

Partisan Bias and Political Decision Making

Role of In-Group Favoritism in Political Perception

[CAITLIN MULCAHY, MAYA SZAL, LIAM THUMSER, AND LILLIAN VANPELT]

Abstract

Political partisanship influences individuals' perceptions and decision-making processes through in-group favoritism, as explained by Social Identity Theory. This study examines how partisan bias affects agreement with political statements based on the perceived political affiliation of the speaker. Sixty-five participants rated neutral political statements attributed to either a Republican or Democratic leader. A 2x2 mixed ANOVA revealed that participants showed greater agreement with statements when they believed the speaker was from their own party, regardless of content, with Republican participants exhibiting a stronger bias. These findings highlight the role of partisan bias in shaping political perceptions and underscore its contribution to polarization, emphasizing the need for strategies to mitigate its impact on political discourse.

Introduction

The three most recent U.S. presidential elections (2016, 2020, and 2024) have been marked by increasing political polarization, with party identity playing a dominant role in shaping voters' attitudes and behaviors.¹ Political alignment increasingly influences how people perceive politics, and partisanship begins to play a stronger role in the way individuals perceive and respond to arguments. This divisive nature of politics is being amplified by the spread of misinformation and biased media. It is important that we reach a deeper understanding of the social driver of this political decision-making. The implications can drive policies to move away from political polarity and prioritize informed voting behaviors in

1 "Vanderbilt Unity Index White Paper," Vanderbilt Project on Unity and American Democracy, Vanderbilt University, n.d., 6-9, <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/unity/about/>.

the United States. This study aims to explore the role of partisan bias in shaping political perceptions and how it influences the way individuals assess political information.

Social Identity Theory and In-Group Favoritism

Humans, by nature, value their social identities to an extent that can affect their attitudes and behaviors. Membership in certain groups, whether in-group or out-group, helps shape one's social identity. Tajfel and Turner introduced the Social Identity Theory, which is an examination of the dynamic between personal identity and social identity within a single person.² They argue that once people have identified with a social group, they will often favor their in-group members and values. Further, research has found that this in-group favoritism is often partnered with a bias against out-groups.³ Brewer et al. suggest that people feel the need to both be distinct and to be included, introducing the idea that self-esteem comes from the status fulfillment of in-group needs.⁴ Since self-esteem is so closely related to social identity and group memberships, people are heavily influenced by their in-groups, especially when their groups are of high status.⁵ Thus, the more meaningful and intense group identifications the greater the influence is on attitudes and behaviors.

The social identity theory centers around the idea that people will strongly identify with their social or political groups, thus it is seen that political partisanship influences political ideologies, leading to further polarization. Haslam et al. found that group membership is highly influential in stereotyping, which is necessary to understand when considering in-group favoritism.⁶ They found that participants were more likely to believe a stereotype that aligns with their group's ideas and is presented by an in-group member, and less likely to agree when an out-group member presents the stereotype, or if it is incompatible with their group's views.⁷ Thus, discussion with members of the opposite political party becomes difficult when opposing groups refuse to believe certain statements.

2 Henri Tajfel and John Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1979), 33-48.

3 Marilynn B. Brewer, Jorge M. Manzi, and John S. Shaw, "In-Group Identification as a Function of Depersonalization, Distinctiveness, and Status," *Psychological Science* 4, no. 2 (1993): 88-89, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.1993.tb00466.x>; S. Alexander Haslam et al., "Stereotyping and Social Influence: The Mediation of Stereotype Applicability and Sharedness by the Views of In-group and Out-group Members," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 35, no. 3 (1996): 391-94, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1996.tb01103.x>; Tajfel and Turner, "An Integrative Theory," 33-48.

