Can Stereotypes-based Interventions in Beliefs about Out-group Reduce Partisan Animosity?

Alper Sukru Gencer

Department of Politics, NYU

December 12, 2023

Motivation

- **Problem**: Partisan animosity in backsliding democracies and post-conflict societies

- **Causes**: Misperceptions about outgroups
  - Overestimating out-group ideological extremity $\rightarrow$ partisan animosity (Ahler and Sood, 2018; Druckman et al., 2022; Voelkel et al., 2023b)

Motivation

- **Problem**: Partisan animosity in backsliding democracies and post-conflict societies

- **Causes**: Misperceptions about outgroups
  - Overestimating out-group ideological extremity $\rightarrow$ partisan animosity (Ahler and Sood, 2018; Druckman et al., 2022; Voelkel et al., 2023b)

- **Challenges**: Explicitly correcting beliefs of outgroup extremity might backfire

- **Research Questions**:
  - Can an intervention strategy reduce outgroup animosity in polarized settings?

Motivation

- **Research Questions**:
  - Can an intervention strategy reduce outgroup animosity in polarized settings?

- **Goal:** An intervention strategy for polarized settings:
  - indirect belief correction
  - context-agnostic strategy
  - driven by empirical data

A Survey Experiment in Turkey

1 **Theoretically-Derived Issues**
- to **indirectly** intervene outgroup extremism beliefs
- using representativeness-based discounting
- context-agnostic

A Survey Experiment in Turkey

1. Theoretically-Derived Issues
- to **indirectly** intervene outgroup extremism beliefs
- using representativeness-based discounting
- context-agnostic

2. Empirically-Derived Intervention Strategy:
- using surveys to find **1) divisive issues** and **2) stereotypical** positions

A Survey Experiment in Turkey

❶ Theoretically-Derived Issues
- to **indirectly** intervene outgroup extremism beliefs
- using representativeness-based discounting
- context-agnostic

❷ Empirically-Derived Intervention Strategy:
- using surveys to find **1) divisive issues** and **2) stereotypical** positions

❸ Survey experiment:
- using likely-stereotypical positions to **empirically derive** interventions
- challenging beliefs about the out-groups' ideology and extremity to reduce partisan animosity

Survey Experiment

- An online survey experiment in Turkey:

- Three treatment arms:

Survey Experiment

- An online survey experiment in Turkey:

- Three treatment arms:

    1) **Treatment Arm:** Exposure to **information** that challenge stereotypes about outgroup members

Survey Experiment

- An online survey experiment in Turkey:

- Three treatment arms:

  1) **Treatment Arm:** Exposure to **information** that challenge stereotypes about outgroup members
  2) **Treatment Arm:** Exposure to a **conversation** among outgroup members on theoretically stereotyped issues

Survey Experiment

- An online survey experiment in Turkey:

- Three treatment arms:

    1) **Treatment Arm:** Exposure to **information** that challenge stereotypes about outgroup members
    2) **Treatment Arm:** Exposure to a **conversation** among outgroup members on theoretically stereotyped issues
    3) **Treatment Arm:** Pure control

Survey Experiment

- An online survey experiment in Turkey:

- Three treatment arms:

    1) **Treatment Arm:** Exposure to **information** that challenge stereotypes about outgroup members
    2) **Treatment Arm:** Exposure to a **conversation** among outgroup members on theoretically stereotyped issues
    3) **Treatment Arm:** Pure control

- **Mediators**: Beliefs about the distribution of outgroup ideology and extremity

Survey Experiment

- An online survey experiment in Turkey:

- Three treatment arms:

    1) **Treatment Arm:** Exposure to **information** that challenge stereotypes about outgroup members
    2) **Treatment Arm:** Exposure to a **conversation** among outgroup members on theoretically stereotyped issues
    3) **Treatment Arm:** Pure control

- **Mediators**: Beliefs about the distribution of outgroup ideology and extremity

- **Outcomes**: Negative attitudes, partisan animosity, affective polarization

Treatment Operationalization

1. **Treatment Arm**: Exposure to **information** that challenge stereotypes about outgroup members on three divisive issues

$$\left(100 - Pr(Stereotype|Outgroup) * 100\right)\% \text{ without stereotyped positions}$$

