

**In Viewership We Trust? Exploring Relationships Between Partisan Cable News and Mass  
Partisan Sentiment**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Prior literature has identified several simultaneously occurring trends: namely, sharply intensifying negative partisanship, partisan patterns of media trust, increasingly partisan content on cable news networks, and increased viewership of these networks. A large portion of this literature, as well as journalistic research, has predominantly focused on individuals' consumption, rather than trust, of particular political media sources. I explore to what degree the nature of *how* individuals are consuming partisan media (be it trustingly, skeptically, etc.) plays a role in the relationship between partisan media consumption and partisan sentiment. Using OLS regression models across three ANES samples, I test the relationship between individuals' viewership and trust levels of particular partisan cable news sources (Fox News and MSNBC) and corresponding partisan sentiment, taking into account individuals' own partisan leanings. I find those who consume like-minded partisan media to express more partisanship (both for their own political group and against the other). I additionally find that trust, as opposed to just viewership, of these partisan networks correlates strongly with partisan sentiment. In light of these findings, I conclude that future research on this topic should more clearly distinguish between trust and viewership of political media.

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## GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Over the last two decades, surging mass political polarization has occurred simultaneously with a strikingly more segmented and increasingly partisan news media landscape. A large portion of research on this topic, both academic and journalistic, has focused exclusively on individuals' viewership or consumption levels of particular media sources. Relying solely on consumption does not take into account the trust levels that individuals have in what they are consuming. In this study, I explore to what degree the nature of *how* individuals are consuming partisan media (be it trustingly, skeptically, etc.) plays a role in the relationship between partisan media consumption and partisan feelings. Utilizing multiple American National Election Studies samples, I test the relationship between individuals' viewership and trust levels of particular partisan cable news sources (Fox News and MSNBC) and corresponding partisan sentiment, taking into account individuals' own partisan leanings. I find those who consume like-minded partisan media (Republicans watching Fox News and Democrats watching MSNBC) to express increased levels of partisanship - both for their own political group and against the other. I additionally find a strong relationship between individuals' trust, as opposed to just viewership, of these partisan networks and their own partisan feelings. In light of these findings, I conclude that future research on this topic should more clearly distinguish between trust and viewership of political media.

## Acknowledgements

When my son, now three years old, was first learning to talk, he would often say “I do it, I did it, I did do” after doing something he was particularly proud of. My wife and I have taken to saying this with some frequency whenever there is some sort of achievement reached in our household. But even in jest, I cannot bring myself to say these words with regard to this project, as there are far too many people whose support made this possible. I’d like to first thank my parents and sisters, both for their encouragement as well as their considerable assistance with our son when school obligations became hectic. Their help has allowed me to be both a better student and a better parent throughout this process. To Patrick Moore, who was not only understanding of my desire to go back to school, but tremendously supportive and one of my biggest cheerleaders.

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I must also acknowledge the substantial assistance of Dr. Karin Kitchens. Even after having to step down as a committee member midway through the process, she continued to provide help with questions pertaining to statistical analysis. Though Dr. Kitchens is not listed on the title page as a committee member, it is no exaggeration to say that I could not have done this without her. While I can safely say that any errors or issues in this thesis come down to my own shortcomings, I can also say that wherever this project succeeds can be attributed to the fact that I benefited from having, for all intents and purposes, four committee members.

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*“We do it. We did it. We did do.”*

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

In early 2017, veteran journalist Ted Koppel interviewed Fox News host Sean Hannity for a *CBS Sunday Morning* segment on political polarization and news media. Hannity claimed that “we have to give some credit to the American people that they are somewhat intelligent, and that they know the difference between an opinion show and a news show.” Koppel expressed hesitation at this remark, which resulted in Hannity asking Koppel a question of his own. “Do you think I’m bad for America?” asked Hannity. Koppel answered affirmatively. “You know why? Because you’re very good at what you do,” Koppel continued. “You have attracted people who are determined that ideology is more important than facts” (“A Polarized America” 2017). Segments such as this are not rare, for it has been difficult to ignore the surging mass polarization which has occurred simultaneously with a strikingly more segmented and increasingly partisan news media landscape (Abramowitz and Webster 2016, Martin and Yurukoglu 2017).

A 2020 Pew study found deep divisions in the news sources trusted by Republicans versus those trusted by Democrats, which appears to provide at least an initial indication in favor of Koppel’s assertion of ideology outweighing objective facts on the part of many news consumers (Jurkowitz et al. 2020). This is only furthered when considering that, within this media environment, disagreement along party lines has not only intensified in terms of opinions and policies, but when it comes to *basic facts themselves* (LaLoggia 2018). Much attention has been given to the role that the ideologically divided, continuously reinforcing “echo chamber” nature of contemporary news media, tailored to distinctly partisan audiences, may play in this increasing American political polarization. Research confirms that a notable increase in overtly partisan content has indeed occurred over the last several years, on certain cable news channels

in particular (Avlon 2019; “How Politically Polarized Media is Driving Our Alternative Realities” 2017; Martin and Yurukoglu 2017; Grossman and Hopkins 2018). Specific focus in this regard has been placed on the idea of negative partisanship, which Abramowitz and Webster define as “the phenomenon whereby Americans largely align *against* one party instead of affiliating *with* the other” (Abramowitz and Webster 2018, 119).

Oftentimes though, especially within popular media, this attention revolves around anecdotal observations, opinions, and feelings, such as those previously mentioned by Koppel and Hannity. Academic literature does provide much more in the way of empirical findings when it comes to examining relationships between these simultaneously occurring phenomena. Yet throughout this literature, there is a predominant focus on individuals’ consumption or viewership levels when it comes to particular media sources. While evidence suggests that people are more likely to seek out opinions and information with which they agree (Festinger 1957), looking *exclusively* at consumption levels still leaves open the possibility that many individuals could be consuming content without really trusting it. In such cases, viewers would very possibly be less than convinced by what they are seeing. This is of particular concern when considering that trust levels in “news media” in general were steadily declining for over a decade, before taking on a particularly partisan pattern during the Trump years (with Democrats becoming more trustful and Republicans becoming sharply less so) (Grossman and Hopkins 2018, 557). Another potential problem with looking exclusively at viewership in this regard is that evidence indicates increased levels of “oppositional” political media consumption (e.g. Democrats watching Fox News) in 2020, as opposed to prior years studied (Jurkowitz, et al. 2020, Mitchell, et al. 2021). These concerns only become magnified when also taking into account the possibility of a “backfire effect” in which individuals express an increased degree of

negatively partisan sentiment upon viewing partisan content in favor of the “other side.” (Bail et al. 2018).

Thus, looking at partisan media consumption alone in this regard, as much of the prior literature has done, appears to not be a nuanced enough analysis. The nature of *how* individuals are consuming partisan media (be it trustingly, skeptically, etc.) is not taken into account when this is the case, and the corresponding role this distinction may play in the relationship with partisan sentiment left unanswered. I instead examine this nuance by looking not only at consumption levels of, but the degree of trust in, partisan media sources. Additionally, when partisan media consumption is examined, I also infer (by looking at respondent partisan identification) whether said consumption is coming from a place of agreement or disagreement by the respondent. My specific research question is therefore fourfold: first, do individuals who *consume* more media from a particular partisan source (whether the consumption is “like-minded” or “oppositional” in nature) also express less favorable feelings toward the respective source’s political “opposition”? Second, do individuals who consume more media from a particular partisan source (again, whether the consumption is “like-minded” or “oppositional”) also express more favorable feelings toward the respective source’s “preferred” political group? Third, do individuals who have more *trust* in a particular partisan media source express less favorable feelings toward the respective source’s political “opposition”? Finally, do individuals who have more trust in a particular partisan media source also express more favorable feelings toward the respective source’s “preferred” group?

To answer these questions, I utilize the 2016 and 2020 American National Election Studies (ANES) Main Studies, as well as the 2020 ANES Social Media Study, to examine the relationship between individuals’ viewership of and trust in particular partisan cable news

sources (specifically, Fox News and MSNBC) and partisan sentiment. While using any one of these ANES datasets would be helpful in this regard, there are three key advantages of using these particular data sources. First, examining data from 2016 and 2020 allows for analysis of recent occurrences. As will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, several distinctly partisan patterns (particularly with respect to media trust) appear to have been exacerbated at the time of the 2016 campaign. The need for more contemporary data which reflects this is critical. Along these same lines, several key programming changes on the respective networks occurred between 2016 and 2020, in several cases reflecting a more partisan tenor upon the inauguration of Donald Trump (Grossman and Hopkins 2018, Schwartz 2017, Sherman 2018, Martin and Yurukoglu 2017). Viewership questions asked about particular programs in the 2016 and 2020 Main Studies allow me to take this into account. Second, in looking at datasets from both 2016 and 2020, I can further examine the increased levels of “oppositional” political media consumption observed in 2020 (which was not seen in 2016) (Jurkowitz, et al. 2020, Mitchell, et al. 2021). Third, while many of the questions asked are quite similar or even identical across the three ANES studies, several questions asked are unique to each particular survey. Most critically, the 2020 Social Media Study asks about trust levels in, as opposed to viewership of, certain media entities and networks. These questions are not asked in the ANES Main Studies, and, frankly, provide for a more forthright examination of how individuals are consuming this partisan media (and, by extension, what the corresponding relationship is with partisan sentiment). Analyzing findings within the ANES Social Media Study pertaining to trust, along with findings from the ANES 2016 and 2020 Main Studies pertaining to viewership (while also examining respondent partisan identification in both cases),

allows for a more nuanced examination of the relationship between partisan news consumption and partisan sentiment (“2020 Social Media Study”).

When it comes to observing respondent viewership and trust levels of news sources themselves, I utilize responses pertaining to the cable networks Fox News and MSNBC, which represent the poles at each end of the partisan spectrum. This not only is in line with prior literature but also allows for the observation of differing patterns of behavior on the part of Republicans versus Democrats. As shall be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 2, Fox News is an obvious and well-supported choice to represent the conservative/Republican side (Jurkowitz et al. 2020). While there is no one network or source which is as much a “go to” for Democrats and liberals in the way Fox News is for those on the right, the choice of MSNBC in this regard is also well-justified in terms of its content and audience (Martin and Yurukoglu 2017, Sanneh 2013, Steinberg 2007).

The results herein largely support the idea that how consumers are viewing partisan media sources (particularly when it comes to being trustful versus distrustful) is an important distinction to make when it comes to measuring respondent partisanship. When looking at cable news media consumption, my findings demonstrate that those who view more like-minded partisan media (Republicans watching Fox News and Democrats watching MSNBC) express more negative feelings toward the opposing partisan side *and* more positive feelings about their own. Furthermore, higher trust levels in each network correspond with increasingly negative views toward the “opposition group” of the respective network, as well as increasingly positive views about the respective network’s “preferred” side. I conclude that the common practice of equating consumption of partisan media with trust or agreement is erroneous, and may lead to

incorrect conclusions being drawn in this regard. I further call on future researchers to acknowledge and take this key distinction into account going forward.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: in the following chapter I review key selections of literature which together form the basis of the underlying conceptual framework for the analyses conducted, concluding with a discussion of these foundational theories and the corresponding hypotheses tested herein. Ordinary least squares regression models are utilized throughout the three datasets previously mentioned. My specific methodology is detailed in Chapter 3, but to summarize: the relationship between viewership of the partisan networks Fox News and MSNBC, in addition to respondents' partisanship, and the correlation with partisan sentiment, is examined using the 2016 and 2020 ANES Main Studies. The degree of trust is included in place of viewership with respect to the 2020 Social Media Study. Results are discussed in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 provides discussion and conclusions drawn from the results found, possible avenues for future research in light of these results, and brings this paper to a conclusion.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The central theory which drives this project is that the nature of how individuals are consuming partisan media (be it trustingly, skeptically, etc.) is a key distinction to make when examining the relationship between partisan media consumption and partisan sentiment. This theory derives from literature which spans the fields of political science, social psychology, economics, and communication. In this chapter, I review this literature. While the cross-disciplinary nature of this review might at times make these works appear to be disparate in terms of topic matter, they ultimately work together to form the theoretical framework of this study.

With this in mind, this chapter is structured in the following manner: I begin with a discussion of American political polarization and partisanship, with a particular focus on negative partisanship, followed by a brief exploration of how these phenomena relate to the psychological concepts of stereotyping and social identity theory. I then follow with academic findings of how partisan media (on cable television in particular) play into the “in-group”/”out-group” mentality of social identity theory, in conjunction with the theory of cognitive dissonance. Brief overviews of how the networks Fox News and MSNBC are prime examples of these psychological theories in action are then provided, and additionally provide support as to why they are justified as representatives of the respective right and left poles of partisan cable news in both prior literature and in the methodology described herein. I conclude this chapter by discussing the overarching theories and concepts which drive this analysis, as well as describing my particular hypotheses.

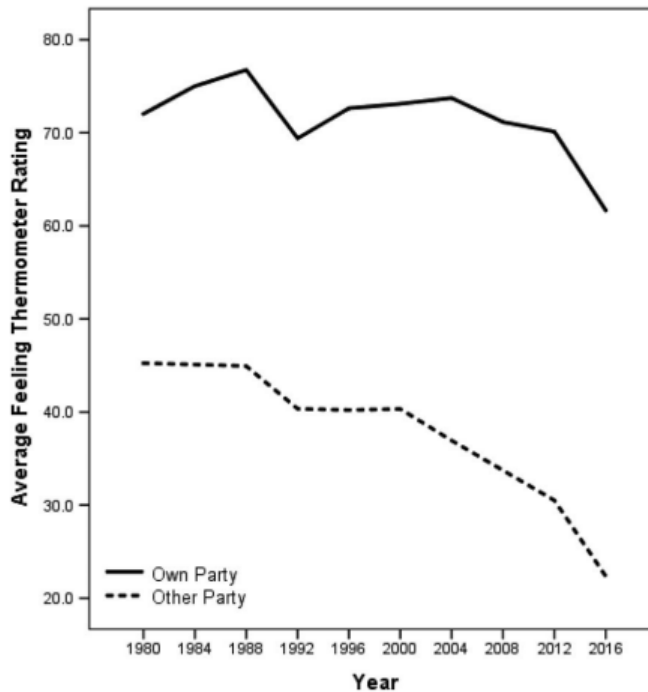
## *Political Polarization and Negative Partisanship*

Increasing levels of partisanship and political polarization have been observed over the last two decades. Academic research has examined these occurrences, but an overwhelming focus in this regard has been placed on the behavior of political elites (Ansolabehere, et al. 2001, McCarty 2006, Sinclair 2006, Theriault 2008, Bafumi and Herron 2010, Mann and Ornstein 2012, Andris 2015, Clark 2009, Bartels 2015, McCarty 2019). Yet, as Abramowitz and Webster note, this behavior has certainly not been limited to elites. Indeed, they go on to explain that “the growing intensity of partisan conflict among political elites cannot be understood without taking into account the increasingly partisan behavior of the American electorate” (Abramowitz and Webster 2016, 12).

Accordingly, recent years have seen increased scholarly attention devoted to polarization when it comes to the American populace at large. A curious trend has been observed in which more and more people are identifying as independents (as opposed to Republicans and Democrats), while simultaneously showing more partisan loyalty in their voting behavior (specifically, by engaging in increased levels of straight party voting) (Abramowitz and Webster 2016, 12-13). Iyengar and Westwood (2015, 705), as well as Abramowitz and Webster (2016, 2017), provide evidence that negative partisanship is the explanatory factor for these seemingly contradictory phenomena, as well as for an overall rising of partisanship in the U.S. While the feelings among Democrats and Republicans (and independents who lean in one direction or the other) towards their own respective parties have remained largely unchanged since the 1980’s, feelings about opposing parties have become sharply more negative (Bafumi and Shapiro 2009, Iyengar, et al. 2012, Mason 2013, Abramowitz, 2014, Huddy, et al. 2015, Mason 2015, Frey 2015). This trend can be witnessed clearly in Figure 1 (by Abramowitz and Webster 2018)

below, which shows ANES mean feeling thermometer ratings on a scale of 0 to 100 (with 0 representing the “coldest” or most negative feelings and 100 being the “warmest”/most positive affect). Note the sharp downward turn in feelings for the opposing party, starting in 2000.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Average Feeling-Thermometer Ratings of Own Party and Opposing Party, 1980-2016**



Source: Abramowitz and Webster 2018, 121 / ANES Cumulative File.

While Figure 1 only includes information through 2016, ANES mean feeling thermometer ratings in 2020 show an even wider split, with the 2020 mean thermometer rating for respondents’ own party being 71.37. This uptick reflects a return in to the levels in seen in 2012. The mean thermometer rating for the opposing party was 18.68 in 2020, marking a new low when it comes to feelings for the “other side” (“2016 Time Series Study,” “2020 Time Series Study”).<sup>1</sup> Clearly, party supporters (including independents who lean one way or another)

<sup>1</sup> The 2020 mean feeling thermometer rating for respondents’ own party reflects an average of Democrats and Democratic-leaning respondents’ mean rating of the Democratic Party and Republicans and Republican-leaning

have essentially come to dislike the opposing party, its leaders, and those affiliated with it, more than they like their own (Abramowitz and Webster 2017). Abramowitz and Webster go on to succinctly describe a “vicious cycle” occurring between political elite and the public at large:

The rise of negative partisanship in the American electorate appears to be part of a vicious cycle of mutually reinforcing elite and mass behavior. Confrontational politics in Washington and in many state capitols is causing Democratic and Republican voters to develop increasingly negative views of the opposing party and to vote along party lines from the top of the ticket to the bottom. Negative views of the opposing party among voters, in turn, encourage political elites to adopt a confrontational approach to governing. Given these mutually reinforcing patterns of elite and mass behavior, negative partisanship is likely to remain an important feature of American politics for the foreseeable future (2016, 22).

While this 2016 article by Abramowitz and Webster is a largely well-supported explanation of the occurrences they investigate, their discussion of the role which increasingly partisan media may play in this “vicious cycle” of negative partisanship is minimal (22, 14). They do state that “these negative feelings toward the opposing party are increasingly reinforced by exposure to partisan media, which have proliferated in recent years,” but this is the sole sentence devoted to this topic (Abramowitz and Webster 2016, 14). When considering this simultaneous proliferation of partisan media and intensifying negative partisanship these authors document (especially when also taking into account the 2020 Pew findings of partisan trust levels discussed in Chapter 1), I question to what degree partisan media exposure plays a critical role in this cycle. I further question if the nature of “exposure to partisan media,” as opposed to just exposure itself, makes a difference in this regard (Abramowitz and Webster 2016, 14). For example, it does not seem overly presumptuous to expect a Republican to have a different reaction than a Democrat when consuming negative coverage of Republicans (and vice versa).

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respondents’ mean towards the Republican Party. The mean feeling thermometer rating for respondents’ opposing party reflects an average of Democrats and Democratic-leaning respondents’ mean towards the Republican Party, and the Republicans and Republican-leaning respondents’ mean towards the Democratic Party.

When considering this possibility of individuals reacting differently to partisan media whether the content is for or against “their side” versus “the other side,” it is beneficial to turn to social psychology literature regarding group identity.

### *Social Identity Theory and Stereotyping*

Citing the work of Tajfel and Turner in the 1970’s, Levendusky summarizes that “decades of work on social identity theory demonstrate that humans naturally perceive the world in terms of in-groups (the group to which they belong) and out-groups (all other groups). As a result of this classification, we show a marked tendency to prefer members of the in-group to out-group members” (Levendusky 2013a, 567).

Research shows that people do tend to view the political opposition as an out-group, and Iyengar and Westwood explain that “while Americans are inclined to ‘hedge’ expressions of overt animosity toward racial minorities, immigrants, gays, or other marginalized groups, they enthusiastically voice hostility for the opposing party and its supporters” (Iyengar and Westwood 2015, 705). This suggests that expressing open animosity for members of another political group is likely seen by many as being more socially acceptable than expressing dislike towards out-groups defined by other characteristics (particularly of the variety described by Iyengar and Westwood). Accordingly, while many individuals may outwardly express a preference for centrist, moderate candidates, this may amount to much of the public essentially saying one thing and doing another. The high levels of “other party” stereotyping and negative partisanship, coupled with increased party loyalty in terms of voting observed by Abramowitz and Webster, indicate that, when it comes to voter behavior, many Americans are choosing to vote “against” the out-group more than anything else (Iyengar and Westwood 2015, 705; Abramowitz and Webster 2016, 12-13).

Stereotyping is a contributing factor in this in-group/out-group mentality (and, likewise, in negative partisanship), as Ahler and Sood document in their 2018 study. Specifically, they demonstrate that Americans, on the whole, overestimate the degree to which party supporters belong to more stereotypically Democratic or Republican groups. A particularly salient example is that, from their findings, people think 32% of Democrats are LGBT and 38% of Republicans earn over \$250,000.00 per year (as opposed to the actual numbers of 6% and 2%, respectively) (Ahler and Sood 2018, 964). While individuals did overestimate the share of party-stereotypes with respect to their own party as well, the bias in out-party perceptions was found to be larger (Ahler and Sood 2018, 964).

If individuals are approaching their entire worldview in “in-group/out-group” terms, as Tajfel, Turner, Levendusky, Ahler, and Sood describe, then it is only logical to expect individuals to view political media in the same manner (Tajfel 1970, Tajfel and Turner 1979, Levendusky 2013a, Ahler and Sood 2018). This human tendency towards “in-group/out-group” stereotyping suggests that individuals are largely not psychologically consuming *any* political media they encounter with blind trust automatically. Nor are they approaching said media with automatic skepticism. Instead, it should be expected that individuals are viewing politically-oriented media through these “in-group/out-group” lenses with which they view the rest of the world, with all of the accompanying stereotypes that go along with that (Ahler and Sood 2018).

#### *Partisan News Media as a Means of Cognitive Dissonance*

Evidence indicates that television news coverage, even of the more mainstream variety, influences this stereotyping of both in-groups and out-groups by consumers when it comes to political parties and candidates (Rahn and Cramer 1996, Morgan et al. 2009). Yet where mainstream news attempts to (at least purportedly) provide unbiased, balanced, and objective

coverage of events, partisan news programming has no such pretense. Instead, partisan news sources blatantly defend the in-group while criticizing, if not outright demonizing, the out-group (Levendusky 2013a, 566, Jamieson and Cappella 2008, Jamieson, et al. 2007). Levendusky and Holbert et al. note that partisan media, particularly cable shows, spend *at least* as much time focusing on why the opposition is wrong as they do defending their own side as being correct (Levendusky 2013a, 566-577, Holbert et al. 2010). This constant criticism of the partisan out-group is intensified by the fact that much of the content shown on these programs includes language designed to invoke negative emotions like anger and disgust on the part of the audience (Levendusky 2013a, 567; Sobieraj and Berry 2011).

Notably, there are indications that when attention is drawn to the differences between groups (especially when the groups are seen to be in conflict – as is frequently the case in partisan media), this in-group/out-group thinking is, unsurprisingly, exacerbated (Abramowitz and Webster 2016, 14, Levendusky 2013a, 567, Mullen, et al. 1992, Brewer 1991). An experiment conducted by Levendusky in 2013 found that exposure to like-minded political media caused participants to “feel more negatively toward the other party, rate them less positively along a number of dimensions, have less support for bipartisanship, and less trust in the other side to do what is right for the country” (Levendusky 2013a, 576). However, it must be noted that Levendusky himself pointed out the critical limitations with such an experiment, namely with respect to external validity. None of the experiments were conducted using random samples (instead coming from an online sample pool), thereby not allowing any type of claims to be made to a broader population. Regardless, Levendusky did find his results to at least establish a “crucial baseline” in this regard (Levendusky 2013a, 570).

