

# Attributions of Responsibility Dynamics and Determinants: The Case of the 2005 German Election

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knowledge and perceptions of reality”

# Attributions of Responsibility

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- Workshop “Political Information, public knowledge and perceptions of reality”: How do people see (and explain) reality? What is the role of the informational environment?
- Attributions of responsibility as a crucial element
- Important ...
  - ... from an individual’s point of view
  - ... but also from the point of view of the political system as a whole: what is government / politics responsible for?
- Studying such attributions – their determinants, but also their effects
  - as an important task for political science
- Here with respect to economic situations: Who is responsible for the state of the economy (and how can we explain that)?

# Determinants of Attributions of Responsibility

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- „Defensive attributions“
- „Morselizing“ / “politically relevant variance”
- Political sophistication
- „Contextualization“ (real-world cues, front-page news)
- Campaigns **Information environment**
- Partisan rationalizations and cultural predispositions

- 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
  - dichotomized

- „Defensive attributions“

Perceived state of own and national economic situation

- „Morselizing“ / “politically relevant variance”

- Political sophistication

Interest in Politics

- „Contextualization“ (real-world cues, front-page news)

Interaction term

- Campaigns

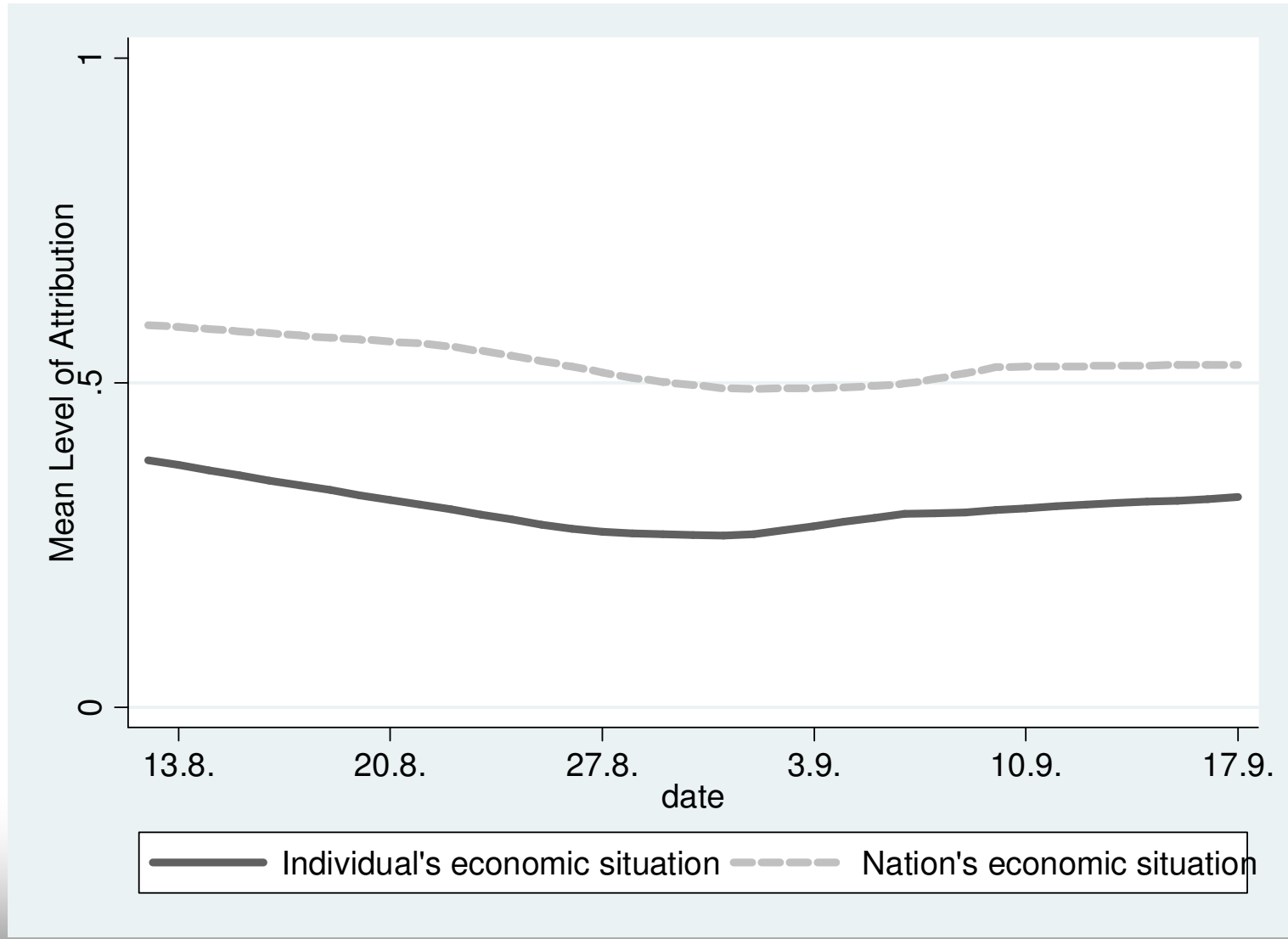
Media usage  
(total vs. by source)

