

Partisan Cheating & Competing:
The Effect of Partisan Competition on Tolerance of Election Cheating
Erik Clarke
Ohio State University

Author Note

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Abstract

American government takes the approach that highly competitive practices, such as elections, are the best way to represent the will of voters. However, in an era of hyper-partisanship and high negative out-party affect, it is worth examining the negative effects that salient partisan competition has on people's attitudes. Specifically, I find that when partisans perceive elections to be "neck and neck" (i.e., partisan competition is salient), they tolerate co-partisan electoral cheating while harshly enforcing rules when their opposing political party engages in the same election cheating.

Using an original survey experiment, I investigate the effects of salient partisan competition on people's tolerance of election cheating and endorsement of political norms and values of fairness. After manipulating salience of partisan competition, I measured participants' tolerance of election cheating that fosters an electoral advantage to either (randomly assigned) their in-party or out-party as well as measuring participants' endorsement of democratic values of fairness. Although partisans selectively tolerate election cheating depending on which party benefits when partisan competition is not salient, I find that greater salience of partisan competition increases participants' tolerance of election cheating when their in-party stands to benefit and decreases participants' tolerance of election cheating when their out-party stands to benefit. Conversely, I do not find that salience of partisan competition affects people's endorsement of political values of fairness despite this differing effect of tolerance of cheating by party benefit.

I discuss these findings in the context of democratic government and the connection to modern partisan animus. These results have important implications regarding democratic health as partisans are not willing to apply democratic norms of fairness under competitive circumstances. Last, I conclude with a discussion of democratic governmental structure and how changes representative democracies could reduce partisan conflict and double standards.

Keywords: Partisan competition, election cheating, democratic values, polarization, experiments, political psychology.

Introduction

Political competition is an ever-present force in America. People are inescapably bombarded with politically charged media messaging emphasizing a fierce battle partisan groups. This media messaging seems increasingly partisan, and political campaigning is beginning earlier and earlier every year. The mechanisms of American government itself seem to place high value on political competition (Rahat, Hazan, & Katz, 2008) Yet, American politics scholars have long accepted this valuing of political competition, and the unfortunate effects it has, because it is supposedly the best way to aggregate mass preferences and represent citizens in government (Schattschneider, 1960).

But, focusing on political competition as the best way to represent citizens may unintentionally affect citizens in democratically harmful ways such as lowering support for democratic values of fairness and adherence to political rules. Currently, no studies have examined the indirect effect of how political competition affects support for these foundational values that democratic systems need to thrive. Depending on how severely political competition affects democratic stability, political and democratic theorists may need to reexamine the nominative role of political competition in issues of electoral representation.

In this study, I investigate the effect of partisan competition on partisans' adherence to political values and rules that underpin democracy. Using an experimental approach, I manipulated the salience of partisan competition by presenting participants with either a simulated news article about a competitive political election or a simulated news article about a non-competitive political election of a co-partisan. Then, I measured participants' tolerance of breaking political rules in scenarios of election cheating as well as measure support for political values of fairness directly.

I find that high salience of partisan competition, compared to low salience of partisan competition, increases participants' tolerance of election cheating when their political in-party stands electorally benefit and also decreases participants' tolerance of election cheating

when their political out-party stands to electorally benefit. Although participants' tolerance of cheating was affected by partisan competition, their support for democratic values of fairness was not affected by salience of partisan competition. In the following sections, I review literature relevant to partisan and group competition as well as democratic values of fairness and adherence to political rules. As there appears to be little to no research specifically on the salience of partisan competition, I connect the literature about district competitiveness and group conflict theory to coherently frame this study. I also discuss the literature of political values of fairness and adherence to rules that seems to have fallen by the wayside in recent years and how it is still relevant to today's political environment. Then, I summarize the methodology and review analyses used in this study. Last, I conclude with important implications for this study and how future research can address remaining questions. Given that highly competitive elections increase people's double-standard of tolerance of cheating, generalized findings of these study have clear implications for how democratic structure affects democratic stability.

Group Competition and Politics

Looking beyond the United States, it is clear there is no single way to design a democratic government (Kaiser, 1997; Schmidt, 2002). The specific design of government, along with choices made by political parties, set the values by which the mechanisms of government represent their citizens (Rahat et al., 2008). The United States places the importance of competition above other governmental values such as participation and representation (Rahat et al., 2008). This emphasis on political competition as the norm or ideal state of government permeates even political academic work. Although there are benefits to valuing political competition above other potential values, the academic exploration of drawbacks and consequences is underdeveloped. It is these under considered effects and assumptions that are worth an investigation into the consequences of the U.S. placing high value on political competition.

As referenced above, the focus on competition between political groups, namely

political parties, has a long history of study in American politics. On a foundational level, Downs' (1957) median voter theorem approaches government decision making from the assumption of political competition. He specially references that the actions of democratic government are a function of both expected vote choice by voters and the strategy of the opposition party or parties. It is this assumption, along with the competition by parties for the median voter, that inherently links Downs' (1957) model of democratic government to the assumption of political competition.

It would be an understatement to write that Downs' (1957) theory, which ties democratic government and political competition together, has been enormously impactful in the field of American politics. Classic works in public opinion (Converse, 1964; Zaller 1992) and legislative politics (Cox & McCubbins, 2005; Poole & Rosenthal, 2000) all incorporate Downs' (1957) theory in one way or another. However, this theory that democracy and political competition are tied together is not the only democratic theory to draw from.

Instead, Buchler (2005) advances a theory of political representation and district non-competition. In his theoretical paper, Buchler (2005) compares models of competitive elections, in which the electoral districts in a state are designed to be maximally competitive, to models of non-competitive elections, in which the electoral districts in a state are designed to be minimally competitive by clustering ideologically homogeneous people together. Buchler (2005) finds that his non-competitive model outperforms his competitive model on minimizing legislator deviation from district median voter preferences, maximizing similarity between constituents and representatives, minimizing distance between the state's median voter and the legislatures' median voter, and maximizing the similarity of the distribution of preferences in the legislature to the distribution of preferences in the electorate.

Overall, Buchler (2005) makes a compelling argument that political competition, at least at the state level, is not necessarily the best way to achieve important representative goals. It is instead specifically designed non-competitive districts that maximize representation. However, Buchler's (2005) method is entirely theoretical and suffers from several

limitations (notably that ideologically similar people cannot always be drawn into the same district). While his work is theoretical, other empirical works support the conclusion of Buchler's (2005) findings.

Reexamining Downs (1957) in the context of Gingrich Revolution in 1994, it is not clear that his median voter theorem can reliably account for election outcomes. Under normal assumptions of the median voter theorem, a shift towards more extreme preferences should result in decreased support for those preferences (as this moves away from the preferences the median voter desires). However, the Gingrich Revolution was the first in a series of instances in which moving to a more extreme policy bundle actually increased support and electoral success. Fiorina (1999) questions this relationship of support and policy centrism and reflects on the possible explanations (some of which are Downs' own theoretical nuances) as to the apparent breakdown of the standard median voter theorem. Overall, Fiorina (1999) theorized that new assumptions must be made or the median voter theorem altered for Downs' (1957) theory to explain mass election outcomes.

This is not to say that the median voter theorem always gets preference aggregation wrong. Giving evidence to Buchler's (2005) conclusion, Gerber and Lewis (2004) find a unique relationship between the preferences of legislators and district homogeneity. Although generally legislators' preferences are not constrained by median voter preferences in their congressional districts, legislators representing homogeneous districts do show constrained preferences (Gerber & Lewis, 2004).

Using specially drawn majority-minority districts as a prominent example of homogeneous districts, it is clear that the benefits of homogeneous districts extend beyond simply constraining legislator preferences. Being in one of these specialized districts both increases knowledge about constituents' elected representative and contact with their elected representative (Banducci, Donovan, & Karp, 2004). Further, the creation of majority-minority districts increases turnout and people who would benefit from being in a homogeneous district even prefer it over a non-homogeneous district (Barreto, Segura, & Woods, 2004; Tate, 2003).

Contrary to these benefits of homogeneous majority-minority districts, there are researchers who conclude that the creation of majority-minority districts hurts the ability of the minority's party to advance its goals in government (Cameron, Epstein, & O'Halloran, 1996; Lubin, 1999; Petrocik & Desposato, 1998). However, this appears to only be the case in creating these homogeneous districts around constraints such as geography. Thus, negative effects of creating a homogeneous district likely would not be a concern if it was the goal of all parties to create homogeneous districts (Shotts, 2001). Overall, the use of homogeneous districts created to minimize political competition has clear benefits for both optimized representation and the people living in these districts.

Given the extent of research on political competition, it is clear that there is foundational evidence supporting benefits of non-competitive practices. The general approach of American government and American politics scholarship assumes that placing high value on competitive practices is the best method for government to represent its citizens. However, there are democratically good benefits to practices that place higher value on alternative considerations to competition such as participation and representation.

Competition and Behavior

On a behavioral level, group competition has a long history of study in both political science, psychology, and even other disciplines. Realistic group conflict theory (Campbell, 1965; Sherif, 1966) explains the social structure that creates antagonistic behavior between groups. In this theory, conflict is created when groups exist in a competitive structure over conflicting group interests. Conflict over zero-sum resources also is a notable feature in realistic group conflict theory and serves as an important catalyst for conflict. In these settings, in-group identification is strengthened and various forms of out-group hostility are increased (Maxwell-Smith et al., 2016).

Another broad theory, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986), further theorizes intergroup conflict. Tajfel and Turner (1979 & 1986) highlight one other important aspects of group competition. They specify that competitive action can be taken on behalf

of one's group rather than solely for one's own interest. This means that people do not have to see direct benefit to themselves to engage in intergroup competitive action as long as they see benefit to their group by engaging in this action.

Taken together, realistic group conflict theory and social identity theory paint an almost perfect picture of how competitive elections contribute to intergroup conflict. Elections, and further the political influence they represent, are zero sum competitions. People engage in behavior, such as voting, campaigning, and donating money, on behalf of their political group. People do not gain direct benefits from these actions, but instead do so to further their political group's agenda. Within this competitive structure, people become strongly attached to their political party and dislike, or even loath, their opposing political party (Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). This is more than idle theorizing however, as salient group competition has been shown to have an effect on people's affect, behavior, and cognition (Holtz & Miller, 2001; Judd & Park, 1988; Sommer, 1995).

As will be discussed in the next section, political tolerance is an important component of political fairness and respect for political rules that are foundational to democratic systems. Group competition also affects tolerance of politically related out-groups. People's positive or negative attitudes towards immigrants are driven in part by the perceived economic threat immigrants pose (Jackson & Esses, 2000). Further, for some groups of people, such as those high in Social Dominance Orientation, negative attitudes towards out-groups is specifically mediated by degree of competitiveness felt towards that out-group (Duckitt, 2006). Although attitudes are certainly an important component of political life, it is behavior instead that has the most potential consequences for democratic systems.

