

# Talking Politics in Social Settings: How Tone Matters

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**Abstract.** Although political discussions—especially when they involve disagreement—have numerous benefits for society, people are averse to them. We propose that this aversion is due to the tone of political discussions and that the benefits of these discussions are *also* reliant on this tone. Using two survey experiments on Prolific (study 1: N=1,045; study 2: N=1,540), we indeed find that the desire to—and the results of—talking politics in social settings depends largely on the tone of these discussions. While people expect political discussions to be heated and thus want to avoid them, once these expectations are changed, people are more willing to engage. Further, calm political discussions are much more beneficial than heated political discussions are—even when they both involve disagreement—leading to positive outcomes such as perceived learning, appreciating a diversity of views, and willingness to engage. Our findings thus speak to people’s willingness to take part in, and benefit from, political discussions with a variety of viewpoints.

**Keywords:** political disagreement, political discussions, social interactions, tone

## Introduction

Discussing politics is often viewed as vital to democracy (Guttman and Thompson 1996; Putnam 2001). This proposition has received empirical support with findings that discussing politics—especially when it involves disagreement—can increase learning (Ognyanova 2020) as well as tolerance of others and their views (e.g., Kalla and Broockman 2020; Levendusky and Stecula 2020; Mutz 2006). Yet, people often hate doing it. Research finds that most people want to avoid discussing politics (Huckfeldt et al. 2013; Mutz 2006), with both out-partisans *as well as* with fellow in-partisans (Klar, Krupnikov, and Ryan 2018)—although this aversion is stronger for discussions with out-partisans (Settle and Carlson 2019).

This avoidance of discussing politics is not only worrisome for politics and civic culture (Almond and Verba 1963), but also for social life and relationships. For example, research finds that the tendency to avoid discussing politics because of underlying disagreement can lead to shorter Thanksgiving dinners (Frimer and Skitka 2020) and can even strain familial relationships (Warner, Colaner, and Park 2020). These findings point to an unfortunate outcome: the very discussions that have the power to improve relationships (e.g., Warner et al. 2020) and politics (e.g., Levendusky and Stecula 2020) are avoided largely *because* politics has become so affectively polarized (Klar et al. 2018; Wells et al. 2017), leaving us to a “spiral of silence” (Noelle-Neumann 1974).

Thus, it seems that at a time we need it most, people are disengaging from each other politically. In conjunction with other research (e.g., Settle and Carlson 2019; Levendusky and Stecula 2020; Kalla and Broockman 2020), we examine this disengagement from social discussions about politics—looking at both willingness to take part in these discussions as well as the process and outcomes of these discussions. We propose that the aversion to political conversation stems from an important moderator: the tone with which these discussions occur, *and* that this tone can also influence both the processes and outcomes *of* these discussions. Through two survey experiments, we find substantial evidence for this claim. People indeed expect political conversations to be more heated than other social conversations, *even when both involve disagreement*, and are thus unlikely to engage in them. However, when political disagreement is dealt with in a calm and reasoned tone, people are not only more willing to engage in the discussions, but they are also more likely to treat others respectfully, learn as well as teach others, and become more willing to engage in similar future interactions, among other normatively positive outcomes.

Our research has important implications for understanding affective polarization and political conversation. It is not politics—or even disagreement—per se, but the expectations of heated discussions that are driving people away from discussing important political issues with those with which they disagree.<sup>1</sup> Thus, *how* we talk about our political disagreements in social settings is vitally important to if people want to engage in these discussions, how they unfold, and the benefits people receive from them.

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<sup>1</sup> Although it is also possible that disagreement is ultimately driving this heated tone. This added nuance is, however, beyond the scope of this manuscript.

## Theoretic Expectations

**Political Discussions.**<sup>2</sup> Discussing politics, especially with people of contrasting views, is an acknowledged ideal of society, with some scholars identifying it as a necessary component of any healthy democracy (Guttman and Thompson 1996). Downs' (1957) economic theory of democracy identified everyday conversation as an important source of “free” information that help inform citizens on who to vote for. Indeed, exposure to contrasting viewpoints improves the ability for citizens to arrive at correct conclusions in both a formal model perspective (Rawls 2009), where rational actors can pool information and minimize disagreement, and a social identity perspective (Benhabib 1996; Young 1996), where interaction helps break down social barriers. As Mutz (2006) summarizes, “hearing the other side has long been considered important for democratic citizens” (pg. 9).

However, research finds that most people do not want to discuss politics (see Huckfeldt et al. 2013), even distancing themselves from people in their social network that *do* want to do so (see Klar et al. 2018). Although this “disappointing frequency of cross-cutting conversations” (Mutz 2006, pg. 61)<sup>3</sup> is not necessarily driven by disagreement, disagreement *within* these discussions about politics makes people even *more* averse to them (Settle and Carlson 2019). In fact, people even use apolitical cues to draw inferences about people’s political beliefs and then use these inferences to guide decisions about whether or not they interact with them—when they infer disagreement, they are less likely to do so (Lee 2020; see also Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995).

This tendency to avoid discussing politics with those with which they disagree is likely driven by various factors, including the fact that people across the ideological spectrum would rather avoid the “other side’s” opinions (Frimer, Skitka, and Motyl 2017), as well as simple affective distaste for out-partisans (see, for example, Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Mason 2018). Certain issues, especially those provoking visceral reactions and divisive topics, also limit public discourse (Goodin 2006). As polarization increases, individuals with contrasting views are less likely to share their opinions and more likely to cut off conversations with those that disagree with them (Wells et al. 2017), creating a “spiral of silence” (Noelle-Neumann 1974) that limits the range of opinion in public discourse.

Thus, we see that many, if not most, people want to avoid talking about politics in social settings—with those they disagree with, but also even with those they agree with. We see the outcomes of this avoidance play out in politics, as research finds that having these political discussions that involve disagreement and different perspectives can be beneficial to society (see Mutz and Mondak 2006; Kwak et al 2005). Indeed, Ognyanova (2020) finds that having high-frequency general conversation partners can spread political knowledge, which can also help mitigate the information losses and distortions associated with single-channel political communication (Carlson 2017).

These types of discussions that involve disagreement also increase people’s value in the free exchange of ideas and thus tolerance of others and their ideas (see Huckfeldt et al. 2013; Mutz 2002, 2006; Mutz and Mondak 2006; Pattie and Johnston 2008). Relatedly, these social conversations can help improve attitudes towards outgroups, something noted as early as Allport’s

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<sup>2</sup> Note that the political discussions we are examining are different from political deliberation (e.g., Elster and Przeworski 1998). As Mansbridge (1999) explains, “Everyday talk, if not always deliberative, is nevertheless a crucial part of the full deliberative system” (p. 211)—this “everyday talk” is what we focus on.

<sup>3</sup> At the time of writing at least, the lack of cross-cutting exposure was even more pronounced among whites, the highly educated, and those with higher incomes (Mutz 2006).

(1954) classic intergroup contact hypothesis. For example, Kalla and Broockman (2020) find that these face-to-face conversations have the power to reduce exclusionary attitudes and Levendusky and Stecula (2020) finds that these same types of conversations have the power to decrease affective polarization.

Lastly, we see how the avoidance of discussing politics influences our social lives. Unsurprisingly—given findings about discussions, tolerance, and exclusionary attitudes—the avoidance of discussing politics when there is potential disagreement has deleterious consequences for relationships. Families that have political disagreements within them can suffer from this avoidance of disagreement, as less communication (ultimately driven by disagreement) leads shared family identity to suffer (Warner et al. 2020). Recent research even found that politically diverse Thanksgiving dinners were *shorter* than politically uniform ones, controlling for other factors (Frimer and Skitka 2020).

Although scholars do note the trade-off of discussions for participation (Mutz 2006) as well as identify ways in which social political conversation can instead *increase* the salience of identity and negative out-group feelings in group settings (Walsh 2004), the overall results of in-person discussions about political disagreements are normatively positive. There is an overwhelming belief that “everyday talk” (Mansbridge 1999)—especially when it involves disagreement—is a powerful and important part of our social and political lives, and that thus disengagement from it is harmful (Huckfeldt et al. 2004a; Mutz 2006). Understanding what drives this disengagement is consequently important—and we don’t believe it is simply the content of politics nor the presence of disagreement in discussions that are driving this disengagement.

***Expectation that Tone Should Matter.*** We expect that people’s willingness to engage in political discussions, as well as the process and outcomes of these discussions, is largely determined not by whether or not the conversation includes political disagreement, but by the tone with which that disagreement occurs. By “tone” we mean the overall *feel* of the discussion—this could involve incivility (see Mutz and Reeves 2005), as well as anger (see Webster 2020), among other emotions, and/or even volume with which the discussion takes place and intensity with which people are speaking. Determining which of these many factors drive the effect of tone is not the goal of this manuscript (although could be important in future research). Instead, we examine this overall “feel” of political disagreements—what we call tone—and whether it is heated or calm.

Previous research suggests to us that tone should matter. Not only do incivility (Mutz and Reeves 2005) and anger (Webster 2020) influence people’s trust in government, but we see other related variables influence political outcomes. For example, Warner et al. (2020) find that “respecting divergent opinions” is the best strategy in dealing with political disagreement. Similarly, Masullo and Kim (2020) find that when comments that attempt to correct misinformation are uncivil, people dislike out-partisans even less than they already do. Even in Kalla and Broockman’s (2020) findings of reducing exclusionary attitudes with face-to-face conversations, they find that the conversations must involve “non-judgmentally exchanging narratives.” And Levendusky and Stecula’s (2020) finding that these discussions can reduce affective polarization have the added nuance that their most influential treatment was that of engaging in “civil discussion” across party lines. Similarly, Huddy and Yair (2020) find that witnessing elites’ either hostile or warm interactions influences affective polarization—noting the importance of tone in changing our current state of politics.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, a motivation behind people’s

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<sup>4</sup> In comparison, they also find that witnessing elites compromising on policy has no effect on affective polarization.

dislike of politics and the politically engaged is the intensity of today's political climate (Klar et al. 2018)—and the fact that this aversion remains with in-partisans suggests that it is not simply disagreement that is turning people off from politics.

Inspired by these previous findings, we thus expect that tone should matter in willingness to engage in political discussions as well as the process and outcomes of those discussions. We expect to find different willingness to engage as well as different processes and outcomes by whether social discussions about politics—even when they involve disagreement—are discussed in a heated tone versus when they are discussed in a calm tone. While we expect tone to be the large determinant, we also examine how individual variation can matter in how willing people are to engage in political discussions as well as how they react in those discussions. We discuss these individual factors at the end of our experimental analyses.

## Empirical Approach

To examine how people's reactions to political disagreements change by the tone in the conversation, we run two survey experiments on Prolific (study 1, September 2020: N= 1,045; study 2, October 2020: N=1,540). We use online survey experiments for four reasons. The first was logistical: an on-going pandemic was taking place at the time, precluding in-person discussions. Second, we believe the work to be done on political discussions is sizable, and that a more efficient means of doing so would be welcomed. Consider if our studies were run in-person. If we had 4-person discussions (with one confederate), this would mean organizing 862 in-person discussions. Even if we moved that to 8-person discussions (with one confederate), this would still be 369 in-person discussions to organize—and expanding the number of people in the discussion naturally leads to less control in the experiment.

This third reason is then tied in with our second reason: control. We wanted to manipulate the tone within disagreements in political discussions—while we could attempt this by using a confederate who would help to moderate the tone, this may prove a difficult task for one person to accomplish. Once those assigned to a calm tone treatment have one person who alters the tone to be more heated, those participants are no longer in a calm discussion—even though they were assigned to one. The only way to fix this would be to add more confederates, increasing the number of in-person discussions to organize in order to get the same number of participants. The fourth and last reason we chose a survey experiment was that loosening the requirement for in-person discussion meant we did not have to be restricted by geographic limitations. Instead, we were able to draw on people across the US, rather than bringing people together in one town or state—this gives us greater external validity.

Of course we realize there is some added realism to in-person discussions as well as potentially stronger treatment effects. There is always a trade-off in design choice (see Shadish, Cook, and Campbell 2002; see also Mutz 2006 who discusses issues with deliberative polls and causal inference and external validity). However, we feel that once we acknowledge that our estimations will likely be conservative—as we are surveying people after recalling or imagining conversations rather than just having had them—our method of examining political discussions could be a promising one. Thus, our hope is to not use this method as a one- (or two-) shot method, but for the field to continue to use it to examine an area that is relatively under-studied, potentially *because* of the onerous task at hand in randomly assigning social interactions at a level that allows for valid statistical tests.

## Study 1: Prolific (N=1,045)

**Survey.** On September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 participants (N=1,045) on Prolific were recruited to take a survey on Qualtrics.<sup>5</sup> After being asked questions about demographics and political leanings, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: 1) a calm treatment, which asked respondents to “Please write about a time someone brought up politics in a social setting where you didn’t agree with what people said but the conversation was calm and reasoned. Be as specific as possible. If you have not been in this situation, write about an imagined time”; 2) a heated treatment, which asked respondents to “Please write about a time someone brought up politics in a social setting where you didn’t agree with what people said and the conversation was heated and tense. Be as specific as possible. If you have not been in this situation, write about an imagined time”; or 3) a control, which asked participants to “Please write about what you had for breakfast this morning. Be as specific as possible.”

