

Attributions of Responsibility – Dynamics, Determinants and Consequences: The Case of the 2005 German Election

Chicago, April 4, 2009

Thorsten Faas
University of Mannheim

67th Annual National Conference of the Midwest Political Science
Association in Chicago, April 2-5, 2009
Panel 21-21 “Models of Campaign Cognition”

Attributions of Responsibility

- Important ...
 - ... from an individual's point of view
 - ... but also from the point of view of the political system as a whole
- Studying such attributions – their determinants, but also their effects
 - as an important task for political science
- However, this task has not been extensively met for a long time
- Only recently have attributions of responsibility become a matter of interest, e.g. in the field of economic voting

Determinants of Attributions of Responsibility

- „Defensive attributions“
- „Morselizing“
- „Contextualization“
- Political sophistication, partisan rationalizations and cultural predispositions
- Campaigns

- Rolling Cross-Section Survey covering the final 41 days of the 2005 German Federal Election campaign (n=3,583)
- Items:
 - “What do you think, to what extent is the ruling government responsible for the development of this economic situation: to a large extent, to some extent or not at all?”
 - „this economic situation“ refers to
 - Individual’s own economic situation
 - Situation of the national economy

- „Defensive attributions“

Perceived State of
own and national economic
Situation

- „Morselizing“

- „Contextualization“

Interaction term

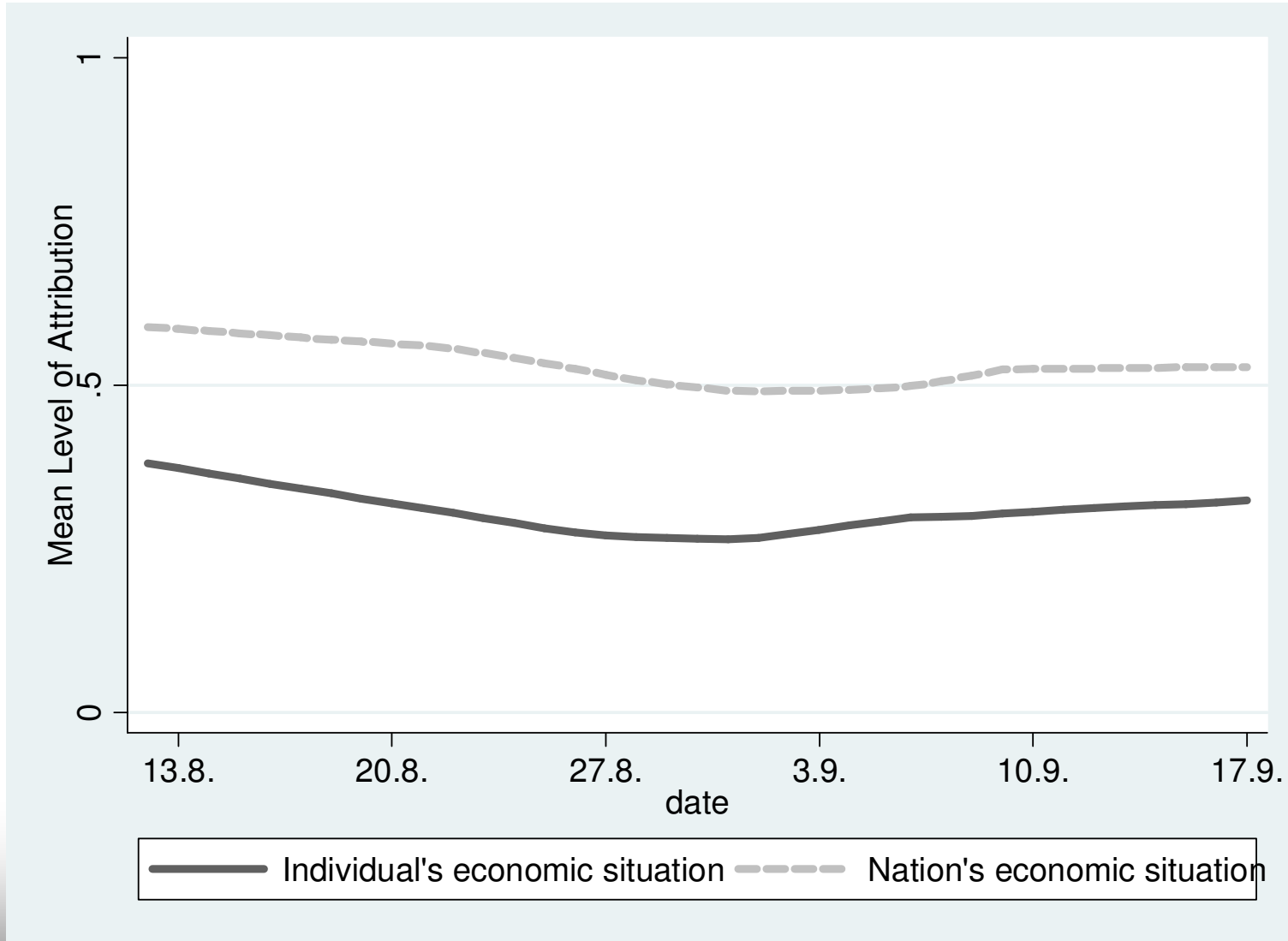
- Political sophistication, partisan rationalizations and cultural predispositions

