

A Fair Fight: Outgroup Empathy and Cross-Party Support for Democratic Norms

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A worrisome characteristic of modern polarization is public opposition to liberal democratic norms. This study explores the role empathy can play in fostering support for such norms. Distinct from individual-level empathy, outgroup empathy is a stable personality trait that promotes perspective taking and emotional connection towards outgroup members in distress. I argue that one's propensity for outgroup empathy depresses support for policies that produce unfair political advantages, even when they benefit one's own party. I draw on nationally representative survey data to show that, controlling for partisanship, ideology, and demographic factors, group empathy is associated with support for free speech, minority rights, and resistance to authoritarianism. I also propose a series of experimental designs where respondents are presented real-life scenarios of their own party engaging in a democratic norm violations. They will assess whether an intervention that encourages taking the perspective of an outparty member bolsters support for said norms. Broadly, the project points to the role that outgroup empathetic disposition and encouraging perspective taking can play in preventing democratic backsliding.

Democracy is worth preserving. There is intrinsic value in political equality and popular participation in lawmaking. In addition, democratic regimes are more peaceful and prosperous, and their publics register more trust and perceived legitimacy in the political system. While democracy has taken numerous theoretical and practical guises through history, in the 20th century democratic systems in the West and beyond have had a number of norms and institutions in common. These norms include (among others) free and fair elections, the rule of law, freedom of speech and press, checks and balances across political institutions, and protection of minority rights (Held 1987).

These norms are currently under threat in the United States. Given the rise of partisan polarization, political elites have increasingly been willing to revise or restrict voting rights, subvert legal and constitutional checks to power, and attack freedom of speech and press in order to achieve partisan and policy priorities. What's more worrying is the public is increasingly allowing, or even welcoming, these anti-democratic activities. Certainly, a high-profile example is the Capitol attack in January 6th and the common belief in false claims of election fraud among Republican identifiers. But it is more widespread than this. To wit, a recent poll shows that majorities of both Trump and Biden voters support censoring oppositional media, empowering an inparty President that need not be "constrained by Congress," and having states secede from the union if their party is not in power at the federal level¹. Political experts give a one in five chance of a "democratic breakdown" in the United States in the next four years². Without greater public willingness to support and defend key democratic norms, this chance will likely increase.

¹ <https://centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/new-initiative-explores-deep-persistent-divides-between-biden-and-trump-voters/>

² <https://www.authwarningsurvey.com/survey>

But how can we bolster support for a free press, the rule of law, voting rights, and the like? Simple information-based appeals to democratic norms will likely not work. This is because while the public tends to support these in the abstract, when applied to specific political events and controversies, commitment to democratic norms is often no match for partisan psychology (Graham and Svobik 2020). A key feature of modern polarization is the growth of an identity-based, or “us versus them,” dimension of partisan conflict. With this, the propensity to engage in motivated reasoning, rationalizing even egregious norm violations from one’s ‘team,’ is stronger than ever (Finkel et al. 2020). Moreover, with a fragmented media environment and the proliferation of partisan media, many are conditioned to distrust information, particularly counter-attitudinal information, coming from an outside source (Iyengar and Hahn 2009). As such, any intervention seeking to bolster support for democratic norms needs to not simply inform, but to build psychological motivation to care and respond to anti-democratic behavior. A few recent studies have shown promise in this regard; for example, outparty animus can be reduced by building common identities across party lines (Levendusky 2018), or correcting erroneous stereotypes partisans hold against outpartisans (Lees and Cikara 2020). No research as of yet, though, has looked at the potential for empathy and perspective taking across party lines to bolster support for democratic norms.

This project theorizes that cross-party empathy, in a multifaceted way, can help provide the motivation needed to support the threatened democratic norms discussed above. Empathy, or (broadly) the ability to understand and care for others’ perspectives and emotional states, is both a stable personality trait as well as a context-dependent attitude that can be encouraged through intervention. And I argue that both the personality and context-dependent dimensions of empathy can buttress support for democratic norms.

I draw a distinction between individual-level empathy, or the ability and motivation to recognize the thoughts of other individuals, and group empathy, or the ability and motivation of “members of one group to vicariously experience and care about the perspectives and emotions of members of other groups” (Sirin, Valentino, and Villalobos 2021, 24). While recent research has shown that individual-level empathy exacerbates affective polarization (Simas, Clifford, and Kirkland 2020), personality-based outgroup empathy produces a greater ability and inclination to adopt the perspective of an outparty ‘other,’ causing one to recognize when they have been treated unfairly. As we are evolutionarily hard-wired to react negatively to perceived unfairness, I argue this recognition can cause individuals to support ‘pro-democratic’ norms and policies that prevent further injustice. In addition, the honest outgroup perspective-taking encouraged by dispositional outgroup empathy may break down negative stereotypes, which dampens affective polarization and bolsters norm support. I further theorize that cross-party perspective taking interventions can produce a contextual attitude of empathy across party lines. Research shows that perspective taking, across ideologies and personality types, can increase tolerance as well as support for various types of anti-discrimination policy (Batson et al. 2002; Weisz and Zaki 2017; Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000). It is thus reasonable to posit that similar interventions could reduce the outparty prejudice and ‘othering’ that is a hallmark of modern polarization, leading to greater support for norms that support fair political competition.

This paper tests the above postulations in two ways. First, the connection between dispositional or personality-based group empathy and democratic norm support is examined using nationally representative survey data from 2018 and 2020. Initial results show that, controlling for partisanship, ideology, race, and other potentially correlated demographic and attitudinal factors, personality-based outgroup empathy is significantly associated with support

for press freedom, protest rights, checks and balances, and the rule of law. It is also negatively associated with voting for Trump, but not for Republican congressional candidates, in 2020.

Second, an experimental design testing the impact of context-dependent empathy is described. It proposes a series of video-based vignettes that encourage respondents to take the perspective of an outparty individual harmed by a norm violation, assessing whether this bolsters support for said norm. The vignettes specifically focus on the issues of voting rights, free speech, or checks and balances. I posit that encouraging outparty empathy will bolster support for these norms *even in contexts where the norm violation benefits one's own party*. I expect this effect to be strongest for those that score high on an indicator for dispositional outgroup empathy.

What is Empathy?

Philosophers and psychologists have long been interested in empathy, or the ability to understand and care for others' perspectives and emotional states. Our capacity for empathy is evolutionarily evolved, fostering social connection and providing incentive to engage in costly acts of altruism that produce long term benefits (de Waal 2008). While scholars offer differing conceptualizations, it is broadly recognized to have both a cognitive and affective dimension (Davis 1983). The cognitive, or perspective taking, component can be broken down into imagining how another feels in a given situation, as well as how one would feel if placed in said situation. The affective component can likewise be divided into matching the emotion of another, as well as feeling emotional concern for another's situation (Batson and Ahmed 2009).

