

The Consequences of Interparty Conversation on Outparty Affect and Stereotypes

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Research Questions

Americans increasingly dislike and stereotype outparty members. Media, politicians, and nonprofits (spending a great deal of money) often tout conversation as a solution.

RQ1 (interparty conversation): Do interparty conversations impact negative feelings and perceptions Americans hold for opposing party members?

Blocked cluster experimental designs improve efficiency and handle attrition well, but are typically used with pre-existing clusters (e.g., cities). In experiments involving conversation, researchers must construct the clusters (i.e., conversation groups) themselves.

RQ2 (experimental design): How do I organize participants into conversations in order to take advantage of a blocked cluster design?

Poster Overview

- I hypothesize that conversation improves outparty affect and decreases use of negative trait stereotypes.
 - I conduct an experiment that manipulates whether a pair of opposing party members engage in conversation or not, and if so, whether they discuss a political or non-political topic.
- Two experimental innovations:
- an algorithm to implement a blocked cluster design when the researcher controls what clusters form
 - a chat software so participants can have real-time, written conversations online
- Results show that conversation improves outparty affect and decreases use of negative trait stereotypes.

Theory & Hypotheses

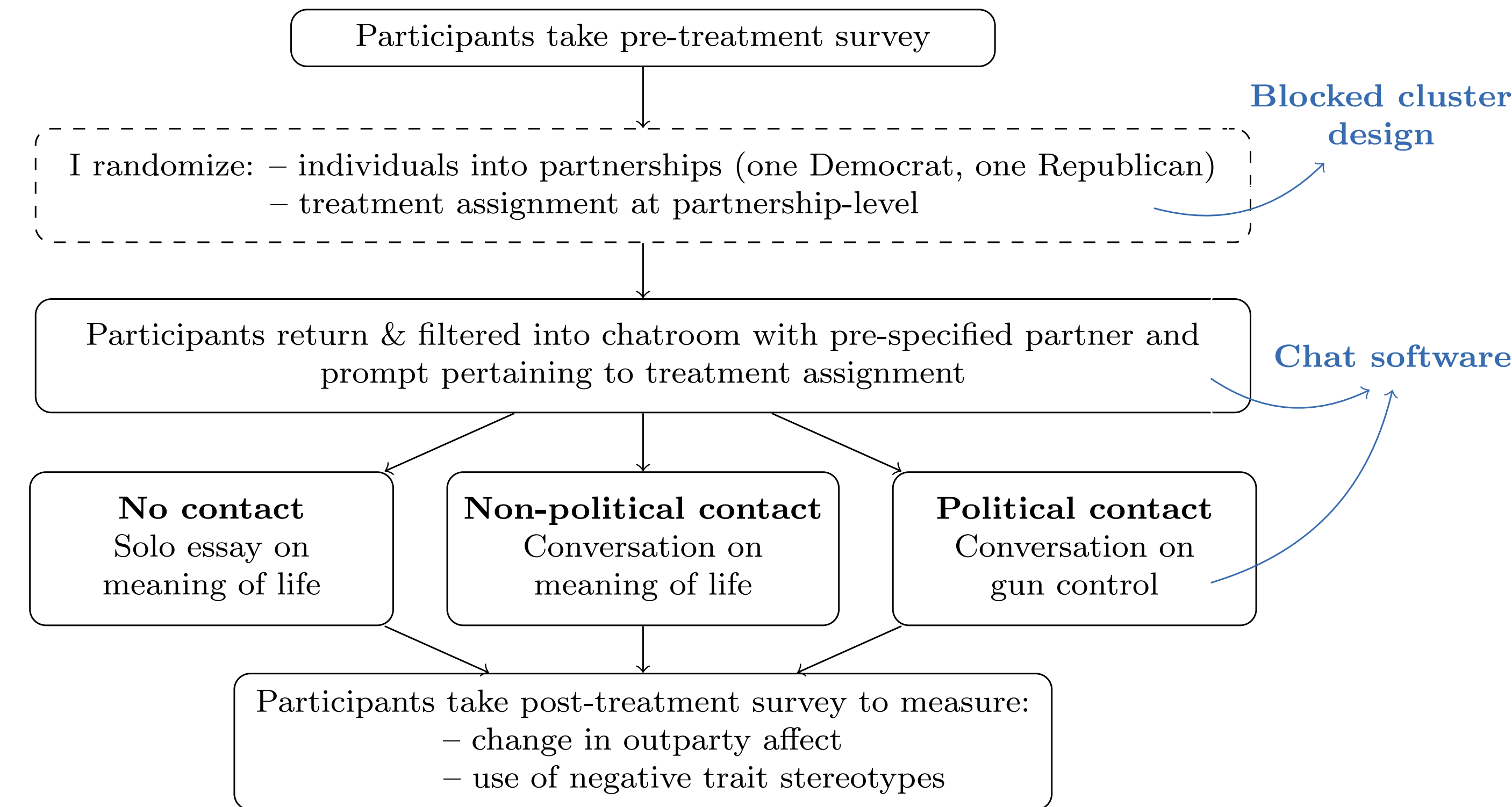
- Partisanship is a *social identity* → "inparty" or "outparty" is a useful way to categorize others
- To make sense of social interaction, outparty member is initially *depersonalized* → affective and cognitive responses toward the outparty applied to outparty member
- But, conversation as *contact* personalizes outgroup member → undermines usefulness of partisanship for categorizing others
- Partisanship is more salient in political conversation → more difficult to make sense of outparty member beyond partisan classification

