How Source Cues and Arguments Affect Support for the Iran Nuclear Deal

By Jared Bowman – Mentored by Dr. Chris Haynes

Introduction

- Since the 2016 election, public opinion has shifted on a variety of issues.
- Framing – The way in which we describe political figures and policies
- Source Cues – A person or group that we can attach to a statement or belief
  - Framing effects can be reduced when the source of the message is viewed as untrustworthy
- Arguments
  - "Rule of Law" and Economic arguments tend to be effective at shifting "pathway to citizenship" support in immigration
  - "Humanistic" Arguments tend to be ineffective
- What happens when we apply this to a foreign policy issue?

Research Question

- **How do participants exposed to the Trump source cue (compared to no cue) shift support for the Iran Nuclear Deal?**
- **How do participants who are presented with the "Diplomacy Argument" shift support for the Iran Nuclear Deal?**

Methods

Design

- **Online survey with participants from M-Turk**
- **1,770 Respondents randomly placed in one of nine groups:**
  - Iran Nuclear Deal Experiment
  - Preemptive Strikes on North Korea Experiment
- **Manipulations:**
  - 2 Source Cues (Trump, Some People)
  - 4 arguments (Missiles, Funds, Development, Diplomacy)
    - Pro Diplomacy – "…Support the original 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal because it provides a pathway to establish more peaceful relations between the United States and Iran."
- **Key Measures**
  - DV- Comparing the level of support for the Iran Nuclear Deal between our main groups
  - Moderators – Democrats, Trump Supporters
- **Analysis**
  - Difference of means

Hypotheses

- **Hypothesis #1:** Participants told that "Trump" supports the Iran Nuclear Deal will report no different support than those told that "Some People" support it.
  - A lower percentage of Democrats will support the Iran Nuclear Deal when given the Trump cue compared to no *cue*.
  - A higher percentage of Trump Supporters will support the Iran Nuclear Deal when given the Trump *cue* compared to no *cue*.
- **Hypothesis #2:** Participants given the *Diplomacy* argument will report a higher level of support than those given no *argument*.
  - An even higher percentage of Democrats will support the Iran Nuclear Deal when given the *argument* compared to no *argument*.
  - An even higher percentage of Trump Supporters will support the Iran Nuclear Deal when given the *argument* compared to no *argument*.

Results & Findings

Figure 1: Effect of Trump Cue on Support of Iran Deal

- Those that were not given the Trump *cue* reported no significant difference in their level of support, than those that were given the Trump *cue*. This is true regardless of Trump supporting the deal or not

Figure 2: The Effect of the Trump Cue on Support of Iran Deal among Democrats

- The percentage of Democrats that were given the *cue* of Trump supporting the deal shifted down in support
- The percentage of Democrats that were given the *cue* of Trump not supporting the deal shifted up in support

Figure 3: The Effect of the Trump Cue on Support of Iran Deal among Trump Supporters

- The percentage of Trump Supporters that were given the *cue* of Trump supporting the deal shifted up in support
- The percentage of Trump Supporters that were given the *cue* of Trump not supporting the deal shifted down in support

Figure 4: The Effect of Diplomacy Argument on Support of Iran Deal

- Those who were not given the argument reported no significant difference in their level or support, than those given the argument.

Figure 5: The Effect of Diplomacy Argument on Support of Iran Deal among Democrats

- The percentage of Democrats that were given the Diplomacy *argument* shifted up in support

Figure 6: The Effect of Diplomacy Argument on Support of Iran Deal among Trump Supporters

