The Effect of Strategic Language on Perceptions of Actions and Speakers

by

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A thesis

presented to the University of Waterloo

in fulfilment of the

thesis requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Psychology

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2023

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Author's Declaration

This thesis consists of material all of which I authored or co-authored: see Statement of Contributions included in the thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Statement of Contributions

As is customary, throughout this dissertation, I use "I" (instead of "we") language when discussing the present work. Nevertheless, while I served as the project lead for all experiments and played a primary role in all experimental tasks (e.g., experiment design, stimuli creation, data analyses, etc.), this work benefited from the contributions of multiple collaborators. For example, Experiments 1, 3, 4, and 6 were reported in an article published in *Cognition* in June of 2021 (Walker et al., 2021). This article (and the experiments reported within it) featured contributions from all article authors: Martin Turpin, Ethan Meyers, Jennifer Stolz, Jonathan Fugelsang, and Derek Koehler. Similarly, Experiments 2, 5, 7, and 8 (as well as S1 and S2) were conducted in collaboration with Jonathan Fugelsang and Derek Koehler, benefiting greatly from their insight and guidance. Therefore, despite the use of "I" language within this dissertation, the present work was not the product of an individual effort. Additionally, I also wish to note that the order in which experiments were conducted does not match the order in which they are presented within this dissertation. Specifically, the experiments reported within this dissertation were conducted in the following order: Experiment 1, 3, 4, 6, 5, 2, S1, S2, 7, and 8. Furthermore, of potential relevance given the fact that many stimuli reference real-world political events and/or feature language common in political discourse, Experiments 1 and 3 were conducted in 2018, Experiments 4 and 6 in 2020, Experiments 5, 2, and S1 in 2022, and Experiments S2, 7, and 8 in 2023.

Abstract

Describing the actions of others (or oneself) necessitates that a speaker make linguistic choices, as multiple terms can often be used to describe the same act. The present work investigates the consequences of these linguistic choices, assessing the extent to which a self-serving speaker can, through the strategic use of euphemistic (agreeable) and dysphemistic (disagreeable) terms, influence peoples' evaluations of actions while avoiding the reputational consequences typically associated with deception. In this dissertation, I aim to better understand the antecedents and consequences of strategic language across different social and information contexts, discussing the theoretical and applied implications of the results of eight experiments ($N = 4,828$) within the context of prior work on linguistic manipulation and political polarization.

First, I demonstrate that participants' evaluations of actions are made more favourable by language that replaces a disagreeable term (e.g., *torture*) with a semantically related agreeable term (e.g., *enhanced interrogation*) in an act's description. Notably, providing participants with more knowledge about the actions they evaluated reduced (but did not eliminate) the persuasive influence of a speaker's linguistic choices, suggesting that the persuasive potential of strategic language is greater when the details of an event are lacking. Even though the strategic use of euphemisms and dysphemisms affected action evaluations, participants judged both agreeable and disagreeable action descriptions as largely truthful and distinct from lies. Similarly, they viewed speakers attributed these descriptions as considerably more trustworthy and moral than liars. Taken together, the present work suggests that a strategic speaker can, through the careful use of language, shape public perception in a preferred direction while avoiding a majority of the reputational costs associated with less subtle forms of linguistic manipulation (e.g., lying).

Second, I investigate the impact of strategic language in the context of political partisanship. Self-serving language is prevalent in the political realm, as liberals and

conservatives are motivated to describe political events in a manner that supports group narratives and favourably presents the actions of co-partisans. Using a subset of liberal-biased (e.g., *expand voting rights*) and conservative-biased (e.g., *reduce election security*) terms from the aforementioned experiments, I find that partisans view speakers describing politically contentious events using ideologically-congruent language as more trustworthy, moral, and open-minded than speakers describing these same events in a non-partisan way (e.g., "relax voter ID requirements and expand mail-in voting"). Thus, in politically homogenous social networks, individuals (and organizations) may be incentivized to describe reality using ideologically-biased language. While beneficial to individuals in certain social contexts, the prevalence of partisan language may have negative consequences for society-at-large, exacerbating political polarization and hindering compromise across political divides. Support for this claim was found in the present work: When presented to political out-group members, partisan language produced negative evaluations of opposing partisans, with speakers attributed out-group language being viewed as untrustworthy, immoral, and closed-minded. Additionally, presenting Democrats and Republicans with ideologically-congruent descriptions of political events enhanced partisan disagreement and increased the ideological extremity of participants' action evaluations. Therefore, partisan language, while praised by co-partisans, exacerbated political polarization, damaging trust and amplifying disagreements between Democrats and Republicans.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to many people who helped make my graduate studies enlightening and enjoyable. First, I would like to thank Dr. Jonathan Fugelsang and Dr. Derek Koehler. You provided me an opportunity to do what I love and taught me how to do it better. The opportunities I enjoy now would not have been possible without you both. Your kindness, enthusiasm, and unwavering support for your students is something that I not only enjoyed but will strive to imitate. I would also like to thank many other brilliant people I have had the opportunity to collaborate with and learn from over the years including Dr. Michał Białek, Dr. Michael Dixon, Dr. Madison Stange, Dr. Evan Risko, Dr. David Mandel, Dr. Igor Grossmann, Dr. Launa Leboe-McGowan, Dr. Jason Leboe-McGowan, Dr. Doug Alards-Tomalin, and my fellow lab mates in the Reasoning & Decision Making lab.

I would like to thank my mother, my first teacher, and a very good one. Many of the qualities that allowed me to complete this dissertation I learned from her, including the ability to work hard and get things done. I would also like to thank my father who, throughout my childhood, modelled a passion and joy in much of what he did, along with a comfort in thinking outside the box (even in the face of disagreement). I would like to thank my wife, a scholar in her own right. Your ability to overcome adversity throughout your graduate studies was a continuous inspiration. Your support throughout my studies invaluable. I am grateful that you trusted me enough to move our family 1,200 miles away and continue to trust me enough to move our family 500 miles more. May I always repay that trust. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my daughter, Emily Alice Walker, for whom this dissertation is dedicated. Emily, your birth interrupted the writing of this thesis. It was a welcome interruption.

Dedication

To Emily Alice Walker.

Dream big, work hard, and be kind to others.

Good things will follow, perhaps not immediately, but eventually.

This document is the result of over seven years working towards an eventually.

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Chapter 1

The Antecedents and Consequences of Partisan Language Across Social Contexts

Narratives help people make sense of the world, organizing events in a way that produces meaningful relationships (Sacasas, 2020). Narratives communicate not only what happened but why it happened, not only how others acted but how they ought to have acted. They can instruct, entertain, and persuade, as well as shape peoples' identities or provide additional meaning in their lives (Rogers et al., 2023). Narratives do not simply provide an unbiased list of events that transpired, but rather include an evaluative component that is naturally shaped by a storyteller's perspective. Given that the narratives people adopt help them make sense of the world, contributing to the formation of their identity and values, it is not surprising that people protect the narratives that shape their reality. As narratives help situate us in our environment, losing our narratives can be traumatic, creating aversive feelings of instability and uncertainty.

1.1 Telling Different Stories: Partisan Narratives and Linguistic Divides

While narratives help form our social reality, our social reality, including our social identities and values, in turn shape our narratives. Liberals and conservatives, possessing different political identities and values (Graham et al., 2009; Lakoff, 2016), produce distinct narratives around singular events or sets of happenings. Across partisan divides, a group of protesters may simultaneously be portrayed as valiant fighters against injustice, or as unlawful extremists threatening the social order. Likewise, a politician may be described as courageous, intelligent, and kind by their supporters, or as cowardly, ignorant, and malicious by their opponents. Given the persuasive potential of narratives (Braddock & Dillard, 2016; Mazzocco et al., 2010; Shen et al., 2015), people often have an interest in promoting certain narratives while criticizing others. For instance, partisans promote narratives that support their worldview, while

denouncing those critical of their leaders, preferred policies, or values (Faris et al., 2017; Fulgoni et al., 2016; Shultziner & Stukalin, 2021). Similarly, individuals benefit from describing events in a manner that is not only consistent with their worldview but that paints their actions in a favourable light.

Competition between narratives can be observed in the linguistic choices of individuals with distinct interests and viewpoints. For example, a poll conducted by YouGov (Nteta et al., 2021) found that a majority (62%) of Republicans elected to describe those who entered the United States Capitol building on January 6th, 2021, as "protesters," while a majority of Democrats (68%) felt that it was more appropriate to refer to these individuals as "insurrectionists," "rioters," and "white nationalists." Likewise, while a majority (80%) of Republicans choose to describe this event as a "protest," a majority of Democrats endorsed the terms "insurrection" (70%), "riot" (75%), and "coup" (51%) as more accurate descriptions. These linguistic differences were also reflected in the linguistic choices of partisan news sources, with media outlets possessing a liberal bias being more likely to classify the events of January 6th as an "insurrection" compared to outlets with a conservative bias (Weinzierl, 2022).[1]

Multiple studies have revealed linguistic differences across partisan divides, both within the general public (Cichocka et al., 2016; Okdie & Rempala, 2019; Robinson et al., 2014; Sterling et al., 2020; although see Frimer et al., 2020) and the communications of political elites (Bayram et al., 2019; Gentzkow et al., 2019; Monroe et al., 2008; Sterling & Jost, 2018; Stier, 2016). For instance, analyses of the social media posts of nearly 25,000 Twitter users (Sterling &

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[1] The Associated Press stylebook encourages the use of non-partisan or non-politicized language. Nevertheless, as I will demonstrate within this dissertation (e.g., Experiment 7) Democrats and Republicans often disagree about the term (e.g., "protest" or "insurrection") that most objectively and accurately depicts a polarizing event. Thus, even with the best intentions, individuals may struggle to describe politically contentious events in a way that is perceived as non-partisan and unbiased across political divides.

Jost, 2018, Sterling et al., 2020) demonstrated that conservatives, compared to liberals, more

frequently used language referencing security, tradition, threat, power, achievement, certainty,

anger, anxiety, and negative emotion. Furthermore, conservatives were more likely than liberals

to use language related to group loyalty, authority, and purity, while liberals were more likely to

use language related to fairness. Recent work demonstrates that the partisanship of different

news sources and politicians can be inferred somewhat accurately based on the linguistic choices

present in their content (Fulgoni et al., 2016; Karamshuk et al., 2017) and speeches (Bayram et

al., 2019), respectively, suggesting the presence of linguistic differences across partisan divides.

Notably, the language of political elites has become more partisan in recent years (Bayram et al.,

2019; Gentzkow et al., 2019), consistent with the documented rise of political polarization in the

United States (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Finkel et al., 2020; Iyengar et al., 2012, 2019;

Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018; Kiley, 2017) and other countries (Boxell et al., 2022; Carothers &

O'Donohue, 2019; Kevins & Soroka, 2018; Marchal & Watson, 2019). As citizens become more

polarized, politicians and political pundits may face increasing incentives to use language that

denigrates their political opponents, in part because such language increases audience

engagement (Rathje et al., 2021). While individuals may benefit, at times, from using partisan

language[2], the prevalence of divisive rhetoric may have negative consequences for society-at-

large, including exacerbating partisan animosity and political violence, as well as diminishing

trust in key institutions (e.g., media and government).

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[2] Within this dissertation, I use the terms "partisan language" and "politically-biased language" to refer to language that supports the viewpoints of a specific group (e.g., a political group) and which is primarily used by members of that group (and seldomly by members of competing groups). For example, under this definition, the terms "radical leftist" and "far-right" would qualify as partisan language as they are primarily used by conservatives and liberals, respectively, and support the group-serving view that one's political opponents are extreme, unreasonable, and perhaps even dangerous. This is not to say that such terms may not be accurately used in some cases, but rather that the use of such terms, and the viewpoints they support, are often partisan in nature.

1.2 Partisan Language and Political Polarization

Like narratives, linguistic choices both shape and are shaped by an individual's viewpoints. Thus, a linguistic divide between groups (e.g., Democrats and Republicans) may contribute to a divergence of attitudes across these same lines. Consistent with this view, there is some evidence that subtle linguistic choices can influence peoples' attitudes, including those surrounding complex and contentious political issues (Eiser & Ross, 1977; Hall et al., 2015; Ipsos, 2017; Simon & Jerit, 2007). For example, Americans expressed more support for regulating an abortion procedure when an article describing this procedure used the word "baby" in place of the word "fetus" (Simon & Jerit, 2007). Similarly, Americans expressed more support for an inheritance tax when this tax was described as an "estate tax" as opposed to a "death tax" (Ipsos, 2017). Given that different linguistic choices can impact support for different political policies, we may expect select exposure to ideologically-congruent language to contribute to the polarization of partisan attitudes. For example, while Democrats may support an inheritance tax more than Republicans independent of how such a tax is described, systematic differences in the language used to refer to this tax (e.g., Republicans using the term "death tax" and Democrats using the term "estate tax") may further polarize the attitudes of partisans, hindering agreement and compromise. As such, we may wonder the extent to which the different linguistic choices of liberals and conservatives, as well as partisans' differential exposure to these choices, contributes to current political divides.

Partisans exhibit a tendency to more frequently interact with political in- as opposed to out-group members, both in online and offline settings (Barberá, 2015; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2011; Mosleh et al., 2021). More generally, people exhibit a tendency to seek out information that supports—as opposed to challenges—their worldview (Hart et al., 2009), with this tendency

resulting in many people receiving a majority of their news from ideologically-congruent sources (Bakshy et al., 2015; Flaxman et al., 2016; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2014; Peterson et al., 2021; Stroud, 2008, 2010). Given the persuasive potential of partisan narratives, we may expect that removing partisans from politically homogenous social networks and exposing them to a more diverse set of political viewpoints would reduce political polarization (Sunstein, 2018). However, recent work suggests that providing partisans with additional exposure to their political opponents increases—rather than diminishes—political polarization (Bail et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2014; Yardi & Boyd, 2010). For example, Bail and colleagues (2018) found that Republicans became more conservative after following a Twitter bot that exposed them to the social media posts of liberal politicians, opinion leaders, and media organizations. Likewise, Lee and colleagues (2014) discovered that, for individuals who were politically engaged, possessing a more heterogeneous online social network was associated with more polarized affective and ideological responses. Instead of viewing conflicting political messages with an open-mind, people often engage politically motivated reasoning, counterarguing the viewpoints expressed within ideologically-incongruent messages (Lord et al., 1979; Taber & Lodge, 2006). Thus, instead of reducing polarization, exposure to conflicting political messages may amplify polarization by strengthening partisans' commitment to their existing attitudes (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010).

Liberals and conservatives possess different worldviews leading them to (at times) perceive reality in different ways and, consequently, depict their reality using different language. While the linguistic choices of partisans may appear fair and unbiased to like-minded individuals, opposing partisans are unlikely to share this perception. Prior work demonstrates that individuals readily impute bias to messages that are incongruent with their existing attitudes

(Kennedy & Pronin, 2008; Pronin et al., 2004). Furthermore, exemplifying "hostile media effects," partisan individuals commonly perceive neutral news as biased against their side (Arpan & Raney, 2003; Feldman, 2011; Hansen & Kim, 2011; Perloff, 2015; Vallone et al., 1985). For instance, Vallone and colleagues (1985) observed that, when presented the same news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both pro- and anti-Israeli individuals judged the coverage to be biased against their group. Interestingly, the more knowledgeable participants were about the ongoing conflict the more they perceived bias in the presented coverage. In sum, exposing partisan individuals to the political messages of political out-group members may facilitate distrust and animosity, on account of such messages being frequently viewed as unfairly biased. Moreover, even non-partisan individuals aiming to be fair and impartial may face accusations of bias from members of competing groups. Thus, paradoxically, only the most ideologically-congruent partisan messages may appear objective and balanced to strongly identified partisans.

1.3 The Personal Benefits Reinforcing Partisan Language in Certain Social Contexts

People are responsive to the reinforcement contingencies present in their environment. For example, people more frequently engage in behaviours that signal their moral quality when others are watching (Ariely et al., 2009; Kurzban et al., 2007; Lacetera & Macis, 2010), suggesting that reputational benefits play a role in motivating such behaviours, even if implicitly. Thus, irrespective of the consequences for society-at-large, individuals should be sensitive to the personal costs and benefits associated with the use of partisan language in different contexts. When communicating with in-group members, the use of partisan language may often be advantageous. Partisan language can be used to express positive in-group evaluations (and negative out-group evaluations), allowing individuals to signal their in-group status and reap social benefits from fellow group members. Furthermore, partisan language can facilitate group

bonding by promoting a shared sense of reality and belonging among group members (Barkho, 2021; Gadamer, 2013). Additionally, by reinforcing the shared worldview of group members, partisan language may help reduce aversive feelings of uncertainty and promote a shared set of beliefs and values. Therefore, in certain social contexts, partisan language may help individuals signal their status as a good group member and satisfy social needs (e.g., belonging, epistemic closure, access to group resources). As such, it is not surprising that many partisans adhere to the language of their in-group while rejecting the linguistic choices of out-group members.

Consistent with rising partisan animosities (Boxell et al., 2022; Finkel et al., 2020; Iyengar et al., 2012, 2019; Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018), both Democrats and Republicans view political in-group members as more trustworthy and moral than political out-group members (Clementson, 2018; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2016; Westwood et al., 2018). Similarly, Democrats and Republicans disagree about the trustworthiness of different news sources, viewing ideologically-congruent sources as trustworthy while discrediting news outlets favoured by their political opponents (Mitchell et al., 2014). People are apt to view language that supports their worldview as truthful, making individuals using ideologically-congruent language appear honest and objective. Therefore, partisan language, when used to communicate with a like-minded audience, may provide individuals with reputational benefits, increasing perceptions of their trustworthiness and morality among co-partisans. For example, to many Republicans, individuals referring to the events of January 6th as a "protest" are likely to appear more trustworthy than those using the terms "insurrection" or "riot," not only on account of these individuals signalling their shared political identity, but also on account of a majority of Republicans viewing "protest" as the more accurate term for this event (Nteta et al., 2021).

The polarizing nature of partisan language may also increase audience engagement, providing an additional benefit to individuals and organizations rewarded by such attention. Recent work demonstrates that moral-emotional expressions (e.g., *hate*, *shame*, *ruin*) are prioritized in visual attention (Brady et al., 2020a, 2020b), increase social media engagement (Brady et al., 2017, 2019), and are associated with greater neural polarization (i.e., the neural responses of liberals and conservatives diverging when engaged with political stimuli; Leong et al., 2020). Relatedly, consistent with a negativity bias, prior work shows that negatively valenced information improves memory (Baumeister et al., 2001; Dreben et al., 1979; although see Taylor, 1991), better captures attention (Pratto & John, 1991; Rozin & Royzman, 2001), and increases social media engagement (e.g., sharing; Rathje et al., 2021; Schöne et al., 2021) compared to positively valenced information. As such, it is perhaps not surprising that expressions of negative affect are more common than expressions of positive affect in the social media content of news organizations (Bellovary et al., 2021). Divisive content has also been shown to capture attention and enhance audience engagement (e.g., on social media websites, Kim & Ihm, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2017; Rathje et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2023). For instance, out-group language (i.e., language referencing the political out-group) is a strong predictor of social media sharing, with posts featuring out-group language being more likely to be shared (Rathje et al., 2021). In sum, individuals and organizations wishing to capture the attention of a political audience may be incentivized to use language that is highly partisan, particularly when such language expresses negative affect, moral concerns, or explicitly denigrates political opponents. Consistent with these claims, American politicians with more extreme ideological positions acquire more followers on social media (Hong & Kim, 2016) and collect more donations when campaign fundraising online (Hong, 2013) compared to their more moderate peers.

Prior work demonstrates the ability for subtle manipulations of language to shape human judgment and decision-making (Fausey & Boroditsky, 2010; Hall et al., 2015; Levin, 1987; Levin & Gaeth, 1988; Liberman et al., 2004; Loftus & Palmer, 1974; Simon & Jerit, 2007). Thus, the persuasive potential of self- and group-serving language may further incentivize its use. Partisan terms (e.g., "death tax") have been shown to bias peoples' support for political policies (Ipsos, 2017; Simon & Jerit, 2007), although more research is needed to understand the persuasive power of partisan linguistic choices across different contexts. Outside the domain of politics, Hall and colleagues (2015, 2021) demonstrate that white Americans judge Americans of African descent more positively when these individuals are characterized as "African American" as opposed to "Black." Furthermore, Liberman and colleagues (2004) reveal that the labelling of an economic game (i.e., Prisoner's Dilemma, referred to as the "Community Game" or "Wall Street Game") predicted the actions of participants more than individuals' prior perceptions of their cooperativeness. Finally, a seminal study by Loftus and Palmer (1974) observed that the simple substitution of verbs (e.g., *collided*, *bumped*, *contacted*, *hit*, or *smashed*) in a question assessing the speed of a car immediately prior to an accident biased peoples' estimates of speed. More generally, studies examining the effects of deceptive advertisements (Olson & Dover, 1978) and partisan political messages (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2007; Druckman & Parkin, 2005) reveal how these messages can influence thought (e.g., by creating false beliefs about a product) and behaviour (e.g., by influencing voting choices). As such, individuals and organizations alike may benefit from strategically using language that makes their actions appear more favourable, their products more appealing, or their political viewpoints more reasonable.

1.4 The Reputational Costs Dissuading the use of Partisan Language in Heterogenous Social Contexts

While partisan language may help individuals reap reputational and social benefits from fellow partisans, such language can also alienate out-group members, resulting in reputational costs in more heterogenous social contexts. Rising partisan animosity (including out-party hate; Finkel et al., 2020; Iyengar et al., 2019) suggests that signalling one's political affiliation is detrimental when communicating with political out-group members. Thus, individuals using language that aligns them with a specific political group, while beneficial in certain social environments, may be costly when communicating with opposing partisans. Furthermore, partisan linguistic choices—while appearing objective to like-minded individuals—are likely to be perceived as biased and deceptive to those with divergent viewpoints. As such, individuals using in-group language and espousing group-serving narratives may be trusted less by their political opponents. Overall, the social and reputational benefits of partisan rhetoric are likely to be diminished (and the costs amplified) within heterogenous social contexts (e.g., those featuring opposing partisans). Accordingly, heterogenous social environments—consisting of individuals with a diverse set of political identities and viewpoints—may discourage the use of partisan language, potentially facilitating understanding and compromise across partisan divides.[3]

Despite the persuasive potential of strategic and self-serving language, it is not clear how frequently and in what social contexts such language is persuasive. For example, aggregating

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[3] Notably, it may not be sufficient for individuals to receive negative social feedback on account of their partisan rhetoric, as individuals privileging social feedback from co-partisans may be incentivized to engage in partisan rhetoric even when facing substantial criticism from opposing partisans. For example, on social media, partisan content may simultaneously evoke praise from political in-group members and disapproval from political out-group members. Nevertheless, users may readily privilege feedback from fellow partisans as these individuals may represent more important connections in a partisan user's social network. Likewise, partisan news organizations may have a financial incentive to privilege social feedback from their subscriber base, a majority of which will share the organizations political leanings and support the news organizations ideologically-congruent content (Flaxman et al., 2016; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2006; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Peterson et al., 2021; Stroud, 2008, 2010).

data from 49 field experiments, Kalla and Broockman (2018) argue that campaign contact and political advertising do not impact Americans' voting behaviours. Meanwhile, other scholars argue that partisan media, rather than shaping peoples' attitudes, simply reinforces the viewpoints of individuals seeking out ideologically-congruent content (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Lazarsfeld et al., 1948). Furthermore, while much has been written about the potential for individuals—including high-ranking officials—to manipulate public opinion by way of language (e.g., doublespeak; Herman, 1992; Lutz, 1988, 1990, 2000), controlled psychological studies remain needed to validate such claims. Attempts at linguistic manipulation, when detected, are often met with swift and severe social sanctions, as individuals are motivated to punish those attempting to deceive for personal gain (Oesch, 2016, 2017; Silk et al., 2000). Thus, individuals wishing to shape the opinions of others through language risk not only being unsuccessful, but also suffering negative social and reputational consequences.

Contextual factors shape the outcomes associated with persuasive appeals. For example, persuasive appeals are most effective when matched with the personal concerns and values of their audience (Feinberg & Willer, 2013, 2015, 2019; Hirsh et al., 2012; Shen, 2004; Shen & Edwards, 2005). The source of such appeals is similarly important, with people being more readily influenced by in- compared to out-group sources (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Mugny et al., 1984). Furthermore, individual's prior knowledge of a situation or topic may impact the extent to which they are susceptible to manipulative language (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Zaller, 1992, 1996). For instance, the more ambiguity that surrounds an event (e.g., a protest) the more likely peoples' opinions of that event may be shaped by a speakers' linguistic choices (e.g., referring to protesters as "activist" or "extremist"). Thus, knowledgeable individuals who understand the details of an event being described or an idea being discussed may be less susceptible to

linguistic manipulation. Overall, the persuasive benefits and reputational risks associated with self-serving language are dependent on the specific language used and the context surrounding the persuasive attempt. While a skilled strategic speaker may succeed in selecting language that shapes the attitudes of an uninformed audience in a manner that hides their persuasive interests and provides them with plausible deniability of deception, other attempts at linguistic manipulation, undergone in different social contexts, may be ineffective and even evoke the ire of their audience.

1.4.1 The Problem of Partisan Language (for Society-at-Large)

Despite, at times, providing personal benefits to the strategic speaker, manipulative language has the potential to be damaging to society-at-large. Much of society, from legal systems to democratic elections, depend on peoples' ability to avoid being deceived by those attempting to manipulate with language. Linguistic divides across partisan conflicts have the potential to worsen political polarization and heighten partisan animosities. Meanwhile, individuals perceiving the language of politicians, journalists, or other members of key institutions as unfairly biased may lose trust in these institutions (e.g., government and media). In fact, consistent with the rise of political polarization and divisive language, Americans trust in many institutions is on the decline, with conservatives exhibiting low levels of trust in mass media (Lazer et al., 2018), the scientific process (Funk et al., 2019), and higher education (Busteed, 2017) and liberals showing similarly little trust in traditional religious institutions (Newport, 2019) and the economic system (Brenan, 2019). While having the potential to mislead, polarize, and damage trust, partisan language, along with that which is self-serving to individuals, may be extremely difficult to police. Unlike misinformation, in which objectively false claims are made, the appropriateness of partisan linguistic choices may often be subjective

and importantly, disputed.[4] For example, describing the events of January 6th as a "protest," while perhaps misleading, is not objectively or verifiably false. In fact, as I have discussed, a majority of Republicans (80%) endorse this label as entirely accurate (Nteta et al., 2021). Thus, the policing of partisan language—more so than misinformation—rests on shaky ground, as partisans disagree about the appropriateness of different linguistic choices with neither party likely to succeed in demonstrating the deceptiveness of the other's language to those sharing a different perspective. As such, while the presence of partisan language is likely to exacerbate political polarization and damage trust in key institutions, so too is the regulating of such language, as attacks on partisan narratives will feel unjust to those who subscribe to them.

1.5 The Present Research: A Brief Overview

This dissertation focuses on the consequences of individuals' linguistic choices. In this opening chapter I discussed the reciprocal influence of language and thought. Here I focused on the demonstrated association between individuals' political ideologies and their linguistic choices (Bayram et al., 2019; Gentzkow et al., 2019; Sterling & Jost, 2018; Sterling et al., 2020), theorizing a mutually reinforcing relationship in which partisans' political beliefs guide their linguistic choices and partisan linguistic choices strengthen political beliefs. Additionally, I discussed a variety of individual costs and benefits that I hypothesize share an association with partisan language. With these social and reputational consequences in mind, I attempt to project and explain the prevalence of partisan language within distinct social contexts. Finally, I considered the potential for partisan language to exacerbate existing social problems, particularly

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[4] Even assessing the veracity of a fact-based claim is not always straightforward, as such claims cannot always be neatly placed into "true" and "false" categories. Instead, fact-checking experts have described the process as "messy and interpretive," often representing a form of knowledge production as opposed to simple classification (Ananny, 2020; Graves, 2016). As such, even claims surrounding the accuracy of factual information can, at times, be disputed across political divides.

those related to rising partisan animosity and political polarization. Deep partisan divisions harm a nation's ability to overcome its biggest challenges (e.g., a global pandemic, Gollwitzer et al., 2020; Van Bavel, 2020). Therefore, understanding the antecedents and consequences of partisan language may help limit the pervasiveness and harmfulness of politically-biased rhetoric, promoting cross-partisan conversations and compromise.

In Chapter 2, I present the results of six experiments investigating the persuasive potential (Experiments 1, 2, and 6) and reputational consequences (Experiments 3-5) associated with the linguistic choices of the strategic and self-serving speaker. First, in Experiments 1 and 2, I evaluate the potential for speakers to bias peoples' evaluations of actions by describing these actions using more or less agreeable terms. Specifically, I report the findings of two experiments assessing the hypothesis that peoples' evaluations of actions can be made more favourable by replacing a disagreeable term (e.g., *torture*) with a semantically related agreeable term (e.g., *enhanced interrogation*) in an act's description. Experiments 3-5 examine the reputational costs associated with the strategic use of euphemistic and dysphemistic terms. Across these experiments, I present participants with detailed descriptions of events and assess the extent to which they judge agreeable and disagreeable action descriptions as depicting events in a truthful manner. Furthermore, within these experiments, I present participants with objectively false action-depicting statements and compare the reputational costs of self-serving language to those associated with less subtle forms of linguistic manipulation (e.g., lying). I hypothesized that, despite their persuasive potential, people would judge both agreeable and disagreeable action descriptions as largely truthful and distinct from lies. Similarly, I predicted that agents attributed agreeable and disagreeable action descriptions would suffer less reputational consequences than liars, being judged as considerably more trustworthy and moral. Thus, I evaluate whether the

reputational risks argued to be a primary deterrent of lying (Oesch, 2016, 2017; Silk et al., 2000) are similarly effective at dissuading individuals from using more subtle forms of linguistic deception. In Experiment 6, I examine ambiguity as a mechanism supporting the persuasive influence of a speakers' linguistic choices. Specifically, I test the hypothesis that participants' action evaluations are less influenced by a speaker's choice of terms when they possess more knowledge about the target of their evaluation. As such, within this experiment, I examined the persuasive influence of strategic language across situations of high and low action ambiguity, manipulating both the language used to describe an action (e.g., *torture* vs. *enhanced interrogation*) as well as participants' knowledge about the action that took place.

Next, in Chapter 3, I investigate the potential for partisan—compared to politically neutral—language to exacerbate political polarization, promoting negative evaluations of opposing partisans and polarizing attitudes across partisan divides. First, Experiment 7 examines how liberals and conservatives judge the reputation of individuals describing politically contentious events using liberal-biased, conservative-biased, or politically neutral language. I hypothesized that speakers would receive reputational benefits for using partisan language when communicating with like-minded individuals. Similarly, I predicted that, when communicating with opposing partisans, partisan language would lead to reputational costs. Thus, within this experiment, I examined the extent to which the partisan language of political out-group members promotes negative evaluations (e.g., distrust) of one's political opponents. Second, Experiment 8 assessed whether exposing participants to ideologically-congruent language strengthens their partisan attitudes and consequently, exacerbates political polarization. That is, I tested whether the attitudes of Democrats and Republicans show greater divergence when politically-relevant events are described with partisan—compared to politically neutral—language. Finally, Chapter

4 concludes this dissertation by summarizing the present work, discussing some of the theoretical and applied implications of the present findings.

1.6 Transparency and Openness

For all experiments, I collected the full sample prior to data analyses and report all data exclusions, all manipulations, and all measures used. All measures and materials presented within these experiments can be viewed in Appendices B to H. Data pertaining to each of these experiments are available through Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/stkg5/). Experiments 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8 were preregistered through Open Science Framework. These pre-registrations can be viewed via the following links (Exp. 2: https://osf.io/tcu2f; Exp. 5: https://osf.io/9q8fa; Exp. 6: https://osf.io/m3eqk; Exp. 7: https://osf.io/mh2fr; Exp. 8: https://osf.io/3rwyq). All experiments were reviewed and received ethics clearance from a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee.

Chapter 2

Controlling the Narrative: Euphemistic Language Shapes Judgments of Actions while Avoiding Perceptions of Dishonesty

2.1 Chapter 2: Introduction

"The social world is ... a kaleidoscope of potential realities, any of which can be readily evoked by altering the way in which observations are framed and categorized" – Edelman (1993)

As social creatures people are often interested in the contents of other peoples' minds, both from the perspective of wanting to know what other people know, and from the standpoint of wanting to influence other peoples' thoughts in favour of their own individual goals. Language plays an important role in these equations, facilitating both pro- and anti-social behaviours. While the ability to communicate has permitted fantastic innovation via the collaborative exchange of accurate information, people may be just as interested in exchanging deceptive and self-serving misinformation when the opportunity arises. Lying, gossiping, and bullshitting represent some of the communicative tools people can use in competition in order to enhance their own prestige, sabotage their competitor's reputation, and misrepresent reality to suit their needs (DePaulo et al., 1996; Robbins & Karan, 2020; Turpin et al., 2019). Political partisans describe politically contentious events using language that favours their preferred narratives and helps serve group goals (Barkho, 2021; Fulgoni et al., 2016; Gentzkow et al., 2019; Stier, 2016). Even subtle linguistic choices (e.g., referring to the target of an abortion procedure as a "fetus" or a "baby") can shape peoples' perceptions and attitudes (Simon & Jerit, 2007). Although at times innocuous, these forms of deceit have the potential to be harmful to human life and flourishing. Much of society, from legal systems to democratic elections, depends on peoples' ability to avoid being deceived by those attempting to manipulate with language. In Chapter 2, I

report the results of six experiments that assess peoples' susceptibilities to linguistic

manipulation by investigating how their judgments of actions can be influenced by the strategic

and ostensibly honest use of a single euphemistic or dysphemistic term.

2.1.1 Language and Thought

Perhaps unsurprisingly, language has been shown to influence thought and consequently

behaviour (Boroditsky, 2001, 2011; Fausey & Boroditsky, 2010; Levin & Gaeth, 1988; Majid et

al., 2004). For instance, the language people speak impacts how they think about time and space

(Boroditsky, 2001; Levinson et al., 2002; Majid et al., 2004), as well as their ability to remember

certain events (Fausey & Boroditsky, 2011; Fausey et al., 2010). Not only can thought vary

systematically across languages, subtle manipulations *within* a language also share the potential

to impact thought. For example, different linguistic frames can bias peoples' moral judgments,

with people assigning more blame and requesting greater financial punishments for actors whose

mishaps are described with an agentive framing (e.g., "She had ignited the napkin!") as opposed

to a non-agentive framing (e.g., "The napkin had ignited!"; Fausey & Boroditsky, 2010).

Similarly, consumer evaluations of products can be influenced by information frame. For

instance, people give more positive evaluations of ground beef when it is labelled as "75% lean"

as opposed to "25% fat" (Levin, 1987; Levin & Gaeth, 1988). Furthermore, the simple

substitution of verbs (e.g., *collided, bumped, contacted, hit, or smashed*) in a question assessing

the speed of a car immediately prior to an accident has been demonstrated to bias peoples'

estimates of speed as well as their memory of the accident (Loftus & Palmer, 1974). More

generally, studies examining the effects of deceptive advertisements (Olson & Dover, 1978) and

partisan political messages (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2007; Druckman & Parkin, 2005) reveal how

these messages can influence thought (e.g., by creating false beliefs about a product) and behaviour (e.g., by influencing voting choices).

Much research has examined how the framing of a message influences its persuasiveness (Arceneaux & Nickerson, 2010; Broemer, 2002; DeSteno et al., 2004; Feinberg & Willer, 2019; Levin et al., 1998; O'Keefe & Jensen, 2007, 2009; Rothman & Salovey, 1997; Yan et al., 2012). A consistent finding from this literature is that persuasive messages are most effective when matched with the personal concerns and values of their audience (Boote, 1981; Hirsh et al., 2012; Shen, 2004; Shen & Edwards, 2005). *Moral reframing*, a technique in which a position that an individual would not normally endorse is reframed in a way that appeals to their moral values (Feinberg & Willer, 2019), has proven to be an effective persuasion tool, particularly when seeking to change the attitudes of partisans resistant to a political message (Bloemraad et al., 2016; Feinberg & Willer, 2013, 2015; Feygina et al., 2010; Kidwell et al., 2013; Wolsko et al., 2016). For example, pro-environment appeals garner greater support from conservatives when framed to address moral concerns related to sanctity as opposed to harm (Feinberg & Willer, 2013). Similarly, persuasive appeals are most effective when matched with the individual characteristics of a message recipient. For instance, negatively framed messages are more persuasive than positively framed messages for individuals who are highly ambivalent (Broemer, 2002), have a propensity to engage in and enjoy effortful cognitive activities (Rothman et al., 1999; Sanchez, 2006; Umphrey, 2003), and for those completing a fear-inducing task (Yan et al., 2012). Conversely, positively framed messages are more influential for individuals low in ambivalence (Broemer, 2002) and enjoyment of effortful cognitive activities (Steward et al., 2003), as well as those made to feel happy or angry (Yan et al., 2012). Messages also become more persuasive when their emotional framing matches the current phenomenological state of

their audience. For example, a message framed to highlight the saddening (angering) problems that a proposed policy was intended to fix was found to be most persuasive for sad (angry) individuals (DeSteno et al., 2004).

The aforementioned research exhibits how various manipulations of language, from subtle framing effects to more explicitly deceptive advertisements, can sway peoples' thoughts in a manner that may be desired for the language user (e.g., in favour of a product). Even without this body of evidence, people appear to share the intuition that they can influence the thoughts of others with deceptive language, as evidenced by its widespread use (DePaulo et al., 1996). Some have even posited that the primary function of language is to deceive and manipulate the behaviour of others in a self-serving way (Dawkins & Krebs, 1978; Krebs & Dawkins, 1984; Scott-Phillips, 2006), although evidence seems to point to deception as being a secondary—as opposed to primary—function of language (Oesch, 2016). Nevertheless, whether for pro- or anti-social purposes, deception is an important part of language use.

The most obvious form of deceptive language is lying, in which a speaker states something they believe to be false as if it were true. This form of deception, specifically when carried out maliciously, comes with social and reputational risks, as those caught lying may face severe punishments. However, more subtle forms of linguistic manipulation, such as the strategic framing of a message or question (Fausey & Boroditsky, 2010; Levin & Gaeth, 1988; Loftus & Palmer, 1974; Simon & Jerit, 2007), may similarly allow a speaker to sway others' opinions in a desired direction, while simultaneously keeping themselves free from the reputational risks associated with lying. Therefore, a potentially attractive alternative for those wishing to influence the thoughts of others is to do so by strategically describing the truth in a self-serving manner.

2.1.2 Doublespeak

Through the careful use of language, a speaker can attempt to make the unpleasant seem pleasant, the unethical seem righteous, and the horrific seem acceptable. The purposeful use of language to distort, obscure, or misrepresent an event or piece of information is referred to as doublespeak (Herman, 1992; Lutz, 1988, 2000). Doublespeak is language that only pretends to communicate; it is language carefully constructed to feature an incompatibility between what is said and reality. Thus, doublespeak does not involve accidental misuses of language, but rather involves the careful choosing of words to deliberately mislead. Furthermore, doublespeak does not involve making objectively false claims but rather involves the strategic use of language to stretch the truth in ways that impart a reality that is most desirable for the speaker.

One form of doublespeak often discussed in the doublespeak literature is that of euphemisms (Lutz, 1987, 1990, 2000; Moore, 1991), which can be used by individuals strategically to communicate unpleasant acts of questionable morality (e.g., torture) in a way in which these acts may appear more innocuous (e.g., as "enhanced interrogation"). Similarly, dysphemisms can be used strategically by individuals to make their opponents appear worse than they are (e.g., referring to a group of activists as extremists). Of course, not all uses of euphemisms and dysphemisms are deceptive. Notably, doublespeak does not involve the charitable use of euphemisms to spare feelings (e.g., stating that a loved one has "passed away" instead of "died") as the reality in such situations is likely to be fully understood by both parties and thus no deception is intended or likely to occur. Nevertheless, euphemisms are more frequently used for self-serving purposes (e.g., self-presentation) rather than out of concern for the sensibilities of others (McGlone & Batchelor, 2003).

Much has been written about the use of doublespeak in politics, advertising, education, science, and business, establishing the use of doublespeak as a common real-world phenomenon (Gibson, 1975; Herman, 1992; Lutz, 1988, 1990, 2000; Moore, 1991; Pulley, 1994). In a society where an informed populace is relied upon to elect high-ranking officials and contribute to decisions of public policy, the deceptive and thought-shaping nature of doublespeak can have dire effects. On a smaller scale, doublespeak can be used to unfairly paint harmless individuals as dangerous or paint dangerous individuals as harmless. This potential may be greater than ever before with the emergence of social media allowing the dissemination of claims, deceptive or not, to become increasingly widespread (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Lazer et al., 2018; Shearer & Matsa, 2018). Thus, it is clear that doublespeak can have negative consequences if successful in its attempts to deceive. However, despite its noted use and potential for harm, no empirical research (to my knowledge) has explored the effectiveness, consequences, or mechanisms of doublespeak in a psychological context.

2.1.3 Partisan Language

The distinct political viewpoints of partisan individuals give rise to linguistic differences across partisan divides. Liberals and conservatives frequently hold different perceptions of political events and, as such, use different language to describe them. Prior work has demonstrated linguistic differences across political lines, both within the general public (Cichocka et al., 2016; Okdie & Rempala, 2019; Robinson et al., 2014; Sterling et al., 2020; although see Frimer et al., 2020) and the communications of American politicians (Bayram et al., 2019; Gentzkow et al., 2019; Monroe et al., 2008; Sterling & Jost, 2018; Stier, 2016). For example, recent studies have shown that the political affiliation of politicians (Bayram et al., 2019; Gentzkow et al., 2019) and media outlets (Fulgoni et al., 2016; Karamshuk et al., 2017)

can be predicted somewhat accurately simply by analyzing their linguistic choices. While not always intentionally deceptive, partisan language has the potential to shape the attitudes of its audience. For instance, Americans express greater support for an inheritance tax when this tax is labelled as an "estate tax" rather than a "death tax" (Ipsos, 2017). Thus, the linguistic choices of partisans, intentional or not, can shape the attitudes of others, making individuals more receptive to ideologically-congruent attitudes, including those surrounding complex and highly contentious issues (e.g., abortion; Simon & Jerit, 2007).

Partisan individuals tend to self-select into co-partisan social networks (Cinelli et al., 2021; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2011; Huber & Malhotra, 2017; Mosleh et al., 2021; Motyl et al.. 2014) and consume ideologically-congruent news (Bakshy et al., 2015; Flaxman et al., 2016; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Peterson et al., 2021; Stroud, 2008, 2010). These tendencies can result in individuals with different political identities being exposed to different linguistic descriptions of polarizing events. Notably, across partisan divides, linguistic descriptions are likely to differ systematically, with partisans being described events in a way that supports their ideological views and which portrays co-partisans in a favourable light (and opposing partisans unfavourably). For example, news sources judged as possessing a left-leaning bias more frequently classified the January 6th United States Capitol attack as an "insurrection" while news sources on the political right largely avoided this term (Weinzierl, 2022; for examples see Appendix A). Consistent with these linguistic differences, Democrats viewed the events of January 6th as more violent and as a greater threat to democracy than Republicans (AP-NORC, 2022; Shepherd, 2022). Thus, it is possible that linguistic divides, such as those observed between Democrats and Republicans, contribute to the polarization of attitudes across these same lines, facilitating partisan animosity and impeding compromise.

Like doublespeak, partisan language need not involve objectively false claims. Rather, a partisan speaker may describe events using language that, while not false, presents the truth in a way that supports specific ideological narratives. For example, terms such as "pro-choice" and "pro-abortion" have been used interchangeably by political partisans with different worldviews and, while not objectively false, support different evaluative judgments (for additional examples featuring the real-world social media posts of popular liberal and conservative individuals, see Appendix A). Thus, similar to other subtle forms of linguistic manipulation, partisan language may allow a speaker to shape the opinions of their audience in a desired direction while protecting themselves against claims of dishonesty. Notably, given its partisan nature, the reputational costs and benefits associated with partisan language is likely to depend on the political affiliation of its audience. That is, individuals may receive reputational benefits for using partisan language when communicating with like-minded individuals and suffer reputational damage when using the same language in communication with opposing partisans. This can be expected in part because, while partisan language may often seem objective and unbiased to like-minded individuals, political out-group members are unlikely to share this perspective. Additionally, partisan linguistic choices may often signal a speaker's political affiliation. Given individuals tendency to display in-party love and out-party hate (Finkel et al., 2020; Iyengar et al., 2019), signalling one's identification with a specific political group is likely to facilitate reputational benefits from fellow in-group members as well as evoke negative feelings from out-group members. In sum, while punished in certain social contexts, individuals situated within homogenous social networks consisting primarily of like-minded individuals may be incentivized—rather than dissuaded—from using partisan language when describing politically-relevant events, the consequences of which remain poorly understood.

