

When Is Changing Policy Positions Costly for Politicians? Experimental Evidence *

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Abstract

Although changing policy positions is often thought of as costly for politicians, this may not always be the case. We present findings from two survey experiments designed to assess how people respond to politicians who change positions on an issue. We examine the direct effects of position changes on both summary evaluations of a candidate and ratings of a candidate's character. We find that the effect of changing positions varies across issues and that the passage of time attenuates the negative effects of a change of position. We also find that although individual voters prefer a candidate who moves closer to their own preferred policy position to one who sticks to a disliked policy position, in the aggregate changing policy positions may be costly unless the prospective new position is supported by a supermajority of the public.

There is no shortage of normative claims about how representatives should behave. Some have argued that representatives should lead the public, using their principled, expert judgment to make well-reasoned decisions rather than blindly following public opinion (Burke 1854). Others conceive of the representation relationship as akin to a contract in which candidates offer competing menus of policy positions, with voters selecting their preferred candidate based on stated policy positions under the expectation that elected officials will follow through on their campaign promises. Yet, few argue that representatives should be steadfastly unwilling to alter their policy positions, and anecdotal evidence implies that politicians believe that changing positions is wise in some circumstances. For instance, running in a 2010 Republican U.S. Senate primary in Illinois, Congressman Mark Kirk publicly expressed a willingness to change his supportive position on an environmental bill favored by the Democratic Party, possibly because he thought that this new position would appeal to conservative voters. Politicians at times even change positions on issues that are often thought of as being rooted in deeply held principles, such as same-sex marriage and abortion: during his second term, President Obama publically announced that his position on same-sex marriage had “evolved” and in early 2015 Democratic Ohio Representative Tim Ryan announced that he was abandoning his long-held pro-life position.

Despite their prevalence in American politics, the consequences of politicians’ position changes are not well-understood. We engage a straightforward question: When should politicians expect to be rewarded for changing positions on an issue, and when might they expect to be punished? We report findings from two survey experiments designed to assess the conditions that shape public responses to politicians who have changed positions on an issue. We focus our attention on three factors that may shape public responses to changes in policy positioning.

The first is whether the politician has adopted a position that is closer to the voter’s own preferences, or if the politician has instead moved in the “wrong” direction from the voter’s perspective. Our findings suggest that, from the perspective of an individual voter, the benefits of a representative moving closer to the voter’s preferred policy tend to outweigh the costs associated with changing positions. However, calculations extrapolated from our experimental findings suggest that *in the*

aggregate—at least on some issues—politicians are likely to receive a net penalty for changing positions on an issue unless the prospective new position is supported by a sizable supermajority of the public.

The second factor we evaluate is whether the amount of time elapsed since the position change occurred affects the extent to which individuals are inclined to punish a politician for his or her inconsistency. Assuming that changing policy positions is suggestive of a politician’s lack of steadfastness or leadership qualities, a more recent policy change may send a stronger signal about the politician’s character¹ than one occurring years in the past. The evidence from our first experiment supports this expectation.

The third factor we examine is the type of issue on which the change of position occurs. Our findings suggest that people are more forgiving of changes in positions on more complex issues. Specifically, on the issues of abortion and raising the Social Security retirement age, we find that candidates who change their positions are evaluated significantly less favorably. In contrast, we find that although people evaluate a candidate who shares their preferred position on how to deal with ISIS or nuclear energy policy more favorably, the effect of a candidate having changed positions on these two issues is statistically indistinguishable from zero. In short, people appear to condition their responsiveness to position changes based at least in part on whether they are confident in their own ability to evaluate policy in the area.

We also assess the breadth of opinions that individuals update about a position-changing politician. We find that a change in one policy position leads to a fairly consistent effect across a range of measures we use to capture overall assessment of a politician, including opinions about whether the politician is likely to change his or her position again in the future. Importantly, with regard to the likelihood of future position changes we find that the effect of a change in one policy area also affects prospective judgments about the likelihood of change in others, though these spill-over effects are

¹ We use the term “character” to generally refer to the politician’s nature or makeup. As such, our use of the term is broader than its use in theoretical models that define a politician’s “character” as being committed to a campaign platform (e.g., Kartik and McAfee 2007).

particularly prominent within the same policy domain. However, our evidence suggests that whether people view a likely future change of position as problematic depends heavily on their feelings about the substance of the politician's current position.

Changing Policy Positions: Public Preferences, Timing, and Issue Type

Candidates, pundits, and others often cast politicians' changes of positions in an unfavorable light. For example, during the 2004 presidential campaign, the Bush campaign had a great deal of success painting John Kerry as a "flip-flopper"—a politician who happily changes policy stances when the political winds shift. Some empirical research finds that people tend to at least believe that others value consistency in candidate positioning (McCaul et al. 1995). Other work finds that candidates who change policy positions are, in fact, viewed less favorably and perceived as less trustworthy (Tomz and Van Houweling 2010). In addition, politicians who maintain consistent positions tend to be seen as more "decisive" (Hoffman and Carver 1984) and some models posit that voters are attracted to candidates who demonstrate "character" through a willingness to stick to their positions even when they are unpopular (Kartik and McAfee 2007). In contrast, changing positions (Carlson and Dolan 1985) or taking "out of character" actions (Sigelman and Sigelman 1986) can negatively affect ratings of a politician's likeability and honesty.² A past change in position on a given issue may also lead voters to believe that the politician will alter his or her position on that or other issues in the future (Hummel 2010). However, existing work finds that voters do not necessarily view uncertainty regarding the positions a candidate will take in the future as problematic (Tomz and Van Houweling 2010)—a matter we revisit in the analysis we present below.

In the studies we report below we examine how three factors—the individual's own policy preference, the amount of time that has elapsed since the position change, and the type of issue on which the politician changes positions—affect both broad evaluations of a candidate and assessments of the

² Sigelman and Sigelman (1986) also note, however, that "out-of-character" acts can raise respondents' assessments of a (fictional) president's "flexibility and open-mindedness."

likelihood that he or she will change positions in the future (on the issue where the policy change occurred, as well as on other issues).

The Role of Substantive Policy Preferences

In order to understand how voters might respond to a candidate who changes position, it is important to consider the intersection between a candidate or elected official's decision to change positions and voters' own substantive policy preferences. A large body of work finds that people tend to prefer politicians whose policy stances mirror their own (Downs 1957). Other work finds that politicians understand this dynamic. For example, politicians appear to believe they have incentives to withhold information about positions they know to be inconsistent with a voter's preferences— particularly on issues where they might easily be depicted by opponents as being out-of-step with their constituents (Rogers and Nickerson 2013; Franklin 1991).

Because voters vary in their preferences, when a politician changes positions on an issue, some voters will tend to prefer the new position, while others will prefer the original position. Previous work finds that voters who support a politician's new position tend to evaluate the candidate differently than a voter who preferred the politician's original position. Specifically, a number of studies have found that voters value *present* agreement between the politician's position and their own significantly more than they value whether the politician has previously changed his or her mind on either domestic (Hoffman and Carver 1984; McCaul et al. 1995; Tomz and Van Houweling 2010) or foreign (Croco 2013; Croco and Gartner 2014) policy issues. Thus, among those who prefer the politician's new position, the negative effect of changing positions on an issue may be outweighed by the positive effect associated with substantive policy agreement.

It is important to note that politicians are rarely concerned with the way in which their positioning will affect how a single voter evaluates them. Instead, they are likely concerned with assessing whether the overall benefits of espousing a popular position outweigh the costs of switching. Considering how the effects we identify might affect a politicians' broad standing—as opposed to confining ourselves to

examining how a position change affects how a single voter evaluates the politician—is therefore important. Although the penalty associated with changing positions may be modest for an individual who agrees with the substance of the new position (or even outweighed by the positive effect of policy agreement), those who disagree with the new position may penalize the politician particularly sharply. We consider these dynamics by using the estimates drawn from our experimental designs to provide a sense of the conditions under which we should expect to see a politician change positions. How much of the public needs to support a prospective new position for the costs associated with changing positions to be outweighed by the benefits of adopting a more popular position?

Conditioning Effects of the Passage of Time and Issue Type

We also consider whether the timing of the change in position is consequential. The more recently a position shift occurred, the more likely it may be to raise questions about the politician's character or "true" preferences. From the perspective of a voter, a recent change in position may be seen as a signal of present day opportunism or lack of character, but over time this shift in policy positioning may be viewed as a decreasingly useful signal of the politician's present-day character. Some work has found evidence of this type of dynamic in the domain of political scandals. For instance, Doherty, Dowling, and Miller (2014) found that people are more forgiving of sex scandals that occurred long ago than more recent scandals.³ No work that we are aware of has examined whether the timing of a position change affects how people evaluate the politician. We expect people to penalize a politician less severely for having changed positions long ago (20 years ago in our experiment) than for having changed positions more recently (in the last year).

The final factor we consider pertains to the type of issue on which a politician has changed positions. Elected officials are expected to make policies in a wide array of issue domains that vary in their salience, complexity, and other characteristics. Findings from previous work have offered mixed

³ However, this effect is conditional: people are no more forgiving of financial scandals when they occurred long ago.

evidence regarding whether the effects of politicians' changing positions varies across issues. In the American context, Tomz and Van Houweling (2010) present evidence that voters respond similarly to changes of position on abortion and tax policy (raising taxes on high income households). However, Tavits (2007) found that voters appear to differentiate between situations in which party policy shifts occur on matters that voters are likely to see as rooted in pragmatism, rather than deeply held principles, and punish the latter more harshly. Other work focusing on foreign policy positioning finds that voters evaluate a politician based on his or her *current* positions, regardless of whether those positions have changed (Croco 2013; Croco and Gartner 2014). Thus, there is reason to suspect that the effect of changing positions depends on the characteristics of the issue at hand, perhaps including factors such as whether the issue area is one where learning new information may justify changing positions (Levendusky and Horowitz 2012).

In line with this expectation, Tomz and Van Houweling (2010) find that people are more forgiving of repositioning on issues that they deem to be of high importance—perhaps because the weight they attach to policy agreement on these issues drowns out any negative effects associated with inconsistency. Here we focus on the question of whether people are more forgiving of changes of position on issues that they view as complex. A robust literature has cataloged the knowledge short-comings of the American public (Delli-Carpini and Keeter 1996), and there is reason to suspect that people recognize the limitations of their own understanding of the policy landscape (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002). We therefore expect that voters are less inclined to punish a politician for changes of position on issues where they see themselves as particularly unprepared to evaluate policy options.

This expectation is consistent with existing findings. Although Tomz and Van Houweling use two issues that differ in important ways, people may view the issues of abortion and whether or not to raise taxes on high-income earners as relatively simple matters, and may therefore feel confident that their own preferences are well-informed. In contrast, the studies that find null effects of changing positions have typically focused on changes of position in the domain of foreign policy—a policy area that people are likely to view as important, but also as complex. This suggests that, when it comes to the effect of a

candidate changing positions on an issue, the complexity of the issue may matter as much, or more than, whether the individual views the issue as important or whether they see it as moral or pragmatic in nature. In short, we expect voters to be less inclined to punish a change in position if it occurs on a “hard” issue that they see as complex and difficult to evaluate (Carmines and Stimson 1980). In these cases, voters may be more likely to defer to the expertise of the politician and view position shifts as necessary adaptations to new information or changing conditions (Gerber, Huber, Doherty, and Dowling 2011).

Experimental Design, Data, and Results

We report findings from two survey experiments, each of which was fielded online using convenience samples recruited from Amazon.com’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk) system. Although MTurk samples are not strictly representative of the national public (e.g., they tend to be younger and more liberal), they are substantially more diverse than student samples often used in experimental research (for a more detailed discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of using this subject pool for research purposes, see Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz 2012; Buhrmester, Kwang, and Gosling 2011; Krupnikov and Levine 2014). Summary statistics for the samples used are presented in Appendix Table A1.