Distance to Election Day

- Partisan rationalizations and cultural predispositions

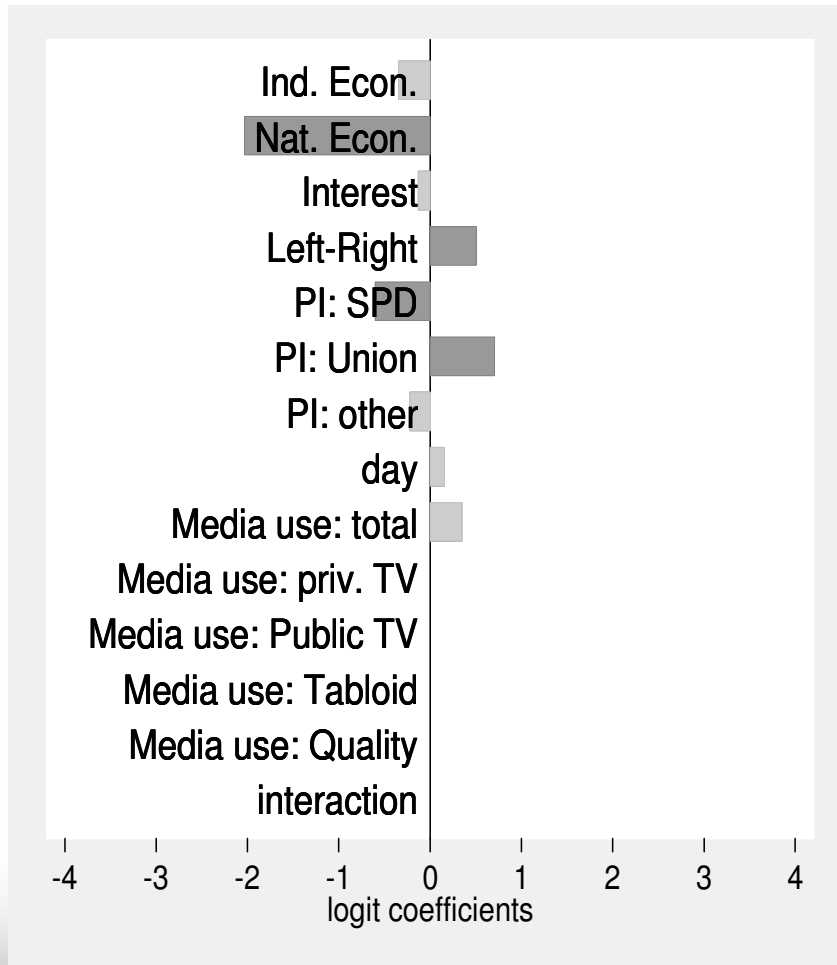
Party Identification,  
Left-Right-Placement