2.1.4 The Present Research

The present work investigates the degree to which language can be used strategically, in an ostensibly honest way, to influence peoples' evaluations of actions. Using euphemisms and dysphemisms identified in the non-empirical literature on doublespeak, Experiment 1 examines whether the simple substitution of a euphemistic (agreeable) or dysphemistic (disagreeable) term in an act's description makes actions appear more or less acceptable (see Figure 1).[5] Experiment 2 attempts to replicate the findings of Experiment 1 using an expanded 48-item set, with additional items ($n = 35$) being inspired by the divergent linguistic choices of partisan individuals describing the same or similar events (see Appendix A). Notably, I avoid dividing terms into the plain language and deceptive categories in which they are sometimes discussed, as the deceptiveness of a term depends on the event for which it is being used to describe. For example, referring to a group of protestors as "political activists" or "political extremists" can range from perfectly accurate to greatly deceptive depending on the actions of the protesters. In fact, there is likely to be a host of situations in which the use of either term may not be considered dishonest by a majority of people. What is interesting in these cases is whether someone wishing to represent the protesters in either a positive or negative light can effectively and permissibly do so via the strategic use of language. While those writing about doublespeak share the intuition that it is effective, criticizing the use of doublespeak in part for its assumed ability to unjustly bias recipients' perceptions of reality (Herman, 1992; Lutz, 1987, 1988, 1990, 2000; Moore, 1991), the degree to which the strategic use of euphemistic and dysphemistic terms influences peoples' assessments of events or actions remains an open question. In Experiments 1

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[5] In Experiment 1, I strategically described actions using either euphemistic or dysphemistic terms in order to investigate whether this would bias participants' judgments of the described actions. Such strategic use of euphemisms and dysphemisms mirrors many real-world instances of doublespeak yet necessarily exists under constrained experimental conditions, describing fictional actions and lacking a purposefully deceptive speaker.

and 2, I test whether the simple substitution of an agreeable term (e.g., working at a *meat processing plant*) in place of a semantically related disagreeable term (e.g., working at a *slaughterhouse*) influences the perceived acceptability of a hypothetical agent's actions. Consistent with the idea that through the careful use of language, individuals can make the unpleasant seem pleasant, the unethical seem righteous, and the horrific seem acceptable (Herman, 1992; Lutz, 1988, 1990, 2000), I hypothesize that participants' evaluations of actions will be made more favourable through the inclusion of an agreeable term, as opposed to a disagreeable term, in each act's description.

Agreeable Term	Disagreeable Term
Mitchell, a political *activist*, protesting outside of City Hall	Mitchell, a political *extremist*, protesting outside of City Hall
Ben inviting a *provocateur* to speak at his university	Ben inviting a *hate-monger* to speak at his university
Emily working at a *meat processing plant*	Emily working at a *slaughterhouse*

Figure 1. Experiments 1 and 2: Item Examples. Each item features an agreeable and disagreeable action-depicting statement in which an action is described using either an agreeable or disagreeable term. For all experiments, a full list of items can be viewed in Appendices B-H.

An important characteristic of doublespeak, distinguishing it from less subtle forms of deceptive language (e.g., lying), is that it does not feature objectively false claims. Rather, those well-versed in doublespeak attempt to influence the opinions of others by carefully and strategically representing the truth in a self-serving manner. Likewise, partisan language need not rely on falsehoods to influence the attitudes of an audience. Rather, the partisan speaker can select language, strategically or not,[6] that depicts an often ambiguous reality in a way that supports in-group narratives and viewpoints. Importantly, the avoidance of objectively false

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[6] Partisan language, even when demonstrating signs of bias, may not represent intentional attempts at deception. Instead, partisans' ideological worldviews can result in their honest attempts to depict events in an objective and accurate manner being seen as misleading and one-sided, particularly by those possessing divergent viewpoints.

statements may protect speakers from some of the reputational risks associated with deception. That is, stating something objectively false comes with the risk that this falsehood is revealed, and the liar punished, whereas stating something linguistically manipulative (yet not objectively false) is likely to avoid a majority of this risk by providing plausible deniability of dishonesty. Therefore, subtle manipulations of language may not only be harmful for their effectiveness but also for the protection they afford their users, potentially allowing a user repeated attempts at influence with minimal correction.

In Experiment 3, I assess whether the semantically related agreeable and disagreeable terms featured in Experiment 1 can be used interchangeably to describe the same unambiguous action in a way that a majority of people find honest and permissible. In Experiment 4, I evaluate the degree to which hypothetical speakers using these agreeable and disagreeable terms to describe unambiguous actions are judged as trustworthy and moral and compare judgments of these speakers to those describing actions using objectively false lies. Lastly, in Experiment 5, I aim to replicate these findings using the expanded 48-item set featured in Experiment 2. Consistent with the claim that the avoidance of falsehoods protects strategic and partisan speakers from the reputational risks associated with lying, I hypothesize that the strategic use of agreeable and disagreeable terms will be judged as largely honest and permissible and that hypothetical speakers attributed these terms will be judged largely as trustworthy, moral, and undeserving of criticism. Additionally, I predict that liars, using objectively false statements to describe the same unambiguous actions, will be judged less favourably (e.g., as less trustworthy) than those attributed agreeable and disagreeable statements. Overall, if people find it honest and permissible to use either more (e.g., *enhanced interrogation*) or less agreeable (e.g., *torture*) terms when describing a well-known action, and if the choice of term can be shown to bias

peoples' evaluation of the action described, then a motivated speaker could presumably, through the strategic use of language, bias public opinion while simultaneously avoiding a majority of the reputational risk associated with less subtle forms of deception.

Experiments 1 and 2 demonstrate that the strategic use of a more or less agreeable term can bias participants' evaluations of actions. In Experiment 6, I investigate ambiguity as a potential mechanism helping to explain *why* participants' evaluations of actions are biased by a speaker's strategic choice of terms. I propose that while people may be susceptible to subtle forms of linguistic manipulation (such as doublespeak) when evaluating an action that is ambiguous (i.e., for which the specific details of the act are unknown), this susceptibility may be reduced as people become more knowledgeable about the act in question. That is, it may be the case that when the details of an action are unknown people have the affordance to imagine several types of acts, and in doing so may be guided by the language used in an act's description. In these circumstances, if euphemistic terms evoke less severe moral transgressions (or more praiseworthy acts) compared to dysphemistic terms, then this may explain how the strategic choice of semantically related agreeable and disagreeable terms influences peoples' evaluations of actions. In contrast, when fully knowledgeable about an act, both euphemistic and dysphemistic terms may evoke the same set of happenings (i.e., those that occurred), reducing the influence of a speaker's linguistic choices. Therefore, I hypothesize that the influence of agreeable and disagreeable terms will be dependent on the level of ambiguity surrounding the actions being evaluated. As such, in Experiment 6, I had one half of participants evaluate actions for which the specific details of each act were left unstated (as in Experiments 1 and 2), while other participants evaluated actions for which additional act information was provided. I predict that when actions are described with a high level of ambiguity, actions described using an

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agreeable term (e.g., *enhanced interrogation*) will be judged more favourably compared to those described with a disagreeable term (e.g., *torture*). In contrast, when actions are described in greater detail, I hypothesize that the use of agreeable and disagreeable terms will have a reduced impact on participants' action evaluations.

2.2 Experiment 1

The goal of Experiment 1 was to assess the influence of a set of euphemistic (agreeable) and dysphemistic (disagreeable) terms on participants' evaluations of a variety of actions (see Figure 1). I hypothesized that the substitution of agreeable terms (e.g., working at a *meat processing plant*) in place of semantically related disagreeable terms (e.g., working at a *slaughterhouse*) in action-depicting statements would lead to more positive action evaluations.

2.3 Methods

2.3.1 Participants

A sample of 404 participants (51% female; $M_{age} = 37.34$, $SD_{age} = 11.63$; 144 Democrats, 183 Independents, 77 Republicans; 61% college graduates) was recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk and received $1.00 upon completion of an eight-minute online questionnaire. Participants were recruited under the condition that they be U.S. residents and possess a Mechanical Turk HIT approval rate greater than or equal to 95%.

2.3.2 Materials

Experiment 1 featured 13 pairs of euphemistic (agreeable) and dysphemistic (disagreeable) terms inspired by real-world examples of doublespeak (Herman, 1992; Lutz, 1987, 1988, 2000; Moore, 1991). All terms were presented within an action-depicting statement (see Appendix B for a full list of items). Item selection was informed by two initial studies (see Walker et al., 2021, Supplementary Materials Part B) which assessed the similarity of paired

agreeable and disagreeable statements and the effectiveness of these statements in biasing participants' action evaluations.

2.3.3 Measures

2.3.3.1 Action Evaluation. For each action-depicting statement, participants responded to the question "How much do you agree or disagree with [Name's] actions?" using a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree with) to 7 (Strongly Agree with).

2.3.3.2 Deception Detection. Following all action evaluations, participants were asked "Did you perceive some of the language used to describe actions in this survey to be intentionally deceptive?" responding with either a "Yes" or "No" response. Participants who responded "Yes" to this item were asked to indicate the percentage of action-depicting statements they felt featured deceptive language.

2.3.4 Design and Procedure

Participants were presented with and evaluated 13 action-depicting statements featuring either a relevant agreeable (e.g., Mitchell, a political *activist*, protesting outside of City Hall) or disagreeable term (e.g., Mitchell, a political *extremist*, protesting outside of City Hall). All participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions, dictating the specific item set they were presented with. Participants randomly assigned to Condition A were presented with agreeable action-depicting statements for items 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, and 13 (see Appendix B) and disagreeable action-depicting statements for items 1, 2, 6, and 10, with the opposite being true for those assigned to Condition B.[7] Thus, at the item-level, Experiment 1 employed a

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[7] My intention was to have participants in Condition A be presented with agreeable statements for all odd number items and disagreeable statements for all even number items, with the opposite being true for those assigned to Condition B. However, an error during survey creation resulted in the item sets specified above, representing a limitation of Experiment 1. Nevertheless, this error was corrected for all remaining studies, most notably for Experiments 2 and 6 in which I observed a similar pattern of results when randomly assigning agreeable and disagreeable statements at the item-level (Experiment 2) and when randomly assigning participants to exclusively evaluate either agreeable or disagreeable statements (Experiment 6).

between-subjects design with participants evaluating either an item's agreeable or disagreeable action-depicting statement. However, across all 13 items, participants were presented with and evaluated both agreeable and disagreeable statements. The order in which these 13 items were presented within each condition was randomized for each participant. Following all action evaluations, participants responded to a deception detection item and concluded the study by reporting their age, sex, level of education, political identity, and political ideology[8].

2.4 Results and Discussion

I fit a generalized mixed effects regression model using the *lme4* package in R (Bates et al., 2015) to examine the effect of Statement Type (dummy coded as 0 – Disagreeable and 1 – Agreeable) on participants' action evaluation judgments. Assessments of model fit (e.g., Akaike Information Criterion [AIC] values), suggested that participant responses were best captured by a model including random slopes and intercepts for both subject and item, allowing for the accounting of idiosyncratic differences in action evaluation judgments for participants and items, respectively.[9] There was a significant effect of Statement Type (see Figure 2), $B = 0.98$, $\beta = 0.53$, 95% *CI* [0.36, 0.69], *SE* = 0.16, $t = 6.29$, $p < .001$, *Marginal R²* = .07, with agreeable action-depicting statements ($M = 3.99$, *SD* = 1.82) being judged more favourably (i.e., agreed with more) than their disagreeable counterparts ($M = 3.00$, *SD* = 1.76). Additionally, for each item, I conducted a one-tailed Bayesian independent-samples *t*-test comparing participants' evaluation of an action when the action was depicted using an agreeable versus disagreeable term (see Table

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[8] Here and elsewhere, I assessed participants' political identity by having them respond to the question: "What political party do you identify with?" Participants responded to this question by selecting one of the following seven response options: Strong Democrat, Democrat, Independent Lean Democrat, Independent, Independent Lean Republican, Republican, Strong Republican. Likewise, I assessed participants' political ideology with the question: "What is your political ideology?" Participants responded to this question by selecting one of five response options: Very Liberal, Liberal, Moderate, Conservative, Very Conservative.

[9] All generalized mixed effects regression models reported within this dissertation included a random slope and intercept for both subject and item on account of model fit assessments (e.g., AIC values) suggesting that participant judgments were best captured by the inclusion of these random effects.

1). For all items, participants judged actions described with an agreeable term as more acceptable (all p's < .004). Overall, the results of Experiment 1 suggest that the strategic use of a euphemistic (dysphemistic) term in an act's description can make that action appear more (less) acceptable.
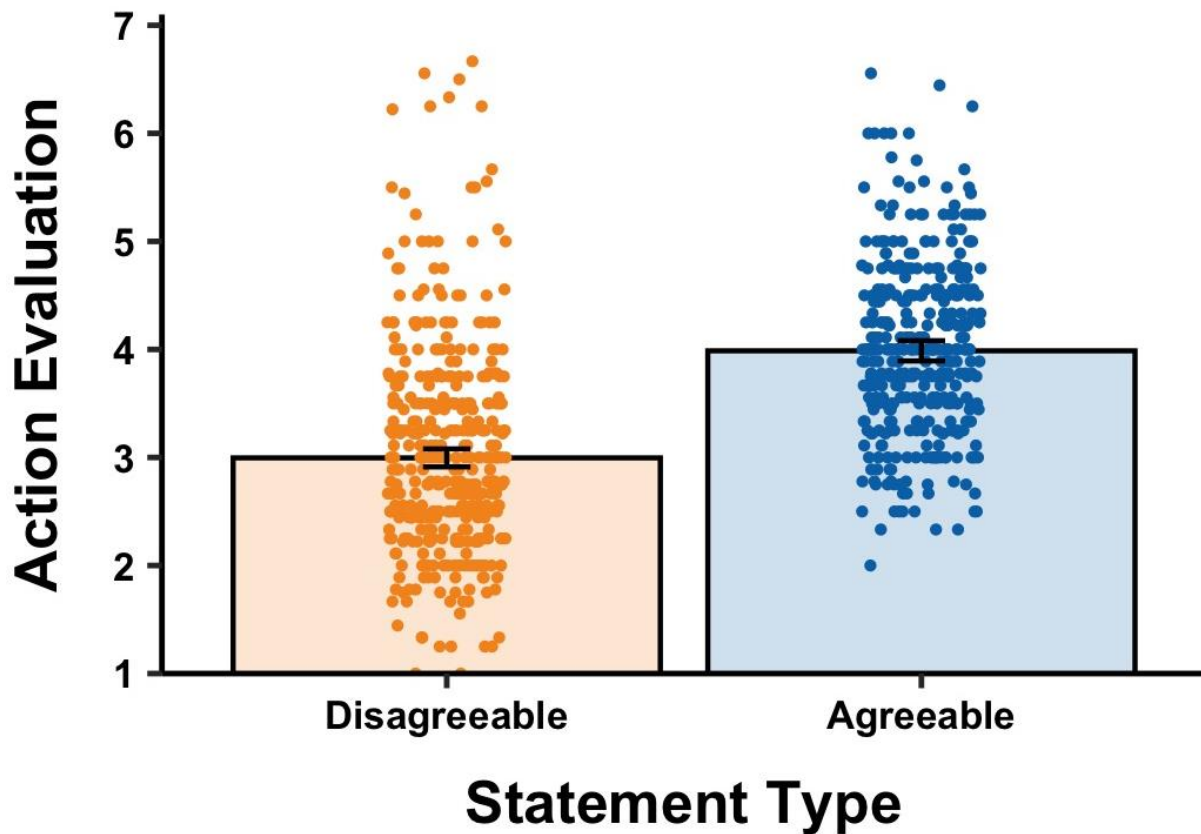
Figure 2. Experiment 1 Results. Each bar displays participants' mean action evaluation judgment for a specific statement type (disagreeable or agreeable). Each dot represents an individual participant's mean action evaluation judgment for agreeable or disagreeable statements. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

One potential reason for this influence is that the deceptive nature of such strategic language may often go unnoticed, as only 39% of my sample ($n = 158$) perceived any instances of deceptive language in Experiment 1, despite all participants being described several actions using potentially self-serving euphemistic and dysphemistic terms. Of the participants who did recognize the presence of deceptive language, these participants on average indicated that 45%

of actions were described with deceptive language. Notably, restricting my sample to only those endorsing the presence of deceptive language did not prevent agreeable statements from being judged more favourably than disagreeable statements. That is, participants detecting deceptive language also judged actions described with an agreeable term ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.83$) as more acceptable than those described with a disagreeable term ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.85$), $B = 0.90$, $\beta = 0.48$, 95% CI [0.32, 0.64], $SE = 0.15$, $t = 5.88$, $p < .001$, $Marginal\ R^2 = .06$.

Table 1

Experiment 1 Item-Level Results

						95% CI for d	
Item	BF$_{10}$	t	df	$p <$	d	Lower	Upper
Torture/Enhanced Interrogation	21,605	4.94	402	.001	0.49	0.29	0.69
Kill/Neutralize	>99,999	7.77	386	.001	0.77	0.57	0.98
Firing/Negotiated Departure	40.32	3.30	400	.001	0.33	0.13	0.52
Indoctrinate/Educate	7.26	2.70	402	.004	0.27	0.07	0.46
Gentrification/Revitalization	>99,999	17.97	344	.001	1.79	1.56	2.02
Slaughterhouse/Meat Processing Plant	7,468	4.70	377	.001	0.47	0.27	0.67
Cut Down/Harvest	>99,999	7.30	376	.001	0.73	0.52	0.93
Hate-Monger/Provocateur	>99,999	9.34	397	.001	0.93	0.72	1.14
Pornographic Film/Erotic Art Piece	2,710	4.46	398	.001	0.44	0.25	0.64
Offensive Speech/Hate Speech	23.69	3.13	401	.001	0.31	0.11	0.51
Profits/Economic Viability	>99,999	6.74	401	.001	0.67	0.47	0.87
Extremist/Activist	1,465	4.31	402	.001	0.43	0.23	0.63
Coddle/Help [the Poor]	>99,999	7.47	394	.001	0.74	0.54	0.94

Note. Results of one-tailed Bayesian independent-samples *t*-tests comparing participants' agreement with an action when the action was depicted using an agreeable versus disagreeable term. Positive effect sizes represent items for which agreeable action-depicting statements were judged more favourably compared to disagreeable action-depicting statements. All differences remained statistically significant when correcting for multiple comparisons (i.e., using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .004 per test [.05/13]).

2.5 Experiment 2

Experiment 2 examined the persuasive influence of an expanded set of agreeable and disagreeable terms. As in Experiment 1, I hypothesized that substituting a disagreeable term

(e.g., participating in a *pro-abortion* protest) with a semantically related agreeable term (e.g., participating in a *pro-choice* protest) in an action-depicting statement would lead to more positive action evaluations.

2.6 Methods

2.6.1 Participants

Six hundred and sixty participants were initially recruited from Prolific, an online research platform. I pre-registered (https://osf.io/tcu2f) the intention to collect additional data for items in which Bayesian independent-samples *t*-test (using a default prior of $\sqrt{2}/2$ or .707) failed to reveal strong evidence in favour of either the null or alternative hypothesis (i.e., reveal a BF_{10} between 0.10 and 10; Jeffreys, 1961).[10] Consistent with this pre-registered intent, I collected additional data for 23 (out of 48) items, 100 participants at a time, stopping data collection when Bayesian independent-samples *t*-test revealed strong evidence for either the null or alternative hypothesis or when 200 additional participants provided data for an item. Participants evaluated a maximum of 12 items within Experiment 2. Based on this restriction, along with data collection criteria, the final sample consisted of 1,062 participants, all of which were recruited from Prolific using the same recruitment criteria. That is, in order to be eligible to participate in Experiment 2, all participants were required to: (1) self-report an age between 18 and 65 years old, (2) self-report English as their first language, (3) reside in the United States, (4) have not participated in Experiment 5,[11] (5) have completed between 100 and 10,000 work submissions

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[10] Note, all aggregate-level analyses exclusively featured responses from my initial sample ($n = 660$; see *Data Preparation*), ensuring all items were equally represented. Nevertheless, I was also interested in the persuasive effects of specific agreeable and disagreeable statements (i.e., item-level analyses). I anticipated (in part based on the results of Experiment 1) large differences in effect sizes across items. Therefore, instead of collecting the same number of responses for each item, I aimed to collect additional data for items in which responses from an initial sample proved inconclusive (based on pre-determined criteria). Bayesian analyses were useful for this purpose, displaying the strength of evidence in favour of both the null and alternative hypothesis.

[11] As indicated in the author note on page v, Experiment 5 was conducted prior to Experiment 2.

on Prolific, and (6) possess a Prolific submission approval rating greater than or equal to 95%.

All participants received $0.75 upon completion of a 5 minute online questionnaire. I excluded

data from 57 participants based on a set of pre-registered exclusion criteria (see *Data*

Preparation), leaving data from 1,005 participants (49% Female; $M_{age} = 37.95$, $SD_{age} = 12.06$;

298 Democrats, 479 Independents, 228 Republicans, 57% college graduates) to be analyzed.

2.6.2 Materials

Experiment 2 featured 48 pairs[12] of euphemistic (agreeable) and dysphemistic

(disagreeable) terms hypothesized to shape participants' evaluations of actions in a manner that

would largely be viewed as honest and, as such, be accompanied with minimal reputational costs

when used in a self-serving and strategic way (see Experiments 3-5). All 13 term pairs from

Experiment 1 were featured in Experiment 2. Additional items ($n = 35$) were inspired by the

different linguistic choices of partisan individuals describing the same or similar events (see

Appendix A). As in Experiment 1, all terms were presented within an action-depicting statement

(see Appendix C for a full list of items).

2.6.3 Measures

Experiment 2 featured the same measures as Experiment 1.

2.6.4 Design and Procedure

Participants were presented with up to 12 action-depicting statements featuring either a

relevant agreeable (e.g., Eric inviting a climate change *skeptic* to speak at his university) or

disagreeable term (e.g., Eric inviting a climate change *denier* to speak at his university). For each

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[12] Action-depicting statements for Item 36 (reproductive healthcare/abortion) originally featured a double negative that appeared to confuse participants regarding whether an elected politician was supporting or opposing a bill that intended to restrict access to reproductive healthcare/abortion. As such, I removed data for this item (collected within the initial 660 participant sample), slightly modified this item, and then collected data for the updated version during additional data collection.

item, participants were presented, with equal likelihood, either an agreeable or disagreeable statement and indicated their level of agreement with the actions of a target actor (e.g., Eric). As such, at the item-level, Experiment 2 featured a between-subjects design in which participants evaluated either an item's agreeable or disagreeable statement. However, as in Experiment 1, across items, participants were presented with and evaluated both agreeable and disagreeable statements. The order in which items were presented was randomized for each participant. Following all action evaluations, participants responded to a deception detection item in which they indicated the extent to which they perceived deceptive language within the presented action-depicting statements. Participants concluded Experiment 2 by reporting their age, sex, ethnicity, level of education, political identity, political ideology, and level of political engagement[13].

2.6.5 Data Preparation

I excluded data from 57 participants who reported responding randomly at some point during the experiment ($n = 22$),[14] or completed Experiment 2 in under 120 seconds ($n = 38$).[15] These exclusions were consistent with pre-registered criteria. All aggregate level analyses were conducted on an initial dataset of 660 participants ($n = 636$ following exclusions), as to avoid overrepresenting items for which inconclusive Bayesian independent-samples t-tests prompted additional data collection. However, these additional responses were retained for all item-level analyses. Neither the aforementioned exclusions nor the choice of sample for aggregate level analyses altered the conclusions drawn from inferential statistics produced by these analyses.

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[13] I assessed participants' level of political engagement with the question: "How closely do you follow American politics?" Participants responded to this question using a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (Not closely at all) to 7 (Very closely).

[14] Specifically, these participants responded "Yes" to the item: "Is there any reason that we shouldn't use your data (e.g., did you randomly select responses at any point during the survey)?"

[15] Here and elsewhere, participants exhibiting multiple grounds for exclusion were counted in multiple categories.

2.7 Results and Discussion

I fit a generalized mixed effects regression model to examine the effect of Statement Type (dummy coded as 0 – Disagreeable and 1 – Agreeable) on participants' action evaluation judgments. There was a significant effect of Statement Type (see Figure 3), $B = 1.12$, $\beta = 0.54$, 95% *CI* [0.38, 0.69], $SE = 0.16$, $t = 6.87$, $p < .001$, *Marginal R^2* = .07, with agreeable statements ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.99$) being judged more favourably (i.e., agreed with more) than their disagreeable counterparts ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 2.02$). At the item-level, I conducted one-tailed Bayesian independent-samples *t*-test comparing participants' evaluation of an action when the action was described using an agreeable or disagreeable term (see Table 2). These analyses revealed that, for 37 out of 48 items[16], action descriptions featuring an agreeable term were judged more favourably than those featuring a semantically related disagreeable term (all *p's* < .032), with this pattern of responding being observed for an additional five items that failed to reach statistical significance (all *p's* > .05).

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[16] Twenty-seven out of 48 items remained statistically significant when correcting for multiple comparisons using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .001 per test (.05/48).
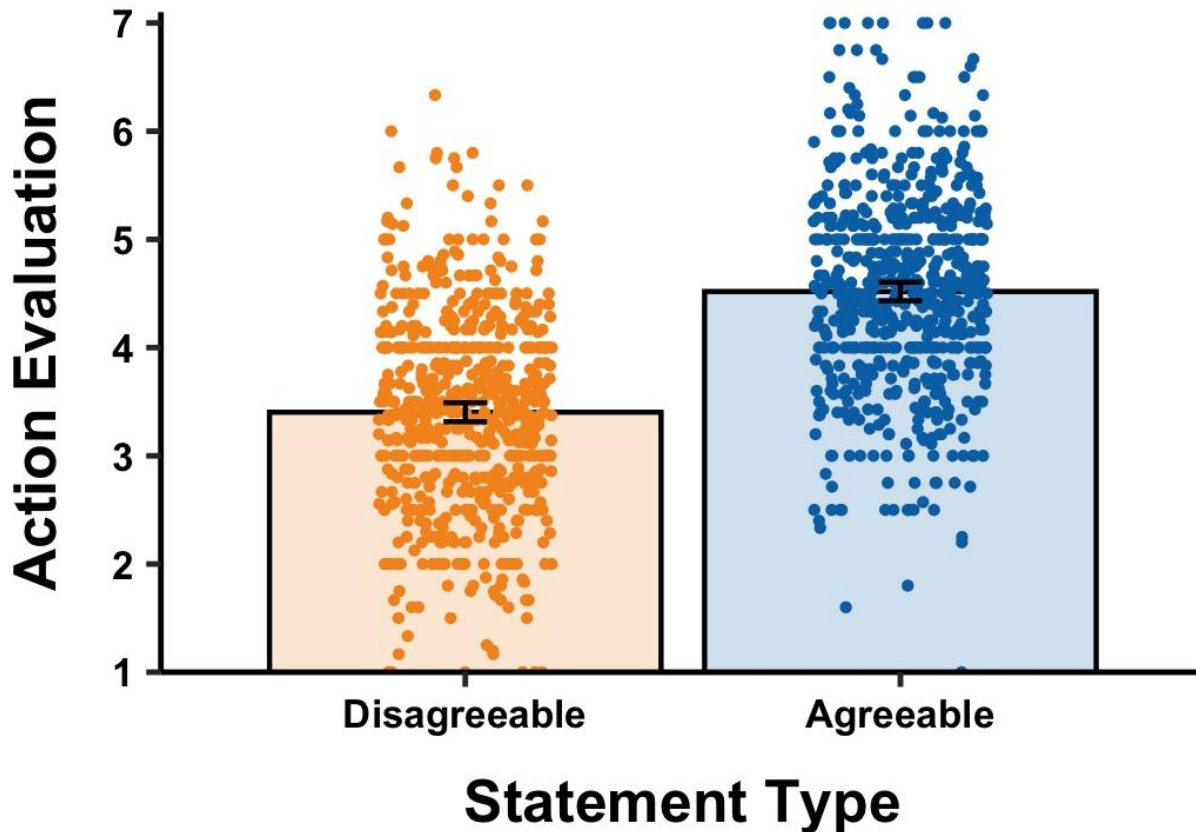
Figure 3. Experiment 2 Results. Each bar displays participants' mean action evaluation judgments for a specific statement type (disagreeable or agreeable). Each dot represents an individual participant's mean action evaluation judgment for agreeable or disagreeable statements. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Consistent with Experiment 1, only a minority of participants (31%, $n = 200$) reported perceiving deceptive language in Experiment 2. Participants who did endorse the presence of deceptive language on average indicated that 38% of actions were described with deceptive language. Once again, restricting my sample to participants perceiving deceptive language within one or more action descriptions did not prevent agreeable action descriptions from being judged more positively ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 2.04$) than their disagreeable counterparts ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 2.04$), $B = 1.04$, $\beta = 0.49$, 95% *CI* [0.34, 0.65], *SE* = 0.16, $t = 6.34$, $p < .001$, *Marginal R^2* = .08.

Table 2A

Experiment 2 Item-Level Results (Items 1-24)

Item	BF_{10}	t	df	$p <$	d	95% CI for d Lower	Upper
Torture/Enhanced Interrogation	>99,999	7.02	154	.001	1.11	0.78	1.45
Kill/Neutralize	471	4.01	253	.001	0.50	0.25	0.75
Firing/Negotiated Departure	7.69	2.70	349	.004	0.29	0.08	0.50
Indoctrinate/Educate	21.82	3.05	237	.002	0.38	0.13	0.63
Gentrification/Revitalization	>99,999	11.68	139	.001	1.85	1.48	2.23
Slaughterhouse/Meat Processing Plant	122	3.62	155	.001	0.58	0.25	0.90
Cut Down/Harvest	>99,999	8.90	124	.001	1.39	1.04	1.74
Hate-Monger/Provocateur	>99,999	9.74	154	.001	1.55	1.19	1.91
Pornographic Film/Erotic Art Piece	555	4.09	154	.001	0.64	0.32	0.96
Offensive Speech/Hate Speech	692	4.11	250	.001	0.52	0.27	0.77
Profits/Economic Viability	669	4.13	155	.001	0.65	0.33	0.97
Extremist/Activist	2,589	4.49	158	.001	0.71	0.39	1.03
Coddle/Help [the Poor]	>99,999	9.46	152	.001	1.50	1.14	1.85
Low-skill/Low-wage [Workers]	0.20	0.61	347	.272	0.06	-0.15	0.27
Anti-vaccination/Vaccine Hesitant	2.69	2.26	333	.013	0.25	0.03	0.46
Vaccine Hesitant User/Anti-Vaxxer	6.62	2.65	347	.005	0.28	0.07	0.49
Unhoused/Homeless	0.08	-0.56	350	.712	-0.06	-0.27	0.15
Illegal/Undocumented [Immigrants]	0.07	-1.61	158	.946	-0.25	-0.57	0.06
Ex-convicts/Formerly Incarcerated People	35.41	3.22	243	.001	0.41	0.16	0.66
Forced Pregnancy/Heartbeat [Bill]	32.94	3.20	248	.001	0.40	0.15	0.65
[Climate Change] Denier/Skeptic	0.50	1.33	346	.093	0.14	-0.07	0.35
[Climate Change] Alarmist/Advocate	66.73	3.41	149	.001	0.54	0.22	0.86
Climate Change/Climate Crisis	0.08	-0.93	253	.824	-0.12	-0.36	0.13
Anti-abortion/Pro-life	0.07	-1.63	153	.948	-0.26	-0.57	0.06

Note. Results of one-tailed Bayesian independent-samples *t*-tests comparing participants' agreement with an action when the action was depicted using an agreeable versus disagreeable term. Positive effect sizes represent items for which agreeable statements were judged more positively than disagreeable statements.

Table 2B

Experiment 2 Item-Level Results (Items 25-48)

Item	BF_{10}	*t*	df	*p* <	*d*	95% CI for *d* Lower	Upper
Pro-abortion/Pro-choice	23.36	3.11	334	.002	0.34	0.12	0.55
[Unborn] Child/Fetus	0.07	-0.81	349	.790	-0.09	-0.30	0.12
Prostitution/Sex Work	0.81	1.64	352	.051	0.17	-0.03	0.38
Gender-affirming Care/Sex Change Surgeries	24.18	3.11	322	.001	0.34	0.12	0.56
Violent/Largely Peaceful [Protest]	>99,999	20.49	153	.001	3.25	2.77	3.73
[Sexual] Assault/Misconduct	12.73	2.89	330	.002	0.32	0.10	0.53
Engage in Censorship/Combat Misinformation	>99,999	8.99	150	.001	1.43	1.08	1.78
Misinformation/Free Speech	>99,999	10.99	158	.001	1.74	1.37	2.10
Critical Race Theory/Anti-Racist Curriculum	324	3.91	152	.001	0.62	0.30	0.94
Suppress Viewpoints/Reduce Disinformation	>99,999	19.26	155	.001	3.06	2.60	3.53
Racially Insensitive/Racist	0.39	1.13	324	.130	0.12	-0.09	0.34
Abortion/Reproductive Healthcare	9.13	2.73	164	.004	0.41	0.11	0.71
Reduce Election Security/Expand Voting Rights	>99,999	14.38	148	.001	2.28	1.88	2.68
[Student] Loan Handout/Debt Relief	0.50	1.33	345	.092	0.14	-0.07	0.35
Woke/Anti-Racist	1.23	1.87	330	.031	0.20	0.01	0.42
[Gender-based] Inequities/Differences	1,684	4.39	154	.001	0.70	0.37	1.02
Restrict Gun Rights/Increase Gun Control	2.48	2.22	332	.014	0.24	0.03	0.46
Insurrection/Protest	>99,999	10.92	151	.001	1.73	1.36	2.10
Radical Leftist/Progressive	>99,999	8.16	158	.001	1.29	0.95	1.63
Far-Right/Conservative	28.74	3.13	156	.001	0.50	0.18	0.82
Substance Use Disorder/Drug Addict	22.16	3.04	157	.002	0.48	0.16	0.80
Obesity/Body Positivity	>99,999	9.55	154	.001	1.51	1.16	1.87
Traitor/Whistleblower	261	3.85	156	.001	0.61	0.29	0.93
Developing/Third World [Countries]	0.08	-0.49	349	.688	-0.05	-0.26	0.16

Note. Results of one-tailed Bayesian independent-samples *t*-tests comparing participants' agreement with an action when the action was depicted using an agreeable versus disagreeable term. Positive effect sizes represent items for which agreeable statements were judged more positively than disagreeable statements.

2.8 Experiment 3

Experiments 1 and 2 demonstrate the ability for the strategic use of more or less

agreeable terms to bias peoples' evaluations of actions. Nevertheless, the extent to which people

view the use of these terms as honest remains unknown. Stating something objectively false

comes with the risk that this falsehood may be revealed, along with the dishonesty of the liar. Conversely, the strategic speakers' avoidance of falsehoods may make their calculated use of euphemistic and dysphemistic terms appear honest. In Experiment 3, I investigate the extent to which participants judge the use of each agreeable and disagreeable term presented in Experiment 1 as deceptive, truthful, and permissible when used to describe an unambiguous action. Furthermore, I compare these judgments to those given to action-descriptions featuring objectively false claims. I hypothesize that describing well-known actions using either agreeable or disagreeable terms will be judged as less deceptive, more truthful, and more permissible compared to descriptions of these actions that feature lies.

2.9 Methods

2.9.1 Participants

Three hundred and one US residents (51% female; $M_{age} = 37.52$, $SD_{age} = 11.63$; 115 Democrats, 133 Independents, 53 Republicans; 54% college graduates) were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk using the same recruitment criteria as Experiment 1. Those who participated in Experiment 1 were restricted from participating in Experiment 3.

2.9.2 Materials

In order to assess how honest participants viewed the use of the presented agreeable and disagreeable terms, I created a detailed action description for each of my 13 items. For each item, participants were presented with a detailed action description (referred to as a "factual event description") and judged how deceptively, truthfully, and permissibly an action-depicting statement represented the factually described event. Each factual event description was created such that it detailed an action in an unambiguous way and described an action which could plausibly be referred to using both the relevant agreeable and disagreeable terms (for an example

see Figure 4; for a full list of items see Appendix D). Importantly, participants were informed that "all event descriptions are factual and contain nothing but truth. Therefore, any potential difference between an event description and a statement is a reflection of the statement not being completely true." Additionally, I created a lie statement for each item (see Figure 4) in order to compare the truthfulness, deceptiveness, and permissibility of an outright lie to that of the presented agreeable and disagreeable statements.

Agreeable Statement	Disagreeable Statement	Lie Statement
The Foxland army engaged in the *enhanced interrogation* of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information	The Foxland army engaged in the *torture* of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information	The Foxland army did not capture or interrogate Rosewald soldiers
Factual Event Description: The Foxland army, seeking to obtain military information, captured Rosewald soldiers and forced them to stand naked in a cell kept at 50°F (10°C) while being regularly doused with cold water.		

Figure 4. Experiment 3: Item Example. Participants in Experiment 3 were presented with either an item's agreeable, disagreeable, or lie statement which they then judged in comparison to the item's factual event description.

2.9.3 Measures

2.9.3.1 Deception. I assessed the extent to which participants viewed action-depicting statements as deceptively representing a factually described event with the item "How deceptive is this statement?" Responses to this item were provided on a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (Not at all Deceptive) to 7 (Very Deceptive).

2.9.3.2 Truthfulness. I examined the degree to which participants viewed each action-depicting statement as truthfully representing a factually described event with the item "How true is this statement?" Participants provided their responses to this item on a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (Completely False) to 7 (Completely True).

2.9.3.3 Permissibility. For each action-depicting statement, I asked "Setting aside how deceptive this statement may or may not be, is this statement strictly speaking a lie?" Participants responded to this item by selecting one of two response options: "Yes, this statement is strictly speaking a lie" or "No, this statement is at least somewhat true."

2.9.4 Design and Procedure

Participants were presented with and judged 13 action-depicting statements in relation to a factual event description (see Figure 4). For each item, participants were presented, with equal likelihood, either an agreeable, disagreeable, or lie statement, and judged how deceptively, truthfully, and permissibly this statement represented a corresponding factual event description. Thus, at the item-level, Experiment 3 employed a between-subjects design with participants being randomly assigned to evaluate either an item's agreeable, disagreeable, or lie statement. However, across all 13 items, this random assignment resulted in participants evaluating statements of all three types (agreeable, disagreeable, and lie). The order in which these 13 items were presented was randomized for each participant. Participants concluded this experiment by responding to five demographic questions asking them to report their age, sex, level of education, political identity, and political ideology.

2.10 Results and Discussion

Participants' mean deceptiveness, truthfulness, and permissibility judgments for all agreeable and disagreeable terms can be viewed in Table 3. I fit generalized mixed effects regression models to examine the effect of Statement Type (dummy coded as 0 – Lie statements and 1 - Agreeable and Disagreeable statements) on participants' judgments of deception, truthfulness, and permissibility. These analyses allowed me to examine whether agreeable and disagreeable action-depicting statements could be distinguished from outright lies, such that they

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be judged by participants as less deceptive, more truthful, and more permissible (see Figure 5). I observed a significant effect of Statement Type for judgments of deception, B = -2.61., β = -1.14, 95% CI (-1.34, -0.94), SE = 0.24, t = -11.08, p < .001, $Marginal\ R^2$ = .29, truthfulness, B = 3.05, β = 1.34, 95% CI (1.13, 1.54), SE = 0.24, t = 12.60, p < .001, $Marginal\ R^2$ = .39, and permissibility, B = 0.64, β = 1.32, 95% CI (1.16, 1.47), SE = 0.04, t = 16.42, p < .001, $Marginal$ R^2 = .38. That is, participants judged action-depicting statements featuring agreeable and disagreeable terms as less deceptive (M = 3.45, SD = 2.06), more truthful (M = 5.10, SD = 1.78), and more permissible (M = .83, SD = .37), than outright lies (deception: M = 6.04, SD = 1.67, truthfulness: M = 2.08, SD = 1.80, and permissibility: M = .20, SD = .40).
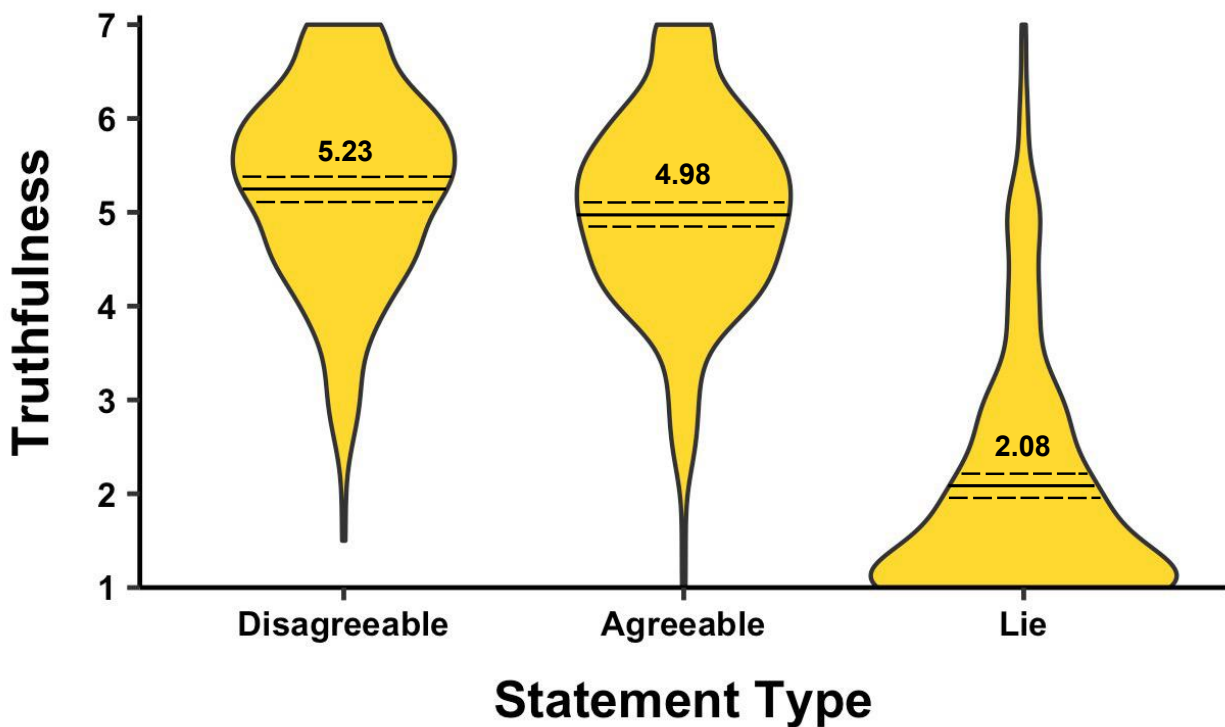
Figure 5. Experiment 3 Results: Truthfulness. Figure 5 displays the distribution of participants' truthfulness judgments for each statement type (disagreeable, agreeable, and lie). The mean truthfulness judgment for each statement type is indicated by a solid line and numerical value. Dashed lines represent the 95% confidence interval.

Consistent with the idea that action descriptions featuring euphemistic or dysphemistic terms are primarily judged as honest, participants judged statements featuring agreeable and disagreeable terms as significantly less deceptive, $t(300) = -9.28$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.53$, and more truthful, $t(300) = 23.55$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.36$, than the midpoint value of each scale. Similarly, comparing participants permissibility judgments for agreeable and disagreeable statements to the "disagreement" proportion of .50 revealed that participants reliably judged agreeable and disagreeable statements as "somewhat true", $t(300) = 30.01$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.73$.

I compared judgments of the deceptiveness, truthfulness, and permissibility of each agreeable and disagreeable statement to those made to the relevant lie statement at the item-level using independent-samples t-tests (see Table 3). These item-level analyses revealed that participants judged each disagreeable statement and 12 out of 13 agreeable statements as less deceptive, more truthful, and more permissible than a relevant lie (all p's $< .001$).[17] Overall, the results of Experiment 3 suggest that the presented agreeable and disagreeable terms can be strategically used to describe the same unambiguous actions in a way in which they are easily distinguished from factually incorrect lies and judged as more honest than dishonest.

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[17] Even when using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .002 (.05/26), all disagreeable statements and 12 out of 13 agreeable statements were judged as reliably less deceptive, more truthful, and more permissible than a corresponding lie.