In each experiment we presented respondents with the biography of a fictional state representative who ran for (or was considering a run for) a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. These vignettes experimentally manipulated whether the representative had changed positions on a policy matter and, if so, some additional aspect of that position change. The first experiment focused on assessing whether the passage of time—how long ago the change of position occurred—moderates responses to a politician changing positions on a policy. The second experiment allows us to assess whether the effect of changing positions varies across policy areas and issues.

Study 1: Changes of Position and the Passage of Time

The first experiment was conducted from August 12-14, 2013. Of the 1,031 respondents who completed the survey from a computer with a U.S.-based IP address and provided responses to some

items in the survey, 877 provided usable responses to all of the items we use in our analysis.⁴ The vignette used in this study described fictional state representative Mark Jones as a long-serving (in office since 1991) and legislatively active state representative who was considering running for a U.S. House seat. The vignette randomly manipulated Jones' position on three policy issues: 1) raising the Social Security retirement age (support or oppose), 2) building more nuclear power plants (support or oppose), and 3) abortion (pro-life or pro-choice).

Jones' experimentally manipulated position on abortion was used in concert with a pre-treatment measure of the respondent's own policy preference to create a measure of randomly assigned policy *Agreement* on abortion. For example, respondents who described themselves as pro-choice and were presented with a representative who was also described as pro-choice (see the Appendix for all question wording) are scored as 1 on the *Agreement: Abortion* measure, whereas pro-life respondents presented with a pro-choice politician are scored as 0. Respondent preferences regarding raising the Social Security retirement age and building more nuclear power plants were measured on four point scales ranging from strongly oppose to strongly support. These pre-treatment measures, in tandem with Jones' experimentally manipulated position, were used to create measures of policy agreement on these issues, ranging from -1 to 1.⁵

The final paragraph of the vignette indicated that Jones' likely opponent had recently criticized him and "repeatedly questioned Jones' ability to provide the leadership the public expects representatives to show." In the *Change of Position* conditions these criticisms were followed by a brief statement indicating that Jones had changed his position on abortion. In two conditions the change in position was

⁴ A multinomial logit model predicting treatment assignment (to one of the five treatment conditions described below) with an array of pre-treatment demographic measures (age, gender, race, education, income, income missing, political ideology, party identification, and political interest) suggested some covariate imbalance ($p=.042$ for test of joint significance of the model). This imbalance was driven primarily by imbalance in respondent race across conditions. In the analysis we report below we include controls for this vector of demographic measures. Identical models excluding these controls yield substantively similar results.

⁵ For example, -1 indicates that the respondent either strongly supported or strongly opposed the policy and was presented with a representative who adopted the opposite position; 1 indicates that the respondent had a strong preference and agreed with the representative's position. Respondents indicating that they either "somewhat" supported or opposed the policy described were scored as -.33 or .33, depending on whether they agreed with the representative's position.

described as taking place about 20 years earlier (in 1993)—with Jones having changed his position from “pro-choice” to “pro-life” in one condition and “pro-life” to “pro-choice” in the other. The remaining two *Change of Position* conditions described the change in position as occurring recently (in 2012), again randomly assigning whether the change was from “pro-choice” to “pro-life” or vice versa.

After reading the vignette, respondent evaluations of Jones were measured using five items. The first question asked respondents how likely they would be to vote for Jones (very unlikely to very likely). We also asked respondents to rate how well Jones was doing as a representative (poor to excellent), and to rate Jones “as a person” (negative to positive). In each case, responses were measured on a seven-point scale. Two additional yes/no items measured whether the respondent viewed the representative as “honest and trustworthy enough to be a representative in the U.S. House” and whether the representative “would do a good job making tough decisions about policy matters.” Factor analysis of these items identified a single underlying component with an eigenvalue greater than 1. We applied orthogonal varimax rotation and used the resulting factor scores to predict a summary scale that captures respondents’ overall evaluations of Jones and transformed the scale to have a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1.

We present our analysis of the first experiment in Table 1. We regressed the summary *Evaluation of Candidate* measure on a series of measures constructed from the experimental treatments. The first three predictor variables are the measures of policy agreement described above. In addition we include indicators for the *Old* and *Recent Change of Position* treatments (respondents for whom no change in position was described serve as the excluded category).

[Table 1 about here]

Three notable findings emerge from the model presented in Table 1. First, the effects of policy agreement are large and statistically significant across the three issues. Focusing on the effects of agreement on abortion, respondents who agreed with the representative’s current position evaluated him approximately .80 standard deviations more favorably than respondents who disagreed with his current position. Second, both old (20 years ago) and recent changes of position led to less favorable evaluations

of the representative. The estimated effects associated with the old and new *Change of Position* treatments are $-.146$ ($p < .05$) and $-.370$ ($p < .01$), respectively (all reported p-values are from two-tailed tests). Last, supporting our expectation that people respond less favorably to recent changes in policy positions, the (negative) effect of the recent change is significantly larger than that associated with the older shift (two-tailed test of equality of coefficients: $p < .01$).

In addition, when we replicate this analysis separately for each of the five items used to construct the *Candidate Evaluation* scale, we observe substantively similar treatment effects for each of the five items (see Appendix Table A2). This analysis suggests that changes of position affect broad assessments of a representative's job performance and worthiness of electoral support, as indicated by the effects of the treatments on reported likelihood of voting for the representative and ratings of the job the representative is doing. Changes of position also negatively affect more specific assessments of the representative's character, including assessments of the target's trustworthiness, decisiveness, and broader personal qualities.⁶

In sum, the findings from this first study indicate that, all else equal, people evaluate a politician who has changed positions on abortion less favorably than one who has not. Our evidence also indicates that these negative responses are more pronounced when the change in position occurred recently, rather than long ago. We also note that the coefficient on *Agreement: Abortion* is substantially and significantly larger ($p < .01$) than the coefficient on either *Change of Position* indicator. This suggests that—at least on

⁶ In additional analysis, presented in Table A3 of the Appendix, we assess whether Policy Agreement moderated the effects of the *Change of Position* treatments. However, theoretically we might expect this interaction to be either positive or negative. If a change of position fosters doubts about the sincerity of a candidate's true current position we would expect a change of position to attenuate the positive relationship between policy agreement and evaluations of the candidate (negative interaction term). Alternately, current substantive policy agreement may attenuate the negative effect of having changed position (positive interaction term). We find no evidence of a statistically significant interaction between agreement on Abortion and either *Change of Position* treatment and including these terms does not jointly improve the fit of the model ($p = .627$; Table A3, column [1]). Nor do we find evidence that agreement with the representative's position on Social Security or nuclear power moderate the effects of a position change on Abortion (Table A3, column [2]). Unfortunately our data do not provide a way to determine whether these null findings are the product of off-setting positive and negative moderating effects or if no such moderating effects exist.

this issue—individuals prefer a politician who has changed to their preferred position to one who has maintained a position with which they disagree.

We illustrate this pattern in Figure 1 where we present mean ratings of the representative for individuals in each of the three position change conditions, broken out by whether the respondent agreed (gray bars) or disagreed (white bars) with the representative's current position. Moving from left to right in the figure it is clear that, among both groups, evaluations of the candidate are less favorable when he has changed positions—particularly when the change occurred recently. However, the figure also shows that respondents presented with a candidate who had only just recently shifted to their preferred position on abortion (far right gray bar in Figure 1) evaluated that candidate more favorably than those presented with a consistent candidate with whom they disagreed (far left white bar in Figure 1).⁷

[Figure 1 about here]

Study 2: Position Changes across Issues

The second experiment was fielded from December 16-21, 2014. Of the 1,505 respondents who completed the survey from a computer with a U.S.-based IP address and provided responses to some items in the survey, 1,222 provided usable responses to all of the items we use in our analysis. These respondents serve as the sample in the analysis we present here.⁸

The design of the second experiment was similar to the first. However, the vignette was modified to allow us to examine whether the effects of a change in policy position vary across issue areas. The vignette again described a fictional long-time state representative. In this case the representative was

⁷ Estimates drawn from a model regressing summary candidate evaluations on indicators for the *Change of Position* treatments, the *Agreement: Abortion* indicator, and interactions between *Agreement: Abortion* and each *Change of Position* measure indicate that this difference is statistically significant ($p = .036$; two-tailed test).

⁸ A multinomial logit model predicting treatment assignment (to the control or one of the four *Change of Position* treatment conditions) with an array of pre-treatment demographic measures (age, gender, race, education, income, income missing, political ideology, party identification, and political interest) found no evidence of covariate imbalance ($p = .694$ for test of joint significance of the model). For the sake of consistency with the analysis presented in the first experiment, in the analysis we report below we include controls for this full vector of demographic measures. Identical models excluding these controls yield substantively similar results.

described as having run for a U.S. House seat in the 2014 midterm elections. We randomly manipulated the representative's position on four issues selected to cover a range of policy domains: raising the Social Security retirement age, issuing more federal permits for the construction of nuclear power plants, laws that ensure that women have access to abortion under any circumstances, and sending ground troops into Iraq and Syria to fight Islamic State (ISIS) militants.

Finally, we randomly assigned whether the representative was described as having changed position on one of these issues and, if so, the direction of that change. After reading the vignette, respondents were asked to evaluate the representative using the same five items used in the first experiment. Factor analysis again indicated that these five measures tap a single underlying evaluative dimension. Following the approach used in the first experiment we use factor loadings to construct a summary scale with a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1. This scale of summary *Evaluations of Candidate* serves as our primary outcome of interest.

The design of the second experiment also allowed us to assess whether the importance respondents assign to an issue and their ratings of its complexity moderate their responses to a change of position on that issue. At the beginning of the survey—prior to reading the vignette—in addition to stating their position on a battery of issues (including those used in the vignette), respondents were asked to rate how important they thought each issue was on a scale ranging from 0 (not at all important) to 3 (one of the most important issues).⁹ They also rated how confident they were that they could effectively evaluate policies in various issue areas on a scale ranging from 0 (not at all confident) to 3 (very confident).¹⁰ As discussed above, each of these assessments may affect how people respond to learning that a candidate has changed positions on an issue. Those who see an issue as important may respond particularly unfavorably to a change in position (though Tomz and Van Houweling [2010] find evidence of the opposite dynamic). Here we are particularly interested in whether those who view an issue as

⁹ Question wording: “Regardless of what you think should or should not be done in each of the following areas, how important (relative to all other issues – not just those listed here) are the following issues to you?”

¹⁰ Question wording: “How confident are you that you have the knowledge and expertise to evaluate policy in each of the following areas?”

complex or feel incapable of sensibly evaluating policy in an area are more forgiving of a politician's change of position on that issue.

We begin our analysis by reporting mean respondent ratings of the importance of each of the four issues used in the vignette, as well as respondents' confidence in their own opinions. The ratings suggest that there was significant variation in how respondents viewed these issues (see Figure 2). Respondents viewed Social Security as the most important of these four issue areas, followed by dealing with ISIS (a high profile matter at the time the survey was fielded). Abortion and nuclear power were each, on average, rated as less important. In terms of respondents' confidence in their own ability to judge policies in these areas, on average people were by far most confident in their ability to assess abortion policy. Respondents viewed Social Security as the second least challenging issue area to evaluate, followed by dealing with ISIS, with policies related to nuclear power being viewed as the most challenging to evaluate (but not greatly different from ISIS). If position changes are most damaging in issue areas where people feel relatively confident in their own ability to make judgments about which policies are best, then Figure 2 suggests that position changes on issues like Social Security and abortion may be most damaging for a politician.