Note that the writing prompt asked respondents to think about not just political discussions, but *disagreement* within those discussions.<sup>6</sup> That is, the only difference between the two treatment conditions was the *tone* within the discussions’ disagreement—one was calm and reasoned and one was heated and tense. Also note that the writing prompts rely on participants’ *perception* of tone in discussions. While at first this may be seen as a weakness, we believe it is a strength. Just as perception of disagreement matters more than objective disagreement (see Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995), perception of tone should matter more than objective tone. What matters is that the participant in the discussion *perceives* a certain tone, not if it does or does not objectively exist.

After writing their responses, respondents in the two treatment groups were asked if they wrote about a real or imagined time. 79.08% of respondents said they wrote about a real time, while 16.02% said they wrote about an imagined time, and 4.91% said they couldn’t remember.<sup>7</sup> Importantly, these percentages did not differ by condition. If they said they wrote about a real time, respondents were asked how they reacted in the conversation, if they reacted differently depending on if they liked the people they were talking to, if they learned anything from the conversation, and if the conversation changed how they thought about the people they were talking to. Then, everyone (including those in the control condition) was asked about future attendance to social

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<sup>5</sup> The sample was 65.1% Democrat, 20.36% Republican, and 14.53% pure independents; with a mean of 3.02 and standard deviation of 1.65 from extremely liberal (1) to extremely conservative (7), 50.48% women and 49.52% men, a mean of age 32.13 with a standard deviation of 12.17, and 61.91% white and 38.09% either mixed or full minority.

<sup>6</sup> This operationalization of political disagreement fits with Mutz’s (2006) conception of “exposure to oppositional political views,” which “requires only that people talk politics with someone who has political views that are to some recognizable degree different from their own” (pg. 79). Thus, disagreement of partisanship—while likely a sufficient condition for disagreement—is not necessary for disagreement, or “exposure to oppositional political views.”

<sup>7</sup> Note the relatively high percentage of people who say they have been in these discussions even though most people would rather avoid them. As Huckfeldt et al. (2013) note in referencing Walsh (2004), “Political discussion is often unplanned. When talking, people jump from topic to topic, as different statements cue new thoughts and recollections” (pg. 676). And, because people don’t typically choose their discussion partners and social networks based on politics (Huckfeldt et al. 2004b), when these discussions *do* occur, there is likely some disagreement within them. Thus, even though people would rather avoid them, political discussions that involve disagreement indeed seem to happen. As Huckfeldt et al. (2013) explain, “avoidance is not always a practical or even viable option” (pg. 678).

gatherings where political discussions might happen, diversity of opinion, enjoyment in talking politics with people in their life, interest in politics, and learning in politics (see Appendix A for full questionnaire).

**Results.** We first examine what people wrote about in the two treatment groups. First, for illustrative purposes, we give you two examples. A participant in the calm conditions wrote:

“Following George Floyd's death I went on a golfing weekend with a number of guys and a couple of them were cops. It was interesting getting their view point, and while I disagreed with them by and large, it helped me to understand what issues they see from their side.”

While a participant in the heated condition wrote:

“I often am in social situations where my father (who is very opposed to my views) brings up politics. One example is when at my grandmother's house (his mother) he brought up that he thinks Trump is a great president, my grandmother called him an idiot, and the entire social situation devolved into chaos. We ended up leaving all angry for different reasons.”

Overall, the responses in the two conditions suggest that those who wrote about a calm disagreement had a more positive experience and those who wrote about a heated disagreement had a more negative experience. Indeed, when we conduct text analysis of participants' responses in these conditions, we find that those in the calm condition used more positive words than both those in the heated condition ( $p=.000$ ) and those in the control condition ( $p=.000$ ), and those in the heated condition used more *negative* words than both those in the calm condition ( $p=.000$ ) and those in the control condition ( $p=.000$ ).<sup>8</sup>

This suggests something about enjoyment in discussing politics. While previous research finds that most people want to avoid discussing politics, our initial findings suggest that when these discussions are calm and reasoned—even when there is disagreement involved—people actually have a positive experience (even more positive than breakfast!). It is when these discussions are hostile and tense that people have negative experiences. Indeed, those in the heated treatment are less likely to say they enjoy talking politics with other people in their lives than both those in the calm treatment ( $p=.024$ ) and those in the control group ( $p=.014$ ; see Figure 3, “enjoy”). There is no difference in responses to this question between those in the calm treatment and those in the control group ( $p=.901$ ). Similarly, those in the calm treatment were more likely to say they learned a lot in the discussion ( $p=.000$ ; see Figure 1, “learned”), that they liked the people they were speaking to more afterwards ( $p=.016$ ; see Figure 2, “like more”—they were also *less* likely to say they liked the people they were speaking to *less* afterwards,  $p=.000$ ; see Figure 2, “like less”), and that it “is helpful to hear the political views of friends who disagree with me” (than those in both the heated treatment [ $p=.006$ ] and the control [ $p=.003$ ]; see Figure 3, “diversity”).

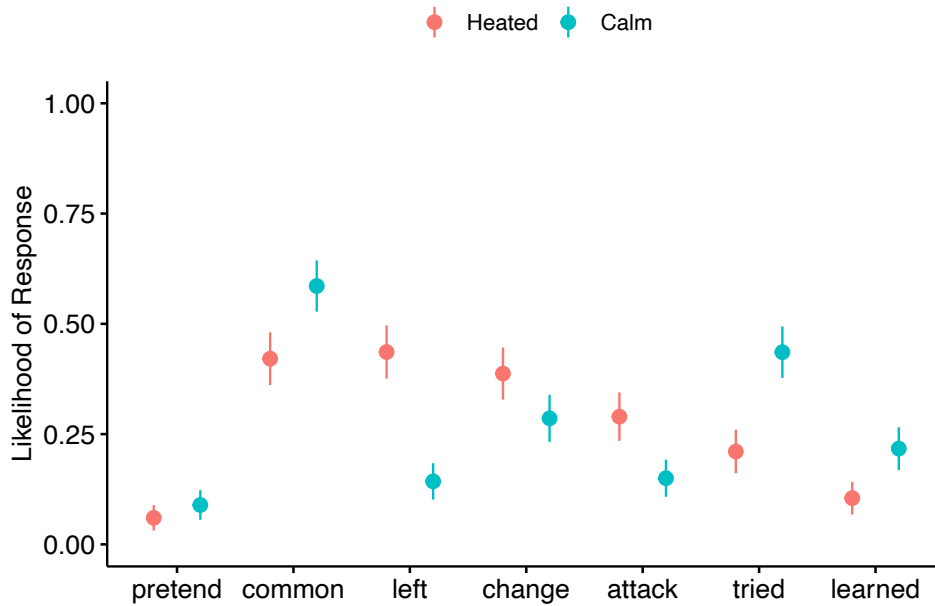
These differential effects of the political discussions make sense when we examine the differences in the discussion *process*. As we see in Figure 1, in comparison to the heated disagreement treatment, those in the calm treatment were more likely to say they tried to find common ground ( $p=.000$ ), that they did *not* try to leave the conversation ( $p=.000$ ), that they did *not* try to change the topic ( $p=.012$ ), that they did *not* attack others' views ( $p=.000$ ), and that they

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<sup>8</sup> In conducting this text analysis, we used the VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary for Sentiment Reasoning) sentiment analysis model to evaluate both polarity and intensity of emotion. Since the data are not normally distributed, we performed a Wilcoxon signed-rank test to compare the means.

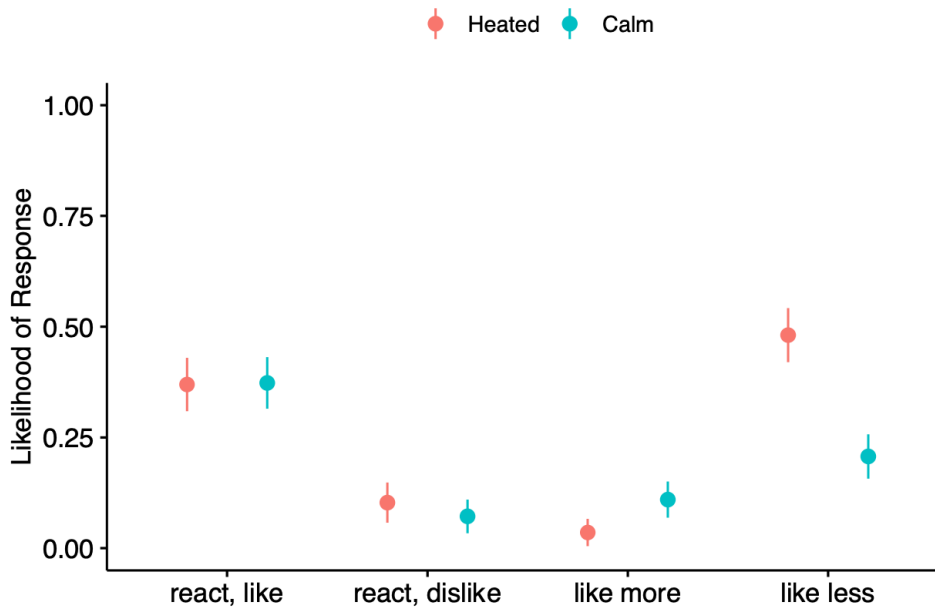
tried to learn in the disagreement ( $p=.000$ ).<sup>9</sup> It is thus quite clear that the social discussions about politics seemed to go completely differently depending on the tone within the conversation—*even though both discussions involved disagreement*.

**Figure 1.** Reactions by Heated and Calm Treatments



Dependent variables are coded as likelihood of choosing certain responses (as compared to *not* choosing them). 95% confidence intervals shown.

**Figure 2.** Reactions by Heated and Calm Treatments

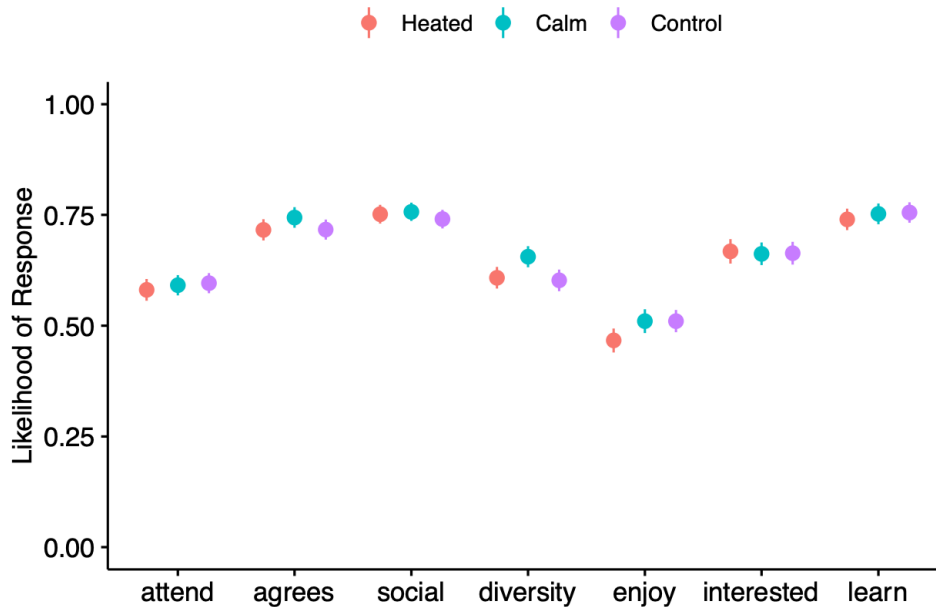


<sup>9</sup> Note that because these questions were about reactions during the discussions, they were not asked to the control condition and thus the comparison is only between the heated and calm treatment conditions.



Dependent variables are coded as likelihood of choosing certain responses (as compared to *not* choosing them). 95% confidence intervals shown.

**Figure 3. Outcomes by Heated and Calm Treatments**



Dependent variables are coded as likelihood of choosing certain responses (as compared to *not* choosing them). 95% confidence intervals shown.

Note that we did not find treatment effects for some of our dependent variable measures, including whether or not people pretended to have the same views as others, reacting differently by whether or not people liked or didn't like the people they were talking to, and 5 of the 7 questions asked of all participants—all but “diversity” and “enjoy” in Figure 3. These last questions (those in Figure 3) were asked at the end of the survey without asking participants to draw on experiences from the discussions, as it aimed to be a more conservative test of the effects of these social discussions. And, as we will see later on, many of these aforementioned dependent variable measures that weren't determined by tone in discussion were instead largely determined by individual-level factors.

Overall, though, what these results suggest to us is that disengagement from the simple but fruitful task of discussing politics is not driven by disagreement, but by the tone with which this disagreement occurs. When that tone is heated and tense, people indeed disengage: they report not trying to find common ground in the discussion, trying to leave the conversation, trying to change the topic, attacking others' views, not *trying* to learn in the discussion, not *learning* in the discussion, liking the people they were speaking to less afterwards, and not enjoying talking about politics. But when that tone is calm and reasoned, even when there is disagreement, people engage and engage *constructively*: they report trying to find common ground in the discussion, *not* trying to leave the conversation or change the topic, *not* attacking others' views and instead trying to learn in the discussion and actually doing so, liking the people they were speaking to more afterwards, and believing it is helpful to hear the political views of friends who disagree with them.

## Study 2: Prolific (N=1,540)

Study 2 aims to build on study 1 by examining how *expectations* of these social interactions influence people's willingness to engage in them, as well as replicating some of the findings from study 1.

