Partisan Animus in the Absence of Out-Party Labels

Abstract

As part of a growing trend of affective polarization, scholars have shown that individuals are more than willing to disparage members of the out-party. However, explicit indicators of the partisan identity of others are not available in many social settings. Can partisan animus be shown towards members of the out-party that are not explicitly identified as partisan? I show that a lack of explicit out-party labels does not necessarily dampen partisan animus. The reason I propose is that indicators of partisan identity that are less explicit than the out-party label can also trigger partisan animus. Using a survey experiment, I show that the political opinions that people express can trigger out-party animus, even if they stem from a messenger without an explicitly defined partisan identity.

Keywords: affective polarization, partisan animus, partisanship, public opinion

Word Count: 4,601

1 Introduction

In recent years, the American political scene has been characterized by the growth of partisan affective polarization, driven in large part by increasingly negative evaluations of out-partisans (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012). Numerous studies have shown that individuals are more than willing to denigrate and discriminate against members of the opposing party (e.g., Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Mason 2018). These ill effects of so-called *partisan animus* are portrayed not as a matter of deep-seated disagreement on policy, but as a social divide that manifests in numerous and surprisingly powerful ways (Iyengar et al. 2019).[1]

However, our current understanding of partisan animus, and affective polarization more broadly, has largely taken for granted the presence of an explict indicator of the partisan identity of others (i.e., the out-party label). Most studies follow a similar pattern: partisans are either explicitly asked to give their opinions about members of the other party (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012), or given a stimulus that explicitly identifies an out-partisan individual, such as a job or college application that lists prior work experience with a political party (Gift and Gift 2015; Iyengar and Westwood 2015). Participants then provide their reactions to the stimulus and its subject. It is not so obvious, however, that these experimental scenario are accurate representations of the political interactions individuals face in everyday life, as explicit indicators of partisan identity may be unavailable in certain social settings. I will highlight two specific reasons why this may be the case: (1) more contextually relevant personal information may crowd out explicit indicators of partisanship such as the party label, and (2) individuals may purposefully hide their partisan identity to avoid the social costs of explicit identification (Klar and Krupnikov 2016; Carlson and Settle 2016; Settle and Carlson 2019). If explicit out-party indicators are unavailable in certain social settings for either reason, questions arise as to whether partisan animus is as common as the literature

[1] In this project, I am primarily concerned with negative evaluations of members of the out-party. I follow Iyengar and Krupenkin (2018) and Orr and Huber (2019) in labeling these evaluations as *partisan animus* or *out-party animus*. The increase in out-party animus is part of a broader trend of *affective polarization*, or the growing divergence in favorability towards members of one's own party and the out-party (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012).

on partisan affective polarization suggests.

Can partisan animus be shown towards out-partisans that bear no explicit indicators of their partisan identity? Answering this question is crucial for understanding the scope of partisan animus in American's everyday lives and the generalizability of previous studies of partisan animus and affective polarization. I argue that indicators of partisan identity that are less explicit than the party label are similarly able to produce partisan animus. I evaluate my argument through the use of a survey experiment where I expose respondents to hostile, partisan rhetoric attacking their party. These "partisan statements" (as I will refer to them) serve as a less explicit indicator of the partisan identity of another individual. I present these statements in the form of mock Twitter profiles, both because Twitter is a widely recognized social media platform where political opinions are often expressed, and also because explicit indicators of partisan identity are not widely available in this context, with only 6% of users explicitly revealing their partisanship in their profiles.[2] After respondents have read the statements, I use several measures of partisan animus to capture attitudes towards the content of the statement and the individual that posted it.

I find that partisan animus can be shown towards those lacking an explicit out-party label. Statements that are reminiscent of stereotypical partisan rhetoric (directed at a survey participant's party) lead participants to respond with partisan animus, even if the statement's author is not explicitly labeled as an out-partisan. This animus manifests in lower favorability ratings of the statement's author, the assignment of more negative and less positive character traits to the author, and viewing the author's statements as more unfriendly and hostile. Consistent with my argument, the degree of partisan animus shown towards an individual making a partisan statement does not change when an explicit out-party label is made available.

