Whose Issue Is It Anyway?

A New Look at the Meaning and Measurement of Issue Ownership

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ABSTRACT: Survey questions about party preferences on issues are fundamental to the concept of issue ownership and our understanding of campaigns, yet the process by which respondents answer them remains a mystery. I present the results of a survey experiment to understand what such responses are telling us. By testing the standard question alongside alternatives giving specific evaluation criteria, I demonstrate that the construct measured by the traditional wording is not an accurate measure of any single concept of issue ownership. These findings carry implications for the design and interpretation of surveys as well as for theories of campaign strategy and effects.

1 Introduction

"Which party do you think would do a better job of handling this issue?"[1]

Versions of this question have been common in political surveys going back to the 1950s. And yet the empirical construct which motivates these questions, often called *issue ownership*, has only been studied directly in the past two decades. Petrocik[2] coined the term and defined issue ownership as a product of the parties' reputations for competence on an issue, and theorized that issue ownership is the primary driver of campaign issue emphasis. Subsequent researchers, particularly those working outside the US context, have suggested their own definitions of issue ownership.[3] These alternative views propose different sources and implications for issue ownership, and so the question of how best to interpret voters' evaluations of parties on issues remains quite open.

Yet whether respondents' answers to the traditional issue ownership survey question actually reflect any particular definition of the concept has rarely been tested, despite a wealth of research in recent years.[4] Not only is this oversight troublesome

[2] Petrocik (1996)

[3] Belanger (2003); van der Brug (2004); Walgrave, Lefevere & Nuytemans (2009)

[4] A very notable exception to this statement (Stubager & Slothuus 2013) came out while this article was under revision, and is a welcome addition to the literature. Their work tests similar hypotheses using different methods in a different context, and thus serves as a useful complement to this study.

in terms of understanding the data we collect, but the question of whether issue ownership stems from the parties' reputations for competence, their histories of attention to issues, their policy positions, or something else is also critical to understanding the implications of the opinions being measured.

In this article, my aim is to help clear up this uncertainty by way of a survey experiment, conducted as part of the 2008 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), testing three distinct wordings of the issue ownership survey question. The control group is presented with a traditional wording, while two treatment groups are asked to respond to alternate wordings giving specific criteria: the first cues respondents to evaluate the parties in terms of positions, while the second asks respondents to assess the parties' competence explicitly. These criteria are based upon the classic dichotomy of looking at issues in terms of either positions or valence, and though these two alternatives do not directly map onto all of the proposed explanations for issue ownership, they do address the two most prominent views and serve to connect the issue ownership literature to the broader work on spatial models and issue voting.[5]

This analysis looks at not only how the results from each group differ, but also how the relationships between responses and factors such as partisanship and ideology vary across wordings. I find that responses to the traditional question are driven by the parties' positions as well as their reputations, contrary to Petrocik's original definition of issue ownership, and that policy considerations may actually be a stronger influence than parties' reputations. I also show that the traditional question's ambiguity as to how respondents should evaluate parties leads to measurement error and potential bias, as respondents more often default to their partisan predispositions than when given more specific criteria. The article concludes with suggestions of best practices for survey researchers and a discussion of these findings' theoretical implications, along with recommendations for future research in this area.

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[5]Stokes (1963).

2 Issue Ownership in Theory and Practice

After work by Repass, Budge and Farlie, and others established the relevance of individual issues to parties' success, Petrocik built on these findings by asserting that the value of an issue to a candidate is based on his party's reputation for competently handling the issue.[6] A party which enjoys a significant reputational advantage over its opponents is therefore said to "own" that issue, and stands to benefit when that issue is made salient during a campaign.[7]

