

Dear Replication Team,

We thank you for your careful work and clear reporting. We are also grateful for the opportunity to provide input on the replication materials and the replication report. We are delighted to see that Study 2 of the article received favorable scores on all three dimensions: transparency, replicability, and unlikelihood of misinterpretation. In this letter we summarize our understanding of the main findings of the replication and share our thoughts on those findings.

The replication study successfully replicated five out of six findings reported in our manuscript: they replicated four interaction effects that were significant in the original Study 2 and found a null result where the original study also found a null result. Only one effect from the original study was not replicated: scores on the Random dimensions were *not* more positively related to support for the Risk-pooling goal than to support for the Incentivizing goal when controlling for ratings on the Rigged and Rewarding dimensions. In other words, the replication study found that the Rewarding and Rigged dimensions were each associated more positively with their compatible goals (Incentivizing and Redistributing, respectively), but that scores on the Random dimension were not associated differently with the Risk-pooling goal compared to the two other goals.

Of course, we can only speculate about possible explanations for the divergent pattern observed in the replication study. Looking at the combined studies (all studies from our manuscript and the replication of Study 2), the predicted compatibility effects of the Random dimension seem qualitatively less pronounced than the other compatibility effects. In this vein, in Study 1 of our manuscript we also find no support for our original prediction of a significant association between the Random dimension and political ideology when controlling for the other two dimensions. Taken together, these findings may hint at the possibility that the Random dimension is a less robust unique predictor of political attitudes than the Rewarding and Rigged dimensions. We point the readers to the original manuscript where we discuss possible explanations for this pattern:

“We surmise that the Random dimension is less uniquely predictive of political ideology than the other dimensions because this relationship is suppressed by shared variance. Although Random and Rigged are conceptually distinct dimensions, we observe a positive correlation between these CAFU subscales in all four studies reported in this article (see Table 3). One possible reason for this partial overlap could be because both dimensions capture factors that are seen as subverting meritocracy. The connection between the Random dimension and political ideology could be weaker than the Rigged dimension because some people underappreciate the long-term cumulative impact of random fluctuations in financial well-being (Frank, 2016). Moreover, the relationship between the Random dimension and political ideology could be suppressed by the Rigged dimension because the perceived antimeritocratic effect of systematic (i.e., Rigged) factors overwhelms the perceived antimeritocratic effect of unsystematic (i.e., Random) factor.” (p. 317)

It is possible that people do believe that randomness plays a role in determining financial outcomes, but that after accounting for their beliefs on the Rigged dimension, their Random beliefs are not as strongly linked to their political attitudes. This possibility is interesting in the light of past literature that has focused on the role of (perceptions of) luck in driving preferences for redistribution (e.g., Alesina & Angeletos, 2005; Almås et al., 2020; Fong, 2001; Piketty, 1995). We would be interested to see followup research delving deeper into the subtle but substantive distinction between the Random and Rigged dimensions and their association with political attitudes. Based on the combined findings, we would predict that the knowable (versus random) set of exogenous factors is more strongly predictive of, and more prominent in determining, political attitudes when controlling for the other dimensions.

In the report, the replication team does an excellent job in the section explaining ‘What the study results do and do not show.’ We tried to be precise in describing the effects of interest in the introduction and methods sections of each study. For example, in the introduction to Study 2, we were careful to explain that “*we predict that (a) scores on the Rewarding subscale will be more positively associated with rated importance of the Incentivizing goal compared with the other two goals, (b) scores on the Rigged subscale will be more positively associated with rated importance of the Redistributing goal compared with the other two goals, and (c) scores on the Random subscale will be more positively associated with rated importance of the Risk-pooling goal compared with the other two goals.*” We subsequently reminded readers of the effects of interest without reiterating the exact same phrasing. We agree that someone who reads only later sections, without the context of the earlier experiments and discussion, might misinterpret the findings.

We tried to minimize the likelihood of misinterpretation in other ways. For instance, we included Figures 6, 7, and 8 to make it clear to readers how the different CAFU dimensions relate to the dependent variable in question for Studies 2, 3, and 4, respectively. In addition, in the discussion of Study 2 we focus readers’ attention on a finding that is more in line with the alternative interpretation highlighted by the replication team — the main effect of the Rigged dimension on support for the government goals:

“Figure 6 also shows a main effect that we can interpret: scores on the Rigged subscale are associated positively with rated importance of all three government goals, also when controlling for political ideology. Although we did not predict this effect, in hindsight it strikes us as not surprising that participants scoring higher on the Rigged subscale are more supportive of all three government goals.” (p. 321)

Based on the combined findings from the original manuscript and the replication study, the Rigged dimension seems the strongest predictor of political attitudes in general, and the Random dimension seems the least strong. Even though these main effects are interesting, critically, we argue that testing for these main effects does not answer the question we set out to explore.

When we started this project, we made a theory-driven prediction about the compatibility of different policy messages with the three dimensions of beliefs about how financial well-being changes over time. This prediction led us to focus on the extent to which each of the CAFU dimensions is more positively associated with the corresponding belief-compatible message compared to the other two messages. Our thinking was that focusing on these particular interaction effects was the best way to test the persuasive power of messages consistent with each of the three belief dimensions (Random, Rigged, Rewarding), compared to messages inconsistent with them.

We thank the replication team for conducting a thoughtful and thorough replication of our findings, and for providing us multiple opportunities to provide materials, input and comments throughout the process.

Sincerely,

Job Krijnen, Gülden Ülkümen, Jonathan Bogard, Craig R. Fox

References

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