Empathy is also both a stable trait and a context-dependent state. Evidence for empathy as a natural trait can be found in the automatic and unintentional responses offered to the emotional state of others (Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson 1994; Heyes 2011). This automaticity is found in newborns (Haviland and Lelwica 1987) as well as non-human animals (de Waal

2008). Some are genetically predisposed to have greater empathetic ability than others (Davis 1983). At the same time, empathic processes can be influenced by contextual factors such as target characteristics, power dynamics, situational norms, environmental stressors, and others (Zaki 2014). Indeed, interventions such as perspective taking and role playing can successfully produce favorable contexts for extending empathy to others (Weisz and Zaki 2017; Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000).

Fostering empathy is associated with a number of positive individual and social outcomes, such as subjective well being (Wei et al. 2011), enhanced cooperation (Rumble, Van Lange, and Parks 2010), and prejudice reduction (Batson et al. 2002; Dovidio et al. 2004). Perhaps sensing this potential, politicians and pundits often decry what Barack Obama has called the “empathy deficit” in US politics (source), and have argued (another quote here). However, empathetic ability, and efforts to induce empathy, are not a silver bullet. Motivation is necessary to express empathy for the other (Zaki 2014). Empathy is thus subject to down-regulation when it is psychologically costly, or conflicts other values and psychological goals. In fact, efforts to foster empathy can even backfire, producing counter-empathetic responses such as overt aggression or schadenfreude (Zaki and Cikara 2015; Mina Cikara 2015). This is particularly across groups that are in conflict (Cikara et al. 2014; Tarrant, Dazeley, and Cottom 2009).

Given the conditionality of empathy in fostering prejudice reduction, as well as the increasing social and psychological divides between partisans (Finkel et al. 2020), it may seem unlikely that empathy could play a productive role in US political life. In fact, recent research suggests empathetic ability could have a polarizing, rather than a de-polarizing, effect. For instance, Simas, Clifford, and Kirkland (2020) contend that empathetic feeling for partisans is more readily extended to members of one’s inparty, which then has an adverse effect on outparty

empathetic concern. They present evidence of a significant relationship between dispositional empathy, inparty favoritism, and negative outparty affect. They also show that partisans with a higher capacity for empathetic concern are more willing to censor speech attacking their party. Similarly, Allamong and Peterson (2021) present respondents with a vignette centered on a woman who would be harmed by the potential repeal of the Affordable Care Act. They find that affective reactions to the vignette are regulated by partisan priors, and the strongest partisan biases are exhibited by those highest in empathetic ability. What this recent research suggests is that for empathy to reduce negative partisanship, take down the temperature, foster mutual respect, or the like, there needs to be *motivation* to extend understanding and concern beyond one's own tribe. Otherwise, empathy fostered solely for one's party is likely to exacerbate animosity and othering.

Drawing on the importance of motivation in producing prosocial outcomes, Sirin, Valentino, and Villalobos make a distinction between individual-level empathy, or the ability to put oneself in another person's shoes, and what they call *group empathy*, or "the ability and motivation to take another group's perspective, feel emotionally connected to their struggles, and care about their welfare even when doing so puts the individual's interest, or those of their group, at risk" (2021, 7). They posit that unlike individual empathy, group empathy is not genetic. But it is a stable trait developed through early socialization experiences (which could be adaptive in multicultural or multiethnic societies). It is thus distributed unevenly through society. Members of groups that have faced historical discrimination, for example, are more likely to be able to map personal experiences onto the suffering of other groups, and are thus more likely to exhibit group empathy. Developing and validating a novel measure—the Group Empathy Index (GEI)—they demonstrate that group empathy is empirically distinct from individual-level empathy, and

it is distinct from (and in many cases orthogonal to) other potentially related constructs such as racial social identity, racial resentment, authoritarianism, partisanship, and ideology. They also find that, controlling for the factors above, group empathy is a powerful predictor of political attitudes involving an ‘other’ in distress. This trait, for instance, is associated with opposition to racial profiling and restrictive immigration policies, as well as support for humanitarian aid and intervention overseas.

Group Empathy and Partisanship

Past research focuses on group empathy and its influence on policy attitudes related to support for marginalized racial and ethnic outgroups (Sirin, Valentino, and Villalobos 2021; 2017). However, I posit that, as distinct from individual-level empathy, dispositional outgroup empathy can moderate support for democratic norms that prevent unfair treatment of *partisan* outgroups. Both the cognitive and affective dimensions of group empathy can do this work. Cognitively, adopting the perspective of an outparty other can cause one to recognize when they have been treated unfairly. Humans innately react negatively reaction to perceived injustice (source); thus, this recognition can cause individuals to support norms and policies that prevent further injustice. This is particularly relevant with relations to liberal democratic norms, as US citizens across party lines are socialized to embrace these norms from an early age (Wolak 2020). And unlike with individual-level empathy, the honest outgroup perspective-taking encourage by group empathy may break down, rather than reinforce, negative stereotypes. Dispositional group empathy, thus, may allow one to see beyond the “red versus blue” competition and find commonality in the experiences of even erstwhile political opponents.

Affectively, emotional matching and concern for an outgroup other can potentially serve to reduce affective polarization. In turn, Kingzette et al. (2021) draw a connection between

affective polarization and democratic norms. They find that affective polarization erodes their support by making the partisan public more susceptible to elite cue-taking. Affectively polarized Republicans, for example, are more likely to countenance authoritarianism and disapprove of checks and balances with a Republican president in power. Affectively polarized Democrats, in turn, will do the same with a Democratic president in power.

H1: Those highest in dispositional group empathy should exhibit the strongest support for a range of democratic norms

I further posit that not only the *trait* of group empathy drives support for democratic norms, but cross-party perspective taking interventions can produce a contextual *state* of empathy across party lines that bolsters democratic norm support. This is in line with past research showing that perspective taking can reduce outgroup prejudice (Batson et al. 2002; Dovidio et al. 2004) and foster support for policy that prevents discriminatory treatment (Broockman and Kalla 2016). Further, I expect those that have the highest dispositional group empathy to be able to more readily recognize and positively respond to appeals from outpartisans.

