

The Effects of Economic Priming on Health Care Policy Public Opinion

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Abstract

Previous research suggests that health care policy public opinion is complicated by factors including one's level of political knowledge and partisan identification. Because health care is so inextricably linked to financial considerations, this research sets out to understand whether being primed to think about individual or national economic considerations in either a positive or negative light systematically alters public opinion on health care policy. The results generated herein through this survey experiment displayed that economic primes are not able to overcome the effects of partisan identification. Moreover, when individuals are primed to think about national economic considerations, partisan identification somewhat mediates the relationship between the prime and public opinion. Limitations in survey design suggest that further research is needed to understand the relationship between financial considerations and public opinion on health care reform.

What We Know

- Self-interest is mediated by political knowledge.
- Party ID acts as a heuristic.
- Health care reform is heavily rooted in economics.

Main Hypotheses

- Positive primes will result in more positive opinion toward the ACA.
- Negative primes will result in more negative opinion toward the ACA.

The Four Primes and Dependent Variable

Treatments			
	Direction	Level	N
Treatment 1	Positive	Individual	62
Treatment 2	Negative	Individual	84
Treatment 3	Positive	National	84
Treatment 4	Negative	National	86
Control	-	-	91

“Please rate your overall feelings toward the ACA, with 10 being the most positive and 0 being the most negative.”

But, partisanship distribution was skewed in the sample.

The Role of Partisan Identification in Health Care Policy Public Opinion

Multivariate Regression Controlling for Party ID

	Cons.	Coef. (b)	P > t	t	Adj. R-squared	N
Treatment 1	0.93	0.301	0.41	0.82	0.27	62
Party ID		0.86	0.000	11.71		
Treatment 2	1.07	-0.30	0.37	-0.9	0.26	84
Party ID		0.86	0.000	11.59		
Treatment 3	0.99	-0.10	0.77	-0.29	0.26	84
Party ID		0.87	0.000	11.74		
Treatment 4	0.97	-0.19	0.95	-0.06	0.26	86
Party ID		0.86	0.000	11.71		

Impact of Partisanship on Receptiveness of Economic Primes

	Cons.	Coef. (b)	P > t	t	Adj. R-squared	N
Treatment 1	0.91	-0.03	0.87	-0.18	0.26	62
Treatment 2	0.97	-0.09	0.61	-0.52	0.26	84
Treatment 3	1.36	0.38	0.04	2.08	0.27	84
Treatment 4	0.92	-0.06	0.74	-0.33	0.26	86

Conclusions

- Limited support for the hypotheses that economic considerations influence public opinion on the ACA.
- Partisanship overrides individuals' financial considerations in developing an opinion on health care policy.
- Positive economic primes at the national level can be mediated by partisanship.

Limitations

- Use of the ACA as a proxy for health care policy as a whole
- Non-mutually exclusive question sets
- Launch date of survey: government shutdown
- Small sample size
- Few uninsured in the sample
- Democratically biased M-Turk membership - baseline opinion skew

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