
The Democratic Paradox of Duterte: Mapping the cognitive-affective ideological structure of leftist student organizations in Manila and Davao

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Abstract - The ongoing war on drugs in the Philippines has become the epicenter of discourse and concern regarding human rights, populism, and illiberal democracy. While most studies focus on President Duterte's controversial 'strongman' persona and mass appeal, very few have sought to analyze the locals' attitudes towards him as cognitive-affective phenomena. To address this gap, this paper provides an in-depth qualitative analysis of pre-selected subjects in Davao and Manila, two regions in the Philippines with arguably the most salient pro-and anti-Duterte populations, respectively, in 2019. Using a mapping software modeled after Paul Thagard's emotional coherence theory, this study maps the possible cognitive-affective processes underpinning the political ideologies of an influential leftist organization in the Philippines. Cognitive dissonance theory was used to consolidate the qualitative analyses of data derived from the surveys and interviews. The findings suggest that the two populations' political ideologies were relatively similar, as expected of subjects who belong to the same organization. However, the significant differences in the subjects' stances towards the Duterte administration suggest that the socio-political contexts of Manila and Davao could affect political opinions and views despite their similar core political ideologies.

Keywords - Cognitive dissonance theory; Emotional coherence theory; Cognitive-affective mapping; Illiberal democracy; Philippine political ideologies

Introduction

For decades, the tenets of liberalism were considered implicit in the Western democratic framework. In his sensational Foreign Affairs article, Fareed Zakaria (1997) criticized this as a flawed assumption since liberalism and democracy have always been theoretically and historically distinct concepts. This critique became increasingly relevant as illiberalism became a divisive concept among political groups in Western democracies. Chantal Mouffe (2000) later coined the term democratic paradox, explaining how the Western concept of 'liberal democracy' is tethered to ideologies that were never even linked philosophically:

"On one side we have the liberal tradition constituted by the rule of law, the defence of human rights and the respect of individual liberty; on the other the democratic tradition whose main ideas are those of equality, identity between governing and governed and popular sovereignty. There is no necessary relation between those two distinct traditions but only a contingent historical articulation." (p. 2)

Recent discourse on illiberalism revolves around the rise of strongman politicians around the world whose inclination for populist rhetoric and democratic-but-illiberal stratagem exhibit this paradox. Among the heads of state given this "strongman" label was Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte who became the new populist bogeyman of the Global South because of his administration's war on drugs policy (Ordoñez & Borja, 2018). While most studies focus on Duterte's controversial persona and mass appeal, few have sought to analyze locals' attitudes towards him and his administration as cognitive-affective phenomena; whereas, recent populist movements in Europe are being thoroughly explored from various ideological lenses and political cognition theories in Western academia (Gerodimos, 2015; Freedon, 2017; Stavrakakis et al., 2017). In this vein, there is a need for new studies that deliberately contextualize current Philippine politics to the broader concepts of liberal democracy, as described in the democratic paradox theory. As such, a more nuanced understanding is needed on what constitutes 'populism' according to the Filipinos who condemn the Duterte administration on the same grounds as Western critiques of illiberalism.

To address this gap, one ought to first evaluate the pertinence of 'illiberalism' to the Philippine context whose political contours are shaped by socio-cultural and historical factors different from those in

most Western liberal democracies. The following case study ties recent developments in Philippine politics to these theoretical frameworks by comparing two student chapters - one based in Manila, the other in Davao - of an influential leftist organization in the Philippines. Building on Paul Thagard's (2015) emotional coherence theory, the political ideologies of each chapter were mapped and simulated as cognitive-affective processes to compare and contrast the two groups. Cognitive dissonance theory was then employed to consolidate and interpret the data derived from the surveys and interviews. The next section provides a brief overview of the regional contexts of Manila and Davao where the local stances towards illiberalism are contingent on the respective legacies of previous political movements and regimes. The third section provides an overview of the theoretical frameworks employed in assessing the cognitive-affective processes underlying an individual's political value system.

Background

Davao and Manila are two metropolises that arguably shaped Philippine politics with their respective histories in supporting and opposing strongman leadership. Metro Manila's opposition to dictatorship traces back to civil and political resistance against former President Marcos's Martial Law between 1965 and 1986. The civilian-led People Power Revolution of Manila is a pivotal protest in modern Philippine history credited for overthrowing the Marcos regime and reviving democratic institutions. After Marcos, seats of power rotated among the same few liberal oligarchs and socioeconomic inequalities remained entrenched (Benedict, 1988), causing support for procedural democracy to wane (Quimpo, 2008). In the struggle for a "more participatory and egalitarian democracy" (p. 295), a large number of cause-oriented groups were founded in Metro Manila to lobby the interests of dissatisfied leftists (Kimura, 2003). This new left emerged from growing low- and middle-class frustrations towards the democratic gridlock perpetuated by traditional politicians or "trapos" in Manila who took over after Marcos (Quimpo, 2008). However, the left's ideological ambiguity, inability to reach a critical mass of the population, and struggle to establish a solid caucus with significant electoral power impeded its efforts to overtake the Manila oligarchs (Bello, 2016; Quimpo, 2008).

During the 2016 elections, Duterte's populist rhetoric appealed to the majority of low- and middle-income Manila voters whose frustrations towards trapos became increasingly palpable (Heydarian, 2017). He responded to democracy fatigue by promising quick fixes and heavy-handed solutions to national issues (Mendoza, 2018). His campaign leveraged the national distrust towards trapos, relying on demagogic language and the "patriotic trolling" tactics of his zealous supporters, dominating the electoral discourse on social media (Curato, 2016; Etter, 2017). Duterte emerged victorious in the capital region despite joining the race months later than his opponents, spending the least on his campaign, and lacking an established political party to back him (Cook & Salazar, 2016). As president-elect, he still received heavy criticism from major universities and new left organizations in Manila who condemned his illiberal methods and dictatorial tendencies (Timberman, 2019). Interestingly, the Visayan and Mindanaoan chapters of these leftist universities and organizations did not always share their Manila counterparts' stances. Duterte's candidacy aggravated these long-standing regional tensions, especially between "Imperial Manila" and the Southern Philippine regions.

