

Validating the Visual Conjoint, with an Application to Candidate Evaluation on Social Media

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Conjoint Experiments and External Validity

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- ▶ Current paradigm: external validity

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- ▶ How similar are the treatments in the study and in the target context?

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Visual Conjoints

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- ▶ This is a common context!
- ▶ Mechanically, two pathways by which this could affect AMCE
 - ▶ Differential attribute salience
 - ▶ Realism (or *possibility*) of encoding a given attribute

	<u>Candidate 1</u>	<u>Candidate 2</u>
Religion	Evangelical Protestant	Mainline Protestant
Profession	High School Teacher	Farmer
Age	75	68
Annual Income	\$54,000	\$210,000
Race / Ethnicity	Caucasian	Black
Gender	Male	Male
Military Service	Served in U.S. military	No military service
College Education	BA from small college	BA from Baptist college



Follow

Congressman Smith

@CongressmanSmith

I'm a Democratic candidate for the House of Representatives. Born in 1959, I'm a College graduate, I served, and currently I am a lawyer.

📍 Washington, DC 🔗 www.congress.gov

📅 Joined November 2010

344 Following 3K Followers

Tweets

Tweets & replies

Media

Likes



Congressman Smith

...

Free and fair elections are a cornerstone of our democracy, plain and simple.

💬 205

🔄 732

❤️ 393



Congressman Smith

...

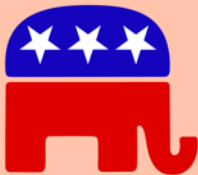
The wealthy already pay far less in taxes than everyday Americans. It's time they pay their fair share.

💬 229

🔄 350

❤️ 508





Follow

Congresswoman Smith

@CongresswomanSmith

I'm a Republican candidate for the House of Representatives. Born in 1987, I'm Jewish, a Ivy League graduate and currently I am a doctor.

📍 Washington, DC 🔗 www.congress.gov

📅 Joined November 2010

863 Following 12K Followers

Tweets

Tweets & replies

Media

Likes



Congresswoman Smith

...

It's #NationalFarmersDay, so #ThankAFarmer!

💬 651

🔄 1747

❤️ 5330



Congresswoman Smith

...

While violence and threats of violence have no place in our society, parents have a right to be heard and voice their concern about what their children are being taught in the classroom.

💬 349

🔄 1130

❤️ 4064



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- ▶ Box conjoint!
- ▶ Much more natural that attribute salience varies
- ▶ Lesson of T-validity: there is no one “best” ranking of attribute salience—it always depends on the target context

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- ▶ Standard candidate choice conjoints include income: would be *awkward* in the visual conjoint
- ▶ Visual conjoint includes *social feedback*
- ▶ Appearance of candidate is crucial
- ▶ Abrajano et al (2018) show differential evaluation of candidates when race is encoded with a picture than just with a box

Experimental Design

- ▶ Selected 500 respondents from a representative sample of Twitter/Facebook users with YouGov
- ▶ Respondents asked to evaluate two images/profiles
- ▶ 10 tasks per type of conjoint
- ▶ Final sample 10,000 observations → MDE 0.045, less than median for conjoint
- ▶ Included three attention checks: two after consent form, and one after demographics (97% qualified)

Pre-Registered Hypotheses

- ▶ More salient attributes (race, gender): *larger* AMCE in visual conjoint

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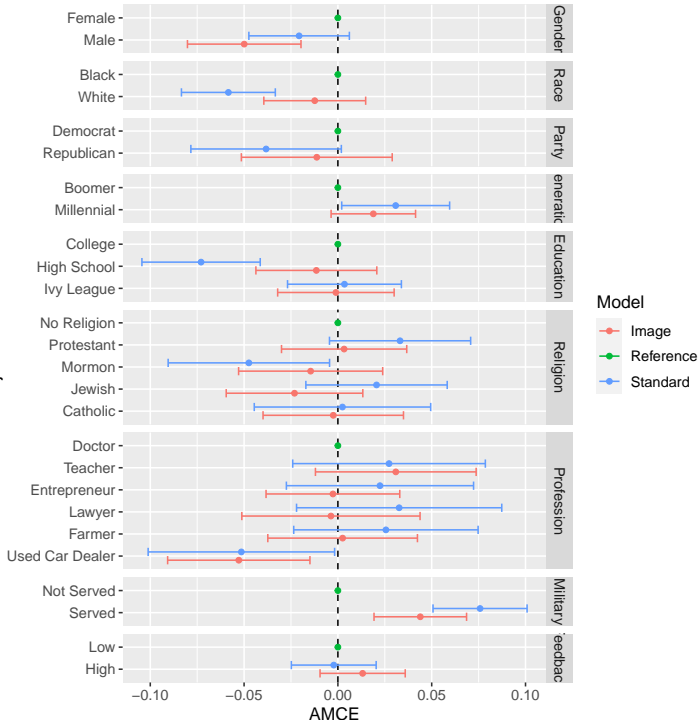
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Pre-Registered Hypotheses

- ▶ More salient attributes (race, gender): *larger* AMCE in visual conjoint
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- ▶ Social feedback HTE in respondent age and respondent digital literacy in the visual but not box conjoint

