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Brief Introduction

Research Interests

- Mass Political Behavior & Theories of Voters' Preference Formation via Information/Media Exposure
- Electoral persuasion with ideological **and** identity-based strategies
- Methods: Surveys, Social media and text data, machine learning

Paper: What People Learn from Twitter

(with Nagler, Tucker, Bonneau, and Eady)

Research Questions

- What topics were covered by the media followed by liberal, moderate, and conservative respondents?"
- On what topics did people modify their attitudes over the course of 2016?
- To what extent did the media contribute to opinion change during the 2016 presidential campaign?

SMaPP U.S. 2016 Panel Survey

- Opinions on 10 issues were elicited
    - In April 2016
    - Again in Oct 25, 2016 - Nov 7, 2016
      (2625 respondents of the original 3,500 participants re-took the survey)

Policy topics: Immigration, Health care, Trade, Taxation, Military use

SMaPP U.S. 2016 Panel Survey

- 1,843 respondents had previously provided YouGov with their Twitter ID & consented to its use
- We merged respondents' private survey responses with their public Twitter information
- Collected
  - Respondents' tweets
  - The set of all accounts these respondents followed
  - All tweets sent by the accounts they followed

Behavioral data

We see what content respondents seek out

- We match the set of all accounts each respondent follows to a set of approximately 2200 accounts of news organizations and journalists.
- Those 2200 media accounts are coded for ideology
  (Approach: Barbera (PA, 2015) homophily-based method)

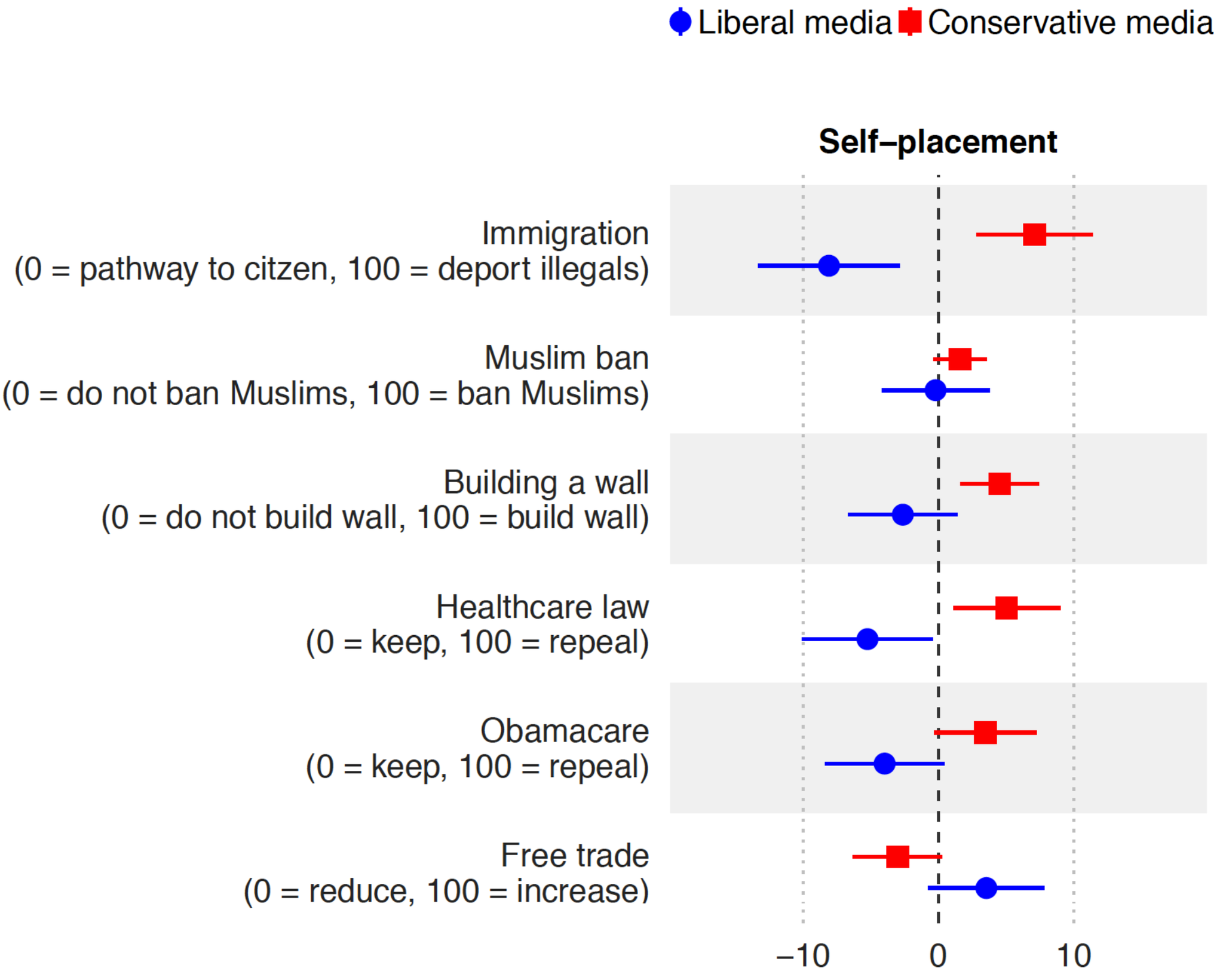
Model Opinion Change
(and the Evolution of Candidate Placement)

