



**PennState**

College of the Liberal Arts

# ***Anymore, this feature varies***

***An experimental study of non-polarity anymore***

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**Penn State**

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# ***Anymore, this feature varies***

## **An experimental study of non-polarity *anymore***

Joint work with Valerie Keppenne, PhD  
Penn State Survey Research Center



# Background

## What is non-polarity (sensitive) anymore?

### Negative polarity item (NPI) *anymore*

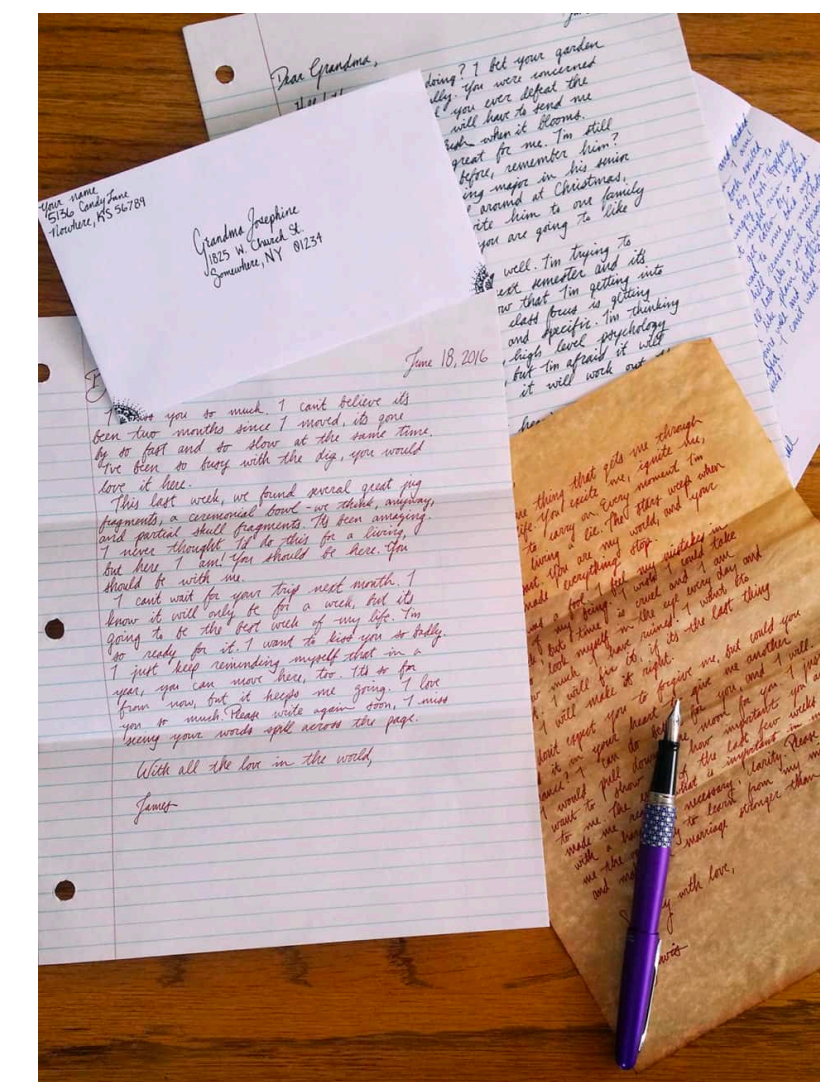
*I do\*(n't) write letters anymore.*

NPI *anymore* is sensitive to clausal polarity:

**Requires a preceding (and c-commanding) negation**

(or “downward entailing”/“non/anti-veridical” environment)

(Ladusaw 1979; Giannakidou 1998)



# Background

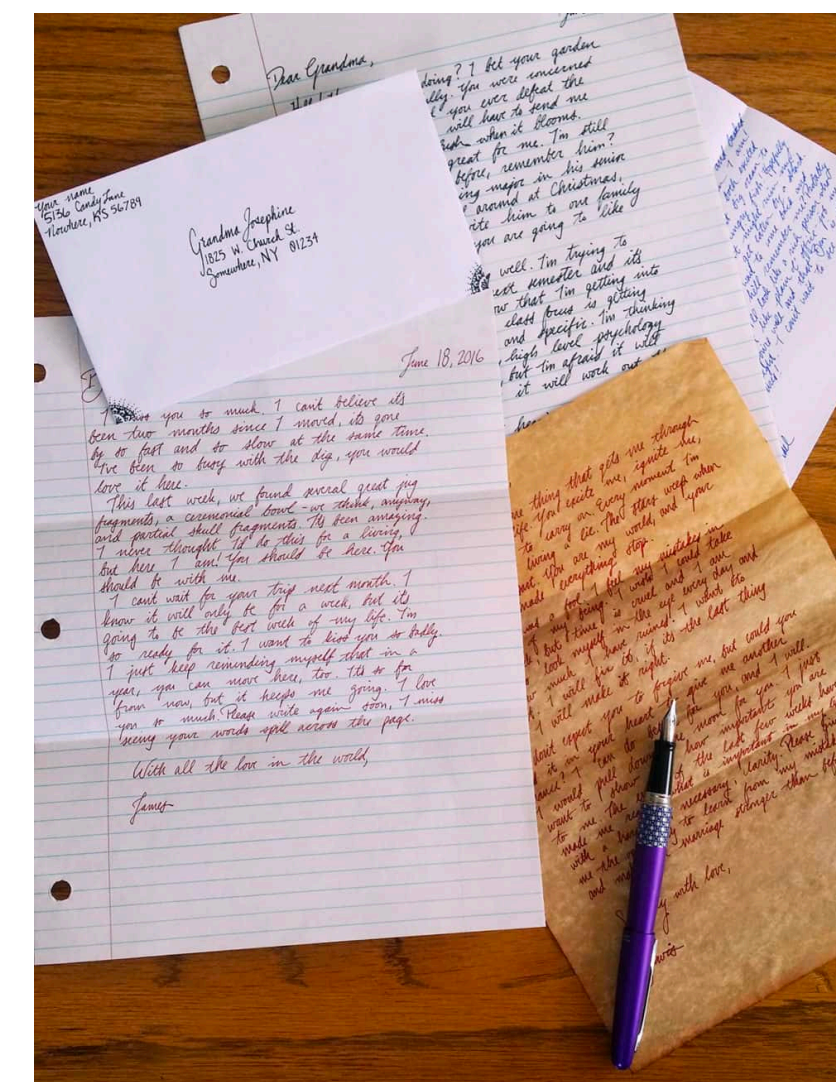
## What is non-polarity (sensitive) anymore?

### “Positive” or non-polarity *anymore* (NPAM)

*I write letters anymore.*

No more sensitivity!

