Supplementary Information

External Cues and Policy Preferences:

Rethinking the Drivers of Policy Positions

November, 2025

Contents

A Survey

A.1 Survey Experiment

This study examined the impact of two types of cues (an elite and a close friend cue) on policy positions by means of a survey experiment. In this experiment, individuals were randomly assigned to one of the five following conditions: a) a close friend liberal cue; b) a close friend conservative cue; c) a Trump liberal cue; d) a Trump conservative cue; e) no cue. Importantly, individuals were consistently exposed to one of these conditions: for example, those randomly assigned to the Trump liberal cue experimental condition received a Trump liberal cue for all experimental vignettes. With this approach, individuals are unlikely to identify the experimental logic of the study. Furthermore, the inclusion of experimental groups for both conservative and liberal endorsements allows the examination of whether the experimental results are driven by individuals' conservative or liberal tendencies. This experiment was conducted within the framework of the 2021 Cooperative Election Study (CES) with a representative sample of Americans (n=1,000). The respondents were recruited from an online pool of Americans administered by YouGov. This experiment was fielded online in November-December, 2021.

To assess the influence of a close friend cue and of a cue from former President Trump on individuals' policy positions, in this study we followed Barber and Pope (2019) and included an endorsement from either a close friend or Trump concerning the following policy issues: (1) the establishment of a $10 minimum wage; (2) the increase of the taxes paid by the wealthy; (3) the enforcement of penalties to women who obtain an abortion; (4) the permission of illegal immigrants to obtain legal status; (5) the permission for teachers to carry guns on school property; (6) the implementation of a health care system that covers all individuals under a government plan; (7) the implementation of mandatory background checks on all weapon purchases; and (8) the provision of federal funding for planned parenthood policies. For each issue, responses were coded on a scale from -1 (conservative position) to +1 (liberal position), with "don't know" responses coded as 0.

Support for traditionally liberal policies (such as minimum wage increase or government healthcare) was coded as +1, while support for traditionally conservative policies (such as abortion penalties or guns in schools) was coded as -1. This coding scheme ensures that positive values consistently indicate liberal policy positions across all issues.

Barber and Pope (2019) included additional policy issues related to Iran's foreign policy and climate change acknowledgment, which we did not include in our study. The Iran item was excluded as the wording was no longer relevant at the time of fielding our survey, while the climate change item was excluded because it measured belief acknowledgment rather than policy support, making it conceptually distinct from our other policy items. Importantly, given that Trump changed position at least once concerning these policy issues (Barber and Pope 2019; 2024), the experiment allows for a realistic assessment of how much Trump's policy endorsement may lead to a change in individuals' policy positions.

Considering the random assignment of participants in one of the five experimental conditions, the main and the null hypotheses are tested by means of a baseline average treatment effect (ATE) estimation, containing only the outcome and the treatment variables. To gain more detailed information on the effect of the close friend cues and of the Trump cues on public opinion formation, we conducted these tests for each policy issue as well, verifying potential differences in the effect of the cues across different types of policy issues. To assess our additional hypotheses about heterogeneous effects between external cues and several socio-demographic characteristics on overall policy support, we also conducted extended versions of the baseline estimations for the overall policy measure, including interactions between the treatments and individuals' party identification, political knowledge, and social conformism.

Table A.1.1: Distribution of Experimental Conditions Across Policy Issues

Policy	**Trump Liberal**	**Trump Conservative**	**Close Friend Liberal**	**Close Friend Conservative**
Minimum wage	Cue: support	Cue: oppose	Cue: support	Cue: oppose
Taxes	Cue: support	Cue: oppose	Cue: support	Cue: oppose
Abortion	Cue: oppose	Cue: support	Cue: oppose	Cue: support
Immigration	Cue: support	Cue: oppose	Cue: support	Cue: oppose
Guns	Cue: oppose	Cue: support	Cue: oppose	Cue: support
Health system	Cue: support	Cue: oppose	Cue: support	Cue: oppose
Background checks	Cue: support	Cue: oppose	Cue: support	Cue: oppose
Planned Parenthood	Cue: support	Cue: oppose	Cue: support	Cue: oppose

A.2 Policy Positions: Experimental Vignettes

Now we would like to ask you a question about a series of issues and policies that may come up in the coming months. Please indicate whether you support or oppose the statement.

