**Online Appendix C: Background Questionnaire**

Note: The following questions were answered by respondents in our voter sample prior to the introduction of any experimental stimuli. The student questionnaire was shorter, e.g., it contained fewer demographics, lacked measures of political knowledge, and posed just one of the two regime-based external efficacy items – but was otherwise identical to the voter questionnaire in all respects relevant to this paper.

**Stage One**

Answer the following questions. In each case, indicate the number that comes closest to describing how you feel. If you have no opinion, do not indicate any number.

1. Some people seem to follow what’s going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there’s an election going on or not. Others aren’t that interested. How closely would you say that you follow what’s going on in government and public affairs?

1 Most of the time

2 Some of the time

3 Only now and then

4 Hardly at all

2. We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. On a scale of one through seven, where “1” is very liberal and “7” is very conservative, where would you place yourself on this scale or haven’t you thought much about it?

1 Very liberal

2 Liberal

3 Slightly liberal

4 Moderate, middle of the road

5 Slightly conservative

6 Conservative

7 Very conservative

8 Other

9 Haven’t thought much about it

3. Where would you place the Democratic Party on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about it?

1 Very liberal

2 Liberal

3 Slightly liberal

4 Moderate, middle of the road

5 Slightly conservative

6 Conservative

7 Very conservative

8 Other

9 Haven’t thought much about it

4. Where would you place the Republican Party on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about it?

1 Very liberal

2 Liberal

3 Slightly liberal

4 Moderate, middle of the road

5 Slightly conservative

6 Conservative

7 Very conservative

8 Other

9 Haven’t thought much about it

5. People have different views about how well government works. Depicted below is a scale with scores ranging from 1 to 7, where “1” means that government can almost always be counted on to do the wrong thing, “7” means that government can almost always be counted on to do the right thing, and “4” means that government is right about half of the time and wrong the other half.

a. Where on this scale would you place the national government in Washington?

1 National government can almost always be counted on to do the wrong thing

2

3

4 National government is right about half the time and wrong the other half

5

6

7 National government can almost always be counted on to do the right thing

b. Where would you place the state government in the state where you live?

1 State government can almost always be counted on to do the wrong thing

2

3

4 State government is right about half the time and wrong the other half

5

6

7 State government can almost always be counted on to do the right thing

c. Where would you place the local government in the city or town where you live?

1 Local government can almost always be counted on to do the wrong thing

2

3

4 Local government is right about half the time and wrong the other half

5

6

7 Local government can almost always be counted on to do the right thing

6. Would you say the government, as a whole, is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves, or that it is run for the benefit of all the people? [*Do you feel strongly or not so strongly about this?*]

1 Government is run by a few big interests (feel strongly)

2 Government is run by a few big interests (feel not so strongly)

3 Mixed, about half and half

4 Government is run for the benefit of all the people (feel not so strongly)

5 Government is run for the benefit of all the people (feel strongly)

7. Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or are they mostly just looking out for themselves? [*Do you feel strongly or not so strongly about this?*]

1 People mostly try to be helpful (feel strongly)

2 People mostly try to be helpful (feel not so strongly)

3 Mixed, about half and half

4 People mostly look out for themselves (feel not so strongly)

5 People mostly look out for themselves (feel strongly)

8. When government leaders make statements to the American people on television or in the newspapers, how often do you think they are telling the truth?

1 Just about always

2 Most of the time

3 Only some of the time

4 Almost never

9. Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair? [*Do you feel strongly or not so strongly about this?*]

1 Most people would try to take advantage (feel strongly)

2 Most people would try to take advantage (feel not so strongly)

3 Mixed, about half and half

4 Most people would try to be fair (feel not so strongly)

5 Most people would try to be fair (feel strongly)

10. Next are a series of paired statements. Although you might agree to some extent with both statements in a given pair, please circle the number next to the one that comes closest to your own opinion.

a. There are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what the government does.

OR

If public officials are not interested in hearing what the people think, there is really no way to make them listen. [*Do you feel strongly or not so strongly about that?*]

1 Many legal ways to influence (feel strongly)

2 Many legal ways to influence (feel not so strongly)

3 Mixed, in-between

4 No way to make officials listen (feel not so strongly)

5 No way to make officials listen (feel strongly)

b. In general, political candidates should avoid criticizing their opponents because campaigns have become too negative.

OR

Candidates need to criticize their opponents because it is important for voters to know the strengths and weaknesses of all candidates. [*Do you feel strongly or not so strongly about that?*]

1 Candidates should avoid criticizing (feel strongly)

2 Candidates should avoid criticizing (feel not so strongly)

3 Mixed, in-between

4 Candidates need to criticize (feel not so strongly)

5 Candidates need to criticize (feel strongly)

c. I often don't feel sure of myself when talking with other people about politics and government.

