

Social Discussion Networks during the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Study of College Students Core Discussion Groups

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Abstract : During the historically unprecedented time of Covid-19 pandemic, we survey college students with social issue generators to measure their core discussion groups. For the total 191 students, we elicit 847 conversation partners (alters) with our five social issue generators such as school closing, facemasks, collegiate sports, race and policing, and social inequality, producing an average of 4.43 alters per respondent. The core discussion groups of our sample are very gender balanced, with female alters slightly outnumbering male alters. However, the core discussion groups are racially homogenous, consisting of mostly white students (around or above 80 percent). Explanatory analyses reveal that gender and race of respondents significantly impact the size, gender composition, and racial composition of their core discussion networks. We discuss those major findings and implications of future studies in our conclusion section.

Keywords : core discussion groups, social issue generators, ego-centric network, Covid-19 pandemic

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