1 Support

2 Oppose

9 Don't know

Wages: To increase the minimum wage to over $10 an hour. [Donald Trump has expressed support for this policy/Donald Trump has expressed opposition to this policy/A close friend of yours has expressed support for this policy/A close friend of yours has expressed opposition to this policy.] How about you? Do you support or oppose increasing the minimum wage to over $10 an hour?

Taxes: To increase the amount of taxes paid by the wealthy. [Donald Trump has expressed support for this policy/Donald Trump has expressed opposition to this policy/A close friend of yours has expressed support for this policy/A close friend of yours has expressed opposition to this policy.] How about you? Do you support or oppose increasing the amount of taxes paid by the wealthy?

Abortion: To enforce penalties on women who obtain abortions. [Donald Trump has

expressed support for such penalties/Donald Trump has expressed opposition to such penalties/A close friend of yours has expressed support for such penalties/A close friend of yours has expressed opposition to such penalties.] How about you? Do you support or oppose enforcing penalties on women who obtain abortions?

Immigration: To allow illegal immigrants to the United States to obtain legal status. [Donald Trump has expressed support for this policy/Donald Trump has expressed opposition to this policy/A close friend of yours has expressed support for this policy/A close friend of yours has expressed opposition to this policy.] How about you? Do you support or oppose allowing illegal immigrants to the United States to obtain legal status?

Guns: To allow teachers to carry guns on school property. [Donald Trump has expressed support for this policy/Donald Trump has expressed opposition to this policy/A close friend of yours has expressed support for this policy/A close friend of yours has expressed opposition to this policy.] How about you? Do you support or oppose allowing teachers to carry guns on school property?

Health Care: Putting in place a health care system that covers all individuals under a government plan. [Donald Trump has expressed support for this policy/Donald Trump has expressed opposition to this policy/A close friend of yours has expressed support for this policy/A close friend of yours has expressed opposition to this policy.] How about you? Do you support or oppose putting in place a health care system that covers all individuals under a government plan?

Background checks: Mandating background checks on all weapons purchases. [Donald Trump has expressed support for this policy/Donald Trump has expressed opposition to this policy/A close friend of yours has expressed support for this policy/A close friend of yours has expressed opposition to this policy.] How about you? Do you support or oppose mandating background checks on all weapons purchases?

Planned Parenthood: Supporting federal funding for Planned Parenthood services. [Donald Trump has expressed support for this policy/Donald Trump has expressed opposition to this policy/A close friend of yours has expressed support for this policy/A

close friend of yours has expressed opposition to this policy.] Do you support or oppose federal funding for Planned Parenthood services?

A.3 Power Analysis

At the pre-analysis stage, the power analysis available in Table A.3.1 was conducted to obtain the optimal sample size of each of the four experimental conditions and the control group (which gave a sample size of around 200 respondents per group), as well as the minimum detectable size (of around 0.10). A significance level of 0.05 and a power of 0.80 were established for both calculations.

Table A.3.1: Power Analysis Calculation

	k	**n**	**f**	**sig.level**	**power**
Minimum Detectable Effect Size	5	200	0.109	0.05	0.8
Required Sample Size Per Group	5	198.228	0.11	0.05	0.8

Note: Balanced one-way analysis of variance power calculation

A.3.1 Interactions

We conducted ex-post power analyses of the interactions. Even when the study is well-powered, as previously shown, it is necessary to corroborate that the treatment samples are sufficient to yield powered interactions. For this, we considered the four interacting variables under analysis in the paper: party identification, Trump approval, political knowledge, and social conformism. Using the `InteractionPoweR` package (Baranger et al. 2022), we calculated the statistical power using the following information:

- Number of simulations per unique combination of input parameters: 10,000.
- Significance level = 0.05.
- Sample size = 1,000, and 200 for each group.
- Categories dependent variable (policy position) = 3, from -1 (oppose, indicating more conservative policy positions), 0 (don't know), to 1 (support, indicating more liberal policy positions).
- Categories main independent variable (treatment) = 5 (four treatments and one

control group).

For each treatment group correlation of N = 200, we assume zero correlation between the treatment $X1$ and the outcome variable Y (policy position), as well as between $X2$ (the interacting variable), given that the treatment was randomly allocated. We use the same correlation size for negative correlations and positive correlations, as the direction of the correlation is irrelevant to calculating power, contrary to the actual size. Finally, the interacting term will have a slightly larger correlation coefficient, as we assume that interacting the aforementioned variables with the treatment will amplify their correlation with the outcome. With a correlation between $X2$ and Y of 0.15 and an interaction effect to be tested of 0.20, we get a power of 0.81.