**Survey.** On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 1,540 participants were recruited on Prolific to take a survey on Qualtrics.<sup>10</sup> After being asked questions about demographics and political leanings, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions that varied whether participants were asked about attending a social event that would include discussing politics or movies.<sup>11</sup> Participants were told the following:

Imagine that you receive the following text message from an acquaintance, someone you know, but would not necessarily consider a close friend. Assuming COVID-19 is no longer a problem, would you accept or decline the invitation?

“Hi! Would you be interested in joining me and some friends for dinner at my house this week? I like to organize dinners and invite people with different perspectives, who don't necessarily know each other, to get together to discuss a particular topic. I was thinking this time we could discuss [movies/politics]. Don't feel any pressure to join. I know this type of thing isn't for everyone, and you may already have plans, but [I contacted you because I'd really like to hear your thoughts. We'd love to have you! / we'd love to have you!”

They were then given response options of “yes, I would accept the invitation” or “no, I would not accept the invitation.” Following this, they were asked about their expectations of the event, where half of the respondents were given extra clarification of disagreement being involved: “Which would you expect it to be[, even if people disagreed]: calm and reasoned or heated and emotional” with three response options of calm and reasoned, heated and emotional, or don't know.

Then, we equalized respondents' expectations by randomly assigning respondents to one of two conditions that varied whether the tone was calm or heated. In the calm condition, respondents were told: “Suppose you went and, although people disagreed about some things, the conversation was calm and reasoned” and in the heated condition respondents were told: “Suppose you went, and people disagreed and the conversation was heated and emotional.”

All respondents were then asked if they would want to attend again, how they would react if they did attend, if they thought they would think differently about the people with which they interacted afterwards, two questions about stereotypes, and if they enjoy talking about politics with other people in their life (see Appendix B for full questionnaire).

**Results.** As you can see in Figure 4, participants said they would rather go to the social gatherings when movies are discussed than when politics are discussed ( $p=.000$ ). This makes sense when we

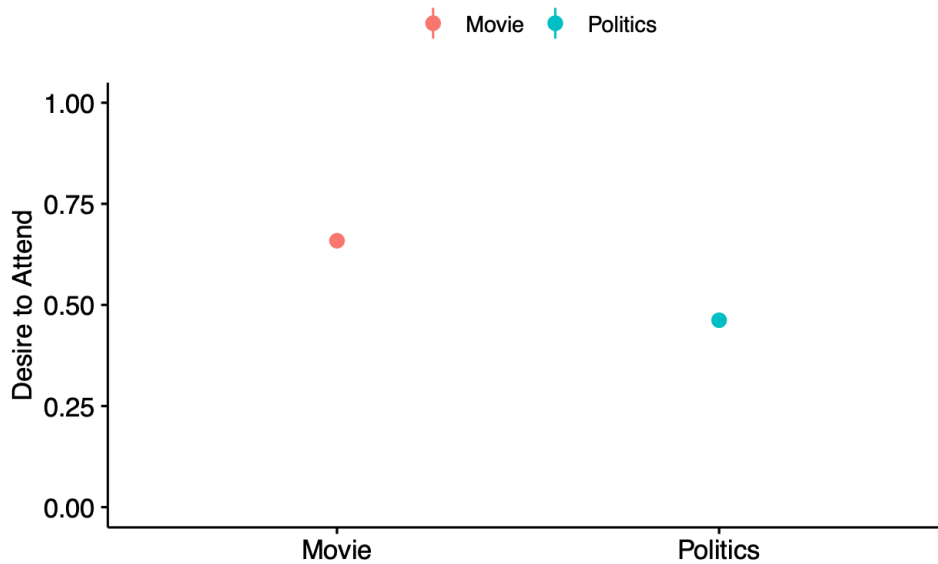
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<sup>10</sup> The sample was 69.54% Democrat and 18.57% Republican (and 11.88% pure independents); with a mean of 2.95 and standard deviation of 1.63 from extremely liberal (1) to extremely conservative (7); 50.10% women and 48.15% men (1.75% other), a mean of age 31.68 with a standard deviation of 11.10, and 63.94% white, non-Hispanic and 36.06% either mixed or full minority.

<sup>11</sup> Participants were originally randomly assigned to one of four conditions—varying not only politics versus movies, but also whether they were encouraged to attend the event or not. The latter variation was for a separate project—here we are focused on the variation of movies versus politics and thus merge the conditions into two (but check for differences by the second variation to ensure this is valid; see Appendix C).

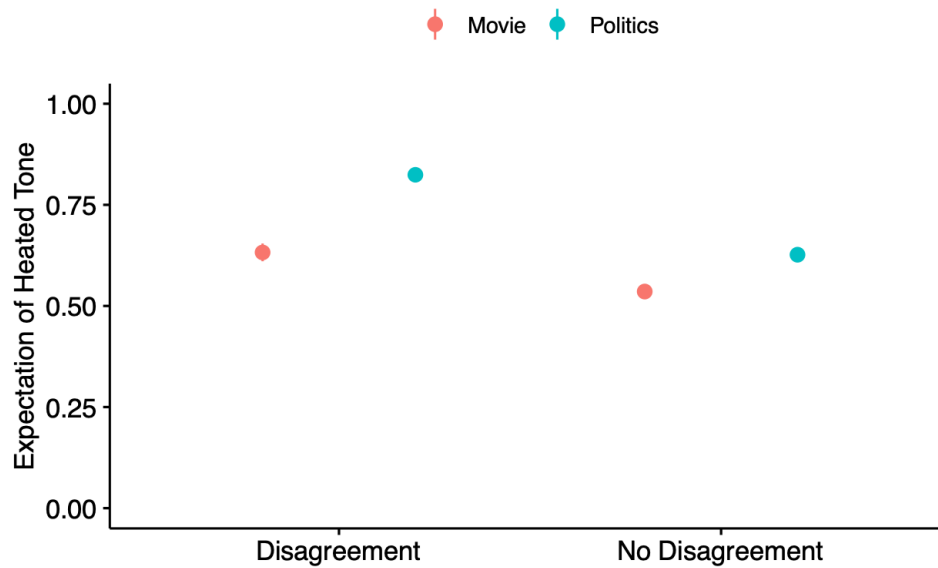
look at their expectations of the event (Figure 5)—which are that discussions about politics are more heated than discussions about movies ( $p=.000$ ), even when they both involve disagreement ( $p=.000$ ), although both are expected to be more heated when disagreement is involved (see Figure 5). As we saw from study 1, people do not like heated discussions and reacted negatively towards them—so it is no surprise that when people expect the event to involve heated discussions, they do not want to attend. Indeed, their expectation that the event will be heated predicts their willingness to attend ( $\alpha=-1.53, p=.000$ )

**Figure 4.** Likelihood of Attendance by Movie and Politics Treatments



Dependent variable is 1 if respondents said they would attend the event and 0 if respondents said they would *not* attend the event. 95% confidence intervals shown.

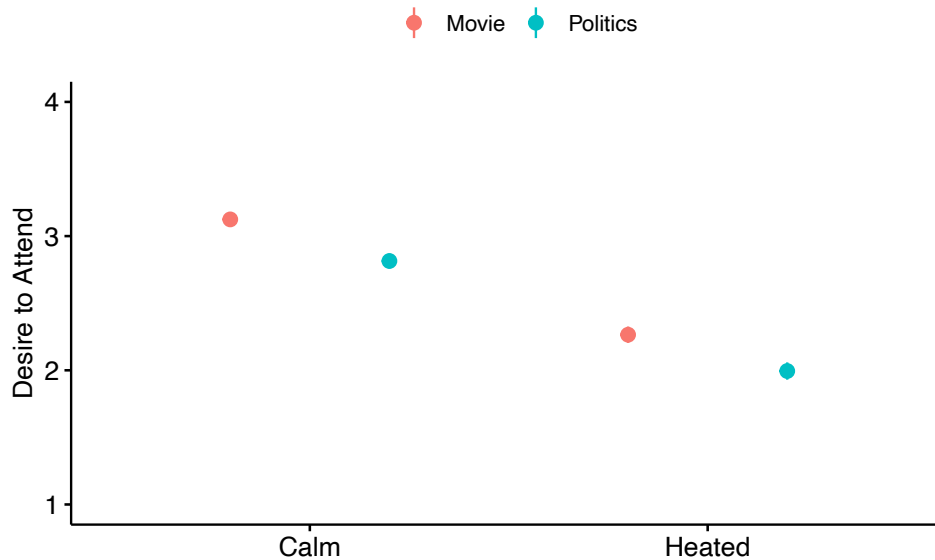
**Figure 5.** Expectation of Tone by Movie and Politics Treatments, with and without Disagreement



Dependent variable is 1 if respondents said they expected the event to be heated and 0 if they said they expected it to be calm. 95% confidence intervals shown.

When we equalize their expectations about the tone in the discussions, we see that the expectation of the tone of the event—rather than the *content* of that event—is driving likelihood of attendance. Remember, we told half of the respondents to imagine they went to the event and “the conversation was calm and reasoned,” while the other half were told the event was “heated and emotional.” As the results demonstrate in Figure 6, while people overall enjoy attending an event discussing movies over an event discussing politics, the heated nature of those discussions drives desire to attend more than the content does. People would rather attend a calm discussion about either movies or politics than a heated one about the same content ( $p=.000$ ). In fact, while people would rather go to an event about movies than politics ( $p=.000$ ), once we account for tone, content no longer matters ( $p=.269$ ) while tone does ( $p=.000$ ). To think about this another way, people would rather go to an event that had a calm discussion of politics than an event that had a heated discussion about movies ( $p=.000$ ).

**Figure 6.** Desire of Future Attendance by Calm, Heated, Movie, and Politics Treatments



Dependent variable is 4 if respondents said they definitely would want to go again, 3 if they said probably, 2 if they said probably not, and 1 if they said definitely not. 95% confidence intervals shown.

Taken together, these results suggest that people expect social events that discuss politics to be heated and thus do not want to attend. Once they are told that the event will be “calm and reasoned,” their desire to attend changes—they are even more likely to want to attend this event than they are an event that discusses movies in a heated tone. Thus, it is not just heated political discussions that disengage people—as we saw in study 1—but the *expectation* of heated political discussions that disengage people. People avoid discussing politics because they assume it is going to be heated, but if they are placed in a situation where the political discussion—which includes disagreement—is calm and reasoned, they—and society—benefit (as we saw in study 1). In conjunction, then, these findings demonstrate that it is not disagreement (study 1) nor content (study 2) that disengages people from political discussions, but tone of those discussions (study 1) as well as *expectation* of the tone of those discussions (study 2).

Recall that we also wanted to replicate some of our main findings from study 1. Thus we asked about people’s potential reactions (and included additional options here), if they thought they would think differently about the people with which they interacted with afterwards, and their enjoyment in talking about politics with other people in their lives. We also asked an additional question about stereotypes of the other party. See Appendix B for full questionnaire. Note that we expected treatment effects here to be smaller, as participants are asked to *imagine* going to an event rather than recalling an event that they actually attended.

Our findings here largely replicate what we saw in study 1. Those that were assigned to the heated treatment (i.e., to imagine they went to the event and it was heated) were *less* likely than those assigned to the calm treatment (i.e., to imagine they went to the event and it was calm) to say they would try to find common ground ( $\alpha=-0.35$ ;  $p=.001$ ), to say they would try to make friends ( $\alpha=-1.02$ ;  $p=.000$ —this response option was unique to study 2), to say they would try to teach others about themselves and/or the topic ( $\alpha=-0.36$ ;  $p=.001$ —unique to study 2), to say they would try to learn ( $\alpha=-0.80$ ;  $p=.000$ ), and to say they would try to fit in ( $\alpha=-0.83$ ;  $p=.000$ —unique

to study 2). Those in the heated condition were *more* likely than those in the calm condition to say that they would try to be quiet ( $\alpha=0.57$ ;  $p=.000$ —unique to study 2), that they would try to leave the conversation ( $\alpha=1.47$ ;  $p=.000$ ), that they would try to change the topic ( $\alpha=1.20$ ;  $p=.000$ ), and that they would attack others' views ( $\alpha=0.55$ ;  $p=.081$ ).

Note that while the tone mattered in *every* reaction dependent variable measure (although the last is marginally significant), the content only mattered for a few of this dependent variable measures. Those that were assigned to the politics condition—as compared to those who were assigned to the movie condition—were less likely to say they would try to make friends ( $\alpha=-0.52$ ;  $p=.000$ ) and try to fit in ( $\alpha=-0.87$ ;  $p=.000$ ), as well as *more* likely to say they would try to teach others about themselves and/or the topic ( $\alpha=0.23$ ;  $p=.030$ ) and try to leave ( $\alpha=0.33$ ;  $p=.036$ ).

Similar to study 1, the heated treatment (as compared to the calm treatment) made respondents more likely to say they would like the people they were talking to *less* afterwards ( $\alpha=1.27$ ;  $p=.000$ ) and *less* likely to say they would like them *more* afterwards ( $\alpha=-1.40$ ;  $p=.000$ )—as compared to saying they would like them the same afterwards. The content treatments had a similar, although smaller, effect. Those in the politics treatment (as compared to those in the movies treatment) were more likely to say they would like them less afterwards ( $\alpha=0.32$ ;  $p=.015$ ) as well as less likely to say they would like them more afterwards ( $\alpha=-0.63$ ;  $p=.000$ )—also as compared to saying they would like them the same afterwards. Note that the coefficients for the tone treatments were more than twice the size of the coefficients for the content treatments for saying they would like them more afterwards and more than four times the size for saying they would like them less afterwards, further demonstrating the importance of tone over content.

