

# Does “Disagree Better” Depolarize Americans?

Robb Willer

Professor of Sociology, Psychology, and Organizational Behavior

*Stanford University*

Willer@Stanford.edu | @RobbWiller



# Cox-Peterson PSA

- Submitted to the *Strengthening Democracy Challenge*
  - Large experiment
  - 32K participants, 25 interventions tested
- Reduced partisan animosity, support for partisan violence, support for undemocratic practices
- Increased support for bipartisan cooperation



# “Disagree Better” Campaign

Spencer Cox (Governor, Utah), Jared Polis (Governor, Colorado), Eric Holcomb (Governor, Indiana), Clint Lamb (Mayor, Indiana), Mike Parson (Governor, Missouri), Laura Kelly (Governor, Kansas), Wes Moore (Governor, Maryland), Jack Coburn (Mayor, Maryland), Michelle Lujan Grisham (Governor, New Mexico), Mark Gordon (Governor, Wyoming), Kay Ivey (Governor, Alabama), Bill Lee (Governor, Tennessee), John Carney (Governor, Delaware), Phil Scott (Governor, Vermont), Abby Cox (First Lady, Utah), Albert Bryan (Governor, Virgin Islands), Mills (Governor, Maine), Sununu (Governor, New Hampshire), Dan McKee (Governor, Rhode Island), Kevin Stitt (Governor, Oklahoma), Sonia Sotomayor (Supreme Court Justice), Amy Coney Barrett (Supreme Court Justice), Robert Gates (Former Secretary of Defense)



# “Disagree Better” Experiment

- With Chagai Weiss, Don Green
- Survey Experiment
- 6,500 participants
- Treatment vs. Placebo

