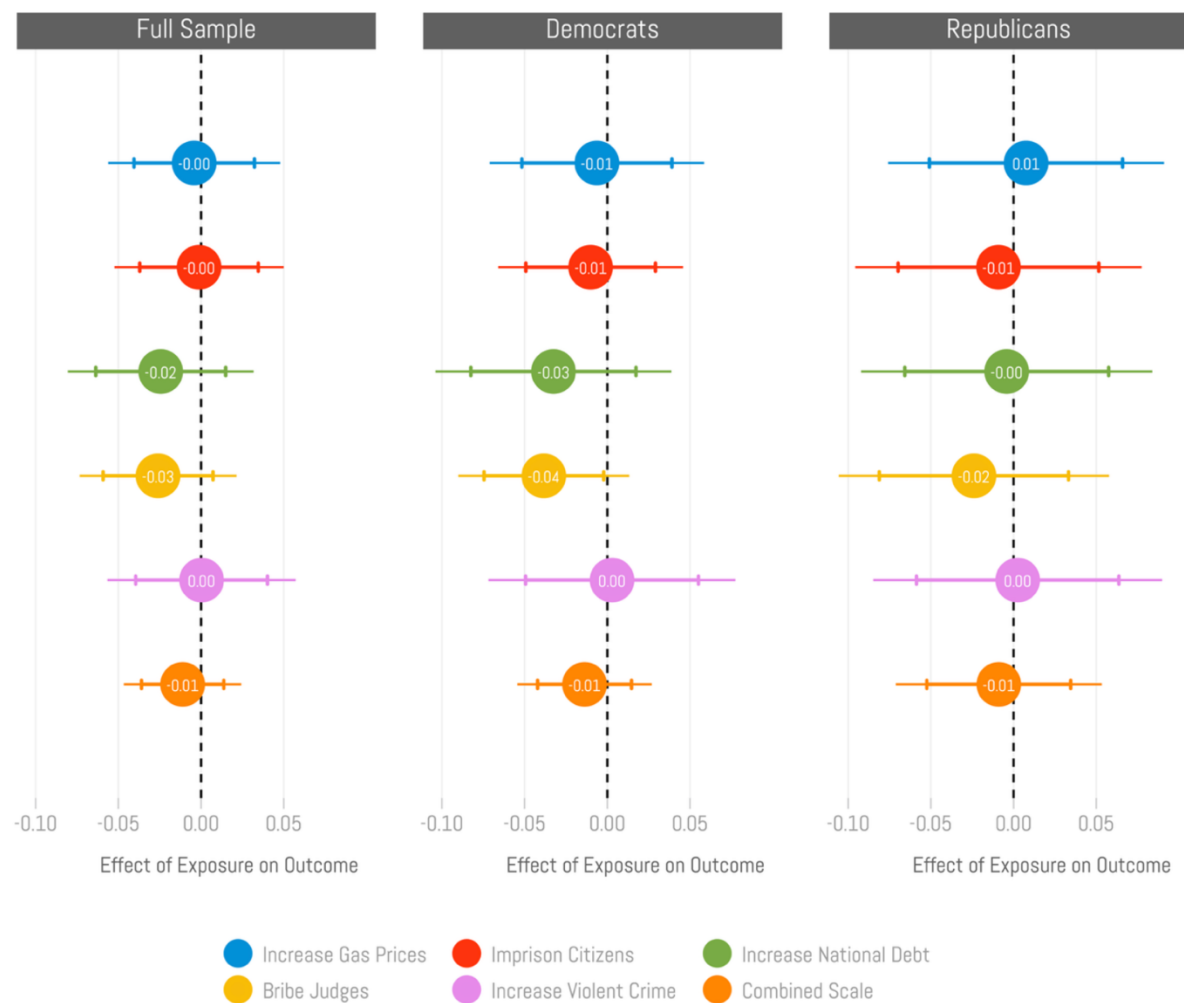
scenario, there are meaningful partisan differences: On the sociotropic issues, Democrats show significantly greater support for their leader than do Republicans (i.e., for gas prices and the national debt, $p < .001$; for violent crime, $p < .05$ (see Supplemental Appendix F for details)). Yet, on the executive behavior-related issues, Republicans tend to show significantly greater support than do Democrats (for both imprisoning citizens and bribing judges, $p < .001$), echoing the partisan differences in baseline values (of the Behavior Bias outcome) that we observed in Study 2. In total, this figure makes clear that unconditional bias may depend upon (1) the issue at hand, (2) the party of the citizen, and (3) the interaction between the two.

Figure 5 presents the results of the experiment. Collectively, the results indicate that changing partisans' *general* level of UPB is unlikely to be sufficient when more specific situations arise. More specifically, we observe consistently null effects for our inparty norm enforcement treatment on partisans' willingness to express support for their inparty leader in response to the five specific hypotheticals described above. Though the combined scale outcome (shown at the bottom of Figure 5) is negative for both partisan groups—indicating a decrease in support for a leader in response to an inparty norm enforcer—these effects are not statistically significant (e.g., for the overall sample, $p = .54$). Further, we do not witness asymmetries in these results across partisan groups: treatment effects for both Republican and Democratic subgroups were nonsignificant and substantively small.

While Study 3 by no means includes an exhaustive list of hypothetical scenarios that could be explored, an important implication of this finding is that, on specific issues, more specific cues may be needed to counter unconditional partisan bias. For example, to counter unconditional bias on the issue of the national debt, inparty norm enforcers may need to speak specifically to the national debt. Without such specificity, partisans may not be able to recognize that a particular

situation represents an instance of needing to hold a leader to account. Additionally, the lack of specificity may more easily enable partisans to rationalize that these hypothetical scenarios “would never happen,” leaving support for an inparty leader unchanged and enabling unconditional political bias to persist.

FIGURE 5. Effect of Exposure to Inparty Norm Enforcement on UPB



Notes: Each outcome (except for “Combined Scale”) is a binary indicator of bias. The “Combined Scale” item is rescaled to range between 0 and 1. Point estimates obtained using logistic regression in all cases except the “Combined Scale” outcome, which used OLS regression. 95% and 83% confidence intervals shown. Total $n = 1,028$ (599 Democrats and 479 Republicans). Data = Prolific.

Summary of Experimental Results

Taken together, our experiments reveal two distinct pathways by which making unconditional bias more salient can help to reduce it: (1) exposure to an outparty member who is violating the norm of political objectivity, and (2) exposure to an inparty member who is upholding this norm. For outcomes involving policy disagreements and unethical executive behavior, becoming more aware of unconditional political bias consistently reduced respondents' own unconditional bias toward a leader of their party (**H1**). These effects were similar for both partisan groups (though more so in Study 2), indicating that both parties' members are willing and able to make their support more conditional in nature. However, for the more specific, hypothetical outcomes included in Study 3, we find that partisans resist altering support for their party's leader. Thus, while becoming more aware of extreme bias may serve as an important first step toward reducing one's own bias, our study indicates that more specific information may be needed if citizens are going to apply this awareness in more specific scenarios.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Theories of partisan-motivated reasoning assert that partisans' directional goals are balanced by a psychological need for accuracy that can serve to constrain bias (Bolsen et al. 2014). However, when partisans' desire for accuracy appears to be minimal in nature, disconfirming information alone may not be enough to dissuade partisans from obstinately maintaining supporting their preferred elites. Instead, injunctive social norms, or a person's beliefs about what others expect them to do, might serve to constrain the degree to which partisans exhibit bias. To investigate this possibility, the present study has sought to define and measure partisan bias directly.

Whereas social scientists have commonly treated partisan bias as an unmeasured mechanism or an indirectly-measured moderator, our study sought to measure it directly and in its most extreme form. We propose that extreme partisan bias can be defined as *unconditional* support for a particular politician or party: a situation in which partisans refuse to diminish support for a co-partisan elite even in the face of evidence of poor executive performance, misdeeds, or a combination of the two. We contend that, though this unconditional political bias (UPB) represents a theoretically valuable construct, our understanding of its nature remains limited. Using nationally representative cross-sectional data, we consistently find that UPB is empirically predictable, and that it is, in some cases, associated with consequential political outcomes (e.g., support for democratic rule-breaking and political violence). Further, we uncover important asymmetries between the parties in terms of the factors that are associated with UPB (e.g., higher education predicts lower UPB among Republicans but is unrelated to UPB among Democrats). We also find evidence that UPB has meaningfully increased in recent years among people who express support for Donald Trump.

Our three survey experiments, in turn, investigate whether UPB is sensitive to particular types of cues—namely, cues that are likely to place unconditional bias in a more negative light. We first reasoned that this could occur via exposure to unconditional bias being exhibited *in the outparty*. When exposed to this behavior, we find that partisans tend to be substantially *less* likely to exhibit UPB in favor of their own party's leader. In short, our results suggest that if the outparty is engaging in UPB, it should be easier for inparty members to recognize that it violates the norm of political objectivity (i.e., it will be perceived as being more biased), and will thereby disincline inparty members to engage in UPB themselves. In a similar vein, we reason that when *inparty* members

vocally speak out *against* UPB, this should motivate inparty members to exhibit less UPB themselves—a prediction for which we also find empirical support.

