Are You a Team Player?
Executives, Coalition Politics, and Partisan Polarization

John V. Kane
Department of Political Science
Stony Brook University
John.V.Kane@stonybrook.edu

Keywords: Party Identification; Groups; Coalitions; Cues; Trust; Compromise
ABSTRACT

Despite high levels of elite polarization, it remains the case that executives frequently disappoint groups in their party’s coalition, particularly during non-election periods. Synthesizing several important literatures, I offer a conceptualization of the parties as “teams of groups,” and theorize that an executive’s relations with groups in his or her party’s coalition serves as a key signal concerning the degree to which s/he is a “team player.” Using data from both survey experiments and national surveys, I consistently find that partisans are indeed sensitive to whether executives please or upset their party’s “base” of support, demonstrating a willingness to update approval of, and trust in, their executives. In addition, such cues appear capable of increasing partisans’ support for bipartisan policy compromise with an outparty executive. The results have important implications for how we understand partisan polarization in the mass public, as well as how it might be overcome.
“Judge me by the enemies I have made.”
--Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1932

Except perhaps in the rare instances in which one party commands complete control over the legislative and executive branches, the task of governing requires compromise. This is especially true for executives, who, whether at the national, state, or local level, are expected to demonstrate that they wield meaningful influence over the legislative process and can successfully bring together “both sides of the aisle” (Lee 2013). Executives, particularly in an era of intense partisan polarization (Hetherington and Rudolph 2015; Mason 2015), operate in a highly constrained environment, sharing what Kousser and Phillips (2012, 2) identify as a common problem: "unlimited expectations but limited powers." Bargaining, deciding which agendas to pursue and which to abandon, locating and exploiting political leverage—such is the plight of the executive (e.g., Aberbach and Rockman 1999; Edwards 2012; Kousser and Phillips 2012; Redlawsk 2015). The risk, of course, is that in an effort to govern, executives may disappoint their party’s coalition—i.e., the various groups that are known to constitute each party’s “base” of political support (Grossmann and Hopkins 2015; Miller, Wlezien, and Hildreth 1991). Thus, while the current state of governance in the U.S. can generally be characterized as polarized and prone to gridlock (Fiorina et al. 2010; Klarner et al. 2012), this is certainly not the entire story—quite often, executives alienate their party’s base.

Yet despite the long history and prevalence of dissension between executives and their party’s coalition (e.g., Chambers 1963; Neustadt 1991), as well as the incentives for major media to report on it (e.g., see Groeling 2010), we know very little about whether such disloyalty comes with consequences for public opinion and behavior. Much contemporary scholarship would seem to suggest not. First, when it comes to evaluating the favorability and trustworthiness of various political targets (e.g., executives, parties, policies), an enormous literature emphasizes the primacy of party identification over other concerns, particularly matters related to public policy (Campbell et al.
1960; Cohen 2003; Hetherington and Rudolph 2015; Iyengar et al. 2012; Lenz 2012). Second, the growing literature on partisan motivated reasoning demonstrates that partisans readily discount information that is inconsistent with their existing political beliefs (Lodge and Taber 2013). But while extremely valuable, both of these literatures tend to neglect research showing that the evaluation of political objects, and even partisanship itself, is in part a function of feelings toward societal groups (Green et al. 2002; Miller et al. 1991; Miller and Wlezien 1993).

This study seeks to synthesize these disparate literatures by examining how citizens respond to cues involving relationships between executives and politically-aligned groups. In doing so, I offer a conceptualization of the parties as, in effect, two great teams, each comprising distinct societal groups (e.g., racial, religious, geographic, economic, ideological, social, etc.) (Campbell et al. 2011; Mason 2016; Newport 2009). Operating within this conceptual framework, I theorize that executives’ relationships with politically-aligned groups signal meaningful information about the executive to partisan citizens. Specifically, how an executive interacts with the groups in his or her party’s coalition should signal whether the executive is committed to “the team,” which, in turn, should affect how he or she is perceived in terms of both favorability and trustworthiness.

While the phenomenon of teamsmanship has been identified among members of Congress (Lee 2009; Lee 2013; Lee 2015; see also Hetherington and Rudolph 2015), it remains underdeveloped for understanding political attitudes and behavior in the mass public. The outcomes of this study are therefore important for how we understand American politics in our polarized era. If citizens are not responsive to cues involving executive interactions with groups (e.g., when executives alienate groups in their party’s coalition), it would suggest that simple “party cues” wield a power over political behavior that is perhaps even greater than scholars have heretofore supposed. But if, on the other hand, citizens are responsive to cues involving politically-aligned groups, it
would suggest that the public is attentive to more than just mere party labels—an equally important consideration may be the extent to which executives appear loyal and committed to “the team.”

To test whether citizens’ attitudes are indeed sensitive to relations between executives and politically-aligned groups, I employ a variety of methods. First, I report the results of survey experiments that featured real-world state governors and manipulated whether these governors appeased or alienated groups in their party’s coalition. Second, I merged multiple nationally representative data sets to investigate whether Democrats and Republicans updated their approval of President Obama after the controversial 2010 budget compromise. This event is particularly useful to explore insofar as it represented a key instance in which President Obama was widely reported to have alienated various groups associated with the Democratic Party, as confirmed by a thorough content analysis of media coverage in the days following the event.

Across each of these studies, the results consistently demonstrate that partisans are indeed receptive to cues involving how executives interact with politically-aligned groups. When an executive betrays—rather than pleases—the groups in his or her party, the executive enjoys greater approval from, and is perceived as more trustworthy by, members of the outparty. Moreover, these partisans become more supportive of policy compromise between the executive and their own party. The results therefore provide important insights into the nature of partisan polarization in the United States and how it can potentially be overcome.

GROUPS AS SOURCES OF POLITICAL ORIENTATION

In his classic study, Converse (1964) found that a plurality of the public understood politics in terms of groups and group interests (see also Achen and Bartels 2016; Campbell et al. 1960). This landmark finding was replicated by Lewis-Beck et al. (2008, Ch. 10). Similarly, analyzing NES respondents’ “likes” and “dislikes” of the two parties from 1980-2004, Lavine et al. (2012, 67) find
that comments concerning group associations were among the most frequent types of comments. A key conclusion emerging from such findings is that, in order to make sense of the political world, what many citizens require is a clear signal communicating how a party or candidate relates to particular *groups*—e.g., racial, religious, geographic, ideological, economic, etc. (Converse 1964, 14). Indeed, scholars have long noted this “group-centric” dimension of American public opinion, wherein citizens evaluate political matters with a keen attentiveness to how various groups stand to benefit (Nelson and Kinder 1996; see also Glaser and Ryan 2013).

Such findings become especially important once we consider the well-established influence of the “party cue.” For example, recent research shows that when respondents are aware of the parties’ positions on an issue, this can have a larger effect on political attitudes than the content of the issue itself, and that this effect becomes even stronger as the parties are said to be more polarized over the issue (Cohen 2003; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013; cf. Bullock 2011). Similarly, Lavine et al. (2012) find that those who are most biased toward their own party are also the most likely to not be concerned with issues when issues and party come into conflict (see also Carsey and Layman 2006).

That party cues can mitigate—and potentially override—issue-based considerations is therefore of obvious importance for understanding the American polity. But such findings raise a deeper question about the nature of partisanship itself—i.e., *why* party cues should carry the weight that they do. Again, following previous research, a key premise of this study is that citizens have non-neutral feelings toward various groups in society, and that these feelings function as simple compasses that many citizens use to navigate and evaluate much of the political world. Thus, to the extent that a given group is perceived as aligned with a particular party, feelings toward that group should then inform and structure attitudes toward the party and the party’s elites (Miller, Wlezien,
and Hildreth 1991). In other words, party cues may be so effectual precisely because, in the minds of many citizens, behind each party label stands a team of societal groups (e.g., see Achen and Bartels 2016).

A “TEAMS-OF-GROUPS” APPROACH TO COALITION POLITICS

Since the founding of the republic, scholars have noted that parties represent a coalition of various groups, factions and interests (Chambers 1963; Lipset 1978). In an effort to synthesize the sizable literatures on party identification and “group-centrism,” I employ a conceptualization of the parties as “teams of groups.” This is because there exist multiple groups in society (e.g., racial, religious, social, ideological, geographic, economic, etc.) that are, and are widely perceived to be, disproportionately sorted into, or aligned with, one of the two dominant political parties (Chambers, Schlenker, and Colilsson 2013; Green et al. 2002; Levendusky 2009; Mason 2016; Miller et al. 1991; Newport 2009; Popkin 1994). The groups that are highly aligned with a party (e.g., in terms of voting, identification, etc.) can be said to constitute that party’s base—its core groups that leaders of the party must often be concerned with appeasing (e.g., Hillygus and Shields 2009; Newport 2009; Petrocik 1996, 828–29). In part because the groups which constitute each party’s base have been largely (though never monolithically (Sundquist 1983, 39)) aligned under the same superordinate group (i.e., the party) for the past several decades, partisans can easily conceive of these various groups as being “on the same team.” As observed by Lewis-Beck et al. (2008, 317), “the party is a sort of ‘supergroup’ with respect to politics [and] membership in it will usually wield more political influence than membership in any social group.”

