

Issue Salience, Issue Ownership and Issue-Based Vote Choice: Evidence from Canada

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ABSTRACT

According to the issue ownership theory of voting, voters identify the political party that they feel is the most competent, or the most credible, proponent of a particular issue and cast their ballots for that issue owner. Yet, the actual micro-level mechanism of such behavior has seldom been examined in the literature. We assess this question and, in the process, offer a refinement to the original model of issue ownership. We argue that while party ownership of an issue is important to individual vote choice, its effect is mediated by the perceived salience of the issue in question; issue ownership should only affect the voting decision of those individuals who think that the issue is important. The conditional effect of issue salience on ownership-based voting is demonstrated through individual-level analyses of vote choice in the 1997 and 2000 Canadian federal elections. The results strongly suggest that salience should be more explicitly integrated into the formulation of the theory and its empirical testing.

The observed decline in the explanatory power of sociological determinants of vote choice over the past few decades has prompted scholars to more closely consider the role of political issues in individual electoral decisions. One explanation of issue-based vote choice that has emerged revolves around the idea of issue ownership (e.g., Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996). According to this theory, parties and their candidates attempt to mobilize voters by emphasizing issues on which they hold a (usually long-standing) reputation of competence. Political parties in turn receive support on the basis of those issues they are perceived to own at election time.

In this paper, we offer a refinement of the original model of issue ownership. We turn to a factor that has received little attention as an independent variable in the literature on voting behavior, namely issue salience. We argue that while party ownership of an issue is important to individual vote choice, its effect is mediated by the perceived salience of the issue in question. Specifically, we claim that a party's competence on an issue should not influence voter behavior unless the issue is considered important. By making the role of issue salience more explicit both in the formulation of issue ownership theory and in its empirical testing, we hope to provide an explanation of issue-based vote choice that is more complete and representative of actual voter behavior.

We begin by reviewing the previous work on issue ownership. We then discuss our refinement of the issue ownership model and test it by analyzing the individual-level determinants of vote choice in the 1997 and 2000 Canadian federal elections. The overall results support our main hypothesis that issue salience acts as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between issue ownership and vote choice.

Theoretical Framework

From the day a party forms, it begins to develop an issue reputation. Based primarily on the stances the party takes on major political issues, this image becomes further entrenched with the party's entry into government and the implementation of its policy agenda. Thus, leaders can come and go, but the party image largely endures. Examples of issue reputation abound. For instance, in the United States, the Democratic Party is known as the party best able to deal with issues of education, welfare, and civil rights, whereas the Republican Party historically has been seen as the party most competent at handling foreign affairs, national defense and crime (Petrocik 1996). Similar reputations exist in Great Britain, where the Labour Party is seen as the party most competent at managing health care and education, and the Conservatives typically enjoy a positive image with regard to taxes, crime, and defense issues (Budge and Farlie 1983).

These observations form the crux of the theory of issue ownership as developed by Budge and Farlie (1983) and Petrocik (1996).¹ The theory's aim is twofold. Its first objective is to provide an explanation of party (and candidate) behavior that focuses on the issues that are put forward by parties during election campaigns. The theoretical expectation is that parties put greater emphasis on issues that they "own." They do so in order to appear credible to voters: the issues being primed by a party have to be consistent with the party's long-standing image (see also Alesina 1988; Bowler 1990).

The theory's second goal is to provide an account of voter behavior based on the role of issue ownership in elections. According to that aspect of the theory, individuals make their

¹ This model constitutes a logical extension of earlier work done on party images and the issues parties emphasize during campaigns (Stokes 1963; RePass 1971; Trilling 1976).

voting decision by evaluating the competence that each party has in handling specific issues. Voters, the theory argues, can identify the party (or candidate) that they feel is the most competent, or the most credible, proponent of a particular issue. They then cast their ballots for the party that owns that particular issue. For example, in the American context, if parties highlight the issue of health care, voters will evaluate the competence of each party on that issue. Because Democrats are generally considered the owner of health care, voters will most likely prefer the Democratic Party over the Republican Party, on the basis of that issue. In this respect, ownership-based issue voting requires less information than proximity or directional theories of issue voting (e.g., Downs 1957; Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989; Merrill and Grofman 1999); according to the ownership model, voters only need to assess which party is the owner of the primed issue.

In recent years, several studies have provided strong empirical evidence that issue ownership is an important dimension of electoral campaigns, especially in the United States (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994; Sellers 1998; Simon 2002; Petrocik, Benoit and Hansen 2003; Blomqvist and Green-Pedersen 2004; Damore 2004; Holian 2004; Kaufmann 2004; Hayes 2005). Focusing mainly on the theory's first theoretical goal, this research shows that parties tend to strategically emphasize issues on which they are perceived to be more competent. They find that the election outcomes reflect, in good part, the relative salience of the various parties' "owned" issues.

Yet, the individual-level mechanism of issue ownership voting – the second aspect of the ownership theory – is seldom examined in those studies. So far, only two studies have provided an empirical test of the relationship between issue ownership and voter behavior at the micro level. The first one is by van der Brug (2004). Looking at survey data from the

1998 Dutch parliamentary election, van der Brug finds that issue ownership only affects voter party preferences indirectly. He argues that party competence serves to alter the voters' perceptions of the party's position on the left-right spectrum. This, in turn, colors their party preferences. But the reliability and generalizability of his results are hindered by his unusual operationalization of party ownership² and his use of "electoral utilities" rather than vote choice as the dependent variable.³ In another study, Nadeau et al. (2001) do find evidence of the direct impact of perceptions of party competence on individual vote choice in Canadian elections. They demonstrate, for instance, that perceived competence at handling issues of job creation, crime, welfare, and national unity significantly increase support for the federal Liberal Party of Canada, beyond the effects of other usual determinants of voter choice. This latter study thus lends support to the claim made by issue ownership theory that citizens take issue-handling reputations into account when deciding which party to vote for.

Our Refinement: Issue Salience Conditions Issue Ownership

While the hypothesis that party ownership influences voter choice appears fairly intuitive, and most aggregate-level tests of the issue ownership model appear to corroborate this claim, a critical element seems to be downplayed in the conceptualization of issue ownership voting and missing altogether from the individual-level empirical evidence offered so far to support the theory. That omitted factor is issue salience. We argue that the impact of issue reputation on individual vote choice is mediated by issue salience.⁴ In other words, issue

² He looks at the proximity between parties and voters in terms of their issue priorities.

³ Van der Brug defines "electoral utility" as "the degree of utility a voter would derive from voting for a party" (van der Brug 2004: 215).

⁴ Issue salience is not an unknown variable to standard (i.e., non-ownership) models of issue voting. While several studies (e.g., Hinckley, Hofstetter and Kessel 1974; Markus and Converse 1979; Niemi and Bartels 1985) find that salience has no direct effect on voting behavior, issue salience has been shown to have an important

ownership should only affect the decision of those voters who think that the issue in question is important. Indeed, why should knowing that the Democrats (or Labour in Britain, or the Liberals in Canada) are the owner of the health care issue matter for an individual's vote if she thinks that health care is irrelevant?

The existence of this conditional effect of salience on issue ownership voting is hinted at by a few studies. RePass (1971) observes that voters perceive sharper differences among political parties in terms of their issue-handling capability on those issues that are salient to them. And in their examination of issues in the 2002 French presidential election, Mayer and Tiberj (2004) suggest that, while by 1995 most French voters already considered Le Pen's Front National as the party best able at handling crime, this factor probably bolstered that party's vote share in 2002 because the issue of insecurity suddenly became highly salient (see also Martin 1998 for a similar reasoning).

But, in most discussions of issue ownership voting, issue salience remains an implicit dimension. Despite the fact that there is rarely a consensus on the importance of political issues across voters (Rivers 1988), the widespread salience of major political issues to all members of the public is often taken for granted in aggregate analyses of issue ownership.⁵ In addition, salience has never been explicitly modeled in the previous micro-level tests of issue ownership voting. This is particularly surprising given the prominent role of issue salience in the ownership model of *candidate* behavior. We argue that salience has to be fully integrated

mediating effect in some models of issue voting (e.g., Rabinowitz, Prothro and Jacoby 1982; Krosnick 1988, 1990; Fournier et al. 2003).

