

# **Development of Political Attitudes Towards the FBI**

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Rachel Hertzberg

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## **Preface**

Coming to the University of Michigan freshman year, I felt overwhelmed by the number of LSA courses available. I had never found a subject I truly loved in high school. I entered the university wondering if there was a major for me. While a lot of things were unknown, I did know one thing, I loved to write. I loved to analyze and explore new questions. I loved to learn about people and why we behave in certain ways. Whether those interests would pull me towards psychology, anthropology, or even history I had no way of knowing. I felt my academic soul being tugged in various directions, yet never finding its true belonging. It was only when I walked into my Political Science course on Public Opinion that I knew I had found my place.

I would like to thank the Political Science Department for giving me a space and the tools to explore the fascinating interaction between reality and public perception. Were it not for this department, I would not have had the courage to tackle the following honors thesis.

I would like to thank the Gerstein Family Research Stipend for its generous grant which allowed me to bring my imagination into reality. I would also like to thank my Honors classmates for their support and constant check-ins. Specifically, I would like to thank Anne Boyd for always being willing to answer my questions, even if they were silly.

Special thanks goes to Professor Vincent Hutchings, my advisor and mentor. Ever since I walked into his classroom sophomore year, I always looked forward to the next class (I have taken a class taught by Professor Hutchings every year since). His unwavering confidence in me and my abilities as a student pushed me to step outside my comfort zone and explore new academic avenues. I will forever appreciate his support.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Political polarization is an emerging phenomenon that negatively affects the workings of the United States government and its institutions. In contemporary politics, the two major political parties have grown increasingly polarized as they move farther apart from one another on the liberal-conservative continuum. The Democratic and Republican parties have established “uncompromising camps” from which they display homogeneity on policy positions.

Layman et al. (2006) view this polarization as an example of conflict extension. Conflict extension occurs when the breath of political contention expands to include both new and old issues. As a result, political parties harden their position on these issues, thus further widening the gap between their political camps. According to a number of scholars in political science, prior to the 1960s, party realignments occurred when a new issue cleavage arises that disrupts contemporary partisan coalitions. The quintessential example is opposition to the expansion of slavery in the 1850s and how this gave rise to the Republican Party, and led to the demise of the Whig Party. Once a “new” issue has emerged, different constituencies develop new relationships with the political parties. However, in today’s politics there has not been a shift in focus. Many of the old issue cleavages in society remain, yet new topics like abortion rights, gun laws, and healthcare policy have been added to the field of political discussion (Layman et al. 2006). This increase in contested partisan issues inevitably leads to heightened levels of partisan conflict in society leading to political polarization.

Political polarization negatively impacts the functionality of United States institutions. The widening gap between the two parties causes congressional gridlock, which leads to policy inaction. “Growing ideological polarization of the parties has contributed to stalemate and



frustration in the policy making process” (Layman et al. 2006). Polarization also negatively affects legislative productivity. Studies have shown that this ideological divergence has stronger negative effects on the legislature than divided party control of the government. While these examples display the institutional effects, party polarization also negatively affects the voting public. Political polarization had led to a decrease in: interest in politics, trust in government, party identification, political participation, and electoral turnout among Americans (Layman et al. 2006). Such polarization has strong implications for the functional capabilities of the United States government. If political polarization already affects certain governmental institutions, it is worth exploring whether it also influences other institutions, specifically attitudes towards the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

My research question was brought to life when my roommates and I were discussing our respective perception of the FBI. After seeing a television news report criticizing an FBI investigation, we began a heated debate about the FBI’s role as a government agency. Each of us had unique perspectives on the organization; however, I noticed that some of the jargon used by political elites in the recently watched news source would also surface later in our conversation. I found myself questioning what factors contributed to these varying opinions of the FBI.

After reviewing the literature on partisanship and political criticism, I developed my research question: Does partisanship and other political considerations influence public opinion towards the FBI? My research topic is relevant in today’s political landscape, as the FBI has been brought into the spotlight of the political arena of American politics since the beginning of the Trump Administration.

In recent years, the FBI has received considerable media attention due to its involvement in the 2016 Election Investigation. The FBI opened this investigation in response to the hacking of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) server by Russian intelligence. Subsequent to this hacking, compromising information obtained about Hillary Clinton was released through WikiLeaks in an apparent attempt to undermine her campaign and increase support for Donald Trump (Zurcher 2017). As part of the investigation, the FBI assessed whether the Trump campaign played any part in the Russian effort to undermine Clinton. The FBI has been openly criticized by political elites for this controversial investigation, as some see it as an attempt to delegitimize the Trump presidency. This type of discourse is new to the American political stage and can have important implications for the relationship between the government and the FBI. Further, these relational changes can have even broader implications for the FBI's ability to conduct effective investigations.

I assert increasing polarization and criticism of the agency by high-profile political elites have contributed to this shift in discourse surrounding the FBI. As defined by Zaller (1992), political elites are persons devoted to the evaluation of politics or the practice of politics. Partisan officials are motivated to criticize the FBI in an attempt to signal to their supporters as to how to think about the agency. I will later elaborate on this tactic of cueing, defining it as framing. By exploring my research question, I can determine how political elites play a role in the activation of partisan identities and the formation of political attitudes.

I expect the results of my research will provide insight into the formation of political attitudes within American society during times of partisan polarization. I expect to find correlations between individual party identification and political attitudes towards the FBI. This association should be particularly heightened when subjects are exposed to politically charged

partisan frames. My research is particularly relevant now, as lack of public support for the FBI could have significant implications for its ability to function as an organization. For my honors thesis, I examine the emergence of the FBI as a perceived partisan agency by evaluating the elite messages that influence political attitudes towards the Bureau. My research will seek to uncover if party identification, particularly when coupled with elite messaging, is the strongest influence in the formation of individual attitudes about the FBI.

Recent studies have indicated that there is a partisan division in regards to opinions of the FBI (Brenan and Ander 2020; McCourtney 2018; Howland 2018). However, these studies fall short of establishing a causal relationship regarding exposure to partisan cues and the development of opinions about the FBI. In this study, I build upon this prior descriptive work with a survey experiment in order to provide a more causal explanation for these attitudes. By exposing subjects to partisan critiques of the FBI, I will examine my hypothesis that there is a correlation between elite framing and public perception of this agency.

## **Chapter 2: Background**

### (I) The History of the FBI

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is a government law enforcement agency within the Department of Justice that investigates federal crimes. The FBI was established in 1908 during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt in order to cope with the rising crime rates in relation to industrialization (FBI.gov). Throughout history, the FBI has played a central role in some of America's most controversial events. These events include undermining the Civil Rights movement, the Red Scare during WWI and WWII, the Internment of Japanese Americans, the Watergate scandal, and the intelligence failures preceding 9/11 (Brown et al. 2018). While the FBI has had instances of scandal, it has also had moments of triumph. The FBI's responses to both international and domestic terrorism has made it one of the leading counterterrorism forces. After 9/11, the FBI shifted its focus to counterterrorism and facilitated the cooperation of multiple law enforcement agencies to create the Joint Terrorism Task Force (FBI.gov). These adjustments have increased the FBI's ability to protect the United States of America and its citizens.

In recent years, the FBI has become politicized in the media as political elites have publicly criticized its more contemporary investigations. For example, the FBI received backlash in response to the reopening of criminal investigation against presidential candidate Hillary Clinton just three weeks before the presidential election. Many Democrats criticized the Bureau and FBI Director James Comey for tainting Clinton's campaign potentially contributing to her subsequent loss in the presidential election (History.com Editors 2017). Additionally, President Donald Trump denounced the FBI for its investigations of his 2016 election campaign;

he tweeted, “The ‘Intelligence’ briefing on so-called ‘Russian Hacking’ was delayed until Friday, perhaps more time needed to build a case. Very strange!” (Diamond et al. 2017). Through his criticism, President Trump perpetuated the idea that the FBI is pursuing a bogus investigation as a means of attacking the legitimacy of his presidency. President Trump has authored other negative tweets regarding the FBI in an attempt to undermine its credibility. One tweet reads, “The top leadership and investigators of the FBI and the Justice Department have politicized the sacred investigative process in favor of the Democrats against Republicans...” (Huffington Post 2018). In this thesis, I will explore whether this criticism affects the political conceptualization of the FBI.

### (1.1) FBI and Political Elite Public Relations

Presidential and congressional interaction with the FBI changed with the start of President Trump’s term, as the FBI has been widely criticized by political actors from the executive and legislative branches (Newstex 2018). More recently, each of these branches rejected its previously held partnership with the agency. Instead, they publicly condemned the FBI and questioned the validity of its investigations, most prominently with Democrats criticizing the investigation of Hillary Clinton’s email and Republicans criticizing its investigation of the Trump campaign’s ties to Russia’s interference in the 2016 election. This dramatic shift in how government actors interact with the FBI makes it an important agency to study.

Historically, the FBI has collaborated with congressional committees providing information and assistance on specific law-related topics. For example, during the Cold War, the FBI shared information about suspected communists so Congress could make informed

legislative decisions (Newstex 2018). In the past, this shared information was kept confidential by Congress as the two bodies developed a strong partnership. In 2016, the FBI agreed to share redacted information with Congress on the Nunes Russian Probe investigation as long as the information remained confidential (Newstex 2018). The Nunes investigation discredited the FBI inquiries into the Trump administration's alleged collusion with Russia and, in a partisan report, vindicated President Trump. In contrast to previous interactions, Congress disregarded its promise of confidentiality and released a four-page memo of the redacted information to the public. This action undermined Congress's relationship with the FBI and marked a departure from their prior trusting relationship.

President Trump has also shifted how the executive branch interacts with the FBI. During the Watergate investigations, President Nixon's interaction with the FBI was very private. Nixon did not want to draw attention to the investigations (Newstex 2018). In contrast, President Trump's observations of FBI investigations of him were made very public (Newstex 2018). President Trump condemned the FBI investigations as threatening his presidential agenda. Both the increased politicization of the FBI and its shifting relationship with other branches of government make the FBI a unique agency to observe.

## **Chapter 3: Theories**

### **(I) Introduction**

The FBI was created as an apolitical government agency. However, in the current political environment, some American citizens have argued that there are partisan motivations behind the FBI's more recent investigations. Particularly in 2016, FBI investigations into presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, as well as members of the Trump administration, were criticized as politically biased. Some viewed these investigations as politically motivated because they may have directly impacted the outcome of the presidential election or the perceived legitimacy of the eventual winner. This growing tension between the FBI and political leaders is a recent development.

The American public has become involved in this tension as they look to partisan leaders for guidance. I argue that Americans have begun to invoke their partisanship when evaluating the FBI, as will be explained later. This shift in perception of the FBI may have negative consequences for its functionality. If members of the American public have divergent views of the FBI based on their partisan loyalties, the legitimacy of the Bureau could be compromised. A divide in partisan opinions of the FBI might hamper the Bureau's ability to protect the American public. This shift could result in the FBI losing credibility as an organization. In that event, the FBI would lose the confidence of the people it is trying to protect.

### **(II) Framing of the FBI**

Criticism of the FBI has been disseminated across a variety of news media outlets. Zaller (1992) describes the transmission of news as:

“information that reaches the public is never a full record of important events and developments in the world. It is, rather a highly selective and stereotyped view of what has taken place.”

These “stereotypes” Zaller (1992) describes are synonymous with the commonly used term “frames.” Frames help the public interpret events that, on their face, seem indecipherable (Zaller 1992). Mass media and political elites have the power to set frames of reference, which can signal how an audience should interpret and discuss complex political events.

Scholars have divided frames into two sections: media news frames and individual frames (Scheufele 1999). Media news frames are defined as how the news organizes and ascribes meaning to a story. Media frames can emphasize certain aspects of a story and can reflect bias, “to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.” (Scheufele 1999)

Individual framing refers to preconceived beliefs through which individuals interpret the media (Scheufele 1999). Individual frames affect how people process new information. Goffman (1974) defines this collection of interpretive schemas as, “primary frameworks.” Primary frameworks allow individuals to, “locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms” (Goffman 1974). Individual framing refers to the already formed belief system an individual possesses. Individual frames are applied to new information so that individuals can more easily ascribe meaning and cognitively organize the information in a manner they find understandable.

Using this definition, party identification can be categorized as a type of frame. Individuals use partisanship as a frame to evaluate events happening around them. My research focuses on this use of partisanship as a frame. If my hypothesis is correct, I expect to find a



connection between partisanship and political attitudes towards the FBI. Framing is crucial to consider when studying the development of political attitudes towards the FBI because it is the lens through which the public interprets new information.

### (2.1) The Framing Effect and Political Elites

Druckman (2001) defines the framing effect as how a particular interpretation of an event, communicated by party leaders, plays a role in shaping the thoughts of the public. This communication between political leaders and the American public is referred to as the framing effect. The framing effect is important for my research because when President Trump criticizes the FBI, he generates a frame through which individuals can interpret the issue. By identifying that frame, I can discern what effect it has on the citizenry and their attitudes towards the FBI.

Druckman (2001) also highlights certain individual characteristics that affect how susceptible an individual will be to the framing effect. Druckman (2001) states that, “better informed people are more likely to be in possession of a frame of their own and thus will be less likely to be influenced by any particular frame imposed from the outside.” This is important to keep in mind while conducting my research because a respondent’s level of political knowledge may influence their susceptibility to my experimental frames. The impact of political knowledge is further explored later in my hypotheses section.

Additionally, Druckman (2001) states, “frames vary in the persuasiveness depending on who sponsors the frame.” This is very important to take into account because, in the context of my research, one “sponsor” of a frame on the FBI is the President of the United States. President Trump holds a prominent place in the minds of Americans. Regardless of whether the image of President Trump is positive or negative, the frame he promotes is difficult to ignore. I also

question whether the content of the frame influences its persuasiveness. As later discussed in my research design, I plan to analyze the effects of different types and sources of criticism through a survey experiment. I anticipate my analysis will indicate that different criticisms will have different impacts on how respondents frame the issues in terms of partisanship.

### (2.2) Framing is Important

Framing effects are crucial to consider when examining the perspectives through which the public views political issues. While the media inevitably embeds particular frames within the majority of the news to increase accessibility, individuals also impose their personal schemas to organize new information cognitively. Goffman (1974) notes this duality of framed news and personal interpretation of framed information. This is important to keep in mind as I transition into further scholarship regarding the overlap between partisanship and political sophistication.

