

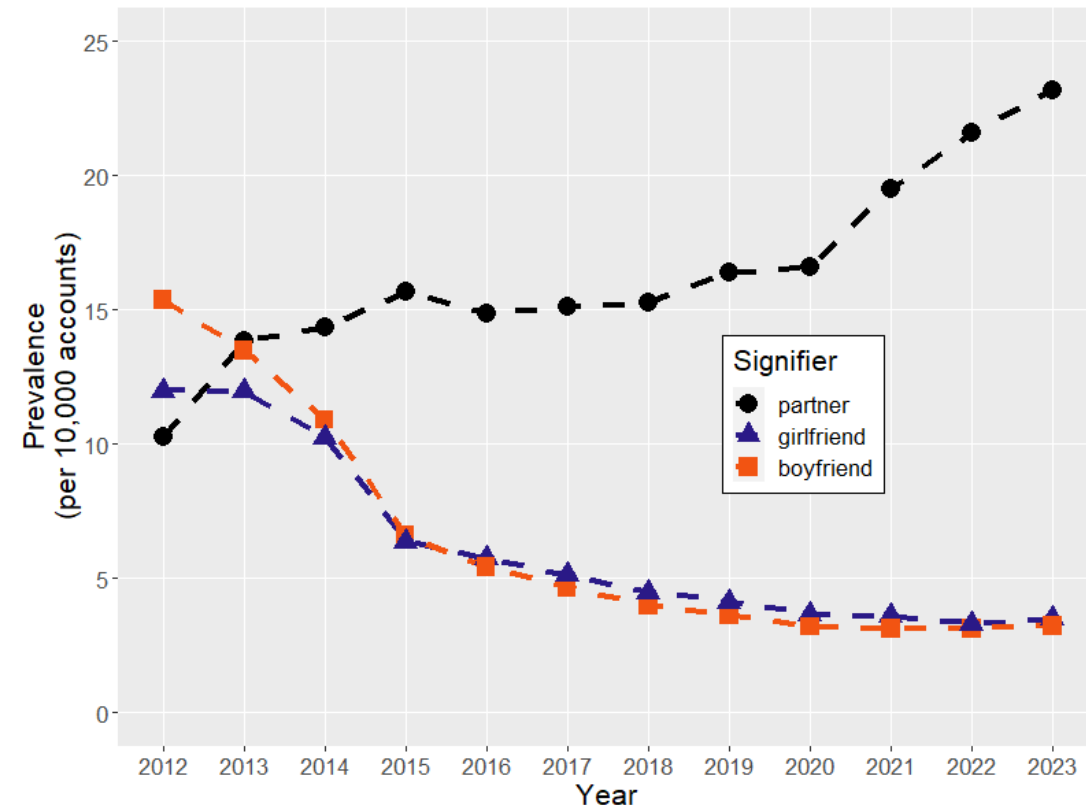
Girlfriend, Boyfriend or Partner? Tracking Signifier Change across a Decade of Self-Authored Self- Descriptions