When using simulations to estimate power, taking into account the categories of the dependent variable and the number of treatment groups, and even more conservative correlations (0.05 for the correlation between $X2$ and Y, and an interaction effect of 0.10), we get a power of 0.88. With this, we can say that the study has an 88% chance of detecting an effect size of 0.10, assuming that such an effect actually exists. This is above the statistical power of 0.80, which is the norm in studies using survey data.

B Data and Variables

B.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table B.1.1: Mean Demographic Values by Treatment Group

Variable	Control	Liberal Trump	Conservative Trump	Liberal Close Friend	Conservative Close Friend
Age	51.14	49.86	49.17	47.87	49.96
White	0.64	0.63	0.63	0.66	0.68
Male	0.32	0.43**	0.42**	0.40	0.41
Knowledge	2.82	3.01	3.16	2.94	2.98
Trump Approval	1.87	1.78	1.75	1.79	1.76
5-point Ideology	2.96	2.89	2.89	2.96	2.77
7-point Ideology	3.74	3.41	3.53	3.36	3.37
Income	6.34	6.14	6.17	5.97	6.05
Education	3.66	3.59	3.79	3.48	3.61
Political Interest	1.88	1.73	1.81	1.77	1.80
Republican	0.25	0.23	0.24	0.17*	0.20
Democrat	0.34	0.44**	0.36	0.41	0.39
Independent	0.35	0.25**	0.30	0.27	0.30
N	194	202	206	200	198

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

B.2 Interacting Variables

This section details the construction of the interacting variables. Party identification was measured pre-treatment, which is suitable as it captures respondents' inherent political leanings before any intervention, ensuring that the treatment does not influence their party allegiance. In contrast, the variables for political knowledge and social conformism were measured post-treatment, as the answers to these questions are unlikely to be affected by treatment exposure. This allows the observed effects to be associated with the treatment itself.

Political Knowledge Following Barber and Pope (2019), we measure six variables to capture the degree of political knowledge of respondents:

1. Constitution: To the best of your knowledge, does your state have its own constitution? 1. Yes (correct), 2. No, 9. Don't know.

2. Deficit: Is the U.S. federal budget deficit – the amount by which the government's spending exceeds the amount of money it collects – now bigger, about the same, or smaller than it was during most of the 1990's? 1. Bigger (correct), 2. About the same, 3. Smaller, 9 Don't know.

3. Term: For how many years is a United States Senator elected – that is, how many years are there in one full term of office for a U.S. Senator? Open answer. Correct answer is 6 years.

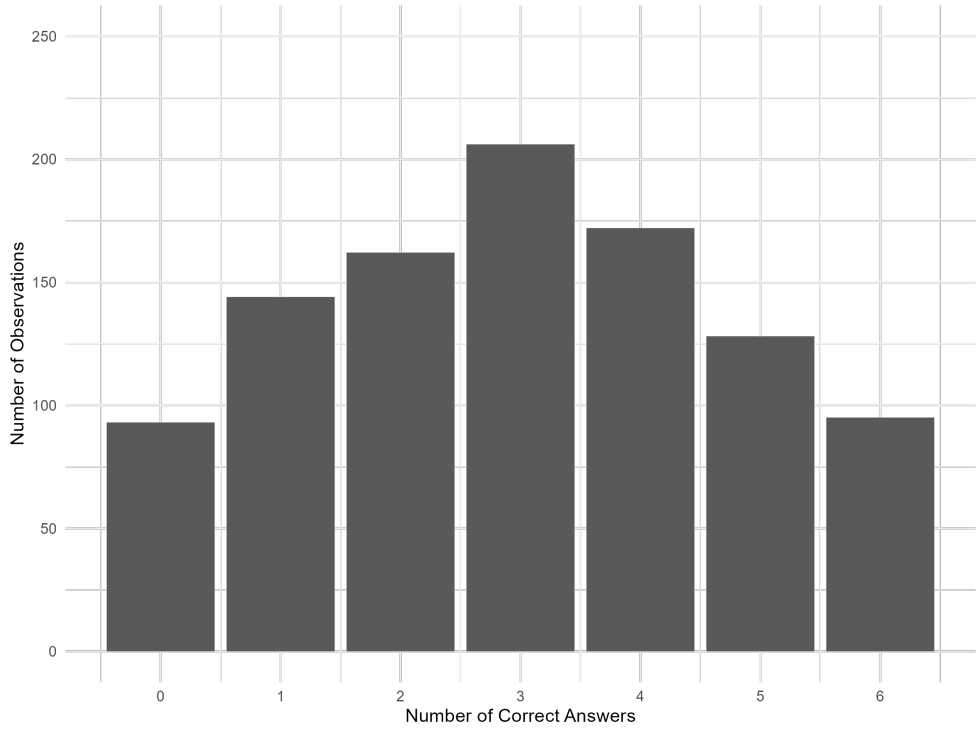
4. Spending: On which of the following does the U.S. federal government currently spend the least? 1. Foreign aid (correct), 2. Medicare, 3. National defense, 4. Social security, 9. Don't know.

