FRAMING THE BASIC INCOME : AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY ON THE FRAMING IMPACT OF ARGUMENTS AND METAPHORS ON INDIVIDUALS' OPINION FORMATION

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TOWARDS AN IMPACT OF ARGUMENTS AND METAPHORS ON THE OPINION FORMATION PROCESS? (1)

- **Ambiguous idea : the basic income**
  - Definition : "*an income payed by a political community to all its members, on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirement" (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017)*

- **Psychological feasibility : How to legitimize the policy and make it desirable?** (De Wispelaere & Noguera, 2012)
  - Language is not neutral
  - Metaphors as cognitive mechanisms may help citizens to **make sense** of the political world

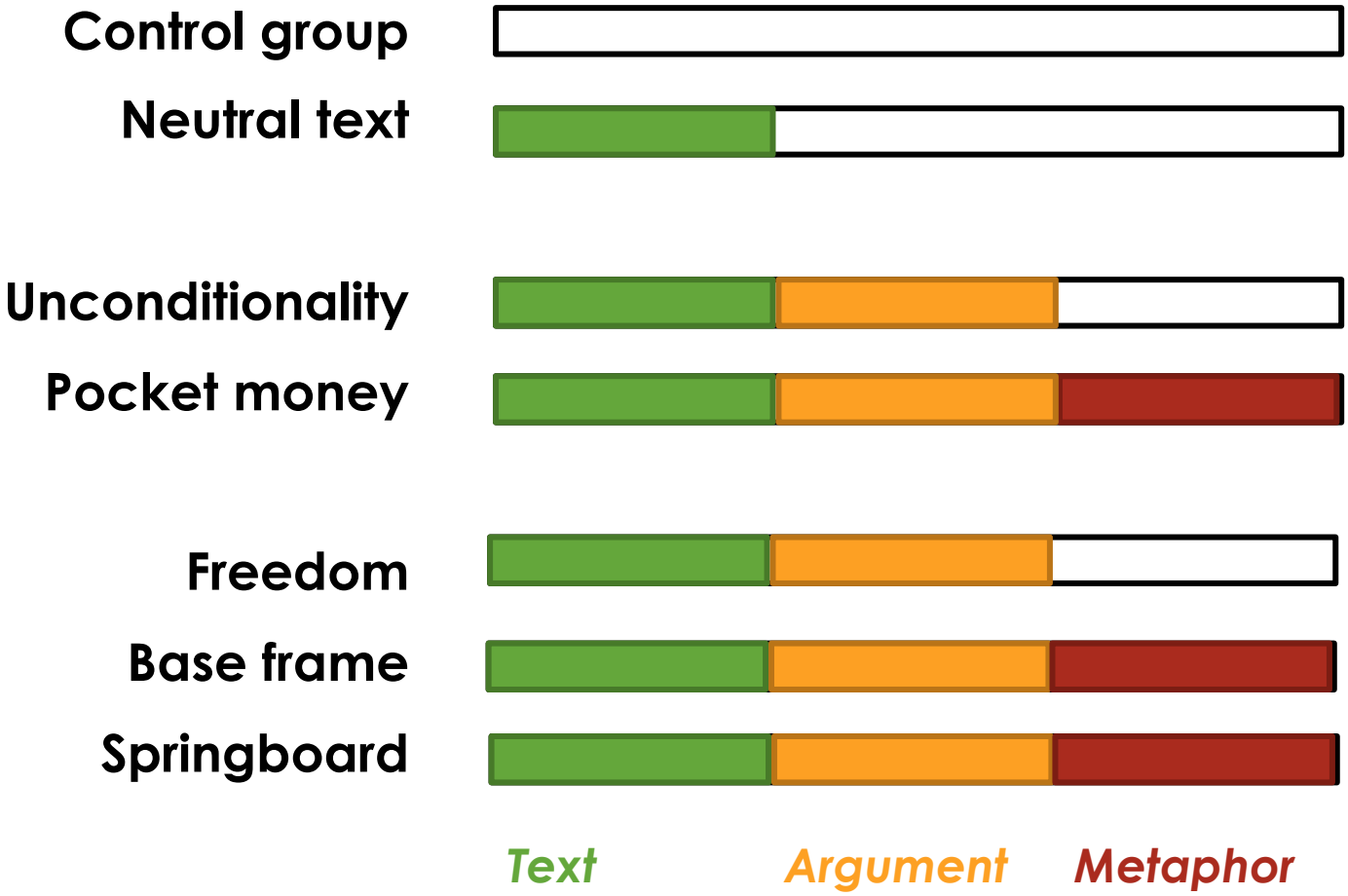
Language/Metaphors may impact the opinion formation process in a controversial debate

TOWARDS AN IMPACT OF ARGUMENTS AND METAPHORS ON THE OPINION FORMATION PROCESS? (2)

- **Political discourse and its framing impact**
  - Framing can be defined as "*select[ing] some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] it more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the described item*" (Entman, 1993)

- **Research question**
  - "How does the framing of an informative text impact the framing of the participants' argumentative text?"