Particularly given the competitive nature of politics in the United States, this systematic sorting of key societal groups into one of the two parties likely encourages greater negative affect toward the “other team” as a whole (Huddy 2013; Mason 2016; Miller, Wlezien, and Hildreth 1991;
Roccas and Brewer 2002). Indeed, Iyengar et al. (2012, 9) find that, over time, “partisans [have come to] like their opponents less and less” (see also Pew Research Center 2014), leading the authors to state that the public is affectively, rather than ideologically, polarized. Consequently, as Hetherington and Rudolph (2015) demonstrate, partisans have become less trusting of the government when the government is run by members of the outparty, and also less willing to support policy compromise with “the other team.”

By integrating a “teams-of-groups” approach to politics, on one hand, with the notion that affect toward salient societal groups is of fundamental importance for citizens’ own political orientations, it stands to reason that the ways in which elites relate to, or interact with, politically-aligned groups should send meaningful signals to partisans in the mass public. For example, a recent study found that a political figure who identifies as an evangelical Christian vis-à-vis a member of a less politically-aligned religious group (e.g., Catholics) encounters more support from Republicans (and more opposition from Democrats), regardless of these partisans’ own religious identification (Campbell et al. 2011; see also Medermott 2006). Thus, from a broader, “teams-of-groups” perspective, it should be the case that relations between an elite and groups in his or her party’s coalition communicate the extent to which the elite is beholden to, or acting merely as an agent of, these groups—i.e., the extent to which the elite is a “team player.”

THE PITFALLS OF COALITION POLITICS

Despite the sizable increase in elite partisan polarization (Poole and Rosenthal 2007), it must be emphasized that relations between executives and the groups on their team are often not harmonious, particularly during the normal course of governing (i.e., in the interims between elections (e.g., Chambers 1963, 46)). Instances in which executives “alienate the base”—i.e., disappoint a particular group that is aligned with the executive’s party—abound in the media at the
national, state and local level. President Obama, to take one prominent example, has frequently been criticized for alienating the base of the Democratic Party throughout his presidency.\(^1\) Perhaps largely stemming from the fact that the U.S. has (effectively) only two parties, the alienation of one or more key groups within each party’s coalition is practically an inevitability (Popkin 1994, 53).

Given the aforementioned literature, and in combination with research on citizen inferences of elite traits, it is reasonable to suspect that when an executive alienates groups aligned with his or her party, it should affect the extent to which partisans view the executive as both favorable and trustworthy. Specifically, when an executive in the outparty is seen as less of a “team player,” he or she should be perceived as more likeable and trustworthy by inparty members, all else being equal. For example, compared to when a Democratic governor appears to be strongly aligned with groups in the Democratic political base (e.g., liberals, African Americans, environmentalists, etc.), a Democratic governor who alienates these groups should be perceived as less aligned with his or her team and, therefore, viewed as more favorable and trustworthy by Republicans.

Broadly speaking, then, a disliked executive who subsequently displeases one’s “enemies” should begin to look more like a “friend.”\(^2\) In such cases, the executive should enjoy greater approval and be perceived as more trustworthy by outparty partisans. Stated formally:

**H1. “Enemy of My Enemies” Hypothesis:** Partisans should improve evaluations of an outparty executive as the executive appears less aligned with groups in his or her party’s coalition.

---

1 For prominent examples, see Chapman 2010; Condon 2010; Halloran 2013; James 2011; Meckler and Weisman 2010; Wheaton 2015; Wolfgang 2013; Wyler 2013.
2 This expectation is consistent with psychological research demonstrating individuals’ need to achieve psychological “balance” in response to new information about how multiple objects are related (Heider 1946). For example, a Republican may look upon Democrats negatively, and thus a Democratic governor negatively as well. But if this governor alienates other Democrats, the Republican will likely be cognitively motivated to view the governor more positively.
Because inparty members are likely to strive for cohesion within the team (Marques and Yzerbyt 1988; Roccas and Brewer 2002), we should also expect that executives who are willing to alienate groups in their own party’s coalition will be perceived as less of a team player by inparty members. Such a perception among inparty partisans should lead to lower approval and less trust than if the executive had acted in a typically partisan fashion. Common political epithets such as “RINO” and “DINO” (Republican/Democrat “in name only,” respectively) can be said to reflect such distrust of co-partisan elites (e.g., see Martin 2015; Reuters 2014). Stated formally:

**H2. “Traitor to the Team” Hypothesis:** Partisans should lower evaluations of an inparty executive as the executive appears less aligned with groups in his or her party’s coalition. ³

Importantly, the expectations specified in H1 and H2 stem from previous research suggesting a link between the actions, stances, and affiliations of elites and the traits (e.g., trustworthiness) they are perceived to have (e.g., Funk 1996; Hayes 2005), but are specifically concerned with interactions between elites and politically-aligned groups. It is worth noting that similar results would be expected if H1 and H2 concerned executive relations with explicitly partisan groups (i.e., “Democrats” and “Republicans”). However, testing such hypotheses would do little to illuminate the extent to which partisans might update attitudes based on cues involving politically-aligned groups rather than simple party cues.

Moreover, as both H1 and H2 treat trust as an outcome, it is worth emphasizing that perceptions of trustworthiness are of considerable political consequence. Heavily influenced by partisan considerations (Hetherington and Rudolph 2015; Iyengar and Westwood 2015), perceptions of trustworthiness have been shown to be strong predictors of overall evaluations of political elites, including members of Congress and presidential candidates (Funk 1996; Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk 1986; Miller 1990). Moreover, as Hetherington (2005, 51) argues, “Other things equal, if

³ The following analyses will feature both approval and perceived trustworthiness as outcome variables. However, in the interest of brevity, the hypotheses refer to “evaluations” more generally.
people perceive the architect of policies as untrustworthy, they will reject its policies; if they consider it trustworthy, they will be more inclined to embrace them.” Bipartisan perceptions of trustworthiness, in other words, appear to be a key prerequisite for mitigating polarization and overcoming political gridlock.

Finally, a well-known symptom of political polarization is a rigid unwillingness to compromise with the other team (Gutmann and Thompson 2010; Harbridge, Malhotra, and Harrison 2014). Might relations between an executive and his or her party’s base affect partisans’ willingness to support bipartisan policy compromise? Relying upon the reasoning outlined above, inparty members should also be more amenable to compromising with an outparty executive who is not perceived as beholden to groups on the other team. Stated formally:

**H3. “Policy Compromise Hypothesis”:** *Partisans should be more willing to support policy compromise with an outparty executive as the executive appears less aligned with groups in his or her party’s coalition.*

In sum, tests of these hypotheses stand to provide important insights into the contemporary nature of partisan polarization in the United States, as well as potential pathways toward overcoming it. If executives’ relations with their respective party’s base do in fact matter for favorability, trust, and support for compromise, executives may be able to devise better strategies for navigating the difficult process of governing during polarized times.

**DATA AND ANALYSES**

The present section is organized as follows: I first report results from survey experiments featuring real-world state governors. Second, I report results from content and data analyses surrounding a potentially instructive event during the early part of the Obama presidency: the federal budget compromise of 2010. In each case, the key independent variable of interest is whether the featured executive appeases or alienates groups in his or her party’s coalition.
Survey Experiments

To test the aforementioned hypotheses, survey experiments were conducted between the Spring of 2015 and January 2016. The first set of studies—hereafter, the MTurk study—had a total sample of 1,012 adult U.S. citizens, and was collected online via Amazon.com’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk) (see Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz 2012). The second study—hereafter, the Qualtrics study—had a sample of 1,002 American adult citizens, and was collected online by Qualtrics. In the Qualtrics study, quotas were used to ensure that the sample would be nationally representative on three key demographic variables: age, race/ethnicity, and geographic region. The samples obtained are comparable, on a variety of theoretically relevant measures, to the samples of other widely-used surveys such as the ANES (see Table 1).

Experimental Design

The design of the MTurk and Qualtrics experiments are substantively identical in many respects. Each features a partisan governor who, in proposing a particular change to the state budget, either appeases or alienates a group (or groups) in his or her party’s coalition. In the MTurk study, respondents were randomly assigned to read a (fabricated) news story wherein either Republican Governor Terry Branstad (R-Iowa) or Governor Mark Dayton (D-Minnesota) appealed or alienated a group in his party’s coalition. In the Qualtrics study, a key objective was to have citizens evaluate an executive with whom they were already likely somewhat familiar. To accomplish this, respondents indicated their home state at the start of the survey. The survey was programmed such that this information allowed for identification of each respondent’s own governor, as well as whether the respondent lived in a state headed by a Republican or Democratic governor. Then,
“blocking” on the latter variable (see Gerber and Green 2012), respondents were randomly assigned to one of two conditions which referenced the respondent’s own state governor by name. (For details on question and treatment wordings, see the Supplemental Appendix.)

In both studies, the two conditions informed each respondent that the governor would soon release a budget proposal for the coming fiscal year. This budget proposal was said to “closely mirror” the budget of the previous year, but would also “include funding for a state-of-the-art weather detection system” (MTurk study) or “decrease funding for the state’s courts and detention systems” (Qualtrics study). In taking this position (which did not itself vary within either experiment), the governor is reported to have either pleased specific groups that are widely perceived as being aligned with the governor’s party (Base Appeasement), or to have displeased these same
groups (*Base Alienation*). Table 2 lists the specific groups that were mentioned for Republican governors and the groups mentioned for Democratic governors in each study.