### (III) Political Sophistication and Partisanship

Campbell et al. (1960) lay the groundwork to support my hypothesis that partisanship may influence evaluations of the FBI. In their groundbreaking book, *The American Voter*, Campbell and his co-authors (1960) explain the concepts of political sophistication (synonymous with political knowledge) and party identification. The authors categorized respondents according to their level of political sophistication, which they termed, “levels of conceptualization.” To test levels of conceptualization, the researchers recorded respondents’ answers to questions about the differences between the two political parties. They classified “ideologues” or “near-ideologues” as those who held a clear perception of the liberal-conservative ideological spectrum and applied this concept to the parties and/or presidential candidates (Campbell et al. 1960). According to Campbell and his colleagues (1960),

“ideologues” are able to comprehend nuanced differences among political parties and are able to employ this understanding in forming their personal beliefs.

### (3.1) Political Sophistication

Campbell et al. (1960) concluded that only a small percentage of the voting population display “ideologue” levels of conceptualization. In other words, the majority of American voters are unsophisticated. This information is pertinent when evaluating political attitudes. If the majority of individuals do not apply ideological principles to their news consumption, the framing of the information may have a greater influence on shaping individual attitudes (Campbell et al. 1960). In other words, to the extent the American citizens are unsophisticated, they may be more susceptible to political elite or media frames. Politically unsophisticated people tend to welcome heuristics or shortcuts to easily process the volume of information with which they are presented (Campbell et al. 1960).

Converse’s (1964) work further supports the findings of Campbell et al. (1960). Converse (1964) observes the differences in the nature of belief systems held by elite political actors in comparison to those held by the masses. The term “belief systems” can be defined as the organization of ideas and attitudes in which elements are linked to each other by some type of constraint or functional interdependence (Converse 1964). Similar to Campbell et al., (1960) Converse (1964) finds that when moving down the messaging chain from elite sources to the masses, the constraint of belief systems decline. This means that the masses are less politically sophisticated in their conceptualization of political thought in comparison to the elites who promote the political messaging (Converse 1964). This finding matches the findings of Campbell

et al. (1960) in displaying that the average American is politically unsophisticated, lacking an “ideologue” level of conceptualization (Campbell et al. 1960).

The previously described work of Zaller (1992) adds to these theories in displaying that individuals are more likely to be influenced by elites who belong to their political party. In this regard, political parties serve as a type of frame. Partisan elites signal their supporters on how to categorize new information consistent with their party principles. For this reason, I would expect partisanship to influence development of political attitudes towards the FBI.

### (3.2) Party Identification

Party identification can be defined as a lasting sense of psychological attachment to a political party. It is a stable identity that is the greatest predictor of voting behavior in the United States. “Political parties serve as reference groups for citizens by providing them with a simple evaluative basis for rendering judgments about political communications” (Campbell et al. 1960). Party identification is commonly measured on a continuum because it varies in direction and level of intensity. Partisanship is comprised of an ideological platform that political parties and its leaders promote.

Party allegiance works to undermine or discredit contrary opinions. “Identification with a party raises a perceptual screen through which the individual tends to see what is favorable to his partisan orientation” (Campbell et al. 1960). Parties serve to educate their supporters on information that individuals do not have the time or ability to experience directly (Campbell et al. 1960). However, these frames of information are often manipulated to align with party ideology. The stronger individuals associate with a certain party, the stronger their perceptual distortion of facts.

In their work, Goren et al. (2009) find that Democrats and Republicans diverge in their support for political values when given partisan cues (Goren et al 2009). When primed with party cues, respondents evaluate information provided through a biased lens. In other words, partisanship alters the digestion of information. Goren et al's (2009) findings support my hypothesis that a partisan frame of FBI criticism may influence the resulting political attitudes.

Additionally, Goren et al. (2009) find overwhelming support for the negativity bias hypothesis which asserts that, "opposition-party cues produce larger effects than in-party cues..." among partisans (Goren et al 2009). When exposed to an out-party cue, the individual adjusts his/her position to be in strong opposition to message conveyed by the out-party member. In other words, the literature suggests that a negative reaction to an out-party message may be stronger than a positive reaction to an in-party message. This is an important phenomenon to note as it may be displayed in my results.

### (3.3) Partisanship and Facts

Van Bavel and Pereria (2018) investigate why (in some instances) political affiliations alter the perceptions of facts. Van Bavel and Pereria (2018) find that people value party dogma over truth, and as a result they reject certain facts that may not align with party ideology. The rejection of fact due to party identification is prevalent across political issues, one example being climate change. This phenomenon has led to the surge of inaccurate or misleading news coverage, so-called "fake news" and selective news digestion in today's society.

Party identification incentivizes the distortion of the truth because political parties fulfill certain social group needs that, at times, may be more valuable than the truth (Van Bavel and Pereria 2018). Indeed, exposure to information that contradicts partisan ideology can lead to cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance is a phenomenon that occurs when multiple beliefs appear to be in contrast with one another. People often try to avoid dissonance between multiple beliefs because it makes them feel inconsistent. By manipulating information to generate ideological consistency, partisans are able to avoid feelings of dissonance. However, this manipulation may result in the misrepresentation or distortion of facts. For most Americans, maintaining alignment with partisanship is a higher priority than achieving accuracy (Van Bavel and Pereria 2018).

Van Bavel and Perreria (2018) conclude that, “political polarization has increased dramatically in the USA over the past few decades and is likely to continue to increase as people tune out ideologically-incongruent news” (Van Bavel and Pereria 2018). Partisanship influences the digestion of facts. This is important to account for when considering the recent FBI investigations and the partisan nature of the Trump administration.

One recent example of partisan fact distortion is the denial of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. The FBI previously confirmed- in concert with other U.S. intelligence agencies- that Russia had interfered in the 2016 election, however some Republicans, most prominently President Trump, rejected this conclusion. This example embodies this phenomenon and could be a potential finding in my experiment. This information led me to include a question in my survey that presents the fact that Russia

interfered in the 2016 election and respondents are asked how strongly they agree with the statement. This question will allow me to capture the fact distorting quality of partisan identity. This question serves as a dependent variable in my study, as I will be able to observe the effect on in-party and out-party cues on perception of fact. By manipulating the partisanship of the FBI critic, I am able to test the effects of partisanship on this dependent variable.

#### (3.4) Implications for my Research

The FBI has become increasingly politicized in the media as its relationship with the president is shifting. I plan to evaluate how this shift has influenced political attitudes towards the FBI. The process in which individuals ascribe meaning to politics has significant implications for how they view the FBI.

#### (IV) Shift in Perception of the FBI

Recently, some researchers have attempted to study public opinion of the FBI through the use of surveys. These surveys were designed to measure changes in public perception of the trustworthiness of the FBI. For example, the McCourtney Institute for Democracy fielded the Mood of the Nation Poll in 2018, which indicated that party identification has a strong correlation to the individual's trust in the FBI. The researchers canvassed individuals asking if they could trust the "FBI to do what is right 'most of the time' or 'just about always,'" and the responses appeared to be divided along party lines (McCourtney 2018). They found that Republicans tend to have less trust in the FBI in comparison to Democrats.

Among Democrats, 67% agreed with both statements. Among Republicans, only 39% of individuals were in agreement with both. According to the McCourtney Institute (2018), “54 percent of Republicans are of the opinion that FBI agents do not enforce the law fairly, because they are biased against President Trump and his agenda.” This study supports my hypothesis that party identification has strong implications for how individuals conceptualize the role of the FBI. The McCourtney Institute for Democracy poll (2018) adds validity to my hypothesis that party identification is influential in the development of political attitudes towards the FBI.

In the wake of President Trump’s public criticism of the FBI, the Marist poll conducted a similar survey (Howland 2018). The Marist poll measured individual levels of trust in the FBI in comparison to trust in President Trump. Of those polled 66% of individuals said they would choose the FBI over President Trump in a dispute (Howland 2018). However, partisan divisions appear again as 49% of Republicans polled believe the FBI “has a grievance against Trump” (Howland 2018). Marist poll’s findings display that Republicans and Democrats differ in their perceptions of the FBI and its interactions with President Trump. In sum, the survey results display a difference in sentiment towards the FBI along party lines. Clearly, some now regard the FBI as a political actor hindering the Trump administration’s agenda (Howland 2018). Once considered as a tool of the executive branch, the FBI appears to be assuming a new identity in American society.

#### (4.1) Political Polarization and the FBI

When analyzing the political divide in America today, the Gallup poll concluded that, “the level of division and animosity—including negative sentiments among partisans toward the members of the opposing party—has only deepened” (Newport 2019).



Partisans on both sides increasingly see United States institutions as political actors who are being manipulated in an effort to gain partisan advantages (Newport 2019). This is characterized by the differences in trust in institutions among partisans displayed within recent surveys.

In 2017, Gallup Poll fielded a survey that measured positive and negative views of government agencies among the American public (Brenan and Ander 2018). In 2014, the last time Gallup asked the government agency series, the FBI ranked second among all of the agencies, but it has fallen in the overall rankings as the positive ratings of other agencies have risen (Brenan and Ander 2018). Comparison between the 2014 and 2017 results revealed that, “every agency, except the FBI, received higher scores (in 2017) than on the 2014 poll” (Bur 2018). Overall, the FBI received zero change in its overall score from 2014 to 2017. However, the FBI lost 13 percentage points among Republicans and gained 9 percentage points among Democrats (Bur 2018).

As of the 2017 poll, there was a 20-point difference between Republicans and Democrats in their ratings of the FBI (Bur 2018). This finding is unique to the FBI, as similar law enforcement agencies, like the CIA, generated greater consensus across party lines. This partisan division could be connected to the involvement of the FBI during the Trump presidency. President Trump has publicly criticized the alleged inadequacy of the FBI’s investigations into presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, while at the same time decrying the FBI’s “witch hunt” against him. As a result, Republicans and Democrats may have come to associate FBI involvement with the legitimacy of their party ties, causing them to view the FBI through the lens of their partisanship.

While Brennan and Ander's (2018) poll indicated that partisanship is relevant to its results, its findings fall short of displaying causality. Within these studies, partisanship is not pinpointed as the main influencer of this partisan divergence. Through the use of a survey experiment, I can more directly test this theory and demonstrate the causal effect of exposure to partisan criticism on public opinion of the FBI.

#### (V) Conclusion

Public opinion of the FBI has been shifting rapidly since 2016, as displayed through poll results. My research seeks to pinpoint what aspect of individual identity is facilitating this change. I hypothesize that partisanship primarily influences the development of political attitudes towards the FBI. I have outlined the relevant literature to support my research and my hypothesis. Next, I will advance to outlining more specifics of my research methodology.

## **Chapter 4: The Hypotheses (and alternatives)**

My thesis questions are as follows: how does partisanship influence the formation of individual attitudes towards the FBI? Does the frame content (type of criticism) and source of criticism (partisanship of the critic) influence the strength of this association? My specific hypotheses are listed in detail below:

- (a) I hypothesize that when exposed to President Trump's criticism of the FBI Russia Investigation, Republicans will display the greatest reduction in support for the FBI, relative to the control group. I believe that Republicans will view the Russia investigation as an attack on the legitimacy of Trump's presidency and the Republican Party. Therefore, their partisan identity will be activated in accordance with the partisan frame to generate negative political attitudes towards the FBI.
- (b) I hypothesize that when exposed to President Trump's criticism of the FBI Russia Investigation, Democrats will register the greatest increase in support of the FBI, relative to the control group. I believe that Democrats will view the investigation as a check on the power of the Republican Party and as a result, view the FBI more favorably.
- (c) I hypothesize that when exposed to President Trump's criticism of the FBI Russia Investigation, less politically knowledgeable respondents will demonstrate the greatest drop in support for the FBI, relative to the control group. I believe respondents with low levels of political knowledge will not have prior knowledge of the Russia investigation. Thus, the criticism will generate negative sentiment towards the FBI because respondents will try to rely on the frame expressed by the critic for their own personal evaluations.
- (d) I hypothesize that politically knowledgeable respondents will have the least amount of change in their position after exposure to the treatments in comparison to those respondents

with low levels of political knowledge, regardless of the content or the source of criticism. I believe this because politically informed citizens have already encountered information on President Trump, Joe Biden, and the Russia Investigation. This means they have already formed their positions on these people and topics and do not need to defer to partisan heuristics or source frames to express their feelings toward the FBI.

- (e) I hypothesize that President Trump's criticism of the FBI Russia Investigation will have a greater impact overall on respondents compared to criticisms of the FBI for the misallocation of resources. I believe that the Russia Investigation has become politically polarizing as members of each party view it as linked to the Republican Party's legitimacy. In particular, Republicans and respondents with low levels of political knowledge will have the greatest change in their views of the FBI, generating strong negative views. Republicans will likely view the Russia Investigation criticism as not only a threat to the presidency, but also a threat to their core values. Less politically knowledgeable respondents will rely on the criticism to base their opinions, which will generate negative sentiments.

In sum, I hypothesize that political attitudes towards the FBI are a product of the combination of individual partisanship, level of political knowledge, the topic of criticism, and the source of criticism. I hypothesize that party identification has the strongest influence over political attitudes towards the FBI. Partisan individuals will generate political attitudes that mirror the sentiment expressed by their party leaders. I believe the presence of in-party or out-party cues will dictate how partisan respondents conceptualize the FBI. Additionally, I expect the less politically knowledgeable respondents will have the greatest shift in alignment with the criticism they are exposed to because they will lack prior knowledge that may challenge the frame expressed in the treatment.

An alternate hypothesis to consider is that a respondent's conceptualization of the importance of the law/law enforcement has a greater influence than partisanship on the development of political attitudes towards the FBI. If a respondent views the law as important, he/she may disproportionately rate the FBI positively, regardless of the treatment criticism. Conversely, if a respondent does not hold the law as a high priority, he/she may disproportionately express negative sentiments towards the FBI, regardless of treatment criticism. If this is the case, the manipulation of type and source of criticism will not generate variance within the dependent variables. However, these are not my findings.

I account for this alternative explanation by including three questions that measure the respondents' regard for the law. Two of these questions are later combined to generate a scale that is manipulated in my analyses, which will be further explained in the Data Analysis section. I selected two out of the three questions to generate this scale because one of the questions did not statistically correlate with the other two. Subsequently, it was removed from the scale to maintain the integrity of the measure. A further explanation of this decision will be expressed within the Data Analysis section.