Levendusky's findings offer an indication of support for my expectation that, when it comes to the relationship with negative partisanship, it is not only a question of *if* individuals are consuming partisan media, but *how* exactly they are doing so. While my examination herein is not of an experimental nature like Levendusky's, I do acknowledge, as well as attempt to confirm and build upon, his findings with regard to partisan media consumption. When looking at viewership within this study, I take into account both the partisan identification of the respondent as well as the particular partisan media source to determine whether said media is being viewed through a "like-minded" or "oppositional" lens. To make more confident determinations in this regard, I also utilize survey questions which ask about particularly partisan news sources, which also are some of the most widely watched in the country (Schneider 2020).

In determining why this type of partisan programming, which is seemingly so divisive, has also been so popular, I briefly turn to the fields of economics and psychology. Iyengar and Hahn summarize that "it is no mere coincidence that the trend toward a more divided electorate has occurred simultaneously with the revolution in information technology" (2009, 20). This revolution has itself unfolded in tandem with the simultaneous collapse of local news and increasing nationalization of American politics. For much of the twentieth century, most news media business models were largely constrained to localities by necessity, and the distribution of newspapers, local television, and radio, reflected this in both coverage areas and content. In the age of the internet and cable, however, not only is this physical restriction no more, but gone too are the incentives for focusing locally (Hopkins 2018). A concentration on national issues means national, rather than just local, audiences. Furthermore, when considering the "free" nature of much of this media, such as news networks being included in basic cable and satellite packages already purchased by consumers, or news websites online which are largely dependent on ad

revenue rather than subscriptions, it is little wonder that local news media entities of the past have crumbled (Bosman 2019). Likewise, there has been a proliferation of national media entities, almost exclusively covering national issues (to court larger, national audiences), when it comes to political news coverage.

Forty years ago, when it came to televised national news, the majority of Americans got their information from one of three network newscasts. As Iyengar and Hahn explain, “these newscasts offered a homogeneous and generic ‘point-counterpoint’ perspective on the news, thus ensuring that exposure to the news was a common experience” (2009, 20). However, the growth of cable television in the 1980s and 1990s meant an increase in options for consumers, not just in terms of which newscast they wished to watch but whether they wanted to watch news at all, as opposed to other programming. This increase in options for viewers therefore meant increased competition between networks and, later, increasingly internet-based media companies. The “common experience” offered by the evening news broadcasts for decades, having essentially amounted to something of a *détente* between the three main networks, was to become a relic. In its place, responding to market demand, networks would provide more “niche” programming, including, but not limited to, “niche news,” tailored to audience’s partisan leanings and biases (Iyengar and Hahn 2009, 20, Mullainathan and Schleifer 2005, Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2006).

This idea that people prefer to be exposed to arguments, political or otherwise, that they agree with can be traced to 1957, when social psychologist Leon Festinger’s “A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance” was published. The theory established that people largely choose to seek information with which they expect to agree as a way of minimizing dissonance (Festinger 1957). Accordingly, Mullainathan and Schleifer in 2005, as well as Gentzkow and Shapiro in

2006, provided evidence indicating that, at the time, the market appeared to be demanding more, not less, politically slanted and biased news in this more competitive environment. These predictions would turn out to be quite accurate in a short period of time, with the content and viewership of Fox News and MSNBC being prime examples of supporting evidence.

Cognitive dissonance theory was cited by Iyengar and Hahn in their 2009 study of ideological selectivity in media use, where they found that, no matter how they arranged their data, “either at the level of individuals or news stories— the results demonstrate that Fox News is the dominant news source for conservatives” (33). Thus, they conclude that the emergence of Fox News as the most watched cable news provider is evidence of Festinger’s theory in action and a “testimony to the viability of this ‘niche news’ paradigm” (21).

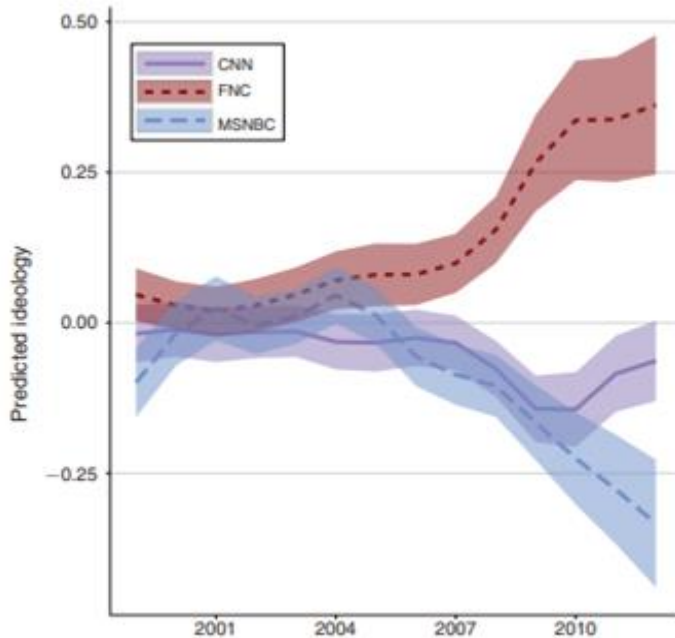
#### *Fox News and the Partisan Divide in Media Trust*

Fox News was, essentially, the first outwardly partisan news channel to come into existence, and it quickly became known for its rightward slant (Groseclose and Milyo 2005, Rutenberg 2000). Grossman and Hopkins summarize that “the ties linking Fox News Channel to the GOP have existed ever since the network was founded in 1996 by the late Roger Ailes, former media consultant to Republican presidents Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush” (552). In 2016, Republican consultant Alex Castellanos went so far as referring to Fox as “the most powerful Republican institution in contemporary American politics” (Lizza 2016).

Even considering the network’s Republican origins, a 2017 study of media bias by Martin and Yurukoglu noted a continuous move towards the right ideologically in terms of content over the years (2567). This trend, as it occurred between 1998-2012, can be seen in Figure 2 by

Martin and Yurukoglu. The midline level which runs across the middle of the chart horizontally represents a general balance of liberal and conservative content. Levels above midline reflect a larger degree of conservative content, scaled so that rising levels on the chart reflect a higher amount of partisan, conservative content shown. Likewise, levels below midline reflect more liberal content overall, with lower levels indicating an increased amount of partisan, liberal content. Fox News is represented by the red dashed line, with CNN shown by the solid purple line and MSNBC the blue dashed line. The upward movement of Fox News shown in this figure, reflecting an increased level of partisan, conservative content, illustrates a trend which occurred in tandem with the increase in negative partisanship observed by Abramowitz and Webster (and shown in Figure 1) (2018).

**FIGURE 2**  
**Estimated Ideology by Channel Year**



Source: Martin and Yurukoglu 2017, 2574.

It is important to note that, despite the fact that the time period reflected in Figure 2 ends in 2012, Martin and Yurukoglu find that this trend has only intensified in the years following,

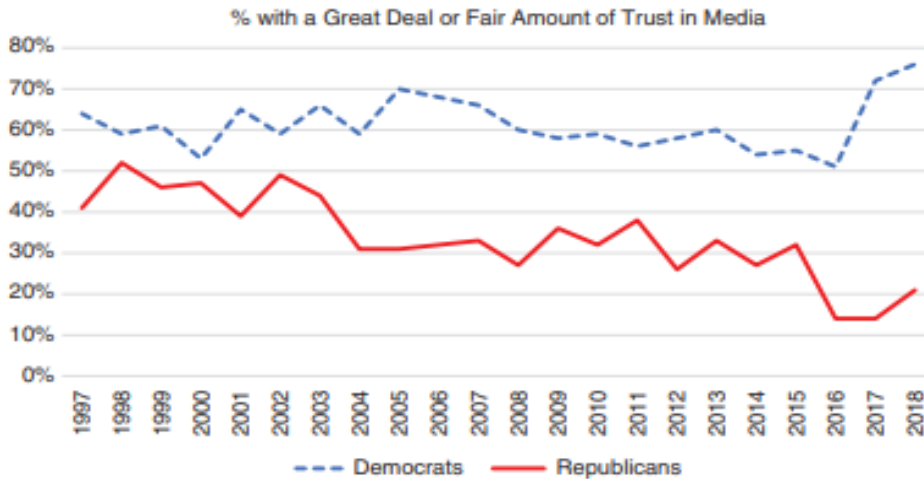
particularly during the Trump era (Martin and Yurukoglu 2017, 2574). The synergy between the Fox News network, the Trump administration, and Trump himself was established during his campaign, and solidified early in his presidency, with the departures of “former prime-time mainstays Bill O’Reilly (who occasionally voiced disagreement with Trump) and Megyn Kelly (who clashed with Trump during the 2016 campaign)” in early 2017 (Grossman and Hopkins 2018, 558). The replacement lineup of Hannity, Tucker Carlson, and Laura Ingraham, would be what Politico reporter Jason Schwartz called “a three-hour nightly block of solid Trump cheerleading” (2017). A Fox News executive even stated that “the network has become a safe space for Trump fans” (Sherman 2018).

In their 2018 study, Grossman and Hopkins found that Fox content has not only moved in an even more distinctly partisan direction since Trump’s inauguration, but that it has also allocated notably more time to negatively portraying the partisan out-group, “devoting an increasing share of attention to the primary themes upon which the president built his political career: cultural nationalism in general and immigration restriction in particular” (559-560). This has not gone unnoticed by the general public. A 2018 Gallup/Knight Foundation survey found Fox News to be tied with Breitbart as the most biased news source in the country (Ralph and Relman 2018).

This heightened rightward trend of Fox content during the Trump years has occurred in tandem with notable patterns in overall media trust levels. Data from Gallup, summarized by Grossman and Hopkins (2018) and visualized in Figure 3, illustrate that while Republicans have consistently held less trust in “the media” than Democrats, overall trust levels in media were gradually declining for both Republicans and Democrats for considerable periods of time. The downward trend in media trust on the part of Republicans can be seen to begin in 1998, dropping

approximately 20 percentage points by 2015. The trust decline for Democrats began almost a decade later, starting in 2005, also dropping about 20 percentage points by 2016 (Grossmann and Hopkins 2018, 557).

**FIGURE 3**  
**The Growing Partisan Gap in Media Trust**



Source: Grossmann and Hopkins 2018, 557 / Gallup

It is important to draw attention to the fact that even amongst this gradually declining media trust, Democrats remained consistently more trusting of news media generally than Republicans. This divide increased considerably, however, in the final years shown in Figure 3, with a notable drop in media trust on the part of Republicans occurring in 2015; unsurprisingly the very same year in which Donald Trump, who made attacks on news media a key part of his campaign and subsequent presidency, began his candidacy (Hampson 2016). Yet where Republican media trust levels plummeted during the first year of Trump’s campaign, Democratic trust levels in media overall skyrocketed in 2016, the first year of Trump’s presidency (Grossmann and Hopkins 2018, 557). This resulted in a sudden widening of the “media trust gap” between Republicans and Democrats beginning in 2016, reaching the staggering 55

percentage point split between the two seen in 2018 (as compared with the 25-percentage point split seen just three years prior) (Grossmann and Hopkins 2018, 557).

Further evidence of this notable partisan trust division can be seen in the findings of the aforesaid 2020 Pew survey referenced in Chapter 1, which showed higher trust levels for several news entities on the part of Democrats, in stark contrast with the overwhelming trust of (and reliance upon) just one network by Republicans (Jurkowitz et al 2020). In this study, nearly two-thirds of Republicans and Republican leaners said they trusted Fox News as a source, with 60% saying they got political/election news there within the past week (Jurkowitz et al. 2020). To say that no other news source (cable or otherwise) comes close to this level of viewership or trust among Republicans is beyond understatement. ABC News is next in line in this Pew ranking of trust among Republicans, but with about half the percentage (33%) of Fox News (65%) (Jurkowitz et al. 2020). Broadly speaking, all of this serves to illustrate the point that where a large number of Democrats trust a variety of news media sources, Republicans by and large distrust “news media” generally - but hold a high degree of trust in Fox News.

The “Fox News Effect” on its viewers’ voting behavior (as demonstrated by the “natural experiment” of increased Republican vote shares in towns where the network is carried) is well-known, and more recent literature has only continued to build upon this phenomenon (Della Vigna and Kaplan 2007, 1228). Yet there seems to be an unstated but underlying equating of trust with viewership in studies of this nature. While cognitive dissonance theory does indicate that people will seek out arguments with which they agree (and this admittedly is largely supported in viewership patterns), much is left unanswered in this regard (Festinger 1957, Iyengar and Hahn 2009). Even though a majority of Republicans reported watching Fox News in the aforesaid 2020 Pew study, that still leaves 40% who did not (Jurkowitz et al. 2020). This

points to the likelihood that a still quite sizeable number of Republicans are consuming media which they do not trust.

This is of particular concern when it comes to examining the relationship of partisan media consumption and partisan sentiment. If a Republican, for example, is watching a particular program which is presenting Republicans in a negative light, the reaction by the Republican viewer in question appears to be contingent on the degree of trust and belief the viewer has in the source. It does not seem logical to expect this viewer to automatically feel colder towards their own party just because they are *viewing* this content. More nuance and context are needed to credibly have such an expectation. This is especially true when it comes to Republicans, considering the high levels of distrust they report having in a large degree of news media (Grossman and Hopkins 2018, Jurkowitz et al. 2020). Yet the same is also true for Democrats, 77% of whom reported distrust of Fox News in the 2020 Pew study, despite it being the most watched cable network (news or otherwise) that same year (Jurkowitz et al. 2020, Schneider 2020). Simply put, examining viewership alone ignores what may be a critical nuance in this regard, and warrants the investigation I undertake herein.

What does not appear to be in question, however, is the standard of Fox News being used as the representative of a “Republican partisan news network” in academic and journalistic works. As Jurkowitz et al. conclude, “it would be hard to overstate [Fox News’s] connection as a trusted go-to source of political news for Republicans” (Jurkowitz et al 2020). Thus, I also utilize Fox News in my analysis.

## MSNBC

The increased variety of sources which Democrats and Democratic leaners trust and rely on currently means that there is no exact equivalent of Fox News on the left, though this does not prohibit comparisons to be made in this regard. CNN may have been found to be the most trusted source (narrowly) of Democrats by Jurkowitz et al. in 2020, but the standard of MSNBC as being the best counterpoint to Fox, particularly with regard to the partisan nature of its content and corresponding ratings, is well supported. (Levendusky 2015, Arceneaux 2015, Levendusky 2013b, Sherman 2018, Collman 2018, Grossmann and Hopkins 2018).

MSNBC entered the market the same year as Fox (1996), but unlike its conservative rival, did not start out as a partisan news source. In its first decade of existence, it largely featured hosts, opinions and guests representing a range of political beliefs (Martin and Yurukoglu 2017, 2569). It was the success of *Countdown with Keith Olbermann* in the mid 2000's which largely resulted in the change in format. Olbermann, known for his unabashedly liberal and anti-Bush monologues (initially to the chagrin of the network's management) had considerable success in attracting viewers, even going on to beat Fox's superstar Bill O'Reilly in the ratings on September 7, 2007 (Sanneh 2013). In light of the success of a more outwardly liberal program, and therefore realizing the incentives to offer more biased, partisan programming, MSNBC made the decision to alter its nighttime lineup accordingly (Steinberg 2007). By 2008, the station had "become, essentially, a liberal network," eventually alluding to this by adopting the slogan "Lean Forward" (Sanneh 2013).

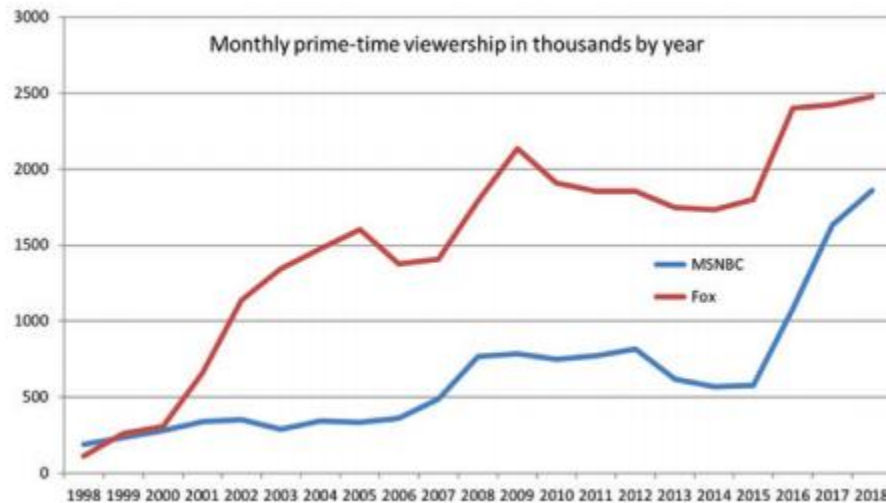
The previously mentioned 2017 study of media bias by Martin and Yurukoglu illustrates the change in format when the network became more partisan, as shown in Figure 2. As they describe, "MSNBC closely tracks CNN in the early 2000s, but then moves left following the

format switch in 2006” (Martin and Yurukoglu 2017, 2567). Again, this figure is limited by the endpoint of the content analysis of Martin and Yurukoglu (2012), but, as with Fox, there is no evidence that this trend has reversed. The arrival of the Trump campaign and presidency, particularly as covered by the liberal primetime lineup of Chris Hayes, Rachel Maddow, and Lawrence O’Donnell, indicates that, if anything, MSNBC’s content has only veered further left in recent years (Meltzer 2019).

Also like Fox News, the partisan nature of the network’s coverage has been acknowledged by the public. In the same 2018 Gallup/Knight Foundation survey which found Fox News to be tied in the rankings with Breitbart for #1 as the country’s most biased news source, MSNBC was next in line, coming in at #3 (Ralph and Relman 2018). Ideological media on the left might be less overwhelmingly driven by one source, but the point remains that the standard of MSNBC as serving as the liberal counterpoint to Fox News in terms of entity-type, content, audience, and public perception is warranted.

In comparing rates of viewership with levels of partisan bias between Fox News and MSNBC, a pattern can be observed. Figures 2 and 4 being examined together illustrates this clearly. Figure 4 (by Grossman and Hopkins 2018) shows Nielsen ratings for both networks over time, and can be compared to the previously referenced Figure 2 (by Martin and Yurukoglu 2017), which shows bias levels in cable news. General increases in ratings for Fox News and MSNBC since their debuts are observed in Figure 4, with a distinct uptick for both networks observed in the mid-2000’s. These ratings increases occur largely in tandem with an increase in overall partisan bias seen on the part of both networks, as measured by Martin and Yurukoglu and shown in Figure 2 (2017).

**FIGURE 4**  
**Fox Still Leads the Cable News Ratings Race**



Source: Grossmann and Hopkins 2018, 559 / Nielsen / Pew Research Center.

The effect of Donald Trump’s campaign and subsequent presidency (both of which, it should be noted, were incredibly polarizing) on these two networks’ viewership levels (also observed in Figure 4) brought about another notable spike in ratings for both networks – taking both networks to their highest ratings ever. This supports the idea that, put simply, bias, partisanship, and attention drawn to in-groups and out-groups results in more viewers. Fox News and MSNBC have both been rewarded with high ratings while serving as the “loyal network” and “loyal opposition” of Trump, respectively. Where Fox News was the most watched cable network in 2020, coming in fifth overall (after the broadcast networks CBS, NBC, ABC, and Fox Network, respectively), MSNBC was next in line at sixth place (Schneider 2020). As Iyengar and Hahn conclude, “when the audience is polarized, ‘news with an edge’ makes for market success” (Iyengar and Hahn 2009, 33). This is illustrative of the theories of social identity and cognitive dissonance, and the patterns observed in Figures 2 and 4 together illustrate that audiences have clearly demonstrated a preference for partisanship in cable news media, and,

likewise, cable news channels are providing more partisan content. Furthermore, incentives for content which is “middle of the road” in nature, or which offers varying perspectives, appears to be continuously dwindling. With media overall becoming more distinctly partisan, in addition to the sharply partisan patterns of media trust previously discussed, partisan viewers can then be expected to increasingly view media sources through either a “like-minded” or “oppositional” lens. This not only reinforces the argument against automatically equating viewership with agreement but heightens the importance of examining how viewers react when viewing “oppositional” content.

#### *Possible Backfire Effect and Recent Viewership Patterns*

While it again is logical, especially when considering Cognitive Dissonance Theory, that individuals are for the most part going to be more inclined to engage with political media they are more likely to agree with, the work of Bail et al. (2018) raises another important possible issue for when this is not the case. Apart from the expectation of individuals simply being less “moved” by content when they are highly skeptical of it, these authors indicate the possibility of another reaction. In an experiment they conducted in 2018 in which partisans were exposed to opposing ideology on social media, a backfire effect was observed, particularly on the part of Republicans. Though Democrats did report slightly (though not statistically significant) more liberal attitudes following exposure to opposing views, Republicans exhibited a highly significant degree of more conservative views post-treatment (Bail et al. 2018, 9217, 9220). Therefore, when individuals are consuming partisan media with which they disagree (an increase of which was observed in 2020), then the backfire effect of high negative partisanship, particularly on the part of Republicans, would be a possibility (Jurkowitz, et al. 2020, Mitchell et al. 2021).

Recent data concerning partisan viewership habits illustrate why, despite a tendency of partisans to consume like-minded media, this concern of viewership not necessarily indicating agreement is of particular concern at this point in time. Within the last year, in attempting to determine whether partisans are viewing more media content on the “opposing side,” or, conversely, doubling down and exclusively viewing content with which they agree, the answer appears to be: both. The Pew Research Center found, based on data collected in late 2019, that 23% of Democrats reported getting political news from Fox News in the past week, despite the fact that 27% of those same individuals also reported distrusting it (Jurkowitz, et al. 2020). In further Pew surveys conducted in November 2019, September 2020, and November 2020, about a quarter of both Republicans and Democrats reported relying *solely* on distinctly “right-wing” or “left-wing” media sources, respectively. However, these same surveys revealed that 34% of Republicans and 48% of Democrats turned to a mixture of right-leaning and left-leaning sources. Furthermore, 41% of Republicans and 27% of Democrats did not have a consistent “media diet” across the three surveys at all (Mitchell, et al. 2021). In sum, several different viewership behaviors on the part of partisans have been observed recently.

To be clear, these findings are not only relatively new, but also largely reflect those of an American populace enduring a global pandemic while also witnessing a highly polarizing presidential contest. To say that findings from 2020 might very well be an anomaly, rather than indicative of a more long-term trend, is quite an understatement. However, the point here is not to compare partisan viewership habits over time, but to instead point to this as evidence that viewership alone does not inherently mean agreement or trust, even when a large number of individuals are only getting information from partisan sources with which they agree.

## *Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses*

To summarize, the prior research described herein serves to illustrate four simultaneously occurring trends. The first of these is sharply intensifying negative partisanship on the part of the public. Individuals are viewing the political out-group in a more distinctly negative light, and it has been demonstrated that news media can exacerbate stereotypes which individuals have about both their own in-group and about who they view as the outgroup. This exacerbation of viewer stereotypes should be expected when considering the second trend observed: increasingly partisan content on cable news. This is very clearly observed in the content seen on the cable networks Fox News and MSNBC. A third trend, of distinctly partisan patterns of media trust, has also emerged within this same timeframe. Democrats have a much higher level of trust when it comes to a variety of news sources, as opposed to Republicans who overwhelmingly trust one source: Fox News. The fourth concurrent trend is that, simply, more and more viewers are watching those networks.

Considering the timelines of these occurrences (and visualized in Figures 1 through 4), it appears that these occurrences are very possibly related. Yet ascertaining causal order, or to what degree partisan news consumption is a cause versus an effect of negative partisanship, is a difficult, if not impossible, task (Mutz 2006, 613). While increased hostility among viewers toward the opposition party might be observed among heavy consumers of partisan media, this would not be enough to conclude that partisan media is necessarily the cause of this hostility. This might be the case, but the reverse could also be surmised: that partisan content is being consumed at a higher level *as a result of* viewers who are already increasingly hostile towards the “other side.”