Lastly, neither tone nor content mattered in people's reporting of enjoying talking about politics (heated:  $p=.426$ ; politics:  $p=.235$ ) nor their stereotypes—believing those that disagreed with them are not smart or not nice (heated, smart stereotype:  $p=.894$ ; heated, nice stereotype:  $p=.312$ ; politics, smart stereotype:  $p=.748$ ; politics, nice stereotype:  $p=.438$ ). The lack of a treatment effect for the enjoyment in talking about politics is the only conflicting finding between study 1 and study 2. It could be attributable to the weaker treatment in study 2, although further research is needed to know this for sure. It is important to note that while we did not find a treatment effect of tone with this question, we *did* find a treatment effect of tone for willingness to attend a similar event in the future (see Figure 6).

## Individual Factors

Up to this point we have discussed environmental factors within political discussions—i.e., the tone of disagreement—that influence the desire to engage in discussions as well as the process and outcomes of these discussions. But there are also likely individual-level factors that influence these variables. We now turn to these. To do so, we examine the same dependent variables from the previous text but run regressions and include the treatments as well as various political, demographic, and trait factors. Because we care about engaging in *political* discussions, in study 2 the dependent variables that involve attending or reactions in an event are limited to the *political* event rather than including the movie event.

In the first study, these independent variables (in addition to the treatments) are: democrat (dummy), ideology, strength, partisan identity, affective polarization (measured by both in-party and out-party feeling thermometers), affective polarization behavior (measured by asking participants if they would sell something to an in-partisan or an out-partisan or find another way),

social polarization (measured with two questions about out-party and in-party in-laws; see Iyengar et al 2012), gender, age, education, religiosity, employment status, race, and self-monitoring (measurement description below). In the second study, these independent variables (in addition to the treatments) are: democrat (dummy), ideology, strength, gender, age, education, race, income, attention to politics, 5 different measures of discussing politics with friends and family, 3 different measures of how much respondents believe others value their opinions, and 6 different measures of how confident respondents feel in their ability to understand politics.

Because examining these variables means running multiple regressions, any findings should be taken with a large grain of salt. To that end, the results of these analyses are in Appendix D, but we only draw attention to findings that are robust and/or we see as a trend. This is purposefully *not* a comprehensive list of all the significant results, but instead a highlighting of those results that seem to repeatedly matter in determining the desire to engage in political discussions as well as the process and outcomes of those discussions. For the curious, see Appendix D. Lastly, before discussing these results, we point out that—as you can see in the tables—*by far* the most important variables are not political, demographic, or even trait-based: they are the heated and calm treatments.

***Political Variables.*** First, we see that some political variables *can* matter—specifically those that measure partisan strength, identity, and feelings towards the out-party. For example, those who feel more negatively toward the out-party are more likely to attack the people they were speaking with (study 1:  $\alpha=-0.02$ ;  $p=.006$ ) and those who report less affective polarization behavior are more likely to say they tried to learn (study 1:  $\alpha=-0.60$ ;  $p=.009$ ). Similarly, strong partisans are *less* likely to say they tried to learn (study 2:  $\alpha=-0.26$ ;  $p=.020$ ). Lastly, and somewhat unsurprisingly, those who more strongly identify with their party are more likely to say they enjoy talking about politics (study 1:  $\alpha=0.19$ ;  $p=.000$ ), that they are interested in following what’s going on in government and public affairs (study 1:  $\alpha=0.15$ ;  $p=.003$ ), and that there is always more to learn about politics (study 1:  $\alpha=0.09$ ;  $p=.029$ ). Strong partisanship, then, seems to be destructive to political discussions.

***Capability.*** We also see in study 2 that feeling capable in understanding politics influences reactions to political discussions. First, those who say they feel capable of participating effectively in group discussions about important political issues are more likely to say yes to the political event ( $\alpha=0.41$ ,  $p=.001$ ) as well as the future hypothetical political event ( $\alpha=0.12$ ,  $p=.003$ ). This is unsurprising since they are *also* more likely to say they enjoy talking about politics ( $\alpha=-0.13$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Those who feel capable also react differently *within* the discussion—they are more likely to say they would try to teach others about themselves and/or the topic ( $\alpha=0.30$ ,  $p=.012$ ) and that they would try to learn ( $\alpha=0.27$ ,  $p=.013$ ).<sup>12</sup> They are *less* likely to say they would be quiet ( $\alpha=-0.45$ ,  $p=.001$ ) or try to leave ( $\alpha=-0.33$ ,  $p=.035$ ). Similarly, those who feel confident in their general abilities are also less likely to say they would be quiet ( $\alpha=-0.26$ ,  $p=.033$ ).

Unsurprisingly, those who pay attention to and bring up politics to their friends and family more often say they indeed enjoy talking about politics more (attention:  $\alpha=-0.14$ ,  $p=.000$ ; discuss2:  $\alpha=-0.21$ ,  $p=.000$ ; discuss4:  $\alpha=-0.18$ ,  $p=.000$ ). On the other hand, those whose family and friends

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<sup>12</sup> Relatedly, those who say they find politics complicated are less likely to say they would try to teach others about themselves and/or others ( $\alpha=-0.27$ ,  $p=.002$ ).

bring up politics to *them* say they enjoy talking politics *less* (discuss3:  $\alpha=0.10, p=.001$ ). Even more interestingly, those who say their friends and family value their opinions about politics say they enjoy talking about politics more (value1:  $\alpha=-0.08, p=.007$ ; value2:  $\alpha=-0.07, p=.003$ ) and those that say people generally value their opinions about politics say they would try to teach others about themselves and/or the topic ( $\alpha=0.39, p=.010$ ). Thus, feeling capable and that your opinions are valued is important for whether and how one engages in political discussion.

**Gender.** Next we look at how gender could be important here. Djupe, McClurg, and Sokhey (2016), for example, find that the outcomes of political discussions and political disagreements are reliant on gender. We see, however, that gender only matters in a consistent manner a few times. First, females are more likely to say they left the conversation (study 1:  $\alpha=0.51; p=.032$ ) and tried to change the topic (study 1:  $\alpha=0.46; p=.033$ ). Females are *less* likely to say they tried to learn in the conversation (study 1:  $\alpha=-0.56; p=.013$ ), that they enjoy talking about politics (study 1:  $\alpha=-0.35, p=.000$ ; study 2:  $\alpha=0.14; p=.000$ ), and that they are interested in following what's going on in government and public affairs (study 1:  $\alpha=-0.25; p=.002$ ). Females thus seem to have a stronger tendency to disengage from political discussions.

**Self-Monitoring.** The last individual factor that we examine here is self-monitoring. Self-monitoring measures how much people are willing to change themselves to impress others or to fit into social contexts (Berinsky 2004; Berinsky and Lavine 2012; Gangestad and Snyder 2000; Snyder 1974). The scale is created with three questions that ask respondents how good or bad an actor they would be, how often they put on a show to entertain others, and how often they are the center of attention—each with four response options (see Berinsky 2004; full questionnaire in Appendix A or Appendix B). It is thus continuous—where those at the lowest end of the scale are least likely to adapt themselves to fit into social contexts and those at the highest end of the scale are the most likely.

We thought self-monitoring would matter here in that those higher in the trait may respond differently to these discussions—prioritizing fitting in and looking good over learning, for example (see Carlson and Settle 2016 who examine people's tendency to try to fit in during social discussions about politics). We only see a marginal correlation between self-monitoring and reporting that they would pretend that they agreed with people in a political disagreement (study 1:  $\alpha=0.16, p=.071$ ), although it is possible that people are simply not self-aware or not willing to admit that they would do this. Further, though, self-monitoring is significantly correlated with saying they would try to make friends at the political event (study 2:  $\alpha=0.13, p=.002$ ) and that they would *not* try to be quiet at the political event (study 2:  $\alpha=-0.11, p=.040$ ). These results indeed suggest what we would expect: that those higher in the self-monitoring trait prioritize the social aspect in a political discussion.

Self-monitoring also predicted reported attending the political event in study 2 ( $\alpha=0.09, p=.035$ ) as well as hypothetical political events in study 1 ( $\alpha=0.07, p=.000$ ) and study 2 ( $\alpha=0.04, p=.017$ ). Lastly, self-monitoring is correlated with reporting normatively positive things, such as enjoying talking about politics (study 1:  $\alpha=0.10, p=.000$ ; study 2  $\alpha=-0.02, p=.028$ ) and believing that there is always more to learn about politics ( $\alpha=0.04, p=.020$ ). These findings also fit with what we know about high self-monitors in that they tend to overreport attitudes and behaviors that “look good” to others (see, e.g., Connors 2020; Klar and Krupnikov 2016).



## Discussion & Conclusion

We began this exercise with two shared beliefs and concerns: that discussing politics—especially with those with which you disagree—is vital to democracy, and that people are not having enough of these discussions, and even actively avoiding them. We then proposed the idea that people are not avoiding political discussions and disagreements necessarily *because* of the disagreement or even because of the political content, but that the heated tone with which political discussions can occur is what is driving this aversion. Indeed, we found that people want to avoid political disagreements that are dealt with in a heated tone, but are significantly more open to those same disagreements when they are dealt with in a calm tone. Further, because people *expect* political discussions to be heated, they avoid them. When these expectations are changed—when they are told the discussion will be calm—their desire to take part in them increases, even above that same event that discusses movies (rather than politics) but in a heated tone rather than a calm one.

Moreover, we find that tone determines more than the desire to take part in political discussions, but also the process and outcomes of those discussions. When a political disagreement is heated, for example, people report trying to be quiet in the conversation, trying to leave the conversation, trying to change the topic, attacking others' views, liking the people less afterwards, and saying they enjoy politics less. Conversely, when a political disagreement is calm, people report trying to find common ground, trying to make friends, trying to fit in, trying to learn, actually learning, trying to teach others about the topic and/or themselves, liking people more afterwards, and endorsing a diversity of views. Although it is unclear if “trying to fit in” is normatively good or bad, the other processes and outcomes are entirely clear: heated disagreements lead to bad processes and outcomes, and calm disagreements lead to good processes and outcomes.

We thus find that the tone with which political discussions that involve disagreement occur is vitally important to willingness to engage in these types of discussions as well as what happens during them and the consequences of them. These findings help to explain what is driving people away from important political discussions with those with which they disagree. And it is no surprise, if heated political disagreements take place the way people report—with views being attacked and liking the people you were with less afterwards—that people want to avoid these conversations. Unfortunately, avoiding them has consequences to political environments as well as social and familial relationships—decreasing (or failing to increase) learning, increasing (or failing to decrease) affective polarization, putting strain on close ties, and precluding weak ones, among others.

Today's political environment doesn't help matters. Homogeneous social networks—which are driven by, but also drive, polarization (Butters and Hare 2020)—make political discussions that involve disagreement less likely simply by chance (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). Further, as affective polarization increases and political disagreements lead to more hostility, we will see more and more people not only opting to avoid political discussions with those with which they disagree, but also to react negatively when they are placed in these discussions. Indeed, Warner et al. (2020) find that disagreement and affective polarization are associated with less communication accommodation—i.e., communication that respects divergent opinions, which they find is ironically the best strategy to deal with political differences but also the most negatively impacted by them.

Similarly ironic, the very communications that are impacted by affective polarization could—when they involve “civil discussion” across party lines—*ameliorate* affective polarization (Levendusky and Stecula 2020). Thus, respectful, civil discussions could be the cure to

polarization and political differences—but they are less likely to happen *because of* polarization and political differences (Wells et al. 2017). What we then see is a “spiral of silence” (Noelle-Neumann 1974), perhaps driven by the worry that political communication will be heated. This is doubly worrisome as more political conversation moves online, where disagreement appears more hostile (Barnidge 2017) and political information is more frequently misconstrued (Anspach and Carlson 2018). Thus, although Mutz (2006) notes that “civility does not appear to be a necessary condition for benefits [of cross-cutting discussions] to occur” (pg. 76), what we find suggests that it is *indeed* a necessary condition—when these discussions are heated, likely involving a level of incivility, the conversations are quite costly.

We thus close this exercise with a call to the public to not only involve themselves in political discussions with those with which they might disagree, but also to treat these conversations in a way that could help our political and social society: with a calm and reasoned tone. Lee (2020) finds that in close elections—in a time of high politicization—people’s social relationships are harmed (see also Frimer and Skitka 2020). These kinds of divides are what tear down a society: strong political divides between groups that can’t see what they have in common because their social lives are subsequently so divided. Collectively, we have the power to change this.

