

Title of Project: In-group Loyalty: A Look into American Political Parties

Anticipated number of participants: 100 participants **Approximate ages:** 18-22

Submission date: xx/xx/xxx

Anticipated start date: xx/xx/xxxx

Expedited Review: for research that does **not** manipulate participants' behavior, use deception, threaten privacy, or cause stress to participants (e.g. observational studies, studies of archival data, some questionnaire and interview studies). Review takes approximately 5 days.

Purpose of Investigation and Procedures:

Political polarization is higher than ever in the United States and research has shown just how much someone's political ideology can sway their feelings of what's deemed good or bad, or right or wrong, in regard to their political leaders' actions (Arieli et al., 2019). In the present work, we hope to get a sense of just how much someone's in-group affiliation to their political party, given the polarization of the current 2024 presidential election, affects their response to a leader of their in-group doing something immoral.

In previous research, it has been found that an individual's loyalty to their in-group, in this case their political party, affects their judgements of what is considered moral and how they judge the members of the out-group versus the in-group (Priedols et al., 2022). Past research has looked into specific stereotypes regarding the way each party views the other with findings indicating that both groups find the latter more "stupid" than immoral or "evil" (Hartman et al., 2023). Our research will build upon these findings.

In this work, we will examine the degree to which an individual's political affiliation affects their perceptions of the actions taken by a leader in from their political group. First, all participants will read about a potentially immoral act (i.e. misuse of campaign funds or lying on paperwork). Participants will be randomly assigned to either learn the political affiliation of the person who did the act, or to have that information omitted. We have chosen real acts that have been committed by either a Republican or a Democrat. All acts involve either misuse of campaign funds or lying on paperwork.

We hypothesize that participants who are randomly assigned to learn the same act was committed by a leader from their own political group will report feeling less appalled by these actions than participants who do not know the political affiliation of the politician who performed the potentially immoral act.

Study Methods (N=100 students from Colgate University): First, we will administer a questionnaire to determine the participants' self-identification to a political party as well as questions to measure the extremity of their affiliation. To determine which political party they identify with, as well as whether they will be assigned to an example of a democrat or republican doing something deemed immoral, they will answer:

- “If you had to choose one of the two major political parties to identify with, which would it be?” Options to click: Democrat or Republican.
 - o Depending on their answer they will then be randomly assigned to their political party’s example of a negative action. As mentioned before, we chose acts that really were committed by both Democrats and Republicans and which involve either misuse of campaign finance or lying on paperwork. Exact wording appears below.

Next, they will answer a few questions to assess the extremity of their political beliefs using the 12-item social and economic conservatism scale (SECS; Everett, 2013):

- To complete this scale, participants will see 12 topics and report their degree of liberalism/conservatism on those topics on 0 to 100 scales
- Topics: Abortion, Welfare benefits (reverse scored), Limited government, Military and national security, Religion, Gun ownership, Traditional marriage, Traditional values, Fiscal responsibility, Business, The family unit, Patriotism.

Next, participants will complete a measure of identification with their political group (scale adapted from Leach et al., 2008). The following items will be answered on a 1-5 scale of Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

- **Solidarity:** I feel committed to [In-group]. (Doosje et al., 1995), **Satisfaction:** I am glad to be [In-group]. (Adapted from Cameron,2004; Doosje et al., 1998; Luhtanen & Crocker,1992.), **Centrality:** The fact that I am [In-group] is an important part of my identity. (Adapted from Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992.), **Individual Self-Stereotyping:** I am similar to the average [In-group] person. (Adapted from Doosje et al., 1995; Spears et al., 1997.), **Ingroup Homogeneity:** [In-group] people are very similar to each other. (Adapted from Ellemers et al.,1999; Spears et al., 1999)

Once the participant has answered the previous questions and scales, they will be randomly assigned to either read an example of a negative thing a leader in their group did where they can see the name and political affiliation of the leader or where this information is omitted. They will be asked to read the situation and then advance.

Text Samples (Republican):

- o Wes Cooley was convicted of having lied on the voter information pamphlet about his service in the Army.
- o Aaron Schock used campaign funds for travel, and redecorating his office, and spent campaign and/or taxpayer money on other questionable personal uses.