Dr. Jason Jeffrey Jones

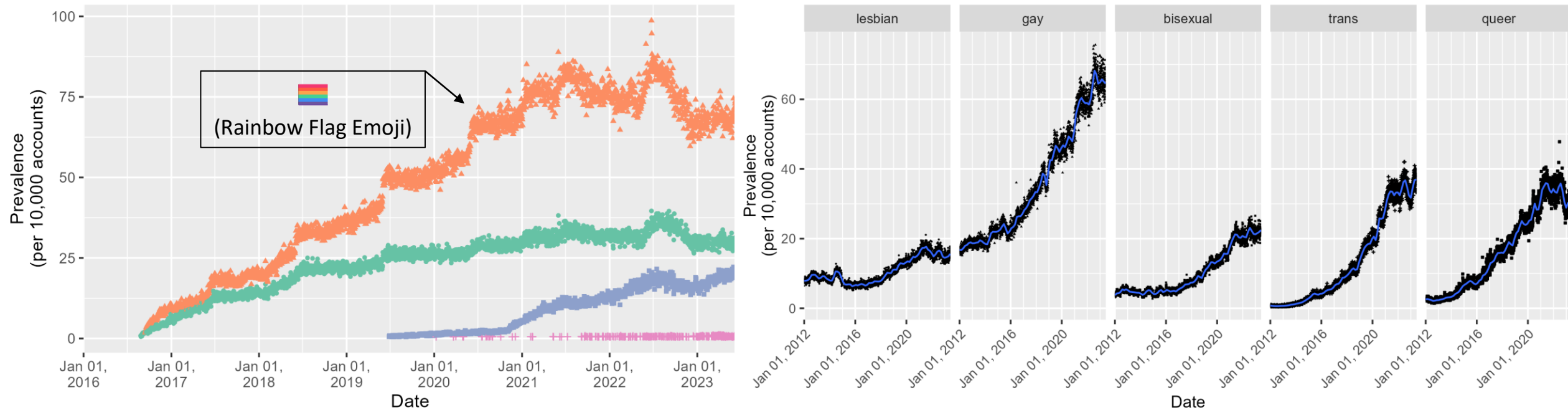
<https://jasonjones.ninja>

with Jayne Yerrick

Preprint: https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/yus58_v1



Prologue by way of Advertisement



LGBTQ Visibility Measured Consistently and Persistently in US Twitter Bios from 2012 through 2023

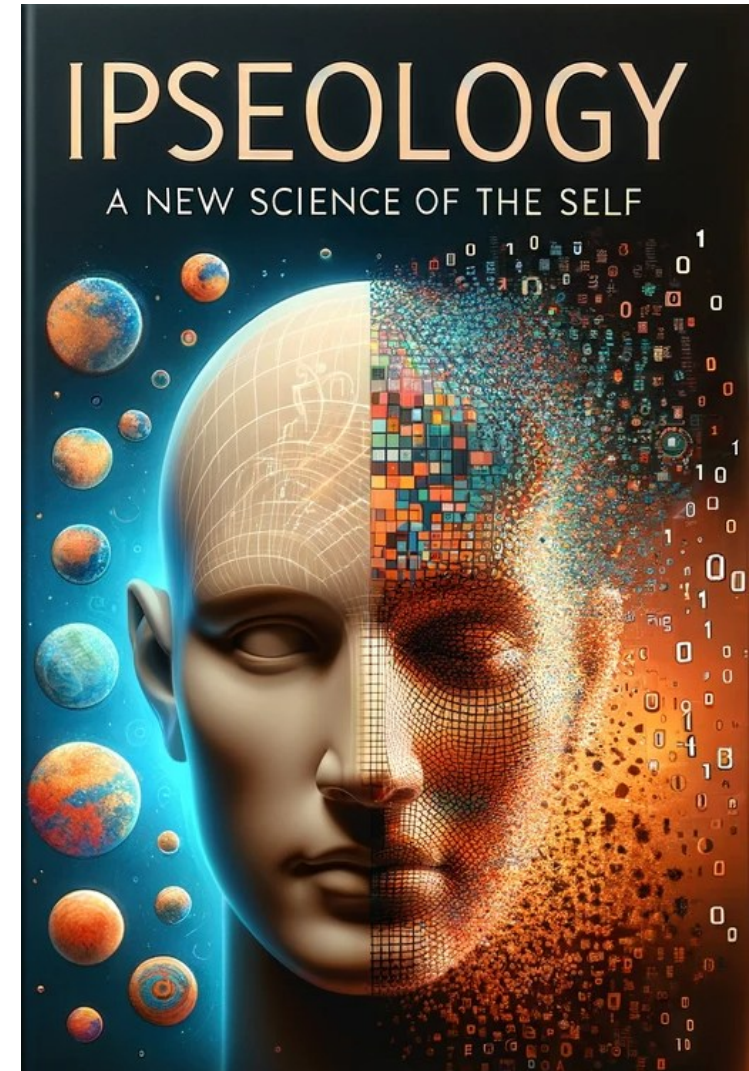
Jones, J. J., & Cisternino, I. (2024).

Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media, 4.

<https://doi.org/10.51685/jqd.2024.017>

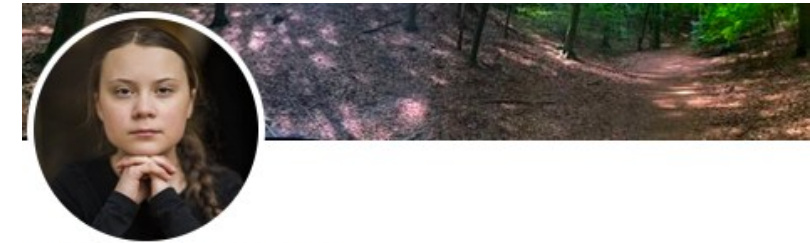
Advertisement by way of Prologue

- **Ipseology** is the study of human identity using large datasets and computational social science methods.
- It is a new way to investigate **ipseity** at scale.
 - Ipseity refers to selfhood, individuality and the essential elements of identity.
 - At scale means with millions of observations covering substantial temporal periods and geographical areas.
- Measure consistently, persistently and precisely.
 - Intro book: <https://jasonjones.ninja/jason-jeffrey-jones-productions/ipseology.html>



Some Ipseology Assumptions

- Human selves are interesting targets of study.
- You can use the language of ***self-authored self-descriptions*** to study human selves.
- Self-descriptions contain ***identity signifiers*** – words, phrases and symbols chosen by the author to describe their identity.
- Individuals may be thought of as bags of signifiers.
- Twitter bios were a copious source of longitudinal signifier bags.



Greta Thunberg ✓

@GretaThunberg

Climate- and environmental activist with Asperger's Born at 375 ppm

📍 Sverige 🔗 ClimateEmergencyEU.org 📅 Joined June 2018

2,619 Following 5M Followers



Venus Williams ✓

@Venuseswilliams

Tennis player, big sister, grown up girl.

[@elevenbyvenus](#) workouts @ link in bio

📍 Palm Beach Gardens, FL 🔗 [linktr.](#)

