

The Influence of Political Discussion on Policy Preference: A comparison of the United States and Japan

SEAN RICHEY

Pace University
srichey@pace.edu

KEN'ICHI IKEDA

University of Tokyo
ikeken@l.u-tokyo.ac.jp

Abstract

This research tests if political discussion influences policy preference. The literature greatly stresses the non-rational nature of political decision-making. Rational policy preferences require learning specific details in a competitive political environment. Yet, research shows that most people do not have the skills to understand policy. Social networking is one way to help people understand policy. Social network influence on policy preferences, however, is mostly ignored. We show that the likelihood of supporting a policy increases when one's social network supports a party that advocates that policy. We control for the political knowledge of the respondent, network size, partisanship, ideology, socioeconomic, and policy-specific determinants. Examining data from the 2000 American National Election Study and Japanese Election Study 3, we find strong results in the United States, but mixed results in Japan. Additional research we perform shows a stronger social network influence in Japan.

Introduction

How do people form policy preferences? The literature greatly stresses the non-rational nature of decision-making (see Lau, 2003, for a recent review). Rational policy preferences require learning specific details in a competitive political environment. In most contentious policy debates, the choices are blurred through the intense and creative marketing of competing policy agendas. That policy debates can be emotive has prompted some researchers to doubt if people are fully rational when deciding which policies to support (e.g. Bartels, 2005). This doubt is increased because many people are unaware of the policy choices available or the potential outcomes. Yet, sometimes policies do provoke political responses, such as the gay marriage referenda in the 2004

United States elections (McDonald, 2004). The influence of social networks is well known in many aspects of political behavior, and may explain how the average member of public makes policy choices. Yet, social network influence on policy preference has been ignored. This research tests the impact of social networking on policy preference. The potential impact of social networks is vastly increased if networks influence policy preferences, which in turn influence vote choice. Thus, discovering this effect may also assist our understanding of the stability of voting behavior.

We investigate the influence on policy preference by testing whether the likelihood of supporting a policy increases when the members of one's social network support a political party that also supports the policy. We examine data from the 2000 American National Election Study (NES) and Japanese Election Study 3 (JES3). We test in the United States the policy preferences from the NES: spending vs. service, the death penalty, abortion, equal rights, adoption by homosexuals, and school vouchers. The policy preferences we test from JES3 are the Japan–US security treaty, spending vs. service, counter-cyclical vs. restructuring policy, constitutional reform, federalism (local autonomy), and the prime minister's visits to Yasukuni Shrine (a controversial shrine to Japan's war dead, including 14 Class A war criminals). We find that for many policies, the political beliefs of the respondent's network have a large impact on the respondent's beliefs. We control for the political knowledge of the respondent, network size, partisanship, ideology, and socioeconomic and policy-specific determinants.

Discovering this relationship is important because it may explain how people form policy opinions with little political knowledge. The literature shows that most people possess very little information about vote choices and policies (e.g. Achen and Bartels, 2004; Althaus, 1998; Bartels, 1996, 2005; Delli Caprini and Keeter, 1996). How, then, does democracy work, when most voters are clueless? Our research shows that voters are influenced by their social networks, and, thus, it may explain how voters with little information will vote similarly to the more informed. Studies on opinion leadership in diffusion research – reviewed by Rogers (1995) – show the influence of opinion leaders on other members of their networks. Opinion leaders may influence the less knowledgeable by making recommendations in discussions. These recommendations do not necessarily teach about politics, but the end results will be an analogous vote outcome of a fully rational public. This research shows the importance of social networks to influence policy opinions, which will in turn influence vote choice. With declining social networking (Putnam, 2000), there is the potential for even less optimal policy choices to be made by voters, who will decide on policies with less guidance from their network.

The literature provides clear evidence of the power of social networks on voting (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1995; Ikeda *et al.*, 2005) and political participation (Ikeda and Richey, 2005; Kotler-Berkowitz, 2005; Kwak *et al.*, 2005), but it is not clear on policy opinion formation. Perhaps networks have greater influence on some policies than others. Further, policy is far more difficult to decipher or understand than candidates whose personality, looks, and campaign marketing all help voters choose.

The contribution of this research is that it tests network influence in an area of political behavior – policy preference – that was heretofore ignored.

Heterogeneous networks and policy beliefs in Japan and the United States

Japan and the United States are excellent test cases for the impact on policy preference because of the differences in social networking in each country. Maruyama (1961) posits that the Japanese typically have homogenous networks and have little exposure to outside ideas. Since Japanese people on average do not encounter diversity of opinion as regularly as Americans (Huckfeldt, Ikeda, and Pappi, 2005), they may not consider different policy options as often as Americans, i.e. they have less chance to scrutinize opinions different than their own. In contrast, Americans may encounter different opinions every day but it is probably not as common for the Japanese to encounter difference (Nakane, 1967). It is possible that Americans' exposure to diversity of ideas makes them less likely to accept advice on policy and more likely to see disagreement as non-threatening and potentially beneficial. Mutz (2002) shows that diverse crosscutting networks have the most beneficial impact in transmitting political information. This, of course, only applies to those Americans in diverse networks. By examining these two nations, we can observe the impact of macro-level diversity on policy preference in these homogenous and heterogeneous settings.

