

Graduate Advising in Experimental Research Groups

Appendix

In this appendix, we provide a more detailed outline of the research planning process described in the main paper. In addition to general explanations of the steps involved, we provide a running example from Howat's dissertation work to illustrate more concretely how the process may unfold. Later in the appendix, we also provide examples of the planning documents themselves from Mullinix.¹

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¹ We do not provide a document for each step *per se* since many of the steps build on one another and thus it becomes repetitive to include each one.

Running Example of Planning Process (Adam J. Howat's Dissertation)

- *Big picture idea*: a short (i.e., few pages) document on the general topic and why it is relevant to understanding social, political, and/or economic phenomena. This document iterates roughly five times—for graduate students working on their dissertations, it is the foundation of what they will study well into the future.

For example, Howat's dissertation work began with a brief document (a few pages long) discussing the importance of values (general beliefs about desirable end-states or behaviors; e.g., equality, individualism) and social identities (aspects of the self-concept derived from membership in social categories; e.g., race, partisanship) in the formation of political preferences. He recognized a gap in the existing literature with respect to the relationship between these two factors as well as their joint impact on political attitudes. This preliminary document raised such questions as the distribution of value priorities across different identity groups—for example, do politically dominant social groups (e.g., whites, men) tend to place greater emphasis on certain values (e.g., tradition, law and order) while more subordinate groups (e.g., racial minorities, women) prioritize others (e.g., freedom, equality)? Also brought up in this document was the degree to which value commitments *constitute* various identities—that is, how important is subscription to common group values to identification with a group? And, in the event of a conflict between one's values and identity—for example, when a proposed policy goes against one's value priorities but promotes the interests of one's in-group—which exerts the greater influence? The document cited a few dozen sources altogether on the concepts of interest, but it did not yet engage in an in-depth literature review.

- *Detailed literature review*: an exhaustive search of research on the topic, and detailed descriptions of specific studies. Ideally, it leads to the identification of multiple potential research directions, some of which are tabled for the future. This is where receiving feedback from the research group is critical insofar as others may know of related literature of which the researcher is unaware. It is also particularly useful to interact with those in different fields or disciplines to discover literature. It is here that the researcher should identify specific gaps in existing knowledge.

In Howat's case, this step entailed discussing two extensive (and largely separate) literatures on values and social identities. Thoroughly investigating these topics required him to draw just as much (if not more) on work from social psychology as from political science. The first section reviewed theory and measurement of values. This included “basic” values that are applicable to most or all domains of life (e.g., achievement, security) and “political” values that are oriented toward the role of government and the organization of society (e.g., equality, free enterprise). After weighing the pros and cons of different approaches, Howat settled on the Schwartz value theory, which identifies a set of ten basic values that, to date, have been measured in samples from over 80 countries.

For political values, Howat comprehensively reviewed theories and measures of values. He then had to make decisions as to which specific measures to use, drawing on several

sources to construct a unique focus set. These kinds of ultimate (and critical) decisions are primarily made by the researcher (e.g., student), but the feedback and guidance from not only the advisor but also the larger research group is crucial. A poor decision at this early point could adversely influence the entire project, and thus the group advice here is of particular importance.

Howat's second main section covered a range of psychological and sociological theories of social identity, discussing the benefits and drawbacks of each. Given his individual-level focus and interest in the relative impact of personal versus group values on political attitudes, he chose self-categorization theory, which draws a relatively clear line between an individual's personal identity and their social identities (e.g., those based on group memberships such as race, gender, and partisanship). Conversations with the research group, as well as a dissertation committee member, led him to this specific framework. Finally, the literature review discussed the comparatively small amount of existing work on the connections between identities and values. This review illuminated specific gaps in existing knowledge to be filled in the dissertation. Although some studies had examined the relationships between group membership and value priorities, they focused on a relatively small set of identities or values at a time. Also missing from existing research was an account of the *perceived* values of different identity groups, in addition to their self-reported values, as well as the impact of those perceived values on intergroup conflict and cooperation. Finally, a great deal remained to be explained concerning the concurrent impact of identities and values on political communication.

- *Research question(s) and outcomes*: given the identification of a gap in existing work, the next step is to put forth a specific question (or questions) to be addressed. This includes identifying the precise outcome variable(s) of interest.

For example, in the realm of political communication and campaigns, Howat considered the relative and joint impact of an identity match (a shared identity between an individual and a political candidate, such as both being women) or a value match (the expression by the candidate of values common to the individual's identity group, such as both valuing equality). One study in his dissertation investigates the influence of a match (or mismatch) on either of both of these dimensions on perceptions of candidates and democratic representation. When a political candidate's group identity and professed values conflict with one another, what does the voter think? When one candidate shares the voter's group identity but not group values (identity match, value mismatch) and another candidate does the reverse (identity mismatch, value match), which candidate is viewed more favorably? For example, how does a Democratic respondent perceive a Democratic candidate who emphasizes traditional morality (a value associated with Republicans), versus a Republican candidate who emphasizes civil liberties (a value more often expressed by Democrats)? This step also entails identification of specific outcome variables which, for Howat, include perceptions of and support for the candidates, as well as measures of how well respondents believe a candidate, if elected, would represent their interests and those of relevant in-groups and out-groups (e.g., how well a white candidate expressing egalitarian values would represent African-Americans and whites, compared to an African-American candidate expressing the same).

- *Theory and hypotheses*: development of a theory and hypotheses to be tested. This often involves accessing distinct literatures, sometimes from other disciplines. Researchers should take their time to derive concrete and specific predictions. As part of this step, potential mediators and/or moderators should be specified. Also, in putting forth predictions, one must be careful to isolate the comparisons to be used.

Drawing upon literature concerning perceptions of descriptive versus substantive representation, as well as responses to identity- and value-based cues in political communication, Howat's design broadly hypothesized that sharing an identity or values with a candidate would increase support, as well as the perception that the candidate would represent an individual's interests, whereas an identity/value mismatch relative to a respondent would have the opposite effect. (For example, consider an African-American respondent who places high value on equality. A candidate who is also African-American, and/or who expresses an equality value message, would receive greater support from such an individual. Conversely, a white candidate and/or a candidate expressing a self-reliance value message would receive less support.) Importantly, this included more specific predictions moderated by the type of identity involved.

- *Research design*: the scholar then needs to put forth a design (see Leeper 2011). This includes:
 - Discussion of the designs used by others who have addressed similar questions, and how the proposed design connects with previous work. In many cases, the ideal strategy is to utilize and extend prior designs.
 - Discussion of how such a design will provide data relevant to the larger questions.
 - Identifying where the data will come from, which includes:
 - Consideration of the sample and any potential biases.
 - Detailed measures and where the measures were obtained—that is, where have they been used in prior studies? The measures need to clearly connect to the hypotheses, including the outcome variables and mediators/moderators.
 - In many cases, the design may be too practically complex (e.g., number of experimental conditions relative to realistic sample size), and decisions must be made on what can be trimmed without interfering with the goal of the study.
 - For original data collection, pre-tests of stimuli, question wordings, etc., are critical to ensure the approach has content and construct validity.
 - Issues related to internal and external validity should be discussed.