A theory that I propose in this regard is that the relationship between increasingly partisan, “out-group negative” cable news and rising levels of negative partisanship is akin to the “vicious cycle of mutually reinforcing” behavior which Abramowitz and Webster describe as occurring between the mass and the elite (2016, 22). The cycle in this case appears to involve consumers of partisan media and partisan media content providers: with viewers taking their cues about political parties, figures, and issues from partisan programming (and becoming increasingly negatively partisan), while creators of said partisan content are simultaneously taking cues from viewers and offering increasingly partisan content (in response to ratings). In other words, causation appears to be circular. Though this study will not be able to establish causation in this regard, my analysis is an attempt to establish “crucial baseline,” such as that established by Levendusky (2013a, 570), in which I use numerous tests to determine if there is, in fact, a relationship between these occurrences.

When considering that increased bias/partisanship in coverage means an increased drawing of attention to the differences between the respective in-groups and out-groups (if not outright stereotyping), then a simultaneous increase in negative affect for the out-group should be expected based on the existing literature previously discussed (Abramowitz and Webster 2016, 14, Levendusky 2013a, 567, Mullen, et al. 1992, Brewer 1991). Yet it cannot simply be presumed that viewership of partisan networks alone inherently indicates identification with the in-group presented on the respective network (and, likewise, *against* the out-group being negatively portrayed), especially in light of recent findings relating to viewership. There is, therefore, no reason to expect individuals to hold increasingly negative viewpoints towards the out-group presented on a particular program (as Levendusky observed in 2013) if the individuals

watching do not themselves actually view the said group as the out-group. In fact, the work of Bail, et al. in 2018 indicates that the opposite effect might take place in some scenarios.

To expect an increase in negative affect for the out-group among viewers instead requires a high degree of confidence that the viewers in question largely already share and/or are convinced by the viewpoints being presented. For it can be reasonably assumed that individuals who are truly relying upon these respective partisan networks for information (as opposed to passively, curiously, or angrily watching) likely hold a higher degree of trust in what they are watching, and are not viewing through a skeptical lens.

The prior literature therefore combines to largely indicate that examining the relationship between partisan news consumption and partisan sentiment is, in and of itself, not enough to draw conclusions from. For example, to simply evaluate the relationship between viewership of MSNBC and feelings towards Republicans (or, on the other hand, viewership of Fox News and feelings towards Democrats), does not indicate the nature of said viewership and could possibly yield misleading results. Such an analysis would not reveal a backfire effect on the part of those aforesaid Republicans watching MSNBC, even if one were taking place. This is an especially salient point when considering the increased “crossing over” of partisan viewership habits observed in late 2019 and 2020 (Jurkowitz, et al. 2020, Mitchell et al. 2021). In other words, *how* people are watching these programs appears to matter, and a more nuanced evaluation, taking these concerns into account, is thus in order.

In light of the findings previously discussed, it does not seem overly presumptuous to expect that Republicans who watch Fox News are more likely to be trusting and less skeptical of the content on that network than Democrats watching the same. Likewise with Democrats and MSNBC (as opposed to Republicans). Accordingly, I expect that those who consume more like-

minded partisan media (e.g. Republicans watching Fox News and Democrats watching MSNBC) to express more negatively partisan feelings than partisans (and partisan leaners) who do not watch programs on these networks. Additionally, while the focus here is on negative partisanship, I investigate “positive partisanship” as well, for the purposes of comparison.

Hypothesis 1, the “like-minded media viewership hypothesis,” therefore contends that:

**Hypothesis 1:** Increased viewership of a network aligned with one’s political in-group will result in increasingly negative views of the opposing political group and increasingly positive views about their own side.

For instance, I expect that, among Republicans, increasing viewership of Fox News will correlate with increasingly negative views of the political left and increasingly positive views of the political right. Likewise, among Democrats, I expect that increasing viewership of MSNBC will correlate with increasingly negative views of the political right and increasingly positive views of the left.

Where Hypothesis 1 concerns “like-minded” viewing, I do not expect “oppositional viewers” to also express an increased level of negatively partisan feelings for the out-group presented on the respective network. If individuals are consuming media which is largely devoted to portraying their own in-group in a negative light, it cannot be assumed that the individuals are going to be trusting of what they are seeing. I instead expect a backfire effect such as that observed by Bail et al. (2018) when it comes to increased viewership levels of “oppositional media.” Therefore, in the “oppositional media viewership hypothesis,” I expect that:

**Hypothesis 2:** Increased viewership of a network aligned with one’s political out-group will result in increasingly negative views of the individual’s opposing political group and increasingly positive views about their own side.

In this case, I specifically predict that among Democrats, increasing viewership of Fox News will correlate with increasingly negative views of the political right and increasingly

positive views of the political left. Among Republicans, I expect that increasing viewership of MSNBC will also again correlate with increasingly negative views of the political left and increasingly positive views of the right.

The nature of trust in these news sources is an even more forthright assessment of how individuals are consuming these media sources (e.g. relying upon, agreeing with, etc., as opposed to watching with a high degree of skepticism). There is less reliance on context (e.g. partisanship) to estimate trust and thus more confidence can be had in the findings in this regard. Accordingly, in the “media trust” hypothesis, I predict that:

**Hypothesis 3:** Regardless of respondents’ partisan identification, higher trust levels in a partisan network will correspond with increasingly negative views toward the political out-group represented by the respective network and increasingly positive views toward the respective network’s political in-group.

For instance, regardless of the partisan identification of the respondent, I expect higher levels of trust in Fox News to correlate with increasingly negative views of the left and increasingly positive views of the right. Likewise, I expect higher levels of trust in MSNBC to correlate with increasingly negative views of the right, and increasingly positive views of the left (also regardless of respondent’s partisan identification).

Finally, I expect that taking the context of partisanship into account along with trust levels of the respective partisan media sources will reflect an even stronger relationship with increased partisan sentiment. The “partisanship and media trust hypothesis” therefore contends that:

**Hypothesis 4:** Increased trust in a network aligned with one’s political in-group will result in increasingly negative views of the opposing political group and increasingly positive views about their own side.

In this case, I specifically expect that, among Republicans, higher levels of trust in Fox News will correlate with increasingly negative views of the left, and increasingly positive views of the right. Among Democrats, I expect higher levels of trust in MSNBC will correlate with increasingly negative views of the right, and increasingly positive views of left.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### *Datasets*

To test these hypotheses, I utilize three data sources from separate ANES surveys: the 2016 and 2020 Main Studies, as well as a Social Media Special Study (of Facebook users) conducted in 2020. The established nature of the ANES, being something of an “industry standard” within American political science literature, provides a great deal of confidence when it comes to data reliability.

Each of the three datasets offers unique characteristics for examination. When considering the aforementioned viewership changes which occurred in 2020, as compared with 2016, utilizing the two ANES Main Studies provides one sample from a population with more “like-minded viewing” among partisans (2016), and another from a population featuring more “oppositional viewing” (2020) (Mitchell, et al. 2021). The previously discussed programming changes which occurred between 2016 and 2020, particularly on Fox News, will also be taken into account in looking at both of these samples.

In terms of survey questions asked across the three samples, the differences therein represent both challenges and opportunities. A difficulty that arises is that the different questions asked do not always allow for things to be measured in the exact same way across the three studies. On the other hand, these differences are able to shed light in different ways on the patterns taking place, and together allow for a more thorough examination of the relationship between partisan media consumption and partisan sentiment. The questions asked in the 2016 and 2020 Main Studies allow for analysis of the relationship between *consumption* of Fox News/MSNBC programming (as well as partisan identification) and partisan feelings. The 2020 Social Media Survey, on the other hand, includes questions which specifically ask about

respondents' *trust levels* in Fox News and MSNBC generally, which provide perhaps the most direct measurement in this study of *how* individuals are consuming programs on these networks (and, accordingly, these relationships with partisan sentiment).

It is critical to mention that neither of the 2020 surveys were conducted in person. In the case of the 2020 Main Study, web and video/phone respondents were exclusively used, due to the COVID-19 pandemic (“Announcement to the American National Election Studies (ANES) User Community”). The 2020 Social Media Study used an entirely online panel provided by NORC at the University of Chicago (“User’s Guide and Codebook”). Malhotra and Krosnick provide evidence that face-to-face sample data contains higher accuracy than data collected over the internet, so this is admittedly a downside (2007). However, it should also be pointed out that a high number of ANES Main Study surveys are conducted online as well. Over 70% of 2016 ANES Main Study responses were collected online, and, it bears repeating, these data are frequently relied upon by political scientists (“User’s Guide and Codebook” 2019, 3).

Along these same lines, Facebook users entirely make up the 2020 Social Media Study sample, and while this also limits the generalizability of results (not all Americans are online, let alone Facebook users) there is evidence that helps somewhat in this regard (“2020 Social Media Study”). A 2019 Pew survey found that no less than 69% of Americans use Facebook (Gramlich 2019). Past political science research on this topic, for example, has relied upon Twitter, which, as of 2019, only 22% of Americans reported using (Bail et al. 2018, Gramlich 2019). Thus, if social media usage must be a prerequisite for respondents in a survey, then Facebook users reflect more of the American population at large than other platforms. Simply put, the positives (the questions of trust levels in Fox News and MSNBC, along with the strong reliability factor of

ANES administering the survey) appear to strongly outweigh the negatives described here.

### *Dependent Variables*

When it comes to measuring the partisan feelings of respondents within these samples, there are, in essence, two dependent variables used across the three studies: feeling thermometer ratings for the political right as well as the political left (with 0° being the “coolest,” or most negative rating and 100° being the “warmest” or most positive rating). However, this is a bit more involved than it may initially appear. The dependent variables are not simply the results of the feeling thermometers for the Republican Party and Democratic Party (such as those used by Abramowitz and Webster in their 2016 study). Instead, I have created additive indices which provide averages of different feeling thermometer ratings. The 2016 and 2020 Main Study summary variables I created each take into account respondent feelings towards the respective party itself, the party’s recent presidential candidate, and conservatives (for the “right” summary variable) or liberals (for the “left” summary variable).

The intent behind this is to better account for who and what can be described as comprising the left and right politically in a general sense (and, likewise, who and what individuals are holding opinions about). This is especially important when considering the strong possibility that a particularly polarizing figure like Donald Trump might contain both higher and lower than average ratings than those for the Republican Party or conservatives (Jones 2020). Summary variables of this nature allow for elements such as these to be taken into account, but without any one particular aspect (or individual) overtaking the larger picture. The choice to include party, presidential candidate, and liberals/conservatives (equally) is made to provide a limited variety which broadly captures who and what are being discussed on the partisan networks in question.

All three studies contain pre-election and post-election questionnaires (as is typical for ANES), with some questions being asked only asked in the pre-election survey or post-election survey, and others asked in both.<sup>2</sup> In the case of the 2016 and 2020 Main Studies, where feeling thermometers were only available for the parties themselves in the pre-election surveys, and for conservatives and liberals only in post-election surveys, the presidential candidate thermometers were included in both (“2016 Time Series Study,” “2020 Time Series Study”). I calculate an average between the two mean presidential thermometer ratings (pre-vote and post-vote), with that average in turn being what is included in the respective summary variables. Complete listings of variables utilized in each summary variable for the 2016 and 2020 Main Studies are included in Tables A1 and A2 in Appendix A.

Similarly to the 2016 and 2020 Main Studies, the 2020 Social Media Study also included feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, Donald Trump, and the Republican Party (“2020 Social Media Study”). In this study, the feeling thermometer ratings for the parties themselves were included in both pre- and post-election surveys, but the other variables were only included in the pre-election questionnaire. Averages of the pre- and post-election party feeling thermometer values are used here in the same way as the pre- and post-election means were used for the presidential candidate feeling thermometers in the 2016 and 2020 Main Studies. As with those studies, the summary variables average these pre/post values, with this mean in turn being averaged with the other two variables.

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<sup>2</sup> Pre-election surveys for the 2016 ANES were conducted between September 7 and November 7, 2016, with post-election surveys taking place between November 9, 2016 and January 8, 2017 (“2016 Time Series Study”). Pre-election interviews for the 2020 ANES Main Study took place between August 18 and November 3, 2020, with the post-election interview period taking place between November 8, 2020 and January 4, 2021 (“2020 Time Series Study”). For the 2020 Social Media Study, the pre-election period was August 20 through September 17, 2020, and the post-election surveys were conducted between November 1, 2020 and January 1, 2021 (“2020 Social Media Study”).

The 2020 Social Media Study, being more limited in its questions than the Main Studies, did not include feeling thermometers for liberals or conservatives. For the respective “left” and “right” summary variables created herein, in their place I use pre-election feeling thermometers for Planned Parenthood and the National Rifle Association (NRA) (“2020 Social Media Study”).<sup>3</sup> The constitutive variables averaged within the summary variables for the 2020 Social Media Study are listed in Tables A3 in Appendix A.

It should be noted here that the possibility of Planned Parenthood and the NRA being more highly charged (and possibly triggering more intense negative feelings than feeling thermometers for liberals and conservatives) has been taken into consideration.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, just as feeling thermometers for liberals and conservatives (or close comparisons) were not included in the 2020 Social Media Study, the thermometers for Planned Parenthood and the NRA were not included in the 2016 Main Study. This means that there is no one consistent grouping which makes up the summary variables across all three sets. Despite this, it still seems wise to include different aspects of the parties, leaders, and groups being portrayed in partisan media, rather than just the parties themselves, for the reasons previously stated.

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<sup>3</sup> Planned Parenthood and NRA feeling thermometers were only included in the pre-election survey of the ANES 2020 Social Media Study.

<sup>4</sup> To account for this variety, alternative summary variables were created for the left and right with regard to the ANES 2020 Main Study (as it had feeling thermometer questions pertaining to liberals and conservatives as well as Planned Parenthood and the NRA) to determine if there were key differences in results. The alternative 2020 Main Study summary variables therefore average the means for party, presidential candidate (pre/post mean), and Planned Parenthood (for the left)/the NRA (for the right). Models were also run using these alternate dependent variables, but no striking differences were found in results. A complete list of the constitutive variables of the alternate summary variables is included in Table A4 in Appendix A, and tables containing the regression models using these alternate summary variables can be found in Appendix E.

### *Independent Variables*

Independent variables for the analyses testing the first two hypotheses (and using the 2016 and 2020 Main Studies datasets) are how much Fox News and MSNBC are being watched. To measure this, additive variables have been created, which take into account the number of shows on each network being reported by the respondent as “watched regularly.” As possible responses to the 2016 pre-election survey question of “Which of the following television programs do you watch regularly? Please check any that you watch at least once a month,” there were four Fox News choices: *Hannity*, *The O’Reilly Factor*, *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren*, and *The Kelly File*. There were three MSNBC choices as responses to the same question in 2016: *The Rachel Maddow Show*, *All In with Chris Hayes*, and *Hardball with Chris Matthews*.

I did not include *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren* in the Fox News Additive Variable. The reasoning for removing this program is twofold: first, there is a matter of timeslot. Where *On the Record* aired at 7:00PM, the remaining three programs on each network aired in the primetime bloc of 8:00PM, 9:00PM, and 10:00PM, allowing for a more balanced composition of the two variables in this regard. Second, host Greta Van Susteren announced her immediate departure from Fox News on September 6, 2016, with Brit Hume taking over her show through the day before the election (Gold 2016). Considering that 2016 ANES pre-election survey data was collected between September 7 (the day after Van Susteren’s announcement) and November 7, 2016 (the last day the program aired – with Hume hosting), the possibility of understandable confusion on the part of respondents seems higher than usual in this regard (“Deeply Grateful to All of You,” “2016 Time Series Study”). Even if a respondent had been a regular viewer of this program, and perhaps still was (albeit with Hume as host) at the

time of answering the question, it is difficult to reasonably ascertain what an accurate response would be in this situation. The three remaining program options on Fox News are therefore included in the 2016 Fox News additive variables, with all three options for MSNBC being included in that network's respective additive variable.<sup>5</sup>

A similar approach was taken with regard to the viewership variables in the 2020 Main Study sample. Once again there are more Fox News options than MSNBC, with Fox News choices of “frequently watched” being *Hannity*, *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, *The Ingraham Angle*, *The Five*, *The Story with Martha MacCallum*, *Special Report with Bret Baier*, and *Fox & Friends*. MSNBC shows included were *The Rachel Maddow Show*, *All In with Chris Hayes*, *The Last Word with Lawrence O’Donnell*, *Morning Joe*, and *The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour with Brian Williams* (“2020 Time Series Study,”). As with the 2016 sample, the choice was made to limit the 2020 Fox News program options used in additive variables to provide as fair of a comparable measure as possible. Looking again at primetime programs results in the Fox News shows *Hannity*, *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, and *The Ingraham Angle* being included in the additive variable, along with the MSNBC programs *The Rachel Maddow Show*, *All In with Chris Hayes*, and *The Last Word with Lawrence O’Donnell*. These programs are therefore all included in the respective summary variables.

*Special Report* and *The Story* on Fox News, as well as *The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour* on MSNBC, are all largely considered “news” (rather than opinion) programs on the respective networks (Battaglio 2021). However, both of the Fox News shows in question aired at quite different times than the

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<sup>5</sup> Additional regression models were run to see if any striking variances were found among specific programs on each network (rather than the networks themselves). Nothing particularly notable was found in this regard. The independent variables as they pertain to viewership in this case are the particular programs themselves. Once again, *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren* was removed from these models for the reasons previously described.

MSNBC option (*Special Report* and *The Story* air at 6PM and 7PM, respectively, where *The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour* airs at 11PM). Because of the inability to “match” these particular programs across the two networks based off of timeslot, Nielsen ratings of each program were examined across a four-year period beginning on December 31, 2016 and ending January 1, 2021. Average ratings for *The Story* were more comparable to the MSNBC program than *Special Report* (“Special Report,” “The Story,” “The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour”). Therefore, *The Story* is included in the Fox News additive variable and *Special Report* is not. *The Five* is a panel show with no comparable options for MSNBC within this survey, so this Fox News program is excluded from the respective additive variable as well. On the other hand, *Fox & Friends* and *Morning Joe*, representing the morning shows on each network, are included.<sup>6</sup>

The 2020 Main Study also provides a key additional variable that the 2016 survey does not, in which the question is asked: “In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the news media when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly?” (“2020 Time Series Study”). In line with my expectation that trust (as opposed to mere viewership) of political media is an important factor to consider in this regard, I expect that including this variable in models will show differing results. Based on prior research previously discussed, I expect the answers to this question to take on a reliability partisan bent, with liberals showing higher degrees of trust in news media generally (Grossman and Hopkins 2018, 557; Jurkowitz et al. 2020). Regression models for the 2020 Main Study variables are therefore run both with and without this variable. In the analyses that follow, this “trust news” variable is coded from 0-4, with 0 indicating none and 4 indicating a great deal. My expectation is that in the models in

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<sup>6</sup> While *Special Report* and *The Five* were not included in the Fox News additive variable for the reasons described to allow for fair comparison with MSNBC, models were created which included them so that results for each programming option could be observed. No particularly striking occurrences were observed in this regard.

which this variable is included, the apparent effect of partisan news viewership on partisan sentiment will be reduced (because of the importance of trust).

Critically, the 2020 Social Media Study asks about trust levels in (as opposed to viewership of) several media entities and networks overall (as opposed to viewership of specific programs), allowing for a straight-forward examination of the relationship between trust in partisan news sources and partisan sentiment. The survey question of “How much do you think political information from each of these sources can be trusted?” contains options for both Fox News and MSNBC as networks, rather than particular programming options being listed (and thus removing the need for new variables, additive or otherwise, to be created in this regard).

The partisan identification of respondents, using the 7-scale Party ID summary variable contained in each ANES study, are additional independent variables used in the analyses conducted for all three samples studied. A list of these variables is included as Table B5 in Appendix B. To more clearly interpret interactions between respondent party identification and viewership, dummy variables were created for Republicans and Democrats (including leaners), with a value of 5 or greater indicating “Republican,” and 3 or less indicating “Democrat.” For models in which the interaction with viewership and partisan identification is not observed, these 7-scale Party ID variables are instead used as control variables.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Independents (who are coded as 4) in the Party ID Summary variable are removed from this sample to more clearly compare Democrats and Republicans (and leaners on each side).

### *Control Variables*

Several control variables are included in the regression models run to better isolate the relationships being investigated, in line with those used in past studies of a similar nature (Abramowitz and McCoy 2019, 145). Complete lists of these control variables for each dataset are included in Appendix C. To allow for statistical analysis utilizing nominal variables, dummy variables were created for gender, race, marital status, employment status, sexual orientation, and region.<sup>8</sup>

Of particular note are control variables used in the 2016 and 2020 Main Studies to account for television news watched on a network other than the one being used as an independent variable in the respective model. In the case of Fox News, this “non-Fox News” variable contains all “frequently watched” television news program options that are not Fox News programs, and is used as a control when Fox News viewership is an independent variable in a model (and likewise with MSNBC and the “non-MSNBC” control variable). The “non-Fox News” and “non-MSNBC” variables are dummy variables so that any viewership of a program not on the particular network results in a value of 1, and no viewership of another program results in a 0. A list of the programming constitutive variables for each of these are included within Tables C1 and C2 in Appendix C. These “non-Fox News” and “non-MSNBC” variables are not used in the models which are run using the 2020 Social Media Study sample, as 1.) the survey questions pertain to trust and not viewership, and 2.) Fox News and MSNBC are the only television networks (or, for that matter, programs) which trust levels are asked about (thus

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<sup>8</sup> The respective dummy variables being: male, white, married, employed, heterosexual, and south.

necessitating both “trust in Fox News” and “trust in MSNBC” to be included in regression models).

### *Statistical Analyses*

Ordinary least squares regression models with robust standard errors are used to test the hypotheses. To thoroughly test the first “like-minded media viewership” hypothesis, I break it into four specific components, as follows: 1. Among Republicans, increasing viewership of Fox News will correlate with increasingly negative views of the left, 2. Also among Republicans, increasing viewership of Fox News will correlate with increasingly positive views of the right, 3. Among Democrats, increasing viewership of MSNBC will correlate with increasingly negative views of the right, and 4. Among Democrats, increasing viewership of MSNBC will correlate with increasingly positive views of the left.

The regression models used here examine the possibility of an interactive effect of viewership and partisanship by utilizing, as independent variables, the Fox News and MSNBC additive variables created in addition to party ID dummy variables. The dummy variable “Republican” is interacted with the amount of Fox News watched and “Democrat” is interacted with the amount of MSNBC watched. Specifically, the first component of Hypothesis 1 is tested by using models which contain the interaction term Republican x Amount of Fox News Watched as the independent variable and the “left” summary feeling thermometer as the dependent variable. The second component is tested with models using the interaction term Republican x Amount of Fox News Watched as the independent variable and the “right” summary variable as the dependent variable. The third component is tested by models which interact Democrat x Amount of MSNBC Watched as the independent variable and the “right” summary variable as the dependent variable. The fourth component is tested by interacting Democrat X Amount of

MSNBC Watched as the independent variable and the “left” summary variable as the dependent variable. Control variables are used throughout all of these models.

I utilize both the 2016 and 2020 ANES Main Studies for statistical tests of Hypothesis 1, to examine results across these quite different samples (with respect to viewership). Two versions of the 2020 models are included in each table. The first version matches the 2016 models, with the second version including the “trust news” variable, to observe differences which occur when this is introduced.

As with Hypothesis 1, I also break the second, “oppositional media viewership hypothesis” (which examines the possibility of a backfire effect) into four components for testing: 1. Among Democrats, increased viewership of Fox News will correlate with increasingly positive views of the left, 2. Among Democrats, increased viewership of Fox News will correlate with increasingly negative views of the right, 3. Among Republicans, increasing viewership of MSNBC will correlate with increasingly positive views of the right, and 4. Among Republicans, increasing viewership of MSNBC will correlate with increasingly negative views of the left.

