

Personal Values and Party Cues: The Political Is Personal

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Abstract: A construct that originated in social psychology, basic human values have attracted the attention of political scientists as the anchor in voters' minds that do not shift with external forces of politics and partisanship. While basic human values have been rigorously tested across cultures and outside of the U.S., aside from external validity, human values' durability as a foundational psychological anchor has been left untested. Using data from two nationally representative samples in 2022 and 2023, I find that partisan cues shift human values positions. In particular, negative partisan cues and party leader cues tend to shift value positions further, highlighting the strength of negative affect. While the result cannot speak to whether party ID is conceptually prior to values, the findings demonstrate that human values may not be as stable as assumed.

Keywords: Basic Human Values, Party Cues

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1 Introduction

Research has established that partisans in the electorate have become more polarized on political matters (Layman 2001; Bafumi and Shapiro 2009; Abramowitz 2010). Polarized voters are especially more likely to rely on their party ID in making political decisions and they are more likely to be swayed by party and elite cues. A few areas that party ID influences include conventional political indices like vote choice, political mobilization, elite influence and more recently, affective polarization (Bartels 2002; Campbell et al. 1960; Zaller 1992; Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002; Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen 2012; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Sniderman and Stiglitz 2012; Huddy et al. 2015; Mason 2018). In addition to factors directly related to political choices, party ID is also shown to affect people's value positions. Scholars have found core political value positions shift with partisan forces such as partisan campaign effects (McCann 1997) and party elite cues (Goren et al. 2009).

That party ID shapes political judgments is hardly surprising. What is surprising is that party ID might also shape personal judgments. Scholars find that party ties affect who we find attractive; how happy we claim to be; where we want to live; how much we plan to spend on holidays and vacations; who we think would make suitable marriage partners for our children; and the precautions we take against COVID-19 (Bishop 2009; Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012; Huber and Malhotra 2017; Jones and McDermott 2022).

However, does party ID shape the longstanding value preferences that are believed to be the founding blocks of an individual's preferences and decisions? Psychologists have stressed that individuals' value preferences are stable in their content and structure, transcending all situations. However, this assumption is challenged in the political realm as partisanship and polarization is believed to politicize all dimensions of life, putting voters' conscience to make consistent decisions into question. At the same time, scholars are increasingly interested in the impact of human values in the political realm, finding evidence of human values shaping key policy preferences, Left-Right symbolic ideology, and presidential vote choice (Goren et al. 2016; Goren and Motta 2022). Given that both human values and partisanship function as powerful predispositions, it is important to understand how the two affect one another.

In this paper, I find evidence that voters' basic human value positions are susceptible to partisan cues. In the survey experiment administered across two nationally representative samples, (1) the respondents were found to shift in their human value positions when they were given partisan cues, (2) respondents were found to shift in human value positions in greater degree when they were given out-party cues than in-party cues, (3) respondents' human value positions generally shifted more when they received the party leader cues, and (4) tendency to modify human value positions was greater for strong partisans and especially for Democrats. While the detected cue effects do not necessarily mean that party ID is a prior disposition to human values, my findings suggest that basic human values are not unchanging, unlike what had been assumed about human value.

2 Basic Human Values

Values are abstract beliefs about desirable end-states or behaviors that can be organized in hierarchy by personal importance and transcends specific situations (Schwartz 1994). There are two prominent ways that scholars of political science and social psychology use to understand values: core political values and basic human values, and basic human values are the focus of this paper. Core political values are developed by political scientists to explain behaviors and preferences in the American political sphere (Feldman 1988; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987). Basic human values are developed by social psychologists to explain behaviors in all domains of one's life beyond the political sphere. For the purpose of testing the endogeneity of values to partisanship, I focus on basic human values in this paper, because basic human values' generalizability that is not tied to politics offer a much more rigorous test on the power of partisanship. While changes in political values – which political scientists have found varying evidence to this (Macdonald 2022; Goren, Kittilson and Federico 2009; McCann 1997) – from partisan forces are notable, changes in values that are completely detached from politics in response to partisan forces serve as definite evidence of partisanship's influence on values.

