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| Supplemental Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Individual Debate Experiments | | | | | | | | | | |
| Debate | N | Age | Female | White | African American | Asian | Latinx/Hisp. | Republican | Democrat | Independent |
| 2004 1st | 443 | 20.7 (5.92) | 244 (55%) | 311 (68%) | 38 (8%) | 29 (6%) | 47 (10%) | 167 (38%) | 180 (41%) | 96 (22%) |
| 2004 2nd | 194 | 22.83 (9.88) | 97 (50%) | 154 (70%) | 16 (7%) | 19 (9%) | 16 (7%) | 77 (40%) | 79 (41%) | 38 (20%) |
| 2004 3rd | 345 | 21.14 (5.15) | 209 (61%) | 223 (62%) | 23 (6%) | 29 (8%) | 60 (17%) | 147 (43%) | 131 (38%) | 67 (19%) |
| 2008 1st | 428 | 21.12 (3.95) | 226 (53%) | 243 (57%) | 39 (9%) | 27 (6%) | 85 (20%) | 101 (24% | 188 (44%) | 139 (33%) |
| 2008 2nd | 443 | 20.73 (4.53) | 243 (55%) | 284 (63%) | 40 (9%) | 30 (7%) | 70 (16%) | 119 (27%) | 220 (50%) | 104 (24%) |
| 2008 3rd | 605 | 21.12 (6.7) | 322 (53%) | 379 (61%) | 58 (9%) | 45 (7%) | 95 (15%) | 184 (30%) | 263 (43%) | 161 (27%) |
| 2008 vp | 495 | 20.67 (4.68) | 273 (55%) | 307 (63%) | 35 (7%) | 30 (6%) | 79 (16%) | 137 (28%) | 202 (41%) | 156 (32%) |
| 2012 1st | 362 | 20.33 (4.95) | 239 (66%) | 260 (69%) | 28 (7%) | 21 (6%) | 25 (7%) | 123 (34%) | 135 (37%) | 104 (29%) |
| 2012 2nd | 385 | 20.91 (3.71) | 254 (66%) | 270 (70%) | 26 (7%) | 23 (6%) | 32 (8%) | 165 (43%) | 120 (31%) | 100 (26%) |
| 2012 3rd | 452 | 20.73 (4.38) | 290 (64%) | 339 (74%) | 28 (6%) | 23 (5%) | 39 (9%) | 182 (40%) | 158 (35%) | 112 (25%) |
| 2012 vp | 328 | 20.98 (4.81) | 182 (56%) | 242 (73%) | 12 (4%) | 14 (4%) | 32 (10%) | 135 (41%) | 101 (31%) | 92 (28%) |
| 2016 1st | 341 | 20.84 (4.53) | 209 (61%) | 267 (78%) | 24 (7%) | 26 (8%) | 13 (4%) | 130 (38%) | 157 (46%) | 54 (16%) |
| 2016 2nd | 343 | 20.76 (4.49) | 195 (57%) | 267 (78%) | 27 (8%) | 20 (6%) | 14 (4%) | 134 (39%) | 154 (45%) | 55 (16%) |
| 2016 3rd | 441 | 20.09 (2.55) | 251 (57%) | 328 (74%) | 28 (6%) | 38 (9%) | 26 (6%) | 172 (39%) | 186 (42%) | 83 (19%) |
| 2016 vp | 172 | 20.01 (1.93) | 96 (56%) | 146 (85%) | 4 (2%) | 7 (4%) | 9 (5%) | 77 (45%) | 69 (40%) | 26 (15%) |

Note: In some instances, descriptive statistics were drawn from older versions of the file that included respondents who did not complete a posttest. As a result, the total number of people who reported, for example, race in 2004, is larger than the observed N for the study.

Supplemental Table 2: Evaluations of Democratic Candidates Before and After Debate Viewing

Democrats Republicans Independents

Candidate Pre Post Pre Post Pre Post

Kerry 2004

Debate 1 71.46 76.63\*\*\* 27.76 30.61\* 47.49 55.26\*\*\*

(20.92) (22.36) (25.62) (27.04) (26.65) (28.01)

Debate 2 72.87 75.59 23.58 22.23 50.13 60.63\*\*\*

(19.39) (21.38) (22.24) (24.17) (20.69) (22.88)

Debate 3 73.48 77.84\*\* 27.15 28.97 56.32 58.99

(19.59) (18.99) (24.66) (27.52) (23.92) (23.17)

Obama 2008

Debate 1 84.54 84.60 30.93 30.16 64.91 66.92

(16.92) (21.26) (25.47) (27.08) (25.54) (28.85)

Debate 2 83.71 79.93\*\*\* 36.44 36.87 60.53 61.97

(15.81) (27.03) (27.64) (30.03) (27.07) (30.20)