This study contributes to a growing line of work that seeks to uncover the mechanisms and motivations that underly partisan animus and affective polarization (Orr and Huber

[2]Appendix B provides more information about the use of party labels in Twitter bios.

2019; Lelkes 2019). Our understanding of partisan animus has taken for granted that the targets of such hostility are explicitly identified partisans and, as a result, has largely over simplified and under appreciated the process that brings these hostile reactions about. By relaxing this common, artificial, and often unstated assumption that out-partisans must be explicitly identified for partisan animus to occur, the results of my experiment expand the implications of previous studies of partisan animus by showing that a wide array of social interactions can lead to negative evaluations of out-partisans, including those where explicit indicators of partisan identity are unavailable.

2 Why Indicators of Partisan Identity May Be Unavailable

Many studies of partisan affective polarization have rested on the assumption that explicit indicators of the partisan identity of others are readily available and capable of triggering negative evaluations of out-partisans. Iyengar and Westwood (2015) measured out-party animus after asking respondents to examine scholarship applications from out-partisans with previous work experience as President of the Young Democrats or Young Republicans. McConnell et al. (2018) use job listings stating that the founders of the hiring company met through fundraising efforts for the Democratic or Republican party. And while the results of these previous studies have been consistent in their findings that partisans dislike members of the out-party, there has been little consideration that explicit indicators of partisan identity are unavailable in some social settings. Here, I highlight two specific reasons why these explicit indicators may be lacking.

First, explicit indicators of partisan identity may be unavailable if they are crowded-out by more relevant considerations. For instance, consider that the biographical statement on one's Twitter profile is limited to a small number of characters — a handful of individuals (≈6%, see Appendix B) are observed using this space to explicitly state their partisanship,

but for most people, personal descriptions often include labels that are more central to one's self-identity than their partisanship (e.g., parent, business-owner, sports fan). The same may be true of job or college applications –although these are potential mechanisms through which partisan identity can be explicitly conveyed, thus leading to partisan affective polarization and animus (Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Gift and Gift 2015), previous experiences that are more directly relevant to the application may take precedent over experiences in political domains. The second reason that explicit indicators of partisan identity may be unavailable is if individuals intentionally hide their partisanship due to social costs. Social costs describe the feelings of uncomfortablility or embarrassment that are generated when expressing one's self in ways that are unfavorable to others in a social setting. In political contexts, social costs have been shown to shape the political opinions that individuals are willing to express aloud (Carlson and Settle 2016) and may even shape individuals' willingness to engage in political discussion at all (Settle and Carlson 2019). More importantly, however, the heavy social costs associated with explicitly identifying oneself as partisan lead some individuals to actively hide their partisanship from others (Klar and Krupnikov 2016). If explicit indicators of the partisan identity of others are lacking for any of the above reasons, it becomes unclear whether and how partisan animus may be triggered.

3 Partisan Animus in the Absence of Out-Party Labels

If partisan animus occurs as a response to explicitly identified out-partisans in the way that previous studies have depicted, then a lack of explicit indicators of partisanship in certain social settings may suggest that partisan animus is not as common as previously believed. However, I argue that indicators reminiscent of partisan identity *other than an out-party label itself* can produce partisan animus. This implies that the lack of explicit indicators of out-party identity in certain social settings does not necessarily eliminate the situations in which negative partisan animus may be expressed.

Following in the tradition of the literature on partisan affective polarization (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Mason 2018), my argument stems directly from social-identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) which suggests that indicators of social or political identities lead to biased or discriminatory behavior against the out-party. The out-party label has clearly played this role in previous studies, but I argue that less explicit indicators of partisan identity can serve the same function. Using a survey experiment, I will show that the political opinions that individuals express can also prime partisan animus.