Universalism	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature
Benevolence	Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent contact
Conformity	Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and isolate social expectations or norms
Tradition	Respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide
Security	Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationship, and of self
Power	Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources
Achievement	Personal successes through demonstrating competence according to social standards
Hedonism	Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself
Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life
Self-Direction	Independent thought and action – choosing, creating exploring

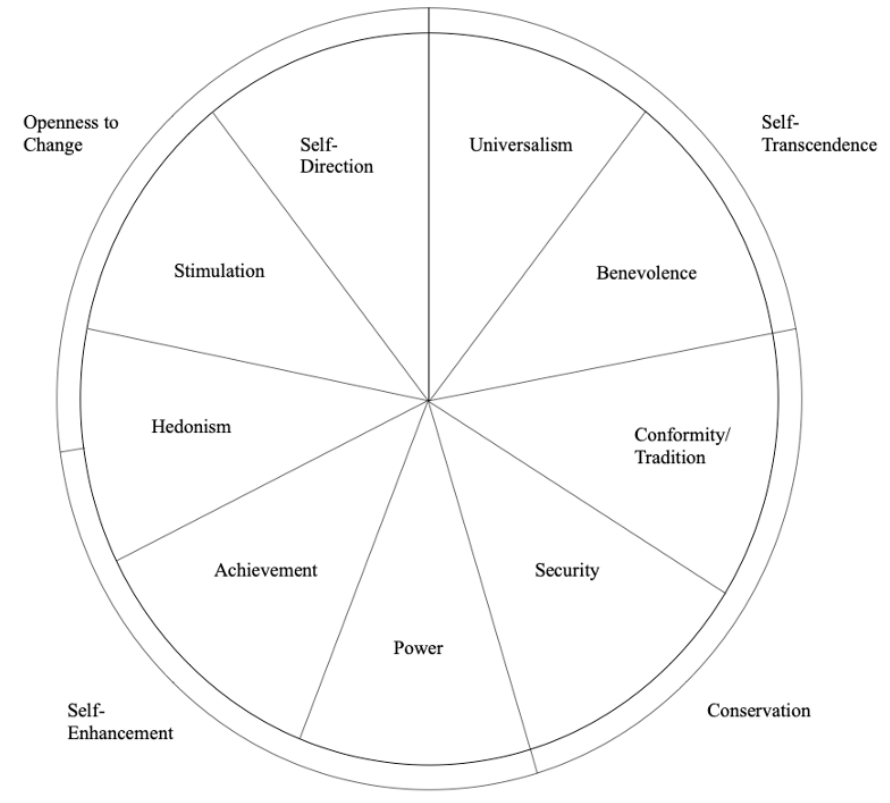
Table 1: Shalom Schwartz’s 10 Basic Human Values

2.1 Backgrounds to Basic Human Values

Building onto Rokeach’s (1973) universal value structure, Shalom Schwartz argues that there are 10 prominent basic human values (Figure 1) that arise due to human biological, social and existential needs. The 10 values were delineated from the bigger value list from Rokeach (1973) using the confirmatory factor analysis and multidimensional scaling analysis (MDS), and they form a circular spectrum where the distance between values indicate conceptual and motivational compatibility (if values are located close to one another) or conflicts (if values are located on the opposite side of the circle). For example, hedonism values and tradition values are located on the opposite side of the circumplex, indicating their motivational conflict, whereas adjacency between traditional values and security values indicate their similarity and compatibility. Basic human values can also be organized into the higher-order motivational clusters based on whether the values are grounded on care for others (self-transcendence vs. self-enhancement) or whether the values are grounded on motivation to stimulation and openness (openness to change vs. conservation). The 10-value content and structure shown in Figure 1 emerged across distinct cultures from 80 countries that Schwartz and colleagues drew data from (Schwartz and Boehnke 2004; Vecchione et al. 2009; Perrinjaquet et al. 2007).

