Talking Polarization:
Evidence on the Effects of Face-to-Face Conversations among Like- and Contrary-minded

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Preliminary draft. Please click here for the most recent version.

Abstract

Do conversations between like-minded exacerbate political polarization whereas conversations between contrary-minded reduce it? We examine this question by exploiting a natural experiment in Germany, in which strangers were matched in pairs based on their political views for unobserved in-person meetings. Leveraging the variation in ideological similarity of partners and conditionally random assignment of meeting availability, we contrast the impact of conversations with like- and contrary-minded partners. We find that meeting a person with a similar political opinion leads to more extreme political views. In contrast, talking to a contrary-minded person reduces negative attitudes towards those with opposing political opinions and improves the perception of social cohesion in the society. However, it does not lead to an adaption of the political views. Together, the results suggest that political in-person conversations among like-minded may increase polarization of views and thus widen the gap between the ideological groups while conversations with contrary-minded can reduce affective, but not ideological polarization.

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1 Introduction

Political polarization has grown over the past years in many countries. While societies are increasingly divided into distinct ideological groups (Gentzkow, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2014), animosity between these groups has risen to an alarming level (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015; Boxell et al., 2019). As there are concerns that these trends endanger social cohesion, the functioning of democracy and even labor markets (Iyengar et al., 2019), the question what causes and consequently how to counteract them becomes increasingly urgent. On the one hand, there is growing concern that staying in the own "echo chamber" among like-minded may be a driver of political polarization (Sunstein, 2009). On the other hand, meeting contrary-minded in person to deliberate on politics may be a countermeasure against it (Allport, 1954; Habermas, 2015). This suggests that in-person conversations play a crucial role, yet evidence on this is scarce.

This paper studies the impact of face-to-face conversations among like- and among contrary-minded on the following dimensions of political polarization: (i) political views; (ii) attitudes towards those with opposing views; and (iii) the general perception of social cohesion in society. To estimate the effects, we leverage the structure of a nationwide intervention called *Germany Talks* and complement it with survey data. Based on policy preferences, the intervention matches two strangers for a private face-to-face meeting.[1] These conversations are not moderated and no topics of discussion were predefined, allowing the meetings to develop freely which provides high external validity.[2] We measured survey outcomes one week after the conversations.

To estimate the effects of having a face-to-face conversation, we exploit a plausibly exogenous variation in meeting availability. After being matched, participants received an email in which their proposed partner was introduced. If both participants accepted the proposed match, contact was established and they could arrange their meeting. If at least one person did not accept, contact was not established and no meeting took place. By restricting the analysis to those participants who accepted their partner first (*first-accepters*), we face a situation where

[1] Since its launch in Germany in 2017, the program *My Country Talks* has expanded worldwide. Until today, there have been interventions of the same form in many countries and regions, among others the USA (*America Talks*) and Europe (*Europe Talks*). Further countries are: Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland.

[2] Related deliberation interventions are more structured. See for example, "America in one Room" (Fishkin et al., 2021), or Schkade et al. (2007).

the partners of the first-accepters determine whether contact is established and a meeting can be arranged (treatment) or no contact is established and no meeting takes place (control). Thus, controlling for the information that the partner knew about the first-accepter when deciding, achieves conditional random assignment of the first-accepters to treatment and control group. This approach identifies the intent-to-treat (ITT) effect of a face-to-face conversation.

To distinguish between the effects of interpersonal conversations with a like-minded and with a contrary-minded, we consider two treatment conditions and estimate respective ITT effects separately. The like-minded treatment and control groups contain those first-accepters in the impact sample, who were matched with a like-minded partner that stated similar political views. The contrary-minded treatment and control group are composed of those who were matched with a contrary-minded partner that has similar political views. Our impact sample consists of 775 participants with a like- and 748 participants with a contrary-minded partner.

This paper has three main results. The first set of findings considers the effect on ideological polarization, defined as polarization in political views towards more extreme positions.[3] We find that interpersonal conversations with like-minded partners increase ideological polarization, while there is no effect for contrary-minded partners. We construct two ideological polarization measures that both consider change in the overall political opinion, defined as a vector of eleven single political attitudes, towards more extreme views. The first one captures the movement towards *absolute* extreme views in terms of absolute (dis-)agreement levels on the eleven policy views. The second one measures the change towards *relative* extreme views being defined as movement away from the average opinion of the respective sample. The ITT effects of having a conversation with a like-minded partner are 0.286 standard deviations more absolute and 0.279 standard deviations more relative extreme answers. In contrast, deliberating with a contrary-minded person does not affect ideological polarization. Further analysis shows that these null effects do not hide opposing polarizing ("backlash") and depolarizing adjustments that cancel each other. The non-adjustment is not driven by shorter meeting durations, an avoidance of contentious topics or antipathy towards the partner.

Our second set of results deals with the effect on affective polarization. In contrast to the finding on ideological polarization, we find that interpersonal conversations with contrary-minded decrease affective polarization while meeting a person with similar views does not have

[3]Sometimes, the term issue polarization is used when at changes in views are investigated (e.g., Mason, 2015; Allcott et al., 2020).

any clear impact. While affective polarization is usually defined as the animosity towards partisans of the opposing party, Orr and Huber (2020) show that partisan aversion reflects mostly hostility between people with different policy views, and not hostility based on partisanship: People dislike others because of what policies they demand, not per se what party they support. In line with this, we measure affective polarization by considering aversion towards people who have very different policy views in form of stereotypes and willingness for personal contact.[4] Using a principal component analysis on all stereotypes, we find a significant reduction of 0.39 standard deviations for those who met a contrary-minded partner. This goes along with a (insignificant) higher willingness for personal contact with a person with opposing views of 0.146 standard deviations. In the case of a like-minded partner, there is a tendency towards reinforcement of stereotypes and reduction of willingness. Summarizing the impact on all measures into one index, contrary-minded conversations reduce affective polarization by 0.352 standard deviations while the estimates for like-minded conversations are positive, though insignificant.

Our third set of findings is that conversations with contrary-minded partners improve the perception of social cohesion. Having established the impacts of interpersonal conversations on attitudes towards contrary-minded, we turn attention on whether these effects extend to the perception of members of the whole society. To estimate these effects, we measure perceptions whether fellow society members are trustworthy and pro-social. The significant ITT estimates for contrary-minded partners are 0.274 and 0.245 standard deviations, respectively. Meetings with like-minded show a similar, albeit weaker and insignificant tendency.

Combined, the results draw a coherent picture and provide important insights about the role of interpersonal conversations with respect to political polarization. On the one hand, we find that meetings with like-minded lead to more extreme views while they do not reduce affective polarization or bolster the perception of social cohesion. These findings suggest that the clustering of like-minded people that have similar views may widen the ideological gap between political groups further (Bishop, 2009; Gimpel and Hui, 2015).[5] On the other hand, the paper also offers a potential solution to fight this vicious circle. We show that conversations with contrary-minded lower affective polarization and improve the perception of social cohesion,

[4]More generally, this way to define affective polarization allows a more flexible analysis independent of the party structure.

[5]Moreover, the tendency towards a smaller willingness for personal contact with contrary-minded suggests that even the unwillingness to cross that ideological gap to interact with those who have different opinions may become larger.

though they do not reduce ideological polarization. Thus, providing people with the possibility to meet a contrary-minded can reduce hostility across ideological groups, but does not narrow the ideological gap.

We contribute to the existing research in three ways. First, we contribute to research that explores interventions against political polarization. Most closely related, there is research on the impact of moderated deliberation interventions (Fishkin et al., 2021; Wojcieszak, 2011; Schkade et al., 2007) though these studies provide mixed evidence and do not yield a consistent pattern of results.[6] We advance the literature by being the first to study the impact of in-person deliberations that are not guided or observed but in a natural environment, an important feature as the way conversations are held matter (Kalla and Broockman, 2020). The conversations are more similar to real world conversations and thus of higher external validity and policy relevance. In addition, our design enables us to compare interpersonal conversations among contrary-minded and like-minded within one quasi-experimental setup.

Second, we contribute to research investigating the idea that echo chambers and one-sided information increase while providing counter-attitudinal information decrease polarization (see e.g., Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2011; Boxell et al., 2019; Flaxman et al., 2016; Martin and Yurukoglu, 2017; Sunstein, 2018). Findings strongly depend on the specific context of the study. In a recent paper, Allcott et al. (2020) show that the deactivation of facebook leads to a reduction of ideological, but not affective polarization. In contrast, Levy (2021) finds that exposure to counter-attitudinal news on Facebook decreases affective polarization, but does not shift political opinions. Bail et al. (2018) even find a "backlash" effect of opinions when being confronted with opposing views on social media. We contribute to this literature by extending the analysis to in-person information exchange within and across political groups.

Last, the paper contributes to the literature investigating whether interaction reduces inter-group prejudice. This research builds up on the contact hypothesis by Allport (1954), finding extensive evidence on the power of inter-group contact for a various types of segregation. For example, Rao (2019) and Lowe (2021) study the effect of contact between different castes in India.[7] Meta analyses by Paluck et al. (2019) and Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) find that contact

[6] Further related interventions use priming of national identity (Levendusky, 2018), correction of misperceptions (Voelkel et al., 2021), meditation (Simonsson and Marks, 2020), making outparty friendships more salient (Voelkel et al., 2021) or narrative writing (Warner et al., 2020).

[7] Other studies estimating the effect of inter-group contact include Boisjoly et al. (2006), Burns et al. (2015), Finseraas and Kotsadam (2017), Scacco and Warren (2018), or Carrell et al. (2015).

generally reduces prejudice. However, none of these studies investigate the effect of *ideological* segregation. Moreover, Paluck (2016) point out that there is a shortcoming of studies that uses adults to test the causal effect of real-world interventions. To the best of our knowledge, this paper is the first one using a large quasi-experimental field setting to estimate the causal effect of interactions between contrary-minded in a real life setting.

The paper proceeds as follows. In Section 2, briefly introduce the the intervention *Germany Talks* and the political situation when it took place. In section 3, we describe the quasi-experimental setting, our impact sample and our empirical strategy. Sections 5 - 7 report our result. Section 8 concludes.

2 Background

This study focuses on interpersonal conversations which took place within the scope of the intervention *Germany Talks* in 2018. In this section, we briefly describe the political situation in Germany in 2018 and introduce the intervention *Germany Talks*.

Political Situation. In 2018 the political divide was perceived as large in Germany. With the strong increase of asylum seekers 2015/16, the 2013 founded right-wing party "Alternative für Deutschland" (translation: Alternative for Germany) had quickly gained popularity and received with 12.6% the third highest vote in the federal election 2017. For the first time, a party that was more right-leaning than the established parties, such as the socially conservative Christian Democratic Union or the libertarian Free Democratic Party, had entered the German parliament, leading to a perceived overall shift to the right. Likewise, similar to other countries like the US (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015), animosity between partisans was at an alarming level, even exceeding aversion based on nationality (Helbling and Jungkunz, 2020). This caused the federal president of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, to state in his yearly Christmas address: "Wherever you look - especially on social media - we see hate; there is shouting and daily outrage. I feel that we Germans are spending less and less time talking to each other. And even less time listening to each other."

Germany Talks *Germany Talks* was initiated by Germany's largest weekly newspaper DIE ZEIT in 2017 as a response to the contemporary political situation in Germany. The intention

behind the intervention was to enable interpersonal conversations across political camps. Since its foundation, it has established itself as a yearly conducted institution with thousands of people talking to each other. Even though it has its roots in Germany, the *My Country Talks* program has since expanded to other regions and countries all over the world, among others the USA (*America Talks*) and Europe (*Europe Talks*). In total, the intervention has taken place in more than 30 countries with more than 170,000 participants until today.[8]

The basic idea of *Germany Talks* is simple: Based on their political views, participants are matched to a partner. If both partners agree to the match, contact details are exchanged and the pair can arrange a meeting. The conversations are held in private.

3 Setting and Empirical Strategy

3.1 Design

We complemented the program *Germany Talks* by sending out a base- and an endline survey to all participants. See Figure 1 for an overview. The subsequent details in this section track the timeline carefully.

Recruitment In 2018 *Germany Talks* was conducted in cooperation with a broad set of German news outlets. Together, the participating partners had considerable outreach. They ranged from large daily and weekly newspapers and their online platforms, over pure online media to major public television. With respect to political orientation, the participating news outlets reflected a broad political spectrum with a focus around center-left.[9] The intervention was promoted on these platforms and participants could register either online on the respective websites or by post. 19,365 participants from all over Germany were successfully recruited. In Appendix XX, we give more details on participating media and recruitment.

Registration In order to register for the program, individuals had to answer seven binary political questions. Table A1 lists all seven questions, henceforth referred to as *political registration questions*. These political registration questions were chosen carefully to capture contemporary

[8]Source: https://www.mycountrytalks.org, on September 16 2021

[9]The organizing news outlet DIE ZEIT is considered as center-left Generally, the main German media are perceived around the middle of a left-right spectrum CITE: PEW.

political controversies. In addition to these questions, applicants had to state their name, age, gender, place of residence and answer five non-political free response questions.[10]

Variation in Political Distance: Assignment of Treatment Condition After registration people were assigned a partner based on their political views and place of residence. The objective of the algorithm was to match each participant with another individual who gave as different answers to the political registration questions as possible and lived within a 20 km radius.[11] The algorithm was conducted exactly one time. Thus, there was no chance of changing partners or being matched to another partner later on.

We divide participants into two treatment conditions based on political distance to their partner. (i) *Contrary-minded Partners (CM)*: To this group belong those participants who were matched with a partner who had answered more than half (i.e., 4 or more) of the political registration questions differently. It consists of 46% of all matched participants. (ii) *Like-minded Partners (LM)*: This group consists of participants who were matched with a partner who answered less than half (i.e., 3 or less) of the political registration questions differently. It includes 54% of the matched participants.

Variation in Meeting Availability: Assignment to Treatment and Control Each successfully paired individual received an email introducing the matched partner. This email contained a list of the political registration questions the partner had answered differently, the partner's first name, age, gender and the answers to the non-political free response questions. Based on this information, the participants could decide whether they wanted to accept the suggested partner or not. If and only if both partners confirmed the match, contact was established by giving out the respective email addresses.

Leveraging this structure, we restrict our analysis to those participants who accepted their partner *first*, before the partner did. This leads to the fact that the (second) partner, who had not accepted (yet), essentially decided whether the first-accepter was going to have a meeting or not. We exploit this feature by defining treatment and control groups in the following way: *Treated participants* are those first-accepters whose partner accepted as well. In these cases,

[10] The five free response questions were about the participants, their hobbies and dislikes. See Table A2.

[11] In more detail, the main objective of the algorithm was to match as many participants as possible, while fulfilling the following two conditions: (1) The matched partner had to be located in a 20 kilometer perimeter (the locations were the geographical centers of the respective zip codes). (2) Given the fulfillment of (1), the difference in political views (number of differently answered political registration questions) was maximized.

contact was established and the partners could arrange their meeting. *Control participants* are those first-accepters whose partner did not accept. In this case, no contact was established and there was no chance of meeting or communicating with the partner.