H2: Interventions encouraging perspective taking for outparty members should bolster support for democratic norms

H3: Those that are highest in dispositional empathy should respond most to perspective taking

As past research suggests, though, drawing the connection between empathy and democratic norms requires a) clear understanding that a norm has been violated, and b) motivation to up-regulate empathetic concern. With regard to *understanding*, I expect the connection between group empathy and democratic norms to be strongest with those with more

political knowledge. These individuals are most likely to recognize when a norm has been violated and thus connect it to natural inclinations towards empathetic concern. Understanding as to whether an important democratic norm has been violated should also vary based on issue context. In particular, if an issue lends itself to competing interpretations, the connection between group empathy and norm violation should be weaker. An example here is voter ID laws. Despite the fact that election fraud is exceedingly rare³ and strict voter ID laws serve to disenfranchise voters rather than prevent malfeasance (Hajnal, Lajevardi, and Nielson 2017), a strong majority in the public see voter ID laws as integral to electoral integrity⁴. With many people thus not perceiving a democratic norm violation with these laws, they will not connect a concern for empathy to this issue. In contrast, with an issue such as press censorship (for one example), the norm violation is less ambiguous, and the connection between empathy and attitudes on this issue should be stronger.

H4: Political knowledge moderates the relationship between democratic norm support and outgroup empathy (both dispositional and empathy induced through perspective taking)

H5: The relationship between outgroup empathy and democratic norm support will be weakest with issues where the norm violation, amongst the public, is ambiguous or contested

With regard to *motivation*, I expect stronger partisans—even those that register higher in group empathy—to register less support for democratic norms, and respond less to perspective taking interventions, than weaker partisans. Cross-party empathy is more costly for those that have more committed partisan identities. Strong partisans are also likely to perceive greater interparty conflict, which makes empathetic failure more likely

³ <https://www.brennancenter.org/issues/ensure-every-american-can-vote/vote-suppression/myth-voter-fraud>

⁴ <https://tufts-pol.medium.com/strict-voter-id-laws-are-popular-across-parties-racial-and-ethnic-groups-cc9a5c80354>

H6: The connection between outgroup empathy and democratic norms will be weakest for strong partisans

Study One: Evidence from the ANES

To examine the role dispositional group empathy plays in moderating support for democratic norms, I draw on data from the 2020 ANES Time Series Study, as well as 2018 ANES Pilot Study. The 2020 study includes a pre-election (n=8,280) and a post-election (n=7,449) wave. It is conducted on a nationally representative sample using internet, phone, and video modes. The 2018 study consists of 2,500 respondents recruited from an opt-in internet-based panel. While it is not based on a probability sample like the 2020 study, it includes sampling weights and design effects based on key population demographics. It can thus be used to make inferences about the U.S. population conditional on the assumption that, after weighting, participation or non-participation is not systematically related to variables of interest (Baker et al. 2013).

Dispositional group empathy is measured through a Group Empathy Indicator (GEI) developed and validated by Sirin and colleagues (2021). The four questions, designed to tap into the perspective taking (cognitive) and empathetic concern (affective) dimensions of outgroup empathy, are as follows:

- How often would you say you try to better understand people of other racial or ethnic groups by imagining how things look from their perspective?
- Before criticizing somebody from another racial or ethnic group, how often do you try to imagine how you would feel if you were in their place?
- How often would you say that you have tender, concerned feeling for people from another racial or ethnic group who are less fortunate than you?

- When you see someone being taken advantage of due to their race or ethnicity, how often do you feel protective toward them?

Response choices are on a five-point scale, ranging from “Not often at all” (0) to “Extremely Often” (4). Sirin et al. construct both a summative index and a factor-based scale based on these four items, finding that both operationalizations yield identical results. A simple summative scale is used in this paper, ranging from 0 to 16 with higher scores indicating greater group empathy. The authors also demonstrate that a GEI measure constructed as such is internally reliable and uniquely predictive of a host of political attitudes related to group discrimination. It is also distinct from potentially related measures such as social dominance orientation, authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, partisanship, ideology, and racial resentment.

Both the 2018 and 2020 ANES ask a number of questions, with closed-ended, ordinal response sets, that tap into support for norms long held to be held as essential to liberal democracy (Mill 1859; Dahl 1971). Using appropriate regression models, I examine the relationship between the GEI measure and responses to these questions while controlling for partisanship, ideology, race, religion, age, gender, and educational attainment. The models also incorporate survey weights and design effects. Predicted margins are presented in the figures below, and the full models are available in the appendix.

Study One Results

(FIGURE ONE HERE)

Figure One displays the impact of the group empathy index (GEI) on responses to a variety of questions tapping support for civil liberties from the 2018 and 2020 ANES. While not completely exhaustive, they are a fair representation of the questions both surveys ask concerning civil liberties. As one can see, they focus on protest rights and media freedom. The

predicted margins presented are generated using OLS regression models, in order to illustrate how average opinion changes across levels of GEI⁵. The panels in the figure show how predicted average opinion changes when one moves from one standard deviation below the mean GEI score, to one standard deviation above the mean GEI score.

Across the board, the GEI has a positive and (as the appendix shows) statistically significant impact on support for civil liberties. Substantively, the size of the impact of group empathy varies. For instance, for a 2018 question that asks how important it is that “people are free to peacefully protest,” we see that going from a low (one SD below the mean) to a high (one SD above the mean) GEI score results in a 0.60 move toward the “extremely important” end of a five-point scale. However, for a 2020 question survey that asks whether protests that year had been “mostly peaceful” or “mostly violent,” moving from a low GEI score to a high GEI score only results in a 0.21 move toward the “peaceful” end of a five-point scale. There are many potential explanations for this difference worthy of unpacking. It should be said, though, that even the more modest impact of GEI with the 2020 question should not be discounted. As a comparison, it is roughly equal to the effect of a one-step change in the seven-point party identification scale—for instance, moving from a “strong” to “not strong” Republican, or an independent leaner to a “pure” independent. Also, this is the impact of group empathy *even controlling for partisanship, ideology, and a host of demographic factors related to civil liberty support.*

(FIGURE TWO HERE)

⁵ Both OLS and ordered probit models are included in the appendix. Results are consistent whether using OLS or ordered probit models.

Likewise, Figure Two illustrates that dispositional group empathy, even controlling for a variety of political and demographic factors, has a significant impact on support for checks and balances and minority rights. For instance, take the question of whether one supports the will of the majority prevailing “even over the rights of minorities.” Moving from one standard deviation below the mean GEI score to one standard deviation above the mean GEI score results in a 0.50 move toward the “disagree strongly” end of the five point scale. The effect of GEI is more muted, in both the 2018 and 2020 ANES survey, when respondents are asked if they would support a President that “could work on the country’s problems without paying attention to what Congress and the courts say.” And while the effect of GEI is statistically significant for this question in the 2020 ANES, it is not so in the 2018 ANES. This being said, respondents in the 2018 ANES were significantly more likely to support the Mueller investigation the higher they scored on the GEI measure. In sum, Figures One and Two illustrates that dispositional group empathy has a positive effect on support for a number of norms that work to sustain liberal democracy.

