

Issue framing across political subcultures: Evidence from water bottling debates in California and Florida

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Abstract:

How actors in the policy process frame the nature of problems and potential solutions is an enduring puzzle. Policy debates are often characterized by opposing coalitions that are battling to frame the nature of the problem in different ways. One of the key open questions is, how and why do policy advocates frame policy dilemmas as they do? One possible driving variable in issue framing is political subculture. We test how the media frames debates about Nestle water bottling operations in two states with different political subcultures, Traditionalistic Florida and Moralistic California. The results indicate that regarding Nestle operations, media in both states employ moralistic framing devices, and therefore political subculture does not drive issue framing. However, the type of moralistic framing language differs across cases which are at different stages of resolution, indicating that perhaps time, rather than place is a driver of framing strategy.

Introduction

How actors in the policy process frame the nature of problems and potential solutions is an enduring puzzle. The variety of actors, such as individual citizens, the media, interest groups, lobbyists, judges, administrators, researchers etc. as well as the variety of issue areas and political contexts provide a rich policy ecosystem to explore. In particular we know from literature that at least two important policy actors, the media and interest groups, employ framing strategies to shape the opinions of others, namely citizens and policy elites. This phenomenon is exemplified by Baumgartner et. al (2008) which showed how the death penalty has been effectively reframed by focusing away from its general moral implications and focusing more specifically on the misapplication of the death penalty on unjustly convicted people. Reframing the nature of the problem (without the condition itself changing) can convince whole cohorts of supporters to change position, mobilize coalitions, and therefore produce institutional change.

Policy framing is a well-studied phenomenon, but is still marked by unanswered questions. In particular, there are rich literatures explaining how media frames policy issues and public opinion about policy issues (Kinder & Sanders, 1990; Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Sociologists have studied how media frames of policy issues creates a “news discourse” that can simplify and present coherent and consistent messages to audiences (Gitlin, 1980). Media framing studies are extremely varied, ranging from empirical to constructivist, deductive to inductive, theoretically oriented to descriptive (Matthes, 2009).

The presence of policy framing devices in news media can also signify the advocacy of certain kinds of ideas in the general political discourse. The media isn't the only activist framing policy ideas- advocates seeking to get their positions published in the news are also pursuing an agenda. Therefore, media frames can be studied in two ways: to see how media outlets are framing policy debates, and to see how policy advocates are shaping their message to those they wish to recruit to their position. These two elements of media frames cannot be entirely separated, as news media exists within a domain “consisting of shared

beliefs about a society” and news outlets and journalists make choices about what stories to run, how often, and what perspectives to include in those stories. Altogether, an enduring lesson of this literature is that these policy actors (media and interest groups) have power in shaping the discourse surrounding issues of public concern.

One possible explanation of why interest groups vary in their framing strategies may lie in the literature regarding political subcultures of the United States. In the United States, the settlement patterns of migrants have created a heterogeneous tapestry of political subcultures across the fifty states. These subcultures reflect the populations’ general orientation toward politics and the role of government (Elazar, 1984; 1994). Therefore, depending on the dominant political subculture of a place, residents will display different levels of political participation as well as support different policies at levels that party affiliation doesn’t adequately predict (Lieske, 1993).

Although multiple studies have been developed to further refine and assess the role of political subcultures in the U.S., there is little empirical work analyzing whether political subcultures play a role in the strategies implemented by policy advocates when debating salient policy issues. In this paper we assess whether policy debates surrounding water extraction for bottling are framed differently when they occur in settings with different political subcultures. To that end, we analyze 10 years of newspaper articles discussing debates of Nestle operations in Florida and California, two states that have traditionally been defined as possessing different political subcultures, to assess whether media depictions of these debates rely on different policy frames. The main expectation is that media depictions about bottled water debates in California will tend to reference the effects of bottled water operations on the public good, the role of local advocacy groups, the selfishness of private corporations, mentions to the community, references to the morality of bottled water operations, requests for government intervention in the form of new policies or policy change, and requests for ending such practices in the state. All of these features are elements associated with the ideal type of a moralistic political subculture, in which communities play an important role, politics is the responsibility of every citizen, the role of the government is to pursue and protect the interest of the community, and have a tendency towards inflexibility (Elazar, 1994). We assess whether these elements are more or less likely to be present in news articles published about California (a state considered to be aligned with moralistic subcultures) when compared to articles in Florida (a state considered to be more aligned with traditionalistic subcultures). We compare the presence of these attributes using Multiple Correspondence Analysis and Logistic regression. Results show that news articles in both states present elements associated with moralistic subcultures, with articles about Florida presenting significantly more of these than articles about California. This finding is interpreted as an indication that it is not so much political subcultures that drives framing of policy debates in more or less moralistic terms, but rather the stage in which the debate is, as well as the venues in which the debate takes place. We finish our paper with a discussion about potential new avenues for research that discuss the temporal (in opposed to the geographic) role that moralistic frames may take in policy debates.

The role of framing in policy conflicts

How an interest group frames the nature of the problem can determine the success or failure of its advocacy effort. In particular, interest groups frame issues in certain ways to gain the support of the voting public, of elected officials, and of judges and administrative

agencies. In setting an agenda for future framing research, De Bruycker (2017) claims that: “A more systematic understanding of framing strategies and its effects could aid in answering questions related to interest group influence and the nature of interest representation more broadly: can interest groups win their political battles by voicing the right selection of frames?” He suggests that by studying how interest groups frame policy debates in the media, and observing its effect on the policy discourse may be a means of marrying a micro-level of analysis (interest group behavior) with a macro-level of analysis (the media frame), we may be able to tie these levels of analysis together (De Bruycker, 2017).

Several important theoretical questions follow: How are policy debates reframed by many actors over time at the *macro level*, and how do individual interest groups select and construct policy frames to try to influence the policy debate at the *micro level*? Baumgartner and Mahoney (2008) define the macro and micro levels of distinction in framing research, and note that each has a particular utility. The macro-level of framing explains how the many actors in the policy process collectively define (and redefine) a policy debate over time, but may not capture the efficacy of the strategies used by various actors in that broader story. The micro-level of framing explains how interest groups and other policy actors construct frames about why a policy issue matters and attempt to communicate to and recruit others to their frame. It can explain behavior at the case level, but may not produce very generalizable theory about policy framing. Studies that link and synthesize both levels could help produce theory that ties both faces of framing together (Baumgartner and Mahoney, 2008; De Bruycker, 2017).

