Issue Attention and Individual Voting Intentions: Survey Experiments of Selective Exposure in Simulated Election Campaigns

Audun Beyer, Carl Henrik Knutsen and Bjørn Erik Rasch

NB: THIS IS WORK IN PROGRESS!

Abstract

In this paper, we investigate whether and how election campaigns matter for party choice. We discuss how systematic changes in voting behavior may stem from the interaction between specific distributions of voter preferences along multiple policy-dimensions and cues generated by campaigns regarding which issues may become important in the future. Moreover, we discuss priming and framing effects activated by election campaigns, which may affect voting behavior systematically. We analyze data from two survey-experiments conducted on Norwegian voters. The results show that many voters change voting intentions when the focus of the election campaign changes, and that shifts within the electorate are quite systematic; specific, and different, parties gain tremendously when campaigns focus on either immigration or environmental issues. The individual-level characteristics of voters who are more likely to change parties are highly issue-dependent.

1. Introduction

How and how much do campaigns matter for voting behavior? Are voters susceptible to changing their vote towards particular parties if the political debate centers on topics such as immigration and the environment? In extension, can the media influence election outcomes by focusing on particular issues, and leaving others out? The literature on the effects of campaigns on voting is inconclusive; some studies find quite strong effects of different campaign-characteristics and different types of media-exposure (e.g. Holbrook 1996; Alvarez 1997; Campbell 2008; DellaVigna and Kaplan 2007), whereas other studies find no systematic effects (e.g. Lazarfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1944; Campbell et al. 1966; Finkel 1993). Nevertheless, "[f]*or many years, the conventional academic wisdom suggested that campaigns and the accompanying media coverage had minimal effects on voters. This wisdom has recently shifted, however, and many scholars now believe that campaigns fundamentally shape voters' decision*" (Druckman 2004, p. 577). A related literature has focused on the effects of campaign expenditures, and although the results are mixed, most studies find a positive effect of campaign spending on votes, at least for non-incumbents (see e.g. Grier 1989; Coates 1998; Mueller 2003, p. 485). However, there are several methodical difficulties related to inferring validly about the effects of campaigns on voting behavior (see e.g. Wlezien and Eriksson 2001), and even if we accept results indicating that campaigns affect voting behavior, there is still a need to specify the strength of the effect and elaborate further on why campaigns may influence voting.

In this paper, we utilize survey experiments on Norwegian voters to investigate the issues raised above. We report results from two such survey experiments dealing with vote intention, and the possible change of vote intention when respondents receive stimulus highlighting that certain immigration or environment issues are dominant political topics in a hypotethical campaign. Our results indicate that a surprisingly large number of voters are likely to change party when election campaigns focus on either immigration or environmental issues, and the direction of change between

parties is very systematic. Moreover, we find that the propensity to change parties is systematically related to individual-specific characteristics, although these vary in importance with the issue area under consideration.

Several mechanisms may contribute to voters changing parties as a result of an election campaign's nature. We identify five plausible mechanisms from the literature: learning; persuasion; strategic voting; ("rationally induced") change in weighting of issues; and priming effects. The structure of our empirical analysis allows us to show that there is a likely effect from campaigns on change in voting intentions, *even* in the absence of learning, persuasion and strategic voting effects. Hence, campaign effects may result from rational voters updating their beliefs on the future political salience of specific issues during a campaign, or frompriming mechanisms. In any case, one central conclusion from this study's empirical analysis is that politicians and the media may influence voting behavior through highlighting certain issue areas and downplaying others.

In Section 2, we present various reasons for why voters may change their voting behavior as a result of election campaigns. In Section 3, we present the survey instruments and methodology. In Section 4, we report and discuss descriptive statistics on changes in voting intentions as a response to the different treatments introduced in the survey experiments. Moreover, we analyze which voters are more likely to change parties when receiving different treatments. Section 5 concludes.

2. Election campaigns and voting behavior

There seems to be at least five identifiable reasons for why voters may change their voting intention during an election campaign:

I. Learning effects

Learning effects could occur when voters, for example through consuming news media, gather new information about the issue positions of parties and candidates. This may lead to changes in party preferences, and ultimately voting behavior. Thus, campaigns may function as a kind of informative

advertising for parties (see e.g. Alvarez 1997; Mueller and Stratmann 1994), which may affect particularly less politically informed voters (e.g. Grossman and Helpman, 1996). Learning effects may also occur when parties introduce new policy proposals during a campaign, and voters take notice. As Schumpeter (1976) noted, democratic politicians may be considered "political entrepeneurs", and successful entrepeneurs who introduce good policy proposals may substantially increase their share of the political market. If politicians are able to credibly commit to new policies, which may be difficult because of several reasons (see e.g. Persson and Tabellini 2000, p.69), campaign promises may induce voters to shift party preference.

II. Persuasion

Persuasion effects are somewhat similar to learning effects as they also come as a result of information concerning issues important to voters. This effect, however, is more complex as it may involve both learning an issue-position, and being persuaded by the "better" argument for taking the position, much in the spirit of Habermas (e.g. Habermas 1996). Further, persuasion requires that parties either have been innovative during the campaign when it comes to presenting arguments, or that voters previously had incomplete information regarding the different arguments and their full implications. The latter may be particularly relevant for voters without extensive political knowledge, or voters who are less interested in politics and generally tune in to politics only during campaigns. Well-informed, rational voters may be hard to persuade (see e.g. Bray and Kreps 1987). However, boundedly rational voters may be persuadable, as repeated exposure to a particular opininon may impact on a voter's beliefs, and function relatively similar to social learning (De Marzo, Vayanos, and Zwiebel 2003). Indeed, persuasive campaigning on the part of politicians may have longer lasting effects than informative campaigning (Mueller 2003, p. 477).

