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Against the (Campaign) Grain: The Cross-Cutting Effects of Authoritarianism in Political Campaigns

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For decades politicians focused their campaigns on issues that primed feelings of normative or existential threat among voters. Whether national security, increasing crime rates, or civil unrest, these campaign appeals led voters to consider external political threats. We examined one particular issue, national security, and showed that Republican candidates in particular benefitted from campaigning on this issue. When the campaign context featured national security issues, Republican candidates benefitted as highly authoritarian Democrats increased their support of Republican candidates. Interestingly, similar appeals did not benefit Democratic candidates. We found that the political context raised perceptions of threat and increased the influence of authoritarianism among voters, but these perceptions were asymmetrical across partisan and psychological divides. This asymmetry led to drastically different candidate evaluations and political behavior.

KEYWORDS *authoritarianism; campaign strategy; national security; threat*

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INTRODUCTION

The presidential elections of the late 1960s and early 1970s saw a massive shift in strategy from Republican candidates. While Richard Nixon courted the African-American swing vote in the 1960 election, the next three presidential campaigns featured explicit appeals by Nixon, Barry Goldwater, and others in the Republican Party aimed at drawing white Democratic voters to the Republican candidates (Hillygus and Shields 2008). These appeals focused on law and order issues such as urban crime rates, drug use, and civil rights unrest. While many of these appeals were thinly veiled racial attacks, they also worked. While Goldwater was not successful in his 1964 run, Nixon and Ronald Reagan were both successful with this strategy.

More recently, the first presidential election after the September 11th terrorist attacks featured campaigns focused on the issue of national security (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). A civil discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the competing approaches, however, was not to be. Instead, George W. Bush hammered John Kerry, claiming he sought to cut vital funding from national security and accusing him of indecision regarding the war in Iraq. Kerry's attempts to combat these claims were often ignored, as Bush won the election.

While candidate and campaign quality clearly played a role in Bush's success, we claim another force was at play as well. By discussing national security, Republicans appealed to highly authoritarian Democrats and their psychological needs for security and certainty.¹ National security issues served a functional purpose for authoritarian Democrats, appealing to these individuals' need for order (Lavine and Snyder 1996, 2000; Hetherington and Weiler 2009) and, when faced with threats to the social order, they reacted positively to candidates and parties that promised a reinstatement of societal stability. This follows directly from the work of Hetherington and Suhay (2011), who demonstrated a right-ward shift in support for anti-terrorism and national security policies after 9/11. We tested whether the same dynamic holds for candidate evaluations under conditions of campaign-induced threat.

AUTHORITARIANISM AND THE NEED FOR ORDER AND SECURITY

We examined how political campaigns appeal to authoritarian psychological needs and we argued that this drew Democratic voters towards the Republican Party. Drawing on theories of authoritarianism, we argued that individuals (in particular for this study, Democrats) who score high in

authoritarianism possess stronger needs for order, certainty, and security and these needs, in turn, cause them to abandon Democratic preferences when presented with the opportunity to restore order to an uncertain world by supporting the Republican candidate. We tested this with an experiment completed during the summer of 2013.² We also leveraged experimental data from the 2012 University of Minnesota Center for the Study of Political Psychology Multi-Investigator Panel Study (UMMPS, Chen et al. 2014) and observational data from the 2000-2002-2004 American National Election Study (ANES), demonstrating similar effects with actual political candidates. We found that Republican candidates who campaign on national security issues provide high authoritarian Democrats with a functionally congruent message, resulting in higher levels of support for Republicans among high authoritarian Democrats under conditions of threats to the national order (here conceptualized as national security threats). As Hetherington and Suhay (2011) found, a right-shift occurred among some voters facing a campaign environment focused on national security.

While the earliest studies on authoritarianism research began with concerns about fascism and group-centric belief systems (Adorno et al. 1950; Altemeyer 1981; Altemeyer 1988; Duckitt 1989; Duckitt 1992), recent work situated authoritarianism in reference to group authority, uniformity, and autonomy (Feldman and Stenner 1997; Feldman 2003; Stenner 2005). In contrast to this research, we approach authoritarianism through the contemporary lens of motivated social cognition (Jost et al. 2003). In particular, we agree with Hetherington and Weiler (2009) in their focus on the cognitive style differences between high and low authoritarians (Stenner 2005; Altemeyer 1996).

Under this conception of authoritarianism, the strong in-group and out-group distinctions drawn by high authoritarians result from a higher psychological need for order and certainty and a lower appreciation of nuance (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). Feelings of normative or collective threat (i.e., threats to the national and social order) activate authoritarian tendencies. Under Hetherington and Weiler's (2009) view, high authoritarians are constantly attuned to these threats, resulting in endorsement of policies and candidates that provide greater security and order and producing conservative preferences on issues such as gay rights, immigration, and national security that are structured by authoritarianism. Individuals low in authoritarianism, on the other hand, can be led to support more restrictive policies as well when they feel threatened.

In turn, this perception of threat produced a number of associations between high levels of authoritarianism and conservative positions, be they social (Hetherington and Weiler 2009) or economic (Johnston and Wronski 2015) issues, ideological positions (Jost et al. 2003; Jost, Federico,

and Napier 2009; Federico, Fisher, and Deason 2011), or partizan identity (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). This stemmed, in part, from the influence of epistemic needs for certainty and order on party identification. Rather than the straightforward connection between conservative policy positions and Republican Party identification that Hetherington and Weiler (2009) posited, research suggested that the relationship is more complex. Wronski (2014) argued that the association between Republican identification and authoritarianism is a recent phenomenon driven by the more socially homogeneous coalition of the Republican Party. Similarly, Luttig (2016) demonstrated that the need for certainty drives strength, rather than direction, of partizan identification; such that higher needs for certainty lead to a greater likelihood of stronger partizan identification. In the case of normative threat, we may see that threats to the national order are met with increasingly conservative policy positions (Hetherington and Suhay 2011), by stronger association with the party of social homogeneity (Wronski 2014), or by retrenchment into existing partizan identities (Luttig 2016).

Following from this research, we argue that, in the case of national security issues, voters (especially highly authoritarian Democratic voters) should move to the right on the political spectrum when faced with this issue environment. If both Democrats and Republicans both offered a credible solution to needs for certainty and order on this issue, then we might expect retrenchment as found by Luttig (2016). However, as we argue in the following section, only one party presents a credible solution to these needs. Therefore, while the right-ward shift in preferences could theoretically apply to all voters, it is only functionally important in our case for Democratic voters.

THREAT, POLITICAL COMMUNICATIONS, AND FUNCTIONAL MATCHING

The arousal of national security threats can occur naturally (through actual terrorist attacks on the nation, for instance) or through concerted efforts to activate threat using political advertisements or media. In particular, modern (post-9/11) political campaign frequently mention issues of national security or threats to the United States, as these are highly salient issues given the broad involvement of the United States in foreign conflicts. National security threats consistently activate authoritarian tendencies in the American public (Feldman and Stenner 1997; Stenner 2005; Hetherington and Weiler 2009; Hetherington and Suhay 2011), but we extended this work and tested whether this activation can occur through campaign communication.

In particular, we believe that political communication that focuses on the issue of national security provides a functional match with individuals high in authoritarian tendencies, leading to greater levels of persuasion. Under the functional matching paradigm, communication is most persuasive when it fulfills a psychological function for the recipient (Lavine and Snyder 1996; Lavine and Snyder 2000; Snyder 1993; Luttig and Lavine 2016). The function can be instrumental, but is often more closely related to value expression or defense (Katz 1960). For highly authoritarian individuals, with a strong preference for certainty and order, communication that draws attention to national security (and the inherent threats to order) is particularly effective, especially if the communication presents a political alternative that promises to satisfy those needs for certainty and order.