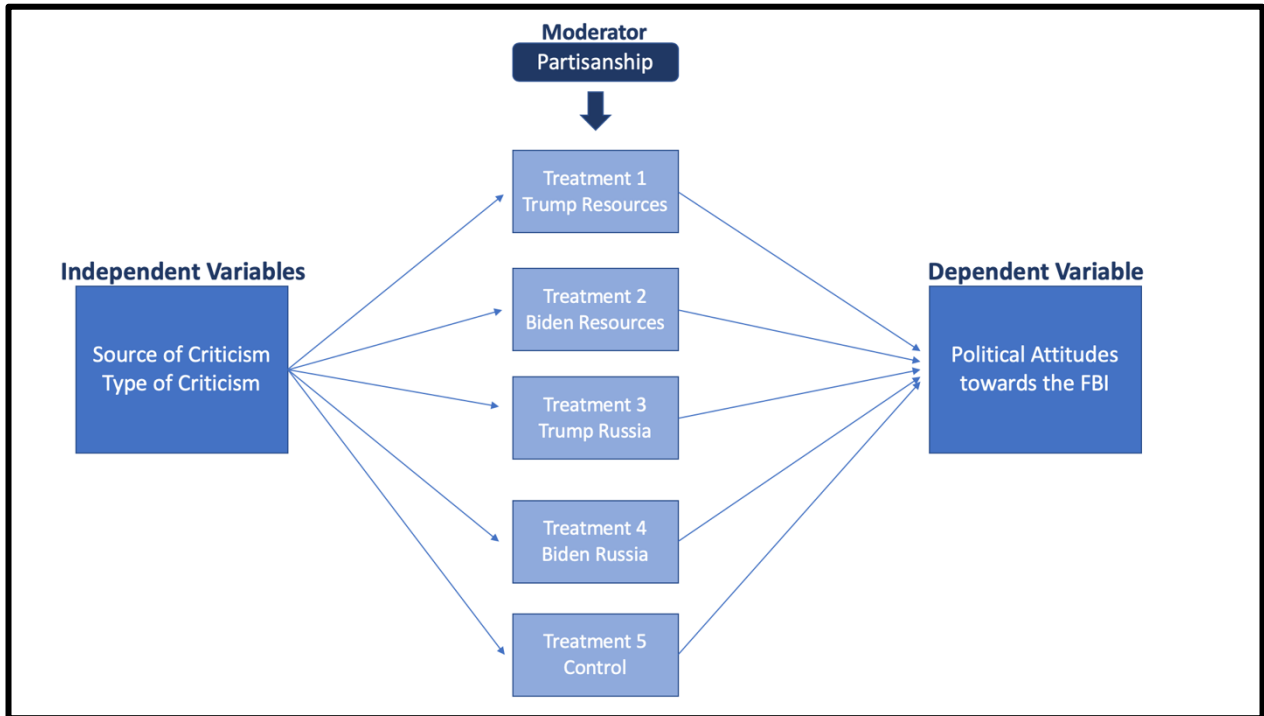
## **Chapter 5: Research Design**

My research will seek to uncover if and how partisan ties influence the development of political attitudes towards the FBI. My research will also consider how the content of the frame (type of criticism of the FBI) and the source of the frame (the partisan critic) impact any such correlation in the context of the Trump presidency. I hypothesize that an individual's partisanship directly influences his/her political attitude towards the FBI.

My unit of measurement is the American individual. My main dependent variable is political attitudes towards the FBI. My main independent variables are type of political criticism of the FBI and source of criticism of the FBI. The type of criticism and the source of criticism variables will be manipulated to produce 4 different treatment groups, along with a non-partisan control group, within the study. My experimental survey was divided into three parts and distributed to 542 respondents using Amazon Mturk. This number of respondents allocated a little over 100 respondents per treatment group. One hundred respondents per treatment insured variance among respondents in each treatment to observe an effect if there was one present.

Figure 1, on the next page, outlines my approach.

Figure 1



The first step in formulating my survey experiment was creating my treatments, which were displayed to the respondent in the middle of my survey. I first had to decide what platform I wanted to use to manipulate my independent variables. I decided to generate BBC Breaking News articles. I picked the style of a BBC Breaking News article because its format is only three to four paragraphs long. By keeping the treatment article short, I increased the probability that the respondent would read the entire article. I also placed the signaling sentences within the header and first lines of the article to ensure the source of criticism and the type of criticism were properly transmitted, in case respondents chose not to read the entire article.

I made the format of each article nearly identical to one another, only changing the two independent variables, source of criticism and type of criticism. By manipulating the independent variables, the resulting data should establish whether a causal link exists between a specific

independent variable and public perception. I selected Donald Trump and Joe Biden as my sources of the criticism because each is well-known to the American public, each held/holds a similar level of political power in the United States government, and each represents a different political party. For type of criticism, I selected the FBI Russia Investigation and allegations of misallocation of resources by the FBI. I selected the FBI Russia investigation as a topic because it has been heavily publicized and it is a contentious topic that has thrown the FBI into the center of the political discourse. I selected FBI misallocation of resources as the other topic because it does not prime any partisan feelings nor threaten the legitimacy of either political party. For the control treatment, the source is Michael Davis, the leader of a fictitious social group: The Crime Scene Integrity Coalition. In the control treatment, Davis criticizes the FBI over its inefficient evidence collection procedures. This type of criticism was also devoid of politicized language and its source and topic of criticism were both unknown to the reader. To read each treatment news article please refer to the Appendix section.

The next step in generating my treatments was formatting my news article's appearance to look real. I took screenshots of headers from the actual BBC News website and I formatted the text to mirror that displayed on BBC News.com. After completing the formatting, my treatments were inputted into my Qualtrics survey and randomized. All respondents were debriefed at the end of the survey and told that the news articles were entirely fabricated.

I generated the two other components of my survey using Qualtrics. The first section was a pre-treatment survey. This primary survey asked respondents to identify their party identification, political ideology, and self-reported partisan strength. These fields display the direction and intensity of the individual's party identification, which is an important variable that will later be used to support my hypotheses. Additionally, respondents answered "feeling



thermometer” questions. Respondents were asked to rate how warmly they feel about the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, and the police on a scale of 0-100, 100 being the warmest feelings. Respondents were also tested on political knowledge by answering general questions about politics (i.e. to name the House minority leader). Political knowledge is an important variable to account for as it may be a moderator of my treatments.

Additionally, within the pre-treatment survey I ask demographic questions where individuals identified their age, sex, gender, and education level. These questions are necessary to account for demographic or group identity influences because they can come into play when individuals are interpreting information. There is significant research regarding group identity, which can influence the formation of individual political opinion on various issues (McClain et al. 2009). By gathering important background information about my respondents’ identities, I account for these effects.

Within the pre-test, there is a cluster of questions about obligations to follow the law and the effectiveness of the FBI. I test for opinions towards the law and citizen obligations to uphold the law. I ask these questions because individuals who hold the law in high esteem may feel more positively towards the FBI as it is a law enforcement agency, thus making the partisan primes in the treatments less effective. Additionally, I test for perceived effectiveness of the FBI before the treatment to get a baseline of public opinion towards the FBI. When generating this pre-treatment survey, I had to carefully word the questions. I wanted to ensure the pre-test would not prime respondents to think about the FBI in terms of their partisanship, thereby “contaminating” my control group and undermining the experiment. I wanted the treatment to do the signaling and framing for the respondents. As a result, crafting the pre-survey questions required extensive revisions and collaboration with my thesis advisor.

Following this first section of the survey, the respondents were randomly assigned one of five different treatment groups. Treatment Group 1 was a BBC breaking news article quoting negative sentiment stated by President Trump criticizing the FBI for the Russia investigations. Treatment Group 2 was a BBC breaking news article quoting negative sentiments stated by Former Vice President Joe Biden criticizing the FBI for the Russia investigations. Treatment Group 3 was a BBC Breaking news article quoting negative sentiments stated by President Trump criticizing the FBI for its misallocation of resources. Treatment Group 4 was a BBC Breaking news article quoting negative sentiments stated by Former Vice President Joe Biden criticizing the FBI for its misallocation of resources. Treatment Group 5, the control treatment, was a BBC Breaking news article about interest group leader Michael Davis criticizing the FBI for its evidence collection procedures. The purpose of the control is to measure whether the absence of partisan cues influences the responses. All of the treatment news articles can be found in the Appendix section.

Following this treatment, the respondents then completed a post-treatment survey, which contained measurements for the dependent variables. Respondents were asked to rate President Trump, Former Vice President Joe Biden, and the FBI on a feeling thermometer. The rating of the FBI contributes to one of my main dependent variables measuring political attitude towards the FBI. Respondents were further questioned as to whether they believe the FBI is a biased institution favoring one party over the other. This is also an important dependent variable as it measures if respondents view this apolitical body as taking a partisan role. The post-test also asked whether the FBI can be trusted to carry out its duties. Finally, respondents are asked to how confident they felt in the FBI. At the end of the post-test, I employed an emotions grid for each of the following topics: Donald Trump, Joe Biden, the FBI, the Police, the Press, and Cable

Television. The emotions grid asks respondents “*How often would you say you have felt each of the following ways because of \_\_\_\_\_ , or because of something they have done?*” There is a set of ten emotions listed some examples being “ashamed” “fearful” “proud” and “relieved.” Respondents then proceed to fill out the grid for each emotion identifying how frequently they have felt that way about the topic on a scale from “Always” to “Never.” See Figure 2 for an example.

*Figure 2*

	Always	Most of the time	About half the time	Some of the time	Never
Hopeful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Angry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Afraid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proud	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Embarrassed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ashamed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Happy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relieved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Respondents were also asked how likely it is that Russia interfered in the 2016 election. This question measures if activating partisan identity distorts respondent’s perceptions of facts. More specifically, do respondents’ partisan beliefs override known truths when answering this question? This question measured the extent to which partisanship can affect political attitudes towards an FBI investigation, which is one of my dependent variables. In sum, all of these post-test questions constitute the dependent variables of political attitudes towards the FBI.

Possible limitations of my research design stem from my assumption that party identification influences political attitudes towards the FBI. There can be potential outside factors that influence my results that I may not be measuring. For example, socioeconomic status and education levels are often correlated with strength and direction of partisanship. Critics may assert that socioeconomic status or education level to be the primary drivers of my findings. However, my pre-treatment questions address any such concerns, as many of those factors (such as education level) are accounted for in that section. I believe my research design is successful in answering my research question, as it presents a new take on the development of political attitudes.

Another potential criticism of my research design is the use of Amazon MTurk to distribute my survey experiment. MTurk is a crowd-sourcing Internet marketplace, which companies and researchers use to conduct surveys to a large diverse sample. MTurk draws its diverse sample through an opt-in recruiting process where respondents sign up to engage with academic surveys in exchange for financial benefits.

MTurk is not a truly random sample because it relies on opt-in participation. Critics may argue that the sample does not accurately represent the American public because it is an opt-in online process, which may inherently leave groups of individuals out of my sample (i.e. the homeless and the elderly). However, Burhmester et al. (2011) posit that the MTurk participant pool is more demographically diverse and closer to being nationally representative compared to other internet survey websites. In the case of my research, I feel that once I make a conclusion based on my sample, I can manipulate the results to draw broader conclusions about how my research applies to less accessible populations. Keeping in mind its limitations, MTurk is the best option to transmit my survey.

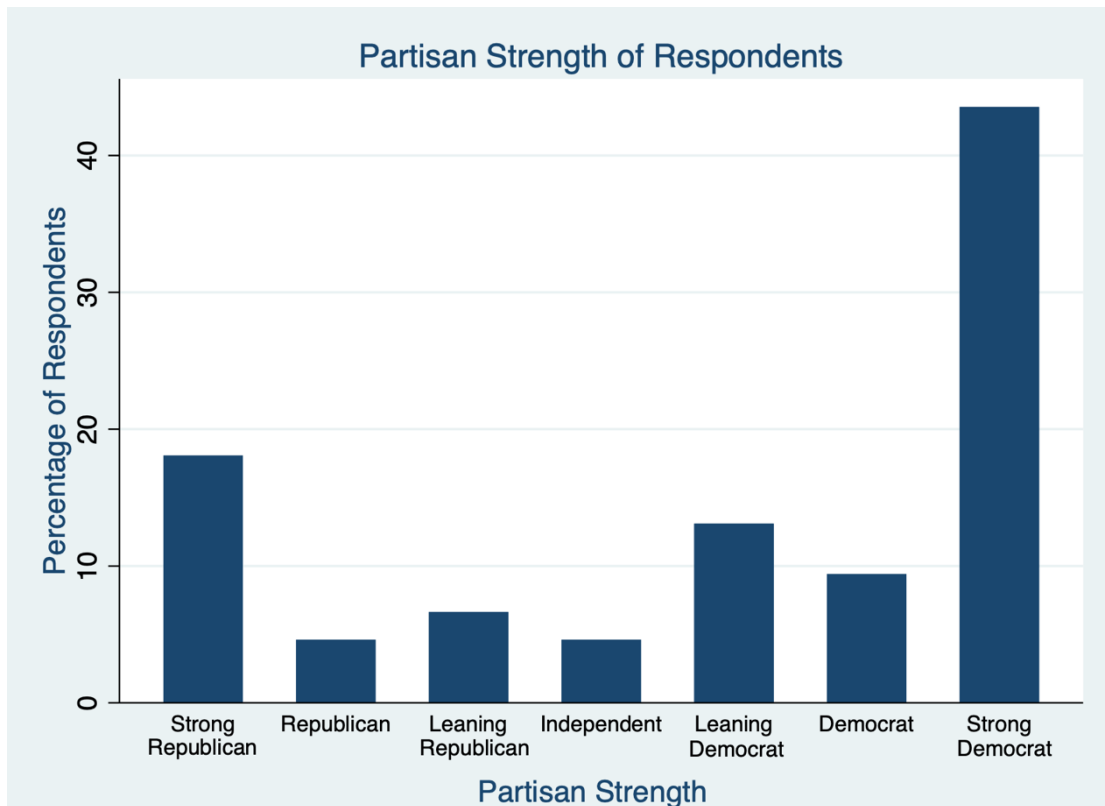
## **Chapter 6: Data Analysis and Results**

### **I) Sample Statistics**

Before jumping into the survey results, it is important to outline the demographics of my sample. Diversity in my sample was critical as my research required data from both partisan and nonpartisan respondents with varying levels of partisan strength and political knowledge. In addition, it was imperative that I had sample diversity in the areas of age and level of education, as these are other potential influencers of political attitudes that run counter to my hypothesis.