Our paper thus contributes to the growing literatures on partisanship and partisan bias by both (1) identifying a uniquely extreme and pernicious form of bias, and (2) demonstrating that it can be influenced by social cues involving injunctive norms. Further, because we were able to analyze the phenomenon of UPB within each party separately, our results contribute to the growing interest in party asymmetries—or lack thereof—in partisan bias (Ditto et al. 2019). Finally, our measure may also prove useful to survey-experimentalists who wish to identify subsets of partisan respondents who might be *especially* resistant to particular types of framing and persuasive messaging about political leaders.

We believe there are at least three useful extensions of our study. First, all of our outcomes focus on an individual politician (i.e., a party leader). However, it stands to reason that a substantial share of citizens also exhibit unconditional support for a *party label* as well, and that such support could also be reduced to the extent that citizens are made aware of how unconditional bias violates the norm of political objectivity. Second, while our study considers misdeeds and poor performance as justifiable reasons why a partisan might lose faith in their preferred candidate, future research might also consider *policy reversals* that pose material threats to supporters as a further reason to denounce a co-partisan leader (e.g., Bisgaard and Slothuus 2018). If a partisan refuses to abandon a leader even when they adopt policy positions that run counter to the partisan's rational basis for support, unconditional political bias could lead to serious fractures in representational linkage between the government and citizens.

Finally, though we focus on unconditional support for an inparty politician, UPB could also be studied in the form of unconditional *opposition to the outparty*—i.e., that there is nothing the

outparty, nor an outparty politician, could do that would increase support from inparty members. Given the increasing interest in negative partisanship (Abramowitz and Webster 2016), this outparty form of UPB also represents an important construct to understand. Thus, future research should examine whether the factors that predict outparty UPB are similar to those that predict the inparty form of UPB that we investigated here, as well as under what conditions such bias against the outparty can be changed via priming injunctive norms.

In conclusion, our study finds that unconditional political bias is both predictable and malleable. While a cult-like devotion to a political leader poses considerable risks to the health of a democracy, our study uncovers pathways that encourage citizens to make their support more conditional in nature.

REFERENCES

- Aarslew, Laurits F. 2023. "Why Don't Partisans Sanction Electoral Malpractice?" *British Journal of Political Science* 53 (2): 407–23.
- Abramowitz, Alan I., and Steven Webster. 2016. "The Rise of Negative Partisanship and the Nationalization of U.S. Elections in the 21st Century." *Electoral Studies* 41 (March): 12–22.
- Abramowitz, Alan, and Jennifer McCoy. 2019. "United States: Racial Resentment, Negative Partisanship, and Polarization in Trump's America." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 681 (1): 137–56.
- Barber, Michael, and Jeremy C. Pope. 2019. "Does Party Trump Ideology? Disentangling Party and Ideology in America." *American Political Science Review* 113 (1): 38–54.
- Bartels, Larry M. 2002. "Beyond the Running Tally: Partisan Bias in Political Perceptions." *Political Behavior* 24 (2): 117–50.
- Bartels, Larry M. 2018. "Partisanship in the Trump Era." *The Journal of Politics* 80 (4): 1483–94.
- Bischof, Daniel, Tim Lars Allinger, Morgan Le Corre Juratic, and Kristian Frederiksen. 2024. "How Citizens Perceive Others: The Role of Social Norms for Democracies." Preprint, OSF, August 25. <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/4qgh8>.
- Bisgaard, Martin. 2015. "Bias Will Find a Way: Economic Perceptions, Attributions of Blame, and Partisan-Motivated Reasoning during Crisis." *The Journal of Politics* 77 (3): 849–60.
- Bisgaard, Martin, and Rune Slothuus. 2018. "Partisan Elites as Culprits? How Party Cues Shape Partisan Perceptual Gaps." *American Journal of Political Science* 62 (2): 456–69.
- Bolsen, Toby, James N. Druckman, and Fay Lomax Cook. 2014. "The Influence of Partisan Motivated Reasoning on Public Opinion." *Political Behavior* 36 (2): 235–62.
- Chong, Dennis, and James N. Druckman. 2011. "Identifying Frames in Political News." In *Sourcebook for Political Communication Research: Methods, Measures, and Analytical Techniques*, edited by Erik P. Bucy and R. Lance Holbert. New York, NY.
- Connors, Elizabeth C. 2023. "Social Desirability and Affective Polarization." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 87 (4): 911–34. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfad053>.
- Costa, Mia. 2021. "Ideology, Not Affect: What Americans Want from Political Representation." *American Journal of Political Science* 65 (2): 342–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12571>.

- Dias, Nicholas C., Laurits F. Aarslew, Kristian Vrede Skaaning Frederiksen, Yphtach Lelkes, Lea Pradella, and Sean J. Westwood. 2024. "Correcting Misperceptions of Partisan Opponents Is Not Effective at Treating Democratic Ills." *PNAS Nexus* 3 (8): pgae304.
- Ditto, Peter H., Jared B. Celniker, Shiri Spitz Siddiqi, Mertcan Güngör, and Daniel P. Relihan. 2025. "Partisan Bias in Political Judgment." *Annual Review of Psychology* 76 (Volume 76, 2025): 717–40. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-030424-122723>.
- Ditto, Peter H., Brittany S. Liu, Cory J. Clark, et al. 2019. "At Least Bias Is Bipartisan: A Meta-Analytic Comparison of Partisan Bias in Liberals and Conservatives." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 14 (2): 273–91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691617746796>.
- Druckman, James N. 2023a. "Correcting Misperceptions of the Other Political Party Does Not Robustly Reduce Support for Undemocratic Practices or Partisan Violence." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 120 (37): e2308938120. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2308938120>.
- Druckman, James N. 2023b. "Correcting Misperceptions of the Other Political Party Does Not Robustly Reduce Support for Undemocratic Practices or Partisan Violence." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 120 (37): e2308938120. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2308938120>.
- Fieldhouse, Edward, David Cutts, and Jack Bailey. 2022. "Who Cares If You Vote? Partisan Pressure and Social Norms of Voting." *Political Behavior* 44 (3): 1297–316. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-020-09661-y>.
- Flynn, D. J., Brendan Nyhan, and Jason Reifler. 2017. "The Nature and Origins of Misperceptions: Understanding False and Unsupported Beliefs About Politics." *Political Psychology* 38 (February): 127–50.
- Funck, Amy S., and Katherine T. McCabe. 2022. "Partisanship, Information, and the Conditional Effects of Scandal on Voting Decisions." *Political Behavior* 44 (3): 1389–409. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-020-09670-x>.
- Funk, Carolyn L. 1996. "The Impact of Scandal on Candidate Evaluations: An Experimental Test of the Role of Candidate Traits." *Political Behavior* 18 (1): 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01498658>.
- Gavrilets, Sergey. 2020. "The Dynamics of Injunctive Social Norms." *Evolutionary Human Sciences* 2 (January): e60. <https://doi.org/10.1017/ehs.2020.58>.
- Graham, Matthew H., and Milan W. Svobik. 2020. "Democracy in America? Partisanship, Polarization, and the Robustness of Support for Democracy in the United States." *American Political Science Review* 114 (2): 392–409. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000052>.

- Groeling, Tim. 2010. *When Politicians Attack: Party Cohesion in the Media*. Cambridge University Press. <http://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/politics-international-relations/american-government-politics-and-policy/when-politicians-attack-party-cohesion-media>.
- Huddy, Leonie, Caitlin Davies, and Joseph Sandor. 2020. "Measuring the Direction and Strength of Partisan Identity." In *Research Handbook on Political Partisanship*. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://www.elgaronline.com/edcollchap/edcoll/9781788111980/9781788111980.00014.xml>.
- Kalmoe, Nathan P., and Lilliana Mason. 2022. *Radical American Partisanship: Mapping Violent Hostility, Its Causes, and the Consequences for Democracy*. University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226820279>.
- Kane, John V. 2019. "Enemy or Ally? Elites, Base Relations, and Partisanship in America." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 83 (3): 534–58.
- Kane, John V., and Ian G. Anson. 2025. "Partisan Solutions for Partisan Problems: Electoral Threat and Republicans' Openness to the COVID-19 Vaccine." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 13 (1): 28–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2024.2304316>.
- Kane, John V., and Jason Barabas. 2019. "No Harm in Checking: Using Factual Manipulation Checks to Assess Attentiveness in Experiments." *American Journal of Political Science* 63 (1): 234–49.
- Kane, John V., Yamil R. Velez, and Jason Barabas. 2023. "Analyze the Attentive and Bypass Bias: Mock Vignette Checks in Survey Experiments." *Political Science Research and Methods* 11 (2): 293–310.
- Krishnarajan, Suthan. 2023. "Rationalizing Democracy: The Perceptual Bias and (Un)Democratic Behavior." *American Political Science Review* 117 (2): 474–96. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422000806>.
- Kunda, Ziva. 1990. "The Case for Motivated Reasoning." *Psychological Bulletin* 108 (3): 480–98.
- Lee, Amber Hye-Yon, Allison Harell, Laura B. Stephenson, Daniel Rubenson, and Peter John Loewen. 2023. "Motivated to Forgive? Partisan Scandals and Party Supporters." *Political Psychology* 44 (4): 729–47. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12882>.
- Levendusky, Matthew S., and Dominik A. Stecula. 2021. "We Need to Talk: How Cross-Party Dialogue Reduces Affective Polarization." *Elements in Experimental Political Science*, ahead of print, November. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009042192>.

