Active Participant Framing, or Frame Impact Depends on Respondent Acceptance: The Case of Race, Religion and Barack Obama

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Abstract

Most framing experiments proceed under the implicit assumption that mere exposure to frames is all that is necessary for them to operate. Thus the usual test is to examine whether the mean response on the dependent variable for those receiving the frame (the treatment group) is significantly different from the control group. This is classic experimental work. However, we argue that respondents may attempt to actively process the frame, and in doing so may either accept or reject its premise. The act of accepting or rejecting a frame's premise may condition the response to the dependent variable in countervailing ways, thus hiding very real effects of the frame. We test the proposition that respondents given frames about Barack Obama may respond differently depending on whether they agree or disagree with the frame's premise on two different datasets. Framing Obama as either Black, Muslim, or Christian appears to have no effect either on support for Obama himself or support for a health care plan attributed to him. However, when the treatment groups are decomposed into those who accepted or rejected each frame, strong effects are found, with those accepting Obama as Muslim being significantly less supportive of him and of his health care policy, while those who accept the Christian frame are more supportive of both. These strong effects hold both for general assessments of Obama as well as for a specific policy attributed to him.

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Words matter. We know that how elites structure their discussion of political issues has significant potential to condition the way the mass public responds to those issues. This knowledge has been built up through years of framing experiments that have tested how often very subtle changes in the structure of political information result in the expression of different opinions. But for the most part research into framing has made the implicit assumption that respondents are passive receivers of the frames presented to them, and analyzed assuming that the frame treatment operates in a similar way on all respondents who are treated. We suggest that this assumption is unwarranted, and leads ultimately to the potential to miss framing effects that are very real and sometimes substantial, but which have countervailing effects on individuals based the likelihood that the frame is accepted at face value or actively rejected as an unlikely claim. This active participation on the part of subjects in framing experiments has rarely been examined (see Brewer, 2001 and Peffley and Hurwitz, 2007 for exceptions) even in sophisticated research designs.

We contend that failing to consider how citizens actively respond to frames about candidates and issues makes the assumption that treatments affect all subjects equally, an assumption that cannot be true on its face. While participants in framing experiments may not give a lot of detailed thought to the experimental stimuli they encounter, they are also not blank slates upon which anything can be written. This must certainly be true when the frames that are presented are about well-known political figures and issues at the core of American politics. We take the opportunity of the 2008 presidential election to examine what happens when citizens encounter frames about a presidential candidate – Barack Obama – which given what they

already believe, they may accept or reject. In doing so we improve our understanding of the conditions under which framing political actors has the expected effects.

The 2008 presidential elections were unique in terms of both race and religion. The election of Barack Obama as the first African-American President was hailed by scholars and pundits as the opening of a new era of race relations in the United States with some suggesting America was entering into a "post-racial" era. As early as a few weeks after Obama's win in the Iowa caucus, National Public Radio commentator Daniel Schorr ruminated on what the Obama victory meant, suggesting the rise of a "color-blurred" generation of voters, if not color-blind. (Schorr, 2008).[1]

But despite Obama's significant presidential election victory, some scholars argue that race still mattered for voting in 2008; and in fact a non-trivial number of whites may have been deterred by Obama's race. Some election forecasters argue that Obama's winning margin was much smaller (up to 5 percentage points) than expected given the state of the economy and historically low approval rating of the incumbent president (Lewis-Beck and Tien 2008; 2009). Research suggested that white voters retained implicit attitudes towards Blacks that had the effect of depressing support for Obama (Fournier and Tompson 2008; Hutchins 2010) and that up to thirty percent of white voters held implicit attitudes expressing concern or "trouble" with Obama as the nation's first black president (Redlawsk, Tolbert and Bowen 2010). Moreover, examination of 2008 voting patterns as reported in the *New York Times* shows that while most of the country became more Democratic in the aggregate, compared to four years prior, a swath of America, running from Pennsylvania through West Virginia and into the south became more Republican at the presidential level (see Donovan 2010). This area corresponds with regions of

[1] Concerns about America's racial divide were so passé immediately following the 2008 election that legal challenges to the Voting Rights Act were heard by the U.S. Supreme Court, and conservative commentators called for an end, once and for all to Affirmative Action (Slevin 2008)

the country that have deep-rooted histories of difficult racial relations. To many race scholars, Obama's victory was but one step in a long series of events exposing America's racial divide, including the Los Angeles race riots a decade earlier (Marks, Barreto and Woods 2004). Thus despite the hopes of many for a post-racial America embodied in the campaign and election of Brack Obama, race may well have played a distinct role in the 2008 election, warranting a closer investigation.

The 2008 presidential elections were unique on a second front, the supposed ties Barack Obama had to the Muslim community and the media campaign waged by some of his opponents questioning his religion. Pre-election surveys revealed that large percentages (25-40 percent) of Americans were unsure of Obama's religion, while 10-15 percent incorrectly believed Obama was a Muslim.[2] In the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the Iraq war, nativism and antipathy towards the Muslim American community reached a zenith (Barreto and Bozonelos 2009; Kundnani 2007; Park, Felix and Lee 2007). Given that as a Black man, Obama was already a minority, the idea of him as Muslim would of course place him well outside the mainstream of the American majority.

Obama's race – difficult to ignore for any voter – and the *sub silentio* discussion of his religion may both have impacted the way voters viewed Obama in the 2008 election. We examine these effects through a survey research experiment in which we frame Obama as Black,

[2] A July 15, 2008 Pew Research Center survey found that about 12 percent of voters nationwide thought Obama was Muslim (http://pewresearch.org/pubs/898/belief-that-obama-is-muslim-is-bipartisan-but-most-likely-to-sway-democrats). The October 2008 University of Iowa Hawkeye Poll asked a national sample of respondents to name both McCain and Obama's religion. An open-ended question was used, and responses were coded into general categories: Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, and others, as well as don't know. When asked to name Obama's religion, 37.9 percent of likely voters said they did not know, somewhat higher than Pew's 25 percent. The difference likely stems from Pew's use of a closed-ended question where the different options were given to the respondent, compared to open-ended where the respondent must come up with an answer. In the Hawkeye Poll 11 percent said Obama was a Muslim (13.4 percent of those giving any answer). A more recent survey by Pew reports that even after the election, about 12 percent of American believe Obama to be Muslim. (http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1176/obama-muslim-opinion-not-changed).

Muslim, or Christian and test the effects of these frames on evaluations of and emotional responses to him. Experimentally framing a political figure is rare in the literature (but see Valentino, Hutchins and White 2002). Most framing studies focus on issues and operate under the (usually unwritten) assumption that an issue frame will have similar effects on all who receive it.[3] While researchers such as Chong and Druckman (2007a; 2007b) have gone beyond simple framing to test what happens when multiple countervailing frames exist in the environment, they still implicitly assume that the mix of frames operates in similar fashion on all who receive them. While this may be a tenable assumption with regard to issues – though see Brewer (2001) for evidence that it is not – it clearly is not when considering political figures such as candidates. There is good reason to believe that voters may readily reject attempts to frame their thinking on candidates about whom they already have an opinion, or that framing effects may actually be counter to expectations as voters counter argue against information that opposes their existing beliefs (Redlawsk, 2002; Redlawsk, Civettini, and Emmerson, 2010,).

In addition to examining the dynamics of the 2008 election, our methodological contribution is to go beyond simply assuming equal effects of frames on those treated by measuring whether voters accept or reject the candidate frame we provide, and the effects of their response on evaluations and emotions. Our intervention is to present the treatment, but then give the respondent a chance to tell us their response to the frame. This does two things: 1) It forces the respondent to engage the treatment and be an active participant, so the frame should have more of an effect and better mimic information in the political environment; and 2) It allows respondents to accept or reject the frame. We call this *active participant framing*. Typical

[3] Typical framing experiments operate under the Stable Unit Treatment Value Assumption (SUTVA). A key SUTVA tenet is that an experimental treatment is assumed to equally affect all of the units under treatment (Morton and Williams, 2009). But if subjects respond differentially to a frame based on pre-existing beliefs, then SUTVA may be violated, and causality cannot be readily established.

framing experiments present a statement to the respondent, and then move on, and later attempt to determine if the experiment had an independent effect on attitudes, compared to a control. However, we know that when presented with information about a candidate, not all respondents react the same way. Some might disagree with it, some might be annoyed, while others are in full agreement. When we lump together all these potential reactions, the result can be a misleading because for some people the treatment worked in one direction, while for others it worked in the opposite direction, meaning "overall" patterns are difficult to detect, if not biased or wrong.

