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ISSUE VOTING
An Empirical Examination of Individually
Necessary and Jointly Sufficient Conditions

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This paper argues that six conditions must be met to conclude that issue voting exists: (1) candidates must take different positions on the issues of the day; (2) the campaign issues must be salient to the voter; (3) voters must have a position on the issue; (4) voters must accurately perceive candidate positions; (5) issue-based candidate evaluations must be consistent with vote intention; and (6) vote intention must be based on a previously established issue evaluation not vice versa. This study estimates the number of voters who were able to meet these conditions for issue voting during the 1972 presidential election campaign.

Among the numerous questions about voting behavior addressed by the students of mass political behavior is the question of issue voting.¹ Issue voting concerns political analysts because it ties the ritual of voting to broader theories of democratic control and representation. At a minimum, proponents of issue voting argue, a system in which the mass population votes on the basis of issues is more democratic than a system where policy issues play no role. Issue voting increases the potential for the reflection of the public will in policy by both making that will clear to decision makers and making responsiveness by decision makers more difficult to avoid.

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Resolving the question of the extent of issue voting in the American electorate has been handicapped by the quality of the data available. Brody and Page (1972) specify that at the very least data are required that measure the voters' position on an issue, the voters' perception of the candidates' positions on the issue, and the salience of the issue to the individual voter. In addition to these three measures, Brody and Page argue, panel data is necessary to resolve questions concerning the extent of issue voting since the simple correlation between issue preferences and vote choice could result either from issue voting or from respondents' rationalizing their issue positions in terms of a previously decided vote choice.

Using data with all the characteristics that Brody and Page demand, this study will provide evidence for a general model of issue voting. First, the conditions which are individually necessary and jointly sufficient will be discussed and grouped into environmental conditions, relevance conditions, perceptual conditions, and behavioral conditions. Second, data from the 1972 general election campaign will be used to determine the extent to which each of these conditions is met by the electorate. Finally, the paper will examine the joint existence of all these conditions in the electorate and the implications of these findings for future studies of voting behavior.

CONDITIONS FOR ISSUE VOTING

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Environmental conditions are those conditions necessary before a voter can cast an issue ballot that are totally outside the immediate control of the voter.² Before issue voting can occur, *candidates must take different positions on the issues of the day*. This environmental condition has three elements. First, it requires that elections have issue content. Clearly, some elections such as the 1952 and 1956 presidential elections (Pomper, 1972) and some state and local races lack this issue

content, thus preventing any issue-based choice. Second, candidates must take a stand on these issues. If candidates refuse to take stands on issues, vacillate in their stands, or present ambiguous positions,³ then voters have no clear guidelines about how a candidate would act if elected. Third, candidates must take positions that are different though not necessarily opposite.⁴ If candidates take identical positions, then voters cannot rationally choose between candidates on the basis of issues.

The next two conditions for issue voting may be termed "relevance" conditions because they indicate whether or not the environmental conditions are relevant to the individual voter. Before we can expect a voter to cast an issue-based vote, he must be aware that the actions of the candidates bear on policies of personal importance. This implies that the voter cares about some of the issues in the campaign and has a real attitude on those issues used to evaluate the candidates.

SALIENT ISSUES

Election issues have no meaning to the electorate if the issues are not salient to a number of voters. If the candidates present issues of marginal interest to the voters, only the irrational voter (or the voter with a surplus of time and energy) would spend the time necessary to learn candidate positions and cast a policy vote. The issues in the campaign, therefore, must be salient to the voters.

THE EXISTENCE OF ATTITUDES

If the campaign presents issues and the issues are salient to the voter, then the next step in the process of issue voting is for the voter to evaluate candidate positions in terms of his own policy preferences. This implies that the voter has policy preferences. Since many scholars have argued that mass publics do not hold real attitudes on policy issues (see Converse, 1964; Hennessy, 1970), the existence of political attitudes must be established empirically. If respondent attitudes vary greatly from

week to week in an election campaign, then the actual existence of the attitudes must be questioned; and the relevance of the issue for voting purposes is greatly diminished.

ACCURATE PERCEPTIONS

Perceptual conditions are those conditions which translate the actions of elite political actors into terms meaningful to the voter. Similar to relevance conditions, perceptual conditions have as a prerequisite the initial environmental conditions; that is, environmental conditions are necessary for the perceptual conditions but are not sufficient. For a voter to cast an issue vote he must accurately perceive the political world, especially the candidates' issue positions.

Although a voter could believe he was voting on the basis of issues without correct information on candidate positions, the act could not properly be termed "issue voting" since the vote would not have the intended effect of promoting a particular policy position. Previous studies of issue voting have directed a great deal of attention to the question of perceptual accuracy (Campbell et al., 1960). By determining the perceptions of the voters to be inaccurate, the analysts assumed that the hypothesis of issue voting could also be rejected. Since accurate perceptions are a necessary condition for issue voting, this deduction is valid. The analysis should not stop there, however, since perceptions may be inaccurate either because the voters lack the necessary cognitive capacities (as is usually argued) or because one or more of the other necessary conditions (absence of issues, ambiguous positions, and so on) may be lacking. An additional benefit of accurate perceptions, if other conditions hold, is that voters will perceive differences between the candidates on the issues, thus permitting a choice between candidates.

