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When Do Partisans Defect from Norm Violators?

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## ABSTRACT

Political in-group members assume the expectation to abide and enforce group norms, maintaining a high motivation to protect their sanctity from the out-group. While research has focused on characteristics of in-group norm violators that may impact judgement, less research has explored attributes of the norm violation itself. This thesis explores causes and predictors of in-group members' responses to norm violations committed by high-status in-group members. Specifically, I seek to explore the contrasting motivations to protect the in-group and look past the violation or condemn the violation to protect the reputation of the in-group. I find that the severity of a norm violation matters, as partisans were more likely to excuse low severity offenses and condemn high severity offenses. Additionally, Democrats and Republicans view norm violations differently, with Republican's displaying a motivation to protect and remain loyal to the in-group and Democrats displaying a motivation to retain group standards. This study offers a new methodological structure for assessing in-group judgments and builds upon the foundation for future research relating to in-group judgments and perceptions of norm violations.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Affective polarization, or the extent to which political partisans dislike, distrust, and/or avoid the opposing partisans, has increased in the United States (Iyengar et al., 2012). More individuals are fusing their political identity with their social identity, creating a heightened motivation to protect and advance the status of the political in-group (Huddy & Bankert, 2017). Political partisans are quick to sort individuals as “in-group members”, which are individuals that are accepted in the group, and “out-group members”, which are individuals outside of the political group, creating an “us” vs. “them” dynamic, to such extremes that members of opposing parties liken each other to enemies of the state, on par with North Korea or Russia. Group norms are believed to have a crucial role, as they drive belief and shape the behavior of in-group members (Abrams et al., 2013; Ashokkumar et al., 2019; Bettache et al., 2019; Geiger et al., 2020; Shuman et al., 2018). However, the rise of affective polarization would appear to mediate or moderate such relationships. That is, prior research has focused on how group norms impact in-group and out-group members, but in light of such strong polarization, are these norms cast aside in favor of group identity?

The focus of the present study attempts to fill an understudied component of group norm violations. Specifically, I argue that not all group norms will be judged similarly, as some norms will experience excusal and others condemnation. While the components and characteristics of the norm violator have been extensively studied, the elements of a norm violation that create differences in responses remain unknown. My central research question asks, what makes an in-

group member excuse or condemn a norm violation? I hypothesize that when holding the status of the norm violator constant, political in-group members with identities strongly fused to their respected in-groups will be more likely to look past norm violations than those loosely fused to their in-groups. Here, I examine two contrasting motivations: 1) to protect the in-group to which one belongs, and therefore look past norm violations to maintain group status, and 2) to condemn norm violations in order to protect the standards established by the group. Additionally, I hypothesize that if a group norm violation relates to a policy issue with high personal salience, the violator will experience harsher judgment and condemnation, regardless of fusion with the political group.

Building upon research from both political science and psychology, I begin by assessing past literature on political in-groups, group norms, and in-group violators. Established conceptualizations of these terms are discussed, as well as relevant research paradigms. After finding relevant gaps in the current literature, I consider what aspects make a norm violation more significant than others. Specifically, I examine how the severity of a norm contributes to an in-group member's responses, as well as how political identity strength and collective narcissism impact this relationship. Additionally, I assess relevant polls to find established group norms relating to policy issues for both Democrats and Republicans. Most relevant to this study, I share about the lack of agreement in the literature on how to predict reactions to in-group norm violations, sharing how this is most likely a result of diverging research paradigms. To test my hypotheses on responses to in-group norm violations, I constructed a survey paradigm that asks partisans to "look past" or "condemn" a high-status member of their in-group after committing a norm violation. Political in-group members must respond to an in-group violator committing group norm violations involving salient topics such as gun control, immigration, abortion, police

reform, and climate change. Through logistic regressions and correlational analyses, inconsistencies in in-group norm responses are estimated. Additionally, different thresholds of condemnation and excusal are determined for those in both the Democratic and Republican parties. A foundation for future research involving how partisans view in-group violators and violations against the in-group are displayed.

My analysis builds upon existing frameworks that the violator as well as the norm violation itself impact in-group members' responses. In broader contexts, this research reveals why some political candidates get a "pass" when committing acts of hypocrisy, while other in-group members receive ostracization or expulsion from the in-group. Additionally, I aim to dissect how established group norms, like loyalty and duty to the in-group, may impact political groups differently, and in turn, impact in-group member's responses to fellow members. The current study will also provide evidence of motivation to promote the in-group, without any indication of how this may affect the out-group, providing clarification on how in-group norms can be existent and prominent without immediate pressure from an out-group.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Researchers have sought to explain why in-group members excuse certain norm violations, while condemning others. There is agreement that status, severity of the transgression, and fusion to the in-group influence responses from in-group members. However, methodological differences create contrasting results on how these variables impact judgement. In this chapter, I explain how group norms are perceived and upheld by the in-group. Additionally, I share research on how group norm violations are perceived differently based on characteristics of an in-group member. Furthermore, I explain that past research has failed to consider issue salience, preference structures, and the unique dynamics of political groups, which contributes to the disagreement on the role status, severity of the transgression, and fusion to the group have on in-group judgments.

#### **Group Norms**

Group norms, the unspoken and unwritten rules that impact in-group members' behaviors and attitudes, are upheld and enforced by fellow in-group members (Turner, 1991). When an in-group member deviates from group norms and the "rules", group members will sanction or act to enforce those norms because it places the group's overall identity at risk, leading to perceived or real consequences for the group (Abrams et al., 2002; Abrams et al., 2000; Pinto et al., 2010). Groups maintain positive group identity through punishing, excusing, or hiding in-group norm violators to help maintain overall legitimacy (Marques et al., 1998).

Researchers agree that Democrats and Republicans enforce and conform to their in-group norms differently. Republicans are more likely to enforce loyalty and duty to their in-group, which contributes to conforming to group norms more often than Democrats (Cavazza & Mucchi-Faina, 2008; Graham et al., 2009). Additionally, Conservative individuals are more likely to accept and adhere to social norms, using them as a schema to guide behavior (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Furthermore, Democrats perceive fellow in-group members as less conformist, with an association of conformity to maintaining social order and the status quo (Feldman, 2003; Le Bon, 1895). Since social change is a value of Democratic individuals, maintaining social order and upholding the status quo are not significant or sought after norms for Democratic in-groups (Feldman, 2003; Le Bon, 1895). These contrasting perceptions on adhering to social and group norms contribute to Liberal individuals scoring higher on reactance and rebelliousness, while Conservative individuals scoring higher on conformity and obedience (Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1988; Jost et al., 2008; Sidanius, 1993; Wilson, 1973).

*H1: High severity norm violations will be condemned than low severity norm violations.*

*H2: Republicans are more loyal to their in-group, and therefore, Democrats will be more likely to condemn group norm violations in both the low and high conditions.*

### *Violations Specific to the In-group*

Research has established that group norms are specific to each group (Marques et al., 1998). In the limited studies that have examined norm violators within political in-groups, one norm violation has been used for both Democrat and Republican individuals. While it is acknowledged that group norms related to social issues differ between groups, researchers instead use economic and pragmatic violations that can relate to both political groups, creating a

gap in research related to social and moral violations (Ashokkumar et al., 2019; Bettache et al., 2019). For example, a commonly used norm violation relates to campaign finance violations and tax fraud (Ashokkumar et al., 2019). However, I argue that by differentiating group norms between Democrats and Republicans, the contrasting motivations to protect the in-group and also punish deviators will heighten.

### **In-Group Identity**

Social Identity Theory posits that an individual's sense of self is influenced by their membership in social groups (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel et al., 1979). Importantly, this relationship requires positive sentiment towards the in-group, and negative sentiment towards those in opposing groups (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel et al., 1979). However, scholars warn about assuming that members within a social group share the same commitment and feelings about their group (Sanchez & Vargas, 2016). Instead, variation of group identity strength and commitment must be acknowledged. The Social Identity Theory framework creates a foundation for why in-group members may react harshly to in-group transgressors, as social identities provide a positive sense of self-concept and in turn, individuals become motivated to maintain that positive sense of identity (Tajfel et al., 1979).