Table 3

Experiment 3 Item-Level Results

| Item | | Deceptiveness | | Truthfulness | | Permissibility | |
Agreeable	Disagreeable	A	D	A	D	A	D
Enhanced Interrogation	Torture	3.41**	2.26**	5.64**	6.18**	95%**	94%**
Neutralize	Kill	4.02**	3.70**	4.65**	4.79**	85%**	89%**
Negotiated Departure	Firing	4.61**	2.62**	4.22**	5.94**	72%**	90%**
Educate	Indoctrinate	3.25**	4.00**	5.51**	4.37**	90%**	73%**
Revitalization	Gentrification	3.83**	3.29**	5.14**	5.45**	87%**	87%**
Meat Processing Plant	Slaughterhouse	3.09**	2.64**	5.55**	5.72**	88%**	83%**
Harvest	Cut Down	4.08**	3.14**	4.54**	5.37**	82%**	90%**
Provocateur	Hate-Monger	2.82**	3.22**	5.62**	5.27**	89%**	83%**
Erotic Art Piece	Pornographic Film	3.43**	2.93**	5.10**	5.39**	85%**	84%**
Hate Speech	Offensive Speech	3.56**	2.18**	4.88**	6.05**	71%**	93%**
Economic Viability	Profits	4.47**	4.17**	4.15**	4.18**	73%**	75%**
Activist	Extremist	1.82**	4.29**	6.40**	4.46**	92%**	82%**
Coddle	Help	5.14	3.83**	3.27*	4.78**	53%**	83%**

Note. All statements were judged with relation to a factual event description. Participants' mean deceptiveness and truthfulness judgments for each item are shown above as is the percentage of participants endorsing each item as "somewhat true." Inferential statistics represent the results of independent-samples *t*-tests examining differences between judgments of each statement and its corresponding lie statement. *A* = Agreeable; *D* = Disagreeable. ** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$.

2.10.1 Comparing Perceptions of Euphemistic versus Dysphemistic Terms

While strategic language (such as doublespeak) can be used to make the actions of opponents appear less favourable, it may be more commonly used to describe one's own actions in a way that conceals their unpleasantness. As such, it may be the case that the selected euphemistic terms, inspired by real-world uses of doublespeak, are purposefully more evasive and therefore deceptive than their dysphemistic counterparts, on account that their goal is often to obscure one's own immoral actions as opposed to expose the immoral actions of others. Consistent with this idea, agreeable action-depicting statements were judged as more deceptive ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 2.06$), less truthful ($M = 4.98$, $SD = 1.82$), and less permissible ($M = .82$, $SD = .39$), than disagreeable statements (deception: $M = 3.25$, $SD = 2.05$, truthfulness: $M = 5.23$, $SD = 1.74$, and permissibility: $M = .85$, $SD = .36$). However, generalized mixed effects regression

models did not reveal an effect of Statement Type (dummy coded as 0 – Agreeable statements and 1 - Disagreeable statements) for judgments of deceptiveness (β = -0.10, p = .195), truthfulness (β = 0.07, p = .351), or permissibility (β = 0.05, p = .296). Furthermore, participants judged agreeable statements as considerably less deceptive (β = -0.54, p < .001), more truthful (β = 0.63, p < .001), and more permissible (β = 0.62, p < .001), than lies and as less deceptive, $t(297)$ = -5.13, p < .001, d = 0.30, and more truthful, $t(297)$ = 16.20, p < .001, d = 0.94, than the midpoint value of each scale. Similarly, comparing participants' permissibility judgments for agreeable statements to the "disagreement" proportion of .50 revealed that participants reliably judged agreeable statements, $t(297)$ = 22.49, p < .001, d = 1.30, as "somewhat true." Therefore, while agreeable statements may have been viewed as somewhat less honest than their disagreeable counterparts, they were still judged as largely honest and were easily distinguished from lies.

2.11 Experiment 4

In Experiment 3, participants judged action-depicting statements featuring agreeable and disagreeable terms as more honest (e.g., more truthful) than lies. Nevertheless, how people judge those making such linguistic choices remains unknown. In Experiment 4, I investigate how people evaluate the character (e.g., trustworthiness) of hypothetical speakers using agreeable and disagreeable terms to describe unambiguous actions. As in Experiment 3, I compare evaluations of these speakers' character with the character evaluations of speakers describing the same set of unambiguous actions with objectively false lies. I hypothesize that speakers using agreeable and disagreeable terms will be judged as more trustworthy, more moral, and as less deserving of criticism compared to liars. Such a finding would provide further support for the claim that individuals strategically using euphemisms and dysphemisms in attempt to bias peoples'

perceptions of actions could do so while largely avoiding the reputational risk associated with less subtle forms of linguistic manipulation (e.g., lying).

2.12 Methods

2.12.1 Participants

A sample of 401 participants (43% female; M_{age} = 41.09, SD_{age} = 13.91; 154 Democrats, 181 Independents, 65 Republicans; 69% college graduates) was recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk and received $1.00 upon completion of an eight-minute online questionnaire. Participants were recruited under the condition that they be U.S. residents and possess a Mechanical Turk HIT approval rate greater than or equal to 99%. To help ensure data quality, all participants were required to correctly answer two simple questions prior to their participation. Those who participated in Experiments 1 or 3 were restricted from participating in Experiment 4.

2.12.2 Materials

The materials used in Experiment 4 were identical to those used in Experiment 3, with the exception that all action-depicting statements (agreeable, disagreeable, and lie) were now attributed to a fictitious member of the public said to have full knowledge of the action they were describing.

2.12.3 Measures

Following the presentation of each statement, participants were asked to judge the person making the statement on three dimensions presented in a randomized order within a matrix table.

2.12.3.1 Trustworthiness. Participants judged the trustworthiness of each fictitious agent on the basis of the public statement they made and its correspondence with a factual event description using a 7-point scale that ranged from "*Untrustworthy*" to "*Trustworthy*."

2.12.3.2 Moral Character. Participants assessed the morality of each agent using a 7-point scale that ranged from "*Immoral*" to "*Moral*."

2.12.3.3 Criticism. Participants indicated how much criticism they felt each agent deserved using a 7-point scale that ranged from "*Deserves No Criticism*" to "*Deserves Criticism*."

2.12.4 Design and Procedure

The design and procedure of Experiment 4 mirrored that of Experiment 3. Participants were presented with the action-depicting statements of 13 agents and judged each agent on three dimensions (i.e., trustworthiness, moral character, and criticism [deserved]) based on the statement they made and its correspondence with a factual event description. Experiment 4 featured a between-subjects design at the item-level as, for each item, participants were randomly assigned to evaluate an agent describing an action using either an agreeable, disagreeable, or lie statement. Across all 13 items, this random assignment resulted in participants evaluating agents attributed statements of all three types. The order in which items were presented was randomized for each participant. Participants concluded this experiment by completing the same five demographic questions administered in Experiments 1 and 3.

2.13 Results and Discussion

Participants' mean trustworthiness, moral character, and criticism judgments for all agreeable and disagreeable terms can be viewed in Table 4. I fit a generalized mixed effects regression model to assess the effect of Statement Type (dummy coded as 0 – Lie statements and 1 - Agreeable and Disagreeable statements) on participants' judgments of trustworthiness, moral character, and criticism. These comparisons allowed me to examine whether individuals using a euphemistic or dysphemistic term to describe a well-known action were judged as more

trustworthy, more moral, and less deserving of criticism compared to those lying about the action that took place (see Figure 6). I observed a significant effect of Statement Type for judgments of trustworthiness, $B = 2.41$, $\beta = 1.15$, 95% CI (0.97, 1.33), $SE = 0.19$, $t = 12.44$, $p < .001$, *Marginal R^2* = .29, moral character, $B = 1.96$, $\beta = 1.01$, 95% CI (0.83, 1.20), $SE = 0.18$, $t = 10.97$, $p < .001$, *Marginal R^2* = .23, and criticism, $B = -2.13$, $\beta = -1.01$, 95% CI (-1.19, -0.83), $SE = 0.20$, $t = -10.84$, $p < .001$, *Marginal R^2* = .22. That is, participants judged agents using agreeable and disagreeable terms as more trustworthy ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 1.88$), more moral ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.77$), and less deserving of criticism ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 2.00$), compared to liars (trustworthiness: $M = 1.97$, $SD = 1.52$, moral character: $M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.54$, and criticism: $M = 5.99$, $SD = 1.54$).
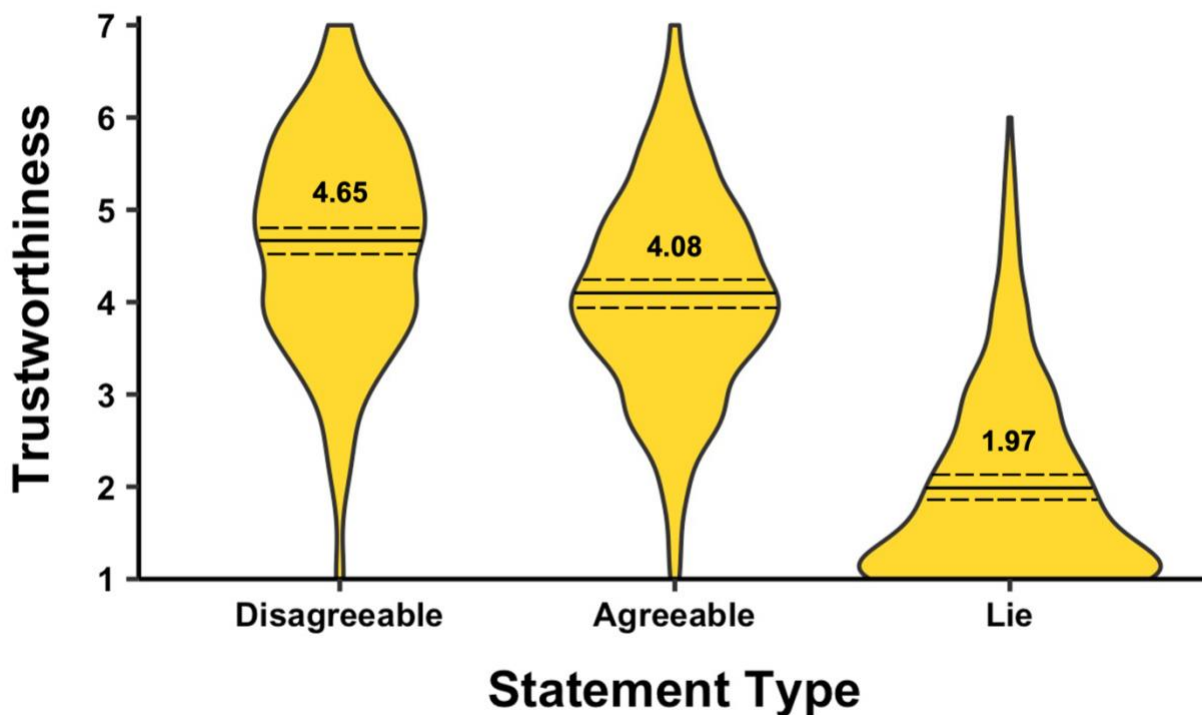
Figure 6. Experiment 4 Results: Trustworthiness. Figure 6 displays the distribution of participants' trustworthiness judgments for each statement type (disagreeable, agreeable, and lie). The mean trustworthiness judgment for each statement type is indicated by a solid line and numerical value. Dashed lines represent the 95% confidence interval.

Consistent with the idea that the strategic use of euphemistic and dysphemistic terms often fails to result in significant reputational costs, participants judged agents using agreeable and disagreeable terms as more trustworthy, $t(400) = 9.14$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.46$, moral, $t(400) = 6.37$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.32$, and less deserving of criticism, $t(400) = -3.18$, $p = .002$, $d = 0.16$, than the midpoint value of each scale. I also compared participants' judgments of agents attributed agreeable and disagreeable statements to judgments of agents attributed a corresponding lie statement at the item-level using independent-samples t-test (see Table 4). These analyses revealed a familiar pattern of results as, for each disagreeable statement and 12 out of 13 agreeable statements, agents attributed these statements were judged as more trustworthy, more moral, and as deserving of less criticism than agents attributed a corresponding lie (all p's < .024).[18] Overall, the results of Experiment 4 suggest that individuals wishing to strategically use euphemistic and dysphemistic terms in order to shape peoples' evaluations of actions may be able to do so with minimal reputational costs.

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[18] When using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .002 (.05/26), agents were judged as significantly more trustworthy, moral, and as deserving of less criticism when attributed 12 (out of 13) disagreeable and 12 (out of 13) agreeable statements compared to when attributed a relevant lie statement.

Table 4

Experiment 4 Item-Level Results

| Item | | Trustworthiness | | Moral Character | | Criticism | |
Agreeable	**Disagreeable**	A	D	A	D	A	D
Enhanced Interrogation	Torture	4.06**	5.65**	3.58**	5.20**	4.49**	2.67**
Neutralize	Kill	3.89**	4.49**	3.75**	4.43**	4.42**	3.73**
Negotiated Departure	Firing	3.02**	4.96**	3.19**	4.67**	5.16**	3.36**
Educate	Indoctrinate	4.41**	3.67**	4.34**	3.70*	3.80**	4.73*
Revitalization	Gentrification	3.85**	4.52**	3.82**	4.36**	4.56**	3.71**
Meat Processing Plant	Slaughterhouse	4.99**	5.24**	4.61**	4.96**	3.01**	2.94**
Harvest	Cut Down	3.54**	4.72**	3.69**	4.65**	4.59**	3.47**
Provocateur	Hate-Monger	4.53**	4.19**	4.46**	4.30**	3.59**	4.04**
Erotic Art Piece	Pornographic Film	4.10**	4.86**	3.90**	4.50**	4.04**	3.33**
Hate Speech	Offensive Speech	4.44**	5.51**	4.40**	5.36**	3.73**	2.64**
Economic Viability	Profits	3.76**	4.56**	3.80**	4.43**	4.51**	3.71**
Activist	Extremist	5.60**	3.51**	5.51**	3.59**	2.45**	4.71**
Coddle	Help	2.81	4.51**	2.72	4.60**	5.79	3.73**

Note. All public statements made by agents were judged with relation to a factual event description. Participants' mean trustworthiness, moral character, and criticism judgments for each item is shown above. Inferential statistics represent the results of independent-samples *t*-tests examining differences between judgments of agents attributed either an agreeable or disagreeable statement and judgments of agents attributed a corresponding lie statement. *A* = Agreeable; *D* = Disagreeable. ** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$.

2.13.1 Reputational Costs Associated with Euphemistic and Dysphemistic Terms

I explored whether agents using agreeable statements were judged less favourably than those attributed their disagreeable counterparts. Consistent with Experiment 3, agents describing actions with a euphemistic term were viewed as less trustworthy ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.85$), less moral ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.72$), and more deserving of criticism ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.95$), than agents describing actions with a dysphemistic term (trustworthiness: $M = 4.65$, $SD = 1.87$, moral character: $M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.77$, and criticism: $M = 3.60$, $SD = 2.01$). However, also consistent with Experiment 3, generalized mixed effects regression models did not reveal a significant effect of Statement Type (dummy coded as 0 – Agreeable statements and 1 – Disagreeable statements) for judgments of trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.15$, $p = .062$), moral character ($\beta = 0.15$, $p =$

.056), or criticism (β = -0.14, p = .092). Notably, compared to liars, participants judged agents describing actions with a euphemistic term as more trustworthy (β = 0.53, p < .001), moral (β = 0.46, p < .001), and undeserving of criticism (β = -0.47, p < .001). Therefore, while agents using agreeable terms to describe actions may have been judged somewhat less favourably than those using more disagreeable terms, the reputation of these agents was still significantly more favourable than that of liars.

2.14 Experiment 5

The primary goal of Experiment 5 was to assess the perceived honesty of all agreeable and disagreeable statements featured in the expanded 48-item set assessed in Experiment 2. Thus, Experiment 5 aimed to replicate the results of Experiments 3 and 4 using this expanded set of items. As such, participants in Experiment 5 were asked to evaluate the truthfulness and permissibility of agreeable and disagreeable statements (as well as lie statements) when used to depict a factually described event. Additionally, participants evaluated hypothetical agents attributed these statements on different dimensions (e.g., trustworthiness). Consistent with the results of Experiment 3 and 4, I hypothesize that statements describing a well-known event using either an agreeable or disagreeable term will be judged as more truthful and permissible than statements featuring an objectively false claim. Likewise, I predict that agents attributed agreeable and disagreeable statements will be viewed as more trustworthy, moral, and undeserving of criticism compared to liars. Such findings would provide further support for the reduced reputational risks associated with the strategic use of more or less agreeable terms across a larger and more diverse set of linguistic choices.

2.15 Methods

2.15.1 Participants

Six hundred and sixty-four participants were initially recruited from Prolific, an online research platform. As in Experiment 2, I pre-registered (https://osf.io/9q8fa) the intention to collect additional data for items in which Bayesian independent-samples t-test (using a default prior of $\sqrt{2}/2$ or .707) failed to reveal strong evidence in favour of either the null or alternative hypothesis (i.e., items for which BF_{10} was between 0.10 and 10; Jeffreys, 1961). In line with this intention, I collected additional data from 75 participants for 3 (out of 48) items. Therefore, my final sample consisted of 739 participants, all of which were recruited from Prolific using the same recruitment criteria. Specifically, in order to be eligible to participate in Experiment 5, all participants were required to: (1) self-report an age between 18 and 65 years old, (2) self-report English as their first language, (3) reside in the United States, (4) have completed between 100 and 10,000 work submissions on Prolific, and (5) possess a Prolific submission approval rating greater than or equal to 95%. Participants in the initial sample ($n = 664$) provided judgments for 12 items and received $1.75 upon completion of a 12-minute online questionnaire. Participants ($n = 75$) recruited to provide additional data for "inconclusive" items provided judgments for 3 items and received $0.75 following their completion of a 5-minute online questionnaire. I excluded data from 32 participants based on a set of pre-registered exclusion criteria (see *Data Preparation*), leaving data from 707 participants (47% Female; $M_{age} = 40.45$, $SD_{age} = 12.74$; 209 Democrats, 321 Independents, 177 Republicans, 54% college graduates) to be analyzed.

2.15.2 Materials and Measures

The materials used in Experiment 5 mirrored those of Experiment 4, with the exception that Experiment 5 featured an expanded 48 item-set[19] (see Appendix E). I created a detailed action description (referred to as a "factual event description") as well as a lie statement for each new item within this set, following the same criteria as described in Experiment 3. On each experimental trial, participants were presented with an item's factual event description along with the item's agreeable, disagreeable, or lie statement, which was attributed to a fictitious person in the public sphere with full knowledge of the action they described. Participants were asked to evaluate how truthfully and permissibly[20] a person's public statement represented the factually described event. Additionally, participants were asked to judge each person making a public statement on three dimensions (i.e., trustworthiness, moral character, and criticism [deserved]) based on the public statement they made and its correspondence with the event that took place. Thus, Experiment 5 used the same measures as Experiments 3 and 4, with the exception that participants were not asked to assess the deceptiveness of statements (as was done in Experiment 3).

2.15.3 Design and Procedure

Participants were presented with the action-depicting statements of 12 agents[21] and judged each statement on two dimensions (i.e., truthfulness and permissibility) and each agent on three dimensions (i.e., trustworthiness, moral character, and criticism [deserved]). For each item,

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[19] This 48-item set included the 13 items presented in Experiments 1, 3, and 4. However, item 13 (coddle/help) was modified prior to its inclusion within this larger set of items (see Appendix E).
[20] The wording of the administered permissibility measure was slightly altered from Experiment 3. Specifically, in Experiment 5, I assessed permissibility with the following question: "Setting aside how misleading this statement may or may not be, is this statement strictly speaking a lie?" Participants responded to this question with either a "Yes, strictly speaking, this statement is a lie" or "No, strictly speaking, this statement is not a lie" response.
[21] With the exception of 75 participants, collected following initial data collection in a manner consistent with a pre-registered stopping rule, who were presented with the action-depicting statements of 3 agents.

participants were randomly assigned to evaluate an agent describing an action using either an agreeable, disagreeable, or lie statement. Across items, this random assignment resulted in participants evaluating statements of all three types (i.e., agreeable, disagreeable, and lie). The order in which items were presented was randomized for each participant. Participants concluded Experiment 5 by reporting their age, sex, ethnicity, level of education, political identity, political ideology, and level of political engagement.

2.15.4 Data Preparation

I excluded data from 32 participants who reported responding randomly at some point during the experiment ($n = 23$) or completed the 12-item version of Experiment 5 in under 300 seconds ($n = 12$). These exclusions were consistent with pre-registered criteria. As in Experiment 2, all aggregate level analyses were conducted using an initial sample of 664 participants ($n = 633$ following exclusions). However, additional responses provided to three items were retained for item-level analyses. Once again, neither the aforementioned exclusions nor the choice of sample altered the statistical significance of any of the aggregate-level analyses reported below.[22]

2.16 Results and Discussion

Participants' mean truthfulness, trustworthiness, and permissibility judgments for all agreeable and disagreeable terms can be viewed in Table 5. I fit generalized mixed effects regression models to examine the effect of Statement Type (dummy coded as 0 – Lie statements and 1 – Agreeable and Disagreeable statements) on participants' judgments of truthfulness, permissibility, trustworthiness, moral character, and criticism (see Figure 7). These analyses revealed an effect of Statement Type for judgments of truthfulness, $B = 3.72$, $\beta = 0.72$, 95% *CI*

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[22] Also of note, an error within item 42 (insurrection/protest) resulted in the removal of data collected for this item within the initial 664 participant sample. Nevertheless, I corrected this error and collected data for this item during additional data collection ($n = 75$).

(0.67, 0.76), $SE = 0.11$, $t = 32.68$, $p < .001$, *Marginal R^2* = .52, and permissibility, $B = 0.67$, $\beta = 0.65$, 95% *CI* (0.62, 0.69), $SE = 0.02$, $t = 37.16$, $p < .001$, *Marginal R^2* = .43. Consistent with Experiment 3, participants judged action-depicting statements featuring an agreeable or disagreeable term as more truthful ($M = 5.51$, $SD = 1.74$) and permissible ($M = .84$, $SD = .36$) than outright lies (truthfulness: $M = 1.79$, $SD = 1.60$; permissibility: $M = .17$, $SD = .38$). Likewise, I observed an effect of Statement Type for judgments of trustworthiness, $B = 2.67$, $\beta = 0.58$, 95% *CI* (0.54, 0.62), $SE = 0.10$, $t = 26.59$, $p < .001$, *Marginal R^2* = .34, moral character, $B = 2.16$, $\beta = 0.51$, 95% *CI* (0.47, 0.56), $SE = 0.09$, $t = 22.97$, $p < .001$, *Marginal R^2* = .26, and criticism, $B = -2.30$, $\beta = -0.49$, 95% *CI* (-0.54, -0.45), $SE = 0.10$, $t = -22.45$, $p < .001$, *Marginal R^2* = .30. Replicating Experiment 4, participants judged agents attributed an agreeable or disagreeable statement as more trustworthy ($M = 4.84$, $SD = 1.80$), more moral ($M = 4.66$, $SD = 1.72$), and less deserving of criticism ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 2.01$), than liars (trustworthiness: $M = 2.16$, $SD = 1.68$, moral character: $M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.63$, and criticism: $M = 5.76$, $SD = 1.74$).
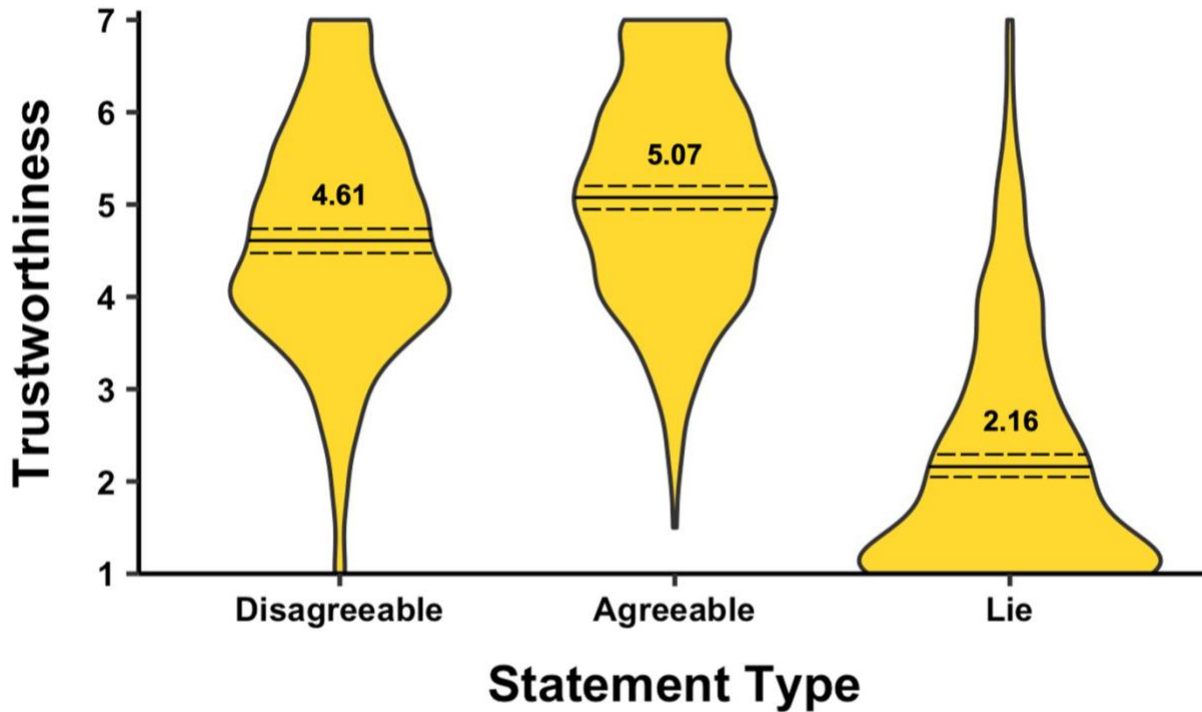
Figure 7. Experiment 5 Results: Trustworthiness. Figure 7 displays the distribution of participants' trustworthiness judgments for each statement type (disagreeable, agreeable, and lie). The mean trustworthiness judgment for each statement type is indicated by a solid line and numerical value. Dashed lines represent the 95% confidence interval.

Single sample *t*-tests revealed that participants judged agreeable and disagreeable action-depicting statements as more truthful, $t(632) = 45.64$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.81$, and judge agents attributed these statements as more trustworthy, $t(632) = 21.14$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.84$, more moral, $t(632) = 17.92$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.71$, and less deserving of criticism, $t(632) = -11.93$, $p < .001$, $d = -0.47$, than the midpoint value (4) of each scale. Additionally, comparing permissibility judgments for agreeable and disagreeable statements to the "disagreement" proportion of .50 demonstrated that participants reliably judged these statements as "not a lie," $t(632) = 49.39$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.96$. Furthermore, I compared judgments of agreeable and disagreeable statements (and the agents attributed these statements) to judgments of a corresponding lie statement (and liar) at the item-level using independent-samples *t*-tests. These analyses revealed that each agreeable and disagreeable statement was judged as more truthful and more permissible than a

corresponding lie (all p's $< .001$). Similarly, for each agreeable statement and 43 out of 48

disagreeable statements, agents attributed these statements were judged as more trustworthy,

more moral, and as less deserving of criticism compared to agents attributed a relevant lie (all p's

$< .032$). Therefore, the results of Experiment 5 provide additional evidence that the agreeable

and disagreeable statements examined here can be used interchangeably to describe the same

event in a manner that is perceived as largely truthful and permissible, with these statements

being easily distinguished from lies. Similarly, these results support the notion that, despite their

persuasive influence (see Experiments 1 and 2), individuals may be able to use euphemistic and

dysphemistic terms in a strategic and self-serving manner without suffering the reputational costs

associated with less subtle forms of linguistic manipulation (e.g., lying).

Table 5A

Experiment 5 Item-Level Results (Items 1-24)

Item		Truthfulness		Trustworthiness		Permissibility	
Agreeable	**Disagreeable**	A	D	A	D	A	D
Enhanced Interrogation	Torture	5.62	6.34	5.06	5.47	85%	94%
Neutralize	Kill	4.62	4.41	4.06	3.77	72%	66%
Negotiated Departure	Firing	3.94	6.29	3.52	5.21	48%	96%
Educate	Indoctrinate	5.53	4.52	4.62	3.76	93%	73%
Revitalization	Gentrification	4.81	5.77	4.04	4.79	91%	87%
Meat Processing Plant	Slaughterhouse	6.16	6.16	5.40	5.31	87%	96%
Harvest	Cut Down	4.41	5.22	3.88	4.57	73%	91%
Provocateur	Hate-Monger	5.90	4.50	4.90	3.37	88%	63%
Erotic Art Piece	Pornographic Film	4.78	4.89	4.69	4.26	89%	64%
Hate Speech	Offensive Speech	4.57	5.81	4.00	5.00	61%	93%
Economic Viability	Profits	3.91	4.33	3.66	4.16	66%	67%
Activist	Extremist	6.38	4.49	5.56	3.93	99%	73%
Help	Coddle	5.95	3.91	5.69	3.61	98%	65%
Low-wage	Low-skill	6.09	4.23	5.51	4.02	92%	70%
Vaccine Hesitant	Anti-vaccination	5.57	4.20	5.13	4.04	87%	70%
Anti-Vaxxer	Vaccine Hesitant User	5.57	6.25	4.88	5.13	90%	96%
Homeless	Unhoused	6.07	5.98	5.44	5.00	93%	91%
Undocumented	Illegal [Immigrants]	5.98	5.42	5.48	4.87	92%	81%
Formerly Incarcerated	Ex-convicts	6.58	6.56	5.96	5.93	96%	96%
Heartbeat Bill	Forced Pregnancy Bill	6.70	5.87	5.77	4.93	94%	93%
[Climate] Skeptic	Denier	4.84	4.43	4.49	4.26	69%	56%
[Climate] Advocate	Alarmist	6.08	4.34	5.64	3.62	87%	70%
Climate Crisis	Climate Change	5.98	5.81	5.29	5.10	92%	87%
Pro-life	Anti-abortion	6.69	6.44	5.80	5.96	99%	92%

Note. All statements were judged with relation to a factual event description. Participants' mean truthfulness and trustworthiness judgments for each item are shown above as is the percentage of participants endorsing each item as "not a lie." *A* = Agreeable; *D* = Disagreeable.

Table 5B

Experiment 5 Item-Level Results (Items 25-48)

Item		Truthfulness		Trustworthiness		Permissibility	
Agreeable	**Disagreeable**	A	D	A	D	A	D
Pro-choice	Pro-abortion	6.26	5.65	5.72	5.33	93%	87%
[Unborn] Fetus	Child	6.38	6.38	5.02	4.92	94%	98%
Sex Work	Prostitution	5.91	5.98	5.21	5.30	84%	90%
Sex Change Surgeries	Gender-Affirming Care	6.48	5.44	5.32	4.40	99%	79%
Largely Peaceful	Violent [Protest]	5.14	4.19	4.76	3.74	78%	70%
[Sexual] Misconduct	Assault	6.60	6.33	5.25	4.63	94%	92%
Combat Misinformation	Engage in Censorship	5.96	5.28	5.56	4.61	87%	84%
Free Speech	Misinformation	5.86	5.84	4.90	4.61	96%	88%
Anti-Racist Curriculum	Critical Race Theory	4.58	5.33	5.02	5.21	75%	88%
Reduce Disinformation	Suppress Viewpoints	5.02	5.04	4.19	4.35	81%	77%
Racist	Racially Insensitive	5.56	6.04	5.16	5.47	80%	91%
Reproductive Healthcare	Abortion	5.25	5.29	4.94	4.73	78%	84%
Expand Voting Rights	Reduce Election Security	6.19	4.33	5.83	3.57	94%	69%
[Student] Debt Relief	Loan Handout	5.90	5.47	5.13	4.95	85%	87%
Anti-Racist	Woke	5.47	6.00	4.78	4.85	86%	96%
[Gender-based] Differences	Inequities	5.33	5.51	4.70	4.49	83%	82%
Increase Gun Control	Restrict Gun Rights	6.36	5.42	5.81	4.95	94%	91%
Protest	Insurrection	6.21	5.04	5.13	4.25	88%	83%
Progressive	Radical Leftist	6.13	4.06	5.42	3.65	98%	59%
Conservative	Far-Right	6.07	4.54	5.33	4.10	89%	63%
Drug Addict	Substance Use Disorder	6.65	6.33	5.73	5.29	98%	92%
Body Positivity	Obesity	6.26	4.61	5.69	4.06	93%	67%
Whistleblower	Traitor	6.14	5.35	5.14	4.46	84%	85%
Third World	Developing [Countries]	5.66	5.45	4.89	4.75	92%	89%

Note. All statements were judged with relation to a factual event description. Participants' mean truthfulness and trustworthiness judgments for each item are shown above as is the percentage of participants endorsing each item as "not a lie." *A* = Agreeable; *D* = Disagreeable.

2.16.1 Reputational Costs Associated with Euphemistic and Dysphemistic Terms

I once again explored the extent to which participants' judgments differed across agreeable and disagreeable statements by fitting generalized mixed effects regression models examining the effect of Statement Type (dummy coded as 0 – Agreeable statements and 1 – Disagreeable statements) for each dependent variable assessed in Experiment 5. These analyses revealed that disagreeable statements were judged as less truthful ($M = 5.32$, $SD = 1.80$), $\beta =$ -

0.11, $p = .005$, and less permissible ($M = .82$, $SD = .39$), $\beta = -0.07$, $p = .022$, than agreeable statements (truthfulness: $M = 5.70$, $SD = 1.65$; permissibility: $M = .87$, $SD = .34$). Likewise, agents attributed disagreeable statements were judged as less trustworthy ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.86$), $\beta = -0.12$, $p < .001$, less moral ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 1.76$), $\beta = -0.10$, $p = .001$, and more deserving of criticism ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 2.04$), $\beta = 0.12$, $p < .001$, compared to agents attributed agreeable statements (trustworthiness: $M = 5.07$, $SD = 1.72$, moral character: $M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.67$, and criticism: $M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.95$). Nevertheless, participants judged disagreeable statements as considerably more truthful ($\beta = 0.72$, $p < .001$) and permissible ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < .001$) than lies. Similarly, they judged agents attributed disagreeable statements as more trustworthy ($\beta = 0.57$, $p < .001$), more moral ($\beta = 0.51$, $p < .001$), and deserving of less criticism ($\beta = -0.48$, $p < .001$) than liars. Further speaking to the minimal reputational costs associated with disagreeable statements, participants judged agents describing a well-defined event using a disagreeable statement as more trustworthy, $t(631) = 13.04$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.52$, more moral, $t(631) = 11.28$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.45$, and less deserving of criticism, $t(631) = -5.75$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.23$, and the statements themselves as more truthful, $t(631) = 30.05$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.20$, than the midpoint value (4) of each scale. Relatedly, comparing participants' permissibility judgments for disagreeable statements to the "disagreement" proportion of .50 revealed that participants reliably judged disagreeable statements as "not a lie," $t(631) = 33.60$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.34$. Therefore, while disagreeable statements, in the aggregate, were viewed as less honest than their agreeable counterparts, these statements were still judged as largely honest and easily distinguished from lies. Likewise, agents describing a well-defined event with a potentially strategic and self-serving dysphemistic term faced minimal reputational costs, being judged far more favourably than liars.

2.17 Experiment 6

Experiments 1 and 2 demonstrate how the strategic use of semantically related agreeable (e.g., *enhanced interrogation*) and disagreeable (e.g., *torture*) terms bias peoples' evaluations of actions. However, these experiments had participants evaluate actions that were somewhat ambiguous. Thus, one may wonder how susceptible people are to a speakers' linguistic choices when more knowledgeable about the acts they are evaluating. It may be the case that when the details of an act are unknown people have the affordance to imagine several types of actions, and in doing so may be easily influenced by the language used in an act's description. In these circumstances, if more agreeable terms evoke more laudable actions compared to disagreeable terms, one may expect actions to be viewed more favourably when described with a euphemistic term. In contrast, when fully knowledgeable about an act, both agreeable and disagreeable terms may evoke the same set of happenings (i.e., those that occurred), reducing the influence of a speaker's linguistic choices. In Experiment 6, I assess the impact of ambiguity by examining the influence of agreeable and disagreeable terms in situations of both high (i.e., no additional act information presented) and low (i.e., additional act information presented) act ambiguity. I hypothesize that the influence of agreeable and disagreeable terms will be dependent on the level of ambiguity surrounding the actions described such that these terms will have a reduced impact on participants' evaluations of actions when actions are described in greater detail.

2.18 Methods

2.18.1 Participants

A sample of 800 US residents was recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk using the same recruitment criteria as Experiment 4. Those who participated in Experiments 1, 3, or 4 were restricted from participating in Experiment 6. I excluded data from eight participants who

reported responding randomly at some point during the experiment, leaving data from 792

participants (52% Female; $M_{age} = 42.11$, $SD_{age} = 13.29$; 67% college graduates) to be analyzed.

2.18.2 Materials

Experiment 6 featured the 13 agreeable and disagreeable action-depicting statements used

in Experiments 1, 3, and 4 (see Appendix F). For participants randomly assigned to a Details

Condition, these action-depicting statements were presented along with additional information

about each act, mirroring the information provided in the factual event descriptions of

Experiments 3 and 4 (see Figure 8). Conversely, participants in the No Details Condition viewed

agreeable and disagreeable statements without this additional information (as in Experiment 1).

Agreeable Term	Disagreeable Term
The Foxland army engaging in the enhanced interrogation of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information	The Foxland army engaging in the torture of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information

Additional Details: Captured Rosewald soldiers were forced to stand naked in a cell kept at 50 ºF (10 ºC) while being regularly doused with cold water by Foxland soldiers.

Figure 8. Experiment 6: Item Example. An example of an item featured in Experiment 6 for which one half of participants were provided with additional details regarding the actions they evaluated. These details were presented along with corresponding agreeable or disagreeable action-depicting statements, for which participants stated their level of agreement with each action described.

2.18.3 Measures

Experiment 6 used the same action evaluation and deception detection measures as

Experiments 1 and 2. That is, for each item, participants responded to the question "How much

do you agree or disagree with [Name's] actions?" using a 7-point scale that ranged from 1

(Strongly Disagree with) to 7 (Strongly Agree with). Additionally, following experimental trials,

participants were asked "Did you perceive some of the language used to describe actions in this

survey to be intentionally deceptive?" responding with either a "Yes" or "No" response. Participants who responded "Yes" to this item were asked to indicate the percentage of action-depicting statements they perceived as featuring deceptive language.

2.18.4 Design and Procedure

Experiment 6 featured a 2 (Statement Type: agreeable, disagreeable) x 2 (Information Type: details, no details) between-subjects design. Based on this design, participants in Experiment 6 were randomly assigned to exclusively evaluate either agreeable or disagreeable action-depicting statements. Likewise, based on random assignment, participants evaluated all 13 statements with or without the presence of additional act details. The order in which these 13 items were presented was randomized for each participant. Participants concluded Experiment 6 by completing a deception detection item and responding to five demographic questions (i.e., age, sex, level of education, political identity, and political ideology).

2.19 Results and Discussion

In order to assess whether describing actions in greater detail reduced the influence of agreeable and disagreeable terms, I conducted a 2 (Statement Type: agreeable, disagreeable) x 2 (Information Type: details, no details) factorial ANOVA[23] with participants' action evaluations as the dependent variable.[24] Consistent with the results of Experiments 1 and 2, I observed a main effect of Statement Type, $F(1, 788) = 200.06$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .202$, such that actions described using an agreeable term ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.76$) were judged more positively (i.e., agreed with more) than those described using a semantically related disagreeable term ($M = 2.91$,

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[23] Unlike Experiments 1-5, participants in Experiment 6 exclusively evaluated agreeable or disagreeable statements. Thus, the between-subjects design of Experiment 6 supported the use of the described factorial ANOVA and did not require the use of a generalized mixed effects model to account for idiosyncratic differences in item presentation.
[24] I conducted an additional study assessing a similar research question (see Walker et al., 2021, supplementary materials Part B). However, this study relied on cross-experiment comparisons and thus was methodologically inferior to Experiment 6. Nevertheless, the results of this additional study were consistent with those of E6.

SD = 0.68). I also observed a main effect of Information Type, $F(1, 788) = 44.63$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .054$, such that actions described in greater detail (*M* = 3.08, *SD* = 0.70) were judged more negatively than those presented without additional act information (*M* = 3.39, *SD* = 0.84). Crucially, I found a Statement Type by Information Type interaction, $F(1, 788) = 121.62$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .134$, as the effect of Statement Type was reduced when participants were provided with more details about the actions they evaluated (see Figure 9).[25] Follow-up independent-sample *t*-tests revealed a large effect of Statement Type within the No Details condition, $t(393) = 19.10$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.93$, with agreeable statements (*M* = 3.97, *SD* = 0.56) being judged more positively than disagreeable statements (*M* = 2.80, *SD* = 0.65). A smaller effect of Statement Type was observed within the Details condition, $t(395) = 2.07$, $p = .039$, $d = 0.20$, once again revealing participants' more positive evaluations of actions described using an agreeable (*M* = 3.15, *SD* = 0.70) as opposed to disagreeable term (*M* = 3.01, *SD* = 0.69).

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[25] The same pattern of results was observed when analyzing only those participants (*n* = 331) detecting the presence of deceptive language in Experiment 6.
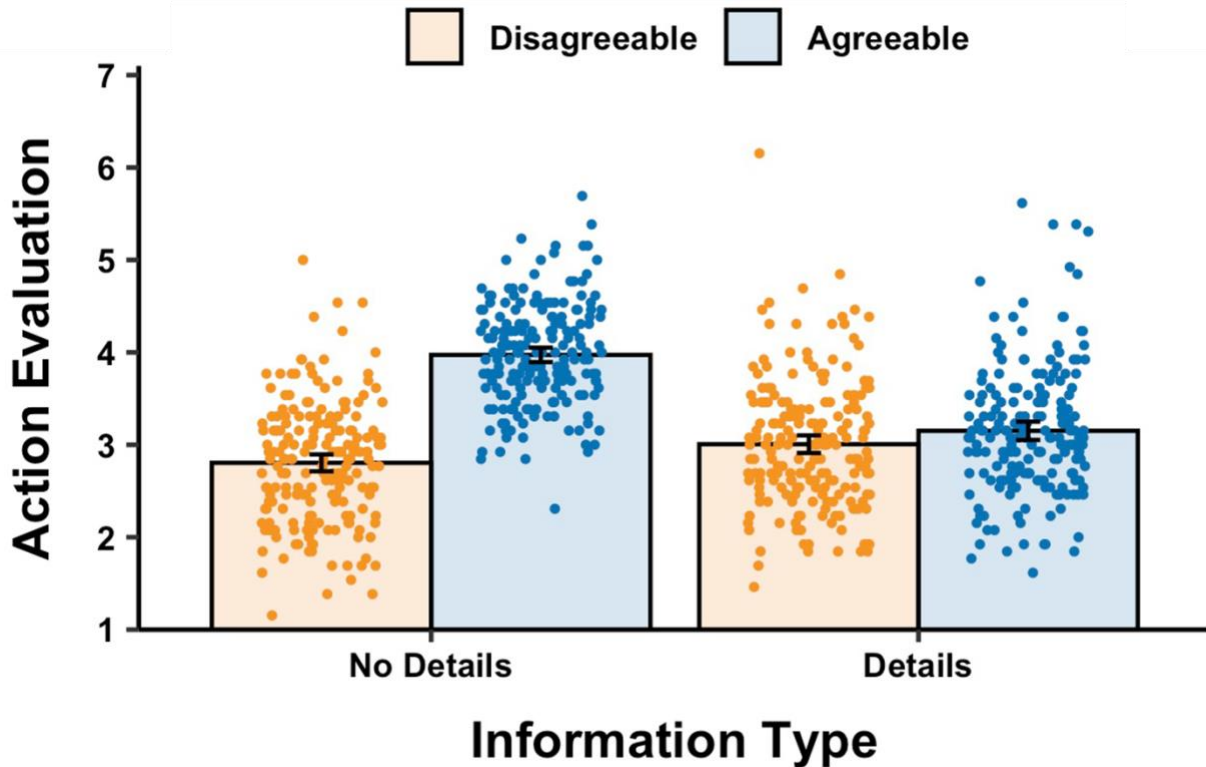
Figure 9. Experiment 6 Results. Each bar displays participants' mean action evaluation judgments within one of the four conditions participants were randomly assigned to in Experiment 6. Each dot represents an individual participant's mean action evaluation judgment. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Similar to Experiments 1 and 2 and consistent with participants distinguishing agreeable and disagreeable statements from lies in Experiments 3-5, only 42% of participants ($n = 331$) perceived any instances of deceptive language in Experiment 6 (with these participants on average indicating that 40% of actions were described using deceptive language). The between-subjects design of Experiment 6 allowed us to explore whether participants detected more deceptive language a) when exposed to agreeable as opposed to disagreeable statements and b) when provided with additional act details. I conducted a 2 (Statement Type: agreeable, disagreeable) x 2 (Information Type: details, no details) factorial ANOVA with participants' assessments of the percentage of actions described using deceptive language as the dependent variable. This analysis demonstrated a main effect of Statement Type, $F(1, 788) = 5.34$, $p = .021$,

$\eta_p^2 = .007$, revealing that participants detected a greater proportion of actions being described

with deceptive language when presented with agreeable ($M = .19$, $SD = .25$) as opposed to

disagreeable statements ($M = .15$, $SD = .24$). I observed no main effect of Information Type, $F(1,$

$788) = 0.73$, $p = .394$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, nor a Statement Type by Information Type interaction, $F(1,$

$788) = 1.71$, $p = .192$, $\eta_p^2 = 002$. Therefore, providing additional details about each action did not

appear to make either agreeable or disagreeable statements seem more deceptive.

