

Through the Ideology of the Beholder: How Ideology Shapes Perceptions of Partisan Groups and Magnifies Social Distance

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Abstract

Growing attitudinal and affective differences across party lines and increasing social polarization are often attributed to strengthened partisan identities and negative partisanship. Scholars have paid less attention to personal preferences as a contributor to these phenomena. Our focus is on how citizens' policy beliefs — their operational ideologies — are associated with their views of partisan groups and report results from two nationally representative studies on the linkages between partisanship, ideology, and polarization. Data from two waves of a panel survey show that citizens' policy views are strongly associated with their perceptions of their own partisan group as well as their counterpartisans. In a second study, we find that partisanship alone does not induce social polarization, but only when it is accompanied by exaggerated partisan stereotypes. Together, our results have important implications for understanding the consequences of increased polarization and partisan antipathy in contemporary politics.

Nearly a century ago, Lippmann (1922, chapter 1) observed that the study of public opinion involves understanding how “the pictures in our heads” shape attitudes and behaviors. These “pictures” reflect our experiences and shape our impressions of salient groups. Because the attitudinal and behavioral consequences of group perceptions can manifest as prejudice and discrimination, respectively, understanding the roots and consequences of these perceptions is a key goal for studying intergroup relations and reducing intergroup conflict.

Contemporary political discourse distinguishes partisans by their policy views and the cultural values and lifestyle choices that serve as manifestations of partisan outlooks. For instance, some describe Democrats as latte-sipping, GMO-opposing electric car zealots,¹ while others characterize Republicans as Bible-thumping, immigrant-deporting architects of the war against women.² Similarly, left-wing politicians in Western Europe have been mocked as “Champagne Socialists” while right-wing supporters of the PAN in Mexico have been dismissed as *mochos* (prudes).³ As these examples suggest, these labels and stereotypes are often used for partisan derision and are frequently attributed to negative partisanship, which prominent scholars argue “explains nearly everything in American politics today.”⁴

In this paper, we study how citizens view their copartisans and counterpartisans in the United States and argue that negative partisanship is an important yet incomplete explanation for these attitudes. Not all partisan stimuli evoke the same response, as the negative partisanship account implies; indeed, for instance, Pew Research Center shows that approximately 10% of the American public switched parties in the last year alone.⁵ Instead, our focus is on how citizens’ policy beliefs — their operational ideologies — are associated with their views of partisan groups. Our argument

¹See <http://tws.io/2x2gAFv>, <http://slate.me/2xCyeD8>, and <http://wapo.st/2h5v57Q>.

²See <http://slate.me/2eYYKuX>, <http://wapo.st/2eYRqzw>, and <http://nyti.ms/2h4X4Rn>.

³See <http://bit.ly/1IQ58uQ> and <http://bit.ly/2ybHStw>.

⁴Alan Abramowitz and Steven Webster, “‘Negative Partisanship’ Explains Everything,” *POLITICO Magazine*, September/October 2017; see <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/09/05/negative-partisanship-explains-everything-215534> (accessed December 11, 2017).

⁵See <http://www.people-press.org/2017/05/17/partisan-identification-is-sticky-but-about-10-switched-parties-over-the-past-year/>.

posits that existing scholarship generally underappreciates the role of ideology for shaping mass political attitudes and behaviors. While studies at the elite level show that increased ideological extremism in Congress is associated with the use of more partisan rhetoric (e.g., Gentzkow, Shapiro, and Taddy 2016), less intraparty collaboration (e.g., Desmarais et al. 2015), and more distant social ties (e.g., Alduncin, Parker, and Theriault 2017), at the mass level researchers more commonly emphasize how group attachments (e.g. Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015) and partisan-ideological sorting (e.g. Levendusky 2009; Mason 2015) produce and reinforce political and social polarization. We argue that individuals with stronger ideological commitments hold increasingly exaggerated perceptions of partisans, particularly regarding members of partisan out-groups. Our account further suggests that partisanship alone is insufficient to generate patterns of partisan teamism and social distance frequently attributed to negative partisanship; instead, we argue that ideological extremity magnifies perceptual differences across party lines and explains variation in intraparty attitudes and behavior.

We support our argument using data from two nationally representative studies on the linkages between partisanship, ideology, and polarization. In the first, we report data from two waves of a large panel survey to document how Americans view partisans in the contemporary U.S. We demonstrate that while individuals hold exaggerated perceptions of partisan out-group members, ideological extremity is strongly associated with perceptions of both partisan in-groups and out-groups. In a second study, we use an original survey experiment to identify the consequences of partisan perceptions for social evaluations and find that exaggerated partisan perceptions significantly reduce the potential for interpersonal interaction across a range of social settings. We find no evidence, however, that partisan group membership alone induces social polarization. Together, our results suggest that ideology may contribute to and reinforce social polarization by shaping how citizens view each other across party lines and have important implications for understanding the consequences of increased polarization and partisan antipathy in contemporary politics.

The Nature of Partisan Perceptions

In the near-century since Lippmann's observations, scholars have sought to understand how citizens perceive the world and how these perceptions shape attitudes and behavior. Perceptions function as "mental maps" that reduce the complexity of a political world that is "altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance" (Lippmann 1922, 16). To the extent politics is animated by group conflict, perceptions of politically relevant groups inform how citizens view and engage with other individuals on the basis of their group identification. The formation and application of group perceptions in political contexts share some similarities with stereotyping, which occurs when we make inferences about an individual based on group membership (Fiske 1993, 623). Applying group perceptions can reduce information costs and allow citizens to make sense of politics using categories that are familiar and accessible.

In the contemporary U.S. and around much of the world, political parties are the most salient groups for how individuals perceive, experience, and understand political phenomena (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012). By classifying themselves and others into partisan camps, citizens use partisanship as a heuristic to evaluate political candidates (Conover and Feldman 1989), interpret political events (Bartels 2002), and attribute responsibility for political outcomes (Malhotra and Kuo 2008). Partisanship also contributes to social polarization by affecting nonpolitical judgments and behaviors (Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Mason 2015). Rather than reflecting considered retrospective calculations (Fiorina 1981) or psychological attachments (Campbell et al. 1960), partisanship separates individuals into partisan "teams" and the differences between these groups influence how most people perceive and engage with the political world (e.g., Campbell et al. 1960; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe 2015; Mason 2015).

Understanding how the public views partisan groups is important given the salience of partisan identities for political conflict. Even as political elites have polarized along ideological lines

(McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006), mass perceptions of partisan groups are likely to reflect more than simple assessments of each group's policy beliefs. As the opening paragraphs indicate, political discourse often categorizes Americans based on party identification and attributes a range of characteristics to members of those groups. Beyond policy attitudes, partisanship also distinguishes contemporary Americans based on personality (Gerber et al. 2012) and core values or "ethos" (Carmines and Berkman 1994). Accounting for the multiple dimensions that structure partisan perceptions provides a more complete evaluation of how groups are viewed within the mass public.

We make several key contributions to scholarship on partisanship, ideology, and polarization. First, we study how partisans perceive each other on cultural issues that extend beyond policy positions and may form the basis of affective polarization. Second, we demonstrate the importance of operational ideology for perceptual and affective polarization documented in recent research (Ahler 2014; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Levendusky and Malhotra 2016). Third, in doing so, we connect the study of polarization at the mass level with studies of political elites, in which increased ideological extremism occupies a prominent role in how elites interact and govern. And fourth, we show how the real-world effects of partisan conflict extend well beyond perceptions of purely political issues and influence how citizens perceive each other as members of social groups.

How Ideology Shapes Partisan Perceptions

We argue that individuals hold exaggerated perceptions of out-group partisans. Social identity theory posits that group members "differentiate their own groups positively from others to achieve a positive social identity" (Turner et al. 1987, 42), and previous research shows that in-group stereotypes tend to be more accurate and less exaggerated than stereotypes about an out-group (Linville, Fischer, and Salovey 1989). The inclination to distinguish in-group members from out-group members leads to the use of motivated reasoning (Kunda and Sinclair 1999) and

can affect opinion formation (Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013), vote choice (Rogowski Forthcoming) and attributions of responsibility (Malhotra and Kuo 2008).

Because contemporary partisanship serves operates as a social identity (e.g., Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe 2015; Mason 2015), we expect that individuals form positive images of their in-group party members and negative images of out-group parties.⁶ Indeed, partisans tend to perceive greater attitudinal extremity among members of the opposite party (Judd and Park 1993; Levendusky and Malhotra 2016). Our argument further predicts that these tendencies should similarly characterize Independents' perceptions of both Democrats and Republicans. Though research in this area generally focuses on how Democrats and Republicans form evaluations of partisan actors and outcomes, social identity considerations should also structure the ways Independents evaluate partisans. While Independents are not a well-defined partisan group on their own, they are an out-group when compared with both Democrats and Republicans. Indeed, Independents may identify as such precisely because of their resistance to being considered members of a partisan group (e.g., Klar and Krupnikov 2016) and recent research indicates that political independence is a political identity of its own (Klar 2014).

Individuals with more extreme ideological beliefs, however, are likely to hold more exaggerated perceptions of partisan groups, as they also perceive higher levels of attitudinal polarization and engage in *polarization projection* (e.g., Van Boven, Judd, and Sherman 2012). In other words, strong ideologues assume that others' beliefs are similarly extreme and thus project their own beliefs onto others. We posit that these patterns are reinforced by the tendency for people to belong to politically homogeneous discussion networks (e.g., Mutz 2006), read online blogs whose political attitudes confirm their own (e.g., Lawrence, Sides, and Farrell 2010), and consume media

⁶Some research discusses these processes in terms of motivated reasoning, where partisans interpret political information and perceive political stimuli based on the party with which they identify. Partisan motivated reasoning could result in the overapplication of party stereotypes to out-group members, although citizens could overestimate the prevalence of stereotypical attributes in other partisans due to representativeness bias, particularly among citizens with more extreme ideological beliefs and whose beliefs about partisan outgroups are reinforced by partisan echo chambers.

from sources that share partisan and ideological views (e.g., Prior 2007). This account suggests that ideological extremity is associated with exaggerated perceptions of both partisan in-groups and out-groups. In the context of contemporary American politics where conservatives have sorted into the Republican Party and liberals have sorted into the Democratic Party (Levendusky 2009; Mason 2015), therefore, ideological extremism magnifies perceptions of partisan group differences.

At the individual level, our argument predicts that ideological extremism within each group is associated with increased inaccuracy and exaggeration in perceptions of partisan out-groups.⁷ In particular, we expect that more conservative [liberal] Republicans [Democrats] hold more exaggerated perceptions of Democrats [Republicans] than more moderate Republicans [Democrats]. Among Independents, moreover, we expect that more conservative [liberal] Independents hold exaggerated perceptions at greater rates of Democrats [Republicans]. We further expect that, among partisans, increased ideological extremism also contributes to greater exaggeration in how they perceive their copartisans.

Our argument suggests that exaggerated partisan images are an important and under-appreciated consequence of contemporary polarization. Though scholars have found somewhat limited evidence that elite polarization has contributed to polarization in the policy preferences of the mass public (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2011; Jewitt and Goren 2016; Layman and Carsey 2002; Lupton, Myers, and Thornton 2015), sorting has generally strengthened the alignment between individuals' partisan and ideological preferences (Levendusky 2009; Mason 2015). The alignment between these identities heightens perceptions of group competition and political identities, promotes the use of projection, and links polarization to increased partisan bias (Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013; Levendusky 2009) and decreased affect toward partisan out-groups (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Miller and Conover 2015; Rogowski and Sutherland 2016).

⁷Some readers may prefer to reference ideological extremism as *operational constraint*; though we acknowledge these are distinct theoretical concepts, they are difficult to distinguish empirically.

Our argument further suggests that the growth in extreme ideologies held by members of the public could increase social polarization by fomenting negative views of citizens across party lines. Consistent with social identity theory, perceptions of group differences may decrease interest in associating with out-group members and could have a pernicious effect on social interaction. Individuals use partisan perceptions as a means of “othering” out-group members, which reduces interest and desire in interacting with out-party members. Our argument thus provides a potential explanation for patterns of increased partisan clustering and self-sorting across geographic areas and social circumstances documented in a growing body of literature (Cho, Gimpel, and Hui 2013; McDonald 2011).

The account outlined above offers some contrasts with a burgeoning literature that emphasizes the role of negative partisanship in shaping how the public views and engages with politics. In particular, we suggest that citizens’ personal ideologies and preferences contribute to and reinforce the growing partisan divide in contemporary American politics. Our argument implies that reducing the strength of citizens’ partisan attachments may be insufficient to remedy interparty divisions; instead, the roots of increased partisanship and social polarization are at least partly found in Americans’ ideological beliefs.

Measuring Partisan Perceptions

We test our argument using data from The American Panel Survey (TAPS), a monthly panel survey completed online from a national probability sample.⁸ We studied perceptions of partisan groups by fielding questions on the March 2014 and May 2014 waves which produced a sample of 1,301 panelists who completed both waves of our survey modules. This subset of panelists forms our sample for analysis and is demographically representative of the U.S. population. The descriptive

⁸The sample is drawn from an address-based sampling frame and is administered online. Respondents without computer or online access are provided access through their participation in the survey. The survey is conducted by GfK/Knowledge Networks.

statistics of the socio-demographic and political variables that define our sample are shown in Tables A.1 and A.2 in the Appendix.

