Supplemental Information for: The Similar and Distinct Effects of
Political and Non-Political Conversation on Affective Polarization

Contents

Appendix A   Ethical Considerations

The human subjects research conducted for our study adheres to APSA's Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research. The study was approved prior to data collection by the author's institutional review board under exempt review.

Participants came from Amazon's Mechanical Turk, which has a subject pool broadly demographically diverse within the U.S. population and not comprised mainly of members of groups we should consider vulnerable or marginalized. This research did not differentially harm particular demographic groups. All participants self-reported living in the United States.

All participants were paid above federal minimum wage. Specifically, in Study 1, all participants who completed the pre-treatment survey were compensated $1.00, regardless of whether they expressed interest in returning for the follow-up task.. All participants who were invited to return to the conversation/short essay portion of the survey were paid $2.00 if they returned, completed their task, and completed the post-treatment survey that immediately followed the task. Participants who returned but could not complete the task because their conversation partner did not return were still paid the full $2.00 compensation. Additionally, participants were incentivized to have "thoughtful, thorough" participation with a bonus of $1.00 for doing so. Without the bonus, participants earned $2.50 for approximately 12 minutes of work, resulting in an hourly wage of $12.50.

This payment scheme was used in Study 2, as well, with only one difference. Participants who completed the conversation/short essay portion of the study were invited to complete a follow-up survey asking one question that took only seconds to answer. Participants who completed this question were paid $0.50.

In both studies, prior to beginning the pre-treatment survey, all participants read an information sheet to obtain their informed and voluntary consent. Participants had to check a box indicating "I consent" to proceed, which is how I documented consent in an online environment. Participants also had the option to select "I do not consent to participate," which would allow them to leave the survey immediately. I will share the full consent information sheets upon request. Importantly, among other things, the information sheet shared approximately how long the tasks would take, the payment for completing the tasks, and how participants would be paid. I also told participants that they could choose to stop participating at any time, that the information they provided would be kept confidential, and that I would not be collecting any personally identifying information. Finally, I told participants that anonymized transcripts of their conversation or short essay would be made available for research purposes. The anonymization would include removing any people's names, places, religious or cultural backgrounds, occupations, family relationships, and any other potentially identifying information that they may have disclosed in their conversations (even though they were not prompted to do so).

Appendix B   Blocked Cluster Design Algorithm

The following provides more specific, technical details for the blocked cluster algorithm used in the experiment, using Study 1 as an example.

- Create trios of similar individuals within the same party
  - Using the `blockTools::block()` statistical software (Moore 2016) with the optimum greedy algorithm and the Mahalanobis distance metric (Moore 2012). Note is step does not create the blocks *in full*, despite the use of the `blockTools` statistical software.
  - Blocking variables are age and education (considered continuous); indicators for gender* and ethnicity, strength of partisan identification*; pre-treatment thermometer ratings of

inparty, outparty, and President Trump*; a 6-item battery on pre-treatment gun views (considered continuous); a single pre-treatment item asking overall view regarding gun control*; personality trait estimates including 4 item adaptive versions of each Big 5 Trait (openness*, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, and extraversion) (Costa and McCrae 2008), Systemizing and Empathizing Quotients (Baron-Cohen et al. 2003); and latitude and longitude. Variables marked with an ∗ are up-weighted to have twice the weight of the other variables.

– Block within subgroups of partisan identification. Those who indicated "Independent" or "other" for partisan identification are collapsed into the respective party toward which they lean.

- Shuffle individuals within trios.
- Simultaneously create blocks and cross-partisan pairs by randomly assigning one Democratic trios to each Republican trio.
- Within each block of cross-partisan pairs, randomly assign treatment at pair-level.

Appendix C   Blocked Cluster Design: Partnership-Level Difference Within and Across Blocks

Figure A.1 demonstrates two important features of the blocked cluster algorithm by adding a second block of clusters to the visualization. First we see that cluster-level difference is minimized *within* each block. All the partnership in a block are similar (or different) in all the same ways. However, we also see that partnership-level difference within partnerships is randomized across blocks. The first block shows Democrats and Republicans that are very different (in the same ways), but the second block shows Democrats and Republicans that are very similar (in the same ways).

Taken together, the design ensures balance across experimental conditions, while still having variation in the kinds of partnerships that are created.

Figure A.1: Partnership-Level Difference Minimized within Blocks, but Randomized Across Blocks
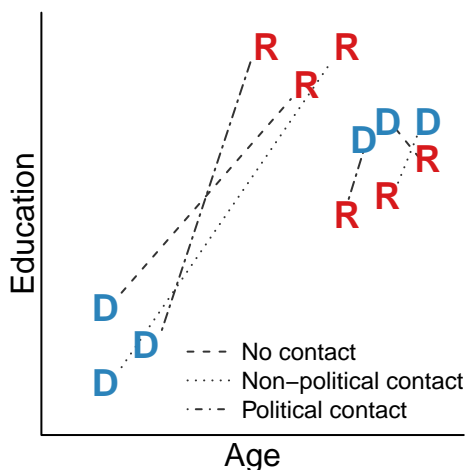
Appendix D   Chatter Conversation Software

As a practical matter, in order to study cross-partisan conversations, I designed a software called "Chatter" by which participants can have real-time, written conversations online.[1] Chatter allows two or more participants to have a conversation via an interface similar to many messaging apps like iMessage or WhatsApp.

Figure A.2 shows an example of Chatter's user interface. Participants see instructions for the conversation above a box containing previously sent messages. A participant's own messages appear unlabeled on the right in blue and other conversation members' messages appear, labeled with a unique identifier, on the left. Participants also see a timer that counts down the time remaining and a "Done" button which illuminates and activates when time expires.

Figure A.2: Example of Chatter User Interface from Study 1
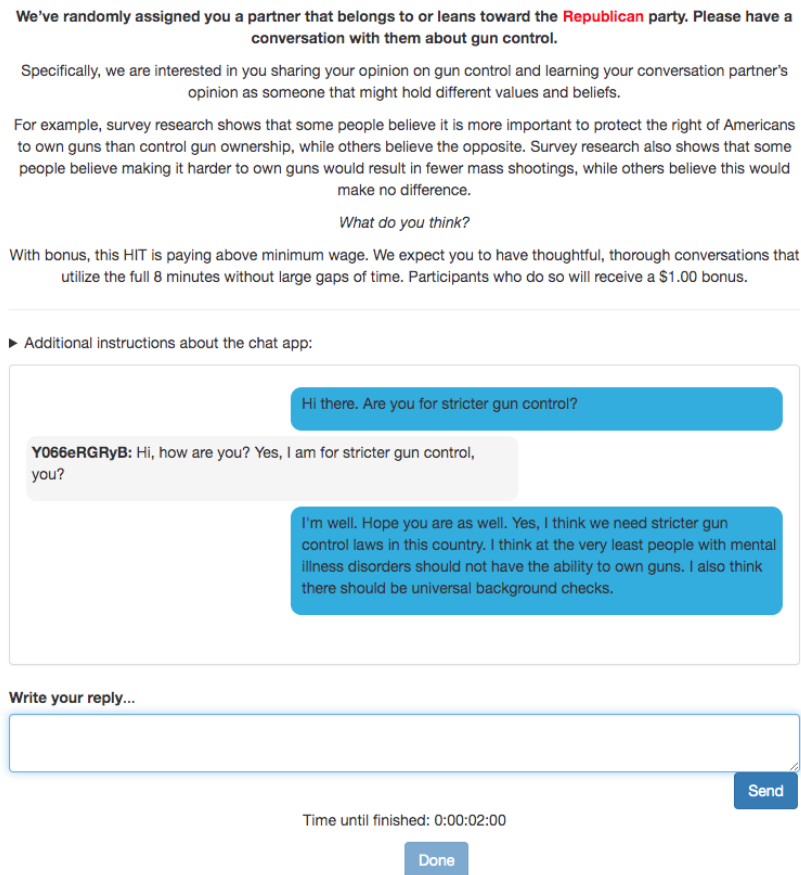
Note: Chatter user interface. Instructions appear at the top of the page. Akin to other messaging software, an individual's own messages appear on the right. Other users' messages appear on the left. When the timer indicates no time is left, the "Done" button activates and redirects users to a post-conversation survey when clicked.