[Figure 2 about here]

We examine the effects of the experimental treatments in Table 2. In column (1) we present a model predicting summary candidate evaluations with measures of agreement on the four policy issues mentioned in the vignette and indicators for each of the four *Change of Position* treatments (with respondents in the condition where no change was described serving as the excluded category). As with the first experiment the policy agreement treatments each significantly and substantially affect evaluations of the candidate, with agreement on the issue of abortion exerting a particularly strong influence. The results also show that the Social Security and abortion *Change of Position* treatments each significantly and negatively affected evaluations of the candidate ($p < .05$ in each case). However, neither the ISIS nor the nuclear plant *Change of Position* treatment significantly affected evaluations of the candidate ($p = .281$ and $.535$, respectively).

[Table 2 about here]

Comparisons of the coefficients on the *Change of Position* and *Agreement* measures indicates that on each of the issues the effects of “strongly” agreeing with the politician’s current position, rather than “strongly” disagreeing on an issue (change from -1 to 1 on the scale used), are larger than the negative effects associated with the politician changing positions on that same issue ($p < .05$ for each comparison).¹¹ We illustrate this in Figure 3 where we present mean ratings of the target candidate by change of position condition. We present means separately for respondents who agreed (either strongly or not; gray bars) and disagreed (either strongly or not; white bars) with the target’s current position. As the figure illustrates, across the four issues respondents evaluated a candidate who had recently changed to their preferred position (far right gray bar within each set) more favorably than a candidate who was not described as having changed positions, but with whom they disagreed (far left white bar within each set).¹²

[Figure 3 about here]

Our findings across issues are also consistent with the theory that voters’ confidence in their own position affects how they view position changes by politicians. On the policies about which respondents reported high confidence (Social Security and abortion), we find that position changes resulted in a more negative assessment of the politician. In contrast, respondents did not significantly downgrade their evaluations of the politician in response to position changes on whether to use ground troops to fight ISIS or whether the federal government should issue more permits for nuclear power plant construction. This is notable given that respondents, on average, deemed ISIS an important policy matter. In addition, the fact

¹¹ In additional analysis we find that, as with the analysis presented in the first experiment, the treatments affected each of the five measures used to construct the *Evaluation of Candidate* scale similarly (see Appendix Table A4). As in the first experiment we find no evidence of a statistically meaningful interaction between the *Change of Position* and *Policy Agreement* measures. See Table A3, column (3) and footnote 6 above.

¹² For each issue we estimated models regressing summary candidate evaluations on a *Change of Position* indicator, a *Policy Agreement* indicator (excluding cases where respondents did not report a directional policy preference), and the interaction between the two. A target who had changed to the respondent’s preferred position was evaluated more favorably than one who was not described as having changed positions, but with whom the respondent disagreed (Social Security: $p = 0.288$; ISIS: $p < .01$; Nuclear Plants: $p = 0.065$; Abortion: $p < .01$; two-tailed tests).

that *Policy Agreement* on each of these issues *did* affect candidate evaluations suggests that people view these policy positions as relevant.

In column (2) of Table 2 we assess this pattern more directly by testing whether respondents' ratings of the *Importance* of each issue area and their subjective *Confidence* in their own ability to evaluate policies in each area moderate the effects of the *Change of Position* treatments. We do this by adding interactions between each of the *Change of Position* treatments and the corresponding importance and confidence measures.¹³ The coefficients on the *Importance x Change of Position* measures present no clear pattern (two are positive and two are negative) and do not approach conventional levels of statistical significance. This suggests that the importance an individual assigns an issue does not moderate the effect of a candidate's change of position. The coefficients on three out of the four *Confidence x Change of Position* measures are negative, suggesting that the more confidence an individual has in his or her own ability to assess policy in a given area the more negative their evaluation is of the position change. Only the coefficient on *Abortion: Confidence x Change of Position* reaches conventional levels of statistical significance, but the pattern is consistent for three of the four issue areas we tested (the only exception is for nuclear power plants).¹⁴ In sum, the results presented in Table 2 provide tentative support for our expectation that responses to candidate repositioning depend on the characteristics of the issue in question. Specifically, our evidence suggests that people respond particularly negatively to changes of positions on issues that they see as relatively easy to understand and evaluate.

This conclusion is bolstered by analysis collapsing across the four position change conditions. As discussed above, each respondent was assigned to one of four issue conditions. In the analysis presented in Appendix Table A5 we use measures of *Agreement on Policy*, and respondent *Confidence* and

¹³ We standardize the importance and confidence measures to each have a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1 prior to calculating these interaction terms. This allows us to interpret the coefficient on each *Change of Position* indicator as the estimated effect for those with mean levels of confidence and mean importance ratings.

¹⁴ Models entering only the Importance interactions or Confidence interactions yield substantively similar conclusions.

Importance ratings only on the issue to which they were assigned.¹⁵ In column (1) of Table A5 we regress the *Evaluation of Candidate* measure on a measure of randomly assigned *Agreement on Policy* and the *Change of Position* treatment. We also include *Confidence x Change of Position* and *Importance x Change of Position* interactions. The findings suggest that, although *Importance* ratings do not significantly moderate the effects of a *Change of Position*, reported *Confidence* does. Specifically, the effect of a *Change of Position* is significantly more negative among those who reported high levels of confidence in their ability to evaluate policy in their assigned issue area—a finding that persists in models controlling for interactions between the *Change of Position* treatment and respondents’ demographic characteristics (see column [2] of Table A5).¹⁶

Flip-flops and Perceived Likelihood of Future Changes

Thus far our analysis demonstrates that, all else equal, politicians who change positions on an issue can often expect to be evaluated less favorably than those who maintain a consistent position. The evidence presented in Tables 1 and 2 (as well as in Appendix Tables A2 and A4) shows that changes of positions affect broad evaluations of a candidate, as well as ratings of a candidate’s trustworthiness and ability to make difficult decisions. An additional question that we have not yet addressed pertains to whether these effects are tied to a perception that the candidate is likely to change their issue positions again in the future. If so, this should manifest in two ways. First, a candidate changing position on an issue should affect expectations about the likelihood of future position changes on that issue and, perhaps, inferences about the likelihood of a change of position on other issues. Second, the expectation that a

¹⁵ Note that respondents assigned to a “no position change” condition were, nonetheless, randomly assigned to an issue area. We use measures of agreement, confidence, and importance on this randomly assigned issue for these respondents. After creating these measures we rescaled the *Confidence* and *Importance* measures to have a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1.

¹⁶ There are several potential explanations for the fact that the *Confidence x Change of Position* interaction is substantial and statistically significant in the collapsed analysis presented in Appendix Table A5, but the interactions between separate measures of *Confidence* and the *Change of Position* treatments in Table 2 are not (with the exception of Abortion). Perhaps the most likely explanation is simply that the experimental design does not provide sufficient statistical power to identify these effects once they are disaggregated or to identify real differences in how confidence moderates responses to different types of issues.

candidate is likely to change positions on an issue should be tied to unfavorable evaluations of that candidate.

We examine the first of these two dynamics by estimating models analogous to those presented in column (1) of Tables 1 and 2, replacing the outcome *Evaluation of Candidate* with respondent ratings of the likelihood that the representative would change positions in the future (see Table 3). In columns (1) and (2) of Table 3 we use data from the first study. The model in column (1) indicates that those treated with either a recent or old change of position on abortion (the only manipulated change of position in Study 1) rated the politician as significantly and substantially more likely to change positions on abortion in the future than those presented with a politician who was not described as having changed positions. As was the case with the findings regarding candidate evaluations, the effects of a recent change in position are significantly larger than those associated with an older change of positions ($p < .01$).

[Table 3 about here]

In column (2) we specify a scale (mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1) of ratings of the likelihood of change of positions on issues other than abortion.¹⁷ We find that a change of position on abortion also led people to view the representative as more likely to change position on issues other than abortion. Again, the point estimate of the effect of the recent flip-flop is larger than that for the older change of position, however this difference falls short of conventional levels of statistical significance ($p = .113$). This finding is consistent with previous work finding that changes of position can have reputational “spill-over” effects—affecting not only how people evaluate a politician on that particular issue, but also how they interpret politicians’ positions on other issues (Tomz and Van Houweling 2010).

In columns (3)-(7) we use data from the second study. The models in columns (3)-(6) specify the outcome as the likelihood of change on each of the four issues where a change of position was possible; column (7) specifies a factor scale generated from ratings of likelihood of change on four additional

¹⁷ These items asked respondents to rate the likelihood of a change on seven additional issues: nuclear power, taxes, Social Security, Medicare, foreign policy, environmental policy, and immigration. Factor analysis indicated that these measures loaded onto a single underlying factor. Rotated factor scores were used to generate a scale of likelihood of change across these issues with a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1.

issues not used in the vignette (Medicaid, defense spending, environmental policy, and same sex marriage). Two notable findings emerge from these analyses. First, as in the first study, respondents treated with a change of position on any issue rated the representative as significantly more likely to change positions on a wide range of issues in the future. Second, the results in columns (3)-(6) demonstrate that the effects of a change of position on a given issue affect assessments of the likelihood of a future change on that issue more than a change of position on another issue ($p < .01$ for all comparisons). In other words, the effects of a change of position on perceived likelihood of a future change are strongest when the outcome is perceived likelihood of a future change *on that particular issue*.

In additional analysis, presented in Appendix Table A6, we conduct a seemingly unrelated regression analysis in which we specify identical models for each of the eight *Likely to Change* measures from Study 2 and compare the magnitude of the four *Change of Position* treatments both within and across models. The findings support the notion that the effects of flip-flops are, to some extent, domain specific and that, although the effects of a change of position on a given issue spills over to other issues, these effects are particularly prominent on other issues within the same policy domain. For example, the effect of the Social Security flip-flop treatment on inferences about the likelihood of a future change of position on Medicaid (column [2]) is greater than the effect of either the ISIS or nuclear power flip-flop treatment. Similarly, the effect of the Social Security flip-flop treatment is greater in columns (1) and (2) than in any other model. A similar pattern holds across the four pairs of similar policy issues (ISIS and defense spending; nuclear plants and environmental protection; abortion and same sex marriage).

These findings demonstrate that people view changes of position as signals that a politician is more likely to change positions again in the future (especially, but not only, on the specific policy area in question). But does the perception that a candidate is likely to change positions in the future explain the effects of position changes on broader evaluations of the candidate? In other words, do people evaluate candidates who have changed positions less favorably because they think they are likely to change positions again in the future? Our experimental designs are not structured in a way that would allow us to identify this type of causal relationship with certainty, as respondents' assessments of the likelihood that

the representative will change positions on an issue in the future and their summary evaluations of that politician were both measured post-treatment. However, examining the bivariate relationships between these measures can provide us with preliminary insight into the plausibility of this dynamic.

In Table 4 we consider the relationships between assessments of the likelihood of a future change on an issue and candidate evaluations focusing on the three policy positions that were manipulated in the first experiment, as well as the four that were manipulated in the second experiment. Pooling respondents across treatment conditions, we found a statistically significant ($p < .01$), negative relationship between perceived likelihood of a future change of position and candidate evaluations for the issues of abortion and nuclear power in the first experiment. Three of the remaining five correlations are small and fall well short of conventional levels of statistical significance. The remaining two approach statistical significance ($p < .10$), but one is negative (Social Security in Study 1) and the other is positive (ISIS in Study 2).

[Table 4 about here]

The findings presented earlier suggest that substantive policy preferences substantially affect candidate evaluations and that the positive effects of policy agreement tend to be larger than the negative effects of changing positions. This suggests that the relationship between perceptions about how likely a candidate is to change positions on a given issue in the future and evaluations of that candidate may depend on whether the individual agrees or disagrees with the candidate's current position.

