

Framing, Polarization and Their Effects on Political Agency, Engagement and Climate Change Anxiety

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Background

Now more than ever, Americans have limitless access to media. The way we make decisions, and formulate our opinions, is largely predicated on how the media we consume resonates with us. (Carvalho et al. 2017) In this research, I studied how three different framing conditions impacted people’s willingness to engage in climate change from a political perspective, as well as their sense of self worth, or agency surrounding climate change. The frames used in my experiment were gain, loss and neutral frames.

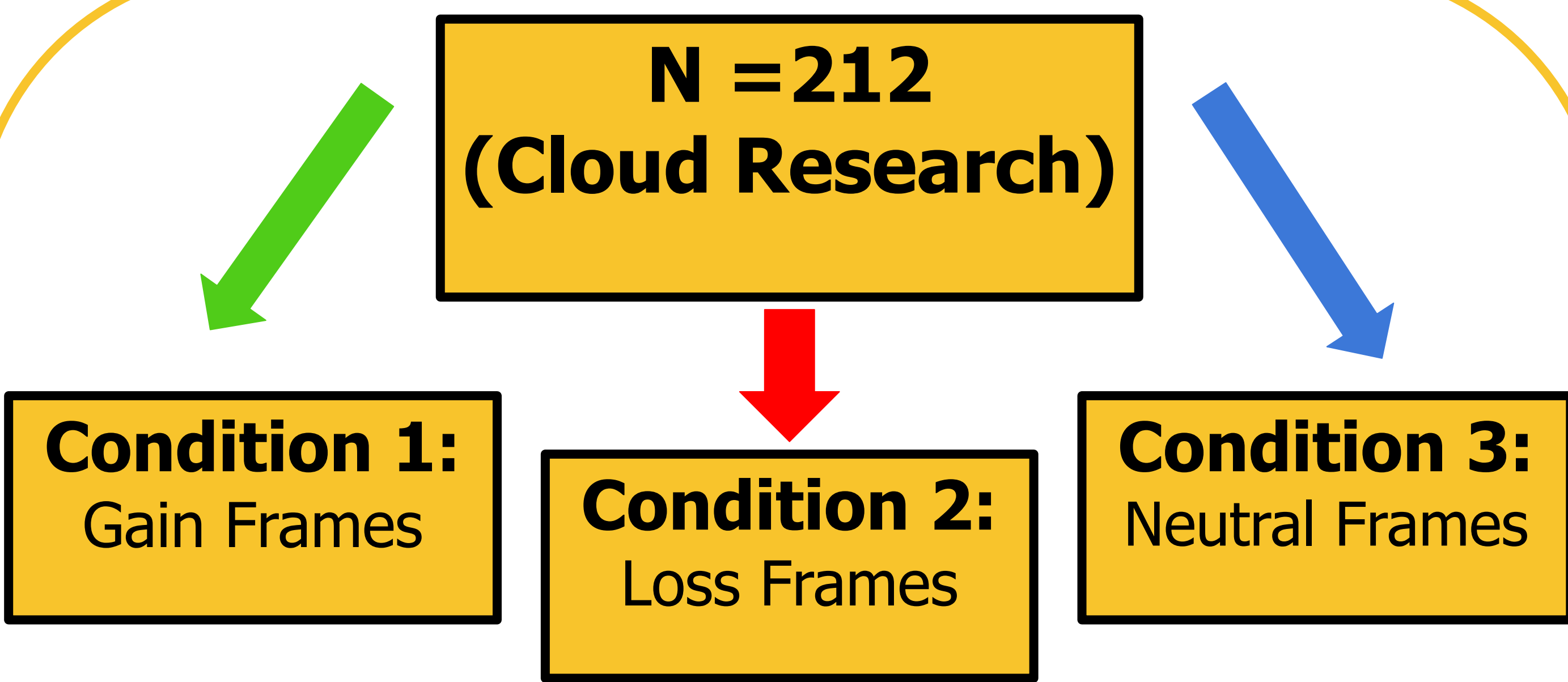


Through a survey experiment, I used five scales to test my variables. I discovered crucial information about the intersection of emotions, and political party identity.

Research Question(s)

Do framing conditions impact people’s willingness to take political action to combat climate change? Do certain frames scare people out of political action? How does the state of the American Political system impact these questions?

