

# Identity-based preference frames as determinants of the effectiveness of valenced persuasive messages

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## **STUDY 1: WHAT DRIVES PARTISANS' VS. INDEPENDENTS' PREFERENCES?**

The basic rationale for this research is the observation that political partisanship and political independence seem to represent different kinds of self-categorization (Leonardelli & Toh, 2015). Partisans self-categorize with reference to their ingroup – i.e., Democrats or Republicans – whereas independents' self-categorization is unclear. They may self-categorize with reference to outgroups (i.e., both parties), to independents as an ingroup (Klar, 2014), or to other ingroups or outgroups. However, despite this potential variability among independents' self-categorizations, in electoral contexts, the United States' party system restricts them to a choice between two groups (Democrats and Republicans) with whom, by definition, they do not identify. This prevents independents from constructing a preference that expresses a positive political group identification, if they have one. As a result, whether or not political independence is best thought of as an identity group in its own right (Klar, 2014), the only reference points for self-categorization *afforded to independents by American elections* are outgroups.

It is therefore hypothesized that electoral contexts create a situation in which partisans are likely to define their political identities in terms of who they are (e.g., a Democrat), whereas independents are more likely than partisans to define themselves in terms of who they are not (e.g., not a Republican or a Democrat). In this sense, partisans and independents represent one example of the general distinction established in previous research between affirmational and negational modes of self-categorization (Zhong et al., 2008). That is, the two-party election situation that predominates in American politics naturally evokes an affirmational identity

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among partisans, in which they define themselves in terms of who they are, while evoking a negational identity among independents, in which they define themselves in terms of who they are not.

It is proposed further that this situation gives rise to contrasting preference frames, whereby partisans and independents are differentially motivated by support for their preferred party versus opposition to their non-preferred party and naturally conceptualize their political preferences in these ways. Because this reasoning is about the motives underlying partisans' and independents' preferences, however, no predictions are made for that subset of independents who express no preference between the two major political parties. The first study is designed as a test of the hypothesis, that political partisanship and independence represent different modes of self-categorization (affirmational and negational) that give rise to different preference frames (support and opposition).

## Method

### *Participants and Design*

A total of 250 Amazon Mechanical Turk workers participated in this study for a fee of \$.08. We targeted 250 in order to ensure at least 40 independents with a preference between the two parties, as our prior experiences using Mechanical Turk suggested a likely rate of around 30% self-reported independents, about 60-70% of whom would also report being more aligned with either party. This estimate indicated an expected sample of between 45 and 52.5 independents who preferred one of the two parties. Ultimately, 117 participants identified as partisan Democrats and 62 as partisan Republicans, while 58 identified as independents and 13 identified as "other." Among the 71 participants who identified themselves as independents or other, 43 reported being more aligned with one party or the other (31 with Democrats, 12 with

Republicans) and 28 reported being aligned more with neither party. As a result, although it is conceivable that these individuals might have a preference between Democrats and Republicans in any given instance (e.g., as it gets closer to election day), the procedure used in this study did not allow for a test of that possibility, and thus further data were not collected from these 28 participants. This left a total sample of 222 partisan ( $n = 179$ ) and independent ( $n = 43$ ) participants who reported having a preference between Democrats and Republicans.

### *Procedure*

Participants first reported whether they identify with Democrats, Republicans, independents, or “other.” Those who identified as independent or other then reported which party (Democrats or Republicans) they tend to be more aligned with, most of the time. To accommodate those who do not consider themselves more aligned with either party, a third option of “neither” was also provided. Participants then reported whether (1) their political views are motivated more strongly by support for their preferred party or opposition to their non-preferred party, as well as (2) whether they tend to think of themselves more as pro-Democrat/pro-Republican or as anti-Republican/anti-Democrat, and finally (3) how strongly they support their preferred party and how strongly they oppose their non-preferred party.

### *Subjective support vs. opposition mindset measures*

Two subjective measures of participants’ supportive vs. oppositional mindsets were administered. First, participants were asked to report the extent to which their political views are motivated by support versus opposition. Partisan Democrats and independents who leaned toward Democrats were asked: *Are your political views motivated more by support for Democrats or by opposition to Republicans?* (7-point scale, from *motivated completely by support for Democrats* to *motivated completely by opposition to Republicans*, with *motivated by*

*both equally* at the midpoint). For partisan Republicans and independents who leaned toward Republicans, the question was: *Are your political views motivated more by support for Republicans or by opposition to Democrats?* (7-point scale, from *motivated completely by support for Republicans* to *motivated completely by opposition to Democrats*, with *motivated by both equally* at the midpoint).

Second, participants were asked whether they tend to think of themselves more as pro- versus anti-. Partisan Democrats and independents who leaned toward Democrats were asked: *Do you tend to think of yourself more as pro-Democrat, or as anti-Republican?* (7-point scale, from *I think of myself as pro-Democrat, but not anti-Republican* to *I think of myself as anti-Republican, but not pro-Democrat*, with *I think of myself as pro-Democrat and anti-Republican equally* at the midpoint). For partisan Republicans and independents who leaned toward Republicans, the question was: *Do you tend to think of yourself more as pro-Republican, or as anti-Democrat?* (7-point scale, from *I think of myself as pro-Republican, but not anti-Democrat* to *I think of myself as anti-Democrat, but not pro-Republican*, with *I think of myself as pro-Republican and anti-Democrat equally* at the midpoint).

The two measures were averaged to form an index of the preference being about the side people are for versus the side they are against. This measure is more subjective in that it assesses participants' explicit self-perceptions as supporters versus opposers and as pro- versus anti-. It was centered around zero so positive values reflect thinking about one's preference as a matter of support and negative values reflect thinking about it as a matter of opposition.

#### *Objective support vs. opposition mindset measure*

Finally, participants reported separate measures of the strength of their support for their preferred party and strength of opposition to their non-preferred party. Partisan Democrats and

independents who leaned toward Democrats were asked: *How strongly do you support the Democratic party?* (7-point scale, from *I do not support the Democratic party* to *I strongly support the Democratic party*), and *How strongly do you oppose the Republican party?* (7-point scale, from *I do not oppose the Republican party* to *I strongly oppose the Republican party*). For partisan Republicans and independents who leaned toward Republicans, the questions were: *How strongly do you support the Republican party?* (7-point scale, from *I do not support the Republican party* to *I strongly support the Republican party*) and *How strongly do you oppose the Democratic party?* (7-point scale, from *I do not oppose the Democratic party* to *I strongly oppose the Democratic party*).

The objective mindset measure was computed as the difference between the strength of support and the strength of opposition, such that positive values reflect stronger support for one's preferred party than opposition to the non-preferred party and negative values reflect stronger opposition to the non-preferred party than support for the preferred party. This measure is more objective in that it quantifies the relative strength of participants' support for their preferred party versus opposition to their non-preferred party without eliciting an overt subjective comparison between them.

