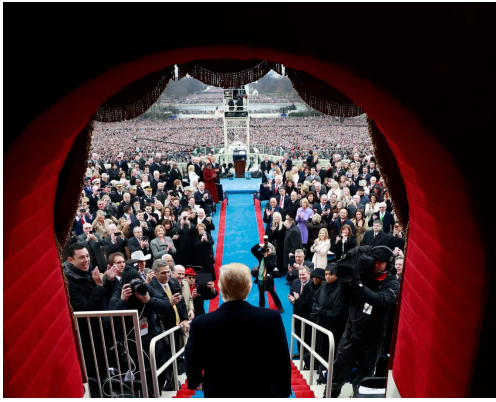
Motivated Political Memory

Lopez Del Valle

DRG

October 23, 2024



The New York Times

Do Americans Have a 'Collective Amnesia' About Donald Trump?

It's only been three years, but memories of Mr. Trump's presidency have faded and changed fast.

	First retrospective approval rating	Year of first retrospective approval rating	2023 retrospective approval rating	Change
	%	%	%	pct. pts.
Kennedy	84	1990	90	6
Nixon	32	1990	32	0
Carter	45	1990	57	12
Reagan	54	1990	69	15
G.H.W. Bush	58	1993	66	8
Clinton	51	2002	58	7
G.W. Bush	47	2010	57	10
Obama	63	2018	63	0

GALLUP

Literature

- Memory
  Schacter 96', Mullainathan 02', Gennaioli & Shleifer 10'
- Motivated Reasoning
  Kunda 90', Bénabou & Tirole 02', Epley & Gilovich 16', Amelio & Zimmerman 23'
  - Demand
    Caplan & Leahy 01, Brunnermeier & Parker 05', Burks et al. 13'
  - Supply
    Eil & Rao 11', Oster 13', Di Tella et al. 15', Exley 15', Zimmerman 20', Möbius 22', Cassella et al. 24'
- Misperceptions
  Bursztyn & Coffman 12', Cruces et al. 13', Alesina et al. 18', Cantoni et al. 19', Bursztyn et al. 20', Bordalo et al. 21', Coibion et al. 21', Karing 21', Cullen & Perez-Truglia 22', Alesina et al. 24'

Bursztyn & Yang 20’

“The origin, persistence, and rigidity of misperceptions about others can in principle be explained by different conceptual frameworks, such as stereotyping (e.g., Bordalo et al. 2016), motivated reasoning (e.g., Benabou Tirole 2016), and pluralistic ignorance (e.g., Kuran 1997; Bursztyn et al. 2020a,c). While this review is primarily empirical, we note that each of the major classes of models could predict (several of) the key patterns that we doccument. ***Most of the existing study designs do not allow one to adjudicate among these models.****”*

Bursztyn & Yang 20’

“We end with a discussion of important directions for future research. First, more work is needed to explicitly identify the ***sources of misperceptions*** *and examine the patterns of misperceptions more directly in order to rule in and rule out existing theories. The patterns that we document may also generate the need for additional theoretical frameworks on the origin of misperceptions. Second, more work is needed to understand the different ways in which misperceptions could be recalibrated and under what conditions such recalibrated misperception may actually lead to behavioral changes.”*

This Paper

How do partisan beliefs hold in the presence of feedback?

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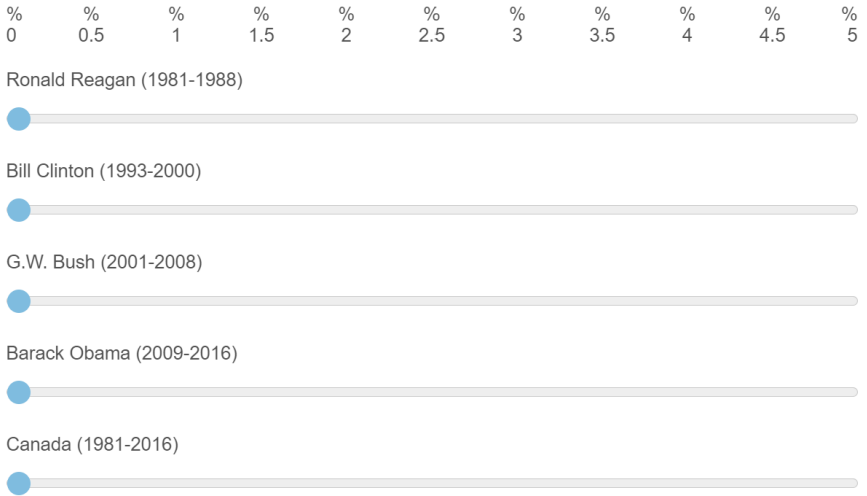
- Theory (Bénabou & Tirole 02')
- Observational Survey Data (ANES, L2, Gallup)
- Experimental Survey Data (Zimmerman 20')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Ronald Reagan (1981-1988)
Bill Clinton (1993-2000)
G.W. Bush (2001-2008)
Barack Obama (2009-2016)
Canada (1981-2016)

This Paper

How do partisan beliefs hold in the presence of feedback?