Interest in Politics,
Party Identification,
Left-Right-Placement

- Campaigns

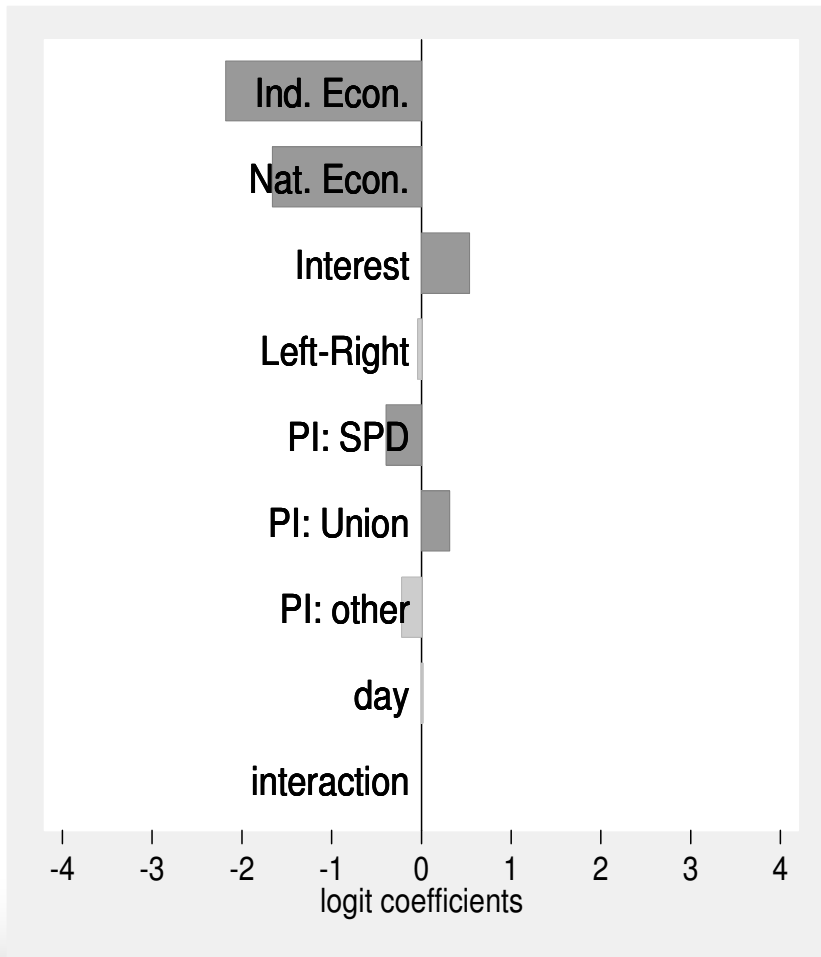
Time