Treatment Operationalization

1. **Treatment Arm**: Exposure to **information** that challenge stereotypes about outgroup members on three divisive issues

$$\left(100 - Pr(Stereotype|Outgroup) * 100\right)\% \text{ without stereotyped positions}$$

2. **Treatment Arm:** Exposure to a**conversation**

   - a hypothetical **Facebook conversation** between two outgroup members
   - on a divisive issue and non-stereotypical position
   - **Manipulation:** Profile names and photos

Pre-Treatment Questions

- To gain efficiency
- To calculate population-weights

Pre-Treatment Questions

- To gain efficiency
- To calculate population-weights

    - Age
    - Gender
    - Education level
    - Employment status

Pre-Treatment Questions

- To gain efficiency
- To calculate population-weights

    - Age
    - Gender
    - Education level
    - Employment status
    - Income level
    - Socio-economic class
    - Ethnicity
    - Religious sect

- Heterogeneous treatment effect

Pre-Treatment Questions

- Heterogeneous treatment effect

    - Political interest
    - News consumption (frequency)
    - News consumption (platform)
    - Political knowledge questions

Pre-Treatment Questions

- Heterogeneous treatment effect

    - Political interest
    - News consumption (frequency)
    - News consumption (platform)
    - Political knowledge questions
    - Political affiliation
    - Degree and importance of affiliation
    - Previous vote choice
    - Democratic attitudes

Pre-Treatment Questions

- Heterogeneous treatment effect

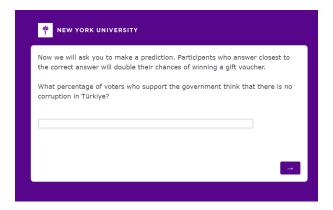# Pre-Treatment Questions

- Heterogeneous treatment effect

  - Prior beliefs about the ideological distributions
    - Government supporters
    - Opposition supporters
    - University students
    - Immigrants and refugees

Pre-Treatment Questions

- Heterogeneous treatment effect

    - Prior beliefs about the ideological distributions
        - Government supporters
        - Opposition supporters
        - University students
        - Immigrants and refugees

Now we will ask you to imagine 100 government supporters and place them into the following four categories. The total number of people in each line should be 100.

	Politically **completely** moderate and conciliatory	Politically **partially** moderate and conciliatory	Politically **partially** extreme and uncompromising	Politically **completely** extreme and uncompromising	Total
100 Government supporters	0	0	0	0	0

Pre-Treatment Questions

- Incentivized Guess about Stereotyped Position

- Incentivized Guess about Stereotyped Position

Treatment Arm - 1

Information Treatment:

A survey from recent years suggests interesting findings about Turkey. The majority of government supporters think there is some form of corruption and imperfect governance in Turkey.

- Indeed, only 15.8% of government supporters think Turkey has no corruption. In other words, 84.2% of government supporters, which is the majority of supporters, think there is some form of corruption in Turkey.
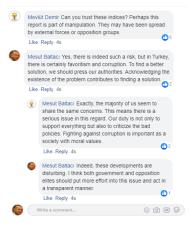

84.2%   15.8%

- Furthermore, only 15.2% of government supporters think the government's performance is great, whereas the remaining 84.8% indicated the performance is not perfect.

84.8%   15.2%

Conversation Treatment:

Outcome Measurement

1. Attention questions
2. Beliefs about Out-groups Ideology Distribution:
   - Outgroup Ideological Distributions (both pre-treatment and post-treatment)

Outcome Measurement

1. Beliefs about Out-groups Extremity:
   - **Outgroup's Probability of Being a Violent Extremist** (both pre-treatment and post-treatment)
     - Preventing others from voting
     - Not accepting election loss
     - Electoral fraud, Electoral violence
     - Deny others' rights and freedoms
   - **Social categorization questions:** Asking how likely various issue position owners can commit/support extremism
     - (pro-abortion, pro-religious education, anti-immigrants, anti-western pro-LGBT-Q, pro-animal rights)
   - Responses, Confidence in Responses, and Time spent

Outcome Measurement

1. Out-group Attitudes:
   - Joy-of-destruction game: Money allocation
   - Out-group feeling thermometer

2. Affective Polarization:
   - Trait association questions
   - Social distance questions