There are two key points for this paper. First, the partners of the first-accepters assign the first-accepters to treatment and control group. Selection into treatment and control is not directly done by those first-accepters. Second, the partners could base their decision on whether to accept as well or not merely on the information about the first-accepters from the introductory email. Thus, conditional on that information the decision was independent of the first-accepter.

Meetings After contact had been established, the organizers of *Germany Talks* played no further role and participants had to organize the exact time and location of the meetings themselves. Meetings were not observed, nor moderated or guided in any way. They mostly took place in natural settings like Cafes, parks, or in peoples' homes. As shown in Figure **??**, the conversation centered around the topics of the seven political registration questions. On average, the conversation lasted 140 minutes and an overwhelming majority of the participants reported that it was a pleasant experience.

Surveys Base- and endline surveys were sent out by the organizers of *Germany Talks*. Unfortunately, the baseline survey was distributed more than a week after the introductory emails had been sent. Therefore, assignments to the partner (type of treatment), the participant's acceptance decision and assignment to treatment (acceptance decision of the partner) had already taken place before most participants filled out the baseline survey. In fact, by that point in time 98% of the treated participants had already learned that the partner had accepted as well. As a consequence, measures that were elicited in the baseline survey may potentially be confounded by first email contact between partners or expectations. For this reason, we only use measures from the baseline survey which are robust.[12]

Basic information about the participants like socio-demographics was only elicited in the baseline survey. It was sent out 5 days prior to the meetings and required on average 14 minutes to answer. The endline survey contained, besides the outcome measures, questions about the

[12]In particular, we do not use any sensitive "social measures" like stereotypes or perception of social cohesion. We only utilize "robust measures" like socio-demographics or political attitudes.

meetings - if they had taken place. Average response time was 12.5 minutes. It was sent out one week after the conversations. 2,645 participants completed both surveys.

3.2 Impact Sample

In our study, we focus on first-accepters who filled out both surveys.[13] Table A4 quantifies the composition of the resulting impact sample, which is composed of 1523 participants. Compared to the German population (column 1), our sample (column 2) is similar in terms of age, income and place of residence, but more educated, male, politically left-leaning and with less migration background. There are two potential reasons for these differences. On the one hand, different types of people may differ in their willingness to participate in a program promoting political discussion. For example, conservatives may be less willing to have such a discussion. This case may be partly seen as a feature of our study as voluntary participation - in contrast to "forced" or paid interpersonal conversations - is an important requirement for the success of such policies in real life. On the other hand, the specificity of the sample may also reflect the reader-/viewership of the participating news outlets. We cannot clearly differentiate which of the two factors plays how much of a role, but it is likely to be a mixture of both.

Political Heterogeneity: Existence of Political Camps While the sample is on average left leaning, one important question is how this translates to the existence of distinct ideological groups within the sample. Are all participants from one "left" political camp, or are there still a left and a right group represented in the sample? Party preferences and self-classified ideology (A4, bottom) suggest the existence of a large left camp and a small right camp. Focussing on the political attitudes from our study, Figure A2 reveals that there exists considerable dissonance in political views among all participants. At the same time, Figure A5 shows that political distance within matched pairs is relatively evenly distributed between the minimum of 0 and the maximum of 7 equal answers to the political registration questions within a pair. To explore whether this heterogeneity actually stems from two political camps we investigate correlational patterns between the groups. The organizers of *Germany Talks* carefully picked the political registration questions in a way that there is typically a more "left" and a more "right" answer.[14]

[13] As discussed in more detail in the next section, conditioning on the information from the introductory mail leads to the fact that we use those participants who filled in both surveys.

[14] There are questions like "Should Germany increase its border control?" which represent typical left vs right topics, in this case migration. Other questions, like "Is Donald Trump good for the USA?" do reflect less classic

Thus, we should expect that one group gathers around left answers while another group chooses predominantly right answers, if there actually are members of the two distinct camps among the participants.[15] We use latent class analysis to check whether there are two latent (political) classes leading to a different set of answer patterns.[16] LCA endogenously creates classes with specific answer patterns and assigns each participant a likelihood of membership in each class. Applying it to all registered participants, we see a bipolar distribution, i.e. participants belong to either one or the other class with high probability (see Figure A4). Assigning participants to classes according to the probabilities, we find a large group to which 82% and a small group to which 18% of the participants belong. The answer patterns of both groups, shown in Figure A5, confirm the hypothesized distinction into a (large) ideologically left and a (small) ideologically right group. Membership in the left group predicts agreement to more liberal notions and clear disagreement to more conservative viewpoints. Likewise, members of the right group show an answer pattern as one would expect from moderately conservative people.[17] As shown in Appendix XX, party preferences and self-stated left-right classification confirm the interpretation. In addition, Table A6 reassuringly shows that we find nearly identical groups if we use k-means clustering instead of LCA. Focussing on our impact sample, we have a representative sample of all registered participants in terms of class membership (83% and 17%). The important point for this paper is that while the impact sample may not be representative of the German population with respect to political preferences, there are people from different political camps in our sample which allows us to study the research question at hand.

Subsamples Table A4 columns 3 and 4 provide descriptive statistics of the subsamples of like-minded (LM) and contrary-minded first-accepters (CM). Subsample sizes are similar with

left-right topics, but nevertheless yield predictions about what conservatives and liberals should answer.

[15] Of course, the choice of questions also plays a crucial role. If they are chosen badly, i.e. do not reflect meaningful controversial topics, participants are matched based on "meaningless" questions. In this case, the questions would not lead to political differentiation and the program would fail its purpose.

[16] LCA is related to factor analysis as both explore the relationship among variables. But, in contrast to FA, LCA assumes a categorical latent variable with a multinomial distribution instead of a continuous normal-distributed variable. This method does not demand any a priori assumptions about the correlations between the questions (i.e. which answers should belong in which group). Instead, it takes the data and checks whether there are latent classes whose members have specific answer patterns.

[17] For example, membership in the left group predicts disagreement with the demand of stricter border control, and agreement to the notion that #metoo had some positive effects. Membership in the right group predicts agreement to stricter border control, but shows otherwise a less differentiating pattern. This is not surprising as many of the conservative answer options are rather extreme opinions. For example, disagreement to the statement that the #metoo movement and the debate about sexual harassment had *some* positive effects reflects arguably a far right position.

775 participants in the LM and 748 in the CM condition. Both subsamples are comparable, except for political preferences. The LM sample is less conservative. The reason for these political differences lies in the mechanics of *Germany talks*: With a large part of the registered participants being from the left ideological camp and the matching algorithm aiming to maximize political distance between partners, conservatives were predominantly matched with left participants. Analogously, liberals often ended up being matched to fellow liberals due to the excess supply. As a consequence, the like-minded subsample contains left but no right people, while the contrary-minded subsample comprises left and right people.

Treatments Conditions: Like-minded and contrary-minded partners The treatment conditions differ in the political views of the partners who are by construction like- or contrary-minded to the first-accepters. Table A7 provides descriptive statistics of the partners. It shows that in the like-minded condition they are younger, more female and more left than in the contrary-minded condition, as would be expected following the rationale about pair compositions above. There is a congruence of our assignment to treatment conditions and the overlap of ideological classes within pairs found by the LCA which gives further substantial foundation to our treatment condition definitions.

3.3 Empirical Strategy

Specification Our approach identifies the ITT of having an in-person conversation with either a like-minded or a contrary-minded person. Recall that the partner assigns the participant who accepted the match first (first-accepter) to treatment and control by choosing to accept or not, based only on the information from the introductory email. Thus, by controlling for the information from the introductory emails the assignment is conditional independent of the first-accepter. While we are able control for most of the content from the mails, we have to use proxies for the surname and the answers to the open questions from the participants.[18]

For both treatments LM and CM separately, we estimate the following ITT specification by OLS:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta * Treat_i + \gamma * BasicInfo_i + \delta * AddInfo_i + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

[18]We know age, gender, answers to the political registration questions, and region. Due to data protection, we did not receive surname nor the answers to the open questions from the organizers of *Germany Talks*.

where Y_i denotes our outcome variable from the endline survey. The dummy $Treat_i$ indicates whether participant i was accepted by her partner or not and ϵ_i is an individual specific error term. β measures the intent-to-treat effect of a political face-to-face discussion. $BasicInfo_i$ and $AddInfo_i$ are sets of fixed effects capturing the information from the introductory mails. $BasicInfo_i$ contains basic information (hard facts) about participant i: age (intervals), gender, region (NUTS level), combinations of political registration questions, and proxies for surname (migration background, and education and income). To capture the information from the open questions better and to increase power, we additionally control for the following dummies, $AddInfo_i$: political self-classification (left to right), party, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status and number of politically contrary-minded people in one's social environment. Appendix XX describes the controls in more detail.

The main identifying assumption is that we achieve conditional independence of treatment assignment and respective outcome variable by controlling for $BasicInfo_i$ and $AddInfo_i$. This would be violated if, for example, some attitudes of the participants shine through in the introductory mail, as a consequence affect the partner's decision and, importantly, also have an impact on the outcome variable.

For robustness, we also report estimates from the post-double-selection method (Belloni et al., 2014). Out of the vector of all potential controls, PDS chooses the right set via a three-step "double-lasso" procedure: Using two lasso regressions, it selects a set of control that is predictive of treatment status $Treat_i$ and a set of controls which predicts outcome Y_i. In a third step, the union of both sets of control variables is used to estimate the treatment effect. The conclusions from the different specifications are largely the same.

Potential Challenges Table 1 suggests conditional random assignment to treatment and control groups in both conditions LM and CM is achieved. Neither is any of the coefficients which are not affected by the treatment significant in one of the treatment conditions LM and CM, nor is the F-Test of joint significance. Table A8 shows that treatment and control groups are even conditionally balanced if we use the more conservative approach of conditioning only on the basic set of controls.

Table A9 tests for conditional selective attrition between base- and endline survey. Note that income (part of the basic controls) and marital status (part of the additional controls) are

not controlled for because we elicited them in the endline survey. Thus, we should interpret the findings with caution. We find very small and insignificant differences between treatment and control groups in both conditions LM (column 1) and CM (column 2). Mean attrition is in both cases 49%. As many participants already knew their treatment status before the baseline survey was sent, people may have selected differently into our panel. Similar to before, we cannot perfectly test whether there are differences between treatment and control groups for our identification, as we are missing all controls from both our surveys. Hence, we have to "approximate our identification" by using a small subset of the controls and findings are only suggestive.[19] Table A10 shows the results. We find significant, yet small differences between treatment and control (6.7% and 7.2%). 18.9 and 21.5% of all participants fill out both surveys in the LM and CM condition, respectively.

To get a feeling how well the intent-to-treat effect captures the real effect of a face-to-face meeting, we look at compliance with treatment assignments. Since contact was only established if both partner had accepted, non-compliance is by construction only one-sided. Participants in the control group had no chance to meet their partner.[20] Compliance with treatment status is very similar across both treatment conditions, 87.2% for LM and 86.8% for CM. Thus, the high compliance rates of 100% (control) and 87% (treatment) suggest that the average effects of a meeting are close to our ITT estimates. Presumably, they are even slightly larger, as the ITT likely provides a lower bound with some participants in the treatment group not having a meeting.

One potential challenge to the interpretation of our study is that we estimate the effects separately in two subsamples of different (political) composition. Differences in effects may partly be rooted in the differences between subsamples instead of being caused by different treatments.[21] To assess the extent of the concern, we look at the selection into the different subsamples in detail. As discussed in the previous section, the subsamples are in large parts comparable in characteristics except for political orientation (see Table A4). Table A11 shows that we do not see any signs that the willingness to accept the partner first varied with political distance. In a second step, we re-weight our contrary-minded sample with weights from the

[19]Note that this time we not only miss the data from the endline but also from the baseline survey.

[20]There were two participants who stated that they met a partner even though the partner did not accept them. We do not know whether they lied on purpose or accidentally stated that they met their partner. We drop them from our analysis, but including them in our analysis does not change our results.

[21]Note that this does not concern the identification of the ITT of like- vs contrary-minded meetings.

like-minded sample to account for the observed differences in political attitudes. We find the same pattern. This suggest that selection into conditions is of limited concern.

4 Findings: Political Attitudes

Scholars like Habermas argue that deliberations among citizens lead to more agreement within the society. However, there is the concern that discussions can yield the exact opposite. Like-minded people may confirm and reinforce each other's opinion Sunstein (2009) leading to more polarized views. Even if confronted with contrasting viewpoints, it is unclear what to expect as discussions may result in a "backfire" effect Bail et al. (2018); Wojcieszak (2011). In this section, we therefore explore the heterogeneity in effects of interpersonal deliberation on political opinion.

Measures To measure polarization in political views, we elicited agreement to eleven different attitudes in the base- and the endline survey. See Table A12 for an overview. Seven out of eleven views were those attitudes used by *Germany talks* to match partners.The remaining four attitudes capture other typical left-right topics like same-sex marriage. We define the overall political opinion as the vector of all eleven views. Our first measure of ideological polarization is the change towards a more extreme view defined by the movement to more (dis-)agreement to the topics. More precisely, it is defined as the change in the Euclidean distance to the center of the scale between end- and baseline. Constructed in an analogous way, our second measure is defined as the movement away from the average pre-meeting opinion within our impact sample. Thus, it captures a second facet of ideological polarization being the divergence from the average opinion in the respective population. Both outcome measures are standardized by subtracting the respective control group means and dividing by the control standard deviations. Note that we use data from the baseline survey to construct our measures. Hence, the analyses are only valid under the assumption that political attitudes are not affected by either learning the treatment assignment or first email contact to arrange the meeting and should thus be looked at with this in mind. For more information on construction of the outcome measures see Appendix D.

Findings Figure 2 presents ITT effects for both ideological polarization measures. It shows that the conversations significantly polarized those participants who met a like-minded partner but not those who met a contrary-minded partner. The ITT effects on the two measures are 0.286 and 0.279 standard deviations in the like-minded treatment condition. For those who met a contrary-minded partner both point estimates are negative, yet insignificant. In particular, we do not find any sign of backlash effects.

Tables A13 and A14 additionally provide the estimation results for the post double selection method (PDS) and a smaller set of covariates. The results are very similar. Tables A23 and A23 show that the findings are robust to assigning participants to treatment conditions according to their membership to the ideological classes found by latent class analysis. Table A22 confirms the findings if treatment condition definitions are varied by splitting participants into like- and contrary-minded based on alternative cut-offs: Participants are assigned to the like-minded condition if they coincide with their partner in three or more and five or more political registration questions, respectively (instead of four or more). The definition of the contrary-minded treatment condition is varied analogously. Tables A16, A17, A18 and A19 and provide the results when alternative distances measures, Manhattan Distance and Mahalanobis Distance, are used to construct our variables instead of Euclidean distances. We find largely the same pattern.

One potential reason for the null effect in the contrary-minded condition is that it masks heterogeneity as found in other persuasion studies Baysan (2021). In this case, polarizing (backfire) and de-polarizing (intended) effects would cancel each other out. This may happen for different attitudes within one person, or, alternatively, for different persons. To test this, we look at the general overall change defined by the Euclidean distance between base- ad endline survey. Figure 2 plots the corresponding ITT effects and shows that in general only conversations with like-minded partners lead to a substantial adjustment of the own political opinion.