My sample consists of 542 respondents. Of those respondents 358 or 66% identify as Democrat or Independent leaning Democrats, 159, or 29% identify as Republican or Independent leaning Republicans, and 25, or 5% identify as true Independents. Of those respondents, 43% identify as strong Democrats and 18% identify as strong Republicans. Only 5% of respondents identify as true Independents. This is positive for the purpose of my research because the large majority of respondents are partisan individuals, thus my treatment should be able to prime their partisan leanings. The wide majority of the sample respondents lean towards the Democratic Party, which is not an accurate representation of the American populous. This is important to note going into my data analysis.

Figure 3



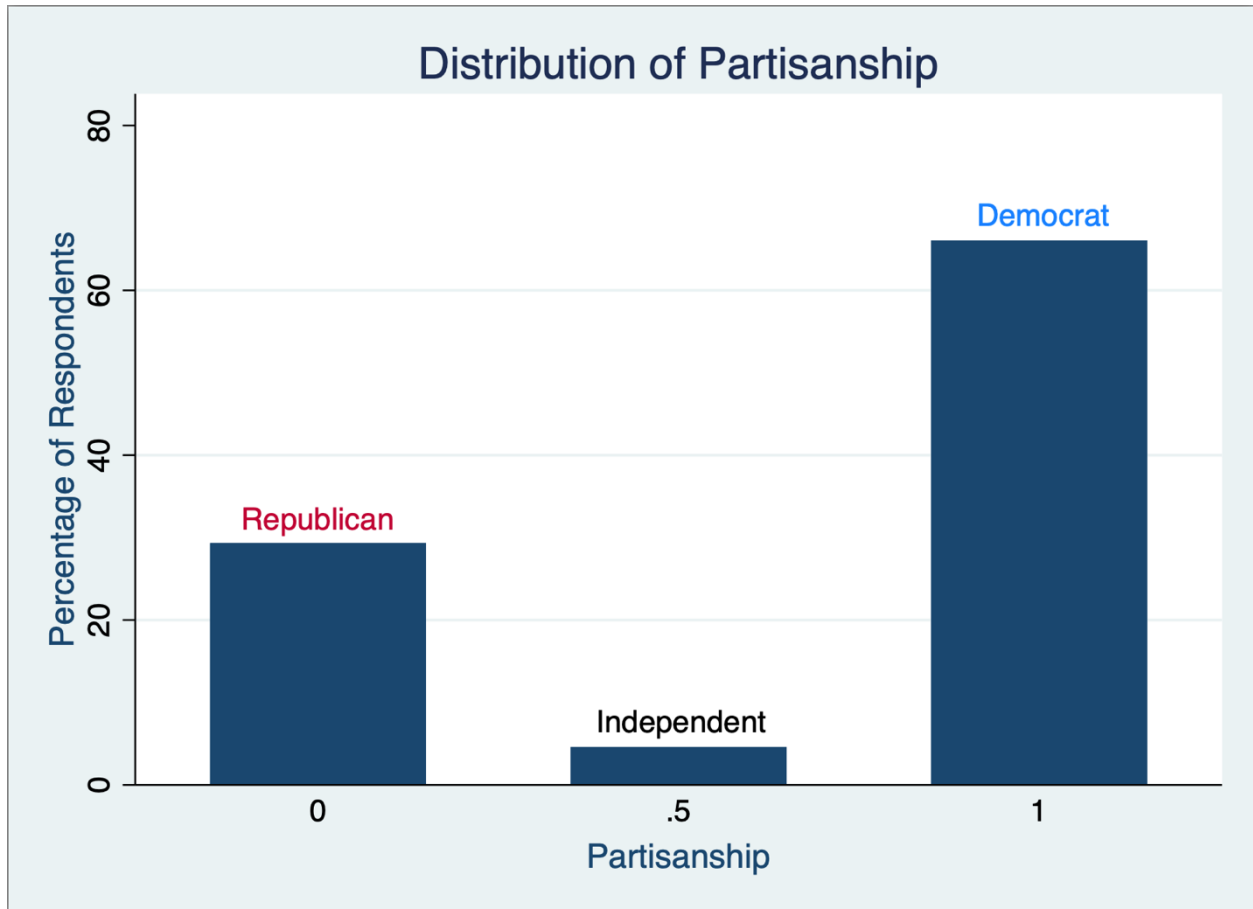
My sample is 51% male, 48% female, and includes 1% of nonbinary individuals. In terms of educational attainment, 13% of the respondents have completed a post-graduate program. The majority of the respondents (43%) have a Bachelor's degree. To reiterate, on certain demographics, my sample is not representative of the greater American population. For example, my sample is disproportionately highly educated, which must be taken into account when interpreting results.

## II) Data Analysis: Generating Variables and Scales

The results illustrate a more nuanced picture of attitudes towards the FBI than I had previously anticipated. However, my findings support my overall hypothesis that partisanship influences political attitudes towards the FBI. Before jumping into the analyses, it is important to

note certain variables I created to refine my examinations. First, I created a variable running on a zero to one scale that measures partisanship. Zero signified Republican identification, 1 signified Democratic identification, and 0.5 signified Independent. By distinguishing partisanship (see Figure 4), I was able to test the validity of my hypotheses throughout my investigations.

*Figure 4*



Second, I created a political knowledge scale. Within the pre-test, I asked a series of three questions that test respondents' contemporary political knowledge. This indicated how closely they follow politics, which I hypothesize will have a moderating effect on the treatments. Table 1 (below) presents the questions that make up the political knowledge scale. Respondents who

answered all the answers correctly received a score of 1 and all those who answered them all incorrectly received a score of zero.

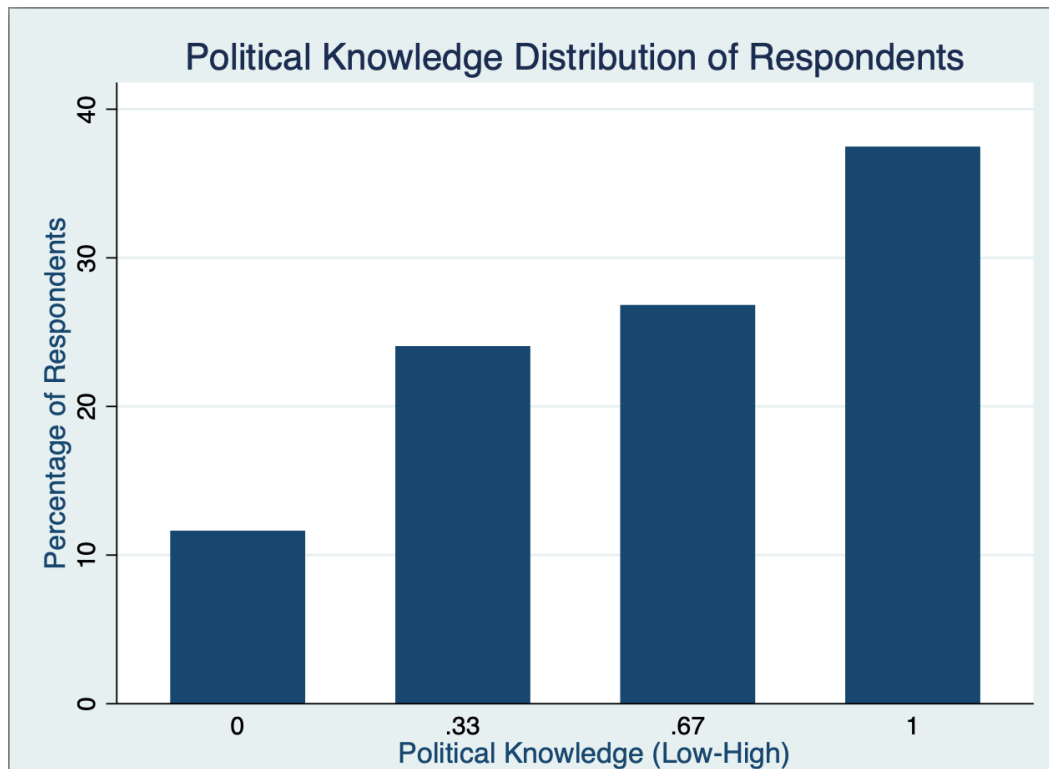
*Table 1*

Question	Response Options (Correct Answer Listed in <b>Bold</b> )
Which party is in the majority in the United States House of Representatives?	<b>Democrat</b> , Republican, Don't Know
Please identify which of the following individuals is currently the Director of the FBI?	Mike Pompeo, Bill Barr, Neil Gorsuch, <b>Christopher Wray</b>
Please identify which of the following individuals is the House minority leader?	Nancy Pelosi, <b>Kevin McCarthy</b> , Paul Ryan, Mike Pompeo

These questions vary in degree of difficulty by design. It was important to include difficult questions because, as previously mentioned, the Amazon MTurk sample pool is disproportionately more educated than the average American. By including difficult questions, I was able to effectively test the sample for political knowledge. If the questions selected had been too easy, a disproportionate majority of respondents would have gotten all the questions correct. However, by including tough questions I was able to get a better distribution of respondents across the scale. As Figure 5 displays below, the majority of my respondents are politically knowledgeable. This is important to take into account moving forward into my data analysis. Within my analysis, it is important to note that I used 0.5 as the dividing value between high and low levels of political knowledge. Those who scored above 0.5 are categorized as having high levels of political knowledge and those below 0.5 are categorized as having low political knowledge.



Figure 5



Then, to account for the possibility that a subject's high regard for law enforcement might impact my result I formulated an alternate hypothesis. Specifically, I generated a scale titled, "Regard for the Law" in order to account for this in my analysis. I generated this scale by combining two questions located in my pre-test survey. The questions are outlined below in Table 2 below.

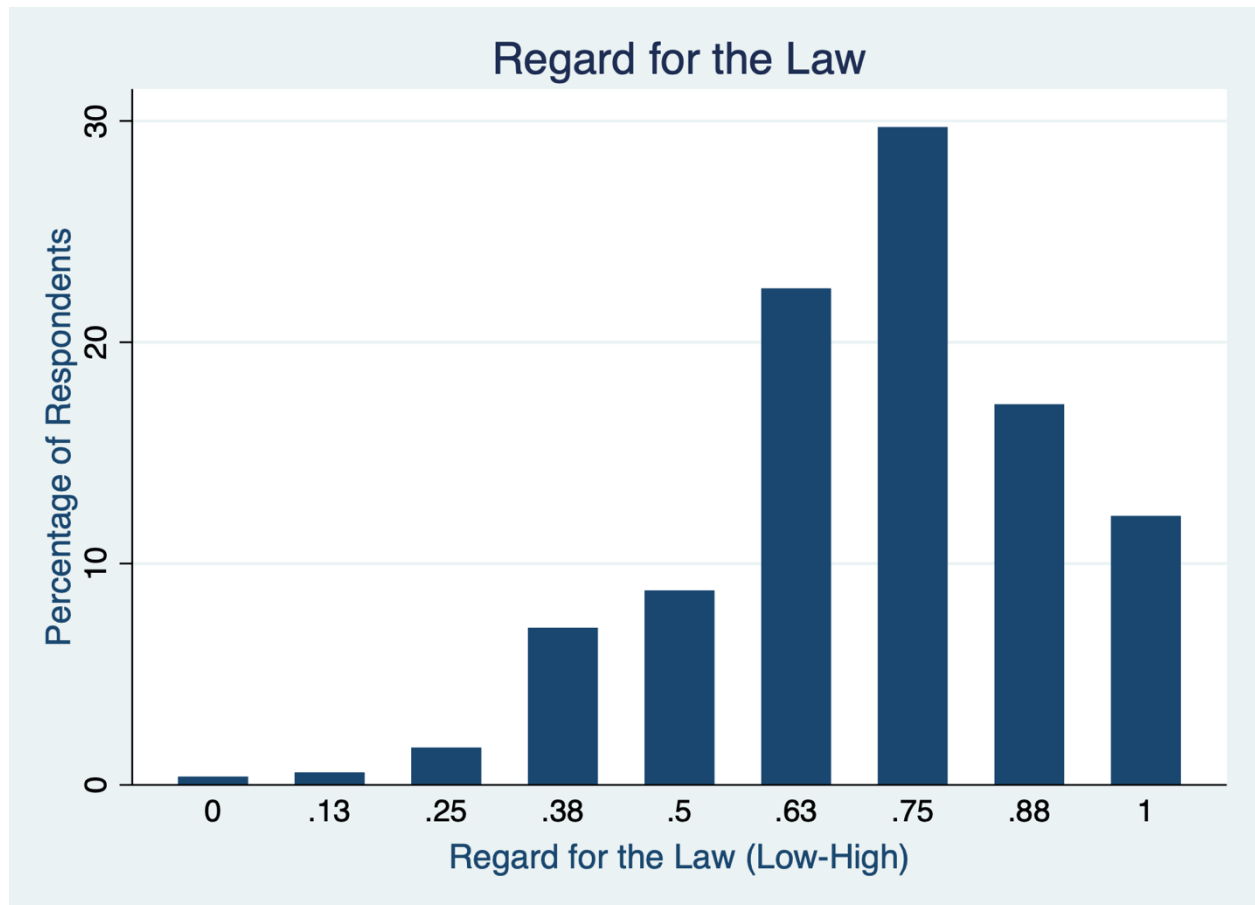
Table 2

Question	Extremely Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not very Important	Not at all Important
How important is it that people obey the law without exception?	18%	42%	31%	7%	2%
How important is a citizen's obligation to report a crime that he or she may have witnessed?	1%	5%	19%	43%	32%

In order to justify the creation of this scale I ran both a correlation coefficient tests and Cronbach's alpha test using STATA. A correlation coefficient is a statistical measure of the strength of the relationship between these two variables. These two questions have a correlation coefficient of 0.43 which is a moderately high correlation to one another. Additionally, the Cronbach's alpha, unlike a correlation coefficient is not a statistical test. It measures the reliability of pairing these two questions together. Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency of how closely related the questions are in their grouping. The Cronbach's alpha score of these two questions has a reliability coefficient of 0.60 which is statistically acceptable. These test results demonstrate the credibility and reliability of this scale to be incorporated into my data analysis.