- Marques, José M., and Dario Paez. 1994. "The 'Black Sheep Effect': Social Categorization, Rejection of Ingroup Deviates, and Perception of Group Variability." *European Review of Social Psychology* 5 (1): 37–68.
- Marques, José M., and Vincent Y. Yzerbyt. 1988. "The Black Sheep Effect: Judgmental Extremity towards Ingroup Members in Inter-and Intra-Group Situations." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 18 (3): 287–92.
- Mernyk, Joseph S., Sophia L. Pink, James N. Druckman, and Robb Willer. 2022. "Correcting Inaccurate Metaperceptions Reduces Americans' Support for Partisan Violence." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 119 (16): e2116851119.
- Mesquita, Ethan Bueno de, and Mehdi Shadmehr. 2023. "Social Norms and Social Change." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 18 (3): 339–63.
- Muddiman, Ashley, Benjamin R. Warner, and Amy Schumacher-Rutherford. 2021. "Losers, Villains, and Violence: Political Attacks, Incivility, and Support for Political Violence." *International Journal of Communication* 15 (0): 0.
- Myers, C. Daniel, and Taylor Hvidsten. 2024. "Who Is the Party? The Effect of Counter-Stereotypical Partisan Exemplars on Inter-Party Stereotypes and Affect." *Political Behavior*, ahead of print, November 20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-024-09991-1>.
- Pink, Sophia L., James Chu, James N. Druckman, David G. Rand, and Robb Willer. 2021. "Elite Party Cues Increase Vaccination Intentions among Republicans." *Social Sciences. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118 (32). <https://www.pnas.org/content/118/32/e2106559118>.
- Prewitt-Freilino, Jennifer L., Jennifer K. Bosson, Rochelle M. Burnaford, and Jonathan R. Weaver. 2012. "Crossing Party Lines: Political Identity and Partisans' Reactions to Violating Party Norms." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 15 (3): 317–32.
- Pronin, Emily, Daniel Y. Lin, and Lee Ross. 2002. "The Bias Blind Spot: Perceptions of Bias in Self Versus Others." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 28 (3): 369–81.
- Redlawsk, David P., Andrew J. W. Civettini, and Karen M. Emmerson. 2010. "The Affective Tipping Point: Do Motivated Reasoners Ever 'Get It'?" *Political Psychology* 31 (4): 563–93.
- Rothschild, Jacob E., Adam J. Howat, Richard M. Shafranek, and Ethan C. Busby. 2019. "Pigeonholing Partisans: Stereotypes of Party Supporters and Partisan Polarization." *Political Behavior* 41 (2): 423–43.
- Rothschild, Zachary K., Lucas A. Keefer, and Julianna Hauri. 2021. "Defensive Partisanship? Evidence That In-Party Scandals Increase Out-Party Hostility." *Political Psychology* 42 (1): 3–21.

- Schönhage, Nanna Lauritz, and Benny Geys. 2022. "Partisan Bias in Politicians' Perception of Scandals." *Party Politics* 28 (4): 691–701.
- Schudson, Michael. 2001. "The Objectivity Norm in American Journalism*." *Journalism* 2 (2): 149–70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146488490100200201>.
- Sikorski, Christian von, Raffael Heiss, and Jörg Matthes. 2020. "How Political Scandals Affect the Electorate. Tracing the Eroding and Spillover Effects of Scandals with a Panel Study." *Political Psychology* 41 (3): 549–68.
- Stagnaro, Michael Nicholas, James Druckman, Adam J. Berinsky, Antonio Alonso Arechar, Robb Willer, and David Rand. 2024. "Representativeness versus Attentiveness: A Comparison across Nine Online Survey Samples." *PsyArXiv* 22. <https://osf.io/h9j2d/download>.
- Stanley, Matthew L., Paul Henne, Brenda W. Yang, and Felipe De Brigard. 2020. "Resistance to Position Change, Motivated Reasoning, and Polarization." *Political Behavior* 42 (3): 891–913.
- Vidigal, Robert, and Jennifer Jerit. 2022. "Issue Importance and the Correction of Misinformation." *Political Communication* 39 (6): 715–36.
- Wood, Thomas, and Ethan Porter. 2019. "The Elusive Backfire Effect: Mass Attitudes' Steadfast Factual Adherence." *Political Behavior* 41 (1): 135–63.
- Wu, Jennifer D., and Gregory A. Huber. 2021. "Partisan Differences in Social Distancing May Originate in Norms and Beliefs: Results from Novel Data." *Social Science Quarterly* 102 (5): 2251–65. h

SUPPLEMENTAL APPENDIX:

COULD I EVER LOSE YOUR SUPPORT? UNCONDITIONAL POLITICAL BIAS IN THE AMERICAN PUBLIC

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPENDIX A. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA	1
APPENDIX B. PRRI ADDITIONAL ANALYSES	3
APPENDIX C. EXPERIMENTAL MANIPULATION CHECKS	6
APPENDIX D. REGRESSION OUTPUT UNDERLYING STUDIES	12
STUDY 1	12
STUDY 2	13
STUDY 3	15
APPENDIX E. EXPERIMENT 2 ROBUSTNESS TEST	18
APPENDIX F. EXPERIMENT OUTCOME SUMMARY STATISTICS	19
APPENDIX G. PREREGISTRATION INFORMATION	19

Appendix A. Demographic Data

TABLE A1. Demographic Data, Experiment 1 (N = 1,142)

	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Age Category	1,130	4.239	1.408	2	7
Nonwhite	1,142	0.285	0.451	0	1
Female	1,142	0.514	0.500	0	1
Household Income	1,110	3.078	1.491	1	6
Education Category	1,127	4.175	1.318	1	6
Republican (with leaners)	1,142	0.236	0.425	0	1
Democrat (with leaners)	1,142	0.570	0.495	0	1

TABLE A2. Demographic Data, Experiment 2 (N = 3,404)

	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Age Category	3,320	47.622	17.253	18	92
Nonwhite	3,404	0.269	0.444	0	1
Female	3,404	0.510	0.500	0	1
Household Income	3,128	55k—59k	--	--	--
Education Category	3,358	3.769	1.473	1	6
Republican (with leaners)	3,404	0.371	0.483	0	1
Democrat (with leaners)	3,404	0.424	0.494	0	1

TABLE A3. Demographic Data, Experiment 3 (N = 1,242)

	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Nonwhite	1,242	0.317	0.466	0	1
Female	1,242	0.51	0.508	0	1
Education Category	1,240	4.290	1.349	0	6
Republican	1,242	0.291	0.455	0	1
Democrat	1,242	0.314	0.464	0	1

Appendix B. PRRI Additional Analyses

Using the PRRI data, here we examine whether unconditionally biased supporters are (1) more willing to turnout to vote, (2) more likely to view democracy as an important issue, (3) more tolerant of a leader “breaking rules,” and (4) more accepting of political violence than their more flexible partisan peers. These items are detailed in Table B1. Collectively, these items stand to provide a sense of whether unconditional bias is associated with greater political mobilization and differential attitudes toward democracy and general democratic norms.

TABLE B1. Additional Outcomes Explored (PRRI Data)

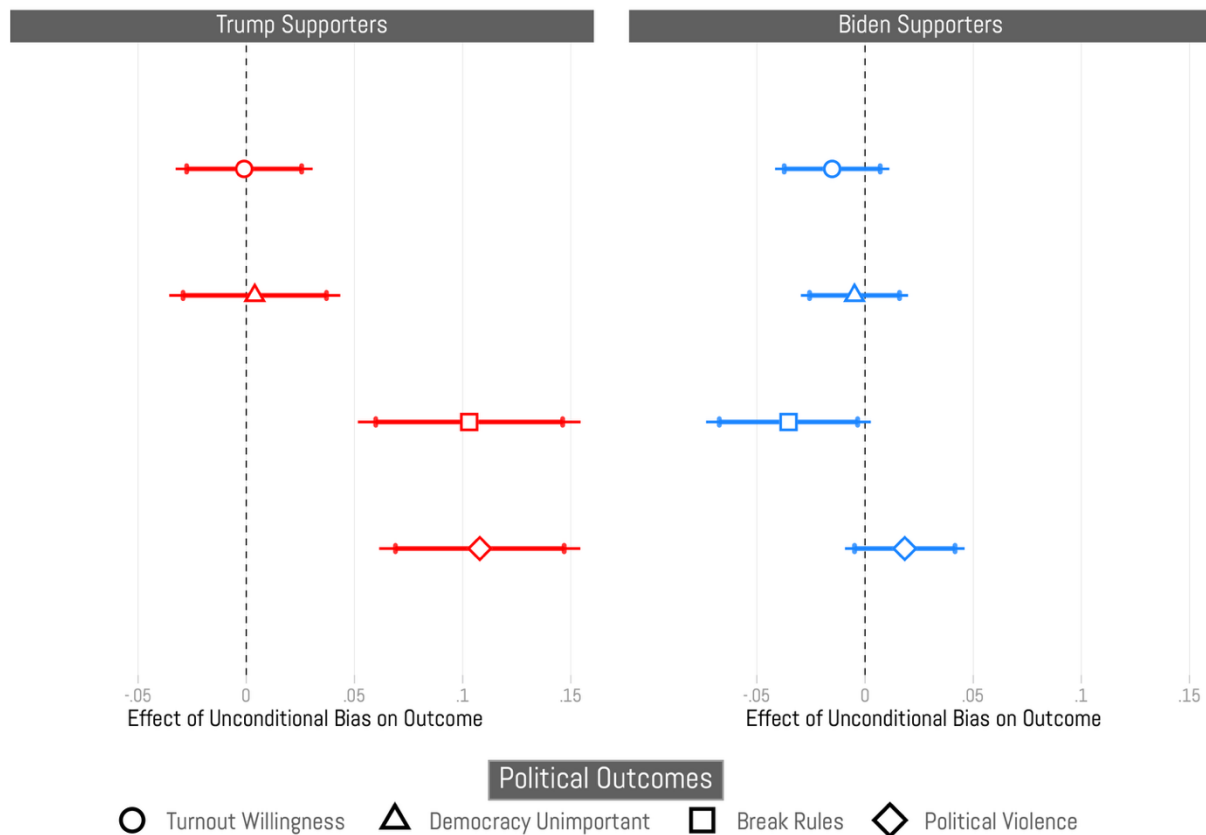
Measure	Question	Response Options
<i>Turnout Willingness</i>	“How would you rate your chances of voting in the 2024 presidential election?”	1. Definitely not 2. Less than 50/50 3. 50/50 4. Probably will 5. Definitely will
<i>Democracy Unimportant</i>	“How important are the following issues to you personally? ... The health of our democracy”	0. Important / Critical Issue 1. Not that important
<i>Break Rules</i>	“Because things have gotten so far off track in this country, we need a leader who is willing to break some rules if that's what it takes to set things right.”	1. Completely disagree 2. Mostly disagree 3. Mostly agree 4. Completely agree
<i>Political Violence</i>	“Because things have gotten so far off track, true American patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save our country.”	1. Completely disagree 2. Mostly disagree 3. Mostly agree 4. Completely agree