Method



Following viewing news headlines, all participants took a survey. Questions from the survey were compiled into scales that judged participants on these dependent measures:

- 1. Climate Anxiety (Clayton & Karazzia 2020)
- 2. Climate Agency
- 3. Political Agency
- 4. Climate Engagement
- 5. Political Engagement

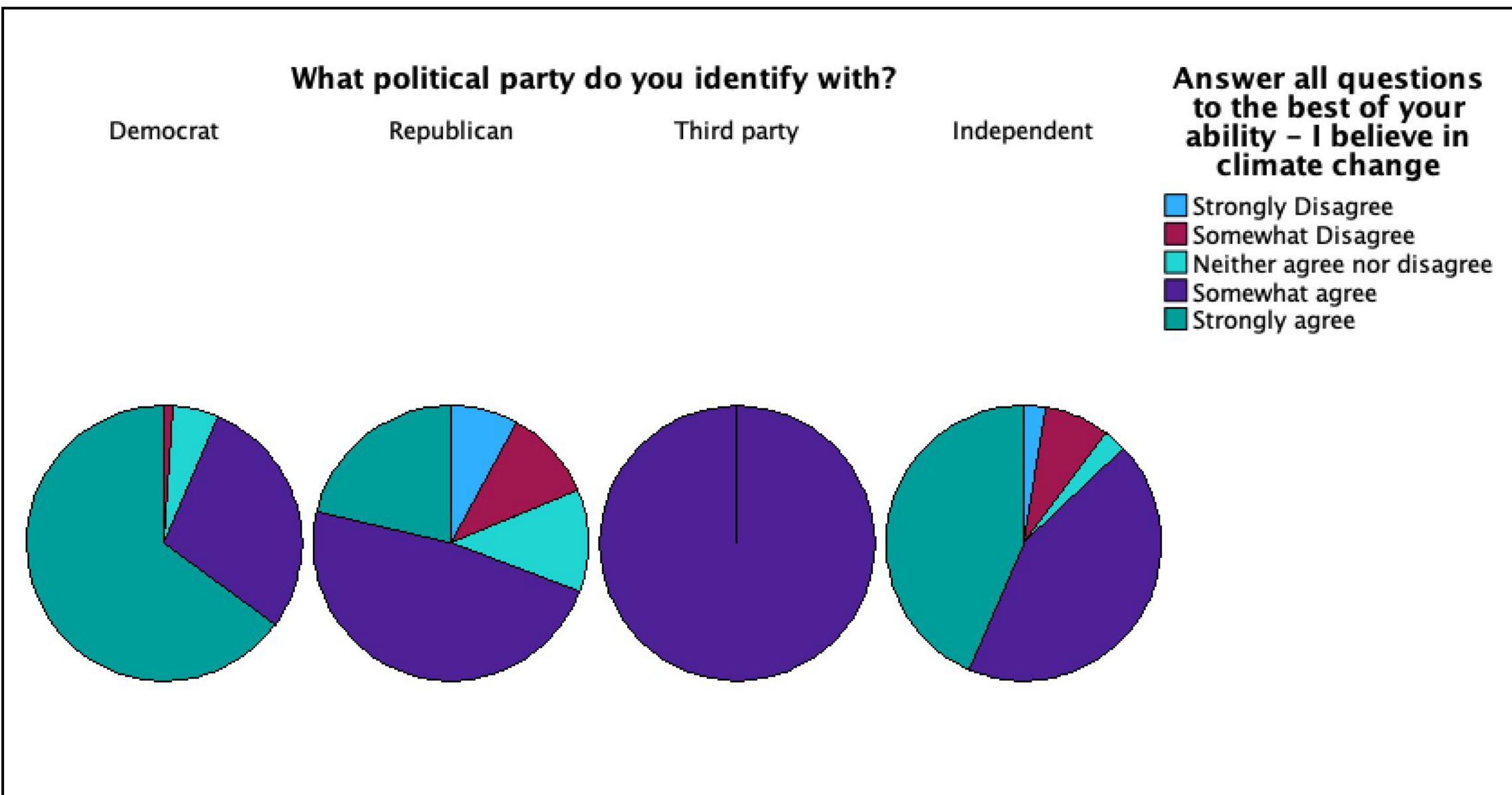
Using composite scale scores, correlations and ANOVA were conducted to learn more about the data set and answer the research question.

Conclusion

The goal of my research was to find a way to portray climate change news in a way that would limit anxiety, and promote political action and engagement. Ultimately, through statistical analysis on my data, I determined that people care less about how news is delivered, and more about how it impacts their political position, and resonates with their pre-existing values.

Results

Climate Change Acceptance as a Function of Political Party



No significant results were found supporting my hypothesis, that frame type had an affect on political engagement or agency. Significant correlation results were found suggesting that Americans make political decisions largely based on their political identity.

Scale Correlation Table										
Variable	n	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Climate Anxiety	206	19.9	8.5		.162*	.316*	.066	.319*	.047	.069
2. Climate Agency	211	21.0	4.5			.741**	.530**	.324**	-.324**	.383**
3. Climate Engagement	208	18.7	6.3				.536**	.495*	-.348**	.480**
4. Political Agency	208	17.5	4.1					.512**	.00	.237**
5. Political Engagement	198	12.1	3.4						.129	.134
6. Voting for Trump	212	2.76	1.77							-.830**
7. Voting for Harris	212	2.94	1.75							

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Future Research

Climate change is perhaps the most pressing political issue we face. Future research should examine how we communicate the severity of climate change, while accounting for political barriers, such as party identity.