Several features of Chatter facilitate experimentation involving conversations. First, Chatter allows the researcher to set up chatrooms so that the partnerships or groups created assigned by

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[1] Chatter is a Ruby on Rails application backed by a Postgres database, deployed on Heroku.

the researcher can engage in social interaction. This allows for randomized assignment of partners, rather than having participants form groups based on when they enter the survey or some other non-random assignment. However, Chatter does also allow for participants to be formed without being randomized and pre-specified by the researcher. Second, Chatter allows the researcher to customize the conversational instructions shown to each participant. For example, in Studies 1 and 2, treatment takes the form of the topic at the partnership-level, so conversation partners see the same instructions. But, each participant's instructions are customized to include the partisan identity of their partner. Third, the researcher controls all additional chatroom and user settings, including what usernames are displayed (e.g., random sequence of letters, the same name to control perception of gender, etc.) and how long the conversation should last. Lastly, I use Chatter coupled with the Qualtrics survey software for survey administration and Amazon Mechanical Turk to recruit participants. However, experimentation using Chatter is generalizable to other survey platforms and other participant pools.

Chatter allows researchers to relatively easily emulate a real social experience without an existing laboratory or a participant pool. Moreover, as a software for *online* conversations, Chatter allows for diversity in the participant pool that is hard to come by when using in-person conversations, usually with students, faculty, and staff that are affiliated with a college campus (e.g., Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2014; Klar 2014) or that can be recruited within a few cities (e.g. Druckman, Levendusky and McLain 2017). A final practical advantage of Chatter is that a researcher can quickly conduct a large-n study involving conversations. Chatter allows for hundreds of conversations to happen simultaneously, which is difficult to achieve in the setting of an academic laboratory.

Appendix E   Study 1 Experimental Conditions

- ***No conversation***

  Please share your thoughts on the meaning of life. A conversation partner will not be joining you. Rather, we ask that you write about the meaning of life independently by sending messages in the chat box below.

  For example, survey research shows that many people mention family as the most important sources of meaning in their life. Survey research also shows that other people mention career, money, faith, friends, and hobbies as the most important source of meaning in their life.

  What do you think?

- ***Non-political conversation***

  We've randomly assigned you a partner that belongs to or leans toward the [Republican/Democratic] party. Please have a conversation with them about the meaning of life.

  Specifically, we are interested in you sharing what you think makes life meaningful and learning your conversation partner's thoughts as someone that might hold different values and beliefs.

  For example, survey research shows that many people mention family as the most important sources of meaning in their life. Survey research also shows that other people mention career, money, faith, friends, and hobbies as the most important source of meaning in their life.

What do you think?

- *Political conversation*

  We've randomly assigned you a partner that belongs to or leans toward the [Republican/Democratic] party. Please have a conversation with them about gun control.

  Specifically, we are interested in you sharing your opinion on gun control and learning your conversation partner's opinion as someone that might hold different values and beliefs.

  For example, survey research shows that some people believe it is more important to protect the right of Americans to own guns than control gun ownership, while others believe the opposite. Survey research also shows that some people believe making it harder to own guns would result in fewer mass shootings, while others believe this would make no difference.

  What do you think?

Appendix F   Study 2 Experimental Conditions

Study 2 is a full 2x2 design. The first random assignment is conversation—either *actual* conversation with one's assigned partner or *imagined* conversation, where the two partners are in different chatrooms. The second random assignment is topic—either non-political or political. The non-political topic is the meaning of life as in Study 1, and the political topic is immigration. Recall, treatment is randomly assigned at the partnership level within each block. Treatment is administered by way of the instructions that the participants see when they enter their pre-assigned chatroom. The four different instructions are the following:

- *Imagined conversation, non-political topic*

  Imagine we've randomly assigned you to have a conversation with someone that belongs to or leans toward the [Republican/Democratic] party. What about your views on the meaning of life would you share with this person? What do you think they would share with you?

  No partner will be joining you, instead please answer the questions independently by sending messages in the chat box below.

  For example, survey research shows that many people mention family as the most important source of meaning in their life. Survey research also shows that other people mention career, money, faith, friends, and hobbies as the most important source of meaning in their life.

- *Imagined conversation, political topic*

  Imagine we've randomly assigned you to have a conversation with someone that belongs to or leans toward the [Republican/Democratic] party. What about your views on immigration policy would you share with this person? What do you think they would share with you?

  No partner will be joining you, instead please answer the questions independently by sending messages in the chat box below.

  For example, survey research shows that some people believe that stronger enforcement of our immigration laws is more important than creating a way for immigrants already here illegally to

become citizens, while others believe the opposite. Survey research also shows that some people believe that undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S. are more likely than U.S. citizens to commit serious crimes, while others believe they are not.

- ***Actual conversation, non-political topic***

  We've randomly assigned you to have a conversation with someone that belongs to or leans toward the [Republican/Democratic] party. Please share your views on the meaning of life with each other.

  Please have your conversation by sending messages in the chat box below.

  For example, survey research shows that many people mention family as the most important source of meaning in their life. Survey research also shows that other people mention career, money, faith, friends, and hobbies as the most important source of meaning in their life.

- ***Actual conversation, political topic***

  We've randomly assigned you to have a conversation with someone that belongs to or leans toward the [Republican/Democratic] party. Please share your views on immigration policy with each other.

  Please have your conversation by sending messages in the chat box below.

  For example, survey research shows that some people believe that stronger enforcement of our immigration laws is more important than creating a way for immigrants already here illegally to become citizens, while others believe the opposite. Survey research also shows that some people believe that undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S. are more likely than U.S. citizens to commit serious crimes, while others believe they are not.

Appendix G   Example Transcripts

This Appendix contains example transcripts from Study 1. The color of the identifier indicates the partisan identification of the participant. The first two transcripts are from a pair of participants assigned to the individual writing task, thus they do not interact with each other. The second two transcripts are from the conversation conditions.

No conversation (control)

u1 I think that feeling content in where you are is really one of the deepest meanings in life.
Having a beautiful connection with someone you love makes life feel so much more worth it.
Being able to connect spiritually and find your inner peace is a great goal.
Finding someone who is your soul match and a willing partner is the ultimate meaning of life.
Not letting money or materialistic things rule you, but instead letting those things be a byproduct of what you love.
Finding your true family, whether blood or not is a great goal in life.
Realizing that sometimes you have to let go and let God is a great goal.
Making sure your heart and your spirit are in a place of love is incredibly important in life.
Not being around anyone who takes away your joy and your light is an important goal in life.
All of these things together are pertinent to reaching your full potential aka the meaning of your life.
There is no right and wrong answer to what the exact meaning is, but you have to look within yourself to see what your soul and spirit deem important.
The true meaning of life is to feel fully content and at peace with your mind, body and spirit.
The true meaning of life is love.

No conversation (control)

u2 For me life is happiness and love. Happiness is when you are with the people you cared for and love. I think life will be dull or boring if we don't have those people that we will cherish the most. They are the one who makes the ride worthwhile.
Life also is giving to others. It is sharing what you have and not asking in return.
Life is when you cry and laugh the most. Life is when you are hurt but prefer to stand up.
Life is still fighting despite the hardship.. Life is loving all the positive things. Life is protecting our mother nature. Life is everything.

Non-political conversation

u3 What do you think about the meaning of life

u4 I think that the meaning of life is very simply to be good people and to spread love and positivity to others.

u3 I think that the mean of life is to enjoy every second we live on this earth. I think it's important to notice the beauty in the simple things.

u4 I definitely agree with that, especially because we have no idea when our life is going to end and if there is something after this life.

u4 We definitely don't appreciate the small things in life, we tend to take them for granted in my opinion.

u3 EXACTLY. We don't know when our life will end so we have to make everyday importwand not to get hung up on mistakes

u4 Yep, and I think it's human nature to be honest.

u4 We're humans and we tend to only focus on ourselves at times.

u4 I know I sometimes blow things way out of proportion with regards to things going wrong in my life. But in reality, my problems really aren't that big of a deal.

u4 Many people worldwide are way less off than me which is why I try to appreciate everything that I have.

u4 It's difficult at times though, sometimes little things add up and can stress you out and you forget to put that type of stuff into perspective.

u3 Yes I agree

u3 I think that people are so focused on the long term they don't think about the here and now.

u3 I'll admit I'm one of them

u4 I agree. I mean it's good to focus on the future and prepare yourself but I think it's also important to balance the future with the present as well.

u4 I see so many people setting themselves up for future success but in the present they're miserable, working a ton of hours at their jobs and hating their lives because they have no free time.

u3 Exactly. That's why I decided to travel and make the most of my youth

u4 What I try to do is enjoy every single day. I try to find minor things that make me happy such as going out to a restaurant or playing a fun game on my phone.

u3 Perfect example. Little walks down a trail make me happy

u4 I love walking around a lake near my house as well, it's very relaxing.

u4 Lets me ease some of my stress when I'm struggling mentally.

u3 Absolutely. The meaning of life is to bring yourself and the ones around you happiness in my book.

u4 Me too. I had a great time chatting with you. Have a great day!