Tom Brady ✓

@TomBrady

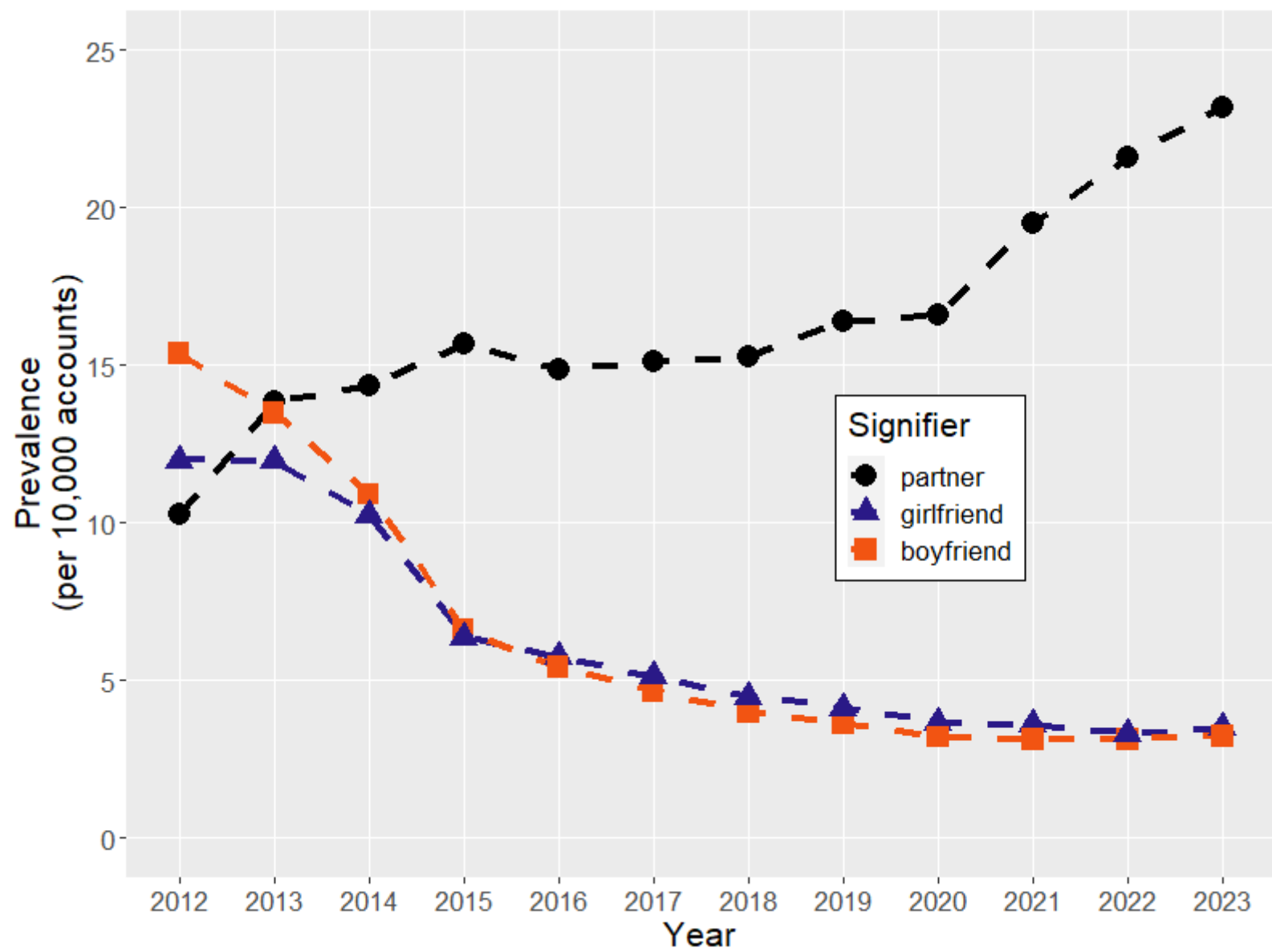
Family and Football



Danny DeVito ✓

@DannyDeVito

I'm an actor, director and producer.



Using Repeated Longitudinal Observations



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Computational social scientist at Stony Brook University. I solve the world's problems by data-mining Facebook and Twitter.



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📍 Stony Brook, NY 🔗 jasonjones.ninja

Using Repeated Longitudinal Observations

- Across two observations of a bio, there are only four possibilities for an identity signifier:
 - **Add**
 - **Delete**
 - **Keep**
 - **Ignore**

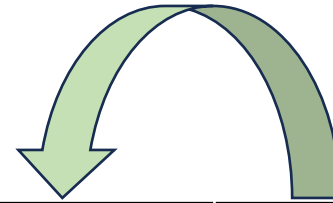
Earlier Bio	Later Bio	Added	Deleted	Kept	Ignored
I like my girlfriend.	I love my girlfriend.	love	like	I, my, girlfriend	partner, aardvark, many others...
Boyfriend of celebrity.	Partner of celebrity.	partner	boyfriend	celebrity, of	girlfriend, alligator, many others...