Figure 6 displays the distribution of my respondents on the "Regard for the Law" scale. As depicted, the majority of sample respondents hold higher levels of regard for the law. This is important to keep in mind when continuing on to my analysis. In order to divide this continuous scale into two groups, I took the average score of the respondent pool. The average rating of a respondent in regard for the law is 0.71. This shows that the average respondents have higher regard for the law. Therefore, to generate two groups I could not simply make 0.5 the cut off point. I used the tick mark of 0.63 (which was the closest to 0.7 in my scale) to divide the sample it in half. This made the groupings more evenly distributed and thus increased the credibility of its usage in my analyses.

Figure 6



These variables and scales were essential to my data analysis. They allowed me to test how other variables interacted with my treatments. Specifically, they allowed me to test whether partisanship, political knowledge, or regard for the law had moderating effects on my results. These distinctions allowed me to create a clearer picture of my results and rule out alternative explanations. Next, I will proceed to explain my findings.

### III) Data Analysis: What hypotheses fell short.

In order to analyze my data, I ran regressions using the statistical program STATA. Regressions are used to display how the treatments relate to the dependent variables. Two important aspects of the regression, which I note in the following analysis, are the **p-value** and

the **regression coefficient**. The p-value quantifies the probability that the coefficient is reliably different from a finding of zero, or no effect. In statistical analysis, it is desirable to have a p-value less than 0.05 because a low p-value means a higher chance that the coefficient is not actually zero. A regression coefficient displays the strength of a relationship between two variables. In this analysis, all of the variables are coded on a 0-1 scale so the reader can interpret the results as similar to a percentage. Combined, these two categories display the statistical significance of my results.

Before analyzing my significant findings, it is important to first acknowledge what I did not find and why. There were a number of dependent variables that did not yield statistically significant results. This means that the p-values and regression coefficients were not within the ideal range to prove any correlation or causation between my independent and dependent variables. The lack of results for these variables runs counter to some of my hypotheses. I will briefly summarize and speculate why these measures did not generate findings. The following dependent variable measures did not generate statistically significant results: Russian interference, confidence in the FBI, trust in the FBI, and approval of Director Wray.

After consulting the work of Van Bavel and Pereria (2018), I decided to include a question that asked: *How likely do you think it is that Russia interfered in the 2016 Election?* This question was designed to capture the fact distorting qualities of partisan identity. I anticipated this question would display the effect of in-party and out-party cues on the perception of facts. By manipulating the partisanship of the FBI critic, I expected partisan respondents to favor alignment with their in-party over the truth. However, I did not find results for this dependent variable. I conclude that due to the prominent nature of the Russia interference investigations, my question was not effective at testing this

phenomenon. Since the FBI has confirmed Russian interference and this event occurred almost 4 years ago, the distance from the situation and publicity of the investigation may make it less effective of a measure.

Next, I wanted to see if the treatments influenced respondents' level of confidence in the FBI. However, the manipulation of source and type of criticism had no statistically significant effect on the levels of confidence in the FBI. The same results are true for my measure of trust in the FBI. It is unclear why these measures did not generate similar results to my statistical findings. I believe that more analysis is needed to understand why these measures did not generate results. The null results of these regressions can be located in the Appendix.

Finally, I asked: *How strongly do you approve of the job that FBI Director Christopher Wray has been doing?* I had anticipated that this question would generate lower approval ratings of Director Wray when the partisan criticism was in alignment with respondent party identification. However, this question did not yield results. One potential explanation is that the average respondents know very little about Director Wray. As a result, they have no knowledge of his capabilities prior to their exposure to the treatments. As a result, respondents do not need to adjust their views of Director Wray because they had no prior opinions of his job performance. The null results for all of these dependent variables can be found in the Appendix section.

### III) Data Analysis: Emotions towards the FBI

While some of my hypotheses fell short, there are statistically significant results worthy of discussion. The first important dependent variables to analyze are the measures of emotions

towards the FBI. The emotions that demonstrated significant results were the emotions of happiness, relief, anger, and fear.

### (3.1) Emotions of Happiness

I begin my analysis with the emotion of happiness. When running a general regression with the control treatment as baseline of comparison, it appears there are significant results. Respondents exposed to the treatment of Biden criticizing the FBI over misallocation of resources are less likely to feel of happy towards the FBI. It is hard to tell what is driving this result from the general regression. For further analysis I utilize prior variables and scales that measure partisanship, political knowledge, and regard for the law.

First, I compare the effect on the basis of partisanship. To reiterate my hypothesis, I hypothesized that Republicans would have the greatest shift in negative emotions towards the FBI. My findings provide support for this hypothesis. Republicans respondents exposed to treatments of President Trump and, surprisingly, Biden criticizing the FBI over misallocation of resources are less likely to express feelings of happiness towards the FBI (see Table 3 below). Democrats do not demonstrate any statistically significant results for feelings of happiness. Thus, Republicans drive this effect.

In treatments of President Trump and Biden criticizing the FBI for the misallocation of resources, Republicans are 21% less likely to express feelings of happiness towards the FBI than comparable Republican participants in the control group. Additionally, Republicans drive this finding, which displays a difference between Republican and Democratic respondents. In sum, Republicans express less feelings of happiness towards the FBI in comparison to Democrats.

This is significant because it displays a partisan division in feelings of happiness towards the FBI.

In terms of political knowledge, I hypothesized that respondents with low levels of political knowledge would express more negative emotions towards the FBI. However, my findings run counter to my hypothesis. Respondents with low levels of political knowledge are unaffected by the treatments. In contrast, I find that politically knowledgeable respondents exposed to the treatment of Biden criticizing the FBI over misallocation of resources are 15% less likely to express happiness towards the FBI, relative to comparable individuals in the control group. This is significant because it displays political knowledge as having a moderating effect on the treatments. However, this finding runs counter to my hypothesis as I expected respondents with low levels of political knowledge to drive this result.

Next, I test to see if my alternative hypothesis could be the cause of these findings. If the alternative hypothesis is correct, I would find that respondents with low regard for the law would express more negative emotions towards the FBI regardless of treatment. However, in contrast to my alternative hypothesis, I find that those with low regard for the law do not generate statistically significant results. However, respondents with high regard for the law in one of the treatment groups displayed more negative emotions towards the FBI than those within the control group.

I find that respondents with low levels of regard for the law generate no statistically significant results. However, respondents with high levels of regard for the law who viewed the treatment of Biden criticizing the FBI over misallocation of resources are 14% less likely to express feelings of happiness towards the FBI than comparable respondents exposed to the

control condition. These findings show respondents with high regard for the law view the FBI more negatively after treatment exposure. It can be speculated that respondents with high regard for the law may place a greater value on organization and structure. Potentially, the topic of criticism, misallocation of resources, could signal disorder of the FBI. As a result, this could cause respondents to feel more negatively towards the agency. Further analysis must be conducted to draw a broader conclusion on these findings, but the main takeaway of this result is it refutes the alternative hypothesis.

TABLE 3: Emotions of Happiness Towards the FBI

Treatment	Coefficient
Trump Resources	-0.35 (0.04)
Biden Resources	-0.11** (0.04)
Trump Russia	0.001 (0.04)
Biden Russia	-0.05 (0.04)
Constant	0.38 (0.03)
R2	0.017
N	514

Notes:

\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*p&lt;0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 3A: Emotions of Happiness Towards the FBI by Partisanship

Treatment	Republicans	Democrats
Trump Resources	-0.21** (0.07)	0.04 (0.05)
Biden Resources	-0.21** (0.07)	-0.05 (0.05)
Trump Russia	-0.09 (0.07)	0.05 (0.05)
Biden Russia	-0.09 (0.08)	-0.02 (0.05)
Constant	0.49 (0.05)	0.33 (0.04)
R2	0.0808	0.0157
N	153	339

Notes:

\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*p&lt;0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 3B: Emotions of Relief Towards the FBI by Political Knowledge (PK)

Treatment	Low PK	High PK
Trump Resources	-0.06 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.05)
Biden Resources	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.15** (0.05)
Trump Russia	-0.04 (0.07)	0.01 (0.05)
Biden Russia	0.03 (0.07)	-0.09 (0.05)
Constant	0.34 (0.04)	0.41 (0.04)
R2	0.0121	0.0372
N	169	345

Notes:

\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*p&lt;0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 3C: Emotions of Happiness Towards the FBI by Regard for the Law (RFL)

Treatment	Low RFL	High RFL
Trump Resources	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.05)
Biden Resources	-0.05 (0.06)	-0.14* (0.06)
Trump Russia	0.001 (0.06)	0.01 (0.05)
Biden Russia	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.05)
Constant	0.26 (0.04)	0.46 (0.04)
R2	0.0055	0.0055
N	211	211

Notes:

\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*p&lt;0.01 ()=std. err.



### (3.2) Emotions of Relief

Feelings of relief towards the FBI also generated statistically significant results. When running a general regression, respondents exposed to Biden criticizing the FBI over the misallocation of resources are 9% less likely to express emotions of relief towards the FBI in comparison to the control group (see Table 4, below).

In analyzing partisanship, I conclude that Republicans drive this result. Republican respondents exposed to treatments of Trump and Biden criticizing the FBI over the misallocation of resources are less likely to express feelings of relief towards the FBI than Republicans in the control group. The treatment of Trump criticism reduces feelings of relief among Republicans by 23%. Additionally, Republicans feelings of relief towards the FBI when exposed to Biden criticism drop by 19 percentage points. For Democrats, exposure to these two treatments generates a minimal percentage of change among respondents (ranging from 1% to 4%). Generating a similar pattern to the previous analysis, this partisan division displays that partisanship does play a part in generating feelings towards the FBI. This finding also supports my hypothesis that Republicans would generate more negative emotional responses to the treatments than Democrats in their ratings of the FBI.

When analyzing the effects of political knowledge, there are no significant results among respondents with low levels of political knowledge. Politically knowledgeable respondents drive this result. Respondents with high levels of political knowledge who are exposed to the treatment of Biden criticizing the FBI over misallocation of resources express lower feelings of relief towards the FBI. Respondents within the treatment group with high political knowledge are 12% less likely to express feelings of relief towards the FBI in comparison to politically

knowledgeable respondents in the control group. This could be caused by the background knowledge the politically knowledgeable respondents possess. Since this treatment highlights a previously unknown deficiency in the FBI, it may cause a greater change among respondents within the treatment condition.

Similar to the happiness emotion results, respondents with low regard for the law have no statistically significant results. In contrast, those with high regard for the law also do not yield results.

TABLE 4: Emotions of Relief Towards the FBI

Treatment	Coefficient
Trump Resources	-0.06 (0.04)
Biden Resources	-0.09* (0.04)
Trump Russia	-0.03 (0.04)
Biden Russia	-0.03 (0.04)
Constant	0.4 (0.03)
R2	0.0125
N	514

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ( )=std. err.

TABLE 4B: Emotions of Relief Towards the FBI by Political Knowledge (PK)

Treatment	Low PK	High PK
Trump Resources	-0.11 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.05)
Biden Resources	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.12* (0.05)
Trump Russia	-0.08 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.05)
Biden Russia	0.04 (0.07)	-0.07 (0.05)
Constant	0.38 (0.04)	0.42 (0.04)
R2	0.0116	0.0212
N	170	344

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ( )=std. err.

TABLE 4A: Emotions of Relief Towards the FBI by Partisanship

Treatment	Republicans	Democrats
Trump Resources	-0.23** (0.07)	0.01 (0.05)
Biden Resources	-0.19** (0.07)	-0.04 (0.05)
Trump Russia	-0.09 (0.06)	0.002 (0.05)
Biden Russia	-0.11 (0.08)	0.01 (0.05)
Constant	0.5 (0.05)	0.36 (0.04)
R2	0.0879	0.0048
N	154	338

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ( )=std. err.

TABLE 4C: Emotions of Relief Towards the FBI by Regard for the Law (RFL)

Treatment	Low RFL	High RFL
Trump Resources	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.08 (0.05)
Biden Resources	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.10 (0.05)
Trump Russia	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.05)
Biden Russia	0.003 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.05)
Constant	0.31 (0.04)	0.46 (0.04)
R2	0.0102	0.0135
N	211	303

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ( )=std. err.

### (3.3) Emotions of Anger

The next emotion is feelings of anger towards the FBI. Respondents exposed to treatments of any President Trump criticism, either over the misallocation of resources or the Russia investigation, or any criticism of the Russia investigation (including criticism from President Trump and Biden) are more likely to express feelings of anger towards the FBI (see Table 5 below).

In terms of partisanship, Republicans mostly drive these results. Republicans exposed to the treatment of President Trump criticizing the FBI over the misallocation of resources are 16% more likely to express anger towards the FBI than Republican respondents in the control group. Democrats exposed to the treatment of President Trump criticizing the FBI over the Russia investigation are 10% more likely to express anger towards the FBI than Democratic respondents in the control group.

While there was no statistical distinction with variations of political knowledge, there were results with respect to regard for the law. Respondents with low levels of regard for the law who are exposed to the treatment of President Trump criticizing the FBI over the Russia investigation are more likely to express feelings of anger towards the FBI. Specifically, respondents with low regard for the law are 16% more likely to express feelings of anger towards the FBI than the corresponding respondents in the control group.

