

Nick Pilkington  
Master's Thesis  
First Reader: Dr. M. Meffert  
Second Reader: Dr. R. Tromble  
Student Number: 1234854

# **Framing Welfare: The Effects of Variations in Newspaper Article Framing on Attitudes to Welfare in Britain**



# Universiteit Leiden

## Contents:

<u>Introduction</u> .....	1
<u>Literature Review</u> .....	3
Media Influence.....	4
Framing.....	5
Previous Framing Research.....	7
Framing and Priming.....	9
Specifics of the Study.....	10
The Effects of Specific Phrases.....	11
Justification of the Study.....	13
<u>Methodology</u> .....	15
Sample.....	16
Stimulus Article.....	17
Manipulation.....	18
Controls.....	21
Sampling Procedure.....	22
<u>Results</u> .....	23
Sample Description.....	23
Hypothesis One.....	25
Hypotheses Two and Three.....	30
Electoral Significance.....	32
Why did the Manipulation not have the Expected Effect.....	33
<u>Discussion</u> .....	35
<u>Bibliography</u> .....	39
<u>Appendix 1: Stimulus Material</u> .....	45
<u>Apendix 2: Questionnaire</u> .....	48

## Abstract

In recent years, there have been a number of journalistic accounts of an increase in the demonization of the working class in Britain, with people who claim state benefit payments apparently bearing the brunt of this media assault. This study aims to look into the effects that negative portrayals of those receiving government payments has on attitudes to government welfare policy. The theoretical framework for this piece is based on *framing*, specifically thematic, equivalency frames. In order to investigate this, an experiment was employed in which a sample of undergraduate students were presented with one of five versions of an article followed by a survey regarding welfare policy. This allowed a comparison between the answers given by participants that received different versions of the article. The results of this study are largely inconclusive, suggesting that framing effects are not present in a manipulation so subtle.

## Introduction

Since the financial crisis in 2008 there has been a lot of emphasis on austerity and belt-tightening towards public spending in the UK. Much of the spotlight has fallen on welfare, and how generous the state's support for the poor is and should be. Particular attention here seems to have been directed towards those either living off the state fraudulently or otherwise those who are apparently too lazy to look for work, instead free-riding off the hard work of others. It has been asserted that this is an issue that has been blown out of all proportion (Jones, 2011) as this message has come to serve political goals, distracting attention away from the wrongdoings of big business and the financial sector, and directing it towards those at the bottom with no defence for themselves (Allen and Savigny, 2012).

According to Garthwaite, this has led to an increase in the use of terms such as “culture of worklessness”, “dependency culture”, “workshy” and “unwilling”, creating the impression that there is an epidemic of scrounging in the country at the taxpayer's expense (2011, p.370). This is apparently portrayed as an easy way out which is open to those looking to shirk their responsibility, whilst the plight of those that are reliant on such benefits goes ignored (de Wolfe, 2012). Some might argue that this is nothing new, for example, Barnett *et al* were talking of the emphasis on individual responsibility and victim blaming in a way that appeals to public prejudices in 2007, before the crisis (2007, pp.297-298). However, it has been asserted that this has increased since, as it serves the purposes of the government's austerity programme (Jones, 2011). This apparent increase in news coverage of the issue has coincided with a hardening of attitudes towards welfare payments, as, according to the

Social Attitudes Survey, the number of people who believe that the government should spend more on benefits has fallen from 35 percent before the crisis in 2008 to 28 percent in 2012 (Rogers, 2012).

This study seeks to examine whether this apparent increase in the use of such terms in the media might influence public opinion. Specifically it has employed an experiment to investigate how thematic framing influences survey responses. The research question will be as follows:

*How do subtle changes to the thematic framing of those living off payments from the state influence individuals' views on welfare policy in Britain?*

This experiment was carried out using British undergraduate physics students from Salford University. The subjects were provided with a short provocative section of a newspaper article, followed by a series of questions. These questions not only related to welfare policy however, but also look into the effects this might have on wider political views, in particular how the respondents are likely to vote. This is important, as it will also give some indication, not only of how framing influences political opinions, but also whether it has an impact electorally.

The results of this survey will show that this subtle manipulation of the framing of an article does not have a significant influence on survey responses. Therefore, this calls into question whether framing has an effect on participants when the manipulation is subtle, as in this experiment. This extends to the electoral consequences of the manipulation, as there was little effect here.

## Literature Review

Central to any study of framing effects is the assumption that the media has an active role in influencing the public's political opinions. Such ideas have a long history, and in many ways are as old as the mass media itself. A lot of work on the influence of the media comes from a leftist perspective, beginning with Marx and Engels, who saw the ruling class, not only owning the means of material production, but also the means of mental production, with those who lack these means subject to this bourgeois influence (2006, p.9). Such ideas have been passed through the major thinkers in the Marxist tradition, and developed by theorists such as Gramsci, seeing the press as "the most dynamic part of [the] ideological structure" (2006, p.16), and Althusser characterising the news media as the communications part of the ideological apparatuses of the state (2006). This has been carried through the Frankfurt school with Horkheimer and Adorno (2006), as well as Habermas, who observed the prevalence of special interests in the production of news (1991; 2006). More recently, Herman and Chomsky have taken up a similar position (1988). Herman and Chomsky challenge what they assert is the widely held view of the American press, which assumes that it represents and cantankerous media that works to hold those in government to account. They assert that, despite some admirable aspirations, this is not the case, and instead suggest a propaganda model where the "societal purpose" of the media is "to inculcate and defend the economic, social, and political agenda of privileged groups that dominate the domestic society and the state" (1988, p.289).

The link between such theory and this study comes through the likes of Allen and Savigny (2012) who assert that the media is complicit in shifting focus away from the wrongdoings of bankers and towards the defenceless poor. Barnett *et al* found evidence to this effect in New Zealand, finding that there was little input from poor

people themselves in stories that concern them (2007). This is also acknowledged by Hodgetts and Hodgetts with regards to homeless people, as they assert that even if the homeless were to find a voice, they would not be able to control how they are portrayed and would still be required to comply with the expectations of more powerful groups and actors (2006). If this is indeed the case, this adds a particular importance to framing, as it seems that it is only those in dominant positions who are able to have any influence on the framing of a story. Wettstein (2012) believes that this is the reality, and that framing is a political tool used by powerful actors in order to emphasise certain aspects of a story. He also believes this to be an effective tactic, as he found that the audience adopts the frames used in the media.

### Media Influence

Habel (2012) cites evidence to suggest that the media is central to how we form our political opinions and preferences. Here it is suggested that, in the US, candidates endorsed by editorial pages can enjoy a one to five percent increase in vote share, whilst in the UK newspaper endorsements have been estimated by Ladd and Lenz to change the preferences of ten to 25 percent of the electorate (cited in Habel, 2012, p.258). Central to this influence is the media's role as a mediator (Hall, 1978; Iyengar, 1990). Hall found that, despite no increase in the crime, in the late 1970s the public in Britain took the impression of an epidemic of mugging in the country due to the increase in media attention that followed a high profile case (Hall, 1978). As Barnet *et al* observe that, however widespread poverty in society, there will always be a large number of people whose only meaningful contact with it is through the media (2007), meaning that the media has the potential to define many people's impression of those in such a situation. It is also asserted that it is through the media that people make sense of their own situations (Barnet *et al*, 2007, p.297), and therefore emotions

might be stirred up in the working poor if they perceive others as taking a free ride at their expense.

This influence is only likely to increase if we consider that people are often seen as having poor, weak, political opinions, as much of the literature asserts. Converse is a central figure to such thought, as his classic work argued just this (1964). Converse has since questioned some of the interpretations of this work, but maintains a dim view of citizen competence in this area (2009). Chong and Druckman (2007, p.103) see good quality political opinions as being stable, consistent, informed and connected to abstract principles and values. This, they claim, is not how the opinions of most people in society can be described. West agrees, finding that people in general do not have coherent views towards the role of the family or the state (1984, p.442), key factors in this study.