Consider the following tweet posted in October 2019: "The Founding Fathers never fathomed the scale of corruption that is today's Republican Party!" Although the person posting this *partisan statement* is not explicitly identified as a partisan, social-identity theory and the literature on affective polarization and partisan animus would predict that this type of hostile, out-party rhetoric should nonetheless raise the salience of partisanship in the minds of Republicans that may read it. Those Republicans are then expected to respond to the statement and its author with partisan animus.[3] In this sense, the partisan statement is serving as a less explicit indicator of the partisan identity of the statement's author, capable of triggering out-party animus in the same way that the explicit out-party label has in previous studies. Compared to statements that do not contain this sort of hostile, out-party rhetoric, which I call *apolitical-innocuous statements*, I expect that individuals reading these types of partisan statements attacking their party will respond with partisan animus.[4] This leads to my first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: *Partisan statements will produce more partisan animus than apolitical-innocuous statements*

Suppose in the above example that the partisan identity of the statement's author — reasonably assumed to be a Democrat — is presented alongside the statement. How much

[3]The same logic would apply if the partisan statement were making a derogatory remark about the Democratic Party. That is, Democrats reading the statement should respond to the statement's author with partisan animus.

[4]An example of an *apolitical-innocuous* statement is given in the Experimental Design section.

will the level of partisan animus change? I suspect the answer to be: very little. As I have argued, the partisan statement should be capable of triggering out-party animus on its own, thus the inclusion of an explicit out-party label provides little motivation to show out-party animus above and beyond the animus generated by the statement. Therefore, my second hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 2: *Given a partisan statement, explicitly identifying the statement's author as partisan will not change the level of partisan animus*

I've argued thus far that possible reason that explicit, out-party labels may be unavailable in certain social settings is that some individuals wish to avoid certain social costs. Individuals that are sensitive to social costs may also be hesitant to make direct attacks on their political opponents as in the above tweet. Suppose instead that an individual decides to make a statement about politics that does not contain explicit partisan references such as, "We need a competent governor in office!" Should partisan animus still arise, and does it matter if the partisan identity of the statement's author is made explicit in this context?

The findings of previous scholars lead me to believe that this type of *political statement* (as I will refer to it) will produce some amount of animus among those that read the statement, though to a lesser degree than the partisan statements. In particular, Klar, Krupnikov, and Ryan (2018) argue that some of the affective polarization we observe stems from a general distaste for partisan politics, and not necessarily from out-group animus. Therefore, removing the explicit partisan references from the statement may mute the effects of partisan animus to a degree, but given that the political statements contain hostile rhetoric directed at a political body (in this case, a governor), some amount of animus is to be expected.

The interesting implications emerge when we consider how individuals respond to the author of a political statement when that author is explicitly identified as a partisan. When it is made clear that the author is a partisan, the political statement begins to seem as though it was made as a partisan gesture. In the context of the political statement about the governor (presented above), telling a Republican respondent that the author is a Democrat

may lead the respondent to think that the statement was an attack on a Republican governor. Therefore, I expect the revelation of the author's partisan identity to increase partisan animus when presented alongside a political statement, presented in Hypothesis 3:

Hypothesis 3: *Revealing the partisan identity of a person making a political statement will produce partisan animus*

4 Experimental Design

To determine whether partisan animus can be shown towards non-explicitly identified partisans expressing their partisan or political opinions, I conduct a survey experiment. The experiment ask respondents to read and react to a set of six Twitter profiles.[5] The profiles contain the sort of biographical information that typically appears on a real Twitter profile, such as the user's name, Twitter handle, profile picture, and a short biographical statement. My hypotheses do not make predictions about the effects of these values, so they are randomized in each of the six profiles.[6] A single profile from the experiment, along with the feeling thermometer that respondent's used to rate the the individual posting the tweet (one of three dependent variables), is shown in Figure 1.

Within each profile, I manipulate (1) the content of the statement and (2) the presence (or absence) of the Twitter user's partisan identity. The content of the statement is randomly assigned to be either *apolitical-innocuous*, *partisan*, or *political*. The *apolitical-innocuous* statement is intended to act as a control group, making no references to parties or politics. The *partisan* statements make derogatory remarks about the respondent's party, but never

[5]There are three reasons why I chose to frame the statements as tweets: (1) Twitter is a widely recognizable platform and tweets from politicians appear often in the news cycle (Leetaru 2019), (2) the type of partisan rhetoric that I expose respondents to is not uncommon on the platform, even from elected officials (Russell 2018), and (3) the Twitter profile provides an organic and credible means to signal the user's partisanship. I observe a number of people displaying party labels in their profile, though as the research on social costs might suggest, this number is low (See Appendix B).