### *Collective Narcissism*

An important personality component related to group identity is collective narcissism, which is an independent measure that refers to an exaggerated belief about the superiority or greatness of an in-group, resulting from deep emotional investment (de Zavala et al., 2009). This

scale has remained valid and reliable after being tested in four different countries, as well as in three different languages (de Zavala et al., 2009). Those who are high in collective narcissism are likely to view their in-group with tremendous respect yet perceive that outsiders do not value the group sufficiently (de Zavala et al., 2009). Collective narcissism predicts both intergroup aggressiveness and prejudice, as well as right wing authoritarianism and blind patriotism (de Zavala et al., 2009). Important to this study, collective narcissism is related to heightened sensitivity to threats directed at the in-group's image, helping to explain the motivation to excuse an in-group violation to maintain group legitimacy, perceiving this treat to in-group image as more damaging than the norm violation itself (de Zavala et al., 2009).

#### *Support for Undemocratic Candidates*

An additional independent measure assessed was to capture support for undemocratic candidates, a scale adopted to measure an individual's willingness to falter on their opinions relating to democratic principles in exchange for better support of their political ideology, partisan loyalty, and policy preferences (Graham & Svobik, 2020). This scale uses undemocratic actions, such as not accepting election results and limiting free speech, to assess when democracy is prioritized by voters (Graham & Svobik, 2020). Preliminary results from a national sample concluded that only 10-13% of Americans will condemn and punish their preferred candidate for violating well-established democratic principles (Graham & Svobik, 2020) I seek to examine if group norms specific to a political party are more important to the in-group than the overall norm of supporting and maintaining democratic principles. While I have no specific hypothesis for both collective narcissism and support for undemocratic candidates, the literature shows them to be important covariates, and therefore they will be controlled for in the analyses.

## **Issue Salience**

In previously mentioned studies, issue salience related to the norm violations has not been considered (Abrams et al., 2013; Ashokkumar et al., 2019; Bettache et al., 2019; Shuman et al., 2018). For example, in a study that used a norm violation related to abusing a detained individual at Guantanamo Bay, it is assumed that this norm violation will remain constant among different political groups, and therefore Republicans and Democrats will view this violation similarly (Shuman et al., 2018). However, I argue that how important an issue is to the individual, as well as the proximity to an existing group norm upheld and honored by the in-group, will determine how an individual responds to the violation. For example, an individual that believes in rehabilitative justice might view this scenario as more offensive compared to an individual that values punitive justice. This distinction is significant because issues that are viewed as more important to an individual illicit a different response than non-important issues, as individuals tend to care more about issues they perceive as important. Considering issue salience as well as preference structures may lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the variation in judgement to norm violations.

*H3: Individuals who rate issues as “highly salient” will be less likely to excuse a violation related to that issue.*

## **Norm Violations and Group Identity**

Prior research shares that priming a group identity before asking an in-group member to respond to a norm violation committed by a fellow in-group member can increase the motivation

to achieve and maintain a positive in-group identity (Pinto et al., 2010). Individuals are more likely to create classifications of “us” and “them” when considerations to group membership are present. Without priming this identity, respondents were more likely to punish and condemn the in-group violator (Pinto et al., 2010).

Furthermore, research asserts that those who are strongly fused with their in-group or those with high in-group identity strength will respond to group norm violations differently when compared to those loosely fused with their in-group or those with low-identity in-group strength (Ashokkumar et al., 2019; Bettache et al., 2019; Shuman et al., 2018). Those with high in-group identity strength were influenced by reputational concerns when responding to a group norm violation committed by a fellow in-group member (Ashokkumar et al., 2019). Similarly, those with high in-group identity strength were more willing to act in unethical ways, such as destroying or tampering with evidence (Ashokkumar et al., 2019). Moreover, deviance is more common among people who weakly identify with their ingroups (e.g., Johnston & White, 2003; Terry & Hogg, 1996; Terry, Hogg, & White, 1999). With the distinction between low and high identity fusion to the in-group, it is apparent that high identifiers are more concerned with upholding the reputation of the in-group, perceiving the norm violation as a threat to group image and the current social order (Ashokkumar et al., 2019; Bettache et al., 2019; Shuman et al., 2018).

*H4: Those who are strongly fused with their political in-group will judge group-norm violations less severely than those who are weakly fused.*

*Status of the In-group Violator*

Since leaders generally have the greatest interest and influence on shaping and maintaining group norms, those in high status positions that violate group norms pose the greatest threat to the in-group (Reicher et al., 2005). Leaders are therefore considered as a “prototypical group member” and are perceived by fellow members to accurately communicate how the in-group should think, feel, and behave (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Low-status violations, such as a Republican Senator who advocates for a slightly higher federal minimum wage, may retain their prototypical categorization because their overall “likeness” to the in-group and dissimilarity to the outgroup remain present (Turner et al., 1987; Syfers et al., 2022). This classification of leaders leads to differences in treatment between low-status and high-status members of the in-group (Abrams et al., 2013).

Yet, research regarding the in-group responses to high-status leaders committing severe in-group violations show conflicting results. Some researchers suggest that a “transgression credit” is granted to high-status in-group members when a norm violation occurs, causing in-group members to respond less severely than if a low-status member committed the same transgression (Abrams et al., 2013). This “transgression credit” acts to protect the legitimacy of the group, with in-group members concluding that there are more negative outcomes while condemning a leader, instead opting to excuse or hide the action (Abrams et al., 2013). Contrasting this conclusion, research also suggests that there is an incentive to punish high-status transgressors more severely to maintain a positive group identity and set precedent for punishment for future norm deviants (Pinto et al., 2010). While these two studies previously mentioned have diverging conclusions, they both suggest that high-status in-group transgressors are judged differently among in-group members. Nevertheless, many aspects of this group

dynamic remain understudied. More specifically, the judgment of high-status norm violators in political in-groups remains unknown.

### **Norm Violation Severity**

Most literature has used harmless norm violations in their experimental designs, not accounting for how differences in the severity of a norm violation may impact judgment (Abrams et al., 2013; Ashokkumar et al., 2019; Bettache et al., 2019; Shuman et al., 2018). For example, if a Democrat didn't recycle, a low severity group norm violation related to environmentalism, this would assumably illicit a different response than a Democrat who accepted oil money during their campaign, a high severity violation. Through distinguishing between low and high in-group norm violations, differences in judgment can be explained more accurately.



## Chapter 3

### Data Collection and Methodology

#### Study Procedures

The data were collected through a survey, which asked participants to respond to different policy-related actions taken by their preferred 2024 presidential candidate. The sample for the survey is drawn from the Pennsylvania State University Psychology Department Subject Pool (SONA), a system where enrolled undergraduate students in introductory psychology classes participate in research for class credit. Participants under the age of 18 were excluded and given an alternative assignment. Assuming to have a small to medium effects size, our ideal sample was between 350-788 participants. With the individual as the unit of analysis, a quantitative survey was administered via Qualtrics to a total of 439 participants. Six respondents were excluded from the analyses due to not indicating a preferred presidential candidate, or completing the survey in under two minutes, which cannot be reasonably accomplished. From this sample, 54.7% of participants identified as Democrats, 33.3% identified as Republicans, and 11.9% identified as Independents based on the prompt: “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a?”. Additionally, our sample had a high number of female respondents, with 71.8% of participants identifying as female and 27.6% identifying as male. This is consistent with prior samples drawn from psychology departments. The sample was 70.2% White, 8.9% Asian, 8.2% Latino, and 6.4% Black, which is relatively consistent with the university average (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). The average participant was born in 2003 and is 20 years old. Prior to accessing the survey, participants provided informed consent. After completing the survey, participants were debriefed about scenarios from the survey relating to

fictional, hypothetical events. All procedures contributing to this work comply with the ethical standards of the relevant national and institutional committees on human subjects and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1968, as revised in 2008. Additionally, this study was approved by the Pennsylvania State University Institutional Review Board on 12/9/2022, with data collection starting 2/1/2023 and ending 2/16/2023 (IRB No. 00021513).

Respondents were informed they would be answering questions regarding their opinions related to potential 2024 presidential candidates. Four presidential candidates were given with two being Democrats (Joe Biden and Kamala Harris) and two Republican (Ron DeSantis and Donald Trump). These individuals were chosen as they were considered the frontrunners as of March 2023. Respondents were assigned the in-group norm violations based on their selected on preferred 2024 presidential candidate. For example, participants who preferred Joe Biden and Kamala Harris were given Democrat in-group norm violations, and participants who preferred Ron DeSantis and Donald Trump were given Republican in-group norm violations (no independent candidates were offered).

