

What's in a Name?

Party-affiliation and Priming

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Our Question



How does framing affect the way in which
Harvard undergraduates respond to the
Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
(PPACA)?

Background

Tversky and Kahneman (1981):
"The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology
of Choice"



Background

"...seemingly inconsequential changes in the formulation of choice problems caused significant shifts of preference"

Background

Iyengar and Kinder (1987)



Background

"By calling attention to some matters and ignoring others, television news influences the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public office are judged."

Hypothesis

Calling the act "Obamacare" will lead to:

- 1) an overall lower approval rating, and
- 2) more polarized ratings when responses are broken down by party affiliation.

Research Design

Qualtrics Survey

- * 13 questions
- * Sent over various email lists
- * Design prevented ballot box stuffing
- * Forced choice responses

"On March 21st, 2010 the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 219-212, and was subsequently signed into legislation soon thereafter. This act includes a set of reforms meant to provide insurance to the majority of the 50 million Americans without health insurance, and provides coverage to those who are otherwise not covered by their employers or the government. Since its passage the constitutionality of this act has been brought into question, specifically questioning whether or not the federal government has the authority to require its citizens to buy health insurance. The Supreme Court is currently deliberating the permissibility of this law, and is expected to come to a verdict in the summer of 2012."

Please rate your approval of the following:

[illegible]

Demographic Questions

- Student at Harvard
 - Gender
 - Age
 - US Citizen
 - Concentration
- What is your political party affiliation?
- ☐ Republican
 - ☐ Lean Republican
 - ☐ Independent
 - ☐ Lean Democrat
 - ☐ Democrat

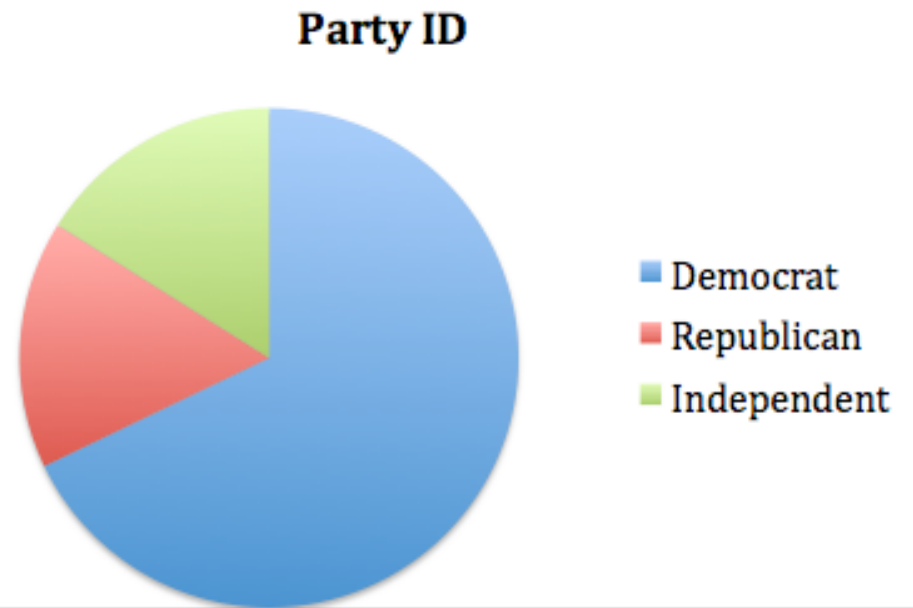
Political Knowledge Test

- PPACA = "Obamacare"
- Members in the US Senate
- Members in the House of Representatives
- Justices on the Supreme Court

Results

Participants

- Survey responses:
 - 122 responses
 - 115 completed the whole survey
 - 112 left after removing 3 who were not Harvard undergraduates



Opinion of the Act

- "Obamacare" condition:
 - Produced the highest approval rating of the act for all three party affiliations
 - For Democrats, the differences approached statistical significance

Knowledgeable Elite?

- 59% answered correctly that Obamacare is a nickname for PPACA
- Only 51% of respondents answered all three knowledge questions correctly
- Did these "elite" respond uniquely? Possibly

Knowledgeable Elite?

$p = 0.019$

$p = 0.165$

Descriptive Statistics

SType	Know		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
PPAC	0	PresidentObama	1	2	2	2.00	.
		Valid N (listwise)	1				
	1	PresidentObama	3	4	6	4.67	1.155
		Valid N (listwise)	3				
	2	PresidentObama	10	3	6	5.00	1.054
Obamacare		Valid N (listwise)	10				
	3	PresidentObama	19	1	7	4.74	2.232
		Valid N (listwise)	19				
	0	PresidentObama	1	7	7	7.00	.
		Valid N (listwise)	1				
anact	1	PresidentObama	4	2	5	3.50	1.291
		Valid N (listwise)	4				
	2	PresidentObama	17	1	7	5.35	1.693
		Valid N (listwise)	17				
	3	PresidentObama	17	2	7	5.47	1.586
anact		Valid N (listwise)	17				
	0	PresidentObama	1	7	7	7.00	.
		Valid N (listwise)	1				
	1	PresidentObama	7	2	6	4.57	1.902
		Valid N (listwise)	7				
anact	2	PresidentObama	11	1	7	5.18	1.722
		Valid N (listwise)	11				
	3	PresidentObama	21	4	7	5.86	.793
		Valid N (listwise)	21				

Conclusions

Conclusions

1. Framing

- "Obamacare" casts a positive light on the act for Democrats
- Surprised to not see a negative impact for Republicans

2. Obama vs. PPACA's Approval

- They're closely tied together
- The illusion of "issue voting" (Bartels 2008)

3. "An Act"

- Neutral language forces you to read and thoughtfully consider the paragraph

External Validity

- More representative sample
 - Who reads emails over House lists?
- Larger sample size
 - Get the survey right the first time

Implications

Senator Chris Dodd in 2009 on Obama's messaging of health care reform:

"I think the president's got to step up and really frame this again for us."

Questions?