Results

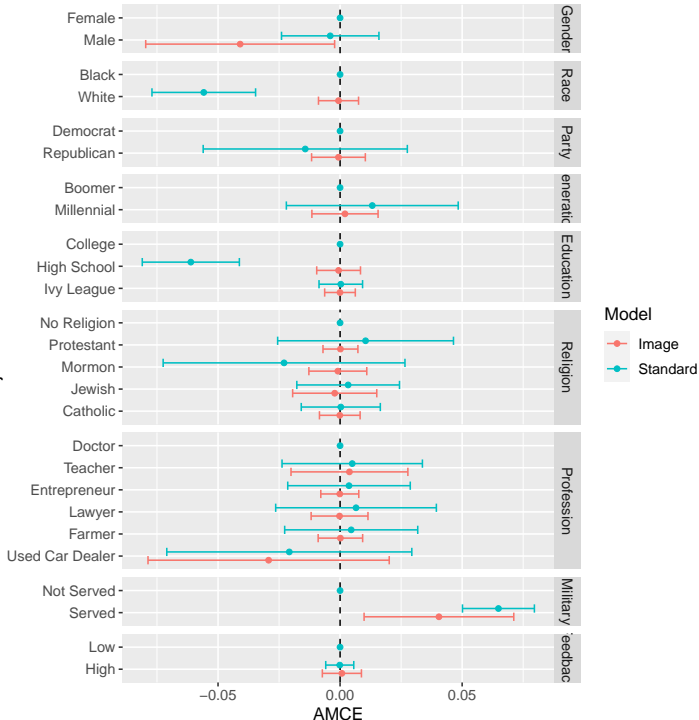
Conjoint Features



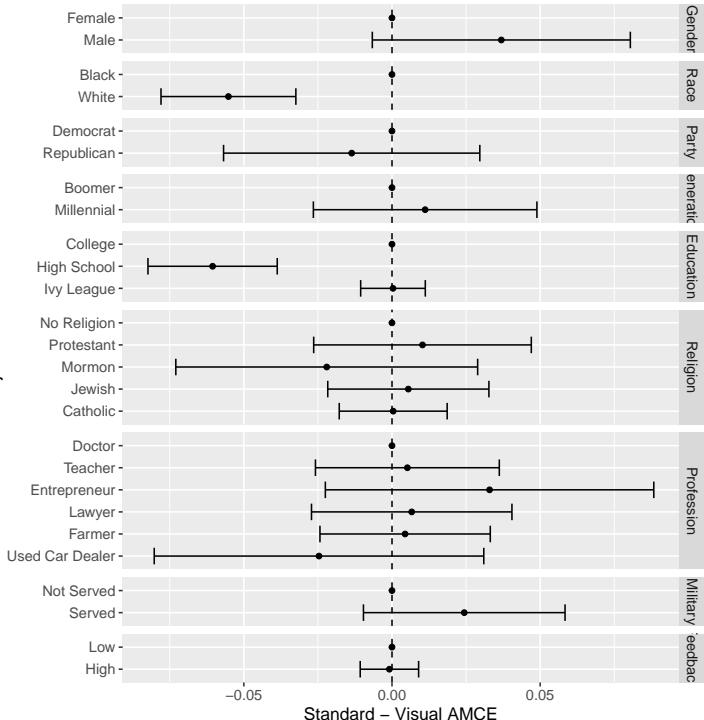
Model

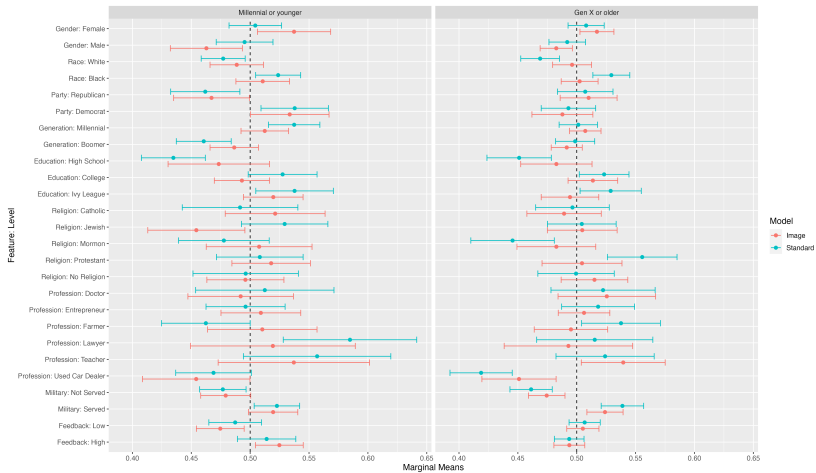
- Image
- Reference
- Standard

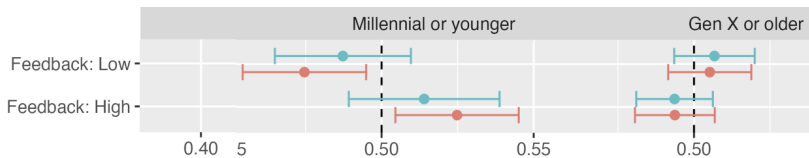
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- ▶ External validity is *not like internal validity*: moving target

Thank you!