

Track 2 Proposal:
Philanthropy in polarized political times: Policy, inequality, and consumer welfare

Philanthropy is affected by changing financial behavior, fluctuations in public policy, and the effects of unforeseen events (Van Steenburg et al. 2022). Overlooked, though, is the effect of political polarization. In combining previous TCR tracks on polarization (2019) and philanthropy (2021, 2023), this Track 2 will collect data before and after the conference to empirically examine the intersection of polarization, policy, and philanthropy both within and between countries. Specifically, it will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. How does political polarization affect support for public policies related to philanthropy?
2. How does this relationship differ by country culture/values and what role does economic inequality play?
3. How is this relationship impacted by an exogenous shock?
4. What effect do polarization and philanthropy have on consumer welfare?
5. What can marketers do support a policy that positively affects consumer well-being?

Up to five different studies will be initiated to answer these questions. The following are brief overviews of each proposed study:

Study 1 answers the first research question by measuring attitudes toward governments and nonprofits, and political affiliation and political values as individual differences, then correlate that with individual charitable giving. Next, it will manipulate a policy initiative and measure support for the policy.

Study 2 answers the second research question using the same measures as study 1. However, it also examines this as a cross-national comparison by looking at the effects of country culture/values as well as a different manipulation for the policy initiative.

Study 3 answers the third research question with the same measures as study 2, but this time manipulates both the public policy proposal and adds an exogenous shock to the country. Comparisons will be made within and between countries.

Study 4 answers the fourth research question by evaluating secondary data in response to COVID-19 and conducting comparisons within and between countries.

Study 5 answers the fifth research question via collaboration with the Center for American Progress to test messaging related to public policy and philanthropy, leading to recommendations for segmentation of potential donors based on key variables. Outcomes include development of targeted messaging building off findings from research.

Tentative Timeline

Pre-Conference Activities

- ✓ Instruments developed and IRB approvals obtained (October-December 2024)
- ✓ Research agenda and development of Studies 1 and 2 (January-March 2025)
- ✓ Data collection for Studies 1 and 2 and TCR preparation (April-June 2025)

Conference Activities

- ✓ Analyze data, prepare Studies 3 and 4, develop Study 5 with community partner
- ✓ Finalize assignments and timelines for completing research

Post-Conference Activities

- ✓ Implement Study 5, analyze data, write/edit final paper (July-September 2025)
- ✓ Submit completed manuscript to appropriate journal (October 2025)