

2016 American Presidential Election: Analysing the politico-psychological differences underlying political behavior

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A. Exploratory sample characteristics

The presented results ensue from a online sample (n=1500) of the American population, representative with respect to age, gender, education, income, and political orientation. The data was collected from August 16th to September 12th, 2016.

Interlocked quotas were used for all quotas until the incidence rate (IR) reached less than 1%. After this threshold, quotas were softened (via proportional simple quotas) for problematic strata - e.g., three specific brackets in Income and Education.

Responses were considered valid only if they passed on a series of quality checks (e.g., attention questions, consistency checks, page and survey-total time controls).

Confirmatory samples

In addition, a confirmatory sample was collected (n=~2100) ensuing from the same panel. This convenient sample had no quotas assigned, but had quality control checks. Lastly, another sample was collected (n=~600) with neither quotas nor quality controls.

The results presented here replicate in magnitude and direction (almost to perfection) in sample 2 (n=~2100). Analyses on sample 3 have not yet been performed.

B. Effect Sizes

As to summarize the survey results, we compare group differences with respect to a variety of politico-psychological constructs. For this, we calculated the *unbiased* effect sizes (*Hedges' g*) between the above defined ideological groups. Effect size is the magnitude of the mean differences between groups of interest. Its interpretation is directly related to the concept of standard deviation, as follows:

- Effect Size of 0.2, 58 % of the target group will be above the mean of the control group
- Effect Size of 0.5, 69 % of the target group will be above the mean of the control group
- Effect Size of 0.8, 79 % of the target group will be above the mean of the control group
- Effect Size of 1.2, 88 % of the target group will be above the mean of the control group

It may be worthwhile to mention that in Social- and Political Psychology, an Effect Size of .20 is commonplace.

[Click here for an external link on the meaning of Effect Sizes]

C. Analyses' details

For the sake of simplicity, in this executive summary, we use only one operationalization to define ideological groups: candidate preferences. Participants were presented with a list of several candidates, and were asked to chose which of them best represents their political views. These choices were classified into three groups: Republicans, Trumpists, and Democrats.

- Republicans = Ted Cruz, Rand Paul, Jeb Bush
- Trumpists = Donald Trump
- Democrats = Bernie Sanders & Hillary Clinton

The results of the nationally representative survey can be visualized below, where we hope to gain insights into the politico-psychological differences between Republicans, Trumpists, and Democrats.

Results were broken-down into three categories depending on the magnitude of the found effect sizes: 1. Medium-Large-&-Very-Large differences between ideological groups; 2. Small-to-Medium differences; and 3. Similarities or no differences.

For each politico-psychological construct, we have estimated the point estimates (represented by bold dots) and built 95% confidence intervals for these estimates (represented by bold lines).

As for reproducibility and stability of presented results, we have replicated these findings using the confirmatory samples. Furthermore, we also studied group differences based on other criteria such as Party ID (Republican vs. Democrat), voting intentions (Donald Trump vs. Hillary Clinton), and Trump’s likability (like vs. dislike Trump on a 9-point Likert scale). Results replicate to a large extent.

D. Interpretation of results

Examples

In the figure below, there are several politico-psychological constructs listed on the y-axis. On the x-axis, there are 3 point estimates and the associated confidence intervals denoting a direct comparison between two ideological groups, per construct.

For example, the first listed variable is “Aggression [RWA Facet]”, which is the composite score of the items associated with the Aggression facet of Right-Wing Authoritarianism. For this construct, the effect size has been estimated to be of magnitude 0.35, with the confidence interval ranging from 0.21 to 0.52. This denotes that there is a small-to-medium difference in Aggression between Trumpists and Republicans. Furthermore, we see that Republicans and Democrats differ (of medium-to-large magnitude) in Aggression, while for Trumpists and Democrats this difference is the (of large-to-very-large magnitude).

Note that while the direction of the effect sizes - i.e., which group has the highest or lowest average on the measured construct - is not plotted, it can be implied. For Aggression it is easy to see that Trumpists have the highest means while Democrats have the lowest. This is because these groups show the highest effect sizes. Similarly, for Anti-egalitarianism [SDO Facet], the second listed construct, Republicans have the highest average while Democrats have the lowest.