## Results

### *Overview of analyses*

Two independent-samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare partisans' and independents' responses to the subjective and objective Mindset measures, and four one-sample *t*-tests were conducted to compare each mindset measure for each group to zero. Cohen's *d* is reported for one-sample test effect sizes, while the Hedges' *g* correction for unequal sample sizes is reported for the independent-samples tests (Lakens, 2013). In addition, two ANOVAs were

used to determine whether Party preference (Democrat, Republican) interacted with Self-categorization (partisan, independent) to influence participants' mindsets.

*Subjective support vs. opposition mindset*

The two measures ( $r = .56$ ) were averaged to form a single index of participants' tendencies to think of themselves as supporters versus opposers. Partisans' and independents' mindsets were significantly different,  $t(220) = 2.69, p = .008, g = .46$ , although only partisans' subjective mindsets ( $M = .63$ ) were significantly different from zero,  $t(178) = 6.29, p < .001, d = .47$ , whereas independents' mindsets ( $M = .01$ ) did not differ from zero,  $t(42) = 0.05, p = .96, d < .01$ . A 2-way Self-categorization (partisan, independent) X Party preference (Democrat, Republican) interaction failed to appear,  $F(3,218) = .30, p = .58, \eta_p^2 < .01$ , indicating that the association between Self-categorization and mindset did not depend on which party was preferred.

*Objective support vs. opposition mindset*

Self-categorization was associated with objective support and opposition mindsets,  $t(220) = 3.39, p = .001, g = .58$ , such that independents ( $M = -1.02$ ) were significantly more negative than neutral,  $t(42) = -2.73, p = .009, d = -.42$ , while partisans ( $M = .21$ ) were directionally but not significantly more positive than neutral,  $t(178) = 1.35, p = .18, d = .10$ . A test of the interaction between Self-categorization and Party preference was not significant,  $F(3,218) = .14, p = .71, \eta_p^2 < .01$ .

Discussion

Consistent with predictions, participants' self-categorization was associated with the extent to which they framed their preferences as being a matter of support or opposition. Those who identified with a party perceived themselves primarily as supporters of that party, whereas

independents tended to perceive themselves as neither supporters of their preferred party nor as opposers of the non-preferred. On the other hand, independents reported opposing one party significantly more strongly than they reported supporting the other, whereas partisans were directionally but not significantly on the side of stronger support. Neither of these patterns differed as a function of party preference.

It is interesting that the subjective measures suggested that the difference between partisans and independents has more to do with support (i.e., partisans support their preferred party more than independents do) whereas the objective measure suggested the difference has more to do with opposition (i.e., independents oppose their non-preferred party more than partisans do). One possible explanation is that independents are averse to describing themselves as being “motivated more by opposition” or as “anti-X, but not pro-Y,” because people may be motivated to avoid appearing negative to others or feeling themselves that they are in some essential way negative. This would not explain why partisans’ responses to the objective measure did not differ significantly from zero, however. Another possibility is that the subjective measures evoke identity, eliciting a response primarily from partisans, whereas the objective measure captures attitude polarization, a more relevant construct for independents. It is also possible that other factors in the political domain work against an association between participants’ self-categorizations and their preference frames, making detecting any such relationship more difficult. Thus, it is desirable to move outside the domain of politics to determine whether the same phenomena arise among identifiers and non-identifiers with other types of groups.

## **STUDY 2: GROUP IDENTIFIERS AND NON-IDENTIFIERS IN PROFESSIONAL SPORTS**

In the second study the same prediction was tested in a different domain that shared two key characteristics with electoral politics in the United States (Study 1). First, a context was needed in which two identity groups engage in direct competition with one another. A number of domains fit this criterion, including market-based competition (i.e., consumer products), athletic competition, and military conflict. Second, because a test of this hypothesis requires some preference to frame, that context must draw enough interest even from those not identified with either group that a large number of these individuals would have a preference between the two competitors.

The domain of professional sports was selected as satisfying the first criterion – that of a group identity-based competition – and the National Football League’s Super Bowl as satisfying the second – that of a competition that attracts substantial interest even from those who do not identify with either of the two competing teams. The Super Bowl was the most-watched sporting event in the United States in 2018, with an estimated 106 million viewers tuning in to the game (“TV Viewership of the Super Bowl,” 2019), and we timed our data collection for approximately one week prior to the 2019 game (which ultimately drew over 98 million viewers).

The reasoning and hypotheses for this study are identical to those described in the context of Study 1. That is, those who identify with one of the two competitors in the 2019 Super Bowl (i.e., the Los Angeles Rams or the New England Patriots) versus those who do not identify with either team (yet have a preference), have different modes of self-categorization (affirmational versus negational). It was expected that this difference in self-categorization would give rise to different tendencies to frame their preferences in terms of support or opposition. It was unknown what proportion of unidentified fans would have a preference but assumed because of the popularity of the Super Bowl and professional football in general that many would. Once again,



no predictions were made regarding those who report having no preference between the two teams and thus data regarding the preference frames of these individuals was not collected.

## Method

### *Participants and Design*

A total of 253 Amazon Mechanical Turk workers residing in the states of California, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine participated in this study for a fee of \$.08. These states were selected in order to ensure recruitment of a sufficient number of participants who identify as fans of the Rams, located in California, and the Patriots, located in New England. A power analysis based on the effect size for the objective mindset measure in Study 1 indicated that a sample of 52 per group would be necessary to achieve .90 power to detect a difference between the groups' mindsets at  $\alpha = .05$ . However, it is not clear that the effect size observed in the political domain is relevant here. 250 seemed like a safe number to ensure the inclusion of at least 50 identified and 50 non-identified fans.

Ultimately, 78 identified as fans of the Los Angeles Rams, 110 identified as fans of the New England Patriots, 49 identified as fans of a different team, and 16 identified as fans of no team. Among the 65 participants who reported being fans of neither the Rams nor the Patriots, 56 reported preferring one of the contending Super Bowl teams or the other (45 preferred the Rams to win and 11 preferred the Patriots), while 9 reported having no preference. Because the procedure involved asking participants about their support for and opposition to the Rams or Patriots, depending on their reported preference, we were unable to obtain measures of the mindsets of those who reported no preference either way. As a result, no further data was collected from these 9 participants, leaving a total sample of 244 participants who were either identified ( $n = 188$ ) or not identified ( $n = 56$ ) with one of the Super Bowl contending teams.

Each group, however, consisted of participants who reported having a preference between the Rams and Patriots.

### *Procedure*

Participants first reported whether they identify with the Los Angeles Rams, the New England Patriots, a different team, or no team. Those who identified with a different team or no team additionally reported which team (the Rams or the Patriots) they prefer win the Super Bowl, or that they preferred neither team to win. Next, participants who did have a preference in the Super Bowl reported whether (1) their views are motivated more strongly by support for their preferred team or opposition to their non-preferred team, (2) whether they tend to think of themselves more as pro-Rams/pro-Patriots or as anti-Rams/anti-Patriots, (3) whether they care more about their preferred team winning or their non-preferred team losing, and finally (4) how strongly they support their preferred team and how strongly they oppose their non-preferred team.