There are several features of the experiments that are worth highlighting. First, the decision regarding which groups to include in the experiment’s vignettes was directly informed by previous research. Having surveyed citizens about their perceptions of the Republican and Democratic Party coalitions, Campbell et al. (2010, see Table 2) identified conservatives, Evangelical Christians, business, and gun owners as the top four groups, respectively, that citizens associate with the Republican Party, and liberals/progressives, labor unions, environmentalists, and African Americans as the top four groups, respectively, that citizens associate with the Democratic Party. These were therefore the groups featured in the two experiments. Second, the Qualtrics study did *not* explicitly state that the featured groups are Democratic- or Republican-leaning, which makes for particularly conservative tests of the hypotheses. Third, because the featured executive’s proposal was held constant across conditions, this policy stance cannot explain any treatment effects we observe. Fourth, the decision to embed the governor’s proposal within the context of the budget was informed by existing research on governors’ common use of the state budget to effect preferred policy goals (Kousser and Phillips 2012). Finally, in the Qualtrics Study, directly referencing respondents’ own state governors in both the experimental vignette and outcome measures served not only to enhance the realism of the study, but to also subject the hypotheses to a far more conservative test insofar as changing attitudes toward known vis-à-vis unknown partisan targets should be more difficult (Lodge and Taber 2013).

*Measures*

The key independent variable is *Treatment*, a dummy variable indicating whether respondents were assigned to the *Base Appeasement* condition (=0), wherein the governor featured in
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2. Overview of MTurk &amp; Qualtrics Survey Experiment Designs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MTurk Study</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variable Manipulated</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governor Featured in Vignette</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Budget Issue Highlighted</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Groups Appeased or Alienated by Governor’s Stance on Budget Issue</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome Measures</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes:* In the MTurk study, respondents were randomly assigned to read a fabricated news story in which either Governor Branstad or Governor Dayton 1) appeased, or 2) alienated a group in the governor’s party’s coalition. In the Qualtrics study, respondents were first identified as residing in states with a Republican governor or states with a Democratic governor. Then, blocking on this variable, respondents were randomly assigned to read a (fabricated) story in which their own state governor (who was referenced by name) either 1) appeased, or 2) alienated groups in the governor’s party’s coalition. In both studies, the budget issue highlighted in the news story, as well as the governor’s stance on it, remained constant across conditions.

the vignette pleases a group(s) associated with his or her party’s base, or the *Base Alienation* condition (=1), wherein the governor featured in the vignette displeases a group(s) associated with his or her party’s base.\(^4\) The primary dependent variables are: Favorability (MTurk study), which captures each respondent’s perceived favorability of the featured governor, and is measured on a seven-point scale with higher values indicating greater favorability; and, Trust (Qualtrics study), which captures each respondent’s perception of his or her respective governor’s trustworthiness on a

---

\(^4\) In both of the experiments, *Base Appeasement* serves as the baseline condition. In addition to preserving statistical power, this choice was informed by previous research which identified the groups mentioned in the experimental vignettes as being widely perceived to be aligned with one of the political parties (e.g., Campbell et al. 2010). In other words, the groups that are being “appeased” are, in expectation, already perceived as aligned with the executive. Nevertheless, the design of the Qualtrics study did permit some investigation of whether *Base Appeasement or Base Alienation* was driving treatment effects (see below for more details).
seven-point scale, with higher values indicating greater trustworthiness. Respondents in the Qualtrics study were also asked “How willing would you be to support policy compromise between Governor [respondent’s governor’s name] and the [Republican (if the governor is a Democrat) / Democratic (if the governor is a Republican)] Party?” Responses were measured on a five-point scale ranging from “Unwilling” (=1) to “Willing” (=5).

In addition, a series of theoretically relevant covariates were measured at the start of each survey. These covariates include each respondent’s race, gender, religious identification, income, party identification, self-placement on the seven-point ideological scale (Ideology; higher values indicate more conservative identification), and self-reported political interest in “information about what’s going on in government in politics,” ranging from “Not at all interested” to “Extremely interested” (Interest). Finally, because trust in one’s governor likely varies for a multitude of reasons across U.S. states, a pre-treatment measure of Trust was also included in the Qualtrics survey (see analyses below). Consistent with previous research, respondents who identified as partisans, or leaning toward a party, were coded as either Democrats or Republicans (see Hawkins and Nosek 2012; Petrocik 2009).

Experimental Results for H1 & H2

Does the manner in which a governor relates to his or her party’s political base, even on issues with little policy substance, matter for the extent to which the governor is liked and trusted by partisan citizens? Table 3 reports ordered logistic regression results for each subgroup in the MTurk study, with the first model featuring only Treatment, and the second model controlling for group imbalances on theoretically-relevant covariates (measured pre-treatment) to better estimate treatment
effects and improve model efficiency (Mutz and Pemantle 2015). For H1 to find empirical support, the coefficient on Treatment should be positive for Democrats evaluating Republican Governor Branstad and for Republicans evaluating Democratic Governor Dayton. This is indeed precisely the pattern we observe, with the effects obtaining at least marginal statistical significance despite modest sample sizes. Moreover, the bottom row indicates that the effects were substantively large, with Treatment leading to a .25 and .08 increase in the probability of finding the governor favorable, respectively. In contrast, for H2 to find support, we should observe a negative coefficient on Treatment for Democrats evaluating the Democratic governor and for Republicans evaluating the Republican governor. Again, this is exactly what we observe, with effect sizes being substantively large, always in the correct direction, and always attaining at least marginal statistical significance. The MTurk study, therefore, provides strong initial support for both H1 and H2.

TABLE 3. Coalition Politics & Partisans’ Perceived Favorability of Governors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Governor Branstad (R-Iowa)</th>
<th>Governor Dayton (D-Minnesota)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treatment</strong></td>
<td>1.30***</td>
<td>1.30***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.24)</td>
<td>(.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Covariates</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.71)</td>
<td>(.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.49)</td>
<td>(.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R²</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∆ pr(y=Favorable)</td>
<td>+.25</td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: MTurk Study. Dependent variable is evaluation of the target (1=Highly unfavorable; 4=Neutral; 7=Highly favorable). “Treatment” represents going from the Republican (Democratic) governor appeasing conservatives (liberals) (0) to alienating conservatives (liberals) (1). Second model for each group includes theoretically-relevant covariates. All covariates were measured pre-treatment and were recoded to range between 0 and 1. Coefficients were estimated using an ordered logistic regression model given that over 75% of cases ranged between 3 and 5 on the dependent variable (cut-points not shown; standard errors in parentheses). ∆ pr(y=Favorable) indicates change in predicted probability of perceiving the governor as favorable (i.e., values of the dependent variable greater than 4) with covariates at their means. †=p<.10; *=p<.05; **=p<.01; ***p<.001 (one-tailed hypothesis tests).

5 As discussed in the notes for Table 3, ordered-logistic—rather than OLS—regression was used due to relatively little actual variation in the dependent variable (i.e., though a seven-point scale, the vast majority of responses ranged between 3 and 5).
Turning now to the Qualtrics study, Figure 1 again provides strong evidence in favor of H1 and H2. Looking first at those with a Republican state governor, Republican respondents in the Base Appeasement condition, unsurprisingly, trust their governor by roughly 20 percentage points more than do Democratic respondents. However, this difference between Republican and Democratic trust decreases by more than 9 percentage points as we move from the Base Appeasement condition to the Base Alienation condition, indicating a considerable reduction in polarized trust. Consistent with H1, this evidence suggests that Democrats became more trusting of their outparty governor when the governor was no longer as closely aligned with commonly known Republican-leaning groups. At least in terms of overall group means, however, we do not observe a statistically significant decline in Trust among Republican respondents with a Republican governor.

FIGURE 1. Coalition Politics & Partisan Polarization in Trust of State Governors

Notes: Qualtrics Study. Dependent variable is perceived trustworthiness of respondent’s state governor, recoded here to range between 0 (lowest trust) and 1 (highest trust) for interpretive ease. The “Base Appeasement” condition involves the respondent’s state governor pleasing his/her party’s base; the “Base Alienation” condition involves the respondent’s state governor alienating his/her party’s base. All within-condition differences (i.e., between Democrats and Republicans) are statistically significant at conventional levels (p<.05). The difference-in-difference measure indicates the change in partisan polarized trust going from Base Appeasement to Base Alienation, first among partisans with a Republican governor, then among partisans with a Democratic governor. For both Republican and Democratic governors, partisans’ trust in their governors is less polarized when the governor is not aligned with the party’s base. *** significant at p<.001 level (one-tailed hypothesis tests).
Turning now to respondents with a Democratic state governor, Figure 1 again illustrates a decline in partisan-polarized trust around the governors. In fact, polarization around Democratic governors declined by an impressive 20 percentage points when going from the Base Appeasement condition to the Base Alienation condition. And, in contrast to the previous case, both Democrats and Republicans significantly altered perceptions of their state governor: Republicans bestowed upon their Democratic governors greater trust when they perceived the governor to be less of a team player, while Democrats, by contrast, found their inparty governor to be less trustworthy upon learning that he or she is not a team player.