To continue with our running example, Howat's dissertation study design presents participants with a series of three mock campaign web pages for fictitious congressional candidates, varying 1) an identity match or mismatch with the participant (one each for partisanship, gender, or race, varied one at a time in order), and 2) the presence of a value message that resonates (or not) with the participant's identity. For instance, one set of conditions presents a candidate who is either male or female (holding race constant and not providing party affiliation) and also includes a humanitarian value message (associated with female identity),

a self-reliance value message (associated with male identity), or no value message. For a female respondent, then, a female candidate would constitute an identity match, and a humanitarian value message would be considered a value match, whereas a male candidate and a self-reliance value message would be an identity and value mismatch, respectively.

Originally, the design presented each participant with only one web page (and thus only one type of identity cue), but consultation with the research group quickly established that this would result in an unmanageable number of experimental conditions that would demand an unattainably large pool of subjects to achieve sufficient statistical power. The revised design presents three pages that present identity cues in a uniform order (partisanship, gender, race), keeping in mind the potential for spillover effects. Group members also helped edit the specific language of the value messages to ensure they communicated the intended concepts.

- *Data collection document:* if the project involves original data collection, a step-by-step plan needs to be put forth so as not to later forget such details as recruitment, implementation, etc.

In the case of Howat's study, a discussion with the research group concluded that the aforementioned laboratory housed at Northwestern University would provide the best affordable sample (in contrast to a Mechanical Turk sample). Furthermore, given the need for a larger number of African-American respondents than are typically represented in the subject pool (again, in order to achieve enough statistical power to find significant effects), the group also helped brainstorm additional convenience samples on campus that might be used to increase the proportion of such individuals in the overall sample.

- *Data analysis plan:* there needs to be a clear data analysis plan—how *exactly* will the data be used to test hypotheses? The researcher should directly connect the design and measures to the hypotheses. This often involves making a table with each measure and how it maps on to specific hypotheses. (See Mullinix materials for an example of these tables and how they change through multiple iterations in important ways.) What techniques will be used if data collection is imperfect (e.g., smaller sample size than expected)? This is a commonly missed step. The plan ensures that the right data will be collected, and it provides a blueprint of what to do once one receives the data.

For example, the analysis plan for Howat's dissertation study involves a comparison of the means of key dependent variables across conditions. However, this seemingly straightforward comparison involves a large number of conditions and specific hypotheses, so it proved invaluable to lay out the expected results in detail, with a table explicitly listing which conditions were expected to yield higher values in these dependent variables than others. Further complicating the data generation process was the need to determine identity and value (mis)matches based not just on experimental condition, but also on each respondent's demographic characteristics, in order to facilitate

the comparisons of interest. This meant Howat had to carefully construct a method to create consistent conditions for analyses.

- *Merging the pieces:* at this point, the researcher merges the aforementioned pieces into a single document and it is reviewed in its entirety by the research group and faculty (e.g., prospectus committee). This is essential because it is possible that in the process of moving from the larger abstract research question to the specific analysis plan, a disconnect could have emerged. In some instances, the particular design no longer speaks to the initial motivating question or no longer clearly fills a gap in the literature.
- *Implementation:* from here, data are collected and analyzed, and the planning document serves as a guide to writing up the results and, potentially, identifying reasons why one may not have found what was expected.

Note: Howat's design still to be implemented.

Mullinix Example Planning Document

This document corresponds to the study presented in Mullinix (2016). The content of this document was compiled after pre-tests were conducted, but before the full (final) survey experiment was implemented.

Mullinix, Kevin J. 2016. "Partisanship and Preference Formation: Competing Motivations, Elite Polarization, and Issue Importance." *Political Behavior* 38(2): 383-411.

This document includes:

- Last paper draft pre-implementation (research question, literature, theory, hypotheses)
- Specific predictions (based on hypotheses) for primary dependent variable
- Stimuli and question-wording for variables

Competing Motivations in Political Preference Formation

Abstract

Public opinion research has long acknowledged that citizens often engage in what can be construed as biased decision making. In many cases this involves a partisan ‘perceptual screen’ (*partisan* motivated reasoning) such that citizens support policies endorsed by their preferred party while rejecting policies – even if substantively equivalent – from the opposing party. Yet, people also engage in *issue-based* motivated reasoning through which policy information is interpreted in light of extant issue opinions. Surprisingly, while a large amount of work has demonstrated each process in isolation, no work has considered them in conjunction. In this paper, I offer a theory and a set of experiments that isolates the conditions under which: partisan motivations dominate preference formation; partisan and issue motivations offset each other; and when issue motivations trump partisan motivations and people are able to incorporate relevant policy information. The results will have broad implications for the role of parties, issues, and information in the contemporary political environment.

Introduction

That partisanship exerts a powerful influence on preference formation is well documented (Bartels 2002; Campbell et al. 1960; Goren 2002; Jerit and Barabas 2012). Because parties have reputations for favoring particular groups and policies in society, elite party cues can provide an efficient, and often times, reliable heuristic in making political choices (Downs 1957; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Popkin 1991). However, research suggests that the citizenry follow elite party cues at expense of substantive information—following party positions even when parties take “non-traditional” or “reversed” positions (Cohen 2003; Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Rahn 1993). Moreover, there is considerable evidence of *partisan motivated reasoning* through which people seek out information that buttresses partisan positions, counter-argue that which casts their party in an unfavorable light, and reinforce partisan leanings (Bolsen et al. 2014; Druckman et al. 2013; Gaines et al. 2007; Goren 2002; Lavine et al. 2012; Petersen et al. 2012; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010). Such partisan distortions in preference formation seemingly stand in contrast to normative ideals of open-mindedness and deliberative and even-handed evaluation of alternatives (Dewey 1916, 1927; Habermas 1998; Mill 1859). All of which prompts a question that is central to assessments of citizen competence; when if ever, do people make use of pertinent policy information in preference formation?

The preponderance of evidence suggests that elite party cues exert considerable influence and substantive policy information is influential in few circumstances (See Bullock 2011).² Yet, there exists a critical shortcoming in the research on the influence of partisanship in attitude formation: a failure to account for different, potentially competing, information processing motivations. Kunda (1990) emphasizes that people have directional motivations (to arrive at a particular conclusion) as well as accuracy motivations (a desire to “get it right”). Political science has largely focused on directional motivations³, and in particular, directional motivations rooted in partisan attachments (Druckman et al. 2013; Gaines et al. 2007; Goren 2002; Lavine et al. 2012; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010). However, directional motivations also come in the form of a drive to buttress prior issue attitudes (Lodge and Taber 2013; Taber and Lodge 2006). While both phenomena—*partisan* and *issue* motivations—have been studied extensively in isolation, almost no research addresses how they interact. That is, in reality, the process through which people respond to political information and form preferences is likely a function of both partisan attachments and prior issue attitudes; yet, these motivations may or may not pull people in the same direction.