Importantly for this research, Cizmar et al. (2014) showed that the increasing importance of authoritarianism for policy derives not from changes in parenting values, but rather from conscious decisions made by political elites to structure political debate around issues that divide along authoritarian lines. The parties and candidates, by focusing on issues like immigration or national security, encouraged the voting public to structure their partisan beliefs along authoritarian lines. Additionally, Cizmar et al. provided observational evidence for the underlying theory of this paper: that authoritarianism's effect on political behavior is contingent on the campaign context. By showing stronger effects in 2004 than in 2008, they demonstrated the ability of campaigns to alter the expression of authoritarian tendencies. We extended this argument by showing these effects were particularly strong for Democratic voters faced with Republican appeals. By activating authoritarianism among Democratic voters, the campaign context induced a shift to the right that ran counter to Democratic party identification.

Our argument, however, is not simply that national security appeals are effective for authoritarian voters because of inherent needs for certainty and security, but that these appeals are particularly effective for Republican candidates. In essence, the mere mention of national security by Republican candidates activates threat and leads to reliance on authoritarianism, at least for highly authoritarian Democrats who may be particularly sensitive to threat. This begs the question, why would Republicans be more successful with these appeals than Democrats? Hetherington and Weiler (2009) suggested that the Republican issue agenda is uniquely suited to activate authoritarian tendencies. The issues that Republicans campaign on were likely to cue normative or societal threat with more regularity than Democratic issues, resulting in an ability to pull Democrats away from their prior partisan or issue-based candidate preferences. Furthermore, Hetherington and Weiler argued that the issues that incite threat are generally considered "Republican" issues. Other scholars

agree, arguing that the Republican Party produced clearer signals on authoritarianism than the Democratic Party (Federico and Tagar 2013). These issues, such as national security or cultural norms, played into authoritarian fears, while traditionally “Democratic” issues such as the economy, workers’ rights, and welfare failed to tap the normative or societal threat necessary to activate authoritarianism. While it is possible that low authoritarians are threatened by some other issues, these alternative issues have not been identified or featured in either major party’s platform. Thus, as Hetherington and Weiler suggested, the issue environment is decidedly slanted in favor of Republican candidates activating authoritarian tendencies.

Importantly, Republican candidates responded to this issue environment by focusing on issues that paint their positions in a favorable light. Additionally, voters reacted by supporting the party that they trust to handle salient issues. Although Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen (2003) noted that individual candidates may be able to break these molds of issue ownership, the tendency among voters is to assign certain “issue-handling reputations” to the parties. For this paper, the key reputation is voters trusting the Republican Party when it comes to national security issues (Petrocik 1996).

Petrocik (1996) presented an important case study that is indicative of the problems faced by Democrats under an issue environment that highlights national security issues. In the 1980 presidential election, he showed that, as voters began to value Republican-owned issues like national defense, support for Reagan increased. Damore (2004) also demonstrated that Democratic presidential candidates face difficulties when they attempt to “issue-trespass” into Republican territory (on issues such as national security) because the Republican Party is trusted more on issues that are seen as under the purview of the president.

This implies that the mere mention and increased salience of national security issues are sufficient to draw Democrats away from their party’s candidate. While the rhetoric used by the Republican candidates certainly reinforces perceptions of threat, if rhetoric alone were driving authoritarian reactions, then both Republicans and Democrats would be able to successfully campaign on national security issues and win the support of authoritarians. Instead, we proposed that a focus on national security issues produces a right-shift towards the Republican Party, rather than a simple retrenchment into prior partizan identities. We hypothesized that reactions to national security issues are rooted in issue ownership and the Republican Party agenda. Therefore, only Republicans can credibly campaign on these issues and persuade highly authoritarian individuals. Democrats can (and do) campaign on national security issues, but the Democratic Party lacks the Republican Party’s historical strength on these issues. Therefore, the Democratic Party does not present a plausible

alternative with a guarantee of increased order and certainty. Thus, the Democratic Party fails to satisfy inherent psychological needs the way the Republican Party does, at least for highly authoritarian voters. Accordingly, we began by testing the hypothesis that, “under conditions of threats to national security, highly authoritarian Democrats should be more supportive of Republican elites than low authoritarian Democrats.” We tested this using observational data from the ANES.

However, these data did not allow us to test the counter-factual, as the post-9/11 political leadership was uniformly Republican. That is, authoritarian members of the opposite party may simply respond positively to all political leaders under conditions of threat. Without a Democratic president during these times of threat, we do not know whether highly authoritarian Democrats or Republicans would increase their support for the current president regardless of party affiliation. To test for the mechanisms of issue ownership unique to the Republican Party, we utilized two experiments to assess the hypothesis that, “when faced with campaign information about national security, highly authoritarian Democrats should be more supportive of Republican candidates than low authoritarian Democrats.” By experimentally manipulating the partizanship of the candidates, we tested whether this is an effect unique to Republican candidates or one found for all candidates that focus on national security.

HETEROGENEITY ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Despite the strength of these needs for order and security, we did not expect the shift to the Republican Party to be universal across all Democrats. Decades of research underscored the importance of partizanship in shaping voting behavior (Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008) and we do not deny partizanship, and especially partizan strength, as a key driver of candidate support. To the extent that partizanship is a social identity (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002), the stronger this identity, the less likely a voter should be to engage in actions (such as supporting a candidate) that violates that identity, even in the face of epistemic threats.

Therefore, while we expected that highly authoritarian Democrats would be more supportive of Republican candidates when faced with national security threats, we believe this effect is partially conditional on the strength of partizan identification. By relying on a continuous measure of partizan identification, we tested the hypothesis that “the right-shift effect of authoritarianism is stronger among weak Democrats and Independents than among strong Democrats.” We expected this because work on party identification showed that stronger partizan identification

makes individuals less likely to abandon their in-party candidates and elites (Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008).

In addition to heterogeneity based on partizan strength, we also note that issue ownership (and therefore the key theoretical mechanism for the right-shift in preferences) requires a certain level of engagement with the political system in order to understand that the Republican Party is more trustworthy on national security issues. For the political neophyte, a complete lack of information about party positions and histories should preclude the right-shift because they lack the necessary knowledge to connect parties to policies. Therefore, when our data allow, we tested the hypothesis that “political knowledge conditions the effect of authoritarianism,” such that highly knowledgeable voters are more likely than low knowledge voters to display a right-shift in candidate preference when faced with a national security issue environment.

2000-2002-2004 ANES PANEL STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

We began with an examination of the effects of authoritarianism in a nationally representative sample. While no publicly available survey experiment exists that allows for a test of our hypotheses with random assignment to different advertisement conditions, we gained leverage on the question using the 2000-2002-2004 ANES panel study. In particular, we used two measures of presidential approval (general approval and foreign affairs approval) and examined the interaction of authoritarianism and partizan identification in the three panel waves.³

We measured authoritarianism using the four child rearing questions commonly used to measure authoritarianism (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). These measures, developed by Feldman and Stenner (1997), are intended to tap authoritarian predispositions without the problematic political issues raised when using Altemeyer’s (1981) RWA scale. This measure allowed us to assess underlying levels of authoritarianism without conflating the measurement of the concept with dependent variables such as preference for conservative candidates or parties.⁴ Individuals who chose the authoritarian answer received a score of 1 for the item, while those who chose the non-authoritarian answer received a score of 0. Individuals who volunteered the answer “both” were coded as a 0.5. These scores were then aggregated into a single additive index that was scaled to run from 0 (low authoritarian) to 1 (high authoritarian).

Ideally, we would have data that measures exposure to campaign advertisements as well as the subject of these advertisements. While these data do not exist, the 2000-2002-2004 panel provided a unique political

situation to test our theory. The year 2000 was a relatively quiescent time in America on issues of national security, while 2002, following the September 11th attacks, saw significant more attention on national security (Jacobson 2003). Meanwhile, 2004 saw a high profile presidential campaign focused on national security issues. If political communication, even in the sense of media accounts in 2002, raised the specter of disorder, then highly authoritarian Democrats should be more supportive of the Republican Party in 2002 (and potentially 2004) than in 2000. Ideally, we would test the effects of authoritarianism in 2002 against another midterm election (say 2006); unfortunately, measures of authoritarianism are not available for the 2006 midterm election. We tested this using OLS regression on the two approval variables and included controls for ideology, gender, age, education, income, race, and ideological awareness (as a proxy for political knowledge)⁵. These results appear in [Table 1](#). In addition, we construct marginal effects and discuss these in the text.