5. Nomination: Who nominates judges to the Supreme Court? 1. The President (correct), 2. The House of Representatives, 3. The Senate, 4. The Supreme Court, 9. Don't know.

6. Veto: What percentage of members in each chamber of Congress are required to override a presidential veto? 1. 51%, 2. 60%, 3. 67% (correct), 4. 80%, 9. Don't know.

The variable for political knowledge was constructed as a cumulative index that counts the number of correct answers per respondent.

Figure B.2.1: Distribution of Political Knowledge



Party Identification We used the three-point party identification variable to construct our party identification variable, with one modification. The original three-point variable codes 1 for Democrat, 2 for Republican, and 3 for Independent, with two other values that we include in the Independent category: 4 for Other and 5 for Not Sure. The final party identification variable that was used in the interaction model stands as follows:

1. Democrat
2. Independent/Other
3. Republican

Social Conformism Six variables of the survey were included to capture the degree of social conformism of respondents, based on the work by Blais and Hortala-Vallve (2021) and Feldman (2003). For each of the following statements, respondents could answer 1. Strongly agree, 2. Agree, 3. Neither agree nor disagree, 4. Disagree, 5. Strongly disagree, and 9. Don't know.

1. It's best for everyone if people try to fit in instead of acting in unusual ways. Agreement indicates high social conformism.

2. People should be encouraged to express themselves in unique and possibly unusual ways. Agreement indicates low social conformism.

3. Obeying the rules and fitting in are signs of a strong and healthy society. Agreement indicates high social conformism.

4. People who continually emphasize the need for unity will only limit creativity and hurt our society. Agreement indicates low social conformism.

5. We should admire people who go their own way without worrying about what others think. Agreement indicates low social conformism.

6. People need to learn to fit in and get along with others. Agreement indicates high social conformism.

Given that statements 2, 4, and 5 are phrased in a way that measures non-conformism or individualism, they were coded inversely so all statements range from low levels of conformism to high levels of conformism. Finally, the creation of the social conformism index was constructed as a mean of all the variables recoded as 1 = low social conformism, 2 = don't know/either, and 3 = high social conformism.

Table B.2.1: Social Conformism, Test for Cronbach's alpha

	n	raw.r	std.r	r.cor	r.drop	mean	sd
Social Conformism 1	9000	0.76	0.74	0.74	0.56	1.73	0.77
Social Conformism 2	9000	0.46	0.51	0.32	0.22	1.45	0.64
Social Conformism 3	9000	0.67	0.64	0.58	0.42	2.13	0.78
Social Conformism 4	9000	0.35	0.33	0.05	0.03	1.90	0.78
Social Conformism 5	9000	0.33	0.37	0.12	0.06	1.48	0.67
Social Conformism 6	9000.	0.70	0.67	0.63	0.46	2.19	0.80

C Estimation

C.1 ATE Policy Support

Table C.1.1: Average Treatment Effect of Policy Cues

	Policy Support
(Intercept)	0.798***
	(0.026)
Male	−0.156***
	(0.017)
Party Identification	
Independent/Other	−0.420***
	(0.020)
Republican	−0.794***
	(0.023)
Treatments	
Liberal Trump	0.097***
	(0.028)
Conservative Trump	0.021
	(0.027)
Liberal Close Friend	−0.055**
	(0.028)
Conservative Close Friend	−0.035
	(0.028)
N	9000
R^2	0.132
R^2 Adj.	0.131
AIC	24 447.9
BIC	24 511.8
Log.Lik.	−12 214.937
F	195.603
RMSE	0.78

Note: N corresponds to the number of rows of the dataset in long format across all nine policy positions. The model uses CES Survey weights. * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