The finding about group competition most influential on this current study is about the effect of salient group competition on adherence to rules. Using an experimental approach, Hildreth, Gino, and Bazerman (2015) examined how manipulating salient group competition affected people's self-reported performance on a number-based puzzle. When group competition was made salient, participants with high levels of in-group identification and loyalty self-

reported better performance on their puzzle task than their actual performance.

Further research has yet to investigate this finding outside of the laboratory and about political groups such as political parties and their partisans. In a political context, the implications of this finding about selective adherence to rules could be extremely consequential to democratic government. Combined with other broad theories regarding group conflict, partisan competition has the capacity to encourage Democrats and Republicans to win resources (e.g., influence through elections) for their group at any cost including disregarding rules and principles of fairness. As support for political values of fairness and adherence to rules is a cornerstone of democracy, an influence that undermines this support requires further study. In the following section, I review how consequential support these political values are.

Political Values of Fairness and Respect for Rules

Even from the first studies of democratic systems, the values of fairness and respect for rules and norms these systems possess were theorized to be an integral part of a democratic system. De Tocqueville (1840, translation 2003) wrote that it was the customs and attitudes of the American people towards democracy that made the American democratic system possible. Specifically, he thought that too many other political theorists put their faith in rule of law alone and discounted the importance of the mass attitudes that contributed to democratic stability.

Over a century later, political science gained interest in exploring the connection between democracy and cultural values of fairness and respect for rules. Griffith, Plamenatz, and Pennock (1956) specifically identified “respect for rules and procedures” as a cornerstone of cultural beliefs necessary for successful democracy. Further, they claimed that democracies that lack the respect for rules and procedures must create further “procedural restraints” to safeguard democracy.

As one of the first researchers to empirically measure support for these fundamental democratic values, McClosky (1964) examined popular and elite support for these values

by asking people questions about minority rights, due process, and freedom of speech. These “rules of the game” questions measured support for core democratic values. The willingness to violate these values was comparatively large for most people with an average of 32.8% of the general electorate endorsing items that violated these democratic values. For the purposes of comparison, only an average of 21.1% of elites endorsed the same democratic value violating questions. Although this is not an overwhelming amount of people who are willing endorse breaking values of fairness and political rules and norms, almost one third of the general electorate supporting these items is not something to casually dismiss. After all, more recent scholars support both de Tocqueville’s theory regarding the importance of these values to democracy and McClosky’s findings about the general endorsement of these values.

A contemporary review of the literature on political values of fairness and adherence to rules supports conclusions that these values are important to democracy and that support for them is not universal. Sullivan and Transue (1999) report that McClosky’s (1964) findings were replicated by other studies. More importantly, these findings furthered the theoretical development of the importance of rules and norms to democratic systems. Political elites, who have higher levels of these democratic values, can safeguard democracy from the citizens who lack or do not understand these values (Sullivan & Transue, 1999). This does not mean that mass public’s support for these values is irrelevant. In examining both Russia’s and South Africa’s democratic development, Gibson (1996) concluded that political norms of tolerance are crucially connected to the development of proper democratic systems. Overall, public support for a set of important democratic values about fairness and respect for rules is directly linked to health and continuation of a successful democracy.

Hypotheses

In this study, I investigate possible consequences of salient partisan competition. First, I examine the political generalizability of Hildreth et al. (2015) by seeing the effect of salient partisan competition on questions regarding participant tolerance of rule breaking

in fictional electoral situations. Elections are the most directly applicable political zero-sum contest in which rules can be broken (e.g., voter fraud) or followed (e.g., strict ID requirements to vote that disadvantage a group) to provide an direct advantage in an electoral contest. Therefore, I use a series of questions about fictional instances of electoral cheating to examine how salience of partisan competition affects equal tolerance of cheating depending on what group would benefit from rule breaking. Specifically, I examine how likely people are to tolerate election cheating that would benefit an in-group or out-group when partisan competition is salient and when partisan competition is not salient.

In line with other general findings about in-group favoritism and partisan in-party preferences, I expect people to exhibit a partisan “double standard” on their tolerance of cheating depending on which political party benefits from said cheating.

Hypothesis 1: People will tolerate election cheating more when it benefits their in-party, compared to when it benefits the out-party.

I also expect salience of partisan competition to affect people’s tolerance of electoral cheating in partisan motivated directions. With partisan competition salient, I expect people’s tolerance of electoral cheating to change based on what benefits their in-party and harms their out-party. Further, I expect an interactive effect of salience of partisan competition and whether people’s in-party or out-party benefits from electoral cheating on people’s tolerance of electoral cheating. Salient partisan completion should increase the difference between people’s tolerance of electoral cheating depending on whether their in-party or out-party benefits from electoral cheating.

Hypothesis 2a: When partisan competition is salient, compared to when partisan competition is not salient, people will tolerate election cheating more when it benefits their in-party and will tolerate election cheating less when it benefits their out-party.

Hypothesis 2b: Salient partisan competition will magnify the difference in tolerance of election cheating when the in-party benefits compared to when the out-party benefits.

Last, I also examine the effect of salient partisan competition on people’s support

for political values of fairness and respect for rules. Similar to how message framing can undermine or support political tolerance (Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997), salient political competition could affect people's endorsement of political values that underpin democratic systems.

Hypothesis 3: Salient partisan competition will reduce support for political values of fairness and respect for political rules.

Method

Participants

For this study, I recruited 653 participants from Lucid Theorem during January-February 2020 and October-November 2020. This sample included more participants who identified as a Democrat (339) than participants who identified as a Republican (253). For Democratic participants, 54.3% reported they were *strong Democrats*, 23.3% reported they were *not very strong Democrats*, and 22.4% reported they were independents but considered themselves *closer to the Democratic party*. For Republican participants, 51.8% reported they were *strong Republicans*, 28.1% reported they were *not very strong Republican*, and 20.1% reported they were independents but considered themselves *closer towards the Republican party*. The remaining participants (61) did not identify as either a Democrat or Republican. Participants who identified as political independents are not included in analysis that focuses on political group membership as they do not fit into a clear political group, and do not have a clear political out-group, in the same way as Democrats and Republicans.

The median participant age was 49 with ages ranging from 18 years old to 95 years old and a standard deviation of 16.8 years. Most participants self-identified as only White (81.6%) with the next largest racial/ethnic groups being Black or African American (9.8%) and Hispanic or Latino (3.4%). Most participants were female (54.5%). The modal participant education level was obtaining a Bachelor's degree (25.4%) with the next most frequent

education levels being attending some college but no degree (23.3%) and having a high school diploma or equivalent (17.0%). The modal participant family household income per year category was between \$20,001-40,000 (23.9%) with the next most frequent income categories being \$40,001-60,000 per year (16.2%) and \$0-20,000 per year (14.7%). Most participants reported owning their current place of residence (65.1%), many reported renting their current place of residence (29.6%), and a minority reported other circumstances regarding their place of residence (4.7%). All participants were from the United States.

Although a sample from Lucid is not a truly random sample, participants recruited by Lucid are adequately representative of the general population and are more representative than other common sources of convenient samples such as college students (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Casler, Bickel, & Hackett, 2013; Coppock & McClellan, 2019; Hauser & Schwarz, 2016). Participants recruited from Lucid are slightly more educated than the U.S. overall (by a mean of 0.7 years of education), more White than the U.S. average, are slightly younger than the U.S. average, have slightly higher levels of political interest than representative samples of the U.S., and are less extroverted than representative samples of the U.S. (Coppock & McClellan, 2019). However, Participants recruited from Lucid are generally more socio-economically and racially/ethnically diverse than college samples and other common internet samples (Buhrmester et al., 2011; Casler et al., 2013; Coppock & McClellan, 2019). Further, the Lucid sample pool does not significantly differ from the U.S. population at large in terms of mean income, sex, geographical region of the U.S., political party identification, voter registration, several personality characteristics, and more (Coppock & McClellan, 2019). Last, participants recruited from online platforms such as Lucid are more attentive to online survey than than participants from traditional convenient sampling pools (Casler et al., 2013; Hauser & Schwarz, 2016).

Procedure

Participants were first asked about their political party affiliation, their political ideology, and were given a series of distractor questions with two embedded attention screening

questions. For political party affiliation, participants were presented with two branching questions. They were first asked if they identified as a *Democrat*, a *Republican*, or an *independent/other*. Then partisan participants were asked how strongly they considered themselves a member of that partisan group and independent participants were asked if thought of themselves as being closer to one political party or to neither political party. For self-identified political ideology, participants were asked to rate themselves separately on social issues and economic issues. participants were asked to place themselves using a 7-point scale ranging from *extremely conservative* to *extremely liberal* with a *moderate* midpoint options and additional *haven't thought about it* response option. For analyses, these two questions were averaged in to a single ideology scale. For the attention check questions, one attention screening question asked participants to pick a certain news source out of a list instead of responding with which news sources they reliably used (Berinsky, Margolis, & Sances, 2014). The other question asked participants their attitudes on U.S. rail infrastructure and participants were informed to respond that the U.S. government should use eminent domain to size necessary land. Participants who failed either attention screening questions were not used in this study.

Then, participants were randomly assigned to either the competitive group or the non-competitive group. Participants were asked to read an excerpt from a (fictional) newspaper's online article. Participants in the competitive group read an article designed to prime partisan competition (i.e., competition prime). This article stated how important the 2020 U.S. House of Representatives elections will be. This article also gave an example of the competitiveness of the 2020 House elections by highlighting a political candidate of the participants' own party in an election that is predicted to be contentious and consequential. This article was tailored to participants' political affiliation, so Democrat and Republican participants received slightly different articles. Independent participants randomly received either a Democrat or Republican tailored article.

Participants in the non-competitive group read a similar article designed to prime

non-competition (i.e., non-competition prime). This article stated that Americans are not divided on political issues and tend to agree about most political topics. This article also gave an example by highlighting a political candidate of the participants' own party in a non-competitive (i.e., safe) 2020 House election and explaining that constituents like and approve of this representative. Like the article for the competitive group, this article was tailored to participants' political affiliation. Images of the competition primes and non-competition primes can be found in the appendix.

In a literature review, Maxwell-Smith et al. (2016) supports the effectiveness of similar primes of group competition. They conclude that group competitive behavior is both a trait and state that can be experimentally manipulated. Overall, researchers find that these two types primes induced states of competitive processing and non-competitive processing. As will be discussed in my Results section, my primes did induce differences in perceptions of political competitiveness.

