

Exposure to Change Talk vs. Participant's Intention to Engage in Everyday Activism

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Introduction

- Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a therapeutic technique that helps patients reflect on their motives, intentions, and goals to enable self-directed change; often applied in medical settings to encourage pro-health behaviors, treat addictions, and decrease vaccine hesitancy (Scales et al., 2025).
- Preliminary research is being conducted to determine the efficacy using of MI tactics for new purposes, including behavioral change in business leaders, latest technique uptake among physicians, or developing stronger candidates during job counseling (Armson et al., 2023).
- One core aspect of MI is the cultivation of change talk, statements by patients that center intent to change. The prevalence of change talk or its opposite, sustain talk, is associated with the prevalence of aligned behavioral outcomes and has persistent effects (Blanc et al., 2024).
- Some researchers are also beginning to examine how motivational interviewing and change talk can be applied to conversations about activism and politics, though this research is limited (Brouwer et al., 2022).
- Gap in Literature:** There has been no research examining the effect of viewing change or sustain talk on participant behavior. Addressing this gap could help advocates understand the potential effects of exposure to change talk on behavior. This could support the application of MI for social change—and help advocates understand how messaging impacts decision making.

Results

Bivariate

- Analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated that effect of Vignette on Petition Intention was **not statistically significant**, though mean intention scores were higher for participants exposed to change talk as compared to sustain talk ($F(3, 103) = 0.445, p = 0.721$) (Figure 1).
- Likewise, ANOVA indicated **no significant difference in mean Donation Intention scores** for all groups ($F(3, 80) = 1.408, p = 0.376$).
- Furthermore, ANOVA revealed no significant relationship between Vignette and Belief in Petitions ($F(3, 110) = 0.998, p = 0.397$).
- ANOVA also showed no significant relationship between Vignette and Belief in Donations ($F(3, 110) = 1.368, p = 0.256$) (Figure 2).

Multivariate

- The interaction between Vignette and Previous Petition Signing was found not to be significantly associated with Intentions to Sign Petitions ($F(3, 91) = 0.559, p = 0.643$) in the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) (Figure 3).
- However, Previous Petition Signing was a significant predictor of Petition Intention scores, indicating that participants who reported increased previous petition signing showed stronger intentions to sign more petitions ($F(3, 91) = 5.002, p = .003$).

Methods

Sample

- 119 Wesleyan students** and 1 non-affiliated participant took part in the study. 30% identified as men (n=35), 50% identified as women (n=58), and 14% as Non-Binary or Other (n=17).
- 22% of respondents were assigned to the Petition-Change condition (n = 26), 27% to the Donation-Change condition (n = 32), 29% to the Petition-Sustain condition (n = 35), and 23% to the Donation-Sustain condition (n = 27).

Measures

- Respondents were randomly assigned to read one of four vignettes discussing either petition signing or small donations, and a student's decision to either change their habits of not engaging or sustain their current behavior.
- Intention to engage in everyday collective action was assessed using two composites, one for Petitions and one for donations, which each averaged 3 5-point Likert scales.
- Belief in the efficacy of everyday collective action was assessed using two composites, one for Petitions and one for donations, which each averaged 3 5-point Likert scales.

Research Questions

- Does viewing change talk impact participants intentions to engage in everyday forms of civic engagement?**
- Likewise, does it impact their beliefs about these everyday actions?

Discussion

- Exposure to change and sustain talk did not significantly alter participants' intentions or beliefs in either domain.
- This suggests that brief exposures to change talk may not be sufficient to shift intentions, but also that exposure to sustain talk may not be able to do the same.
- Sample size could have contributed to the lack of significant results, but study design is more likely
- Further studies may benefit from the following:
 - Utilizing fewer questions
 - Analyzing Intentions and Beliefs in distinct studies
 - Incorporating a reading check at the beginning of the survey