⁵ In his work, Petrocik generally assumes that issue salience is determined by political parties. However, in his most recent study, he and his co-authors find that parties do not always succeed in priming voters' issue concerns during campaigns (Petrocik, Benoit and Hansen 2003). This conclusion suggests that citizens have some autonomy in terms of deciding which issues are important to them.

into the formulation of the theory and its empirical testing because it constitutes a key element in the individual-level mechanism of issue ownership voting.

To summarize our claims, we expect that the effect of issue ownership on individual vote choice is conditional upon the perceived salience of the issue. If the issue is not salient, ownership should not affect, or should have less of an effect, on party support. If the issue is salient, then ownership should have an effect, or more of an effect, on vote choice.

Data and Methods

To test our proposed refinement of issue ownership theory, we turn to the 1997 and 2000 federal elections in Canada. These two elections are attractive for both theoretical and empirical reasons. First, like most advanced industrial democracies, Canada provides a multidimensional political environment in which to examine the ownership effects of several distinct issues. Second, as most work done on issue ownership has been restricted to two-party systems, it is a good test of how transportable this concept is to a system with five main parties and less consensus on issue-handling competence.⁶ In that respect, the 1997 and 2000 Canadian federal elections were very similar, with the incumbent Liberal Party being re-elected twice and the opposition vote getting split between four parties. Third, the 1997 and 2000 Canadian Election Study (CES) surveys provide innovative and relatively underutilized data resources that allow us to adequately test the ownership and salience hypotheses. Indeed, these two CES are among the first individual-level election surveys to provide measures about

⁶ While there is rarely a clear-cut consensus about the ownership of particular political issues in the Canadian context as Table 1 will show, individual voters are able to identify issue owners. For instance, between 77 and 87% of respondents to the 1997 CES find one party (or none) to be the most competent on each of the five issues.

respondents' perceptions of both issue salience and party reputation on a variety of policy issues.

For each election, our dependent variable is reported vote choice. Five main parties were competing in the June 1997 Canadian federal election: the incumbent Liberal Party, the Progressive-Conservative Party (PC), the New Democratic Party (NDP), the Reform Party, and the Bloc Québécois. The exact same five parties were competing in the November 2000 election, the only difference being that the Reform Party had been renamed the Canadian Alliance. We examine the effects of salience and ownership of five key election issues on voting behavior in the 1997 contest. Those five issues are: preserving national unity,⁷ creating jobs, cutting taxes, protecting social programs, and fighting crime. In the 2000 survey, the national unity issue is not available,⁸ but two new issues can be added to the analysis: improving health care and protecting the environment, for a total of six issues in that contest.

Independent Variables

Issue Salience For the purpose of explaining voter choice from the point of view of issue ownership theory, it is critical to know what voters think are the most important issues and the most competent parties on those issues. In both surveys, issue salience is measured by the following closed-ended question: "How important are the following issues to

⁷ The "national unity" issue was interpreted in the context of several important events. The first was the ongoing existence of the Quebec separatist movement and its near win of a referendum on Quebec sovereignty only a year and a half before the 1997 federal election. The second event that occurred during the 1997 election campaign was the Reform Party's much-talked-about TV ad attacking Quebec federal political leaders (including Prime minister Jean Chrétien and PC leader Jean Charest) for their inability to solve the unity issue problem. For more details on this, see Nevitte et al. (2000).

⁸ More specifically, a question on ownership is available but one on salience (which is crucial to our argument) is missing.

you personally in this election?”⁹ For each issue, respondents were asked to rate the importance they attached to the issue by choosing between the following answers: very important, somewhat important, or not very important. Following the practice of Fournier et al. (2003), we represent respondents’ perceptions of issue salience as dichotomous variables, with “very important” coded 1 and “somewhat important” and “not very important” coded 0. The “don’t know” responses were excluded.

Very few respondents – less than 3% of the national sample in both CES surveys – answered “don’t know” to the issue salience questions, indicating that almost everybody was able to estimate the extent to which each issue was important to them. In the aggregate, the political issue that was most salient to the Canadian public at the time of the 1997 federal election was the creation of jobs (84% said it was very important to them personally), followed by crime (70%), social programs (62%), national unity (55%), and tax cuts (43%). Canadians’ issue priorities were slightly different in 2000. Health care was the most salient issue (85% said it was very important to them personally), followed by crime (72%), job creation (70%), the environment (56%), tax cuts (55%) and social programs (41%). In both surveys, the issue salience variables are only weakly correlated with one another, with Pearson’s *R*s between .00 and .25 depending on the pair of issues. This suggests that a substantial amount of heterogeneity exists in voters’ individual evaluations of the salience of these issues.

⁹ The salience items constitute the very first set of questions that were asked in the 1997 and 2000 campaign-wave survey questionnaires.

Issue Ownership

Issue ownership is determined by the following question: “In your view, which party would be best at...?”¹⁰ For each of the issues discussed above, respondents were thus asked to name which party (if any) they considered as most competent at handling the issue. Consistent with Nadeau et al. (2001), we recode responses into three-point scales for each party and each issue: the respondent is coded +1 if she thinks that the given party is the most competent on the given issue, -1 if she thinks that another party is the most competent, and 0 if she finds no particular party to be competent. For example, if a respondent names the Liberals as the party best able to create jobs, then the jobs ownership variable for the Liberal Party takes on the value of +1 (for that respondent) while all four other jobs ownership variables take on the value of -1 (for that same respondent). If that respondent is unable or unwilling to name any party as most competent on another issue, say crime, then her score on all five crime ownership variables would be 0.

Analysis of the CES survey data confirms that respondents can identify issue owners – a precondition for the issue ownership model of voting. As Table 1 shows, between 77% and 87% of individuals surveyed in 1997 find one party to be the most competent on each of these issues.¹¹ In 2000, if we exclude the environment issue where 36% do not identify a most competent party, between 82% and 94% of respondents name one party (or none) as issue owner. According to the plurality of those surveyed, the Liberals were deemed the owner of the national unity and crime issues in 1997, and the jobs issue in 1997 and 2000. The NDP received the largest share of the responses for owner of the social programs issue in both elections, and of health care and the environment in 2000. The Progressive-Conservative

¹⁰ In both CES, the party ownership questions were asked towards the end of the campaign-wave survey questionnaire, just before the party identification items.

¹¹ These percentages include respondents answering that no party was owner.

Party was identified by a plurality of respondents as owner of the taxes issue in 1997 but lost that image to the Canadian Alliance in 2000. The Alliance was also perceived as slightly more competent than the Liberals on crime at the time of the 2000 election.

[Table 1 about here]

As these latter examples suggest, there, however, is rarely a consensus about the ownership of certain issues in this five party system. Ownership of the taxes, social programs and crime issues are particularly contested. Even the NDP ownership of health care and the environment in 2000 appears hotly contested by the Liberals.

Such variation in perceptions of issue competence has led some scholars to criticize the general use of “party best at” questions for measuring issue ownership (e.g., Kuechler 1991; van der Brug 2004). Their argument is that these survey responses are likely to be reflections of partisanship. We too find patterns suggesting that partisan identification does, to some extent, inform perceptions of ownership in the CES data. For instance, in the 1997 survey, about 24% of respondents named the same party as most competent on all five issues; this proportion is 16% among non-identifiers, while it is 29% among party identifiers (who tend to name their party). Also, non-identifiers are about twice as likely as party identifiers to answer “don’t know” to questions about competence, although the total number of “don’t know” answers in itself is not particularly high.¹² The 2000 data reveal very similar patterns.¹³

However, the advantages to using this measure in our current study outweigh the disadvantages. First, this question more directly captures the underlying concept of party ownership than other questions available in this survey or those employed by others in similar

¹² In 1997, the percentage of “don’t know” responses ranged from 13% to 16%, except for crime (23%); see upper part of Table 1.

