

Free Trade Attitudes and the Vote

Todd Hertling and Jim Bisbee

Vanderbilt University

October 26, 2023

Does exposure to negative trade signals cause Americans to be more protectionist, and do those trade attitudes influence their voting behavior?

Open
Economy
Politics (OEP)

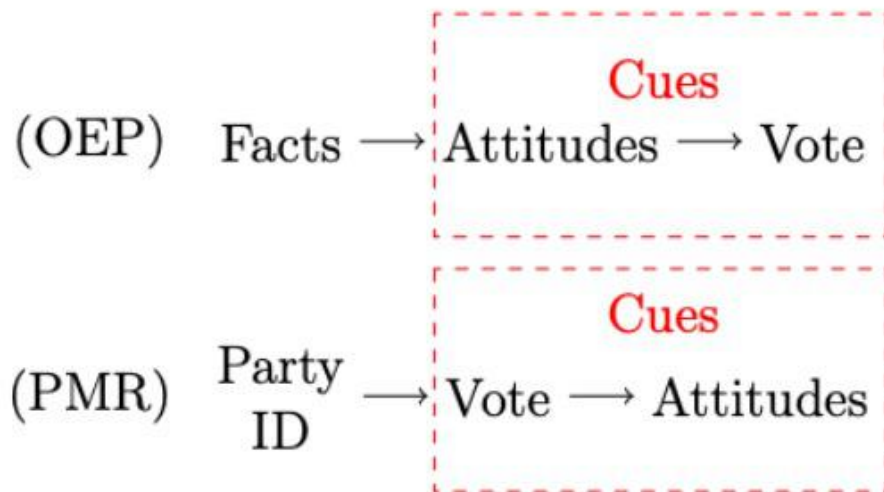
Cracking microfoundations?



A Worthy Challenger

Partisan
Motivated
Reasoning





Findings & Contribution

Negative trade exposure...

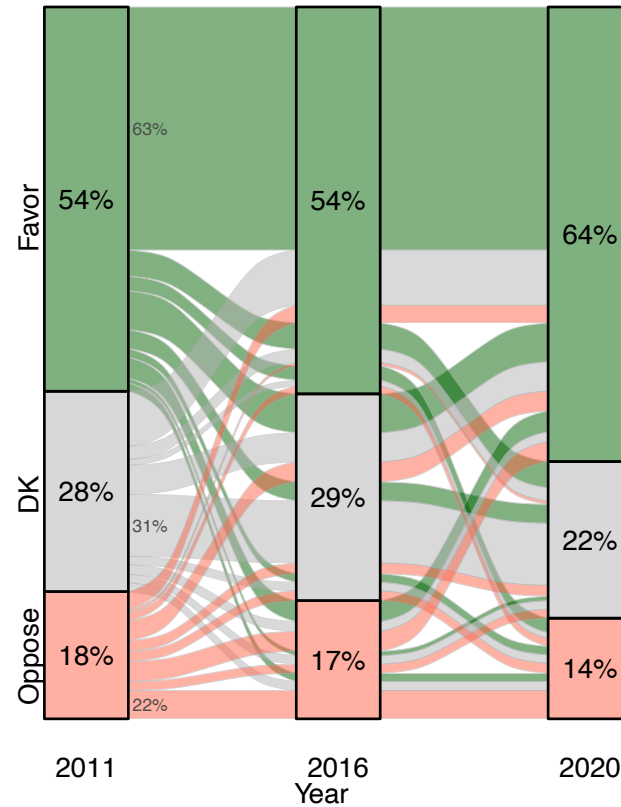
- *Does* lead to less favorable free trade attitudes—but so do elite cues
- *Does not* determine one's vote—it's party identification
- Individuals from a panel survey across three elections