### *Subjective support vs. opposition mindset measures*

Four measures were administered of participants' tendencies to frame their preference between the Rams and the Patriots in terms of support or opposition. First, participants were asked to report an explicit comparison of the extent to which their preference is motivated by support versus opposition. Those who identified as fans of the Rams and those who did not identify with either team but preferred the Rams were asked: *Is your preference in the Super Bowl motivated more by support for the Rams or by opposition to the Patriots?* (7-point scale, from *motivated completely by support for the Rams* to *motivated completely by opposition to the Patriots*, with *motivated by both equally* at the midpoint). For those who identified as fans of the Patriots and those who did not identify with either team but preferred the Patriots, the question

was: *Is your preference in the Super Bowl motivated more by support for the Patriots or by opposition to the Rams?* (7-point scale, from *motivated completely by support for the Patriots* to *motivated completely by opposition to the Rams*, with *motivated by both equally* at the midpoint). This measure was centered around zero so positive values reflect a perception of oneself as motivated mainly by support and negative values reflect a perception of oneself as motivated mainly by opposition.

Second, participants were asked whether they tend to think of themselves more as pro- versus anti-. Those who identified as fans of the Rams and those who did not identify with either team but preferred the Rams were asked: *Do you tend to think of yourself more as pro-Rams, or as anti-Patriots?* (7-point scale, from *I think of myself as pro-Rams, but not anti-Patriots* to *I think of myself as anti-Patriots, but not pro-Rams*, with *I think of myself as pro-Rams and anti-Patriots equally* at the midpoint). For those who identified as fans of the Patriots and those who did not identify with either team but preferred the Patriots, the question was: *Do you tend to think of yourself more as pro-Patriots, or as anti-Rams?* (7-point scale, from *I think of myself as pro-Patriots, but not anti-Rams* to *I think of myself as anti-Rams, but not pro-Patriots*, with *I think of myself as pro-Patriots and anti-Rams equally* at the midpoint). This measure was centered around zero so positive values reflect a perception of oneself as more pro- and negative values reflect a perception of oneself as more anti-.

Third, participants were asked whether they care more about their preferred team winning or their non-preferred team losing. This is the sole measure included in this study that was not present in Study 1. It was included because winning and losing is more relevant to the event-focused context of the Super Bowl than to the general preference context of party politics. Those who identified as fans of the Rams and those who did not identify with either team but preferred

the Rams were asked: *Do you care more about the Rams winning, or the Patriots losing?* (7-point scale, from *I care much more about the Rams winning* to *I care much more about the Patriots losing*, with *I care about the Rams winning and the Patriots losing equally* at the midpoint). For those who identified as fans of the Patriots and those who did not identify with either team but preferred the Patriots, the question was: *Do you care more about the Patriots winning, or the Rams losing?* (7-point scale, from *I care much more about the Patriots winning* to *I care much more about the Rams losing*, with *I care about the Patriots winning and the Rams losing equally* at the midpoint). This measure was centered around zero so positive values reflect a stronger desire to see one's preferred team win and negative values reflect a stronger desire to see one's non-preferred team lose.

The three measures ( $\alpha = .91$ ) were averaged to form an index of people's subjective sense of their preference being about the side they are for versus the side they are against. This composite measure was centered around zero so positive values reflect thinking about one's preference as a matter of support and negative values reflect thinking about it as a matter of opposition.

*Objective support vs. opposition mindset measure*

Finally, separate measures of the strength of participants' support for their preferred team and opposition to their non-preferred team were obtained. Those who identified as fans of the Rams and those who did not identify with either team but preferred the Rams were asked: *How strongly do you support the Rams?* (7-point scale, from *I do not support the Rams* to *I strongly support the Rams*), and *How strongly do you oppose the Patriots?* (7-point scale, from *I do not oppose the Patriots* to *I strongly oppose the Patriots*). For those who identified as fans of the Patriots and those who did not identify with either team but preferred the Patriots, the questions

were: *How strongly do you support the Patriots?* (7-point scale, from *I do not support the Patriots* to *I strongly support the Patriots*) and *How strongly do you oppose the Rams?* (7-point scale, from *I do not oppose the Rams* to *I strongly oppose the Rams*). We computed the fourth mindset measure as the difference between the strength of support and the strength of opposition, such that positive values reflect stronger support for one's preferred team than opposition to the non-preferred team and negative values reflect stronger opposition to the non-preferred team than support for the preferred team.

## Results

### *Overview of analyses*

Two independent-samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare identified fans (i.e., of the Rams and Patriots) and non-identified fans' (i.e., fans of other teams) responses to the subjective and objective mindset measures, and four one-sample *t*-tests were conducted to compare each mindset measure for each group to zero. Cohen's *d* is reported for one-sample test effect sizes, while the Hedges' *g* correction for unequal sample sizes is reported for the independent-samples tests (Lakens, 2013). In addition, two ANOVAs were used to determine whether the relationship between Self-categorization (identified fan, non-identified fan) and mindset depended on Team preference (Rams, Patriots.)

### *Subjective support vs. opposition mindset*

The first three mindset measures are subjective in that they assess participants' explicit self-perceptions as supporters versus opposers, as pro- versus anti-, and as caring more about one's side winning versus the other side losing. Identified and non-identified fans' mindsets were significantly different from one another,  $t(242) = 13.10, p < .001, g = 1.32$ , such that both identified fans ( $M = 1.43$ ),  $t(187) = 11.51, p < .001, d = .84$ , and non-identified fans ( $M = -.98$ ),

$t(55) = -3.38, p = .001, d = -.45$ , were significantly different from zero in the predicted direction. A test of the 2-way Self-categorization (identified fan, non-identified fan) X Team preference (Rams, Patriots) interaction was not significant,  $F(3,240) = 1.34, p = .25, \eta_p^2 < .01$ , indicating that the association between Self-categorization and mindset did not depend on which team was preferred.

#### *Objective support vs. opposition mindset*

The fourth mindset measure is more objective in that it quantifies the relative strength of participants' support for their preferred team versus opposition to their non-preferred team, operationalized as the difference between the measures, without eliciting an overt subjective comparison between the two. Identified and non-identified fans once more had significantly different mindsets,  $t(220) = 9.34, p < .001, g = 1.42$ , such that both identified fans ( $M = 1.92$ ),  $t(187) = 9.76, p < .001, d = .71$ , and non-identified fans ( $M = -2.02$ ),  $t(56) = -5.02, p < .001, d = -.67$ , were significantly different from zero in the predicted direction. A test of the interaction between Self-categorization and Team preference was not significant,  $F(3,240) = 2.83, p = .094, \eta_p^2 = .012$ .

#### Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the preference frames that characterize political partisans versus independents generalize to the very different domain of professional sports. In both group identity-based competitive contexts, those who identified with one of the competitors – parties or football teams – naturally framed their preference in terms of support for their group, whereas those who identified with neither competitor – independents and fans of another or no football team – deemphasized support relative to partisans and, according to most measures

across the two studies, emphasized their opposition to their non-preferred group over their support for their preferred one.

Notably, the inconsistencies observed across the subjective and objective measures of political partisans' and independents' mindsets did not recur in the context of the Super Bowl. Whereas in Study 1 partisans' support focus was evident primarily on the subjective measure and independents' opposition focus was evident only on the objective measure, in Study 2 identified fans' and non-identified fans' preference frames were both significantly different from zero on both types of measure. Thus, whatever factors may be responsible for these fluctuations in the context of party politics does not seem to be intrinsic to the phenomenon of interest: The difference between affirmational and negational modes of self-categorization and the chronic preference frames associated with them. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the proposed model does not preclude fluctuations in the tendencies of group identifiers and non-identifiers to frame specific preferences in terms of one valence or the other. Rather, the argument is simply that identifiers should on average be more likely than non-identifiers to emphasize support over opposition, whereas non-identifiers should on average be more likely than the former to emphasize opposition over support, and that this difference has important consequences.

### **STUDY 3: MATCHING PERSUASIVE MESSAGES TO SUPPORTIVE VS.**

#### **OPPOSITIONAL MINDSETS**

Having established that affirmational versus negational modes of self-categorization are associated with the tendency to frame the relevant preference in terms of support or opposition, the next study set out to explore the consequences of this difference in the domain of persuasion. Specifically, it is proposed that the effectiveness of supportive versus oppositional persuasive messages may depend on these tendencies to think in affirmational or negational terms. Thus, in

the political context, the focus of Study 3, partisans are expected to respond more favorably to *support-framed* messages, whereas independents should respond more favorably to *opposition-framed* messages.

These hypotheses are consistent with past research indicating that other aspects of a message can influence persuasion by matching with a characteristic of the recipient or their construal of the choice (e.g., Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004; Petty & Wegener, 1998). The current research also relates to the distinction between frames in communication (i.e., frames imposed by a message) and frames in thought (i.e., frames generated by personal mental content; Chong & Druckman, 2007). Essentially, the key hypothesis is that when it comes to valenced persuasive messaging, it is critical to understand recipients' relevant frames in thought (i.e., their chronic support/opposition mindsets in that domain) in order to anticipate the effectiveness of positive or negative frames in communication.

Matching effects on the effectiveness of the message would be most clearly evident in differences in participants' evaluations of the political parties or their preference between them. They could also be reflected, however, in outcomes indicative of an "unfreezing" process (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996) in which participants are relatively receptive to persuasive attempts and open-minded about their arguments, which would be beneficial not only for persuasion but also for positive intergroup contact. Specifically, it is expected that matched (relative to mismatched) messages will elicit greater receptiveness, thoughtful processing, and openness to challenge, even if they do not alter participants' attitudes and preferences themselves. This study also aimed to determine whether the position taken by the message moderates any such matching effects. An influence of matching would be most striking in the case of counterattitudinal persuasion, as people are often motivated to maintain their existing



attitudes (e.g., Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996), making this kind of persuasion especially difficult.

## Method

### *Participants and Design*

402 Amazon Mechanical Turk workers participated in this study for a fee of \$.50. We targeted this number in order to reach approximately 80-90 participants per condition in a Match (same valence Self-categorization and Frame, different valence Self-categorization and Frame) X Message position (proattitudinal, counterattitudinal) interaction after excluding independents who did not have a preference. Ultimately, 177 identified as partisan Democrats and 106 as partisan Republicans, 107 identified as independents, and 12 identified as “other.” Among the 119 who identified as independents or other, 81 reported being more aligned with one party or the other (36 with Democrats, 45 with Republicans) and 38 reported being aligned more with neither party. Because the predictions regarding partisans’ and independents’ mindsets pertain only to those who have a preference between Democrats and Republicans, as described earlier, and because it is impossible to determine whether a given message is proattitudinal or counterattitudinal from the perspective of people who do not align with either party, we excluded that group of 38 from the analyses. Thus, the total sample for this study was 364 ( $n_{\text{Dems}} = 177$ ,  $n_{\text{Reps}} = 107$ ,  $n_{\text{inds}} = 81$ ).

### *Procedure*

Participants first reported whether they identify with Democrats, Republicans, independents, or “other.” Those who identified as independent or other additionally reported which party (Democrats or Republicans) they tend to be more aligned with, most of the time. To accommodate those who do not consider themselves more aligned with either party, a third

option of “neither” was also provided. Participants were then asked how they feel about Democrats and Republicans on a bipolar scale from *intensely prefer Democrats* to *intensely prefer Republicans*. Next, participants were informed that they would receive a political advertising message created by a political action committee (PAC) that has a long history of involvement in American politics and asked them to read it carefully. Participants were then randomly assigned to receive a message arguing for one of four positions: supporting Democrats, supporting Republicans, opposing Democrats, or opposing Republicans. (See Appendix A for full text of messages.) As such, participants received a message that that was either proattitudinal or counterattitudinal and was either support-framed or opposition-framed. For example, if the participant preferred the Republican party, the proattitudinal message was either supportive of Republicans or in opposition to Democrats whereas the counterattitudinal message was either in opposition to Republicans or in support of Democrats. After receiving the randomly assigned message, participants were again asked their feelings about Democrats and Republicans with the same bipolar scale.

Next, participants reported their receptiveness to, processing of, and openness to having their views challenged by the message. Whether or not matching induces changes to participants’ preferences, it may promote changes in these potential antecedents to persuasion. In group-based choice domains like party politics, people’s opinions are often “frozen” (i.e., subject to a motivation to maintain cognitive closure; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996), and minimizing their frozenness might facilitate not only persuasion but also positive intergroup contact.

Participants then rated their attitudes toward both Democrats and Republicans, providing an index of Attitude polarization (i.e., the difference between the attitudes). Self-categorization and Attitude polarization are likely to covary naturally because people whose attitudes toward

the parties are more polarized may be more likely to identify with the party they like, and because belonging to a party may cause one's attitudes to become more extreme over time. It is therefore important to determine whether any joint effects of Self-categorization and Frame (i.e., matching) would remain significant when controlling statistically for Attitude polarization. Testing the impact of this natural confound will distinguish the potential role of identification in matching from that of attitudes, helping to determine which of the two influences is shaping partisans' and independents' responses and when.