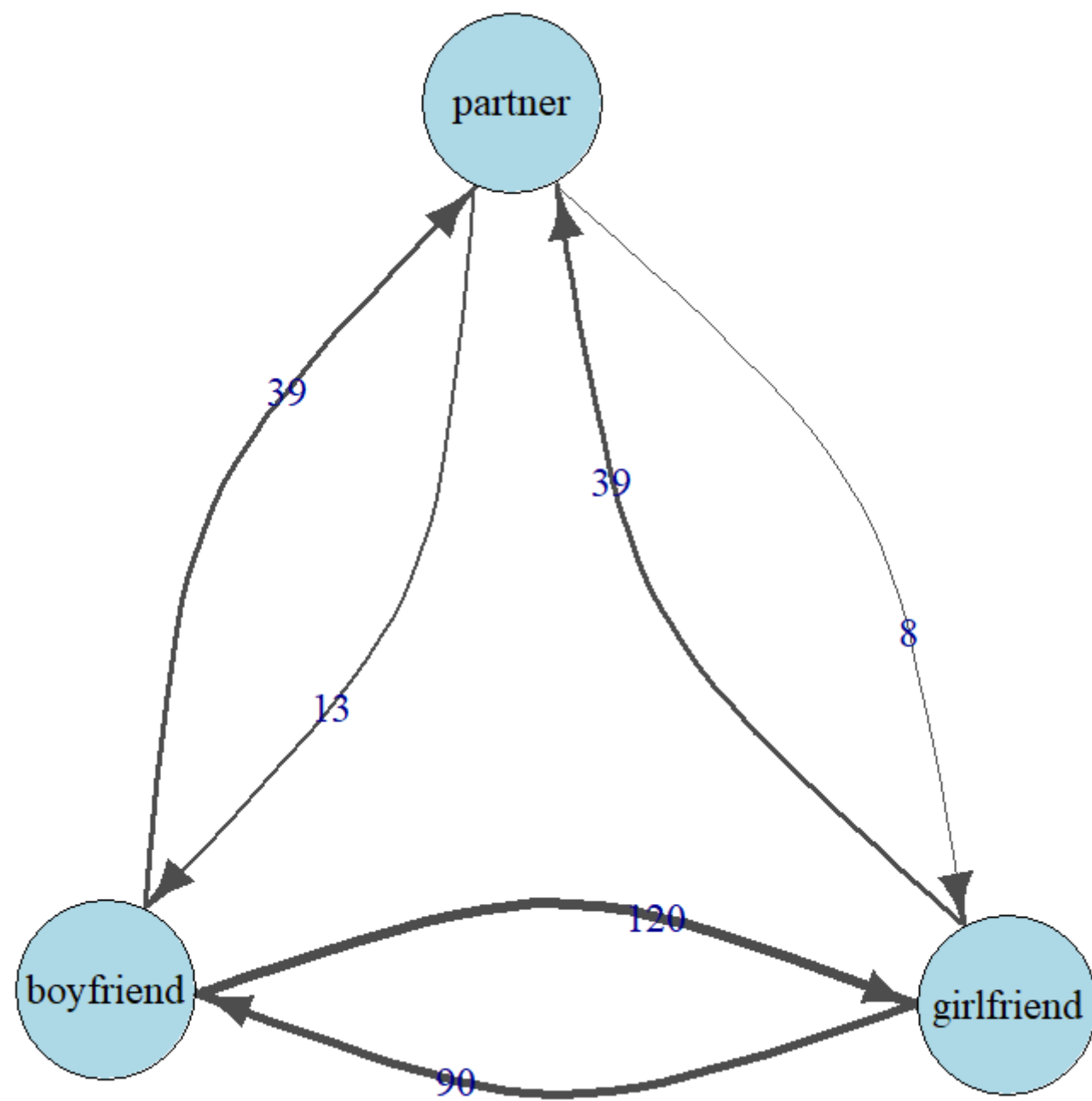
In year-over-year longitudinal bio observations, **Adds** outnumbered **Deletes** for partner.
Deletes outnumbered **Adds** for boyfriend and girlfriend.

Using Repeated Longitudinal Observations

- A **transmutation** from <signifier> to <other-signifier> occurs when:
 - An <other-signifier> **Add** accompanies a **Delete**.



