

**Symposium
on
Media and Internet Use
During General Election 2015**

Wednesday, 27 January 2016

Conference Room, Level 1, Oei Tiong Ham Building

Multiple Opinion Climate Indicators: Significance of Offline-Online Opinion Climate Perceptions on Engagement and Voting Behaviour

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Multiple Opinion Climate Indicators in GE2015

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Significance of Study

‘Watershed election’, GE 2011

- Lowest votes for incumbent since independence (60.14%)
- Most parliament seats for opposition
- Loss of GRC

▪ touted as *Social Media* election

- Opinions from social connections
- Diverse opinions from various groups and individuals
- Faster information
- More “authentic” information, NPNT
- Alternative opinions and information than more traditional media sources

Is Social Media Really Influential

- **Role of perceived public opinion**
- **Different types/layers of opinion climates and social media platforms**
 - Personal vs. Society vs. Social Media
- **On different issues**
 - Population, Transport, Housing
- **On voting outcomes**
 - Demographics and Personal Disposition



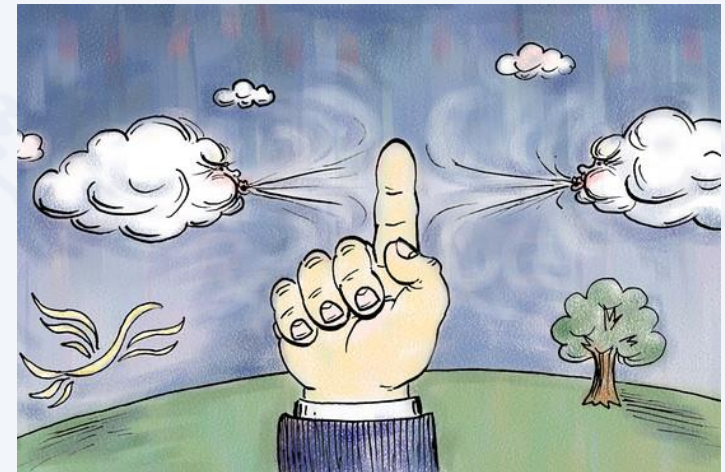
Sensing the Opinion Climate

“Quasi-statistical sense”

- “sensitively-tuned organ” to connect one’s own opinion with proportion of population
- seek majority opinion on certain issues

Conformity hypothesis, Decision-making

- what is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’
- reference groups
 - what I should be concerned about
 - how to think about issues



Source: Barbara Kelly, Wall Street Journal,
<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703735804575535980253650578>

Multiple Opinion Climates

Traditional Opinion Climates

- Mass media news sources
- Public Opinion polls
- Reference groups



Multiple and Multi-layered Opinion Climates

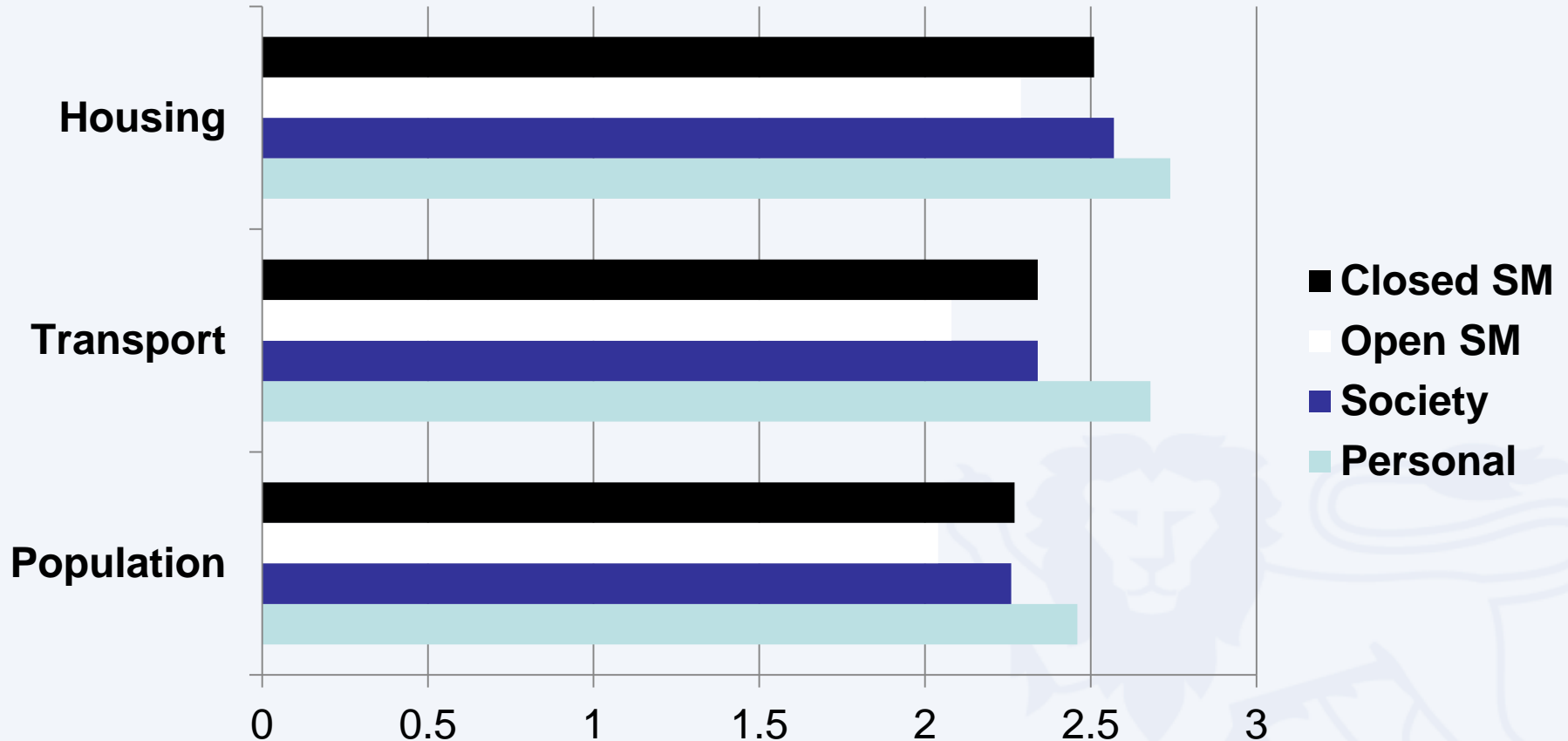
- Personal
- General Society
- Social Media
 - Open-group (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
 - Closed-group (WhatsApp, Viber, IM, FM, etc.)