We constructed a battery of ten questions designed to measure various dimensions of partisan beliefs and fielded them in the March 2014 wave. Our battery of questions improves upon other research on partisan perceptions by asking respondents to evaluate partisan characteristics that represent a mixture of specific policy positions and more general topics about respondents' lifestyles and worldviews which may form the basis of affective polarization. For each party, our questions were intended to tap into perceptions of lifestyle preferences and cultural values in addition to policy attitudes. Five statements corresponded to perspectives that may be typically associated with Republicans and included topics such as creationism, cultural values, gun ownership, and nationalism (e.g., "We should build a fence between the United States and Mexico."). The other five statements aimed to capture perspectives more likely to be associated with Democrats including topics such as paternalism, tax increases, social values and lifestyle (e.g., "This country would be better if every citizen drove an electric car."). The complete question wordings are shown in Table A.3 in the Appendix.

Though the statements that comprised our battery are not exhaustive, they were inspired by messages from political actors and elites that attributed specific qualities to their opponents and media pieces that described (and sometimes caricatured) prominent members of the parties. For example, Donald Trump made the construction of a wall between the U.S. and Mexico a prominent component of his 2016 presidential campaign, which appealed to a nationalistic worldview shared by some of his supporters. Similarly, Democratic President Barack Obama not only made it his goal to put one million all-electric cars on the road by 2015, but also promised to buy one himself after his presidency.⁹ We used responses to these statements, which we term *first-order beliefs*, to calculate the proportions of Democrats, Republicans and Independents that agreed with each. We characterized partisanship with the standard question: "Generally speaking, do you usually

⁹See <http://wapo.st/2xAIY4I>, <http://bit.ly/2b8GgVY>, and <http://bit.ly/1Uisr5d>.

think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what?”¹⁰

Table 1 presents respondents’ first-order beliefs and shows the percentages of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans that agreed with each item.¹¹ The top panel of the table shows rates of agreement with the items intended to assess typical perceptions of Republicans and the bottom panel shows rates of agreement with the items expected to elicit commonly held Democratic perceptions. Each item generally performed as expected, with greater rates of agreement with the Republican items among self-identified Republicans. For example, 42.5% of all Republican respondents agreed with the statement that “this country would be safer if every law-abiding citizen possessed a firearm,” while agreement was much lower among Independents (25.1%) and Democrats (14.2%). Similarly, for the five Democratic items we observe the highest levels of agreement among self-identified Democrats. For example, 38.7% of Democrats agreed that “this country would be better if every citizen drove an electric car,” while smaller percentages of Independents (22%) and Republicans (11.4%) agreed. Furthermore, for nine of the 10 questions Independents agreed with each statement at rates in between those for Democrats and Republicans.

Columns 4 and 5 of Table 1 present results of statistical tests of differences in agreement between Democrats and Republicans. Column 4 presents the absolute difference in percentage points, and Column 5 reports the accompanying *t*-statistics for differences in means tests. For nine of our ten items the differences in agreement between Democrats and Republicans are statistically significant. The only statement that does not exhibit significant differences is: “The federal government should impose a ban on a sale of soda,”¹² though the difference is still in the expected direction with the highest agreement among Democrats and the least agreement among Repub-

¹⁰We also measured party identification in which *leaners* (people thinking of themselves as closer to one of the parties in a follow-up question) are classified as partisans as well. The results reported below are robust to this alternative classification.

¹¹The estimates presented in the tables and figures below are weighted to national population parameters based on the Current Population Survey (CPS) at the time of the interviews.

¹²Since agreement with this item is relatively low among Democrats, Republicans and Independents, it is not surprising that the existing difference is not significant.

licans. Moreover, for all of our items, the differences are of substantively important magnitudes. Excluding the soda ban item, the differences range from 9.3 percentage points on the question regarding humans and dinosaurs to a striking 47 percentage points when asked about the virtues of nationalized health care. Given the variation in rates of agreement among partisans and the differences between parties, the first-order beliefs reported in Table 1 provide good leverage for studying perceptions of partisan groups.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics: First-Order Beliefs

	Democrat Agreement	Independent Agreement	Republican Agreement	$ D - R $	t-statistic
All have guns	14.2	25.1	42.5	28.3	6.20
Humans and dinosaurs together	19.1	18.5	28.4	9.3	2.17
Homosexuality threatens	13.2	17.5	34.5	21.3	5.04
Require pledge	49.1	52.9	72.6	23.5	4.60
Border fence	27.3	40.9	53.3	26.0	5.44
Electric car	38.7	22.0	11.4	27.3	-7.20
Legal marijuana	43.3	41.4	24.7	18.6	-4.19
Ban on soda	12.1	7.0	6.9	5.2	-1.49
All pay more taxes	19.3	12.0	6.8	12.5	-3.84
Nationalized health care	63.2	33.8	16.2	47.0	-10.24

Note: The agreement columns report the percentage of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans who indicated agreement with the respective item. The last two columns report the results of a t-test for significant differences in mean levels of agreement between Democrats and Republicans. Bold t-statistics indicate statistical significance at the 95% confidence level.

In May 2014, we asked panelists to indicate the percentages of Democrats/Republicans they perceived to agree with each of the statements introduced in the March wave. Methodologically, the two-month lag between asking respondents about their own beliefs and their perceptions of partisan groups' beliefs helps to minimize potential biases from anchoring or reference effects. Respondents represented their perceptions of partisan groups' beliefs by choosing from five response categories that corresponded to their perceived rates of agreement with each statement: 0-20 percent, 21-40 percent, 41-60 percent, 61-80 percent, and 81-100 percent. By limiting panelists' response options to these five categories, we reduce measurement error in the dependent variable that results from differences in how respondents use large number scales or which may result from strategies such as satisficing (Wilcox, Sigelman, and Cook 1989).¹³ We coded

¹³We note that we conducted a supplementary analysis with a subset of the sample in which respondents were

these responses on a 1-5 scale, where larger numbers represent a respondent's perception that greater proportions of the partisan group share that belief or attitude. For example, when Democratic panelists were asked to indicate what percentage of Republicans they believe agreed with the statement "Elementary students should be required to recite the pledge of allegiance every day," a larger number indicates that they perceived substantial agreement with that statement among Republicans. This measure of *second-order beliefs* characterizes how strongly respondents attributed these perceptions to partisan groups.¹⁴ These second-order beliefs are our primary dependent variable for our first set of analyses.

We recognize the limitations inherent in using survey data to measure stereotypes, as the relationship between first- and second-order beliefs may be driven by an unobserved trait that encourages respondents to produce affective, as opposed to sincere, responses. That is to say, imagine the respondent's social environment is highly partisan and for reasons associated with her in-group membership she wants to express her partisan social identity. One strategy to do this would be to claim that members of the out-group were very likely to be extremists, holding stereotypical preferences. Thus a potential limitation in the dependent variable is that biased perception of the outgroup could instead be caused by a desire to express ideological extremity. Additionally, our strategy cannot directly address the causes of variation in the independent variable, and a key threat to inference is whether there is some third party factor that causes both own (apparent) extremity and (apparent) views about the extremity of the other party. Yet there are reasons to believe the survey responses are sincere and not endogenous. One strength of this project is the use of multiple stereotypes, and employing this measurement strategy we see a tremendous amount of variation. That is to say, there are ideologically-extreme respondents who report some, but not all, of the partisan mis-perceptions. This variation suggests sincerity

asked to indicate the *percentage* of partisans they believed agreed with each of the items, ranging from 0 to 100 percent. This additional analysis produced results nearly identical to those reported here.

¹⁴Our use of the term *second-order beliefs* is consistent with its use in psychology to explain "what people think about other people's thoughts" (Perner and Wimmer 1985), but is distinct from its usage in game theoretic scenarios where a strategic actor develops beliefs about the strategy another actor expects her to use.

on the part of the respondents; homogeneity in extremity would suggest more affective (perhaps signaling) behavior. We do account for a wide range of political and socio-demographic controls, including political knowledge, political interest, income, education, sex, race, age, and place of residence; however, because our data are neither experimental nor do we leverage exogenous shifts in beliefs, it is difficult to reach strong causal conclusions. It is not clear, however, what form an analogous experimental intervention might take, however, because deeply-held beliefs are difficult to experimentally manipulate. In our second study, we provide evidence from an experiment where we reduce the uncertainty around a respondents' beliefs regarding the stereotype of a neighbor and helps mitigate this concern.

Results: Ideology and Partisan Perceptions

We begin by testing our expectation that individuals exaggerate perceptions of partisan out-groups. Figure 1 offers a preliminary answer to this question, where the left panel shows second-order beliefs for Democratic items and the right panel shows second-order beliefs for Republican items. For each item we plot three bar charts that illustrate the degree to which Democrats, Independents, and Republicans believed that Democrats (in the left panel) and Republicans (in the right panel) agreed with their respective item, where the width of each colored region corresponds to the share of respondents that answered with that respective category. The category with the black frame reflects the *observed* answer (the correct level of agreement based on the figures shown in Table 1) and the shaded category indicates the modal second-order belief.

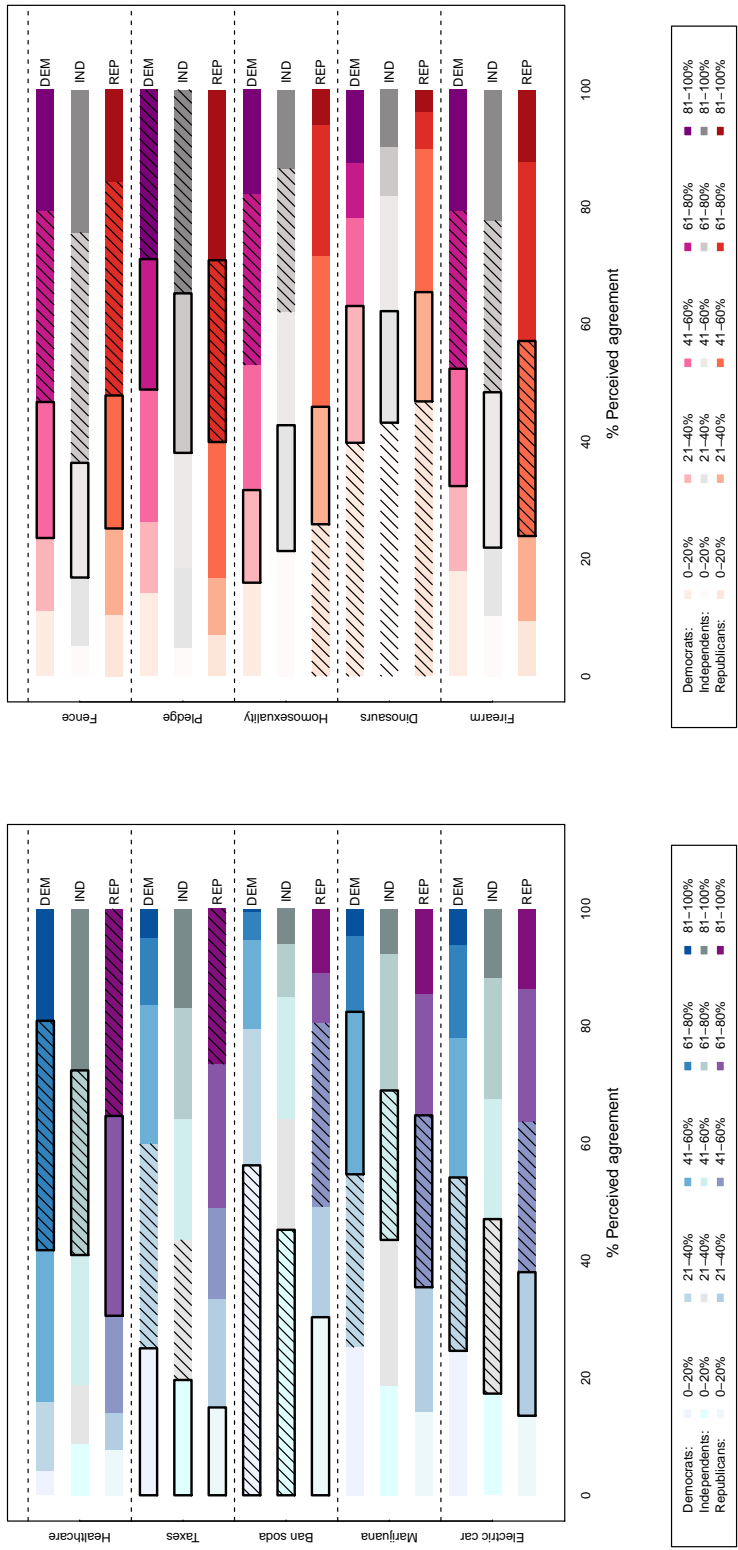
For example, we know from Table 1 that 63.2% of Democrats agreed with the nationalized health care item (a stereotypically Democratic item). Examining the three bar charts for that item in Figure 1, the fourth category (61-80%) has a bold frame, indicating that it contains the *correct* (observed) level of agreement. The shaded regions indicate that most Democrats and most Independents correctly identified that the observed level of agreement fell into this category.