As this second hypothesis is essentially the first hypothesis “in reverse,” I test this accordingly and use the same regression models run for the first hypothesis. Here, I interpret the constant and use only the appropriate “amount of Fox News watched” or “amount of MSNBC watched” variable as the independent variable. For example, the first part of Hypothesis 1 is tested by using a model which contains the interaction term of Republican x Amount of Fox News Watched as the independent variable and the “left” summary feeling thermometer as the dependent variable. Because the constant in this case is a Democrat, to test the first part of Hypothesis 2, I therefore use the same model but only examine the coefficient for the amount of

Fox News watched as the independent variable (with the “left” feeling thermometer still being used as the dependent variable). This same method is repeated to test each component of the second hypothesis.

The third and fourth hypotheses, which correspond to respondent trust levels of Fox News and MSNBC (rather than viewership), are tested using regression models which rely on the 2020 ANES Social Media Study. Models testing Hypothesis 3 are run in which the amount of trust in each network (on a scale of 0-4) are used as independent variables, with feeling thermometers of the left and right (using the summary variables) as the dependent variables. Both “amount of trust” variables (for Fox News and MSNBC) are incorporated into each of these models, so that they act as a control against the other. For example, when testing the relationship between the amount of trust in Fox News and feelings towards Democrats, “amount of trust in MSNBC” is incorporated as a control variable. This seems appropriate as “Trust in Fox News” and “Trust in MSNBC” are the only two television networks asked about in this survey (“2020 Social Media Study”).<sup>9</sup>

Hypothesis 4, which also takes partisan identification into account (along with trust of the respective networks) is tested using interactive models. The interactive effects of trust levels in Fox News, and being Republican, as well as that of trust levels in MSNBC, and being a Democrat, are independent variables in this case.

Control variables are once again utilized for the models which test Hypotheses 3 and 4. For the non-interactive models which test Hypothesis 3, the 7-scale party ID summary variable is used as a control.

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<sup>9</sup> The other trust level questions asked in this sample asked about the following sources: New York Times, USA Today, Facebook posts, and Twitter posts.

## Chapter 4: Results

### *Viewership and Partisan Sentiment within the 2016 and 2020 ANES Main Study Samples*

Prior to examining any regression models, it is important to first explore some quite revealing descriptive statistics about the particular samples utilized. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, the central theory which drives the hypotheses (informed by prior research) is that the relationship between viewership of partisan media and partisan feeling is likely contingent upon *how* individuals feel about what they are viewing. However, the two tables which follow indicate how, if too cursory a glance is taken, incorrect (or, perhaps more accurately, incomplete) conclusions may

**TABLE 1**  
**Fox News Viewership and Partisan Sentiment in 2016**

|                                    | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Left | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Right |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Watched At Least One Fox News Show | 25.86                              | 65.80                               |
| Watched No Fox News Show Regularly | 52.80                              | 42.38                               |

Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and Conservatives. Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party, and Liberals.

*On the Record with Greta Van Susteren* not included.

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019, <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE 2**  
**MSNBC Viewership and Partisan Sentiment in 2016**

|                                 | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Left | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Right |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Watched At Least One MSNBC Show | 64.40                              | 33.30                               |
| Watched No MSNBC Show Regularly | 45.28                              | 48.85                               |

Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and Conservatives. Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party, and Liberals.

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019, <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

Table 1 provides initial indication that regular viewership of at least one program on Fox News appears to correlate with cooler feelings for the left and warmer feelings for the right in 2016. Likewise, Table 2 indicates the reverse in regard to MSNBC, with corresponding cooler feelings for the right and warmer feelings for the left (also using the 2016 Main Study sample). However, something left unaddressed by these rather simplistic two tables is that, within this sample, viewership is very partisan in nature. Only 7.3% of Democrats reported watching at least one Fox News program, as opposed to 36.93% of Republicans. Similarly, only 5.59% of Republicans reported watching at least one MSNBC show, compared to 18.37% of Democrats (“2016 Time Series Study”). This then raises the question of what these same feeling thermometer means would look like if Fox News and MSNBC viewers were separated by party (including party leaners). The corresponding means using these scenarios are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

**TABLE 3**  
**Partisan Identification, Viewership of Fox News, and Means of Partisan Sentiment in 2016**

|   | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Left | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Right |
|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Republicans Who Watched<br>At Least One Fox News Show | 18.02                              | 72.89                               |
| Republicans Who Watched<br>No Fox News Show Regularly | 29.32                              | 63.39                               |
| Democrats Who Watched<br>At Least One Fox News Show   | 63.94                              | 35.95                               |
| Democrats Who Watched<br>No Fox News Show Regularly   | 69.62                              | 28.59                               |

Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and Conservatives. Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party, and Liberals.

*On the Record with Greta Van Susteren* not included.

Source: “2016 Time Series Study.” *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019, <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE 4**  
**Partisan Identification, Viewership of MSNBC, and Means of Partisan Sentiment in 2016**

|  | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Left | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Right |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Republicans Who Watched<br>At Least One MSNBC Show | 27.57                              | 66.24                               |
| Republicans Who Watched<br>No MSNBC Show Regularly | 25.15                              | 66.81                               |
| Democrats Who Watched<br>At Least One MSNBC Show   | 76.77                              | 23.09                               |
| Democrats Who Watched<br>No MSNBC Show Regularly   | 67.50                              | 30.48                               |

Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and Conservatives. Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party, and Liberals.

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019, <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

While looking at the findings in Tables 1 and 2 in isolation may incline one to assume an overwhelming relationship between viewership of partisan media channels and partisan sentiment, separating viewers and non-viewers of each by party helps to put things into perspective a bit. Table 3 shows that, among Republican Fox News viewers specifically, the mean feeling thermometer rating of the left is 7.84 points lower, and the mean rating of the right 7.09 points higher, than the respective ratings of Fox News viewers overall seen in Table 1. Similarly, the mean ratings for Democratic MSNBC viewers seen in Table 4 are 12.37 points higher towards the left, and 10.21 points lower towards the right, than those seen amongst all MSNBC viewers in Table 2. These comparisons help illustrate the unsurprising notion that the party which respondents identify with more plays a major role in how individuals view the political opposition.

That being said, Tables 3 and 4 do also indicate that consumption of like-minded media (Republicans watching Fox News and Democrats watching MSNBC) still seems to correlate with lower temperatures for the opposing groups and higher temperatures for respondents' own

groups. Table 3 shows that Republican Fox News viewers (compared with non-Fox News viewing Republicans) reflect mean ratings that are 11.3 points lower for the left, and 9.5 points higher for the right. Similarly, Table 4 reveals that MSNBC-watching Democrats have mean ratings that are 9.27 points higher for the left and 7.39 points lower for the right, than non-MSNBC viewing Democrats. All of this indicates the possibility of support for the first, “like-minded media viewership hypothesis,” which predicts that consumption of like-minded media correlates with increasingly negative views of individuals’ political opposition and increasingly positive views about their own side.

When partisans are watching “opposing” media (Democrats watching Fox News and Republicans watching MSNBC), the differences in mean thermometer ratings are notable among Democratic Fox News viewers but less so when it comes to Republican MSNBC viewers. Among Democratic Fox News viewers, Table 3 shows a mean feeling thermometer rating of the left that is 5.68 points lower, and a mean rating of the right that is 7.36 points higher, than the respective mean ratings among non-Fox News viewing Democrats. The mean ratings for Republican MSNBC viewers seen in Table 4 are 2.42 points higher towards the left, and 0.57 points lower towards the right, than the respective means of non-MSNBC watching Republicans. None of this points to the presence of a backfire effect or, therefore, any initial indication of support for Hypothesis 2 (“the oppositional media viewership hypothesis”) in 2016.

Continuing along this path, Tables 5 through 8 explore the same things seen in Tables 1 through 4, only this time using the 2020 Main Study sample. Among Fox News watchers overall, the mean feeling thermometer rating of the left seen in Table 5 is actually 5.76 points *higher* than the respective mean among non-Fox News watchers. This is not only

**TABLE 5**  
**Fox News Viewership and Partisan Sentiment in 2020**

|                                    | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Left | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Right |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Watched At Least One Fox News Show | 53.13                              | 44.39                               |
| Watched No Fox News Show Regularly | 47.37                              | 46.19                               |

Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and Conservatives. Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Liberals.

*Special Report with Bret Baier and The Five* not included.

“2020 Time Series Study.” *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

counterintuitive but also in opposition to the respective 2016 means shown in Table 1. Likewise, the mean feeling thermometer rating of the right is 1.8 points *lower* among regular Fox News viewers. These findings in Table 5 would be quite shocking if no further examination were conducted. However, it is critically important to reiterate that much more viewing of “opposing” partisan media has been documented in 2020 as opposed to 2016 (Jurkowitz, et al. 2020; Mitchell, et al. 2021). Accordingly, these samples reflect this.<sup>10</sup> Where only 7.3% of Democrats reported watching a Fox News program regularly in the 2016 sample, a *much* larger 47.56% of Democrats reported the same in the 2020 Main Study sample. This figure is only more striking when considering that a lesser percentage (42.55%) of Republicans than Democrats responded as regularly watching at least one Fox News program.

Less counterintuitively, Table 6 shows that MSNBC viewers do show a warmer mean rating (by 9.87 points) towards the left than the right, and further display warmer feelings (by 6.82 points) towards the left than non-watchers. In the case of feeling thermometer ratings for

<sup>10</sup> When comparing with the findings of Jurkowitz, et al. (2020) and Mitchell, et al. (2021), the 2020 ANES Main Study sample might actually over-represent the degree of “oppositional” partisan viewing rates in 2020. However, even if this is the case, it ultimately benefits the purposes of this study by providing a sample in which a large amount of this “oppositional” viewing is occurring (and thereby allowing for more thorough testing in this regard).

the right, MSNBC watchers reflect a mean which is 2.38 points cooler than non-MSNBC viewers.

**TABLE 6**  
**MSNBC Viewership and Partisan Sentiment in 2020**

|                                 | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Left | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Right |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Watched At Least One MSNBC Show | 53.87                              | 44.00                               |
| Watched No MSNBC Show Regularly | 47.05                              | 46.38                               |

Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and Conservatives. Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Liberals.

“2020 Time Series Study.” *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

To once again examine partisan viewership of the network in question, where only 5.59% of Republicans responded as watching an MSNBC program regularly in 2016 (compared to 18.37% of Democrats), 39.76% of Republicans said they did so in the 2020 Main Study sample (compared to 45.04% of Democrats) (“2016 Time Series Study,” “2020 Time Series Study”). Though it cannot be said that a greater percentage of Republicans watched MSNBC than Democrats in the 2020 sample (as was the case with Democratic viewership of Fox News), the increase of Republican viewership in terms of percentage is still quite sizeable when comparing between the two samples.

As was previously shown with respect to the 2016 sample, Tables 7 and 8 provide feeling thermometer means for the left and right among Fox News viewers and MSNBC viewers, separated also by respondent party. Among Republican Fox News viewers, Table 7 reflects mean feeling thermometer ratings that are 30.41 points lower for the left, and 30.42 points higher for the right, than the respective ratings seen by Fox News viewers overall in Table 5. The mean ratings among Democratic MSNBC viewers seen in Table 8 are 23.47 points higher towards the

left and 23.59 points lower towards the right, than those observed among all MSNBC viewers in Table 6. This again strongly indicates the importance of partisanship in this regard.

**TABLE 7**  
**Partisan Identification, Viewership of Fox News, and Means of Partisan Sentiment in 2020**

|   | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Left | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Right |
|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Republicans Who Watched<br>At Least One Fox News Show | 22.72                              | 74.81                               |
| Republicans Who Watched<br>No Fox News Show Regularly | 22.94                              | 72.57                               |
| Democrats Who Watched<br>At Least One Fox News Show   | 76.82                              | 20.82                               |
| Democrats Who Watched<br>No Fox News Show Regularly   | 71.04                              | 21.32                               |

Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and Conservatives. Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Liberals.

*Special Report with Bret Baier and The Five* not included.

“2020 Time Series Study.” *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE 8**  
**Partisan Identification, Viewership of MSNBC, and Means of Partisan Sentiment in 2020**

|  | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Left | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Right |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Republicans Who Watched<br>At Least One MSNBC Show | 23.40                              | 74.97                               |
| Republicans Who Watched<br>No MSNBC Show Regularly | 22.47                              | 72.55                               |
| Democrats Who Watched<br>At Least One MSNBC Show   | 77.34                              | 20.41                               |
| Democrats Who Watched<br>No MSNBC Show Regularly   | 70.85                              | 21.63                               |

Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and Conservatives. Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Liberals.

“2020 Time Series Study.” *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

In contrast to the “like-minded” media viewing comparisons made regarding the 2016 sample, Table 7 shows only a 0.22 point lower mean rating for the left among Republican Fox News viewers versus non-Fox News viewing Republicans. Republican Fox News viewers did display a 2.24 point higher mean for the right than non-Fox News viewing Republicans. MSNBC-watching Democrats, as observed in Table 8, only rated the right 1.22 points lower on average than Democrats who did not watch MSNBC, but the mean rating of the left was 6.49 points higher. This does indicate support for the first “like-minded viewership hypothesis,” but less strikingly so than the same comparisons made about the 2016 sample.

When it comes to “oppositional” viewing, Democratic Fox News watchers (seen in Table 7) display mean ratings that are 5.78 points higher for the left, and 0.5 point lower for the right, than non-Fox News watching Democrats. Among Republicans who watch MSNBC, Figure 8 shows mean ratings of the left that are a mere 0.93 point higher, and 2.42 points *higher* for the right, than the means of non-MSNBC watching Republicans. This does reveal the possibility of a backfire effect, and possible support for Hypothesis 2.

Tables 7 and 8 reveal two notable, party-specific, patterns within this 2020 Main Study sample. Among Republicans in these two tables, the differences in feeling thermometer ratings between watchers versus non-watchers of either network are minimal. The highest feeling thermometer rating observed for their own group is 74.97, with the lowest being 72.55. This reflects a split of 2.42. Within the same tables, the highest Republican mean ranking of the left is 23.40, and the lowest is 22.47 (reflecting a split of 0.93).

Compare this with the much larger 6.49 point split in the left mean ratings (observed in Table 8) between MSNBC watching and non-MSNBC watching Democrats. Democratic Fox viewers also show a 5.78 point higher mean feeling thermometer rating towards their own group.

This illustrates that Democratic viewers of *either* network reveal warmer feelings towards their own group than non-viewers of each. Democrats' opinions about the right, on the other hand, are more in line with the patterns found among Republicans in this regard, and appear to differ minimally between viewers and non-viewers of both networks. The largest gap in this regard is the 1.22-point gap between Democratic MSNBC viewers and Democratic non-MSNBC viewers.

Overall, Tables 1-8 indicate that viewership alone does not appear to be enough to credibly evaluate a relationship with partisanship (whether negative or positive). The differences in partisan viewership habits between these two samples (2016 and 2020 Main Studies) allow for more thorough and rigorous testing of both the “like-minded media viewing” and “oppositional media viewing” hypotheses (Hypotheses 1 and 2). Again, in the 2016 sample, Fox News was largely only watched by Republicans and Republican leaners. Likewise, MSNBC was largely watched only by Democrats and Democrat-leaners. With this in mind, I presume that within the 2016 sample, a large degree of “like-minded” viewing is occurring, with both Fox News and MSNBC viewers therefore largely agreeing/trusting what they are consuming. Considering the much larger degree of “oppositional viewing” seen in the 2020 Main Study sample, I expect a higher degree of viewer skepticism and/or distrust. The interaction of respondent viewership of each network and Party ID, as independent variables, can be examined to attempt to assess “like-minded” versus “oppositional” viewership within these two very different samples. The corresponding relationship with partisan feelings as dependent variables (as previously described in Chapter 3) can then be evaluated.

Multivariate regression models are provided in Tables 9 through 12 which test Hypothesis 1 (the “like-minded viewership hypothesis”) in this manner, controlling for other

factors which might influence this relationship.<sup>11</sup> The models provided in these tables correspond with each part of Hypothesis 1 as described in Chapter 3.

*Testing of Hypothesis 1: The Like-Minded Media Viewership Hypothesis*

To test the first portion of this hypothesis (that among Republicans, increasing viewership of Fox News will correlate with increasingly negative views of the left), feeling thermometer ratings for the left are the dependent variables. Model 1 (seen in Table 9) uses the 2016 dataset, where Models 2 and 3 do the same with regard to the 2020 Main Study datasets. All three of the models seen in this table contain interactive terms for the amount of Fox News watched and the dummy variable for being Republican. I calculated the linear combinations from these interaction terms, and doing this with respect to the results in Model 1 reveals that in 2016, each Fox News show watched by a Republican led to a decrease in feelings towards the left by 5.26 points. Doing the same in Model 2, which replicates Model 1 but uses the 2020 Main Study sample, each Fox News show watched by a Republican corresponds to a 1.98-point decrease in feelings toward the left.

Model 3 is similar to the 2020 model seen in Model 2 but contains one additional relevant variable: trust level in news media. This added coefficient is itself highly significant and, resulting in higher views of the left, is directionally in line with what would be expected based on prior research (Grossman and Hopkins 2018; Jurkowitz et al. 2020). Each one unit increase of news media trust (on a scale of 0-4) reflects a 7.06-point increase in feelings towards the left.

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<sup>11</sup> Non-interaction regression models which have viewership independent variables are included in Appendix D.

**TABLE 9**  
**Partisanship, Viewership of Fox News, and Feelings Towards the Left**

|  | Model 1 (2016)<br>β<br>(Robust Std. Error) | Model 2 (2020)<br>β<br>(Robust Std. Error) | Model 3 (2020)<br>β<br>(Robust Std. Error) |
|--|--|--|--|
| Constant                                   | 78.05***<br>(1.98)                         | 66.25***<br>(1.49)                         | 55.70***<br>(1.40)                         |
| Amount of Fox News Watched                 | -4.98***<br>(1.29)                         | 2.30***<br>(0.39)                          | 0.91**<br>(0.36)                           |
| Republican                                 | -36.89***<br>(0.80)                        | -44.09***<br>(0.67)                        | -35.99***<br>(0.67)                        |
| Amount of Fox News Watched x<br>Republican | -0.29<br>(1.36)                            | -4.28***<br>(0.56)                         | -2.52***<br>(0.52)                         |
| Trust News                                 |  |  | 7.06***<br>(0.23)                          |
| Male                                       | -2.23***<br>(0.68)                         | -2.96***<br>(0.51)                         | -3.04***<br>(0.47)                         |
| Age  | 0.27**<br>(0.12)                           | 0.07***<br>(0.02)                          | 0.03*<br>(0.02)                            |
| Educational Attainment                     | 0.08<br>(0.06)                             | 0.64***<br>(0.13)                          | 0.46***<br>(0.12)                          |
| White                                      | -6.62***<br>(0.80)                         | -3.24***<br>(0.59)                         | -2.61***<br>(0.54)                         |
| Income                                     | 0.09**<br>(0.05)                           | 0.09**<br>(0.05)                           | 0.08**<br>(0.04)                           |
| Married                                    | -1.17<br>(0.77)                            | -2.13***<br>(0.57)                         | -1.92***<br>(0.52)                         |
| Employed                                   | 0.57<br>(0.75)                             | -0.67<br>(0.58)                            | -0.02<br>(0.53)                            |
| Heterosexual                               | -8.90***<br>(1.49)                         | 0.11<br>(1.04)                             | 0.04<br>(0.95)                             |
| Christian                                  | -3.80***<br>(0.80)                         | -1.09*<br>(0.63)                           | -0.92<br>(0.57)                            |
| South                                      | -0.20<br>(0.70)                            | 0.81<br>(0.53)                             | 1.14**<br>(0.48)                           |
| Non-Fox News Treatment                     | 3.88***<br>(0.73)                          | 1.94***<br>(0.60)                          | 0.48<br>(0.55)                             |
| Number of Cases                            | 2,547                                      | 4,650                                      | 4,647                                      |
| Adjusted R-Squared                         | 0.6453                                     | 0.6747                                     | 0.7283                                     |

\*  $p \leq .10$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$

2016 Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party, and Liberals. 2020 Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Liberals.

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

Source: "2020 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

Furthermore, “trust news” is one of the most sizeable coefficients within the model (second only to being Republican) in terms of feelings towards the left. It is therefore not surprising that when this powerful variable is included in this model as a control (Model 3), the linear combination of the interaction terms is reduced from what was calculated with regard to Model 2. Where the linear combination of the interaction term was -1.98 points per Fox show watched by Republicans in Model 2, the respective combination in Model 3 is lessened to -1.62 points (though still statistically significant). This reinforces the importance of media trust in this regard, even when it is only being asked about in a very generic manner. Despite this reduction, all three of the respective linear combinations calculated from the interaction terms in the Table 9 models are negative and statistically significant, reflecting increased negative feelings towards the left among Republicans and thus supporting the first part of the “like-minded viewership hypothesis.”

The models in Table 10 test the second aspect of Hypotheses 1 (that among Republicans, increasing viewership of Fox News will correlate with increasingly positive views of the right) by utilizing the “right” summary variable as the dependent variable. Model 4, in line with my expectations, shows a positive linear combination of the interaction of being Republican and watching Fox News in this regard in 2016. For each additional Fox News show watched in 2016, Republicans rank the right 4.90 points warmer. The respective linear combinations of the 2020 models are 1.76 for Model 5 and 1.50 for Model 6, reflecting higher ratings of the right among Republican viewers of Fox News in 2020 as well. Once again, the inclusion of the “trust news” variable (this time in Model 6) reduces the size of the interaction combination in question, as expected, but this combination is still statistically significant and positive. Thus, the second part of Hypothesis 1 is also fully supported.

**TABLE 10**  
**Partisanship, Viewership of Fox News, and Feelings Towards the Right**

|  | Model 4 (2016)      | Model 5 (2020)      | Model 6 (2020)      |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|  | $\beta$             | $\beta$             | $\beta$             |
|  | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) |
| Constant                                   | 22.09***<br>(1.91)  | 18.71***<br>(1.43)  | 24.48***<br>(1.43)  |
| Amount of Fox News Watched                 | 2.47*<br>(1.19)     | -1.42***<br>(0.37)  | -0.66*<br>(0.37)    |
| Republican                                 | 32.41***<br>(0.76)  | 47.28***<br>(0.65)  | 42.76***<br>(0.69)  |
| Amount of Fox News Watched x<br>Republican | 2.44*<br>(1.27)     | 3.18***<br>(0.54)   | 2.16***<br>(0.53)   |
| Trust News                                 |                     |                     | -3.96***<br>(0.24)  |
| Male                                       | 0.32<br>(0.64)      | -3.30<br>(0.49)     | -0.19<br>(0.48)     |
| Age  | -0.10<br>(0.11)     | 0.05***<br>(0.02)   | 0.07***<br>(0.02)   |
| Educational Attainment                     | -0.13**<br>(0.06)   | -1.18***<br>(0.13)  | -1.08***<br>(0.12)  |
| White                                      | 3.36***<br>(0.76)   | -0.48<br>(0.57)     | -0.78<br>(0.56)     |
| Income                                     | -0.31***<br>(0.05)  | -0.22***<br>(0.04)  | -0.21***<br>(0.04)  |
| Married                                    | -0.21<br>(0.73)     | 1.63**<br>(0.55)    | 1.49***<br>(0.54)   |
| Employed                                   | -1.22*<br>(0.71)    | 0.93*<br>(0.56)     | 0.51<br>(0.55)      |
| Heterosexual                               | 8.60***<br>(1.46)   | 3.64***<br>(1.00)   | 3.67***<br>(0.98)   |
| Christian                                  | 7.34***<br>(0.77)   | 7.09***<br>(0.60)   | 7.01***<br>(0.59)   |
| South                                      | 2.74***<br>(0.67)   | 1.64***<br>(0.51)   | 1.46***<br>(0.49)   |
| Non-Fox News Treatment                     | -1.81***<br>(0.70)  | 0.83<br>(0.58)      | 1.60***<br>(0.56)   |
| Number of Cases                            | 2,546               | 4,613               | 4,610               |
| Adjusted R-Squared                         | 0.6122              | 0.7243              | 0.739               |

\*  $p \leq .10$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$

2016 and 2020 Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and Conservatives.

