

# Messaging to Non College Whites in Key States in USA

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SURVEYS TESTING MORAL FOUNDATIONS THEORY

MAY – OCTOBER 2017

- 7 million Americans voted for both Obama and Trump
- Majority of them have less than a full college education
- 10 US Democratic Senators Up for Reelection in 2018 in states where Trump won in 2016
- As many as 15 competitive Governor's races and 40 US House Races in play

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**HOW TO MESSAGE TO THESE SWING VOTERS?**

Does Message Framing Using Moral Foundations Theory Help Advance Core Democratic Policy Issues With Non College Whites?

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**RESEARCH QUESTION**

# MORAL FOUNDATIONS THEORY

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“Moral Foundations Theory was created by a group of social and cultural psychologists to understand why morality varies so much across cultures yet still shows so many similarities and recurrent themes. In brief, the theory proposes that several innate and universally available psychological systems are the foundations of ‘intuitive ethics.’ Each culture then constructs virtues, narratives, and institutions on top of these foundations, thereby creating the unique moralities we see around the world, and conflicting within nations too.”

-MoralFoundations.org

# MORAL FOUNDATIONS THEORY

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Our hunter-gatherer ancestors had to deal with problems within their groups as well as with competing groups. Over the centuries a basic set of moral principals emerged that were common to prospering groups. There are at least five moral foundations that functioning societies share:

- Care/harm
- Fairness/cheating
- Loyalty/betrayal
- Authority/subversion
- Sanctity/degradation

**Loyalty, Authority, Sanctity** foundations bind groups together for conflict with other tribes. **Care, Fairness** foundations help with concerns for individuals within the tribe

Research suggests that Liberals in the USA emphasize **Care** and **Fairness** more when making choices in politics while Conservatives are more likely to value **In Group loyalty, Authority** and **Sanctity** foundations than Liberals.

# METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

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- Nine waves of surveys in 15 swing states
- N = 800+ per wave
- Random sample of frequent NCW voters in the following states:  
AZ, CO, CT, FL, IL, ME, MI, MN, MO, NH, NM, NV, OH, PA, WI
- Sample provided by Catalist
- IVR to land lines

# METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

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- Testing Trump and GOP-Led Congress Popularity
- Measuring Impact of Moral Foundations Primer Language
  - A/B testing on core Democratic issues and critiques of President Trump
  - Cross tabs by Gender, Age, Partisan Identity, Neighborhood Type, Allegiance to Trump
- Word Clouds on Open Ended Questions on Most Important Issue in Washington

# SURVEY FORMAT

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1. Trump Job Approval
2. Job Approval of GOP in Congress
3. Measure Support for Core Democratic Issues with A/B Tests that measure the impact of different “Moral Foundations” primer statements.
4. Measure Support for Trump Critique with A/B Tests that measure the impact of different “Moral Foundations” primer statements.
5. Gender confirmation
6. Age confirmation
7. Partisan self-identification
8. Open-ended question on “What should be the top priority for our elected leaders in Washington?”



## RESEARCH FINDINGS

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- In general, with NCW's the Conservative language message (***Loyalty/Authority/Sanctity***) framing works better than with the Liberal framing, regardless of voters' partisan affiliations
- Strong Trump supporters are less predictable about which message frame works better on policy issues, although in six out of the nine waves they agreed more with the conservative primer.
- Population density (Rural vs Suburban) is not a good predictor.