4 Brewer, Manzi, and Shaw, "In-Group Identification," 88-89.

5 Brewer, Manzi, and Shaw, "In-Group Identification," 88-89.

6 Haslam et al., "Stereotyping and Social Influence," 391-92.

7 Haslam et al., "Stereotyping and Social Influence," 382-92.

It also becomes easier to persuade members of an in-group when messages reinforce existing group identities, especially when politics is framed using “us versus them” language. Research shows that political party cues can heighten awareness of group membership and encourage individuals to view others primarily as members of political groups rather than as unique individuals.⁸ People tend to conform to the positions of their political in-group rather than evaluating policies objectively and through the lens of their internal values when primed with the “us” vs “them” concept.⁹ As a result, it is implied that when politicians emphasize partisanship and the division between parties, they are increasing the chances that people will prioritize their party’s beliefs over their own personal beliefs.

Additionally, research has found that political partisanship is used as cues for voting in elections. A study on the North Carolina elections found that inconsistent systems of ordering candidate names on ballots lead to voters accidentally voting for someone they did not intend to, because they expected the candidate of their party to be in a particular spot on the ballot.¹⁰ This study suggests that people may simply support a candidate based on party affiliation, rather than individual values. It seems probable that when presented with an idea or quotation they believe is affiliated with a politician from their party, people will be more likely to endorse that concept, even if it goes against what they truly believe.

Partisan Bias in Perception and Memory

Past research has shown that in-group favoritism is correlated with political bias, but past work has also explored how political bias and group favoritism affects perception and even memory. Van Bavel and Pereira introduce the idea that political parties continue this idea of “us” versus “them” that the Social Identity Theory proposed.¹¹ When it comes to partisan bias, individuals will align with a party that is most like their personal ideology. However, researchers have found that attitudes about certain policies often align with party affiliation rather than an individual’s ideology. There is a disconnect between party alignment and what that individual truly believes. Generally, the individual will choose an option

8 Kim Mannemar Sønderskov and Jens Peter Frølund Thomsen, “Contextualizing Intergroup Contact: Do Political Party Cues Enhance Contact Effects?” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (2015): 49-50, 53-54, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272514560761>.

9 Geoffrey L. Cohen, “Party Over Policy: The Dominating Impact of Group Influence on Political Beliefs,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85, no. 5 (2003): 819-21, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.5.808>.

10 Alessandro Arlotto et al., “Ballot Design and Electoral Outcomes: The Role of Candidate Order and Party Affiliation” (arXiv preprint, 2025), 18-19, <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2507.16722>.

11 Jay J. Van Bavel and Andrea Pereira, “The Partisan Brain: An Identity-Based Model of Political Belief,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 22, no. 3 (2018): 213-24, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2018.01.004>.

that is more aligned with their party rather than what they believe. What is most interesting is when a party's belief and an individual's own belief conflict, members will experience cognitive dissonance. Rather than abandoning their belief in their party, individuals will double down on those beliefs, consequently losing their own.¹² This was shown by a study done on cult members. When cult members were confronted with the fact that their doomsday was never going to happen, instead of abandoning belief in the cult, they increased their commitment to that cult (Festinger, 1964).¹³ According to these studies, we can see that party affiliation can come before an individual's personal ideologies.

Not only does party affiliation tend to come before personal ideologies, but affiliation can also affect how ideologies are interpreted. People tend to filter learned information through the lens of their political affiliation causing them to interpret their personal ideologies in accordance with their party values. This effect is known as confirmation bias, where individuals seek out or give more weight to information that supports their pre-existing beliefs and reject information that contradicts them.¹⁴ A study done by Johnson and Judd demonstrates that partisan affiliation can significantly influence both perception and memory.¹⁵ Johnson and Judd found that individuals were more likely to remember and correctly attribute statements that align with their existing beliefs, reinforcing the idea that political bias shapes how we process information.¹⁶ When it comes to partisan affiliation, people tend to prioritize information that is consistent with their political identity, which encourages the likelihood that they will accurately recall and endorse statements that support their party's views. On the other hand, when confronted with statements or information that disagree with their beliefs, individuals are more prone to misattributing these false aligning statements, potentially forgetting them, misinterpreting them, or even assigning them to the wrong source.¹⁷ This bias can lead to an altered memory that distorts the recall of certain events or messages to fit with their party alignment.