The lack of exact comparability between these surveys is a problem we need to address. Although they have many similar questions, political circumstances create the need to test different policies (discussed in more detail below). Also, the measures we use for party identification in social networks are different in each country, since Japan is a multi-party system and the United States is a two-party system. Further, the survey administration and methodology were performed with different survey organizations, and with different modes, e.g. a combination of phone and face-to-face interviews in the United States but only face-to-face interviews in Japan. We performed sensitivity analysis by including a control variable for mode differences in the NES data, and found it was not significant (see Bowers, Burns, Ensley, and Kinder, 2005 for an explanation of this process and why it is necessary). These differences challenge the validity of exact comparison of the outcomes, and thus our results are only broadly comparable.

Data

The Japanese data are from a national sample survey from 2003, the Japanese Election Survey 3 (JES3).¹ The JES3 is multiple wave survey, and we use wave four, which has a sample of 2,268 and a response rate of 63.5 per cent. The United States data come from the 2000 National Election Study (NES), which started approximately nine weeks before Election Day. The response rate was 86 per cent with a sample of

¹ Data descriptive statistics, the JES3 questionnaire, and information on the sampling procedure and survey administration are available upon request.

1,807.² There were no crucial issues specific to this time that would have changed policy attitudes in either country. We chose these data because both surveys ask similar questions about the respondent's social network using a similar technique, network batteries.

Social network variables

Both surveys collect network data by asking the respondents about the people with whom they discuss politics. Both the JES₃ and the NES ask about the four people with whom the respondent most often has political discussions. These surveys also ask the respondent to describe characteristics about each network member. We predict the more the respondent discusses politics with acquaintances from the same political party, the more similar their policy opinions will be, as this is a measure of in-group density. Research shows that in-group density congeals attitudes (Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague, 2004). To create this variable, we sum the perceived vote choice for each network member – up to four discussants are in each network. This is weighted by the amount of discussion from that member: coded from zero for no discussion, one for sometimes, and two for often. For the multi-party Japanese data, we dichotomize the various parties into incumbent coalition as these groups have generally similar policy viewpoints. This includes Liberal Democratic Party and Komeito (labeled as 'LDP' below) and the opposition: Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), Japanese Communist Party (JCP), and Japanese Socialist Party (JSP). There is obvious diversity between these parties, and this is a disadvantage when comparing two-party and multi-party systems. We ran sensitivity analysis by estimating the difference between the two largest parties – the LDP and DPJ, who account for 80 per cent of the Japanese vote choice – and the results are similar. We also tested putting Komeito into the opposition and dropping it altogether from the models, with no affect on the outcome, perhaps due to the small number of Komeito members. Thus, we are relatively confident that the influence of social networks in a multi-party system can be compared. We also control *Number of discussants* to ensure that more networking does not alter policy beliefs.

Another possible problem is that of the potential for endogeneity or self-selection; the other network members could be a product of the respondent's policy preferences. They may choose to discuss politics with someone because they have similar political opinions. We do not test this possibility in this paper; however, panel survey analysis done by Ikeda *et al.* (2005) suggests that this is not the case. In analyzing the composition of social networks, they show that networks are not formed on the basis of political homogeneity. We do not change our family and friends based on their political viewpoint, but our family and friends may change our political views. The implication of this study is that the causal direction is more likely from network to the respondent, rather than the reverse.

² Data descriptive statistics for the NES data are available upon request.

Dependent variables

The American policies are commonly discussed issues asked on the NES. It is important to use these famous issues because a high percentage of respondents will have an opinion about them. We test in the United States spending vs. service, the death penalty, abortion, equal rights, adoption by homosexuals, and school vouchers. The Japanese policies are also commonly discussed issues asked on the JES3. The policies we test from JES3 are the Japan–US security treaty, spending vs. service, counter-cyclical vs. restructuring policy, constitutional reform, federalism (local autonomy), and the prime minister's visits to Yasukuni Shrine. As previously stated, these dependent variables are not exactly comparable, and are policies of relevance in each country. Thus, caution is needed when comparing these results (for further information on these variables, please see the Appendix).