Respondents were asked to complete a task in which they had to “condemn” or “look past” a behavior committed by their preferred presidential candidate. This task used fake media reports that suggested their preferred presidential candidate violated a group norm related to five policy issues: abortion, police reformation, climate change, immigration, and gun control. Respondents were given a salience measure, asking how important each issue was to them, ranging from “very important” to “not important at all”. Each issue consisted of a low and high violation, with participants responding to both levels of the violation. In total, participants responded to ten group norm violations. Since group norms are specific to their prescribed group, participants who identified as Democrats or Republicans received slightly different norm

violations reflected each group's values. These norm violations were modelled from Gallup, a platform that researches American's preferences towards specific political and social issues (Gallup, 2022). Low severity group norm violations were less aggressive, and only minorly violated a group norm. Conversely, high severity group norm violations were aggressive, direct, and intentional, with the group norm understandably being violated.

To illicit a more natural response, the norm violations were phrased as "The media just reported" or "It was just announced", helping add legitimacy to each violation. Participants were also asked to explain, if any, actions or behaviors that would result in stopping support for their preferred candidate. See Table 1 for Democratic conditions. See Table 2 for Republican conditions.

**Table 1. Democrat Norm Violations**

<b>Democrat Norm Violations</b>	
<b>Policy Issue</b>	<b>Condition</b>
<b>Abortion- Low</b>	Recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions have brought the abortion issue back the individual states. Financial records show that [Politician] donated to a Pro-life campaign.
<b>Abortion- High</b>	Recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions have brought the abortion issue back to the individual states. The media has just revealed that [Politician] refused to support a 14-year-old who wanted an abortion.
<b>Gun Control-Low</b>	Gun control has become a major political issue. Paparazzi pictures show [Politician] has a second amendment bumper sticker on the back of their car that states, “Gun control means using both hands
<b>Gun Control-High</b>	Gun control has become a major political issue. A collection of recently released media photos show that [Politician] carries a concealed weapon at all times.
<b>Immigration- Low</b>	The U.S. is facing a crisis at the border. Previous debate transcripts reveal that [Politician] encouraged increasing the number of Immigration Customs Enforcement officers.
<b>Immigration- High</b>	The U.S. is facing a crisis at the border. During a town hall, media outlets reported that [Politician] told a reporter to “go back where they came from” and advocated for their deportation.
<b>Climate Change- Low</b>	Climate change is a major issue facing the world. [Politician] was caught throwing away garbage in a recycle-only trash can.
<b>Climate Change- High</b>	Climate change is a major issue facing the world. The Federal Election Commission just leaked that [Politician] accepted dark money for their campaign from oil companies.
<b>Police Reform- Low</b>	There is a major debate in the U.S. today on police reform. During a recent interview, [Politician] expressed that police reform is a “radical” solution to isolated incidents.
<b>Police Reform- High</b>	There is a major debate in the U.S. today on police reform. In their new policy platform, [Politician] proposed increasing the police’s budget, while defunding other community programs, such as supportive housing and after-school care.

**Table 2: Republican Norm Violations**

<b>Republican Norm Violations</b>	
<b>Policy Issue</b>	<b>Condition</b>
<b>Abortion- Low</b>	Recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions have brought the abortion issue back to the individual states. Financial records show that [Politician] donated to Planned Parenthood.
<b>Abortion- High</b>	Recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions have brought the abortion issue back to the individual states. Recent media reports provide evidence that [Politician] was having an extramarital affair, and encouraged their partner to get an abortion.
<b>Gun Control-Low</b>	Gun control has become a major political issue. Past voting records show that [Politician] voted in favor of universal background checks.
<b>Gun Control-High</b>	Gun control has become a major political issue. In a recent interview, [Politician] advocated and showed support for banning AR style rifles.
<b>Immigration- Low</b>	The U.S. is facing a crisis at the border. Yet, media reports prove that [Politician] voted against immigrant detention because it was "cruel" and advocated for better detainment conditions.
<b>Immigration- High</b>	The US is facing a crisis at the border. In a recent speech, [Politician] expressed support of "Sanctuary Cities", offering for illegal immigrants to reside in places within the U.S. without fear of local law enforcement.
<b>Climate Change- Low</b>	Climate change is a major issue in the country. During a recent appearance on a news network, [Politician] encouraged the public to "listen to the scientists" on climate change.
<b>Climate Change- High</b>	Climate change is a major issue in the country. The media has recently reported that [Politician] plans to support the Green New Deal.
<b>Police Reform- Low</b>	There is a major debate in the U.S. today on police reform. It was discovered that [Politician] voted against increasing policing budgets.
<b>Police Reform- High</b>	There is a major debate in the U.S. today on police reform. In a campaign speech, [Politician] suggested to fire police officers and hire more mental health specialists.

## Measures

The dependent variable is defection, derived from the response of either condemnation or excusal to each proposed in-group norm violation. This measure provides a direct, measurable reaction from an in-group member when a group norm is violated. The independent variables are measured through pre-established, tested scales and measures to include political fusion (Buhrmester et al., 2012), collective narcissism (de Zavala et al., 2009), sex, political party identification, and support for undemocratic candidates (Graham & Svobik, 2020) have significant relationships with in-group norm maintenance. This present study seeks to create a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between each of these independent variables and defection. After completing the original survey section regarding defection, participants were asked to complete questions related to each measure. Descriptive statistics for each measure are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics**

<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>					
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Sex	0.23	0.45	0	1	0=Female, 1=Male
Race	0.33	0.47	0	1	0= White, 1= Non-white
Fusion Scale	8.56	7.14	0	35	Lower= Weaker Fusion
Saliency-Abortion	0.81	0.4	0	1	0= Not Important, 1= Important
Saliency-Climate	0.7	0.46	0	1	0= Not Important, 1= Important
Saliency- Police	0.58	0.49	0	1	0= Not Important, 1= Important
Saliency- Immigration	0.61	0.49	0	1	0= Not Important, 1= Important
Saliency- Gun Control	0.76	0.43	0	1	0= Not Important, 1= Important
Collective Narcissism	13.22	7.76	0	40	Lower=Lower Collective Narcissism
Support for Undemocratic Candidate-Democrat	12.21	5.87	0	30	Lower=Less Likely Support Undemocratic Candidate
Support for Undemocratic Candidate-Republican	13.6	7.39	0	30	Lower= Less Likely Support Undemocratic Candidate

Political fusion or how one identifies with their political party, was measured using an adapted version of Gomez et al.'s (2011) Verbal Fusion Scale. The original scale assessed fusion with a country, yet the scale has been modified to capture fusion with political parties (Buhrmester et al., 2012). The Cronbach's alpha for this sample is .92, which indicates that the items tap into one discrete construct. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement on a 6-point scale, which stated remarks such as "I am one with my political party" and "My political party is me" (Buhrmester et al., 2012). Higher scores on this scale, which range from 0 to 35, indicate higher levels of fusion to the political party. Individuals who are highly fused to their group are more likely to internalize their political party's victories and defeats, as well as display more malleable boundaries between their political and personal identities (Buhrmester et al., 2012). Survey participants were asked about their fusion with a party before they evaluated the actions of their preferred candidate to help prime political group identities in advance of asking for responses to group norm violations, as this identification may impact how individual's judge these violations (Pinto et al., 2010). I sought through this measure to differentiate participants who were highly fused with their group from those who are just highly fused with their preferred candidate.

Additionally, I adapted the Collective Narcissism Scale, which originally states, "my group" at the end of each item, changing it to "the supporters of", followed by the preferred 2024 presidential candidate selected by the participant (de Zavala et al., 2009). One reason for this change is to classify supporters of the presidential candidate as the in-group, limiting confusion between supporters of the political party and supporters of just the candidate. Participants were



asked to respond to statements such as, “I will never be satisfied until [presidential candidate] supporters get the recognition they deserve” and “Not many people seem to fully understand the importance of [presidential candidate] supporters” ranking their agreement on a 6-point scale. The Cronbach’s alpha for this sample is .86. I adapted the scale to express, “the supporters of”, followed by the preferred 2024 presidential candidate selected by the participant. One reason for this change is to classify supporters of the presidential candidate as the in-group, limiting confusion between supporters of the political party and supporters of just the candidate. Participants were asked to respond to statements such as, “I will never be satisfied until [presidential candidate] supporters get the recognition they deserve” and “Not many people seem to fully understand the importance of [presidential candidate] supporters” ranking their agreement on a 6-point scale.

Democratic and Republican participants were given different variations of the Support for Undemocratic Candidates Scale, both with the same democratic principle violations, but modified to reflect their specific in-group being benefited (Graham & Svulik, 2020). The Cronbach’s alpha for this sample is .81 and .91 for Democrats and Republicans respectively. Participants were asked to rate their support for the candidate on a 7-point scale after learning about the undemocratic action. Thus, I use this scale to compare a participant’s willingness to excuse/condemn in-group norm violations, as well as their willingness to condemn/excuse their candidate’s undemocratic actions, that may result in an in-group victory (Graham & Svulik, 2020).

