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Extremism and Its Effects on Idaho Legislation

Steve D. Sutherland
Boise State University

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Steven D. Sutherland

Boise State University

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Dr. Margaret Sass

Author Note

The content of this paper is done so in affiliation with Boise State University, specifically within the Department of Multidisciplinary Studies.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Steven D. Sutherland.

Contact information: stevensutherland@u.boisestate.edu

Abstract

The Capstone Project covers, through documented interviews and insights, practitioners, journalists, and researchers that have endeavored to recognize and reconcile the effects of extremism in Idaho legislation. The referenced articles and academic journals also shed light on how this is not unique to the Gem State and how it is manifesting and evolving within the United States. This paper describes my approaches to researching this topic and the challenges of its polarization and political realities. I cover how creating an innovative approach can bring together different perspectives. Emotional intelligence is vital in exploring a hot-button issue such as this. Awareness of one's self and others helps to bolster the consideration of the audience and brings value to others who broach the subject matter. Implementing a creative framework nurtures a unique approach for the purposes of innovation to the project and accomplishment of the Capstone. This project not only satisfies my desire to bring clarity to the problem but to espouse its benefits and impact on the stakeholders.

Keywords: extremism, legislation, Idaho

Introduction to my Capstone Project

The great state of Idaho has long been home to conservative values and self-governance. The geography itself lends access and exploration while promoting the independent and pioneering spirit generations of Idahoans have come to enjoy. It is in this spirit that we find freedom; the freedom to choose and live as we intend. However, this freedom is being cast as a dividing theme in our political landscape. Extreme views in the name of ‘freedom’ have transcended into politics. Legally elected extremist legislators are now among the House and Senate in the Idaho legislature. It is here that I research the actions and effects of legislators who propose, pass, and put down bills that profoundly affect the rule of law, self-governance, and all levels of public education in this Gem State we call Idaho.

Innovative Approach

The approach I selected is the Research Project. My project topic concerns how extremism is affecting our legislative process in the Idaho State Legislature. While it is not new that extremist groups have made the Gem State home, their agendas are more and more becoming mainstream in political dialogues and even within our Statehouse. Increasingly, elected officials are legislating extremism that shuns inclusivity, dismisses common sense, and even challenges our State Constitution that protects us all as citizens. First-level stakeholders include both current and future elected legislators, voting residents of Idaho, and PAC groups. However, the research project will show how this issue reaches well beyond these, including its effects on higher education and the underserved populations of Idaho. The question then becomes apparent in my approach: How might I objectively investigate this current event issue as it unfolds in real-time and manifests itself as our Statehouse is in session? Either I seek

resources that support my own insights and opinions as an Idahoan, or I look to fact-based reporting and peer-reviewed academic journals. In the interest of integrity and objectivity, it is crucial to approach this topic with the latter. Upon completion of this paper, readers will see the enumerated articles and journals as examples of the research for their edification.

Bringing Together Different Perspectives

To solve the problem, I brought together different perspectives to provide insight and balanced weight to the problem. There are many stakeholders, and they do have inherent platforms of their own. The topic is indeed polarizing and is playing out in our State Legislature. When addressing and interviewing stakeholders, it is necessary to be forthright in disclosing the intent of the research as academic as well as objective. The nature of the problem being researched lends itself to pointed and subjective perspectives. Having said that, it is imperative to draw from fact-based reporting and academia to establish how different perspectives are in play when addressing the problem. If and when one is to see the research, they themselves can ask informed questions in the effort to gain informed answers. They in turn can add their own perspectives and give weight to the crucial conversation regarding the topic.

Creating Innovative Approaches: Beyond Either/Or

To begin, this project is unprecedented. There are hardly any current academic resources (not yet anyway) that have investigated the problem. The problem continues to evolve and has done so throughout the project. The resulting research is an accumulation of insights, interviews, and on-record legislation that affects us as Idahoans. I was integrative in my approach to handling these crucial conversations by asking open-ended questions and allowing for only whole and genuine answers. While I do have an informed opinion, I myself must remain neutral throughout the research in the investigative process.

Given that my project is one of research, I have to know both the background of the problem and the stakeholders as I create an environment that is inclusive and safe for those whom I interact with. Every player in this project is a contemporary, especially since the problem is a current event. For example, at the onset of the project, I sat down with the retired Idaho Secretary of State Ben Ysursa. I reached out to him to let him know what I was doing and how to approach the subject of the problem. To say the least this was insightful but it also revealed how daunting this project may be. I informed him that I will be referencing interviews with persons like Mr. Ysursa in my research project.

Emotional Intelligence

Awareness of Self and Others

The research that I was performing indicated an awareness of self and an awareness of others by applying the four domains of Emotional Intelligence (EI). Initially, I reminded myself how important it is to begin with *self-awareness*. I am researching a polarizing and stressful topic that can stir emotions. Speaking for myself, I am engaged and I appreciate civics and how it affects us as citizens and our communities. Like many cohorts, I too question policy and protocol and why our leaders do what they do. This stirs emotions because we are all affected by decision-making, no matter our affiliation or opinion. I would add that those who feel a disconnect from our government are affected by being emotionally and civically diminished as well. Nevertheless, I am a human being, so while I have my opinions, it is here in this research realm that I must recognize and reconcile them.