The behavioral conditions of issue voting tie the cognitive and electoral process to the actual voting act. To verify the existence of issue voting, the researcher must find some correlation between issues and votes and find that issues determine votes rather than vice versa.

ISSUE VOTE COVARIATION

The most frequently recognized condition for issue voting is that the voter's issue preferences be correlated with his vote. For a ballot to be considered an issue vote, the voter must support the candidate nearest him on the issues salient to the voter. This covariation has been established by several other scholars of voting behavior (Pomper, 1972; Boyd, 1972; Miller et al., 1976; Kirkpatrick et al., 1975).

THE DIRECTION OF CAUSALITY

Even if all five previously noted conditions existed simultaneously, they would not be sufficient for issue voting. The congruence of issue preferences and vote preferences may exist for reasons other than actual issue voting. The voter may, for example, decide how to vote on the basis of any number of criteria and then align his issue positions to coincide with his previously established vote. Such issue position rationalization might meet the five other conditions but could not be termed issue voting. For issue voting to occur the respondent must *first* have established issue preferences and *then* decide how to vote on the basis of those preferences. The direction of causality, therefore, between issue preferences and vote preferences is important.

DATA AND METHODS

Assessing policy voting requires that several variables central to a rational evaluation of policy options be measured (Brody and Page, 1972). An adequate study must measure the voter's perception of candidate positions, the voter's position on the issue, the salience of the issues to the voter, and the voter's vote intention. This research will operationalize the above measures within the bounds of a *single attitude theory*, that of Fishbein (1967; also Fishbein and Coombs, 1974). The data also must be

collected in a panel survey format similar to the designs of *People's Choice* and *Voting* so that the direction of causality between issues and vote choice can be determined.

RESPONDENTS' EVALUATION OF THE ISSUES

The position respondents take on political issues will be defined as their attitude toward that issue (attitude is defined as affect for or against a psychological object).⁵ Operationally, according to Fishbein, attitudes can be measured on seven-point scales with the attitude object as the stimulus and with bipolar adjectives with evaluative connotations as the poles of the seven-point scale (Osgood et al., 1957). More simply, respondents will be asked to evaluate an issue position (e.g., reducing military spending) on seven-point good/bad scales. Respondents' attitudes were measured on military spending, amnesty, McGovern's \$20,000 tax proposal, government spending, law and order, welfare recipients working, busing, political corruption, government guaranteed jobs, Vietnam withdrawal, and honoring foreign commitments.

PERCEIVED CANDIDATE POSITIONS

The respondents' perceptions of candidate positions will be measured as the respondents' beliefs about the candidate. Using the normal Fishbein definition, a belief is the perceived probability that two psychological objects are related in a certain way. If the two objects are a political issue and a candidate for a political office, a person's belief would be his feeling that some relationship existed between a candidate and that issue; a belief would be the respondent's perception of the candidate's issue stand. Operationally, the respondent's beliefs can be measured and scaled on seven-point scales with likely/unlikely poles using a stimulus that links a candidate and an issue position (e.g., Richard Nixon favors spending less money on the military). Two beliefs were measured for each issue, one for each candidate.

VOTE INTENTION

A behavioral intention is the probability that a person will take some action, either favorable or unfavorable, toward an object. If the object were a political candidate, a person's behavioral intention would be his inclination to support that candidate. A behavioral intention toward a candidate, therefore, corresponds with a voter's vote intention. Two seven-point scales assessing the probability of voting for Richard Nixon or George McGovern were used to measure behavioral intention.

Fishbein's attitude theory not only precisely defines some previously ambiguous terms but also specifies exactly how attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral intentions are interrelated. Fishbein's theory holds that a person's behavioral intention toward some object will be consistent with the person's beliefs about that object and other objects, and the person's attitudes toward those other objects related to the initial object, all other relationships being equal. Fishbein's (1967) research has confirmed that attitudes and beliefs are strongly related to behavioral intentions and that the association is strongest when the product of an individual's attitudes and beliefs are summed.

$$I = \sum_i^N a_i b_i$$

where

I = an individual's behavioral intention toward an object

b_i = the strength of belief "i" about the object, i.e., the probability or improbability the object is related to some other object "a"

a_i = the evaluative aspect of the belief, i.e., the attitude toward the related object

N = the number of beliefs held about the object by the individual.

Applying the Fishbein formula to voting behavior, the summation of the product of a voter's issue positions and his perceptions

of candidate positions becomes the voter's issue-based candidate evaluation. A strong association between issue positions and vote intention requires that a voter's vote intention be positively related to his issue positions and perceptions of candidate positions. In other words, the probability of voting for a candidate is a function of whether or not that candidate's issue positions coincide with those of the voter. The advantages of the Fishbein theory are obvious. First, if the respondent takes no position on an issue, that issue does not contribute to his issue preference score. Second, intensely held positions contribute more than weakly held positions to the issue preference score. Third, each voter defines his own information about candidates' issue stands; no assumption is made that the voters possess perfect information. If a voter is unaware of the candidates' stands on an issue, that issue does not contribute to his issue preference score.