### *Demographic Controls*

Demographic questions were asked prior to items relating to the dependent and independent variables. Sex, age, race, were included in the analyses. Since the survey was dispersed to college students in introductory psychology classes, education is constant. Sex is dichotomous (1=male) and (0=female), with a heavy skew towards female respondents. Additionally, race is dichotomous (1=non-white) and (0=white). The age of respondents is continuous (mean=20, range 19-47). If participants did not respond to a question items, their response was coded as missing and not used in the analyses.

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### **Analytical Approach**

To explore the relationship between in-group norm violations and defection, I conduct several different analyses. First, I test if both the low and high in-group norm violation conditions have good discriminant validity via a paired t-test. Next, using a difference of means test, I measure the differences among Democrats and Republicans condemnation frequencies, examining patterns in responses. Similarly, a difference of means test is used to determine differences in defection among respondents who indicated a policy issue as salient. Lastly, I run a series of logistic regressions to test the hypotheses regarding which variables (political fusion, collective narcissism, issue salience, support for undemocratic candidates, and demographic controls) predict defection. The dependent variable for my analyses is response to the in-group norm violation, with respondents given the response choice of either excusal or condemnation. This dichotomous response choice requires a logistic regression for analysis.

#### *Norm Violation Conditions*

To test my first hypothesis, I examine if respondents condemned the high severity norm violation condition more than the low severity norm violation condition. Using a paired t-test, I compare the low and high condition means for each policy issue. For the Democrat conditions, the low severity condition was excused more than the high severity condition for abortion,

immigration, climate change, and police reform (Table 4,  $p < .01$ ). This provides support for the hypothesis that the severity of the norm violation matters for voter support. However, for the issue of gun control, the low severity condition was condemned more than the high severity condition. This may be a result of the language used in the condition, as it might be perceived as more offensive than intended. All further analyses on gun control norms violations for Democratic participants are therefore suggestive. For the Republican conditions, the low severity condition was excused more than the high severity condition for all policy issues signaling the measures are suitable (Table 4,  $p < .01$ ).

**Table 4: Low and High Violation Conditions**

<b>Norm Violation Conditions (0=Look Past, 1=Condemn)</b>					
<b>Condition</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Correlation</b>	<b>p</b>
Abortion-Low (D)	0.65	170	0.48		
Abortion-High (D)	0.87	225	0.47	0.28	<.001
Abortion-Low (R)	0.34	60	0.34		
Abortion-High (R)	0.49	87	0.5	0.23	<.001
Climate Change-Low (D)	0.3	77	0.46		
Climate Change-High (D)	0.85	219	0.4	0.14	<.001
Climate Change-Low (R)	0.19	34	0.36		
Climate Change-High (R)	0.31	54	0.46	0.49	<.001
Immigration-Low (D)	0.47	123	0.5		
Immigration-High (D)	0.92	239	0.45	0.17	<.001
Immigration-Low (R)	0.28	50	0.27		
Immigration-High (R)	0.44	78	0.5	0.35	<.001
Police Reform-Low (D)	0.68	176	0.47		
Police Reform-High (D)	0.84	218	0.5	0.36	<.001
Police Reform-Low (R)	0.44	78	0.37		
Police Reform-High (R)	0.55	97	0.5	0.33	0.01
Gun Control-Low (D)	0.61	158	0.49		
Gun Control-High (D)	0.44	114	0.45	0.45	<.001
Gun Control-Low (R)	0.28	49	0.5		
Gun Control-High (R)	0.37	66	0.48	0.57	0.002

*Democrat and Republican Condemnation*

Next, I test the hypothesis that Democrats condemn violations more frequently than Republicans, which will hold true for both low and high conditions. Using a difference of means test, I compare the means of condemnation for each policy issue (Table 5). Overall, Democrats were more likely to condemn both low and high severity norm violation when compared to Republicans. This was held constant for each policy issue. Therefore, Democrats are harsher towards in-group norm violators than Republicans, opting for condemnation of both low and severe acts, while Republicans opt for excusal.

**Table 5: Democrat and Republican Norm Violation Response Means**

<b>Difference of Means: Condemnation (0=Look Past, 1=Condemn)</b>				
<b>Condition</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>	<b>p</b>
Abortion-Low (D)	0.65	170	0.48	
Abortion-Low (R)	0.34	60	0.47	<.001
Abortion-High (D)	0.87	225	0.34	
Abortion-High (R)	0.49	87	0.5	<.001
Climate Change-Low (D)	0.3	77	0.46	
Climate Change-Low (R)	0.19	34	0.4	0.013
Climate Change-High (D)	0.85	219	0.36	
Climate Change-High (R)	0.31	54	0.46	<.001
Immigration-Low (D)	0.47	123	0.5	
Immigration-Low (R)	0.28	50	0.45	<.001
Immigration-High (D)	0.92	239	0.27	
Immigration-High (R)	0.44	78	0.5	<.001
Police Reform-Low (D)	0.68	176	0.47	
Police Reform-Low (R)	0.44	78	0.5	<.001
Police Reform-High (D)	0.84	218	0.37	
Police Reform-High (R)	0.55	97	0.5	<.001
Gun Control-Low (D)	0.61	158	0.49	
Gun Control-Low (R)	0.28	49	0.45	<.001
Gun Control-High (D)	0.44	114	0.5	
Gun Control-High (R)	0.37	66	0.48	0.158

*Saliency*

Next, I analyze hypothesis three- that issue saliency matters. This is done by testing if those who rate policy issues as “highly salient”, or “important” will be less likely to excuse a violation related to that issue. I start by dichotomizing saliency as 0=not important, and 1=important. Then, I use a difference of means test to examine participant responses. Among both Democrats and Republicans, the importance of issue saliency varied greatly by policy issue and by the severity of the norm violation. For Democrats, saliency was significant for both the low and high group norm violations related to abortion and police reform (Table 6). Additionally, saliency was significant for Democrats in the high severity condition related to climate change, and low severity conditions related to immigration and gun control. Overall, in 7 out of 10 conditions, issue saliency was significant for Democrats. Conversely, for Republicans, issue saliency was not significant among any of the policy issues for any of the high and low conditions (Table 6). Simply put, Republicans appear indifferent in their support for their candidate based on the importance of specific issues to them.



**Table 6: Difference of Means- Salience**

<b>Difference of Means: Salience and Condition</b>							
	<b>0= Not Important</b>			<b>1= Important</b>			
	Mean	N	Standard Deviation	Mean	N	Standard Deviation	p
Abortion-Low (D)	0.33		0.48	0.69		0.46	<.001
Abortion-High (D)	0.46	24	0.51	0.91	236	0.29	<.001
Abortion-Low (R)	0.25		0.44	0.37		0.49	0.12
Abortion-High (R)	0.42	59	0.5	0.52	118	0.5	0.25
Climate Change-Low (D)	0.31		0.47	0.3		0.46	0.82
Climate Change-High (D)	0.53	45	0.5	0.91	214	0.29	<.001
Climate Change-Low (R)	0.22		0.42	0.16		0.37	0.3
Climate Change-High (R)	0.34	87	0.48	0.27	89	0.45	0.33
Immigration-Low (D)	0.28		0.45	0.55		0.5	<.001
Immigration-High (D)	0.89	76	0.31	0.93	184	0.26	0.35
Immigration-Low (R)	0.26		0.44	0.31		0.46	0.5
Immigration-High (R)	0.45	95	0.5	0.43	81	0.5	0.77
Police Reform-Low (D)	0.51		0.5	0.74		0.44	<.001
Police Reform-High (D)	0.76	71	0.43	0.87	188	0.33	0.03
Police Reform-Low (R)	0.41		0.49	0.48		0.5	0.42
Police Reform-High (R)	0.53	111	0.5	0.57	65	0.5	0.63
Gun Control-Low (D)	0.29		0.46	0.66		0.48	<.001
Gun Control-High (D)	0.38	34	0.49	0.45	226	0.5	0.48
Gun Control-Low (R)	0.21		0.41	0.3		0.46	0.17
Gun Control-High (R)	0.37	71	0.49	0.38	105	0.49	0.84

### *What Predicts Condemnation After a Norm Violation?*

To examine potential predictors of condemnation, I utilized logistic regressions to examine 1) the difference between respondents who were lowly and highly fused with their in-group, 2) the difference between respondents who rated an issue as important or non-important to them, 3) the difference between those low and high in collective narcissism, and 4) the difference between those who support or don't support undemocratic candidates. The dependent variable in each regression is defection, separated by party-affiliation and policy issue, with independent variables and controls included in the analyses.