H1: Non-political conversation with an outparty member improves (1) negative outparty affect and (2) use of negative outparty stereotypes.

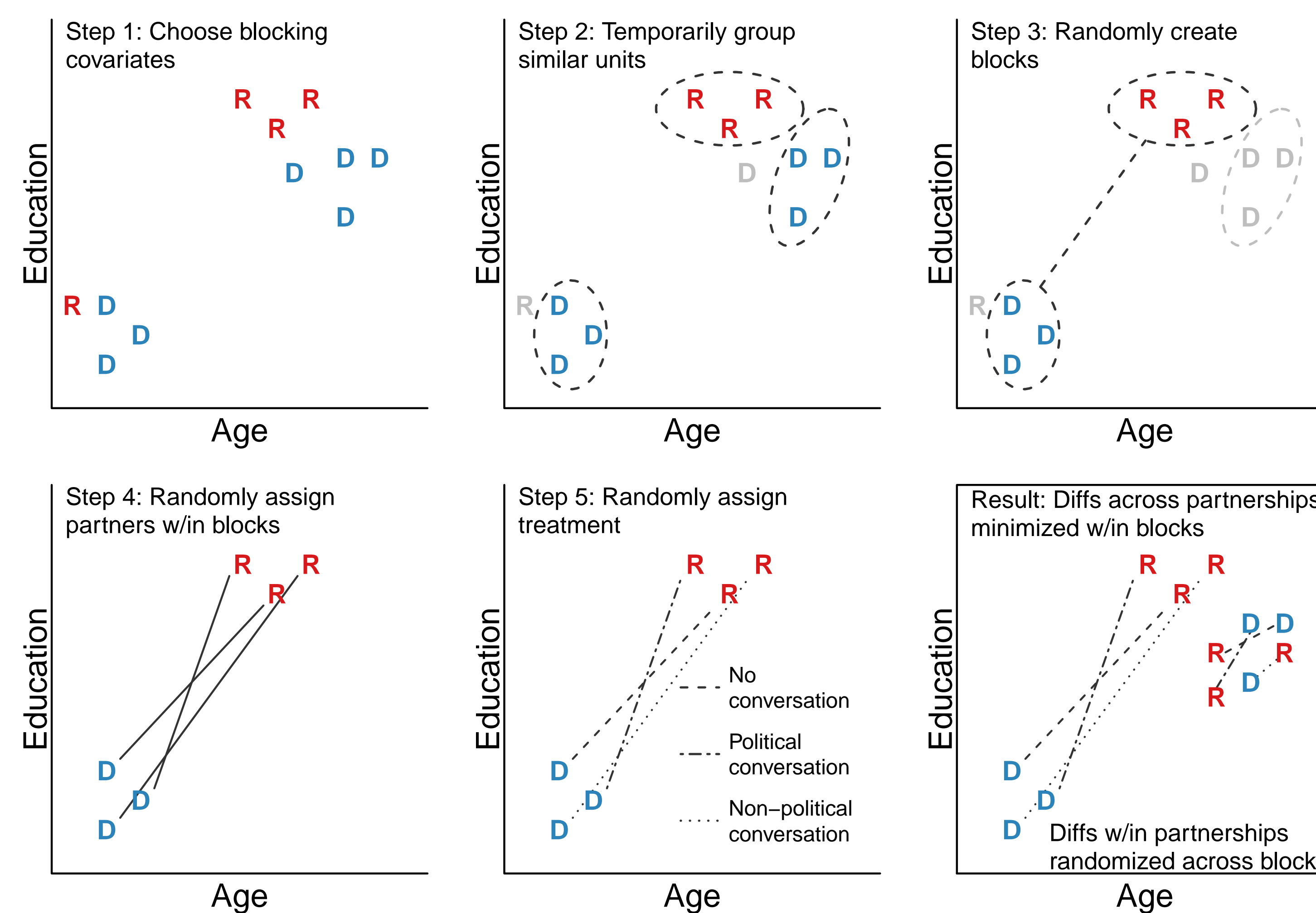
H2: Political conversation with an outparty member improves (1) negative outparty affect and (2) use of negative outparty stereotypes.

