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Brief Introduction

Research Interests

- Mass Political Behavior & Theories of Voters' Preference Formation

- Electoral persuasion with ideological **and** identity-based strategies

- Methods: Surveys, Social media and text data, machine learning

Paper: Programmatic Competition & Identity Politics

Explanations of Donald Trump's victory in 2016

- **Narrative 1: An identity-fueled campaign**

  - "[W]hat stands out as crucial to his victory was the unusually large role of identity-inflected anxieties" (Sides et al. 2018)

  - Both Clinton and Trump campaigns primed racial gender attitudes (Schaffner, MacWilliams and Nteta, 2018)

- **Narrative 2: Partisan tribalism**

- **Other possibility:** Some policy issues function as fundamental elements of voting calculus.
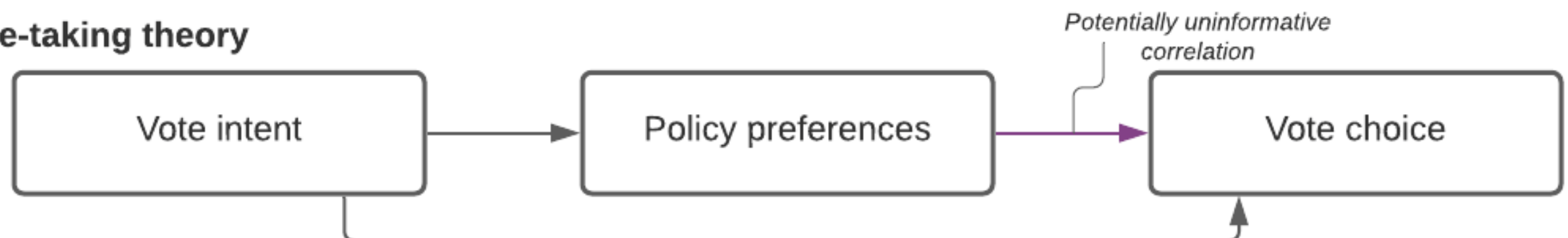
Observational equivalence problem

