

**Collision with Collusion:
Republican Reaction to the Trump-Russia Scandal**

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Abstract:

Partisan polarization and sorting are at all-time highs, while the multitude of available media options allows partisans to filter their news exposure. Can major stories break through to change partisans’ minds, or are media efforts to draw attention to issues futile? Attempts to assess partisan reaction to major political events, such as the Trump-Russia investigation, are confounded by selective exposure to news and partisan “cheerleading” in responses to pollsters. We enrolled respondents in a Google News-inspired online news feed that experimentally varies the news headlines shown to participants over the course of one week. This design allows us to measure attitudes before and after repeated exposure to news content, improving upon both the selection bias characteristic of self-report data and the fleeting nature of single-shot forced exposure experiments. We find that Republicans randomly assigned to receive more articles about the Trump-Russia investigation were less proud, less enthusiastic, less hopeful, and more anxious about President Trump. These Republicans were also likelier to expect his presidency will have negative consequences. Attitudes about media bias were unchanged among Republicans, and were not contingent upon clicking on articles about the Trump-Russia investigation. Though partisanship and selective exposure are strong determinants of attitudes and behavior, intense media concentration on an issue may alter partisans’ evaluations of politicians by changing the balance of headlines.