

Integrated or Segregated? User Behavior Change After Cross-Party Interactions on Reddit

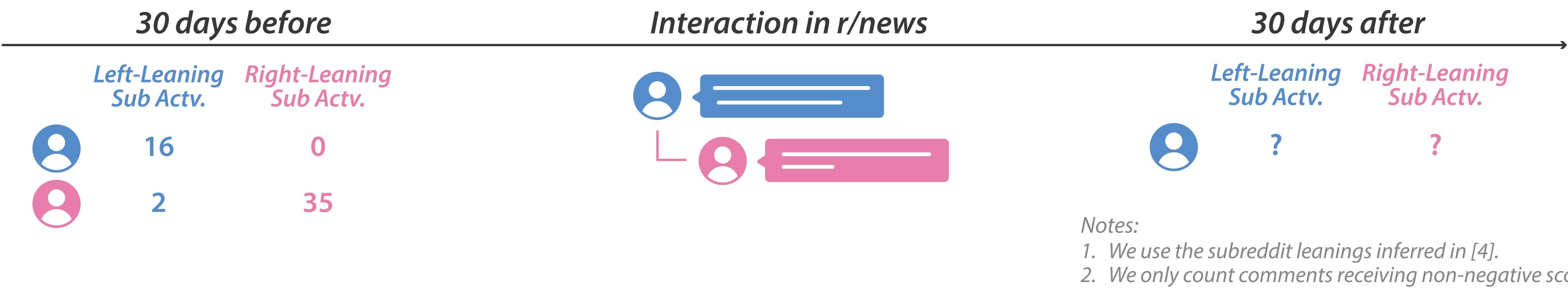


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Core Inquiry Are cross-party interactions depolarizing?

- Intergroup contact theory suggests so [1]
- Some experiments show depolarization [2], some show backfire [3]
- **Observational evidence is lacking**



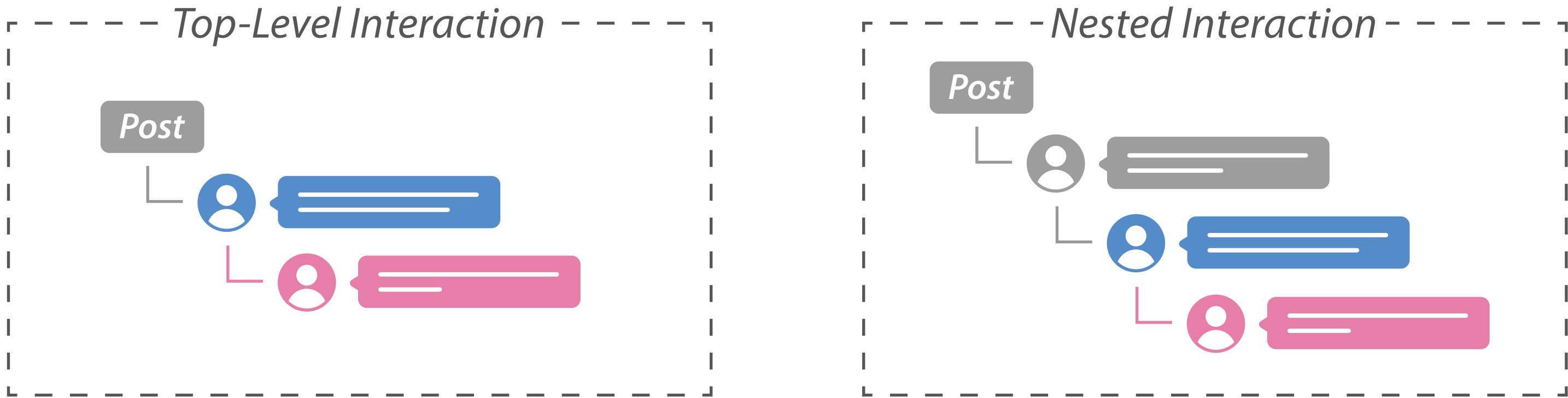
RQ After receiving a cross-party reply in r/news, do users increase in-/out-party subreddit activity?

