

# Online Appendix

## Does Hard Propaganda (Also) Work in Democracies? Evidence from the United States

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This study was pre-registered through OSF. The pre-registered hypotheses, survey questionnaire and analyses plan are available at: <https://osf.io/gj2tc>

# A Changes to the pre-analysis plan

Our pre-analysis plan was registered at OSF and is available at <https://osf.io/gj2tc>. The following table summarizes all deviations of our analyses to the pre-analysis plan.

	Deviation
Main analysis	Separately done for each propaganda image (pooled results in Appendix D.1) Calculation of difference in perception between supporter and opponent groups (pooled results in Table D.1) Including the answer option “I would never protest” when rescaling the mobilization potential outcome
Sensitivity tests	Additional analysis using party identification as grouping variable (see Figure 7) Priming tests for design effects (see Appendix E.6) Power analysis (see Appendix E.5)
Heterogeneous analysis	Only done separately for the supporter and opponent group (see Appendix D.2) Additional analysis relying on ethnic identification (see Figure 6)

Table A.1. Deviations to the pre-analysis plan

# B Data

## B.1 Recruitment and ethical considerations

In conducting the survey, we worked together with the survey and market research company *Interviewing Service of America*. More precisely, we relied on the company’s subsidiary firm specialized in online surveys, *SoapBoxSample*. Participants were sampled from the company’s online panel such that the respondent pool was as closely aligned with key demographic variables and the political affiliation of the U.S. adult voter population as possible. Participants were directed by the survey company to our five minute survey run using the software *Questback*.

Before starting the survey, we asked respondents for their consent, as displayed in Figure B.1, and provided a link to our data privacy policy that is in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation of the European Union.<sup>1</sup> When giving consent, participants knew that the survey is about the political perception of images posted by the Trump administration. There was, correspondingly, no need to debrief participants upon completing the survey. Participants were also informed that the survey is completely

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<sup>1</sup>Available upon request.

anonymous and information would only be used for scientific purposes.

The images shown to participants, as depicted in the main body of the article, do not display any harmful content. Specifically, our survey showed only official images provided by the White House's or President Trump's social media channels. We thus anticipated no harm to subjects when participating in the survey. Moreover, our survey did not aim to induce any behavioral change; in fact, our measurement strategy consisted solely of eliciting differences in subjects' perceptions between different image pairs.

Finally, after completing the survey, participants were redirected to *SoapBoxSample* and received a financial reward. Since *SoapBoxSample* is a private market survey research company, we were not provided with the exact amount of financial compensation for our five minute survey. As a subsidiary of one of the largest market survey research companies in the U.S., the company adheres to market standards and meets minimum wage requirements. We paid three US Dollars for each completed survey.

We recorded an overall dropout rate of 7%, where most participants dropped out on the introduction page where active, opt-in consent had to be given (2.5%).

### Welcome to this 5 minute survey about political communication in the United States.

We are researchers from the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] conduct a survey about political perceptions of images that were posted by the Trump administration. Processed anonymized information will only be used for scientific purposes as specified in our [data privacy policy](#). We request that you answer these questions honestly.

If you agree with our data privacy policy, are 18 years or older, and want to participate in this study, please click on "I accept." If you do not want to participate or are younger than 18 years, click on "I do not accept."

I accept     I do not accept

Figure B.1. Informed consent

## B.2 Wording of survey questions

Questions	Answer Options
<b>Demographic questions</b>	
In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat or an Independent?	Republican, Democrat, Independent
What is your gender?	Female, male, prefer not to say, other
Which category below includes your age?	18 - 21, 21 -29, 30 - 39, 40 - 49, 50 - 59, older than 60
How do you identify?	Black or African American, Asian American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White or Caucasian, Native American or Alaska Native, Hispanic or Latino, Multiracial, decline to respond, other
What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have?	Less than high school degree, high school degree or equivalent, bachelor degree, graduate degree or higher
In what state or U.S. territory do you live?	List of 55 U.S. territories
Do you live in a rural, suburban or urban area?	Rural, suburban, urban
How often do you watch or read national news?	Daily, several times a week, several times a month, never
If the presidential election was held next Tuesday, how likely would you be to vote for Donald Trump?	Very unlikely, unlikely, somewhat unlikely, somewhat likely, likely, very likely
<b>Outcome questions</b>	
In which image does the Trump administration look stronger?	Image 1, image 2
How well does image 1 convey political strength?	Very poorly, poorly, somewhat poorly, somewhat well, well, very well
How well does image 2 convey political strength?	Very poorly, poorly, somewhat poorly, somewhat well, well, very well
In the current situation, which of the two images do you personally find more appropriate for use in a press release?	Image 1, image 2
How likely is it that you would participate in protests against the current administration after seeing image 1?	I would never participate, very unlikely, unlikely, somewhat unlikely, somewhat likely, likely, very likely
How likely is it that you would participate in protests against the current administration after seeing image 2?	I would never participate, very unlikely, unlikely, somewhat unlikely, somewhat likely, likely, very likely

Table B.2. Survey questions and answer options

## B.3 Sample

Table B.3 illustrates that the self-reported answers of our survey participants closely align with the political orientation and core demographic statistics of the American adult voter population drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau (2018) and Pew research polling data.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Figure B.3 shows that our sample reflects the population distribution of U.S. states quite well.

Nevertheless, since we still rely on a non-probability sample, there are some notable differences. First, our survey records a lower number of participants who identify as Latino. However, since our short survey only included one question on race, respondents were “forced” to decide between identifying as Latino or another group, which helps to explain the higher shares for Caucasian/White and Black. Second, as is often the case with online surveys, our sample somewhat over-represents younger age groups.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/06/02/in-changing-u-s-electorate-race-and-education-remain-stark-dividing-lines/> (Accessed: June 12, 2020)

	Sample	Reference Source
Democrat	35%	33% (Pew research)
Republican	30%	29% (Pew research)
Independent	35%	34% (Pew research)
Female	52%	51% (Census)
Caucasian/White	65%	60% (Census)
Latino	12%	18% (Census)
Black/ African American	17%	13% (Census)
Asian Americans/Other	6%	6% (Census)
Age 18–39	47%	37% (Census)
Age 40 –59	32%	34% (Census)
Age 60 or above	21%	29% (Census)

Table B.3. Sample comparison. *Note:* Statistics for age groups are approximated using the information from the U.S. Census Bureau (2018).

Finally, Figure B.2 illustrates the distribution of the voting intention variable, which we used to classify participants as Trump opponents or supporters. The figure reflects the high level of polarization in the U.S. Moreover, the fraction of 41% self-identified Trump supporters in our sample closely aligns with his approval ratings by other major polls during the period of study. *FiveThirtyEight* reports 39-44% (avg.  $\sim 41\%$ ) approval of President Trump across a variety of polls conducted from June 12-16, 2020.<sup>3</sup>

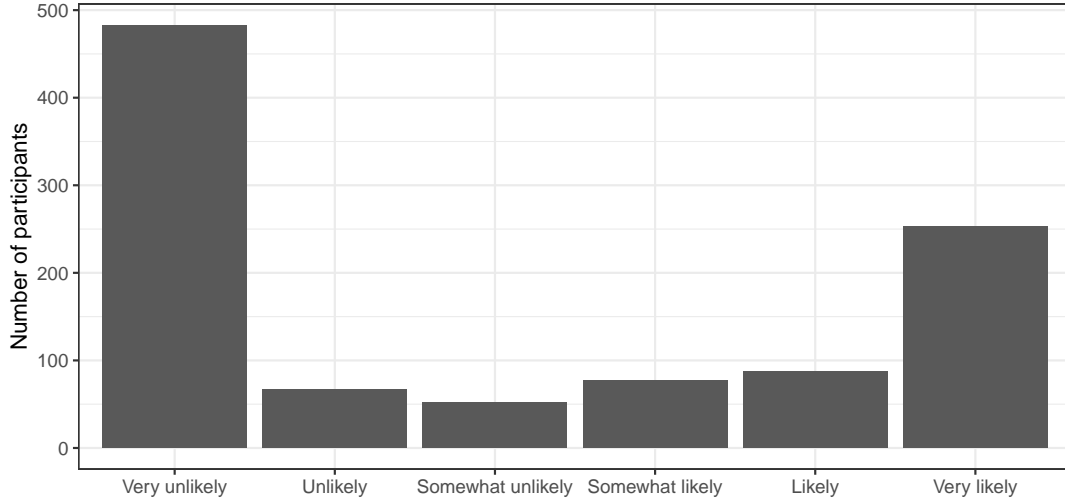


Figure B.2. Voting intention for Donald Trump in the next election.