Lastly, I conducted item-level analyses assessing the influence of Statement Type

(agreeable, disagreeable) within both Details and No Details conditions. That is, for both Details

and No Details conditions, I conducted a one-tailed Bayesian independent-samples t-test for each

item comparing participants' agreement with an action when the action was described using an

agreeable versus disagreeable term (see Table 6). Further demonstrating the reduced influence of

agreeable and disagreeable terms in the Details condition, the advantage for actions described

with an agreeable term in this condition was found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$) for only

3 of 13 items.[26] Conversely, in the No Details condition, all items were judged more positively

when described with an agreeable as opposed to disagreeable term (all p's $< .001$).

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[26] This was further reduced to a single item when using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha to correct for multiple comparisons. Nevertheless, actions described using an agreeable term were judged more favourably for 10 out of 13 items (which was greater than the chance expectation of 50%, $t(12) = 2.21$, $p = .047$).

Table 6

Experiment 6 Item-Level Results

Item	No Details					Details				
	BF$_{10}$	t	df	p <	d	BF$_{10}$	t	df	p =	d
Torture/Enhanced Interrogation	>999	8.04	385	.001	0.81	0.10	-0.09	391	.537	-0.01
Kill/Neutralize	>999	6.74	391	.001	0.68	0.12	0.12	394	.454	0.01
Firing/Negotiated Departure	>999	5.17	391	.001	0.52	0.16	0.43	393	.335	0.04
Indoctrinate/Educate	>999	5.43	377	.001	0.55	0.80	1.66	390	.049	0.17
Gentrification/Revitalization	>999	19.09	308	.001	1.92	0.42	1.25	392	.107	0.13
Slaughterhouse/Meat Processing Plant	>999	5.48	388	.001	0.55	0.06	-0.91	395	.819	-0.10
Cut Down/Harvest	>999	8.05	341	.001	0.81	40.50	3.29	373	.001	0.33
Hate-Monger/Provocateur	>999	10.60	393	.001	1.07	0.51	1.38	395	.084	0.14
Pornographic Film/Erotic Art Piece	>999	7.29	391	.001	0.73	2.77	2.30	395	.011	0.23
Offensive Speech/Hate Speech	>999	4.81	392	.001	0.48	0.55	1.43	393	.077	0.14
Profits/Economic Viability	>999	7.69	392	.001	0.77	0.13	0.23	393	.408	0.02
Extremist/Activist	>999	5.20	392	.001	0.52	0.19	0.61	395	.271	0.06
Coddle/Help [the Poor]	>999	7.44	385	.001	0.75	0.08	-0.53	395	.701	-0.05

Note. Results of one-tailed Bayesian independent-samples *t*-tests comparing participants' agreement with an action when the action was depicted using an agreeable versus disagreeable term. Positive effect sizes represent items for which agreeable statements were judged more favourably than disagreeable statements. All differences in the No Details condition, and one difference in the Details condition, remained statistically significant when using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .002 per test (.05/26) to correct for multiple comparisons.

Overall, the results of Experiment 6 suggest that peoples' evaluations of actions become less susceptible to a speakers' linguistic choices as they become more knowledgeable about the actions they are evaluating. Nevertheless, even when provided a detailed description of each action, participants still indicated greater agreement with actions described using an agreeable as opposed to disagreeable term. Thus, understanding the details surrounding an action may not make one immune to having their opinion of that action be swayed by a linguistically manipulative speaker.

2.20 Chapter 2: Discussion

The present work demonstrates how peoples' evaluations of actions can be biased by the strategic use of euphemistic (agreeable) and dysphemistic (disagreeable) terms. In Experiments 1, 2, and 6, I exhibit how substituting a disagreeable term (e.g., "Emily working at a *slaughterhouse*") with a semantically related agreeable term (e.g., "Emily working at a *meat processing plant*") in an act's description can make actions appear more acceptable. Additionally, I demonstrate how the influence of agreeable and disagreeable terms relies upon the details of actions being somewhat ambiguous, as providing participants with more information about each action reduced (but did not eliminate) the impact of each action's linguistic framing. Therefore, it appears that the effectiveness of strategic language may be somewhat reliant upon its audience having some uncertainty about the action, event, or idea they are evaluating, such that when people are knowledgeable about a topic they are less susceptible to a speaker's linguistic choices.

Despite their impact on action evaluations, participants in Experiments 3 and 5 viewed the use of agreeable and disagreeable terms as largely honest and permissible. Most notably, participants readily distinguished the strategic use of agreeable and disagreeable terms from lies, judging both agreeable and disagreeable action-depicting statements as less deceptive and more truthful than lies when used to describe the same unambiguous actions. Similarly, Experiments 4 and 5 exhibit how those using either agreeable or disagreeable terms to describe a well-known action are judged more favourably (i.e., as more trustworthy, more moral, and less deserving of criticism) compared to liars. Taken together, these data suggest that a speaker can, through the careful use of language, sway the opinions of others in a direction congruent with their individual

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goals while largely avoiding the risks and condemnation associated with less subtle forms of linguistic manipulation.

Given that people can benefit from successfully deceiving others, many investigating the evolution of language have wondered how the majority of linguistic communication remains honest (Fitch, 2010). One hypothesis is that the social and reputational sanctions used to punish known liars encourages people to be honest in their communication with others (Oesch, 2016, 2017; Silk et al., 2000). Nevertheless, empirical findings demonstrating the reputational cost of lying are limited (Oesch, 2017). In Experiments 4 and 5, I find evidence of such reputational costs with participants judging liars as highly immoral, untrustworthy, and deserving of criticism. Interestingly, these reputational consequences appeared to be reserved for liars, as those using potentially self-serving euphemistic and dysphemistic terms to describe well-known actions were on average judged above the midpoint of the administered trustworthiness and moral character scales. Therefore, the risk of social and reputational costs argued to be a primary deterrent of lying may be far less effective in dissuading individuals from using more subtle forms of linguistic manipulation to their benefit.

As showcased in the literature surrounding doublespeak (Herman, 1992; Lutz, 1988, 1990, 2000), as well as research analyzing the linguistic choices of partisan news sources and American politicians (Anolli et al., 2006; Fulgoni et al., 2016; Gentzkow et al., 2019; Stier, 2016), there exist countless ways to use language in attempt to bias peoples' opinions of actions, ideas, or people. In the present research I demonstrate how a diverse set of terms can influence peoples' attitudes towards a diverse set of actions. Notably, as self- and group-serving language is often utilized in highly contentious political and moral domains, I examined the persuasive potential of euphemistic and dysphemistic terms in the domain of moral reasoning, having

participants evaluate many actions for which they may have already had a strong prior belief. These actions included acts of political protest, the promotion of partisan organizations, acts of military violence, and politicians supporting policies related to abortion regulation, climate change advocacy, immigration, online content moderation, and gun reform, to provide a few examples. Thus, the present work demonstrates how the subtle choice of more or less agreeable terms in an act's description can influence peoples' judgments of actions even in contentious political and moral contexts. Similarly, this work displays how even the most subtle of linguistic changes (e.g., the substitution of a single euphemism or dysphemism in an act's description) can bias peoples' evaluations of actions. Thus, attempts at influencing the opinions of others with language need not be drastic to be effective.

2.20.1 Ambiguity as a Mechanism for Linguistic Manipulation

The results of Experiment 6 suggest that possessing more knowledge about an act protects people from being biased by the language used in an act's description. When participants were presented with a more detailed description of each action during action evaluations agreeable and disagreeable terms were substantially less effective in influencing participants' judgments. Therefore, I propose that while people may be highly influenced by the strategic use of euphemistic and dysphemistic terms when evaluating an action that is ambiguous (i.e., for which the specific details of the act are unknown), this susceptibility is reduced as people become more knowledgeable about an act in question. That is, when actions are described with some degree of ambiguity people have the affordance to imagine several types of actions. In these cases, the use of a euphemistic term may guide people to imagine actions that are more acceptable whereas the use of a dysphemistic term may guide people to imagine more severe moral transgressions. Conversely, when a person is fully knowledgeable about the act they are

evaluating, this reduction in ambiguity may restrict people into imagining a similar act regardless of how an action is described. For example, if witnessing an interrogative act firsthand, a speaker using the terms "torture" or "enhanced interrogation" to refer to that act may conjure up identical images of the act that was witnessed. However, if largely unaware of the act that took place (besides knowing that some act of interrogation occurred), a person may imagine a more or less agreeable action depending on whether the act is described as "torture" or "enhanced interrogation."

Interestingly, the results of Experiment 6 suggest that even in situations of low ambiguity, a speakers' linguistic choices may still exert some small influence on peoples' judgments. While these results are in no way definitive, this finding would not be unprecedented, as prior work has shown the ability for subtle linguistic changes to influence peoples' judgments of car crashes they witnessed and food that they tasted (Levin, 1987; Levin & Gaeth, 1988; Loftus & Palmer, 1974). Therefore, as memory is not impenetrable by linguistic suggestion, it is likely that possessing knowledge of an act does not leave one immune to linguistic manipulation, perhaps especially as time passes between the instance in which a person witnesses or learns about an act and the moment they encounter a deceptive description of that action.

2.20.2 Manipulative Language in the Real-World

Of course, people often make moral judgments and form important beliefs without full knowledge of the actions they are judging or the ideas they are evaluating. In today's information age, characterized by attention-grabbing headlines and 280-character quips, information may be missed or necessarily left out. In this context, the potential influence of linguistic manipulation may be great. While much has been written about the proliferation and dangers of objectively false reporting (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Lazer et al., 2018; Lewandowsky et al., 2017;

Vosoughi et al., 2018), the potential for influential figures to shape public opinion in their favour with subtle and strategic manipulations of language may be just as worrisome. One reason this form of deception may be especially harmful is its seemingly covert nature (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2020; Wineburg et al., 2016) as well as the plausible deniability of dishonesty it affords its users. Thus, an influential figure spouting objectively false claims may be exposed and suffer reputational damage, making their future claims less credible in the eyes of many. However, if the same individual were to use language strategically to represent events in their favour (a tactic that the present research demonstrates can be effective) this tactic is likely to be far harder to detect, let alone expose,[27] protecting the individual from reputational damage. With a lower level of risk, individuals may be able to utilize such forms of linguistic manipulation repeatedly without correction.

The strategic use of language to serve group—as opposed to individual—goals is likely to be even further incentivized in particular social contexts. For example, individuals, including politicians, journalists, and political pundits, may receive reputational benefits from political in-group members when describing polarizing events using language that paints the actions and attitudes of co-partisans in a positive light. Prior work demonstrates individuals' tendency to consume news from ideologically-congruent sources (Bakshy et al., 2015; Flaxman et al., 2016; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2014; Peterson et al., 2021; Stroud, 2008, 2010) as well as possess positive feelings towards political in-group members (Finkel et al., 2020; Iyengar et al., 2019). Additionally, compared to their more moderate peers, politicians with more extreme ideological positions acquire more social media followers (Hong & Kim, 2016) and collect more

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[27] Support for this claim comes from the present work in which I find that a) many people do not endorse the presence of deceptive language when described several actions using euphemistic and dysphemistic terms shown to bias peoples' evaluations of actions and that b) a majority of people endorse both euphemistic and dysphemistic action descriptions as "not a lie."

donations fundraising online (Hong, 2013). Thus, rather than being dissuaded by potential reputational costs, partisan speakers—particularly when communicating with a like-minded audience—may be incentivized to describe events in an ideologically-biased way, whether to increase audience engagement or secure the reputational benefits associated with signalling one's status as a political in-group member.

An interesting question surrounding the use of doublespeak and similar forms of linguistic manipulation (e.g., partisan language) is the role it plays in our increasingly polarized societies (USA: Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Finkel et al., 2020; Iyengar et al., 2012, 2019; Canada: Kevins & Soroka, 2018; Proudfoot, 2019; UK: Marchal & Watson, 2019; Ridgwell, 2018; Multiple Countries: Boxell et al., 2022). As people are motivated to seek out news sources that reinforce their existing viewpoints (Flaxman et al., 2016; Frimer et al., 2017; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Peterson et al., 2021; Stroud, 2008, 2010; Washburn & Skitka, 2018), they may also be unknowingly selectively exposing themselves to particular group-serving linguistic framings of popular events making their beliefs appear more justified than they otherwise would given a neutral framing. One can speculate whether select exposure to objectively true—yet linguistically biased—claims further the divide between individuals ideologically opposed, potentially hindering productive communication and compromise.

2.20.3 Limitations and Future Directions

While the variability of the presented item's agreeable and disagreeable terms is in some ways a strength speaking to the generalizability of the observed effects, a related limitation is that it is unclear what properties of these terms make them effective. One possibility is that the ability of these terms to bias participants' evaluations of actions stems from their diverging valences. Unsurprisingly, messages framed in a more positive manner have been shown to evoke

more positive emotions with negatively framed messages arousing more negative emotions (Bilandzic et al., 2017; Nabi et al., 2018; Shen & Dillard, 2007), at times directed at the message sender (Erlandsson et al., 2018). Thus, participants may have endorsed more positive evaluations of actions described using more positively valanced agreeable terms (e.g., *enhanced interrogation*), on account that these terms may have evoked more positive emotions, or at least fewer negative emotions, compared to their disagreeable counterparts (e.g., *torture*). Additionally, it is possible that some terms operated by representing superordinate categories able to describe a larger array of actions compared to their semantically related counterpart. For example, the term "enhanced interrogation," while including actions that can be referred to as torture, may simply encompass far more acts (including more agreeable acts) compared to the term "torture" and as such may cause participants to judge a somewhat ambiguous action less harshly. Under this account, event knowledge would be expected to reduce the persuasive influence of superordinate terms as such knowledge can ensure that terms capable of describing a large array of actions instead depict a constrained set of actions consistent with an individual's knowledge. Notably, while not directly assessing the persuasive influence of superordinate terms, the observed effect of ambiguity in Experiment 6 was consistent with these claims. Of course, some combination of mechanisms may be involved in making the use of agreeable and disagreeable terms lead to more or less favourable evaluations of actions. Future studies should attempt to tease apart these (and other) factors in order to learn more about what makes the strategic selection of semantically related euphemistic and dysphemistic terms persuasive.

Another potential limitation of the current study is that participants were not presented with any information about the person describing each action. Of course, in a real-world context people can be attentive to source information, specifically whether a piece of information is

potentially biased by a source's favoured beliefs or individual goals. Thus, future work could investigate whether peoples' susceptibility to a speaker's linguistic choices is reduced when provided information about the person describing each action. Lastly, while the present work suggests that people are in general biased by the linguistic choices of a speaker, this susceptibility almost certainly varies systematically across individuals. Past work demonstrates how the persuasiveness of a message often depends on the personal concerns, values, and individual characteristics of message recipients (Covey, 2014; Feinberg & Willer, 2019; Hirsh et al., 2012; Rothman & Salovey, 1997). Thus, future studies should investigate how various individual differences correlate with peoples' susceptibility to the form of linguistic manipulation studied here. Such an investigation would be informative for learning about who is most likely to fall victim to doublespeak and other forms of biased or manipulative language.

2.20.4 Conclusion

As social creatures people are often interested in trying to influence other peoples' minds. Subtle linguistic manipulation (such as doublespeak) exemplifies a potentially harmful real-world attempt to shape the beliefs of others through the strategic use of language. The present research suggests that peoples' evaluations of actions can be predictably biased by the strategic use of euphemistic and dysphemistic terms in an act's description. This is especially true when people possess some degree of uncertainty about the act, event, or idea they are evaluating. Unfortunately, people often make important moral judgments and form consequential beliefs without a perfect understanding of the acts they are evaluating or the ideas they are contemplating. Therefore, understanding the impact of manipulative language in both situations of high and low ambiguity is important to better understand how the strategic use of language can bias people's perceptions of important and highly contentious actions.

Chapter 3

Partisan Language Increases Political Polarization while Providing Reputational Benefits in Politically Homogenous Co-Partisan Networks

3.1 Chapter 3: Introduction

Possessing different political identities and values, liberals and conservatives often make distinct linguistic choices when describing the same politically contentious events (Bayram et al., 2019; Fulgoni et al., 2016; Gentzkow et al., 2019; Monroe et al., 2008; Stier, 2016; see Appendix A for real-world examples). For example, while a majority of Republicans describe the January 6th United States Capitol attack as a "protest," a majority of Democrats use different terms, instead referring to this event as an "insurrection," "riot," or "coup" (Nteta et al., 2021). Partisan language can serve different individual and collective goals. Individuals describing events in a manner that is consistent with their worldview may satisfy sense-making goals (Chater & Loewenstein, 2016) and reduce aversive feelings of uncertainty (FeldmanHall & Shenhav, 2019). Shared narratives (and linguistic choices) may help bond social groups, facilitating a shared sense of reality, values, and belonging among group members (Barkho, 2021; Gadamer, 2013). Furthermore, partisan language can be used to express positive in-group sentiment (and negative out-group sentiment), helping individuals signal their in-group status and consequently, reap social and reputational benefits from fellow group members. Finally, the persuasive potential of partisan narratives may allow partisan individuals to shape the attitudes of their audience in an ideologically-congruent way (Simon & Jerit, 2007; Walker et al., 2021). As such, individuals may benefit from using partisan—as opposed to politically neutral—language within a variety of social contexts.

3.1.1 Rising Partisan Animosity Reinforces the use of Partisan Language

Political polarization is on the rise. Partisan animosity and political polarization are escalating in the United States (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Finkel et al., 2020; Kiley, 2017) and other countries (Boxell et al., 2022; Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019; Kevins & Soroka, 2018; Marchal & Watson, 2019). In the United States, Democrats and Republicans share in their increasing disdain for one another, while expressing positive sentiments towards co-partisans (Iyengar et al., 2012, 2019; Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2016). As the attitudes of Democrats and Republicans has diverged so too has their political discourse. American politicians increasingly use partisan language to discuss polarizing issues in a preferred manner (Bayram et al., 2019; Gentzkow et al., 2019). Likewise, many news organizations exhibit partisan linguistic biases, as evidenced by the ability for their political leanings to be inferred based on the language featured within their content (Fulgoni et al., 2016; Karamshuk et al., 2017). As such, some scholars have theorized that the divergent discourse of liberals and conservatives contributes to current partisan divides (Barkho, 2021; Finkel et al., 2020; Levendusky, 2013). Unfortunately, exposing partisans to the discourse of their political opponents appears to strengthen—rather than diminish—political polarization. For example, Republicans become more conservative after following a Twitter bot exposing them to the social media posts of liberal politicians, thought leaders, and media outlets (Bail et al., 2018). Relatedly, for politically engaged users, possessing a more heterogeneous online social network is associated with more polarized affective and ideological judgments (Lee et al., 2014).

As citizens become more polarized, individuals—including politicians and political pundits—may face growing incentives to describe reality using language that supports specific ideological viewpoints (e.g., those of their political in-group or audience). Divisive political

content has been found to capture attention (Brady et al., 2020a, 2020b) and promote audience engagement (e.g., on social media websites, Brady et al., 2017, 2019; Kim & Ihm, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2017; Rathje et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2023). Perhaps on account of this engagement, American politicians with more extreme ideological positions acquire more social media followers than their more moderate peers (Hong & Kim, 2016). News organizations may also benefit from posting ideologically-biased content that consistently appeals to a specific partisan audience, as suggested by the rise of partisan news sources catering to one side of the political aisle (Faris et al., 2017; Shultziner & Stukalin, 2021). Partisans exhibit greater trust in ideologically-congruent news sources (Mitchell et al., 2014), being more likely to believe and share news that reflects positively on their in-group or negatively on their out-group (Pereira et al., 2023). Supporting these ideological preferences is partisans' tendency to view politically-neutral news as biased in favour of their political opponents (Feldman, 2011; Hansen & Kim, 2011; Perloff, 2015; Vallone et al., 1985). For example, Vallone and colleagues (1985) demonstrated that, when presented the same news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both pro- and anti-Israeli individuals believed this coverage to be biased against their group. Accordingly, a majority of the news shared by partisans originates from ideologically-congruent sources (Karamshuk et al., 2017; Osmundsen et al., 2021). Thus, as audiences become more polarized, news organizations are likely to benefit from injecting more—rather than less—political bias into their content (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2006). Whether more prevalent within news content, political speeches, or the communications of everyday citizens, increases in partisan rhetoric has the potential to deepen partisan divides.

3.1.2 Partisan Language Exacerbates Political Polarization

While individuals (and organizations) may benefit from using partisan language in certain social contexts, the pervasiveness of such divisive rhetoric is likely to have negative consequences for society-at-large. Partisan language—while appearing objective to like-minded individuals—will often be perceived as biased and dishonest by opposing partisans. As such, partisans encountering the politically-biased communications of their political opponents (e.g., on social media) may come to view political out-group members as less trustworthy and moral. Similarly, exposure to the divisive linguistic choices (e.g., those denigrating opposing partisans) of political out-group members may dissuade individuals from participating in productive political discussions across partisan lines. To the extent that politically-biased language makes partisans appear unreasonable in the eyes of their political opponents, such language may also help excuse political violence and promote anti-democratic attitudes. Additionally, when used by politicians, journalists, and other members of key institutions, partisan rhetoric may reduce the perceived trustworthiness and legitimacy of important institutions (Jilani & Smith, 2019; Newport, 2019), harming a society's ability to collectively address its most significant problems. Nevertheless, reducing the pervasiveness of partisan language represents a major challenge, as the negative consequences of partisan rhetoric may be felt less by its purveyors and more by society-at-large.[28]

Along with arousing partisan animosities, partisan language may contribute to the polarization of attitudes across political lines. Partisan linguistic choices can impact peoples'

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[28] Further complicating the issue, the appropriateness of partisan language may often be disputed, with accusations of political bias often seeming subjective and naturally inviting counter-accusations of bias. Thus, provided that partisan rhetoric does not feature verifiable falsehoods, the policing of partisan language is likely to rest on shaky ground, as partisans disagree about the appropriateness of different linguistic choices with neither group likely to succeed in demonstrating the deceptiveness of the other's language across party lines.

support for political policies, including those surrounding contentious political topics. For example, Simon and Jerit (2007) demonstrated that substituting the word "fetus" with the word "baby" in an article describing an abortion procedure increased Americans support for regulating this procedure. Likewise, Americans expressed greater support for an inheritance tax when this tax was described as an "estate tax" as opposed to a "death tax" (Ipsos, 2017). Therefore, while liberals and conservatives endorse different political viewpoints independent of language, differential exposure to divergent linguistic choices may further divide the attitudes of partisans. For example, while liberals may support an inheritance tax more than conservatives independent of how this tax is described, systematic differences in the language used to describe this tax (e.g., with liberals contemplating an "estate tax" and conservatives a "death tax") may intensify partisan disagreement, increasing liberals' support for this tax while decreasing the support of conservatives. People more frequently interact with political in-group—as opposed to out-group—members (Cinelli et al., 2021; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2011; Huber & Malhotra, 2017; Motyl et al., 2014) as well as exhibit a proclivity to seek out ideologically-congruent news (Bakshy et al., 2015; Flaxman et al., 2016; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Peterson et al., 2021; Stroud, 2008, 2010). As such, partisans may often be selectively exposed to ideologically-congruent linguistic framings of political events that strengthen their existing viewpoints, making their beliefs appear more justified than they otherwise would given a neutral framing. In sum, the prevalence of partisan language may contribute to the polarization of attitudes across political divides, potentially hindering productive communication and compromise.

3.1.3 The Present Research

The present work examines the consequences of partisan language across different social contexts. First, Experiment 7 investigates the reputational consequences of describing politically-

relevant events using partisan language when communicating with political in- and out-group members. I hypothesize that describing events using partisan terms (see Figure 10) leads to reputational benefits when communicating with co-partisans and reputational costs when communicating with political opponents. Thus, I predict that Democrats will view speakers attributed liberal-biased language as more trustworthy, open-minded, and moral than those attributed conservative-biased language, with Republicans showing the same partisan affinity for conservative speakers. Experiment 7 also examines the social consequences of partisan language, assessing the hypothesis that partisans will express more interest in having a political discussion with speakers using ideologically-congruent language. Notably, Experiment 7 also had participants judge speakers describing politically-relevant events in a non-partisan way (see Figure 10). As such, I compared the social and reputational consequences of using politically-biased versus politically-neutral language when communicating with political in- and out-group members. Overall, the results of Experiment 7 provide initial insight into the social and reputational consequences promoting or dissuading individuals from using partisan language within different social environments. Likewise, this experiment reveals the extent to which partisan language facilitates negative evaluations of political out-group members as well as the potential for politically-neutral language to depict polarizing events in a way that engenders trust and acceptance across partisan divides.

Liberal Statement	Neutral Statement	Conservative Statement
Joshua Sherman participated in a *pro-choice* protest.	Joshua Sherman participated in a protest to keep abortion legal.	Joshua Sherman participated in a *pro-abortion* protest.

Factual Event Description: TV star Joshua Sherman participated in a protest to keep abortion legal in his state. Specifically, Joshua participated in a protest that began with an organized march and ended with a rally downtown that featured several invited speakers. The stated mission of the protest was to "fight for reproductive freedom, including the right to access abortion."

Figure 10. Experiment 7: Item Example. Participants were presented with an item's factual event description as well as either the item's liberal, neutral, or conservative statement. All statements were presented as the public statement of a fictious person (e.g., Ana) in the public sphere. Participants judged each person attributed a public statement on multiple dimensions based on the person's statement and its correspondence with a factually described event.

Next, Experiment 8 examines whether selective exposure to ideologically-congruent—as opposed to politically neutral—language polarizes the attitudes of Democrats and Republicans. I hypothesized that describing polarizing events using ideologically-congruent language would strengthen the in-group attitudes of partisans, resulting in the attitudes of Democrats and Republicans showing greater divergence compared to when events were described in a non-partisan way. Notably, Experiment 8 assessed this hypothesis within situations of both high and low event ambiguity. Consistent with the results of Experiment 6, I predicted that the polarizing effects of partisan language would be reduced when participants were made more knowledgeable about the events they evaluated. In sum, Experiment 8 reveals the potential for partisan language to strengthen partisan viewpoints and polarize Democrats' and Republicans' assessments of politically-relevant actions (e.g., a politician voting to increase government spending on welfare programs). Additionally, Experiment 8 demonstrates the ability for non-partisan language, along with event knowledge, to reduce this divergence, helping ensure that partisan disagreements are not exacerbated by misleading language or group-serving interpretations of ambiguous events.

3.2 Experiment 7

Experiment 7 assessed how a person's partisan or politically neutral linguistic choices influenced their reputation among political in- and out-group members. Democrats and Republicans were presented the public statements of fictious speakers describing politically contentious events using liberal-biased, conservative-biased, or politically neutral language. I hypothesized that participants would judge speakers using in-group language more positively than those attributed out-group language. Specifically, I predicted that Democrats would display an affinity for speakers describing politically-relevant events using liberal-biased language, viewing these speakers as more trustworthy, moral, open-minded, and undeserving of criticism compared to those describing the same events using conservative-biased language, with Republicans showing a similar affinity for individuals using conservative- compared to liberal-biased language.

3.3 Methods

3.3.1 Participants

A sample of 461 participants was recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk and received $1.75 upon completion of a 12-minute online questionnaire. In order to be eligible to participate in Experiment 7, all participants were required to: (1) self-report English as their first language, (2) reside in the United States, (3) self-report either a liberal or conservative political ideology, (4) have completed between 100 and 10,000 work submissions on Mechanical Turk, (5) possess a Mechanical Turk submission approval rating greater than or equal to 99%, and (6) correctly respond to two simple questions. I excluded data from 70 participants based on a set of exclusion criteria (see *Data Preparation*), leaving data from 391 participants (52% Female; $M_{age} = 42.37$, $SD_{age} = 14.02$; 163 Democrats, 97 Independents [44 Lean Democrat, 53 Lean Republican], 131

Republicans, 63% college graduates) to be analyzed. Individuals who participated in Experiment S2 (see Appendix J) were restricted from participating in Experiment 7.

3.3.2 Materials

Experiment 7 featured 12 items selected from a larger 48-item set. Pre-test data revealed that each item in this 12-item set featured a statement that was judged as containing a liberal-bias, a statement that was judged as containing a conservative-bias, and a statement that was comparatively viewed as politically neutral (see Appendix J for a full report of this pre-test, Appendix G for a complete list of items, and Figure 10 for an example item).[29] Thus, all 12 items featured in Experiment 7 included a liberal, conservative, and neutral statement along with a single factual event description (for which all statements intended to describe). On each experimental trial, participants were presented with an item's factual event description along with the item's liberal, conservative, or neutral statement which was attributed to a fictitious person said to be in the public sphere and have full knowledge of the event they were describing.

3.3.3 Measures

As in Experiments 4 and 5, participants assessed the trustworthiness, moral character, and criticism [deserved] for each agent attributed a statement in Experiment 7. However, Experiment 7 also featured additional measures not featured in Experiments 1-6.

3.3.3.1 Political Identity Strength. Prior to experimental trials, participants responded to five items designed to assess the strength of their identification with their preferred political party. These items, adapted from Leach and colleagues (2008), asked participants to rate their agreement with five statements that referenced their self-reported political affiliation (e.g., "I feel

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[29] Pre-test data also revealed that agents attributed liberal statements were perceived as possessing a more liberal political ideology (and identifying more as Democrats) than agents attributed neutral statements. Likewise, agents attributed conservative statements were perceived as possessing a more conservative ideology (and identifying more as Republicans) than those attributed neutral statements.

a bond with [Democrats/Republicans]"). Participants responded to each statement using a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Responses to these items were averaged to form a political identity strength score for each participant, with higher scores representing stronger identification with one's political party.

3.3.3.2 Perceived Speaker Political Identity. Participants judged the political identity of each agent by responding to the question: "Based on [Name's] public statement, which political party do you believe [he/she] identifies with?" Participants responded to this question using a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (Strong Democrat) to 7 (Strong Republican), with the midpoint of this scale being labelled as 4 (Independent).

3.3.3.3 Political Discussion. I asked participants "Based on [Name's] public statement, how interested would you be in having a political discussion with [Name]?" Participants responded to this question using a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (Not at all interested) to 7 (Very interested).

3.3.3.4 Open-Mindedness. Participants assessed the open-mindedness of each agent using a 7-point scale that ranged from "*Closed-minded*" to "*Open-minded.*" This measure was presented within a matrix table that also had participants assess the trustworthiness, moral character, and criticism [deserved] of each agent.

3.3.4 Design and Procedure

Participants were presented with the public statements of 12 individuals and were asked to judge each individual on multiple dimensions based on the individual's public statement and its correspondence with a factual event description. Specifically, participants judged the political identity, trustworthiness, moral character, open-mindedness, and amount of criticism deserved for each speaker (i.e., individual attributed a public statement). Additionally, participants

indicated their degree of interest in having a political discussion with each speaker. All participants were presented and evaluated four speakers attributed a liberal statement, four speakers attributed a conservative statement, and four speakers attributed a neutral statement. As participants were recruited on the basis that they possessed either a liberal or conservative ideology and indicated their political affiliation (Democrat or Republican) within this experiment, I categorized liberal and conservative speakers as political in-group and out-group speakers based on the match (or mismatch) between a participants' political affiliation and the type of statement attributed to a speaker. Thus, for participants self-identifying as Democrats [Republicans], speakers attributed liberal [conservative] statements were categorized as political in-group speakers while those attributed conservative [liberal] statements were classified as political out-group speakers. Participants were randomly assigned to one of six conditions that determined the type of statement (liberal, conservative, neutral) that was presented for a particular item. Regardless of condition, the order in which items were presented was randomized for each participant. Participants began Experiment 7 by self-reporting their political identity, ideology, and level of political engagement. Next, they responded to five political identity strength items, after which they proceeded to experimental trials. Following experimental trials, participants responded to two questions assessing their preference for partisan versus non-partisan news sources and concluded Experiment 7 by reporting their age, sex, ethnicity, and level of education.

3.3.5 Data Preparation

Consistent with pre-registered criteria (https://osf.io/mh2fr), I excluded data from 66 participants who reported responding randomly at some point during the experiment ($n = 29$), provided multiple outlier or incoherent responses ($n = 6$), failed an attention check item ($n = 38$),

or completed Experiment 7 in under 360 seconds ($n = 15$). Additionally, I excluded data from four participants who self-identified as a Democrat while self-reporting a conservative ideology.[30] This final exclusion criterion was not pre-registered. However, all statistically significant results reported below remained significant when not applying this final criterion. Furthermore, with two exceptions,[31] all statistically significant results remained significant when analyzing data from the full sample.

3.4 Results and Discussion

First, as a manipulation check, I attempted to verify that speakers attributed a liberal [conservative] statement were, on average, perceived as identified with the Democratic [Republican] party, while those attributed a neutral statement were judged largely as Independents. A repeated-measures ANOVA[32] demonstrated a significant effect of Statement Type (Liberal, Neutral, Conservative) on participants' perceived speaker political identity judgments, $F(2,780) = 582.94$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .599$ (see Figure 11). Follow-up paired-samples t-tests confirmed that speakers attributed liberal statements were perceived as Democrats ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.87$) more strongly than those attributed neutral statements ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.75$), $t(390) = -15.75$, $p < .001$, $d = -1.05$. Relatedly, speakers attributed conservative statements were judged as more strongly identified with the Republican party ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.04$) compared to neutral speakers, $t(390) = 21.52$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.50$. Thus, participants' perceptions of the

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[30] These participants were excluded on account of it being unclear whether liberal or conservative statements (if either) could be accurately categorized as featuring language favourable to their political in-group.

[31] When analyzing data from the full sample, participants' greater trust of in-group ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 1.01$) compared to politically neutral ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 0.96$) speakers failed to reach statistical significance, $t(460) = 1.91$, $p = .056$, $d = 0.08$. Nevertheless, participants' continued to view in-group speakers as more moral, open-minded, and less deserving of criticism than neutral speakers (all p's $< .038$). Additionally, in the case of neutral speakers, when analyzing data from the full sample, perceived speaker political identity judgments were no longer significantly correlated with judgments of criticism, $r(459) = -.05$, $p = .254$.

[32] The design of Experiments 7 and 8 ensured that participants made an equivalent number of judgments regarding statements of each type (e.g., Liberal, Neutral, and Conservative). As such, Experiments 7 and 8 did not require the use of generalized mixed effects models to help account for idiosyncratic differences in item presentation.

political identity of speakers were consistent with the categorization of statements as liberal-

biased, conservative-biased, and politically neutral.
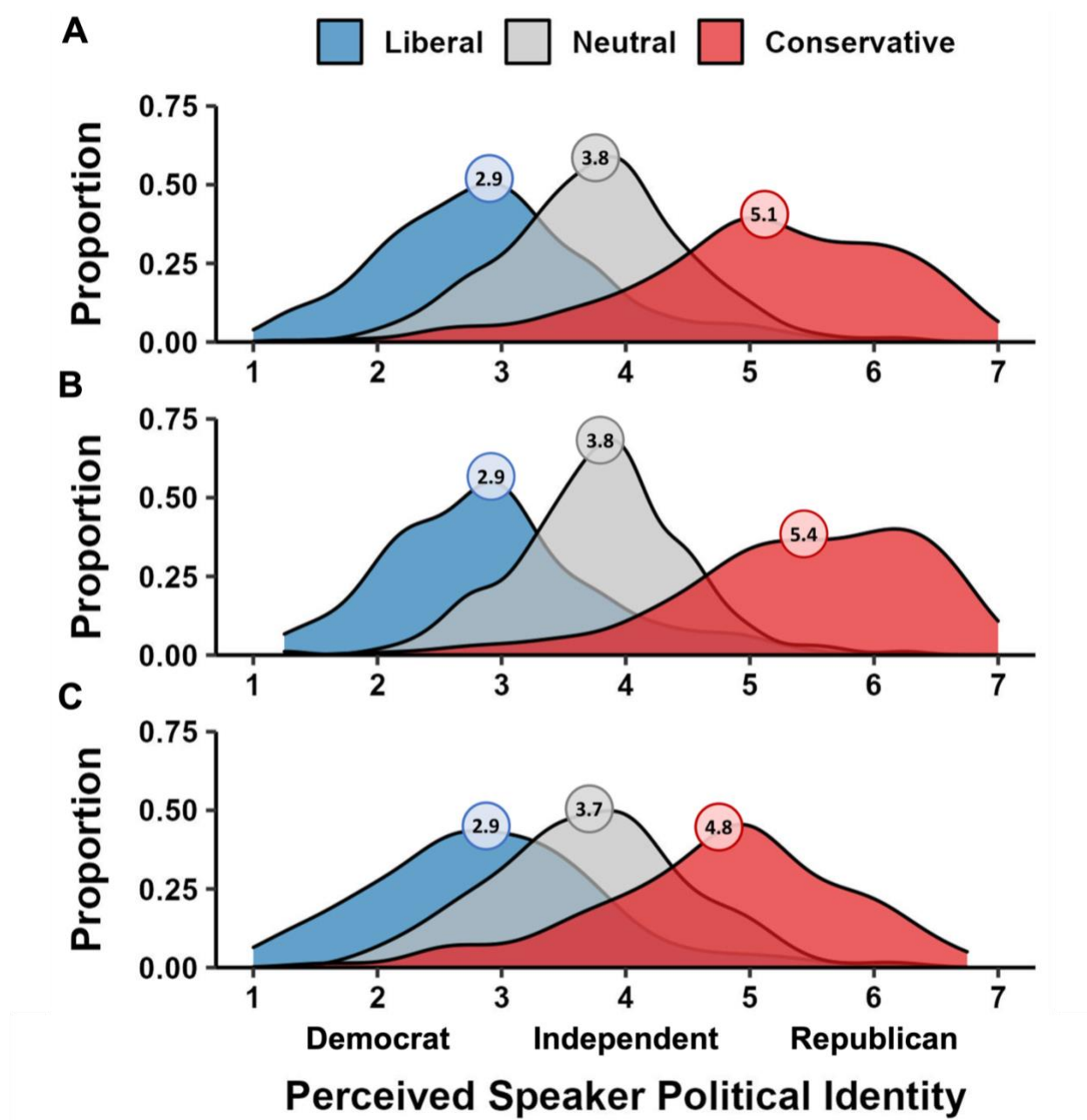
Figure 11. Experiment 7 Results: Perceived Speaker Political Identity. This figure shows the distribution of participants' mean perceived speaker political identity judgments by statement type (Liberal, Neutral, Conservative). Mean values are indicated by a circle and numerical value attached to the relevant distribution. Panel A depicts judgments from the full sample, Panel B the judgments of Democrats, and Panel C the judgments of Republicans. *Perceived Speaker Political Identity*: 1 (Strong Democrat) to 4 (Independent) to 7 (Strong Republican).

3.4.1 Reputational and Social Consequences of Partisan and Non-Partisan Language

I assessed the reputational consequences of using in-group-biased, out-group-biased, or politically neutral language when describing politically contentious events to a partisan audience by conducting 2 (Participant Political Identity: Liberal, Conservative) x 3 (Speaker Type: In-Group, Neutral, Out-Group) mixed ANOVAs for judgments of trustworthiness, moral character, criticism [deserved], and open-mindedness. As hypothesized, these analyses revealed a main effect of Speaker Type, $F(2,778) > 214.36$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 > .354$, and a Participant Political Identity by Speaker Type interaction, $F(2,778) > 42.74$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 > .098$, for each dependent variable. I did not observe a main effect of Participant Political Identity for any of the four judgments assessed (all p's $> .05$). Follow-up t-tests revealed that participants judged out-group speakers as less trustworthy and moral as well as more closed-minded and deserving of criticism than in-group, $t(390) > 15.58$, $p < .001$, $d > 0.98$, and neutral speakers, $t(390) > 14.80$, $p < .001$, $d > 0.89$. Notably, Democrats judged in-group speakers more positively, $t(390) > 3.04$, $p < .003$, $d > 0.31$, and out-group speakers more negatively, $t(390) > 5.91$, $p < .001$, $d > 0.59$, than Republicans. For example, while participants trusted in-group speakers ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 0.96$) more than neutral speakers ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 0.92$), $t(390) = 2.69$, $p = .007$, $d = 0.14$, and neutral speakers more than out-group speakers ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.09$), $t(390) = 16.82$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.06$, these effects were more pronounced for Democrats ($d = 0.18$ and $d = 1.56$, respectively) compared to Republicans ($d = 0.09$ and $d = 0.59$, respectively, see Figure 12), with the same pattern of results observed for judgments of moral character, criticism, and open-mindedness.
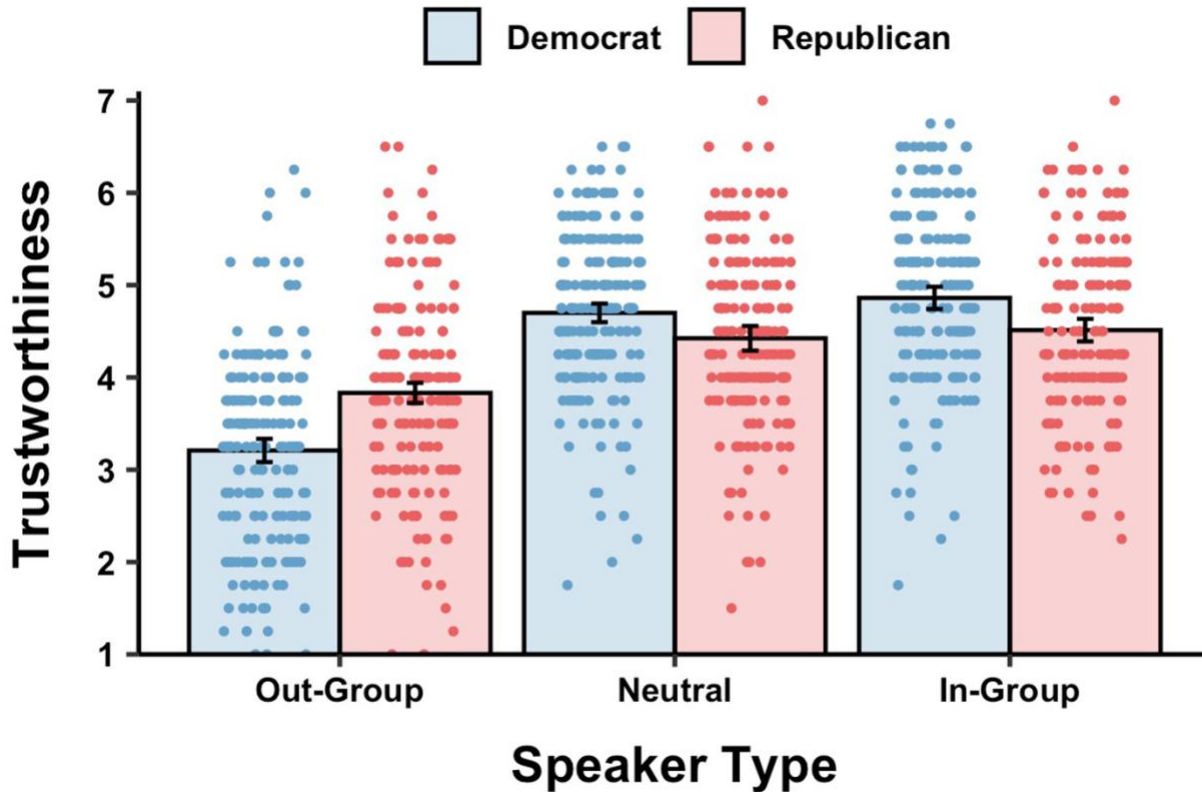
Figure 12. Experiment 7 Results: Trustworthiness. Bars display the mean trustworthiness judgments of Democrat and Republican participants when evaluating out-group, neutral, and in-group speakers. Dots represent individual participants' mean trustworthiness judgment within a specific Speaker Type. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

I also assessed whether the linguistic choices of speakers had social consequences, by evaluating whether these choices impacted participants willingness to have a political discussion with speakers. The results of a 2 (Participant Political Identity: Liberal, Conservative) x 3 (Speaker Type: In-Group, Neutral, Out-Group) mixed ANOVA revealed a main effect of Speaker Type, $F(2,778) = 183.67$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .321$ and a Participant Political Identity by Speaker Type interaction, $F(2,778) = 20.08$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .049$. Conversely, I did not observe a main effect of Participant Political Identity, $F(1,389) = 0.28$, $p = .598$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$. Follow-up simple effects analyses revealed that participants expressed more interest in having a political discussion with speakers using in-group ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.36$) compared to neutral language (M

= 3.60, SD = 1.27), $t(390)$ = 6.69, $p < .001$, d = 0.23. Relatedly, participants expressed less

interest in having a political discussion with speakers using out-group (M = 2.89, SD = 1.31)

compared to neutral language, $t(390)$ = -13.82, $p < .001$, d = -0.55. Democrats were particularly

uninterested in having a political discussion with out-group speakers (M = 2.68, SD = 1.21), as

despite expressing slightly more interest in discussing politics with in-group and neutral speakers

(compared to Republicans), they were less interested than Republicans (M = 3.13, SD = 1.37) in

having a political discussion with out-group speakers, $t(390)$ = 3.40, $p < .001$, d = 0.35.

