Elite Discourse, Programming and Survey Response in the Partial Birth Abortion Debate

Adam F. Simon
Department of Political Science,
University of Washington

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Abstract

This paper uses multiple methods to investigate programming, a media effect which is arguably central to democratic governance. Under programming, mediated discourse teaches citizens to associate certain concepts and consequently influences survey response. First, participants in three experimental conditions read a newspaper article detailing partial birth abortion where "baby" was substituted for all, half or none of the appearances of "fetus." Results support two hypotheses: uptake—exposure strengthened the baby-abortion connection, increasing ban support; and, emergence—participants reading the competitive article exhibited only the influence of the baby association. Second, a content analysis then examines the associations linked to PBA in government and the media, connecting these to public opinion. This study then documents how political entrepreneurs used programs in discourse to promote their agendas. Besides undermining probabilistic survey response models, these findings support a model of democracy in which an adaptive dynamic can emerge from the interaction of citizens' cognitions and elite communication.

When thinking about the basic structure of politics, democratic ideals suggest a simple causal relationship; namely that citizens' wants drive government action. Extant political communication research, however, generally portrays media effects that flow in the opposite direction, from the government through the media to the public. This view is only reinforced by findings that suggest that politicians and their discourse essentially lead the public and determine its opinions (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000, Zaller 1992). Hence the prevailing wisdom concerning the media and elite discourse leaves little space for consequential public participation within the democratic process. On the distaff side of this debate are scholars who see the public as prime movers; in this view politicians are merely strategic followers, positioning themselves wherever they anticipate public opinion will move -- an alternative that leaves scant room to specify a meaningful role for politicians (Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson 1995). Thus, we are left with a challenge – can we develop a model of public opinion which specifies a consequential role for citizens while recognizing the heavy lifting done by politicians and other political entrepreneurs?

In this paper, I attempt to develop such a model by reconciling research on media effects with a broader conception of public action that gives citizens limited access to the governmental driver's seat. Specifically, I address two questions. First, how does mediated discourse affect citizens' answers to survey questions? And, second, where does mediated discourse originate and how does it evolve in response to citizens' actions? To answer these questions, I introduce a new theory and some evidence about the nature of mediated discourse, its origins and its effects. The theory revolves around a new category of media effects that I call "programming." After defining programming, this paper presents an experimental demonstration of this effect in the so-called partial birth abortion (PBA) controversy. With the establishment of some basic results, namely the properties of public discourse that I call "uptake" and "emergence," the analysis moves to examine the actual discourse surrounding this issue. Taken together, these results support a model of discursive evolution that follows the popular notion of memes. This model illustrates how elites and citizens can interact to create successful democratic governance.

Under programming, mediated discourse affects survey responses by teaching citizens to associate otherwise loosely related concepts. The idea of programming presumes that the media functions as a discursive arena where competing elites attempt to fashion rationales for their preferred policies. Putatively, these rationales consist of elaborated networks of semantic associations or memes. In other words, elites struggle to inject favorable associations into the information flow. Once there, these associations and the network of preexisting associations that accompany them guide public sentiment, including survey responses. To illustrate, consider attitudes toward the legal status of partial birth abortion (PBA). The prevailing association in abortion discourse is between the concepts abortion and fetus. Thus, in describing abortion, media sources and citizens alike tend to spontaneously use the word fetus as opposed to a countervailing term like baby. As a result, when citizens make judgments about abortion, their expressions are influenced in part by the associational network attached to the word fetus as opposed to being influenced by the one attached to baby. As detailed below for the PBA controversy, this prevailing association is flexible; in this particular case the network attached to the word baby displaced the one attached to fetus, leading to a reduction in public support for

maintaining PBA's legal status. In short, the connection between the words abortion and fetus critically underpins public attitudes toward this issue, and support for abortion can vanish as a consequence of programming when this connection weakens.

Beyond helping to explain survey response, programming is important as an understanding of this effect highlights new possibilities for citizen action within democratic governance. It seems reasonable to claim that discursive competition over salient political issues normally leads to government action, only when a policy's rationale develops enough favorable associations to prompt sufficient public acceptance. This premise elevates the public in general, and individual's survey response mechanisms in particular, to a central role in the policy process, making an oft-visited theme in the survey response literature critical. Are citizens passive information recipients or are they able to sort more actively through the information? Probabilistic models imply that the public is relatively passive in that the discursive environment's associational mix dictates survey response (Zaller and Feldman 1992). If, however, citizens behave in the same way as this study's participants, then they do not accept associations reflexively or even haphazardly; instead adoption is governed by deeper associations seemingly activated by the presence of competing messages. In particular cases, such as the one reported here, citizens can completely reject "specious" associations. In this way, the idea of programming relates back to democratic theory, leading to the conclusion that the interplay between citizens' cognitions and elite communication creates an adaptive dynamic. Intelligent democratic governance emerges from healthy mediated discursive interactions between elites and citizens.

In reviewing the literatures that bear on these issues, my discussion begins with a review of media effects and continues with an outline of political cognition and survey response. There, I define programming and lay out the experimental design as well as the key hypotheses. After detailing the experimental findings, I turn to examine the evolution of discourse in the PBA debate, charting its origins and following the dissemination of the key associations. I then attempt to link these associations to government action and public opinion given the data available. The paper concludes by discussing the relationship of the results to democratic theory, including the development of public policy and the now popular idea of memes, which can be seen as an evolutionary approach to understanding public discourse.

Background

Media Effects Research

Extant media effects research routinely portrays the public as followers. Two paradigms dominate social scientific understandings of political communication. These paradigms, agenda-setting and framing, arose after persuasion studies failed to demonstrate powerful media effects. Laboratory studies can easily document persuasive effects; yet, attempts to replicate these findings in the field consistently fail (Hovland 1950). The "law of minimal effects" responded to this evidence by stating that the overt persuasive impact of public discourse is negligible (Klapper 1960). The media, if it does anything,

apparently does something more subtle than direct persuasion. Agenda-setting and framing studies capitalize on this lesson and show what the media can do.

Under agenda setting the media exerts its influence indirectly, telling people not what to think, but "what to think about" (Cohen 1963). Notwithstanding the enormous number of studies (see Rogers, Dearing and Bregman 1993, for a review), the agenda-setting hypothesis is straightforward: increases in the media attention accorded to an issue raises public concern over that subject. Priming, a parallels notion, holds that the priorities of discourse set the criteria for evaluating public officials and events. Under priming, the more prominently a subject is featured in the information stream, the greater its weight in subsequent judgments (Iyengar and Kinder 1987). These ideas affirm that the influence of discourse is subtle; rather than directly altering evaluations, discourse only affects the time and weight given to relevant considerations. In each case, note that the volume of communication accorded to a subject is the sole factor driving the effect.

Framing, another paradigm, addresses effects that are potentially more important than those of agenda-setting, and yet its theory and literature is less well developed (Entman 1993; Brosius and Eps 1995; Scheufele 1999). Goffman's (1974) seminal work presumed that the rhetorical structure of messages—the frame—channeled subsequent reactions although the underlying informational content remained unchanged. Frames are the "central organizing idea or storyline that provides meaning" (Gamson and Modigliani 1987, p. 143). Research into framing effects explores the content, as opposed to the volume, of communicative behavior (Nelson, Oxley and Clawson 1997). Beyond these basics, framing studies take on a range of approaches. Psychologists generally refer to frames as the relationship between context and information as it determines meaning. Minsky (1975), for instance, sees frames as templates within which bits of information fit. In economics, now famous framing studies investigated the impact of different descriptions of mathematically identical problems (Khaneman and Tversky 2000). In political science, frames are generally seen as discursive structures like scripts and schemas, related concepts from cognitive psychology (see Fiske and Taylor 1991, for a review) although some political researchers do not distinguish between frames and schemas or between frames and other information processing phenomena (Lodge and Hamill 1986; Popkin 1994).