However, among Republicans the shaded region indicates that most of them believed that 81-100% of Democrats agreed with this statement. In other words, the modal Republican perceived an exaggerated level of agreement among Democrats for this item.

The right panel of Figure 1 presents a similar pattern for the Republican items. Democrats exaggerated levels of agreement among Republicans, whereas Republicans themselves tended to correctly or slightly underestimate the level of agreement. For example, 42.5% of Republicans agreed that “this country would be safer if every law-abiding citizen possessed a firearm.” However, most Democrats and Independents believed the level of agreement among Republicans was 61-80%, while most Republicans correctly chose the 41-60% category.

For eight of our ten items, supporters of one party overestimated rates of agreement among members of the out-party for their respective item. More specifically, for four out of the five Republican items, Democrats exaggerated levels of agreement among Republicans, whereas Republicans similarly exaggerated levels of agreement among Democrats for four out of the five Democratic items. Figure 1 thus provides support for two conclusions. First, partisan respondents tend to exaggerate out-party perceptions, as Democratic [Republican] identifiers held partisan perceptions that were less accurate for Republicans [Democrats] than for Democrats [Republicans]. Second, Independents demonstrated varied success in identifying partisans’ levels of agreement with the statements. While they accurately categorized Democrats’ beliefs for most items, they overestimated the perceived level of agreement for Republican items on all but one item.

Figure 1: Descriptive Statistics: Second-Order Beliefs



Partisan (Mis)Perceptions and Ideological Extremity

We now test our prediction that ideological extremity is associated with increased exaggeration in perceptions of the opposite party. We characterize ideological extremity with a measure of operational ideology based on respondents' agreement with a series of 13 policy statements known to load highly on a single ideological dimension (Claassen, Tucker, and Smith 2015).¹⁵ The scores have a mean of zero (SD=1); because higher values of this measure represent more conservative preferences and lower values indicate liberal preferences, we refer to this measure as *Conservatism*.¹⁶

We test our hypotheses by estimating a series of linear regressions that model an individual's second-order beliefs of out-party members as a function of their ideological extremity. For every Democrat or Republican in our data set, we focus on the five items that relate to the *opposite* party. This provides five outcome variables per respondent, where our outcome variable $Perception_{ij}$ indicates the extent to which respondent i believes members of the out-party agree with question j . For example, for the statement "this country would be safer if every law-abiding citizen possessed a firearm", $Perception_{ij}$ is included for every Democrat in our sample and takes on a value between 1 – 5, where higher values indicate they believe a larger share of Republicans agreed with the statement. Our model is as follows:

$$Perception_{ij} = \beta_1 + \beta_2 Conservatism_i + \gamma \mathbf{X}_i + \delta_j + \varepsilon_{ij},$$

where $Conservatism_i$ is our measure of operational ideology for respondent i .¹⁷ To address po-

¹⁵Factor analysis shows the 13 items to be strongly correlated on one dimension. Factor loadings and eigenvalues are found in Table A.4 in the Appendix and question wordings in Table A.5. Figure A.1 in the Appendix displays the ideology scores by partisan identification, where the vast majority of Republicans are concentrated on the conservative side of the policy space while most Democrats are on the liberal side of the space.

¹⁶As we note below, our results are robust to substituting symbolic ideology in place of operational ideology; moreover, our results for operational ideology are also robust to the inclusion of symbolic ideology as an additional control.

¹⁷Our measure of operational ideology could describe individuals' sincere policy beliefs or, as Broockman (2015) writes, their degree of ideological constraint. To the degree both of these quantities are influenced by messages from

tential question-specific variation in perceptions, we include indicator variables for each item, represented by δ_j . Additionally, $\gamma\mathbf{X}_i$ captures the effect of a series of control variables, including political knowledge and political interest.¹⁸ Respondents with high political knowledge and interest may hold exaggerated second-order beliefs about members of the out-party because they are more familiar with the opinions and beliefs of out-party politicians and supporters due to their exposure to elite rhetoric. We also include a broad set of socio-demographic controls including race, gender, age, as well as the respondent's region and metropolitan status.¹⁹ We cluster standard errors by respondent. The structure of the data provide for two sets of N values: the number of respondents, cumulatively about 1,300 across all models, and the total number of respondent-question observations, or the number of panelists multiplied by the number of questions they answered.

The results are presented in Table 2, where Column 1 shows Republicans' views of Democrats and Column 2 explains Democrats' views of Republicans. Consistent with our hypothesis, the coefficient estimate for *Conservatism* is statistically significant in both models. The positive coefficient estimate in Column 1 indicates that more ideologically conservative Republicans perceived higher rates of agreement among Democrats with the Democratic items, while the negative coefficient estimate in Column 2 suggests that more ideologically liberal Democrats perceived that larger percentages of Republicans subscribed to the Republican items.

The third column of Table 2 includes both Democrats' and Republicans' views of the out-party. Because *Conservatism* is standardized at 0, we use its absolute value as a measure of *Ideological*

political elites (Lenz 2012; Zaller 1992), differing levels of political knowledge might influence both responses to our policy questions and their evaluations of members of the out-party (Bullock 2011). However, we obtain results nearly identical to those reported in Table 2 when studying the relationship between *Conservatism* and out-party perceptions among low-knowledge respondents, and we find no evidence that knowledge systematically moderates the relationship between reported policy views and out-party perceptions.

¹⁸Political knowledge is measured as the number of correct answers in a ten-item battery covering political affairs and American government institutions. Political interest is measured with the question "In general, how interested are you in politics and public affairs?" with responses on a 4-point scale ranging from "Not at all interested," to "Very interested."

¹⁹Results for the full set of control variables can be found in Table A.6 in the Appendix.

Extremity. High values of this variable indicate respondents that are very liberal or very conservative, while lower values indicate respondents with more ideologically moderate views. The positive and significant coefficient estimate here shows that more ideologically extreme partisans perceived higher levels of agreement with our items among their respective out-party, all of which provides strong support for our argument.

We also examined panelists' perceived level of agreement with these statements among *in-party* members. Using the same modeling strategy as in Table 2, we regressed $Perception_{ij}$ on the same set of covariates, where the dependent variable now reflects Republicans' [Democrats'] second-order beliefs about perceived percentage of Republicans [Democrats]. We again find that *Conservatism* is positively associated with the outcome variable for Republicans and negatively so for Democrats, indicating that more ideologically extreme partisans believe greater proportions of their in-party members subscribe to the statements. While these estimates are statistically significant and in the same direction as those in the main analysis, they are weaker in magnitude.²⁰ The full results are shown in Table A.7 in the Appendix.

The estimated coefficients for the control variables are also of substantive interest. More politically interested and sophisticated respondents tended to believe that a larger share of members of the other party agreed with that party's items.²¹ Though the exact level of statistical significance varies across these estimates, the results generally suggest that greater attentiveness to politics and public affairs among partisans is associated with attributing these beliefs to members of the out-party at greater rates.

To the extent political independence is a meaningful political identity (see Klar 2014; Klar and Krupnikov 2016), our argument suggests that Independents with more ideologically extreme

²⁰The differences between the coefficients are statistically significant at $p < .10$ for columns 1 and 2 and at $p < .05$ for column 3 (likely due to the increased statistical power from pooling all respondents), indicating that ideological extremity is a stronger predictor of out-party perceptions than in-party perceptions.

²¹We also estimated models treating political interest as a series of dummy indicators for the four possible responses. We found the results to hold and that the estimated coefficients for the dummy variables indicated a linear association with the dependent variable.

Table 2: Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members

	Views of Opposing Party		
	Republicans' Views of Democrats	Democrats' Views of Republicans	All Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members
Conservatism	0.336* (0.073)	-0.370* (0.069)	
Ideological Extremity			0.459* (0.066)
Political Knowledge	0.038 (0.029)	0.060* (0.022)	0.047* (0.018)
Political Interest	0.275* (0.077)	0.097 (0.056)	0.169* (0.045)
Constant	2.224* (0.508)	2.530* (0.311)	2.005* (0.268)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	1513	2480	3993
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	323	537	860
<i>R</i> ²	0.23	0.19	0.20

Note: Table entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. The outcome variable is Perception_{ij}, the degree to which a respondent *i* believes members of the out-party agreed with item *j* as described in the text. Additional socio-demographic controls (income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region) and question indicators are included but not reported. * $p < 0.05$

policy views also harbor more stereotypical attitudes toward partisans. We investigated this expectation separately for each group of partisans, and expected that extremity would increase stereotypical perceptions among Independents whose ideological orientation was opposite that of the target partisan group. Table 3 presents the results.²² Consistent with our argument, more liberal Independents tended to believe that greater proportions of Republicans agreed with the Republican items we asked, whereas more conservative Independents believed that more Democrats

²²This analysis includes those Independents, who admit to leaning closer to one party, as well as those who can be classified as “pure Independents.” Although pure Independents may behave differently than those who lean to one party, our data do not allow us to explore this question, given that our sample only contains 24 such respondents (about 2% of all observations).

agreed with the Democratic items. This is consistent with recent research that finds that citizens who may be embarrassed about their partisan attachments identify as Independents despite holding beliefs similar to partisans (Klar and Krupnikov 2016). These findings suggest that Independents, as an out-group relative to both Democrats and Republicans, nonetheless structure their views of the parties based on the same underlying principles and beliefs as partisans. In other words, ideology meaningfully structures the ways in which Independents perceive partisans even though Independents have no analogous partisan group identification.

Table 3: Independents’ Views of Partisans

	Views of Partisans	
	Views of Democrats	Views of Republicans
Conservatism	0.288* (0.047)	-0.127* (0.047)
Political Knowledge	0.058* (0.022)	0.029 (0.025)
Political Interest	-0.032 (0.058)	0.024 (0.067)
Constant	2.784* (0.377)	3.133* (0.428)
Controls	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓
N (Total)	2000	1999
N (Respondents)	441	439
R^2	0.20	0.18

Note: Table entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. The outcome variable is $\text{Perception}_{i,j}$, the degree to which a respondent i believes Democrats/Republicans agree with item j as described in the text. Additional socio-demographic controls (income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region) and question indicators are included but not reported. * $p < 0.05$

Our results are robust to a number of different model specifications shown in the Appendix. We estimated models that included an indicator for whether a respondent is a strong partisan to explore whether our results are driven by strength of party identification rather than ideo-

logical extremity (Table A.8).²³ We also substituted a traditional seven-point symbolic ideology variable for our measure of operational ideology (Tables A.9 and A.10).²⁴ To disentangle ideological extremity from one’s ideological identity as, for instance, a “conservative” or a “liberal,” we controlled for both symbolic and operational ideology in the same models (Tables A.11 and A.12). We estimated models in which we accounted for the partisan’s own position on each statement to explore the possibility that respondents may hold exaggerated perceptions in ways that varied systematically with their position on that statement (Table A.13). We also measured party identification in which *leaners* (people thinking of themselves as closer to one of the parties in a follow-up question) are classified as partisans rather than as Independents (Table A.14). Finally, we created an indicator for responses whose partisan identities were aligned with their ideologies to explore whether our results are driven by partisan-ideological sorting (Table A.15).²⁵ We also estimated models that included the different controls for strong partisanship, symbolic ideology, and partisan ideological sorting all at the same time (Table A.16). These models produce consistently strong evidence that ideological extremity is associated with exaggerated perceptions of partisan groups.

In addition, because our outcome measure is a five-category variable, we replicated all analyses using ordered logit models (Table A.17).²⁶ Finally, while our analyses pool all perception items together, we estimated a series of models that focused on one individual statement at a time (Tables A.18 and A.19). These robustness checks also support the findings above.

Figure 2 illustrates the substantive relationship between ideology and partisan perceptions

²³We considered respondents coded as a “1” (for Democrats) or a “7” (for Republicans) on the seven-point party ID scale as strong partisans.

²⁴This variable is measured with a folded version of the seven-point symbolic ideology scale, where a value of zero corresponds to an individual who placed themselves at the midpoint of the scale and a value of 3 indicates individuals who placed themselves at either 1 or 7 (very liberal or very conservative).

²⁵We created an indicator, *Sorted*, for partisans who fell on their own ideological side of the *Conservatism* measure. If a Republican [Democrat] scored on the positive [negative] side of 0 in our standardized operational conservatism measure, she was coded as 1, or “sorted.” Likewise, if a Republican [Democrat] scored on the negative [positive] side of 0 in our conservatism variable, she was coded as 0, or “unsorted.”

²⁶However, since the findings of these ordered logit models were consistent with a linear modeling strategy, we present the results from the linear models for a more straightforward interpretation.

and shows predicted levels of our outcome variable $Perception_{ij}$ across the range of values of operational ideology. Based on Models 1 and 2 in Table 2, the left panel of Figure 2 displays the differences in perceptions of members of the out-party.²⁷ The y -axis corresponds to the categorical outcome measure, where a value of ‘2’ indicates a belief that between 21 and 40 percent of out-partisans agree with a given item and ‘4’ indicates a belief that between 61 and 80 percent of out-partisans agree with a given item. The dashed line is the predicted perception among Democrats toward Republicans and the solid line is the predicted perception among Republicans toward Democrats. The shaded regions represent the 95% confidence intervals. The left panel of Figure 2 suggests that the most conservative Republicans and the most liberal Democrats perceive that members of the opposite party agree with a respective item a full category higher than their more moderate co-partisans, all else equal. That is, given two Republicans who are identical in all respects, with the exception of one being a far-right conservative and the other being an ideological moderate, our model predicts that the more conservative individual will believe about 20 percent more Democrats agree with a given Democratic item.