Building a *theory of intersecting motivations*, I argue that partisan attachments and issue motivations can, at times, work in tandem; prompting heightened elite party position taking—that also likely reinforces one’s prior issue attitudes. More interestingly, I suggest that when these motivations are in competition, heightened issue motivations can not only eliminate the effects of elite party cues, but even prompt increased attention to substantive policy information that pulls in the opposite direction of one’s preferred party cue. Thus, the nature of the relationship between partisan and issue motivations can profoundly alter the relative influence of partisanship and policy information in preference formation.

I theorize that the relationship between partisan and issue motivations is a function of elite party positions and the salience of motivations. Further, I argue that the salience of individual-level motivations can be driven by one’s political context and information environment. In particular, this study examines the ability of *elite partisan polarization* to accentuate partisan motivations, and the role of self-interest and *personal issue importance* in catalyzing issue motivations. By systematically varying the elite party positions, the level of polarization, and the personal importance of an issue in nationally representative survey experiment, I am able to explore various conditions under which partisan and issue motivations interact. Consistent with previous research, the theory and results illuminate contexts in which partisanship is the dominant force in attitude formation. However, I reveal that when partisan and issue motivations are in competition and an issue is thought to be personally important, the influence of partisanship is not only eliminated, but people can make use of the substantive policy information and shift attitudes in the opposite direction of elite party cues.

² There are exceptions. Several studies have shown particular instances under which substantive information can rival the effects of party cues (Arceneaux 2008; Malhotra and Kuo 2008; Riggle et al. 1992; Bullock 2011).

³ See Druckman 2012 for a similar argument and exception.

In what follows, I first discuss the literature on partisan motivated reasoning and describe how elite polarization may heighten the influence of partisanship on preference formation. Next, I theorize about how the salience of issue motivations is accentuated by self-interest and personal issue importance. This is followed by a presentation of a theory of intersecting motivations (i.e. how partisan and issue motivations intersect) and specific hypotheses about how people form policy preferences in different contexts. Finally, I present the design of a survey experiment to test the theoretical predictions.

Partisan Motivated Reasoning and Elite Polarization

For decades, scholars have empirically tested and debated whether partisanship acts as a “perceptual screen” (Campbell et al. 1960) that colors how people perceive the political world around them (Bartels 2002; Gerber and Green 1998; Gerber and Huber 2009; Gerber et al. 2010; Goren 2002; Goren et al. 2009; Jerit and Barabas 2012). Elite party cues often provide a reliable and efficient decision-making heuristic (Downs 1957; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Popkin 1991), but there is evidence that these cues may come at the expense of pertinent information (Cohen 2003; Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Rahn 1993). In recent years, much research on the ‘perceptual screen’ incorporates a theory of partisan motivated reasoning (Bolsen et al. 2014; Druckman et al. 2013; Gaines et al. 2007; Goren 2002; Lavine et al. 2012; Leeper and Slothuus 2014; Petersen et al. 2012; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010); whereby, an attachment to a political party prompts individuals to seek out information that buttresses their preferred party’s positions (i.e., confirmation bias) and counter-argue information that challenges or casts their party and its positions in unfavorable light (i.e., disconfirmation bias). These partisan distortions in information processing influence policy preferences (Bolsen et al. 2014; Druckman et al. 2013); evaluations of political figures (Goren 2002; Lebo and Cassino 2007; Mullinix forthcoming); condition the effects of issue framing (Slothuus and de Vreese 2010); and shape interpretations of political events (Gaines et al. 2007).

Thus, there is considerable evidence of party cue taking and partisan motivated reasoning; suggesting that partisanship is a powerful force—that often overwhelms substantive policy and candidate information—in preference formation. Yet, its effects for preference formation are not entirely unbounded. Much attention is given to individual-level variables that moderate directional motivated reasoning, such as political sophistication (Taber and Lodge 2006), attitude strength (Taber et al. 2009), need for cognition and affect (Arceneaux and Wielen 2013), and partisan ambivalence (Lavine et al. 2012). However, there is a dearth of research on how different political contexts might condition the influence of partisan motivated reasoning on preference formation.⁴

⁴ See Bolsen et al. (2014) and Druckman et al. (2013) as exceptions.

How might political contexts shape partisan motivations? In what follows, I focus on one of the most salient contextual features in the contemporary American politics: elite partisan polarization. While the level of partisan polarization in the mass public is debated (Fiorina et al. 2005; Fiorina and Abrams 2008; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008), there is considerable evidence that partisan elites have polarized in recent years (McCarty et al. 2006; Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Theriault 2008). I argue that elite partisan polarization impacts the influence of partisanship in preference formation through at least two ways.⁵ First, when elites are divided along party lines (high inter-party heterogeneity and intra-party homogeneity), they provide stronger signals about the party's position on a given issue to the mass public (Levendusky 2010; Zaller 1992). Levendusky (2010) writes, "When elites are polarized, they send voters clearer signals about where they stand on the issues of the day" (114-115). Second, elite partisan polarization that emphasizes conflict between competing sides increases the salience of partisanship in the public (Dancey and Goren 2010; Druckman et al. 2013). Building on insights from Lavine et al. (2012) and the moderating effects of partisan ambivalence, Druckman et al. (2013) suggest that elite polarization, which heightens partisan identities, should in turn heighten partisan responses to information. Similarly, Dancey and Goren (2010) argue, "When partisan elites debate an issue and the news media cover it, partisan predispositions are activated in the minds of citizens" (686). I argue that by both providing clear party signals and increasing the salience of partisan identities in the mass public, elite partisan polarization accentuates the influence of partisanship in political preference formation. That is, when people are made aware of elite partisan divisions on an issue, the salience of partisan motivations will increase.

H1: Individuals who perceive higher levels of elite partisan polarization are more likely to engage in partisan motivated reasoning than people who perceive lower levels of polarization.

While the level of partisan motivated reasoning may be contingent upon elite polarization, partisan motivations are but one form of directional motivated reasoning; people are also driven to seek out information that buttresses prior issue attitudes and counter-argue information that challenges one's issue preferences (Lodge and Taber 2013), a point elaborated upon in the next section.

⁵ Elite partisan polarization may accentuate partisan motivated reasoning in other ways. If partisanship is conceptualized as a social identification (Green et al. 2002), polarization may heighten perceptions of threat; where the opposing party is more likely to be seen as a threat to the electoral/legislative goals of one's own party. When one's social identity experiences a real or perceived threat, he or she may experience greater in-group solidarity and heightened negative out-group prejudices and biases (See Huddy et al. 2005); thus elite partisan polarization may prompt greater partisan distortions in preference formation. Other work suggests that partisans will be selective in exerting the necessary cognitive effort to defend partisan beliefs; and will be more likely to do so when the opposing party is viewed as a competitive (Matthews 2013)

Issue Motivations and Issue Importance

Just as people seek out information that buttresses partisan predispositions, they also attempt to bolster prior issue attitudes—through a process of issue-based motivated reasoning (Kunda 1990; Lodge and Taber 2013; Lord et al. 1979; Taber and Lodge 2006). Through both unconscious and conscious processes, people filter information in a manner that reinforces existing attitudes (Lodge and Taber 2013). And while partisan motivations can be shaped by one’s political context, the salience of issue motivations may vary by the issue information environment.