While the differences in experimental group means certainly offer additional support for H1 and H2, we can investigate the robustness of these results using multivariate regression models. Table 4 reports OLS regression results for respondents in the Qualtrics study. Again, H1 predicts that the sign on Treatment should be positive for Democrats (Republicans) with a Republican (Democratic) governor, while H2 predicts that the sign should be negative for Democrats (Republicans) with a Democratic (Republican) governor. This is precisely the pattern observed in Table 4. The first regression model for each subgroup displays the change in average Trust going from Base Appeasement to Base Alienation, therein reproducing the between-condition effects for each partisan group observed in Figure 1. The second regression model builds upon the first by including several theoretically-relevant variables (all measured at the start of the survey). Controlling for citizens’ pre-treatment levels of Trust, ideological self-placement, and political interest, the size, direction, and statistical significance of the treatment effects remain substantively intact. A notable exception occurs for Republicans with a Republican governor, where the more robust regression model reveals a sizable, and statistically significant, treatment effect. Overall, then, consistent support was found for both H1 and H2 in the Qualtrics study, with treatment effect sizes ranging
from 5 to 11 percent and, despite relatively modest sample sizes, nearly always attaining at least marginal statistical significance.\(^6\)

**TABLE 4. Coalition Politics & Partisans’ Trust in Their State Governors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Republican State Governor</th>
<th>Democratic State Governor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>0.44**</td>
<td>0.35**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covariates</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Trust</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.54***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-0.56*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.34)</td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
<td>(0.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.30)</td>
<td>(0.34)</td>
<td>(0.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.12***</td>
<td>1.66***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td>(0.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R(^2)</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes: Qualtrics Study. Dependent variable is perceived trustworthiness of respondent’s Democratic state governor (1=Highly Untrustworthy; 7=Highly Trustworthy). Treatment represents going from the respondent’s Republican (Democratic) state governor appeasing groups in the Republican (Democratic) Party’s political base (0) to alienating groups in the Republican (Democratic) Party’s base (1). Pre-Trust is a measure of the dependent variable prior to assignment to treatment. Ideology indicates respondent self-placement on the seven-point ideology scale (1=Extremely Liberal; 7=Extremely Conservative). Interest indicates respondent self-reported interest in “information about what’s going on in government and politics” (1=Not Interested At All; 5=Extremely Interested). Ideology and Interest were measured pre-treatment and were recoded to range between zero and one. Coefficients were estimated using OLS regression (standard errors in parentheses). †=p<.10; *=p<.05; **=p<.01; ***p<.001 (one-tailed hypothesis tests).*

As the experiments did not feature a “pure control” condition, the inclusion of a pre-treatment measure of trust in one’s governor (Pre-Trust) was also useful in that it allowed for investigation into whether the Base Appeasement condition itself significantly affected Trust. Overall, differences between Pre-Trust and Trust in the Base Appeasement condition were substantively small and not statistically significant at conventional levels, meaning that most of the treatment effect on Trust is driven by the Base Alienation information rather than the Base Appeasement information. However,

\(^6\) It is notable that, across the two surveys, there is a slight tendency for treatment effects to be larger for Democrats, and Ideology to only be a significant covariate among Republicans. Interestingly, this pattern fits recent research which argues that Democrats are more concerned with societal groups, whereas Republicans are more concerned with ideology (Grossmann and Hopkins 2015). That being said, the results of this study consistently demonstrate that groups remain relevant for both Democrats and Republicans.
for governors who, in reality, have frequently upset their political base, it is understandable—and perfectly consistent with the argument of this paper—that the *Base Appeasement* condition exerted its own effect on *Trust*. The larger point, therefore, is that relations between an executive and his or her party’s base—whether friendly or hostile in nature—can matter for how the executive is evaluated.

Lastly, a reasonable concern is that, because the Qualtrics Study featured specific social groups in the experimental vignettes (e.g., African Americans, Evangelical Christians, and business groups), it is respondents’ membership in these social groups—and not their identification as *Democrats or Republicans* more broadly—that is actually driving the results. For example, because the Republican governors were said to have alienated Evangelical Christians, perhaps it is only Christian Republicans—rather than Republicans in general—who were responsive to the treatment. This possibility was tested by specifying three separate interactive regression models, each looking at treatment effects among groups that 1) were in some way referenced in one of the experimental vignettes, and 2) could be identified using responses to pre-treatment questions in the survey. The results of these robustness-check analyses (see Supplemental Appendix for details) provide no evidence that the treatment effects were primarily driven by particular social group memberships rather than partisan team-based considerations. This finding offers further support for H2.

*What Did the Cues Communicate?: Investigating the Mechanism(s)*

The experimental results offer consistent evidence that cues involving executives’ relations with partisan-aligned groups affect how these executives are evaluated. However, we can attempt to further investigate *what*, exactly, is communicated by such cues. Theoretically, it seems likely that the cues transmit a mixture of at least two pieces of compelling information about the executive. First, the *Base Alienation* cue should signal a purely *symbolic* detachment from politically-aligned
groups—i.e., that the executive is, in a general sense, willing to go against the wishes of the base of the party. Beyond this, though, executives’ relations with particular groups may also signal something about the executive’s ideology. Though the specific policy items featured in the experiments were relatively ambiguous in terms of ideological content, citizens may infer something about the executive’s ideological position based on his or her relation to these groups (e.g., see Feldman and Conover 1983), especially given that citizens harbor perceptions of many social groups’ ideological leanings (e.g., see Chambers, Schlenker, and Collisson 2013).

To more fully understand the types of information transmitted by base appeasement/alienation cues, several additional analyses were undertaken. First, it is notable that no significant results were found when the aforementioned regression models were run on (“pure”) political Independents—i.e., those without loyalty to either political team. Second, the Qualtrics survey included both a pre- and post-treatment measure of each respondent’s perceived location of the governor on the seven-point ideology scale, thus facilitating the creation of an individual-level variable capturing the change in perceived ideology of one’s governor going from pre- to post-treatment. Even after accounting for this measure in the regression analyses, however, the treatment effects remain substantively identical. This finding suggests that the treatment effects we observed were primarily driven by symbolic concerns regarding the relationship between the executive and groups.

Notably, though, survey respondents did indeed significantly adjust their perceptions of the Democratic (but not the Republican) Governor’s placement on the ideological scale in response to the treatment. Both Republican and Democratic respondents perceived the Democratic Governor to be significantly more conservative in the Base Alienation condition than in the Base Appeasement condition (p<=.06 in both cases). However, these effects were substantively quite small (.42 and .44,
respectively, on a seven-point scale). Thus, while the experimental cues likely communicated a mixture of important information about the executive, the weight of the evidence appears to suggest that concerns about the executive’s ideology likely played a relatively minor role in shaping evaluations.

Support for Bipartisan Compromise

Figure 2 illustrates the results of our test of H3. Again, this test examines whether executive relations with the party’s base are consequential for partisan support for bipartisan compromise between one’s own party and the outparty executive. Above each set of bars are the differences in mean support for compromise when going from Base Appeasement to Base Alienation. The results for this outcome exhibit a pattern similar to that observed for Trust: Among Democrats with a Republican state governor, we see a greater willingness to support bipartisan compromise (i.e., compromise between the governor and the Democratic Party) in the Base Alienation condition than in the Base Appeasement condition. The same pattern holds for Republicans with a Democratic state governor: when the governor is perceived as less associated with groups at the heart of the Democratic political coalition, compromising with the governor is no longer as objectionable. Thus, the governor’s willingness to alienate groups in his or her party’s base appears to have garnered greater support for bipartisan policy compromise from members of the outparty, therein providing strong evidence in favor of H3.
FIGURE 2. Coalition Politics & Partisan Support for Bipartisan Policy Compromise

Notes: Qualtrics Study. Dependent variable is willingness to support policy compromise between the respondent’s governor and the opposing party, recoded to range between 0 and 1 for interpretive ease. “Base Appeasement” condition involves state governor pleasing his/her party’s base; “Base Alienation” condition involves state governor alienating his/her party’s base. “Δ” indicates the change in support for compromise going from Base Appeasement condition to Base Alienation condition. Partisans who are not of their governor’s party appear more willing to support political compromise between their party and the governor when the governor is not perceived as aligned with his or her party’s base. (One-tailed hypothesis tests.)

The Budget Compromise of 2010 & Approval of President Obama: A Case Study

To test H1 and H2 using a real-world political event, I examine public opinion surrounding President Obama’s budget compromise with congressional Republicans in 2010. (A second case study, involving Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey, was also conducted—the results of which appear in the Supplemental Appendix\(^7\)). The event was notable in that it signaled Obama’s

\(^7\) The analysis involved Governor Christie’s unexpected decision in October 2013 to not appeal a New Jersey court’s ruling allowing same-sex marriage in the state. Again, ample media coverage detailed the Governor’s decision, frequently noting that he had displeased his political base (e.g., Haddon 2013). Results from a difference-in-difference analysis were consistent with those described below—Democrats came to look upon Christie more favorably after the event, whereas Republicans came to look upon the governor less favorably, though statistically significant effects were found only among those high in political interest (29% of all partisans sampled). Still,
willingness to disappoint key portions of his political base—a fact not lost on major media outlets. Obama’s compromises reportedly “infuriated” many of those in his party’s coalition (Herszenhorn and Calmes 2010). Moreover, the outcry from many Democrats reportedly prompted President Obama to famously refer to these critics as “sanctimonious” (Meckler and Weisman 2010), thus further driving a wedge between the president and the base of the Democratic Party. Media outlets of all ideological persuasions took notice of this intra-party strife, with a headline in conservative-leaning Wall Street Journal proclaiming, “Obama Lashes Out at Critics in His Base” (Meckler and Weisman 2010).