H3: Non-political conversation is more effective than political conversation at improving (1) negative outparty affect and (2) use of negative outparty stereotypes.

Experimental Stages



Blocked Cluster Design Algorithm



Conversation Software

We've randomly assigned you a partner that belongs to or leans toward the **Republican** party. Please have a conversation with them about gun control.

Specifically, we are interested in you sharing your opinion on gun control and learning your conversation partner's opinion as someone that might hold different values and beliefs.

For example, survey research shows that some people believe it is more important to protect the right of Americans to own guns than control gun ownership, while others believe the opposite. Survey research also shows that some people believe making it harder to own guns would result in fewer mass shootings, while others believe this would make no difference.

What do you think?

Write your reply...

Send

Time until finished: 0:00:02:00

Done

Transcript Snippet

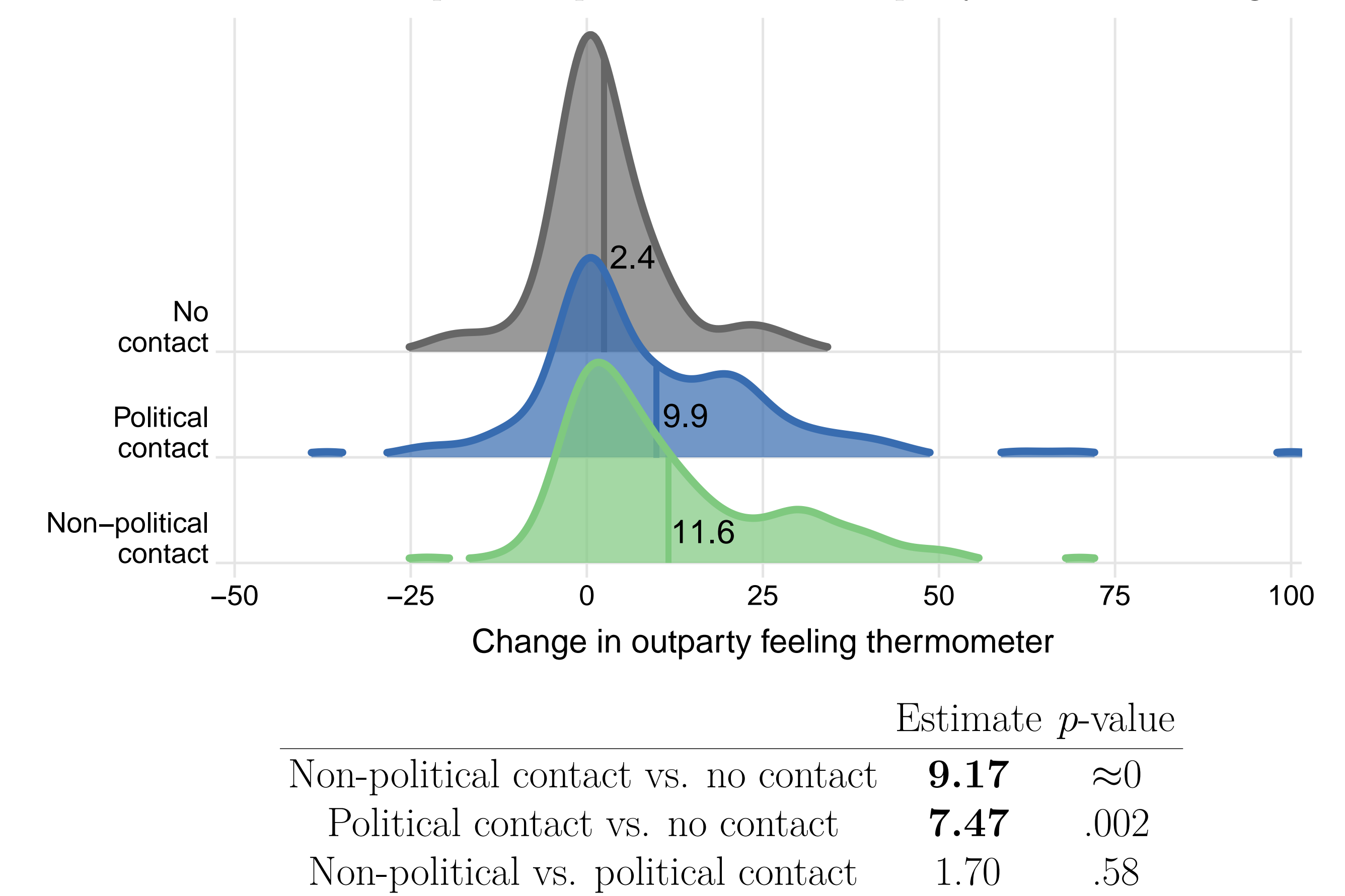
User1 Hello!
 User2 Hi!
 User1 So we are supposed to have a conversation about gun control
 User2 I am in favor of strict gun control. You?
 User1 I am actually somewhat anti-gun control, but I think some existing laws should be improved.
 User2 I don't think people should be able to own assault weapons, or weapons of war.

User1 I disagree, as some rifles that are generically considered "assault weapons" have been available to civilians for over 50 years. For example, the first Colt civilian AR-15 was released in 1968.
 User1 These are not new and dangerous weapons that have suddenly fallen into civilian hands.
 User2 It's availability over the years though doesn't mean that people should freely have them.
 ...