Why is there no adjustment for contrary-minded? The findings by Chen and Rohla (2018), who show that Thanksgiving dinners are significantly shorter when residents from opposing-party precincts attend, suggests that participants may avoid contentious topics. In contrast to this hypothesis, the meetings among contrary-minded were significantly longer than those among like-minded, with median durations of 150 and 120 minutes, respectively. ($p < 0.01$).

To be added:

- Mechanism
- Reweighting samples according to each other
- Benchmark
- Interpretation and relation to literature

5 Effects on Affective Polarization

Beyond the effect on ideological polarization, political discussions may have an impact on affective polarization. Independent of the change of their political opinion, people may adjust their view about those who have different opinions. Indeed, studies suggest that interpersonal conversations between contrary-minded persons may lead to a reduction of stereotypes (Allport, 1954; Fishkin, Siu, Diamond, and Bradburn, Fishkin et al.; Kalla and Broockman, 2020). In this section, we therefore turn attention to estimating the impact of face-to-face discussion with members of the own, and members from the other political camp.

Measures To assess the effect on affective polarization we use two measures, stereotypes about and preference for personal contact with contrary-minded persons. We defined such contrary-minded persons as someone who has opposing political views on the seven political registration questions.[22] We elicited stereotypes about contrary-minded views that were communicated by previous participants. These were the prejudice that contrary-minded are cognitively less capable, bad informed, have different moral values and lead completely different lives. We reduce dimensionality by implementing a principal component analysis (PCA). We use the first principal component which is the convex combination of the four stereotypes that accounts for the largest possible variation in the data, as our overall stereotype measure. Table XX provides the respective loadings (weights). To get a broader picture, we additionally measured the preference for close interpersonal contact with opposing political views. More precisely, we elicited participants' willingness to have a contrary-minded person in their social environment. See Table A12 for a detailed overview of the outcome measures.

[22]Note that we did not elicit beliefs and attitudes towards the partner, but towards some arbitrary contrary-minded person.

Stereotypes Figure 3 shows that interpersonal conversations with contrary-minded significantly reduced stereotypes. The point estimate is -0.379 standard deviations. Figure A7 estimates the ITT effects on each stereotype separately. The reduction is largest for the belief that contrary-minded are of low cognitive ability, while we do not see any decrease in whether contrary-minded lead a completely different life. Meeting a person from the own political camp does not have any effect on stereotypes about contrary-minded. The positive point estimate of 0.087 standard deviations suggests that if anything conversations with like-minded tend to slightly increase stereotypes. However, none of the effects is significant, neither for the overall nor for the single stereotypes.

Tables A25, A28, A29, A27 and A26 show robustness to dropping controls, and running PDS regressions. Tables A22 and A30 show that effects are similar if treatment conditions definitions are altered by varying the cut-off and using ideological classes, respectively.

Willingness for Personal Contact Table 2 presents the effect of the conversation on willingness for personal contact with a contrary-minded person. In line with the previous finding, the point estimate for meetings with a contrary-minded partner is 0.146 of a standard deviation meaning a higher willingness for personal contact, yet insignificant (column 5). Analogously, the coefficient for like-minded meetings is -0.0993 and insignificant. Dropping the set of additional controls (columns 1 and 4) and post-double selection (columns 3 and 6) yield the same pattern. In the latter case, the estimate of contrary-minded conversations is of similar size (0.176 standard deviations) but significant at a 5% level due to a smaller standard error. Similarly, the coefficient for like-minded partner is -0.137 standard deviations and significant at a 10% level. Varying the definition of like- and contrary-minded partners produces very similar results (see Tables A22 and A31).

Interpretation The results for both measures paint a coherent picture. To estimate the overall effect on affective polarization we conduct a principal component analysis with all five affective polarization measures. The first principal component is a weighted index of the five measures capturing aversion towards contrary-minded.[23] Using one measure yields effect sizes that usefully summarize the overall impact of the conversations and allows us to benchmark

[23]Table XX provides the loadings on the overall measure. With positive signs for the single stereotypes and a negative sign for willingness for personal contact, it confirms the interpretation of an overall measure for animosity towards contrary-minded.

effect sizes. Figure 4 provides ITT estimates for both treatment conditions. The estimates for like-minded partners are insignificant, but positive (0.099 standard deviations) while conversations with contrary-minded reduce affective polarization by 0.352 standard deviations ($p<0.01$)

To put the effect magnitude in perspective, we use two different benchmarks. First, we follow Lowe (2021) and compare our estimates with effects of intergroup contact from a meta-analysis by Paluck et al. (2019). As Figure XX shows, the meta-analytic effect of 0.39 standard deviations is very close to our estimate. Second, Broockman and Kalla (2016) show that a 10-minute face-to-face conversation with transgender/gender non-conforming canvassers leads to an increase of tolerance. The effect sizes are 0.45 standard deviations after 3 days and 0.3 standard deviations after 3 weeks, respectively. Our effect consistently ranks between the two points in time of elicitation with the endline survey being sent out 7 days after the conversations took place, and between the two effect sizes. The fact that Broockman and Kalla (2016) found very long lasting effects after a 10-minute conversation may give hope that our conversations with a median duration of 150 minutes reduced affective polarization lastingly.

6 Effects on the Perception of Social Cohesion

One fear associated with the rising levels of affective and ideological polarization is the threat to society as a whole (Iyengar et al., 2019). The increasing gaps and animosity between contrary-minded may threaten social cohesion by affecting attitudes and perceptions of general members of society. Although the contact hypothesis predicts improved attitudes towards contrary-minded, it is less clear whether these effects transfer to general levels of beliefs and attitudes. Related evidence by Rao (2019) finds an increase of general pro-sociality after contact, while Lowe (2021) observes a reduction of general trust. [24] In this section, we hence shed light on the effect of interpersonal conversations on perceptions of trustworthiness and pro-sociality of fellow society members.

To explore the heterogeneous impact of interpersonal conversations, we elicited two beliefs: first, the belief about how trustworthy fellow citizens generally are, and second, the belief in how far German citizens generally care about the wellbeing of others (see Table A12).

[24] Similarly, Dinesen et al. (2020) show that ethnic diversity is generally negatively related to generalized trust.

Findings Figure 5 provides the ITT effects on the two beliefs. For both types of conversations the point estimates are positive for both measures, though in the case of like-minded conversations they are small and insignificant. Coefficients for contrary-minded meetings are 0.274 (trustworthiness) and 0.245 (pro-sociality) standard deviations and significant.

Tables A32 and A33 provide estimates if the set of additional controls is dropped and the PDS regressions. The results are similar, though the PDS effect on trustworthiness for meetings between like-minded is also significant due to a slightly larger coefficient and smaller standard error. Tables A22, A34 and A34 show robustness towards varying the definition of treatment conditions.

The findings are in large parts in line with the effects on affective polarization and the idea that the positive intergroup effects extend to attitudes towards a more general population. Conversations among contrary-minded individuals reduce and affective polarization and have a positive impact on the perceptions of general trustworthiness and pro-sociality. However, the (insignificant) tendencies for like-minded conversations are not consistent with the hypothesis. Even though affective polarization tends to increase, trust and perception of general pro-sociality also both tend to improve.

Alternative Explanation: Disappointment TO BE REWRITTEN One potential alternative explanation of our findings on affective polarization and social cohesion may be disappointment not being accepted by the proposed partner. In this case participants from the control group would be driving the effects. To see if disappointment was a determining factor, we look at people who were never rejected by the partner but nevertheless had no conversation.[25] We present evidence that there are no signs of disappointment in our control group by comparing the time-trend of the outcome variables between subjects who were never rejected and our control group.[26] Table A36 presents the diff-in-diff estimates. Confirming our interpretation, there is no sign of different time trends between the two groups.

[25]These are participants who answered both surveys but never accepted their partner or were not matched.

[26]Note that this comparison also makes use of the pre-survey data, which we carefully avoided in our main analysis. However, this might be less of a problem for the control group (see Section **??** for details).

7 Conclusion

TO BE REWRITTEN This study explores the impact of political face-to-face conversations and provides important insights about their potential to fight growing social segregation in democracies. Our first main takeaway is that the effects of a conversation depend on the political opinion of the partner. When an individual had a conversation with a partner that holds substantially different political attitudes, stereotypes were reduced and perceived social cohesion improved. Furthermore, individuals slightly adapt their political attitudes and move towards the pre-conversation average opinion of the sample. In contrast, conversations between like-minded individuals affected neither stereotypes nor perceived social cohesion significantly. If anything, we observe a negative tendency for stereotypes. When it comes to political attitudes, we see that these participants move towards the boundaries of the Likert scale and away from the average opinion of the whole sample. Both can be interpreted as a reinforcement of existing political beliefs.

Taken together, the results reveal a clear pattern. Staying within the own echo chamber and solely interacting with like-minded persons might exacerbate polarization and segregation of the society. However, meeting a person with sufficiently different views can have an opposing impact and help to overcome the negative consequences of rising polarization. This paper should be seen as a proof of concept that, given the right circumstances, interpersonal communication can change a lot. Future research could ascertain how long-lasting the effects are and how they transfer to real world behavior.

Figure 1: Quasi-experimental Setting

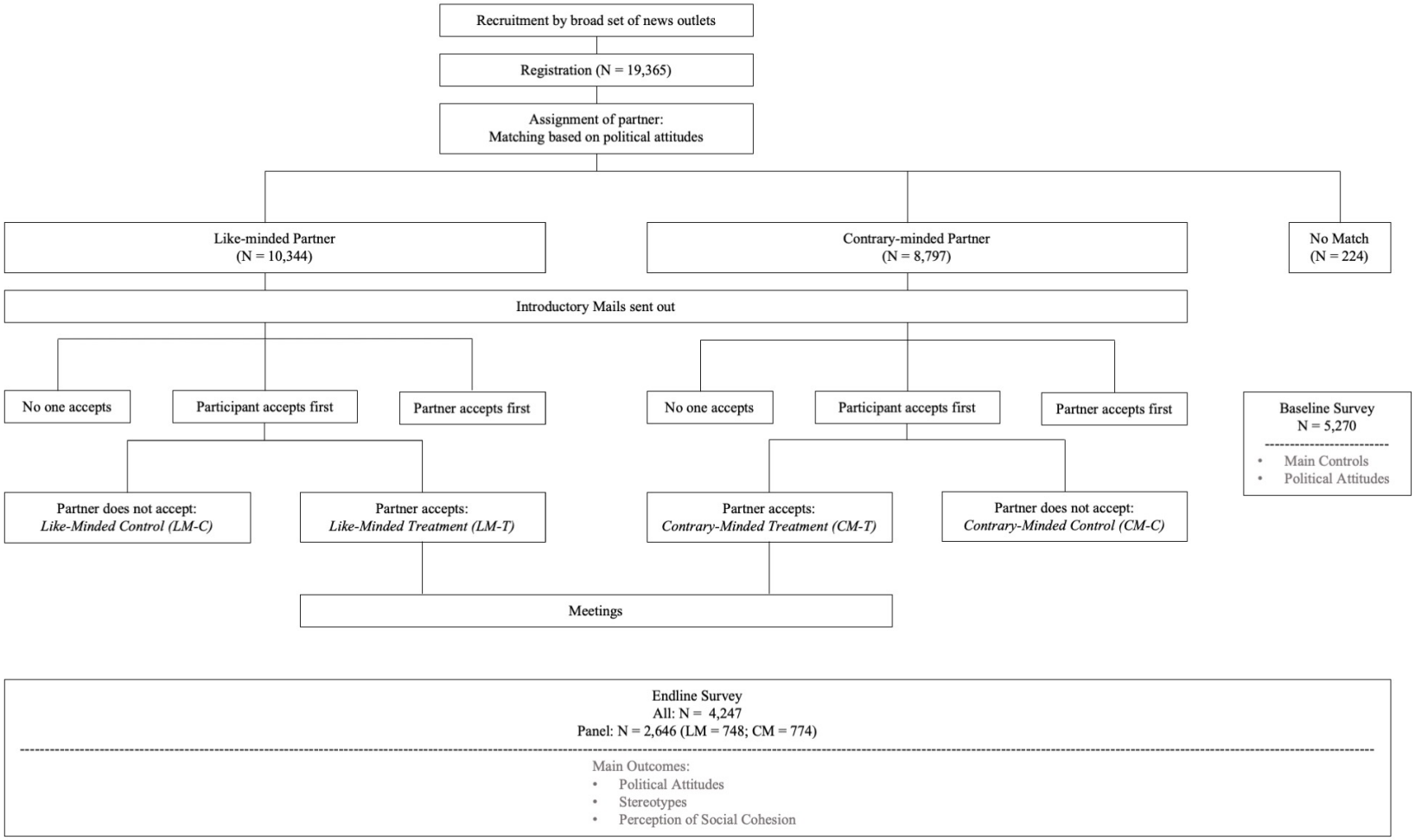
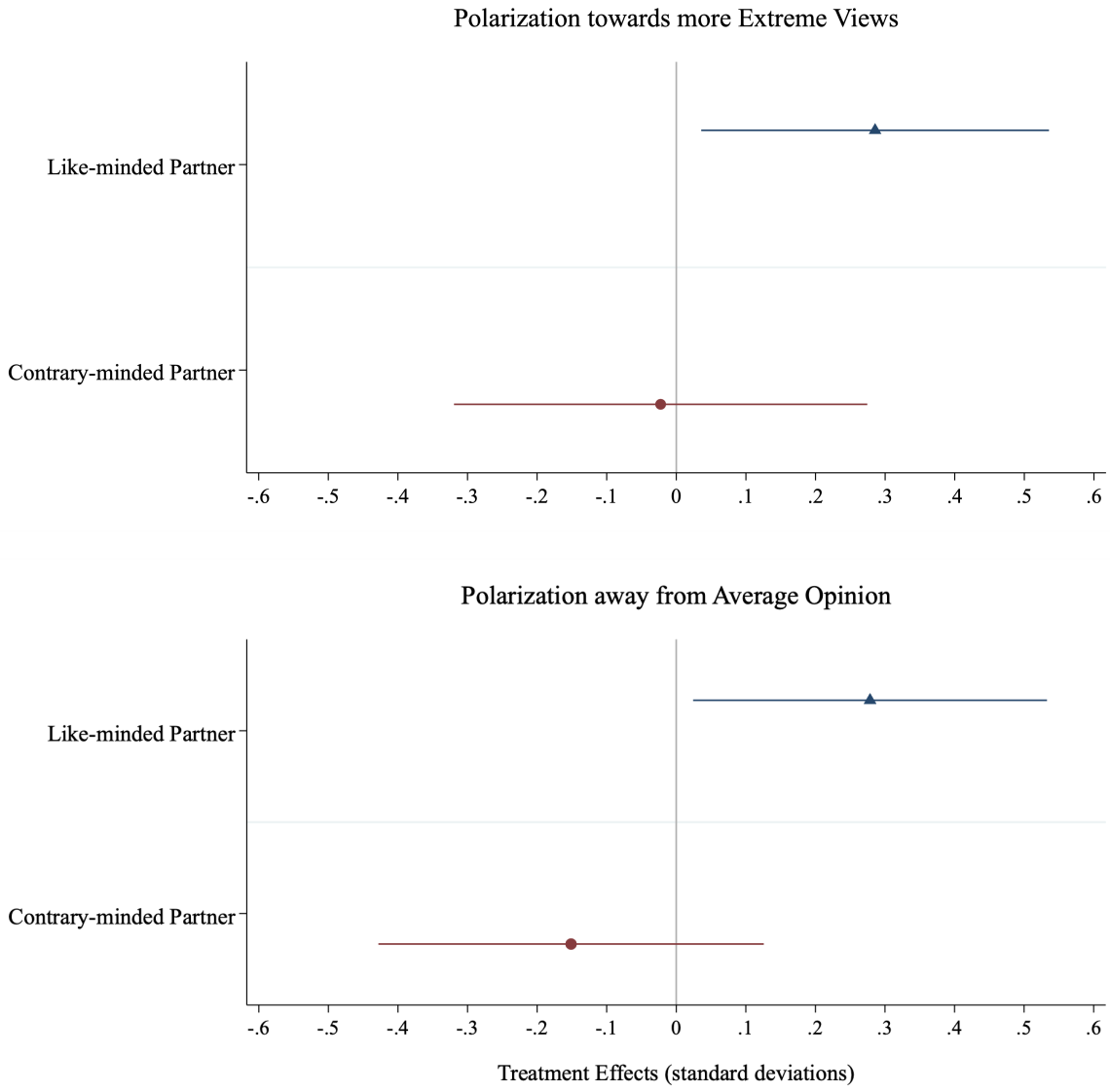


Figure 2: Effect of the Conversations on Political Views



The two panels show the effect of the conversations on ideological polarization.