*Pre-message and post-message preference measures*

Both before and after presenting participants with the political advertising message, their feelings toward Democrats and Republicans were assessed on a sliding scale anchored at *intensely prefer Democrats* and *intensely prefer Republicans*, centered at *prefer neither*, with *somewhat prefer Democrats* and *somewhat prefer Republicans* halfway between the midpoint and endpoints.<sup>2</sup> Measuring this preference at both time points allows for a score to be computed corresponding to any change in feelings about the parties that may have been induced by the message. An index of the extremity of the post-message preference was computed as the absolute value of the distance of the preference from the scale midpoint, and an index of the pre-message to post-message change in extremity as the difference between pre-message and post-message preference extremity scores. An untransformed preference change measure was also computed as the difference of raw pre-message and post-message preferences.

*Receptiveness to message ( $\alpha = .88$ )*

Three measures evaluated the degree to which participants were receptive to the political advertising message: *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the message you read earlier*

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<sup>2</sup> We elicited their response with the following prompt: *Please tell us how you feel about Democrats and Republicans using the following scale.*

*in the study? (7-point scale, from strongly disagree to strongly agree); To what extent did the message provide good reasons for the argument it was making? (7-point scale, from not at all to very much); How interesting did you find the message to be? (7-point scale, from not at all to very much).*

*Processing of message arguments ( $r = .80$ )*

Two measures assessed the extent to which participants processed the message arguments thoughtfully: *How deeply did you think about the message?*; and *How much did you reflect on the arguments given in the message?* (Both 7-point scales, from *not at all* to *very much*). Strictly speaking these are measures of perceived processing, which has been shown in previous work to arise as a consequence of actual processing (Barden & Petty, 2008). In this research it is measured soon after the relevant processing experience and is intended to be a proxy for actual processing.

*Openness to challenge ( $\alpha = .77$ )*

Five items assessed participants' willingness to engage further with content that challenges their views: *To what extent would you be interested in reading more about the issues raised in the message?* (7-point scale, from *not at all* to *very much*); *Would you think about sharing the view expressed in the message with your friends?* (7-point scale, from *definitely no* to *definitely yes*); *To what extent do the arguments given in the message challenge your typical way of thinking?* (7-point scale, from *not at all* to *very much*); *To what extent did the message lead you to think more favorably about viewpoints that differ from your own?* (7-point scale, from *not at all* to *very much*); and finally, *Would you be willing to reconsider your current position on Democrats and Republicans?* (7-point scale, from *definitely no* to *definitely yes*).

*Attitude polarization*

Participants' reported their attitudes toward each of the two major political parties: *Please rate your attitude toward Democrats on the following scale.* and *Please rate your attitude toward Republicans on the following scale.* (both 11-point scales from -5 to +5, anchored at *strongly negative* and *strongly positive*). The difference between these two measures was computed as an estimate of the polarization of participants' attitudes toward the parties, a likely covariate of Self-categorization. Statistically controlling for Attitude polarization in any cases of matching effects would help establish whether those effects are caused by identity-related or attitudes-related factors (or both).

## Results

### *Overview of analyses*

The key hypothesis, that there should be greater receptiveness, thoughtfulness, and openness to challenge in matched than mismatched conditions, will be tested with independent-samples *t*-tests comparing matched and mismatched conditions on receptiveness, processing, and openness.

3-way ANOVAs will be used to test for differences in matching effects based on Message position (proattitudinal, counterattitudinal), Self-categorization (partisan, independent), Message frame (proattitudinal, counterattitudinal), or their combination (except Self-categorization and Frame, which would be redundant with the Match variable).

In addition, any statistical models that produce significant matching effects or moderation of those effects will be repeated while controlling for Party preference and Attitude Polarization, to test an identity-based interpretation of the results against these alternative accounts. Thus, significant *t*-tests will be followed by one-way ANOVAs controlling for these variables, while 3-way ANOVAs will be repeated with these statistical controls. This is especially important with

respect to Attitude polarization, which is a natural covariate of partisanship and was associated with it in this dataset.

Supplementary analyses are included in Appendix B, including characteristics of partisans and independents, depending on Party preference; exploratory findings concerning the effect of Match on preference confidence and threat perceptions; and 4-way analyses with Match, Self-categorization/Message frame, Message position, and Party preference.

#### *Manipulation/attention check*

At the conclusion of the study, participants were asked to report whether the message to which they had been randomly assigned argued for supporting Democrats, supporting Republicans, opposing Democrats, or opposing Republicans. 85.7% of participants (312 of 364) correctly identified the position taken by the message, a proportion significantly greater than chance,  $t(363) = 7.78, p < .001$ .

#### *Match variable*

The Match variable is coded as 1 to denote a match when a partisan (Democrat, Republican) receives a support-framed message or an independent receives an opposition-framed message, and a 2 to denote a mismatch when a partisan receives an opposition-framed message or an independent receives a support-framed message.

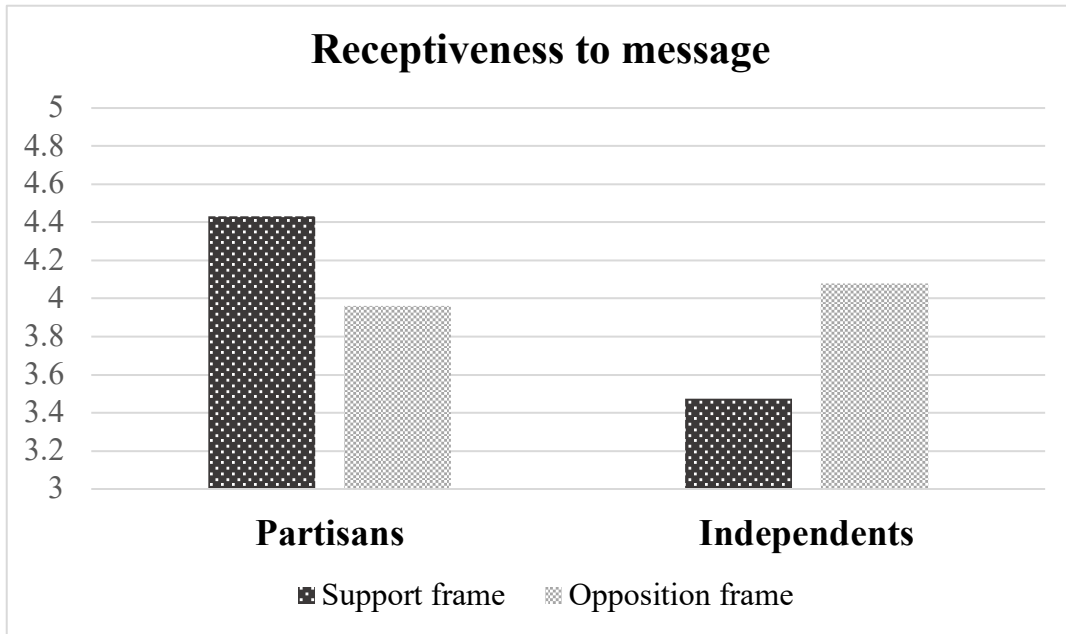
#### *Effects of matching on post-message preference extremity, pre- to post-message preference change, and pre- to post-message preference extremity change*

There were no significant Match main effects or interactions with Self-categorization, Message position, or both variables, on post-message preference extremity (i.e., the absolute value of the distance of one's preference from the scale midpoint), or on the change in preference or change in preference extremity from pre-message to post-message. Interactions between

Match and Message frame emerged on post-message preference extremity and the change in pre-message to post-message extremity, reflecting differences between partisans and independents that are detailed in Appendix B.

