

Name-Induced Race Effects on Political Efficacy Anchoring Vignette Questions

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Research Questions and Motivations

Political efficacy is an important construct in understanding political behavior and voting patterns. Self-assessment political efficacy questions have been included in the American National Election Studies (ANES) for decades, including both internal efficacy questions¹ and external efficacy questions². One commonly used question to measure external efficacy is “How much say / Have no say about what government does” (Hopkins & King, 2010).

Reporting Heterogeneity

The subjective self-assessment political efficacy questions, as the “How much say” question used in ANES, are found can be subjective to errors (e.g., Hopkins & King, 2010; King, Murray, Salomon, & Tandon, 2004). In an ideal world, one would assume that respondents answer these questions only based on their actual attitudes. This, however, is rarely the case in real situations. Respondents give their answers not only based on their true attitudes but also on the ways they view or use the response scales. For example, “a great deal influence on what government does” may mean differently for people from different race groups. This phenomenon, also known as “reporting heterogeneity” (e.g., Bago d’Uva, Lindeboom,

¹ It measures “beliefs about one's own competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics”(Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991)

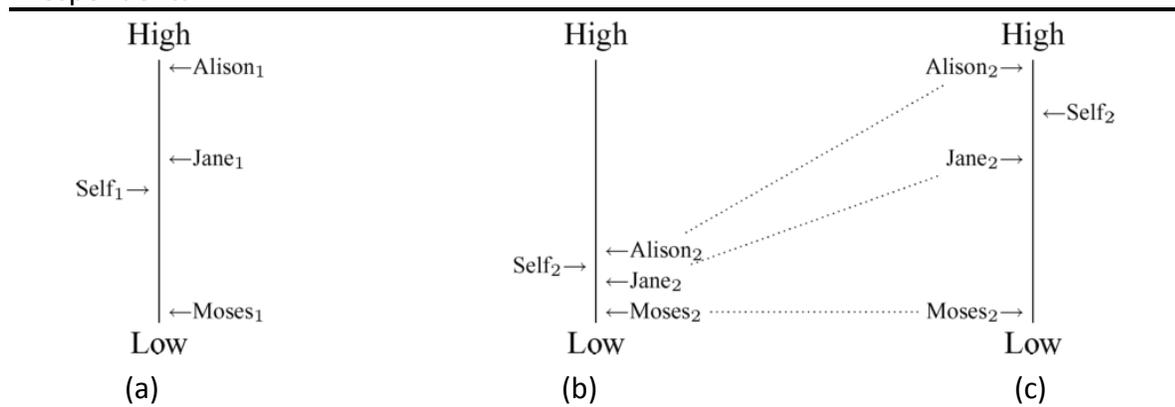
² It measures “beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizen demand” (Niemi et al., 1991)

O'Donnell, & van Doorslaer, 2011; Grol-Prokopczyk, 2014), can lead to incomparability among different sub-groups of a population (e.g., age, gender, racial and cultural groups).

Anchoring Vignette Method and Assumptions

Anchoring vignette is proposed as a method to correct for reporting heterogeneity in these situations (King et al., 2004), where respondents are asked to assess a few vignette items that describe hypothetical persons' situations related to the domain of interest following a self-assessment question. See *Question Contents and Wordings* section for an example. By having respondents assess the same set of vignette items and assuming they will use the response scales in the same way as in self-assessment, this method allows researchers to compare where respondent's self-assessment stands relative to their assessments on vignette persons. This approach, therefore, enables the correction for the differential response scale usage across individuals and sub-population groups. A simple illustration of such correction is presented in Figure 1, which is adopted from King et al. (2004).

Figure 1. Comparing Survey Response to Self-Assessment Questions Across Two Respondents



Note: A simple comparison of self-reports show that Respondent 1 in (a), are at a higher level for self-assessment question than Respondent 2 in (b). For (c), Respondent 2's reported scale is adjusted to match respondent 1's scale based on their responses to the

vignette questions. Their reports thus become comparable (in (a) and (c)), which reveals that Respondent 2 has a higher actual level than Respondent 1 (King et al., 2004).