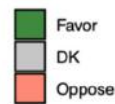
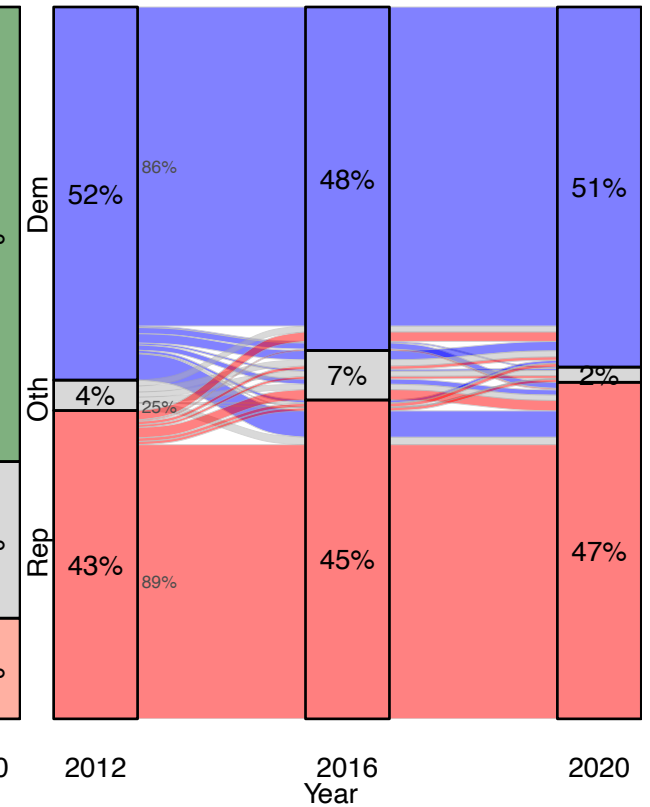
How do we do it?