(Labov 1973; Murray 1993; Horn 2021)

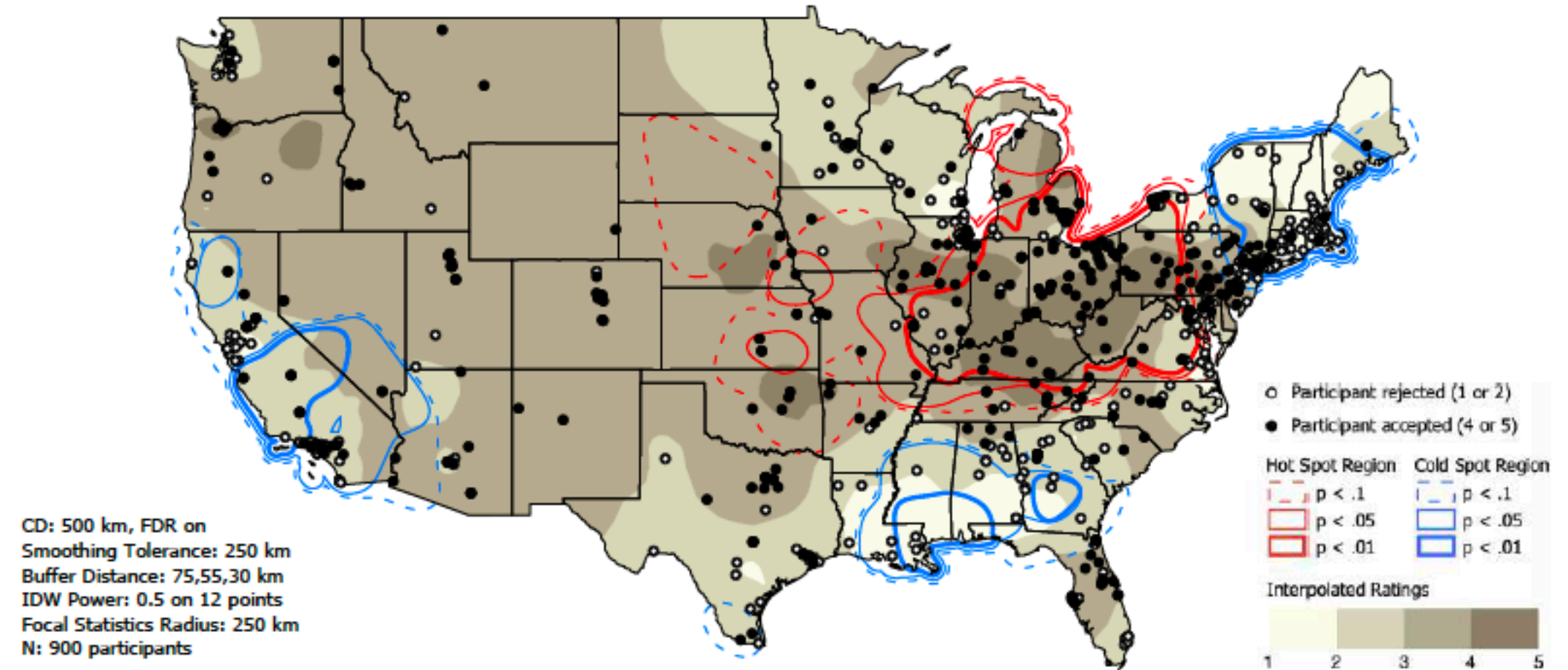


# Distribution of NPAM

Who uses this?



F1226: "Football is more popular than baseball anymore."



“A Midland Dialect Feature”

(Labov 1973; Wood et al. 2020, p. 197)

# NPAM Analyses

## What does it mean?

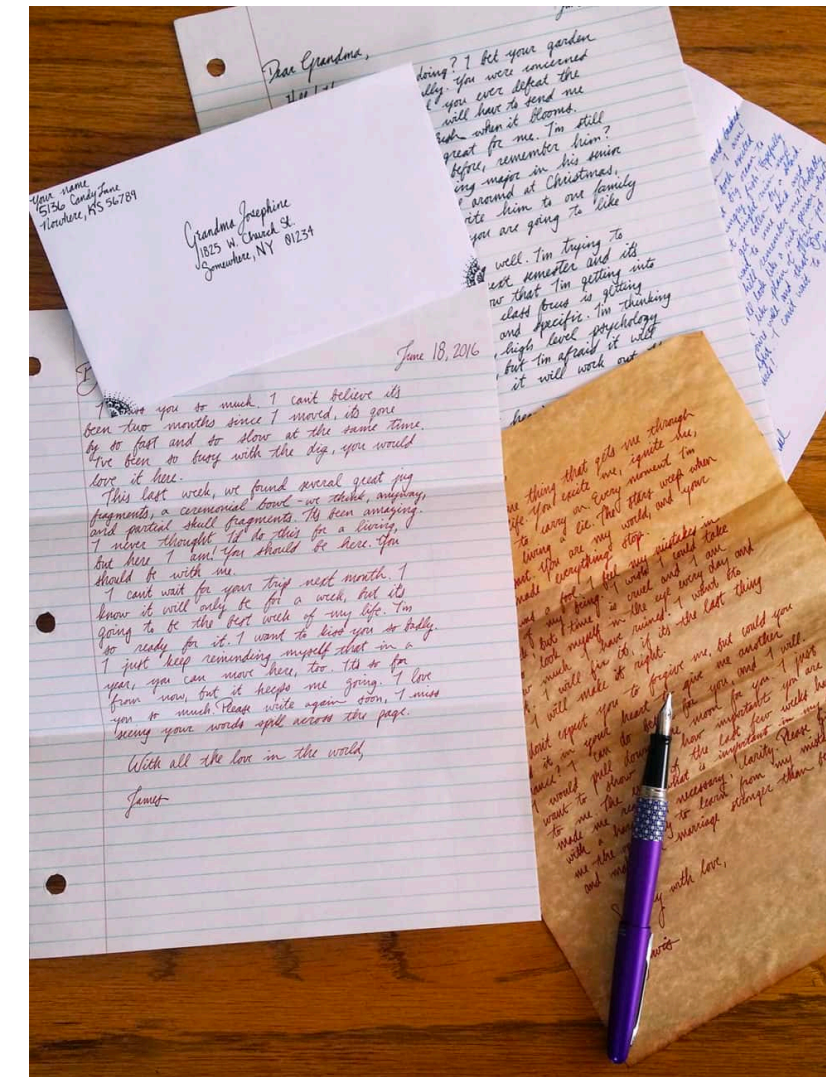
Negative polarity item (NPI) *anymore*

*I don't write letters anymore.*

Positive presupposition: 'I used to write letters.'

Negative assertion: 'But now I do not (write letters).'

(Horn 1970; Krifka 2000)



# NPAM Analyses

## What does it mean?

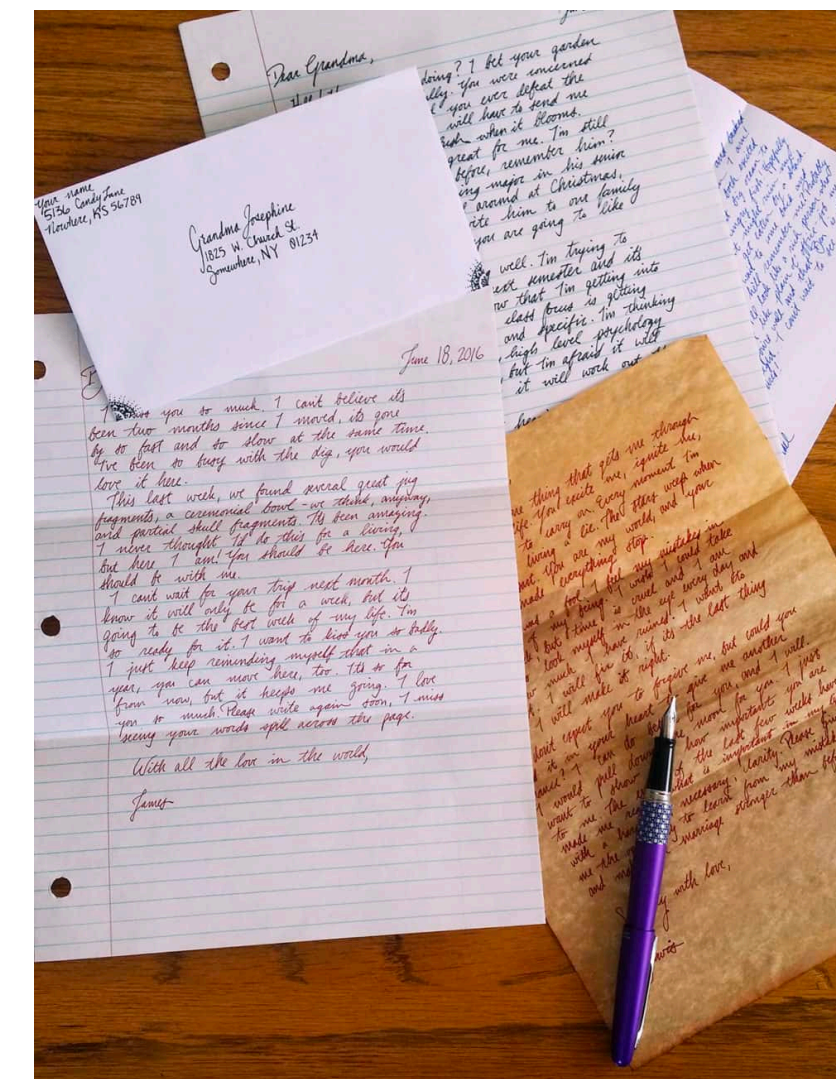
“Positive” or non-polarity *anymore* (NPAM)

*I write letters anymore.*

Negative presupposition: ‘I didn’t used to write letters.’