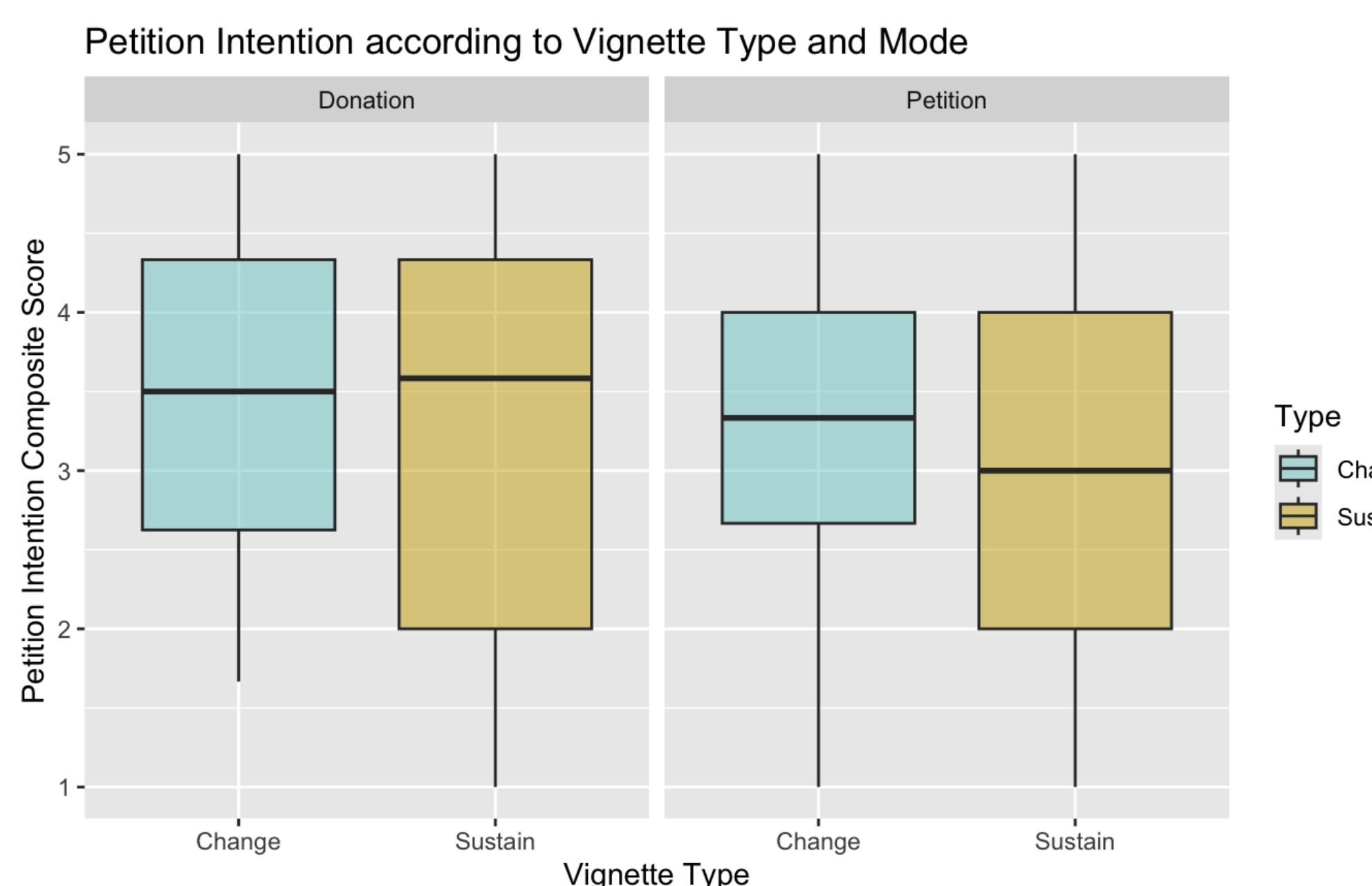


Figure 1. Petition Intention according to Vignette Type and Mode

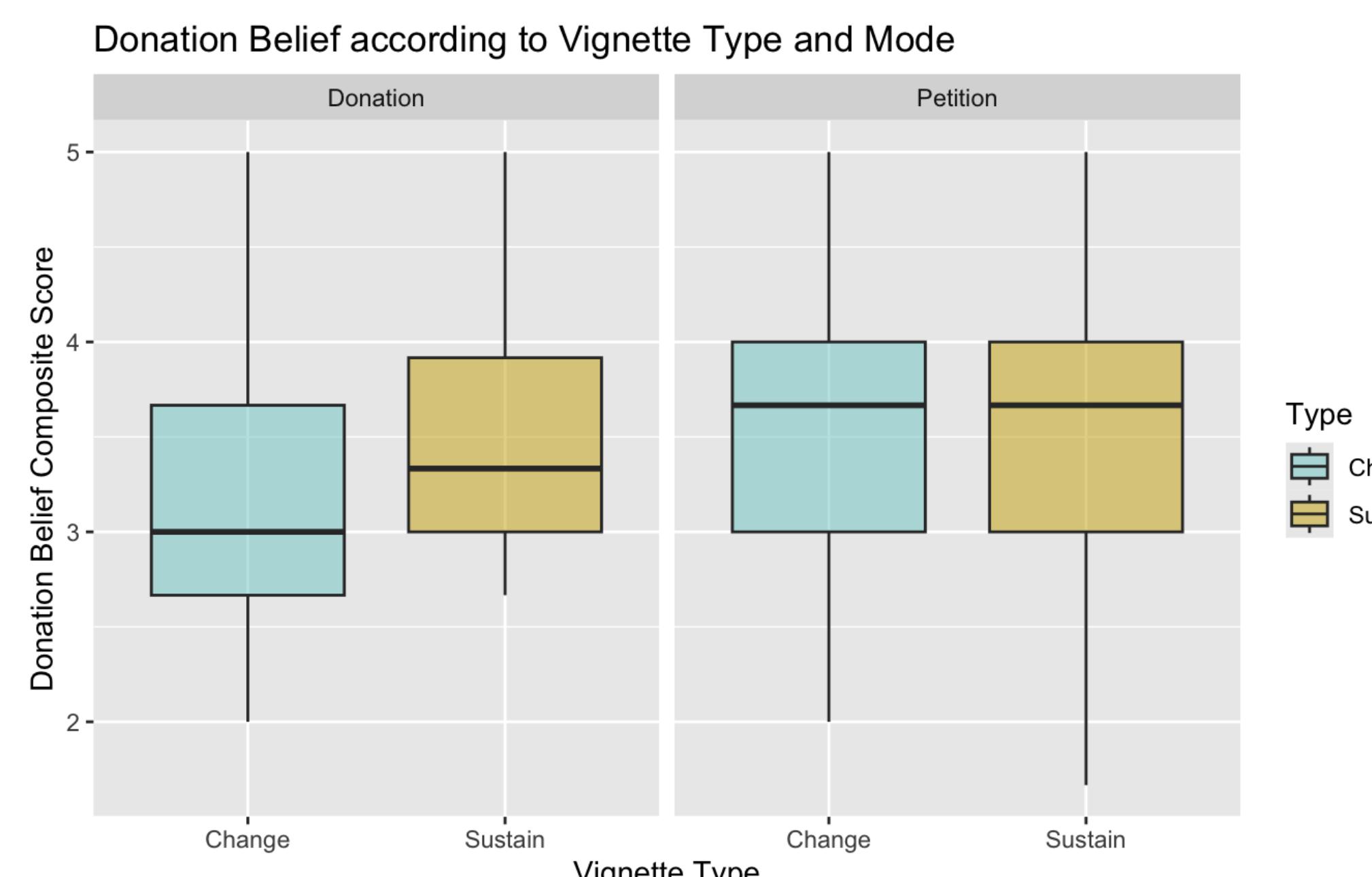