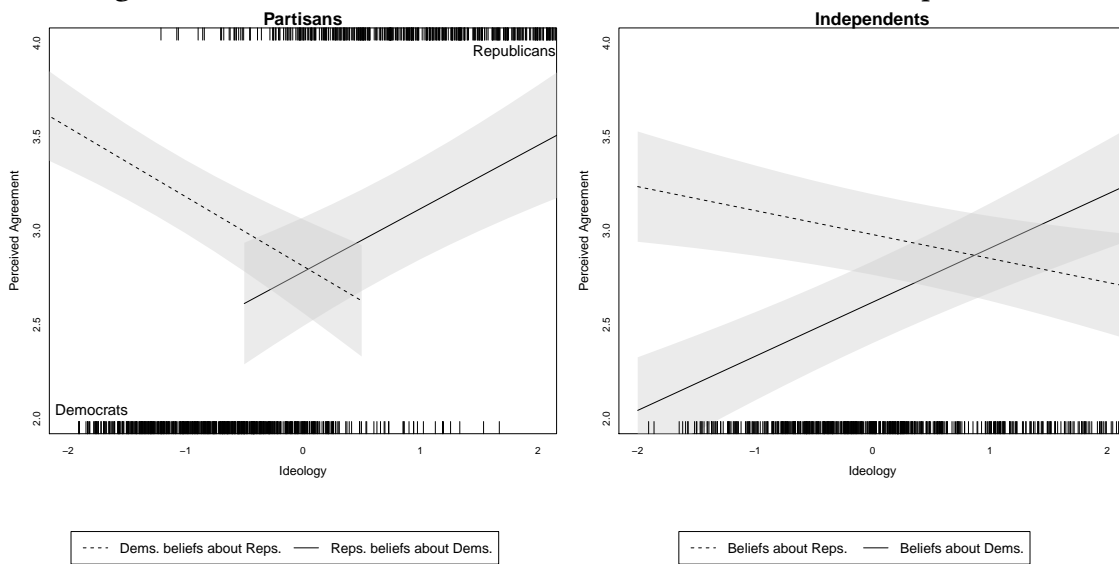
Figure 2 also reveals that our ideology measure exhibits substantial overlap across party lines. This is useful for two key reasons. First, it validates that the measure captures something different from simply partisanship. Second, it allows us to compare predicted outcomes for respondents that identify with opposite parties but share similar ideologies. Consider the predicted values for a respondent with an ideology score of about 0.5 in the left panel of Figure 2. If that person is a Democrat, our model predicts them to perceive less agreement with a given item among Republicans compared to the perceptions of Democrats if that person were a Republican. However, if that person has an ideology score of roughly -0.5 , we would then expect a Democrat to perceive higher rates of agreement among Republicans than the other way around.

The right panel of Figure 2 uses the estimates from Table 3 to illustrate similar patterns among

²⁷For the purpose of these predictions, all other continuous covariates were held at their mean scores, while categorical and dummy variables were held at their mode values.

Independents. As the dashed line demonstrates, the effect of ideology is considerably weaker for explaining second-order beliefs about Republican items. That is, the predicted difference in evaluations of Republicans between the most conservative and most liberal Independents is only about half a category. When evaluating Democrats, however, this gap is much wider, as demonstrated by the much steeper, positive slope. The predicted difference between the most conservative Independent and the most liberal is greater than one category, indicating that ideologically opposed Independents will have nearly a 20 percent difference in their classifications of Democrats.

Figure 2: Predicted Second-Order Beliefs for Partisans and Independents



(a) Partisans

(b) Independents

Note: The left panel corresponds to the predicted values of second-order beliefs for Democrats and Republicans. The right panel graphs predicted values for Independents. The shaded areas show 95% confidence intervals.

We also examined whether respondents identified the *correct* proportion of out-party members who agreed with each survey item. These results are shown in the Appendix in Table B.1. For each item, we created an indicator for whether a respondent correctly identified the percentage category that contained the observed level of agreement with the partisan item.²⁸ We find

²⁸For example, 28.4% of all Republicans agreed with the statement that “Humans and dinosaurs walked the earth at the same time.” A Democratic respondent who is asked about the percentage of Republicans they believed agreed with that statement are coded as 1 if they responded that 21-40% of Republicans agreed with this statement, and 0 otherwise.

that the likelihood of identifying the correct proportion of agreement among partisan out-groups is significantly related to the respondent's own ideology. The more conservative a Republican is, the less likely they are to identify the correct proportion of Democrats that reported agreement with a Democratic item. Likewise, the more liberal a Democrat is, the less likely they are to correctly identify the percentages of Republicans that reported agreement with the Republican items.

The results from our survey analysis provide strong support for our argument about ideology and partisan perceptions. Perceptions of partisan out-groups are considerably less accurate than perceptions of in-groups, and these perceptions are substantially influenced by ideology. Among both Democrats and Republicans, ideological extremity is associated with greater inaccuracy and increased exaggeration in perceptions of the out-group. Ideological extremity also structures how Independents view members of both parties, which suggests that partisan identity alone is an incomplete explanation for the exaggerated perceptions shown here. Instead, consistent with our theoretical perspective, the convergence of group membership and ideological extremity appears to contribute to the use of exaggerated perceptions to characterize partisan out-groups.

The Consequences of Realized Partisan Perceptions

We now study how perceptions of outgroup partisans contribute to social and affective polarization. Our study improves on existing work (e.g., Mason 2015; Rogowski and Sutherland 2016) by using direct measurements of potential means of interpersonal interaction and by using an experimental framework that addresses potential concerns about causality. To do so, we conducted a survey experiment on the December 2016 wave of TAPS with a sample of 1,487 respondents. Complete demographic and socio-political characteristics are shown in Table C.1.

Our key manipulation concerns the realization of exaggerated partisan images. Respondents were randomly assigned to receive one of three short vignettes, each of which described the char-

acteristics of a hypothetical new neighbor who is moving into the respondent's community.²⁹ All respondents received a brief demographic description of the potential neighbor, and these descriptors were chosen for containing relatively neutral information that did not prime or provide cues about partisan affiliation. Respondents in the *control* group (N=491) received additional non-political information about the potential new neighbor regarding pets and hobbies while also being told that the neighbor frequently volunteers for local candidates' campaigns, as a sign of political activism. Respondents in the *partisan* treatment condition (N=497) received the same information, but were also informed that the potential new neighbor was registered as a voter for the opposing party (among Independents, we randomized between Republican and Democrat neighbors). In the *realized perceptions* treatment condition (N=499), respondents were told that the potential neighbor was registered with the opposing party and, in addition to receiving information about pets, hobbies, and volunteering, they were also told that the potential neighbor subscribed to three of their party's stereotypical items we referenced in our analyses above. In other words, we make those general partisan stereotypes *realized perceptions* by stating that the hypothetical individual matches the beliefs that some individuals have about Republicans/Democrats.

After receiving the vignettes, respondents were asked five follow-up questions to gauge their interest in interacting with this potential new neighbor. Specifically, we asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed that they would be interested in befriending, hiring, dating, or inviting the person over for a meal, and whether they would allow their children to play together.³⁰ These questions were chosen to reflect ostensibly non-political modes of interaction and their order was randomized. To gauge the perceived ideological extremity of the potential neighbor, we also asked respondents to place the neighbor on a standard five-point ideological scale that ranged from very liberal (1) to very conservative (5). Responses to this question allow us to evaluate how respondents make assessments about individuals on the basis of their adherence to

²⁹Complete vignette wording can be found in Table C.2 in the Appendix.

³⁰Full question wording is available in Table C.3 in the Appendix.

partisan stereotypes and can also provide suggestive evidence that these ideological assessments generate social polarization over and beyond the effects of partisanship.

We assessed the consequences of realized partisan perceptions by comparing responses to the outcome variables among those in the *realized perceptions* condition with those in the *partisan* and *control* conditions. We conduct both sets of comparisons because a comparison between the *perceptions* and *control* conditions could simply reflect the effect of partisanship rather than the realized perceptions per se. Any observed differences between the *partisan* and *control* conditions reflect the effect of partisanship on the outcome variables. The *partisan* condition resembles the perceptions a relatively moderate Democrat (Republican) might hold of Republicans (Democrats), while the *realized perceptions* condition characterizes the way a more liberal Democrat (conservative Republican) may perceive Republicans (Democrats). Thus, our experiment tests the effect of realized perceptions of partisan out-groups on social polarization. Consistent with our theoretical account, we expect that the treatment effects of the *realized perceptions* condition will be negative and larger in magnitude than the *partisan* condition treatment effects. Such a finding would suggest that social polarization does not result simply from the presence of partisan differences, but rather than individuals are more likely to discriminate based on partisanship only after a counterpartisan's conformity with partisan stereotypes are made explicit.

Experimental Results

The overall treatment effects are shown below in Figure 3.³¹ The plotted points indicate the difference between the *control* condition compared with both the *partisan* and *realized perceptions* conditions for each of the outcome variables shown along the *y*-axis. The *x*-axis represents the difference in the proportions of respondents who expressed interest in interacting with the potential neighbor that, by design, is from the opposing party of the respondent.³² The verti-

³¹Complete summary statistics are shown in Table C.4 in the Appendix.

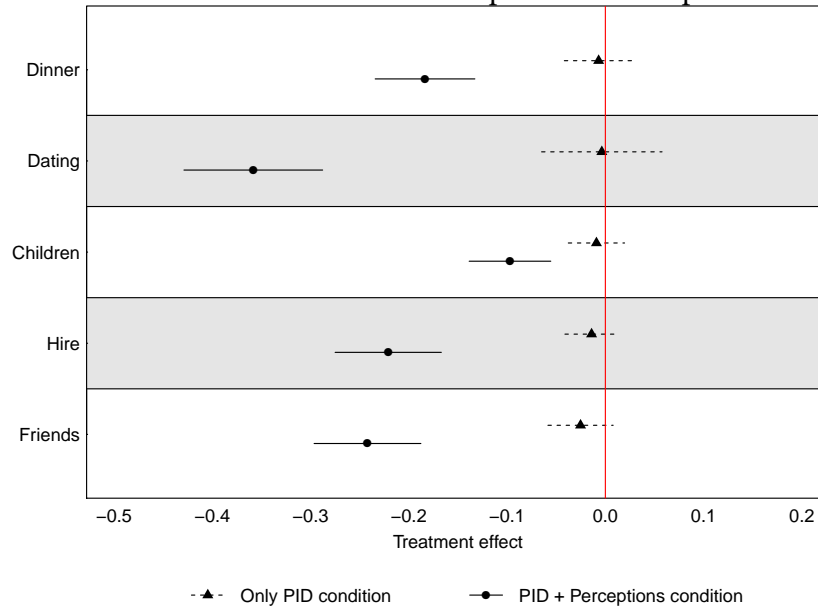
³²Independents were randomized to receive information that the hypothetical neighbor identified as either a Democrat or a Republican, though the results are robust to excluding Independents from the analysis.

cal line at zero indicates no treatment effect, while positive values along the x -axis indicate that larger proportions of treatment group respondents than control respondents expressed interest in interacting with the potential neighbor. Negative values indicate that smaller proportions of treatment group respondents than control respondents expressed interest in interacting with the potential neighbor.

As the figure shows, we find strong, statistically significant, and substantively large effects of partisan realized perceptions on interpersonal interaction. Compared with the control group, respondents in the *realized perceptions* treatment group were substantially less interested in interacting with the hypothetical potential neighbor in all five scenarios. These differences range from -9.7 percentage points (allowing children to play together) to -35.8 percentage points (interest in dating). The effects of the *realized perceptions* condition are also considerably larger than and statistically distinguishable from the effects of the *partisan* condition for each outcome variable. In addition, there are no reliable effects of the *partisan* condition relative to the control condition in any of the five outcome variables, but all five are in the negative direction.