In the two studies reported here, we present respondents with a question providing some background information designed to frame Obama as sympathetic to one of three groups (Blacks, Muslims or Christians) and then ask the extent to which the respondent believes Obama is able to "sympathize" with the named community. The control group, roughly one quarter of the sample, receives no framing question. In the first study run in October 2008, questions immediately following ask respondents to evaluate Obama's presidential candidacy on a feeling thermometer and to provide emotional reactions to Obama. In the second study in late 2009 respondents are asked their level of support for Obama's health care plan. In both survey experiments, we find that the frames appear to have made no significant difference in support for Obama, emotional responses to him, or support for his policy agenda when we make the typical assumption that frames operate the same way on all voters. But when we consider acceptance or rejection of the frame we find countervailing effects among voters within a frame, suggesting that failure to consider whether respondents actually agree with a frame can hide very real framing effects.

We find that those who accepted the Obama as Muslim frame were much more negative towards him than those who accepted the Obama as Black frame, even when we control for a wide range of covariates. Thus by examining in more detail the effect of frames on our

respondents we learn that in fact religion – Obama as Muslim – may have trumped race in it impact on perceptions of Obama in 2008. The results from the framing experiment evaluating Obama as a candidate during the 2008 elections hold up more than one year later when evaluating Obama's health care plan.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. We briefly examine the existing literature on race and candidate evaluations, with a particular focus on the difficulties of measuring race effects. We then give an overview of the existing literature on framing and then describe our experiment and results. We first present the experimental results for evaluations of Obama, and then support for health care, our extension to a policy issue. We also discuss the results from a replication using two-stage models to control for potential endogeneity. We conclude with a discussion of both the substantive and methodological implications of our findings.

Measuring Race and Candidate Evaluations

The unique fact of Obama's race was impossible to miss during the 2008 campaign, of course, making direct appeals to race as a reason to oppose him unnecessary even for those who might be tempted. Recognizing the potential implicit use of race in the campaign, Obama famously told a gathering in Missouri in late July 2008 that "[w]hat they're going to try to do is make you scared of me. You know, he doesn't look like all those other presidents on the dollar bills" a charge the McCain campaign denied and in fact turned on Obama suggesting it was he who was "playing the race card".

But few campaigns at any level make use of only explicit appeals, even when opposing candidates are non-white. Yet discriminatory attitudes may be exploited using implicit campaign messages. Mendelberg (2001) provides evidence of this noting that the campaign messages of

Barry Goldwater (1964), Richard Nixon (1968) and others conveyed implicitly racial appeals that primed white voters' racial predispositions. She shows the power Willie Horton had on generating media coverage that primed voters to apply racial resentment when evaluating Michael Dukakis in 1988. Others have also found evidence of effective similar priming, since some voters pay limited attention to politics and make decisions on the basis of pieces of information, slogans, symbols and prejudices (Bartels 2003; Krosnick and Kinder 1990; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Krosnick and Brannon 1983).

Valentino, Hutchins and White (2002) use an experiment to test whether subtle racial cues embedded in political advertisements prime racial attitudes as predictors of candidate preference by making them more accessible in memory. Results show that a number of implicit race cues can prime racial attitudes and that cognitive accessibility mediates the effect. They also find counter-stereotype cues—especially those implying blacks are deserving of government resources—reduce racial priming, suggesting that the meaning drawn from the visual/narrative pairing in an advertisement, and not simply the presence of black images, triggers the effect. The research suggests the importance of processing frames, but does not directly measure the acceptance of rejection of primes or frames as we do here.

While in recent years white voters have been more willing to vote for Blacks running for public office (Sigelman et al. 1995; Terkildsen 1993), race has still been found to be a major obstacle for minority candidates, especially in the South (Giles and Buckner 1993; Glaser 1994; Valentino and Sears 2005). More generally, an experiment conducted by Terkildsen (1993) using fictional candidates found substantial evidence of discrimination by white respondents. Both feeling thermometers and vote choice were significantly lower for Black candidates when compared to the white candidates with the same political backgrounds. Sigelman et al. (1995)

find that whites are more likely to question the competence of liberal minority candidates in an experimental setting.

On the other hand, religious appeals may not be burdened by the same sense of social desirability that racial appeals face. Thus we should not be surprised to see both implicit and explicit religious appeals. In the 2008 presidential campaign the mass media and negative campaign ads used implicit claims, intentionally or unintentionally, by showing images of Obama with his former pastor, Rev. Jeremiah Wright, Jr., who gave sermons praising the Muslim faith. Images were also shown of Obama as a youth growing up in Indonesia, a mostly Muslim nation, and with family members wearing turbans. At the same time, direct claims about Obama's supposed Muslim sympathies appeared in a number of sources.[4] Countering the Muslim framing was so important that Obama made emphasizing his Christian religion a key point of the campaign.

While some people will admit to racial or religious bias (as America's first Catholic president John Kennedy faced in the 1960s—Sniderman et al. 2009), most attempts to directly ask about race become trapped by social desirability effects, where respondents report what they expect the interviewer wishes to hear or whatever they think is socially acceptable rather than what they truly believe (Berinsky 1999; 2002). Berinsky argues the difference between privately held beliefs and public responses may be a result of the "desire to cloak attitudes that society as a whole might deem unacceptable for fear of social sanctions. It is plausible that under circumstances where respondents fear they might be `censured' or socially shunned for their attitudes … they might shade those attitudes when reporting them to the interviewer (1999,

[4] For example, Insight, then an online unit of the *Washington Times*, published an article claiming Obama had been taught in a radical Muslim school as a child. All links to this article and subsequent articles in Insight now resolve to the *Washington Times* website,

1211)."[5] Social desirability effects have been revealed not only in reference to racial attitudes (Berinsky 1999; 2002; Gilens, Sniderman, and Kuklinski 1998; Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens 1997; Kuklinski et al. 19 97; Sniderman, Crosby, and Howell 2000; Hutchins 2010), as well as over-reporting of voter turnout (Karp and Brockington 2005).

Because of social acceptability bias, especially in telephone or in-person surveys, researchers have looked for other ways to examine the effects of race. One is to approach things like Sniderman and Stiglitz (2009) who make use of techniques like implicit association tests (IAT), examining people's non-conscious reactions to stimuli that include both Black and white faces. Others have turned to list experiments (Gilens, Sniderman, and Kuklinski 1998; Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens 1997; Kuklinski et al. 1997; Sniderman, Crosby, and Howell 2000; Redlawsk, Tolbert, and Franko 2010) which rely on comparisons between sub-samples that receive a particular stimulus and those that do not. These approaches can and do move us forward in understanding how race plays out in the electoral context.