Positive assertion: ‘But now I do (write letters).’

(Labov 1973; Murray 1993; Horn 2021)



# Investigating NPAM

## Today's question

Is it true that NPAM contributes a positive assertion and a negative presupposition?



(Labov 1973; Murray 1993; Horn 2021)



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probably (but figuring this out is challenging!)



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Is it true that NPAM contributes a positive assertion and a negative presupposition?

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**(And what else can we learn by investigating this?)**

(Labov 1973; Murray 1993; Horn 2021)

# Investigating NPAM

## Today's question

Is it true that NPAM contributes a positive assertion and a negative presupposition?

probably (but figuring this out is challenging!)



(And what else can we learn by investigating this?)

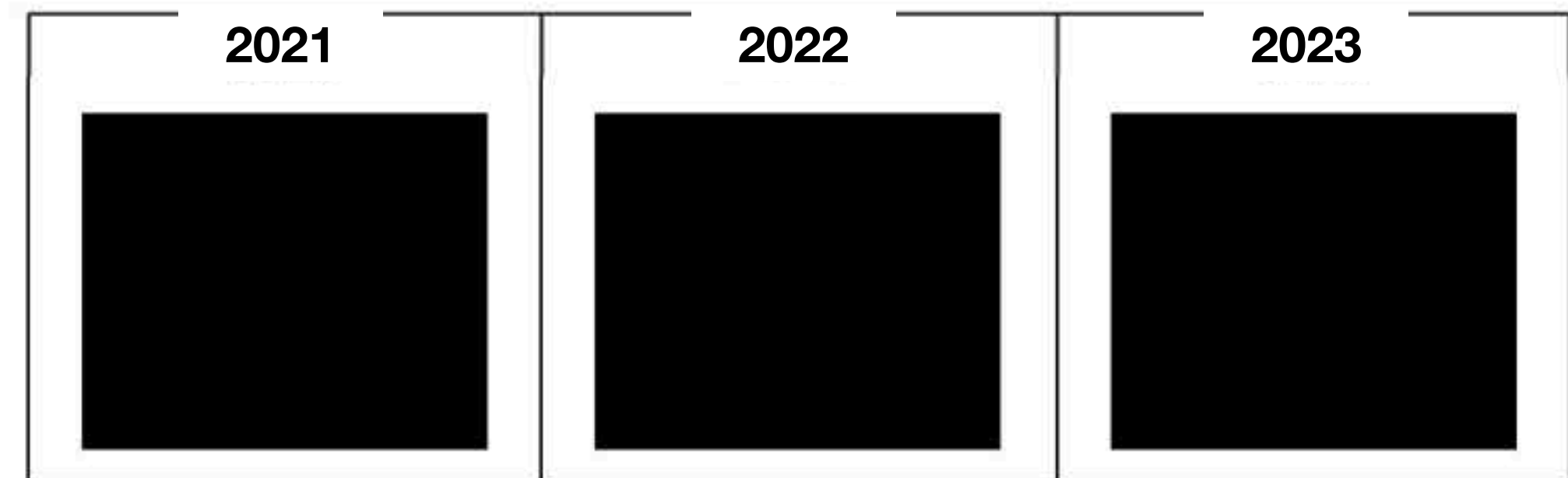
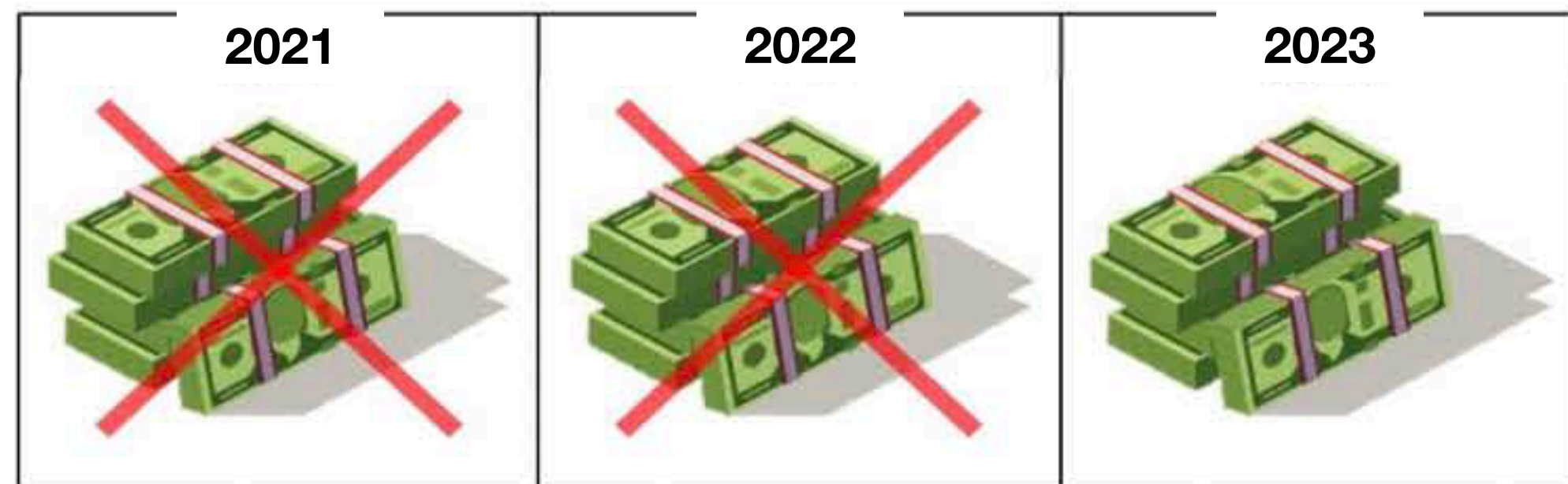
(lots, including many new questions)

(Labov 1973; Murray 1993; Horn 2021)

# Experiment Methods

## Covered Picture Task Sample Stimulus

Which one matches the sentence's meaning?