Before his presidential candidacy, Duterte cultivated his strongman reputation as the former mayor of Davao, the most populated region in the South (Teehankee, 2017). Once a "hotbed for crime and communist insurgency" (p. 53), Davao became globally recognized under his leadership for its zero crime rates, setting it apart from other Philippine cities. Throughout his twenty-two-year tenure as mayor, the vigilante group Davao Death Squad (DDS) was primarily linked to the extrajudicial killings of civilians purportedly involved in the drug network (Breuil and Rozema, 2009). In 2017, Duterte belatedly acknowledged the squad's existence a year into his presidency, finally confirming public speculations that DDS was responsible for reducing drug-related crime in Davao (Santos & de Guzman, 2017). This zero-tolerance approach later became the template for the Duterte administration's Philippine Drug War policy.

Akin to most modern populists, Duterte is capable of transcending ideological barriers, being a self-described socialist and having worked closely with leftist organizations as Davao mayor. He appeased local communist groups during his mayorship and early in his presidency, even forging peace accords in an attempt to end one of the longest-running insurgencies in world history (Casiño, 2017; Heydarian, 2016; Santos, 2016). His unprecedented victory opened up a new political space for anti-trapo candidates whose

tactics can appeal to a wide spectrum of ideologies (Cook & Salazar, 2016; Aguirre, 2018). Moreover, his regime saw the culmination of regional tensions, leveraging the tendency of Filipinos to lean on their geographical loyalties and the lack of coherent ideologies and political parties strong enough to mobilize critical masses at the national level (Bauzon, 1991; Cook & Salazar, 2016; Timberman, 2019).

Manila and Davao arguably exhibit the most salient regional features in terms of the left's fragmentation under Duterte. Opposition towards Duterte grew stronger among leftist organizations in Manila who criticized his illiberal methods since his candidacy, most notably his death squad tactics as mayor, which he later enforced for his anti-drug operations in the Manila slums as president. Meanwhile, many of their leftist counterparts in Davao endorsed Duterte's candidacy, believing that his appointment could finally advance their interests after a century of political exclusion due to a failing democracy (Maboloc, 2017). Building on their respective political contexts, this paper argues that the different priorities and impetuses of the Manila leftists and their Davao counterparts not only attest to political regionalism in the Philippines, but also the fundamental crisis of liberal democracies, as Mouffe described. A closer investigation at intra-organizational similarities and differences of the political left in these two regions can help contextualize Philippines under Duterte within the democratic paradox.

Theoretical Framework

Thagard (2015) argues that people do not "rationalize" their political stances based on careful calculations of utility and logical reasoning, as most rational choice theories would posit. Rather, he argues that people "rationalize" by assessing how emotionally coherent a stance is with their personal beliefs and goals which, in practice, generates less-than-rational inferences about the issue at hand. Hence, people tend to gravitate towards views that validate their strongly-held ideologies and belief systems consisting of interrelated concepts with emotional values attached to them. Although this does not explain how people acquire, retain, or abandon their core beliefs, it could be argued that emotional coherence is the dominant mental mechanism guiding such processes.

Modeled after Thagard's theory, cognitive-affective maps (CAM) illustrate belief systems and ideological processes by depicting not only the relationships between concepts but also the emotions associated with them. The diagram below summarizes the basic components of a CAM generated using the version of EMPATHICA created by the Ideological Conflict Project:

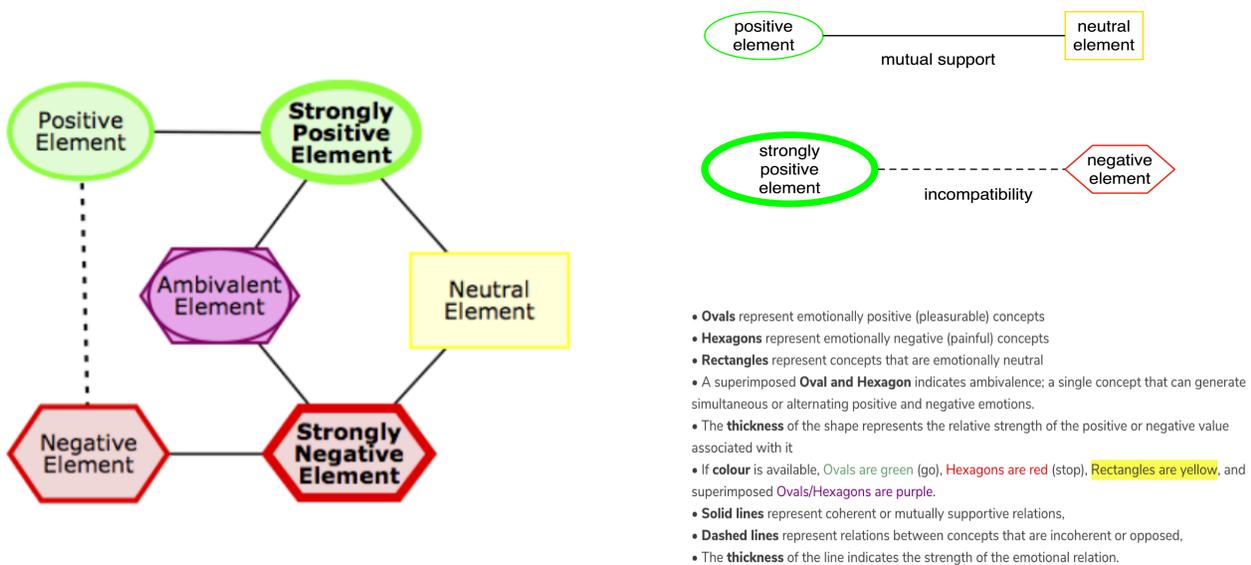


Figure 1. Basic properties of a cognitive affective map

CAM incorporates the vital aspects of emotional coherence by depicting ideology as a neural network of concepts in which “the activation of one concept leads to the activation of another according to a characteristic pattern” (Mock, 2018, p. 373) with the goal of “maximizing the satisfaction of multiple cognitive and emotional constraints” (van Rooij et al., 2007, p. 4). Approaching ideology as a complex system of interconnected concepts is not new to political psychology research. In 1992, Spellman and Holyoak (1992) used a similar computational method to understand how ideologies shifted during the Persian Gulf war and found that attitudes towards the war were directly shaped by adjusting one’s cognitive network of interconnected concepts such as their stances towards the United States and political figures like Saddam Hussein as well as their ambiguous ideals of pacifism and isolationism. This interdisciplinary framework became widely used by more recent studies on conceptual change, a cognitive process one exhibits when changing political perceptions which, from the ideological lens, can help explain shifts in voting patterns and affiliations.

However, conceptual change happens only when an individual’s belief system undergoes heavy restructuring, which rarely occurs without a major shift in external circumstances and an iterative process of generating new beliefs, revising old ones, and internally justifying why these changes were necessary. Cognitive dissonance theory (CDT) suggests that individuals have an “inner drive to hold all [their] attitudes and beliefs in harmony and avoid disharmony (or dissonance)” (McLeod, 2014, para. 3). That is, when people are faced with information inconsistent with their deeply-held beliefs (schema), they rarely exhibit conceptual change immediately after encountering dissonance. Instead, people often rely on cognitive strategies to resolve the dissonance between their belief system and the new information that threatens it (Spillane et al., 2016; Critcher et al., 2009).

While emotional coherence provides a viable mechanism as to why people gravitate towards certain beliefs, CDT attempts to explain how people cope with information opposing these core ideologies. When coping with dissonance, people exhibit cognitive biases, most notably selection bias and confirmation bias, or psychological resolve, in which one resorts to treating two issues as separate and irrelevant to one another despite being deeply related.

Methodology

Sampling Population

For confidentiality purposes, the pseudonym “Pilipina” will be used to refer to the organization used as the sampling population. Pilipina is a prominent leftist women’s organization with active regional chapters in Manila and Davao. To further minimize confounding factors, only members enrolled at the Manila and Davao campuses of the same university system were sampled to keep demographic factors constant. Pilipina’s values-driven advocacy coincides with several tenets of liberalism and equality underpinning democracy described by Mouffe. Apart from advocating for women’s rights, the organization actively endorses human rights, rule of law, and civil freedoms and condemns inequality, corruption, and elitism. While Pilipina is not politically-motivated, it has publicly expressed dissent against initiatives spearheaded by the Duterte administration. As an organization, it condemns the president’s misogynist comments and rape jokes and equally criticizes left-leaning politicians and oligarchs perpetuating socioeconomic inequalities. Despite the agreement on these particular issues, the organization’s rationale towards Duterte was remarkably fragmented during the 2016 elections when some members from its Mindanao chapters expressed their support for him as president-elect. These dynamics make Pilipina an ideal sampling population to explore the internal fragmentation of leftist ideologies in environments where populism is a serious threat to liberal democracy.

Preliminary Survey and Interviews

The subjects were individually asked to complete a preliminary survey organized into three main parts to measure the following:

Part 1: Familiarity with and stances on two major policies (Drug War and TRAIN Law)

Part 2: Attitudes towards tenets of democracy on the concepts of liberalism and equality as described by Mouffe

Part 3: Perceptions towards the current administration, President Duterte's previous mayorship, perceptions of the president's controversial statements.

Both the survey and interview were designed to measure five dimensions: stances on major national policies; support for major political blocs; perceptions of liberal democracy; perceptions of President Duterte; perceptions of Duterte's leftist supporters. The three parts of the survey were organized to minimize overall priming. Most of the survey questions prompt the participant to self-report their agreement towards a particular statement. For these items, a 7-point Likert scale was used, which has been found to be the most optimal scale in collecting reliable survey data from written questionnaires (Krosnick & Pressner, 2009). The only items in which the 7-point scale did not apply are questions gauging the subject's self-reported familiarity with a concept or issue, for which the baseline is zero (i.e. "0: Not Familiar", "1: Quite Familiar", "2: Familiar", "3: Very Familiar") and optional open-ended questions asking the subject to expound on their survey responses or any other text-based responses.

At least three participants were randomly selected from each chapter for 30 to 40-minute phone interviews. Each interview consisted of 10 to 14 questions tailored according to each subject's survey responses, depending on their degree of support or dissent towards democratic ideals, the president himself, and major party blocs, among others. The questions were designed as prompts for the subject to provide further justification regarding their stances and attitudes towards the issues and to clarify or resolve their self-contradicting responses. All interviewed subjects were asked the same opening and closing questions, the latter referring specifically to the Pilipina regional chapters' internal disagreement over Duterte's presidential candidacy. The interviews were conducted during the first quarter of 2019. The closing questions are as follows:

1. In 2016, the Pilipina southern chapter campaigned for President Duterte. Personally, how did you feel about the endorsement?
2. In 2018, the Pilipina southern chapter took back this endorsement, saying "they were wrong" about the president, two years into his term. Why do you think the chapter revoked its support?

After collecting the preliminary data from the participants, CAMs were generated on the Manila and Davao chapters' responses for each part of the survey to compute the corresponding "emotional coherence" of each map using the EMPATHICA software. Afterwards, potential points of cognitive dissonance were assessed during the interviews to observe the coping mechanisms participants would exhibit to justify their stances or process information incoherent to their views.

