**Appendix A: Additional Tables and Robustness Checks**

Table A.1 reports the results of models from Tables 1 and 2 in the main text, but tests hypotheses 2 and 3 jointly by including the interactions of both ideological extremism and political interest with ideological divergence, the main treatment variable.

**Table A.1: Ideological Divergence and Affective Polarization**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Independent variables** | **Experimental** | **Observational** |
| Ideological divergence | -1.36  (1.76) | 6.22\*  (2.87) |
| Ideological extremism | 4.51\*  (0.58) | 0.57  (0.35) |
| Ideological divergence *x* ideological extremism | 5.14\*  (0.90) | 3.37\*  (1.14) |
| Political interest | 3.37\*  (1.67) | -0.26  (0.70) |
| Ideological divergence *x*  political interest | 4.19  (2.67) | 12.07\*  (1.83) |
| (Intercept) | 20.44\*  (6.57) | 8.59\*  (2.10) |
| N | 1714 | 8090 |
| Controls | Yes | Yes |

Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the difference in feeling thermometer ratings between the two candidates, where larger values indicate greater affective polarization. Data are weighted to national population parameters. Independent variables are defined in the text. Controls include partisanship (seven-point scale), ideological self-placement (eleven-point scale), age, race/ethnicity, sex, and education.

\* indicates p < 0.05, two-tailed tests.

The results in this table show that the main findings from Table 1 in the text remain unchanged when accounting for the strength of respondents’ partisanship.

**Table A.2: Candidate Divergence and Affective Polarization**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Independent variables** | **(1)** | **(2)** | **(3)** |
| Ideological divergence | 10.89\*  (1.40) | -0.73  (1.70) | 5.44\*  (1.71) |
| Ideological extremism |  | 3.82\*  (0.58) |  |
| Ideological divergence *x* ideological extremism |  | 5.88  (0.84) |  |
| Political interest |  |  | 3.16  (1.65) |
| Ideological divergence *x* political interest |  |  | 11.28\*  (2.72) |
| Partisan strength | 7.76\*  (0.86) | 3.99\*  (0.78) | 7.29\*  (0.82) |
| (Intercept) | 0.06  (5.76) | 8.21  (5.96) | 4.10  (5.58) |
| N | 1725 | 1714 | 1717 |
| Controls? | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the difference in feeling thermometer ratings between the two candidates, where larger values indicate greater affective polarization. Data are weighted to national population parameters. Independent variables are defined in the text. Controls include ideological self-placement (eleven-point scale), age, race/ethnicity, sex, and education.

\* indicates p < 0.05, two-tailed tests.

The results in this table demonstrate that the availability of biographical information significantly attenuates the effect of ideological divergence on affective polarization.

**Table A.3: Candidate Divergence, Biographical Information, and Affective Polarization**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Independent variables** | **(1)** |
| Ideological divergence only | 18.20\*  (2.07) |
| Biographical information only | 3.67\*  (1.60) |
| Ideological divergence and Biographical information | -13.57\*  (2.88) |
| (Intercept) | 8.41  (7.50) |
| N | 1714 |
| Controls? | Yes |

Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the difference in feeling thermometer ratings between the two candidates, where larger values indicate greater affective polarization. Data are weighted to national population parameters. Independent variables are defined in the text. Controls include partisanship (seven-point scale), ideological self-placement (eleven-point scale), age, race/ethnicity, sex, and education.

\* indicates p < 0.05, two-tailed tests.

This table replicates the models shown in Table 2, but separates respondents based on their level of political knowledge. Political knowledge is measured by whether respondents correctly identified which party controlled the US House of Representatives. The results demonstrate that ideological divergence between Senators is associated with greater affective polarization among both respondents with differing levels of political knowledge, but that this relationship is stronger among citizens with high levels of knowledge. Citizens with high levels of political knowledge are more likely to have been exposed to information about their Senators’ voting records than citizens with low levels of political knowledge.