<sup>3</sup><https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/trump-approval-ratings/> (Accessed: September 4, 2020)

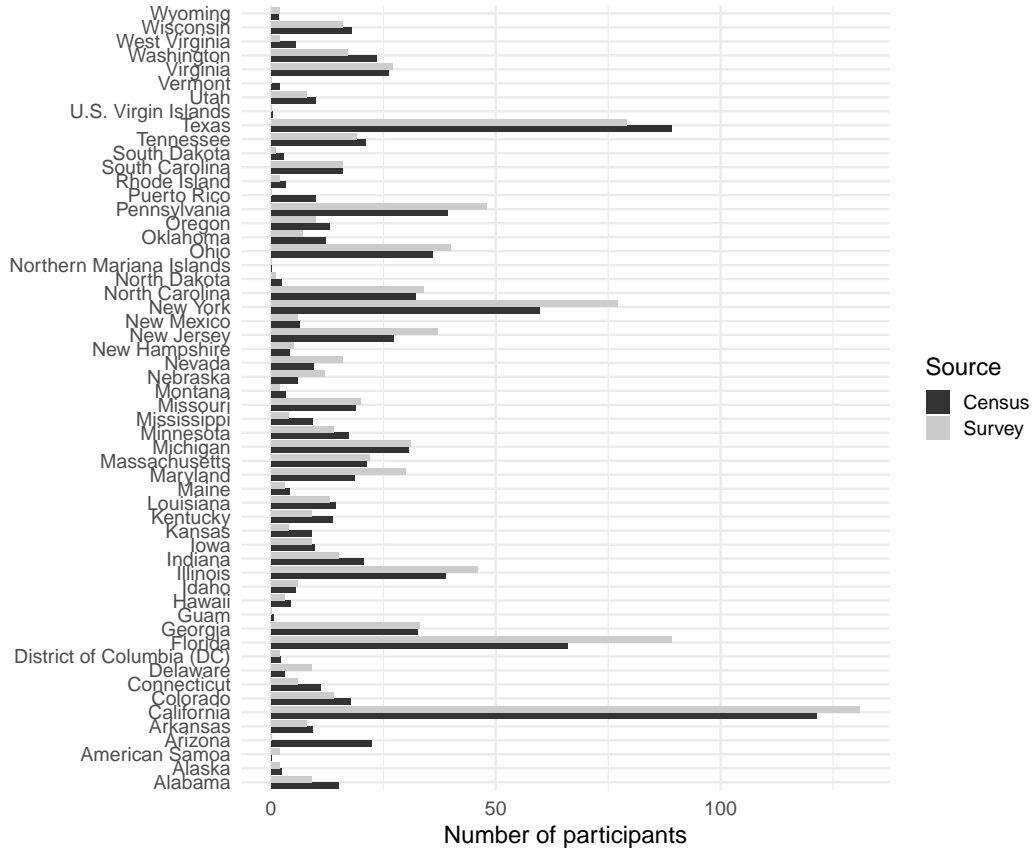


Figure B.3. Number of participants per state for our survey and estimated ideal numbers using the data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2018).

## B.4 Image group assignment

The procedure for the randomized image pair group assignment used in our survey proceeds as follows (see also Figure 2 in the main manuscript). Our first step used the information on participants' voting intention for President Trump in the upcoming elections to create two groups. We assigned participants to the Trump supporters group when they answered the six point Likert scale voting intention question with either very likely, likely, or somewhat likely. Respectively, we considered Trump opponents as participants who either answered with very unlikely, unlikely, or somewhat unlikely.

	Bureaucrats-Reference	Police-Reference	Bureaucrats-Police
Full sample	348 (34%)	336 (33%)	335 (33%)
Trump supporters	143 (34%)	138 (33%)	136 (33%)
Trump opponents	205 (34%)	198 (33%)	199 (33%)

Table B.4. Number of participants per image pair groups for the whole sample and subgroups. Note: Fractions relative to the full sample size and the sizes of each of the two groups are given in parentheses.

In a second step, we randomly drew from a uniform distribution to assign the participants from both subgroups (Trump supporters and opponents) to three different image pair groups (Bureaucrats-Reference, Police-Reference or Bureaucrats-Police). Moreover, to avoid profile order effects, we randomized the image order. In this process we ensured balanced groups within both subgroups. Table B.4 shows the number of participants per image pair group for the whole sample and the two subgroups. The table illustrates that the groups are balanced for the full sample and within the Trump supporters and opponents group.

In order to check whether our randomization was successful, we also ran linear regression models predicting allocation to one of the three image pair groups. Table B.5 shows that the image pair assignment is statistically independent for almost all of our measured variables before the randomization, both for the full sample and the two subgroups. We find only some correlations with a few specific U.S. states, which is unlikely to bias our analysis.



<i>Dependent Variable:</i>	Full sample			Trump Supporters			Trump Opponents		
	Bureaucrats-Reference	Police-Reference	Bureaucrats-Police	Bureaucrats-Reference	Police-Reference	Bureaucrats-Police	Bureaucrats-Reference	Police-Reference	Bureaucrats-Police
Democrat	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	0.00 (0.09)	0.01 (0.09)	-0.01 (0.09)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)
Republican	-0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	0.00 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.06)	0.03 (0.06)	-0.00 (0.06)	0.00 (0.07)	-0.03 (0.07)	0.03 (0.07)
Male	0.01 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.00 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)
Age (21-29)	-0.09 (0.07)	0.06 (0.07)	0.03 (0.07)	-0.23 (0.14)	0.00 (0.13)	0.23 (0.13)	-0.06 (0.08)	0.11 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.08)
Age (30-39)	-0.11 (0.07)	0.10 (0.07)	0.01 (0.07)	-0.24 (0.13)	0.07 (0.13)	0.17 (0.13)	-0.06 (0.08)	0.11 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.08)
Age (40-49)	-0.08 (0.07)	0.06 (0.07)	0.01 (0.07)	-0.14 (0.13)	0.07 (0.13)	0.07 (0.13)	-0.07 (0.09)	0.06 (0.08)	0.01 (0.08)
Age (50-59)	-0.08 (0.07)	0.10 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.12 (0.14)	0.11 (0.13)	0.01 (0.14)	-0.12 (0.09)	0.12 (0.09)	-0.00 (0.09)
Age (older than 60)	-0.07 (0.07)	0.06 (0.07)	0.01 (0.07)	-0.13 (0.13)	0.01 (0.13)	0.11 (0.13)	-0.08 (0.09)	0.10 (0.09)	-0.02 (0.09)
Latino	-0.11 (0.08)	0.06 (0.08)	0.05 (0.08)	-0.21 (0.13)	0.24 (0.13)	-0.03 (0.13)	-0.03 (0.10)	-0.04 (0.10)	0.07 (0.10)
Black/ African American	-0.06 (0.08)	0.06 (0.08)	-0.00 (0.08)	-0.11 (0.14)	0.09 (0.14)	0.01 (0.14)	0.01 (0.10)	0.04 (0.10)	-0.05 (0.10)
Caucasian	-0.07 (0.07)	0.07 (0.07)	0.00 (0.07)	-0.12 (0.12)	0.08 (0.11)	0.04 (0.11)	0.01 (0.09)	0.05 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.09)
Higher education	0.03 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.05 (0.06)	0.07 (0.06)	0.06 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)
Sub-urban	-0.01 (0.04)	0.00 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	0.02 (0.07)	0.03 (0.07)	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.06)	0.08 (0.06)
Urban	-0.04 (0.05)	0.04 (0.05)	-0.00 (0.05)	0.06 (0.08)	0.08 (0.08)	-0.14 (0.08)	-0.12 (0.06)	0.03 (0.06)	0.09 (0.06)
Infrequent news consumer	-0.02 (0.05)	0.00 (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.08)	0.11 (0.08)	-0.03 (0.06)	0.04 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.06)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.09	0.09	0.10
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	-0.00	-0.00	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01	-0.03	-0.01	-0.01	-0.00
Num. obs.	1019	1019	1019	417	417	417	602	602	602

Table B.5. Balance Tests. Note: Education and news consumption variables are aggregated to low vs. high binary variables as described in Appendix D. States and Intercepts are not displayed. Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

## C Collection of news articles

- **Political Violence @ a Glance** (August 5, 2020)

*Authoritarian Tactics on US Soil*

URL: <https://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2020/08/05/authoritarian-tactics-on-us-soil/>

- **Just Security** (June 3, 2020)

*Trump's Moves Are Right Out of the Authoritarian Playbook*

URL: <https://www.justsecurity.org/70544/trumps-moves-are-right-out-of-the-authoritarian-playbook/>