3.4.2 Association between Perceptions of Speaker Political Identity and Social/Reputational Judgments

I hypothesized that participants would judge speakers more favourably the more strongly

they perceived them as members of their political in-group. This hypothesis was supported (see

Tables 7A and 7B). Within each speaker type, I observed a positive correlation between

perceptions of speaker political identity (recoded such that responses ranged from -3 [Strong

Political Out-Group Member] to 3 [Strong Political In-Group Member]) and judgments of

trustworthiness, $r(389) > .37$, $p < .001$, moral character, $r(389) > .39$, $p < .001$, and open-

mindedness, $r(389) > .24$, $p < .001$. I also observed a negative correlation between perceptions of

speaker identity and assessments of how much criticism each speaker deserved, $r(389) < -.23$, p

$< .001$. Lastly, I observed a positive association between perceptions of speaker identity and

political discussion judgments, $r(389) > .25$, $p < .001$. Thus, the more participants perceived

speakers as sharing their political identity the more they viewed speakers as trustworthy, moral,

open-minded, and undeserving of criticism. Similarly, the more participants perceived that a

speaker shared their political identity the more interested they were in discussing politics with

this individual.

Table 7A

Experiment 7: Pearson's Zero-order Correlations (In-Group and Out-Group Speakers)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perceived Speaker Political Identity	-	.37**	.40**	.24**	-.31**	.31**
2. Trustworthiness	.60**	-	.87**	.66**	-.68**	.48**
3. Moral Character	.54**	.89**	-	.64**	-.62**	.48**
4. Open-Mindedness	.65**	.79**	.74**	-	-.49**	.39**
5. Criticism	-.55**	-.78**	-.76**	-.70**	-	-.23**
6. Political Discussion	.25**	.44**	.41**	.39**	-.27**	-

Note. Pearson correlations ($N = 368$). Association between perceptions of Speaker Political Identity and social/reputational judgments for in-group and out-group speakers. Bottom diagonal = Out-Group Speaker. Top diagonal = In-Group Speaker. ** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$.

Table 7B

Experiment 7: Pearson's Zero-order Correlations (Neutral Speakers)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perceived Speaker Political Identity	-					
2. Trustworthiness	.41**	-				
3. Moral Character	.39**	.86**	-			
4. Open-Mindedness	.45**	.75**	.76**	-		
5. Criticism	-.23**	-.62**	-.54**	-.53**	-	
6. Political Discussion	.31**	.40**	.39**	.36**	-.16*	-

Note. Pearson correlations ($N = 368$). Association between perceptions of Speaker Political Identity and social/reputational judgments for neutral speakers. ** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$.

3.4.3 Summary

In summary, describing politically relevant events using language that was congruent with the political identity of one's audience produced reputational rewards for speakers, as in-group speakers were judged as more trustworthy, moral, and open-minded than both non-partisan and out-group speakers. Meanwhile, describing events using language that was incongruent with the political identity of one's audience was reputationally costly, as out-group speakers were viewed by both Democrats and Republicans as untrustworthy, immoral, closed-minded, and deserving of criticism. Therefore, reinforcement contingencies may reward individuals who match their linguistic choices with the partisanship of their audiences, promoting the use of politically-biased language within politically homogenous social networks. Nevertheless, partisan speakers may be despised by opposing partisans for these very linguistic choices. As such, the linguistic choices that are rewarded by co-partisans, may reduce trust and exacerbate animosity *between* competing social groups who come to view opposing partisans as untrustworthy, immoral, and closed-minded, in part based on their linguistic choices.

3.5 Experiment 8

Experiment 7 revealed the potential for partisan language to facilitate negative evaluations of political out-group members, with individuals attributed such language being perceived as untrustworthy, closed-minded, and immoral by their political opponents on the basis of their linguistic choices. Experiment 8 assessed a different consequence of partisan language, mainly the potential for ideologically-congruent language to strengthen the in-group attitudes of partisans, amplifying disagreement across political divides. Participants in Experiment 8 were presented with action-depicting statements and stated their level of agreement with different polarizing actions (e.g., a middle school teacher lecturing her students on the concept of privilege

and the presence of systemic racism in America's past and present). Notably, these actions were described using either ideologically-congruent (e.g., "Mary, a middle school teacher, teaching [an anti-racist curriculum/critical race theory] in her classroom") or politically-neutral language (e.g., "Mary, a middle school teacher, teaching about privilege and systemic racism in her classroom"), as well as featured different levels of event information, manipulating the amount of ambiguity that surrounded each action. I hypothesized that partisans would express stronger agreement (or disagreement, whichever was consistent with in-group attitudes, see *Recoding of Action Evaluation Judgments*) with political actions when these actions were described with ideologically-congruent compared to politically-neutral language. As such, I predicted that Democrats' and Republicans' evaluations of actions would exhibit greater divergence when actions were described with partisan—as opposed to non-partisan—terms. Additionally, consistent with the results of Experiment 6, I hypothesized that the polarizing influence of partisan language would be reduced when additional event information decreased action ambiguity by making participants more knowledgeable about the actions they were evaluating. Therefore, Experiment 8 investigated the potential for ideologically-congruent language to polarize attitudes and intensify disagreements across partisan divides, particularly in cases in which event knowledge is ambiguous or lacking.

3.6 Methods

3.6.1 Participants

A sample of 660 participants was recruited from Prolific and received $1.00 upon completion of an approximately 6-minute online questionnaire. In order to be eligible to participate in Experiment 8, participants were required to: (1) self-report English as their first language, (2) reside in the United States, (3) self-report their political affiliation as either

Democrat or Republican, (4) have completed between 100 and 10,000 work submissions on Prolific, and (5) possess a Prolific submission approval rating greater than or equal to 99%. Additionally, individuals who participated in Experiments 2, 5, or S1 were restricted from participating in Experiment 8. I excluded data from 54 participants based on a set of exclusion criteria (see *Data Preparation*), leaving data from 606 participants (48% Female; $M_{age} = 43.35$, $SD_{age} = 15.00$; 270 Democrats, 78 Independents [30 Lean Democrat, 48 Lean Republican], 258 Republicans, 55% college graduates) to be analyzed.

3.6.2 Materials

Experiment 8 featured the same 12 items as Experiment 7, and thus included the same 12 liberal, conservative, and neutral statements (see Appendix H). For participants randomly assigned to a Details condition, each action-depicting statement was presented alongside additional act information (see Figure 13). Notably, additional act details mirrored information provided within the factual event description of each item.[33] Conversely, participants assigned to a No Details condition evaluated each action-depicting statement without any additional information.

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[33] However, unlike the presentation of factual event descriptions in prior experiments (e.g., Experiment 7), this information did not appear under a distinct label (e.g., "Factual Event Description") nor were participants instructed to privilege this information in any way. Rather, from the point-of-view of participants, this additional act information was simply part of an act's description.

Liberal Statement	Neutral Statement	Conservative Statement
Carol, an elected politician, supporting a bill that would expand voting rights	Carol, an elected politician, supporting a bill that would relax voter ID requirements and expand mail-in voting	Carol an elected politician, supporting a bill that would reduce election security

Additional Details: Specifically, Carol supported a bill that would make it easier for people in her country to vote in elections. If passed, this bill would relax voter ID requirements by allowing voters to vote without identification if they complete a sworn written statement attesting to their identity. Additionally, this bill would expand mail-in voting nationwide, permitting all eligible voters to vote by mail.

Figure 13. Experiment 8: Item Example. An example of an item featured in Experiment 8 for which one half of participants were provided with additional details regarding the actions they evaluated. These details were presented along with corresponding liberal, conservative, or neutral action-depicting statements, for which participants stated their level of agreement with each action described.

3.6.3 Measures

Experiment 8 featured the same action evaluation and deception detection measures as Experiments 1, 2, and 6 and the same political identity strength measure as Experiment 7. That is, participants evaluated each action described by responding to the question "How much do you agree or disagree with [Name's] actions?" Responses to this question were provided on a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree with) to 7 (Strongly Agree with). Prior to action evaluations, participants responded to five political identity strength items designed to assess the strength of their identification with their preferred political party. Following all action evaluations, participants were asked "Did you perceive some of the language used to describe actions in this survey to be intentionally deceptive?" providing either a "Yes" or "No" response. Participants responding "Yes" to this item were then asked to specify the percentage of action-depicting statements they perceived as featuring deceptive language.

3.6.3.1 Recoding of Action Evaluation Judgments. Depending on the item and participants' political identity, ideologically-congruent statements were expected to facilitate

agreement with an action in some cases and disagreement in others. As such, in order to assess whether describing actions using ideologically-congruent—as opposed to politically neutral—language strengthened partisans' in-group attitudes and exacerbated political polarization, I recoded participants' action evaluation judgments (see Figure 14). Specifically, consistent with my pre-registered intent (https://osf.io/3rwyq), I recoded action evaluation judgments onto a 7-point scale that ranged from -3 (Strong Out-Group Attitude) to 3 (Strong In-Group Attitude). Data from prior experiments revealed whether agreement with an action was consistent, in the aggregate, with the attitudes of Democrats or Republicans. Responses made within the current experiment supported this recoding, replicating the partisan differences in action evaluations observed in prior studies and revealing in-group attitudes for both Democrat and Republican participants across conditions[34] (Democrats: $M = 1.60$, $SD = 0.74$; Republicans: $M = 1.03$, $SD = 0.83$) which were reliably distinguished from a neutral mid-point value (0), $t(605) = 38.63$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.57$.

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[34] This recoding also resulted in Democrats and Republicans displaying in-group attitudes within each experimental condition (i.e., regardless of Statement Type or Information Type). Most notably, Democrats' and Republicans' action evaluations were consistent with this recoding within neutral statements presented in the Details condition, suggesting that this recoding captured partisan attitudes when actions were the least ambiguous and presented in a politically neutral manner.
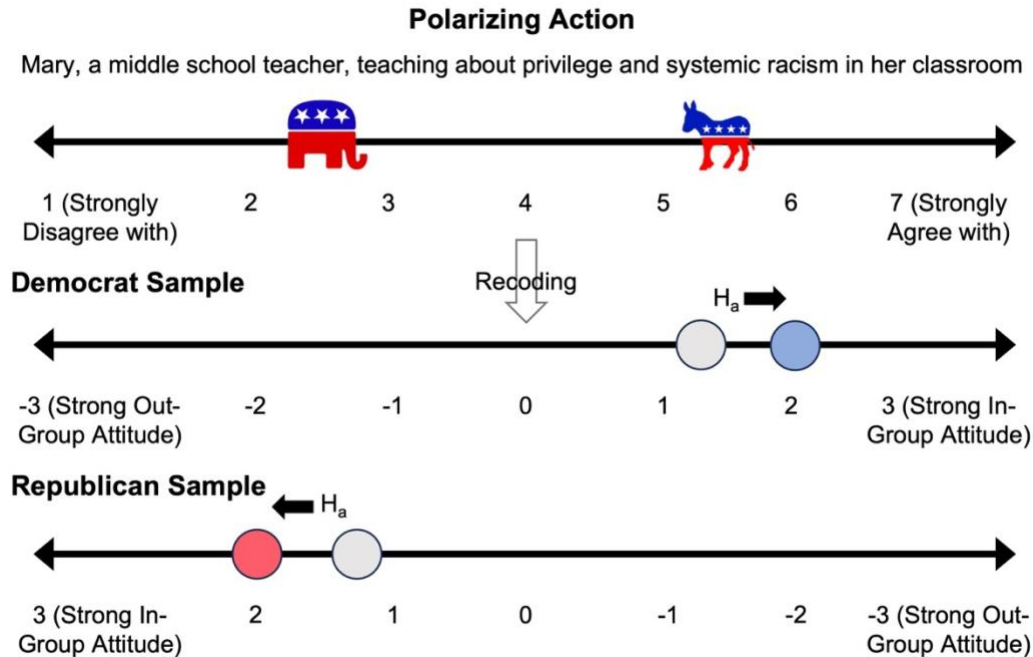
Polarizing Action

Mary, a middle school teacher, teaching about privilege and systemic racism in her classroom

Figure 14. Experiment 8: Action Evaluation Recoding. All 12 items described a polarizing action in which Democrats and Republicans differed with regards to how much they agreed with the actions of a target actor (e.g., Mary). In the example shown above, Democrats, in the aggregate, agreed more with Mary's actions compared to Republicans. As such, in order to assess whether describing actions using ideologically-congruent—as opposed to politically neutral—language strengthened in-group attitudes, I recoded Democrats' action evaluations such that agreement with Mary's action represented an in-group attitude (positive values) and disagreement with Mary's action an out-group attitude (negative values). Likewise, I recoded Republicans' action evaluations such that disagreement with Mary's action represented an in-group attitude and agreement with Mary's action an out-group attitude. Items for which Republicans, in the aggregate, agreed more with a target actor's actions compared to Democrats were recoded in the opposite manner (i.e., with agreement representing an out-group attitude for Democrats and an in-group attitude for Republicans). Notably, based on this recoding, as the action evaluations of Democrats and Republicans polarize the absolute value of recoded judgments becomes larger (with positive values indicating divergence in the predicted [in-group] direction). Likewise, as the action evaluations of Democrats and Republicans converge the absolute value of recoded judgments becomes smaller (i.e., their recoded judgments increasingly mirror each other [e.g., 1/-1] and the full sample mean approaches zero). I hypothesized (H_a) that describing actions using liberal-biased (blue circle) and conservative-biased (red circle) language would make the action evaluations of Democrats and Republicans (respectively) more partisan compared to when these actions were described using politically neutral language (grey circles).

3.6.4 Design and Procedure

Experiment 8 featured a 2 (Statement Type: in-group, neutral [within]) x 2 (Information Type: details, no details [between]) mixed design. Participants evaluated the actions described

within 12 action-depicting statements. For each participant, six actions were described with politically neutral language while the remaining six action-depicting statements featured language that was biased in favour of their self-reported political identity (Democrat or Republican).[35] As such, participants' self-identifying as Democrats evaluated actions described within six liberal-biased and six neutral statements while self-identified Republicans evaluated actions depicted within six conservative-biased and six neutral statements. Each participant was also randomly assigned to one of two Information Type conditions, determining whether they evaluated all 12 action-depicting statements with (Details condition) or without (No Details condition) additional act details. Regardless of condition, the order in which items were presented was randomized for each participant. As in Experiment 7, participants began Experiment 8 by responding to three demographic questions (i.e., political identity, political ideology, and political engagement) and five political identity strength items. Participants concluded Experiment 8 by completing a deception detection measure, responding to two questions assessing their preference for partisan versus non-partisan news sources, and reporting their age, sex, ethnicity, and level of education.

3.6.5 Data Preparation

I excluded data from 41 participants based on a set of pre-registered criteria (https://osf.io/3rwyq). Excluded participants reported responding randomly at some point during the experiment ($n = 14$), failed an attention check item ($n = 6$), or completed Experiment 8 in under 240 seconds (Details condition only; $n = 26$). Additionally, I excluded data from 13 participants who self-identified as a Democrat while self-reporting a conservative ideology or

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[35] The categorization of statements as liberal-biased, conservative-biased, or politically neutral was supported by data from previous experiments, including Experiments 5 and S1, with the strongest and most direct evidence for these categorizations being observed in Experiment S2 (see Appendix J).

self-identified as a Republican while endorsing a liberal ideology (see footnote 30). This final

exclusion criterion was not pre-registered. Nevertheless, the reported findings were robust to the

choice of exclusion criterion, as not applying this final criterion or including data from the full

sample did not change the interpretation of any of the inferential statistics reported below.

3.7 Results and Discussion

In order to examine whether ideologically-biased language promotes partisan evaluations

of actions described with varying levels of detail I conducted a 2 (Statement Type: in-group,

neutral [within]) x 2 (Information Type: details, no details [between]) mixed ANOVA[36] with

participants' recoded action evaluations (see Figure 14 and *Measures*) as the dependent variable.

I observed a main effect of Statement Type, $F(1, 604) = 111.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .156$, such that

actions described with an in-group term produced more partisan action evaluations ($M = 1.53$,

$SD = 0.93$) compared to actions described with politically neutral language ($M = 1.09$, $SD = $

1.03). Notably, I observed a Statement Type by Information Type interaction (see Figure 15),

$F(1, 604) = 42.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .066$. As hypothesized, in the No Details condition, participants

evaluated actions in a more partisan manner (i.e., more strongly endorsed in-group evaluations of

actions) when actions were described with an in-group term ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 0.78$) as opposed to

neutral language ($M = 1.01$, $SD = 1.07$), $t(312) = 12.69$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.73$. Nevertheless, the

polarizing influence of in-group language was mitigated when participants were provided with

more details about the actions they evaluated. That is, in-group language produced more partisan

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[36] I also conducted a 2 x 2 x 2 mixed ANOVA that included Participant Political Identity (Democrat, Republican) as a between-subjects factor in order to explore potential asymmetries within the recoded action evaluations of Democrats and Republicans. These analyses revealed a main effect of Participant Political Identity, $F(1, 602) = 81.59$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .119$, with Democrats ($M = 1.60$, $SD = 0.90$) displaying more partisan action evaluations compared to Republicans ($M = 1.03$, $SD = 1.03$). Nevertheless, Participant Political Identity did not interact with Statement Type, $F(1, 602) = 0.54$, $p = .463$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$, or Information Type, $F(1, 602) = 0.17$, $p = .682$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$, nor was there a three-way interaction, $F(1, 602) = 3.52$, $p = .061$, $\eta_p^2 = .006$.

action evaluations in the No Details condition ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 0.78$) compared to the Details condition ($M = 1.34$, $SD = 1.04$), $t(604) = 4.91$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.40$. Relatedly, while in-group language produced more partisan action evaluations ($M = 1.34$, $SD = 1.04$) than neutral language ($M = 1.18$, $SD = 1.00$) within the Details condition, $t(292) = 2.70$, $p = .007$, $d = 0.16$, the polarizing impact of Statement Type was greater when participants evaluated actions that were somewhat ambiguous ($d = 0.73$ vs. $d = 0.16$). Thus, while Democrats and Republicans unsurprisingly held different attitudes towards a host of politically polarizing actions, ideologically-congruent language, particularly in situations featuring greater ambiguity, further polarized the attitudes of partisans in my sample.
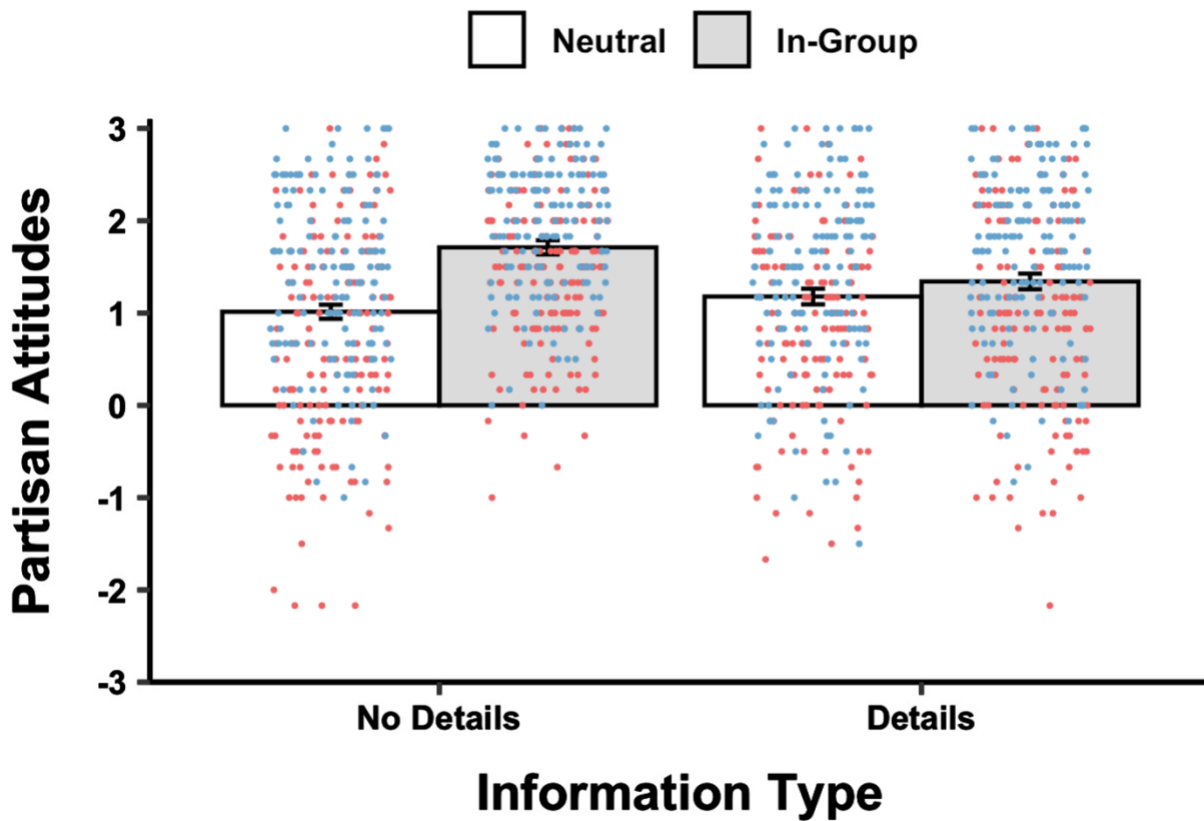
Figure 15. Experiment 8 Results. Bars display the mean action evaluations (recoded as partisan attitudes: 3 = Strong in-group evaluation to -3 = Strong out-group evaluation) when evaluating actions described with in-group and political neutral language across Information Type conditions. Dots represent individual Democrats' (Blue) and Republicans' (Red) mean partisan attitudes within a specific condition. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

3.8 Chapter 3: Discussion

Prior work has revealed the distinct linguistic choices of Democrats and Republicans within different political contexts (Bayram et al., 2019; Gentzkow et al., 2019; Monroe et al., 2008; Sterling et al., 2020; Sterling & Jost, 2018; Stier, 2016). Consistent with this linguistic divide, the present work suggests that, when used to depict the same well-defined political events, Democrats and Republicans disagree about the validity of different linguistic choices. That is, while Democrats viewed speakers describing events (e.g., a politician supporting a bill that would relax voter ID requirements and expand mail-in voting) using liberal-biased terms (e.g., "expand voting rights") as largely trustworthy, moral, and open-minded, Republicans viewed these same speakers as somewhat untrustworthy, immoral, and closed-minded. Likewise, Republicans showed the same affinity—and Democrats the same aversion—for speakers describing events with conservative-biased language (e.g., "reduce election security"). Therefore, the present work demonstrates that describing polarizing events using politically-biased language leads to reputational benefits when communicating with like-minded individuals and reputational costs when communicating with opposing partisans. Notably, when judged by co-partisans, the reputational benefits associated with partisan language exceeded those of politically-neutral language, as in-group speakers were judged as more trustworthy, moral, and open-minded than speakers describing events in a non-partisan manner. Thus, when communicating with a politically homogenous audience consisting primarily of co-partisans, individuals (and organizations) may be incentivized to describe events in an ideologically-biased way.

Shared political partisanship promotes social interaction, both in online and offline settings (Huber & Malhotra, 2017; Mosleh et al., 2021; Motyl et al., 2014). More generally, individuals exhibit a tendency to seek out information that supports—as opposed to challenges—

their political viewpoints. As such, many partisans are embedded in social networks consisting primarily of like-minded individuals (Barberá, 2015; Cinelli et al., 2021; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2011) and receive a majority of their news from ideologically-congruent sources (Bakshy et al., 2015; Flaxman et al., 2016; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2014; Peterson et al., 2021; Stroud, 2008, 2010). Partisan language may both support and be supported by this tendency to self-select into ideologically-congruent environments. In Experiment 7, speakers attributed partisan language were judged positively by political in-group members and negatively by out-group members. Thus, partisan linguistic choices may contribute to the formation of politically homogenous social networks on account of these linguistic choices simultaneously facilitating the admiration of co-partisans (promoting within-party friendships) and the ire of political opponents (hindering cross-party friendships). Consistent with these claims, partisan participants expressed greater interest in having a political discussion with individuals attributed in- compared to out-group language. Furthermore, the more participants perceived speakers as members of their political in-group the more they viewed speakers as trustworthy, moral, open-minded, and undeserving of criticism and the more interest they expressed in discussing politics with them. These findings can also help explain individuals' disproportionate consumption of ideologically-congruent news, as they showcase partisans' trust in those who described politically contentious events in an ideologically-congruent manner. Notably, participants viewed in-group speakers as more trustworthy than speakers ascribed politically-neutral language. Thus, to many partisans, ideologically-congruent language may appear more accurate and objective than even that which is largely viewed (e.g., by a politically diverse sample) as being free from political bias, a finding consistent with prior work demonstrating the tendency

for partisans to view non-partisan content as biased against their political in-group (Feldman, 2011; Hansen & Kim, 2011; Perloff, 2015; Vallone et al., 1985).

At the same time, the use of partisan language is supported by partisans' tendencies to trust and engage with ideologically-congruent content. People are sensitive to the reinforcement contingencies present in their environment (Brady et al., 2021; Lacetera & Macis, 2010). Thus, an individual who receives more praise and engagement from their social network when describing events in a partisan—as opposed to non-partisan—way is more likely to continue to use partisan language in the future. Likewise, partisans' trust and engagement with ideologically-congruent content can incentivize news and media outlets to ensure that their content consistently supports the political viewpoints of their audience. Thus, participants' observed preference for ideologically-congruent speakers can help explain the documented rise of partisan news sources catering to one side of the political spectrum (Faris et al., 2017; Shultziner & Stukalin, 2021), as well as the larger social media followings of more ideologically extreme politicians' (Hong & Kim, 2016). In sum, how individuals respond to partisan versus non-partisan content is likely to determine the prevalence of partisan content (including politically-biased language) within a social environment. Thus, Democrats' and Republicans' positive evaluations of speakers using ideologically-congruent language suggests that such language will be common in politically homogenous environments.

While providing social and reputational benefits to individuals in certain social contexts, the divisiveness of partisan language can be damaging to society-at-large. Partisan rhetoric has the potential to amplify distrust and animosity among opposing partisans, as suggested by participants' negative evaluations of out-group speakers in Experiment 7. Thus, to the extent that the partisan language of Democrats and Republicans is viewed by their political opponents, such

language may lead partisans to perceive political out-group members as less trustworthy, moral, and open-minded. Consistent with this claim, prior work finds that increasing partisans' exposure to the social media posts of political out-group members increases—rather than diminishes— political polarization (Bail et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2014). Partisans' distinct judgments of in- and out-group speakers may have important societal consequences. While the reputational benefits associated with ideologically-congruent language reinforces its use, the distrust and criticism such language evokes in political out-group members can amplify partisan animosities and deepen political divides. Rising partisan antipathy and political polarization (Boxell et al., 2022; Finkel et al., 2020; Iyengar et al., 2019) has been linked with many negative societal outcomes, including growing political radicalism (Warner, 2010), increased inter-group conflict and in-group bias (Amira et al., 2021; Anduiza et al., 2013; Lelkes & Westwood, 2017; McConnell et al., 2018), diminishing trust in key institutions (Jilani & Smith, 2019; Newport, 2019), less effective governance (Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015), and greater support for anti-democratic attitudes and political violence (Carey et al., 2022; Kalmoe & Mason, 2019; Kingzette et al., 2021; Mason, 2018; Mooijman et al., 2018; Orhan, 2022). Thus, divisive partisan rhetoric, to the extent that it facilitates dislike and distrust across political lines, may contribute not only to current political divides but also to the negative consequences associated with these divisions.

Along with amplifying partisan animosities, partisan language may polarize the attitudes of partisans exposed to ideologically-congruent linguistic framings of political events. In Experiment 8, Democrats and Republicans expressed different attitudes towards a host of politically relevant actions, independent of how these actions were described. That is, when presented the same politically-neutral action-depicting statement, the action evaluations of Democrats and Republicans diverged. Nevertheless, this divergence of attitudes was exacerbated

by partisan language. For example, Democrats described the politically relevant actions of target

actors using liberal-biased language evaluated actions in a more partisan way, whether by

expressing greater agreement with a politician supporting a bill that would relax voter ID

requirements or greater disagreement with a politician supporting policies that sought to prevent

minors from receiving gender transition procedures. Similarly, Republicans described these same

actions using conservative-biased language also evaluated actions in a more partisan way,

disagreeing more with the politician seeking to relax voter ID requirements and agreeing more

with the politician aiming to restrict gender transition procedures. As such, exposing Democrats

and Republicans to descriptions of polarizing events that featured partisan language[37] enhanced

partisan disagreement and increased the ideological extremity of participants' responses.[38]

    While partisan language increased the ideological extremity of participants' evaluations

of different politically-relevant actions, the persuasive (and polarizing) influence of liberal- and

conservative-biased terms was reduced when participants were provided with more details about

each action. That is, replicating the main finding of Experiment 6, possessing more knowledge

about an action appeared to protect participants from being influenced by the linguistic choices

of a co-partisan speaker. Nevertheless, event knowledge did not make participants immune to the

persuasive influence of partisan language. Thus, even when the details of an event are well-

understood, politically-biased language may exert some small influence on the attitudes of

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[37] Notably, partisan individuals may frequently be selectively exposed to ideologically-congruent descriptions of political events, as suggested by their greater trust and interest in discussing politics with in-group speakers in Experiment 7, as well as prior work suggesting that people more frequently interact with political in-group—compared to out-group—members (Cinelli et al., 2021; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2011) and exhibit a tendency to seek out ideologically-congruent news (Flaxman et al., 2016; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Peterson et al., 2021; Stroud, 2010).
[38] The strengthening of partisan disagreement in Experiment 8 resulted from the substitution of a single term in an act's description (see Appendix H). Furthermore, action descriptions, while judged as politically biased, were viewed as largely honest by a politically diverse sample of Americans in Experiment 5 and did not feature objectively false claims. Thus, consistent with previous experiments within this dissertation demonstrating the persuasive potential and perceived honesty related to the strategic selection of more or less agreeable terms, the linguistic choices of the partisan speaker need not be drastic or false to polarize the attitudes of an audience.

partisans. As discussed previously, this finding would not be unprecedented, as past research has demonstrated the ability for subtle linguistic choices to shape peoples' judgments of car crashes they witnessed and food that they tasted (Levin, 1987; Levin & Gaeth, 1988; Loftus & Palmer, 1974). Nonetheless, people commonly make important judgments and form consequential beliefs without a perfect understanding of the acts they are evaluating or the ideas they are contemplating. This may be especially true within the political domain in which polarizing events—including the large political gatherings, legislative bills, and interrogative actions described in the present work—are often complex, opaque, or involve privileged information. As such, understanding the polarizing potential of partisan language in situations of both high and low ambiguity is important for understanding how the linguistic choices of partisan speakers may deepen political divides.

3.8.1 Limitations and Future Directions

Speaking to the generalizability of the observed effects, Experiments 7 and 8 featured a diverse set of liberal-biased, conservative-biased, and politically neutral terms which were used to describe a variety of politically contentious events. Nevertheless, the polarizing events (and partisan terms) presented within these experiments necessarily included only a subset of that which could have been chosen. As such, it is possible that item selection influenced the results reported within this chapter. Large scale analyses of social media posts, political speeches, and news articles may prove fruitful, allowing for the conceptual replication of the present findings in a naturalistic setting featuring a more diverse set of partisan and non-partisan terms. Relatedly, such analyses have the potential to provide unique insight into the association between partisan language and audience engagement (e.g., social media sharing), an important research question that was not assessed within the present work. Given participants affinity for in-group speakers

in Experiment 7 and prior work demonstrating the positive association between polarizing content and social media engagement (Brady et al., 2017, 2019; Kim & Ihm, 2020; Rathje et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2023), we may expect politically-biased language to facilitate audience engagement. Whether assessed in a naturalistic or laboratory setting, future work investigating Democrats and Republicans engagement with partisan and non-partisan descriptions of polarizing events would be worthwhile, helping to further illuminate the reinforcement contingencies associated with partisan and non-partisan linguistic choices across social contexts. Finally, participants in Experiments 7 and 8 were not provided with any information about the people describing each action, representing a limitation of this work. In real-world contexts, people often attend to source information, including their political affiliations and personal biases. Consequently, it is possible that the linguistic choices of a partisan speaker may be less influential when their political affiliation is made explicit. Therefore, future work could investigate the influence of partisan and non-partisan language when used by explicitly partisan individuals.

3.8.2 Concluding Remarks

The present work demonstrates how the linguistic choices of a partisan speaker can promote distrust among political opponents and polarize attitudes across political divides. Nevertheless, there remain reasons for optimism. Across the political spectrum, Americans are united by their desire for a less divided nation, with cross-partisan majorities expressing support for "news that is as non-partisan as possible" (Schleifer et al., 2021). The results of Experiment 7 suggest that describing polarizing events in a non-partisan way is effective at facilitating trust across political divides, as both Democrats and Republicans judged non-partisan speakers as considerably more trustworthy than out-group speakers and only slightly less trustworthy than

in-group speakers. Nevertheless, to the extent that many politicians, political pundits, and members of the general public belong to social networks that consist primarily of co-partisans, describing events using partisan language may often be personally advantageous. While simply exposing partisans' to the viewpoints of their political opponents may not curb polarization (Bail et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2014), the present findings suggest that social environments in which partisans are sensitive to their reputation among both political in- and out-group members can promote less polarizing language, as politically-neutral language led to the most positive reputational outcomes for speakers when considering the judgments of both Democrats and Republicans.

While many people express a desire for non-partisan news sources as well as concerns about rising partisan animosity and political extremism, divisive partisan content continues to receive more engagement and ideologically-congruent content more praise (Brady et al., 2017, 2019; Rathje et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2023). If we want to live in less divided nations we need to work to reverse these trends, as the type of political rhetoric we reward is likely to be the type of rhetoric we encounter. Partisan language can deepen political divides; however, it remains within our power to reduce the prevalence of such language by not incentivizing its use. If accomplished, liberals and conservatives will continue to disagree, however without the polarizing influence of partisan rhetoric such disagreements may more frequently promote productive discussion and effective compromise.

Chapter 4

Summary

The proliferation of misinformation has garnered a great deal of attention in recent years, becoming a major focus of public debate and scientific research (Lazer et al., 2018; Pennycook & Rand, 2021; Vosoughi et al., 2018). Scholars have revealed the many damaging effects associated with the spread of misinformation, including the promotion of unhealthy behaviours (Roozenbeek et al., 2020), the amplification of political polarization (Au et al., 2021; Ribeiro et al., 2017), and the erosion of trust in social institutions (e.g., media; Van Duyn & Collier, 2019; Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019). Nevertheless, information need not be false to mislead or polarize. The subtle linguistic choices of a strategic speaker can be used to present "the truth" in a self-serving way, shaping the perspectives of their audience. In a political context, partisan speakers can use language that, while not objectively false, describes political events in a way that supports co-partisan narratives and increases support for favoured policies (Simon & Jerit, 2007). Much like the spread of misinformation, the prevalence of partisan language can be damaging to society, unduly shaping public opinion, intensifying political disagreements, and facilitating dislike and distrust across political divides. As such, the rise of partisan language (Bayram et al., 2019; Gentzkow et al., 2019) represents an important social challenge, one whose antecedents and consequences remain poorly understood. Across eight experiments, I examined the potential for a self-serving speaker to, through the strategic use of a more or less agreeable term, a) influence peoples' evaluations of actions while b) maintaining a reputation as a trustworthy and honest individual. Notably, I investigated the persuasive potential of subtle (and ostensibly honest) linguistic choices in a moral and political context, demonstrating how the substitution of a more or less agreeable term can shape peoples' evaluations of morally

contentious and highly polarizing actions. Finally, within a political context, I assessed the

potential for partisan linguistic choices to contribute to affective and ideological polarization

across different social and information environments. In this final chapter I summarize this work,

highlighting key takeaways and discussing some of the theoretical and applied implications of

the present findings.

4.1 Persuasion without Correction

Experiments 1 and 2 reveal how peoples' evaluations of actions can be made more

favourable by replacing a disagreeable term (e.g., *torture*) with a semantically related agreeable

term (e.g., *enhanced interrogation*) in an act's description. Notably, despite their persuasive

influence, the resulting agreeable and disagreeable action-depicting statements were judged as

largely truthful by participants (Experiments 3 and 5). Likewise, individuals attributed these

statements experienced minimal reputational costs, being viewed as largely trustworthy, moral,

and undeserving of criticism (Experiments 4 and 5). Taken together, the results of Experiments

1-5 suggest that a motivated speaker could, through their linguistic choices, bias public opinion

in manner that maintains their reputation as a trustworthy and honest individual. Given that

people can benefit from misleading others, many investigating the evolution of language have

wondered how the majority of communication remains honest (Fitch, 2010). One hypothesis is

that the social and reputational sanctions used to punish liars dissuades people from being

deceptive in their communications with others (Oesch, 2016, 2017; Silk et al., 2000). Therefore,

without reputational consequences, individuals may be able to engage in subtle forms of

linguistic manipulation repeatedly without correction. Consistent with these claims, participants

in Experiments 3-5 viewed action-depicting statements featuring a falsehood (i.e., lie) as

dishonest and deceptive, with liars being judged as untrustworthy and immoral. Conversely,

agreeable and disagreeable statements (and the individuals attributed them) were judged considerably more positively, seemingly being met with minimal disapproval. Therefore, the risk of social and reputational costs argued to be a primary deterrent of lying may be far less effective in dissuading individuals from using more subtle forms of linguistic manipulation (e.g., doublespeak) to their benefit.

A vast literature has assessed the persuasiveness of messages across different contexts, demonstrating that persuasive messages are most effective when matched with the personal concerns, values, and individual characteristics of their audience (Covey, 2014; Feinberg & Willer, 2019; Hirsh et al., 2012). Experiment 6 contributes to this literature, establishing that a speaker's linguistic choices are more influential when used to depict more (as opposed to less) ambiguous events. That is, while substituting a disagreeable term with a semantically related agreeable term in an action description made participants evaluate actions more positively in all cases, this effect was diminished when providing participants with additional details about each action. Thus, providing participants with more knowledge about the actions they were asked to evaluate reduced (but did not eliminate) the influence of a speaker's linguistic choices. On the basis of these results, I propose that when the details of an action are unknown people have the affordance to imagine several types of actions, and in doing so are often guided by the language used in an act's description. In these circumstances, if more agreeable terms evoke more acceptable actions compared to disagreeable terms, we can expect actions to be viewed more favourably when described with a euphemistic term. Conversely, as the ambiguity that surrounds an action is reduced (e.g., by event knowledge) people may be restricted into imagining a smaller set of actions, reducing the influence of a speaker's linguistic choices. Thus, if witnessing an interrogative act firsthand, a speaker using the terms "torture" or "enhanced interrogation" to

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describe this action may conjure up identical images of the act that was witnessed. However, if largely unaware of the act that took place (besides knowing that some act of interrogation occurred), this choice of term may guide individuals' to imagine a more or less agreeable action (and evaluate the action accordingly).

Much has been written about the use of doublespeak and related forms of linguistic manipulation within the domains of politics, advertising, education, science, and business (Gibson, 1975; Herman, 1992; Lutz, 1988, 1990, 2000; Moore, 1991; Pulley, 1994). While those writing about doublespeak appear to share the intuition that it is effective, criticizing the use of doublespeak in part for its assumed ability to bias audiences' perceptions of reality, empirical research exploring the persuasiveness, reputational consequences, and mechanisms of doublespeak in a psychological context is lacking. The present work mirrors prior research demonstrating how subtle linguistic changes (e.g., the substitution of a single term) can bias human perception and judgment (Hall et al., 2015; Levin, 1987; Levin & Gaeth, 1988; Loftus & Palmer, 1974; Simon & Jerit, 2007). Nevertheless, prior work largely assessed the persuasive influence of a single term-pair (e.g., "25% fat" vs "75% lean") and had participants provide judgments for which they were unlikely to possess strong prior beliefs (e.g., the quality of a ground beef product). Thus, the present work provides an important contribution to this literature, assessing participants' judgments of 48 morally-relevant and politically polarizing actions described with either an agreeable or disagreeable term. These actions included acts of military violence, the promotion of partisan organizations, acts of political protest and politicians supporting policies related to immigration, abortion regulation, online content moderation, gun reform, and climate change, to provide a few examples.[39] As such, the results of Experiments 1

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[39] Moreover, many of the agreeable and disagreeable terms used to describe these actions have been used similarly in real-world contexts (see Appendix A).

and 2 demonstrate that peoples' evaluations of even the most contentious actions can be influenced by the strategic use of a more or less agreeable term.

Even if persuasive, communications that can be exposed as deceptive or dishonest may be of minimal utility to individuals reliant on maintaining a positive reputation within a social network. As such, the present work, along with revealing the persuasive potential of several euphemistic and dysphemistic terms, examined the reputational consequences associated with their use. Despite their impact on participants' evaluations of actions, individuals describing a well-known event using either an agreeable or semantically related disagreeable term were judged as largely trustworthy, moral, and undeserving of criticism. Notably, the minimal reputational costs associated with agreeable and disagreeable statements was not a result of participants being ignorant of key event details (e.g., those that could be exposed at a later time). Additionally, the minimal reputational costs associated with these statements could easily be distinguished from the reputational costs associated with explicitly dishonest statements (i.e., lies). Understanding the persuasive impact and reputational consequences associated with different communications can help explain their prevalence within different social contexts. For example, we may expect messages that are highly persuasive and associated with minimal reputational risks to be used frequently, with persuasive messages associated with greater reputational risks being used more sparingly, particularly by individuals highly reliant on their reputation. Likewise, contextual factors that increase the persuasiveness of a message (e.g., event ambiguity; Experiment 6) or the perceived trustworthiness of its source (e.g., shared partisanship; Experiment 7) should also increase the prevalence of a message within a specific context. In sum, the present work contributes to an understanding of the antecedents and consequences associated with the distinct linguistic choices of the strategic and self-serving

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speaker, illuminating the reinforcement contingencies that underly different linguistic choices within different social contexts as well as demonstrating the consequences of these choices within ambiguous and unambiguous information environments.

4.2 Partisan Language Exacerbates Political Polarization

Recruiting samples of self-identified Democrats and Republicans, Experiments 7 and 8 explored the antecedents and consequences of partisan language. First, in Experiment 7, I explored the reputational consequences associated with the use of liberal-biased and conservative-biased statements.[40] Here, the reputational consequences associated with the use of partisan language was dependent on the match between a speaker's linguistic choices and the partisanship of their audience. For example, while Democrats viewed speakers describing a polarizing event using a liberal-biased term as largely trustworthy, moral, and open-minded, Republicans perceived these same speakers as somewhat untrustworthy, immoral, and closed-minded. Similarly, Republicans showed the same affinity—and Democrats the same aversion—for speakers describing events with a conservative-biased term. Furthermore, when communicating with co-partisans, speakers using politically-biased language were judged as more trustworthy, moral, and open-minded than speakers describing events using politically-neutral language. Therefore, within politically homogenous social networks, individuals (and organizations) may be rewarded for describing events in a politically-biased manner, with partisan linguistic choices signalling a speaker's in-group status and garnering praise from co-partisans. Conversely, in politically heterogenous environments, Democrats and Republicans

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[40] These statements also appeared in Experiments 1-6 (i.e., as either agreeable or disagreeable statements) and were judged by a politically diverse sample as featuring either a liberal- or conservative-bias (see Appendix J). I also created a politically-neutral statement for each item in Experiments 7 and 8. Neutral statements described the same polarizing events as liberal and conservative statements in a manner that was viewed by a politically diverse sample as featuring significantly less political bias.

distrust and dislike of individuals using conservative-biased and liberal-biased language, respectively, may incentivize speakers to describe polarizing events in a non-partisan way, helping them maintain the trust of a politically diverse audience. As such, social environments in which Democrats and Republicans not only interact but are motivated to maintain a positive reputation across party lines, may discourage the use of divisive partisan rhetoric, promoting understanding and compromise. Unfortunately, partisans frequently exist within politically homogenous social networks (Barberá, 2015; Cinelli et al., 2021; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2011), allowing them to selectively attend to the social feedback of like-minded individuals. In these contexts, partisan language may thrive, garnering the attention and admiration of co-partisans, while the criticisms of out-group members (and non-partisans) remain unseen or ignored.

Consistent with rising partisan animosities (Boxell et al., 2022; Finkel et al., 2020; Iyengar et al., 2019), the language of American politicians (Bayram et al., 2019; Gentzkow et al., 2019), along with the political alignment of popular news sources (Faris et al., 2017; Shultziner & Stukalin, 2021), has become more partisan in recent years. The present work suggests that partisan language may both escalate political polarization as well as be supported by rising partisan antipathy. As the general public polarizes, individuals may experience increasing incentives to describe politically-relevant events in an ideologically-biased way. Experiment 7 demonstrates the social and reputational benefits available to speakers using partisan language when communicating with a like-minded audience. To the extent that more polarized individuals exhibited a stronger proclivity to interact with political in-group members and more positively judge co-partisan compared to non-partisan speakers, increases in political polarization may increase the prevalence of politically-biased language. Consistent with these claims, prior work demonstrates that partisan individuals frequently perceive non-partisan news as biased against

their group (Feldman, 2011; Hansen & Kim, 2011; Perloff, 2015; Vallone et al., 1985), with this effect being greater for more knowledgeable (and potentially more partisan) individuals (Hansen & Kim, 2011; Vallone et al., 1985). Similarly, on social media, partisans most frequently share news that not only originates from ideologically-congruent sources (Karamshuk et al., 2017; Osmundsen et al., 2021), but that uses language similar to their own (Dyagilev & Yom-Tov, 2014). Therefore, as the general public becomes more polarized, individuals and organizations may benefit from using more—rather than less—politically-biased language.