OR

I think that I am better informed about politics and government than most people. [*Do you feel strongly or not so strongly about that?*]

1 Often don’t feel sure (feel strongly)

2 Often don’t feel sure (feel not so strongly)

3 Mixed, in-between

4 I am better informed (feel not so strongly)

5 I am better informed (feel strongly)

d. Under our form of government, the people have the final say about how our country is run no matter who is in office.

OR

People like me don’t have any say about what the government does. [*Do you feel strongly or not so strongly about that?*]

1 People have the final say (feel strongly)

2 People have the final say (feel not so strongly)

3 Mixed, in-between

4 Don’t have any say (feel not so strongly)

5 Don’t have any say (feel strongly)

e. Politics is about compromise, and a good politician will try to find the common ground that brings different groups together.

OR

A good politician stands on principle and doesn’t like to compromise except as a last resort. [*Do you feel strongly or not so strongly about that?*]

1 Politics is about compromise (feel strongly)

2 Politics is about compromise (feel not so strongly)

3 Mixed, in-between

4 Good politician stands on principle (feel not so strongly)

5 Good politician stands on principle (feel strongly)

11. Here are two more statements, each of which describes the way some people feel about how much control they have over their personal lives. Please circle the number next to the one that comes closest to your own opinion.

I can do just about anything I really set my mind to.

OR

I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life. [*Do you feel strongly or not so strongly about that?*]

1 I can do just about anything (feel strongly)

2 I can do just about anything (feel not so strongly)

3 Mixed, in-between

4 I often feel helpless (feel not so strongly)

5 I often feel helpless (feel strongly)

12. Generally speaking (setting aside how you might vote in a particular election), which of the following best describes how you think of yourself?

1 Strong Democrat

2 Democrat

3 Independent, leaning toward the Democrats

4 Independent, not leaning toward either party

5 Independent, leaning toward the Republicans

6 Republican

7 Strong Republican

8 Other

9 Don’t know/Not sure

13. We want to know how you feel about the two major political parties in American politics today. Please indicate how positively you feel about each party in the following manner: If you do not have any positive feelings about the party, give it the lowest rating of 1; if you have some positive feelings, rate it a 2; if you have generally positive feelings, rate it a 3; and if you have extremely positive feelings, rate it a 4. Please rate each party based solely on how positively you feel about it, while ignoring or setting aside for the moment any negative feelings you may also have.

a. the Republican Party

1 no positive feelings

2 some positive feelings

3 generally positive feelings

4 extremely positive feelings

b. the Democratic Party

1 no positive feelings

2 some positive feelings

3 generally positive feelings

4 extremely positive feelings

14. Here are a few questions about the government in Washington. Many people don't know the answers to these questions, so if there are some you don't know just indicate that and move on to the next one.

a. Whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not – is it the president, the Congress or the Supreme Court?

1 President

2 Congress

3 Supreme Court

4 Don’t know

b. Who has the power to nominate judges to the federal courts?

1 President

2 Congress

3 Supreme Court

4 Don’t know

c. How much of a majority is required for the U.S. Senate and House to override a presidential veto?

1 50 percent plus 1

2 Two-thirds

3 Three-quarters

4 A presidential veto cannot be overridden by the Senate or House

5 Don’t know

d. Which party has the most members in the House of Representatives in Washington?

1 Democrats

2 Republicans

3 Don’t know

15. How much of the time do you think you can trust the people who run our government to do what is right?

1. Just about always

2. Most of the time

3. Only some of the time

4. Almost never

16. Going back to your feelings about political parties, we would now like you to indicate how negatively you feel about both the Republicans and the Democrats: If you do not have any negative feelings about the party, give it the lowest rating of 1; if you have some negative feelings, rate it a 2; if you have generally negative feelings, rate it a 3; and if you have extremely negative feelings, rate it a 4. Please rate each party based solely on how negatively you feel about it, while ignoring or setting aside for the moment any positive feelings you may also have.

a. the Republican Party

1 no negative feelings

2 some negative feelings

3 generally negative feelings

4 extremely negative feelings

b. the Democratic Party

1 no negative feelings

2 some negative feelings

3 generally negative feelings

4 extremely negative feelings

17. Some people think it is better when one party controls both the White House and Congress, while others feel that it's better when control is split between the Republicans and the Democrats. What about you . . . When the president is a Republican, do you prefer that the Democrats control Congress or the Republicans control Congress?

1 Democrats

2 Republicans

3 Doesn’t matter

18. When the president is a Democrat, do you prefer that the Democrats control Congress or that the Republicans control Congress?

