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The Trends of Research Methods in Japanese Sociology, 1952-2018

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1 Question: Changing Sociology

1.1 Quantitative Approach to Changing Sociology

- Description of changing sociology had been a task for historians of sociology.
- But, it depends on arbitrary choice of some “important” texts, while several thousands of sociological papers are published every year only in Japan*¹.

*¹ CINI tells us 2925, 2589, 2386, and 2186 papers referring the character string, “社会学” (sociology) were published from 2015 to 2018 (I searched them on 21/September/2019).

- Nowadays, nobody can read the whole body of sociological papers and choose important/representative papers.
- Therefore, sampling and/or text-mining approach is helpful to grasp the whole body of sociology.
- We sampled papers from two leading journals of Japanese sociology and conducted conventional content analysis.

1.2 Focus on Research Methods of Sociology

- Research methods are a part of paradigm (Kuhn 1970=1971).
- They were employed as a standard to classify schools or quasi-paradigms of sociology (Alise & Teddlie 2010; Ritzer 1980; Wells & Picou 1981).
- Which methods are prevalent? How did they change in Japan?

1.3 Previous Research in US and UK

- Quantitative methods started to increase in US sociology before WW II (Camic & Xie 1994), it was prevailed in 1970's on a leading US journal (Wells & Picou 1981), still increasing in 2000's (Schwemmer & Wieczorek 2019 online first).
- However, UK witnessed the decline of quantitative methods from 1970 to 2000 compared to the qualitative (Platt 2012), although they might revive in 2000's (Schwemmer & Wieczorek 2019 online first).

1.4 Japanese Contexts

- Japanese sociology is more similar to UK than to US (Yamamoto & Tarohmaru 2015)
- Annual meetings of Japan Sociological Society witnessed increasing qualitative and decreasing theoretical papers from 1960's to 1990's (Tarohmaru et al. 2002).

1.5 Aim

- To Describe the trends of methods employed by Japanese sociologists controlling for several variables such as author's sex and status

1.6 Hypotheses

- The turning point would be 1980's; the new left generation became professors; the Cultural Turn arrived at Japan; sociological associations preferring quantitative methods were established.
- since then theoretical methods decreased,
- and qualitative methods increased.

2 Data

- Papers published in 1952, 1954, 1956, . . . , and 2018 in Japanese Sociological Review (Hyoron) and Sosioroji, leading journals for sociology general. N (the number of sampled papers) = 1383.
- We classified the methods they employed into four types: theoretical, historical, ethnographic, and quantitative methods.
- We recorded the sex and status of the first author, number of authors, and whether it was on a special issue.

2.1 Classification of Research Methods

theoretical Analyzing no empirical data

historical Analyzing texts such as documents or texts written by others

ethnographic Analyzing or writing ethnography based on what authors heard, watched, or experienced.

quantitative Analyzing quantitative data or mathematical models

We call historical and ethnographic methods “qualitative.”

3 Results

- There are descriptive statistics and the details of results on the handout.
- There is the results of multinomial logit model predicting methods at Table h.2 in the handout.