- **Washington Post** (June 3, 2020)

*Is it time to call Trump the f-word?*

URL: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/06/03/trump-protests-fascism/>

- **The New Yorker** (June 3, 2020)

*#BunkerBoy's Photo-Op War*

URL: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/letter-from-trumps-washington/bunkerboys-photo-op-war>

- **Business Insider** (June 5, 2020)

*Trump's tear gas photo-op was 'frightening' to authoritarianism experts, who warn that his behavior will only get worse without 'fierce opposition'*

URL: <https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-teargas-photo-op-was-frightening-to-authoritarianism-experts-2020-6?r=US&IR=T>

- **The New York Times** (June 2, 2020)

*How Trump's Idea for a Photo Op Led to Havoc in a Park*

URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/02/us/politics/trump-walk-lafayette-square.html>

- **Washington Post** (June 3, 2020)

*Opinion — Trump's church photo-op is propaganda that erases a violent attack on*

*protesters*

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Lowr86dZns>

- **Global News** (June 2, 2020)

*Trump 'propaganda' video leaves out peaceful tear-gassed protesters*

URL: <https://globalnews.ca/news/7015430/donald-trump-photo-op-video-bunker/>

- **The Intercept** (June 4, 2020)

*Is This Trump's Reichstag Fire Moment?*

URL: <https://theintercept.com/2020/06/04/is-this-trumps-reichstag-fire-moment/>

- **CNN** (June 2, 2020)

*Trump went from freedom fighter to authoritarian in about a week*

URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/02/politics/what-matters-june-1/index.html>

- **New York** (June 6, 2020)

*Trump Has Gone Full Authoritarian*

URL: <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/06/trump-has-gone-full-authoritarian.html>

- **International Bar Association** (June 18, 2020)

*Comment and analysis - Black Lives Matter: protests prompt President Trump to unleash his inner authoritarian*

URL: <https://www.ibanet.org/article/539F141B-FDE8-4CA3-B1D9-A0562DAC1BCB>

## D Supporting material for main analysis

This section provides additional supporting material for our main analyses. We present these results using the same type of graphical representation also used in the main manuscript. In the first section just below, we specifically provide an overview of the main results shown in Figure 3 of the manuscript in tabular form; all other tabular results can be obtained using our replication material published through the *Perspectives Dataserve* at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/1H9BNR>.

### D.1 Main results

Images	Estimate	Std. Err	z value	$Pr(>  z )$
<b>Strength perception (Trump Supporters)</b>				
Bureaucrats	0.24	0.05	4.69	0
Police	0.17	0.05	3.27	0
<b>Strength perception (Trump Opponents)</b>				
Bureaucrats	-0.01	0.04	-0.14	0.89
Police	0.13	0.04	3.04	0
<b>Political strength (Trump Supporters)</b>				
Bureaucrats	0.04	0.02	1.89	0.06
Police	0.02	0.02	1.23	0.22
<b>Political strength (Trump Opponents)</b>				
Bureaucrats	0	0.02	0.17	0.86
Police	0.05	0.02	2.47	0.01
<b>Appropriateness perception (Trump Supporters)</b>				
Bureaucrats	0	0.05	-0.07	0.94
Police	0.06	0.05	1.22	0.22
<b>Appropriateness perception (Trump Opponents)</b>				
Bureaucrats	-0.15	0.04	-3.52	0
Police	-0.08	0.04	-1.79	0.07
<b>Mobilization potential (Trump Supporters)</b>				
Bureaucrats	0	0.02	0.15	0.88
Police	-0.02	0.02	-0.87	0.39
<b>Mobilization potential (Trump Opponents)</b>				
Bureaucrats	0.08	0.02	3.98	0
Police	0.05	0.02	2.19	0.03

Table D.1. Results for perception of strength, appropriateness and mobilization potential shown for Trump supporters and opponents as graphically shown in Figure 3. Note: Numbers are rounded to two decimal places.

### D.2 Heterogeneous perceptions

As discussed in our pre-analysis plan we conducted a number of heterogeneous perception analyses. In the following, we report those results only briefly discussed in the

	Strength (forced choice)	Political strength (rating)	Appropriateness (forced choice)	Mobilization potential (rating)
(Intercept)	0.37* [0.31; 0.42]	0.73* [0.70; 0.75]	0.48* [0.42; 0.54]	0.30* [0.26; 0.34]
Bureaucrats	0.24* [0.15; 0.32]	0.04 [-0.00; 0.08]	-0.00 [-0.09; 0.08]	0.00 [-0.06; 0.07]
Police	0.17* [0.08; 0.25]	0.02 [-0.02; 0.07]	0.06 [-0.02; 0.15]	-0.02 [-0.08; 0.04]
Trump opponents	0.09* [0.02; 0.17]	-0.42* [-0.46; -0.38]	0.10* [0.02; 0.17]	0.17* [0.12; 0.23]
<b>Bureaucrats:Opponents</b>	-0.24* [-0.35; -0.14]	-0.03 [-0.09; 0.03]	-0.15* [-0.25; -0.04]	0.07 [-0.01; 0.15]
<b>Police:Opponents</b>	-0.04 [-0.14; 0.07]	0.02 [-0.04; 0.08]	-0.14* [-0.25; -0.03]	0.07 [-0.01; 0.15]
R <sup>2</sup>	0.03	0.35	0.01	0.08
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.35	0.01	0.08
Num. obs.	2038	2038	2038	2038
RMSE	0.49	0.29	0.50	0.37

\* Null hypothesis value outside the 95% confidence interval. Interaction effects test for differences between group as depicted in column 3 in Figure 3.

Table D.2. Interaction results for perception of strength, appropriateness and mobilization potential shown for Trump supporters and opponents as graphically shown in Figure 3. Note: Numbers are rounded to two decimal places. Interaction effects, which test for group differences in the perception of the propaganda images, are highlighted in bold.

main manuscript—each of them for both subgroups, Trump supporters and opponents, separately.

### D.2.1 News consumption

We investigate whether news consumption influences the perception of propaganda images; either because participants had already seen the propaganda images and/or because participants are generally more politically aware when following national news. Thus, we compared those participants who read or watch national news frequently (at least several times per week) to those who do so only infrequently (several times a month or never).

Figure 5 in the main manuscript shows the results conditional on news consumption for the Trump opponents group. Figure D.1 presents the same for the Trump supporters group finding no significant difference between participants who follow national news frequently or infrequently.

For Trump opponents, panel (a) in Figure 5 suggests that not frequently following national news, i.e., being less likely exposed to prior news coverage and the images we used in our survey, correlates with perceiving both propaganda images as communicating

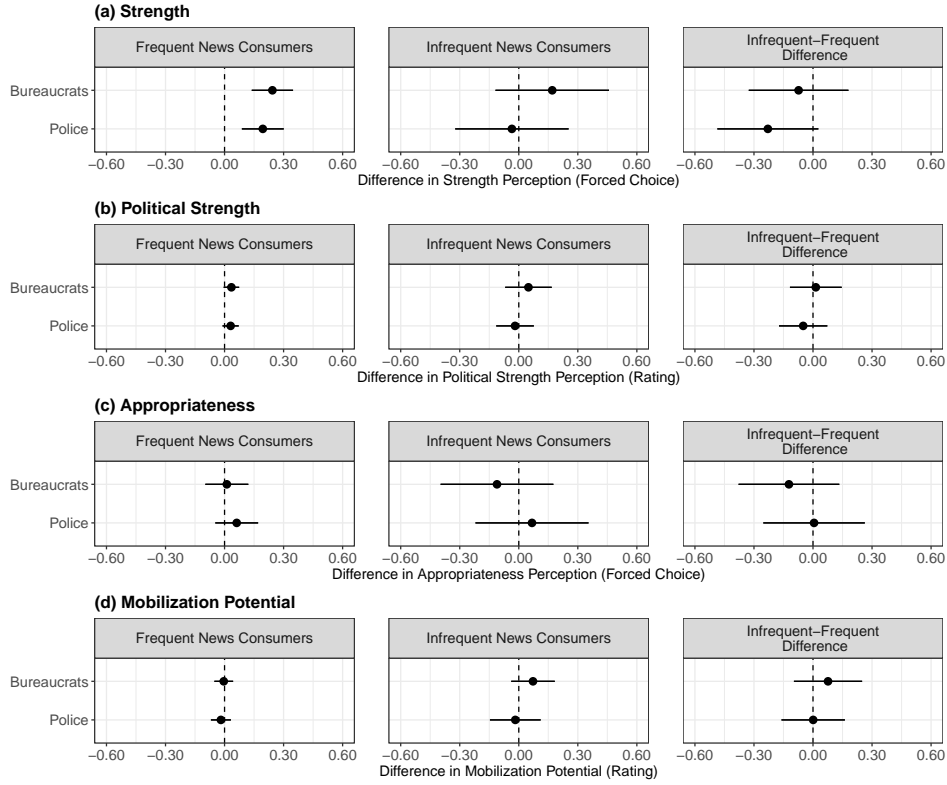


Figure D.1. Results for perception of strength, political strength, appropriateness and mobilization potential conditional on media consumption for Trump supporters.

government strength. This perception is significantly different for participants who frequently consume news, for which the relative perception for both propaganda images is indistinguishable from the reference image. This suggests that media coverage can have an important impact in moderating perceptions of propaganda and countering authoritarian messages.