As [Table 1](#) reveals, there is initial support for the presence of an interaction between authoritarianism and conditions of threat, a la Feldman and Stenner (1997) and Hetherington and Suhay (2011). In 2000, authoritarianism exerted no influence over either presidential or foreign affairs approval. However, in the high threat environment of 2002, authoritarianism took on a strong role, with higher levels of authoritarianism predicting greater levels of support for Bush's general job approval and foreign affairs performance, especially among Democrats and Independents. This effect was diminished in 2004, reflecting a reduction in threat in the political environment. It is important to note, however, that these results are not necessarily a direct reflection of the campaign environment. The national mood in 2002 was heavily focused on issues of national security and media accounts focused heavily on external threats to the United States. It would be ill-advised to attribute the increased relevance of authoritarianism solely to the 2002 midterm congressional campaigns. While the campaigns may have played a role in highlighting issues of national security, the overall political environment likely drove this relationship more than specific campaign tactics.

In 2002, we see that this is also a significant interaction between partizanship and authoritarianism. Democrats relied heavily on authoritarianism when forming opinions about George W. Bush, while the marginal effect of authoritarianism steadily decreased as partizanship moved more Republican. If we examine predicted values for support for President Bush, we see that, while the overall level of support shifts (Independents and leaning Democrats are more supportive than weak or strong Democrats), the pattern is consistent. As authoritarianism increases, approval for President Bush also increases. The effects are particularly stark for foreign affairs approval, where movement from the lowest to the highest level of authoritarianism among strong Democrats leads to a 42-percentage point

TABLE 1. Presidential and Foreign Affairs Approval.

	Clinton (2000)		Bush (2002)		Bush (2004)	
	Approval	Foreign Affairs	Approval	Foreign Affairs	Approval	Foreign Affairs
Authoritarianism	0.04 (0.09)	-0.03 (0.09)	0.33*** (0.12)	0.42*** (0.12)	0.21** (0.09)	0.09 (0.11)
Party Identification	-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.08*** (0.02)	0.11*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.15*** (0.01)	0.12*** (0.01)
Party Identification X	-0.02 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	-0.05* (0.02)	-0.06** (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Ideology	-0.33*** (0.06)	-0.20*** (0.07)	0.17** (0.08)	0.26*** (0.08)	0.19** (0.08)	0.28*** (0.08)
Sex (Male)	0.02 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.07* (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)
Age	0.04 (0.09)	-0.05 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.09)	0.05 (0.10)	0.14 (0.12)	0.10 (0.13)
Education	0.08 (0.07)	0.13** (0.06)	-0.01 (0.08)	-0.03 (0.08)	0.02 (0.08)	-0.07 (0.08)
Income	0.05 (0.13)	-0.17** (0.08)	0.06 (0.15)	0.02 (0.14)	-0.14 (0.11)	-0.09 (0.12)
White	-0.01 (0.04)	0.01 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.07)	0.05 (0.07)	-0.11*** (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)
Ideological Awareness	-0.16*** (0.06)	-0.09 (0.07)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.13 (0.09)
Constant	1.07*** (0.11)	0.98*** (0.10)	0.24 (0.16)	0.04 (0.13)	0.03 (0.09)	0.16 (0.11)
<i>N</i>	857	854	667	672	466	462
<i>R</i> ²	0.417	0.251	0.319	0.284	0.587	0.523

Source: 2000-2002-2004 American National Election Study.

Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .10$.

** $p < 0.05$.

*** $p < 0.01$.

shift in foreign affairs approval. Even for the standard measure of presidential approval, however, movement along the scale of authoritarianism produced a 32-percentage point shift in presidential approval for strong Democrats. The same pattern of results holds for weak and leaning Democrats as well as Independents, although the strength of the marginal effect did diminish as partizan strength decreases, which is contrary to expectations, as we note below.

When we examined our expectations about heterogeneity, we saw that in 2002, our first expectation (that weaker partisans would be more influenced by authoritarianism) was not supported by the data. We saw

that the strongest effects for authoritarianism was among the strongest partisans. This pattern held true for both general and foreign affairs approval and ran counter to our expectations. We do note, however, that among all Democrats and Independents, authoritarianism exerted a strong, significant, and positive influence on approval of President Bush.

In addition to partisan strength, we also tested for differences based on political sophistication. For our 2002 models (when the national security threat was most salient), we divided our sample into high and low sophisticates and re-run the models. When we did this, another interesting pattern arose. Among those in the bottom half of sophistication, authoritarianism did exert a positive influence on approval of President Bush. However, the effect was not conditional on partisan identification for either general (interaction not significant at $p = .37$) or foreign affairs approval ($p = .16$). Thus, for low sophisticates, it appears that, under conditions of threat, higher levels of authoritarianism produced greater support for President Bush regardless of partisan identity.

On the other hand, for high sophisticates, the results were conditional on partisan identification, significant at the $p = .02$ level for both general and foreign affairs approval. This offers support for our second expectation with regard to heterogeneity and it suggests that two separate process may have occurred in 2002. For low sophisticates, threat activated authoritarianism but, without the political knowledge to connect this to party positions, a general shift towards the president occurred. For high sophisticates, however, Republicans were already supportive of the president regardless of levels of authoritarianism. For Democrats, higher levels of authoritarianism, combined with high levels of sophistication, allowed them to connect President Bush and the issues owned by the Republican Party in a way that low authoritarian Democrats were unable to.

While these results clearly demonstrated the cross-cutting effects that authoritarianism exerted on Democratic voters in normatively threatening political environments, it raised questions about the incongruence between these results and the results of Hetherington and Suhay (2011), who found increases in support for authoritarian policies among the lowest levels of authoritarianism, conditional on perceptions of threat. We do not believe, however, that these results are mutually exclusive. The campaign environment of 2002 likely produced heightened levels of perceived threat across the board, but we know that high authoritarians are more attuned to threat than low authoritarians, and the weak but significant correlation between authoritarianism and perceived threat from terrorism reported by Hetherington and Suhay (2011) supports this expectation. Thus, we expected that, conditional on perceptions of threat, even low authoritarian voters increased their support for President Bush in 2002. High authoritarian Democrats, however, by nature of their increased perceptiveness to

threat, exhibited the greatest movement in attitudes towards President Bush. Unfortunately, unlike the CCES, the 2000-2002-2004 ANES did not include questions about perceived levels of threat from terrorism, meaning we cannot explicitly test this possibility with these data.

While these results confirmed the findings of Cizmar et al. (2014) and added the complexity of cross-cutting effects based on party identification, they do not speak directly to the ability of campaign appeals to activate or deactivate authoritarian tendencies. As noted above, it is unclear whether the effects observed for 2002 result from congressional campaigns or (more likely) the general political and media environment that primed individuals to consider external threats to the security of the United States. In addition, these results failed to distinguish between two possible explanations for the results. These results could be driven by the theory we laid out earlier; that authoritarian Democrats are drawn to Republicans in times of threat because the Republican Party owns issues of national security and are seen as the party to best alleviate the threat. On the other hand, the results could also derive from a simple increase in support for political leadership in times of threat by all authoritarians. Authoritarian Republicans do not see an increase in support because they are already highly supportive of a Republican president, resulting in a ceiling effect and the observed pattern of results. Thus, to fully test our expectations about issue ownership, authoritarianism, and a right-shift in support, we rely on our experimental results presented below.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN, EXPERIMENT 1

To address these hypotheses, we conducted an experiment using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk).⁶ This service allows individuals to post short surveys and tasks and pay individuals to participate. Although MTurk has many benefits for researchers, the data obtained through this service are not without criticism. Paolacci and Chandler (2014) showed that the composition of the workforce is far from representative of the national population. MTurk workers tend to be younger, whiter, more educated, and more liberal. We considered these characteristics in our analyses and advise caution in interpreting our experimental results too generally.⁷

During the summer of 2013, we collected responses from a sample of 454 individuals from the United States. This sample was 53.6% male, largely white (72.9%), well educated (56.2% with some type of college degree), and relatively young (mean age =33.6). These individuals were told they were evaluating political advertisements from a candidate who would appear on their ballot sometime in the next 5 years. They were also told that the names of the candidates had been changed so they would

not be able to identify which candidate had created the advertisements. They were asked to enter their zip code and were then “matched” with the appropriate candidates.