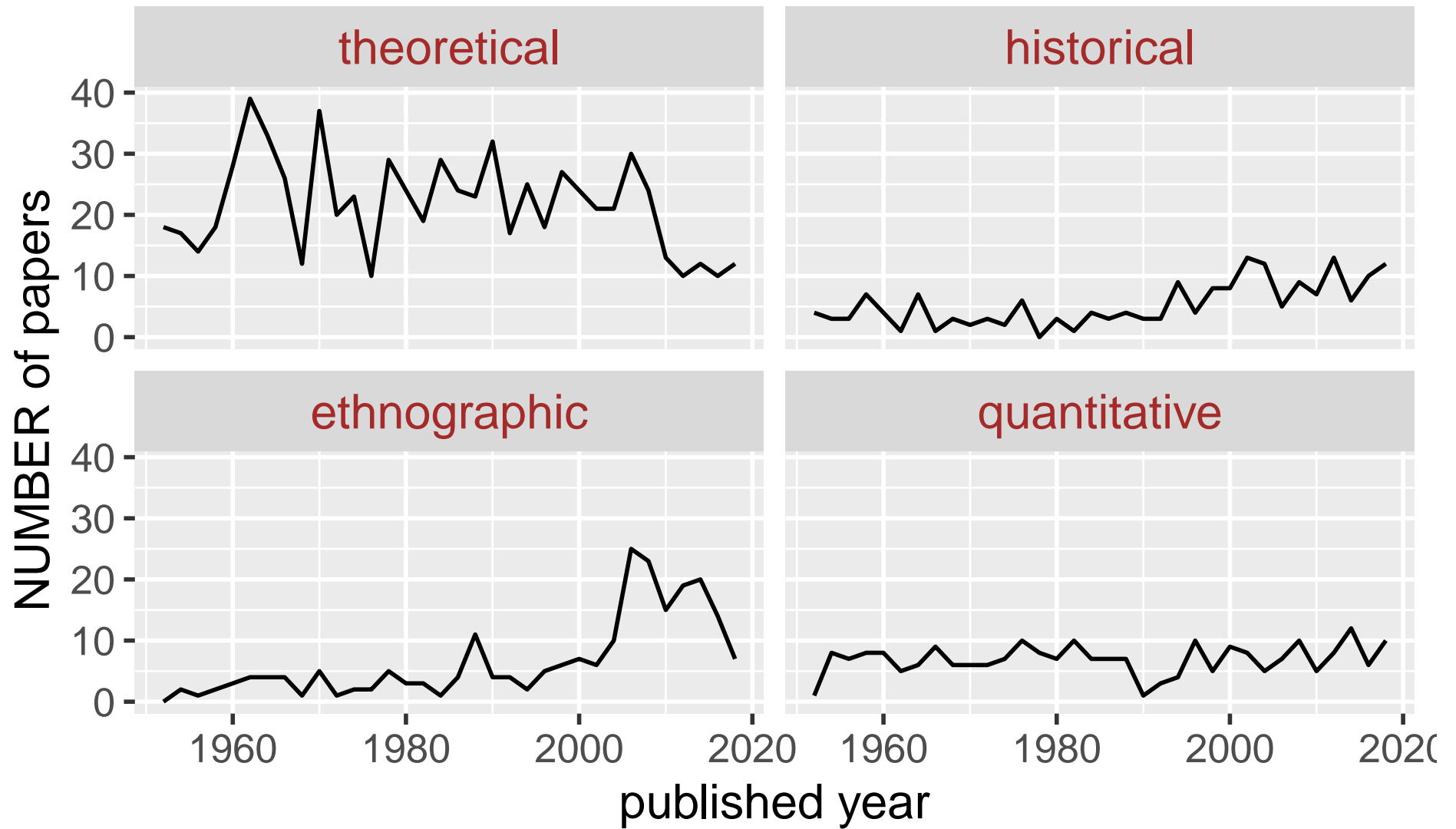


Fig. 1 Numbers of papers employing four methods