When we disaggregate respondents according to whether they agreed or disagreed with the candidate's current stance (columns [2] and [3] of Table 4), we find evidence suggesting that whether people view a future change of position on an issue as desirable depends on their feelings about the candidate's current position on that issue. Among respondents who were treated with a candidate whose current position they agree with on a given issue (column [2]), the relationship between perceptions about the likelihood that the candidate would change positions on that issue in the future and evaluations of the candidate are consistently negative (but do not all reach conventional levels of statistical significance). In other words, the more likely a respondent thought it was that the candidate would change positions in the future, the lower their evaluations were of him *if* they agreed with his current position. In contrast, among

those who disagreed with the candidate's current position on the issue (column [3]), five of the seven correlations are *positive*—and three are statistically significant ($p < .05$, and an additional positive correlation approaches statistical significance [$p = .073$ for Social Security in Study 1]; neither of the two negative correlations approaches statistical significance). This suggests that those who disagreed with the candidate's position evaluated him more favorably if they thought it was likely that he would change his position in the future.

Again, given that both perceived likelihood of future change and ratings of the candidate were measured post-treatment, caution is warranted when interpreting these relationships. However, they are consistent with a dynamic where people do not view changes of position as inherently undesirable. Instead, the perception that a politician will change positions on an issue in the future is only viewed unfavorably insofar as such a change might move them away from a currently liked position.

When Should We Expect Politicians To Change Positions?

In both experiments we find evidence suggesting that how a person evaluates a candidate who has changed positions depends, in part, on how he or she feels about the substance of the new position. In each case we find that policy agreement significantly and substantially affects evaluations of the representative and that these positive effects are larger in magnitude than the negative effects associated with changing positions. However, the practical question a strategic politician faces pertains to the aggregate consequences of a change in position: when might a politician expect changing positions to improve his or her average standing with voters? We conclude our analysis by considering what our results suggest about the conditions under which we might expect a strategic politician to change positions.

The first experiment focused on a policy matter that was treated as dichotomous: respondents identified as “pro-choice” or “pro-life,” as did the target politician. We calculated the net benefits—average change in summary evaluation of the politician—of changing positions on this issue for various

hypothetical levels of public support for the prospective new position a politician may choose to adopt based on the model reported in Table 1, column (1).

Our point estimates (presented in Figure 4) suggest that the net effect of recently switching to a new position does not become positive until the point at which approximately 83 percent of the public supports the new position. Moreover, the net positive effect of a change is not statistically distinguishable from zero until public support reaches more than 95 percent. This suggests that, unless a position change occurs on an issue for which a representative's new position is overwhelmingly supported by voters, a change in position may be costly. In the case of an "old" change of position the estimated "break even" point is a scenario in which 63 percent of the public supports the new position, but the positive net effect of changing to a more popular position is not distinguishable from zero until the point at which just over 75 percent of the public supports the new position. Of course, politicians cannot go back in time to retroactively change their positions. However, if a representative is in a position where she can survive a near-term penalty for changing positions—and perhaps expects her current position to become increasingly unpopular with the public—she may reap long-term benefits even if only a modest majority of the public currently supports the new position.

[Figure 4 about here]

The second experiment provides additional insight into the conditions under which we might expect a politician to change positions. In that experiment we found evidence that suggests that the extent to which people penalize a change in positions depends on the issue in question. Because respondent policy preferences were measured on a 5-point scale, estimating the relationship between public preferences and the expected costs or benefits of changing position is somewhat more complicated than for the first experiment. For the purposes of exposition, in Figure 5, we posit that 20 percent of the public placed themselves at the mid-point of each scale (in our data the share of respondents placing themselves at the mid-point ranged from 17 percent [abortion] to 33 percent [nuclear plants]).¹⁸ We also posit that on

¹⁸ Because the policy position a politician adopts matters little to individuals who do not have a preference on the issue at hand, we should expect them to respond to a change in position unfavorably (or be indifferent to the change

each side of the preference scale the number of people stating strong and weak preferences are equal (e.g., if 60 percent support a prospective new position we assume that 30 percent strongly support and 30 percent somewhat support).¹⁹

[Figure 5 about here]

On the two issues where the negative effect of a change in position fell short of conventional levels of statistical significance—ISIS and nuclear power (panels B and C of Figure 5, respectively)—the point estimate for the net effect of changing to a more popular position becomes positive when public support for the new position (among those reporting a preference) is around 60 percent. However, largely as a product of the modest effect of policy agreement on these issues, the positive effect is not statistically distinguishable from zero until the point at which 90 percent of the public supports the prospective new position on ISIS. In the case of nuclear power, the positive effect of a change of positions is not distinguishable from zero even in a hypothetical situation where 100 percent of those stating an opinion support the prospective new position.

These calculations suggest similar conclusions in the case of raising the Social Security retirement age (panel A of Figure 5)—changing positions does not yield a net benefit that is statistically greater than zero, even when 100 percent of the public supports the prospective new position. Furthermore, because people respond quite unfavorably to changes of position on this issue, the estimated net effect does not even reach a point of indifference until a situation where 83 percent of the public supports the prospective new position.

at best). Thus, all else equal, the larger the share of voters who are indifferent on a given policy matter, the more damaging a change of position is likely to be.

¹⁹ If a politician faces a situation where a prospective new position is strongly supported by a large swath of the public, and only somewhat opposed by the rest, this calculus changes. For example, the estimates in Panel D of Figure 5 suggest that in a situation where the public is evenly divided between supporting and opposing a prospective new position on abortion, changing positions is expected to yield a net .238 unit penalty. However, if we posit that 40 percent of the public *strongly* supports the new position and 40 percent only *somewhat* oppose (with the remaining 20 percent being indifferent), this penalty is reduced to essentially zero (estimate = .006; p=.940).

Finally, on the issue of abortion (panel D of Figure 5) our findings are substantively similar to those found in the first experiment: our estimates do not suggest a net benefit of changing positions until a fairly substantial super-majority of the public (close to 70% of those reporting an opinion) support the new position. The positive net effect of changing positions is not distinguishable from zero until almost 80 percent of those stating a position support the prospective new position.

Discussion

Many observers posit that changing established policy positions can be costly for politicians. However, elected officials also face a tension between an expectation that they offer consistent and principled leadership on policy matters and an expectation that they be willing to change positions under some circumstances. The evidence presented above suggests that people tend to evaluate politicians who have changed positions on an issue less favorably than those who have not. However, these effects are contingent. In the first experiment we found evidence that more recent position changes impart stronger negative effects on candidate evaluations than those that occurred further in the past. In the second experiment we found evidence that the effect of changing positions varies across issues. This variation is consistent with the notion that people are less inclined to penalize changes of position on complex issues than changes on issues that are viewed as more accessible to the average citizen.

We also find that, from the perspective of an individual voter, the positive effects of agreeing with a politician's current position tend to outweigh the negative effects of the politician only having come to that position recently. Our analysis of the relationship between perceptions that a politician is likely to change positions in the future and evaluations of that candidate further reinforce the importance of substantive policy preferences. We find little support for the notion that people view prospective changes of position as inherently problematic. Instead that analysis suggested that people who agree with a politician's current position view the prospect of a future change of position as problematic, while those who disagree with the target's current position tend to view likely future changes as desirable.

Our estimates of the net effects of a change of position for various distributions of public opinion illustrates the importance of recognizing that the effects of policy agreement are a two-way street: a change in position is likely to please some voters and displease others. Importantly, the negative effects of a position change among those who disagree with the politician’s new position are likely to be stronger than the positive effects among those who support the new position because the evaluative benefits among those who support the new position are tempered by the negative effects of the change in position. Thus, there is reason to expect elected officials to be reluctant to change positions—particularly on less complex issues—outside of circumstances where a supermajority of the public supports the prospective new position or where a politician anticipates that public opinion is trending inexorably in a particular direction.²⁰

Our research design is not without limitations. For example, findings from survey experiments like those we report here may yield inflated estimates of the consequences of the real world correlates of the phenomena of interest (e.g., Barabas and Jerit 2010; Jerit, Barabas, and Clifford 2013). This limitation could be addressed by implementing a field experiment that compared the effectiveness of campaign advertisements (e.g., campaign mailers) that highlighted changes of position with those that emphasize policy positioning. In a similar vein, our “back of the envelope” calculations of when the aggregate effects of policy agreement are likely to outweigh the deleterious effects of position changes are just that—back of the envelope calculations based on estimates from our experiments. That said, even if the effects we identified in our studies inflate the apparent effects of our treatments, so long as our estimates reasonably capture the *relative magnitude* of the effects of policy agreement and changes of position, our calculations are instructive. In other words, the effect of changes of position would have to be inflated more than the effect of policy agreement (or vice versa) for the back of the envelope calculations to be biased. We have no reason to suspect that one effect would be inflated more than the other.

²⁰ For example, President Obama’s much publicized change of position on same-sex marriage may have stemmed in part from an expectation that public opposition to same-sex marriage will continue to wane.

Our experimental vignettes were also written such that information about the change in position immediately followed an attack made by the politician’s political opponent. One possibility is that the effects of a change in position would be different if the information about the position change was presented in a different context or by a different source (e.g., Bersinky et al. 2011; Miller 2010). Future work could also build on our findings by exploring voter responses to the communication dynamics that may play out when one politician accuses another of inconsistency and the accused politician has an opportunity to respond to those accusations (see, for example, Levendusky and Horowitz 2012).

In a similar vein, future work could examine whether views of a representative who changes policy position depend on whether the change makes the representative more or less ideologically consistent (or suggests that the representative is bucking, rather than toeing, the party line). The experiments we report here are not designed to address this question. However, we are able to leverage the fact that we manipulated the target’s position on multiple issues to offer tentative evidence regarding whether the effects of a change of position depended on whether the change made the target appear more ideologically consistent (see Appendix Table A7).²¹ Although we find little support for this type of conditionality, future work could more directly examine whether, for example, people respond differently to a representative who goes from opposing to supporting same-sex marriage if that representative is a Republican, rather than a Democrat.

These limitations aside, the findings we report here shed new light on the factors that shape public responses to candidates who change policy positions. Although people do value consistency, they are less inclined to punish representatives for changes in policy positions that occurred long ago, and are

²¹ Specifically, in columns (1) and (3) of Appendix Table A7 we run models analogous to those presented in column (1) of Tables 1 and 2, interacting the *Change of Position* indicators with an indicator for whether the target’s current pattern of policy positions indicated ideological consistency (the ideological valence of each issue was determined based on the relationship between respondents’ self-reported ideology and their issue attitudes). Statistically significant coefficients on these interaction terms would indicate that people respond differently to a change of position when that position makes the politician more ideologically consistent. However, the coefficients fall well short of statistical significance. In columns (2) and (4) of Appendix Table A7 we instead add an indicator for respondents presented with a politician who had been ideologically consistent, but changed positions in a way that appeared to defy his ideology. We find no evidence that people reward (or punish) a representative for adopting a less ideologically rigid policy platform.

also more forgiving of position changes in policy areas that they view as complex. Our experiments also show that people clearly prefer a politician who has “come around” to their preferred policy position to one who has been consistent, but whose position is at odds with their own preferences. This suggests that when public sentiment shifts—particularly when it shifts dramatically—politicians have incentives to risk being accused of inconsistency if it means their positions are better aligned with voters’ preferences.

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Table 1: Treatment Effects on Candidate Evaluations (Study 1)

	(1)
	Evaluation of Candidate (M=0; SD=1)
Agreement: Abortion (1=yes)	0.769 [0.058]**
Agreement: Social Security (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.512 [0.066]**
Agreement: Nuclear Plants (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.350 [0.069]**
Old Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.146 [0.071]*
Recent Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.370 [0.072]**
Constant	-0.291 [0.167]
Observations	877
R-squared	0.268
Demographic Controls?	Yes

Note: Cell entries are OLS coefficients. Robust standard errors in brackets.

Demographic controls (suppressed): age, gender, race, education, income, income missing, political ideology, party identification, and political interest; excluding these controls yields substantively similar results. * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%.