Development of Level of Attributed Responsibility

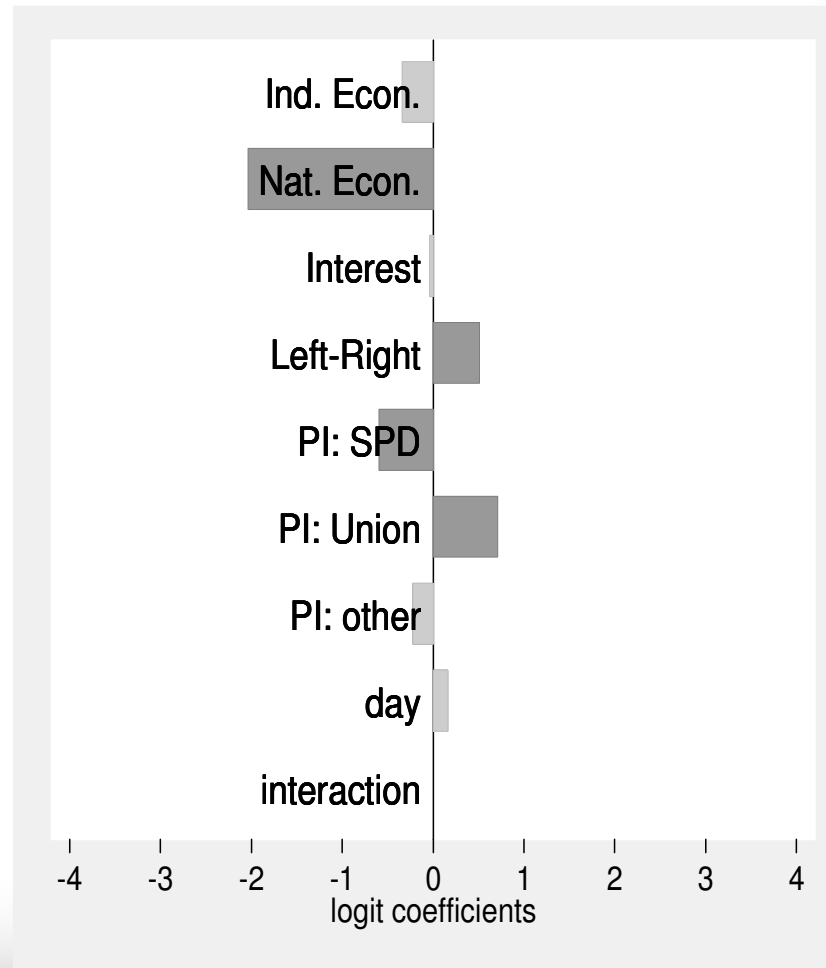


Determinants of Attributed Responsibility for ...