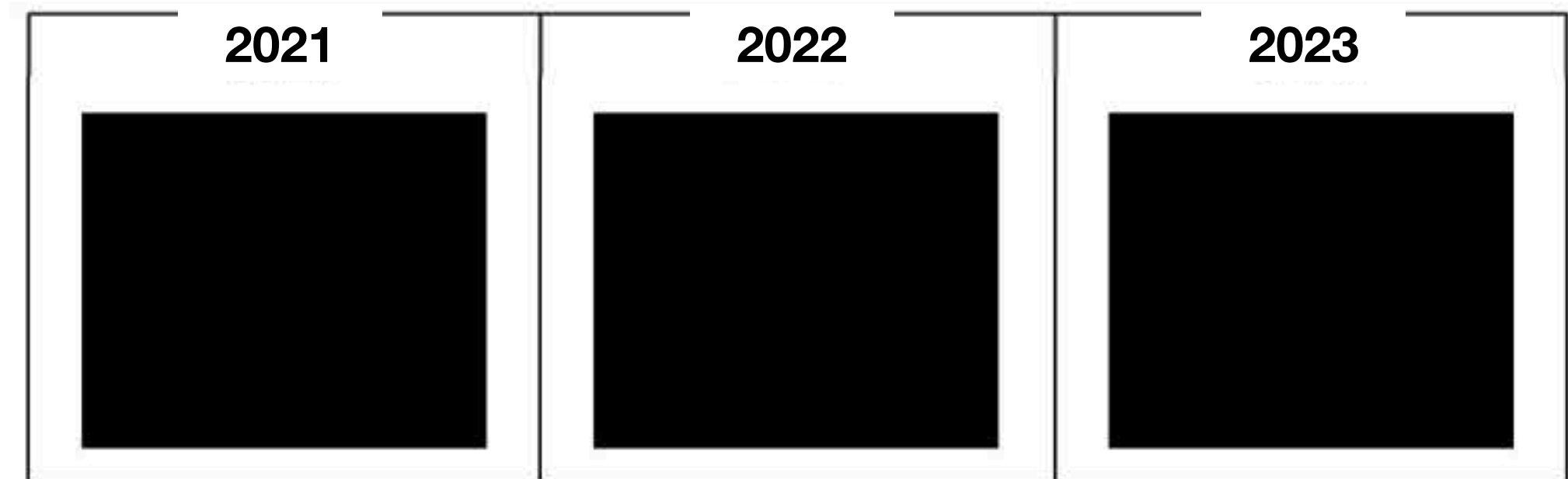
**Sarah doesn't make money anymore.**

(adapted from Bill et al. 2018)

# Experiment Methods

## Covered Picture Task Sample Stimulus

Which one matches the sentence's meaning?



**Sarah makes money anymore.**





(adapted from Bill et al. 2018)

# Experiment Methods

## Covered Picture Task Materials

32 experimental items, 4 Latin Square lists, 96 fillers of similar complexity

Each participant was randomly assigned to a list and saw only one of these:

List 1	List 2	List 3	List 4
Sara doesn't make money anymore.	Sara doesn't make money anymore.	Sara makes money anymore.	Sara makes money anymore.
			
NPI-match (select picture)	NPI-mismatch (select covered picture)	NPAM-match (select picture)	NPAM-mismatch (select covered picture)

# Experiment Methods

## Acceptability Judgment Task (AJT)

**I enjoy my own company anymore.**

**How natural sounding is this sentence?**

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

(completely unnatural)

(completely natural)

# Experiment Methods

## Acceptability Judgment Task Materials

32 experimental items, 2 Latin Square lists, 24 fillers of similar complexity

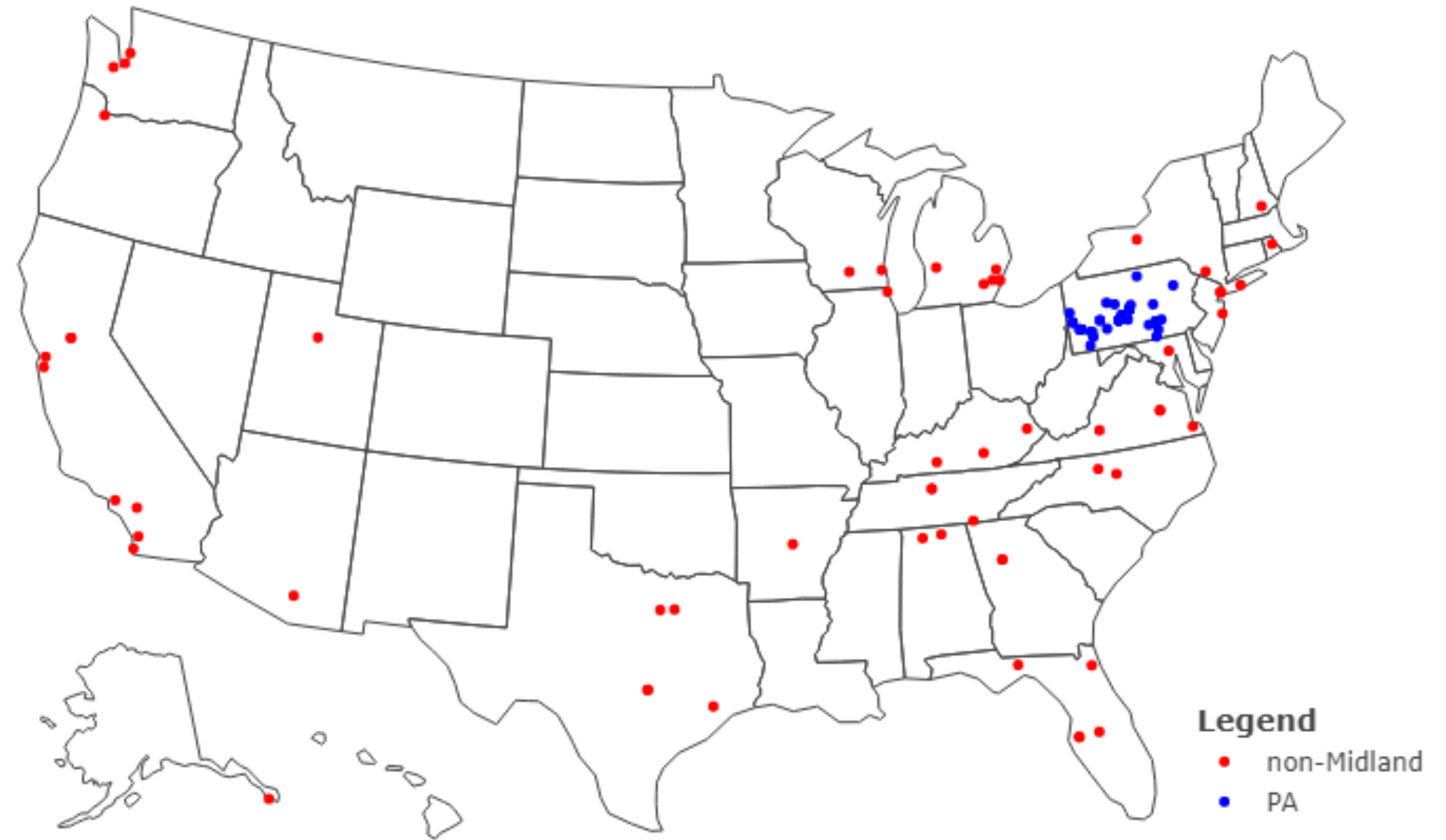
Item Type	Example
16 NPI items from the covered picture task	<i>Sara doesn't enjoy music anymore.</i>
16 NPAM items from the covered picture task	<i>Alex takes pictures anymore.</i>
<b>8 naturalistic NPAM items adapted from Strelluff (2019)</b>	<b><i>That player is playing how we expect anymore.</i></b>