Outcomes: Trade Attitudes & Vote Choice

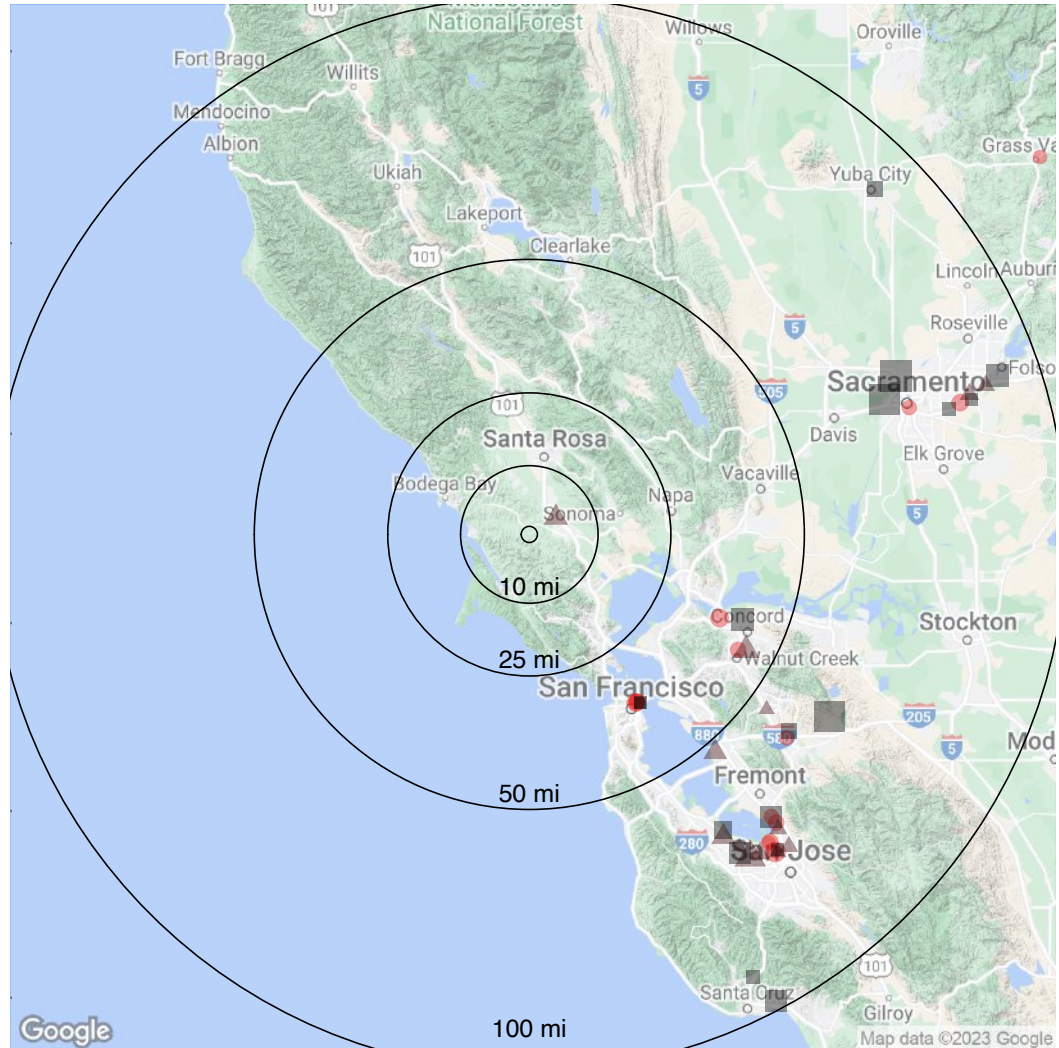
Trade Attitudes



Vote Choice



Trade Adjustment Assistance: Linking zip codes to layoffs



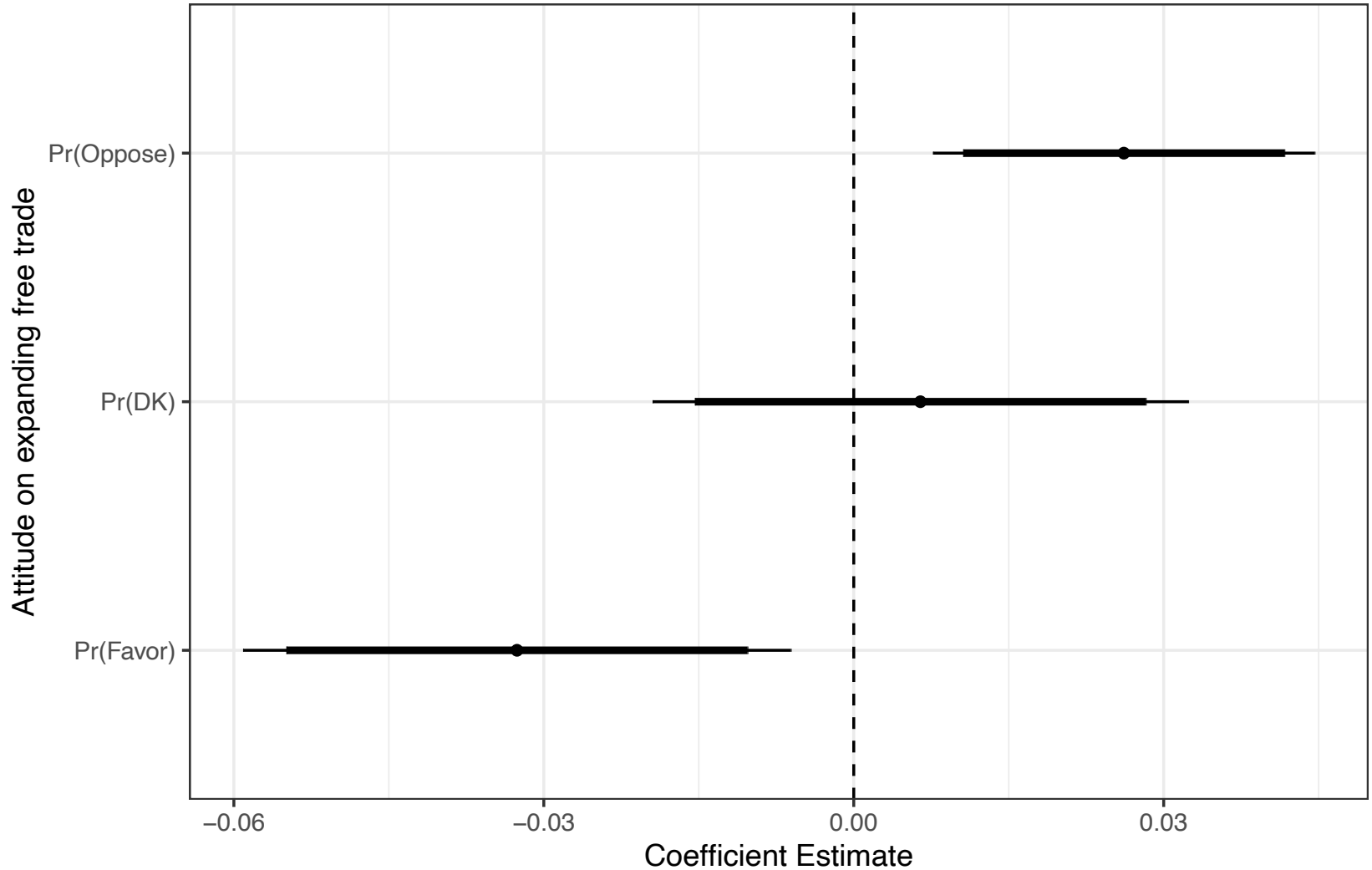
Layoffs ● 1 ● 100 ● 1000 Period ■ 3 months ▲ 6 months ● 12 months

$$y_{it} = \alpha_i + \delta_t + \beta_1 \log\left(\sum_{t \in \{t-k, t\}} \sum_{d \in \{0, D\}} TAA_{itd} \right) + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Results: Exposure and Attitudes

Relationship between exposure and attitudes

"Exposure" = logged TAA applications within 200 miles over preceding four months



Two-Wave Test (Lenz, 2013)

$$pref_{i,2016} = \alpha_g + \beta_1 pref_{i,2011} + \beta_2 vote_{i,2012} + \varepsilon_i$$

$$vote_{i,2016} = \alpha_g + \rho_1 vote_{i,2012} + \rho_2 pref_{i,2011} + \varepsilon_i$$

Are trade attitudes correlated with vote?