... Individual Economic Situation

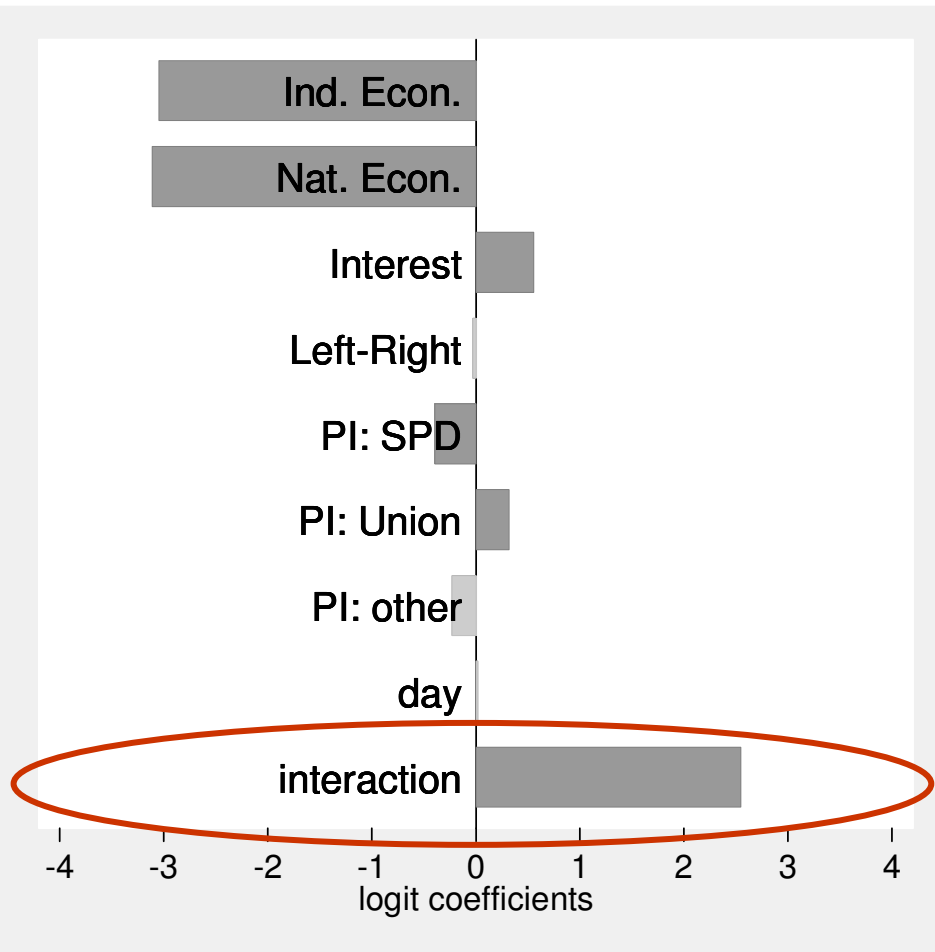


... National Economic Situation