Anchoring vignette method has been applied to many fields including health (King et al., 2004; Salomon, Tandon, & Murray, 2004), health system responsiveness (Rice, Robone, & Smith, 2011; Valentine et al., 2003), work disability (Kapteyn, Smith, & Van Soest, 2007), life and job satisfaction (Angelini, Cavapozzi, Corazzini, & Paccagnella, 2014; Kristensen & Johansson, 2008), and also political efficacy (Hopkins & King, 2010; King et al., 2004). King et al. (2004) evaluated political efficacy question “How much say do you have in getting the government to address issues that interest you?” using data from China and Mexico. They found that although the raw responses show higher level of political efficacy in China, Chinese actually have lower levels of government efficacy. The reason they report higher levels of say in government is because their thresholds / standards for the response categories are lower than Mexico (King et al., 2004; King & Wand, 2007).

The successful application of anchoring vignettes relies on two key assumptions (King et al., 2004; Peracchi & Rossetti, 2011, 2013). One is *response consistency (RC)*, in which “each individual uses the response categories for a particular survey question in the same way when providing a self-assessment as when assessing each of the hypothetical people in the vignettes” (King et al., 2004). The second assumption is *vignette equivalence (VE)*, which means that “the level of the variable represented in any one vignette is perceived by all respondents in the same way and on the same unidimensional scale, apart from random measurement error” (King et al., 2004).

Goal of this study

To better achieve RC assumption, respondents are often asked to rate the vignette items as if rating for someone with same background as themselves. However, many factors can lead to a deviation from such instructions, such as neglecting the introduction of vignette section (Grol-Prokopczyk, 2014) and the race effect of the vignette person. Although vignette races are not explicitly included in the vignette question wording, it can be signified by names of the vignette persons. As mentioned by Martinez (2012), “Because of social constructs, names carry various elements of ethnic expectancy and bias that can lead to prejudice”. Since respondents from different racial groups vary in their political behaviors and perceptions (Bobo, Gilliam, & Franklin, 1990), if respondent from one race group perceives the vignette person as someone from a different racial group based on the name, then the respondent may use different standard for political efficacy, leading to violation of RC. To evaluate whether the race indicated by vignette names can have an influence on RC achievement and the use of vignette methodology, this study aims to evaluate the name-induced racial effects of vignette characters for the “Have no say about what government does” question in ANES, and how these vignette racial characters interact with respondents’ races.

In the 2012 American National Election Studies (ANES), two versions of this question have been provided. One is the standard version used many years in ANES, which uses an “agree-disagree” scale – “Agree strongly, Agree somewhat, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree somewhat, Disagree strongly”. Another is an item-specific scale ranging from a great deal to not at all, for the revised version of this question “*how much can people like you affect what the government does?*”. Among the two scales, the item-specific scale is recommended

due to its reduction in acquiescent response styles (Liu, Lee, & Conrad, 2015). The experiment in this proposal focuses on the item-specific scale of this question.

Design of Experiments

This study proposes a two-factor factorial design, where respondents from different racial groups will be randomly assigned to three vignette race conditions: Black, Hispanic or White vignette names. The following table illustrates the design. The names indicating each racial group, listed in Table 2, are selected based on previous literature on ‘whitest’ and ‘blackest’ names and popular names by race on website (Levitt & Dubner, 2006). See next section *Question Contents and Wordings* for the exact question wordings.

Table 1. Experimental Design

		Race Indicated by Vignette Name		
		Black	Hispanic	White
Respondent	Black			
	Hispanic			
	White			

Question Contents and Wordings

The self-assessment question will be adopted from the 2012 ANES study.

How much can people like you affect what the government does?

1. *A great deal*
2. *A lot*
3. *A moderate amount*
4. *A little*
5. *Not at all*

The proposed corresponding vignette questions will be adapted from (King et al., 2004) and the political efficacy vignette question example on gking.harvard.edu. The introduction of

vignette section will be adapted from World Health Survey (2003) (Üstün, Chatterji, Mechbal, & Murray, 2003).

Here are some brief descriptions of people and their situations. Read these descriptions and answer how much these people can affect in getting their government to address issues of importance to each person.