Table 2: Treatment Effects on Candidate Evaluations (Study 2)

	(1)	(2)
	Evaluation of Candidate (M=0; SD=1)	
Agreement: Social Security (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.229 [0.040]**	0.231 [0.040]**
Agreement: ISIS (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.241 [0.040]**	0.241 [0.040]**
Agreement: Nuclear Plants (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.151 [0.043]**	0.153 [0.043]**
Agreement: Abortion (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.609 [0.032]**	0.606 [0.032]**
Social Security Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.181 [0.073]*	-0.175 [0.074]*
ISIS Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.074 [0.069]	-0.067 [0.069]
Nuclear Plants Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.047 [0.075]	-0.052 [0.075]
Abortion Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.238 [0.075]**	-0.235 [0.074]**
Social Security: Confidence x Change of Position		-0.061 [0.074]
ISIS: Confidence x Change of Position		-0.030 [0.065]
Nuclear Plants: Confidence x Change of Position		0.029 [0.073]
Abortion: Confidence x Change of Position		-0.151 [0.074]*
Social Security: Importance x Change of Position		0.005 [0.073]
ISIS: Importance x Change of Position		-0.028 [0.069]
Nuclear Plants: Importance x Change of Position		0.104 [0.070]
Abortion: Importance x Change of Position		-0.093 [0.075]
Confidence: Social Security (M=0; SD=1)		-0.018 [0.035]
Confidence: ISIS (M=0; SD=1)		0.008 [0.036]
Confidence: Nuclear Plants (M=0; SD=1)		-0.004 [0.035]
Confidence: Abortion (M=0; SD=1)		0.017 [0.032]
Importance: Social Security (M=0; SD=1)		-0.035 [0.029]
Importance: ISIS (M=0; SD=1)		0.084 [0.032]**
Importance: Nuclear Plants (M=0; SD=1)		0.008 [0.030]
Importance: Abortion (M=0; SD=1)		-0.013 [0.029]
Constant	-0.236 [0.147]	-0.243 [0.162]
Observations	1222	1222
R-squared	0.296	0.313
Joint Sig. of Confidence Interaction Terms (p-value)		0.275
Joint Sig. of Importance Interaction Terms (p-value)		0.407
Demographic Controls?	Yes	Yes

Note: Cell entries are OLS coefficients. Robust standard errors in brackets. Demographic controls (suppressed): age, gender, race, education, income, income missing, political ideology, party identification, and political interest; excluding these controls yields substantively similar results. * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%.

Table 3: Treatment Effects on Perceived Likelihood of Future Position Change

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Likely to Change Position?						
	Study 1		Study 2				
	Abortion	Non-abortion issues	Social Security	ISIS	Nuclear Plants	Abortion	Four other issues
	(1=extremely unlikely; 6=extremely likely)	(M=0; SD=1)	(1=extremely unlikely; 6=extremely likely)				(M=0; SD=1)
Agreement: Abortion (1=yes)	0.062 [0.086]	0.104 [0.068]					
Agreement: Social Security (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.169 [0.095]	0.068 [0.082]	-0.008 [0.056]	0.060 [0.057]	0.042 [0.056]	0.049 [0.057]	0.020 [0.046]
Agreement: Nuclear Plants (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	-0.141 [0.099]	0.025 [0.074]	0.103 [0.063]	0.093 [0.065]	0.049 [0.064]	0.043 [0.062]	0.026 [0.050]
Agreement: ISIS (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)			0.116 [0.054]*	0.055 [0.059]	0.068 [0.057]	0.056 [0.055]	0.122 [0.046]**
Agreement: Abortion (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)			0.130 [0.045]**	0.149 [0.047]**	0.073 [0.045]	0.181 [0.044]**	0.144 [0.037]**
Old Change of Position (1=yes)	0.749 [0.100]**	0.234 [0.081]**					
Recent Change of Position (1=yes)	1.131 [0.105]**	0.371 [0.083]**					
Social Security Change of Position (1=yes)			1.008 [0.104]**	0.196 [0.106]	0.372 [0.096]**	0.407 [0.100]**	0.535 [0.080]**
ISIS Change of Position (1=yes)			0.498 [0.100]**	0.888 [0.108]**	0.448 [0.103]**	0.325 [0.097]**	0.489 [0.081]**
Nuclear Plants Change of Position (1=yes)			0.487 [0.101]**	0.352 [0.111]**	0.852 [0.106]**	0.374 [0.104]**	0.518 [0.082]**
Abortion Change of Position (1=yes)			0.444 [0.106]**	0.314 [0.106]**	0.379 [0.106]**	1.332 [0.119]**	0.524 [0.091]**
Constant	2.920 [0.242]**	-0.113 [0.194]	2.935 [0.202]**	2.982 [0.210]**	2.789 [0.198]**	2.612 [0.200]**	-0.110 [0.161]
Observations	877	877	1222	1222	1222	1222	1222
R-squared	0.146	0.034	0.103	0.084	0.065	0.138	0.088
Demographic Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

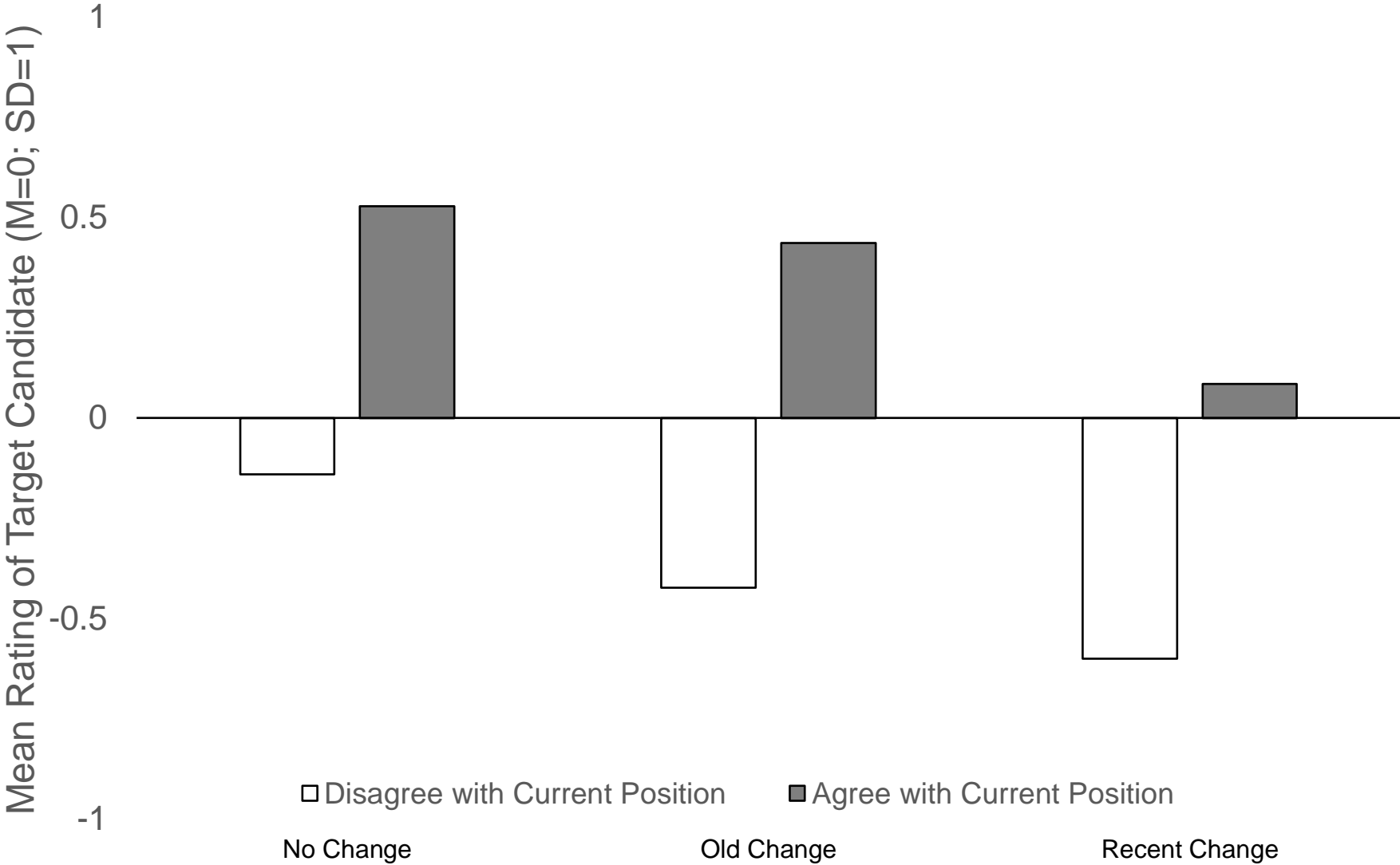
Note: Cell entries are OLS coefficients. Robust standard errors in brackets. Demographic controls (suppressed): age, gender, race, education, income, income missing, political ideology, party identification, and political interest; excluding these controls yields substantively similar results. In Study 1, "non-abortion issues" in column (2) are: nuclear power, taxes, Social Security, Medicare, foreign policy, environmental policy, and immigration. In Study 2, "four other issues" in column (7) are: Medicaid, defense spending, environmental policy, and same sex marriage. * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%.

Table 4: Relationships between Perceived Likelihood of Future Position Change and Candidate Evaluations

		(1)	(2)	(3)
		All	Agree w/Current Position	Disagree w/Current Position
Abortion	Study 1	-0.144 [<.001]	-0.289 [<.001]	-0.036 [0.457]
	Study 2	0.038 [0.182]	-0.262 [<.001]	0.203 [<.001]
Social Security	Study 1	-0.059 [0.083]	-0.222 [<.01]	0.105 [0.073]
	Study 2	0.006 [0.837]	-0.066 [0.168]	0.050 [0.268]
Nuclear Power	Study 1	-0.095 [<.01]	-0.211 [<.001]	-0.039 [0.581]
	Study 2	0.024 [0.410]	-0.025 [0.613]	0.130 [<.01]
ISIS	Study 2	0.052 [0.068]	-0.035 [0.445]	0.110 [0.016]

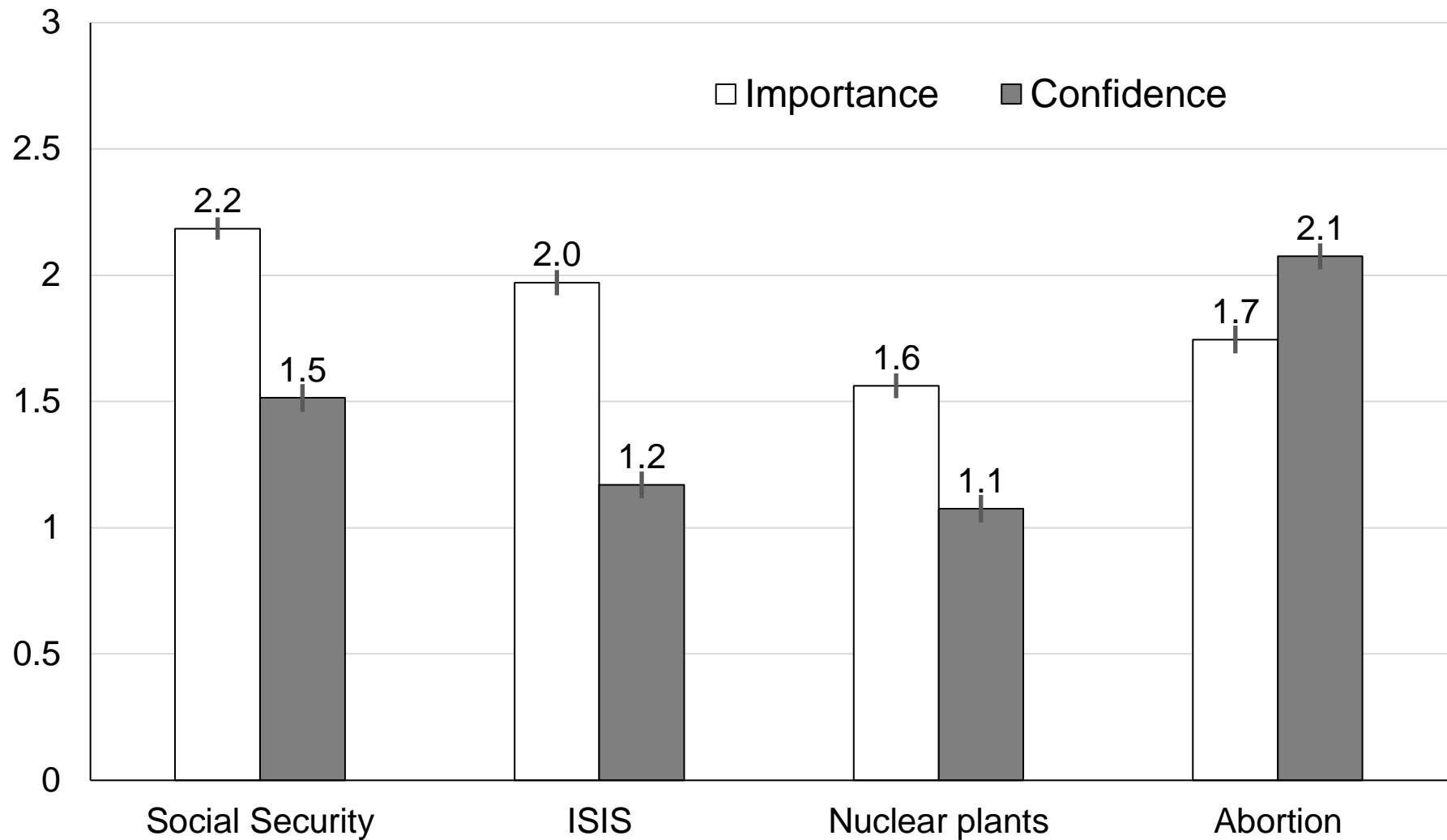
Note: Cell entries are bivariate correlations between respondents' assessments of the likelihood that the target candidate will change positions on an issue in the future and summary evaluations of that candidate. P-values are reported in brackets.