There is little consensus about the exact sources of these reputations, however. Petrocik cited parties' histories of performance and attention on particular issues, as well as their links to specific interested constituencies, as the main sources of these reputations, while downplaying the role of the parties' positions.[8] As such, voters see candidates mainly as potential administrators who, because of party affiliation, offer differing levels of expected performance across a range of issues. This framework is the basis for the one employed by Walgrave, who add an "associative dimension" of issue ownership to reflect more spontaneous linkages between parties and issues, which becomes especially relevant in a many-party context such as Belgium.[9]

Elsewhere, Sellers, Holian, Sigelman, and even Petrocik himself all suggest a role for positions in understanding views of candidates and parties, either as an alternative source of advantages on issues or as a way of reframing how voters see issues and assign ownership.[10] Simon, meanwhile, derives a model of issue ownership which entirely substitutes positional advantages for party reputations. Yet the coexistence

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[6]Budge & Farlie (1983); Petrocik (1996); RePass (1971)

[7]Petrocik, Benoit & Hansen (2003)

[8]Petrocik (1996) asserts that the typical voter is "inclined to view elections as choices about collective goods and resolving problems, and not about the specifics of the resolution. The key facts for this voter is not what *policies* candidates promise to pursue, but what *problems...* will be resolved." (p. 829–830; emphasis in original)

[9]Walgrave, Lefevere & Tresch (2012)

[10]Holian (2004); Petrocik (1996); Sellers (1998); Sigelman & Buell (2004)

of issue ownership with positional theories of issue voting has always been uneasy.[11] While van der Brug and Meguid both try to directly juxtapose issue ownership with parties' positions, the majority of researchers have simply avoided taking any strict view of the sources of issue ownership, preferring instead to focus on the empirical manifestation of issue ownership reflected in survey responses.[12] Given that most of these studies have focused on the discussion of issues in campaigns, rather than the concept of issue ownership itself, this approach spares researchers from having to take sides in much larger and less settled debates over how voters evaluate parties generally.

In practice, though, there seems to be a greater level of agreement on how to measure issue ownership: with a simple question, routine in political surveys, asking respondents which party would do a better job at "handling" a particular issue. Though the question's wording has varied somewhat when used outside the US—see for example Belanger, Belanger and Meguid, and Walgrave—these surveys more often than not refrain from telling respondents *how* they should compare the parties on each issue, and this vagueness has largely obviated any pressing need for an exact definition.[13] Though we may not be able to specify exactly what *causes* issue ownership, the thinking goes, we can measure issue ownership *itself* as a manifest aspect of public opinion.

But where issue ownership comes from—whether from parties' reputations, their issue positions, or a combination of these and other factors—has both theoretical and empirical importance. For theories of campaign strategy, understanding issue ownership is crucial to deciphering the incentives for candidates and parties in choosing whether and how to discuss particular issues. Clarifying issue ownership

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[11]Simon (2002)

[12]van der Brug (2004); Meguid (2005)

[13]Belanger (2003); Belanger & Meguid (2008); Walgrave & De Swert (2007). van der Brug (2004) provides an interesting counterexample, asking voters to rate parties' positions and priorities distinctly, among other questions.

also matters for public opinion research more broadly, both for the interpretation of existing data and the design of future surveys of voters' opinions of parties on issues.

To serve both of these goals, I designed a survey experiment to offer insight into how voters evaluate parties on issues. As the framework for this test, I return to the classic conceptualization by Stokes which conceives of issues in positional and valence terms.[14] In this view, voters think about the utility of each party in terms of their ability to produce either an objective good (such as lower crime or unemployment) or a subjective good (such as universal healthcare or a decrease in income taxes). The objective (*valence*) benefits a party can offer are universally-desired, so the relative difference between parties is in their ability to deliver, while the subjective (*positional*) benefits depend upon each voter's own policy preferences. This schema corresponds well to the competence-based and position-based views of issue ownership described above, and offers a way to compare these alternative explanations of issue ownership directly.