Political conversation

u5 Hi, I am ready when you are. thank you.

u6 Hi there! I just think that something so importat is tough to discuss

u6 Especially with a stranger

u5 My thoughts on gun control are that there are plenty of laws we just need to follow them although maybe some gun types just aren't needed in the general public.

u5 such as assault rifles i mean

u6 I agree, some things are not meant to be had by everyone

u6 yea AK47s are superflous

u6 but some people just like the power they get from owning them

u5 how do you feel about background checks at gun shows...I thought they had those and then someone told me no they do not

u6 also you can have a garage sale and sell your guns, there are many loopholes!

8

u6 guns are in our culture and will be there in the future

u5 yes...or just give them away...I have known that to happen. I don't know how they will regulate that so yes guns are here to stay no doubt

u5 Maybe we can work harder on making some areas safe.

u6 i am not antigun but have a hard time accepting assault rifles

u5 I know gun enthusiasts that like their assault rifles very much. I don't know how we are going to keep guns out of the hands of the mentally ill...that is a grey area to regulate

u6 sadly people have an 'all or nothing' attitude, so it is hard to compromise

u5 I saw we first expend the money and energy to make sure all the existing laws are followed and see where that leaves us.

u5 sorry say not saw..oops

u6 no prob!! lol,,,at least it is nice to have a conversation with someone who gets other people's point!

u6 i wish we had more of that

u5 our time is about up....have a wonderful rest of the day and nice talking with you

u6 same!! have a great one!

u6 on to the nest HIT lol :)

Appendix H Manipulation Check

In this Appendix, I assess whether participants engaged in the exercise and discussed the assigned topic in Study 1. First, summary statistics of the amount of messages exchanged demonstrate the participants engaged in the exercise. A median number of 17.5 messages were sent across non-political conversation and 14 messages across political conversations. The median number of words exchanged were 222, 269, and 299 in the no conversation, non-political conversation, and political conversation conditions, respectively.

Additionally, Table A.3 details how many times the following terms appear across all short essays or conversations for each experimental condition. Phrases such as "family," "faith," and "happiness" occur often, as expected, when talking about the meaning of life, and do not occur when participants are asked to discuss gun control. Likewise, "gun," "shooting," and "background check" occur often when discussing gun control but not when participants were asked to discuss the meaning of life. (I investigated the one instance of "shooting" appearing in the control condition was "shooting hoops" i.e., playing basketball.)

Table A.3: Topic-Specific Word Counts Suggesting Participants Discussed Assigned Topic (Study 1)

	gun	shooting	background check	family	faith	meaning	happiness
Individual writing task (control)	0	1	0	111	14	394	42
Non-political conversation	0	0	0	105	7	119	18
Political conversation	386	38	38	13	0	0	0

Appendix I Full Table for Figure 3 (Study 1)

Table A.4 presents the results of Figure 3 in table form for conversation's effect on outparty affect. The table reports difference-in-means estimates for pairwise comparisons for the three experimental conditions of Study 1. Standard errors for conversations partners are clustered. Both non-political and political conversation increase outparty affect relative to the individual writing task control, but their positive effects are not distinguishable from each other.

Table A.4: Conversation's Effect on Outparty Affect (Study 1)

Outcome: Change in Outparty Affect	Est.	Std. Err.	Stat.	*p*-value	95% CI	DF	N
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	8.41	1.29	6.50	<0.01	[5.86, 10.97]	201.96	322
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	6.43	1.50	4.28	<0.01	[3.47, 9.40]	201.96	322
Non-political vs. political conversation	1.98	1.82	1.09	0.28	[-1.62, 5.58]	152.00	308

Note: Table reports difference-in-means estimates for pairwise comparisons of the experimental conditions in Study 1. Standard errors are clustered for conversation partners. Outcome is change in outparty affect, measure pre- and post-treatment using the standard 101point feeling thermometer. The first and second estimates under each trait are the average treatment effect (ATE) of non-political conversation relative to the individual writing task control and the ATE of political conversation relative to the individual writing task control. Finally, the third estimate is the ATE non-political and political conversation.

Appendix J   Robustness with Full Blocks for Figure 3 (Study 1)

Table A.5 presents a robustness check for the results of Figure 3 for conversation's effect on outparty affect. Because of the blocked design, I can drop any block with missing participants to ensure balance on blocking covariates across experimental conditions. I use the sample of "full blocks"—any block that has all six participants finish the stduy—as a robustness check of Study 1 results. There were 44 full blocks in Study 1. Each pairwise comparison will have four participants (two from each condition), thus the sample size for each test in Table A.5 is 176.

Table A.5 shows consistent results as in Table A.4. Both non-political and political conversation increase outparty affect relative to the individual writing task control, but their positive effects are not distinguishable from each other. Because of the relatively small sample size, I also use randomization inference as a robustness check. In the final column of Table A.5, I approximate *p*-values using 10,000 simulations consistent with the blocked cluster design to test a sharp null hypothesis. The two-sided randomization inference *p*-values are nearly identical to the *p*-values from a t-test.

Table A.5: Robustness Tests using Full Blocks for Conversation's Effect on Outparty Affect (Study 1)

Outcome: Change in Outparty Affect	Est.	Std. Err.	Stat.	*p*-value	95% CI	DF	N	RI *p*-value
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	9.17	0.77	11.95	<0.01	[7.62, 10.72]	44.00	176	<0.01
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	7.47	0.77	9.73	<0.01	[5.92, 9.01]	44.00	176	<0.01
Non-political vs. political conversation	1.70	2.85	0.60	0.55	[-4.04, 7.45]	43.00	176	0.56

Note: Table reports difference-in-means estimates for pairwise comparisons of the experimental conditions in Study 1. Standard errors are clustered for conversation partners. Outcome is change in outparty affect, measure pre- and post-treatment using the standard 101point feeling thermometer. The first and second estimates under each trait are the average treatment effect (ATE) of non-political conversation relative to the individual writing task control and the ATE of political conversation relative to the individual writing task control. Finally, the third estimate is the ATE non-political and political conversation. Final column of the table reports randomization inference hypothesis tests with two-tailed *p*-values, approximated with 10,000 simulations.

Appendix K   Full Table for Figure 4 (Study 1)

Table A.6 presents the results of Figure 4 in table form for conversation's effect on perceptions of the outparty. The table reports difference-in-means estimates for pairwise comparisons for the three experimental conditions of Study 1. Standard errors for conversations partners are clustered.

Table A.6: Conversation's Effect on Perceptions of the Outparty (Study 1)