It is important to note, moreover, what dispositional group empathy is *not* related to. In the 2020 ANES, there is not a significant relationship between the GEI measure and trust in government or trust in election officials. So while those with higher group empathy are more likely to support, in various ways, a “fair” political system, this does not mean they are more likely to extend the benefit of the doubt to said system. Group empathy, moreover, is not merely a negative measure for affective polarization. The correlation between GEI and a ‘feeling thermometer’ measure of affective partisanship, among partisan identifiers and leaners, is nearly non-existent ($r = 0.01$). Finally, there is an insignificant relationship between GEI and support for stricter voter ID laws. With this issue, there are competing partisan narratives as to which

perspective is “pro-democratic;” Democratic leaders often argue that erecting barriers to voting is suppressive, while Republican leaders suggest that strict ID laws are necessary to prevent fraud. As there is not a clear narrative in the public’s mind regarding which perspective violates norms of fairness (indeed, the majority of the public supports stricter voter ID laws), it is not surprising that respondents do not connect group empathetic feeling to their attitude on this issue. With H4 above, this is what one would expect.

(FIGURE THREE HERE)

Finally, Figure Three illustrates that the GEI measure is significantly and negatively related to respondents expressing, in the post-election wave of the 2020 ANES, that they voted for Trump. The figure illustrates the effect of a one-unit change in GEI on the predicted probability of voting for the former President. To put in context, moving from one standard deviation below the mean GEI score to one standard deviation above results in 5.8 percentage point drop in predicted likelihood of voting for Trump (from 46.4% to 40.6%). This is, again, controlling for partisanship, ideology, and a host of demographic factors. Interestingly, though, there is not a significant relationship between GEI and vote intention for the Republican candidate in respondents’ House of Representatives district. This suggests that it is not necessarily a Republican or conservative platform that is driving the connection between GEI and Trump voting. It is the candidate specifically—perhaps his rhetoric, personality, and/or norm violating behavior—that spurs people with higher dispositional group empathy to vote against him.

Study Two: Experimental Design

The results above focus on dispositional, or personality-based, empathy. The experimental design that follows focuses on perspective taking, utilizing survey-based

experiments to examine the extent *contextual* or *attitude-based* empathy can be manipulated to bolster support for democratic norms. The proposed experiments present respondents with a real-life scenario of *their own party* engaging in a democratic norm violation. They assess whether an intervention that encourages taking the perspective of an outparty member bolsters support for said norm. My goal is to further develop this initial design over summer 2022, and then collect data by the end of fall 2022. As such, feedback on this portion, as I proceed with planning, is greatly appreciated.

Each respondent will be assigned to one of three experiments, focused on either the issue of voting rights, free speech, or checks and balances. Below, I will describe in detail the “checks and balances” experiment, but each of the three experiments have a similar structure. First, all respondents receive pretreatment questions that measure party identification, ideology, and demographic information. They will also answer the Group Empathy Index (GEI). After that, the vignette they receive provides a real-life example of a state where their own party’s governor engaged in unilateral action, bypassing the “checks and balances” provided by their state legislature, to achieve a policy priority⁶. If the respondent identifies as a Democrat, the vignette focuses on a unilateral action from a Democratic governor. If the respondent identifies as a Republican, it focuses on a Republican governor.

Next, they receive different information based on the condition they are assigned to:

- In the “perspective taking condition,” respondents view a fictitious 1-2 minute video testimonial from an outparty citizen. She will describe the injustice she feels concerning how her party and perspective has been shut out of the decision-making process by the

⁶ While the vignettes will be fully developed over fall 2022, there are examples across party lines. For example, governors routinely issue executive orders to bypass their state legislature. And in the era of gridlock and polarization, these orders have taken on more and more policy significance.

governor's unilateral action. The video testimonial will be modeled on past research on perspective taking and prejudice reduction⁷, and it will be designed to elicit empathic concern. If the respondent is a Democrat, the testimonial will be from a Republican; if the respondent is Republican, the testimonial will be from a Democrat. This will allow me to assess whether perspective taking can bolster support for checks and balances *even in the face of an executive action from one's own party*.

- Those in the "informational" condition view a video of someone describing how the unilateral action runs counter to the state's normal policymaking process, as well as the importance of checks and balances at the state and federal level. The information will be presented objectively and with no effort to elicit empathetic concern, and the person talking in the video will not be identified with any party affiliation
- Respondents in the control condition will not receive a video or any other additional information

Finally, respondents then will receive questions that assess views on the governor's unilateral action they received information about, as well as broader questions concerning checks and balances, unilateral policymaking, and authoritarianism at the federal and state level.

Respondents in the "perspective taking" condition will also answer questions that assess their level of empathic concern for the outparty individual in their video.

I expect that those in the perspective taking condition, but not the informational condition, will be less supportive of the unilateral action they received information on, as well as more supportive of broadly protecting checks and balances at the federal and state level. I expect that those in the perspective taking condition expressing the most empathy for the individual in

⁷ See, for example, Dovidio et al. (2004)

the video will most strongly support protecting checks and balances. What's more, I expect those scoring highest on the Group Empathy Index to display the strongest treatment effects in the perspective taking condition.

The survey questionnaire containing these experiments will be hosted on the Qualtrics platform, and respondents will be recruited through Lucid Theorem⁸. Recent research has demonstrated the internal and external validity of Lucid Theorem samples (Coppock and McClellan 2019). There will be a total of 3600 respondents, or 400 respondents for each condition in the 3x3 experimental design (three experiments, and three conditions for each experiment). This will provide adequate statistical power to draw inferences between treatment groups and control.

The same actor will be talking in each of the videos, regardless of which of the three experiments or conditions they are assigned to. Thus, any differences in response will be due solely to what the actor in the video is saying. Prior to conducting these experiments, a short pilot study will confirm that the perspective taking condition videos elicit empathetic concern, and that the informational condition videos do not. For this pilot, a convenience sample of 600 respondents will be recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk.

I have also conducted an experimental study that has provided information and motivation for this experiment. It somewhat similar in design to what is proposed above⁹, but it exclusively focuses on the antidemocratic practice of partisan gerrymandering. It also employs text-based, rather than video, vignettes. The initial study provides evidence that dispositional empathy depresses support for gerrymandering and increases support for redistricting reform.

⁸ <https://luc.id/theorem/>

⁹ The following is a link to the survey instrument. It can give some general sense of what the survey flow for Study Two will look like: https://ryanstrickler.weebly.com/uploads/5/3/0/1/53011311/summer_survey.pdf

With Study Two, I will build on this initial work by assessing the role dispositional empathy and perspective taking can play in bolstering support for not just one, but a variety of democratic norms. This study will also be conducted on a sample that is more reflective of the national population, and the video-based experimental treatment better reflects the way most individuals consume political information. As such, Study Two will significantly improve upon the generalizability and external validity of the initial study I conducted over the summer.