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

Source: "2020 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

The third part of Hypothesis 1 (that among Democrats, increasing viewership of MSNBC will correlate with increasingly negative views of the right) is tested by the models shown in Table 11. In this table, the dependent variable is feelings towards the right, and a dummy variable for Democrat is used within the interaction term. The linear combination of the interaction term (amount of MSNBC watched x being Democrat) in Model 7 is -4.35, meaning that every MSNBC show watched by a Democrat in 2016 led to a 4.35-point decrease in feelings toward the right. The respective combination resulting from Model 8 (2020) of -1.56, is obviously less than the 4.35 decrease observed in Model 7 (2016) but is still in the expected direction and statistically significant. When the “trust news” variable is added to the 2020 model (as seen in Model 9), the “trust news” coefficient is, as in previous cases, statistically significant, sizeable, and in the anticipated direction. The introduction of the “trust news” variable also once again results in the linear combination of the interaction term being reduced, the time being -0.76. The analyses of Models 7 through 9 all support this third part of Hypothesis 1, and once again reinforce the importance that trust in news media plays in the relationship between consumption of partisan media and feelings towards the opposing group.

Table 12 tests the final part of the first hypothesis: that among Democrats, increasing viewership of MSNBC will correlate with increasingly positive views of the left. Accordingly, feeling thermometer ratings for the left are the dependent variables for the models in this table. In Model 10, the linear combination of the interaction term (of being a Democrat and amount of MSNBC watched) is 6.03, meaning that for each MSNBC program watched by Democrats, feelings towards their own respective group increase by 6.03 points. In the 2020 models (Models 11 and 12), these interaction combinations are 3.04 and 1.63, respectively. Yet again

**TABLE 11**  
**Partisanship, Viewership of MSNBC, and Feelings Towards the Right**

|                                       | Model 7 (2016)<br>β<br>(Robust Std. Error) | Model 8 (2020)<br>β<br>(Robust Std. Error) | Model 9 (2020)<br>β<br>(Robust Std. Error) |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Constant                              | 53.31***<br>(2.11)                         | 66.43***<br>(1.57)                         | 67.50***<br>(1.53)                         |
| Amount of MSNBC Watched               | 0.43<br>(1.46)                             | 0.67<br>(0.44)                             | 0.58<br>(0.43)                             |
| Democrat                              | -33.95***<br>(0.74)                        | -47.90***<br>(0.64)                        | -43.22***<br>(0.68)                        |
| Amount of MSNBC Watched x<br>Democrat | -4.77***<br>(1.56)                         | -2.24***<br>(0.56)                         | -1.34**<br>(0.55)                          |
| Trust News                            |  |  | -3.98***<br>(0.24)                         |
| Male                                  | 1.02<br>(0.65)                             | -0.34<br>(0.50)                            | -0.21<br>(0.48)                            |
| Age                                   | 0.11<br>(0.11)                             | 0.05***<br>(0.02)                          | 0.09***<br>(0.02)                          |
| Educational Attainment                | -0.10*<br>(0.06)                           | -1.17***<br>(0.13)                         | 1.07***<br>(0.12)                          |
| White                                 | 3.66***<br>(0.77)                          | -0.43<br>(0.57)                            | -0.73<br>(0.56)                            |
| Income                                | -0.26***<br>(0.05)                         | -0.22***<br>(0.04)                         | -0.20***<br>(0.04)                         |
| Married                               | -0.58<br>(0.74)                            | 1.56***<br>(0.55)                          | 1.47***<br>(0.54)                          |
| Employed                              | -1.76**<br>(0.72)                          | 0.89<br>(0.56)                             | 0.48<br>(0.55)                             |
| Heterosexual                          | 8.05***<br>(1.48)                          | 3.55***<br>(1.01)                          | 3.59***<br>(0.98)                          |
| Christian                             | 7.27***<br>(0.78)                          | 7.14***<br>(0.60)                          | 7.07***<br>(0.59)                          |
| South                                 | 2.71***<br>(0.68)                          | 1.73***<br>(0.51)                          | 1.51***<br>(0.49)                          |
| Non-MSNBC News Treatment              | 1.49**<br>(0.75)                           | 0.94<br>(0.60)                             | 1.70***<br>(0.58)                          |
| Number of Cases                       | 2,546                                      | 5,104                                      | 4,610                                      |
| Adjusted R-Squared                    | 0.6015                                     | 0.6141                                     | 0.7382                                     |

\*  $p \leq .10$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$

2016 and 2020 Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and Conservatives.

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

Source: "2020 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE 12**  
**Partisanship, Viewership of MSNBC, and Feelings Towards the Left**

|                                       | Model 10 (2016)     | Model 11 (2020)     | Model 12 (2020)     |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                                       | $\beta$             | $\beta$             | $\beta$             |
|                                       | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) |
| Constant                              | 43.43***<br>(2.18)  | 21.25***<br>(1.64)  | 19.24***<br>(1.50)  |
| Amount of MSNBC Watched               | 0.40<br>(1.53)      | 0.21<br>(0.46)      | 0.31<br>(0.42)      |
| Democrat                              | 38.13***<br>(0.78)  | 45.07***<br>(0.66)  | 36.73***<br>(0.67)  |
| Amount of MSNBC Watched x<br>Democrat | 5.63***<br>(1.64)   | 2.84***<br>(0.59)   | 1.32**<br>(0.54)    |
| Trust News                            |                     |                     | 7.03***<br>(0.23)   |
| Male                                  | 0.01<br>(0.11)      | -2.94***<br>(0.51)  | -3.06***<br>(0.47)  |
| Age                                   | 0.01<br>(0.11)      | 0.07***<br>(0.02)   | 0.02<br>(0.02)      |
| Educational Attainment                | 0.04<br>(0.06)      | 0.63***<br>(0.13)   | 0.46***<br>(0.12)   |
| White                                 | -7.09***<br>(0.81)  | -3.21***<br>(0.59)  | -2.59***<br>(0.54)  |
| Income                                | 0.04<br>(0.05)      | -0.10**<br>(0.05)   | 0.08**<br>(0.04)    |
| Married                               | -0.80<br>(0.77)     | -1.96***<br>(0.57)  | -1.85***<br>(0.52)  |
| Employed                              | 1.12<br>(0.76)      | -0.53<br>(0.58)     | 0.08<br>(0.54)      |
| Heterosexual                          | -8.29***<br>(1.51)  | 0.23<br>(1.04)      | 0.14<br>(0.96)      |
| Christian                             | -3.82***<br>(0.81)  | -1.13*<br>(0.63)    | -0.98**<br>(0.57)   |
| South                                 | -0.18<br>(0.71)     | 0.64<br>(0.53)      | 1.04**<br>(0.48)    |
| Non-MSNBC News Treatment              | -0.36<br>(0.79)     | 1.39**<br>(0.62)    | -0.10<br>(0.57)     |
| Number of Cases                       | 2,547               | 4,650               | 5,148               |
| Adjusted R-Squared                    | 0.6362              | 0.6748              | 0.6764              |

\*  $p \leq .10$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$

2016 Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party, and Liberals. 2020 Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Liberals.

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." Data Center, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

Source: "2020 Time Series Study." Data Center, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

the addition of the “trust news” variable in Model 12 (with a coefficient of 7.03) reduces the size of the linear combination, though this combination is still statistically significant. In all three of the models seen in Table 12, the linear combinations are positive (indicating warmer feelings towards the left) and statistically significant, therefore providing support for the final part of this first hypothesis.

To assess support of this “like-minded media viewership hypothesis” overall, I observe that in all of the twelve tests run, statistically significant linear combinations, in the expected directions, were found. Considering this, I conclude that this first hypothesis is strongly supported.

Comparing the negatively partisan relationships observed with the positive ones, Republicans who watched more Fox News displayed a larger degree of negative sentiment towards their opposition than they did positive feelings towards their own side. For example, the linear combination in Model 1 for the interaction of “amount of Fox News watched” and being Republican reveals feelings towards the left to go down 5.26 points per Fox News show watched in 2016. The respective combination in Model 4 (also using the 2016 sample) shows feelings towards the right to go up 4.90 points-per Fox show watched. The increased negativity towards the left is more sizeable than the increased positivity towards the right in this case. I observe this larger degree of negative partisanship in every instance when it comes to Fox News-watching Republicans in 2016 and 2020 (in addition to the above comparisons, the same is seen when comparing Models 2 with 5, and 3 with 6, in the same manner).

Democrats who watched MSNBC expressed exactly the opposite. Increased MSNBC watching on the part of Democrats resulted in higher positive feeling towards their own group than negative feelings towards the right. To again use the 2016 models as the example, the linear

combination of a 6.03-point increase (per MSNBC show watched) in Democrats' feelings towards the left seen in Model 10 is larger than the respective 4.35 point-per show decrease in feelings towards the right seen in Model 7. This too is true in every comparison made in this regard (also comparing Models 11 with 8 and Models 12 with 9). Thus, it can be concluded that, from results found in Models 1-12, Republicans who watched more Fox News displayed stronger negatively partisan sentiment in 2016 and 2020. Democrats who watched more MSNBC in 2016 and 2020, on the other hand, displayed more positive sentiment toward their own side than vice versa. This raises the question of whether the increasingly negative content on Fox News following Trump's candidacy may play a role here (Grossman and Hopkins 2018, 559-560).

### *Testing of Hypothesis 2: The Oppositional Media Viewership Hypothesis*

Moving on to tests of Hypothesis 2, the "oppositional media viewership hypothesis" which predicts a backfire effect, I again look at each component. Starting with the first aspect (that among Democrats, increasing viewership of Fox News will correlate with increasingly negative views of the right), for Democrats in 2016, Model 4 (in Table 10) shows a 2.47-point increase in ratings of the right for each Fox News program viewed regularly. This quite obviously does not indicate a backfire effect (quite the opposite) and thus does not support Hypothesis 2. On the other hand, Models 5 and 6, reflecting the 2020 Main Study sample, contain negative, statistically significant coefficients of -1.42 and -0.66, respectively. These coefficients reflect that with each Fox News show watched by Democrats in 2020, feeling thermometer ratings of the right went down 1.42 and 0.66 points in each respective model. This does provide support the first part of Hypothesis 2.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The addition of the "trust news" variable in Model 3 reduces the size of the Fox News viewership coefficient here as well and also lessens (but does not eliminate) its statistical significance - once again highlighting the importance of media trust in this regard.

A similar pattern is observed when testing the second part of Hypothesis 2, which predicts that as Democrats watch more Fox News they will have an increasingly positive views of the left. Looking at Model 1 in Table 9, here again a coefficient is seen in 2016 which does not support the hypothesis. Each Fox News show watched by Democrats in 2016 results in a 4.98 decreased rating of the left (clearly not indicative of a backfire effect). However, in a scenario akin to that previously witnessed in Models 5 and 6, Democrats' ratings of their own group do go up as they watch more Fox News programs in the 2020 models. The coefficients in Models 2 and 3 are 2.30 and 0.91, respectively. Put simply, the more Fox News programs Democrats watched in 2020, the more positively they felt about their own side. These findings, as with the findings seen in the models within Table 10, do point to the possibility of a backfire effect potentially taking place in 2020 (but not 2016), and thus also provides mixed evidence for the second part of Hypothesis 2.

The last two portions of the second hypothesis, that increasing viewership of MSNBC on the part of Republicans will correlate with increasingly negative views of the left and increasingly positive views of the right, are overwhelmingly unsupported. In attempting to observe a pattern between Republicans who watch MSNBC and their views toward the left (part 3 of the second hypothesis), none of the "amount of MSNBC watched" coefficients in the Table 12 models are statistically significant. With regard to Republican viewership of MSNBC and feelings towards the right (the final part of Hypothesis 2), none of the "amount of MSNBC watched" coefficients in the Table 11 models are statistically significant either. Therefore, no backfire effect is observed between Republican MSNBC viewers and feelings towards the left or right, and parts 3 and 4 of the "oppositional media viewing hypothesis" are uniformly unsupported.

To briefly return to the findings which do offer a degree of support for Hypothesis 2 (Democrats in 2020) which tests for a backfire effect, I compare the degree of increased negative partisanship versus positive partisanship observed. Evaluating the sizes of the appropriate “amount of Fox News watched” coefficients allows for this comparison to be made. The respective coefficients in this case are -1.42 when the dependent variable is feelings towards the right (seen in Model 5), and 2.30 when the dependent variable is feelings towards the left (seen in Model 2). As with the similar comparisons made relating to Hypothesis 1, Democrats again display a larger degree of favorability towards their own group (this time when watching Fox News) than they do negative feelings towards the right. This remains true when adding the “trust news” variables to the 2020 models, as seen by the larger positive coefficient of feelings towards the left (0.91) in Model 3 than the negative one towards the right (0.66) observed in Model 6.

Looking at these “oppositional media viewership hypothesis” results more broadly, it can be said that the expectation of a backfire effect is completely unsupported with regard to MSNBC-watching Republicans, and mixed results are seen with respect to Fox News-watching Democrats. Democrats displayed increasingly negative feelings towards the left and increasingly positive feelings towards the right when watching more Fox News in 2016 (seen in Models 1 and 4), against my expectation in this case. On the other hand, Democrats displayed increasingly positive feelings towards the left and increasingly negative feelings towards the right when watching more Fox News in 2020 (seen in Models 2, 3, 5, and 6). This does point to the possibility of a backfire effect in 2020, and is in line with my expectation. When considering these results, it is critically important to keep in mind the differences in partisan viewership patterns between the samples. It bears repeating that in the 2016 sample, only 7.3% of Democrats reported watching even one Fox News program. This does give reason for hesitancy in

attempting to draw any type of broad-based conclusions when it comes to Democratic Fox News viewers in the 2016 sample.

The 2020 sample, on the other hand, contained a large percentage (47.56%) of Democratic Fox News viewers. Within this sample, Democrats who watched an increased amount of Fox News consistently displayed higher feelings towards their own group and lower feelings towards the right. Backfire indications were confirmed in every single test of Democratic Fox News viewers in 2020, whether the key “trust news” variable was included or not. A particularly curious aspect of these results is that where Bail et al. found the backfire effect to occur more strongly with respect to Republicans (when consuming oppositional, Democrat-favoring partisan media), *if* such an effect is occurring in this study, then it is only seen here on the part of Democrats watching Fox News (Bail et al. 2018, 9217, 9220). Considering the contradictory findings between the 2016 and 2020 models, these results are certainly not near enough to confidently conclude that a backfire effect is occurring on the part of Democrats. Yet it can certainly be said that a strong possibility exists of this occurrence, which further research may be able to shed more light on.

Repeatedly throughout the respective models included in Tables 9-12, the importance of trust is illustrated. In every instance in which this variable is added to a model, the linear combination of partisan sentiment and partisan media viewership is reduced. This supports the overarching theory herein, that trust in what people are consuming matters when evaluating relationships with their partisan feelings.

Furthermore, this justifies the more direct examination of trust levels of these partisan networks, as described in Hypotheses 3 and 4. To test these hypotheses, I utilize the ANES 2020 Social Media Study, which asked questions pertaining to trust levels in Fox News and MSNBC.

Adopting a similar approach that I took with the ANES 2016 and 2020 Main Study samples at the beginning of this chapter, before moving on to regression analysis I first discuss some descriptive statistics about this 2020 Social Media sample.

*Media Trust and Partisan Sentiment within the 2020 ANES Social Media Study Samples*

Table 13 shows those who trust Fox News reflect a mean rating of the left that is 28.1 points lower than the respective mean rating of the right. The inverse is true when it comes to those who do *not* trust Fox News, whose mean rating of the left is 32.73 points higher than the same with regard to the right. Furthermore, the mean rating of the left is 25.42 points lower, and the mean rating of the right 35.41 points higher, among those who trust Fox News as compared with those who do not. The sizeable nature of these splits provides initial indication that relationship between trust in Fox News and partisan feelings.

**TABLE 13**  
**Fox News Trust and Partisan Sentiment in 2020**

|                      | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Left | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Right |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Trust Fox News       | 36.47                              | 64.57                               |
| Don't Trust Fox News | 61.89                              | 29.16                               |

Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and the National Rifle Association (NRA). Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Planned Parenthood.

Trust being reflected here as the sum of percentages for those who responded that they trusted the entity a moderate amount, a lot, or a great deal.

Source: "2020 Social Media Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 8 Mar. 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-social-media-study/>.

Table 14 includes mean feeling thermometer ratings of the right and left based on those who trust MSNBC and those who do not. Among those who trust MSNBC, the mean rating for the left is 44.92 points higher than the mean rating of the right. A 15.53 point lower mean for the left is seen among those who do not trust MSNBC, as opposed to those who do. Finally, the

mean rating of the left is 32.33 points higher, and the mean rating of the right 28.12 points lower, among those who trust MSNBC than those who do not. These patterns are in line with expectations and are very similar to those seen in Table 13.

**TABLE 14**  
**MSNBC Trust and Partisan Sentiment in 2020**

|                    | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>Of Democrats | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of Republicans |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Trust MSNBC        | 70.99                               | 26.07                                 |
| Do Not Trust MSNBC | 38.66                               | 54.19                                 |

Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and the National Rifle Association (NRA). Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Planned Parenthood.

Trust being reflected here as the sum of percentages for those who responded that they trusted the entity a moderate amount, a lot, or a great deal.

Source: "2020 Social Media Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 8 Mar. 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-social-media-study/>.

Taken together, the means observed in Tables 13 and 14 provide strong initial indications of support for the "media trust" Hypothesis 3: that regardless of respondents' partisan identification, higher trust levels in a partisan network will correspond with increasingly negative views toward the political out-group represented by the respective network and increasingly positive views toward the respective network's political in-group. Regression models shown in Table 15 investigate this further.

*Testing of Hypothesis 3: The Media Trust Hypothesis*

Model 13 in Table 15 tests the first component of Hypothesis 3: that increased trust in Fox News will correlate with lower feelings towards the left. This model contains a negative, statistically significant coefficient in this respect, revealing that with each unit increase of trust in Fox News, feeling thermometer ratings for the left decrease by 3.99 points. As the "amount of trust" variables are measured on a scale of 0-4, this means that someone who had the highest possible degree of trust in Fox News would feel 15.96 points less warmly towards the left. The

**TABLE 15**  
**The Relationship Between Trust in Fox News, Trust in MSNBC, and Partisan Feelings in 2020**

|                             | Model 13<br>DV: Left<br>$\beta$<br>(Robust Std. Error) | Model 14<br>DV: Right<br>$\beta$<br>(Robust Std. Error) |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Amount of trust in Fox News | -3.99***<br>(0.23)                                     | 6.86***<br>(0.24)                                       |
| Amount of trust in MSNBC    | 7.70***<br>(0.25)                                      | -4.30***<br>(0.26)                                      |
| Party ID                    | -7.76***<br>(0.14)                                     | 8.96***<br>(0.14)                                       |
| Male                        | -1.92***<br>(0.48)                                     | -0.26<br>(0.50)   |
| Age                         | 0.08***<br>(0.02)                                      | 0.01<br>(0.02)  |
| Educational Attainment      | 0.27<br>(0.23)   | -2.73***<br>(0.24)                                      |
| White                       | -2.85***<br>(0.55)                                     | 0.80<br>(0.57)  |
| Income                      | 0.01<br>(0.01)   | -0.30***<br>(0.07)                                      |
| Married                     | -2.44***<br>(0.52)                                     | 1.07**<br>(0.55)  |
| Employed                    | 0.51<br>(0.53)   | -0.94*<br>(0.55)  |
| Heterosexual                | -0.74<br>(0.89)  | 3.46***<br>(0.94)                                       |
| Christian                   | -2.10***<br>(0.53)                                     | 4.40***<br>(0.55)                                       |
| South                       | -0.54<br>(0.49)  | 0.82<br>(0.51)  |
| Number of Cases             | 4,619  | 4,563   |
| Adjusted R-Squared          | 0.7353   | 0.7622  |

\* $p \leq .10$ ; \*\* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .01$

Democrat summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Planned Parenthood. Republican summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and the NRA.

Source: "2020 Social Media Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 8 Mar. 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-social-media-study/>.

7-scale Party ID variable is used as a key control in this model, and unsurprisingly shows partisan identification to be strongly associated with feelings towards the left. This variable is coded from 1=Strong Democrat to 7=Strong Republican, and so the coefficient of -7.76 means that for every unit increase (in the Republican direction), feelings towards the left drop by a sizeable 7.76 points. The fact that a relationship is seen to exist between trust in Fox News and negative feelings towards the left, when isolated from partisanship in particular, supports this first aspect of Hypothesis 3.

Model 14 additionally shows support for the second part of this hypothesis, that higher levels in trust in Fox News will with warmer feelings towards the right. As with Model 13, the Party ID variable is used as a critical control here as well (again resulting in a large coefficient, this time of 8.96). The coefficient for “amount of trust in Fox News” is 6.86, meaning that for every unit increase in trust of Fox News, feelings towards the right increase by 6.86 points. To use the same example as was applied to Model 13 above, someone who holds the highest degree of trust in Fox News possible would feel 27.44 points more favorably towards the right.

While it can be said that the first two portions of the “media trust” hypothesis are clearly supported by these models, comparing the coefficients for “amount of trust in Fox News” between Models 13 and 14 reveals an interesting, and somewhat unexpected, finding. The relationship between higher levels of trust in Fox News and warmer feelings toward the right is reflected by a more sizeable coefficient (6.86) than is the relationship between higher levels of trust in Fox News and cooler feelings towards the left (-3.99). In other words, the “positive partisanship” aspect of trust in Fox News seems to be larger than the negatively partisan aspect. This is somewhat in opposition to the similar comparisons made with respect to Models 1-6 relating to Fox News viewership. In those models, Republicans (who presumably would have

more trust in Fox News) displayed a larger degree of negative partisanship when watching Fox News than they did positive partisanship towards their own group. However, I have hesitation in making any sweeping inferences in this regard. Not only are comparisons being made between different samples, but Models 1-12 looked at viewership and partisanship of Fox News and MSNBC where Models 13 and 14 examine trust of these networks. Despite the fact that utilizing the interaction of viewership and partisan identification in Models 1-12 was essentially a way to approximate trust of these networks, this still is an approximation and therefore limited. If anything, the differences revealed by this comparison ultimately serve to again reinforce the importance of distinguishing trust from viewership.

To test the third component of Hypothesis 3, that increased trust in MSNBC will correlate with lower feelings towards the right, I return to Model 14 in Table 15. The coefficient “amount of trust in MSNBC” is -4.30, meaning that with each unit increase of trust in MSNBC, feeling thermometer ratings for the right decrease by 4.30 points. Thus, this aspect of the “media trust hypothesis” is supported as well. Model 13 additionally shows support for the final part of this hypothesis, in that trust in MSNBC corresponds with more positive feelings towards the left. The coefficient for “amount of trust in MSNBC” is 7.70, meaning that for every unit increase in trust of MSNBC, feelings towards the left increase by 7.70 points.

Again comparing the trust coefficients in question between Models 13 and 14, this time “amount of trust in MSNBC,” shows patterns more similar to those seen in the viewership models (Models 7-12) corresponding with the first two hypotheses. The “positive partisanship” aspect of trust in MSNBC in this case seems to be larger than the negatively partisan aspect. The relationship between higher levels of trust in MSNBC and warmer feelings toward the left seen in Model 13 is reflected by a more sizeable coefficient (7.70) than is the relationship between

higher levels of trust in MSNBC and cooler feelings towards the right (-4.30). This does not reduce the hesitations previously mentioned about this type of comparisons. However, this does show that trust in MSNBC, in addition to MSNBC viewership by Democrats, is seen to correlate more positively towards the left than it is negatively towards the right in terms of sentiment. Regardless, the models in Table 15 offer clear support for every element of the third, “media trust” hypothesis.