Control variables

We must control for other factors that influence policy beliefs. Primarily, ideology affects policy preferences. For the American data, *Ideology* is coded from zero to four with conservative highest. Party identification is coded one for Democratic in the United States, and one for LDP in Japan, and zero for all others. Socioeconomic factors affect policy preferences, and unless controlled can bias the results. Race is a determinant of policy preferences, which we control for with Whites coded as one, and others zero. Hispanics are coded one, and others zero. The other demographics that influence policy preference are being male, age measured in years, education in years, and income coded ordinally in 5,000-dollar categories. For Japan, we include *ideology* coded from one to ten with highest as conservative, being male, age in years, education in years, and income in 2,000,000-yen categories. Knowledge of politics is an important determinant of policy preference (Alvarez, 1998; Delli Caprini and Keeter, 1996). The more knowledgeable the respondent is the more stable their political choices and the less likely they are to be influenced by others. As used by Bartels (1996: 203), we include the survey interviewer's assessment of the respondent's political *knowledge*, coded from one for not knowledgeable to five for very knowledgeable about politics.

Some variables are only used with some models, as they would be inapplicable for some policies. Thus, religious and born again are dichotomous variables that measure these characteristics – coded one if so, and zero if not – and used in models for abortion and homosexual adoption. Media usage is controlled for in models for spending vs. service and death penalty. Media is measured by a question that asks whether or not the respondent watches television programs about politics. Trust also has been shown to influence certain policy beliefs (Hetherington, 1998). Trust is coded one if the respondent feels people are trustworthy, and zero if not for the United States. Trust in Japan also questions whether most people are trustworthy: agreement (coded five), partial agreement (coded four), neutrality (coded three), partial disagreement (coded two), or disagreement (coded one). In Japan, years of residence, city size (coded from

one for small towns, to six for large urban areas) and commute (coded in minutes) are used for appropriate policies.

Methods

For each policy, we construct a logistic regression model. Most dependent variables were dichotomized, but the results are robust to using ordered logistic regression models. To save space, we present simulations from *Clarify* (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2003), drawn from the data to show the effect of a change in a quantity of interest on the dependent variable. Here, all the control variables are held at their mean, and the predicted effect is shown for a specified change in the social network diversity variable. To predict the likely policy support for each type of network, the program creates 1,000 simulations from the data. The curves on the graphs display the 95 per cent confidence intervals of the predicted probability distributions of supporting a certain policy when often discussing politics with either four discussants that support the Democratic or LDP party or with four discussants that support the Republican or Opposition party, *ceteris paribus*.

A source of error is whether missing data are not missing completely at random (King *et al.*, 2001). For example, the NES data has only 1,350 complete cases, out of a possible of 1,807. Many of the cases are missing only one variable's response, but regression analysis using listwise deletion throws out the entire case. Multiple imputation is a better alternative than listwise deletion (King *et al.*, 2001). Multiple imputation creates data for the missing responses based on information in the case and the other data. Simulated data are more trustworthy than the biased data set after listwise deletion (King *et al.*, 2001). We use the *Amelia* (King *et al.*, 2001) program to create five imputed data sets for both NES and JES3, and each have all cases. We use *Clarify* (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg, 2000) packages for Stata to handle the multiple data sets, run the regressions, calculate the standard errors, and create the simulations below. No data, however, are imputed for opinions, such as ideology. We do not know whether the data are missing, or if the respondent did not respond because they are neither conservative nor liberal. The opinion variables, however, were almost fully present. Most missing data are from demographic variables such as *Income*. To address possible concerns over imputation, we checked the results using the non-imputed data. They are substantively similar for all causal variables, and thus any bias is negligible.

We cannot impute data for discussants because the data are not necessarily missing, as the respondent may not have political discussions with four friends. It is important, however, not to delete these cases with listwise deletion, as data on one, two or three other network members are important. Therefore, we code responses for those with less than four discussants as zero in the space for the missing friend. The zero-coded missing answers for the non-existent discussant do not then alter the outcome when summed.