Discussion of Results

In total, twenty-six survey responses out of ~60 members from Manila and nineteen survey responses out of ~20 members from Davao were collected. The table below summarizes the median, interquartile range, and calculated p-value from the Mann-Whitney U-Test of the responses from Manila and Davao for each item. Upon graphing the histograms of responses for each survey item and observing a recurrent skewness in the results, the Likert-scale items were analyzed as interval data.

Table 1. Summary of Mann-Whitney U-Test p-values

Question	Manila		Davao		Significance (p-value)
	Median	IQR	Median	IQR	
Part 1: Democratic Paradox (Liberalism and Equality)	<i>Do you agree with these statements? (7-point scale)</i>				
Democracy is the most ideal system of government.	4	2.75	5	1.5	0.58232

Core Concepts on Liberalism

The government has the duty to uphold the human rights and welfare of each and every individual, no matter what.	7	1	7	0	0.18684
Being part of a democracy entails being respectful of opposing views.	5	2	5	2.5	0.75656
The core essence of democracy is to protect liberal freedoms, e.g. right to speech, life, personal safety, and fair trial.	5	1.75	6	1	0.0477**
Composite Score (3 items above)	5.67	1.58	6	1.167	0.16758
[Conditional] Individual liberal freedoms should always be prioritized even when huge inequalities of wealth and privilege exist.	2.5	1.75	3	2	0.71884

Core Concepts on Equality

Access to primary goods is a better measure of social justice than access to liberal freedoms.	5	2	4.5	1	0.56868
Equality of opportunity is the key goal of democracy.	5.5	1	5	1	0.83366
Equal distribution of primary goods should be the main priority of the government.	6	1.75	6	1	0.6818
Composite Score (3 items above)	5.33	1.33	5.33	0.833	0.57548
[Conditional] In societies with huge inequalities, the government has to promote measures of wealth redistribution even though they can hurt society temporarily. (e.g. using tax revenue from price hikes on basic commodities to fund public education).	5	3	5	2.5	0.79486

Part 2: Stances towards Duterte and his administration

Familiarity with and stances on policies

Drug War Familiarity (4-point scale) (1- No knowledge, 2 - Not very familiar, 3 - Quite familiar, 4 - Very familiar)	3.5	1	4	1	0.60306
Drug War Stance (7-point scale) (-3: Strongly Disagree, -2: Somewhat Disagree, -1: Disagree, 0: Neutral, 1: Agree, 2: Somewhat Agree, 3: Strongly Agree)	1	0	1	1	0.09102 *
TRAIN Familiarity (4-point scale)	3	1	3	1	0.9124
TRAIN Stance (7-point scale)	1	1	1	0	0.53526

Do you agree with these statements? (7-point scale)

President Duterte's mayorship in Davao should be judged separately from his work as president.	5	4	5	3	0.29834
President Duterte's mayorship in Davao is an effective template to use in solving nationwide issues.	1	1	3	1	0.00104 ***
The president's controversial statements are blown out of proportion by the media.	2	1.75	3	2.5	0.0139 **
Supporting, not opposing, the current administration would be beneficial for Philippine society.	1	0	2	1	0.16758

The president's controversial statements inflict real damage on Philippine society.	7	0	6	1	0.03486 **
Damages that may result from the drug war is a justifiable means if it results in ending the drug-related problems society has faced for decades.	1	0	2	1	0.12356
The president's political and economic policies matter more than his statements.	2	2.75	3	2	0.42952
Nitpicking the president's controversial remarks distracts the public from the real issues.	5	4	6	3.5	0.24604
<i>Rate your stance on the following statements (7-point scale)</i>					
The president's controversial remarks should not be taken too seriously.	1	0	1	0.5	0.3125
The strong reactions against the president's rape joke are mostly due to cultural differences.	1	0	1	1	0.1902
The president should be judged for his long history of pro-women policymaking, not his remarks.	1	1	2	0	0.0466 **
The international media distorts the president's statements against women and interprets them out of context.	1	1	2	2	0.0784 *

Democratic Paradox: Tenets of liberalism and equality

Both groups associated inequality and poverty as very negative concepts and human rights as a very positive one. Despite a few negligible differences (e.g. Davao has a slightly more positive attitude towards civil liberties), the following diagrams confirm speculations that the two chapters exhibit very similar ideologies, being members of the same political organization.