III. Strategic considerations

Strategic voting concerns might also lead voters to shift parties during an election campaign (see Cox, 1997). As voters form more precise expectations of the election result, they may be more likely

to abandon their preferred party for their second or third options to increase their probability of influencing the election outcome. Voters may vote for their second preference if they believe that voting for their first preference will have no effect on the seat-distribution in the legislature, or they may vote for their second preference if this contributes to strengthening the prospects for a coalition government where their first preference is included. Strategic voting might be spurred, for example, by voters' perception of the distribution of votes and seats based on opinion polls, which become more frequent during campaigns.

IV. Campaigns as signals and weighting of policy dimensions

As seen above, both learning and persuasion may affect voters during a campaign. However, election campaigns may matter *even when* voters do not learn anything about parties' preferred policy positions, or change their evaluations of what the ideal policies on different policy-dimensions are: voters may change their preferred party because a campaign leads them to evaluate specific policies or issue dimensions as relatively more important than what they did prior to the campaign. Even if voters are perfectly aware of their ideal policy on all dimensions, such a change in weighting of issue dimensions may generate behavioral change. Therefore, voters with fixed preferences over policy outcomes, but who are uncertain of which policy-areas politicians are going to focus on over the coming years in terms of reform, legislation and implementation, may change their vote as a response to signals provided in a campaign.

Think of a voter with preferences over policy outcomes in two dimensions, let us call them fiscal policy and immigration. The voter knows his ideal position on both dimensions, but is uncertain as to which one of these issues are going to be the focus of politicians' attention, and thus how much effort that will go into policy making and reform, in the coming years. In these situations voters may use campaigns as information signals to produce more accurate predictions of how important the different issue areas are going to be in the next parliamentary period. If immigration or the environment are important topics during an election campaign, with politicians constantly repeating

their resolve regarding promoting particular policies in these issue areas, voters may infer that these areas will be of particular political importance over the coming years.

Hence, voters would more likely vote according to their preference on the policy dimension considered to be of extra political importance. This may change voting intentions, and systematically so if a large bulk of voters tend to agree more with one party on one issue dimension and with another on a second dimension. A large literature on parties and "issue-ownership" has indicated that this indeed tends to be the case (e.g. Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Petrocik, Benoit and Hansen, 2003; van der Brug 2004; Walgrave et al., 2009). Empirical studies show that particular parties are often considered by a large share of the electorate, far exceeding their own vote shares, to have the best policies and solutions on specific issue-dimensions. Thus, parties have incentives to focus the election campaign on issues where they have "ownership".

FIGURE 1 HERE

The stylized example in Figure 1 considers one voter (V), three parties (A, B and C) and two policy-dimensions, fiscal policy and immigration policy. In the leftmost diagram, which can be considered the "original" or "default" situation, the circular shapes of the voter's indifference curves indicates a relatively equal weighting of the two policy-dimensions. This implies that a unit deviation on any of the two dimensions from the voter's ideal-point, which is a relatively strict immigration policy and a left of center fiscal policy, yield relatively identical utility losses. In the rightmost diagram, the situation is different. Because of exogenous events, for example the nature of an election campaign that produces context cues regarding which issues may become important in the future, the voter now weighs the immigration dimension more heavily. The elliptic indifference curve indicates a larger utility loss when moving one unit away from the ideal point on the immigration dimension than on the fiscal policy dimension. This, leads the voter to prefer C, rather than A, which was the favored party in the original situation.

V. Priming and framing

The existence of priming effects in campaigns, as a result of exposure to the most salient issues on the media agenda, has been reported in numerous studies (e.g. Iyengar and Kinder 1987; de Vreese, Primed by the Euro???; Druckman 2004). In short, priming effects are ”changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations” (Iyengar and Kinder 1987, p.?), and relates to for example “the capacity of the press to isolate particular issues, events, or themes in the news, as criteria for evaluatimg politicians” (Ansolabehere, Behr, and Iyengar 1992, p.148). Priming also relates to the the concept of framing (see REF), though the exact nature of the relationship between the two concepts is under debate (see Maher 2001 for an overview).[1]

Priming effects from campaigns, leading voters to change their votes based on heightened attention to one particular policy dimension or area, are in some aspects similar to the mechanism underlying the explanation in IV. In both instances, voters' behavior may change as an effect of selective attention to particular issues. Political parties and the mass media may make some issues more salient than others, as part of agenda-setting efforts, inducing some voters to vote in accordance with their preference on the most salient issue dimension. The literature on issue ownership is thus highly relevant also for this argument.

However, priming mechanisms, in contrast with the mechanism described in IV, in a sense works behind the back of the voter. With regards to the psychological mechanisms underlying priming effects, the most convincing seem to be that of *accessibility* (ref needed, Iyengar og Kinder, evt de Vreese 2010); when asked to perform some kind of political evaluation, many people seem to grab the standard for evaluation that is most accessible to them. That standard may well be the issues with a high saliency on the media agenda.

[1] A possible framing effect probably occurs before the priming effect. When respondents receive certain issue stimuli, it is probable that what come to mind are framed versions of these issues or issue complexes. Thus, any priming effect may be said to linger on an earlier framing effect, and it may in fact be the framing effect that causes differences in how respondents evaluate politicians, parties, or how they should vote. The priming effect makes the earlier framing effect more accessible to respondents, and if the framing of the issues are applicable (for a discussion on the nuances concerning accessibility and applicability in framing studies, see de Vreese 2010, pp.193-195) to a respondent's mental schema, it is possible that this affects evaluations or vote intentions either by enforcing or indeed changing preferences.

One likely example of priming-effects in politics is that of voters' evaluation of President Bush during the first Gulf War (Krosnick and Brannon 1993). When the war was highly salient on the media agenda, Bush was evaluated as a strong leader, because many people thought he handled the war quite good. After the war finished, Bush's popularity sank as a stone, when the economy dominated media content; Bush was not considered to do well on the economy.[2]

In Figure 2 we show different outcomes with a priming effect for the same distribution of voter preferences and party positions as those in Figure 1. When the issue-focus is on issue 1, our hypothetical voter will likely opt for party B, the party closest to V's position. When issue 2 is the salient issue, V will rather opt for party C.

FIGURE 2 HERE

3. Research design

Through using surveys of Norwegian voters, we simulate election campaigns in which attention is focused on a single issue or issue-dimension. Combined with questions from the same surveys on voting preferences, without making any assumptions of a prior campaign, this allows us to investigate to what extent behavior (vote intention) changes as a result of (forced) selective attention. The simple and stylized Figure 3 illustrates the basic logic of our research design.

FIGURE 3 HERE

The first telephone-based survey was conducted in June 2009, and the second during the last weeks of the campaign for the 2009 Parliamentary election in Norway (primo September).[3] Norway is a

[2] Priming studies often focus on the evaluation of presidents or other higher rank officials in the US (e.g. Krosnick and Kinder 1990; Krosnick and Brannon 1993), but there have also been studies showing other kinds of priming effects (de Vreese primed by the euro, further references needed).

[3] The first survey was part of a greater standard omnibus survey (N=989) carried out by TNS Gallup Norway between June 24 and July 1, 2009. This was a survey performed on a representative sample of the Norwegian population above the age of 18. The second survey was a web survey (N=1001) carried out by Norstat, another of the main polling organizations in Norway. This sample was also a representative sample, but of the Internet population, which for the case of Norway is quite high (referanse med prosenttall). Norstat has a web panel consisting of about 70000 respondents. Respondents earn points for each survey they participate in, but there are quite strict regulations on how many surveys people are offered to take part in.

parliamentary democracy with elections every four years. In the current parliament seven parties are represented (the Progress Party (right-wing populist), the Conservative Party, three centre parties (Christian Democrats, the Left Party, and the Center Party), a social-democratic Labour Party, and the Socialist Party, the three latter have formed a majority government, now in their second term, labelled the Red-Green coalition).

In the first survey, respondents were first asked a standard question concerning vote intention if the elections were held the next day. This question was followed by a general set of omnibus questions, not related to politics. At last, the respondents were asked about vote intention one more time, but with a twist. Respondents were asked to assume that issues concerning integration of minorities to the Norwegian society, specifically such controversial issues as that of *creeping islamification*, the use of hijab by women police officers, and the Muhammed caricatures had been highly salient. In fact, these issues had spurred heated debates during the last year or so in Norway, most recently with the proposed creeping islamification (of Norwegian society) issue put forward by the leader of the Progress Party in February 2009. In general, the Progress Party, which promotes a restrictive immigration policy, is considered to have issue ownership on immigration policy in Norwegian politics (Karlsen and Aardal, 2007). One plausible hypothesis is therefore that the Progress Party would increase its vote share after the introduction of the "immigration-treatment".

We also performed a second web-based survey, this time with two different stimulus conditions, and with a set of background variables such as socio-demographic variables, and common measures tapping political cynicism, knowledge, and interest. In the second survey these background variables concerning political interest, which issues were rated as most important by respondents, and political knowledge, followed the first question concerning vote intention if the elections were held the next day. For the last question in this second survey, respondents were randomly assigned to two stimulus conditions. Both groups were told that the question concerning vote intention would be repeated, now supposing that a particular issues had been very salient during the election campaign.

One group received a similar stimulus to that used in the first, telephone-based survey, and the other group was provided a stimulus relating to environment and alternative energy.

The two questions were:

Immigration/integration condition: INSERT QUESTION

Environment/alternative condition:INSERT QUESTION

We expected to see similar movements of voters as in the first survey for the group receiving the immigration treatment. The parties we expected to increase their share of voters for the group receiving the environment treatment were the Socialist Party and the Liberal Party; both parties may be considered to have issue ownership on environmental policy (e.g. Karlsen and Aardal 2007). Moreover these parties' policy positions also "match" the particular framing of the issues proposed in the environmental treatment quite well; both parties promote a "restrictive" environmental policy, including being restrictive when it comes to the exploration of new oil-fields in vulnerable areas such as the ocean outside the Lofoten archipelago.

Although there may be several methodical problems related to inferring from our surveys, it should be noted that the same question about vote intention is asked twice to every respondent, first without further stimuli and later with the kind of stimuli described above. We are thus able to control for individual-specific factors. As discussed above, there may be several different mechanisms leading a voter to change party as a result of the particular nature of an election campaign. Nevertheless, both persuasion and learning can be ruled out in our case as the stimulus that were provided in the experiments contain neither information on issue-positions nor any *arguments* for taking a position. Similarly, it is unlikely that strategic voting considerations impact on the results. If we find that voters change parties as a result of the treatment introduced in the survey, we are thus left with the mechanisms introduced as IV (rational voters change weighting of policy dimension) and V (priming effects) in Section 2 as potential explanations.

4. Empirical analysis

4.1 Descriptive statistics: Results from the survey experiments

First, we present the results from the web-based survey. Table 1 shows the distribution of voters according to parties for the three different questions in this survey. The leftmost column gives the distribution of voters according to party for the total sample, being asked the ordinary, non-treatment question. The two following columns give the distribution of voters in what is labeled the immigration sample, in which respondents were given the immigration treatment before the second question on voting intention. The two rightmost columns show the distribution for half the sample, eventually treated with the environmental question (environment sample).

TABLE 1 HERE

We see a marked difference in intended voting behavior for the ordinary and treatment conditions. This is true for both the immigration and the environment samples. For the immigration sample, 30.5% of voters originally said they would vote Labor, but this number was reduced to 23.8% once given the immigration stimulus. Also, the Conservative Party's vote share was reduced, from 19.2% to 15.5%, once voters were given this stimulus. Indeed, all parties except the Progress Party lost votes as a result of the stimulus. The Progress Party gained enormously, increasing its vote share from 22.8% to 37.3%.

In the environment sample, Labor also lost substantially when the treatment was introduced, going from 33.7% to 26.0%. As mentioned, the Socialist- and Liberal Party are considered particularly environment-friendly parties, and, as mentioned, there are indications that particularly the Socialist Party has issue-ownership on environmental policy (see e.g. Karlsen and Aardal, 2007; Aardal et al. 2007, p.33). Indeed, these parties also gained the most after the environment and alternative energy stimulus was introduced. The Socialist Party more than doubled its vote share, going from 9.7% to 20.0%. The Liberal party increased its vote share from 6.3% to 9.4%. The Progress party lost

massively when the environment-treatment was introduced, going from 20.1% to 15.6%. For the Progress Party, a campaign focusing on immigration issues seems clearly preferable to one focusing on environment issues.