Though Models 13 and 14 do control for Party ID, examining the interactive effects of party identification and trust levels in the respective partisan networks (as with previous models which examined viewership) provides an even more nuanced analysis, and allows for testing of the final hypothesis. The expectation here is that the interaction between being a Republican with higher trust in Fox News, and likewise being a Democrat with higher trust levels in MSNBC, will correlate with elevated reflections of partisan sentiment (both in a positive and negative sense).

*Media Trust, Partisan Identification, and Partisan Sentiment within the 2020 ANES Social Media Study Sample*

Continuing along in the same manner as before, before turning to regression models to test the final hypothesis, the following two tables contain some additional descriptive statistics about the 2020 Social Media Study sample. Table 16 separates those who do and do not trust Fox News among Democrats and Republicans, and provides the corresponding feeling thermometer ratings for the left and right. As previously seen in Tables 13 and 14, there is a marked difference between mean ratings for individuals’ own groups and the opposition, regardless of trust in Fox News. However, these means do diverge further when the question of trust in Fox News is incorporated. The smallest gap in this regard is 4.42 points, between

Democrats who do and do not trust Fox News, and mean feeling ratings of the left. The largest gap, on the other hand, is a striking 18.01 split, also between Democrats who do and do not trust Fox News, but this time with regard to feelings towards the right. The gaps between Republicans who do and do not trust Fox News exceed 10 points in both cases. All of this implies support for Hypothesis 4 relating to partisanship and media trust.

**TABLE 16**  
**Partisan Identification, Trust of Fox News, and Means of Partisan Sentiment in 2020**

|                                     | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Left | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Right |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Republicans Who Trust Fox News      | 21.05                              | 78.75                               |
| Republicans Do Not Trust Fox News   | 31.31                              | 64.56                               |
| Democrats Who Trust Fox News        | 72.31                              | 32.02                               |
| Democrats Who Do Not Trust Fox News | 76.73                              | 14.01                               |

Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and the National Rifle Association (NRA). Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Planned Parenthood.

Trust being reflected here as the sum of percentages for those who responded that they trusted the entity a moderate amount, a lot, or a great deal.

Source: "2020 Social Media Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 8 Mar. 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-social-media-study/>.

Table 17 is structured exactly like Table 16, only the party groupings are separated by trust in MSNBC versus trust in Fox News. The gaps seen here are similar in nature to those seen in Table 16 (though in the reverse in terms of left/right favorability). As is the case with trust in Fox News, clear differences in partisan sentiment are observed between those who do and do not trust MSNBC. Here, the smallest split between the two is a still quite sizeable 5.12 points, between Democrats who do and do not trust MSNBC with regard to their feelings towards the right. The largest split, of 20.08 points, is seen between Republicans (who do/do not trust MSNBC) and corresponding ratings of the left. These findings also strongly imply support for the last hypothesis.

**TABLE 17**  
**Partisan Identification, Trust of MSNBC, and Means of Partisan Sentiment in 2020**

|                                    | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Left | Mean Feeling Therm.<br>of the Right |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Republicans Who Trust MSNBC        | 41.26                              | 63.90                               |
| Republicans Who Do Not Trust MSNBC | 21.18                              | 75.43                               |
| Democrats Who Trust MSNBC          | 79.82                              | 15.53                               |
| Democrats Who Do Not Trust MSNBC   | 68.72                              | 20.65                               |

Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and the National Rifle Association (NRA). Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Planned Parenthood.

Trust being reflected here as the sum of percentages for those who responded that they trusted the entity a moderate amount, a lot, or a great deal.

Source: "2020 Social Media Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 8 Mar. 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-social-media-study/>.

A particularly interesting finding in comparing the means in Tables 16 and 17 is that the largest splits in each table occur between those who do and do not trust "opposing media," and feeling thermometers for the "other side." More directly stated, the biggest gaps in feeling thermometer ratings occur between Democrats who do and do not trust Fox News and feelings towards the right (seen in Table 16), and between Republicans who do and do not trust MSNBC and feelings towards the left (seen in Table 17). The implication here is that when individuals trust media from the "other side," they tend to also hold that other side in higher regard.

Because trust is different than viewership, these findings do not in any way undermine the possibility of a backfire effect previously discussed with regard to Models 1-12. *If* such a backfire effect is occurring in this study, it again is happening among Democratic viewers of Fox News in 2020. Considering past findings related to cognitive dissonance theory (and people largely seeking out opinions with which they agree), as well as the large percentage of Democrats watching Fox News in the 2020 ANES Main Study sample, it seems reasonable to expect that a great many of these Democratic Fox News viewers do not trust what they are

watching (Festinger 1957, Iyengar and Hahn 2009). These findings with respect to Tables 16 and 17 only serve to considerably reinforce the importance of trust in this regard, especially when it comes to feelings towards the out-group. To examine this further, multivariate regression models (with controls) are again run which test the final, “partisanship and media trust hypothesis.”

#### *Testing of Hypothesis 4: The Partisanship and Media Trust Hypothesis*

Hypothesis 4 contends that increased trust in a network aligned with one’s political in-group will result in increasingly negative views of the opposing political group and increasingly positive views about their own side. As with the tests of Hypotheses 1 and 2, which pertained to partisanship and viewership, I include an interactive term in each of the following models (this time, of partisan identification and trust level of the respective partisan media network). I again examine each aspect of this hypothesis to test it as thoroughly as possible. For the first part of Hypothesis 4, I expect that among Republicans, higher levels of trust in Fox News will correlate with cooler views of the left. This aspect is tested by Model 15 in Table 18. The linear combination from the interaction term is -5.1, meaning that within this sample, each increased degree of trust in Fox News (measured on a scale of 0-4) by Republicans leads to a decrease in feelings towards the left of 5.1 points. Calculating predictive values using this information, Republicans who have no trust in Fox News would rank the left at 28.34. Republicans who hold the maximum amount of trust in Fox News would rank the left at an incredibly low 7.94. For comparison, each increased degree of trust in Fox News on the part of Democrats corresponds

**TABLE 18**  
**Partisanship, Trust of Fox News, and Partisan Feelings in 2020**

|   | Model 15<br>DV: Left<br>$\beta$<br>(Robust Std. Error) | Model 16<br>DV: Right<br>$\beta$<br>(Robust Std. Error) |
|---|--|---|
| Constant                                    | 61.25***<br>(1.35)                                     | 27.89***<br>(1.40)                                      |
| Amount of trust in Fox News                 | -3.10***<br>(0.35)                                     | 8.21***<br>(0.37)                                       |
| Republican                                  | -32.91***<br>(0.82)                                    | 43.33***<br>(0.84)                                      |
| Amount of trust in<br>Fox News x Republican | -2.00***<br>(0.46)                                     | -1.79***<br>(0.47)                                      |
| Amount of trust in MSNBC                    | 8.30***<br>(0.25)                                      | -5.06***<br>(0.25)                                      |
| Male  | -1.79***<br>(0.48)                                     | -0.16<br>(0.49)   |
| Age   | 0.10***<br>(0.02)                                      | 0.00<br>(0.02)  |
| Educational Attainment                      | 0.34<br>(0.23)   | -2.68***<br>(0.23)                                      |
| White                                       | -2.58***<br>(0.55)                                     | 0.86<br>(0.57)  |
| Income                                      | 0.03<br>(0.07)   | -0.27***<br>(0.07)                                      |
| Married                                     | -2.46***<br>(0.52)                                     | 1.02*<br>(0.54)   |
| Employed                                    | 0.83<br>(0.53)   | -1.59***<br>(0.55)                                      |
| Heterosexual                                | -1.28<br>(0.90)  | 3.37***<br>(0.93)                                       |
| Christian                                   | -1.83***<br>(0.53)                                     | 3.56***<br>(0.55)                                       |
| South                                       | -0.69<br>(0.49)  | 1.00**<br>(0.50)  |
| Number of Cases                             | 5,178  | 5,116   |
| Adjusted R-Squared                          | 0.6577   | 0.7261  |

\* $p \leq .10$ ; \*\* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .01$

Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Planned Parenthood. Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and the NRA.

Source: "2020 Social Media Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 8 Mar. 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-social-media-study/>.

with 3.1 point drop in ratings for their own party. However, when interpreting the constant and calculating predictive values here as well, Democrats with the highest degree of trust in Fox News reflect a thermometer rating of 48.85 towards their own group. This demonstrates that, while trust in Fox News is very clearly a strong indicator of negative partisanship, the interaction effect of trust in Fox News and being Republican is even stronger. Thus, this first part of Hypothesis 4 is clearly supported.

Model 16 tests the second portion of this hypothesis, that higher levels of trust in Fox News on the part of Republicans will correlate with increasingly positive views of the right. Here, the linear combination for the interaction term of “amount of trust in Fox News x Republican” is 6.42, meaning that for each unit of increase in Fox News trust on the part of Republicans, feelings towards their own group will rise 6.42 points. Democrats in this model rate the right 8.21 points higher for each unit of increase in trust Fox News. Needless to say, the second part of the last hypothesis is also supported.

The final two portions of the fourth hypothesis are tested by the models seen in Table 19. The third aspect (that among Democrats, higher levels of trust in MSNBC on the part of Democrats will correlate with increasingly negative views of the right) is examined by Model 18. Here the linear combination of the interaction term “amount of trust in MSNBC x Democrat” is -3.48. Therefore, among Democrats, every unit increase in trust of MSNBC leads to a 3.48-point reduction in feelings toward the right. Again calculating predictive values, this means that a Democrat with the highest possible level of trust in MSNBC would rate the right at an incredibly low 13.75. Among Republicans, for comparison, every unit increase in trust of MSNBC results in a 7.33-point reduction in feelings towards the right. In this case, Republicans who hold the highest degree of trust in MSNBC would rate their own group at 44.39. As with the models

**TABLE 19**  
**Partisanship, Trust of MSNBC, and Partisan Feelings in 2020**

|  | Model 17<br>DV: Left<br>$\beta$<br>(Robust Std. Error) | Model 18<br>DV: Right<br>$\beta$<br>(Robust Std. Error) |
|--|--|---|
| Constant                               | 22.98***<br>(1.50)                                     | 73.71***<br>(1.55)                                      |
| Amount of trust in MSNBC               | 11.25***<br>(0.40)                                     | -7.33***<br>(0.41)                                      |
| Democrat                               | 40.86***<br>(0.88)                                     | -46.04***<br>(0.91)                                     |
| Amount of trust in<br>MSNBC x Democrat | -4.61***<br>(0.51)                                     | 3.85***<br>(0.52)                                       |
| Amount of trust in Fox News            | -4.30***<br>(0.22)                                     | 3.85***<br>(0.52)                                       |
| Male                                   | -1.62***<br>(0.48)                                     | -0.51<br>(0.49)   |
| Age                                    | 0.13***<br>(0.02)                                      | -0.03*<br>(0.02)  |
| Educational Attainment                 | 0.25<br>(0.22)   | -2.68***<br>(0.23)                                      |
| White                                  | -2.78***<br>(0.54)                                     | 0.62<br>(0.56)  |
| Income                                 | 0.01<br>(0.06)   | -0.31***<br>(0.07)                                      |
| Married                                | -2.49***<br>(0.52)                                     | 1.09**<br>(0.54)  |
| Employed                               | 0.99*<br>(0.53)  | -1.50***<br>(0.55)                                      |
| Heterosexual                           | -0.89<br>(0.89)  | 3.59***<br>(0.92)                                       |
| Christian                              | -1.33**<br>(0.53)                                      | 3.57***<br>(0.54)                                       |
| South                                  | -0.66<br>(0.48)  | 0.99**<br>(0.50)  |
| Number of Cases                        | 4,619  | 4,563   |
| Adjusted R-Squared                     | 0.7387   | 0.7701  |

\*  $p \leq .10$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$

Left summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Planned Parenthood. Right summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and the NRA.

Source: "2020 Social Media Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 8 Mar. 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-social-media-study/>.

concerning partisanship and Fox News in Table 18, this all serves to illustrate that trust in MSNBC is highly correlated with partisanship, with the interaction effect of “trust in MSNBC and Democrat” being even stronger. Alas, this third aspect of the fourth hypothesis is supported as well.

The final aspect of Hypothesis 4, that among Democrats, higher levels of trust in MSNBC will correlate with increasingly positive views of the left, is examined in Model 17. Here the linear combination for the interaction effect of “amount of trust in MSNBC x Democrat” is 6.65. Among Democrats who trust MSNBC the most, this 6.65 point-per unit of MSNBC trust results in an exceptionally high feeling thermometer rating of 90.44 for their own group. For comparison, Republicans in this model rate the left 11.25 points higher with each unit increase of trust in MSNBC. In this case, among Republicans who trust MSNBC at the highest level, the predicted rating of the left is 67.98. This fourth test of the Hypothesis 4 shows clear support that higher levels of trust in MSNBC among Democrats correlates with increasingly positive views of the left.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

In summation, I find Hypotheses 1, 3, and 4 to be strongly supported. Results supporting the first hypothesis demonstrate that those who consume more like-minded partisan media (in this case Republicans watching Fox News and Democrats watching MSNBC) express more negative *and* positive partisan feelings. Regarding Hypothesis 3, higher trust levels in each network correspond with increasingly negative views toward the “opposition group” of the respective network, as well as increasingly positive views about the respective network’s “preferred” group. Finally, when also taking respondent partisan identification into account along with trust levels of the respective partisan media sources, a strong relationship with partisanship (both negative and positive) is observed, thereby confirming the final hypothesis.

One of the more curious discoveries of this project is found when comparing the degrees of increased negative partisanship versus increased positive partisanship throughout the various relationships observed. Findings differ in this regard. Republicans who watched more Fox News displayed larger decreases in ratings of the left than they did increases towards their own party. This was the case across the “viewership models” (Models 1-6) in both 2016 and 2020. The exact opposite was seen when it came to Democrats who watched MSNBC. Within Models 7-12, the positive increases in Democrats’ feelings towards the left were larger than the respective decreases in feelings towards the right in all cases.

However, in the “trust models” (Models 13-18, which examined trust of the particular partisan networks), larger amounts of increased positive partisanship were consistently seen among both Republicans and Democrats. Every single comparison made between coefficients (or, where appropriate, linear combinations) relating to trust of Fox News and MSNBC revealed the positive partisan sentiment value to be more sizeable than the negative. Unlike the larger

degree of negative feelings observed on the part of Republican Fox News viewers in Models 1-6, when it comes to increasing levels of trust in either network, both Republicans and Democrats reflected higher degrees of warm feelings towards their own side than they did cooler feelings for their opposition.

Two distinct patterns are apparent here, which are not easily explained. First, in the viewership models, there was an obvious split between the parties, with Republicans reflecting more negative partisanship and Democrats displaying more positive partisanship. Second, while this party-related split was seen in the viewership models, it is not observed at all in the models relating to trust. Instead, within the trust models both parties reflected higher levels of positive partisanship. When considering the generally declining level of positive partisanship which has occurred over the last two decades, in tandem with sharply increasing negative partisanship, these findings are, frankly, quite puzzling (Abramowitz and Webster 2018). Further research might be able to more precisely identify the cause of the patterns taking place here.

This is, however, indicative of something which is seen again and again throughout these results: differing effects observed when distinguishing between trust and viewership. Clearly, trust in partisan media sources is a very important factor in relation to partisan sentiment. When the “trust in news media” variable is added to viewership models (even with this being a predictably liberal/Democratic-skewing variable), the observed relationship with viewership of the partisan networks examined is reduced. This is made even more clear in the analyses involving the ANES 2020 Social Media Survey, wherein trust levels in Fox News and MSNBC, and corresponding partisan feelings, can be witnessed more directly. The level of trust which an individual holds in particular media sources strongly relates to the degree of partisan sentiment observed.

The importance of distinguishing between viewer trust and viewership is only further confirmed by the possibility of a backfire effect. While Hypothesis 2 was in several respects not supported, thus prohibiting me from concluding that such an effect is definitively happening, the possibility cannot be fully eliminated either. Curiously, where Bail et al. found this to be more prominent among Republicans in their 2018 experimental study, *if* a backfire effect is occurring in this study, then it is only seen here on the part of Democrats watching Fox News (Bail et al. 2018, 9217, 9220).

The trust models did not provide any indication of backfire effects taking place. For example, there is no evidence here that Republicans who hold higher degrees of trust in MSNBC will also hold more negative feelings for Democrats. Though this is perhaps unsurprising intuitively, it still is notable as the exact mechanism which causes the backfire effect has not been identified (Bail et al. 2018, 9220). Considering this, I echo the call of Bail et al. that “future studies are thus urgently needed,” probably of an experimental nature, to more specifically confirm that 1.) such an effect is indeed occurring, and 2.) if so, what the mechanism is which is creating this effect (Bail et al. 2018, 9220).

While some may argue that cable news is trending towards obsolescence, and perhaps not the best medium to utilize in examining this topic, I beg to differ. I do acknowledge the fact that 2021 ratings are considerably down for Fox News as well as MSNBC (and, for that matter, CNN) in comparison with 2020 (Johnson 2021). Furthermore, *if* ratings for these cable news networks continue to drop going forward, then my findings give every reason to expect partisan sentiment to also become less intense. Yet I must express hesitation in predicting this sharp plummeting of ratings to continue. In the second quarter of 2021, Fox News had an average of 2.13 million viewers per night in primetime, compared with 1.31 million for MSNBC (Johnson

2021). These figures are notably close to the ratings levels observed in 2016 with respect to both networks (which can be observed in Figure 4 herein) (Grossmann and Hopkins 2018, 559). This indicates a strong possibility that these networks might not continue a downward slope of ratings declines, but might instead be merely “leveling off” following an intense, Trump-related bounce. Whatever the case may be, it is no secret that the candidacies and presidency of Donald Trump drove up ratings of political programming. As Leslie Moonves, CEO (at the time) of CBS, said about the Trump campaign in 2016, “it may not be good for America, but it’s damn good for CBS” (Bond 2016). Furthermore, political news and opinion shows are taking up an increasingly large percentage of the cable television viewership which is occurring. Nielsen ratings, analyzed by Bridge, reveal that 57% of cable shows watched were political programs in 2016. That already sizeable percentage rose to an extraordinary 83% in 2021 (Bridge 2021). This all serves to provide skepticism of quickly dismissing cable news as a relic of a bygone era.

On the contrary, the need for further research on this topic, and very possibly cable news in particular, will only become more important if the “oppositional viewership” observed in the last several years continues going forward (Mitchell, et al. 2021, “Time Series Study”). As stated previously, the unique nature of 2020 (with the global pandemic, economic crisis, and an incredibly polarizing presidential election) makes predicting any type of trend based off recent occurrences a fool’s errand. However, there is nothing which currently points to a weakening of the longer, more established trends of increasing partisan content (Joyella 2021a). Recent events, however, do indicate the potential for more oppositional viewing. During the reporting of the Republican-dominated elections in Virginia and New Jersey on November 2, 2021, several conservatives actively encouraged their Twitter followers to watch MSNBC, mocking the commentators. Stephen Miller remarked of the hosts having an “election meltdown,” Ann

Coulter tweeted that “if you want to give yourself a treat, turn on MSNBC,” and Kyle Smith remarked that “every conservative I know is watching MSNBC” (Flood 2021). Fox News itself joined in with the headline “Twitter Roasts MSNBC for Election Night Meltdown” (Flood 2021). The fact that highly partisan individuals were not only watching, but actively encouraging like-minded followers to watch “opposing media” is quite eye-opening. On the other side of the aisle, Aaron Rupar, who until recently was a journalist with liberal-leaning Vox, has a popular Twitter feed (@atrupar) predominantly dedicated to the more outrageous statements made on conservative media. Clips from Fox News overwhelmingly dominate this feed. Neither of these cases are examples of individuals watching opposing media *despite* the fact that they do not trust it. Instead, they are indicative of people watching (and encouraging others to watch) *because* they do not trust it.

Whether examples such as these are isolated occurrences or part of a pattern remains to be seen. Yet if this higher degree of oppositional viewership is to continue, then the implications from the results of this study point to the possibility of even sharper increases in both partisan media content and in public partisanship. For all of the talk of these programs merely “preaching to the choir,” if partisans continue to consume opposing media which they presumably do not trust, ratings still go up (which, to state the obvious, is what content providers care most about) (Hains 2021). Thus, when it comes to providing highly charged, partisan content, any remaining disincentive that might have previously existed, for fear of losing viewers, can be expected to continue to disappear.

In 2020, U.S. District Judge Mary Kay Vyskocil stated in her opinion in a slander case against Fox News (pertaining to *Tucker Carlson Tonight*), that “Fox persuasively argues, that given Mr. Carlson’s reputation, any reasonable viewer ‘arrive[s] with an appropriate amount of

skepticism’ about the statement he makes” (Folkenflik 2020). Despite what these Fox News lawyers quite ironically claim, what is actually occurring appears to be more complicated than this. When considering both prior research as well as my results, it can be said that a great many viewers (largely Republicans) *do* trust Fox News – and, by implication, Tucker Carlson, by virtue of him having one of the highest rated programs on the network (Joyella 2021b). A similar conclusion can be reached with respect to Democrats, a majority of whom express trust in MSNBC (“2020 Social Media Study”). This implies that people are largely *not* watching with “an appropriate amount of skepticism,” but are instead watching in either a distinctly trustful, or highly distrustful, manner (Folkenflik 2020).

Carrying this a step further, another possible consideration for future researchers to examine would be the strong possibility that “oppositional viewers” not only do not trust what they are watching, but *do* believe that those on the “other side” do trust it. For example, a Democrat who regularly watches a particularly partisan Fox News program might have little to no trust in what they are consuming, but may believe that most Republican viewers hold no such hesitation. Experimental designs could provide even more extreme content than is largely seen on either of these networks to partisan individuals, to measure how extreme they find the beliefs of “the other side” to be. Such a measurement might be quite enlightening when it comes to negative partisanship and opposing media (and would expand upon the work of Ahler and Sood in 2018).

Ultimately, as these findings heavily illustrate the importance of trust, they likewise point to the need of future surveys to include more measures in which this can be addressed. While the 2020 ANES Social Media survey did ask questions of this nature, the generalizability of results is limited in this regard. As previously stated in the introduction, not all Americans are

on the internet, let alone Facebook users (who make up this sample). The lack of any type of face-to-face component with this survey is a potential concern as well (“2020 Social Media Study,” Malhotra and Krosnick 2007). I therefore call on ANES to incorporate questions which ask about trust of particular news sources in their larger, more representative Main Studies. This would allow for further and more reliable analysis to be conducted on this critical topic. By no means should these questions of trust be limited to Fox News and MSNBC. The same could be asked of not only additional networks and particular programs, but also of newspapers, magazines, and especially online sources for more thorough investigations of this nature. Perhaps most importantly, inclusion of questions relating to trust, in addition to questions pertaining to viewership, would allow for both viewership and trust to be observed within the same sample. This is a limitation present in my study, as these two concepts had to be examined separately. To be able to examine both within the same sample would likely be an illuminating study for a future researcher to undertake, but the questions must first be included in surveys for this to occur.

To return to my theory of a “vicious cycle of causality” between partisan media consumers and partisan media content providers, it bears repeating that this study does not determine causal order. These results do not prove that either viewership or trust of partisan cable news have a causal effect on partisan sentiment. Nor do they show a causal effect in the reverse. They do, however, provide something of a “crucial baseline,” such as that established by Levendusky (2013a, 570), in identifying that relationships among these various occurrences not only exist, but the important role that trust plays in them. What becomes most clear in this analysis is, in essence, confirmation of the central theory of this project: that the distinction between trust and viewership of partisan media is key when examining the corresponding

relationship with partisan sentiment. Despite mixed results with respect to the backfire effect, these findings strongly suggest that the standard of automatically equating partisan media viewership with trust or agreement is erroneous. Future research on this topic should acknowledge and take into account this crucial distinction.