Answering these questions is difficult for practical methodological reasons. To produce a generalizable answer would require data about how interest groups framed policy debates across time, policy issue areas and venues, with a way of correlating specific frames with favorable policy changes. Instead, many studies have focused on single policy debates in relatively few venues being tackled by specific interest groups. The process tracing of case studies in the successes and failures of interest groups can at least examine the efficacy of particular framing devices in particular policy contexts. Both large-N generalizable studies and case studies are needed.

Case studies have been very valuable for examining the efficacy of frames, but as Kluver & Mahoney (2015) point out, they tend to focus on salient, controversial and partisan issues. But what about less sensational policy dilemmas that aren't so closely tied to party affiliation or controversial questions? Furthermore, scholars have shown that there are cross level interactions between the frames interest groups employ and the characteristics of the policy dilemma itself (2015). As De Bruycker (2017) puts it: “...frames are both seen as tools of political actors to obtain a certain outcome and as societal forces structuring policy and how interests mobilize.” Therefore it may be fruitful to study interest group framing of less divisive issues, as well as the ways in which societal factors influence how interest groups select their frames.

Framing strategies used by interest groups tend to reflect the *interests* of that particular group, of course, and thus groups rather naturally choose to emphasize problems associated with those interests (Candel et al. 2014). For example, an environmental advocacy group is likely to emphasize the environmental effects of a policy, while a business league may emphasize economic effects. This is not a strategic choice to win over new allies, but is just a natural inclination borne of the interest group's mission. Seen this way, measuring the

efficacy of a groups framing strategy is rather uninteresting, as it just becomes a measure of how receptive different policy elites are to different interests. Instead, it would be more fruitful to study the equivalence frames that different groups use. We can assume that an environmental group uses an environmental frame generally, but we can observe the effects of different emphases within that broader orientation. For example, does it achieve more success if it emphasizes how environmental damage harms human health and economic productivity or how it harms sensitive wilderness areas and wildlife? Is this variable depending on whom is being addressed?

Finally, because changing the overall frame through which a plurality of policy actors view a problem is such a complicated process, it may be immediately useful to understand how interest groups win small battles along the way in more localized settings. Most policy in the United States is made at the local and state level, which have their own media, interest groups, demographics, and political subcultures, as well as their own particular policy problems. Examining how interest groups frame issues and pursue their agendas in these spaces, and how those framing devices spill out into the broader policy discussion in the media and at the decision-level can help link the micro and macro level of theory. Moreover, we may find that at this level of analysis, there is interesting variation in how groups pursuing similar goals employ (strategically or not) different frames to appeal to political-cultural predispositions of the citizens and policy elites in their particular place. Environmentalists in Oklahoma and Oregon may, for example, frame the same problem in different ways to win the support of their different sets of other policy actors. Examining if and how interest groups employ different issue frames in different social contexts would naturally raise the question of why they may do so.

Do political subcultures play a role in the framing of policy conflicts?

The theory of political subcultures was most famously authored by Daniel Elazar, who proposed that the American “geology” of subcultures is basically divided into three types, which can overlap or combine: Traditionalistic, Individualistic and Moralistic political subcultures (Elazar, 1984). These subcultures are a reflection of the dominant settler groups who came to define the region’s political order. For example, in Moralistic Massachusetts (puritan Anglo “Yankees”), a policy that empowers government to pursue egalitarian social aims through welfare will gain more traction than in Traditionalistic and Individualistic Texas (plantation agrarian gentry and outpost settlers). Though subcultures can be conflated with general categories of “liberal” or “conservative”, they are used to describe how a region’s population conceives of the role of government and civil society in more detail, and may not adhere to party politics exactly.

Elazar’s typography describes each of the three subcultures’ orientation toward government, bureaucracy and politics. The differences are generally as such: Traditionalistic subcultures, which tend to dominate in southern States, conceive of government as “a means of maintaining the existing order”, view bureaucracy negatively, and consider the realm of politics to be that of the social and political elite, who use politics as a vehicle for defending elite interests and not the public interest. Moralistic subcultures, which dominate the northeast, upper midwest and west coast, conceive of government as the “means to achieve the good community through positive action”, view bureaucracy positively, and consider it a citizen’s responsibility to be involved in politics, which is the vehicle for attaining goals in the broader public interest. Individualistic subcultures are dispersed throughout the states,

and form a secondary belief system that is sometimes stronger (especially in the midwest and west) or weaker (the deep south and upper midwest), but are often present as a function of the underlying philosophy of classical liberalism that pervades the nation. Highly individualistic areas consider government to be a tool for responding to the marketplace of public demands, are ambivalent toward bureaucracy, and consider politics to be a “dirty” game between parties vying to win favors for their members, rather than over broader issues. (Elazar, 1984; pp. 238-239).

None of these categories are mutually exclusive, and according to Elazar (1984), regions may be dominated by one of the subcultures or may be mixes of two of the three. Some places, like California, are dominantly moralistic throughout. Others, like Florida, are dominantly traditionalistic throughout. If this theory is correct, clear distinctions like this ought to play a measurable role in the political discourse and behavior of residents as they consider policy issues.

Scholars have attempted to create more accurate, rigorously constructed maps of political subcultures in the United States (see Luttbeg 1971; Garreau 1981; Morgan and England 1987; Lieske 1993), that expanded the number of subcultures beyond three and provided a more detailed map that didn't generalize the cultures of whole states. Theorizing about political subcultures has largely fallen out of favor, but the idea that political subcultures remain a “pretty good” explanation of why political participation and local issues vary across the country persists. It is a common textbook explanation for variation of state politics.

If political subcultures shape how policy actors view the role of government in society and their own participation in governance, then these subcultures ought to be evident in political discourse itself. How people inhabiting these various geographies discuss problems and policies may reflect their political subculture in an observable way. In fact, one of the major critiques of the theory of political subcultures is that it is not measured or tested in a very rigorous way. In particular, how people advocating for issues or policy change frame their arguments may provide data to test questions about how political subculture shapes political discourse about issues. National or otherwise common political issues, therefore, would be discussed in different political subcultures in different, and predictable, ways.