This selective memory and perception pattern reflects how partisan bias can polarize both the way we perceive the world and the way we remember it, contributing to further polarization of political divides. For instance, if a person is strongly aligned with a political party, they might remember a policy or statement made by an opposing party in a more negative way, while exaggerating the positive aspects of their own party's actions. This distortion can persist even when confronted with new, contradictory evidence. Van Bavel and Pereira's research

12 Van Bavel and Pereira, "The Partisan Brain," 215-16.

13 Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), 207-8, <https://doi.org/10.1037/10030-000>.

14 Joel T. Johnson and Charles M. Judd, "Overlooking the Incongruent: Categorization Biases in the Identification of Political Statements," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 45, no. 5 (1983): 978-96, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.45.5.978>.

15 Johnson and Judd, "Overlooking the Incongruent."

16 Johnson and Judd, "Overlooking the Incongruent."

17 Johnson and Judd, "Overlooking the Incongruent."

suggests that people's attachment to their political party may overshadow their ability to objectively assess facts or beliefs, reinforcing the social divide that grows between "us" and "them."¹⁸ This divide becomes very prominent in the media and how things are displayed throughout content.

Media, Political Discourse, and Out-Group Animosity

Over the last decade, social media has made an incredible impact on society. It is used for virtually anything, from entertaining videos to spreading important news. However, a growing concern is how it has played a role in American politics. Partisan affiliations have been hypothesized to influence online behavior, such as sharing true or false information.¹⁹ Consistent with the Social Identity Theory, in-group content will have more interaction than that of the out-group. However, it has been found that in the United States, out-group negativity is stronger than in-group positivity.²⁰ Thus, out-group animosity is a strong predictor for social media engagement. Posts about out-group members or ideologies elicit negative emotions such as anger or mockery and in turn generate more engagement on social media.²¹ Additionally, the effect of out-group language increases with politicians.²² The research done by Rathje et. al, suggests that political messaging that elicits negative emotions will have a wider spread, whether it is true or not.²³ Thus, eliciting strong emotions out of constituents becomes politicians' main goal rather than spreading truthful messages on social media.

To begin to understand how certain political elites gain massive followings on social media, it is important to understand language as a tool for social media engagement. Consistent with the findings above, political elites (presidents, senators, representatives) sharing messages using moral-emotional language – beliefs, opinions and values – strongly correlates to a larger spread of content.²⁴ In the presidential candidate comparison, Trump benefited more from moral-emotional language than Clinton.²⁵ Regarding ideologies, those with more conservative ideologies tend to interact with and spread moral emotional language

18 Van Bavel and Pereira, "The Partisan Brain," 215-16.

19 Steve Rathje, Jay J. Van Bavel, and Sander van der Linden, "Out-group Animosity Drives Engagement on Social Media," *Psychological and Cognitive Sciences* 118, no. 26 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2024292118>.

20 Alan I. Abramowitz and Steven W. Webster, "Negative Partisanship: Why Americans Dislike Parties But Behave Like Rabid Partisans," *Political Psychology* 39, no. S1 (2018): 119-35, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12479>.

21 Rathje, Van Bavel, and van der Linden, "Out-group Animosity."

22 Rathje, Van Bavel, and van der Linden, "Out-group Animosity."

23 Rathje, Van Bavel, and van der Linden, "Out-group Animosity."

24 William J. Brady et al., "An Ideological Asymmetry in the Diffusion of Moralized Content on Social Media Among Political Leaders," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 148, no. 10 (2019): 1802-13, <https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0000532>.

25 Brady et al., "An Ideological Asymmetry," 1805, 1808.

a lot more than those that hold liberal ideologies.²⁶ This moral contagion effect illuminates the way in which political elites gain exposure and followings, which can have great implications on political discourse in the media. Social media favors male politicians that use a large amount of moral – emotional language, suggesting that message style and moral-emotional framing can drive engagement regardless of whether a message is substantively informative.²⁷ Statement content ultimately seems to matter less than how it is presented and the person who is saying it, leading us to question if partisan identity could influence the way individuals interact with political messages.