Conclusion

In an era of affective polarization, appeals to empathy in politics can seem anachronistic or naive. And indeed, recent research has demonstrated that individual-level empathic disposition can exacerbate polarization by allowing partisans to extend concern and support to their own party, but not the outparty (Simas, Clifford, and Kirkland 2020). However, I argue that group empathy, distinct from individual-level empathy, can bolster support for democratic norms across party lines. We can think of outgroup empathy as a stable personality trait, learned through early socialization and stable across one's life. It is also a trait that cuts across partisans and ideological lines, and it is distinct from affective partisanship. We can also think of outgroup empathy as a context-dependent state, encouraged with anyone through interventions such as perspective taking. There are only initial results thus far; all of the hypotheses have not been fully examined. But as a personality trait, my results show that dispositional outgroup empathy is significantly related to support for free press, protest rights, minority rights, the rule of law, and other norms important to liberal democracy. It is also negatively related to support for former President Trump, but not related to support for House Republican candidate. With regards to a context-dependent attitude, I present an initial proposal for a series of video-based perspective taking experiments. The proposed experiments present respondents with a real-life scenario of

their own party engaging in a democratic norm violation. They assess whether an intervention that encourages taking the perspective of an outparty member bolsters support for said norm.

With the prevalence of democratic backsliding across the world, understanding what drives support for values such as free speech, checks and balances, and minority rights is of the utmost importance. By illustrating the connection between outgroup empathy and values such as these, the study helps explain why some are willing to abandon inparty leaders that engage in norm violating behavior, while others are not. With the proposed experiment, it also hopes to illustrate how appealing to outgroup empathetic feeling can help foster greater support for democratic norms across the aisle.

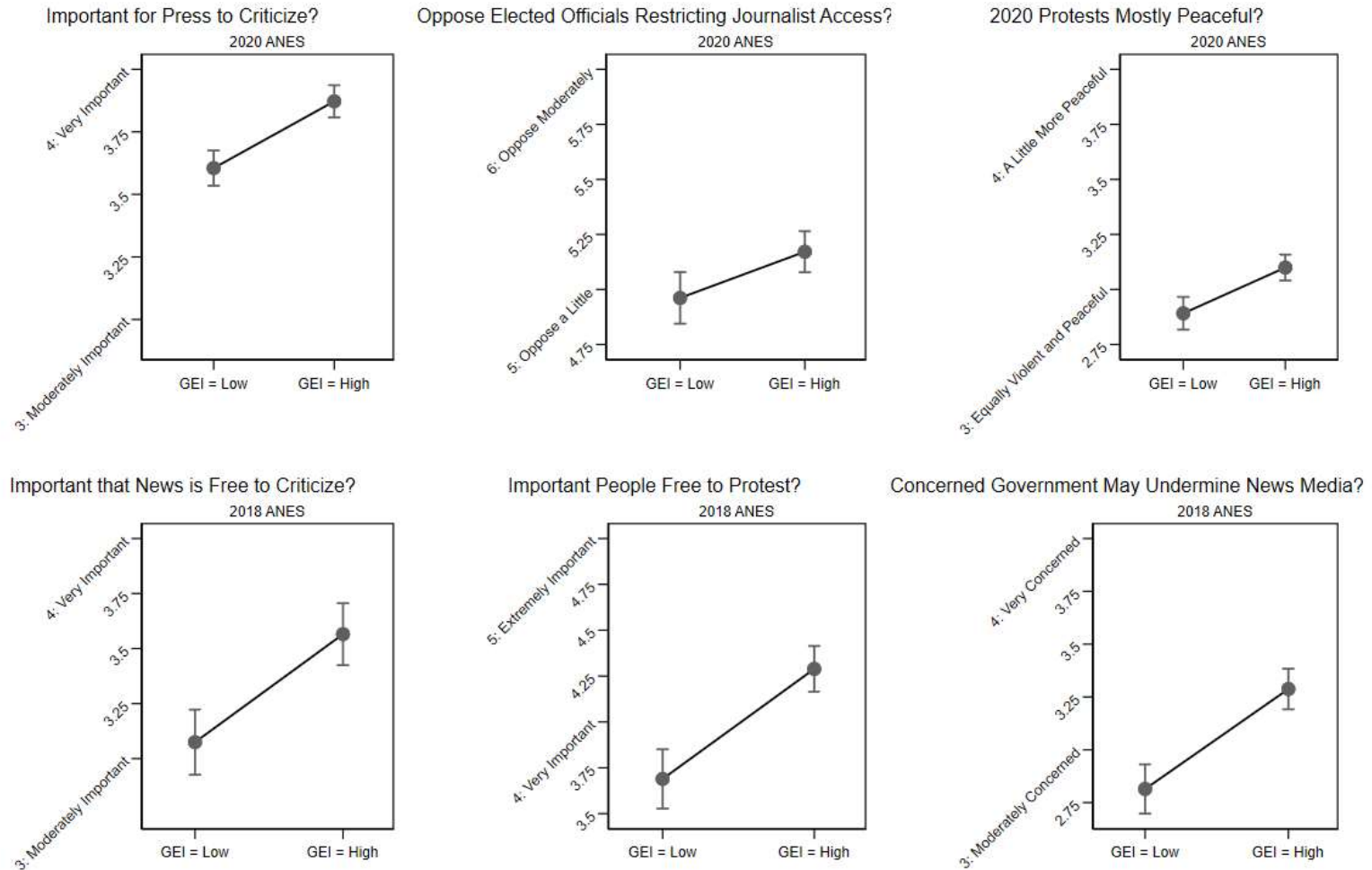
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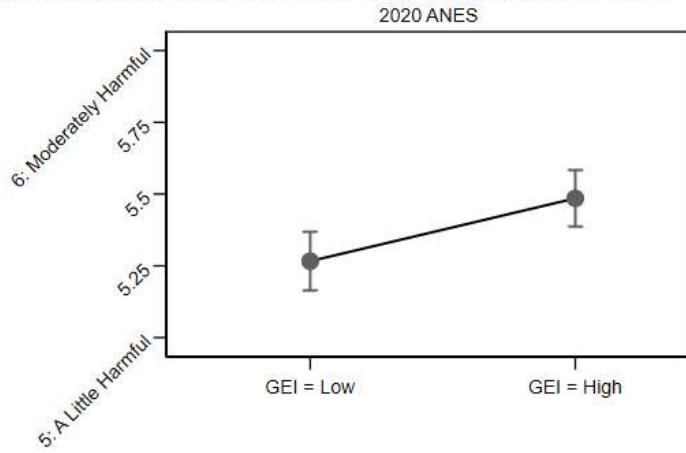
Figure One: Impact of Group Empathy Index (GEI) on Support for Civil Liberties, 2018 and 2020 ANES