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## Appendix A: Study 1

### Survey 1.

1. [self-monitoring 1] When you are with other people, how often do you put on a show to impress or entertain them? [always / most of the time / some of the time / once in a while / never]
2. [self-monitoring 2] When you are in a group of people, how often are you the center of attention? [always / most of the time / some of the time / once in a while / never]
3. [self-monitoring 3] How good or poor of an actor would you be? [excellent / good / fair / poor / very poor]
4. [gender] What is your gender? [male / female / other]
5. [age] What is your age? [ ]
6. [race] What racial or ethnic group or groups best describes you? [white / black / Hispanic / Asian / Native American / other]
7. [education] What is the highest level of education that you have completed? [did not complete a high school degree / high school degree / some college / Associate's degree / Bachelor's degree / graduate or professional degree]
8. [religiosity] Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services? [more than once a week / once a week / once or twice a month / a few times a year / seldom / never]
9. [employment] What is your current employment status? [full-time / part-time / temporarily laid off / unemployed / retired / permanently disabled / homemaker / student / other: \_\_\_\_\_]
10. [state] In what state do you currently live?
11. [ideology] We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a 7-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this? [extremely liberal / liberal / slightly liberal / moderate / slightly conservative / conservative / extremely conservative / don't know]
12. [PID] Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? [Republican / Democrat / independent / something else [\_\_\_\_\_]]
  - a. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or the Democratic Party? [closer to the Republican Party / closer to the Democratic Party / neither]
  - b. Would you call yourself a strong [Democrat/Republican] or a not very strong [Democrat/Republican]? [strong [Democrat/Republican] / not very strong [Democrat/Republican]]
13. [PID identity] How important is being [a Democrat / a Republican / an Independent] to your identity? [not at all important / a little important / moderately important / very important / extremely important]
14. [affective polarization] Next, we'd like to get your feelings toward the two national parties. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the party. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward the party and that you don't care too much for that party. You would rate the party at the 50-degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the party. [randomize order of a and b]
  - a. How would you rate Democrats? [0 to 100 degrees]
  - b. How would you rate Republicans? [0 to 100 degrees]
15. [randomize order of a and b]

- a. [social polarization 1] How would you feel if you had a son or daughter who married someone who votes for the Democratic Party? Would you feel unhappy or happy? [very unhappy / unhappy / neutral / happy / very happy]
  - b. [social polarization 2] How would you feel if you had a son or daughter who married someone who votes for the Republican Party? Would you feel unhappy or happy? [very unhappy / unhappy / neutral / happy / very happy]
16. [polarization behavior measure] If you were trying to sell something and two people wanted it, and you knew one was a Democrat and one was a Republican, what would you do? [sell it to the Democrat / sell it to the Republican / find another way to sell it]
17. [randomize to treatment a, b, or c]
- a. [control] Please write about what you had for breakfast this morning. Be as specific as possible.
  - b. [treatment 1] Please write about a time someone brought up politics in a social setting where you didn't agree with what people said but the conversation was calm and reasoned. Be as specific as possible. If you have not been in this situation, write about an imagined time.
  - c. [treatment 2] Please write about a time someone brought up politics in a social setting where you didn't agree with what people said and the conversation was heated and tense. Be as specific as possible. If you have not been in this situation, write about an imagined time.
18. [if treatment b or c] Have you been in situations like the one from before or did you write about an imagined time? [yes I have been in situations like this / no I haven't been in situations like this / I can't remember]
- a. [if yes] How did you react in the conversation? (check **all** that apply) [pretended I agreed with them / tried to find common ground / left the conversation / tried to change the topic / attacked their views / tried to learn]
  - b. [if yes] Did how much you liked the people you were with change how you reacted? [yes, I reacted differently because I liked the people I was with / yes, I reacted differently because I didn't like the people I was with / no, I would have reacted the same either way]
  - c. [if yes] Did you learn anything from this conversation? [yes I learned a lot / yes but nothing productive / not really / no, nothing]
  - d. [if yes] Did the conversation change how you thought about the people you were talking to? [yes, I liked them more after the conversation / yes, I liked them *less* after the conversation / no, I thought about them the exact same]
19. If you were invited to a social gathering where political discussions might happen, would you go? [certainly not / probably not / maybe / probably / certainly]
20. How well do the following statements fit with your own views? [not well at all / slightly well / moderately well / very well / extremely well]
- a. You shouldn't expect others to adopt the same ideas of right and wrong as you, because there will always be a diversity of viewpoints in the world
  - b. Diversity of opinion is valuable in any group or organization
  - c. It is helpful to hear the political views of friends who disagree with me
  - d. I enjoy talking politics with other people in my life
  - e. I am interested in following what's going on in government and public affairs
  - f. There is always more to learn about politics



21. If you had to make your best guess, what percentage of people currently serving in Congress are women?
22. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? [strongly disagree / disagree / neither agree nor disagree / agree / strongly agree]
  - a. Government officials care what people like me think.
  - b. People like me have a say in what the government does.
23. Please identify the political party associated with each of the options below: [the Republican Party / the Democratic Party / other / don't know]
  - a. Currently holds the majority of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives
  - b. Currently holds the majority of seats in the U.S. Senate.
  - c. Currently holds a majority of seats in the Lower Chamber of your state
  - d. Currently holds a majority of seats in your state Senate
  - e. Is the party of the current governor of your state
24. Which of the following best describes the party of the two senators from your state?
  - a. Both are Democrats
  - b. Both are Republicans
  - c. One is a Democrat and one is a Republican
  - d. Not sure
25. If you would like to add comments or feedback: [\_\_\_\_\_]

## Appendix B: Study 2

### Survey 2.

1. [gender] What is your gender? [man / woman / other]
2. [age] What is your birth date? (xx/xx/xxxx)
3. [Hispanic] Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino? [yes / no]
4. [race] What racial or ethnic group or groups best describes you? [American Indian or Alaska Native / Asian / Black or African American / Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander / White / other]
5. [education] What is the highest grade of school or year of college you have completed? [8 grades or less and no diploma / 9-11 grades, no further schooling / high school diploma or equivalency / more than 12 years of schooling / junior or community college level / bachelors degree / BA level degrees; 17+ years / advanced degree, including LLB]
6. [income] Information about income is very important to understand. Would you please give your best guess? Please indicate the answer that includes your entire household income in (previous year) before taxes. [less than \$10,000 / \$10,000 to \$10,999 / \$20,000 to \$29,999 / \$30,000 to \$39,999 / \$40,000 to \$49,999 / \$50,000 to \$59,999 / \$60,000 to \$69,999 / \$70,000 to \$79,999 / \$80,000 to \$89,999 / \$90,000 to \$90,999 / \$100,000 to \$149,999 / \$150,000 or more]
7. [attention] How often do you pay attention to what's going on in government and politics? [always / most of the time / about half the time / some of the time / never]
8. [ideology] Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this? [extremely liberal / liberal / slightly liberal / moderate; middle of the road / slightly conservative / conservative / extremely conservative / haven't thought much about this]
9. [party ID] Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? [Republican / Democrat / independent / other]
  - a. If Republican or Democrat: [strength] Would you call yourself a strong [Republican / Democrat] or a not very strong [Republican / Democrat]? [strong [Republican / Democrat] / not very strong [Republican / Democrat]]
  - b. If independent or other: [lean] Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party? [closer to Republican / closer to Democratic / neither]
10. [discuss1] How often do **friends or family ask you** for your opinions about politics? [never / very rarely / sometimes / often / very often]
11. [discuss2] How often do **you ask** friends or family for their opinions about politics? [never / very rarely / sometimes / often / very often]
12. [discuss3] How often do **friends or family initiate** conversations with you about politics? [never / very rarely / sometimes / often / very often]
13. [discuss4] How often do **you initiate** conversations with friends or family about politics? [never / very rarely / sometimes / often / very often]
14. [discuss5] How often do you discuss politics with friends or family? [never / very rarely / sometimes / often / very often]
15. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements: [strongly disagree / somewhat disagree / neither agree nor disagree / somewhat agree / strongly agree]
  - a. [value1] My friends value my thoughts about politics
  - b. [value2] My family values my thoughts about politics
  - c. [value3] In general, people value my thoughts about politics

- d. [better] In general, I do better on most things than most people
  - e. [capable] I am capable of participating effectively in group discussions about important political issues
  - f. [confident] I am confident in my abilities, even when confronting tasks I haven't done before
  - g. [frustrated] I am frequently frustrated by my inability to express my opinions to others
  - h. [understand] I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing us today
  - i. [complicated] Sometimes politics and the government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on
16. [self-monitoring 1] When you are with other people, how often do you put on a show to impress or entertain them? [always / most of the time / some of the time / once in a while / never]
17. [self-monitoring 2] When you are in a group of people, how often are you the center of attention? [always / most of the time / some of the time / once in a while / never]
18. [self-monitoring 3] How good or poor of an actor would you be? [excellent / good / fair / poor / very poor]
19. [RA to 1 of 4 conditions] Imagine that you receive the following text message from an acquaintance, someone you know, but would not necessarily consider a close friend. Assuming COVID-19 is no longer a problem, would you accept or decline the invitation?
- “Hi! Would you be interested in joining me and some friends for dinner at my house this week? I like to organize dinners and invite people with different perspectives, who don't necessarily know each other, to get together to discuss a particular topic. I was thinking this time we could discuss [movies/politics]. Don't feel any pressure to join. I know this type of thing isn't for everyone, and you may already have plans, but [I contacted you because I'd really like to hear you thoughts. We'd love to have you! / we'd love to have you!”
- [yes, I would accept the invitation / no, I would not accept the invitation]
20. As you answer the questions below, think about the dinner party referenced in the previous question.
21. Which would you expect it to be [, even if people disagreed]: calm and reasoned or heated and emotional? [calm and reasoned / heated and emotional / don't know]
22. [RA to 1 of 2 conditions] Suppose you went and [, although people disagreed about some things, the conversation was calm and reasoned / people disagreed and the conversation was heated and emotional].
- a. Would you want to go again? [definitely, probably, probably not, definitely not]
  - b. How would you react? (check all that apply) [try to find common ground / try to make friends / try to teach people something about the topic and/or myself / try to learn / try to fit in / try to be as quiet as possible / try to leave the conversation / try to change the topic / attack people's views]
  - c. Do you think you would think differently about the people with which you interacted afterwards? [yes, I would like them more / yes, I would like them less / no, I would think about them the exact same]
  - d. How much do you agree with the following statements:
    - i. People who disagree with my views towards politics are usually not very smart [strongly disagree → strongly agree]

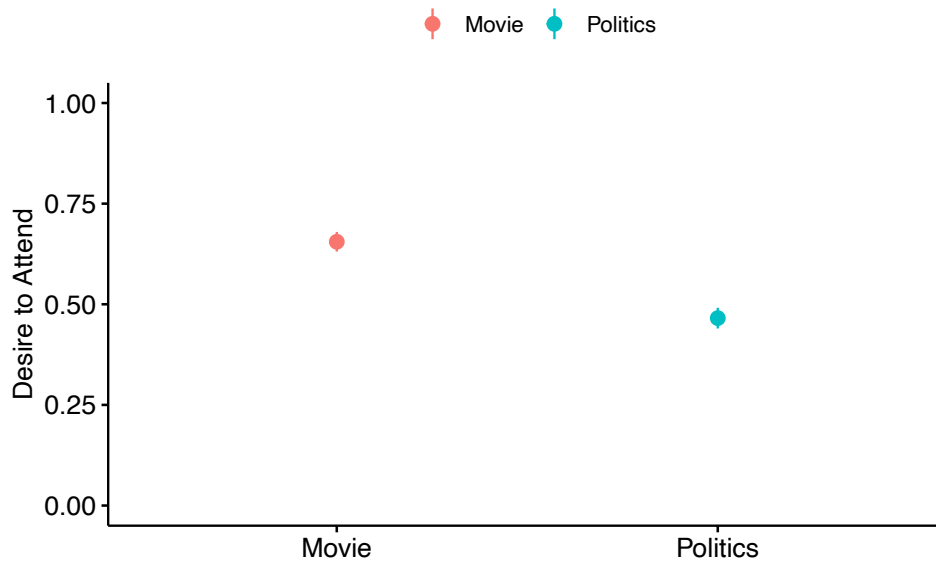
- ii. People who disagree with my views towards politics are usually not very nice people [strongly disagree → strongly agree]
- iii. I enjoy talking about politics with other people in my life [strongly disagree → strongly agree]
  - 1. [if not strongly agree] What makes you not strongly agree that you like talking about politics with other people in your life? Please rank your responses from most important (1) to least important (6). If there are any response options that don't apply, just leave them blank. [I fear learning about the political views of people I like / I don't like conflict / I find it boring / I fear it will get heated / I fear it will ruin our relationship / I don't want to waste time with people in my life talking about politics]



## Appendix C: Robustness Checks

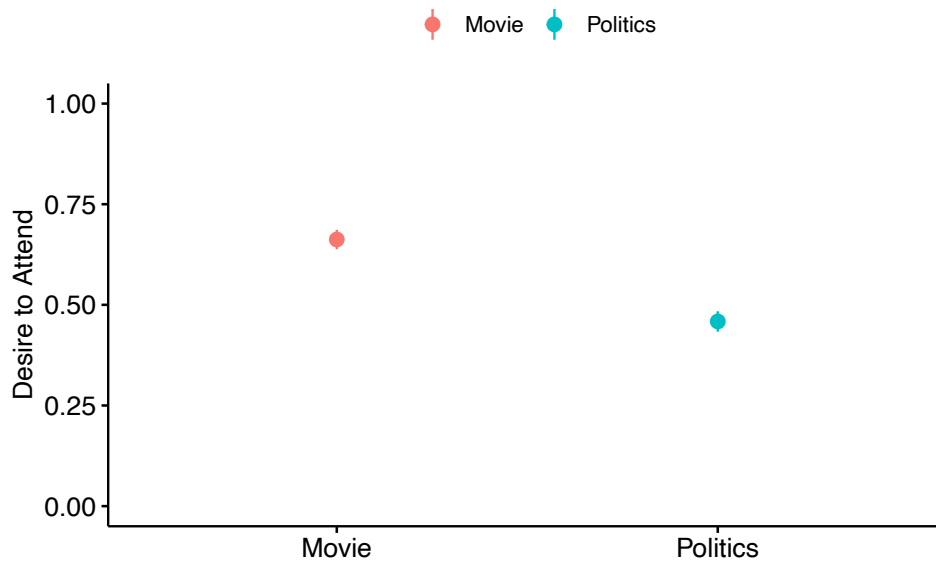
Below are Figures 4, 5, and 6 from main text, but limiting the sample to just those encouraged to attend the event (prompt) versus those *not* encouraged to attend the event (no prompt).