Framing research typically pursues one or both of two related goals. First, it charts the individual level effects of media content, generally via experimental methods (Nelson and Kinder 1996; Price, Tewksbury and Powers 1997; Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Jacoby 2000). In this vein, researchers tend to operationalize frames as exclusive organizations of similar information – in Iyengar's (1991) work, for example, accounts of poverty were organized thematically or episodically. Second, a complementary strain of framing research observes frames as they occur in natural discourse; here the preferred tool tends to be content analysis. Typically, these studies employ relatively complex categorization schemes, which allow human coders to capture the subtlety of human language (Gamson and Modigliani 1987).

Taken together, the notions of agenda-setting and framing reveal much about the media's influence on the public. The media tells the public what to think about and guides the thinking when it gets there. Yet there may be less here than meets the eye as an important media role has been overlooked. An examination of this role leads me to argue for programming, a new effect that exposes one way that public influence can travel back toward government. To introduce this new role, one must look at the way citizens interact with discourse, specifically how they answer survey questions.

Political Cognition, Programming and Survey Response

The portrait of the average citizen, who pays little attention to politics, has sketchy information about government and little incentive to actively think about the issues of the day dominates political behavior research. Under the heading "low information rationality," scholars reason that democracy's operation depends on citizens' ability to use their slim and haphazardly collected information to make "reasonable" choices at the ballot box and in polls (Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991). Heuristics, simple rules of thumb that clarify complex decisions, do much of the cognitive work citizenship requires. This literature supports the idea that politicians try to build support for their preferred policies or win elections by taking advantage of the public's use of heuristics. Notably, neither agenda setting nor framing accounts for this kind of mediated influence on public opinion. I claim that these results depend on another media effect that (for lack of a better term) I call programming. Programming can first be understood as an alternative to the so-called top of the head model of survey response (Zaller and Feldman 1992).

Under programming, citizens exposed to particular discourses learn (defined loosely, see Dennett 1993) to associate otherwise loosely related concepts; these associations then affect subsequent judgments. Programming is closely related to framing; yet it differs in that frames are larger discursive devices while programs are smaller word pairings spread throughout discourse. One might say that a given text can have a dominant frame but many competing programs, for example. Programming incorporates a form of mental associationism, an idea that dates back to Aristotle. While early modern forms of associationism disappeared after Skinnerian behaviorism, a new form called connectionism has appeared in many cognitive models involving memory. Accordingly, my belief in the centrality of associations to political cognition stems from the fact that human understanding lays within our mental connections between concepts (see Pinker 1997). In this section, I sketch a picture of survey response that employs standard models of memory and judgment to explain how programming works (see also Tourangeau, Rips and Rasinski 2000).

Political scientists (cf. Lodge, McGraw and Stroh 1989) have been quick to adopt the primary distinction in the psychological literature on judgment, namely that respondents switch between two information-processing strategies, on-line and memory-based (Hastie and Park 1986). Survey respondents can answer questions "on-line" by immediately reporting a stored judgment, or they can pause, responding in a "memory-based" fashion by computing a new judgment. We generally default to the easier and

quicker on-line mode; however, when stored judgments are unavailable, we must resort to memory-based strategies. The term memory-based is a bit misleading, because memory plays a central part in judgment when we process on-line. Really, the timing of computation is all that separates on-line processing from its memory-based alternative. When judgments are stored, we have in fact computed them prior to the question, but when they are not, we form the judgment after the question is asked (Simon 2002).

Inspecting memory function more closely sheds light on the factors affecting the computation, especially insofar as it relates to survey response. Cognitive scientists typically divide memory into two main types, short-term and long-term, although this distinction probably does not apply to physical brain locations (Freeman 2000). Short-term memory serves as a scratch pad used to carry out mental functions like judging. Short-term memory can only hold small amounts of information, so when more information enters, the new pushes out the old. Long-term memory, in contrast, is theoretically infinite and relatively permanent. In some sense, we can remember everything that we have encountered over the course of our lives though we may have trouble accessing those memories (see Ashcraft 1989, for a review of this literature).

In making a judgment, a request enters short-term memory driving activation--the recall of information from long to short-term memory (Ashcraft 1989). Every stimulus entering short-term memory spontaneously activates some long-term memories, automatically moving them to the mental workspace. What decides which elements are activated? This question lacks a complete answer, although the organization of information in long-term memory demonstrably affects the process. Long-term memory is thought to be organized as a network of concepts. Associations are the primary feature of long-term memory, especially under connectionist views that posit thousands of connections between concepts (Pinker 1997). Everything stored in the brain is linked to everything else by a dense network. The specifics of activation partially depend on the fact that some links are stronger than others (cf. Gillund and Shiffrin 1984; Murdock 1982). With "spreading activation theory," Collins and Loftus (1975) propose that the strengths of the links determine which associations are activated in response to given prompts (McNamara 1992; but see also Klinger, Burton and Pitts 2000). For example, as you read a word, its mental representation leaps to activation as does those of neighboring concepts. With this theory it seems that predicting question responses would be easy, but because it remains technologically impossible to map an individual's entire memory network, predictions are elusive. For the purposes of understanding programming, we can conclude that some activation patterns are more likely because of the connecting link's relative strength.

This discussion raises the critical question that gives rise to the idea of programming: what accounts for link strength? Among others, Collins and Loftus (1975) suggest that links strengthen through a learning process whenever two concepts are activated simultaneously (also see Ashcraft 1989). When a person reads a newspaper article, for instance, or encounters any other discourse, the contained concepts are activated simultaneously, increasing link strength. Thus, discourse teaches its audience to associate certain concepts which are then activated and influence judgment at the time of

computation. This is the notion of programming in a nutshell. This idea also suggests that while we may be unable to map an individual's connection network, we may be able to map our collective network by relying on analyses of massive amounts of discourse. The researchers building the Lexical Freenet have performed this task (Beeferman 1998) and I review some of their data when making specific predictions concerning the programming effect as it appears in PBA rhetoric.

To review, a survey question is a judgment task that automatically brings associated concepts into short-term memory, possibly including a stored judgment, which produces a response. The idea of programming stems from the fact the activated associations may have been learned from exposure to discourse. Stated as a hypothesis, which I call "uptake," exposure to particular associations in discourse will strengthen those mental connections and affect subsequent judgments. So far, this sketch resembles extant cognitive models of survey response (Tourangeau et al. 2000; Sudman et al. 1996; Zaller and Feldman 1989); there is, however, a signal difference. This difference is critical because it clears a space for the average citizen's mental processes to play a more important role in the democratic process. I will illustrate this difference by reviewing the "top of the head" model, one of the foremost models in question.