Notes: All non-binary items were recoded to range from 0 to 1.

The results of these analyses are shown in Figure B1. Conditioning on the same set of covariates featured in Figure 1 of the main text, we do not find—for either Biden supporters or Trump supporters—that unconditional bias is significantly predictive either of turnout intentions

or views on democracy. This is important as it suggests that those who are unconditionally biased are not necessarily more active in U.S. politics nor do they view democracy as being less important, at least in a general sense.

FIGURE B1. Unconditional Bias and Political Outcomes



Notes: Left panel displays Trump supporters (n=795). Right panel displays Biden supporters (n=1,002). Each x-axis displays the effect of unconditional bias (coded 1 for blatantly biased supporters, and 0 otherwise) on one of the four outcomes. All outcomes recoded to range from 0 to 1. “Turnout Willingness” and “Democracy Unimportant” outcomes are logistic; “Break Rules” and “Political Violence” outcomes are OLS. Data from PRRI (2023).

However, unconditional bias appears to be far more consequential for outcomes involving norms surrounding political behavior. Compared to less biased Trump supporters, those who are unconditionally biased are significantly more likely to accept rule-breaking and political violence.

Specifically, among Trump supporters, those who are unconditionally biased are approximately 10 percentage points more accepting of a leader who is “willing to break some rules if that’s what it takes to set things right.” Unconditionally biased Trump supporters are also approximately 11 percentage points more accepting of citizens “resort[ing] to violence in order to save our country” ($p < .001$) compared to Trump supporters who are not unconditionally biased.¹ Importantly, party identification strength exhibits a near-zero effect in these models ($p > .4$ in both cases), whereas unconditional bias exhibits sizeable effects on the outcome.

We do not, however, observe symmetrical patterns among Biden supporters. As shown in the right panel of Figure B1, the effects of unconditional bias are negative for the *Break Rules* and *Political Violence* outcomes among this group. The effects are smaller in magnitude than those observed for Trump supporters, however, and neither is significant at the .05 level. Those who are unconditionally biased in favor of Biden do not appear to differ a great deal from other Biden supporters on these measures.

Appendix C. Experimental Manipulation Checks

¹ In using the term “true American patriots,” this item is arguably charged and may have more appeal to Trump supporters than Biden supporters. However, the primary contrast of interest in this analysis is unconditionally biased supporters vis-à-vis ordinary supporters, not differences between the two parties as a whole.

Our first experiment (Experiment 1) featured only a factual manipulation check (FMC; Kane and Barabas 2019). The results of this check are shown in Table C1. Respondents were asked to indicate which politician the target shown in the vignette had voted for. Because respondents were shown a vignette involving a member of the *outparty*, this means that Democrats should have indicated that the target had voted for Trump, while Republicans should have indicated that the target voted for Biden. This is clearly the case ($p<.001$), with Democrats and Republicans performing similarly well in answering the question correctly (each answering over 90% correctly). This pattern confirms attentiveness to a key feature of the vignette, which is that respondents were aware that they were reading about a member of the outparty and, more specifically, a supporter of an outparty leader.

TABLE C1. Factual Manipulation Check (Prolific Study/Experiment 1)

<i>Leader Identified by Respondent</i>	<i>Party of Respondent</i>		
	Democrats	Republicans	Total
<i>Trump</i>	91.87	9.30	67.80
<i>Biden</i>	7.66	90.12	31.69
<i>Other</i>	0.48	0.58	0.51
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Notes: Cells indicate the percentage of each column that indicated a particular leader in the experimental vignette they were shown. Democrats were assigned to a vignette involving Trump (the correct answer for Democrats) while Republicans were assigned to a vignette involving Biden (the correct answer for Republicans). The table shows that partisans were overwhelmingly able to correctly identify the correct leader shown in the vignette, and that party significantly covaries with the response that was given ($\chi^2=383.98$ ($p<.001$)).

We featured the same FMC in Experiment 2. Though there is a slight decline in the percentage of correct responses compared to Experiment 1, the results are comparable, with Democrats and Republicans providing significantly different responses ($p<.001$). Most importantly, the FMC again confirms that respondents were aware that the vignette involved a supporter of an outparty leader.

TABLE C2. Factual Manipulation Check (Lucid Study/Experiment 2)

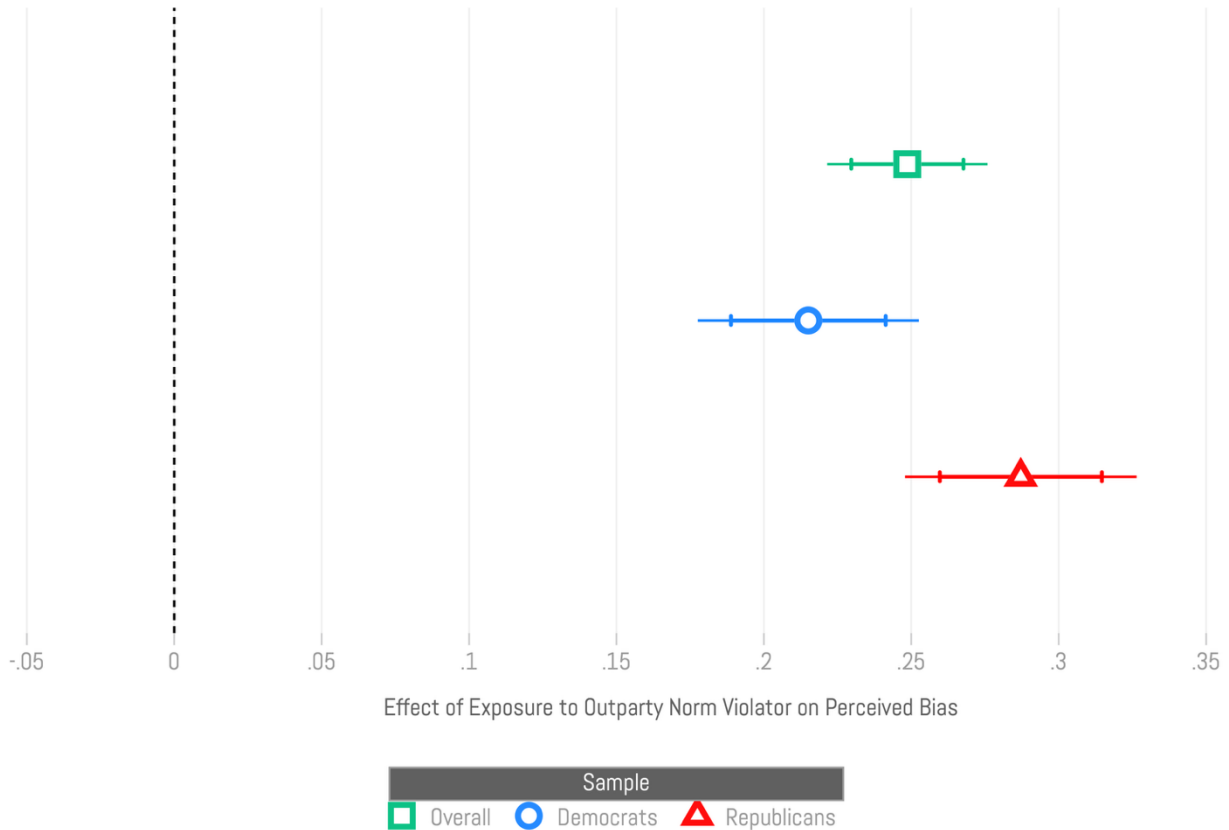
<i>Leader Identified by Respondent</i>	<i>Party of Respondent</i>
--	----------------------------

	Democrats	Republicans	Total
<i>Trump</i>	86.63	9.55	50.58
<i>Biden</i>	9.74	87.97	46.33
<i>Other</i>	3.63	2.48	3.09
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Notes: Cells indicate the percentage of each column that indicated a particular leader in the experimental vignette they were shown. Democrats were assigned to a vignette involving Trump (the correct answer for Democrats) while Republicans were assigned to a vignette involving Biden (the correct answer for Republicans). The table shows that partisans were overwhelmingly able to correctly identify the correct leader shown in the vignette, and that party significantly covaries with the response that was given ($\chi^2=1128.34$ ($p<.001$)).

