

# **Party Foul: The Effectiveness of Political Value Rhetoric is Constrained by Party Ownership**

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***Abstract.*** Politicians use political value rhetoric to win elections or persuade constituents towards policy positions, but the effectiveness of this rhetoric is unclear. I argue that partisan forces constrain the effectiveness of this rhetoric and that this constraint is conditional based on the value evoked and the match between the politician's and message recipient's partisanship. To examine this, I conduct two surveys (Amazon's Mechanical Turk and Qualtrics) and one survey experiment (Dynata) that together show that the public views political values as party-owned and that politicians' value rhetoric is disproportionately evaluated based on the value evoked as well as whether the politician is in-party or out-party. Findings demonstrate that in-party politicians are punished—and out-party politicians rewarded—for signaling party betrayal. The results speak to political values, the effectiveness of political rhetoric, and the true object of out-party distaste, which seems to be more about the party than the party member.

**Key Words:** political parties; political values; party ownership; political rhetoric

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## Introduction

Politicians use value rhetoric—arguments appealing to the underlying beliefs that shape our political attitudes—to win elections or to persuade constituents towards certain policy positions (e.g., Clifford and Jerit 2013; Clifford et al. 2015; Day et al. 2014; DeMora et al. 2021; Druckman 2001; Feinberg and Willer 2015; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997; Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson 1997; Voelkel and Feinberg 2018). The public often hears, for example, Democrats referencing the value of equality in their rhetoric and Republicans referencing the value of self-reliance or hard work in their rhetoric—political values that are associated with their respective parties (see Goren et al. 2009). Sometimes, presumably to broaden their appeal, they switch: for example, Democrats reference self-reliance and Republicans reference equality. It is unclear, however, if attempts such as these to “trespass” on the other party’s political values works—that is, if they lead both in-party and out-party members to rate them more highly—or if they backfire—that is, if they lead both in-party and out-party members to rate them lower—or if they work for some and backfire for others—for example, if they lead in-party members to rate them more highly but out-party members to rate them lower (or vice versa: if they lead in-party members to rate them lower but out-party members to rate them more highly).

Previous research leads to various, sometimes competing, hypotheses regarding what I call political value trespassing. On the one hand, political value rhetoric—including trespassing on the other party’s values—could be a slam dunk. Nelson and Garst (2005), for example, note that referencing political values can be “powerful and reliable weapons in the persuader’s arsenal,” and it is possible that trespassing on the other party’s values could indeed broaden the politicians’ appeal—making them more likeable among out-partisans while still maintaining their in-party members’ support. This is a case where political value trespassing could work.

Yet it is also possible that trespassing on the other party’s values could send a confusing message and thus alienate in-party members as well as fail to win over out-party members. As Condor, Tileagă, and Billig (2013) explain, “the fact that the key terms of political debate are essentially contestable means that although speakers often *treat* appeals to values such as fairness, the national interest, or human rights as if they were noncontentious, there is no guarantee that their audience will necessarily accept their argument” (pg. 273).

Indeed, attempts such as these that try to “trespass” on the other party by utilizing something that is associated with the other party (e.g., certain issues, traits, values, and even gender) find some level of punishment from trespassing because it violates expectations (see, for example, Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994; Bauer 2019; Hayes 2005; Herrnson et al. 2003; Nelson and Garst 2005). In these cases, politicians need a reputation that fits their rhetoric. Without that reputation, their rhetoric falls flat—either at best failing to persuade both in-party and out-party members because they lack a certain reputation, or at worst backfiring among both in-party and out-party members because the rhetoric seems like “insincere pandering” (Nelson and Garst 2005). It is thus possible that—because certain values are associated with certain parties (see Goren et al. 2009)—when politicians attempt to use the other party’s political values, they are punished with decreased support among both in-party and out-party members because this breaks with people’s expectations. Indeed, this is what Nelson and Garst (2005) find.

The aforementioned two possibilities—that political value trespassing works or that it doesn’t work—do not take into account the significant increases in political polarization (Iyengar et al. 2019) and the development of negative partisanship (Abramowitz and Webster 2016, 2018), however. In fact, partisanship does not matter at all in the first possibility and in the second

possibility only matters with regard to reputation or expectation: politicians are rewarded for using the values that people associate with their party but are punished for using the values that people associate with the opposing party—by *both* in-party and out-party members. Yet we know that partisanship is more than a mere summary of issues, traits, and values. Partisanship is a strong and important social identity (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002): even aside from substantive differences, partisans love their own party and hate the other party (see Mason 2015, 2018), or even simply hate the other party (see Abramowitz and Webster 2016, 2018).

The importance of partisanship as a social identity, partisan polarization, and negative partisanship should thus all bleed into how people perceive political rhetoric, including rhetoric on political values. And it could do so in two distinct ways. First, it could render rhetoric on political values meaningless—meaning that no matter what political value a politician uses, in-party politicians will be rated high and out-party politicians will be rated low. In fact, this could be the case even if politicians are rewarded and punished for their particular political value rhetoric: in-party politicians could simply always be rated more highly than out-party politicians. This may especially be the case given that much of the distaste towards the out-party is directed at out-party elites (see Druckman and Levendusky 2019).

But it is also possible that polarization creates a different dynamic: the desire to see out-party leaders defy their party. Indeed, if political values are in fact social signals of group identification (see Connors 2020), it is possible that when politicians reference political values they are also signaling either party loyalty (if the value is an in-party value) or party betrayal (if the value is an out-party value). Relying on research that finds that these signals differentially influence ratings by in-party and out-party members (Kane 2019a, 2019b), we would predict that when in-party politicians trespass on the other party’s political values, they will be punished—but that when *out-party* politicians trespass on the other party’s political values, they will be *rewarded*. This should be the case because partisans enjoy witnessing out-party members betray their party (Kane 2019a, 2019b).

I proceed as follows. First, I pull from research on political values (Caprara and Vecchione 2013), party ownership (Egan 2013; Hayes 2005, 2011; Petrocik 1996), partisanship as a social identity (Green et al. 2002; Tajfel and Turner 1979), polarization (Iyengar et al. 2019), negative partisanship (Abramowitz and Webster 2016, 2018), and party disunity (Kane 2019a, 2019b) to demonstrate in detail why we might predict different outcomes from political value trespassing. This then leads me to four hypotheses regarding political value ownership and the ratings of politicians using political value rhetoric. Testing these with two surveys (with samples from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk [Mturk] and Qualtrics) and one survey experiment (with a sample from Dynata), I find that politicians are indeed disproportionately evaluated—or “rewarded” versus “punished”—based on the values they use as well as whether they are an in-party or out-party member: in-party politicians are punished—and out-party politicians rewarded—for signaling party betrayal. I close with implications of this finding, including the suggestion that the true object of out-party distaste is the *party* rather than the party *member* or even the party *elite*.

## Theoretic Expectations

**Political Values.** Traditionally, political values are thought of as broad concepts about how the world should work that provide people with a standard for evaluating politics (see Caprara and Vecchione 2013). Political values have been found to guide political attitudes and behavior (Feldman and Zaller 1992; see also Ciuk, Lupton, and Thornton 2018; Lupton and McKee 2020;

Lupton, Smallpage and Enders 2020), predicting positions on social welfare (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001), government spending, candidate evaluations (Feldman 1988), beliefs about racial equality (Kinder and Sanders 1996), judgments on tolerance (Peffley, Knigge, and Hurwitz 2001), and affective polarization (Enders and Lupton 2020). Political values are viewed as different from political attitudes in that the former can be applied to multiple issues rather than just a position on one issue. For example, it is not a value to support welfare, but one can value equality, which will likely lead to supporting welfare. This same value—equality—can also inform attitudes towards, for example, taxes, where valuing equality will likely lead to supporting a progressive tax. Values, essentially, are viewed as broader than political attitudes.

Referencing political values in rhetoric makes sense, given that—as Goren et al. (2009) explain—“political values are quite popular, [so] the perceptual background surrounding them is positive.” Elites aiming to persuade should highlight the facets of an issue that give their side “the rhetorical edge” (Jerit 2008; see also Riker 1996), and political value rhetoric could in fact be that edge (see Nelson and Garst 2005). Indeed, as Feldman (2013) explains, “Since values refer to a preferable mode of conduct or desirable end-state, it is likely that an individual will positively evaluate most, if not all values” (pg. 603). From this research—i.e., given political values’ positive valence—we might think that politicians are rewarded for using political value rhetoric, no matter the value. This may especially be the case when political value rhetoric doesn’t explicitly pit values *against* one another, as people’s value systems are believed to be transitive in that they rank values over one another (e.g., Ciuk 2016; Ciuk and Jacoby 2015).

Similarly, it is also possible that political value rhetoric could work disproportionately based on one’s endorsement of the particular value being used in the rhetoric, as research has found that framing an issue as relevant to a particular value can persuade those who prioritize that value (Druckman 2001; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997; Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson 1997). Thus, research on political values would predict that either political value trespassing works (because political values have a positive valence) or that it works among those who endorse the political value being used (i.e., that value endorsement drives ratings of politicians).

***Party Ownership of Values.*** However, the possibility that political values are owned by political parties—something that I propose and then explicitly test—suggests more complication to the effectiveness of political value rhetoric. The idea of party ownership is analogous to issue ownership (Egan 2013; Petrocik 1996), which argues that political parties strategically adopt (i.e., “own”) certain issues and political campaigns serve to prime individuals of their party’s owned issues in hopes of increasing their popularity. The fact that certain issues are owned by political parties means that referencing these issues in rhetoric is conditionally effective based on whether that issue is the politician’s party’s issue (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994; Belander and Meguid 2008; Bellucci 2006; Clarke 2004; Egan 2013; Nadeau et al. 2001; Petrocik 1996; Thesen et al. 2016; van der Brug 2004). If a candidate uses their party’s owned issue, they are awarded greater support. However, if a candidate uses the opposing party’s owned issue (or trespasses), they are punished with decreased support. In other words, candidates cannot simply “ride the wave” and adopt every consensus issue—they need to have a reputation that fits with the issue (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994; although see Norpoth and Buchanan 1992).