To more systematically examine media coverage of the budget compromise, a content analysis was performed on each article appearing in The New York Times, The Washington Post, USA Today, and The Wall Street Journal that mentioned “Obama” during the week of 12/06/10 to 12/13/10 (i.e., the week immediately following the first report of the compromise). Two coders independently identified a total of 75 unique articles that mentioned “Obama,” and subsequently coded whether these articles 1) mentioned the budget agreement, and, if so, 2) allude to the fact that Obama alienated groups aligned with the Democratic Party, and, if so, 3) allude to this fact within the article headline itself (% agreement between coders = 94.51%; kappa=.8816, p<.001). The analysis found that major newspaper coverage of President Obama commonly mentioned the budget deal, as well as the fact that the deal was not pleasing to various groups aligned with President Obama’s (Democratic) party. (See Supplemental Appendix for additional details.) As such, this event serves as an ideal test case for H1 and H2.

among this group, partisan polarization around the governor decreased by twenty-two percentage points in the weeks surrounding this event (see Supplemental Appendix for details).
Data & Measurement

The aforementioned hypotheses were tested by merging data from six separate national surveys, resulting in a total $N$ of 6,054. The event of interest—the budget compromise between President Obama and Republicans in Congress—first appeared in The New York Times on Monday, December 6th, 2010 (Herszenhorn and Calmes 2010). Three of the national surveys were administered immediately prior to the budget compromise event (between 12/1/10 and 12/6/10), with the remaining three administered immediately after the event (between 12/9/10 and 12/13/10).8 9

The key “treatment” variable is a binary indicator equaling “0” for respondents in a survey conducted prior to the date of the event (i.e., before Obama had alienated his party’s base over the budget deal), and equaling “1” for respondents in a survey conducted after the event occurred. The dependent variable of interest is presidential approval (Approval), which is a dichotomous measure coded “0” for respondents who indicated that they do not approve of Obama’s performance as president, and “1” for respondents who do approve of Obama’s job performance. The variable was constructed using survey items that asked respondents whether they approve or disapprove of the “job Obama is doing.” Respondents who answered “Don’t Know/No Opinion/Unsure” were excluded.

Two key political variables were extracted from each of the six data sets. The variable labeled Party ID is coded such that “Strong Democrat/Democrat/Lean toward Democrat” equal “0” (39.29%); “Pure Independents”/“Don’t Know” equal “.5” (22.50%); and “Strong

8 See Supplemental Appendix for additional details.
9 Importantly, while the event is well-suited for testing H1 and H2 given the considerable amount of coverage it received, it is by no means the first event in which Obama disappointed his liberal base—see, for example, the President’s 2009 decision to increase troops in Afghanistan, which liberals had openly opposed (“Obama Afghanistan Strategy: More Troops in Quickly, Drawdown in 2011 - CNN.com” 2009), as well as the 2009 decision to ask Congress for a somewhat smaller stimulus package in order to appease Congressional Republicans (Pfiffner 2011, 254). Thus, to the extent citizens had already been exposed to some degree of “treatment,” this test of H1 and H2 is quite conservative.
Republican/Republican/Lean toward Republican” equal “1” (38.21%). Respondents also indicated their ideological self-placement (Ideology), with liberal respondents coded as “0” (20.16%), moderate/“Unsure/Don’t Know” respondents coded as “.5” (40.03%), and conservative respondents coded as “1” (39.81%).

Results

The first set of analyses simply examines changes in mean approval rates of President Obama among Democrats and Republicans. Specifically, a series of difference-of-means analyses were conducted to determine whether, both within and between these groups, approval rates of Obama significantly changed from pre-treatment to post-treatment. These results are displayed in Table 5. First, the upper rows indicate that partisan groups significantly differed in their approval of Obama between the pre-treatment and post-treatment periods. Specifically, approval among Democrats fell approximately 4 percentage points (p=.01), while Republicans increased their approval of Obama by nearly 3.5 percentage points (p=.02).

TABLE 5. Partisan Approval of President Obama Pre- and Post-Budget Compromise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partisan Groups (n)</th>
<th>Pre-treatment</th>
<th>Post-treatment</th>
<th>Difference Pre→Post</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrats (2416)</td>
<td>.85 (.01)</td>
<td>.81 (.01)</td>
<td>-.04 (.02)</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans (2367)</td>
<td>.12 (.01)</td>
<td>.15 (.01)</td>
<td>+.03 (.01)</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference-of-means</th>
<th>Pre-treatment</th>
<th>Post-treatment</th>
<th>Difference Pre→Post</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrats - Republicans</td>
<td>+.73 (.01)</td>
<td>+.66 (.01)</td>
<td>-.07 (.01)</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Dependent variable is a dichotomous measure, with 0=Disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president, and 1=Approve of the job Barack Obama is doing as president. Entries are results of t-test analyses with unequal variances specified. Standard errors appear in parentheses. Table demonstrates that Obama’s mean approval among partisan groups changed significantly between pre-treatment and post-treatment, with Republicans (Democrats) increasing (decreasing) in their approval of Obama’s job performance. (Independents did not significantly change in their approval of Obama.) The table also indicates that, moving from the pre-treatment period to the post-treatment period, the extent of polarization between Democrats and Republicans regarding Obama’s job performance was reduced by over 7 percentage points. The last column indicates p-values generated for values in the “Difference Pre→Post” column (two-tailed hypothesis tests).

In addition, a common set of theoretically relevant covariates was created using variables measured within the six original data sets. For additional information on these measures, see the Supplemental Appendix.

10 Notably, the change in approval of Obama among Independents did not approach statistical significance (p=.38).
In addition, Table 5 lists the results of a difference-in-differences (DID) analysis. When the difference between Democratic and Republican approval of Obama in the pre-treatment period is compared to this difference in the post-treatment period, we observe that the groups became less polarized, as indicated by the negatively signed figure in the bottom row of the penultimate column. Indeed, the difference in approval of Obama among Democrats and Republicans shrank by over 7 percentage points (p<.001). These results are again consistent with the “Enemy of My Enemies” hypothesis (H1)—i.e., that, when an executive alienates his or her party’s political base, outparty citizens will look approvingly upon the executive for not being a team player. By the same token, and consistent with H2, Democrats appear to have resented that Obama was not being a team player.

The second set of analyses seeks to test the robustness of these findings by incorporating a host of covariate measures as control variables. The results from several logistic regression analyses are reported in Table 6. Model 1 is a simplified model, containing only the treatment indicator variable, Party ID, and a term indicating the interaction between treatment and Party ID. In this model, the coefficient on Party ID can be interpreted to mean that, in the pre-treatment group, moving from Democrat to Republican results in a significant decline in mean approval of Obama (p<.001). However, the positive coefficient on the interaction term indicates that this negative relationship between Party ID and Approval is attenuated (i.e., made less negative) when we move from the pre-treatment period to the post-treatment period. The magnitude of this treatment effect is reported in the lower portion of the table, and indicates that, among Republicans, the predicted probability of approving of Obama increases by over three percentage points (from 12 percent to slightly more than 15 percent) as we move from the pre-treatment period to the post-treatment period (effectively recovering the difference-of-means result reported for Republicans in Table 5).
TABLE 6. Regression Analyses of Obama Approval Pre- and Post-Budget Compromise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treatment</strong></td>
<td>-0.30***</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party ID</strong></td>
<td>-3.73***</td>
<td>-3.35***</td>
<td>-3.40***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treatment X Party ID</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.56</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>0.56</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>0.67</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Covariates</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.02***</td>
<td>-0.82***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>(.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonwhite</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.71***</td>
<td>0.70***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.12***</td>
<td>-0.12***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.34*</td>
<td>0.33*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treatment X Ideology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.43†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>1.74***</td>
<td>2.15***</td>
<td>2.07***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pseudo R</strong>²</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>6054</td>
<td>3577</td>
<td>3577</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Dependent variable is a dichotomous measure, with 0=Disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president, and 1=Approve of the job Barack Obama is doing as president. Treatment equals 0 for individuals surveyed before budget compromise, and equals 1 for individuals surveyed after budget compromise. Party ID =0 for Democrats, =.5 for Independents, and =1 for Republicans. Coefficients are unstandardized and were estimated using a logistic regression model. Standard errors appear in parentheses. Predicted probabilities were estimated with covariate measures at their mean or modal values using CLARIFY software (King, Wittenberg, and Tomz 2003).† significant at p<.10; * significant at p<.05; **significant at p<.01; *** significant at p<.001 (one-tailed hypothesis tests given directional hypotheses).

Model 2 includes a variety of control variables to examine the robustness of the Model 1 results. Importantly, the interaction term in Model 2 remains positive and statistically significant,

---

12 The reduction in sample size between models 1 and 2 can be attributed to the fact that the Pew (12/2/10-12/5/2010) survey did not include a measure for Ideology and the NBC/WSJ (12/9/10-12/13/10) survey did not include a measure for Education. These two surveys were therefore dropped, leaving two pre-treatment surveys and two post-treatment surveys to be included in the Model 2 and Model 3 analyses.
indicating that the changes in Approval among partisan groups following the budget compromise are robust to the inclusion of covariates. Moreover, holding these covariates constant at their mean and modal values, we observe that the probability of approving of Obama among Republicans changes from .09 in the pre-treatment to .16 in the post-treatment period, for a total effect size of approximately 7 percentage points. Model 2 thus provides further evidence that Republicans did indeed respond favorably to Obama following his “infuriation” of groups located in the Democratic coalition.