Subjects responded to a questionnaire with demographic and psychological batteries. After answering these questions, subjects participated in a hypothetical campaign between two candidates, Alex Johnson and John Sanders. In reality, all received an advertisement from Alex Johnson attacking John Sanders on his stance on American intervention in Syria.⁸ The only difference in the conditions was whether Alex Johnson was identified as a Democrat or a Republican (and vice versa for his opponent).

Respondents saw an introductory advertisement for Alex Johnson and were then shown the manipulation advertisement. The manipulation advertisement was created to activate feelings of anxiety and fear towards John Sanders and his stance on Syrian intervention while cuing potential threats to national security. The only difference between the advertisements was whether the logo for Alex Johnson carried the label “Democrat” or “Republican”. Manipulation checks show that respondents were able to correctly identify the partizan identity of Alex Johnson based on the differences in the advertisements.⁹ We did not include a control group because our concern was with the effects of the different advertisements interacted with authoritarianism. The relevant comparison is the between-group effect of a Republican or Democratic candidate across levels of authoritarianism.

This advertisement raised the possibility that failing to intervene in Syria could lead to lapses in national security at home. We chose the issue because the national parties had not taken clear stances on intervention at the time, increasing the possibility that either a Democratic or Republican candidate could take the stance advocated in the advertisement. Additionally, the national security prime should lead to anxiety and a reliance on authoritarian predispositions, given the nature of the threat.

After viewing the advertisements, subjects answered a series of questions about the candidates, including their likelihood of voting for each candidate and a feeling thermometer evaluation of the two candidates. After taking the survey, respondents were debriefed about the deception in the study, thanked for their participation, and given a code to enter into the Mechanical Turk website so they could be paid. Respondents were paid \$1.00 for their participation. Total time in the experiment averaged under ten minutes.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS, EXPERIMENT 1

Using OLS regression, we analyzed these data with a series of interactions between party identification, condition assignment, and authoritarianism. Recall that our theory was that the effect of authoritarianism is conditional

on both the partizanship of the respondent and the campaign environment. Because of this, we employ three-way interactions between partizanship, condition assignment (sponsoring candidate was a Democrat or Republican) and authoritarianism (measured with the same child-rearing scale that appears in the ANES).

We analyze two dependent variables in these analyses. The first dependent variable asked respondents “how likely would you be to vote for Alex Johnson?” Johnson is the sponsoring candidate for all of the advertisements. Response options ranged from “extremely unlikely” to “extremely likely” and were arranged on a five-point scale. The second dependent variable was the 101-point feeling thermometer score for Alex Johnson.¹⁰ This was then rescaled to run from 0 to 1, with a score of 0 representing very negative feelings towards Johnson and a score of 1 very positive feelings for Alex Johnson.

We test these expectations with a regression containing the measure of authoritarianism, a dummy variable for the partizanship of the candidate, a variable for the party identification of the respondent, and a three-way interaction term (and all necessary two-way interaction terms) for these three variables. Because of the difficulty in interpreting coefficients from three-way interactions, Figure 1 presents the marginal effect of authoritarianism across levels of partizanship for the treatment condition (where respondents saw a national security advertisement). Looking at the

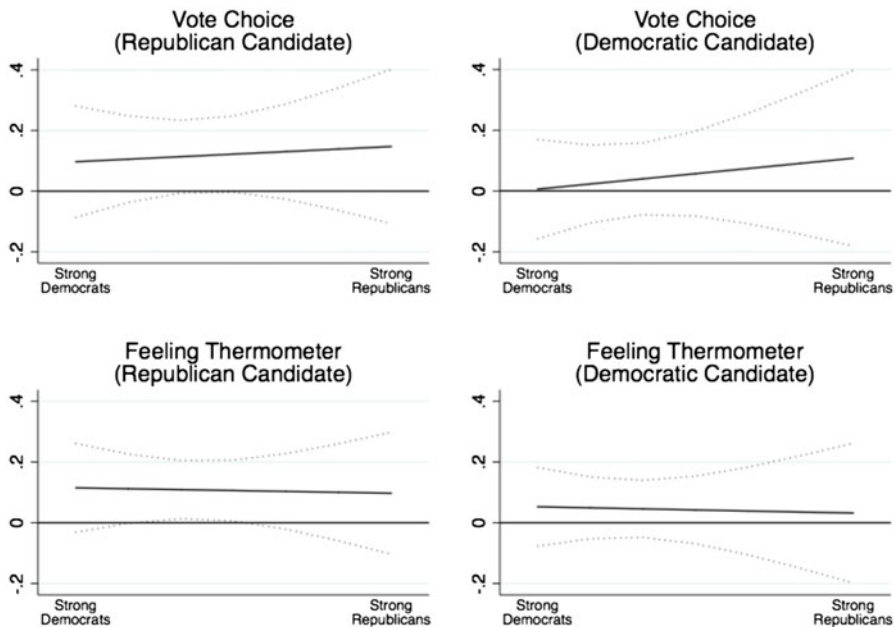


FIGURE 1. Marginal effect of authoritarianism, by party identification (experiment 1).

results in Figure 1, we see that authoritarian exerted a positive effect on support for the Republican candidate among some respondents. The marginal effect reached traditional levels of significance for some Democratic respondents with feeling thermometer ratings and approached significance for candidate vote choice. On the other hand, for Democratic candidates, we saw no effect for authoritarianism under the treatment condition. This result is expected, as the Democratic Party does not offer the same satisfaction of needs for order and security that the Republican Party traditionally does. The rhetoric surrounding national security appeals, therefore, is insufficient to satisfy needs for order. It must be coupled with the security of an existing political party and their history of support for strong defense policies.

Figure 2 plots the predicted likelihood of voting for the Republican candidate, while Figure 3 plots the predicted feeling thermometer rating for the Republican candidate. The text in these figures represents the marginal effect of authoritarianism for the various levels of partizan strength (replicated from Figure 1). We note that the marginal effects only obtained significance in the feeling thermometer results for independents and leaning Democrats, with weak Democrats showing marginal significance ($p < .10$). For the vote choice models, only independents and leaning Democrats showed marginal significance. While we expected this result, it