C.2 ATE Policy Positions

Table C.2.1: ATE Policy Positions

	Wages	Taxes	Abortion	Immigration	Guns	Health Care	Background Checks	Planned Parenthood
(Intercept)	0.976***	0.829***	0.732***	0.522***	0.715***	0.707***	1.108***	0.731***
	(0.074)	(0.075)	(0.074)	(0.080)	(0.078)	(0.077)	(0.067)	(0.078)
Male	−0.228***	−0.189***	−0.064	−0.070	−0.190***	−0.072	−0.270***	−0.185***
	(0.049)	(0.050)	(0.049)	(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.051)	(0.044)	(0.052)
Party Identification								
Independent/Other	−0.405***	−0.370***	−0.235***	−0.464***	−0.449***	−0.454***	−0.386***	−0.534***
	(0.057)	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.063)	(0.061)	(0.060)	(0.052)	(0.061)
Republican	−0.646***	−0.839***	−0.427***	−0.972***	−0.998***	−1.053***	−0.316***	−0.974***
	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.072)	(0.070)	(0.069)	(0.060)	(0.070)
Treatments								
Liberal Trump	0.140*	0.174**	0.039	0.261***	0.098	0.079	−0.013	0.079
	(0.081)	(0.082)	(0.082)	(0.088)	(0.086)	(0.085)	(0.073)	(0.085)
Conservative Trump	−0.006	0.110	−0.075	0.182**	0.010	0.079	−0.241***	0.088
	(0.078)	(0.079)	(0.078)	(0.085)	(0.082)	(0.081)	(0.070)	(0.082)
Liberal Close Friend	−0.121	0.061	−0.094	−0.007	−0.178**	0.003	−0.084	0.036
	(0.079)	(0.080)	(0.079)	(0.086)	(0.083)	(0.082)	(0.071)	(0.083)
Conservative Close Friend	−0.063	0.002	−0.115	0.043	0.036	−0.003	−0.156**	0.054
	(0.080)	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.087)	(0.085)	(0.084)	(0.072)	(0.084)
N	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
R^2	0.125	0.161	0.047	0.171	0.195	0.198	0.108	0.188
R^2 Adj.	0.119	0.155	0.040	0.165	0.189	0.192	0.102	0.182
AIC	2621.2	2647.2	2642.0	2794.8	2736.4	2714.7	2424.6	2728.2
BIC	2665.4	2691.3	2686.2	2839.0	2780.5	2758.9	2468.8	2772.4
Log.Lik.	−1301.616	−1314.575	−1312.018	−1388.393	−1359.182	−1348.360	−1203.310	−1355.108
F	20.238	27.233	7.010	29.269	34.249	34.927	17.168	32.721
RMSE	0.73	0.74	0.74	0.81	0.80	0.78	0.65	0.78

Note: The models use CES Survey weights. * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

C.3 Interaction Models

Table C.3.1: Interaction with Party Identification

	Policy Support
(Intercept)	0.791*** (0.045)
Male	−0.161*** (0.017)
Party Identification - Independent/Other	−0.352*** (0.053)
Party Identification - Republican	−0.872*** (0.058)
Treatments	
Liberal Trump	0.036 (0.057)
Conservative Trump	0.024 (0.056)
Liberal Close Friend	−0.002 (0.054)
Conservative Close Friend	−0.005 (0.055)
Interactions	
Independent/Other × Liberal Trump	−0.008 (0.071)
Republican × Liberal Trump	0.237*** (0.077)
Independent/Other × Conservative Trump	−0.014 (0.068)
Republican × Conservative Trump	0.014 (0.075)
Independent/Other × Close Friend Liberal	−0.171** (0.068)
Republican × Close Friend Liberal	0.090 (0.077)
Independent/Other × Close Friend Conservative	−0.124* (0.068)
Republican × Close Friend Conservative	0.096 (0.078)
N	9000
R^2	0.136
R^2 Adj.	0.134
AIC	24 425.4
BIC	24 546.2
Log.Lik.	−12 195.713
F	94.155
RMSE	0.78

Note: N corresponds to the number of rows of the dataset in long format across all nine policy positions. The model uses CES Survey weights. * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Table C.3.2: Interaction with Political Knowledge