¹³ About 26% of people surveyed in 2000 named the same party as owner on all six issues; this proportion is 17% among non-identifiers, while it is 30% among party identifiers.

research. Van der Brug (2004), for example, claims to avoid the potential bias inherent in these questions by using information on the issue priorities of voters and parties to tap into issue ownership. Yet, the questions he uses are only informative of issue ownership *if* one makes the further strong assumption that parties only give priority to issues that they own. This is a central hypothesis of the issue ownership theory, one that needs to be tested, not asserted. Moreover, as research by proponents of the issue ownership theory has demonstrated (see Budge and Farlie 1983), this claim is not necessarily true with regard to all issues; political parties typically emphasize a common set of major issues in a given election campaign, even if their credibility on those issues varies. It is the goal of our research to assess the impact of issue ownership as distinct from issue salience, and thus, we need to employ a measure of mass perceptions of party issue competence.

Second, even if there is a correlation between partisanship and “party best at” survey responses, the extent to which it is problematic for this analysis should not be overstated. Almost half (47%) of the 1997 CES sample did not self-identify as a strong or very strong partisan of any party. Of those who did, many partisan identifiers were willing to name a party other than their own as issue owner. The proportion of partisans not naming their party as most competent in 1997 is about 25% on the jobs issue, 37% on national unity, 38% on crime, 40% on social programs, and 46% on taxes. Again, data from the 2000 CES reveal roughly similar patterns.¹⁴ Perceptions of party competence, thus, are far from being entirely predetermined by partisan identification.¹⁵

¹⁴ In 2000, 44% of the sample did not self-identify as a strong or very strong partisan of any party. The proportion of partisans not naming their party as most competent is about 29% on the jobs issue, 38% on crime, 41% on health care, 44% on environment, 45% on tax cuts, and 52% on social programs.

¹⁵ While acknowledging that a projection effect is real, previous work done in the U.S. (RePass 1971; Trilling 1976; Petrocik 1996) and Canada (Meisel 1972; Nadeau and Blais 1990; Nadeau et al. 2001; Bélanger 2003) has also shown that questions about the “party best at” do reveal genuine party images of issue competence once

A further complication of testing the effects of issue ownership stems from the choice of issues presented in the 1997 and 2000 CES. The ownership theory of voting assumes that voters are casting their ballots on the basis of valence issues. These are issues where all actors share a common policy stance, but disagree on the means of achieving them (Stokes 1963). In this analysis, “increasing jobs,” “fighting crime,” “improving health care” and “protecting the environment” can be treated as valence issues. However, the other three issues, “preserving national unity,” “cutting taxes” and “preserving social programs,” do not fit this definition. Decreasing taxes and protecting social programs, for example, are not universally agreed upon goals. Likewise, in the context of the standing debate about Quebec secession, the goal of reinforcing the Canadian state is also controversial.

For this second set of issues, known as position issues, the theory’s claim that issue ownership should lead directly to vote choice does not necessarily apply. If an individual does not share a party’s issue stance, then it is irrelevant that she finds that particular party to be the owner of the policy position. To give an example, if the voter does not favor tax cuts, then the fact that the Progressive-Conservative Party owns that issue should not increase the voter’s probability of supporting it. Consequently, to properly test the ownership theory in the case of these three position issues, we create a new set of variables that measure issue ownership *given* a respondent’s shared preferences on that issue. Descriptions concerning the creation of these new position-dependent ownership variables for the national unity, taxes and social programs issues can be found in the Appendix, together with more details about all other variables included in our analyses.

contamination from party identification is controlled for. We discuss our strategy for controlling for partisanship in the model estimation section.

Model Estimation

To estimate the effects of issue salience and ownership on individual-level vote choice, we conduct a series of logistic regressions. This form of analysis is chosen over a multinomial logit because it allows us to test the effect of negative issue ownership separate from that of no issue ownership. In each logit regression, we analyze the likelihood that a respondent to the 1997 or the 2000 CES voted for one of the five main federal parties. As explanatory variables, we include measures of salience (*S*) and party ownership (*O*) for each of the issues discussed previously. Recall that for the three position issues – preserving national unity, cutting taxes and protecting social programs – the influence of ownership on vote choice depends on the voter’s programmatic preferences. As an advancement over past analyses of Canadian issue ownership, we therefore include interactive terms to measure the ownership of these position issues given a respondent’s preference on that issue (*OxPref*).¹⁶ A further set of interactive variables is added to test our central claim that the impact of issue ownership is conditional upon issue salience (*SxO*).¹⁷ Finally, we include a set of control variables found to be informative of recent Canadian electoral behavior (see Nevitte et al. 2000; Blais et al. 2002). These socio-demographic factors consist of age, gender, education, income, religion and region.

¹⁶ Consistent with the recommendations of Friedrich (1982), Golder (2003) and Braumoeller (2004), we separately include the voter programmatic preference measures on national unity, taxes and social programs in the estimations. In the case of the last two, the measures are perfectly (and negatively) correlated; as described in the Appendix, support for tax cuts is equivalent to opposition to the maintenance of social programs. Thus, we only include one variable – preference for tax cuts – in the regressions. While we have no theoretically based expectations about the independent effect of the preference variables on vote choice, their inclusion is necessary econometrically so as to “avoid nonsensical models” (Golder 2003: 436).

¹⁷ The inclusion of the variable *Ownership* in two separate interactive terms creates a “tacit interaction” between the *Salience* and *Voter Preference* variables. Following the recommendation of Braumoeller (2004), we therefore include a set of *SxPref* terms.

Given that partisans are more likely to consider their party as the owner of an issue, we need to control for the effect of partisanship when estimating our models. This can be accomplished, to some degree, by either introducing systematic controls for partisan identification to the analysis or by limiting the analysis to those respondents who do not identify with the party in question. We chose the latter, more restrictive approach. While we cannot fully remove the effect of partisanship on a respondent's perceptions of issue ownership, we can mitigate its effect by excluding, for example, Liberal partisans from the analysis of Liberal Party vote, NDP partisans from the analysis of the NDP vote, etc.¹⁸ With this design which includes only those respondents not otherwise prone to supporting that party, we can be more confident that any positive effect of ownership on vote choice reflects the impact of party competence rather than partisanship. To verify the robustness of our findings, we present the results of analyses conducted with partisanship controls and the full sample of respondents in the Appendix (Tables A1 and A2).¹⁹ As those tables reveal, testing the issue ownership model on non-partisans and partisans alike yields similar substantive results.

Findings

What factors influence vote choice? Tables 2 and 3 present the results of our analyses of party vote in the 1997 and 2000 Canadian federal elections, respectively. Turning our

¹⁸ Contributing to our decision to run a series of separate logit models was the fact that partisans cannot be selectively excluded from analyses of their party's vote in a multinomial logit. The option of excluding *all* respondents professing partisan preferences from a MNL introduces severe data restrictions; for example, with this approach, the number of observations for our 1997 analyses would drop from 1517 to 571.

¹⁹ Consistent with past analyses of the 1997 and 2000 CES data (e.g., Nevitte et al. 2000; Nadeau et al. 2001; Blais et al. 2002), the partisanship variables are statistically significant and exhibit strong influences over vote choice.

attention first to the standard socio-demographic control variables, we find that their influence on voting decisions varies across political parties. Following a trend witnessed in past elections in Canada and elsewhere (see Dalton 1996; Gidengil et al., 1999), region stands out as a strong predictor of vote likelihood. Indeed, of the six sets of control variables, it is the only one which proves statistically significant across the various logit models. Age, gender, education and religion (i.e., whether a respondent is Catholic or not) also shape the choice of specific political parties. In each case, the direction of these effects appears consistent with the socio-demographic characteristics of the electoral bases of these parties.²⁰

[Tables 2 and 3 about here]

Conditional Effects of Issue Salience on Issue Ownership

The interpretation of the effect of the central variables of interest – issue salience and issue ownership – on vote choice is less straightforward. Because we posit that the influence of issue ownership is dependent upon the salience of the issue, we model this effect using interaction terms. When interpreting the results of regression models with interactive variables, we need to remember that the effect of one variable is conditional upon the level of another (Friedrich 1982). As a result, the coefficients for the issue salience (*S*) terms reported in Tables 2 and 3 only capture the effect of the special case in which ownership of those issues is zero. In the case of the ownership (*O*) variables, their estimated effect on vote choice presented in Tables 2 and 3 is limited to an even more restrictive set of circumstances; they

²⁰ Previous research (Nevitte et al. 2000; Blais et al. 2002) has demonstrated that the NDP disproportionately attracts female voters, the Liberal Party and the Bloc Québécois disproportionately draw Catholics and, conversely, Catholics are underrepresented in the Reform Party/Canadian Alliance, and that the PC disproportionately attracted male and highly educated voters in 2000 but not in 1997. There is less systematic evidence confirming our findings about party choice among younger non-partisan voters; age is generally found to be a better predictor of turnout than of actual party choice in these studies.

measure the effects of ownership when the salience is equal to zero, but only for valence issues.