### Framing

The central theoretical framework of this study is based on framing. Goffman identified a “frame” as the “central organising idea or storyline that provides meaning” (1974, p.64), as framing represents the organisation of experience (1974, p.11). What this means to the news media is that the context and presentation of a story may alter its interpretation (Simon and Jerit, 2007, p.256). Druckman demonstrates that there are two distinct uses of the terms “frame” and “framing”. The first of these refers to the words, images, phrases, and presentation used by the speaker himself, what might be called “frames of communication” (2001, p.287). The second usage refers to an individual’s understanding of a given situation – “frames of thought” (*ibid*). However, it seems that these different usages are not so distinct from one another, and that the first of these impacts upon the second. Therefore, for the use of this study, “frames of communication” will be the independent variable that is



manipulated, whilst the effect this has on “frames of thought” will be measured, the dependent variable (Scheufele, 2000, p.306). The idea being that small changes in the presentation of an issue can produce large changes in opinion (Chong and Druckman, 2007), and therefore, the way an issue is “framed” profoundly influences outcomes (Iyengar, 1991, p.11).

The theory behind framing states that people make judgements within certain frames of reference in order to help them deal with the complexity of the political world, and that news media can help to provide these frames by where it places emphasis (Wettstein, 2012). Iyengar states that decisions involve a number of factors beyond our cognitive abilities and not all of these can be considered at once. Therefore, what is taken into account and what is ignored depends on accessibility and ease with which these issues come to mind, this is where framing can have an impact (1990, p.21). Chong and Druckman extend this, as they illustrate the many dimensions that might be considered when thinking of the rights of hate groups. In this case, a person might be able to draw on considerations of public safety or rights of free speech, as well as other potential considerations which might lead to diverging opinions on the matter. Each consideration can be said to represent a “frame of thought”, therefore, if free speech is what dominates an individual’s considerations then their frame of thought is free speech (Chong and Druckman, 2007). It is these frames of thought that framing in the media can apparently influence, as the way in which a news story is presented and what aspects are emphasised can impact upon how we consider the issues at hand, and subsequently what is considered to be important when coming to form an opinion or make a decision (Wettstein, 2012).

### Previous Framing Research

There is a wealth of previous work which has been carried out regarding the effects of framing on how we make decisions and form our opinions. For instance Iyengar points out that physicians and patients are less attracted to surgery as a treatment when it is presented in terms of mortality rather than survival rates (1990, p.20; 1991, p.12). More specific to the interests of this study, he also cites research by Smith, which found that more generous welfare is favoured by more respondents when it is framed as helping “poor people” and not “people on welfare” (1990, p.20). This is used to illustrate that the decisions people make and opinions they express are extremely sensitive to the context in which they come about, meaning that framing is central to these thought processes (Iyengar, 1991). Similarly, Druckman points to research by Sniderman and Theriault which suggests that when government spending for the poor is framed as helping poor people, respondents support this, but when framed in terms of higher taxes it faces opposition (2001).

Further research in this area has come from Kuklinski *et al* (1997). They found that the attitudes of white respondents towards affirmative action changed depending on how the questions and information they received changed. For example, there was more support for the policy when people were asked if “extra effort” should be made to make sure blacks considered for university admission than when asked whether blacks should be given “preference”. Attitudes also changed when there had been overt discrimination against black people in the past (Kuklinski *et al*, 1997). Wettstein (2012) has carried out a panel study in this area, finding that the audience generally adopts the frames that they see in the media. Similarly, Simon and Jerit show that elites use a distinctive vocabulary when advancing their political agenda and that this is reflected in the word choice of the news, subsequently influencing citizens’ survey responses (2007).

As has been mentioned previously, an important scholar in this area is Iyengar, as he has looked into the effects of both priming (with Kinder, 2010) and framing. Iyengar's work has shown that the particular qualities of poor people shown in the news may affect attributions for poverty. For instance when single mothers are shown, respondents focus more on individual responsibility for the issues those depicted face than they do for other groups (1991). He found comparable results in a similar study, as he found that, in reports of people in poverty, emphasis on several characteristics of the poor person in a news story influenced individuals' views on welfare. For instance, their economic situation or desire to work was important here, as was how the money they received was to be spent (1990). In addition, when poverty was framed in thematic terms, individuals assigned responsibility for poverty to societal factors, whereas when the focus was on the individual, the poor individual in the case was seen as responsible (*ibid*).

This previous research provides the theoretical foundation on which the first hypothesis for this study is based. It is clear from the studies mentioned above, that with more negative framing of those who receive welfare, the public's attitudes to welfare can be expected to harden. Therefore, hypothesis one for the study is as follows:

*A more negative use of language to describe those receiving welfare will lead subjects to favour more restrictive and less generous welfare policy.*

### Framing and Priming

It is at this point that a distinction must be made between framing and its neighbouring concepts. In particular, this should be differentiated from *priming*. These two concepts are very much related, as both start from similar psychological

theory regarding how we make our decisions, as both involve the influences of the issues that come to mind in decision making (Brewer *et al*, 2003). The two concepts are so closely related that Chong and Druckman actually state that they can be used interchangeably (2007). Similarly, when Iyengar and Kinder are discussing priming they describe how “big changes in choices” can come “from *framing* the problem a certain way” (2010, emphasis added). Despite this however, Iyengar does treat the concepts separately, and there is quite a clear distinction to be made here, despite some cases of blurring.

It seems that much of this blurring is the result of both of these theories starting from a similar position. Scheufele argues that both of these concepts are closely related to agenda-setting. He cites Iyengar and Kinder who link priming to agenda-setting, as it represents “changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations” (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007, p.11). Similarly, Scheufele also sees framing as an extension of agenda-setting, as agenda-setting is concerned with the salience of issues, whilst framing is concerned with the salience of issue attributes (2000). Despite these similarities, Scheufele is quite adamant that framing and priming remain two distinct concepts, and is critical of attempts by McCombs, Llamas *et al* to integrate agenda-setting, priming, and framing into a single theoretical framework. Scheufele argues that, despite similarities, the assumptions and premises that are the bases of the concept are different. Framing “differs significantly from these accessibility-based models [priming and agenda-setting]” as it is “based on the assumption that how an issue is characterised in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences” (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). Perhaps this distinction suggests that the influence of framing is more deep set than that of priming, as it changes how an individual considers an issue, rather than simply the

criteria on which we evaluate a particular issue in making a decision or expressing a preference.

The work of Scheufele acquiesces with that of Brewer *et al* (2003) in making this distinction. Brewer *et al* assert that the main difference between priming and framing is that priming is “indirect” whilst framing is “direct” in its influence. By this they mean that priming is about the accessibility of thoughts about an issue, so the audience is primed to base evaluations on these thoughts. Framing, as a direct influence, is, according to Brewer *et al*, about how a news story presents a frame linking an agent to an issue which might shape how the audience judge the particular agent. Scheufele makes essentially the same argument with different terminology. He argues that priming, as well as agenda-setting, is based on “salience”, as it makes certain issues more salient in a person’s memory which will influence subsequent judgments and decisions. Framing, on the other hand, is based on “attribution”, as it encourages a link between an observed behaviour and a person or circumstance that can be considered responsible for this.

### Specifics of the Study

Despite separating framing from its neighbouring concepts, it remains quite a broad term. Therefore this needs to be refined further. The first distinction that must be made here is between “thematic” and “episodic” framing. This is a distinction that Iyengar (1991) identifies, and it refers to the level that the frame is working on. Thematic framing focuses on society as a whole, whereas episodic framing focuses on an individual case. Iyengar notes that societal causes are more likely to be attributed to the issues that poor people face when the story is framed in thematic terms (1991, P.54). However, he does not delve much deeper than this in looking into how different

thematic frames of poverty influence attitudes towards welfare. This study will focus on thematic framing and will investigate just this.

The concept can still be refined further. Druckman (2004) draws a distinction between “issue” and “equivalency” frames. Issue frames change a substantial aspect of the article, as they impact upon how an agent or circumstance is presented substantively in an article. The majority of previous framing research focuses on such changes to framing. Equivalency frames involve a more subtle change to an article. Here, a phrase is replaced by different but logically equivalent words or phrases. Slothuus asserts that this is not such an important aspect of framing, and that this is unlikely to have major effects on an individual’s thinking (2008). This study will look to challenge this assertion, and investigate the impact that changes in equivalency framing can have on public opinion.