Outcome	Est.	Std. Err.	Stat.	p-value	95% CI	DF	N
All Negative Traits							
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.46	0.10	-4.73	<0.01	[-0.65, -0.27]	201.96	322
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.44	0.10	-4.27	<0.01	[-0.64, -0.24]	201.96	322
Non-political vs. political conversation	-0.02	0.10	-0.17	0.86	[-0.22, 0.19]	152.00	308
Mean							
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.51	0.12	-4.25	<0.01	[-0.75, -0.27]	201.96	322
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.54	0.12	-4.46	<0.01	[-0.77,-0.30]	201.96	322
Non-political vs. political conversation	0.03	0.13	0.21	0.84	[-0.22, 0.27]	152.00	308
Closeminded							
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.30	0.12	-2.58	0.01	[-0.52, -0.07]	201.96	322
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.28	0.12	-2.29	0.02	[-0.52, -0.04]	201.96	322
Non-political vs. political conversation	-0.02	0.12	-0.16	0.88	[-0.27, 0.23]	152.00	308
Hypocritical							
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.57	0.11	-5.20	<0.01	[-0.79, -0.36]	201.96	322
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.49	0.12	-4.24	<0.01	[-0.72, -0.26]	201.96	322
Non-political vs. political conversation	-0.08	0.12	-0.70	0.49	[-0.32, 0.15]	152.00	308
Selfish							
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.44	0.12	-3.74	<0.01	[-0.67, -0.21]	201.96	322
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.45	0.12	-3.63	<0.01	[-0.69, -0.20]	201.96	322
Non-political vs. political conversation	0.01	0.13	0.05	0.96	[-0.24, 0.26]	152.00	308
All Positive Traits							
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.32	0.10	3.30	<0.01	[0.13, 0.52]	201.96	322
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.30	0.09	3.15	<0.01	[0.11, 0.48]	201.96	322
Non-political vs. political conversation	0.03	0.10	0.27	0.79	[-0.16, 0.22]	152.00	308
Honest							
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.39	0.12	3.16	<0.01	[0.15, 0.63]	201.96	322
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.42	0.12	3.51	<0.01	[0.18, 0.66]	201.96	322
Non-political vs. political conversation	-0.03	0.12	-0.28	0.78	[-0.26, 0.20]	152.00	308
Openminded							
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.32	0.12	2.64	0.01	[0.08, 0.56]	201.96	322
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.21	0.13	1.66	0.10	[-0.04, 0.46]	201.96	322
Non-political vs. political conversation	0.11	0.12	0.90	0.37	[-0.13, 0.35]	152.00	308
Intelligent							
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.29	0.12	2.35	0.02	[0.05, 0.53]	201.96	322
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.28	0.11	2.46	0.01	[0.06, 0.50]	201.96	322
Non-political vs. political conversation	0.01	0.12	0.11	0.91	[-0.22, 0.25]	152.00	308
Patriotic							
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.29	0.14	2.03	0.04	[0.01, 0.58]	201.96	322
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.28	0.14	2.05	0.04	[0.01, 0.55]	201.96	322
Non-political vs. political conversation	0.01	0.13	0.10	0.92	[-0.24, 0.27]	152.00	308

Note: Table reports difference-in-means estimates for pairwise comparisons of the experimental conditions in Study 1. Standard errors are clustered for conversation partners. Each outcome is agreement that a trait describes outpartisans well, on a Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The first and second estimates under each trait are the average treatment effect (ATE) of non-political conversation relative to the individual writing task control and the ATE of political conversation relative to the individual writing task control. Finally, the third estimate is the ATE non-political and political conversation.

Appendix L Robustness with Full Blocks for Figure 4 (Study 1)

Table A.7 provides results corresponding to Figure 4 in the main body of the paper, but only considering all full blocks in the experiment, meaning all six participants in a block completed the study. The table also reports randomization inference hypothesis tests with the difference in means test statistic under the sharp null hypothesis of no treatment effect. See Appendix J for an explanation of "full blocks" and the use of randomization inference in this context.

Comparing these robustness check results to those in Table A.6, we see the results are largely significant. While the estimate of political conversation's effect on openmindedness of the outparty is positive in Table A.6, it is not significant. However, with the robustness checks, it is significant. The point estimate is larger with the robustness check sample, perhaps because this sample has less noise biasing the results down. On the contrary, the point estimate non-political conversation's effects on viewing the outparty as intelligent and patriotic is smaller in the robustness checks and does not reach statistical significance.

In sum, the robustness checks coupled with the main analysis presented in the article—showing the treatment effects are larger for negative than positive traits—suggest that conversation's effects on disinclining the use of describing the outparty is negative terms may be stronger than conversation's effects on inclining the use of positive terms.

Table A.7: Robustness Tests using Full Blocks for Conversation's Effect on Perceptions of the Outparty (Study 1)

Outcome	Est.	Std. Err.	Stat.	p-val	95% CI	DF	N	RI p-val
All Negative Traits								
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.49	0.09	-5.59	<0.01	[-0.66, -0.31]	44.00	176	<0.01
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.51	0.09	-5.92	<0.01	[-0.69, -0.34]	44.00	176	<0.01
Non-political vs. political conversation	0.03	0.12	0.23	0.82	[-0.22, 0.28]	43.00	176	0.84
Mean								
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.59	0.10	-5.78	<0.01	[-0.80, -0.38]	44.00	176	<0.01
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.66	0.10	-6.44	<0.01	[-0.87, -0.45]	44.00	176	<0.01
Non-political vs. political conversation	0.07	0.17	0.41	0.69	[-0.27, 0.41]	43.00	176	0.73
Closeminded								
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.34	0.11	-3.23	<0.01	[-0.55, -0.13]	44.00	176	0.02
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.33	0.11	-3.13	<0.01	[-0.54, -0.12]	44.00	176	0.05
Non-political vs. political conversation	-0.01	0.15	-0.07	0.94	[-0.32, 0.30]	43.00	176	>0.99
Hypocritical								
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.59	0.09	-6.50	<0.01	[-0.77, -0.41]	44.00	176	<0.01
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.56	0.09	-6.12	<0.01	[-0.74, -0.37]	44.00	176	<0.01
Non-political vs. political conversation	-0.03	0.15	-0.23	0.82	[-0.33, 0.27]	43.00	176	0.88
Selfish								
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.42	0.11	-3.97	<0.01	[-0.63, -0.21]	44.00	176	0.01
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	-0.51	0.11	-4.82	<0.01	[-0.72, -0.30]	44.00	176	<0.01
Non-political vs. political conversation	0.09	0.15	0.61	0.54	[-0.21, 0.39]	43.00	176	.60
All Positive Traits								
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.22	0.09	2.53	0.01	[0.05, 0.40]	44.00	176	0.07
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.36	0.09	4.16	<0.01	[0.19, 0.54]	44.00	176	<0.01
Non-political vs. political conversation	-0.14	0.13	-1.09	0.28	[-0.40, 0.12]	43.00	176	0.29
Honest								
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.25	0.10	2.40	0.02	[0.04, 0.46]	44.00	176	.16
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.42	0.10	4.04	<0.01	[0.21, 0.63]	44.00	176	0.01
Non-political vs. political conversation	-0.17	0.15	-1.11	0.27	[-0.48, 0.14]	43.00	176	.31
Openminded								
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.39	0.12	3.21	<0.01	[0.14, 0.63]	44.00	176	0.02

Political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.35	0.12	2.93	0.01	[0.11, 0.59]	44.00	176	0.05
Non-political vs. political conversation	0.03	0.17	0.20	0.84	[-0.31, 0.38]	43.00	176	0.90
Intelligent								
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.12	0.10	1.30	0.20	[-0.07, 0.32]	44.00	176	0.49
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.34	0.10	3.54	<0.01	[0.15, 0.54]	44.00	176	0.04
Non-political vs. political conversation	-0.22	0.16	-1.37	0.18	[-0.53, 0.10]	43.00	176	0.20
Patriotic								
Non-political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.12	0.16	0.78	0.44	[-0.20, 0.45]	44.00	176	0.44
Political conversation vs. individual writing task	0.34	0.16	2.13	0.04	[0.02, 0.66]	44.00	176	0.63
Non-political vs. political conversation	-0.22	0.16	-1.35	0.18	[-0.54, 0.11]	43.00	176	0.21

Note: Table reports blocked difference-in-means estimates for pairwise comparisons of the experimental conditions in Study 1. Standard errors are clustered for conversation partners. Each outcome is agreement that a trait describes outpartisans well, on a Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Participants answer this question for eight traits. The first estimate under each trait is the average treatment effect of non-political conversation relative to the individual writing task control. The second estimate is the average treatment effect of political conversation relative to the individual writing task control. Finally, the third estimate compares non-political and political conversation. These estimates use only complete blocks where all six participants in the block completed the study, thus the sample size of 176 (88 per condition) for each is the same for each test. Final columns table reports randomization inference hypothesis tests with two-tailed p-values, approximated with 10,000 simulations.

Appendix M   Full Table for Figure 5 (Study 2)

Tables A.8 and A.9 present results corresponding to Figure 5. Table A.9 shows non-political conversation, relative to imagined non-political conversation, improves outparty affect. Political conversation, relative to non-political conversation, also improves outparty affect. These were preregistered hypotheses for the effect of conversation separately by topic. I also preregistered whether the effects would be different, specifically, whether non-political conversation would have a stronger effect than political conversation. I do not find support for this hypothesis as Table A.8 shows the interaction between conversation and topic is not significant.