Since an election forces a choice between two candidates and, therefore, two sets of evaluations, the formula developed by Fishbein must be adapted to a two-candidate situation. This can be done simply by subtracting the evaluation of one candidate from the other (designated "vote intention") and the subtraction of the issue preferences of one candidate from the other (designated "issue-based candidate preference").

SALIENCE

The Fishbein theory has no analogue to salience, assuming for the most part that salience is reflected in a respondent's attitude.⁶ Since the concept of issue salience is important to the study of issue voting, a separate measure of salience is necessary. Salience is the importance a voter attaches to a policy issue. Operationally, we measured salience by having respondents evaluate the importance of an issue to themselves on seven-point scales.

THE CAUSAL PRIORITIES

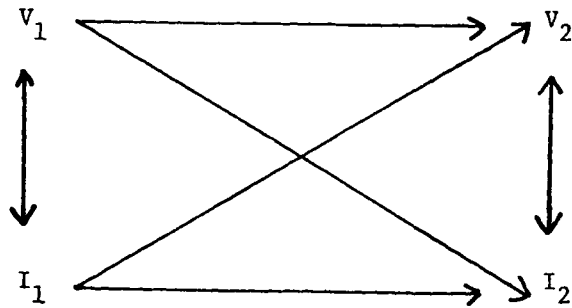
To determine the causal relationships between vote intention and issue-based candidate preference, a model of the causal

process will be constructed and predictions made from this model. While such a procedure (or any other procedure) will not allow the researcher to determine causality, it will allow us to reject one of two possible causal paths. Figure 1a depicts all possible relationships between issue-based candidate preference (I) and vote intention (V) with both variables measured at two points in time.⁷ Note that four paths (V_2 to V_1 , V_2 to I_1 , I_2 to I_1 , and I_2 to V_1) were eliminated because a temporally antecedent variable cannot be caused by a variable which occurs at a later point.

Since the model contains eight paths and six correlations that can be calculated, further assumptions are necessary to identify the model's equations, specifically that issue-based candidate preference can affect vote intention only after a time lag and vote intention can affect issue-based candidate preference only after a time lag.⁸ This assumption eliminates the path from vote 2 to issue 2 and from issue 2 to vote 2, and leaves the identified model in Figure 1b. Our purpose then is to estimate which causal linkage (V_1 to V_2 or I_1 to V_2) is stronger. *Assuming* issue-based candidate preference is a cause of vote intention, vote intention at time 2 should become more congruent with issue-based candidate preference measured at time 1. Because issue preference would not be affected by vote intention under this assumption, its change relative to vote choice should be random, reducing the congruence between vote choice at time 1 and issue-based candidate preference at time 2. Under this assumption the parameter estimate for the true causal path should be larger than the parameter estimate for the other path.

To determine which of the two causal paths to reject, Heise (1970) suggests using path analysis to estimate the parameters of the model in Figure 1b. If the path from vote intention at time 1 to issue-based candidate preference at time 2 ($p_{I_2V_1}$) is larger than the path from issue preference at time 1 to vote intention at time 2 ($p_{V_2I_1}$), then vote intention is causally prior to issue-based candidate preference. If $p_{V_2I_1}$ exceeds $p_{I_2V_1}$, issue-based candidate preference is more likely to be causally prior.

1a. All Possible Relationships for Two Time Periods



1b. Identified Panel Model

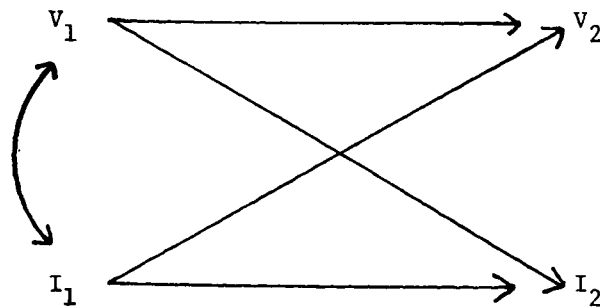


Figure 1: Models of the Casual Relationship Between Vote Intention (V) and Issue-Based Candidate Preference (I)

DATA

During the 1972 general election campaign for president, we conducted a panel survey of registered voters in the Syracuse metropolitan area similar to the Lazarsfeld surveys of the 1940s.

Three preelection personal interviews, each of which lasted about 90 minutes, were conducted. During the first wave, September 7 through 18, 731 respondents were interviewed. In the second wave, October 7 through 15, 650 respondents were reinterviewed. In the third wave, October 30 through November 6, 650 of our original respondents were contacted again. Overall, 626—or 86%—of the original panel were interviewed three times prior to the election. Respondents were selected through normal survey research random clustering techniques and interviewed by professionally trained interviewers.