Giving People Something to Think About: Framing Obama

A robust literature has developed on the role of framing in conditioning how citizens view issues in the marketplace of ideas. Early studies of framing (for example Gamson and Modligliani; Kinder and Sanders, 1990; Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder, 1982) focused on how different ways of structuring issue discussions impacted the public's view of those issues. More recent work like Chong and Druckman (2007a, 2007b) has expanded our understanding of frames to include something more akin to the give and take of political discussion, what Chong and Druckman call "competitive framing". And some researchers have examined how frames

[5] Berinsky provides evidence of this effect in responses toward support for school integration, showing that attitudes in favor of integration were significantly biased.

work in other contexts. For example, Nicholson and Howard (2003) examine how frames affect support for the Supreme Court, while Bowler and Donovan (2007) consider the role of framing in discussion of electoral reform. Nicholson (2005) finds salient ballot measures can have framing effects, setting the agenda for candidate races and effect vote choice. Same-sex marriage ballot measures may have primed support for Republican candidate Bush in the 2004 presidential elections (Donovan, Tolbert and Smith 2008). Miller, et al. (1998) studied how candidates frame themselves in their press releases and Lakoff (2004) wrote about how candidates (and particularly Republicans) frame their messages to take control of an issue, but to date most framing research has focused on issues even though it seems perfectly reasonable to expect that framing can be applied directly to candidates as well.[6]

Frames are said to work by "passively altering accessibility of different considerations" about the issue being framed (Druckman, 2001, 1044). In other words, frames do not really change what people believe, but instead they act to make certain aspects of an issue or a candidate more accessible in memory, and thus impact how that issue or person is perceived once the frame is encountered. In effect they help determine which of the mix of considerations voters carry around in their heads are most likely to be used at any given time (Zaller, 1992). Tversky and Kahneman (1981) in a classic series of experiments showed how changing the way in which their subjects viewed a problem – such as framing the results of an epidemic in terms of lives saved versus lives lost – also changed subjects' preferences for a solution to the problem. In a similar way, political campaigns strive to frame specific issues or even the campaign itself

[6] Often work that focuses on candidates is described as "priming" rather than "framing" and it may focus on subliminal priming of subjects rather than explicit primes or frames (for example, see Kam, 2007). From our perspective, there is little difference between the two, following Chong and Druckman (2007a). Priming as used by political scientists follows Iyengar and Kinder's (1987) definition as "calling attention to some matters while ignoring others" (63). Framing is clearly a similar process, and while psychologists and communications theorists might draw some distinctions between the two (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007), for our level of analysis framing and priming are interchangeable.

(think Bill Clinton's "it's the economy stupid" mantra in 1992) in the way they believe will make their candidate the obvious choice.

Active Processing of Frames

How voters see candidates is no doubt influenced by the way those candidates are framed (Mendelberg 2001). Within the context of an election campaign voters pay at least some attention to information they receive about candidates (Lau and Redlawsk 2006) and while they may process much of it superficially using heuristics and other means of limited cognitive effort (Lau and Redlawsk 2001), they do process at least some of it. When they do so, we conceive of voters as active participants in framing their own understanding of the candidate choices in front of them. Framing experiments which generally operate on the assumption that mere exposure to the frame has measurable effects miss a crucial aspect of political information processing. Upon receiving a candidate frame, voters may accept it as given, but they may also reject it.

Thus not all respondents react similarly to a frame, and these different reactions influence how respondents process the frame. For example, if a group of respondents is told that cars do *not* contribute to global warming, we should not expect that all respondents will listen to, absorb, and react similarly. Yet our typical analysis of framing treatments groups all "exposed" or "treated" respondents together to assess whether or not statistically significant differences in their attitudes or behavior are observed. However, some respondents will reject the notion that cars do not contribute to global warming, and once this attribute has been cued, may react even more vigorously in their support for tighter emission standards than they otherwise would. (Taber and Lodge, 2006; Taber, Cann, and Kucsova, 2009; Redlawsk, 2002; Redlawsk, Civettini, and Emmerson, 2010.) In contrast, some respondents will accept the frame, and go on to show low support for tighter emission standards. In the end, the overall treated group may

show no statistically significant difference from the control, even though two statistically significant effects emerged, albeit in opposite directions.

Brewer (2001) takes up something similar when in studying the framing of welfare reform, he finds no overall framing effects in his experiment, attributing this to some of his subjects resisting the frame he provided, in opposition to what he says is the idea of citizens as "passive receivers". Brewer argues that at least some citizens will be "active processors" of the information provided to them and in taking this approach they will not be easily molded by the frames presented to them. Peffley and Hurwitz (2007) also make the point that not all citizens blindly accept the issue frames they are given, and that predispositions on particular issues interact with framing statements to condition responses.

To different degrees, we believe that such acceptance/rejection of frames occurs in all framing experiments and scholars inappropriately group all treated respondents together. We argue instead that subjects need to be given a chance to respond directly to the frames that are presented, by asking them in essence, whether they agree or disagree with how (in our case) Obama is framed. In our experiments we capture this by the presentation of frames as *questions* rather than *statements*, respondents describe the degree to which they agree with the frame. Not only does this allow respondents to accept or reject the frame, but it also forces them to engage the frame more than if they were simply read a statement. We characterize this as an *active participant frame*, as opposed to a *passive frame* in which a respondent is merely read information and not asked to respond.

Our framing experiment builds on information processing theories. Scholars have found much of the time people process information peripherally or try to make decisions using the least information possible (Petty and Cacioppo, 1989; Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Lau and

Redlawsk, 2001). However, from time to time decision making is more active, particularly in environments where the unexpected may occur (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen, 2000) or where people are motivated to pay more careful attention, such as might be the case in a competitive presidential election campaign with a candidate who does not fit prior expectations for a presidential nominee. In our framing experiment, we force people to consider who Obama is and give them the opportunity to accept or reject the information. Instead of passive exposure to a frame, we require respondents to actively engage the frame. We allow the respondent to draw on information in the real world political environment in making this assessment, and thus more accurately mimic real world campaigns. In traditional framing experiments it is not that people are not accepting or rejecting frames if they are not asked about it, instead this information is simply unmeasured. In our experiment, information processing about the frames is measured and used to structure the interpretation of the data. Thus our experiment focuses on the processing of frames in its own right, not just the effects of alternative frames.

Framing provides a potentially powerful way for political elites to tell stories that they hope will allow them to prevail in the political marketplace. These stories exist not just for issues, but for candidates as well. While Brewer (2001) and Peffley and Hurwitz (2007) show that framing issues is contingent, to our knowledge no one has tested these kinds of framing effects on candidates. Given the unique features of Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential election, there were clearly multiple stories that could be reasonably told about him. We take advantage of this to test our arguments about race and religion and about the process of framing itself, as we compare frames highlighting Obama as Muslin, as Christian, or as Black compared to voters receiving none of these.

Expectations

Does the perception of Obama as sympathetic to the Christian, Black, or Muslim "communities" condition voter response to him? We would expect that framing Obama as Christian, that is, as part of the dominant religious community in the United States, would improve evaluations of him over the control, since while respondents would be quite aware of Obama's race and his position as a minority, they may not be thinking of him as part of a dominant American religious group until we make that point. While we expect race to be present in the processing of evaluations of Obama without our intervention, given the large literature on racial prejudice against minority candidates, we anticipate that making Obama's ties to the Black community salient may somewhat depress his support compared to the control group. Finally, we anticipate that reminding voters of Obama's ties to the Muslim community would cause a negative effect. Our expectation is that reinforcing his minority status – and particularly his links to a religious minority looked upon with suspicion by many Americans – would have negative effects on evaluations and emotional responses. However, there is a caveat to these expectations. Where we expect to see differences we anticipate that these differences will be stronger for those who accept the frames compared to those who reject them.

Data & Methods

In our first study, we placed our framing experiment on a national random sample telephone opinion poll of registered voters, which was fielded from October 1 – November 2, 2008.[7] A total of 1,666 interviewers were completed and the poll included many traditional

[7] The Hawkeye Poll was fielded by the University of Iowa Social Science Research Center from October 1 through November 2, 2008 interviewing roughly 50 respondents per day. The sampling frame was a national random sample of households with landline telephones and at least one registered voter. Callers were instructed to ask first for the youngest male at home who was a registered voter. If a male was not available, callers spoke to an available female. Respondents were screened for registered voter status and the interview was terminated if the respondent was not registered. The AAPOR response rate 1 was 7.5% of all numbers dialed, cooperation rate 1 was 19%, refusal rate 1 was 32%, and contact rate 1 was 38%. Data reported here are unweighted as appropriate for experimental designs.

questions related to voter attitudes found on a pre-election survey. The experiment was embedded in the latter half of the survey, after questions were asked about voting intention, political knowledge and participation, and awareness of various media stories about the election. Respondents were not asked any evaluations of the presidential candidates until after the framing experiment. Our dependent variables include a feeling thermometer question asked immediately following the frames and a set of questions on emotional response to the candidates that followed the feeling thermometer. To tap emotional responses, voters were asked whether a candidate or candidate's policies made them feel afraid, anxious, enthusiastic, or hopeful.[8] Here we focus on one positive (hopeful) and one negative (afraid) response as dependent variables.