In-group favoritism and out-group animosity, as well as political messaging all contribute to the growing political polarization of the United States and several other two-party countries. In-group praise, or messages that cast a positive light on the in-group, lead to stronger attitudes and greater self-reported polarization.²⁸ Similarly, messages that are derogatory towards the out-group tend to have the same effect on attitudes and self-polarization. Thus, studies have shown that biased, opinionated messaging techniques lead to more polarization than balanced news presenting both arguments.²⁹ However, the greatest predictor of polarization is congenial news, or evidence-based news. Although it is comforting to know that evidence-based news is highly regarded by those that engage with it, not everyone does. As we have seen in the past, polarization comes as a heavy price due to the nature of biased political presence on social media.

Aim of Current Study

Past research has shown that individuals are highly influenced by in-group favoritism, as people tend to favor those within their own political party and have biased perceptions of those outside it. Studies on partisan bias have further analyzed how political identity shapes the way individuals perceive information, and people often prioritize party affiliation over objective content. Additionally, research on media has shown how media sources echo out-group animosity and in-group praise by reinforcing content that deepens polarization.

The aim of the current study is to investigate the extent to which partisan bias influences perception of political statements. Building on previous research on in-group favoritism and partisan bias, this study seeks to examine how individuals' agreement with political statements is influenced by the perceived political affiliation of the person making the statement. We hypothesize that participants will show greater agreement with political statements when they believe the

26 Brady et al., "An Ideological Asymmetry," 1806-8.

27 Brady et al., "An Ideological Asymmetry," 1806-10.

28 Magdalena Wojcieszak et al., "What Information Drives Political Polarization? Comparing the Effects of In-group Praise, Out-group Derogation, and Evidence-based Communications on Polarization," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 27, no. 2 (2022): 325-52, <https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612211004418>.

29 Wojcieszak et al., "What Information."

statement is attributed to a figure from their own political party, even when the statement has no political affiliation (neutral).

Method

Participants

A convenience sampling method was applied to recruit participants. The participants included 65 adults, who were between 18 and 65 years old ($M = 25.1$). Participants were recruited through the 9 AM Psychology 221 Group 1, earning credit by inviting at least 10 participants. A power analysis was conducted using G*power to show that 24 participants were needed to achieve a power of 0.8. There were no ethical concerns as participant data was kept anonymous from the research team and each participant consented to the research study. A debriefing statement was provided at the end of the survey. Participants were not compensated.

Design

Two variables were measured or manipulated, the political affiliation of neutral statements and participant party identity. Neutral statements were randomly assigned to a political figure with a specific party affiliation. All participants saw the same neutral statements. For the second variable, participants self-reported their party identity, Democratic or Republican, which was a quasi-independent variable. Agreement with the neutral statements was assessed.

Materials

To assess perception and agreement on political statements, our survey gave ten neutral statements regarding politics, meaning no political affiliation was attributed to the statement. A Likert Scale of Agreement was used to assess agreement level with the neutral statements. Ten statements had either a Democratic or Republican leader at the end of the statement, suggesting the statement came from that leader (e.g., "Building strong international relationships benefits the people of the United States of America – Donald Trump"). There were five statements associated with Republican leaders, and five statements associated with Democratic leaders. Participants were required to provide their political identity, either Democratic ($n = 44$) or Republican ($n = 21$). Additional data was collected on age and level of education.

Responses to the Likert scale were coded numerically to quantify agreement levels. The four-point scale consisted of the following values: Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Agree = 3, Strongly Agree = 4. This coding method allowed for the assessment of agreement across different statements. Higher scores indicated stronger agreement with the presented statement.

Procedure

After providing informed consent, participants completed an online survey that was distributed using Microsoft Forms. They were then presented with the 10 neutral statements, where they were then asked to rate their agreement with the statements. After the 10 Likert statement answers, participants moved to a section that consisted of demographic questions, including political affiliation, age and education level.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed to compare responses between neutral statements and those attributed to political figures, examining potential shifts in agreement based on source attribution. Average scores of agreements with democratic statement representatives and average scores of agreements with republican statement representatives were analyzed for each participant. Jamovi was used to run a 2 x 2 factorial ANOVA. Excel was used to create figures as a visual representation of the results found in Jamovi.