A reading of the political subcultures literature might reveal a rather general conclusion that the politics of some places may be less welcoming to certain types of interests, and others more welcoming. For example, in a Traditionalistic and Individualistic state or region, environmental conservation efforts that include the intervention of governments may be deemed as antithetical to the general role that people consider appropriate for the government. You could perhaps predict and measure the success or failure of particular “frames” in such places. The “environmental frame” might have less success than the “economic frame” at affecting the agenda. But there is another way to measure these subcultures that could put policy issues on an equivalent level. If a substantially similar policy goal is being pursued in two different political subcultures, being championed by different interest groups acting within their respective policy arenas, then different strategies may be observed. For example, an environmentalist group may be framing a policy issue not simply as “environmentalist” broadly, but as environmentalist in order to pursue the protection of some *individual* liberty, *traditional* value or *moral* imperative. In other words, an equivalent interest can be framed in different ways to win the support of other policy actors inhabiting different political subcultural spaces.

We propose a research question and hypothesis that could inform theories of interest group framing and political subcultures. We propose a testable assumption that interest groups make choices about how to frame an issue of public concern because they are themselves products of their particular political subcultures. How they communicate these frames through the media reflects their subcultural orientation. Those that communicate using terminology that reflects their subculture may have more success at accessing policy elites and/or swaying members of the public. Therefore, the micro-level analysis of interest group framing (interest groups employing a frame) may be linked to the macro-level (which frame comes to dominate the issue discourse). Crucially, that process is theoretically grounded by political subcultures to explain *why* an interest group would frame the issue in a particular way in a particular place.

We ask: Do media and interest groups frame the same problem in different ways, depending on the political subculture in which they exist? To test this we examine the discourse about the public bads associated with bottled water takings in two U.S. States theorized to be characterized by different political subcultures: California and Florida. In both states, bottled water companies are capturing groundwater, which is held in the public trust, and selling it. In the last decade, activists have begun to voice opposition to this taking using various justifications. These justifications can be heard through media reports that contain direct quotes. In California, which is primarily “moralistic” will interest groups be framing water takings as being morally reprehensible harms to nature? In Florida, which is primarily “traditionalistic” will takings be framed as infringing upon the sovereign rights of other water-using individuals? These questions reflect our hypothesis, which is that **in a policy dilemma that is equivalent across political subcultures, interest groups pursuing a similar goal will frame the nature of the problem in accordance with the dominant political subculture.** To test this hypothesis, we measure particular “frames” of the problem using keywords that indicate a “moralistic” or “individualistic” frame found in news articles reporting on policy debates about water bottling in the respective regions.

The results of this analysis may have several implications and open a line of inquiry. If the similar issue is being framed in subculturally “appropriate” ways, then it may indicate that interest groups frame issues differently because they are in fact a representation of that subculture. It may also suggest that interest groups are making strategic choices to attract attention and support from other policy actors who embody those subcultural predilections. Though we do not test it here, support for the hypothesis may also justify examining if these particular framing strategies are more successful (at achieving media attention and of suasion of other policy actors) in different political subcultures. Those further studies would better link the micro and macro levels of framing analysis, and provide some answers about how and why interest group framing varies across the diverse political geography of the US. Lack of support for our hypothesis would indicate that political subcultures are a weak predictor of advocate behavior, and thus framing strategies of these local/regional dilemmas are more similar than different across political geographies.

What is wrong with bottled water?

The policy dilemmas we are examining in California and Florida both revolve around Nestle water bottling operations. In both states, Nestle has bottled water plants to produce several brands of spring water. In California, Nestle sources its Arrowhead brand spring water from natural springs in the San Bernardino National Forest northeast of Los Angeles.

The company takes about 45 million gallons per year, and pays an annual permit fee of \$2,000 to the US Forest Service for the privilege (Wilson, 6/13/19). In Florida, Nestle pays an annual permit fee of \$115 to the Suwanee River Management District to pump up to 400 million gallons of water from the Ginnie Springs to bottle under the ZephyrHills brand. This new permit expansion was approved on February 23, 2021 (Turner, 2/23/21). Nestle is the largest food company in the world, and their bottled water brands represent over \$8 billion in annual revenue (.

In 2014, journalist Ian James broke a story for the Palm Springs Desert Sun newspaper claiming that Nestle had been taking spring water from the San Bernardino National Forest without a valid permit since 1988, when it's permit expired without renewal. This was in the midst of a major drought in California, during which the State Water resources Control Board had imposed water restrictions for municipal and agricultural use. Nestle's take was on federal property via a Special Use Permit, and the company claimed that it had senior water rights dating back to the "1800s" which allowed it to satisfy its right even during drought (Switzer, 3/21/17). California is a regulated riparian and prior appropriation state, so vehicle water rights status creates a hierarchy of rights to water access, all waters of the state are held in the "public trust" as per the state constitution. This means that the state may impose restrictions or even rescind rights if a water use is determined not to be in the public interest.

Following the revelation about Nestle's expired permit, environmental activists began arguing that the Arrowhead bottling operation was reducing surface flows through Strawberry Canyon, threatening a variety native species in the National Forest. Environmental flows is an explicitly stated element of the public trust, and provided ammunition for arguments that the state had the right and obligation to reduce or eliminate Nestle's permitted take.

In Florida, a much more water rich state, Nestle draws a larger volume of spring water from the Seven Springs region of Northern Florida. They do so via a contract with a private landowner who owns Ginnie Springs, a major surface spring that feeds the Santa Fe river and farms and municipalities downstream. Though water rich, Florida is also contending with claims that groundwater is overdrawn, and the state is using tax dollars for groundwater recharge and quality improvement projects. This garnered media attention as journalists and citizens voiced opposition to the seeming unfairness of Nestle's ability to draw spring water for little cost, while the public pays for environmental rehabilitation. The sentiment is well represented by the editorial board opinion from Orlando Sentinel "*Companies drain Florida waters, and pay zilch: End this corporate giveaway*" (8/10/19). Florida is a riparian rights state, and private landowners may contract with Nestle and other bottlers. However, Florida, like California, holds all water in the public trust, and any use must be in the public trust rather than simply for private gain. Advocates challenging this permit argued that Nestle's ability to profit from the resource while the public pays for environmental remediation proves that the permit is not in the public interest.

Coverage of these dilemmas resulted in the issue being ultimately raised by the US House subcommittee on Natural Resources in 2020. In March of 2020, Rashida Tlaib and Harley Rouda issued a press release indicating that they were seeking documentation from Nestle about its bottling operations because "[the] Subcommittee is concerned that Nestle is taking a critical public resource from communities in need without equitably reinvesting in those communities and ensuring long-term environmental sustainability" (Targeted News Service, 3/06/20).

Both cases represent a salient environmental policy issue that exists at the state or substate level. Because it is substantially the same issue in two states that theoretically have different political subcultures but both of which hold water resources in the public trust, it may provide useful comparative data.