Figure 2. Donation Belief According to Vignette Type and Mode

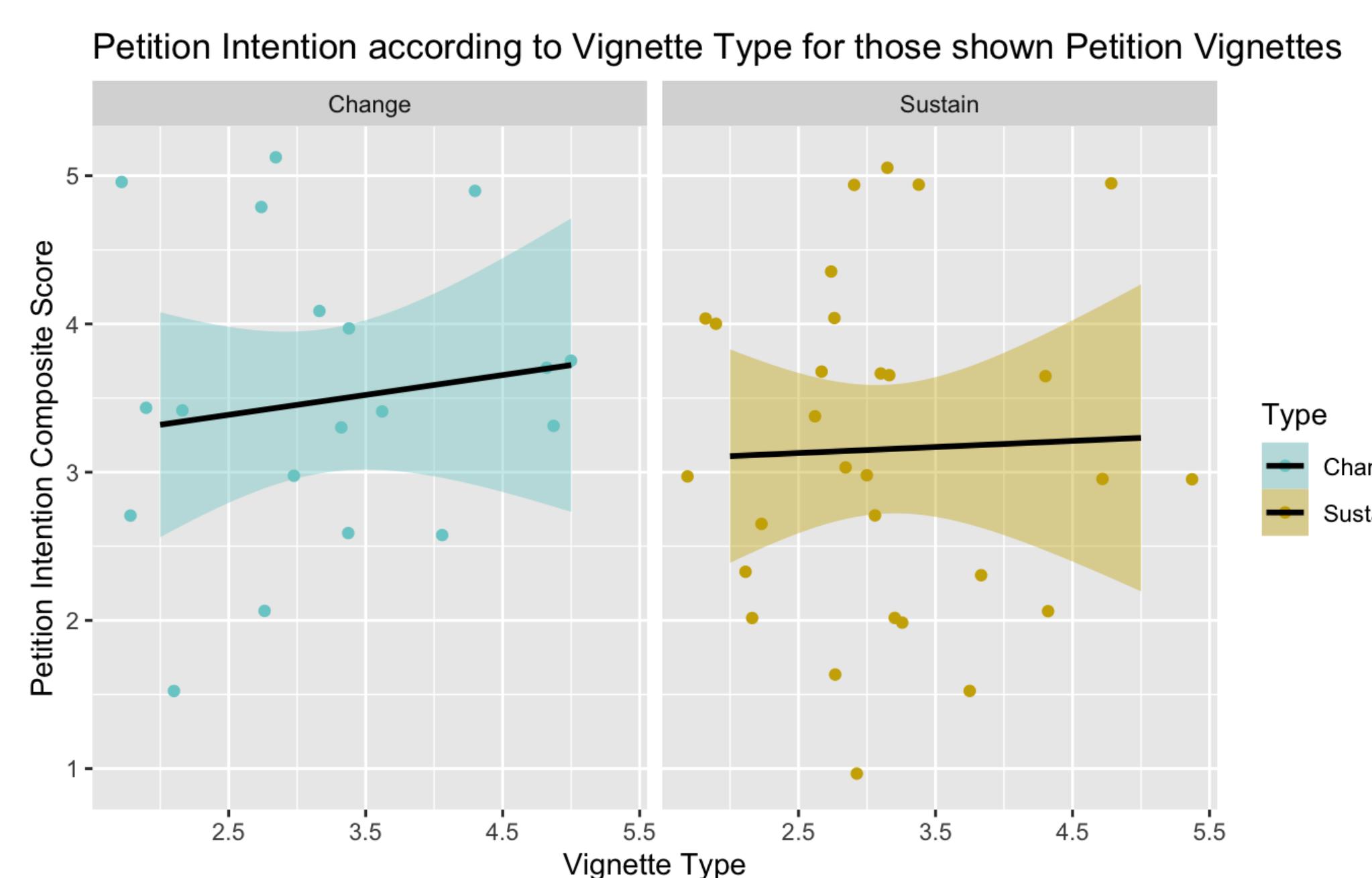


Figure 3. Petition Intention according to Vignette Type for those shown Petition Vignettes

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