- Theory (Bénabou & Tirole 02')
- Observational Survey Data (ANES, L2, Gallup)
- Experimental Survey Data (Zimmerman 20')
  - **Facts:**
    1. **Misperceptions:** 1 p.p. GDP Growth Rate
    2. **Misperceptions Updating:** Treatment 0.7 p.p. vs Control 0.9 p.p.
    3. **(No) Motivated Political Reasoning:** Positive 0.2 p.p. vs Negative 0.2 p.p.
    4. **Motivated Political Memory:** One-Month 0 p.p. vs Immediate 0.2 p.p.

Theory

Self 0

Receives a signal $\sigma = L$ with probability q and $\sigma = \varnothing$ with probability $1 - q$ where

$$\theta_L \equiv \mathrm{E}[\theta \mid \sigma = L] < \mathrm{E}[\theta \mid \sigma = \emptyset] \equiv \theta_H$$

And decides to pass the signal to *Self 1* according to

$$\max_{\lambda} \{\lambda U_T(\theta_L) + (1-\lambda) U_C(\theta_L \mid r^*) - M(\lambda)\}$$

Where

$$\lambda \equiv \Pr[\hat{\sigma} = L \mid \sigma = L]$$

Self 1

Is aware of such manipulation

$$r^* \equiv \Pr\left[\sigma = \emptyset \mid \hat{\sigma} = \emptyset; \lambda^*\right] = \frac{q}{q + (1-q)(1-\lambda^*)}$$

Then

$$\theta\left(r^*\right) \equiv r^* \theta_H + \left(1 - r^*\right) \theta_L$$

So Self 0

$$U_C\left(\theta_L \mid r^*\right) - U_T\left(\theta_L\right) = \beta\delta \left(\int_{\beta\delta\theta_L}^{\delta\theta_L} \left(\delta\theta_L - c\right) d\Phi(c) - \int_{\delta\theta_L}^{\beta\delta\theta(r^*)} \left(c - \delta\theta_L\right) d\Phi(c) \right)$$

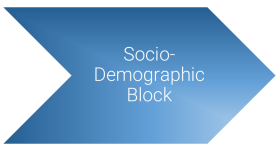
Observational

	(1) Democrat	(2) Democrat	(3) Democrat
Good Democrat Years	0.001	0.001	0.005**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Bad Democrat Years	0.006	0.004	0.010
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.015)
Good Republican Years	-0.001	-0.004**	0.002
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Bad Republican Years	0.012**	0.014***	0.023***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.008)
N	15550	15550	15550
Controls	No	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes
Region FE	No	No	Yes

ANES data. Standard errors clustered at the region level in parentheses.

Controls include age, geneder, employment status and income

Experimental


Socio-
Demographic
Block

Thanks for agreeing to take this survey! Let's begin with some questions about yourself.

What is your age?

Are you a United States citizen?

Yes

No

What is your gender?

Male

Female

How would you describe your ethnicity/race?

European American/White

African American/Black

Hispanic/Latino

Asian/Asian American

Mixed race

Which category best describes your highest level of education?

Eighth grade or less	College degree
Some high school	Master’s degree
High school degree	Doctoral degree
Some college	Professional degree (JD, MD, MBA)

What was your total household income, before taxes, last year?

Less than $9,999	Between $50,000 and $69,999
Between $10,000 and $14,999	Between $70,000 and $89,999
Between $15,000 and $19,999	Between $90,000 and $109,999
Between $20,000 and $29,999	Between $110,000 and $149,999
Between $30,000 and $39,999	Between $150,000 and $199,999
Between $40,000 and $49,999	More than $200,000

What follows are a couple of questions related to politics and the economy.

Do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?

Strong Democrat	Democrat	Independent	Republican	Strong Republican

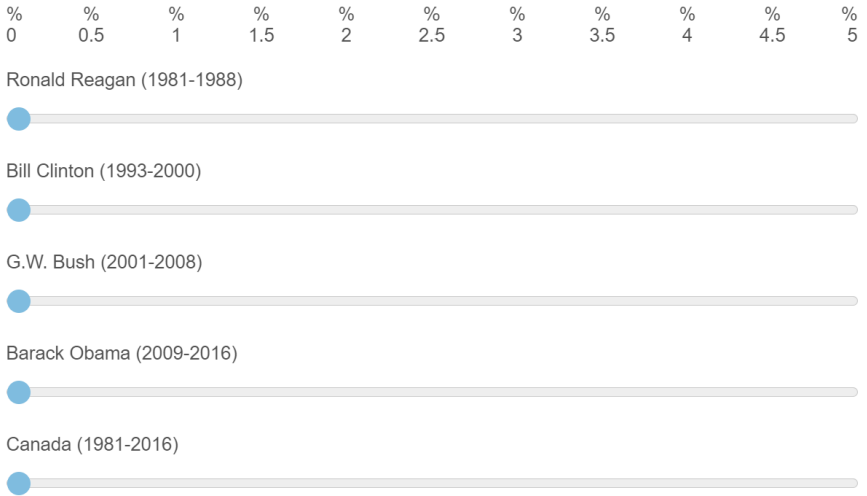
What do you think the acronym "GDP" stands for?