Because it would be overly cumbersome for any individual to learn about and form strong attitudes on all policy issues, people tend to only focus their cognitive efforts on a handful of issues they deem personally important (Anand and Krosnick 2003; Converse 1964; Krosnick 1988a, 1989b, 1990).⁶ When individuals attach personal importance to an issue, they are said to be a member of that “issue public” (Iyengar et al. 2008). Issue public membership and perceived issue importance is driven by material self-interest, identification with reference groups, and abstract values (Anand and Krosnick 2003; Boninger et al. 1995; Krosnick et al. 1994).

Accounting for perceived issue importance is critical because it has consequences for how people seek out and process information. A large body of research analyzes the effects of issue public membership for information seeking (Bolsen and Leeper 2013; Iyengar et al. 2008; Kim 2009), and highlights the role of issue importance as a motivation (Kim 2007; See also Jerit 2007). Kim (2007) observes, “A thorough review of the literature in political science and social psychology suggests that personal issue importance is a primary motivation in political information consumption” (187). People who attach personal importance to an issue attitude tend to acquire knowledge about the attitude object (Holbrook et al. 2005). Lecheler et al. (2009) theorize that issue “importance is a crucial variable in the formation and change of attitudes, it causes individuals to engage in more active processing of information, to accumulate more relevant knowledge about an issue, and—finally—to act on their conviction” (404). Related to this point, Krosnick et al. (1994) suggest that when people consider an issue personally important, they will “expend the energy required by elaborative process (see, e.g., Petty and Cacioppo 1986)...the process of elaboration involves evaluating and relating new information to the information already stored in a person’s memory” (401-402). Petty and Wegener (1999) state that the personal relevance of an issue can prompt elaborative information processing and “relatively extensive and effortful information-processing activity, aimed at scrutinizing and uncovering the central merits of the issue” (42). Thus, when people perceive an issue as personally important, they are more likely to think about it (Krosnick 1990), seek out information about the topic (Kim 2007), and engage in more elaborative information processing (Krosnick et al. 1994).

⁶ This stands in contrast to Almond’s (1950) “attentive public” comprised of citizens informed about a wide-range of issues (See Anand and Krosnick 2003).

While issue importance may catalyze more motivated and effortful information processing, research on a closely related topic—attitude importance⁷—reveals that this information processing is not completely unbiased. Visser et al. (2006) note that “perceiving an attitude to be personally important leads people to protect it against attack and use it in processing information. . . . Thus, attitude importance seems to be primarily a motivator of attitude protection and attitude use” (12). That is, when an issue is thought to be important, people focus on the substantive information at hand, but they connect the information to issue preference and engage in “attitude protection.”⁸ Similarly, Visser et al. (2004) find evidence that issue importance motivates people to defend attitudes and neglect information that challenges prior attitudes. Because people who view an issue as personally important are motivated to engage in attitude protection and elaborative information processing, they are more likely to focus on the substantive information at hand and actively filter it in a manner consistent with prior attitudes and preferred issue positions—a process consistent with issue-based motivated reasoning.⁹

H2: Individuals who perceive an issue to be personally important are more likely to engage in higher levels of issue motivated reasoning than people view the issue as less important.

A Theory of Intersecting Motivations

Heretofore, I have presented literature that provides evidence of partisan and issue motivated reasoning in isolation and theorized about the conditions that moderate the salience of each motivation. Yet, in reality, these informational processing motivations do not function in isolation. Rather, a news story often discusses an issue (for which people may have some preference), and the issue is commonly presented in conjunction with partisan cues (i.e., where partisan elites stand on the topic). In these situations that permeate political news we might reasonably expect that both partisan and issue motivations are at work, yet, we know very little about the intersection of these motivations and how the relationship between them impacts preference formation.

In what follows, I theorize that partisan and issue motivations can work in tandem to pull people in the same direction, but at times, they can also compete; and the relationship between the two has important consequences for public opinion and the role of partisanship and policy information for opinion formation. In particular, I suggest that the relationship and its consequences for policy preferences are contingent upon elite party positions and the salience of each motivation.

⁷ Importance of issues and objects is extremely correlated with reports of importance about the attitude (Boninger et al. 1995; Visser et al. 2006).

⁸ Because issue importance motivates information selection, it may also increase the extremity of related attitudes, as both importance and extremity are related components underlying attitude strength (Kim 2007; Visser et al. 2006).

⁹ Consistent with this point, Visser et al. (2004) find that issue importance motivates people to seek information that allows them to use their issue attitudes in candidate evaluations.

When Motivations Work in Tandem

Partisan and issue motivations are directional in nature; that is, they pull people towards a particular conclusion (Kunda 1990; Lodge and Taber 2013). We could easily think about situations in which partisan and issue motivations work in tandem to move people in the same direction. When partisan elites take traditional party positions on an issue, they are likely taking an issue position consistent with the preferences of the average citizen in their party. Thus, when partisans receive traditional party cues, the elite cues are likely to reinforce most partisans' preferred position on that issue. For example, a Republican individual—who likely prefers income tax cuts—reads a news story about Republicans in Congress proposing legislation to reduce income taxes. In this situation, the party cue likely activates partisan motivated reasoning while the issue stimulates issue motivated reasoning; further, both processes are pulling the individual towards the same preference: supporting income tax cuts. In this way, we might say that the motivations are working in tandem.

At the most basic level, the simple exposure to a partisan cue is likely to trigger partisan motivations. Goren et al. (2009) write: “When someone hears a recognizable partisan source advocating some position, her partisan leanings are activated, which in turn lead her to evaluate the message through a partisan lens’ (806). Yet the salience of partisan and issue motivations may impact that degree to which people take their party’s position; which in this context of a traditional party cue, is likely also the preferred issue position of most partisans. As discussed above, elite partisan polarization may accentuate partisan motivations and issue importance may heighten issue motivated reasoning. If elites are polarized on the issue and partisan motivations are stimulated, we might expect people to be more likely to select their party’s position. Similarly, if people view an issue as important, they may engage in elaborative information processing and attitude protection, prompting higher levels of issue motivated reasoning; in this case, reinforcing their issue attitude and their party’s position.