Basic human values’ predictive power of a variety of personal and professional decisions speaks to its universal and trans-situational nature. Traditional values are strong indicator of religiosity, while hedonism values – located on the opposite side of the circular spectrum – are negatively correlated with religiosity (Roccas and Elster 2014; Saroglou et al. 2004). Across cultures, self-transcendence values are strongly related to prosocial behaviors in everyday life as well as decisions to donate or volunteer for social cause (Arieli et al. 2020; Sanderson and McQuilkin 2017). Universalism and

Figure 1: Shalom Schwartz's 10 Basic Human Values



self-direction values also meaningfully predict readiness for out-group contact (Sagiv and Schwartz 1995). On the opposite side of the circumplex, power values tend to predict a variety of anti-social values like aggression, delinquency and choosing competition over cooperation (Benish-Weisman et al. 2017; Bilsky and Hermann 2016; Sagiv et al. 2011). Values are also seen to predict important life decisions like university majors as well as specific preferences in medical specialty decisions (Sagiv 1997; Schubot, Eliason and Cayley 1995). Human values also shape political values and political decisions. Goren and colleagues (2016) found that basic human values consistently predict left-right symbolic ideology as well as policy preferences and issue positions in the select major issue domains. In particular, the authors find that socially oriented value clusters in the self-transcendence and conservation values consistently guide opinion formation on political discourse.

With human values' breadth in predictability beyond political domain, one would believe that partisan cues and political forces would not change basic human values. If, as claimed by scholars

of human values, human values are foundational constructs, we would expect human values to be resistant to external forces. If this is found to be true, this would also present a highly notable finding for political scientists that have long been in search for the unmoved mover of public opinion. On the other hand, if voters adjust human values with partisan cues, it would be a strong signal of how powerful partisanship has become – to a point where people are willing to adjust their guiding principles in life based on politics.

While scholars have repeatedly scrutinized core political values on durability (McCann 1997; Goren, Kittilson and Federico 2009; Macdonald 2022), a test of endogeneity has not taken place on human values with the exception of a longitudinal study of Italian national election, where Schwartz and his colleagues found no change before and after a controversial Italian national election (Vecchione et al. 2012). This is perhaps because human value scholarship has been incredibly invested on validating the external validity and its “universalism”. Nevertheless, I argue that it is a mistake to regard universalism and generalizability with durability and resistance to external stimulus. With the relatively new attention paid to basic human values in the American context where partisanship’s power is assumed to be the most important determinant of public opinion, a direct test of basic human values’ durability provides important knowledge around public opinion: it will either prove that there is indeed an unmoved mover of public opinion that is not swayed by partisan affect, or it will prove that partisanship has become so powerful in voters’ minds that people will willingly adjust their personal belief.

3 Party Cues and Basic Human Values

Party cues are one of the most studied elite influences on mass public opinion. With longstanding psychological lesson on the power of group influence, cumulated research has shown that there is a strong and consistent pattern in partisans shift according to the direction that they are cued by the party elites (Bullock 2011, 2020). In an early study, Geoff Cohen (2003) found that survey participants prioritized party identity over policy contents, supporting parties that they identified with, even if they were told the parties supported policies they did not traditionally endorsed. Scholars have repeatedly shown the power of group influence. In particular, party cues function as

the mental shortcut for many voters who often lack the time and resource to comprehend complex policies and political dynamics. As aforementioned, partisan cues were shown to exert significant influence on political value positions (Goren, Kittilson and Federico 2009; Goren 2005; McCann 1997), policy positions (Cohen 2003) and evaluation of candidates (Nicholson 2012). Additional research suggests that the power of partisan cues extend beyond the political domain and into the psychological subconscious, shaping information process and preference formation (Kahan 2015; Kahan et al. 2017; Malka and Lelkes 2010). Research by Ciuk (2018) suggests that people's moral foundations are also influenced by partisan considerations. Experimental effects found in both political and non-political domains provide strong grounds to expect that despite the enduring belief, partisan cues may shift personal values. Thus, I hypothesize that voters adjust their human value positions with partisan considerations (H1).