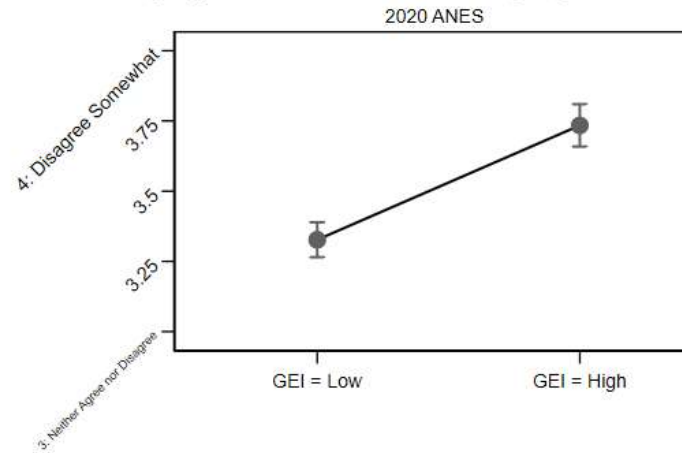
Graphs illustrate predicted difference in average response between those scoring one standard deviation below, versus one standard deviation above, mean group empathy indicator score. Estimates generated using OLS regression, controlling for partisanship, ideology, race, gender, religion, age, and educational attainment. Models incorporate survey weights and design effects

Figure Two: Impact of GEI on Support for Checks and Balances/Minority Rights, 2018 and 2020 ANES

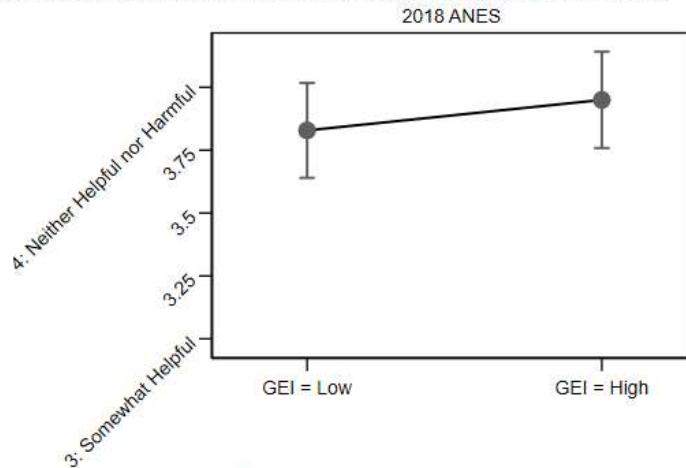
Helpful or Harmful if President Did Not Have to Worry about Congress or Courts?



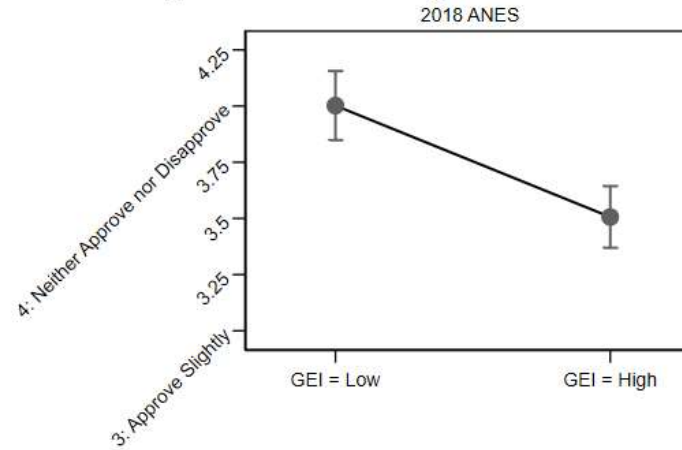
Will of Majority Should Prevail Over Minority Rights?



Helpful or Harmful if President Did Not Have to Worry about Congress or Courts?