TABLE 5: Emotions of Anger Towards the FBI

Treatment	Coefficient
Trump Resources	0.07* (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.04 (0.04)
Trump Russia	0.08* (0.04)
Biden Russia	0.07* (0.04)
Constant	0.23 (0.03)
R2	0.013
N	515

Notes:

\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*p&lt;0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 5B: Emotions of Anger Towards the FBI  
by Political Knowledge (PK)

Treatment	Low PK	High PK
Trump Resources	0.03 (0.06)	0.10* (0.05)
Biden Resources	-0.02 (0.06)	0.09 (0.05)
Trump Russia	0.04 (0.06)	0.11** (0.05)
Biden Russia	0.06 (0.06)	0.09* (0.05)
Constant	0.28 (0.04)	0.20 (0.03)
R2	0.0117	0.0097
N	170	345

Notes:

\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*p&lt;0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 5A: Emotions of Anger Towards the FBI  
by Partisanship

Treatment	Republicans	Democrats
Trump Resources	0.16* (0.06)	0.04 (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.07 (0.07)	0.04 (0.05)
Trump Russia	0.08 (0.06)	0.10* (0.05)
Biden Russia	0.11 (0.08)	0.08 (0.05)
Constant	0.24 (0.05)	0.23 (0.03)
R2	0.0405	0.0046
N	154	339

Notes:

\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*p&lt;0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 5C: Emotions of Anger Towards the FBI  
by Regard for the Law (RFL)

Treatment	Low RFL	High RFL
Trump Resources	0.04 (0.06)	0.09* (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.09 (0.06)	0.01 (0.05)
Trump Russia	0.16** (0.06)	0.04 (0.04)
Biden Russia	0.05 (0.06)	0.09* (0.05)
Constant	0.27 (0.04)	0.21 (0.03)
R2	0.0212	0.023
N	212	303

Notes:

\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*p&lt;0.01 ()=std. err.

### (3.4) Emotions of Fear

Emotions of fear towards the FBI also generated significant results. A general regression on all respondents in my study reveals that exposure to the treatment of President Trump criticizing the FBI over the misallocation of resources are more likely to express feelings of fear towards the FBI (see Table 6, below).

In terms of partisanship, Republicans exposed to treatment of President Trump criticizing the FBI over the misallocation of resources are more likely to express fear towards the FBI.

Republicans are 13% more likely to express feelings of fear towards the FBI in comparison to Republicans in the control group. In contrast, Democrats do not display any statistically significant results. This finding aligns with the previous findings in displaying that Republicans have stronger emotional responses to the FBI after treatment exposure than Democrats. This is why in this treatment Republicans drive a significant portion of the partisan results.

Respondents with high levels of political knowledge exposed to treatment of President Trump criticizing the FBI over the misallocation of resources are more likely to express feelings of fear towards the FBI. Within this treatment, respondents with high political knowledge are 11% more likely to express feelings of fear than politically knowledgeable respondents within the control group.

Respondents with low regard for the law who are exposed to the treatment of President Trump criticizing the FBI over the Russia investigation are more likely to express feelings of fear towards the FBI. They differ from respondents in the control condition by 14 percentage points. This is the first result within the emotions measures that respondents with low regard for the law generate statistically significant results. I speculate these results occur because respondents with low regard for the law have more senses of fear towards the FBI because they do not believe it is capable of enforcing the laws. As a result, criticism highlighting the FBI's flaws may cause these respondents to express more fear than respondents in the control group.

TABLE 6: Emotions of Fear Towards the FBI

Treatment	Coefficient
Trump Resources	0.08* (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.001 (0.04)
Trump Russia	0.07 (0.04)
Biden Russia	0.05 (0.04)
Constant	0.21 (0.03)
R2	0.0153
N	514

Notes:

\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*p&lt;0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 6B: Emotions of Fear Towards the FBI  
by Political Knowledge (PK)

Treatment	Low PK	High PK
Trump Resources	0.03 (0.06)	0.11** (0.04)
Biden Resources	-0.06 (0.07)	0.04 (0.05)
Trump Russia	0.04 (0.07)	0.09* (0.04)
Biden Russia	0.06 (0.07)	0.07 (0.04)
Constant	0.27 (0.04)	0.18 (0.03)
R2	0.0202	0.0211
N	169	345

Notes:

\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*p&lt;0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 6A: Emotions of Fear Towards the FBI  
by Partisanship

Treatment	Republicans	Democrats
Trump Resources	0.13* (0.06)	0.06 (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.08 (0.07)	-0.03 (0.05)
Trump Russia	0.10 (0.06)	0.07 (0.05)
Biden Russia	0.04 (0.07)	0.06 (0.05)
Constant	0.19 (0.04)	0.23 (0.03)
R2	0.0315	0.0198
N	153	339

Notes:

\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*p&lt;0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 6C: Emotions of Fear Towards the FBI  
by Regard for the Law (RFL)

Treatment	Low RFL	High RFL
Trump Resources	0.05 (0.06)	0.09* (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.02 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.05)
Trump Russia	0.14* (0.06)	0.02 (0.04)
Biden Russia	0.06 (0.06)	0.05 (0.04)
Constant	0.24 (0.04)	0.19 (0.03)
R2	0.0297	0.023
N	211	303

Notes:

\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*p&lt;0.01 ()=std. err.

### (3.5) Conclusion

In viewing these results, some trends emerge. For expression of positive emotions, like happiness and relief, only the treatments criticizing the FBI for the misallocation of resources generated statistically significant negative results. This finding runs counter to my hypothesis. I believed that treatments including the Russia Investigation would generate greater findings than the misallocation of resources treatments. I believe this may be a result of the increased publicity of the Russia investigations. Respondents already had negative emotions associated with the Russia investigation, so this topic did not generate statistically significant scores. However, the

misallocation of resources presents a new topic of criticism that may have evoked a more dramatic shift in respondent emotions, which is captured in the regression. In contrast, for the negative emotions of anger and fear, both topics of criticism generated statistical significance. I believe this is because the expression of negative emotions towards the FBI was in alignment with the partisan criticism displayed in the treatments. Respondents were incentivized to express strong negative emotions in an attempt to best align with their partisan identities.

Overall, Republicans drove the majority of the findings displaying they have a greater emotional response to the treatments. Additionally, respondents with high levels of political knowledge generated more statistically significant results. Finally, respondents with high regard for the law drove the results with the exception of emotions of fear towards the FBI.

#### IV) Data Analysis: Is the FBI a Partisan Entity?

The major finding of my analysis is that respondents view the FBI as a politicized entity favoring the Democratic Party. I ran regressions to see how the treatment groups interacted with the dependent variable of FBI partisan favoritism. The question, located in the post-test, reads: *“Do you think the FBI tends to treat both major political parties equally, or does it tend to favor either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party?”* The answer choices run from “Strongly favors the Democratic Party” to “Strongly favors the Republican Party.”

When running an initial general regression on my entire sample, I found statistically significant results (see Table 7, below). Respondents exposed to treatments of President Trump criticizing the FBI over misallocation of resources and the Russia investigation view the FBI as

expressing favoritism towards the Democratic Party. Table 7 displays the general regression results.

**TABLE 7: Perception that the FBI Favors  
Dems over Reps**

<b>Treatment</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>
<b>Trump Resources</b>	0.10** (0.03)
<b>Biden Resources</b>	0.02 (0.03)
<b>Trump Russia</b>	0.10** (0.03)
<b>Biden Russia</b>	0.04 (0.03)
<b>Constant</b>	0.46 (0.02)
<b>R2</b>	0.0338
<b>N</b>	520

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01      ()=std. err.

Next, I re-ran the general regression only measuring respondents who identify as Republicans (see Table 7A, below). I hypothesized that Republicans would express more negative emotions towards the FBI when exposed to President Trump or Russia Investigation criticism. My findings support this hypothesis. Republican respondents exposed to treatments of President Trump and Biden criticizing the Russia investigation and Trump criticizing the misallocation of resources are more likely to view the FBI as favoring the Democratic Party. Specifically, when President Trump is cited criticizing the FBI over the misallocation of resources, the favoritism for the Democratic Party measure increases by 16% compared to Republican respondents in the control group. When President Trump criticizes the FBI over the Russia investigation, this idea of favoritism increases by 20%. Finally, when Biden criticizes the



FBI over the Russia investigation the phenomenon increases by 18% in comparison to Republicans in the control group.

In other words, Republicans exposed to criticism dictated by Trump or involving the Russia investigation view the FBI as politically biased to favor the Democrats. This finding is interesting because it displays how partisan individuals, when signaled by an in-party sponsor (in this case, President Trump) view the FBI as being aligned with the out-party. This displays how Republican partisanship is activated in generation of opinion towards the FBI.

Subsequently, I ran the general regression only measuring respondents who identify as Democrats in order to make comparisons across party lines. Democrat respondents exposed to treatments of Trump criticizing the FBI over misallocation of resources and the Russia investigation are 7% more likely to view the FBI as favoring the Democratic Party compared to Democrats in the control group. In comparing these results to Republican respondents, Republicans have stronger results than Democrats. It is important to note that regressions were run to test if there were findings among Independents, however there were no statistically significant results.

TABLE 7A: Perception that the FBI Favors Dems  
over Reps by Partisanship

Treatment	Republicans	Democrats
Trump Resources	0.16** (0.06)	0.09** (0.03)
Biden Resources	0.11 (0.06)	0.02 (0.03)
Trump Russia	0.20** (0.06)	0.07* (0.03)
Biden Russia	0.18** (0.07)	0.03 (0.03)
_cons	0.49 (0.04)	0.42 (0.02)
R2	0.091	0.0302
N	154	344

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01

()=std. err.

These are interesting results, because I expected Republicans and Democrats to diverge in their views of FBI favoritism. However, it seems that both groups view the FBI as a partisan agency. Both groups also agree that the FBI is politically biased to favor the Democratic Party. However, there are still substantial differences in the strength of each partisan response to this measure.

One reason that the Republican response is stronger than the Democratic response may be because the significant effects were found for the treatments mainly involving President Trump or the Russia investigation. Both of these items can potentially act as signals to prime Republican identity, which may generate a stronger response. In short, since the partisan cues were mainly in-party for Republican respondents, they may have had greater incentives to align in accordance with the criticism. In contrast, Democratic respondents may not have been primed as effectively by an out-party cue, thus making their responses less intense. This is a pertinent

finding that contributes to my overall hypothesis that people conceptualize the FBI as a political entity. Additionally, partisanship does matter when expressing opinions towards the FBI.

These findings are inconsistent with my hypothesis that Republicans and Democrats would diverge in their opinion of FBI favoritism. I anticipated Democrat respondents to indicate that the FBI favored the Republican Party. However, after further analysis, the results can be explained. Potentially, Democrats exposed to out-party criticism of the FBI may view the FBI as working in alignment with their partisan goals. As characterized by the old proverb, these results display the mentality of *the enemy of my enemy is my friend*. Democrats may view the FBI as favoring their party because exposure to Republican sponsored criticism puts them on the same political team.

Next, I analyzed if political knowledge levels interacted with these results. I hypothesized that respondents with low levels of political knowledge would generate more negative emotions towards the FBI. However, the results were not consistent with this hypothesis as there were no statistically significant results for individuals with low levels of political knowledge. However, there were results for politically knowledgeable individuals. Respondents with high levels of political knowledge exposed to treatments of President Trump criticizing the FBI over misallocation of resources and the Russia investigation are more likely to view the FBI as favoring the Democratic Party. Additionally, respondents with high levels of political knowledge exposed to the treatment of Biden criticizing the FBI over Russia investigation are more likely to view the FBI as favoring the Democratic Party. In both treatments, respondents with high levels of political knowledge exposed to these treatments differ from those within the control group by roughly 10 percentage points in agreeing that the FBI favors the Democrats.

**TABLE 7B: Perception that the FBI Favors Dems  
over Reps by Political Knowledge (PK)**

<b>Treatment</b>	<b>Low PK</b>	<b>High PK</b>
<b>Trump Resources</b>	0.09 (0.05)	0.10** (0.04)
<b>Biden Resources</b>	0.02 (0.06)	0.03 (0.04)
<b>Trump Russia</b>	0.06 (0.05)	0.13** (0.04)
<b>Biden Russia</b>	-0.04 (0.06)	0.07* (0.04)
<b>_cons</b>	0.48 (0.04)	0.44 (0.03)
<b>R2</b>	0.0365	0.0436
<b>N</b>	174	346

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01

()=std. err.

These findings do not align with many of my hypotheses. I hypothesized that respondents with low levels of political knowledge would generate the greatest results in comparison to those with high levels of political knowledge. However, throughout my analyses, there were only statistically significant results among highly politically knowledgeable respondents. After further consideration, these findings signal an important aspect of attitude development towards the FBI.

My analysis suggests that politically knowledgeable respondents were more influenced by the treatments than respondents with low levels of political knowledge. I assert one potential explanation for this finding. Possibly, politically knowledgeable respondents with greater outside opinions on the political parties, Joe Biden, or President Trump may have been influenced more by the treatment because they had more pre-existing knowledge that was challenged by the treatments. Politically knowledgeable respondents may have stronger opinions on President Trump or the Russia investigation. As a result, their responses generate results because their pre-

existing knowledge is being challenged. Meanwhile, respondents with low levels of political knowledge had less background knowledge to begin with. Thus, the treatments did not challenge their previous conceptualizations of these figures or events.

Finally, I wanted to determine if my “Regard for the Law” scale had any mediating effects on these findings of political favoritism for the Democratic Party. If it did have a moderating effect, it would give support to an alternative hypothesis that partisanship is not the primary driver of these results. While, it does appear to have some effects, these results disappear when comparing the low-level and high-level respondents to one another. This finding is not consistent with the alternative hypothesis and strengthens my primary hypothesis.

Respondents with low regard for the law who were exposed to treatments of President Trump criticizing the FBI over misallocation of resources and the Russia investigation are more likely to view the FBI as favoring the Democratic Party. For respondents who score high in regard for the law, the results are the same. However, when looking across these two sections for differences, there is little variation between the results of the two groups. This displays that while regard for the law may have an impact, differentiation between low and high regard for the law do not make any significant distinctions.

TABLE 7C: Perception that the FBI Favors Dems  
over Reps by Regard for the Law (RFL)

Treatment	Low RFL	High RFL
Trump Resources	0.10* (0.05)	0.10** (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.01 (0.05)	0.04 (0.04)
Trump Russia	0.12** (0.05)	0.09* (0.04)
Biden Russia	0.08 (0.05)	0.01 (0.04)
_cons	0.42 (0.03)	0.48 (0.03)
R2	0.0461	0.0338
N	214	306

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01

()=std. err.

I included this scale to account for an alternative explanation and add credibility to my argument. I was surprised to find that these measures created statistical distinctions within the sample. However, both individuals with high and low regard for the law display the same statistically significant results. Respondents with both high and low regard for the law exposed to treatments of Trump criticism view the FBI as favoring the Democratic Party.

Subsequently, I ran some interaction regressions for my regard for the law scale to see if there was a greater relationship that the general regression was not displaying. The results confirmed my belief that there is not much interaction between the treatments and the regard for law scale. These findings conclude that the results for regard for the law are not significant and can be viewed as having little to no impact on the results for this dependent variable.