CONDITIONS FOR ISSUE VOTING: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Were issues important in the 1972 presidential campaign? Did candidates take different positions on these issues? The 1972 election was perhaps the most issue-centered election in recent history. Although the war in Vietnam was largely Vietnamized, the general conduct of foreign policy, the status of our support for Vietnam, and the question of amnesty were raised by the election. On the domestic front the social issue (i.e., busing, crime, welfare, abortion, and the like) remained salient with George Wallace's primary campaign. The post-1960s recession reestablished unemployment, inflation, and government spending as crucial issues. Watergate emphasized corruption as a central issue. These and other issues (health care costs, minority rights, and so on) provided a solid core of issues for the campaign.

We must establish, however, not only the existence in the abstract of potential issues but also that the public actually perceived that the "issues" constituted public problems. As a measure of the voters' perceptions of public problems, we asked each voter in our sample to indicate the one political problem that mattered most to him personally. Although such a procedure will not exhaust public concerns since it asks for only a single

problem per respondent and asks for a "self-regarding" problem, the responses provide a good indication of the problems voters wanted candidates to address in their campaign.

From the responses to our question about public problems (see Table 1) and the brief summary of conditions at the time of the election, we can be confident that the setting of the 1972 presidential election was quite conducive to the development of issues and consequently the response to issues—issue voting. Although our survey does not cover all the issues in Table 1, it does include the issues deemed most important by three-fourths of the sample.

The mere presence of perceived and actual public problems is not an adequate environment for issue voting. Candidates must take stands (preferably different stands) on the issues, or voters selecting a candidate on the basis of issues can not possibly make a choice. To determine if candidates publicly expressed positions on the eleven issues selected for analysis, all television network newscasts and televised campaign commercials were monitored (see Patterson and McClure, 1976). Through a content analysis of these broadcasts, candidates were assigned positions on these issues. Table 2 lists these issues and shows the positions of each candidate on the issue.⁹

On six issues, all position issues, Richard Nixon and George McGovern took different stands; these issues were military spending, amnesty, taxes, busing, jobs, and Vietnam. Despite the arguments of some scholars (e.g., Downs, 1957), the examination of issue voting should not omit style issues (issues with only one real position) since a voter can rationally vote for a candidate who is perceived as better able to conduct foreign affairs or better able to manage the economy (see Campbell and Meier, 1977). On style issues the belief about the candidates becomes the deciding factor rather than the stated candidate position (since there is no position difference). For this reason, style issues will be retained in the analysis as an essential facet of issue voting.

TABLE 1
Voter's Most Pressing Public Problem

Issue	% Mentioned
Government spending	2.2
Jobs	5.8
Taxes	12.1
Vietnam	26.8
Law and order	5.2
Foreign affairs-- national commitments	5.1
Busing	1.2
Military spending	1.0
Welfare	5.2
Corruption	.8
Amnesty	.3
Just domestic	3.1
Aged	3.3
Other social welfare	5.5
Race	2.2
Pollution	1.1
Economy	6.1
Inflation	10.4
Miscellaneous	2.8
	100.0

ISSUE SALIENCE

Issue voting is an action of limited utility if the issues the candidates present in the campaign are of only marginal concern to the voter. Table 3 presents the average salience scores for the

TABLE 2
Candidates' Expressed Positions on the Issues

Issue	Nixon's Position	McGovern's Position
Cutting Military Spending	Con	Pro
Granting Amnesty	Con	Pro
Increasing Taxes on High Incomes	Con	Pro
Cutting Government Spending	Pro	Pro
Increasing Law and Order	Pro	Pro
Making Welfare Recipients Go To Work	Pro	Pro
Stopping Busing	Pro	Con
Eliminating Political Corruption	Pro	Pro
Government Guaranteed Jobs	Con	Pro
Immediately Withdrawing From Vietnam	Con	Pro
Honoring Foreign Commitments	Pro	Pro

eleven issues included in this analysis for all three waves of the survey. The respondents felt most issues were salient; only busing was rated as not salient in September; and by November the voters also rated busing as salient. The "average" respondent indicated that a wide variety of issues were personally salient. Only 4.3 percent of the respondents indicated three or less issues were salient, with three of every five respondents indicating that at least seven of the eleven issues were salient.

TABLE 3
Perceived Salience of 1972 Campaign Issues

Issue	Wave 1 [*]	Wave 2	Wave 3
Welfare	.89	--	1.28
Military spending	.84	1.01	1.32
Busing	-.12	--	.65
National commitments	1.29	1.29	1.40
Law and order	2.00	1.78	1.78
Vietnam	1.74	1.78	1.89
Taxation	1.27	--	1.42
Guaranteed jobs	1.64	1.80	1.67
Government spending	1.35	1.52	1.61
Corruption	--	.97	1.04
Amnesty	--	.06	.81

*positive scores indicate the issue is perceived as salient, items are scored on a seven-point scale from +3 (extremely important) to -3 (extremely unimportant).