While increases in political polarization have the potential to increase the prevalence of partisan language, partisan language, in turn, may exacerbate political polarization. Partisan language has the potential to amplify dislike and distrust across political divides, as suggested by participants' negative evaluations of out-group speakers in Experiment 7. That is, exposure to the partisan rhetoric of political out-group members led partisans to view out-group speakers as somewhat untrustworthy, immoral, and closed-minded, potentially explaining why increasing partisans' exposure to the social media posts of opposing partisans increases—rather than decreases—political polarization (Bail et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2014). Furthermore, in Experiment 7, Democrats [Republicans] expressed minimal interest in discussing politics with speakers describing an event using a conservative-biased [liberal-biased] term. Thus, viewing the partisan language of political out-group members may dissuade partisans from discussing political issues with individuals who hold disparate viewpoints, facilitating the formation of politically homogenous "echo chambers." In sum, while the reputational benefits associated with partisan language may reinforce its use within certain social contexts, when viewed by opposing partisans, such language can amplify dislike and distrust across party lines, deepening political divides. Political polarization, including partisans' increasing dislike, distrust, and avoidance of

their political opponents (Boxell et al., 2022; Finkel et al., 2020; Iyengar et al., 2019), has been linked with negative societal outcomes, such as escalating inter-group conflict and in-group bias (Amira et al., 2021; Anduiza et al., 2013; Lelkes & Westwood, 2017; McConnell et al., 2018), less effective governance (Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015), and greater political radicalism (Warner, 2010) and violence (Kalmoe & Mason, 2019; Mooijman et al., 2018). Therefore, partisan rhetoric, to the extent that it contributes to rising partisan animosities and deepening political divides, may have negative consequences for society-at-large.

Presenting events in a way that supports ideological narratives, partisan language has the potential to strengthen the political viewpoints of partisans. Experiments 1 and 2 demonstrate how a motivated speaker can predictably bias peoples' evaluations of actions via the strategic use of a more or less agreeable term in an act's description. In Experiment 8, using a subset of items assessed in Experiments 1 and 2, I demonstrate how selective exposure to ideologically-congruent—as opposed to politically-neutral—linguistic choices leads Democrats and Republicans to evaluate politically-relevant actions in a more partisan manner. Described a range of polarizing actions in a non-partisan way, Democrats and Republicans differed in their evaluation of each action. Nevertheless, this divergence of attitudes was amplified by partisan language, as partisan assessments of polarizing actions became more extreme when actions were described with an ideologically-congruent term. For instance, when described in a non-partisan way, Democrats expressed agreement and Republicans disagreement with a politician supporting a bill that would relax voter ID requirements and expand mail-in voting. However, Democrats expressed greater agreement, and Republicans greater disagreement, with this politician's actions when described in an ideologically-congruent manner, further polarizing the attitudes of partisans in our sample (see Figure 16). People exhibit a tendency to seek out information that

supports—rather than challenges—their existing viewpoints (Hart et al., 2009), resulting in many

partisans receiving a majority of their news from ideologically-congruent sources (Iyengar &

Hahn, 2009; Peterson et al., 2021; Stroud, 2008, 2010) and more frequently forming social

connections with like-minded individuals (Barberá, 2015; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2011). As such,

individuals may often be exposed to ideologically-congruent linguistic framings of polarizing

events that strengthen their existing viewpoints, making their beliefs appear more justified than

they otherwise would given a neutral framing. In this way, the prevalence of objectively true, yet

politically-biased, linguistic framings of political events can unnecessarily intensify partisan

disagreements, hindering productive communication and compromise across party lines.

Non-Partisan Action-Depicting Statement

Carol, an elected politician, supporting a bill that would relax voter ID requirements and expand mail-in voting.

How much do you agree or disagree with Carol's actions?
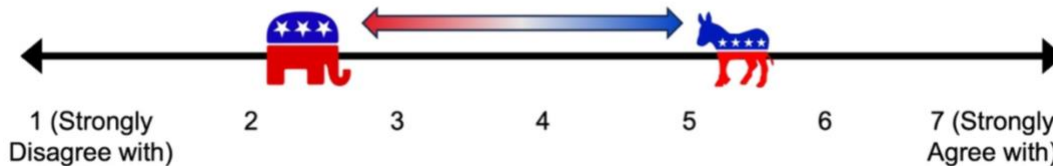
1 (Strongly Disagree with)　2　3　4　5　6　7 (Strongly Agree with)

Partisan Action-Depicting Statement

Carol, an elected politician, supporting a bill that would [reduce election security/expand voting rights].

How much do you agree or disagree with Carol's actions?

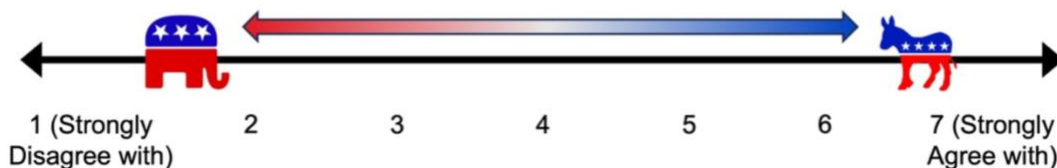1 (Strongly Disagree with)　2　3　4　5　6　7 (Strongly Agree with)

Figure 16. Experiment 8: Polarizing Influence of Partisan Language. This figure depicts the mean action evaluations of Democrats and Republicans when described an action in a politically-neutral and ideologically-congruent way. The placement of symbols representing the Democratic and Republican party on the administered 7-point scale show the mean action evaluation for Democrats and Republicans, respectively. The partisan action-depicting statement for this item featured the term depicted in red when viewed by Republicans and the term depicted in Blue when viewed by Democrats. An arrow featuring a colour gradient is used to show the polarization of partisans' responses for each Statement Type (Non-Partisan vs. Partisan).

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While politically-biased language increased the ideological extremity of partisans' evaluations of various polarizing actions, the persuasive (and polarizing) influence of these terms was reduced when participants were made more knowledgeable about the actions they evaluated. Thus, the present work demonstrates how partisan disagreements can be unnecessarily amplified when partisan language is used to describe polarizing events to a less than well-informed audience, suggesting that interventions that promote non-partisan language or an increasingly informed populace may help curb political polarization. Of course, these prescriptions present a major challenge in their own right. While many people appear to hold a preference for less partisan rhetoric (Schleifer et al., 2021), as long as enough individuals reward partisan—compared to politically-neutral—linguistic choices (e.g., with attention or praise), we can expect partisan language to be prevalent in our political discourse. Likewise, becoming knowledgeable about the many complex events and issues discussed in today's political discourse requires much time and effort, which may be ill-suited to the ephemeral nature of online discourse in which events and issues are quickly forgotten as new trending topics continuously emerge. Nonetheless, if we want to avoid the social ills associated with political polarization, it is up to us to reward content that is not only free from falsehoods, but avoids divisive partisan rhetoric, even when forwarding partisan viewpoints. Likewise, if we wish to avoid being swayed by the language of self-serving and strategic speakers, we need not only be cognizant of the persuasive potential of subtle linguistic framings, but ensure that we possess the knowledge required to recognize the biases present in a speaker's linguistic choices.

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Appendix A

Real-World Examples of Partisan Linguistic Differences on Twitter

* Mean political bias ratings from participants in Experiment S2 (see Appendix J) are presented along with each term. These ratings were provided on a 100-point scale in which "50" represented "politically neutral," values less than 50 represented "liberal bias," with lower values indicating a stronger liberal bias, and values greater than 50 represented "conservative bias," with larger values indicating a stronger conservative bias. Notably, participants judged the political bias of statements (rather than terms). Thus, the statement a term appeared in, along with the factual event description it described, impacted judgments of political bias.

Item #20: Forced Pregnancy Bill/Heartbeat Bill

Examples From the Political Left: Forced Pregnancy Bill (41.73 [Liberal-Biased])

Stacey Abrams ✔ @staceyabrams · May 7, 2019
Bad policies like the **forced pregnancy bill** are a direct result of voter suppression. If leaders can silence Georgians' voices at the ballot box, they can ignore Georgians' voices when in office. We will fight back in court and at the voting booth. #HB481

Alyssa Milano ✔ @Alyssa_Milano · Sep 2, 2021
Why is Jeff Toobin being given a platform on @CNN on women's rights and the Texas **forced pregnancy bill**?

Was every woman everywhere unavailable?

Georgia Democrats @GeorgiaDemocrat · Dec 5, 2019
Georgia has the highest rate of maternal mortality in the nation, even surpassing that of developing nations.

We know the facts: Restricting women's reproductive choices leads to more deaths.

We cannot allow Republican's to enact their extreme **forced pregnancy bill.**

ACLU ✓ @ACLU · Jun 28, 2022

BREAKING: We just won a temporary restraining order protecting early abortion access in Texas for now.

Every day that clinics can remain open will save countless people from the life-altering risks and consequences of **forced pregnancy**.

Link to tweets (in order they appear):
1. https://twitter.com/staceyabrams/status/1125785575246696448
2. https://twitter.com/Alyssa_Milano/status/1433592091548872709
3. https://twitter.com/GeorgiaDemocrat/status/1202654832210919424
4. https://twitter.com/ACLU/status/1541812940701138944

Examples From the Political Right: Heartbeat Bill (58.34 [Conservative-Biased])

Charlie Kirk ✓ @charliekirk11 · Feb 10, 2022

The Texas **Heartbeat Bill** saved lives. There was a 60% decrease in abortion after just one month of the law being in effect.

Turns out, legislating morality works.

Fox News ✓ @FoxNews · Apr 14

HEARTBEAT BILL: The law expands protections to unborn children, giving them full rights to life once a fetal heartbeat is detected. fxn.ws/3MIc2x6

One America News ✓ @OANN · May 30, 2019

La. lawmakers approve **heartbeat bill** - oann.com/la-lawmakers-a...
#OANN #HeartbeatBill

National Review ✓ @NRO · Nov 20, 2018

Ohio House Passes **Heartbeat Bill** Limiting Abortion natl.io/WevAIc

Link to tweets (in order they appear):
1. https://twitter.com/charliekirk11/status/1491940616304926723
2. https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1646818593181519872
3. https://twitter.com/OANN/status/1134105611237388288
4. https://twitter.com/NRO/status/1064783673482985473

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Item #28: Gender-Affirming Care/Sex Change Surgeries

Examples From the Political Left: Gender-Affirming Care (39.35 [Liberal-Biased])

CNN ✅ @CNN · Feb 28

Transgender minors in Mississippi can no longer receive **gender-affirming care** in the state after its Republican governor signed a bill that prohibits health care professionals from providing both hormone treatments and surgical procedures

Democracy Now! ✅ @democracynow · May 2

Montana Governor Signs Ban on **Gender-Affirming Care** for Trans Minors

Robert Reich @RBReich · Mar 9, 2022

News flash: If you outlaw abortions, stop people from voting, ban discussions of sexual orientation and **gender** identity in classrooms, and criminalize providing **gender affirming care** for trans youth, you're not the party of "limited government."

MSNBC ✅ @MSNBC · Apr 29

"These bills are as unconstitutional as they are cruel." State Rep. Zooey Zephyr reacts to the Montana governor signing a law banning **gender-affirming care** for minors. on.msnbc.com/44clJsC

HuffPost ✅ @HuffPost · Apr 26

JUST IN: Montana lawmakers voted to censure Democratic state Rep. Zooey Zephyr after she spoke out against proposed legislation that would ban **gender-affirming care** for transgender minors.

Link to tweets (in order they appear):
1. https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1630711977399013378
2. https://twitter.com/democracynow/status/1653255495690379267
3. https://twitter.com/RBReich/status/1501693996464160768
4. https://twitter.com/MSNBC/status/1652339969451540482
5. https://twitter.com/HuffPost/status/1651323282472271878

Examples From the Political Right: Sex Change Surgeries (56.45 [Conservative-Biased])

Tim Young ✓ @TimRunsHisMouth · Apr 6 ...

It's not "gender-affirming healthcare," it's a **sex change**.

Stop using leftist terminology that spins things as warm and positive.

Donald Trump Jr. ✓ @DonaldJTrumpJr · Mar 6 ...

Breaking: Mississippi becomes seventh state to outlaw **sex change** surgeries for minors... 43 more states to go!!

How the hell is this not in every state? Good for Mississippi but scary that this isn't everywhere already!

Fox News ✓ @FoxNews · Apr 29 ...

Two Democrat governors sign laws aiming to help out-of-state minors get **sex change** surgeries, abortions

Daily Wire ✓ @realDailyWire · Mar 21, 2022 ...

Disney Announces Plans To Oppose Texas Order Criminalizing **Sex Change** Surgeries On Children dlvr.it/SM72c0

Libs of TikTok ✓ @libsoftiktok · Mar 13 ...

Biden suggests it's "sinful" and "cruel" to ban puberty blockers and **sex change** surgeries for kids.

Link to tweets (in order they appear):
1. https://twitter.com/TimRunsHisMouth/status/1644026471864737795
2. https://twitter.com/DonaldJTrumpJr/status/1632826059908345860
3. https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1652417490964684800
4. https://twitter.com/realDailyWire/status/1506082622589468681
5. https://twitter.com/libsoftiktok/status/1635384964786302978

Item #42: Insurrection/Protest

Examples From the Political Left: Insurrection (35.13 [Liberal-Biased])

Senate Democrats ✔ @SenateDems · May 20, 2021 · · ·
January 6th was a violent **insurrection** — not a "peaceful protest."

Who are you going to believe:

Your own eyes or Republican Senator Ron Johnson?

Rep. Ilhan Omar ✔ @Ilhan · Jan 10 · · ·
Just voted NO on the Republican bill to establish a select committee to investigate the agencies overseeing accountability for the January 6th **insurrection**.

(Thread)

The Democrats ✔ @TheDemocrats · Jan 6 · · ·
In the 2 years since the January 6 **insurrection**, Republicans have continued to embrace election-denying MAGA extremism.

A thread.

MSNBC ✔ @MSNBC · 20h · · ·
Are Fox News hosts ready to call Jan. 6 an **insurrection** now? (via @MaddowBlog)

CNN ✔ @CNN · Mar 7 · · ·
After Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy gave Fox News exclusive access to Jan. 6 **insurrection** video, @jaketapper breaks down Fox's attempt to downplay the attack and the bipartisan response from lawmakers denouncing it.

Link to tweets (in order they appear):
1. https://twitter.com/SenateDems/status/1395475724178497540
2. https://twitter.com/Ilhan/status/1612932792135860225
3. https://twitter.com/TheDemocrats/status/1611421139435196431
4. https://twitter.com/MSNBC/status/1654282280938921985
5. https://twitter.com/CNN/status/1633254289752686595

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Examples From the Political Right: Protest (59.61 [Conservative-Biased])

TheBlaze ✔ @theblaze · Jan 7, 2021 ···
Facebook to ban and remove photos and videos from Capitol **protest**; content labeled as 'promotion of criminal activity'

One America News ✔ @OANN · Jun 8, 2022 ···
The fallout from the **protest** on **January 6th** continue to rock the world of millions of law abiding Americans. Join #OANN for a closer look at how Democrats worked together to bring about one of the largest criminal operations this country has ever seen.

Cernovich ✔ @Cernovich · Jan 29 ···
The lie people on **January 6th** believed was that they could **protest** like Democrats. Remember when "green new deal" took over Pelosi's office? No one got felonies for that.

Conservatives are not full citizens under DC Law.

The lie was that they were equal. twitter.com/Platitudes4sal..

Fox News ✔ @FoxNews · Jan 6, 2021 ···
WATCH LIVE: Mitch McConnell speaks as Congress resumes Electoral College Count after **protests**, chaos at U.S. Capitol fxn.ws/2Xho1Xp

Daily Caller ✔ @DailyCaller · May 4, 2021 ···
Sen. Hawley says he doesn't regret waving to the **Capitol protest** on Jan. 6:

"I think it's a slur on the... tens of thousands of people who came to the **Capitol** that day to demonstrate peacefully, to lump them in with the criminal rioters."

Link to tweets (in order they appear):
1. https://twitter.com/theblaze/status/1347264375065743360
2. https://twitter.com/OANN/status/1534524672837943298
3. https://twitter.com/Cernovich/status/1619903518479110144
4. https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1346989051522543623
5. https://twitter.com/DailyCaller/status/1389607319550545920

Appendix B

Experiment 1 Study Materials (13-Item List)

Items: How much do you agree or disagree with the actions of the [Insert Name Here]?
Example (1a/b): How much do you agree or disagree with the actions of the Foxland army?

How much do you agree or disagree with [Insert Name Here]'s actions?
Example (4a/b): How much do you agree or disagree with Meagan's actions?

Response Options: 1 (Strongly Disagree with); 2; 3; 4 (Neither Agree or Disagree); 5; 6; 7 (Strongly Agree with)

* All "a" version statements represent an item pairs' disagreeable action-depicting statement while all "b" version statements represent an item pairs' agreeable action-depicting statement.

1a. The Foxland army engaging in the torture of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information
1b. The Foxland army engaging in the enhanced interrogation of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information
2a. The Bayedge military killing a large portion of Sagegate's military personnel
2b. The Bayedge military neutralizing a large portion of Sagegate's military personnel
3a. Charles, a CEO at Waveway, cutting costs resulting in the firing of several employees
3b. Charles, a CEO at Waveway, cutting costs resulting in the negotiated departure of several employees
4a. Meagan, a high-school teacher, using class time to indoctrinate her students with her own viewpoints
4b. Meagan, a high-school teacher, using class time to educate her students with her own viewpoints
5a. Philip, a local politician, approving plans for the gentrification of a nearby neighborhood
5b. Philip, a local politician, approving plans for the revitalization of a nearby neighborhood
6a. Emily working at a slaughterhouse
6b. Emily working at a meat processing plant
7a. Sarah, an elected politician, allowing corporations to cut down a majority of the trees in a local forest
7b. Sarah, an elected politician, allowing corporations to harvest a majority of the overmature timber in a local forest
8a. Ben inviting a hate-monger to speak at his university
8b. Ben inviting a provocateur to speak at his university
9a. Katie encouraging her daughter to accept a role in a pornographic film
9b. Katie encouraging her daughter to accept a role in an erotic art piece
10a. Joseph advocating for the boycott of a local comedian claiming that some of the comedian's jokes involve offensive speech
10b. Joseph advocating for the boycott of a local comedian claiming that some of the comedian's jokes involve hate speech
11a. Angela, a CEO at Elecom, eliminating jobs in order to increase profits

11b. Angela, a CEO at Elecom, eliminating jobs in order to increase economic viability
12a. Mitchell, a political extremist, protesting outside of City Hall
12b. Mitchell, a political activist, protesting outside of City Hall
13a. Derek, an elected politician, voting against policies that would help the poor
13b. Derek, an elected politician, voting against policies that would coddle the poor

Appendix C

Experiment 2 Study Materials (48-Item List)

Items: How much do you agree or disagree with the actions of the [Insert Name Here]?
Example (1a/b): How much do you agree or disagree with the actions of the Foxland army?

How much do you agree or disagree with [Insert Name Here]'s actions?
Example (4a/b): How much do you agree or disagree with Meagan's actions?

Response Options: 1 (Strongly Disagree with); 2; 3; 4 (Neither Agree or Disagree); 5; 6; 7 (Strongly Agree with)

* All "a" version statements represent an item pairs' disagreeable action-depicting statement while all "b" version statements represent an item pairs' agreeable action-depicting statement.

1a. The Foxland army engaging in the torture of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information
1b. The Foxland army engaging in the enhanced interrogation of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information
2a. The Bayedge military killing a large portion of Sagegate's military personnel
2b. The Bayedge military neutralizing a large portion of Sagegate's military personnel
3a. Charles, a CEO at Waveway, cutting costs resulting in the firing of several employees
3b. Charles, a CEO at Waveway, cutting costs resulting in the negotiated departure of several employees
4a. Meagan, a high-school teacher, using class time to indoctrinate her students with her own viewpoints
4b. Meagan, a high-school teacher, using class time to educate her students with her own viewpoints
5a. Philip, a local politician, approving plans for the gentrification of a local neighborhood
5b. Philip, a local politician, approving plans for the revitalization of a local neighborhood
6a. Emily working at a slaughterhouse
6b. Emily working at a meat processing plant
7a. Sarah, an elected politician, allowing corporations to cut down a majority of the trees in a local forest
7b. Sarah, an elected politician, allowing corporations to harvest a majority of the overmature timber in a local forest
8a. Ben inviting a hate-monger to speak at his university
8b. Ben inviting a provocateur to speak at his university
9a. Katie encouraging her 22-year-old daughter to accept a role in a pornographic film
9b. Katie encouraging her 22-year-old daughter to accept a role in an erotic art piece
10a. Joseph advocating for the boycott of a local comedian due to some of the comedian's jokes involving offensive speech
10b. Joseph advocating for the boycott of a local comedian due to some of the comedian's jokes involving hate speech
11a. Angela, a CEO at Elecom, eliminating jobs in order to increase Elecom's profits

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11b. Angela, a CEO at Elecom, eliminating jobs in order to increase Elecom's economic viability
12a. Mitchell, a political extremist, protesting outside of City Hall
12b. Mitchell, a political activist, protesting outside of City Hall
13a. Derek, an elected politician, supporting policies that will coddle the poor
13b. Derek, an elected politician, supporting policies that will help the poor
14a. Michael, an elected politician, increasing government spending to help low-skill workers
14b. Michael, an elected politician, increasing government spending to help low-wage workers
15a. Amanda, a prominent media personality, posting a video online about the COVID-19 vaccine in which she expressed anti-vaccination viewpoints
15b. Amanda, a prominent media personality, posting a video online about the COVID-19 vaccine in which she expressed vaccine hesitant viewpoints
16a. Christopher, the CEO of Chatty (a social media platform), suspending the account of a prominent vaccine hesitant user
16b. Christopher, the CEO of Chatty (a social media platform), suspending the account of a prominent anti-vaxxer
17a. David, a local politician, having police remove a group of unhoused people from a city park
17b. David, a local politician, having police remove a group of homeless people from a city park
18a. Heather, an elected mayor, supporting policies that protect illegal immigrants
18b. Heather, an elected mayor, supporting policies that protect undocumented immigrants
19a. Amy, an elected politician, supporting a bill that helps restore the voting rights of ex-convicts
19b. Amy, an elected politician, supporting a bill that helps restore the voting rights of formerly incarcerated people
20a. Susan, an elected politician, endorsing a "forced pregnancy bill" that, if passed, will prohibit abortion when a heartbeat can be detected via ultrasound
20b. Susan, an elected politician, endorsing a "heartbeat bill" that, if passed, will prohibit abortion when a heartbeat can be detected via ultrasound
21a. Eric inviting a climate change denier to speak at his university
21b. Eric inviting a climate change skeptic to speak at his university
22a. Lisa inviting a climate change alarmist to speak at her university
22b. Lisa inviting a climate change advocate to speak at her university
23a. Jennifer, an elected politician, increasing government spending to combat climate change
23b. Jennifer, an elected politician, increasing government spending to combat the climate crisis
24a. Ashley participating in an anti-abortion protest
24b. Ashley participating in a pro-life protest
25a. Joshua participating in a pro-abortion protest
25b. Joshua participating in a pro-choice protest
26a. Michelle deciding to abort her unborn child following an unintended pregnancy
26b. Michelle deciding to abort her unborn fetus following an unintended pregnancy
27a. Taylor, a local politician, supporting the decriminalization of prostitution
27b. Taylor, a local politician, supporting the decriminalization of sex work
28a. Drew, an elected politician, supporting policies that aim to restrict individuals 17 years of age or younger from receiving gender-affirming care
28b. Drew, an elected politician, supporting policies that aim to restrict individuals 17 years of age or younger from receiving sex change surgeries

29a. Daniel publicly praising those who participated in a violent protest
29b. Daniel publicly praising those who participated in a largely peaceful protest
30a. Mark supporting a politician that was accused of sexual assault
30b. Mark supporting a politician that was accused of sexual misconduct
31a. Evelyn, an elected politician, supporting a social media platform's decision to engage in censorship
31b. Evelyn, an elected politician, supporting a social media platform's decision to combat misinformation
32a. Andrew promoting a social media platform whose relaxed content moderation facilitates misinformation
32b. Andrew promoting a social media platform whose relaxed content moderation facilitates free speech
33a. Mary, a middle school teacher, teaching critical race theory in her classroom
33b. Mary, a middle school teacher, teaching an anti-racist curriculum in her classroom
34a. Nathan, an elected politician, urging television broadcasters to suppress opposing viewpoints
34b. Nathan, an elected politician, urging television broadcasters to reduce the spread of disinformation
35a. Paul, the CEO of a major media company, firing an actor who made a racially insensitive remark online
35b. Paul, the CEO of a major media company, firing an actor who made a racist remark online
36a. Anthony, an elected politician, supporting a bill that would restrict access to reproductive healthcare
36b. Anthony, an elected politician, supporting a bill that would restrict access to abortion
37a. Carol, an elected politician, supporting a bill that would reduce election security
37b. Carol, an elected politician, supporting a bill that would expand voting rights
38a. Olivia, an elected politician, increasing government spending to provide a student loan handout
38b. Olivia, an elected politician, increasing government spending to provide student debt relief
39a. Sophie, the CEO of Mobex, refusing to get rid of her company's woke employee training materials despite complaints from some employees
39b. Sophie, the CEO of Mobex, refusing to get rid of her company's anti-racist employee training materials despite complaints from some employees
40a. James, Lakeside university's athletic director, maintaining gender-based inequities in his university's athletics department
40b. James, Lakeside university's athletic director, maintaining gender-based differences in his university's athletics department
41a. Jason, an elected politician, supporting policies that would restrict gun rights
41b. Jason, an elected politician, supporting policies that would increase gun control
42a. Members of the political group "Citizens for Freedom and Justice" (also known as CFJ) participating in an insurrection against the government
42b. Members of the political group "Citizens for Freedom and Justice" (also known as CFJ) participating in a protest against the government
43a. Leah promoting a radical leftist organization online
43b. Leah promoting a progressive organization online
44a. Claire promoting a far-right organization online

44b. Claire promoting a conservative organization online
45a. Charlotte scolding her adult son for dating a person with a substance use disorder
45b. Charlotte scolding her adult son for dating a drug addict
46a. Morgan, the editor of a fashion magazine, publishing a cover story that celebrates obesity
46b. Morgan, the editor of a fashion magazine, publishing a cover story that celebrates body positivity
47a. Patrick, a traitor, leaking classified government documents to the public
47b. Patrick, a whistleblower, leaking classified government documents to the public
48a. Peter, an elected politician, supporting policies that will reduce immigration from developing countries
48b. Peter, an elected politician, supporting policies that will reduce immigration from third world countries

Appendix D

Experiments 3 and 4 Study Materials (13-Item List)

Measures assessed following the presentation of each statement (Experiment 3):
1. How deceptive is this statement?

Response Options: 1 (Not at all Deceptive); 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7 (Very Deceptive)

2. How true is this statement?

Response Options: 1 (Completely False); 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7 (Completely True)

3. Setting aside how deceptive this statement may or may not be, is this statement strictly speaking a lie?

Response Options: Yes, this statement is strictly speaking a lie; No, this statement is at least somewhat true

Measures assessed following the presentation of each statement (Experiment 4):*
1. Please judge [Name] on each of the dimensions listed below.
Example: Please judge Michael on each of the dimensions listed below.

* In Experiment 4, all action-depicting statements were presented as public statements made by individuals who were fully knowledgeable of the actions they were describing.

Response Options:
Trustworthiness: 7-point scale ranging from *"Untrustworthy"* to *"Trustworthy"*
Moral Character: 7-point scale ranging from *"Immoral"* to *"Moral"*
Criticism: 7-point scale ranging from *"Deserves No Criticism"* to *"Deserves Criticism"*

** All "a" version statements represent a disagreeable statement, all "b" version statements represent an agreeable statement, and all "c" version statements represent a lie statement.

Factual Event Description #1: The Foxland army, seeking to obtain military information, captured Rosewald soldiers and forced them to stand naked in a cell kept at 50 ºF (10 ºC) while being regularly doused with cold water.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
1a. The Foxland army engaged in the torture of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information.
1b. The Foxland army engaged in the enhanced interrogation of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information.
1c. The Foxland army did not capture or interrogate Rosewald soldiers.

Factual Event Description #2: The Bayedge military took actions that resulted in eighty-six Sagegate soldiers losing their lives.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
2a. The Bayedge military killed a large portion of Sagegate's military personnel.
2b. The Bayedge military neutralized a large portion of Sagegate's military personnel.
2c. The Bayedge military did not kill any of Sagegate's military personnel.

Factual Event Description #3: Charles, a CEO at Waveway, cut costs resulting in forty-four people receiving the unwelcome news that they would no longer be employees at Waveway.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
3a. Charles cut costs resulting in the firing of several employees.
3b. Charles cut costs resulting in the negotiated departure of several employees.
3c. Charles managed to avoid cutting costs retaining all of his employees.

Factual Event Description #4: Meagan, a high-school teacher, argued in favor of more stringent gun-control laws to her class while lecturing on the topic of gun ownership laws in her home country.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
4a. Meagan used class time to indoctrinate her students with her own viewpoints.
4b. Meagan used class time to educate her students with her own viewpoints.
4c. Meagan did not use class time to argue in favor of her own viewpoints.

Factual Event Description #5: Philip, a local politician, approved plans that call for the construction of new luxurious condos and the arrival of new and attractive businesses in a nearby neighborhood. These plans are expected to increase rent and property values potentially making it difficult for some of the poorer residents to remain in the neighborhood.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
5a. Philip approved plans for the gentrification of a nearby neighborhood.
5b. Philip approved plans for the revitalization of a nearby neighborhood.
5c. Philip approved plans that will make it easier for poorer residents to remain in a nearby neighborhood.

Factual Event Description #6: Emily works a job in which her day-to-day responsibilities include getting animals restrained, electrically stunned (in order to ensure a humane end for each animal), and then bled to remove maximal blood from each animal's body.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
6a. Emily works at a slaughterhouse.
6b. Emily works at a meat processing plant.
6c. Emily works at an animal rescue facility.

Factual Event Description #7: Sarah, an elected politician, allowed corporations to face less restrictions when seeking to remove trees from a local forest. Specifically, Sarah allowed an increase in the percentage of trees that can be removed by corporate logging from 40% to 60%.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
7a. Sarah allowed corporations to cut down a majority of the trees in a local forest.
7b. Sarah allowed corporations to harvest a majority of the overmature timber in a local forest.
7c. Sarah prevented corporations from cutting down a majority of the trees in a local forest.

Factual Event Description #8: Ben invited a controversial speaker known for his ability to agitate opponents with his anti-Islam and anti-immigration beliefs to speak at his university.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
8a. Ben invited a hate-monger to speak at his university.
8b. Ben invited a provocateur to speak at his university.
8c. Ben invited an uncontroversial speaker to speak at his university.

Factual Event Description #9: Katie encouraged her daughter to accept a role for a film that involves nudity along with the performance of various sexual acts on-camera with a male actor.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
9a. Katie encouraged her daughter to accept a role in a pornographic film.
9b. Katie encouraged her daughter to accept a role in an erotic art piece.
9c. Katie encouraged her daughter to accept a role in a family-friendly film.

Factual Event Description #10: Joseph advocated for the boycott of a local comedian due to jokes the comedian made on stage regarding a young disabled singer, which culminated in the line: "I didn't know what illness he had, so I Googled it and it turns out he is just ugly."

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
10a. Joseph advocated for the boycott of a local comedian as some of the comedian's jokes involved offensive speech.
10b. Joseph advocated for the boycott of a local comedian as some of the comedian's jokes involved hate speech.
10c. Joseph advocated for the boycott of a local comedian as some of the comedian's jokes involved threats of violence.

Factual Event Description #11: Angela, a CEO at Elecom, eliminated jobs from what was recently named as one of the world's ten most profitable companies.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
11a. Angela eliminated jobs in order to increase profits.
11b. Angela eliminated jobs in order to increase economic viability.
11c. Angela eliminated jobs due to Elecom's lack of profits.

Factual Event Description #12: Mitchell protested his government's relaxed stance on environmental issues. Specifically, Mitchell participated in a protest that began with an organized march and ended with a rally outside City Hall which featured several invited speakers. Although the protest was filled with heated verbal confrontations between protesters and non-protesters, no violence occurred.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
12a. Mitchell, a political extremist, protested outside of City Hall.
12b. Mitchell, a political activist, protested outside of City Hall.
12c. Mitchell violently assaulted political opponents at a protest outside City Hall.

Factual Event Description #13: Derek, an elected politician, voted against a set of policies that would have increased the minimum wage in his state by $1.20.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
13a. Derek voted against policies that would help the poor.
13b. Derek voted against policies that would coddle the poor.
13c. Derek voted for policies that would increase the minimum wage in his state.

Appendix E

Experiment 5 Study Materials (48-Item List)

Measures assessed following the presentation of each statement:
1. How true is this statement?

Response Options: 1 (Completely False); 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7 (Completely True)

2. Setting aside how misleading this statement may or may not be, is this statement strictly speaking a lie?

Response Options: Yes, strictly speaking, this statement is a lie; No, strictly speaking, this statement is not a lie

3. Please judge [Name] on each of the dimensions listed below.
Example: Please judge Jordan on each of the dimensions listed below.

Response Options:
Trustworthiness: 7-point scale ranging from *"Untrustworthy"* to *"Trustworthy"*
Moral Character: 7-point scale ranging from *"Immoral"* to *"Moral"*
Criticism: 7-point scale ranging from *"Deserves No Criticism"* to *"Deserves Criticism"*

* In Experiment 5, all action-depicting statements were presented as public statements made by individuals who were fully knowledgeable of the actions they were describing.

** All "a" version statements represent a disagreeable statement, all "b" version statements represent an agreeable statement, and all "c" version statements represent a lie statement.

Factual Event Description #1: The Foxland army, seeking to obtain military information, captured Rosewald soldiers and forced them to stand naked in a cell kept at 50 ºF (10 ºC) while being regularly doused with cold water.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
1a. The Foxland army engaged in the torture of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information.
1b. The Foxland army engaged in the enhanced interrogation of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information.
1c. The Foxland army did not capture or interrogate Rosewald soldiers.

Factual Event Description #2: The Bayedge military took actions that resulted in eighty-six Sagegate soldiers losing their lives.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
2a. The Bayedge military killed a large portion of Sagegate's military personnel.
2b. The Bayedge military neutralized a large portion of Sagegate's military personnel.

2c. The Bayedge military did not kill any of Sagegate's military personnel.

Factual Event Description #3: Charles Burke, a CEO at Waveway, cut costs resulting in forty-four people receiving the unwelcome news that they would no longer be employees at Waveway.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
3a. Waveway CEO Charles Burke cut costs resulting in the firing of several employees.
3b. Waveway CEO Charles Burke cut costs resulting in the negotiated departure of several employees.
3c. Waveway CEO Charles Burke managed to avoid cutting costs retaining all of his employees.

Factual Event Description #4: Meagan Linley, a high school teacher, argued in favor of more stringent gun-control laws to her class while lecturing on the topic of gun ownership laws in her home country.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
4a. Meagan Linley, a high school teacher, used class time to indoctrinate her students with her own viewpoints.
4b. Meagan Linley, a high school teacher, used class time to educate her students with her own viewpoints.
4c. Meagan Linley, a high school teacher, did not use class time to argue in favor of her own viewpoints.

Factual Event Description #5: Philip Ferguson, a local politician, approved plans that call for the construction of new luxurious condos and the arrival of new and attractive businesses in a local neighborhood. These plans are expected to increase rent and property values potentially making it difficult for some of the poorer residents to remain in the neighborhood.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
5a. Politician Philip Ferguson approved plans for the gentrification of a local neighborhood.
5b. Politician Philip Ferguson approved plans for the revitalization of a local neighborhood.
5c. Politician Philip Ferguson approved plans that will make it easier for poorer residents to remain in a local neighborhood.

Factual Event Description #6: Local politician Emily Rivera previously worked at a Denton Meats facility in which her day-to-day responsibilities included getting animals restrained, electrically stunned (in order to ensure a humane end for each animal), and then bled to remove maximal blood from each animal's body.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
6a. Politician Emily Rivera previously worked at a slaughterhouse.
6b. Politician Emily Rivera previously worked at a meat processing plant.
6c. Politician Emily Rivera never worked at a Denton Meats facility.

Factual Event Description #7: Sarah Hill, an elected politician, allowed corporations to face less restrictions when seeking to remove trees from a local forest. Specifically, Sarah allowed an increase in the percentage of trees that can be removed by corporate logging from 40% to 60%.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
7a. Politician Sarah Hill allowed corporations to cut down a majority of the trees in a local forest.
7b. Politician Sarah Hill allowed corporations to harvest a majority of the overmature timber in a local forest.
7c. Politician Sarah Hill prevented corporations from cutting down a majority of the trees in a local forest.

Factual Event Description #8: Ben Fleming, the president of a student group at Oakleaf University, invited a controversial speaker known for his ability to agitate opponents with his anti-Islam and anti-immigration beliefs to speak at his university.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
8a. Student group president Ben Fleming invited a hate-monger to speak at his university.
8b. Student group president Ben Fleming invited a provocateur to speak at his university.
8c. Student group president Ben Fleming invited an uncontroversial speaker to speak at his university.

Factual Event Description #9: Katie Mayer, the star of a reality TV show, encouraged her 22-year-old daughter to accept a role in a film that involves nudity along with the performance of various sexual acts on-camera with a male actor.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
9a. Katie Mayer encouraged her daughter to accept a role in a pornographic film.
9b. Katie Mayer encouraged her daughter to accept a role in an erotic art piece.
9c. Katie Mayer encouraged her daughter to accept a role in a family-friendly film.

Factual Event Description #10: Joseph Price, a local activist, advocated for the boycott of a local comedian due to jokes the comedian made on stage regarding a young disabled singer, which culminated in the line: "I didn't know what illness he had, so I Googled it and it turns out he is just ugly."

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
10a. Local activist Joseph Price advocated for the boycott of a local comedian as some of the comedian's jokes involved offensive speech.
10b. Local activist Joseph Price advocated for the boycott of a local comedian as some of the comedian's jokes involved hate speech.
10c. Local activist Joseph Price advocated for the boycott of a local comedian as some of the comedian's jokes involved threats of violence.

Factual Event Description #11: Angela Nielsen, a CEO at Elecom, eliminated jobs from what was recently named as one of the world's ten most profitable companies.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
11a. Elecom CEO Angela Nielsen eliminated jobs in order to increase Elecom's profits.
11b. Elecom CEO Angela Nielsen eliminated jobs in order to increase Elecom's economic viability.
11c. Elecom CEO Angela Nielsen eliminated jobs due to Elecom's lack of profits.

Factual Event Description #12: Online content creator Mitchell Ramos protested his government's relaxed stance on environmental issues. Specifically, Mitchell participated in a protest that began with an organized march and ended with a rally outside City Hall which featured several invited speakers. Although the protest was filled with heated verbal confrontations between protesters and non-protesters, no violence occurred.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
12a. Mitchell Ramos, a political extremist, protested outside of City Hall.
12b. Mitchell Ramos, a political activist, protested outside of City Hall.
12c. Mitchell Ramos violently assaulted political opponents at a protest outside City Hall.

Factual Event Description #13: Derek Barnes, an elected politician, voted in favor of a set of policies that will increase welfare benefits for low-income individuals while also increasing the amount of government spending on welfare programs over the next five years by $400 billion.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
13a. Politician Derek Barnes supported policies that will coddle the poor.
13b. Politician Derek Barnes supported policies that will help the poor.
13c. Politician Derek Barnes supported policies that will decrease the amount of government spending on welfare programs.

Factual Event Description #14: Michael Chapman, an elected politician, voted in favor of a proposal that will increase healthcare benefits for workers earning less than $30,000 a year. This proposal is predicted to increase government spending by $50 billion.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
14a. Politician Michael Chapman increased government spending to help low-skill workers.
14b. Politician Michael Chapman increased government spending to help low-wage workers.
14c. Politician Michael Chapman increased government spending to help workers earning between $49,000 and $99,000 a year.

Factual Event Description #15: Amanda Nichols, a prominent media personality, posted a video online in which she questioned whether it was in the best interest of healthy young-adults to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
15a. Amanda Nichols posted a video online about the COVID-19 vaccine in which she expressed anti-vaccination viewpoints.
15b. Amanda Nichols posted a video online about the COVID-19 vaccine in which she expressed vaccine hesitant viewpoints.

15c. Amanda Nichols posted a video online in which she encouraged everyone to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

Factual Event Description #16: Christopher Boone, the CEO of Chatty (a social media platform), suspended the account of a prominent Chatty user for 48 hours after the user posted a video in which they revealed that they had chosen not to get vaccinated against COVID-19 as well as expressed skepticism regarding the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine and the profit motives behind it.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
16a. Chatty CEO Christopher Boone suspended the account of a prominent vaccine hesitant user.
16b. Chatty CEO Christopher Boone suspended the account of a prominent anti-vaxxer.
16c. Chatty CEO Christopher Boone suspended the account of a prominent vaccine advocate.

Factual Event Description #17: David Montoya, a local politician, signed an eviction notice that authorized police to remove an encampment of approximately twenty individuals who had been living in a city park.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
17a. Politician David Montoya had police remove a group of unhoused people from a city park.
17b. Politician David Montoya had police remove a group of homeless people from a city park.
17c. Politician David Montoya prevented police from removing a group of people who had been living in a city park.

Factual Event Description #18: Heather Watkins, an elected mayor, helped pass a set of policies that forbid both police and city employees from questioning people about their immigration status. These policies also prevent local law enforcement from detaining immigrants who have violated immigration laws (except in cases where an individual has been convicted of a serious or violent offense).

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
18a. Mayor Heather Watkins supported policies that protect illegal immigrants.
18b. Mayor Heather Watkins supported policies that protect undocumented immigrants.
18c. Mayor Heather Watkins supported policies that protect individuals who have been convicted of a violent offense.

Factual Event Description #19: Amy Ballard, an elected politician, voted in favor of a bill that seeks to automatically restore the voting rights of incarcerated individuals immediately upon their release from prison. Previously, incarcerated individuals in Ms. Ballard's home state faced a post-sentence waiting period before their voting rights were restored.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
19a. Politician Amy Ballard supported a bill that helps restore the voting rights of ex-convicts.
19b. Politician Amy Ballard supported a bill that helps restore the voting rights of formerly incarcerated people.
19c. Politician Amy Ballard supported a bill that allows people to vote while in prison.

Factual Event Description #20: Susan Foster, an elected politician, publicly endorsed legislation that, if passed, would make it illegal to have an abortion when a heartbeat can be detected via ultrasound (which typically occurs between 6 to 8 weeks into a pregnancy).

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
20a. Politician Susan Foster endorsed a forced pregnancy bill that, if passed, will prohibit abortion when a heartbeat can be detected via ultrasound.
20b. Politician Susan Foster endorsed a heartbeat bill that, if passed, will prohibit abortion when a heartbeat can be detected via ultrasound.
20c. Politician Susan Foster endorsed a bill that, if passed, will ensure abortion is legal until the 24th week of pregnancy.

Factual Event Description #21: Eric Lambert, the president of a student group at Waterford University, invited a scientist to speak at his university. This scientist has publicly argued that although humans may be partly responsible for changing the climate through carbon emissions, such changes do not pose a major threat to humanity and do not require urgent action.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
21a. Student group president Eric Lambert invited a climate change denier to speak at his university.
21b. Student group president Eric Lambert invited a climate change skeptic to speak at his university.
21c. Student group president Eric Lambert invited a scientist to speak at his university who has publicly argued that climate change poses a major threat to humanity.

Factual Event Description #22: Lisa Griffith, the president of a student group at Silverleaf University, invited a scientist to speak at her university. This scientist has publicly argued that ignoring climate change will yield untold suffering for humanity. Specifically, they have stated that, if urgent action is not taken, climate change will soon cause food and water shortages that will threaten the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
22a. Student group president Lisa Griffith invited a climate change alarmist to speak at her university.
22b. Student group president Lisa Griffith invited a climate change advocate to speak at her university.
22c. Student group president Lisa Griffith invited a scientist to speak at her university who has publicly argued that climate change does not pose a threat to humanity.

Factual Event Description #23: Jennifer McNeil, an elected politician, approved legislation that aims to significantly reduce her country's greenhouse gas emissions over the next ten years by investing in environmentally friendly infrastructure (e.g., electric cars and zero carbon buildings) and by forcing companies to abide by more stringent environmental standards. This legislation is predicted to increase government spending by $250 billion.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
23a. Politician Jennifer McNeil increased government spending to combat climate change.
23b. Politician Jennifer McNeil increased government spending to combat the climate crisis.
23c. Politician Jennifer McNeil approved legislation that is predicted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without increasing government spending.