# RESEARCH FINDINGS

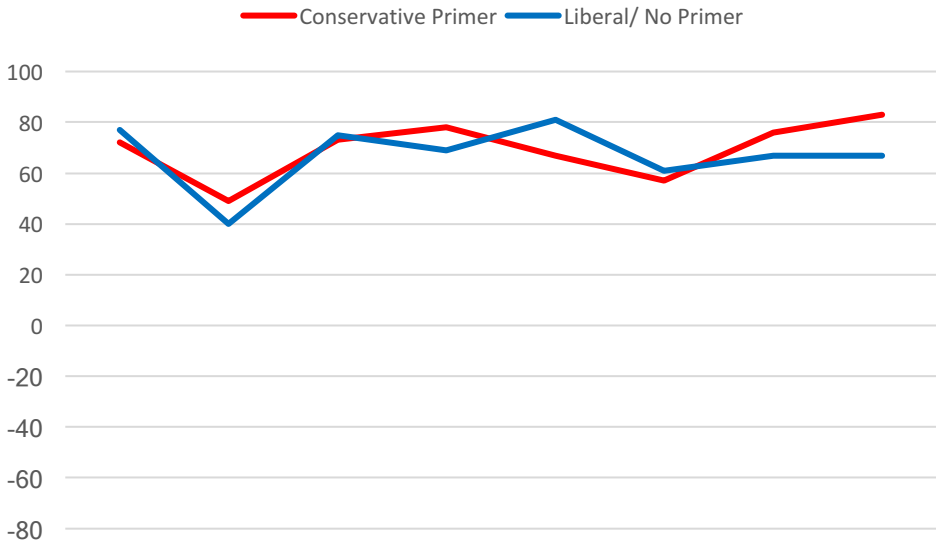
In general, with NCW's the Conservative language message (*Loyalty/Authority/Sanctity*) framing works better than with the Liberal (*Care/Fairness*) framing.

Topic	Date	Conservative	Liberal/ None	Net
Environment	May 11-12	+65	+61	+4
Health Care	May 23-24	+36	+19	+17
Russia	June 7-8	+40	+28	+12
Gun Safety	June 22-23	+73	+64	+9
Health Care	July 13-14	+54	+51	+3
Environment	August 2-3	+20	+30	-10
Transgender Military Service	August 16-17	+33	+20	+13
DACA	September 5-6	+50	+35	+15
Voting Laws	October 18-19	+56	+46	+10