We find some evidence that the effects of the *partisan* condition were moderate by respondents' ideological extremity. As Figure C.1 shows, ideologically extreme respondents appeared to react more negatively to the *partisan* condition than moderate respondents, for whom all the results are null. Though suggestive, our findings mostly parallel those from our observational analysis, in which ideological extremity is associated with more negative perceptions of out-party members. We also found, however, the treatment effects were generally consistent across each partisan group. The treatment effects of the *realized perceptions* condition were negative and statistically significant for all five dependent variables among Democratic respondents and for four of the five dependent variables among Republican respondents. The negative treatment effects also appear to be somewhat smaller in magnitude among Republicans than Democrats. Finally, the *realized perceptions* condition also produced statistically significant negative treatment effects among Independents for all five dependent variables, though the magnitudes of these effects are

Figure 3: Effect of Realized Partisan Perceptions on Interpersonal Interaction



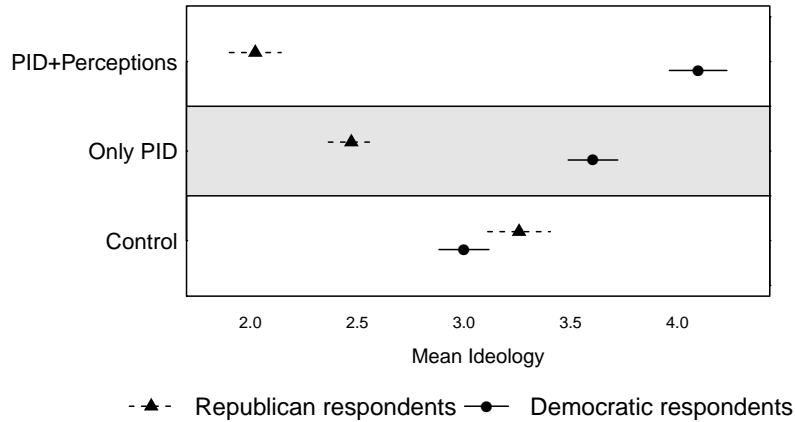
Note: Values along the x -axis indicate the difference in proportions when comparing each of the treatment groups to the control group. The vertical line at zero indicates the null hypothesis of no treatment effect. The horizontal lines show the 95% confidence intervals.

also smaller than they are among Democrats. These results are shown in Figure C.2 in the Appendix.

As Figure 4 shows, the treatment conditions affected respondents' evaluations of the ideological orientation of the potential new neighbor. Democratic respondents in the *control* condition placed the potential neighbor at 3.0, which is perfectly in the center of the ideological scale; however, the average placement among Democrats in the *partisan* condition was 3.6, more than half a point to the right of the ideological center, and suggests that respondents used the partisan-ship information to infer the potential neighbor's ideology was fairly conservative. Democratic respondents in the *realized perceptions* condition evaluated the potential neighbor even more conservatively with a mean rating of 4.1, an additional half point to the right of the *partisan* condition and more than one full point to the right of the *control* condition. The differences between each of these conditions are statistically significant. The mean placements among Republican respondents followed a similar pattern as they placed their hypothetical neighbors on average at 3.3 in

the *control* condition, 2.5 in the *partisan* condition, and 2.0 in the *realized perceptions* condition, respectively. Among both Republican and Democratic respondents, therefore, partisanship, particularly when coupled with the realization of partisan stereotypes, significantly affected their evaluation of the potential neighbor's ideology.

Figure 4: Effect of Realized Partisan Perceptions on Evaluations of Ideology



Note: Values along the x-axis indicate the mean placement for each experimental condition along a five-point scale ranging from very liberal (1) to very conservative (5). The horizontal lines show the 95% confidence intervals.

The experimental findings indicate that the invocation of exaggerated partisan perceptions could serve as an impediment to non-political forms of interpersonal interaction including social, professional, and romantic engagement. The effects of realized partisan perceptions extend far beyond the effects of partisanship itself, however. In fact, we find that partisanship itself has relatively small, and mostly statistically insignificant, effects on social polarization. Our results suggest that, absent realized partisan perceptions, partisanship itself is not an impediment to social interaction. This finding is broadly consistent with our observational findings in which partisanship on its own did not fully explain exaggerated perceptions of partisan out-groups. The experimental results further indicate that the invocation of exaggerated partisan characteristics significantly increases social distance. While our experiment does not allow us to manipulate respondents' underlying perceptions about partisan groups, the findings suggest that the application of these perceptions has important social consequences. The results further suggest that

ideological extremity may produce social and affective polarization through the development of increasingly exaggerated perceptions of out-partisans.

Conclusion

Lippmann’s “pictures in our heads” are as powerful today as it was almost a century ago. In times of increased affective and social polarization, analyzing how individuals perceive the political and social world is more timely than ever. Today, our results indicate, Americans carry around in their heads “pictures” of partisan groups that reflect their ideological commitments — particularly when characterizing partisan outgroups. By fomenting these “pictures,” ideology contributes in important ways to social polarization beyond the ways predicted by negative partisanship alone.

The results of our study suggest a new research agenda for studying operational ideology and mass polarization. While studies at the elite level routinely emphasize the importance of policy preferences for characterizing polarization and its consequences, researchers have devoted less attention to understanding how operational ideology relates to mass polarization. Scholars have instead focused on how partisan group identities, identities based on ideological labels, and partisan-ideological sorting produce affective and social polarization. Our analyses suggest that accounting for policy views in the contemporary electorate will allow researchers to more fully understand the dynamics that characterize mass politics.

Our findings contribute new insights about the potential consequences of contemporary partisan polarization for mass political behavior. In particular, our results suggest that increased partisan polarization may be associated with the use of increasingly exaggerated partisan caricatures. As the public forms perceptions of partisan groups at increased rates and with decreased accuracy, the “pictures in our heads” may in fact make it more difficult for citizens to relate to one another across the partisan aisle. These patterns of results suggest a potential explanation for why increased polarization at the elite level has led to increased social polarization among

partisans in the mass public. They also suggest an important link between increased ideological extremity and decreased affect toward political out-groups.

By design, our research has some important limitations. First, we considered a small number of items that may be salient for forming perceptions of partisans. Second, our TAPS data mostly represent a single snapshot in time and limit our ability to make stronger conclusions about the causal relationship between partisan polarization and perceptions. It is unclear whether the nature of partisan perceptions has intensified in direction or salience (or both) in the contemporary era relative to a generation or two ago. Third, our survey experiment asked respondents to evaluate the potential for interpersonal interaction based on the information they received in a hypothetical setting. We are less certain how the experimental results generalize into real-world settings in which, for instance, social norms could serve as countervailing influences on the application of partisan perceptions. Fourth, the design of our studies does not permit us to conduct convincing mediation analyses to evaluate the mechanisms implicated by our theory. More systematic research, both experimental and observational, is necessary to more definitively answer these questions.

At the same time, our research raises several important questions about the nature of partisan perceptions and their implications. Perhaps most importantly, future research should interrogate the possibility of correcting exaggerated (mis)perceptions about partisans. For instance, Ahler (2014) shows that correcting exaggerated perceptions of ideological polarization reduced respondents' self-reported levels of ideological extremism. To the degree that partisan perceptions inhibit social interaction across partisan lines, efforts to increase the accuracy of partisan perceptions may therefore prove fruitful for achieving greater levels of empathy, reduced affective polarization, and more consensual political outcomes. Finally, our research does not address temporal dynamics in the formation and deployment of partisan instances, though we suspect that they emerge, evolve, and are displaced over time as the parties themselves change (e.g., Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). These questions are all important for future research.

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Supplementary Appendix

This Supplementary Appendix provides additional analysis and figures for “Through the Ideology of the Beholder: Partisan Perceptions and Polarization Among the Mass Public” and includes 3 main parts:

- **Part A** TAPS Study – Main Analysis (p. 36-58) : this part contains 1 figure and 20 tables that provide additional information regarding the paper’s main analysis of partisan (mis)perceptions and ideological extremity.
- **Part B** TAPS Study – Correct Assessment (p. 59-62) : this part contains 2 tables that provide additional information regarding an additional set of analyses that examines whether respondents identified the correct proportion of out-party members who agreed with each survey item.
- **Part C** TAPS Study – Experiment (p. 63-70) : this part contains 1 figure and 5 tables that provide additional information regarding the paper’s experimental analysis that examines the consequences of partisan (mis)perceptions.

A TAPS Study – Main Analysis

In the paper’s main analysis, we test our hypothesis that ideological extremism within each partisan group is associated with increased inaccuracy and exaggeration in perceptions of partisan out-groups. In particular, we expect that more conservative [liberal] Republicans [Democrats] hold more exaggerated perceptions of Democrats [Republicans] than more moderate Republicans [Democrats]. Among Independents, moreover, we expect that more conservative [liberal] Independents hold exaggerated perceptions at greater rates of Democrats [Republicans]. Put differently, as one’s policy attitudes are more intensely aligned with their partisan group, that individual is more likely to harbor greater misperceptions of the partisan out-group.

While the analyses in the manuscript provide strong support for our hypothesis, the following tables and figures provide additional background information regarding our panel, the measurement and distributions of key variables, and also the results from a series of robustness checks. More specifically, Table A.1 provides descriptive statistics of the socio-demographic and political variables that define our sample, and Table A.2 compares the descriptive statistics of our two-wave sample to the statistics for each of the separate waves in order to make sure that our combined sample is still nationally representative. Table A.3 contains the full wording of the partisan perceptions questions. Table A.4 presents the detailed results of the factor analysis we ran to create the operational ideology scores, while Table A.5 lists the exact question wording for the items used. Figure A.1 displays the distribution the ideology scores we use, split up by partisan identification.

Table A.6 reports the full regression results for our main results table in the manuscript including the coefficient estimates for all control variables. Table A.7 uses the same modeling strategy, but examines panelists’ perceived level of agreement with these statements among *in*-party members. The models in Table A.8 include an indicator for whether a respondent is a strong partisan to explore whether our results are driven by strength of party identification rather than ideological extremity (where we consider respondents coded as a “1” (for Democrats) or a “7” (for Republicans) on the 7-point party ID scale as strong partisans). Tables A.9 and A.10 substitute a traditional seven-point symbolic ideology variable for our measure of operational ideology. To disentangle ideological extremity from the strength of one’s ideological identity, the specifications in Tables A.11 and A.12 control for both symbolic and operational ideology in the same models.

Table A.13 accounts for the partisan’s own position on each statement to explore the possibility that respondents may hold exaggerated perceptions in ways that varied systematically with their position on that statement. For the results in Table A.14, we changed our measure of

party identification to also classify *leaners* (people thinking of themselves as closer to one of the parties in a follow-up question) as partisans rather than as Independents. Table A.15 includes a *Sorted* indicator, which controls for the possibility that partisan ideological sorting might be driving our results, and the models in Table A.16 include the controls for strong partisanship, symbolic ideology, and partisan ideological sorting all in the same model specification. Because our outcome measure is a five-category variable, Table A.17 replicates the main analysis using ordered logit models. Tables A.18 and A.19 focus on one individual statement at a time instead of pooling them all together. Finally, Table A.20 is based on a follow-up survey in December 2016, where we asked respondents to indicate their answers on a 100-point scale to make sure that our answers are not driven by the five-category scheme.

All these robustness checks produce results that are consistent with the findings we report in the main manuscript.

Table A.1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Female	0.490	0.500	0	1
White	0.745	0.436	0	1
Age: 18-29	0.078	0.269	0	1
Age: 30-44	0.195	0.397	0	1
Age: 45-59	0.327	0.469	0	1
Age: 60+	0.400	0.490	0	1
Education: Less than High School	0.030	0.171	0	1
Education: High School/Some College	0.365	0.482	0	1
Education: College or more	0.605	0.489	0	1
Income: Less than \$30,000	0.204	0.403	0	1
Income: \$30,000-\$49,999	0.195	0.397	0	1
Income: \$50,000-\$79,999	0.261	0.439	0	1
Income: \$80,000+	0.340	0.474	0	1
Metropolitan	0.853	0.354	0	1
Region: Northeast	0.151	0.358	0	1
Region: Midwest	0.263	0.440	0	1
Region: South	0.356	0.479	0	1
West	0.231	0.421	0	1
Conservatism	-0.013	1.045	-1.907	2.340
Ideology	4.108	1.741	1	7
Democrat	0.413	0.493	0	1
Republican	0.248	0.432	0	1
Independent	0.339	0.474	0	1
Political Knowledge	6.948	2.306	0	10
Political interest: not at all interested	0.031	0.173	0	1
Political interest: not very interested	0.144	0.351	0	1
Political interest: somewhat interested	0.374	0.484	0	1
Political interest: very interested	0.451	0.498	0	1

Table A.2: Descriptive Statistics and Differences Between Waves

Variable	Difference		Difference
	Both waves	Both waves - Wave 1	Both waves - Wave 2
Female	0.49	0.03	0.01
White	0.74	-0.01	0.00
Age: 18-29	0.08	0.01	0.00
Age: 30-44	0.20	0.02	0.00
Age: 45-59	0.33	-0.01	0.00
Age: 60+	0.40	-0.02	0.00
Education: Less than High School	0.03	0.01	0.00
Education: High School/Some College	0.37	0.02	0.00
Education: College and more	0.60	-0.02	-0.01
Income: Less than \$30,000	0.20	0.02	0.01
Income: \$30,000-\$49,999	0.20	0.01	0.00
Income: \$50,000-\$79,999	0.26	-0.01	0.00
Income: More than \$80,000	0.34	-0.02	-0.01
Metropolitan	0.85	0.00	0.00
Region: Northeast	0.15	0.00	0.00
Region: Midwest	0.26	0.00	0.00
Region: South	0.36	0.01	0.00
Region: West	0.23	0.00	0.00
Conservatism	-0.01	0.01	0.01
Ideology	4.11	0.00	0.01
Democrat	0.41	-0.02	-0.01
Republican	0.25	0.00	0.00
Independent	0.34	0.02	0.01
Political Knowledge	6.95	-0.33*	-0.12
Political interest: not at all interested	0.03	0.01	0.00
Political interest: not very interested	0.14	0.01	0.00
Political interest: somewhat interested	0.37	0.01	0.00
Political interest: very interested	0.45	-0.04*	-0.01

Note: Column 1 shows the mean value of each variable (proportion of each demographic category) for respondents that completed the first *and* second wave of the survey. Column 2 presents the difference between the mean values of the sample that completed both waves and everybody who completed wave 1 (i.e., also including some respondents that did not complete wave 2). Similarly, Column 3 shows the differences between respondents in both waves and the full sample of wave 2. * indicates whether the differences are statistically significant at the 95% level or more (two-tailed t-tests). Respondents per wave: Wave 1 (March 2014) = 1,669; Wave 2 (May 2014) = 1,496; Both waves = 1,301.