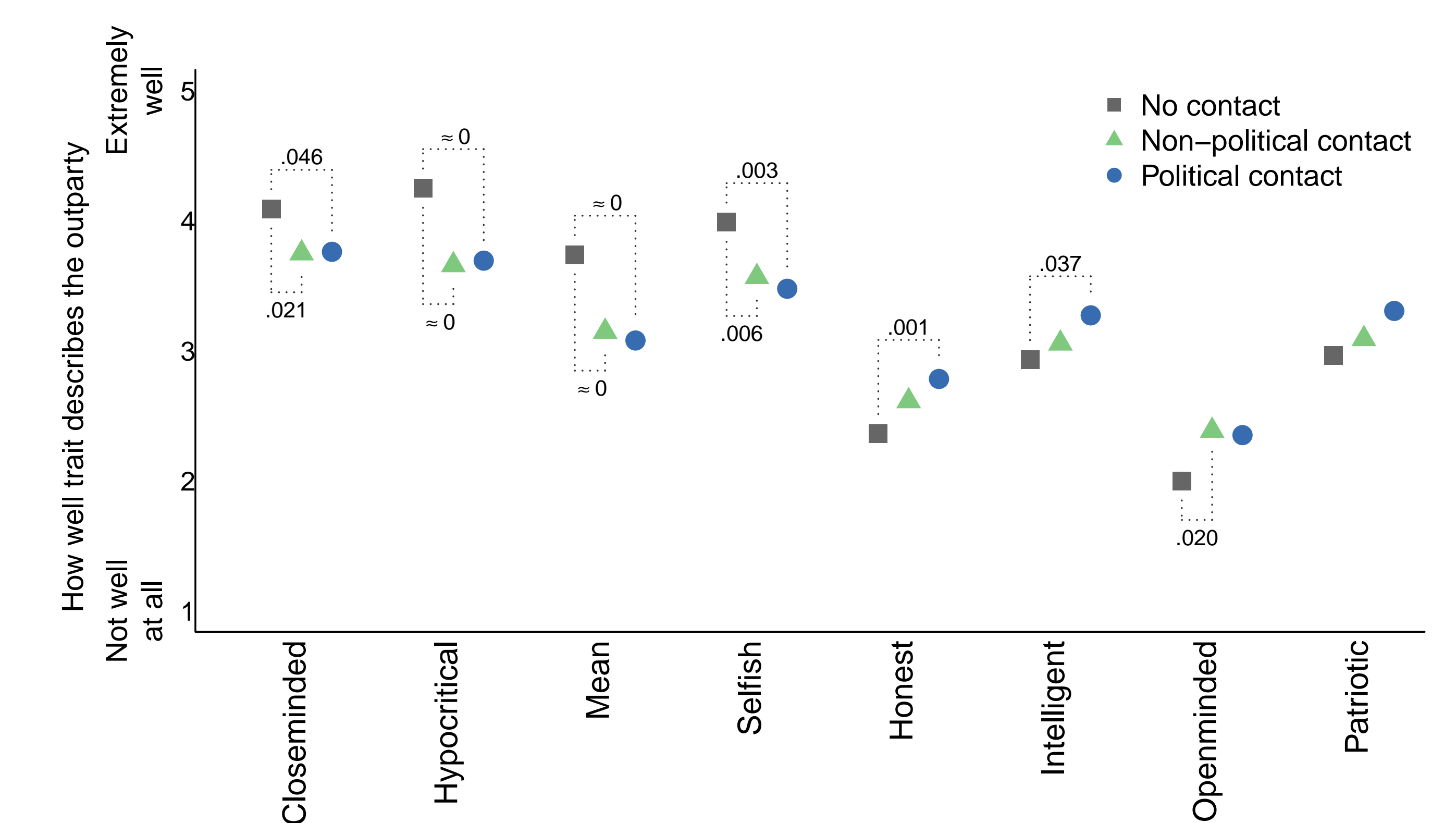
Results

- Design included 105 blocks containing 650 partnerships
- Sample includes 44 full blocks, 238 partnerships
- Difference in means estimates, randomization inference p-values

Outcome 1: Difference in pre- and post-treatment 'outparty members' feeling thermometer



Outcome 2: Post-treatment ratings of how well several traits describe outparty members



Conclusions & Future Research

New evidence to suggest interparty conversation, whether politically-charged or not, can work to undo the negative view of outparty members held by many Americans

Replication study, full 2x2 design

- Topic arm: meaning of life or *immigration* (new political topic)
- Contact arm: actual or *imagined* (indirect rather than no contact)
- Asses mediators