While these special cases do reveal some information, to assess the validity of our central hypothesis, we need to calculate the effect of issue ownership when issue salience is equal to one. We present the results of these calculations in Tables 4 and 5 along with the coefficients of ownership for both valence and position issues when issue salience is equal to zero. It is clear that the influence of party ownership is dependent upon the issue being salient to the voter. As shown in the top half of Table 4, the effect of issue ownership on party vote in the 1997 election is only significant in ten cases when the issue in question is considered unimportant. On the other hand, as shown in the bottom half of the table, fifteen of the 25 conditional coefficients prove statistically significant and are of the expected positive sign. Ten of those cases support our further claim that issue ownership should have a *larger* impact on vote probability when the issue is salient than when it is considered irrelevant. Results for the 2000 party vote (presented in Table 5) confirm that the effect of issue ownership is mostly conditional upon issue salience, by providing similar evidence in the context of a different election campaign.²¹

[Tables 4 and 5 about here]

These regression results thus suggest the need to control for issue salience when modeling issue ownership effects on vote choice. This conclusion is confirmed by likelihood-ratio tests (King 1989), the results of which appear at the bottom of Tables 4 and 5. The

²¹ The top half of Table 5 shows that the effect of issue ownership on party vote in the 2000 election is only significant in nine cases when the issue in question is considered unimportant, whereas the bottom half of the table indicates that eighteen of the 30 conditional coefficients prove statistically significant and are of the expected positive sign. In fourteen of those cases, the effect of ownership is greater when the issue is salient as opposed to not salient.

likelihood-ratio tests indicate that our conditional models of issue ownership are closer to the true specification of vote choice than the standard ownership models for almost all political parties in both elections; the improvement in model fit is statistically significant in nine regressions out of ten.²²

While supportive of our hypotheses and model choice, these data do not show that issue ownership plays a role in voting decisions with regard to *every* issue and *every* party. Ownership of the crime issue, for example, proves insignificant in three out of the five 1997 party vote models regardless of the level of issue salience. While detractors of issue ownership theory might interpret these results as evidence of the approach's limitations, a closer look at the data reveals patterns consistent with the theory's expectations. In the case of the crime issue, almost one third of all 1997 respondents cannot identify an issue owner.²³ Given that the identification of an issue owner is a prerequisite of the ownership theory, it comes as little surprise that these variables have almost no effect on vote choice. Thus, rather than weakening the claims of the ownership model, these negative findings strengthen them.

Predicted Probabilities

The logistic regression coefficients in Tables 4 and 5 give the reader an idea of the statistical significance and direction of ownership's effects on vote choice. But, to fully grasp the impact of these conditional variables on a respondent's likelihood of voting for a particular party, we consider some typical voter scenarios. In Table 6, we list the predicted probabilities

²² The only case in which the conditional model does not significantly improve the fit of the standard ownership model is for the Bloc Québécois in the 2000 election (fifth logit model in Table 5), where the fit improvement (chi-square value) fails to reach the .10 level.

²³ Of the five issue ownership questions in 1997, the crime question has the highest level of "don't know" responses with 22.7%. An additional 8.4% refused to respond or answered "other," "all of them" or "none."

of a voter supporting the Reform Party and the NDP in 1997, and the Liberal Party in 2000, on the basis of the social programs, jobs and environment issues, respectively, under differing values of issue salience and ownership. For these calculations, the values of all other issue salience and ownership variables were assumed to be zero, and all control variables were held at their means. Because the first example involves a position issue, we make the further assumption that the respondent supports the preservation of social programs (*voter soc. program preference=1*).

[Table 6 about here]

These examples clearly demonstrate the “value-added” of issue salience for the effects of issue ownership on individual vote choice. If we start with the scenario typically modeled in ownership theory research – where ownership=1, but salience=0 – we find that our respondent would support the Reform Party with a .705 probability. However, once that issue is considered very important (salience=1), that probability increases to .721. If, on the other hand, another party is considered the owner of the tax issue – the dominant view of Canadian voters – the probability of voting for the Reform Party starts lower, and drops even further when the issue becomes salient. The same patterns are repeated in the hypotheticals involving support for the Liberal Party on the basis of the environment issue and support for the NDP on the basis of the jobs issue.²⁴ As the latter example shows, even when the overall probability of voting for a party is small, that probability changes markedly when the issue in question becomes salient.

²⁴ These patterns of probability change are representative of those found in hypotheticals involving every party and every issue. For the 1997 election, in 16 out of 25 cases, the probability of voting for the issue owner increases when the issue becomes salient (salience changing from 0 to 1). In 17 out of 25 cases, the probability of voting for a party that is not the issue owner decreases when the issue becomes salient. For the 2000 election, the respective number of cases is 18 and 19 (out of 30 cases).

Regional Variation

The central goal of these analyses has been to explore the relationship between issue ownership, issue salience and vote choice. But in demonstrating the conditionality of issue ownership upon issue salience, the regression results have further reinforced the centrality of Canadian geography in voting behavior. As discussed earlier, regions emerge as significant determinants of vote likelihood for all political parties in both elections. It is therefore worthwhile to explore how much of an effect a change in region has on a respondent's party choice. Looking back to the hypotheticals constructed in Table 6, how would the likelihood of voting for the Reform Party change if the respondent was in Western Canada – a Reform Party stronghold – as opposed to the reserve category of Ontario? Conversely, how would the probability of voting for the NDP differ if the respondent was in Quebec – a veritable NDP wasteland? And how would the likelihood of supporting the Liberals vary outside Ontario?

Table 7 displays the probabilities of voting for an issue owner by region.²⁵ In the first two columns, we repeat the values reported in Table 6 for ballots cast in Ontario, the reserve regional category. Looking across the columns, we find that the likelihood of supporting a party when it is perceived as the issue owner is higher in its stronghold regions and lower in areas where it is traditionally weaker. And this pattern is maintained regardless of whether or not the issue is salient. As we would expect, we find increased vote probability for the Reform Party in Western Canada and for the NDP in the Atlantic provinces, relative to other regions. In Quebec, where the NDP has failed to successfully compete with the Liberal Party

²⁵ Because the Reform Party received so few votes in Quebec in 1997, the logistic analysis of Reform Party vote cannot be conducted in that province.

and the Bloc Québécois, a vote for the NDP is less likely. The probability to support the Liberal Party is highest in Ontario, a traditional Liberal stronghold.

[Table 7 about here]

That said, these regional differences do not eclipse the conditional effect of issue salience on issue ownership. In every region, a voter's probability of supporting the Reform Party, the NDP or the Liberals increases as the issue becomes salient. Thus, while real, regional effects are not driving ownership-based vote choice.

Conclusion

Work done on voting since the 1970s has suggested that sociological factors are not the only or the central determinants of vote choice (e.g., Nie, Verba and Petrocik 1976; Särilvik and Crewe 1983). Our paper continues in this tradition. Drawing upon individual-level survey data from the 1997 and 2000 Canadian Election Studies, we find evidence that party reputation influences an individual's voting behavior. A voter is more likely to support a political party if that party is perceived to be the most competent on a given issue.