Table A.3: Partisan Perceptions Questions

Republican perceptions	Democratic perceptions
This country would be safer if every law-abiding citizen possessed a firearm.	This country would be better if every citizen drove an electric car.
Humans and dinosaurs walked the earth at the same time.	Marijuana use should be legal in all states.
Homosexuality threatens the well-being of our country.	The federal government should impose a ban on the sale of soda.
Elementary students should be required to recite the pledge of allegiance every day.	This country would be better if we all paid more taxes.
We should build a fence between the United States and Mexico.	A nationalized healthcare system would improve health for all citizens.

These questions were preceded by the following instructions: “Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.” Responses were measured on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree,” with an additional “don’t know” response option. Respondents are coded as agreeing with the statement if they chose either the “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” response options.

Table A.4: Operational Ideology Factor Analysis

Variable	Factor 1 Loading	Uniqueness
Abortion	0.63	0.45
Education Spending	-0.63	0.56
Taxes	0.72	0.43
Gay Marriage	0.62	0.44
Gun Control	0.57	0.63
Global Warming	0.81	0.35
ObamaCare	-0.76	0.38
Immigration	0.58	0.57
Minimum Wage	0.81	0.30
Medicaid Expansion	0.68	0.48
Regulation of Business	0.72	0.44
Affirmative Action	0.62	0.52
Privatization of Social Security	-0.42	0.75

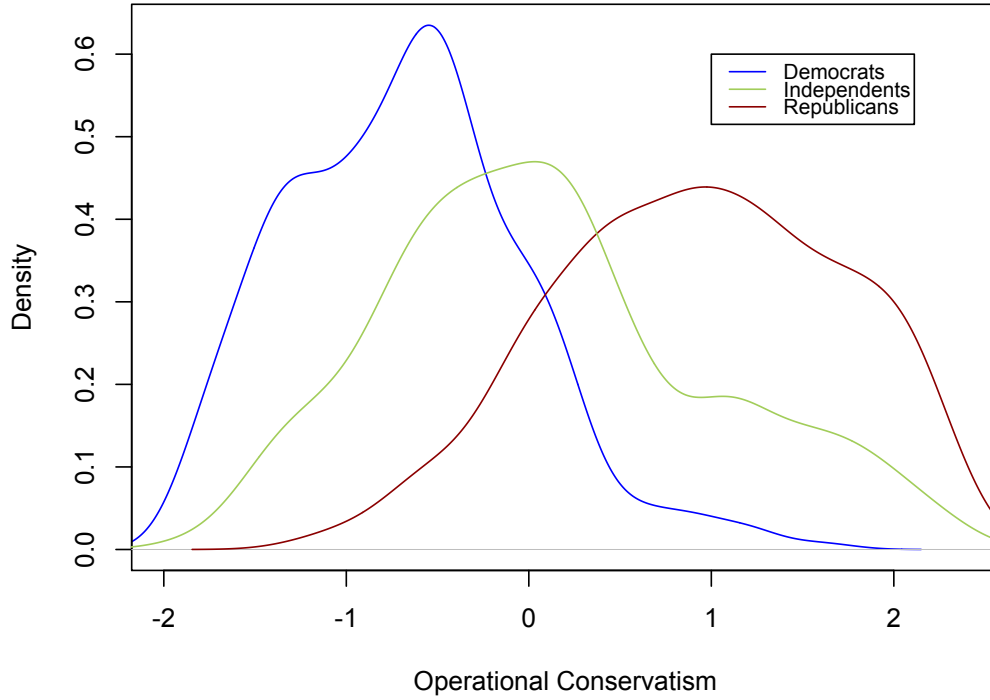
Note: First Factor Eigenvalue 5.77; Second Factor Eigenvalue 0.51; $\alpha = 0.91$

Table A.5: Question Wording for Operational Ideology Items

Item	Full text
Abortion	Federal programs that provide health care benefits should allow funding for abortions.
Education Spending	Federal spending for education should be reduced.
Taxes	Federal personal income taxes for individuals with incomes higher than \$250,000 should be raised.
Gay Marriage	The federal government should recognize the validity of a same-sex marriage where state law does.
Gun Control	Federal law should ban the possession of handguns except by law enforcement personnel.
Global Warming	The federal government should adopt policies to address the problem of global warming.
ObamaCare	The federal health care reform program adopted in 2010 should be repealed.
Immigration	The federal government should find a way to allow people who now are in the U.S. illegally to stay in the U.S. and become U.S. citizens.
Minimum Wage	The federal government should guarantee a higher minimum hourly wage for workers.
Medicaid Expansion	Medicaid, the federal government health program for low income people, should be extended to cover more people.
Regulation of Business	The federal government should do more to regulate business in order to protect the interests of consumers.
Affirmative Action	The federal government should support programs designed to help minorities better jobs and education.
Privatization of Social Security	Social Security should be reformed so that individuals are given private retirement accounts that are invested in the stock market.

Question Prompt: We are interested in your views on issues being debated in American national politics. For each issue, we give you a statement about the issue. We want to know whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement.

Figure A.1: Operational Ideology by Party



Note: The mean ideological score for Democrats is -0.68 , with a standard deviation of 0.64 . For Republicans, the mean score is 0.92 , with a standard deviation of 0.78 . For independents, the mean score is 0.10 , with a standard deviation of 0.90 .

Table A.6: Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members

	Views of Opposing Party		
	Republicans' Views of Democrats	Democrats' Views of Republicans	All Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members
Conservatism	0.336* (0.073)	-0.370* (0.069)	
Ideological Extremity			0.459* (0.066)
Political Knowledge	0.038 (0.029)	0.060* (0.022)	0.047* (0.018)
Political Interest	0.275* (0.077)	0.097 (0.056)	0.169* (0.045)
Income	-0.012 (0.015)	0.010 (0.013)	0.001 (0.010)
Education	-0.028 (0.035)	-0.025 (0.024)	-0.028 (0.019)
White	-0.018 (0.139)	0.011 (0.094)	-0.011 (0.077)
Female	0.054 (0.106)	0.061 (0.084)	0.061 (0.065)
Age 30-44	-0.297 (0.181)	-0.067 (0.169)	-0.109 (0.126)
Age 45-59	-0.302 (0.184)	-0.101 (0.156)	-0.139 (0.120)
Age 60+	-0.441* (0.183)	-0.151 (0.153)	-0.242* (0.118)
Metropolitan Area	-0.033 (0.132)	0.067 (0.117)	0.033 (0.088)
Midwest	-0.121 (0.170)	-0.144 (0.122)	-0.146 (0.098)
South	0.040 (0.155)	0.049 (0.120)	0.011 (0.094)
West	-0.095 (0.177)	0.206 (0.117)	0.078 (0.098)
Constant	2.224* (0.508)	2.530* (0.311)	2.005* (0.268)
Question FE	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	1513	2480	3993
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	323	537	860
<i>R</i> ²	0.23	0.19	0.20

Table A.7: Partisans' Views of In-Party Members

	Views of Own Party		
	Republicans' Views of Republicans	Democrats' Views of Democrats	All Partisans' Views of In-Party Members
Conservatism	0.157* (0.069)	-0.216* (0.061)	
Ideological Extremity			0.268* (0.052)
Political Knowledge	-0.012 (0.025)	0.015 (0.017)	0.003 (0.014)
Political Interest	0.094 (0.069)	-0.059 (0.038)	-0.011 (0.035)
Constant	3.416* (0.434)	2.833* (0.258)	2.729* (0.219)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	1487	2527	4014
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	323	547	870
<i>R</i> ²	0.26	0.29	0.29

Note: Table entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. The outcome variable is Perception_{ij} , the degree to which a respondent i believes members of the *in*-party agree with perception j as described in the text. Additional socio-demographic controls (income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region) and question indicators are included but not reported. * $p < 0.05$

Table A.8: Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members, Controlling for Strong Partisans

	Views of Opposing Party		
	Republicans' Views of Democrats	Democrats' Views of Republicans	All Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members
Conservatism	0.315* (0.081)	-0.384* (0.074)	
Ideological Extremity			0.451* (0.070)
Strong Partisan	0.100 (0.118)	-0.055 (0.091)	0.034 (0.071)
Political Knowledge	0.041 (0.029)	0.061* (0.022)	0.047* (0.018)
Political Interest	0.256* (0.079)	0.100 (0.056)	0.164* (0.046)
Constant	2.235* (0.506)	2.532* (0.310)	2.010* (0.268)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	1513	2480	3993
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	323	537	860
<i>R</i> ²	0.23	0.19	0.20

Note: Table entries are ordinary least squares coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. Additional socio-demographic controls and question dummy variables are included, but not reported. These controls include income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region. * $p < 0.05$

Table A.9: Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members, Using Symbolic Conservatism

	Views of Opposing Party		
	Republicans' Views of Democrats	Democrats' Views of Republicans	All Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members
7-Point Symbolic Ideology (1=Very Lib., 7=Very Cons.)	0.170* (0.048)	-0.110* (0.032)	
Symbolic Ideological Extremity			0.144* (0.032)
Political Knowledge	0.056* (0.027)	0.084* (0.022)	0.079* (0.017)
Political Interest	0.252* (0.070)	0.124* (0.054)	0.187* (0.044)
Constant	1.496* (0.529)	2.775* (0.378)	1.770* (0.275)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	1536	2418	3954
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	324	523	850
<i>R</i> ²	0.21	0.18	0.18

Note: Table entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. The outcome variable is Perception_{*ij*}, the degree to which a respondent *i* believes members of the out-party agree with perception *j* as described in the text. Additional socio-demographic controls (income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region) and question indicators are included but not reported.

* $p < 0.05$

Table A.10: Independents' Views of Partisans, Using Symbolic Conservatism

	Views of Partisans	
	Views of Democrats	Views of Republicans
7-Point Sym. Ideol. (1=Very Lib., 7=Very Cons.)	0.173* (0.029)	-0.027 (0.032)
Political Knowledge	0.058* (0.023)	0.028 (0.026)
Political Interest	0.007 (0.060)	-0.010 (0.068)
Constant	2.049* (0.404)	3.275* (0.439)
Controls	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	1955	1936
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	428	426
<i>R</i> ²	0.21	0.18

Note: Table entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. The outcome variable is Perception_{*ij*} the degree to which a respondent *i* believes Democrats/Republicans agree with perception *j* as described in the text. Additional socio-demographic controls (income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region) and question indicators are included but not reported. * $p < 0.05$

Table A.11: Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members, Using Symbolic Conservatism and Operational Conservatism

	Views of Opposing Party		
	Republicans' Views of Democrats	Democrats' Views of Republicans	All Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members
Conservatism	0.322* (0.087)	-0.271* (0.077)	
Ideological Extremity			0.405* (0.072)
7-Point Symbolic Ideology (1=Very Lib., 7=Very Cons.)	0.079 (0.087)	-0.063 (0.035)	
Symbolic Ideological Extremity			0.076* (0.032)
Political Knowledge	0.040 (0.029)	0.062* (0.023)	0.047* (0.018)
Political Interest	0.210* (0.072)	0.070 (0.056)	0.137* (0.044)
Constant	2.048* (0.544)	2.780* (0.385)	1.994* (0.280)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	1471	2337	3808
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	312	505	817
<i>R</i> ²	0.24	0.19	0.20

Note: Table entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. The outcome variable is Perception_{*ij*}, the degree to which a respondent *i* believes members of the out-party agree with perception *j* as described in the text. Additional socio-demographic controls (income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region) and question indicators are included but not reported.

* $p < 0.05$

Table A.12: Independents' Views of Partisans, Using Symbolic Conservatism and Operational Conservatism

	Views of Partisans	
	Views of Democrats	Views of Republicans
Conservatism	0.224* (0.060)	-0.218* (0.064)
7-Point Sym. Ideol. (1=Very Lib., 7=Very Cons.)	0.076* (0.038)	0.065 (0.043)
Political Knowledge	0.054* (0.023)	0.040 (0.026)
Political Interest	-0.021 (0.060)	-0.006 (0.068)
Constant	2.417* (0.427)	2.944* (0.445)
Controls	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	1867	1855
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	409	408
<i>R</i> ²	0.22	0.20

Note: Table entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. The outcome variable is $Perception_{ij}$ the degree to which a respondent i believes Democrats/Republicans agree with perception j as described in the text. Additional socio-demographic controls (income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region) and question indicators are included but not reported. * $p < 0.05$

Table A.13: Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members, Controlling for Agreement with Statement

	Views of Opposing Party		
	Republicans' Views of Democrats	Democrats' Views of Republicans	All Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members
Conservatism	0.338* (0.073)	-0.371* (0.069)	
Ideological Extremity			0.459* (0.066)
Agree with Statement	0.362 (0.305)	0.019 (0.097)	-0.003 (0.094)
Political Knowledge	0.039 (0.029)	0.060* (0.022)	0.047* (0.018)
Political Interest	0.276* (0.077)	0.097 (0.056)	0.168* (0.045)
Constant	2.194* (0.511)	2.524* (0.315)	2.001* (0.272)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	1513	2480	3993
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	323	536	860
<i>R</i> ²	0.23	0.19	0.20

Note: Table entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. The outcome variable is Perception_{ij} , the degree to which a respondent i believes members of the out-party agree with perception j as described in the text. *Agree with Statement* is a dichotomous variable that indicates whether respondent i indicated agreement with perception j themselves. Additional socio-demographic controls (income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region) and question indicators are included but not reported.