Thus, when partisan and issue motivations move in the *same direction* (Ex. a partisan receives traditional elite party policy cues—i.e., the position taken by a partisan’s preferred party is likely the same as the partisan’s preferred position):

H3a: partisans will be more likely to adopt their preferred party’s position than when no party cues are present. [NOTE: This corresponds to H1a in Mullinix 2016]

H3b: partisans will be more likely to adopt their preferred party’s position when there are high levels of partisan and/or issue motivated reasoning than when there are low levels of partisan and/or issue motivated reasoning. [NOTE: This corresponds to H1b in Mullinix 2016]

When Motivations Compete

However, partisan and issue motivations may not always work in tandem. They may, at times, work in competition. Situations in which motivations pull people in opposite directions may reveal themselves in a number of ways. For example, that same Republican individual discussed above—who like many Republicans supports income tax cuts, might hear that Republicans in Congress are proposing to raise income taxes. In this context, the party cue is pulling the individual towards one position (increasing income taxes), but his or her issue preference is pulling in the opposite direction (decreasing income taxes). What happens in these situations? I theorize that when motivations are in competition, political preferences are contingent on the salience of each motivation.

Buttressing this argument, Carsey and Layman (2006) suggest that the relationship between issue positions and partisanship is moderated by issue importance. They find that when people are aware of how parties differ on an issue, but do not consider the issue personally important, people adjust their issue positions to conform to their party's positions. In contrast, when they are aware of party differences and the issue is considered important, they can update their party identification. Thus, we might then also expect that the relative influence of partisanship and issue positions on preference formation to be shaped by issue importance and the salience of issue motivations.

Although untested, Leeper and Slothuus (2014) discuss situations in which directional motivations might compete, and suggest that the outcome may depend on the prioritization of motivations. They write, "When deciding how to vote, a Democratic partisan strongly opposed to abortion must compromise their partisan identity or their abortion attitude when faced with a choice between two run-of-the-mill Democratic and Republican candidates. This voter might compromise their views in service to their identity...or compromise their identity in service to their views" (25). Further, they argue that "the operation of motivated reasoning will look differently for individuals depending on what issues are at stake and how intensely they need to defend their prior attitudes or identities (Leeper and Slothuus 2014, 28). Thus, when directional motivations pull people in opposite directions, we might expect the outcomes for preference formation to be contingent on motivation salience.

Building on this insight, we might then expect that when issue motivations are low, partisan motivations exert greater influence. Consider again the situation in which a Republican who likely prefers income tax cuts is informed of Republicans in Congress proposing increases to income taxes; but here, the individual does not think that the issue is important or that it will have a large impact on his or her life. In this context, we might expect partisan motivations to trump issue motivations, and the individual to follow the elite party cue—even though it is a reversed party cue and likely inconsistent with his or her preferred position. In many respects, this is consistent with the findings from research on the effects of reversed party cues (Cohen 2003; Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Rahn 1993). Again, we might expect the effects of partisanship

to be accentuated under high levels of elite polarization, which may stimulate partisan motivated reasoning.

When partisan and issue motivations pull in opposite directions (Ex. a partisan receives reversed party policy cues—i.e., the position taken by a partisan’s preferred party is likely not the same as the partisan’s preferred position) and *issue motivations are LOW*:

H4a: partisans will be more likely to engage in partisan motivated reasoning and adopt their preferred party’s position (the reversed party cue) than when no party cues are present.

[NOTE: Corresponds to H2a in Mullinix 2016]

H4b: partisans are more likely to follow the reversed party cue when partisan motivations are high than when they are low.

[NOTE: Corresponds to H2b in Mullinix 2016]

However, we have very different predictions if issue motivations are high and an issue is thought to be personally important. Now let us think about how a Republican who prefers income tax cuts—and considers this issue to be personally important—responds to information about Republicans in Congress proposing income tax hikes. If the issue is thought to be important, we might expect the individual to engage in effortful and elaborative information processing (Krosnick et al. 1994), and then connect the substantive policy information to their prior issue positions—to engage in “attitude protection” (Visser et al. 2006). If issue motivations are high and partisan motivations are low, we might expect issue motivations to exert great influence on preference formation; whereby the partisan cues are abandoned and people select what is actually their preferred position (the Republican does not follow the party cue, and instead prefers income tax cuts).

But, what happens when issue and partisan motivations are in competition and both are made salient? Here, I suggest that the motivations offset each other, leading people to form preferences similar to those in which partisan motivations are not activated (no party cues) and issue motivations are not stimulated (i.e., baseline policy preferences). High party motivations pull the Republican towards increasing income taxes and high issue importance pulls the individual towards income tax cuts, and in turn, each motivation cancels the effects of the other.

Thus, if partisan and issue motivations pull in *opposite directions* (Ex. a partisan receives reversed party policy cues—i.e., the position taken by a partisan’s preferred party is likely not the same as the partisan’s preferred position) and *issue motivations are HIGH*:

H4c: and *partisan motivations are low*, people will be more likely to engage in issue motivated reasoning and select what is their preferred party’s position in reality (take the opposing party’s position in the context of the stimuli) than when no party cues are present and issue importance is low.

[NOTE: Corresponds to H2c in Mullinix 2016]

H4d: and *partisan motivations are high*, issue and partisan motivated reasoning will offset each other. Position taking will be no different than a control in which no party cues are given and issue importance is low.

[NOTE: Corresponds to H2d in Mullinix 2016]

In the next section, I unite each of these hypotheses to specify precisely how people will respond to political information in different contexts.

Design

Conditions and Hypotheses

To test these hypotheses, I designed experiments that varied: the salience of partisan motivations, the salience of issue motivations, and whether or not they pulled people in the same or opposing direction. The level of elite partisan polarization on an issue was manipulated (low or high) to influence the degree of partisan motivated reasoning, and the personal importance of the issue was varied (low or high) to impact the salience of issue motivations. Finally, the nature of the relationship between partisan and issue motivations (working in tandem or working competition) was manipulated by presenting people with either traditional or reversed party cues. In receiving a traditional party cue, partisans are likely receiving a party position consistent with their preferred position on the issue. In receiving a reversed party cue, partisans are likely receiving a party cue that is out-of-step with their traditional party positions.¹⁰ Varying each of these elements presents a 2 (high v. low polarization) X 2 (high v. low issue importance) X 2 (traditional v. reversed party cues), 8 condition design. Yet, we may also be concerned about people's preferences in the absence of party cues. For this reason, an additional two groups were included as a point of comparison: a condition with low polarization, low importance, and no party cues, and a second condition with no polarization cues, no importance cues, and no party cues. These two additional groups allow for a couple direct tests of party cue effects relative to particular conditions in the full design, as well as a sense of baseline attitudes in the absence of party cues.

Experimental Conditions

Condition 1 (Control 1): Low Polarization, Low Issue Importance, No Party Endorsement

Condition 2 (Control 2): No Polarization Cue, No Issue Importance Cue, No Party Endorsement

¹⁰ I recognize that this approach is not without limitations. It assumes that the traditional party cue is consistent with many partisans preferred positions. While it is possible that a number of partisans' prior attitudes on a given issue is not that same as their preferred party's traditional position, we would expect that it is on average.

	Low Polarization		High Polarization	
	Low Issue Importance	High Issue Importance	Low Issue Importance	High Issue Importance
Traditional Party Endorsement	<i>Condition 3</i>	<i>Condition 4</i>	<i>Condition 5</i>	<i>Condition 6</i>
Reversed Party Endorsement	<i>Condition 7</i>	<i>Condition 8</i>	<i>Condition 9</i>	<i>Condition 10</i>

Sample and Stimuli

To test whether people respond to political information in the hypothesized manner, I plan to implement two survey experiments with a general population sample with Research Now and their online panel. The experimental stimuli, randomized by condition, are in the form of news articles (the news source is not revealed). Each individual in the sample receives a total two articles and answers a series of questions after each article. That is, people are randomized to 1 of 10 experimental conditions and receive an article (that matches their condition), answers questions about the issue and article, receives a second article (that matches their condition), and again answers a series of questions. Consistent with similar experimental work, the condition number will be held constant between the two articles (See Bolsen et al. 2014; Druckman et al. 2013).

The news articles focus on two issues: a Republican proposal to simultaneously cut income taxes and increase sales taxes, and the Republican proposed “Student Success Act” to increase local control (and reduce the federal government’s role) in education policy. Both issue articles were based on real Republican policy proposals discussed in actual *New York Times* articles. While neither issue is extremely partisan in nature, pre-tests revealed that people were largely able to correctly identify where Republicans and Democrats stood on the sales tax issue.¹¹ Further, typical partisan arguments are used for each issue. Proponents of decreasing

¹¹ When people were asked “Which political party do you think is most likely to support INCREASING reliance on state sales taxes (relative to income taxes)?” they were over 11 percentage points more likely to select Republican than Democrat. When asked “If you learned that Republicans supported DECREASING reliance on state sales taxes (relative to income taxes), would you think...” 40.70% selected “this is inconsistent with other Republican policy

income taxes and increasing sales taxes (Republicans in reality) argued that the measure would “attract professionals with high incomes” while opponents (Democrats) suggested that the benefits are “not uniform because cuts to the income tax will benefit some more than others.” Proponents of the Student Success Act (Republicans) stated “it shifts authority away from the federal government by leaving decisions...to states and local districts,” while opponents (Democrats) “worry that localizing education standards and reducing the role of government will provide some students with an inferior education.” Thus, the issues are based on real partisan proposals and arguments and pre-tests highlight the ability of people to identify party positions—yet, I recognize that these are not extremely salient partisan issues.

Three features of the article have to be manipulated. The first is whether or not people received traditional or reversed party cues. This involved a simple switch of which party proposed and which party opposed the legislation. The second feature to be manipulated is the level of elite partisan polarization on each issue. Individuals in high polarization conditions are told that “virtually all Republicans/Democrats support” and “virtually all Democrats/Republicans oppose” the legislation and that it is an “incredibly competitive partisan atmosphere” that is “highly polarized.” Individuals in the low polarization conditions are still told which party proposed the legislation but are then informed that “support is mixed within parties” and that the issue “has not been intensely competitive or highly polarized.”¹² Similar, but slightly altered language was used for discussions of partisan divisions in the second issue. These manipulations are consistent with other approaches to inducing perceptions of elite polarization that attempt to vary the clarity of the party signal and accentuate the salience of partisan identifications (Bolsen et al. 2014; Druckman et al. 2013). Pre-tests for both issues revealed that the high polarization cue significantly increases perceptions of elite partisan divisions on each issue ($p < 0.001$) and the low polarization significantly reduces perceptions of elite divisions ($p < 0.001$) relative to a control that received no polarization cue.

The third dimension that needed to be varied surrounds the personal importance of each issue. While personal issue importance varies by individual by issue, only making use of natural variation hinders experimenter control and can potentially impede solid causal inference. Instead, I directly attempt to manipulate the personal importance of the issues. As noted above, one of the key influences of issue importance is self-interest and whether people think an issue will directly impact their lives (Anand and Krosnick 2003; Boninger et al. 1995; Krosnick et al. 1994). Self-interest develops when people “expect [an object or issue] to have significant consequences for their own lives” (Apsler and Sears 1968, p. 162), and when an individual thinks that an issue will have a clear and direct impact on his or her rights, privileges, or lifestyle (Bolsen and Leeper 2013; Krosnick 1990). Thus, I attempt to convince people that how the issue is handled will have

positions” while only 23.36% thought that it was consistent (remainder reported “don’t know”). Unfortunately, I did not run similar pre-tests for the Republican proposed “Student Success Act” issue.

¹² In this way, both inter-party heterogeneity and intra-party homogeneity—key elements of elite polarization are made evident (See Levendusky 2009).

(or not have) direct effects on their daily lives. To do so, I created two artificial expert sources (one for each article, Ex. Douglas Stevenson, a Harvard economist) that were pre-tested and found to be neutral and highly credible. For high importance conditions in the sales and income tax issue, the source informed people that “how this issue is handled will have direct consequences for the daily lives of nearly all Americans...this will have an impact virtually every time citizens get a paycheck and every time they make a purchase.” In contrast, the low importance condition was told “how this issue is handled will not really have consequences for most Americans.” Similar, but distinct language was used for the second issue and attributed to a different source. Pre-tests revealed that the high importance cue significantly increased perceptions of personal issue importance ($p < 0.05$) and the low importance cue significantly reduced personal issue importance ($p < 0.001$) relative to a Control that received no importance cue for both issues. Similar effects are found in the study’s main sample, and are discussed later.

Measures

After reading the randomly assigned article, participants answer a series of questions. There are two primary dependent variable questions, each of which was asked immediately after the participant read the news article. For the sales and income tax proposal participants were asked, “Given this information, to what extent do you support increasing sales taxes relative to income taxes (increasing sales taxes and decreasing income taxes)?” For the Student Success Act article participants were asked, “Given this information, to what extent do you support the proposed “Student Success Act?” For each issue, they respond from 0 (Strongly oppose) to 10 (Strongly support). One might recognize that the tax question may be considered “double-barreled.” However, this wording was deliberately selected because it was a single policy proposal that was comprised of both elements (simultaneously cutting income taxes while increasing sales taxes), and I chose to have the question mirror how the policy was proposed in the actual article and stimuli.

I also assess personal issue importance post-stimuli consistent with the standard measures (Boninger et al. 1995; Kim 2007; Kim 2009; Krosnick 1988a, 1988b; 1990; Krosnick et al. 1994) whereby people are asked “How important to you personally is your opinion towards...” (1=Not too important, 7=extremely important). In an effort to determine if people are engaged in motivated reasoning and if there was evidence of a disconfirmation bias and counter arguing (Taber et al. 2009), participants rated the effectiveness of arguments. Participants were asked “How effective or ineffective did you find the main argument in favor of... (and the argument opposed to...)” from (1 very ineffective) to 7 (very effective). Finally, to assess the effects of stimuli on the salience of party identification, participants were asked, “How important to you is your party identification?” (1=Not important at all, 7=very important).