	Policy Support
(Intercept)	0.857*** (0.040)
Male	−0.155*** (0.018)
Political Knowledge	−0.023** (0.011)
Party Identification	
Independent/Other	−0.415*** (0.020)
Republican	−0.790*** (0.023)
Treatments	
Liberal Trump	−0.027 (0.054)
Conservative Trump	−0.117** (0.048)
Liberal Close Friend	−0.011 (0.050)
Conservative Close Friend	−0.182*** (0.051)
Interactions	
Knowledge × Liberal Trump	0.044*** (0.016)
Knowledge × Conservative Trump	0.051*** (0.015)
Knowledge × Liberal Close Friend	−0.016 (0.015)
Knowledge × Conservative Close Friend	0.054*** (0.015)
N	9000
R^2	0.136
R^2 Adj.	0.135
AIC	24 419.3
BIC	24 518.7
Log.Lik.	−12 195.630
F	117.749
RMSE	0.78

Note: N corresponds to the number of rows of the dataset in long format across all nine policy positions. The model uses CES Survey weights. * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Table C.3.3: Interaction with Social Conformism Index (SCI)

	Policy Support
(Intercept)	0.812*** (0.099)
Male	−0.156*** (0.017)
SCI	−0.008 (0.052)
Party Identification	
Independent/Other	−0.421*** (0.020)
Republican	−0.793*** (0.023)
Treatments	
Liberal Trump	0.582*** (0.139)
Conservative Trump	0.343*** (0.133)
Liberal Close Friend	0.084 (0.133)
Conservative Close Friend	−0.324** (0.133)
Interactions	
Liberal Trump × SCI	−0.258*** (0.073)
Conservative Trump × SCI	−0.170** (0.069)
Liberal Close Friend × SCI	−0.075 (0.070)
Conservative Close Friend × SCI	0.159** (0.071)
N	9000
R^2	0.137
R^2 Adj.	0.136
AIC	24 403.4
BIC	24 502.8
Log.Lik.	−12 187.686
F	119.280
RMSE	0.78

Note: N corresponds to the number of rows of the dataset in long format across all nine policy positions. The model uses CES Survey weights. * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

D Robustness Checks

D.1 Realism

In our pre-analysis plan, we raised concerns about how the effect of close friend conditions could be linked to how much respondents know about the position of their close friend. More precisely, individuals who know the position of their close friend with respect to each of the experimental issues may not be affected by the cue. In order to address this, we included a question tapping the frequency with which individuals discuss each of the nine policy issues with a close friend, which is included in the post-treatment survey. This allows us to assess the close friend treatments' realism. We expected that, while our use of an undefined close friend as the treatment may result in conservative estimates of the influence of a close friend endorsement on policy support, the use of a defined close friend would lead to heterogeneous treatment effects, depending on the strength of friendship ties.

Specifically, the question was phrased as "How often do you discuss with a close friend about...", for each of the following policy positions:

1. Increasing the minimum wage to over $10 an hour.
2. Increasing the amount of taxes paid by the wealthy.
3. Enforcing penalties on women who obtain abortions.
4. Allowing illegal immigrants to the United States to obtain legal status.
5. Allowing teachers to carry guns on school property.
6. Putting in place a health care system that covers all individuals under a government plan.
7. Mandating background checks on all weapons purchases.
8. Supporting federal funding for Planned Parenthood services.

The alternatives of response were 1 = more than once a week, 2 = once a week, 3 = once or twice a month, 4 = a few times a year 5= seldom 6 = never. For the analysis, we inverted the alternatives to go from never to more than once a week. The distribution of responses across policy positions is available in Figure D.1.1.

Figure D.1.1: Distribution of Realism (*How often do you discuss with a close friend about...*)