1 Democrats

2 Republicans

3 Doesn’t matter

19. What is your current age?

1 18-29

2 30-44

3 45-59

4 60-69

5 70 or over

20. How much formal education have you received?

1 less than a high-school degree

2 high-school graduate

3 some college, but did not graduate

4 college graduate

5 some graduate work, but did not receive advanced degree

6 advanced graduate degree

21. What is your gender?

1 Male

2 Female

22. What is your religious affiliation?

1 Protestant

2 Evangelical Protestant

3 Catholic

4 Jewish

5 other affiliation

6 not religious

23. How often do you attend religious services?

1 at least once a week

2 once or twice a month

3 a few times a year

4 never

5 not religious

24. What is your race or ethnic identity?

1 White (or Caucasian)

2 African American

3 Latino

4 Asian

5 Native American

6 other

25. Would you say that your household’s approximate yearly income bracket is . . .

1 less than $15,000

2 between $15,000 and $35,000

3 between $35,000 and $50,000

4 between $50,000 and $70,000

5 between $70,000 and $90,000

6 between $90,000 and $120,000

7 between $120,000 and $150,000

8 between $150,000 and $200,000

9 over $200,000

**Stage Two**

Read the information presented below, and then answer the questions that immediately follow. **Remember: Do not look ahead until you have completed this stage.**

II. Post-Exposure Questions: Republican Incumbent

**After reading the candidate biographies, respondents were asked to answer the following questions:**

Please answer the following questions. Once again, circle the number that comes closest to describing how you feel. If you have no opinion, do not circle any number.

1. Based on the information you currently have, which candidate would you vote for if the election were held today?

1 Michael Stanley (Republican)

2 Katherine Hall (Democrat)

2. Based on the information you currently have, how do you feel about each of these candidates? Depicted below is a scale with scores ranging from 1 to 7, where “1” means that you feel very unfavorably about the candidate, “7” means that you feel very favorably, and “4” means that you have an equal mix of favorable and unfavorable feelings.

a. Michael Stanley (Republican)

1 Very unfavorable (or negative)

2 Unfavorable

3 Slightly unfavorable

4 Equal mix of unfavorable and favorable

5 Slightly favorable

6 Favorable

7 Very favorable (or positive)

b. Katherine Hall (Democrat)

1 Very unfavorable (or negative)

2 Unfavorable

3 Slightly unfavorable

4 Equal mix of unfavorable and favorable

5 Slightly favorable

6 Favorable

7 Very favorable (or positive)

**Stage Three**

Imagine now that it is late in the campaign and you receive the information presented below in a **direct mail appeal** sent by challenger **Katherine Hall (D)**. Please read this information carefully and then answer the questions that immediately follow.

**---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------**

**After reading the attack on the Republican incumbent made by the Democratic challenger, respondents were asked to answer the following questions:**

Please answer the following questions. Once again, circle the number that comes closest to describing how you feel. If you have no opinion, do not circle any number.

1. Based on the information you currently have, which candidate would you vote for if the election were held today?

1 Michael Stanley (Republican)

2 Katherine Hall (Democrat)

2. Based on the information you currently have, how do you feel about each of these candidates? Depicted below is a scale with scores ranging from 1 to 7, where “1” means that you feel very unfavorably about the candidate, “7” means that you feel very favorably, and “4” means that you have an equal mix of favorable and unfavorable feelings.

a. Michael Stanley (Republican)

1 Very unfavorable (or negative)

2 Unfavorable

3 Slightly unfavorable

4 Equal mix of unfavorable and favorable

5 Slightly favorable

6 Favorable

7 Very favorable (or positive)

b. Katherine Hall (Democrat)

1 Very unfavorable (or negative)

2 Unfavorable

3 Slightly unfavorable

4 Equal mix of unfavorable and favorable

5 Slightly favorable

6 Favorable

7 Very favorable (or positive)

3. You just read a direct mail piece that Katherine Hall sent to voters in your congressional district. Do you believe that these criticisms of Michael Stanley are (1) too negative and should not be made publicly, (2) negative but acceptable within the context of a competitive political campaign, or (3) not really negative at all?

1 Too negative, should not be made

2 Negative but acceptable

3 Not really negative at all

**Stage Four**

Imagine that it is nearing Election Day and you receive the information presented below in a **direct mail appeal** sent by incumbent **Michael Stanley (R)**. Please read this information carefully and then answer the questions that immediately follow.

**---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------**

**After reading a response by the Republican incumbent, respondents were asked to answer the following questions:**

Please answer the following questions. Once again, circle the number that comes closest to describing how you feel. If you have no opinion, do not circle any number.

1. Based on the information you currently have, which candidate would you vote for if the election were held today?

1 Michael Stanley (Republican)

2 Katherine Hall (Democrat)

2. Based on the information you currently have, how do you feel about each of these candidates? Depicted below is a scale with scores ranging from 1 to 7, where “1” means that you feel very unfavorably about the candidate, “7” means that you feel very favorably, and “4” means that you have an equal mix of favorable and unfavorable feelings.

a. Michael Stanley (Republican)

1 Very unfavorable (or negative)

2 Unfavorable

3 Slightly unfavorable

4 Equal mix of unfavorable and favorable

5 Slightly favorable

6 Favorable

7 Very favorable (or positive)

b. Katherine Hall (Democrat)

1 Very unfavorable (or negative)

2 Unfavorable

3 Slightly unfavorable

4 Equal mix of unfavorable and favorable

5 Slightly favorable

6 Favorable

7 Very favorable (or positive)

**Thank you for your cooperation!**