Results

A 2 x 2 mixed ANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of participant party affiliation (Democratic vs. Republican) and speaker party affiliation (Democratic vs. Republican) on agreement ratings. Participant party was treated as a between-subjects factor and speaker party was treated as a within-subjects factor.

The analysis revealed a significant interaction between participant party and speaker party, $F(1, 63) = 15.38, p < .001, \eta^2 = .059$, indicating that agreement with statements depended on whether the speaker shared the participant's political affiliation (see Figure 1).

There was also a significant main effect of participant party, $F(1, 63) = 6.41, p = .014, \eta^2 = .064$. Democratic participants ($M = 3.59, SE = 0.051$) gave higher overall agreement ratings than Republican participants ($M = 3.37, SE = 0.074$; see Figure 2).

The main effect of speaker party was not significant, $F(1, 63) = 0.52, p = .474, \eta^2 = .002$.

Post hoc Tukey tests were conducted to examine the interaction. Republican participants showed significantly greater agreement with statements attributed to Republican speakers ($M = 3.50, SE = 0.08$) than Democratic speakers ($M = 3.24, SE = 0.09$), $t(63) = 2.82, p = .032$ (see Figure 1). Democratic participants also rated Democratic speakers ($M = 3.68, SE = 0.06$) higher than Republican speakers ($M = 3.51, SE = 0.06$), $t(63) = -2.82, p = .032$ (see Figure 1).

Simple effects analyses further supported this interaction. Republican participants showed significantly higher agreement with Republican speakers ($M = 3.50, SD = 0.39$) than Democratic speakers ($M = 3.24, SD = 0.58$), $t(20) = 2.35, p = .029, d = 0.51$. Democratic participants also showed significantly higher agreement

with Democratic speakers ($M = 3.68, SD = 0.31$) than Republican speakers ($M = 3.51, SD = 0.38$), $t(43) = -3.17, p = .003, d = -0.48$.

Figure 1. *Interaction Effect Between Speaker Party Affiliation and Party Identity of Participant*

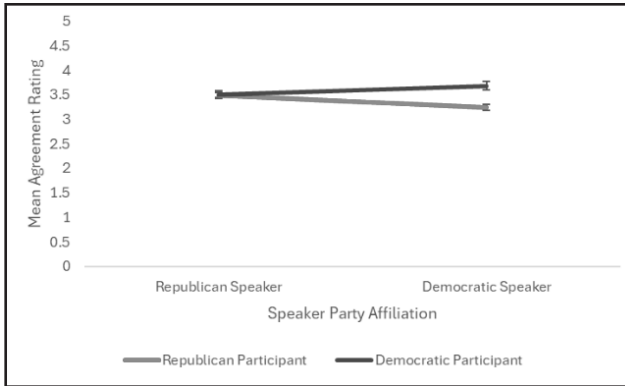
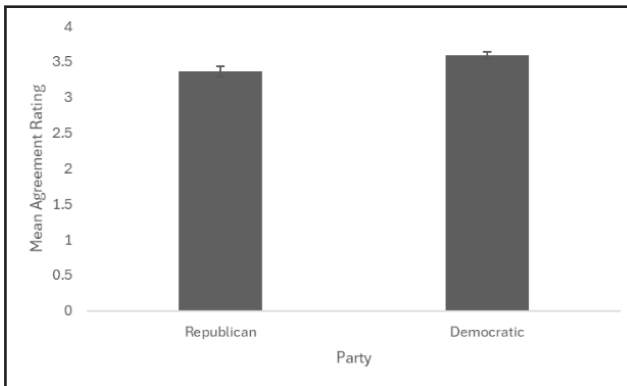