Table 2 below shows the results for the original and immigration-treatment questions for respondents in the telephone survey. These results generally point in the same direction as the results from the web-survey, although the differences are somewhat less marked. The Progress Party increased its vote share from 17.2% to 23.5% after the immigration treatment was introduced, whereas Labor's vote share dropped from 27.1% to 24.7% (NB: TAKE OUT "NO ANSWER" AND RECALCULATE).

TABLE 2 HERE

Given that these are the same voters revealing their voting intentions in the same surveys, the differences between original and treatment questions are quite astounding, particularly given that respondents often want to be perceived as consistent, and not wavering, thus reporting that they consequently vote for one party, even if they have changed their minds (Hellevik; Waldahl og Aardal i SPS rundt 1995). This should introduce a downward bias in our results.

The results above indicate that the nature of an election campaign may produce large and systematic net voter movements. However, it may be that several voters shifted in various directions, also, for example, including voters favoring liberal immigration policy and lax environment policy changing away from the Progress Party and Socialist Party, for the respective treatments. We can investigate the changes in voting intention between the original questions and the stimulus conditions more thoroughly by constructing transition matrices. Tables 3, 4 and 5 show such transition matrices for the two samples in the web-based survey, and for the phone-based survey. These tables yield information on gross changes between parties, in relative frequencies, rather than aggregate changes. There are surprisingly small differences between net changes and gross changes to and from parties.

For example only 1 respondent changed from the Progress Party to Labor in the web-based immigration sample (24 went the other way), and only 3 respondents left the Socialist Party in the environment sample, whereas it gained 46 new "voters", 30 of whom from the Labor Party. The changes in voting intention are thus surprisingly systematic, also in the sense that very few voters change against "the main flow".

TABLES 3, 4 AND 5 HERE

The very strong effects of the two stimulus conditions, with one being replicated over two surveys, may be considered surprising. Not only does campaigns' issue-focus seem to matter for parties, according to our surveys they matter a lot. Tables 3 and 5 based on the web-survey show that the Conservative and Labor party only retain roughly 70 percent of their original voters, whereas about 30 percent leave them, once the two treatments are introduced. Most of these latter voters change to parties that are considered having issue-ownership on the respective issues dealt with in the treatment conditions. Considering this result, parties may gain substantially from trying to force a campaign's agenda towards their issues, although parties without ownership on an issue may reduce their losses considerably if able to present their views to voters (Walgrave et al., 2009).

4.2 Who changes parties?

For the second survey we can analyse the individual characteristics of those that changed intention to vote, as the survey included questions on ascribed characterstics such as age and gender, as well as values and opinions towards particular issues and politics more in general. We explore whether there are specific types of voters that tend to change parties more often as a response to being treated with either the immigration or environment conditions. Given the lack of a theoretical framework to guide our expectations regarding which particular voters tend to switch parties more often, the analysis below has an exploratory character. Nevertheless, some plausible hypotheses can be deduced a priori, although many of them are weakly anchored in existing knowledge.

First, it may be that voters who have more established voting habits might be less sensitive to priming effects (ref needed). Thus, older voters may have a smaller propensity to change voting intention as a result of priming treatment than younger voters. Moreover, voters who care strongly about an issue area may have a different probability of changing their vote towards a particular party when receiving treatment related to the issue area. One hypothesis is that voters who care intensively about an issue tend to change more often when receiving the treatment, as this may activate voting behavior based on their strong preferences on the issue dimension. However, voters with a very strong interest in the issue area may already, prior to the stimulus treatment, be voting according to their preference on this dimension. For example, voters that already are very concerned with immigration or the environment may already vote on anti-immigration or pro-environment parties.

A third factor that may affect likelihood of changing parties is political knowledge. One hypothesis is that voters with little political knowledge may be more likely to change their voting intentions due to stronger framing effects. Fourth, also general political interest may reduce the probability of changing parties because of weaker priming- and framing effects. The politically interested have perhaps to a larger degree made up their minds on voting prior to election campaigns, because they have spent more time considering their options.

Fifth, higher educated voters may be better able to independently make up their minds, without letting their choice of party being steered by the salience or framing of a specific issue. Thus, higher educated voters may be less likely to change their voting behavior as a result of the particular nature of a campaign. Sixth, political cynicism may affect likelihood of changing parties. Political cynics may be less likely to change because they assume their vote does not matter anyway, and vote expressively on particular parties. However, political cynicism may trigger protest voting only when specific issues, like immigration, are considered important, thus indicating stronger priming effects among cynics.

We ran logit regressions with party change as dependent variable. The regression models were applied on the two samples separately, as the factors affecting the probability of changing parties may differ between the two issue areas. In accordance with the brief discussion above, age, years of education, and proxies for issue-importance, political knowledge, political interest and political cynicism were entered as independent variables. Age and years of education were entered linearly. We operationalized issue area importance with the responses to the following survey questions: "XX" and "YY".[4] The political knowledge index is an additive index constructed from a battery of three concrete questions related to knowledge of Norwegian politics and political history (describe in note or appendix). The political cynicism index is also constructed as an additive index on the basis of X questions, tapping YY (describe in note or appendix). The political interest variable is based on the question "XX", and is entered directly, assuming cardinal values.[5] In addition to the above variables, we entered a gender-dummy.

Table 6 shows the results for various models incorporating different combinations of the independent variables applied on the immigration sample, and Table 7 shows the results for the environment sample. There are systematic factors affecting the propensity to change parties in both samples, but interestingly these factors are not identical. In the immigration sample political interest significantly enhances the probability of changing party, which goes contrary to the expectations presented above. Perhaps even more puzzling is the result that the importance of immigration as an issue reduces the probability of changing party when provided the immigration-treatment. However, this may be due to the fact that those already voting Progress Party were very interested in immigration as an issue. 73 percent of the original Progress Party voters considered immigration to be an important issue. Among those that changed to the Progress Party after the immigration-treatment was introduced, 36 percent considered immigration important. Among voters that neither originally voted for nor

[4] The immigration question and environment policy question only enter in their respective samples.
[5] Robustness checks where voters are classified as having high or low levels of political knowledge, political cynicism and political interest yields XXX results to those reported in tables 6 to 9. NB: CHECK.

changed their vote to the Progress Party, only 29 percent considered immigration important. None of the other variables significantly affects the probability of changing parties after the immigration treatment is introduced.

In the environment sample, age, gender, political knowledge and political cynicism are significant determinants of the propensity to change parties. There is only a weak correlation in our data between age, gender and considering environmental issues to be important. Nevertheless, we find that young and female voters are more likely to change parties when provided the environment treatment. Issue importance does not have an independent, significant effect on propensity to change parties. Those with more political knowledge are less likely to change parties, which is in accordance with our expectation from above. However, we also find that political cynicism increases the probability of changing party when provided with the environment treatment.

TABLES 6 AND 7 HERE[6]

In order to further elaborate on these results, we focused on the voters that changed to the parties that may be considered to have issue ownership in the respective areas; the Progress Party in the immigration sample, and the Socialist- and Liberal Party in the environment sample. The dependent variable is now scored a 1 only if the voter changed to the relevant party in the different samples. Moreover, prior Progress Party voters in the immigration sample, and Liberal- and Socialist Party voters in the environment sample are excluded from the analysis.

When we apply the same independent variables as in the models above, several clear patterns emerge in the immigration sample, as seen in Table 8. First, men are more likely to change to voting Progress Party. Second, the more educated are far less likely to change. Moreover, we find that the politically interested and cynical are more prone to change their vote to the Progress Party after having received the treatment. However, we do not find any effect of age, and despite a significant,

[6] In tables 6 to 9, *** implies p<0.01, ** implies p<0.05, * implies p<0.10.

negative effect at the 10% level in the parsimonious model, there is no robust effect of political knowledge.

TABLE 8 HERE

Table 9 shows the results for the analysis on voters reporting change to the Liberal- or Socialist Party after receiving the environment treatment. There are significant effects from gender and age, as women and younger voters are more likely to change to one of the two parties. Moreover, those considering the environment to be an important issue are more likely to change to the Liberal- or Socialist Party after being treated, and this is in accordance with the expectation above.There is also some weak evidence for the hypothesis that those with little political interest are more likely to change. However, this latter effect is not robust.

TABLE 9 HERE

To sum up, there are particular characteristics that affect a respondent's probability to change party as a response to the nature of an election campaign's focus. However, these characteristics seem to vary with the particular issue focused on during the campaign. More theoretical knowledge and thorough empirical studies are needed in order to say anything determinate about how individual-specific characterstics affect the likelihood of changing parties during an election campaign.

4.3 A brief discussion

If there are specific distributions of voters, in the sense that voters are clustered in specific intervals on one or more policy dimensione, the issue-focus in election campaigns may not only lead to several voters changing their preferred party; election campaigns may also lead to some parties gaining *systematically* at the expense of others. For example, if a large share of the Norwegian electorate has relatively similar preferences (restrictive) on immigration policy, but are more dispersed on fiscal policy, for example, a campaign that focuses on immigration will, in the Norwegian context, tend to favor the Progress Party (restrictive immigration policy and right-wing

fiscal policy), and disfavor the Conservative Party (less restrictive immigration policy and right-wing fiscal policy), and even Labor (less restrictive immigration policy and left-wing fiscal policy). If voters are less clustered on the immigration dimension, a stronger weighting of the immigration dimension may lead to several party-changes, but to and from various parties. Thus, it is the combination of clustering of preferences on at least one dimension *and* the treatment effect inducing changes in the weighting of policy dimensions that may yield systematic voter movements from some parties to other.

Indeed, we found that Norwegian voters systematically report to change their votes towards specific parties, if the campaign's focus were to be put on a particular issue. More specifically, the Progress Party gains from a campaign focusing on immigration policy; the Socialist and Liberal parties gain from a campaign focusing on environmental policy. The two large parties considered by Norwegian voters to be competent particularly on fiscal policy (see Karlsen and Aardal, 2007; Aardal et al. 2007, p.32), Labor and the Conservative Party, lose dramatically in both instances. The focus of the election campaign, according to our results, would dramatically alter the Norwegian vote-, and thus parliamentary seat- and perhaps ultimately government composition. According to our estimates, a campaign focusing on immigration issues would lead to the Progress Party becoming the by far largest party, in terms of votes. A campaign focusing on environmental issues would more than double the Socialist Party's vote share, making it the second largest party after Labor.

As mentioned above, our results on the effect of campaigns on voting can not be due to learning of parties' policy position (mechanism I) or persuasion by good arguments on the appropirateness of particular policies (II), as these factors are not included in the treatment. Moreover, there is little reason to believe that many voters are able to guess the posterior distribution of voters in their district after the treatment, and vote strategically (III) on their second- or thirdmost preferred party on this basis. Thus, our results may be due to the more rationally induced behavior, related to

campaigns as signals inducing change in weighting of different dimensions (IV) and it may be due priming (and framing) mechanisms (V).

It is very difficult to test of the relative importance of these two effects with a basis in our data. We could, however, have made a case for each of them by establishing which independent variables that tend to predict change in vote intention. If the most politically interested, knowledgeable, and those with the highest interest in the particular issue area are the ones most liable to change, it could be argued that the mechanisms sketched out in IV have importance. If the least knowledgeable and those with no specific interest in the issue beforehand change, it could be argued in favor of the relevance of priming mechanisms. However, no clear pattern emerges from the individual-specific analysis of which factors that tend to increase the probability of party change. First, the factors affecting probability of party change are issue specific. Second, the results for various indicators that may be related to the argument above, like political knowledge and political interest, often point in different directions.

In any case, our hypotheses and empirical results, can be related to the literature on *issue-ownership* (see e.g. Petrocick, 1996; Walgrave et al., 2009). Large shares of the electorate may agree with certain parties on particular issues, and parties thus have incentives to focus campaigns on issues over which they have ownership. This literature emphasizes that not only placement on general issue dimensions, as was highlighted above, matter; it may be that many voters consider particular solutions to concrete aspects of issues as superior. Parties may thus for example not only want to put focus on the environment, but more concretely steer the discussion towards oil drilling or conservation of forest areas, if they have popular policy proposals or are more generally trusted to handle these issue-aspects well.

There is already some statistical and experimental evidence from this literature indicating that parties and candidates may gain from having discussions focusing on "their" issues and issue-aspects, triangulating well with the results presented here. However, there is also evidence that parties

lacking ownership may be able to partly counter these effects by promoting their policies (Walgrave et al., 2009), possibly even by trying to capture ownership from other parties (Karlsen, 2004). The two latter factors may moderate the results presented in this paper. Despite this, a safe strategy for political actors seem to be to promote their own issues before elections, and one would thus expect campaigns to contain multiple debates and focuses, possibly with parties sometimes trying to avoid debating with each other and rather focusing on different issues.

A last point related to our analysis is that the effect uncovered by our survey-experiment is not solely an effect that may stem from priming as such; it may also result from what could be construed as a framing effect.[7] The reason is that the issues that are described in the treatment-condition are framed in particular ways, not only referring to broad issues such as immigration or the environment, but to some degree framed versions of these broader issues such as the "creeping islamification", or the risk of accidents in areas that may be used for the oil industry. The issues had been high on the Norwegian media agenda some time prior to the survey, and it was these particular versions of the issues, promoted by the parties that tend to gain when the stimulus conditions are introduced, that had received the most attention by far.

5. Conclusion

As Wleizen and Erikson note, many researchers believe that "events that happen during the course of the campaign cause voters' preferences to change… The problem is empirically identifying these effects" (2001, p.419). Several aspects of a campaign may affect voters' preferences over parties; a

[7] Framing enters into this specific analysis as an effect that the the other effects are contingent upon. This effect may not only linger on accesibility but also on what de Vreese (2010, p. 195) calls a *consideration salience mechanism*. While accessibility is the psychological mechanism that lies underneath a priming effect, scholars have recently (see ibid.) tended to see framing effects in terms of *applicability*, meaning that the way messages are structured affect which thoughts are applicable to message processing. De Vreese cites Nelson and Kinder (1996) that argue even more radically against accessibility after having conducted experiments that found no accessibility effects of framing manipulations. Rather, "framing effects stemmed from the *weight* and *importance* (italics in original) that citizens attached to certain considerations when asked to make political judgments" (de Vreese 2010. p. 194-195). In this case, it means that the stimulus that were provided (see appendix) were already framed versions of certain issues, not "pure" uncontaminated issues as 'the economy', 'welfare and social security', 'foreign policy', etc.

particular candidate may come across as particularly trusthworthy and carismatic in a campaign, a candidate may experience scandals, a party may develop a new and attractive policy proposal, voters may learn of parties' existing policies and change their votes accordingly, and voters may vote for another party than their first preference because of strategic considerations developed during the campaign. Leaving such effects aside, we have in this paper showed that campaigns may have a large impact on voting due to the issue-focus of a campaign.

Our empirical analysis, based on two survey experiments, showed that a large share of Norwegian voters are likely to change their vote as a response to the focus of an election campaign. Parties that are considered to have issue ownership on immigration issues and environmental issues in some instances more than doubled their vote share, as an effect of a hypothethical campaign focusing on these parties' core issues. There is no a priori reason to believe that this effect is limited to the Norwegian case, but future empirical research on electorates in other countries is needed to find this out.

We discussed two potential mechanisms that may explain our results. One is that rational voters consider the issue-focus in a campaign as a signal of which issues that will be the most dynamic and receive the most legislative attention from politicians in the coming parliamentary term. Thus, voters are induced by the campaign to weigh these issues more heavily when choosing which party to vote for. Another possible mechanism is related to priming, with voters evaluating parties according to the most readily available yardstick, which may likely be policies on issues that have received much attention during a campaign. It is very difficult to give a straightforward answer to the relative importance of these two mechanisms on the basis of the empirical evidence provided here.

Nevertheless, two important implications arise from our study: First, the media and other organizations may strongly influence election results through increasing the focus on some issues, and reducing the focus on others. Second, strategic and clever politicians may increase their party's vote share if they are able to affect the issue-focus in a campaign, drawing the focus towards issues

where they have “ownership”. Thus, we should expect parties to fight hard to implement specific agendas for election camapaigns. Refocusing election campaigns from one particular issue area to another may be a better campaign strategy than proposing and focusing on broad policy platforms that deal with multiple issues. However, issue-ownership is dynamic (e.g. Karlsen, 2004), at least in the long run, and parties may in some instances gain from battling others parties with current ownership on their home turf (see also Walgrave et al., 2009). Nevertheless, given our strong results, this may be a risky strategy, at least during the relatively short time-span of an election campaign.

The fact that agenda setting and issue focus affects voting is likely not very surprising. However, the large estimated *size* of such effects identified in this study may surprise researchers and politicians alike.