We created three unique frames to describe Obama, and randomly assigned our participants to one of the three frames, or to a control condition that was not provided a frame, with about 400 total respondents in each condition. The three frames were:

Muslim Frame:

Because his uncle in Kenya is Muslim, and for a few years he was raised in Indonesia, a Muslim country; how much do you think Barack Obama can sympathize with the Muslim community in America? Is it very much, somewhat, only a little, not at all?

Black Frame:

Because he worked as a community organizer for a Black church in Chicago, and represented a majority-Black district in the Illinois Senate; how much do you think Barack Obama can sympathize with the Black community in America? Is it very much, somewhat, only a little, not at all?

[8] The emotions question also had an experiment embedded. A random half of respondents were asked about their feelings towards the candidates, while the other half were asked about feelings towards the candidates' *policies*. For reasons that go beyond this paper, the experiment had little effect on emotional responses, so we combine the two versions into one dependent variable for each emotion.

Christian Frame:

Because he was married in, and attended a Christian church, and has stressed his Christian values; how much do you think Barack Obama can sympathize with the Christian community in America? Is it very much, somewhat, only a little, not at all?

These frames all provide two key pieces of information highlighting Obama's ties to a particular group and then asked the degree to which the respondent thought Obama could sympathize with the target group. We believe that those who responded "very much" that Obama could sympathize were clearly accepting the frame, while those who said "only a little" or "not at all" were rejecting the frame. The question of where to place those responding "somewhat" is complex; in the end we decided to create a third group that was "ambivalent" about the frame.

Table 1 presents an overview of how survey respondents responded to our three frames. Seventy-seven percent of respondents agreed or somewhat agreed with the Muslim frame, while almost all (93%) agreed or somewhat agreed with the Black frame and three in four respondents agreed with the Christian frame. These high numbers overall are interesting in and of themselves. They suggest that while we theoretically expect those who reject a frame to differ from those who accept it, the mere fact of our presenting a particular frame may have caused significant numbers of respondents to agree with it. While we would expect high agreement with the Black frame since Obama's race was front and center, the relatively low levels of rejection for the other two frames is interesting, though as we will see, even while relatively small, these groups are significantly different. An appendix table provides summary statistics for our three treatment groups and control group to ensure that the randomization process worked. The appendix also reports similar data for our second study, replicating the experiment one year later.

There is one important point we should make now. Framing experiments rely on random

assignment to the frames to "wash out" individual level differences between respondents across the experimental groups, as we have done here. If all we were interested in was examining the gross effects between the groups, this would be fine for us as well. However, we will be dependent on respondents deciding their response to the frames, and this process is assuredly not random. There is little doubt, for example, that those who oppose Obama will be more likely to accept the Muslim frame, given the status of Muslims in America. Thus, it will be important for us to go beyond typical experimental analysis of groups, and to control for a wide range of factors that might effect responses to the frames themselves and thus to the dependent variables as well.

Results: Candidate Evaluations

We present three series of results that test the effects of our three frames on attitudes towards Obama's candidacy, compared to the control group which did not receive a frame. We start with a traditional analysis where we simply compare the three experimental groups to the control, making the underlying assumption that frames operate in the same general direction on all who encounter them. Given our theoretical perspective above, however, we will not be surprised to find few, if any effects. We then take the next step, splitting our respondents within each frame into groups that accept, are ambivalent, or reject the frame. We anticipate that we may well see countervailing effects within these groups even if overall we see no effects. While our respondents were randomly assigned to their framing (or control) condition, allowing them to respond to the frame divides them into groups in a clearly non random fashion. To control for this, we then add key variables to the mix in OLS and ordered logit regression analyses to see if our results hold, even after controlling for known covariates such as partisanship, education, and attention to news and explicit attitudes that much condition framing effects.

The Overall Effects of Framing Obama

Table 2 reports the initial analysis of the framing experiment. Across all three dependent variables there are no statistically significant differences for any of the treatments, as compared to the control group. Starting with the feeling thermometer, 17 percent of our control group rated Obama in the lowest quartile and 39 percent in the highest quartile. The results for each of our three treatment groups are roughly the same in the lowest and highest quartiles. Only the Black frame shows a slightly higher rating, 46.4 percent in the 76 – 100 quartile, though the difference is not statistically significant (Chi square = .221).

These results are consistent in both our negative (afraid) and positive (hopeful) assessments of Obama also found in Table 2. Taken as a whole, the treatments do not appear to cause any movement in evaluations of Obama.[9] We believe this is because competing reactions can occur during the presentation of the frame depending on how the subject processes the frame, resulting in an overall null effect. If true, even in the case where studies find significant framing effects, these effects may be muted due to the grouping of all respondents into a single treatment class. These results track quite well with Brewer's (2001) similar findings on the issue of welfare reform, where he found no direct unconditional framing effects, despite the expectation that such effects would be visible.

Considering Active Participant Framing Effects

We present the bivariate analysis for active frame participation in Tables 3 through 5.[10] The analysis reveals three interesting findings. First, across all groups there are statistically

[9] All results are using the full sample of respondents. We further tested these results among only white respondents, and among only non-Democrats. The outcome of this analysis was similar to the analysis presented in Table 2. Details are provided in the appendix.

[10] Middle categories of the dependent variables are left out of Tables 3-5 in order to provide ease of reading. Full tables are available from the authors.

significant differences between respondents who accepted and rejected the frames, as we hypothesized. Second, the Black frame did not lead to negative perceptions of Obama. In fact, those who agreed with the frame were 14 percentage points *more* likely to rate Obama 76-100 on the feeling thermometer than the control group. Third, frames about Obama's religion appeared to be much more relevant to his evaluation than was the racial frame.

In Table 3 respondents who accepted the Muslim frame were far more likely to rate Obama in the lowest quartile 0 – 25 than in the highest quartile of 76 – 100 with 37.2 percent rating him low, compared to only 17.0 percent of the control group. In contrast, those who rejected the Muslim frame were more likely to give Obama a higher rating. Among this group, 49 percent rated Obama at 76 or higher, compared to 39 percent in the control, and only 20 percent in the group accepting the Muslim frame. This 29 point difference in high ratings of Obama between those who accepted and those who rejected the Muslim frame strongly supports our argument that not all respondents who receive a treatment frame should be lumped together. This same trend holds in the negative (afraid) and positive (hopeful) emotions dependent variables reported in Table 3. Respondents who accepted the Muslim frame were more likely to say they were afraid of Obama's policies while those who rejected the frame were more like to say that Obama made them feel hopeful. Individuals accepting the Muslim frame were 18 percentage points more likely to say Obama often made them feel afraid and 17 percentage points less likely to say Obama often made them feel hopeful.

As Table 4 shows, the results for the Black frame evidence a significantly different pattern. In the first section of the Table, we find that those who agree with the Black frame are statistically *more* likely to rate Obama higher on the feeling thermometer while. The difference is substantively significant, leading to a 14 percentage point increase among those rating him 76-

100. This finding stands in contrast to anecdotal accounts that implicit racism hurt Obama's candidacy. While there were certainly individuals who espoused both implicit and explicit racial attitudes in 2008, continued reference to Obama's blackness did not seem to independently detract from his standing.

There are probably two reasons for this pattern of findings in Tables 3 and 4. First, the Obama campaign was well tested on racial issues during the primary and was out in front of the race issue during the general. Obama himself used his race as a positive story in his campaign. This made it difficult for opponents to engage in a purely racial attack against Obama. Second, on the surface, the United States has changed since 1968 and 1988 and overt racial attacks in the political arena are not well received. Issues of race, racism and implicit racial attitudes will continue to exist in American politics however identification as the "Black candidate" may not be enough by itself to elicit resentment or dissatisfaction among voters. To the extent that voters did carry racial stereotypes and discrimination, they appeared to be channeled through other venues, namely anti-Muslim attitudes and charges that Obama was either Muslim himself, his family was Muslim, or he was a Muslim-sympathizer. Late in the campaign, Obama was more often called un-American for reasons more likely tied to issues of his fictitious Muslim-ness than his blackness.