Table A.8: Conversation's Effect on Outparty Affect (Study 2): Average Treatment Effect Estimates and Heterogeneous Treatment Effect Estimates by Topic

	Change in Outparty Affect	
Conversation	4.93*	5.75*
	(0.99)	(1.38)
Topic (Non-political)	2.62*	3.36*
	(0.96)	(1.22)
Conversation × Topic (Non-political)		−1.58
		(1.96)
Num.Obs.	740	740

Note: p < 0.05. Table reports linear model cofficient estimates and standard errors in parentheses clustered for conversation partners. Models include blocked fixed effects.

Appendix N   Robustness with Full Blocks for Figure 5 (Study 2)

As in Study 1, I check the robustness of my results using the sample of participants from "full blocks" in addition to using randomization inference p-values due to the relatively small sample size,

Table A.9: Conversation's Effect on Outparty Affect (Study 2): Conditional Average Treatment Effect Estimates by Topic

Outcome: Change in Outparty Affect	Est.	Std. Err.	Stat.	p-value	95% CI	DF	N
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	4.03	1.36	2.97	<0.01	[1.36, 6.70]	232.80	378
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	5.10	1.24	4.12	<0.01	[2.66, 7.54]	225.46	362

Note: Table reports difference-in-means estimates and 95% confidence intervals estimating conditional average treatment effects of conversation by topic in Study 2. Standard errors are clustered for conversation partners.

discussed more in Appendix J. Unlike Study 1, Study 2 has four experimental conditions, so it is more difficult to retain a full block of eight participants. Study 2 features 37 full blocks, thus the sample size in Table A.10 which uses all four experimental conditions has 37x8=296 participants The sample size in Table A.11 which looks at effects condition on topic, thus only uses two experimental conditions per analysis, has 37x4=148 participants.

in Table A.11, we see the positive treatment effect of non-political conversation, relative to non-political imagined conversation, is not robust to using this sample. While a positive treatment effect of conversation, the magnitude of the effect is small and does not reach significance. It is not that non-political conversation was a weak treatment—it increased outparty affect by an average of 8.55 degrees in this sample. Instead, imagined conversation was a strong baseline condition, increasing outparty affect by an average of 6.7 in this sample. Thus, the effect of non-political conversation, relative to imagined conversation, was not significant.

On the contrary, the results for the effect of political conversation are consistent with the main results in Appendix M. Political conversation increased outparty affect by an average of 6.25 degrees in this sample, and imagining political conversation increased outparty affect by an average of only 1.72 degrees, thus the effect of actual conversation was strong.

In sum, the robustness check would suggest that actual conversation is particularly important for improving outparty affect when political topics are salient. On the other hand, the results of this robustness check would provide additional evidence that imagined contact can be an an effective form of intergroup contact (Dovidio, Eller and Hewstone 2011), but only when the topic avoids politics. It is important to note that this robustness check uses only 38% of the participants relative to the full sample of participants presented in Figure 5, thus I caution readers from concluding the null hypothesis that non-political conversation has no effect relative to imagined conversation is true absent additional evidence.

Table A.10: Robustness Checks for Conversation's Effect on Outparty Affect (Study 2): Average Treatment Effect Estimates and Heterogeneous Treatment Effect Estimates by Topic

	Change in Outparty Affect	
Conversation	3.19*	4.53*
	(1.38)	(1.77)
Topic (Non-political)	3.64*	4.97*
	(1.38)	(1.80)
Conversation × Topic (Non-political)		−2.68
		(2.77)
Num.Obs.	296	296

Note: p < 0.05. Table reports linear model cofficient estimates and standard errors in parentheses clustered for conversation partners. Models include blocked fixed effects.

Table A.11: Robustness Checks for Conversation's Effect on Outparty Affect (Study 2): Conditional Average Treatment Effect Estimates by Topic

Outcome: Change in Outparty Affect	Est.	Std. Err.	Stat.	*p*-value	95% CI	DF	N	RI *p*-val	RI *p*-val for the Difference
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	1.85	1.51	1.23	0.23	[-1.21, 4.91]	37.00	148	0.37	0.95
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	4.53	0.92	4.91	<0.01	[2.66, 6.39]	37.00	148	0.00	

Note: Table reports difference-in-means estimates and 95% confidence intervals estimating conditional average treatment effects of conversation by topic in Study 2. Standard errors are clustered for conversation partners. Final two columns of table report preregistered randomization inference hypothesis tests with one-tailed *p*-values, approximated with 10,000 simulations.

Appendix O   Full Tables for Figure 6 (Study 2)

Tables A.12 and A.13 present results corresponding to Figure 6.

Table A.12: Conversation's Effect on Perceptions of the Outparty (Study 2): Average Treatment Effect Estimates and Heterogeneous Treatment Effect Estimates by Topic

	Negative Trait Avg.		Mean		Closeminded		Hypocritical		Selfish	
Conversation	−0.36*	−0.26*	−0.50*	−0.40*	−0.35*	−0.17	−0.30*	−0.29*	−0.29*	−0.19
	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.13)	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.08)	(0.12)
Topic (Non-political)	−0.06	0.03	−0.10	−0.01	−0.08	0.08	−0.10	−0.09	0.05	0.14
	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.08)	(0.11)
Conversation × Topic (Non-political)		−0.19		−0.19		−0.36*		−0.03		−0.18
		(0.13)		(0.17)		(0.16)		(0.16)		(0.16)
Num.Obs.	740	740	740	740	740	740	740	740	740	740

	Positive Trait Avg.		Honest		Openminded		Intelligent		Patriotic	
Conversation	0.27*	0.19	0.37*	0.38*	0.37*	0.24	0.25*	0.08	0.11	0.04
	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.09)	(0.13)	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.10)	(0.14)
Topic (Non-political)	0.12	0.04	0.08	0.09	0.10	−0.02	0.08	−0.07	0.22*	0.16
	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.08)	(0.12)	(0.10)	(0.15)
Conversation × Topic (Non-political)		0.17		−0.03		0.26		0.31		0.13
		(0.13)		(0.16)		(0.17)		(0.17)		(0.19)
Num.Obs.	740	740	740	740	740	740	740	740	740	740

Note: p < 0.05. Table reports linear model cofficient estimates and standard errors in parentheses clustered for conversation partners. Models include blocked fixed effects.

Appendix P   Robustness with Full Blocks for Figure 6 (Study 2)

As in Study 1, I check the robustness of my results using the sample of participants from "full blocks" in addition to using randomization inference *p*-values due to the relatively small sample size, discussed more in Appendix J and Appendix N.

Table A.13: Conversation's Effect on Perceptions of the Outparty (Study 2): Conditional Average Treatment Effect Estimates by Topic

Outcome	Est.	Std. Err.	Stat.	p-value	95% CI	DF	N
Negative Trait Avg.							
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.45	0.09	-5.04	<0.01	[-0.62, -0.27]	232.80	378
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.23	0.10	-2.29	0.02	[-0.43, -0.03]	225.46	362
Mean							
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.59	0.11	-5.54	<0.01	[-0.80, -0.38]	232.80	378
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.31	0.12	-2.48	0.01	[-0.55, -0.06]	225.46	362
Closeminded							
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.50	0.11	-4.67	<0.01	[-0.71, -0.29]	232.80	378
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.16	0.12	-1.35	0.18	[-0.39, 0.07]	225.46	362
Hypocritical							
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.34	0.11	-3.19	<0.01	[-0.56, -0.13]	232.80	378
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.26	0.11	-2.40	0.02	[-0.48, -0.05]	225.46	362
Selfish							
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.36	0.11	-3.29	<0.01	[-0.57, -0.14]	232.80	378
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.20	0.12	-1.63	0.10	[-0.44, 0.04]	225.46	362
Positive Trait Avg.							
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.36	0.09	4.25	<0.01	[0.20, 0.53]	232.80	378
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.22	0.10	2.23	0.03	[0.03, 0.41]	225.46	362
Honest							
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.37	0.10	3.63	<0.01	[0.17, 0.58]	232.80	378
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.39	0.12	3.25	<0.01	[0.15, 0.63]	225.46	362
Openminded							
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.52	0.11	4.59	<0.01	[0.29, 0.74]	232.80	378
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.27	0.12	2.20	0.03	[0.03, 0.52]	225.46	362
Intelligent							
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.37	0.11	3.45	<0.01	[0.16, 0.58]	232.80	378
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.09	0.11	0.78	0.44	[-0.13, 0.31]	225.46	362
Patriotic							
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.20	0.13	1.54	0.12	[-0.05, 0.45]	232.80	378
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.11	0.14	0.82	0.41	[-0.16, 0.38]	225.46	362

Note: Table reports difference-in-means estimates and 95% confidence intervals estimating conditional average treatment effects of conversation by topic in Study 2. Standard errors are clustered for conversation partners.