*Effects of matching on receptiveness to the message*

Receptiveness to the message was computed as the mean of three items ( $\alpha = .88$ ): agreement with the message, extent to which the message provided good reasons for its arguments, and interest in the message. Participants in matched ( $M = 4.35$ ) conditions were significantly more receptive to the message than those in mismatched ( $M = 3.86$ ) conditions,  $t(362) = 2.52, p = .012, d = .26$ , an effect that remained significant when controlling for Attitude polarization and Party preference,  $F(3,360) = 5.91, p = .016, \eta_p^2 = .016$ , and did not depend further on Self-categorization, Message position, or their interaction. This matching effect reflects a significant underlying interaction between Self-categorization (partisan, independent) and Frame (support, opposition),  $F(3,360) = 5.24, p = .023, \eta_p^2 = .014$ . (See figure 1.)



**Figure 1.** Significant main effect of Matching broken down by Self-categorization (partisan, independent) and Message frame (support, opposition). The simple effect of Message frame was significant among partisans ( $p = .034$ ), but not among the smaller group of independents ( $p = .146$ ). However, the effect of Matching was not moderated by Self-categorization.

To simplify presentation, subsequent analyses will include the single Match variable instead of both Self-categorization and Frame. 3-way ANOVAs with Match, Position, and Self-categorization or Frame will also be reported in order to establish whether matching processes worked in the same way or differently across these groups.

A 3-way ANOVA predicting receptiveness to the message revealed a significant interaction between Match, Message frame, and Message position,  $F(7,356) = 4.93, p = .027, \eta_p^2 = .014$ . Analysis of the simple effects showed that matching had a significant effect only in support-framed proattitudinal conditions ( $p < .001$ ) and opposition-framed counterattitudinal conditions ( $p = .0495$ ). In these cases partisans ( $M = 5.65$ ) were more receptive than independents ( $M = 4.23$ ) to appeals for proattitudinal support, and independents ( $M = 3.31$ ) were more receptive than partisans ( $M = 2.64$ ) to appeals for counterattitudinal opposition. The interaction remained significant when controlling for Attitude polarization, and although the



simple matching effect remained significant in proattitudinal support-framed conditions, it was no longer significant in counterattitudinal opposition-framed conditions ( $p = .26$ ).<sup>3</sup> Neither Self-categorization nor its interaction with Message position moderated the Match main effect.

*Effects of matching on message processing*

Message processing was computed as the mean of two items ( $r = .80$ ): the extent to which one reported having thought deeply about the message and the extent to which one reported having reflected on the message arguments. Those in matched ( $M = 5.20$ ) conditions reported having processed the message more thoroughly than those in mismatched ( $M = 4.83$ ) conditions,  $t(362) = 2.34$ ,  $p = .020$ ,  $d = .26$ . This effect remained significant when controlling for Attitude polarization and Party preference,  $F(3,360) = 5.83$ ,  $p = .016$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .016$ . No significant interactions between Match and any combination of Self-categorization/Frame and Message position emerged.

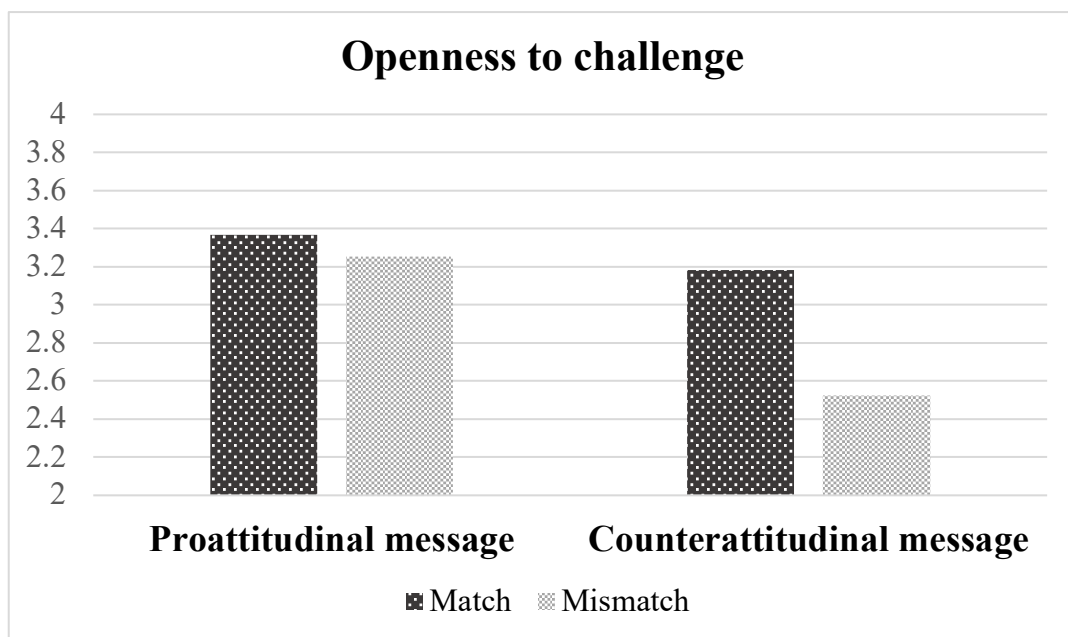
*Effects of matching on openness to challenge*

Openness to challenge was computed as the mean of five items ( $\alpha = .77$ ): interest in reading more about the message arguments, openness to sharing the message with a friend, extent to which the arguments challenged one's typical way of thinking, extent to which the message made one think more favorably of views that differed from one's own, and willingness to reconsider one's current views. Participants in matched ( $M = 3.27$ ) conditions reported more openness than those in mismatched ( $M = 2.90$ ) conditions,  $t(362) = 2.52$ ,  $p = .012$ ,  $d = .27$ , an effect that remained significant when controlling for Attitude polarization and Party preference,  $F(3,360) = 4.62$ ,  $p = .032$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .013$ .

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<sup>3</sup> The simple effect was marginally significant when controlling for Party Preference,  $p = .087$ .