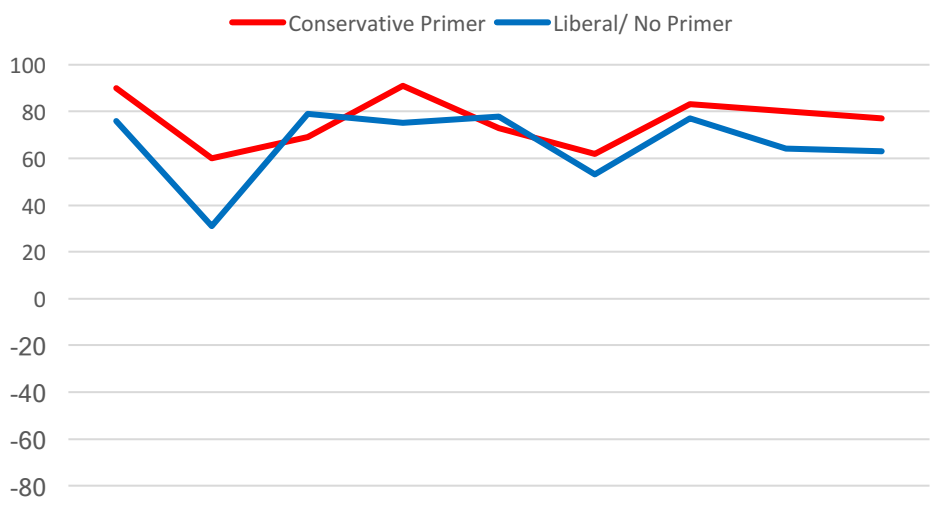
# RESEARCH FINDINGS

## Policy Primers: Strong and Leaning Democrats

Policy Issue: NCW Strong Dem

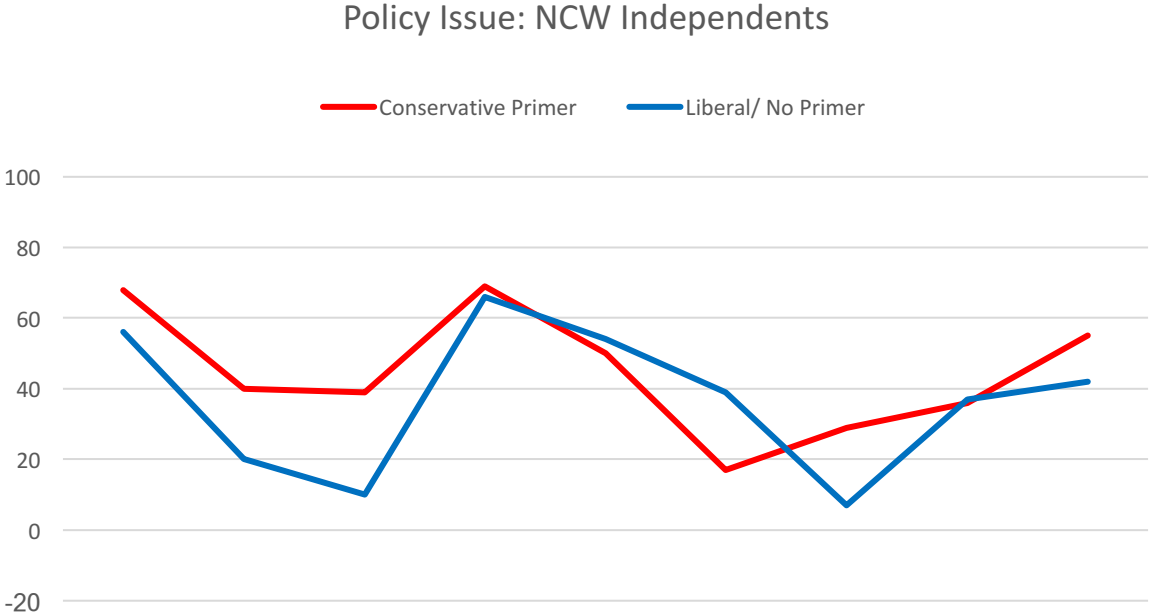


Policy Issue: NCW Lean Dem



# RESEARCH FINDINGS

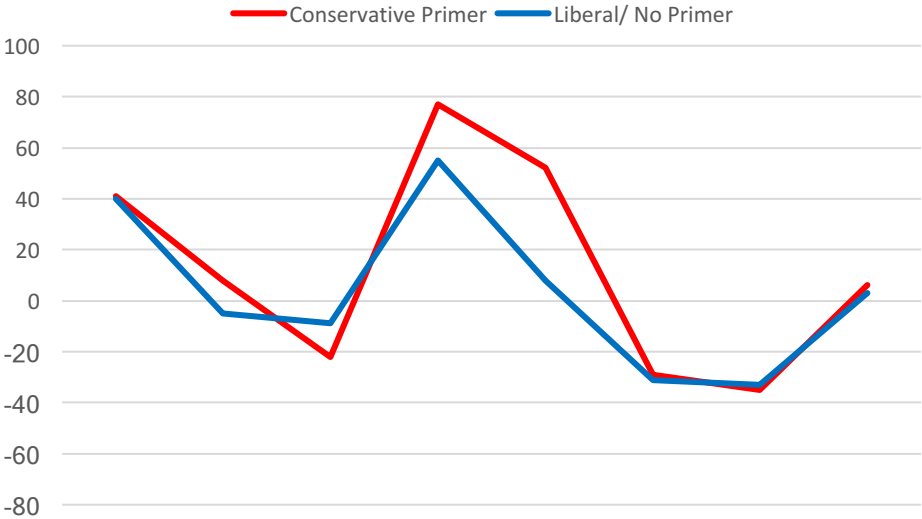
## Policy Primers: Neither Democrat Nor Republican