* $p < 0.05$

Table A.14: Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members (Including *Leaners*)

	Views of Opposing Party		
	Republicans' Views of Democrats	Democrats' Views of Republicans	All Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members
Conservatism	0.201* (0.045)	-0.287* (0.051)	
Ideological Extremity			0.375* (0.039)
Strength of Partisanship	-0.025 (0.036)	-0.036 (0.033)	-0.048* (0.024)
Political Knowledge	0.017 (0.017)	0.036* (0.014)	0.023* (0.011)
Political Interest	0.096* (0.049)	0.002 (0.032)	0.038 (0.027)
Constant	3.119* (0.314)	2.363* (0.217)	2.621* (0.176)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	4957	6880	12006
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	548	772	1320
<i>R</i> ²	0.21	0.25	0.21

Note: Table entries are ordinary least squares coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. Additional socio-demographic controls and question dummy variables are included, but not reported. These controls include income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region. * $p < 0.05$

Table A.15: Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members, Controlling for Sorting

	Views of Opposing Party		
	Republicans' Views of Democrats	Democrats' Views of Republicans	All Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members
Conservatism	0.395* (0.095)	-0.313* (0.094)	
Ideological Extremity			0.415* (0.068)
Sorted	-0.233 (0.189)	0.153 (0.174)	0.262* (0.099)
Political Knowledge	0.037 (0.028)	0.062* (0.022)	0.046* (0.017)
Political Interest	0.267* (0.078)	0.097 (0.056)	0.163* (0.044)
Constant	2.379* (0.522)	2.423* (0.349)	1.872* (0.271)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	1513	2480	3993
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	323	537	860
<i>R</i> ²	0.23	0.19	0.20

Note: Table entries are ordinary least squares coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. Additional socio-demographic controls and question dummy variables are included, but not reported. These controls include income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region. *Sorted* is coded as 1 if a panelist identifies as a partisan and lies on the “sorted” side of the Conservatism scale. Likewise, a panelist is coded as 0 if they are a partisan and remain on the “unsorted” side of the conservatism scale. For example, if a Democrat scores less than the standardized mean of 0, they are coded as 1. Similarly, if a Republican scores less than 0, they are coded as 0. * $p < 0.05$

Table A.16: Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members, Using Symbolic Conservatism, Strong Partisanship, Sorting, and Operational Conservatism

	Views of Opposing Party		
	Republicans' Views of Democrats	Democrats' Views of Republicans	All Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members
Conservatism	0.403* (0.105)	-0.225* (0.104)	
Ideological Extremity			0.375* (0.074)
Strong Partisan	0.034 (0.118)	-0.032 (0.092)	0.008 (0.072)
7-Point Symbolic Ideology (1=Very Lib., 7=Very Cons.)	0.077 (0.062)	-0.063 (0.035)	
Symbolic Ideological Extremity			0.067 (0.037)
Sorted	-0.360 (0.185)	0.155 (0.174)	0.226* (0.101)
Political Knowledge	0.039 (0.028)	0.065* (0.023)	0.046* (0.018)
Political Interest	0.191* (0.074)	0.072 (0.056)	0.132* (0.046)
Constant	2.317* (0.555)	2.678* (0.418)	1.891* (0.282)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	1471	2337	3808
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	312	505	817
<i>R</i> ²	0.24	0.19	0.20

Note: Table entries are ordinary least squares coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. Additional socio-demographic controls and question dummy variables are included, but not reported. These controls include income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region. * $p < 0.05$

Table A.17: Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members, Ordered Logit

	Views of Opposing Party		
	Republicans' Views of Democrats	Democrats' Views of Republicans	All Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members
Conservatism	0.545* (0.117)	-0.543* (0.102)	
Ideological Extremity			0.719* (0.101)
Political Knowledge	0.052 (0.044)	0.079* (0.034)	0.058* (0.027)
Political Interest	0.408* (0.121)	0.137 (0.084)	0.248* (0.067)
21 to 40 percent	-0.656 (0.819)	-0.949 (0.465)	-0.260 (0.401)
41 to 60 percent	0.554 (0.813)	0.000 (0.461)	0.787 (0.397)
61 to 80 percent	1.716 (0.812)	1.064 (0.464)	1.884 (0.399)
81 to 100 percent	3.054 (0.824)	2.480 (0.471)	3.267 (0.406)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	1513	2480	3993
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	323	537	860
log likelihood	-2218.50	-3688.85	-5922.66
Wald χ^2	311.18	360.51	653.36

Note: Table entries are ordered logit regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. Additional socio-demographic controls and question dummy variables are included, but not reported. These controls include income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region. * $p < 0.05$

Table A.18: Individual Questions

	Republicans' Views of Democrats				
	Electric Car	Marijuana	Soda Ban	Taxes	Health Care
Conservatism	0.297* (0.114)	0.325* (0.098)	0.405* (0.108)	0.569* (0.102)	0.092 (0.105)
Political Knowledge	0.061 (0.046)	0.058 (0.038)	0.008 (0.047)	0.051 (0.044)	0.023 (0.041)
Political Interest	0.313* (0.117)	- 0.325* (0.100)	0.266* (0.113)	0.109 (0.113)	0.326* (0.116)
Constant	2.659* (0.818)	1.577* (0.661)	3.083* (0.759)	2.348* (0.708)	2.387* (0.482)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i>	266	302	267	316	311
<i>R</i> ²	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.20	0.09

Note: Table entries are ordinary least squares coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. Additional socio-demographic controls and question dummy variables are included, but not reported. These controls include income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region. * $p < 0.05$

Table A.19: Individual Questions

Democrats' Views of Republicans					
	Guns	Dinosaurs	Homosexuality	Pledge	Border Fence
Conservatism	-0.463*	-0.121	-0.468*	-0.356*	-0.410*
	(0.109)	(0.114)	(0.109)	(0.104)	(0.103)
Political Knowledge	0.111*	-0.032	0.052	0.100*	0.059
	(0.032)	(0.035)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.032)
Political Interest	0.058	0.202*	0.114	0.031	0.078
	(0.079)	(0.086)	(0.096)	(0.090)	(0.088)
Constant	2.172*	1.522*	2.149*	2.838*	3.009*
	(0.264)	(0.529)	(0.509)	(0.491)	(0.269)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i>	519	463	496	496	506
<i>R</i> ²	0.16	0.06	0.13	0.14	0.11

Note: Table entries are ordinary least squares coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. Additional socio-demographic controls and question dummy variables are included, but not reported. These controls include income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region. * $p < 0.05$

Table A.20: Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members Using 100 Point Scale

	Views of Opposing Party		
	Republicans' Views of Democrats	Democrats' Views of Republicans	All Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members
Conservatism	7.810* (1.759)	-6.150* (1.982)	
Ideological Extremity			8.945* (1.604)
Political Knowledge	1.908* (0.761)	0.788* (0.611)	1.010* (0.479)
Political Interest	0.239 (1.667)	-0.580 (1.546)	0.015 (1.103)
Constant	62.504* (11.349)	59.058* (9.353)	52.624* (7.159)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	1208	1877	3085
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	258	403	661
<i>R</i> ²	0.20	0.18	0.18

Note: Table entries are ordinary least squares coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. Additional socio-demographic controls and question dummy variables are included, but not reported. These controls include income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region. * $p < 0.05$

B TAPS Study – Correct Assessment

As part of our main analysis, we examine how well respondents identify the correct proportion of out-party members who agree with a given statement. For each item, we created a measure of *correct assessment* that indicates whether a respondent correctly identified the percentage category that contained the observed level of agreement with the partisan perception. For example, 28.4% of all Republicans agreed with the statement that “Humans and dinosaurs walked the earth at the same time.” A Democratic respondent who is asked about the percentage of Republicans they believed agreed with that statement are coded as “1” for *correct assessment* if they believed that 21-40% of Republicans agreed with this statement, while Democrats that believed that 0-20, 41-60, 61-80, or 81-100% of Republicans agree with the statement are coded as “0” for *correct assessment*.

We model this variable in a series of logit models that include our measure of ideology, item-specific indicators, and standard errors clustered on respondents:

$$\Pr(\text{CorrectAssessment}_{ij} = 1) = \text{logit}^{-1}(\beta_1 + \beta_2 \text{Ideology}_i + \gamma \mathbf{X}_i + \delta_j + \varepsilon_{ij}),$$

The results can be found in Table B.1. In short, we find that the likelihood of identifying the “correct proportion” of opposite party supporters who believe a agree with a given statement is significantly related to the respondent’s own ideology. For example, the more conservative a Republican is, the less likely they are to identify the correct proportion of Democrats that maintain an extreme view. Likewise, the more liberal a Democrat is, the less likely they are to provide the correct percentage of Republicans believing a given position. As for the shown control variables, we find limited evidence that political sophistication has a positive association with the ability to classify the opposite party. Although the variable had a positive coefficient estimate in the previous models, suggesting that more politically knowledgeable respondents believed partisans were more extreme, in Column 2 of Table B.1 we find that more sophisticated Democrats are significantly more likely to correctly classify Republicans.

To get a better idea of the substantive effect of our ideology measure in Table B.1, consider the following probabilities. Fixing all control variables at their respective mean, a Republican with an ideology score of -0.5 would be predicted to assess Democrats’ level of agreement with their perceptions correctly 36% of the time, whereas this would decrease to 23% at an an ideology score of 1.5. Similarly, for a very liberal Democrat with an ideology score of -1.5 , the model would expect them to correctly assess the level to which Republicans agree with perceptions of Republicans 19% of the time, whereas this would increase to 27% for an an ideology score of 0.25 while keeping all other variables at their mean. This in turn suggests that the effects we uncover are not only statistically, but also substantively significant.

Table B.2 presents the results of a similar model that furthermore accounts for the possibility of measurement error, which could be induced by our five-category scheme as some of the actual rates of agreement are close to the line that divides one category from the next. In order to do so, we created a second version of the $\text{CorrectAssessment}_{ij}$ variable that also considers assessments as correct if they are within five percentage points of the correct category. The results are robust with the findings presented in Table B.1.

Table B.1: Predicting Correct Assessment of Partisan Perceptions

	Views of Opposing Party		
	Republicans' Views of Democrats	Democrats' Views of Republicans	All Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members
Conservatism	-0.332* (0.091)	0.272* (0.095)	
Ideological Extremity			-0.312* (0.066)
Political Knowledge	-0.016 (0.036)	0.088* (0.035)	0.048 (0.025)
Political Interest	-0.099 (0.096)	-0.030 (0.085)	-0.056 (0.062)
Constant	-1.372* (0.637)	-2.469* (0.476)	-2.102* (0.268)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	1513	2480	3993
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	323	537	860
Wald χ^2	82.39	56.35	121.27
log likelihood	-811.99	-1276.23	-2101.46

Note: Table entries are logit regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. The outcome variable is $\text{CorrectAssessment}_{ij}$, indicating whether respondent i perceived the correct level of out-party agreement with perception j as described in the text. Additional socio-demographic controls (income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region) and question indicators are included but not reported. * $p < 0.05$

Table B.2: Ability to Determine Correct Percentage within Five Percent

	Views of Opposing Party		
	Republicans' Views of Democrats	Democrats' Views of Republicans	All Partisans' Views of Out-Party Members
Conservatism	-0.514* (0.101)	0.109 (0.106)	
Ideological Extremity			-0.374* (0.089)
Political Knowledge	0.010 (0.041)	0.127* (0.036)	0.078* (0.026)
Political Interest	-0.115 (0.097)	-0.057 (0.085)	-0.063 (0.063)
Constant	0.442 (0.699)	0.608 (0.476)	-0.889* (0.412)
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Question FE	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i> (Total)	1513	2480	3993
<i>N</i> (Respondents)	323	537	860
Wald χ^2	79.78	546.55	121.27
log likelihood	-962.37	-1185.14	-2101.46

Note: Table entries are logit regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses, clustered on individuals. The outcome variable is $\text{CorrectAssessment}_{ij}$, indicating whether respondent i perceived the correct level of out-party agreement with perception j as described in the text, or was within five percentage points of that category. Additional socio-demographic controls and question dummy variables are included, but not reported. These controls include income, education, sex, race, age, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and US Census region. * $p < 0.05$

C TAPS Study – Experiment

In the second part of the paper, we present the results from an experiment that focuses on the real-world consequences of exaggerated partisan perceptions. More specifically, our key manipulation concerns the realization of exaggerated partisan images. Respondents were randomly assigned to receive one of three short vignettes, each of which described the characteristics of a hypothetical new neighbor who is moving into the respondent’s community. All respondents received a brief demographic description of the potential neighbor, but some also received additional information regarding the neighbor’s partisanship (and potentially also the fact that the hypothetical neighbor subscribed to three of the items we used in the main analysis). After receiving the vignettes, all respondents were then asked five follow-up questions to gauge their interest in interacting with this potential new neighbor.