First, in Table A.14, we see that the significant interaction between conversation and topic for "closeminded" remains significant with this robustness check. The effect of actual non-political conversation, relative to imagined non-political conversation, is much stronger at reducing the use of "closeminded" to describe the outparty than the effect of actual political conversation, relative to imagined political conversation. More broadly, the magnitude of the difference in effects between non-political and political conversation is similar between the robustness checks here and the main results in Table A.12.

In Table A.15, I test the robustness of the effects of conversation condition on topic. The t-test results, making large sample assumptions, are consistent with those in the main paper. The randomization inference p-values are more conservative, with hypocritical also have significant treatment effects. However, averaging across all negative traits, the treatment effects are consistent and significant.

For positive traits however, the robustness checks call some results into question. In particular, averaging across all four positive traits, the positive effect of political conversation is not longer significant. While the tests for heterogeneity in the effect of actual relative to imagined conversation

depending on topic of conversation are not significant in the main results or robustness tests, the point estimates for non-political conversation have a pattern of stronger effects. Taken together with similar results in Study 1, it may warrant future research to unpack whether this is a distinct advantage of conversation that avoids politics. While not reaching statistical significance in this research, the evidence is suggestive and consistent with my argument that perhaps avoiding politics and connecting on topics that avoid making the inparty and outparty identities may disarm the use of negative stereotypes to describe the outparty.

Table A.14: Robustness Tests using Full Blocks for Conversation's Effect on Perceptions of the Outparty (Study 2): Average Treatment Effect Estimates and Heterogeneous Treatment Effect Estimates by Topic

	Negative Trait Avg.		Mean		Closeminded		Hypocritical		Selfish	
Conversation	−0.36*	−0.23	−0.50*	−0.32	−0.36*	−0.11	−0.28*	−0.28*	−0.29*	−0.19
	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.17)	(0.12)	(0.15)	(0.10)	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.15)
Topic (Non-political)	−0.09	0.04	−0.14	0.04	−0.19	0.07	−0.09	−0.09	0.03	0.14
	(0.09)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.17)	(0.12)	(0.16)	(0.10)	(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.16)
Conversation × Topic (Non-political)		−0.26		−0.35		−0.51*		0.01		−0.20
		(0.18)		(0.23)		(0.23)		(0.21)		(0.22)
Num.Obs.	296	296	296	296	296	296	296	296	296	296

	Positive Trait Avg.		Honest		Openminded		Intelligent		Patriotic	
Conversation	0.25*	0.17	0.35*	0.39*	0.31*	0.16	0.26*	0.14	0.06	−0.03
	(0.10)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.17)	(0.13)	(0.18)	(0.13)	(0.17)	(0.14)	(0.21)
Topic (Non-political)	0.15	0.07	0.05	0.09	0.18	0.03	0.11	−0.01	0.25	0.16
	(0.10)	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.16)	(0.13)	(0.19)	(0.13)	(0.17)	(0.14)	(0.22)
Conversation × Topic (Non-political)		0.16		−0.08		0.30		0.26		0.18
		(0.19)		(0.24)		(0.25)		(0.25)		(0.28)
Num.Obs.	296	296	296	296	296	296	296	296	296	296

Note: p < 0.05. Table reports linear model cofficient estimates and standard errors in parentheses clustered for conversation partners. Models include blocked fixed effects.

Table A.15: Robustness Tests using Full Blocks for Conversation's Effect on Perceptions of the Outparty (Study 2): Conditional Average Treatment Effect Estimates by Topic

Outcome	Est.	Std. Err.	Stat.	p-value	95% CI	DF	N	RI p-val	RI p-val for Difference
Negative Trait Avg.									
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.49	0.10	-4.82	<0.01	[-0.70,-0.28]	37.00	148	<0.01	0.13
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.23	0.08	-2.89	0.01	[-0.38, -0.07]	37.00	148	0.05	
Mean									
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.68	0.13	-5.36	<0.01	[-0.93, -0.42]	37.00	148	<0.01	0.08
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.32	0.10	-3.10	<0.01	[-0.54, -0.11]	37.00	148	0.04	
Closeminded									
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.62	0.11	-5.50	<0.01	[-0.85, -0.39]	37.00	148	<0.01	0.04
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.11	0.12	-0.94	0.36	[-0.34, 0.13]	37.00	148	0.30	
Hypocritical									
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.27	0.11	-2.56	0.01	[-0.48, -0.06]	37.00	148	0.10	0.54
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.28	0.07	-3.83	<0.01	[-0.43, -0.13]	37.00	148	0.07	
Selfish									
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.39	0.12	-3.18	<0.01	[-0.64, -0.14]	37.00	148	0.02	0.24
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.19	0.12	-1.60	0.12	[-0.43, 0.05]	37.00	148	0.13	
Positive Trait Avg.									
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.33	0.11	3.06	<0.01	[0.11, 0.54]	37.00	148	0.02	0.22
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.17	0.10	1.72	0.09	[-0.03, 0.36]	37.00	148	0.15	
Honest									
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.31	0.11	2.77	0.01	[0.08, 0.54]	37.00	148	0.02	0.54
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.39	0.11	3.52	<0.01	[0.17, 0.62]	37.00	148	0.02	
Openminded									
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.46	0.14	3.23	<0.01	[0.17, 0.75]	37.00	148	<0.01	0.11
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.16	0.14	1.15	0.26	[-0.12, 0.45]	37.00	148	0.23	
Intelligent									
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.39	0.14	2.90	0.01	[0.12, 0.67]	37.00	148	0.02	0.19
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.14	0.11	1.22	0.23	[-0.09, 0.36]	37.00	148	0.20	
Patriotic									
Non-political actual vs. imagined conversation	0.15	0.16	0.93	0.36	[-0.18, 0.47]	37.00	148	0.22	0.26
Political actual vs. imagined conversation	-0.03	0.18	-0.15	0.88	[-0.40, 0.34]	37.00	148	0.55	

Note: Table reports blocked difference-in-means estimates and 95% confidence intervals estimating conditional average treatment effects of conversation by topic in Study 2. Standard errors are clustered for conversation partners. Final two columns of table report preregistered randomization inference hypothesis tests with one-tailed p-values, approximated with 10,000 simulations.

Appendix Q   Durability

In Study 2, I recontacted participants seven days after their actual or imagined conversation. Table A.16 shows that while the average treatment effect of actual, relative to imagined, conversation was still positive after seven days, it was not statistically significant. Likewise, while non-political conversation's has a larger, positive effect at seven days, it is not a significant difference from political conversation.

Similar experiments with short conversation interventions have found treatment effects persisted for three days (Rossiter and Carlson 2022), but not three months (Santoro and Broockman 2022). Moreover, a more intense, in-person, hour-long intervention had effects that persisted for at least a week (Levendusky and Stecula 2021). The null findings for seven-day durability in this study are important because, together with other studies, the literature is finding the bounds of the effects of conversation interventions. Future studies may specifically seek to understand the features of cross-partisan conversation, such as the length or modality, that make their effects more or less durable.

Table A.16: Durability of Conversation's Effect on Outparty Affect (Study 2)

	Change in Outparty Affect after Seven Days	
Conversation	0.99	0.30
	(1.29)	(1.92)
Topic (Non-political)	−0.69	−1.36
	(1.21)	(1.73)
Conversation × Topic (Non-political)		1.39
		(2.50)
Num.Obs.	508	508

Note: p < 0.05. Table reports linear model cofficient estimates and standard errors in parentheses clustered for conversation partners. Models include blocked fixed effects.

Appendix R   Full Table for Potential Mechanisms in Figure 7

Table A.17 reports the full table of results for Figure 7. Each row is an estimated treatment effect of non-political conversation relative to political conversation for a different, preregistered exploratory mechanism. For comparability, all outcome measures are standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one, thus effect sizes can be interpreted as standard deviations.