3   Experimental Design

To find out what the traditional issue ownership question really measures, I conducted a survey experiment as part of the NYU / UC Berkeley module of the 2008 Cooperative Congressional Election Study.[15] This experiment tested whether a change in the wording of the traditional party evaluation question, cueing respondents to base

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[14]Stokes (1963)

[15]The CCES is a nationally-representative, internet-based panel survey which includes a main section of common content and additional modules designed by participating researchers (Ansolabehere 2009, Egan 2009). In our module, 837 respondents returned in the post-election wave, which included these questions. Those who did not complete the second wave came disproportionately but not exclusively from groups which tend to be harder to reach in surveys—they were more likely to be young, moderate, and nonwhite, and less likely to be retired, homeowning, or partisan. More information about the sample design, response rates, and original data are available at http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/cces/.

their responses on either positional or competence considerations, would affect the resulting responses.

Each respondent was randomly assigned to one of three groups and asked to evaluate parties on nine issues. A different wording of the question was presented to each group, with the ordering of issues and parties randomized:

1. *Traditional wording*: For each of the following issues, please tell us whether you think the Republicans or the Democrats **would do a better job of dealing with** that issue

2. *Position cue wording*: For each of the following issues, please tell us whether you think the Republicans or the Democrats **have better ideas and policies regarding** that issue

3. *Competence cue wording*: For each of the following issues, please tell us whether you think the Republicans or the Democrats **are better qualified to handle** that issue

I investigate how respondents generate their answers to the traditional question by comparing the results from each wording, first through a simple comparison of aggregate responses and then through modeling individual responses.[16]

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[16]Though in the ideal case, we would have responses to all three questions from every respondent—so that we could see how individual respondents distinguish between evaluation criteria—this approach would bring its own set of problems. While some respondents might feel prompted to have their answers be consistent across criteria, others might feel compelled to make more distinct evaluations than they would otherwise employ. With random assignment to treatments, the results from each question wording are (in expectation) equivalent to the results that would have been produced if the same set of respondents provided answers to all three questions *and* those answers were independent of one another.

4   Findings

Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents who reported a preference for the Republicans on each issue, out of those who expressed a preference for either party, across all three wordings. The traditional question's results echo the patterns of issue ownership found in Petrocik and myriad other studies: Democrats are rated highest on education, healthcare, and Social Security, while Republicans' best issues are taxes, terrorism, and the Iraq war.[17] But interestingly, only on the issue of terrorism are the Republicans preferred by a majority of respondents—it appears that, in the 2008 election, Democrats were preferred by voters (or at least, those particpating in the CCES) across a broad range of issues.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Table 2 shows the frequency with which partisan respondents (those self-identifying as either Republicans or Democrats) defect from their parties, either giving a preference for the opposing party or declining to choose between them.[18] Party identification could serve as a default response for partisans—rather than investing the effort to decide between parties, they simply name their own—and thus greater partisan defection would signal that respondents are more carefully considering their answers. In these results, both cues are shown to produce significantly higher rates of defection than the traditional wording, with the larger difference coming from the competence cue (a 27.0% defection rate on average, compared to 21.6%), again suggesting that the traditional question is not equivalent to one that asks about competence explicitly.

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

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[17]Petrocik (1996)

[18]Though not shown in this table, Democrats most often defected on the issues of terrorism, immigration, and the Iraq war, while Republicans defected most often on eduction, immigration, and Social Security. This suggests that while defections are especially likely on issues "owned" by the other party, there may also be issues (such as immigration in this example) which cut across traditional partisan cleavages and invite defection from both sides.

The takeaway here is that the traditional wording is at best an inefficient tool for measuring as a measure of issue ownership: if respondents are less apt to seriously consider the questions asked of them, then more responses are needed in order to observe differences.[19] But perhaps more importantly, this wording could also introduce bias if the cognitive demands on respondents vary across issues. If respondents are more likely to use their default choice on some issues than others, then the variation in resulting bias (toward the sample's partisan distribution) could lead to a false ordering of best and worst issues for each party.[20]

For both of these reasons, the use of more specific evaluation criteria (in the form of cues) for questions about party preferences on issues would seem to be the prudent choice for accurately measuring views of parties on issues. Yet in practice, we are often interested in measuring issue ownership as an *overall* evaluation of parties on issues—letting the respondents choose for themselves how to make those evaluations. So the question still remains: where do responses to the traditional issue ownership question come from?