After reading the partisan competition prime or non-competition prime, participants answered two questions designed to determine their perception of partisan competition. The first question asked participants about how competitive they believe U.S. Congressional elections are on a 6-point Likert-type scale with response options ranging from *not competitive* to *extremely competitive*. The second question asked participants about important it is to them that their political party wins the 2020 election also on a 6-point Likert-type scale with response options ranging from *not important* to *extremely important*. Independent participants were randomly presented with either the Democrat or Republican version of this question.

Next, participants answered two sets of questions designed to measure their willingness to tolerate election cheating to the benefit of their in-party/out-party and support for political values of fairness. For questions about election cheating, participants were randomly assigned to answer these five questions focused on members of their political in-party (e.g., Democrats answering questions about other Democrats) or members of their political out-

party (e.g., Democrats answering questions about Republicans). All participants were presented with the same set of questions measuring their support for political values of fairness and respect for rules.

In the set of election cheating questions, participants were given a series of five Likert-type questions asking how participants would respond to fictional scenarios about the 2020 election. All question response options were anchored with support for following the law on one end and agreement with breaking the law to the electoral benefit of their in-party/out-party (randomly assigned) on the other end of the scale. The topics of these novel questions were if participants would report an in-party/out-party acquaintance to election officials for committing voter fraud, voting for an in-party/out-party politician who attempted to misinform out-party/in-party voters about the date of an election, allowing a majority in-party/out-party county to count votes places after a state mandated cut off time, turning away an in-party/out-party acquaintance from a polling place for lack of appropriate voter ID, and voting using a friend's voter registration. Participants could respond to these questions with a 7-point scale that included a midpoint option. The full text of these questions can be found in the appendix.

The second set of questions about political values of fairness and respect for rules were the twelve “rules of the game” questions by McClosky (1964). These twelve items are designed to measure participants' belief in “fundamental values” and belief in procedural rules of democratic government. This scale includes items such as “the majority has the right to abolish the minorities if it wants to” and “politicians have to cut a few corners if they are going to get anywhere”. Participants could respond to each question with a 7-point scale with responses ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* with a midpoint option.

Participants also completed a five-item political knowledge scale. Some of these questions were standard civics type questions such as “Whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not? Is it the President, the Congress, or the Supreme Court?”

Other political knowledge questions were focused on current events and international political knowledge such as “Xi Jinping is currently the political leader of which country?” Participants were given four multiple choice response options to choose from (with the exception of two questions with *Democrats* and *Republicans* response options) plus a *don’t know* option. From these items, I created a political knowledge scale with possible scores ranging from 0 (no questions correct) to 5 (all questions correct). The average political knowledge score was 2.98 with a standard deviation of 1.57.

Last, participants completed several standard demographics questions. These questions included self-reporting age, sex, and belonging to self-identified racial groups. Participants also self-reported their highest level of education from several categories, their household level of income, and whether they rented or owned their current place of residence. Then, participants were debriefed about the purpose of this study and informed about their competition of this study.

Results

Manipulation Check

As intended, my experimental treatments caused a significant difference in participants’ perceptions of how competitive U.S. elections are but did not cause a significant difference in participants’ importance that their political party wins elections. Participants who received the partisan competition prime’s perception of competitiveness in U.S. Congressional elections ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.12$) was significantly greater than participants who received the non-competition prime’s perception of competitiveness in U.S. Congressional elections ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.40$), $t(586.85) = -7.51$, $p < .001$, $d = -0.59$, 95% CI $[-0.95, -0.56]$. However, there was not a significant difference between partisans’ belief that winning the 2020 election was important between those who received the partisan competition prime ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.64$) and those who received the non-competition prime ($M = 4.66$, $SD = 1.73$), $t(570.05) = -0.93$, $p = .353$, $d = -0.08$, 95% CI $[-0.40,$

0.14].

Tolerance of Election Cheating

To analyze participants' responses about the five electoral cheating questions, I conducted a series of difference in mean tests and linear regressions. For these analyses, I collapsed the group that would benefit from cheating for each question across political affiliations into in-party (e.g., Democrats being asked about other Democrats) and out-party (e.g., Democrats being asked about Republicans). Then, item responses were added into a linear scale with low scores indicating support for following the law and high scores indicating agreement with breaking the law to benefit a participant's in-party/out-party.

As these five electoral cheating questions are novel, and thus have yet to be validated, I conducted a series of Cronbach's alpha reliability analyses. In ideal circumstances, the reliability of this scale would have been tested on a separate sample of participants who received no experimental manipulation and who responded to other questions to determine convergent and discriminant validity. Unfortunately, this was not feasible given resource limitations and this present study being focused on experimental effects rather than scale creation. To be as conservative as possible in testing the underlying construct of an additive scale comprised of these items, I conducted these reliability analyses independently for the four possible combination of group target (i.e., in-party would benefit from electoral cheating and out-party would benefit from electoral cheating) and type of treatment received (i.e., partisan competition prime and non-competition prime).

All four initial reliability analyses indicated that the Cronbach's alpha would be improved by dropping electoral cheating question three (i.e., willingness to count votes cast on election day past cut-off time in heavily partisan county). These initial reliability analyses are found in Table 7 and Table 8 located in the appendix. The reliability analyses for the remaining four items is located in Table 1 for the in-party would benefit from cheating items and Table 2 for the out-party would benefit from cheating items.

Three conclusion from these reliability analysis are clear. First, the alpha levels indicate

Table 1: Conbach's Alpha Scores for Election Cheating In-party Target Questions

	<i>Non-Competition Prime</i>				<i>Partisan Competition Prime</i>			
	<i>Item Statistics:</i>		<i>Reliability if Dropped:</i>		<i>Item Statistics:</i>		<i>Reliability if Dropped:</i>	
	Raw α	Standardized α	Raw α	Standardized α	Raw α	Standardized α	Raw α	test
EC1	0.62	0.60	0.62	0.61	0.41	0.41	0.59	0.57
EC2	0.66	0.67	0.55	0.55	0.50	0.55	0.43	0.42
EC4	0.75	0.75	0.45	0.46	0.79	0.77	0.05	0.06
EC5	0.70	0.70	0.52	0.52	0.71	0.69	0.22	0.22
Raw α	0.61				0.43			
Standardized α	0.61				0.42			
Observations	128				153			

Table 2: Conbach's Alpha Scores for Election Cheating Out-party Target Questions

	<i>Non-Competition Prime</i>				<i>Partisan Competition Prime</i>			
	<i>Item Statistics:</i>		<i>Reliability if Dropped:</i>		<i>Item Statistics:</i>		<i>Reliability if Dropped:</i>	
	Raw α	Standardized α	Raw α	Standardized α	Raw α	Standardized α	Raw α	test
EC1	0.49	0.48	0.48	0.45	0.58	0.56	0.26	0.24
EC2	0.41	0.51	0.41	0.41	0.35	0.43	0.42	0.42
EC4	0.72	0.70	0.11	0.11	0.67	0.65	0.11	0.09
EC5	0.71	0.66	0.16	0.18	0.62	0.41	0.16	0.14
Raw α	0.38				0.31			
Standardized α	0.37				0.29			
Observations	149				162			

acceptable levels of internal consistency given scale constraints. Cronbach's alpha coefficients are biased towards being smaller the fewer number of items a scale is comprised of (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). So although the alpha for the in-party questions ($\alpha = .61$) would be classified as questionable under ideal circumstances, with only four items in this scale this is an acceptable alpha. Likewise, the alpha for the out-party questions ($\alpha = .38$) would be classified as poor or unacceptable under ideal circumstances but in this scale is at least questionable or acceptable (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). While this is less than ideal for out-party electoral cheating questions, these items should have enough internal consistency to be used in analyses. The difference in internal consistency between the in-party and out-party electoral cheating is the subject of my next conclusion.

Second, the Cronbach's alpha scores are substantially lower for the out-party would benefit from cheating items compared to the in-party would benefit from cheating items. With a difference in raw alpha scores of over .2, the in-party questions, compared to the out-party questions, have statistically significantly more internal consistency ($F(127,148) = 1.590, p = .007$) (Diedenhofen, 2016). However there is not a statistically significant difference between the alpha coefficients based on group target for participants who received the partisan competition prime ($F(152,161) = 1.211, p = .232$) (Diedenhofen, 2016). Therefore, I conclude that the electoral cheating questions make a more consistent scale when used for participants choosing between benefiting their in-party by rule breaking or following rules compared to using identical questions for participants choosing between benefiting their out-party by rule breaking or following rules. This present study does not have the capacity though convergent and discriminate validity to delve in to why this difference exists but future research could seek to answer this question. For the purpose of this present study, I conclude that, while there is adequate reliability for both in-party and out-party electoral cheating questions, I can be more confident in the validity of results using the in-party would benefit from cheating items compared to the validity of results using the out-party would benefit from cheating items. These results include treatment effects, which I

next turn to in regards to differences in scale reliability.

Third, the Cronbach's alpha scores for items when participants received the partisan competition prime, compared to those who received the non-competition prime, is lower. This difference is only statistically significant for the in-party would benefit from cheating items ($F(127,152) = 1.462, p = .025$) and not statistically significant for the out-party would benefit from cheating items ($F(148,161) = 1.113, p = .506$) (Diedenhofen, 2016). These differences are confounded by, and possibly a result of, the differences in primes participants receive. For this reason, I do not believe any differences between these two group is problematic for the validity of any statistical inferences. While the statistically significant difference for the in-party items by primes but not the out-party items by prime indicates *something*, this could be a stronger treatment effect for in-party items (i.e., in which the treatment effects the four items in unequal ways thus reducing the alpha) than the out-party items. Alternatively, the treatment effect of priming partisan competition could be more equal across out-party items compared to an unequal treatment effect across in-party items. Further, this difference could even be the result of a floor effect as the alpha for the in-party items has more "room" to decrease compared to the alpha for the out-party items. The exact meaning of the differences in alpha coefficients by prime is unclear, but confounding by the treatments themselves indicates no substantial problems for causal analyses using treatment effects.

Therefore, the final electoral cheating scale using in this analysis is comprised of four Likert-type items each with a 7-point response scale. The electoral cheating scale scores range from the lowest possible score of 0 (i.e., maximum *disagreement* with election cheating to benefit in-party/out-party in every individual item) to the highest possible score of 24 (i.e., maximum *agreement* with election cheating to benefit in-party/out-party in every individual item). All analyses on individual question items also follow these endpoints.