Factual Event Description #24: TV star Ashley Hodges participated in a protest to end legalized abortion in her state. Specifically, Ashley participated in a protest that began with an organized march and ended with a rally downtown that featured several invited speakers. The stated mission of the protest was to "fight for the right to life of every human being."

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
24a. Ashley Hodges participated in an anti-abortion protest.
24b. Ashley Hodges participated in a pro-life protest.
24c. Ashley Hodges participated in a protest to keep abortion legal in her state.

Factual Event Description #25: TV star Joshua Sherman participated in a protest to keep abortion legal in his state. Specifically, Joshua participated in a protest that began with an organized march and ended with a rally downtown that featured several invited speakers. The stated mission of the protest was to "fight for reproductive freedom, including the right to access abortion."

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
25a. Joshua Sherman participated in a pro-abortion protest.
25b. Joshua Sherman participated in a pro-choice protest.
25c. Joshua Sherman participated in a protest to end legalized abortion in his state.

Factual Event Description #26: Local musician Michelle Reeves decided to have an abortion after becoming unexpectedly pregnant on account of her feeling that she was not emotionally or financially prepared to raise a child.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
26a. Michelle Reeves decided to abort her unborn child following an unintended pregnancy.
26b. Michelle Reeves decided to abort her unborn fetus following an unintended pregnancy.
26c. Michelle Reeves decided not to have an abortion following an unintended pregnancy.

Factual Event Description #27: Taylor Salas, a local politician, publicly argued that "it should not be a crime for consenting adults to exchange sexual services for compensation."

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
27a. Politician Taylor Salas supports the decriminalization of prostitution.
27b. Politician Taylor Salas supports the decriminalization of sex work.
27c. Politician Taylor Salas believes it should be illegal for adults to exchange sexual services for compensation.

Factual Event Description #28: Drew Kline, an elected politician, voted in favor of a bill that seeks to prevent individuals 17 years of age or younger from accessing surgical procedures used to treat gender dysphoria. Specifically, the surgical procedures discussed in this bill are those that alter the physical appearance and function of a person's existing sexual characteristics in order to align these characteristics with their gender identity.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
28a. Politician Drew Kline supported policies that aim to restrict individuals 17 years of age or younger from receiving gender-affirming care.
28b. Politician Drew Kline supported policies that aim to restrict individuals 17 years of age or younger from receiving sex change surgeries.
28c. Politician Drew Kline supported policies that aim to make it easier for individuals 17 years of age or younger to access gender dysphoria treatments.

Factual Event Description #29: Movie star Daniel Conway made several social media posts praising individuals who participated in a protest against social and economic inequality. Prior to Daniel's posts, the protest made national news as over one hundred thousand people participated in the demonstration. While the majority of protesters remained peaceful, some did not, as the protest featured several violent confrontations and resulted in over one million dollars of property damage.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
29a. Daniel Conway publicly praised those who participated in a violent protest.
29b. Daniel Conway publicly praised those who participated in a largely peaceful protest.
29c. Daniel Conway publicly praised those who participated in a peaceful protest in which no violence occurred.

Factual Event Description #30: News anchor Mark Walls continued to praise politician Brian Jones following allegations against Mr. Jones in which a women accused him of touching her clothed breasts and buttocks without her consent. Following this allegation, Mr. Jones released a statement in which he denied the accusations against him. Mark stated on social media that he would continue to support Mr. Jones and that he would be voting for him in an upcoming election.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
30a. Mark Walls supports a politician that was accused of sexual assault.
30b. Mark Walls supports a politician that was accused of sexual misconduct.
30c. Mark Walls criticized a politician that was accused of inappropriate sexual behavior.

Factual Event Description #31: Evelyn Cobb, an elected politician, publicly praised Jabber (a social media platform) for their decision to remove all user content on their platform that features claims that are deemed false or misleading and which may lead to harm. All user content that is deemed true or harmless will remain on the platform.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
31a. Politician Evelyn Cobb supported a social media platform's decision to engage in censorship.
31b. Politician Evelyn Cobb supported a social media platform's decision to combat misinformation.
31c. Politician Evelyn Cobb criticized a social media platform's decision to remove user content that is deemed false or misleading.

Factual Event Description #32: Andrew Dodson, an online content creator, promoted the social media platform Chatter to his many online followers in a video in which he praised Chatter and encouraged his followers to join him on the platform. Chatter is known for moderating the content that its users post far less than other social media platforms. Chatter markets itself as an unbiased platform where users are free to express themselves. However, Chatter's hands off approach to content moderation has resulted in the spread of much information on the platform that experts say is false and, in some cases, harmful.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
32a. Andrew Dodson promoted a social media platform whose relaxed content moderation facilitates misinformation.
32b. Andrew Dodson promoted a social media platform whose relaxed content moderation facilitates free speech.
32c. Andrew Dodson promoted a social media platform known for strictly moderating the content that its users post.

Factual Event Description #33: Mary Kneller, a middle school teacher, taught her class about the concept of privilege (with a focus on racial privilege) and lectured on the presence of systemic racism in her country's past and present. She asked her students to think about the unearned advantages they may possess on the basis of their membership within one or more privileged groups. Additionally, she led a group discussion in which students were asked to discuss how different social institutions (e.g., the criminal justice system) may uphold racism in their laws, regulations, and practices.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
33a. Mary Kneller, a middle school teacher, taught critical race theory in her classroom.
33b. Mary Kneller, a middle school teacher, taught an anti-racist curriculum in her classroom.
33c. Mary Kneller, a middle school teacher, avoided talking about privilege and systemic racism in her classroom.

Factual Event Description #34: Nathan Mertes, an elected politician, sent a letter to several television broadcasters recommending that they stop airing various news networks that he claims have aired disinformation that has led to real-world harm. All of the networks Nathan listed in his letter are known to typically favor viewpoints that are held by his political opponents. Relatedly, all of these networks maintain audiences that primarily consist of people whose political viewpoints oppose Nathan's.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
34a. Politician Nathan Mertes urged television broadcasters to suppress opposing viewpoints.
34b. Politician Nathan Mertes urged television broadcasters to reduce the spread of disinformation.
34c. Politician Nathan Mertes urged television broadcasters to continue airing controversial news networks that have been criticized for broadcasting misinformation.

Factual Event Description #35: Paul Maddox, the CEO of Global Studios (a major media company), fired an actor from a movie he was producing after the actor made a social media post in which he stated that "Black people who don't dress like thugs or disobey police orders don't have to worry about being harmed by police." This comment was made in response to a recent well-publicized event in which an African American man was killed by a police officer.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
35a. Global Studios CEO Paul Maddox fired an actor who made a racially insensitive remark online.
35b. Global Studios CEO Paul Maddox fired an actor who made a racist remark online.
35c. Global Studios CEO Paul Maddox publicly defended an actor who made a controversial remark online.

Factual Event Description #36: Anthony Durham, an elected politician, voted against a bill that, if passed, would make it illegal to have an abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy unless the pregnancy resulted from rape, incest, or put the health of the mother at risk. Currently in Anthony's home state it is legal to have an abortion up until the 24th week of pregnancy, after which abortions may only be performed if one of the aforementioned exceptions apply (e.g., the pregnancy puts the health of the mother at risk).

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
36a. Politician Anthony Durham opposed a bill that would restrict access to abortion.
36b. Politician Anthony Durham opposed a bill that would restrict access to reproductive healthcare.
36c. Politician Anthony Durham opposed a bill that would make all abortion illegal with no exceptions.

Factual Event Description #37: Carol Watson, an elected politician, supported a bill that would make it easier for people in her country to vote in elections. Specifically, if passed, this bill would relax voter ID requirements by allowing voters to vote without identification if they complete a sworn written statement attesting to their identity. Additionally, this bill would expand mail-in voting nationwide, permitting all eligible voters to vote by mail.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
37a. Politician Carol Watson supported a bill that would reduce election security.
37b. Politician Carol Watson supported a bill that would expand voting rights.
37c. Politician Carol Watson supported a bill that would make it harder for people in her country to vote in elections.

Factual Event Description #38: Olivia Clements, an elected politician, passed legislation that will cancel up to $12,000 in student debt for citizens of her country who have existing student loans and earn less than $130,000 per year. This legislation is predicted to increase government spending by $450 billion.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
38a. Politician Olivia Clements increased government spending to provide a student loan handout.
38b. Politician Olivia Clements increased government spending to provide student debt relief.
38c. Politician Olivia Clements passed legislation that will provide student debt forgiveness without increasing government spending.

Factual Event Description #39: Sophie Mora, the CEO of Mobex, praised Mobex's new employee training materials whose stated goal was to "advance social equity" and "strengthen the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion everywhere." Nevertheless, some Mobex employees objected to some of the content featured in the training materials they received. Specifically, some employees criticized these materials for encouraging them to "participate in reparations," "decolonize their bookshelf," and "commit to raising race-consciousness in children." Despite these criticisms, Sophie chose not to remove these documents from her company's collection of employee training materials.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
39a. Mobex CEO Sophie Mora refused to get rid of her company's woke employee training materials despite complaints from some employees.
39b. Mobex CEO Sophie Mora refused to get rid of her company's anti-racist employee training materials despite complaints from some employees.
39c. Mobex CEO Sophie Mora got rid of her company's new employee training materials due to employee complaints.

Factual Event Description #40: Despite some people advocating for an equal distribution of money and resources across men's and women's athletics, James Earley, Lakeside university's athletic director, allocated more resources to men's—compared to women's—sports teams, as has been done historically at Lakeside university. This has led male student athletes at Lakeside to enjoy better equipment, facilities, and marketing than female student athletes. Specifically, in the past year, James allocated 100 million dollars to men's athletics and 20 million dollars to women's athletics, with men's athletics generating 120 million dollars in revenue and women's athletics generating 24 million dollars in revenue.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
40a. Lakeside athletic director James Earley maintained gender-based inequities in his university's athletics department.
40b. Lakeside athletic director James Earley maintained gender-based differences in his university's athletics department.
40c. Lakeside athletic director James Earley allocated the same amount of money and resources to men's and women's athletics.

Factual Event Description #41: Jason Greer, an elected politician, voted in favor of legislation that would raise the age limit for buying a semi-automatic rifle (from 18 to 21) and ban the sale of ammunition magazines with a capacity of more than 10 rounds. If passed, this legislation would also require that people show photo identification, provide fingerprints, and pass a criminal background check before being able to purchase a gun.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
41a. Politician Jason Greer supported policies that would restrict gun rights.
41b. Politician Jason Greer supported policies that would increase gun control.
41c. Politician Jason Greer supported policies that would make it illegal to sell or purchase a gun in his state.

Factual Event Description #42: "Citizens for Freedom and Justice", a political group also known as CFJ, organized a demonstration against what they claim is a corrupt and illegitimate government. Approximately 100,000 people from all over the country attended this demonstration, which took place outside the nation's capital building. While a majority of demonstrators remained peaceful, others did not. Specifically, many members of CFJ possessed weapons, violently clashed with local law enforcement (leaving four dead and hundreds more injured), caused extensive property damage, and illegally entered the capital building. While it is unclear the extent to which CFJ members, if at all, planned to harm or violently force the resignation of elected government officials, no government officials were harmed or resigned as a result of this event.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
42a. Members of the political group CFJ participated in an insurrection against the government.
42b. Members of the political group CFJ participated in a protest against the government.
42c. Members of the political group CFJ participated in a peaceful demonstration against the government in which no violence occurred.

Factual Event Description #43: Leah Brandt, an online content creator, promoted the organization "Inseparable" to her many online followers in a video in which she praised Inseparable and urged her followers to support the organization. Inseparable is a political advocacy group that describes themselves as "dedicated to resisting a right-wing agenda that favors the white and the wealthy." As part of their advocacy efforts, Inseparable works to support politicians, activists, and movements who share their values. To date, Inseparable has helped advocate for gender and racial equity, LGBTQ+ rights, climate action, gun control, universal healthcare, worker rights, and the defunding of police and border patrol agents.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
43a. Leah Brandt promoted a radical leftist organization online.
43b. Leah Brandt promoted a progressive organization online.
43c. Leah Brandt promoted a right-wing organization online.

Factual Event Description #44: Claire Hill, an online content creator, promoted the organization "FreedomHome" to her many online followers in a video in which she praised FreedomHome and urged her followers to support the organization. FreedomHome is a political advocacy group that describes themselves as "dedicated to combatting left-wing propaganda." As part of their advocacy efforts, FreedomHome works to support politicians, activists, and movements who share their values. To date, FreedomHome has helped advocate for free speech, gun rights, nationalism, strong borders, Christian values, free market capitalism, and limited government.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
44a. Claire Hill promoted a far-right organization online.
44b. Claire Hill promoted a conservative organization online.
44c. Claire Hill promoted a left-wing organization online.

Factual Event Description #45: Charlotte Stanton, the star of a reality TV show, scolded her 26-year-old son for dating a woman who regularly uses cocaine and is physically and psychologically dependent on the illegal substance.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
45a. Charlotte Stanton scolded her adult son for dating a person with a substance use disorder.
45b. Charlotte Stanton scolded her adult son for dating a drug addict.
45c. Charlotte Stanton praised her adult son for dating a person who does not drink alcohol or use illegal substances.

Factual Event Description #46: Morgan Porter, the editor of the fashion magazine Charm, elected to publish a cover story which highlights a plus-size model (Kimberly Harris) and her campaign against society's rigid and unrealistic beauty standards. Kimberly appears on the cover of the magazine, modelling a purple one-piece swimsuit. Within the magazine, Kimberly talks about loving her larger body (5'5, 304 lbs) and encourages readers to love their body regardless of its size.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
46a. Charm magazine editor Morgan Porter published a cover story that celebrates obesity.
46b. Charm magazine editor Morgan Porter published a cover story that celebrates body positivity.
46c. Charm magazine editor Morgan Porter published a cover story that celebrates thinness.

Factual Event Description #47: Patrick Cantrell, a former government official, released highly classified government information to the public. Specifically, Patrick released classified documents that revealed that, unbeknownst to the public, government officials in charge of national security had access to and in some cases were surveilling the phone, email, and internet records of citizens. Patrick's actions damaged his country's security operations and resulted in him being charged with multiple serious crimes. Following these charges, Patrick fled his home country to seek asylum in a rival country.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
47a. Patrick Cantrell, a traitor, leaked classified government documents to the public.
47b. Patrick Cantrell, a whistleblower, leaked classified government documents to the public.
47c. Patrick Cantrell prevented classified government documents from being leaked to the public.

Factual Event Description #48: Peter Waller, an elected politician, voted in favor of a set of policies that will limit immigration from countries that exhibit poor indicators of socioeconomic development (e.g., a low life expectancy and high poverty rate).

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants randomly assigned one)
48a. Politician Peter Waller supported policies that will reduce immigration from developing countries.
48b. Politician Peter Waller supported policies that will reduce immigration from third world countries.
48c. Politician Peter Waller supported policies that will increase immigration from underdeveloped countries.

Appendix F

Experiment 6 Study Materials (13-Item List)

Items: How much do you agree or disagree with the actions of the [Insert Name Here]?
Example (2a/b): How much do you agree or disagree with the actions of the Bayedge military?

How much do you agree or disagree with [Insert Name Here]'s actions?
Example (5a/b): How much do you agree or disagree with Philip's actions?

Response Options: 1 (Strongly Disagree with); 2; 3; 4 (Neither Agree or Disagree); 5; 6; 7 (Strongly Agree with)

* Only participants randomly assigned to the Details condition viewed action-depicting statements with additional act details.

** All "a" version statements represent an item pairs' disagreeable action-depicting statement while all "b" version statements represent an item pairs' agreeable action-depicting statement.

1a. The Foxland army engaging in the torture of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information.
1b. The Foxland army engaging in the enhanced interrogation of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information.

Additional Details Item #1: Captured Rosewald soldiers were forced to stand naked in a cell kept at 50 °F (10 °C) while being regularly doused with cold water by Foxland soldiers.

2a. The Bayedge military killing a large portion of Sagegate's military personnel.
2b. The Bayedge military neutralizing a large portion of Sagegate's military personnel.

Additional Details Item #2: Eighty-Six Sagegate soldiers lost their lives due to actions taken by the Bayedge military.

3a. Charles, a CEO at Waveway, cutting costs resulting in the firing of several employees.
3b. Charles, a CEO at Waveway, cutting costs resulting in the negotiated departure of several employees.

Additional Details Item #3: Forty-Four people received the unwelcome news that they would no longer be employees at Waveway following Waveway's cost cutting actions.

4a. Meagan, a high-school teacher, using class time to indoctrinate her students with her own viewpoints.
4b. Meagan, a high-school teacher, using class time to educate her students with her own viewpoints

Additional Details Item #4: Meagan argued in favor of more stringent gun-control laws to her class while lecturing on the topic of gun ownership laws in her home country.

5a. Philip, a local politician, approving plans for the gentrification of a nearby neighborhood.
5b. Philip, a local politician, approving plans for the revitalization of a nearby neighborhood.

Additional Details Item #5: The approved plans call for the construction of new luxurious condos and the arrival of new and attractive businesses. These plans are expected to increase rent and property values potentially making it difficult for some of the poorer residents to remain in the neighborhood.

6a. Emily working at a slaughterhouse.
6b. Emily working at a meat processing plant.

Additional Details Item #6: Emily's day-to-day responsibilities include getting animals restrained, electrically stunned (in order to ensure a humane end for each animal), and then bled to remove maximal blood from each animal's body.

7a. Sarah, an elected politician, allowing corporations to cut down a majority of the trees in a local forest.
7b. Sarah, an elected politician, allowing corporations to harvest a majority of the overmature timber in a local forest.

Additional Details Item #7: Due to Sarah's actions, corporations will face less restrictions when seeking to remove trees from a local forest. Specifically, these actions have increased the percentage of trees that can be removed by corporate logging from 40% to 60%.

8a. Ben inviting a hate-monger to speak at his university.
8b. Ben inviting a provocateur to speak at his university.

Additional Details Item #8: Ben invited a controversial speaker known for his ability to agitate opponents with his anti-Islam and anti-immigration beliefs.

9a. Katie encouraging her daughter to accept a role in a pornographic film.
9b. Katie encouraging her daughter to accept a role in an erotic art piece.

Additional Details Item #9: This role is for a film and involves nudity along with the performance of various sexual acts on-camera with a male actor.

10a. Joseph advocating for the boycott of a local comedian claiming that some of the comedian's jokes involve offensive speech.
10b. Joseph advocating for the boycott of a local comedian claiming that some of the comedian's jokes involve hate speech.

Additional Details Item #10: Joseph is advocating for the boycott of a local comedian due to jokes the comedian made on stage regarding a young disabled singer, which culminated in the line: "I didn't know what illness he had, so I Googled it and it turns out he is just ugly."

11a. Angela, a CEO at Elecom, eliminating jobs in order to increase profits.
11b. Angela, a CEO at Elecom, eliminating jobs in order to increase economic viability.

Additional Details Item #11: Elecom was recently named as one of the world's ten most profitable companies.

12a. Mitchell, a political extremist, protesting outside of City Hall.
12b. Mitchell, a political activist, protesting outside of City Hall.

Additional Details Item #12: Mitchell is protesting his government's relaxed stance on environmental issues. The protest he participated in began with an organized march and ended with a rally outside City Hall which featured several invited speakers. Although the protest was filled with heated verbal confrontations between protesters and non-protesters, no violence occurred.

13a. Derek, an elected politician, voting against policies that would help the poor.
13b. Derek, an elected politician, voting against policies that would coddle the poor.

Additional Details Item #13: Specifically, Derek voted against a set of policies that would have increased the minimum wage in his state by $1.20.

Appendix G

Experiment 7 Study Materials (Partisan Item List [12-Item])

Measures assessed prior to experiment trials:

Political Identity Strength (adapted from Leach et al., 2008)

* Participants' self-reported political affiliation determined which political affiliation (Democrat or Republican) was displayed for each political identity strength scale item.

Instructions: Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

Response Options (all items): 1 (Strongly Disagree); 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7 (Strongly Agree)

1. I feel a bond with [Democrats/Republicans].
2. Being a [Democrat/Republican] gives me a good feeling.
3. The fact that I am a [Democrat/Republican] is an important part of my identity.
4. I have a lot in common with the average [Democrat/Republican].
5. [Democrats/Republicans] have a lot in common with each other.

** Participants' mean response to these five items were calculated to represent their political identity strength (with higher values representing stronger identification with one's political group).

Measures assessed following the presentation of each statement:
1. Based on [Name]'s public statement, which political party do you believe [he/she] identifies with? I believe [Name] is a:
Example: Based on Cameron's public statement, which political party do you believe he identifies with? I believe Cameron is a:

Response Options: Strong Democrat; Democrat; Independent who leans Democrat; Independent; Independent who leans Republican; Republican; Strong Republican

2. Based on [Name]'s public statement, how interested would you be in having a political discussion with [Name]?
Example: Based on Jessica's public statement, how interested would you be in having a political discussion with Jessica?

Response Options: 1 (Not at all interested); 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7 (Very interested)

3. Please judge [Name] on each of the dimensions listed below.
Example: Please judge Jordan on each of the dimensions listed below.

Response Options:
Trustworthiness: 7-point scale ranging from *"Untrustworthy"* to *"Trustworthy"*

Moral Character: 7-point scale ranging from *"Immoral"* to *"Moral"*
Criticism: 7-point scale ranging from *"Deserves No Criticism"* to *"Deserves Criticism"*
Open-mindedness: 7-point scale ranging from *"Closed-minded"* to *"Open-minded"*

*** In Experiment 7, all action-depicting statements were presented as public statements made by individuals who were fully knowledgeable of the actions they were describing.

**** All "a" version statements represent an item's liberal statement, all "b" version statements represent an item's conservative statement, and all "c" version statements represent an item's politically neutral statement.

Factual Event Description #1: The Foxland army, seeking to obtain military information, captured Rosewald soldiers and forced them to stand naked in a cell kept at 50 ºF (10 ºC) while being regularly doused with cold water.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
1a. The Foxland army engaged in the torture of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information.
1b. The Foxland army engaged in the enhanced interrogation of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information.
1c. The Foxland army forced captured Rosewald soldiers to stand naked in a cold cell and repeatedly drenched them with cold water in order to obtain military information.

Factual Event Description #2: Katie Mayer, the star of a reality TV show, encouraged her 22-year-old daughter to accept a role in a film that involves nudity along with the performance of various sexual acts on-camera with a male actor.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
2a. Katie Mayer encouraged her daughter to accept a role in an erotic art piece.
2b. Katie Mayer encouraged her daughter to accept a role in a pornographic film.
2c. Katie Mayer encouraged her daughter to accept a role in a film that requires nudity and the performance of sexual acts on-camera.

Factual Event Description #3: Derek Barnes, an elected politician, voted in favor of a set of policies that will increase welfare benefits for low-income individuals while also increasing the amount of government spending on welfare programs over the next five years by $400 billion.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
3a. Politician Derek Barnes supported policies that will help the poor.
3b. Politician Derek Barnes supported policies that will coddle the poor.
3c. Politician Derek Barnes supported policies that will increase government spending on welfare programs.

Factual Event Description #4: TV star Joshua Sherman participated in a protest to keep abortion legal in his state. Specifically, Joshua participated in a protest that began with an organized march and ended with a rally downtown that featured several invited speakers. The stated mission of the protest was to "fight for reproductive freedom, including the right to access abortion."

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
4a. Joshua Sherman participated in a pro-choice protest.
4b. Joshua Sherman participated in a pro-abortion protest.
4c. Joshua Sherman participated in a protest to keep abortion legal.

Factual Event Description #5: Drew Kline, an elected politician, voted in favor of a bill that seeks to prevent individuals 17 years of age or younger from accessing surgical procedures used to treat gender dysphoria. Specifically, the surgical procedures discussed in this bill are those that alter the physical appearance and function of a person's existing sexual characteristics in order to align these characteristics with their gender identity.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
5a. Politician Drew Kline supported policies that aim to restrict individuals 17 years of age or younger from receiving gender-affirming care.
5b. Politician Drew Kline supported policies that aim to restrict individuals 17 years of age or younger from receiving sex change surgeries.
5c. Politician Drew Kline supported policies that aim to restrict individuals 17 years of age or younger from receiving gender transition procedures.

Factual Event Description #6: Evelyn Cobb, an elected politician, publicly praised Jabber (a social media platform) for their decision to remove all user content on their platform that features claims that are deemed false or misleading and which may lead to harm. All user content that is deemed true or harmless will remain on the platform.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
6a. Politician Evelyn Cobb supported a social media platform's decision to combat misinformation.
6b. Politician Evelyn Cobb supported a social media platform's decision to engage in censorship.
6c. Politician Evelyn Cobb supported a social media platform's decision to remove user content that is deemed false or misleading.

Factual Event Description #7: Andrew Dodson, an online content creator, promoted the social media platform Chatter to his many online followers in a video in which he praised Chatter and encouraged his followers to join him on the platform. Chatter is known for moderating the content that its users post far less than other social media platforms. Chatter markets itself as an unbiased platform where users are free to express themselves. However, Chatter's hands off approach to content moderation has resulted in the spread of much information on the platform that experts say is false and, in some cases, harmful.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
7a. Andrew Dodson promoted a social media platform whose relaxed content moderation facilitates misinformation.
7b. Andrew Dodson promoted a social media platform whose relaxed content moderation facilitates free speech.
7c. Andrew Dodson promoted a social media platform known for its relaxed content moderation.

Factual Event Description #8: Mary Kneller, a middle school teacher, taught her class about the concept of privilege (with a focus on racial privilege) and lectured on the presence of systemic racism in her country's past and present. She asked her students to think about the unearned advantages they may possess on the basis of their membership within one or more privileged groups. Additionally, she led a group discussion in which students were asked to discuss how different social institutions (e.g., the criminal justice system) may uphold racism in their laws, regulations, and practices.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
8a. Mary Kneller, a middle school teacher, taught an anti-racist curriculum in her classroom.
8b. Mary Kneller, a middle school teacher, taught critical race theory in her classroom.
8c. Mary Kneller, a middle school teacher, taught about privilege and systemic racism in her classroom.

Factual Event Description #9: Carol Watson, an elected politician, supported a bill that would make it easier for people in her country to vote in elections. Specifically, if passed, this bill would relax voter ID requirements by allowing voters to vote without identification if they complete a sworn written statement attesting to their identity. Additionally, this bill would expand mail-in voting nationwide, permitting all eligible voters to vote by mail.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
9a. Politician Carol Watson supported a bill that would expand voting rights.
9b. Politician Carol Watson supported a bill that would reduce election security.
9c. Politician Carol Watson supported a bill that would relax voter ID requirements and expand mail-in voting.

Factual Event Description #10: "Citizens for Freedom and Justice", a right-wing political group also known as CFJ, organized a demonstration against what they claim is a corrupt and illegitimate government. Approximately 100,000 people from all over the country attended this demonstration, which took place outside the nation's capital building. While a majority of demonstrators remained peaceful, others did not. Specifically, many members of CFJ possessed weapons, violently clashed with local law enforcement (leaving four dead and hundreds more injured), caused extensive property damage, and illegally entered the capital building. While it is unclear the extent to which CFJ members, if at all, planned to harm or violently force the resignation of elected government officials, no government officials were harmed or resigned as a result of this event.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
10a. Members of the political group CFJ participated in an insurrection against the government.
10b. Members of the political group CFJ participated in a protest against the government.
10c. Members of the political group CFJ participated in a riot against the government.

Factual Event Description #11: Leah Brandt, an online content creator, promoted the organization "Inseparable" to her many online followers in a video in which she praised Inseparable and urged her followers to support the organization. Inseparable is a political advocacy group that describes themselves as "dedicated to resisting a right-wing agenda that favors the white and the wealthy." As part of their advocacy efforts, Inseparable has helped advocate for gender and racial equity, LGBTQIA+ rights, climate action, democratic socialism, and the defunding of police and border patrol agents.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
11a. Leah Brandt promoted a progressive organization online.
11b. Leah Brandt promoted a radical leftist organization online.
11c. Leah Brandt promoted a left-wing organization online.

Factual Event Description #12: Claire Hill, an online content creator, promoted the organization "FreedomHome" to her many online followers in a video in which she praised FreedomHome and urged her followers to support the organization. FreedomHome is a political advocacy group that describes themselves as "dedicated to combatting left-wing propaganda." As part of their advocacy efforts, FreedomHome has helped advocate for strong borders, gun rights, nationalism, Christian values, and limited government.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
12a. Claire Hill promoted a far-right organization online.
12b. Claire Hill promoted a conservative organization online.
12c. Claire Hill promoted a right-wing organization online.

Measures assessed following experiment trials:
1. I prefer getting news from sources that share my political viewpoints.

Response Options: 1 (Strongly Disagree); 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7 (Strongly Agree)

2. I prefer getting news from sources that are objective (i.e., unbiased), even if, at times, reporting from these sources is unfavorable to my political views.

Response Options: 1 (Strongly Disagree); 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7 (Strongly Agree)

Appendix H

Experiment 8 Study Materials (Partisan Item List [12-Item])

Measures assessed prior to experiment trials:

Political Identity Strength (adapted from Leach et al., 2008)

* Participants' self-reported political affiliation determined which political affiliation (Democrat or Republican) was displayed for each political identity strength scale item.

Instructions: Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

Response Options (all items): 1 (Strongly Disagree); 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7 (Strongly Agree)

1. I feel a bond with [Democrats/Republicans].
2. Being a [Democrat/Republican] gives me a good feeling.
3. The fact that I am a [Democrat/Republican] is an important part of my identity.
4. I have a lot in common with the average [Democrat/Republican].
5. [Democrats/Republicans] have a lot in common with each other.

** Participants' mean response to these five items were calculated to represent their political identity strength (with higher values representing stronger identification with one's political group).

Measures assessed following the presentation of each statement:

How much do you agree or disagree with the actions of the [Insert Name Here]?
Example (1a/b): How much do you agree or disagree with the actions of the Foxland army?

How much do you agree or disagree with [Insert Name Here]'s actions?
Example (2a/b): How much do you agree or disagree with Katie's actions?

Response Options: 1 (Strongly Disagree with); 2; 3; 4 (Neither Agree or Disagree); 5; 6; 7 (Strongly Agree with)

*** Only participants randomly assigned to the Details condition viewed action-depicting statements with additional act details.

**** All "a" version statements represent an item's liberal statement, all "b" version statements represent an item's conservative statement, and all "c" version statements represent an item's politically neutral statement. All participants were presented and evaluated six in-group statements and six neutral statements. Thus, self-identified Democrats viewed six "a" version statements and six "c" version statements while self-identified Republicans viewed six "b" version statements and six "c" version statements.

1a. The Foxland army engaging in the torture of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information

1b. The Foxland army engaging in the enhanced interrogation of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information

1c. The Foxland army forcing captured Rosewald soldiers to stand naked in a cold cell while repeatedly drenching them with cold water in order to obtain military information.

Additional Details Item #1: Captured Rosewald soldiers were forced to stand naked in a cell kept at 50 °F (10 °C) while being regularly doused with cold water by Foxland soldiers.

2a. Katie encouraging her daughter to accept a role in an erotic art piece.

2b. Katie encouraging her daughter to accept a role in a pornographic film.

2c. Katie encouraging her daughter to accept a role in a film that requires nudity and the performance of sexual acts on-camera.

Additional Details Item #2: Specifically, Katie encouraged her 22-year-old daughter to accept a role in a film that involves nudity along with the performance of various sexual acts on-camera with a male actor.

3a. Derek, an elected politician, supporting policies that will help the poor.

3b. Derek, an elected politician, supporting policies that will coddle the poor.

3c. Derek, an elected politician, supporting policies that will increase government spending on welfare programs.

Additional Details Item #3: Specifically, Derek voted in favor of a set of policies that will increase welfare benefits for low-income individuals while also increasing the amount of government spending on welfare programs over the next five years by $400 billion.

4a. Joshua participating in a pro-choice protest.

4b. Joshua participating in a pro-abortion protest.

4c. Joshua participating in a protest to keep abortion legal.

Additional Details Item #4: Specifically, Joshua participated in a protest to keep abortion legal in his state. This protest began with an organized march and ended with a rally downtown that featured several invited speakers. The stated mission of the protest was to "fight for reproductive freedom, including the right to access abortion."

5a. Drew, an elected politician, supporting policies that aim to restrict individuals 17 years of age or younger from receiving gender-affirming care.

5b. Drew, an elected politician, supporting policies that aim to restrict individuals 17 years of age or younger from receiving sex change surgeries.

5c. Drew, an elected politician, supporting policies that aim to restrict individuals 17 years of age or younger from receiving gender transition procedures.

Additional Details Item #5: Specifically, Drew voted in favor of a bill that seeks to prevent individuals 17 years of age or younger from accessing surgical procedures used to treat gender dysphoria. The surgical procedures discussed in this bill are those that alter the physical appearance and function of a person's existing sexual characteristics in order to align these characteristics with their gender identity.

6a. Evelyn, an elected politician, supporting a social media platform's decision to combat misinformation.
6b. Evelyn, an elected politician, supporting a social media platform's decision to engage in censorship.
6c. Evelyn, an elected politician, supporting a social media platform's decision to remove user content that is deemed false or misleading.

Additional Details Item #6: Evelyn publicly praised Jabber (a social media platform) for their decision to remove all user content on their platform that features claims that are deemed false or misleading and which may lead to harm. All user content that is deemed true or harmless will remain on the platform.

7a. Andrew promoting a social media platform whose relaxed content moderation facilitates misinformation.
7b. Andrew promoting a social media platform whose relaxed content moderation facilitates free speech.
7c. Andrew promoting a social media platform known for its relaxed content moderation.

Additional Details Item #7: Andrew promoted the social media platform Chatter to his many online followers in a video in which he praised Chatter and encouraged his followers to join him on the platform. Chatter is known for moderating the content that its users post far less than other social media platforms. Chatter markets itself as an unbiased platform where users are free to express themselves. However, Chatter's hands off approach to content moderation has resulted in the spread of much information on the platform that experts say is false and, in some cases, harmful.

8a. Mary, a middle school teacher, teaching an anti-racist curriculum in her classroom.
8b. Mary, a middle school teacher, teaching critical race theory in her classroom.
8c. Mary, a middle school teacher, teaching about privilege and systemic racism in her classroom.

Additional Details Item #8: Specifically, Mary taught her class about the concept of privilege (with a focus on racial privilege) and lectured on the presence of systemic racism in her country's past and present. She asked her students to think about the unearned advantages they may possess on the basis of their membership within one or more privileged groups. Additionally, she led a group discussion in which students were asked to discuss how different social institutions (e.g., the criminal justice system) may uphold racism in their laws, regulations, and practices.

9a. Carol, an elected politician, supporting a bill that would expand voting rights.
9b. Carol, an elected politician, supporting a bill that would reduce election security.
9c. Carol, an elected politician, supporting a bill that would relax voter ID requirements and expand mail-in voting.

Additional Details Item #9: Carol supported a bill that would make it easier for people in her country to vote in elections. Specifically, if passed, this bill would relax voter ID requirements by allowing voters to vote without identification if they complete a sworn written statement attesting to their identity. Additionally, this bill would expand mail-in voting nationwide, permitting all eligible voters to vote by mail.

10a. Members of the right-wing political group "Citizens for Freedom and Justice" (also known as CFJ) participating in an insurrection against the government.
10b. Members of the right-wing political group "Citizens for Freedom and Justice" (also known as CFJ) participating in a protest against the government.
10c. Members of the right-wing political group "Citizens for Freedom and Justice" (also known as CFJ) participating in a riot against the government.

Additional Details Item #10: CFJ organized a demonstration against what they claim is a corrupt and illegitimate government. Approximately 100,000 people from all over the country attended this demonstration, which took place outside the nation's capital building. While a majority of demonstrators remained peaceful, others did not. Specifically, many members of CFJ possessed weapons, violently clashed with local law enforcement (leaving four dead and hundreds more injured), caused extensive property damage, and illegally entered the capital building. While it is unclear the extent to which CFJ members, if at all, planned to harm or violently force the resignation of elected government officials, no government officials were harmed or resigned as a result of this event.

11a. Leah promoting a progressive organization online.
11b. Leah promoting a radical leftist organization online.
11c. Leah promoting a left-wing organization online.

Additional Details Item #11: Specifically, Leah promoted the organization "Inseparable" to her many online followers in a video in which she praised Inseparable and urged her followers to support the organization. Inseparable is a political advocacy group that describes themselves as "dedicated to resisting a right-wing agenda that favors the white and the wealthy." As part of their advocacy efforts, Inseparable has helped advocate for gender and racial equity, LGBTQIA+ rights, climate action, democratic socialism, and the defunding of police and border patrol agents.

12a. Claire promoting a far-right organization online.
12b. Claire promoting a conservative organization online.
12c. Claire promoting a right-wing organization online.

Additional Details Item #12: Specifically, Claire promoted the organization "FreedomHome" to her many online followers in a video in which she praised FreedomHome and urged her followers to support the organization. FreedomHome is a political advocacy group that describes themselves as "dedicated to combatting left-wing propaganda." As part of their advocacy efforts, FreedomHome has helped advocate for strong borders, gun rights, nationalism, Christian values, and limited government.

Measures assessed following experiment trials:
1. I prefer getting news from sources that share my political viewpoints.

Response Options: 1 (Strongly Disagree); 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7 (Strongly Agree)

2. I prefer getting news from sources that are objective (i.e., unbiased), even if, at times, reporting from these sources is unfavorable to my political views.

Response Options: 1 (Strongly Disagree); 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7 (Strongly Agree)

Appendix I

Experiment S1: Investigating Perceptions of Speaker Political Identity

Methods

Participants

A sample of 660 participants was recruited from Prolific and received $1.75 upon completion of a 12-minute online questionnaire. In order to be eligible to participate in Experiment S1, all participants were required to: (1) self-report an age between 18 and 65 years old, (2) self-report English as their first language, (3) reside in the United States, (4) have completed between 50 and 10,000 work submissions on Prolific, and (5) possess a Prolific submission approval rating greater than or equal to 95%. I excluded data from 55 participants based on a set of pre-registered exclusion criteria (see *Data Preparation*), leaving data from 605 participants (46% Female; $M_{age} = 39.31$, $SD_{age} = 12.06$; 187 Democrats, 268 Independents, 150 Republicans, 58% college graduates) to be analyzed. This experiment was pre-registered through Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/3ek9h).

Materials

Experiment S1 used the same materials as Experiment 5. For each item, participants were presented with a factual event description followed by a public statement attributed to a fictious member of the public sphere. However, Experiment S1 differed from Experiment 5 such that it did not feature lie statements. Thus, only agreeable and disagreeable action-depicting statements were attributed to fictious individuals in Experiment S1.

Measures

Participants were asked to judge the political identity and ideology of each fictious person attributed an agreeable or disagreeable statement in Experiment S1.

Perceived Speaker Political Identity. Participants judged the political identity of individuals attributed a public statement by responding to the question: "Based on [Name's] public statement, which political party do you believe [he/she] identifies with?" Participants responded to this question using a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (Strong Democrat) to 7 (Strong Republican), with the midpoint of this scale being labelled as 4 (Independent).

Perceived Speaker Political Ideology. Participants judged the political ideology of each individual attributed a public statement with the item "Based on [Name's] public statement, how do you perceive [his/her] political ideology?" Responses to this item were provided on a 5-point scale that ranged from 1 (Very Liberal) to 5 (Very Conservative), with the midpoint of this scale being labelled as 3 (Moderate).

Design and Procedure

Participants were presented the action-depicting statements of 12 people and judged the political identity and ideology of each person based on the statement they made and its relation to a factual event description. For each item, participants were randomly assigned to evaluate a person who described an action using either an agreeable or disagreeable term. Across items, this random assignment resulted in all participants evaluating agents attributed agreeable and disagreeable statements. The order in which items were presented was randomized for each participant. Participants concluded Experiment S1 by responding to the same set of demographic questions administered in Experiments 2 and 5.

Data Preparation

Consistent with pre-registered criteria, I excluded data from 55 participants who reported responding randomly at some point during the experiment ($n = 21$) or completed Experiment S1 in under 300 seconds ($n = 35$).

Results and Discussion

A primary goal of Experiment S1 was to gather information regarding the perceived partisanship of agreeable and disagreeable statements featured within the 48-item set presented in Experiments 2 and 5. Specifically, I was interested in identifying cases in which a person attributed an item's agreeable statement was perceived as being on the opposite side of the political spectrum compared to a person attributed the item's disagreeable statement. As such, I conducted one-sample t-tests, identifying agreeable and disagreeable statements for which agents were perceived as possessing a political identity and ideology that reliably differed from the midpoint value of each scale (4 and 3; labelled "Independent" and "Moderate," respectively; see Table 8). The results of these t-tests were considered—along with data from Experiments 2 and 5—when selecting items to be included in a partisan itemset that featured liberal-biased, conservative-biased, and neutral statements. Ultimately, 24 items were included in this initial partisan set (see Appendix K), with these items being further assessed in Experiment S2.

Table 8A

Experiment S1 Item-Level Results: Perceived Speaker Political Identity Judgments (Items 1-24)

Item Agreeable	Disagreeable	Agreeable M	t	p	d	Disagreeable M	t	p	d
Enhanced Interrogation	Torture	5.44	9.35	<.001	1.07	3.38	-3.54	<.001	-0.41
Neutralize	Kill	4.86	4.81	<.001	0.57	3.70	-1.79	.077	-0.20
Negotiated Departure	Firing	5.10	8.57	<.001	0.98	3.92	-0.50	.616	-0.06
Educate	Indoctrinate	3.96	-0.17	.864	-0.02	5.26	5.11	<.001	0.59
Revitalization	Gentrification	5.01	5.27	<.001	0.62	3.24	-3.53	<.001	-0.41
Meat Processing Plant	Slaughterhouse	4.49	4.05	<.001	0.46	3.70	-1.65	.103	-0.19
Harvest	Cut Down	4.59	2.86	.006	0.33	3.18	-3.93	<.001	-0.45
Provocateur	Hate-Monger	3.42	-2.99	.004	-0.34	2.43	-7.05	<.001	-0.80
Erotic Art Piece	Pornographic Film	3.33	-3.47	<.001	-0.40	5.01	5.70	<.001	0.66
Hate Speech	Offensive Speech	2.42	-10.02	<.001	-1.17	3.51	-2.88	.005	-0.33
Economic Viability	Profits	4.69	3.66	<.001	0.43	3.32	-3.56	<.001	-0.41
Activist	Extremist	3.47	-2.91	.005	-0.34	4.73	3.03	.003	0.35
Help	Coddle	2.50	-9.87	<.001	-1.10	5.78	8.50	<.001	0.97
Low-wage	Low-skill	3.31	-3.58	<.001	-0.42	4.43	1.99	.050	0.23
Vaccine Hesitant	Anti-vaccination	3.85	-0.95	.344	-0.11	3.55	-2.02	.046	-0.23
Anti-Vaxxer	Vaccine Hesitant User	3.01	-4.81	<.001	-0.56	4.11	0.52	.603	0.06
Homeless	Unhoused	4.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	3.62	-1.88	.065	-0.22
Undocumented	Illegal [Immigrants]	3.76	-1.05	.299	-0.12	4.34	1.46	.149	0.17
Formerly Incarcerated	Ex-convicts	2.87	-8.70	<.001	-0.99	3.38	-3.34	.001	-0.38
Heartbeat Bill	Forced Pregnancy Bill	4.42	2.65	.010	0.30	3.36	-2.87	.005	-0.32
[Climate] Skeptic	Denier	3.27	-3.69	<.001	-0.42	3.04	-4.45	<.001	-0.52
[Climate] Advocate	Alarmist	2.94	-6.82	<.001	-0.78	4.77	3.00	.004	0.36
Climate Crisis	Climate Change	2.70	-7.72	<.001	-0.86	3.59	-2.00	.049	-0.23
Pro-life	Anti-abortion	4.85	5.28	<.001	0.60	3.72	-1.37	.175	-0.16

Note. Results of one-sample *t*-tests comparing participants' perceived speaker political identity judgments to the midpoint value (4; "Independent") of the administered scale. Participants' mean perceived speaker political identity judgments for each statement are displayed in the *M* column. Positive effect sizes (*d*) represent cases in which agents attributed a statement were viewed as more Republican than Democrat with negative effect sizes representing the reverse (i.e., agents being perceived as more Democrat than Republican).