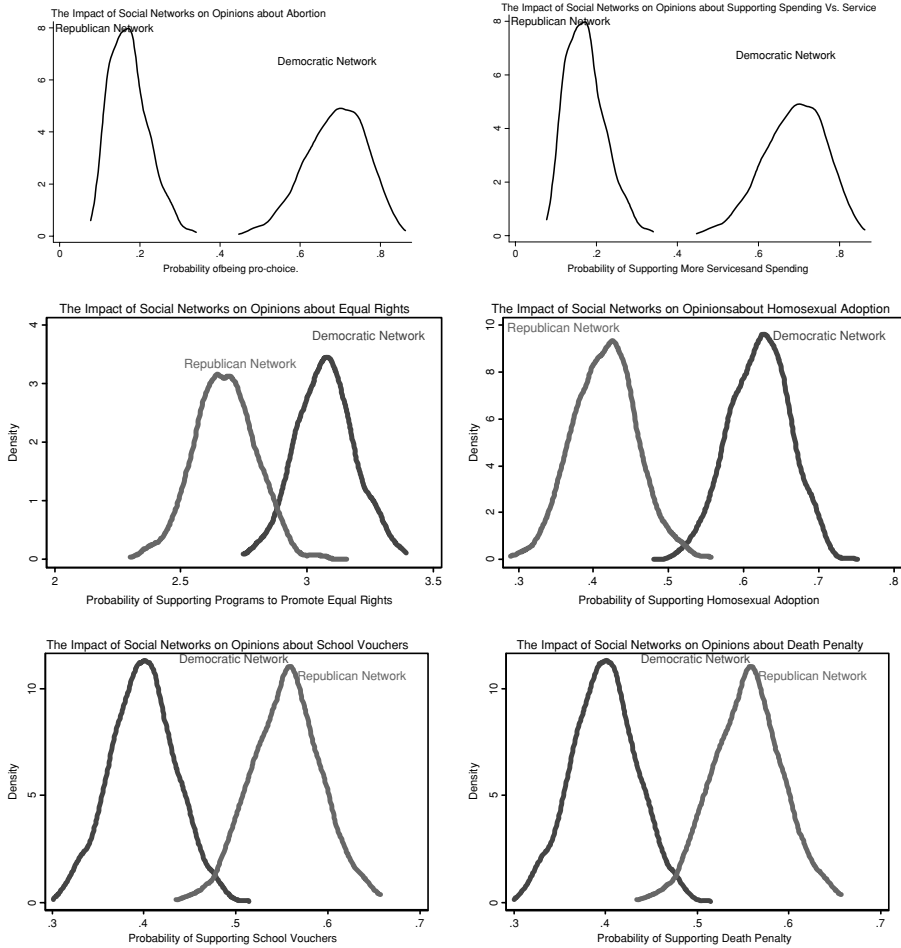


Figure 1 These graphs show that political discussion influences policy preferences in the United States. The lines represent the predicted probability distributions of supporting a policy when often discussing politics with either a four-person Republican or Democratic social network, while holding all else constant. See text for details.

Results: the impact of network on policy preference

The results are summarized in Figures 1 and 2 to save space.³ For all models there were no collinear variables or heteroscedasticity. The control variables basically match their hypothesized effect. To restate, the lines in the figures show the probability distributions of the impact on policy preference of speaking often about politics with either four supporters of the Democratic or LDP parties, or, alternatively, a four person

³ The full results are available upon request.

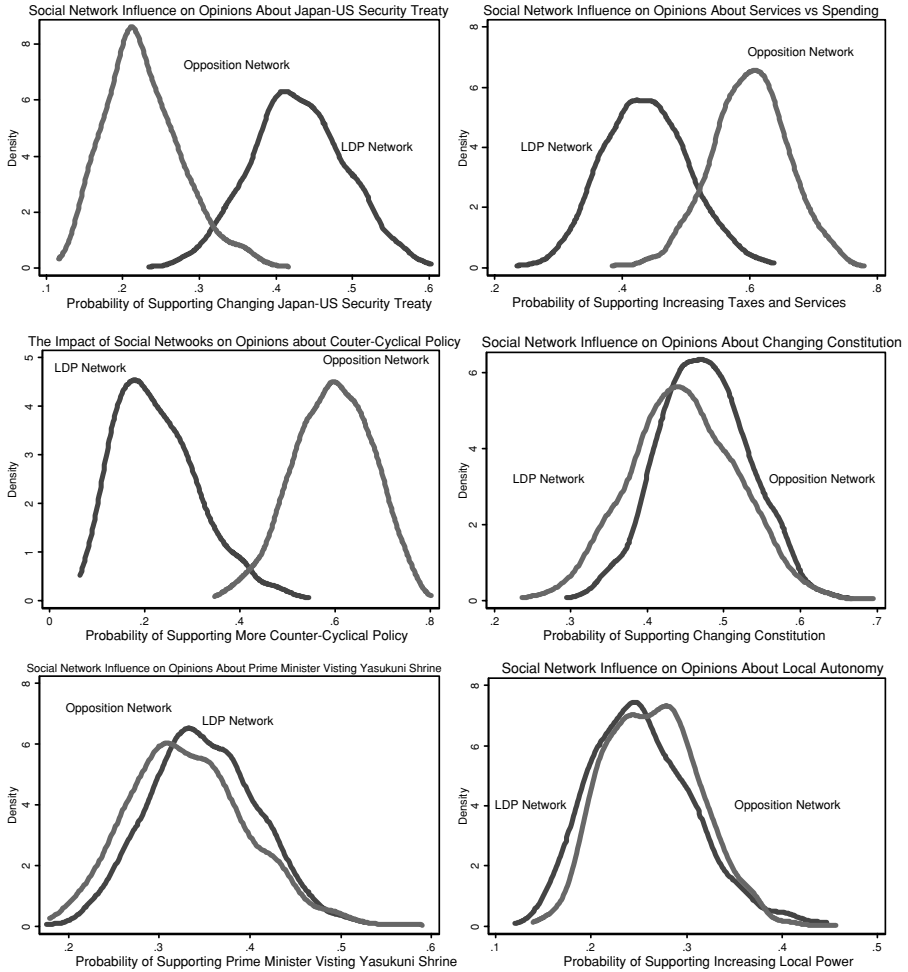


Figure 2 These graphs show that political discussion influences policy preferences in Japan. The lines represent the predicted probability distributions of supporting a policy when often discussing politics with either four LDP supporters or four supporters of opposition parties, while holding all else constant. See text for details.

network of Republican or Opposition supporters, while holding the control variables constant.