# Experiment Methods

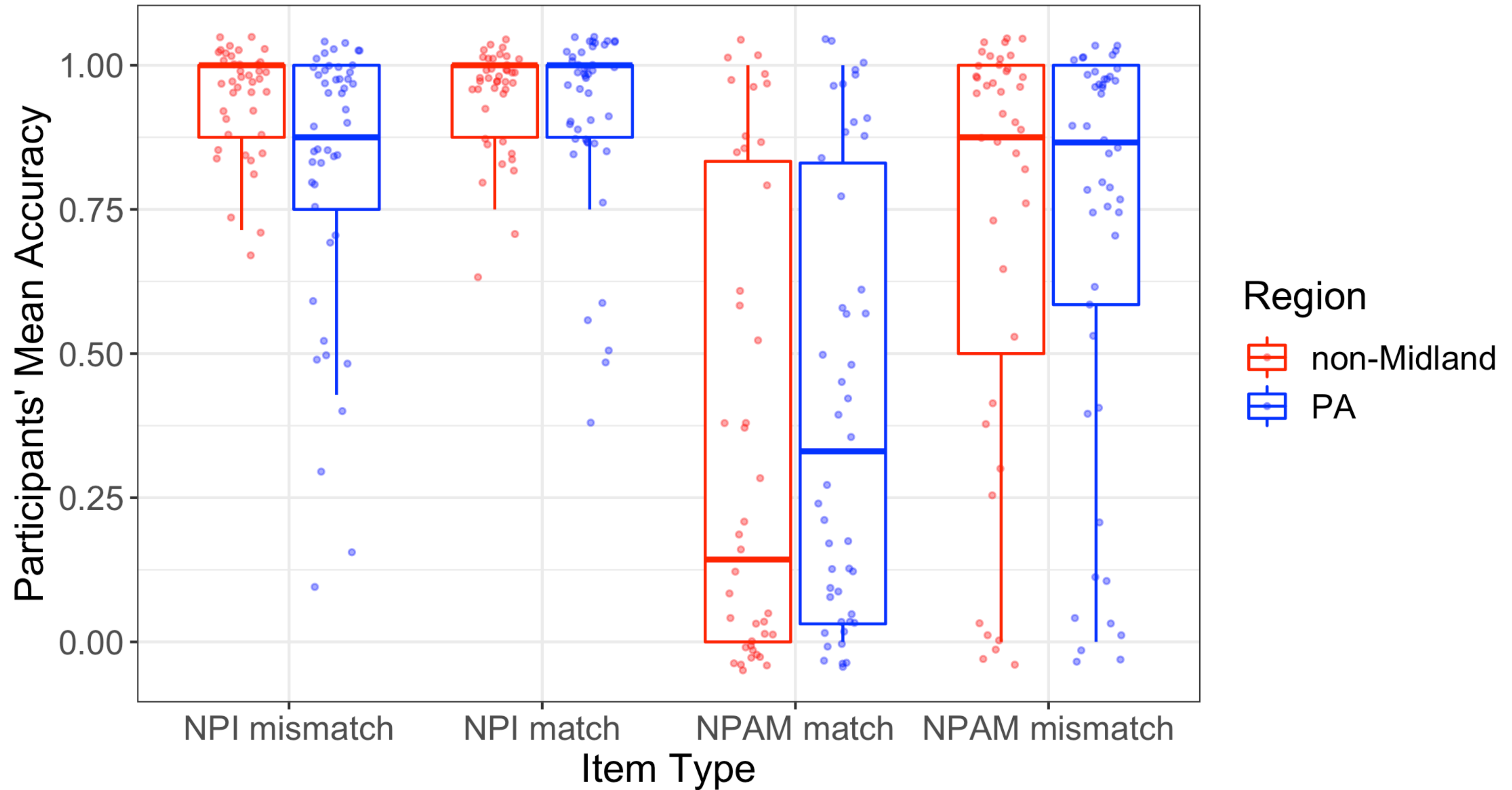
## Participants: Adult Native Speakers of American English

- 46 participants from local communities in **Central and Western PA**
- 46 participants from “**non-Midland**” region recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk
- Similar ages, ethnic and gender identities across groups



# Covered Picture Task Results

Mean accuracy on NPI and NPAM trials

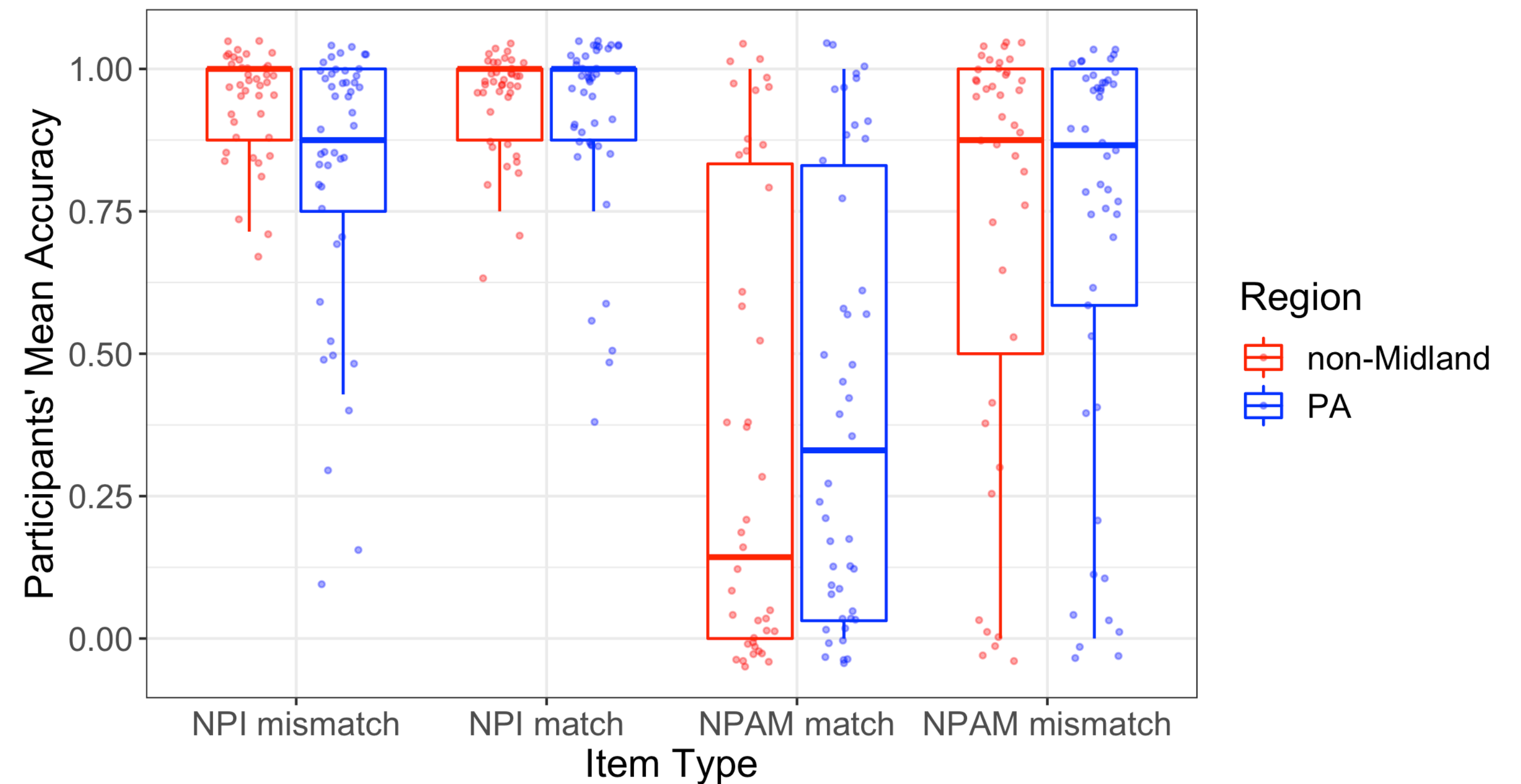


# Covered Picture Task Results

## Mean accuracy on NPI and NPAM trials

### NPI trials

- Highest accuracy for NPI match—makes sense!
- NPI mismatch is a bit more difficult than match, but accuracy is still very high
- This tells us that participants understand the task

