

Introduction

- Denial of healthcare coverage due to pre-existing conditions a pressing concern
 - Many with pre-existing conditions unable to afford healthcare (CNN)
- Mixed public support for Obamacare
- Inclusion of pre-existing condition rationale could increase support

Research Questions

- How does equivalency framing affect public support for the healthcare law?
- How does issue framing affect public support for the healthcare law?

Definitions

- “Equivalency framing”** - a situation in which individuals are presented with two or more identical options that differ only in the way that they are worded (Tversky & Kahneman 1981)
- “Issue (emphasis) framing”** concerns “increasing or decreasing the salience of an issue or consideration when formulating an opinion” (Entman et al. 2009)

Prior Research on Framing

Equivalency Framing

- Asian disease experiment (Tversky and Kahneman 1981)
- Varying immigration frames affects support for level of immigration – less support for “illegal” v. “undocumented” (Knoll et.al 2010)
- Varying immigrant frames does not affect support for immigration policies (Merolla et.al 2013)

Issue Framing

- Rule of law rationale decreases support for Dream Act, legalization and increases support for deportation (Merolla et.al 2013)
- Changing the immigration rationale matters only occasionally — mixed results (Merolla et. al 2013)
- When moving from a “recipient” frame to an “economy” frame, average support for welfare policy doesn’t change (Nelson et.al 1997)

Hypotheses

- Hypothesis #1:** Varying the equivalency frame (i.e. Obamacare vs. Affordable Care Act) will NOT affect the level of support for the underlying healthcare law.
- Hypothesis #2:**
 - If people are told that the cost of healthcare premiums will go down, support for the underlying healthcare law will be significantly higher than those not receiving this cost rationale.
 - If people are told that the cost of healthcare premiums will go up, support for the healthcare law will be significantly lower than those not receiving this rationale.
- Hypothesis #3:** If people are told that the recent healthcare bill will allow people with pre-existing conditions to get health insurance, support for the underlying healthcare law will increase (compared to those not receiving this rationale).