Examining how political fusion impacted violation responses, political fusion was only predictive in one condition, low severity issues relating to gun control for Democrats (Table 7). Political fusion was not predictive for any Republican conditions or policy issues (Table 8). As previously mentioned, this one exception might be caused by the unintentional offensive language in the low severity condition. Overall, political fusion was not a significant predictor of condemnation. That is, how much one sees themselves as an extension of their party, has little role in their acceptance of a norm violation.

Similarly, the two other independent variables, collective narcissism and support for undemocratic candidates are overall not significant predictors of condemnation. Collective narcissism is not significant for any condition or policy issues (Table 7; Table 8). Additionally, support for undemocratic candidates is only significant among Democrats in low severity conditions relating to immigration and gun control. Overall, neither of these measures proved to be a significant predictors of in-group responses to norm violations.

Analyzing relevant demographic controls, sex and race were only significant in a limited number of conditions. Sex is a significant predictor of condemnation among Democrats in low

severity conditions related to abortion and police reform, and in the high severity condition relating to immigration (Table 7). Sex is not a significant predictor for any Republican condition or policy issue (Table 8). Similarly, race is a significant predictor of condemnation among Democrats in both low and high severity conditions related to abortion, low severity conditions relating to police reform, and high severity conditions related to immigration and gun control. Race is not a significant predictor for any Republican condition or policy issue (Table 8). Neither sex nor race acted as a consistent predictor of condemnation for both Republicans and Democrats.

Overall, the demographic and independent measures tested do not act as reliable and significant predictors of condemnation. As previously mentioned, the only seemingly reliable predictor is salience, which was a predictor among Democrats in 7/10 conditions, but not in any Republican conditions. Additionally, the low  $R^2$  for each regression indicates that no model predicted defection well, as they explained roughly .49%-3% of the variance. Moreover, this shows that different predictors are needed to better explain defection.

**Table 7: Logistic Regression- Democrat Conditions**

<b>Logistic Regression- Democrat Conditions</b>										
	<b>Abortion Low</b>	<b>Abortion High</b>	<b>Climate Low</b>	<b>Climate High</b>	<b>Immig. Low</b>	<b>Immig. High</b>	<b>Police Low</b>	<b>Police High</b>	<b>Gun Low</b>	<b>Gun High</b>
<b>Sex</b>	0.04	0.78	0.32	0.84	0.67	0.01	0.01	0.53	0.7	0.19
<b>Race- White</b>	0.01	0.01	0.85	0.09	0.12	<.001	0.04	0.72	0.2	0.04
<b>Race- Black</b>	0.01	0.22	0.47	0.81	0.32	0.37	0.1	0.56	0.65	0.01
<b>Salience</b>	<.001	<.001	0.95	<.001	<.001	0.21	<.001	0.04	<.001	0.54
<b>Politician</b>	0.11	0.74	0.96	0.27	0.25	0.38	0.84	0.06	0.66	0.03
<b>Political Fusion</b>	0.33	0.98	0.14	0.25	0.84	0.14	0.7	0.93	<.001	0.06
<b>Collective Narcissism</b>	0.08	0.82	0.93	0.16	0.41	0.51	0.46	0.08	0.17	0.36
<b>Undem Support</b>	0.52	0.16	0.1	0.65	0.05	0.66	0.48	0.23	0.05	0.15
<b>B</b>	0.26	0.44	0.23	0.51	0.11	0.73	0.43	0.82	0.07	0.22
<b>R^2</b>	0.13	0.18	0.17	0.18	0.11	0.1	0.11	0.07	0.14	0.08
<b>S.E.</b>	0.46	0.31	0.46	0.34	0.48	0.27	0.45	0.36	0.46	0.49
<b>p</b>	<.001	<.001	0.89	<.001	<.001	0.003	<.001	0.06	<.001	0.02

Table 8: Logistic Regression- Republican Conditions

Logistic Regression- Republican Conditions										
	Abortion Low	Abortion High	Climate Low	Climate High	Immig. Low	Immig. High	Police Low	Police High	Gun Control Low	Gun Control High
<b>Sex</b>	0.21	0.33	0.74	0.34	0.33	0.81	0.96	0.41	0.18	0.97
<b>Race- White</b>	0.34	0.38	0.36	0.62	0.72	0.75	0.28	0.45	0.42	0.77
<b>Race- Black</b>	0.29	0.65	0.65	0.34	0.58	0.31	0.55	0.51	0.6	0.52
<b>Salience</b>	0.56	0.69	0.42	0.75	0.7	0.59	0.43	0.82	0.65	0.85
<b>Politician</b>	0.91	0.82	0.33	0.25	0.07	0.66	0.98	0.67	0.43	0.34
<b>Political Fusion</b>	0.4	0.96	0.58	0.72	0.73	0.77	0.92	0.39	0.75	0.32
<b>Collective Narcissism</b>	0.28	0.23	0.48	0.98	0.08	0.65	0.71	0.63	0.46	0.79
<b>Udem Support</b>	0.44	0.13	0.4	0.6	0.94	0.9	0.97	0.73	0.49	0.96
<b>B</b>	0.38	0.65	0.16	0.27	0.27	0.47	0.3	0.31	0.22	0.29
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.07	0.05	0.07	0.03	0.08	0.01	0.02	0.05	0.06	0.03
<b>S.E.</b>	0.47	0.5	0.4	0.47	0.44	0.51	0.51	0.5	0.44	0.49
<b>p</b>	0.26	0.5	0.28	0.8	0.14	0.99	0.94	0.53	0.33	0.81

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

Through this thesis, I aimed to build upon existing research and explore the relationship between political in-group norm violations and perceptions of these transgressions. Specifically, I explore excusal and condemnation of policy related norm violations, and what may predict subsequent judgment from the in-group. After testing the validity of the low and high in-group norm violation conditions, I analyzed independent and demographic measures hypothesized to predict violation responses. My analyses reveal that while it is difficult to predict what causes condemnation or excusal, predicting the response outcome proves not as complicated.

Establishing a new research paradigm through a survey structure that includes preference structures, policy related violations, and variation in the severity of norm violations, some differences among in-group responses are explained. Consistent with hypothesis one, Republicans excused the low severity condition more than the high severity condition for all policy issues. Democrats excused the low severity condition more than the high severity condition for 4/5 of the policy issues. Holding constant for both Democrats and Republicans, this finding suggests that contrasting literature regarding responses to norm violations may be a result of solely testing low or high severity transgressions. For stimuli only consisting of low severity violations, response results may be skewed towards excusal, and for high severity conditions, results may be skewed towards condemnation. Additionally, this proves that norm violations do matter to the individual, and they are willing to excuse some actions and condemn others.

Additionally, consistent with hypothesis two, Democrats condemned group norm violations more than Republicans for both low and high severity conditions. Regardless of policy issue, Republicans excused in-group violations more than their Democrat counterparts. Consistent with prior research, this suggests that Republicans are more loyal to their in-group and preferred candidate regardless of the severity of a hypocritical action. On the other hand, Democrats are more willing to condemn a violator, even if the offense is low, hinting that they hold their candidates to a higher moral and ethical standard. While Republicans opt to protect the in-group and look past norm violations to maintain group status, Democrats opt to condemn norm violations in order to protect the standards established by the group. This finding suggests that competing group norms may impact Republicans differently than Democrats. Further research should examine the heightened influence of loyalty to Republican individuals, and how this impacts group norm violation responses and judgment.

The impact of salience on violation response had mostly insignificant or inconsistent results at best. Personal issue salience proved only significant in limited conditions and policy issues and only for Democrats. For Democrats, salience was only significant in 7/10 conditions. Conversely, for Republicans, salience was not significant among the policy issues for both the high and low conditions. So, for Republicans, regardless of if a policy issue had high personal salience, the motivation of loyalty to the in-group and to their candidate outweighed this policy preference. The influence of policy-related preference structures proved to be different among Republicans and Democrats. Contrasting hypothesis three, it might be more impactful to examine why salience was not significant in any Republican condition for all policy issues. For example, what is the extent to which a Republican will retain support for a candidate, even if the candidate outwardly expresses contrasting moral and economic viewpoints? Most importantly,

even without the immediate threat of an out-group, Republicans value maintaining in-group status over punishing in-group violators.