The perspective dovetails nicely with the striking results presented in Table 5 related to the Christian frame. Throughout the campaign charges of being a Muslim followed Obama – in fact in our data approximately 11 percent of respondents stated that Obama was a practicing Muslim. Further, when given the Christian frame, 26 percent disagreed, compared to 33 that agreed and 40 percent in the middle. The differences between those who accepted and rejected the Christian frame are remarkable. Among those who accepted the characterization of Obama

as a Christian, 78 percent rated him in the highest quartile; in contrast less than 5 percent of those who rejected the frame rated him highly, more than a 70 point divergence. Likewise, when asked if Obama's policies made them feel afraid or hopeful, of respondents who accepted the Christian frame, 63 percent were afraid and only 5 percent were hopeful, while of those who rejected it only 5 percent were afraid and 78 percent were hopeful. Not only does this provide more convincing evidence that treated subjects should not be grouped together in all cases, but it further demonstrates the effects that the Muslim rumors had on voters in 2008. Even the Obama campaign itself grew worried about possible backlash and forbid two Muslim women wearing the *hijab* from sitting directly behind the candidate during an appearance in Michigan.

We appear to have strong differences between respondents who accepted the frames we gave them and those who rejected them. Yet as we noted earlier, while the original assignment to the framing treatments is completely random, the decision to agree or disagree with the frame is likely not random. Instead, a respondent's pre-existing notions about Obama may influence whether they accept or reject, or are ambivalent about the frame. In particular, partisanship, race, or attention to news may be driving this decision as may be existing attitudes towards race and religion. For example, 17 percent of Democrats agreed with the Obama Muslim frame compared to 45 percent of Republicans. In the Christian frame, 29 percent of whites agreed while 64 percent of minorities agreed. Thus, it is important to add these additional control variables to separate out the independent effects of the treatment from other covariates. Further, we also consider a two-stage model predicting acceptance/rejection of the frame first, and then how the frame influenced support for Obama (see appendix B).

Applying Controls: Does Frame Acceptance Matter?

To test the independent effects that the treatments, and acceptance or rejection of the

frames as compared to the control, we created dummy variables for the position taken on each treatment, accept, reject or ambivalent to include in regression models. In addition, we included control variables for age, education, income, gender, race, party identification, attention to election news, and one unique variable related to each frame. For the Muslim frame, we included a dummy variable coded 1 for respondents who answered that Obama's religion was Muslim, and in the Christian frame a dummy variable coded 1 for those who answered that his religion was Protestant. This question was asked before the treatment, and taps into the pre-existing, pre-treatment attitudes that the respondent held on Obama's religious beliefs. For the Black frame, we included a dummy for respondents who felt that Obama's policies would favor Blacks more than whites, also a question asked before the treatment.

Regression results are presented for our three dependent variables, independently for each treatment frame. Each of the regressions includes data for one treatment plus the control group, thus the treatment variable results should be read as in comparison to the control. With our new independent control variables in the model, we still witness statistically significant effects for the treatment frames based on acceptance or rejection of those frames, as compared to the control group. To control for possible endogeneity, we also produced a two-stage model which is reported in appendix B. The results show once we control for selection bias in terms of accepting or rejecting the frame in stage one, the findings are consistent with those reported above and below. However, two-stage models are not ideal for treatment/control group studies because those in the control group were not faced with the decision to accept or reject a frame. For this reason, we report the direct (one stage) multivariate models below and discuss the two-stage models in the appendix.

Table 6 displays the results for each frame treatment as compared to the control. Starting

with the Muslim frame (presented in column 1), even after controlling for important covariates such as partisanship, and perceptions of Obama's religion, we find that respondents who accepted the Muslim frame were statistically less likely to rate Obama high or feel hopeful, and considerably more likely to be afraid of Obama. In contrast, those who rejected the Muslim frame were far more supportive of Obama across all three dependent variables. Thus, it appears that those who rejected the Muslim frame – a common charge against Obama during the campaign – seemed to rally to his defense. Rather than having a null effect, those who rejected our frame reported higher support for Obama than the control group. Note too that this is controlling for an important covariate – actually believing that Obama is Muslim. Those respondents who answered the open-ended religion question given earlier in the survey by saying they believed Obama is Muslim were substantially less supportive of him (21 points on the 101 point feeling thermometer) and much more likely to say he made them afraid and less likely to say he made them hopeful. This is a very strong effect, and shows quite clearly how belief in Obama as Muslim had negative effects on his support. But the point we make here is that even after controlling for this effect, respondents who accepted the Muslim frame lowered their rating of Obama by another 8.6 points. Importantly, rejecting the frame was not a neutral activity. Respondents who actively engaged the frame and rejected it became more supportive of Obama compared to those who did not receive the frame at all.

Table 6, column 2 shows much different results for the Black frame. As we saw in the bivariate results above, characterizing Obama as the Black community candidate did not hurt his chances, in fact the regression results show that it may have helped even once we control for other factors. Respondents who accepted the Black frame for Obama were statistically more likely to rate him higher on the thermometer, and marginally (90% significance) more likely to

feel his policies elicited a sense of hope. This stands in stark contrast to the framing of Obama as sympathetic to the Muslim community acceptance of which caused significant reduction in his support. And again, this result controls for those who were suspicious of Obama's ties to the Black community, as evidenced by their response to the question for whether Obama's policies would benefit Blacks over whites, whites over Blacks, or both groups equally, asked before the framing experiment. Believing Obama would show favoritism to Blacks greatly depresses support, (falling to 36 on the thermometer), but independently accepting the Black frame that he can sympathize with the Black community improves support by 7 points to 62 on the thermometer, while in this case rejecting the frame has no effect.

Further evidence for this trend is noted in Table 6, column 3 with the regression results for the Christian frame. Perhaps a corollary of the Muslim frame, significant differences emerge in respondents who accepted or rejected the depiction of Obama as Christian. It is important to note that the results hold controlling for partisanship and also perceptions of Obama's own religion, similar to the Muslim frame in column 1. Here, we find respondents who accepted the framing of Obama as Christian gave far more support than the control group, suggesting such a characterization is still a powerful influence in American politics today – voters like Christian candidates and clear association as a Christian benefits candidates. However in the case of Obama there is a second story to be told. Those who rejected the Christian frame, even as Obama is a professed Christian, were extremely hesitant to support him.

We summarize the findings across all three frames in Figure 1 which reports post-estimation predicted values for the first dependent variables, the feeling thermometer across all three treatments. The control group is estimated to provide Obama with an average rating of 55 (the red line across the middle of the figure). The cluster of bars on the left represent

respondents who agreed with each frame, while those on the right are subjects who disagreed with our frames. As the chart makes clear, acceptance of the Muslim frame leads to an 8-point drop with an average rating of 47. Even more troubling for Obama, those who rejected the Christian frame evidenced a 17-point drop to an estimated rating of 38. In contrast, acceptance of the Black frame led to a statistically significant 7-point increase in estimated support for Obama to 62. Agreement with the Christian frame had the greatest effect, a 15-point increase from the control to an estimated 70 rating on the thermometer.

Replication of Framing Experiment in October 2009, Obama's Health Care Plan

As a robustness test, we replicated our framing experiment on a telephone survey of registered voters conducted in Washington state in October 2009. While our sample size is smaller (n=710), we find almost identical results, even with smaller cell sizes for our experiment. The frames respondents received were identical to the 2008 national poll. Following the frames we asked respondents to provide their level of support for Obama's health care reform plan, extending our analysis to a policy issue, as well as the candidate feeling thermometer. The Washington poll did not ask people what they thought Obama's religion was[11] (a variable we used as a control in the 2008 models), but otherwise the models, control variables and coding are identical. Table 7 provides the results of the Washington state experiment replication: column 1 reports the Muslim frame compared to the control group, column 2 the Christian frame, and column 3 the Black frame. Overall, the findings are very similar to the 2008 experiment, and the results are very significant for support of Obama's health care plan, as well as the Obama feeling thermometer. Individuals who agree with the Muslim frame are much more likely to oppose health care reform, controlling for other factors, and have lower evaluations of Obama.

[11] Discussion and rumors of Obama's religion were prominent during the 2008 primary and general election, however after his election the topic received little attention, thus we did not put this question on our 2009 replication study.