[6]I take into consideration that some pieces of biographical information may be more suggestive of partisanship than others. More information about the materials used in the experiment, and the process used to collect those materials, can be found in Appendix A.

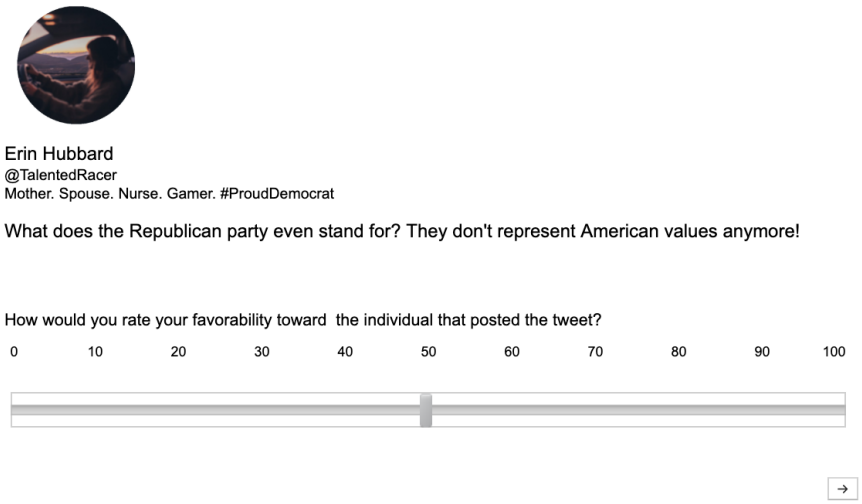

Figure 1: Example of Profile Shown in Experiment with Feeling Thermometer

explicitly identify the Twitter user as partisan. Respondents only read these remarks about their own party, never about the out-party. Finally, *political* statements about political matters (i.e., mayors and governors), but make no explicit partisan references.

To ensure that peculiarities of the particular statements that I chose are not driving my results, several versions of each statement type have been created; for instance, there are 11 different apolitical, innocuous statements in total, so if the randomizer assigns a profile to contain an apolitical, innocuous statement, one of these eleven statements is randomly presented. This approach assumes that statements of the same type provoke homogeneous responses. A complete list of statements used in this experiment can be found in Table 4 of Appendix A. None of the three statements types contain references to salient political issues or ideology. Examples of each type of statement include:

- *Apolitical-Innocuous Statement* - "Rode my new bike yesterday and i've gotta say i'm satisfied with my purchase"
- *Partisan Statement* - "Republicans [Democrats] don't care about the well-being of this country. They want perpetual, unchecked power!"
- *Political Statement* - "The mayor has no clue how to run a city!"

Within each profile I also randomly manipulate the presence or absence of an explicit

out-party label among the Twitter user's biographical information in the form of a partisan 'hashtag', such as #ProudDemocrat. Figure 1 shows an example of the out-party label and partisan statement treatments.[7] Including a party label alongside additional biographical information in this way is similar to manner in which previous studies have subtly administered the partisan prime, and an ecologically valid way of displaying one's partisan identity.

4.1 Experimental Data

The study was conducted with a sample from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (N=449).[8] Descriptives statistics, along with a comparison to the broader U.S. population, are presented in Table 1. Although this study does not utilize a nationally representative sample, there is sufficient reason to believe that the results presented here are externally valid. First, the study takes place on MTurk, which has been shown capable of recovering treatment effects originally discovered on convenience and nationally representative samples (Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz 2012). Second, the results from the MTurk study replicate the results of my pilot study, which was conducted on a student sample that contained more Republican and non-white participants than is typical of most "narrow" student samples (Sears 1986). This gives me confidence that the treatment effects I recover are externally valid even though they are found among a non-representative sample (Druckman and Kam 2011).

[7] In the 'Party Label' condition, the partisan hashtag is either presented alongside a biographical state as shown in Figure 1, or the partisan hashtag is presented alone (name and username are still given). This change was made from the pilot study to alleviate concerns that respondents were not detecting the party label amongst the other biographical information. In Appendix E, I show that there was no difference in outcomes across these methods of delivering the party label. I pool these conditions when analyzing the effect of the party label.