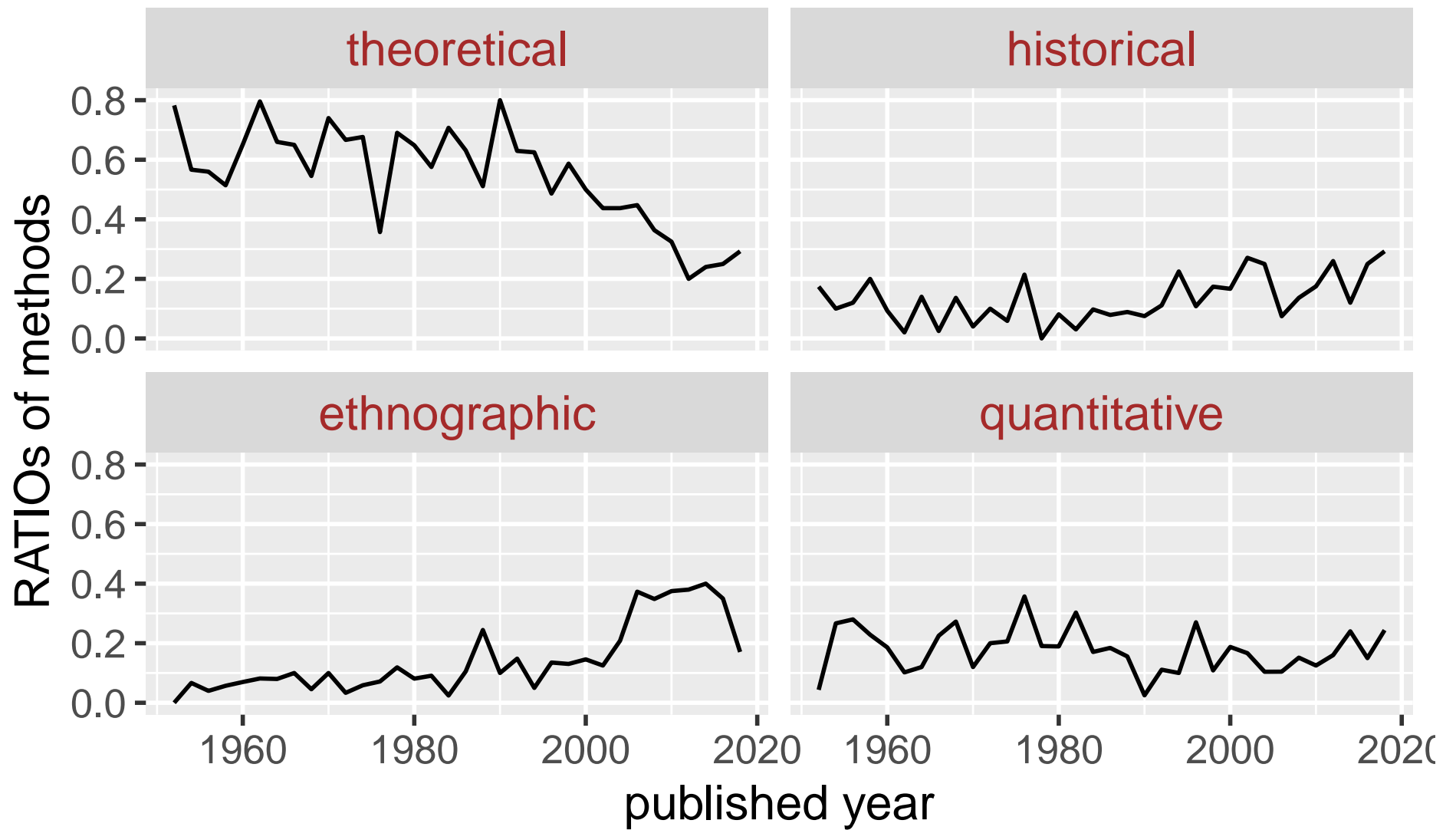


Fig. 2 Ratio of Papers

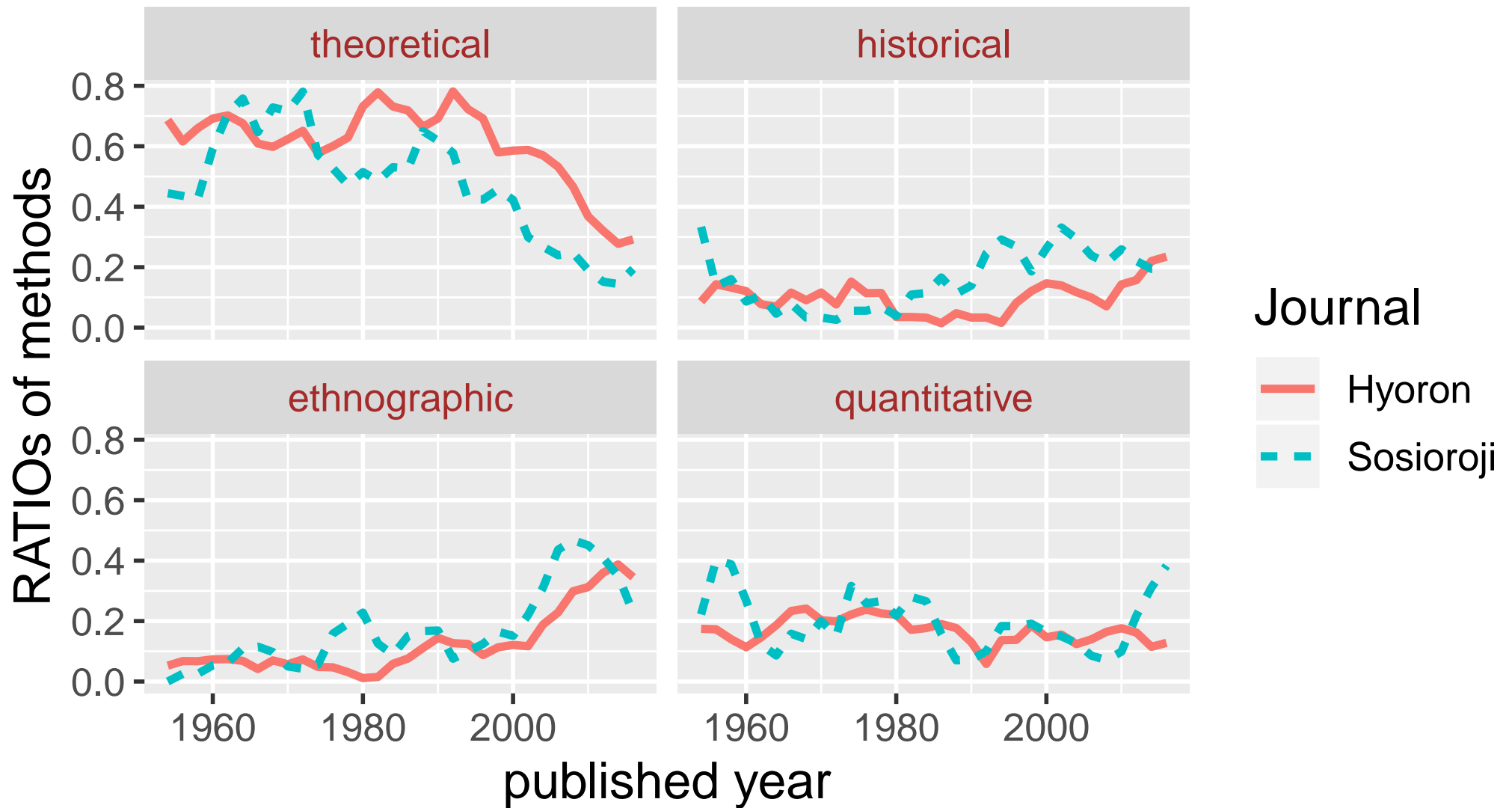


Fig. 3 Trends of Methods by Journal (moving average of three time points)