A 3-way ANOVA with Match, Self-categorization, and Message position revealed a significant interaction between Match and Message position,  $F(7,356) = 4.27$ ,  $p = .044$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .011$ , and analysis of the simple effects showed significant matching effects when the message was counterattitudinal ( $p_{\text{partisans}} = .011$ ,  $p_{\text{independents}} = .049$ ), but not when proattitudinal ( $p_s > .41$ ). The interaction no longer approached significance when controlling for Attitude polarization, however ( $p = .55$ ). (It remained marginally significant when controlling for Party preference,  $p = .083$ .) No significant interactions between Match and Self-categorization or Message frame, between Match, Self-categorization, and Message position, or between Match, Message frame, and Message position, emerged on the openness to challenge measure.



**Figure 2.** Significant interaction between Match and Message position. The matching effect was significant when the message was counterattitudinal ( $p = .002$ ), but not when it was proattitudinal ( $p = .58$ ). However, unlike the main effect of matching, the interaction of Matching and Message position no longer approached significance when controlling for Attitude polarization.

## Discussion

Message recipients in this study responded more favorably to persuasive attempts that matched their orientation toward the choice. Partisans were more receptive to support-framed messages, reported processing them more thoughtfully, and were more open to being challenged by them, than opposition-framed messages. Independents were instead more receptive to opposition-framed messages, processed them more thoroughly, and were more open to being challenged by them. These effects appeared even when the message was counterattitudinal – partisans were more favorable to arguments for supporting their opponents than arguments for opposing them, while party-leaning independents were more favorable toward arguments for opposing the party they lean away from than for supporting the one they lean toward.

Some results point to specific mechanisms through which these effects might operate. For example, partisans and independents differed significantly in their receptiveness to proattitudinal support-framed messages, likely because the message was more compelling for partisans, to whom the message appealed as ingroup members, than independents, for whom identity was not at stake. Partisans and independents also differed, though in the opposite direction, in their receptiveness to counterattitudinal opposition-framed messages. Like the proattitudinal support condition, these messages focus on the preferred option, and were therefore presumably more counterattitudinal for partisans, who identify with the group targeted by the message, than for independents, who lean toward but do not identify with that group.

Interestingly, attitude polarization was unable to account for the matching effect in proattitudinal support-framed conditions, but the simple effect in counterattitudinal opposition-framed conditions was no longer significant when polarization was statistically controlled for. Evidently, the difference between partisans and independents in their receptiveness to

proattitudinal support-framed messages was due to identification, not (or not only) attitudes, whereas their difference in receptiveness to counterattitudinal opposition-framed messages was due to attitudes, not identification. This may be related to the Study 1 finding that partisans' preference frames differed from zero on the subjective, more identity-evoking measures, but independents' differed from zero on the more objective, attitude polarization-type measure. Indeed, findings from both studies point to separate roles of identification and attitudes in shaping these matching processes.

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### Appendix A: Study 3 persuasive message

*Example of persuasive message used in Study 3. The other conditions are identical except that “support” and other valenced words (e.g., “increasing”) were replaced with “oppose” (and “decreasing”).*

There are many reasons to support Democrats in future national and state elections. We want to highlight a few of these reasons here.

First, a large number of scientific studies indicate that the Democratic party’s policies are good for the economy. Specifically, Democrats’ policies tend to have the effect of increasing opportunities for millions of Americans while making the government run more efficiently.

The second reason to support Democrats is that they have the well-being of average Americans at heart; they choose to pursue a policy agenda that benefits the vast majority of Americans – even at the expense of their own political popularity. Democrats are in touch with what ordinary Americans experience every day and are able to build real connections with their constituents and truly understand their needs.

This is related to a broader strength within the Democratic party: The party is well-organized and well-run, and many Democratic politicians have the political skill necessary to achieve significant successes on behalf of the party and the country. As a result, Democrats end up spending their time and energy on issues that really matter.

We feel that the reasons to support Democrats are too numerous to list, and we urge you to support Democratic politicians in the months and years to come.

## Appendix B: Supplementary analyses

### Descriptive statistics

#### *Characteristics of partisans and independents in this sample*

An overall comparison of partisans and independents was conducted on the dependent variables using independent-samples *t*-tests. Partisans' attitudes were significantly more polarized ( $M = 5.78$ ) than independents' ( $M = 3.84$ ),  $t(362) = 5.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $g = .66$ , and their post-message preferences were more extreme ( $M = 2.74$ ) than independents' ( $M = 1.91$ ),  $t(362) = 5.77$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $g = .73$ . Partisans also perceived more threat from their political opponents ( $M = 4.21$ ) than independents did ( $M = 3.68$ ),  $t(362) = 2.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $g = .31$ , and were marginally more receptive ( $M = 4.20$ ) than independents ( $M = 3.79$ ) to messages overall,  $t(362) = 1.71$ ,  $p = .089$ ,  $g = .22$ . The two groups did not differ in the amount they reported processing messages ( $p = .71$ ) or their overall openness to further engagement ( $p = .55$ ).

#### *Characteristics of people in this sample who prefer Democrats versus Republicans*

An overall comparison of participants who preferred Democrats versus those who preferred Republicans was conducted on the dependent variables using independent-samples *t*-tests. Those who preferred Democrats had significantly more polarized attitudes ( $M = 6.03$ ) than those who preferred Republicans ( $M = 4.39$ ),  $t(362) = 5.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $g = .56$ , and their post-message preferences were more extreme ( $M = 2.68$ ) than those of people who preferred Republicans ( $M = 2.38$ ),  $t(362) = 2.34$ ,  $p = .020$ ,  $g = .25$ . Party preference was not related to perceived threat ( $p = .52$ ), receptiveness to the message ( $p = .23$ ), or depth of processing. Participants who preferred Republicans reported marginally more openness ( $M = 3.25$ ) to further engagement than those who preferred Democrats ( $M = 2.97$ ),  $t(362) = -1.88$ ,  $p = .060$ ,  $g = .20$ .

#### *Partisans and independents who prefer Democrats and Republicans*

The interaction between Self-categorization (partisan, independent) and Party preference (Democrat, Republican) on Attitude polarization was marginally significant,  $F(3,360) = 3.08, p = .080, \eta_p^2 = .008$ , reflecting a greater difference between partisan Democrats ( $M = 6.42$ ) and Democrat-leaning independents ( $M = 4.08$ ) than between partisan Republicans ( $M = 4.71$ ) and Republican-leaning independents ( $M = 3.64$ ), though both simple effects of Self-categorization were significant. The same interaction approached significance on the extremity of the post-message preference,  $F(3,360) = 2.78, p = .097, \eta_p^2 = .008$ , due once again to the greater difference between partisan Democrats ( $M = 2.85$ ) and Democrat-leaning independents ( $M = 1.81$ ) than between partisan Republicans ( $M = 2.55$ ) and Republican-leaning independents ( $M = 1.99$ ). No effects of the Self-categorization X Party preference interaction on perceived threat, receptiveness to the message, depth of processing, or openness to further engagement approached significance.