Data

We gather data from newspaper articles in Florida, California, and national media from between 2010 to 2020. Queries in LexisUni and Proquest databases are used to find news coverage of policy disputes regarding water bottling. News media is an appropriate source of data about issue framing because it contains quotes from relevant parties: advocates challenging bottled water companies as well as beverage companies themselves. Such language, in addition to the language used by journalists, may contain measurable differences that indicate a greater or lesser moralistic frame. To obtain articles discussing debates about bottled water in California and Florida, searches were conducted in LexisUni and Proquest using the following key terms: “California or Florida and water and bottl* and Nestle or Deer Park or Crystal Geysers or Arrowhead or Zephyrhills or Seven Springs not pollut*”. After removing irrelevant articles and duplicates, the search resulted in 63 articles pertaining to debates about bottled water, mentioning California and/or Florida. A later screening then resulted in the removal of 2 additional articles that were neither about California nor Florida. This resulted in a universe of 61 articles.

We coded the 61 relevant newspaper articles along 16 variables. First, articles were coded as either being predominantly about California or Florida (or both equally), to differentiate the states. Then, six control variables are coded, and nine theoretically driven variables are coded (see table 1). The nine variables of interest measure how “moralistic” the framing of the issue is within the story (see appendix 3 for explanations of why each variable ties to the original theoretical conception of what constitutes a moralistic state). Each story was coded as having the trait indicated by the corresponding variable (indicated by a value of 1) or not (value of 0). This resulted in a database with 16 dummy variables, measured across 61 observations.

To code the articles, both authors read every story and coded the presence or absence of the variables of interest. A codebook was developed to guide specific interpretation of the articles (see appendix 3). Both authors separately coded all 63 articles. The first round of coding revealed an 87.7% intercoder reliability. However, with so few observations, we wished to achieve 100% agreement, so each coding disagreement was discussed until consensus was achieved. Some simple coding errors were revealed, and this iterative process also led to a refinement of the codebook.

| Dependent Variable: | Control Variables: | Moralism Variables: |
|---------------------|---|---|
| California | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nestle is focus 2. Opinion/editorial 3. Written by Nestle employee 4. Report balanced 5. National newspaper 6. Date 2010-2015 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reference to public good 2. "Fairness" language 3. Organized advocacy groups 4. "Dishonesty/selfishness" language 5. Reference to "community" 6. Reference to a private entity harming the public 7. Use of "moral/ethical" language 8. Proposal of a new regulation 9. Challenges the right of the bottler to exist |

Table 1: Variables

Methods and Results

The data was analyzed to see if articles regarding California have a greater amount of moralistic language than those referencing Florida. The comparison between both states was assessed via multiple component analysis and logistic regression. A multiple component analysis (MCA) allows identifying underlying trends in the data, and was used to assess the presence of clear distinctions between observations from California and from Florida. This approach also allows assessing whether the news articles, as a whole, rely on specific groupings of the moralism variables, and if these are also associated with aspects of the outlet in which they were published.

The multiple component analysis was conducted using only the moralism variables, to identify possible groupings of the variables without including the control variables or the variable distinguishing observations from California or Florida. Figure 1 below shows the distribution of newspaper articles across the top 2 dimensions generated by the MCA, with colors distinguishing observations from California and Florida.

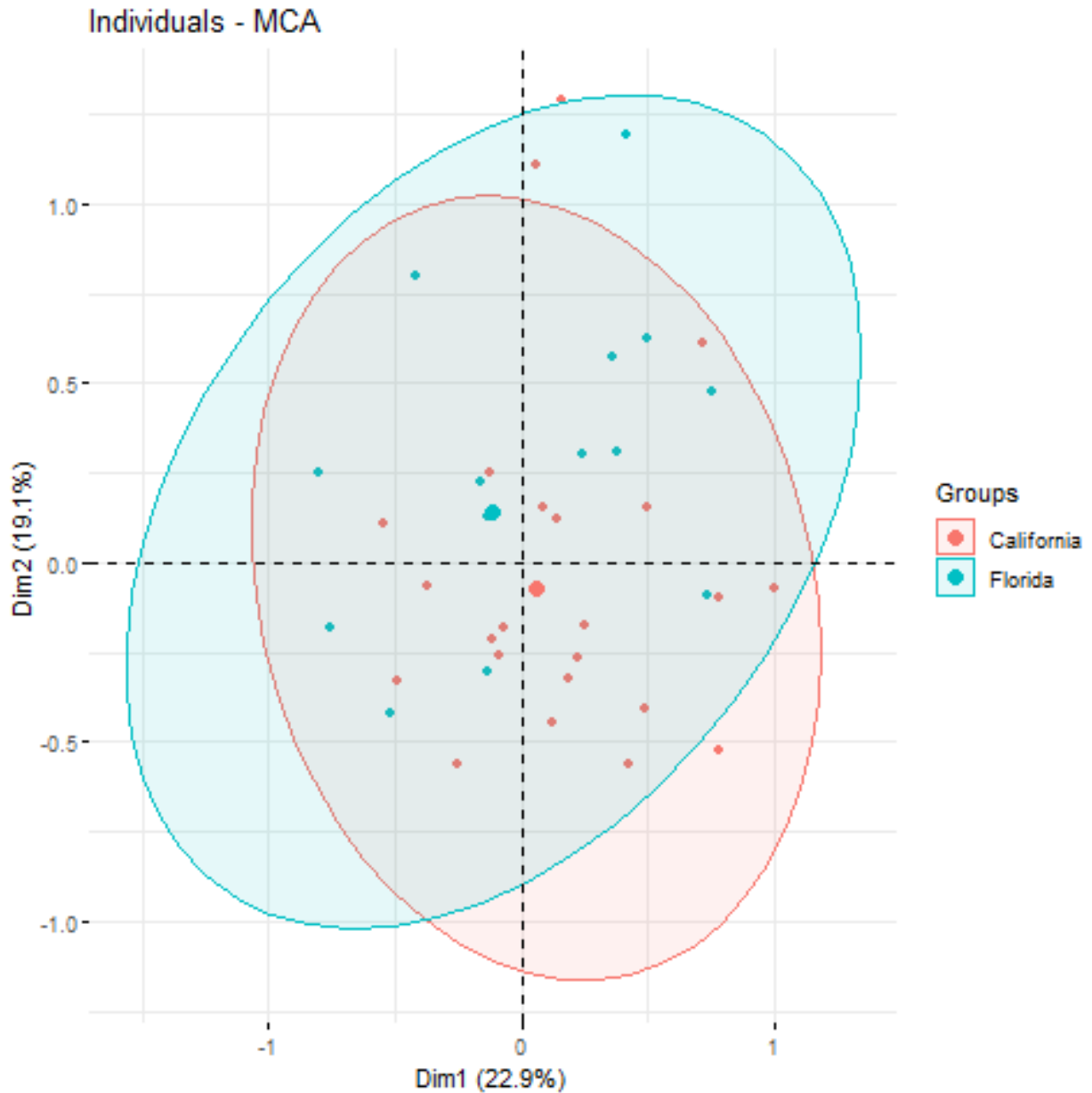


Figure 1. Distribution of newspaper articles across MCA dimensions, by State.