Notes on predictions:

This study has two control groups, but does not predict differences between them on primary (policy support) dependent variables. Control 1 receives low polarization cue, low importance cue, BUT NO party cues. Control 2 is a more pure control that receive no polarization cue, no importance cue, and no party cues. BOTH groups remove partisan endorsements—so we get people’s baseline issue opinions uncontaminated by partisan cues.

While Control 2 is a pure control in the traditional since, if only it was used in the current design, direct tests of causal inferences could be problematic because each experimental group would differ from Control 2 in at least 3 ways (polarization, importance, and party cues)—and we could not attribute effects to a single dimension. Control 1 will allow for cleaner and more direct tests of the dimensions of interest. Thus, I include both control groups.

As noted above, I do not predict significant differences between the two control groups with respect to the primary policy support dependent variables. Neither group receives party cues, so neither group should be pulled in a particular partisan direction. I do predict that the Control 1 will lead to lower reported levels of issue importance due to the manipulation of “low importance” and “low polarization.”

For primary dependent variables –policy support variables--I predict NO DIFFERENCES between these controls. I do not expect low polarization and low importance to influence party opinions in the absence of party cues. Without party cues, there is not much to pull partisans in one direction or another.

For issue importance variable: I DO PREDICT DIFFERENCES between the Control groups. Control 1 (with low polarization and low importance) should lead to lower levels of importance than Control .

For primary dependent variables: When treatment groups move away from the Control groups (both of them) in the direction of their preferred party’s position—this will signal *partisan motivated reasoning* (i.e., people following party cues). A move away from the Control groups in the opposite direction of one’s preferred party’s position will reflect *issue motivated reasoning*. The latter prediction is grounded in the idea the high issue importance manipulation will increase the strength of the attitude and it is well-documented that extremity in opinions is a measure of

strength (See Visser et al. 2006). However, we only really expect issue MR (a move away from Controls in opposite direction of preferred party cue) to occur when the party takes a non-traditional stance and there is high issue relevance (Group 8).

As will be discussed in the predictions outlined below, even though I do not expect that “low polarization” and “low importance” to prompt differences between the Control groups (when party cues are absent)—I do expect these variables to serve an important function when party cues are present.

Primary Dependent Variable:

Tax Issue: “Given this information, to what extent do you support increasing sales taxes relative to income taxes (increasing sales taxes and decreasing income taxes)?”

Student Success Act: “Given this information, to what extent do you support the proposed “Student Success Act?”

For each issue, they responded from 0 (Strongly oppose) to 10 (Strongly support).

Both policies are actually Republican proposals, but the source of the proposal is manipulated in the experiment.

Dependent Variables and Predictions






In the first table, I order the experimental groups from when they will be LEAST supportive of their party's policy position (as communicated to them in the stimuli) to when they will be MOST supportive of their party's position (as communicated to them in the stimuli)


Partisan Support	Issue Importance
Group 8 (<i>Partisan MR and Issue MR compete, Issue MR wins</i>) ↓ Controls 1,2	Control 1 Group 3 Group 7 (Low importance)
Group 10 (<i>Issue and partisan MR compete and offset, no different than control</i>) ↓ Group 3 (<i>Some partisan MR</i>)	↓ Control 2 ↓
Group 7 (<i>Partisan MR and Issue MR compete, Some partisan MR</i>) ↓ Group 4 (<i>Partisan MR + Issue MR pulling in same direction</i>)	Group 5 Group 9 (Moderate importance)
↓ Group 9 (<i>Partisan MR</i>) Group 5 (<i>Partisan MR</i>) ↓	↓ Group 4 Group 8 ↓
↓ Group 6 (<i>High partisan MR and High issue MR pulling in same direction</i>)	Group 6 Group 10 (Highest importance)

Note: for variable Partisan Support, the results will be broken down in analysis by respondent party.

[In an earlier iteration, I presented predictions in the following table.]

Hypothesized Order of Support for the Traditionally Republican Proposals

Condition Description	Prediction
Traditional party cues, high polarization, high importance (TC, HP, HI) Same Direction: High Partisan and High Issue MR	Republicans Very Supportive Democrats Very Opposed 
Traditional party cues, high polarization, low importance (TC, HP, LI) Same Direction: High Partisan and Low Issue MR	
Traditional party cues, low polarization, high importance (TC, LP, HI) Same Direction: Low Partisan and High Issue MR	
Traditional party cues, low polarization, low importance (TC, LP, LI) Same Direction: Low Partisan and Low Issue MR	
Reversed party cues, low polarization, high importance (RC, LP, HI) Competing Motivations: Low Partisan and High Issue MR	

<p>NO party cues, low polarization, low importance (NP, LP, LI) Control 1</p>	<p>No different than Control 2 and (RC,HP,HI)</p>
<p>NO party cues, no polarization cue, no importance cue (Control 2) (NP, NP, NI) Control 2</p>	
<p>Reversed party cues, high polarization, high importance (RC, HP, HI) Competing and Offsetting Motivations</p>	
<p>Reversed party cues, low polarization, low importance (RC, LP, LI) Competing Motivations: Low Partisan MR</p>	
<p>Reversed party cues, high polarization, low importance (RC, HP, LI) Competing Motivations: High Partisan MR</p>	<p>Republicans Very Opposed Democrats Very Supportive</p>

Tax Issue

Stimuli by Experimental Condition

[Low polarization, low importance, no party endorsements]

[Insert page break]

We want to give you an opportunity to read through some text from an article about sales taxes.

[Insert page break]

Several state legislatures are currently discussing tax reform proposals to increase reliance on the sales tax relative to the income tax. That is, while income taxes (money paid to the government based on individual earnings) would decrease, sales taxes (money paid to the government based on sales of goods and services) would increase.

Douglas Stevenson, a Harvard economist, said “how this issue is handled will not really have consequences for most Americans. The issue is only being discussed in a few states, and it is unlikely to trigger change in tax policy in these states or the country overall. Even in states that pass the law, those citizens will not be noticeably affected. In sum, whether states get their tax revenue on the front end (income taxes) or the tail end (sales taxes) does not affect the total amount taxed for most Americans, regardless of their partisan leaning.”

Support is mixed within parties as members from both parties in these states (in about equal numbers) advocate for increasing the sales tax relative to income taxes. They argue that the measure will attract professionals with high incomes to the state and is a necessary and innovative tax reform that will improve the economy.

In contrast, people who oppose the bill argue that increasing the sales tax will only restrain consumer spending and stifle their state’s economy. They suggest that the effects of the proposal are not uniform because cuts to the income tax will benefit some more than others.

As mentioned, members from both parties, in nearly equal numbers, can be found on both sides of the issue. Thus, the issue has not been intensely competitive or highly polarized.

[No polarization cue, no importance cue, no party endorsement]

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This is a highly partisan issue with roughly equal numbers of partisans in these state legislatures, and they take completely distinct positions, as mentioned, which makes the competition intense. This has created an incredibly competitive partisan political atmosphere with an outcome that is difficult to predict – it is highly polarized.

