Citizen’s political discussion network

- A central feature of contemporary deliberative democratic theories
- People get informed, affirm their political views, or being contested, etc.
- Robust evidence re: preference towards...
  - like-minded people (consistency)
  - Better informed people (understanding)
A dilemma

“Ahn et al., 2013; Huckfeldt et al., 2014

“When available, individuals would most strongly prefer discussion partners that are well informed who also share the same political preferences”
A tradeoff
Ahn et al., 2013; Huckfeldt et al., 2014

- One’s ability to talk “ideal” (i.e., highly informed co-partisan) partners depends on various factors outside of one’s explicit control.

- In reality such socially-supplied political expertise is not readily-available nor equally distributed to every citizens.

- In contrast, exposure to political disagreement is common and widespread.
A role of personality traits

• personality traits such as the Big-Five (John et al., 2008; McCrae & Costa, 1997) represent a stable and reliable way of how individuals orient themselves towards an outside world

• Existing studies suggests that preference for political agreement and expertise are uniquely related to personality factors
Expectations

• Effects of preference on talk frequency
  • Preference towards opinion agreement and (alter) expertise will increase talk frequency

• When preference towards agreement and expertise collide, does personality matter?
  • Different facets of personality dimensions?
  • Different “topics” of political discussion?
PUMA Online Survey

• Following standard egocentric network name-generator Qs, we ask:
  • Social contacts (up to 3 discussants)
  • Discussion frequency of economic / immigration
  • Perceived opinion agreement
  • Perceived (alter) political expertise
  • Ego's personality traits

• PUMA survey module II
  • Data collection in 2016
  • Representative survey data (N = 721)
  • Using Covariate Balance Propensity score weighting, we address some methodological concerns
Preference towards “ideal” discussants

• Independent effects of disagreement and expertise:
  • If more agreement, more discussion frequency
  • If more expertise, more discussion frequency

• Clear preference towards “expertised but co-partisan” discussants
Preference towards “ideal” discussants

• Independent effects of disagreement and expertise:
  • If more agreement, more discussion frequency
  • If more expertise, more discussion frequency

• Clear preference towards “expertised but co-partisan” discussants
When agreeableness is low, one is mainly responsive to disagreement.
When agreeableness is high, disagreement has no effect when low expertised alter is concerned.
When Extraversion is low, one is more responsive to disagreement when expertised alters are concerned.
When Extraversion is high, one is mainly responsive to disagreement
Conclusion

• Logic of agreement and expertise

• The relationship is then partly conditioned by individuals’ personality characteristics

• Topic of discussion and personality appears to both affect the relationship between agreement and expertise in predicting frequency