The appropriateness perceptions in panel (b) also correlate strongly with frequent news consumption, suggesting that media indeed played a vital role in how the images were perceived by our respondents; in particular, the *bureaucrats propaganda* image taken on the way from the White House to Lafayette Square. Interestingly, panel (c) suggests that the mobilization potential for the same image appears similar regardless of news consumption whereas only frequent news consumption correlates to higher mobilization potential for the *police propaganda*. A potential explanation for this finding may be that the mobilization potential of these messages only outweighs the perceived threat when citizens are aware of the protest campaign. Yet, in contrast to panel (a), the

difference between frequent and infrequent news consumers does not statically differ for these outcomes.

### D.2.2 Level of education

Figure D.2 and D.3 display the results conditional on higher education on propaganda perception for Trump opponents and Trump supporters group, respectively. There are no significant differences between participants with low (high school degree or less) and high education (bachelor degree or higher) overall.

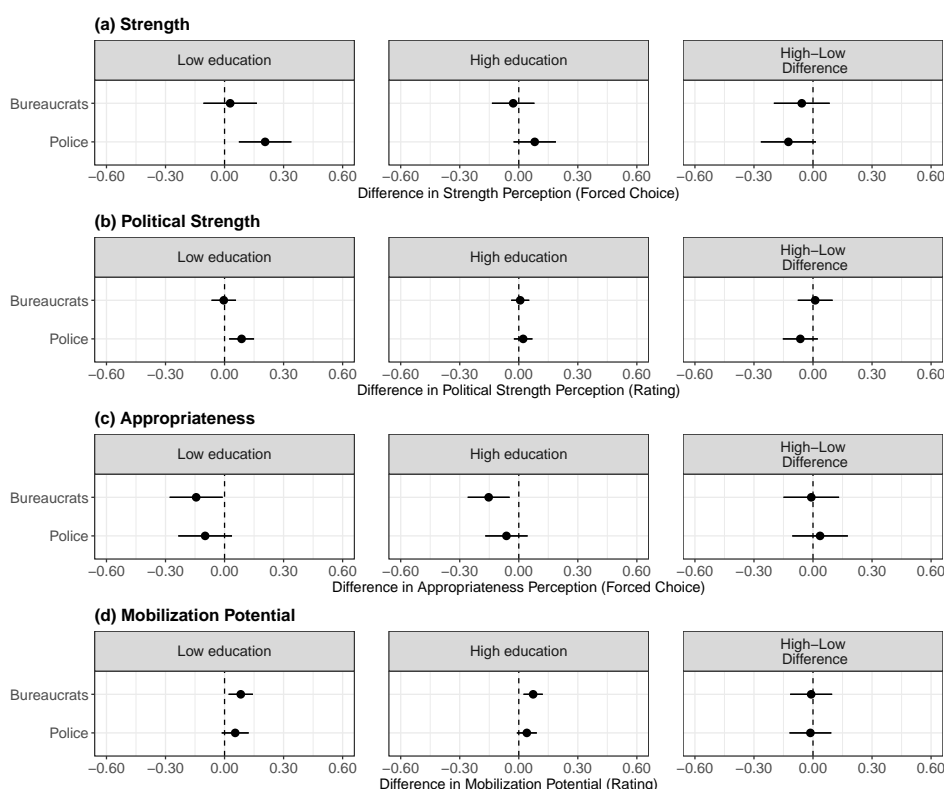


Figure D.2. Results for perception of strength, political strength, appropriateness and mobilization potential conditional on the level of education for Trump opponents.

### D.2.3 Neighborhood

Figure D.4 and Figure D.5 display the results conditional on neighborhood for Trump opponents and Trump supporters, respectively. Overall, we find few differences for conditional correlations here. It does seem, however, that Trump opponents living in a suburban or rural area find the propaganda images significantly less appropriate to use

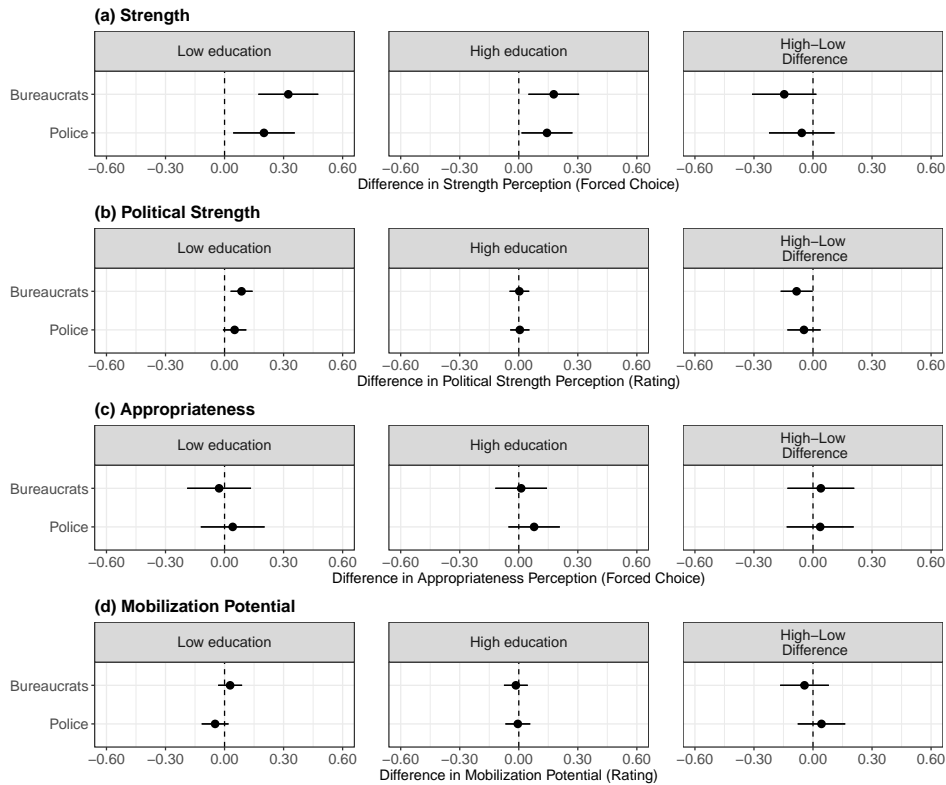


Figure D.3. Results for perception of strength, political strength, appropriateness and mobilization potential conditional on the level of education for Trump supporters.

compared to urban opponents.

#### D.2.4 Anti-Trump stance or something else?

In our design we randomized exposure to different image pairs separately for both Trump supporters and opponents. The voting intentions we based these categories on, however, may themselves correlate with other factors that could influence participant responses. We systematically evaluated this possibility using a simple step-wise linear regression predicting membership in our Trump opponents category.