This idea of issue ownership has been extended to examine asymmetric rewards and punishment dependent on not only partisanship and issues, but also traits, gender, and values (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994; Bauer 2019; Hayes 2005, 2011; Herrnson et al. 2003; Nelson and Garst 2005). Nelson and Garst (2005), for example, find that value rhetoric can backfire if it

runs counter to expectations (e.g., if a Republican discusses egalitarianism or a Democrat discusses Protestant ethic), as it seems disingenuous. They explain this finding by arguing that because of sinking trust in political leaders, “language that strikes of insincere pandering will not sit well with many citizens” (see also Druckman 2001). Indeed, they find that out-party messages were only rejected when they evoked the “wrong” values.

Overall, though, research on party ownership reaches no consensus on the effectiveness of partisan trespassing—some find it to be successful (e.g., Hayes 2005), while others find it to backfire (e.g., Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994). This research does suggest, however, that if political values are indeed owned by political parties, political value rhetoric may have more limited rhetorical power than the first set of research would predict. Party ownership research suggests, for example, that politicians may be rewarded for using their own party’s values and punished for value trespassing (see Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994; Nelson and Garst 2005). This literature thus gives me my first two hypotheses: first, that political values are “owned” by political parties, just as issues are (the “Political Value Ownership Hypothesis”); and second, that politicians are rewarded for using their own party’s values but punished for value trespassing because this breaks with expectations (the “Expectancy Violations Hypothesis”):

**Hypothesis 1 (Political Value Ownership Hypothesis):** Political values are owned by political parties—i.e., people associate certain political values with certain political parties.

**Hypothesis 2a (Expectancy Violations Hypothesis):** Politicians will be rewarded for using their own party’s values but punished for using the opposing party’s values.

***Polarization and Negative Partisanship.*** Yet, given the strength and importance of partisanship as a social identity (Green et al. 2002; Tajfel and Turner 1979), it is likely that the party match between the speaker (i.e., the politician) and the message recipient will matter—that people will respond differently not just by whether politicians are endorsing their own party’s or the opposing party’s values (as the Expectancy Violations Hypothesis predicts) but *also* by whether the political value rhetoric is coming from an in-party or an out-party politician.

This should matter given how influential partisanship is in shaping how people evaluate the world (Arceneaux 2008; Bartels 2000, 2002; Bullock 2009; Campbell et al. 1960; Cohen 2003; Green et al. 2002; Kam 2005; Rahn 1993; Snyder and Ting 2002). Note that while in Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2a partisanship matters, it matters in regard to the party’s *reputation* with the particular value. But partisanship should matter more than just in if the party is associated with certain political values—as previously mentioned, partisanship is a strong social identity that has become increasingly important over the past half century, leading to rising affective polarization (Iyengar et al. 2019) and the development of negative partisanship (Abramowitz and Webster 2016, 2018), especially toward out-party elites (Druckman and Levendusky 2019).

It is thus likely that these developments influence how people perceive political value rhetoric. They could do so in two ways. First, it is possible that the increase in polarization leads people to rate their own party’s candidates higher than the out-party’s candidates, no matter the political value the candidates endorse. This could present itself in data with in-party candidates (both those endorsing their owned values as well as trespassed values) being rated more highly than out-party candidates (both those endorsing their owned values as well as trespassed values). In other words, in no case would out-party candidates be rated more highly than in-party candidates. It is possible in this scenario that candidates are still rewarded and punished for the

political values that they use—just that partisanship matters more than political value rhetoric does. This brings me to my third hypothesis (the “Polarization Hypothesis”): that no matter the value used, in-party politicians will always be rated more highly than out-party politicians:

**Hypothesis 2b (Polarization Hypothesis):** In-party politicians will be rated more highly than out-party politicians, no matter the political value they each endorse.

Note that this hypothesis does not conflict with Hypothesis 2a—it could be the case both that politicians are rewarded for using their own party’s values but punished for using the opposing party’s values (Hypothesis 2a), as well as the case that in-party politicians are rated more highly than out-party politicians, no matter the value they endorse (Hypothesis 2b).

*However*, it is *also* possible that polarization and negative partisanship work differently than explained above. Rather than leading partisans to constantly punish out-party politicians for being out-party politicians (Hypothesis 2b), it is possible that polarization could lead partisans to *reward* out-party politicians for breaking with their party because they enjoy seeing disunity among the out-party (Kane 2019a, 2019b). In this case, we would see differential effects of politicians breaking with their party’s values by whether the politician’s party matches the message recipient’s party. That is, *in-party* elites would be rewarded for sticking with their party’s values and punished for breaking with them (Hypothesis 2a)—but the reverse would be true of out-party elites, who would be *punished* for sticking with their party’s values and *rewarded* for breaking with them. This is the fourth hypothesis (the “Differential Effects Hypothesis”):

**Hypothesis 2c (Differential Effects Hypothesis):** In-party politicians will be rewarded for using their own party’s values and punished for value trespassing (following Hypothesis 2a), but the opposite will be true for out-party politicians, who will be *punished* for using their own party’s values and *rewarded* for value trespassing.

Note that Hypothesis 2c relies on Hypothesis 2a being true *but only for in-partisans*. And, just like with Hypothesis 2b and Hypothesis 2a, it is possible that both Hypothesis 2b and Hypothesis 2c are true. It could be the case that in-party politicians are rated more highly than out-party politicians, no matter the value used (Hypothesis 2b), as well as the case that there are differential effects of value trespassing by whether the politician is in-party or out-party (Hypothesis 2c).

## Empirical Approach

I conduct my empirical analyses in several steps. First, I test Hypothesis 1: that political values are owned by political parties. I do this in two complementary ways: 1) conducting two studies to examine if the public perceives party ownership of political values (i.e., that certain political values are owned by certain political parties [Studies 1 and 2]); and 2) as a robustness check, examining if certain political parties use these political values in their rhetoric. Together, these data show us that the public perceives certain values as being owned by political parties and that politicians often use the values that the public perceives they own in their rhetoric. Next, I test Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c—the rewards and punishments that politicians receive in response to the political values they use (Study 3). Here, I find support for the “Differential Effects Hypothesis” (Hypothesis 2c): that in-party politicians are rewarded for using their own values and punished for

value trespassing, but that the opposite is true for out-party politicians, who are punished for using their own values and rewarded for value trespassing.

## Studies 1 & 2: Value Ownership

First I test Hypothesis 1 (the “Value Ownership Hypothesis”): does the public perceive certain parties as owning particular values? Studies 1 and 2 aim to test if ordinary people perceive political value ownership, but I also then replicate this by conducting a content analysis of elite rhetoric, which serves as a robustness check as well as gives us insight into elite political value rhetoric. Studies 1 and 2 use two different samples (Mturk and Qualtrics) to examine if the public perceives equality, moral tolerance, freedom, economic security, moral traditionalism, self-reliance, limited government, patriotism, individualism, and social order as owned by the Democratic or Republican parties, and the robustness check examines politicians’ use of many of these same values.

**Study 1 & 2 Design.** Participants were recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (Mturk; N=152; January, 2018)<sup>1</sup> and Qualtrics (N=1,832; April, 2017)<sup>2</sup>—both non-probability samples—and then directed to Qualtrics’ survey platform, where they were first asked various demographic and political questions and then asked about political value ownership. Participants were asked in random order which party is better at handling values, where Mturk participants were asked about equality, moral tolerance, self-reliance, moral traditionalism, freedom, patriotism, economic security, social order, individualism, and limited government and Qualtrics participants (because of length limitations) were asked about equality, self-reliance, and moral traditionalism.

The wording of these questions was motivated by Egan (2013) and are in Appendices A and B. Within each question the value was defined. For example, for the limited government question asked: “Which political party is better at handling limited government (that is, the idea that the free market can handle economic problems without government being involved)?” Respondents were then given the options of the Democratic Party or the Republican Party.<sup>3</sup>

**Study 1 & 2 Results.** Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the results from the two surveys (Figure 1 = Study 1 on Mturk; Figure 2 = Study 2 on Qualtrics). The bars in the figures show the percent of respondents who chose the Democratic Party or the Republican Party with 95% confidence intervals. Here, all respondents (i.e., Democrats, Republicans, and independents) are included.

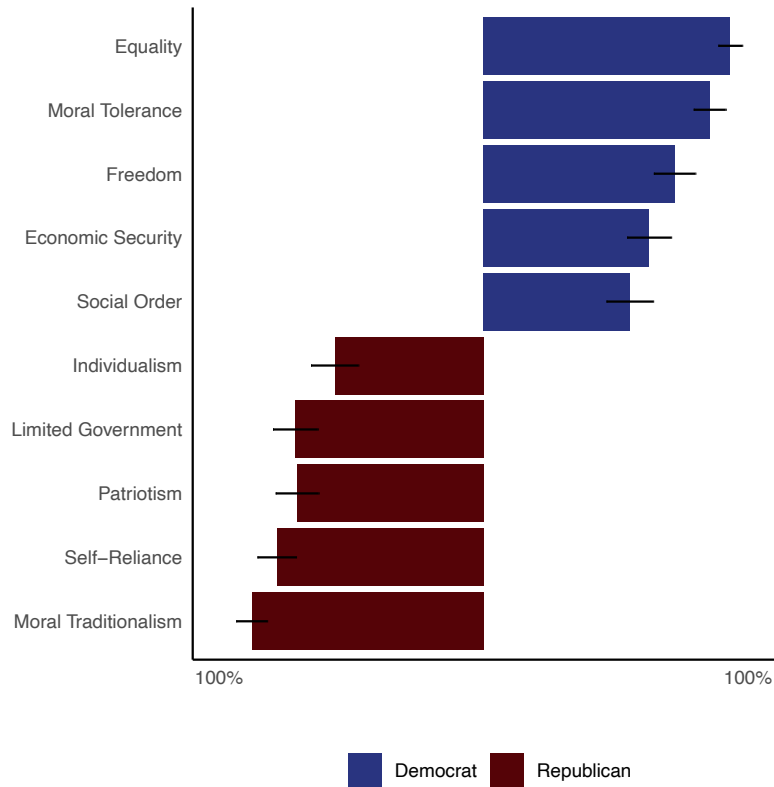
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<sup>1</sup> The sample was 23% Republican, 47% Democratic, and 30% independent (pure and leaning), with an ideology mean of 3.41 and standard deviation of 1.65 on a scale from 1 (extremely liberal) to 7 (extremely conservative). It was 47% female, 53% male; with a mean age of 37; 55% of the sample had a bachelor’s degree or more; and 70% of the sample was white.