Zaller and Feldman (1989) suggest that people answer survey questions by drawing on the first thought that activates as the question ends. Zaller (1992) proposes a comprehensive model of public opinion that essentially extends this so-called top of the head model to the entire public. The main lesson of this work is that the activation process is governed by the messages that respondents receive from political elites. He elaborates by suggesting the metaphor of a probability urn to represent survey response. As citizens receive supportive and opposing information about a particular topic, these bits go into memory like lottery balls. When asked a question, the respondent draws a metaphorical ball and that provides the opinion. Extrapolating, the proportion of supportive balls to opposing ones is the expected value of the response, which, in turn, is determined by the elite information flow—more specifically, the ratio of favorable to unfavorable news about a given topic. Zaller offers another idea, called "acceptance," which states that citizens can reject some information based on their predispositions. Republicans, for instance, will filter out some negative information about President Bush. The acceptance idea suggests that there is an interaction between the expected value of the response and altitudinal predispositions, such as partisanship (Zaller 1992).

My view differs in two fundamental ways. I propose, first, that responses are not probabilistic; instead, they are fully determined by the organization of information present in long-term memory at the time of the question. So, although, the probabilistic model may offer an approximate prediction of survey response, a fully specified model would provide something more definitive. Second, I would argue that under certain conditions acceptance does not apply. Instead I propose the idea of "emergence," a more subtle filtering process in which incoming discourse automatically prompts complex memory associations that elide the favorable - unfavorable distinction used by Zaller (1992). Under emergence, given bits of information can be accepted and used or rejected without passing through any political filter although they must meet an alternative standard of use which

arises from ordinary language understandings. For example, as citizens typically encounter PBA discourse neither the word baby nor the word fetus can be placed on favorable - unfavorable continuum, so they elide political filtering and enter long-term memory. Moreover, upon receipt of a judgment request, citizens do not randomly draw baby or fetus from storage. Rather they deploy the word that has the best linguistic fit with a given context. Here, I demonstrate emergence in an experimental design that explicitly rules out acceptance. As detailed below, under acceptance we would expect participants exposed to a PBA article containing baby and fetus in a one to one ratio to exhibit the influence of fetus half the time and the influence of baby the other half. In contrast, under emergence we would expect participants in this condition to exhibit only the influence of baby or only the influence of fetus.

The design also tests the idea of programming itself, and shows how this mechanism can be susceptible to elite manipulation. The experiment concerns the influence of newspaper articles—and the associations or programs within them—on public support for making partial birth abortion illegal. At the risk of putting the cart before the horse, I will lay out the experimental conditions, hypotheses and the results before delving into the political history of PBA, a content analysis of the actual discourse surrounding this issue and a corresponding look at related government action and public opinion.

Experimental Procedure, Design and Results

Procedure

A three conditions plus control between subjects experimental design tests for programming, including the idea of emergence. Three of the conditions featured a manipulated newspaper article as the only stimulus. Control participants read no article but answered the same questions, as possible. To create the stimuli, a 600 word New York Times article, which described PBA as the intact dilation and extraction medical procedure and reported on pending legislation to make it illegal, was slightly edited to produce three new versions. The stimulus articles were identical with the exception of a one word substitution corrected for singular or plural form. In the "fetus" condition the article was left alone -- in it the word fetus appeared 16 times. In the "baby" condition the word baby was substituted for the 16 appearances of fetus. In the "competitive" condition the word "baby" was substituted for every other appearance of fetus, leaving eight appearances for each term. This slight intervention, some two percent of the content was changed, follows from the minimalist logic underlying the programming notion. The article and changes appear in the appendix.

This experiment was conducted among undergraduates and adults recruited from the New Haven, Connecticut community. Because many of the undergraduates were high academic achievers, additional students were recruited from nearby colleges. The three sub-samples—Yale students, adults and nearby school students, were roughly equal in size and spread evenly across conditions; subsequent analyses detected no statistically significant differences across the sub-samples. Participants were told they were participating in an exercise to study news comprehension. The articles were presented in

identical packets and the participants were allowed to go at their own pace. On completion, participants were paid and debriefed. Roughly 185 voting age citizens participated, 50 for each article and 35 in the control condition. Participants were asked about their political orientation and media habits before reading the article and, afterward, were asked to summarize the article, describe their position on PBA and rate their support for banning the procedure on a seven-point scale. The question wordings also appear in the appendix. The control condition was identical, save participants did not summarize.

Hypotheses and Predictions

Two hypotheses derive from the programming idea. First, the "uptake" hypothesis—the words fetus and baby will promote the use of different associations in the article summary and in thinking about PBA. These associations will activate an existing network of associations that will influence judgment as measured by the Likert scale. For example, participants in the fetus condition will use that word, as opposed to the word baby more often than other participants. In the event, the associations that go with fetus will supplant those that go with baby and influence subsequent judgment. "Baby" participants will behave in a symmetrically opposite fashion. I will turn to data from the Lexical Freenet, a service that charts associations present in massive amounts of publicly available textual material (Beeferman 1998), to assist in making a prediction about the direction of influence. Table 1 presents the "trigger" associations for the words fetus and baby, side by side. They each trigger each other, and both trigger four common words (birth, born, mother and pregnant); after that, the baby associations seem to have more positive associations than those of fetus. Here, positive is taken to be the evaluative dimension of meaning as defined by Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum (1957). In line with my emergence argument, the good – bad distinction can be replaced with a more value neutral observation by saying that the fetus associates aligned with science and health while those of baby aligned with youth and life. Either line of thinking supports predicting that fetus participants will be more supportive of the PBA procedure, decreasing support for a ban.

Second is the "emergence" hypothesis; competitive participants will converge to the "right" answer to the question. Here right as defined as the word having the best linguistic fit with a given context. Thus, instead of dividing their opinion half and half as the top of the head model would suggest (given equivalent predispositions), all participants in the competitive condition will adopt either fetus or baby as their learned association. Specifically, the idea of emergence, as defined here, leads to the prediction that mean ban support in the competitive condition will be identical to either mean support in the baby condition or the fetus condition. In addition, participants will not filter information as suggested by Zaller (1992), meaning that the adoption pr particular programs into long term memory and hence the effects on survey response observed as a consequence of that adoption will not be dictated by ideology or any analogous predisposition. Specifically, we should observe no statistically significant interactions between the experimental manipulation and appropriate measures of political predispositions. The dominant association should exhibit its influence as a main effect of exposure.

Results

Cutting to the heart of the matter, Table 2 shows the mean support for banning the procedure, providing evidence for both hypotheses. Other than the fetus condition, where participants expressed a mean support of 3.96 (on a 7-point scale with a midpoint of 4), the participants in the rest of the conditions express almost exactly the same level of support, around 4.83 on average. The difference between the fetus condition and the rest is significant at the .01 level ($F = 8.25$). This pattern of means supports the uptake hypothesis because the substitution of the word baby for fetus made a substantial difference in expressed attitudes. As mean support in the competitive condition does not fall near a point halfway between support expressed in the baby and fetus conditions, the emergence hypothesis finds preliminary support, as well. The control group supplies another useful finding as the expressed support here is statistically identical to that of the baby condition.