Though to a lesser extent than the experimental data, these data also afford us some ability to explore the extent to which ideological concerns might help explain the patterns we observe. To this end, Model 3 controls for the interaction between respondents’ ideological self-placement and the treatment. As can be seen, the inclusion of this interaction term does not undermine the main result—in fact, this model actually generates a slightly larger coefficient on the Treatment X Party ID interaction term than did the previous two models. Therefore, while some citizens may have shifted evaluations of Obama based on considerations involving policies, a simpler—though not mutually exclusive—explanation is that evaluations of Obama changed because many citizens merely learned of which groups Obama had betrayed. And, because those groups (e.g., liberals/progressives) are typically aligned with the Democratic Party, it is reasonable to have expected that Republicans would look approvingly upon Obama alienating his base (H1), while Democrats would look upon it disapprovingly (H2).

Finally, it should be noted that, while these effects may at first appear relatively modest in size, there are manifold reasons—even apart from partisan motivated reasoning—why we might have expected to find no changes in approval of Obama whatsoever. First, many partisans likely did not observe “the treatment,” either directly or via social networks; thus, we should not expect any
changes in evaluations of Obama for those who were unaware that he disappointed the Democratic base. Second, the post-treatment surveys were not immediately administered; thus, treatment effects may have dissipated due to time itself or other intervening events. Third, the dependent variable—presidential approval—is fairly broad, and may have been more resistant to change vis-à-vis more nuanced outcome measures (e.g., evaluation of Obama’s handling of the budget deal specifically). Fourth, as noted above, Obama had alienated the Democratic base prior to the budget agreement—thus, the impact of this particular event may have been weak relative to previous events. Given these manifold considerations, therefore, this change in presidential approval among partisans is quite impressive, and provides further empirical support for both H1 and H2.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

As argued by Hetherington and Rudolph (2015, 40), “Among all the forces in American political life, the public is one of the few that could plausibly encourage elites to rise above their worst partisan instincts.” At present, however, partisan polarization in the American public, both with respect to affect for outparty partisans and trust in government leaders, deeply threatens opportunities for political compromise and fair-minded attitude formation. Of course, polarization need not necessarily be characterized as “bad”—for example, it could be viewed as a sign of a vibrant democracy (e.g., Abramowitz 2010). But insofar as polarization prevents policymaking on the vitally important issues of our time, the prospect of never-ending polarization is ominous indeed.

To overcome polarization, it must first be understood. This study argues that much can be learned about partisan polarization, and potential pathways toward overcoming it, by first acknowledging that 1) many, if not most, citizens tend to think about the parties in terms of group associations (Achen and Bartels 2016; Green et al. 2002; Miller et al. 1991), and 2) the intensity of divisions in the American public has much to do with affect rather than policy stances or ideology.
(Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Mason 2015). Synthesizing these theoretical insights, the central argument of this study is that when citizens evaluate elite behavior, a key concern is the extent to which the elite in question is beholden to the groups in his or her party’s coalition—i.e., the groups on his or her “team.” The magnitude of this fidelity signals the degree to which the elite is a “team player,” which, as the results of this study demonstrate, has important consequences for public opinion. Specifically, partisans are willing to be more trusting of, and more willing to compromise with, outparty executives who are decoupled from groups in the outparty’s base, and they become less approving and trusting of inparty executives who alienate groups in their party’s base. In all, the findings offer an important contribution, and caveat, to the growing literatures on partisanship and motivated reasoning, which have repeatedly demonstrated that partisans either choose to ignore, or grow more polarized in response to, information that challenges their existing attitudes and loyalties (e.g., Lodge and Taber 2013; Taber and Lodge 2006).

Several finer points are also worth emphasizing. Crucially, if the simple party label of executives were all-powerful, and/or if citizens did not think about the parties as comprising particular coalitions of societal groups, the consistent pattern of results found in this study should not have been observed. These results therefore suggest a key underpinning for partisan polarization in the American public: the pervasive conceptualization of each party as a “team of groups.”

Second, the experimental treatment effects were found using relatively obscure policy issues, suggesting that partisan opinion can change even as a result of executives’ symbolic actions toward groups on their team. That is, though likely sufficient for finding similar patterns of effects, it was not necessary that politically-aligned groups were appeased or alienated over hot-button policy issues.
The results of this study come with a variety of notable implications. First, because we observe a significant decrease in partisan polarization (both in terms of general approval and trust) around executives when they are reported to have alienated groups in their political coalition, it follows that, in the absence of such cues in the real world, partisan polarization would likely be even more pronounced than we currently observe. Second, the difficult process of governing during polarized times should become less arduous as members of the outparty become less distrustful of the executive (Hetherington 2005). The results of this study suggest that executives stand to more easily gain the trust of outparty members by conspicuously distancing themselves, even symbolically (if not substantively), from groups in their respective party’s base (e.g., by openly criticizing these groups, refusing to meet with them, etc.). For example, in attempting to gain support for, or defend, a given policy agenda, executives would likely fare better among outparty members by explicitly making it known that co-partisan groups are displeased with the policy. President Obama may have reduced Republican animus toward him during the health care debate in 2010, for example, had he more strongly emphasized how upset groups in the Democratic base were with his decision to abandon a push for the so-called “public option.” Indeed, this decision led some pro-Democratic journalists to openly declare that Obama is “not an ally. He’s an obstacle” (Mogulescu 2010). In other words, to the extent that such cues were absent from their respective information environments, Republicans may simply have assumed that the Democratic base was pleased with Obama’s stance—a perception that, as this study argues, would have only served to exacerbate Republicans’ negative sentiment and distrust toward Obama, and potentially the Affordable Care Act itself.

Certainly, multiple avenues exist to build upon this study. For example, when executives interact with groups in their party’s coalition, which groups matter most to partisans when deciding

---

13 Some political journalists have vaguely alluded to such a strategy. Referring to Obama’s 2014 budget proposal, Wolfgang (2013), for example, asserts, “politically, Mr. Obama may be trying to show Republicans that he’s willing risk scorn from some fellow liberal Democrats in order to make a deal.”
the extent to which an executive is a team player, and might the answer vary depending upon the issue at hand? Second, if executives were to strategically alienate groups in the interest of gaining support from the outparty, would inflexible outparty members attempt to undermine such strategies? If so, how? Lastly, the parties are, of course, asymmetric in the degree of social diversity within their respective bases: the Democrats are known to have a much more diverse coalition of groups than the Republican Party (Grossmann and Hopkins 2015). How might this asymmetry affect the success of Democratic vis-à-vis Republican executives? Such an investigation stands to reveal further insight into contemporary polarization in the mass public.\(^\text{14}\)

Understandably, these results may raise normative questions regarding what leaders should do. Is alienating one’s political base, for example, the right thing to do in a representative democracy? Important as they are, such questions fall outside the scope of the present study. Nevertheless, it is worth emphasizing that the results consistently show that alienating the groups in one’s political coalition leads to decreased favorability and trust among inparty members, which would likely be problematic in the context of a competitive primary or general election. However, during the normal course of governing, wherein garnering some modicum of support from “the other team” could mean the difference between key legislation passing or failing, distancing oneself from the groups known to associate with the party would be strategically wise, even if morally—and democratically—dubious.

In sum, an executive’s ability to govern during polarized times should be comparatively easier when the executive loudly signals that he or she is not a “team player.” And, as most citizens

\(^{14}\) For example, because of their more diverse political base, we might expect that Democratic governors should be more likely to alienate their base than Republican governors. Combining this logic with the theory advanced by this study, partisan polarization in trust should therefore be lower for Democratic governors than Republican governors. Using pre-treatment measures of trust (Pre-Trust) in the Qualtrics study data, this is precisely the pattern observed: the partisan gap in Pre-Trust is 33% greater for Republican governors than Democratic governors (1.42 compared to 1.02, respectively; p<.01).
are not particularly preoccupied with policy substance (Achen and Bartels 2016), such appeals can be effective even when relatively *symbolic* matters are involved, as the results of this study consistently demonstrate. Again, future studies should investigate whether keen political sophisticates attempt to countervail such efforts. But for most rank-and-file partisans, the results of this study suggest that, all else being equal, media transmission of cues about the extent to which executives are team players can alter levels of polarization in the public and, potentially, create much-needed openings for bipartisan compromise and policymaking.
REFERENCES


SUPPLEMENTAL ONLINE APPENDICES

Supplemental Appendix A
Question and Treatment Wordings in MTurk & Qualtrics Studies

QUESTION WORDINGS

Race
Would you describe yourself as:
- American Indian / Native American (1)
- Asian (2)
- Black / African American (3)
- Hispanic / Latino (4)
- White / Caucasian (5)
- Pacific Islander (6)