We model opinion change as function of

- (**Number of tweets** seen) about (**topic**) by (**source type**)
- Television consumption; respondents' characteristics

Basic Intuition: Seeing tweets by Fox News will lead respondents to move closer to Donald Trump's positions. Seeing tweets by MSNBC will lead respondents to endorse (most) Hillary Clinton's policy positions

Predicted opinion change based on consuming the average number of tweets instead of zero tweets on the subject



Zero-sum thinking

- 1. Global Zero-sum Thinking (GZT): "When other countries prosper, it is bad news for America."

- 2. Finite Money Fallacy (FMF): "If someone becomes successful and makes a lot of money, it means that someone else has to make less money."

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- 2. Finite Money Fallacy (FMF): “If someone becomes successful and makes a lot of money, it means that someone else has to make less money.”

- 3. Skepticism of corporations: “Today, most companies don’t compete for customers, they prey on their customers.”

- 4. Denial of complexity: “Most economic problems in our country have simple, common-sense solutions.”

Hypotheses

- H2: The Fallacy of Finite Money will correlate negatively with Trump support, partly because of its link with symbolic liberalism and low system justification.

- H3: The Fallacy of Finite Money will correlate positively with favorable evaluations of Bernie Sanders, even conditioning on partisanship, symbolic ideology, or expressed support for wealth taxes.

Paper: What Citizens Want from the Economy: Determinants and Predictability of Economic Evaluations

- **Motivation:** When Are Citizens Satisfied with the State of the Economy? Many (too many?) possibilities?
    - General problem/blessing in various settings: a large number of covariates, too few rows.

- **RQ:** How closely do aggregate perceptions of the economy reflect the true state of the economy, namely the statistical economy conveyed in standard economic indicators?

- **Conjecture:** because the economy is multi-faced, many aspects of the economy could influence evaluations

- Borrow approaches from machine learning to identify the attributes of the economy that drive subjective economic sentiment

Data

- Paper 1: Gallup World poll (120+ countries). Outcome: Aggregate econ. evaluations (2008–16).

- Paper 2 polls:

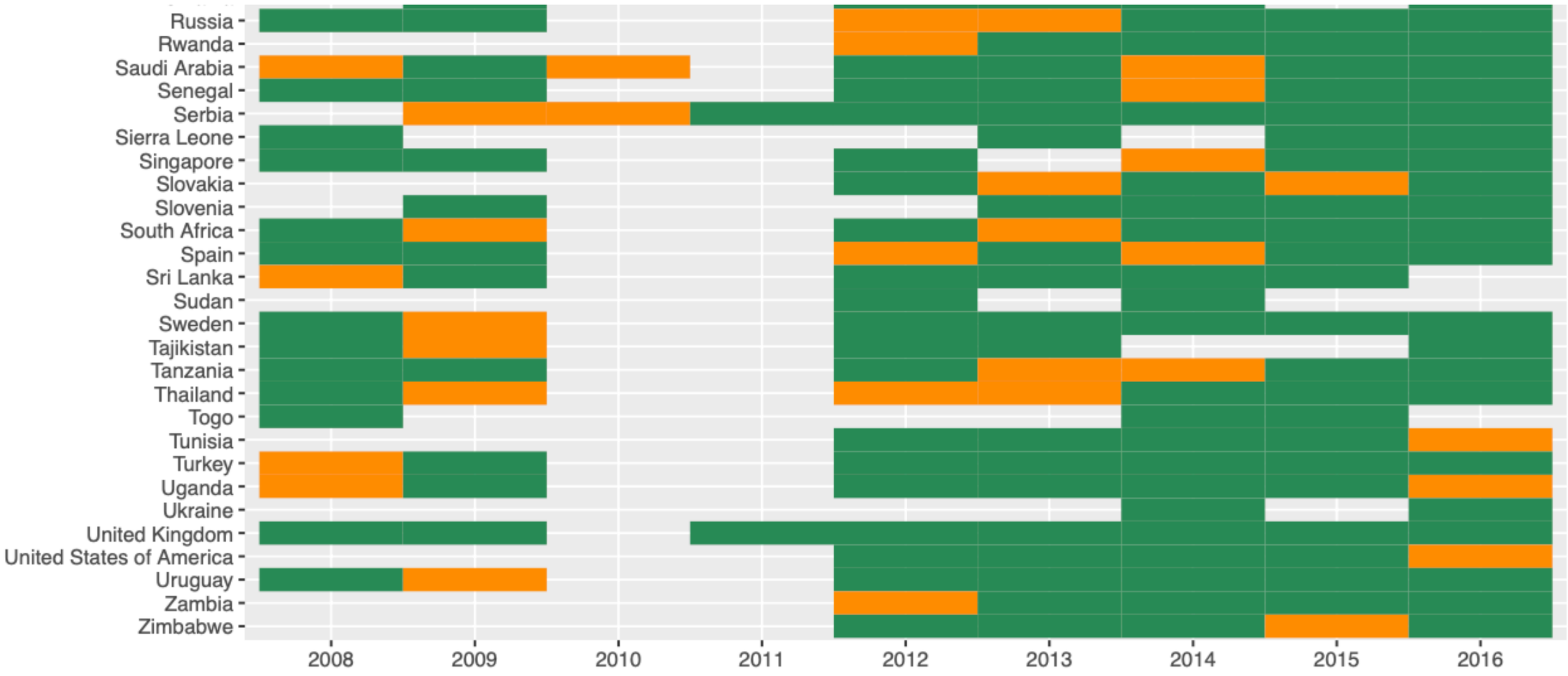
  Nationscape, ~280K respondents Years 2019–20