Average number of issues perceived as salient	8.56
% with 3 or less	4.3
% with 4-7	37.6
% with 8-11	58.1

ATTITUDE STABILITY

Issue voting requires that the voter have stable policy preferences as criteria to evaluate the candidates. Table 4 presents the percentage of the respondents holding stable attitude positions on the eleven issues during the campaign and the autocorrelation for each attitude item. The autocorrelations reveal inadequate attitude stability (ranging from .3 for government

TABLE 4
Stability of the Respondents' Attitudes

Issue	% Stable	r
Government spending	72.6	.30
Guaranteed jobs	63.5	.50
Taxation	64.7	.52
Vietnam	65.8	.61
Law and order	82.9	.57
National commitments	69.2	.48
Busing	63.5	.41
Military spending	59.6	.38
Welfare	80.4	.48
Corruption	80.0	.41
Amnesty	69.1	.66

Average number of stable attitudes per respondent = 7.72

spending to .66 for amnesty with a mean correlation of .47¹⁰).

Examining only the autocorrelation, however, is misleading. First, we ought to expect some real change and not expect autocorrelations of 1.0. Second, since the respondents are confronted with unfamiliar stimuli and are responding with unfamiliar survey instruments, the attitude scales must be taken as only an indicator of the respondents' real position. A more appropriate indicator of attitude stability would be if the response remains on the same side of the scale or if the respondent is not sure about his attitude both times he is asked.¹¹ These stability percentages demonstrate a moderate to high amount of stability in the attitudes used in this study; the items ranged from 59.6% stable on military spending to 82.9% on law and order with a

mean percentage of 70.1. The magnitude of these percentages demonstrates that for many people *real attitudes exist on some, though not all, issues.*

BELIEF ACCURACY

Obviously, the voter cannot cast policy votes unless the candidates' actual positions on the issues are known. If the voter has a distorted perception of candidate positions, then a vote based on such information would not have the intended impact. Table 5 presents the percentage of respondents who hold the correct perception on each of the candidates' positions. Although little information is required, on the average issue less than one respondent in four incorrectly perceives a candidate's position.¹² The accuracy of respondent perceptions varies dramatically by issue and by candidate. Although the reasons for this variation are beyond the scope of this article, perceptual accuracy is probably a function of the ambiguity and frequency of candidate messages.

Do the accurate perceptions of candidate positions translate into perceived differences between the candidates? As Table 6 shows, they obviously do. Table 6 classifies perceived differences as either "small"—where the difference might be as little as one scale position—and "opposite"—where one candidate was perceived as supporting the issue and one was perceived as opposing. On the average issue 80% of the respondents perceived some differences while 42% perceived opposite positions. Clearly most voters were able to perceive differences between Richard Nixon and George McGovern even on several issues where differences were at most minimal.¹³

ISSUE-VOTE COVARIATION

The first necessary behavioral condition of issue voting and the one that has most concerned political analysts is the covariation between issue-based candidate preference and vote inten-

TABLE 5
Percentage of Respondents Who Correctly Perceived
Candidate Positions By Issue

Issue	Correct Perceptions for	
	McGovern	Nixon
Government spending	78.6*	69.0
Government guaranteed job	91.3	61.1
Taxation	91.0	65.2
Vietnam	95.7	68.1
Law and order	75.0	92.0
National commitments	48.5	96.7
Busing	58.3	85.9
Military spending	94.4	69.8
Welfare	57.5	85.0
Corruption	75.0	56.8
Amnesty	89.9	89.4

*Percentage of correct perceptions among respondents who perceived the candidate took a stand on the issue.

tion. The four previous conditions necessary for issue voting are sufficiently met so that some covariation between issue and vote could be expected. The data indicate that (1) an environment conducive to issue voting existed, (2) voters held positions on the issues of the day, (3) voters perceived these issues as salient, and (4) the voters accurately perceived candidate positions. This section will determine the extent to which the potential issue voting electorate actually converted their issue preferences into votes.

Respondents' issue-based candidate evaluations and vote intentions were strongly related during the 1972 presidential election, and the relationship strengthened as election day approached. Using all eleven issues combined via the modified

TABLE 6
Percentage Perceived Differences in
Candidate Positions

Issue	Perceived Small Differences	Perceived Opposite Positions
Government spending	77.8	38.2
Guaranteed jobs	78.3	41.4
Taxes	79.6	41.2
Vietnam	88.0	63.5
Law and order	82.3	20.1
National commitments	84.7	35.4
Busing	75.0	35.8
Military spending	87.8	57.2
Welfare	75.3	32.5
Corruption	64.8	30.6
Amnesty	84.2	62.8
Mean	79.8	41.7

Fishbein formula, the cross-sectional correlation between vote intention and issue preference was .64 in September, it increased to .69 in October, and further increased to .73 by November. On a simpler level, 86% of the respondents cast ballots consistent with their issue-based preferences by the November interview.

ISSUES AND VOTES: THE CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP

The final necessary condition to be examined is the determination of the causal relationship between issue-based candidate preference and vote intention. If the dominant causal relation-

ship between the two variables is from issue preference to vote intention, then we can be fairly sure that some voters are engaging in issue voting, since they are aligning their vote intention with their previously established issue preferences.