Relationships between ideology and vote choice imply distinct mechanisms

Issue-voting theory

Policy preferences → Vote Choice

Elite cue-taking theory

Vote intent → Policy preferences → Vote choice

Potentially uninformative correlation

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

Issue-voting theory

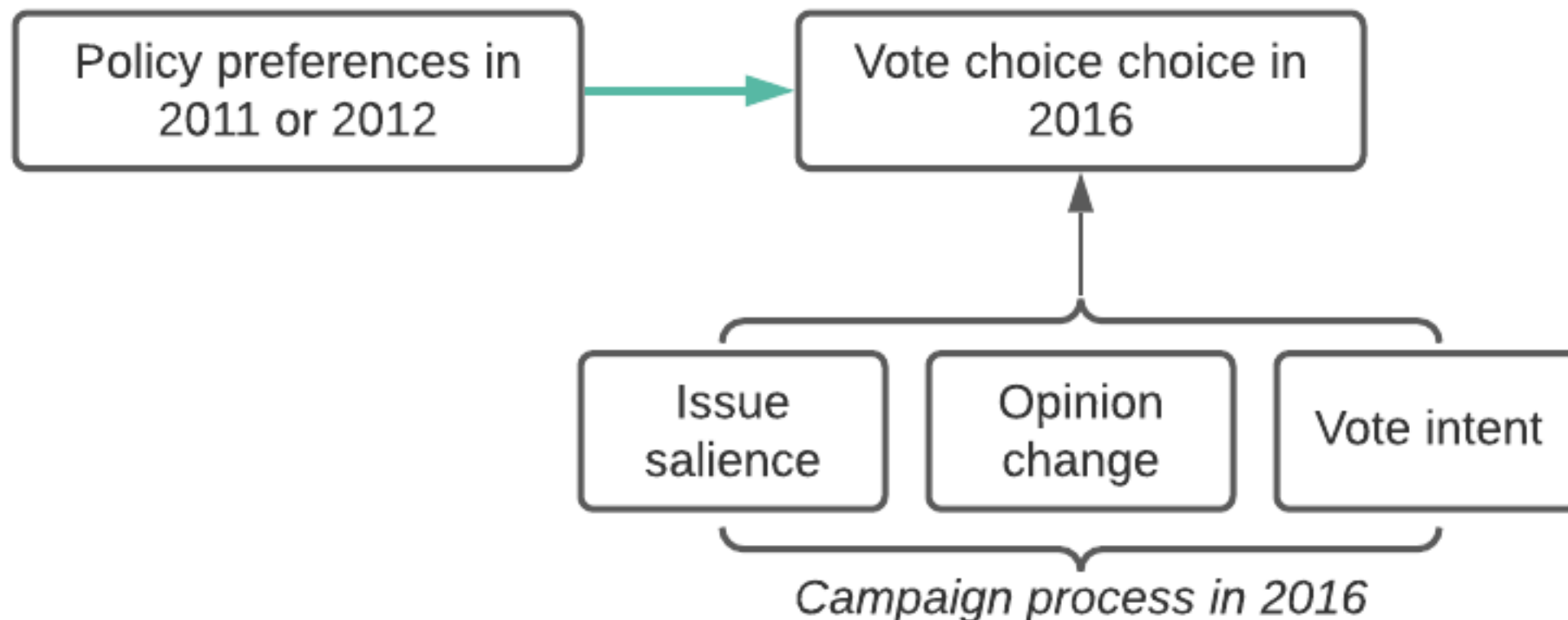| Policy preferences | → | Vote Choice |

Elite cue-taking theory