Overall, these findings support my hypothesis that the FBI has become a politicized entity and is conceptualized in terms of partisanship. This has significant implications for the functioning of the FBI within American society. The FBI is seen as favoring the Democratic Party by both Republicans and Democrats when exposed to treatments containing criticism from President Trump. As he is our current president, it could be the case that currently, people view the FBI as favoring the Democratic Party. Within the minds of many Americans, the FBI has taken a side within the political arena. This finding has huge implications for the functioning of the FBI.

## **Chapter 7: Discussion**

Overall, I find significant results that implicate that Americans view the FBI as a partisan entity. While the findings outlined above display more nuance than my original hypotheses, they do support my main assertion. The FBI is viewed through a partisan lens. My results suggest that the FBI has become a politicized entity in American public opinion.

To advance my analysis, I generated certain variables and scales to test along with the regressions. I generated a partisanship variable to separately test results for Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. I created a political knowledge scale to test results for respondents with high and low levels of political knowledge. Finally, I generated a regard for the law scale to examine whether high or low regard for the law influenced the effect of the treatments. All of these variables and scales build on previous literature to support their usage and each maintains statistically reliable values.

Moving into my analysis, my initial finding is that there are partisan divisions among respondents when expressing emotions towards the FBI. Based on the partisanship of the critic, Democratic and Republican respondents expressed emotions towards the FBI that best aligned with their party identification. This finding runs counter to Goren et al.'s (2009) negativity bias hypothesis, as I find in-party cues produce larger effects among partisans than out-party cues. These findings call into question the validity of the negativity bias hypothesis. Overall, Republicans exposed to President Trump criticism of the FBI (for either topic) express more negative emotions towards the FBI in comparison to Democrats within the same treatment.

Next, I find that respondents exposed to treatments containing President Trump criticism are more likely to view the FBI as favoring the Democratic Party. Both Republicans and



Democrats view the FBI as favoring the Democratic Party when exposed to criticism sponsored by President Trump. Respondents with high levels of political knowledge view the FBI as favoring the Democratic Party when exposed to President Trump criticism. Finally, both respondents with high and low scores on the regard for the law scale, who viewed treatments containing criticism by President Trump, viewed the FBI as favoring the Democratic Party.

These findings support my main assertion that conceptualization of the FBI is influenced by individual partisanship. However, many of my minor hypotheses were not supported by my findings. Counter to many of my hypotheses, respondents with low levels of political knowledge did not drive any of the results. Only members with high levels of political knowledge generated statistical findings.

One question that remains is: why do the results display bigger effects for Trump criticism and less effects for Biden? Within the sample, 66% of respondents identify as Democrats. However, many of the results are driven by Republicans. There are two potential explanations. One is that since President Trump is in office right now his criticism carries more weight than that of Joe Biden. A second explanation is that Trump and the Russia investigation can be viewed by some as two symbols that prime Republican partisanship. In contrast, Joe Biden is the only prime for Democratic respondents. This may be the reasoning why Republican respondents have stronger responses than Democratic respondents.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusion**

By building off recent opinion polls as outlined in Chapter 3, my thesis contributes to a new line of study observing the shift in opinion of the FBI. Subsequent to the works outlined in Chapter 3, my study generates a survey experiment to further quantify whether average Americans conceptualize the FBI as a partisan entity. My survey experiment design distinguishes my work from prior studies because it allows me to analyze the causal relationship between partisanship and opinion of the FBI.

My research question is important because its findings have significant implications for the future of the FBI as a governmental law enforcement agency. My findings display that respondents employ their partisan identity when expressing emotions towards the FBI. Additionally, I find that both Democratic respondents and Republican respondents view the FBI as favoring the Democratic Party. Both of these findings display that the FBI is conceptualized within a partisan frame in the minds of Americans, which was not the case in prior studies. This is a recent shift and the growing partisan divide could be a potential explanation for this change.

If the average American views the FBI as a partisan entity, how does this finding impact the FBI? First and foremost, American citizens opinions of the FBI as partisan could interfere with its ability to carry out its mission of protecting the American people. Citizens involved in investigations may be less inclined to cooperate with the Bureau if they view the agency as working against their partisan preferences. As previously outlined, partisanship is one of the strongest and most stable identification traits for Americans. Americans who believe the FBI is threatening their partisan identity may not be willing to cooperate with the agency.

The FBI is dependent on its collaboration with Americans to uphold its mission of maintaining national security. My findings have strong implications for the functionality of the Bureau in today's society. Without the full cooperation of the average American, the FBI cannot perform its job properly. The FBI is dependent on outside sources and collaboration with private companies to carry out its mission. If this cooperation is tainted by partisan preferences, the FBI is placed at a huge disadvantage.

Overall, my research highlights there is much left to explore on this topic. However, I believe it lays the groundwork for more studies to follow. It would be interesting to further examine how different partisan primes influence expression of emotions towards the FBI. Additionally, I would be curious to see if this conceptualization of the FBI as a partisan entity continues after Donald Trump's Presidency ends. This study would conclude if these findings are unique to the time period of the Trump presidency, or if there has been a fundamental shift in conceptualizations of the FBI.

While there are many questions left to be explored, it is clear that the role of the FBI in the minds of Americans has changed. My findings have significant implications for the functionality of the FBI in today's society. On a broader scale, my research displays that the manipulation of type and source of criticism influences the activation of partisan identity, which in turn affects perceptions of the FBI.

# **Appendix**

## **I) Copy of Entire Qualtrics Survey**

### **Honors Thesis Survey**

---

#### **Start of Block: Introduction**

We are interested in understanding your political opinions. We would like you to read a story about a recent political event and tell us what you think. Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential.

The initial survey should take you one minute to complete, and you will be given \$0.10 for your participation. If you qualify, the full study should take you between 10 and 15 minutes to complete, and you will receive an additional \$0.90 (\$1 total) for your participation.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study for any reason. If you would like to contact the Principal Investigator in the study to discuss this research, please e-mail Rachel Hertzberg at [rachertz@umich.edu](mailto:rachertz@umich.edu).

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that your participation in the study is voluntary, you are 18 years of age, and that you are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time and for any reason.

Please note that this survey will be best displayed on a laptop or desktop computer. Some features may be less compatible for use on a mobile device.

#### **End of Block: Introduction**

---

#### **Start of Block: Pre-Test 1: Party ID**

First we would like to get some more information about you.

---

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, Independent, or what?

- Democrat (1)
  - Republican (2)
  - Independent (3)
  - Other (4)
- 

*Display This Question:*

*If Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, Independent, or... = Democrat*

Would you call yourself a strong or a not very strong Democrat?

- Very strong (1)
  - Strong (2)
  - Somewhat strong (3)
  - Not strong (4)
  - Not at all strong (5)
- 

*Display This Question:*

*If Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, Independent, or... = Republican*

Would you call yourself a strong or a not very strong Republican?

- Very strong (1)
  - Strong (2)
  - Somewhat strong (3)
  - Not strong (4)
  - Not at all strong (5)
- 

*Display This Question:*

*If Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, Independent, or... = Other*  
*Or Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, Independent, or... = Independent*

Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or the Democratic Party?

- Republican Party (1)
  - Democratic Party (2)
  - Other (3)
-

We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives.

Below, is a scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

- Extremely Liberal (1)
- Liberal (2)
- Slightly Liberal (3)
- Moderate (4)
- Slightly Conservative (5)
- Conservative (6)
- Extremely Conservative (7)

**End of Block: Pre-Test 1: Party ID**

---

**Start of Block: Pre-Test 2: Demographics**

Which of the following most closely characterizes your highest level of educational attainment?

- Less than High School Diploma (1)
- High School Diploma/GED (2)
- Some college but no degree (3)
- Associate Arts Degree (4)
- Bachelor's Degree (5)
- Post-Graduate Degree (ex: MA, MD, PHD, JD) (6)

---

What is your current gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Transgender (3)
- A gender not listed here (4)
- 

What is your age in years?

---

---

Are you a United States citizen?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

**End of Block: Pre-Test 2: Demographics**

---

**Start of Block: Pre-Test 3: Law Enforcement**



How important is it that people obey the law without exception?

- Extremely important (1)
  - Very important (2)
  - Somewhat important (3)
  - Not very important (4)
  - Not at all important (5)
- 

How important is it that people follow their conscience, even if it means breaking the law to do so?

- Extremely important (1)
  - Very important (2)
  - Somewhat important (3)
  - Not very important (4)
  - Not at all important (5)
-

How important is a citizen's obligation to report a crime that he or she may have witnessed?

- Extremely important (1)
  - Very important (2)
  - Somewhat important (3)
  - Not very important (4)
  - Not at all important (5)
- 

We are interested in your impressions of the effectiveness of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Do you think the FBI is extremely effective, very effective, moderately effective, not very effective, or not at all effective?

- Extremely effective (1)
- Very effective (2)
- Moderately effective (3)
- Not very effective (4)
- Not at all effective (5)

**End of Block: Pre-Test 3: Law Enforcement**

---

**Start of Block: Pre-Test 4: Political Knowledge**

Now we would like to ask you a few questions about various political figures and issues that have been in the news. Some of these questions will be more difficult than others so do not worry if you do not know the answer to the questions.

---

Which party is in the majority in the United States House of Representatives?

- Democratic Party (1)
  - Republican Party (2)
  - Don't Know (3)
- 

Please identify which of the following individuals is currently the Director of the FBI?

- Mike Pompeo (1)
  - Bill Barr (2)
  - Neil Gorsuch (3)
  - Christopher Wray (4)
- 

Please identify which of the following individuals is the House minority leader?

- Nancy Pelosi (1)
- Kevin McCarthy (2)
- Paul Ryan (3)
- Mike Pompeo (4)

---

**End of Block: Pre-Test 4: Political Knowledge**


---

**Start of Block: Pre-Test 5: Feeling Thermometer**

We would like to get your feelings towards some organizations. Please rate the listed organizations on a scale from 0-100. Ratings between 50 and 100 mean that you feel favorable or warm towards the group. Ratings between 0 and 50 mean you don't feel favorable toward the group or that you don't care too much for that group. You would rate the group at the 50 point mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the group.

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

How would you rate the police? ()	
How would you rate the Democratic Party? ()	
How would you rate the Republican Party? ()	

---

**End of Block: Pre-Test 5: Feeling Thermometer**


---

**Start of Block: Introduction to Treatment**

We would now like you to read a BBC Breaking News article. Please pay attention as you will be tested on your knowledge of the article afterwards.

---

**End of Block: Introduction to Treatment**


---

**Start of Block: Treatment**

(Treatments will be randomized so each respondent will only receive one treatment article to read)

Treatment 1

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## US & Canada

# FBI under fire


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## Trump criticizes FBI over misallocation of resources

President Trump heavily criticized the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) over its misallocation of resources.

During a recent press conference, FBI Director Christopher Wray acknowledged that certain field offices are devoting too many resources to Anti-Government Extremism investigations, where they should be allocating those resources to White Collar Fraud cases.

Upon learning of this comment, Trump responded over Twitter writing: "The misallocation of resources is unacceptable! This is embarrassing for the FBI."



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## US & Canada

# FBI under fire


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## Biden criticizes FBI over misallocation of resources

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Upon learning of this comment, Biden responded over Twitter writing: “The misallocation of resources is unacceptable! This is embarrassing for the FBI.”



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## US & Canada

# FBI under fire

12 December 2018 f 📺 🐦 ✉ ↪ Share

## Trump criticizes FBI over Russia investigation

President Trump has heavily criticized the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) over its investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

During a recent press conference, FBI Director Christopher Wray acknowledged that the Russians sought to influence the 2016 Presidential Elections.

Upon learning of this comment, Trump responded over Twitter writing: "This Russia investigation is a witch hunt! This is embarrassing for the FBI."



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## US & Canada

# FBI under fire


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## Biden criticizes FBI over Russia investigation

Former Vice President Biden has heavily criticized the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) over its investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

During a recent press conference, FBI Director Christopher Wray denied that the Russians sought to influence the 2016 Presidential Elections.

Upon learning of this comment, Biden responded over Twitter writing: "This Russia investigation is extremely important! This is embarrassing for the FBI."




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# FBI under fire

🕒 12 December 2018



## Activist criticizes FBI over Evidence Collection Procedures

Michael Davis, head of the Crime Scene Integrity Coalition (CSIC), a criminology interest group, has launched a round of criticisms against the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) over its evidence collection procedures.

During a recent press conference, FBI Director Christopher Wray acknowledged that the FBI's evidence collection procedures may cause biological evidence to deteriorate before it can be fully evaluated.

Upon learning of this comment Mr. Davis responded by saying: "Revising these procedure is extremely important! This is embarrassing for the FBI."



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End of Block: Treatment

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Start of Block: Manipulation Check Test

The following questions are designed to test your knowledge of the previous news article. If you correctly answer these questions you will receive a \$0.90 bonus.

-----

In the article you just read, which individual was reported as criticizing the FBI?

- Donald Trump (1)
  - Joe Biden (2)
  - Michael Davis (3)
  - Barack Obama (4)
- 

In the article you just read, what was the subject of the criticism expressed towards the FBI?

- Misallocation of resources (1)
  - Russia investigation (2)
  - Evidence collection procedures (3)
  - Domestic terrorism investigations (4)
-

In the article you just read, what was the name of the FBI Director?

- James Comey (1)
- Christopher Wray (2)
- William Session (3)
- Ron Paul (4)

End of Block: Manipulation Check Test

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Start of Block: Post-Test 1: FBI

We would like to you answer a few more questions.

-----

We would like to get your feelings towards some of our government leaders and government agencies. Please rate the listed individuals and organizations on a scale from 0-100. Ratings between 50 and 100 mean that you feel favorable or warm towards the subject. Ratings between 0 and 50 mean you don't feel favorable toward the subject or that you don't care too much for that subject. You would rate the subject at the 50 point mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the person.

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

How would you rate the FBI? ()	
How would you rate President Donald Trump? ()	
How would you rate former Vice President Joe Biden? ()	

-----

How often can you trust the FBI to do what is right?

- Always (1)
  - Most of the time (2)
  - About half the time (3)
  - Sometimes (4)
  - Never (5)
- 

How often can you trust the federal government in Washington D.C. to do what is right?