Another key characteristic of partisan cue is, that they not only shape opinions, they polarize them. It is a well-established lesson that American voters dislike the opposite party more than they like the party they identify with (Abramowitz and Webster 2016). Negative partisanship shapes partisan cue effects as voter responses to negative cues are greater. The same pattern was found in the aforementioned research in political values, moral foundations theory, candidate evaluations and numerous other studies (Goren et al. 2009; Ciuk 2018; Nicholson 2012). With this in consideration, my second hypothesis incorporates negative cue effect: Voters adjust their human values positions in a greater degree with negative partisan considerations (H2). Finally, I also hypothesize that partisan loyalty moderates the degree to which voters adjust their human value positions as a response to partisan cues (H3).

Hypothesis 1: Voters adjust their human value positions with partisan considerations.

Hypothesis 2: Voters adjust their human values positions in a greater degree with negative partisan considerations.

Hypothesis 3: partisan loyalty moderates the degree to which voters adjust their human value positions as a response to partisan cues.

4 Data and Methods

I use two sets of nationally representative sample from the U.S. to test whether basic human values are susceptible to party cues. These data come from 2022 Mid-term Election Study administered biannually by University of Minnesota’s Center for Study of Political Psychology wave 1, collected in the third week of November 2022 through a polling company, Bovitz, and Polarization Research Lab’s weekly tracking survey fielded by YouGov in the first week of March 2023. Both samples are nationally representative (though they are not probability samples), and the sample sizes are 2,066 and 1,000 respectively. In both surveys, I manipulated the elite cue treatments by prompting the original basic human value standard personal value questions (PVQ) with party cues and party leader cues. Schwartz’s original PVQ asks survey participants how close they think they are to the statements that describe a neutral third person’s values. In the modified survey, I switched the neutral third person with a partisan or a party leader to insert party cue and party leader cue (Table 2). The respondents were then asked to report how similar these descriptions of either a neutral third party or randomly assigned partisan figures were to respondents themselves in 1-6 Likert scale.

5 Analysis

5.1 Difference in Means (H1, H2)

I use difference of means test to test if there is any significant difference between groups with no party cues and groups with party or party leader cues. I have also separated the sample into Democrats and Republicans since in-party and out-party cues may cancel each other out in the full sample t-test. The full set of comparisons using t-tests is presented in Figure 2-7. Across all four value clusters – categorized by their motivational origins –, the means of the groups with party and party leader cues are significantly different from those of the control group. The same applied for both Republicans and Democrats. Another notable feature of the t-test result is that the difference in basic human value positions is greater and is more significant when they receive the out-party and out-party leader cues compared to the means of the control group. In fact, Republicans showed no difference between control groups and in-party cue groups as well as control groups and in-party

leader cue groups. *Republicans' basic human value positions were only significantly different when they received out-party cues.*

The direction of the difference is also notable. In all four motivational value clusters, groups treated with out-party cues and out-party leader cues reported value means significantly lower than the mean of the control group. While in-group treatment groups showed less significant or less of a difference from the control group, when they did have significant difference, in-group cue treated groups consistently reported significantly higher means than the control group. This is a clear evidence that the partisan cues have significant effect on value positions *and* that negative partisanship modifies the effects of partisan cues on human values.