Figure 1: Mean Ratings by Condition (Study 1)



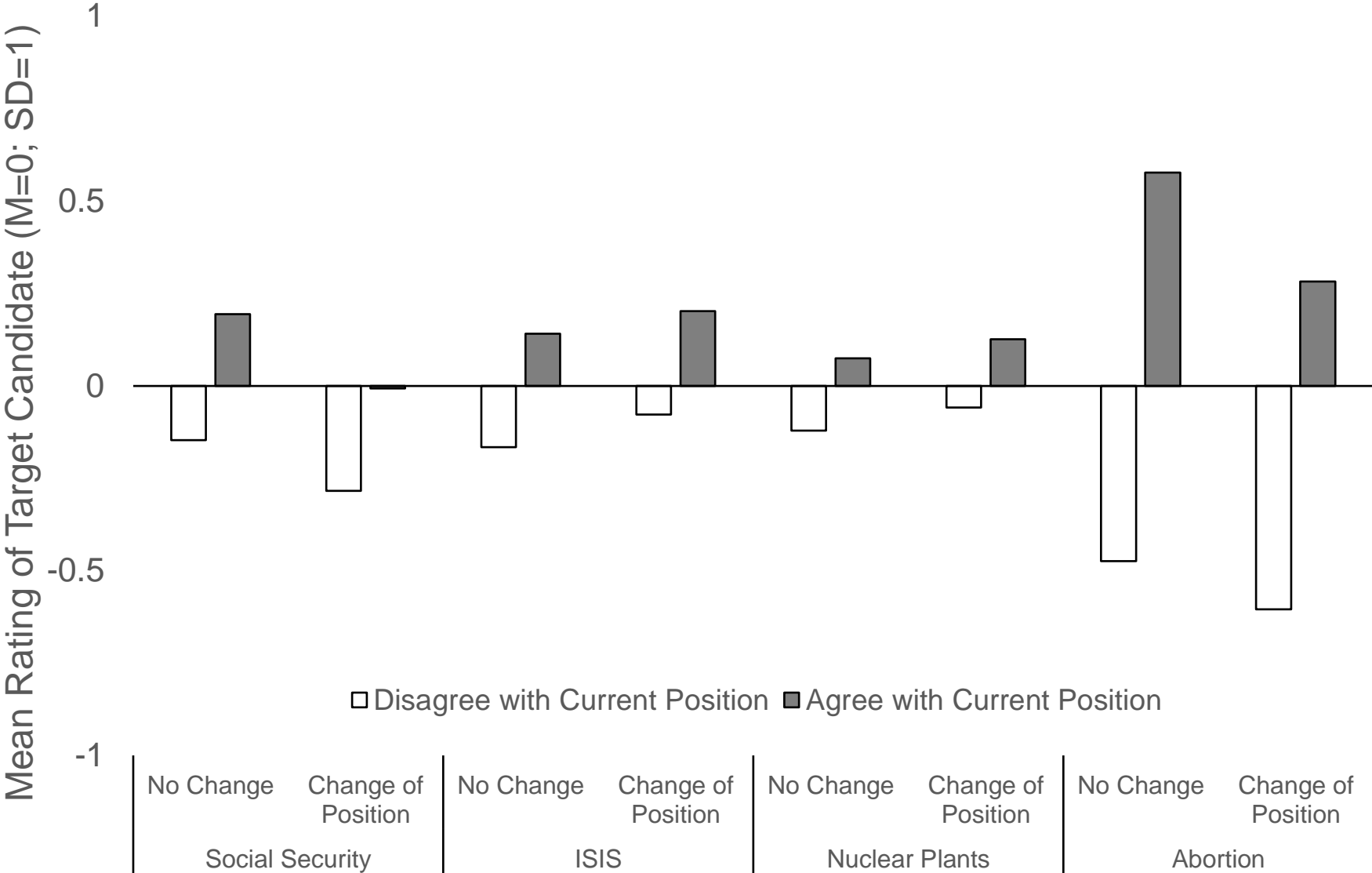
Note: Bars indicate mean candidate ratings by change of position treatment condition. White bars are means among respondents who disagreed with the candidate's current position on abortion; gray bars are for respondents who agreed with the representative's current position on abortion.

Figure 2: Mean Confidence and Importance Ratings (Study 2)



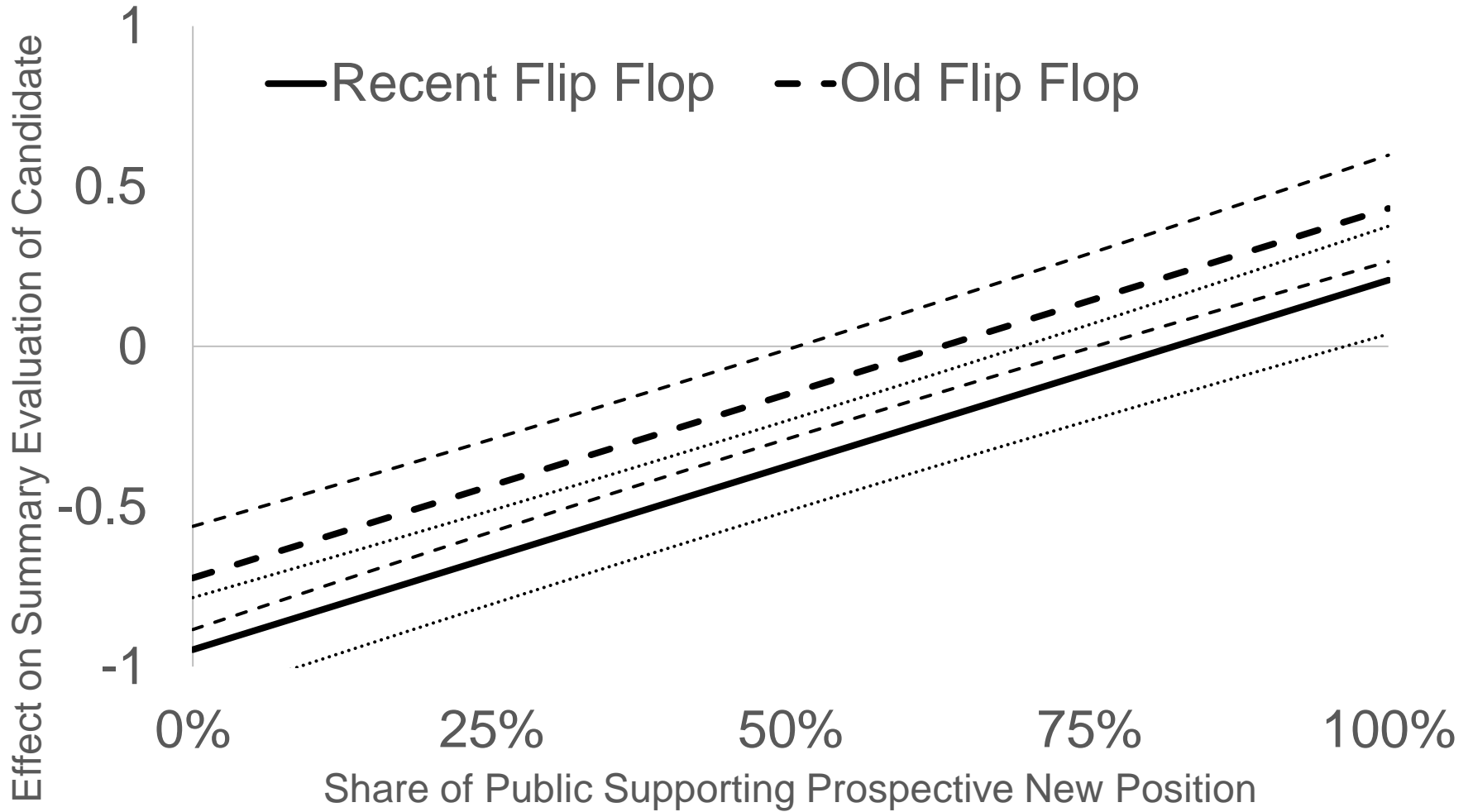
Note: *Importance* question wording: “Regardless of what you think should or should not be done in each of the following areas, how important (relative to all other issues – not just those listed here) are the following issues to you?” (0=not at all important) to 3 (one of the most important issues). *Confidence* question wording: “How confident are you that you have the knowledge and expertise to evaluate policy in each of the following areas?” (0=Not at all confident; 3=very confident). Bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 3: Mean Ratings by Condition (Study 2)