Potentially uninformative correlation

| Vote intent | → | Policy preferences | → | Vote choice |

Proposed solution

Pre-treatment attitudes

| Policy preferences in 2011 or 2012 | → | Vote choice choice in 2016 |

Issue salience | Opinion change | Vote intent
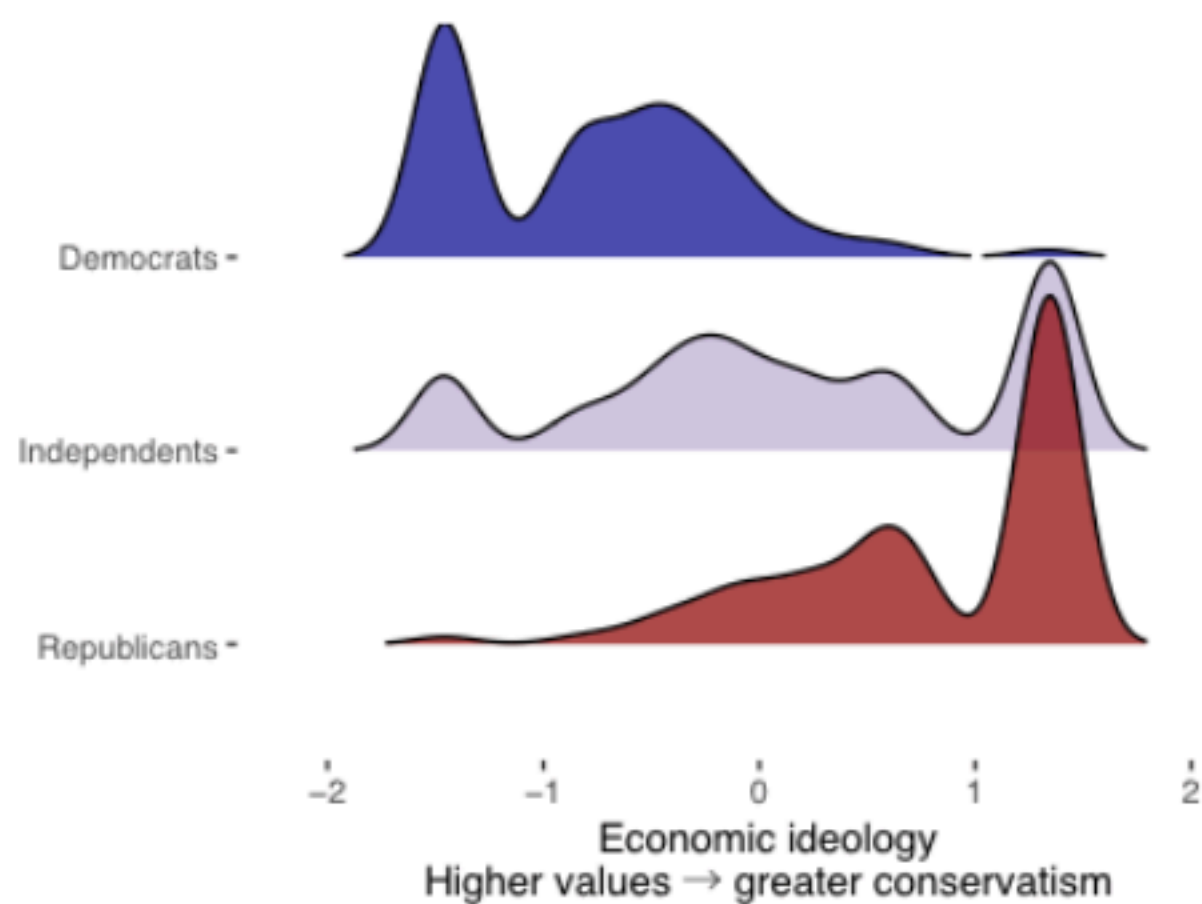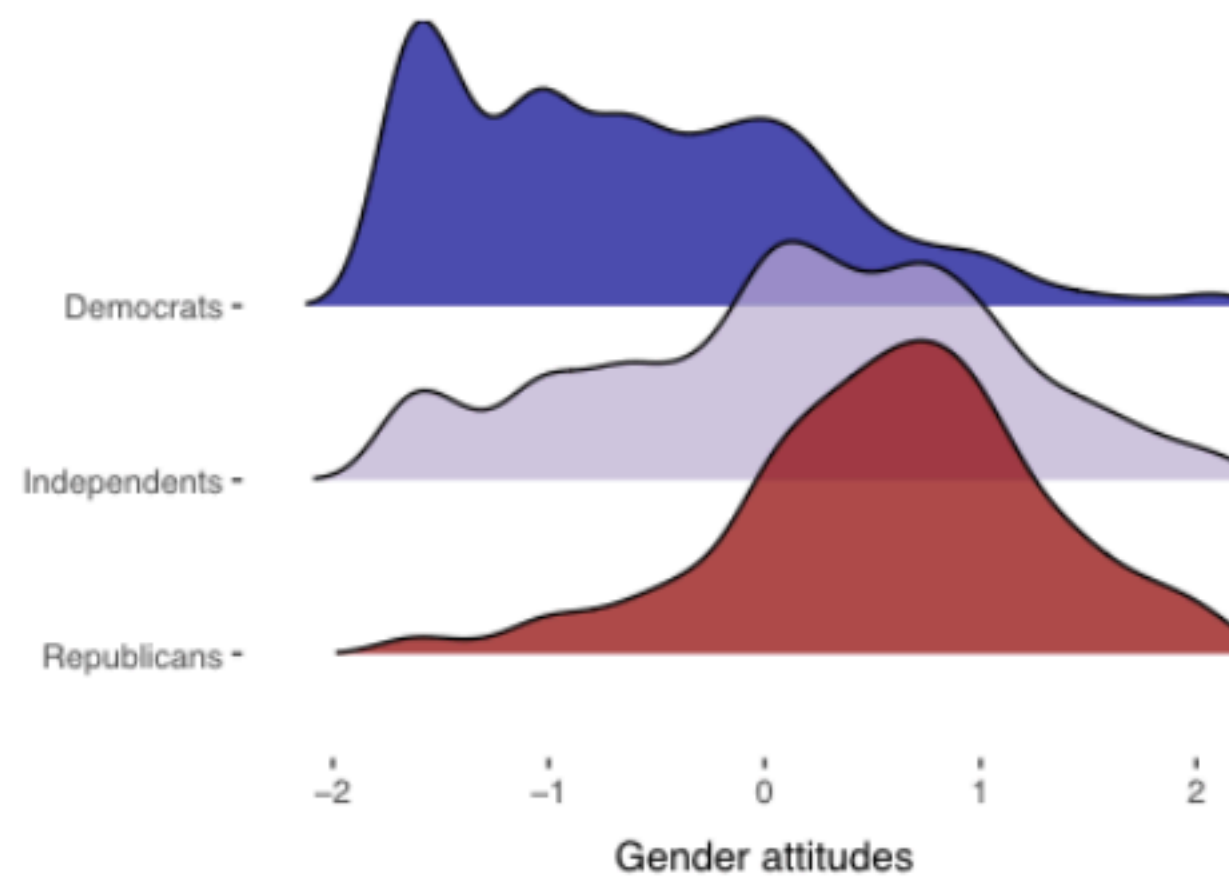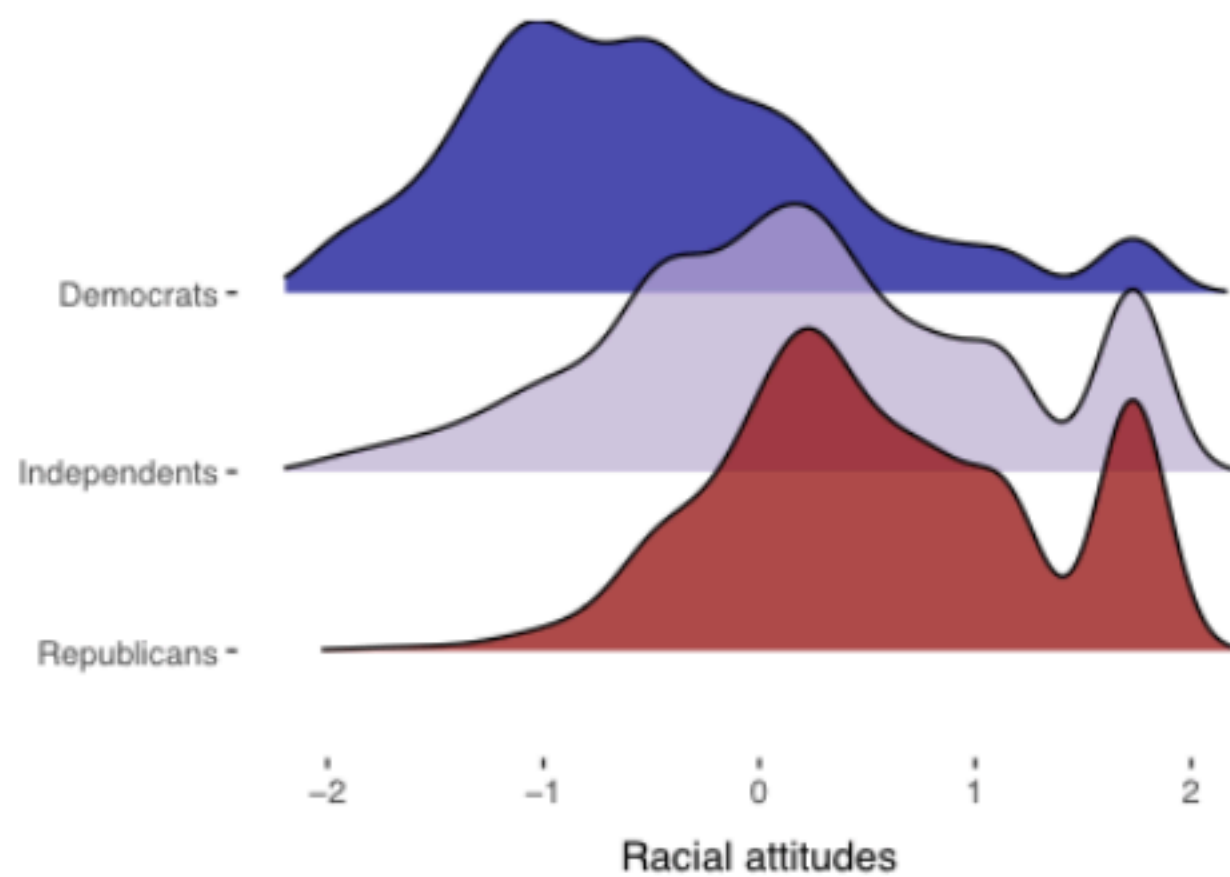
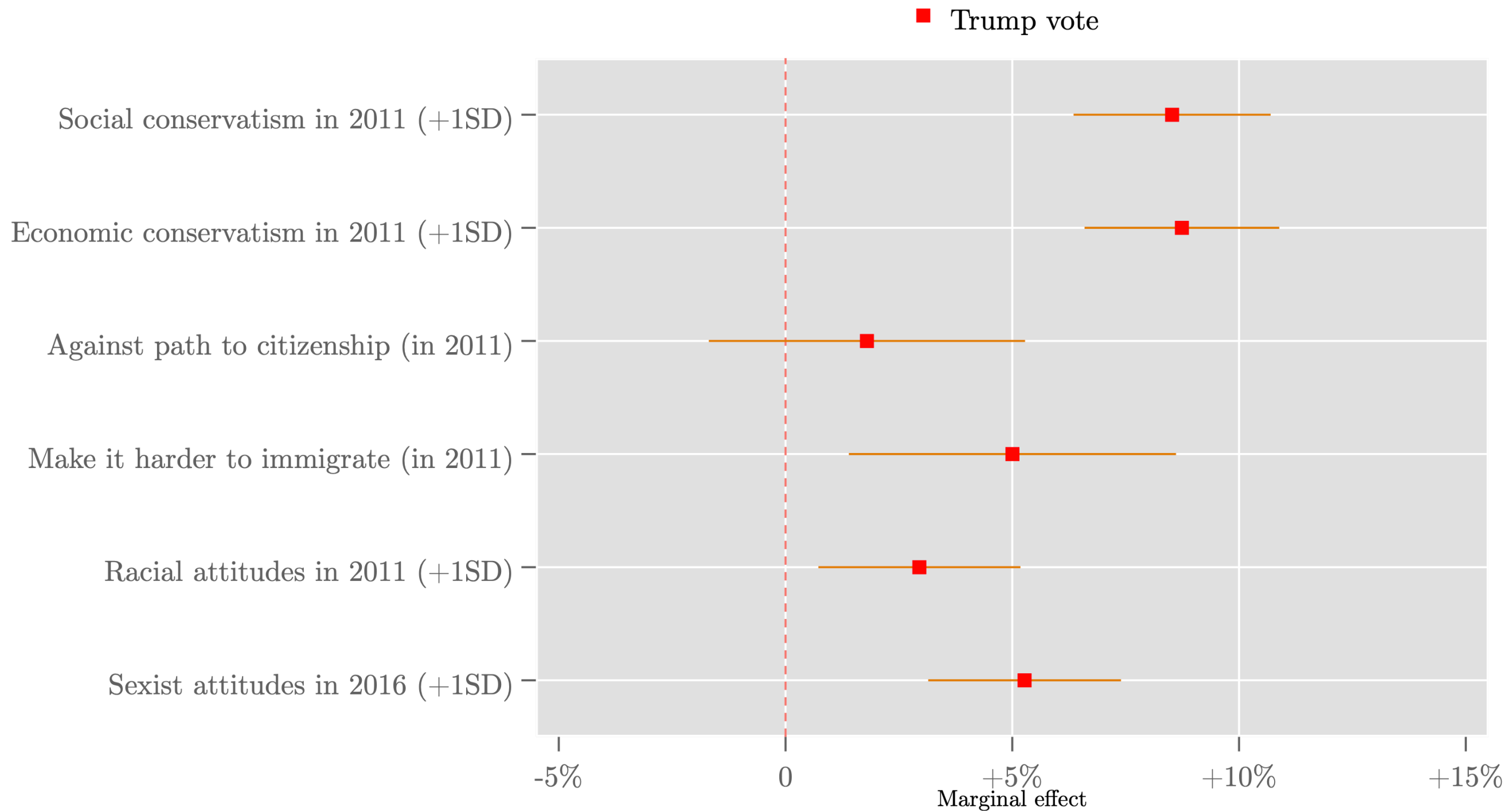*Campaign process in 2016*