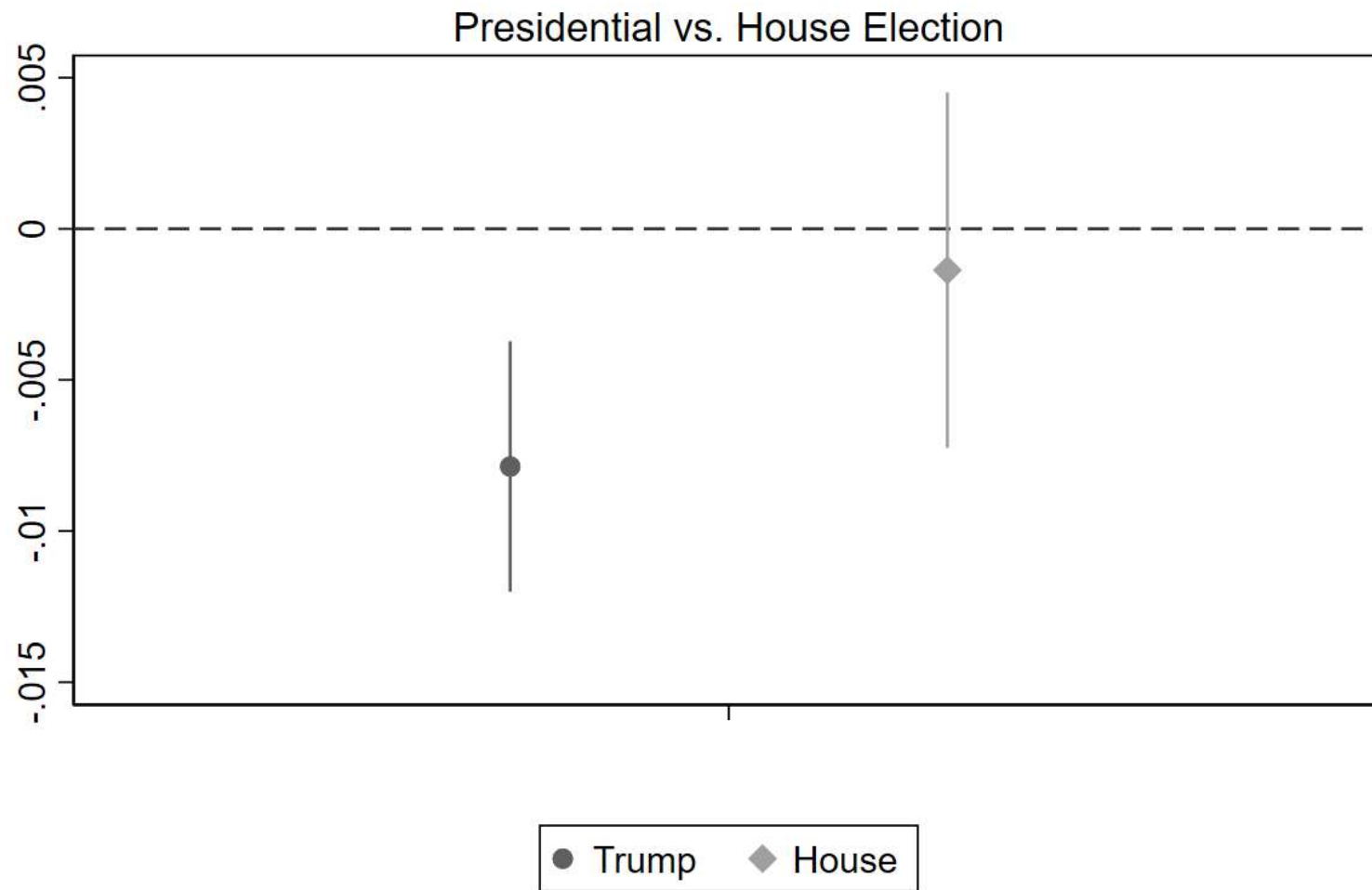


Approve of Mueller Investigation?



Graphs illustrate predicted difference in average response between those scoring one standard deviation below, versus one standard deviation above mean group empathy indicator score. Estimated generated using OLS regression, controlling for partisanship, ideology, race, gender religion, age, and educational attainment. Models incorporate survey weights and design effects

Figure Three: Marginal Effect of GEI on Predicted Probability of Voting for Republican Presidential and House of Representatives Candidate, 2020 ANES



Estimates indicate predicted effect of one-point increase in GEI measure on predicted probability of voting for Republican candidate. Estimates generated using logistic regression, controlling for partisanship, ideology, race, gender, religion, age, and educational attainment. Models incorporate survey weights and design effects

Appendix

Tables for Predicted Margins in Figures:

Figure One: Models from 2020 ANES

	(1) press criticize	(2) access	(3) protests
GEI	0.04 ^{***} (0.01)	0.03 [*] (0.01)	0.03 ^{***} (0.01)
PID	-0.12 ^{***} (0.01)	-0.18 ^{***} (0.02)	-0.23 ^{***} (0.02)
ideo	-0.12 ^{***} (0.02)	-0.25 ^{***} (0.03)	-0.27 ^{***} (0.03)
age	0.01 ^{***} (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 ^{**} (0.00)
educ	0.18 ^{***} (0.02)	0.20 ^{***} (0.03)	0.15 ^{***} (0.02)
male	0.35 ^{***} (0.05)	0.41 ^{***} (0.07)	0.20 ^{***} (0.04)
white	0.09 (0.05)	0.27 ^{***} (0.07)	-0.02 (0.05)
protestant	0.08 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.08)	-0.00 (0.05)
catholic	-0.02 (0.06)	0.15 [*] (0.07)	-0.24 ^{***} (0.07)
_cons	3.23 ^{***} (0.17)	5.24 ^{***} (0.27)	4.38 ^{***} (0.15)
<i>N</i>	5876	5867	5879
<i>R</i> ²	0.195	0.196	0.431

Figure One: Models from 2018 ANES

	(1) news_criticize	(2) protest	(3) media_gov
GEI	0.06*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)
pid	-0.13*** (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.29*** (0.02)
ideo	-0.15*** (0.04)	-0.10* (0.04)	-0.12*** (0.03)
birthyr	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
educ	0.19*** (0.04)	0.16*** (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
male	0.24* (0.09)	0.42*** (0.09)	-0.12 (0.07)
white	0.22 (0.12)	0.11 (0.12)	-0.05 (0.08)
protestant	-0.04 (0.11)	-0.05 (0.11)	-0.20** (0.08)
catholic	-0.40** (0.14)	-0.19 (0.13)	-0.12 (0.09)
_cons	12.59* (6.04)	13.66** (5.04)	8.76* (4.28)
<i>N</i>	1112	1110	2220
<i>R</i> ²	0.251	0.205	0.347

Figure Two: Models from 2020 ANES

	(1) auth_pres	(2) majority
GEI	0.03** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)
PID	-0.16*** (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.02)
ideo	-0.09** (0.03)	-0.07** (0.02)
age	0.01*** (0.00)	-0.00** (0.00)
educ	0.29*** (0.03)	0.14*** (0.02)
male	0.20** (0.07)	0.15** (0.05)
white	0.23** (0.07)	0.07 (0.05)
protestant	0.25** (0.08)	-0.04 (0.06)
catholic	0.08 (0.07)	-0.08 (0.05)
_cons	4.20*** (0.23)	3.11*** (0.15)
<i>N</i>	5868	5879
<i>R</i> ²	0.133	0.130

Figure Two: Models from 2018 ANES

	(1) strongpres	(2) muellerinv
GEI	0.02 (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.01)
pid	-0.22*** (0.04)	0.51*** (0.03)
ideo	-0.20*** (0.04)	0.23*** (0.04)
birthyr	0.01** (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)
educ	0.13** (0.04)	-0.08* (0.03)
male	0.17 (0.13)	0.22* (0.10)
white	0.28 (0.15)	-0.19 (0.11)
protestant	0.01 (0.15)	0.13 (0.11)
catholic	-0.01 (0.18)	-0.10 (0.13)
_cons	-21.17** (7.85)	12.31* (6.17)
<i>N</i>	1107	2200
<i>R</i> ²	0.157	0.427

Tables using Alternative Regression Models:

Figure One: Models from 2020 ANES, Using Ordered Logit

	(1) press_criticize	(2) access	(3) protests
GEI	0.07*** (0.01)	0.04** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
PID	-0.19*** (0.02)	-0.19*** (0.02)	-0.34*** (0.03)
ideo	-0.23*** (0.03)	-0.29*** (0.03)	-0.45*** (0.04)
age	0.01*** (0.00)	0.01** (0.00)	-0.01** (0.00)
educ	0.30*** (0.03)	0.23*** (0.03)	0.25*** (0.03)
male	0.57*** (0.08)	0.49*** (0.08)	0.37*** (0.06)
white	0.25** (0.08)	0.30*** (0.07)	-0.02 (0.09)
protestant	0.11 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.09)	0.01 (0.09)
catholic	-0.06 (0.09)	0.07 (0.07)	-0.37** (0.11)
/			
cut1	-1.58*** (0.26)	-2.86*** (0.30)	-3.48*** (0.25)
cut2	-0.87*** (0.25)	-2.04*** (0.28)	-3.32*** (0.25)
cut3	0.42 (0.25)	-1.90*** (0.28)	-1.33*** (0.25)
cut4	1.45*** (0.25)	-0.27 (0.28)	-0.45 (0.24)
cut5		-0.11	