For a more careful look at respondents' evaluations, I employ binary logit models to separate out the effects of three considerations—partisanship (as a default choice), policy positions, and reputations for competence—on responses to each question wording.[21] In analyzing the results, I look to see the relationship between each of

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[19] The term "inefficient" simply means "less effective than the alternative" as used here, and is not referring to "efficiency" in the statistical sense.

[20] The rates of uncertain responses (both "no difference" and "don't know") to the party preference questions varied between 19.7% and 40.1% across issues, so there is surely room for bias to affect the overall results.

[21] Though the data comes from a randomized experimental design, I choose to use models in addition to raw tabulations because of sample size limitations. Though the treatment and control groups are equivalent in expectation, there is of course still random variation in group characteristics across finite samples, so the inclusion of simply-specified models can help to smooth out those differences. In these data, the three groups are well-balanced across a wide range of demographic variables and ideology, but the competence cue treatment group was slightly more Republican than

these considerations and responses to each wording. While compiling data on party identification is straightforward, estimates of respondents' opinions of the parties' positions and competence are much harder to come by. Though we would ideally be able to control for positions on each issue separately, by assuming that individuals' reactions to the parties' positions are correlated within and across issues, we can use self-reported ideology as a proxy for policy preferences on individual issues.[22] Because competence is presumed *not* to be dependent upon respondent characteristics, however, it should not vary across respondents—only across issues.[23] As such, these reputations can be accounted for by employing fixed effects for each issue, as their impacts on party-issue preferences should be effectively uniform across individuals.

I first look at the magnitude and significance of each relationship in models predicting party preferences on all nine issues, for each of the three question wordings. The results shown in Table 3 first run these models separately for each wording, then present a single model which pools all three groups, with interactions used to evaluate the differences in coefficents across wordings.

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]

In the unpooled models, party identification, ideology, and fixed effects are all significant for each question wording. For each group, Democrats were least likely to prefer Republicans on these issues, while Republicans were most likely. As respondents grew more conservative, they also became more likely to prefer Republicans. Finally, for all three wordings, the joint impact of fixed effects for each issue is highly significant. The relative magnitudes of these effects are hard to compare across models, but the patterns appear promising: the total impact of PID (that is, the difference

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average (mean = 4.05 on a 1–7 scale, compared to mean = 3.70 overall). Results of ordered logit models which include ambivalent responses (available upon request) produce similar patterns to the results shown here.

[22]While voters are often ideologically heterogeneous, self-reported ideology is still a very strong predictor of preferences on individual issues.

[23]Petrocik (1996)

between the Democratic and Republican coefficients) is greatest for the traditional wording, ideology's effect is greatest for the position cue wording, and issue fixed effects are most significant with the competence cue. But to compare these directly, the "All Wordings" model offers the clearest tests.

From the pooled results, the differences between wordings are more apparent. We see that while the effects of Democratic affiliation do not differ significantly across wordings, Republican affiliation has a substantially larger positive effect under the traditional wording (the base category) than for either the position or competence cue wordings (a significant difference for the competence cue, and just slightly under that threshold for the position cue). Overall, partisans answering the traditional question were more likely to give responses consistent with their party identification than those given either cue, consistent with the findings about defection rates shown in Table 2. The effects of ideology under the position cue, meanwhile, are significantly larger than under the other two wordings; conservative respondents became more likely to prefer Republicans, and liberals less likely, with the position cue than without. And the significance of fixed effects for issues is highest with the competence cue: the Wald statistic for that wording's fixed effects is more than 30% higher than that seen for the position cue wording, echoing the result seen in the unpooled models.[24]