# Development of Level of Attributed Responsibility

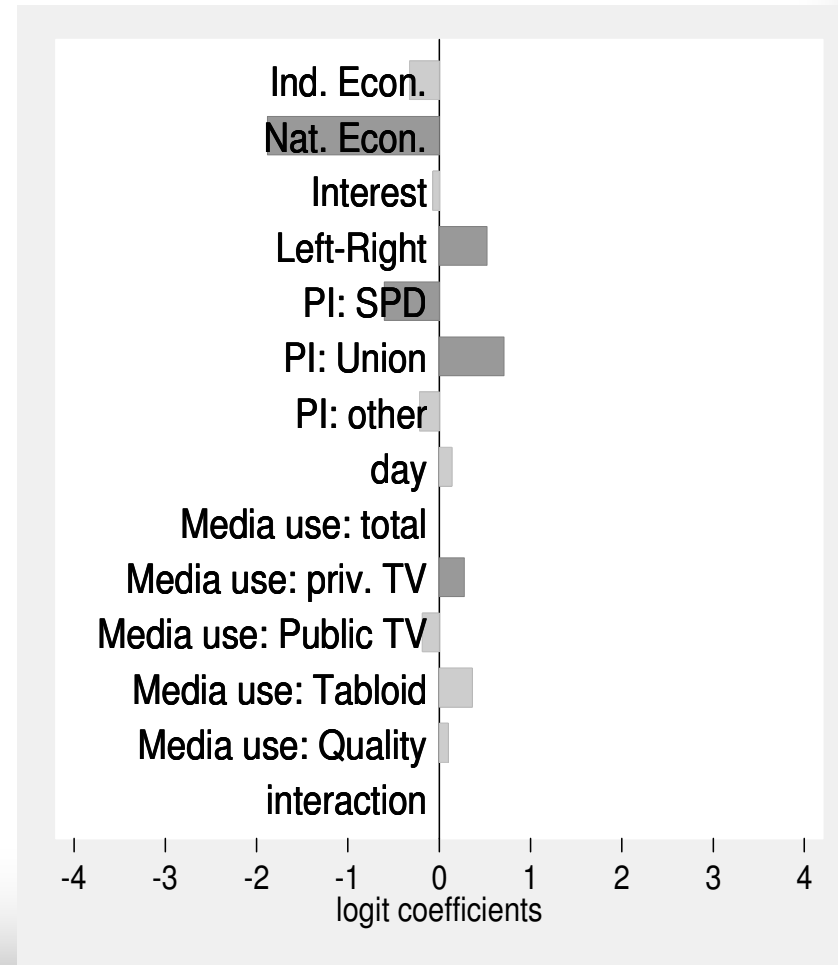


# Determinants: National Economic Situation

Media use: total