Table 8B

Experiment S1 Item-Level Results: Perceived Speaker Political Identity Judgments (Items 25-48)

Item		Agreeable				Disagreeable			
Agreeable	**Disagreeable**	*M*	*t*	*p*	*d*	*M*	*t*	*p*	*d*
Pro-choice	Pro-abortion	3.24	-4.71	<.001	-0.54	4.37	1.61	.111	0.19
[Unborn] Fetus	Child	4.03	0.12	.902	0.01	4.15	0.60	.552	0.07
Sex Work	Prostitution	3.27	-3.71	<.001	-0.42	3.47	-3.06	.003	-0.35
Sex Change Surgeries	Gender-Affirming Care	4.20	1.00	.320	0.11	2.69	-6.04	<.001	-0.70
Largely Peaceful	Violent [Protest]	2.44	-11.70	<.001	-1.29	4.92	4.13	<.001	0.48
[Sexual] Misconduct	Assault	3.81	-1.08	.283	-0.13	3.14	-4.34	<.001	-0.50
Combat Misinformation	Engage in Censorship	2.76	-7.86	<.001	-0.89	4.62	2.82	.006	0.33
Free Speech	Misinformation	5.07	5.71	<.001	0.66	3.45	-3.03	.003	-0.35
Anti-Racist Curriculum	Critical Race Theory	2.72	-6.90	<.001	-0.79	4.39	1.64	.106	0.19
Reduce Disinformation	Suppress Viewpoints	3.33	-3.52	<.001	-0.39	4.15	0.73	.465	0.08
Racist	Racially Insensitive	2.97	-5.90	<.001	-0.68	3.04	-5.36	<.001	-0.62
Reproductive Healthcare	Abortion	3.64	-1.59	.115	-0.19	2.96	-4.71	<.001	-0.54
Expand Voting Rights	Reduce Election Security	2.28	-12.05	<.001	-1.42	5.05	5.13	<.001	0.58
[Student] Debt Relief	Loan Handout	4.11	0.47	.642	0.05	5.32	6.09	<.001	0.70
Anti-Racist	Woke	3.40	-2.53	.014	-0.30	4.88	3.35	.001	0.38
[Gender-based] Differences	Inequities	3.41	-2.95	.004	-0.33	2.57	-8.88	<.001	-1.02
Increase Gun Control	Restrict Gun Rights	3.93	-0.32	.748	-0.04	4.67	3.02	.003	0.35
Protest	Insurrection	4.70	3.19	.002	0.37	3.36	-2.88	.005	-0.33
Progressive	Radical Leftist	3.55	-2.12	.037	-0.25	5.42	5.97	<.001	0.68
Conservative	Far-Right	4.55	2.70	.009	0.31	2.87	-4.89	<.001	-0.56
Drug Addict	Substance Use Disorder	4.72	4.96	<.001	0.57	3.68	-1.82	.073	-0.21
Body Positivity	Obesity	2.58	-10.20	<.001	-1.16	4.96	5.13	<.001	0.60
Whistleblower	Traitor	3.95	-0.29	.774	-0.03	4.88	4.14	<.001	0.47
Third World	Developing [Countries]	4.93	5.07	<.001	0.59	4.41	2.09	.040	0.24

Note. Results of one-sample *t*-tests comparing participants' perceived speaker political identity judgments to the midpoint value (4; "Independent") of the administered scale. Participants' mean perceived speaker political identity judgments for each statement are displayed in the *M* column. Positive effect sizes (*d*) represent cases in which agents attributed a statement were viewed as more Republican than Democrat with negative effect sizes representing the reverse (i.e., agents being perceived as more Democrat than Republican).

In the aggregate, participants perceived individuals attributed agreeable and disagreeable

statements from this 48-item set as more Democrat than Republican ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.59$),

$t(604) = 6.18$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.25$, and more liberal than conservative ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 0.38$),

$t(604) = 5.81$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.24$, although mean judgments were close to the scale midpoint in

both cases. Generalized mixed effects regression models examining the effect of Statement Type

(0 – Agreeable and 1 – Disagreeable) on participants' perceptions of agent's political identity (β = 0.12) and ideology (β = 0.13) did not display a significant effect of Statement Type for either judgment (both p's > .209). I also assessed the zero-order relations between participants' judgments of agents' political identity and ideology and their self-reported political identity and ideology (see Table 9). Here, I observed small negative associations between participants' political identity and perceptions of the political identity of agents attributed a statement, $r(603)$ = -.10, p = .011, and between participants' political ideology and perceptions of agents' ideology, $r(603)$ = -.15, p < .001. Thus, participants displayed a slight tendency to view individuals attributed agreeable and disagreeable statements as members of their political out-group.

Table 9

Experiment S1: Pearson's Zero-order Correlations

	1	2	3	4
1. Political Identity	-			
2. Political Ideology	.84**	-		
3. Perceived Speaker Political Identity	-.10*	-.11*	-	
4. Perceived Speaker Political Ideology	-.17**	-.15**	.91**	-

Note. Pearson correlations (*N* = 605). *Political Identity* = Participants' self-reported political identity (1 = Strong Democrat; 4 = Independent; 7 = Strong Republican). *Political Ideology* = Participants' self-reported political ideology (1 = Very Liberal; 3 = Moderate; 5 = Very Conservative). *Perceived Speaker Political Identity* = Participants' perceptions of the political identity of agents attributed agreeable and disagreeable statements (1 = Strong Democrat; 4 = Independent; 7 = Strong Republican). *Perceived Speaker Political Ideology* = Participants' perceptions of the political ideology of agents attributed agreeable and disagreeable statements (1 = Very Liberal; 3 = Moderate; 5 = Very Conservative). ** p < .001, * p < .05.

Appendix J

Experiment S2: Neutral Statement Pre-Test

Methods

Participants

A sample of 400 US residents was recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk using the same recruitment criteria as Experiment 7, with the exception that for Experiment S2 participants were recruited from across the political spectrum (i.e., they were not required to self-report a liberal or conservative ideology). I excluded data from 83 participants (see *Data Preparation*), leaving data from 317 participants (44% Female; $M_{age} = 41.71$, $SD_{age} = 12.61$; 91 Democrats, 144 Independents, 81 Republicans, 64% college graduates) to be analyzed.

Materials

Experiment S2 featured 24 items from the 48-item set presented in Experiments 2, 5, and S1. These items were selected on the basis of multiple factors. First, I required that all selected items featured agreeable and disagreeable statements that shaped action evaluations in Experiment 2 while being judged as (largely) truthful in Experiment 5. Second, I aimed to select items that displayed some degree of partisanship such that participants perceived agents attributed the item's agreeable [disagreeable] statement as a member of one political group (e.g., Democrat) and agents attributed the item's disagreeable [agreeable] statement as a member of an opposing political group (e.g., Republican; Experiment S1). Similarly, I aimed to select items for which Democrat and Republican participants in Experiment 5 diverged in their assessments of an item's agreeable and disagreeable statement (e.g., disagreed on which statement was most truthful), displaying partisanship. In this manner, I created a set of 24 partisan items from the larger 48-item set (see Appendix K). In order to assess the extent to which partisan language

exacerbates political polarization compared to politically neutral language in follow-up studies, I created a neutral action-depicting statement for each item. As the name suggests, I aimed to have neutral statements describe a well-known event in a manner that would be judged as (a) featuring minimal political bias, and (b) for which agents attributed these statements would be perceived, in the aggregate, as Independents (as opposed to Democrats or Republicans).

Measures

Participants were asked to judge the political identity and ideology of each fictious agent attributed a public statement using the same measures as Experiment S1. Additionally, I asked participants to rate the political bias of each statement using a 100-point slider that ranged from 0 ([Name's] statement displays a Liberal bias) to 100 ([Name's] statement displays a Conservative bias). Participants who believed that an agent's statement was unbiased (i.e., politically neutral) could endorse this belief by selecting 50 ([Name's] statement is politically neutral).

Design and Procedure

Participants were presented the action-depicting statements of 12 individuals and asked to judge the political identity and ideology of each person as well as the political bias of each statement. For each item, participants were randomly assigned to evaluate a person who described an action using either the item's liberal, conservative, or neutral statement.[41] Across items, this random assignment resulted in participants evaluating agents attributed statements of each type (i.e., liberal, conservative, and neutral). The order in which items were presented was randomized for each participant. Participants concluded Experiment S2 by responding to the same set of demographic questions administered in Experiments, 2, 5, and S1.

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[41] Agreeable and disagreeable statements were reclassified as either liberal or conservative statements within this itemset on the basis of participants perceiving speakers attributed these statements as possessing either a liberal or conservative political ideology, respectively. This reclassification was further supported by the divergent assessments (e.g., truthfulness) of these statements by liberal and conservative participants in Experiment 5.

Data Preparation

I excluded data from 83 participants who reported responding randomly at some point during the experiment ($n = 40$), provided multiple outlier responses ($n = 10$), failed an attention check ($n = 56$), or completed Experiment S2 in under 300 seconds ($n = 9$).

Results and Discussion

Participants' mean perceived speaker political identity and ideology judgments for all liberal, neutral, and conservative statements can be viewed in Table 10. Additionally, participants' mean assessments of political bias for each statement can be viewed in Figure 17. I fit generalized mixed effects regression models to examine the effect of Statement Type (dummy coded as 0 – Neutral, 1 – Liberal, and 2 – Conservative) on participants' judgments of perceived speaker political identity, perceived speaker political ideology, and political bias (see Figure 18). As hypothesized, individuals attributed liberal statements were perceived as more identified with the Democratic party ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.59$), $B = -0.67$, $\beta = -0.38$, 95% CI (-0.52, -0.25), $SE = 0.12$, $t = -5.66$, $p < .001$, and as possessing a more liberal ideology ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 1.00$), $B = -0.42$, $\beta = -0.39$, 95% CI (-0.52, -0.26), $SE = 0.07$, $t = -5.98$, $p < .001$, compared to those attributed neutral statements ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.50$, and $M = 2.91$, $SD = 0.92$, respectively). Likewise, individuals attributed conservative statements were perceived as more identified with the Republican party ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 1.73$), $B = 1.02$, $\beta = 0.58$, 95% CI (0.44, 0.72), $SE = 0.13$, $t = 8.05$, $p < .001$, and as possessing a more conservative ideology ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.10$), $B = 0.57$, $\beta = 0.52$, 95% CI (0.38, 0.66), $SE = 0.08$, $t = 7.25$, $p < .001$, than those attributed neutral statements. The same pattern of results was observed for judgments of political bias, with liberal statements being judged as displaying a more liberal bias ($M = 40.40$, $SD = 22.40$), $B = -8.59$, $\beta = -0.35$, 95% CI (-0.47, -0.23), $SE = 1.49$, $t = -5.77$, $p < .001$, and conservative statements a more

conservative bias ($M = 62.50$, $SD = 25.20$), $B = 13.52$, $\beta = 0.55$, 95% CI (0.41, 0.70), $SE = 1.77$, t = 7.62, $p < .001$, compared to neutral statements ($M = 48.80$, $SD = 19.80$).

Table 10

Experiment S2 Mean Perceived Speaker Political Identity and Ideology

Item Liberal/Conservative	Perceived Speaker Identity			Perceived Speaker Ideology		
	L	N	C	L	N	C
Torture/Enhanced Interrogation	3.29	3.67	5.25	2.56	2.86	3.58
Kill/Neutralize	3.35	3.64	4.70	2.69	2.85	3.35
Educate/Indoctrinate	4.84	5.09	5.73	3.60	3.72	4.14
Gentrification/Revitalization	2.60	4.59	4.80	2.13	3.43	3.50
Cut Down/Harvest	2.98	3.74	4.34	2.32	2.97	3.08
Erotic Art Piece/Pornographic Film	3.27	4.29	5.31	2.45	3.14	3.83
Activist/Extremist	3.85	3.71	5.64	2.80	2.82	4.04
Help/Coddle [the Poor]	2.75	4.09	5.74	2.31	3.04	4.00
Anti-Vaxxer/Vaccine Hesitant User	2.95	3.82	3.86	2.45	2.92	2.90
Formerly Incarcerated People/Ex-convicts	3.00	3.48	3.78	2.51	2.75	2.89
Forced Pregnancy/Heartbeat [Bill]	3.24	4.46	4.53	2.56	3.23	3.26
[Climate Change] Advocate/Alarmist	3.72	3.52	5.12	2.78	2.74	3.58
Pro-choice/Pro-abortion	3.42	3.51	4.19	2.65	2.65	3.09
Gender-Affirming Care/Sex Change Surgeries	3.15	3.96	4.47	2.50	2.84	3.22
Largely Peaceful/Violent [Protest]	2.87	3.14	4.56	2.26	2.45	3.40
Combat Misinformation/Engage in Censorship	2.98	3.78	4.67	2.32	2.84	3.33
Misinformation/Free Speech	3.39	4.17	5.02	2.54	3.09	3.44
Anti-Racist Curriculum/Critical Race Theory	2.83	2.90	4.56	2.20	2.40	3.40
Expand Voting Rights/Reduce Election Security	2.74	3.49	5.28	2.35	2.77	3.78
Anti-Racist/Woke	3.30	3.48	5.57	2.53	2.69	3.98
Insurrection/Protest	2.71	3.32	4.84	2.33	2.62	3.38
Progressive/Radical Leftist	3.18	5.10	5.72	2.44	3.58	3.96
Far-Right/Conservative	2.39	3.41	4.45	2.08	2.74	3.22
Body Positivity/Obesity	2.91	3.67	4.39	2.28	2.69	3.16

Note. All public statements made by agents were judged in relation to a factual event description. Participants' mean perceived speaker political identity and ideology judgments for each item is shown above. *Perceived speaker political identity*: 1 (Strong Democrat) to 4 (Independent) to 7 (Strong Republican). *Perceived speaker political ideology*: 1 (Very Liberal) to 3 (Moderate) to 5 (Very Conservative). L = Liberal; N = Neutral; C = Conservative. *Italics* = Item included in the 12-item partisan set featured in Experiments 7 and 8.
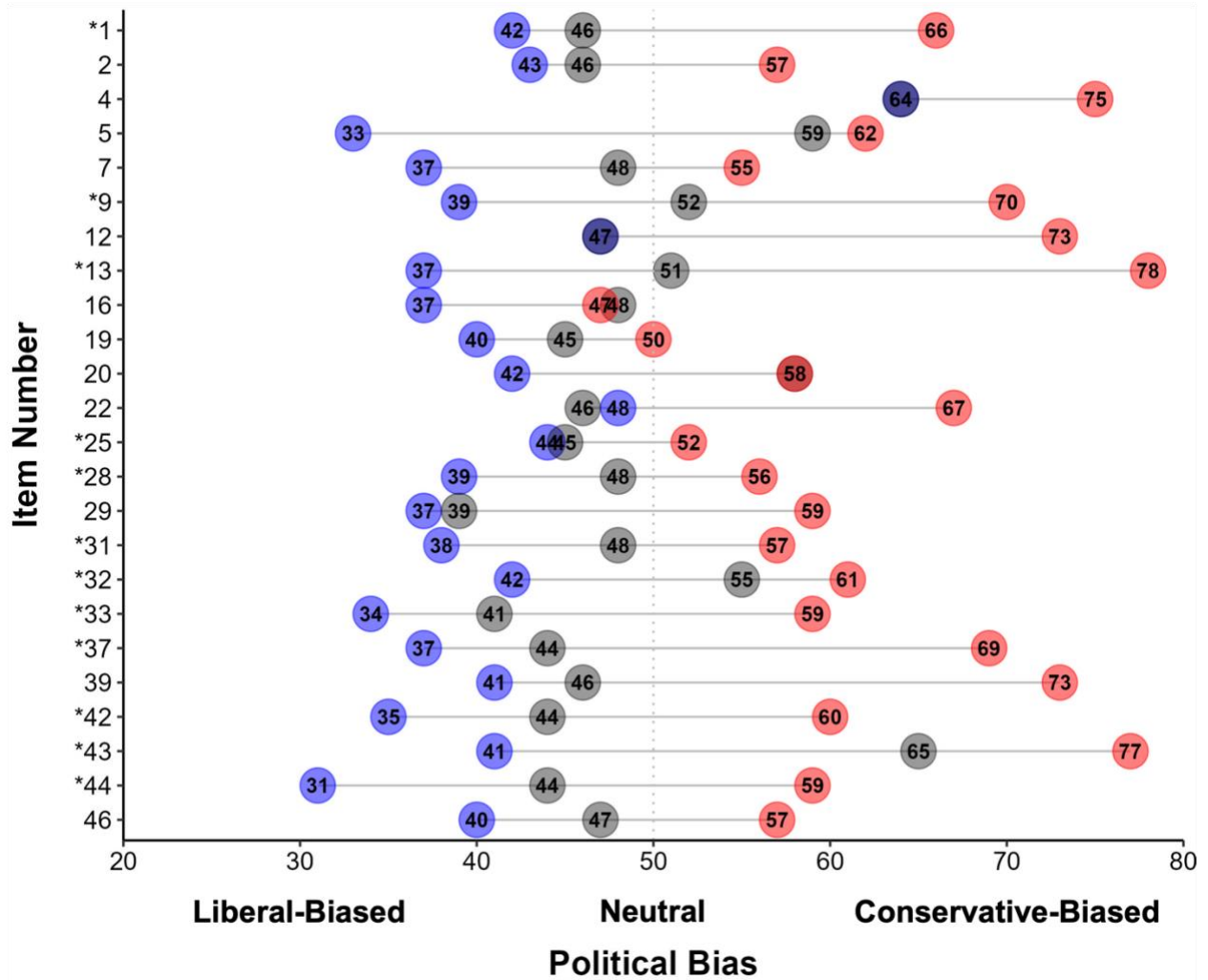
Figure 17. Experiment S2 Item-Level Results: Political Bias. Mean Political Bias judgments for each statement presented in Experiment S2. Numerical values represent the mean political bias judgment for a particular statement. Item numbers are provided on the y-axis and correspond to an item's number within the 48-item set featured in Experiments 2 and 5 (see Appendices C or E). An asterisk next to an item number indicates that the item was included in the 12-item partisan set featured in Experiments 7 and 8. *Blue Circle*: Liberal Statement. *Grey Circle*: Neutral Statement. *Red Circle*: Conservative Statement. In some cases, the mean value of an item's neutral statement matched that of the item's liberal or conservative statement. These cases are represented by dark blue/red circles. *Political Bias*: 0-49 (Liberal bias [smaller numbers indicate more liberal bias]), 50 (Politically neutral), 51-100 (Conservative bias [larger numbers indicate more conservative bias)].
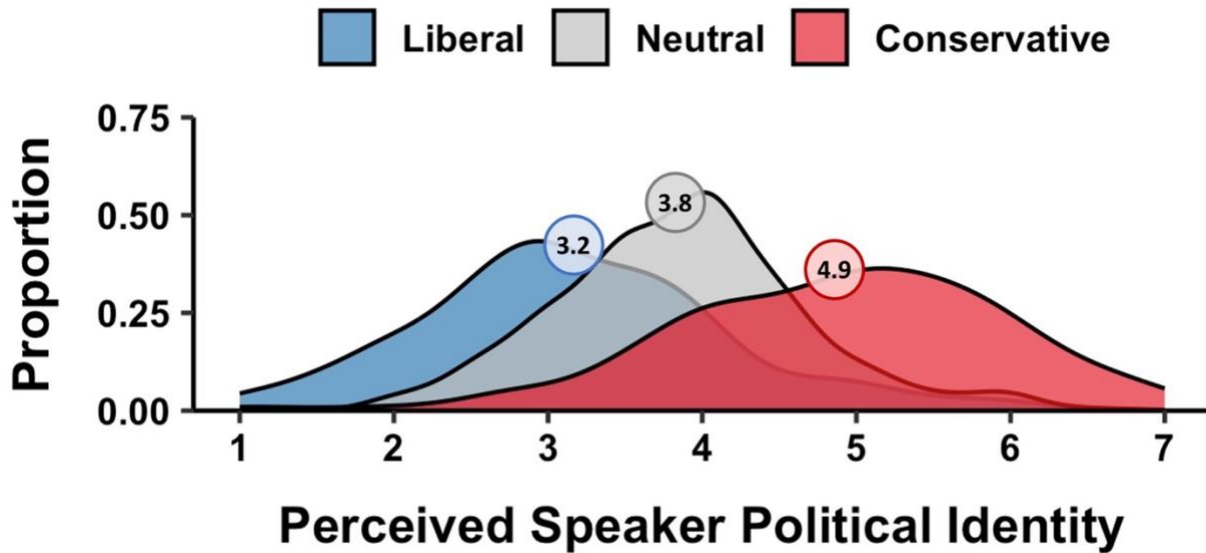
Figure 18. Experiment S2 Results (24-Item): Perceived Speaker Political Identity. This figure shows the distribution of participants' mean perceived speaker political identity judgments by statement type (Liberal, Neutral, Conservative). Mean values are indicated by a circle and numerical value attached to the relevant distribution. *Perceived Speaker Political Identity*: 1 (Strong Democrat) to 4 (Independent) to 7 (Strong Republican).

Item-level one-tailed independent samples *t*-tests revealed that, for a majority of items, individuals attributed an item's conservative statement were perceived as more identified with the Republican party (20 out of 24 items), as possessing a more conservative ideology (18 items), and as displaying more conservative bias than individuals attributed an item's neutral statement (21 items; all *p's* < .05). Relatedly, for a majority of items, individuals attributed an item's liberal statement were judged to be more identified with the Democratic party (16 items), possess a more liberal ideology (15 items), and display a more liberal bias than those attributed an item's neutral statement (15 items; all *p's* < .05). Item-level Bayesian one-sample *t*-tests comparing participants' assessments of the political bias of each item's neutral statement to the midpoint value (50; "[Name's] statement is politically neutral") of the administered scale revealed evidence in favour of the null hypothesis (*H₀*: assessments of political bias do not differ

from the midpoint value) for 14 out of 24 items (all *BF's* < 0.79). These findings suggest that, as intended, a majority of neutral statements were perceived as exhibiting minimal political bias.

Finally, I assessed the zero-order relation between participants' self-reported political identity and ideology and their perceptions of speaker political identity, ideology, and bias (see Table 11). Participants' self-reported political identity (and ideology) were negatively correlated with their perceptions of speaker political identity. For instance, the more strongly participants identified as a Democrat [Republican], the more they tended to perceive individuals attributed a statement in Experiment S2 as Republicans [Democrats], $r(314) = -.18$, $p = .002$. Relatedly, I observed a negative association between participants' self-reported political identity (and ideology) and judgments of political bias, such that the more strongly participants identified as a Democrat [Republican] the more likely they were to judge statements as displaying a conservative [liberal] bias (and the less likely they were to view statements as biased in favour of their political in-group), $r(314) = -.32$, $p < .001$.

Table 11

Experiment S2: Pearson's Zero-order Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Political Identity	-				
2. Political Ideology	.79**	-			
3. Perceived Speaker Political Identity	-.18*	-.15*	-		
4. Perceived Speaker Political Ideology	-.21**	-.16*	.86**	-	
5. Political Bias	-.32**	-.27**	.82**	.87**	-

Note. Pearson correlations (*N* = 317). *Political Identity* = Participants' self-reported political identity (1 = Strong Democrat; 4 = Independent; 7 = Strong Republican). *Political Ideology* = Participants' self-reported political ideology (1 = Very Liberal; 3 = Moderate; 5 = Very Conservative). *Perceived Speaker Political Identity* = Participants' perceptions of the political identity of agents attributed a liberal, neutral, or conservative statement (1 = Strong Democrat; 4

= Independent; 7 = Strong Republican). *Perceived Speaker Political Ideology* = Participants'
perceptions of the political ideology of agents attributed a liberal, neutral, or conservative
statement (1 = Very Liberal; 3 = Moderate; 5 = Very Conservative). *Political Bias* =
Participants' judgments of the political bias of statements (1-49 = Liberal Bias; 50 = Politically
Neutral; 51-100 = Conservative Bias). ** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$.

Information regarding the Partisan Itemset featured in Experiments 7 and 8

Based in large part on the results of Experiment S2, I selected 12 items for inclusion in a

partisan itemset (see Appendices G and H). Specifically, Experiment S2 helped identify items for

which participant judgments supported the categorization of statements as liberal-biased,

conservative-biased, and politically neutral. Generalized mixed effects regressions models

examining the effect of Statement Type (0 – Neutral, 1 – Liberal, and 2 – Conservative) on

participant judgments for items selected within this 12-item set demonstrated that agents

attributed liberal statements were judged to be more identified with the Democratic party (M =

3.02, SD = 1.53; see Figure 19), B = -0.79, β = -0.44, 95% CI (-0.61, -0.28), SE = 0.15, t = -5.35,

$p < .001$, and possess a more liberal ideology (M = 2.40, SD = 0.95), B = -0.48, β = -0.43, 95%

CI (-0.59, -0.28), SE = 0.09, t = -5.50, $p < .001$, compared to agents attributed neutral statements

(M = 3.80, SD = 1.55, and M = 2.88, SD = 0.95, respectively). Additionally, agents attributed

conservative statements were perceived as more identified with the Republican party (M = 4.96,

SD = 1.70), B = 1.15, β = 0.64, 95% CI (0.49, 0.79), SE = 0.14, t = 8.39, $p < .001$, and as

possessing a more conservative ideology (M = 3.52, SD = 1.11), B = 0.64, β = 0.58, 95% CI

(0.44, 0.72), SE = 0.08, t = 8.14, $p < .001$, than those attributed neutral statements. Judgments of

political bias displayed a similar pattern of results, with liberal statements being judged as

displaying a more liberal bias (M = 38.40, SD = 21.60), B = -10.08, β = -0.40, 95% CI (-0.54, -

0.26), SE = 1.75, t = -5.76, $p < .001$, and conservative statements a more conservative bias (M =

63.70, SD = 25.90), B = 15.40, β = 0.61, 95% CI (0.45, 0.78), SE = 2.12, t = 7.26, $p < .001$, than

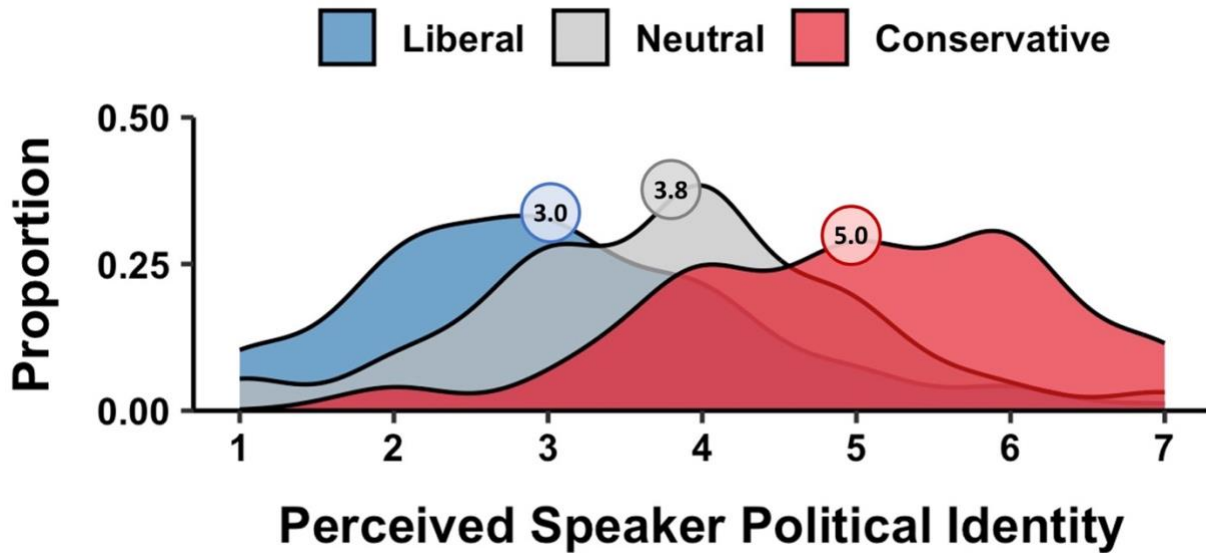neutral statements (M = 48.40, SD = 20.70).

Figure 19. Experiment S2 Results (12-Item): Perceived Speaker Political Identity. All data represented in this figure pertains to judgments made to items included in the final 12-item partisan set (featured in Experiments 7 and 8). This figure shows the distribution of participants' mean perceived speaker political identity judgments by statement type (Liberal, Neutral, Conservative). Mean values are indicated by a circle and numerical value attached to the relevant distribution. *Perceived Speaker Political Identity*: 1 (Strong Democrat) to 4 (Independent) to 7 (Strong Republican).

Item-level one-tailed independent samples *t*-tests demonstrated that, for all 12 items, individuals attributed an item's conservative statement were seen as more identified with the Republican party and as displaying a more conservative bias than individuals attributed an item's neutral statement (all *p's* < .05). For 11 out of 12 items, individuals attributed an item's conservative statement were viewed as possessing a more conservative ideology than those attributed the item's neutral statement (all *p's* < .019). Likewise, for a majority of items, individuals attributed an item's liberal statement were perceived as more identified with the Democratic party (9 items), as possessing a more liberal ideology (8 items), and as displaying a more liberal bias than individuals attributed an item's neutral statement (9 items; all *p's* < .043). Furthermore, contrasting the partisan leanings of liberal and conservative statements, Bayesian one-sample *t*-tests comparing participants' judgments of the political bias of each item's neutral

statement to the midpoint value (50) found evidence in favour of the null hypothesis (H_0:
assessments of political bias do not differ from the midpoint value) for 7 out of 12 items (all
BF's < 0.75).

Summary

In sum, the results of Experiment S2 supported the categorization of statements as liberal-
biased and conservative-biased, both with regards to how individuals attributed these statements
were perceived and on the basis of participants' judgments of political bias. Likewise,
participants' judgments of neutral statements justified their categorization as politically neutral,
with agents attributed these statements being viewed largely as Independents and minimal
political bias being attributed to statements of this type. This was true within the administered
24-item set, as well as within a 12-item set selected, in part, on the basis of judgments provided
within this experiment. As this 12-item set was featured in Experiments 7 and 8, the results of
Experiment S2 helped inform item selection for Experiments 7 and 8, with participant judgments
supporting the classification of statements as liberal-biased, conservative-biased, and politically
neutral within this set of items.

Appendix K

Experiment S2 Study Materials (Initial Partisan Item List [24-Item])

Measures assessed following the presentation of each statement:
1. Based on [Name]'s public statement, which political party do you believe [he/she] identifies with? I believe [Name] is a:
Example: Based on Elizabeth's public statement, which political party do you believe she identifies with? I believe Elizabeth is a:

Response Options: Strong Democrat; Democrat; Independent who leans Democrat; Independent; Independent who leans Republican; Republican; Strong Republican

2. Based on [Name]'s public statement, how do you perceive [his/her] political ideology?
I believe [Name] is:
Example: Based on Ryan's public statement, how do you perceive his political ideology?
I believe Ryan is:

Response Options: Very Liberal; Liberal; Moderate; Conservative; Very Conservative

3. How would you rate the political bias of [Name]'s public statement? Positioning the slider directly in the center means that you believe [Name]'s statement is unbiased (i.e., politically neutral). If you believe [Name]'s statement displays a Liberal bias, position the slider to the left of center, placing it further left the more strongly you perceive a Liberal bias. If you believe [Name]'s statement displays a Conservative bias, position the slider to the right of center, placing it further right the more strongly you perceive a Conservative bias. Please provide your response to this question using the slider below.

Response Options: 100-point slider with the following labels placed at "25," "50," and "75," respectively: *"[Name]'s statement displays a Liberal bias"; "[Name]'s statement is politically neutral"; "[Name]'s statement displays a Conservative bias"*

* All action-depicting statements within Experiment S2 were presented as public statements made by individuals who were fully knowledgeable of the actions they were describing.

** All "a" version statements represent an item's liberal statement, all "b" version statements represent an item's conservative statement, and all "c" version statements represent an item's politically neutral statement.

Factual Event Description #1: The Foxland army, seeking to obtain military information, captured Rosewald soldiers and forced them to stand naked in a cell kept at 50 ºF (10 ºC) while being regularly doused with cold water.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
1a. The Foxland army engaged in the torture of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information.
1b. The Foxland army engaged in the enhanced interrogation of Rosewald soldiers in order to obtain military information.
1c. The Foxland army forced captured Rosewald soldiers to stand naked in a cold cell and repeatedly drenched them with cold water in order to obtain military information.

Factual Event Description #2: The Bayedge military took actions that resulted in eighty-six Sagegate soldiers losing their lives.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
2a. The Bayedge military killed a large portion of Sagegate's military personnel.
2b. The Bayedge military neutralized a large portion of Sagegate's military personnel.
2c. The Bayedge military caused the death of a large portion of Sagegate's military personnel.

Factual Event Description #3: Meagan Linley, a high school teacher, argued in favor of more stringent gun-control laws to her class while lecturing on the topic of gun ownership laws in her home country.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
3a. Meagan Linley, a high school teacher, used class time to educate her students with her own viewpoints.
3b. Meagan Linley, a high school teacher, used class time to indoctrinate her students with her own viewpoints.
3c. Meagan Linley, a high school teacher, used class time to argue in favor of her own viewpoints.

Factual Event Description #4: Philip Ferguson, a local politician, approved plans that call for the construction of new luxurious condos and the arrival of new and attractive businesses in a local neighborhood. These plans are expected to increase rent and property values potentially making it difficult for some of the poorer residents to remain in the neighborhood.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
4a. Politician Philip Ferguson approved plans for the gentrification of a local neighborhood.
4b. Politician Philip Ferguson approved plans for the revitalization of a local neighborhood.
4c. Politician Philip Ferguson approved plans for the construction of new luxurious condos in a local neighborhood.

Factual Event Description #5: Sarah Hill, an elected politician, allowed corporations to face less restrictions when seeking to remove trees from a local forest. Specifically, Sarah allowed an increase in the percentage of trees that can be removed by corporate logging from 40% to 60%.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
5a. Politician Sarah Hill allowed corporations to cut down a majority of the trees in a local forest.
5b. Politician Sarah Hill allowed corporations to harvest a majority of the overmature timber in a local forest.
5c. Politician Sarah Hill allowed corporations to remove more trees from a local forest.

Factual Event Description #6: Katie Mayer, the star of a reality TV show, encouraged her 22-year-old daughter to accept a role in a film that involves nudity along with the performance of various sexual acts on-camera with a male actor.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
6a. Katie Mayer encouraged her daughter to accept a role in an erotic art piece.
6b. Katie Mayer encouraged her daughter to accept a role in a pornographic film.
6c. Katie Mayer encouraged her daughter to accept a role in a film that requires nudity and the performance of sexual acts on-camera.

Factual Event Description #7: Online content creator Mitchell Ramos participated in a protest demanding that the government do more to combat climate change, including halting all future development and production of fossil fuels, encouraging the uptake of plant-based diets, and placing restrictions on unnecessary air travel. Specifically, Mitchell participated in a protest that began with an organized march and ended with a rally outside City Hall which featured several invited speakers. Although the protest was filled with heated verbal confrontations between protesters and non-protesters, no violence occurred.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
7a. Mitchell Ramos, a political activist, protested outside of City Hall.
7b. Mitchell Ramos, a political extremist, protested outside of City Hall.
7c. Mitchell Ramos protested outside of City Hall.

Factual Event Description #8: Derek Barnes, an elected politician, voted in favor of a set of policies that will increase welfare benefits for low-income individuals while also increasing the amount of government spending on welfare programs over the next five years by $400 billion.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
8a. Politician Derek Barnes supported policies that will help the poor.
8b. Politician Derek Barnes supported policies that will coddle the poor.
8c. Politician Derek Barnes supported policies that will increase government spending on welfare programs.

Factual Event Description #9: Christopher Boone, the CEO of Chatty (a social media platform), suspended the account of a prominent Chatty user for 48 hours after the user posted a video in which they revealed that they had chosen not to get vaccinated against COVID-19 as well as expressed skepticism regarding the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine and the profit motives behind it.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
9a. Chatty CEO Christopher Boone suspended the account of a prominent anti-vaxxer.
9b. Chatty CEO Christopher Boone suspended the account of a prominent vaccine hesitant user.
9c. Chatty CEO Christopher Boone suspended the account of a prominent user who expressed skepticism regarding the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Factual Event Description #10: Amy Ballard, an elected politician, voted in favor of a bill that seeks to automatically restore the voting rights of incarcerated individuals immediately upon their release from prison. Previously, incarcerated individuals in Ms. Ballard's home state faced a post-sentence waiting period before their voting rights were restored.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
10a. Politician Amy Ballard supported a bill that helps restore the voting rights of formerly incarcerated people.
10b. Politician Amy Ballard supported a bill that helps restore the voting rights of ex-convicts.
10c. Politician Amy Ballard supported a bill that helps restore the voting rights of individuals immediately upon their release from prison.

Factual Event Description #11: Susan Foster, an elected politician, publicly endorsed legislation that, if passed, would make it illegal to have an abortion when a heartbeat can be detected via ultrasound (which typically occurs between 6 to 8 weeks into a pregnancy).

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
11a. Politician Susan Foster endorsed a forced pregnancy bill that, if passed, will prohibit abortion when a heartbeat can be detected via ultrasound.
11b. Politician Susan Foster endorsed a heartbeat bill that, if passed, will prohibit abortion when a heartbeat can be detected via ultrasound.
11c. Politician Susan Foster endorsed a bill that, if passed, will prohibit abortion when a heartbeat can be detected via ultrasound.

Factual Event Description #12: Lisa Griffith, the president of a student group at Silverleaf University, invited a scientist to speak at her university. This scientist has publicly argued that ignoring climate change will yield untold suffering for humanity. Specifically, they have stated that, if urgent action is not taken, climate change will soon cause food and water shortages that will threaten the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
12a. Student group president Lisa Griffith invited a climate change advocate to speak at her university.
12b. Student group president Lisa Griffith invited a climate change alarmist to speak at her university.
12c. Student group president Lisa Griffith invited a scientist to speak about climate change at her university.

Factual Event Description #13: TV star Joshua Sherman participated in a protest to keep abortion legal in his state. Specifically, Joshua participated in a protest that began with an organized march and ended with a rally downtown that featured several invited speakers. The stated mission of the protest was to "fight for reproductive freedom, including the right to access abortion."

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
13a. Joshua Sherman participated in a pro-choice protest.
13b. Joshua Sherman participated in a pro-abortion protest.
13c. Joshua Sherman participated in a protest to keep abortion legal.

Factual Event Description #14: Drew Kline, an elected politician, voted in favor of a bill that seeks to prevent individuals 17 years of age or younger from accessing surgical procedures used to treat gender dysphoria. Specifically, the surgical procedures discussed in this bill are those that alter the physical appearance and function of a person's existing sexual characteristics in order to align these characteristics with their gender identity.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
14a. Politician Drew Kline supported policies that aim to restrict individuals 17 years of age or younger from receiving gender-affirming care.
14b. Politician Drew Kline supported policies that aim to restrict individuals 17 years of age or younger from receiving sex change surgeries.
14c. Politician Drew Kline supported policies that aim to restrict individuals 17 years of age or younger from receiving gender transition procedures.

Factual Event Description #15: Movie star Daniel Conway made several social media posts praising individuals who participated in a protest against police brutality and racial inequality. Prior to Daniel's posts, the protest made national news as over one hundred thousand people participated in the demonstration. While the majority of protesters remained peaceful, some did not, as the protest featured several violent confrontations and resulted in over one million dollars of property damage.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
15a. Daniel Conway publicly praised those who participated in a largely peaceful protest.
15b. Daniel Conway publicly praised those who participated in a violent protest.
15c. Daniel Conway publicly praised those who participated in a protest in which a majority of demonstrators were peaceful, although violent confrontations and property damage did occur.

Factual Event Description #16: Evelyn Cobb, an elected politician, publicly praised Jabber (a social media platform) for their decision to remove all user content on their platform that features claims that are deemed false or misleading and which may lead to harm. All user content that is deemed true or harmless will remain on the platform.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
16a. Politician Evelyn Cobb supported a social media platform's decision to combat misinformation.
16b. Politician Evelyn Cobb supported a social media platform's decision to engage in censorship.
16c. Politician Evelyn Cobb supported a social media platform's decision to remove user content that is deemed false or misleading.

Factual Event Description #17: Andrew Dodson, an online content creator, promoted the social media platform Chatter to his many online followers in a video in which he praised Chatter and encouraged his followers to join him on the platform. Chatter is known for moderating the content that its users post far less than other social media platforms. Chatter markets itself as an unbiased platform where users are free to express themselves. However, Chatter's hands off approach to content moderation has resulted in the spread of much information on the platform that experts say is false and, in some cases, harmful.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
17a. Andrew Dodson promoted a social media platform whose relaxed content moderation facilitates misinformation.
17b. Andrew Dodson promoted a social media platform whose relaxed content moderation facilitates free speech.
17c. Andrew Dodson promoted a social media platform known for its relaxed content moderation.

Factual Event Description #18: Mary Kneller, a middle school teacher, taught her class about the concept of privilege (with a focus on racial privilege) and lectured on the presence of systemic racism in her country's past and present. She asked her students to think about the unearned advantages they may possess on the basis of their membership within one or more privileged groups. Additionally, she led a group discussion in which students were asked to discuss how different social institutions (e.g., the criminal justice system) may uphold racism in their laws, regulations, and practices.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
18a. Mary Kneller, a middle school teacher, taught an anti-racist curriculum in her classroom.
18b. Mary Kneller, a middle school teacher, taught critical race theory in her classroom.
18c. Mary Kneller, a middle school teacher, taught about privilege and systemic racism in her classroom.

Factual Event Description #19: Carol Watson, an elected politician, supported a bill that would make it easier for people in her country to vote in elections. Specifically, if passed, this bill would relax voter ID requirements by allowing voters to vote without identification if they complete a sworn written statement attesting to their identity. Additionally, this bill would expand mail-in voting nationwide, permitting all eligible voters to vote by mail.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
19a. Politician Carol Watson supported a bill that would expand voting rights.
19b. Politician Carol Watson supported a bill that would reduce election security.
19c. Politician Carol Watson supported a bill that would relax voter ID requirements and expand mail-in voting.

Factual Event Description #20: Sophie Mora, the CEO of Mobex, praised Mobex's new employee training materials whose stated goal was to "advance social equity" and "strengthen the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion everywhere." Nevertheless, some Mobex employees objected to some of the content featured in the training materials they received. Specifically, some employees criticized these materials for encouraging them to "participate in reparations," "decolonize their bookshelf," and "commit to raising race-consciousness in children." Despite these criticisms, Sophie chose not to remove these documents from her company's collection of employee training materials.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
20a. Mobex CEO Sophie Mora refused to get rid of her company's anti-racist employee training materials despite complaints from some employees.
20b. Mobex CEO Sophie Mora refused to get rid of her company's woke employee training materials despite complaints from some employees.
20c. Mobex CEO Sophie Mora refused to get rid of her company's diversity, equity, and inclusion employee training materials despite complaints from some employees.

Factual Event Description #21: "Citizens for Freedom and Justice", a right-wing political group also known as CFJ, organized a demonstration against what they claim is a corrupt and illegitimate government. Approximately 100,000 people from all over the country attended this demonstration, which took place outside the nation's capital building. While a majority of demonstrators remained peaceful, others did not. Specifically, many members of CFJ possessed weapons, violently clashed with local law enforcement (leaving four dead and hundreds more injured), caused extensive property damage, and illegally entered the capital building. While it is unclear the extent to which CFJ members, if at all, planned to harm or violently force the resignation of elected government officials, no government officials were harmed or resigned as a result of this event.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
21a. Members of the political group CFJ participated in an insurrection against the government.
21b. Members of the political group CFJ participated in a protest against the government.
21c. Members of the political group CFJ participated in a riot against the government.

Factual Event Description #22: Leah Brandt, an online content creator, promoted the organization "Inseparable" to her many online followers in a video in which she praised Inseparable and urged her followers to support the organization. Inseparable is a political advocacy group that describes themselves as "dedicated to resisting a right-wing agenda that favors the white and the wealthy." As part of their advocacy efforts, Inseparable has helped advocate for gender and racial equity, LGBTQIA+ rights, climate action, democratic socialism, and the defunding of police and border patrol agents.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
22a. Leah Brandt promoted a progressive organization online.
22b. Leah Brandt promoted a radical leftist organization online.
22c. Leah Brandt promoted a left-wing organization online.

Factual Event Description #23: Claire Hill, an online content creator, promoted the organization "FreedomHome" to her many online followers in a video in which she praised FreedomHome and urged her followers to support the organization. FreedomHome is a political advocacy group that describes themselves as "dedicated to combatting left-wing propaganda." As part of their advocacy efforts, FreedomHome has helped advocate for strong borders, gun rights, nationalism, Christian values, and limited government.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
23a. Claire Hill promoted a far-right organization online.
23b. Claire Hill promoted a conservative organization online.
23c. Claire Hill promoted a right-wing organization online.

Factual Event Description #24: Morgan Porter, the editor of the fashion magazine Charm, elected to publish a cover story which highlights a plus-size model (Kimberly Harris) and her campaign against society's rigid and unrealistic beauty standards. Kimberly appears on the cover of the magazine, modelling a purple one-piece swimsuit. Within the magazine, Kimberly talks about loving her larger body (5'5, 304 lbs) and encourages readers to love their body regardless of its size.

Possible statements to be evaluated (participants assigned one)
24a. Charm magazine editor Morgan Porter published a cover story that celebrates body positivity.
24b. Charm magazine editor Morgan Porter published a cover story that celebrates obesity.
24c. Charm magazine editor Morgan Porter published a cover story that features a plus-size model.