To give a sense of the magnitudes of these relationships and their differences across wordings, Tables 4a–4c offer estimates of how likely respondents with various characteristics are to prefer the Republicans under each wording, from the unpooled results in Table 3. In Table 4a, these estimates are averaged across issues, for a respondent who identifies as a moderate. In each case, partisanship is a very strong predictor of responses, holding the other variables (ideology and issue) constant. But this rela-

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[24] As the fixed effects simply reflect the variation in constant terms across groups, the pooled and unpooled models' Wald statistics are equivalent—the issue fixed effects × position cue result in the pooled model, for example, is simply the sum of the results from the unpooled traditional wording and position cue models. So these are not meant to be seen as separate and reinforcing findings; instead, they simply show different ways of looking at the observed pattern.

tionship is strongest for respondents given the traditional wording, with a difference in the frequency of pro-Republican responses of nearly 74% between Democratic and Republican identifiers, approximately 10 percentage points higher than with either alternate wording. This is consistent with Table 2's suggestion that partisanship serves as a default choice most often with the traditional wording.

[INSERT TABLE 4 HERE]

In Table 4b, similar estimates are calculated for independents of varying ideologies. We see that ideology is an even stronger predictor of responses than partisanship, with the position cue wording leading to differences between the most liberal and most conservative respondents of greater than 94%; the other two wordings also show a strong relationship, their ranges just 6–7 percentage points lower. Respondents' policy preferences play an important role in party preferences in all cases, but especially when they are specifically cued.

Table 4c shows the differences in predicted prefences across issues while holding constant both partisanship and ideology. There is significant variation across issues in all cases, but these differences are particularly pronounced for the competence cue: Republicans get 47% more support on their most favorable issue compared to the issue most favorable to Democrats. As we would expect, asking specifically about the parties' competence provides the best reflection of differences in voters' party preferences across issues which are unconnected to the respondents' individual predispositions—that is, the original construct of objective party qualities defined by Petrocik as "issue ownership".

There are ultimately three main conclusions to be drawn from these results. First, the overall results of the survey experiment show that the traditional issue ownership question is not a direct measure views of the parties' issue-handling competence, as Petrocik originally claimed. Second, when we provide respondents with specific criteria by which to make their evaluations, they are more likely to give answers which are distinct from their partisan predispositions. And finally, we see from

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looking at individual responses that while the traditional wording appears to tap into both positional and competence considerations, it is not the best reflection of either type and is most susceptible to partisan bias.

5 Discussion

What, then, do these findings imply for our understanding of issue ownership? On the most basic level, my results provide strong evidence that the construct measured by the issue ownership survey question is not the same as what Petrocik originally claimed issue ownership to be. Whether that finding suggests a need to revise the theory of issue ownership, or rather to develop a better way of measuring it as defined, is largely a semantic debate that is best left to future researchers. The essential implication of my results is that the traditional issue ownership survey question should *not* be interpreted as a measurement of any one specific consideration, but instead is a reflection of various factors weighed by respondents.

This conclusion echoes another set of recent findings, those in Stubager and Slothuus.[25] In the context of Danish elections, the authors similarly find a role for policy positions, competence, and party identification in determining issue ownership. They also find a fourth factor (constituency links, which were not tested herein) to be relevant as well. Taken together, these two studies are quite different in terms of both context and methods, yet reach the same general conclusions: that issue ownership is comprised of multiple distinct dimensions of public opinion, and cannot be reduced to a single concept independent of other political concerns.