Turning to the open-ended responses and their relationship to expressed support on the closed-ended item, the instrument features two open-ended questions, the article summary and the position explanation. To analyze these items, synonyms, words with identical meaning, were categorized together after eliminating obvious spelling errors. Thus, the words baby, infant and child were treated identically. This resulted in the following ten words appearing most frequently in the summaries; each word is followed by the number of mentions: abortion 169; baby 139; d and e 127; fetus 125; procedure 104; healthy 103; bill 91; intact 50; vetoed 50 and performed 50. In the position statements the ten most frequent were: I 279; abortion 288; should 97; baby 94; think 63; partial birth 60; believe 47; am 45; fetus 42 and choice 35. To simplify, further analysis will be limited to the word categories baby and fetus, which were at the heart of the manipulation and appeared more frequently than other words. A more detailed analysis featuring a comparison of a human created to a computer created dictionary is presented in Simon and Xenos (2002).

Did the manipulation affect the use of the terms fetus and baby? As presented in Table 3, the answer is yes for the summaries. Here, the use of fetus was high in the fetus condition and low in the baby condition and the use of baby followed the same pattern in reverse. Both effects are significant at the .01 level ($F = 10.36$ and $F = 14.92$, respectively). These effects diminish in the position statements, and the effect reverses in the fetus condition. Put another way, fetus participants somewhat paradoxically used the word baby more often than the word fetus as they explained their positions. In the other conditions the competitive participants went 50/50 and, interestingly, the use of the terms among control participants almost matched those of baby participants. The reversal finding in the fetus position statements was unexpected; nonetheless, it provides the opportunity for a richer analysis allowing us to pinpoint the proximal influence on participants' closed ended responses.

An ordinary regression analysis begins to assess the implication of this pattern for overall levels of support. Statistical descriptions of predictors used in this analysis appear in Table 4. They include conservative, a three-point measure of ideology, a dummy

variable for the conditions other than fetus and four mentions variables, charting the response for fetus and baby in the summary and position statements. Two more indicators appear, summary mentions and position mentions; these are indices calculated by subtracting the number of fetus mentions from the number of baby mentions for the appropriate questions. As a preliminary the correlations between these indicators appear in Table 5. The correlations between being a conservative and the other variables are uniformly low; it is retained as a control variable because of its known relationship to opinions expressed on the PBA issue and in order to test for acceptance-related filtering by estimating interactive effects. Within words, appearances of baby and fetus in the summary correlate with appearances in the position statement, more so for fetus than baby. These correlations -- .42 and .21, respectively – are high but imperfect. The correlations across words are low, indicating their usage is relatively independent, suggesting that they may be memetic alleles or substitutes rather than complements. The indices have a slight positive correlation, which is probably due to response loquacity.

OLS estimates of the predicted effects on PBA ban support appear in Table 6. Three models were specified. Looking from left to right, model one is the full specification while model two substitutes the indices for the raw mentions. As expected, the manipulation has a strong positive effect in all models, increasing support for the ban by almost a point on average as a participant moved from the fetus to the other conditions. Ideology also significantly predicts ban support; if the average participant moved from liberal to conservative, we would expect their support for a ban to increase\ by a little more than a full point, almost the same amount as we would expect from moving across conditions. These estimates are uniformly significant at the .05 level or better. The only mention with an impact is baby summary mentions. This effect does not seem spurious as it surpasses the .01 level of statistical significance. Also, as the previous discussion indicated, the sign for both the position statement coefficients is wrong being positive for fetus position mentions and negative for baby position mentions although neither estimate reaches statistical significance. This pattern is investigated more deeply below. A variety of interactions were included in alternative specifications including a fully saturated model; no interactive terms in any specification reached a significance level of .15 or better.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) allows for a deeper examination of casualty displayed between the open-ended responses and attitudinal judgments. Specifically, does the use of baby in the article summary mediate the effect of the manipulation on judgments concerning PBA support? Note, in this usage a SEM is analogous to a two-stage least squares estimation procedure (Bentler 1995). The estimates presented in Figure 1 suggest that the answer is yes. The path from the manipulation to the use of baby in the summary as well as the path from the use of baby to the PBA ban support question is significant. There is also a large direct effect of the condition on PBA ban support, so we can say that the condition exerted both direct and indirect effects. There is also a substantial independent (non-interactive) direct effect of ideology.

A look at the dynamics underlying participant processing may help to explain the anomalous results in the position statements for the word baby in the fetus condition.

Essentially, I propose to examine whether the position statements are relevant under the assumption that participants process in an online fashion. To conduct this analysis, we must first ask what it would mean for respondents to process on-line. If we presume that content contains two parts – the language and the political meaning – we can sort out the participants' processing method. My thought is that the participants' language links to their memory while their political meaning relates to the seven-point Likert scale used to measure their judgment. Here language implicates word choice that is baby or fetus. In an on-line strategy memory and judgment are unrelated, implying that the participant's language should not necessarily relate to their political meaning. Figure 2 portrays this logic. Tracing the path from the article to survey response, the article's language directs the participants' political meaning which then expresses itself in the survey response. The article itself has no political position, as represented by the X, given the journalism's "objectivism" (Bennett 2001) while the participants' language is unrelated to the meaning given the "ratiocination" process respondents typically engage in when answering open-ended questions (see Lodge, McGraw and Stroh 1989).

To test this logic, the participants' political meaning must be measured. This measure was obtained by coding the position statements. Three coders each read all the position statements, achieving an average intercoder correlation of .97. Figure 3 presents a confirmatory SEM estimating the hypothesized relationship. These estimates suggest that participants processed on-line; notably the path between the use of baby in the position statement is not significantly related to the coding of the position statement and it is also unrelated to the expressed support for the PBA ban. On the other hand, there is a significant set of paths running from the condition to the use of baby in the summary to the position statement coding to expressed support. There are also theoretically irrelevant direct relationships between ideology and position statement codes as wells as one between the use of baby in the summary and the use of baby in the position statement. In short, although participants had some access to alternative word associations in their memory, it did not affect their survey responses.

Programming and its Effects in Actual Discourse

The experimental results suggest it would be profitable to examine PBA discourse as it actually occurred in the media and to attempt to link this discourse to changes in public opinion as well as to relevant government action. These results also imply that elites may attempt to use programming in attempts to further their political agendas. This section examines these issues by investigating public opinion, government action and media discourse relevant to PBA from 1995 to 2000. It begins with an overview of PBA itself and then moves on to a look at public opinion, government action and mediated discourse, concluding with an examination of the role of elites in shaping this discourse.

Partial Birth Abortion, Public Opinion and Government Action

Abortion rhetoric and political attitudes toward abortion have been well-studied; accordingly, it is a good place to test a new idea. As an issue, abortion has some other nice features, being both "easy" and "hard." Abortion is easy in the sense that potential

respondents have given it some thought, so participants will have something to say. It is hard in the sense that as a political problem, abortion has been the subject of long and intense debate, so relevant political attitudes are presumably firmly held. In short, while we may recover lots of data, our initial expectations as to the magnitude of programming effects should be low. The focus on partial birth abortion (PBA), a subset of the overall subject, may work against this tendency.