The paths which serve as indicators of the causal relationship are shown for all voters in Table 7. For all three possible combinations of measurements, the vote intention to issue-based candidate preference path (the rationalizing path) is larger than the issue preference to vote preference path. Despite the significant differences between the two path coefficients, the path coefficients for the issue dominant path are not zero as they should be if the issue to vote relationship were spurious.

Before we accept the conclusion that the voter's decision is not based on issues and that the issue-vote covariation is a result of widespread voter rationalization, the statistically significant issue-to-vote paths suggest that we entertain at least one plausible rival hypothesis. Examining the change process and the statistics used to measure the change is necessary to determine why both the issue voting and the rationalizing paths are strong. The cross-lagged technique is sensitive to change in either issue-based candidate preference or vote intention and is relatively insensitive to stable preferences. The changes can be of two types—changing a preference from one candidate to the other *or* strengthening or weakening one preference (but not changing to the other candidate). The following hypothesis should be considered. Let us assume the voter is a rational issue voter. This voter decided on the basis of his own positions and the candidates' announced positions that candidate X is his preference early in the campaign. Now the rational voter would not freeze his preferences at this moment but rather would continue to monitor the political environment. As new issues arise, as the candidates clarify their stands, and as events increase the salience of different issues, our voter incorporates these factors into his issue preference. If, as is usually expected, these events reinforce the voter's decision, we have a case of issue-based candidate preference becoming more aligned with vote intention of what statistically appears as rationalization. But this voter cannot be dismissed

TABLE 7
 Path Coefficients for Panel Model of Issue-Based
 Candidate Preference (I)-Vote Intention
 (V) Relationships

Time Periods	Issues Cause*	Vote Causes**
	Vote Path	Issues Path
September-October	.11	.33
September-November	.14	.36
October-November	.09	.26

*PV₂I₁ **P₁I₂V₁

as a rationalizing voter because this voter may have initially decided according to policy issues and has since continued to incorporate political information. Such a voter cannot automatically be dismissed as "irrational."

Testing this rival hypothesis poses some difficulties since the vote decision in most instances occurred before our survey was in the field. We can offer only two unsatisfying partial tests. First, was the dominant form of change among stable voters reinforcement? The mean issue-based candidate preference scores for the stable McGovern and Nixon voters in September were -4.48 and 3.08 respectively (preference for McGovern is designated as negative). For the same voters, November issue-based candidate preference scores increased to -5.45 and 3.69 respectively. In the aggregate, stable voters did reinforce their issue-based candidate perceptions. Examining individual voter changes during the campaign would also reveal that small, vote-consistent change was the most prevalent type of change. Together these facts indicate that the predominant form of change among stable voters was reinforcement of a previous vote decision.

Second, did the voters who were undecided in September vote consistently with their previously established issue preferences? Of the September undecideds 15% did not vote, 30% cast ballots against their September issue preference (though not necessarily their November preference) and 55% *voted consistent with their issue preferences*. Finding a large portion of issue voters among late deciders, those voters least likely to have the motivation and possibly the skills to cast policy oriented ballots, raises serious doubt on the original finding of rationalization. We can be sure at least some portion of the sample fulfills the conditions necessary for issue voting.

JOINT SUFFICIENCY

Until now we have addressed each of the necessary conditions individually. More important for the process of issue voting than whether or not each condition is met by each voter is whether or not the entire sample or some subset of the sample meets all conditions jointly. This section will examine the extent to which our voters meet the salience, the perceived differences, the perceptual accuracy, and the attitude stability conditions simultaneously. We will also assess the degree to which respondents who meet the perceptual and relevance conditions also meet the first behavioral condition of covariance. Since environmental conditions are outside the control of voters, we will assume they are met (bearing in mind that the absence of any of the environmental conditions will attenuate issue voting). In addition, the survey was not in the field during the decision time for most respondents; therefore, the causality question cannot be answered directly for our sample of voters. Since issue voting requisites may well vary with the individual (some individuals needing less information and motivation than others to cast a policy-oriented vote), two different levels of meeting the necessary conditions will be considered.

JOINT EXISTENCE: THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

To cast an "issue vote," the voter should meet the following minimal perceptual and relevance conditions. First, the voter must perceive at least minor differences between the candidates; that is, the voter should either see the candidates on opposite sides of the issue or perceive the candidates differ in their emphasis on the issue. Second, the minimal condition for belief accuracy is perceiving the candidate to be on the side of the issue he actually is without consideration of the certainty that the voter attaches to that perception. If the candidate position was coded as positive and the voter assigns the candidate a positive position, then the belief is considered accurate. To cast an issue vote, the voter must know the position of both candidates.¹⁴ Third, attitude stability need be only minimal in the sense that if the respondent can locate himself *on the same side* of the issue twice in a row, the attitude is considered stable. Finally, a salient issue under the least stringent case is an issue that is evaluated as salient, though not necessarily extremely salient, to the voter. Any voter meeting these conditions on any one issue will be termed a member of that issue's *issue public*. A voter needs to belong to only one issue public to be a potential issue voter.