In addition to guiding the interpretation of existing surveys, my results also imply a need for survey practitioners to reconsider how they design questions related to issue ownership. For researchers wishing to capture a particular type of party comparison—for example, voters' beliefs about issue-handling competence—the al-

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[25]Stubager & Slothuus (2013)

ternate wordings used herein show the value of using more precise question wordings. When given specific criteria for evaluating parties, respondents are indeed more likely to use them in their replies. And yet even if one takes a broad view of issue ownership, and is more interested in voters' overall evaluations of parties than the specific components thereof, the need for careful approaches to question wording remains. The use of party identification as a default choice not only leads to measurement error, but can also generate bias if that error is heterogeneous across individuals or issues, so practitioners should explore how best to ascertain respondents' party preferences on issues independent of their overall predispositions.

Though a detailed treatment of the theoretical aspects of issue ownership is beyond the scope of this article, the results herein suggest a need for the discipline to reexamine how party preferences on issues may change over time and as a function of campaigns. At the simplest level, it suggests further uses for survey tests (such as the one presented in this study) to determine how voters evaluate parties, to bring in other proposed sources of issue ownership such as party priorities that were not tested here. With larger samples to work with, researchers could also begin to look in greater detail at how the weighting of positions, competence, and other factors varies across individuals, issues, countries, and time. The results in this article were derived from a test of one particular context, and given changes in issue salience, party positions, campaign platforms, and so forth, we might find very different results elsewhere.

Finally, on a more conceptual level, the finding that voters evaluate parties in terms of both positions and competence implies a variety of ways in which those evaluations can be changed. Issues may be reframed, shifting focus toward one component or another, and evaluations on those individual components may themselves be affected—for example, if voters learn about the parties' positions or change their own. And it follows that candidates may distinguish themselves from their parties based upon their own policy positions or qualifications, while views of the parties themselves on issues may even vary across electoral contexts. All of these possibili-

ties stand in contrast to existing theories of campaign issue emphasis, and highlight the need for richer views which embrace complexity rather than deny it. The theory of issue ownership was never intended to serve as a singular explanation of issue voting and campaign strategy, and the results in this article reinforce the need to incorporate its concepts into a more sophisticated framework for understanding the role of issues in modern elections.

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Table 1: Alternative Question Wordings and Party Preferences

Percentage of respondents preferring Republicans on each issue

| Issue | Traditional Wording | *Alternate Wordings* | |
		Position Cue	Competence Cue
Economy	34.4	33.2	40.9
Education	29.7	30.7	38.0*
Energy	36.7	40.7	46.2**
Healthcare	33.0	33.5	37.4
Immigration	44.1	42.5	52.5
Iraq	45.8	45.9	55.9**
Social Security	33.3	34.4	39.2
Taxes	42.7	44.6	53.9**
Terrorism	55.9	56.8	65.9**
All issues	39.5	40.4	47.9***
n	220	183	207

*** = Result is significantly different from traditional wording's result at > 0.01 level, ** = at > 0.05 level, * = at > 0.1 level (difference-of-means tests). Percentages do not include respondents who gave "'no difference" or "not sure" responses. Number of respondents presented is the mean for a given question wording across all issues. Traditional wording varies from 188 to 239 respondents, position cue from 134 to 207, competence cue from 179 to 229; significance tests are calculated using the actual number of respondents for each individual issue, and the total number of responses across all issues for the pooled sample.

Table 2: Alternative Question Wordings and Party Defections

Percentage of partisans not preferring their own party on each issue

Issue	Traditional Wording	Alternate Wordings	
		Position Cue	Competence Cue
Economy	17.3	23.5	26.1**
Education	27.6	30.7	30.2
Energy	19.8	22.9	21.4
Healthcare	16.2	19.6	26.2**
Immigration	35.0	37.5	40.4
Iraq	17.3	15.7	19.7
Social Security	18.9	23.7	28.3**
Taxes	13.8	19.6	23.0**
Terrorism	28.7	25.5	27.7
All issues	21.6	24.3*	27.0***
n	196	153	183

*** = Result is significantly different from traditional wording's result at > 0.01 level, ** = at > 0.05 level, * = at > 0.1 level (difference-of-means tests). Percentages reflect the proportion of self-identified partisans (i.e., independents and leaners are not included) who either prefer the opposing party on that issue, say that there is no difference between the parties, or that they are not sure. Number of respondents presented is the modal number for a given question wording across all issues; sample sizes only vary across issues by 1–2 respondents at most within each question wording. Significance tests are calculated using the actual number of respondents for each individual issue, and the total number of responses across all issues for the pooled sample.