Experiment 2 also featured a subjective manipulation check (SMC), designed to test whether the treatment (i.e., the change from the Supporter condition to the Unconditional Bias condition) affected—as intended—the perceived level of bias of the target shown in the vignette. Indeed, Figure C1 shows that, compared to the Supporter condition, the Unconditional Bias condition increased respondents’ perceived bias of the vignette target by approximately 25 percentage points for the sample as a whole ($p<.001$). The effect occurred for both Democrats and Republicans, though it was several percentage points larger in magnitude for the latter. This confirms that the experiment effectively manipulated the degree to which respondents viewed the target as politically biased—a key assumption underlying our argument that exposure to violations of the objectivity norm, in the outparty, are capable of changing the degree to which inparty members express unconditional bias.

FIGURE C1. Subjective Manipulation Check (Lucid Study/Experiment 2)



Notes: Outcome is perceived bias of target shown in experiment, measured on a five-point scale (1=Not biased at all; 5=Extremely biased) that was subsequently recoded to range from 0 to 1. The “Supporter” condition serves as the baseline. The figure shows OLS coefficients with 83% and 95% confidence intervals. Total n=1,813 (965 Democrats and 848 Republicans). Data = Lucid.

Our third experiment (Experiment 3), which instead featured an inparty member promoting the norm of objectivity, also featured an FMC as well as two SMCs. Beginning with the FMC, respondents were given six choices and asked to indicate whom the target in the vignette had voted for in the 2024 presidential election. Because the correct answer depends upon one’s inparty, Democrats should have indicated Harris while Republicans should have indicated Trump. Table A3 confirms that partisans did indeed significantly differ in how they responded to this question ($p < .001$), with Republicans and Democrats both answering correctly in over 95% of cases. This confirms that respondents were largely aware that they were reading about a fellow member of their party—a key feature of this particular experiment.

TABLE C3. Factual Manipulation Check (Experiment 3)

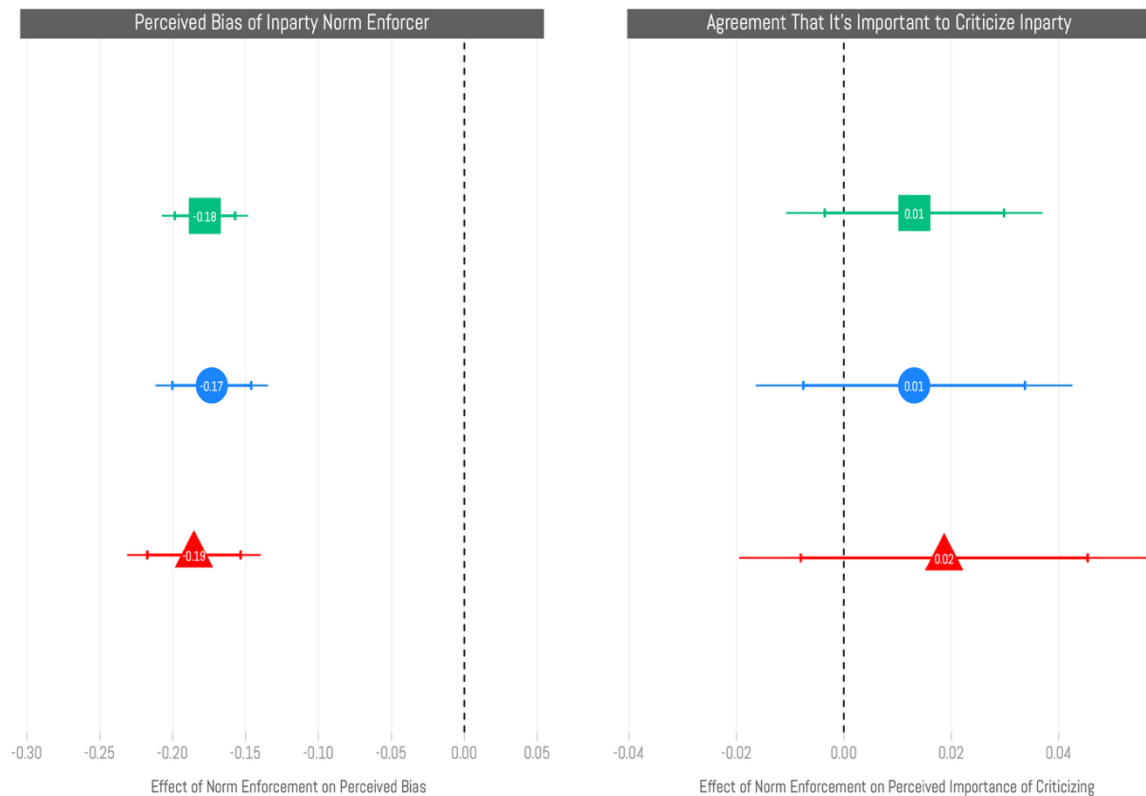
<i>Leader Identified by Respondent</i>	<i>Party of Respondent</i>		
	Democrats	Republicans	Total
<i>Harris</i>	98.33	1.88	55.47
<i>Trump</i>	0.50	95.62	42.76
<i>Other</i>	1.17	2.51	1.76
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Notes: Cells indicate the percentage of each column that indicated a particular leader in the experimental vignette they were shown. Democrats were assigned to a vignette involving Harris (the correct answer for Democrats) while Republicans were assigned to a vignette involving Trump (the correct answer for Republicans). The table shows that partisans were overwhelmingly able to correctly identify the correct leader shown in the vignette, and that party significantly covaries with the response that was given ($\chi^2 > 1000$ ($p < .001$)).

Respondents were also asked two SMCs, both of which followed all of the outcome measures shown in the main text. The first read as follows: “In your honest assessment, to what extent would you say [the target shown in the vignette] is **biased** in favor of their preferred candidate?” Responses ranged from 1 (“Not biased at all”) to 5 (“Extremely biased”). The second SMC instead asked respondents to indicate the degree to which they agree with the following statement: “No matter how much we support a politician, it’s important that we are willing to be critical of them if they aren’t doing the right thing.” Response options ranged from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly agree”). In both cases, the outcomes were rescaled to range from 0 to 1.

The results for both SMCs are shown in Figure C2. On the left, we clearly see that, both for partisans as a whole as well as for each partisan group, the treatment (i.e., changing from a supporter to someone who is promoting objectivity and conditional support) significantly reduced perceived bias. The effect for partisans overall is an 18 percentage-point reduction in perceived bias ($p < .001$), and was similar in size for both partisan groups. This analysis confirms that respondents saw the inparty norm enforcer target as being less biased than the inparty supporter—a key assumption of the experiment. In the right panel, we do see that—as intended—the treatment tended to increase agreement that it is important to criticize the leader of one’s own party, and these effects were similar in size for each partisan group. However, the results fall short of statistical significance. For the sample overall, the one-tailed p -value is .14. Looking at partisans only (i.e., excluding leaners), the p -value is slightly lower at .06 (one-tailed).

FIGURE C2. Subjective Manipulation Check (Experiment 3)



Notes: Outcome in left panel is perceived bias of inparty target shown in experiment, measured on a five-point scale (1=Not biased at all; 5=Extremely biased) that was subsequently recoded to range from 0 to 1. Outcome in right panel is level of agreement that it is important to criticize one's own party. The figure shows OLS coefficients with 83% and 95% confidence intervals. Total $n=1,078$ (599 Democrats and 479 Republicans). Data = Prolific.

Given that this experiment found significant effects on the main outcomes of interest, there are two potential explanations for the small effects observed for this second SMC. First, even in the control condition, the overwhelming majority of partisans (over 90%) answered either “Agree” or “Strongly agree,” with over 60% indicating the maximum (“Strongly agree”). Both partisan groups showed this same tendency, though Republicans had a slightly lower percentage at “Strongly agree” (approximately 50%). This undoubtedly introduced a potential ceiling effect, whereby the treatment would be unable to increase this SMC’s mean much higher. Indeed, Republicans show a slightly larger effect in Figure C2, perhaps precisely because they had a lower baseline average for the SMC. The second possibility for the weak effect observed in the right

panel of Figure C2 is that this item came after many other outcomes and checks. Thus, it is possible that the other items served to dilute the effect to some degree.