  Gallup US daily polls. N > 1.8 million respondents. Years 2008–17

Plausible feature space (P1)

- GDP growth (annual %)
- Inflation
- Unemployment rate
- Government expenditures (% of GDP)
- General government final consumption expenditure (% of GDP)
- Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)
- Gross fixed capital formation (annual % growth)
- Trade (% of GDP)
- Manufacturing, value added (% of GDP)
- Industry (value added, or % annual growth)
- Industry (including construction), value added (annual % growth)
- **And 180+ other variables**

A subset of country-year observations and their assignment to the training (green) and test (orange) sets.

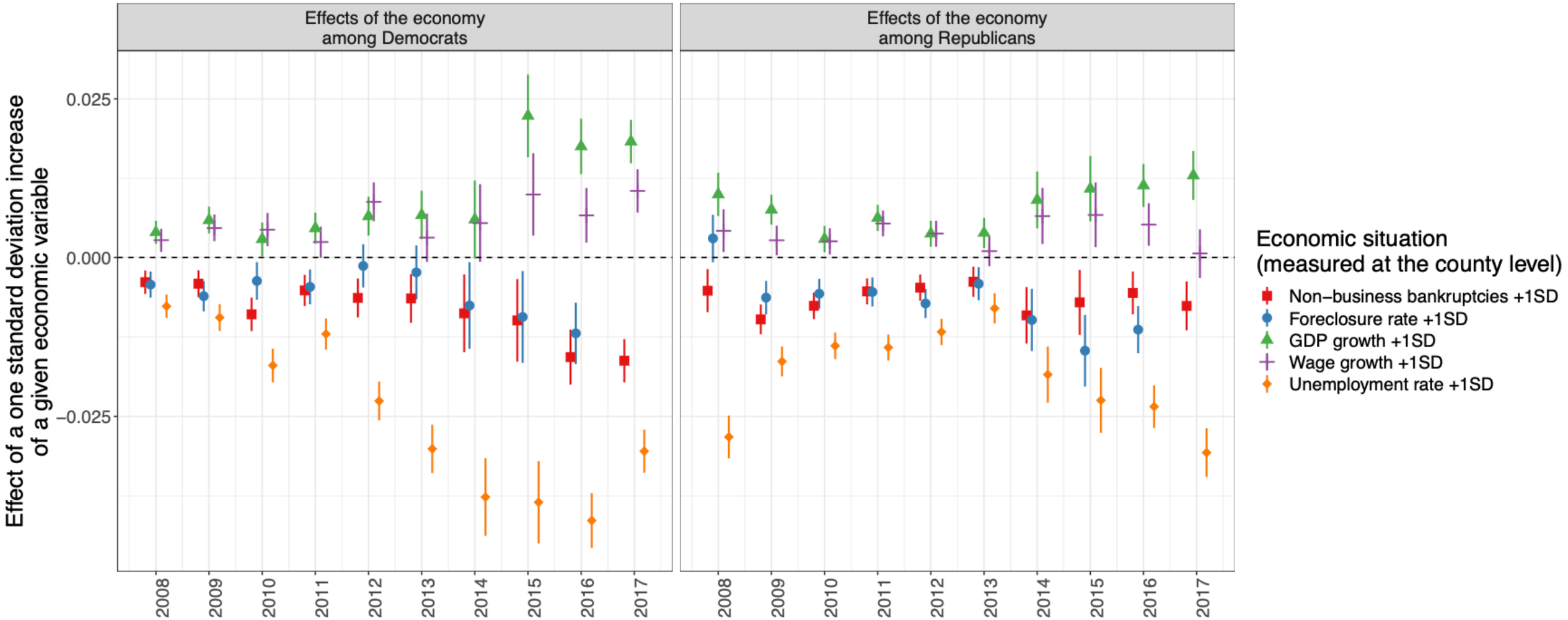


Model	Inputs	Median Abs. Error	RMSE