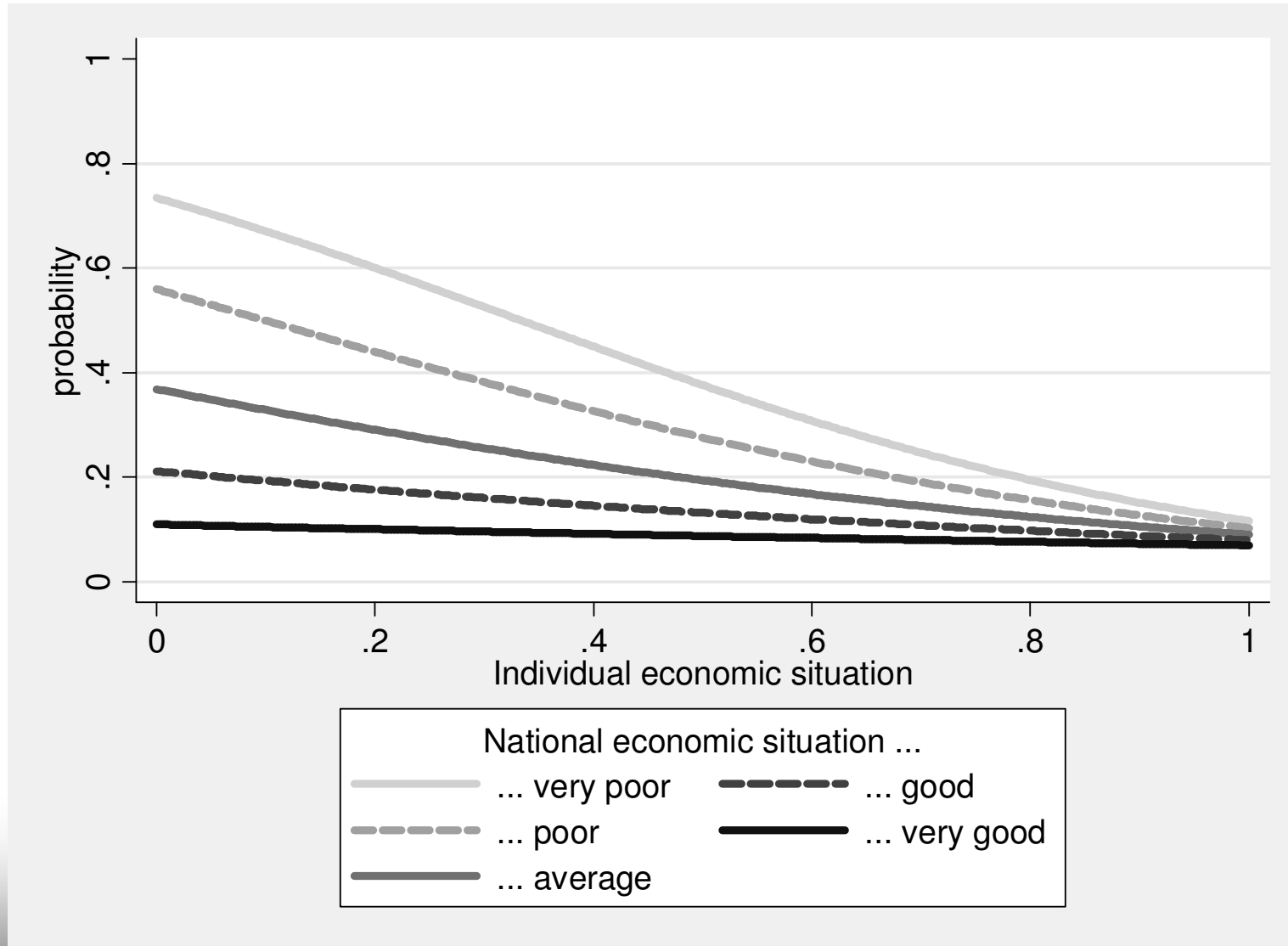


Determinants of Attributed Responsibility for ...