- Gross Domestic Production
- Gross Domestic Product
- Gross Domestical Production
- Gross Domestical Product

What do you think GDP measures?

- How much a state is producing each year
- How much a country is consuming each year
- How much a country is producing each year
- How much a state is consuming each year


Socio-
Demographic
Block
Pre-Elicitation
Block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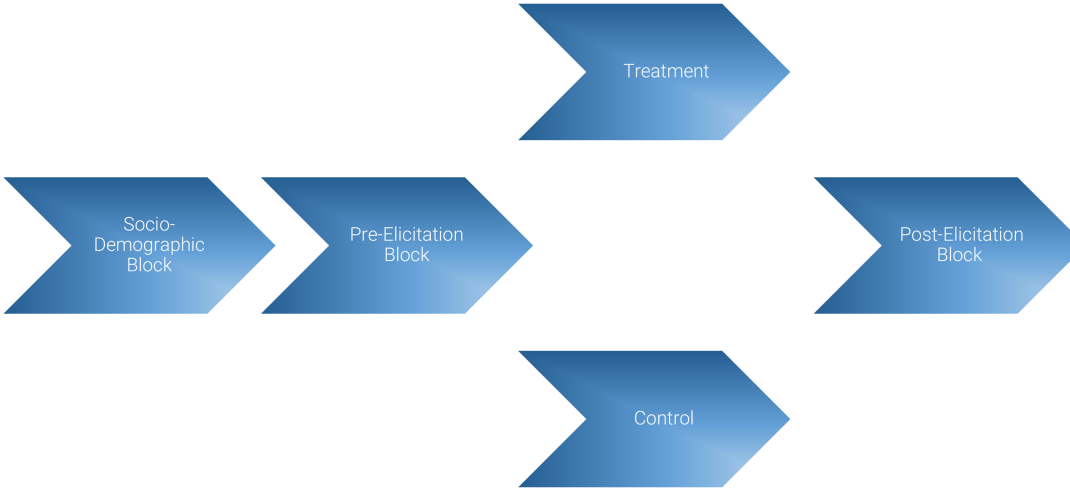
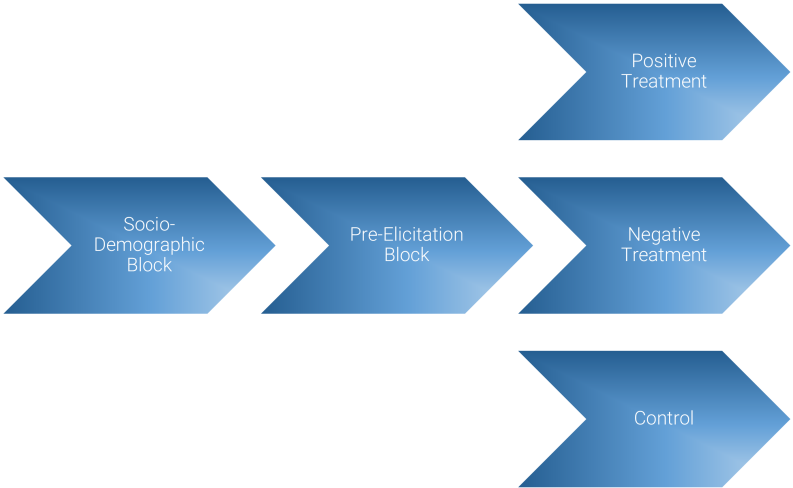
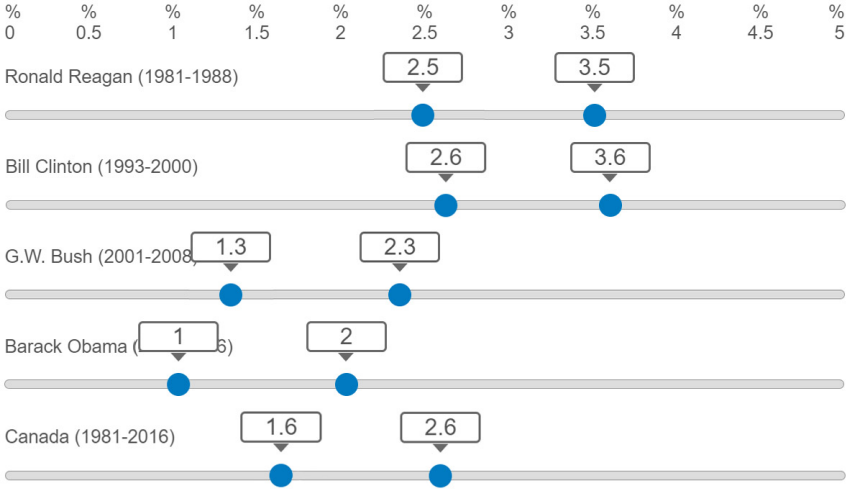
Ronald Reagan (1981-1988)
Bill Clinton (1993-2000)
G.W. Bush (2001-2008)
Barack Obama (2009-2016)
Canada (1981-2016)