At first glance, Figure 1 does not show any particular grouping of observations from California when compared to Florida. The lower right quadrant in the plot shows a majority of observations corresponding to California, with only one observation from Florida (light blue dot).

Although observations do not seem to group in distinct fashion across the two main dimensions, it is still useful to assess how much specific variables contributed to each dimension, to identify underlying general trends in the data. Figure 2 below shows three plots capturing correlations between the variables used in the MCA and the main two dimensions generated by the process (subplot "A"), as well as the top-5 contributions to each dimension from the categories used (subplot "B" shows top-5 contributors to Dimension 1 and subplot "C" does the same for Dimension 2).

Subplot A shows that variables “Organized advocacy groups”, “Reference to a private entity harming the public”, “Challenges the right of the bottler to exist”, and “Dishonesty/selfishness language” correlate mainly with Dimension 1, and little to none with Dimension 2. On the other hand, variables “Reference to community”, “Fairness language”, and “Use of moral/ethical language” correlate mainly with Dimension 2 and little with Dimension 1. Upon closer inspection, the categories that contribute the most to Dimension 2 are all associated with the presence of features associated with Moralistic subcultures: references to community, the use of moral/ethical language, fairness language, references to public good, and the proposal of new regulations. Dimension 2 also includes variables associated with moralistic subcultures, but in categories capturing both the presence and absence of features associated with it. In other words, Dimension 2 indicates the presence of a constant moralistic component in the discourses utilized across both California and Florida news articles.

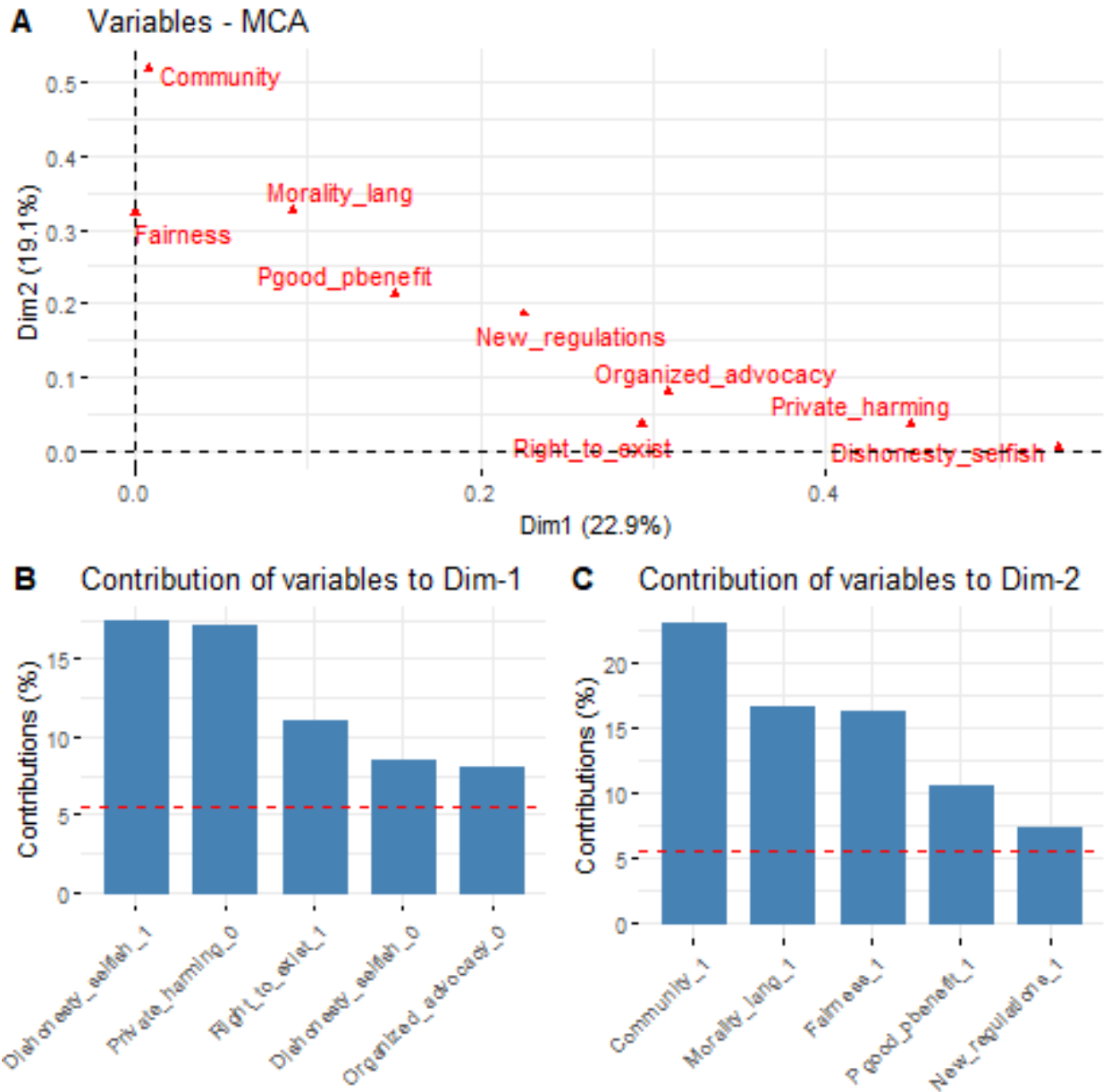


Figure 2. Relationships between variables/categories and MCA dimensions.