5.2 Linear Regression and Interaction Effects (H1, H2, H3)

Next, I tested to see if the out-party and in-party cue effects are shown as interaction effects in linear regression analysis. In Table 3, I interacted party and party leader cues with party ID. Democrats are coded as 0, Republicans are coded as 2, and Independents are coded as 1. According to the linear regression results, individuals who identify with the Republican Party identifies with the self-transcendence value descriptions more strongly when they receive the in-party cues (both Trump and the Republican co-partisan cues). The direction of the party cue effects flip when the Republican Party identifiers are given the Biden cue or Democratic out-partisan cue. This clearly demonstrates that partisan cues are capable of flipping partisans' positions on human values, and that in-party cues can attract people to values that partisans would normally not prioritize. The same pattern is detected for conservation, openness to change and self enhancement value clusters. The regression results support the first hypothesis that partisan cues move basic human value positions for all four

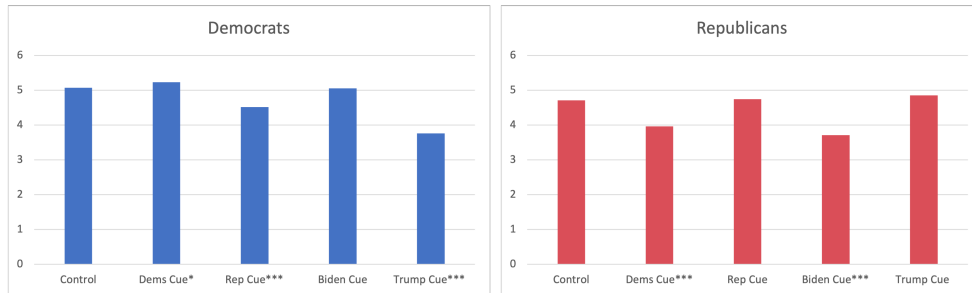


Figure 2: Self-Transcendence Values (Bovitz 2022)

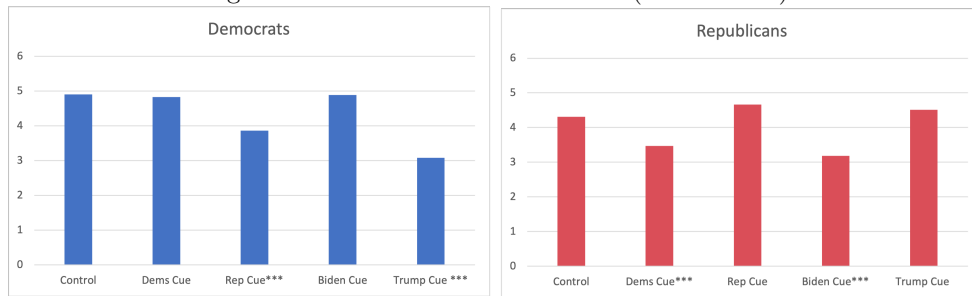


Figure 3: Self-Transcendence Values (YouGov 2023)

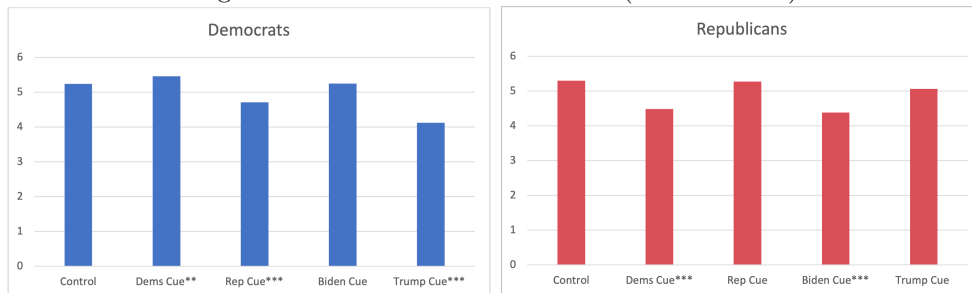


Figure 4: Openness to Change Values (Bovitz 2022)