Figure 3: Effect on Stereotypes about Contrary-minded

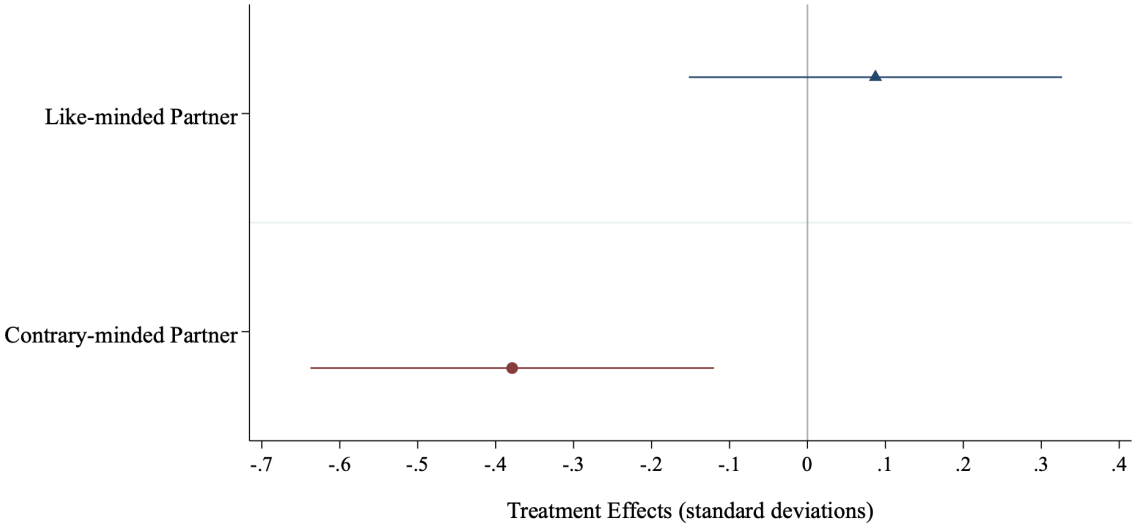


Figure 4: Overall Effect on Affective Polarization

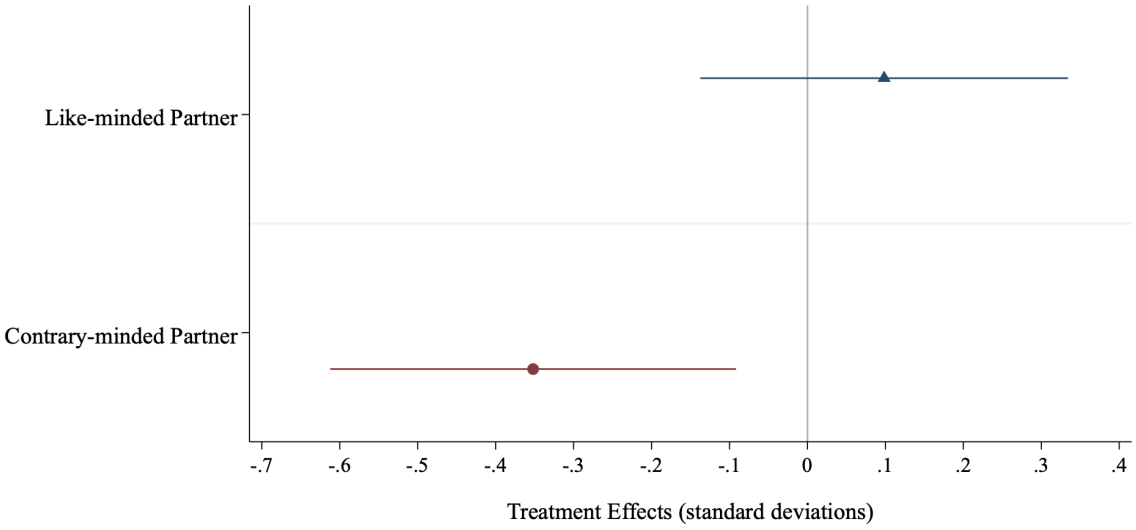
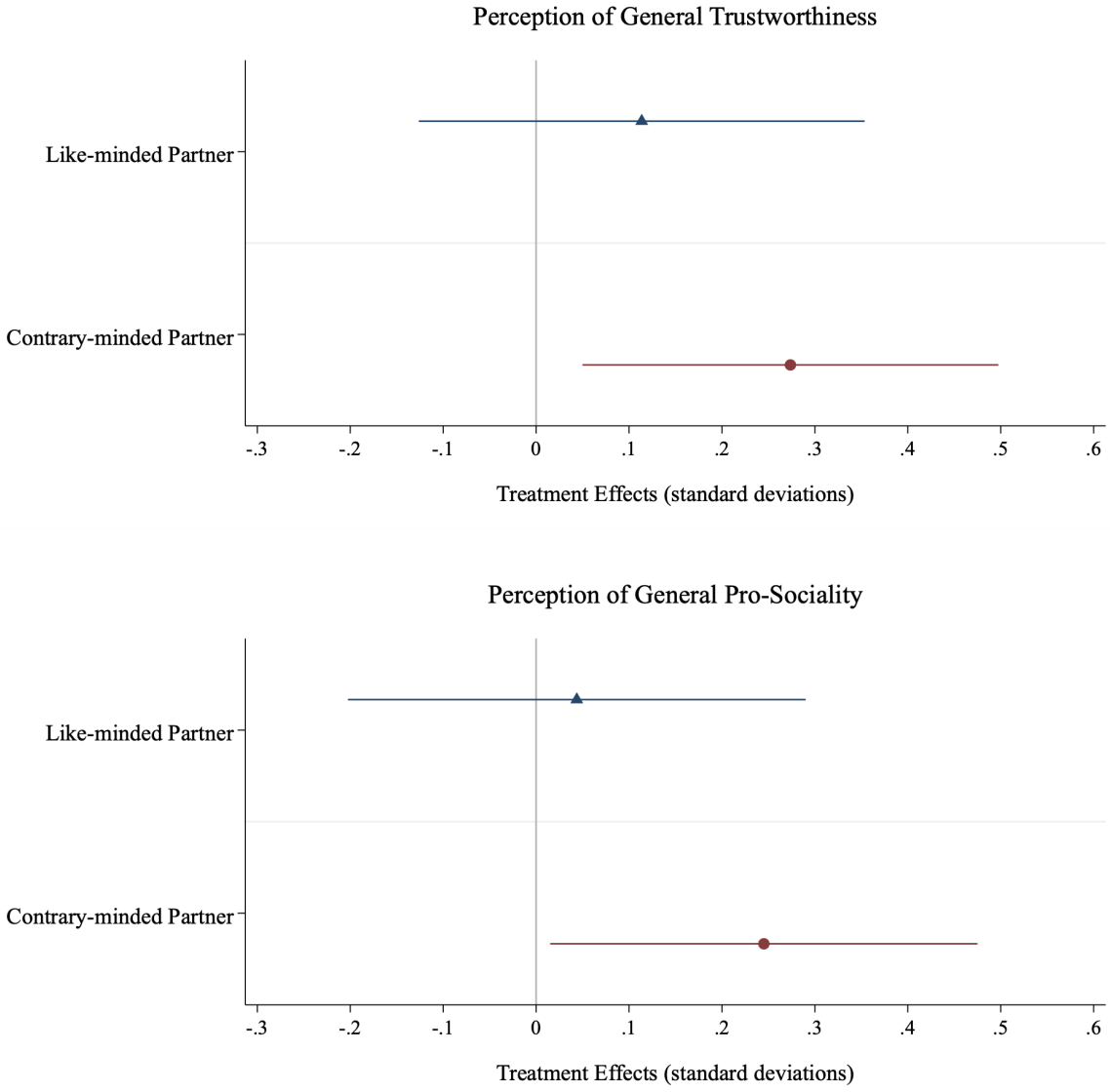


Figure 5: Effect of the Conversations on Social Cohesion



The two panels show the effect of the conversations on perception of general trustworthiness and pro-sociality.

Table 1: Balance Checks

	Like-minded	Contrary-minded
Political Attitudes		
Border Control	0.0969	-0.0922
	(0.137)	(0.139)
Metoo	-0.191	-0.103
	(0.127)	(0.148)
Meat Tax	0.00334	-0.0752
	(0.140)	(0.189)
Car free inner-cities	-0.163	-0.0806
	(0.132)	(0.158)
Cohabitation (Non-)Muslims	-0.0415	0.0486
	(0.114)	(0.149)
Development Germany	-0.00698	0.0500
	(0.157)	(0.169)
Trump	-0.0387	0.0764
	(0.0981)	(0.126)
Same-sex marriage	-0.118	-0.161
	(0.122)	(0.153)
Cooperation within EU	-0.114	0.172
	(0.0973)	(0.122)
Income Tax	0.118	-0.0373
	(0.160)	(0.172)
Trustworthiness Media	0.0310	-0.148
	(0.160)	(0.169)
Importance		
Importance: Border Control	0.0357	0.219
	(0.222)	(0.232)
Importance: Metoo	0.0737	-0.152
	(0.178)	(0.204)
Importance: Meat Tax	-0.0495	0.150
	(0.177)	(0.196)
Importance: Car free inner-cities	0.0474	0.184
	(0.178)	(0.192)
Importance: Cohabitation (Non-)Muslims	0.161	0.0729
	(0.157)	(0.172)
Importance: Development Germany	0.326	0.182
	(0.216)	(0.222)
Importance: Trump	0.285	0.186
	(0.224)	(0.235)
Beliefs		
Number applications for asylum	-16641.0	-8822.1
	(33678.8)	(41681.3)

Table 1: (continued)

	Like-minded	Contrary-minded
Share Muslims in Population	-0.177	0.107
	(0.601)	(0.741)
F-Test	0.95	0.71
P-Value	0.52	0.82

The table reports the treatment coefficients of the balance checks. Dependent variables are measures from the baseline survey that are not used in the basic specification: Baseline attitudes, subjective evaluation of importance of topics, and baseline beliefs about the share of muslims in Germany and number of asylum seekers in Germany. Each of these variables is regressed on the treatment and the sets of basic and additional controls. The respective dependent variable is listed in the first column. Column (1) reports the results for the and column (2) for the contrary-minded. F-Tests are calculated by regressing the treatment on all variables and the sets of basic and additional controls. Robust standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table 2: Effect on Willingness for Personal Contact

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	-0.113	-0.0993	-0.137*	0.131	0.146	0.176**
	(0.110)	(0.115)	(0.0799)	(0.122)	(0.133)	(0.0779)
Constant	0.733	-0.563		1.149	0.211	
	(1.196)	(1.104)		(0.991)	(1.482)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	X	Yes	Yes	X
Additional Controls	No	Yes		No	Yes	
Observations	755	755	755	727	727	727
R^2	0.394	0.501		0.529	0.582	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized willingness for personal contact. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): Various combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

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Appendix

A Measures

Our analysis relies on two datasets: data from the intervention *Germany Talks* and self-reported survey data. The primary set consists of all 19,134 registered participants and includes age, gender, zip-code, answers to the seven political registration questions and the matched participant.

A.1 Controls

Additional to the variables elicited during registration, we gathered more control variables about the participants in our baseline and endline survey. In the baseline survey, we gathered information about participants' demographics like education, migration background, and religion, the political heterogeneity of their social environments, i.e. how many politically contrary-minded people they have in their social environment, and their political preferences, which includes a position on a political self-classification and the party they would vote for. In the endline we elicited income and marital status. The following paragraphs list the relevant controls and how we construct them.

Basic Controls The *Basic Controls* includes most of the information the partners received about each other in the introductory email. This Set of Controls include dummies for age (intervals), gender, region (NUTS level), all combinations of political registration questions, and proxies for the surname (migration background, education, and income). Age, gender, answers to the seven political registration questions, and location data (zip codes) were included in the data provided by ZEIT online. For our analysis, we create six age dummies by dividing the variable into six intervals: 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, 65+. Gender is a binary variable indicating whether a person identifies as a male or female. Instead of including 1531 five-digit zip codes in our analysis, we construct dummies based on the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS). NUTS is a geocode standard that is developed and regulated by the European Union, it divides Germany into 39 government regions. We match the zip codes with these NUTS government regions to construct our NUTS region dummies. To capture the political attitudes of the participants, we include all combinations of the seven

binary political registration questions. From our baseline survey, we include variables for the participants' education, income, and migration background. Education is an ordinal variable with seven options from no school leaving certificate to a Ph.D. We include dummies for each category. Migration background is a binary dummy, where we define a person with a migration background as someone who either was not born in Germany or has parents who were born in a different country. Income is an ordinal variable that captures the net income per month of the respondents. It has 5 options from Below 800 EUR to Over 3300 EUR and an option for participants that don't know their monthly income.

Additional Controls To capture the information from the to us unknown, answers to the open questions and to increase power, we include several additional dummy variables. These *Additional controls* consist of dummies for party preferences, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and the number of politically contrary-minded people in their social environment. In party, we elicit the party the respondents would vote for. It is a nominal variable with nine options including all five parties represented in the 19th Bundestag and the options different party, I don't know, and I do not vote. Our next control political self-classification is a nominal variable with seven options from very liberal to very conservative. We also include dummies for different forms of political engagement that participants have been part of or not. Political engagement is a nominal variable that includes the following options participation in civic initiatives, attending demonstrations, being an active member of a party, and being an active member of a trade union. Religion elicits whether participants are part of a church or religious community, it is a nominal variable with the options part of Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist, or Hindu religious community and an option not part of any church or religious community. Religiousness is an ordinal variable eliciting how often participants visit a place of worship. It has six options from never to more than once per week. We also control for the marital status of the participants (nominal variable with the options single, divorced, widowed, registered partnership, married and living separately, married and living with a spouse). Further, we control for the amount of contrary-minded people in the participants' social environment (an ordinal variable with seven options from none to all).

