

1.1. Evidence-Responsiveness

- Focus on **policy consequences** → **evidence-responsive** → reduces attitude extremity in lab (Fernbach et al., 2013)
- Focus on **non-negotiable values** → **evidence-unresponsive** → leads to intractable debates (Baron & Spranca, 1997)
- Evidence-responsive discourse** aids consensus-building

1. Motivation

1.2. Reddit and Emerging Consensus

- Emerging consensus about **same-sex marriage (SSM)** and **marijuana legalization** since 2006 in the US, coinciding with **Reddit's popularity** (redditinc.com)

2. Hypothesis

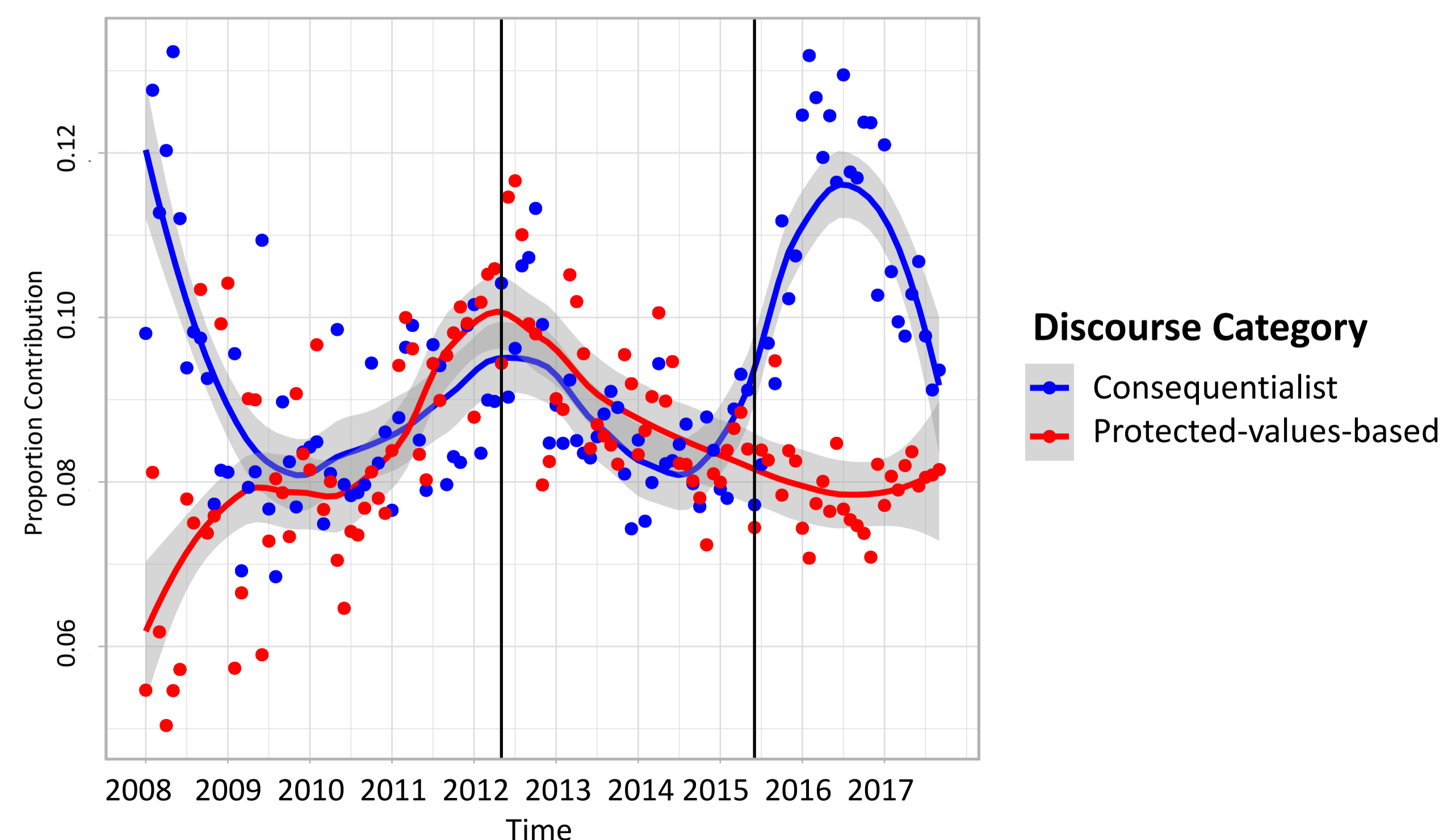
More evidence-responsive and **less evidence-unresponsive** discourse about **same-sex marriage** and **marijuana legalization** on **Reddit** coincides with greater societal support **over time**