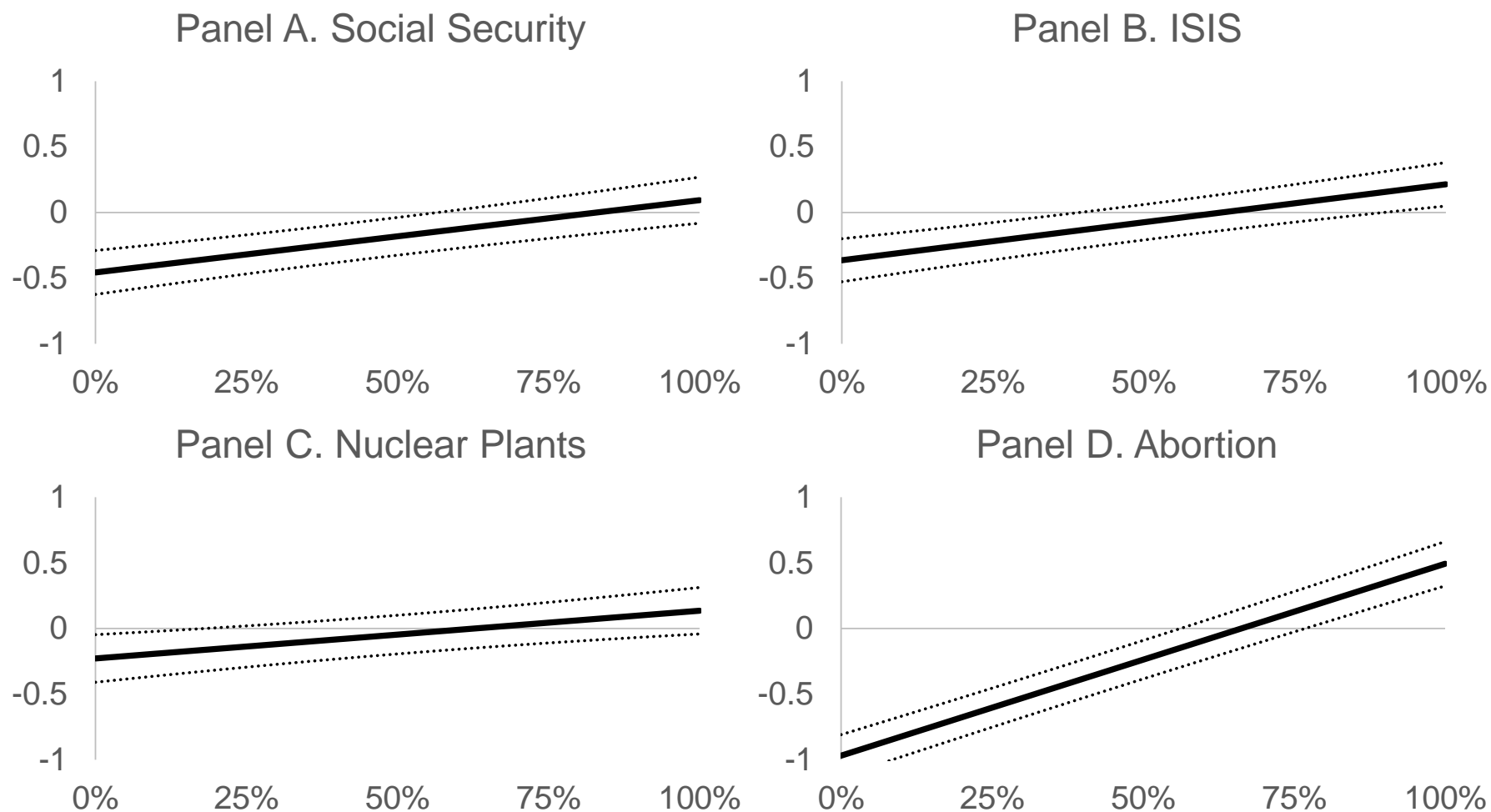
Note: Bars indicate mean candidate ratings by change of position treatment condition. White bars are means among respondents who disagreed with the candidate's current position on the issue; gray bars are for respondents who agreed with the representative's current position.

Figure 4: Mean Effect of Flip-flop for Hypothetical Distributions of Voter Preferences (Study 1)



Note: Lines represent estimated net (average) effect of changing positions on abortion for various distributions of public preferences on the issue. X-axis values indicate share of public supporting the prospective new position the politician could take (e.g., 75% is for a scenario where 75% of the public supports the prospective new position and 25% prefer the politician's current position). Dotted lines represent 95% confidence intervals. Estimates based on model presented in Table 1, column (1).

Figure 5: Mean Effect of Change of Position for Hypothetical Distributions of Voter Preferences (Study 2)



Note: Lines represent estimated net (average) effect of changing positions on each issue for various distributions of public preferences on the issue. X-axis values indicate share of public stating a directional preference who support the prospective new position the politician could take (20% of public assumed to have no preference). Dotted lines represent 95% confidence intervals. Estimates based on model presented in Table 2, column (1).

APPENDIX

Vignette: Experiment 1

Below is a short biography of a hypothetical state representative who is considering running for the U.S. House of Representatives in 2014. Please read it carefully and we will ask you some questions about what you have read.

Mark Jones is a state representative who has been in office since 1991. In his 22 years in office, he has sponsored over 30 bills that have been signed into law. These bills have addressed a variety of issues related to taxation, government spending priorities, and social issues.

He is currently considering running for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives on a platform that focuses on his [support for / opposition to] raising the Social Security retirement age for Americans who were born after 1960 from 67 to 69 years old and his [support for / opposition to] proposals to build more nuclear power plants as a way of decreasing America's reliance on imported foreign oil. His platform also includes positions on a wide range of other issues—including abortion, where he describes himself as [pro-life / pro-choice].

Recently, Jones' likely opponent has heavily criticized Jones' policy positions. He has also repeatedly questioned Jones' ability to provide the leadership the public expects representatives to show. [NONE / {Twenty years ago / Last year} Jones changed his position on abortion. Prior to {1993 / 2012}, he described himself as [pro-choice / pro-life], but he now describes himself as [pro-life / pro-choice]].

Question Wording

Likely to Vote For: If you lived in Representative Jones' district, how likely do you think you would be to vote for him? (Very unlikely [1]-Very likely [7])

Job Rating: Based on what you know about Representative Jones, how would you rate the job he is doing as a representative? (Poor [1]-Excellent [7])

Feel about as Person: How do you feel about Representative Jones as a person? (Negative [1]-Positive [7])

Honest and Trustworthy Enough?: Do you think Representative Jones is honest and trustworthy enough to be a representative in the U.S. House? (Yes/no)

Would do a good job making tough decisions about policy matters? Representatives in the U.S. House must often make difficult policy decisions. Do you think representative Jones would do a good job making tough decisions about policy matters? (Yes/no)

Likely to Change Position?: How likely do you think it is that Representative Jones will change his positions on each of the following topics in the future? (1=extremely unlikely; 6=extremely likely)—Abortion, Nuclear power, Taxes, Social Security, Medicare, Foreign Policy, Environmental Policy, Immigration

Vignette: Experiment 2

Below is a short biography of a hypothetical state representative who ran for the U.S. House of Representatives in 2014. Please read it carefully and we will ask you some questions about what you have read.

Mark Jones is a state representative who has been in office since 1991. In his 24 years in office, he has sponsored over 30 bills that have been signed into law. These bills have addressed a variety of issues related to taxation, government spending priorities, and social issues.

He ran for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives in November 2014. On the campaign trail he staked out positions on a wide range of issues. He expressed [support for / opposition to] raising the Social Security retirement age for Americans who were born after 1960 from 67 to 69 years old and [support for / opposition to] issuing more federal permits to allow for the construction of new nuclear power plants. He also said he [supports / opposes] laws that make abortion legal under any circumstance and [supports / opposes] sending ground troops into Iraq and Syria to fight Islamic State (ISIS) militants.

Jones' opponent heavily criticized his policy positions. He also repeatedly questioned Jones' ability to provide the leadership the public expects representatives to show. [NONE / Last year Jones changed his position on [abortion / raising the social security retirement age / issuing permits to build more nuclear power plants / sending U.S. ground troops to fight ISIS militants]. Previously he said he [supported/opposed] [raising the Social Security retirement age for Americans who were born after 1960 from 67 to 69 years old / issuing more federal permits to allow for the construction of new nuclear power plants / laws that make abortion legal under any circumstance / sending ground troops into Iraq and Syria to fight ISIS militants] but now he says he [opposes/supports] that policy.]

Question Wording

Likely to Vote For: If you lived in Representative Jones' district, how likely do you think you would be to vote for him? (Very unlikely [1]-Very likely [7])

Job Rating: Based on what you know about Representative Jones, how would you rate the job he is doing as a representative? (Poor [1]-Excellent [7])

Feel about as Person: How do you feel about Representative Jones as a person? (Negative [1]-Positive [7])

Honest and Trustworthy Enough?: Do you think Representative Jones is honest and trustworthy enough to be a representative in the U.S. House? (Yes/no)

Would do a good job making tough decisions about policy matters? Representatives in the U.S. House must often make difficult policy decisions. Do you think representative Jones would do a good job making tough decisions about policy matters? (Yes/no)

Likely to Change Position?: How likely do you think it is that Representative Jones will change his positions on each of the following topics in the future? (1=extremely unlikely; 6=extremely likely)—Environmental Policy, Same-sex marriage, Spending on national defense, Dealing with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (the group commonly referred to as “ISIS”), Social Security, Medicaid, Abortion, Construction of new nuclear power plants

Table A1. Summary Statistics

Variable	Study 1	Study 2
Likely to Vote for Candidate (1=very unlikely; 7=very likely)	3.485 [1.905]	3.413 [1.9347]
Rate Job Representative is Doing (1=poor; 7=excellent)	4.102 [1.4927]	3.941 [1.5882]
How do you Feel About Candidate as a Person? (1=negative; 7=positive)	3.992 [1.588]	3.863 [1.6317]
Honest and Trustworthy Enough? (1=yes)	0.596 [.4909]	0.568 [.4956]
Would do a good job making tough decisions about policy matters? (1=yes)	0.561 [.4965]	0.512 [.5001]
Age (in years)	31.677 [10.9891]	33.125 [11.4976]
Female (1=yes)	0.419 [.4936]	0.466 [.4991]
Black (1=yes)	0.079 [.2694]	0.085 [.2792]
Hispanic (1=yes)	0.065 [.2467]	0.041 [.1982]
Other race / Skipped (1=yes)	0.144 [.351]	0.135 [.3419]
Education (1=No HS; 6=post-grad)	3.871 [1.2416]	4.040 [1.268]
Income (1=<\$10k; 14=\$150k+; 15=refused)	7.300 [3.6144]	7.416 [3.7035]
Income Refused (1=yes)	0.031 [.1728]	0.039 [.1943]
Ideology (-3=v. liberal; 3=v. conservative)	-0.689 [1.5732]	-0.696 [1.6316]
Party ID (-3=str. D; 3=str. R)	-0.808 [1.8018]	-0.759 [1.8158]
Interest in politics (1=not at all; 3=very interested)	2.154 [.5815]	2.203 [.6042]
Observations	877	1222

Note: Cell entries are means with standard deviations in brackets.

Table A2. Regression Analysis (Study 1; Individual Outcome Measures)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Likely to Vote for Candidate (1=very unlikely; 7=very likely)	Rate Job Representative is Doing (1=poor; 7=excellent)	How do you Feel About Candidate as a Person? (1=negative; 7=positive)	Honest and Trustworthy Enough? (1=yes)	Would do a good job making tough decisions about policy matters? (1=yes)
Agreement: Abortion (1=yes)	1.726 [0.107]**	0.865 [0.092]**	1.105 [0.097]**	0.228 [0.031]**	0.294 [0.031]**
Agreement: Social Security (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	1.052 [0.114]**	0.740 [0.105]**	0.728 [0.111]**	0.147 [0.035]**	0.169 [0.034]**
Agreement: Nuclear Plants (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.874 [0.127]**	0.418 [0.109]**	0.409 [0.111]**	0.105 [0.034]**	0.128 [0.034]**
Old Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.134 [0.131]	-0.224 [0.111]*	-0.259 [0.120]*	-0.095 [0.037]*	-0.032 [0.037]
Recent Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.309 [0.132]*	-0.492 [0.115]**	-0.476 [0.117]**	-0.227 [0.039]**	-0.178 [0.039]**
Constant	2.976 [0.314]**	4.068 [0.270]**	3.542 [0.274]**	0.386 [0.089]**	0.411 [0.087]**
Observations	877	877	877	877	877
R-squared	0.336	0.184	0.208	0.134	0.167
Demographic Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Cell entries are OLS coefficients. Robust standard errors in brackets. Demographic controls (suppressed): age, gender, race, education, income, income missing, political ideology, party identification, and political interest; excluding these controls yields substantively similar results. * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%.

