

WORKSHOP

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Partisanship as Group Identity Predicts Polarization in Political Beliefs

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Abstract

Identifying the determinants of political polarization is a pressing issue across the social sciences. Through a nationally representative online experiment deployed the week prior to the 2020 US presidential election, we explore how group identity shapes the process of political opinion formation. We measure participants' ingroup favoritism in monetary allocations as a manifestation of group identity and incentivize them to predict policy-sensitive statistics one year later, conditional on which candidate becomes president. Ingroup favoring individuals exhibit a stronger partisan gap in initial predictions, spend more resources to avoid articles from politically-opposing news sources, and increase their prior gap more strongly after reading relevant news articles. Exogenously reducing the salience of group identity decreases partisan bias in information avoidance, especially for ingroup favoring individuals.