3. Methods

- Posts identified using **regular expressions** (~600,000 posts for SSM, ~2,000,000 for marijuana)
- Latent Dirichlet Allocation** used to extract themes of relevant Reddit discourse using 50 (SSM) and 75 topics (marijuana legalization)
- Topic contribution:** Percentage of words from a time period (2008-2019) generated by a topic
- Marijuana:** Trained assistants ($n = 6$) rated 800 posts with the greatest contribution from various topics as **evidence-responsive** or **unresponsive**
- SSM:** rated 800 posts with the most up/down-votes as **consequentialist** or **protected-values-based**
- Categorized topics** (evidence-responsive, unresponsive or neither) based on contribution **predicting participant ratings** in a **linear regression** (Avg. classification accuracy based on only topic info: 64%)
- Focus of **individual topics** identified using **words and post samples uniquely associated** with them

4. Results

4.1. Same-Sex Marriage



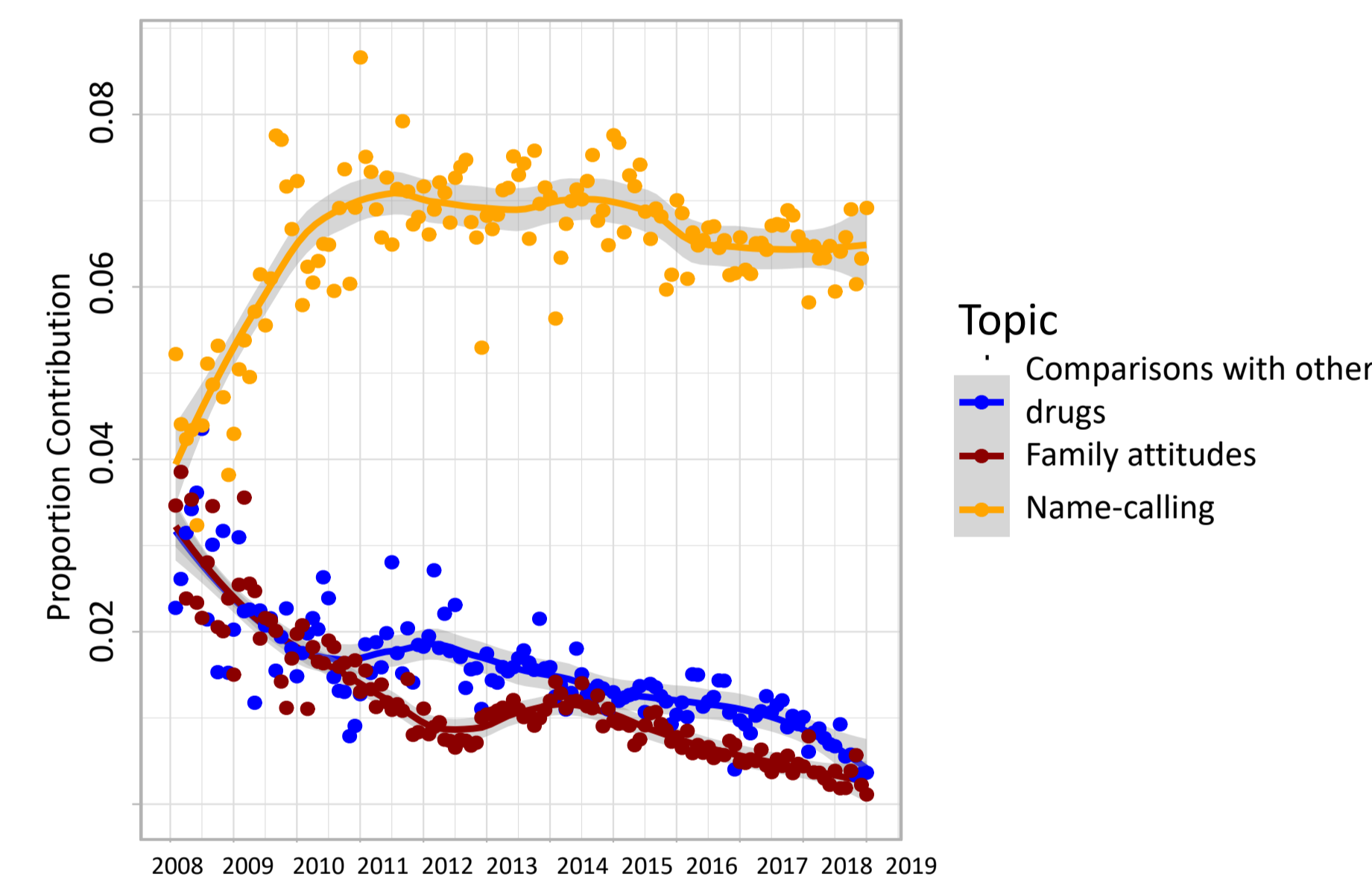
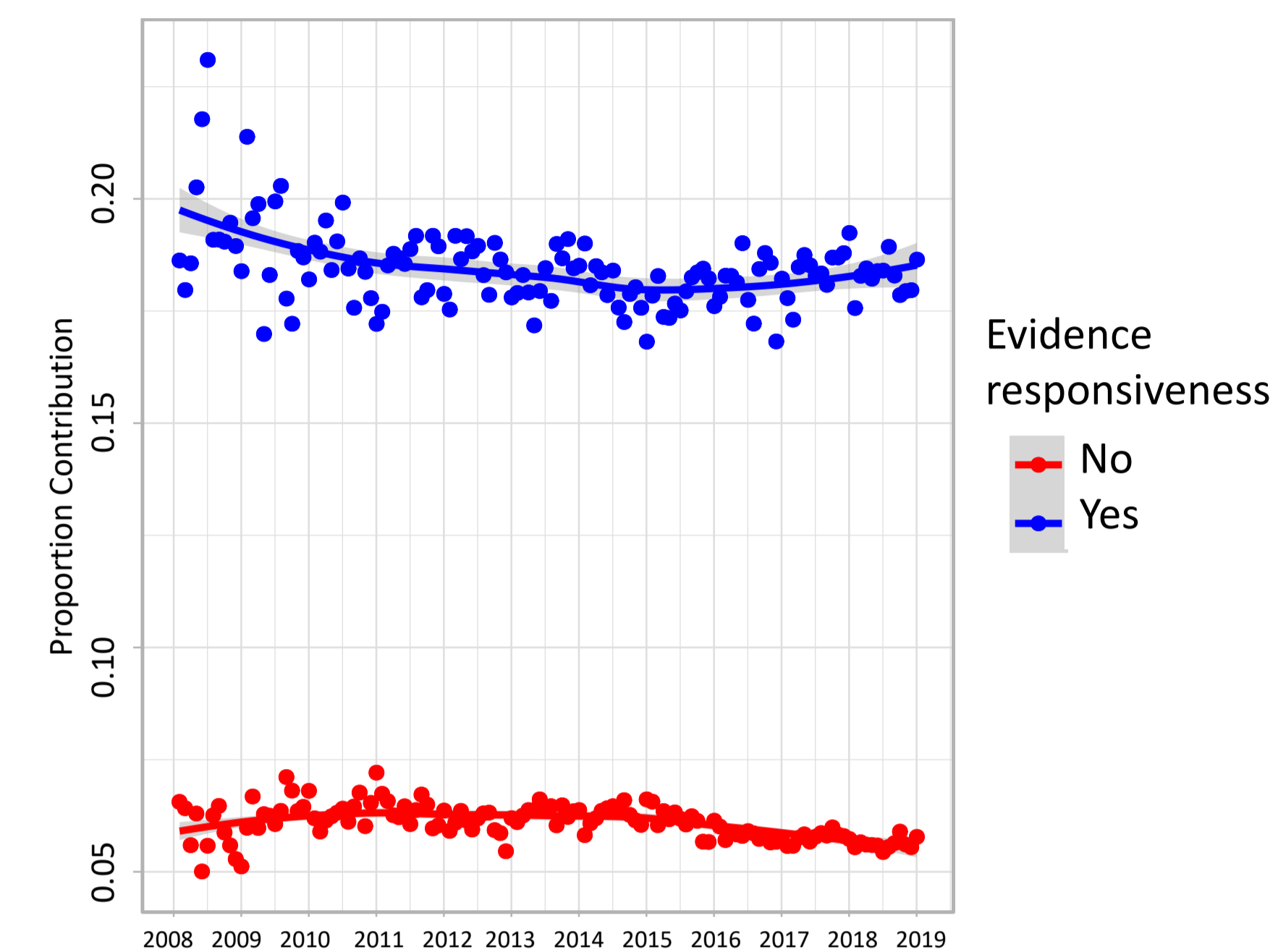
Legend:

- 1st vert. line: **Consistent majority support for SSM in US**
- 2nd vert. line: **Supreme Court ruling that legalized SSM**

Discussion

- consequence-based** topics contributed **less** to discourse overall **before majority support for SSM** in the US, **increasing in influence after**.
- Mostly due to discussions of the **politics of SSM**, and framing it **as a policy issue**
- Contribution of **protected-values-based** topics **increasing before majority support**, **declining after**.
- Focused on **religious arguments** and **freedom of opinions/beliefs**

4.2. Marijuana Legalization



Discussion

- Evidence-responsive** discourse **dominated overall**. **Decreased before 2015**, **stabilized after**.
- Evidence-unresponsive** discourse **mostly stable before 2015**, **slightly decreasing after**.

Discussion

- The downward trend in **evidence-responsive** discourse partly attributable to **fewer comparisons with other drugs**.
- The stable overall contribution of **evidence-unresponsive** discourse partly reflects **less discussion of families' attitudes** to marijuana, but **more heated arguments and name-calling**

5. Summary

Same-sex marriage:

- From 2006 to 2012:** Discourse **increasingly** about **evidence-unresponsive values**
- Starting in 2012:** With **majority support** among Americans, **evidence-responsive discourse** **growingly replaced protected values** as the focus
- The **Supreme Court ruling** did not affect these patterns

Marijuana legalization:

- Evidence-responsive** topics **dominated** discourse but **decreased** over time. **Evidence-unresponsive** arguments were weaker but overall **constant** contributors.

Summary:

Evidence-responsiveness alone does not explain the attitude changes around these two topics in our dataset.

6. Reference

Hemmatian, B., Sloman, S. J., Priva, U. C., & Sloman, S. A. (2019). Think of the consequences: A decade of discourse about same-sex marriage. *Behavior research methods*, 1-21

More Information

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