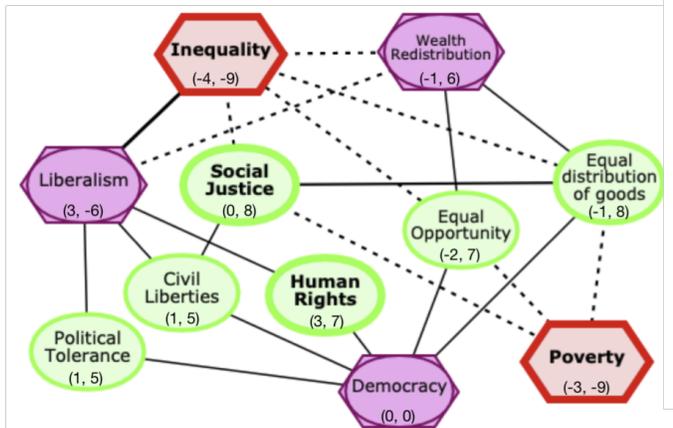


Figure 2a. Manila chapter: Core Ideology

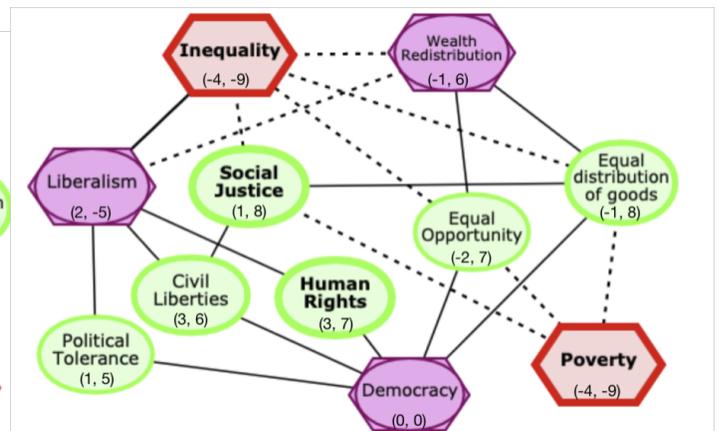


Figure 2b. Davao chapter: Core Ideology

As expected, inequality was considered a very negative concept by both chapters. Social justice was associated with equal distribution of goods and the eradication of poverty and inequality. The concept of liberalism was perceived by both groups as a rather ambiguous concept, generating either positive or negative opinions, depending on the stimulus. On one hand, human rights, civil liberties, and political

tolerance were considered positive concepts. When all three were active, both groups tended to perceive liberalism positively as well. On the other hand, both groups also associated inequality with liberalism. For instance, when inequalities perpetuated by the liberal elite were discussed, their confidence in liberalism as a 'positive' concept also diminished. Hence, both chapters tend to prioritize equality over liberalism in theory, assuming that these diagrams indeed represent the subjects' basal political ideologies since they were not prompted with triggers to activate these nodes.

Political Opinions: Stances towards the Duterte administration

In terms of stances towards the presidential administration, both Manila and Davao exhibited strongly negative reactions towards Duterte's national expertise, national policies, presidency, controversial remarks, international image, and rape jokes. Both also have strongly positive reactions towards media coverage and women's rights. However, there were three crucial differences between the two chapters' perceptions of Duterte.

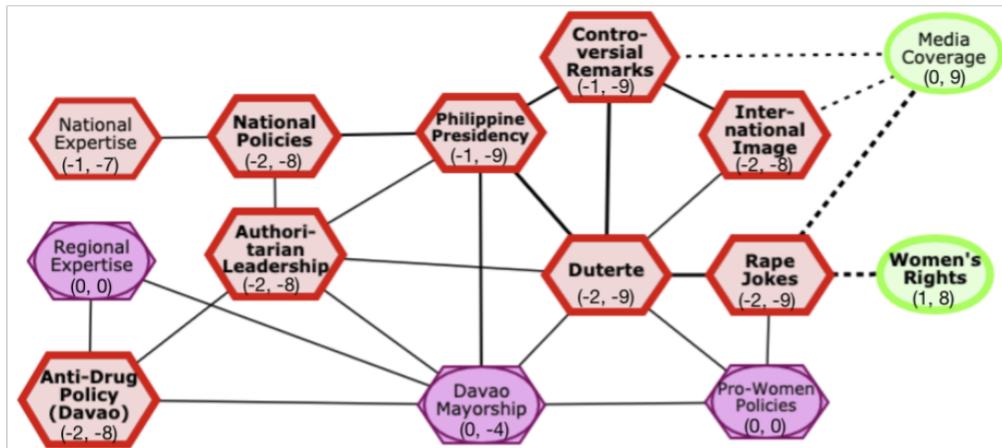


Figure 3a. Manila chapter: Stances towards Duterte and his administration

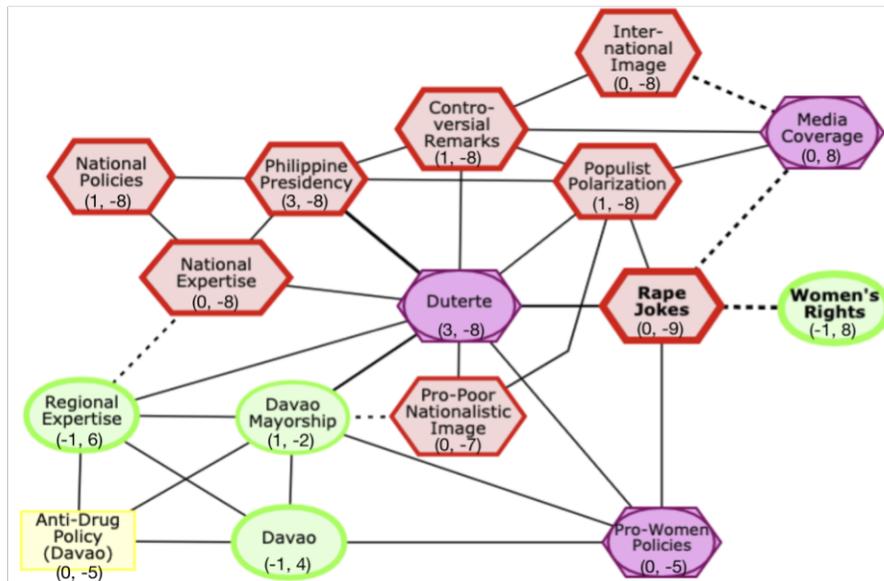


Figure 3b. Davao chapter: Stances towards Duterte and his administration

First, the Davao group perceived his regional expertise as a positive trait, emphasizing the former mayor's deep knowledge of southern Philippine politics and adept negotiation skills to keep the peace in Davao. Manila members were rather neutral on the issue since they are not as familiar with Duterte's regional expertise of the south. More importantly, the Manila group based its negative conceptualization of Duterte on other very negative factors related to his presidency. Despite their lack of knowledge of Duterte's mayorship, the Manila group perceived it negatively, associating it with his authoritarian style of leadership as a president. Meanwhile, Davao was more conflicted towards Duterte himself and finds the concept rather ambiguous. On one hand, they associate him with positive concepts towards Davao where Duterte served as mayor for decades and used his regional expertise to advance the region's interests. On the other hand, they also associate Duterte with his presidency which the Davao chapter condemns, similar to their Manila counterparts.