Appendix S   Downstream Outcomes

Full Table for Figure 8

In Study 2, participants were asked about their willingness to have future conversations with outpartisans. To assess willingness to have future non-political conversations, I asked about willingness to talk about "family," as it is akin to the non-political conversation prompt of meaning of life in the experiment. Likewise, to assess willingness to have future political conversations, I asked abouf "immigration," as that was the political topic prompt. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate their agreement on a five point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) for the following questions: "I am willing to have a conversation about my family with a person that

Table A.17: Potential Differing Mechanisms of Non-Political and Political Conversation

Outcome	Est.	Std. Err.	Stat.	p-value	95% CI	DF	N
Self-disclosed to partner	1.02	0.10	10.64	<0.01	[0.83, 1.21]	172.49	350
Personalized partner	0.54	0.11	4.82	<0.01	[0.32, 0.76]	172.49	350
Empathized with partner	0.39	0.13	3.14	<0.01	[0.15, 0.64]	172.49	350
Conversation was positive/good	0.39	0.12	3.26	<0.01	[0.15, 0.62]	172.49	350
Did not feel anxiety	0.14	0.11	1.34	0.18	[-0.07, 0.35]	172.49	350
Learned about outparty	-0.42	0.11	-3.92	<0.01	[-0.63, -0.21]	172.49	350

Note: Table reports six preregistered, exploratory mechanism tests. Table reports difference-in-means estimates and 95% confidence intervals comparing all full non-political and political conversations in Study 2. Sample size was 350 for each analysis, with 178 participants in non-political conversation and 172 in political conversation. Standard errors are clustered for conversation partners. For comparability, all outcome measures are standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one, thus effect sizes can be interpreted as standard deviations.

identifies as [Democrat/Republican]" and "I am willing to have a conversation about immigration with a person that identifies as [Democrat/Republican]." In Study 1, participants were asked about their willingness to talk politics again with their assigned conversation partner, asking agreement on a five point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) for the statement "I would chat with my conversation partner about politics." Table A.18 reports the full table of results for Figure 8 for these outcomes. For Study 2 outcomes, Figure A.3 displays a summary of the outcomes by conversation topic. As discussed in the main text, having a conversation lowered the barrier to having a future, similar conversation, demonstrating the benefits of political conversation relative to avoiding political topics.

Table A.18: Topic of Conversation's Effect on Willingness to Have Future Cross-Partisan Conversation

Outcome & Study	Est.	Std. Err.	Stat.	p-value	95% CI	DF	N
Future political conversation with partner (Study 1)	-0.25	0.12	-2.03	0.04	[-0.49, -0.01]	152.00	308
Future political conversation with outpartisan (Study 2)	-0.25	0.11	-2.29	0.02	[-0.46, -0.03]	172.79	350
Future non-political conversation with outpartisan (Study 2)	0.42	0.10	3.95	<0.01	[0.21, 0.62]	172.79	350

Note: Table reports difference-in-means estimates and 95% confidence intervals comparing all full non-political and political conversations in Study 1 (row 1) and Study 2 (rows 2-3). Study 2 had 178 participants in non-political conversation and 172 in political conversation. Study 1 had 154 participants in each condition. Standard errors are clustered for conversation partners. For comparability, all outcome measures are standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one, thus effect sizes can be interpreted as standard deviations.

Other Preregistered Hypotheses

I preregistered expectations about conversation's effect on downstream political outcomes. While there is value in looking at a wide array of downstream outcomes, I focus specifically on two that I expected conversations with outpartisans could affect: willingness to have future cross-partisan conversation and perceptions of bipartisanship. Willingess to have future conversations is the

Figure A.3: Willingness to Have Future Political Conversation by Conversation Topic

(a) Willing to Have Non-Political Conversation

(b) Willing to Have Political Conversation
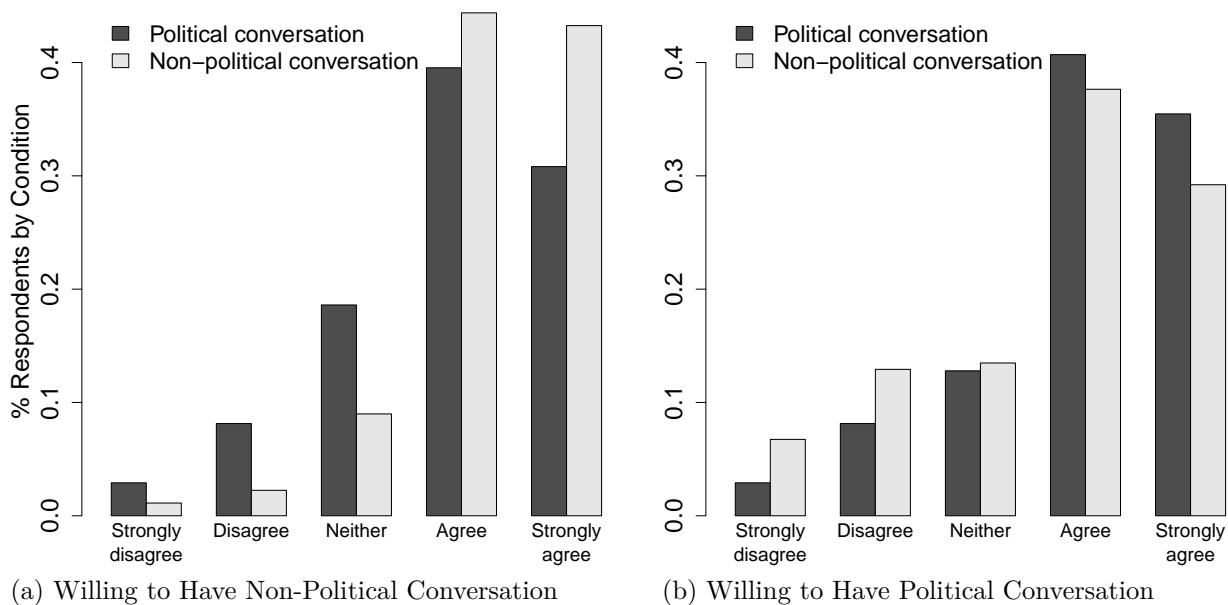
Note: Description of agreement with "willing to have future conversation" statements for the two conversation conditions in Study 2. Panel (a) shows willingness to have non-political conversation, and panel (b) shows willingness to have future political conversation.

most theoretically proximate outcome. Having a conversation could lower the barrier to future conversations. The specific question wording for willingness to have future conversations with outpartisans is in Section S. To assess the scope of what cross-partisan conversation can affect, I also asked about perceptions of bipartisanship. In line with my argument, I did not ask about willingness to compromise, but instead asked about perceptions of alignment in political goals. Compromise implies disagreement and making concessions to work together. I specifically asked about how often concessions are *not* needed because citizens or parties can agree and cooperate. In line with my argument, if conversation differentiates partisans from the perception of an extreme, homogeneous outparty, then that could affect perceptions that partisans' political goals are not all that different from other citizens. To futher assess the scope of what cross-partisan conversation can affect, I asked about bipartisanship among the parties, with the idea that this is a plausible, but tougher outcome for a single conversation to affect. In all, I intended to bound the effects of a single cross-partisan conversation.

The specific question wording for perceptions of bipartisanship amongst partisans was: "How frequently do you think that the political goals of citizens that identify as Democrats and those that identify as Republicans are compatible? Goals are compatible when taking a step forward for one does not require a step back for the other." The question wording for perceptions of bipartisanship among elites was: "How frequently do you think that the political goals of the Democratic party and the Republican party are compatible? Goals are compatible when taking a step forward for one does not require a step back for the other." Response options were on a five point scale from Never (1) to Always (5).