<sup>2</sup> The sample was 36% Republican, 33% Democrats, and 30% independent (pure and leaning), with an ideology mean of 4.06 and standard deviation of 1.74 on a scale from 1 (extremely liberal) to 7 (extremely conservative). It was 57% female, 43% male; 47% of respondents were ages 50-69; and 48% of the sample had a bachelor’s degree or more. The sample was recruited for a study on race and thus only recruited white respondents.

<sup>3</sup> On Mturk they were given the option of “neither.” The following number of participants chose this for each of the following values: equality (24), moral tolerance (20), moral traditionalism (22), social order (29), freedom (26), limited government (41), self-reliance (27), individualism (33), economic security (21), patriotism (30). These were dropped in the main analysis.

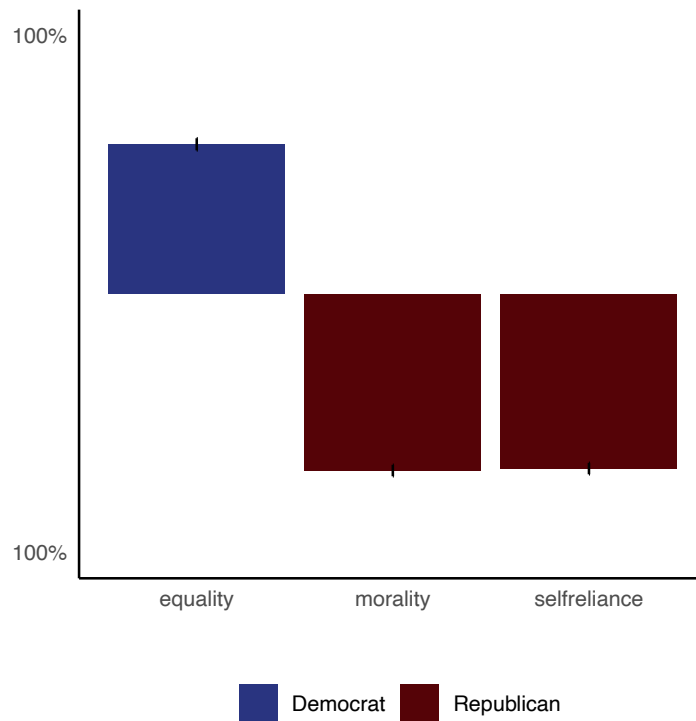
**Figure 1.** Mturk Participants’ Perception of Party Value Ownership



*Participants (N=152) were asked which party “owns” equality, moral tolerance, freedom, economic security, social order, individualism, patriotism, limited government, self-reliance, and moral traditionalism. Bars show the percent of respondents who chose the Democratic Party (blue) or the Republican Party (red), with 95% confidence intervals. Results show that the Democratic Party “owns” equality, moral tolerance, freedom, economic security, and social order, and that the Republican Party “owns” moral traditionalism, self-reliance, patriotism, limited government, and individualism.*



**Figure 2.** Qualtrics Participants’ Perception of Party Value Ownership



*Participants (N=1,830) were asked which party “owns” equality, self-reliance, and moral traditionalism. Bars show the percent of respondents who chose the Democratic Party (blue) or the Republican Party (red), with 95% confidence intervals. Results show that the Democratic Party “owns” equality and that the Republican Party “owns” self-reliance and moral traditionalism.*

We see that the public perceives partisan political value ownership: they view Democrats as owning equality, moral tolerance, freedom, economic security and social order and Republicans as owning moral traditionalism, self-reliance, patriotism, limited government, and individualism. Next, to follow Egan (2013), I also conduct the analysis limiting the sample of respondents to only Independents (leaning and pure), and I find the same general results (see Appendices A and B). In fact, the results are even stronger among the more politically independent. In the Qualtrics sample, for example, when we limit the findings to just pure independents, we see that the mean of equality moves from .16(.02) in the full sample to .28(.06) among pure independents; the mean of moral traditionalism moves from -.37(.02) to -.40(.06); and the mean of self-reliance moves from -.35(.02) to -.41(.06).

Lastly, as previously mentioned, I examine the elite rhetoric side of political value ownership to see if this aligns with people’s perceptions. To do so, I examine a content analysis of 2014 Senate and House race advertisements from the Wesleyan Media Project, which was previously coded by independent coders (N=1,022,474 after excluding non-partisan advertisements). Although the coding does not explicitly reference values (and the original data is unavailable), I use their coding to create value variables (the full details of which can be found in Appendix C). Comparing the mean use of these values by party, I find that based on elite rhetoric,

Democrats “own” equality, moral tolerance, and social order and Republicans “own” moral traditionalism, self-reliance, patriotism, and freedom (I could not measure economic security and limited government). Thus, the only difference between the public’s perception and elite rhetoric in terms of party-value match was freedom, which the public viewed as Democratic-owned yet Republicans used more often in their rhetoric. Figures can be found in Appendix C.

I thus find support for Hypothesis 1—that political values are “owned” by political parties, although the strength of this ownership varies by value. Next I turn to Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c to examine how the public rewards and punishes politicians for using these values. In particular, I am interested in what occurs when politicians “trespass” on the other party’s values: are they rewarded, punished, or rewarded by some and punished by others?

### **Study 3: Political Value Rhetoric Rewards and Punishments**

Study 3 aims to test what happens to politicians in terms of support when they trespass on the other party’s values. Here, I have three non-mutually exclusive hypotheses. Hypothesis 2a (the “Expectancy Violations Hypothesis”) is that politicians will be rewarded for using their own party’s values but punished for value trespassing. Hypothesis 2b (the “Polarization Hypothesis”) is that in-party politicians will be rated more highly than out-party politicians, no matter the value they endorse. Lastly, Hypothesis 2c (the “Differential Effects Hypothesis”) is that *in-party* politicians will be rewarded for using their own party’s values but punished for value trespassing (following Hypothesis 2a), but that the opposite will be true for *out-party* politicians, who will be punished for using their own party’s values but rewarded for value trespassing.

**Design.** I empirically examine these hypotheses using a non-probability sample recruited from Dynata in June of 2018 (N=998).<sup>4</sup> Participants in the study were first asked various demographic questions and then randomly assigned to one of four conditions, varying the candidate’s partisanship (whether the candidate was in-party or out-party) and the value evoked (either equality—a robust Democratic value—or self-reliance—a robust Republican value [see Studies 1 and 2]). Thus, they were randomly assigned to read about either: 1) a Democratic candidate evoking equality; 2) a Republican candidate evoking equality; 3) a Democratic candidate evoking self-reliance; or 4) a Republican candidate evoking self-reliance. The value trespassing conditions are when the Democrat evokes self-reliance and when the Republican evokes equality.

Participants in all conditions were told, “We would like to tell you about a [Democratic / Republican] candidate running for Congress and ask you some questions about his campaign

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<sup>4</sup> Formerly known as Survey Sampling International (SSI). Once those not affiliated with a party (N=119) and those who did not complete the survey (N=74) were dropped, 998 participants were left. Of this sample, 27.05% were strong Democrats, 15.93% were weak Democrats, 17.94% were leaning Democrats, 6.81% were leaning Republicans, 12.53% were weak Republicans, and 19.74% were strong Republicans. The sample had a mean ideology of 3.83 and standard deviation of 1.81 on a scale from 1 (very liberal) to 7 (very conservative). It was 45.79% male, 53.41% female, and 0.80% other; 67.03% white; with a mean age of 43.28 and standard deviation of 14.33. Lastly, 47.69% of the sample had a bachelor’s degree or more, and 49.80% of participants described themselves as “very much interested” in political news.

slogan.”<sup>5</sup> Then, participants were given the campaign slogan. For the equality conditions, this was: “I think this country was built on the value of equality. And sometimes equality means that hard-working people need some help.” For the self-reliance conditions, this was: “I think this country was built on the value of self-reliance. Our country and our citizens would be much better off if there were more emphasis on hard work.” The treatments aimed to minimize differences between the conditions, but out of necessity required varying the definition of equality and self-reliance.

Participants were then asked about the candidate. They were first asked how much they liked him as a candidate, with five response options from strongly dislike to strongly like. They were then asked more specifically about the candidate’s likability. They were asked: “how well do you think the following phrases describe him”: 1) a competent individual, 2) qualified to hold office, 3) a person who lacks integrity, 4) a weak public servant, 5) someone who does not represent his constituents, and 6) a leader on national issues. These phrases were randomly ordered and respondents were given five response options to each that ranged from extremely well to not at all well with the additional option of “no idea.” The dependent variable was comprised by dropping “no idea” responses and then merging the other responses into one scale where higher values indicated greater likability, reverse coding where necessary (Cronbach’s alpha = .77).

Note that, given the design, there was no control condition. It would not have been feasible (or believable) to ask participants about a candidate with *no* information and *no* campaign slogan—the results from this condition would have been meaningless. Yet adding more information to a control condition would have naturally removed the very point of the control: a baseline condition. Thus, all comparisons are between the four treatment groups. Also note that because the conditions are reliant on associating with a party, pure independents are removed from the analysis. Leaning independents are grouped with their leaning party.

**Results.** Table 1 gives the results and Figure 3 illustrates them by showing the mean likability (i.e., the summation of the seven standardized questions) of the candidate by whether he was portrayed as an in-party or out-party candidate and whether he was endorsing an owned value (i.e., a Democrat endorsing equality or a Republican endorsing self-reliance) or a trespassed value (i.e., a Democrat endorsing self-reliance or a Republican endorsing equality).