[8] While there was a total of 449 MTurkers recruited, the experiment uses a repeated observation design where each respondent evaluates 6 Twitter profiles, giving a total of 2,694 observations. Note that the number of observations shown in Table 2 has been slightly reduced due to missing data and the removal of pure Independents.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of MTurk Sample

Variable	MTurk Sample ($N = 449$)*	US Population†
Median Age	36	38.2
Female	47.0%	51.3%
Median Family Income	$50k - $75k	$76,401
Party ID		
Democrat (incl. leaners)	50.1%	46%
Pure Independent	12.6%	8%
Republican (incl. leaners)	37.1%	46%
Race/Ethnicity		
White	74.7%	60.2%
Black	7.4%	12.3%
Latino/Hispanic	4.0%	18.3%
Asian	9.2%	5.6%

†US population estimates for age, sex, income, and ethnicity come from the US Census Bureau (2018) and partisanship from Gallup (2020)
*N represents the number of unique respondents in the sample.

Dependent Variables

The primary outcome of interest in both studies is the respondent's level of partisan animus, which I capture with three distinct measures. The first asks respondents to rate the qualities of a tweet with a set of 2 *semantic differential items* (Arceneaux, Johnson, and Murphy 2012). The item asks respondents to rate the tweet from Bad to Good, and the second from Hostile to Friendly using 9-point scales. Placements on these two items are added together for each tweet. The second outcome gauges respondent's attitudes towards the hypothetical individual that posted the tweet using a 101-point feeling thermometer, where 0 is very cold feelings, 50 is neutral, and 100 is very warm. The third and final outcome asks respondents to perform a short *trait-association* task, where they are asked to indicate how well a given trait describes the person that posted the tweet on a 4-point scale from 'Not so well' to 'Extremely Well'. This includes a set of three positive traits (honest, intelligent, open-minded) and a set of three negative traits (hypocritical, mean, and selfish). Scores on the negative traits

are then reverse coded and all six values are added together. To ease comparison, each of the three outcomes is scaled to range between 0 and 1, where a value of 0 indicates the most negative assessments and 1 indicates the most positive assessments.

5 Results

In this section, I present the results of my survey experiment.[9] I test my hypotheses by specifying a series of OLS regressions with a measure of out-party animus as the dependent variable and indicators for (1) the type of statement and (2) the presence or absence of an explicit out-party label as my primary explanatory variables. In some instances, I interact the statement type and out-party label indicators to look for effect heterogeneity (Hypotheses 2 and 3). Given the repeated observations design, standard errors are always clustered by respondent. Leaning independents are coded as partisans and pure independents have been excluded.

My first hypothesis posits that partisan statements will generate more partisan animus (i.e., reduced positive affect) than apolitical-innocuous statements. To test this hypothesis, I specify an additive model of the 'Partisan Stmt.,' 'Political Stmt.,' and 'Out-Party Label' indicators for each of the three outcomes. This allows me to examine the independent effects of either of these manipulations. These models are presented in Columns 1, 3, and 5 of Table 2. The quantities of interest are the coefficient estimates on 'Partisan Stmt.' (first row of Table 2). The estimates indicate that the partisan statements had a negative and statistically significant effect on all three outcomes: ratings of the tweet using the semantic differential items are reduced by nearly half the range of the outcome ($\hat{\beta}$=-0.47, $p < 0.01$), while trait ratings of the statement's authors ($\hat{\beta}$ = -0.35, $p < 0.01$) and warmth toward the author using the feeling thermometer ($\hat{\beta}$ = -0.39, $p < 0.01$) are decreased by more than one-third the range of either outcome. From these results, I conclude that Hypothesis 1 is

[9]The results presented here closely replicate the results of my pilot study. Details and results of the pilot study can be found in Appendix C.