# Treatment Condition



Govs. Cox & Polis



Gov. Holcomb & Mayor Lamb

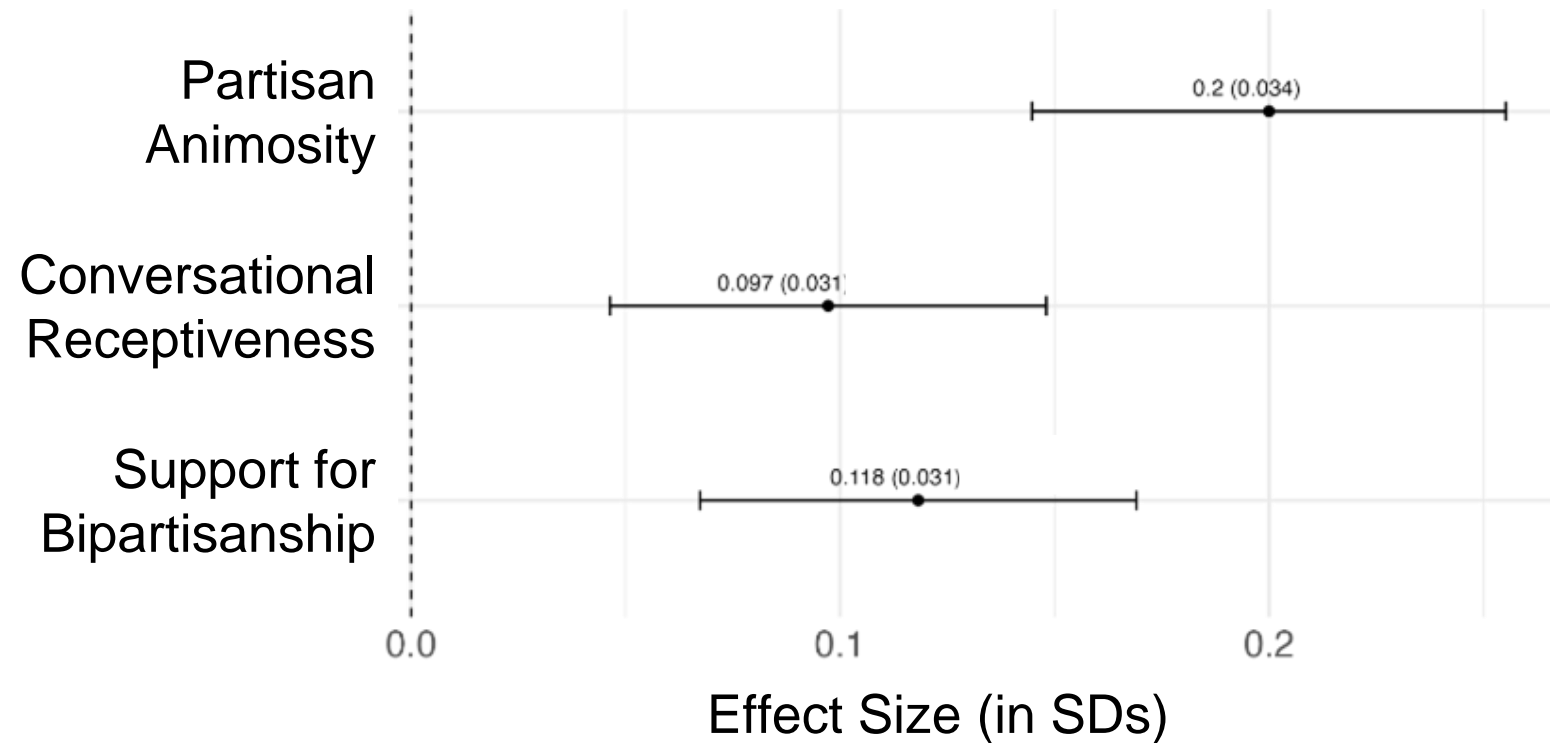


Govs. Parson & Kelly

# Placebo Condition

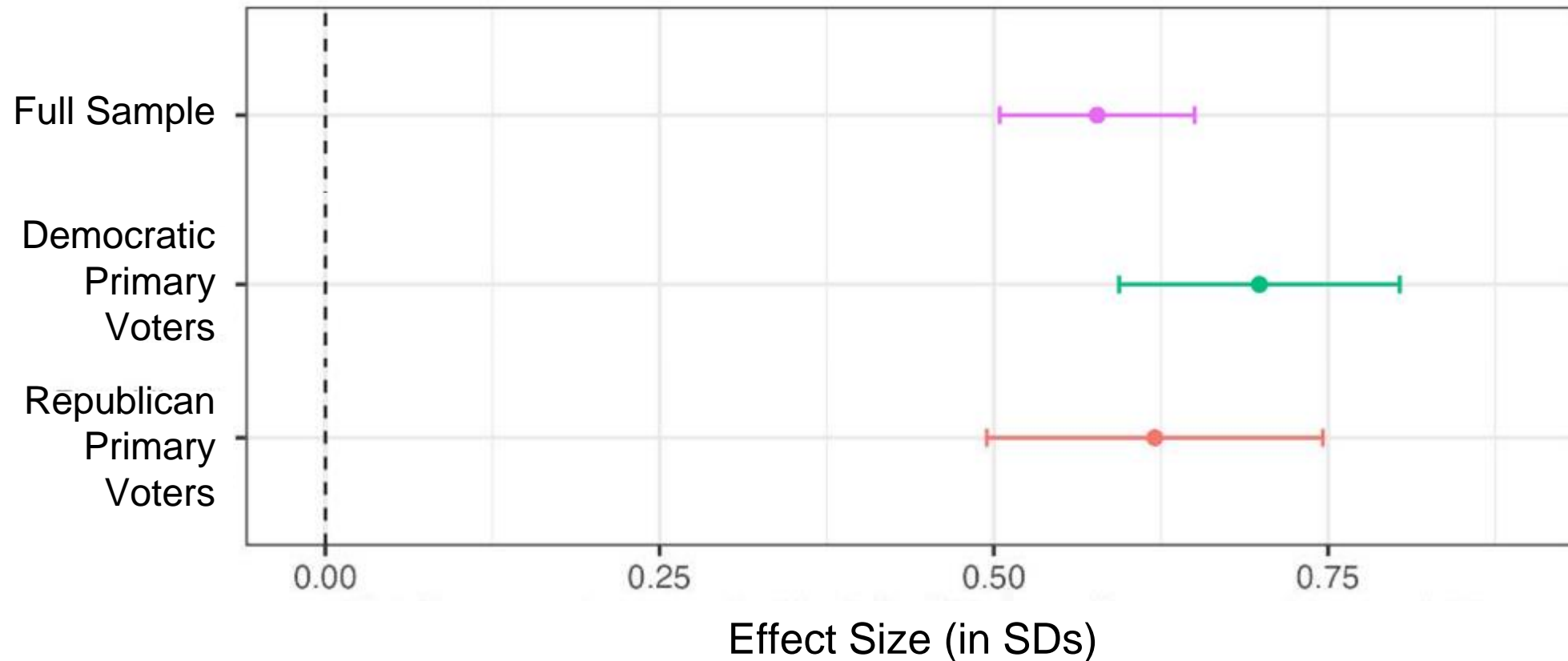


# Depolarizing Effects of Disagree Better



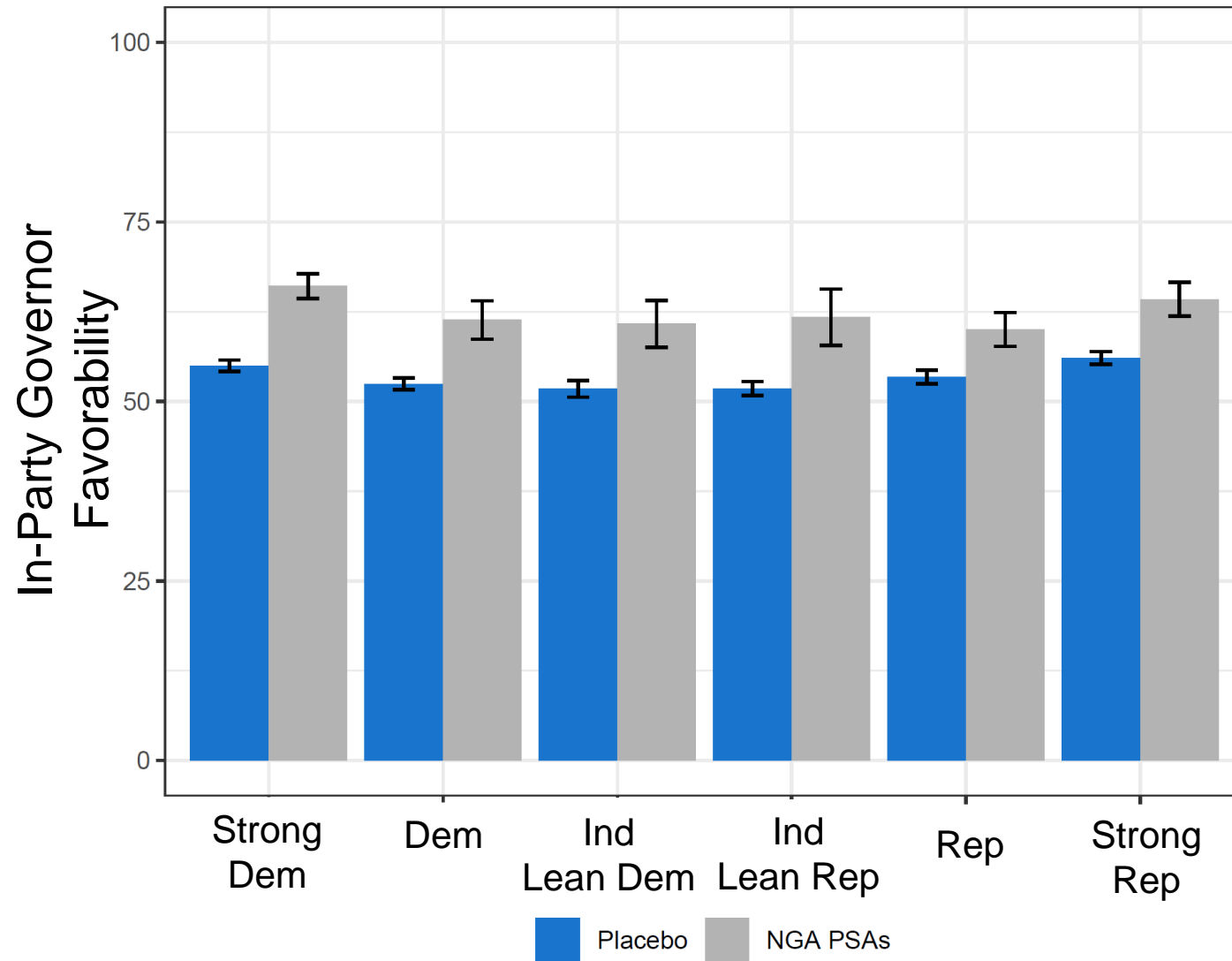


# Effects of Disagree Better on Governor Favorability





# Effects of Disagree Better on Governor Favorability



# Why did this work?

- Correcting misperceptions of out-partisans
- Sympathetic, respectful out-partisans
- Highlighting common identities
- Trusted Leaders

# Leadership Matters

# Thank You!



Chagai M. Weiss



Donald P. Green



Chrystal Redekopp



Luiza Santos



James Chu



Jan Voelkel



Nick Stagnaro



Sophia Pink