We include dummies for all options in our analysis. Importantly, in all regressions, if a

covariate includes missing values, the missing values are coded to a constant, and an additional dummy control is added to the regression indicating whether a value is missing.

A.2 Outcome Measures

All outcome measures are standardized by subtracting the control group mean and dividing by the control group standard deviation.

Political Views Participants were asked to state the extent to which they agree with different political statements on a seven-point Likert scale. See Table (A4) for an overview. The first seven of the eleven questions were, apart from the transformation from questions into statements, identical to the political registration questions. However, participants could now indicate their (dis-)agreement on a finer level. In addition to the seven questions, we elicited four other, more general political attitudes. Based on these attitudes, we create a variety of variables for our analysis. The underlying idea is to take all eleven attitudes together and interpret the eleven-dimensional vector as the overall political attitude. Contrary to our social measures (Affective polarization and Perception of Social Cohesion), we use data from the baseline survey. We argue that political attitudes are not affected by either learning the treatment assignment or the first email contact with the partner.

Absolute change - The measure *Absolute change* (PA_change) helps us to explore if there was any movement in participants' overall political attitude. We define PA_change_i as the Euclidean distance between individual i's overall attitude in the endline (after the conversation) and baseline (before the conversation) survey:

$$PA\_change_i = \sqrt{\sum_{a=1}^{11} (Y_{ai2} - Y_{ai1})^2}$$

where Y_{ait} denotes individual i's level of agreement to attitude a in the endline (t=2) and the baseline (t=1) survey. The eleven attitudes are the political attitudes from Table A12. It should be noted that PA_change_i is neutral towards the direction of movement, i.e. it merely captures the magnitude of change.

Change towards extreme values - In order to study whether conversations with like- respectively

contrary-minded people lead to a polarization of political views, we construct two measures. Based on the eleven attitudes, we construct one measure that indicates whether someone moved towards or away from the center of our scale (a vector of 3s). We interpret this measure as the *Movement towards extreme responses*. This interpretation implies that we assume that the movement towards the boundaries of the seven-point Likert scales reflects a movement towards stronger or more extreme positions. We define the measure *Movement towards extreme responses* ($PA\_change\_center_i$) as:

$$PA\_change\_center_i = \sqrt{\sum_{a=1}^{11} (Y_{ai2} - 3)^2} - \sqrt{\sum_{a=1}^{11} (Y_{ai1} - 3)^2}$$

where Y_{ait} denotes individual i's level of agreement to attitude a in the endline (t=2) and the baseline (t=1) survey. The first term is the Euclidean distance of i's attitude to the center point (vector of 3s) in the endline survey (t=2), while the second term is the respective Euclidean distance in the baseline survey (t=1). Thus, *Movement towards extreme responses* ($PA\_change\_center_i$) reflects the change in the distance to the center of our scale. A positive realization of this variable indicates that individual i moved towards the boundary of our scale, whereas a negative realization implies that i's attitudes changed in the direction of the center. If the variable equals zero, participants moved neither closer nor further away from the center. Our second measure to study attitude polarization is called *Movement away from the average opinion* ($PA\_change\_average_i$). The variable measures whether an individual converged to the average pre-meeting overall attitude of our impact sample:

$$PA\_change\_average_i = \sqrt{\sum_{a=1}^{11} (Y_{ai2} - \overline{Y}_{a1})^2} - \sqrt{\sum_{a=1}^{11} (Y_{ai1} - \overline{Y}_{a1})^2}$$

where Y_{ait} denotes individual i's level of agreement to attitude a in the endline (t=2) and the baseline (t=1) survey. $\overline{Y}_{a1}$ is the average level of agreement to attitude a of all participants in the impact sample in the Pre-Survey. The two terms reflect the distance to the average pre-meeting opinion after and before the meeting took place. In sum, *Movement away from the average opinion* ($PA\_change\_average_i$) denotes whether someone moved towards ($PA\_change\_average\_i < 0$) or away from ($PA\_change\_average\_i > 0$) the average pre-meeting opinion or none of the two.

Affective Polarization To study how the conversations' affected stereotypes about contrary-minded people and participants' willingness to have personal contact with these people, participants had to picture a person that gave opposing answers to the seven political registration questions. We then elicited participants' beliefs about this person by asking them the extent to which they agree with different statements about the contrary-minded person on a seven-point Likert scale. Importantly, we did not elicit beliefs and attitudes towards the matched partner but some pictured person. The elicited stereotypes are based on beliefs and attitudes from previous participants of *Germany Talks*. (STIMMT DAS? Wieso haben wir noch mal diese Fragen ausgewhlt?)

Stereotypes - Our *Stereotypes* measures combines four single stereotypes. All participants were asked about the contrary-minded person's cognitive abilities and how poorly informed this person is. Further, they had to state the degree to which the contrary-minded person's way of life and their moral values differ from their own. We combine these questions by implementing a principle component analysis. We use the first principle component as our *Stereotypes* measures. A higher value of our *Stereotypes* measure is associated with larger stereotypes about contrary-minded individuals. Table 12A (LINK) lists the translated wording for our four single stereotypes and Table XYZ () provides the loadings of the first principle component.

Willingness for personal contact - We elicited participants' *Willingness for personal contact* by asking participants to state their level of agreement to the statement that they do not want to have the imagined person in their social environment. For our analysis, we reverse the scale. See Table 12A (LINK) for the exact wording of the phrase.

Perception of Social Cohesion To gather participants' perceptions of social cohesion in Germany, we elicit two beliefs. The two beliefs measure different components of how participants perceive their fellow German citizens. First, we elicit the participants' belief about how trustworthy their fellow citizens are (*Perception of General Trustworthiness*). Second, we measure participants' *Perception of General Pro-Sociality* by asking them whether German citizens generally care about the wellbeing of others. The OEdefinesine a society as 'cohesive' "if it works

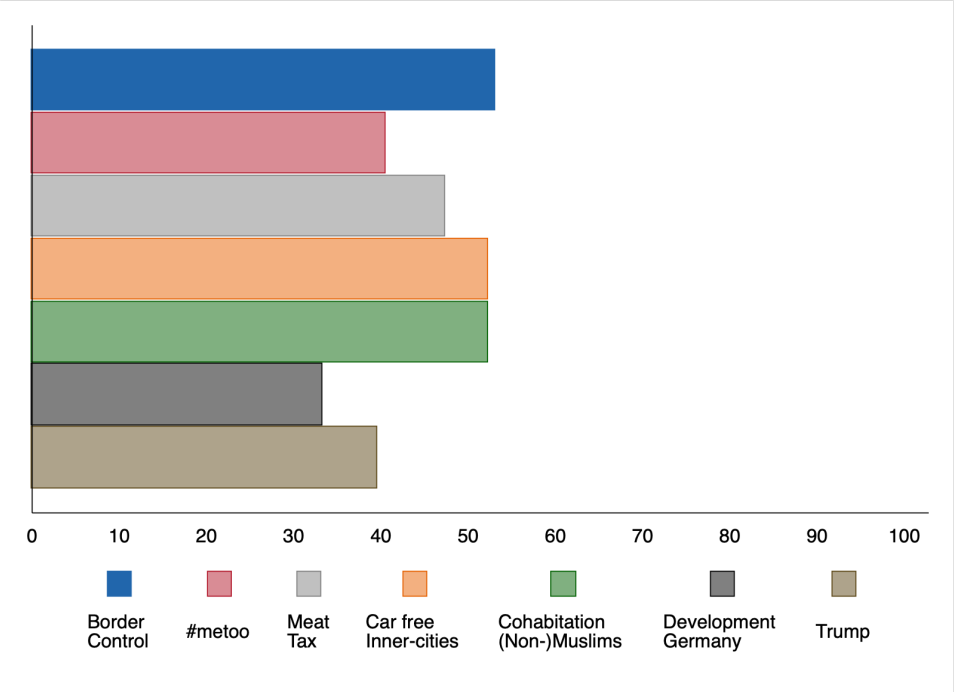
towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward social mobility."(Quote OECD$_{s}ocial_{c}ohesion : SeeBibTexbelow)Boththetrustinothersandthebeliefthatothersaroundcarea$
$beingoffellowcitizenscaptureimportantaspectsofthisdefinition.Thetwoquestionsarelistedin Table 12A.$

Unused Outcome Variables In addition to the variables above, we elicited several outcome measures which we do not focus on in the paper. First, the endline survey contained two questions about the relative size of the Muslim population in Germany and the total number of refugees in Germany in 2017. We do not report the results for these factual questions as our data revealed that participants only rarely talked about these numbers.[27] Second, we elicited the attitudes of typical AfD and Green voters. Unfortunately, we do not have sufficient data to analyze the effects of the meeting on these beliefs as identifying the relevant meetings requires that we have the party preferences of both partners.

[27]Only 8.5% of the participants talked about the number of refugees and only 9 % about the percentage of Muslims living in Germany.

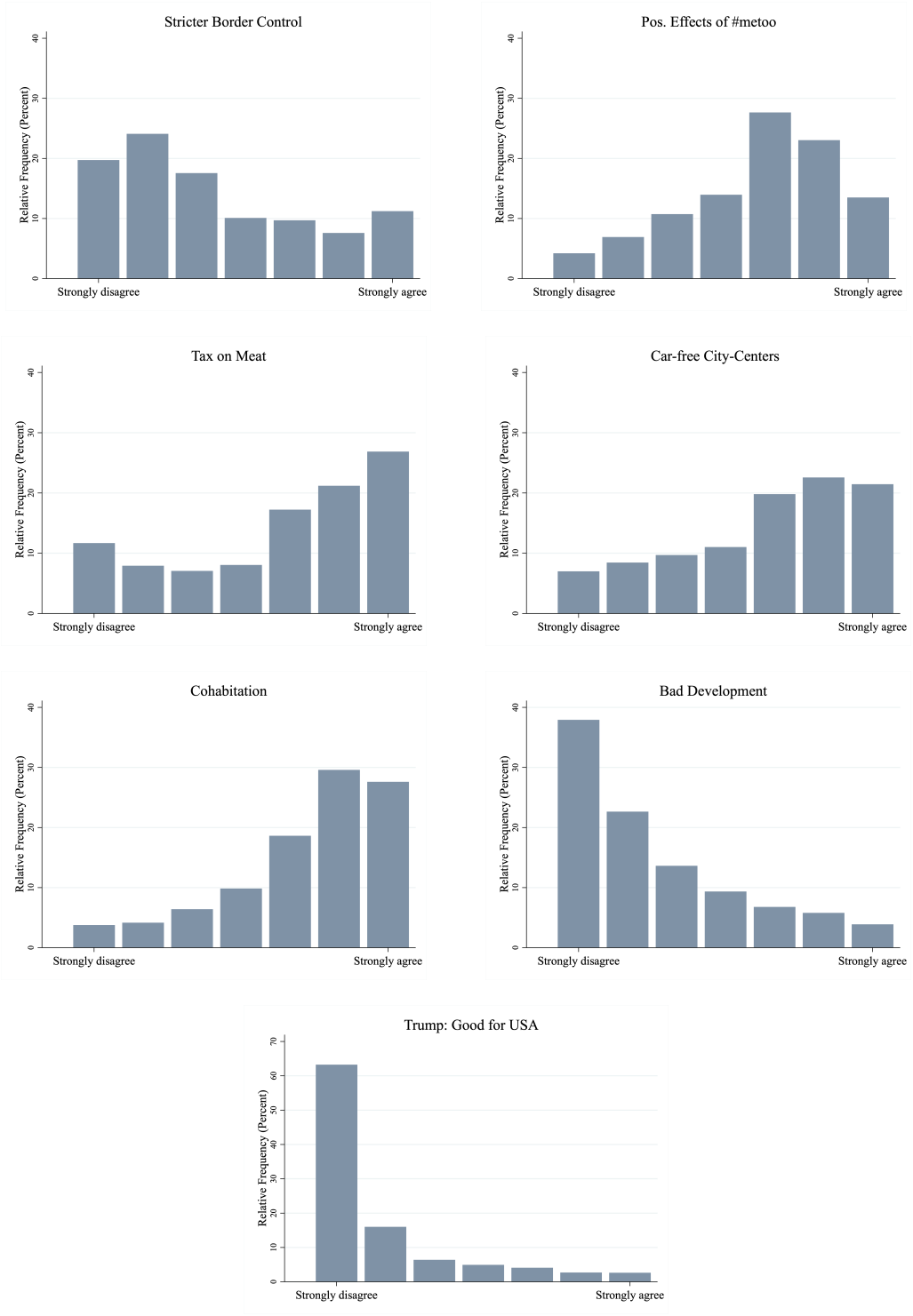
B Figures

Figure A1: Topics during Conversation



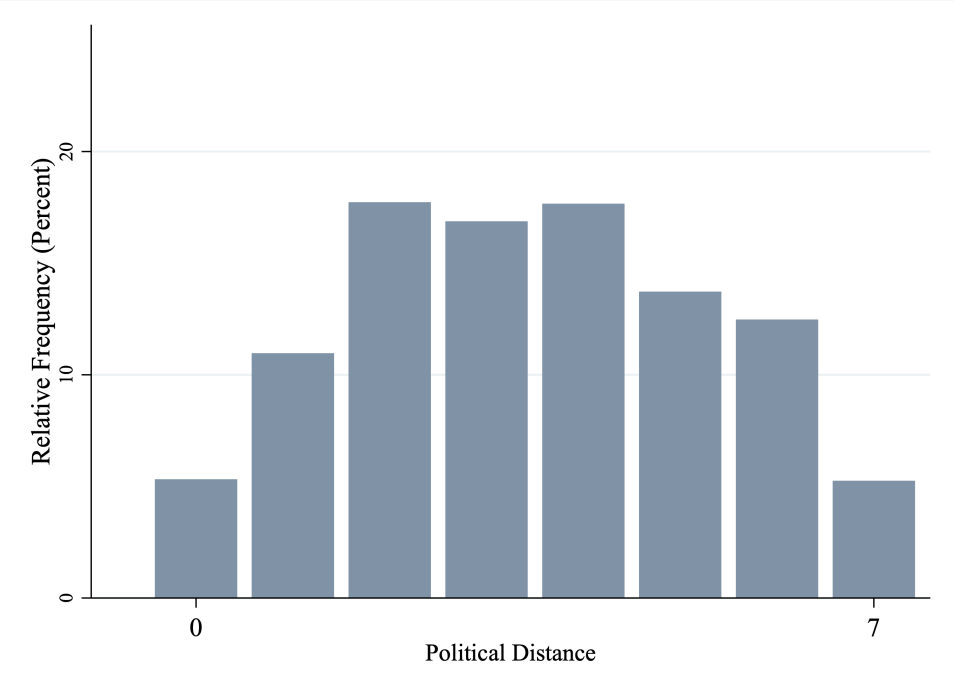
The Figure plots the how frequent the topics of the political registration questions were discussed in the conversations. The x-axis on the graph denotes the frequency in %.