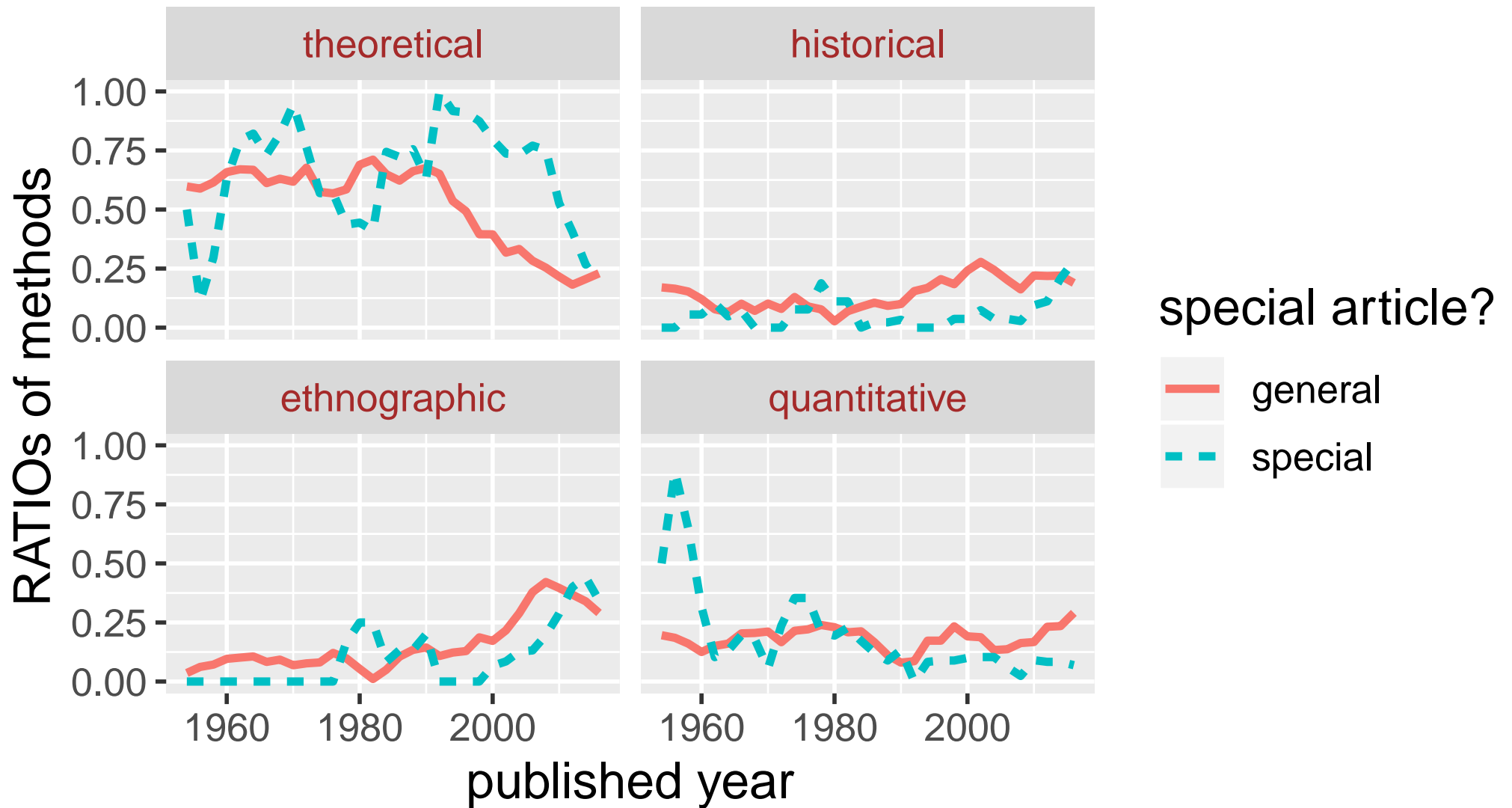


Fig. 4 Trends of special and general papers (moving average of three time points)