But the micro-level relationship between issue competence and party choice is not as simple as that articulated and tested so far by the issue ownership literature. Rather, our analysis demonstrates that the influence of issue ownership on vote choice is conditional upon the perceived salience of the issue. A party's issue competence will affect a voter's behavior *only* if the issue in question is considered salient. The role of issue salience, so prominent in the aggregate-level analyses of the issue ownership theory of candidate behavior, therefore needs to be more explicitly integrated into the formulation and testing of the ownership theory of voting.

This revision of the original issue ownership theory has both empirical and practical implications. First, the fact that our conditional model is closer to the true specification calls into question the conclusions reached by scholars who fail to directly measure the role of issue salience in issue ownership models of voter behavior. Turning again to the CES data, we would have concluded that ownership was, in general, a weaker determinant of voting behavior if we had not accounted for the mediating role of issue salience.²⁶ When combined with the fact that some studies also fail to compensate for the positional nature of some issues (see, for example, Nadeau et al. 2001), it is clear that the validity and generalizability of these earlier conclusions must be reassessed in light of this study's findings.

Second, recognition of the centrality of issue salience has practical implications for the behavior of vote-seeking political parties. While past work on issue ownership may have suggested that party reputation, as distinct from party issue positions, is critical for vote choice, we demonstrate that reputation alone is insufficient. Parties need to be more concerned about conveying the significance of "their" issues to the public. The importance of this conclusion is further strengthened by the recent findings that voters rarely share the same issue priorities as each other or as political parties in the system (Rivers 1988; Duch, Palmer and Anderson 2000; Fournier et al. 2003; Petrocik, Benoit and Hansen 2003). Our research suggests that this heterogeneity of perceived issue importance has real effects which not only color the significance of issue ownership but may determine the outcome of any given election.

²⁶ In comparison with the conditional ownership coefficients from the logit regressions presented in Tables 4 and 5, the marginal effect of ownership variables in models without issue salience and its interaction with issue ownership is smaller in over half of the issue-party cases. And as mentioned earlier, likelihood-ratio tests confirm that the gain in model fit is statistically significant when issue salience and its interaction with issue ownership are added to the vote choice models.

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Appendix

Description of variables (with original variable names in parentheses)

Vote: The dependent variable is coded 1 if the respondent reported voting for a given party and 0 otherwise. Five vote variables are created, one for each of the following parties: Liberal Party, Progressive-Conservative Party, New Democratic Party, Reform Party/Canadian Alliance and the Bloc Québécois. Those who responded “other,” “none,” “don’t know,” or who refused to answer were excluded from the analysis. (variable *pesa4* in 1997 CES; *pesa3a* and *pesa3b* in 2000 CES)

Issue Salience: These variables measure a respondent’s attitude on the perceived importance of a given issue. The value 1 is assigned to issues considered “very important,” and 0 to issues considered “somewhat important” and “not very important.” (variables *cpsa2a*, *cpsa2c*, *cpsa2d*, *cpsa2f* and *cpsa2g* in 1997 CES; *cpsa2a*, *cpsa2b*, *cpsa2e*, *cpsa2f*, *cpsa2g* and *cpsa2h* in 2000 CES)

Issue Ownership: A three-level ordinal scale measures a party’s perceived ownership of a given issue. We code the ownership variables +1 if the respondent names the party in question as the most competent party on an issue, 0 if the respondent could not identify an owner (he/she responded “none,” “other,” or “don’t know” or refused to answer the question), and -1 if the respondent names another party. (variables *cpsj1a*, *cpsj1b*, *cpsj1c*, *cpsj1f* and *cpsj1g* in 1997 CES; *cpsj1a*, *cpsj1d*, *cpsj1e*, *cpsj1g*, *cpsj1h* and *cpsj1j* in 2000 CES)

For the position issues, additional ownership variables were formed which take into account the respondent’s programmatic preferences. These variables are listed in Table 1 as *Taxes: O×Pref*, *Social Programs: O×Pref*, and *Unity: O×Pref*. As their labels suggest, they were created by interacting the above three-level ownership scales with dichotomous variables indicating the respondent’s support for (1) or opposition to (0) the given issue position. Variable *cpse1a* in the 1997 CES (*cpspla25* in the 2000 CES) is used to derive voter preferences on cutting taxes. Variable *cpspla24* in the 2000 CES is used to derive voter preferences on protecting social programs. For 1997, proxies were used to gauge voter preferences on policy positions for the other two position issues. Because question *cpse1a* in the 1997 CES equates a decrease in taxes with a decrease in social programs, a respondent’s support for “increasing taxes” or “keeping (taxes) as they are” is understood as indicating their support for protecting social programs. A respondent’s desire to “do more” rather than “the same” or “less” for Quebec (variable *cpse3a* in the 1997 CES) is interpreted as a desire to appease the Quebecois and, thus, preserve national unity.

Issue Salience x Voter Issue Position Preference: An interaction of the salience and voter position preferences for the valence issues of national unity, cutting taxes and preserving social programs.

Issue Salience × Ownership: An interaction of the salience and ownership variables. For the position issues, these variables are the interaction of salience with ownership conditioned on policy preferences.

Age: Measured as age in years divided by 100. (variable *cpsage* in both CES)

Male: A dichotomous variable coded 1 if male, 0 if female. (variable *cpsrgen* in both CES)

Education: An eleven-point scale running from 0 (no schooling) to 1 (professional degree or Ph.D.). (variable *cpsm3* in both CES)

Income: A ten-point scale running from 0 (lowest income category) to 1 (highest income category). (variables *cpsm16* and *cpsm16a* in both CES)

Catholic: Coded 1 if respondent is Catholic, 0 otherwise. (variable *cpsm10* in both CES)

Region: A set of dummy variables are created to represent the four major regional divisions in Canada. *Atlantic* includes the provinces of Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. *Quebec* stands for the province of Quebec, and *West* includes Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Territory. The reserve category is *Ontario*. (variable *province* in both CES)

Party Identification: One dummy variable has been created for each party. Each variable takes the value of 1 when the respondent has a very strong or a fairly strong identification with the party, and 0 otherwise. (variables *cpsk1*, *cpsk2* and *cpsk3* in 1997 CES; variables *pesk1a*, *pesk1b*, *pesk2* and *pesk3* in 2000 CES)