Figure A2: Answer Distributions



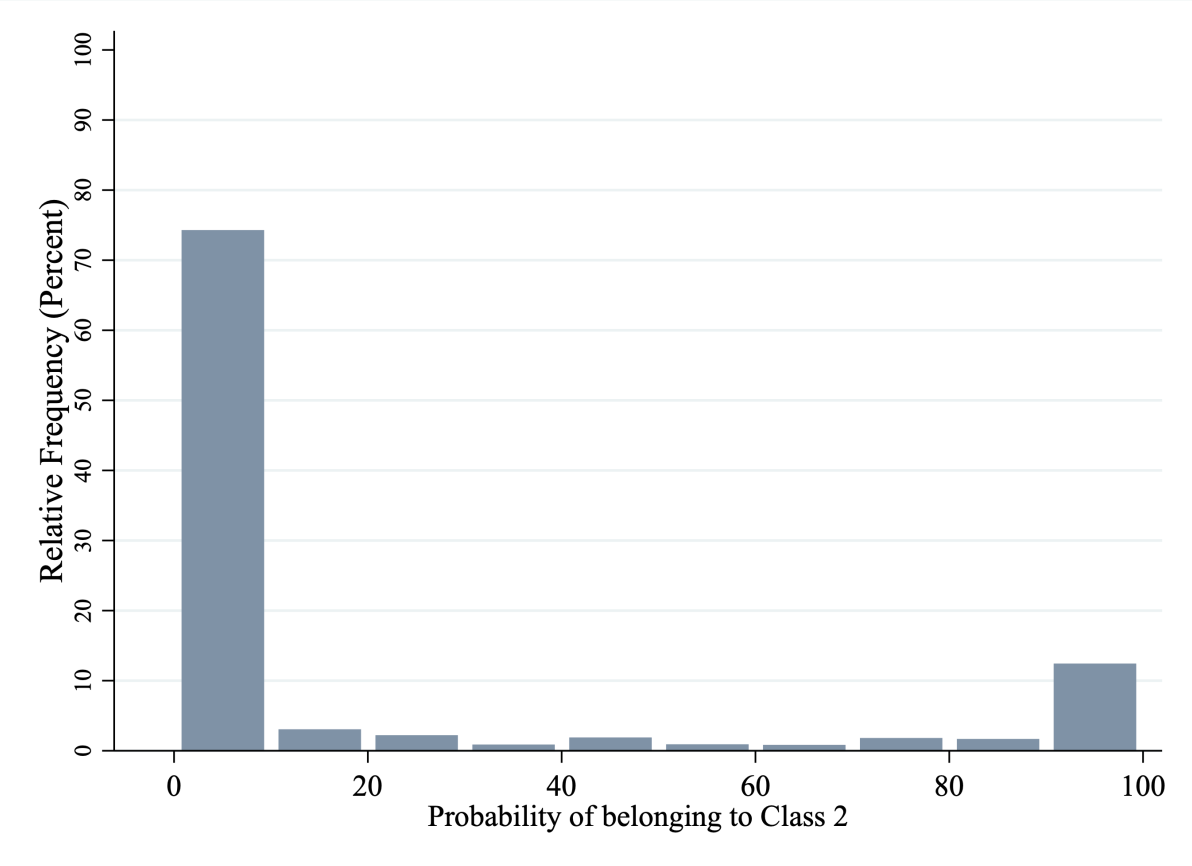
The histograms plot the answers for four of the seven political attitude questions from the Pre-Survey. Participants had to state how much they agree with the respective statement (*0 = Strongly disagree* to *6 = Strongly agree*).

Figure A3: Political Distance within Pairs



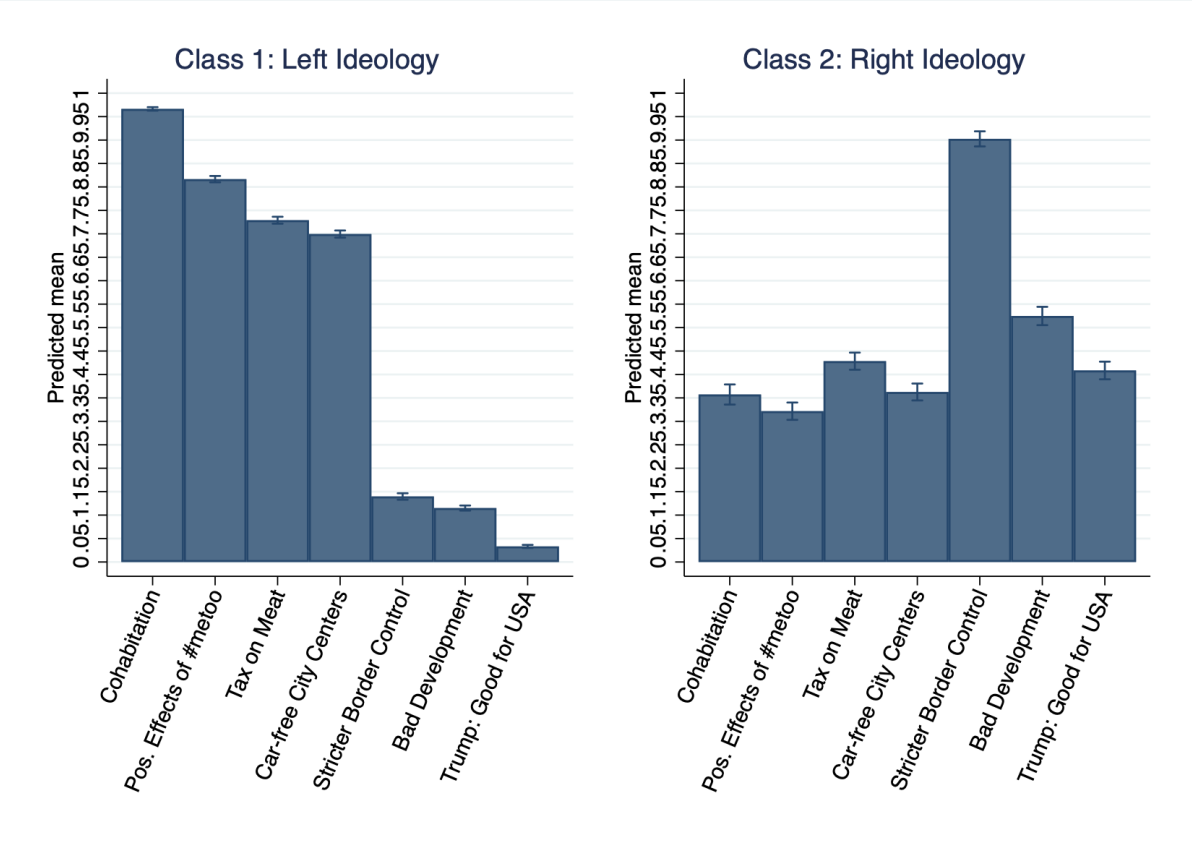
The Figure plots the distribution of the political distance within pairs. The political distance is between 0 (= giving identical answers to all political registration questions) and 7 (= giving different answers to all political registration questions).

Figure A4: LCA: Likelihood of Class 2 Membership



The Figure plots the distribution of probabilities to belong to the class 2 from the Latent class analysis.

Figure A5: LCA: Conditional Likelihood of Agreement



The Figure shows the probabilities of agreeing to the binary political registration questions conditional on class membership.

Figure A6: Effect on General Change of Political Opinions

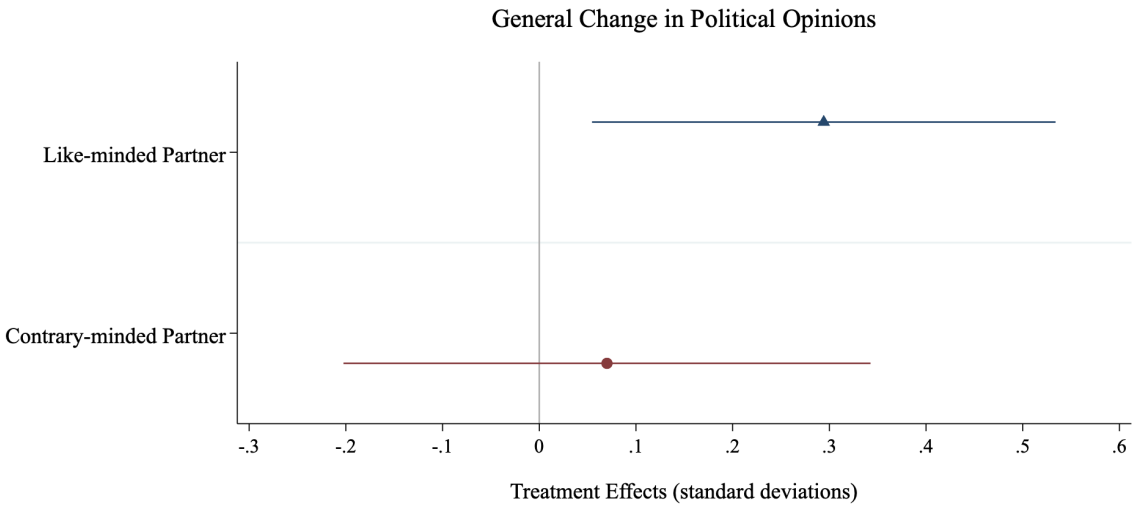
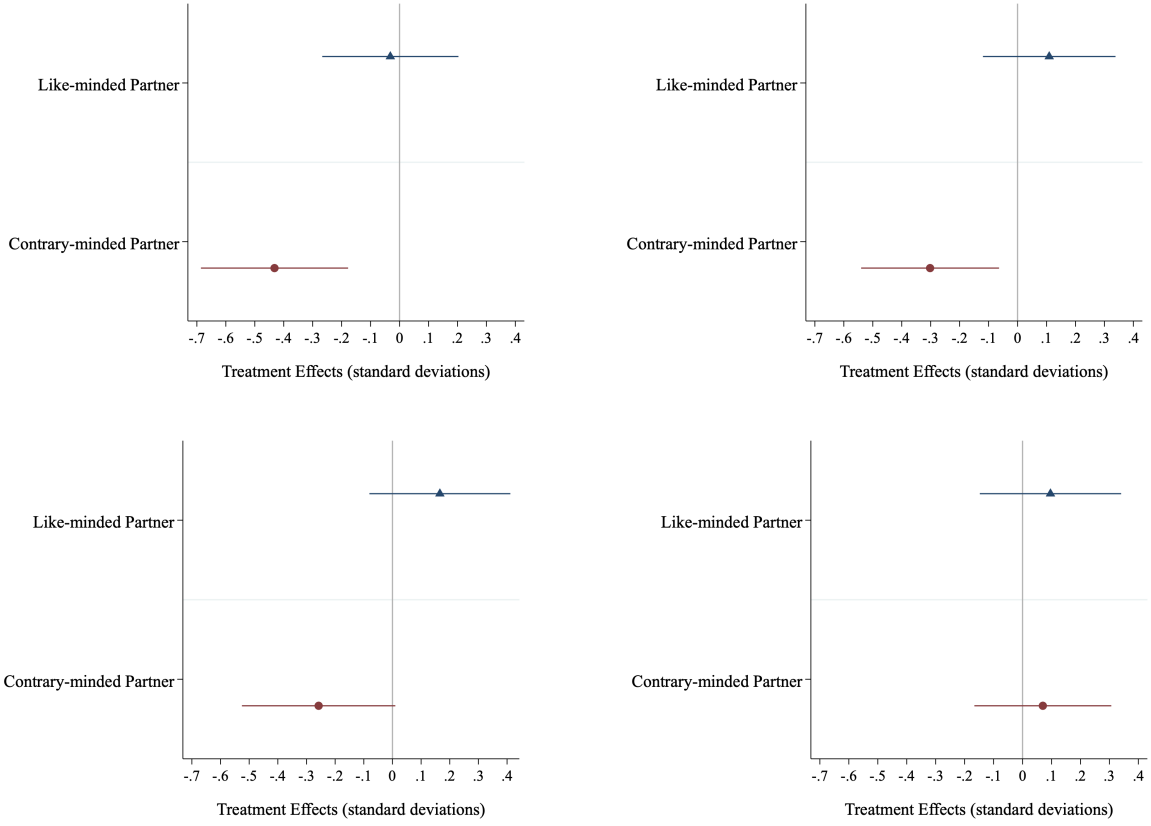


Figure A7: Effect on Stereotypes



The panels show the effect on stereotypes.

C Tables

Table A1: Political Registration Questions

Question	Answer Scale
Should Germany implement stronger border controls?	YES or NO
Did the public debate about sexual harassment and metoo caused something positive?	YES or NO
Should meat be taxed more to reduce the consumption of it?	YES or NO
Should German inner-cities be car-free?	YES or NO
Do Muslims and Non-Muslims cohabit well in Germany?	YES or NO
Are Germans worse off than 10 years ago?	YES or NO
Is Donald Trump good for the USA?	YES or NO

The table lists all seven political registration questions elicited during registration.

Table A2: Five Open Questions

Question / Statement	Answer Scale
What do you do for a living?	Open text
You are a friend of....	Open text
What do you do in your free time?	Open text
How would you describe yourself?	Open text
What are your dislikes?	Open text

Five open questions elicited during registration for *Germany Talks*.

Table A3: Treatment & Control Groups

	Like-minded Partner (LM)	Contrary-minded Partner (CM)
Treatment (Meeting possible)	LM-T: First-accepters, assigned to a like-minded partner who accepted as well.	CM-T: First-accepters, assigned to a contrary-minded partner who accepted as well
Control (Meeting not possible)	LM-C: First-accepters, assigned to a like-minded partner who did not accepted	CM-C: First-accepters, assigned to a contrary-minded partner who did not accepted.

This table summarizes the different treatment and control groups. Treatment conditions LM and CM are shown in columns, while the rows differentiate between whether people were treated or not.