During the interviews, the Davao members cited populist polarization and Duterte's pro-masses nationalistic image as two of the worst things about his presidency. They saw his attempts to appear as pro-poor as inauthentic, finding it incoherent with their perception of him as the former Davao mayor who came from a family of rather powerful oligarchs. However, the Davao group criticized his role as president due to his lack of national expertise in alleviating conditions for the Philippine masses, but not his authoritarian style of leadership, as their counterparts from Manila did. Those from Manila associated both his anti-drug policy in Davao and his national-level policies as president with his authoritarian leadership which they viewed as the overarching problem with Duterte politics. Although Davao also processed his national policies negatively, they were less opposed to Duterte's anti-drug policy as mayor, given their more positive perceptions of his regional expertise and mayorship in Davao.

Prompt: Justifying stances towards Duterte using organization's core political ideologies

When the interviewees were asked to justify their stances towards Duterte in relation to their organization's ideology, key differences emerged between the two chapters. Most of these also stem from their different perceptions of Davao, the president himself, and his mayorship, regional expertise, and authoritarian style of leadership, as discussed earlier.

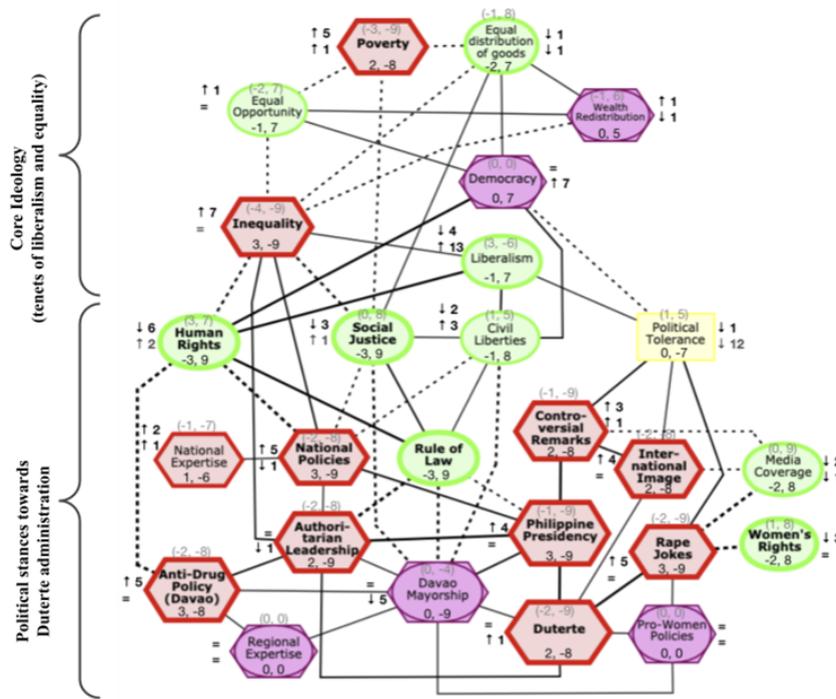


Figure 4a. Manila chapter: Prompted to justify stances towards Duterte using core ideology

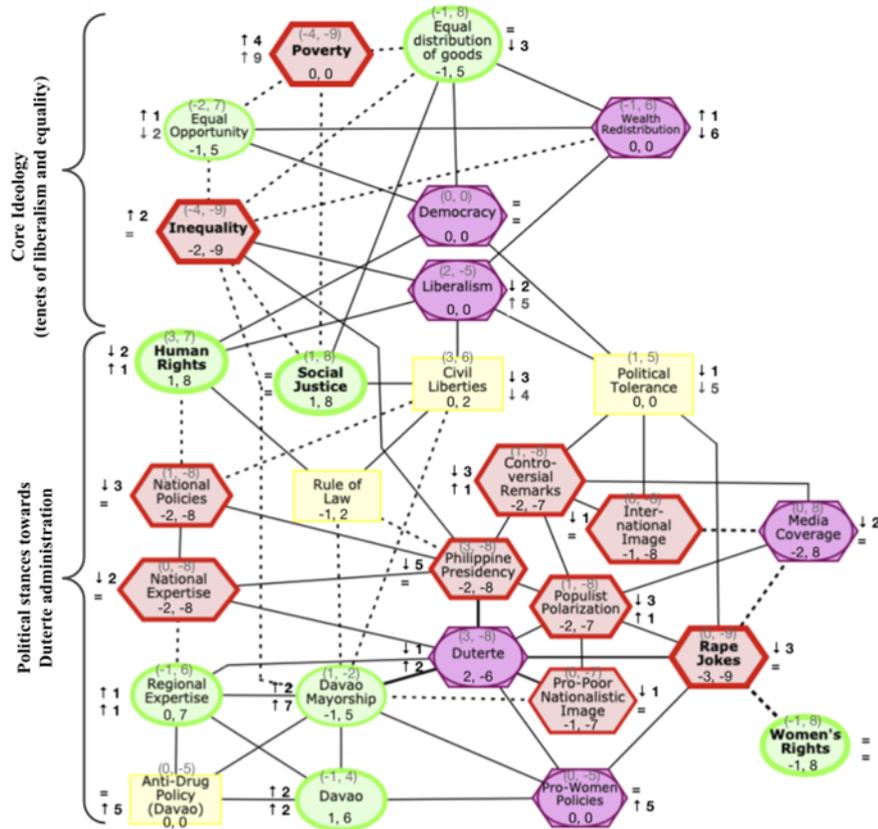


Figure 4b. Davao chapter: Prompted to justify stances towards Duterte using core ideology

Overall, there was no remarkable activation of the concepts on liberalism or equality among Davao participants when asked to relate their stances towards Duterte with their organization’s core principles. Inequality, social justice, and human rights remained very active but poverty and wealth redistribution became inactive, lacking relevance to the Davao group’s response to the prompt.