Other independent measures used, such as political fusion, support for undemocratic candidates, and collective narcissism were not significantly or reliably predictive of violation response. This finding suggests that it is difficult to predict what causes in-group violation condemnation or excusal, despite being able to assume the response outcome. As mentioned previously, one can assume that Democrats will condemn violations more than Republicans, yet not understand what independent measures may predict this result. Overall, norm violations do matter, yet partisans differ on the extent to which they matter.

### *Limitations*

This study consists of several limitations that may have impacted results. First, the sample of the study is limited to current college students at the Pennsylvania State University, and participant collection was confined to students in introductory psychology classes. Additionally, my sample had a significant skew of female participants, with roughly 72% identifying as female. Therefore, the surveyed respondents are not representative of the larger population. Another possible limitation results from the lack of statistical significance from the measured independent variables, as this leaves a gap in understanding the predictors of norm violation responses. Lastly, the dependent variable conditions were not tested prior to this initial survey, with their external validity and reliability needing further investigation.

The present thesis assists in bridging gaps in current literature, as well as establishing a foundation for future investigation into predictors of in-group responses to norm violations. Future studies can integrate severity conditions, preference structures, and politically relevant

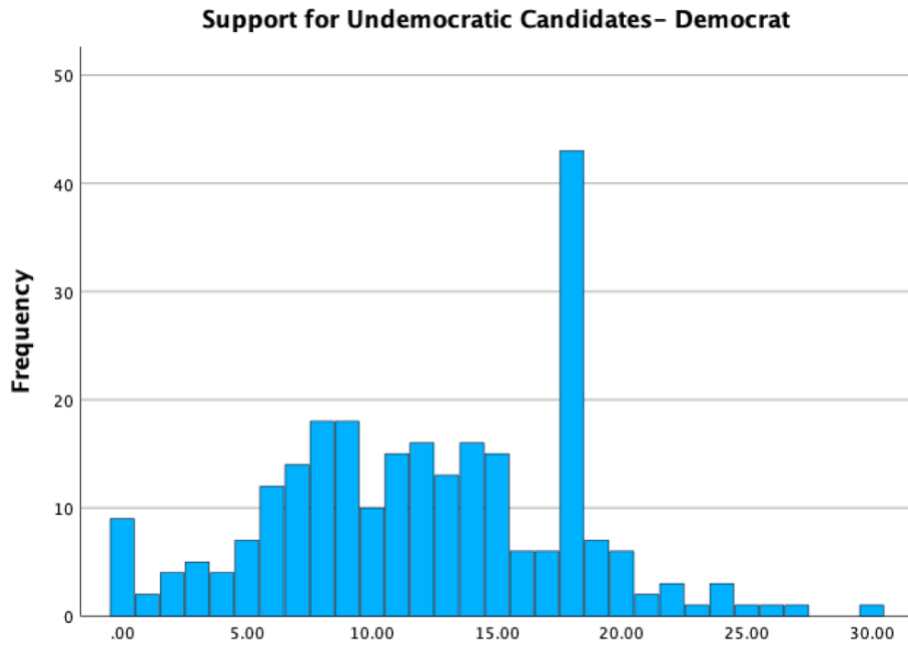
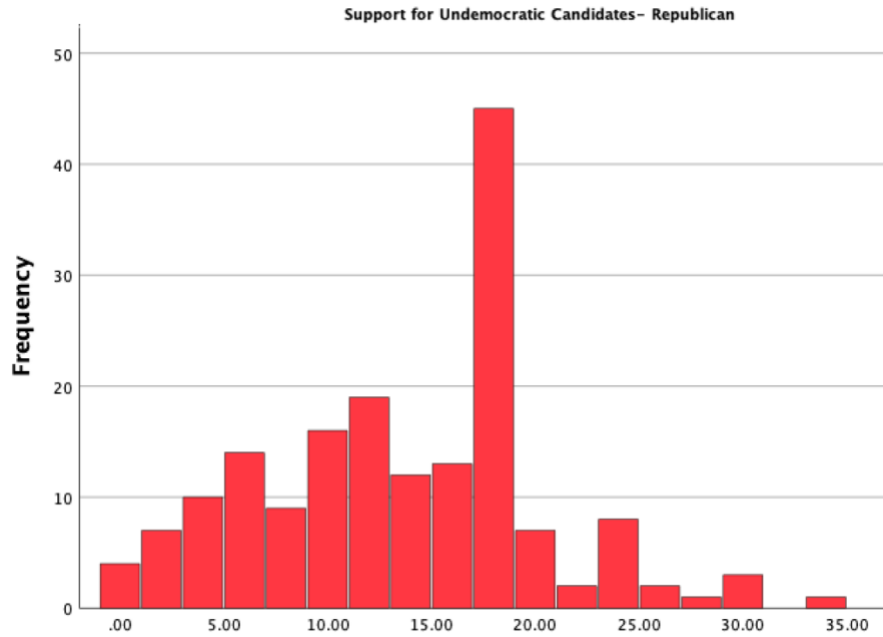


stimuli into their surveys to illicit more comprehensive, realistic responses to norm violations. Specifically, researchers can limit skews in their results towards condemnation or excusal that may result from not considering the impact of severity. Further research can continue to examine significant predictors of in-group response, testing different covariates to better understand the cause of condemnation or excusal. Additionally, future studies may seek a more comprehensive understanding of differences in preestablished group norms, specifically Republicans' duty and loyalty to their in-group, which may impact judgement on if condemnation is worse than the nature of violation itself.

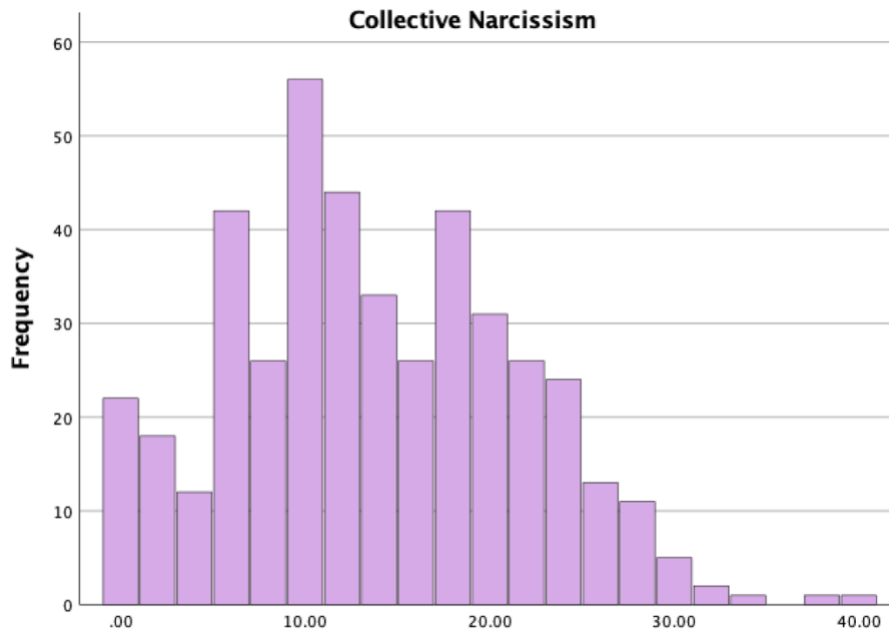
# Appendix A

## Distribution Responses for Independent Measures

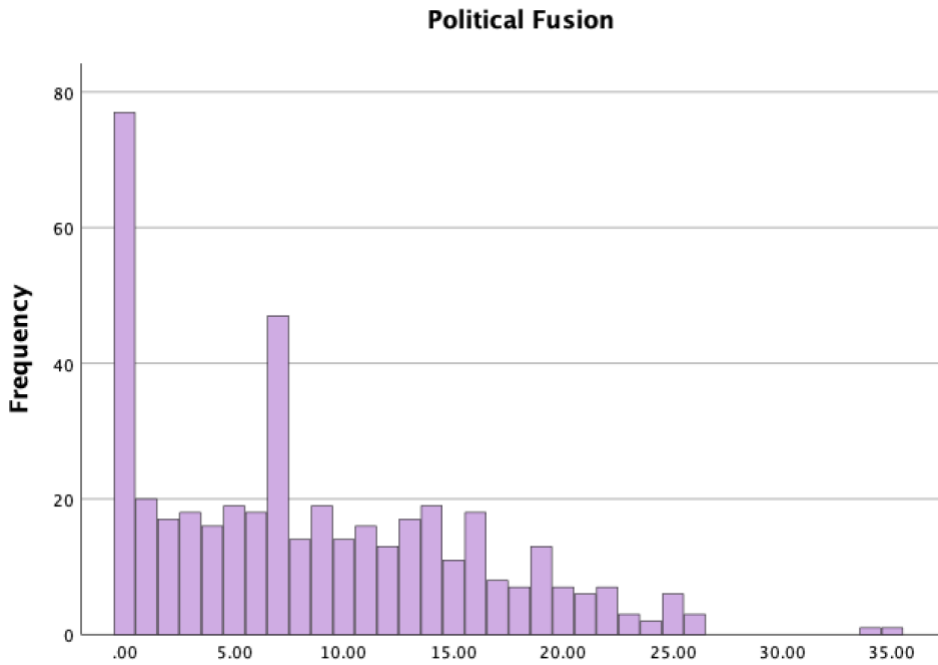
### Factor 1: Support for Undemocratic Candidates