Questions

If Social Media is really influential during GE,

- 1. influence of social media via perceived public opinion on voters and their voting patterns?**
- 2. significant differences between opinion climates perceived from different platforms and indicators?**
 - i. personal vs. general society vs. open-group SM vs. closed-group SM
- 3. differ by different issues?**
 - i. population vs. transport vs. housing
- 4. hold after considering voter demographics and individual political predispositions?**
 - i. age, gender, education, income
 - ii. personal interest in election issues, perceived self-efficacy in the elections, perceived knowledge of political issues

Finding: Opinion Climates of Different Issues



Qn: Overall, how do you feel [*opinion climate*] about how the government is handling issues related to [*specific issues*].

Scale: 1=Very Dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very Satisfied

Finding: Opinion Climate Differences

Issue	Opinion Climate	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Housing	Personal v. Society	8.277	1972	.000
	Society v. Open SM	11.301	1450	.000
	Open SM v. Closed SM	-7.807	1119	.000
	Closed SM v. Personal	8.973	1235	.000
Transport	Personal v. Society	15.667	1977	.000
	Society v. Open SM	10.059	1457	.000
	Open SM v. Closed SM	-9.275	1127	.000
	Closed SM v. Personal	11.569	1241	.000
Population	Personal v. Society	9.966	1963	.000
	Society v. Open SM	9.430	1443	.000
	Open SM v. Closed SM	-9.499	1113	.000
	Closed SM v. Personal	6.511	1226	.000

Finding: Demographic and Personal Dispositions on Voting

	Housing (n=670)		Transport (n=673)		Population (n=662)	
	β	<i>t</i>	β	<i>t</i>	β	<i>t</i>
Age	.001	.026	-.005	-.130	.001	.024
Gender	.145***	3.734	.145***	3.772	.141***	3.613
Education	-.027	-.632	-.032	-.758	-.022	-.505
Income	.000	.006	.000	.008	-.001	-.024
	F=3.755, p<.01, R ² =.016		F=3.902, p<.01, R ² =.017		F=3.465, p<.01, R ² =.015	
Personal Interest (election issues)	-.039	-.900	-.041	-.949	-.040	-.920
Perceived self-efficacy (election)	.224***	5.620	.225***	5.656	.224***	5.562
Perceived knowledge (political issue)	-.158***	-3.557	-.158***	-3.567	-.154***	-3.457
	F=7.82, p<.001, R ² =.067		F=7.98, p<.001, R ² =.068		F=7.46, p<.001, R ² =.064	

p<.05*, *p*<.01**, *p*<.001***

Voting: Which party did you vote for in GE2015 – 1=Opposition, 2=Incumbent

Finding: Opinion Climates on Voting

	Housing (n=670)		Transport (n=673)		Population (n=662)	
	β	t	β	t	β	t
Personal	.377***	7.639	.306***	6.584	.414***	8.292
Society	-.079	-1.402	-.037	-.663	-.126*	-2.105
Open SM	-.030	-.503	-.031	-.541	.013	.211
Closed SM	.164***	2.776	.185**	3.379	.102	1.760
	F=19.56, $p<.001$, $R^2=.234$		F=16.82, $p<.001$, $R^2=.206$		F=17.58, $p<.001$, $R^2=..216$	

$p<.05^*$, $p<.01^{**}$, $p<.001^{***}$

Voting: Which party did you vote for in GE2015 – 1=Opposition, 2=Incumbent

Summary (1)

1. Overall, opinion climates perceived to be least critical toward housing issues, and most critical toward **population** issues
2. Voters perceive the opinion climates from different indicators differently from one another
 - i. Overall, opinion climate from open-group social media platforms perceived as most critical on issues
 - ii. Personal opinion on issues is least critical on issues
3. Perceived self-efficacy [*positive association*] and Perceived knowledge [*negative association*] with voting patterns [*Voting scale: 1=Opposition, 2=Incumbent*]

Summary (2)

1. **Personal opinions most influential on voting patterns in ALL three issues *[direct relationship]***
 - i. The more satisfied voters are of how government is handling the issues, the more likely they will vote for the incumbent
2. **Perceived opinion climate from closed social media platforms second most influential on voting patterns in *housing* and *transport* issues *[direct relationship]***
3. **Perceived opinion climate from open-group social media platforms is NOT significant on voting patterns across ALL issues.**

Conclusion

- **Open-group social media platforms generally produce opinion climates that are:**
 - perceived as most critical of how government is handling societal issues
 - perceived as most distant from personal opinion
 - are not influential in voting decisions c.f. other opinion climates
- **Closed-group social media platforms are more influential than open-group platforms**
 - closer-tied networks, reference groups
 - greater levels of individual involvement with group concerns and discussions

Thank You

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