Appendix D. Regression Output Underlying Studies

Study 1

TABLE D1. PRRI Analyses (Study 1)

	Unconditional Political Bias (UPB)	
	Trump Supporters	Biden Supporters
<i>Party Identification</i>	2.16*** (0.19)	-2.46*** (0.36)
<i>Education</i>	-0.98*** (0.17)	0.02 (0.26)
<i>Income</i>	-0.67*** (0.17)	-0.39 (0.27)
<i>Age</i>	0.88*** (0.19)	2.30*** (0.31)
<i>Female</i>	0.21** (0.08)	0.11 (0.14)
<i>Black</i>	0.18 (0.26)	0.23 (0.21)
<i>Hispanic</i>	0.39** (0.13)	-0.03 (0.23)
<i>Other</i>	0.25 (0.17)	-0.06 (0.25)
<i>Protestant</i>	-0.27^ (0.16)	-0.45* (0.22)
<i>Catholic</i>	-0.16 (0.14)	-0.27 (0.20)
<i>Other Christian</i>	-0.25 (0.16)	-0.59^ (0.32)
<i>Other</i>	-0.34 (0.24)	0.42 (0.28)
<i>Born Again</i>	-0.22^ (0.13)	-0.19 (0.23)
<i>Midwest</i>	-0.31* (0.13)	-0.10 (0.21)
<i>South</i>	-0.10 (0.13)	0.06 (0.20)
<i>West</i>	-0.32* (0.14)	-0.17 (0.21)
<i>2019</i>	-0.14 (0.14)	--
<i>2020</i>	-0.02 (0.11)	--
<i>2023</i>	0.40*** (0.12)	--
Constant	-1.49***	-0.55^

	(0.23)	(0.32)
N	2,916	1,020

Notes: Dependent variable is whether respondent indicated that there was any type of policy (“Policy Bias”) or behavior (“Behavior Bias”) that their party’s leader could do that would result in the leader losing their support (0=Yes, 1=No). Coefficients are logistic, with standard errors shown in parentheses. All continuous variables recoded to range from 0 to 1. “Party Identification” coded so that higher values mean less Democratic / more Republican.

Study 2

Tables D2 and D3 provide regression output for Experiment 1 and Experiment 2. Though we also include the control group in these tables, we emphasize that the use of a pure control creates a challenge for comparison. Whereas respondents in the *Supporter* and *Outparty Unconditional Political Bias (UPB)* conditions are exposed to nearly identical material, only varying the level of bias of the target, the pure control is exposed to nothing. Thus, whereas the former conditions both prime politics and introduce different levels of political bias, the latter does not. Again, this makes it difficult to compare the control group against the *Supporter* and *UPB* groups. In the Prolific study, the effects of *UPB* tend to be larger versus the control than they are versus the *Supporter* condition. In the Lucid study, the opposite is true.

TABLE D2. Study 2 Experiment Regression Output (Prolific Sample)

	Overall		Democrats		Republicans	
	Policy Bias	Behavior Bias	Policy Bias	Behavior Bias	Policy Bias	Behavior Bias
<i>Control</i>	0.18 (0.16)	-0.01 (0.18)	0.18 (0.20)	-0.28 (0.24)	0.33 (0.31)	0.27 (0.32)
<i>UPB Outparty</i>	-0.55** (0.18)	-0.49* (0.20)	-0.58* (0.23)	-0.60* (0.26)	-0.78* (0.36)	-0.44 (0.35)
Constant	-0.92*** (0.12)	-1.31*** (0.13)	-0.81*** (0.15)	-1.25*** (0.17)	-0.68** (0.23)	-0.88*** (0.24)
Δ pr(Y=1): UPB vs. Supporter	-9.8pp	-7.0pp	-10.9pp	-4.4pp	-14.8pp	-8.2pp
Δ pr(Y=1): UPB vs. Control	-13.7pp	-6.8pp	-14.9pp	-4.3pp	-22.6pp	-14.0pp
N	1,116	1,114	641	641	267	266

Notes: Logistic regression coefficients shown. Table includes “Control” group, which did not feature any vignette. Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, ^ p<0.10. Data = Prolific.

TABLE D3. Study 2 Experiment (Lucid Sample)

	Overall		Democrats		Republicans	
	Policy Bias	Behavior Bias	Policy Bias	Behavior Bias	Policy Bias	Behavior Bias
<i>Control</i>	-0.39*** (0.09)	-0.33*** (0.10)	-0.31* (0.13)	-0.26^ (0.14)	-0.48*** (0.14)	-0.42** (0.14)
<i>UPB Outparty</i>	-0.21* (0.09)	-0.30** (0.10)	-0.18 (0.13)	-0.34* (0.14)	-0.25^ (0.14)	-0.27* (0.14)
Constant	0.21** (0.07)	-0.31*** (0.07)	0.14 (0.09)	-0.62*** (0.10)	0.28** (0.10)	0.03 (0.10)
Δ pr(Y=1): UPB vs. Supporter	-9.8pp	-7.8pp	-7.8pp	-5.8pp	-12.0pp	-10.4pp
Δ pr(Y=1): UPB vs. Control	-4.5pp	-0.1pp	-3.3pp	1.5pp	-5.9pp	-3.6pp
N	2,696	2,696	1,438	1,438	1,258	1,258

Notes: Logistic regression coefficients shown. Table includes “Control” group, which did not feature any vignette. Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, ^ p<0.10. Data = Lucid.

Study 3

TABLE D4. Study 3 Experiment Regression Output (Prolific Sample)

	Overall	Democrats	Republicans
	Policy Bias		
<i>Norm Enforcer</i>	-0.46*** (0.14)	-0.48** (0.18)	-0.42* (0.21)
Constant	-0.67*** (0.09)	-0.62*** (0.12)	-0.75*** (0.14)
$\Delta\text{pr}(Y=1)$	-9.4pp	-10.1pp	-8.3pp
	Behavior Bias		
<i>Norm Enforcer</i>	-0.28^ (0.15)	-0.36^ (0.21)	-0.21 (0.22)
Constant	-1.19*** (0.10)	-1.27*** (0.14)	-1.09*** (0.15)
$\Delta\text{pr}(Y=1)$	-4.6pp	-5.6pp	-4.8pp
	Trust		
<i>Norm Enforcer</i>	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.03)
Constant	0.58*** (0.01)	0.58*** (0.02)	0.58*** (0.02)
	Explicit Agreement		
<i>Norm Enforcer</i>	-0.38** (0.12)	-0.59*** (0.18)	-0.11 (0.18)
Constant	0.46*** (0.09)	0.99*** (0.13)	-0.19 (0.13)
$\Delta\text{pr}(Y=1)$	-9.4pp	-13.1pp	-2.7pp
N	1,078	599	479

Notes: Logistic regression coefficients shown for “Policy Bias,” “Behavior Bias” and “Explicit Agreement” outcomes. OLS regression coefficients shown for “Trust” outcome. Standard errors in parentheses *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ^ $p < 0.10$. Data = Prolific.

TABLE D5. Hypothetical Scenario Measures

Measure	Question	Response Options
<i>Gas Prices</i>	Imagine that under a [inparty leader] presidency, gas prices increase from their current level (about \$3/gallon nationally) to over \$4 per gallon. If this were to happen, would [inparty leader] lose your support?	0. No, they would not lose my support 1. Yes, they would lose my support
<i>Imprison Citizens</i>	Imagine that under a [inparty leader] presidency, credible evidence showed that the administration made multiple attempts to imprison U.S. citizens that protested against it. If this were to happen, would [inparty leader] lose your support?	0. No, they would not lose my support 1. Yes, they would lose my support
<i>Increase National Debt</i>	Imagine that under a [inparty leader] presidency, the national debt were to increase from its current level (around \$37 Trillion) to around \$41 Trillion. If this were to happen, would [inparty leader] lose your support?	0. No, they would not lose my support 1. Yes, they would lose my support
<i>Bribe Judges</i>	Imagine that under a [inparty leader] presidency, credible evidence surfaced that [he / she] was involved in a scandal to bribe federal judges. If this were to happen, would [inparty leader] lose your support?	0. No, they would not lose my support 1. Yes, they would lose my support
<i>Increase Violent Crime</i>	Imagine that under a [inparty leader] presidency, the rate of violent crime were to increase from its current level (about 360 cases per 100,000 people each year) to around 400 cases per 100,000 people per year. If this were to happen, would [inparty leader] lose your support?	0. No, they would not lose my support 1. Yes, they would lose my support

Note: All items were combined into an additive scale to create the “Combined Scale” measure.