Methods

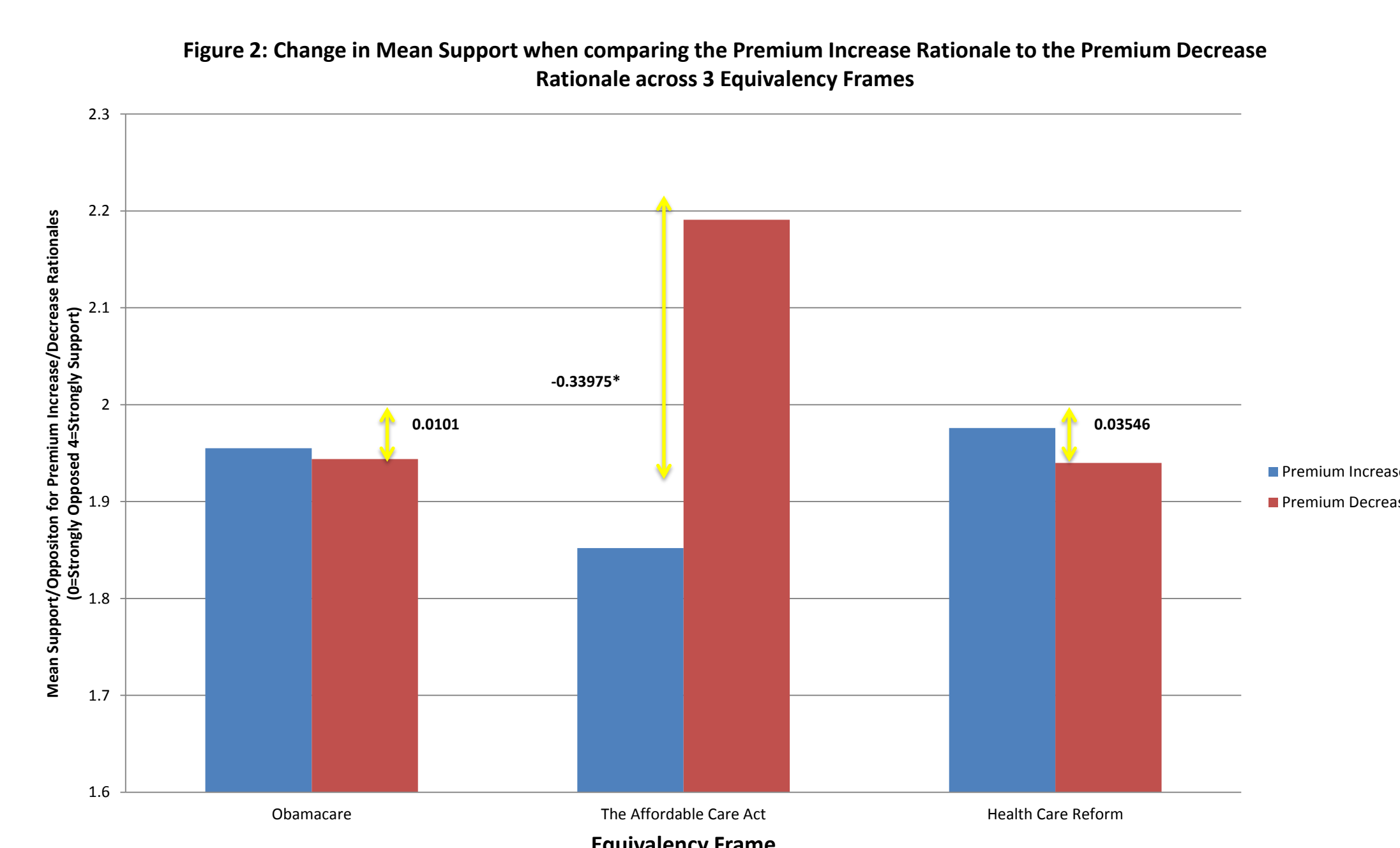
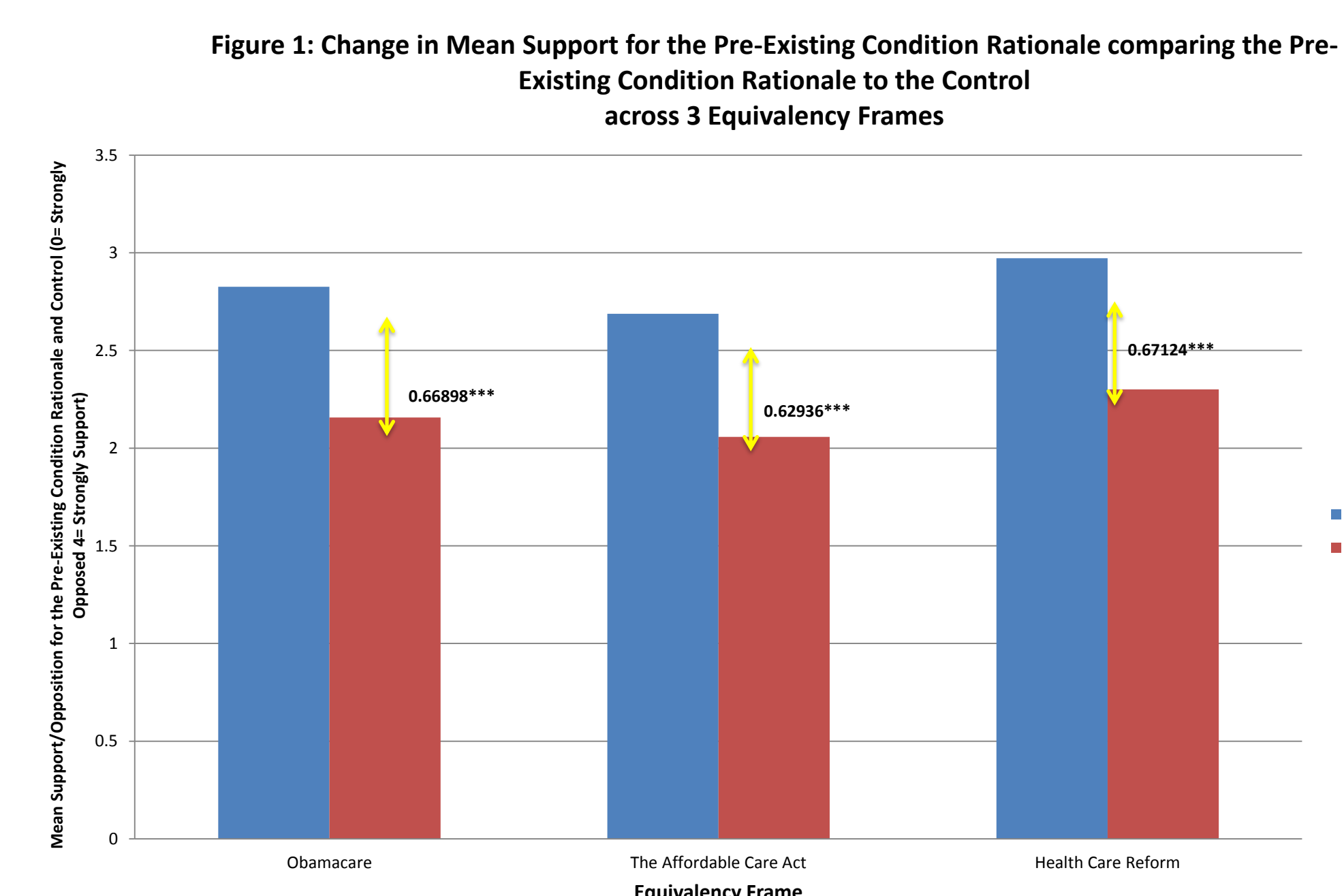
Design

- Qualtrics’ survey building software
- 4x3 experimental design
 - Two manipulations:
 - Equivalency frame manipulation (1)
 - Issue frame manipulation (2)
 - Question: “Some people say that (1) will (2). To what extent do you support or oppose this policy?”
- Fielded online – Amazon M-Turk
- N = 2071
- Randomization largely successful

Analysis

- SPSS
 - Difference of means T-tests
 - Multiple regressions (balance checks)

Graphs



Acknowledgments

- I would like to thank the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship donors for providing the resources needed to pursue this opportunity
- I would also like to thank Dr. Chris Haynes, my SURF advisor, Carol Withers, and Janice Sanderson for all of their help with my project

Major Findings

- Equivalency framing of healthcare issue has little effect on support
 - Only in one case did the issue frame prove significant: HCR + pre-existing conditions vs. ACA + pre-existing conditions
- Inclusion of “premium increase” rationale vs. the “premium decrease” rationale has little effect on support
 - H2 mostly inaccurate
 - Level of support remained nearly identical for all but one case (ACA)
- “Pre-existing conditions” rationale dramatically increased support
 - H3 accurate

Implications/Takeaways

- Both supporters and opponents can apply these findings
 - Supporters may learn how to frame the bill in the future
 - Opponents may learn how to attack the bill in the future
- Builds on previous research on equivalency & issue framing
 - No prior study has examined the link between framing and the recent healthcare bill
- Weights in on the debate over the merits of issue framing
 - Pros vs. Cons

Challenges

- Learning SPSS & statistical analysis from scratch
- Some mistakes were made in the wording and structuring of the survey
 - e.g. pre-existing condition contact question
- Recoding issues
 - Incorrect recoding (attention to detail)
 - Learning how to justify coding decisions