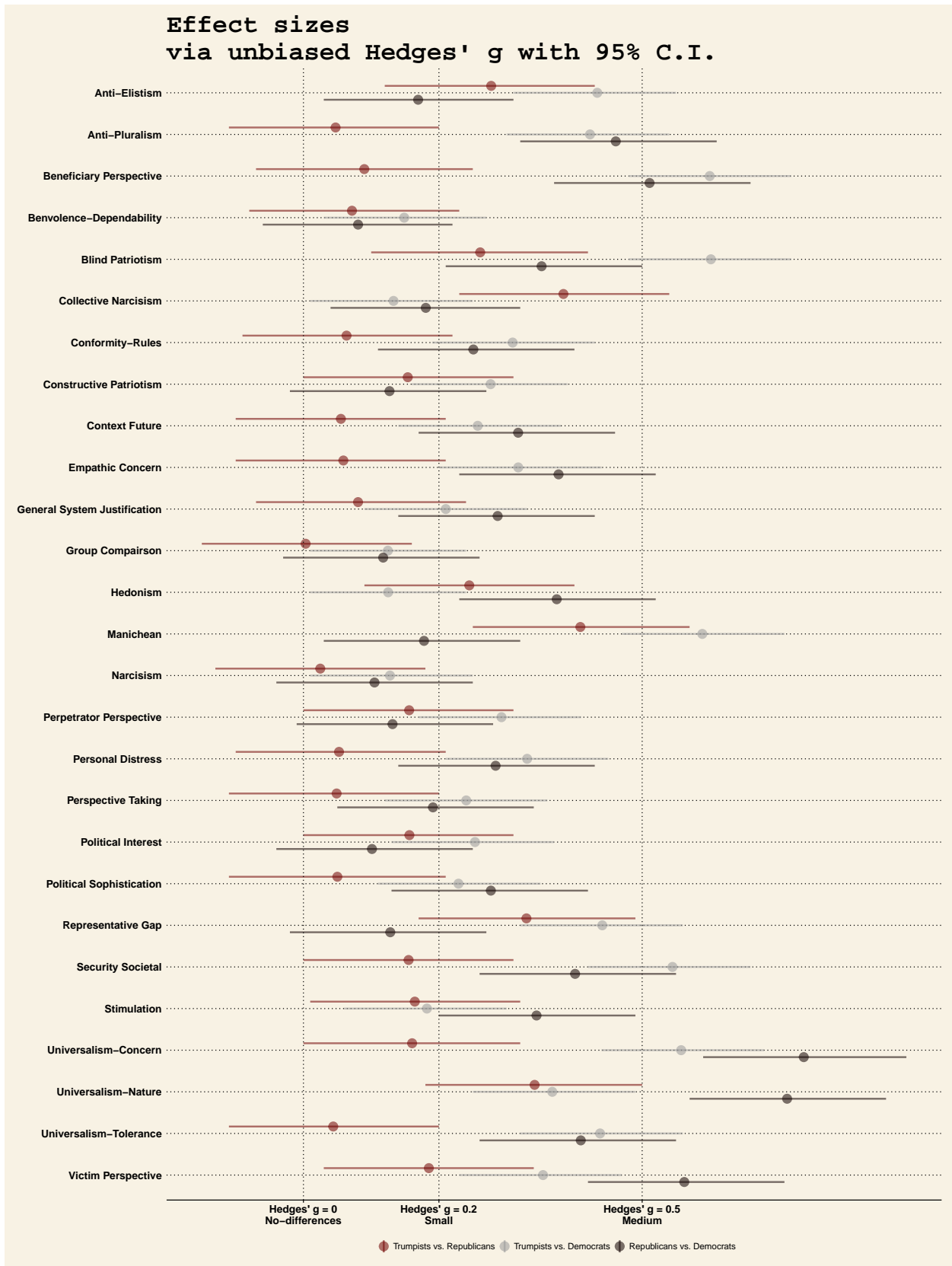
In the same lines, Trumpists are shown to be the highest on antagonism towards blacks (4th construct listed), then Republicans, then Democrats. Interestingly, the results seem to point out that Trumpists would be significantly higher on black antagonism than Republicans. This can be seen by the fact that the confidence interval of the point estimate does not touch zero.