To analyze the effects of of priming partisan competition and party that would benefit from cheating on tolerance of election cheating, I conducted two linear regression which

are reported in Table 3. I first conducted a “restricted model” which only contained the dummy variables for receiving the partisan competition prime, having the out-party benefit from electoral cheating in the electoral cheating questions, and the interaction of these two variables. Then, I conducted a “full model” which contained several covariates in addition to the dummy variables from the restricted model. Of these covariates, political knowledge measures participants’ total amount of correct answers to the 5-item political knowledge scale. Political ideological extremity measures participants’ self-identified political ideology with 0 being *moderate* and 3 being *extremely conservative/liberal* (i.e., a Democrat with a positive score indicates she/he identified as a liberal whereas a Republican with a positive score indicates she/he identified as a conservative). Male and non-White are both dummy demographic variables indicating self-identified status as either a male or a non-White racial/ethnic group. Although the full model, compared to the restricted model, does statistically significantly account for more variance of the electoral cheating scale according to a model comparison ANOVA ($F(6) = 3.7341, p = .001$), the substantive difference is small with a residual sum of squares decrease of 3.8% (restricted model RSS is 12050, compared to the full model RSS of 11589).

In both models, I find substantive and interpretative effects for priming partisan competition, the party that would benefit from cheating, and the interaction of these dummy variables. To further explain the comparisons between these groups, I conducted a series of regression contrasts for the restricted and full models as seen in Table 4. This series of contrasts compares the relevant comparisons of if participants received the partisan competition prime or the non-competition prime and if participants answers the electoral cheating questions about their in-party benefiting from cheating and about their out-party benefiting from cheating. As the differences between these two contrast analyses is slight (in the full model, the difference between partisan competition prime and out-party target & non-competition prime and out-party target changes from statically significant at the 0.95 level to marginally significant), I focus my analysis on the contracts of the restricted

Table 3: Electoral Cheating Regression Models

	<i>Dependent variable: Electoral Cheating Scale</i>	
	Restricted Model	Full Model
Constant	7.672** (0.408)	7.216** (0.610)
Partisan Competition Prime	1.354* (0.553)	1.293* (0.556)
Out-Party Benefit from Cheating	-2.115** (0.556)	-1.599** (0.605)
Partisan Competition Prime* Out-Party Benefit from Cheating	-2.424** (0.762)	-2.209** (0.766)
Political Knowledge		-0.083 (0.125)
Political Ideological Extremity		0.196 (0.171)
Political Ideological Extremity* Out-Party Benefit from Cheating		-0.552* (0.234)
Male		0.548 (0.427)
Non-White		0.407 (0.660)
Male*Non-White		1.981* (0.990)
Observations	592	574
R ²	0.134	0.160
Adjusted R ²	0.129	0.147
Residual Std. Error	4.616 (df = 588)	4.533 (df = 564)
F Statistic	30.229** (df = 3; 588)	11.962** (df = 9; 564)

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01

model for sake of parsimony. These contrasts are visualized by plotting the estimated marginal means in Figure 1 (Figure 7, which plots the estimated marginal means of the full model, can be found in the Appendix).

Table 4: Electoral Cheating Regression Contrasts

Contrast	Restricted Model		Full Model	
	Estimate	t-ratio	Estimate	t-ratio
Non-Competition Prime In-party & Non-Competition Prime Out-party	2.11** (0.556)	3.802	2.176** (0.560)	3.885
Partisan Competition Prime In-party & Partisan Competition Prime Out-party	4.54** (0.520)	8.721	4.385** (0.519)	8.447
Partisan Competition Prime In-party & Non-Competition Prime In-party	1.35* (0.553)	2.449	1.293* (0.556)	2.326
Partisan Competition Prime Out-party & Non-Competition Prime Out-party	-1.07* (0.524)	-2.041	-0.916 [†] (0.527)	-1.740
df	588		564	
Result averages:			Results are averaged over the levels of: Male, Non-White	
P value adjustment: Benjamini-Hochberg method for 4 tests				
<i>Note:</i>	[†] p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01			

To examine the differences between the possible combinations of partisan competition prime/non-competition prime and in-party would benefit from cheating/out-party would benefit from cheating, Table 4 and Figure 1 report the differences and means of participants' tolerance of election cheating. As a starting point of analysis, there is a statically significant difference between participants' tolerance of election cheating depending on whether their in-party would benefit from cheating or their out-party would benefit from cheating. When their in-party would benefit from election cheating, compared to when their out-party would benefit from election cheating, participants were more willing to tolerate election cheating. This effect size is equal to a difference of just over two scale response points total ($\Psi = 2.11$, $p < .001$) or an effect size of 42.7% of a standard deviation.

Beyond just these difference by which party benefits from election cheating, there are further differences depending on the salience of partisan competition.

Priming partisan competition also has a statistically significant effect on tolerance of election cheating. This effect of salient partisan competition changed participants' tolerance of election cheating in partisan motivated directions. When their in-party would benefit from election cheating, participants who were primed with partisan competition, compared to those who were primed with non-competition, were more willing to tolerate election cheating. This effect size is equal to an increase of less than one and half scale response points ($\Psi = 1.35$, $p = .029$) or an effect size of 26.4% of a standard deviation of the in-party would benefit from cheating electoral cheating scale. Conversely, when their out-party would benefit from election cheating, participants who were primed with partisan competition, compared to those who were primed with non-competition, were less willing to tolerate election cheating. This effect size is equal to a decrease of about one scale response point ($\Psi = -1.07$, $p = .042$) or an effect size of 25.6% of a standard deviation of the out-party would benefit from cheating electoral cheating scale. Taken together, these effects of salient partisan competition exaggerate the difference between how participants responded to election cheating questions depending on which party benefited from cheating.

When primed with partisan competition, there is a statistically significant difference between participants' tolerance of election cheating between when their in-party would benefit from cheating and when their out-party would benefit from cheating. When their in-party would benefit from electoral cheating while primed with partisan competition, compared to when their out-party would benefit from electoral cheating while primed with partisan competition, participants were more willing to tolerate election cheating. This effect size is equal to a difference of four and a half scale response points total ($\Psi = 4.54$, $p < .001$) or an effect size of 91.8% of a standard deviation.

As Figure 1 illustrates, it is the interactive effect of salient partisan competition and group that would benefit from election cheating that is most distinctive on participants'

tolerance of election cheating. Although the treatment effects from priming partisan competition are substantively small when compared within the same grouping of party that would benefit from electoral cheating, these individual treatment effects have opposing directional results. It is the large difference between how participants primed with partisan competition tolerate election cheating depending on whether it benefits their in-party or out-party, compared to the more modest difference of tolerance of election cheating based on party benefit when participants are primed with non-competition, that has the largest substantive difference of all analyzed comparisons.

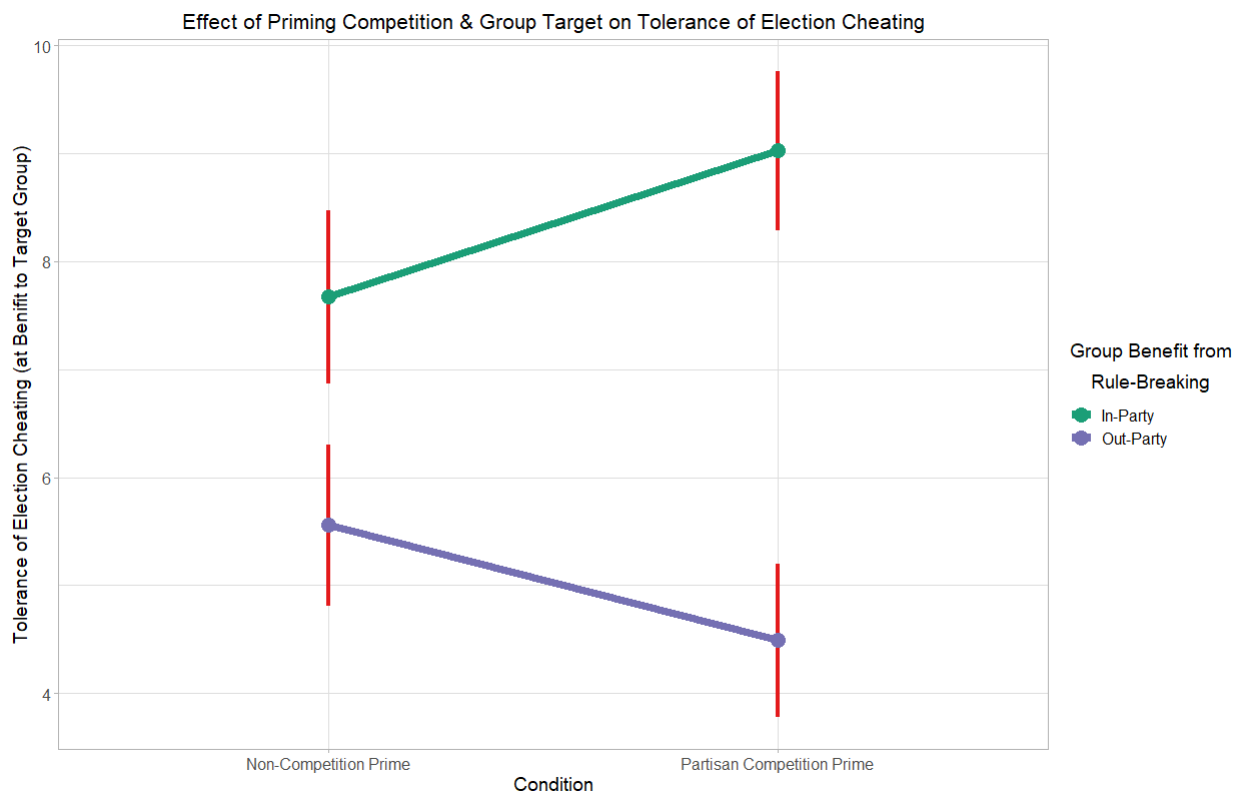


Figure 1: Effect of Priming Competition & Group Target on Tolerance of Election Cheating

Beyond the experimentally manipulated effects on participants' tolerance of election cheating, my full model (Table 3) includes relevant covariates. Of these covariates, participant self-identified political ideology has a statistically significant conditional effect. Although ideology does not affect how participants tolerate election cheating when their *in-party*

would benefit from cheating ($\beta = 0.196, p = .252$), it does affect how participants tolerate election cheating when their *out-party* would benefit from cheating ($\beta = -0.552, p = .019$). When their out-party would benefit from election cheating, participants become less tolerant of election cheating for every move towards identifying as an extreme conservative/liberal (when the participant correspondingly identifies as a Republican/Democrat). This means that an Democrat who identifies as *extremely liberal* compared to a Democrat who identifies as a *moderate* is about one and a half scale response points less tolerant of election cheating on the 4-item election cheating scale. Non-White men, compared to White women, are statistically significantly more willing to tolerate election cheating. This effect is equal to a difference of almost two scale response points ($\beta = 1.981, p = .046$) among the 4-item scale. In contrast to this demographic effect, neither being a man (compared to a woman) nor self-identifying as belonging to a non-White racial group (compared to self-identifying as *White*) had a significant effect on participants' tolerance of election cheating ($\beta = 0.548, p = .200$; $\beta = 0.407, p = .538$). Last, participants' level of political knowledge, as measured by the number of correct responses to the five-item political knowledge scale, did not have a significant effect on participants' tolerance of election cheating ($\beta = -0.083, p = .509$).