First, I examine Hypothesis 2a (the “Expectancy Violations Hypothesis”)—that politicians will be rewarded for using their own party’s values but punished for value trespassing. Looking at the first two rows in Table 1 (all candidates using a trespassed versus an owned value), we see no support for Hypothesis 2a. When both in-party and out-party candidates are grouped together, they are on average rated the same whether the value is an owned value or a trespassed value ( $p=.896$ ).

Next, I examine Hypothesis 2b (the “Polarization Hypothesis”)—that in-party politicians will be rated more highly than out-party politicians, no matter the value they endorse. Looking at Figure 1 as well as the bottom four set of rows in Table 1, we see that there is not support for this hypothesis either. In fact, while on average in-party politicians are rated (only slightly) more highly than out-party politicians (.58 versus .55,  $p=.054$ ), when we break the ratings down by the value used, we see that the out-party candidate who value trespasses is rated virtually the same (i.e., *not* more highly) as an in-party candidate who value trespasses (.57 versus .55,  $p=.207$ ).

Lastly, I examine Hypothesis 2c (the “Differential Effects Hypothesis”)—that in-party politicians will be rewarded for using their own party’s values but punished for value trespassing

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<sup>5</sup> Because it is likely the case that gender would matter here (see, for example, Bauer 2019; Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2003), I kept the gender constant as a male candidate.

(following Hypothesis 2a), but that the opposite will be true for out-party politicians, who will be punished for using their own party's values but rewarded for value trespassing. Looking at Figure 1 as well as the last four rows in Table 1, we see support for this hypothesis. While the in-party candidate is rated more highly when endorsing their party's owned value than when breaking with it (.61 versus .55,  $p=.008$ ), the *out-party* candidate is rated more highly when *breaking* with their party's owned value than when endorsing it (.57 versus .52,  $p=.009$ ).

**Table 1.** Candidate Likability by In-Party vs. Outparty and Owned Value vs. Trespassed Value

	<i>Condition</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>T-Statistic</i>	<i>P-Value</i>
<i>All Candidates</i>	Trespassed Value	505	.56	.01	0.13	.896
	Owned Value	493	.56	.01		
<i>Outparty Candidate</i>	Trespassed Value	237	.57	.01	2.61	.009
	Owned Value	248	.52	.01		
<i>Inparty Candidate</i>	Trespassed Value	268	.55	.01	2.68	.008
	Owned Value	245	.61	.02		

Table shows mean likability (from 0 to 1) of each of the candidates by the value they endorse.

**Figure 3.** Candidate Likability by Out-party vs. In-party and Trespassed Value vs. Owned Value

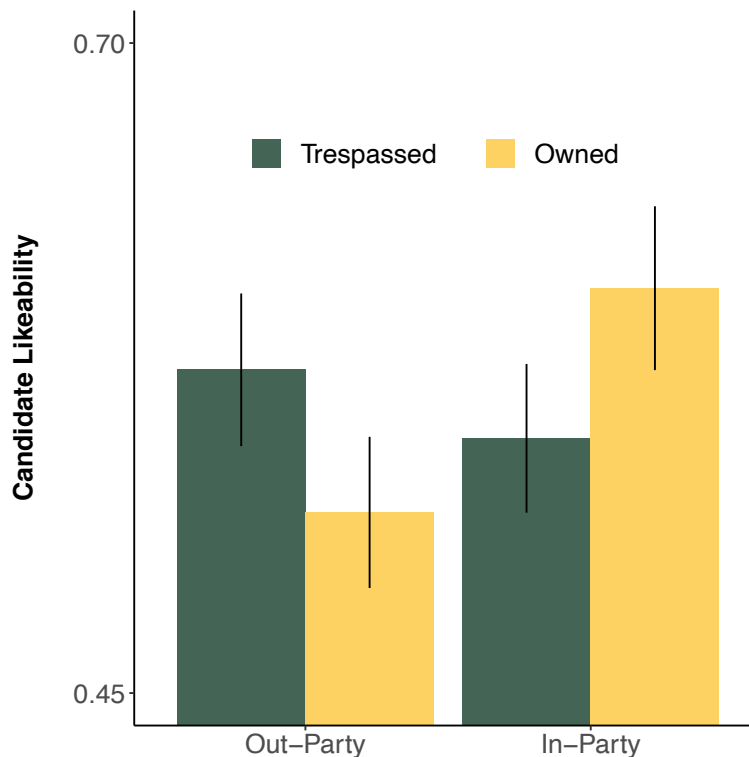


Figure shows mean likability of the political candidate (from 0 to 1), as measured with a summary of general likability, competence, qualifications to hold office, holding integrity, weak or strong public servant, representation of constituents, and leadership. 95% confidence intervals shown. Participants were randomly assigned to an in-party or out-party candidate whose slogan endorses an owned value or a trespassed value. Figure shows that in-party candidates are punished for value trespassing while outparty candidates are rewarded for it.

**Robustness Checks.** I then conduct various robustness checks on the results. I first run an OLS regression with robust standard errors predicting likability (the same summary variable from the main analysis) by an interaction between in-party candidate (a dummy variable that equals 1 if the candidate is in-party and 0 if he is out-party) and trespassed value (a dummy variable that equals 1 if the value is a trespassed value and 0 if it is an owned value). Note that this model represents the aforementioned analysis and findings from Table 1 and Figure 1: in this model, the interaction term of in-party candidate and trespassed value is  $\alpha=-0.11$  ( $p<.001$ ).

I then use this model to run the robustness checks: I run it among just Democrats, just Republicans, differing levels of partisan strength, adding in controls, and separating the components of the dependent variable. I do this rather than run triple interactions for ease of interpretation. First, I find the same results with Democrats and Republicans—for Democrats the interaction coefficient is  $\alpha=-0.11$  ( $p=.005$ ) and for Republicans it is  $\alpha=-0.12$  ( $p=.012$ ). Second, examining partisan strength, while we find the same trends for all three levels of partisan strength (leaning, weak, and strong partisans), the significance disappears for weak partisans, potentially a result of the decreased sample size (although the size of the coefficient also changes; N of weak partisans=284): the interaction coefficient for leaners is  $\alpha=-0.12$  ( $p=.048$ ), for weak partisans is  $\alpha=-0.05$  ( $p=.379$ ), and for strong partisans is  $\alpha=-0.14$  ( $p=.001$ ).

Next, running the model while controlling for partisanship (dummy), partisan strength, ideology (direction and extremity), political interest, age, gender, education, and ethnicity, the interaction coefficient remains virtually the same:  $-0.11$  ( $p<.001$ ). Fourth, running the main model with each dependent variable measure as a separate dependent variable gives me the same results. The interaction coefficients for each of these dependent variable measures is as follows: general likability ( $\alpha=-0.17$ ,  $p<.001$ ), competence ( $\alpha=-0.13$ ,  $p<.001$ ), qualifications to hold office ( $\alpha=-0.12$ ,  $p<.001$ ), holding integrity ( $\alpha=-0.15$ ,  $p<.001$ ), strong public servant ( $\alpha=-0.18$ ,  $p<.001$ ), representation of constituents ( $\alpha=-0.10$ ,  $p=.007$ ), and leadership ( $\alpha=-0.11$ ,  $p=.001$ ).

Next I rely on another set of experimental data in January of 2019 also with a sample from Dynata.<sup>6</sup> This experiment had one extra variation, the purposes of which are beyond the scope of this manuscript. Thus, for my purposes, the experiment had the same general setup: participants (N=839) were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: 1) an out-party candidate evoking a trespassed value; 2) an out-party candidate evoking an owned value; 3) an in-party candidate evoking a trespassed value; or 4) an in-party candidate evoking an owned value.<sup>7</sup>

Just like in the original experiment, participants were told, “We would like to tell you about a [Democratic / Republican] candidate running for Congress and ask you some questions about his campaign slogan” and then given the equality slogan (“I think this country was built on the value

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<sup>6</sup> Once those not affiliated with a party (N=227) were dropped, 839 participants were left. Of this sample, 24.31% were strong Democrats, 18.59% were weak Democrats, 12.04% were leaning Democrats, 8.46% were leaning Republicans, 15.73% were weak Republicans, and 20.86% were strong Republicans. The sample had a mean ideology of 3.95 and standard deviation of 1.88 on a scale from 1 (very liberal) to 7 (very conservative). It was 45.89% male, 52.80% female, and 1.31% other; 78.90% white; with a mean age of 40.87 and standard deviation of 15.77. Lastly, 36.83% of the sample had a bachelor’s degree or more, and 39.81% of participants described themselves as “very much interested” in political news.

<sup>7</sup> Because this variation (an added social cue) did not significantly change the means of the conditions, I group those without and those with the social cue into the same condition.

of equality. And sometimes equality means that hard-working people need some help”) or the self-reliance slogan (“I think this country was built on the value of self-reliance. Our country and our citizens would be much better off if there were more emphasis on hard work”), depending on their randomly assigned condition. They were then asked the same seven likability questions from the original experiment, which I again recoded and merged to create a general likability scale from 0 to 1, from lower to higher likability (Cronbach’s alpha = .82).

Here I find almost the exact same results from the original experiment. Just like in the original experiment, grouping in-party and out-party politicians, we see no difference between ratings of politicians who use their own values and those who value trespass (.67 versus .66,  $p=.321$ —not supporting Hypothesis 2a, the “Expectancy Violations Hypothesis”). Similarly, we see that while on average in-party politicians are rated more highly than out-party politicians (.68 versus .65,  $p=.005$ ), breaking down by the value used, we see that the out-party candidate who value trespasses is actually rated higher than the in-party candidate who value trespasses (.68 versus .63,  $p<.001$ ). This thus gives us evidence *against* Hypothesis 2b (the “Polarization Hypothesis”), in that there is a scenario in which out-party politicians are rated more highly than in-party politicians.

Lastly, like in the original experiment, we see that while in-party candidates are rated more highly when endorsing their party’s owned value than when breaking with their party’s owned value (.72 versus .63,  $p<.001$ ), the out-party candidate is rated more highly when *breaking* with their party’s owned value than when endorsing it (.68 versus .61,  $p<.001$ —supporting Hypothesis 2c, the “Differential Effects Hypothesis”). Further, running the same robustness checks as in the original experiment does not change the results (see Appendix E). These findings thus replicate the original experiment, again finding strong support for the Differential Effects Hypothesis.