Table 3: Modeling Party Preferences Across Issues

DV: Preference for Republicans on an issue (binary logit model)

	Traditional Wording	Position Cue Wording	Competence Cue Wording	All Wordings
PID: Democrat	-1.92*** (0.17)	-2.29*** (0.22)	-1.99*** (0.19)	-1.92*** (0.17)
PID: Democrat × Position Cue				-0.37 (0.28)
PID: Democrat × Competence Cue				-0.07 (0.26)
PID: Republican	2.14*** (0.23)	1.63*** (0.21)	1.56*** (0.19)	2.14*** (0.23)
PID: Republican × Position Cue				-0.52 (0.32)
PID: Republican × Competence Cue				-0.58* (0.30)
Ideology	1.45*** (0.11)	1.96*** (0.14)	1.53*** (0.11)	1.45*** (0.11)
Ideology × Position Cue				0.52*** (0.18)
Ideology × Competence Cue				0.08 (0.16)
Issue Fixed Effects (*Wald statistic, 8 d.f.*)	52.25***	43.95***	74.52***	
Issue Fixed Effects (*Wald statistic, 8 d.f.*)				52.25***
Issue Fixed Effects × Position Cue (*16 d.f.*)				96.20***
Issue Fixed Effects × Competence Cue (*16 d.f.*)				126.77***
Position Cue				-1.83*** (0.63)
Competence Cue				-0.11 (0.57)
Constant	-3.62*** (0.40)	-5.45*** (0.49)	-3.73*** (0.40)	-3.62*** (0.40)
n	1984	1643	1866	5493
ePCP	83.0%	83.5%	81.2%	82.5%
ePRE	64.4%	65.8%	62.2%	64.3%

Table entries are binary logit coefficients with standard errors (SEs) in parentheses, except for the results under "Issue Fixed Effects", which are Wald statistics for the joint significance of fixed effects (FEs) under each wording. (The tests of issue FEs for specific wordings in the "All Wordings" model have 16 degrees of freedom because they include a base set of FEs as well as a separate set for each of the alternate wordings.) *** = Result is significant at > 0.01 level, ** = at > 0.05 level, * = at > 0.1 level (two-tailed). DV is coded 0 for Democratic preference, 1 for Republican preference. Model does not include respondents who gave "'no difference" or "not sure" responses, but alternate specifications which do produce similar results. Measures of ePCP and ePRE are defined in Herron (1999) and are developed from traditional measures of percent correctly predicted (PCP) and proportional reduction in error (PRE) achieved over a null model. All issues are pooled, so individual respondents appear up to nine times. I choose not to use clustered SEs in this table because the outcomes being modeled are distinct across issues, and as such, clustering would likely overestimate the errors involved. For those interested in how clustering affects these errors, however, an alternative set of results which cluster by individual are presented in an online appendix.

Table 4: Predictive Margins by Party ID, Ideology, and Issue

Estimated percentage of respondents preferring Republicans in each category

(a) By Respondent Party ID

		Alternate Wordings	
Party ID	Traditional Wording	Position Cue	Competence Cue
Democrat	10.2	5.4	10.3
Independent	40.9	33.3	42.0
Republican	84.0	69.3	74.9
Range (High – Low)	73.8	63.9	64.6

(b) By Respondent Ideology

		Alternate Wordings	
Ideology	Traditional Wording	Position Cue	Competence Cue
Very Liberal	4.2	1.1	3.9
Somewhat Liberal	15.1	7.2	15.2
Moderate	40.9	33.3	42.0
Somewhat Conservative	72.8	75.7	74.4
Very Conservative	91.6	95.5	92.6
Range (High – Low)	87.4	94.4	88.7