Using Candidate Preferences: Trumpists vs. Republicans vs. Democrats

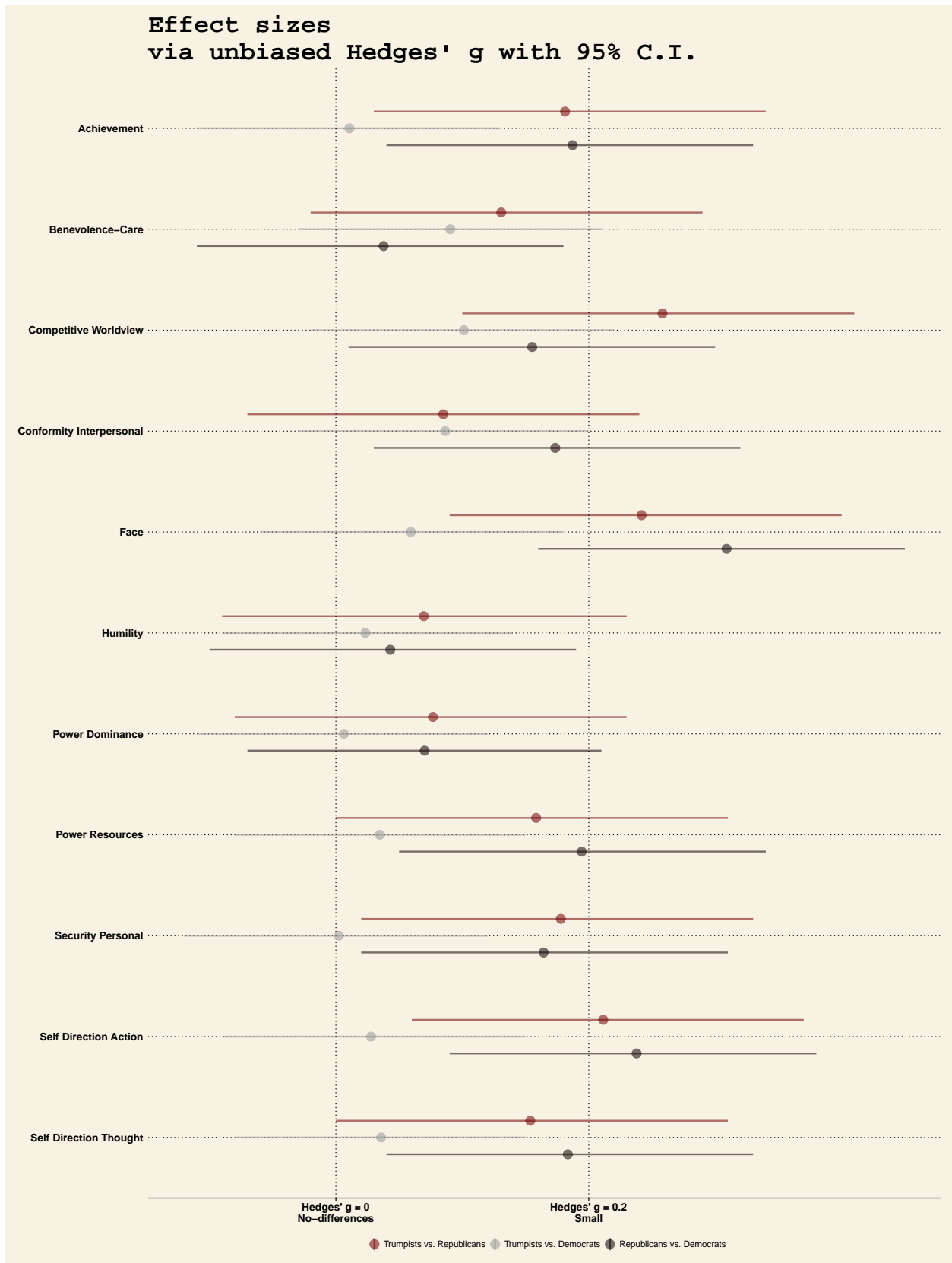
Medium-Large-&-Very-Large differences: Effect sizes whose the lower bound of the C.I. is larger than 0.5



Small-to-Medium differences: Effect sizes whose C.I. does not include 0 and include 0.5



Similarities between Trump and Clinton voters: Effect sizes whose C.I. include zero