Overall, the results from the experiments and robustness checks give strong support for the Differential Effects Hypothesis—that while in-party politicians are punished for value trespassing, out-party politicians are rewarded for it. Next, I examine why this would be the case, with two possible mechanisms in mind. First, it is possible that this differential effect is driven by endorsement of particular values. That is, that Democrats simply care about who is endorsing equality and Republicans simply care about who is endorsing self-reliance—and that this drives candidate support, thus driving the differential effect. It is *also* possible, though, that this differential effect is driven more by feelings of party loyalty or betrayal—an identity- or group-based mechanism similar to what Kane (2019a, 2019b) finds, but with political values. This could be the case because endorsement of political values signals party membership (Connors 2020), and thus candidates using their party’s values could signal party loyalty while trespassing on the other party’s values could signal party betrayal—something that in-party members would punish and out-party members would reward (Kane 2019a, 2019b).

Thus, both mechanisms would drive the differential effects that I find, but the first—value endorsements—would suggest that my findings are the result of a strong belief among the public in values, while the second—enjoyment in party disunity—would suggest that my findings are the result of polarization and negative partisanship, with values being yet another way to signal party loyalty versus betrayal.

***Evidence of the Mechanism.*** To understand the differential effects mechanism, I use a few additional measures from the two Dynata studies: value endorsements, political interest, and affective polarization. First, I examine whether individuals’ value endorsements influence their ratings of candidates using political value rhetoric. I ask: does people’s endorsement of equality

influence how favorable they rate politicians who have a campaign slogan centered around equality? And similarly, does people's endorsement of self-reliance influence how favorable they rate politicians who have a campaign slogan centered around self-reliance?

In the original experiment, I ask participants their endorsement of equality for those in the equality condition and of self-reliance for those in the self-reliance condition. This was asked post-treatment and dependent variable questions to avoid priming participants or giving them information about the intent of the experiment. While this is not ideal—as the experiment could also have influenced their endorsements of these values<sup>8</sup>—it *can* give us some insight into the driver behind the asymmetric rewards and punishments of value trespassing. To do this, I first predict the same summary likability variable from the original analysis by participants' value endorsements. Indeed, I find that endorsing equality predicts rating candidates who endorse equality more highly ( $\alpha=0.04$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and endorsing self-reliance predicts rating candidates who endorse self-reliance more highly ( $\alpha=0.08$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

However, it does *not* seem to be the case that these value endorsements are driving the differential effects. For those who endorse the value in question the *most* (i.e., who give a 4 out of 4 in value endorsement), the interaction coefficient of in-party and trespass is  $\alpha=-0.06$  ( $p=.292$ ), and for the second most (a 3 out of 4), it is  $\alpha=-0.08$  ( $p=.187$ ). Note that neither of these is significant. In contrast, for those who endorse the value in question the second *least* (a 2 out of 4), the interaction coefficient is  $\alpha=-0.14$  ( $p=.002$ ) and for those who endorse it the *very* least (a 1 out of 4) it is  $\alpha=-0.30$  ( $p=.003$ ). Note that these are highly significant and that the interaction coefficient for those who endorse these values the least is *five times* the size of the interaction coefficient for those who endorse these values the most, suggesting that the differential effects are driven by those who *don't* care about the values in question rather than those who do. Thus, it seems that belief in a value leads people to rate *all* politicians who endorse this value more highly, rather than to differentially punish and reward in-party and out-party politicians based on whether they endorse an owned or a trespassed value.

Next I examine the alternative mechanism: that the differential effects are driven by feelings of party loyalty or betrayal. If this were the case, we might see a couple things: first, that those who are more politically aware are more likely to asymmetrically punish political value trespassing because they are potentially more aware of political value ownership; and second, that those who are more affectively polarized are *also* more likely to asymmetrically punish political value trespassing because they should care more about in-party loyalty and out-party betrayal.

To examine the first expectation, I proxy political awareness with a political interest question (measured pre-treatment) that asks respondents: “Some people don't pay much attention

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<sup>8</sup> I also test this possibility—that respondents' endorsements of values changed in response to the in-party candidate's endorsement of them. I do not find this to be the case: in-party candidate value endorsement does not predict endorsement of equality ( $\alpha=-0.08$ ,  $p=.357$ ) or of self-reliance ( $\alpha=0.11$ ,  $p=.185$ ). However, I do not believe this diminishes previous findings that elites can drive political value endorsements (Goren 2005; Goren et al. 2009; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997; Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson 1997), as the treatment attempting to *shift* value endorsements was quite weak and participants were heavily pre-treated. That is, it is still possible (for example) that some Democrats report endorsing equality because their in-party elites do—but since this has already happened in the real world, finding an in-party elite treatment effect within the context of an experiment would be quite difficult (see Druckman and Leeper 2012).

to political news. How about you? Would you say that you are very much interested, somewhat interested, or not interested at all in political news?” This had response options of “not at all interested” (low interest), “somewhat interested” (medium interest), and “very much interested” (high interest). In the original Dynata study, I see that among low political interest the interaction coefficient of in-party and trespass is  $\alpha=-0.05$  ( $p=.662$ ), for medium political interest it is  $\alpha=-0.10$  ( $p=.036$ ), and for high political interest it is  $\alpha=-0.14$  ( $p=.001$ ). In the replication Dynata study, I see the same trend: among low political interest the interaction coefficient of in-party and trespass is  $\alpha=-0.04$  ( $p=.557$ ), for medium political interest it is  $\alpha=-0.14$  ( $p<.001$ ), and for high political interest it is  $\alpha=-0.23$  ( $p<.001$ ). In other words, the treatment effect for the highly politically interested is about three times the size than that of the non-interested in the first study and about six times the size than that of non-interested in the second study.

I next examine the second expectation of this alternative mechanism using affective polarization. I measure this with two feeling thermometers questions (measured post-treatment) that tells respondents: “Please rate the political parties on the following feeling thermometer scale. Ratings between [50/5] and [100/10] degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm towards the party, and ratings between 0 and [50/5] mean you don’t feel favorable towards the party and that you don’t care too much for the party” and then gives them a scale for both the Republican and Democratic parties.<sup>9</sup> Affective polarization is then measured by subtracting out-party feelings from in-party feelings (see Iyengar et al. 2019). Then, I split participants into low and high affective polarization with a median split. Here, we see that while for the low affectively polarized the interaction coefficient of in-party and trespass in the first study was  $\alpha=-0.05$  ( $p=.220$ ) and for the second study was  $\alpha=-0.11$  ( $p<.001$ ), for the *high* affectively polarized it was  $\alpha=-0.18$  ( $p<.001$ ) in the first study and  $\alpha=-0.25$  ( $p<.001$ ) in the second study. In other words, the effect was almost four times the size for the high affectively polarized than the low affectively polarized in the first study and over twice the size in the second study.

The stronger effect sizes among those with low value endorsement, high political interest, and high affective polarization suggest that the differential effects of political value trespassing by whether the candidate is in-party or out-party is driven more by group- and identity-based motivations than by endorsement of political values. People seem to reward and punish politicians based on their signaling of party loyalty versus party betrayal—punishing the latter when it is an in-party candidate but rewarding it with an out-party candidate—and this is decreasingly true with the high value endorsers but increasingly true with the politically interested and affectively polarized. This story fits with prior research on political values as group-based social signals (Connors 2020) as well as research on partisans rewarding out-party disunity (Kane 2019a, 2019b).

## Discussion & Conclusion

This piece aimed to examine, first, if political values are owned by political parties and, second, the effectiveness of political value rhetoric using these party-owned political values. Using two surveys and a survey experiment (as well as robustness checks with a content analysis and a second survey experiment), I discovered political value ownership by parties as well as tested three non-mutually exclusive hypotheses regarding candidate trespassing on the opposing party’s values. In doing so, I found that in-party politicians are rewarded for using their party’s values and punished

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<sup>9</sup> In the first study these numbers were from 0 to 100, but in the second they were from 0 to 10.



for using the opposing party's values, but that out-party politicians are treated the opposite way: they are punished for using their party's values and rewarded for using the opposing party's values. Then, using additional measures within my survey experiments, I examined the mechanism driving this differential effect. I found that these asymmetric rewards and punishments seem to be driven less by political value endorsements and more by group- and identity-based motivations.

This is further evidence that political values are viewed as partisan social signals (Connors 2020), but also suggests something about affective polarization and negative partisanship. Recall that one of the hypotheses was a polarization hypothesis: that partisans will always rate in-party candidates higher than out-party candidates. I did not find this to be the case—in fact, I found that among those who value trespassed, out-party politicians were rated *more* highly than in-party politicians (.57 versus .55,  $p=.207$  in original study and .68 versus .63,  $p<.001$  in replication study). Thus, politicians have a way to be rewarded by out-partisans—by breaking with their party (see also Kane 2019a, 2019b)—suggesting that the object of negative evaluations of the opposing party is more about the party itself than about specific actors within the party. Specific actors *can*, in fact, be perceived as more likeable among out-partisans than the out-party actor, even in our extremely polarized environment—implying, in contrast to what we might think given the ample research on polarization, that what out-party politicians do *can* matter.

Thus, one might wonder: *should* politicians trespass on the opposing party's political values? Yet, although politicians are indeed rewarded by out-partisans for value trespassing, this gain among the out-party is making up for a somewhat equal loss among the in-party. Indeed, if we look at overall rating, politicians are rated the same for using their own values as they are when using the opposing party's values (.56 versus .56  $p=.896$  in original study and .67 versus .66,  $p=.321$  in replication study). This average, though, masks the heterogeneity by whether the message recipients are in-partisans or out-partisans. Given the low likelihood of party switching (i.e., a Democrat deciding to vote for a Republican or a Republican deciding to vote for a Democrat), partisans should care more about keeping their base than about pleasing out-partisans—my results show that political value trespassing does only the latter and thus would not be recommended. There is thus no safe way for politicians to broaden their appeal using political values. A politician speaking to in-partisans should use their own party's values and a politician speaking to out-partisans should use the opposing party's values, but a politician speaking to a mixed crowd of Republicans and Democrats is better off avoiding political values altogether.