... Individual Economic Situation



Predicted Probabilities



Consequences of Attributions of Responsibility

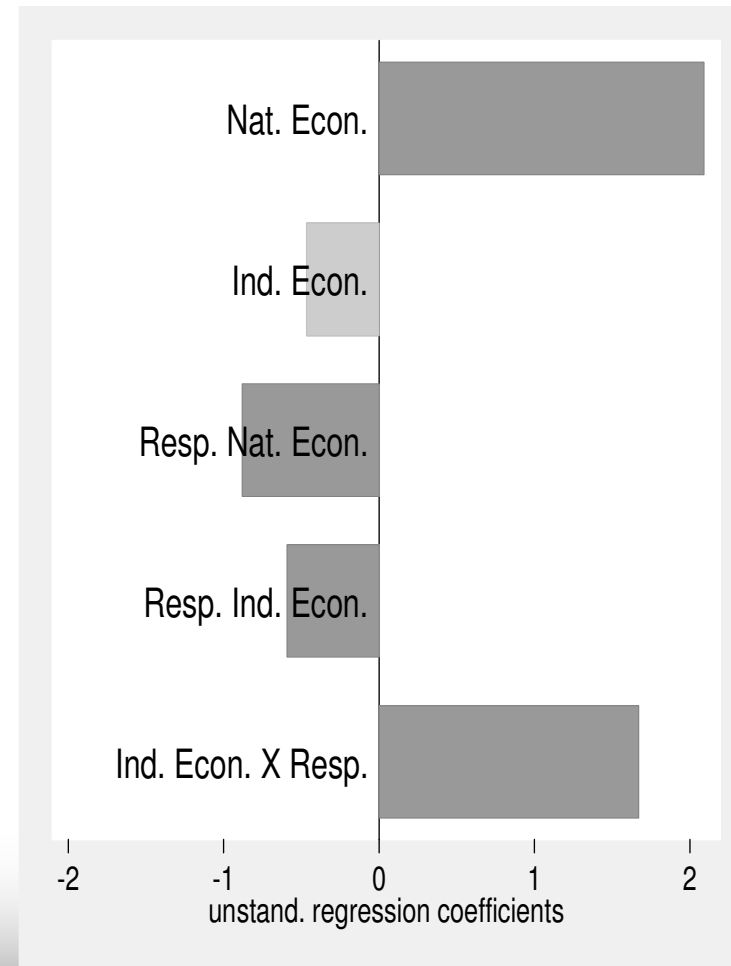
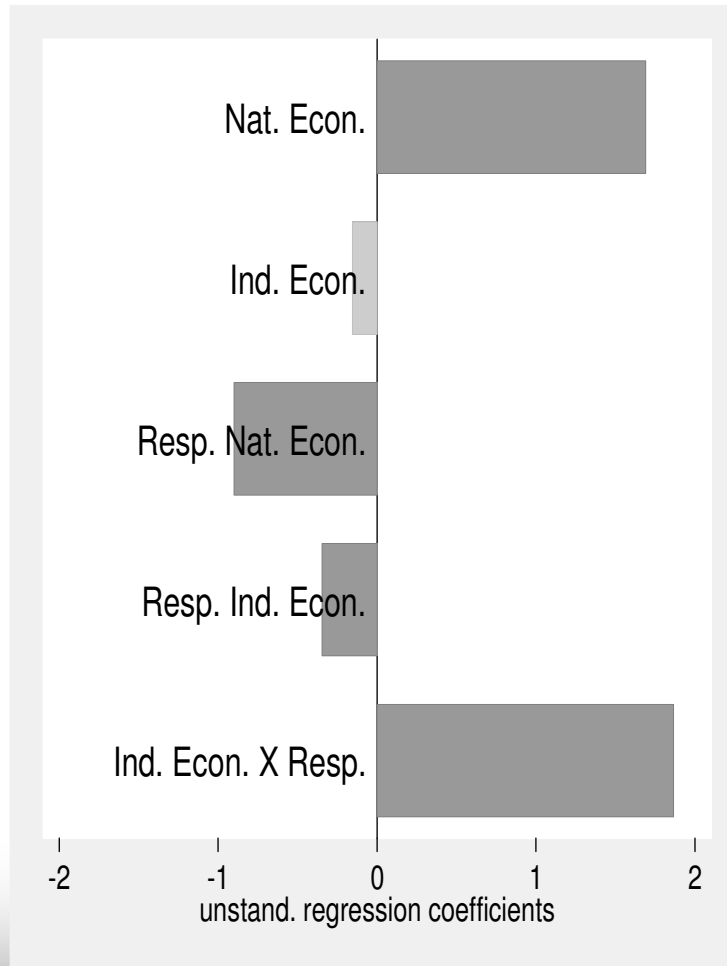
- Kinder/Kiewiet (1979): sociotropic vs. pocketbook voting
- Empirically, sociotropic voting prevails
- But: attributions of responsibility as a potential “contingency dilemma”
- Do attributions of responsibilities moderate effects of economic perceptions (pertaining to one’s own economic situation) on feeling thermometers for Germany’s major parties?

Consequences of Attributed Responsibility for ...

10

... feelings towards Social Democrats

... feelings towards Green Party



Conclusions

- Studying attributions of responsibility is worthwhile. 😊

- Contact:
Thorsten Faas
University of Mannheim
A5, 6
68131 Mannheim
Germany

Thorsten.Faas@uni-mannheim.de
www.thorsten-faas.de