(c) By Issue

		Alternate Wordings	
Issue	Traditional Wording	Position Cue	Competence Cue
Best Issue for Democrats	28.0	20.9	23.3
Second Best for Democrats	28.8	21.5	24.0
Third Best for Democrats	28.9	21.7	27.8
Fourth Best for Democrats	30.9	22.8	31.7
Median Issue	32.3	31.7	38.0
Fourth Best for Republicans	44.0	36.7	50.7
Third Best for Republicans	52.0	41.8	53.8
Second Best for Republicans	56.3	42.5	57.8
Best Issue for Republicans	67.4	60.8	70.3
Range (High – Low)	39.6	39.9	47.0

Estimates are derived from the unpooled models shown in Table 3, and reflect the percentage of respondents in each category who would prefer the Republicans over the Democrats on an issue for each set of conditions. Predictions by party identification are for a respondent who describes herself as a moderate, on average across all issues. Predictions by ideology are for a respondent who identifies as an independent, again on average across all issues. Predictions by issue are for a moderate independent. As these explanatory variables are all made up of ordered categories, ranges are provided as a simple way to summarize the magnitudes of their relationships to the dependent variable, in order to demonstrate which question wording leads to the strongest such relationship for each variable. In (c), the ordering of "best" issues is done separately for each wording, but the rankings are highly similar across wordings (see Table 1).

Online Appendix: Modeling Party Preferences With Clustered Errors

DV: Preference for Republicans on an issue (binary logit model)

	Traditional Wording	Position Cue Wording	Competence Cue Wording	All Wordings
PID: Democrat	-1.92*** (0.38)	-2.29*** (0.43)	-1.99*** (0.39)	-1.92*** (0.38)
PID: Democrat × Position Cue				-0.37 (0.57)
PID: Democrat × Competence Cue				-0.07 (0.55)
PID: Republican	2.14*** (0.50)	1.63*** (0.46)	1.56*** (0.43)	2.14*** (0.50)
PID: Republican × Position Cue				-0.52 (0.68)
PID: Republican × Competence Cue				-0.58 (0.66)
Ideology	1.45*** (0.23)	1.96*** (0.33)	1.53*** (0.26)	1.45*** (0.23)
Ideology × Position Cue				0.52 (0.40)
Ideology × Competence Cue				0.08 (0.34)
Issue Fixed Effects (*Wald statistic, 8 d.f.*)	81.19***	69.56***	108.10***	
Issue Fixed Effects (*Wald statistic, 8 d.f.*)				81.39***
Issue Fixed Effects × Position Cue (*16 d.f.*)				151.17***
Issue Fixed Effects × Competence Cue (*16 d.f.*)				189.75***
Position Cue				-1.83 (1.33)
Competence Cue				-0.11 (1.11)
Constant	-3.62*** (0.72)	-5.45*** (1.12)	-3.73*** (0.84)	-3.62*** (0.72)
n	1984	1643	1866	5493

This table replicates the results in Table 3 using clustered standard errors rather than traditional SEs, which are presented in order to suggest an upper bound to the degree of error potentially present in these analyses. In reading an earlier version of this paper, one reviewer pointed out that the responses from a single individual are likely to be correlated, and that as such the standard SE estimates may be too small. While the author is unconvinced that observations of different survey questions from a given individual are equivalent to repeated observations of the same question asked of groups of individuals or of the same individuals in waves of a panel survey (the two most common applications of clustered errors to survey data), this is less a methodological disagreement than a philosophical one, and there is ultimately no perfect solution to this question. By presenting both the traditional SEs in the paper and the clustered SEs in this appendix, we aim to give a sense of the potential bounds of the errors involved in these models, and readers can choose their own weighting of the two extremes based upon their own interepretation of this methodological challenge.