



# STEREOTYPICAL TRAITS ASSOCIATION AND VOTE CHOICE: INSIGHTS FROM A CONJOINT EXPERIMENT

Alberto Stefanelli  
Central European University (CEU)  
[alberto.stefanelli.main@gmail.com](mailto:alberto.stefanelli.main@gmail.com)

# STEREOTYPING, REPUTATION, CATEGORIZATION, TYPICALITY: A GENERAL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## **Partisan Stereotypes (Rhan, 1993)**

Stereotypical  
associations  
between issues,  
traits, ideologies,  
candidates, and  
party labels

## **Issues stereotyping (Petrocik, 1996)**

Voters learn to associate a reputation for owning certain issues. A party **owns** an issue if citizens believe the party has an advantage on that issue

## **Candidate stereotyping (Hayes, 2005)**

Parties select certain candidate qualities alongside their issue portfolios and thus the party label encourages assumptions regarding candidate traits and qualities.

# CANDIDATE TRAITS EVALUATION AND VOTE CHOICE

## **Two trait dimensions influence candidate evaluation**

(Markus, 1982; Miller & Miller, 1976; Stewart & Clarke, 1992; McCurley & Mondak, 1995 )

**Political traits** (Page, 1978;  
Fiorina, 1988)

Leadership, Competence, Issues

**Non-political/Personal  
traits** (Fiske et al., 2007, Funk 1999)

Warmth, integrity, group  
commitment, authenticity, age,  
gender

# **RESEARCH QUESTION:** **HOW TRAITS INFLUENCE CANDIDATE EVALUATION/VOTE CHOICE?**

**H1.** Voters fails to associate to FSM those traits and qualities that are consistent with its anti-elitist and anti-establishment nature (candidate stereotyping).

**H2.** FSM partisans and are more supportive of those candidates that possess a “populist” traits.

**H3.** Anti-establishment framing (corruption primiming) impacts on how respondents evaluate candidates that present populist traits/issues.

# THE CONJOINT EXPERIMENT DESIGN

## WHAT IS IT?

Fractional factorial design where respondents are shown two profile (or products) with fully randomized traits (attributes) taken from a list (levels).

## ANALYSIS

Average marginal component effects (AMCEs) developed by Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto, 2014. Probability that a respondent selects as FSM candidate a profile that display “university degree” **versus** a profile with “middle school”, keeping the other attributes constant.

## WHY USING IT ?

- Isolate the aspects that influence a respondent's choice in a multi-dimensional space.
- It is possible to test several treatment conditions in only one experiment
- Reduce the impact of partisan bias compared to normal issue ownership survey
- Increase realism (Rose and Greene 2005, 176)

**IVs:** Issue, Political experience, Family, Gender, Political Background, Personality, Age, Education, Job, Monthly Wage

### **DVs (Recoded 0-1)**

- Correct party guessing (Forced choice)
- Likelihood to support the candidate based on traits and issues (0-7)

Attributes

Attributes' levels per each candidate

	Candidato 1	Candidato 2
<b>Principale proposta politica</b>	Riduzione del crimine	Maggiore tutela ambientale
<b>Numero di anni trascorsi in politica</b>	Nessuna esperienza politica	3
<b>Nucleo familiare</b>	Sposato	Sposato
<b>Genere</b>	Femmina	Maschio
<b>Background politico</b>	Sindacalista	Nessuno
<b>Si descrive come</b>	Un leader forte	Vicino ai cittadini
<b>Eta'</b>	79	46
<b>Titolo di studio</b>	Media inferiore	Diploma di maturita'
<b>Professione</b>	Dirigente	Operaio
<b>Stipendio Mensile (in euro)</b>	Da 2251 a 3140	Da 977 a 1303

### **Controls:**

- Respondent's party identification/ideology (subsetting the sample)

[illegible]



## MAIN FINDINGS

# STEREOTYPING

## Traits

- Middle aged (?) males
- Higher educated
- Congressman and previous political experience (?)
- Close to the people and competent

## Issues

- Privatisation (?)
- National Security

## FSM Partisans

Substantial agreement apart from congressman, trade unionist (?) and environmental protection

# CANDIDATE EVALUATION

## Overall

- Young Females
- Trade unionists and social movement activists
- Hard workers and close to the people
- Tax cut

## FSM Partisans

- Young Females
- Previous political experience (?)
- Social movement activists (but not congressman)
- Close to the people
- National security and guaranteed minimum income