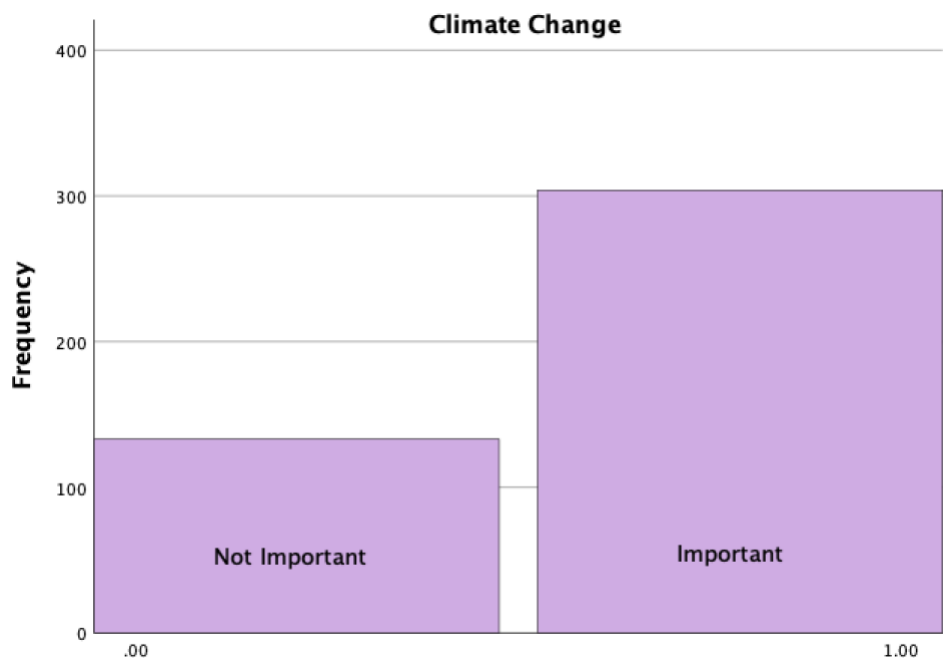
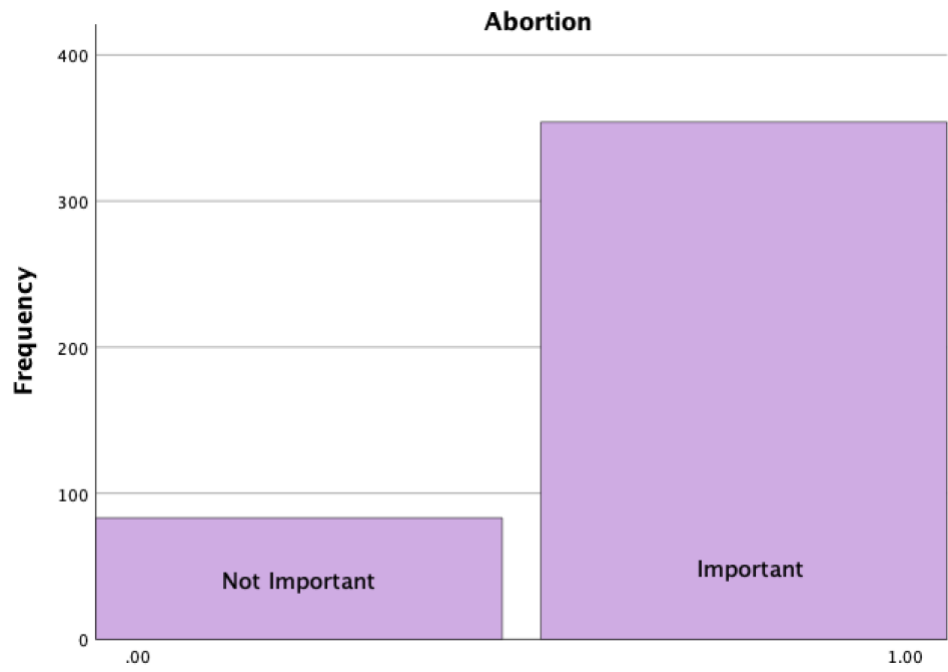
### Factor 2: Collective Narcissism

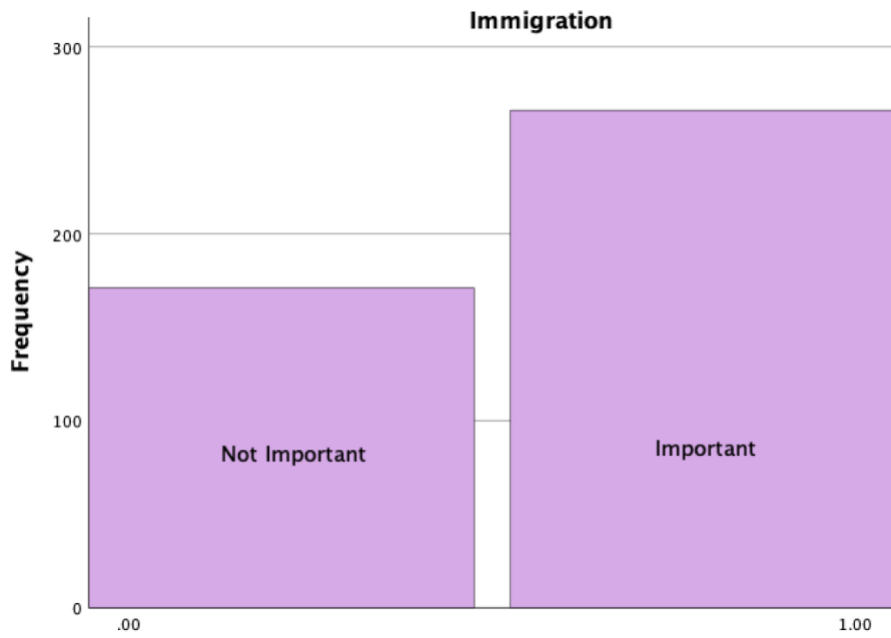
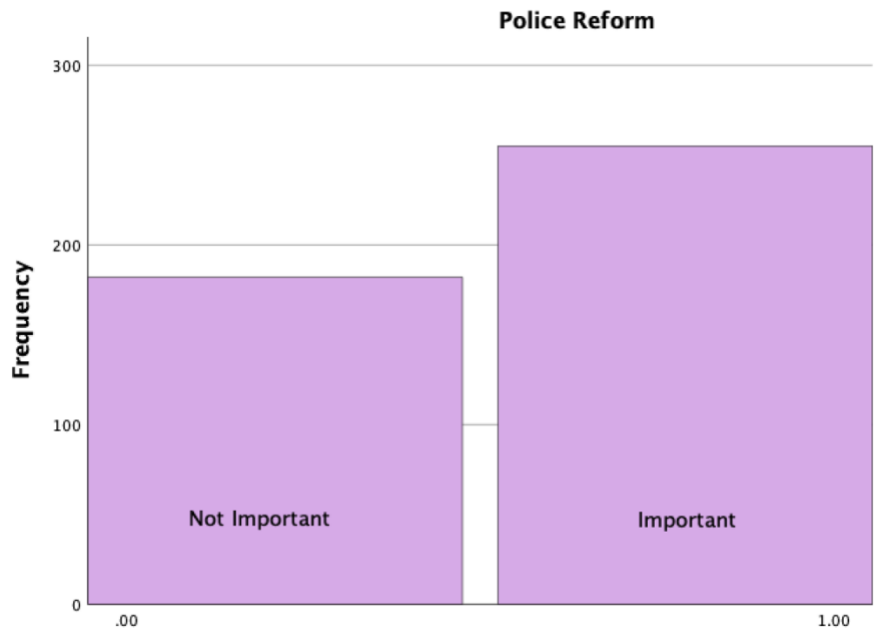