Debate 3 85.84 87.98\* 35.31 39.10\*\* 63.85 68.64\*\*\*

(15.85) (17.92) (25.75) (28.81) (25.01) (24.85)

Biden 2008 49.22 58.36\*\*\* 46.79 53.18\*\*\* 50.55 60.17\*\*\*

(27.52) (31.61) (32.35) (30.51) (25.92) (26.73)

Obama 2012

Debate 1 80.46 81.64 23.86 24.11 54.38 55.17

(15.69) (17.70) (20.13) (21.60) (24.65) (26.43)

Debate 2 82.04 87.56\*\*\* 22.53 24.25 57.46 63.19\*\*\*

(13.76) (12.96) (20.25) (23.86) (23.19) (24.81)

Debate 3 81.20 84.11\* 23.46 24.74 55.80 59.87\*

(17.07) (18.48) (21.67) (23.04) (23.92) (26.06)

Biden 2012 62.93 80.33\*\*\* 28.88 22.38\*\*\* 47.17 51.32\*

(21.39) (18.34) (23.17) (25.49) (22.60) (30.22)

Clinton 2016

Debate 1 54.64 67.21\*\*\* 23.18 26.58\* 35.20 44.98\*\*\*

(25.55) (26.85) (22.83) (25.17) (23.00) (27.43)

Debate 2 58.61 66.53\*\*\* 19.60 20.59 32.18 39.45\*\*

(26.02) (26.62) (20.16) (20.15) (26.41) (31.32)

Debate 3 57.78 67.01\*\*\* 19.22 22.41\* 33.01 39.31\*\*\*

(26.64) (28.51) (20.17) (22.40) (23.51) (30.06)

Kaine 2016 46.52 63.49\*\*\* 40.33 25.18\*\*\* 36.00 27.57\*

(31.92) (26.83) (24.92) (26.52) (25.86) (21.41)

Note: Values represent means (standard deviations) of candidate feeling thermometer ratings before and after viewing a live presidential debate.

\**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01, \*\*\**p* < .001

Supplemental Table 3: Evaluations of Republican Candidates Before and After Debate Viewing

Democrats Republicans Independents

Candidate Pre Post Pre Post Pre Post

Bush 2004

Debate 1 24.52 24.39 79.54 79.42 34.66 35.96

(24.71) (25.38) (20.49) (23.28) (28.41) (28.87)

Debate 2 21.89 25.54\* 85.94 89.01 37.53 36.45

(23.26) (26.68) (16.02) (16.03) (26.63) (29.78)

Debate 3 22.56 24.18 82.06 84.24 42.40 47.22\*

(21.36) (22.88) (18.49) (19.85) (29.28) (28.78)

McCain 2008

Debate 1 29.56 27.46 75.16 77.18 40.89 38.83

(23.07) (24.20) (19.10) (22.96) (25.93) (27.63)

Debate 2 27.70 24.35\*\* 72.01 71.67 44.57 44.65

(21.43) (22.26) (20.98) (26.36) (26.47) (29.34)

Debate 3 26.71 21.58\*\*\* 70.61 70.95 45.64 42.61\*

(22.67) (22.71) (21.55) (24.37) (24.60) (27.62)

Palin 2008 20.24 24.12\*\*\* 71.67 74.49\* 27.28 32.51\*\*\*

(22.26) (23.66) (25.03) (25.33) (25.37) (28.38)

Romney 2012

Debate 1 23.68 27.14\* 69.36 76.42\*\*\* 36.35 42.88\*\*\*

(19.51) (24.59) (17.21) (19.77) (22.80) (26.56)

Debate 2 22.75 20.21 76.51 75.53 38.96 39.74

(21.59) (21.21) (16.05) (19.03) (22.89) (25.14)

Debate 3 22.01 21.11 73.14 75.37 41.89 42.67

(18.73) (20.55) (19.05) (19.91) (21.37) (23.47)

Ryan 2012 26.63 25.94 67.86 76.96\*\*\* 42.38 44.43

(20.69) (24.42) (20.19) (23.07) (22.65) (27.43)

Trump 2016

Debate 1 10.02 8.70 47.07 50.14\* 30.43 25.76

(19.23) (15.40) (28.18) (31.28) (27.00) (25.65)

Debate 2 11.53 11.13 50.95 51.70 27.82 29.20

(20.64) (18.94) (27.87) (30.70) (28.64) (30.26)

Debate 3 11.94 9.30\* 44.36 47.87\*\* 22.95 24.86 (19.85) (14.95) (30.47) (32.80) (28.07) (26.82)

Pence 2016 30.99 23.90\*\*\* 49.35 67.01\*\*\* 40.69 52.42\*\*\*

(30.07) (22.92) (27.28) (29.49) (27.62) (33.53)

Note: Values represent means (standard deviations) of candidate feeling thermometer ratings before and after viewing a live presidential debate.

\**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01, \*\*\**p* < .001