Individuals who accept the Christian are much more likely to favor Obama's health care plan and Obama, whereas those who reject the Christian frame are staunchly opposed to Obama and his health reform policy. We continue to find very weak, non-statistically significant results for accepting the Black frame.[12]

Figure 2 shows the probability of favoring Obama's health care reform, based on agreeing or disagreeing with the frame, with all other variables held constant at mean values. Of those agreeing with the Christian frame, 81 percent favored Obama's health care reform, more than a 30 point increase over the control (48 percept support) compared to just 7.5 percent support among those who disagree with the Christian frame, nearly a 40 point drop in support. We also observe a more than 70 point difference in predicted support for the health plan based on whether a respondent accepted or rejected the frame – a striking finding that would have been concealed had we considered all those in the Christian frame as one treatment group. In contrast, of those who accepted the Muslim frame, just 29 percent favored health care reform, 20 points lower than the control, while 41 percent who rejected the frame supported health care, a non-significant difference from the control. In both cases, respondents who accepted or rejected the Black frame were not statistically different from the control group support for Obama's health reform plan. The replication of the experiment one year later on a poll in a single state shows very large differences on both the feeling thermometer and health policy support based on accepting or rejecting the Christian and Muslin frames compared to the control group.

Three general points are important related to the replication. First, the same pattern remains twelve months later, suggesting the findings are not an artifact of the specific environment during the final month of the 2008 election. Second, that we were able to replicate

[12] One note is that the finding we had for the "reject" Muslim frame in that individuals rallied behind Obama, seems to have died off. This is expected since the Muslim frame is no longer front and center in the media as it was during the campaign.

the findings in a specific state in which Obama carried by a huge margin in the 2008 presidential election, adding further generalizability to the findings. Third, the results remain in predicting support for health care reform, moving beyond simple candidate ratings, to a specific policy issue. We thus show that active participant framing, or measuring how respondent's process frames, not only shapes evaluations of candidates for elected office, but also policy issues they are associated with even beyond simple controls for partisanship and other known covariates.

Discussion

This paper reveals two important outcomes to our framing experiments..First, we note that an explicit racial frame did not hurt evaluations of Barack Obama. Second, our frames elicited very different reactions from respondents, some in full agreement with the frame, some completely disagreeing, and these different reactions lead to statistically significant differences in evaluations of Obama. When we disaggregate respondents by acceptance/rejection of our frames, we find that the Black frame had a significantly positive and substantial effect on support for Obama (but not in the follow-up replication). Our two religious frames had consistent and strong effects in the original experiment and replication a year later, once we separated respondents who either accepted or rejected our depiction of Obama. Viewing Obama as Muslim (or separately as non-Christian) caused him to lose considerable support across three different dependent variables, and in terms of support for his policy agenda one year later. Viewing Obama as Christian increased evaluations of Obama compared to the control group, and increases support for his policy agenda. But why?

Headlines continued to refer to "Obama's Race Problem" including a Yahoo! interactive web page where visitors could review countless news stories and poll results suggesting racism

might doom Obama.[13] Interestingly, association of Obama as a Muslim was regarded as a legitimate news story, and never rejected as a politically incorrect attack against the professed Christian candidate. When rumors circulated that Obama had converted to Islam as a child attending school in Indonesia, CNN actually sent a news crew to Jakarta for a week to investigate this (headline read: *CNN debunks false report about Obama*[14]) as if finding evidence of his Muslim conversion at age eight would indeed ruin his chances for the presidency. Throughout the election, when critics made an issue of Obama's blackness, there was immediate push-back from the Obama campaign, as well as from surrogates and even some commentators (for example, Keith Olbermann routinely took on racially based comments on his nightly MSNBC television show). However, when Obama was painted as a Muslim, the Obama campaign would quickly try to simply deny those claims, as opposed to actively pushing back against anti-Muslim attitudes.[15] Because of Obama's seemingly elusive past, his father and family in Kenya that nobody knew about, as well as his four years living in Indonesia, it was easy for the opposition to throw out Muslim rumors that became a news story just to correct. This is related to Mendelberg's (2001) concept of implicit racism, but applied to religion.

Further, the public was more than ready to accept stories about Obama's Muslim-ness and condemn him for this association. Only seven years removed from September 11, 2001, the American public in 2008 continues to harbor a high degree of anti-Muslim attitudes, and with little efforts to correct these attitudes, it has almost become accepted, if not expected, to hold negative opinions of Muslims (Nacos and Torres-Reyna 2007). During the previous eight years

[13] http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/files/specials/interactives/wdc/yahoo_poll_race/index.html
[14] http://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/01/22/obama.madrassa/
[15] It wasn't until Colin Powell's endorsement of Obama two weeks before the election that anyone had stopped to say, as Powell did, "Well, the correct answer is, he is not a Muslim, he's a Christian. He's always been a Christian. But the really right answer is, what if he is? Is there something wrong with being a Muslim in this country? The answer's no, that's not America."

of the Bush administration, the so-called "War on Terror" was the center of attention, and negative stereotypes of Muslims filled the airwaves. The specter was raised of "home-grown terrorists" and the public was asked to be vigilant, especially against "suspicious" looking people, which generally translated to Muslims. Congressman Peter King, then chairman of homeland security committee called on the FBI to increase surveillance of mosques in an effort to track suspected terrorists. Americans who held xenophobic or racist views may have rejected Muslims in any event, however the connection between Muslims and the terrorist attacks on 9/11 provided an opportunity for all Americans to be worried, anxious or to discriminate against Muslims, and cause the two major political parties to be especially cautious in their outreach and courting of Muslim voters (Barreto and Bozonelos 2009).

Most importantly, this research contributes to our understanding of the complex dynamics of political information processing and the contingent nature of candidate frames. Given the work of Brewer (2001) and Peffley and Hurwitz (2007) on issue frames, it makes sense to suspect that not all respondents would have a similar reaction to a candidate frame. Moreover, recent work on motivated reasoning effects on candidates (Redlawsk, 2002; Redlawsk, Civettini, and Emmerson, 2010) and issue (Taber and Lodge, 2006; Taber, Cann, and Kucsova, 2009) suggests strongly that predispositions – whether affective or cognitive – condition the processing of new information. Thus, rather than assume that all of our respondents would have a similar treatment experience, we allowed respondents to reply to our framing treatment, and later disaggregated them by whether they accepted or rejected the frame. In doing so we found it particularly interesting that rejecting one frame (Muslim) could actually have the effect of increasing support for Obama compared to the control, rather than having no effect. This suggests a process like motivated reasoning: the acquisition of new negative information

about a liked candidate results in a more positive evaluation (Redlawsk, 2002) as those learning negative information mentally counter argue it and bolster their previous evaluation, resulting in even more positive feelings. So while accepting the Muslim frame had the expected effect of lowering evaluations of Obama, rejecting the frame was not the equivalent of not having received it in the first place. But decay is also found, where this result does not occur in the follow-up experiment a year later.

As with Brewer (2001) we find that all three treatments had no significant effect on voter attitudes when taken as a whole. However, in the case of candidate Obama or his health care policy, the lack of effects was because there were opposing forces at work that were masked when the treatment groups were combined. Respondents who accepted each frame narrative behaved statistically distinct from control group, as did those who rejected the frame (except in the Black frame, which had few rejections), and they moved in opposite directions. We add a new dimension to studies of race in America, and experimental research more generally, by highlighting how attitudes about religion may trump racial attitudes, and by providing an experimental design (active participant framing) that allows us to measure how individuals process framing experiments. By taking individual information processing into account, we hope to provide a more realistic experimental design.