RF	GDP growth	12.39	19.98
RF	Unemployment rate	12.03	18.71
RF	UR + Labor Force Participation Rate	8.05	14.71
RF	UR + LFP + Youth unemployment rate	7.71	13.02
RF	3 labor indicators above and GDP growth	7.98	13.00
OLS	3 labor indicators above and GDP growth	12.24	16.81
OLS	Same 4 variables and all interactions	11.19	16.38
OLS	Same 4 variables; interactions and polynomials	10.79	15.09
RF	200 economic variables	5.10	8.94

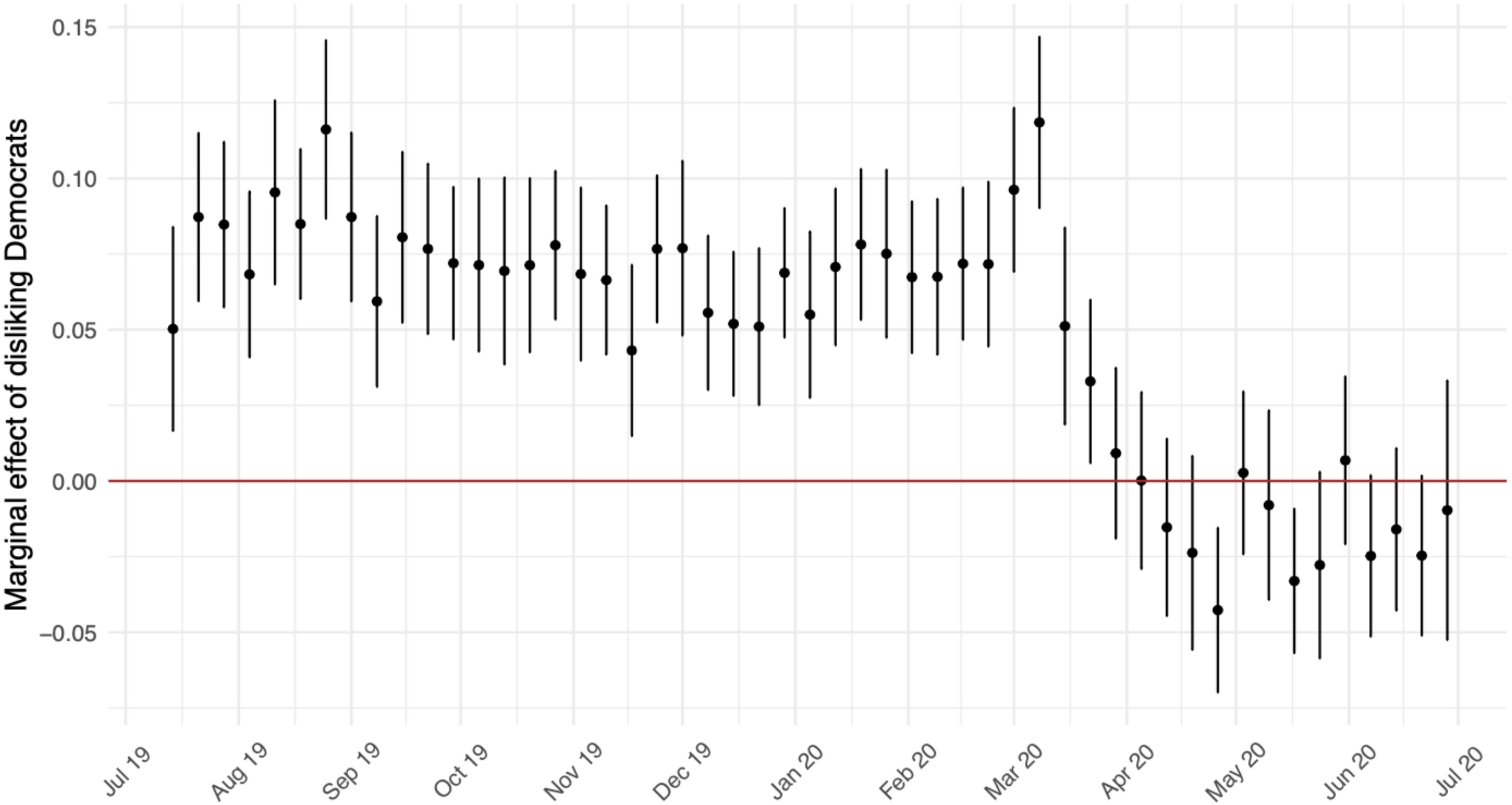
Paper: Economic Fundamentals, Partisanship, and Outgroup Animus Explain Economic Evaluations

Well-documented fact: (co-)partisanship correlates with economic evaluations

- H1: Both Democrats and Republicans pay attention to the state of the economy
- H2: Economic evaluations have an **affective component**