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Figure 1: Global voting with equal and un-equal issue salience

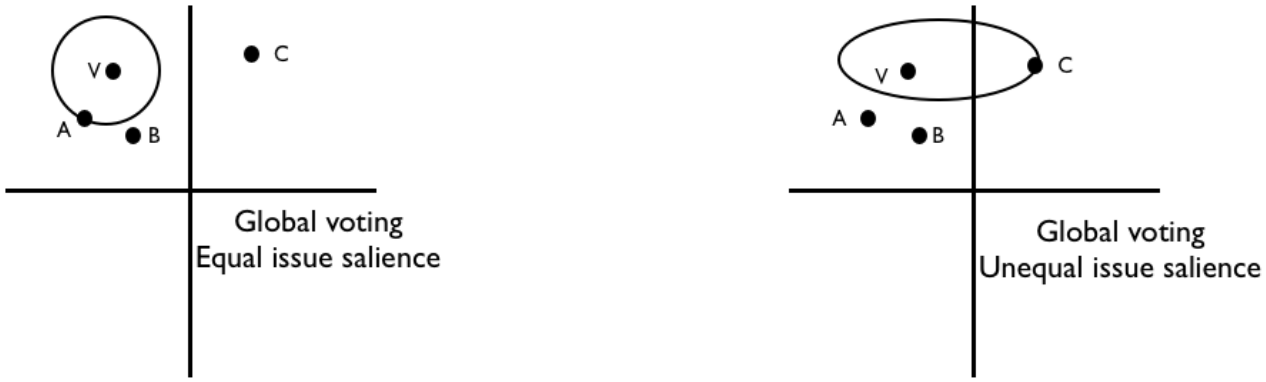
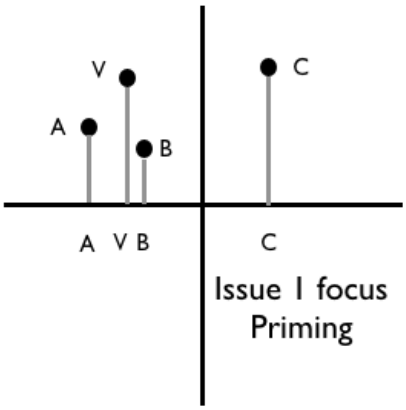


Figure 2: Priming effects, issue 1 and 2



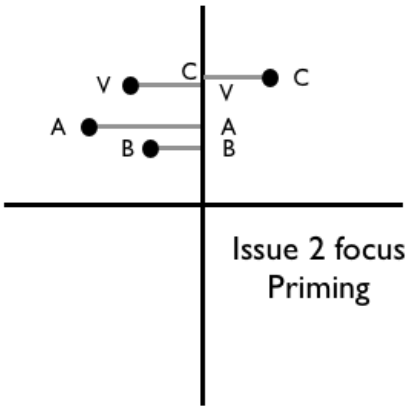


Figure 3: Research design

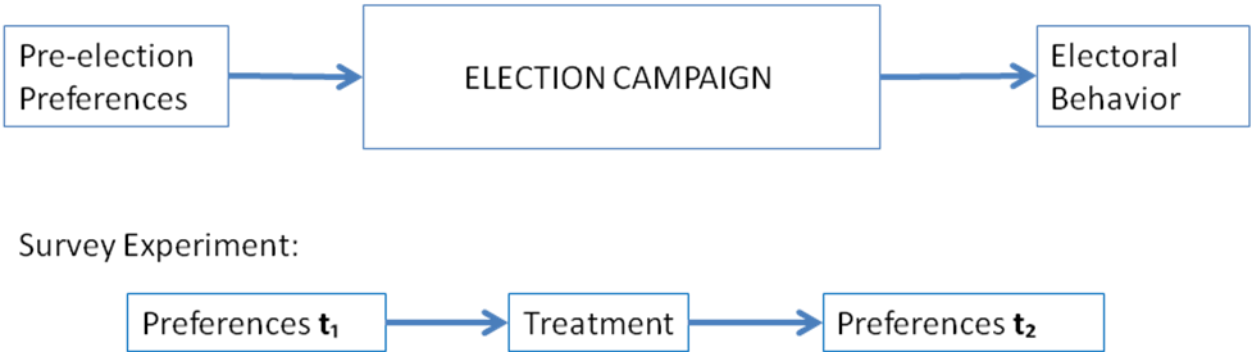


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Table 1: Split sample survey; percent of voters according to party, for different questions

Sample	Total	Immigration		Environment	
Party\Question	Ordinary	Ordinary	Treatment	Ordinary	Treatment
DNA	32.1	30.5	23.8	33.7	26.0
FRP	21.4	22.8	37.3	20.1	15.6
H	17.9	19.2	15.5	16.7	14.9
R	2.7	3.2	3.1	2.3	2.3
SP	5.9	4.5	2.5	7.2	6.7
SV	9.5	9.0	8.5	9.7	20.0
V	5.9	5.4	3.8	6.3	9.4
Other	4.7	5.4	5.4	3.8	5.1
N	886	443	445	442	435

Table 2: Same sample survey; percent of voters according to party, for different questions

	Immigration		
Party	Ordinary	Treatment	Difference
DNA	27.1	24.7	-2.4
FRP	17.2	23.5	6.3
H	11.1	12.0	0.9
KRF	6.2	6.0	-0.2
SP	3.1	2.6	-0.5
SV	8.9	8.7	-0.2
V	4.0	3.8	-0.2
Other (incl. Rødt)	3.0	2.8	-0.2
No answer; not want to vote; do not know; etc.	19.5	16.1	-3.4
Missing	89	33	
N	989	989	

Table 3: Voter distribution (relative frequencies) in immigration sample for original and immigration-treatment questions. Split sample survey.

\Original Immigr\	DNA	FRP	H	KP	R	SP	SV	V	Others	Total
DNA	0,71	0,01	0,02	0,00	0,00	0,05	0,13	0,04	0,00	0,21
FRP	0,18	0,99	0,25	0,00	0,07	0,25	0,00	0,04	0,18	0,33
H	0,02	0,00	0,68	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,17	0,05	0,14
KP	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,01	0,00
R	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,86	0,00	0,03	0,00	0,01	0,03
SP	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,55	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,02
SV	0,02	0,00	0,01	0,00	0,00	0,05	0,78	0,04	0,01	0,08
V	0,01	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,58	0,01	0,03
Others	0,05	0,00	0,04	1,00	0,07	0,10	0,08	0,13	0,73	0,16
Total	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00

Table 4: Voter distribution (relative frequencies) in immigration sample for original and immigration-treatment questions. Same sample survey.

INSERT TABLE

Table 5: Voter distribution (relative frequencies) in environment sample for original and environment-treatment questions. Split sample survey.