TABLE D6. Study 3 Experiment Hypothetical Outcomes

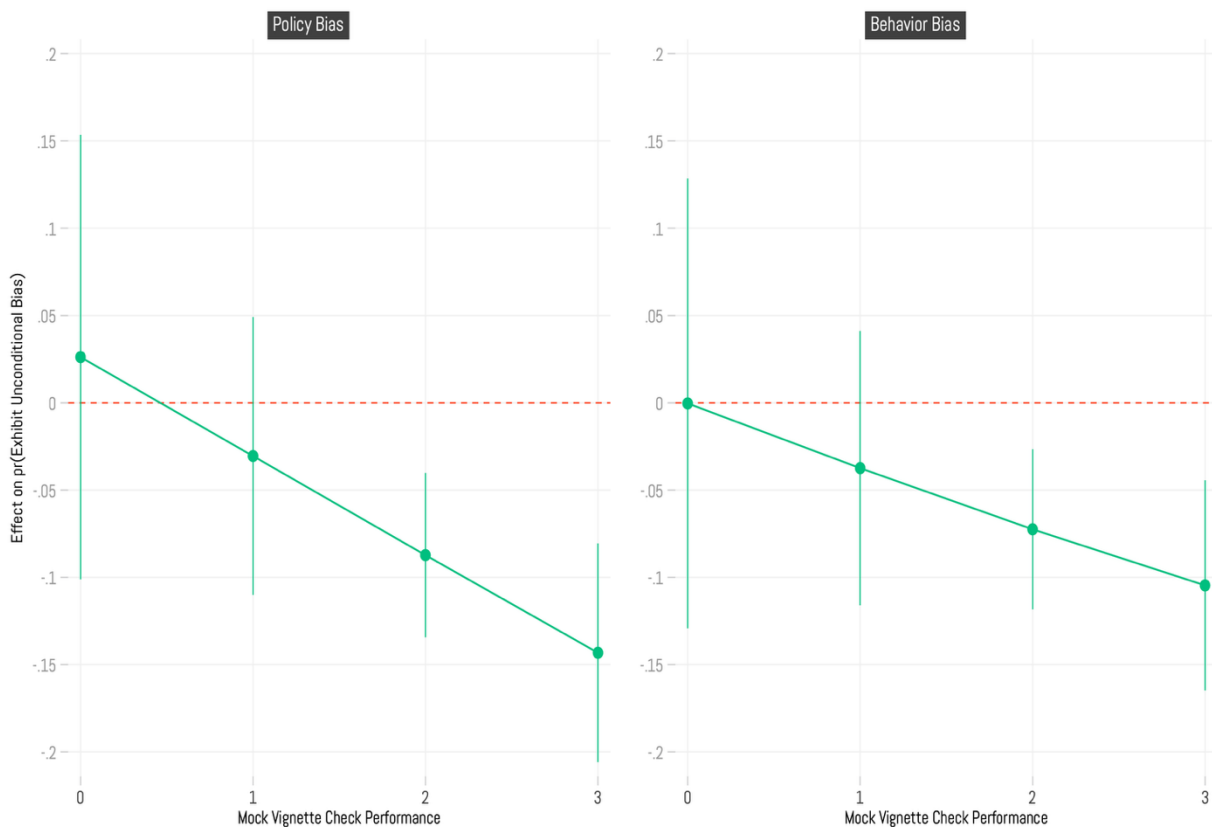
	Overall	Democrats	Republicans
Gas Prices			
<i>Norm Enforcer</i>	-0.02 (0.14)	-0.04 (0.20)	0.04 (0.20)
Constant	1.10*** (0.10)	1.37*** (0.14)	0.77*** (0.14)
Imprison Citizens			
<i>Norm Enforcer</i>	-0.01 (0.14)	-0.08 (0.23)	-0.04 (0.19)
Constant	-1.14*** (0.10)	-1.76*** (0.16)	-0.53*** (0.14)
Increase National Debt			
<i>Norm Enforcer</i>	-0.11 (0.13)	-0.17 (0.18)	-0.02 (0.19)
Constant	0.77*** (0.09)	1.08*** (0.13)	0.41** (0.14)
Bribe Judges			
<i>Norm Enforcer</i>	-0.17 (0.15)	-0.37 (0.26)	-0.12 (0.20)
Constant	-1.33*** (0.11)	-1.83*** (0.17)	-0.83*** (0.14)
Increase Violent Crime			
<i>Norm Enforcer</i>	0.00 (0.13)	0.01 (0.18)	0.01 (0.19)
Constant	0.63*** (0.09)	0.75*** (0.12)	0.47*** (0.14)
Combined Scale			
<i>Norm Enforcer</i>	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)
Constant	0.51*** (0.01)	0.50*** (0.01)	0.51*** (0.02)
N	1,078	598	475

Notes: For all outcomes except “Combined Scale,” coefficients are logistic. “Combined Scale” coefficients are OLS. Standard errors shown in parentheses. *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, ^ p<0.10.

Appendix E. Experiment 2 Robustness Test

Following Kane, Velez and Barabas (2023), we included three mock vignette checks prior to random assignment. The checks were identical for each respondent. If the treatment is indeed effective, we should observe stronger (weaker) effects among those who were more (less) attentive to the experiment. Figure E1 shows precisely this pattern, with near-zero effects among those who were least attentive and increasingly large (negative) effects among those who were more attentive. This pattern serves as additional evidence that, compared to observing a less biased supporter, observing an outparty norm violator reduces one's likelihood of exhibiting unconditional political bias themselves.

FIGURE E1. Stronger Effect of Treatment Among More Attentive Respondents



Notes: The x-axis shows the number of correct pre-treatment mock vignette checks (MVCs). The y-axis shows the effect of changing from the Supporter condition to the Outparty Norm Violator condition. Each panel represents a separate form of unconditional political bias. Estimator is logistic with an interaction specified between the treatment and MVC performance. 95% confidence intervals shown. Total n=1,813 (965 Democrats and 848 Republicans). Data = Lucid.

Appendix F. Experiment Outcome Summary Statistics

The following two tables indicate the control group averages, for each outcome, in Experiments 1 and 2, respectively. For the Policy Bias and Behavior Bias outcomes, we also tested whether the proportions significantly differed from one another. In Experiment 1, we find significantly higher Policy Bias than Behavior Bias (.32 versus .21, $p < .001$). We also tested for partisan differences on each of these outcomes. While partisans do not significantly differ on the Policy Bias item ($p = .26$), we find that Republicans exhibit significantly higher Behavior Bias (.35 versus .18, $p < .001$).

In Experiment 2, we find the same pattern: Policy Bias is significantly higher than Behavior Bias (by approximately 15 percentage points ($p < .001$)), Republicans exhibit higher Policy Bias than Democrats but not significantly so ($p = .57$), and Republicans exhibit significantly higher Behavior Bias—by approximately 16 percentage points—compared to Democrats ($p < .001$).

TABLE F1. Proportions for All Outcomes in Pure Control Group (Experiment 1)

	Overall	Democrats	Republicans
<i>Policy Bias</i>	.32	.35	.41
<i>Behavior Bias</i>	.21	.18	.35*
<i>Open-Ended Criticism</i>	.58	.56	.55

Note: All variables are binary; figures thus represent proportions. *indicates that Republican proportion significantly differed from Democratic proportion ($p < .001$).

TABLE F2. Proportions for All Outcomes in Pure Control Group (Experiment 2)

	Overall	Democrats	Republicans
<i>Policy Bias</i>	.50	.49	.51
<i>Behavior Bias</i>	.35	.28	.44*
<i>Open-Ended Criticism</i>	.53	.51	.55

Note: All variables are binary; figures thus represent proportions. *indicates that Republican proportion significantly differed from Democratic proportion ($p < .001$).

TABLE F3. Proportions and Means for All Outcomes (Experiment 3)

	Overall	Democrats	Republicans
<i>Policy Bias</i>	.29	.301	.278
<i>Behavior Bias</i>	.21	.192	.232
<i>Trust</i>	.566	.564	.568
<i>Explicit Agreement</i>	.565	.664	.439*
<i>Scenarios</i>			
<i>Higher Gas Prices</i>	.747	.794	.688*
<i>Imprison US Citizens</i>	.242	.142	.367*
<i>Increase National Debt</i>	.672	.73	.60*
<i>Bribe Judges</i>	.196	.119	.291*
<i>Increase Violent Crime</i>	.652	.681	.616*
<i>Overall Scale</i>	.5	.494	.508

Note: *indicates that Republican value significantly differed from Democratic value at at least $p < .05$. Importantly, the “Explicit Agreement” item was different for Democrats (a question about expanding the Supreme Court) than for Republicans (removing judges who prevent Trump from doing what he wants), which may explain the significant partisan difference for that item.

Appendix G. Preregistration Information

All experimental studies were preregistered on the OSF.io framework, using the standard OSF preregistration format.

To sufficiently blind the study for peer review, we include this preregistration information in the section below, rather than providing hyperlinks to the registration documentation. If the paper enters the publication process, we will replace this section with the appropriate hyperlinks.

Study 2 Preregistration Information

Hypotheses Updated

H1: Exposure to blatant bias in the outparty will reduce the probability of answering “No” to questions asking whether any: [(H1a) policy position] or [(H1b) behavior] could cause a preferred candidate to lose respondent's vote, relative to a pure control and a less biased outparty message
H2: Exposure to blatant bias in the outparty will reduce the amount respondent thinks others should trust what an inparty politician says, relative to a pure control and a less biased statement
H3: Exposure to blatant bias will increase the likelihood of listing negative statements about an inparty politician in an open-ended response setting

Design Plan

Study type

Experiment - A researcher randomly assigns treatments to study subjects, this includes field or lab experiments. This is also known as an intervention experiment and includes randomized controlled trials.

Blinding

For studies that involve human subjects, they will not know the treatment group to which they have been assigned.

Is there any additional blinding in this study?

No data

Study design Updated

Respondents will be randomly assigned to receive a vignette describing a supporter's beliefs about a presidential candidate, either Joe Biden or Donald Trump. This is a 1x3 randomized experiment with specialized treatment text according to a respondent's partisan affiliation. In addition to a pure control, the first treatment exposes respondents to a statement that does not contain any form of blatant bias in support of a candidate. The second treatment contains instances of blatant bias and a lack of willingness to reconsider candidates in light of new information. In treatments 1 and 2, Republican (Democratic) and leaning Republican (Democratic) respondents will receive treatments about Joe Biden (Donald Trump). "Pure" independents will randomly receive a statement about Trump or Biden.

No files selected

Randomization

Using the qualtrics randomizer tool, we will expose respondents to a randomly selected treatment, with each group containing roughly 1/3 of participants.

Sampling Plan

Existing Data

Registration prior to creation of data

Explanation of existing data

No existing data

Data collection procedures

Data will be collected using the Prolific respondent recruitment platform. Respondents will be American adults who are active participants on Prolific platforms. Payment for participation will be commensurate with Prolific policies and minimum wage in the state of the researcher's home institution.

No files selected

Sample size

Sample size is expected to be N = 1,200 but may vary depending upon funding availability

Sample size rationale

Sample size arbitrarily constrained by funding availability.