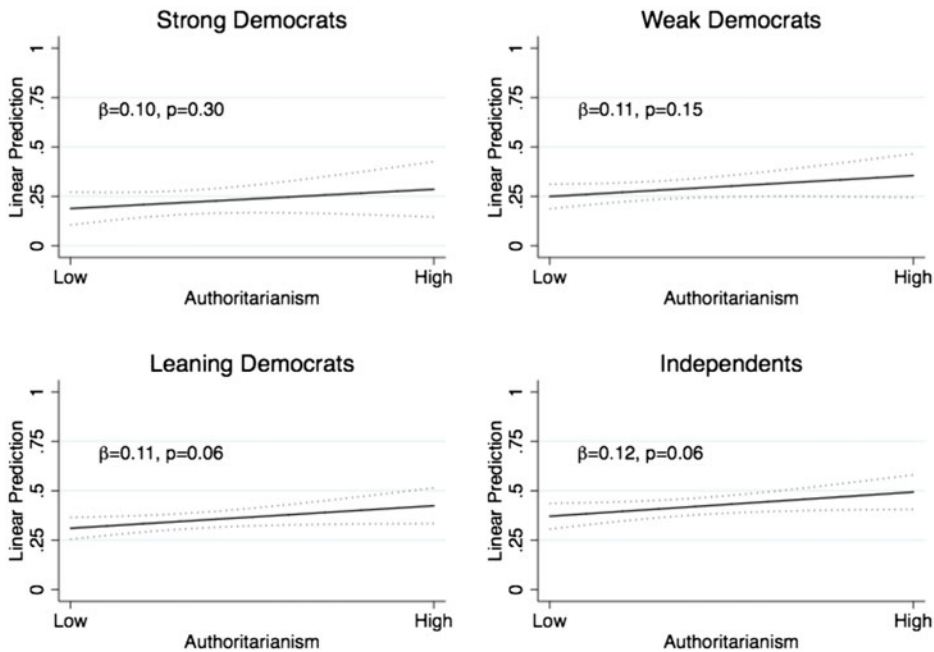


FIGURE 2. Predicted likelihood of voting for republican candidate, by party identification (experiment 1).

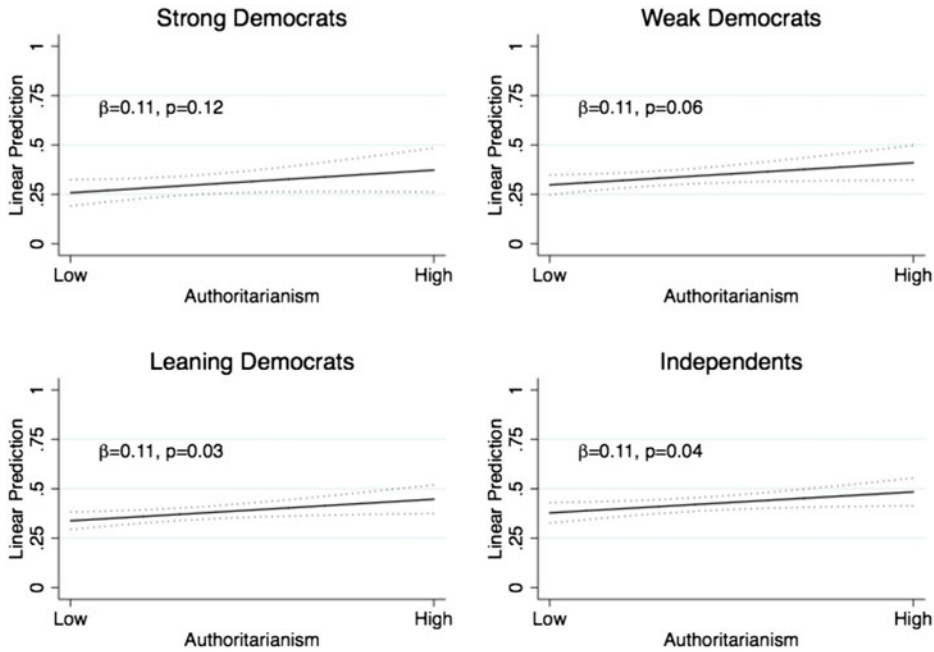


FIGURE 3. Predicted feeling thermometer rating of republican candidate, by party identification (experiment 1).

does run counter to our findings from the observational data. It is possible that the circumstances immediately post-9/11 created a different environment than a survey experiment conducted in 2013. We revisit this topic in our discussion.

In both Figures 2 and 3, we saw that effect size magnitude was greatly reduced from the ANES. Thus, moving from low to high authoritarianism, regardless of partizan strength, makes individuals slightly more supportive of the Republican candidate who campaigns on national security issues, but we didn't see the strong effects like the 2002 ANES. The differences in effect size, however, should not surprise readers, as the level of threat salience varied greatly between the immediate post-9/11 aftermath and a single national security advertisement with a hypothetical candidate.

Interestingly, the magnitude of the effect of authoritarianism did not diminish with partizan strength (as it did in the ANES data), but rather stayed relatively constant or slightly increased as partizan strength decreased. This offers weak support for our initial partizan heterogeneity hypothesis, but runs counter to the results from the ANES. In addition, the difference in effect size was relatively minor. Nonetheless, these results provided further evidence for the cross-cutting effects of authoritarianism on candidate evaluations. When Republican candidates run using national security appeals, high authoritarian Democratic voters started to evaluate

them more positively. They became more likely to vote for the candidate and felt more positive towards the Republican candidate, relative to low authoritarian Democrats. On the other hand, Democratic appeals to national security appeared to fall on deaf ears. Regardless of levels of authoritarianism, Democratic national security appeals failed to move the needle, with Democrats supporting Democratic candidates and Republicans opposing the same candidate.

The question remains, however, whether these results were unique to the hypothetical experimental context of this campaign. That is, in the real political world, media accounts or national mood may swamp any campaign appeals, resulting in null effects for authoritarianism. In addition, the advertisements used to induce national security threat specifically attacked the opposing candidate. While we believe the results were driven by the issue content and not the negative tone of the advertisements, we were not able to say for certain that authoritarians are responding to the issue rather than the negativity. To overcome these limitations, we relied on a second survey experiment embedded in an internet panel study conducted during the 2012 presidential election.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN, EXPERIMENT 2

To test whether these results are unique to the hypothetical campaign environment we created, we leveraged data from the UMMPS. While not designed to address this question explicitly, the UMMPS featured an experiment that presented respondents with fictional statements from Mitt Romney and Barack Obama and then asked respondents a number of questions related to the candidates.

The UMMPS collected data from an initial sample of 1,800 individuals on MTurk during the fall of 2012. Three panel waves were conducted (two pre-election and one post-election) with embedded experiments. The relevant experiment for this paper occurred in the second panel wave. The original MTurk sample was skewed Democratic (951 Democrats, 450 Republicans, 220 Independents), white (84%), and educated (59% held a college degree). Responses to the second panel wave were collected from October 31st to November 5th, 2012.

Respondents during the second wave were randomly assigned to one of 12 experimental conditions (received one of four different speeches from each candidate) or placed into a control condition. In three of these conditions, respondents read a short excerpt from a speech purportedly given by Mitt Romney that discussed national security. Immediately after reading the speech, respondents were asked a series of questions about Romney. In three other conditions, respondents read the same speech

attributed to Barack Obama and then respondents to questions about Obama.¹¹ The text of the national security speech was as follows:

The following quotation was taken from a speech [Mitt Romney/Barack Obama] recently delivered in Ohio.

“The safety and security of the United States of America is foremost in my mind. If I win in November, I will continue the fight against al Qaeda until they no longer pose a threat to the United States. I will support our troops in this fight until we have rooted out every member of al Qaeda and vanquished this threat from the face of the Earth. I support keeping our troops in Afghanistan, and I will guarantee that terrorists are unable to take root there again.