Table A4: Summary Statistics

	German Population (%)	Impact Sample (%)		
		All	LM	CM
Age				
18 - 34	24	25	27	23
35 - 54	32	37	35	39
55 or older	43	38	37	39
Gender				
Female	49	37	42	32
State				
Baden Württemberg	13	13	13	14
Bayern	16	14	14	14
Berlin	4	13	16	11
Brandenburg	3	2	2	3
Bremen	1	1	1	0
Hamburg	2	6	7	5
Hessen	8	8	8	9
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	2	1	0	2
Niedersachsen	10	10	11	9
Nordrhein-Westfalen	22	17	16	18
Rheinland-Pfalz	5	3	3	3
Saarland	1	1	1	1
Sachsen	5	5	5	5
Sachsen-Anhalt	3	1	1	1
Schleswig-Holstein	3	4	4	3
Thüringen	3	1	0	2
Migration background				
Yes	23	10	10	10
Education				
No Education	2	0	0	0
Lower Sec. Education	24	1	1	1
Middle School	30	7	6	7
Advanced technical certificate	6	6	7	6
High School	10	17	17	17

Table A4: (continued)

	German Population	Impact Sample		
		All	LM	CM
University	27	67	68	66
Other	0	1	1	2
Income (monthly; EUR)				
0-800	19	10	0.11	0.08
800-1499	25	13	0.13	0.13
1500-2199	23	20	0.21	0.20
2200-3299	17	23	0.26	0.21
3300 or more	17	27	0.24	0.30
Political spectrum left-right				
Far-left	3	4	4	3
Left	18	25	29	21
Centre-left	30	40	44	34
Centre	28	20	18	21
Centre-right	16	9	4	15
Right	3	2	0	4
Far right	1	1	0	1
Party				
Die Linke	10	14	14	12
Bündnis/90 Die Grüne	16	50	54	39
SPD	17	11	12	9
CDU/CSU	28	7	5	8
FDP	9	7	5	9
AfD	15	7	0	13
Other	5	5	3	5
Don't Vote/Don't know	31	2	1	2
Ideological Class				
Left Ideology		83	98	67
Right Ideology		17	2	33
N		1,523	775	748

Table A4: (continued)

	German Population	Impact Sample		
		All	LM	CM

The table presents characteristics of the German adult population, our impact sample, the subsamples LM and CM. Measures for the German population are taken from the German Microcensus (age, gender, marital status), German Allbus 2018 (education, migration background, income, religious confession, religiousness), the CSES 2017 (left-right), and an election poll by Forsa from the week prior to DS (Party). To allow for comparisons, some variables were transformed by collapsing several subcategories into one supercategory. If categories do not sum up to 100, this is due to rounding.

Table A5: Treatment Conditions

	Class 1: Left Ideology (kmeans)	Class 2: Right Ideology (kmeans)
Class 1: Left Ideology (LCA)	15,721	0
Class 2: Right Ideology (LCA)	377	2997

This table shows the number of participants who belong to either the left or the right class, identified by LCA (rows) and k-means clustering (columns), respectively.

Table A6: Treatment Conditions

	Class 1: Left Ideology (kmeans)	Class 2: Right Ideology (kmeans)
Class 1: Left Ideology (LCA)	15,721	0
Class 2: Right Ideology (LCA)	377	2997

This table shows the number of participants who belong to either the left or the right class, identified by LCA (rows) and k-means clustering (columns), respectively.

Table A7: Like-minded vs contrary-minded Partners

	Like-minded (%)	Contrary-minded (%)
Gender		
Female	38	21
Male	62	79
Age		
18 - 34	46	33
35 - 54	34	38
55 or older	21	29
Ideological Class		
Left Ideology	98	57
Right Ideology	2	43
Ideological Class: Overlap		
Same Ideological Class	97	26
Different Ideological Class	3	74

This table summarizes the characteristics of the partner in the LM (column 1) and the CM treatment condition (column 2).

Table A8: Balance Checks

	Like-minded	Contrary-minded
Political Attitudes		
Border Control	0.137	-0.0270
	(0.131)	(0.138)
Metoo	-0.151	-0.212
	(0.121)	(0.145)
Meat Tax	0.00334	-0.0752
	(0.140)	(0.189)
Car free inner-cities	-0.174	-0.170
	(0.130)	(0.160)
Cohabitation (Non-)Muslims	-0.0590	0.0679
	(0.110)	(0.149)
Development Germany	0.0688	0.147
	(0.144)	(0.168)
Trump	-0.0204	0.149
	(0.103)	(0.122)
Same-sex marriage	-0.0505	0.0666
	(0.140)	(0.170)
Cooperation within EU	-0.0733	0.114
	(0.0886)	(0.120)
Income Tax	0.0764	-0.0690
	(0.160)	(0.181)
Trustworthiness Media	0.0547	-0.257
	(0.153)	(0.161)
Importance		
Importance: Border Control	0.0639	0.193
	(0.209)	(0.220)
Importance: Metoo	0.0827	-0.141
	(0.163)	(0.195)
Importance: Meat Tax	0.0190	0.0870
	(0.165)	(0.184)
Importance: Car free inner-cities	0.0349	0.0444
	(0.167)	(0.191)
Importance: Cohabitation (Non-)Muslims	0.169	0.142
	(0.151)	(0.156)
Importance: Development Germany	0.351*	0.163
	(0.207)	(0.203)
Importance: Trump	0.305	-0.0309
	(0.210)	(0.222)
Beliefs		
Number applications for asylum	-16025.4	-6738.0
	(32060.3)	(37974.5)

Table A8: (continued)

	Like-minded	Contrary-minded
Share Muslims in Population	-0.0148	0.125
	(0.562)	(0.696)
Political Engagement		
Participation in citizens' initiative	0.0284	-0.0148
	(0.0272)	(0.0313)
Participation in demonstration	-0.0905*	-0.0102
	(0.0528)	(0.0500)
Work for party	0.0460	0.00946
	(0.0358)	(0.0448)
Work for union	0.0183	-0.00592
	(0.0215)	(0.0261)
None	0.00981	0.00447
	(0.0523)	(0.0573)
Not specified	-0.0119	0.0170
	(0.0158)	(0.0157)
Marital Status		
Single	0.00486	-0.0288
	(0.0419)	(0.0450)
Single, in relationship	-0.00394	0.0225
	(0.0417)	(0.0501)
Life Partnership	-0.00686	-0.00538
	(0.0109)	(0.00768)
Married	-0.0614	-0.00108
	(0.0472)	(0.0536)
Married, living separately	0.0308	-0.00321
	(0.0215)	(0.0167)
Divorced	0.0261	0.0131
	(0.0216)	(0.0334)
Widowed	-0.00449	0.00783
	(0.0139)	(0.0146)
Not specified	0.0137	-0.00495
	(0.0160)	(0.0120)
Social Environment		
No one	0.0208*	-0.00855
	(0.0122)	(0.00569)
Almost no one	-0.0572	-0.0137
	(0.0348)	(0.0411)
Some	-0.0100	0.102*
	(0.0543)	(0.0607)
Approx. half	0.0635	-0.0442
	(0.0431)	(0.0535)

Table A8: (continued)

	Like-minded	Contrary-minded
Many	-0.0326	-0.0422
	(0.0339)	(0.0389)
Almost everyone	0.00731	0.00310
	(0.00593)	(0.0143)
Everyone	7.45e-17***	-4.63e-17***
	(7.56e-18)	(6.35e-18)
Religion		
None	-0.0521	-0.0122
	(0.0522)	(0.0563)
Christian	0.0313	0.0171
	(0.0515)	(0.0539)
Other	-0.00654	0.00755
	(0.0149)	(0.0174)
Not Specified	0.0274*	-0.0125
	(0.0154)	(0.0168)
Religiousness		
Never	-0.0602	-0.0485
	(0.0517)	(0.0600)
Less than several times per year	0.00396	0.0203
	(0.0550)	(0.0592)
Several times per year	0.0519	0.0144
	(0.0415)	(0.0410)
One to three times per month	0.0106	-0.00417
	(0.0217)	(0.0264)
Once per week	-0.0100	0.0238
	(0.0164)	(0.0151)
Several times per week	-0.00836	0.00920
	(0.0169)	(0.0120)
Not specified	0.0121	-0.0150
	(0.0102)	(0.0146)
Political spectrum left-right		
Far-left	-0.0349	0.00198
	(0.0212)	(0.0248)
Left	0.0226	-0.0419
	(0.0515)	(0.0476)
Centre-left	-0.00872	0.0395
	(0.0544)	(0.0569)
Centre	0.0627	-0.0103
	(0.0384)	(0.0466)
Centre-right	-0.0317	0.0224
	(0.0220)	(0.0352)

Table A8: (continued)

	Like-minded	Contrary-minded
Right	-0.0000269	-0.00797
	(0.00119)	(0.0185)
Far right	0.00128	0.00814
	(0.00228)	(0.0131)
Not specified	-0.0113	-0.0119
	(0.0121)	(0.0112)
Party		
CDU/CSU	-0.0273	0.00295
	(0.0208)	(0.0292)
SPD	0.0564*	-0.0197
	(0.0325)	(0.0356)
Bündnis/90 Die Grüne	-0.0145	-0.0413
	(0.0536)	(0.0561)
FDP	0.0247	0.00427
	(0.0234)	(0.0349)
Die Linke	-0.0653	-0.0206
	(0.0396)	(0.0402)
AfD	-0.000179	0.0518**
	(0.00153)	(0.0230)
Other party	0.0154	0.0162
	(0.0185)	(0.0287)
Don't Vote	0.000221	-0.000299
	(0.00632)	(0.00877)
Not specified	0.0107	0.00673
	(0.0215)	(0.0270)
F-Test	1.11	1.12
P-Value	0.28	0.27

The table reports the treatment coefficients of the balance checks. Dependent variables are measures from the baseline survey that are not used in the basic specification: Baseline attitudes, the set of additional controls, subjective evaluation of importance of topics, and baseline beliefs about the share of muslims in Germany and number of asylum seekers in Germany.. Each of these variables is regressed on the treatment and the set of basic controls. The respective dependent variable is listed in the first column. Column (1) reports the results for the and column (2) for the contrary-minded. F-Tests are calculated by regressing the treatment on all variables and the set of basic controls. Robust standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A9: Attrition

	Like-minded (LM)	Contrary-minded (CM)
	(1)	(2)
Treat	-0.0162	-0.0228
	(0.0345)	(0.0357)
Constant	0.845**	0.640
	(0.365)	(0.393)
Basic Controls (no income)	Yes	Yes
Add. Controls (no marital st.)	Yes	Yes
Outcome Mean	0.49	0.49
Observations	1489	1412

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is a dummy variable equal to one if the participant filled out the baseline survey but did not complete the endline survey. It is equal to zero if only the baseline was completed. Column (1) shows the results for the like-minded treatment condition, column (2) for the contrary-minded treatment condition. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A10: Selective Take-Up

	Like-minded (LM)	Contrary-minded (CM)
	(1)	(2)
Treat	0.0669***	0.0715***
	(0.0126)	(0.0155)
Constant	-0.0449	0.494***
	(0.0685)	(0.152)
Basic Controls (no income)	Yes	Yes
Outcome Mean	0.189	0.215
Observations	4032	3391

Robust standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is a dummy variable equal to one if the participant filled out both surveys and equal to zero if no survey was completed. Column (1) shows the results for like-minded treatment condition, column (2) for the contrary-minded treatment condition. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A11: Political Distance Dependent Selection

	All Participants	Panel
	(1)	(2)
Contrary-minded	-0.00553	0.0157
	(0.00721)	(0.0187)
Constant	0.446***	0.633***
	(0.00488)	(0.0131)
R^2	0.0000307	0.000267
Observations	19135	2646

The table reports OLS estimates. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if a person accepted first and zero if she did not accepted or accepted second. *Contrary-minded* is 1 if the participant was assigned to a contrary-minded partner. The first column contains all available observations while in column (2) the sample is restricted to people who answered both surveys. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A12: Outcome Variables

Variable	Statement
Political Attitudes	
Border control	Germany should implement stronger border controls.
Metoo	The public debate about sexual harassment and metoo caused something positive.
Tax meat	Meat should be taxed more to reduce its consumption.
Car-free inner-cities	German inner-cities should be car-free.
Muslims	Muslims and Non-Muslims cohabit well in Germany.
German development	Germans are worse off than 10 years ago.
Trump	Donald Trump is good for the USA.
Same-sex marriage	Marriage should only be possible between a men and a women.
Cooperation within EU	Germany should deepen its cooperation with other EU countries.
Income Tax	To reduce the gap between rich and poor, the maximum tax rate for top earners should be increased.
Trustworthiness Media	Altogether, German media are trustworthy.
Stereotypical Beliefs:	
Cognitive abilities	This person is incapable of understanding complex contexts. (rev.)
Badly informed	This person is badly informed. (rev.)
Moral values	This person has completely different moral values. (rev.)
Way of life	This person leads a completely different life. (rev.)
Willingness for personal contact	I don't want this person to be in my personal environment. (rev.)
Social Cohesion	
Trust	One can trust most people in Germany.
Care	Most people in Germany do not care about what happens to fellow human beings.

The table lists all outcome variables including a translation of the original formulations. The *Stereotypical Beliefs* were elicited directly after participants answered the first seven political attitude questions. We asked participants to picture a person that gave *very different* answers to the seven political attitude questions and to state their beliefs about this person. The last column shows the corresponding scales. We reversed the scale for stereotypical beliefs during analysis for interpretational purpose. Scales were agreement to statements and, in the case of the stereotypes, whether the statement applies.

Table A13: Effect on Attitudes: Adjustment away from Center

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.283**	0.286**	0.281***	-0.0645	-0.0225	-0.00911
	(0.123)	(0.127)	(0.0810)	(0.140)	(0.151)	(0.0827)
Constant	0.615	0.927		-2.226**	-1.309	
	(0.575)	(1.133)		(0.924)	(1.777)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.386	0.447		0.521	0.582	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized general adjustment PA_change_center. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A14: Effect on Attitudes: Adjustment away from Average Opinion

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.232*	0.279**	0.199**	-0.156	-0.151	-0.112
	(0.130)	(0.129)	(0.0834)	(0.131)	(0.141)	(0.0797)
Constant	1.505**	1.256		-2.404**	-4.168**	
	(0.738)	(1.255)		(0.959)	(1.664)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.381	0.448		0.540	0.585	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized general adjustment *PA_change_average*. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the average opinion, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A15: Effect on Attitudes: General Adjustment

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.303***	0.294**	0.216***	0.0998	0.0700	0.167**
	(0.115)	(0.122)	(0.0818)	(0.143)	(0.138)	(0.0790)
Constant	0.664	0.373		-0.738	-4.155**	
	(0.791)	(1.379)		(1.167)	(2.037)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.405	0.459		0.535	0.615	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized general adjustment *PA_change*. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one social environment dummy.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A16: Effect on Attitudes: Adjustment away from Center (Manhattan Distance)

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.262**	0.264**	0.237***	-0.0908	-0.0392	-0.0663
	(0.121)	(0.129)	(0.0819)	(0.137)	(0.145)	(0.0823)
Constant	0.442	1.129		-2.792***	-2.558	
	(0.705)	(1.217)		(0.886)	(1.691)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.376	0.437		0.532	0.599	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized away from the center, measured with the Manhattan Distance. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A17: Effect on Attitudes: Adjustment away from Center (Mahalanobis Distance)

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.181	0.213*	0.232***	-0.0402	-0.0278	-0.0455
	(0.117)	(0.120)	(0.0799)	(0.152)	(0.163)	(0.0846)
Constant	0.137	-0.533		-2.455**	-3.181*	
	(0.592)	(1.163)		(1.110)	(1.902)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.412	0.478		0.492	0.562	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized away from the center, measured with the Mahalanobis Distance. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A18: Effect on Attitudes: Adjustment away from Average Opinion (Manhattan Distance)