Next, I must use *self-management* by controlling my emotions and refrain from them influencing my research. Using *social awareness*, I need to research all aspects and perspectives of the stakeholders involved that said research involves and affects. I must be cognizant of how

my research can and will be interpreted by all who read it. Last but not least is keeping in mind the importance of *relationship management*. When I did my research, it included interviews with stakeholders that are in the public eye. They are elected and charged with representing their varied constituencies in their respective districts within the state. In addition, there are those who serve the state in unofficial capacities but are civically active nonetheless. In any regard, they all are subject to feedback that may be less than civil. It is my responsibility to be objective and have their interests in mind when I apply their insights to my research project. Since my proposal creation, I have already heavily considered how EI is relevant and useful. As my research project has come to fruition, I continuously felt the need to re-emphasize the importance of EI in my approach and throughout the project until the terminus.

Consideration of the Audience: Emotional Intelligence

It is crucial that my approach and findings consider the emotional intelligence of the audience. The subject matter is hotly contested and the challenge here is garnering insights that are objectively attained and evenly projected. It is imperative to be balanced and ask open-ended questions that allow those interviews to be forthright and clear. (That begins with me as well!) This in turn encourages the audience to read my research with an open-mindedness that may manifest a more considered and differing perspective than their own. Sure, this is an academic project, but I know it is not just for my instructor's consumption. I consider it an opportunity to reach others who may not initially have broached the subject and perhaps gain new perspectives for their edification.

Value to Others: Emotional Intelligence

My research is valuable to others given that it is a current and evolving subject. There are not many academic or scholarly references to this and therein lies the challenge as well as the

necessity. I am hopeful that my research project sheds more light on how this topic affects us all. If I can accomplish this, perhaps those reading it will have a better understanding of the subject matter and come to their own informed opinion. Maybe it will even compel readers to ask more informed questions in the effort to receive more informed answers. In any case, it is the goal of my project to be a valuable reference to those who seek to have a better understanding of the subject at hand.

Creative Thinking

The Creative Framework

Like many, I like to think of myself as the creative type. I appreciate original and creative thinking, but I also may allow myself to just go with the flow and let the framework of the assignment or project be my guide. Maybe that approach gives me a feeling of security, when in fact it may be more appropriate to get over the fear of the messy or unknown. Upon reflection, perhaps there is an opportunity to find clarity in the midst of chaos. Still, I appreciate structure and stability, but I do realize that I need to get out of my comfort zone to deal with uncertainty and the unexpected. After all, the path of life is littered with the unknown.

I am also very judgmental of myself. I compare it to being my own worst critic. I rationalize that if I am critical of my own work, that will translate to approval or positive evaluation from others. I do appreciate feedback, but I also try to mitigate it with proactive self-criticism. It is here that I need to resist judging myself. I am good with constant reflection, yet it enables judgment to perpetuate itself long after the task is complete. So in acknowledging this, I can help myself by changing this approach in order to be more flexible and forgiving as I draw on my creative framework.

In addition, I am relearning to let my ideas go if they do not work and allow others' ideas to take their place. I want to be original and creative, but there is no need to be stubborn and not be receptive to ideas or sources that I had not yet considered. When researching a topic, it is appropriate to use sources that are peer-reviewed and/or scientific in nature. Yet, I need to draw from those databases and form my own conclusions or formulate my own interpretations in the effort to understand the topic and relay the message or content with authenticity and clarity as originally intended.

Unique Approaches to Topic

To be honest, my project is one of research so as far as the method is concerned it is not original. Having said that, it is original to me. I have an opportunity to create something that is unique and perhaps establish a foundation to build on. Indeed, it is the subject material itself that is burgeoning and manifesting. I have yet to see an academic or peer-reviewed journal in this area for my original and particular research. I have to create another approach in the effort to genuinely explore the subject and set a precedent for edification. I was hopeful that my approach was unique in that my project was to include individuals with particular insights into the subject. I found garnering these interviews to be challenging, but the subject is still important to carry on and substantiate the research. I had to pivot and find comparable and relevant research articles that address similar insights and contemporary events. At this juncture, I did feel somewhat discouraged given these challenges, but I reminded myself that this is only providing me the opportunity to have an original approach and hopefully a unique result.

My Innovative Solution

Accomplishment of Capstone

My project is a research paper. The topic is how extremism in politics is affecting not only legislation in the State of Idaho but the country as well for comparison. While I am truly interested in this topic as a citizen as well as a student, I am motivated to understand the different points of view from the stakeholders who are involved and therefore influence legislation. Having said that, I initially desired to interview many of the stakeholders from the sides that are party to our legislative process. Knowing that they might not be available, given their schedules and commitments during a primary election season, it became necessary to pivot from relying on first-hand interviews to exploring other recent and relevant academic resources to bolster my research. This realization compelled me to use an innovative approach in research in compiling facts that are current and yet evolving. I had to find similar, contemporary, and relevant academic sources that explained the phenomenon in legislation. I would synthesize that with the subject matter and produce content and context to the topic.