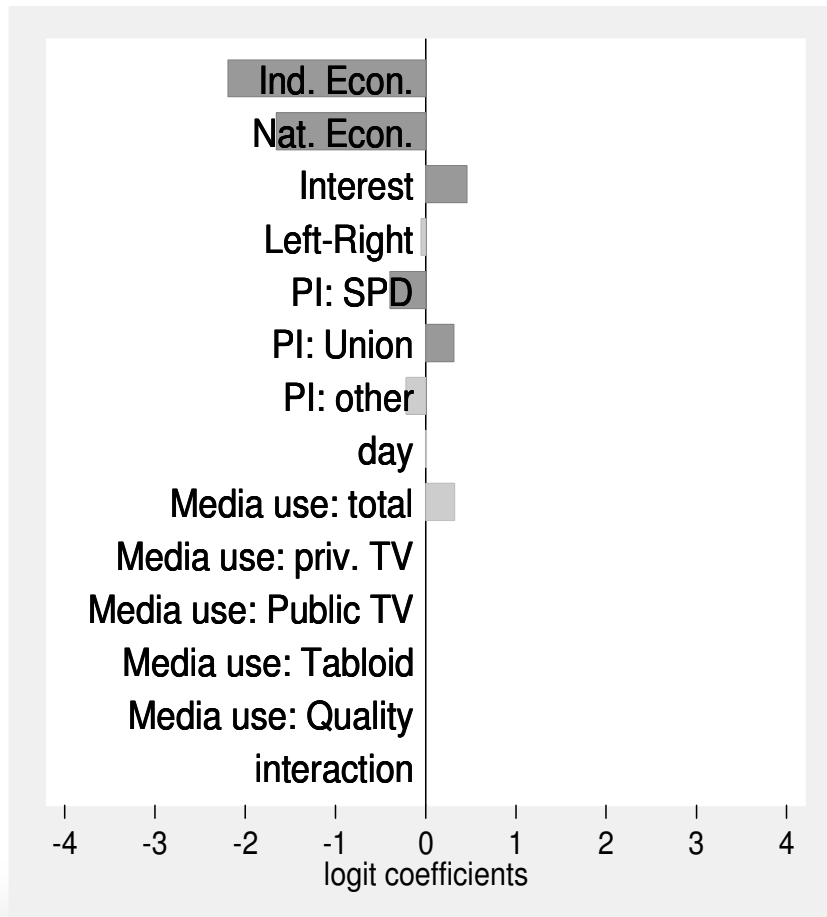


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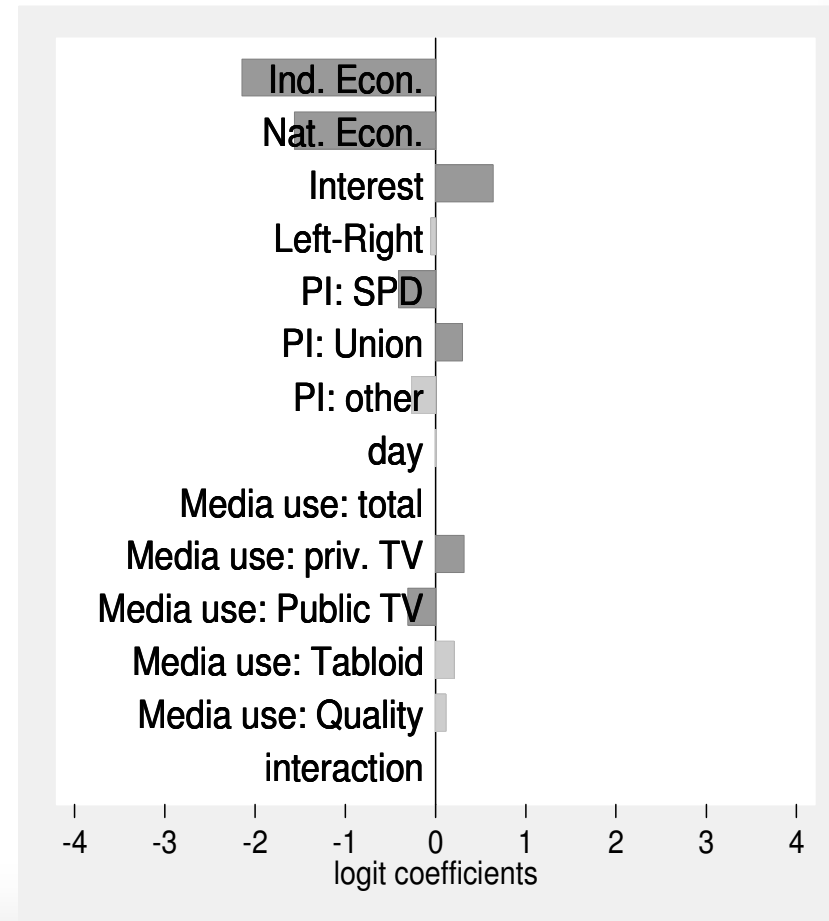