# ANTI- ESTABLISHMENT FRAMING

Absolutely **no effect** as showed by previous researches on the topic

## LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS



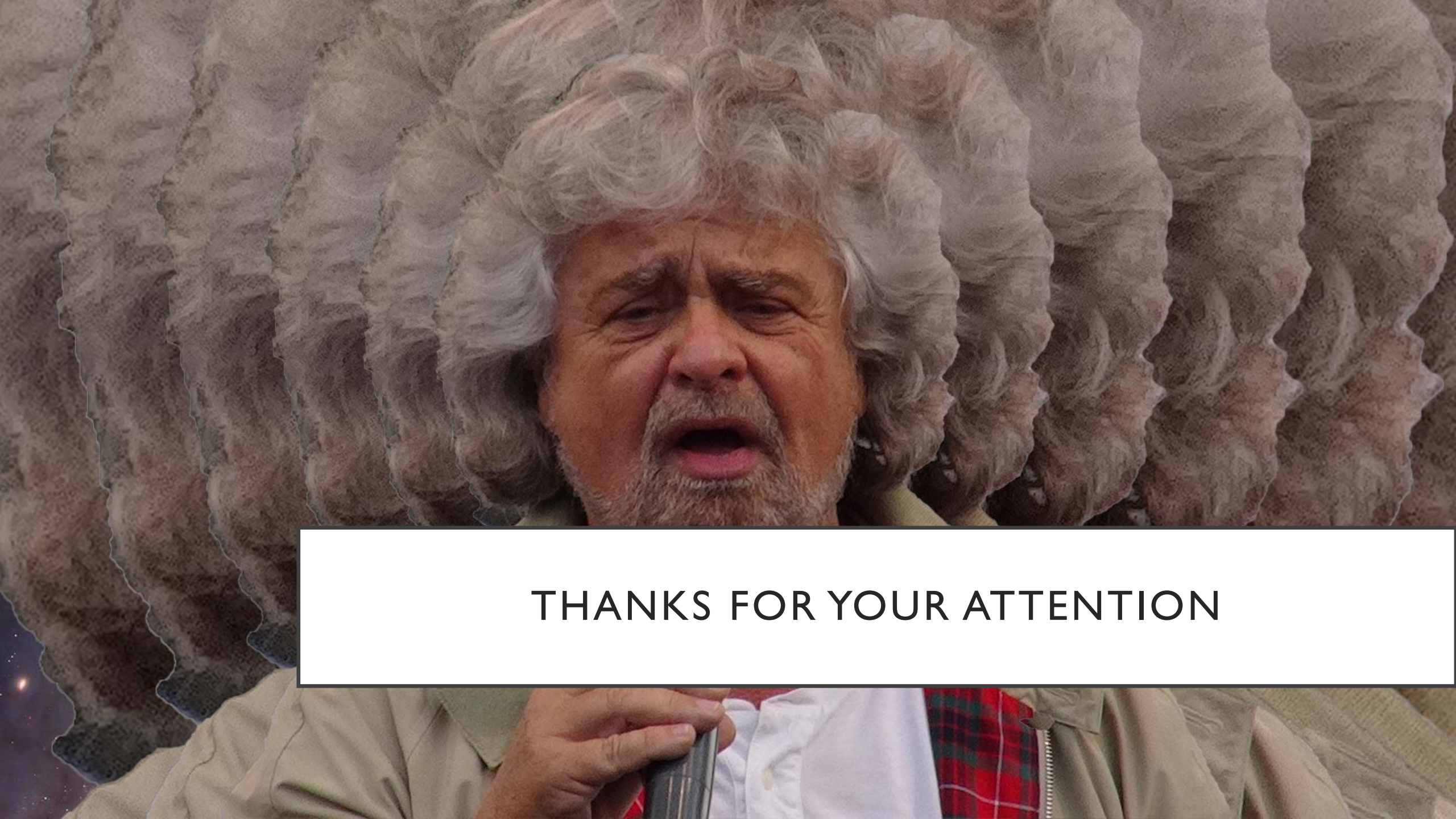
### **Limitations:**

- Sample size and Crowdfunder sample limitation
- Not enough power for some of the groups (due to conditioning and small sample size)
- Lack of a precise benchmark for traits and issues ownership and party issues association. Impossible to compare it with the actual distribution of attributes (lack of previous study)

### **Related questions and issues**

- More knowledgeable voters could be able to “correct guess” more frequently the FSM candidates especially in regard to issues
- Impossible to test the “mediation” effect between issues and traits for the stereotyping and associative processes.





THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION