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That's Not a Me Problem:
Frame Ownership Theory and Applications

By

HANNAH ELIZABETH DILLMAN MURNANE
DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

Issue ownership has been thoroughly studied by political scientists since its re-emergence as a popular research topic, yet few scholars have considered the role that party “ownership” might play in how parties deliver their issue messages. In the three papers of this dissertation, I examine the idea that just as parties tend to be associated with (and gain electoral benefit from focusing on) certain issues, parties are also associated with (and might gain electoral benefit from employing) certain ways of framing issues. My first paper builds a theory of frame ownership, testing the idea that voters associate certain frames with certain parties in the same way they do issues. I test this theory with a nationally-fielded survey experiment. The results offer support for the existence of frame ownership across issues. The evidence suggests that parties may be able to successfully “trespass” on issues they don’t own, by talking about those issues using frames they do own.

In my second paper, I use content analysis of news coverage of policy issues to examine whether politicians are using owned frames and if the media, as the conduit between politicians, parties, and campaigns and the general public, reflects the use of these owned frames. I treat this question as a further test of frame ownership as a phenomenon, namely that parties and the media are making the same associations between parties and frames as shown in the first paper. In other words, when Republicans and Democrats are mentioned in the news, are they more likely to be associated with frames owned by their own party? The findings of the paper suggest that, in line with the findings from the first paper, there are certain frames that are more likely to be associated with one party over the other. However, there is only one frame, Security and Defense, which is consistently associated with one party over the other across issues. This finding does not suggest that frame ownership isn’t appearing in the media and/or being used by

politicians, but simply that owned frames are not the *only* ways in which politicians are communicating to their constituencies.

In my third and final paper, I use an experiment to examine whether candidates are rewarded when they “stay in their own lane” by using owned frames (as identified in the first paper), and/or are punished for trespassing on out-party owned frames. The results of this paper offer inconsistent evidence of rewards in either direction. I argue that these findings do not necessarily mean that frame ownership does not shape voter attitudes and electoral outcomes. Rather, as the results from the second paper and this paper suggest, it is likely the case that some frames are stronger than others, prompting them to be more likely to be picked up by the media and more likely to influence voters.

My research tells the story of frame ownership. It opens the doors for further research that asks exactly how politicians and parties can utilize these owned frames in order to gain electoral advantage over their opponents, and also demonstrates the limits of frame ownership’s influence in the presence of especially powerful frames and party cues.

To my grandmother, Ruthann

For the ever present reminder to just finish the dang thing

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When I set out to apply and attend graduate school, despite my dear advisor's warnings, I could not have ever imagined what was in store over the course of the next 6 years. Fortunately for me, I did not ever face this incredibly daunting and overwhelming world of academia alone. Writing a dissertation (and working your way through any doctoral program) may be considered one of the loneliest tasks, but it is only through great friendship, love, and support that I was able to persevere through the end. I would be remiss to not take the time to thank those that have supported me along the way.

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I am acutely aware of my great fortune to have found my dream job while working to finish my dissertation, but I am even more aware of the miraculousness of finding a job that has not only allowed me to, but encouraged and supported me while finishing my PhD. For this stroke of luck, and an endlessly supportive team, I am forever grateful.

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Paper: 1 The Frame Ownership Phenomenon

Testing Public Associations of Frames with Political Parties

Introduction

Issue ownership, the idea that certain political parties are associated with and/or seen as being more competent in handling certain issues, has been thoroughly studied by political scientists since its re-emergence as a popular research topic by Petrocik (1996). In this vein of research, scholars have almost entirely focused on what *issues* political parties, campaigns, and candidates discuss while vying for public support. Yet few scholars have considered the role that party ownership might play in how parties deliver their issue messages. Simultaneously, a robust literature on issue framing (i.e., how an issue or idea is presented) tells us that framing an issue in one way as opposed to another way can “mobilize voters behind their policies by encouraging them to think about those policies along particular lines” (Jacoby, 2000, p. 751). Together, these literatures suggest that it is important for key political actors (parties, campaigns, and candidates) to understand not only how to strategically choose what *issues* to highlight, but also how to strategically *frame* both the issues they choose to talk about and the issues that they are forced to talk about. Knowing which frames will be most advantageous might help political campaigns maximize their effectiveness.

In the same way that citizens tend to ascribe “ownership” of different issues to certain parties, do they also ascribe ownership of different ways of *framing* issues to certain parties? I address this question by evaluating whether survey respondents associate frames, regardless of the issue being discussed, with certain parties. I do this by asking respondents to identify which party they associate with a given frame for several different issues. Below, I first address the issue ownership and framing literature to build a theory arguing that frame ownership functions

similarly to issue ownership. I then explain the survey experiment I employed in order to test the question of frame ownership. I follow by explaining my research findings that suggest that frame ownership *does* exist and behaves similarly across issues and across partisan respondents. I end by discussing the implications of these findings and the direction I believe this literature should continue to progress.

Literature Review

Issue Ownership Background

The idea that certain parties (or candidates) own certain issues draws from Petrocik (1996), who argues that candidates have distinctive patterns of problem emphasis in their campaigns. That is to say that certain political parties are seen by the public to be either more competent at handling certain issues or more associated with certain issues. Issue ownership theory suggests that issue emphases are specific to candidates, and voters support candidates with a party- and performance-based reputation for greater competence on handling the issues about which the voter is concerned (Petrocik, 1996). Research has shown that the electorate holds expectations regarding the relative capabilities of political parties to deal with certain issues (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994).

These general expectations exist because voters generally lack specific factual knowledge about issues and events, but acquire general information about parties and candidates through years of political experience and socialization (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994). Further, “confirmatory bias”, from the information-processing literature, holds that people are more receptive to messages that confirm rather than disconfirm existing stereotypes (Pratto and John, 1991). As such, there should be positive electoral benefit for the candidate who can effectively

shift the voter choice to a decision made in terms of problems facing the country that that candidate is seen as being better able to “handle.” This image of being able to handle certain issues may emerge from the record of the incumbent and/or the constituencies of the parties (Petrocik, 1996). For example, a public audience is less likely to resist a Republican claim on crime, or a Democratic advertisement dealing with civil rights, based on a history of the Republican party handling crime, compared to the Democratic party being perceived as better at handling civil rights.

In other words, issue ownership theory suggests that voters identify the political party that they feel is the most competent proponent of a particular issue, or is perceived to be more “sincere” about and “committed” to an issue, and cast their ballots for that issue owner when voting on the basis of that issue (Bélanger and Meguid, 2008). Issue ownership acts as a major asset to a party or candidate’s effort to persuade voters because even a simple association with a party is an indicator of an ability to implement superior policies and programs (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen, 2003). As long as the issues being primed by a party are consistent with the party’s long-standing image, candidates and parties have the opportunity to gain an advantage over the opposition when they choose to prime voters to these issues. However, priming voters to an issue that their party owns may only matter if the voter finds that issue to be important (Bélanger and Meguid, 2008).

Importantly, issue ownership has been found to be multidimensional (Walgrave, Tresch and Lefevere, 2015). Generally speaking, *competence* issue ownership “refers to parties’ perceived capacity to competently handle and ‘resolve’ particular issues, whereas *associative* issue ownership refers to the spontaneous identification between some parties and some issues, regardless of competence” (Walgrave, Tresch and Lefevere, 2015: 5).

Going forward, I rely on the associative dimension of issue ownership, and apply this dimension to frame ownership. Associative ownership points to a traditional association between a party and an issue, or, in this case, a frame, which is the product of a long-term attention given to a frame (Lachat, 2014). Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen (2003) state that the “mere association” of an issue with a party indicates that party’s ability to implement superior policies. I choose to focus on the associative dimension of issue ownership in order to avoid two problems of the competency dimension. The first problem associated with competency measures (asking respondents which party is more competent on a certain issue) is that responses may be endogenous with vote choice. The second problem is that the standard measure of competence issue ownership may also tap into issue positions of respondents (Walgrave, Tresch and Lefevre, 2015). The associative dimension of issue ownership avoids these pitfalls of competency measures of issue ownership. However, despite my attempt to avoid these pitfalls, I will evaluate the results of frame ownership questions at the party level, as well as the aggregate level, to ensure that party identification is not driving frame association.

Although parties have become more aware of the strategic importance of issues and the potential advantage of issue ownership (Walgrave, Tresch and Lefevre, 2015), many studies have demonstrated that “issue trespassing” or “issue convergence”—parties addressing issues owned by another party—is a common occurrence (Damore 2004, 2005; Holian 2004; Sides 2006, 2007). Damore (2004) argues that occurrences of issue trespassing are a function of the context in which a campaign occurs, and factors that stem from the campaign process. That is to say, based on the nature of campaigns it becomes impossible for candidates and parties to solely focus on issues that they own.

By considering the case of Clinton's crime rhetoric, Holian (2004) demonstrates how candidates may trespass on issues that their party does not own, and still be successful in appealing to voters. In this case, Republican administrators helped to set the agenda on issues related to crime punishment, but the Clinton administration succeeded in setting the agenda on their own definition of crime.

Holian (2004) identifies three means through which parties and candidates may counteract an opposition-owned issue. First, public opinion must be shifted from favoring one party's ability to handle an issue to at least parity between the two parties. The party that does not own the issue they are "trespassing on" must secure a way to shift public opinion in their favor, at least to a point of parity. Next, the party or candidate attempting to neutralize an issue must talk about the issue in a way that is distinguishable from the way in which the once-advantaged party has to change the dimension over which an issue is debated. In the case of Clinton, he could not adopt the Republican position on crime and convince voters that he would handle criminal punishment better than the republican candidate. Rather, he had to adopt a whole new dimension of the debate, shifting the debate to the topic of *fighting* crime. The final requirement for this dimension shift to be successful is that the new issue dimension needs to be picked up by the media and transmitted to the public. This shift in dimension must be powerful enough to draw the attention of the media, and, subsequently, the public.

From Issue Framing and Issue Ownership toward a Theory of Frame Ownership

To frame an issue is to "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient" (Entman, 1993; 52). As such, framing does not persuade individuals to adapt a candidate's position on an issue, but instead to increase the weight given to a particular aspect of

an issue (Chong and Druckman, 2007; Nelson and Oxley, 1999). Because voters possess finite attention and information-processing capabilities, ordinary citizens will only consider a limited set of beliefs from the many that are stored in their long term memory while considering political issues (Nelson and Oxley, 1999). Therefore, frames may have the ability to affect the importance attached to particular beliefs.

Without using the word “frame,” Holian (2004) suggests that the key to successfully “trespassing” on an opposition owned issue is to reframe the debate in a way that highlights the strengths of the once-disadvantaged party. Because we know that there is a campaign effect when a candidate can shift the debate to an issue owned by their own party (Petrocik, 1996), I argue the same may be true in regards to *frame* ownership. Issue trespassing is a necessary occurrence due to the nature of campaigns (Danmore, 2004) and, as such, it becomes an essential part of a campaign to be able to successfully shift a debate, regardless of the issue. One way it may be possible to shift the debate is if voters more strongly associate some frames with certain parties. If that is the case, then a party may be able to successfully reframe the debate if they can shift the debate to a frame they “own.” If a party or candidate can capitalize on an owned *frame*, rather than an owned *issue*, they can utilize that frame in order to create an advantage, or at least parity, on issues not traditionally considered “owned” by their party. Frame ownership may be an especially important tool when parties are forced to “trespass” on issues that they don’t own, but may be an equally important tool within the issues that they do own. Even within an owned issue, parties, candidates, and campaigns may form a more effective message by using frames that the party owns.

In short, the issue ownership literature posits that priming voters to a particular issue is only relevant if voters find that issue to be important (Bélanger and Meguid, 2008). If frames

have the ability to alter the amount of importance that a voter attaches to a certain issue, framing is a powerful tool for campaigns to consider when trying to capitalize on issues that they own, or when they are forced to “trespass” on issues that they do not own.

Prior literature offers evidence for how parties and campaigns may use framing as a mechanism to shift how the public thinks about an issue. Because parties are forced to address issues that they would rather not communicate about, parties reframe issues in terms of policy domains that are both salient to the general public, but are also salient to the party itself (Lefevere et. al, 2019). We see reframing used as a tool in the Clinton example cited above (Holian, 2004). The Clinton campaign successfully reframed crime as an issue of crime *fighting*, rather than crime *punishment*, even though crime is not an issue that is typically considered owned by the Democratic party. Holian (2004) argues this shift was successful because he was able to emphasize the need for more police on the street, federal dollars, and the need to get guns off the street, using federal laws. Further, he was able to agree with the Republican rhetoric (such as the fight against drugs) but then take it one step further to make it an issue of gun control, which was a portion of the debate that the Democrats “owned.”

Although other literature has found that parties frequently reframe issues in a systematic way (Lefevere et. al, 2019), this paper addresses the question of whether or not parties *own* particular frames, across issues. Ownership of frames across issues suggests that regardless of the issue, a party may own a particular dimension of that issue. For example, education is seen typically as an issue owned by Democrats. However, I argue that even though the *issue* of education is owned by Democrats, there are still *frames* within that issue that Republicans own, and thus may be successful in using to discuss education, despite Democrats owning the issue itself. In other words, in the same way the issue ownership literature shows that citizens tend to

endow “ownership” of issues to one party or the other and that parties are more successful when they focus on their “owned” issues¹, this paper asks if citizens tend to endow “ownership” of particular *frames* to one party or the other. Generally speaking, political communication scholars have spent a lot of time evaluating whether issue ownership exists, and how parties use issue ownership to their advantage, but have not spent much time considering if *frame* ownership exists.

Arbour (2014) begins to consider this question by looking at issue specific frames and finds that parties use fundamentally different frames to discuss issues. For example, the most common appeal on taxes by Republicans are valence appeals, but Democrats talk about taxes in an entirely different way, focusing on taxes on the middle class, corporate tax breaks, and taxes on the wealthy. However, looking at the issue of jobs and the economy, Democrats focus the largest proportion of their efforts on jobs going overseas, whereas Republicans once again focus on valence appeals. Arbour (2014) concludes that, though there are some general trends, there is no consistent pattern, across all five of the issues that he studies, in the tendency of one party as opposed to the other using a particular frame.

Although Arbor’s work is a clear stepping stone in the direction of answering the question of whether or not parties “own” particular frames, Arbour does not consider the use of frames *across* issues. Arbor analyzes which frames are used with which issues, but the majority of frames that are considered are issue specific frames. From Arbour's work, it is clear that parties are actively choosing to frame issues differently from one another, but not whether they are doing so in any consistent way. Understanding whether parties own certain frames more generally, regardless of the issue, may open the door to understanding how campaigns can use

¹ In this paper I only focus on the existence of frame ownership. In later papers I intend to test the question of frame ownership effectiveness.

frames strategically to successfully “trespass” on out-party owned issues. Further, understanding whether frame ownership pervades across issues may help us further identify framing as an effective means of “second-level agenda setting” (Coleman, et. al, 2009).

Below, I posit a hypothesis that parties “own” frames *across* issues. In other words, regardless of the issue, if voters hear a message about the health and/or safety consequences of an issue (e.g. health consequences of smoking, safety concerns about gun ownership, healthcare for immigrants) they will be likely to associate the message with Democrats. However, if they hear about the economics associated with an issue (e.g. the economic impact of immigration, economic impact of gun sales associated with gun control) they will be more likely to associate the message with Republicans.

Theory

According to Petrocik (1996), issue handling reputations (what he later describes as “issue ownership”) come from a history of behavior by the party, which is regularly tested and reinforced. As these reputations become more ingrained in party ideology, candidates can rely on these party owned issues and positions to further their own agendas. An example given by Petrocik is when President Bush opposed the extension of the Civil Right Restoration Act under the guise that it would hurt business owner interests. By doing so, he indicated to voters that the concerns of businessmen were more important than the concerns of Black voters. Because Black voters are not an important GOP constituency, and businessmen are, the President was able to confirm the GOPs reputation for particular concerns and indicate issues that the party was well equipped to “handle.” In this case, the issue that was “owned” was business owner interests, President Bush relied on that ownership, while simultaneously reinforcing his party’s ability to

handle it. By relying on the party's ethos as developed by a history of similar actions, candidates can act strategically to appeal to voters.

The above literature outlines the arguments surrounding the basis of issue ownership. To put most simply, research has shown that certain parties are seen as being more competent in, and are more associated with, certain issues (Petrocik, 1996). The most poignant example of issue ownership is Republicans owning the issue of national defense, whereas Democrats own the issue of welfare. Typically, we see candidates making an effort to keep their campaigns focused on issues that they, or their parties own. However, as campaigns escalate, candidates, and parties, are forced to "trespass" into issues that they do not own (Holian, 2004). When forced to campaign on issues that the party does not own, they must shift the dimension of the debate in their favor. In other words, they must reframe the debate in a way that is more favorable to their campaign and/or party.

I argue that in the same way that candidates try to rely on issues that they or their party "owns," they will do the same for frames. Like issue ownership, frame ownership has been developed over time through observed party behavior (Petrocik, 1996), and is furthered as parties become aware of the strategic importance of their owned frames (Walgrave, Tresch and Lefevere, 2015). In order to cope with having to "trespass" on issues they do not own, parties, over time, have developed "ownership" over certain *dimensions* of issues (i.e., ways of framing issues), the same way in which they have developed "ownership" over issues themselves. That is to say, the same way that certain parties own certain issues, I argue that certain parties own certain frames due to a history of use of the frame by parties, and a continued strategic implementation of frame. Generally speaking, I expect the frames that parties "own," to be substantively similar to the issues that they "own," because framing functions as second-level

agenda setting. Thus, parties can use (strategically, or through a history of use) the same reputations they use to establish issue ownership to establish frame ownership. Although Arbour (2014) begins to evaluate this claim, he focuses on how parties own frames that are issue specific. In other words, in the five issues he evaluates, each party owns certain frames, however, these frames vary from issue to issue. Instead of looking at issue specific frames, I consider how parties may own certain frames, regardless of the issue. These considerations lead to the following hypothesis:

H1: In the same way that the voting population associates parties with, or believes they are more competent in handling, specific issues, the voting population will associate certain issue frames with certain parties, across a range of issues.

H2: Similar to findings in the issue ownership literature above, Republicans will “own” the economic and constitutionality frame, while Democrats will “own” morality and health frames. However, the political frame will be less “owned” than the other frames.

Research Design

In order to establish the existence of frame ownership, I employ data from a survey with subjects recruited from an online survey platform, Prolific, which aims for a representative sample of a given population (in this case, US adults).² Participants were paid what is equivalent to \$12.00 an hour for participation in this survey. The demographics of respondents are shown in Table 1. As illustrated in Table 1.1, there were a total of 2053 respondents with a majority of

² In the Spring of 2020, I first ran this survey on a student sample (N=247) and found substantively identical results to this survey.

respondents being Democrats (N = 1164), young (N = 1200 in the 18-30 category), and educated (n = 1775 of respondents having at least some college education). Despite requesting a representative sample, it is clear that the results do not yield a representative sample based on age. Further, with only 206 Republican respondents, it is important to note that any findings regarding Republicans may not be representative of the broader group.

| PID | | Gender | | Age | | Education | | Race | |
|------|------|-------------------|------|-------|------|------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|------|
| D. | 1164 | Male | 989 | 18-30 | 1200 | Did not graduate high school | 13 | White | 1409 |
| R. | 206 | Female | 1013 | 31-40 | 469 | High School | 265 | Black or African American | 277 |
| Ind. | 687 | Other | 49 | 41-50 | 217 | Some College | 560 | Hispanic or Latino | 157 |
| | | Prefer not to say | 1 | 51-60 | 110 | 2 year degree | 171 | American Indian or Alaska Native | 4 |
| | | | | 61-70 | 44 | 4 year degree | 740 | Middle Eastern | 138 |
| | | | | 71+ | 14 | Post-grad degree | 304 | Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | 4 |
| | | | | | | | | Other | 27 |

Table 1.1: Demographics of Survey Respondents

Participants were told that they would be participating in a study that was intended to help better understand political attitudes. After agreeing to participate, respondents were given four issues and asked which party they instantaneously thought of when thinking about a given aspect of that issue. This prompt aligns with prior work that measures associative issue ownership (Walgrave, Lefevere, and Tresch, 2012). In Walgrave et al.’s study, they use the

question “Can you indicate for the following issue which party you spontaneously think about when you think about the issue? This does not have to be the party whose position on that issue you find most compelling.” In my survey I asked “Regarding the issue of (immigration, gun control, health care, national defense), and the following prompts, which party do you spontaneously think about?” An example of the question wording can be found in Figure 1.1. In order to ensure that respondents were aware of what they were being asked to do, before they were shown this question for the four issues listed above they needed to pass an attention check question.

Respondents were then shown the question listed above, and a list of specific aspects (frames) of that issue. In order to choose what frames respondents were shown, I relied on the Media Frames Codebook (Boydston et al., 2014) and the issue ownership literature. I chose frames that closely align with the issue ownership literature, such as healthcare, which is an *issue* the literature suggests is owned by the Democratic party (Benoit and Hansen, 2004). Further, for example, respondents were shown the question “Regarding the topic of immigration, and the following prompts, which party do you spontaneously think about?” The prompts aligned with the five frames that I am studying--economics, constitutionality, health and safety, morality, and politics--worded as “the economics of immigration,” “the legality of immigration,” and so forth (see Figure 1.1 for example). In order to eliminate redundancy, for the issue of health care instead of “the health and safety of health care” respondents were asked to respond to “the quality of life of health care.” The order in which respondents were shown each issue is randomized, though the order of the frames within each issue remains consistent across respondents. For each frame, respondents could answer “Democratic Party,” “Republican Party,” or “Neither political party comes to mind.”

Regarding the topic of **Health Care**, and the following prompts, which party do you spontaneously think about?

| | Democratic Party | Republican Party | Neither political party comes to mind |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| The economics of health care | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The morality of health care | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The constitutionality of health care | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The quality of life associated with health care | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The politics of health care | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Figure 1.1: Question Wording for Frame Ownership Questions

Results

In order to test my frame ownership hypothesis, I first compare the results of the aforementioned experiment across all four issues: Immigration, defense, gun control, and health care. The results are shown in Figure 1.2, where the light blue portions of the graph represent the percentage of respondents that responded “Republican” when prompted with a given frame³.

Figure 1.2 offers support for my first hypothesis. For example, for the economic frame, 67% of respondents (across all 4 issues) answered Republican, while only 33% of respondents associated

³ For this analysis, I exclude those who answered “don’t know.” However, I include the “don’t know” responses in a similar figure in the appendix. The results are similar regardless of inclusion of “don’t know” responses.

economic frames with Democrats. Across all four issues, we see that there appears to be a clear divide between responses to each frame. For each issue, there is a generally strong majority of respondents picking one party over the other when asked which party they spontaneously think of. Economic, constitutionality, and political frames are associated with the Republican party, while health and morality frames are associated with the Democratic party. These initial findings support my second hypothesis such that the Republican party appears to “own” the economics, constitutionality, and political frame, while the Democratic party appears to “own” the morality and health frames.

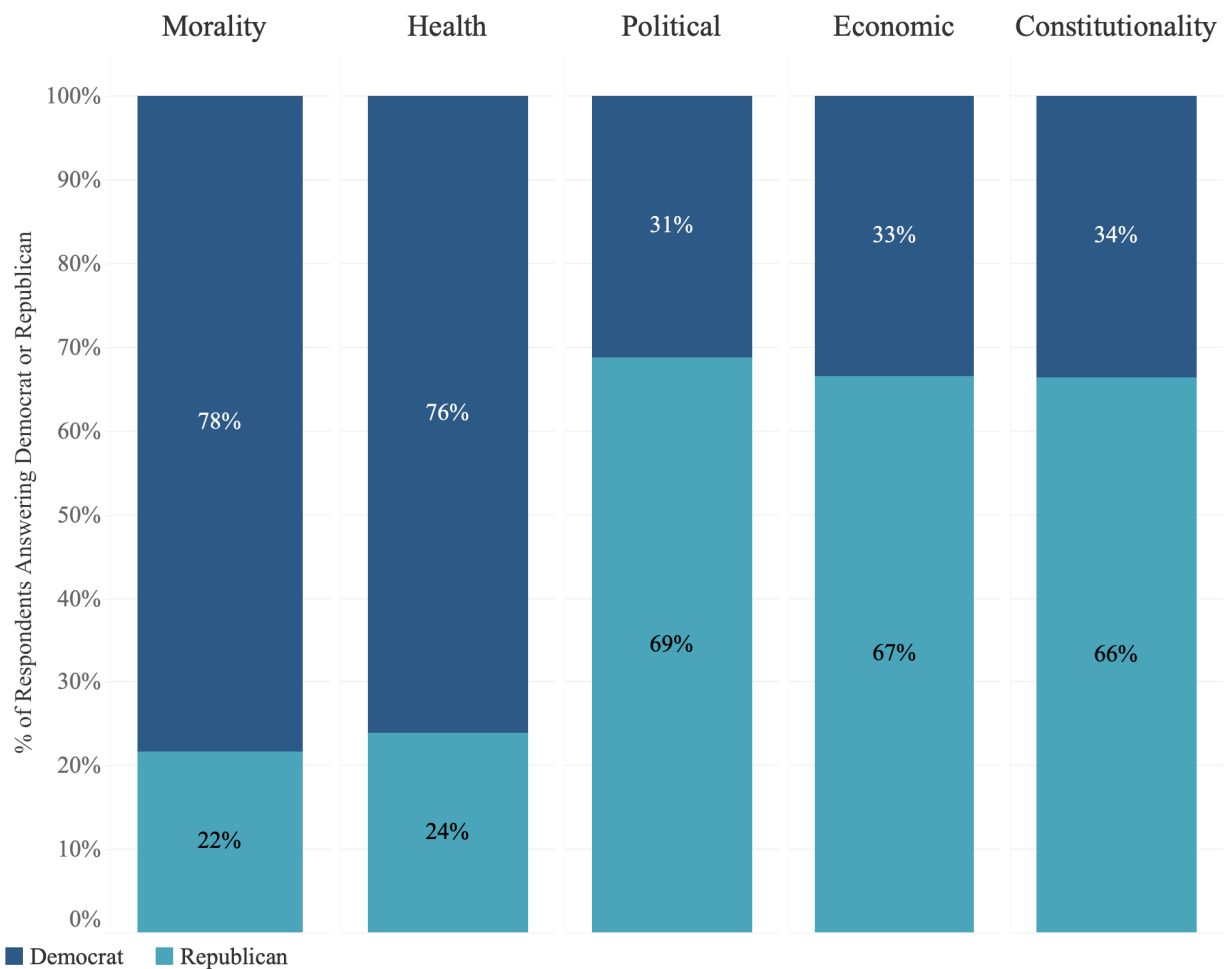


Figure 1.2: Percentage of Respondents responding “Republican” and “Democrat” across all issues, by frame (excluding “don’t know” responses).

There is some variation among the frames. The political frame is the frame most strongly associated with the Republican party, with 69% of respondents answering “Republican,” and morality is the most strongly held democratic frame with 78% of respondents responding “Democrat” across all four issues.

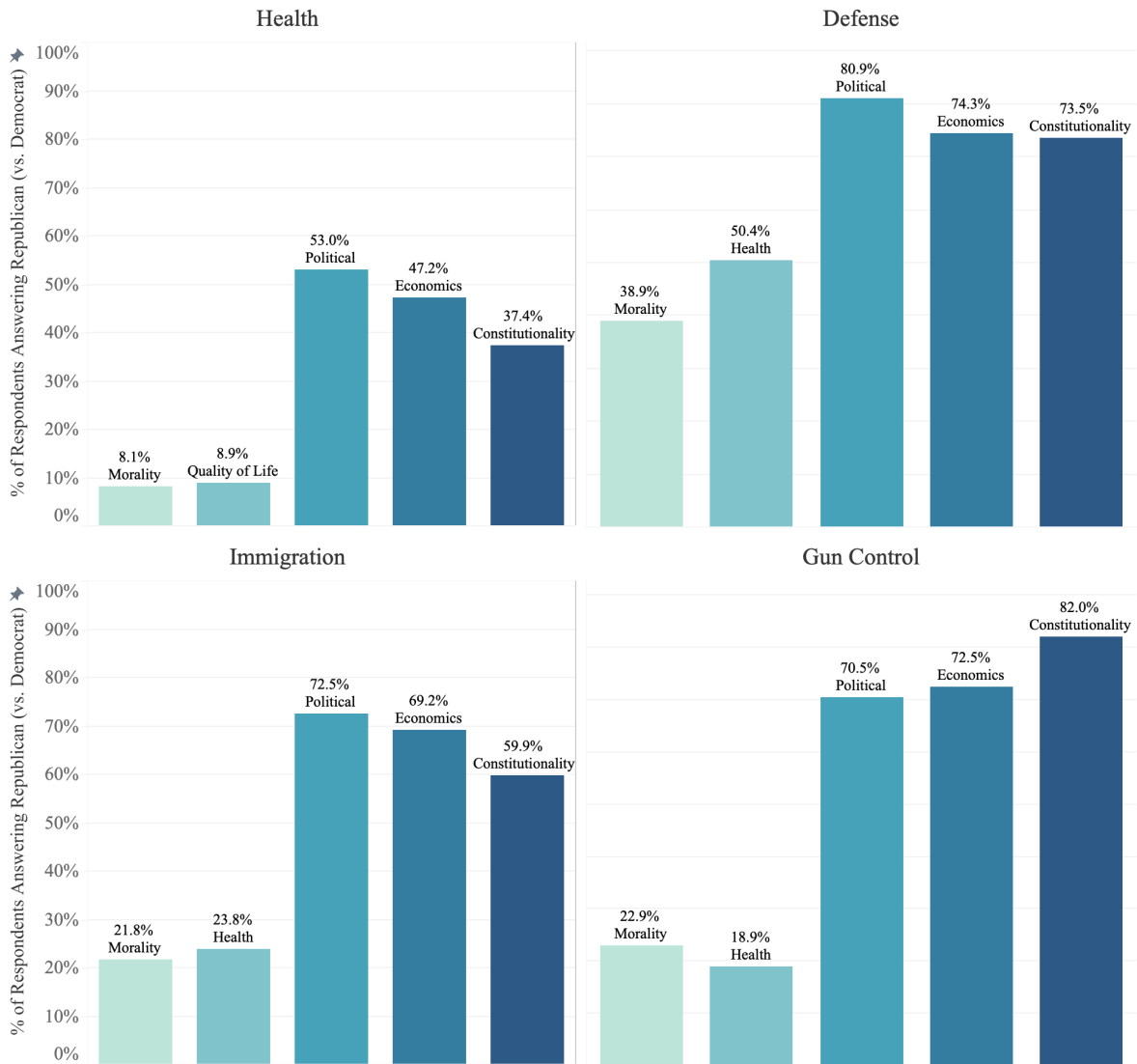


Figure 1.3: Percentage of Respondents answering “Republican” by issue and frame

To evaluate whether these general trends span across issues, and further my claims of frame ownership, I shift my analysis to issue by issue. Figure 1.3 indicates that the trends that I

found at the aggregate level, also appear to exist at the issue level. Within Figure 1.3 there is some variation worth noting, but nothing that is entirely unexpected.

For health care, we see the lowest percentage of respondents answering “Republican” for each frame. This finding is in line with the issue ownership literature; given that healthcare is such a strongly held issue by the Democratic party, it is unsurprising that the smallest percentages of respondents associated each frame with the Republican party. However, despite these lower than average responses, the general trends that I expect to see remain. The frames that I previously noted as having the most “Republican” responses, still hold true. Political, economic, and constitutionality frames still had considerably more “Republican” responses than did morality and quality of life frames. Additionally, the two frames I claim to be Democratically “owned” (morality and quality of life) show the lowest percentage of Republican responses.

Similarly to how health care shows the lowest percentages of “Republican” responses for Republican-owned frames, Defense shows the *highest* “Republican” responses for Democrat-owned frames. Also similarly to health care, these higher than average responses are in line with the issue ownership literature given that defense is such a strongly held issue by the Republican party. Despite these deviations from the average, and these higher than average responses for Democrat-owned frames, the *trends* are still the same. The health and morality frames are much less likely to be associated with the Republican party than are political, economics, and constitutionality frames.

The other two issues, gun control and immigration, show almost identical results that are in line with what I would expect based on my theory of frame ownership, in line with the previous aggregate results. My hypothesis states that “In the same way that the voting population associates parties with, or believes they are more competent in handling, specific issues, the

voting population will associate certain issue frames to certain parties, across a range of issues.”

In order for this hypothesis to be true, I would expect the individual issue results to align with the aggregate level results. Immigration and gun control continue to strengthen these results with the morality and health frames significantly less attributed to the Republican party than the economic, political, and constitutionality frames.

However, there are two other things to note as I look at the breakdown of responses by frame. There is one variation within the frames that I used. Again, for the issue of health care, rather than asking respondents which party they associate with the “health and safety of health care” I replaced the health frame with quality of life. My results show that with this swap, respondents treat the quality of life frame very similarly to how they treat the health frame in the context of the other issues.

In order to confirm that the responses to these frames were significantly different from one another, I ran T-tests comparing the average response (0 to 1, where 0 = a response of “Democrat” and 1 = a response of “Republican”). The results are presented in Table 1.2. I find consistent support for my hypothesis. For each issue, the average response to the Democratically owned frames was significantly lower than the average response to the Republican-owned frames. I use the average because by excluding the “don’t know” responses, I limit response to 0 for Democrat and 1 for Republican indicating that average response to each frame is the percentage of people that responded Republican. In other words, the average response for the morality frame for immigration is .21, indicating that 21% of respondents answered “Republican” as displayed in Figure 1.3 above.

Immigration:

| | | Democratic Frames | |
|------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Republican | | Health & Safety | Morality |
| | Crime | H < C | M < C |
| | Economic | H < E | M < E |
| | Political | H < P | M < P |

Gun Control:

| | | Democratic Frames | |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Republican | | Health & Safety | Morality |
| | Constitutionality | H < C | M < C |
| | Economic | H < E | M < E |
| | Political | H < P | M < P |

Health Care:

| | | Democratic Frames | |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Republican | | Quality of Life | Morality |
| | Constitutionality | Q < C | M < C |
| | Economic | Q < E | M < E |
| | Political | Q < P | M < P |

Defense:

| | | Democratic Frames | |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Republican | | Health & Safety | Morality |
| | Constitutionality | H < C | M < C |
| | Economic | H < E | M < E |
| | Political | H < P | M < P |

Each cell in the table above represents a T-test comparison of the mean responses to a Republican owned frame versus a Democrat owned frame. Due to the nature of responses, the mean response is also the percentage of respondents that answered “Republican” to a given frame/issue combination. As such, for example, the upper right cell in the immigration chart indicates that the crime frame had a statistically significant higher mean response than the health and safety frame. In other words, a statistically significant larger percent of respondents answered “Republican.” All cells are presented in bold as all comparisons showed statistically significant differences in the expected direction.

Table 1.2: T-Test Results for Statistically Significant Differences between Frames (excluding “neither Republican nor Democrat” answers)

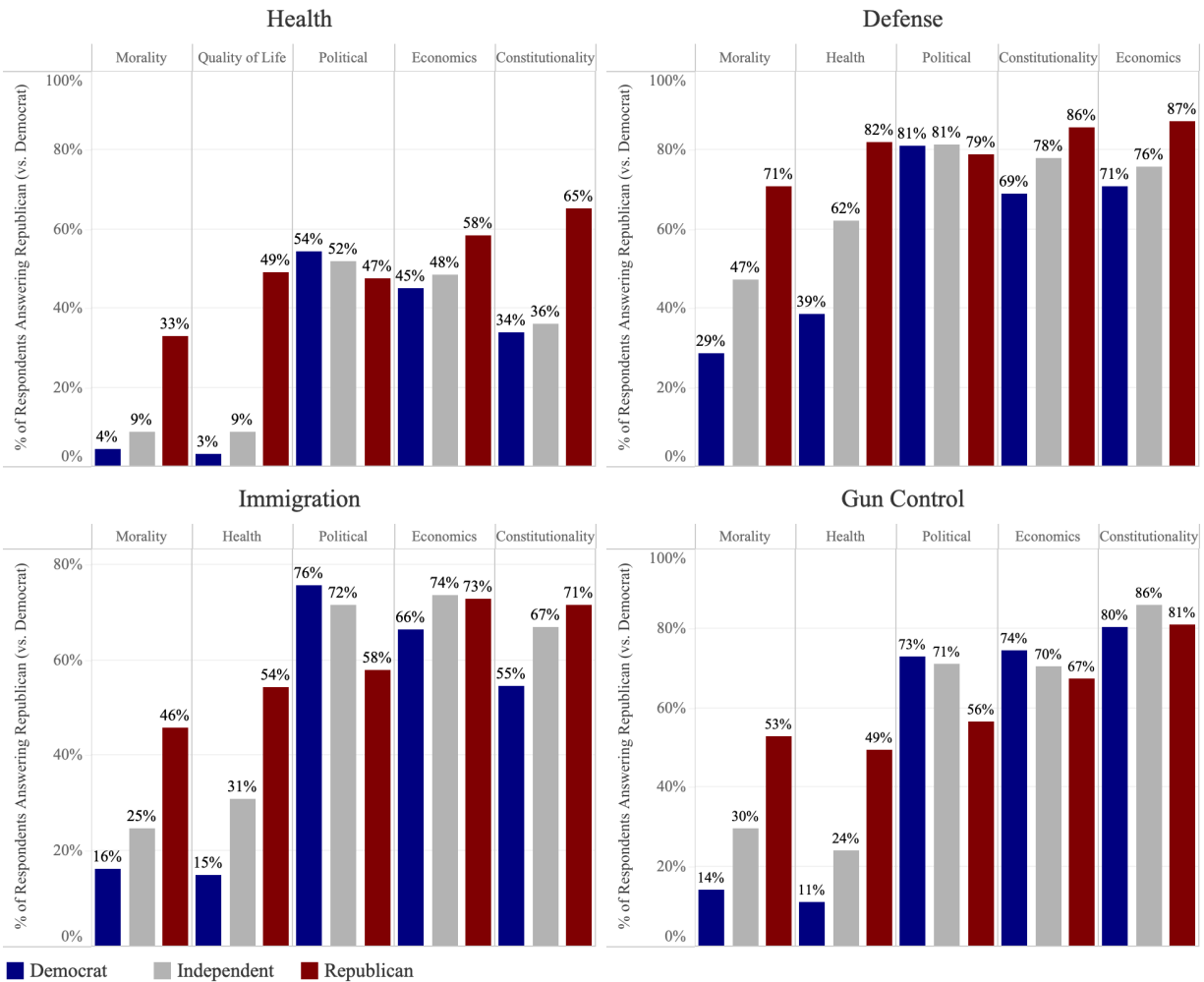
These statistically significant differences provide support for my hypothesis. Across all four issues, there are two frames that are significantly more likely to be associated with the Democratic Party, while there are three frames which are significantly more likely to be associated with the Republican Party.

Although the above shows support for my hypothesis across groups, I now turn to the question of whether partisanship affects association of frames with parties. The issue ownership literature suggests that some issue ownership results may be a function of party identification because party identifiers tend to name their own party as competent to handle any issue (Wagner

and Zeglovits 2014). It is my hope that by using the associative dimension of issue ownership rather than the competency dimension, I will avoid this problem, but I run the analysis at the party level to be certain. Additionally, even though respondents are not asked about competency, they may be more likely to associate any and all frames with their own party because that is the party that they are thinking about most of the time and thus are probably more likely to spontaneously think of regardless of the issue/frame combination. If this is the case, both Republicans and Democrats would be more likely to answer their own party when asked issue ownership questions. Further, I would expect that independents may fall somewhere in the middle.

Looking at the results below in Figure 1.4, I see this to be the case for both Democrats and Republicans. For nearly every single frame, a larger percentage of Republicans answered Republican than Democrats. In some cases these differences are very small (81% of Democrats and 79% of Republicans in regards to the politics of defense), but in some instances these differences are quite large (14% of Democrats and 53% of Republicans in regards to the health of gun control). One thing to note is that for nearly every frame/issue combination, Republicans are more likely to say “Republican” than are Democrats, except for every instance of the political frame. This could be happening for two reasons. The first is that both Republicans and Democrats are part of a *political* party, meaning that, by nature they both may be associated with politics. However, I argue what is happening here is blame attribution by the Democrats, by suggesting that Republicans are responsible for the “politics” of each of these issues. Notably, this frame is also the most weakly “owned” Republican frame when looking at how Republicans respond as well.

Percent of Partisans that Answered "Republican" as Opposed to "Democrat" by Issue, Frame and Party ID (Excluding "don't know"):



In the figure above, each bar represents the percentage of respondents, by party (Democrats in blue, Independents in gray, Republicans in red) that respondents “Republican” to a given frame/issue combination. For instance, looking at the morality frame for the issue of health care, 4% of Democrats answered “Republican,” 9% of independents answered “Republican,” and 33% of Republicans answered “Republican.”

Figure 1.4: Average Response by Issue, Frame, and Party

In order to determine if these differences between parties are statistically significant, I run T-tests to compare responses by Republicans and Democrats and find that there are some instances in which their responses are statistically different (at the .05 level). These results are present in Table 1.3. However, there do not seem to be any consistent trends that span across issues or frames, suggesting that there is no systematic reason for when the party groups respond

differently from one another. As mentioned above, despite these differences between party groups (statistically significant or not) the general trends hold as outlined in the figure above, with one notable exception. In the case of the political frame, Democrats are more likely to associate the issue with Republicans than are Republicans. As noted above, this may be due to Democrats associating Republicans with bringing “politics” into each of these issues.

Ultimately, both parties are more likely to associate Republicans with Republican-owned frames (constitutionality, and economics) than they are Democrat-owned frames (health and morality).

Differences between Republican & Democrats

| | Immigration | Health Care | Gun Control | Defense |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Health/Quality of Life (Health Care Only) | R > D | R > D | R > D | R > D |
| Morality | R > D | R > D | R > D | R > D |
| Constitutionality | R > D | R > D | No Sig. Diff. | R > D |
| Economic | No Sig. Diff. | R > D | No Sig. Diff. | R > D |
| Political | D > R | D > R | D > R | No. Sig. Diff. |

In the table above, each cell represents a T-test comparison of mean responses by Republicans and Democrats for each issue/frame combination. The cell is bolded, and the relationship noted in the instances in which these differences were significant at a .05 level of significance. Looking at the upper right most cell, it indicates that in the case of health and safety frame for immigration, the mean response by Republican was statistically significantly higher than the mean response by Democrats.

Table 1.3: T-Test Comparison of Party Groups

Conclusions, Implications, and Further Research

The findings discussed above, while not perfectly generalizable to the general public, represent substantial evidence in support of the phenomenon of frame ownership. These results

suggest that certain parties are associated with certain issues by the general public. I identify three frames that are consistently associated with the Republican party (politics, constitutionality, and economics) and two frames that are consistently associated with the Democratic party (health and safety, and morality). These results are consistent across four issues (health care, defense, immigration, and gun control) suggesting that regardless of the issue being discussed there are certain ways that an issue can be framed that will make it more likely to be associated with one party or the other. These findings fall in line with the issue ownership theory in the ways that I would expect (the economy is typically a republican owned issue, so it follows that the economic *frame* would also be owned by the Republican party). However, they go one step further than the issue ownership literature in that these results permeate across issues. This finding suggests that regardless of the issue, parties may be able to capitalize on party-owned *frames* when they are forced to “trespass” on issues that they do not otherwise own.

The results shown here help illustrate the need for future research in this area, particularly with a larger, more generalizable sample. If the results continue to hold with a larger sample, then additional research questions may present themselves. Do frame/party associations hold across all levels of education and political interest? Are framing effects stronger when in-party owned frames are used? For example, are Democrats more affected by a health & safety frame than are Republicans, and are Republicans more affected by an economic frame than are Democrats? Are owned frames being used strategically by candidates in campaign ads (possibly tv, speeches, etc)? If owned frames are being used strategically, are candidates rewarded for using those frames?

These additional research questions, in addition to the current results, may lead academics to consider issue ownership not just as a single level phenomena, but a multi-layered

issue with framing acting as a second-level agenda setter. Therefore, the combination of both issue and frame ownership may allow us to better understand how parties, campaigns, and candidates can shape messages to be the most effective to their supporters. Further, these findings begin to develop a means through which parties may be able to strategically discuss issues that they generally would otherwise avoid (i.e. issues that they are “trespassing” on).

Paper 2: Frame Ownership Application in the Media

Testing Parties' Use of Frame Ownership as Captured in News Coverage

Introduction

When Petrocik (1996) found that there are issues that parties are more likely to be seen as being able to “handle,” he also found that candidates in presidential elections show distinctive patterns of emphasizing these “owned” issues. He notes that individual voters are significantly influenced by issue concerns above and beyond the effects of other standard predictors. In the previous paper, I evaluated the phenomenon of frame ownership and determined that the parties are consistently associated with certain frames, across issues. Unlike Petrocik (1996), I do not base my definition of ownership on the competency measure, but rather the associative, meaning that respondents *associate* the party with certain frames (see Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen, 2003) rather than (necessarily) ascribing competence to the party for how they deal with a given issue when framed that way. There is evidence that the “mere association” of an issue with a party is an indicator of the party’s ability to implement superior policies and programs (Petrocik, Benoit and Hansen, 2003, p. 601).

Although I show in my first paper that citizens are associating certain parties with certain frames, here I consider a second test of the frame ownership theory. I theorize that parties and the media employ the same associations between parties and frames as do citizens. In order to test that theory, I evaluate whether or not candidates are *using* their owned frames, and whether journalists are associating parties with their owned frames. I examine media portrayals of party members, with the idea that if these media portrayals link specific politicians to their party-

owned frames, it would suggest both that politicians are using their owned frames and that the media is picking up and transmitting (perhaps even amplifying) these frame ownership signals..

Literature Review

We know that the foundation of political parties are rooted in deep cleavages that divide society (Klingemann, et al., 1994). How parties begin determining their subsequent issue ownership: “Parties sustain an identity that is anchored in the cleavages and issues that gave rise to their birth” (Klingemann, et al., 1994: 24). Despite these cleavages being so central to any party, there are several channels through which a party may convey their relative interest in issues, and to “claim, reclaim, reinforce, or loosen their issue ownership” (Walgrave and De Swert, 2007: 39). Politicians can make speeches, while parties themselves can put forth advertisements, draft manifestos, and use their formal electoral programming (debates, etc.) to show that they care about issues. From this perspective, parties themselves determine their own issue ownership (Klingemann, et al., 1994). That is to say that parties can be strategic in what they choose to emphasize or de-emphasize.

Issue ownership theory puts forth a positive relationship between electoral support and public attention to issues that a party “owns” (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994; Beyer, Knutsen, and Rasch, 2014). In a comparative setting, subsequent research has found this relationship to be significant, though different for opposition and government parties. Opposition parties (parties not currently in power) benefit from media attention to owned issues without losing ground when the news concentrates on issues owned by government parties. However, ruling parties lose votes when news about opposition-owned issues increases without gaining support when the media agenda is in their favor (Thesen, Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2017). Even though

these effects vary for parties dependent on whether or not they are in power, it is still important to note that this study identifies the significance of voters seeing owned issues in the media.

Based on the above literature, I first argue that politicians and political parties expect to gain electorally by focusing on owned frames, in the same way that other scholars have shown is true for owned issues. This argument relies on Petrocik's (1996) foundational literature that suggests that parties will highlight some feature of an issue on which it is more likely to be regarded as more competent. Therefore, I expect that political parties will make an effort to set the media agenda in favor of their owned frames. In order to test this argument, I rely on how politicians and political parties are presented by the media. Therefore, I also expect that frame ownership will be visible in the media. Research suggests that the mass media systematically links parties with their issues (Walgrave and De Swert, 2007), which I expect to see with owned frames as well.

Politicians' use of owned frames

Petrocik's (1996) study on issue ownership has driven most of the subsequent studies on the topic. He notes that a candidate's campaign can be understood as a marketing effort with the goal of achieving a strategic advantage focusing on problems that reflect their own parties owned issues. By making these issues the programmatic meaning of the election, and the criteria by which voters make their choice, politicians can put themselves, and their parties at an advantage over their opponents. And, as such, he finds that presidential campaigns emphasize issues owned by their own party.

What Petrocik is really getting at is the ability, and benefit, of a political candidate to set the agenda in their own favor. Generally speaking, agenda setting refers to the idea that there is a

strong correlation between the emphasis the mass media places on certain issues and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). Further, it has been found that the media appear to exert considerable impact on voters' judgments of what they consider to be major issues of a campaign (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Therefore, if candidates expect to be rewarded when campaigns are centered on their own party's owned issues, it would be in their best interest to ensure that the media is picking up on these issues. In other words, they should have a vested interest in setting the media agenda in their own favor.

There is also evidence that issue ownership influences the favorability of news coverage toward candidates during a campaign (Hayes, 2008). When considering the "favorability" of news coverage, Hayes (2008) finds that Democrats benefit particularly from news about social welfare topics (a topic considered to be owned by Democrats), while Republicans, meanwhile, receive the most favorable coverage in defense and tax stories (topics considered to be owned by Republicans). Hayes' finding is relevant to a candidate's desire to set the media agenda because the presumption underlying the study of favorable news coverage is that if news is slanted in a way that benefits one candidate or party over the other, public opinion could be affected. Therefore, it is beneficial to candidates to do their best to set the media agenda to reflect issues that their party owns. Noting this favorability of coverage is important for two reasons. The first is that the research suggests that the media picks up on instances of candidates using their owned issues. Second, if owned frames act the same way that owned issues do, then the media should also reflect that usage.

Media picking up on use of party-owned frames

It is important to account for the role of the mass media in conveying information to voters. It would be remiss to not consider that the mass media is nearly the only way that the average citizen receives information regarding party positions. The mass media relays speeches, advertisements, and even party manifestos to the public (Walgrave and De Swert, 2007). Therefore, when research shows that parties communicate their issue emphasis via speeches and advertisements, they implicitly refer to the role of the mass media. Therefore, we should see these linkages between parties and their owned issues, or frames, in the media data. And, the prior research confirms this. By and large, the mass media systematically links parties with their issues (Walgrave and De Swert, 2007). Party manifestos seem to produce issue ownership, but in a much slower way, with long time lags, while media coverage has a somewhat immediate effect. This more immediate effect, and the fact that the media is nearly the only way that the average citizen receives information begins to suggest that issue ownership is originally created by parties' own deliberate issue claims, but is maintained by mass media's coverage of parties and issues (Walgrave and De Swert, 2007). Further, when Holian (2004) considers how parties may "successfully" issue trespass, his third condition is that the new rhetoric needs to be picked up by the media and transmitted to the public.

From the prior studies, we know that journalists seem to be aware of issue ownership, or, at a minimum, that they enforce these reputations in their writings (Hayes, 2008). We also know that voters are susceptible to party issue profiles displayed in the media (Aalberg and Jenssen 2007; Walgrave et al. 2009). Walgrave et. al. (2009) go further to find that voters' perceptions of competence issue ownership are affected by media messages in the short term. Tresch et al.

(2015) find similar results, namely that election news affects voters perceptions of the associative dimension of issue ownership. Bringing all of the above literature together, media exposure matters for issue ownership; by communicating about one's owned issue, a party can maintain its ownership over that issue (Walgrave et al., 2009).

If parties expect to gain electoral advantage by relying on owned issues, they should be able to do the same with owned frames. The basic idea is that a party selectively “highlights some feature of the issue on which it is likely to be regarded as more competent” (Petrocik 1996: 829). The above literature demonstrates the role that owned frames in the media *could* play in affecting voter behavior. But, again, this relationship between owned frames and the media is dependent on the media picking up on these “features,” or frames. The next step to consider is whether not the media is actively noticing a party or candidate’s decision to focus on owned issues or frames and then presenting them to the public.

Expectations

Thus far, I have laid the framework for why parties *should* care about highlighting their owned frames, and why we would expect the media to be picking up on these frames. However, the question remains as to whether, in reality, candidates and parties *are* using these frames and if the media is observing these frames and presenting the parties with these frames in mind.

Below, I will measure frame ownership on behalf of politicians and media through the single measure of the extent to which parties are associated with certain frames in the context of media coverage. There are, of course, limitations to relying on media coverage to measure whether politicians are utilizing their owned frames. The media has a limited agenda and several studies identify the importance of agenda setting and gatekeeping (Bjarnøe et al., forthcoming).

And, by nature, measuring newspaper coverage will not gather all news outlets and sources. However, there is also research that shows strong issue and frame convergence between parties' messaging and media coverage of those messages (Merz, 2017). Ultimately, as outlined above, most information that the average citizen receives about politicians and political parties is done so through the media, therefore, I argue that using the media as a further test of frame ownership, serves the purpose of determining if owned frames are being used in a way that may garner electoral support for political parties and candidates.

The above research highlights the importance of the media on *issue* ownership, and begins to discuss the interplay between issues and frames. Based on this literature, I have argued that the media should have an equally important role on owned *frames*. We know that citizens respond more favorably to an issue frame if it is sponsored by a party they vote for (Slothuus and De Vreese, 2010) and we know that the media is the conduit through which citizens learn of the policies (and, likely, frames) that parties and candidates are emphasizing. As such, I form my hypothesis:

H1: Candidates are more likely to use their parties' "owned" frames, across issues, when discussing policy agenda items, and the media will pick up on these frames.

Research Design & Methods

Taking into account Walgrave and De Swert (2007) who suggest that when parties are mentioned in the news dealing with an issue, the co-mentioning creates a link between this issue and that party in the head of the news consumer, I use the Media Frames Corpus (Boydston et al., 2014) to test my hypothesis. This data is compiled of news articles spanning from 1980 to 2012 capturing coverage from twelve major newspapers (see appendix for full list of sources). These stories were downloaded from Lexis Nexis using a series of tag searches (such as

“immigration law” and “foreign labor” for immigration; for full list of search tags see appendix). These searches were done for 6 topics: gun control, tobacco, climate change, same sex marriage, immigration and the death penalty.

Each article is coded in accordance with the Media Frames Codebook (Boydston et al., 2014). The Media Frames Codebook includes 14 frames: Economic, Capacity & Resources, Morality & Ethics, Fairness & Equality, Legality, Constitutionality & Jurisdiction, Crime & Punishment (Retribution), Security & Defense, Health & Safety, Quality of Life, Cultural Identity, Public Sentiment, Political Factors & Implications, Policy Description, Prescription & Evaluation, External Regulation & Reputation. For example, stories on immigration discussing the debate over whether regularization of status for unauthorized immigrants is a net positive or negative for public expenditure is coded economic. Op-eds that discuss their conscience being tested at the thought of “ripping families apart” at the border are coded morality. Any story that discusses the deportation of immigrants is coded as crime and punishment. However, a story discussing possible terrorists immigrating to the US, is considered security and defense.

Boydston and colleagues used the Media Frames Codebook to develop the Media Frames corpus—a database built text-as-data techniques, linking meticulous manual content analysis with supervised machine learning. First a considerable sample of the articles were annotated by human coders working in pairs of two to ensure inter-coder reliability. Inter-coder reliability for identifying the tone and primary emphasis frame was reasonably strong, hovering around a Krippendorff’s Alpha of 0.6. Then through supervised machine learning, Boydston et al. leveraged a state-of-the-art approach from natural language processing (NLP), by fine-tuning pretrained contextual embedding models for each task (RoBERTa; Liu et al., 2019), which offered the best performance based on preliminary experiments. From this, the top frames used

in each article were predicted for the remaining articles, leaving the dataset with over 150,000 news articles. The dataset offers an apples-to-apples comparison of (a) overall levels of attention, (b) the tone of the coverage (portraying one “side” of a policy debate or the other in a positive light), and (c) the emphasis frames used in that coverage (e.g., framing the issue in terms of economics, morality, security, etc.), of multiple policy issues across several decades.

I use the Media Frames Corpus to create my political party coverage variable, which identifies which of these articles mention Democrats or Republicans as part of the text of the article. To identify Democrat and Republican mentions, I use keywords (for Democrats: “Democrat”, “(D)”, “ D-”, and “(D- ” and the equivalent phrases for Republicans) that highlight when a Democrat or Republican is discussed in the media. These particular keywords and phrases highlight not just when a Republican or Democrat is mentioned, but instances where a Democrat is Republican is quoted. For example, these keywords pick up phrases such as:

"What we're really getting hit with are these very extreme weather events," said Councilman James Gennaro (D-Queens), chairman of the Council's Environmental Protection Committee. "We need to be very mindful of sea level rise and what that could mean for New York City."

In a random test of 100 articles, these keywords elicit no false positives or negatives. However, we can imagine scenarios in which a discussion of a “democratic nation” or phrases such as these may highlight a few false positives. That said, these phrases are minimal and unlikely to skew any results in favor of my hypothesis. These keyphrases generate 13,884 articles that mention Republicans, and 10,062 that mention Democrats. In addition, 13,054 articles mention both parties. For the purposes of this analysis, I ignore those articles that

mention both parties, given that for the sake of comparison these mentions would cancel each other out.

| Frame | Democrat | Republican |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Capacity and Resources | 149 (38.7%) | 236 (61.3%) |
| Crime and Punishment | 447 (48.3%) | 477 (51.7%) |
| Cultural Identity | 300 (44.4%) | 375 (55.6%) |
| Economic | 618 (46.8%) | 702 (53.2%) |
| External Regulation | 145 (35.6%) | 262 (64.4%) |
| Fairness and Equality | 292 (41.7%) | 408 (58.3%) |
| Health and Safety | 320 (48.4%) | 341 (51.6%) |
| Legality and Constitutionality | 1123 (44.2%) | 1420 (55.8%) |
| Morality | 208 (50%) | 208 (50%) |
| Policy Prescription and Evaluation | 1166 (45.5%) | 1396 (55.5%) |
| Political | 4355 (38.9%) | 6853 (62.1%) |
| Public Sentiment | 541 (48.9%) | 566 (51.1%) |
| Quality of Life | 207 | 233 |
| Security and Defense | 191 | 406 |
| Total | 10,062 | 13,884 |

Table 2.1: Distribution of Top Frames by Party

In addition to the party coverage variable, I also create a “top frame” variable that allows me to know which frame has the highest predicted probability of being the main frame of any given article. The distributions of top frame, and the percentages of all articles that have that top frame, by party mention, are presented in Table 2.1.

As indicated in Table 2.1, in almost every frame, Republicans are more likely to be mentioned, simply the nature of them being more mentioned overall (nearly 14,000 mentions overall, compared to Democrats 10,000 overall mentions). Further, Figure 2.1 shows the distribution of all articles that mention Republicans or Democrats across all top frames. Here, we can see that the distributions are similar, but do show some key differences. Consistent with what I would expect, in line with my first paper, of all articles that mention Democrats, there is a larger proportion of health and moral frames than of those articles that mention Republicans. The same is true for articles that mention Republicans in that a larger share of that agenda space is devoted to the political frame and the security frame. However, unlike what I would expect, a larger share of articles that mention Democrats have the economic and crime frames, a frame that I would expect to be owned by Republicans.

To account for these differences, I employ T-tests that compare the predicted probability that a frame will be the top frame in any given article by party mentions. This set of T-tests allows me to take into account the overall higher number of articles that mention Republicans. I also run a test of proportions to test differences in the proportion of articles where Democrats versus Republicans are mentioned, by the top predicted frame. This robustness check considers the highest probability frame for each article and calls that the “top frame.” I then compare, for each frame, and each issue (as well as all issues combined), the proportion of all articles that share a top frame that mention either a Republican or a Democrat.

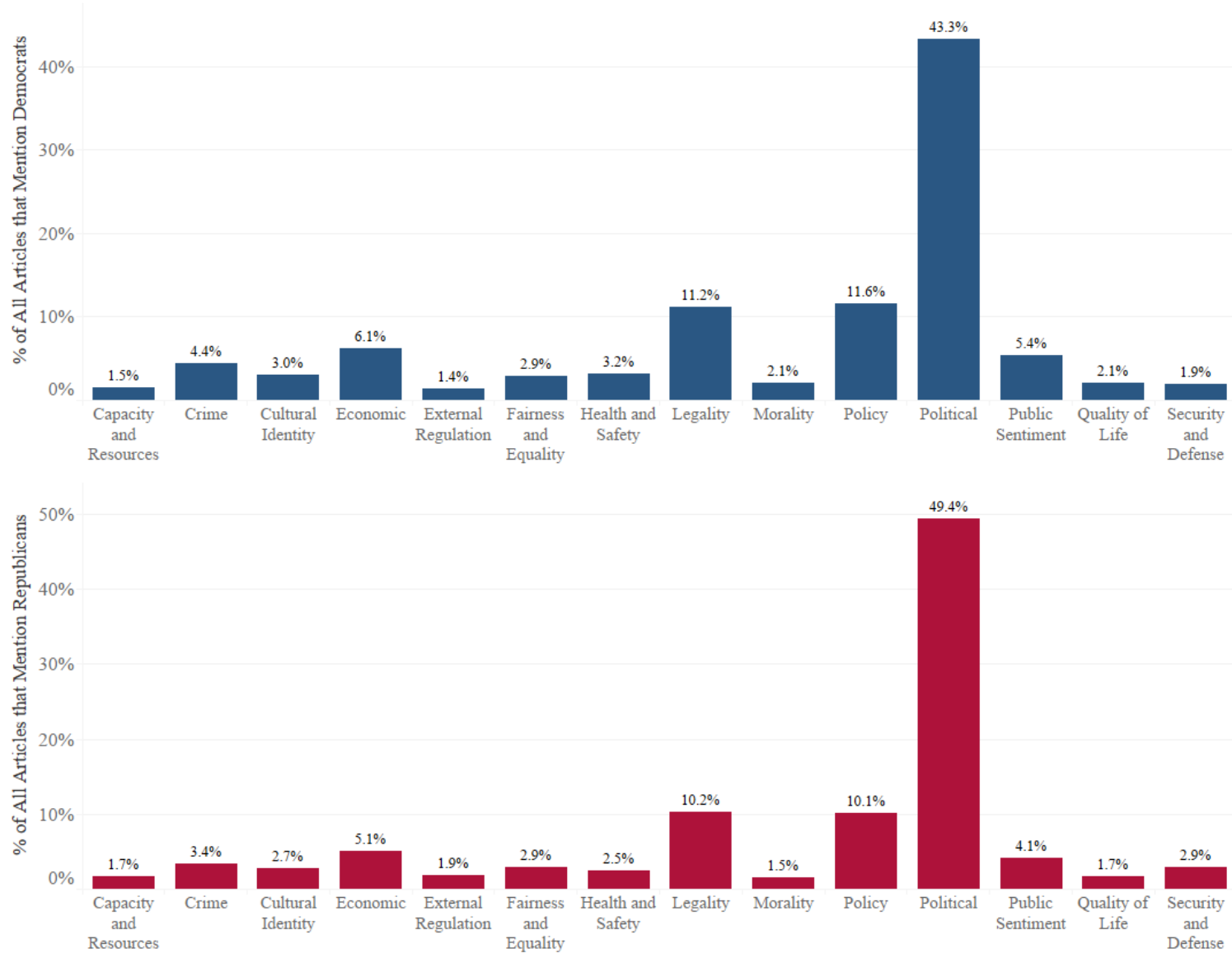


Figure 2.1: Distribution of Top Frame across Articles that mention Republicans or Democrats

Results

Looking at Figure 2.1, it is clear that the distribution of articles by party is similar. Both parties are most likely to be mentioned in an article with political as the top frame, and both parties see a lot of coverage having to do with policy, legality, and the economy. However, We can also consider examining the data dynamically. Figure 2.2 presents the average probability that each frame will be in an article over time across all issues. Looking at these probabilities over time offers a cursory glance at whether there are any frames that are predominantly more likely to be used when a party is mentioned not just across issues, but also across time. Here, the scale of each set of probabilities matters less than do the comparisons of the probability that Republicans are mentioned compared to Democrats. Each frame is on a different scale due to the nature of the frames. For example, the political frame is always going to be more likely than the capacity and resources frame. As is indicated here, for most issues, there are no clear patterns as to which party has a higher probability of being associated with a given frame in a way that is consistent over time. However, there are some important caveats to that statement. For example, here it appears that over time the political and security frames have higher probabilities of being the main frame for articles that mention Republicans. By contrast, the health and morality frames seem to have a slightly higher probability of being included in a story that mentions Democrats.

Looking at these over time charts there are a few key surges that may drive these results. Considering the security frame, for example, we see that there was a surge for both parties, but a slightly stronger surge for Republicans, during the early 2000s. This surge aligns with the 9/11 attacks in the US. This type of event would likely impact the prominence of security frames across all issues, as it is at the top of the minds of all consumers and both parties are likely to focus on their commitment to security in defense. There is a similar surge in attention to the

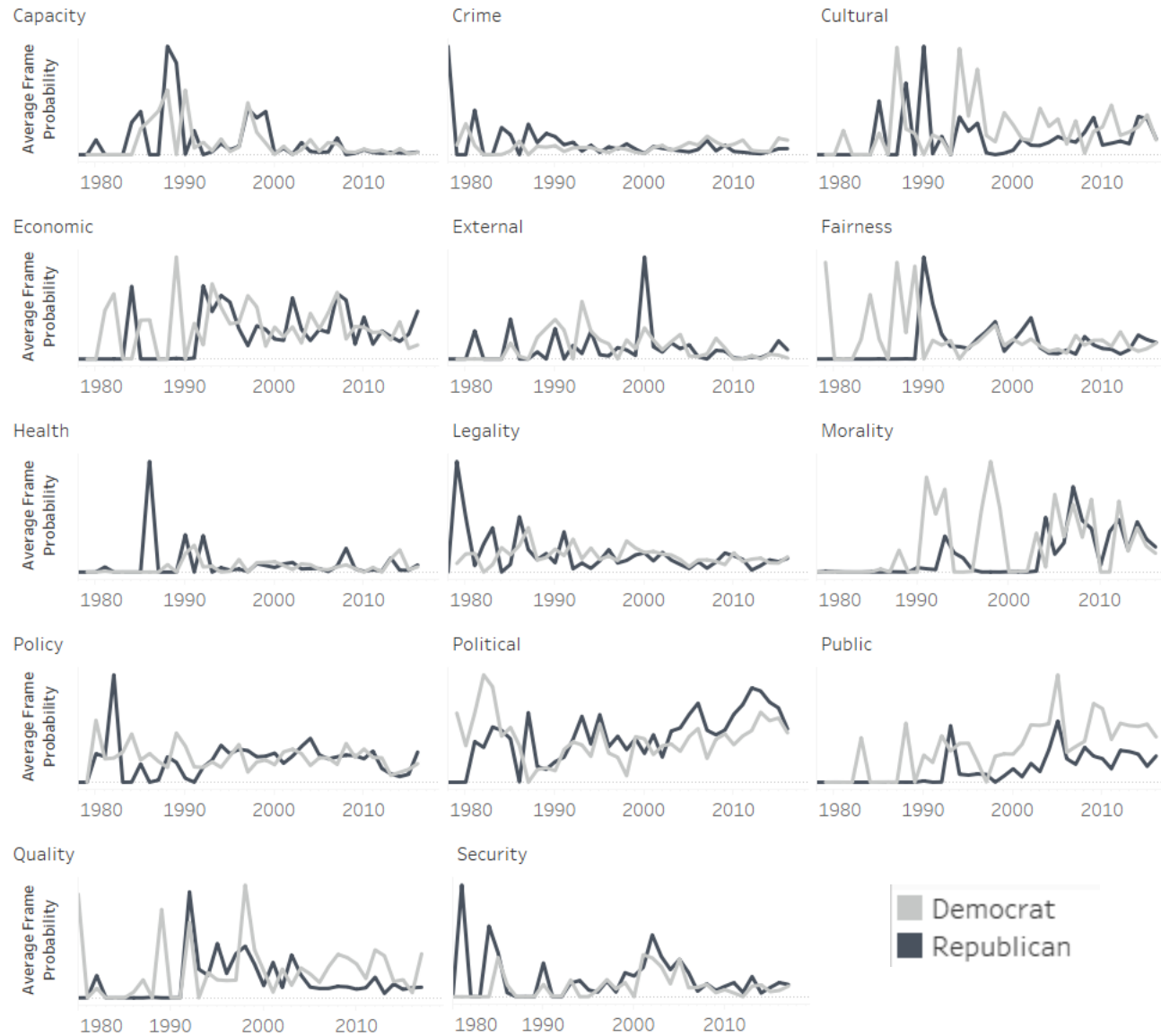


Figure 2.2: Average Probability of Frames over time, across all issues.

external regulation and reputations around the same time period, likely for the same reasons. However, there are other frames that lack this type of surge and, instead, remain fairly constant over time, such as the political frame, and the economic frames. Importantly, these initial findings are based on these over time comparison charts. In order to test the significance of these differences further analysis is required.

To test the significance of comparisons shown in Figure 2.2, I run T-tests to compare the predicted probability that a frame will be the main frame of an article with either Republican or Democrat mentions. The results of these comparisons are shown in Table 2.2. Table 2.2 illustrates the instances in which one party has a significantly higher probability of that frame being used in articles that mention that party. If frame ownership was displayed in the media 100% of the time, I would expect to see solidly colored horizontal lines. In other words, for example, I would expect to see that for all issues combined, and each individual issue, there was always a higher probability of a frame being used dependent on the party that the article mentioned.

On the one hand, there don't appear to be any consistent significant differences across all issues, however, there are important differences to note that suggest frame ownership may be influencing media coverage in some ways. First, according to my first paper, economic, legality, and political are all frames associated with Republicans, while health and morality are associated with Democrats. While I don't test for a security frame in my paper regarding the frame ownership phenomenon, it is such a strongly held Republican-owned issue, it follows that it is likely to be a Republican-owned frame as well.

| | All Issues | Climate | Death | Gun | Immigration | Same-Sex | Tobacco |
|-----------|------------|---------|-------|------|-------------|----------|---------|
| Capacity | Red | Red | Gray | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue |
| Crime | Blue | Gray | Gray | Gray | Blue | Blue | Gray |
| Cultural | Gray | Gray | Gray | Gray | Blue | Gray | Gray |
| Economic | Blue | Blue | Gray | Blue | Gray | Gray | Gray |
| External | Red | Red | Gray | Blue | Blue | Gray | Blue |
| Fairness | Gray | Gray | Red | Gray | Blue | Gray | Gray |
| Health | Blue | Gray | Red | Gray | Blue | Gray | Blue |
| Legality | Blue | Gray | Red | Blue | Blue | Red | Gray |
| Morality | Blue | Red | Blue | Gray | Gray | Blue | Blue |
| Policy | Blue | Blue | Gray | Gray | Gray | Gray | Blue |
| Political | Red | Red | Blue | Gray | Red | Red | Red |
| Public | Blue | Gray | Gray | Gray | Blue | Blue | Red |
| Quality | Blue | Gray | Gray | Red | Blue | Gray | Blue |
| Security | Red | Gray | Gray | Red | Red | Red | Gray |

In the above table the red squares indicate instances in which there is a significantly higher probability ($p = 0.10$) of that frame being used in articles that mention Republicans and blue squares indicate the same for Democrats. Gray squares indicate no significant difference between Republican and Democrat mentions.

Table 2.2: T-test comparisons of predicted probabilities by frame and issue

Looking specifically at the Democrat-owned frames (health and morality), when all issues are combined, we see that articles featuring Democrats are significantly more likely to have health and morality frames. Though there are not significant differences for every issue

tested, for the topics where there are significant differences between the probability of these frames in articles that mention Republicans compared to Democrats, all but one of those differences is in the direction that I expect. Further, in my first paper, I ask specifically about the health and safety and morality of gun control and immigration. The results here indicate that specific to immigration, articles that mention Democrats have a higher probability of including the health frame. Though the difference does not quite reach statistical significance ($p = 0.11$), I find that for gun control, articles are likely to have a higher probability of including the health frame when mentioning Democrats as well. However, the same cannot be said about the morality frame regarding the issues of immigration and gun control where we see no significant difference between the probability of the morality frame as the top frame in articles that mention Democrats or Republicans.

Looking at Republican-owned frames (economic, legality, and political), when considering all issues combined, economic and legality do not behave how I expect. In fact, legality behaves the opposite of how I would expect it to according to my first paper, not just for all issues, but specifically for gun control and immigration. The economic frame shows no significant differences when Republicans or Democrats are mentioned for the topic of immigration, and the opposite of what I expect for gun control. However, the political frame behaves how I anticipate both when all articles are combined and for immigration, as my first paper suggests that it should. Further, for the political frame, where there are significant differences between the articles that mentioned Democrats or Republicans, all but one of those significant differences is in the favor of my expectations. Finally, considering the security frame, when all issues are combined, and for the issues that show significant differences between articles that mention Democrats or Republicans, those differences indicate that a security frame

is more likely to appear as the main frame in articles that mention Republicans compared to articles that mention Democrats.

There are no issues where there are significant differences for every frame. Similarly, there are no frames that show significant differences for every issue. Ultimately, these findings are unsurprising because not every frame fits well into the narrative of each policy topic. Additionally, some frames are just less used both for specific issues (it’s hard to imagine a security and defense frame being used to discuss climate change), but also across issues (the cultural identity frame is going to be less used than a legality or political frame regardless of the policy topic. These results, though not perfectly aligned with my hypothesis, begin to form a picture of how the media is likely to present policy topics to readers when they are discussing political figures and parties.

| Issue | Democrats | Republicans |
|----------------|-----------|-------------|
| Climate Change | 1886 | 2363 |
| Death Penalty | 2008 | 2187 |
| Gun Control | 5859 | 5724 |
| Immigration | 7765 | 11282 |
| Same-Sex | 3068 | 3151 |
| Tobacco | 2531 | 2231 |

Table 2.3: Count of number of articles that mention each party, by issue

As a further robustness check I run a test of proportions to test differences in the proportion of articles where Democrats versus Republicans are mentioned, by the top predicted frame. I present an additional table and figure in the appendix, but within this second test when I

look across issues and frames, the most notable finding is that there appear to be consistencies across issues much more than there are across frames. For example, on the topic of immigration, it doesn't matter what frame is the most likely frame, there is always a significantly higher proportion of articles about Republicans than there are articles about Democrats. Additionally, for nearly all frames the same is true for both climate change and the death penalty. For Tobacco, the opposite is true, for nearly all frames (political being the exception), a higher proportion of articles have Democrats mentioned than are Republicans. Similarly, for gun control and same-sex marriage nearly all the frames favor Democrats. Here, the cleavages cut much more clearly across issues than they do frame.

However, the breakdown of articles that mention each party vary slightly by issue, which is displayed in Table 2.3. Looking at Table 2.3 it is possible that these findings are merely reflective of the overall number of articles that mention each party. Despite this, it is still important to note, because even though the proportion of each party being displayed for a given frame/issue combination is skewed by the overall number of articles that mention that party, it's important to consider that this is reflective of what voters are seeing. This seems to indicate one of two things, either politicians are not utilizing these owned frames in a consistent way across all issues, or the media isn't picking up on those cues. Thinking back to Table 2.1, and the distribution of all articles, this is not surprising given that across all issues there are nearly 4000 more articles about republicans. Therefore, what should be noted are the instances in which there *aren't* significant differences in favor of articles that mention Republicans. In other words, with nearly 4000 more articles overall, the fact that for health, morality, and public sentiment there isn't a significantly higher proportion of Republican mentions for articles in which those are the top frames should be significant in and of itself. This doesn't undermine the significance or

importance of the significant differences that favor the Republican articles, but it does tell its own story.

Conclusions and Implications

The analysis above offers a second test of the idea that parties are associated, as they are with issues, with issue frames. Here, I test the phenomenon of frame ownership in the case of media coverage. Although the results are not consistently supportive of my hypothesis, overall media signals are more likely to link politicians with frames "owned" by their party (in line with the frame ownership patterns shown in my first paper). Whether these cues stem explicitly from politicians using owned frames and news outlets faithfully conveying those signals and/or journalists selectively discussing politicians in stories with the respective party frames, at the end of the day citizens tend to get a pattern of media signals that link parties with frames in a way that largely reinforces the patterns of frame ownership shown in my first paper.

I find that there are certainly instances in which the probability of a given frame mentioning one political party over the other is significant. Specifically, I find this relationship to be true for the security and defense frame across all issues, and for the health and safety and morality frames for most issues. These are important findings because they begin to show that the media do use frames in a somewhat consistent way when discussing political parties and politicians. Because we know that the media is how voters get their information about politicians, campaigns, and candidates, and that the mere association of an issue (or frame in this case) with a party may indicate the party's competence on that issue, politicians should care about what frames they're being associated with in the media. For example, from the data presented above, we know that for any article about immigration, across all frames, a Republican

is more likely to be mentioned because there are just more articles about Republicans and immigration than there are about Democrats and immigration.

Yet, when I compare the probability of a frame appearing as the main frame of any given article that mentions Republicans or Democrats then for more frames than not, the probability of that frame appearing as the main frame is more likely in articles that mention Democrats. The reason that Republicans are almost always more likely to be mentioned is because the probability of each frame appearing is a zero sum game, that is to say that the probability of each frame appearing as the main frame for any given article sums to one. So, then, for immigration for example, the average probability of an article's main frame being political for articles that mention Republicans is .49. In other words, on average, any article that mentions Republicans has a near 50% chance of having political be the main frame of that article. For Democrats, there is only a 43% chance of any article having political be the main frame. This smaller chance means for an article that mentions Democrats, for nearly every other frame, there's a higher chance of that frame being the main frame of an article, than it is for Republicans. Again, this discrepancy can be explained by sheer volume of articles that mention Republicans, compared to those that mention Democrats.

Bringing this analysis together, I am able to offer another test of the frame ownership phenomenon, this time considering whether the media is linking political parties to specific frames. The results are mixed, but generally begin to suggest that overall media signals are more likely to link politicians with frames "owned" by their party.

Paper 3: Frame Ownership Rewards?

Old Dog, New Tricks: The Role of Frame Ownership on Issue “Trespassing”

Introduction

My first two papers tested the phenomenon of frame ownership. In my first paper, I showed that in the same way that parties have established reputations of ownership over issues, they have also established reputations of ownership over frames, across issues. In my second paper, I tested whether the same relationship exists between owned frames and the media. I found that though not consistently supportive of my hypothesis (that candidates are more likely to use their parties’ “owned” frames, across issues, when discussing policy agenda items, as captured through the media picking up on these frames), overall media signals are more likely to link politicians with frames “owned” by their party. In this third paper, I examine whether candidates who employ owned frames receive electoral benefits from voters, similar to the documented benefits candidates receive for employing owned issues.

The concept of frame ownership derives from Petrocik’s (1996) foundational work on issue ownership. This piece argues that candidates have distinctive patterns of problem emphasis in their campaigns that favor problems facing the country that their own party is seen to be able to better “handle” than their opponents. Research shows that these issue handling reputations emerge from history, which, by the nature of political conflict, is frequently tested and reinforced (Petrocik, 1996) and that the electorate maintains expectations regarding the relative capabilities of the political parties to deal with particular issues (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994). Given the nature of “confirmatory bias” in information processing, which suggests that people are more receptive to messages that confirm rather than disconfirm existing stereotypes (Pratto and John, 1991), it follows that candidates will gain the most from focusing on issues over which they can

claim ownership (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994). Ultimately, issue ownership is a major asset to a candidate's efforts to persuade voters because even just an association with a party is an indicator of an ability to implement superior policies and programs for dealing with the problems owned by the party (Petrocik, Benoit and Hansen, 2003). Candidates stand to gain the most from advertising on issues over which they can claim ownership -- it benefits to “stick to what they’re good at” (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994).

Here, following the findings of my first two papers, and the issue ownership literature, I argue that in the same way that candidates may recognize their issue-handling advantages and the opportunity they present to gain an *electoral* advantage over the opposition (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen, 2003), they may do the same with owned frames. However, I also offer an alternative hypothesis that it may be the case that party cues drive electoral support regardless of the frames that are used by politicians.

Party Cues Informing Policy Decisions

A number of canonical works suggest that voters use party preference to vote above all else. Campbell et al. (1960) refer to party as the perpetual screen that colors attitudes as they are formed. Converse (1964) considers parties a “central object” particularly for voters who do not hold strong views. Bartels (2002) argues that party ID biases perception and policy views. Lenz (2009) finds that individuals learn the positions of parties, and adopt their party’s positions as their own, and the list continues. Party cues activate group motivational processes that compel citizens to support the position of their party (Peterson et al., 2013). Walter Lippmann was the first to suggest the functional necessity of stereotypes: “For the real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. We are not equipped to deal with so

much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations. And although we have to act in that environment, we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage with it. To traverse the world men must have maps of the world" (Lippmann 1965, 11). It is these partisan stereotypes that have considerable influence on political information processing, suggesting that the political parties continue to play an important role in voters' decision-making process (Rahn, 1993).

Not only do these partisan stereotypes play an important role in voters' evaluations, but they may play the *most* important role. Riggle et al. (1992) find that when subjects were asked to make comparative judgments of two candidates, they based their judgments on each candidate's party membership and not on their respective voting records. Even under conditions of effortful processing, attitudes toward a social policy depend almost exclusively upon the stated position of one's political party (Cohen, 2003). And dual-process models of attitude change suggest that individuals generally *do not* use effortful processing, instead opting for simple decision rules and cues when they lack the motivation or ability to process information systematically (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). The literature, once again, suggests voters are motivated to rely simply on party cues, rather than fully processing policy positions and forming support for parties based on these positions.

However, in order for it to be possible for voters to use partisan cues, it must also be true that voters know the positions of their own parties. Fortunately, Democrats and Republicans have long differed in predictable ways (Page and Jones, 1979). This finding is in line with both issue and frame ownership theories. It is clear that voters have a clear sense of which issues are owned by which party. Also consistent with these theories is that generally speaking, the public's perceptions of these cleavages have remained quite stable over time (Geer, 1992). That is to say

that the differences between the two parties are clear and apparent to voters, and those differences haven't changed significantly over time. Against this backdrop, we might expect that it does not matter what frame a politician or party uses, but, instead, the party cue will be the driving force behind any support (or lack thereof) a voter has for any given candidate or party.

If it is the case that frame ownership does not advantage parties from a public opinion perspective, the culprit mechanism is likely motivated reasoning. Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus (2013) find that polarized environments increase partisan motivated reasoning, decrease reliance on substance, and cause people to view their opinions as more important. In the last 50 years, the percentage of sorted partisans, i.e., partisans who identify with the party most closely reflecting their ideology, has steadily increased (Levendusky, 2009). In these polarized conditions citizens turn to partisan biases and ignore arguments they would otherwise consider to be "strong." Thus, it may not matter the strength of the frame, and whether it is owned or not, but instead only matter which party is using that frame at any given time.

People are often unable to escape the pull of their prior attitudes and beliefs (Taber and Lodge, 2006), which, again, may mean that frames cannot penetrate these biases past the party that is using the given frame. Research confirms this and finds that citizens tend to respond more favorably to an issue frame if sponsored by a party they vote for than if the frame was promoted by another party (Slothuus and De Vreese, 2010). This is an important finding, but only suggests that the party using a frame certainly matters, and does not confirm whether or not the frame itself matters. Finally, motivated directional reasoning causes people to seek out information that confirms their existing beliefs (i.e., an attitude confirmation bias), counter-argue and dismiss information inconsistent with their existing beliefs regardless of the belief's objective accuracy (i.e., a disconfirmation bias), and view evidence consistent with their prior

opinions as stronger, (i.e., a prior attitude effect) (Bolsen, et al., 2014). This may explain why support for an out-party candidate may not change regardless of frame. If the out-party is using an in-party owned frame then it may cause individuals to dismiss it outright as inconsistent with their prior beliefs and therefore unrealistic.

If frame ownership cannot overcome party identification bias, this finding would contradict the issue framing literature that suggests that regardless of party identification of the constituents, it is advantageous for parties to focus on their owned-issues. This contradiction may be because at the issue level, parties may have reputations of focusing legislative agendas on their owned issues. If this discrepancy between issue and frame ownership occurs, it may suggest that issue ownership is powerful enough to overcome party identification bias of respondents, while frame ownership is not.

One final avenue of literature may suggest that frames matter less than party: affective polarization. When we identify with a political party, we instinctively divide up the world into an in group (our own party) and an out group (the opposing party) (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). A vast literature in social psychology demonstrates that any such in-group/out-group distinction, even one based on the most trivial of shared characteristics, triggers both positive feelings for the in group and negative evaluations of the out group (Billig and Tajfel, 1973). Affective polarization is a natural offshoot of this sense of partisan group identity: “the tendency of people identifying as Republicans or Democrats to view opposing partisans negatively and copartisans positively” (Iyengar and Westwood 2015, p. 691). With a growing dislike and distrust of those from the other party’s members, it would be no surprise if partisan cues completely overtook the role that owned frames may otherwise fill.

From these discussions of party cues, motivated reasonings, and affective polarization, I derive my null hypothesis:

H0: It does not matter what frames parties are using, owned or otherwise, because partisans will respond based on general party cues above all else

Frame Ownerships Electoral Advantages

Above, I outline a theory suggesting that frame ownership will not elicit rewards to politicians who successfully use owned frames (either to issue trespass or not) because citizens will ignore policy cues in favor of partisan cues. However, despite the literature to suggest the use of owned frames may *not* elicit rewards, the issue ownership literature offers compelling evidence to suggest the opposite.

Many studies have demonstrated that “issue trespassing” or “issue convergence,” whereby parties address issues owned by another party, is a common occurrence (Damore, 2004, 2005; Holian, 2004; Sides, 2006, 2007; Arceneaux 2008). Frame ownership can help to explain why candidates are able to not just issue trespass, but *successfully* issue trespass. Research shows that a party can counteract a rival party’s issue ownership by using its own frame or by blaming the rival’s performance (Seeberg, 2020). Holian (2004) offers an example of successful issue trespassing, as when Clinton was able to successfully shift the crime rhetoric from the discussion of crime punishment to crime fighting/prevention. By reframing the debate, Clinton was able to navigate through an issue usually considered to be a Republican stronghold. Importantly, when “trespassing” on opposition-owned issues, candidates are not necessarily changing their positions, or flip-flopping, but, rather, attempting to shift the debate to favor their own parties’ owned-frame or rhetoric, like the example of Clinton above.

To counteract opposition-owned issues, Holian (2004) offers three mechanisms that must be satisfied: 1) public opinion must shift from favoring one party's ability to handle an issue to at least parity between the two parties; 2) the party or candidate attempting to trespass must talk about the issue in a new way that is distinguishable from the way in which the once-advantaged party has talked about; Frame ownership as a phenomenon may satisfy Holian's first step. If frame ownership functions the same way that issue ownership does, such that owned frames indicate a party's ability to implement superior policies by means of associating a frame with a party (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen, 2003), then candidates should be able to shift public opinion in their favor by using an owned frame. My second paper addressed Holians' third condition (the new frame being picked up by the media and transmitted to the public), but here I focus on Holian's second step, candidates attempting to neutralize an issue by changing the dimension over which an issue is debated.

Issue ownership theory suggests that it is most advantageous for parties to focus their agenda setting goals on issues that are owned by their own party. However, parties are frequently forced to address issues they would rather not communicate about (Lefevere, et al., 2019). When forced to discuss these disadvantageous issues, parties can still optimize their communication by focusing on an issue's sub-dimension. Parties reframe policy issues into policy domains that are salient to themselves and to the general public. (Lefevere, et al., 2019). Further, reframing issues toward owned policy domains allows parties to be seen as better to handle issues than their opponents. This is in part due to these parties being perceived as comparatively better than their competitors, but also because issue ownership theory suggests that a party that owns and issue will focus their legislative efforts on issues related to policy domains they own (Egan, 2013; Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2011).

Arbour (2014) offers an important example that considers how parties frame campaign messages using issue specific frames. Parties are able to develop their own distinct rhetorical strategies on particular issues, indicating that each party owns particular issue frames (Arbour, 2014). Similar to the discussion of “confirmatory bias” above, we know that when faced with different views on an issue, individuals are more likely to choose the alternative that is consistent with their own extant values or principles (Sniderman and Theriault, 2004). Lodge and Taber (2013) explain that upon encountering new information, existing attitudes come inescapably to mind, whether consciously recognized or not, and for better or worse these feelings guide subsequent thought. In other words, it should benefit parties and candidates to use frames that voters expect to see and already have positive attitudes towards.

Campaigns can use party-themed rhetoric (what I refer to as “owned frames”) to exploit mental images voters have of their party, creating positive associations between their party’s efforts over time, the rhetoric of their co-partisans, and their candidate (Arbour, 2014). Moreover, when forced to trespass on issues campaigns will use frames that “can be interpreted in a way to highlight some feature of the issue on which they are likely to be regarded as more competent” (Petrocik, 1996, pp. 828–829). All of the literature above highlights that frame ownership should share key similarities with issue ownership, including the electoral benefits of utilizing frames owned by citizens’ party of choice. The above literature leads me to my first hypothesis (with comparison references to Figure 3.1, below):

Hypothesis 1a: Partisan participants will be more favorable toward in-party candidates (i.e., candidates from the participant’s own party) who use owned frames than when they use borrowed frames (comparisons A & E), *because they are more likely to recognize and trust the owned frame as one they associate with their own party*. Although results are expected to vary across issues, we expect the general phenomenon to hold regardless of which party owns the issue.

Hypothesis 1b: Partisan participants will be more favorable toward out-party candidates who use borrowed frames (assuming the borrowed frame is one owned by the participant's own party) than when they use owned frames (comparisons B & D), *because they are more likely to recognize and trust the owned frame as one they associate with their own party.*

To measure these two parts of my first hypothesis, I consider not just electoral support for the candidates, but also support for the policies of those candidates. This approach allows me to consider if the use of owned frames not only plays a role in support of the individual politicians, but also in how citizens may or may not support their policy positions.

Despite these two parts of my first hypothesis, there is little research that indicates how we may expect independents to respond to the use of owned frames. This is, in part, due to a growing number of people self-reporting themselves as independents in an attempt to hide their preferences (Klar and Krupnikov, 2016). This trend suggests that independents do have partisan preferences, but by concealing their partisan identity behind the label of “independent,” it is difficult to judge how these citizens will respond to the use of owned frames. For this reason, I raise an additional research question:

Research Question 1: Will independent participants reward parties for “staying in their own lane” by using owned frames or reward parties for “reaching across the aisle” by using borrowed frames?

Research Design

In order to test my competing hypotheses and address my research question, I ran an online survey conducted by the survey firm Lucid, which aims for a representative sample (based on age, race, and gender) of United States citizens. Participants were paid what is equivalent to \$12.00/hr for their participation in the study. The survey was distributed to 2,053 respondents, the demographics of which are shown in Table 3.1. As depicted in Table 3.1, of the over 2000

respondents, there was a generally good distribution among gender, and education. However, despite requesting a representative sample based on age over half of respondents were in the youngest age bracket. Further, nearly as many respondents (56.6%) considered themselves Democrats. The next largest category of partisans were those that consider themselves Independents (33.4%) and, finally, the smallest group were Republicans accounting for only 10% of the total respondent population. With only 206 Republican respondents, it is important to note that any findings regarding Republicans may not be representative of the broader group.

Once in the survey, respondents were told they were taking a study that was intended to help better understand political attitudes. After agreeing to participate, respondents were shown one of two randomly assigned studies. Before each study, participants were shown an attention to

| PID | | Gender | | Age | | Education | | Race | |
|------|------|-------------------|------|-------|------|------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|------|
| D. | 1164 | Male | 989 | 18-30 | 1200 | Did not graduate high school | 13 | White | 1409 |
| R. | 206 | Female | 1013 | 31-40 | 469 | High School | 265 | Black or African American | 277 |
| Ind. | 687 | Other | 49 | 41-50 | 217 | Some College | 560 | Hispanic or Latino | 157 |
| | | Prefer not to say | 1 | 51-60 | 110 | 2 year degree | 171 | American Indian or Alaska Native | 4 |
| | | | | 61-70 | 44 | 4 year degree | 740 | Middle Eastern | 138 |
| | | | | 71+ | 14 | Post-grad degree | 304 | Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | 4 |
| | | | | | | | | Other | 27 |

Table 3.1: Demographics of Survey Respondents

check to ensure that they were closely reading each question. Of all participants, 250 were excluded due to a failed attention check. The first study provided the results presented in my second paper. The second study was to evaluate frame ownership rewards. All participants were shown both studies, but the order in which they saw them was randomized.

For the frame ownership rewards study, participants were shown a vignette on three topics: immigration, education, and infrastructure. The order of these topics was randomized, and the vignette on each topic was randomly assigned. For each vignette it was made clear the party of the “speaker,” and the frame that was being used. Based on the frame ownership phenomenon study (in my first paper), the Republican frame was economic, and the Democratic frame was morality. Each of these frames was applied to each of the issues. When the statement was attributed to a Republican, the vignette was written in a way consistent with Republican policy positions, and the opposite for Democrats. For each topic, each participant was shown one of the four possible vignettes: Democratic speaker, Democratical owned frame; Democratic speaker, Republican-owned frame; Republican speaker, Democratical-owned frame; Republican speaker, Republican-owned frame. An example vignette can be seen below, A Democratic speaker and Democratic owned frame on the issue of immigration (full text of all vignettes can be found in appendix):

Democratic Candidate Speaks Out about Immigration Reform

The Democratic Gubernatorial candidate believes that the humane way to handle immigration reform is to encourage legal immigration. Since September, over 1% of Honduras’ population and 1% of Guatemala’s population have crossed our southern border illegally. One-third of women are assaulted on the dangerous journey north. And 70% of illegal immigrants are victims of violence, with children being used as pawns by human traffickers. The Democratic party and our candidate believes we must stand up for our moral values and legally accept refugees, asylum-seekers, and families who come to the United States in search of the American Dream.

Following each vignette, respondents were asked to describe what they had just read, and then asked two questions that serve as the dependent variable measures: overall support of the candidate, and how much they support the policies they just read about, each on a 1 to 10 scale, where 10 indicates strong support. These two questions allow me to test whether in-party owned frames are received differently than out-party owned frames. In other words, are Democratic responses to Democratic candidates using Democrat-owned frames different than Democratic responses to Democratic candidates using Republican frames?

Figure 3.1 represents all of the comparisons, where the arrows represent the expected direction of the relationship. In other words, when the participant and the candidate are both Democrats (as is the case in the top left hand box), I would expect to see higher support when a frame owned by the Democratic party is used compared to a frame owned by the Republican party. I run these comparisons when only accounting for all respondents, but then again for leaning, weak, and strong partisans.

| Candidate/position | | Democrat | Democrat | Republican | Republican |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Frame owner | | Democrat | Republican | Republican | Democrat |
| Participant | Democrat | <i>Comparison A</i> | | <i>Comparison D</i> | |
| | | ↑ | ↓ | ↓ | ↑ |
| | Republican | <i>Comparison B</i> | | <i>Comparison E</i> | |
| | ↓ | ↑ | ↑ | ↓ | |
| Independent | <i>Comparison C</i> | | <i>Comparison F</i> | | |
| | ? | ? | ? | ? | |

Note: The arrows represent the expected direction of the relationship between in-party owned frames and out-party owned frames.

Figure 3.1: Comparison Chart

Following the vignettes and subsequent questions, respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their political engagement such as if they are registered to vote, their partisanship, and past participation in campaigns. They were then asked a series of questions in order to measure their political knowledge. These questions included being asked to identify

current political figures, and current policies in the US. Both political engagement and political knowledge allow me to compare responses not just by partisanship, but also by how knowledge and/or engaged a participant is with American politics. Finally, respondents were asked a series of demographic questions in order to later be able to control for demographic characteristics that may skew any results and confirm the representativeness of the survey sample.

Results

Below I present the results of several tests that evaluate my two competing hypotheses. Generally speaking, the results presented offer support for my null hypothesis. I present results for three policy topics: immigration, education, and infrastructure. Across these three topics, there are very few generalizable results. The most consistent finding is that in almost all instances, it appears that party identification drives support for candidates and policies. However, I examine these relationships more thoroughly, and by issue, and make note of where I find expected relationships between owned-frames and support for candidates or policies.

Before running T-tests to compare the rewards that candidates may gain from using in or out-party owned frames, I look at the average support that respondents have for a candidate based on their own party, the candidate's party, and the frame the candidate used. In Figure 3.2, the y-axis for the two left hand columns is the support for the candidate that the respondent just read about, while the two columns on the right the y-axis reflect the support for the *policies* respondents just read about. Looking just at support for the candidate and policies that discuss immigration (top row of Figure 2), we see exactly what we would expect, and what the null hypothesis suggests. Where the vertical bars represent the average responses by party identification, we see that when a Republican is attributed to a statement about immigration,

Republicans have higher support for that candidate than Democrats or Independents, and the same is true for Democrats when a statement is attributed to a Democratic candidate. In other words, regardless of the frame used, partisan respondents who “hear” from a candidate from their own party have much stronger support for that candidate than they do when they hear from an out-party candidate.

Figure 3.2 shows all of the dependent variables which makes it clear that in almost all instances, party identification drives support for candidates and policies. This finding is line with the vast array of literature that suggests that party identification alone should drive support for political candidates and policy. However, this initial finding does not answer the question of whether or not support for in-party (or out-party) candidates and policies shift dependent on what frame a candidate uses to discuss that issue.

In order to test my frame ownership reward hypotheses and answer my research question regarding independents, I first compare the responses to the questions posed following each vignette topic by running T-tests to determine if in-party vs. out-party owned frames have an impact on support for candidates and/or their policy positions. Before breaking the comparison down by issue, and by Democrats and Republicans, I first evaluate all instances of out-party vs. in-party comparisons by issue, excluding independents. I first determine if the respondent read a vignette with their own party as the speaker, and then determine if they were given an in-party (morality for Democrats, economic for Republicans) or out-party frame. These results are shown below in Table 3.2.

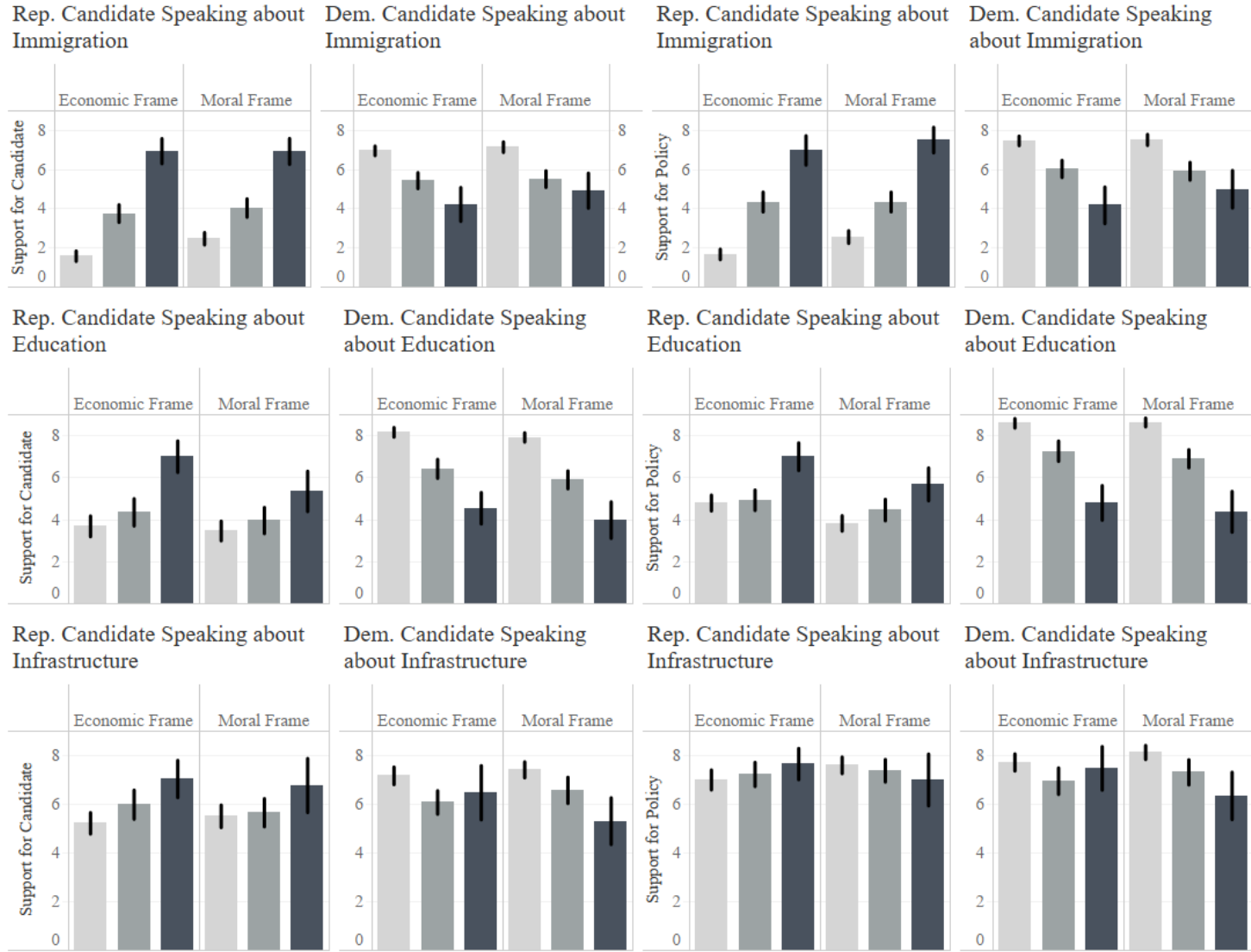


Figure 3.2: Average response to candidate and policy support by Partisan Respondent w/ 95% Confidence Intervals

When looking at Table 3.2, each cell represents the relationship between the in-party and out-party used frames. Within each cell, the arrows indicate the direction of that relationship, and show the subsequent p-value of the comparison of means. For example, looking in the top left cell there is a comparison of when an in-party candidate uses an in-party frame compared to an out-party frame. For this comparison, that candidate is rated higher when using an in-party frame, but not statistically significantly higher ($p=0.17$). This table shows that across issues, both in regard to feelings towards candidates themselves, and the policies of those candidates, when evaluating a candidate in their own party, the frame that they use doesn't make a significant difference. In other words, for example, if a Democrat is evaluating a Democratic candidate, then there appears to be no significant difference if the candidate uses an economic or a moral frame. However, the same is not true when looking at out-party candidates. In these instances, there are significant differences in nearly every comparison between the frames being used, though they do not appear to be consistent across issues. For immigration and infrastructure, candidates are rewarded for using an in-party owned frame (though not in a significant way for support of the candidate following the infrastructure vignette). Although, for education, candidates appear to be rewarded for using an out-party owned frame.

At first glance, these results appear to begin telling a story of when candidates may be rewarded for using their respective in- and out-party-owned frames. However, given that such a large portion of the respondents are Democrats (remembering that only 10% of the population who took the survey were Republicans) it is very possible that these results are being driven by the Democrats entirely and, for example, an out-party candidate being rewarded for using an out-party frame when discussing education, may simply be the result of Democrats supporting Republicans for using an economic frame, which may say more about the strength of the

economic frame on education, than it does the relationship between in and out-party owned frames.

| Speaker | In-Party | | Out-Party | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|---|-----------|
| Frame | In-Party | Out-Party | In-Party | Out-Party |
| Immigration Candidate | Comparison A & B ↑ p = .17 ↓ | | Comparison D & E ↑ p < .01 ↓ | |
| Immigration Policy | Comparison A & B ↓ p = .41 ↑ | | Comparison D & E ↑ p < .01 ↓ | |
| Education Candidate | Comparison A & B ↓ p = .46 ↑ | | Comparison D & E ↓ p = .02 ↑ | |
| Education Policy | Comparison A & B ↑ p = .11 ↓ | | Comparison D & E ↓ p < .01 ↑ | |
| Infrastructure Candidate | Comparison A & B ↑ p = .18 ↓ | | Comparison D & E ↑ p = .17 ↓ | |
| Infrastructure Policy | Comparison A & B ↑ p = .08 ↓ | | Comparison D & E ↑ p = .07 ↓ | |

In the table above, each cell represents the relationship between the in-party and out-party used frames. The left hand column represents an in-party candidate, and the right an out-party candidate. Within each cell the arrows indicate the direction of the relationship (i.e., which frame resulted in higher support from respondents) with the p-value of that comparison presented between. The p-values in bold represent a statistically significant difference between the two frames.

Table 3.2: In-Party/Out-Party T-Test Comparisons

To begin evaluating whether the strength of a given frame is at play, and to begin looking more closely at these results for both partisans and independents, I run the same comparisons, this time keeping Democrat and Republican respondents separate from one another. The results from these comparisons are displayed below in Tables 3.3-3.8, where each table represents one dependent variable. Similarly, to above, these tables represent the comparison of the means of

support for a candidate, or their policies, when that candidate uses an in-party or out-party owned frame. The arrows represent the direction of that relationship, and the p-value is listed to indicate the significance of the relationship. Here, green arrows are used when the relationship is in the expected direction, red arrows indicate the opposite direction as expected, and bolded p-value represents statistically significant differences between the two means.

Immigration Candidate:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-----------|-------------|------------------------------------|----------|--|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| | Democrat | <i>Comparison A</i> ↑ p = .15 ↓ | | <i>Comparison D</i> ↓ p < .01 ↑ | |
| | Republican | <i>Comparison B</i> ↑ p = .13 ↓ | | <i>Comparison E</i> ↑ p = .49 ↓ | |
| | Independent | <i>Comparison C</i> ↑ p = .40 ↓ | | <i>Comparison F</i> ↑ p = .20 ↓ | |

Table 3.3: T-test results to “One a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate you just read about?” by Partisan Respondent

Immigration Policy:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-----------|-------------|---|----------|--|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| | Democrat | <i>Comparison A</i> ↑ p = .40 ↓ | | <i>Comparison D</i> ↓ p < .01 ↑ | |
| | Republican | <i>Comparison B (N=16)</i> ↑ p = .12 ↓ | | <i>Comparison E (N=16)</i> ↓ p = .15 ↑ | |
| | Independent | <i>Comparison C</i> ↓ p = .36 ↑ | | <i>Comparison F</i> = p = .50 = | |

Table 3.4 : T-test results to “On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate's immigration policies?” by Partisan Respondent

Education Candidate:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-----------|-------------|---|----------|---|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| | Democrat | <i>Comparison A</i> ↓ p = .07 ↑ | | <i>Comparison D</i> ↑ p < .01 ↓ | |
| | Republican | <i>Comparison B (N=10)</i> ↓ p = .17 ↑ | | <i>Comparison E (N=22)</i> ↑ p < .01 ↓ | |
| | Independent | <i>Comparison C</i> ↓ p = .05 ↑ | | <i>Comparison F</i> ↑ p = .25 ↓ | |

Table 3.5: T-test results to “One a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate you just read about?” by Partisan Respondent

These tables begin to draw a clearer picture of the significant results that were displayed in Table 3.2. Starting with immigration, the only significant difference in the use of frames was when Democratic respondents read a statement by a Republican candidate. However, the same is not true for Republican respondents reading a statement from a Democratic candidate, as Table 3.2 would have suggested. This is likely a result of the sample size of Democrats and that differences being so significant ($p\text{-value} = 0.00$). This suggests that breaking up the results by dependent variable, and by Republican and Democrat respondents will give a clearer picture of the relationship between frame ownership and support for candidates and their policies. Moving to education, there are still significant differences in how Democrats respond to Republican messages based on the frame they use, but in the opposite direction than was the case for immigration. There are also other significant differences, though none for how Republicans support Democrats, suggesting, again, that the findings in Table 3.2 were driven by Democrats' support (or lack thereof) for Republicans.

An important note regarding responses to the education dependent variables is that all but one of these relationships between the economic frame and the moral frame had higher responses for a candidate who used an economic frame. Seven of the eleven relationships that show this relationship are significant in favor of the economic frame, the other five are not significant, though directionally consistent. And the final relationship that is not directionally consistent (where the moral frame elicits higher support) has such a high $p\text{-value}$ (0.40), it really can't be considered for any comparison. With that in mind, the education dependent variables begin to tell a different story all together. Here, it may be the case that the economic frame is so much stronger than the morality frame in reference to education policy that despite being the "owner" of the morality frame, Democrats can gain no additional support for utilizing that frame.

Education Policy:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-----------|-------------|-----------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| | Democrat | Comparison A ↑ p = .40 ↓ | | Comparison D ↑ p < .01 ↓ | |
| | Republican | Comparison B (N=10) ↓ p =.26 ↑ | | Comparison E (N=22) ↑ p = .01 ↓ | |
| | Independent | Comparison C ↓ p =.14 ↑ | | Comparison F ↑ p = .10 ↓ | |

Table 3.6: T-test results to “On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate's Education policies?” by Partisan Respondent

Infrastructure Candidate:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-----------|-------------|-----------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| | Democrat | Comparison A ↑ p = .15 ↓ | | Comparison D ↓ p =.17 ↑ | |
| | Republican | Comparison B (N=15) ↓ p =.38 ↑ | | Comparison E (N=17) ↑ p = .47 ↓ | |
| | Independent | Comparison C ↑ p = .34 ↓ | | Comparison F ↓ p = .40 ↑ | |

Table 3.7: T-test results to “One a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate you just read about?” by Partisan Respondent

Infrastructure Policy:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-----------|-------------|------------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| | Democrat | Comparison A ↑ p = .09 ↓ | | Comparison D ↓ p =.02 ↑ | |
| | Republican | Comparison B (N=15) ↑ p = .30 ↓ | | Comparison E (N=17) ↑ p = .27 ↓ | |
| | Independent | Comparison C ↑ p = .30 ↓ | | Comparison F ↓ p = .03 ↑ | |

Table 3.8: T-test results to “On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate's Education policies?” by Partisan Respondent

For the final policy topic, infrastructure, the results somewhat mimic that of immigration. There are very few significant differences between the moral and the economic frame. The relationship with the most significant difference is when Democrats are reading statements by Republicans.

And, in this case, this reflects the findings from immigration, and Table 3.2, such that

Republicans are rewarded for using the Democratic owned frame. However, unlike immigration, for infrastructure, this relationship only applies to the candidate’s policy positions, not the candidate themselves. Consistent with all the dependent variables, the same cannot be said for Republicans reading statements by Democratic candidates, suggesting that the findings in Table 2, were entirely driven by the large sample size of Democrats in the study. Notably, for infrastructure policy, this is one of the only places where a candidate (the Democratic candidate) is rewarded for using their own frame, suggesting that when trying to elicit support from your own party, it is possible that using an owned frame is not necessary.

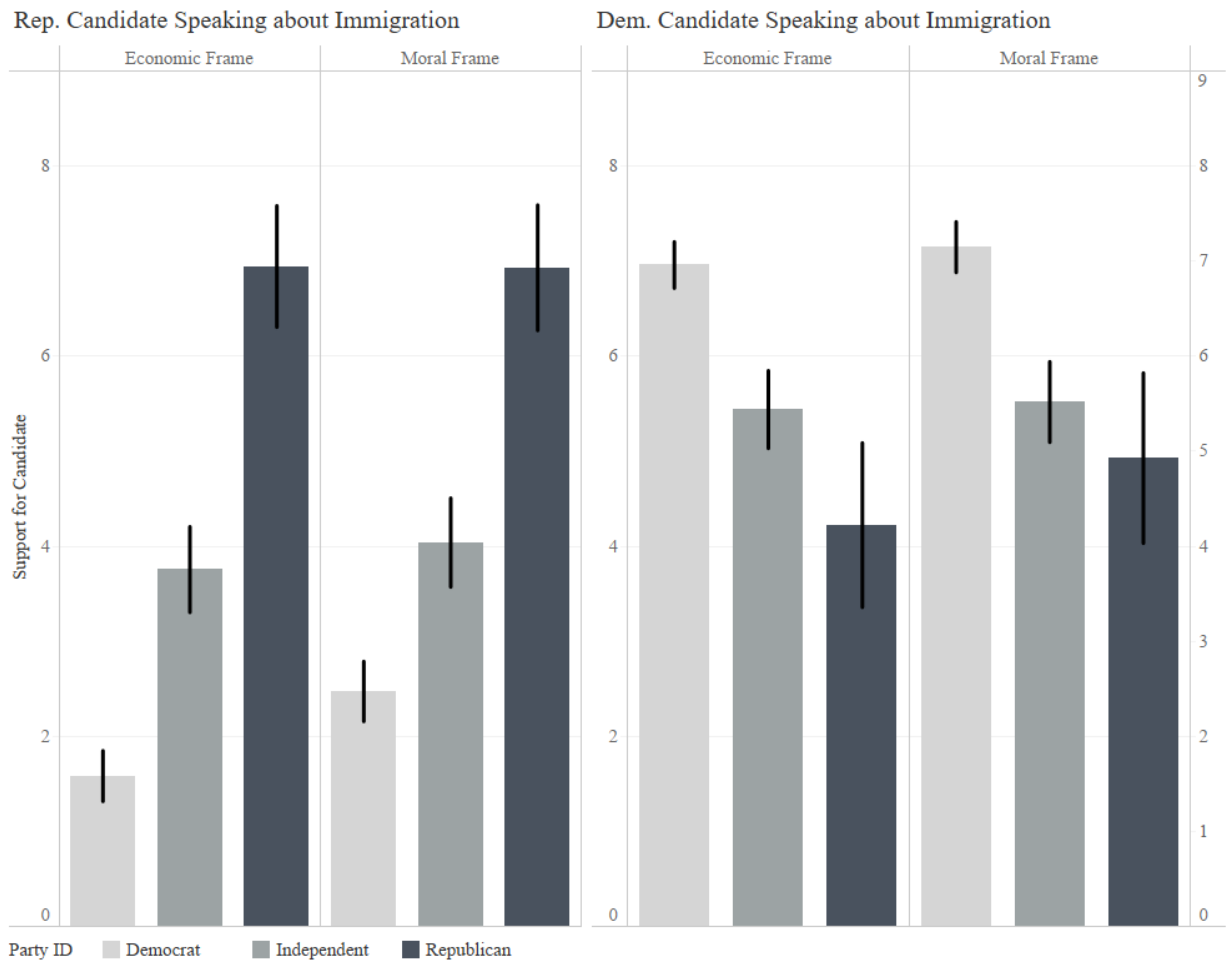


Figure 3.3: Zoomed in view of Figure 3.2

Notably, the results presented above are for all partisans. I run the same comparisons for leaning partisans, weakly identifying partisans, and strong partisans and get nearly identical results (these tables can be found in the appendix). For example, for education, regardless of the strength of partisanship, the economic frame is always more effective at garnering support for a candidate or policy, though not in a consistently significant way. I also explore the idea that political knowledge and/or political engagement may be driving these results and find similar inconsistent results across issues.

The final test I run to explore the relationship between owned frames and support for candidates or policies, is to determine if candidates are rewarded more or less than one another if as they use one frame vs. another, based on if they are trespassing from in-party owned frames to out-party owned frame. For example, do Democrats reading a statement from a Democrat reward that candidate differently when considering the difference between an economic frame and a moral frame than they do a Republican candidate doing the same thing? Above, a zoomed in version of Figure 3.2 is presented. My next test answers the question of whether the difference between the two darkest bars on the left hand side of the figure is significantly different than the difference between the darkest bars on the right hand side of the figure? To test this question I run a linear regression analysis interacting the frame of the statement with the party of the speaker.

The linear regression model is such that:

$$\begin{aligned} \textit{Support for Candidate/Policy} = \\ \alpha + \beta_1 \textit{Frame} + \beta_2 \textit{Cand. Party} + \beta_3 \textit{Frame} * \textit{Candidate Party} \end{aligned}$$

I run this model for each group of partisans, for each dependent variable. The p-values of the interaction effect are listed in Table 3.9⁴.

| | Democrats | Republicans | Independents |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Immigration Candidate | 0.012 | 0.354 | 0.647 |
| Immigration Policy | 0.004 | 0.724 | 0.806 |
| Education Candidate | 0.140 | 0.228 | 0.492 |
| Education Policy | 0.001 (negative) | 0.289 | 0.824 |
| Infrastructure Candidate | 0.877 | 0.860 | 0.928 |
| Infrastructure Policy | 0.537 | 0.424 | 0.342 |

Table 3.9: P-values of interaction coefficients for linear models regressing frame and party on dependent variable

Table 3.9 indicates that neither party is benefited more than the other when comparing the difference between an in-party owned frame to an out-party owned frame. The only place there are any significant results are the immigration results for Democrats. These results indicate that for immigration, Democrats reward Republican candidates for using a moral frame instead of an economic frame, more than they do their own party candidates. For the only other significant difference (education policy), the opposite is true, Democrats reward Republican candidates more than they do Democratic candidates when they see an economic frame as compared to a moral frame. These results reflect prior results in the fact they do not offer any clear, consistent narrative as to the role that owned frames may play in shifting support for candidates or their policy positions. Subsequently, these results do not offer any support for

⁴Full regression analysis available upon request.

either of the competing hypotheses (H1a or H1b) presented above. As such, the null hypothesis, that party cues drive candidate and policy support cannot be rejected. Further, my research question (“ Will independent participants reward parties for “staying in their own lane” by using owned frames or reward parties for “reaching across the aisle” by using borrowed frames?”) remains largely unanswered with no consistency across how independents reward (or punish) candidates for using in-party or out-party owned frames.

Conclusions, Implications, and Further Research

The findings presented above do not offer any generalizable results that can be applied across issues in a consistent manner. Broadly speaking, I find no support for either of my competing hypotheses, and only see support for the null hypothesis (H0). I identify some contexts in which candidates seem to be rewarded (or reprimanded) for using their own party owned frames, but never in a clear or consistent way.

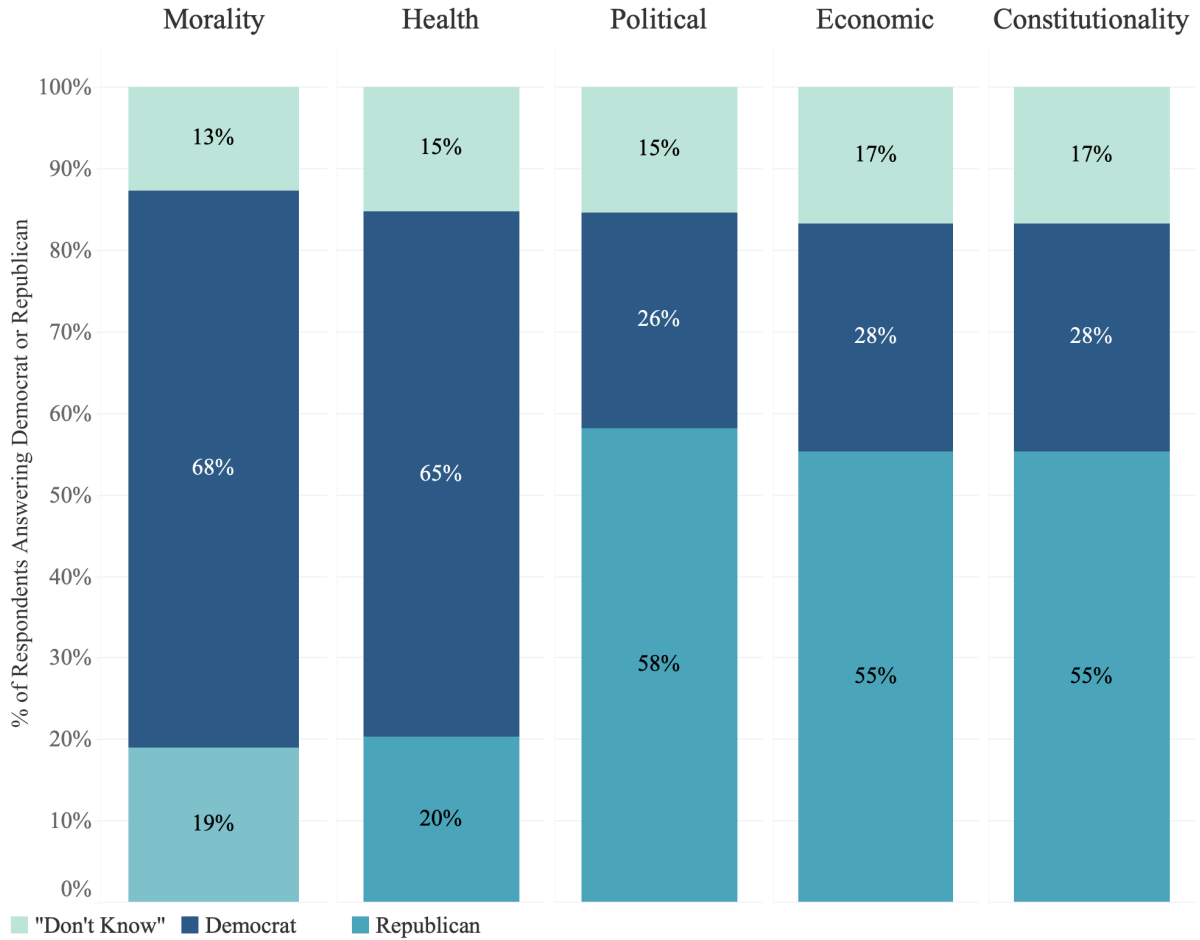
These findings do not fall in line with issue ownership theory, which fosters further questions as to why owned frames do not have the same impact on voters as do owned issues. Despite the substantial evidence that frame ownership exists presented in my first two papers, it is not clear as to why ownership over certain frames does not offer candidates the same rewards as owned issues do. The results presented here lend themselves well to further research in this area, the most obvious of which is to examine potential reasons for why owned frames do not offer the same rewards to their “owners” as owned issues do. Perhaps it is the case that although frame ownership exists, as indicated in my first and second, it may be the case that voters are so accustomed to seeing certain frames used by certain parties that when presented with new frames in this study they deferred back to their partisanship rather than processing these new frames. It might instead or also be the case that the ownership of frames holds less weight for voters than

the ownership of issues; voters might indeed be treating frames as second-level agenda items, with a corresponding decline in importance. In that case, it would make sense that partisan allegiance (and the influence of especially compelling frames) outweighs the power of frame ownership in a way that it does not in the context of issue ownership; future studies could examine exactly this question. However, the support for the null hypothesis in this study alone does not undercut the significance of the findings of my first two papers that frame ownership is co-occurring within issue-ownership.

Combined, these three papers examine frame ownership's existence and applications. I present a theory of frame ownership and find that frame ownership holds across all issues and frames tested. There is clear indication that respondents associate certain frames with certain parties. Further, when I consider if these owned frames are being used by politicians as picked up by the media, I find mixed results. However, the final paper shows little evidence that politicians are then rewarded or gain any electoral advantage for using those frames. These findings lend themselves to further questions. In particular, if politicians receive no electoral benefits from using frames owned by voters (paper 3), what societal forces drive the phenomenon of frame ownership in the first place (paper 1) and at least the partial adherence of this frame ownership by politicians and the media (paper 2)? These papers mark a meaningful step forward in defining and examining the concept of frame ownership, with results that point to the value of future research in this area.

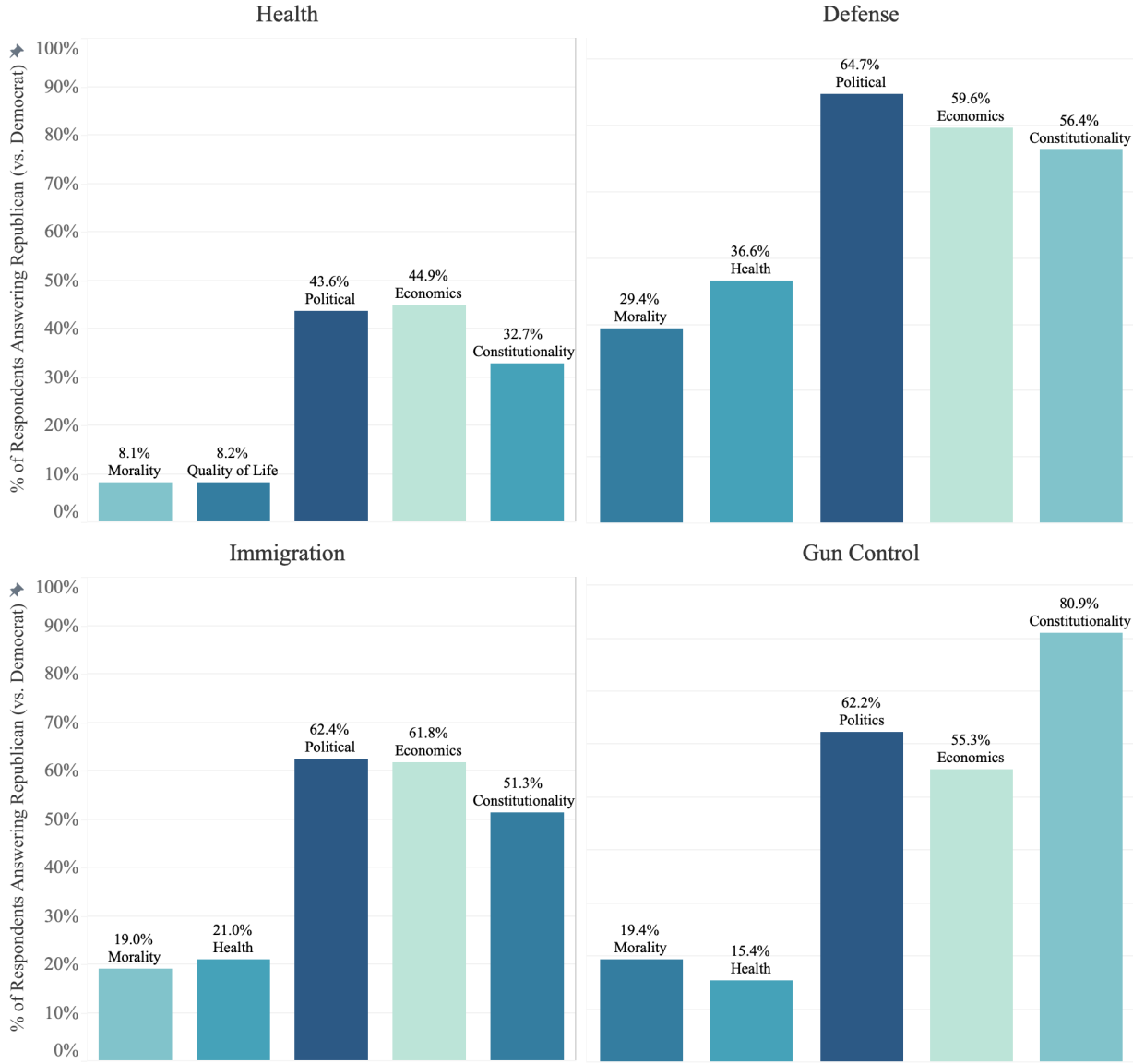
Appendix

Supplemental Information from Chapter 1:



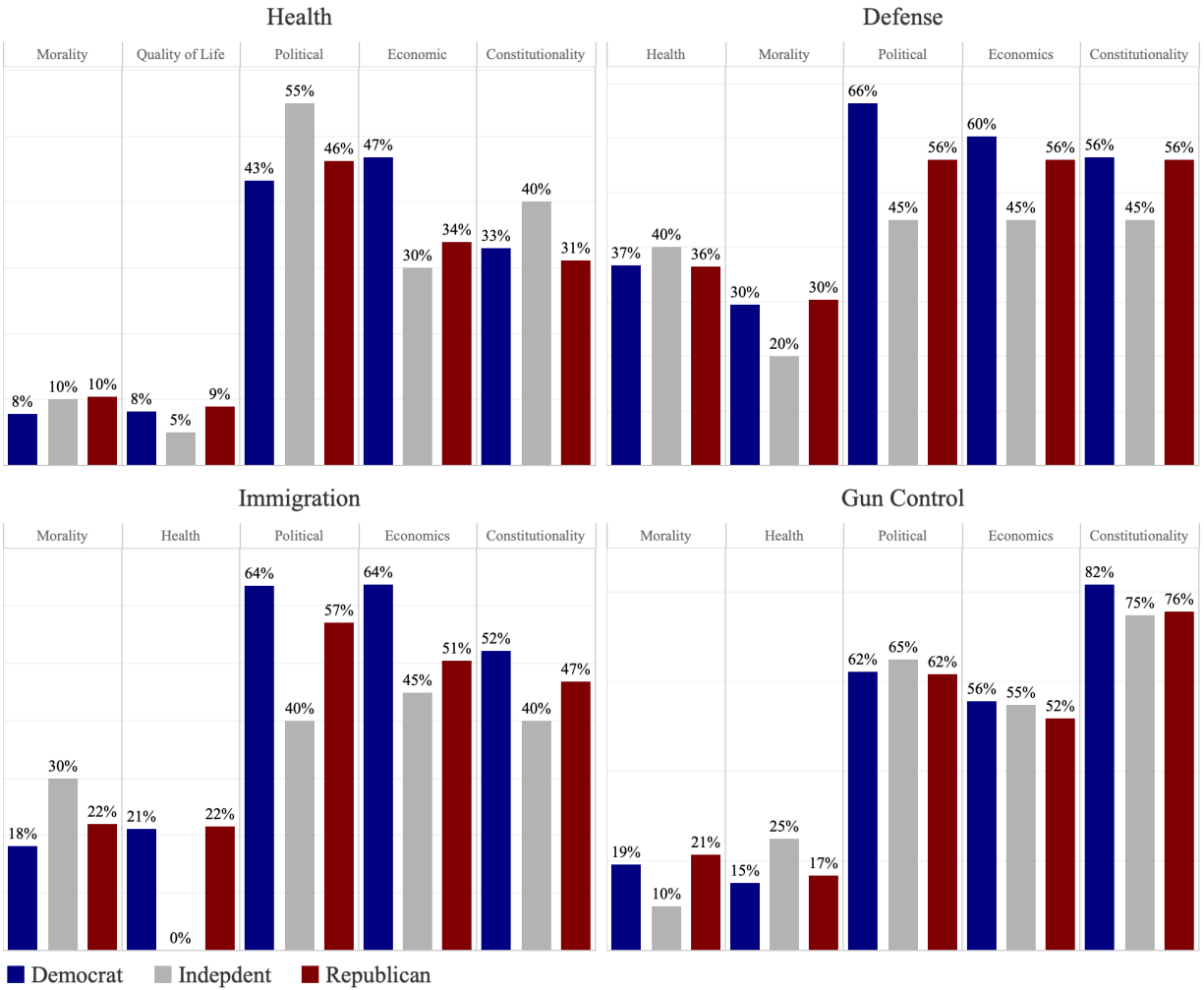
Average Responses to Frames Across Issues (Including “Don’t Know”)

Percentage of Respondents Answering "Republican" as Opposed to "Democrat" by Issue and Frame (including "don't know" responses):



Percentage of Respondents Answering Republican (Including "don't know" responses)

Percent of Partisans that Answered "Republican" as Opposed to "Democrat" by Issue, Frame and Party ID (Including "don't know"):



Average Response by Issue, Frame, and Party (including "Don't know")

Supplemental Information for Chapter 2:

Newspaper is Media Corpus Dataset:

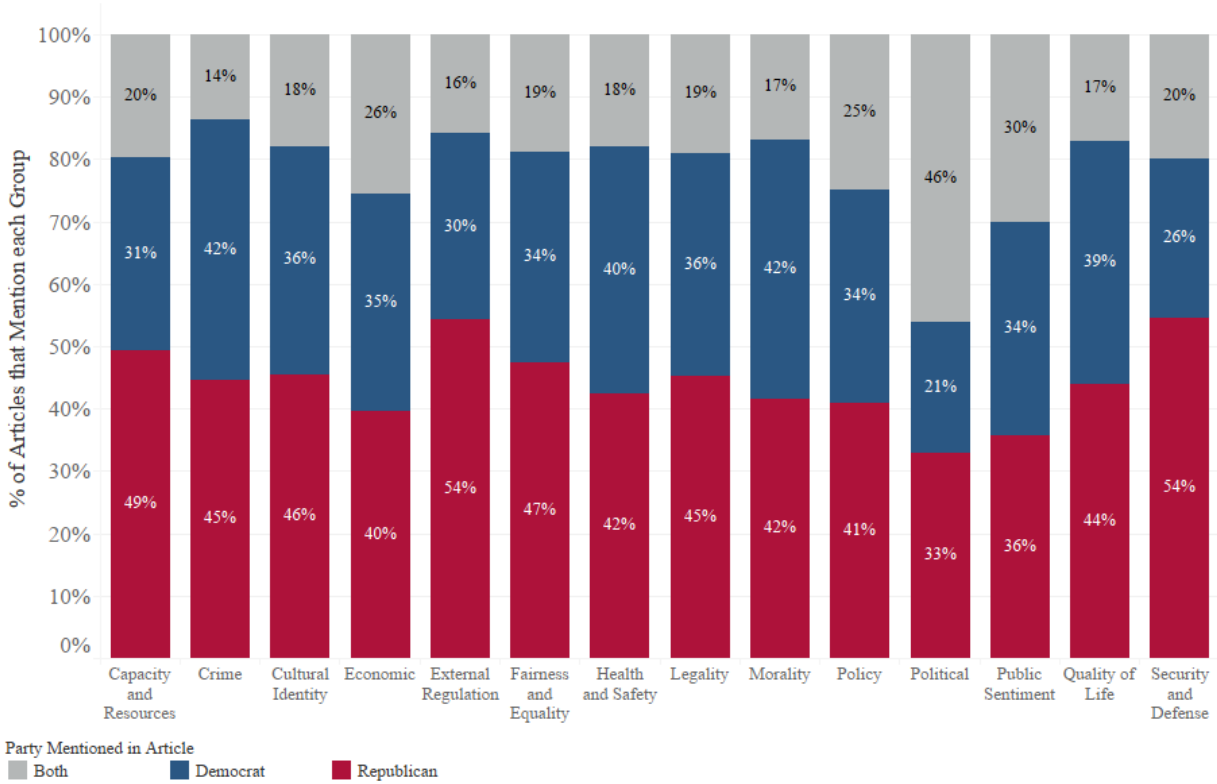
List of Newspapers used in Media Frames Corpus: New York Daily News, Philadelphia Inquirer, New York Times, USA Today, Washington Post, San Jose Mercury News, St. Louis Dispatch, Denver Post, Tampa Bay Times, Atlanta Journal and Constitution, St. Paul Pioneer Press, Herald-Sun, Palm Beach Post.

Lexis Nexis Search Terms for Media Corpus Dataset

- Climate Change
 - Global Warming
 - Climate Change
 - Greenhouse Gases
- Death Penalty
 - Capital Punishment
 - Death Penalty
 - Death Row
 - Capital Crime
- Gun Control
 - Gun Control
 - Stand your Ground Laws
 - Right to Bear Arms
- Immigration:
 - Immigration, Citizenship & Displacement
 - Immigration Law
 - Foreign Labor
 - Immigration
 - Illegal Immigrants
 - Immigration
 - Detention Centers
 - Immigration Law
 - Alien Smuggling
 - Inadmissibility of Immigrants
 - US State Immigration
 - Law Foreign Labor
- Tobacco
 - Smoking
 - Smoking Cessation
 - Tobacco Health
 - Tobacco Products
 - Tobacco Farming
 - Tobacco MFG
 - Smoking Bans
- Same-sex Marriage

- Domestic Partnerships
- Same Sex Marriage and Unions
- Same Sex Marriage Laws

Additional Figures:



% of Articles with Top Frame that mentions Democrats, Republicans, or Both

| | All Issues | Climate | Death | Gun | Immigration | Same-Sex | Tobacco |
|-----------|------------|---------|-------|------|-------------|----------|---------|
| Capacity | Red | Red | Red | Blue | Red | Gray | Blue |
| Crime | Red | Gray | Gray | Gray | Red | Blue | Gray |
| Cultural | Red | Gray | Gray | Gray | Red | Gray | Gray |
| Economic | Red | Blue | Red | Blue | Red | Gray | Blue |
| External | Red | Red | Red | Blue | Red | Gray | Blue |
| Fairness | Red | Gray | Red | Gray | Red | Gray | Gray |
| Health | Gray | Red | Red | Blue | Red | Blue | Blue |
| Legality | Red | Red | Red | Blue | Red | Red | Blue |
| Morality | Gray | Red | Blue | Blue | Red | Blue | Blue |
| Policy | Red | Blue | Red | Gray | Red | Gray | Blue |
| Political | Red | Red | Gray | Blue | Red | Red | Red |
| Public | Gray | Red | Gray | Gray | Red | Blue | Gray |
| Quality | Red | Red | Gray | Red | Red | Gray | Blue |
| Security | Red | Red | Gray | Blue | Red | Gray | Gray |

In the above table the red squares indicate instances in which there are significantly higher portions of articles for that given frame/issue combination that are associated with Republicans, and blue squares indicate the same for Democrats. White squares indicate an insufficient number of articles to consider, and gray squares indicate no significant difference between Republican and Democrat mentions.

Equality of Proportions test by frame and issue

Supplemental Information from Chapter 3:

Survey Introduction Language

This survey is part of an academic research project being conducted by a professor and a graduate student at the University of California, Davis. The purpose of this research is to better understand people's political attitudes. Your participation and your contributions to academic scholarship are very much appreciated. As you complete this short survey, please keep in mind:

- What you say in this survey is anonymous and will be kept strictly confidential. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.
- You are free to decide not to participate in this study.
- You can also withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of California, Davis.
- You will be asked to respond to a series of cues, followed by a short survey. It should take about 10 minutes to complete the study. If you choose not to participate, there will be no penalty.
- All answers provided will be used. The anonymity of the survey makes withdrawing specific responses impossible. The data will be stored for three (3) years.
- We plan to share what we learn by publishing the results of this work in scholarly outlets.
- Research sometimes requires that information regarding its purpose not be shared with the research participants because its knowledge could impact the results of the research.
- While the tasks you will be asked to perform for this research have been explained, the full intent of the research will not be provided until the completion of the study. At that time you will have the opportunity to ask questions, including about the purpose of the study and the procedures used. Note that none of the aspects of the research being withheld are reasonably expected to affect your willingness to participate.
- Completion of this survey constitutes your consent to participate in this study.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of California, Davis. The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. Information to help you understand research is on-line at <http://www.research.ucdavis.edu/policiescompliance/irb-admin/>. You have the right to ask questions at any time. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact the principal investigator in this study, Hannah Dillman at (925) 978-3436 or

hedillman@ucdavis.edu. You may also choose to talk to an IRB staff member at (916) 703-9151, hs-irbadmin@ucdavis.edu, or 2921 Stockton Blvd, Suite 1400, Room 1429, Sacramento, CA 95817.

Vignettes

Immigration Statements (Participants shown 1 immigration statement):

1. Immigration – Morality (**Dem** Owned, **Dem** Statement):

The Democratic Gubernatorial candidate believes that the **humane** way to handle immigration reform is to **encourage legal immigration**. Since September, over 1% of Honduras' population and 1% of Guatemala's population have crossed our southern border illegally. **One-third of women are assaulted on the dangerous journey north. And 70% of illegal immigrants are victims of violence, with children being used as pawns by human traffickers.** Our candidate believes we must stand up for **our moral values and legally accept refugees, asylum-seekers, and families who come to the United States in search of the American Dream.**

OR

2. Immigration – Economic (**Rep** Owned, **Dem** Statement):

The Democratic Gubernatorial candidate believes that the **most fiscally responsible** way to handle immigration reform is to **encourage legal immigration**. Since September, over 1% of Honduras' population and 1% of Guatemala's population have crossed our southern border illegally. **Immigrants offer the ability to expand our job force** by nearly one-third, opening up new jobs for US citizens. And 70% of immigrants are **qualified to offer skilled work across various economic sectors**. Our candidate believes that we must stand up **in support of increased legal immigration opportunities in order to continue boosting our economy.**

OR

1. Immigration – Morality (**Dem** owned, **Republican** Statement):

The Republican Gubernatorial candidate believes that the **humane** way to handle immigration reform is to **discourage illegal immigration**. Since September, over 1% of Honduras' population and 1% of Guatemala's population have crossed our southern border illegally. **One-third of women are assaulted on the dangerous journey north. And 70% of illegal immigrants are victims of violence, with children being used as pawns by human traffickers.** Our candidate believes we must stand up for **our moral values as Americans and discourage illegal immigration.**

OR

2. Immigration – Economic (**Rep Owned, Republican Statement**):

The Republican Gubernatorial candidate believes that the **most fiscally responsible** way to handle immigration reform is to **discourage illegal immigration**. Since September, over 1% of Honduras' population and 1% of Guatemala's population have crossed our southern border illegally. **Immigrants are projected to occupy** one-third of our job force, taking away jobs from US citizens. And 70% of illegal immigrants are **qualified to replace an American worker across various economic sectors**. Our candidate believes that we must stand **up in discouraging illegal immigration in order to best support our economy**.

Education Statements (Participants shown 1 education statement):

1. Education – Morality (**Dem Owned, Dem Statement**):

The Democratic Senate candidate promises to call on community colleges' **moral obligation** to focus on serving students by offering free tuition. We have a **moral obligation** to ensure that community-colleges available to all. Programs at community colleges have already helped many students **gain access to the educational opportunities that all Americans should have**, and can be offered to even more students by removing the barrier of tuition. For example, many job-training programs at community colleges are well run and **help many students in need**.

OR

2. Education – Economic (**Rep Owned, Dem Statement**):

The Democratic Senate candidate promises to call on community colleges' **economic obligation** to focus on serving students by offering free tuition. We have an **economic obligation** to ensure that community-colleges available to all. Programs at community colleges have already helped many students **be better equipped to enter the job market** and can be offered to even more students by removing the barrier of tuition. For example, many job-training programs at community colleges are well run and **help prepare students to join the US workforce**.

OR

1. Education – Morality (**Dem Owned, Republican Statement**):

The Republican Senate candidate promises to encourage community colleges, just like four-year colleges, to focus on **servicing students who can succeed**. We have a **moral obligation** to ensure that community-colleges are well run, which is largely possible by continuing to charge

community college tuition. There are many programs at community colleges that have already helped many students **gain access to the educational opportunities that all Americans should have**, illustrating that higher education can be approached **humanely**, and can be offered to even more students by maintaining current tuition rates. For example, many job-training programs at community colleges are well run and **help many students in need**.

OR

2. Education – Economic (**Rep** Owned, **Republican** Statement):

The Republican Senate candidate promises to encourage community colleges, just like four-year colleges, to focus on **servicing students who are likely to later contribute to the American economy**. We have an **economic obligation** to ensure that community-colleges are well run, which is largely possible by continuing to charge community college tuition. There are many programs at community colleges that have already helped many students **be better equipped to enter the job market** and can be offered to even more students by maintaining current tuition rates. For example, many job-training programs at community colleges are well run and **prepare students to join the US workforce**.

Infrastructure Statements (Participants shown 1 infrastructure statement):

3. Infrastructure – Morality (**Dem** Owned, **Dem** Statement):

The Democratic House candidate supports recent legislation in order to improve a series of interstate highways and local roads. The candidate cites **a moral obligation** to ensure that **all constituents have equal access to safe roads** both within state lines and across state lines. Many roadways have become outdated and are in dire need of major improvements. These improvements are long overdue and we cannot **in good conscience** sit back and allow more time to pass without these much-needed improvements.

OR

4. Infrastructure – Economic (**Rep** Owned, **Dem** Statement):

The Democratic House candidate supports recent legislation in order to improve a series of interstate highways and local roads. The candidate cites **an economic obligation** to ensure that **essential goods pivotal to our economy** can easily be transported both within state lines and across state lines. Many roadways have become outdated and are in dire need of major improvements. These improvements are long overdue and we cannot **risk the health of our economy** by sitting back and allowing more time to pass without these much-needed improvements.

OR

3. Infrastructure – Morality (**Dem** Owned, **Republican** Statement):

The Republican House candidate supports recent legislation in order to improve a series of interstate highways and local roads. The candidate cites **a moral obligation** to ensure that **all constituents have equal access to safe roads** both within state lines and across state lines. Many roadways have become outdated and are in dire need of major improvements. These improvements are long overdue and we cannot **in good conscience** sit back and allow more time to pass without these much-needed improvements.

OR

4. Infrastructure – Economic (**Rep** Owned, **Republican** Statement):

The Republican House candidate supports recent legislation in order to improve a series of interstate highways and local roads. The candidate cites **an economic obligation** to ensure that **essential goods pivotal to our economy** can easily be transported both within state lines and across state lines. Many roadways have become outdated and are in dire need of major improvements. These improvements are long overdue and we cannot **risk the health of our economy** by sitting back and allowing more time to pass without these much-needed improvements.

Additional Tables

LEANERS AND WEAKLY IDENTIFYING

Immigration Candidate:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---|----------|---|----------|
| | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Leaning/Weak Democrat | <i>Comparison A</i> ↑ p = .065 ↓ | | <i>Comparison D</i> = p = .49 = | |
| | Leaning/Weak Republican | <i>Comparison B (N=11)</i> ↓ p = .31 ↑ | | <i>Comparison E (N=12)</i> ↑ p = .41 ↓ | |
| | Independent | <i>Comparison C</i> ↑ p = .13 ↓ | | <i>Comparison F</i> ↑ p = .01 ↓ | |

T-test results to “One a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate you just read about?” by Partisan Respondent

Immigration Policy:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Leaning/Weak Democrat | Comparison A ↑ p = .30 ↓ | | Comparison D ↓ p = .11 ↑ | |
| | Leaning/Weak Republican | Comparison B (N=11) ↓ p = .13 ↑ | | Comparison E (N=16) ↓ p = .42 ↑ | |
| | Independent | Comparison C ↓ p = .38 ↑ | | Comparison F ↓ p = .04 ↑ | |

T-test results to “On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate's immigration policies?” by Partisan Respondent

Education Candidate:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Leaning/Weak Democrat | Comparison A ↑ p = .02 ↓ | | Comparison D ↑ p = .46 ↓ | |
| | Leaning/Weak Republican | Comparison B (N=5) N/A | | Comparison E (N=22) ↓ p = .46 ↑ | |
| | Independent | Comparison C = p = .50 = | | Comparison F ↑ p = .47 ↓ | |

T-test results to “One a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate you just read about?” by Partisan Respondent

Education Policy:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Leaning/Weak Democrat | Comparison A ↑ p = .002 ↓ | | Comparison D ↓ p = .48 ↑ | |
| | Leaning/Weak Republican | Comparison B (N=5) ↑ N/A ↓ | | Comparison E (N=22) ↑ p = .187 ↓ | |
| | Independent | Comparison C ↑ p = .13 ↓ | | Comparison F ↓ p = .45 ↑ | |

T-test results to “On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate's immigration policies?” by Partisan Respondent

Infrastructure Candidate:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|-------------------------|---|----------|---|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Leaning/Weak Democrat | <i>Comparison A</i> ↑ p = .36 ↓ | | <i>Comparison D</i> ↑ p = .42 ↓ | |
| | Leaning/Weak Republican | <i>Comparison B (N=12)</i> ↓ p = .26 ↑ | | <i>Comparison E (N=11)</i> ↓ p = .22 ↑ | |
| | Independent | <i>Comparison C</i> ↑ p = .25 ↓ | | <i>Comparison F</i> ↑ p = .36 ↓ | |

T-test results to “One a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate you just read about?” by Partisan Respondent

Infrastructure Policy:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|-------------------------|---|----------|---|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Leaning/Weak Democrat | <i>Comparison A</i> ↑ p = .21 ↓ | | <i>Comparison D</i> ↓ p = .06 ↑ | |
| | Leaning/Weak Republican | <i>Comparison B (N=12)</i> ↑ p = .26 ↓ | | <i>Comparison E (N=11)</i> ↑ p = .04 ↓ | |
| | Independent | <i>Comparison C</i> ↑ p = .25 ↓ | | <i>Comparison F</i> ↑ p = .45 ↓ | |

T-test results to “On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate's immigration policies?” by Partisan Respondent

LEANERS IDENTIFYING

Immigration Candidate:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Leaning Democrat | Comparison A ↑ p = .066 ↓ | | Comparison D ↓ p = .27 ↑ | |
| | Leaning Republican | Comparison B (N=8) ↓ p = .35 ↑ | | Comparison E (N=8) ↑ p = .31 ↓ | |
| | Independent | Comparison C ↑ p = .13 ↓ | | Comparison F ↑ p = .01 ↓ | |

T-test results to “One a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate you just read about?” by Partisan Respondent

Immigration Policy:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Leaning Democrat | Comparison A ↑ p = .24 ↓ | | Comparison D ↓ p = .13 ↑ | |
| | Leaning Republican | Comparison B (N=11) ↓ p = .14 ↑ | | Comparison E (N=16) ↑ p = .37 ↓ | |
| | Independent | Comparison C ↓ p = .38 ↑ | | Comparison F ↓ p = .04 ↑ | |

T-test results to “On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate's immigration policies?” by Partisan Respondent

Education Candidate:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Leaning Democrat | Comparison A ↑ p = .30 ↓ | | Comparison D ↑ p = .31 ↓ | |
| | Leaning Republican | Comparison B (N=5) N/A | | Comparison E (N=22) ↓ p = .38 ↑ | |
| | Independent | Comparison C = p = .50 = | | Comparison F ↑ p = .47 ↓ | |

T-test results to “One a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate you just read about?” by Partisan Respondent

Education Policy:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Leaning Democrat | Comparison A ↑ p = .29 ↓ | | Comparison D ↑ p = .37 ↓ | |
| | Leaning Republican | Comparison B (N=5) ↑ N/A. ↓ | | Comparison E (N=11) ↑ p = .29 ↓ | |
| | Independent | Comparison C ↑ p = .13 ↓ | | Comparison F ↓ p = .45 ↑ | |

T-test results to “On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate's immigration policies?” by Partisan Respondent

Infrastructure Candidate:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Leaning Democrat | Comparison A ↑ p = .25 ↓ | | Comparison D ↑ p = .43 ↓ | |
| | Leaning Republican | Comparison B (N=12) ↑ p = .33 ↓ | | Comparison E (N=7) ↑ p = .14 ↓ | |
| | Independent | Comparison C ↑ p = .25 ↓ | | Comparison F ↑ p = .36 ↓ | |

T-test results to “One a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate you just read about?” by Partisan Respondent

Infrastructure Policy:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Leaning Democrat | Comparison A ↑ p = .09 ↓ | | Comparison D ↓ p = .05 ↑ | |
| | Leaning Republican | Comparison B (N=9) ↑ p = .29 ↓ | | Comparison E (N=11) ↑ p = .068 ↓ | |
| | Independent | Comparison C ↑ p = .25 ↓ | | Comparison F ↑ p = .45 ↓ | |

T-test results to “On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate's immigration policies?” by Partisan Respondent

STRONGLY IDENTIFYING

Immigration Candidate:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Strongly Democrat | Comparison A p = .40 | | Comparison D p = .14 | |
| | Strongly Republican | Comparison B (N=8) p = .17 | | Comparison E (N=8) p = .41 | |
| | Independent | Comparison C p = .13 | | Comparison F p = .01 | |

T-test results to “One a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate you just read about?” by Partisan Respondent

Immigration Policy:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Strongly Democrat | Comparison A p = .28 | | Comparison D p = .18 | |
| | Strongly Republican | Comparison B (N=11) p = .49 | | Comparison E (N=16) p = .33 | |
| | Independent | Comparison C p = .38 | | Comparison F p = .04 | |

T-test results to “On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate's immigration policies?” by Partisan Respondent

Education Candidate:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Strongly Democrat | Comparison A p = .11 | | Comparison D p = .24 | |
| | Strongly Republican | Comparison B (N=7) p = .38 | | Comparison E (N=22) p = .34 | |
| | Independent | Comparison C p = .50 | | Comparison F p = .47 | |

T-test results to “One a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate you just read about?” by Partisan Respondent

Education Policy:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Strongly Democrat | Comparison A p = .03 | | Comparison D p = .39 | |
| | Strongly Republican | Comparison B p = .16 | | Comparison E p = .39 | |
| | Independent | Comparison C p = .13 | | Comparison F p = .45 | |

T-test results to “On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate's immigration policies?” by Partisan Respondent

Infrastructure Candidate:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Strongly Democrat | Comparison A p = .45 | | Comparison D p = .43 | |
| | Strongly Republican | Comparison B p = .05 | | Comparison E p = .36 | |
| | Independent | Comparison C p = .44 | | Comparison F p = .36 | |

T-test results to “One a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate you just read about?” by Partisan Respondent

Infrastructure Policy:

| Candidate | | Democrat | | Republican | |
|-------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------------|----------|
| Frame | | Morality | Economic | Economic | Morality |
| Participant | Strongly Democrat | Comparison A p = .26 | | Comparison D p = .66 | |
| | Strongly Republican | Comparison B p = .33 | | Comparison E p = .25 | |
| | Independent | Comparison C p = .25 | | Comparison F p = .45 | |

T-test results to “On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 indicates strong support) how much do you support the candidate's immigration policies?” by Partisan Respondent

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