Table A1. Logistic Vote Regressions Including Partisans, 1997 Canadian Election

	<i>Liberal</i>		<i>PC</i>		<i>NDP</i>		<i>Reform</i>		<i>Bloc</i>	
	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)
Constant	-0.66	(.55)	-2.90***	(.66)	-2.07**	(.83)	0.70	(.75)	-3.71***	(1.25)
Age	-0.83	(.56)	0.46	(.65)	-0.78	(.78)	0.79	(.77)	-0.51	(1.31)
Male	-0.05	(.18)	0.13	(.20)	-0.50**	(.24)	0.00	(.24)	0.40	(.37)
Education	0.39	(.43)	0.69	(.48)	-0.43	(.67)	-0.86	(.59)	0.89	(.96)
Income	0.27	(.28)	0.22	(.34)	-0.45	(.43)	-0.08	(.35)	-0.34	(.61)
Catholic	0.29	(.20)	-0.19	(.24)	-0.16	(.29)	-0.47*	(.25)	2.39***	(.45)
Atlantic	-1.10***	(.29)	1.21***	(.29)	0.88**	(.36)	0.05	(.45)	—	—
Quebec	-0.48*	(.28)	0.45	(.30)	-0.84	(.57)	—	—	—	—
West	-0.68***	(.20)	-0.32	(.25)	0.09	(.31)	1.07***	(.25)	—	—
Party Identification	1.76***	(.20)	1.57***	(.26)	1.97***	(.39)	2.75***	(.75)	4.40***	(.69)
Unity: S	0.27	(.19)	0.46*	(.24)	0.00	(.27)	-0.68***	(.25)	-1.65**	(.70)
Taxes: S	-0.11	(.21)	0.10	(.25)	-0.31	(.33)	-0.05	(.35)	0.23	(.55)
Social programs: S	0.25	(.38)	-0.03	(.40)	0.12	(.70)	-0.55	(.52)	1.15	(.70)
Jobs: S	-0.17	(.24)	0.58**	(.25)	0.26	(.39)	-0.75**	(.34)	0.80	(.62)
Crime: S	0.41**	(.20)	-0.41*	(.24)	-0.44	(.38)	0.34	(.25)	-1.14*	(.65)
Unity: O	0.22**	(.10)	0.48***	(.12)	0.03	(.25)	0.70***	(.21)	0.63	(.51)
Voter Unity Pref.	-1.12***	(.42)	-0.30	(.34)	0.52	(.90)	-18.42***	(1.05)	0.56	(.64)
Unity: O×Pref	-0.15	(.33)	-0.54*	(.28)	-0.07	(.84)	-13.04***	—	-1.67**	(.69)
Taxes: O	-0.03	(.13)	0.38***	(.13)	0.34*	(.20)	0.45***	(.14)	0.81**	(.40)
Voter Tx/SocPrgm Pref.	0.33	(.38)	0.06	(.38)	-0.35	(.77)	-0.96	(.66)	0.93	(.94)
Taxes: O×Pref	0.54	(.36)	0.16	(.30)	-0.45	(.57)	-0.21	(.42)	0.15	(.88)
Social Program: O	0.22	(.20)	0.12	(.23)	0.53	(.37)	-0.31	(.37)	1.68***	(.48)
Social Program: O×Pref	0.14	(.26)	-0.09	(.32)	-0.08	(.58)	0.59	(.54)	-1.17	(.81)
Jobs: O	0.97***	(.25)	0.73***	(.25)	0.35	(.35)	0.76**	(.36)	-0.84	(.72)
Crime: O	0.16	(.18)	0.30	(.21)	0.04	(.36)	0.34	(.23)	0.04	(.57)
Unity: S×Pref	1.39***	(.49)	0.23	(.46)	0.44	(.97)	17.94***	(1.20)	1.21	(.97)
Taxes: S×Pref	-0.04	(.52)	-0.22	(.44)	0.93	(.77)	1.17*	(.62)	-1.78*	(1.02)
Social Program: S×Pref	-0.37	(.43)	0.19	(.47)	1.69**	(.81)	0.23	(.67)	-1.36	(.99)
Unity: S×O×Pref.	0.31	(.41)	0.67	(.43)	1.11	(.98)	14.04***	(.73)	2.29***	(.66)
Taxes: S×O×Pref.	0.01	(.50)	-0.03	(.38)	1.16	(.77)	0.68	(.51)	-0.28	(.87)
Social Prgms: S×O×Pref.	-0.01	(.22)	0.51*	(.26)	0.12	(.47)	0.16	(.46)	0.25	(.76)
Jobs: S×O	-0.29	(.27)	-0.24	(.27)	0.31	(.38)	0.18	(.41)	0.96	(.73)
Crime: S×O	0.15	(.22)	-0.43*	(.26)	0.07	(.41)	0.15	(.28)	0.96	(.73)
Pseudo-R ²	.38		.31		.42		.55		.71	
N	1517		1517		1517		1517		1517	

Note: Entries are logit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. * p ≤ .10 ** p ≤ .05 *** p ≤ .01

Table A2. Logistic Vote Regressions Including Partisans, 2000 Canadian Election

	<i>Liberal</i>		<i>PC</i>		<i>NDP</i>		<i>Alliance</i>		<i>Bloc</i>	
	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)
Constant	-.47	(.61)	-3.76***	(.83)	-2.87**	(1.15)	.13	(.77)	-2.62*	(1.44)
Age	-1.03	(.64)	2.01**	(.89)	-.47	(1.56)	-.22	(.89)	-1.94*	(1.14)
Male	.34*	(.19)	-.34	(.25)	-.46	(.30)	-.06	(.25)	.45	(.39)
Education	.17	(.52)	1.35**	(.63)	-.21	(1.11)	-.65	(.67)	-.05	(1.08)
Income	.07	(.35)	.36	(.40)	.44	(.48)	-.41	(.41)	.95	(.65)
Catholic	.27	(.23)	.06	(.29)	.07	(.39)	-.51*	(.28)	2.24***	(.42)
Atlantic	-.34	(.31)	1.28***	(.30)	.91**	(.45)	-.77*	(.44)	—	—
Quebec	-1.06**	(.31)	-.06	(.35)	-.63	(.60)	-1.11***	(.42)	—	—
West	-.58**	(.25)	-.04	(.33)	.68*	(.38)	.09	(.29)	—	—
Party Identification	2.39***	(.22)	2.83***	(.30)	2.56***	(.38)	5.34***	(.76)	6.35***	(.87)
Taxes: S	.15	(.21)	-.34	(.36)	.17	(.43)	.42	(.33)	.51	(.54)
Social Programs: S	-.31	(.35)	.50	(.34)	1.12***	(.41)	-.88**	(.45)	-1.26*	(.74)
Jobs: S	.52**	(.21)	.58*	(.32)	-.50	(.36)	-.34	(.29)	-.84	(.64)
Crime: S	-.26	(.23)	-.84***	(.29)	-.30	(.44)	.86***	(.27)	-.45	(.38)
Health Care: S	.23	(.31)	.50	(.39)	-.05	(.51)	.02	(.42)	-1.09*	(.56)
Environment: S	-.06	(.22)	-.05	(.32)	.70**	(.32)	-.54**	(.27)	.76*	(.43)
Taxes: O	.44***	(.14)	.11	(.19)	.20	(.23)	.12	(.17)	.04	(.44)
Voter Taxes Pref.	.16	(.41)	-.37	(.43)	.52	(.50)	.10	(.42)	.44	(.71)
Taxes: O×Pref	-.08	(.40)	.05	(.44)	-.20	(.53)	.29	(.40)	.18	(.74)
Social Program: O	-.01	(.18)	.13	(.19)	.32	(.25)	.34	(.23)	.06	(.40)
Voter SocPrgm Pref.	-.14	(.26)	-.08	(.42)	.47	(.57)	.09	(.47)	1.05	(.64)
Social Program: O×Pref	-.50*	(.26)	.08	(.45)	-.44	(.58)	.34	(.50)	.27	(.61)
Jobs: O	.74***	(.19)	-.20	(.25)	1.03***	(.25)	.61**	(.26)	1.01	(.70)
Crime: O	.37**	(.18)	.41*	(.25)	-.09	(.38)	.64***	(.24)	1.51***	(.41)
Health Care: O	.62**	(.30)	-.26	(.38)	.21	(.34)	.10	(.40)	.71	(.56)
Environment: O	-.09	(.19)	-.03	(.27)	.54	(.25)	.11	(.24)	.19	(.36)
Taxes: S×Pref	-.34	(.48)	.47	(.62)	-.17	(.75)	-.14	(.55)	-.14	(.84)
Social Program: S×Pref	.23	(.46)	-.48	(.58)	-.42	(.68)	-.03	(.77)	1.83**	(.86)
Taxes: S×O×Pref	.44	(.44)	-.29	(.56)	1.52**	(.69)	.09	(.44)	.07	(.75)
Social Prgms: S×O×Pref	.16	(.32)	-.12	(.54)	.25	(.63)	-.58	(.67)	.10	(.58)
Jobs: S×O	-.10	(.23)	1.11***	(.32)	-.48	(.33)	.22	(.33)	-.66	(.83)
Crime: S×O	-.20	(.23)	.01	(.32)	-.04	(.48)	-.12	(.29)	-.48	(.42)
Health Care: S×O	.08	(.32)	.76*	(.40)	.53	(.40)	.25	(.41)	.27	(.59)
Environment: S×O	.51**	(.25)	.14	(.35)	.05	(.36)	.46	(.32)	.26	(.51)
Pseudo-R ²	.46		.32		.50		.59		.74	
N	1299		1299		1299		1299		1299	

Note: Entries are logit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. * p ≤ .10 ** p ≤ .05 *** p ≤ .01

Table 1. Perceptions of Issue Ownership in Canada (columns as percentage of total sample*)

The 1997 Election

	Taxes	Social Programs	Jobs	Crime	National Unity
Liberals	16	26	28	25	44
PC	26	14	19	13	22
NDP	8	29	12	6	5
Reform	21	7	11	22	6
Bloc Québécois	3	5	4	3	3
Other/None	9	6	9	8	5
DK	15	13	16	23	15