Table D.3 reports that four factors significantly correlate to the likelihood of being in the Trump opponent group: party affiliation as Democrat or Republican and self-identification as Black or Hispanic/Latino. Whereas being a Democrat, Black and Hispanic/Latino shows a positive correlation, Republicans are—reassuringly—less likely to be in the Trump opponent group. In the main body of our article, we explored if our results change when we use party affiliation, finding relatively similar patterns as in our



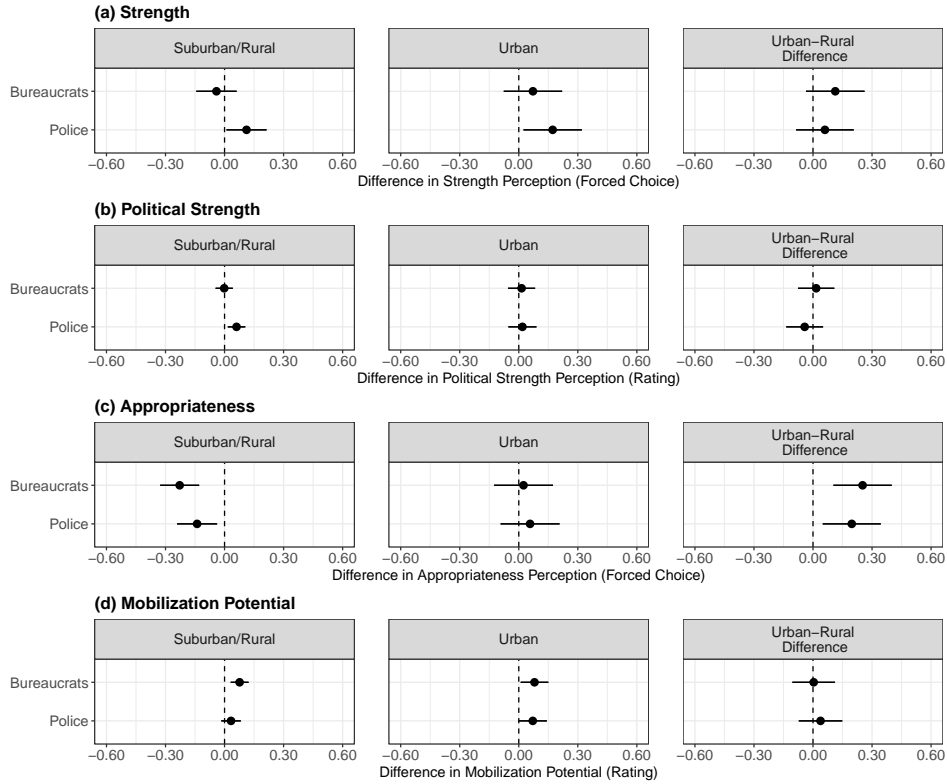


Figure D.4. Results for perception of strength, political strength, appropriateness and mobilization potential for Trump opponents conditional on neighborhood.

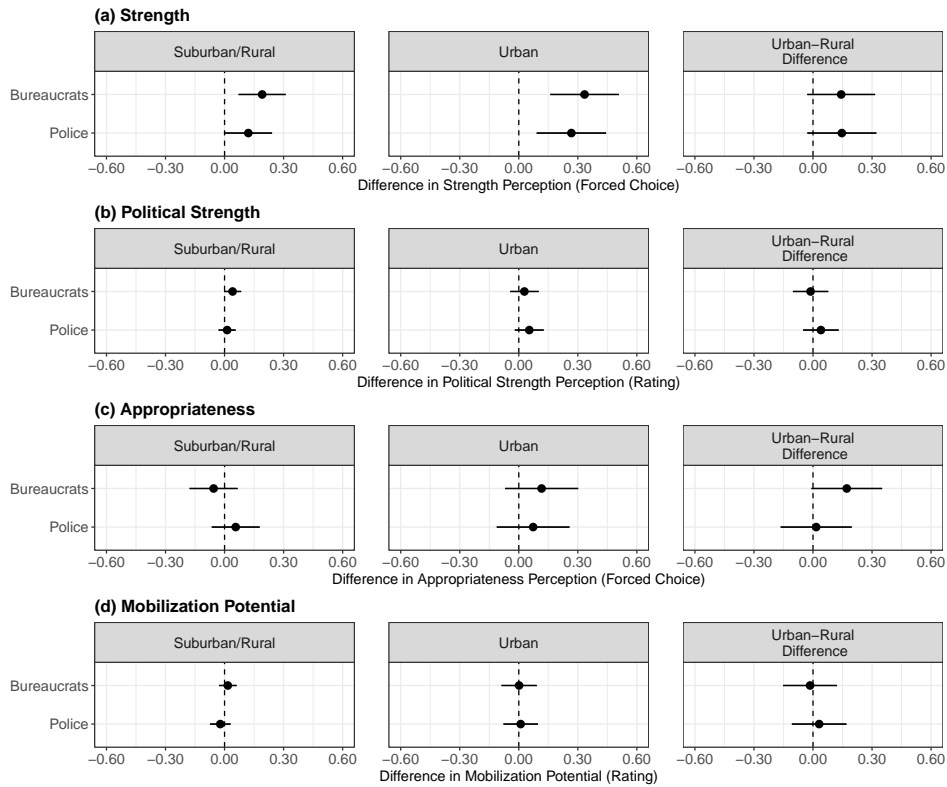


Figure D.5. Results for perception of strength, political strength, appropriateness and mobilization potential for Trump supporters conditional on neighborhood.

main analysis. Figure D.6 explores the same for ethnic identification dividing the sample into Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos and a category “Other,” which includes Whites, Asian Americans and Natives.

<i>Dependent variable:</i>	Trump opponent	
	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	0.49** (0.15)	0.59*** (0.02)
Democrat	0.24*** (0.03)	0.25*** (0.03)
Republican	-0.43*** (0.03)	-0.43*** (0.03)
Male	-0.04 (0.03)	
Age (21-29)	-0.00 (0.06)	
Age (30-39)	-0.04 (0.06)	
Age (40-49)	-0.08 (0.06)	
Age (50-59)	-0.02 (0.06)	
Age (older than 60)	-0.04 (0.06)	
Latino	0.08 (0.07)	0.08* (0.04)
Black	0.17** (0.06)	0.17*** (0.03)
Caucasian	0.01 (0.06)	
Higher education	0.02 (0.03)	
Sub-urban	0.04 (0.04)	
Urban	0.03 (0.04)	
Infrequent news consumer	0.04 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.39	0.35
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.35	0.35
Num. obs.	1019	1019

Table D.3. Linear Model for predicting the likelihood of being in the Trump opponent group. Note: The reference category for Model 1 is an Asian American or other, female, Independent who is younger than 21, lives in a rural area, has no higher education and frequently watches or reads news. States are excluded from the table and do not show any significant effect. The minimal model (Model 2) was obtained using the Akaike information criterion. Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Figure D.6 illustrates relatively similar results for the perception of the propaganda

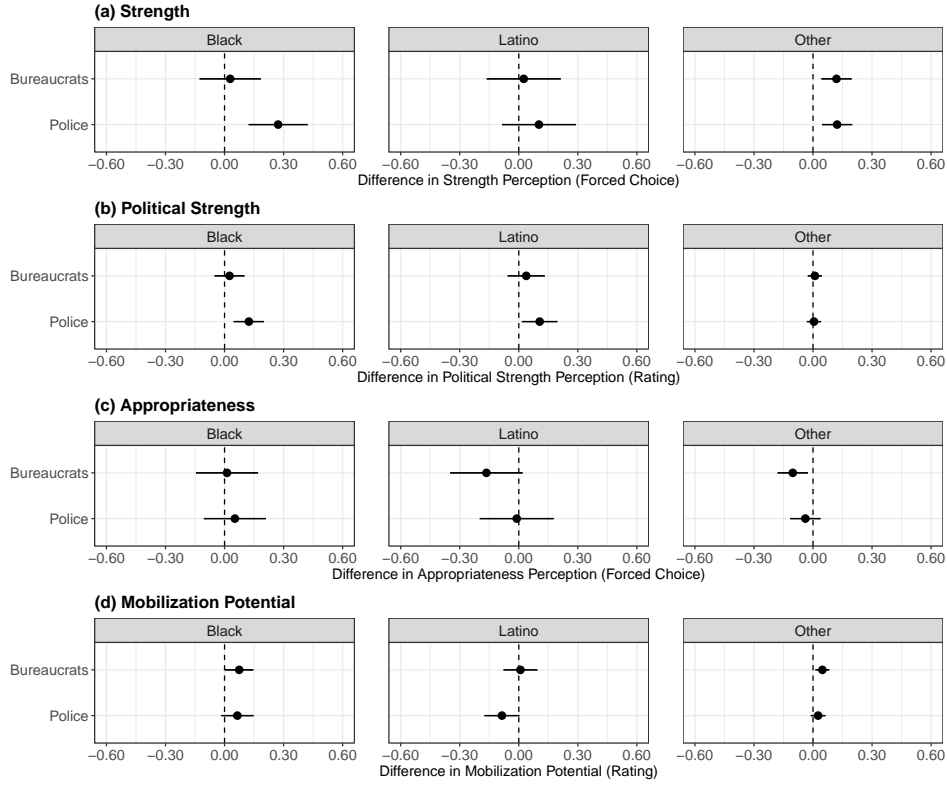


Figure D.6. Results for perception of strength, political strength, appropriateness and mobilization potential conditional on ethnic identity.

images conditional as identify as Black as reported in Figure 6 in the main text.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, Latinos rated the mobilization potential of the *police propaganda* image as (borderline significant) negative as compared to our reference Oval Office image. This result suggests that the non-verbal threats transposed by this image actually reduces protest willingness and that no other mechanism, i.e., anger, outweighs this perception. More generally, it seems that for this group the propaganda images are just not as salient enough as compared to Blacks who were directly targeted by these messages.