- The percentage of Trump Supporters that were given the Diplomacy *argument* shifted down in support
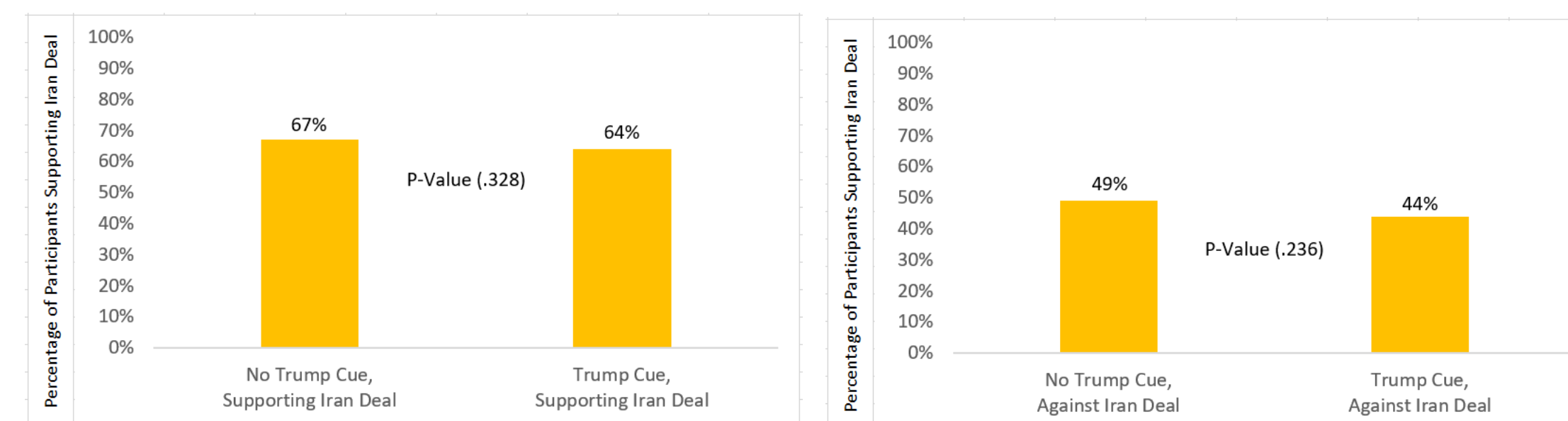
Implications/Takeaways

- **More research needs to be done to better understand the effects that source cues and arguments can have on shifting public support for foreign policy**