Stopping rule

Data collection will terminate when funds are exhausted.

Variables

Manipulated variables Updated

T0 text: Thank you for your continued attention. T1 text: Earlier this year, voters across America were interviewed by the nonpartisan American Politics Research Organization (APRO). The APRO has published some of the statements made by ordinary Americans in their interviews. Below is one statement from a [Trump/Biden] supporter: "I voted for [Trump/Biden] in the last election. I follow news about him pretty regularly and generally pay attention to what he says and does. Personally, I think he has helped people. He did some good things during his presidency, even if it wasn't perfect. I haven't made up my mind yet, but I am leaning toward voting for him again in the next election." T2 text: Earlier this year, voters across America were interviewed by the nonpartisan American Politics Research Organization (APRO). The APRO has published some of the statements made by ordinary Americans in their interviews. Below is one statement from a [Trump/Biden] supporter: "I voted for [Trump/Biden] in the last election and will support him no matter what he says or what he does."

Whenever I hear something bad about him, I just don't believe it. He has helped people more than any other candidate ever will. Everything he did during his presidency was perfect and should not be criticized. He has my vote in the next election no matter what!"

No files selected

Measured variables Updated

Q1. Politicians sometimes change positions on policies, taking a position we do not agree with. When thinking about [Trump/Biden], is there any policy position [Trump/Biden] could take that would cause him to lose your vote? o Yes, there is a policy position he could take that would cause him to lose my vote (1) o No, there is no policy position he could take that would cause him to lose my vote (2) Q2. Politicians also sometimes engage in corrupt or other inappropriate ways while in office. When thinking about [Trump/Biden], is there any corrupt or inappropriate behavior that [Trump/Biden] could engage in that would cause him to lose your vote? o Yes, there is a behavior that would cause him to lose my vote (1) o No, there is no behavior that would cause him to lose my vote (2) Q3. On a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 means "definitely don't trust" and 10 means "definitely trust", please indicate how much you think voters should trust every word that [Trump/Biden] says Q4. Would you be willing to list up to 3 things that, personally, you don't really like about [Trump/Biden]? If so, please write them in the space below. If not, please type "NO" in the space below. Manipulation Checks (only shown to T1/T2 respondents): M1. Earlier we asked you to read a statement from a supporter of a Presidential candidate. In your honest assessment, to what extent would you say this person is biased in favor of their preferred candidate? o Not biased at all (1) o Slightly biased (2) o Moderately biased (3) o Very biased (4) o Extremely biased (5) M2. In the statement you read, which politician did the interviewee say they voted for? o Hillary Clinton (2) o Donald Trump (3) o Joe Biden (4) o John McCain (5) o Barack Obama (1) o Mitt Romney (6)

No files selected

Indices

n/a

No files selected

Analysis Plan

Statistical models

1. Logistic regression for H1. If the two blatant items are highly correlated, an ordered logistic regression will be used. 2. OLS regression for H2 3. For H3, logistic regression to test if treatment significantly predicts whether any negative statements were listed (0=no, 1=yes); ordered logistic regression to test if treatment significantly predicts the number of statements listed. Graphics will present group means with 90% and 95% CIs for illustrative and comparative purposes. For the purposes of analysis, Republicans and Democrats are to be analyzed separately, and separately from pure political independents, in addition to any models that combine both partisan groups.

No files selected

Transformations

Variables may be coded to ensure that higher numbers indicate greater positivity when needed

Inference criteria

$p < 0.05$ decision criterion for regression coefficients

Data exclusion

No exclusion criterion anticipated

Missing data

Listwise deletion

Exploratory analysis

Analysis across levels of PID strength are anticipated but not formally hypothesized.

Other

Other

No data

Study 3 Preregistration Information

Study Information

Hypotheses

H1. In a comparison of partisans randomly assigned to experimental groups, those exposed to a cue designed to mitigate blatant partisan bias will exhibit diminished blatant bias relative to a control condition.

Design Plan

Study type

Experiment - A researcher randomly assigns treatments to study subjects, this includes field or lab experiments. This is also known as an intervention experiment and includes randomized controlled trials.

Blinding

For studies that involve human subjects, they will not know the treatment group to which they have been assigned.

Is there any additional blinding in this study?

No data

Study design

Simple randomization into two groups. Experimental treatment text will be tailored in each condition to match the partisanship of subjects. Subjects with Democratic identification will see treatment text that describes Kamala Harris; subjects with Republican identification will see text that describes Donald Trump. The experimental text is as follows: Control Condition Earlier this year, voters across America were interviewed by the nonpartisan American Politics Research Organization (APRO) about the 2024 election. The APRO has published some of the statements made by ordinary Americans in their interviews. Below is one statement from a supporter of the $\{e://Field/party\}$ Party presidential candidate, $\{e://Field/leader\}$: "I think 2024 was an especially important election for our country. I voted for $\{e://Field/leader\}$ and, along with many other $\{e://Field/party\}$ voters, really want $\{e://Field/himher\}$ to $\{e://Field/next\}$." Treatment Condition Earlier this year, voters across America were interviewed by the nonpartisan American Politics Research Organization (APRO) about the 2024 election. The APRO has published some of the statements made by ordinary Americans in their interviews. Below is one statement from a supporter of the $\{e://Field/party\}$ Party presidential candidate, $\{e://Field/leader\}$: "I think 2024 was an especially important election for our country. I voted for $\{e://Field/leader\}$ and, along with many other $\{e://Field/party\}$ voters, really want $\{e://Field/himher\}$ to $\{e://Field/next\}$. But it's important that we don't just follow $\{e://Field/himher\}$ blindly, you know? If $\{e://Field/heshe\}$ starts doing things we don't like, we can't be afraid to speak up. It doesn't matter that we voted for $\{e://Field/himher\}$. If $\{e://Field/heshe\}$ does something wrong, $\{e://Field/heshe\}$ needs to hear about it from us."

No files selected

Randomization

Simple randomization into two experimental groups

Sampling Plan

Existing Data

Registration prior to creation of data

Explanation of existing data

No data yet exist for this study

Data collection procedures

N = 1,250 respondents will be recruited using the Prolific platform. From this sample, only partisans and leaning partisans will be exposed to treatments, resulting in an anticipated N of around 1,000. Respondents will be paid a rate commensurate with state minimum wages.

No files selected

Sample size

N = 1,250 respondents will be recruited from Prolific.com. Of these, a subset of partisans and leaning partisans will be exposed to the treatment, yielding an anticipated study N of ~1,000.

Sample size rationale

Arbitrary constraint based on money

Stopping rule

Stopping rule determined by the exhaustion of available funds

Variables

Manipulated variables

Experimental treatment text will be tailored in each condition to match the partisanship of subjects. Subjects with Democratic identification will see treatment text that describes Kamala Harris; subjects with Republican identification will see text that describes Donald Trump. The experimental text is as follows: Control Condition Earlier this year, voters across America were interviewed by the nonpartisan American Politics Research Organization (APRO) about the 2024 election. The APRO has published some of the statements made by ordinary Americans in their interviews. Below is one statement from a supporter of the $\{e://Field/party\}$ Party presidential candidate, $\{e://Field/leader\}$: "I think 2024 was an especially important election for our country. I voted for $\{e://Field/leader\}$ and, along with many other $\{e://Field/party\}$ voters, really want $\{e://Field/himher\}$ to $\{e://Field/next\}$." Treatment Condition Earlier this year, voters across America were interviewed by the nonpartisan American Politics Research Organization (APRO) about the 2024 election. The APRO has published some of the statements made by ordinary Americans in their interviews. Below is one statement from a supporter of the $\{e://Field/party\}$ Party presidential candidate, $\{e://Field/leader\}$: "I think 2024 was an especially important election for our country. I voted for $\{e://Field/leader\}$ and, along with many other $\{e://Field/party\}$ voters, really want $\{e://Field/himher\}$ to $\{e://Field/next\}$. But it's important that we don't just follow $\{e://Field/himher\}$ blindly, you know? If $\{e://Field/heshe\}$ starts doing things we don't like, we can't be afraid to speak up. It doesn't matter that we voted for $\{e://Field/himher\}$. If $\{e://Field/heshe\}$ does something wrong, $\{e://Field/heshe\}$ needs to hear about it from us."

No files selected

Measured variables

See the attachment for a list of DVs and manipulation check variables.

[bb dv.docx](#)

Indices

A scaled sum of "blatant bias" responses will be created by adding together the scenario-based blatant bias DV items and dividing by the number of items. The resulting 0-1 continuous variable will assess how much blatant bias a respondent indicates across all scenarios in the DV battery.

No files selected

Analysis Plan

Statistical models

Simple comparison of treatment and control groups using OLS regression will be performed to assess average treatment effects. The same analysis will be performed for partisan subgroups to ensure no heterogeneity in treatment effects across these groups.

No files selected

Transformations

DVs will be rescaled to 0-1 continuous scales for ease of interpretation

Inference criteria

$p < 0.05$ for all tests will indicate credible evidence of a treatment effect; $p < 0.10$ will indicate "suggestive" evidence of a treatment effect.

Data exclusion

We anticipate presenting the full sample analysis, and an additional analysis that examines only respondents in the top 98% of response times, along with those who did not fail a simple attention check, to ensure that response quality is not affecting the results.

Missing data

Listwise deletion

Exploratory analysis

No exploratory analysis planned

Other**Other**

No data