Table 2: Effects of Political Statement and Out-Party Label

	Semantic Differential		Trait Ratings		Feeling Therm.	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Partisan Stmt.	−0.47***	−0.48***	−0.35***	−0.39***	−0.39***	−0.43***
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Political Stmt.	−0.28***	−0.27***	−0.15***	−0.15***	−0.17***	−0.16***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Out-Party Label	−0.02***	−0.02*	−0.04***	−0.05***	−0.05***	−0.06***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Partisan Stmt. × Out-Party Label		0.01		0.05***		0.05**
		(0.03)		(0.02)		(0.03)
Political Stmt. × Out-Party Label		−0.02		−0.001		−0.02
		(0.02)		(0.02)		(0.02)
Constant	0.72***	0.72***	0.70***	0.71***	0.69***	0.69***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Observations	2,352	2,352	2,352	2,352	2,352	2,352

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01; one-tailed tests
Standard errors clustered by respondent
Out-Party Label: 0 = No Out-Party Label Present, 1 = Out-Party Label Present
Reference category for 'Political Stmt.' and 'Partisan Stmt.' is 'Apolitical, Innocuous Stmt.'

supported.

My second hypothesis states that, given a partisan statement, the presence of an explicit out-party label will not change the level of partisan animus. To examine this hypothesis, I specify an interaction between the statement type and out-party label treatments, as shown in Columns 2, 4, and 6 of Table 2, and use these estimates to plot the conditional average treatment effect (CATE) of the out-party label in Figure 2. The CATE in this context gives the effect of the out-party label treatment conditioned on the statement type. The left panel of Figure 3 shows estimates of CATE for apolitical-innocuous statements, the middle panel for political statements, and the right panel for partisan statements.

The right panel of Figure 2 shows that the effect of the out-party label given a partisan statement is small and statistically indistinguishable from zero for all three outcomes. So while partisan statements may produce out-party animus on their own (Hypothesis 1), explicitly identifying the statement's author as an out-partisan does not appear to exacerbate

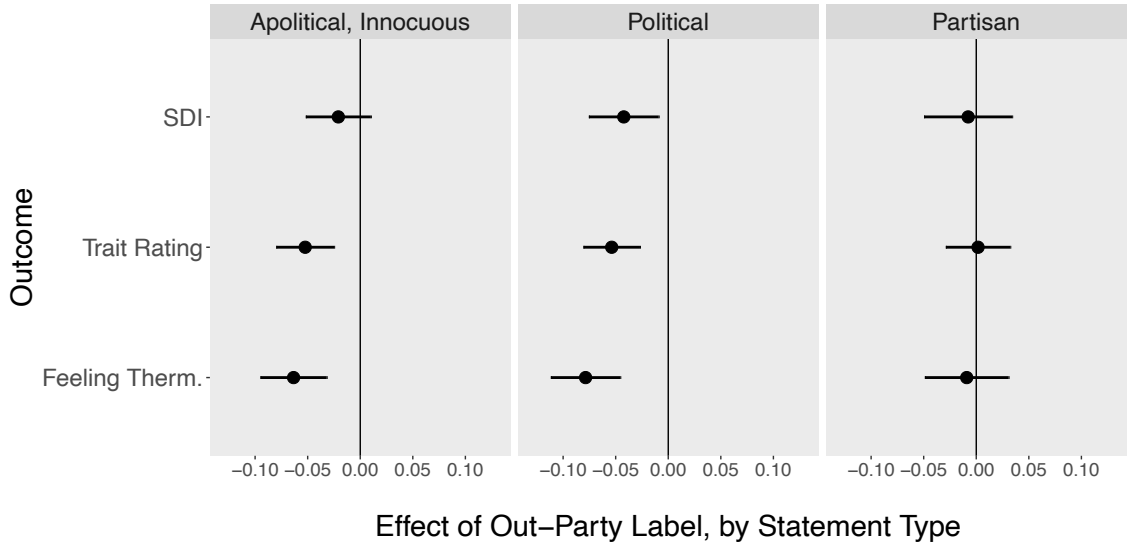

Figure 2: Conditional Effect of Out-Party Label

Note: Estimates are generated from interactive models in Table 2 (Columns 2, 4, and 6), with standard errors clustered at the respondent-level. Sample limited to partisans only (leaners included).

these effects. These results are consistent with Hypothesis 2. It should be noted, however, that failing to reject a null hypothesis of no treatment effect is not the same as rejecting a null hypothesis that there is a meaningful treatment effect. I address this issue with Two One-Sided Test (Rainey 2014) in Appendix D, where I show that we can indeed reject a null hypothesis of a substantively meaningful effect of the out-party label for all three outcomes.