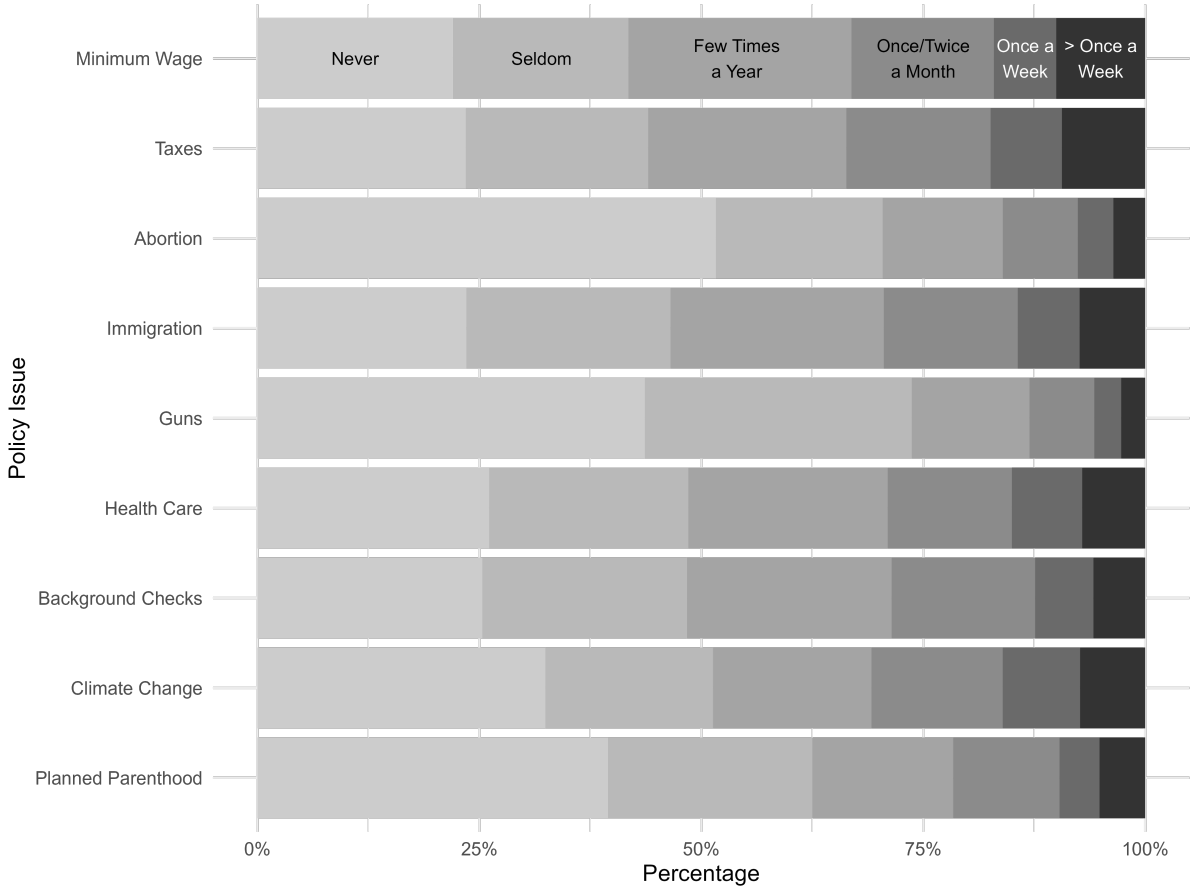


Table C.2.1 shows the ATE for specific policy positions with interactions between treatments and a binary indicator of discussion frequency (where frequent discussants are those who score above 3.5 on a 1-6 scale of averaged discussion frequency across all issues). The interaction terms reveal that among frequent discussants, the close friend treatment leads to more conservative positions on immigration while showing no consistent effects across other policy domains. These results suggest limited heterogeneity in the effect of close friend treatments based on respondents' general propensity to discuss politics with friends.