Effects of the economy among Democrats
Effects of the economy among Republicans
Effect of a one standard deviation increase of a given economic variable
0.025
0.000
−0.025
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
2016
2017
Economic situation (measured at the county level)
Non−business bankruptcies +1SD
Foreclosure rate +1SD
GDP growth +1SD
Wage growth +1SD
Unemployment rate +1SD

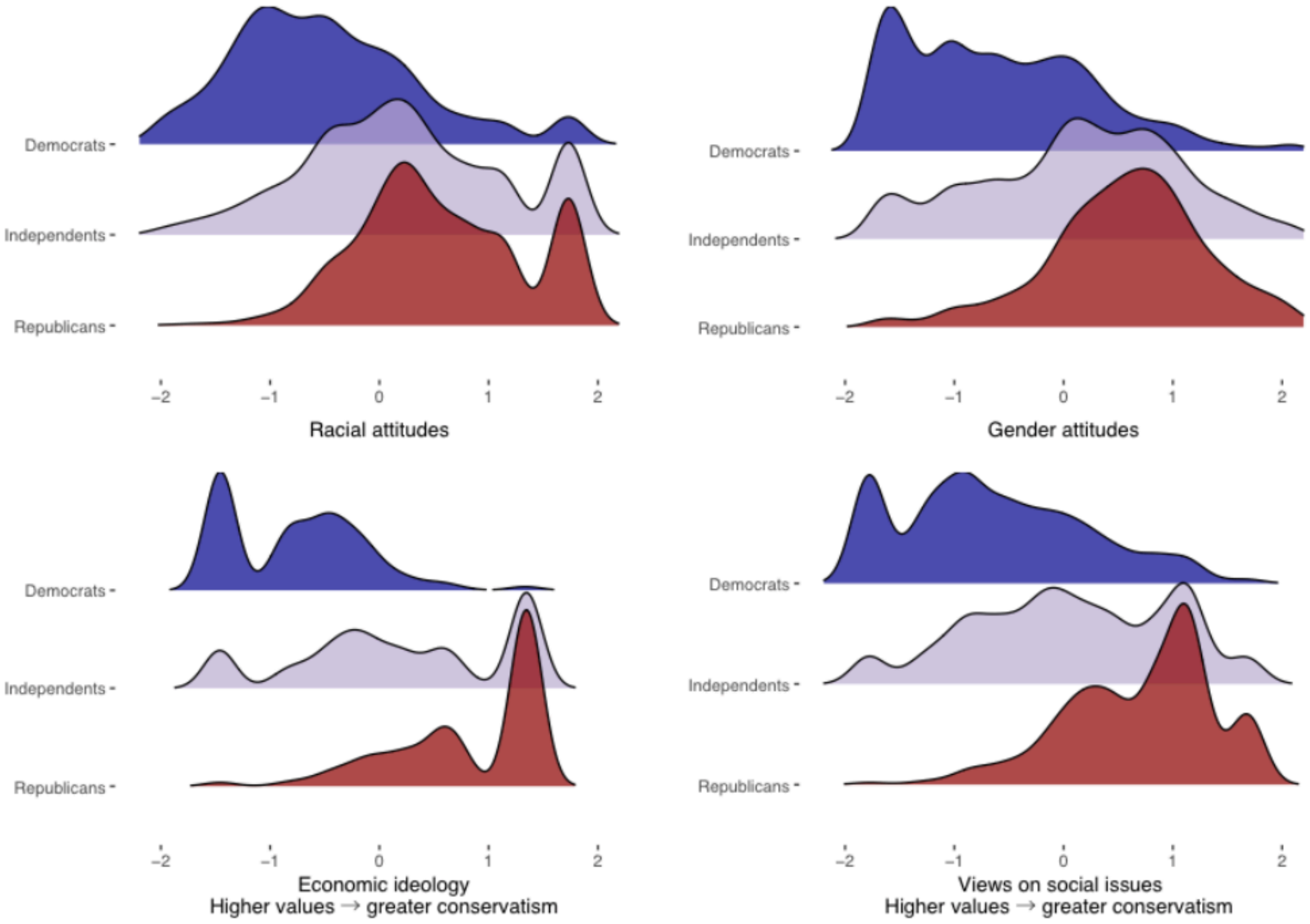
Negative partisanship linked to cheerleading before the recession



Summary of results

- Within-party comparisons suggest local economic conditions matter
- There is an **affective** channel
- Is partisan bias growing over time? Perhaps, but not monotonically