State of Residence (Qualtrics Study Only)
Which U.S. state do you currently live in?
- Alabama (1)
- Alaska (2)
- Arizona (3)
- Arkansas (4)
- California (5)
- Colorado (6)
- Connecticut (7)
- Delaware (8)
- Florida (9)
- Georgia (10)
- Hawaii (11)
- Idaho (12)
- Illinois (13)
- Indiana (14)
- Iowa (15)
- Kansas (16)
- Kentucky (17)
- Louisiana (18)
- Maine (19)
- Maryland (20)
- Massachusetts (21)
- Michigan (22)
- Minnesota (23)
- Mississippi (24)
- Missouri (25)
- Montana (26)
Nebraska (27)
Nevada (28)
New Hampshire (29)
New Jersey (30)
New Mexico (31)
New York (32)
North Carolina (33)
North Dakota (34)
Ohio (35)
Oklahoma (36)
Oregon (37)
Pennsylvania (38)
Rhode Island (39)
South Carolina (40)
South Dakota (41)
Tennessee (42)
Texas (43)
Utah (44)
Vermont (45)
Virginia (46)
Washington (47)
West Virginia (48)
Wisconsin (49)
Wyoming (50)
Washington D.C. (District of Columbia) (57)
Other (58)

Party Identification
Generally speaking, do you consider yourself to be a(n):
Strong Democrat (1)
Democrat (2)
Independent, But Leaning Democrat (3)
Independent (4)
Independent, But Leaning Republican (5)
Republican (6)
Strong Republican (7)
Religion
What, if any, is your religious affiliation?
- Protestant (1)
- Catholic (2)
- LDS / Mormon (3)
- Jewish (4)
- Other (5)
- No Preference / No Religious Affiliation (6)
- Prefer Not To Say (7)

Ideological Self-Placement
Below 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?
- Extremely Liberal (1)
- Liberal (2)
- Slightly Liberal (3)
- Moderate / Middle Of The Road (4)
- Slightly Conservative (5)
- Conservative (6)
- Extremely Conservative (7)

Income
What is your annual income range?
- Below $20,000 (1)
- $20,000 - $29,999 (2)
- $30,000 - $39,999 (3)
- $40,000 - $49,999 (4)
- $50,000 - $59,999 (5)
- $60,000 - $69,999 (6)
- $70,000 - $79,999 (7)
- $80,000 - $89,999 (8)
- $90,000 Or More (9)

Political Interest
How interested are you in information about what's going on in government and politics?
- Not Interested At All (1)
- Slightly Interested (2)
- Moderately Interested (3)
- Very Interested (4)
- Extremely Interested (5)
Trust
How trustworthy do you find your state's current governor, Governor {last name inserted}, to be?
- Highly Untrustworthy (1)
- Untrustworthy (2)
- Slightly Untrustworthy (3)
- Neutral (4)
- Slightly Trustworthy (5)
- Trustworthy (6)
- Highly Trustworthy (7)

Support for Compromise (if Respondent has a Democratic Governor)
How willing would you be to support policy compromise between Governor {last name inserted} and the Republican Party?
- Unwilling (1)
- Slightly Unwilling (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Slightly Willing (4)
- Willing (5)

Support for Compromise (if Respondent has a Republican Governor)
How willing would you be to support policy compromise between Governor {last name inserted} and the Democratic Party?
- Unwilling (1)
- Slightly Unwilling (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Slightly Willing (4)
- Willing (5)

TREATMENT WORDINGS

MTurk Study

Instructions: Now we'd like to ask for your opinion about different elected officials in federal and state government. We have a database of news stories on hundreds of elected officials, and will randomly select an excerpt from one of these news stories for you to view. We ask that you carefully read over the information provided in the excerpt, and then answer a few questions about your opinions. Please read the news article excerpt closely as you will be asked questions about it afterward.
Excerpt from an article appearing in THE ASSOCIATED PRESS (AP) earlier this year:


Speaking to members of the Iowa state legislature late yesterday afternoon, [Republican Governor Branstad / Democratic Governor Dayton] outlined his budget proposal for the next fiscal year. Among other proposals, the Governor’s budget calls for funding for the development of a state-of-the-art weather detection system. The Governor has previously argued that the measure is essential for the people and state of Iowa. [However, while] satisfied with most of the budget, the [conservative/liberal] base of the Governor’s party in the state legislature has expressed [high praise for/deep disappointment with] the Governor’s decision to include funding for the weather detection system. “In doing this, he has [pleased many of us in his party/let so many of us in his party down],” said one Republican state senator. The proposal has been forwarded to the state legislature for review and is scheduled to be voted upon within the next month.

The [Republican/Democratic] Governor, in office since 2011, also hinted at the possibility of a run for the presidency in 2016. Having [pleased/upset] the base of his [Republican/Democratic] Party with his recent push for the weather detection system, it remains to be seen whether [conservatives/liberals] in the state legislature will endorse him should he decide to run.

Qualtrics Study

Instructions: Now we'd like to ask for your opinions on a different topic. We have a large database of recent news stories covering elected officials in your state government, and will randomly select an excerpt from one of these news stories for you to view. We ask that you carefully read over the information provided in the excerpt, and then answer a few questions about your opinions. Please read the news article excerpt closely as you will be asked questions about it afterward.

Excerpt from recent Associated Press article covering political developments in your state:

Details have recently been released regarding Governor [respondent’s governor’s name]’s budget proposal for the next fiscal year. The [governor’s party] Governor’s budget proposal will likely be presented to the state legislature in the coming months. The proposal closely mirrors the budget of the previous year. However, the proposal also includes a significant decrease in funding for the state’s courts and detention systems. The Governor’s decision to decrease this funding has [pleased/upset] a variety of politically active groups, particularly [Evangelical Christian, business, and gun rights activist groups / labor unions, environmentalists, and African American activist groups]. Said one representative of a prominent [Evangelical Christian group / labor union], “The Governor’s decision comes as a [welcomed surprise /terrible shock]. In doing this, he has truly [pleased/upset] many of the people in the organization I represent.”
Supplemental Appendix B
Qualtrics Study Treatment Effects Not Driven By Social Group Memberships

An alternative explanation for the treatment effects observed in the Qualtrics study is that social group memberships—rather than party memberships—were driving the results. This could occur because the experimental vignettes explicitly featured social groups. For example, because “African-Americans” were said to have been upset by the Governor, we might expect African-Americans to respond negatively toward the governor. And, since African-Americans are highly aligned with the Democratic Party, treatment effects among this particular social group could potentially explain the entire treatment effect observed for Democrats in general.

Table S1 reports the results of an investigation of this possibility. In the case of African-Americans, there is indeed a marginally significant interaction between the treatment and identification as African-American, suggesting that African-Americans responded more strongly to the treatment than did other Democrats. However, this does not entirely explain the treatment effect observed for Democrats in general. We can see this by observing the first row of coefficients in Table S1, which shows a significant (negative) treatment effect even for non-African American Democrats. This same pattern appears when looking at effects among high-income and Christian Republicans as well.
Table S1. Interactive Effects for Partisan Sub-Groups Featured in Qualtrics Vignettes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Republican Governor &amp; Respondents</th>
<th>Democratic Governor &amp; Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group=Christians</td>
<td>Group=High Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treatment</strong></td>
<td>-.70*</td>
<td>-1.00***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group</strong></td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treatment X</strong></td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.89†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
<td>(0.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Trust</strong></td>
<td>0.70***</td>
<td>0.69***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideology</strong></td>
<td>0.77†</td>
<td>0.92*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.45)</td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interest</strong></td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.34)</td>
<td>(0.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>0.72†</td>
<td>0.94*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.38)</td>
<td>(0.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R²</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Qualtrics Study. Dependent variable is perceived trustworthiness of respondent’s state governor (1=Highly Untrustworthy; 7=Highly Trustworthy). “Treatment” represents going from the respondent’s state governor appeasing his/her party’s political base (0) to alienating this base (1). “Christian” and “African American” groups are dummy variables for Republicans and Democrats, respectively, where self-reported membership in the group=1 (otherwise=0). “Income” is a nine-point measure of Republican respondents’ individual annual income ranging from <20k to >90k, recoded to range between 0 and 1. Pre-Trust is a measure of the dependent variable prior to assignment to treatment. Ideology indicates respondent self-placement on the seven-point ideology scale (1=Extremely Liberal; 7=Extremely Conservative). Interest indicates respondent self-reported interest in “information about what’s going on in government and politics” (1=Not Interested At All; 5=Extremely Interested). All covariates were measured pre-treatment. Ideology and Interest were recoded to range between zero and one. Because specific social groups were featured in the vignettes, each model tests the possibility that treatment effects are driven by social group identities rather than partisan identities. If this were the case, we would expect each interaction term to be negative and significant, and the effect on Treatment to be insignificant and substantively small. However, this is not what we observe. †=p<.10; *=p<.05; **=p<.01; ***p<.001 (two-tailed hypothesis tests).
Supplemental Appendix C
Content Analysis of Major Media Coverage of 2010 Budget Agreement

Two coders independently reviewed articles appearing in The New York Times, The Washington Post, USA Today, and The Wall Street Journal that mentioned “Obama” during the week of 12/06/10 to 12/13/10. A total of 75 unique articles mentioned “Obama,” and the coders analyzed whether these articles 1) mentioned the budget agreement, and, if so, 2) allude to the fact that Obama alienated groups aligned with the Democratic Party, and, if so, 3) allude to this fact within the article headline itself (% agreement between coders = 94.51%; kappa=.8816, p<.001) This last category is to acknowledge the disproportionate influence that headlines have been found to have on consumption and interpretation of printed news (Dor 2003; Emig 1928). Second, it should be noted that this collection of newspapers is used not because they represent the entirety of “the treatment,” but rather because these news sources influence the news that is carried by other newspapers, televised news, and/or online news (e.g., Atkinson, Deam, and Uscinski 2014).