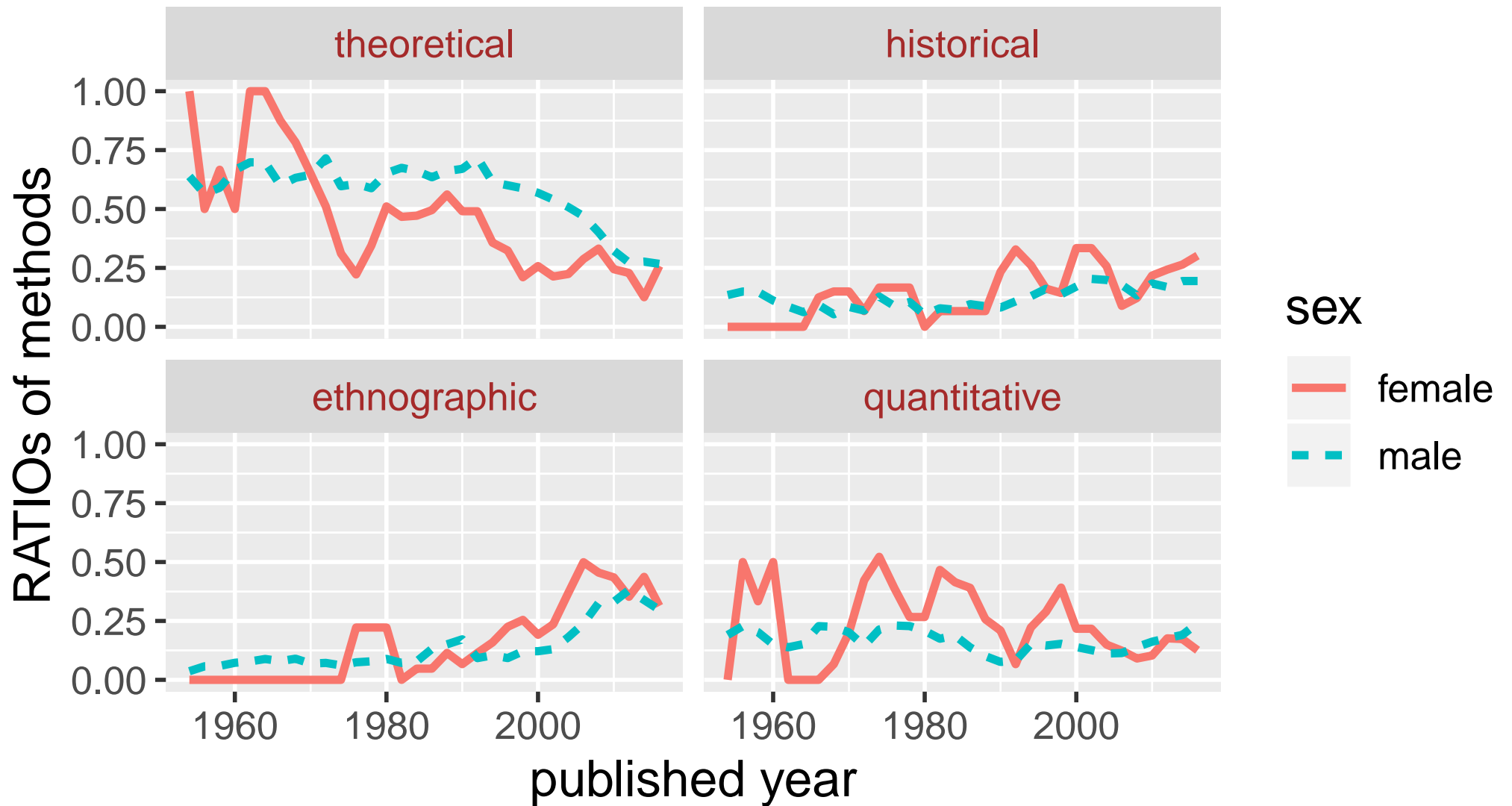


Fig. 5 Trends of methods by sex (moving average of three time points)