**Figure 1.** Likelihood of Attendance by Movie and Politics Treatment, just those with prompt



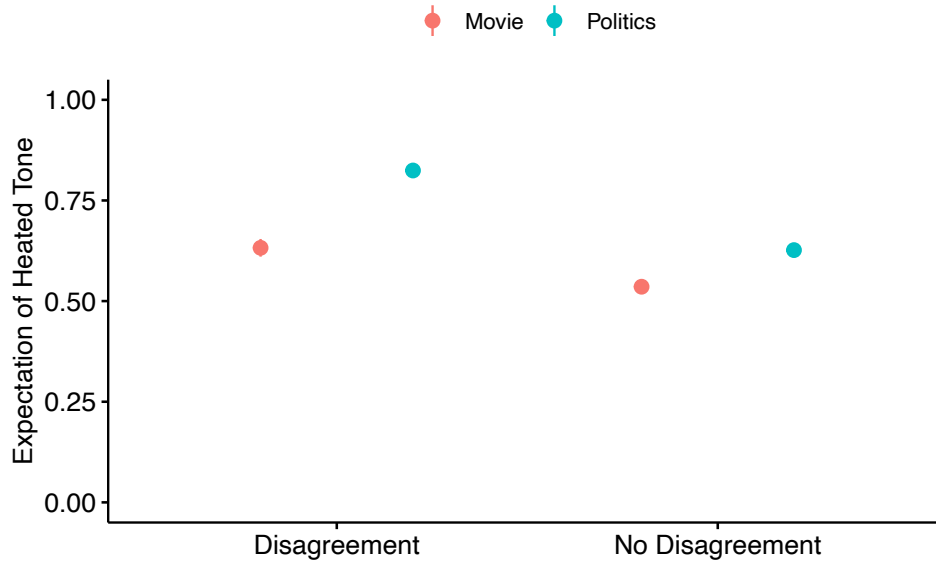
Dependent variable is 1 if respondents said they would attend the event and 0 if respondents said they would *not* attend the event. 95% confidence intervals shown.

**Figure 2.** Likelihood of Attendance by Movie and Politics Treatment, just those with *no* prompt



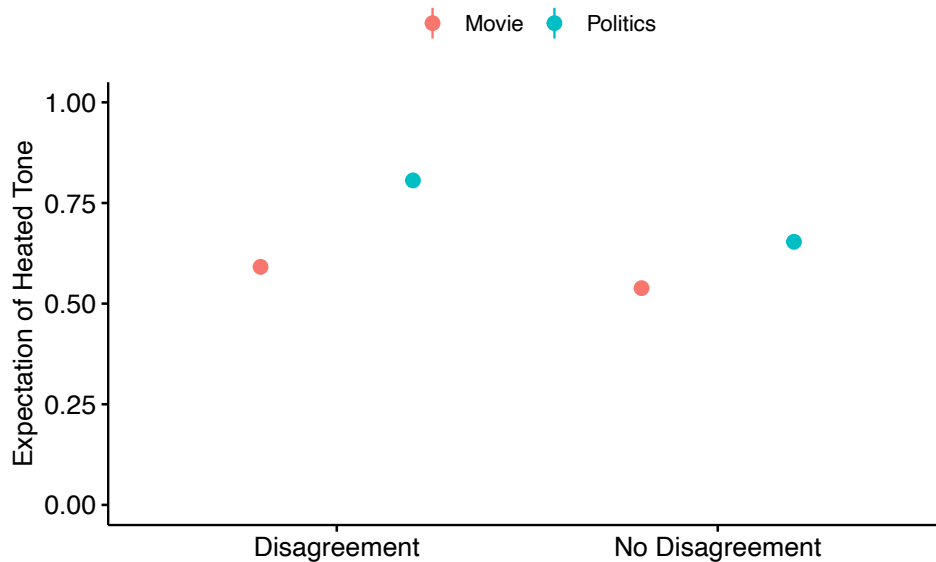
Dependent variable is 1 if respondents said they would attend the event and 0 if respondents said they would *not* attend the event. 95% confidence intervals shown.

**Figure 3.** Expectation of Tone by Movie and Politics Treatments, with and without Disagreement, just those with prompt



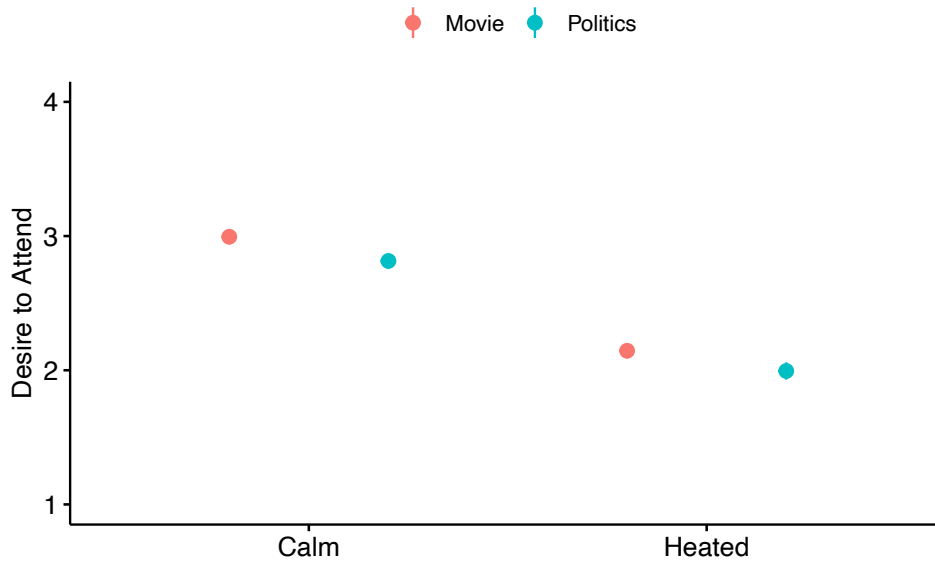
Dependent variable is 1 if respondents said they expected the event to be heated and 0 if they said they expected it to be calm. 95% confidence intervals shown.

**Figure 4.** Expectation of Tone by Movie and Politics Treatments, with and without Disagreement, just those with *no* prompt



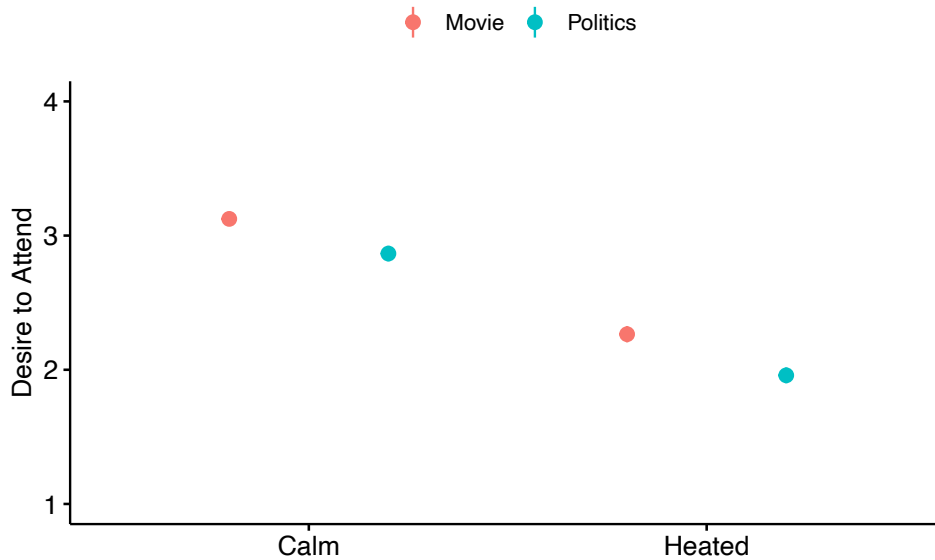
Dependent variable is 1 if respondents said they expected the event to be heated and 0 if they said they expected it to be calm. 95% confidence intervals shown.

**Figure 5.** Desire of Future Attendance by Calm, Heated, Movie, and Politics Treatments, just those with prompt



Dependent variable is 4 if respondents said they definitely would want to go again, 3 if they said probably, 2 if they said probably not, and 1 if they said definitely not. 95% confidence intervals shown.

**Figure 6.** Desire of Future Attendance by Calm, Heated, Movie, and Politics Treatments, just those with *no* prompt



Dependent variable is 4 if respondents said they definitely would want to go again, 3 if they said probably, 2 if they said probably not, and 1 if they said definitely not. 95% confidence intervals shown.



## Appendix D: Individual Factors

**Study 1.** The measurements for the independent variables for study 1 can be found in Appendix A. The coding of these variables are as follows: self-monitoring (continuous from 3 to 15, low to high self-monitoring); democrat (0=republican, 1=democrat); ideology (1 to 7, from extremely liberal to extremely conservative); strength (0 to 3, from pure independent to strong partisan); partisan identity (1 to 5, from not at all important to extremely important); inparty feeling thermometer (0 to 100, from cold to warm ratings); outparty feeling thermometer (0 to 100, from cold to warm ratings); polarization behavior (0=not polarized, 1=polarized); social polarization (-5 to 5, from least to most polarized); female (0=male, 1=female); age (continuous); education (1 to 6, from less to more education); religion (1 to 6, from more to less attendance); employment (1=full-time, 2=part-time, 3=temporarily laid off, 4=unemployed, 5=retired, 6=permanently disabled, 7=homemaker, 8=student, 9=other); and white (0=non-white, 1=white).

**Table 1.** Dependent variables from study 1

<b>variables</b>	<b>pretend</b>	<b>common</b>	<b>left</b>	<b>change</b>	<b>attack</b>	<b>tried</b>	<b>learned</b>
<b>self-monit.</b>	0.158 (0.0873)	0.0732 (0.0470)	-0.0398 (0.0547)	0.0134 (0.0497)	0.0208 (0.0572)	0.0400 (0.0534)	-0.0338 (0.0216)
<b>democrat</b>	0.159 (0.642)	0.00534 (0.352)	-0.193 (0.428)	0.0792 (0.384)	-0.451 (0.471)	0.705 (0.389)	0.170 (0.170)
<b>ideology</b>	-0.0742 (0.161)	-0.0509 (0.0888)	-0.0950 (0.106)	-0.0743 (0.0956)	-0.149 (0.114)	0.00827 (0.100)	0.109* (0.0444)
<b>strength</b>	0.0771 (0.283)	-0.226 (0.151)	-0.0815 (0.174)	0.239 (0.163)	0.0784 (0.184)	-0.167 (0.169)	0.0406 (0.0752)
<b>identity</b>	-0.284 (0.220)	-0.0610 (0.116)	-0.0301 (0.135)	-0.0462 (0.125)	-0.00475 (0.138)	-0.00782 (0.135)	-0.0689 (0.0570)
<b>inparty</b>	0.0171 (0.0110)	0.00267 (0.00533)	0.00437 (0.00614)	0.00408 (0.00578)	0.00195 (0.00632)	0.00257 (0.00610)	0.000122 (0.00253)
<b>outparty</b>	1.50e-05 (0.0112)	0.00524 (0.00587)	-0.00362 (0.00717)	-0.00549 (0.00636)	-0.0234** (0.00848)	0.0161* (0.00651)	-0.00566* (0.00281)
<b>behavior</b>	0.362 (0.405)	0.0383 (0.208)	0.0900 (0.243)	-0.163 (0.223)	0.469 (0.264)	-0.603** (0.232)	0.130 (0.0948)
<b>social polar.</b>	-0.0582 (0.184)	0.00640 (0.0951)	0.118 (0.109)	-0.140 (0.103)	-0.00135 (0.110)	-0.0603 (0.113)	0.0588 (0.0472)
<b>female</b>	-0.144 (0.374)	-0.117 (0.200)	0.505* (0.236)	0.459* (0.216)	-0.375 (0.247)	-0.561* (0.227)	-0.0779 (0.0946)
<b>age</b>	-0.0654* (0.0271)	0.0104 (0.00943)	0.000316 (0.0110)	0.000396 (0.0100)	0.00151 (0.0118)	-0.0183 (0.0112)	0.00605 (0.00432)
<b>education</b>	0.272 (0.168)	-0.105 (0.0841)	-0.0211 (0.0993)	0.222* (0.0913)	0.102 (0.103)	-0.0115 (0.0954)	-0.0922* (0.0379)
<b>religion</b>	-0.107 (0.127)	-0.0267 (0.0735)	-0.0280 (0.0860)	0.00232 (0.0785)	0.0342 (0.0951)	-0.0472 (0.0811)	0.0466 (0.0338)
<b>employment</b>	0.0402 (0.0712)	0.0329 (0.0383)	0.0115 (0.0443)	0.0125 (0.0412)	0.0365 (0.0469)	0.0179 (0.0431)	-0.0218 (0.0173)
<b>white</b>	-0.234 (0.388)	0.157 (0.214)	0.159 (0.250)	-0.176 (0.228)	-0.0657 (0.266)	0.105 (0.239)	0.122 (0.0985)

