Costly Values: The Limited Benefits and Potential Costs of Targeted Policy Justifications[*]

Supporting Information

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A: Experimental Designs and Question Wordings

Study 1 Design/Questions

Table 1: Experimental Conditions - Study 1 / TESS Study

	Pro-Evidence	Pro-Values	Con-Evidence	Con-Values
Pre-Justification Opinion	1	2	3	4
Post-Justification Opinion	5	6	7	8

Currently there is a debate in Washington about the amount of taxes wealthy Americans should pay. Some politicians think the government should increase taxes on wealthy Americans, defined as people who make more than $250,000 per year. Other politicians think taxes on wealthy Americans should be kept at their current level. And still other politicians think the government should decrease taxes on wealthy Americans.

Question 1 - (Conditions 1,2,3,4 Only)

We would like your opinion about this issue. To what extent do your support or oppose increasing taxes on wealthy Americans?

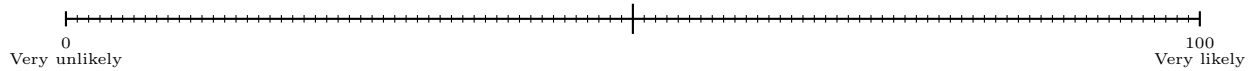| _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Strongly oppose	Moderately oppose	Slightly oppose	Neither support nor oppose	Slightly support	Moderately support	Strongly support

Page Break

[**Name**] is a [**Party Label**] Congressman in the U.S. House of Representatives. At a town hall meeting in his district, [**Name**] was asked to explain his vote for a bill that would increase taxes on wealthy Americans.

Here is his answer:

[**Justification - See Appendix B for wording**]
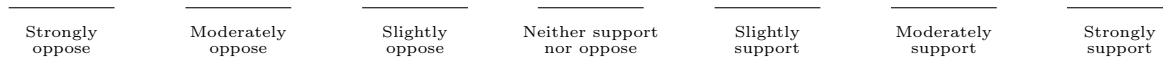
Question 2 - (All Conditions)

Based on this information, how likely do you think you would be to vote for Representative [**Name**] in the next election if you lived in his district?

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0                                        |                              100
Very unlikely                                                    Very likely
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Page Break

Question 3 - (Conditions 5,6,7,8 Only)

We would like your opinion about this issue. To what extent do you support or oppose increasing taxes on wealthy Americans?

| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Strongly oppose | Moderately oppose | Slightly oppose | Neither support nor oppose | Slightly support | Moderately support | Strongly support |

Study 2 Design/Questions

Table 2: Experimental Conditions - Study 2 / Mturk Study

Pro-Evidence	Pro-Values	Con-Evidence	Con-Values	Pro-No Justification	Con-No Justification
1	2	3	4	5	6

Currently there is a debate in Washington about the amount of taxes wealthy Americans should pay. Some politicians think the government should increase taxes on wealthy Americans, defined as people who make more than $250,000 per year. Other politicians think taxes on wealthy Americans should be kept at their current level. And still other politicians think the government should decrease taxes on wealthy Americans.

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Question 1

We would like your opinion about this issue. To what extent do your support or oppose increasing taxes on wealthy Americans?

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Strongly oppose	Moderately oppose	Slightly oppose	Neither support nor oppose	Slightly support	Moderately support	Strongly support

Now we would like to ask you about the position taken on this issue by a congressional representative from a district elsewhere in the country. The representative's name has been altered.

[**Conditions 1-4** are in Appendix B and are the same as in Study 1.]

[**Condition 5** - Pro - No Justification]

[**Name**] is a [**Party Label**] Congressman in the U.S. House of Representatives. [**Name**] voted for a bill that would increase taxes on wealthy Americans.
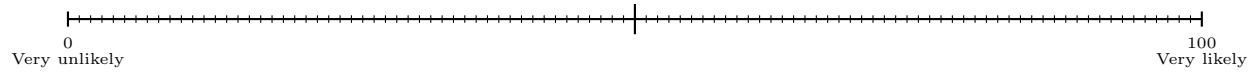
[**Condition 6** - Con - No Justification]

[**Name**] is a [**Party Label**] Congressman in the U.S. House of Representatives. [**Name**] voted against a bill that would increase taxes on wealthy Americans.
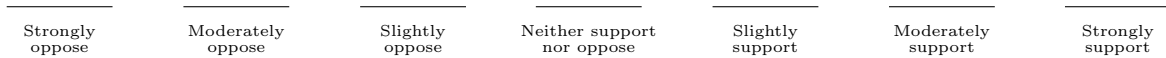
Question 2

Based on this information, how likely do you think you would be to vote for Representative

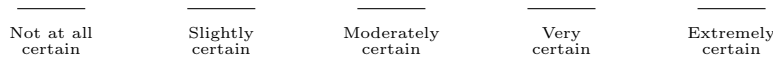[**Name**] in the next election if you lived in his district?