Paper: Programmatic Competition & Identity Politics

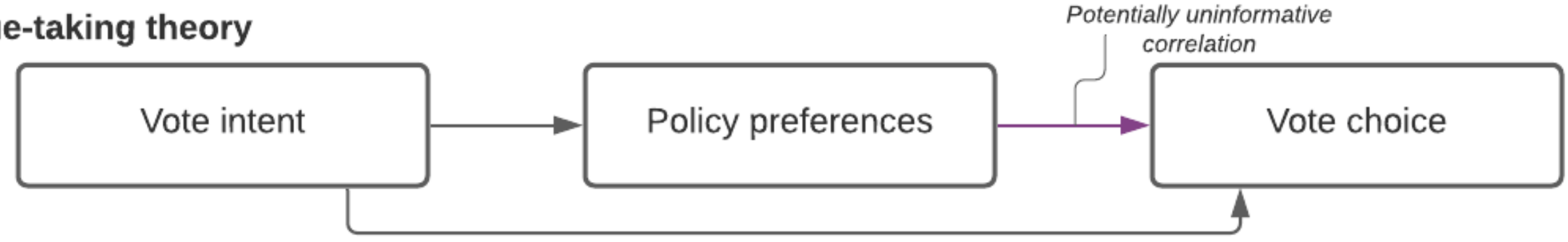


Observational equivalence problem

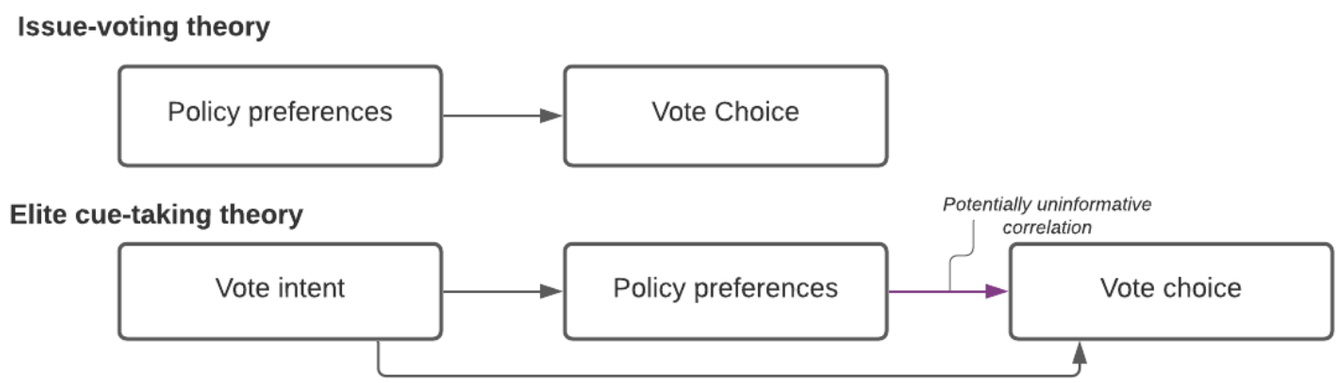
Relationships between ideology and vote choice imply distinct mechanisms