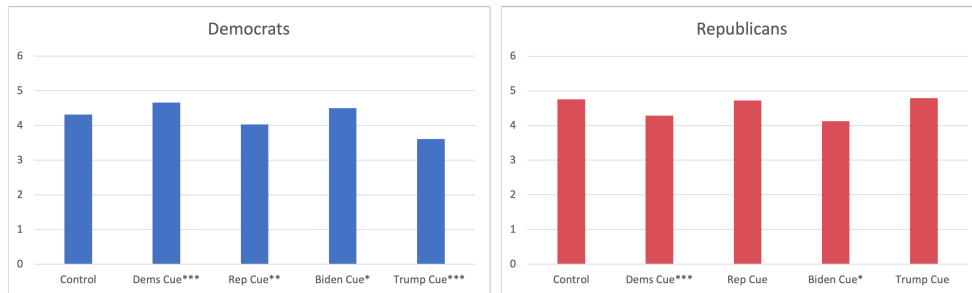


Figure 5: Conservation Values (Bovitz 2022)

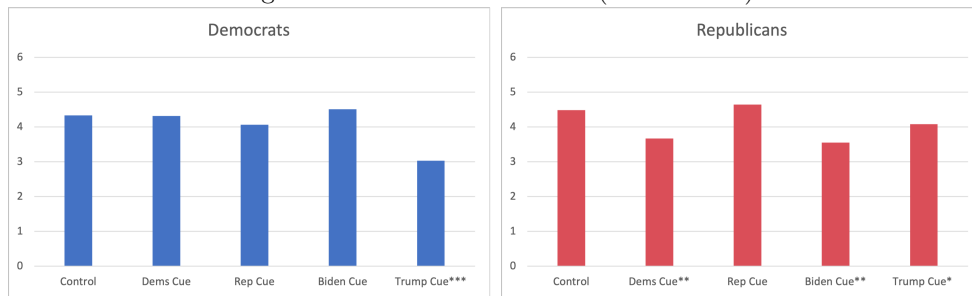


Figure 6: Conservation Values (YouGov 2023)

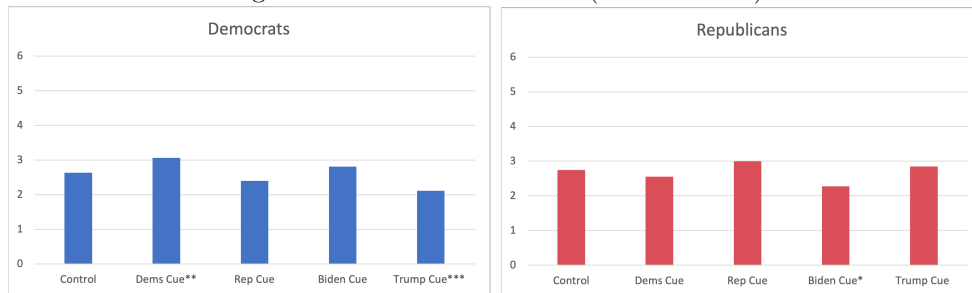


Figure 7: Self-Enhancement Values (Bovitz 2022)

clusters.

	self-transcendence	conservation	openness	selfenhancement
Trump Cue	-1.280*** (0.114)	-0.631*** (0.099)	-1.069*** (0.116)	-0.462*** (0.123)
Biden Cue	-0.035 (0.114)	0.211** (0.100)	0.026 (0.117)	0.235* (0.124)
Democrats Cue	0.137 (0.115)	0.301*** (0.101)	0.219* (0.118)	0.412*** (0.125)
Republicans Cue	-0.569*** (0.117)	-0.251** (0.102)	-0.505*** (0.120)	-0.219* (0.127)
PID	-0.187*** (0.069)	0.182*** (0.061)	0.014 (0.071)	0.024 (0.075)
Trump Cue:PID	0.734*** (0.099)	0.396*** (0.087)	0.455*** (0.102)	0.323*** (0.108)
Biden Cue:PID	-0.497*** (0.097)	-0.385*** (0.085)	-0.459*** (0.099)	-0.306*** (0.105)
Democrats Cue:PID	-0.475*** (0.101)	-0.430*** (0.089)	-0.530*** (0.104)	-0.337*** (0.110)
Republicans Cue:PID	0.294*** (0.097)	0.150* (0.085)	0.264*** (0.099)	0.264*** (0.105)
Constant	5.042*** (0.080)	4.213*** (0.070)	5.197*** (0.082)	2.530*** (0.087)