\Orig. Envir\	DNA	FRP	H	KP	R	SP	SV	V	Others	Total
DNA	0,70	0,01	0,03	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,02	0,00	0,06	0,23
FRP	0,00	0,67	0,04	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,07	0,14
H	0,00	0,13	0,68	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,04	0,03	0,13
KP	0,00	0,02	0,01	0,75	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,01
R	0,01	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,80	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,01	0,02
SP	0,01	0,01	0,01	0,00	0,00	0,78	0,00	0,00	0,01	0,06
SV	0,20	0,03	0,03	0,25	0,20	0,09	0,93	0,04	0,06	0,17
V	0,03	0,02	0,08	0,00	0,00	0,06	0,02	0,86	0,03	0,08
Others	0,05	0,09	0,12	0,00	0,00	0,06	0,02	0,07	0,73	0,16
Total	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00

Table 6: Logit-regressions with party-change after treatment as dependent variable. Immigration sample.

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
	b/(t)	b/(t)	b/(t)	b/(t)	b/(t)	b/(t)
Age	-0.005	-0.001	-0.004	-0.006	-0.005	-0.003
	(-0.72)	(-0.12)	(-0.58)	(-0.87)	(-0.77)	(-0.36)
Gender	0.212	0.128	0.173	0.199	0.168	0.077
	(0.99)	(0.58)	(0.79)	(0.92)	(0.78)	(0.34)
Education	-0.158	-0.105	-0.140	-0.150	-0.152	-0.111
	(-1.41)	(-0.91)	(-1.19)	(-1.34)	(-1.36)	(-0.93)
Pol. interest		0.348**				0.315*
		(2.13)				(1.75)
Pol. knowl.			-0.135			0.054
			(-0.59)			(0.22)
Pol. cynicism				0.194		0.119
				(1.35)		(0.76)
Issue import.					-0.466**	-0.434*
					(-2.09)	(-1.92)
Constant	-0.778	-1.806**	-0.743	-1.349*	-0.537	-1.809**
	(-1.33)	(-2.35)	(-1.26)	(-1.86)	(-0.89)	(-2.05)
N	500	500	499	500	500	499

Table 7: Logit-regressions with party-change after treatment as dependent variable. Environment sample.

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
	b/(t)	b/(t)	b/(t)	b/(t)	b/(t)	b/(t)
Age	-0.020***	-0.019**	-0.019***	-0.022***	-0.021***	-0.021***
	(-2.81)	(-2.56)	(-2.62)	(-2.97)	(-2.82)	(-2.72)
Gender	0.619***	0.577***	0.564***	0.619***	0.614***	0.562***
	(2.92)	(2.69)	(2.64)	(2.91)	(2.90)	(2.59)
Education	-0.190*	-0.158	-0.124	-0.165	-0.170	-0.090
	(-1.77)	(-1.42)	(-1.10)	(-1.52)	(-1.56)	(-0.78)
Pol. interest		0.167				0.033
		(1.15)				(0.21)
Pol. knowl.			-0.432**			-0.372*
			(-2.00)			(-1.66)
Pol. cynis.				0.324**		0.283*
				(2.22)		(1.88)
Issue impor.					-0.264	-0.205
					(-1.15)	(-0.88)
Constant	-0.472	-0.955	-0.389	-1.523**	-0.436	-1.386
	(-0.82)	(-1.34)	(-0.67)	(-2.03)	(-0.76)	(-1.62)
N	501	501	501	501	501	501

Table 8: Logit-regressions with party-change to Progress party after treatment as dependent variable. Immigration sample.

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
	b/(t)	b/(t)	b/(t)	b/(t)	b/(t)	b/(t)
Age	-0.003	0.007	0.001	-0.006	-0.002	0.006
	(-0.31)	(0.70)	(0.06)	(-0.69)	(-0.19)	(0.56)
Gender	-0.499*	-0.827***	-0.646**	-0.606**	-0.483*	-0.898***
	(-1.77)	(-2.71)	(-2.20)	(-2.10)	(-1.71)	(-2.85)
Education	-0.402***	-0.261*	-0.322**	-0.391***	-0.418***	-0.283*
	(-2.75)	(-1.70)	(-2.06)	(-2.61)	(-2.84)	(-1.73)
Pol. interest		0.969***				0.917***
		(4.14)				(3.52)
Pol. knowl.			-0.565*			-0.047
			(-1.85)			(-0.14)
Pol. cynis.				0.729***		0.506**
				(3.60)		(2.29)
Issue impor.					0.365	0.470
					(1.26)	(1.52)
Constant	0.345	-2.323**	0.482	-1.725*	0.201	-3.778***
	(0.46)	(-2.27)	(0.63)	(-1.78)	(0.27)	(-3.06)
N	399	399	398	399	399	398

Table 9: Logit-regressions with party-change to Socialist- or Liberal Party after treatment as dependent variable. Environment sample.

	I b/(t)	II b/(t)	III b/(t)	IV b/(t)	V b/(t)	VI b/(t)
Age	-0.027***	-0.030***	-0.027**	-0.027***	-0.026**	-0.030***
	(-2.59)	(-2.84)	(-2.55)	(-2.60)	(-2.49)	(-2.77)
Gender	0.702**	0.788***	0.672**	0.702**	0.756**	0.807***
	(2.37)	(2.61)	(2.24)	(2.37)	(2.52)	(2.62)
Education	0.189	0.131	0.222	0.195	0.131	0.136
	(1.23)	(0.83)	(1.37)	(1.25)	(0.84)	(0.81)
Pol. interest		-0.307				-0.364*
		(-1.52)				(-1.68)
Pol. knowl.			-0.207			-0.365
			(-0.69)			(-1.14)
Pol. cynis.				0.050		0.124
				(0.25)		(0.60)
Issue impor.					0.662**	0.644**
					(2.19)	(2.10)
Constant	-2.301***	-1.431	-2.246***	-2.465**	-2.476***	-1.753
	(-2.80)	(-1.45)	(-2.72)	(-2.35)	(-2.99)	(-1.47)
N	429	429	429	429	429	429