DESIGN OF THE EXPERIMENT



THE EXPERIMENT

THE INFORMATIVE TEXT

Some people propose the idea of a universal allocation, also called – depending on the country – basic income, unconditional basic income or Citizen's income, which can be defined as: "an income payed by a political community to all its members, on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirement". ***[We could see it as (ARGUMENT/METAPHOR)]***

Although this idea has long been connected to a gentle utopia entertained by intellectuals (but defended by numerous Nobel Prizes in Economic Sciences), it slowly gained ground. It has punctually been tested in Canada, the United States, India; has been launched by Lula in Brazil; in Alaska, it exists by means of a redistribution of energetic benefits of the state.

In our country, the debate is underway. And you, what do you think?

THE ARGUMENTS AND THE METAPHORS (1)

Unconditionality 

"We could see it as an income that citizens receive from the State by the very fact that they are members of it."

Pocket money 

"We could see it as pocket money that citizens receive from the State like children receive it by the very fact that they are members of the family."

THE ARGUMENTS AND THE METAPHORS (2)

Freedom 

"We could see it as an income supplied by the State so that citizens can freely live their life without having to be concerned about material constraints."

Base frame 

"We could see it as a base frame supplied by the State so that the citizens can build their life freely without having to be concerned about material constraints."

Springboard 

"We could see it as a springboard supplied by the State so that the citizens can freely launch themselves into life without any material constraints."

THE EXPERIMENT

THE ARGUMENTATIVE TEXT

Explain in your own words in ten lines what is the basic income and to then write what you think of it.

"The universal income is an income paid by the State **to its citizens** because **its citizens belong to the State.** For us, citizens, this seems like **a good thing** since we're getting a certain amount of money from the State **while doing nothing**. However, I do not get the objective the State is aiming for by giving some sort of income to its citizens **because they are members of it**."

"I think it could be a good idea in the sense that **poverty will decrease**, **the purchasing power will increase** and **living conditions will improve**. On the other hand, I think it's inevitable to take into account de fact that **fraud will occur**."

OUR HYPOTHESES

How does the framing of an informative text impact the framing of the participants' argumentative text?

- *H1: If the informative text contains the* **unconditionality argument***, it is likely that the participants' argumentative texts will contain* ***arguments related to the conditions*** *of the BI implementation.*
- *H2: If the informative text contains the* ***freedom argument****, it is likely that the participants' argumentative texts will contain* ***arguments related to the consequences*** *of the BI implementation.*
- *H3: If the informative text contains a* ***metaphor****, it is likely that the participants' argumentative texts will contain* ***comparatively more arguments*** *than texts from participants of the related argument's group do.*

FINDINGS : DO ARGUMENTS AND/OR METAPHORS FRAME THE DEBATE? (1)

H1 : UNCONDITIONALITY -> CONDITIONS OF BI IMPLEMENTATION

Normative considerations:

-> Focus on the negative normative considerations justifying BI

- e.g. ***61.9%*** of the unconditionality group's respondents refer to a bad current social situation while ***30%*** of the respondents in the neutral group do so.

Pragmatic considerations:

-> Focus on the conditions of access to BI

FINDINGS : DO ARGUMENTS AND/OR METAPHORS FRAME THE DEBATE? (2)

H2 : FREEDOM -> CONSEQUENCES OF BI IMPLEMENTATION

Normative considerations:

-> No framing impact

Pragmatic considerations:

-> Focus on the positive consequences of BI implementation

- e.g. ***78.4%*** of the freedom group's respondents refer to BI's potential positive consequences while ***67.4%*** of the respondents in the neutral group do so.

FINDINGS : DO ARGUMENTS AND/OR METAPHORS FRAME THE DEBATE? (3)

H3 : METAPHORS STRENGTHEN THE ARGUMENTATIVE CONDITIONS' FRAMING IMPACT

- **Reinforces the arguments**
  - e.g. base frame -> greater presence of freedom-related arguments
- **Specifies the framing**
  - e.g. pocket money -> Belgian citizens as a family?
- **Counterproductive effect**
  - e.g. springboard -> lesser presence of freedom-arguments

TO CONCLUDE

- **The arguments managed to frame the debate**

- **Impact of metaphors**
  - Nuanced
  - Specific effects linked to specific metaphors

- **Relevance of the labelling of political concepts**

Framing the Basic Income: An experimental study on the framing impact of arguments and metaphors on individuals' opinion formation

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION !

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