Issue-voting theory

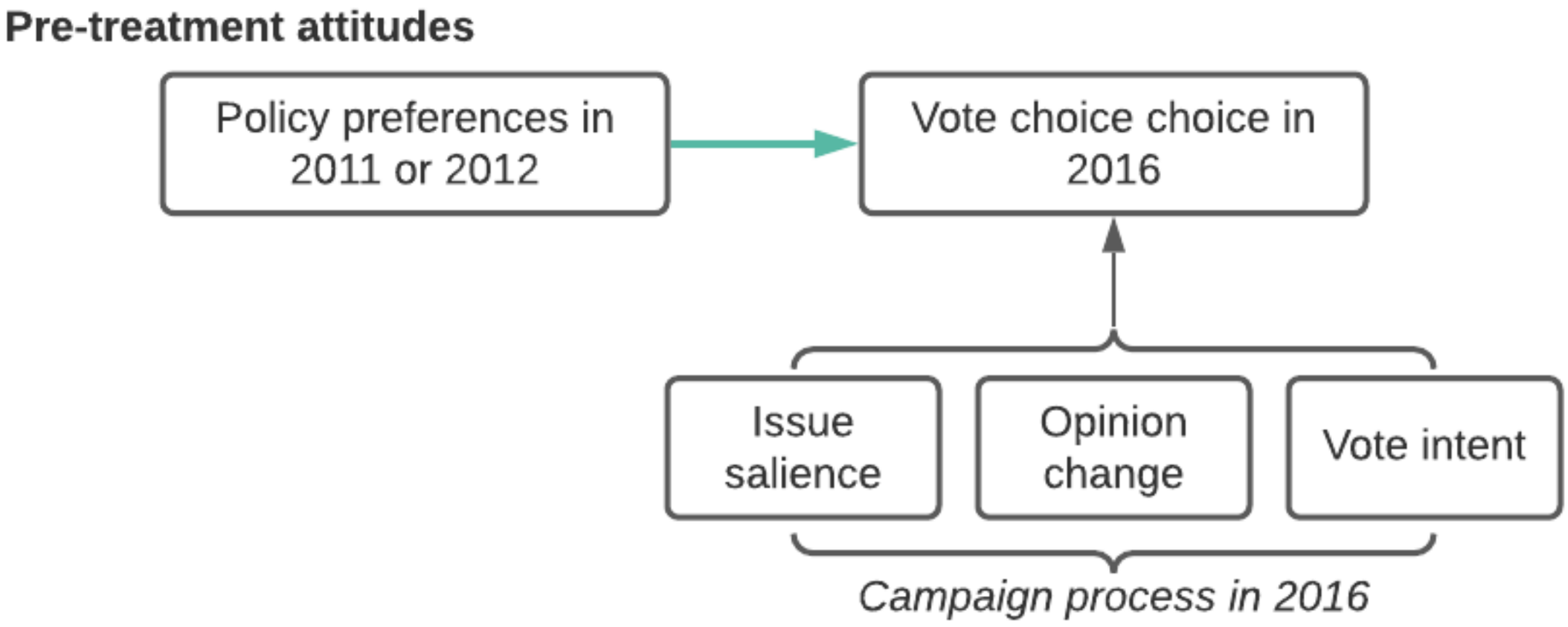
Elite cue-taking theory



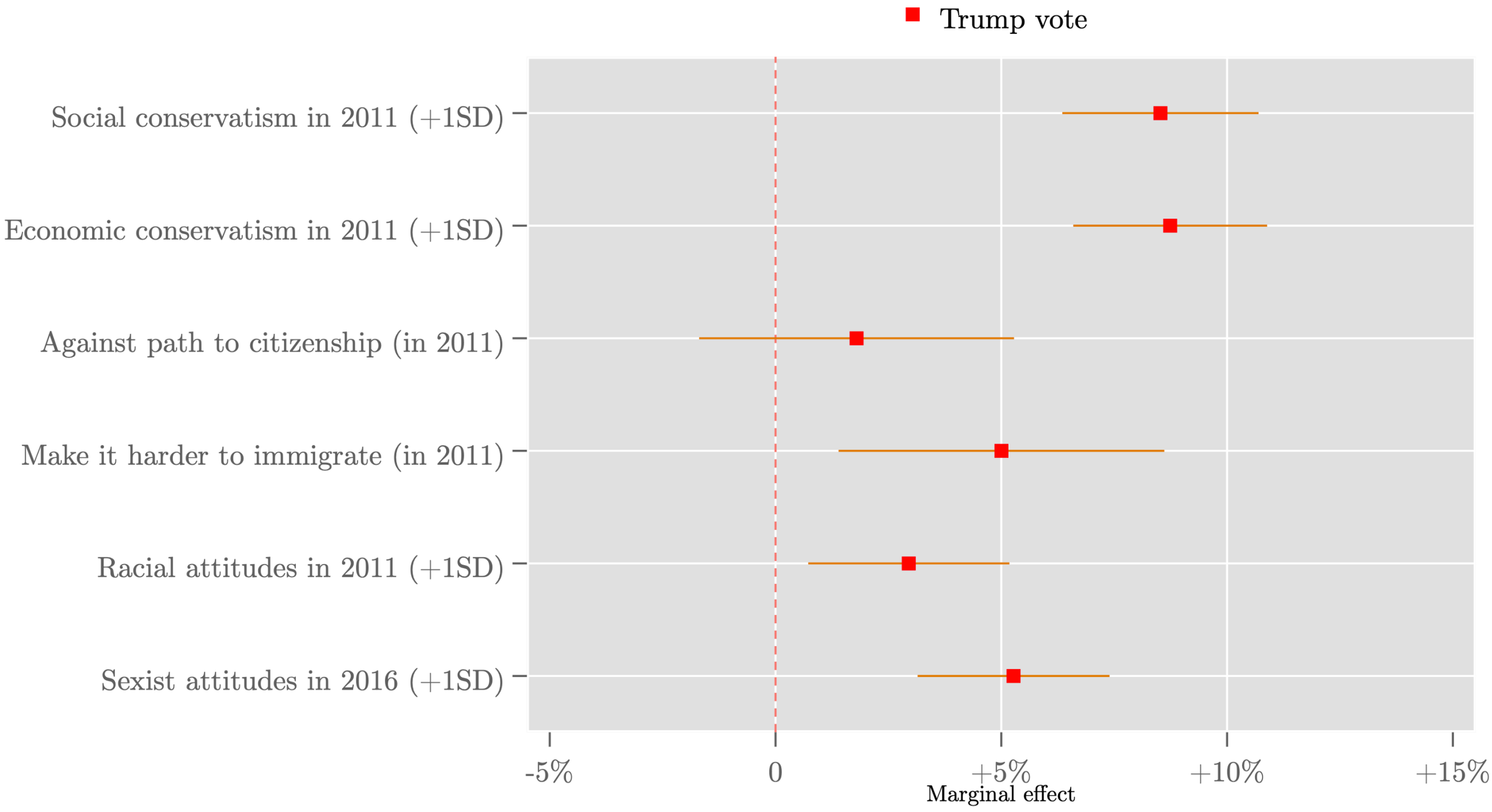
Contemporaneous relationships between ideology and vote choice do not have a clear theoretical meaning