Tables and Figures

Table 1: Responses to Framing Experiment

	Muslim frame	Black frame	Christian frame
Obama can sympathize with group:			
Very much	31.8%	62.1%	33.9%
Somewhat	44.7%	31.3%	40.1%
Only a little	17.1%	5.8%	17.4%
Not at all	6.4%	0.8%	8.6%

Table 2: Evaluation of Obama by Treatment Group

Obama Feeling Thermometer Ratings (grouped by quartile)

Frame →	Muslim	Black	Christian	Control
0 – 25	15.6	15.3	14.9	17.0
26 – 50	19.7	17.1	21.9	20.6
51 – 75	23.9	21.0	21.0	23.2
76 – 100	40.6	46.4	42.0	39.1
N	438	391	446	391

Frequency of Feeling Fear Towards Obama or His Policies

Frame →	Muslim	Black	Christian	Control
Never	41.8	40.4	43.6	40.5
Rarely	14.5	16.5	16.6	15.7
Occasionally	19.1	13.7	13.7	14.9
Often	24.4	29.2	26.0	28.6

Frequency of Feeling Hope Towards Obama or His Policies

Frame →	Muslim	Black	Christian	Control
Never	24.9	26.9	22.9	31.4
Rarely	14.0	12.9	16.5	13.5
Occasionally	19.1	19.9	19.5	18.9
Often	41.8	40.1	41.0	36.1

Note: Table entries are percentage of respondents in each category.
All differences between frames and controls are non-significant

Table 3: Evaluation of Obama by Acceptance of Muslim Frame

Obama Feeling Thermometer Ratings

	Reject	Ambivalent	Accept	Control
0 – 25	9.3	5.4	37.2	17.0
76 – 100	49.0*	53.5***	20.1***	39.1
n	*96*	*183*	*130*	*391*

Frequency of Feeling Fear Towards Obama or His Policies

	Reject	Ambivalent	Accept	Control
Never	53.1	48.6	25.4	40.5
Often	12.5**	13.8***	46.8***	28.6

Frequency of Feeling Hope Towards Obama or His Policies

	Reject	Ambivalent	Accept	Control
Never	15.6	13.1	50.0	31.4
Often	45.8*	54.6***	19.0***	36.1

Note: Table entries are percentage of respondents in each category. Significant differences are for two by two tables of each column (reject, ambivalent, accept) with the Control group. Chi-sq Pr * < .050 ** < .010 *** < .001.

Table 4: Evaluation of Obama by Acceptance of Black Frame

Obama Feeling Thermometer Ratings

	Reject	Ambivalent	Accept	Control
0 – 25	32.0	12.6	15.1	17.0
76 – 100	20.0	26.1	53.2**	39.1
n	*25*	*119*	*236*	*91*

Frequency of Feeling Fear Towards Obama or His Policies

	Reject	Ambivalent	Accept	Control
Never	32.0	36.9	42.6	40.5
Often	60.0	28.6	27.1	28.6

Frequency of Feeling Hope Towards Obama or His Policies

	Reject	Ambivalent	Accept	Control
Never	52.0	22.7	26.2	31.4
Often	20.0	38.7	43.5	36.1

Note: Table entries are percentage of respondents in each category. Significant differences are for two by two tables of each column (reject, ambivalent, accept) with the Control group. Chi-sq Pr * < .050 ** < .010 *** < .001.

Table 5: Evaluation of Obama by Acceptance of Christian Frame

Obama Feeling Thermometer Ratings

	Reject	Ambivalent	Accept	Control
0 – 25	44.4	5.9	1.4	17.0
76 – 100	4.6***	38.3	78.0***	39.1
n	*109*	*168*	*142*	*391*

Frequency of Feeling Fear Towards Obama or His Policies

	Reject	Ambivalent	Accept	Control
Never	16.0	41.5	67.3	40.5
Often	63.2***	20.4	4.9***	28.6

Frequency of Feeling Hope Towards Obama or His Policies

	Reject	Ambivalent	Accept	Control
Never	57.9	19.1	0.7	31.4
Often	5.6***	34.1	78.8***	36.1

Note: Table entries are percentage of respondents in each category. Significant differences are for two by two tables of each column (reject, ambivalent, accept) with the Control group. Chi-sq Pr * < .050 ** < .010 *** < .001.

Table 6: Results of Framing Experiment and Support for Obama – National pre-election survey Oct 2008

	Col 1: Muslim Frame			Col 2: Black Frame			Col 3: Christian Frame		
Independent Vars	Obama Feel Therm	BO Policies: Afraid	BO Policies: Hopeful	Obama Feel Therm	BO Policies: Afraid	BO Policies: Hopeful	Obama Feel Therm	BO Policies: Afraid	BO Policies: Hopeful
Accept Frame	-8.635 ***	0.518 *	-0.542 *	6.332 **	-0.053	0.324 †	14.325 ***	-0.782 ***	1.833 ***
	(2.714)	(0.225)	(0.227)	(2.146)	(0.183)	(0.186)	(2.495)	(0.230)	(0.268)
Ambivalent	8.485 ***	-0.415 *	0.803 ***	2.065	0.07	0.205	6.144 **	-0.123	0.487 *
	(2.342)	(0.196)	(0.204)	(2.666)	(0.223)	(0.223)	(2.355)	(0.199)	(0.199)
Reject Frame	8.909 ***	-0.602 *	0.743 ***	-9.893	0.728	-0.799 †	-18.06 ***	0.971 ***	-0.939 ***
	(2.895)	(0.245)	(0.243)	(6.193)	(0.503)	(0.474)	(2.759)	(0.252)	(0.241)
R White	-4.534 †	0.277	0.083	-3.465	0.392 †	-0.465 *	-5.23 *	0.579 *	-0.432 †
	(2.642)	(0.228)	(0.236)	(2.737)	(0.243)	(0.239)	(2.647)	(0.251)	(0.264)
R Age	-0.064	0.004	0.001	0.028	0.005	0.003	-0.041	0.004	-0.002
	(0.055)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.059)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.055)	(0.005)	(0.005)
R Education	0.821	-0.099 †	-0.022	0.974	-0.143 *	0.024	0.777	-0.06	-0.025
	(0.680)	(0.057)	(0.058)	(0.698)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.664)	(0.059)	(0.060)
R Income	0.362	-0.025	-0.003	-0.412	-0.023	-0.039	0.193	-0.018	-0.048
	(0.501)	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.491)	(0.042)	(0.044)	(0.463)	(0.041)	(0.043)
R Male	-1.334	-0.225	0.026	0.072	-0.187	0.106	-0.55	-0.224	0.003
	(1.866)	(0.156)	(0.160)	(1.888)	(0.161)	(0.163)	(1.770)	(0.157)	(0.160)
R Democrat	32.641 ***	-1.743 ***	2.368 ***	31.024 ***	-1.737 ***	2.113 ***	29.15 ***	-1.649 ***	2.139 ***
	(2.001)	(0.177)	(0.192)	(2.030)	(0.177)	(0.186)	(1.999)	(0.183)	(0.197)
Attn to Election News	4.344 *	-0.077	0.321 †	-0.719	0.043	0.02	2.998	0.146	0.334 †
	(2.080)	(0.170)	(0.173)	(2.075)	(0.174)	(0.175)	(1.961)	(0.169)	(0.175)
Think Obama is Muslim	-21.389 ***	1.561 ***	-1.388 ***						
	(3.395)	(0.318)	(0.322)						
Think Obama Favors Blacks				-25.951 ***	1.75 ***	-1.983 ***			
				(2.532)	(0.232)	(0.234)			
Think Obama is Christian							9.747 ***	-0.778 ***	0.57 ***
							(1.852)	(0.162)	(0.164)
Constant	34.552 ***	1.56 ***	-1.388 ***	49.719 ***	1.765 ***	-1.979 ***	32.649 ***		
	(7.735)	(0.318)	(0.322)	(7.789)	(0.232)	(0.235)	(7.343)		
N	657	654	654	632	633	632	659	656	658
Adj R2	0.428	0.121	0.168	0.447	0.151	0.183	0.479	0.141	0.203
% Predicted Correctly	na	0.534	0.549	na	0.567	0.538	na	0.55	0.555
Prop Reduction error	na	0.193	0.259	na	0.263	0.247	na	0.23	0.266

† p < .100 * p < .050 ** p < .010 *** p < .001

Table 7: Replication of Experiment in October 2009, WA State and Health Care Support

