

Immigration rates, political parties, and motivated reasoning

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Perceptions and performance voting

- Voters hold perceptions about social and economic conditions and how these have changed
- Economy
 - Economic perceptions: Changes in economic conditions
 - Economic voting: Individuals reward/punish governments based on these perceptions
- Other fields?
 - Foreign policy? Education? Health care?
 - Our concern: Immigration

Perceptions as political battlegrounds

- Economy
 - Parties argue about economic situation and record
 - Interpretation of situation
 - Assignment of credit and blame
- Immigration
 - Arguments about immigration
 - Numbers of immigrants – Migration Watch vs Migration Matters
 - Extent of integration
 - But: less of a valence issue
 - Is more immigration good?
 - How much should immigrants integrate?

What motivates misperceptions?

- Motivated reasoning as mechanism
 - Information processing
 - Pay greater attention to immigration news
 - Place greater credence in 'negative' statements
 - Downplay 'positive' information
- Alternative: Heuristically derived responses
- Directional goals:
 - Economy: Partisanship/government support (Evans)
 - Climate change: Values and identity (Kahan)
- Immigration:
 - Values and identity – positive affect towards diversity
 - Partisanship – party position of party supported

Contextual differences

- Strength of motivated reasoning and heuristic response may depend on contextual factors
- Values/identity and party system
 - Average party position
 - Party polarization

Measuring immigration perceptions

- European Social Survey Round 1
 - ‘Out of every 100 people living in your country, how many do you think were born outside the country?’
 - Innumeracy: Herda (2010)
 - Predictor of immigration attitudes
 - Who are immigrants (Schneider: non-Western)
- European Election Study 2009
 - ‘Over the last 12 months, has immigration in your country increased a lot, increased a little, stayed the same, decreased a little or decreased a lot’?
 - First or second derivative?

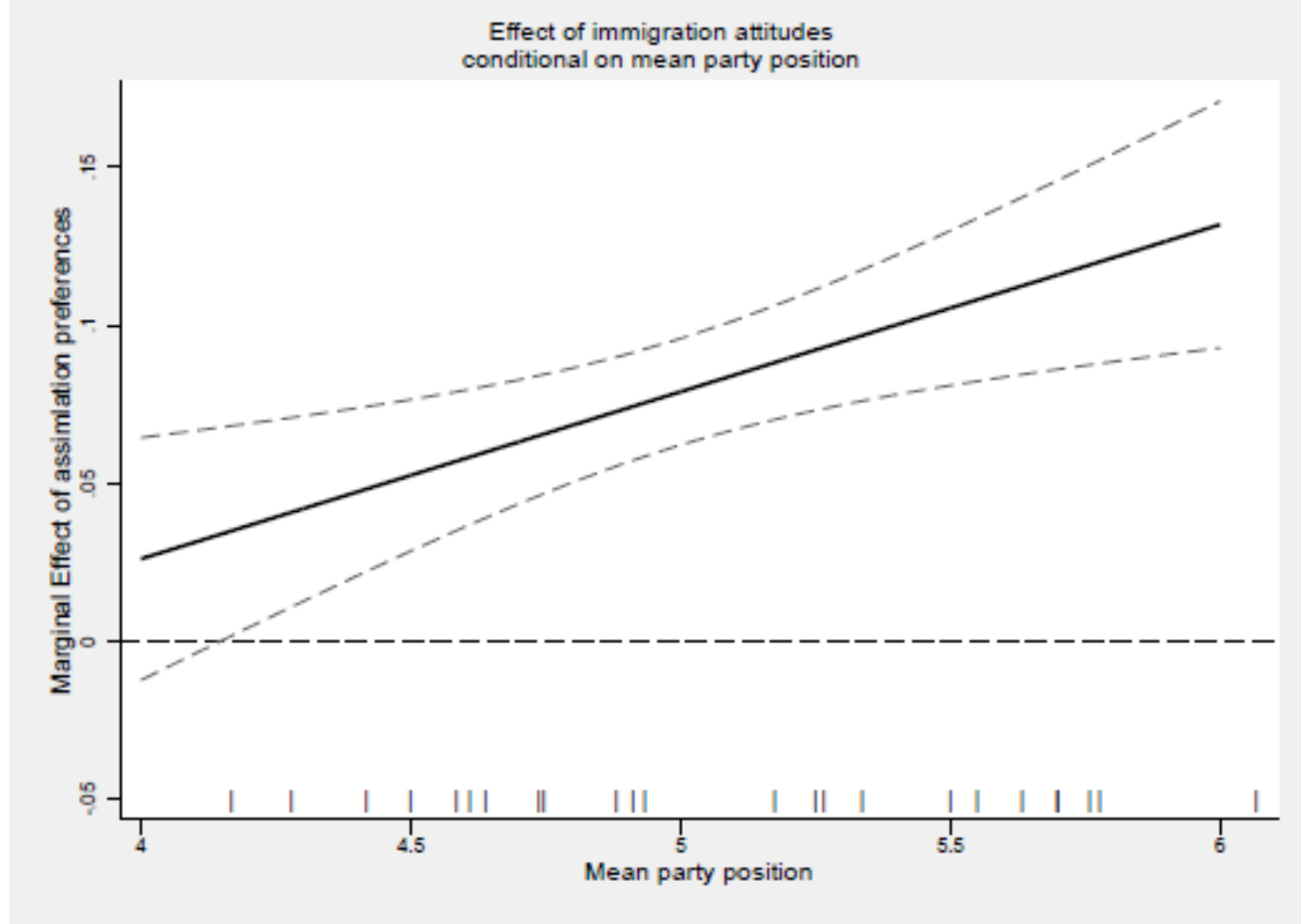
Predictors and endogeneity

- Values: Should immigrants assimilate?
- Partisanship: Position of party identified with (expert survey → also avg party position + polarization)
- Controls based on Herda (2010)
 - Ideology, democratic satisfaction, attitudes towards law/order, economic perceptions, EU opinion, political knowledge, socio-demographics
- Multi-level model, n=13,622 (7,174) in 20 countries