Figure 2. *Mean Agreement Ratings Based on Participant Party Alignment*



Discussion

The study investigated the role of partisan bias in shaping individuals' agreement with politically neutral statements based on the perceived political affiliation of the speaker. Consistent with our hypothesis, results showed that participants were significantly more likely to agree with statements when they believed the speaker was affiliated with their own political party, despite the statements themselves being politically neutral. Interestingly, the effect was particularly larger among Republican participants, who showed a potentially larger

susceptibility to bias than Democratic participants. This research reflects the Social Identity Theory, which suggests that individuals show in-group favoritism and are more receptive to information that originated from members of their own group.³⁰ Specifically, we saw that people's attachment to their political party overshadows their agreement with a statement, similar to the findings in Van Bavel and Pereira's research.³¹ Having strong ingroup identities reinforces the idea of "us" versus "them", creating a prominent divide.

Other research has provided different methods to the same overshadowing shown in our results. Lyons and Utych investigates the extent of in-group favoritism in political contexts by asking whether Americans will discriminate in favor of in-group partisan (and against opposite partisans) *even when no party labels are provided*.³² They report two studies in which participants were shown only facial photographs of individuals and asked to make judgments without any political information. Subsequently, the researchers found that people consistently inferred others' partisanship from subtle facial cues alone and then acted on those perceived affiliations when making decisions. In hiring scenarios, participants tended to favor candidates for whom they assumed to share their own party identity, demonstrating bias in the absence of explicit cues. Like our findings, where agreement was based more on speaker affiliation than content, this study shows that partisan bias operates even without explicit signals, highlighting how deeply political identity can shape perception and decision-making.

Past research has also elaborated on the divide that political partisanship creates. Like results found in Castle and Stepp, our study also suggests that there is an implication for political polarization.³³ Our results indicated that participants responded differently to neutral statements based on their political affiliation. Castle and Stepp found similar results when looking at the predictability of polarization based on partisanship.³⁴ Participants were first presented with ten political issues. Then, the issues were presented with either a liberal or conservative framing. Participants were asked how much they sympathized with the debate. The researchers took their responses and generated a measure of polarization on each issue. Most interestingly, they found that public opinion generally tended to remain at the center of distribution when given a political statement without a partisan framework. Yet, they found that when partisanship is introduced, it has a strong impact on the polarization of individual issues.³⁵ Partisanship can impact

30 Tajfel and Turner, "An Integrative Theory," 33-48.

31 Van Bavel and Pereira, "The Partisan Brain."

32 Jeffrey Lyons and Stephen M. Utych, "Partisan Discrimination Without Explicit Partisan Cues," *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 10, no. 1 (2022): 288-305, <https://doi.org/10.5964/jsp.6491>.

33 Jeremiah J. Castle and Kyla K. Stepp, "Partisanship, Religion, and Issue Polarization in the United States: A Reassessment," *Political Behavior* 43 (2021): 1311-35, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-020-09668-5>.

34 Castle and Stepp, "Partisanship."

35 Castle and Stepp, "Partisanship."

the way participants respond and interact with political issues, a similar result to ours. Even though individuals tend to lean towards the middle of the political spectrum, when presented with a politicized framework, partisanship and group identity will overpower individual beliefs. Thus, as we suspected, there is evidence that a strong predictor of polarization is party affiliation.

An additional factor studied that affects politicization and partisanship is personality. In our study, there was an effect detected when evaluating how self-reported Democrats and Republicans respond to neutral statements regardless of the politician saying the statement. To understand this, research was done on the personality differences of Democrats and Republicans. Past research on partisan personality has shown that liberals tend to be more open to new experiences and have higher agreeableness.³⁶ Interestingly, individuals who have higher emotional stability and conscientiousness tend to lean more Republican, or conservative.³⁷ However, in the study done by Gerber et al., though openness to new experiences was significantly higher for Democrats, agreeableness did not significantly differ across the two parties.³⁸ These results show that though measuring personality can lead to different results, there are trends in differing personalities between parties. Democrats being more open can be a cause for having higher agreement ratings across the board. Thus, looking into personality can provide some more clues as to why Democrats were more likely to respond with higher agreement ratings to neutral statements than Republican participants.