When thinking about PBA, first, it should be noted that this term is itself linguistically and politically laden. There is evidence that political entrepreneurs opposed to abortion crafted this formulation to advance their cause. For example, abortion opponents first attempted to tag this procdure"brain-suction abortion" (BSA). BSA, however, did not "catch on," possibly because it was too graphic. BSA first appeared in Ohio newspapers on February 15, 1995, after state Representative Jerome Leubbers introduced a potential ban in the Ohio House, the first of its kind in the country. Ohio newspapers, and to a lesser extent, other media venues used BSA in reporting on the bill's passage and its eventual overturn by a federal judge. A variation of this term, "brain sucking abortion", made it to the floor of Congress on seven different occasions. It was first used on November 11, 1995 by Representative Chris Smith of New Jersey arguing for the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 1995. Aside from the Ohio event, no other evidence of BSA's use has been found in the media stream. It is relatively clear, though, that both BSA and PBA refer to the same intact dilation and extraction (DAE) procedure, a method of late term abortion rarely used by doctors (ACOG 1997). In the examination of seven major newspapers presented below PBA was used almost 14 times as often as DAE. Thus, it is in some sense appropriate to refer to the Congressional legislation, Supreme Court action and accompanying media coverage as the PBA debate. Looking closely at these episodes provides an opportunity to explore programming and its effects.

Good measures of public attitudes toward PBA and potential bans in this timeframe are sparse. Their inadequacy will make subsequent analyses much coarser than would be ideal but this investigation should nevertheless shed some light on the issues at hand. CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll asked the same question the most often; their wording ran "[D]o you favor or oppose the following proposal: A law which would make it illegal to perform a specific abortion procedure conducted in the last six months of pregnancy known as a 'partial birth abortion,' except in cases necessary to save the life of the mother?" Figure 4 presents the distribution of responses to this question, which was administered in national surveys four times during six years beginning with 1995. There is a simple but clear pattern in the responses to this question. We see a statistically significant upsurge in support for the ban, from roughly 55 percent in March of 1997 to 64 percent in January of 2000. What explains this trend? First intuitions suggest it may relate to an increase in the number of PBAs actually performed; however the estimated number of procedures performed remained relatively stable, hovering around 18,000 per year, for the six years examined (Herndon et al. 2002). Can this upsurge be linked to other factors?

Table 7 presents a timeline of major government action directed at PBA. Over the timeframe, ban legislation passed twice, in 1996 and 1997, only to be vetoed twice by

President Clinton. The other major governmental event was a Supreme Court case, *Stenberg v Carhart*, which took place during 2000. *Stenberg* will be discussed in more detail below. While these actions were important, there is nothing to suggest they caused the change in public attitudes.

PBA Discourse 1995 – 2000

Tables 8 and 9 chart the usage of the key words – baby and fetus – in major newspapers, television news shows and magazines during the six years in question. For this analysis, all the articles mentioning PBA were downloaded according to source and subjected to a word count using the same dictionary employed in the analysis of the open-ended experimental questions. Examining Table 8 first, we see the total number of keywords and the percentage of that total falling in the baby category for seven papers: the Atlanta Journal-Constitution; Boston Globe; Chicago Tribune; Denver Rocky Mountain News; New York Times; Portland Oregonian and Washington Post. There is a great deal of variance between papers and over time in both measures -- total words and percent baby. The New York Times had achieved the closest balance between the two words choices with 46 percent, while in their sparse coverage the Portland Oregonian had the most at 83 percent; the rest of the papers fell in between these two extremes. Time series analysis was unable to tie either of these measures to government action; however among newspapers there was a trend toward greater use of baby as opposed to fetus over time. As presented in the bottom of the chart, in the first two years, 1995 and 1996 the baby percentage was 49. The usage of baby rose to 64 and 69 percent during the second and third set of years, respectively.

We do not see the same trend of increasing use of baby as an associate of PBA in television and magazines, as shown in table 9. For these venues, the use of baby started high, at 90 percent for 1995 and 1996, fell slightly to 82 percent for the middle two years and then jumped back to 95 percent for the last two years. Again, no time series correlation was uncovered between media coverage and government action. As a point of comparison, however, Table 11 details the use of baby and fetus in congressional rhetoric from 1995 to 2000. With the exception of actual legislation, given in the "bill text" row, Use of baby predominated over fetus in Congress. I believe legal issues preclude the use of these words in legislation. Within the Congressional documents the trend is also toward increasing use of baby over fetus, a jump of ten points from 79 to 88 percent, occurring during the same timeframe as the change in newspaper coverage, between 1995-1996 and 1997-1998, which roughly corresponds to the trend in public opinion toward increasing support for a PBA ban.

Elites and PBA discourse.

The last portion of this paper examines the sources of PBA discourse more closely to determine whether or not we can attribute observed discursive patterns to elite's intentional programming attempts. The Supreme Court represents an ideal venue for this portion of the study. Here competing elites with clearly identifiable political positions leave permanent traces in the public record. Thus far, there has been one case dealing with

PBA, Stenberg v. Carhart. Carhart was a doctor fired for breaking a Nebraska law by performing a PBA procedure. After a lower court ordered his rehiring, the Supreme Court heard the case on appeal, brought by Stenburg, the Nebraska state attorney general acting as petitioner in case; Stenberg took a position against PBA in support of the legal ban. The court ultimately ruled for Carhart.

Table 11 presents a breakdown of three segments of the court's discourse, with the anti-ban respondents arrayed on the left and the pro-ban petitioners set to the right. The first set of rows presents data on the amicus briefs filed by the parties as well as so-called "friends of the court." At the time of filing these friends had to identify with either side in the case. As shown, the pro-ban friends used the word baby twice as often relative to fetus as the anti-ban filers. Further, Stenberg's brief used the word baby almost exclusively, 93 percent of the time. The oral arguments continued this pattern; the respondent's attorney used baby 16 percent of the time while the petitioner's attorney used the word 80 percent of the time. During oral arguments, the justices' questions used baby 60 percent of the time. These data provide good evidence that these elite communicators intentionally attempted to take advantage of the programming effect.

Interestingly the respondents may have succeeded in this effort. In the opinions issued by the court, the majority and concurring opinions as well as the dissenting opinions used the word baby roughly 45 percent of the time. This level of usage was much closer to that of the respondents, the case's winners. The match in percentages in the dissenting opinions may be due to the dissenting justices entering the same "semantic space" as a result of deliberation regardless of their legal views. Of course, the correspondence between the respondents and the justices may just be coincidental.

Discussion

The experimental results clearly show that the substitution of baby for fetus in the stimulus article had a powerful effect, nearly equal, in fact, to the effect of ideology. Is this a fair substitution? Going back the literature on news values (cf. Bennett 2001), we can picture a contest between a reporter and editor, after the reporter submitted a version of the story with baby substituted for fetus. "Clearly," the editor might say, "this word choice has political implications." "But that is exactly the point," the reporter may respond, "there are political implications with any word we could choose." This is the first lesson of these results -- word choice matters. This finding should not be entirely surprising given the literature on question wording effects (Schuman and Presser 1996). Important substitutions, "freedom fighter" for "rebel" or "terrorist" for "martyr," for example, will alter survey response. What I have tried to supply is an understanding of this process based on contemporary understandings of cognition and, more importantly, to relate these kinds of effects to the broader stream of mediated discourse. By giving this phenomenon a name, programming, I hope to change understanding of it from happenstance (cf. Zaller 1992) to an important political effect.

The programming process that relates mediated discourse directly to survey response has critical implications for democracy. The results from the competitive

condition underscore the fact that citizens are more than just passive vessels in the democratic equation. Even with equal attention to two competing associations, at least in this study, the participants clearly adopted one or the other. Arguably, this indicates that citizens can do more than probabilistically choose between competing messages. With sufficient attention, the public discourse created by elites is not accepted uncritically; it may be modified out of proportion to the inputs or existing predispositions. Further, individual judgments are grounded in a discursive process linking government and citizens; thus we could reasonably expect that in more complicated situations the variety of messages in public discourse rather than the sheer proportion would be a critical determinant of citizens' views. Thus, the polity's ability to make the right choices on big questions -- what can be called public reason -- emerges from the crucible of elite discourse as mediated by its interaction with citizens.