## E Sensitivity & Robustness Tests

### E.1 Profile ordering effects

Figure E.1 shows that there are no significant differences when we condition our results on the images' profile order for most outcomes. We do find one significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) differ-

<sup>1</sup>The main difference here is that also potentially Black Trump supporters are included, explaining the slightly different levels of uncertainty and point estimates.

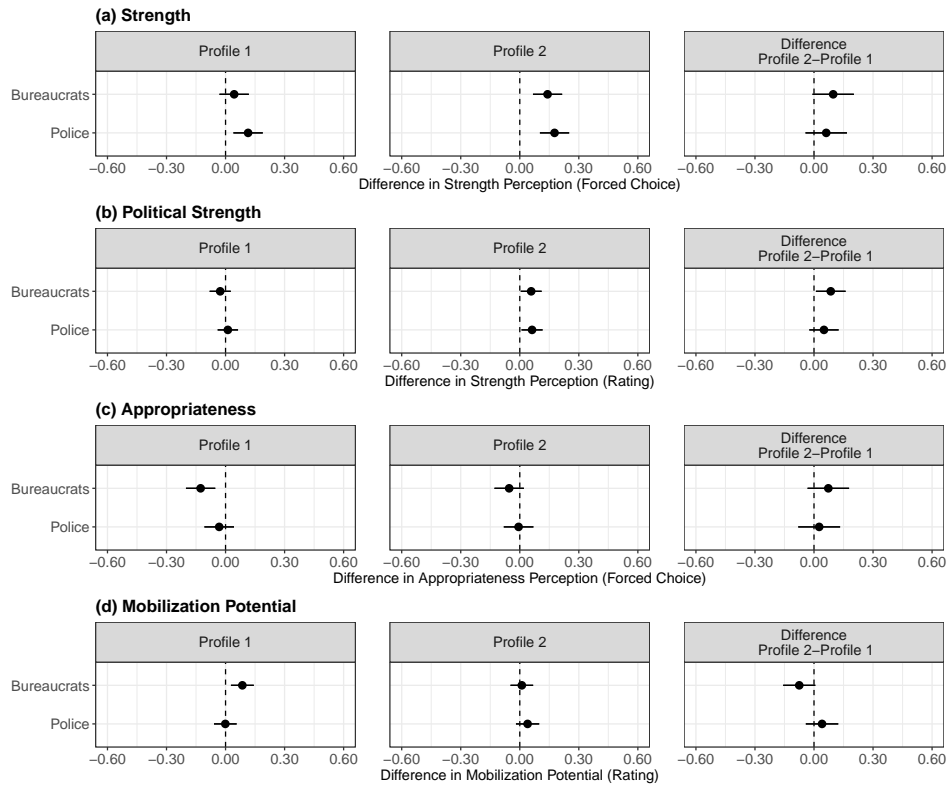


Figure E.1. Results for perception of strength, political strength, appropriateness and mobilization potential conditional on the image’s profile order.

ence for the political strength outcome though. Here respondents rated the police image as significantly politically stronger when presented second. Yet, since we randomized the profile order, any differences are canceled out in the pooled analysis.

## E.2 Aggregated propaganda images

Figure E.2 shows the same patterns when we aggregate our two propaganda images to one group, as originally envisioned in the pre-analysis plan.

## E.3 Undecided voters

Figure E.3 highlights that our results for Trump opponents and supporters hold when we add a third group of undecided voters, defined as participants who answered the voting intention question with either “somewhat unlikely” or “somewhat likely.”

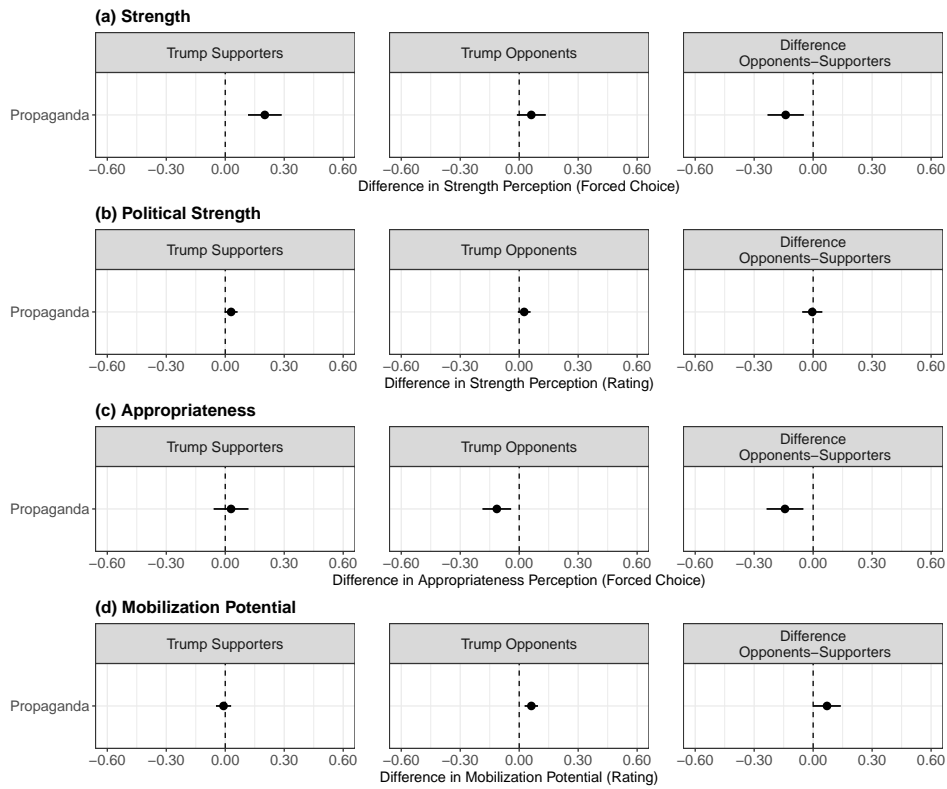


Figure E.2. Results for perception of strength, political strength, appropriateness and mobilization potential with the two different types of propaganda images as an aggregated group.

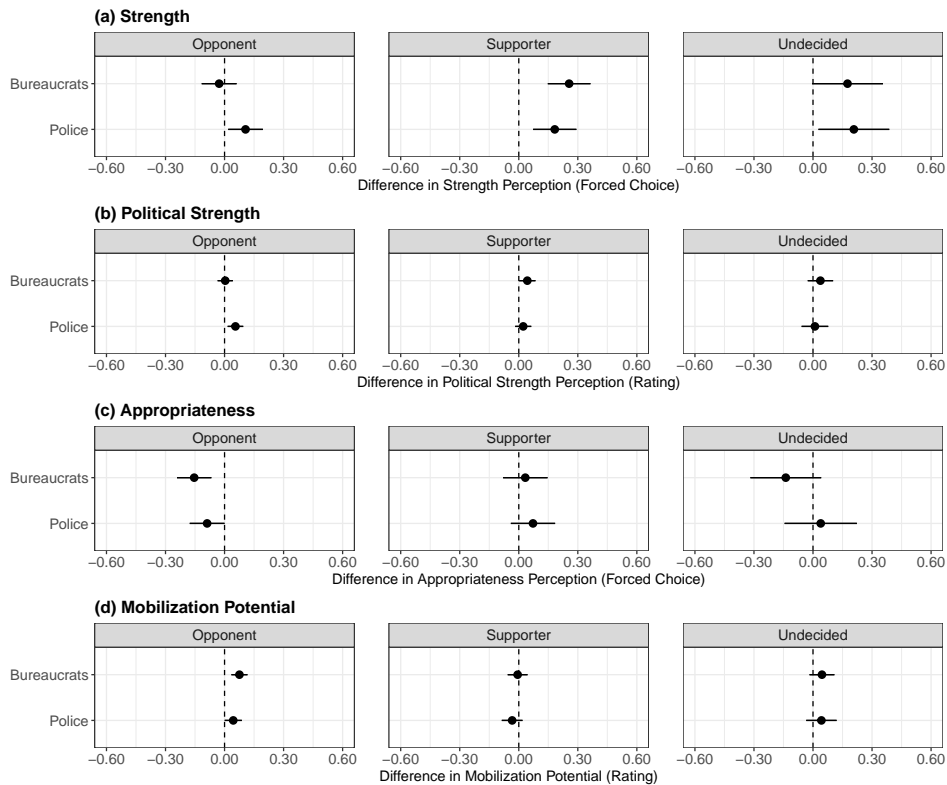


Figure E.3. Results for perception of strength, political strength, appropriateness and mobilization potential conditional on Trump supporters, opponents and undecided voters.