#### The Effects of Specific Phrases

This study, therefore, will be a qualitative investigation using an experiment to find the effects of framing on people’s attitudes to welfare. This will involve participants reading one of five versions of a newspaper article containing the manipulation, followed by a set of survey questions. The focus of this investigation will be on different thematic frames, whilst the manipulation will be a subtle one, focussing on equivalency frames. This will allow for the first and most important hypothesis to be tested. This looks into the impact that framing on attitudes to welfare. There are also exploratory aspects to this study. These aspects focus on, not only whether negative framings have an impact on such attitudes, but what type of phrasing might influence these views. A phrase that has been cited as having been used extensively in the media in recent years is “scroungers” (Garthwaite, 2011), so much so that this is apparently becoming an integral part of how people consider

welfare claimants, stigmatising those who claim (Rameesh, 2012; Shildrick, 2012; Barnes, 2012). Gavin Edwards, a Labour Party Councillor for Southwark in London has claimed on *Twitter* that the use of the term has increased massively in recent years, using Lexus Nexus to illustrate this (Edwards, 2013). It is of interest to this study, therefore, to see how phrases that are used so regularly impact upon reactions compared to those not so often seen. Hypothesis two predicts that:

*The use of phrases more commonly seen in the media will lead respondents to favour more restrictive welfare policies.*

This marks a slight departure from much of the rest of the study, as it relates to priming theory perhaps more closely than to framing. This is because this hypothesis relies on the idea that seeing a more commonly used phrase will bring to mind similar articles and judgements from the past, whilst a newer phrase will not have this impact. This illustrates just how closely these two concepts are related.

Hypothesis three is related to the differences in issue and equivalency frames. Here, a term of slightly more substance is used and the reaction that this generates amongst participants can be compared to those phrases which are little more than insults. This manipulation will centre on equivalency frames, but will be closer to issue frames than the others, as it slightly shifts the locus of responsibility. Therefore, following work by Slothuus (2008) who claims that such frames have more of an impact, hypothesis three predicts that:

*Negative descriptions of the unemployed of more substance will create a more negative view of welfare than descriptions which are little more than insults.*

### Justification of the Study

What is important for this study, as with any piece of empirical research, is to ensure that it is worthwhile, as it finds a niche in the literature that can be addressed which has not been adequately filled previously, while remaining relevant to the real political world. If the study can be justified on these lines, it must have a legitimate claim to make a valuable contribution to the existing body of literature. Part of this justification is outlined above, with the exploratory area of the experiment adding something unique to the field. Aside from this, there also has to be a justification for hypothesis one, which, in reality, is the most important aspect of the study.

This justification has, in part, already become clear through this literature review. The specific area of framing that it is looking into is not something that has been done so much before, first, through looking at the differences between thematic framings, and, secondly, by focussing on equivalency frames. Equivalency frames have been investigated previously, (for example, Smith cited in Iyengar, 1990). However, this has been done in the framing of the question, and not in the stimulus material. This is important, as how a question is posed has a direct influence on how an individual thinks to answer the question at hand. Having the manipulation in an article read in advanced, on the other hand, will test how an article affects subsequent judgements.

It is also important to note that the specific area of framing that is investigated, that is, news representations of welfare claimants and the poor have not been carried out to such a great extent in Europe, and particularly Britain. There are indeed European studies of framing effects, however, through their attempts to create a unique area for themselves that differentiate themselves from American studies, they have focussed on separate areas, for instance, mediators and moderators of framing



effects (Slothuus, 2008; Lecheler and de Vreese, 2012). This study is more closely related to previous work of Iyengar (1990; 1991) in looking at the influence that framing has on survey responses, but is separated from Iyengar's work due to the specific area of framing that is focussed on, thematic, equivalency frames. That this study is carried out in the UK and not America is also a significant difference from Iyengar's work. Firstly, there are different cultures and education systems in the two countries, which might lead to differences that need to be exposed and explored. Perhaps more importantly however, the media systems of the two countries are quite different. Whilst Hallin and Mancini (2004) place both of these countries in their "liberal" media system model, they also identified a number of differences in their respective media cultures. Significantly for this study, one such difference is the partisan nature of the British press, compared to the values of impartiality that prevail in US journalism. This is a significant difference, as it gives the British press much more licence to print content that will sway their audience in a particular direction, whilst it may also be of interest to see how repeated exposure to these different media values might influence the way that the audience interprets what they read in the press.

As has also been noted previously, the issue of depictions of those in poverty has become an important issue in British politics, with the accusation being that those living on welfare have been portrayed more negatively in recent years (Jones, 2011; Allen and Savigny, 2012). This makes this research particularly relevant at present, as it is important to understand the effects that such portrayals have on the public's views of those in poverty. This might prove to be different to previous framing research, which has come at times when the poor are not under such an apparent barrage from the press. The electoral significance of welfare policy was also asked in

order to discover the importance of the issue to the electorate and the effect that framing can have on this.

### **Methodology**

In order to test these hypotheses and investigate this research question an experiment was employed. This involved a short extract of a newspaper article being manipulated to act as a stimulus, followed by a number of survey questions. Perhaps more familiar to natural scientists, psychologists and economists, experiments have gained a growing importance in political science during recent decades. Gaines and Kuklinski describe the importance of experiments, specifically in their case a “survey experiment”, in manipulating items “to infer how public opinion works in the real world” (2007, p.3). Kagel and Roth (1995) introduce three different functions of experiments, this study falling into the “searching for facts” category as it attempts to establish how public opinion is formed. According to Sniderman and Grob, such experiments are characterised by interventions which are at deliberately low intensity, manipulations of information and “variation in framing of choices presented or variation of immediate context of the choice” (1996, p.393). From here, it starts to become clear why such an experiment will serve the purposes of this study, as the context in which subjects express political choices is manipulated.

A further advantage of an experimental design here is that it is useful in establishing causal links between two phenomena (McConalay, 1973; McDermott, 2002), which is precisely what this study is looking to investigate. The goal of attempting to establish causality will take priority over attempts to create a study

which is generalizable to the population as a whole. Therefore, internal validity takes precedence over external validity. Other advantages of an experiment identified by McConalay that are relevant to this study and to internal validity include a greater control over extraneous variables and it providing opportunities to study the process as well as the outcome (1973, p.363).

### Sample

This emphasis on internal validity leads to a potential drawback of an experiment, as it is difficult to generalise to the population as a whole. The subjects do not have to make up a representative sample of the population, but are rather a number of people in a controlled setting. Although this impacts upon the generalisability of the study, it means that these subjects can then be manipulated in order to establish causal links. The key to this is not a random sample, but random assignment within the sample. The subjects used for this study were undergraduate physics students from Salford University in the UK. These subjects should all have the sufficient cognitive abilities to process the information presented to them. Unlike many such experiments using undergraduate students however, these will not be social science students. We might speculate that these students might not have the settled political opinions that social science students are likely to hold, and may be more open to the manipulation, as the rest of the population should be. They will also be of legal age to vote in the UK. However, as with many UK universities, there are some international students on this course, and therefore a control question was added in order that we can disregard those who are not able to vote in UK general elections. This is important as such individuals are likely to be exposed to different news than British respondents, whilst the issues at hand do not affect them in the same way that

it might other participants. A control was also set in order to find the gender of the subjects, as it seemed inevitable that physics students would be disproportionately male.

### Stimulus Article

This experiment was made up of two parts. The first was a stimulus article which focused on the welfare policy of the current government. This was then followed by a short survey. This included a number of statements regarding welfare and participants were asked how far they agree with each of these statements. Following this, a number of control questions were included. The article that was chosen is a real piece taken from the *Daily Mail* newspaper, a popular national daily, from 7 November 2010. The article describes a proposed government scheme that would force the long-term unemployed to take part in a work scheme if they hope to keep receiving their benefits. The *Daily Mail* is a divisive newspaper in the UK, expressing strong political views from a well established ideological position. Therefore, to prevent this impacting upon how the participants interpret the article, the piece was said to have been taken from “a national daily newspaper”. The article associates the policy with the Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith. He remained in this position at the time of the experiment. Newspapers have been chosen for the subject of this research for two main reasons. Firstly, in the UK, the print press has a lot more license to express opinion than the more regulated broadcast media and generally hold explicit political opinions, therefore, they are more likely to use wording which is not neutral, as is evident in the article selected. Secondly, this was much easier to provide to the subjects, as using a video or some other form of stimulus would be more difficult to distribute among a fairly large sample.