Clearly, this set of criteria involves the minimal expectations that one can demand on perceptual and relevance conditions and still designate the process issue voting. The absence of any of these minimal conditions, in the authors' opinion, is sufficient grounds to conclude that issue voting is unlikely.

Table 8 shows the percentage of respondents in each issue public meeting the minimum criteria for issue voting. The size of issue publics for individual issues ranges from 6.8% of the electorate for corruption to 36.8% in the case of Vietnam. On the average issue 21.2% of the respondents meet all four perceptual and relevance conditions simultaneously. Although Table 8 by itself would indicate that few voters were members of issue publics, Table 9 shows this is not the case. Of the respondents in this survey 81% were included in one or more issue publics and, thus, have the potential for casting issue votes. No re-

TABLE 8
Percent of Respondents Meeting All Four Perceptual
and Relevance Conditions by Issue

Issue	Least Stringent	Most Stringent
Government spending	16.5	0.0
Guaranteed job	23.3	1.4
Taxes	22.8	2.3
Vietnam	36.8	11.7
Law and order	22.7	0.0
National commitments	14.7	0.0
Busing	14.5	1.1
Military spending	29.8	5.3
Welfare	10.7	0.0
Corruption	6.8	0.0
Amnesty	34.5	7.7
Mean	21.2	2.7

spendent was a member of more than eight issue publics; the average respondent belonged to two or three issue publics.

JOINT EXISTENCE: THE STRINGENT CONDITIONS

The skeptic could dispute the evidence presented thus far by claiming that we have set the conditions for issue voting at a minimum, a minimum that does not reflect the difficulties involved in issue voting. To consider the criticism of the skeptic and to attempt to set a lower limit on the number of issue voters, more stringent conditions for issue voting were established. First, to perceive an issue as salient under these conditions,

TABLE 9
Number of Issues on Which Each Respondent Meet All Four
Perceptual and Relevance Conditions

Number of Issues	Least Stringent	Most Stringent
0	19.1%	78.3%
1	18.6	16.3
2	18.6	4.1
3	17.8	1.4
4	12.4	0
5	9.4	0
6	2.3	0
7	1.8	0
8	0.2	0
9	0	0
10	0	0
Mean	2.33	.29

the respondent must “strongly agree” that X is the most important issue. If the respondent did not mark the extreme response on the salience question, the issue was considered not salient to the voter. Second, attitudes were considered “real” under the most stringent conditions only if the respondent’s attitude varied one scale point or less from September to November. This procedure allows some random variations (which can be attributed to the measurement instrument) but does not permit large fluctuations. Third, the perceptual accuracy conditions combine both perceptual accuracy and certainty. To be considered an “accurate” belief, the respondent’s belief must not only be on the correct side of the issue, but must indicate that he is *certain* of his response. The respondent would then be extremely certain

that the candidate held the position indicated. Finally, the differences the respondent perceives between the candidates must be large. A difference was determined to be significant only if the respondent saw one candidate on one side of the issue and the other candidate on the other side of the issue; minor differences were not counted. This criterion eliminates any issue voting on style issues.

The percentage of respondents jointly meeting all four necessary conditions under the stringent conditions are listed by issue in Table 8. The percentages are small compared to the minimal conditions. Vietnam (11.7%) and amnesty (7.7%) were exceptions to the general pattern that less than 5% of the respondents were able to perceive large differences between candidates when they were very certain about candidate positions, thought the issue was very salient, and had highly stable attitudes. Only 2.7% of the respondents were able to meet these conditions on the average issue (5.0% on position issues). Table 9 shows that the number of respondents who belong to one or more issue publics shrinks rapidly under these conditions. Only 21.7% of the respondents belonged to one or more issue publics, and more than half of those belonged to only one issue public.

By examining the joint existence of the four perceptual and relevance conditions under both sets of conditions, we can establish an estimate of the upper and lower limit of issue voting thus far. Permitting a voter to be classified as a potential issue voter if he met the four conditions on one or more issues, we get a lower limit of 21.7% and an upper limit of 83.5%. Clearly the range of these figures is so large as to limit the usefulness of the analysis. The reader should bear in mind that these percentages only indicate the number of voters who have the potential (based on the perceptual and relevance conditions) to become issue voters. Only if the environmental conditions are met (we assumed they were met) and if the behavioral conditions are met (see below) *could* these voters be classified as issue voters.

BEHAVIORAL CONDITIONS

This section will determine how many issue public members also cast their ballots for the issue-preferred candidate. A voter is classified as meeting the behavioral condition only if the respondent actually voted for the candidate nearest his own position on the issues when all four perceptual and relevance conditions are met. If these conditions were met on more than one issue, then the issues were combined using Fishbein's formula. The respondent can then be classified as behaving consistent with the issue publics he belongs to, behaving inconsistent with the issue publics, or behaving neither consistently nor inconsistently (the latter being the case when the respondent had a neutral vote intention or did not belong to any issue publics).

The combination of the four perceptual and relevance conditions along with the one behavioral condition of covariation will have to serve as indicators of issue voting. Since we already know the survey was initiated too late to tap the decisions of most of the sample, examining the last behavioral condition would not prove fruitful. For the minimum conditions of issue voting three of every five voters (60.7%) jointly meet the five conditions for issue voting while one of every six (16.3%) actually behaves inconsistent with his attitudes, beliefs, and salience perceptions. The behavior for 23% of the respondents could not be classified. Under the more stringent conditions of issue voting over 19% of the respondents meet the five conditions simultaneously and less than 3% exhibit inconsistent behavior with 78% unclassified.

The range of possible issue voters (19-62%) is still fairly large, but any attempts to be more precise would necessarily be speculative rather than data-based. It is difficult to specify the exact conditions that must be met for any particular voter to engage in issue voting. Although one voter might be able to cast a reasoned issue vote based solely on the minimum conditions of issue voting, other voters might need the certainty of the more stringent conditions to cast an issue vote. In part, the conditions necessary for issue voting are idiosyncratic because the involvement of citizens in politics and the circumstances surrounding their vote

choice are also idiosyncratic. For this reason we believe that at the present time and with the present data, a more exact estimate of the extent of issue voting simply cannot be made.

NOTES

1. The studies of issue voting have proliferated to the point where a complete listing is impossible. One of the most comprehensive lists is found in Kessel (1972) in the initial footnote. Studies completed since that time are referenced in Margolis (1977).

2. Environmental conditions can be defined in contrast to individual conditions. If the former are the main restrictions on issue voting, then the quality of candidates and their campaigns restricts the extent of issue voting (see Pomper, 1972). If the latter are the key, then individual cognitive limitations prevent issue voting.

3. An example of an ambiguous position is that of Nixon on Vietnam. Interspersed in the election campaign are hard line statements and action coupled with "peace is at hand" statements appealing to the doves. Other ambiguous positions include McGovern's on law and order, and busing, and Nixon's on corruption and government spending.

4. For example, no candidate could oppose combating crime, at least not publicly, thus it is classified as a style issue, on which there are no opposing positions. But the candidates could present different solutions (e.g., combating "causes" or "giving the police the necessary tools"). As a result, such a style issue must be included although opposite positions are impossible.

5. This definition of attitude follows not only that of Fishbein (1967) but also Thurstone (1929) and Osgood et al. (1957) among others. The reader will also note the similarity between attitude as we define it and the evaluative dimension of attitude as proposed by Smith et al. (1956).

6. Our research indicates a relationship between attitude intensity and salience just as the theory assumes. The average correlation for all eleven issues between intensity of attitudes and salience of the issue is .29. This indicates that the attitude measure also taps the salience dimension. Fishbein's original work experimented with salience but deleted the concept when it failed to improve predictions.

7. See Heise (1970) for a discussion of this technique. The writings in this area are too numerous to cite. See McCullough (1978) for a discussion of alternative techniques and a bibliography on panel analysis.

8. Assumptions involved in the crosslagged analysis include linearity, homoscedasticity, constancy, equivalence, finite causal lags, equal causal lags, uncorrelated disturbance terms, and minimal measurement error. See Heise (1970) and Pelz and Andrews (1964) for a discussion of the assumptions involved. Heise's model is only one of many which could have been used, and we have examined alternative models and discovered similar results to those reported below. We feel, however, that the above model is the most appropriate, particularly in that it involves causation with lag rather than causation without lag.

9. We do not argue that the positions were held with equal intensity, were thought to be of equal importance to the candidates, or were nicely reducible to an uncomplicated

pro-con form for the moment. We are simply presenting the general impression of their expressed opinions and will consider some complications later.

10. To be sure, a correlation of .47 would normally be a moderate to large correlation. In this case, however, the same variable is being measured eight weeks apart. With the autocorrelation qualification, the size of the coefficients must be considered small.

11. The incorporation of the "not sure" respondents makes the stability percentages conservative estimates of stability similar to the correlations. The "not sure" respondents evidence some degree of random behavior in their responses. Such respondents are likely to go from the "not sure" response to an extreme response, to the other extreme response, or back to the "not sure" response. In many cases when a respondent indicates a "not sure" response, it is likely the person is just that, not sure what attitude position he holds.

12. The data also reveal that those voters who were better educated and showed high levels of political interest were the most likely to be accurate in their perceptions. On salient issues, voters accurately perceived a candidate's position whether or not they voted for that candidate.

13. The reader should note that the perception of differences was greater where real differences could be objectively assigned. The large percentages indicate not that lack of perceived differences is a problem, but rather that respondents might perceive differences that do not exist.

14. One could argue that issue voting is possible if only one candidate's position is known. The voter could then accept or reject this candidate on the basis of issues. If knowing only one candidate's position were used as the least stringent case, then 95.4% of the electorate meet the following four conditions.

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