The Power of Rumor Mill: How Rumors Shape Political Decision Making

By Dan Xu*

This project is a replication of Berinsky's study of political rumors surrounding the 2010 U.S. health care reform act. I re-examined the structure of the experimental design and re-analyzed the results generated by the survey experiment.
JEL: A10, A11
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I. Experimental design

Berinsky conducted the survey experimental using a two wave online survey. From 17 - 19 May 2010, Berinsky performed a between subjects design experiment, in which the outcome is only measured post - treatment, online with a national sample of 1701 American adults. The second wave was administered to only 699 of the initial respondents from 25 - 29 May 2010. The experiment was conducted by Survey Sample International (SSI) - a U.S. based digital research business that offers survey sampling and related services for market survey research. The survey was constructed according to the the US adult population on education, gender, age, geography, and income.

A. Between vs. Within Subject Design

Widely used in Psychological studies, between-subject experimental designs are an experimental approach in which each subject is tested under one condition and only exposed to a single treatment. In Berinsky's experimental design, the survey respondents were randomly assigned to four different treatment groups and one control group and presented with the stories regarding the controversial 2010 ACA. The following table details the conditions which the survey respondents received,

I would like to further clarify the differences between between-subject (between - group) experimental designs and within-subjects (or repeated-measures) experimental designs. In a between-subjects design, or a between-groups design, each subject is only exposed to one condition. In a within-subjects design, however, each participant experiences all conditions.The same participants are tested repeatedly in order to assess differences between conditions. Therefore, if Berinsky were to conduct a within - subject experiment with the sample, the survey respondents would not be assigned to five groups (four treatment and one control).

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Table 1—The experimental treatments and control of the study

	Condition	Description
1	Rumor	Rumor
2	Rumor and Correction	Rumor and correction
3	Rumor and Republican correction	Rumor and correction, Quote from Republican senator
4	Rumor and Democratic correction	Rumor and correction, quote from emocratic representative
5	Control	No experimeital conditions

Note: Table provides a brief description of the experimental design. See text for details.

Source: Table drawn on the original Berinsky(2017) article.

Instaed, they would be exposed to all the same treatments to examine their reactions to the rumors.

Sample figure:

Figure here.

Figure 1. Caption for figure below.

Note: Figure notes without optional leadin.

Source: Figure notes with optional leadin (Source, in this case).

Sample table:

Table 2—Caption for table above.

	Heading 1	Heading 2
Row 1	1	Rumor in the form of quotes endorsed by opponents
Row 2	3	4

Note: Table notes environment without optional leadin.

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References here (manual or bibTeX). If you are using bibTeX, add your bib file name in place of BibFile in the bibliography command. % Remove or comment out the next two lines if you are not using bibtex.

% The appendix command is issued once, prior to all appendices, if any.

Mathematical Appendix