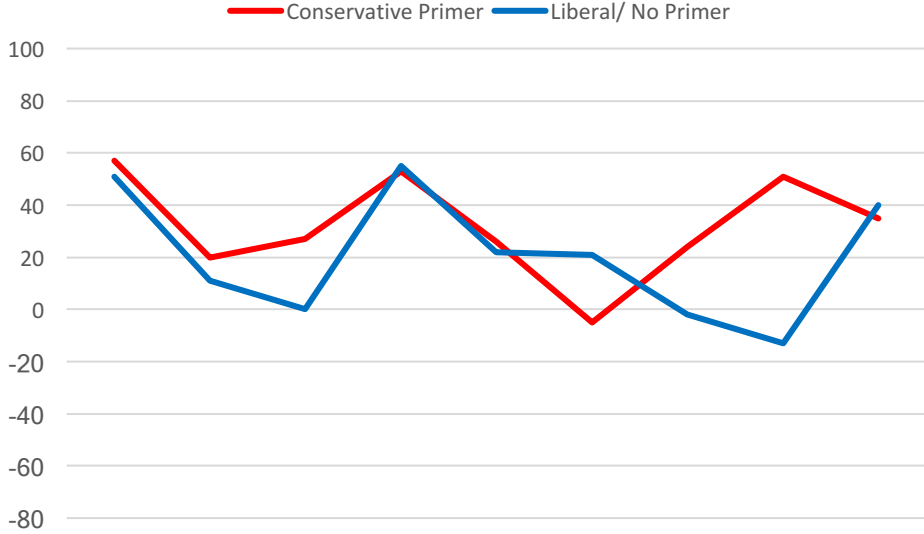
# RESEARCH FINDINGS

## Policy Primers: Strong and Leaning Republicans

Policy Issue: NCW Strong GOP



Policy Issue: NCW Lean GOP



# RESEARCH FINDINGS: With Policy Issues, The Theory Generally Holds

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**CARE FOUNDATION.** Congress should extend DACA—the policy that postpones the deportation of children of illegal immigrants. *They came to our country when they were minors and children should not be punished for the actions of their parents.*

**IN GROUP LOYALTY FOUNDATION.** Congress should extend DACA--the policy that postpones the deportation of children of illegal immigrants *if these children are in school or the US Military and have no criminal record. These young people who want to be part of our country and make it stronger should be allowed to stay.*

**CONSERVATIVE MORAL PRIMER INCREASE NET AGREEMENT BY 15% AMONG NON COLLEGE WHITES OVERALL AND 64% BETTER WITH SOFT REPUBLICANS.**

# RESEARCH FINDINGS:

## With Policy Issues, The Theory Generally Holds

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**FAIRNESS MORAL FOUNDATION.** *If Transgender people can meet the same IQ and physical fitness tests as others who want to join the armed forces, we should allow them to serve in the military.*

**IN GROUP LOYALTY FOUNDATION.** *If Transgender people love America enough to be willing to risk their lives in combat to protect the rest of us, we should allow them to serve in the military.*

**CONSERVATIVE MORAL PRIMER INCREASE NET AGREEMENT BY 13% AMONG NCW OVERALL**

**CONSERVATIVE MORAL PRIMER 26 % better with soft Republicans and 22% better with Independents**

# RESEARCH FINDINGS: Too Much Information can Negate Impact

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**CARE MORAL FOUNDATION.** *USA should abide by international agreements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions so we can reduce the flooding and drought caused by climate change that create famine and hardship in underdeveloped countries and are devastating to the poorest of the poor.*

**IN GROUP LOYALTY FOUNDATION** *USA should abide by international agreements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions because the flooding and drought caused by climate change in third world countries makes them more susceptible to radical governments and terrorist groups who are hostile to our country.*