Treatment
Socio-
Demographic
Block
Pre-Elicitation
Block
Post-Elicitation
Block
Control


Positive Treatment
Socio-Demographic Block
Pre-Elicitation Block
Negative Treatment
Control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Ronald Reagan (1981-1988)
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Bill Clinton (1993-2000)
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G.W. Bush (2001-2008)
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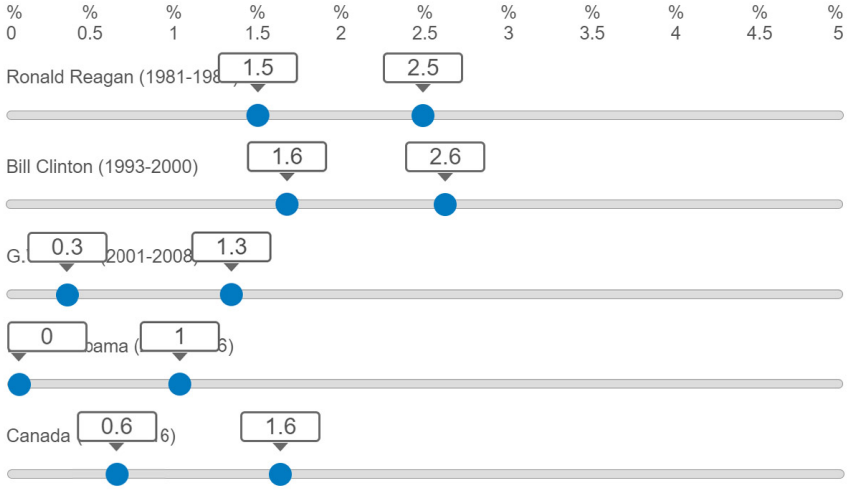
2.3
Barack Obama (
1
2
Canada (1981-2016)
1.6
2.6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Ronald Reagan (1981-198 1.5 2.5
Bill Clinton (1993-2000) 1.6 2.6
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0 bama (1 6)
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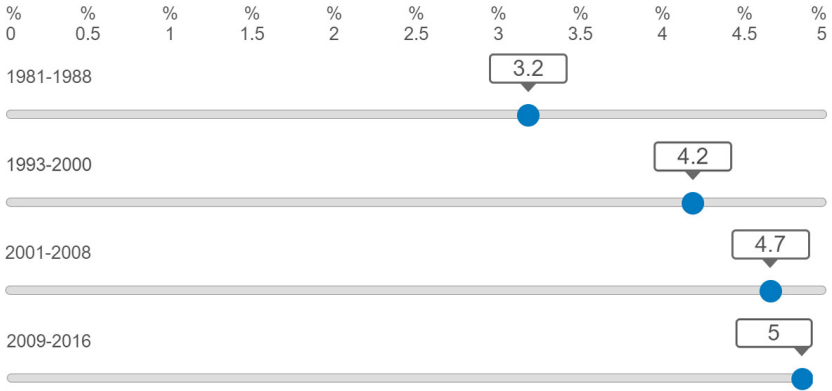
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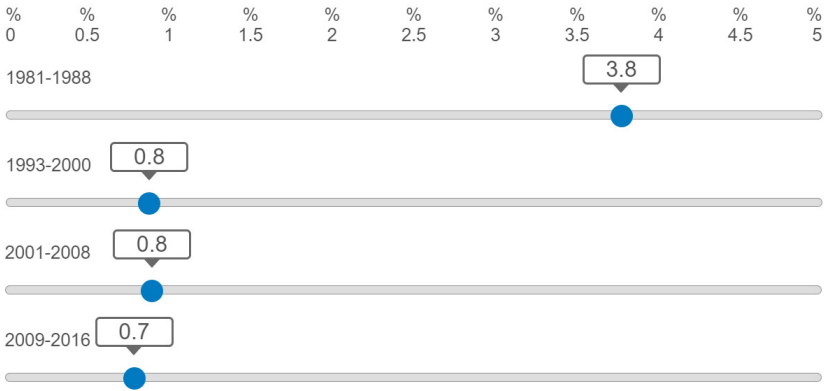
% 5
1981-1988
3.2
1993-2000
4.2
2001-2008
4.7
2009-2016
5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1981-1988
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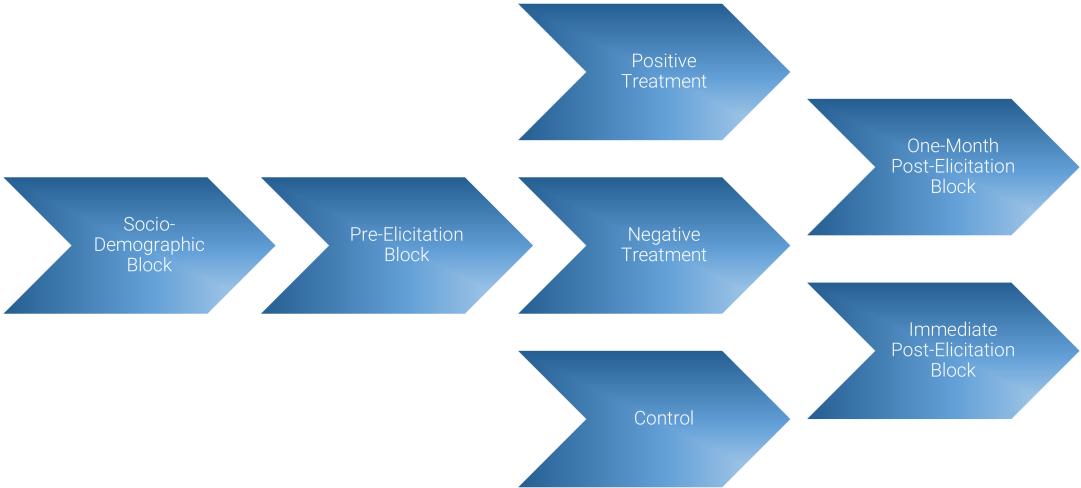
1993-2000
0.8
2001-2008
0.8
2009-2016
0.7