Meanwhile, the Manila interviewees emphasized civil liberties, rule of law, and human rights in justifying their stances. This promptly activated democracy and liberalism, two previously neutral concepts. The Manila interviewees perceived Duterte’s anti-drug policy as Davao mayor, his national policies as president, and overall authoritarian leadership as incoherent with these three liberal concepts. Positive perceptions of liberalism among the Davao interviewees also increased when justifying their stances towards the president. Similar to their Manila counterparts, they emphasized the need for human rights in response to the president’s national policies. But unlike the Manila group, the Davao group perceived fewer concepts as incoherent with human rights, civil liberties, and rule of law to really activate liberalism or democracy. Thus, democracy and liberalism remained neutral among the interviewees from the Davao chapter while the two were positively activated among those in the Manila chapter.

Political tolerance also became a negative concept for both chapters, linking it to the president’s rape jokes, controversial remarks, and international image as a strongman politician. Both groups believed that these public messages inflict real damage to society. However, the Manila participants further emphasized the need to regulate the president’s controversial remarks, rape jokes, and public image because they go against the liberal aspects of democracy. Whereas, the Davao participants did not refer to any liberal concepts in their justification.

Another key difference is the direct association between democracy and civil liberties. From a purely ideological perspective, both Manila and Davao perceived civil liberties as coherent with the concept

of democracy (see Figures 2a and 2b). In response to the prompt, Manila retained the connection between democracy and civil liberties. Whereas, Davao severed the connection because of the cognitive dissonance it would create, given their positive activation of Davao despite acknowledging that civil liberties (i.e. due process, protection from extrajudicial killings) were violated under his mayorship. To cope with the possible dissonance, emphasis on civil liberties was reduced.

Both groups also mentioned the importance of rule of law in protecting human rights and civil liberties in the context of Duterte's presidency. However, there was a key difference in how the two groups processed rule of law as a concept. On one hand, Manila interviewees associated it as a positive concept linked to social justice as well as antithetical to authoritarian leadership — both as mayor and president. Whereas, the interviewees from Davao did not find the rule of law as a particularly negative concept. Although they acknowledged its theoretical importance to upholding human rights and civil liberties, they did not find it particularly effective in addressing the key issues of his presidency, which they were primarily concerned with.

Prompt: Closing questions and stances towards the Duterte administration

For the closing question, the interviewees were asked to relay their thoughts on the Pilipina Southern chapter's endorsement of Duterte during the 2016 presidential elections and why they think a faction of their organization supported him at the time. Figures 5a and 5b depict how the interviewees justified this occurrence in relation to their original stances towards the Duterte administration (see Figures 3a and 3b).

As shown below, interviewees from Manila perceived the Pilipina Southern chapter's decision to endorse Duterte negatively, finding it starkly antithetical to the organization's advocacy. As one Manila interviewee said, she felt "betrayed when progressive organizations expressed support for him" since his remarks and methods should be opposed by all women's organizations regardless of location. Originally, the Manila group was neutral towards Duterte's regional expertise since their knowledge of politics in the southern Philippines and Duterte's mayorship were rather limited. However, this changed in response to the prompt as the Manila interviewees sought to rationalize the regional context behind the chapter's endorsement of Duterte during his presidential bid. Most Manila participants speculated that members of the chapter endorsed Duterte because organization members from the south were conditioned to trust his regional expertise even though his actions do not cohere with the organization's values. Moreover, Manila participants felt that regional loyalties mattered more than organization values during national elections. As one participant put it, the Mindanao chapter's decision to endorse Duterte was most likely because "he was the first Mindanaoan in a very long time (or ever) that had a shot at claiming the presidency" and that the chapter hoped to "uproot Manila's hold" on the national seat of power. These assumptions resulted in the negative conceptualization of his regional expertise.

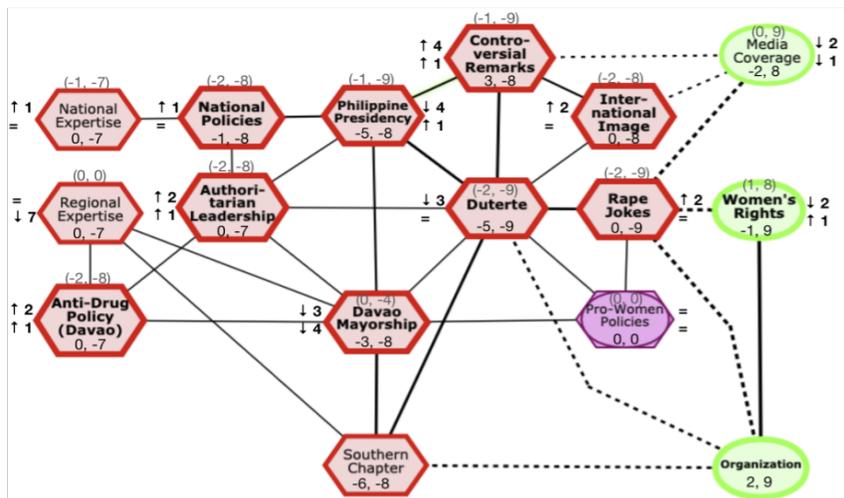


Figure 5a. Manila chapter: Prompted to justify Pilipina Southern chapter's endorsement of Duterte