United States

The results show that for the United States having a Democratic network rather than a Republican network has a strong effect on every policy considered. Spending vs. service, death penalty, abortion, equal rights, gay rights, and school vouchers all show strong significant effects. These are large effects. For every policy, we found a

significant large effect that the more Gore voter's in your social network, the more you support liberal polices, holding all else constant including your ideology and political knowledge. The models shown fit the data well, and many of the covariates are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. The significant variables match their predictions in all models.

Japan

The results show that for Japan, social networks have an effect on some policies. Japan–US security treaty, spending vs. service, and counter-cyclical policy have significant effects. The more opposition voter's in your social networks, the more you support liberal polices, holding all else constant. Constitutional reform, Prime Minister's Yasukuni visits, and federalism (local autonomy) do not show any effects. The models shown fit the data well, and many of the covariates are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. The significant variables basically match their predictions.

Why are there differences on the effect of social networks between Japan and the United States? Half of the policies have clear effects in Japan and the others do not. One explanation may be that the issues that had no effect were touchy or risky issues. As it is an old issue, most people have established a very clear position on changing the constitution for a long time. Fearing arguments with extremists, people may avoid talking about this issue. The Yasukuni issue shows the same tendency. Local autonomy, however, is different, as this issue has not attracted much interest and may not provoke hostility when discussed. It may be that these issues are not discussed in interpersonal networks, due to fear or lack of interest. On the other hand, the Japan–US security treaty is an issue on which there is general agreement to support the treaty more or less across the left and right, except for the JCP. For service and spending and counter-cyclical policy, many Japanese favor big government. Those issues are easy to discuss without risking your social position. Perhaps this explains why some policies have a network effect, because they are issues that people actually discuss.

These results do not necessarily support the hypothesis on the comparative difference in network heterogeneity, as both countries show a similar network effect. The difference between Japan and US may not come from network heterogeneity, but come instead from a Japanese cultural fear of instigating conflict. This inference is supported by research on Japanese risk aversion (see Ikeda and Kobayashi, 2006).

Another possibility is that Japanese voters perhaps see the parties as a package that compromises on a variety of issues, some of which they cannot agree on, others they can agree on, and still others they are not interested in. The complex factional politics of Japan, where factions inside the party often fight more with each other than with separate parties, make it difficult to know a party's policy stance. In these confusing circumstances, voters cannot easily understand what policy their network supports, simply by knowing their discussants' vote choices. Fractional party politics make vote choice a kind of 'Fuku-bukuro', you can buy in bargain seasons, in which there are

Table 1. *Determinants of Number of LDP Manifesto Points the Respondent Agrees with from JES3*

Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Network LDP support	0.168*	(0.050)
Homogeneity	-0.022	(0.021)
Ideology	0.034	(0.022)
PartyID	0.292***	(0.116)
Male	0.401***	(0.088)
Years of residence	0.003	(0.047)
Education	-0.066	(0.047)
Age	-0.002	(0.004)
City size	-0.067***	(0.021)
Intercept	1.408***	(0.344)
Number of cases	609	
χ^2	77.58***	
-2 Log likelihood	-723.66	

Note: Cells represent unstandardized coefficients and standard errors of an negative binomial regression model for determinants of number of LDP manifesto points the respondent agrees with.

a variety of things (some attract you and some do not, but in general you can be satisfied). If this is true, then vote choice may be a kind of package policy deal, and not a cumulative index of issue preference. In this situation, it will not be clear what policy your discussant supports, even if you know how they voted. In Japan, where parties are less ideologically coherent, it is more difficult to utilize your discussant's vote choice as a heuristic for understanding policy. Knowing how your friend voted maybe a helpful heuristic for understanding policy in America, with clearer partisan policy positions. Simply put, because the LDP does not stand for specific policies due to factional infighting, it is hard to apply the knowledge that your friend supports the LDP to whether or not you should support specific policies. This lack of party policy coherence may explain the lower network effect in Japan.