To identify differences in the framing of news articles in California and Florida, we rely on logistic regression analysis. Two models were conducted, both shown in Figure 3. Both models aim at identifying differences between California and Florida news articles. The dependent variable in both models assumes a value of 1 when the article is about California and 0 when the article is about Florida. Although we are not arguing that the presence or absence of some categories will lead an article to be about California or not, logistic regression is a useful approach to identify which variables are more associated with either California or Florida. Both models include the 9 variables associated with moralistic subcultures, with Model 1 (labeled “CA with controls”) include a series of control variables associated with the outlet in which each article was published, the year of publication, and

the type of article. Model 2 (labeled “CA without controls”) shows only the effects of the 9 variables associated with moralistic subcultures.

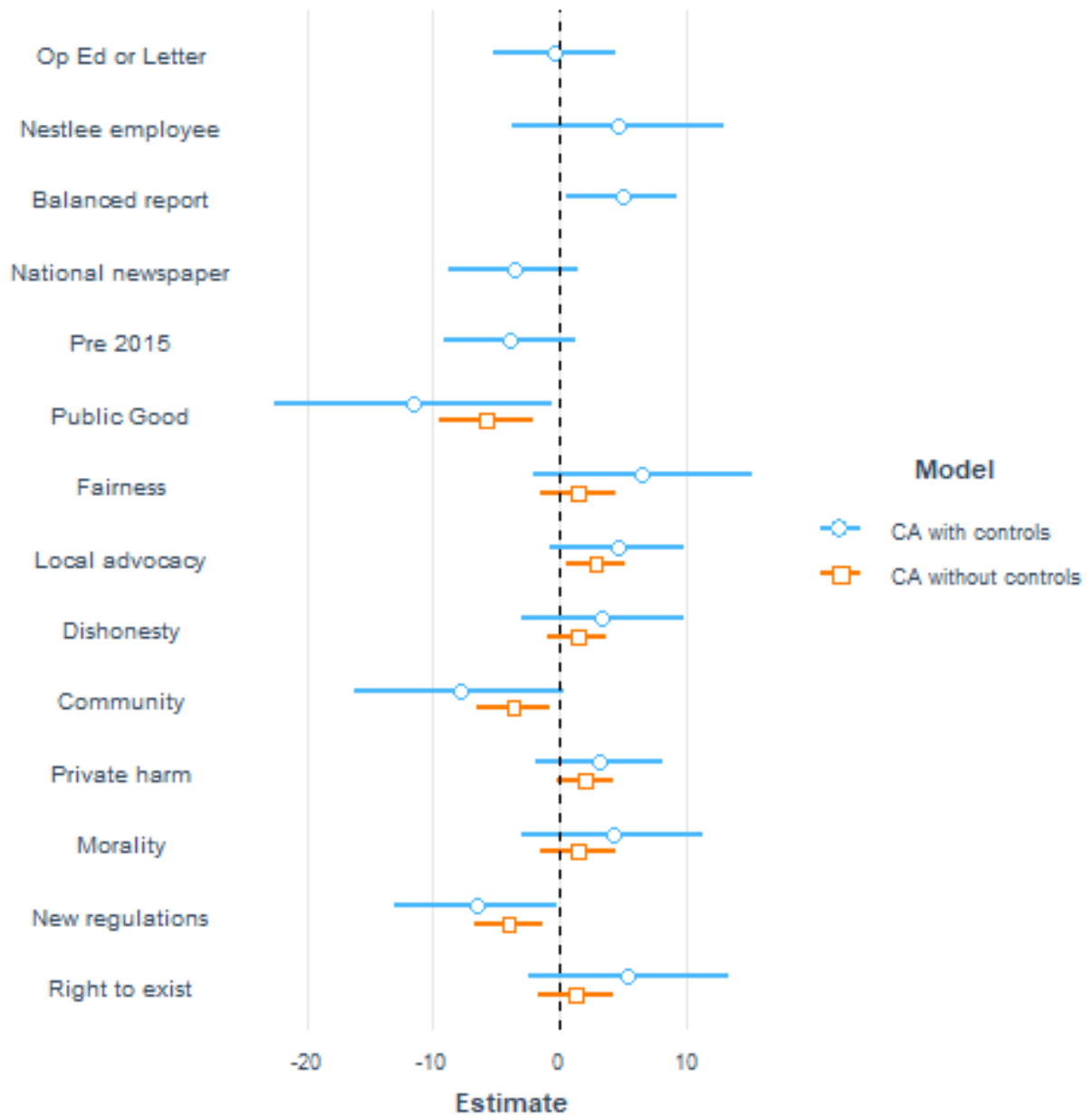


Figure 3. Logistic regression coefficients.

Both models consistently show that mentions of public good, community, and new regulations have a negative and statistically significant effect on whether an article is about California. In other words, California articles, on average, have fewer mentions to public good, community, or discuss new regulations than articles about Florida. In addition, mentions of local advocacy and references of a private entity harming the public (only on Model 2 and with $p < 0.1$) are positively associated with an article being about California.

Finally, among the control variables, the only one with statistically significant coefficients is the one capturing whether a news article included both sides of the argument, in its discussion of the policy conflict. This variable shows a positive and statistically significant coefficient, indicating that California articles tend to include both the arguments of those who oppose and those who promote water extraction for bottling. As a robustness check, Table A2 in the Appendix shows p-values for bivariate Fisher's Exact Tests, comparing the variable California to each of the 9 moralistic variables in our dataset. Results are consistent with the findings in the logistic regressions, showing statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) differences with California for the variables "reference to public good", "organized advocacy groups", and "reference to community". The variable "reference to a private entity harming the public" also shows a statistically significant difference with California, but at $p < 0.1$.

Discussion

Though the hypothesis is not supported, the results raise new theoretically interesting questions. First, because both States frame the issue of bottled water in moralistic terms, it indicates that geography, and therefore political subculture, does not have a significant role in determining the behavior of policy actors in framing this issue. In pursuing our research question, we proposed that perhaps in issues that were fairly localized and not regarding "hot-button" issues (as opposed to the death penalty framing research, for example), political subculture might bring out differences in framing across geographies. Apparently not so. Because the political subcultures theory rests to some degree on the assumption that politics in the U.S. is shaped by the cultural characteristics of the people, and doesn't particularly focus on the structural characteristics of governance institutions, our results lend credence to the idea that innate cultural characteristics are less important than institutional characteristics of governance.