There are certain aspects of this article that were left out or altered for the purposes of the experiment. Firstly, only a short section of the article was used, the headline and the first two paragraphs. The reasoning being that following these introductory sections the details of a political debate begin. This debate would have created a distraction from the subtle changes in framing in the opening sections, whilst such debate would potentially allow the influence of existing political allegiances to be felt more strongly. The original article was also accompanied by a photograph depicting a television comedian's character based on the "scrounger" caricature. This would be a needless distraction, when it is hoped that the focus of the respondents is on the wording of the article and not an evocative picture that accompanies it. In addition, the original headline for the article contains the term "Scroungers". As will be seen below, this is one of the words used as part of the manipulation. Therefore, this was removed from there headline and replaced with the term "Unemployed".

### Manipulation

The original stimulus article contains a number of provocative phrases that are similar to those identified by Garthwaite (2011) previously, including the word "scrounger" which has been the topic of much media debate (Rameesh, 2012; Shildrick, 2012; Barnes, 2012). The other phrases of interest to the study are "feckless unemployed" and "without bothering to find work". As mentioned in the literature review, each of these phrases is also somewhat different from the others in character. "Scroungers" is taken as the phrase more commonly seen in the media, as opposed to "feckless unemployed" which should be less familiar. "Without bothering to find work" is taken as the phrase with the most substance, shifting the locus of

responsibility. This is opposed to the other two phrases, which are little more than insults towards those who are taking these welfare payments.

These three phrases will be the subject of the manipulation in the experiment. They will be interchanged with phrases that are not so insulting to those on welfare and, in the case of “without bothering to find work” will put less emphasis on individual responsibility for their position. Therefore, “scroungers” will be interchanged with “unemployment”; “feckless unemployed” will be interchanged with “those out of work”; and “without bothering to find work” with “whilst unable to find work”. The article with none of the original phrases was taken as the base, control article, and this was compared with the original article, containing all of the provocative phrases, in order to test hypothesis one, the responses of these participants being the main dependent variable. Hypothesis two and three were tested using three other versions of the article, each containing just one of the original phrases. There are therefore five versions of the article, they vary as follows:

- Article 1: Control condition, with none of the original provocative phrases
- Article 2: “scrounger” added to the base article with no other original phrases
- Article 3: “the feckless unemployed” added to the base article with no other original phrases
- Article 4: “without bothering to find work” added to the base article with no other original phrases
- Article 5: the three more provocative original phrases included

Therefore, for hypothesis one, article 1 was compared with article 5. For hypothesis two, article 2 was compared with article 3. Lastly, for hypothesis three, article 4 was compared with articles 2 and 3.

Having read the article, participants will then be confronted by a series of statements regarding government policy towards welfare in the UK. They will be asked to pick one of five response options for each statement, namely: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. This includes a question regarding whether the political parties' stance on issues of welfare will be important in how the subjects decide to vote in an election. This helped investigate the electoral significance of welfare to those receiving the articles with different framing. This question will be on a four point scale, the potential answers being: very important; important; unimportant; and, lastly, not important at all.

In terms of the operationalisation of analysing these results, the responses to questions relating to welfare were aggregated into one scale. This allowed for the responses on these issues to be evaluated as a whole, rather than between several different questions. The reliability of this scale was tested using a Cronbach's Alpha test. This gave a result of 0.842. This result reveals that this new scale is indeed reliable.

### Controls

As mentioned above, there were also a number of additional questions set as controls for the study. These help to determine how different characteristics affect the responses that the respondents give. This also helped to build up a picture of just who was in this sample, an important aspect, as the sample is not representative, so being able to describe just who took part in the study is useful. Therefore, questions were

included in the survey which ask a participants age, eligibility to vote in the UK, gender, political allegiances, how often they read a newspaper, which newspaper they are likely to read, and what their main source of news is. In addition, the main questions of interest to the study are interspersed amongst statements regarding government performance in a more general manner. The aim here is to make the manipulation less obvious, as having an article about welfare policy followed by questions exclusively on this subject might lead some people to begin to understand what is being tested.

One area that might have some impact on the study is the social desirability factor. It has previously been professed as an advantage of experiments that they provide an opportunity to control the impact of the social desirability of certain answers over others (McConalay, 1973, p.363). However, the way that this questionnaire is distributed is closer to a regular survey and it is difficult to see how there will be any greater degree of control over this effect than in any other research. This is important to this study, as the focus is on a contentious area of politics, essentially, how much support the poor should receive. Social desirability issues have previously been identified as a factor in British politics, as people have been known to place themselves on the left of how they actually voted when responding to exit polls (Kavanagh, 1992). Some attempt has been made to control for these effects however. The survey was anonymous, whilst it is hoped that the inclusion of extra questions on government performance, as mentioned above, will make it less clear that this is the area of the respondents' political views that are being canvassed specifically.

Lastly, the order of the questions is quite significant. The section of the survey that is of most interest to the study, that containing the statements regarding welfare,



is placed at the beginning of the questionnaire. Although this is quite a short survey, this is important, as if people lose interest towards the end of the survey it is appropriate that this happen when addressing the less important and less cognitively demanding control questions.

### Sampling Procedure

The survey was carried out at the beginning of some of the larger lectures of undergraduate students, taking in participants from across the three years of the degree course. The different versions of the article were dispersed randomly within the sample. Consequently, there will be subjects in the same room who answered different versions of the survey. Whilst it might be suggested that this will compromise the manipulation, this should not be the case, as the changes in the article are so subtle that they should not have been noticeable without a fairly close reading of two different versions of the piece. This random assignment is important to ensure that there are no discernible differences between those reading the different versions of the survey, an issue that might have been created if different classes receive different versions. In addition, it was important to ensure that there is only one lecture from each year group that filled in the survey in order that no student repeated the experiment. The surveys were distributed by university staff and not the researcher, but this was done under close guidance, so that the experiment was properly explained and to make sure that the assignment was random. It was made clear to the participants that they were to read the article before completing the survey, it was explained that this was a survey used to gather students' political opinions on contemporary political issues.

## Results

### Sample description

It is important, before discussing results in earnest, to give some description of the sample that was used for the experiment. As mentioned previously, the sample was made up of undergraduate physics students from Salford University in Greater Manchester in the north-west of England. There were 110 respondents in total, with two being discarded as they were not eligible to vote in the UK, therefore leaving a sample of 108. As was expected, the sample was very male-dominated, 90 males to 17 females, or 83 to 16 percent. One respondent did not identify their gender. Due to the sample being made up of undergraduate students, it was also very young, with 74% falling into the 18 to 22 years old category, 14 percent were 23 to 30 and 12 percent were over 30 years old.

A large proportion of the respondents claimed that newspapers were their main source of news, 34 percent in all, second only to those who use blogs and other websites to keep up with current affairs (43%). People's preferred choice of newspaper proved too sporadic to analyse, as a wide range of publications were given as answers, whilst many didn't identify any newspaper at all. Many also identified more than one newspaper, perhaps reflecting a movement to online editions. The most popular newspaper that was cited was the *Metro*, this is given away for free on public transport in Manchester. 20 percent of the respondents named this paper, with the second most popular being the *Guardian* on 12 percent, and others much further behind. There is reason to be somewhat sceptical of this result, as the *Guardian* is known as a high-brow, progressive newspaper, and the number of people who claim to read it might be inflated. The political position of the *Metro* is more ambiguous,

although it is published by Associated Newspapers, who also publish the right-wing *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday*.