Socio-
Demographic
Block
Pre-Elicitation
Block
Positive
Treatment
Negative
Treatment
Control
One-Month
Post-Elicitation
Block
Immediate
Post-Elicitation
Block

What does the acronym "GDP" stand for? You'll be rewarded a $0.10 bonus payment if you answer correctly.

- Gross Domestic Production
- Gross Domestic Product
- Gross Domestical Production
- Gross Domestical Product

What does GDP measure? You'll be paid an extra $0.10 if your answer is correct.

- How much a state is producing each year
- How much a country is consuming each year
- How much a country is producing each year
- How much a state is consuming each year

You'll be paid an extra $0.05 for each accurate response.

%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
0	0.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5

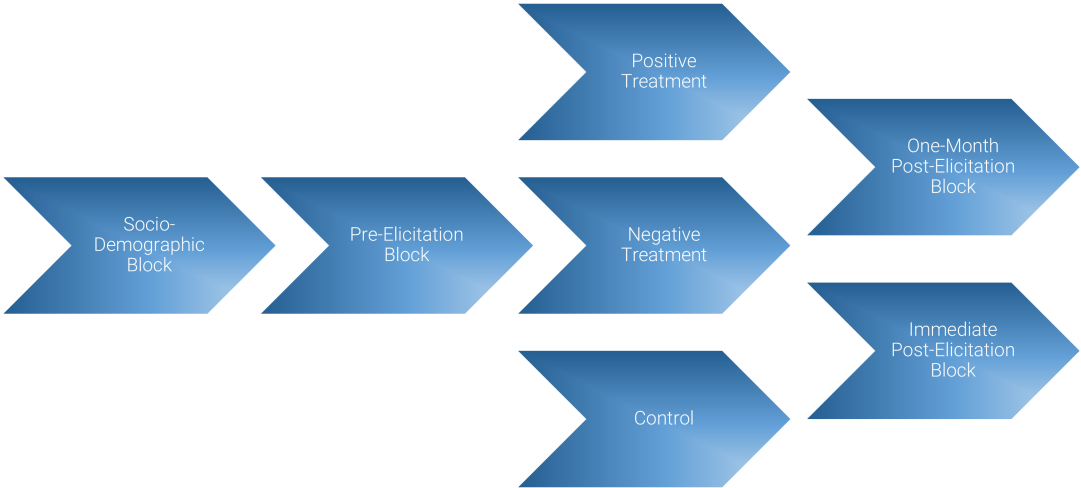
Ronald Reagan (1981-1988)

Bill Clinton (1993-2000)

G.W. Bush (2001-2008)

Barack Obama (2009-2016)

Canada (1981-2016)