<b>calm</b>	0.581 (0.379)	0.616** (0.194)	-1.590*** (0.238)	-0.490* (0.208)	-0.769** (0.243)	1.075*** (0.225)	-0.275** (0.0907)
<b>constant</b>	-3.259 (1.926)	-0.167 (0.975)	-0.398 (1.144)	-2.348* (1.061)	-0.610 (1.211)	-0.398 (1.107)	2.598*** (0.460)
<b>observations</b>	466	466	466	466	466	466	468

**Table 2.** Dependent variables from study 1 (continued)

<b>variables</b>	<b>react like</b>	<b>react dislike</b>	<b>like more</b>	<b>like less</b>
<b>self-monit.</b>	0.0798 (0.0497)	0.0812 (0.112)	0.176 (0.116)	-0.0205 (0.0544)
<b>democrat</b>	0.130 (0.390)	-0.0822 (0.857)	0.00521 (0.828)	-0.359 (0.447)
<b>ideology</b>	-0.0480 (0.0970)	-0.177 (0.214)	-0.158 (0.200)	-0.193 (0.112)
<b>strength</b>	0.188 (0.163)	0.502 (0.338)	0.150 (0.397)	0.105 (0.170)
<b>identity</b>	0.0534 (0.124)	-0.317 (0.280)	0.182 (0.273)	-0.0199 (0.134)
<b>inparty</b>	-0.00412 (0.00595)	-0.000116 (0.0115)	0.00447 (0.0169)	-0.00559 (0.00587)
<b>outparty</b>	0.000267 (0.00632)	-0.0137 (0.0155)	0.00774 (0.0132)	-0.0128 (0.00737)
<b>behavior</b>	0.669** (0.227)	0.0804 (0.475)	0.327 (0.547)	0.141 (0.240)
<b>social polar.</b>	0.0353 (0.0997)	-0.142 (0.237)	0.0752 (0.225)	0.163 (0.107)
<b>female</b>	0.0610 (0.215)	-0.134 (0.454)	-0.604 (0.506)	0.275 (0.231)
<b>age</b>	-0.0193 (0.0104)	-0.0433 (0.0290)	-0.000177 (0.0260)	-0.00847 (0.0112)
<b>education</b>	0.121 (0.0902)	0.0255 (0.200)	0.118 (0.214)	0.0138 (0.0974)
<b>religion</b>	-0.163* (0.0787)	-0.347* (0.156)	-0.390* (0.153)	0.115 (0.0898)
<b>employment</b>	0.0138 (0.0411)	-0.0585 (0.0891)	0.119 (0.0982)	-0.0154 (0.0441)
<b>white</b>	0.413 (0.233)	0.0226 (0.474)	-0.920 (0.553)	0.322 (0.250)
<b>calm</b>	0.0667 (0.210)	-0.202 (0.469)	1.294* (0.632)	-1.370*** (0.229)
<b>constant</b>	-1.300 (1.055)	0.766 (2.458)	-3.815 (2.427)	0.141 (1.153)
<b>observations</b>	443	300	313	445

**Table 3.** Dependent variables from study 1 (continued)

<b>variables</b>	<b>attend</b>	<b>agrees</b>	<b>social</b>	<b>diversity</b>	<b>enjoy</b>	<b>interested</b>	<b>learn</b>
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<b>self-monit.</b>	0.0679*** (0.0189)	-0.00522 (0.0183)	0.0413* (0.0165)	0.0546** (0.0201)	0.0998*** (0.0208)	0.0394 (0.0206)	0.0450* (0.0193)
<b>democrat</b>	-0.243 (0.130)	0.452*** (0.137)	0.376*** (0.113)	0.135 (0.131)	-0.267 (0.144)	-0.370** (0.133)	0.0912 (0.132)
<b>ideology</b>	-0.0276 (0.0346)	0.0757* (0.0354)	0.0124 (0.0297)	-0.0411 (0.0351)	-0.0861* (0.0392)	-0.131*** (0.0363)	-0.0539 (0.0334)
<b>strength</b>	0.0906 (0.0594)	-0.0181 (0.0580)	0.108* (0.0525)	-0.0629 (0.0605)	0.0697 (0.0632)	0.0246 (0.0615)	0.0632 (0.0562)
<b>identity</b>	0.0110 (0.0454)	-0.00954 (0.0435)	0.0294 (0.0375)	0.0359 (0.0430)	0.193*** (0.0471)	0.146** (0.0485)	0.0883* (0.0404)
<b>inparty</b>	0.000615 (0.00223)	0.00359 (0.00219)	0.000181 (0.00197)	0.00385 (0.00229)	-0.00320 (0.00244)	-4.10e-05 (0.00226)	7.92e-05 (0.00223)
<b>outparty</b>	-0.00298 (0.00225)	0.00139 (0.00223)	0.000372 (0.00197)	0.00269 (0.00234)	-0.000363 (0.00263)	-0.0080** (0.00242)	-0.00399 (0.00226)
<b>behavior</b>	0.0686 (0.0851)	-0.0920 (0.0832)	-0.0674 (0.0734)	-0.0656 (0.0836)	0.142 (0.0923)	0.0710 (0.0868)	-0.0427 (0.0812)
<b>social pol.</b>	0.00263 (0.0406)	-0.17*** (0.0391)	-0.14*** (0.0348)	-0.16*** (0.0375)	0.0314 (0.0418)	0.0601 (0.0393)	-0.0279 (0.0364)
<b>female</b>	-0.0980 (0.0777)	0.118 (0.0746)	0.0847 (0.0678)	-0.129 (0.0778)	-0.347*** (0.0839)	-0.251** (0.0801)	-0.00388 (0.0744)
<b>age</b>	-0.000806 (0.00382)	0.00659 (0.00354)	0.00132 (0.00321)	-0.00244 (0.00394)	0.00197 (0.00402)	0.0136*** (0.00367)	-0.00140 (0.00359)
<b>education</b>	0.115*** (0.0307)	0.0131 (0.0319)	0.0576* (0.0275)	0.0448 (0.0325)	0.0970** (0.0342)	0.0748* (0.0320)	-0.0157 (0.0311)
<b>religion</b>	-0.0774** (0.0272)	0.0360 (0.0269)	0.00817 (0.0238)	-0.0123 (0.0261)	-0.0325 (0.0288)	-0.0112 (0.0282)	0.00560 (0.0275)
<b>employment</b>	0.0169 (0.0149)	-0.0164 (0.0148)	0.00477 (0.0136)	-0.0105 (0.0154)	0.0155 (0.0166)	-0.0180 (0.0159)	-0.0164 (0.0155)
<b>white</b>	0.161 (0.0832)	-0.126 (0.0808)	0.0221 (0.0713)	-0.110 (0.0830)	0.0302 (0.0903)	0.162 (0.0848)	0.0384 (0.0804)
<b>calm</b>	0.0294 (0.0895)	0.105 (0.0884)	0.0755 (0.0799)	0.238** (0.0919)	0.0490 (0.0977)	0.0614 (0.0917)	-0.0167 (0.0892)
<b>heated</b>	-0.0426 (0.0884)	-0.0663 (0.0891)	0.0155 (0.0797)	0.0940 (0.0920)	-0.174 (0.0956)	0.0780 (0.0927)	-0.108 (0.0882)
<b>constant</b>	2.461*** (0.398)	2.619*** (0.416)	2.469*** (0.353)	2.832*** (0.413)	1.976*** (0.430)	3.075*** (0.416)	3.527*** (0.408)
<b>observations</b>	865	865	865	865	860	861	864

**Study 2.** The measurements for the independent variables for study 2 can be found in Appendix B. The coding of these variables are as follows: self-monitoring (continuous from 3 to 15, low to high self-monitoring); democrat (0=republican, 1=democrat); ideology (1 to 7, from extremely liberal to extremely conservative); strength (0 to 3, from pure independent to strong partisan); woman (0=man, 1=woman); age (continuous); education (1 to 8, from less to more education); Hispanic (0=non-Hispanic, 1=Hispanic); white (0=non-white, 1=white); income (1 to 12, from less to more income); attention (1 to 5, from never to always); discuss1 (1 to 5, from never to very often); discuss2 (1 to 5, from never to very often); discuss3 (1 to 5, from never to very often); discuss4 (1

to 5, from never to very often); discuss5 (1 to 5, from never to very often); value1 (1 to 5, from strongly disagree to strongly agree); value2 (1 to 5, from strongly disagree to strongly agree); value3 (1 to 5, from strongly disagree to strongly agree); understand (1 to 5, from strongly disagree to strongly agree); complicated (1 to 5, from strongly disagree to strongly agree); capable (1 to 5, from strongly disagree to strongly agree); frustrated (1 to 5, from strongly disagree to strongly agree); better (1 to 5, from strongly disagree to strongly agree); and confident (1 to 5, from strongly disagree to strongly agree).

Dependent variables attend, expect, expect2, willing, common, friends, teach, learn, fit in, quiet, leave, change, attack, like more, and like less are limited to the political conditions, as this is the focus of the research.

**Table 4.** Dependent variables from study 2

<b>variables</b>	<b>attend</b>	<b>expect</b>	<b>expect2</b>	<b>willing</b>
<b>self-monit.</b>	0.0931* (0.0440)	-0.0275 (0.0643)	0.0298 (0.0674)	0.0351* (0.0147)
<b>democrat</b>	-0.305 (0.358)	-0.0341 (0.517)	-0.326 (0.632)	-0.131 (0.122)
<b>ideology</b>	-0.0459 (0.0922)	-0.0149 (0.133)	-0.219 (0.158)	0.00630 (0.0313)
<b>strength</b>	0.144 (0.119)	-0.144 (0.185)	0.254 (0.200)	-0.0379 (0.0409)
<b>woman</b>	-0.185 (0.189)	0.837** (0.287)	0.495 (0.298)	-0.0985 (0.0642)
<b>age</b>	-0.0229* (0.00930)	0.0363* (0.0143)	-0.000446 (0.0157)	-0.00502 (0.00318)
<b>education</b>	0.0280 (0.0628)	0.0235 (0.0913)	0.106 (0.104)	0.0148 (0.0210)
<b>Hispanic</b>	0.357 (0.349)	-0.643 (0.561)	-1.042 (0.574)	0.148 (0.118)
<b>white</b>	0.0552 (0.227)	-0.176 (0.330)	0.125 (0.357)	-0.0752 (0.0769)
<b>income</b>	0.0119 (0.0278)	0.0206 (0.0418)	-0.00876 (0.0457)	0.00275 (0.00952)
<b>attention</b>	0.327** (0.126)	-0.0382 (0.190)	-0.124 (0.214)	0.0596 (0.0424)
<b>discuss1</b>	-0.116 (0.154)	0.155 (0.241)	0.0920 (0.244)	-0.0838 (0.0519)
<b>discuss2</b>	0.288 (0.151)	0.199 (0.226)	-0.329 (0.228)	0.0705 (0.0517)
<b>discuss3</b>	0.0550 (0.144)	0.0456 (0.226)	0.205 (0.223)	-0.0137 (0.0487)
<b>discuss4</b>	0.199 (0.148)	-0.0136 (0.239)	-0.104 (0.219)	0.172*** (0.0507)
<b>discuss5</b>	-0.0106 (0.180)	-0.202 (0.268)	0.205 (0.275)	0.00506 (0.0611)
<b>value1</b>	0.0305	0.234	-0.215	-0.0195

	(0.138)	(0.204)	(0.234)	(0.0461)
<b>value2</b>	0.163	-0.318	-0.0487	-0.0326
	(0.108)	(0.189)	(0.156)	(0.0370)
<b>value3</b>	0.134	-0.419	0.111	0.0990
	(0.149)	(0.237)	(0.238)	(0.0509)
<b>understand</b>	-0.352*	0.542*	0.156	-0.122**
	(0.141)	(0.216)	(0.235)	(0.0461)
<b>complicated</b>	-0.0538	0.173	0.254	-0.0259
	(0.0872)	(0.135)	(0.138)	(0.0292)
<b>capable</b>	0.408***	-0.402*	-0.200	0.115**
	(0.121)	(0.192)	(0.190)	(0.0393)
<b>frustrated</b>	0.0486	-0.0443	-0.118	0.0576*
	(0.0850)	(0.134)	(0.128)	(0.0282)
<b>better</b>	0.0678	-0.0765	-0.300	0.0194
	(0.112)	(0.172)	(0.174)	(0.0383)
<b>confident</b>	-0.0927	0.0599	0.0913	-0.0157
	(0.105)	(0.161)	(0.167)	(0.0352)
<b>heated</b>	-			-0.882***
	-			(0.0612)
<b>constant</b>	-3.671***	-0.525	0.0155	3.031***
	(1.092)	(1.631)	(1.619)	(0.363)
<b>observations</b>	636	271	265	634

Note that the heated variable is removed for the three dependent variables that were measured *prior* to assignment to the heated or calm treatment.