Independent Vars	Muslim Frame		Christian Frame		Black Frame	
	Obama Feel Therm	Support BO Health Care	Obama Feel Therm	Support BO Health Care	Obama Feel Therm	Support BO Health Care
Accept Frame	-1.317 **	-0.988 *	1.591 ***	1.504 ***	-0.190	-0.081
	(0.471)	(0.410)	(0.400)	(0.455)	(0.338)	(0.287)
Ambivalent	0.266	-0.173	-0.203	-0.015	-0.282	-0.305
	(0.355)	(0.307)	(0.346)	(0.297)	(0.364)	(0.308)
Reject Frame	-0.958 *	-0.431	-3.447 ***	-2.461 ***	-1.904 *	-0.835
	(0.455)	(0.377)	(0.446)	(0.620)	(0.874)	(0.962)
R White	0.091	-0.042	0.297	-0.084	0.657	-0.203
	(0.396)	(0.309)	(0.364)	(0.314)	(4.000)	(0.326)
R Age	-0.005	-0.002	-0.021	-0.018 *	-0.006	-0.005
	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.007)
R Education	0.057	0.167 **	0.058	0.167 *	0.037	0.148
	(0.075)	(0.063)	(0.072)	(0.068)	(0.074)	(0.061)
R Income	0.046	-0.068	-0.088	-0.291 ***	0.042	-0.111
	(0.088)	(0.074)	(0.083)	(0.081)	0.083	(0.070)
R Male	-0.693 *	-0.207	-0.305	-0.024	-1.088 ***	-0.364
	(0.298)	(0.249)	(0.269)	(0.249)	(0.282)	(0.233)
R Democrat	3.415 ***	2.430 ***	2.865 ***	2.472 ***	3.220 ***	2.554 ***
	(0.284)	(0.266)	(0.290)	(0.289)	(0.288)	(0.271)
Attn to Political News	-0.103	-0.049	-0.011	0.127	-0.177	-0.117
	(0.195)	(0.159)	(0.182)	(0.167)	(0.189)	(0.156)
Constant	4.040 ***	1.911	5.418 ***	0.624	4.131 ***	0.824
	(1.272)	(1.083)	(1.249)	(1.142)	(1.257)	(1.047)
Cut 2		2.639		1.497		1.744
		(1.083)		(1.143)		(1.052)
Cut 3		2.901		1.720		1.979
		(1.088)		(1.143)		(1.055)
Cut 4		4.245		3.052		3.350
		(1.110)		(1.155)		(1.068)
N	278	262	292	274	274	278
Adj R2	0.370	0.138	0.501	0.222	0.369	0.151
% Predicted Correctly		50.4%		56.2%		50.0%
Prop Reduction error		26.1%		34.8%		26.5%

† p < .100 * p < .050 ** p < .010 *** p < .001

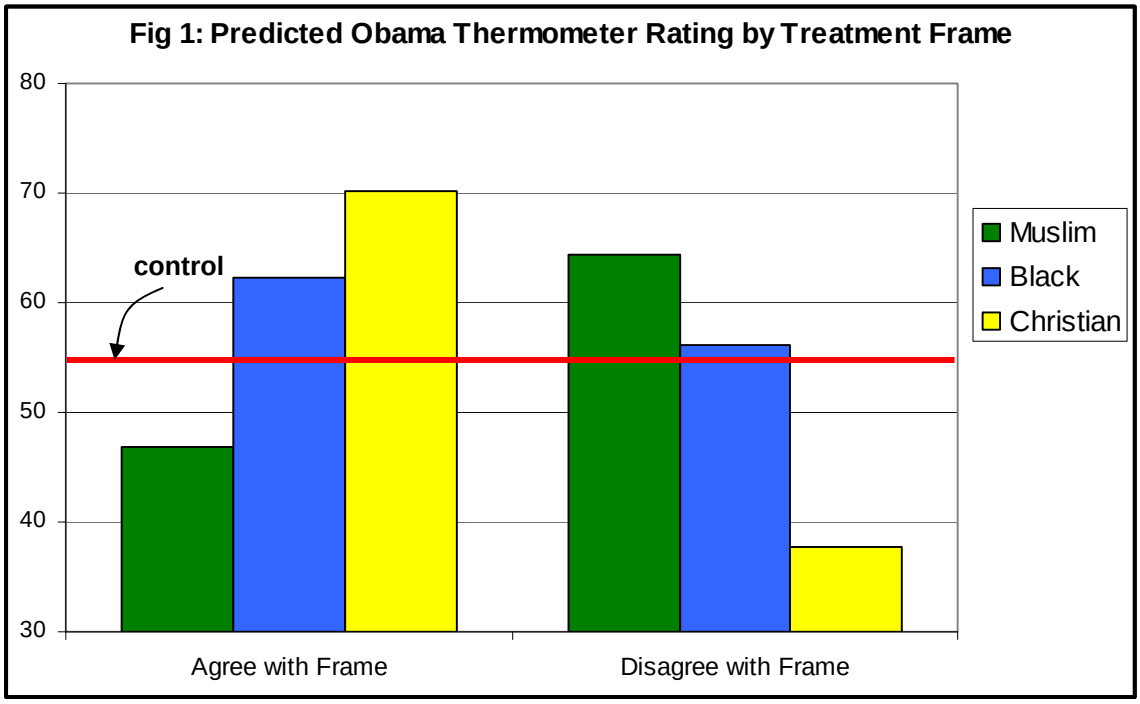
Fig 1: Predicted Obama Thermometer Rating by Treatment Frame
80
70
60
50
40
30
control
Muslim
Black
Christian
Agree with Frame
Disagree with Frame

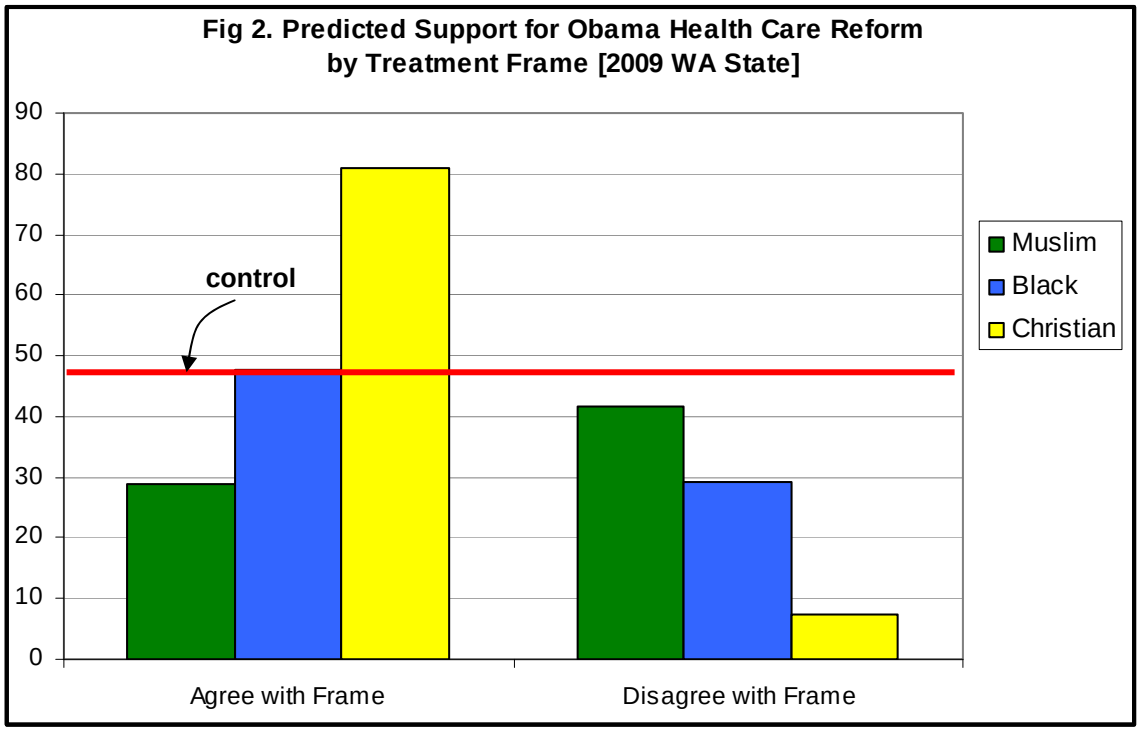
Fig 2. Predicted Support for Obama Health Care Reform
by Treatment Frame [2009 WA State]
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
control
Muslim
Black
Christian
Agree with Frame
Disagree with Frame

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