I am ready to make the tough decisions about the security of our nation. National security is a central focus of my campaign, and it will remain so during my administration. I recognize the importance of maintaining a strong military to protect the American people. If you vote for me I won't let you down.”¹²

We collapsed these conditions into two conditions (Obama or Romney security speech), as we are only interested in those conditions where respondents read a speech on national security. We then examined the effects of authoritarianism in the treatment condition as well as a control condition, where respondents read no speeches and only answered the evaluation questions about Obama and Romney.¹³ We ran models predicting a series of dependent variables in the security condition and the control condition. As opposed to a vote likelihood measure, we used a measure of which candidate the respondent planned to vote for in the upcoming election. We used logistic regression to predict likelihood of an individual supporting Romney or Obama. We again employed the 101-point feeling thermometer ratings as we used in Experiment 1, this time substituting evaluations of Mitt Romney and Barack Obama. Again, these were rescaled to run from 0 to 1. In addition to these variables, the panel study included a number of trait evaluations, including one which asked respondents “In your opinion, how competent is [Mitt Romney/Barack Obama]?” with respondents rating the candidate from 1 (Not at all Competent) to 7 (Extremely Competent). Responses to this question were rescaled to run from 0 to 1, with 1 representing viewing the candidate as extremely competent. This question captured a generalized opinion about the qualifications of the presidential candidates absent the affect of the feeling thermometer.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS, EXPERIMENT 2

We analyzed these three dependent variables for both Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, resulting in six different models. Reflecting the strategy from

Experiment 1, we constructed three-way interactions between condition assignment (Security Speech or Control Condition), partizan identification, and authoritarianism. Again, to ease interpretation of the three-way interactions, we present marginal effects for authoritarianism in Figure 4 (showing evaluations of Mitt Romney in the control condition and the Romney security speech condition) and Figure 5 (showing evaluations of Barack Obama in the control condition and the Obama security speech condition).

Starting with Figure 4, we see that, when we examined the control condition (the bottom row of graphs), for both vote choice and evaluations of Romney's competence, the marginal effect of authoritarianism never achieved statistical significance. For feeling thermometer ratings of Romney, we did find that authoritarianism exerted a small positive and significant effect for weak partisans and Independents. When we examined the results under the Romney security speech condition (the top row of graphs), we saw that authoritarianism increased competence ratings for weak Democrats and Independents. The same pattern of results held for Romney feeling thermometer ratings, where the magnitude of the marginal effect is noticeably larger than the magnitude in the control condition. These results showed that when Romney was portrayed as giving a speech that was strong on national security, higher levels of authoritarianism,

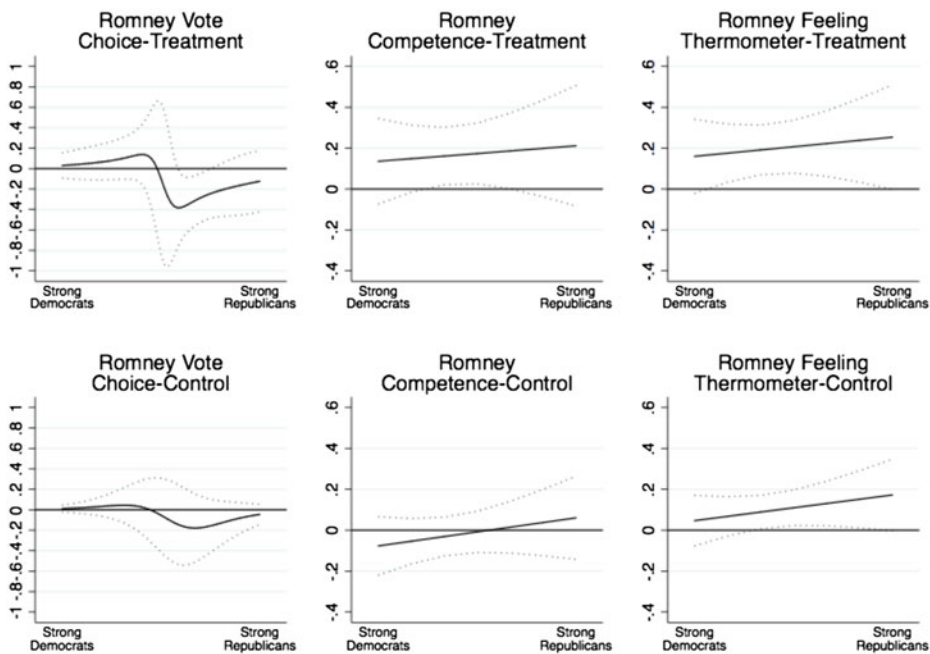


FIGURE 4. Marginal effect of authoritarianism on Romney evaluations, by party identification (experiment 2).

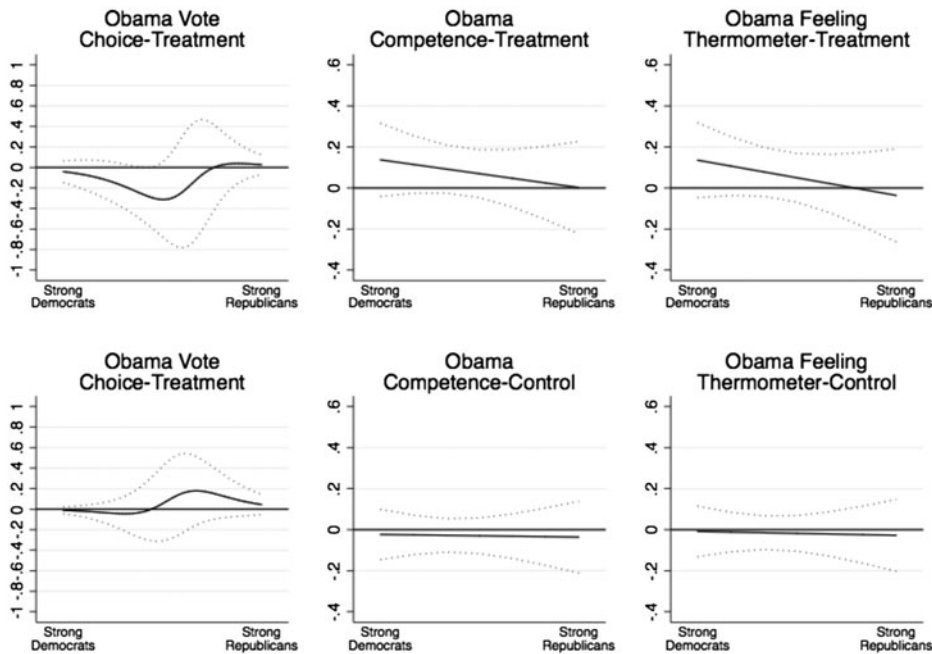


FIGURE 5. Marginal effect of authoritarianism on Obama evaluations, by party identification (experiment 2).

especially among Independents and weak Democrats, led to higher levels of support.

We note, however, the anomalous finding in the results for vote likelihood for Mitt Romney. In the Romney Security Speech condition, we expect to find no effect among Republicans, but instead we see that leaning Republicans are less likely to vote for Romney than those in the control condition. We believe this is an area for future study, as we have no *a priori* reason to expect these results. It is possible, however, that if the parties are sorted along authoritarian lines and act as Luttig (2016, 2017) suggests, then those at the highest levels of authoritarianism will have retreated to the extremes of the parties. This would leave the least authoritarian individuals at the lower levels of partizan strength, and these voters may be particularly sensitive or averse to national security rhetoric. It is also possible that Republicans on MTurk are particularly doveish or isolationist, especially among those with weak ties to the party. Unfortunately, these explanations are untestable with the current data.

Of course, these results could simply be driven by the issue of national security and not the theoretical interaction of issue content with issue ownership. To test this possibility, Figure 5 presents the results from the control condition and Obama security condition (where Obama was portrayed as giving the national security speech) for the same dependent

variables, except with Obama as the target. As predicted, at no point, in either the control or treatment condition, did authoritarianism condition responses on voting for Obama, competence ratings of Obama, or feeling thermometer ratings of Obama. These results underscored the unique ability of Republican candidates to use national security issues to induce a right-ward shift and win support from authoritarian Independents and Democrats.

We further examined the results by looking at the predicted competence and feeling thermometer ratings for Mitt Romney among strong, weak, and leaning Democrats, as well as Independents. As predicted, the effect of authoritarianism was stronger and significant for weaker partisans and Independents than it was for strong partisans. For competence ratings, authoritarianism exerted a statistically significant effect on Independents and leaning Democrats and a marginally significant effect on weak Democrats. For feeling thermometer ratings, the effect was significant for weak and leaning Democrats and Independents, and only marginally significant for strong Democrats.