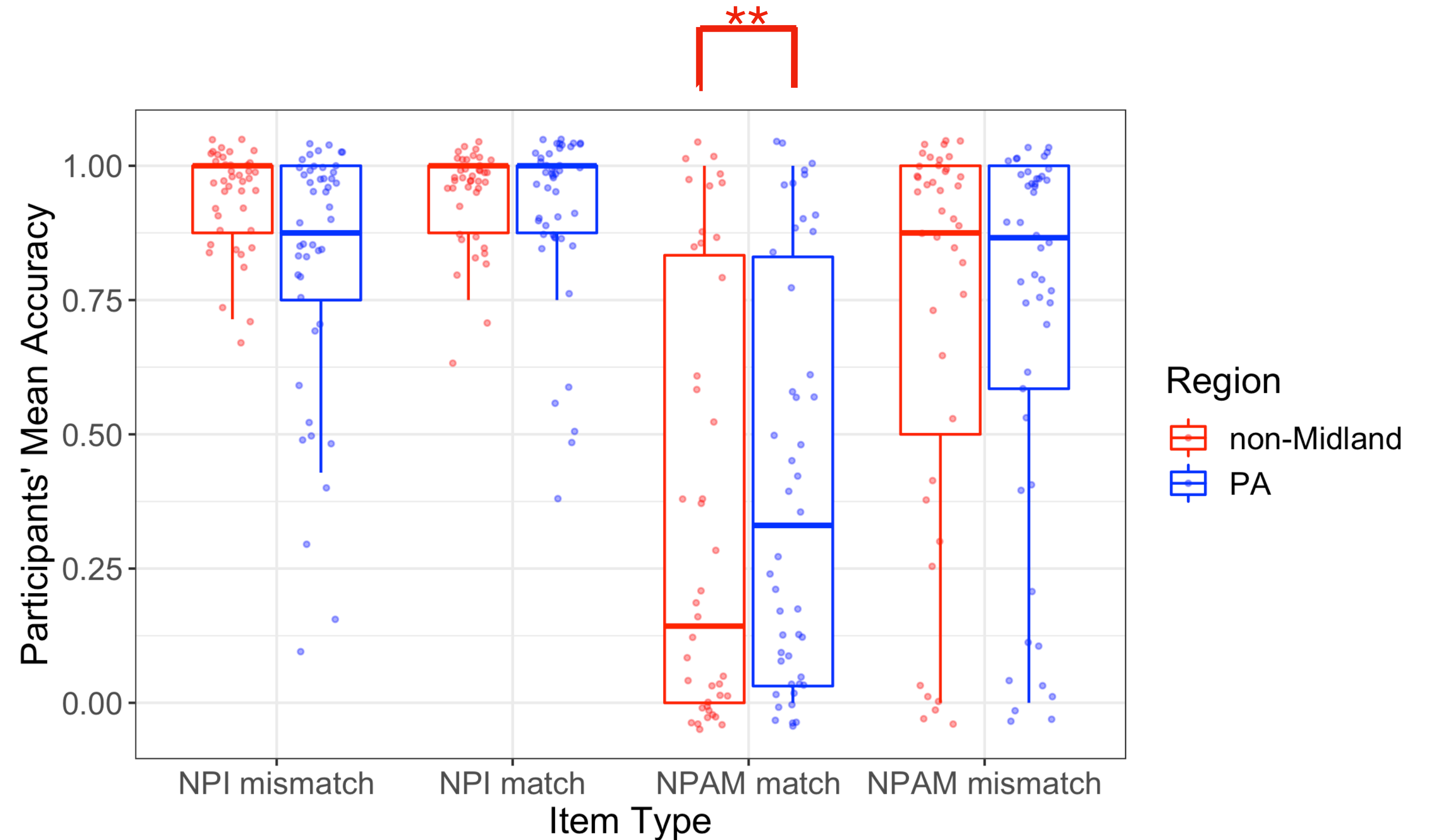


# Covered Picture Task Results

## Mean accuracy on NPI and NPAM trials

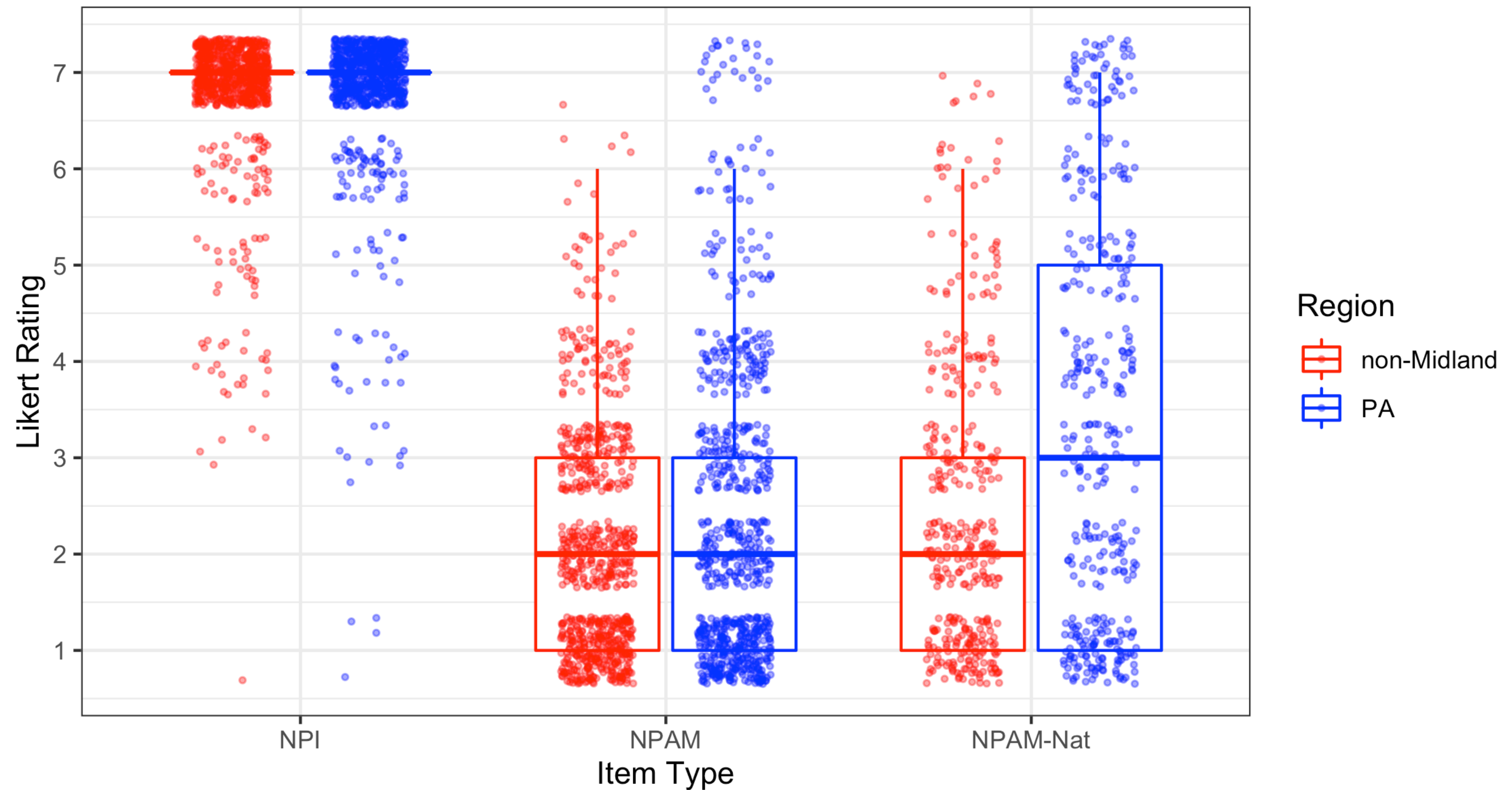
### NPAM trials

- Lots of variation in both groups!
- PA group has higher accuracy on NPAM match trials than non-Midland group ( $p < .01$ )
- NPAM mismatch trials were much better than match trials for both groups