# Determinants: Individual Economic Situation

Media use: total



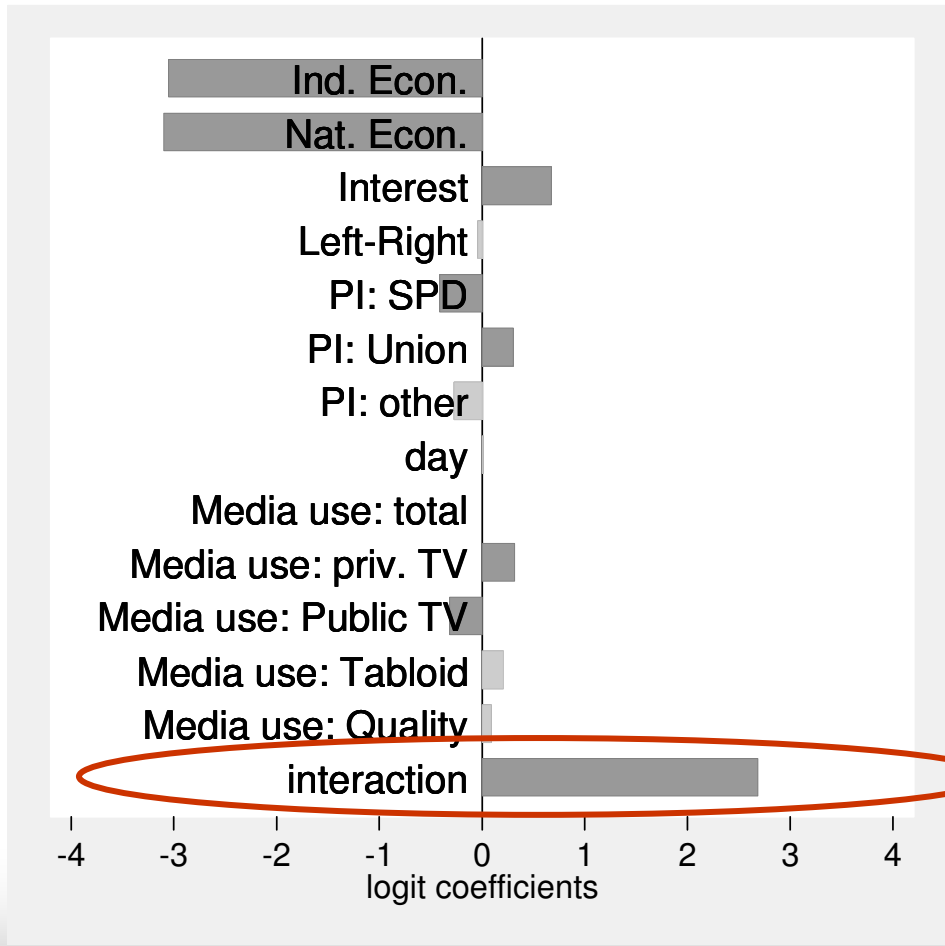
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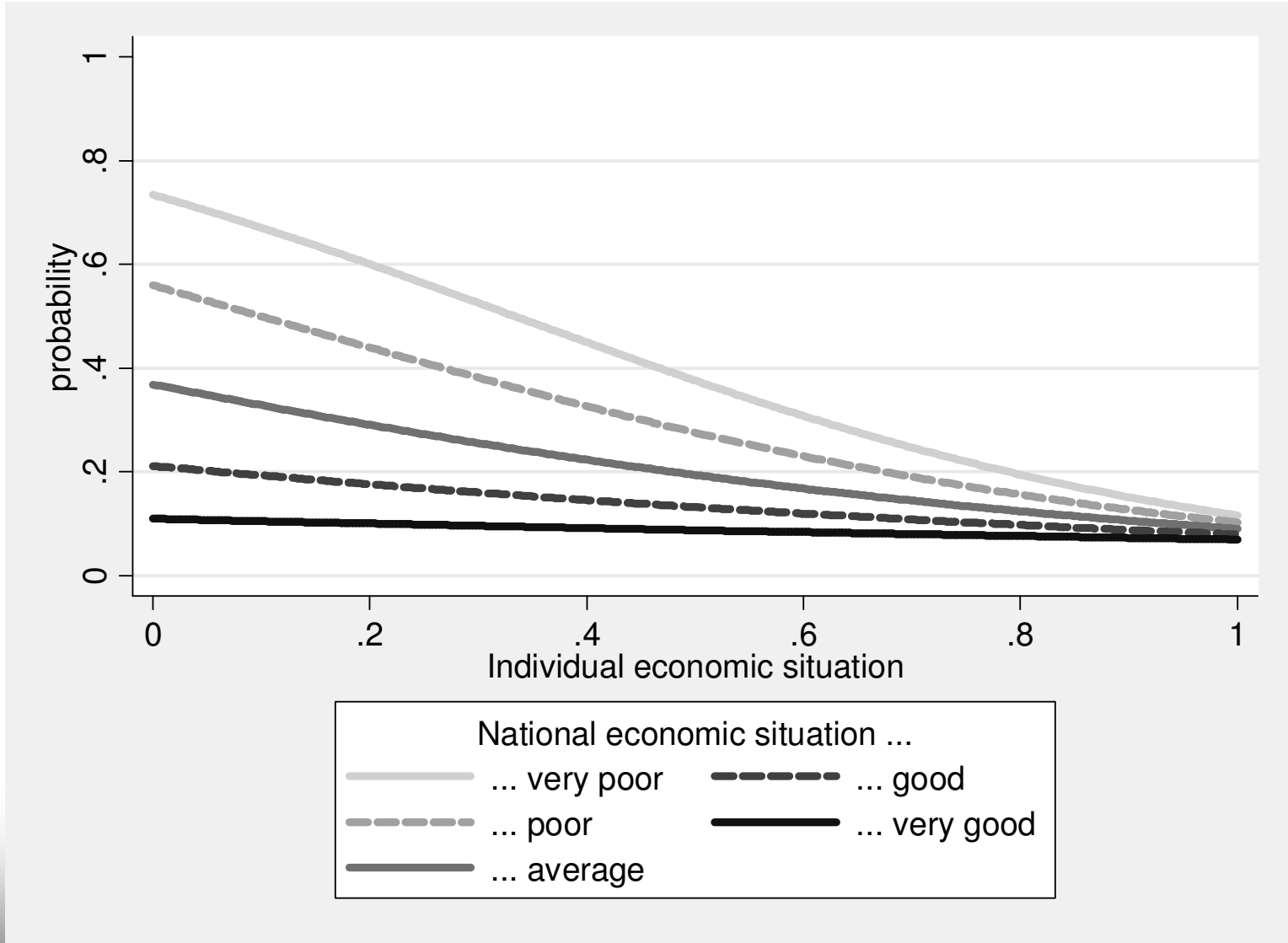


# Determinants: Individual Economic Situation

+ Interaction Term



# Predicted Probabilities



# Conclusions

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- Information environment affects how people make sense of the world
- Information can have different sources
- However, media effects hard to understand without content analysis

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