## RESULTS DIDN'T SUPPORT THEORY

*Hurdle 1: Climate Change*

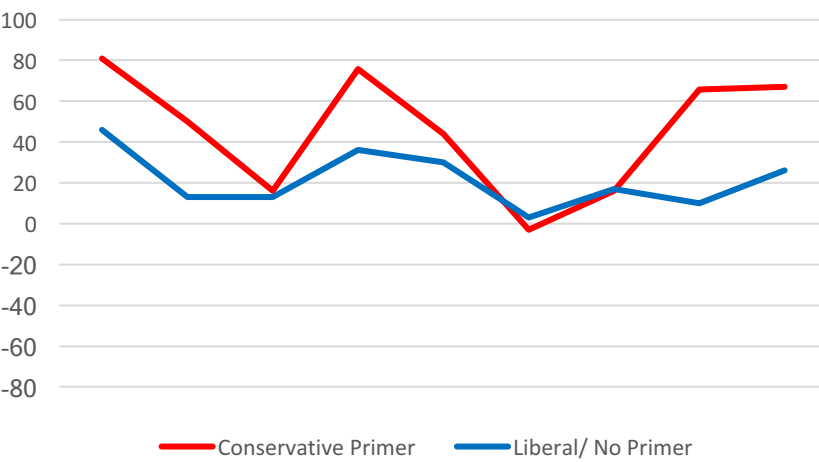
*Hurdle 2: International Agreements*



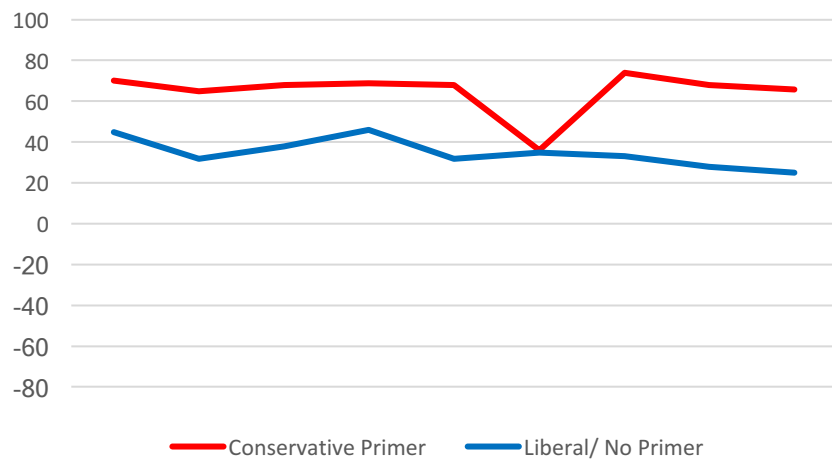
# RESEARCH FINDINGS

Trump critics are more predictable on policy issues, with the conservative primer working better.

