Effect of Political Orientation on Altruistic Attitudes

https://github.com/anind99/304Final

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Abstract

Altruism is the moral practice of helping others when they are in need. This may even include taking on a personal cost to do so. Having altruistic attitudes allowed humans to prosper over other organisms, and as a result societal norms have evolved to promote such stances. However modern society is dictated by government policies. The political orientation people take determine the altruistic stance of society as a single entity. In this paper I explored whether political orientation could predict altruistic stance. In addition, I determined whether political philosophy could predict political orientation i.e., whether the party people vote for truly represent their social stances. I confirmed the findings of previous papers, that political orientation and altruism are correlated. In addition, I determined that the current political system is not sufficient for representing the social philosophy of individuals.

Introduction

Altruism is the philosophy of helping others even when it may come at a personal cost. It is a behaviour that has evolved in social organisms as it provided a survival advantage over non-social species who had more competition and less companions. It is arguable that the fact that us humans are so social that we have been able beat the competition and become the dominant species in this world. Consequently, Altruism is a major part of the success of human society.

In his paper, Vlerick (2020) explained that with the addition of gene, our culture as well has evolved to take altruistic stances. Competition between groups selected for norms which were more beneficial for the survival of the group as a whole. For example, individuals who can be identified as "cheaters" are punished in various ways such as social criticism and even physical punishment. Vlerick didn't stop at this, in his paper he explored a novel aspect of altruism; conscious decision making. Rather than hard-wired motions, intuition-based processes play a major part. This may even override the automatic, instinctual responses talked about previously.

Being such an important aspect of society, one may ask; how can these altruistic characteristics that we have developed further be emphasized? While humans individually may morally take the

stance of helping others when they are need, society as a single entity (a system) does not always share this sentiment. Government policies dictate the opportunities people receive and ultimately decide the quality-of-life of less fortunate individuals.

In order to explore this societal implementation of altruism, in this paper I will explore the effect of political orientation on altruistic attitudes. This will be an expansion of the work done by Zettler and Hillbig (2009); who also explored whether altruism is an important construct even when controlling for personality factors. This is because while researchers have found the importance of personality on political orientation, the concept of altruism still hadn't been explored.

Zettler and Hillbig (2009) confirmed their hypotheses; i) Individuals high in altruism will endorse a left-wing ideology. Ii) Altruism explains unique variance in political orientation beyond personality (big six).

To follow the former study, I will be exploring whether political orientation influences altruistic attitudes. More specifically, I will be analyzing the prototypical properties of both extreme political stances (left vs Right), to determine whether they can predict altruistic stances. In addition, I will confirm whether these prototypical properties are truly representative of people or are individuals forced to take an extreme stance due to the nature of the political system.

In order to conduct this study will be using data collected by the American Social Survey (NORC 2016) and select for two groups of variables. The first being variables that capture altruistic attitudes, the second being variables associated with political orientation (including vote party). To follow I will be analyzing the effect of dependant variables of political orientation on the independent variables of altruistic responses. Lastly, I will determine whether the variables of pollical ideology can independently determine orientation. Or whether, our current pollical system is insufficient in capturing the social stances of its subjects. I will use linear regression, ordinal logistic regression along with chi-squared tests to determine the significance of the relationships between these variables.

Data

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