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|++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++|++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++|
0                                                                              100
Very unlikely                                                          Very likely
```

Question 3

Where do you think Representative [**Name**] stands on increasing income taxes on the wealthy?

| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Strongly oppose | Moderately oppose | Slightly oppose | Neither support nor oppose | Slightly support | Moderately support | Strongly support |

Question 4

How certain are you about Representative [**Name**]'s position on increasing income taxes on the wealthy?

| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Not at all certain | Slightly certain | Moderately certain | Very certain | Extremely certain |

Question 5

Now we would like to know something about the feelings you have towards Representative [**Name**]. Has [**Name**] – because of the kind of person he is, or because of something he has done – made you feel angry?

A) Yes, Have Felt Angry

B) No, Haven't Felt Angry

Question 6 - (Manipulation Check only asked to respondents who saw a justification)

Some arguments use facts and evidence to make their case. Other arguments make a case

without emphasizing facts and evidence. What would you say about the statement Representative [**Name**] made?

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Definitely not based on evidence						Definitely based on evidence

Battery of Demographic Questions

Question 7

We would like your opinion about this issue. To what extent do your support or oppose increasing taxes on wealthy Americans?

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Strongly oppose	Moderately oppose	Slightly oppose	Neither support nor oppose	Slightly support	Moderately support	Strongly support

B: Additional results

Examining the effect of the justifications on other outcome measures, we find that justifications did lead to some interesting differences in the way respondents perceived the issue stance of the candidate as a function of the justifications they used. First, candidates who provided a justification for their positions were perceived as having a more extreme stance on the issue (Table B1, Column 1), and respondents were also more certain when recalling the position of candidates offering a justification (Table B1, Column 3). These findings are consistent with our theoretical argument and suggests that one reason why justifications may backfire is that they make the disagreement between candidates and voters more salient compared to simple position taking.

Finally, Column 2 shows that the two types of justifications were perceived as distinct in the manner we intended. Evidence-based justifications were perceived as relying on evidence to a greater degree than the values-based explanations.

Consistent with previous findings about messaging effects on highly salient issues (e.g., Bechtel et al. 2015) we find that in addition to producing limited differences in candidate evaluations, the different justifications produced limited changes in tax policy opinions. In

Table B1: The perception of the candidate and his argument, by experimental condition and issue-alignment

Dependent variables	Perceived position	Perceived evidence	Certainty
Pro tax-increase	0.634	0.136	-0.010
	(0.022)	(0.026)	(0.028)
Value-based justification	-0.091		0.188
	(0.022)		(0.027)
Evidence-based justification	-0.054	0.236	0.136
	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.028)
Pro tax-increase X Value-based justification	0.118		-0.038
	(0.031)		(0.037)
Pro tax-increase X Evidence-based justification	0.100	-0.029	-0.026
	(0.031)	(0.037)	(0.038)
Constant	0.194	0.250	0.580
	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.021)
Observations	1,213	807	1,213
R-squared	0.732	0.192	0.073

Note: Entries are coefficient estimates from linear regressions. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. All dependent measures are scaled to lie between 0 and 1. For Perceived position, higher values mean positions perceived as more liberal.

Table B2 we assess this by comparing the pre and post-treatment tax policy opinions in Study 2. While there are small within-subject changes in opinion in the direction of the stance taken by the politician they evaluated, the different types of justifications failed to produce further differences in tax policy opinion.

Table B2: Change in Issue Opinion By Policy Justification

Condition	Tax opinion		Tax opinion change	
	Before	After	Mean	SE
Con control	5.54	5.46	-0.11	0.05
Con fact	5.16	5.07	-0.08	0.06
Con values	5.58	5.55	-0.02	0.06
Pro control	5.46	5.52	0.08	0.07
Pro fact	5.33	5.48	0.13	0.06
Pro values	5.32	5.46	0.13	0.07

Note: Entries in the first two columns report mean tax opinion before and after reading about the candidate, by experimental conditions in Study 2. The last two columns are the the mean and standard error of individual level opinion change. The measure of opinion is recoded to lie between 0 and 1, with higher values indicating higher support for increasing taxes.