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.201	0.233*	0.173**	-0.173	-0.152	-0.160**
	(0.126)	(0.128)	(0.0830)	(0.126)	(0.132)	(0.0792)
Constant	1.930*	1.967		-2.416***	-3.793**	
	(1.046)	(1.332)		(0.860)	(1.600)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.381	0.443		0.565	0.612	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized adjustment away from the center, measured with the Manhattan Distance. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the average opinion, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A19: Effect on Attitudes: Adjustment away from Average Opinion (Mahalanobis Distance)

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.145	0.200	0.148*	-0.131	-0.139	-0.0989
	(0.131)	(0.134)	(0.0839)	(0.128)	(0.138)	(0.0809)
Constant	1.255	0.516		-2.560***	-4.447**	
	(0.862)	(1.216)		(0.964)	(1.879)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.382	0.449		0.567	0.613	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized adjustment away from the center, measured with the Mahalanobis Distance. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the average opinion, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A20: Effect on Attitudes: General Adjustment (Manhattan Distance)

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.320***	0.278**	0.218***	0.119	0.0712	0.204**
	(0.106)	(0.110)	(0.0759)	(0.150)	(0.137)	(0.0806)
Constant	0.532	-0.260		-0.777	-3.800*	
	(0.749)	(1.285)		(1.111)	(2.031)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.419	0.484		0.534	0.615	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized general adjustment, measured with the Manhattan Distance. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one social environment dummy.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A21: Effect on Attitudes: General Adjustment (Mahalanobis Distance)

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.266**	0.264**	0.191**	0.0923	0.0569	0.170**
	(0.110)	(0.117)	(0.0776)	(0.156)	(0.152)	(0.0836)
Constant	0.740	0.499		-0.495	-3.316	
	(0.829)	(1.424)		(1.225)	(2.151)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.393	0.452		0.532	0.610	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized general adjustment, measured with the Manhalanobis Distance. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one social environment dummy.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A22: Cut-Offs

	Like-minded			Contrary-minded		
	(1) Standard	(2) Strict	(3) Weak	(4) Standard	(5) Strict	(6) Weak
stereo_prej_st	0.0642	0.156	0.0163	-0.329***	-0.232***	-0.368***
	(0.0833)	(0.111)	(0.0704)	(0.0892)	(0.0730)	(0.127)
stereo_willingness_st	-0.115	-0.0390	-0.114	0.102	-0.00381	0.119
	(0.0875)	(0.113)	(0.0711)	(0.0864)	(0.0715)	(0.123)
sc_care_st	0.0243	-0.0559	0.110	0.283***	0.250***	0.223*
	(0.0856)	(0.110)	(0.0703)	(0.0830)	(0.0707)	(0.114)
sc_trust_st	0.139*	0.00716	0.160**	0.221**	0.236***	0.204*
	(0.0793)	(0.102)	(0.0687)	(0.0880)	(0.0700)	(0.118)
pa_change_ed_st	0.212**	0.204*	0.183**	0.166*	0.185**	0.244**
	(0.0909)	(0.119)	(0.0733)	(0.0970)	(0.0761)	(0.120)
pa_middle_ed_ch_st	0.261***	0.264**	0.214***	-0.0465	0.0374	-0.0947
	(0.0968)	(0.124)	(0.0815)	(0.0940)	(0.0802)	(0.129)
pa_change_avg_st	0.213**	0.253**	0.178**	-0.193**	-0.0882	-0.243*
	(0.0955)	(0.120)	(0.0814)	(0.0969)	(0.0816)	(0.131)

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A23: Effect on Ideological Polarization (Extreme Views): Ideological Classes

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.258**	0.276**	0.243***	-0.122	-0.00411	0.00523
	(0.111)	(0.114)	(0.0751)	(0.176)	(0.200)	(0.0912)
Constant	-0.632	-0.268		-2.321**	-0.556	
	(0.573)	(1.166)		(0.909)	(2.038)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	876	876	876	540	540	540
R^2	0.309	0.368		0.596	0.694	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized ideological polarizatio towards more extreme views. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: $.^{*}$ $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A24: Effect on Ideological Polarization (Non-average Views): Ideological Classes

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.226**	0.286**	0.187**	-0.221	-0.102	-0.171*
	(0.108)	(0.111)	(0.0738)	(0.174)	(0.184)	(0.0916)
Constant	-0.220	-0.763		-2.750***	-2.789	
	(0.602)	(1.158)		(0.995)	(1.943)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	876	876	876	540	540	540
R^2	0.322	0.385		0.651	0.734	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized ideological polarization towards non-average views. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: $.^{*}$ $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A25: Effect on Stereotypes

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.0847	0.0873	0.0303	-0.292**	-0.379***	-0.305***
	(0.117)	(0.122)	(0.0814)	(0.120)	(0.132)	(0.0798)
Constant	-2.542**	-2.519*		-2.496**	-2.421	
	(1.196)	(1.412)		(0.982)	(1.489)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	X	Yes	Yes	X
Additional Controls	No	Yes		No	Yes	
Observations	747	747	747	720	720	720
R^2	0.388	0.470		0.561	0.618	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized stereotypes about contrary-minded. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): Two combinations of the political registration questions, two NUTS FE..* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A26: Effect on Stereotypes: Different Way of Life

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.150	0.0903	0.113	0.0853	0.0738	-0.0552
	(0.107)	(0.116)	(0.0752)	(0.125)	(0.127)	(0.0799)
Constant	-1.927***	-1.788*		-1.301	-1.012	
	(0.557)	(1.039)		(0.838)	(1.609)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	X	Yes	Yes	X
Additional Controls	No	Yes	X	No	Yes	X
Observations	755	755	755	725	725	725
R^2	0.420	0.479		0.536	0.616	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized belief that contrary-minded lead a different way of life. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one education dummy. Column (6): Two combinations of the political registration questions, one NUTS FE, one social environment dummy.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A27: Effect on Stereotypes: Different Moral Values

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.142	0.159	0.0897	-0.214	-0.267*	-0.234***
	(0.111)	(0.120)	(0.0765)	(0.130)	(0.141)	(0.0797)
Constant	-0.704	-0.370		-1.718*	-0.796	
	(0.903)	(1.215)		(0.969)	(1.741)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	X	Yes	Yes	X
Additional Controls	No	Yes		No	Yes	
Observations	753	753	753	725	725	725
R^2	0.368	0.439		0.503	0.570	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized belief that contrary-minded have different moral values. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, one NUTS FE.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A28: Effect on Stereotypes: Low Cognitive Abilities

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	-0.0414	-0.0305	-0.0595	-0.366***	-0.448***	-0.341***
	(0.110)	(0.115)	(0.0765)	(0.124)	(0.134)	(0.0809)
Constant	-1.819*	-2.095*		-1.594	-1.327	
	(1.039)	(1.202)		(1.000)	(1.557)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	X	Yes	Yes	X
Additional Controls	No	Yes	X	No	Yes	
Observations	753	753	753	725	725	725
R^2	0.372	0.439		0.529	0.586	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized belief that contrary-minded have low cognitive abilities. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): Various NUTS FE, one education dummy.Column (6):Two combinations of the political registration questions.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A29: Effect on Stereotypes: Poorly Informed

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.0733	0.107	0.0246	-0.228*	-0.308**	-0.144*
	(0.110)	(0.114)	(0.0771)	(0.116)	(0.123)	(0.0784)
Constant	-2.410**	-2.355		-1.987**	-2.777**	
	(1.213)	(1.454)		(0.967)	(1.345)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	X	Yes	Yes	X
Additional Controls	No	Yes	X	No	Yes	X
Observations	753	753	753	726	726	726
R^2	0.380	0.464		0.562	0.626	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized belief that contrary-minded are poorly informed. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): Various NUTS FE, one party dummy. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, two NUTS FE, one income dummy.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A30: Effect on Stereotypes: Ideological Classes

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.0563	0.0426	0.00151	-0.341**	-0.388**	-0.328***
	(0.0938)	(0.0970)	(0.0709)	(0.162)	(0.177)	(0.0930)
Constant	-3.424***	-3.943***		-2.194**	-1.107	
	(0.585)	(0.955)		(1.091)	(1.714)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	910	910	910	557	557	557
R^2	0.383	0.450		0.643	0.716	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized overall stereotype measure. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: $.^{*}$ $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A31: Willingness for Personal Contact: Ideological Classes

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	-0.150	-0.166*	-0.129*	0.219	0.235	0.232**
	(0.0918)	(0.0952)	(0.0682)	(0.152)	(0.165)	(0.0927)
Constant	-0.596	-0.944		-0.0648	-1.821	
	(0.553)	(0.852)		(1.009)	(1.673)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	918	918	918	564	564	564
R^2	0.336	0.418		0.649	0.696	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized overall stereotype measure. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: $.^{*}$ $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A32: Effect on Perception of General Trustworthiness

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.0963	0.114	0.163**	0.229**	0.274**	0.155**
	(0.114)	(0.122)	(0.0768)	(0.109)	(0.114)	(0.0761)
Constant	-1.259	-2.196		-0.502	-0.948	
	(1.259)	(1.413)		(0.889)	(1.852)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	757	757	757	726	726	726
R^2	0.356	0.430		0.655	0.698	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized perception of general trustworthiness. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one income dummy. Column (6): Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one income dummy, two political party dummies.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A33: Effect on Perception of General Pro-Sociality

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.0211	0.0438	0.0585	0.255**	0.245**	0.217***
	(0.114)	(0.125)	(0.0786)	(0.109)	(0.117)	(0.0746)
Constant	-1.078	-0.107		0.960	1.566	
	(1.248)	(1.037)		(0.815)	(1.536)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	X	Yes	Yes	X
Additional Controls	No	Yes		No	Yes	X
Observations	759	759	759	727	727	727
R^2	0.384	0.456		0.595	0.657	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized perception of general pro-sociality. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Column (3): One combination of the political registration questions, two NUTS FE, one education dummy. Column (6): Various combinations of the political registration questions, two NUTS FE, one political party dummy.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A34: Effect on Perception of General Trustworthiness: Ideological Classes

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.101	0.131	0.132**	0.309**	0.252	0.201**
	(0.0858)	(0.0887)	(0.0644)	(0.151)	(0.166)	(0.0946)
Constant	-1.283*	-0.701		-0.494	-0.722	
	(0.722)	(1.244)		(1.143)	(2.287)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	921	921	921	562	562	562
R^2	0.321	0.376		0.690	0.738	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized perception of trustworthiness. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: $.^{*}$ $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A35: Effect on Perception of General Pro-Sociality: Ideological Classes

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.0612	0.0753	0.0839	0.310**	0.273*	0.218**
	(0.0897)	(0.0934)	(0.0659)	(0.146)	(0.161)	(0.0895)
Constant	-2.020***	-1.417		1.516*	2.828	
	(0.554)	(1.106)		(0.858)	(1.858)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	923	923	923	563	563	563
R^2	0.356	0.428		0.631	0.692	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized belief about general pro-sociality. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: $.^{*}$ $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A36: Disappointment

	Incompetence	Otherness	Willingness	Care	Trust
time	0.201**	0.0478	-0.232**	0.0429	0.264***
	(0.0821)	(0.0709)	(0.0969)	(0.0855)	(0.0744)
control_alt	0.173	0.359***	-0.418**	-0.262*	-0.383**
	(0.136)	(0.121)	(0.172)	(0.155)	(0.153)
time × control_alt	-0.0156	-0.101	-0.0248	-0.0166	0.165
	(0.193)	(0.166)	(0.234)	(0.219)	(0.204)
Constant	-0.201***	-0.0439	3.569***	3.279***	3.953***
	(0.0596)	(0.0513)	(0.0703)	(0.0626)	(0.0561)
R^2	0.00752	0.0103	0.0154	0.00522	0.0214
Observations	1319	1321	1324	1328	1325

The table presents the results of regressions of our outcome variables (not standardized) on the dummy *time*, the dummy *control_alt* and their interaction. *time* equals zero before the meeting and one afterwards. *control_alt* denotes whether a person belongs to the regular or the alternative control group which consists of subjects in the panel who did not accept their partner. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

D Measures

All outcome measures are standardized by subtracting the control group mean and dividing by the control group standard deviation.

D.1 Political Views

Participants were asked to state the extent to which they agree with different political statements on a seven point Likert scale. See Table A4 for an overview. The first seven of the eleven questions were, apart from the transformation from questions into statements, identical to the political registration questions. However, participants could now indicate their (dis-)agreement on a finer level. In addition to the seven questions, we elicited four other, more general political attitudes. Based on these attitudes, we create a variety of variables for our analysis. The underlying idea is to take all eleven attitudes together and interpret the eleven dimensional vector as the overall political attitude.

Absolute change - The measure PA_change helps us to explore if there was any movement in participants' overall political attitude. We define PA_change_i as the Euclidean distance between individual i's overall attitude in period 2 (after the conversation) and period 1 (before the conversation):

$$PA\_change_i = \sqrt{\sum_{a=1}^{11} (Y_{ai2} - Y_{ai1})^2}$$

where Y_{ait} denotes individual i's level of agreement to attitude a in the Post-Survey (t=2) and the Pre-Survey (t=1). The eleven attitudes are the political attitudes from Table A12. It should be noted that PA_change_i is neutral towards the direction of movement, i.e. it merely captures the magnitude of change.

Change towards the boundaries of our scale - The measure $PA\_change\_center_i$ indicates whether someone moved towards or away from the center of our scale (a vector of 3s), we

define:

$$PA\_change\_center_i = \sqrt{\sum_{a=1}^{11}(Y_{ai2}-3)^2} - \sqrt{\sum_{a=1}^{11}(Y_{ai1}-3)^2}$$

where Y_{ait} denotes individual i's level of agreement to attitude a in the Post-Survey (t=2) and the Pre-Survey (t=1). The first term is the Euclidean distance of i's attitude to the center point (vector of 3s) in the Post-Survey (t=2), while the second term is the respective Euclidean distance in the Pre-Survey (t=1). Thus, $PA\_change\_center_i$ reflects the change in the distance to the center of our scale. A positive realization of this variable indicates that individual i moved towards the boundary of our scale, whereas a negative realization implies that i's attitudes changed in the direction of the center. If the variable equals zero, participants moved neither closer nor further away from the center.

Divergence from average opinion - To see whether the meeting moves people closer to the average opinion of the population, we construct the variable $PA\_change\_average_i$. The variable measures whether an individual converged to the average pre-meeting overall attitude of our impact sample:

$$PA\_change\_average_i = \sqrt{\sum_{a=1}^{11}(Y_{ai2}-\overline{Y}_{a1})^2} - \sqrt{\sum_{a=1}^{11}(Y_{ai1}-\overline{Y}_{a1})^2}$$

where Y_{ait} denotes individual i's level of agreement to attitude a in the Post-Survey (t=2) and the Pre-Survey (t=1). $\overline{Y}_{a1}$ is the average level of agreement to attitude a of all participants in the impact sample in the Pre-Survey. The two terms reflect the distance to the average pre-meeting opinion after and before the meeting took place. In sum, $PA\_change\_average\_i$ denotes whether someone moved towards ($PA\_change\_average\_i < 0$) or away from ($PA\_change\_average\_i > 0$) the average pre-meeting opinion or none of the two.