Turning to the other results, it seems safe to conclude that participants' open-ended responses provide an imperfect window on the cognitive processes underlying survey response, as Lodge et al. (1989) first discovered. Here, the use of baby in the summary statements played an important role in subsequent judgments; however, we also know that there were participants who were affected by the manipulation, without using baby or its cognates in any open-ended question. Further, participants were able to partially deflect associations; the respondents in the fetus condition seemed to consciously reject the use of baby in their position statements when arriving at a final judgment concerning banning partial-birth abortion.

In short, the experimental results and the content analysis suggest there is no reason to reject the notion of programming. These results should seriously undermine support for the top of the head model. When faced with competing associations participants were able to select, whether consciously or unconsciously, between them. Further, the actual discourse and public opinion surrounding partial birth abortion followed the expected pattern and broadly corroborated the experimental findings. The evidence also indicates that at least in the Supreme Court case reported here, that elites attempt to take advantage of this effect. What remains, of courser, is to investigate this phenomenon more closely in a variety of other contexts.

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Table 1. Associations Triggered by the Words “Fetus” and “Baby.”

“Fetus"	“Baby”
baby	fetus
birth	
born	
mother	
pregnant	
abortion	adoption
caesarean	age
elders	bell
embryo	biological
placenta	boomer
prenatal	boy
procedure	breastfeeding
reproductive	children
section	early
trimester	family
unborn	father
uterus	generation
viable	home
woman	hospital
womb	older
	parent
	son

Source: Lexical Freenet

Table 2. Mean Support for Making Partial Birth Abortion Illegal.[a]

Condition	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
Fetus	3.96	2.15	50
Competitive	4.83	1.79	49
Baby	4.84	1.88	51
Control	4.91	1.66	35

a. Seven point scale with a midpoint of 4.

Table 3. Mean Mentions of Fetus and Baby in Open-Ended Questions by Condition.

	Question: Summary		Position	
Condition:	Fetus	Baby	Fetus	Baby
Fetus	.86	.42	.20	.53
Competitive	1.00	.78	.33	.35
Baby	.39	1.37	.16	.53
Control			.11	.42

Table 4. Description of Predictors used in Analysis.

Predictors	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
Conservative	-1	1	-.28	.77	187
Mentions Baby Summary	0	6	.69	1.11	187
Mentions Fetus Summary	0	6	.60	.99	152
Mentions Baby Position	0	3	.45	.73	152
Mentions Fetus Position	0	3	.20	.47	187
Summary Mentions Index	-6	6	.09	1.57	187
Position Mentions Index	-2	3	.26	.81	187

Table 5. Correlations Among Predictors of Support for PBA Ban.

	Conservative	Baby Summary	Fetus Summary	Baby Position	Fetus Position	Sum. Index
Baby Sum.	-.17					
Fetus Sum.	-.13	-.10				
Baby Pos.	.07	.21	-.03			
Fetus Pos.	-.06	.06	.42	.13		
Sum. Index	-.04	.77	-.70	.16	-.22	
Pos. Index	.10	.15	-.26	.82	-.45	.28

Table 6. Predicting Support for Making Partial Birth Abortion Illegal.[a]

Predictor	Model: 1		2	
Mixed or Baby Condition	.80	***	.78	***
	(.31)		(.31)	
Conservative	.91	***	.85	***
	(.18)		(.17)	
Mentions Baby Summary	.32	***		
	(.12)			
Mentions Fetus Summary	-.06			
	(.15)			
Mentions Baby Position	-.07			
	(.19)			
Mentions Fetus Position	.30			
	(.32)			
Summary Mentions Index			.20	**
			(.09)	
Position Mentions Index			-.15	
			(.17)	
(Constant)	4.08		4.31	
Adj. R sqrd.	.17		.16	
N	148		148	

a. Seven point scale with a midpoint of 4.
Entries are multiple regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.
Asterisks indicate significance. *** p<.01, ** p<.05. Control respondents excluded

Table 7. Major Government Action Concerning PBA 1995 to 2000

1995 6/14 – Rep. Canady (R-FL) introduces PBA Ban Act of 1995, H.R. 1833
6/14 – H.R. 1833 referred to House Judiciary committee
6/16 – Sen. Smith (R-NH) introduces PBA Ban Act of 1995, S. 939
6/21 – House Constitution subcommittee approves H.R. 1833
11/1 – House passes the H.R. 1833, 288 to 139
11/2 – H.R. 1833 introduced in Senate
11/8 – H.R. 1833 referred to Senate Judiciary committee
11/17 – Senate Judiciary committee concludes hearings
12/7 – Senate passes the S. 939, 54 to 44

1996 3/27 – House agrees to Senate amendments
4/10 – President Clinton vetoes PBA Ban Act of 1995
9/19 – House overrides Presidential veto
9/26 – Senate fails to override Presidential veto

1997 1/21 – Sen. Santorum (R-PA) introduces PBA Ban Act of 1997, S. 2645
1/21 – S. 2645 referred to Senate Judiciary committee
3/19 – Rep. Solomon (R-NY) introduces PBA Ban Act of 1997, H.R. 1122
3/19 – H.R. 1122 refereed to House Judiciary committee
3/20 – House passes H.R. 1122, 295 to 136
5/21 – Senate passes S. 2645, 64 to 36
12/10 – President Clinton vetoes the PBA Ban Act of 1997

1998 7/23 – House overrides Presidential veto
9/18 – Senate fails to override Presidential veto

1999 12/5 – Sen. Santorum (R-PA) introduces PBA Ban Act of 1999, S. 1692
12/21 – Senate passes S. 1692, 63 to 34

2000 2/15 – Rep. Canady (R-FL) introduces PBA Ban Act of 2000, H.R. 3660
2/15 – H.R. 3660 referred to House Judiciary committee
4/5 – H.R. 3660 passed in House, 287 to 141
4/25 – *Stenberg v. Carhart* argued
6/28 – *Stenberg v. Carhart* ruling

Table 8. Use of Baby and Fetus in Major Paper PBA Rhetoric 1995 to 2000

Half Year:	1995		1996		1997		1998		1999		2000		**Total**
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	
Atl. Journal													
Total Words	0	26	10	80	91	17	12	39	45	0	6	10	**336**
% Baby		84	60	73	54	58	75	79	93		16	100	**71**
Bos. Globe													
Total Words	22	26	28	71	141	19	30	78	45	23	46	23	**552**
% Baby	18	46	85	64	34	68	76	79	66	56	39	73	**56**
Chi. Tribune													
Total Words	2	47	64	84	156	14	78	53	32	34	75	46	**724**
% Baby	0	38	65	70	51	64	73	73	71	52	41	80	**61**
Den. RMN													
Total Words	0	36	83	58	90	9	26	142	30	4	4	32	**514**
% Baby		61	92	87	62	22	84	76	46	75	100	93	**75**
NY Times													
Total Words	8	92	53	388	147	54	106	1	0	0	128	144	**1121**
% Baby	12	32	45	24	33	48	78	100			54	96	**46**
Por. Oreg.													
Total Words	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	5	3	0	**61**
% Baby									88	60	66		**83**
Wash. Post													
Total Words	3	38	60	246	174	29	170	275	71	47	99	63	**1068**
% Baby	0	47	55	50	54	65	71	90	80	57	63	82	**73**