Importantly, these results did not rely on negative advertisements or comparisons between Romney and Obama. Instead, for both the feeling thermometer and competence ratings, respondents were asked a singular evaluation of the individual rather than to compare Romney and Obama. The design of the experiment further allowed us to examine how authoritarianism acts under both the security speech condition and a control condition where respondents read no speeches from either candidate. Once again, these results accorded nicely with the ANES results and the results from Experiment 1. Republican candidates and elites are uniquely positioned to benefit from national security appeals in a way that Democrats are not.

WHO ARE THESE VOTERS?

One piece of the puzzle that remains is whether there are a significant number of Democratic voters who are high in authoritarianism and, if so, which voters fall into this category. To the first question, the answer can be found by examining the proportion of Democrats along the authoritarianism continuum. Returning to the 2004 ANES, the percentage of white Democrats who scored at the highest level of authoritarianism was 9.7%. Examining the top three categories (a score from 0.75 to 1.0 on the authoritarianism scale), 33.4% of white Democrats fell into this range, suggesting that a not-insignificant number of Democrats held authoritarian views.

The next question, then, is who are these Democrats? [Table 2](#) presents an investigation of this question. The first set of results simply predicted levels of authoritarianism among Democrats, while the second set of results

TABLE 2. Predictors of authoritarianism among Democrats.

	Authoritarianism	High authoritarians
Sex (male)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.30)
Northeast	-0.07 (0.06)	0.37 (0.68)
South	-0.06 (0.06)	0.55 (0.69)
West	-0.11** (0.05)	0.07 (0.61)
Ideology	0.27*** (0.08)	1.85** (0.90)
Education	-0.26*** (0.06)	-1.99** (0.77)
Age	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)
# of Kids	0.00 (0.02)	0.07 (0.31)
Income	-0.09 (0.08)	-0.58 (0.84)
Bush Approval	0.19*** (0.06)	1.29* (0.64)
Voted in 2004	-0.10 (0.07)	-0.19 (0.65)
2004 Kerry Vote	-0.07 (0.05)	-0.70 (0.52)
Partisan Strength	0.19*** (0.05)	0.93 (0.66)
	(0.11)	(1.21)
<i>N</i>	280	280
<i>R</i> ²	0.341	-

Source: 2004 American National Election Study.

Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .10$.

** $p < .05$.

*** $p < .01$.

predicted the likelihood of scores in the top three categories of authoritarianism (1.0, 0.875, or 0.75) among Democrats using logistic regression. These results paint a picture of who highly authoritarian Democrats are within the Democratic coalition. Interestingly, while one might expect that southern Democrats make up a large component of high authoritarians, this is not the case. Region was not a significant predictor of authoritarianism. Among the other socio-demographic predictors, ideology and education emerged as significant predictors in both models. Thus, highly authoritarian Democrats appear to be more conservative and less educated than their less authoritarian co-partisans.

In addition to the socio-demographic factors, authoritarianism was correlated with higher approval of President Bush's job handling. That is not to say that presidential approval causes authoritarian tendencies; the

causal arrow almost certainly runs in the opposite direction. Instead, it suggested that authoritarian Democrats are more confident in the performance of the Republican president, potentially after he fulfilled needs for order and security post 9/11. Finally, in congruence with Luttig (2016, 2017), we found that partizan strength and authoritarianism were positively correlated with each other.

These results suggested, first, that the highly authoritarian Democratic voting bloc is not insubstantial. Second, while they are distinct from less authoritarian Democrats (more conservative, less educated, more positive about the incumbent Republican president), they are not simply weaker partisans, which would accord with a greater likelihood of supporting the Republican candidate. Authoritarian Democrats, at least in 2004, were in fact more extreme in their partizanship than less authoritarian Democrats. Authoritarian Democrats, while unique, are not just more likely to abandon their partizan priors. Instead, when facing normative or existential threats, they showed support for the candidate they saw as best able to handle those threats. In the contemporary political context, at least with respect to national security, that candidate almost always hails from the Republican Party.

HETEROGENEOUS KNOWLEDGE EFFECTS

If the mechanism for these effects rests not on retrenchment towards your preferred party (as Hetherington and Suhay [2011] and Luttig [2016] might suggest), but rather in siding with the Republican Party because it is the party of strength and security, then it requires that voters possess some knowledge that the Republican Party traditionally exhibits stronger policy positions on issues of national security. While our experiments did not directly measure knowledge of the party's strengths and weaknesses, they did include measures of political knowledge, which we used as a proxy for issue ownership knowledge.¹⁴ If the mechanism is rooted partially in issue ownership, we should see the interaction between national security appeals and authoritarianism results in a stronger effect of authoritarianism for highly knowledgeable individuals who can more easily connect party positions with their needs for order.

In particular, issue ownership tells us that voters perceive candidates and parties as particularly well qualified to handle certain issues. In Petrocik's (1996) view, parties, by nature of historical circumstances and constituencies, are associated and trusted with certain issues. Democrats (in 1980) were trusted more on issues of social welfare, while Republicans were trusted on foreign policy and defense issues, a pattern that continued through the 1980s and 1990s (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003). Patterns of ownership can even be self-reinforcing, with media coverage reflecting

existing perceptions (Hayes 2008). Yet trusting the Republican Party with national security issues presumes a baseline knowledge (and potentially issue salience, see Bélanger and Meguid [2008]) which can best be captured by examining voters at varying levels of political knowledge.

Although further splitting our experimental samples by knowledge resulted in increasingly imprecise measures of marginal effects, we constructed four-way interactions between condition assignment, authoritarianism, party identification, and political knowledge and calculated marginal effects for authoritarianism across party identification at high and low levels of political knowledge. The results, while not definitive, suggest Republican Party issue ownership of national security issues helps explain why our results may diverge from past research.

In the first experiment, our measure of political knowledge was heavily skewed towards the high end of the scale. Using the modal category, where a respondent answered every question correctly, we saw the average marginal effect of authoritarianism on vote choice among high knowledge Democrats was 0.11, compared to an average marginal effect of 0.04 among low knowledge Democrats (defined as those who scored in the second most common category, which was 4 of 5 questions correct).¹⁵ Similarly, for feeling thermometer ratings, the average marginal effect for high knowledge Democrats was 0.12, while it was a substantively smaller 0.04 for low knowledge Democrats. Additionally, the marginal effects only reached statistical significance for those high in political knowledge.

The results are less clear in the second experiment. Although political knowledge was better distributed in the sample, there was still imprecision in the marginal effect estimates at low levels of political knowledge. At low levels of political knowledge, no significant marginal effects for authoritarianism emerged for Democrats. Although the size of the marginal effects was often quite large, the standard errors were often one and a half to two times the size of the effect estimate. As we moved up in political knowledge, the effect of authoritarianism emerged as significant for Democrats in the Romney security conditions. This pattern held for all three dependent variables (feeling thermometer ratings, Romney vote choice, and Romney competence evaluations).

Because of the complexity of the models and sample size restrictions, we cannot say with confidence that the cross-cutting effects of authoritarianism are relegated solely to high knowledge individuals. However, these results imply that our proposed mechanism, driven both by a need for order and the unique issue ownership environment of the contemporary American political system, likely holds, especially for those with the ability to understand partisan differences on approaches to national security and, in turn, perceive the Republican Party as uniquely qualified to reduce threats to security.

DISCUSSION

In totality, these results suggest that we would be wrong to assume that normatively threatening political advertisements influence every individual similarly. Extensive prior research demonstrated the ability of authoritarian tendencies to influence voters, and our results reiterated this importance. However, these findings took the argument a step further, showing that political campaigns (or the political environment in general) cue threats to national stability or order, thereby activating authoritarianism among Democratic voters. When this happens, highly authoritarian Democrats generally increase their support of Republican candidates or elites.