## APPENDIX A – Dependent Variables

**TABLE A1**  
**ANES 2016 Main Study Summary Variable Components**

| <b>Summary Variable</b> | <b>Constitutive Variable</b>                        | <b>Measurement</b>   | <b>ANES Variable Name</b> |
|-------------------------|---|--|---------------------------|
| Republican              | How would you rate the Republican Party? (PRE-VOTE) | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V161096                   |
| Republican              | How would you rate Donald Trump?* (PRE-VOTE)        | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V161087                   |
| Republican              | How would you rate Donald Trump?* (POST-VOTE)       | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V162079                   |
| Republican              | How would you rate conservatives? (POST-VOTE)       | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V162101                   |
| Democrat                | How would you rate the Democratic Party? (PRE-VOTE) | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V161095                   |
| Democrat                | How would you rate Hillary Clinton?*** (PRE-VOTE)   | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V161086                   |
| Democrat                | How would you rate Hillary Clinton?*** (POST-VOTE)  | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V162078                   |
| Democrat                | How would you rate liberals? (POST-VOTE)            | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V162097                   |

\* A mean of the pre-vote and post-vote ratings of Donald Trump is used with the remaining two variables herein, so that the mean (pre-vote/post-vote) rating of Donald Trump is one of three variables averaged in the Republican summary variable.

\*\* A mean of the pre-vote and post-vote ratings of Hillary Clinton is used with the remaining two variables herein, so that the mean (pre-vote/post-vote) rating of Hillary Clinton is one of three variables averaged in the Democrat summary variable.

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE A2**  
**ANES 2020 Main Study Summary Variable Components**

| <b>Summary Variable</b> | <b>Constitutive Variable</b>                        | <b>Measurement</b>   | <b>ANES Variable Name</b> |
|-------------------------|---|--|---------------------------|
| Republican              | How would you rate the Republican Party? (PRE-VOTE) | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = "Very cold or unfavorable," 100° = "Very warm or favorable feeling" | V201157                   |
| Republican              | How would you rate Donald Trump?* (PRE-VOTE)        | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = "Very cold or unfavorable," 100° = "Very warm or favorable feeling" | V201152                   |
| Republican              | How would you rate Donald Trump?* (POST-VOTE)       | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = "Very cold or unfavorable," 100° = "Very warm or favorable feeling" | V202144                   |
| Republican              | How would you rate conservatives? (POST-VOTE)       | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = "Very cold or unfavorable," 100° = "Very warm or favorable feeling" | V202164                   |
| Democrat                | How would you rate the Democratic Party? (PRE-VOTE) | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = "Very cold or unfavorable," 100° = "Very warm or favorable feeling" | V201156                   |
| Democrat                | How would you rate Joe Biden?** (PRE-VOTE)          | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = "Very cold or unfavorable," 100° = "Very warm or favorable feeling" | V201151                   |
| Democrat                | How would you rate Joe Biden?** (POST-VOTE)         | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = "Very cold or unfavorable," 100° = "Very warm or favorable feeling" | V202143                   |
| Democrat                | How would you rate liberals? (POST-VOTE)            | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = "Very cold or unfavorable," 100° = "Very warm or favorable feeling" | V202161                   |

\* A mean of the pre-vote and post-vote ratings of Donald Trump is used with the remaining two variables herein, so that the mean (pre-vote/post-vote) rating of Donald Trump is one of three variables averaged in the Republican summary variable.

\*\* A mean of the pre-vote and post-vote ratings of Joe Biden is used with the remaining two variables herein, so that the mean (pre-vote/post-vote) rating of Joe Biden is one of three variables averaged in the Democrat summary variable.

Source: "2020 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE A3**  
**ANES 2020 Social Media Study Summary Variable Components**

| Summary Variable | Constitutive Variable  | Measurement  | ANES Variable Name |
|------------------|--|--|--------------------|
| Republican       | How would you rate the Republican Party?*(PRE-VOTE)                | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | ftrep              |
| Republican       | How would you rate the Republican Party?*(POST-VOTE)               | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | w2ftrep            |
| Republican       | How would you rate Donald Trump?(PRE-VOTE)                         | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | fttrump            |
| Republican       | How would you rate the National Rifle Association (NRA)?(PRE-VOTE) | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | ftnra              |
| Democrat         | How would you rate the Democratic Party?**(PRE-VOTE)               | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | ftdem              |
| Democrat         | How would you rate the Democratic Party?**(POST-VOTE)              | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | w2ftdem            |
| Democrat         | How would you rate Joe Biden?(PRE-VOTE)                            | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | ftjb               |
| Democrat         | How would you rate Planned Parenthood?(PRE-VOTE)                   | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | ftpp               |

\* A mean of the pre-vote and post-vote ratings of the Republican Party is used with the remaining two variables herein, so that the mean (pre-vote/post-vote) rating of the Republican Party is one of three variables averaged in the Republican summary variable.

\*\* A mean of the pre-vote and post-vote ratings of the Democratic Party is used with the remaining two variables herein, so that the mean (pre-vote/post-vote) rating of the Democratic Party is one of three variables averaged in the Democrat summary variable.

Source: “2020 Social Media Study.” *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 8 Mar. 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-social-media-study/>.

**TABLE A4**

**Alternate ANES 2020 Main Study Republican Summary Variable Components**

| <b>Summary Variable</b> | <b>Constitutive Variable</b>                             | <b>Measurement</b>   | <b>ANES Variable Name</b> |
|-------------------------|--|--|---------------------------|
| Republican              | How would you rate the Republican Party? (PRE-VOTE)      | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V201157                   |
| Republican              | How would you rate Donald Trump?* (PRE-VOTE)             | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V201152                   |
| Republican              | How would you rate Donald Trump?* (POST-VOTE)            | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V202144                   |
| Republican              | How would you rate the National Rifle Association (NRA)? | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V202178                   |
| Democrat                | How would you rate the Democratic Party? (PRE-VOTE)      | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V201156                   |
| Democrat                | How would you rate Joe Biden?** (PRE-VOTE)               | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V201151                   |
| Democrat                | How would you rate Joe Biden?** (POST-VOTE)              | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V202143                   |
| Democrat                | How would you rate Planned Parenthood? (POST-VOTE)       | 0° to 100° feeling thermometer; 0° = “Very cold or unfavorable,” 100° = “Very warm or favorable feeling” | V202185                   |

\* A mean of the pre-vote and post-vote ratings of Donald Trump is used with the remaining two variables herein, so that the mean (pre-vote/post-vote) rating of Donald Trump is one of three variables averaged in the Republican summary variable.

\*\* A mean of the pre-vote and post-vote ratings of Joe Biden is used with the remaining two variables herein, so that the mean (pre-vote/post-vote) rating of Joe Biden is one of three variables averaged in the Democrat summary variable.

Source: “2020 Time Series Study.” *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

## APPENDIX B – Independent Variables

**TABLE B1**

### ANES 2016 Main Study Fox News Program Options

Survey Question: Which of the following television programs do you watch regularly?

Please check any that you watch at least once a month.

| Variable                               | Network  | Measurement   | ANES Variable Name |
|--|----------|---------------|--------------------|
| Hannity                                | Fox News | 0=No<br>1=Yes | V161096            |
| The O'Reilly Factor                    | Fox News | 0=No<br>1=Yes | V161409            |
| On the Record with Greta Van Susteren* | Fox News | 0=No<br>1=Yes | V161391            |
| The Kelly File                         | Fox News | 0=No<br>1=Yes | V161372            |
| The Rachel Maddow Show                 | MSNBC    | 0=No<br>1=Yes | V161393            |
| All In with Chris Hayes                | MSNBC    | 0=No<br>1=Yes | V161365            |
| Hardball with Chris Matthews           | MSNBC    | 0=No<br>1=Yes | V161386            |

NOTE: This question was only asked in the pre-election survey.

\* This program option was not included in the 2016 Fox News additive variable created.

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE B2****ANES 2020 Main Study Fox News Program Options**

Survey Question: Which of the following television programs do you watch regularly?

Please check any that you watch at least once a month.

| <b>Variable</b>                                       | <b>Network</b> | <b>Measurement</b> | <b>ANES Variable Name</b> |
|---|----------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Hannity (Fox)   | Fox News       | 0=No<br>1=Yes      | V201630b                  |
| Tucker Carlson Tonight (Fox)                          | Fox News       | 0=No<br>1=Yes      | V201630c                  |
| The Five (Fox)*                                       | Fox News       | 0=No<br>1=Yes      | V201630f                  |
| The Ingraham Angle (Fox)                              | Fox News       | 0=No<br>1=Yes      | V201630g                  |
| The Story with Martha MacCallum (Fox)                 | Fox News       | 0=No<br>1=Yes      | V201630h                  |
| Special Report with Bret Baier (Fox)*                 | Fox News       | 0=No<br>1=Yes      | V201630k                  |
| Fox & Friends (Fox)                                   | Fox News       | 0=No<br>1=Yes      | V201631k                  |
| The Rachel Maddow Show (MSNBC)                        | MSNBC          | 0=No<br>1=Yes      | V201630d                  |
| The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell (MSNBC)         | MSNBC          | 0=No<br>1=Yes      | V201630e                  |
| Morning Joe (MSNBC)                                   | MSNBC          | 0=No<br>1=Yes      | V201631m                  |
| All In with Chris Hayes (MSNBC)                       | MSNBC          | 0=No<br>1=Yes      | V201631n                  |
| The 11 <sup>th</sup> Hour with Brian Williams (MSNBC) | MSNBC          | 0=No<br>1=Yes      | V201631p                  |

NOTE: This question was only asked in the pre-election survey.

\* This program options were not included in the 2020 Fox News additive variable created.

"2020 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE B3****ANES 2020 Main Study Trust News Variable**

| <b>Variable</b>  | <b>Measurement*</b>  | <b>ANES Variable Name</b> |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the news media when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly? | 0=None<br>1=A little<br>2=A moderate amount<br>3=A lot<br>5=A great deal | V201377                   |

NOTE: This question was only asked in the pre-election survey.

\* Value labels were recoded from 1=None, 2=A little, etc. to allow for clearer interpretation of the base value in interaction models.

"2020 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021.

<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE B4****ANES 2020 Social Media Survey Trust Levels in Fox News and MSNBC**

Survey Question: How much do you think political information from each of these sources can be trusted?

| <b>Variable</b> | <b>Measurement</b>                                       | <b>ANES Variable Name</b> |
|-----------------|--|---------------------------|
| Fox News        | 5 pt. scale, ranging from "Not at all" to "A great deal" | trustfox                  |
| MSNBC           | 5 pt. scale, ranging from "Not at all" to "A great deal" | trustmsnbc                |

Source: "2020 Social Media Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 8 Mar. 2021.

<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-social-media-study/>.

**TABLE B5**

**Party ID Summary Variables in ANES 2016 Main Study, ANES 2020 Main Study, and ANES 2020 Social Media Study**

| <b>Variable</b>                | <b>Measurement</b>   | <b>ANES 2016 Variable Name</b> | <b>ANES 2020 Main Variable Name</b> | <b>ANES 2020 Social Media Variable Name</b> |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Party ID summary, Pre-election | 1= Strong Democrat, 2=Not very strong Democrat, 3= Independent-Democrat, 4=Independent, 5= Independent-Republican, 6=Not very strong Republican, 7=Strong Republican | V161158x                       | V201231X                            | pid7x                                       |

“2016 Time Series Study.” *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

“2020 Time Series Study.” *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

“2020 Social Media Study.” *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 8 Mar. 2021. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-social-media-study/>.

**APPENDIX C –Control Variables in ANES 2016 Main Study, ANES 2020 Main Study, and  
ANES 2020 Social Media Study**

**TABLE C1**

**Control Variables in ANES 2016 Main Study**

| <b>Variable</b>                      | <b>Measurement</b>   | <b>ANES 2016 Variable Name</b>   |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Male*                                | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | V161342  |
| Age                                  | 1= Age group 18-20; 2 = Age group 21-24; 3=Age group 25-29; 4= Age group 30-34; 5=Age group 35-39; 6=Age group 40-44; 7=Age group 45-49; 8=Age group 50-54; 9=Age group 55-59; 10 Age group 60-64; 11= Age group 65-69; 12= Age group 70-74; 13= Age group 75 or older   | V161267x   |
| Educational Attainment               | 1= Less than 1 <sup>st</sup> grade; 2=1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , or 4 <sup>th</sup> grade; 3= 5 <sup>th</sup> or 6 <sup>th</sup> grade; 4= 7 <sup>th</sup> or 8 <sup>th</sup> grade; 5= 9 <sup>th</sup> grade; 6= 10 <sup>th</sup> grade, 7= 11 <sup>th</sup> grade, 8= 12 <sup>th</sup> grade no diploma, 9=High school graduate-high school diploma or equivalent; 10= Some college but no degree; 11=Associate degree-occupational/vocational; 12=Associate degree-academic; 13= Bachelor’s degree, 14=Master’s degree, 15=Professional school degree, 16=Doctorate degree | V161270  |
| White*                               | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | V161310x   |
| Income summary                       | 01= Under 5,000; 02=5,000-9,999; 03=10,000-12,499; 04=12,500-14,999; 05=15,000-17,499; 06=17,500-19,999; 07=20,000-22,499; 08=22,500-24,999; 09=25,000-27,499; 10=27,500-29,999; 11=30,000-34,999; 12=35,000-39,999; 13=40,000-44,999; 14=45,000-49,999; 15=50,000-54,999; 16=55,000-59,999; 17=60,000-64,999; 18=65,000-69,999; 19=70,000-74,999; 20=75,000-79,999; 21=80,000-89,999; 22=90,000-99,999; 23=100,000-109,999; 24=110,000-124,999; 25=125,000-149,999; 26=150,000-174,999; 27=175,000-249,999; 28= 250,000 or more   | V161361x   |
| Married*                             | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | V161268  |
| Employed*                            | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | V161277  |
| Heterosexual*                        | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | V161511  |
| Christian*                           | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | V161265x   |
| South*                               | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | V163003  |
| Watched News Shows Not on Fox News** | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | V161393; V161386;<br>V161365; V161367;<br>V161380; V161381;<br>V161382; V161384; |

|                                    |                |   |
|------------------------------------|----------------|---|
|                                    |                | V161388; V161390;<br>V161396; V161399;<br>V161400; V161403;<br>V161404; V161405   |
| Watched News Shows Not on MSNBC*** | 1= Yes<br>0=No | V161370; V161409;<br>V161372; V161391;<br>V161367; V161380;<br>V161381; V161382;<br>V161384; V161388;<br>V161390; V161396;<br>V161399; V161400;<br>V161403; V161404;<br>V161405 |

\* Dummy variables created herein from the corresponding nominal variables listed for each survey.

\*\* Dummy variable created herein where any news show regularly watched not on Fox News triggers a 1(yes). All non-Fox News show options are listed in the variable name cell.

\*\*\* Dummy variable created herein where any news show regularly watched not on MSNBC triggers a 1(yes). All non-MSNBC news show options are listed in the variable name cell.

"2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE C2****Control Variables in ANES 2020 Main Study**

| <b>Variable</b>            | <b>Measurement</b>   | <b>ANES 2016 Variable Name</b> |
|----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Male*                      | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | V201600                        |
| Age                        | Value=Age of respondent 18-79; 80=Age 80 or older  | V201507x                       |
| Highest Level of Education | 1= Less than high school credential; 2= High school diploma or equivalent; 3= Some college but no degree; 4=Associate degree – occupational/vocational; 5=Associate degree – academic; 6=Bachelor’s degree; 7=Master’s degree; 8= Professional school/doctoral degree  | V201510                        |
| White*                     | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | V201549x                       |
| Income summary             | 01= Under 9,999; 02=10,000-14,999; 03=15,000-19,999; 04=20,000-24,999; 05=25,000-29,999; 06=30,000-34,999; 07=35,000-39,999; 08=40,000-44,999; 09=45,000-49,999; 10=50,000-59,999; 11=60,000-64,999; 12=65,000-69,999; 13=70,000-74,999; 14=75,000-79,999; 15=80,000-89,999; 16=90,000-99,999; 17=100,000-109,999; 18=110,000-124,999; 19=125,000-149,999; 20=150,000-174,999; 21=175,000-249,999; 22= 250,000 or more | V202468x                       |
| Married*                   | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | V201508                        |
| Employed*                  | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | V201534x                       |
| Heterosexual*              | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | V201601                        |
| Christian*                 | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | V201458x                       |
| South*                     | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | V203003                        |

\* Dummy variables created herein from the corresponding nominal variables listed for each survey.

\*\* Dummy variable created herein where any news show regularly watched not on Fox News triggers a 1(yes). All non-Fox News show options are listed in the variable name cell.

\*\*\* Dummy variable created herein where any news show regularly watched not on MSNBC triggers a 1(yes). All non-MSNBC news show options are listed in the variable name cell.

“2020 Time Series Study.” *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE C3**

**Control Variables in ANES 2020 Social Media Study**

| <b>Variable</b>   | <b>Measurement</b>   | <b>ANES 2016 Variable Name</b> |
|-------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Male*             | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | profile_gender                 |
| Age               | Value=Age of respondent 18-79; 80=Age 80 or older  | profile_age                    |
| 5-level education | 1= Less than HS; 2= HS graduate or equivalent;<br>3=Vocational/tech school/some college/associates;<br>4=Bachelor’s degree; 5=Post grad study/professional degree  | profile_edu5                   |
| White*            | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | profile_racethnicity           |
| Income summary    | 01= Less than 5,000; 02=5,000-9,999; 03=10,000-14,999;<br>04=15,000-19,999; 05=20,000-24,999; 06=25,000-29,999;<br>07=30,000-34,999; 08=35,000-39,999;<br>09=40,000-49,999; 10=50,000-59,999; 11=60,000-74,999;<br>12=75,000-84,999; 13=85,000-99,999;<br>14=100,000-124,999; 15=125,000-149,999; 16=150,000-174,999;<br>17=175,000-199,999; 18= 200,000 or more | profile_income                 |
| Married*          | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | profile_marital                |
| Employed*         | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | profile_employ                 |
| Heterosexual*     | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | profile_lgbt                   |
| Christian*        | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | profile_relig                  |
| South*            | 1= Yes<br>0=No   | profile_region4                |

\* Dummy variables created herein from the corresponding nominal variables listed for each survey.

\*\* Dummy variable created herein where any news show regularly watched not on Fox News triggers a 1(yes). All non-Fox News show options are listed in the variable name cell.

\*\*\* Dummy variable created herein where any news show regularly watched not on MSNBC triggers a 1(yes). All non-MSNBC news show options are listed in the variable name cell.

“2016 Time Series Study.” *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

“2020 Time Series Study.” *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

“2020 Social Media Study.” *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 8 Mar. 2021.  
<https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-social-media-study/>.

**APPENDIX D –Alternate, Non-Interactive Regression Models Examining Viewership of Partisan Networks and Partisan Sentiment**

**TABLE D1**  
**The Relationship Between Fox News Viewership and Feelings Towards Democrats**

|                            | Model 19 (2016)                | Model 20(2020)                 | Model 21(2020)                 |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|                            | $\beta$<br>(Robust Std. Error) | $\beta$<br>(Robust Std. Error) | $\beta$<br>(Robust Std. Error) |
| Amount of Fox News Watched | -5.23***<br>(0.45)             | 0.04<br>(0.30)                 | -0.20<br>(0.27)                |
| Trust News                 |                                |                                | 7.19***<br>(0.23)              |
| Republican                 | -36.94***<br>(0.77)            | -46.83***<br>(0.57)            | -37.44***<br>(0.60)            |
| Male                       | -2.22***<br>(0.68)             | -2.85***<br>(0.52)             | -2.98***<br>(0.47)             |
| Age                        | 0.28**<br>(0.11)               | 0.08***<br>(0.02)              | 0.03<br>(0.02)                 |
| Educational Attainment     | 0.08<br>(0.06)                 | 0.65***<br>(0.13)              | 0.47***<br>(0.12)              |
| White                      | -6.62***<br>(0.80)             | -3.47***<br>(0.60)             | -2.73***<br>(0.54)             |
| Income                     | 0.10**<br>(0.05)               | 0.09*<br>(0.05)                | 0.08*<br>(0.04)                |
| Married                    | -1.17<br>(0.76)                | -2.01***<br>(0.57)             | -1.84***<br>(0.52)             |
| Employed                   | 0.57<br>(0.75)                 | -0.64<br>(0.59)                | 0.01<br>(0.54)                 |
| Heterosexual               | -8.89***<br>(1.49)             | 0.45<br>(1.05)                 | 0.23<br>(0.96)                 |
| Christian                  | -3.79***<br>(0.80)             | -0.95<br>(0.63)                | -0.84<br>(0.57)                |
| South                      | -0.20<br>(0.70)                | 0.71<br>(0.53)                 | 1.09**<br>(0.48)               |
| Non-Fox News Treatment     | 3.90***<br>(0.73)              | 1.90***<br>(0.60)              | 0.43<br>(0.55)                 |
| Number of Cases            | 2,547                          | 4,650                          | 4,647                          |
| Adjusted R-Squared         | 0.6454                         | 0.6707                         | 0.7269                         |

\* $p \leq .10$ ; \*\* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .01$

2016 Democrat summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party, and Liberals. 2020 Democrat summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Liberals.

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019, <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

Source: "2020 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE D2**  
**The Relationship Between Fox News Viewership and Feelings Towards Republicans**

|                            | Model 22 (2016)     | Model 23 (2020)     | Model 24 (2020)     |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                            | $\beta$             | $\beta$             | $\beta$             |
|                            | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) |
| Amount of Fox News Watched | 4.61***<br>(0.43)   | 0.01<br>(0.29)      | 0.31<br>(0.28)      |
| Trust News                 |                     |                     | -4.07***<br>(0.24)  |
| Republican                 | 32.80***<br>(0.73)  | 49.31***<br>(0.55)  | 43.99***<br>(0.62)  |
| Male                       | 0.31<br>(0.65)      | -0.38<br>(0.50)     | -0.24<br>(0.48)     |
| Age                        | -0.10<br>(0.11)     | 0.04**<br>(0.02)    | 0.07***<br>(0.02)   |
| Educational Attainment     | -0.13**<br>(0.06)   | -1.18***<br>(0.13)  | -1.08***<br>(0.12)  |
| White                      | 3.35***<br>(0.76)   | -0.32<br>(0.57)     | -0.68<br>(0.56)     |
| Income                     | -0.31***<br>(0.05)  | -0.22***<br>(0.04)  | -0.20***<br>(0.04)  |
| Married                    | -0.25<br>(0.73)     | 1.55***<br>(0.55)   | 1.43**<br>(0.54)    |
| Employed                   | -1.23*<br>(0.71)    | 0.90<br>(0.57)      | 0.48<br>(0.55)      |
| Heterosexual               | 8.55***<br>(1.46)   | 3.41***<br>(1.01)   | 351***<br>(0.98)    |
| Christian                  | 7.29***<br>(0.77)   | 6.99***<br>(0.61)   | 6.95***<br>(0.59)   |
| South                      | 2.74***<br>(0.67)   | 1.72***<br>(0.51)   | 1.51***<br>(0.49)   |
| Non-Fox News Treatment     | -1.92***<br>(0.69)  | 0.85<br>(0.58)      | 1.64***<br>(0.56)   |
| Number of Cases            | 2,546               | 4,613               | 4,610               |
| Adjusted R-Squared         | 0.6118              | 0.7222              | 0.7381              |

\*  $p \leq .10$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$

2016 and 2020 Republican summary variables taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and Conservatives.