- **Source Cues may be effective at shifting opinions of relevant subgroups**
  - Democrats may start losing support for particular policies that Trump begins supporting
  - Trump Supporters may start supporting particular policies if Trump supports them as well
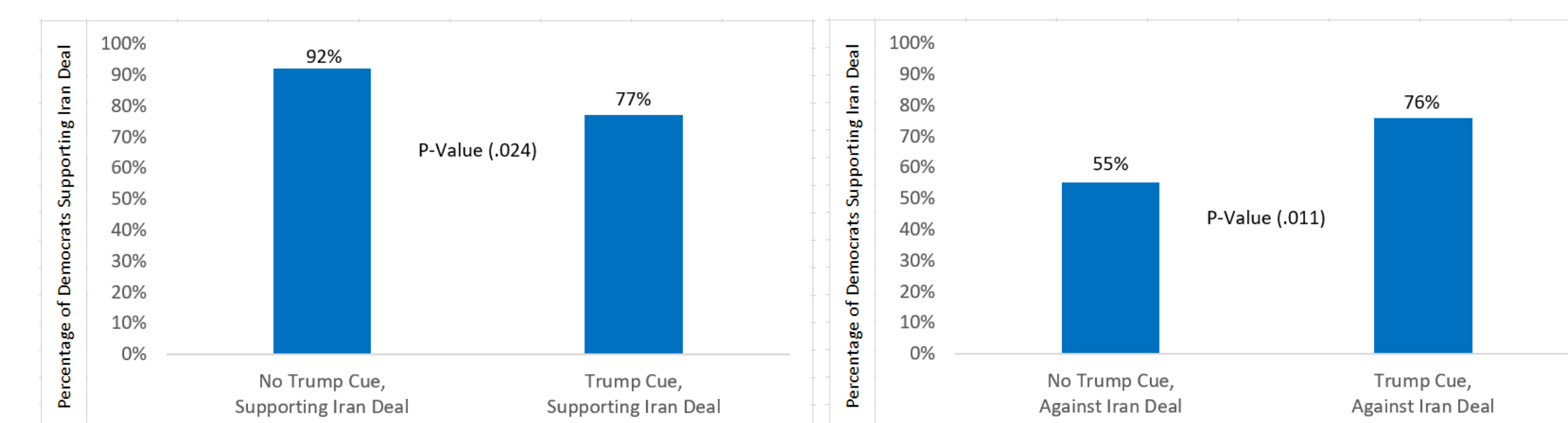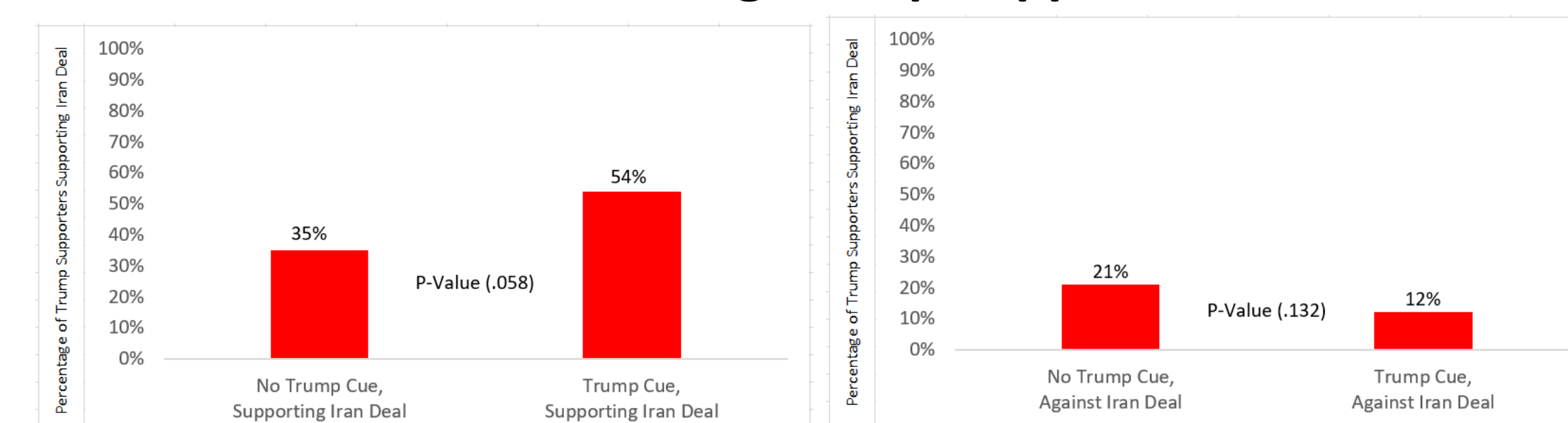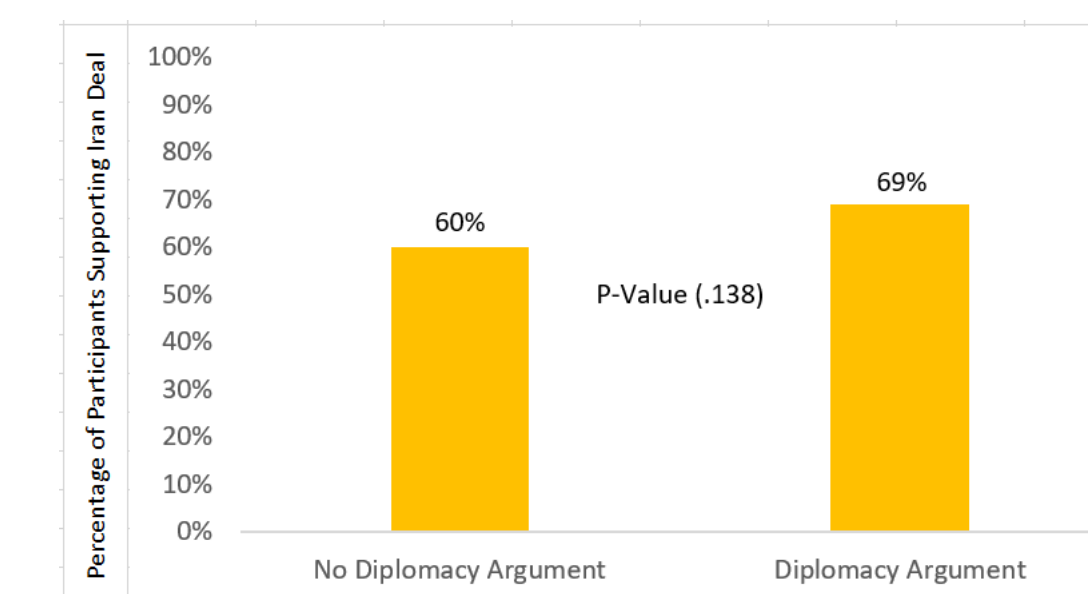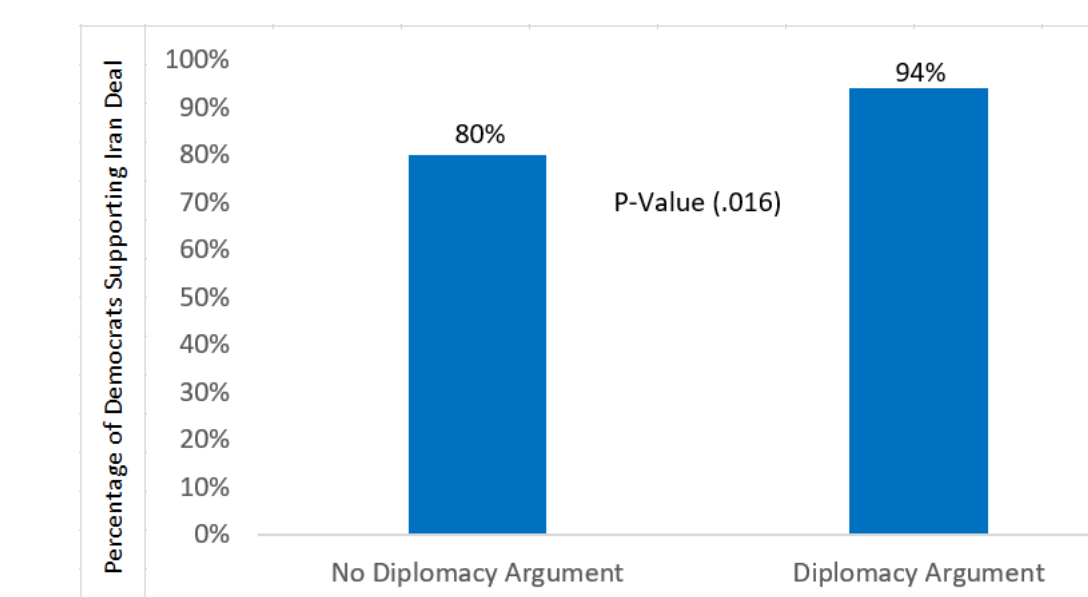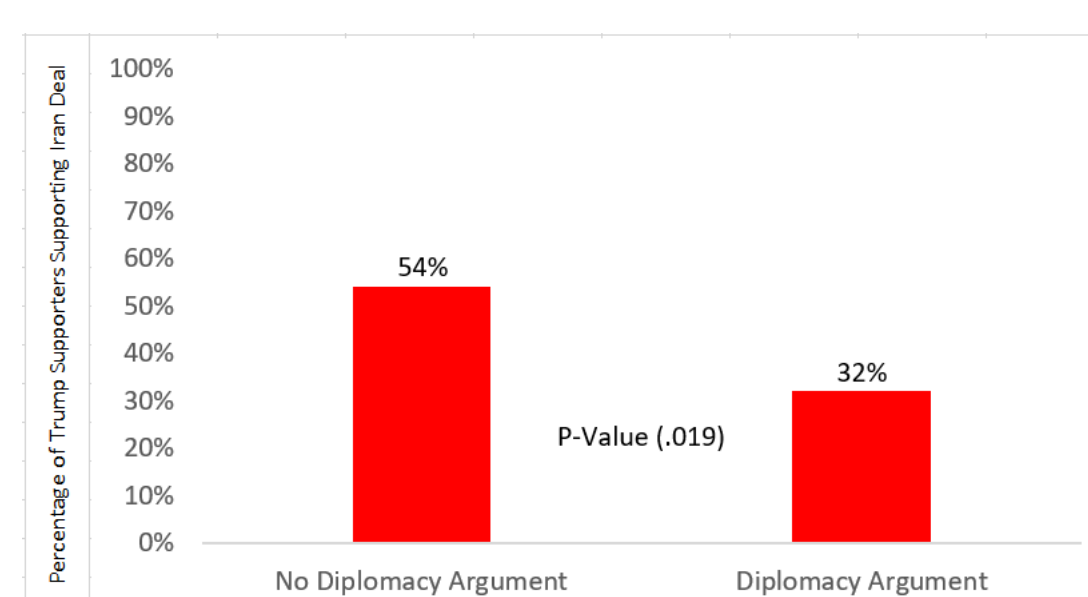
Challenges

- This was my first time doing a project like this so I had to learn as I was going.
- This was my first time using SPSS. It was difficult at first to understand the statistics involved in the difference of means tests, but overtime I learned how to properly run these tests to gather my results.
- My data actually showed too many results for me to put on the poster, but I managed to pick the results that had the most impact and possible implications.

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