If Japanese understanding of policy is a kind of package deal based on partisanship, then it can be predicted that if we provide partisan cues, network influence should emerge. For example, if you trust your friend's political judgment, and they are all LDP supporters, the network effect may appear when we inform the respondent that the LDP has advocated certain policies in their manifesto. We predict the more the respondent's discussants support a certain party, the more manifesto points of that party the respondent will agree with, holding all else constant. In the 2003 election in Japan, JES3 has a measurement of support for the party manifestos' 14 policy issues in the post election survey. Manifestos are similar to party platforms. For example, JES3 asks, 'Political parties advocated manifestos in this election campaign and the policies stated became political issues, which party is closest to you on these issues.' Thus,

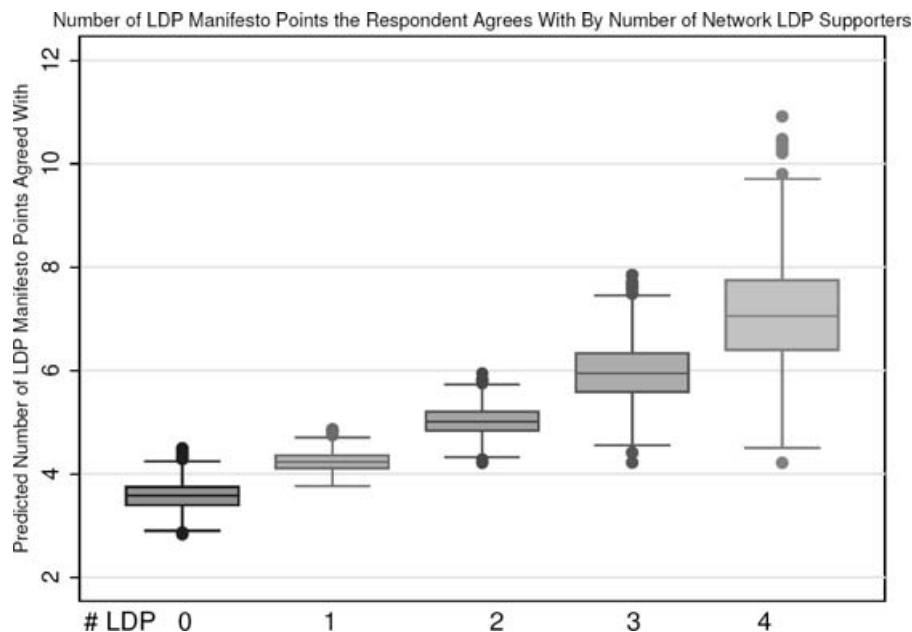


Figure 3 This graph shows that informal social networks influence the number of manifesto policies that someone agrees with in Japan, while holding all else constant in a Negative Binomial regression model. The boxes represent the 95 per cent confidence intervals for each simulated network.

we measure the total number of policies that the respondent agrees, and predict that the respondent's support for the party's policies will increase the more their network members support that party. The number of policies supported is event count data. Thus, for this model, we use a negative binomial regression model.⁴ Unfortunately, the NES does not have party platform questions, so we cannot compare the results.

Table 1 shows that having more LDP supporters in your network does increase the number of LDP manifesto policies you support. Of course, a conservative ideology and LDP party identification also increase the number of supported policies. As expected, rural voters and males also support more of the LDP's manifesto policy positions. We can calculate the predicted level of having each possible number of LDP supporters in the network using *Clarify*. We plot this in Figure 3. It shows clearly that the power

⁴ The choice of which event count model to employ depends on if the data are over-dispersed, under-dispersed, or equi-dispersed and if they are zero-inflated (Long, 1997: 237). The test statistic for whether to use a Poisson or a negative binomial regression model is the α test of over-dispersion. If $\alpha \approx 1$, then Poisson is an accurate model. The α test of over-dispersion shows that these data are over-dispersed, with α over two in all models. As α rises significantly above one, it shows that the data are over-dispersed and a negative binomial regression model is required. The Vuong test recommends non-zero inflated models if the results show large significant negative values. These data are not zero inflated as the Vuong test of zero inflation is negative and significant in all models z is below negative eight and $p < 0.00$. Thus, a negative binomial regression model is acceptable (see Long, 1997: 230–8).

of social network influence may require partisan cues to understand which policy to support, and the manifesto provided these cues. For example, a person may not know where the LDP stands on political issues. If they are told that the LDP supports a certain policy in the manifesto, then the knowledge that their close friend strongly supports the LDP may impact their decision to support this policy. In the more clearly partisan American context, voters should know where their parties stand on issues easily, and not need a cue from a party platform. Additional research should focus on this area.

Conclusion

This research finds that political discussion helps citizens form policy preferences. Why is there an effect in the United States and only sometimes in Japan? Is this due to the difference between the types of social networks in the United States and Japan? Or, perhaps the Japanese data do not measure policy preference well, as suggested by the manifesto results. Another possible explanation is that arguing about something as potentially contentious as policy disputes is too extreme for the Japanese environment, where the cultural emphasis is on preference for similarity and harmony (Dalton, 2002; Weisberg and Tanaka, 2001). Perhaps diverse networks will have an impact in Japan on less threatening forms of disagreement.

