

Title

Tone of the Political Discourse and Perceptions of Party Positions

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Abstract

Perceived party positions are based on many factors and besides to actual policy considerations, non-policy characteristics of the electorate, of the parties and of the political system all drive them. This study investigates how tone of political discourse can influence the distance in perceived left-right party positions in Hungary. A survey experiment conducted on a representative online sample in Hungary shows that there is no difference among positive, civil negative and uncivil negative tones in this respect. However, if respondents' preference of the parties involved in the discourse is taken into account, one finds that both types of negative tones yield a significantly higher perceived distance for those who have their preferred party in the given debate. Results thus suggest that tone matters but only if respondents are attached to the debate through the preferred party participating in it.