	1995/1996	1997/1998	1999/2000
Total:			
Total Words	1525	1951	1051
% Baby	49	64	69

Table 9. Use of Baby and Fetus in TV News and Magazine PBA Rhetoric 1995 to 2000

Half Year:	1995		1996		1997		1998		1999		2000		**Total**
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	
ABC													
Nightline													
Total Words	0	28	0	0	26	0	5	0	0	0	1	0	**60**
% Baby		86			35		100				100		**65**
This Week													
Total Words	0	21	24	21	25	30	1	3	12	0	47	54	**238**
% Baby		90	83	100	100	90	100	100	100		100	91	**94**
World News													
Total Words	6	7	10	5	11	1	4	0	0	0	4	4	**52**
% Baby	67	43	100	80	27	100	50				100	100	**60**
CNN													
Crossfire													
Total Words	0	0	0	3	85	4	6	35	15	21	39	21	**229**
% Baby				100	94	100	100	100	100	100	79	100	**94**
Inside Pol.													
Total Words	0	2	22	16	33	25	38	19	32	32	106	64	**389**
% Baby		100	100	100	56	84	95	95	100	97	100	98	**94**
Newsweek													
Total Words	0	22	4	3	22	0	11	4	0	21	3	74	**164**
% Baby		86	100	0	68		36	75		76	100	100	**84**
Time													
Total Words	0	6	5	168	16	4	4	4	4	0	3	22	**236**
% Baby		50	100	97	93	50	100	75	100		100	81	**93**

Total:	1995/1996	1997/1998	1999/2000
Total Words	373	416	579
% Baby	90	82	95

Table 10. Use of Baby and Fetus in Congressional PBA Rhetoric 1995 to 2000

Half Year:	1995		1996		1997		1998		1999		2000		**Total**
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	
Bill Text													
Total Words	8	24	4	0	45	9	0	0	9	6	32	0	**137**
% Baby	0	0	0	0	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**9**
Committee Reports													
Total Words	0	155	0	0	243	0	100	117	94	29	0	203	**941**
% Baby	0	59	0	0	68	0	98	100	100	93	0	87	**82**
Cong. Record													
Total Words	222	2331	382	1726	2063	326	589	1380	615	2480	436	480	**13030**
% Baby	90	76	94	88	87	85	99	90	96	85	88	95	**85**

Total:	1995/1996	1997/1998	1999/2000
Total Words	4852	4872	4384
% Baby	79	88	87

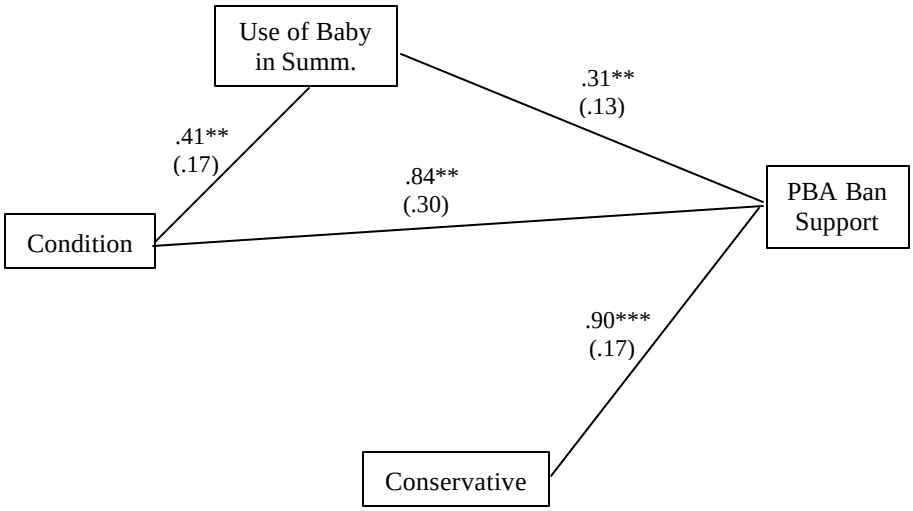
Table 11. Word Choice in Elite PBA Discourse: Supreme Court (Stenberg v. Carhart)

Ban Position:	Against		For	
Amicus Briefs:	Resp.	Friend	Friend	Petition.
Total Words	141	579	1654	289
% Baby	38	40	76	93

Oral Arguments:	Resp.	Quest.	Petition.
Total Words	24	41	5
% Baby	16	63	80

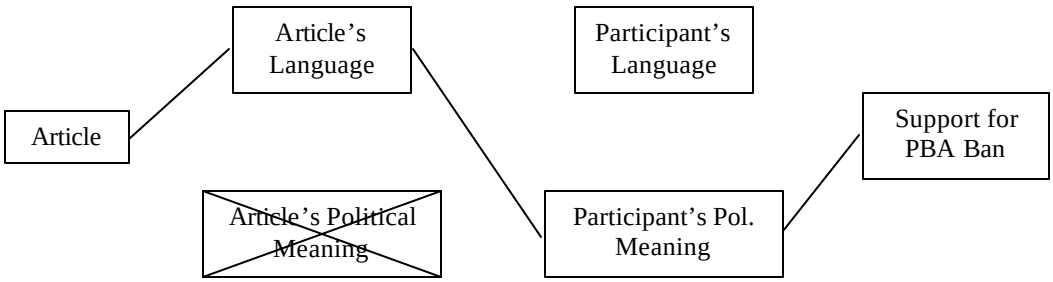
Opinions:	Maj./Conc.	Dissenting
Total Words	116	172
% Baby	44	45

Figure 1. Confirmatory Structural Equation Model Predicting PBA Ban Support



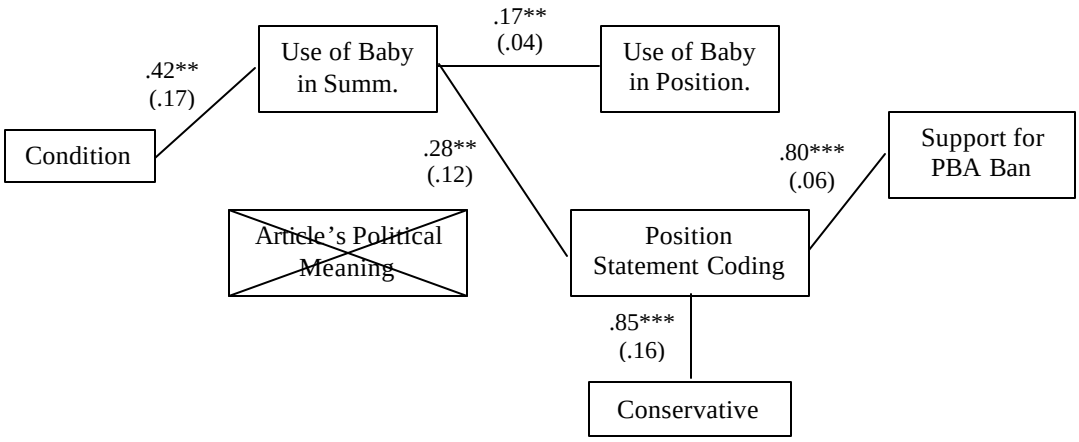
Probability value for the chi-square statistic = .08; Bentler-Bonett normed fit index = .95. Entries are unstandardized coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; asterisks indicate approximate significance levels, *** = $p < .01$, ** = $p < .05$; non-significant relationships and error covariation omitted; arrows represent paths of influence.