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019, <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

Source: "2020 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE D3**  
**The Relationship Between MSNBC Viewership and Feelings Towards Republicans**

|                          | Model 25 (2016)     | Model 26 (2020)     | Model 27 (2020)     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                          | $\beta$             | $\beta$             | $\beta$             |
|                          | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) |
| Amount of MSNBC Watched  | -3.71***<br>(0.54)  | -0.61**<br>(0.30)   | -0.18<br>(0.29)     |
| Trust News               |                     |                     | -4.03***<br>(0.24)  |
| Democrat                 | -34.53***<br>(0.72) | -49.20***<br>(0.55) | -43.92***<br>(0.62) |
| Male                     | 1.04<br>(0.65)      | -0.34<br>(0.50)     | -0.20<br>(0.48)     |
| Age                      | 0.09<br>(0.11)      | 0.05***<br>(0.02)   | 0.07***<br>(0.02)   |
| Educational Attainment   | -0.10<br>(0.06)     | -1.17***<br>(0.13)  | -1.07***<br>(0.12)  |
| White                    | 3.56***<br>(0.77)   | -0.36<br>(0.57)     | -0.69<br>(0.56)     |
| Income                   | -0.26***<br>(0.05)  | -0.21***<br>(0.04)  | -0.20***<br>(0.04)  |
| Married                  | -0.65<br>(0.74)     | 1.57***<br>(0.55)   | 1.47***<br>(0.54)   |
| Employed                 | -1.78**<br>(0.72)   | 0.84<br>(0.57)      | 0.45<br>(0.55)      |
| Heterosexual             | 8.18***<br>(1.48)   | 3.42***<br>(1.01)   | 3.51***<br>(0.98)   |
| Christian                | 7.21***<br>(0.78)   | 7.06***<br>(0.61)   | 7.02***<br>(0.59)   |
| South                    | 2.70***<br>(0.68)   | 1.73***<br>(0.51)   | 1.51***<br>(0.49)   |
| Non-MSNBC News Treatment | 1.60**<br>(0.75)    | 0.99<br>(0.60)      | 1.74***<br>(0.58)   |
| Number of Cases          | 2,546               | 4,613               | 4,610               |
| Adjusted R-Squared       | 0.6002              | 0.7216              | 0.7379              |

\*  $p \leq .10$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$

2016 and 2020 Republican summary variables taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and Conservatives.

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019, <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

Source: "2020 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE D4**  
**The Relationship Between MSNBC Viewership and Feelings Towards Democrats**

|                          | Model 28 (2016)     | Model 29 (2020)     | Model 30 (2020)     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                          | $\beta$             | $\beta$             | $\beta$             |
|                          | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) |
| Amount of MSNBC Watched  | 5.27***<br>(0.57)   | 1.84***<br>(0.31)   | 1.06***<br>(0.29)   |
| Trust News               |                     |                     | 7.09***<br>(0.23)   |
| Democrat                 | 38.82***<br>(0.75)  | 46.71***<br>(0.57)  | 37.42***<br>(0.60)  |
| Male                     | -3.21***<br>(0.69)  | -2.94***<br>(0.51)  | -3.06***<br>(0.47)  |
| Age                      | 0.04<br>(0.11)      | 0.07***<br>(0.02)   | 0.02<br>(0.02)      |
| Educational Attainment   | 0.03<br>(0.06)      | 0.63***<br>(0.13)   | 0.46***<br>(0.12)   |
| White                    | -6.97***<br>(0.81)  | -3.31***<br>(0.59)  | -2.63***<br>(0.54)  |
| Income                   | 0.04<br>(0.05)      | 0.09**<br>(0.05)    | 0.08*<br>(0.04)     |
| Married                  | -0.71<br>(0.78)     | -1.98***<br>(0.57)  | -1.86***<br>(0.52)  |
| Employed                 | 1.16<br>(0.76)      | -0.48<br>(0.59)     | -0.10<br>(0.54)     |
| Heterosexual             | -8.44***<br>(1.51)  | -0.39<br>(1.05)     | 0.22<br>(0.96)      |
| Christian                | -3.75***<br>(0.81)  | -1.04*<br>(0.63)    | -0.94<br>(0.57)     |
| South                    | -0.17<br>(0.71)     | 0.65<br>(0.53)      | 1.04**<br>(0.48)    |
| Non-MSNBC News Treatment | -0.48<br>(0.79)     | 1.33**<br>(0.62)    | -0.14<br>(0.57)     |
| Number of Cases          | 2,547               | 4,650               | 4,647               |
| Adjusted R-Squared       | 0.6346              | 0.6732              | 0.7277              |

\* $p \leq .10$ ; \*\* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .01$

2016 Democrat summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party, and Liberals. 2020 Democrat summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Liberals.

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019, <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

Source: "2020 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

**APPENDIX E – Regression Models Using Alternate Versions of Party Summary Variables  
in 2020**

**TABLE E1**  
**Partisanship, Viewership of Fox News, and Feelings Towards Democrats**

|  | Model 31 (2016)     | Model 32 (2020)     | Model 33 (2020)     |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|  | $\beta$             | $\beta$             | $\beta$             |
|  | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) |
| Constant                                   | 70.05***<br>(1.98)  | 74.47***<br>(1.52)  | 64.33***<br>(1.44)  |
| Amount of Fox News Watched                 | -9.74***<br>(1.01)  | 2.01***<br>(0.39)   | 0.69*<br>(0.36)     |
| Republican                                 | -32.16***<br>(0.84) | -44.73***<br>(0.69) | -36.72***<br>(0.69) |
| Amount of Fox News Watched x<br>Republican | 4.41***<br>(1.13)   | -3.77***<br>(0.52)  | -2.09***<br>(0.53)  |
| Trust News                                 |                     |                     | 6.96***<br>(0.24)   |
| Male                                       | -2.92***<br>(0.69)  | -3.77***<br>(0.52)  | -3.88***<br>(0.48)  |
| Age  | 0.35***<br>(0.12)   | 0.04**<br>(0.02)    | -0.01<br>(0.02)     |
| Educational Attainment                     | 0.08<br>(0.06)      | 0.25*<br>(0.13)     | 0.07<br>(0.12)      |
| White                                      | -8.32***<br>(0.80)  | -3.32***<br>(0.61)  | -2.75***<br>(0.56)  |
| Income                                     | 0.18***<br>(0.05)   | 0.03<br>(0.05)      | 0.02<br>(0.04)      |
| Married                                    | -1.21<br>(0.78)     | -2.23***<br>(0.58)  | -1.98***<br>(0.53)  |
| Employed                                   | 1.32*<br>(0.76)     | 0.33<br>(0.59)      | 1.01*<br>(0.55)     |
| Heterosexual                               | -7.61***<br>(1.50)  | 1.32<br>(1.07)      | 1.17<br>(0.98)      |
| Christian                                  | -2.61***<br>(0.81)  | -2.63***<br>(0.64)  | -2.41***<br>(0.59)  |
| South                                      | -1.21*<br>(0.72)    | -0.15<br>(0.54)     | 0.41<br>(0.49)      |
| Non-Fox News Treatment                     | 5.11***<br>(0.75)   | 2.26***<br>(0.61)   | 0.80<br>(0.56)      |
| Number of Cases                            | 2,896               | 4,572               | 4,569               |
| Adjusted R-Squared                         | 0.5418              | 0.6774              | 0.7273              |

\* $p \leq .10$ ; \*\* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .01$

2016 Democrat summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party, and Liberals.  
2020 Democrat summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Planned Parenthood.

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019, <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

Source: "2020 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE E2**  
**Partisanship, Viewership of Fox News, and Feelings Towards Republicans**

|  | Model 34 (2016)<br>β<br>(Robust Std. Error) | Model 35 (2020)<br>β<br>(Robust Std. Error) | Model 36 (2020)<br>β<br>(Robust Std. Error) |
|--|---|---|---|
| Constant                                   | 23.53***<br>(1.83)                          | 21.42***<br>(1.63)                          | 28.90***<br>(1.61)                          |
| Amount of Fox News Watched                 | 5.88***<br>(0.89)                           | -1.42***<br>(0.41)                          | -0.42<br>(0.40)                             |
| Republican                                 | 29.38***<br>(0.76)                          | 51.07***<br>(0.72)                          | 45.13***<br>(0.75)                          |
| Amount of Fox News Watched x<br>Republican | -1.04<br>(1.00)                             | 2.57***<br>(0.59)                           | 1.18**<br>(0.57)                            |
| Trust News                                 |   |   | -5.14***<br>(0.26)                          |
| Male                                       | 0.59<br>(0.63)                              | 0.38<br>(0.54)                              | 0.54<br>(0.52)                              |
| Age  | -0.10<br>(0.10)                             | -0.01<br>(0.02)                             | 0.03<br>(0.02)                              |
| Educational Attainment                     | -0.11**<br>(0.05)                           | -1.91***<br>(0.14)                          | -1.75***<br>(0.13)                          |
| White                                      | 4.71***<br>(0.73)                           | 0.77<br>(0.64)                              | 0.46<br>(0.62)                              |
| Income                                     | -0.36***<br>(0.04)                          | -0.32***<br>(0.05)                          | -0.32***<br>(0.05)                          |
| Married                                    | -0.03<br>(0.70)                             | 1.69***<br>(0.61)                           | 1.56***<br>(0.58)                           |
| Employed                                   | -1.81***<br>(0.69)                          | 1.39**<br>(0.62)                            | 1.02*<br>(0.60)                             |
| Heterosexual                               | 10.06***<br>(1.40)                          | 3.67***<br>(1.14)                           | 3.43***<br>(1.10)                           |
| Christian                                  | 6.91***<br>(0.74)                           | 6.80***<br>(0.66)                           | 6.57***<br>(0.64)                           |
| South                                      | 3.14***<br>(0.65)                           | 1.34**<br>(0.56)                            | 1.13**<br>(0.54)                            |
| Non-Fox News Treatment                     | -1.86***<br>(0.68)                          | 1.11<br>(0.64)                              | 2.19***<br>(0.62)                           |
| Number of Cases                            | 2,892                                       | 4,458                                       | 4,915                                       |
| Adjusted R-Squared                         | 0.5475                                      | 0.7233                                      | 0.7453                                      |

\* $p \leq .10$ ; \*\* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .01$

2016 and 2020 Republican summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and the National Rifle Association (NRA).

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

Source: "2020 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE E3**  
**Partisanship, Viewership of MSNBC, and Feelings Towards Republicans**

|                                       | Model 37 (2016)     | Model 38 (2020)     | Model 39 (2020)     |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                                       | $\beta$             | $\beta$             | $\beta$             |
|                                       | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) |
| Constant                              | 39.47***<br>(1.99)  | 73.34***<br>(1.78)  | 74.55***<br>(1.71)  |
| Amount of MSNBC Watched               | -1.07<br>(1.28)     | 0.11<br>(0.48)      | 0.01<br>(0.46)      |
| Democrat                              | -28.07***<br>(0.72) | -51.87***<br>(0.71) | -45.68***<br>(0.75) |
| Amount of MSNBC Watched x<br>Democrat | -1.07<br>(1.28)     | -1.26**<br>(0.61)   | -0.11<br>(0.59)     |
| Trust News                            |                     |                     | -5.17***<br>(0.26)  |
| Male                                  | 0.65<br>(0.65)      | 0.34<br>(0.55)      | 0.52<br>(0.52)      |
| Age                                   | 0.24**<br>(0.11)    | -0.01<br>(0.02)     | 0.03*<br>(0.02)     |
| Educational Attainment                | -0.07<br>(0.06)     | -1.91***<br>(0.14)  | -1.75***<br>(0.13)  |
| White                                 | 6.24***<br>(0.75)   | 0.83<br>(0.64)      | 0.51<br>(0.62)      |
| Income                                | -0.17***<br>(0.04)  | -0.32***<br>(0.05)  | -0.32***<br>(0.05)  |
| Married                               | -0.21<br>(0.73)     | 1.62***<br>(0.61)   | 1.55***<br>(0.58)   |
| Employed                              | -0.97<br>(0.72)     | 1.30**<br>(0.62)    | 0.94<br>(0.60)      |
| Heterosexual                          | 10.03***<br>(1.46)  | 3.56***<br>(1.14)   | 3.35***<br>(1.10)   |
| Christian                             | 8.59***<br>(0.76)   | 6.87***<br>(0.66)   | 6.63***<br>(0.64)   |
| South                                 | 3.06***<br>(0.67)   | 1.43**<br>(0.56)    | 1.17**<br>(0.54)    |
| Non-MSNBC News Treatment              | 2.38***<br>(0.75)   | 0.53<br>(0.66)      | 1.70***<br>(0.64)   |
| Number of Cases                       | 2,892               | 4,458               | 4,455               |
| Adjusted R-Squared                    | 0.5102              | 0.7224              | 0.7446              |

\* $p \leq .10$ ; \*\* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .01$

2016 and 2020 Republican summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and the National Rifle Association (NRA).

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

Source: "2020 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

**TABLE E4**  
**Partisanship, Viewership of MSNBC, and Feelings Towards Democrats**

|                                    | Model 40 (2016)     | Model 41 (2020)     | Model 42 (2020)     |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                                    | $\beta$             | $\beta$             | $\beta$             |
|                                    | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) | (Robust Std. Error) |
| Constant                           | 50.09***<br>(2.01)  | 28.97***<br>(1.68)  | 27.28***<br>(1.54)  |
| Amount of MSNBC Watched            | 2.37*<br>(1.31)     | -0.20<br>(0.47)     | -0.14<br>(0.43)     |
| Democrat                           | 33.93***<br>(0.74)  | 45.51***<br>(0.67)  | 37.16***<br>(0.68)  |
| Amount of MSNBC Watched x Democrat | 3.88***<br>(1.45)   | 2.90***<br>(0.60)   | 1.41**<br>(0.55)    |
| Trust News                         |                     |                     | 6.95***<br>(0.24)   |
| Male                               | -3.24***<br>(0.67)  | -3.72***<br>(0.52)  | -3.88***<br>(0.48)  |
| Age                                | -0.06<br>(0.11)     | 0.03*<br>(0.02)     | -0.01<br>(0.02)     |
| Educational Attainment             | 0.01<br>(0.06)      | 0.24*<br>(0.13)     | 0.06<br>(0.12)      |
| White                              | -9.22***<br>(0.77)  | -3.28***<br>(0.61)  | -2.72***<br>(0.56)  |
| Income                             | -0.02<br>(0.05)     | 0.04<br>(0.05)      | 0.03<br>(0.04)      |
| Married                            | -0.89<br>(0.75)     | -2.13***<br>(0.58)  | -1.95***<br>(0.53)  |
| Employed                           | 0.36<br>(0.74)      | 0.40<br>(0.59)      | 1.06*<br>(0.55)     |
| Heterosexual                       | -7.17***<br>(1.45)  | 1.42<br>(1.07)      | 1.24<br>(0.99)      |
| Christian                          | -3.92***<br>(0.78)  | -2.68***<br>(0.64)  | -2.47***<br>(0.59)  |
| South                              | -0.75<br>(0.69)     | 0.03<br>(0.54)      | 0.34<br>(0.49)      |
| Non-MSNBC News Treatment           | -0.06<br>(0.77)     | 1.76***<br>(0.64)   | 0.43<br>(0.59)      |
| Number of Cases                    | 2,896               | 4,572               | 4,569               |
| Adjusted R-Squared                 | 0.5704              | 0.6772              | 0.727               |

.  $p \leq .10$ ; \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .0001$

2016 Democrat summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party, and Liberals; 2020 Democrat summary variable taking into account feeling thermometers for Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, and Planned Parenthood.

Source: "2016 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 4 Sept. 2019. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/>.

Source: "2020 Time Series Study." *Data Center*, American National Election Studies, 19 July, 2021. <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/>.

## APPENDIX F – Fair Use Evaluation Documentation for Figures 1-4

# Fair Use Evaluation Documentation

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| <b>Job Title:</b>            | Graduate Student   |
| <b>Institution:</b>          | Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  |
| <b>Title of Work Used:</b>   | Average Feeling-Thermometer Ratings of Own Party and Opposing Party,<br>1980-2016  |
| <b>Copyright Holder:</b>     | Alan I. Abramowitz and Steven W. Webster   |
| <b>Publication Status:</b>   | Published  |
| <b>Publisher:</b>            | Advances in Political Psychology   |
| <b>Place of Publication:</b> |  |
| <b>Publication Year:</b>     | 2018   |
| <b>Description of Work:</b>  | Figure 1 shown in the following article:<br><br>Abramowitz, Alan I. and Steven W. Webster. "Negative Partisanship: Why Americans Dislike Parties But Behave Like Rabid Partisans," <i>Advances in Political Psychology</i> , vol. 39, 2018, pp. 119-135. |
| <b>Date of Evaluation:</b>   | January 20, 2022   |
| <b>Date of Intended Use:</b> | December 13, 2021  |

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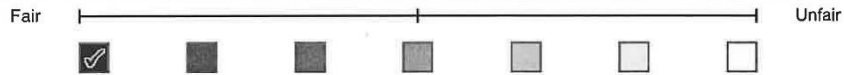
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|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
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Fair |-----| Unfair

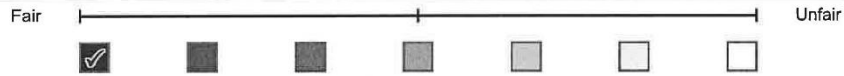
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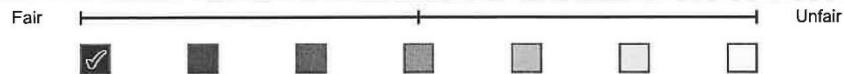
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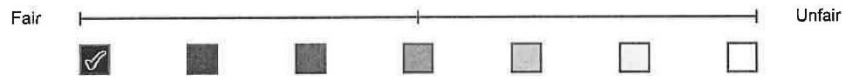
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The Average **"Fairness Level,"** Based on Your Rating of Each of the 4

Factors, Is:

[see tool disclaimer for important clarifying information]:



Based on the information and justification I have provided above, I, Kevin Thomas Lillard, am asserting this use is **FAIR** under Section 107 of the U.S. Copyright Code.

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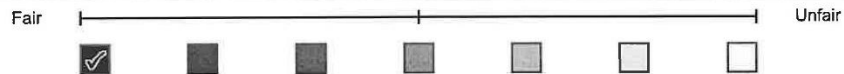
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|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Name:</b>                 | Kevin Thomas Lillard  |
| <b>Job Title:</b>            | Graduate Student  |
| <b>Institution:</b>          | Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University   |
| <b>Title of Work Used:</b>   | Estimated Ideology by Channel Year  |
| <b>Copyright Holder:</b>     | Gregory J. Martin and Ali Yurukoglu   |
| <b>Publication Status:</b>   | Published   |
| <b>Publisher:</b>            | American Economic Review  |
| <b>Place of Publication:</b> |   |
| <b>Publication Year:</b>     | 2017  |
| <b>Description of Work:</b>  | Figure 3 shown in the following article:<br><br>Martin, Gregory J. and Ali Yurukoglu. "Bias in Cable News: Persuasion and Polarization." American Economic Review, vol. 107 no. 9, 2017, pp. 2565-99. |
| <b>Date of Evaluation:</b>   | January 20, 2022  |
| <b>Date of Intended Use:</b> | December 13, 2021   |

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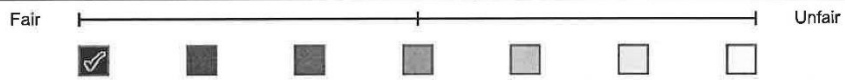
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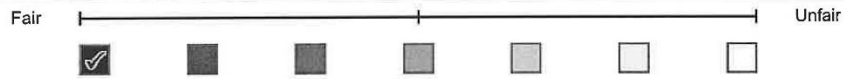
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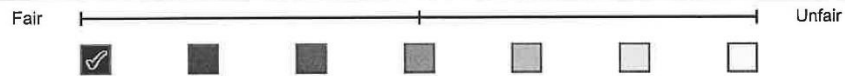
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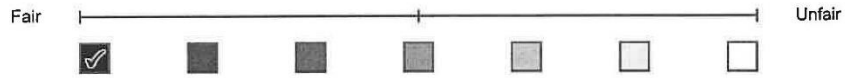
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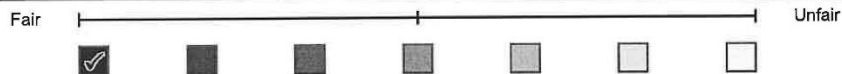
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|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Name:</b>                 | Kevin Thomas Lillard  |
| <b>Job Title:</b>            | Graduate Student  |
| <b>Institution:</b>          | Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University   |
| <b>Title of Work Used:</b>   | The Growing Partisan Gap in Media Trust   |
| <b>Copyright Holder:</b>     | Matt Grossmann and David A. Hopkins   |
| <b>Publication Status:</b>   | Published   |
| <b>Publisher:</b>            | The Forum   |
| <b>Place of Publication:</b> |   |
| <b>Publication Year:</b>     | 2018  |
| <b>Description of Work:</b>  | Figure 1 shown in the following article:<br><br>Grossmann, Matt, and David A Hopkins. "From Fox News to Viral Views: The Influence of Ideological Media in the 2018 Elections." The Forum, vol. 16, no. 4, 2018, pp. 551-571. |
| <b>Date of Evaluation:</b>   | January 20, 2022  |
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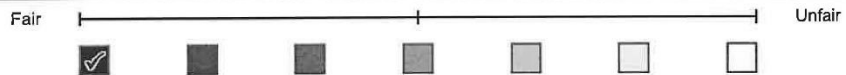
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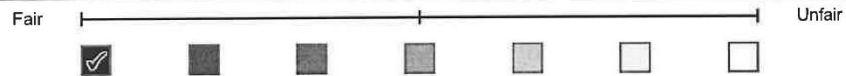
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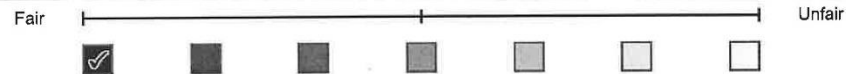
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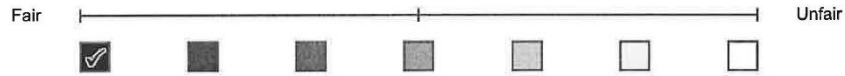
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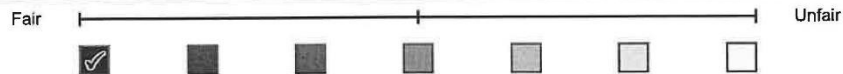
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|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Name:</b>                 | Kevin Thomas Lillard  |
| <b>Job Title:</b>            | Graduate Student  |
| <b>Institution:</b>          | Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University   |
| <b>Title of Work Used:</b>   | Fox Still Leads the Cable News Ratings Race   |
| <b>Copyright Holder:</b>     | Matt Grossmann and David A. Hopkins   |
| <b>Publication Status:</b>   | Published   |
| <b>Publisher:</b>            | The Forum   |
| <b>Place of Publication:</b> |   |
| <b>Publication Year:</b>     | 2018  |
| <b>Description of Work:</b>  | Figure 2 shown in the following article:<br><br>Grossmann, Matt, and David A Hopkins. "From Fox News to Viral Views: The Influence of Ideological Media in the 2018 Elections." The Forum, vol. 16, no. 4, 2018, pp. 551-571. |
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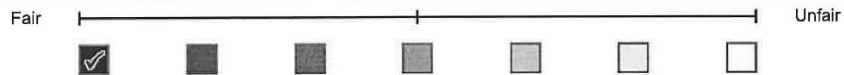
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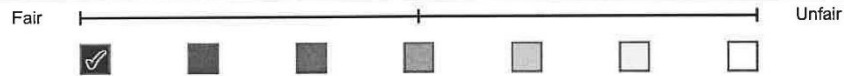
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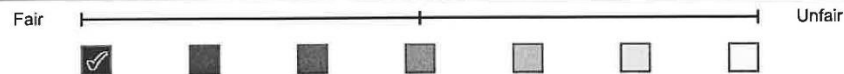
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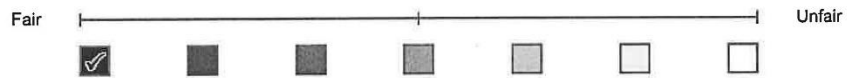
A market for the work as it will be used is absent or is negligible & use of the work will have little or no negative impact on its value or potential value  
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The Average **"Fairness Level,"** Based on Your Rating of Each of the 4

Factors, Is:

[see tool disclaimer for important clarifying information]:



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Date of Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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*January 20, 2022*

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