The last control measured political allegiances. Here, a vast majority of respondents (74%) said that they had no political party allegiance, whilst the most popular party was Labour, with 16 percent of the respondents identifying themselves with this party. This might be a reflection of the university being based in a large industrial city in the north of England, Labour’s traditional constituency. Four percent of the respondents identified the Conservative Party. Five percent said that they identified with an “other” party, but interestingly no participant identified themselves as supporters of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), who made major electoral gains in the local elections that took place in the weeks that followed the study. As a result of so many of the participants not identifying any party allegiances at all the numbers for many of the parties is very small. Therefore, the only category that make up a large enough group to be analysed here are those that identify themselves as Labour supporters.

Lastly, the distribution of the different articles across the sample was not even. Most significantly for this study, the largest difference here was between those who received the “base” article and those that received the survey containing the article with all the terms used in the study, with 14 participants receiving the base article, and 27 the article with all terms, 13 and 25 percent respectively. This is slightly problematic, as this is the main comparison that this study wishes to make, but the numbers of people receiving the base article is smaller than any of the others.

**Table 1 - Article Version Frequencies**

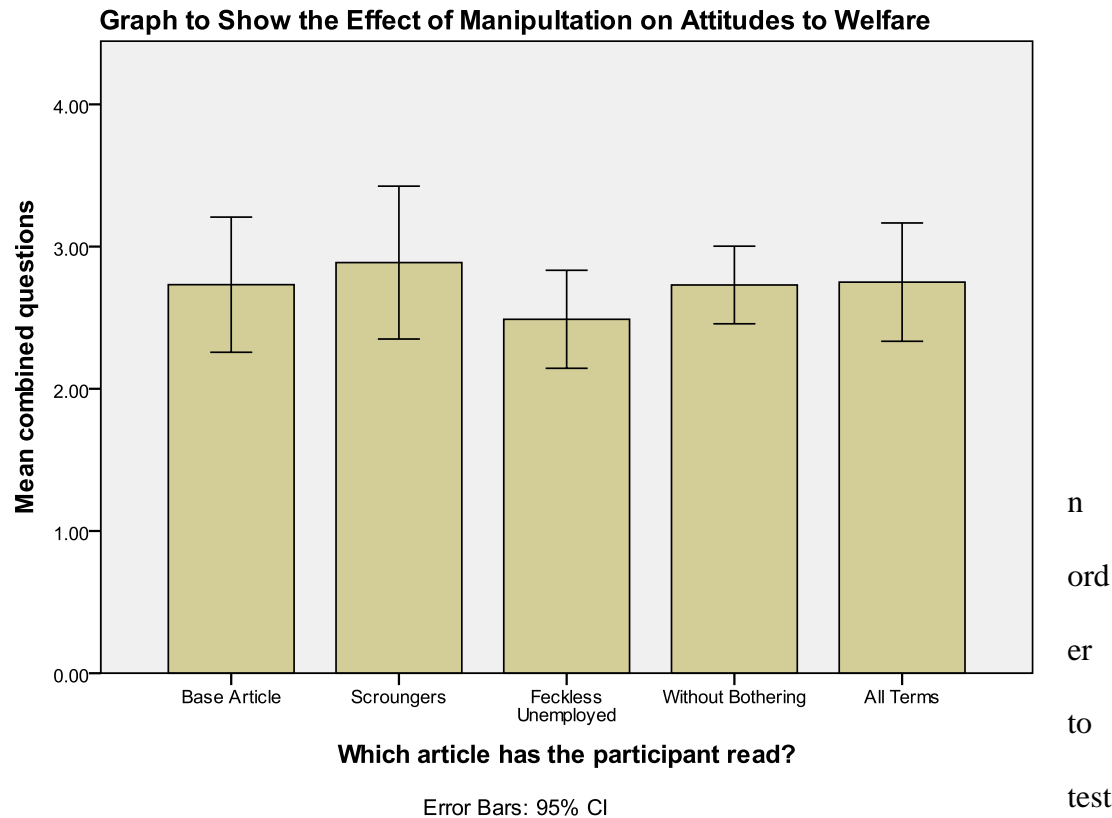
<b>Article</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>

Base Article	14	13
Scroungers	20	18.5
Feckless Unemployed	22	20.4
Without Bothering	25	23.1
All Terms	27	25
Total	108	100

### Hypothesis One

As identified in the literature review, hypothesis one of this study predicted that *a more negative use of language to describe those receiving welfare will lead subjects to favour more restrictive and less generous welfare policy*. As mentioned in the methodology, in order to test this, the four questions relating to welfare were aggregated into a single measure. This new measure allowed a comparison of the aggregated answers on matters relating to welfare over these four questions, therefore giving us a good indication of each participant's views on questions of welfare. As can be seen from the chart below, there is little difference between the means of the answers that were given by respondents who read different versions of the stimulus article. The most important comparison to be made for hypothesis one is between the results for the "base" control article and the article containing all of the provocative terms. Here there is little, almost no, effect of the articles, as the results are almost the same. The mean for the "base" article is 2.7321, whilst for the article with all terms this is 2.7500. This shows that there is a slight difference in the direction predicted by the hypothesis, as those who received the article with all of the terms included displayed slightly more negative attitudes towards welfare. The manipulation used in this experiment is quite subtle, and it is therefore reasonable to expect that the

differences in responses will be only slight. However, the differences here only begin with a slight difference at the second decimal place. It is difficult to describe this as a significant difference. Therefore, on this evidence, it seems that it cannot be said that the hypothesis was confirmed.



I  
n  
ord  
er  
to  
test

the significance of the relationships between the dependent and independent variable a One-Way ANOVA was run. The results shows a lack of significance overall, as this number was 0.714, and if the 0.05 is taken as the threshold of what is significant, as is typical, it is difficult to say that there is a significant relationship here. A linear regression was also used to test the significance of any effect of the manipulation on attitudes to welfare, as well as including the control variables that were included in the survey. An issue with a linear regression here is that the main variable, the aggregated welfare questions, is ordinal, and not on a scale. Therefore, dichotomous dummy

variables were set up for those that read each article apart from the control article. For example, the dummy variable for the “scrounger” article was set up so that all those that read this article were coded as 1, whilst those that read a different version of the article were coded as 0. This gave a scale that could then be used for a linear regression.

In addition, some of the control variables could not be used here due to the results that were given. Newspaper choice was not analysed due to the vast array of responses given to this question. In terms of party preference, The Labour Party is the only answer that enough people gave to allow analysis. Therefore, as with the articles read, a new variable was added comparing Labour supporters to the sample as a whole. The control variable for the source of news each participant used was also recoded the same way that the articles were, creating dichotomous dummy variables for each answer. However, radio was left out as only a handful of respondents gave this answer.

**Table 2 - Linear Regression**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Scrounger Article	0.687
Feckless Unemployed Article	0.749
Without Bothering to find Work Article	0.671
All Terms Article	0.299
Age	0.002

Newspapers Source of News	0.611
TV Source of News	0.105
Internet Source of News	0.160
Labour Party	0.016

What is quite clear from this table is that again there is no significance that can be found for the main hypothesis. The most important article in this regard is the “All Terms” article compared to the rest of the sample. The result here is a significance of 0.299, a long way from significant. This remains the closest to significant of the different versions of the article however, with the “Scrounger” article having a significance of 0.687, “Feckless Unemployed” 0.749 and “Without Bothering to find Work” 0.671 when compared to the sample as a whole.

When the attention is switched to looking at the control variables, what becomes clear is that the source of news that each person has identified is not significant. This is important for this study as, as part of the justification for choosing newspapers, it was argued that newspapers are more partisan than television news, whilst previous literature has asserted that the depictions of those on welfare in

newspapers is negative. Despite this, however, there is no significance in any differences between those who identified newspapers as their main source of news and the other respondents. This perhaps reflects changing habits in how people gain their news, as those using the internet may well be using partisan sources, meaning that they are exposed to similar views to those using newspapers.

There was some significance however, when age was considered. Here, it was found that the older respondents favour more restrictive welfare policy than their younger classmates. This is an interesting result but might be quite easily explained, as the younger participants are less likely to have considered paying tax in any large amount, meaning that they are not concerned that it is their money going to help others.

