

The Effect of Issue Framing on Public Support for Obamacare

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Abstract

Currently, the United States *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* isits wording , has the ability to dra opinion. The goal of this paper is to examine the effects that framing has on this new healthcare law. A have analyzed the effects of framing on other issues, none has yet evaluated the consequences of fram conduct an experiment manipulating three different equivalency frames and four different rationales. U issue rationales have the greatest effect on public support for healthcare. Specifically, what you call the vs. Affordable Care Act) has little sway over public opinion. Instead, providing individuals with the r will allow people with pre-existing conditions to obtain health insurance significantly increases support old Stuart Wald had not one, but three different pre-existing conditions, including schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

how relevant each option is to their own set of personal experiences and values.

Another point worth emphasizing is the meaning of the term “framing effect.” Druckman (2001) and Entman (2009), define a framing effect as the process by which an individual forms an opinion toward a particular issue after exposure to frames presented by the media or politicians. However, one should be careful not to assume that this opinion will be in favor of the views supported by those doing the framing. In fact, even if an individual forms the opposite opinion, it is still said to be a framing effect. Thus, it is exposure to a frame and the subsequent formation of an opinion that characterizes a framing effect, and not the nature of the opinion itself.

One final concept that needs defining is the term “considerations.” Two terms that are often used interchangeably with considerations are “implications” and “rationales.” Unlike framing, “consideration” is well-defined in the existing literature in the field and little disagreement exists on what it entails (Chong and Druckman 2007; Druckman 2001; Tversky and Kahneman 1981; Tversky and Kahneman 1986). Briefly put, a consideration is any effect or outcome that will occur as a consequence of a particular frame. For instance, using the example of a hate speech rally, a news story using a public safety frame might emphasize the *possibility of violent crime that could occur as a result of the rally*.

Different Types of Framing in Use

In terms of practical usage, there have been several important studies that have examined the effects of equivalency framing. It is worth noting though that these studies often disagree as to the merits of using equivalency framing to affect public opinion. For example, Tversky and Kahneman’s 1981 Asian disease experiment presented individuals with two different problems (Tversky and Kahneman 1981). Although the answers to these problems were identical apart from slightly altered wording, Tversky and Kahneman found that individuals chose the option that they believed would avoid the most risk. However, Druckman (2001) disagreed



that (insert manipulation 1 here) will (insert manipulation 2 here). To what extent do you support or oppose this policy?" This question was based off of a 4x3 cell experimental

The third pairing in this set compared “The Affordable Care Act” with the “pre-existing condition” rationale to “Health Care Reform” with the “pre-existing condition” rationale. T-test results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between average policy support for these groups ($p=.037$). Substantively, evidence shows that when moving from “Health Care Reform” with the “pre-existing condition” rationale to “The Affordable Care Act” with the “pre-existing condition” rationale, there is a $-.285$ shift in policy support. However, a multiple linear regression with balance checks reports that the difference between groups is not significant ($p=.156$).

In short, the evidence suggests that what you call the recent healthcare law really has no bearing on average public support. Although several pairings were originally marginally significant and one pairing was statistically significant, the inclusion of balance checks indicates that these findings may only be due to small sample sizes. Thus, with balance checks taken into account, none of the pairings analyzed in my first hypothesis were statistically significant.

frames that a respondent might have received, “Health Care Reform” with the “pre-existing condition” rationale had the highest mean support level at 2.972. It is likely that this frame garnered the most support of the three because it primed individuals to think about improving the American healthcare system. Since allowing individuals with pre-existing conditions to obtain health insurance is one of the top concerns of health reformers, it makes sense that those who received the “Health Care Reform” frame had the highest level of support. Hence, future attempts at framing the recent healthcare law would benefit from providing a “pre-existing condition” rationale to the general public.

In conclusion, we can now get a good idea of the implications of this paper. In terms of practical political implications, proponents of the law who read this paper might discover that they should restructure their efforts by focusing on the benefits that the