There are some limitations to these studies, however. First, not all political values were studied in the survey experiment. It is thus quite possible that the effects found would not replicate for other political values—that, for example, political values that are less politicized (such as social order) might not elicit such disproportionate responses. Second, these studies deal with *explicitly* referenced values, but often values are referenced implicitly—both in rhetoric and in how one conducts their life. It is unclear if implicitly referenced values would find the same trends. And third, there are possibly differences in responses to political value rhetoric based on the traits of the candidate—for example their gender (Bauer 2019; Herrnson et al. 2003), their race (Ciuk 2017), and how much political power they have, among others. While these are certainly important questions, they are beyond the scope of this research and I thus leave them for future research.

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## Appendix A: Amazon's Mechanical Turk Survey

### *Survey Instrument.*

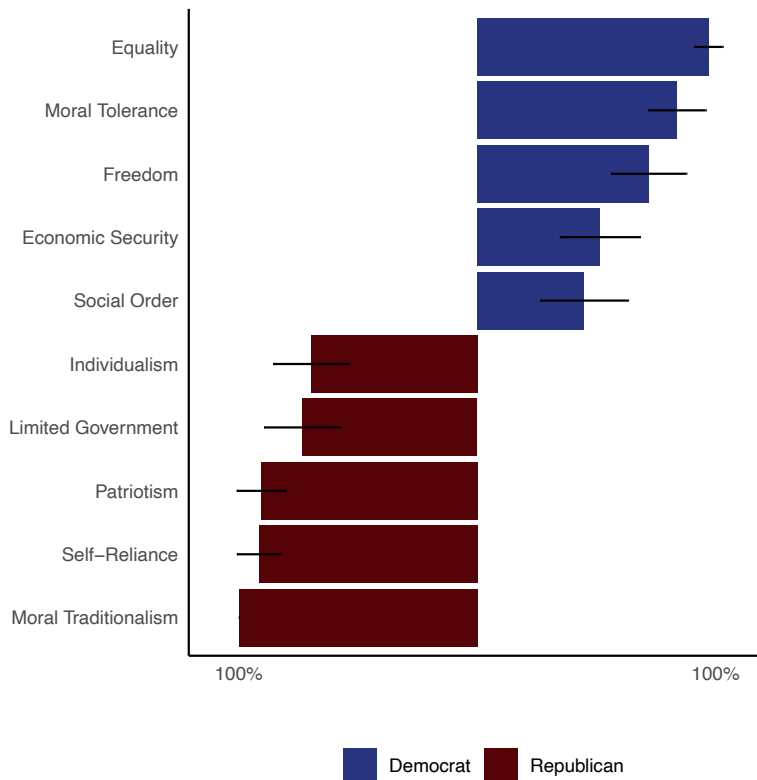
1. [pid] Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what? [Republican / Democrat / Independent / other:\_\_\_ / don't know, haven't thought about it]
    - a. [if Republican or Democrat] Would you call yourself a strong [Republican / Democrat] or a not very strong [Republican / Democrat]
    - b. [if other, don't know, or haven't thought about it] Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party? [closer to the Republican Party / closer to the Democratic Party / neither]
  2. [ideology] We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal or extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or have you not thought about it? [extremely liberal / liberal / slightly liberal / moderate, middle of the road / slightly conservative / conservative / extremely conservative / haven't thought much about this]
  3. [interest] Some people don't pay much attention to political news. How about you? Would you say that you are very much interested, somewhat interested, or not interested at all in political news? [very much interested / somewhat interested / not at all interested]
  4. [discuss] How many days in the past week did you talk about politics with family or friends? [never / one day a week / two days a week / three days a week / four days a week / five days a week / six days a week / seven days a week]
  5. [media] How many days in the past week did you watch political news on television, read about politics in a newspaper (either online or in print), and/or listen to politics on the radio? [never / one day a week / two days a week / three days a week / four days a week / five days a week / six days a week / seven days a week]
  6. [gender] What is your gender? [male / female]
  7. [age] What is your age? \_\_\_\_
  8. [race] What racial or ethnic group or groups best describes you? [white / Black / Hispanic / Asian / Native American / other (please specify:\_\_\_)]
  9. [education] What is the highest level of education that you have completed? [did not complete a high school degree / high school degree / some college / Associate's degree / Bachelor's degree / graduate or professional degree]
- [Questions asked in random order]
10. Which political party is better at handling **equal opportunity** (that is, making sure everyone has an equal chance to get ahead in life)? [Democratic Party / Republican Party / neither]
  11. Which political party is better at handling **equality** (that is, making sure everyone has the same chance to get ahead in life)? [Democratic Party / Republican Party / neither]
  12. Which political party is better at handling **moral tolerance** (that is, believing that we should be more tolerant of people who choose to live according to their own moral standards)? [Democratic Party / Republican Party / neither]
  13. Which political party is better at handling **traditional family ties** (that is, the idea that this country would have many fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family ties)? [Democratic Party / Republican Party / neither]

14. Which political party is better at handling **moral traditionalism** (that is, believing that our country would be much better off if there were more emphasis on traditional family ties)? [Democratic Party / Republican Party / neither]
15. Which political party is better at handling **social order** (that is, being able to live without fear, in a safe, peaceful society where the laws are respected and enforced)? [Democratic Party / Republican Party / neither]
16. Which political party is better at handling **freedom** (that is, the widest liberty possible for everyone to act and think as they consider most appropriate)? [Democratic Party / Republican Party / neither]
17. Which political party is better at handling **limited government** (that is, the idea that the free market can handle economic problems without government being involved)? [Democratic Party / Republican Party / neither]
18. Which political party is better at handling **self-reliance** (that is, believing that our country would be much better off if there were more emphasis on self-reliance)? [Democratic Party / Republican Party / neither]
19. Which political party is better at handling **individualism** (that is, everyone getting ahead in life on their own, without any extra help from government or other groups)? [Democratic Party / Republican Party / neither]
20. Which political party is better at handling **economic security** (that is, making sure that everyone has a steady job, a decent income, and a reasonable standard of living)? [Democratic Party / Republican Party / neither]
21. Which political party is better at handling **patriotism** (that is, looking beyond our own personal interests and doing things that honor, respect, and protect our nation as a whole)? [Democratic Party / Republican Party / neither]

*Note that equality and moral traditionalism were measured with two questions (equality measured with questions 10 and 11 and moral traditionalism measured with questions 13 and 14). To create these variables, I coded responses that kept their answer constant across both questions. In doing so, 30 respondents were dropped (18 for equality and 12 for moral traditionalism).*

***Additional Analysis: Only Independents.***

**Figure 1.** Mturk Participants' Perception of Party Value Ownership—only leaning & pure independents (N=46)



*Participants were asked which party “owns” equality, moral tolerance, freedom, economic security, social order, individualism, patriotism, limited government, self-reliance, and moral traditionalism. Bars show the percent of respondents who chose the Democratic Party (blue) or the Republican Party (red), with 95% confidence intervals. Results show the Democratic Party “owns” equality, moral tolerance, freedom, economic security, and social order and the Republican Party “owns” moral traditionalism, self-reliance, patriotism, limited government, and individualism.*



## Appendix B: Qualtrics Survey

### *Survey Instrument.*

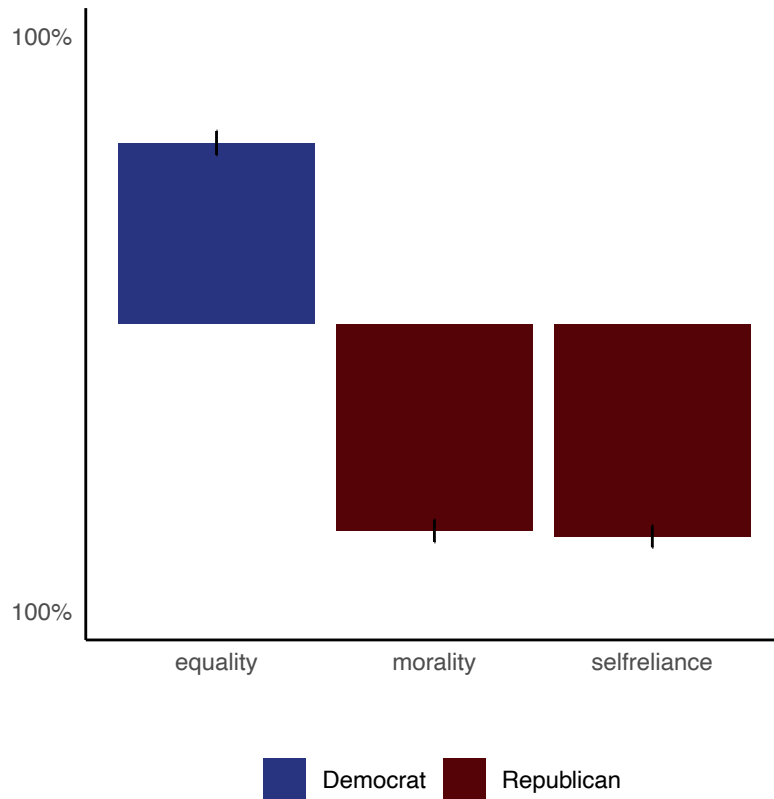
1. [age] How old are you? [less than 18 / between 18 and 29 / between 30 and 49 / between 50 and 69 / 70 and older] (if less than 18, skip to end of block)
2. [gender] What is your gender? [male / female / other (please specify:\_\_\_)]
3. [education] What is the highest level of education what you have completed? [did not complete a high school degree / high school degree / some college / Associate's degree / Bachelor's degree / graduate or professional degree]
4. [pid] Do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, or an Independent? [Democrat / Republican / Independent]
  - a. [if Democrat or Republican] Do you consider yourself a strong or not a very strong [Democrat / Republican]? [strong / not very strong]
  - b. [if Independent] Would you say that you lean more toward the Republican Party or the Democratic Party? [lean toward the Democrats / lean toward the Republicans / do not lean toward either party]
5. [ideology] Where would you place yourself on the scale below? [extremely liberal / liberal / slightly liberal / moderate, middle of the road / slightly conservative / conservative / extremely conservative]