The process has been challenging to say the least, but I had considered this when I ventured into this political realm. The potential was great; if I were to garner all the interviews I desired, it would have been remarkable and rewarding. However, these realizations and the outcomes that came with them led me down a path I had to explore even further. I had to dig deeper, so to speak, and create an outcome that still satisfied both the required curriculum and my own genuine interest in the subject matter.

Innovative Approach to the Project

I cannot say that a research paper itself is more innovative than other approaches, but the composition of the subject matter will be. Previously, I have mentioned the lack of original and

current academic research on this topic. I have yet to see research that perhaps has set precedent for this evolving subject, but that also means I have an opportunity to put forth original work. Since I considered the topic for this project what seems like so long ago, many events have transpired that I need to apply. In addition to reflecting on past events to shape my research, it is necessary to combine them with current events and form a cohesive and manageable research paper that is relevant, relatable, and rewarding for everyone's edification.

I may have approached this work differently to enhance innovation by being more assertive in scheduling interviews. I was admittedly somewhat sheepish in trying to encourage the individuals I sought out for these interviews. Indeed, I respect that they were and still are committed to their schedules and causes, but in hindsight, I feel I failed in making my own case for them to contribute. I didn't want to step on toes, so to speak, and I certainly wanted them to keep me in mind in the future. Upon reflection, I needed to reach out to others who may have more experience with individuals such as these, and perhaps create an approach that an experienced interviewer would put into practice. I wanted to be original, but I felt by doing that I also needed to find outside sources to help with my innovative approach. For example, I should have considered those who work with and for the people I desired to interview. This right here is one of the bigger lessons I have learned from this project and through this process.

Results

Benefits to Stakeholders

My research paper adds to the literature previously published. Having said that, I initially found the existing academic literature to be lacking when I first explored my topic. It seemed at first I was doing something that was unprecedented, so it was similar to the *chicken or the egg* situation. After all, how can I use academic journals when in fact they are/were lacking for my

initial needs? To address that, I had to broaden my scope of the topic and therefore the research project. This means that I had to recognize that the different and identified stakeholders addressed in the research may be fluid and evolving. I also realized that all stakeholders needed to be fairly addressed and objectively included. If I were to truly produce a document that is inviting and inclusive, I found it necessary to dig deeper into how my topic came to be. What I mean by this is that my topic is essentially a current event; it is happening in real-time so my sources are yet to be presented. To offset this I needed to research more background data. This would include more local reporting, legislation documentation, and comparable national publications relevant to the topic. This in turn changed the scope of which stakeholders this addressed and therefore benefits them in providing increased aspects for them and their edification.

Given that this is a research paper, the impact has yet to manifest itself. However, I hope that it compels those interested in the topic and our state of affairs to create a reference point and conversation starter in the pursuit of constructive and civil discourse. Stakeholders will have at their disposal content and context in determining their respective impacts.

The research involves politics and policy. In the current political and social climate, one would find it challenging to suss out objective feedback, given the stakeholders' perceptions and positions. I expect varied impact results as a result of inherent tensions and interpretations of facts and opinions. I readily accept this and understand that many in a political capacity are charged with taking sides. I also find that this project has the potential of being impactful on future stakeholders within this context. If one were to investigate how we got here, so to speak, I hope this paper is seen and used in a positive contribution in referring to and understanding the realities and results of the research.

Conclusion

I chose the research paper method because I found it necessary to investigate and compile evidence for the topic. The topic itself is comprehensive given that there are many players that influence how politics and therefore policy is played out. During most legislative sessions there are quite a few bills that are presented, passed, or put down. It is important to understand who introduces and votes for and against any bill that comes across the state legislature. It is equally important to mete out these proposals and bills that are introduced by legislators who may not have truly objective motivations for doing so. With inclusive and comprehensive reporting, it is significant to manifest patterns and track records that show who and how these extremist views are implemented into public policy.

What I learned is that this issue is not only playing out in our nation but in my own state of Idaho Legislature. There are and always will be political divides, but they have transcended to social and cultural ones as well. I find it remarkable that an extreme segment of our population has been enabled to be manipulative, intimidating, and overbearing among our leadership. It is resulting in profound effects on the rule of law, governance, and education.

Those who will benefit from this research are individuals who seek to delve deeper into this difficult, prevalent, and current event. It is my intent to provide a viable resource for those who would like to peer into our collective reality and objectively make their own decisions on the matter. I know I benefited from this research by gaining meaningful insight and expanding perspective-taking. In addition to myself and the novice consumer, I hope to benefit the stakeholders including current and future legislators, the voting public, vulnerable populations, underserved minorities, educators, and students alike. The people of the Gem State deserve to be

an objectively informed public and therefore compel leadership to implement informed and objective legislative policies for today and beyond.

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