## E.4 Leaving out fastest responding participants

Figure E.4 confirms that the results hold when we leave out the 5% of fastest responding participants.

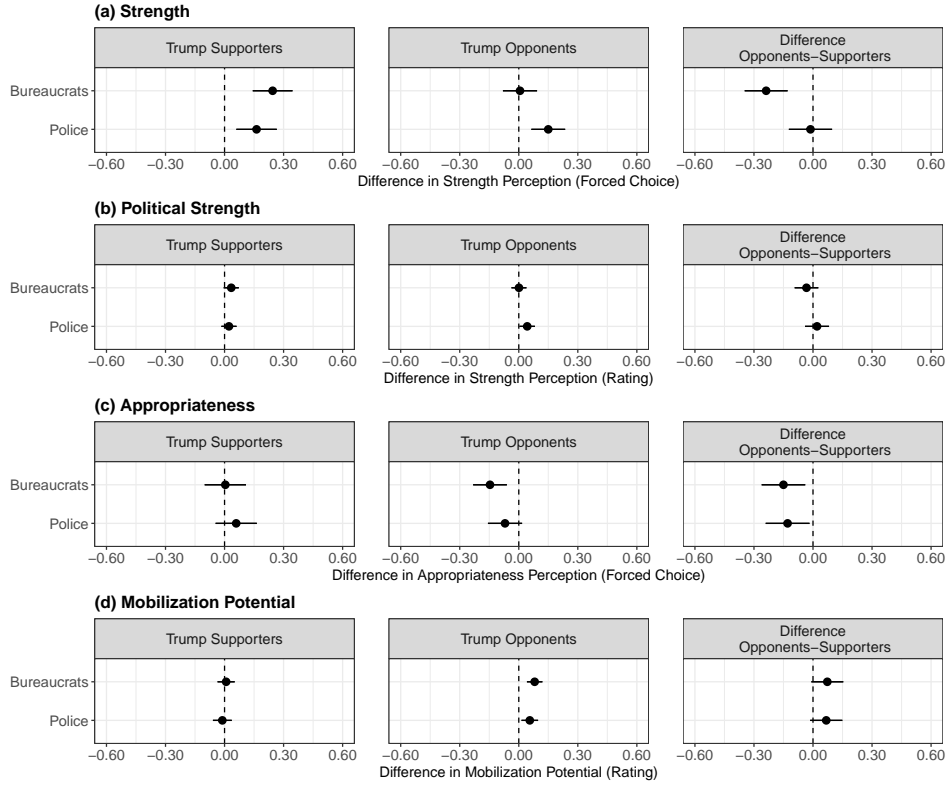


Figure E.4. Results for perception of strength, appropriateness and mobilization potential shown for the full sample, Trump supporters and opponents, leaving out the 5% fastest responding participants.

## E.5 Sample size tests

In designing our empirical strategy, we ensured sufficient sample size to detect expected effect sizes for all of our analysis, including the disaggregated analysis of Trump supporters and opponents. We specifically used a procedure specifically devised to estimate sample size  $N$  or, in turn, the minimal detectable effect ( $MDE$ ) for our forced choice outcomes. We followed the methodology of de Bekker-Grob et al. (2015) specifically that allows us, given the design matrix of the paired image task, to calculate the variance-covariance matrix as the basis of our power estimation. Note that we here always report values of  $MDE$  given the actual sample size of our survey. This corresponds to post-hoc validation

that indeed the paired image task was sufficiently powered, i.e., observed effects are larger than the *MDE* the randomized image pair assignment can detect. The formula used corresponds to equation (4) in de Bekker-Grob et al. (2015) here solved for  $\delta$ , i.e., the size of the *MDE*:

$$\delta = (z_{1-\beta} + z_{1-\alpha}) \times \sqrt{\sum_{\gamma^k} / N^2} \quad (1)$$

where  $\sum_{\gamma^k}$  denotes the diagonal values of the variance-covariance matrix for the given design and  $z_{1-\beta}$  and  $z_{1-\alpha}$  are the quantiles of the normal distribution given significance level  $\alpha$  and statistical power level  $\beta$ ; we here assume the standard values of  $\alpha = 0.05$  and  $\beta = 0.8$ .

Recall that our discrete paired image task is designed such that participants always select between just two alternative images, where only three combinations are possible: Bureaucrats-Reference, Police-Reference and Bureaucrats-Police. Note that we did randomize ordering within image pairs but for the combinatorics only the pairing of image 1 with image 2 matters as such. The resulting design matrix (Table E.1) thus has three choice sets where we model the assignment of images using one attribute with three levels, i.e., the three images, where the Oval Office image is the reference. In Table E.2 we show exemplary for our main finding on strength perceptions that for each significant result for both propaganda images the minimal detectable effect (MDE) is smaller than (or equal to) the estimate we obtain, including for the disaggregated analysis of Trump supporters vs. opponents. This provides strong evidence that our design was indeed sufficiently powered.

## E.6 Priming tests

Finally, we tested for potential priming effects that may have occurred because we showed the images exclusively as image pairs and not single images. To assess whether priming effects may have driven our results, we conducted a number of different additional tests.<sup>1</sup> While we ultimately cannot know how participants would have evaluated the images

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<sup>1</sup>These tests were not specified in the pre-analysis plan but suggested when presenting this work.

Choice Set	<i>Attribute</i>	
	Bureaucrats	Police
1	1	0
1	0	0
2	0	1
2	0	0
3	1	0
3	0	1

Table E.1. Design Matrix for our paired image task. Rows correspond to individual choices that participants see within each choice set; 1 indicates that a feature is shown, 0 that it is not shown. Note that a row 0 0 indicates that the reference image is shown, for example, the first choice set corresponds to the two-image combination Bureaucrats-Reference.

Images	Estimate	Std. Err	z value	$Pr(>  z )$	MDE
Strength perception (unconditional)					
Bureaucrats	0.09	0.03	2.81	0	0.09
Police	0.15	0.03	4.42	0	
Strength perception (Trump supporters)					
Bureaucrats	0.24	0.05	4.69	0	0.14
Police	0.17	0.05	3.27	0	
Strength perception (Trump opponents)					
Bureaucrats	-0.01	0.04	-0.14	0.89	0.12
Police	0.13	0.04	3.04	0	

Table E.2. MDE for our main outcome on perceptions of government strength. Results are those also shown in Table D.1 with the additional information on the minimal detectable effect (MDE) in our paired image task with 1,019 participants (i.e.,  $N = \text{participants} \times \text{choices per task} = 2038$ ).



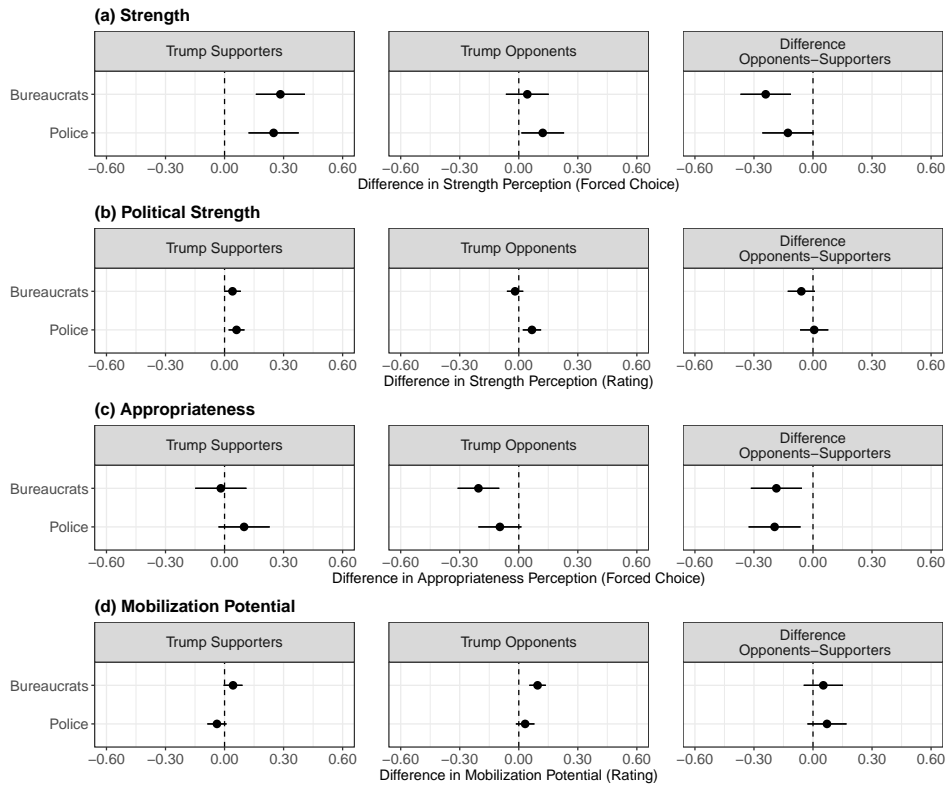


Figure E.5. Results for perception of strength, political strength, appropriateness and mobilization potential leaving out participants who encountered the *police* and *Bureaucrats* propaganda image pair.

alone, these tests overall show no indication for the existence of systematic priming effects.