Another significant result was that Labour Party supporters are more likely to take a more negative view of generous welfare policies than the rest of the sample. This is interesting, and actually works against the result that might be expected. The Labour Party has traditionally been the party of the centre-left in Britain, reflecting its roots in the trade union movement. Therefore, it might be more reasonably expected that the supporters of this party are supportive of generous welfare payments. However, this has not been the case. This might suggest that Labour supporters, traditionally with working class roots, have shifted to take a more hardened view of welfare claimants. It is difficult to test the impact that the social class of the participants might have had on these results, as despite asking a question on “household” income, it seems that there may have been some confusion as to whether this meant their student house or parent’s home, making this an unhelpful and unreliable measure.

Hypotheses 2 and 3



Hypotheses two and three are part of the exploratory investigation into the impact of particular phrases that might contribute to different political preferences being identified. Hypothesis two concerns whether phrases lose or gain meaning with repeated usage, as it predicts that: *The use of phrases more commonly seen in the media will lead people to favour more restrictive welfare policies.* Hypothesis three predicts that: *the more substantive descriptions of the unemployed will create a more negative view of welfare than descriptions which are little more than insults.* Therefore, both of these hypotheses predict that, of the articles with only one provocative phrase used, there will be some difference in the reaction to survey questions regarding welfare.

These hypotheses can be analysed using the same statistics as in hypothesis one. For hypothesis two the article containing the more commonly used term, “scroungers”, is compared with those less typical of the media, “feckless unemployed”. Interestingly, of all of the articles, it is these two which give the greatest difference in survey responses. The article with the term “scroungers” has a mean score of 2.8875 for the aggregated welfare questions, whilst this was 2.4886 for the “feckless unemployed” article. Therefore, this pattern is in the direction that the hypothesis predicts, as the more familiar term has led respondents to give a more negative reaction to welfare than the less common term. Statistically this is difficult to describe as significant, as in a One-Way ANOVA the significance is 0.160. However, with such a subtle manipulation, it cannot be expected that large differences would emerge here, and such small differences might hold more significance than is immediately obvious.

In order to test hypothesis three, the article containing the term “without bothering to find work” is taken as the article containing a word of more substance,

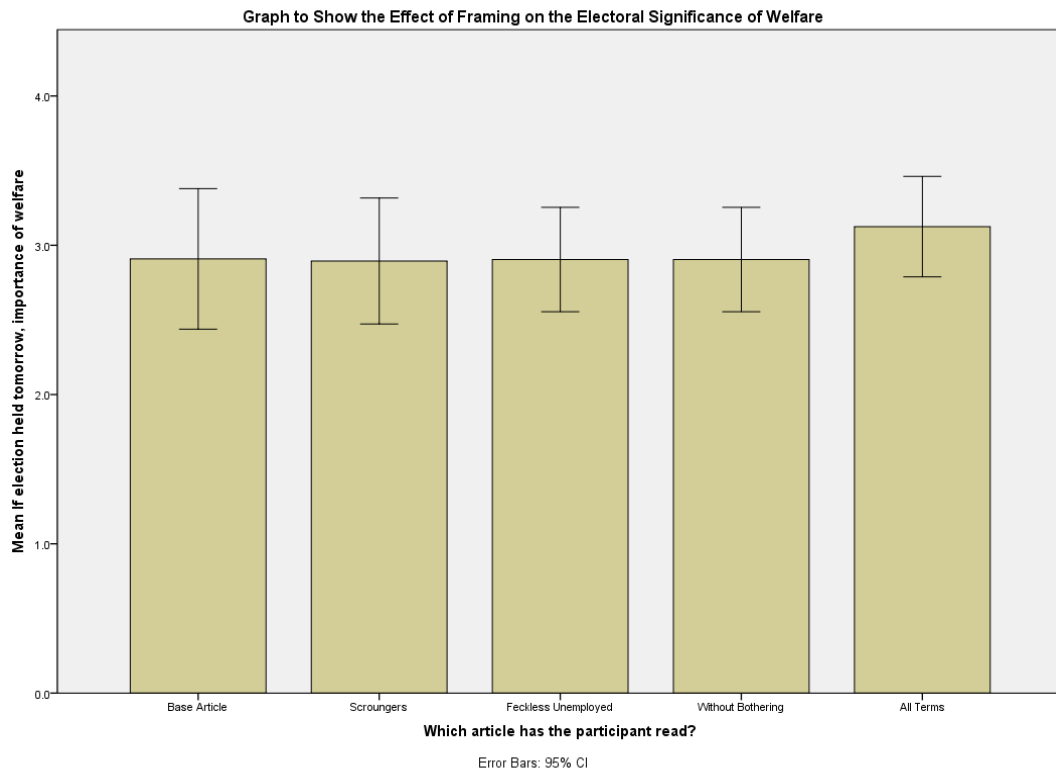
which must be compared to the articles using the terms “scroungers” and “feckless unemployed”, as these contain terms that are merely insults. From looking at the table it becomes quite clear that there is little effect here, as the “without bothering to find work” article has a mean score of 2.7300, therefore sitting in between the means of the “scrounger” and “feckless unemployed” articles, which are 2.8875 and 2.4886 respectively. This provides quite a clear indication that there is little or no evidence in support of this hypothesis from this study.

Despite this, the articles for “scroungers” and “feckless unemployed” were combined, providing an opportunity to compare the articles containing mere insults to more substantive comments more thoroughly. The combined mean for these two articles is 2.6786. Therefore, this shows the pattern going in the direction predicted in the hypothesis as compared to the mean for “without bothering to find work” (2.7300) the more substantive comment creates more negative responses towards welfare. However, any apparent effects here are not significant, as the two articles containing insults have means that sit either side of the “without bothering to find work” article. It is clear, therefore, that this hypothesis has not been confirmed by this study.

### Electoral Significance

It is also of interest to this study to link potential framing effects to how participants might choose to vote. Therefore, a test was run in order to investigate whether the versions of the article had any impact on the importance of issues of welfare electorally for the participants. As can be seen from the graph below, these effects were minimal. Again, perhaps the most important articles to compare here are the “base” control article and the article containing all of the terms used for the

manipulation. The mean for the base article is 2.909 and for the article with all terms this was 3.125, a very slight difference in the direction expected that suggests that those with the more provocative framing consider welfare to be more important electorally. This pattern persists through the sample, as the article with all of the terms has a larger mean than all of the other articles.



However, this is hardly a large gap, and Ordinal Logistic Regression was run in order to find if there was any significance in these results. A number of people declined to answer this question, meaning that there was an n of 96. The Nagelkerke pseudo R-square gave a result of 0.021, a very small result when this should approach one. As is illustrated in the table below, this is not a significant result.

**Table 3 - Ordinal Logistic Regression - Electoral Significance**

	Estimate	Std. Error	Significance

Not important at all	-3.209	0.569	000
Unimportant	-1.896	0.454	000
Important	0.820	0.408	0.020
Base Article	-0.740	0.716	0.301
“Scroungers”	-0.569	0.604	0.346
“Feckless unemployed”	-0.575	0.587	0.327
“Without bothering to find work”	-0.660	0.588	0.262

Why did the manipulation not have the expected effect?

The clearest result from this study is that there are no clear patterns or results that can be identified. All of the hypotheses tested in this study have been shown to be inconclusive. Before moving on to discuss theoretical implications from these results, it is important to consider some practical reasons that the manipulation might not have had an effect on the participants.

Firstly, as was mentioned previously, this is a more subtle manipulation than what was seen in a lot of the previous work, for instance, Iyengar (1990; 1991). The changes that were made to the article were not as substantive as in previous work on framing, only changing the wording to what were essentially synonymous terms. Only the phrase “without bothering to find work” offered something of substance, but even this was not an extreme change, being interchanged with “whilst unable to find work”, although it does shift responsibility to the unemployed themselves. This can be important, and perhaps suggests that framing effects are not so extreme that such small changes can result in changes in attitudes. It might instead suggest that framing

effects will only be felt if changes in the stimulus are not so subtle, and that people are not quite so easily manipulated.