Regression Analysis Results

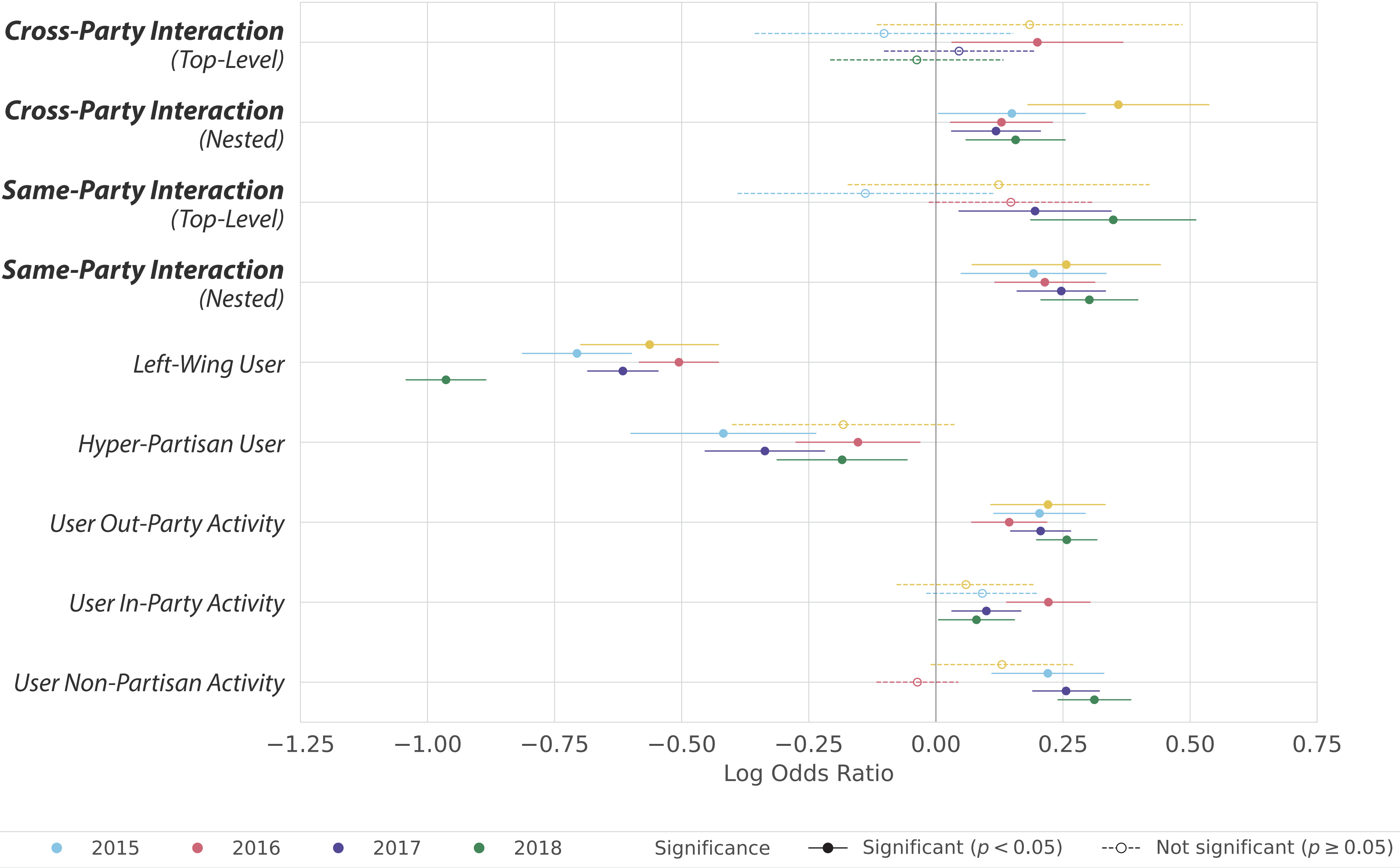
Depolarization?

Limited, unless the receiver already demonstrates willingness to engage with other opinions (seen in a nested interaction).

Even when out-party activity increases after a cross-party interaction, it may reflect a more general dynamic of **feedback-boostered engagement**, which explains a similar correlation between a same-party interaction and increased activity in out-party communities.



Dependent Variable: More Out-Party Activity



Backfire?