Second, the results indicate that while both States use moralistic framing devices, they use different ones. This may be due to the differences in their broader legal/institutional context as well as the point in time of the policy debate. For example, Floridians are leaning much more on issues of fairness, morality and responsibility, which may be a product of the youngness of the dilemma there. Californians, by contrast, having now forced the debate into the regulatory and legal venues, lean much more heavily on discussions of rights and legal obligations. This alternative explanation points out that advocates adapt their framing as the policy debates evolve and new receptive venues are found, rather than expressing a cultural predisposition. If this were the case, as the story in California broke, advocates for change should have highlighted the "wrongness" of the situation to gain sustained media attention, and as they were able to force the US Forest Service, State Water Resources Control Board, and Courts to take up the issue, adopt a legalistic frame. In Florida, since the debate has not made it to Court, it seems that advocates are still on the stage of highlighting the "wrongness" of the situation, as new venues are explored. This goes in line with long-standing arguments in the policy literature regarding the role of policy images and venue shopping (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005; Baumgartner and Jones, 2009). As the availability and receptiveness of venues for policy change, so will the policy frames.

This conclusion could lead to a more rigorous analysis of how this policy dilemma is playing out over time in different political subcultures. For example, in Moralistic and Traditionalistic states, one could examine the evolution of the policy debate from beginning to end to see which moralistic framing elements are accentuated in each stage. If time is

significant, and political subculture doesn't determine frames, then early and late stage frames ought to look similar across states. This could answer the important question of how much political subcultures really do determine policy debate. If the answer is not much or not at all, then the theory is better left to explain general political participation and orientation toward government rather than issue framing.

Conclusion

In this study, we have attempted to measure observable geographic differences between policy frames regarding the same issue. Differences, we hypothesized, would be present and would reflect the political subculture of each place. Compared to Traditionalistic Florida, Moralistic California would contain significantly more use of language that reflects its moralistic subculture. Support for the hypothesis would indicate that political subculture influences how media and advocacy groups frame policy issues.

The hypothesis was not supported. Media reports from both states contained similar amounts of moralistic language, and in fact, Florida outperformed California on several variables. However, the results showed that reports from each state emphasized different aspects of the debate. Multiple Component Analysis and Logistic regression revealed that in Florida, reports had more mentions of community, the public good, and calls for new regulations. In California, media reports emphasized organized advocacy and how private interest are harming the public. Perhaps the difference in emphasis is not a function of geography but of time. As the debate in Florida matures, and reaches the courts and regulatory review process, as it has in California, perhaps the framing will also change and become more like that in California. Bringing in the variable of time may reveal that the process of framing and reframing is much more driven by the effects of time and venue access. Such a result would support the general notion that policy debates and framing are more driven by institutional factors rather than cultural characteristics.

Given that geography is not a significant variable, further studies that compare issue framing in the same place over time (i.e. year by year changes in California and year by year changes in Florida) could provide evidence for whether or not this particular issue is maturing everywhere in the same way. Might early media emphasize certain framing devices as advocates seek to garner popular support, while later media emphasize other frames once legal, regulatory or legislative actors are involved? Answers may help further theorize about how issue frames develop for policy debates over less controversial, less partisan, and more local policy debates such as this one.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Logit results

Table A1. Logistic regression coefficients.

| | CA with controls | CA without controls |
|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Op Ed or Letter | -0.38 (2.46) | |
| Nestle employee | 4.60 (4.26) | |
| Balanced report | 4.93 ** (2.27) | |
| National newspaper | -3.64 (2.60) | |
| Pre 2015 | -3.93 (2.62) | |
| Public Good | -11.60 ** (5.59) | -5.76 *** (1.90) |

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Fairness | 6.56 (4.42) | 1.51 (1.54) |
| Local advocacy | 4.57* (2.70) | 2.87 ** (1.15) |
| Dishonesty | 3.37 (3.28) | 1.43 (1.18) |
| Community | -7.90* (4.23) | -3.66 ** (1.44) |
| Private harm | 3.18 (2.59) | 2.01* (1.18) |
| Morality | 4.21 (3.64) | 1.50 (1.49) |
| New regulations | -6.59 ** (3.30) | -4.00 *** (1.40) |
| Right to exist | 5.43 (4.03) | 1.33 (1.50) |
| <hr/> | | |
| N | 61 | 61 |
| AIC | 54.44 | 61.47 |
| BIC | 86.11 | 82.58 |
| Pseudo R2 | 0.81 | 0.62 |

*** p < 0.01; ** p < 0.05; * p < 0.1.

Appendix 2: Fisher's exact test results between variable of interest and California

| Variable | P Value |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Public Good | 0.048 |
| Fairness | 1 |
| Local advocacy | 0.01328 |
| Dishonesty | 1 |
| Community | 0.04888 |
| Private harm | 0.09711 |

| | |
|-----------------|--------|
| Morality | 1 |
| New regulations | 0.77 |
| Right to exist | 0.3528 |