Hypotheses

1. Operational ideology, racial attitudes, and sexist attitudes all influenced vote choice.
2. Culture > Economics.
3. Stability: Ideological motivations of voters were similar across three elections.

Data: Two panel surveys: VOTER Survey (2011-16 panel) and ANES (2016-20).

Research design: Use variables measured before the campaign to model vote choice.
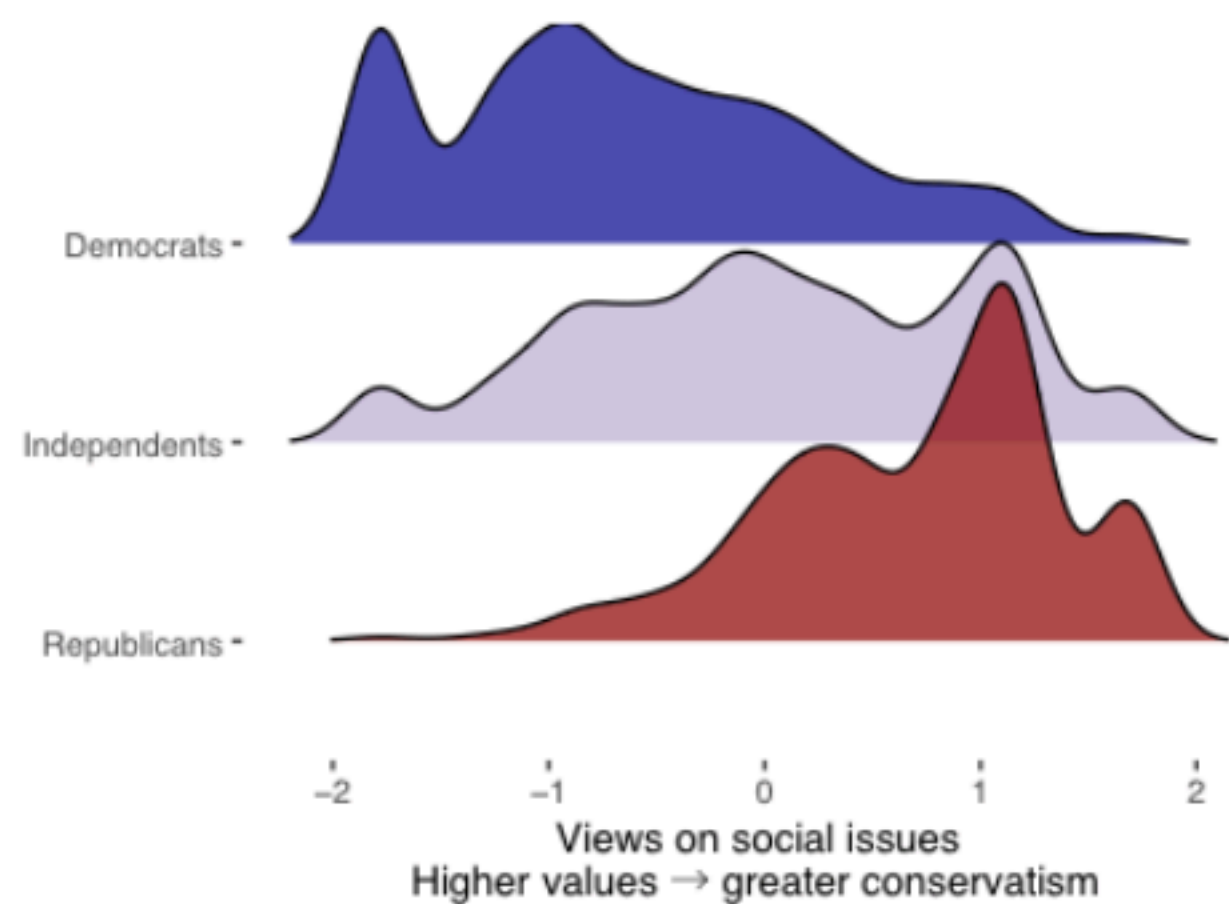
Democrats
Independents
Republicans

−2   −1   0   1   2
Racial attitudes

Democrats
Independents
Republicans

−2   −1   0   1   2
Gender attitudes

Democrats
Independents
Republicans

−2   −1   0   1   2
Economic ideology
Higher values → greater conservatism

Democrats
Independents
Republicans

−2   −1   0   1   2
Views on social issues
Higher values → greater conservatism

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

■ Trump vote

Social conservatism in 2011 (+1SD)

Economic conservatism in 2011 (+1SD)

Against path to citizenship (in 2011)

Make it harder to immigrate (in 2011)

Racial attitudes in 2011 (+1SD)

Sexist attitudes in 2016 (+1SD)