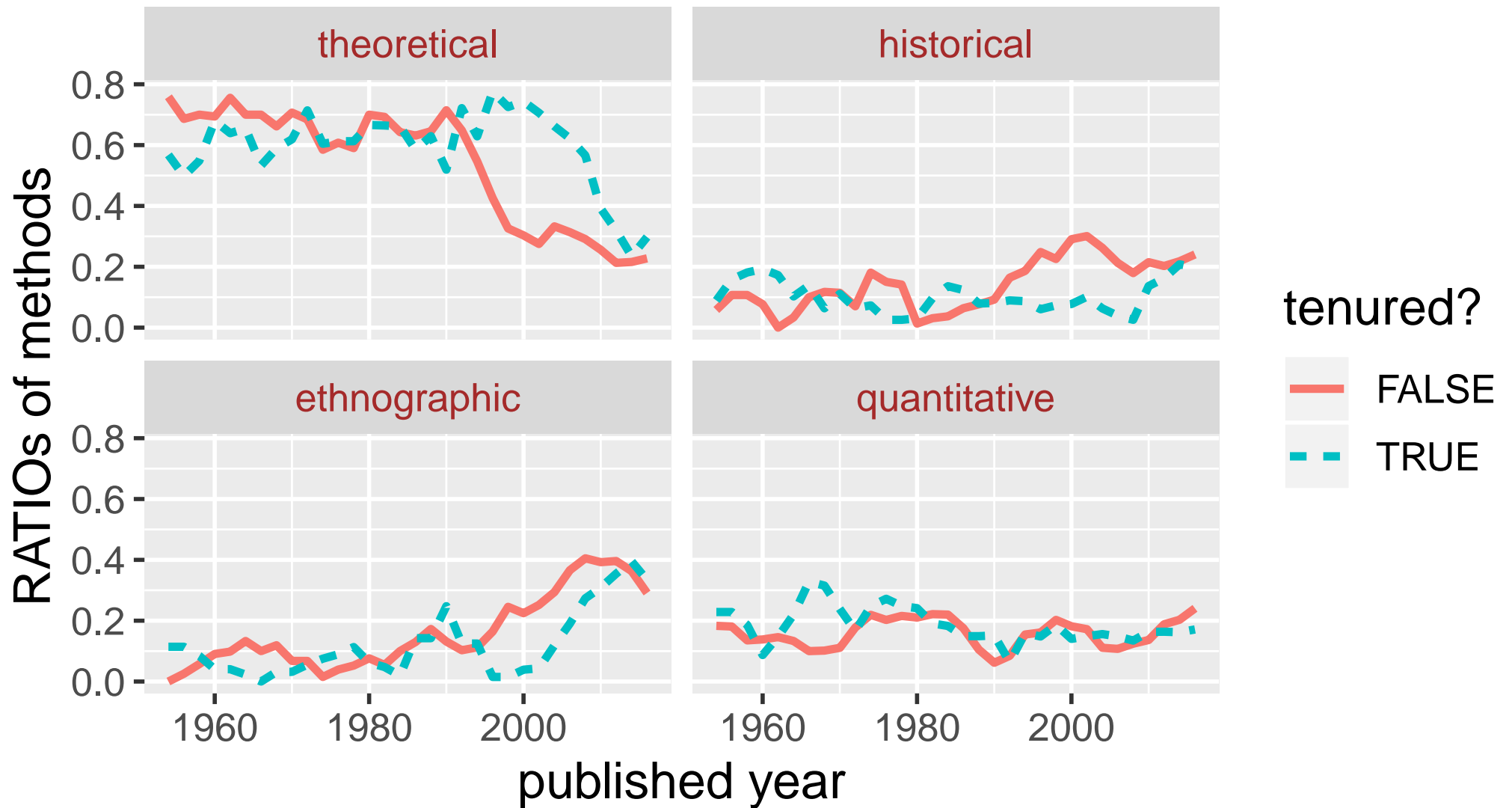


Fig. 6 Trends of methods by status (moving average of three time points)