I first delineated expectations for these outcomes conditional on topic. I expected that actual political conversation, relative to imagined political conversation, would (1) increase willingness to have future cross-partisan political conversation, (2) increase willingness to have future cross-partisan

Figure A.4: Effect of Conversation on Downstream Outcomes Given Topic
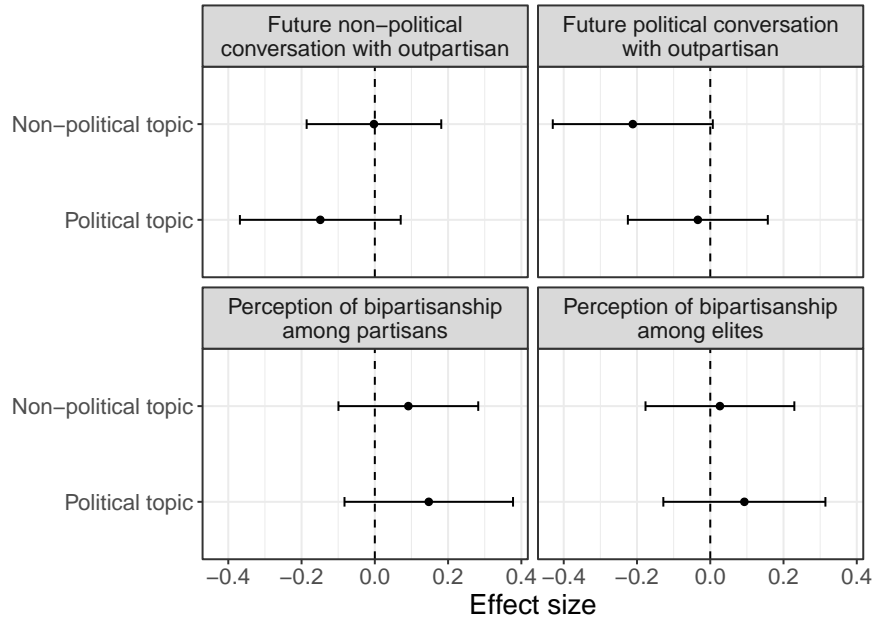
Note: Results for preregistered expectations about conversation's effect on downstream political outcomes. Figure displays difference-in-means estimates and 95% confidence intervals for the effect of actual conversation, relative to imagined conversation, conditional on topic for four downstream outcomes. Standard errors are clustered for conversation partners. For comparability, all outcome measures are standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one, thus effect sizes can be interpreted as standard deviations.

non-political conversation, and (3) increase perceptions of bipartisanship. I had parallel expectations for actual non-political conversation, relative to imagined non-political conversation.

In addition to these expectations for the effect of conversation conditional on topic, I also preregistered expectations that they effects of conversation would *differ* by topic. I expected that a social experience with an outpartisan, and especially about politics itself–where the dividing lines stem from–could be especially potent on politically-relevant downstream outcomes. Specifically, I hypothesized that political conversation would have a stronger effect than non-political conversation on willingness to have future *political* conversations and perceptions of bipartisanship. For willingness to have future non-political conversations, I hypothesized instead that non-political conversation would have a stronger effect than political conversation.

Simply put, I do not find support for any of these preregistered hypotheses, as shown in Figure A.4 and Table A.19. Figure A.4 displays the estimated effect of actual conversation, relative to imagined conversation, conditional on topic. The effect of conversation is not significant across the board. Table A.19 shows the interaction between conversation and topic is not significant, as well. Thus, I do not find evidence to suggest political conversation has a stronger effect on the politcal downstream outcomes. While not reaching statistical significance, I note that the point estimates are in line with my expectations about political conversation's unique benefits. The effect of political conversation is *not* stronger than non-political conversation on willingness to have future *non-political* conversations (as expected). However, this pattern flips for willingness to have future *political* conversation, as expected – the effect of political conversation on this outcome is larger than

Table A.19: Differential Effect of Conversation on Downstream Outcomes Depending on Topic

	Willingness for Future Convo		Bipartisanship Attitudes	
	Non-political	Political	Partisans	Elites
Conversation	−0.21	−0.07	0.12	0.08
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Topic (Non-political)	0.22	−0.06	−0.01	0.07
	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.10)
Conversation x Topic (Non-political)	0.27	−0.15	−0.04	−0.07
	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.15)
Num.Obs.	739	740	740	740

* p < 0.05

Note: * p < 0.05. Linear model regression coefficients, including blocked fixed effects and HC2 robust standard errors clustered at the partnership level for individuals assigned to a conversation condition. Conversation is 1 if the participant was assigned to actual conversation with outparty member and 0 if the participant was assigned to imagined conversation. Partisanship is 1 if Republican and 0 if Democrat.

the effect of non-political conversation. Finally, the effect of political conversation is larger than non-political conversation for both bipartisanship outcomes. However, these are not statistically significant interactions, thus future research is needed to futher examine these patterns.

While I do not find statistically significant evidence that cross-partisan conversation had a stronger effect than imagined conversation, that does not imply political conversation has no benefits for these outcomes. When examing the effect of *topic* amongst actual conversations in the experiment, I find support for my argument that political conversations in particular have some unique benefits for downstream political outcomes, as shown in Figure 8 and discussed in the main text.

Appendix T   Partnership Agreement

In this Appendix I consider how levels of agreement on the issue of gun control in Study 1 might lead to heterogeneous treatment effects. I do so for both pre-treatment measures of agreement and post-treatment agreement within the conversation itself. I code a partnership as having "similar" or "different" views pre-treatment by splitting partnership-level measures of agreement at the mean. The agreement measure is the absolute difference between each individual's mean response to six gun control proposal questions asked pre-treatment. In Figure A.5, we see that partners who agree pre-treatment are no more likely to improve their affect than those who disagreed.

To further assess the impact of agreeing on the topic of gun control, I examined agreement within the conversation itself. I note that this is post-treatment, thus results should be interpreted cautiously. I hand coded each message sent in the political and non-political conversations for whether the message expressed agreement, disagreement, or neither. For each transcript, I then created an agreement score: (# of messages expressing agreement - # of messages expressing disagreement)/(# of messages in transcript). Finally, I split this variable at the mean to dichotomize conversation-level agreement. Figure A.6 presents boxplots of this result. We see that agreement

Figure A.5: Pre-Treatment Agreement on Gun Control
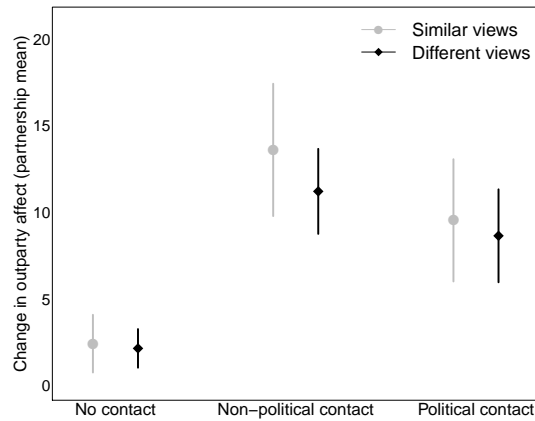
and disagreement within the non-political conversations does not correlated with changes in outparty affect. However, conversations that disagree about gun control improve their outparty affect less than those that agree.

It is understandable that political disagreement that sufaces within a conversation would dampen positive effects of that social experience. It is left to future research to understand why some conversations may decide to dive into this disagreement and some might not, in light of the finding that there are no heterogeneous treatment effects depending on *pre-treatment* agreement on the issue.

Figure A.6: Agreement within Conversations
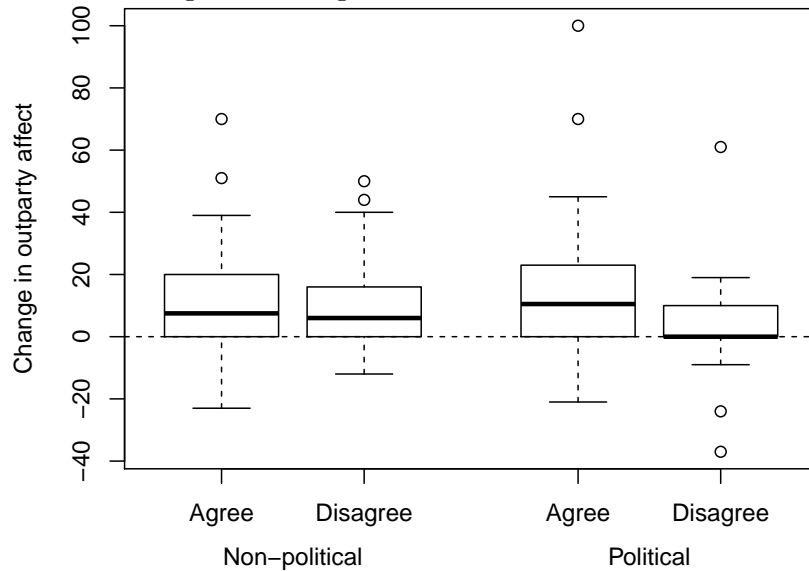
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