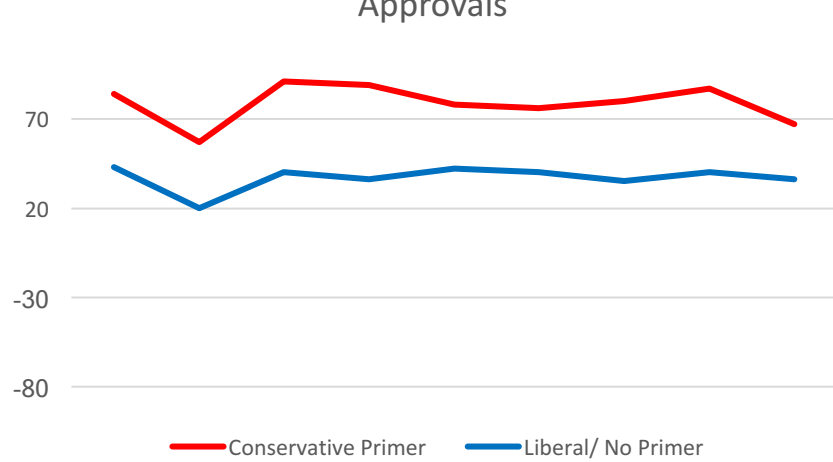
NCW Policy: Fair Trump Approvals



NCW Policy: Poor Trump Approval

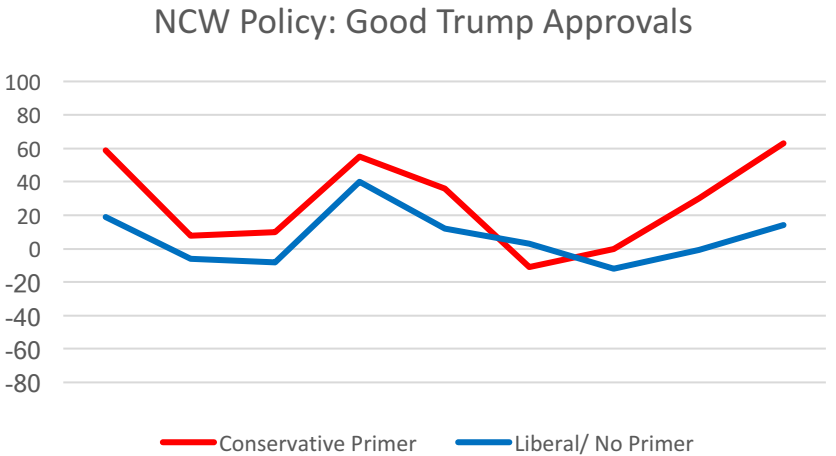
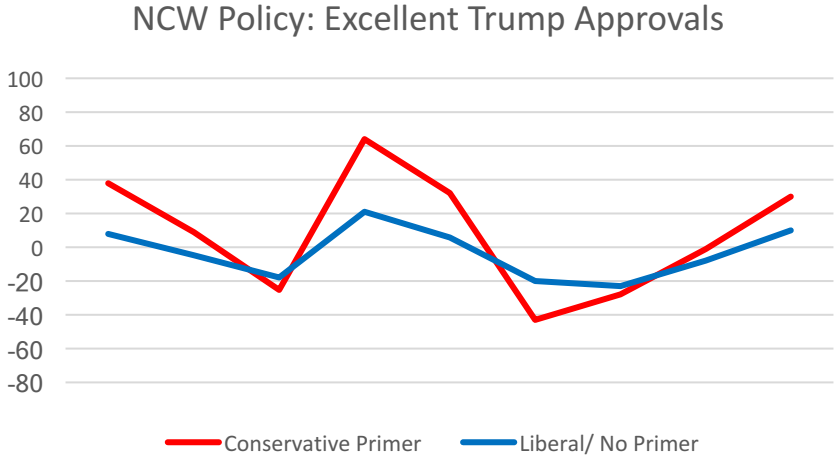


NCW Policy: Totally Unsatisfactory Trump Approvals



# RESEARCH FINDINGS

Trump supporters are less predictable about which message frame works better on policy issues.



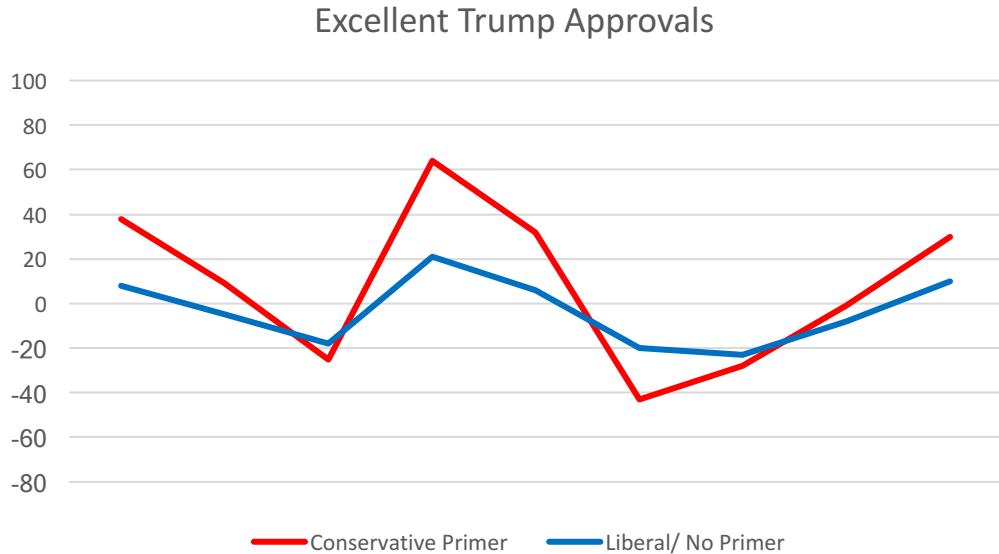
## RESEARCH FINDINGS

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- Critiques of President Trump don't produce results that fit neatly with the theory
  - Strong Trump supporters are generally unmoved, regardless of the message framing or issue.
  - We often saw a backlash from messaging that took hard shots at the president from a conservative angle

# RESEARCH FINDINGS

Strong Trump supporters are less predictable than the average respondent about which message frame works better on **policy issues**, although in six out of the nine waves they agreed more with the conservative primer.