Opposition to trade and GOP support

Increasingly strong associations over time

Year in which opposition was recorded

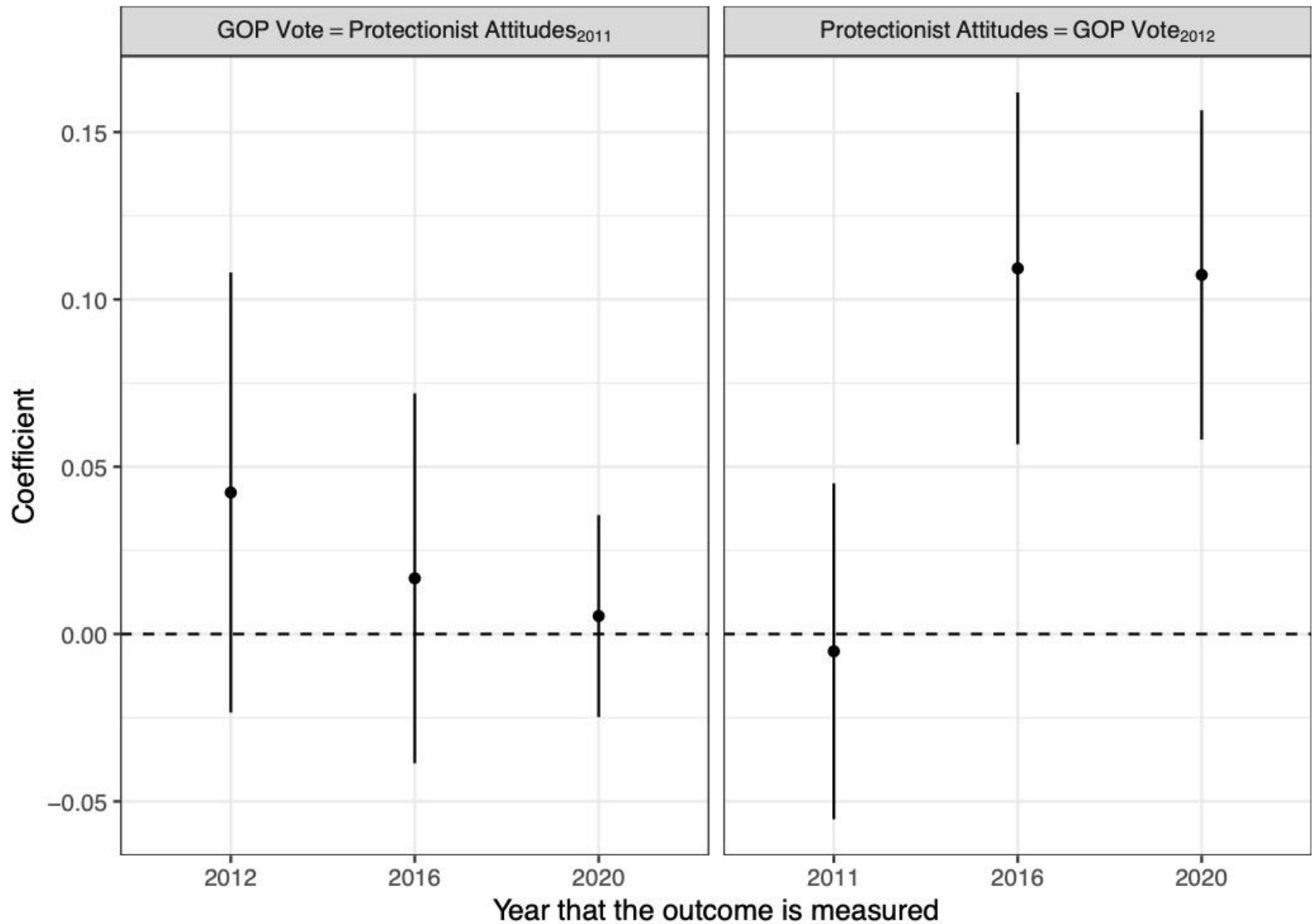
Are votes correlated with trade attitude?

GOP Support and opposition to trade

Increasingly strong associations over time

Year in which GOP vote was recorded

Are attitudes or votes more predictive?



Implications

- Trade attitudes are a result of people's vote intentions and exposure
- The role of organized interests and political entrepreneurship *within the place*
- Repercussions for trade policy and international cooperation and conflict



Discussion