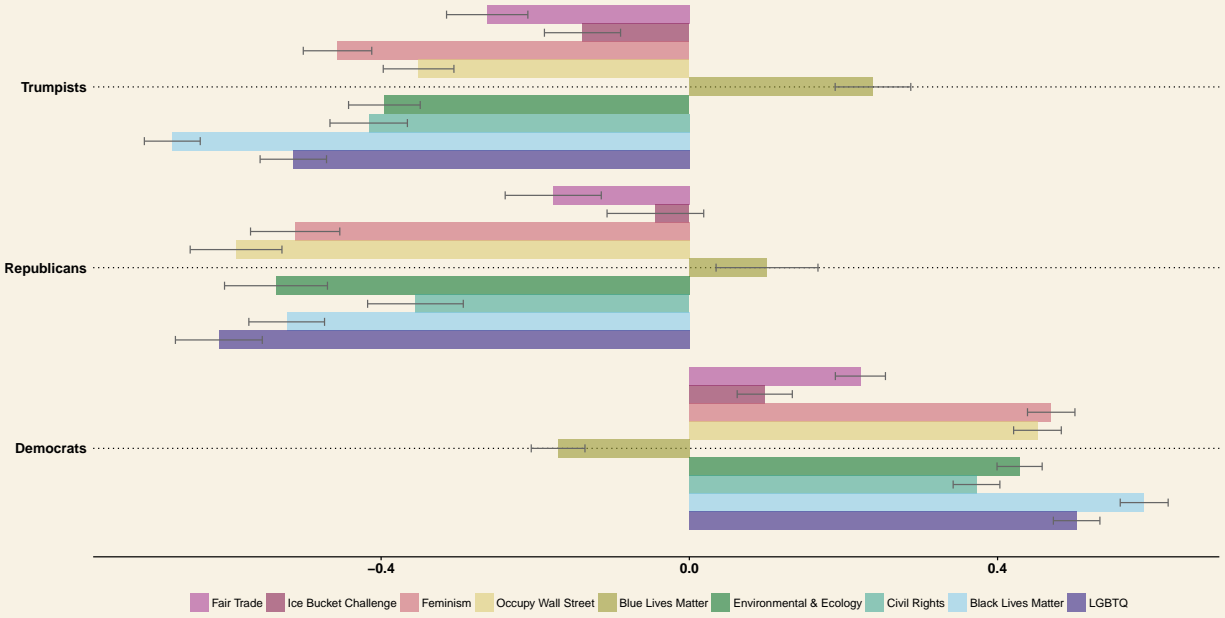


Social Movements

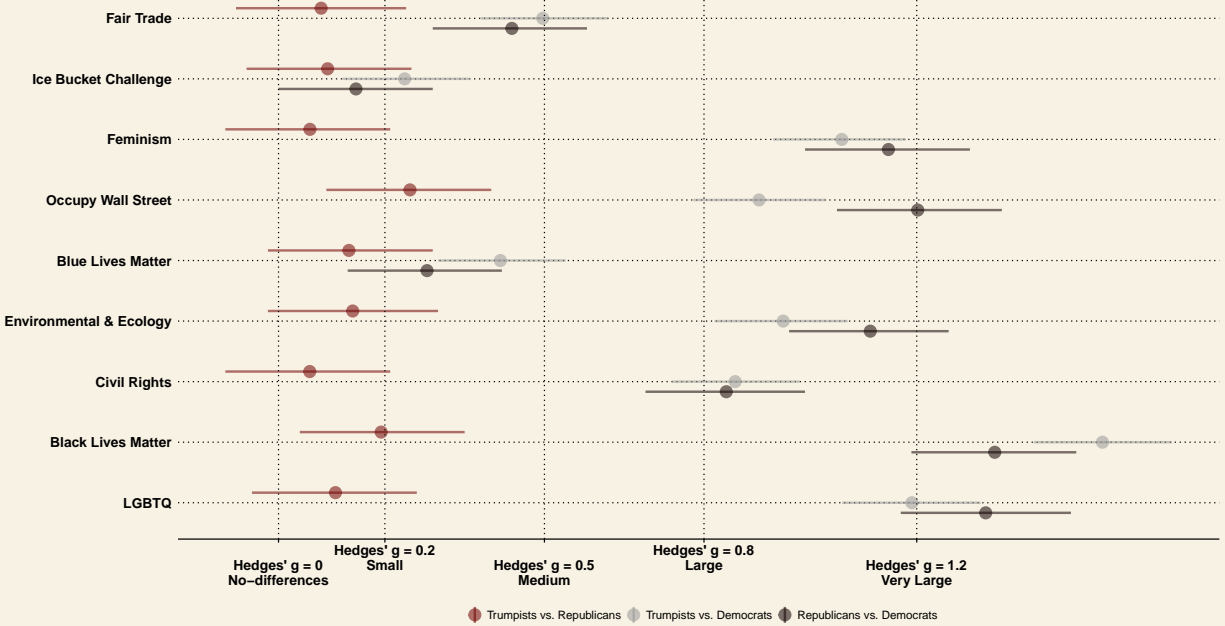
We also look at support for Social Movements (politicized and non-politicized*) across ideological groups (Trumpists vs. Republicans vs. Democrats *via* candidate preferences).