# Acceptability Judgment Task Results

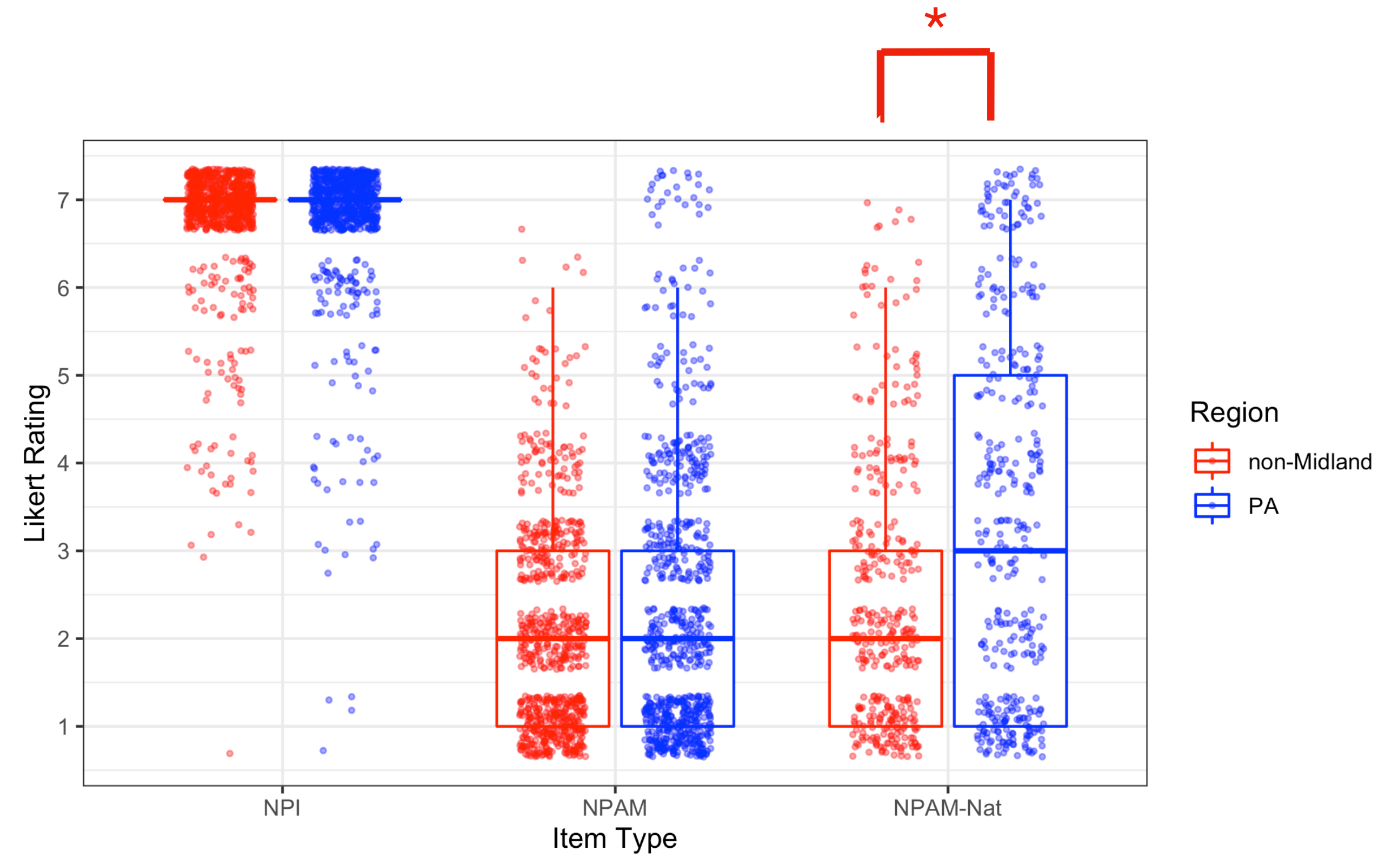
Ratings for NPI, NPAM-experiment, and NPAM-naturalistic items



# Acceptability Judgment Task Results

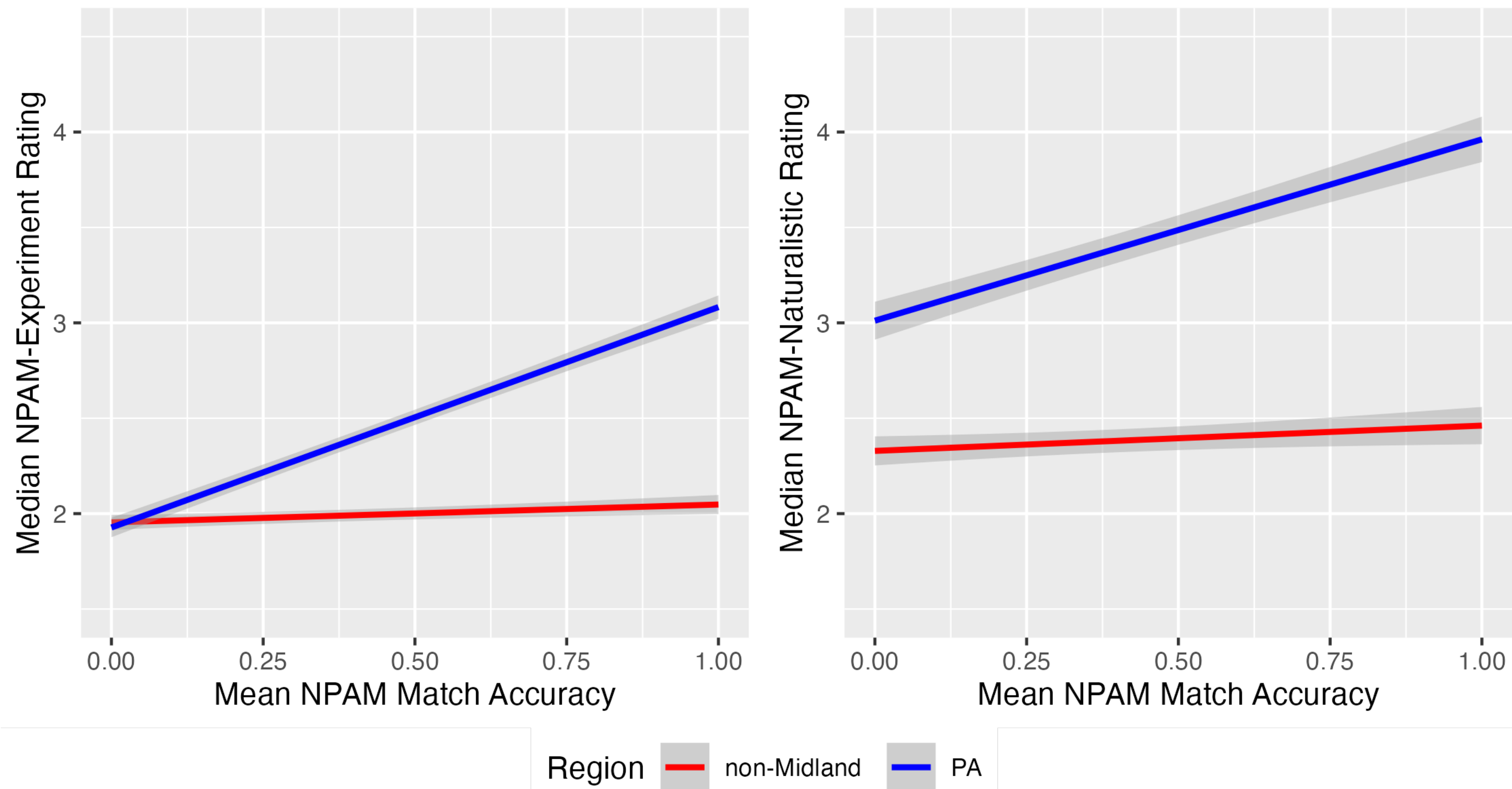
## Ratings for NPI, NPAM-experiment, and NPAM-naturalistic items