From the left panel of Figure 2, we see that out-party labels are producing partisan animus when the statement is apolitical and innocuous, with the size of these estimates appearing relatively small (roughly 5% of the range of the scale). These effects are negative and significant for the trait ratings ($\hat{\beta}$ = -0.05, $p < 0.01$) and feeling thermometer ($\hat{\beta}$ = -0.06, $p < 0.001$), but insignificant for the semantic differential items ($\hat{\beta}$ = -0.02, $p = 0.19$). Clearly, I have recovered the animus-inducing effects of explicitly identifying out-partisans in non-political contexts as demonstrated in many previous studies of affective polarization and partisan animus.

Before proceeding to the tests of my third and final hypothesis, it should be noted from Columns 1, 3, and 5 of Table 2 that political statements generate less out-party animus than

partisan statements (holding the effect of the out-party label constant). This is consistent with the findings of Klar, Krupnikov, and Ryan (2018) that some of the partisan affective polarization we observe stems from a distaste for partisan politics. When the partisan references are removed from the statement, animus is reduced to a degree, though these political statements still produce more animus than apolitical- innocuous statements.[10]

Hypothesis 3 states that, given a political statement, the out-party label should produce out-party animus. I test this hypothesis by examining the conditional average treatment effect of the out-party label given a political statement as shown in the middle panel of Figure 2. Here we see that explicitly identifying the statement's author as an out-partisan produces significant decreases in positive affect for all three outcomes: ratings on the semantic differential items decrease by 4% ($\hat{\beta}$=-0.04, $p < 0.01$), trait ratings decrease by 5% ($\hat{\beta}$=-0.05, $p < 0.01$), and the feeling thermometer decreases by 8% ($\hat{\beta}$=-0.08, $p < 0.01$). So while unveiling the out-party identity of a person making a partisan statement had no distinguishable effect (Hypothesis 2), the same is not true of those making political statements. These findings are clear support for Hypothesis 3.

6 Conclusion

Given the wide array of contexts in which partisan animus has been shown to arise, it is crucial that we understand the mechanism that leads to such outcomes. I show that out-partisans need not be explicitly identified for partisan animus to be directed towards them in the way that the literature seems to suggest. Instead, the out-party label can be replaced with less explicit indicators of partisan identity; in this study, partisan statements, and to a lesser extent political statements, served that role.

It is understandable that scholars would look first to the most obvious indicator of

[10]Table 6 in Appendix F contains the same additive models shown in Columns 1, 3, and 5 of Table 2, but I change the reference category to 'Political Statements'. This allows me to show that apolitical, innocuous statements produce a statistically significant increase in positive affect compared to political statements, while partisan statements produce a statistically significant decrease in positive affect.

partisanship – the party label – as a trigger for partisan polarization and animus. However, my results suggest that, moving forward, we should more carefully consider how indicators of partisan identity are experienced in day-to-day life. Indicators are often encountered through less explicit means than the party label, which may introduce uncertainty about another's true partisan identity. Nevertheless, the results presented here suggest that partisan animus can be shown towards those that act as though they are partisan, such as those that make partisan statements, even if their partisan identity is not known with certainty.

The experiment in this study used one of the most obvious, but non-explicit indicators available (i.e., partisan statements), however, the literature has already hinted that personal characteristics beyond the party label also align closely with partisan identity. Hetherington and Weiler (2018) suggests that the cars people drive or the foods they eat may provide hints about partisan identity. Mason (2018) shows that a number of social characteristics, such as race, income, and religion, have come into alignment with partisan identity over the last several decades. It is possible that these other indicators of partisanship produce partisan animus in the way that the partisan or political statements did here. In demonstrating that partisan animus can be shown towards individuals that are not explicitly identified as partisan, I help lay the groundwork for future research to articulate the types of signals available in everyday life, beyond the statements that we make or the labels that we bear, that lead to partisan animus and polarization.

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