Observations	2,163	2,162	2,163	2,162
R ²	0.133	0.076	0.094	0.037
Adjusted R ²	0.129	0.072	0.090	0.032
Residual Std. Error	1.198 (df = 2153)	1.047 (df = 2152)	1.226 (df = 2153)	1.299 (df = 2152)
F Statistic	36.669*** (df = 9; 2153)	19.645*** (df = 9; 2152)	24.772*** (df = 9; 2153)	9.063*** (df = 9; 2152)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01			

Table 2: Interaction Results 1 (Partisanship \times PartyCue)

Then, I tested another interaction between party loyalty and party cue using the subsets of Democrats and Republicans to test whether party loyalty or partisan strength moderates the effect of party cues. As shown in Table 3, Democrats with greater party loyalty are less likely to support self-transcendence values when they are given Trump cue and Republican out-partisan cue. Same pattern applies to conservation values, but the effects are not as consistent with openness to change and self enhancement value clusters. Among Democrats, party loyalty did not moderate the effect of Trump cue for either openness or self enhancement value clusters. Party loyalty was seen to moderate the effect of Republican party cue for openness to change values. For self enhancement values, Democrats who were more loyal to the party were more likely to support self-enhancement when they were given co-partisan cues while party loyalty was not seen to moderate out-party cues for self-enhancement values. Another notable feature of the linear regression result is the consistently significant and large effect of Trump cue across all four of the basic human value clusters.

Interestingly, the interaction effects are slightly different for the Republican respondents (Table 4). When the Republican respondent subset was looked at separately, the party loyalty's moderating effects of the out-party cues were not so clear compared to the Democratic respondent subset. However, for the Republican respondents, while partisan loyalty did not have a consistent interaction effect with partisan cues, partisan cues were consistently strong across different levels of party loyalty. In particular, Biden cue has a consistently significant correlations with the less favorable position on all four of the basic human value clusters. This is congruent with the Trump cue effects on the Democratic respondents' positions on basic human value clusters. In contrast to the Democrats, out-party cues (separate from the leader cue) consistently correlated with less favorable view on basic human value positions for Republican respondents with the exception of self-enhancement value cluster. This suggests that party loyalty's moderating effect is greater for Democrats than Republicans, and that the nature of partisanship in the Left or the Right may differentially affect partisanship's influence on value evaluations.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	self-transcendence	conservation	openness	selfenhancement
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Trump Cue	−1.010*** (0.185)	−0.376** (0.165)	−0.931*** (0.191)	−0.596*** (0.217)
Biden Cue	0.028 (0.193)	0.158 (0.172)	0.092 (0.199)	0.070 (0.226)
Democrats Cue	0.141 (0.220)	0.164 (0.196)	0.250 (0.227)	−0.027 (0.258)
Republicans Cue	−0.080 (0.200)	0.025 (0.178)	−0.161 (0.206)	−0.028 (0.234)
PartyLoyalty	0.489*** (0.170)	0.216 (0.152)	0.291* (0.175)	−0.100 (0.199)
Trump Cue:PartyLoyalty	−0.462* (0.237)	−0.557*** (0.212)	−0.291 (0.245)	0.128 (0.278)
Biden Cue:PartyLoyalty	−0.065 (0.241)	0.034 (0.215)	−0.122 (0.249)	0.182 (0.283)
Republicans Cue:PartyLoyalty	−0.736*** (0.249)	−0.484** (0.222)	−0.575** (0.257)	−0.306 (0.292)
Democrats Cue:PartyLoyalty	−0.039 (0.262)	0.197 (0.233)	−0.076 (0.270)	0.628** (0.307)
Constant	4.757*** (0.136)	4.186*** (0.122)	5.056*** (0.141)	2.697*** (0.160)
Observations	943	943	943	943
R ²	0.201	0.132	0.153	0.065
Adjusted R ²	0.193	0.124	0.145	0.056
Residual Std. Error (df = 933)	1.149	1.024	1.185	1.347
F Statistic (df = 9; 933)	26.051***	15.834***	18.742***	7.218***