Table A3: Interaction between Policy Agreement and Change of Position

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Evaluation of Candidate (M=0; SD=1)		
Agreement: Abortion (1=yes)	0.739 [0.098]**	0.738 [0.098]**	
Agreement: Social Security (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.510 [0.066]**	0.520 [0.108]**	0.252 [0.044]**
Agreement: Nuclear Plants (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.350 [0.069]**	0.233 [0.111]*	0.162 [0.048]**
Agreement: ISIS (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)			0.259 [0.045]**
Agreement: Abortion (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)			0.629 [0.035]**
Old Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.201 [0.102]*	-0.229 [0.103]*	
Recent Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.359 [0.102]**	-0.363 [0.105]**	
Social Security Change of Position (1=yes)			-0.192 [0.073]**
ISIS Change of Position (1=yes)			-0.076 [0.069]
Nuclear Plants Change of Position (1=yes)			-0.046 [0.075]
Abortion Change of Position (1=yes)			-0.241 [0.075]**
Agree on Abortion x Old Change of Position (1=yes)	0.109 [0.142]	0.117 [0.141]	
Agree on Abortion x Recent Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.020 [0.144]	-0.019 [0.143]	
Agree on Soc. Security x Old Change of Position (1=yes)		-0.054 [0.150]	
Agree on Soc. Security x Recent Change of Position (1=yes)		0.032 [0.159]	
Agree on Nuclear Power x Old Change of Position (1=yes)		0.277 [0.160]	
Agree on Nuclear Power x Recent Change of Position (1=yes)		0.115 [0.155]	
Social Security: Agreement x Change of Position			-0.114 [0.104]
ISIS: Agreement x Change of Position			-0.118 [0.101]
Nuclear Plants: Agreement x Change of Position			-0.062 [0.114]
Abortion: Agreement x Change of Position			-0.105 [0.088]
Constant	-0.263 [0.173]	-0.270 [0.173]	-0.241 [0.148]
Observations	877	877	1222
R-squared	0.269	0.272	0.299
Joint Sig. of Interaction Terms (p-value)	0.627	0.583	0.367

Note: Columns (1) and (2) are from Study 1; column (3) is from Study 2. Cell entries are OLS coefficients. Robust standard errors in brackets. Demographic controls (suppressed): age, gender, race, education, income, income missing, political ideology, party identification, and political interest; excluding these controls yields substantively similar results. * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%.

Table A4. Regression Analysis (Study 2; Individual Outcome Measures)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Likely to Vote for Candidate (1=very unlikely; 7=very likely)	Rate Job Representative is Doing (1=poor; 7=excellent)	How do you Feel About Candidate as a Person? (1=negative; 7=positive)	Honest and Trustworthy Enough? (1=yes)	Would do a good job making tough decisions about policy matters? (1=yes)
Agreement: Social Security (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.541 [0.074]**	0.355 [0.065]**	0.337 [0.068]**	0.065 [0.021]**	0.065 [0.020]**
Agreement: ISIS (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.559 [0.074]**	0.331 [0.068]**	0.286 [0.069]**	0.079 [0.021]**	0.100 [0.020]**
Agreement: Nuclear Plants (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.420 [0.082]**	0.268 [0.073]**	0.240 [0.073]**	0.025 [0.023]	0.023 [0.022]
Agreement: Abortion (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	1.254 [0.059]**	0.871 [0.052]**	0.914 [0.055]**	0.186 [0.017]**	0.228 [0.017]**
Social Security Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.057 [0.133]	-0.308 [0.117]**	-0.204 [0.124]	-0.107 [0.039]**	-0.110 [0.039]**
ISIS Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.062 [0.131]	-0.233 [0.117]*	-0.015 [0.117]	-0.050 [0.039]	-0.013 [0.039]
Nuclear Plants Change of Position (1=yes)	0.037 [0.141]	-0.066 [0.124]	0.072 [0.127]	-0.049 [0.041]	-0.070 [0.040]
Abortion Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.168 [0.137]	-0.326 [0.123]**	-0.294 [0.127]*	-0.149 [0.042]**	-0.134 [0.041]**
Constant	2.956 [0.277]**	3.674 [0.247]**	3.548 [0.243]**	0.406 [0.079]**	0.450 [0.080]**
Observations	1222	1222	1222	1222	1222
R-squared	0.355	0.245	0.244	0.133	0.168
Demographic Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Cell entries are OLS coefficients. Robust standard errors in brackets. Demographic controls (suppressed): age, gender, race, education, income, income missing, political ideology, party identification, and political interest; excluding these controls yields substantively similar results. * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%.

Table A5: Treatment Effects on Candidate Evaluations, Collapsed across Issues (Study 2)

	(1)	(2)
	Evaluation of Candidate (M=0; SD=1)	
Agreement on Policy (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.288 [0.043]**	0.287 [0.043]**
Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.089 [0.059]	-0.460 [0.329]
Confidence x Change of Position	-0.148 [0.063]*	-0.205 [0.066]**
Importance x Change of Position	-0.022 [0.066]	-0.030 [0.066]
Confidence (M=0; SD=1)	0.069 [0.052]	0.110 [0.054]*
Importance (M=0; SD=1)	0.034 [0.054]	0.039 [0.054]
Age (in years)	0.000 [0.003]	-0.005 [0.004]
Female (1=yes)	0.022 [0.059]	0.121 [0.104]
Black (1=yes)	0.073 [0.106]	0.117 [0.170]
Hispanic (1=yes)	0.049 [0.130]	0.072 [0.226]
Other race / Skipped (1=yes)	-0.067 [0.084]	-0.045 [0.134]
Education (1=No HS; 6=post-grad)	0.027 [0.024]	0.080 [0.041]
Income (1=<\$10k; 14=\$150k+; 15=refused)	0.006 [0.009]	0.006 [0.014]
Income Refused (1=yes)	0.047 [0.164]	0.071 [0.306]
Ideology (-3=v. liberal; 3=v. conservative)	0.019 [0.029]	0.010 [0.029]
Party ID (-3=str. D; 3=str. R)	-0.019 [0.025]	-0.012 [0.025]
Interest in politics (1=not at all; 3=very interested)	0.108 [0.051]*	-0.062 [0.088]
Age (in years) x Change of Position		0.006 [0.005]
Female (1=yes) x Change of Position		-0.140 [0.126]
Black (1=yes) x Change of Position		-0.073 [0.214]
Hispanic (1=yes) x Change of Position		-0.006 [0.273]
Other race / Skipped (1=yes) x Change of Position		-0.032 [0.171]
Education (1=No HS; 6=post-grad) x Change of Position		-0.074 [0.050]
Income (1=<\$10k; 14=\$150k+; 15=refused) x Change of Position		0.000 [0.018]
Income Refused (1=yes) x Change of Position		0.008 [0.361]
Interest in politics (1=not at all; 3=very interested) x Change of Position		0.244 [0.107]*
Constant	-0.338 [0.164]*	-0.070 [0.262]
Observations	1222	1222
R-squared	0.056	0.063

Note: Cell entries are OLS coefficients. Robust standard errors in brackets. * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%.

Table A6: Treatment Effects on Perceived Likelihood of Future Position Change (Seemingly Unrelated Regression; Study 2)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Likely to Change? (1=extremely unlikely; 6=extremely likely)							
	Social Security	Medicaid	ISIS	Defense	Nuclear Plants	Environment	Abortion	Same Sex Marriage
Agreement: Social Security (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	-0.008 [0.051]	0.012 [0.048]	0.060 [0.054]	0.007 [0.050]	0.042 [0.051]	-0.002 [0.049]	0.049 [0.052]	0.087 [0.050]
Agreement: ISIS (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.116 [0.053]*	0.107 [0.049]*	0.055 [0.055]	0.152 [0.051]**	0.068 [0.053]	0.125 [0.051]*	0.056 [0.054]	0.082 [0.052]
Agreement: Nuclear Plants (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.103 [0.058]	-0.001 [0.054]	0.093 [0.060]	0.031 [0.056]	0.049 [0.058]	-0.003 [0.056]	0.043 [0.059]	0.105 [0.057]
Agreement: Abortion (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.130 [0.043]**	0.132 [0.040]**	0.149 [0.046]**	0.177 [0.042]**	0.073 [0.043]	0.128 [0.042]**	0.181 [0.044]**	0.121 [0.043]**
Social Security Change of Position (1=yes)	1.008 [0.101]**	0.687 [0.094]**	0.196 [0.106]	0.453 [0.098]**	0.372 [0.101]**	0.502 [0.097]**	0.407 [0.103]**	0.369 [0.100]**
ISIS Change of Position (1=yes)	0.498 [0.099]**	0.421 [0.092]**	0.888 [0.104]**	0.553 [0.096]**	0.448 [0.099]**	0.516 [0.096]**	0.325 [0.101]**	0.386 [0.098]**
Nuclear Plants Change of Position (1=yes)	0.487 [0.104]**	0.496 [0.097]**	0.352 [0.109]**	0.477 [0.100]**	0.852 [0.104]**	0.660 [0.100]**	0.374 [0.106]**	0.280 [0.102]**
Abortion Change of Position (1=yes)	0.444 [0.105]**	0.547 [0.098]**	0.314 [0.111]**	0.265 [0.102]**	0.379 [0.105]**	0.538 [0.102]**	1.332 [0.108]**	0.716 [0.104]**
Constant	2.935 [0.198]**	2.807 [0.185]**	2.982 [0.208]**	3.098 [0.192]**	2.789 [0.198]**	2.840 [0.192]**	2.612 [0.202]**	2.586 [0.196]**
Observations	1222	1222	1222	1222	1222	1222	1222	1222
Demographic Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Cell entries are coefficients from Seemingly Unrelated Regression (SUR) models. Standard errors in brackets. Demographic controls (suppressed): age, gender, race, education, income, income missing, political ideology, party identification, and political interest; excluding these controls yields substantively similar results. * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%.

Table A7: Moderating Effect of Ideological Consistency

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Evaluation of Candidate (M=0; SD=1)			
Agreement: Abortion (1=yes)	0.768 [0.058]**	0.773 [0.058]**		
Agreement: Abortion (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)			0.612 [0.032]**	0.609 [0.032]**
Agreement: Social Security (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.514 [0.066]**	0.516 [0.066]**	0.229 [0.040]**	0.229 [0.040]**
Agreement: Nuclear Plants (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)	0.347 [0.069]**	0.352 [0.068]**	0.150 [0.044]**	0.151 [0.043]**
Agreement: ISIS (-1=str. disagree; 1=str. agree)			0.242 [0.041]**	0.241 [0.040]**
Old Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.145 [0.082]	-0.108 [0.076]		
Recent Change of Position (1=yes)	-0.402 [0.084]**	-0.337 [0.075]**		
Social Security Change of Position (1=yes)			-0.175 [0.080]*	-0.176 [0.074]*
ISIS Change of Position (1=yes)			-0.066 [0.075]	-0.071 [0.070]
Nuclear Plants Change of Position (1=yes)			-0.045 [0.082]	-0.042 [0.076]
Abortion Change of Position (1=yes)			-0.252 [0.081]**	-0.234 [0.075]**
Old Change of Position x Ideologically Consistent	-0.019 [0.166]			
Recent Change of Position x Ideologically Consistent	0.139 [0.162]			
Social Security Change of Position x Ideologically Consistent			-0.039 [0.205]	
Nuclear Plants Change of Position x Ideologically Consistent			-0.027 [0.207]	
ISIS Change of Position x Ideologically Consistent			-0.066 [0.190]	
Abortion Change of Position x Ideologically Consistent			0.113 [0.201]	
Ideologically Consistent (1=yes)	-0.058 [0.110]		-0.055 [0.113]	
Change Positions to Ideologically Inconsistent (1=yes)		-0.133 [0.084]		-0.038 [0.096]
Constant	-0.275 [0.171]	-0.279 [0.167]	-0.222 [0.149]	-0.237 [0.147]
Observations	877	877	1222	1222
R-squared	0.269	0.271	0.297	0.296

Note: Columns (1) and (2) are from Study 1; columns (3) and (4) are from Study 2. Cell entries are OLS coefficients. Robust standard errors in brackets. Demographic controls (suppressed): age, gender, race, education, income, income missing, political ideology, party identification, and political interest; excluding these controls yields substantively similar results. * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%.