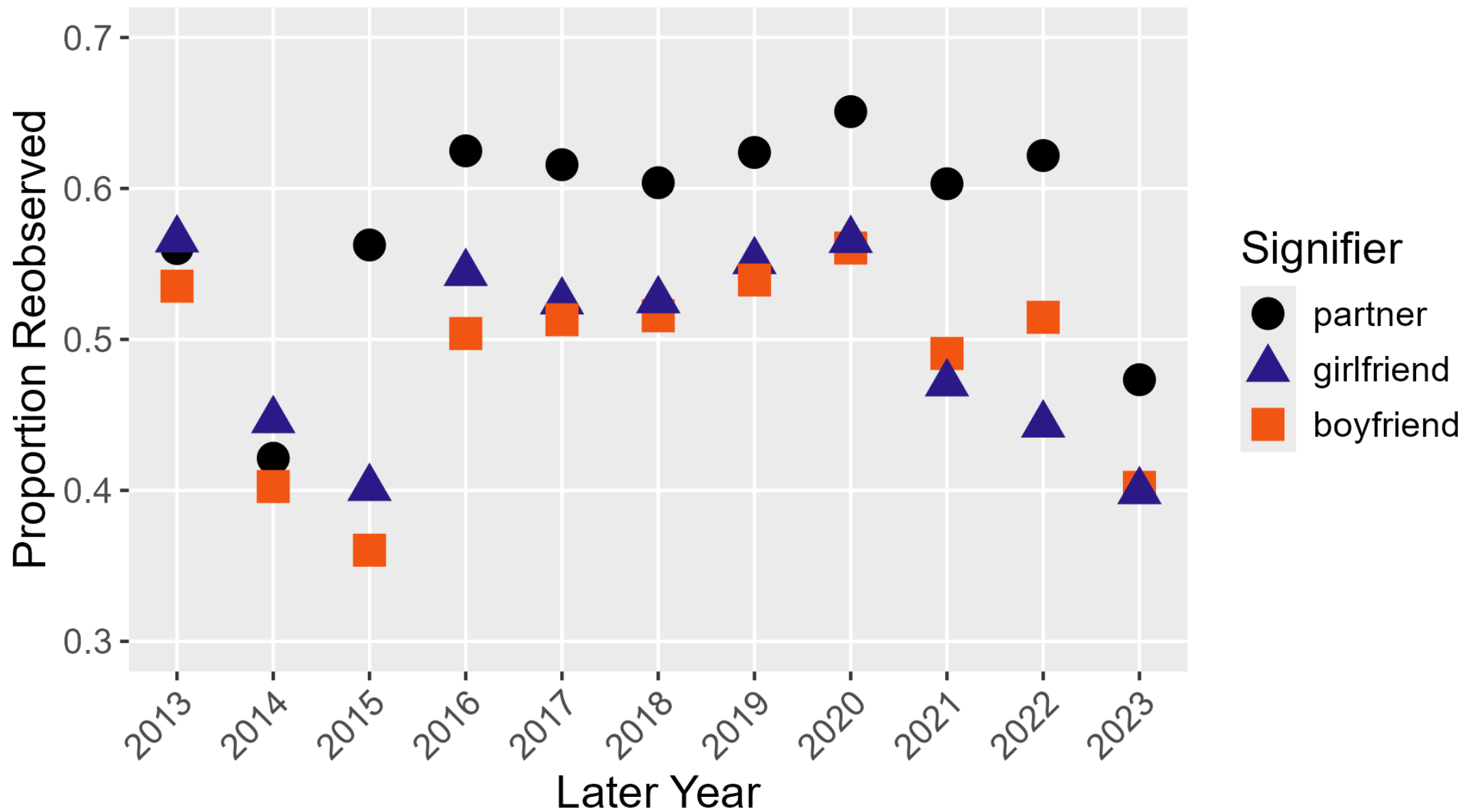
Earlier Bio	Later Bio	Added	Deleted	Kept	Ignored
I like my girlfriend.	I love my girlfriend.	love	like	I, my, girlfriend	partner, aardvark, many others...
Boyfriend of celebrity.	Partner of celebrity.	partner	boyfriend	celebrity, of	girlfriend, alligator, many others...



Using Repeated Longitudinal Observations

- Year-over-year, some accounts are re-observed and some disappear.
- We can compare:
 - At what rate were partner, boyfriend and girlfriend users re-observed?