Similarly, the section of the article that was used as a stimulus material was quite short. This might not have as strong an affect as the stimuli used in previous research. Other research has also put the manipulation in the question (Kuklinski *et al*, 1997) thereby changing the immediate context in which respondents made their choices, unlike this study, where the article was somewhat separate from the questions. Perhaps the short article was not an immersive enough experience to have any influence on the answers that people gave. It must also be considered that some of the participants paid little or no attention to the stimulus article. The experiment was carried out at the beginning of undergraduate lectures, and the students may have been impatient to begin and did not appreciate the distraction of this research.

A third factor that might have had an impact on the results of this experiment is the political salience of the issue at hand. As mentioned in the literature review, this research is socially relevant as issues of welfare and people not pulling their own weight are very prominent in the news and, perhaps, also in the public's consciousness, and have been for the last five years or so now. Perhaps the effect of this very public discussion is that people have come to form fairly solid political opinions on the matter by this point and are therefore less open to manipulation on this issue as they might be on other matters. They perhaps might also have been more open to the manipulation a few years ago. Therefore, as each individual is likely to have spent some time considering an issue that it will have been difficult to avoid in recent years, they might be less open to the manipulation.

## Discussion

This study launched an investigation into how thematic framing influences political opinions towards welfare. To test this, an experiment was employed, using a group of British undergraduate physics students as subjects. The manipulation in this experiment was subtle, using equivalency frames to investigate how small changes in the wording of a short article might influence survey responses on the matter. The manipulation altered how those receiving welfare were characterised with no significant changes, only altering how they were described rhetorically, not substantively.

The results from this study are underwhelming, as there was a distinct lack of any sort of pattern that emerges between which of the five versions of the article the participants received and the answers they gave in the survey. Hypothesis one predicted that a more negative choice of language in the article read would lead to responses that favour less generous welfare policy. The results here were inconclusive, with only slight changes in responses in the direction expected. For hypothesis two, it was predicted that the more common phrasing would result in the respondents favouring more restrictive welfare policy. There was some pattern here to suggest this was the case, although it was also found to be statistically insignificant, this was closer to a significant change than was found for the other hypotheses. Lastly, hypothesis three predicted that more substantive descriptions of the unemployed would lead to more restrictive policy than those which were mere insults. No pattern could be established that suggested this was the case.

The research question for this study asked:

*How do subtle changes to the thematic framing of those living off payments from the state influence individuals' views on benefit claimants and welfare policy in Britain?*

The answer to this question, based on this study, is that no discernible influence of thematic framing can be established. This might have some implications for the theory of framing. Perhaps most significantly, it suggests that there is no effect when the manipulation is as subtle as in this experiment. As mentioned previously, not only was the emphasis on equivalency frames, but this manipulation also only involved a very short newspaper extract.

It is also interesting to try to understand the reasons that the article containing the term “scrounger” was the piece that elicited the most positive reactions to statements suggesting that welfare was too generous and being taken advantage of. It is first worth noting that this might well be something of a coincidence. As was shown in the results section, this is not significant statistically, something that is important in such a small sample. However, with the manipulation being so subtle, quite small changes should be looked into and considered from a theoretical viewpoint.

If the results of this are to be considered theoretically significant, there must be some effort to explain why this article has affected the participants in a different way from the other versions of the piece. One explanation might be that priming has a greater effect on the audience than framing does. As was argued in the literature review, this version of the article might be closer to priming than the others, as the term being a familiar one might create associations to previous judgements that the participants have made on the issue.

However, what this does not explain is why this article gave more of a reaction in this direction than the version containing all of the terms. The “all terms” version contained the term “scroungers” as well as a number of other provocative phrases, and was expected to lead to answers which took the dimmest view of welfare. This was not the case however, and this article was closer to the mean result across the sample

as a whole than the “scrounger” article. This is where theoretical explanations might begin to fall down. Perhaps the other provocative terms used in the article with all terms were distracting and over stimulating, making the article seem too one-sided, whereas the simple use of the word “scrounger” was a more subtle hint that was not picked up on. This seems a bit of a leap however, and a stronger reasoning would have to be found if this result is to be taken seriously. This is therefore an area that seems appropriate for further research.

In short, the experiment has given a number of inconclusive results. From this study, none of the hypotheses can be confidently said to have been confirmed with only slight, statistically insignificant variation in survey responses as a result of different framing.



## Bibliography

- Allen, H., and H. Savigny, (2012), "Selling Scandal or Ideology? The Politics of Business Crime Coverage" in *European Journal of Communication*, 27, pp.278-290.
- Althusser, L., (2006), Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)" in M. G. Durham and D. Keller (Eds.) *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, Revised Edition, (Blackwell, Oxford), pp.79-87.
- Barnett, A., *et al.*, (2007), "Child Poverty and Government Policy: The Contesting of Symbolic Power in Newspaper Constructions of Families in Need" in *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 17, pp.296-312.
- Brewer, P., J. Graf and L. Willnat, (2003), "Priming or Framing: Media Influence on Attitudes Towards Foreign Countries" in *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies*, 65(6), pp.493-508.
- Chong, D., and J. Druckman, (2007), "Framing Theory" in *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10(1), pp.103-126.
- Converse, P., (1964), "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics" in D. Apter (eds.) *Ideology and Discontent*, (Collier-MacMillan, London), pp.206-261.
- Converse, P., (2009), "Perspectives on Mass Belief Systems and Communication" in R. Dalton and H. D. Klingemann *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behaviour*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford), pp.144-158.
- Druckman, J., (2001), "The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Confidence" in *Political Behaviour*, 23, pp.225-256.

- Druckman, J., (2004), "Political Preference Formation: Competition, Deliberation, and the (Ir)relevance of Framing Effects" in *American Political Science Review*, 98(4), pp.671-686.
- Druckman, J., D. Green, J. Kuklinski and A. Lupia, (2006), "The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science" in *American Political Science Review*, 100, pp.627-633.
- Dyer, R., (2006), "Stereotyping" in M. G. Durham and D. Keller (Eds.) *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, Revised Edition, (Blackwell, Oxford), pp.353-365.
- Gaines, B. And J. Kuklinski, (2007), "The Logic of the Survey Reexamined" in *Political Analysis*, 15, pp.1-20.
- Garthwaites, K., (2011), "'The Language of Shirkers and Scroungers?' Talking about Illness: Disability and Coalition Welfare Reform" in *Disability and Society*, 26, pp.369-372..
- Goffman, E., (1974), *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organisation of Experience*, (Harper and Row, London).
- Gramsci, A., "(I) History of the Subaltern Classes; (II) Cultural Themes" in M. G. Durham and D. Keller (Eds.) *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, Revised Edition, (Blackwell, Oxford), pp.13-17.
- Habel, P., (2012), "Following the Opinion Leaders? The Dynamics of Influence Among Media Opinion, the Public and Politicians" in *Political Communication*, 29, pp.257-277.

- Habermas, J., (1991), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, (MIT Press, Cambridge, MA).
- Habermas, J., (2006), “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article” in M. G. Durham and D. Keller (Eds.) *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, Revised Edition, (Blackwell, Oxford), pp.73-87.
- Hall, S., et al. (1978), *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*, (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke).
- Hallin, D., and P. Mancini, (2004), *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge).
- Herman, E., and N. Chomsky, (1988), *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, (Pantheon Books, New York).
- Hodgetts, D., and A. Hodgetts, (2006), “Life in the Shadow of the Media: Imaging Street Homelessness in London” in *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9, pp.497-516.
- Horkheimer, M., and T. Adorno, (2006), “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” in M. G. Durham and D. Keller (Eds.) *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, Revised Edition, (Blackwell, Oxford), pp.41-72.
- Iyengar, S., (1990), “Framing Responsibility for Political Issue: The Case of Poverty” in *Political Behaviour*, 12, pp.19-40.
- Iyengar, S., (1991), *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues*, (University of Chicago Press, London).