Text Samples (Democrat):

- o Austin Murphy was convicted of engaging in voter fraud for filling out absentee ballots for members of a nursing home.
- o Jesse Jackson Jr., used campaign funds to buy personal items such as stuffed animals, elk heads and fur capes.

Finally, participants will be asked questions about their perception and feelings towards the actions they just read about (either with the knowledge that it was a member of their political group or not).

- “After reading this, how do you feel?”

- Text box where they can as little or as much as they would like
- We will then give a list of 15 positive and negative emotion words and ask participants to rate how they feel or relate to them on 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) scales
 - guilty, regretful, remorseful, ashamed, sympathetic, compassionate, empathetic, appalled, shocked, shaken, surprised, happy, pleased, discouraged, uneasy.

Once the participant has finished answering all the prompts they will be told the study is complete and compensated via SONA with course research credit for their participation. Because there is no deception, there is not a debriefing statement.

Anticipated Risk and Potential Benefits to Participants:

We do not anticipate any direct benefits for the participants. There are potential minor risks to participants; in particular, asking participants to think about politics in a very politically polarized environment may create discomfort. However, as the topic of politics is currently extremely salient in the United States, the questions we will be asking participants should not be vastly different from ones our participants are confronted with in their daily lives and the examples used do not reflect immoral events that deviate from what it regularly reported in the national news (e.g., misuse of campaign funds).

Steps Taken to Protect the Participants:

Participants will confirm that they are 18 years old or older before participating in our study. Participants will also complete an informed consent. Participants can also stop participating at any time and for any reason and will still receive research credit. We will not obtain identifying information about participants within the context of our study so responses cannot be linked to participants' names. That said, Qualtrics does record IP address by default. However, we will delete this column of data before data analysis. All data will be stored on password-protected computers. This is all described on the informed consent under the confidentiality section.

Manner of Obtaining Participants:

Recruitment of participants will happen through the SONA platform. In particular, information about our study (length, payment, etc.) will be posted on SONA and interested participants can choose to participate in our study by clicking a link to the Qualtrics survey. They will begin the study by reading the certificate of informed consent and confirming that they are at least 18 years old or older. We will set up the Qualtrics survey so that participants are automatically granted credit on SONA once they complete they survey in Qualtrics.

References

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Certificate of Informed Consent

Overview and Procedure:

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study.

Your part in this study will last approximately 10-15 minutes. During this study you will answer a few questions regarding your political ideology and emotions and asked to read about a political event.

Risks and Benefits:

We anticipate few risks in this study. However, it is possible that you will feel uncomfortable answering some questions about politics and political events that appear in this study.

You may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

Confidentiality:

You signed up for this study through the online research participation system, SONA. Although your name appears on SONA, we will not ask for your name during the study itself, so your name will not be attached to the data you provide in the Qualtrics survey. That said, by default, Qualtrics records your IP address. However, we will delete this column of data after data collection is complete and before beginning data analysis. Thus, only de-identified data files will be used by the research team once data collection is complete. We will program the survey in Qualtrics to automatically grant you credit on SONA once you reach the end of the survey. However, if you complete the study and notice you do not have credit on SONA, please email the research team to let them know and they will manually grant you credit.

Compensation:

As long as you are enrolled in a course that involves research participation credits, you will receive 0.5 research participation credits on SONA for completing this study. Even if you decide to stop at any point and for any reason, or if you skip any questions, you will receive this research participation credit. However, if you stop early, you will need to email the researchers to let them know so that they can grant you credit via SONA.

Your Rights:

To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join. If you choose to join, you may skip any questions at any time and for any reason, and may also withdraw from this study at any time, for any reason, and without penalty.

Contact Information:

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, please contact the Colgate University Institutional Review Board with an email to IRB_Chair@colgate.edu. For more information about the study, please contact the faculty advisor for this study, [name and contact here] or contact the principal investigator, [name and contact here].

For Your Records:

If you would like a copy of this consent form, please print this page now for your records and before continuing. You may also email the researchers working on this project to request an electronic copy of this consent form.

By providing electronic agreement below you are confirming that 1) you have read this consent form 2) that you agree to participate and 3) that you are 18 years old or older.