In analyzing the methods of our study, several limitations should be considered. First, the sample size of 65 participants was small, which may limit how well the findings apply to the broader population. A larger sample would provide more reliable results and allow for more generalizability of our findings. Additionally, the sampling method may not represent the views of a wider group considering it consisted of mostly young adults. Most participants were college students, and their political beliefs might differ from those of other age groups or people in different regions, leading to sampling error. Though it is important to note that older adults were included in the sample, there may have been a limited number of them due to the usage of a convenient sampling method.

Another limitation is the lack of a manipulation check, which would ensure that participants correctly identified the political statements as coming from the intended figures. Without confirming this, it's unclear whether the observed effects were due to the correct attribution or misunderstandings. If we were to run a manipulation check, we would make sure to include neutral statements that were not politically affiliated to see if participant responses were solely due to our

36 Christopher A. Cooper, Lauren Golden, and Alan Socha, "The Big Five Personality Factors and Mass Politics," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 43, no. 1 (2013): 68-82, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2012.00982.x>.

37 Alan S. Gerber et al., "Personality and the Strength and Direction of Partisan Identification," *Political Behavior* 34 (2012): 653-88, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-011-9178-5>.

38 Gerber et al., "Personality."

manipulations. Also, while the Likert scale used to measure agreement is common, self-reported surveys can be affected by biases, such as participants trying to answer in ways they believe it is socially acceptable, especially in politically sensitive situations.

Lastly, while the study used a 2x2 mixed ANOVA to analyze the data, it didn't consider other factors that might affect participants' views, such as their level of political interest or exposure to certain political messages. Ignoring these factors might make the results less accurate and provide other explanations for our findings. In the future, we would focus on using a larger, more diverse sample, including a manipulation check, and controlling other factors that could affect participants' responses.

If we could change the study, our first goal would be to address the limitations of the present study, such as acquiring a larger and more diverse sample. Due to the convenience sampling used in the present study, there was not a very diverse spread of age and education level, as most participants were young high school graduates. If we were to restudy about the same topic, our focus in redesigning the study would be sample diversity. Along with gathering a more diverse sample, we would need to perform a manipulation check in our study. We would create a control group in which we would not link the statements to a political representative. This would allow us to determine whether the mere presence of political figures influenced agreement ratings. Finally, we would expand on demographic questions, aiming to analyze how that might influence political identity and agreement ratings.

There are many opportunities for future research that stem from the present study. For example, we did not ask the participants to provide their gender, occupation, religion, or location in the demographics section of our survey. It would be interesting to explore whether any of these factors create significant differences in people's agreements with certain politicians' statements. Another possibility is determining whether the political climate of the community that people inhabit can influence the willingness of agreement level with certain political figures. Perhaps in areas where the political beliefs of the community and the participant are aligned will generate more willing responses, whereas communities where beliefs differ may generate a more reserved response. Further, a person's occupation may be extremely influential in a person's agreement with a statement, regardless of what party they align with. For example, a person who works in business may be more likely to agree with the previously mentioned statement "Building strong international relationships benefits the people of the United States of America – Donald Trump," regardless of the participant's political alignment or the political figure linked to the statement. Politics are complicated, as everyone has different backgrounds and experiences that influence their political views and values, and future research should explore the effects of more demographic factors on agreement with political statements.

Yet undeniably, party identity clearly influences the way people interact

with ideologies, beliefs and political messages. In some ways, it is helpful to have cues from political figures to help the lay person to know what information they should be paying attention to. However, strictly adhering to the values of the group, even when they are not in alignment with one's own, can lead to a loss of personal identity and a spread of outgroup animosity. Political polarization becomes a side effect when society struggles to see the similarities between ingroup and outgroup members. Although this study has recognized this pattern in social behavior, we must go beyond that. There will need to be tangible ways in which we can reduce political polarization and ingroup favoritism, as well as bringing awareness to outgroup animosity. Only then will we be able to achieve collaboration in our political sphere.