Figure 2. Conceptual Model of On-line Cognitive Processing in this Context



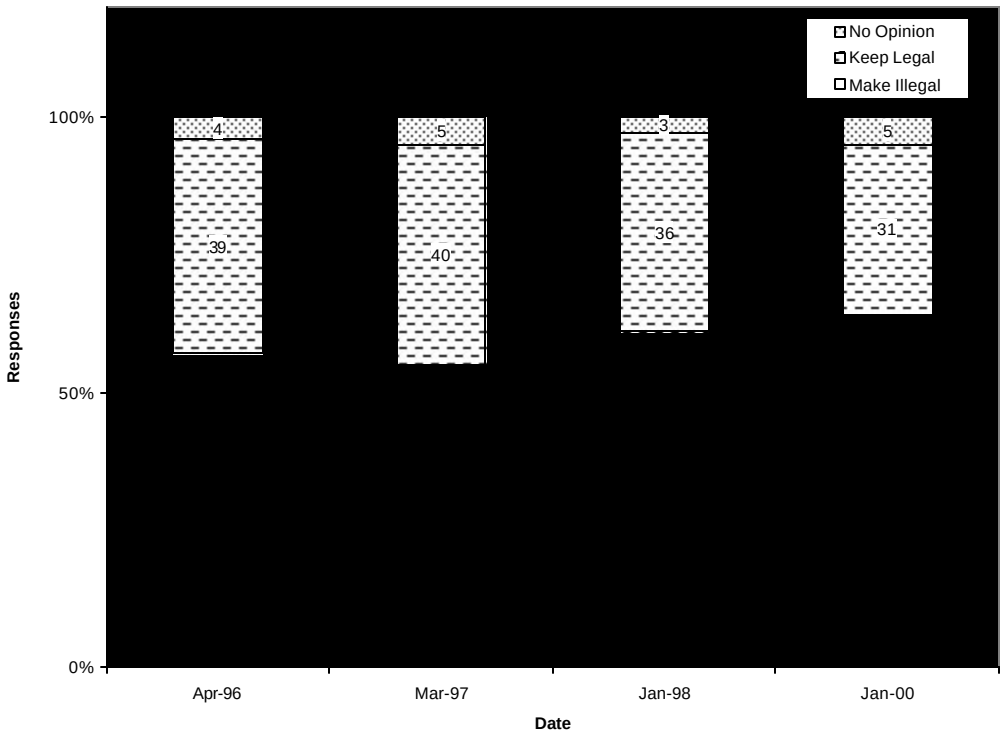
Arrows represent predicted paths of influence.

Figure 3. Confirmatory Structural Equation Model of Actual Processing



Probability value for the chi-square statistic = .15; Bentler-Bonett normed fit index = .96. Entries are unstandardized coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; asterisks indicate approximate significance levels, *** = p < .01, ** = p < .05; non-significant relationships and error covariation omitted; arrows represent paths of influence.

Figure 4. Public Opinion on Partial Birth Abortion



Source: CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll. N=1,027 adults nationwide. MoE ± 3. Question Wording: "[D]o you favor or oppose the following proposal: A law which would make it illegal to perform a specific abortion procedure conducted in the last six months of pregnancy known as a 'partial birth abortion,' except in cases necessary to save the life of the mother?"

Appendix: Stimulus and Question Wording

Congress, Nation Still Divided Over Partial-Birth Abortion
By DAVID BROWN
WASHINGTON DC, February 27—
Congress passed a bill in its last session that would have banned the abortion technique, which is known technically as "intact dilation and evacuation" (D&E). The debate was graphic and contentious, with some longtime abortion rights supporters in Congress voting to ban the procedure. President Clinton vetoed the bill, saying the measure failed to include exceptions to protect the health of the women involved. Officials expect that bills to ban it will be reintroduced soon.
Intact D&E is used by some physicians to remove a relatively large /fetus/baby/ from the womb in one piece. The feet of the /fetus/baby/ are removed first, then the brain is removed by puncturing the back of the head. By doing so, the /fetus/baby/' skull is partially collapsed for easy removal through the cervix, the narrowest part of the birth canal
Often the /fetus/baby/ is dead before the procedure begins, although occasionally it is alive. Sometimes the procedure is done at a stage in gestation when the /fetus/baby/ has no chance of surviving outside the womb were it born alive. Sometimes it is done later, when the chance of survival, albeit small, exists. The moment in development when that transition to "viability" occurs is not fixed. However, after about 25 weeks of gestation, many premature /fetuses/babies/ survive.
The most common alternative to intact D&E is "dismemberment dilation and evacuation," in which the /fetus/baby/ is removed in pieces. Some physicians believe the intact technique is safer because it is less physically traumatic to the pregnant woman.
There are no statistics on the number of intact D&E procedures performed on /fetuses/babies/ in the United States each year. Reporting by several newspapers suggests that at least 2,000 are performed. That research also suggests that at least half, and possibly the great majority, of intact D&Es are done on healthy /fetuses/babies/ carried by women who are themselves healthy. That last impression contrasts with statements made by most pro-choice organizations and their spokesmen. In general, they say that in most cases the procedure is done only when the /fetuses/babies/ have severe abnormalities, or when the woman is so ill that ending her pregnancy is imperative.
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Partial-Birth Abortion Debate
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The mixed reaction to the bill can be found in the most surprising of sources. For example, a representative from the National Coalition of Abortion Providers, stated in an interview that when the bill to ban intact D&Es on /fetuses /babies/ was initially introduced, he called many abortion clinics in his organization and asked how common the procedure was and on what condition of babies it was generally performed.

Although he is a staunch abortion rights supporter and usually aligns with the views represented by the pro-choice party line, he was surprised to learn that the procedure is typically performed on healthy /fetuses/babies/ rather than malformed /fetuses/babies/, as pro-choice backers had previously believed.

These findings have affected his response to the bill. "I felt very uneasy about it, knowing what I knew...I just decided not to interject myself into the debate," he said.

Pro-choice and anti-abortion groups will continue to face-off over the highly debated issue of D&E abortion procedures, and the legality of aborting not only malformed but also healthy /fetuses/babies/ late in pregnancy. One anti-abortion supporter reemphasized the party line: "This is murder, plain and simple."

Question Wording

Instructions: In the following survey you will read articles taken from actual newspapers dealing with issues of national political importance. After reading the article, you will be asked to answer some questions. All of your answers will be completely anonymous and treated confidentially. For each question, please check the best answer or type your response in the allotted space.

In the space provided, please summarize the story on partial birth abortion you have just read …

In the space provided, please describe and briefly explain your position on legalizing partial birth abortion …

On a scale of 1 to 7, indicate your support or opposition for partial birth abortion where a one indicates strong support for legalizing partial birth abortion and a seven indicates strong opposition legalizing to partial birth abortion.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Opposed to Legalizing Partial Birth Abortion			Neither			Opposed to Legalizing Partial Birth Abortion