# RESEARCH FINDINGS: Trump Supporters are Unmoved

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**CARE MORAL FOUNDATION.** President Trump was too slow in condemning Nazi's and other hate groups and *that adds to level of fear that many religious and ethnic minorities in America experience.*

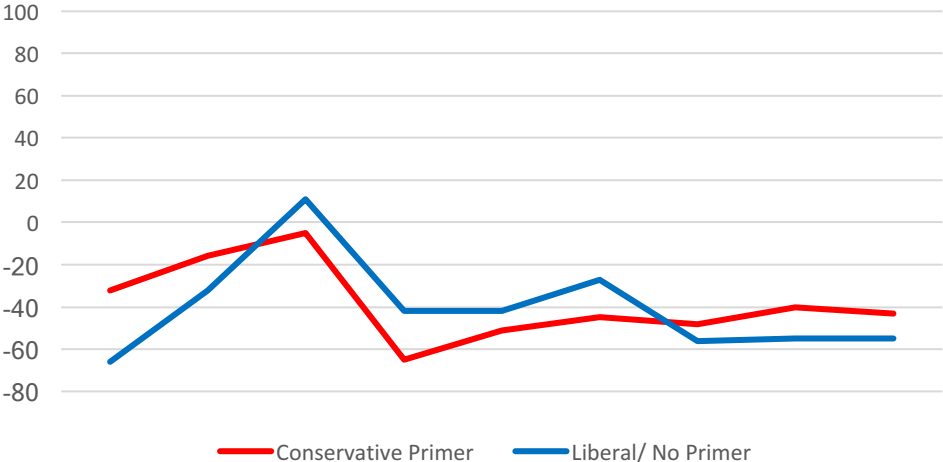
**SANCTITY FOUNDATION.** After Charlottesville, President Trump was too slow in condemning Nazi's and other hate groups and *that dishonors the memory of brave servicemen and women who fought in World War Two to defeat Nazis.*

**WHILE INDEPENDENTS AGREED MORE WITH THE CONSERVATIVE MORAL PRIMER STATEMENT BY 15%, STRONG GOP VOTERS TUNED OUT THE TRUMP CRITICISM— THEY DISAGREED BY A NET - 48% WITH THE STATEMENT REFERENCING WWII.**

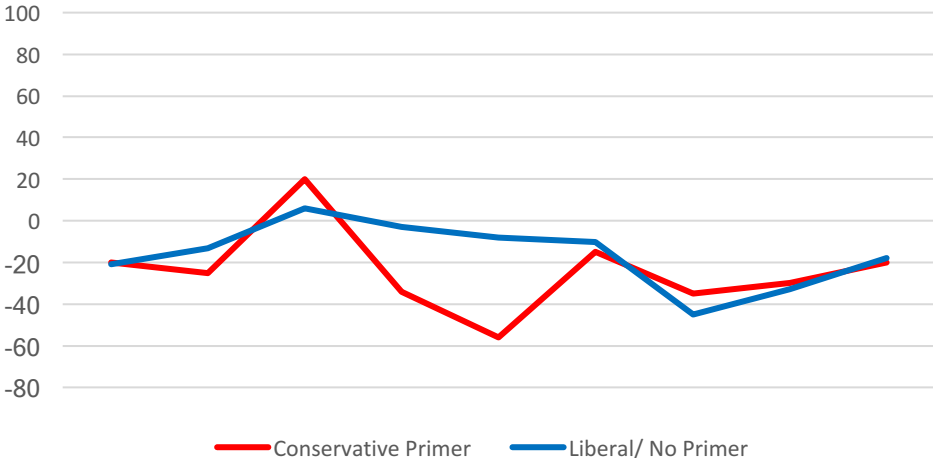
# RESEARCH FINDINGS

Critiques of President Trump don't produce results that fit neatly with the theory. Strong Trump supporters are generally unmoved, regardless of the message framing or issue.