Table D.1.1: ATE Policy Positions - Interaction with Discussion Frequency

	Wages	Taxes	Abortion	Immigration	Guns	Health Care	Background Checks	Planned Parenthood
(Intercept)	0.928***	0.797***	0.731***	0.401***	0.710***	0.589***	1.161***	0.599***
	(0.083)	(0.084)	(0.084)	(0.090)	(0.088)	(0.086)	(0.075)	(0.086)
Male	−0.240***	−0.186***	−0.069	−0.066	−0.184***	−0.070	−0.259***	−0.185***
	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.054)	(0.053)	(0.051)	(0.045)	(0.051)
Independent/Other	−0.370***	−0.338***	−0.220***	−0.419***	−0.437***	−0.400***	−0.375***	−0.462***
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.060)	(0.063)	(0.062)	(0.061)	(0.053)	(0.061)
Republican	−0.621***	−0.850***	−0.424***	−0.935***	−1.002***	−1.022***	−0.336***	−0.907***
	(0.067)	(0.068)	(0.068)	(0.073)	(0.071)	(0.069)	(0.061)	(0.069)
Liberal Trump	0.100	0.174*	0.057	0.362***	0.154	0.172*	−0.061	0.012
	(0.097)	(0.098)	(0.098)	(0.105)	(0.103)	(0.101)	(0.088)	(0.100)
Conservative Trump	−0.040	0.151	−0.170*	0.163	0.027	0.080	−0.263***	0.061
	(0.095)	(0.096)	(0.097)	(0.103)	(0.101)	(0.099)	(0.087)	(0.098)
Liberal Close Friend	−0.172*	−0.083	−0.169*	−0.088	−0.331***	−0.085	−0.159*	−0.057
	(0.093)	(0.094)	(0.094)	(0.100)	(0.098)	(0.096)	(0.084)	(0.096)
Conservative Close Friend	−0.071	0.052	−0.140	0.143	0.046	0.034	−0.209**	0.044
	(0.097)	(0.098)	(0.099)	(0.105)	(0.103)	(0.101)	(0.088)	(0.101)
Frequent Discussant	0.107	0.086	−0.002	0.348**	0.036	0.319**	−0.166	0.296**
	(0.132)	(0.133)	(0.133)	(0.142)	(0.139)	(0.136)	(0.119)	(0.136)
Liberal Trump × Frequent Discussant	0.155	−0.013	−0.043	−0.300	−0.157	−0.320*	0.171	0.245
	(0.181)	(0.182)	(0.183)	(0.195)	(0.191)	(0.187)	(0.164)	(0.187)
Conservative Trump × Frequent Discussant	0.094	−0.081	0.264	−0.072	−0.077	−0.051	0.140	0.016
	(0.170)	(0.172)	(0.173)	(0.184)	(0.181)	(0.177)	(0.155)	(0.176)
Liberal Close Friend × Frequent Discussant	0.168	0.448**	0.230	0.219	0.465**	0.255	0.218	0.290
	(0.174)	(0.176)	(0.177)	(0.189)	(0.185)	(0.181)	(0.158)	(0.180)
Conservative Close Friend × Frequent Discussant	−0.010	−0.191	0.036	−0.311*	−0.105	−0.114	0.184	0.028
	(0.174)	(0.175)	(0.177)	(0.188)	(0.185)	(0.180)	(0.158)	(0.180)
N	980	980	980	980	980	980	980	980
R^2	0.141	0.187	0.060	0.200	0.210	0.231	0.104	0.234
R^2 Adj.	0.130	0.177	0.048	0.190	0.200	0.222	0.092	0.224
AIC	2571.5	2587.8	2600.2	2725.3	2686.0	2642.0	2382.1	2635.7
BIC	2639.9	2656.2	2668.6	2793.7	2754.4	2710.4	2450.5	2704.1
Log.Lik.	−1271.742	−1279.879	−1286.081	−1348.625	−1328.989	−1306.990	−1177.056	−1303.861
F	13.221	18.506	5.120	20.131	21.361	24.224	9.311	24.573
RMSE	0.73	0.74	0.74	0.81	0.79	0.77	0.65	0.78

Note: N corresponds to the number of respondents. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

D.2 Treatment Effects on Trump Approval

We conducted robustness analyses to assess whether treatment assignment systematically affected Trump's approval ratings. A chi-square test of independence revealed no significant association between treatment assignment and Trump approval distributions, as shown in Table D.2.1. While treatment groups showed modest differences in approval proportions, these differences were not statistically significant overall.

Table D.2.1: Trump Approval Distribution by Treatment Group

Treatment Group	Disapprove	Neither	Approve
control	0.546	0.041	0.412
TL	0.564	0.094	0.342
TC	0.573	0.102	0.325
CFL	0.560	0.085	0.355
CFC	0.581	0.076	0.343

Note: Chi-square test: $\chi^2 = 8.22$, df = 8, p = 0.413

In addition, we estimated multinomial logit models using 'Neither' as the reference category to examine treatment effects on Trump approval (Table D.2.2). The negative coefficients for all treatments in both the 'Disapprove' and 'Approve' columns indicate that experimental exposure made respondents more likely to select the neutral 'Neither' category rather than express strong approval or disapproval positions. Notably, this pattern occurs regardless of whether respondents received Trump-related cues or friend-related cues, indicating that the shift toward neutrality reflects a general response to the experimental context rather than Trump-specific treatment contamination.

Table D.2.2: Multinomial Logit: Treatment Effects on Trump Approval

Treatment	Disapprove	Approve
(Intercept)	1.833** (0.330)	2.214** (0.323)
Liberal Trump	-0.426 (0.407)	-0.948* (0.403)
Conservative Trump	-0.803* (0.385)	-1.215** (0.380)
Liberal Close Friend	-0.504 (0.398)	-0.944* (0.392)
Conservative Close Friend	-0.615 (0.393)	-1.261** (0.391)

Reference category: Neither Approves nor Disapproves. Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.1

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