Theories on the need for political discussion for a successful democracy are linked to a long philosophical tradition that stretches from Habermas in the twentieth century back to Rousseau, and even to Aristotle. These theorists stress that being a political animal means that we need to use political discussion to resolve our differences. For example, Habermas' argues for constitutional reforms to create structures that permit and encourage political discussion to allow citizens to learn about politics from their peers. The research supports this, and more reforms that promote political discussion should be considered and implemented.

That policy preference is influenced by political discussion has interesting possibilities for democratic theory. This research shows that our opinions on politics are a product of communication in informal networks. Other studies show that interpersonal communication is sometimes necessary to comprehend the nightly news (e.g. Robinson and Levy, 1986). Thus, our political understanding often derives from informal networks, even if the original information comes from the mass media. In this sense, without support from networks, our political comprehension may be limited. This is important because understanding the influence of social networks may allow opportunities to develop programs to increase political knowledge. For example, one suggestion is for government to promote political understanding by sponsoring deliberation (Ackerman and Fishkin, 2004; Leib, 2004). If programs can be created that sponsor political discussion, they may force people to encounter new ideas and have a large impact on creating more rational policy preference.

One caveat is that we have no data that specifically show whether advice is offered, although the model does contain data on the amount of discussion. The results are, hence, limited to conclusions based on the assumption that advice was given during

the political discussions, and this is what leads to the similarity of policy preference. This is an area future research should examine when considering who is influential in social networks.

References

- Achen, Chris H. and Larry M. Bartels (2004), 'Musical Chairs: Pocketbook Voting and the Limits of Democratic Accountability', Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September.
- Ackerman, Bruce and James S. Fishkin (2004), *Deliberation Day*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Althaus, Scott (1998), 'Information Effects in Collective Preferences', *American Political Science Review*, 92(3): 545–58.
- Alvarez, R. Micheal (1998), *Information and Elections: Revised to Include the 1996 Presidential Election*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Bartels, Larry M. (1996), 'Uninformed Votes: Information Effects in Presidential Elections', *American Journal of Political Science*, 40(1): 194–230.
- Bartels, Larry M. (2005), 'Homer Gets a Tax Cut: Inequality and Public Policy in the American Mind', *Perspectives on Politics*, 3(1): 15–31.
- Bowers, Jake, Nancy Burns, Micheal J. Ensley, and Donald R. Kinder (2005), 'Analyzing the 2000 National Election Study', *Political Analysis*, 13(1): 109–11.
- Dalton, Russel J. (2002), *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, 3rd edition, New York: Chatham House.
- Delli Carpini, Michael X. and Scott Keeter (1996), *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Hetherington, Marc J. (1998), 'The Political Relevance of Political Trust', *American Political Science Review*, 92(4): 791–808.
- Huckfeldt, Robert, Ken'ichi Ikeda, and Franz Pappi (2005), 'Patterns of Disagreement in Democratic Politics: Comparing Germany, Japan, and the United States', *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(2): 497–514.
- Huckfeldt, Robert, Paul E. Johnson, and John D. Sprague (2005), *Political Disagreement: The Survival of Diverse Opinions Within Communication Networks*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Huckfeldt, Robert and John D. Sprague (1995), *Citizens, Politics, and Social Communication*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ikeda, Ken'ichi and Robert Huckfeldt (2001), 'Political Communication and Disagreement Among Citizens in Japan and the United States', *Political Behavior*, 23(1): 23–51.
- Ikeda, Ken'ichi and Tetsuro Kobayashi (2006), 'Risk Avoidance and Economic Value Orientation: Functioning of Post-materialist Values in the Pacific Rim Countries', in Russel Dalton (ed.), *Citizens, Democracy and Markets around the Pacific Rim*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ikeda, Ken'ichi, James Liu, Masahiko Aida, and Marc Wilson (2005), 'Dynamics of Interpersonal Political Environment and Party Identification: Longitudinal Studies of Voting in Japan and New Zealand', *Political Psychology*, 26(4): 517–42.
- Ikeda, Ken'ichi and Sean E. Richey (2005), 'Japanese Network Capital: The Impact of Social Networks on Japanese Political Participation', *Political Behavior*, 27(3): 239–60.
- Katz, Elihu and Paul Lazarsfeld (1955), *Personal Influence*, New York: The Free Press.
- King, Gary, Michael Tomz, and Jason Wittenberg (2000), 'Making the Most of Statistical Analyses: Improving Interpretation and Presentation', *American Journal of Political Science*, 44(2): 347–61.
- King, Gary, James Honaker, Anne Joseph, and Kenneth Scheve (2001), 'Analyzing Incomplete Political Science Data', *American Political Science Review*, 95(1): 49–69.
- Kotler-Berkowitz, Laurence (2005), 'Friends and politics: Linking diverse friendship networks to political participation', in Alan S. Zuckerman (ed.), *The Social Logic of Politics: Personal Networks as Contexts for Political Behavior*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 152–70.