Overall, in both restricted and full models the interactive effect of priming partisan competition and the target of group benefit from election cheating has most significant and substantively largest effect on participants' tolerance of election cheating. Although the treatment effect of priming partisan competition within the same target group of cheating benefit is statistically significantly but modest in size, the most substantive effect of priming partisan competition lies in the difference between how participants tolerate election cheating depending on which party benefits from election cheating while primed with partisan competition. Although there are some covariates that have significant effects participants' tolerance of election cheating, these effect sizes are no larger than the effect of priming partisan competition.

Exploratory Analyses: Differences in Tolerance of Election Cheating by Partisanship

In my main analysis of tolerance of electoral cheating, I collapse across partisanship to increase my statistical power. However, this approach can obscure differences of how Democrats and Republicans are affected by the experimental effects of this study. To explore these potential differences by partisanship, I conducted linear regression models for only Democrat participants and Republican participants with my restricted model specifications (i.e., the dummy variables indicate receiving the partisan competition prime, having the out-party benefit from election cheating in the electoral cheating questions, and the interaction of these two variables) in order to keep statistical power as large as possible. As the regression contrasts are the focus of this analysis, the linear regression results can be found in Table 9 located in the appendix. As the following paragraph specifies, there are distinct differences in experimental effects by partisanship.

Table 5: Election Cheating Regression Contrasts by Partisanship

Contrast	Democratic Participants Only		Republican Participants Only	
	Estimate	t-ratio	Estimate	t-ratio
Non-Competition Prime In-party & Non-Competition Prime Out-party	1.958* (0.739)	2.651	2.416* (0.821)	2.944
Partisan Competition Prime In-party & Partisan Competition Prime Out-party	4.909** (0.728)	6.742	3.988** (0.715)	5.578
Partisan Competition Prime In-party & Non-Competition Prime In-party	2.301** (0.754)	3.051	0.198 (0.785)	0.253
Partisan Competition Prime Out-party & Non-Competition Prime Out-party	-0.649 (0.712)	-0.912	-1.373 (0.754)	-1.821
df	335		249	
P value adjustment: Benjamini-Hochberg method for 4 tests				

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01

In my exploratory analysis, I find differing experimental effects by partisanship. The regression contrasts of the restricted models by partisanship are located in Table 5. These

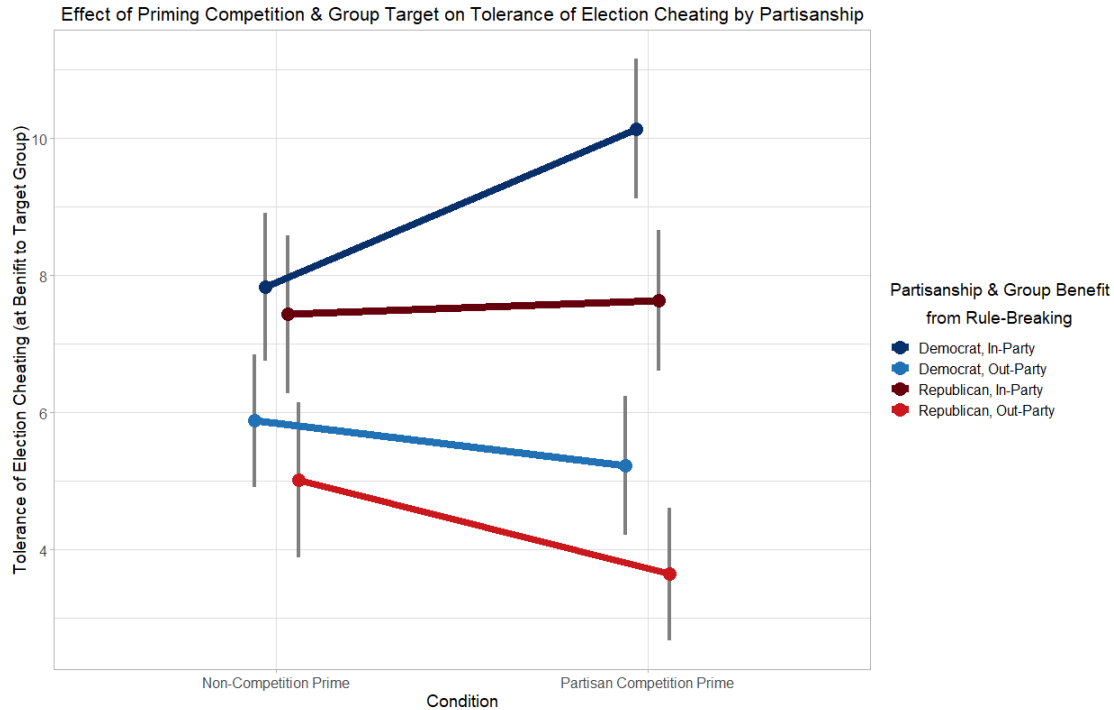


Figure 2: Effect of Priming Competition & Group Target on Tolerance of Election Cheating by Partisanship

contracts are visualized in Figure 2. For Democratic participants, there are noticeable differences from the all partisans regression contrasts results. Compared to the all partisan model, the differences between tolerance of election cheating depending on which group benefits from cheating for both the participants who received the non-competition prime and the partisan competition prime remain about equal (less than half a response point of change). However, this difference is due to the statistically significant increase in tolerance of election cheating when Democrats would benefit while primed with partisan competition compared to when prime with non-competition ($\Psi = 2.301, p = .007$) rather than to two significant opposing effects. There is not a significant difference of tolerance of election cheating when primed with partisan competition, compared to when prime with non-competition, for instances in which Republicans would benefit from election cheating ($\Psi = -0.649, p = .363$). These analyses about Democratic participants are contrasted by the findings from Republican participants.

For Republican participants, there are again noticeable differences from the all partisans regression contrasts results. Similar to the Democratic participants model, there is little difference between the Republican participant model and all partisans model for differences between tolerance of election cheating depending on which group benefits from cheating across the participants non-competition prime and participants who received the partisan competition prime. Although the differences between the Republican and all partisans model is slightly larger than the differences between the Democratic and all partisans model (slightly more than half a response point of change), the differences are comparable within target group of benefit. However, this difference is due to the decrease in tolerance of election cheating when Democrats would benefit while primed with partisan competition compared to when prime with non-competition ($\Psi = -1.373$, $p = .140$) rather than to two opposing effects. Although this effect does not reach the traditional level of statistical significance, this is likely a result of small sample size ($n = 253$, split between four groups) compared to Democratic ($n = 339$) results or all partisan results ($n = 588$). With a larger sample that follows the same distribution among groups, this difference would likely reach at least marginal levels of statistical significance. This is compared to the starkly non-significant difference of tolerance of election cheating when primed with partisan competition, compared to when prime with non-competition, for instances in which Republicans would benefit from election cheating ($\Psi = 0.198$, $p = .801$). Together with the contrast results of Democratic participants, these contrast results of Republican participants show how partisans' tolerance of election cheating are affected by the experimental treatments differently.

Overall, Democrats and Republicans appear to be inversely sensitive to salient partisan competition depending on whether their in-party or out-party benefits from election cheating. For Democrats, priming partisan competition increases their tolerance of election cheating only when Democrats (i.e., their in-party) benefit from cheating. And although the relationship is not as clear due to low statistical power, for Republicans, priming partisan competition decreases their tolerance of election cheating only when Democrats (i.e., their out-party)

benefit from cheating. While these partisan differences are preliminary findings based on comparatively low sample sizes, these analyses can serve as a starting point for future research and validation.

Political Values of Fairness and Respect for Rules/Rules of the Game Scale

To analyze participants' responses about the twelve "Rules of the Game" questions, and thus to their support for political values of fairness and respect for rules, I again conducted a linear regression model. I combined all twelve questions into an additive scale with possible scores ranging from 0 (strongly disagreeing with breaking political values of fairness and respecting political rules) to 72 (strongly agreeing with breaking political values of fairness and not respecting rules). I do not find a significant effect of priming partisan competition on participants' support for political values of fairness in this model. I do find significant effects of several covariates on participants' support for political values of fairness. The covariates used in this model are identical to those used in the electoral cheating full model.

In my linear regression model, seen in Table 6, I do not find a significant difference in response to the Rules of the Game scale for participants who received the partisan competition prime compared to the participants who received the non-competition prime ($F(6,566)=8.506, p < .001; \beta = 0.568, p = 0.592$). However, several covariates had significant effects on participants' support for political values and respect for rules. Most notably Political knowledge has a statistically significant negative effect on people's support for breaking political values of fairness ($\beta = -1.706, p < .001$). This effect is a decrease of over one and a half scale response points per correct response to the five-item political knowledge scale on the Rules of the Game scale. Next, political ideological extremity also has a statistically significant negative effect on people's support for breaking values of fairness ($\beta = -0.810, p = .013$). This effect is a decrease of about three-quarters of a scale response point for every move towards identifying as an extreme conservative/liberal. White men, compared to White women, had a higher support for breaking political values of fairness by over four scale response points ($\beta = 4.318, p < .001$). Both non-White women and non-

Table 6: Political Values of Fairness Regression Model

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Rules of the Game Scale
Constant	30.512** (1.448)
Partisan Competition Prime	0.568 (1.058)
Political Knowledge	−1.706** (0.345)
Political Ideological Extremity	−0.810* (0.323)
Male	4.318** (1.180)
Non-White	0.269 (1.817)
Male*Non-White	2.486 (2.733)
Observations	573
R ²	0.083
Adjusted R ²	0.073
Residual Std. Error	12.550 (df = 566)
F Statistic	8.506** (df = 6; 566)

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01

White men, compared to compared to White women and White men, did not significantly differ in their support for breaking political values of fairness ($\beta = 0.269, p = .882; \beta = 2.486, p = .364$).

Overall, priming partisan competition does not appear to affect participants' support of political values of fairness and respect for rules. For all questions as a scale, there was not a significant difference in responses between participants who received the partisan competition prime and participants who received the non-competition prime. Although there were significant effects of some covaraites on participants responses to the Rules of the Game scale, none of these covaraites were experimentally manipulated nor the focus of this present study. With these analyses, I am confident that priming partisan competition does not directly reduce people's support for political values of fairness and respect for political rules.