- Always (1)
- Most of the time (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Sometimes (4)
- Never (5)

**End of Block: Post-Test 1: FBI**

---

**Start of Block: Post-Test 1B: FBI**

Do you think the FBI tends to treat both major political parties equally, or does it tend to favor either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party?

- Strongly favors the Democratic Party (1)
  - Slightly favors the Democratic Party (2)
  - Treats both parties equally (3)
  - Slightly favors the Republican Party (4)
  - Strongly favors the Republican Party (5)
- 

How much confidence do you have in the FBI?

- A great deal of confidence (1)
  - A lot of confidence (2)
  - A moderate amount of confidence (3)
  - A little confidence (4)
  - No confidence at all (5)
-

How strongly do you approve of the job that FBI Director Christopher Wray has been doing?

- Strongly approve (1)
- Approve (2)
- Neither approve nor disapprove (3)
- Disapprove (4)
- Strongly disapprove (5)

**End of Block: Post-Test 1B: FBI**

---

**Start of Block: Post Test 1C: Russia Interference**

How likely do you think it is that Russia interfered in the 2016 Election?

- Extremely likely (1)
- Moderately likely (2)
- Slightly likely (3)
- Neither likely nor unlikely (4)
- Slightly unlikely (5)
- Moderately unlikely (6)
- Extremely unlikely (7)

**End of Block: Post Test 1C: Russia Interference**

---

**Start of Block: Post-Test 2: Trump Questions and Emotions**

How often would you say you have felt each of the following ways because of the kind of person Donald Trump is or because of something he has done?

	Always (1)	Most of the time (2)	About half of the time (3)	Some of the time (4)	Never (5)
Hopeful (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Angry (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Afraid (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proud (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bitter (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worried (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Embarrassed (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ashamed (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Happy (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relieved (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Post-Test 2: Trump Questions and Emotions

---

Start of Block: Post-Test 3: Biden Emotions

How often would you say you have felt each of the following ways because of the kind of person Joe Biden is or because of something he has done?

	Always (1)	Most of the time (2)	About half the time (3)	Some of the time (4)	Never (5)
Hopeful (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Angry (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Afraid (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proud (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bitter (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worried (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Embarrassed (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ashamed (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Happy (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relieved (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Post-Test 3: Biden Emotions

---

Start of Block: Post-Test 4: FBI emotions



How often would you say you have felt each of the following ways because of the kind of organization the FBI is or because of something it has done?

	Always (1)	Most of the time (2)	About half the time (3)	Some of the time (4)	Never (5)
Hopeful (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Angry (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Afraid (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proud (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bitter (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worried (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Embarrassed (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ashamed (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Happy (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relieved (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Post-Test 4: FBI emotions

---

Start of Block: Post Test 5: Police Emotions

How often would you say you have felt each of the following ways because of the local police or because of something it has done?

	Always (1)	Most of the time (2)	About half the time (3)	Some of the time (4)	Never (5)
Hopeful (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Angry (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Afraid (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proud (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bitter (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worried (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Embarrassed (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ashamed (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Happy (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relieved (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Post Test 5: Police Emotions

Start of Block: Post Test 6: Press Emotions

How often would you say you have felt each of the following ways because of the national press (ex: New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal) or because of something it has done?

	Always (1)	Most of the time (2)	About half the time (3)	Some of the time (4)	Never (5)
Hopeful (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Angry (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Afraid (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proud (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bitter (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worried (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Embarrassed (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ashamed (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Happy (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relieved (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Post Test 6: Press Emotions

---

Start of Block: Post Test 7: Press Emotions TV

How often would you say you have felt each of the following ways because of cable news programs (ex: CNN, MSNBC, Fox) or because of something they have done?

	Always (1)	Most of the time (2)	About half the time (3)	Some of the time (4)	Never (5)
Hopeful (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Angry (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Afraid (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proud (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bitter (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worried (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Embarrassed (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ashamed (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Happy (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relieved (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Post Test 7: Press Emotions TV

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Start of Block: Conclusion

Thank you for completing our survey. Again all responses from this survey will remain confidential. If you would like to contact the Principal Investigator in the study to discuss this research, please e-mail [rachertz@umich.edu](mailto:rachertz@umich.edu).

Please enter in your MTurk Worker ID Number below

---

End of Block: Conclusion

## II) Null Hypothesis Regression Tables

TABLE A: Confidence in the FBI

Treatment	Coefficient
Trump Resources	-0.01 (0.7)
Biden Resources	-0.02 (0.06)
Trump Russia	0.006 (0.03)
Biden Russia	-0.01 (0.04)
Constant	0.56 (0.02)
R2	0.0012
N	521

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01      ()=std. err.

TABLE B: Trust in the FBI

Treatment	Coefficient
Trump Resources	-0.01 (0.03)
Biden Resources	-0.03 (0.03)
Trump Russia	0.02 (0.03)
Biden Russia	-0.006 (0.03)
Constant	0.61 (0.02)
R2	0.0036
N	522

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01      ()=std. err.

TABLE C: Truth of Russia Investigation

Treatment	Coefficient
Trump Resources	0.07 (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.04 (0.04)
Trump Russia	0.06 (0.04)
Biden Russia	0.04 (0.04)
Constant	0.70 (0.03)
R2	0.0054
N	520

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01      ()=std. err.

TABLE D: Wray Approval Rating

Treatment	Coefficient
Trump Resources	0.01 (0.03)
Biden Resources	-0.04 (0.03)
Trump Russia	0.02 (0.03)
Biden Russia	-0.04 (0.03)
Constant	0.58 (0.02)
R2	0.0115
N	521

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01      ()=std. err.

III) Successful Hypothesis Regression Tables (copies)

TABLE 3: Emotions of Happiness Towards the FBI

Treatment	Coefficient
Trump Resources	-0.35 (0.04)
Biden Resources	-0.11** (0.04)
Trump Russia	0.001 (0.04)
Biden Russia	-0.05 (0.04)
Constant	0.38 (0.03)
R2	0.017
N	514

Notes:  
\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 3A: Emotions of Happiness Towards the FBI by Partisanship

Treatment	Republicans	Democrats
Trump Resources	-0.21** (0.07)	0.04 (0.05)
Biden Resources	-0.21** (0.07)	-0.05 (0.05)
Trump Russia	-0.09 (0.07)	0.05 (0.05)
Biden Russia	-0.09 (0.08)	-0.02 (0.05)
Constant	0.49 (0.05)	0.33 (0.04)
R2	0.0808	0.0157
N	153	339

Notes:  
\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 3B: Emotions of Relief Towards the FBI by Political Knowledge (PK)

Treatment	Low PK	High PK
Trump Resources	-0.06 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.05)
Biden Resources	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.15** (0.05)
Trump Russia	-0.04 (0.07)	0.01 (0.05)
Biden Russia	0.03 (0.07)	-0.09 (0.05)
Constant	0.34 (0.04)	0.41 (0.04)
R2	0.0121	0.0372
N	169	345

Notes:  
\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 3C: Emotions of Happiness Towards the FBI by Regard for the Law (RFL)

Treatment	Low RFL	High RFL
Trump Resources	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.05)
Biden Resources	-0.05 (0.06)	-0.14* (0.06)
Trump Russia	0.001 (0.06)	0.01 (0.05)
Biden Russia	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.05)
Constant	0.26 (0.04)	0.46 (0.04)
R2	0.0055	0.0055
N	211	211

Notes:  
\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 4: Emotions of Relief Towards the FBI

Treatment	Coefficient
Trump Resources	-0.06 (0.04)
Biden Resources	-0.09* (0.04)
Trump Russia	-0.03 (0.04)
Biden Russia	-0.03 (0.04)
Constant	0.4 (0.03)
R2	0.0125
N	514

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 4B: Emotions of Relief Towards the FBI by Political Knowledge (PK)

Treatment	Low PK	High PK
Trump Resources	-0.11 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.05)
Biden Resources	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.12* (0.05)
Trump Russia	-0.08 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.05)
Biden Russia	0.04 (0.07)	-0.07 (0.05)
Constant	0.38 (0.04)	0.42 (0.04)
R2	0.0116	0.0212
N	170	344

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 4A: Emotions of Relief Towards the FBI by Partisanship

Treatment	Republicans	Democrats
Trump Resources	-0.23** (0.07)	0.01 (0.05)
Biden Resources	-0.19** (0.07)	-0.04 (0.05)
Trump Russia	-0.09 (0.06)	0.002 (0.05)
Biden Russia	-0.11 (0.08)	0.01 (0.05)
Constant	0.5 (0.05)	0.36 (0.04)
R2	0.0879	0.0048
N	154	338

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 4C: Emotions of Relief Towards the FBI by Regard for the Law (RFL)

Treatment	Low RFL	High RFL
Trump Resources	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.08 (0.05)
Biden Resources	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.10 (0.05)
Trump Russia	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.05)
Biden Russia	0.003 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.05)
Constant	0.31 (0.04)	0.46 (0.04)
R2	0.0102	0.0135
N	211	303

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 5: Emotions of Anger Towards the FBI

Treatment	Coefficient
Trump Resources	0.07* (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.04 (0.04)
Trump Russia	0.08* (0.04)
Biden Russia	0.07* (0.04)
Constant	0.23 (0.03)
R2	0.013
N	515

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 5B: Emotions of Anger Towards the FBI by Political Knowledge (PK)

Treatment	Low PK	High PK
Trump Resources	0.03 (0.06)	0.10* (0.05)
Biden Resources	-0.02 (0.06)	0.09 (0.05)
Trump Russia	0.04 (0.06)	0.11** (0.05)
Biden Russia	0.06 (0.06)	0.09* (0.05)
Constant	0.28 (0.04)	0.20 (0.03)
R2	0.0117	0.0097
N	170	345

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 5A: Emotions of Anger Towards the FBI by Partisanship

Treatment	Republicans	Democrats
Trump Resources	0.16* (0.06)	0.04 (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.07 (0.07)	0.04 (0.05)
Trump Russia	0.08 (0.06)	0.10* (0.05)
Biden Russia	0.11 (0.08)	0.08 (0.05)
Constant	0.24 (0.05)	0.23 (0.03)
R2	0.0405	0.0046
N	154	339

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ()=std. err.

TABLE 5C: Emotions of Anger Towards the FBI by Regard for the Law (RFL)

Treatment	Low RFL	High RFL
Trump Resources	0.04 (0.06)	0.09* (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.09 (0.06)	0.01 (0.05)
Trump Russia	0.16** (0.06)	0.04 (0.04)
Biden Russia	0.05 (0.06)	0.09* (0.05)
Constant	0.27 (0.04)	0.21 (0.03)
R2	0.0212	0.023
N	212	303

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ()=std. err.



TABLE 6: Emotions of Fear Towards the FBI

Treatment	Coefficient
Trump Resources	0.08* (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.001 (0.04)
Trump Russia	0.07 (0.04)
Biden Russia	0.05 (0.04)
Constant	0.21 (0.03)
R2	0.0153
N	514

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ( )=std. err.

TABLE 6B: Emotions of Fear Towards the FBI by Political Knowledge (PK)

Treatment	Low PK	High PK
Trump Resources	0.03 (0.06)	0.11** (0.04)
Biden Resources	-0.06 (0.07)	0.04 (0.05)
Trump Russia	0.04 (0.07)	0.09* (0.04)
Biden Russia	0.06 (0.07)	0.07 (0.04)
Constant	0.27 (0.04)	0.18 (0.03)
R2	0.0202	0.0211
N	169	345

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ( )=std. err.

TABLE 6A: Emotions of Fear Towards the FBI by Partisanship

Treatment	Republicans	Democrats
Trump Resources	0.13* (0.06)	0.06 (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.08 (0.07)	-0.03 (0.05)
Trump Russia	0.10 (0.06)	0.07 (0.05)
Biden Russia	0.04 (0.07)	0.06 (0.05)
Constant	0.19 (0.04)	0.23 (0.03)
R2	0.0315	0.0198
N	153	339

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ( )=std. err.

TABLE 6C: Emotions of Fear Towards the FBI by Regard for the Law (RFL)

Treatment	Low RFL	High RFL
Trump Resources	0.05 (0.06)	0.09* (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.02 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.05)
Trump Russia	0.14* (0.06)	0.02 (0.04)
Biden Russia	0.06 (0.06)	0.05 (0.04)
Constant	0.24 (0.04)	0.19 (0.03)
R2	0.0297	0.023
N	211	303

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01 ( )=std. err.

TABLE 7: Perception that the FBI Favors  
Dems over Reps

Treatment	Coefficient
Trump Resources	0.10** (0.03)
Biden Resources	0.02 (0.03)
Trump Russia	0.10** (0.03)
Biden Russia	0.04 (0.03)
Constant	0.46 (0.02)
R2	0.0338
N	520

Notes:  
\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01      ()=std. err.

TABLE 7A: Perception that the FBI Favors Dems  
over Reps by Partisanship

Treatment	Republicans	Democrats
Trump Resources	0.16** (0.06)	0.09** (0.03)
Biden Resources	0.11 (0.06)	0.02 (0.03)
Trump Russia	0.20** (0.06)	0.07* (0.03)
Biden Russia	0.18** (0.07)	0.03 (0.03)
_cons	0.49 (0.04)	0.42 (0.02)
R2	0.091	0.0302
N	154	344

Notes:  
\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01  
()=std. err.

TABLE 7B: Perception that the FBI Favors Dems  
over Reps by Political Knowledge (PK)

Treatment	Low PK	High PK
Trump Resources	0.09 (0.05)	0.10** (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.02 (0.06)	0.03 (0.04)
Trump Russia	0.06 (0.05)	0.13** (0.04)
Biden Russia	-0.04 (0.06)	0.07* (0.04)
_cons	0.48 (0.04)	0.44 (0.03)
R2	0.0365	0.0436
N	174	346

Notes:  
\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01  
()=std. err.

TABLE 7C: Perception that the FBI Favors Dems  
over Reps by Regard for the Law (RFL)

Treatment	Low RFL	High RFL
Trump Resources	0.10* (0.05)	0.10** (0.04)
Biden Resources	0.01 (0.05)	0.04 (0.04)
Trump Russia	0.12** (0.05)	0.09* (0.04)
Biden Russia	0.08 (0.05)	0.01 (0.04)
_cons	0.42 (0.03)	0.48 (0.03)
R2	0.0461	0.0338
N	214	306

Notes:  
\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01  
()=std. err.

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