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 3: Interaction Results 2 (Party Cue \times PartyLoyalty, among Democrats)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	selftranscendence	conservation	openness	selfenhancement
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Trump Cue	−0.292 (0.240)	−0.171 (0.202)	−0.613** (0.250)	0.329 (0.280)
Biden Cue	−0.852*** (0.249)	−0.388* (0.210)	−0.541** (0.259)	−0.818*** (0.290)
Democrats Cue	−0.484* (0.253)	−0.367* (0.213)	−0.539** (0.263)	−0.081 (0.294)
Republicans Cue	−0.104 (0.220)	−0.004 (0.186)	0.125 (0.230)	0.004 (0.257)
PartyLoyalty	0.107 (0.217)	0.408** (0.183)	0.365 (0.226)	0.062 (0.252)
Trump Cue:PartyLoyalty	0.757** (0.311)	0.381 (0.262)	0.668** (0.324)	−0.393 (0.362)
Biden Cue:PartyLoyalty	−0.235 (0.307)	−0.393 (0.259)	−0.591* (0.320)	0.495 (0.358)
Republicanas Cue:PartyLoyalty	0.263 (0.289)	−0.010 (0.244)	−0.232 (0.301)	0.482 (0.337)
Democrats Cue:PartyLoyalty	−0.438 (0.321)	−0.175 (0.271)	−0.455 (0.334)	−0.197 (0.374)
Constant	4.653*** (0.171)	4.516*** (0.144)	5.080*** (0.178)	2.716*** (0.199)
Observations	586	586	586	586
R ²	0.175	0.120	0.136	0.059
Adjusted R ²	0.162	0.106	0.122	0.044
Residual Std. Error (df = 576)	1.133	0.955	1.180	1.318
F Statistic (df = 9; 576)	13.557***	8.720***	10.038***	3.982***

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 4: Interaction Results 3 (Party Cue \times PartyLoyalty, amongRepublicans)

6 Discussion

According to the experimental results, voters change their basic human value positions when they receive partisan cues unlike the conventional wisdom. There was some asymmetry in how respondents responded to partisan cues. The modification stands out particularly for groups that were treated with out-party and out-party leader cues, and for Democrats, those who are more loyal to the Democratic Party seem to adjust their value expressions in a greater extent than those who are leaners. This is the first systematic evidence found in the literature that human values are susceptible to political stimuli and specifically, partisan cues.

6.1 Future Direction

The results point to the power of out-group hate and that party ID has reached voters' personal identity to the extent that they may choose to modify their value positions. However, the given data are not sufficient to conclude that party ID is prior to basic human values. Moreover, the experimental results do not speak to whether the change detected were changes in values or change in value *expressions*. Future work to distinguish the types of change would be beneficial.

It is also possible that affect one feels towards the party or party figures rather than an innate quality of party ID, that shifted people's value positions. The consistent but significant difference in means between control group and the out-group leader group's basic human value positions among the weak partisans suggests that basic human values are susceptible to other types of out-group hatred other than one associated with parties. A future study on affect's moderating effect would help understand this possible latent mechanism.

Finally, a feasible follow-up study that I am currently planning utilizes a much more realistic partisan cue than the one employed in this study. Given the bluntness in how party cues were worded, it is possible that party and party figure overwhelmed any value content associated with it. This alone, still, speaks to the power of partisanship and people's willingness to adjust their value positions. However, I expect a softer version of cue experiment would formulate a much more realistic setting than the current one.

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