Discussion

Based on the results of these analyses, I conclude that my hypotheses one and two are supported by these data while hypothesis three is not supported by these data. Hypothesis 1 (people will tolerate election cheating more when it benefits their in-party, compared to when it benefits the out-party) is supported by my election cheating regression contrast analysis. When people are presented with situations in which their in-party would benefit from election cheating, compared to when people are presented with situations in which their out-party would benefit from election cheating, they are more tolerant of electoral cheating.

Hypothesis 2a (when partisan competition is salient, compared to when partisan competition is not salient, people will tolerate election cheating more when it benefits their in-party and will tolerate electoral cheating less when it benefits their out-party) is also supported by these data. Based on my election cheating regression contrast analysis, when people are primed with partisan competition, compared to when primed with non-

competition, they are more tolerant of election cheating when their in-party would benefit from electoral cheating. Further, when people are primed with partisan competition, compared to when primed with non-competition, they are less tolerant of election cheating when their out-party would benefit from electoral cheating.

As hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2a are supported by these data, Hypothesis 2b (salient partisan competition will magnify the difference in tolerance of election cheating when the in-party benefits compared to when the out-party benefits) is also supported by these data. As priming partisan competition caused people to become more tolerant of election cheating when their in-party would benefit would electoral cheating and less tolerant of election cheating when their out-party would benefit, there is a difference between people's tolerance of election cheating depending on which party benefits while primed with partisan competition. This difference is also much larger than the same difference for people primed with non-competition. With hypotheses one and two supported, this means my hypotheses regarding election cheating were fully supported by these data and subsequent analysis.

However, hypothesis 3 (salient partisan competition will reduce support for political values of fairness and respect for political rules) is not supported by these data. When measuring people's support for political values of fairness and respect for rules in general, salient partisan competition did not change people's support for these values. Although people's reported endorsement of political values of fairness consequential to democracy did not change by priming of partisan competition, people's differing responses to instances of election cheating by salience of partisan competition indicate important consequences of how salience of partisan competition affects people's tolerance of political rule violations.

Overall, there are important implications we can conclude from this study and further areas of investigation that future research can examine. Beginning with how salient partisan competition affected tolerance of election cheating by which party benefits from cheating, my finding that salient partisan competition increases people's willingness to enforce electoral rules when their out-party members benefit from rule breaking has important implications

for both political behavior and political systems. It appears that when the electoral stakes are low and people are unconcerned with election outcomes, people are willing to let election transgressions by their out-party slide without severe consequences. But once partisan competition is salient and an election appears to be neck-and-neck, this leniency goes away. Instead, partisans are willing to use the letter of the law to deny votes and punish wrongdoing by their opposing partisan group. This selective application of the rule of law, contrasted with the general spirit of the law and further democratic values, clearly has consequences and relevant parallels to examples in the U.S. elections and politics. Strict voter I.D. laws give partisans the cover of “just enforcing the law” while denying or creating significant obstacles to good-faith voting by out-party members. Similar instances regarding closing or moving polling places to even using procedural political rules of institutions and agencies to prevent a “win” by an out-party are within this same large-scale implications of this finding.

Next, my finding that salient partisan competition increases people’s willingness to tolerate breaking election rules when their in-party members benefit from rule breaking has also important implications for both political behavior and political systems. While partisans seem willing to “take the high road” and enforce rules that electorally harm them in situations of low partisan competition, this relationship changes once partisans are concerned about their party winning the election. While outside the scope of this present study, the question of how far partisans are willing to go if they’re concerned out election outcomes is one of grave importance. Even if many partisans are not willing to directly engage in electoral cheating themselves, selective attitudinal outcomes are no less consequential. Voters might be willing to forgive a co-partisan politician who engaged in electoral cheating to win a close election whereas a co-partisan politician who engaged in the same behavior would be held accountable for their actions if partisans felt safe they would retain their say in government. Although, as an experimental study, this present research does not describe the frequency or magnitude of these findings in the outside world, it is worth

considering how these effects manifest beyond the scope of this controlled experiment.

As for exactly how and the extent to which partisan competition affects political behavior in the natural world, these findings fit within conclusions of other research. High levels of competition have been documented to make people less willing to help out-group members and engage in cheating to help their in-group win competitive games (Hildreth et al., 2016; Jackson & Esses, 2000). Although it is puzzling that salient partisan competition does not affect people's reported support for democratic values of fairness in general but alters their specific responses to applications of these norms in specific, this finding is not without parallel. One comparison that is of socially desirable responding to beliefs such as racist attitudes (Krumpal, 2013). People may report they do not hold racist attitudes as doing so is a violation of social norms, yet behave in ways that reveal their true beliefs (Dovidio et al., 1997). This could be a similar instance in which people know the democratic values that are socially desirable in yet act in ways counter to their socially desirable response but expressive of their true attitude (Katz, 1960). Therefore, the results of this study appear to be consistent findings from more generalized research.

The implications for how salient partisan competition increases people's double standard towards election cheating depend in part on the extent to which partisans express these attitudes in the outside world. With a constant news cycle emphasizing the fierce contest between Democrats and Republicans, there is little question that many American partisans are exposed to information that increases the salience of partisan competition on a regular basis. Although the specific election cheating questions used in this study put participants in fictitious situations that many people will never experience in the outside world, the same specific attitudes and judgments people use to reach a decision on these questions likely apply to real-world political attitudes and situations. Potential analogous real-world attitudes include not holding politicians of their own party accountable for engaging in illegal or immoral activities while being overly sensitive to the same transgressions of the opposing party, dismissing instances of voter fraud by their own political party as unimportant

while harshly punishing even perceived illegal voting practices by their opposing party, and accepting rushed confirmations/appointments of judges/politicians of their own party while being opposed to identical hasty proceedings by their opposing party. Further research should explore the exact generalized effects of this study, but it is clear that salient partisan competition's effect on widening partisan double-standards on tolerance of ruling breaking is likely consequential. As I will discuss next, how this study's effects manifest in the real world have important implications for democratic structure.

The differences between how partisans tolerate election cheating by different political parties has the most potential consequence to democratic systems of government and how democracies should be designed to foster democratic values among their citizens. Although my finding that partisans tolerate election cheating differently depending on whether their own political party or opposing political party benefits from election cheating should hardly be surprising to scholars of modern American politics or even to regular consumers of political news, the effect of salient partisan competition in widening this gap of people's tolerance of election cheating depending on who benefits warrants discussion.

These findings have troubling implications for American democracy and citizens' democratic attitudes. A cornerstone of functioning democracy is citizen's adherence to political fair play and a respect for rules and procedures (McClosky, 1964). While it is not expected that all Americans fully endorse these democratic values, a certain level of adherence among citizens is needed for democracy to function effectively (Griffith et al., 1956). A significant double standard in people's tolerance of election cheating violates these fundamental democratic values referenced above. Therefore, as emphasizing political competition causes this significant double standard in how partisans approach political fair play and rules, there are democratic consequences of highly salient partisan elections. As partisan competition itself causes people to be selectively adherent to political rules, this is reason to re-evaluate the nominative good of democratic systems that place high emphasis on competition or at least to acknowledge the negative consequences of these

systems. As highly salient competitive elections reduce people's support of fair play in elections themselves, electoral systems that instead place value on other considerations such as representation and participation may be needed for functional democracies (Rahat et al., 2008).

The contrast of first-past-the-post (FPTP) systems and proportional representative (PR) systems stand out in light of this research. In FPTP systems, such as the U.S., people are encouraged to win elections because they lose out on all influence when they receive a minority of the vote for a given election. This desire not to lose out on a zero-sum resource of political representation and influence fits well within the desire to win elections by cheating if necessary. However, the resource of political representation and influence is less zero-sum in PR voting systems. While a narrowly losing an election in a PR system does not award a party a majority influence, it still gives sizable representation and influence to said political party and its supporters. This distinction seems to deemphasize partisan competition to a certain degree as political parties, and therefore the citizens who support them, do not have to "win" an election to receive a share of political resources and representation.

Yet another source of governmental structural that seems consequential to contributing to high levels of partisan competition is the presence, or lack there of, of a coalition government structure. By their very structure, coalition governments appear to encourage partisan cooperation to a given extent. The uncertainty of which other political parties a partisan could need to cooperative with in the future may reduce competitive attitudes partisans hold towards other opposing political parties. While the exact differences in governmental and democratic structure that affect citizens' vigor of partisan competition are beyond the scope of this present research, it seems clear a reduction of partisan competition is desirable if citizens are expected to blanketly enforce political rules.

Given the evidence I have presented in this study that salient partisan competition does increase partisan's double-standard of tolerance toward political cheating, even if it

does not reduce endorsement of democratic values themselves, political scientists should examine possibility of salient partisan competition negatively affecting democratic systems in other ways. McClosky (1964) concluded that political elites were a group that safeguarded democracy because they supported these democratic values at disproportionately high levels compared to the general population. As I only sampled a segment of the general population, it is possible salient partisan competition changes tolerance toward political cheating disproportionately in elites and therefore negatively affects democratic systems in this way. If political elites care greatly about their reelection or the reelection of members of their political party (Mayhew, 1974), then salient partisan competition could make them willing to violate some political rules to increase their chance of election or reelection. Other researchers could explore the full effect of salient partisan competition on the stability of democratic systems.

Limitations

Social desirability bias has a longstanding and well established effect on survey responses about sensitive questions (Kreuter, Presser, & Tourangeau, 2008; Krumpal, 2013). This includes several topics of political research such as voting and racial attitudes where social desirability bias has clear effects on people's responses (McConnell & Leibold, 2001; Silver, Anderson, & Abramson, 1986). With this in mind, it cannot be dismissed that social desirability bias could have affected participants' responses to several questions in this study. This is especially possible with regards to the questions of interest about election cheating and support for democratic values. Although this survey included techniques designed to reduce socially desirable responding, such as restating the confidentiality of participant responses and emphasizing the fictional nature of some questions, this was likely not enough to fully eliminate the concern of socially desirable responding.

Also, despite this present study, as well as most research about the American population, focusing on clear political partisans, I cannot simply dismiss the portion of the American electorate that either does not identify with a political party or is politically disengaged.

In this study, I admittedly analyze data exclusively on self-identified partisans. This limits the potential conclusions that can be reached from this study both because the context of this study is specifically about the American political system and because it leaves no room for non-partisans and the politically disengaged. Out-party and in-party status clearly operates differently for non-partisans than it does for Democrats and Republicans, let alone how these statuses affect interplay with salient competition between groups. Therefore, I only draw conclusions from this study to clearly distinguished opposing partisan groups.

The lack of statistical power caused by low sample size when examining Democrats and Republicans differing effects of salient partisan competition is also a severe limitation of this study. Ideally, I would have enough resources to recruit a greater amount of participants to increase statistical power and therefore increased confidence in the statistical results when conducting my analyses by only Democratic participants and Republican participants. I do not discuss the implications of my exploratory analyses by partisan group in my discussion section due to this current lack of statistical confidence. Further research should be conducted to examine how salient partisan competition affects Democrats' and Republican' tolerance of electoral cheating in different ways.