While the analyses in the manuscript provide strong initial support for our hypotheses, the following tables and figures provide additional background information regarding our subject pool, the measurement and distributions of key variables, and also the results from a series of robustness checks. More specifically, Table C.1 provides descriptive statistics of the socio-demographic and political variables that define our sample. Table C.2 contains the full vignette wording, while Table C.3 presents the full question wording for the outcome variables.

Table C.4 provides summary statistics for the outcome variables across the different experimental treatment groups, and Table C.5 presents the results from a series of multivariate analyses in which we regressed each dependent variable on indicators for treatment assignment along with a complete set of demographic and socio-political variables, including sex, age, race, education, income, ideology, and partisanship. Further, Figure C.1 illustrates the treatment effects within groups defined based on party identification: Democrats, Republican, and Independents.

Table C.1: Descriptive Statistics (TAPS Experiment)

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Female	1487	0.51	0.50	0.00	1.00
White	1487	0.78	0.42	0.00	1.00
Age	1460	56.46	15.56	18.00	93.00
Education	1477	11.30	1.79	3.00	15.00
Income	1400	7.00	3.66	1.00	16.00
Ideology	1480	4.17	1.68	1.00	7.00
Democrat	1487	0.36	0.48	0.00	1.00
Republican	1487	0.31	0.46	0.00	1.00

Table C.2: Vignette Question Wording (TAPS Experiment)

Condition	Vignette
Control	<p>Suppose a new person moves into your neighborhood. The person is approximately 45 years old, has a college degree, and grew up in a suburb outside of a large Midwestern city.</p> <p>This person has a dog, enjoys being physically active, follows college sports and frequently volunteers to work in local candidates' campaigns.</p>
Partisan (R)	<p>Suppose a new person moves into your neighborhood. The person is a registered Republican, approximately 45 years old, has a college degree, and grew up in a suburb outside of a large Midwestern city.</p> <p>This person has a dog, enjoys being physically active, follows college sports and frequently volunteers to work in local candidates' campaigns.</p>
Partisan (D)	<p>Suppose a new person moves into your neighborhood. The person is a registered Democrat, approximately 45 years old, has a college degree, and grew up in a suburb outside of a large Midwestern city.</p> <p>This person has a dog, enjoys being physically active, follows college sports and frequently volunteers to work in local candidates' campaigns.</p>
Perceptions (R)	<p>Suppose a new person moves into your neighborhood. The person is a registered Republican, approximately 45 years old, has a college degree, and grew up in a suburb outside of a large Midwestern city.</p> <p>This person believes that humans and dinosaurs walked the earth at the same time, that elementary school students should be required to recite the pledge of allegiance, and that we should build a fence between the United States and Mexico.</p> <p>This person has a dog, enjoys being physically active, follows college sports and frequently volunteers to work in local candidates' campaigns.</p>
Perceptions (D)	<p>Suppose a new person moves into your neighborhood. The person is a registered Democrat, approximately 45 years old, has a college degree, and grew up in a suburb outside of a large Midwestern city.</p> <p>This person believes that the country would be better if every citizen drove an electric car, that marijuana use should be legal in all states, and that a nationalized healthcare system would improve health for all citizens.</p> <p>This person has a dog, enjoys being physically active, follows college sports and frequently volunteers to work in local candidates' campaigns.</p>

Table C.3: Question Wording for Dependent Variables: TAPS Experiment

Short title	Full text
Friends	I would be interested in becoming friends with this person.
Hire	If I were an employer and needed to hire a new employee, I would be interested in considering this person for a position with my company.
Children	I would feel comfortable allowing my children to play with the new neighbor's kids.
Dating	I would consider dating this person or would introduce this person to a friend.
Dinner	I would consider having this person over for a family meal or barbecue.

Table C.4: Summary Statistics Across Experimental Treatments (TAPS)

Condition	Friends	Hire	Children	Dating	Dinner	Ideological Placement
Control	0.96	0.97	0.96	0.81	0.94	3.10
Partisan	0.94	0.96	0.95	0.81	0.93	3.04
Perception	0.72	0.75	0.87	0.46	0.76	3.14

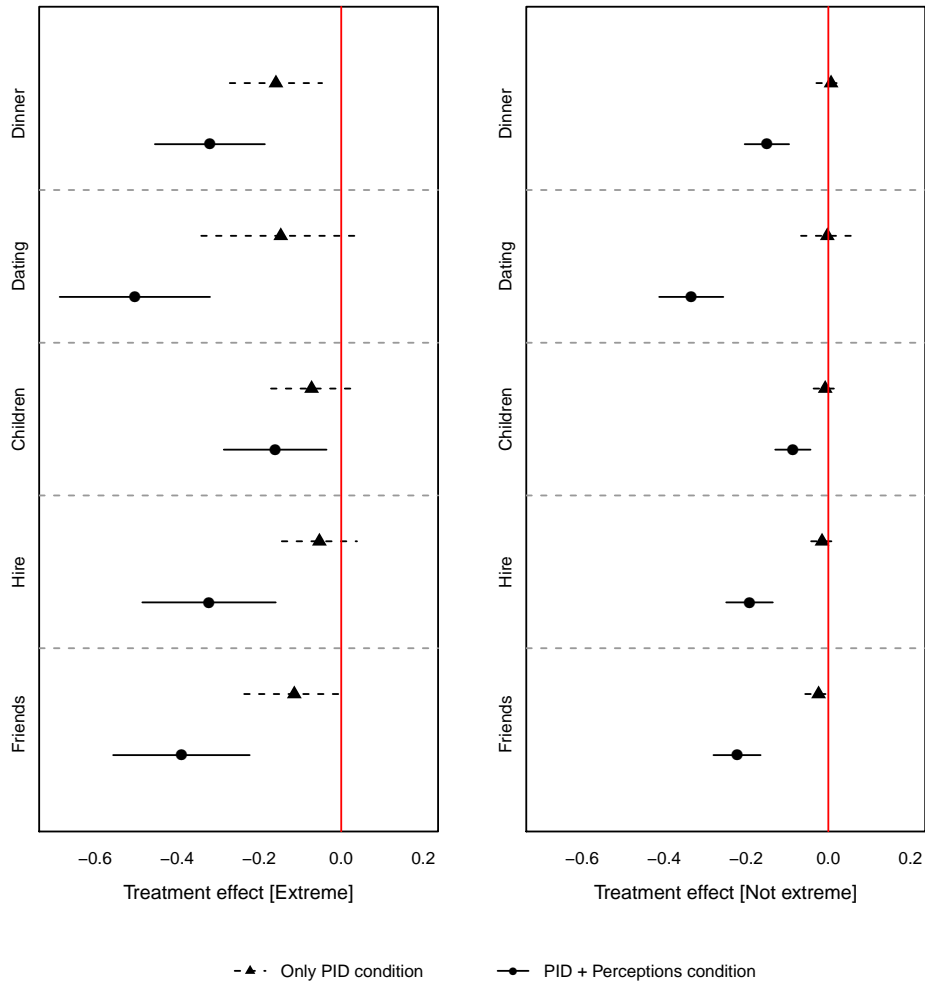
Entries are the proportion of respondents who agreed they would be interested in interacting with a potential neighbor in the ways indicated by the column headings. Entries in the last column reflect the mean placement on a five-point ideological scale ranging from very liberal (1) to very conservative (5). Sample sizes were N=491 for the control condition, N=497 for the partisan condition, and N=499 for the perception condition.

Table C.5: Effect of Partisan Perceptions on Social Interaction

	Friends	Hire	Children	Dating	Dinner
Perception condition	-2.24* (0.31)	-2.41* (0.36)	-1.32* (0.33)	-1.72* (0.20)	-1.62* (0.26)
Partisan condition	-0.57 (0.36)	-0.36 (0.42)	-0.16 (0.38)	-0.05 (0.22)	-0.10 (0.31)
Constant	2.74* (0.99)	3.06* (1.08)	1.85 (1.12)	1.38* (0.70)	2.16* (0.90)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	938	928	1,006	878	1,030
Log Likelihood	-291.61	-241.41	-236.19	-470.86	-343.68

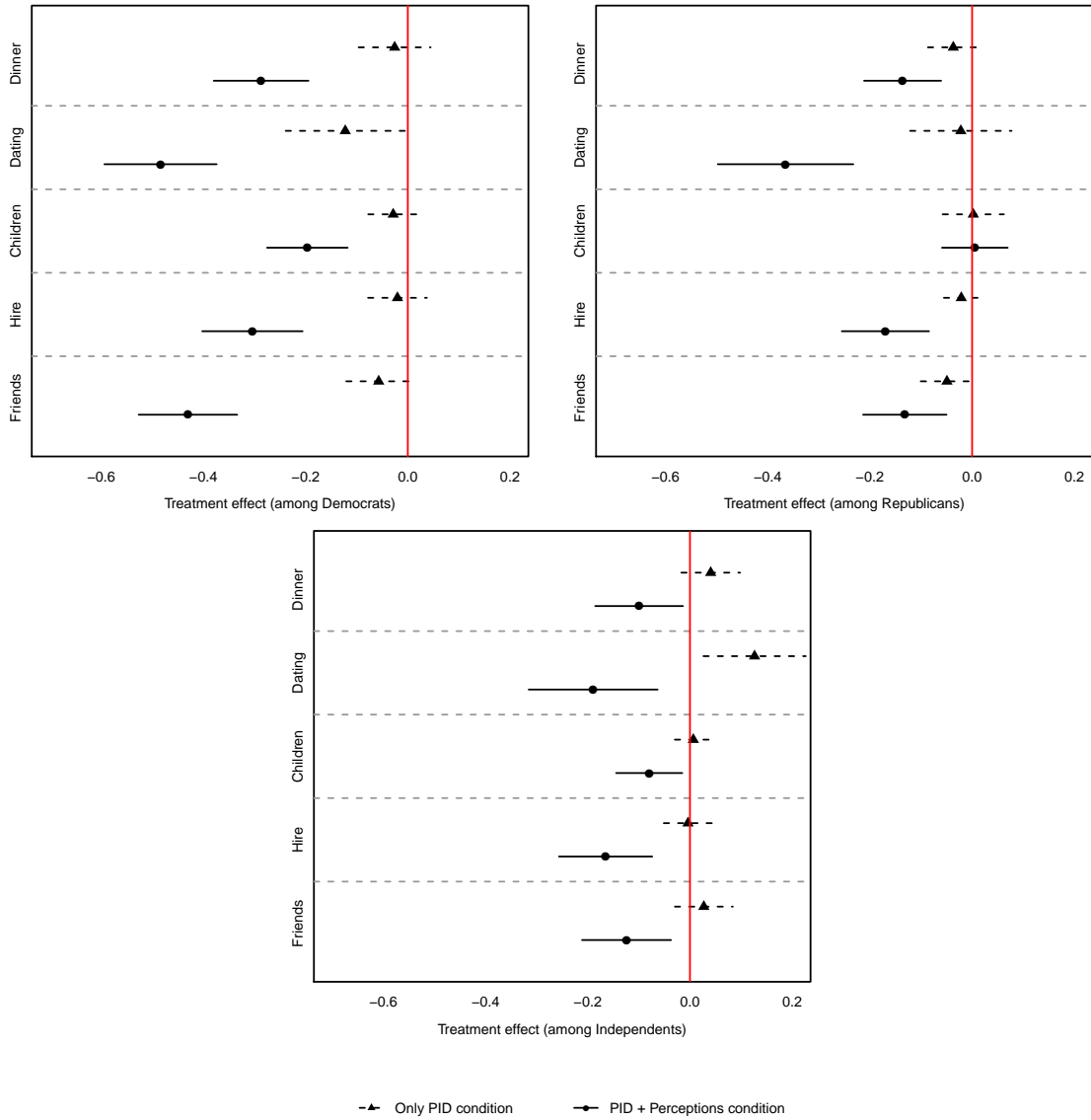
Note: Table entries are logit regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is listed at the top of each column. Controls include partisanship, self-reported ideology, sex, racial group, age, education, and income as described in Table C.1. * $p < 0.05$

Figure C.1: Effect of Realized Partisan Perceptions on Interpersonal Interaction by Ideological Extremity



Note: Values along the x -axis indicate the difference in proportions when comparing each of the treatment groups to the control group. The vertical line at zero indicates the null hypothesis of no treatment effect. The horizontal lines show the 95% confidence intervals. The left plot shows individuals who are “very conservative” or “very liberal” and the right plot shows results for respondents who report more moderate ideologies.

Figure C.2: Effect of Realized Partisan Perceptions on Interpersonal Interaction (by PID)



Note: Values along the x -axis indicate the difference in proportions when comparing each of the treatment groups to the control group. The vertical line at zero indicates the null hypothesis of no treatment effect. The horizontal lines show the 95% confidence intervals.