**Table 5.** Dependent variables from study 2 (continued)

<b>variables</b>	<b>common</b>	<b>friends</b>	<b>teach</b>	<b>learn</b>	<b>fit in</b>
<b>self-monit.</b>	-0.00475	0.134**	0.0567	-0.0321	0.0711
	(0.0399)	(0.0434)	(0.0432)	(0.0403)	(0.0655)
<b>democrat</b>	0.303	0.0478	-0.284	0.0220	-0.0509
	(0.333)	(0.357)	(0.362)	(0.338)	(0.534)
<b>ideology</b>	0.0676	0.0670	-0.0904	-0.0400	0.0558
	(0.0851)	(0.0909)	(0.0927)	(0.0861)	(0.140)
<b>strength</b>	-0.119	-0.0418	-0.188	-0.262*	-0.0607
	(0.111)	(0.120)	(0.119)	(0.113)	(0.179)
<b>woman</b>	-0.194	-0.0754	-0.0779	-0.0640	-0.237
	(0.174)	(0.189)	(0.189)	(0.176)	(0.288)
<b>age</b>	-0.00921	-0.0202*	-0.0256**	-0.0194*	-0.0218
	(0.00864)	(0.00970)	(0.00951)	(0.00879)	(0.0158)
<b>education</b>	-0.0456	0.0281	-0.120	0.0831	0.137
	(0.0572)	(0.0627)	(0.0627)	(0.0581)	(0.0968)
<b>Hispanic</b>	-0.0797	0.316	-0.724*	-0.0406	-0.281
	(0.320)	(0.336)	(0.367)	(0.326)	(0.520)
<b>white</b>	-0.135	-0.178	-0.0552	-0.230	-0.142
	(0.209)	(0.223)	(0.227)	(0.212)	(0.332)
<b>income</b>	-0.00357	0.00631	0.0174	0.0218	0.0517
	(0.0259)	(0.0279)	(0.0282)	(0.0264)	(0.0422)

<b>attention</b>	0.00432 (0.116)	-0.0201 (0.123)	0.0873 (0.126)	-0.0595 (0.117)	-0.0323 (0.184)
<b>discuss1</b>	-0.0765 (0.142)	0.101 (0.154)	0.0843 (0.159)	0.0304 (0.145)	-0.303 (0.229)
<b>discuss2</b>	0.0313 (0.140)	0.280 (0.154)	0.0887 (0.153)	0.184 (0.142)	-0.0379 (0.234)
<b>discuss3</b>	0.161 (0.133)	0.279 (0.145)	0.0292 (0.144)	0.191 (0.135)	-0.128 (0.216)
<b>discuss4</b>	0.0879 (0.137)	0.0292 (0.151)	0.266 (0.147)	0.102 (0.139)	0.316 (0.238)
<b>discuss5</b>	-0.183 (0.168)	-0.513** (0.187)	-0.104 (0.180)	-0.442** (0.171)	0.0817 (0.281)
<b>value1</b>	-0.0703 (0.126)	-0.190 (0.138)	0.00458 (0.137)	0.0822 (0.127)	0.180 (0.201)
<b>value2</b>	-0.127 (0.102)	-0.0717 (0.109)	-0.206 (0.112)	-0.0500 (0.102)	-0.198 (0.158)
<b>value3</b>	0.228 (0.139)	0.249 (0.152)	0.388* (0.152)	0.00601 (0.139)	-0.114 (0.222)
<b>understand</b>	0.142 (0.126)	-0.0394 (0.135)	0.0835 (0.141)	-0.0944 (0.128)	0.0784 (0.193)
<b>complicated</b>	0.0586 (0.0798)	0.0666 (0.0859)	-0.272** (0.0867)	-0.104 (0.0803)	0.00663 (0.129)
<b>capable</b>	0.111 (0.107)	0.0967 (0.117)	0.301* (0.120)	0.272* (0.110)	-0.285 (0.175)
<b>frustrated</b>	0.0358 (0.0770)	0.0135 (0.0824)	0.155 (0.0851)	0.00890 (0.0773)	0.0660 (0.122)
<b>better</b>	0.0882 (0.104)	0.0743 (0.112)	0.0882 (0.113)	0.0678 (0.104)	0.169 (0.168)
<b>confident</b>	0.0683 (0.0952)	-0.0689 (0.105)	-0.0127 (0.105)	-0.0536 (0.0968)	-0.126 (0.155)
<b>heated</b>	-0.479** (0.166)	-0.981*** (0.183)	-0.323 (0.181)	-0.516** (0.168)	-0.550* (0.278)
<b>constant</b>	-0.314 (0.997)	-0.413 (1.079)	-1.158 (1.109)	1.687 (1.001)	-0.931 (1.610)
<b>observations</b>	636	636	636	636	636

**Table 6.** Dependent variables from study 2 (continued)

<b>variables</b>	<b>quiet</b>	<b>leave</b>	<b>change</b>	<b>attack</b>
<b>self-monit.</b>	-0.112* (0.0544)	-0.0759 (0.0638)	0.0283 (0.0686)	0.0577 (0.128)
<b>democrat</b>	0.0343 (0.429)	0.328 (0.514)	-0.112 (0.574)	- -
<b>ideology</b>	0.0376 (0.112)	0.0419 (0.135)	0.0365 (0.149)	-1.213* (0.478)
<b>strength</b>	0.254 (0.151)	0.159 (0.182)	0.264 (0.202)	0.0480 (0.395)

<b>woman</b>	0.138 (0.229)	0.0998 (0.270)	0.220 (0.303)	-0.456 (0.561)
<b>age</b>	-0.00206 (0.0121)	0.0164 (0.0137)	0.00607 (0.0149)	0.0494* (0.0248)
<b>education</b>	0.0516 (0.0772)	0.141 (0.0892)	0.0960 (0.0999)	0.222 (0.174)
<b>Hispanic</b>	0.00429 (0.418)	-0.429 (0.545)	0.752 (0.554)	-0.196 (1.279)
<b>white</b>	0.124 (0.274)	0.0616 (0.320)	0.581 (0.400)	0.0310 (0.761)
<b>income</b>	0.0370 (0.0347)	-0.00529 (0.0405)	0.0114 (0.0449)	0.00207 (0.0837)
<b>attention</b>	-0.190 (0.148)	-0.150 (0.179)	-0.106 (0.203)	0.155 (0.439)
<b>discuss1</b>	-0.193 (0.180)	-0.345 (0.218)	-0.141 (0.233)	-0.0861 (0.493)
<b>discuss2</b>	-0.196 (0.187)	-0.273 (0.216)	0.221 (0.225)	-0.382 (0.436)
<b>discuss3</b>	0.0886 (0.174)	0.106 (0.202)	0.211 (0.224)	0.547 (0.421)
<b>discuss4</b>	-0.276 (0.186)	-0.426* (0.214)	-0.660** (0.228)	0.0979 (0.410)
<b>discuss5</b>	0.159 (0.222)	0.238 (0.252)	0.435 (0.273)	0.766 (0.490)
<b>value1</b>	0.0731 (0.164)	0.411* (0.199)	-0.00702 (0.216)	-0.678 (0.413)
<b>value2</b>	0.165 (0.138)	0.0618 (0.158)	0.0899 (0.176)	-0.238 (0.274)
<b>value3</b>	-0.291 (0.179)	-0.450* (0.217)	-0.0916 (0.242)	0.358 (0.508)
<b>understand</b>	0.257 (0.156)	0.217 (0.185)	-0.0306 (0.208)	0.195 (0.459)
<b>complicated</b>	-0.0266 (0.106)	0.173 (0.125)	0.0418 (0.135)	0.265 (0.262)
<b>capable</b>	-0.451*** (0.133)	-0.333* (0.158)	-0.317 (0.178)	0.118 (0.365)
<b>frustrated</b>	0.164 (0.0998)	-0.134 (0.125)	-0.0777 (0.135)	-0.102 (0.256)
<b>better</b>	-0.0297 (0.134)	0.0158 (0.159)	0.162 (0.176)	-0.212 (0.339)
<b>confident</b>	-0.261* (0.123)	-0.0320 (0.147)	0.165 (0.170)	0.259 (0.292)
<b>heated</b>	0.717** (0.223)	2.246*** (0.329)	0.792** (0.298)	0.758 (0.585)
<b>constant</b>	-0.0401 (1.297)	-4.843** (1.601)	-5.596** (1.760)	-9.507** (3.543)

**observations**      636                  636                  636                  494

Note that in the attack column, democrat is removed, as none of the 149 Republicans said they would attack others' views (21 of the 524 Democrats said they would attack others' views).

**Table 7.** Dependent variables from study 2 (continued)

<b>variables</b>	<b>like more</b>	<b>like less</b>	<b>smart</b>	<b>nice</b>	<b>enjoy<sup>1</sup></b>
<b>self-monit.</b>	0.125* (0.0567)	0.113* (0.0501)	-0.0254* (0.0107)	-0.0275* (0.0111)	-0.0212* (0.00965)
<b>democrat</b>	-0.313 (0.489)	-0.840* (0.415)	-0.0844 (0.0819)	-0.0141 (0.0864)	0.0301 (0.0735)
<b>ideology</b>	-0.0977 (0.125)	-0.413*** (0.109)	0.0623** (0.0219)	0.109*** (0.0228)	-0.0198 (0.0190)
<b>strength</b>	0.0220 (0.152)	0.188 (0.140)	-0.0636* (0.0287)	-0.0779** (0.0297)	0.00133 (0.0243)
<b>woman</b>	0.291 (0.249)	-0.209 (0.217)	0.0721 (0.0452)	-0.0244 (0.0474)	0.139*** (0.0384)
<b>age</b>	-0.00686 (0.0118)	-0.0150 (0.0110)	0.000642 (0.00234)	0.00271 (0.00237)	0.00206 (0.00195)
<b>education</b>	0.0715 (0.0822)	0.00805 (0.0702)	-0.00657 (0.0153)	0.00749 (0.0160)	0.00493 (0.0124)
<b>Hispanic</b>	0.445 (0.443)	-0.498 (0.423)	-0.0980 (0.0764)	-0.0398 (0.0827)	-0.0327 (0.0684)
<b>white</b>	0.420 (0.309)	0.266 (0.254)	-0.0925 (0.0547)	-0.0324 (0.0563)	-0.00949 (0.0478)
<b>income</b>	0.0189 (0.0378)	0.0131 (0.0319)	-0.00491 (0.00661)	0.00736 (0.00684)	-0.00421 (0.00593)
<b>attention</b>	0.0158 (0.166)	0.0178 (0.143)	-0.0575 (0.0309)	-0.0642* (0.0317)	-0.143*** (0.0268)
<b>discuss1</b>	-0.269 (0.205)	-0.222 (0.181)	-0.0828* (0.0401)	-0.0303 (0.0415)	0.0135 (0.0355)
<b>discuss2</b>	-0.0623 (0.206)	-0.138 (0.174)	0.0547 (0.0348)	0.00403 (0.0382)	-0.205*** (0.0316)
<b>discuss3</b>	0.435* (0.183)	0.175 (0.175)	0.000402 (0.0360)	-0.0296 (0.0378)	0.101*** (0.0302)
<b>discuss4</b>	-0.0572 (0.201)	-0.139 (0.169)	-0.0930** (0.0337)	-0.0677 (0.0356)	-0.182*** (0.0311)
<b>discuss5</b>	-0.0292 (0.238)	0.208 (0.208)	0.0372 (0.0444)	0.0196 (0.0443)	-0.0845* (0.0417)
<b>value1</b>	-0.0843 (0.191)	-0.0187 (0.149)	-0.0155 (0.0311)	-0.0686* (0.0348)	-0.0794** (0.0296)
<b>value2</b>	-0.0244 (0.143)	0.0466 (0.126)	0.0364 (0.0254)	0.0765** (0.0256)	-0.0659** (0.0222)
<b>value3</b>	0.336 (0.208)	-0.0882 (0.167)	0.00598 (0.0356)	0.0139 (0.0354)	-0.0435 (0.0315)
<b>understand</b>	-0.0110	0.0342	-0.109***	-0.0984**	0.0298

<sup>1</sup> Note that this variable is coded as strongly agree to strongly disagree.



	(0.185)	(0.152)	(0.0321)	(0.0339)	(0.0268)
<b>complicated</b>	0.153	0.0391	0.0119	0.000342	0.0157
	(0.115)	(0.0978)	(0.0212)	(0.0224)	(0.0182)
<b>capable</b>	0.319*	-0.0904	0.0767**	0.0585*	-0.129***
	(0.157)	(0.132)	(0.0270)	(0.0291)	(0.0246)
<b>frustrated</b>	0.0112	0.0620	-0.0254	-0.0520*	-0.000476
	(0.111)	(0.0966)	(0.0211)	(0.0224)	(0.0185)
<b>better</b>	-0.0144	-0.100	-0.155***	-0.0480	-0.00670
	(0.150)	(0.130)	(0.0274)	(0.0294)	(0.0249)
<b>confident</b>	-0.233	0.182	0.113***	0.0876**	0.00789
	(0.136)	(0.121)	(0.0257)	(0.0274)	(0.0246)
<b>politics</b>	-	-	0.00410	-0.0671	0.0280
	-	-	(0.0426)	(0.0450)	(0.0370)
<b>heated</b>	-1.629***	1.291***	-0.0169	0.0512	0.0235
	(0.284)	(0.217)	(0.0427)	(0.0451)	(0.0367)
<b>constant</b>	-1.692	-1.704	3.753***	3.331***	4.848***
	(1.442)	(1.235)	(0.273)	(0.295)	(0.227)
<b>observations</b>	437	504	1,272	1,269	1,272