**Table A.4: Senator Voting Records and Affective Polarization**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Politically knowledgeable | | | Not politically knowledgeable | | |
| Independent variables | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Ideological divergence | 17.06\*  (3.27) | 9.79\*  (3.40) | 12.02\*  (3.30) | 7.57\*  (3.59) | 8.54\*  (3.75) | 5.37  (3.22) |
| Ideological extremism |  | 0.09  (0.41) |  |  | 1.02\*  (0.52) |  |
| Ideological divergence *x* ideological extremism |  | 6.70\*  (1.16) |  |  | -1.14  (1.76) |  |
| Political interest |  |  | -0.34  (0.83) |  |  | 0.53  (1.29) |
| Ideological divergence *x* political interest |  |  | 12.93\*  (2.10) |  |  | 8.30  (4.94) |
| Same-party delegation | 0.30  (1.52) | 0.54  (1.52) | 0.69  (1.43) | -0.71  (1.68) | -0.77  (1.68) | -1.03  (1.64) |
| (Intercept) | 8.67\*  (2.21) | 9.43\*  (2.31) | 9.45\*  (2.33) | 10.87\*  (2.66) | 10.32\*  (2.62) | 10.84\*  (2.61) |
| N | 5528 | 5528 | 5268 | 3163 | 3163 | 2891 |
| MSE | 19.57 | 19.41 | 19.56 | 17.16 | 17.16 | 17.22 |
| Controls? | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the difference in feeling thermometer ratings between the two U.S. Senators from the respondent’s state, where larger values indicate greater affective polarization. Independent variables are defined in the text. Controls include partisanship (seven-point scale), ideological self-placement (seven-point scale), age, race/ethnicity, sex, and education.

\* indicates p < 0.05, two-tailed tests.

**Appendix B: Supplementary Analyses**

In additional analyses, we find that ideological divergence affects how citizens evaluate the political choices they are offered. By increasing affective polarization, ideological divergence should also increase the stakes that citizens associated with the political choice. The APSA Committee on Political Parties (1950) argued that the parties should be more clearly differentiated for exactly this reason, and more recently Abramowitz (2010) has argued that party polarization engages the public by increasing the stakes associated with election outcomes.

We study this account in the context of our experiment by examining whether ideological divergence increased the strength of respondents’ preferences over candidates, and increased the importance that respondents assigned to the election outcome. Though we did not present formal hypotheses about these relationships, our account implies that candidate divergence also strengthens citizens’ commitments to the more proximate candidate and increases their psychological investment in the election’s outcome. We note that these hypotheses present a more difficult test of our account, as the hypothetical election context in our survey experiment is unlikely to elicit much psychological investment from respondents.

Table B.1 below reports results from probit regressions for the effect of Ideological divergence on two dependent variables. The first dependent variable, *Preference certainty*, is an indicator for whether respondents said they were “very certain” of their preference over Candidate A and Candidate B.[[1]](#footnote-1) The second dependent variable*, Importance of winning,* is an indicator for whether respondents reported that it was “extremely important” or “very important” which candidate won the election.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The results in Column (1) demonstrate that Ideological divergence significantly increases respondents’ certainty in their preference over candidates. Based on the estimates in column (1), for instance, the predicted probability of being “very certain” in a candidate preference is approximately 7 percentage points higher among respondents in the divergent condition. We find similar results when analyzing the effect of Ideological divergence on Importance of winning. Respondents in the divergent condition assigned significantly greater importance to the outcome of the election. Based on the estimates shown in column (2), the predicted probability of reporting that the election outcome was “extremely important” or “very important” to the respondent personally was about 7 percentage points higher for respondents in the Ideological divergence condition.

**Table B.1: Ideological Divergence, Preference Strength, and Electoral Stakes**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Independent variables** | **Preference Certainty** | **Importance of Winning** |
| Ideological divergence | 0.19\*  (0.09) | 0.20\*  (0.07) |
| (Intercept) | -0.58  (0.41) | -2.39\*  (0.34) |
| N | 1330 | 1937 |
| Controls? | Yes | Yes |

Entries are probit regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variables are listed at the top of the columns. Data are weighted to national population parameters. Independent variables are defined in the text. Controls include party identification (seven-point scale), ideological self-placement (eleven-point scale), age, race/ethnicity, sex, and education.

\* indicates p < 0.05, two-tailed tests.

1. Respondents were first asked to indicate whether they preferred Candidate A or Candidate B, and then were asked: “How certain are you of this preference?” The response options were: “Very certain”; “somewhat certain”; “not very certain”; and “not at all certain.” Just more than a third (35.5%) of respondents said they were “very certain.” Not every respondent reported a preference for one candidate or the other, and thus the sample size for this dependent variable reduces to N=1340. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The precise wording of the question was: “How important is it to you personally whether candidate A or candidate B wins this election?” The response options were: “Extremely important”; “very important”; “somewhat important”; “not very important”; and “not important at all.” A third (33.7%) of respondents said it was “extremely important” or “very important” whether candidate A or candidate B won the election. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)