The 2000 Election

	Taxes	Social Programs	Jobs	Crime	Health Care	Environment
Liberals	31	25	43	24	24	17
PC	11	6	9	7	9	6
NDP	5	37	9	4	26	19
Alliance	34	10	16	27	16	9
Bloc Québécois	6	8	7	12	10	5
Other/None	7	5	9	8	7	9
DK	6	7	8	18	9	36

**Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding*

Source: 1997 and 2000 Canadian Election Studies

Table 2. Party Vote in the 1997 Canadian Federal Election (Logistic Regression Results)

	<i>Liberal</i>		<i>PC</i>		<i>NDP</i>		<i>Reform</i>		<i>Bloc</i>	
	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)
Constant	-0.44	(.62)	-2.52***	(.76)	-1.16	(.84)	0.51	(.76)	-3.65**	(1.44)
Age	-1.37**	(.70)	-0.22	(.78)	-0.88	(.88)	0.92	(.76)	-0.13	(1.45)
Male	0.01	(.21)	0.04	(.24)	-0.54*	(.28)	0.07	(.24)	0.20	(0.44)
Education	0.65	(.51)	0.75	(.57)	-0.07	(.72)	-0.82	(.60)	0.94	(1.06)
Income	0.07	(.33)	0.16	(.39)	-0.52	(.45)	-0.06	(.36)	-0.35	(.68)
Catholic	0.27	(.24)	-0.14	(.28)	-0.06	(.32)	-0.59**	(.26)	2.53***	(.56)
Atlantic	-1.47***	(.40)	0.99***	(.35)	0.82**	(.37)	0.09	(.43)	—	—
Quebec	-0.40	(.34)	0.42	(.32)	-0.95	(.61)	—	—	—	—
West	-0.74***	(.23)	-0.65**	(.33)	-0.15	(.36)	0.99***	(.24)	—	—
Unity: S	0.46**	(.23)	0.41	(.28)	-0.19	(.29)	-0.78***	(.25)	-1.72*	(.93)
Taxes: S	-0.20	(.26)	-0.04	(.29)	-0.32	(.36)	0.08	(.34)	0.22	(.60)
Social Programs: S	0.49	(.42)	0.05	(.48)	0.94	(.76)	-0.63	(.57)	0.85	(.85)
Jobs: S	-0.18	(.27)	0.60*	(.32)	0.15	(.42)	-0.68*	(.36)	0.81	(.69)
Crime: S	0.34	(.23)	-0.49*	(.28)	-0.91**	(.42)	0.40	(.25)	-1.21*	(.68)
Unity: O	0.19	(.12)	0.56***	(.14)	0.34	(.28)	0.64***	(.23)	0.37	(.70)
Voter Unity Pref	-1.36***	(.48)	-0.58	(.39)	-0.05	(1.06)	-18.55***	(.60)	1.35*	(.76)
Unity: O×Pref	-0.53	(.36)	-0.77**	(.34)	-0.46	(.99)	-13.18***	(1.20)	-0.89	(.89)
Taxes: O	-0.11	(.17)	0.35**	(.16)	0.36	(.23)	0.46***	(.14)	1.18***	(.43)
Voter Tx/SocPrgm Pref	0.30	(.43)	-0.02	(.51)	-16.96***	(.74)	-0.88	(.70)	0.30	(1.05)
Taxes: O×Pref	0.89**	(.40)	0.39	(.40)	-16.17***	(.82)	-0.32	(.47)	-0.39	(.99)
Social Program: O	0.46**	(.21)	0.24	(.26)	1.09**	(.45)	-0.18	(.38)	1.72***	(.56)
Social Program: O×Pref	-0.07	(.29)	-0.45	(.39)	-0.85	(.59)	0.42	(.55)	-0.63	(.84)
Jobs: O	0.75***	(.28)	0.86***	(.33)	0.40	(.40)	0.71*	(.37)	-0.87	(.84)
Crime: O	0.03	(.21)	0.41*	(.23)	0.33	(.35)	0.39*	(.24)	-0.20	(.66)
Unity: S×Pref	1.58***	(.54)	0.36	(.54)	0.54	(1.22)	18.18***	(0)	0.76	(1.18)
Taxes: S×Pref	0.42	(.64)	0.32	(.55)	16.79	(0)	1.12*	(.66)	-1.75	(1.10)
Social Program: S×Pref	-0.78	(.48)	0.25	(.58)	0.70	(.85)	0.42	(.71)	-1.55	(1.09)
Unity: S×O×Pref	0.58	(.45)	0.74	(.51)	1.19	(1.28)	14.19***	(1.22)	2.03***	(.75)
Taxes: S×O×Pref	0.35	(.62)	-0.19	(.51)	17.57***	(1.02)	0.81	(.55)	-0.21	(.96)
Social Prgms: S×O×Pref	-0.06	(.27)	0.85**	(.34)	0.33	(.41)	0.29	(.46)	-0.47	(.76)
Jobs: S×O	-0.09	(.31)	-0.32	(.36)	0.22	(.43)	0.33	(.42)	1.06	(.86)
Crime: S×O	0.27	(.26)	-0.68**	(.30)	-0.44	(.44)	0.00	(.29)	-0.40	(.78)
Pseudo-R ²	.21		.21		.29		.41		.54	
% correctly predicted	84%		88%		92%		90%		97%	
N	1131		1302		1413		1380		1413	

Note: Entries are logit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. * p ≤ .10 ** p ≤ .05 *** p ≤ .01

Table 3. Party Vote in the 2000 Canadian Federal Election (Logistic Regression Results)

	<i>Liberal</i>		<i>PC</i>		<i>NDP</i>		<i>Alliance</i>		<i>Bloc</i>	
	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)
Constant	-.73	(.73)	-5.70***	(1.13)	-2.83**	(1.21)	-.01	(.78)	-2.70*	(1.62)
Age	-.31	(.77)	3.08***	(1.05)	-.80	(1.84)	.08	(.89)	-2.47**	(1.18)
Male	.32	(.23)	-.54*	(.29)	-.57*	(.32)	-.05	(.26)	.63	(.45)
Education	.32	(.61)	1.87***	(.68)	-.34	(1.15)	-.59	(.66)	.21	(1.24)
Income	.12	(.43)	.71	(.48)	.67	(.53)	-.44	(.42)	.87	(.73)
Catholic	.68**	(.28)	.31	(.31)	.00	(.42)	-.50*	(.28)	2.36***	(.53)
Atlantic	-.51	(.40)	1.01***	(.38)	.74	(.50)	-.77*	(.45)	—	—
Quebec	-1.81***	(.40)	-.45	(.39)	-.94	(.64)	-1.07**	(.43)	—	—
West	-.56**	(.28)	.08	(.35)	.41	(.46)	.10	(.29)	—	—
Taxes: S	-.13	(.30)	-.02	(.42)	.33	(.46)	.40	(.34)	.30	(.62)
Social Programs: S	-.20	(.46)	.42	(.39)	1.32***	(.48)	-.87*	(.46)	-2.66**	(1.15)
Jobs: S	.52**	(.25)	.58	(.36)	-.22	(.41)	-.31	(.30)	-.68	(.63)
Crime: S	-.31	(.28)	-.89**	(.35)	-.66	(.48)	.90**	(.28)	-.40	(.41)
Health Care: S	.16	(.31)	1.19*	(.62)	-.29	(.59)	-.11	(.43)	-.99	(.64)
Environment: S	-.04	(.27)	-.03	(.37)	.75**	(.34)	-.51*	(.28)	.63	(.44)
Taxes: O	.52***	(.18)	.23	(.23)	.20	(.24)	.13	(.18)	.10	(.49)
Voter Taxes Pref.	.69	(.42)	.17	(.46)	.72	(.56)	.17	(.40)	.17	(.72)
Taxes: O×Pref	.21	(.40)	.27	(.47)	-.27	(.58)	.13	(.38)	-.20	(.75)
Social Program: O	-.12	(.23)	-.34	(.31)	.28	(.30)	.36	(.23)	.15	(.44)
Voter SocPrgm Pref.	-.32	(.40)	-.05	(.77)	.84	(.67)	.11	(.47)	1.28**	(.63)
Social Program: O×Pref	-.70*	(.39)	-.22	(.79)	-.04	(.67)	.28	(.50)	.29	(.57)
Jobs: O	.53**	(.22)	.11	(.27)	.89***	(.28)	.58**	(.27)	1.04	(.75)
Crime: O	.36	(.22)	.24	(.30)	.01	(.34)	.66**	(.26)	1.62**	(.47)
Health Care: O	.77***	(.29)	-1.07*	(.63)	.47	(.37)	.17	(.42)	.70	(.63)
Environment: O	-.03	(.22)	.21	(.29)	.38	(.27)	.09	(.24)	.33	(.35)
Taxes: S×Pref	-.44	(.55)	.16	(.65)	-.42	(.79)	-.21	(.54)	.24	(.93)
Social Program: S×Pref	.46	(.61)	-.25	(.86)	-.62	(.75)	.04	(.77)	2.94**	(1.25)
Taxes: S×O×Pref	.10	(.46)	-.34	(.54)	1.54**	(.72)	.25	(.42)	.28	(.76)
Social Prgms: S×O×Pref	.43	(.43)	.28	(.81)	-.01	(.72)	-.45	(.66)	-.10	(.53)
Jobs: S×O	.18	(.27)	.71*	(.37)	-.28	(.37)	.26	(.34)	-.52	(.85)
Crime: S×O	-.12	(.28)	.23	(.41)	-.48	(.52)	-.15	(.30)	-.47	(.47)
Health Care: S×O	.06	(.32)	1.71***	(.64)	.30	(.43)	.19	(.44)	.06	(.51)
Environment: S×O	.75**	(.30)	.23	(.42)	.12	(.38)	.49	(.32)	.34	(.68)
Pseudo-R ²	.26		.17		.32		.35		.51	
N	918		1192		1213		1125		1174	