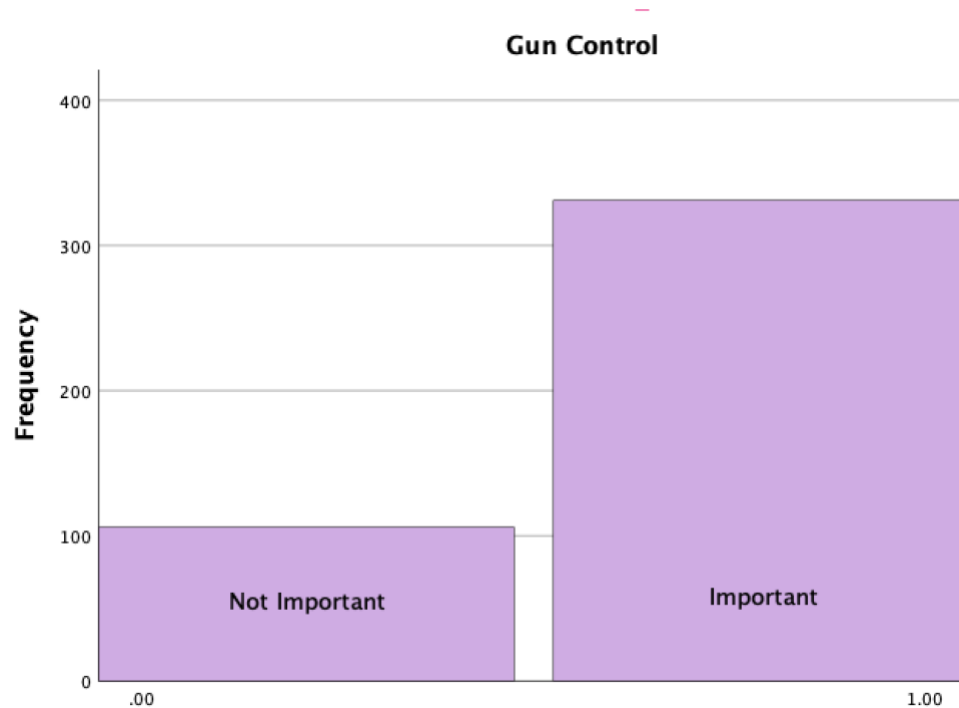
### Factor 3: Political Fusion



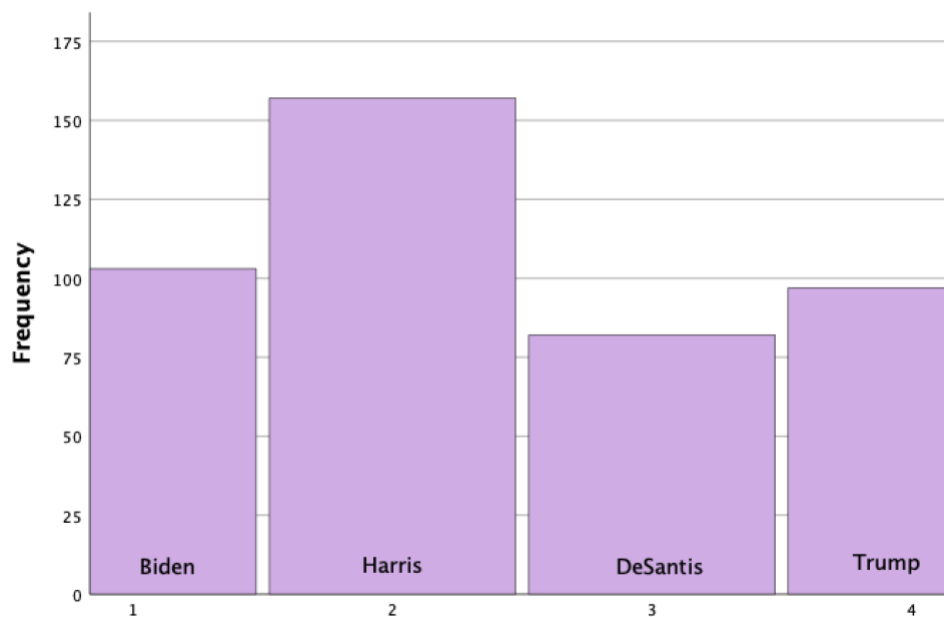
**Factor 4: Salience**







**Factor 5: Preferred 2024 Presidential Candidate**



**Below are the four most likely candidates for President in 2024. Of these, who are you most likely to vote for in the 2024 Presidential Election?**

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## ACADEMIC VITA OF MACKENZIE FLANDERS

MackenzieSFlanders@gmail.com

### EDUCATION

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**The Pennsylvania State University: Schreyer Honors College** **University Park, PA**  
*Bachelor of Arts in Political Science* *May 2023*  
*Bachelor of Science in Psychology: Business Option*  
*Honors: Political Science*

### WORK EXPERIENCE

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**Expedia Group** **Seattle, WA**  
*People, Technology, and Operations Intern* *May 2022-Aug 2022*

- Prioritized Human-Centered Design while creating Learning and Development events for the Legal and Finance teams.
- Analyzed the employee audience to determine gender, level, location, and function statistics, then presented to stakeholders.
- Managed an internal research project that interviewed employees to gain insights on sentiments regarding workplace policies.

**The Pennsylvania State University, Dept. of Psychology** **University Park, PA**  
*Research Assistant, Empathy and Moral Psychology Laboratory* *Sep 2019-present*

- Conduct literature reviews on recent studies relating to empathy and political polarization to assist with building experiments.
- Maintain a secure and confidential data log to abide by the Institutional Review Board's standards.
- Run participants through experiments while obtaining informed consent and/or debriefing about possible manipulations.

**The Shut Down Berks Coalition** **State College, PA**  
*Intern* *Jun 2020-Aug 2020*

- Acted as a press contact for news media, State Representatives, Berks County Commissioners, and Governor Tom Wolf.
- Organized and promoted community town halls, projection actions, protests, and meetings with elected representatives.
- Managed the Twitter, Instagram, Gmail, and Facebook accounts, posting original content on each platform daily.

**Associated Realty Property Management** **State College, PA**  
*Part-time Accounting Assistant* *Sep 2017 – Aug 2019*

- Managed and sorted invoices from over 50 vendors to ensure billing statements were accurate and sent to the correct owner.
- Organized past due bills using Excel to calculate added late fees, as well as record vendors who were not paying on time.

- Communicated weekly with management and vendors regarding future, present, and past due billing disputes.

*Rental Office Secretary*

*Jun 2016 – Aug 2016*

- Copied leases for tenants to ensure that they understand the policies and procedures that they legally had to abide by.
- Prepared over 3,000 keys and condensed move-in materials for new tenants, providing support through the move-in process.
- Utilized oral and written communication skills to assist current and future tenants with any questions or concerns.

## **LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE**

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### **Liberal Arts Undergraduate Council**

**University Park, PA**

*President*

*Aug 2021 – present*

- Delegate tasks to members of the Executive Council and Associate Council, ensuring all tasks are being completed correctly.
- Host Liberal Arts events, as well as Sexual Harassment trainings to all student leaders within the Liberal Arts College
- Maintain communication with the Dean, Liberal Arts Students, and Liberal Arts faculty to assist with representing students.

### **Phi Alpha Delta: Pre-Law Chapter**

**University Park, PA**

*Membership Vice President and Founding Member*

*May 2021 – present*

- Develop and implement a new recruitment technique that successfully engaged over one hundred new members.
- Supervise five officers and coordinate weekly meetings to delegate tasks to each officer and their respective committees.
- Act as the Public Relations Officer and submit written articles of chapter interest to the Executive Office for publication.

### **Liberal Arts Ambassador**

**University Park, PA**

*General Body Member*

*Jan 2021 – present*

- Assist the Penn State College of Liberal Arts through engagement with prospective and accepted students and alumni.
- Foster positive relations between the College of Liberal Arts and the University at-large through meaningful service.
- Encourage the development of leadership skills and individual responsibility through dedication and model leadership.

## **AWARDS**

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Costello Award: Honorable Mention

*Mar 2023*

Political Science Board of Visitors Scholarship

*Oct 2022*

Nick Petnick Trustee Scholarship

*Sep 2019- Sep 2022*

American Red Cross Leaders Save Lives Scholarship

*May 2019*

American Red Cross Outstanding Youth Services Volunteer Award

*Apr 2019*