Socio-
Demographic
Block
Pre-Elicitation
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Positive
Treatment
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One-Month
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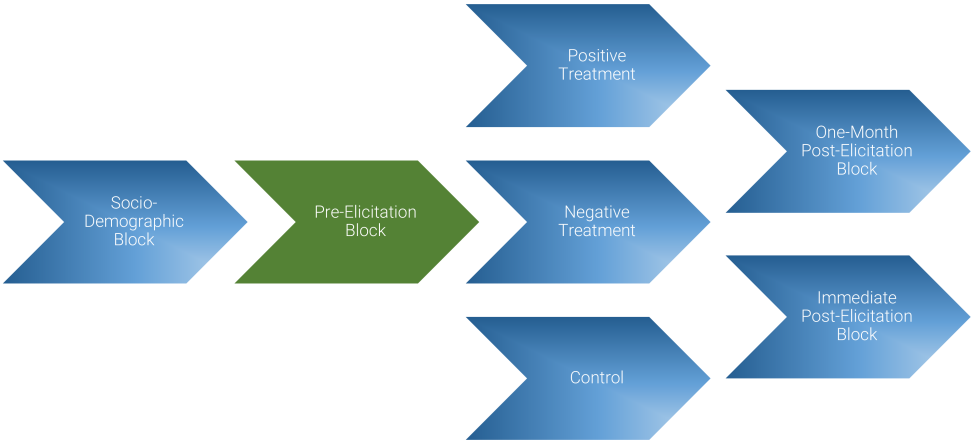
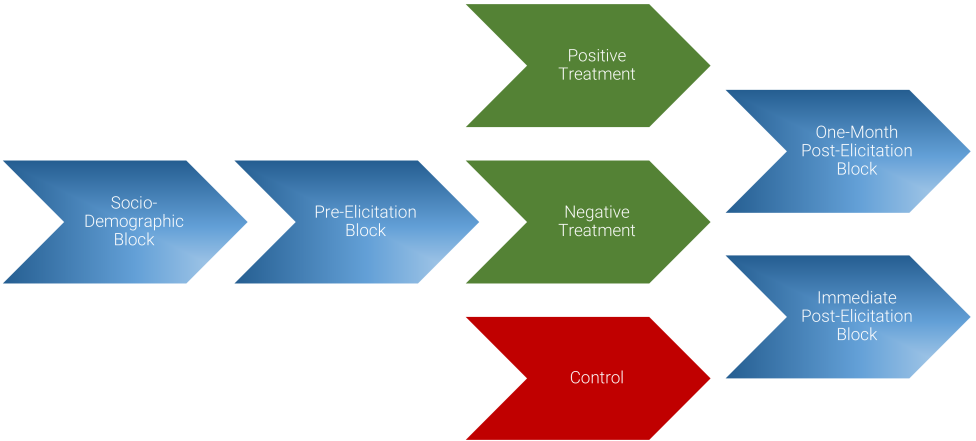
Immediate
Post-Elicitation
Block