- Iyengar, S., and D. Kinder, (2010), *News that Matters: Television and American Opinion*, (University of Chicago Press, London).
- Johnson, J., et al (2009), “Priming Media Stereotypes Reduces Support for Social Welfare Policies: The Mediating Role of Empathy” in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 35(4), pp.463-476.
- Jones, O., (2011), *Chavs: The Demonisation of the Working Class*, (Verso, London).
- Kagel, J., and A. Roth, (1995), *The Handbook of Experimental Economics*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton).
- Kavanagh, D., (1992), “The Fourth Term: Blasts from Labour’s Past” in *Guardian*, 11/04, available at:  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/1992/apr/11/past.electionspast> [accessed 27/02/2013].
- King, G., R. Keohane and S. Verba, (1994), *Designing Social Enquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton).
- Kuklinski, J., et al (1997), “Racial Prejudice and Attitudes Toward Affirmative Action” in *American Journal of Political Science*, 41, pp.402-419.
- Marx, K., and F. Engels, (2006), “The Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideas” in M. G. Durham and D. Keller (Eds.) *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, Revised Edition, (Blackwell, Oxford), pp.9-12.
- McCombs, M., and D. Shaw, (1972), “The Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media” in *Political Opinion Quarterly*, 36, PP.176-187.

- McConalay, J., (1973), "Experimental Research" in J. Knutson, *The Handbook of Political Psychology*, (Jossey-Bass, London).
- McDermott, R., (2002), "Experimental Methods in Political Science" in *Annual Review of Political Science*, 5, pp.31-61.
- Page, B., (1996), "The Mass Media as Political Actors" in *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 29, pp.20-24.
- Rogers, S., (2012), "British Social Attitudes Survey – How What We Think and Who Thinks it Has Changed" in *The Guardian*, (published online 17 September), available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2012/sep/17/british-social-attitudes-historic-data> [accessed 19/02/2012].
- Scheufele, D., (2000), Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing Revisited: Another Look at Cognitive Effects in Political Communication" in *Mass Communication and Society*, 3(2&3) pp.297-316.
- Scheufele, D., and D. Tewksbury, (2007), "Framing, Agenda Setting and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models" in *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), pp.9-20.
- Simon, A., and J. Jerit, (2007), "Toward a Theory Relating Political Discussion, Media and Public Opinion" in *Journal of Communication*, 57, pp.254-271.
- Slothuus, R., (2008), "More than Weighting Cognitive Importance: A Dual-Process Model of Issue Framing Effects" in *Political Psychology*, 29(1), pp.1-28.
- Sniderman, P., and D. Grob, (1996), "Innovations in Experimental Design in Attitude Surveys" in *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, pp.377-399.
- Stevens, D., *et al*, (2011), "Priming Time for Blair? Media Priming, Iraq, and Leadership Evaluations in Britain" in *Electoral Studies*, 30(3), pp.546-560.

- West, P., (1984), “The Family, the Welfare State and Community Care: Political Rhetoric and Public Attitudes” in *Journal of Social Policy*, 13, pp.417-446.
- Wettstein, M., (2012), “Frame Adaption in Referendum Campaigns: The Effect of News Coverage on the Public Salience of Issue Interpretations” in *American Behavioural Scientist*, 56, pp.318-333.
- Wolfe, P. De, (2012), “Reaping the Benefits of Sickness? Long-Term Illness and the Experience of Welfare Claims” in *Disability and Society*, 27, pp.617-630.

## **Appendix 1: Stimulus Material**

*Article 1 (base, control article):*

### **Unemployed to clear rubbish for one pound an hour**

Those out of work will be forced to take part in a punishing U.S.-style 'workfare' scheme involving gardening, clearing litter and other menial tasks for just £1 an hour in a new crackdown on unemployment.

And if they fail to turn up on time or work hard they will be stripped of their dole for three months.

Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith will tomorrow unveil 'compulsory community placements' in an attempt to stop people living on benefits for years whilst unable to find work.

*Article 2 (scroungers):*

### **Unemployed to clear rubbish for one pound an hour**

Those out of work will be forced to take part in a punishing U.S.-style 'workfare' scheme involving gardening, clearing litter and other menial tasks for just £1 an hour in a new crackdown on scroungers.

And if they fail to turn up on time or work hard they will be stripped of their dole for three months.

Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith will tomorrow unveil 'compulsory community placements' in an attempt to stop people living on benefits for years whilst unable to find work.

*Article 3 (feckless unemployed):*

**Unemployed to clear rubbish for one pound an hour**

The feckless unemployed will be forced to take part in a punishing U.S.-style 'workfare' scheme involving gardening, clearing litter and other menial tasks for just £1 an hour in a new crackdown on unemployment.

And if they fail to turn up on time or work hard they will be stripped of their dole for three months.

Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith will tomorrow unveil 'compulsory community placements' in an attempt to stop people living on benefits for years whilst unable to find work.

*Article 4 (without bothering to find work):*

**Unemployed to clear rubbish for one pound an hour**

Those out of work will be forced to take part in a punishing U.S.-style 'workfare' scheme involving gardening, clearing litter and other menial tasks for just £1 an hour in a new crackdown on unemployment.

And if they fail to turn up on time or work hard they will be stripped of their dole for three months.

Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith will tomorrow unveil 'compulsory community placements' in an attempt to stop people living on benefits for years without bothering to find work.



*Article 5 (all terms):*

### **Unemployed to clear rubbish for one pound an hour**

The feckless unemployed will be forced to take part in a punishing U.S.-style 'workfare' scheme involving gardening, clearing litter and other menial tasks for just £1 an hour in a new crackdown on scroungers.

And if they fail to turn up on time or work hard they will be stripped of their dole for three months.

Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith will tomorrow unveil 'compulsory community placements' in an attempt to stop people living on benefits for years without bothering to look for work.

[Original article in full available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/money/news/article-1707517/Scroungers-to-clear-rubbish-for-1-an-hour.html>].

## Appendix 2: Questionnaire

How far do you agree with the following statements (circle one of: strongly agree; agree; neither agree nor disagree; disagree; or strongly disagree):

1. Those who have been receiving unemployment benefits for an extended period of time should be forced to work  
(Strongly agree) (agree) (neither agree nor disagree) (disagree) (strongly disagree)
2. The current government is performing well in difficult circumstances  
(Strongly agree) (agree) (neither agree nor disagree) (disagree) (strongly disagree)
3. In the UK, too many people are free riding off the hard work of others  
(Strongly agree) (agree) (neither agree nor disagree) (disagree) (strongly disagree)
4. The government spends too much on welfare/benefits  
(Strongly agree) (agree) (neither agree nor disagree) (disagree) (strongly disagree)
5. The top rate of tax should be reduced in order to make the UK more competitive internationally  
(Strongly agree) (agree) (neither agree nor disagree) (disagree) (strongly disagree)
6. Those on Jobseeker's Allowance can get up to £111.45 per week, this is too high  
(Strongly agree) (agree) (neither agree nor disagree) (disagree) (strongly disagree)
7. The exam to qualify for incapacity benefit should be more rigorous  
(Strongly agree) (agree) (neither agree nor disagree) (disagree) (strongly disagree)

If a general election were held tomorrow, how important would the stance of the parties on issues of welfare and benefits be in deciding who you will vote for?

(very important) (important) (unimportant) (not important at all)?

- a) Are you eligible to vote in UK general elections?
  - i. Yes      ii. no
  
- b) Gender?
  - i. Male      ii. female
  
- c) How many years old are you?
  - i. Younger than 18    ii. 18-22    iii. 23-30    iv. 30+
  
- d) Do you have an allegiance to any British party, and if so, which? (if no, skip to question e)
  - i. Labour    ii. Conservative    iii. Lib Dem    iv. UKIP    v. other
  
- e) How many days a week do you read a newspaper? (Either print or online edition)
  - i. Never      ii. 3 or less      iii. 4 to 6      iv. Everyday
  
- f) What is your main source of news (choose one)?
  - i. Television    ii. Radio    iii. Newspapers (either print or online edition)
  - iv. Blogs or other websites
  
- g) Family household income?
  - i) less than 20k    ii) 21-30k    iii) 31-40k    iv) 41-60k    v) 61-80k    vi) 81k
  
- h) Which newspaper would you be most likely to read?