Results

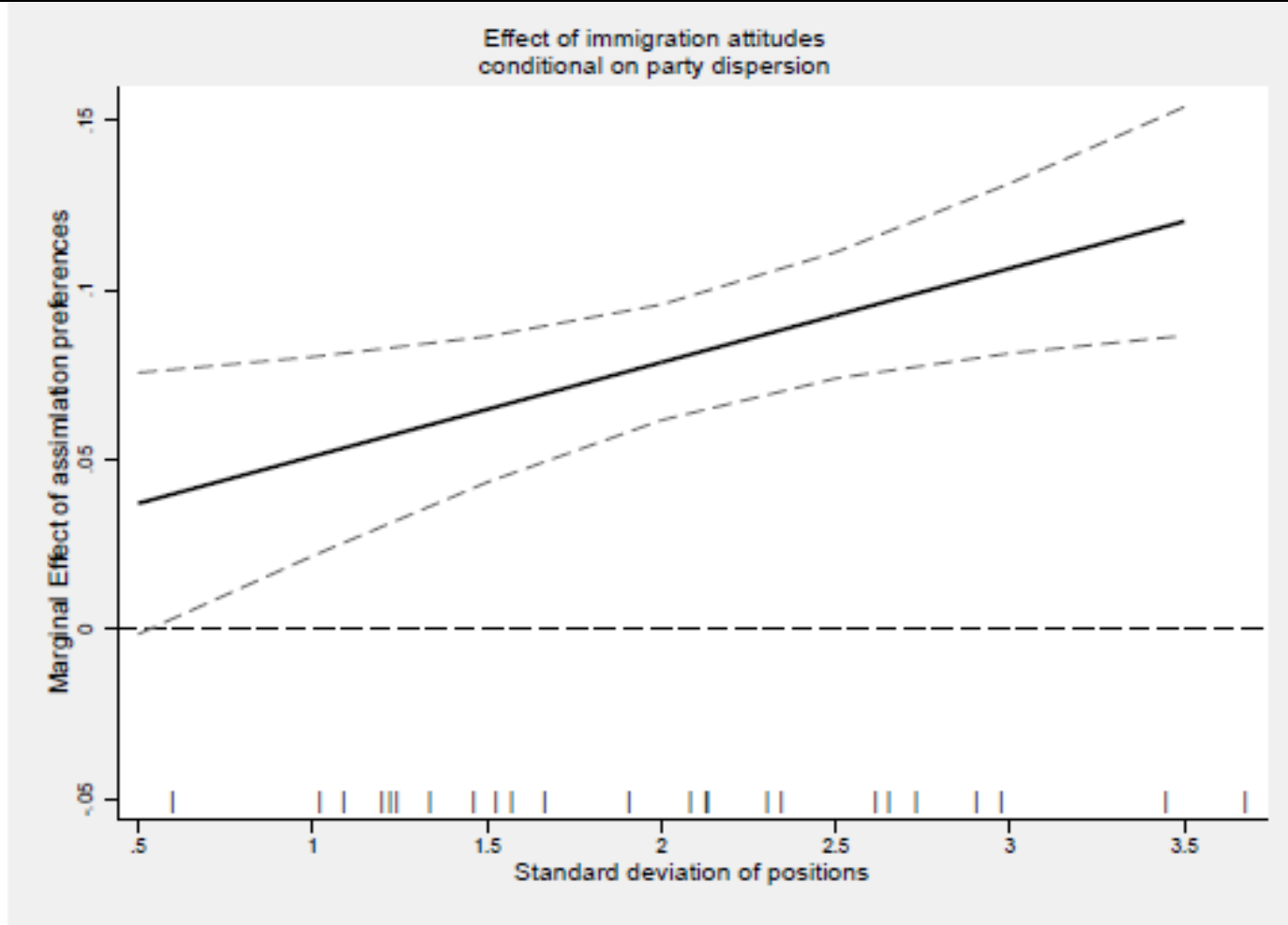
- Attitude towards assimilation
 - People who want immigrants to assimilate also think that immigration rates are higher
 - Min-Max change
 - .32 increase on a 1-5 scale or 1/3 standard deviation
- Party position
 - People who support more anti-immigration parties also think immigration rates are higher
 - Min-max change
 - .20 increase on a 1/5 scale or 1/5 standard deviation

Results



Source: Based on Model 2, Table 1. The rug plot indicate the actual average party positions in the sample.

Results



Source: Based on Model 2, Table 1. The rug plot indicates the actual distribution of standard deviations in party positions in the sample.

Summary

- Values and partisanship are associated with perceptions of immigration rates
 - ESS: Values and partisanship associated with perceptions of immigration numbers as well
- Contextual factors (party competition) may matter
- Implications for public discourse and accountability
- Empirical challenges
 - Question format
 - Reverse causality: survey experiment