[questions 6, 7, and 8 asked in random order]

6. Which political party is better at handling **equal opportunity** (that is, making sure everyone has an equal chance to get ahead in life)? [Democratic Party / Republican Party]
7. Which political party is better at handling **moral traditionalism** (that is, believing that our country would be much better off if there were more emphasis on traditional family ties)? [Democratic Party / Republican Party]
8. Which political party is better at handling **self-reliance** (that is, believing that our country would be much better off if there were more emphasis on self-reliance)? [Democratic Party / Republican Party]

**Additional Analysis: Only Independents.**

**Figure 2.** Qualtrics Participants' Perception of Party Value Ownership—only leaning & pure independents (N=527)



*Participants were asked which party “owns” equality, self-reliance, and moral traditionalism. Bars show the percent of respondents who chose the Democratic Party (blue) or the Republican Party (red), with 95% confidence intervals. Results show the Democratic Party “owns” equality and the Republican Party “owns” self-reliance and moral traditionalism.*

## Appendix C: Wesleyan Media Project Content Analysis

This study aims to replicate the finding that political candidates use particular values in campaign rhetoric. To do so, I conduct a content analysis of 2014 Senate and House race advertisements from the Wesleyan Media Project, which was coded previously by independent coders. Unfortunately, the coding does not include explicit references to values.<sup>1</sup> Instead, then, I create variables for each political value from Connors (2020), Goren (2005), and Goren et al. (2009), predicting that the same partisanship-aligned value polarization found in previous research will exist in these transcripts.

**Variables.** To create these value variables, I combine multiple items into each value and then rescale them from 0 to 1. The first value, equality, represents equal opportunity from both Goren (2005) and Goren et al. (2009). It is composed of the following: a labor union endorsement; a teacher group endorsement; and mentions of the minimum wage, affirmative action, education, health care, Medicare, social security, welfare, women’s health, and the Affordable Care Act. The second value, moral tolerance, is from Goren (2005) and Goren et al. (2009)—it includes mentions of abortion, homosexual rights, race relations, and civil rights. The third value, social order, includes a law enforcement endorsement and mentions of crime, narcotics, and illegal drugs.

Self-reliance, the fourth value, is from Goren et al. (2009), but also represents economic security and individualism. It includes mentions of the deficit, budget, debt, government spending, business, employment, jobs, and the economy. The fifth value, freedom, represents limited government from Goren (2005)—it is composed of mentions of gun control, civil liberties, privacy, and government regulations. Moral traditionalism, the sixth value, represents traditional family values from Goren (2005) and moral traditionalism from Goren et al. (2009). It includes mentions of God, moral values, family values, and religious values. Lastly, the patriotism value is composed of images of the American flag and mentions of veterans, September 11<sup>th</sup>, terror, terrorism, terrorist, and immigration.

These proxies for value rhetoric are not perfect representations of the values. Further, some of the items include specific policies or issues, confounding value ownership with issue ownership. For these reasons, I demonstrate evidence of values invoked with the operationalization explained above (in *Figure 1*, below), but also demonstrate evidence for the stripped-down version (i.e., the value variables *excluding* any references to issues or policies—in *Figure 2*, below).<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, stripping down the variables in this way eliminates a good portion of the data, leaving the findings a bit less certain. This is why I also retain the original operationalization. Together, though, these results are telling—they are suggestive of which parties own which values.

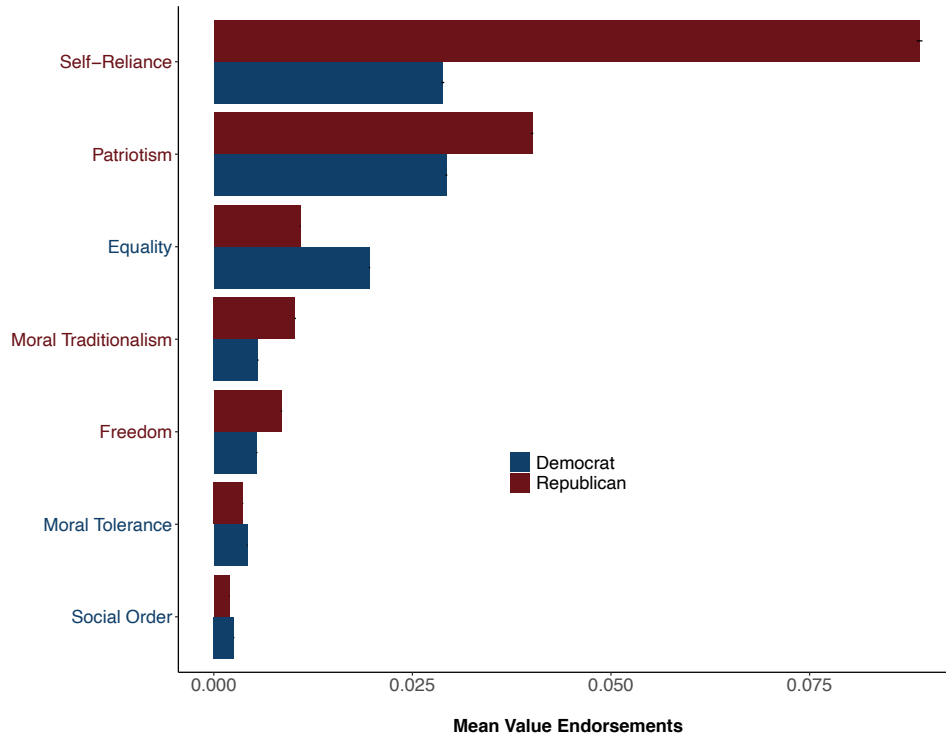
**Results.** To examine the difference between parties’ use of values, I compare the mean of the previously described seven values across the two parties, dropping non-partisan advertisements. Given the population size ( $N=1,022,474$ ), each difference is strongly significant ( $p<.0001$ ).

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<sup>1</sup> The written transcripts are also unavailable, making a simple value word count impossible.

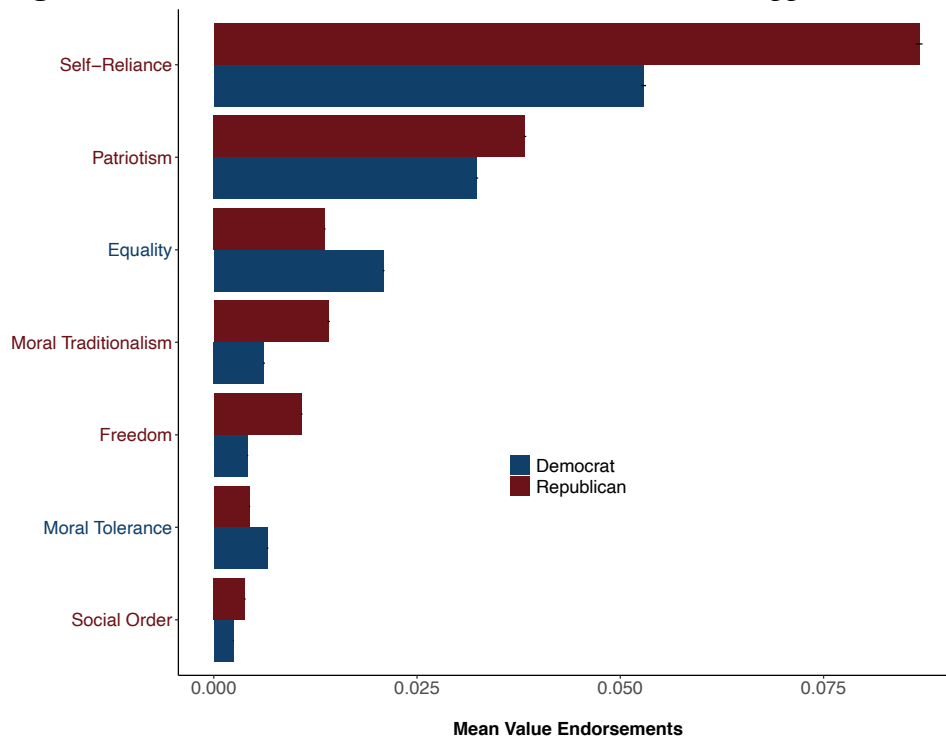
<sup>2</sup> These are: equality (a labor union endorsement, a teacher group endorsement, mentions of welfare, mentions of women’s health); moral tolerance (race relations, civil rights); social order (the same operationalization as before); moral traditionalism (the same operationalization as before); freedom (civil liberties, privacy); economic security (deficit, budget, debt); patriotism (the same operationalization as before).

**Figure 3. Values Invoked in Political Advertisements**



*2014 Senate and House race advertisements were coded as referencing political values. Figure shows that Democrats “own” social order, moral tolerance, and equality, while Republicans “own” freedom, moral traditionalism, patriotism, and self-reliance.*

**Figure 4.** Values Invoked in Political Advertisements—Stripped Down Variables



2014 Senate and House race advertisements were coded as referencing political values—this is the stripped-down version, eliminating all references to issues or policies. Figure shows that Democrats “own” equality and moral tolerance, while Republicans “own” self-reliance, moral traditionalism, and patriotism (the coding here shows that the social order variable is owned by the Republican Party, rather than the Democratic Party).

Although these proxies are not perfect, the findings here are still suggestive of the use of values in party rhetoric. We see some values—equality, patriotism, and self-reliance, especially—are more frequently used in the advertisements, but there are also differences between *which* value each party tends to emphasize. Democrats utilize the equality, moral tolerance, and social order values more often, while Republicans utilize the economic security, freedom, moral traditionalism, and patriotism values more often. Further, this is largely true even when we remove references to policies and issues from the value variables’ operationalization.<sup>3</sup>

**Operationalization of Full Variables:**

1. Equality (Equal Opportunity)
  - a. Endorse3: A Labor Union
  - b. Endorse5: A Teacher Group
  - c. Issue14: Minimum Wage
  - d. Issue34: Affirmative Action
  - e. Issue50: Education/Schools
  - f. Issue53: Health Care

<sup>3</sup> The one inconsistent finding within these analyses is the social order value. Given this, as well as the diminutive difference between the two parties for this value in both analyses, I am hesitant to draw any conclusions about the social order value.