First, we reran our models, leaving out answers by participants who saw both propaganda images. This is, thus, a much simpler inferential setup in which all participants saw both one propaganda and the reference Oval Office image. Note here that our randomization scheme ensures that we can also draw valid inferences from this subset because all pairings were independently randomized. The rationale behind this test is that participants may have more strongly reacted to the images had they not seen a valid neutral reference image of the Trump administration. Figure E.5 illustrates that the results remain consistent.

Second, we compared the evaluation of every single image for the rating outcome questions and whether it makes a difference for those ratings in which combination the image was shown. For example, we investigated whether the *police propaganda* image was differently evaluated by respondents when it was shown with the reference image or the *bureaucrats propaganda* image. Table E.3 and Table and E.4 show only small differences

between the average rating of each image depending on the combination in which they are shown. However, the comparisons highlight two (borderline) significant differences. First, the *police propaganda* image is on average evaluated as politically stronger for Trump supporters when shown together with the reference image (as compared to the *bureaucrats propaganda* image). Second, Trump opponents rate the mobilization potential significantly higher for the reference image when it is shown together with the *bureaucrats propaganda* image (as compared to the police propaganda image).

<b>Supporters</b>		p-value
Police (Reference)	Police (Bureaucrats)	
0.79	0.71	0.01
Bureaucrats (Reference)	Bureaucrats (Police)	
0.77	0.76	0.75
Reference (Bureaucrats)	Reference (Police)	
0.72	0.73	0.77
<b>Opponents</b>		p-value
Police (Reference)	Police (Bureaucrats)	
0.37	0.33	0.23
Bureaucrats (Reference)	Bureaucrats (Police)	
0.28	0.33	0.15
Reference (Bureaucrats)	Reference (Police)	
0.3	0.31	0.73

Table E.3. Average rating of political strength rating questions per group and image, depending on the image pair combination in which they are shown.

<b>Supporters</b>		p-value
Police (Reference)	Police (Bureaucrats)	
0.26	0.3	0.43
Bureaucrats (Reference)	Bureaucrats (Police)	
0.34	0.26	0.07
Reference (Bureaucrats)	Reference (Police)	
0.34	0.26	0.1
<b>Opponents</b>		p-value
Police (Reference)	Police (Bureaucrats)	
0.51	0.53	0.48
Bureaucrats (Reference)	Bureaucrats (Police)	
0.57	0.53	0.32
Reference (Bureaucrats)	Reference (Police)	
0.52	0.42	0.01

Table E.4. Average rating of mobilization potential rating questions per group and image, depending on the image pair combination they are shown.

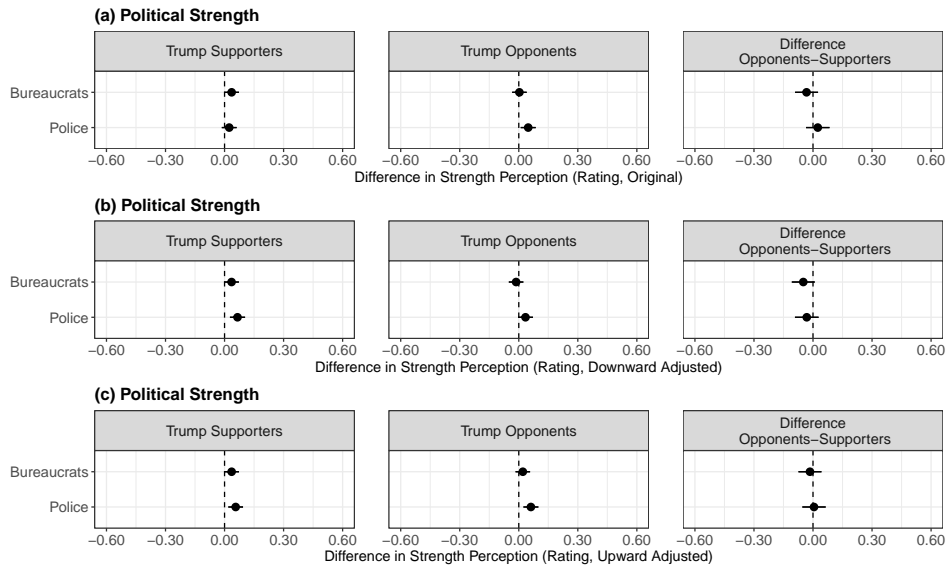


Figure E.6. Results for perception of strength outcome comparing the original result (a) with hypothetical down- (b) and upward (c) adjusted ratings to account for potential priming effects.

To assess how these different evaluations may have potentially affected our results, we conducted a third test in which we constructed hypothetical examples and adjusted the rating outcomes in two ways. This test borrows from extreme bound analyses commonly undertaken when dealing with attrition in experiments (Manski, 1999). First, we downward adjusted the outcomes for the image combination that is evaluated as stronger or for which participants rated a higher mobilization potential by subtracting the mean difference. Second, we upward adjusted the outcomes for the image combination evaluated as weaker, or for which participants rated a lower mobilization potential, by adding the mean difference.<sup>2</sup> Figure E.6 and Figure E.7 overall show that our results hold when creating these hypothetical scenarios. Since the relative differences for our forced choice outcomes are on average twice as strong, these results are also likely to hold.

Only if we assume that participants had rated the reference image with a similarly high or higher mobilization potential as when shown with the bureaucrats propaganda image, the relative difference for the police propaganda outcome would become indistinguishable from zero (see bottom panel in Figure E.7).<sup>3</sup> Importantly, however, the results

<sup>2</sup>We constructed these hypothetical scenarios for all combinations, regardless of whether the differences were insignificant.

<sup>3</sup>While we also observe that the relative perception of political strength for the *police propaganda* image becomes smaller when downward adjusting the rating of political strength for Trump opponents,

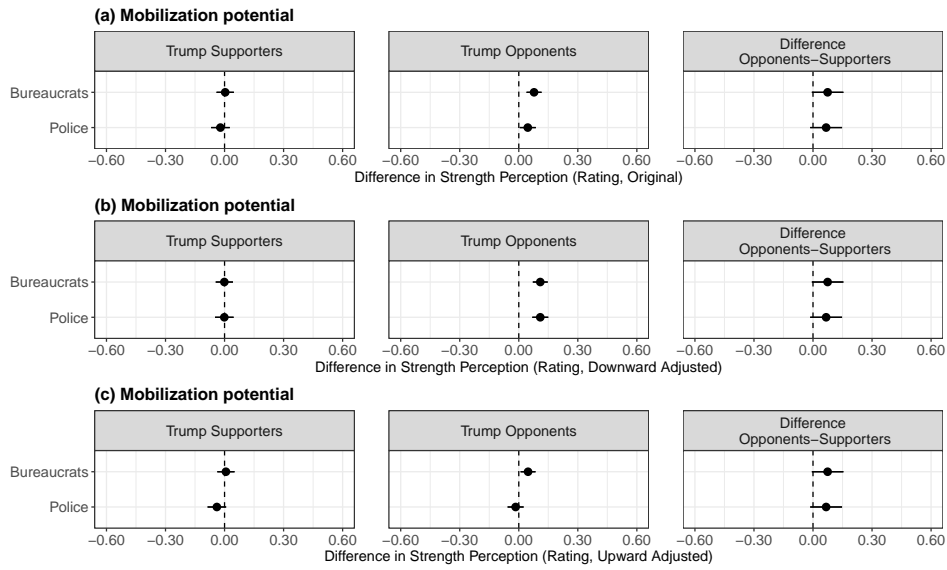


Figure E.7. Results for the mobilization potential outcome comparing the original result (a) with hypothetical down- (b) and upward (c) adjusted ratings to account for potential priming effects.

do not show significant negative patterns as would be expected from the literature on authoritarian information control (Huang, 2015, 2018), and remain consistent for the *bureaucrats propaganda* image.

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the results remains borderline significant.

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