- NPIs highly acceptable for both groups (as expected)
- NPAM experiment trials have low acceptability for both groups
- NPAM naturalistic items more acceptable for PA than for non-Midland ( $p < .05$ )



# Results Across the Two Tasks

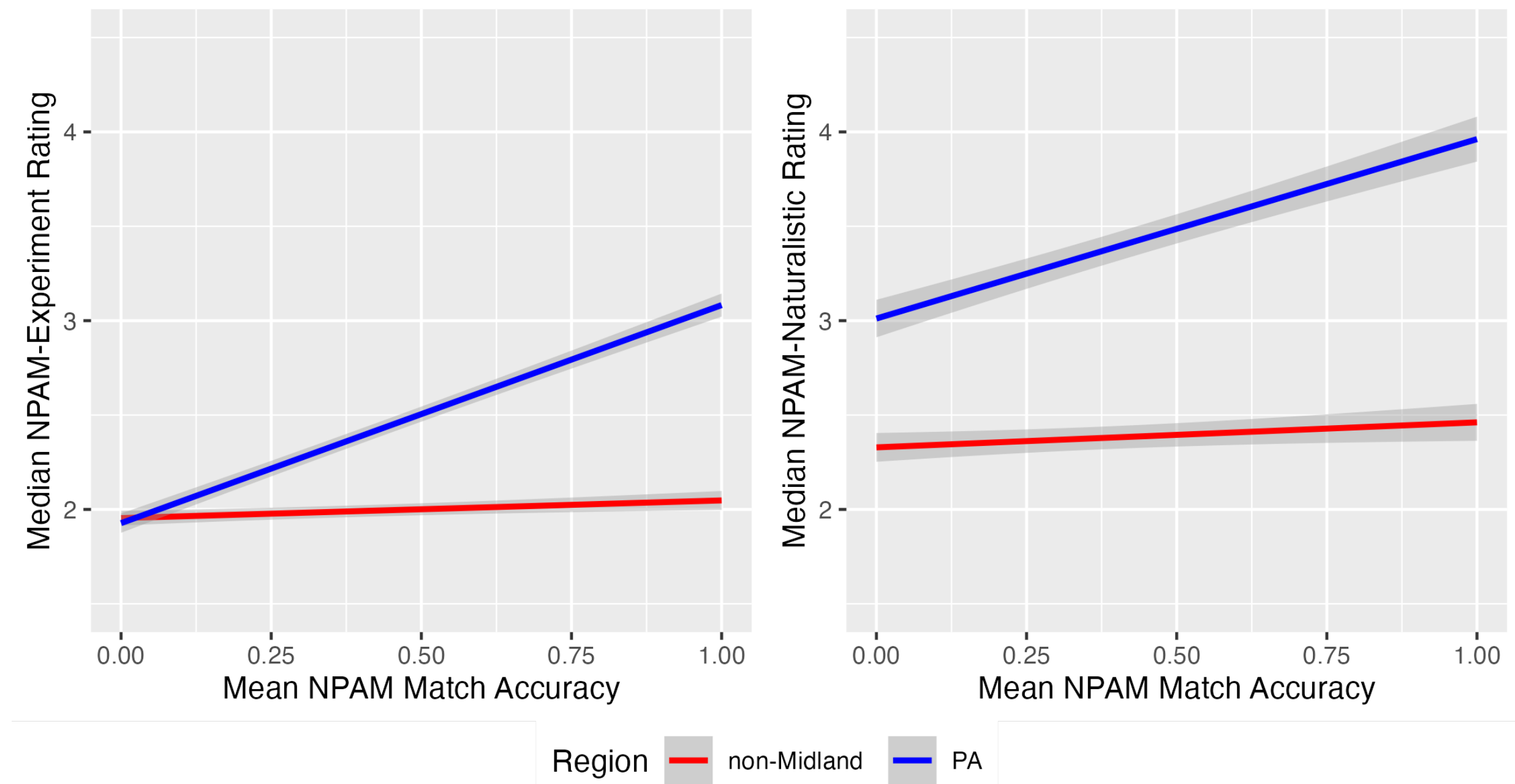
Do ratings relate to performance on the covered picture task?



# Results Across the Two Tasks

## Do ratings relate to performance on the covered picture task?

- Positive relationship between accuracy and ratings for the PA group only
- Suggests that interpreting NPAM as a positive assertion — negative presupposition makes you more likely to accept it, but **only if you have regional exposure**





# Synthesis of Results



## What have we learned?

**PA vs. Non-Midland** group-level differences (but LOTS of individual variation!)

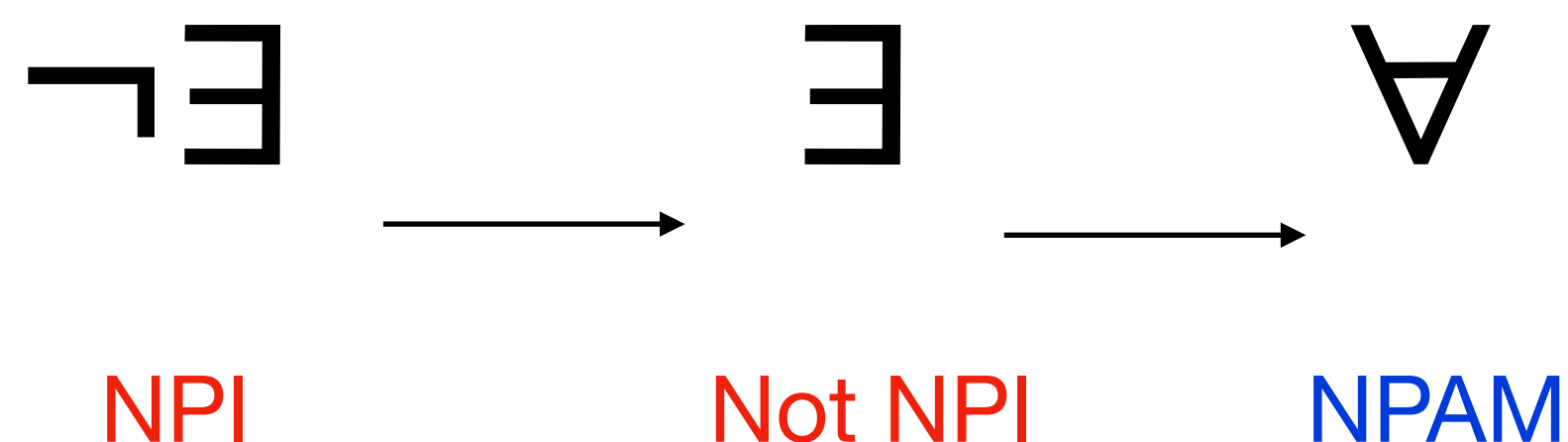
- **Being from PA** makes you **more likely to interpret NPAM as contributing a positive-assertion – negative presupposition**
- **Being from PA** makes you **more likely to accept naturalistic NPAM constructions** (but not lab-constructed ones)
- **Being from PA** and **interpreting NPAM as contributing a positive-assertion – negative presupposition** makes you **more accepting of NPAM**



# Implications

## What does this suggest about representations of NPAM?

- NPAM-mismatch results suggest that no regional knowledge is necessary to know that NPAM does not have an NPI meaning (i.e., that it does NOT contribute a **negative assertion** — positive presupposition)
- BUT you probably need some exposure “in the wild” to know what it does mean ([positive assertion](#) — negative presupposition)
- NPAM-mismatch results may reflect an intermediate stage of interpretation:



# Thank you

(and please help me interpret these results!)

- Penn State Eberly College of Science
- Valerie Keppenne
- Samantha Roth (statistics PhD candidate, Penn State)
- Elle Tang (statistics PhD candidate, Penn State)



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Eberly College of Science



# Selected references

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