- LGBTQ
- Black Lives Matter
- Civil Rights
- Environmental & Ecology
- Blue Lives Matter
- Occupy Wall Street
- Feminism
- Ice Bucket Challenge*
- Fair Trade*

Social Movements grouped by Candidate Preferences



Effect sizes via unbiased Hedges' g with 95% C.I.



Conservatism

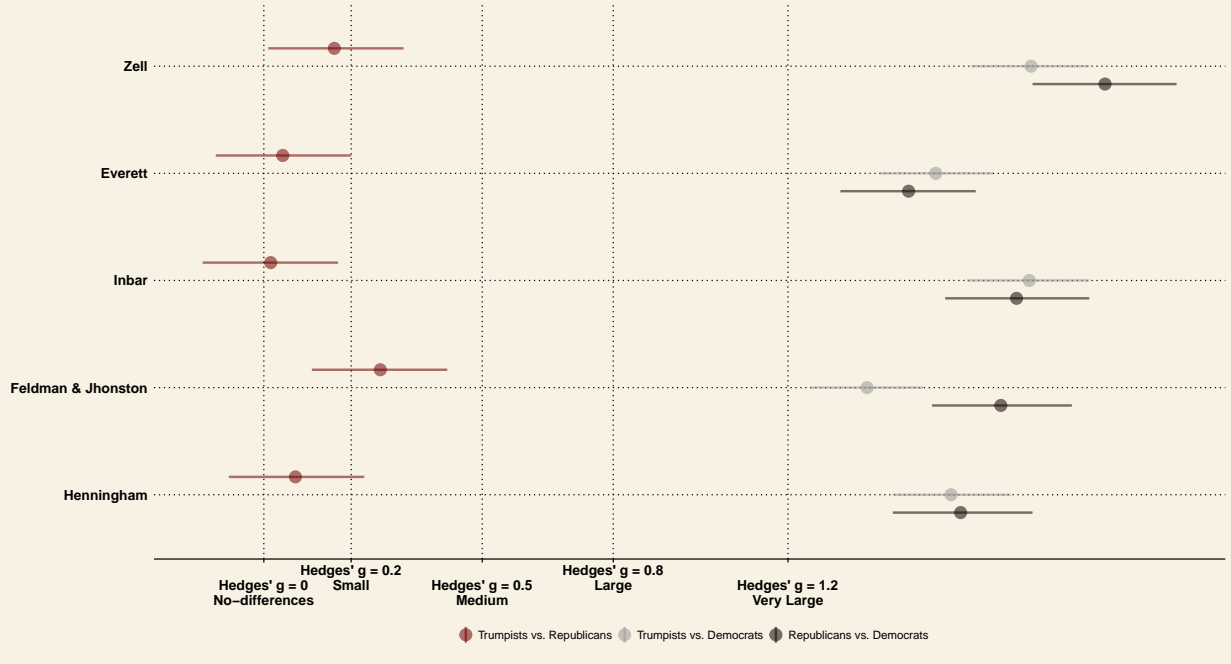
We analyze the differences between Republicans, Trumpists and Democrats while looking at the issue-based conservatism scales.

- Henningham (1996) - Social Conservatism
- Henningham (1997) - Economic Conservatism
- Zell & Bernstein (2014) - 12 item scale
- Everett (2013) - 12 item scale Social & Economic Conservatism Scale
- Inbar, Pizarro & Bloom (2009) - 10 item scale
- Feldman & Johnston (2014) - 13 item Social and Economic conservatism scale

The objective is to investigate whether there are ideological differences between ideological groups that could account for the psychological differences we have found above.

For example, with respect to differences between Republicans and Trumpists, results seem to indicate that there seems to be hardly any differences in terms of ideology (*via* symbolic and operational conservatism) that could account for the different politico-psychological profiles found above.

Effect sizes via unbiased Hedges' g with 95% C.I.



Conservatism grouped by Candidate Preferences