Appendix 3: Codebook

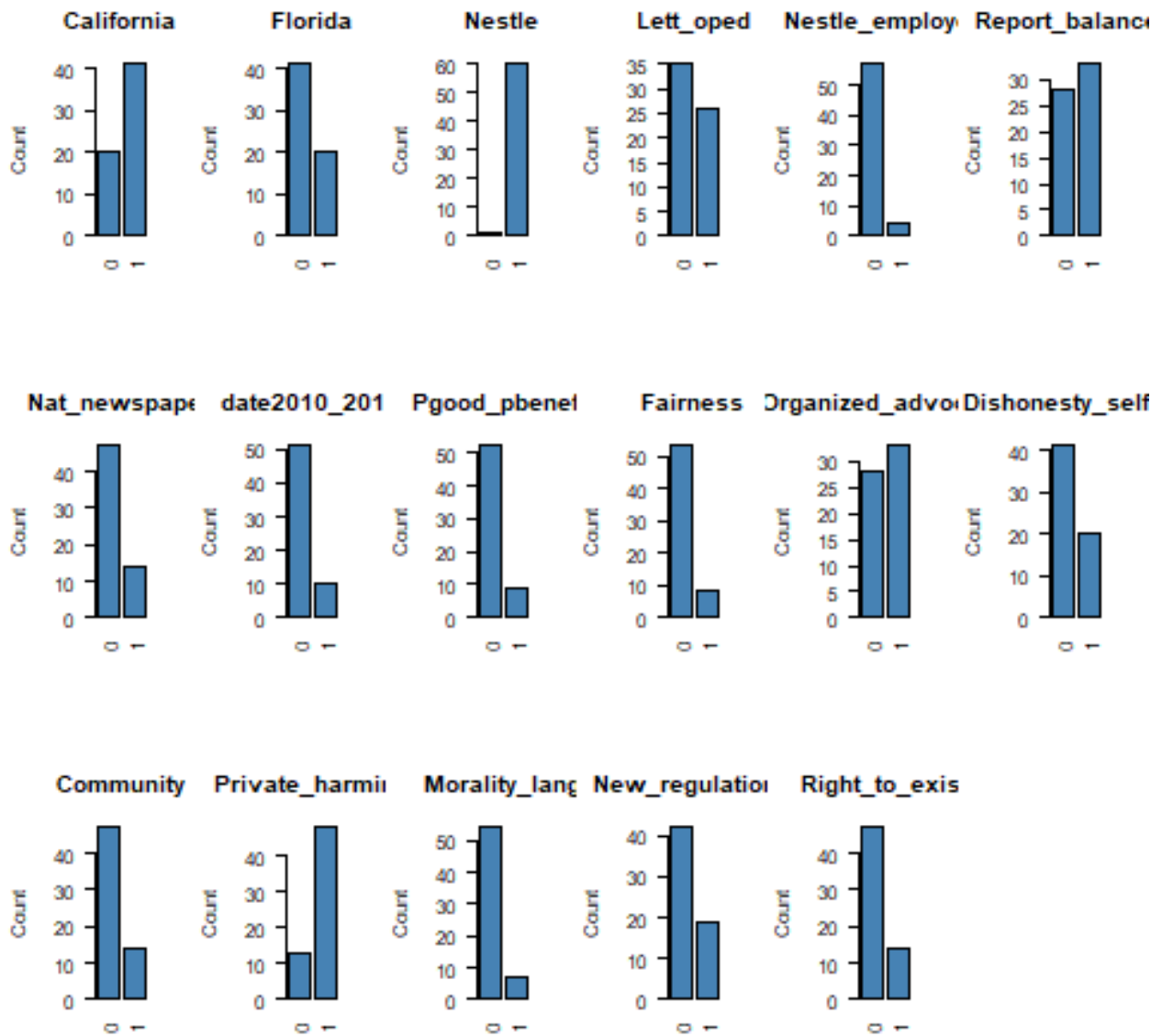
| Label | Question | Reasoning | Comment | Type |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---------|
| California | Is the article about California? | To distinguish between CA y FL | The article is generally about California | Control |
| Florida | Is the article about Florida? | | The article is generally about Florida | |
| Both_states | Is article generally talking about bottled water and mentions both CA and FL? | | The article is not generally about California OR Florida but mentions both of them. | |
| Nestle | Does article mention Nestle? | To control for potential Nestle-only effects | | Control |
| Lett_oped | Is article an op-ed or letter to the editor? | To control for potential differences between op-eds and regular news articles | Includes Letters to the editors | Control |
| Nestle_employee | Is the article written by a Nestle employee? | | | Control |

| | | | | |
|-----------------|--|--|---|--|
| Report_balanced | Is the article reporting the story or conflict without clear bias? | | | Control |
| Nat_newspaper | Is article published in National newspaper? | To control for differences between local/regional/state newspapers and national ones | It could be that we only observe these differences in local/regional/state newspapers. National papers, on the other hand, since they appeal to a wider audience, may not phrase things in light of regional sub-cultures. IT INCLUDE NATIONAL LEVEL NEWS AGENCIES | Control/Potential secondary hypothesis |
| date2010_2015 | Is the article published between 2010 and 2015? | | | Control |
| Pgood_pbenefit | Does the article explicitly include any of the following: “public good” or “public benefit”, “public trust”, “public welfare”, or “public interest”? | Moralistic subcultures understand politics as the search for the public good. | | Moralistic |
| Fairness | Does the article mention any of these words: fair, fairness, equity, equality, share? | | | Moralistic |

| | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|--|------------|
| Organized_advocacy | Does the article mention actions undertaken by a nongovernmental organization (i.e. an environmental advocacy group)? | Moralistic subcultures are communitarian (not collectivist), communally, preferably nongovernmental power intervenes in the sphere of private activities. | If the article mentions “environmentalists”, it does not count. The article must mention the name of an advocacy group or at least mention “environmental group” or “environmental groups” | Moralistic |
| Dishonesty_selfish | Does the article use words that imply dishonesty or selfishness, such as lie, misrepresent, hide, falsehood, take, steal? | Moralistic subcultures define good government in terms of honesty, selflessness, and commitment to public welfare | | Moralistic |
| Community | Does the article mention the word ‘community’? | Moralistic subcultures are communitarian (not collectivist) | | Moralistic |
| Private_harming | Does the article mention or imply a private entity harming a public? | Moralistic subcultures see the role of the government as one that intervenes in the sphere of ‘private activities’ when necessary | | Moralistic |
| Morality_lang | Does the article use any of these three words: “moral”, “right” or “ethical”? | Moralistic subcultures see the role of government as one to promote moral and ethical behavior | | Moralistic |

| | | | | |
|-----------------|--|--|--|--|
| New_regulations | Does the article ask for NEW regulations to be implemented? | Although moralistic subcultures are not necessarily communitarian, they are “not committed to either change or the status quo per se but, rather, will accept either depending on upon the morally defined ends to be gained” (234). | | |
| Right_to_exist | Will advocates against Nestle NOT accept new terms of transaction (i.e. less taking water and/or paying more for it) or they want to abolish the transaction altogether? | Moralistic subcultures tend to be more close minded (when compared to individualistic subcultures, for instance), therefore we should expect them to establish a community standard that would ‘infringe upon’ a liberty. | | |

Appendix 4: Distribution of observations per variable



Appendix 5: Averages per state

| Variable | California | Florida |
|-----------------|------------|---------|
| Florida | 0 | 1 |
| California | 1 | 0 |
| Nestle | 1 | 0.97 |
| Op Ed or Letter | 0.39 | 0.5 |

| | | |
|--------------------|------|------|
| Nestle employee | 0.05 | 0.1 |
| Balanced report | 0.66 | 0.3 |
| National newspaper | 0.19 | 0.3 |
| Pre 2015 | 0.12 | 0.25 |
| Public Good | 0.07 | 0.3 |
| Fairness | 0.12 | 0.15 |
| Local advocacy | 0.66 | 0.3 |
| Dishonesty | 0.34 | 0.3 |
| Community | 0.15 | 0.4 |
| Private harm | 0.85 | 0.65 |
| Morality | 0.12 | 0.1 |
| New regulations | 0.29 | 0.35 |
| Right to exist | 0.27 | 0.15 |