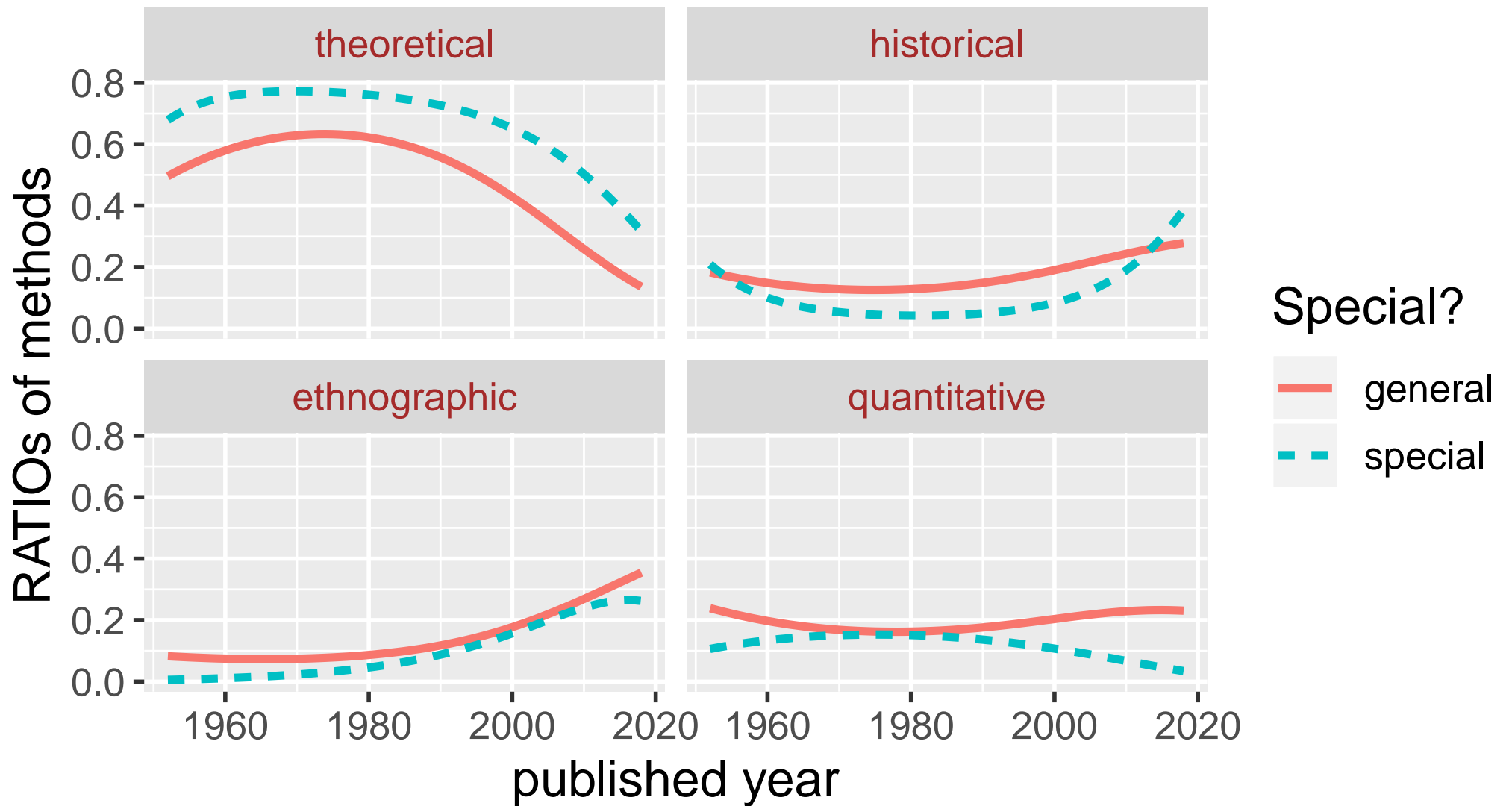


Fig. 7 Trends of methods predicted by the logit model, assuming paper is general, written by a single male tenured author on Sosioroji16

4 Discussion

4.1 Summary of Results

- Theoretical methods decreased after 1980's and empirical methods increased, only qualitative methods. They are a majority group after 2010.
- Although the ratio of quantitative methods were constant, they were excluded from special issues after 1980's.

4.2 Comparison with US and UK

- Although quantitative methods increased in 2000's in US and UK, it didn't in Japan.
- Is the pressure for a peer reviewed paper weaker in Japanese sociology?
- Is the appeal to policymakers not very important?

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