		(0.28)	
cut6		0.77**	
		(0.27)	
<hr/> <i>N</i>	5876	5867	5879

Figure One: Models from 2018 ANES, Using Ordered Logit

	(1) news_criticize	(2) protest	(3) media_gov
GEI	0.11*** (0.02)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.10*** (0.02)
pid	-0.20*** (0.04)	-0.09 (0.05)	-0.43*** (0.03)
ideo	-0.23*** (0.06)	-0.18** (0.07)	-0.20*** (0.05)
birthyr	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
educ	0.29*** (0.06)	0.27*** (0.06)	0.02 (0.04)
male	0.36* (0.14)	0.70*** (0.17)	-0.13 (0.11)
white	0.39* (0.17)	0.24 (0.21)	0.01 (0.13)
protestant	-0.12 (0.17)	-0.19 (0.19)	-0.30* (0.12)
catholic	-0.61** (0.21)	-0.41 (0.22)	-0.17 (0.15)
/			
cut1	-12.79 (9.40)	-18.23* (9.04)	-10.33 (7.15)
cut2	-11.88 (9.39)	-17.19 (9.04)	-9.34 (7.16)
cut3	-10.66 (9.39)	-16.01 (9.04)	-7.97 (7.15)
cut4	-9.66 (9.38)	-15.16 (9.04)	-7.17 (7.14)
<i>N</i>	1112	1110	2220

Figure Two: Models from 2020 ANES, Using Ordered Logit

	(1) auth_pres	(2) majority
GEI	0.05*** (0.01)	0.10*** (0.01)
PID	-0.19*** (0.02)	-0.10*** (0.02)
ideo	-0.11*** (0.03)	-0.12** (0.04)
age	0.02*** (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)
educ	0.30*** (0.03)	0.20*** (0.03)
male	0.23** (0.07)	0.26** (0.08)
white	0.25** (0.07)	0.07 (0.08)
protestant	0.28** (0.09)	-0.03 (0.10)
catholic	0.06 (0.08)	-0.14 (0.08)
/		
cut1	-1.79*** (0.25)	-2.28*** (0.23)
cut2	-0.75** (0.24)	-0.78** (0.23)
cut3	-0.57* (0.24)	0.50* (0.22)
cut4	0.76** (0.24)	1.82*** (0.22)
cut5	0.92*** (0.24)	

cut6	1.87*** (0.23)	
<hr/>		
<i>N</i>	5868	5879

Figure Two: Models from 2018 ANES, Using Ordered Logit

	(1) strongpres	(2) muellerinv
main		
GEI	0.01 (0.02)	-0.07*** (0.02)
pid	-0.25*** (0.04)	0.55*** (0.03)
ideo	-0.20*** (0.05)	0.25*** (0.04)
birthyr	0.01** (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
educ	0.13** (0.04)	-0.10** (0.04)
male	0.15 (0.13)	0.23* (0.11)
white	0.27 (0.15)	-0.25* (0.13)
protestant	-0.01 (0.15)	0.20 (0.12)
catholic	0.00 (0.19)	0.01 (0.14)
/		
cut1	25.12** (8.53)	-4.76 (7.22)
cut2	25.92** (8.53)	-4.11 (7.23)
cut3	26.74** (8.52)	-3.62 (7.23)
cut4	27.92** (8.54)	-1.92 (7.23)
cut5	28.47*** (8.53)	-1.65 (7.23)

cut6	29.08*** (8.53)	-1.24 (7.23)
<hr/>		
<i>N</i>	1107	2200
<i>R</i> ²		
adj. <i>R</i> ²		
pseudo <i>R</i> ²		
<hr/>		

Figure Three: Logit Models for President and House Voting

	(1) pres_vote*	(2) house_vote*
GEI	-0.09*** (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
PID	0.86*** (0.06)	0.58*** (0.04)
ideo	0.75*** (0.08)	0.57*** (0.05)
age	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.00)
educ	-0.24** (0.08)	-0.10 (0.07)
male	-0.52*** (0.14)	-0.10 (0.13)
white	0.49* (0.22)	0.47** (0.17)
protestant	-0.16 (0.23)	0.15 (0.18)
catholic	0.14 (0.20)	-0.07 (0.18)
_cons	-5.86*** (0.50)	-4.51*** (0.53)
<i>N</i>	4854	4353

*Binary variable – 1 = Vote for Republican candidate, 0 otherwise. Analysis limited to respondents that reporting they voted in the post-election wave

Question Wording for Items in Figures auth pres majority

Figure One:

- “How important is it that news organizations are free to criticize political leaders?” (2020 ANES; five point scale ranging from “Not at all important” (1) to “Extremely Important” (5))
- “Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose elected officials restricting journalists’ access to information about government decision-making?” (2020 ANES; seven point scale ranging from “Favor a great deal” (1) to “Oppose a great deal” (7))
- “During the past few months, would you say that most of the actions taken by protestors to get the things they want have been violent, or have most of these actions by protestors been peaceful, or have these actions been equally violent and peaceful?” (2020 ANES; five point scale ranging from “A lot more violent” (1) to “A lot more peaceful” (5))
- “How important are each of the following to the United States maintaining a strong democracy?... News organizations are free to criticize political leaders” (2018 ANES; five point scale ranging from “Not at all important” (1) to “Extremely Important” (5))
- “How important are each of the following to the United States maintaining a strong democracy?... People are free to peacefully protest” (2018 ANES; five point scale ranging from “Not at all important” (1) to “Extremely Important” (5))
- “How concerned are you that some people in the government today might want to undermine the news media’s ability to serve as a check on governmental power?” (2018 ANES; five point scale ranging from “Not at all concerned” (1) to “Extremely concerned” (5))

Figure Two:

- “Would it be helpful, harmful, or neither helpful nor harmful if U.S. presidents could work on the country’s problems without paying attention to what Congress and the courts say?” (2020 ANES; seven point scale ranging from “Extremely helpful” (1) to “Extremely harmful” (7))
- “Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with the following statement? ‘The will of the majority should always prevail, even over the rights of minorities.’” (2020 ANES; five point scale ranging from “Agree strongly” (1) to “Disagree strongly” (5))
- “How helpful or harmful would it be if U.S. presidents could work on the country’s problems without worrying so much about opposition from Congress or the courts?” (2018 ANES; seven point scale ranging from “Extremely helpful” (1) to “Extremely harmful” (7))
- “Do you approve, disapprove, or neither approve nor disapprove of Robert Mueller’s investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 election?” (2018 ANES; seven point

scale ranging from “Approve extremely strongly” (1) to “Disapprove extremely strongly” (7)