Conclusion

Overall, I find that salient partisan competition changes partisans' tolerance of election cheating depending on which political party benefits from cheating. When partisan competition is made salient, people become more tolerant of election cheating when their in-party benefits from cheating and less tolerant of election cheating when their out-party benefits from cheating. Although the salience of partisan competition does not affect people's endorsement of democratic values of fairness and respect for rules, people's differing tolerance of election cheating has clear democratic implications. As this effect is generalizable to a wide context of political rule breaking and possibly perceived political rule breaking, these results could help explain at least a portion of why Democrats and Republicans treat each other so differently. Taking this conclusion in the opposite direction, reducing political competition

could be a way to solve, or at least reduce, partisan double-standards as well as partisan cleavages and hostility more generally.

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Appendix

Appendix: Survey Questions

Electoral Cheating Question 1

Imagine that it's just after a local election and one of your acquaintances, who is a registered [Democrat/Republican], admits to you they voted twice in the election. If you reported your acquaintance to an election official, their votes would not be counted, they would have to pay a small fine, and they would not know you reported them.

How likely is it that you would report your acquaintance to an election official?

- Very likely (1)
- Likely (2)
- Slightly likely (3)
- Neither likely nor unlikely (4)
- Slightly unlikely (5)
- Unlikely (6)
- Very unlikely (7)

Electoral Cheating Question 2

Now, imagine a new scenario.

Imagine it's a month away from the 2020 election. Michael Diaz, who is a [Democrat/Republican], is running for county commissioner in your county, buys a local television advertisement that will air in part of the county that is heavily [Republican/Democrat]. In this ad, he deliberately misinforms Republican voters about the date of election day.

How likely would you be to vote for Michael Diaz ([D/R]) instead of the [Republican/Democrat] candidate?

- Very likely to vote for the Democrat (1)
- Likely to vote for the Democrat (2)
- Slightly likely to vote for the Democrat (3)

- o Wouldn't vote for either candidate (4)
- o Slightly likely to vote for the Republican (5)
- o Likely to vote for the Republican (6)
- o Very likely to vote for the Republican (7)

Electoral Cheating Question 3

Now, imagine a new scenario.

It's the day after the 2020 election. A reliable Democratic county in your state is under scrutiny for allowing people to vote past your state's mandated poll closing time. Due to voter demand, polling places in this Democratic county stayed open until midnight. State law requires that polling places close at 8pm.

Should votes cast after 8pm be counted?

- o Definitely should be counted (1)
- o Should be counted (2)
- o Probably should be counted (3)
- o Uncertain (4)
- o Probably should be NOT counted (5)
- o Should be NOT counted (6)
- o Definitely should be NOT counted (7)

Electoral Cheating Question 4

Now, imagine a new scenario.

Imagine you're employed to work at your local polling place on election day 2020. You are required to check voters' state-issued ID to ensure they're eligible vote. An acquaintance who you know is a registered Democrat, comes to vote and presents their registration card but is unable to present an appropriate form of ID. Under state law, your acquaintance would not be allowed to cast a ballot without appropriate ID.

In this situation, how likely are you to allow your acquaintance to vote?

- Very likely (1)
- Likely (2)
- Slightly likely (3)
- Neither likely nor unlikely (4)
- Slightly unlikely (5)
- Unlikely (6)
- Very unlikely (7)

Electoral Cheating Question 5

Now, imagine a new scenario.

Imagine that it's the day before the 2020 election. You intend to vote, but realize that you have lost your voter ID, and will not be able to vote without it. You mention this to your friend, who is a registered independent, and your friend offers to let you use his voter ID. In your state, only a voter ID is required to vote and you will not need to present any photo identification to vote.

How likely is it that you would go vote by using your friend's voter ID?

- Very likely (1)
- Likely (2)
- Slightly likely (3)
- Neither likely nor unlikely (4)
- Slightly unlikely (5)
- Unlikely (6)
- Very unlikely (7)

Rules of the Game Questions 1

There are times when it almost seems better for the people to take the law into their own

hands rather than wait for the machinery of government to act.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Slightly disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Slightly agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

Rules of the Game Questions 2

The majority has the right to abolish the minorities if it wants to.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Slightly disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Slightly agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

Rules of the Game Questions 3

We might as well make up our minds that in order to make the world better a lot of innocent people will have to suffer.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Slightly disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Slightly agree (5)

- o Agree (6)
- o Strongly agree (7)

Rules of the Game Questions 4

If congressional committees stuck strictly to the rules and gave every witness his rights, they would never succeed in exposing the many dangerous subversives they have turned up.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Disagree (2)
- o Slightly disagree (3)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- o Slightly agree (5)
- o Agree (6)
- o Strongly agree (7)

Rules of the Game Questions 5

I don't mind a politician's methods if he manages to get the right things done.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Disagree (2)
- o Slightly disagree (3)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- o Slightly agree (5)
- o Agree (6)
- o Strongly agree (7)

Rules of the Game Questions 6

Almost any unfairness or brutality may have to be justified when some great purpose is

being carried out.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Slightly disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Slightly agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

Rules of the Game Questions 7

Politicians have to cut a few corners if they are going to get anywhere.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Slightly disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Slightly agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

Rules of the Game Questions 8

People ought to be allowed to vote even if they can't do so intelligently.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Slightly disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Slightly agree (5)
- Agree (6)

- o Strongly agree (7)

Rules of the Game Questions 9

To bring about great changes for the benefit of mankind often requires cruelty and even ruthlessness.

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Disagree (2)
- o Slightly disagree (3)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- o Slightly agree (5)
- o Agree (6)
- o Strongly agree (7)

Rules of the Game Questions 10

Very few politicians have clean records, so why get excited about the mudslinging that sometimes goes on?

- o Strongly disagree (1)
- o Disagree (2)
- o Slightly disagree (3)
- o Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- o Slightly agree (5)
- o Agree (6)
- o Strongly agree (7)

Rules of the Game Questions 11

It is all right to get around the law if you don't actually break it.

- o Strongly disagree (1)

- Disagree (2)
- Slightly disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Slightly agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

Rules of the Game Questions 12

The true American way of life is disappearing so fast that we may have to use force to save it.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Slightly disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Slightly agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

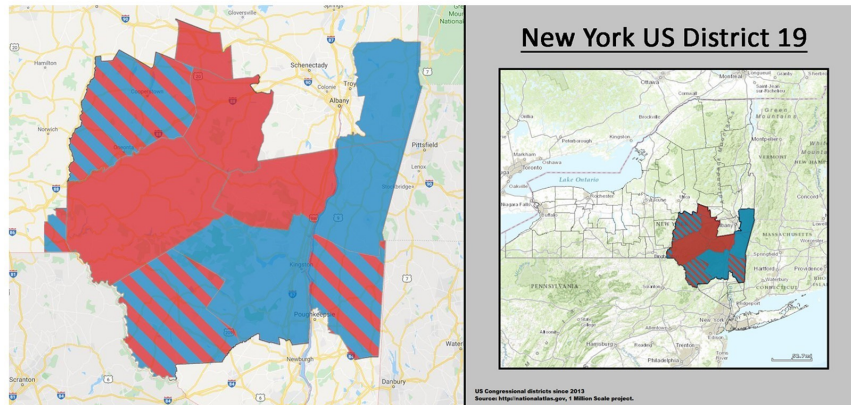
Appendix: Simulated News Article Primes

The image shows a simulated news article from the Buffalo Gazette. At the top, the website header includes the Buffalo Gazette logo, a search bar, and a '12 WEEKS FREE Start Trial' offer. Below the header, there are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Email. The main headline reads 'Democrats fight to keep control of the U.S. House, all eyes on NY 19th district'. To the left of the headline is a map of the Hudson Valley region with several counties shaded in red and blue with diagonal stripes. To the right is a smaller map titled 'New York US District 19' showing the district's boundaries in red and blue. Below the maps is a byline 'By David Watts' with a small profile picture. The main text of the article begins with 'The 2020 election season is upon us and it is shaping up to be the most competitive election season in our lifetimes. The stakes of the 2020 election could not be higher for Democrats. Although the Presidential election receives most of the media spotlight, the House of Representatives is where the real electoral battle will be fought in 2020. More House races are being classified as competitive than at any other time in recent U.S. history.' The text continues: 'One of these highly competitive districts is New York's 19th district. This district in the Hudson Valley has large numbers of Democrat and Republican voters, and often has many contentious elections. Although the 19th district is currently represented by the newly elected Democrat Antonio Delgado, most people in the district voted for Donald Trump in 2016 so the threat of a Republican takeover is real. Since the NY 19th district has a long history of being a bellwether for election outcomes nationwide, a Democrat win here would signify a defense of Democrat seats in the rest of the country.' To the right of the text is a vertical advertisement for Loreto, Mexico, featuring a scenic view of a lake and mountains with the text 'Loreto', 'MEXICO', 'A WORLD OF ITS OWN', 'visitmexico.com', and 'DISCOVER the magic of Loreto'. The word 'ADVERTISEMENT' is printed at the bottom of the ad.

Figure 3: Partisan Competition Prime for Democrats



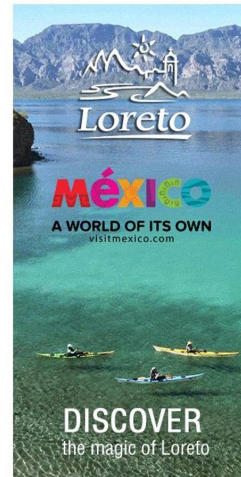
Republicans fight to take control of the U.S. House, all eyes on NY 19th district



By David Watts

The 2020 election season is upon us and it is shaping up to be the most competitive election season in our lifetimes. The stakes of the 2020 election could not be higher for Republicans. Although the Presidential election receives most of the media spotlight, the House of Representatives is where the real electoral battle will be fought in 2020. More House races are being classified as competitive than at any other time in recent U.S. history.

One of these highly competitive districts is New York's 19th district. This district in the Hudson Valley has large numbers of Republican and Democrat voters, and often has many contentious elections. Although the 19th district is currently represented by the newly elected Republican Antonio Delgado, most people in the district voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016 so the threat of a Democrat takeover is real. Since the NY 19th district has a long history of being a bellwether for election outcomes nationwide, a Republican win here would signify that Republicans have a real chance of winning elections across the country.