1. *[Black/Hispanic/White Name] lacks clean drinking water. She / He and her/his neighbors are supporting an opposition candidate in the forthcoming elections that has promised to address the issue. It appears that so many people in her area feel the same way that the opposition candidate will defeat the incumbent representative.*
2. *[Black/Hispanic/White Name] lacks clean drinking water. She / He and her/his neighbors are drawing attention to the issue by collecting signatures on a petition. They plan to present the petition to each of the political parties before the upcoming election.*
3. *[Black/Hispanic/White Name] lacks clean drinking water. There is a group of local leaders who could do something about the problem, but they have said that industrial development is the most important policy right now instead of clean water.*
4. *[Black/Hispanic/White Name] lacks clean drinking water because the government is pursuing an industrial development plan. In the campaign for an upcoming election, an opposition party has promised to address the issue, but she/he feels it would be futile to vote for the opposition since the government is certain to win.*
5. *[Black/Hispanic/White Name] lacks clean drinking water. She / He would like to change this, but she / he can't vote, and feels that no one in the government cares about this issue. So she/he suffers in silence, hoping something will be done in the future.*

Table 2. Names used as fills in the vignette questions

Black		Hispanic		White	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Tyrone	Imani	Sebastián	Luciana	Jake	Molly
DeAndre	Ebony	Matías	Gabriela	Connor	Amy
Malik	Shanice	Emiliano	Valeria	Tanner	Claire
Trevon	Aaliyah	Luciano	Isabella	Luke	Emily
Darnell	Tierra	Eduardo	Daniela	Garrett	Katie

Note: the Black and White names are selected from a list in Levitt & Dubner (2006), which were cited in an ABC news article titled “Top 20 'Whitest' and 'Blackest' Names” (abcNEWS, 2006). Hispanic first names are selected from lists of most popular Hispanic baby names on Babycenter website.

To better achieve RC and VE assumptions, as suggested by King et al. (2004), the same questions in the self-assessment will be asked for respondents to rate the hypothesized

individuals. For example, the question asked for the first vignette will be “*How much can people like [Black/Hispanic/White Name] affect what the government does?*”. The response scales will remain the same as self-assessment, ranging from “a great deal” to “not at all”. To better achieve RC, the gender of vignette person will be matched to respondents’ gender.

Analysis Plan

The first part of analysis will focus on respondents from the same racial groups. For each respondent racial group, response distributions for the three vignette racial groups will be compared. Chi-square test will be conducted. Such analysis will help researchers to evaluate whether the name-induced racial groups of the vignette items have effects on respondents’ rating of the vignette items. If respondents rate same-race vignette (e.g., Black respondents rate for Black hypothetical vignette person) differently from rating for opposite-race vignettes (e.g., Black respondents rate for Hispanic or White hypothetical vignette persons), it is likely that the RC assumption is violated in the opposite race - rating conditions. The testing of RC assumptions will then be conducted for the three conditions in each respondent racial group respectively, following Van Soest, Delaney, Harmon, Kapteyn, & Smith (2011) and Hirve et al., (2013). In addition to the assumption-testing, the HOPIT models will also be conducted for each of the three conditions for each respondent racial group. The validity of the models will be evaluated to find out whether race-matching has higher model validity or not comparing with opposite race.

The second part of analysis will focus on respondents from different racial groups rating for each vignette racial condition (i.e., whether Black, Hispanic and White respondents rate the

Black vignette in the same way). This analysis aims to test that when presented with the same vignette person indicating a certain racial group, whether respondents with different racial groups view it in the same way (VE assumption). For each vignette racial condition, response distributions for the three respondent racial groups will be compared. Chi-square test will be conducted. Vignette equivalence assumption will be tested using a hierarchical ordered probit (HOPIT) model to test for equality of perceived vignette locations, following Hirve et al., (2013).

Broder Impact

Self-assessed political efficacy is commonly used in surveys including ANES to better understand people's political behavior. Such questions, however, can be subjective to reporting heterogeneity, leading to incomparability across different groups. Anchoring vignette provides a convenient tool to correct for reporting heterogeneity in self-assessed political efficacy questions. However, as suggested by previous literature (King et al., 2004; King & Wand, 2007), anchoring vignette needs to be designed carefully in order to achieve the measurement assumptions – RC and VE. This study will be the first to evaluate whether there is any name-induced race effect in vignette character descriptions for political efficacy questions. The result of this study will sensitize researchers about the potential sources of measurement errors in anchoring vignettes themselves, and help with future design and use of anchoring vignette questions.

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