Based on Denberg 2020

Study 1 Methods

Study Sample

We conducted a stated preference survey of societal views on and personal support of Universal Health Care (UHC), capital punishment, anthropoegenic (human-caused) climate change, and slavery, among students enrolled in a Psychology course at a Midwestern University. Participants were recruited through an online survey platform and were offered course credit in exchange for their participation.

Survey design and development

Development of the survey instrument drew on prior literature on support for universal healthcare, perspectives on deontological and utilitarian moral orientation, as well as prior work on perception of social consensus. Our social consensus manipulation exercise was adapted from work on estimation of social consensus conducted by Kobayashi and colleagues (2018). Our final survey questionnaire directed participants to estimate perceived social consensus on support for different social issues, and then receive artificially high or low feedback on the degree of social consensus which allegedly exists among the population. We presented each participant with the same four social issues (support for UHC, capital punishment, climate change, and slavery); these scenarios were intended to provide variation in social characteristics, such as relative liberal/conservative leaning of issues and recent or past historical relevance. Participants then provided their level of support for our social issues after the social consensus manipulation. Support levels were captured as continuous variables ranging from 0 (strong disagreement) to 100 (strong agreement), with 50 representing relative neutrality. Participants also were measured for their deontological and utilitarian orientation, health literacy, numeracy, as well as demographic information related to gender identity, age, race/ethnicity, and year in school.

Intervention

Randomization of participants to either intervention condition was achieved using a randomization algorithm that guarantees each element was selected approximately equivalent amounts of times. We subjected participants in our intervention groups to a series of preference estimation tasks. Balance was sought between the social issues chosen such that there were a variety of public policy perspectives, both liberal and conservative, presented. Participants in our ‘high’ social consensus condition were given artificially high feedback on the degree to which society agreed on the four aforementioned issues; The feedback was manipulated to be 20% higher than the actual American survey values recorded in the literature. Likewise, participants in our ‘low’ social consensus were given artificially low feedback; feedback was manipulated to be 20% lower than survey values. Participants were prevented from changing their responses in prior answers in the survey.

Statistical analysis