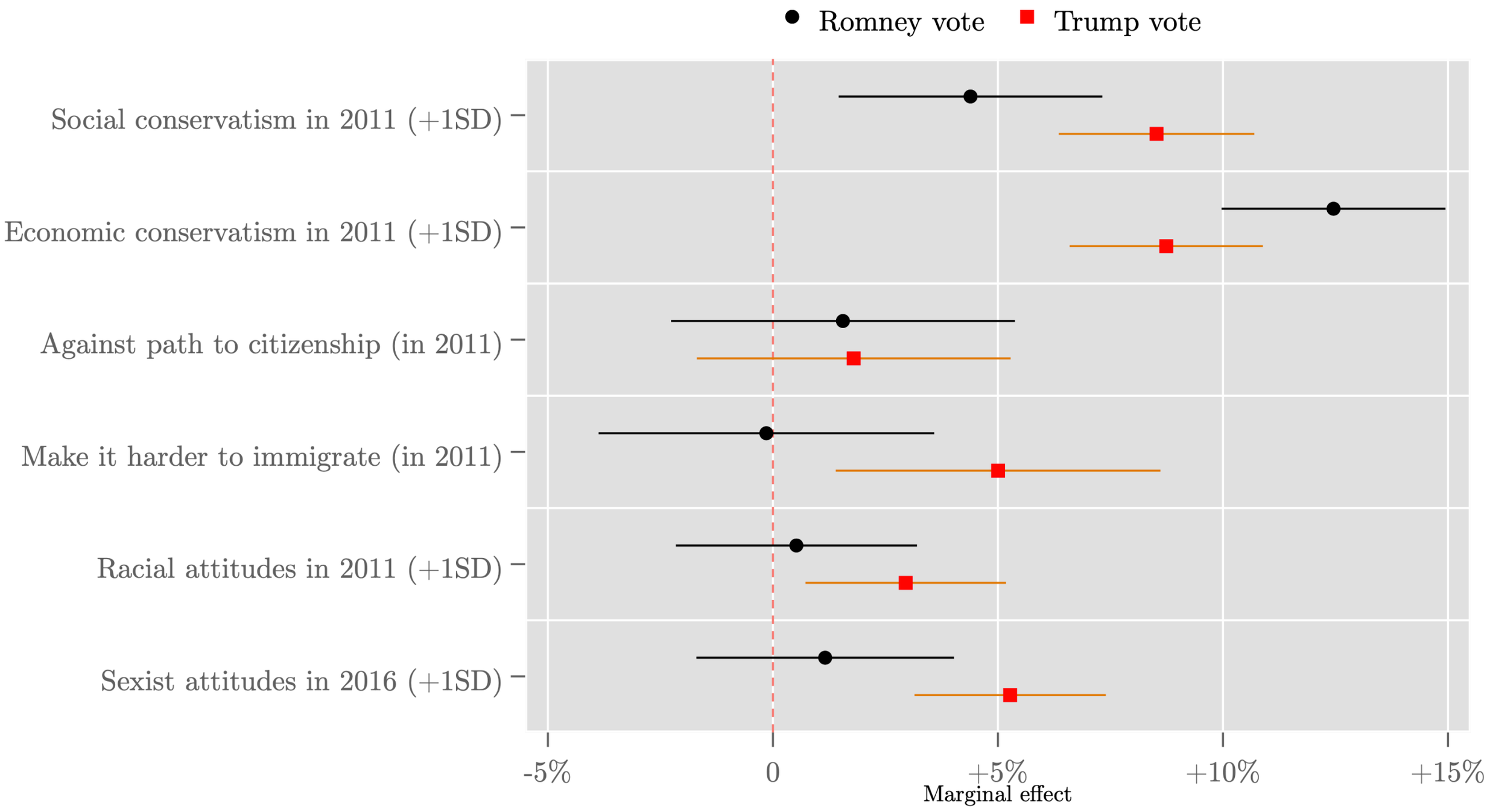
Proposed solution



Marginal effects of group attitudes and operational ideology measured in 2011
on the probability for Donald Trump in 2016



Marginal effects of group attitudes and operational ideology
measured in 2011 on the probability
of voting for Mitt Romney or Donald Trump



Research Agenda / Work in development

- **People Like Me Are Falling Behind (with S. Linn & J. Nagler)**
  Novel survey instruments measuring perceptions of economic inequality.
  Finding: Group-economic evaluations - in addition to national economic evaluations - predict vote choice.

- *Predictability of Vote Choice, 1952-2020 (with Silvia Kim). Under Review.*

- *How Europeans changes their attitudes during COVID (NEPOCS, team project)*

Thank you.

Feedback or questions welcomed via Slack or email