

Learning From Personal and Impersonal Political Discussion



Olivia Costes, Maegan Smarkusky
Marli Dunietz, Valeria Burdea



Abstract

The purpose of this research project is to better understand how social image plays a role in an individual's response to certain political issues. This research will fill a gap in second-order thinking research pertaining to political interaction and policy review. The overall study involves an individual's response to a relevant policy followed by a peer's review of the response where the listener can decide to reward the respondent for their response. The most recent portion of the project involves reviewing responses and annotating them based on different interpersonal and political factors. The results are currently not conclusive, but they will be very useful to determine how to best structure political discussion in the future to minimize inaccuracies in public opinion due to second-order thinking.

Background

- Several previous studies in behavioral economics have found that social image concerns shape the way individuals portray themselves to a group.
- Many studies also show that Americans often underestimate the popularity of their political opinion leading to pluralistic ignorance and an inaccurate perception of public opinion.

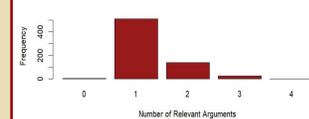
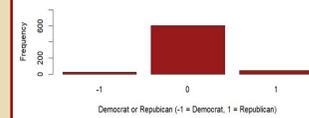
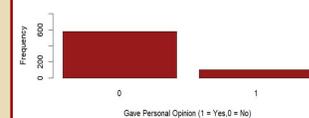
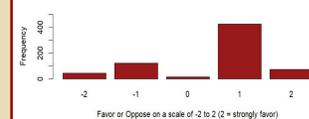
Methods

In order to better understand how individuals engage in political discussion, this project used an online survey where participants were given several hot topic policies to respond to and state why someone would agree or disagree with the policy. Participants were given the option to share their response to the policy among others causing social image to be a concern. This is part of the encoding stage. The most recent portion of the research was centered around annotating these responses for several categories: whether the respondent included a personal opinion, the number of relevant arguments, whether the respondent favored or opposed the policy, and whether the respondent's response aligned with a specific political party, and whether the argument was informational or moral-based. The analysis utilized LIWC, a software that analyzes text for certain commonalities such as the number of moral arguments. The annotations were compared mathematically in order to determine the agreement between annotations. This data would allow us to better understand the nature of political discussion. The project also has a second stage where participants are able to guess the response distribution, however the most recent portion of the project was focused on the encoding stage of the research project.

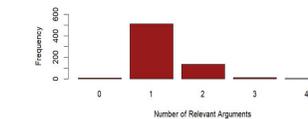
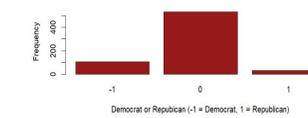
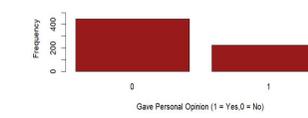
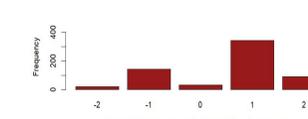
Results/Conclusions

Currently, this project is still ongoing. The team is currently working on the data analysis methods in order to determine the results of participants' responses based on different conditions. However, qualitatively the nature of certain responses were very interesting. Certain policies provoked different types of responses. Social issues seemed to have more people give responses that revealed a political party association. Also, issues that seemed like more "hot" topics had more agreement than was predicted. This idea aligned with the literature review as many individuals underestimate the agreement among individuals. While this project does not have any official results as of right now, more conclusions should be drawn within the next month. These results will be very helpful in structuring effective political discussion in the future in order to minimize pluralistic ignorance and prevent polarization.

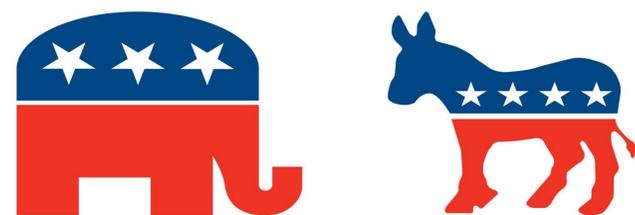
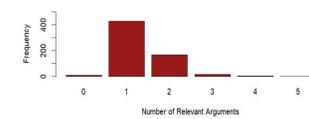
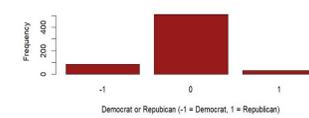
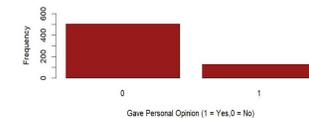
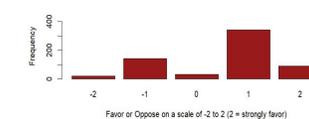
Policy 1: "Under this policy, WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) recipients will be able to use these benefits for mobile payments and online grocery orders, with delivery fees potentially covered by state or federal funds."



Policy 3: "The policy would lease additional federal public lands for production of solar, wind, or geothermal energy."



Policy 5: This policy aims to make wages more equal between federal employees of different gender, age, and/or racial groups in similar jobs. Specifically, it proposes to ban consideration of previous salaries when making job offers, so as not to perpetuate the wage gaps of the past.



References



Acknowledgements

Thank you to Mrs. Marli Dunietz and Dr. Burdea for their support and mentoring over the past two semesters