Table S2 lists the results of this analysis, which make clear that a substantial amount of coverage noted that Obama had upset his Democratic base.
TABLE S2. Major Media Coverage of the 2010 Budget Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Analysis Categories</th>
<th>NYT</th>
<th>WaPo</th>
<th>USAT</th>
<th>WSJ</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Unique Articles Mentioning President Obama</strong></td>
<td>N=13</td>
<td>N=28</td>
<td>N=10</td>
<td>N=24</td>
<td>N=75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Previous Row that Mention Budget Agreement/Tax Deal</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=8)</td>
<td>(N=19)</td>
<td>(N=6)</td>
<td>(N=18)</td>
<td>(N=51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Previous Row that Allude to Base Alienation</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=7)</td>
<td>(N=13)</td>
<td>(N=5)</td>
<td>(N=12)</td>
<td>(N=37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Previous Row that Allude to Base Alienation in Article Headline</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=2)</td>
<td>(N=7)</td>
<td>(N=2)</td>
<td>(N=5)</td>
<td>(N=16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Groups Alienated**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>54%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liberals/Progressives</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labor/Blue-collar Workers</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African-Americans</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=20)</td>
<td>(N=14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=2)</td>
<td>(N=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=1)</td>
<td>(N=1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Supplemental Appendix C References


Surveys

The surveys (and dates of administration) are as follows: **Pre-event**: Gallup (12/3/2010-12/6/2010); Pew (12/3/2010-12/5/2010); Pew (12/1/2010-12/05/2010). **Post-event**: Gallup/USA (12/10/10-12/12/10); NBC/WSJ (12/9/10-12/13/10); ABC/Washington Post (12/9/10-12/12/10).

The Gallup survey was conducted over four days, and includes respondents interviewed on the exact day of the event (26.82% of the Gallup sample), which potentially increases the probability of a Type II error by labeling these respondents as untreated. However, additional analyses suggested that differences in mean support for Obama among Republicans and Democrats did not substantively differ when the analysis omitted respondents who were interviewed on 12/6/10.

The Pew Research Center survey, conducted between 12/2/10 and 12/5/10, did not contain the standard “job approval” question for President Obama. Instead, the survey asked respondents to rate their favorability of Obama on a 4-point scale ranging from “Very unfavorable” to “Very favorable.” Thus, respondents who indicated either “Very Unfavorable” or “Mostly unfavorable” were coded as “0,” while respondents who indicated “Very/Mostly unfavorable” were coded as “1.” Results do not differ in any substantive way when this survey is excluded from the analysis. Also, the Pew Research Center survey conducted between 12/2/10 and 12/5/10 did not contain a measure of respondent ideology.

Additional analyses tested whether the different survey houses mattered for mean approval of Obama among Republicans. The results reveal that the Pew (12/02/10-12/05/10) survey was significantly different than the other two pre-treatment surveys (perhaps because mean approval was measured slightly differently for this survey (see below)). However,
Republican approval of Obama is significantly higher (roughly six percentage points) in this survey than in the other two pre-treatment surveys, and thus should make it more difficult to find a treatment effect, all else equal. Similarly, in the post-treatment period, the significant outlying survey (Gallup/USA) provides a significantly lower mean approval among Republicans. Again, this effectively renders it more difficult to find a significant difference between the pre-and post-treatment periods, all else equal.

Covariates

Respondents identifying as female (Female; 47% of the sample) were coded as “1,” with males coded as “0.” Respondents’ age (Age) was recorded (mean=52.17; SD=17.38), and subsequently divided by 10 for interpretive ease. Respondents were also asked about their respective racial identification. Because of heterogeneity in response options across the six surveys, a simple binary variable, Nonwhite, was created wherein respondents who identified as any race other than white/Caucasian were coded as “1” (31.15% of the sample), while whites were coded as “0.” The variable Income is an ordinal measure capturing respondents’ reported household income. Households reportedly earning less than $50k per year were coded as “0” (50.87%); between $50k and $100k were coded as “.5” (31.40%); and over $100k were coded as “1” (17.73%). Lastly, respondents’ highest level of educational attainment was recorded. Again, because of heterogeneity in question wording and response options, a five-category ordinal-level variable (Education) was created, wherein “Less than High School” equals “0” (6.43%); “High School” equals “.25” (24.64%); “Some College”/ “Vocational School”/ “Don’t Know”/ “Refused” responses equal “.50” (31.36%); “College” equals “.75” (22.49%); and “Graduate degree” equals “1.0” (15.08%).
Supplemental Appendix E
Coalition Politics & Partisan Approval of New Jersey State Governor Christie

On October 21st, 2013, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie was reported to have unexpectedly withdrawn an appeal of a New Jersey court ruling which legalized same-sex marriage in the state. Christie was an outspoken opponent of legalized same-sex marriage, and had vocally criticized the court’s ruling before dropping the appeal (Haddon 2013). Thus, he did not drop the appeal for ideological reasons—rather, he stated that fighting the state Supreme Court, which had by then refused to the governor’s request to block gay marriages from taking place (thereby allowing gay marriage in the state), would be a “fool’s errand” given the court’s indication that his appeal had “no reasonable probability of success” (Zernike and Santora 2013). Yet, despite the dropping of the appeal being a largely symbolic event, Christie’s aides acknowledged that the decision could “alienate [Republican] primary voters,” and the National Organization for Marriage (an anti-gay marriage group) harshly criticized the governor for “throwing in the towel” (Haddon 2013; Zernike and Santora 2013).

The event thus serves as another useful test case for H1 and H2. Did Republicans become less approving of Christie after he alienated groups in his base? Did Democrats become more approving? To investigate this, I obtained the results of two specific polls from Fairleigh Dickinson University’s PublicMind polling organization. The first poll was conducted via telephone (landline and cell phone) between 09/30/13 and 10/05/13, and had a randomly selected sample of 702 registered voters. The second poll was conducted via telephone (landline and cell phone) between 10/24/13 and 10/30/13, and had a randomly selected sample of 570 registered voters.

The dates of the first and second survey are therefore in reasonably close proximity to the date of the event itself (10/21/13). Fortunately, both surveys featured several key political and
demographic variables, including each respondent’s party identification, ideological self-placement, race, gender, and political interest (here, measured as how closely the respondent reported following “the upcoming race for the governor in New Jersey”). In addition, both surveys featured the dependent variable of interest (Approval of Christie’s job performance). The question measuring this variable read as follows, “Now thinking about New Jersey, do you approve or disapprove of the job Chris Christie is doing as governor?” This permitted the creation of a dichotomous variable, where 0=Disapprove and 1=Approve. As with the analysis of public opinion of Obama, the key independent variable is Treatment, which equals 0 for respondents who took the first survey, and equals 1 for respondents who took the second survey.

While null effects were found for the sample as a whole, very strong effects were found for those who reported that they were “very closely” following the governor’s race (29% of all partisans)—i.e., those who reported being relatively high in political interest. This makes logical sense insofar as these individuals were most likely to have perceived the event (again, no change should be expected among those who did not perceive Christie upsetting groups in his base). As Table S1 demonstrates, among this group, Republicans significantly lowered their job approval of Governor Christie after the appeal withdrawal event (7 percentage points, p<.05), while Democrats increased their approval by 15 percentage points (p<.05). This represents a substantial decrease in partisan polarization around the governor, on the order of 22 percentage points (p<.001). (Analyzing the data in a multivariate logistic regression framework, with included controls for demographic covariates—and even a specified interaction between the treatment and ideological self-placement (which was not statistically significant (p=.62))—does not change the results in any substantive way.)
Table S3. Partisan Approval of Governor Christie Before and After Appeal Withdrawal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partisan Groups (n)</th>
<th>Pre-treatment</th>
<th>Post-treatment</th>
<th>Difference Pre→Post</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republicans (302)</td>
<td>.96 (.02)</td>
<td>.89 (.02)</td>
<td>-.07 (.03)</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats (254)</td>
<td>.27 (.04)</td>
<td>.42 (.04)</td>
<td>+.15 (.06)</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Difference-of-means**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Republicans - Democrats</th>
<th>Difference Pre→Post</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.68 (.05)</td>
<td>-.22 (.04)</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** Entries are results of t-test analyses with unequal variances specified. Standard errors appear in parentheses. Analyses feature partisans reporting high interest in politics (29% of all partisans); effects were weaker or null among those lower in political interest. The results demonstrate that Governor Christie’s mean approval among partisan groups changed significantly between pre-treatment and post-treatment, with Democrats (Republicans) significantly increasing (decreasing) in their approval of Christie’s job performance. The table also indicates that, moving from the pre-treatment period to the post-treatment period, the extent of polarization between Republicans and Democrats regarding Christie’s job performance was reduced by 22 percentage points. The last column indicates p-values generated for values in the “Difference Pre→Post” column (two-tailed hypothesis tests).