-5% 0 +5% +10% +15%

Marginal effect

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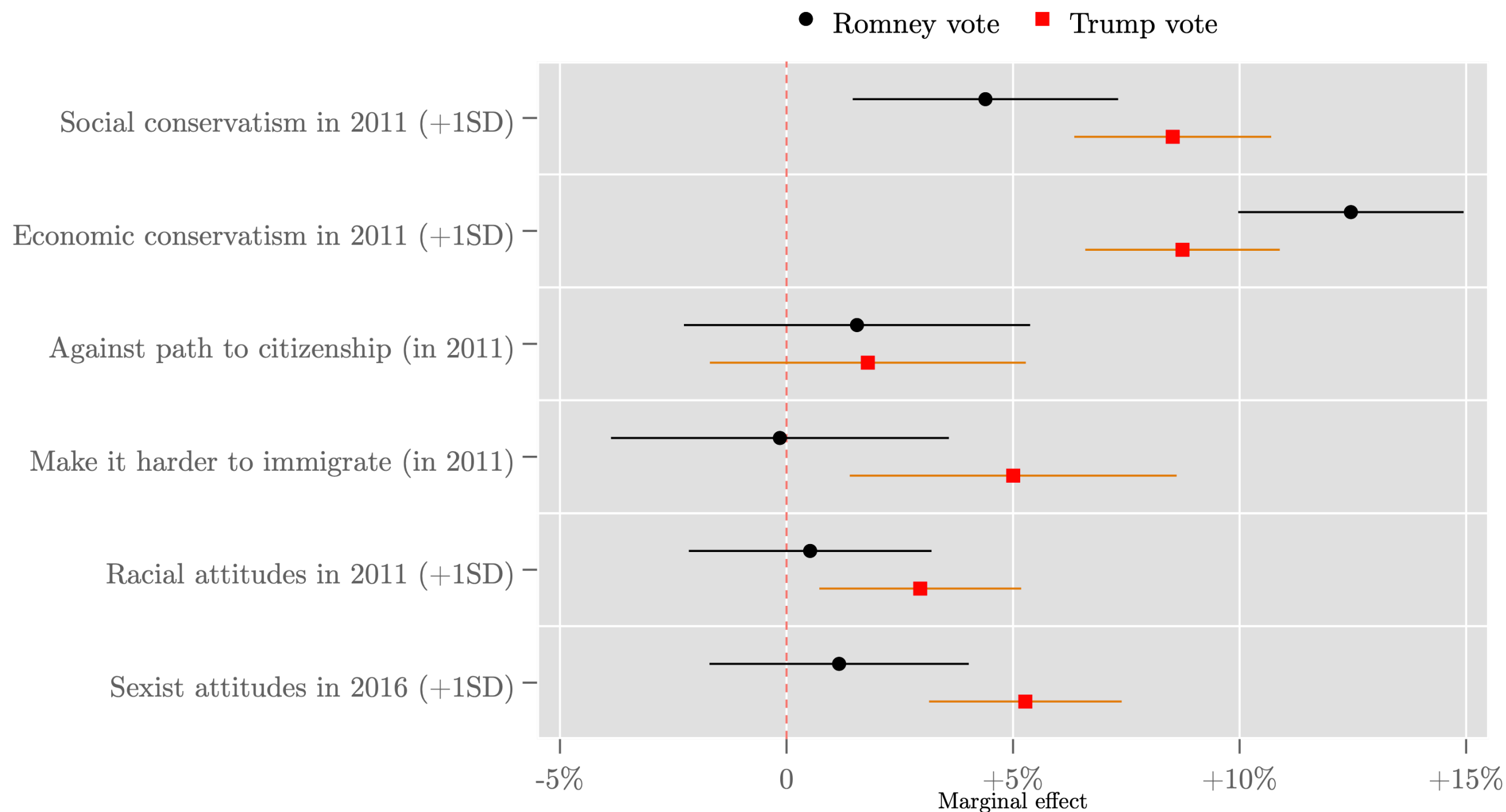
Results

1. Lagged conservative policy views among voters predict the Trump vote in 2016.
2. Social issues as prognostic as economic issues.
3. Stability over time with respect to ideology but group attitudes became more important in 2016.
4. Elite-based opinion change theory is not sufficient for explaining voting decisions.

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.

- **Zero-sum Mindset in Politics**
  "When other countries prosper, it is bad news for America."
  Finding: Concerns about relative standing are politically meaningful independently of views on globalization.

- **Political appeals (with Brian Brew and Silvia Kim)**
  How do political candidates deploy visceral and sexist language when advertising, asking for donations, and communicating with constituents?

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

Thank you.

Feedback or questions welcomed at
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