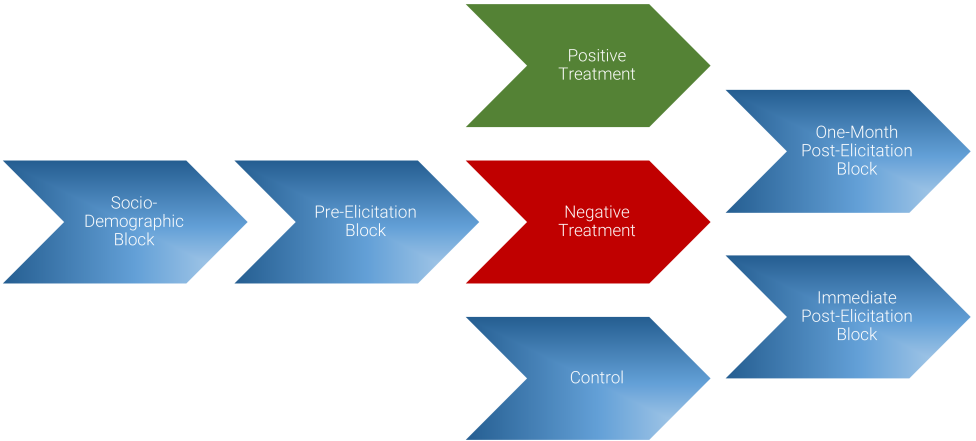
1. Misperceptions



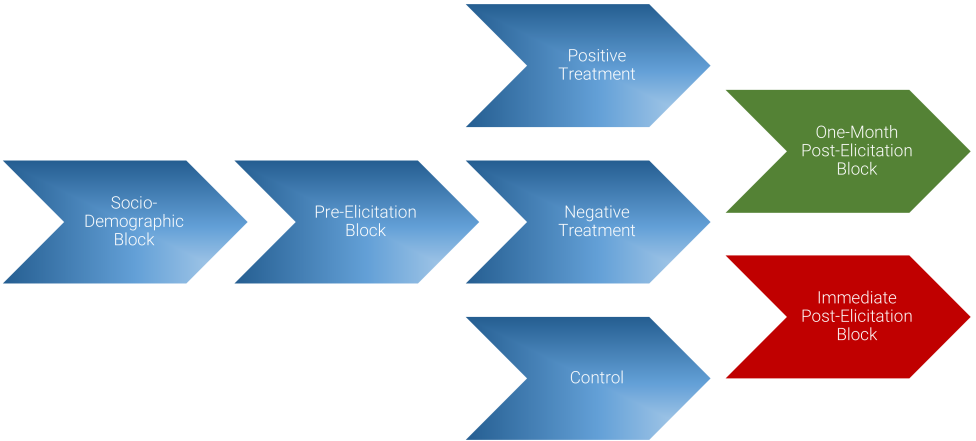
2. Misperceptions Updating



3. Motivated Political Reasoning



4. Motivated Political Memory



Data

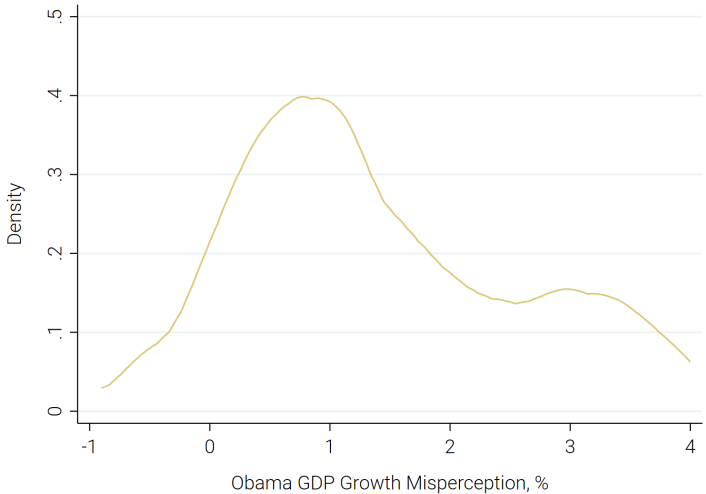
- *Amazon MTurk*
- ∼$1 per respondant
  - Immediate Arm: $0.5 + Bonus
  - One-Month Arm: $0.5 + Bonus + $0.5 + Bonus
- +18 US citizens, 95% HITs completed, captcha check
- 180 respondents, ∼5 minutes
  - Immediate Arm: 84 respondents, ∼4 minutes
  - One-Month Arm: 96 respondents, ∼4 minutes ⇒ 75 respondents, ∼2 minutes

▸ Balance Table

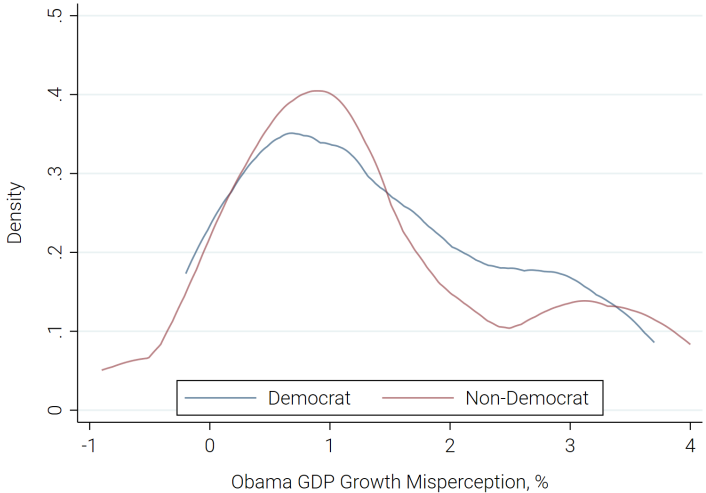
1. Misperceptions

$$Misperception_{i,j} = Prior\ Belief_{i,j} - Actual_j$$

1. Misperceptions



1. Misperceptions



1. Misperceptions

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	$Reagan$	$Clinton$	$Bush$	$Obama$	$Canada$
$\lvert Misperceptions_i \rvert$	0.703	0.769	1.039	1.437	1.012
	(0.633)	(0.566)	(0.814)	(1.083)	(0.840)
Observations	159	159	159	159	159

Where

- $|Misperception_{i,j}| = |Prior\ Belief_{i,j} - Actual_j|$

2. Misperceptions Updating

$$|Misperception_{i,j}| = \alpha + \beta\, Treatment_i + \mathbf{\Gamma_i} + \varepsilon_{i,j}$$

Where

- $|Misperception_{i,j}| = |Prior\ Belief_{i,j} - Actual_j|$

2. Misperceptions Updating

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	$\lvert Misperception_{i,Reagan}\rvert$	$\lvert Misperception_{i,Clinton}\rvert$	$\lvert Misperception_{i,Bush}\rvert$	$\lvert Misperception_{i,Obama}\rvert$	$\lvert Misperception_{i,Canada}\rvert$
$Treatment_i$	-	-	-	-	-
	(.)	(.)	(.)	(.)	(.)
Observations	159	159	159	159	159
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors.

2. Misperceptions Updating

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	$\lvert Misperception_{i,Reagan}\rvert$	$\lvert Misperception_{i,Clinton}\rvert$	$\lvert Misperception_{i,Bush}\rvert$	$\lvert Misperception_{i,Obama}\rvert$	$\lvert Misperception_{i,Canada}\rvert$
$Treatment_i$	-0.099	-0.135	-0.302**	-0.358**	-0.497***
	(0.128)	(0.111)	(0.129)	(0.150)	(0.122)
Observations	159	159	159	159	159
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors.

3. Motivated Political Reasoning

$$|Update_{i,j}| = \alpha + \beta\, Positive_i + \nu\, Democrat_i + \omega\, Positive_i \times Democrat_i + \mathbf{\Gamma_i} + \varepsilon_{i,j}$$

Where

- $|Update_{i,j}| = |Posterior\ Belief_{i,j} - Prior\ Belief_{i,j}|$

3. Motivated Political Reasoning

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	$\lvert Update_{i,Reagan} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Clinton} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Bush} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Obama} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Canada} \rvert$
$Positive_i \times Democrat_i$	-	+	-	+	0
	(.)	(.)	(.)	(.)	(.)
Observations	117	117	117	117	117
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors.