Note: Entries are logit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq .10$ ** $p \leq .05$ *** $p \leq .01$

Table 4. Conditional Effects of Variables on 1997 Party Vote

(as logistic coefficients based on the regressions in Table 2)

	<i>Liberal</i>		<i>PC</i>		<i>NDP</i>		<i>Reform</i>		<i>Bloc</i>	
	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)
Ownership when Issue Not Salient (S=0)										
Unity	-.34	(.34)	-.21	(.31)	-.13	(.93)	-12.54***	(1.18)	-.53	(.52)
Taxes	.78**	(.37)	.75**	(.38)	-15.8***	(.82)	.14	(.44)	.79	(.79)
Social Programs	.39**	(.20)	-.21	(.29)	.24	(.39)	.24	(.40)	1.09	(.68)
Jobs	.75***	(.28)	.86***	(.33)	.40	(.40)	.71*	(.37)	-.87	(.84)
Crime	.03	(.21)	.41*	(.23)	.33	(.35)	.39*	(.24)	-.20	(.66)
Ownership when Issue Salient (S=1)										
Unity	.24	(.31)	.53	(.38)	1.06	(.96)	1.65**	(.70)	1.50**	(.63)
Taxes	1.13**	(.52)	.56	(.34)	1.76**	(.57)	.95***	(.35)	.58	(.66)
Social Programs	.33*	(.18)	.64***	(.19)	.58***	(.18)	.54**	(.26)	.62	(.52)
Jobs	.65***	(.14)	.54***	(.15)	.62***	(.20)	1.05***	(.19)	.19	(.49)
Crime	.30*	(.17)	-.27	(.19)	-.10	(.33)	.39**	(.17)	-.61	(.65)
Likelihood-ratio test										
Chi-square value	77.59***		55.82***		52.81***		74.84***		73.01***	

* p ≤ .10 ** p ≤ .05 *** p ≤ .01

Table 5. Conditional Effects of Variables on 2000 Party Vote
(as logistic coefficients based on the regressions in Table 3)

	<i>Liberal</i>		<i>PC</i>		<i>NDP</i>		<i>Alliance</i>		<i>Bloc</i>	
	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)	B	(S.E.)
Ownership when Issue Not Salient (S=0)										
Taxes	.74**	(.37)	.50	(.41)	-.07	(.52)	.26	(.35)	-.09	(.62)
Social Programs	-.82**	(.34)	-.56	(.75)	.25	(.59)	.64	(.46)	.44	(.43)
Jobs	.53**	(.22)	.11	(.27)	.89***	(.28)	.58**	(.27)	1.04	(.75)
Crime	.36	(.22)	.24	(.30)	.01	(.34)	.66**	(.26)	1.62**	(.47)
Health Care	.77***	(.29)	-1.07*	(.63)	.47	(.37)	.17	(.42)	.70	(.63)
Environment	-.03	(.22)	.21	(.29)	.38	(.27)	.09	(.24)	.33	(.35)
Ownership when Issue Salient (S=1)										
Taxes	.83***	(.30)	.16	(.41)	1.47***	(.51)	.51*	(.27)	.18	(.52)
Social Programs	-.39	(.34)	-.28	(.44)	.24	(.37)	.19	(.49)	.33	(.40)
Jobs	.71***	(.17)	.83***	(.25)	.60**	(.24)	.85***	(.24)	.52	(.39)
Crime	.24	(.20)	.47*	(.27)	-.47	(.38)	.51***	(.17)	1.15***	(.28)
Health Care	.83***	(.19)	.65***	(.22)	.77***	(.26)	.36*	(.20)	1.04***	(.30)
Environment	.72***	(.22)	.44	(.32)	.50*	(.28)	.58**	(.25)	.39	(.38)
Likelihood-ratio test										
Chi-square value	39.82***		44.78***		34.55***		53.40***		17.54	

* p ≤ .10 ** p ≤ .05 *** p ≤ .01

Table 6. Probability of Voter Support under Varying Issue Saliency and Ownership Conditions

Table 6a. Effects of Social Programs Issue on Probability to Vote for the Reform Party in 1997

	Issue Not Salient (saliency= 0)	Issue Salient (saliency= 1)
Reform Party Owner (ownership= +1)	.705	.721
Reform Party Not Owner (ownership= -1)	.600	.470

Probabilities calculated for a 44 year old, non-Catholic male who has completed high school, has an income of \$CDN 50,000-59,000, resides in the province of Ontario and supports the protection of social programs.

Table 6b. Effects of Jobs Issue on Probability to Vote for the NDP in 1997

	Issue Not Salient (saliency= 0)	Issue Salient (saliency= 1)
NDP Owner (ownership= +1)	.126	.172
NDP Not Owner (ownership= -1)	.060	.057

Probabilities calculated for a 44 year old, non-Catholic male who has completed high school, has an income of \$CDN 50,000-59,000 and resides in the province of Ontario.

Table 6c. Effects of Environment Issue on Probability to Vote for the Liberal Party in 2000

	Issue Not Salient (saliency= 0)	Issue Salient (saliency= 1)
Liberal Party Owner (ownership= +1)	.401	.576
Liberal Party Not Owner (ownership= -1)	.414	.244

Probabilities calculated for a 47 year old, non-Catholic male who has completed high school, has an income of \$CDN 50,000-59,000 and resides in the province of Ontario.

Table 7. Predicted Probability of Voting for Party by Region

	Ontario (reserve category) <i>reported in Table 6</i>		Quebec		Atlantic		West	
	Issue NOT Salient	Issue Salient	Issue NOT Salient	Issue Salient	Issue NOT Salient	Issue Salient	Issue NOT Salient	Issue Salient
Reform Party 1997: Owner of Social Prgms Issue	.705	.721	NA	NA	.723	.739	.865	.874
NDP 1997: Owner of Jobs Issue	.126	.172	.053	.075	.248	.323	.110	.152
Liberal Party 2000: Owner of Environment Issue	.401	.576	.099	.182	.286	.449	.277	.438

Probabilities calculated for a 44 year old (for a 47 year old in 2000), non-Catholic male who has completed high school and has an income of \$CDN 50,000-59,000. In the first hypothetical, the respondent also supports the protection of social programs.