No strong evidence:

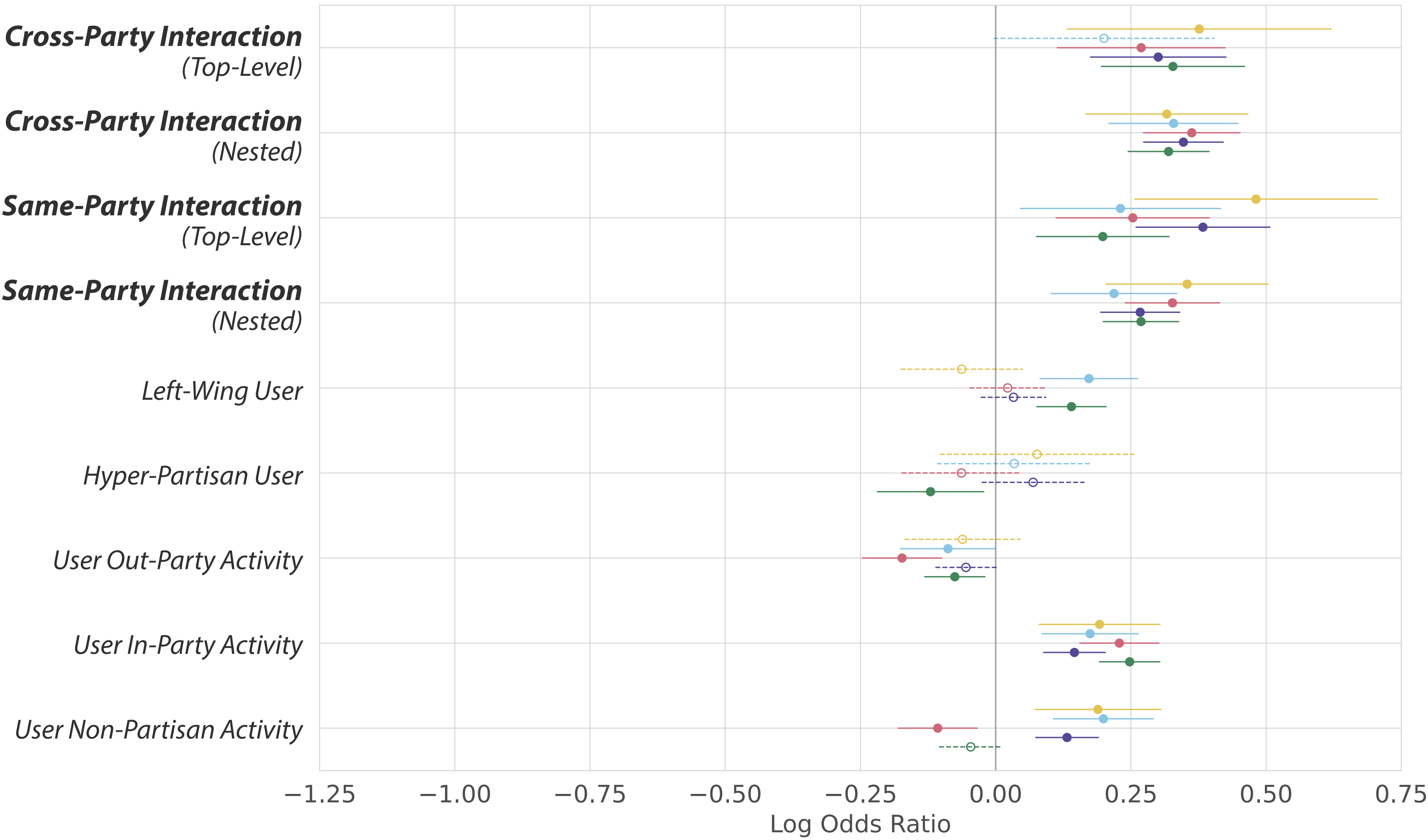
Compared to a same-party interaction, a cross-party interaction is **not**

- a significantly **more negative** predictor of **increased out-party activity**

OR

- a significantly **more positive** predictor of **increased in-party activity**

Dependent Variable: More In-Party Activity



Contact

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Paper



References

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3. Bail, C. A., Argyle, L. P., Brown, T. W., Bumpus, J. P., Chen, H., Hunzaker, M. F., ... & Volfovsky, A. (2018). Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarization. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(37), 9216-9221.
4. Waller, I., & Anderson, A. (2021). Quantifying social organization and political polarization in online platforms. *Nature*, 600(7888), 264-268.