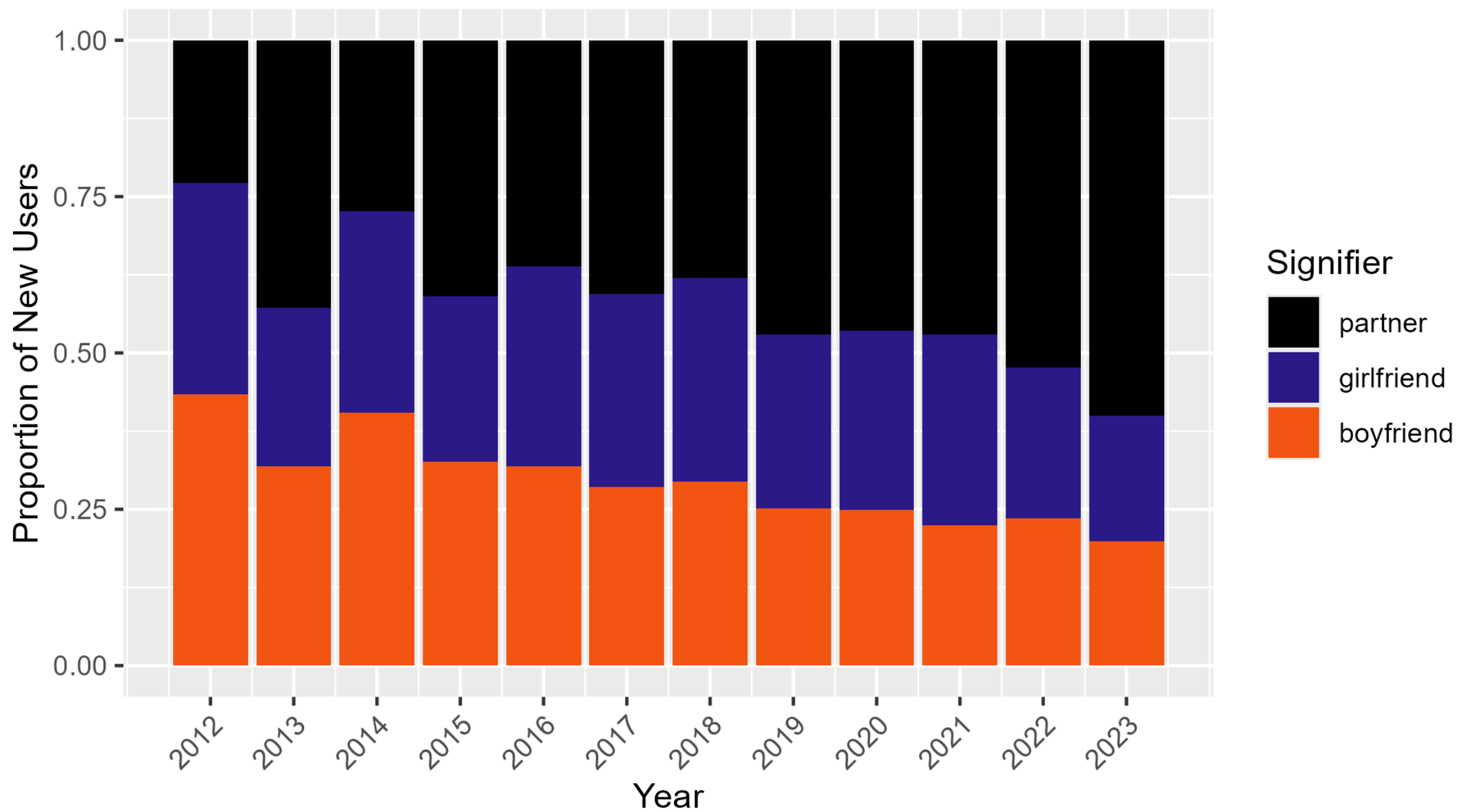




Using First Year Observations

- Every year, new users joined the platform.
- We can compare:
 - What were the relative proportions of new users including partner, boyfriend and girlfriend in the bio?
- Generational replacement?





Conclusions

- In Twitter bios of Americans, we observed **partner shift**.
 - However, when `girlfriend` and `boyfriend` were deleted, they were not *replaced* by `partner`.
 - `Partner` accounts showed lower mortality and higher generational replacement, but the use of `partner` was *overwhelmingly non-romantic*.
- We demonstrated multiple methods to decompose temporal trends in the language of self-description.