3. Motivated Political Reasoning

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	$\lvert Update_{i,Reagan} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Clinton} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Bush} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Obama} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Canada} \rvert$
$Positive_i \times Democrat_i$	0.035	-0.137	0.350	-0.256	0.082
	(0.299)	(0.411)	(0.334)	(0.435)	(0.345)
Observations	61	61	61	61	61
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors.

4. Motivated Political Memory

$$|Update_{i,j}| = \alpha + \beta\, Positive_i + \nu\, Democrat_i + \kappa\, One\, Month_i + \omega\, Positive_i \times Democrat_i \times One\, Month_i + \mathbf{\Gamma_i} + \varepsilon_{i,j}$$

Where

- $|Update_{i,j}| = |Posterior\, Belief_{i,j} - Prior\, Belief_{i,j}|$

4. Motivated Political Memory

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	$\lvert Update_{i,Reagan} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Clinton} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Bush} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Obama} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Canada} \rvert$
$Positive_i \times Democrat_i \times OneMonth_i$	-	+	-	+	0
	(.)	(.)	(.)	(.)	(.)
Observations	117	117	117	117	117
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors.

4. Motivated Political Memory

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	$\lvert Update_{i,Reagan} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Clinton} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Bush} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Obama} \rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Canada} \rvert$
$Positive_i \times Democrat_i \times OneMonth_i$	-0.287	0.720	-0.073	0.450	-0.036
	(0.491)	(0.504)	(0.501)	(0.557)	(0.530)
Observations	117	117	117	117	117
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors.

▸ Republicans

Discussion

Discussion

- Power calculations: $N \sim 3,000$
- Inflation treatment?
- *Narrative* treatment?
- Thoughts on Positive/Negative treatments?
- Include any additional questions?

Balance Table

Variable	(1) T vs C	(2) P vs N	(3) OM vs I	(4) A vs No A
Gender	0.102	0.056	0.039	0.090
	(0.084)	(0.084)	(0.084)	(0.133)
Age	-1.189	-0.661	0.943	-0.946
	(1.504)	(1.420)	(1.401)	(2.961)
Race	-0.112	0.106	0.108	0.031
	(0.090)	(0.084)	(0.084)	(0.189)
Education	-0.159	0.078	0.118	-0.185
	(0.280)	(0.312)	(0.313)	(0.508)
Republican	0.085	-0.056	-0.009	-0.108
	(0.077)	(0.084)	(0.084)	(0.133)
Observations	180	132	132	132

Variable	(1) T vs C	(2) P vs N	(3) OM vs I	(4) A vs No A
Democrat	-0.040	0.121	0.088	0.215
	(0.084)	(0.087)	(0.088)	(0.134)
Reagan Prior	-0.102	0.264*	-0.019	0.250
	(0.173)	(0.155)	(0.155)	(0.286)
Clinton Prior	-0.174	0.048	-0.182	-0.210
	(0.166)	(0.154)	(0.155)	(0.201)
Bush Prior	-0.080	0.200	0.184	0.203
	(0.178)	(0.160)	(0.159)	(0.326)
Obama Prior	-0.336	0.292	0.276	0.055
	(0.211)	(0.178)	(0.180)	(0.276)
Observations	180	132	132	132

▸ Data

Balance Table

Variable	(1) T vs C	(2) P vs N	(3) OM vs I
Gender	0.085	0.049	0.020
	(0.089)	(0.090)	(0.090)
Age	-2.126	-0.458	1.143
	(1.594)	(1.443)	(1.447)
Education	-0.231	0.083	0.157
	(0.301)	(0.335)	(0.334)
IncomeBracket	-0.508	0.316	-0.453
	(0.481)	(0.547)	(0.547)
Republican	0.082	-0.083	0.014
	(0.083)	(0.090)	(0.090)
Observations	159	117	117

Variable	(1) T vs C	(2) P vs N	(3) OM vs I
Democrat	-0.052	0.163*	0.042
	(0.090)	(0.092)	(0.093)
Reagan Prior	-0.222	0.185	-0.072
	(0.186)	(0.164)	(0.167)
Clinton Prior	-0.195	0.021	-0.137
	(0.185)	(0.169)	(0.168)
Bush Prior	-0.136	0.154	0.141
	(0.197)	(0.163)	(0.166)
Obama Prior	-0.358	0.300	0.265
	(0.232)	(0.190)	(0.192)
Observations	159	117	117

4. Motivated Political Memory

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	$\lvert Update_{i,Reagan}\rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Clinton}\rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Bush}\rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Obama}\rvert$	$\lvert Update_{i,Canada}\rvert$
$Positive_i \times Republican_i \times OneMonth_i$	0.428	-0.336	0.338	-0.356	-0.076
	(0.485)	(0.521)	(0.584)	(0.629)	(0.566)
Observations	117	117	117	117	117
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors.

▸ Main