#### Additional effects of matching

##### *Effects of matching on confidence measures (certainty, confidence, clarity, correctness)*

After reporting their post-message preference, participants were asked to evaluate their certainty and confidence in their preference: *How certain are you of this opinion?* (7-point scale, from *not at all certain* to *completely certain*) and *How confident are you in your judgment?* (7-point scale, from *not at all confident* to *extremely confident*). They also reported the degree of clarity they felt in their preference and their degree of certainty that it was correct: *How certain are you that the attitude you just expressed is really the attitude that you have?* (7-point scale, from *not at all certain* to *completely certain*) and *How certain are you that the attitude you just expressed is the correct attitude to have?* (7-point scale, from *not at all certain* to *completely certain*).

There were no effects of matching on attitude certainty, confidence, or correctness, regardless of Message position ( $ps > .25$ ). However, while matching did not affect attitude clarity overall, the interaction of Match, Self-categorization, and Message position approached significance  $F(7,356) = 2.88, p = .090, \eta_p^2 = .008$ . Counterattitudinal matched (i.e., opposition-framed) messages significantly decreased independents' clarity about their attitudes relative to mismatched messages, (simple effect  $p = .005$ ), whereas matching did not significantly affect other participants' clarity about their preferences.

#### *Effects of matching on perceived threat*

Perceived threat was computed as the mean of four items ( $\alpha = .91$ ): threat to one's values, threat to people's freedoms and rights, threat to people's economic opportunities, and threat to people's physical safety. This consisted of four items, each beginning with *People whose political views oppose mine...* and ending with: *...are a threat to my values.; ...threaten the freedoms and rights of others.; ...threaten economic opportunities of others.; ...threaten the physical safety of others in society.* (all 7-point scales, from *not at all* to *very much*).

No a priori hypothesis was formulated about matching effects on this measure, but it seemed plausible that threat might play a role in this context because of its relevance to the phenomenon of intergroup prejudice (e.g., Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006; Bahns, 2015; Makashvili, Vardanashvili, & Javakhishvili, 2018), with which partisanship has recently been tied (Parker & Janoff-Bulman, 2013; Abramowitz & Webster, 2018; Groenendyk, 2018). Therefore, these findings should be considered tentative and should not be relied upon unless replicated in a larger sample.

Participants in matched ( $M = 3.91$ ) conditions reported perceiving significant less threat from their political opponents than those in mismatched ( $M = 4.28$ ) conditions,  $t(362) = -2.01, p$

= .045,  $d = .21$ . This was marginally significant when controlling for Attitude polarization,  $F(2,361) = 2.97, p = .086, \eta_p^2 = .008$  (and remained significant when controlling for Party preference only,  $F(2,361) = 3.99, p = .047, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ). 2-way and 3-way ANOVAs did not find evidence for moderation of the matching effect by Self-categorization, Message position, or their interaction.

The interaction of Match and Message frame did significantly affect perceived threat, however,  $F(7,356) = 5.82, p = .016, \eta_p^2 = .016$ . The effect of matching was significant in proattitudinal opposition-framed ( $p = .002$ ) but not support-framed ( $p = .52$ ) conditions, suggesting that independents' reduced threat perceptions in proattitudinal opposition-framed conditions ( $M = 3.06$ ) relative to support-framed conditions ( $M = 3.87$ ) drove the matching main effect. The interaction of Match and Message frame was no longer significant when controlling for Attitude polarization ( $p = .26$ ), however. The 2-way interaction was not further moderated by Message position.

*Match X Message frame interaction on post-message preference extremity and pre-message to post-message change in preference extremity.*

A significant interaction between Match and Message frame emerged on post-message preference extremity,  $F(7,356) = 32.41, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .083$ , reflecting the fact that partisans' preferences were more extreme than independents' overall. Post-message preferences were more extreme in matched support-framed conditions (i.e., among partisans) than opposition-framed conditions (i.e., among independents; simple effect  $p < .001$ ) and in mismatched opposition-framed (i.e., partisan) than support-framed (i.e., independent) conditions (simple effect  $p = .002$ ). The same interaction also marginally significantly predicted the change in preference extremity from pre-message to post-message,  $F(7,356) = 3.56, p = .052, \eta_p^2 = .011$ , indicating that

independents' preference extremity increased more than partisans': Preferences became marginally more extreme in matched opposition-framed conditions (i.e., among independents) than support-framed conditions (i.e., among partisans; simple effect  $p = .069$ ), though the difference did not approach significance in mismatched support-framed (i.e., independents) compared to opposition-framed (i.e., partisans) conditions (simple effect  $p = .41$ ). The interaction of these variables did not significantly affect the absolute change in participants' preferences.

#### 4-way interactions with Party Preference

##### *Higher-order interactions with Self-categorization*

4-way ANOVAs with Match, Self-categorization, Message position, and Party preference, as well as with Match, Message frame, Message position, and Party preference, were conducted on all dependent variables. These are not reported in the main text of the article because some groups in the 16-group comparison are smaller than  $n = 10$ . The statistical interactions reported here ought not be relied upon unless replicated in much larger sample.

There was a significant 4-way interaction between Match, Self-categorization, Message position, and Party preference on receptiveness to the message,  $F(15,348) = 8.64, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .024$ . In seven of eight combinations of Self-categorization, Message position, and Party preference, matching produced at least directionally more receptiveness than mismatching. The one exception was among Democrat-leaning independents who received a proattitudinal message, who were slightly more receptive after reading a mismatched (i.e., support-framed) message ( $M = 4.38$ ) than a matched (i.e., opposition-framed) message ( $M = 4.30$ ).

The 4-way interaction between Match, Self-categorization, Message position, and Party preference also significantly affected participants' self-reported depth of processing,  $F(15,348) = 5.55, p = .019, \eta_p^2 = .016$ . The same seven of eight combinations of Self-categorization, Message

position, and Party preference showed higher levels of processing in matched than mismatched conditions. This time, Democrat-leaning independents reported substantially more processing in mismatched ( $M = 5.69$ ) than matched ( $M = 4.72$ ) conditions.

The 4-way interaction between Match, Self-categorization, Message position, and Party preference did not significantly affect openness to further engagement or perceived threat.

*Higher-order interactions with Message frame*

A 4-way ANOVA revealed an interaction between Match, Message frame (instead of Self-categorization), Message position, and Party preference on receptiveness to the message,  $F(15,348) = 4.04, p = .045, \eta_p^2 = .011$ . In seven of eight combinations of Message frame, Message position, and Party preference, matching produced at least directionally more receptiveness than mismatching. The exception was the group of people who preferred Democrats and received proattitudinal, opposition-framed messages. In this small group, those who received mismatched messages (i.e., partisan Democrats) were more receptive to the message ( $M = 5.02$ ) than those who received matched messages (i.e., Democrat-leaning independents,  $M = 4.30$ ).

The same 4-way interaction did not significantly affect depth of processing, openness to further engagement, or perceived threat.