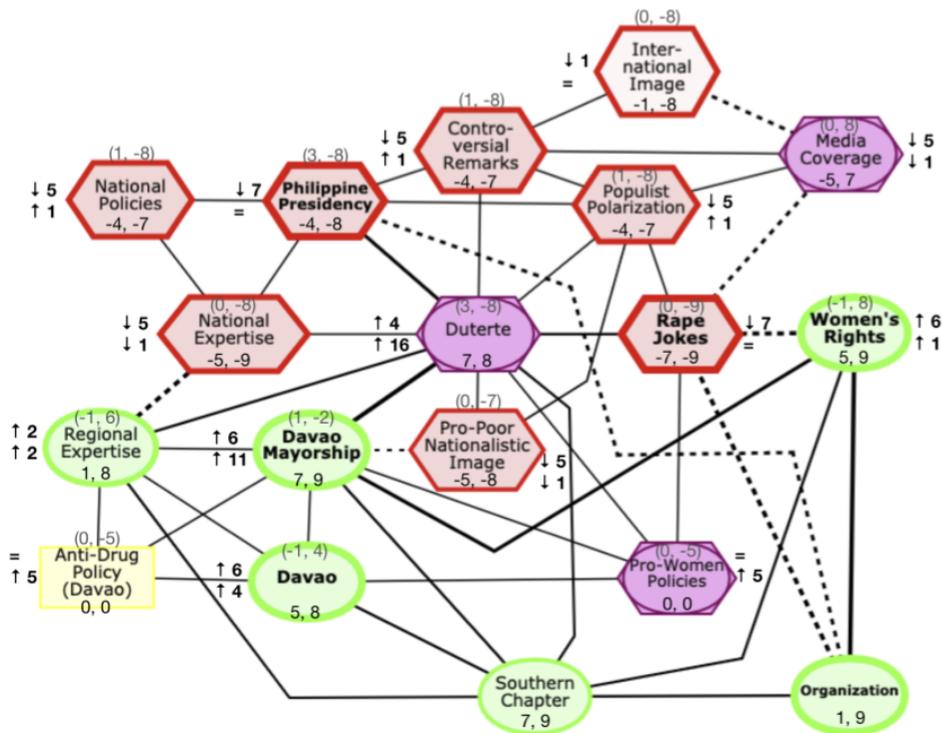


Figure 6a. Davao chapter: Prompted to justify Pilipina Southern chapter’s endorsement of Duterte

Meanwhile, the Davao interviewees saw the Pilipina Southern chapter’s initial endorsement of Duterte in 2016 as a positive thing. Unlike the Manila participants, they didn’t think the chapter’s actions betrayed the organization’s values or undermined women’s rights. Davao participants rationalized that Duterte, as a mayor, was initially perceived as a strong advocate of women’s rights and liberalism. As one participant explained, she understood why the chapter campaigned for Duterte at that time because he cultivated very good relations with left-wing organizations during his two decades of mayorship. In justifying their responses to the prompt, Davao participants further emphasized their positive stance towards his Davao mayorship, regional expertise, and Davao itself, highlighting his previous pro-liberal stances and actions as mayor. Yet again, this prompt put his mayorship in the spotlight, elevating perceptions of him despite the Davao participants’ negative perception of his presidency.

Afterwards, all the interviewees were asked why they thought the Southern chapter revoked its endorsement of Duterte in 2018, more than a year into his presidential term. The Manila group used this information to confirm their own biases, interpreting it as further evidence that Duterte’s presidency is an extension of his long-standing authoritarian tendencies as mayor. Hence, the Manila interviewees associated the Southern chapter’s “change of heart” as a realization that “Duterte’s pro-liberal stance is a sham because the president only advances the interests of his family, cronies, and the rich,” confirming their suspicions. Whereas, the participants from Davao associated the chapter’s resolve with a shift in the president’s leadership methods and priorities. Unlike Manila participants who found Duterte’s authoritarian brand of leadership as the overarching problem, Davao participants rationalized that “Duterte has always been greatly influenced by the people surrounding him” and for this reason, “as a president, he’s so different from how he acted as mayor.” This signified a possible occurrence of conceptual change among Davao participants in their perception of Duterte sometime between his mayorship and presidency.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The insights derived from this case study reaffirmed the increasing relevance of cognitive-affective paradigms in political ideology research. The theories of emotional coherence and cognitive dissonance were effective frameworks for understanding the subtle differences not only between two populations, but also between two derivatives of the democratic ideology. This was especially relevant to the Davao

population's significantly different perceptions of Duterte, particularly the concepts related to his mayorship. The significant differences in their responses to this part of the survey confirmed that regional contexts did affect political opinions, even when the strength and orientations of the two populations' cognitive functions were relatively similar. Moreover, the closing questions to the in-depth interviews revealed that the two populations exhibited cognitive bias and psychological resolve, specifically, to cope with information that contradicts the very purpose of their organization.

The findings also supported the democratic paradox theory, given the two chapters' different democratic priorities. The distinct ways members from these two chapters framed their answers imply that there are indeed two distinct theories of democracy that shape perceptions differently in politically polarized environments. The fact that the subjects came from the same organization and have similarly strong stances towards polarizing issues makes this an even more interesting finding about the dual role of the democratic paradox as a personal psychology and political philosophy. While this supports the democratic paradox theory as a paradigm of ideology, this does not necessarily affect the political stances of those who exhibit such tendencies. Although liberalism and democracy are arguably two philosophies that can be used as distinct psychological frameworks in forming political opinions, they were not enough impetus for massive shifts in political stances. This was evident in the statistically significant but overall insignificant differences in the Manila and Davao populations' stances towards the two controversial policies enacted by the Duterte administration. As depicted in the CAM simulations, small adjustments in valences and activations were made by the subjects when dealing with cognitive dissonance. However, such adjustments were not enough to instigate conceptual change. Future studies should focus on simulating conceptual change in political ideology as a complex neural network and cognitive phenomena. Such an approach can potentially generate insights on the growing support for populism and, in a broader sense, the processes of constructing, deconstructing, and creating political support.

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