These results showed that, even with prior knowledge about a candidate's partizan identity, threatening campaign communications pull individuals toward the Republican Party. Our findings suggested that, given the right message, there are few disadvantages for Republican candidates utilizing threatening appeals. These messages not only raise the specter of normative threat for high authoritarian voters, but combined with a credible partizan sponsor, they provide a solution to that threat: support for the Republican candidate.

While our results challenge traditional thinking about the direct effects of party identification and authoritarianism, they should be qualified. First, MTurk samples, while better than convenience samples, are not representative of the general population. Thus, our experimental results only speak to the individuals in our studies and are not necessarily generalizable to the electorate as a whole. Nonetheless, these samples are much better than local convenience samples or the much more problematic college sophomore sample (Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz 2012; Sears 1986). Second, the experimental nature of these studies does not replicate the political environment, but this approach allows us to gain control over the issue and partizan content of the stimuli and only manipulate the most relevant aspects of these advertisements. Acknowledging the tradeoff with external generalizability, we believe this technique provided enough gains in internal validity and control to justify its use over observational approaches. Furthermore, observational data from the ANES corroborates our findings, though with less control over the nature and measurement of threat and campaign exposure.

Additionally, the observational results suggested that the strength of the threat stimuli may lead to greater heterogeneity across partizan strength. In 2002, the threat was acute and highly salient, while in our experimental conditions, the cues were subtler. Immediately post-9/11, Democrats of all authoritarian stripes turned to the Republican Party (and President Bush in particular) as a means to alleviate threat. However, under the experimental conditions, the threat was not salient enough to overcome strong partizan priors. Instead, we saw authoritarianism acted primarily among

Independents and Democrats with weaker partizan identities. It is also possible that, since 2004, authoritarians have moved towards the Republican Party, such that voters are better sorted along partizan and authoritarian lines. While we believe that threatening scenarios should move authoritarian Democrats to support Republican candidates and elites, we do not believe that all threats are created equal. Instead, certain highly salient threats are going to be more likely to move Democrats off of their partizan priors, and with greater strength, than less salient threats. Future work should explore these differences in threat salience and how these differences may create different levels of activation among strong and weak partizans.

As scholars continue to investigate the complex relationship between psychological needs and the connection to threat and authoritarianism, we would be wise to consider a few potential avenues for research. First, the role of political knowledge can be more fully explored, helping to untangle whether issue ownership or needs for order and certainty are the primary driver of the connection between authoritarianism, national security, and Republican Party support. Second, future studies should directly measure emotional arousal, either through self-reports or physiological measures of arousal, to determine if fear or anxiety is part of the mechanism for authoritarian arousal from national security issues. Finally, we should continue to pursue the identification of a similarly important construct for the Democratic Party that resembles authoritarianism. While scholars have generally failed to identify a liberal authoritarianism, the possibility exists that another trait, perhaps Big Five personality traits such as openness to experience or neuroticism, could play a similar role for Democrats. To this final point, political practitioners would benefit from further investigation and refinement of the functional matching approach to Democratic appeals. While the distribution of authoritarianism in the general population lends itself to appeals from Republicans, identifying a similar mechanism that benefits Democrats could assist candidates in the future who wish to attract Republican voters with campaign appeals to salient traits or values.

Our results demonstrated that we must consider the role psychological predispositions play in an individual's interpretation of advertisements and political campaigns. We also should recognize the functional matching qualities of certain appeals. National security appeals directly affect an individual's perceptions of threat to the order and security of the nation, and for some individuals (namely, highly authoritarian individuals), a need to restore that order is aroused. Politics, by providing a credible solution through a (Republican) political candidate, can satisfy that need. As the prevalence of national security issues ebbs and flows on the national agenda, politicians (especially Republican politicians) would be wise to consider the cross-pressures faced by authoritarian Democrats as they craft their electoral strategies.

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NOTES

1. While authoritarianism is connected with needs for order and security for all individuals, we are particularly concerned with Democrats in this study. Although we present results across the partisan spectrum, the interest of readers should focus on Democratic voters and their tendency to shift right-ward and support Republican candidates. The nature of the US party system is such that right-ward shifts in preferences among Republican voters would simply solidify support for Republican candidates, making the results generally uninteresting for Republicans.

2. Data from all experiments are available from the corresponding author.

3. The dependent variables are a summary of branched questions. Respondents were asked “Do you approve or disapprove of the way [Bill Clinton/George W. Bush] is handling [his job as President/our relations with foreign countries]?” and this was followed by the question “Do you [approve/disapprove] strongly or not strongly?” These two questions were combined to form a four-point index which is scaled to run from 0 to 1, with 1 representing strong approval and 0 representing strong disapproval.

4. The child-rearing questions ask respondents “Please tell me which one you think is more important for a child to have:” and this stem is followed by four paired attributes. The four attributes are “Independence or Respect for Elders,” “Obedience or Self-Reliance,” “Curiosity or Good Manners,” and “Being Considerate or Well Behaved.” The attributes of Respect for Elders, Obedience, Good Manners, and Well Behaved are scored as authoritarian responses.

5. Replication code can be found in the online appendix.

6. The surveys and manipulations for both experiments are available from the authors by request.

7. While individuals who participate in Mechanical Turk surveys are clearly not representative of the national population, the system is ideal for fielding experiments quickly and affordably. Scholars show that Mechanical Turk samples are more representative than in-person convenience samples (Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz 2012; Buhrmester, Kwang, and Gosling 2011; Mason and Suri 2012) and recent research demonstrates that the platform is appropriate for experimental research that does not demand a representative sample, as the respondents appear psychologically consistent with the general population (Paolacci and Chandler 2014). Additionally, previous studies have utilized Mechanical Turk samples to successfully replicate experimental results concerning psychological mechanisms that closely resemble authoritarianism (Craig and Richeson 2014; Crawford et al. 2013; Crawford and Pilanski 2014). These results support our claim that psychological tendencies operate similarly among Mechanical Turk workers as they do in the general population. Additionally, because of the quickly changing nature of national security issues, studies need to be fielded quickly, which is possible with Mechanical Turk but significantly more difficult with more representative samples.

8. These advertisements were created by examining the current discussion by American politicians about the situation in Syria. We decided to use the Syria case because the parties had not formed crystallized positions on intervention, allowing us to credibly present both candidates with the same positions. The advertisements were created by a local political communication specialist.

9. Unfortunately, while a partisan identity manipulation check was included, we did not include a manipulation check about threat activation in this experiment. The advertisement used, however, was developed after a pre-test of issues which showed the highest levels of expressed fear for advertisements concerning nuclear and chemical weapons, as opposed to those dealing with crime, immigration, or instability in the Middle East. Mean levels of fear in the pre-test were significantly higher at the $p < .01$ level. Pre-tests also showed that fear, more than anger, was aroused by these advertisements.

10. This question asked respondents the following question: “We’d like to get your feelings towards some of our political leaders and groups who are in the news these days. Please rate each of these people or groups on something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person or group. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don’t feel favorable toward the person or group and that you don’t care too much for that person or group. You would rate them at the 50-degree mark if you don’t feel particularly warm or cold toward the person or group.” Respondents then rated the “Barack Obama,” “Mitt Romney,” “The Republican Party,” “The Democratic Party,” “Liberals,” “Conservatives,” “Alex Johnson,” and “John Sanders.”

11. The 12 conditions occur because each candidate could be assigned one of four speeches (Security, Health Care, Leadership, or Family) and these were crossed such that a respondent could not see the same speech from both candidates.

12. The national security speech attributed to Romney/Obama was not based off of actual text. The speech was written by the researchers to approximate a political speech that could credibly be given by either major party candidate.

13. The three collapsed condition for Romney were Romney Security Speech/Obama Health Care Speech, Romney Security Speech/Obama Leadership Speech, and Romney Security Speech/Obama Family Speech. The Obama conditions reflect this same pattern.

14. The online appendix includes the political knowledge questions used in the two experiments.

15. To preserve some sample size, we do not break down partisanship in these analyses by strong, weak, and leaning Democrats. Instead we group all three categories together.

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