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Tax Issue Dependent Variables

Given this information, to what extent do you support increasing sales taxes relative to income taxes (increasing sales taxes and decreasing income taxes)?

[Scale 0-10]

0 (Strongly oppose), 5 (Neither oppose nor support), 10 (Strongly support)

How important to you personally is your opinion towards increasing sales taxes relative to income taxes?

[Scale 1-7]

1(Not too important), 4 (Moderately important), 7 (Extremely important)

How effective or ineffective did you find the main argument in favor of increasing sales taxes relative to income taxes?

[Scale 1-7]

1(Very ineffective), 2(Ineffective), 3(Somewhat ineffective), 4 (Neither effective nor ineffective), 5(Somewhat effective), 6(Effective), 7 (Very effective)

How effective or ineffective did you find the main argument opposed to increasing sales taxes relative to income taxes?

[Scale 1-7]

1(Very ineffective), 2(Ineffective), 3(Somewhat ineffective), 4 (Neither effective nor ineffective), 5(Somewhat effective), 6(Effective), 7 (Very effective)

“Student Success Act” Issue

Stimuli by Experimental Condition

[Low polarization, low importance, no party endorsements]

Next, we want to give you an opportunity to read through some text from an article about proposed changes to education policy.

[Insert page break]

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires annual reading and mathematical tests, and that all students become proficient in reading and math. Schools that fail to make progress could be shut down. Everyone agrees that NCLB needs revising, but they don't agree on how to do it. With support coming from a near exact mix of partisans, some Members of Congress proposed the “Student Success Act.”

Kenneth Dodge, a professor of public policy at Duke University, emphasized that how this legislation is handled is of almost no importance to the American public. “Ultimately, whatever happens will not impact anyone's property taxes, the quality of schools and teachers, whether schools will close down, or the jobs of Americans.” He said that the impact of the Student Success Act has been overstated and its changes will not influence the lives of Americans of any partisan leaning.

The proposed Student Success Act still requires annual testing, but it shifts authority away from the federal government by leaving the decisions on how to use the scores up to states and local districts. It does not require targets for student achievement or specify consequences for schools that fail. Proponents suggest that this program has flexibility, “Rural schools have different needs than urban schools. One program does not fit all.”

Other Members of Congress, who are struggling to form a united front in their opposition to the bill, worry that localizing education standards and reducing the role of government will provide some students with an inferior education, “There are huge discrepancies in performance across states.” Other opponents have railed against testing and its impact on classroom teaching and

thus want distinct reforms such as better teacher training and mentorship programs for struggling teachers.

Because so many of Members of Congress are crossing party lines and partisans can be found on both sides of the issue, the debates have not been fiercely competitive nor polarized.

[No polarization cue, no importance cue, no party endorsement]

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[Low polarization, low importance, traditional party endorsements]

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Student Success Act Dependent Variables

Given this information, to what extent do you support the proposed “Student Success Act”?

[Scale 0-10]

0 (Strongly oppose), 5 (Neither oppose nor support), 10 (Strongly support)

How important to you personally is your opinion towards the Student Success Act?

[Scale 1-7]

1(Not too important), 4 (Moderately important), 7 (Extremely important)

How effective or ineffective did you find the main argument in favor of the Student Success Act?

[Scale 1-7]

1(Very ineffective), 2(Ineffective), 3(Somewhat ineffective), 4 (Neither effective nor ineffective), 5(Somewhat effective), 6(Effective), 7 (Very effective)

How effective or ineffective did you find the main argument opposed to the Student Success Act?

[Scale 1-7]

1(Very ineffective), 2(Ineffective), 3(Somewhat ineffective), 4 (Neither effective nor ineffective), 5(Somewhat effective), 6(Effective), 7 (Very effective)

Other measures

How important to you is your party identification? [Scale 1-7]

1(Not important at all), 4(Not sure), 7(Very important)

To see how failure to follow these steps can be detrimental, consider the following examples:

- One of us (Druckman) conducted a study on how source credibility (e.g., is the source trusted and knowledgeable?) conditions framing effects (see Druckman 2001). For example, in the first of two experiments he presented respondents with frames concerning an increase or decrease in spending on assistance to the poor, emphasizing either humanitarian concerns (i.e., a frame meant to increase support for spending) or government expenditures (i.e., a frame meant to decrease support for funding). He further varied whether the statement was attributed to Colin Powell (a credible source) or Jerry Springer (a non-credible source) and found a significant difference in policy opinion (as well as importance attached to the poor's well-being and self-reliance) between the two framing conditions *only* when Powell was the source. However, his review of the literature missed some key pieces and, as a result, he neglected to measure key moderators such as knowledge (Miller and Krosnick 2000) and prior values (Sniderman and Theriault 2004), as well as possible mediators such as belief accessibility (see Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson 1997 for discussion).
- In another study, Druckman compared the effects of watching versus only listening to the famous first Kennedy-Nixon debate, in order to test the conventional wisdom that viewing the debate on television engendered less favorable evaluations of Nixon (see Druckman 2003). Prior to publication, the first iteration of this study measured perceived candidate characteristics (leadership effectiveness, integrity, and empathy) and closeness to participants' issue positions; however, it failed to measure arguably the most important outcome: overall perceptions of which candidate won the debate. As a result, the entire experiment had to be re-run. Had a clear data analysis plan been written before implementing the study, this may have been avoided.
- In a paper on equivalency framing, Druckman examined the effects of gains versus loss frames in the context of the famous disease problem (see Druckman 2004), as well as those frames' interactions with party endorsements, on policy preference. For example, some received a frame emphasizing how many lives would be saved (gains frame) with a given program while others learned of an identical program but framed in terms of lives lost (losses frame). Druckman explored whether adding party endorsements to the programs would affect the power of the gains versus losses frame. However, missing from the experimental conditions was a control group that mentioned both gains and losses (i.e., did not frame the policy with an emphasis on either)—an oversight that was later criticized. Again, with a clear analysis plan in place ahead of time, the need for these additional conditions would have been more apparent.
- In another experiment, related to the one just described, Druckman collected data from different discussion sections from a single course, debriefing students immediately after they participated. It became apparent (via communications with various participants) that students in different discussion sections communicated with one another about the purpose of the study, thereby making the data invalid since many participants knew the

purpose of the study going in. Had Druckman fleshed out the data collection plan, this may have been avoided.

- In an experiment implemented before studying at Northwestern University, Mullinix tested a hypothesis that exposure to a real military advertisement would increase patriotism. Counter to the hypothesis, the experiment produced a backlash effect where exposure to the military commercial reduced multiple measures of patriotism and national identity. Mullinix did not include measures of potential mediating and moderating variables—such as personality traits, whether the respondent or their close family served in the military, or measures of foreign policy attitudes—that would have helped explain why the effect occurred and who the advertisement was most likely to impact in a particular way. A more thorough investigation of existing literature and a planning document likely would have altered his hypothesis, or at the very least, would have led to the inclusion of additional measures that would help him empirically test and understand the findings.

References (not cited in main text)

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