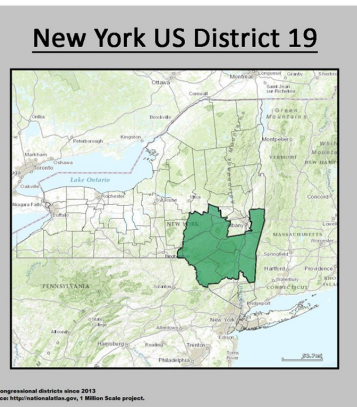
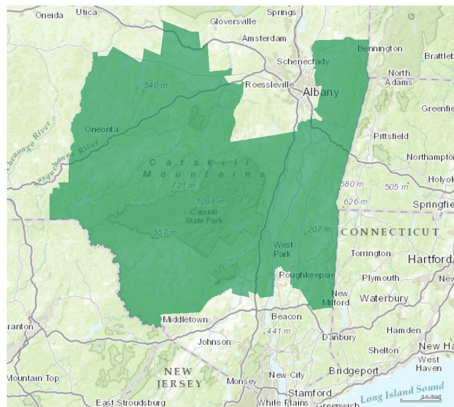


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Figure 4: Partisan Competition Prime for Republicans



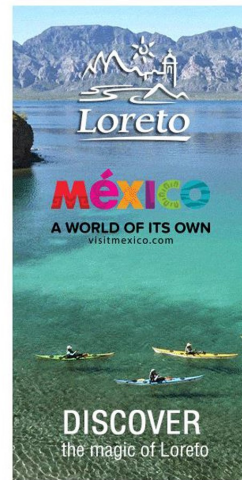
As NY 19th district shows, most elections not competitive



By David Watts

With the 2020 election season fast approaching, it is important to remember that when the votes are counted and the results are announced, the control of most U.S. House seats will look exactly like they do now. Over 90% of the districts in the House are either solidly Democrat or Solidly Republican. It is also important to note that this is not because of partisan gerrymandering, but instead because most people like to live in communities with other people that share similar political views.

One such community is New York's 19th district which includes the Hudson Valley and the Catskills regions. This district is represented by Antonio Delgado (D) who has been in office since the 2012 election. This community votes mostly for Democrats and polls show that almost all people support Representative Delgado and his policies. Although this is just one example, it serves as a reminder that most of America is not as politically divided as many people think it is.

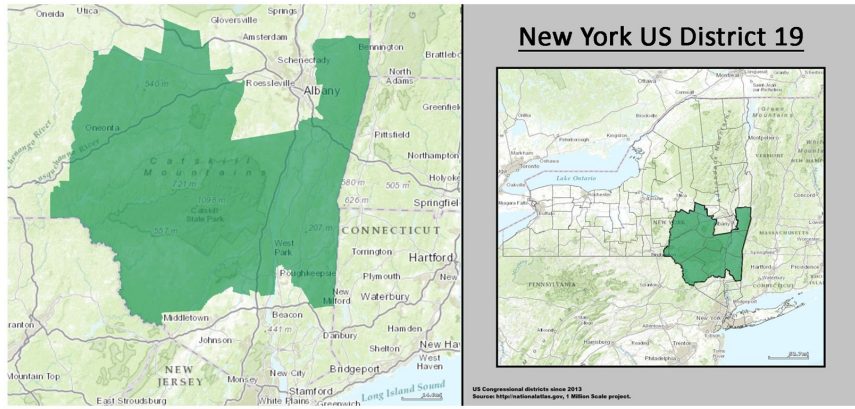


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Figure 5: Non-competition Prime for Democrats



As NY 19th district shows, most elections not competitive



 By David Watts

With the 2020 election season fast approaching, it is important to remember that when the votes are counted and the results are announced, the control of most U.S. House seats will look exactly like they do now. Over 90% of the districts in the House are either solidly Republican or Solidly Democrat. It is also important to note that this is not because of partisan gerrymandering, but instead because most people like to live in communities with other people that share similar political views.

One such community is New York's 19th district which includes the Hudson Valley and the Catskills regions. This district is represented by Antonio Delgado (R) who has been in office since the 2012 election. This community votes mostly for Republicans and polls show that almost all people support Representative Delgado and his policies. Although this is just one example, it serves as a reminder that most of America is not as politically divided as many people think it is.

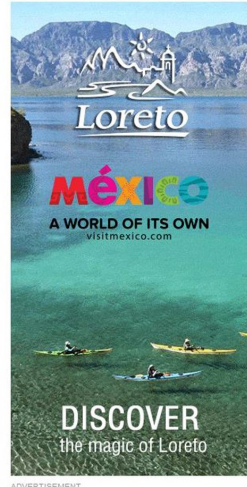


Figure 6: Non-competition Prime for Republicans

Appendix: Analyses

Table 7: Conbach's Alpha Scores for all Five Election Cheating In-party Target Questions

	<i>Non-Competition Prime</i>				<i>Partisan Competition Prime</i>			
	<i>Item Statistics:</i>		<i>Reliability if Dropped:</i>		<i>Item Statistics:</i>		<i>Reliability if Dropped:</i>	
	Raw α	Standardized α	Raw α	Standardized α	Raw α	Standardized α	Raw α	test
EC1	0.58	0.59	0.22	0.27	0.41	0.41	0.05	0.09
EC2	0.63	0.65	0.15	0.20	0.42	0.49	-0.05	-0.02
EC3	0.22	0.16	0.61	0.61	0.13	0.07	0.43	0.42
EC4	0.64	0.66	0.15	0.19	0.66	0.66	-0.39	-0.35
EC5	0.61	0.61	0.21	0.25	0.65	0.64	-0.38	-0.31
Raw α	0.35				0.01			
Standardized α	0.39				0.04			
Observations	128				153			

Table 8: Conbach's Alpha Scores for all Five Election Cheating Out-party Target Questions

	<i>Non-Competition Prime</i>				<i>Partisan Competition Prime</i>			
	<i>Item Statistics:</i>		<i>Reliability if Dropped:</i>		<i>Item Statistics:</i>		<i>Reliability if Dropped:</i>	
	Raw α	Standardized α	Raw α	Standardized α	Raw α	Standardized α	Raw α	test
EC1	0.47	0.46	-0.08	0.01	0.60	0.59	-0.38	0.31
EC2	0.41	0.52	-0.16	-0.10	0.23	0.34	0.07	0.12
EC3	0.20	0.13	0.38	0.37	0.28	0.18	0.31	0.29
EC4	0.55	0.56	-0.24	-0.17	0.50	0.52	-0.16	-0.16
EC5	0.61	0.58	-0.33	-0.20	0.58	0.58	-0.30	-0.27
Raw α	-0.05				-0.06			
Standardized α	-0.02				-0.03			
Observations	149				162			

Table 9: Electoral Cheating Regression Model by Partisanship

	<i>Dependent variable: Electoral Cheating Scale</i>	
	Democratic Participants Only	Republican Participants Only
Constant	7.840** (0.550)	7.434** (0.588)
Partisan Competition Prime	2.301** (0.754)	0.198 (0.785)
Out-Party Benefit from Cheating	-1.958** (0.739)	-2.416** (0.821)
Partisan Competition Prime* Out-Party Benefit from Cheating	-2.950** (1.037)	-1.572 (1.088)
Observations	339	253
R ²	0.142	0.142
Adjusted R ²	0.135	0.132
Residual Std. Error	4.760 (df = 335)	4.283 (df = 249)
F Statistic	18.450** (df = 3; 355)	13.758** (df = 3; 249)

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01

Appendix: Visualizations

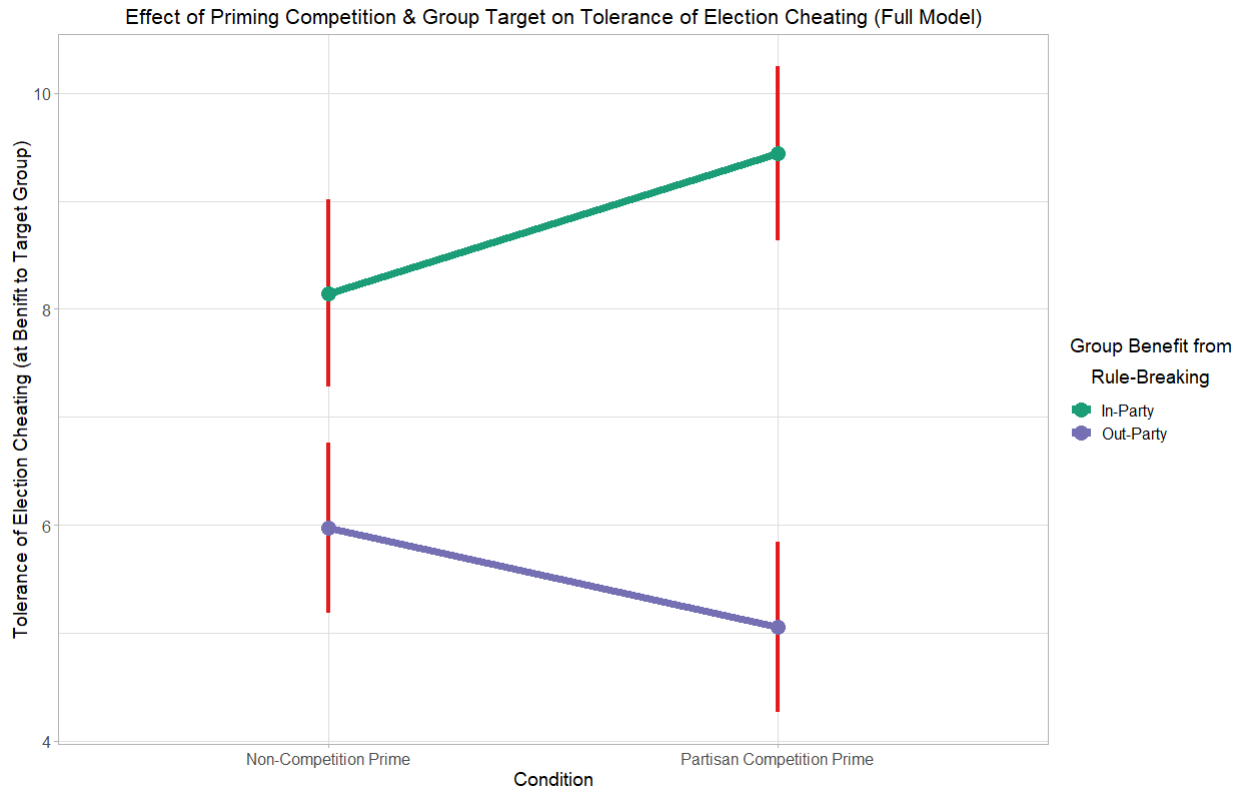


Figure 7: Effect of Priming Competition & Group Target on Tolerance of Election Cheating (Full Model)



Figure 8: Question Means for all Election Cheating Items