- g. Issue55: Medicare
  - h. Issue56: Social Security
  - i. Issue57: Welfare
  - j. Issue58: Women's Health
  - k. Issue59: Affordable Care Act/Obamacare/Health Care Law/etc.
2. Moral Tolerance
    - a. Issue30: Abortion
    - b. Issue31: Homosexuality/Gay & Lesbian Rights
    - c. Issue39: Race Relations/Civil Rights
  3. Social Order
    - a. Endorse1: Law Enforcement
    - b. Issue40: Crime
    - c. Issue41: Narcotics/Illegal Drugs
  4. Morality (Moral Traditionalism/Traditional Family Values)
    - a. Mention2: God
    - b. Issue 32: Moral/Family/Religious Values
  5. Freedom (Limited Government)
    - a. Issue37: Gun Control
    - b. Issue38: Civil Liberties/Privacy
    - c. Issue98: Government Regulations
  6. Self-Reliance (Economic Security/Individualism)
    - a. Issue11: Deficit/Budget/Debt
    - b. Issue12: Government Spending
    - c. Issue16: Business
    - d. Issue18: Employment/Jobs
    - e. Issue22: Economy (generic reference)
  7. Patriotism
    - a. Use of Flag
    - b. Issue62: Veterans
    - c. Issue68: September 11<sup>th</sup>
    - d. Issue69: Terror/Terrorism/Terrorist
    - e. Issue95: Immigration

**Operationalization of Stripped-Down Variables:**

1. Equality (Equal Opportunity)
  - a. Endorse3: A Labor Union
  - b. Endorse5: A Teacher Group
  - c. Issue57: Welfare
  - d. Issue58: Women's Health
2. Moral Tolerance
  - a. Issue39: Race Relations/Civil Rights
3. Social Order
  - a. Endorse1: Law Enforcement
  - b. Issue40: Crime
  - c. Issue41: Narcotics/Illegal Drugs
4. Morality (Moral Traditionalism/Traditional Family Values)

- a. Mention2: God
  - b. Issue 32: Moral/Family/Religious Values
- 5. Freedom (Limited Government)
  - a. Issue38: Civil Liberties/Privacy
- 6. Self-Reliance (Economic Security/Individualism)
  - a. Issue11: Deficit/Budget/Debt
- 7. Patriotism
  - a. Use of Flag
  - b. Issue62: Veterans
  - c. Issue68: September 11<sup>th</sup>
  - d. Issue69: Terror/Terrorism/Terrorist
  - e. Issue95: Immigration

## Appendix D: Dynata Experiment 1

### *Experimental Questionnaire.*

#### [Pretreatment Questions]:

1. [pid] Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? [Republican / Democrat / Independent / other]
  - a. [if Republican or Democrat] Would you call yourself a strong [Republican / Democrat] or a not very strong [Republican / Democrat]? [strong / not strong]
  - b. [if Independent, other, or don't know] Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party? [Republican / Democrat / neither]
2. [ideology] We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a 7-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this? [very liberal / liberal / slightly liberal / moderate, middle of the road / slightly conservative / conservative / very conservative]
3. [gender] What is your gender? [male / female / other]
4. [age] What is your age? [\_\_]
5. [race] What racial or ethnic group or groups best describes you? [white / black / Hispanic / Asian / Native American / other (please specify: \_\_)]
6. [education] What is the highest level of education that you have completed? [did not complete a high school degree / high school degree / some college / Associate's degree / Bachelor's degree / graduate or professional degree]
7. [interest] Some people don't pay much attention to political news. How about you? Would you say that you are very much interested, somewhat interested, or not interested at all in political news? [very much interested / somewhat interested / not at all interested]

#### [Treatments]:

8. We would like to tell you about a Democratic candidate running for Congress, John Kane, and ask you some questions about his campaign slogan: "*I think this country was built on the value of equality. And sometimes, equality means that hard-working people need some help.*"
9. We would like to tell you about a Republican candidate running for Congress, John Kane, and ask you some questions about his campaign slogan: "*I think this country was built on the value of equality. And sometimes, equality means that hard-working people need some help.*"
10. We would like to tell you about a Democratic candidate running for Congress, John Kane, and ask you some questions about his campaign slogan: "*I think this country was built on the value of self-reliance. Our country and our citizens would be much better off if there were more emphasis on hard work.*"
11. We would like to tell you about a Republican candidate running for Congress, John Kane, and ask you some questions about his campaign slogan: "*I think this country was built on the value of self-reliance. Our country and our citizens would be much better off if there were more emphasis on hard work.*"

#### [Post-Treatment Questions]:

12. [likability] Based on John Kane's campaign slogan, how much do you like him as a candidate? [strongly dislike / somewhat dislike / neither like nor dislike / somewhat like / strongly like]



13. [specific likability] More specifically, how well do you think the following phrases describe him? [extremely well / very well / somewhat well / not very well / not at all well / no idea]
- a. A competent individual
  - b. Qualified to hold office
  - c. A person who lacks integrity
  - d. A weak public servant
  - e. Someone who does not represent his constituents
  - f. A leader on national issues
14. [equality endorsement—shown if given equality treatment] How much do you support **equality** (that is, making sure that everyone has the same chance to get ahead in life)? [not at all, somewhat, a fair amount, very much so]
15. [self-reliance endorsement—shown if given self-reliance treatment] How much do you support **self-reliance** (that is, believing that our country would be much better off if there were more emphasis on determination, perseverance, and hard work)? [not at all, somewhat, a fair amount, very much so]
16. [feeling thermometers] Since we are asking about how you feel about the future of electoral competition in the United States, we would like to ask you how you feel about members of political parties. To start, we will show the name of the political party and we would like you to rate members of those parties using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm towards them. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't care too much for them. You would rate them at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward them.
- a. How would you rate people who identify with the Democratic Party? [0 to 100]
  - b. How would you rate people who identify with the Republican Party? [0 to 100]

## Appendix E: Dynata Experiment 2

### Experimental Questionnaire

#### [Pretreatment Questions]:

1. [gender] What is your gender? [male / female / other, non-binary]
2. [age] What is your age (in years)? [\_\_]
3. [race] What racial or ethnic group or groups best describes you? (check all that apply)  
[white / black / Hispanic or Latino / Asian or Pacific Island / Native American / other]
4. [education] What is the highest level of education that you have completed? [did not complete a high school degree / a high school degree or GED / some college / Associate's degree / Bachelor's degree / Graduate or professional degree]
5. [pid] Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? [Republican / Democrat / Independent / other, don't know]
  - a. [if Republican or Democrat] Would you call yourself a strong [Republican / Democrat] or a not very strong [Republican / Democrat]? [strong, not strong]
  - b. [if other, don't know] Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party? [Republican / Democrat / neither]
6. [ideology] We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a 7-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this? [extremely liberal / liberal / slightly liberal / moderate, middle of the road / slightly conservative / conservative / extremely conservative / haven't thought much about it, don't know]
7. [interest] Some people don't pay much attention to political news. How about you? Would you say that you are very much interested, somewhat interested, or not interested at all in political news? [not at all interested / somewhat interested / very much interested]

#### [Treatments]:

8. We would like to tell you about a Democratic candidate running for Congress, John Kane, and ask you some questions about his campaign slogan: *"I think this country was built on the value of equality. And sometimes, equality means that hard-working people need some help."*
9. We would like to tell you about a Republican candidate running for Congress, John Kane, and ask you some questions about his campaign slogan: *"I think this country was built on the value of equality. And sometimes, equality means that hard-working people need some help."*
10. We would like to tell you about a Democratic candidate running for Congress, John Kane, and ask you some questions about his campaign slogan: *"I think this country was built on the value of self-reliance. Our country and our citizens would be much better off if there were more emphasis on hard work."*
11. We would like to tell you about a Republican candidate running for Congress, John Kane, and ask you some questions about his campaign slogan: *"I think this country was built on the value of self-reliance. Our country and our citizens would be much better off if there were more emphasis on hard work."*

#### [Post-Treatment Questions]:

12. [likability] Based on John Kane's campaign slogan, how much do you like him as a candidate? [strongly dislike / somewhat dislike / neither like nor dislike / somewhat like /

strongly like]

13. [specific likability] More specifically, how well do you think the following phrases describe him? [extremely well / very well / somewhat well / not very well / not at all well / no idea]
- a. A competent individual
  - b. Qualified to hold office
  - c. A person who lacks integrity
  - d. A weak public servant
  - e. Someone who does not represent his constituents
  - f. A leader on national issues
14. [feeling thermometers] Please rate the political parties on the following feeling thermometer scale. Ratings between 5 and 10 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm towards the party, and ratings between 0 and 5 mean you don't feel favorable towards the party and that you don't care too much for the party. [Republican Party / Democratic Party]

### **Robustness Checks**

Just like with the main analysis robustness checks, I rerun the interaction term of in-party candidate and trespassed value ( $\alpha=-0.17$ ,  $p<.001$ ), but among just Democrats ( $\alpha=-0.21$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and just Republicans ( $\alpha=-0.12$ ,  $p<.001$ ); among just leaning ( $\alpha=-0.15$ ,  $p=.001$ ), weak ( $\alpha=-0.07$ ,  $p=.018$ ), and strong partisans ( $\alpha=-0.25$ ,  $p<.001$ ); controlling for partisanship (dummy), partisan strength, ideology (direction and also extremity), political interest, age, gender, education, and ethnicity ( $\alpha=-0.17$ ,  $p<.001$ ); and separating each dependent variable measure (general likability:  $\alpha=-0.19$   $p<.001$ , competence:  $\alpha=-0.16$   $p<.001$ , qualifications to hold office:  $\alpha=-0.14$   $p<.001$ , holding integrity:  $\alpha=-0.21$   $p<.001$ , strong public servant:  $\alpha=-0.18$   $p<.001$ , representation of constituents:  $\alpha=-0.14$   $p<.001$ , and leadership:  $\alpha=-0.19$   $p>.001$ ).