NCW Excellent Trump Apr: Critique



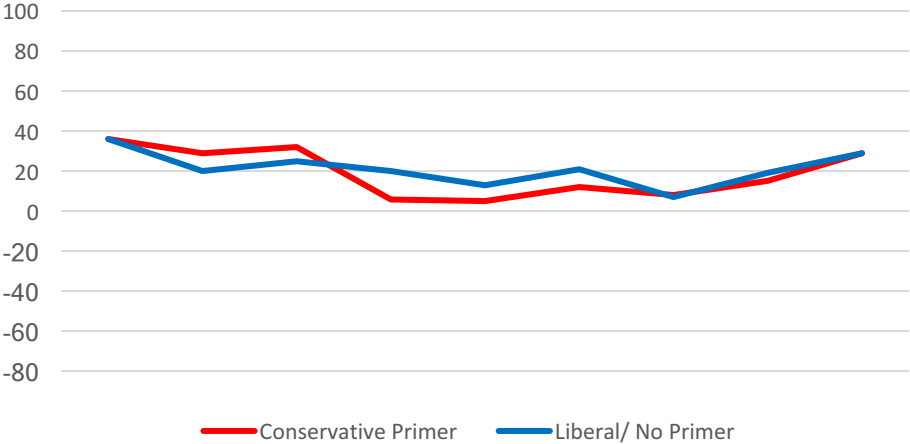
NCW Good Trump Apr: Critique



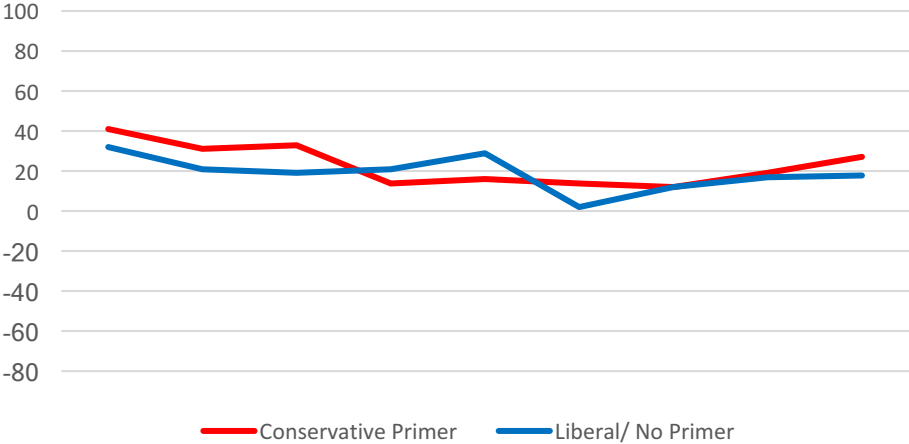
# RESEARCH FINDINGS

Population density (Rural vs Suburban) is not a good predictor.

Trump Critique: NCW Rural



Trump Critique: NCW Suburban



# RESEARCH FINDINGS: Cautions

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- **Don't be professorial** – NCW's are not historians or constitutional scholars
- **Don't be too strident** – Many NCW's are invested in the Trump Myth. Simple, concise criticisms of his actions work better than indictments of his character
- **Remember their world view** – Most NCW's are wary of NAFTA and TPP and some are even isolationists
- **Remember their news sources** – Most NCW's don't watch PBS or read the NYT. Their news interests are more parochial, and with national affairs, more likely FOX than MSNBC.



# Messaging to Non College Whites in Key States in in 2018 USA Elections

For detailed reports for each survey wave or a  
comprehensive analysis, contact:

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