

Intellectual Humility in Political Leaders: A Person-Perception Approach



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INTRO

- Recent work suggests that people high in intellectual humility are more open to learning about opposing viewpoints (Porter & Schumann, 2018), have less polarized feelings towards political rivals (Krumrei-Mancuso & Newman, 2020), and may be less interested in derogating a political opponent (Stanley et al., 2020). In a world where individuals often fail to reconsider their beliefs after exposure to new evidence (Nyhan & Reiffer, 2010), embracing intellectual humility has been touted as a potential key to improving relationships among people with different perspectives.
- Yet, in the sociopolitical sphere, an intellectually humble person is only as valuable as the people around them perceive them to be. Surprisingly, little research has been conducted on how individuals perceive those high in intellectual humility.
- This study aims to clarify claims made about intellectual humility (IH) by a) examining to what extent perceivers value IH in the face of a polarizing topic (abortion), and b) to assess if people are as attracted to IH expressed by political leaders as they are in their peers (Huynh & Romero Gonzalez, 2023).
- Understanding how people perceive others high in IH could be the first step in motivating others to adopt intellectually humble characteristics themselves.

MATERIALS

Abortion Speeches

- We created four short speeches to manipulate the view type (pro or anti-abortion) and expressed intellectual humility (humble, arrogant) of the politician.
- Speeches were created using real reasons people gave for holding their respective stance on abortion in an unrelated study. They were validated using the Linguistic Inquiry Word Count to control for tone and content.

Ex.

Imagine the following speech was given by a politician running for president...

I am not interested in hearing about the other side's approach to abortion regulation, and it is obvious that our first concern as a nation should be how we can best protect personal freedoms....

.....I cannot see the other side's perspective on this issue. It is clear that a politician's religion should not be the deciding factor in a decision that impacts millions of women across the country.

Dependent Variables

- After reading each speech, participants rated how much they liked each candidate on a seven-point scale, followed by a question asking whether the participant would consider voting for each candidate.
- Participants also rated each candidate on exploratory dimensions including perceived knowledgeability, novelty, and valence of tone.

Other measures

- General Intellectual Humility Scale (Leary et al., 2017)
- Social Desirability Scale (Stöber, 2001)

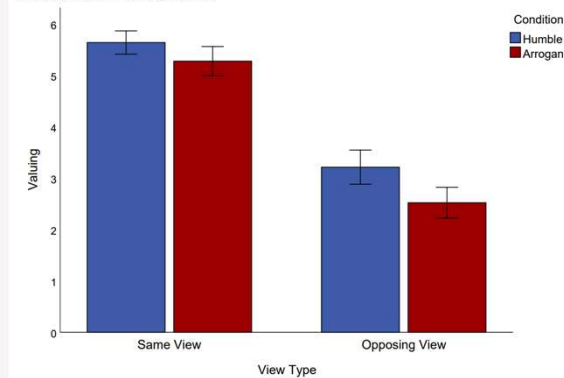
PROCEDURE

- Ninety-four participants from the U.S. (49 women, 44 men, 1 agender; $M_{age} = 44.28$, $SD_{age} = 14.17$; 51 pro- and 43 anti-abortion) completed the study through Prolific survey platform.
- Participants first confirmed their position on abortion. They were then presented with each speech in a randomized order: Anti-Abortion/Humble, Anti-Abortion/Arrogant, Pro-Abortion/Humble, and Pro-Abortion/Arrogant.
- Participants completed individual measures of our dimensions of interest after each speech.

RESULTS

Figure 1

Valuing of Intellectual Humility by View Type



A main effect of humility was significant, $F(1, 93) = 38.98$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .29$. On average, participants reported liking the humble candidate ($M = 4.43$, $SD = .09$) more than the arrogant candidate ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .09$).

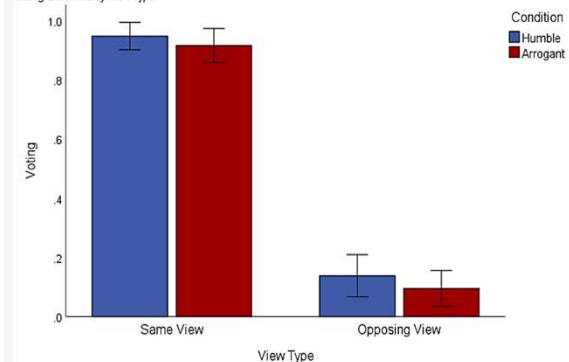
Although people value humility in both candidates, the effect was smaller in the same view condition.

Participants in the same view condition reported liking humility more in the same view candidate ($M = 5.64$, $SD = .11$) than in the opposing candidate ($M = 3.21$, $SD = .17$), $F(1, 93) = 10.62$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$; $F(1, 93) = 36.02$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .28$.

Significant interaction between view type and humility, $F(1, 93) = 4.78$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$.

Figure 2

Voting Behaviors by View Type



A main effect of humility was not significant, $F(1, 93) = 3.35$, $p = .07$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$.

A main effect of view type was, however, significant, $F(1, 93) = 399.53$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .81$. Participants voted for the same-view candidate significantly more ($M = 0.93$, $SD = .02$) than the opposing view candidate ($M = 0.12$, $SD = .03$).

The decision to vote for one's preferred candidate was not impacted by that candidate's degree of humility or arrogance.

No significant interaction between view type and humility, $F(1, 93) = .10$, $p = .77$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$.

CONCLUSION

- Participants valued humility in political leaders, regardless of their ideology. However, participants were willing to tolerate arrogance more if it was coming from a leader supporting (vs. opposing) their ideology.
- The pattern was similar across participants with a pro-abortion and anti-abortion stance. All findings were not affected by social desirability bias or participants' IH.
- These findings imply that perceivers' valuing of IH becomes most apparent when faced with rhetoric they disagree with.
- Overall, expressing intellectual humility may help political leaders garner support from citizens across the aisle. Yet, citizens will vote for leaders of their own ideology regardless of expressed humility.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- We anticipate replicating these results with a larger sample ($n = 300$) in a preregistered study.
- In order to better capture participants' own levels of IH about political issues, we will add Hoyle and colleagues' (2016) Specific Intellectual Humility Scale.
- Next steps will also include investigating the mechanism behind the potential tolerance for arrogance coming from one's own ideology.

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