- Kwak, Nojin, Ann E. Williams, Xiaoru Wang, and Hoon Lee (2005), 'Talking Politics and Engaging Politics: An Examination of the Interactive Relationships between Structural features of Political Talk and Discussion Engagement', *Communication Research*, 32(1): 87–111.
- Lau, Richard (2003), 'Models of Decision Making', in David O. Sears, Leonie Huddy, and Robert Jervis (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 19–59.
- Leib, Ethan J. (2004), *Deliberative Democracy in America: A Proposal for a Popular Branch of Government*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Long, J. Scott (1997), *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables. Advanced Quantitative Techniques in the Social Sciences*, Volume 7. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Maruyama, Masao (1961), *Japanese Thought*, Tokyo: Iwanami Books (in Japanese).
- McDonald, Michael P. (2004), 'Up, Up and Away! Voter Participation in the 2004 Presidential Election', *The Forum* (2): 4.
- Mutz, Diana C. (2002), 'Cross-cutting Social Networks: Testing Democratic Theory in Practice', *American Political Science Review*, 96(1): 111–26.
- Nakane, Chie (1967), *Tate Shakai no Ningen Kankei: Tanitsu Shakai no Riron [Human Relationship in Vertical Society: Theory of Mono-Society, in Japanese]*, Tokyo: Kodansha.
- NES (2000), 'The National Election Studies', Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan, Electronic resources from the NES World Wide Web site www.umich.edu/~nes, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies [producer and distributor], 1995–2002.
- Putnam, Robert D. (2000), *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Robinson, John P. and Mark R. Levy (1986), 'Interpersonal Communication and News Comprehension', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 50(2): 160–75.
- Rogers, Everett M. (1995), *Diffusion of Innovations*, 4th edition, New York NY: Free Press.
- Sniderman, Paul M., Richard A. Brody, and Philip E. Tetlock (1991), *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tomz, Michael, Jason Wittenberg, and Gary King (2003), CLARIFY: Software for Interpreting and Presenting Statistical Results, Version 2.1, Stanford University, University of Wisconsin, and Harvard University, January 5, Available at <http://gking.harvard.edu/>
- Weisberg, Herbert F. and Aiji Tanaka (2001), 'Change in the Spatial Dimensions of Party Conflict: The Case of Japan in the 1990s', *Political Behavior*, 23(2): 75–101.

Appendix

Here are the question wordings for the dependent variables. For the NES, each respondent was asked about the following policies:

Abortion

There has been some discussion about abortion during recent years. I am going to read you a short list of opinions. Please tell me which one of the opinions best agrees with your view? You can just tell me the number of the opinion you choose. 1 by law, abortion should never be permitted. 2 the law should permit abortion only in case of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger. 3 the law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the woman's life, but only after the need for the abortion has been clearly established. 4 by law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice. 7 other (specify) 8 DK.

Spending vs. service

Some people think the government should provide fewer services even in areas such as health and education in order to reduce spending. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Other people feel it is important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6.

Equal rights

Our society should do whatever is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. 'Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with this statement?'

Death penalty

Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

Adoption by homosexuals

Do you think gay or lesbian couples, in other words, homosexual couples, should be legally permitted to adopt children?

School vouchers

Do you favor or oppose a school voucher program that would allow parents to use tax funds to send their children to the school of their choice, even if it were a private school?

In the JES3, each respondent was asked '(w)hich statement do you agree with? Choose one that is the closest to your opinion: 1. Agree with A 2. Somewhat agree with A 3. Somewhat agree with B 4. Agree with B 5. DK 6. NA.'

Services vs. spending

A. Even if the taxes have to be increased, public services such as welfare should be improved. B. Even if (the) public services such as welfare have to be weakened, the tax burden should be made lighter.

Contra-cyclical policy

A. When the economic climate as is bad as it is now, the government should put (the) priority on the contra-cyclical policy, even though it may delay the financial reconstruction. B. When the country is in so much debt as it is now, the government should put (the) priority on the financial reconstruction, even though it may delay the contra-cyclical policy.

Constitution reform

A. The Constitution of Japan is becoming out of date, and should be amended in the near future. B. The Constitution of Japan is good and respectable overall, and should not be amended at this point in time.

Japan—US security

A. In order to strengthen the Japan—US security regime, the use of the right to collective self-defense should be approved. B. Because Japan might be involved in international conflicts, the use of the right to collective self-defense should not be approved.

Yasukuni visits

A. In order to console the souls of the war dead, the Prime Minister should pay an official visit to Yasukuni Shrine. B. To be in accord with the principle of separation of politics and religion, the Prime Minister should not pay an official visit to Yasukuni Shrine.

Local autonomy

A. In order to support local autonomous bodies that are not competitive, it is legitimate to distribute government subsidies. B. In order to realize a vital society, local areas should participate in free competition and receive less government subsidies.