Issue Ownership and Electoral Change: a Longitudinal Perspective

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ABSTRACT: Issue ownership theory stipulates that citizens whose individual concerns are primed in a given context will favor the party with a better reputation of handling those concerns. Despite their centrality as one of the main causal mechanisms of the theory, media priming effects are rarely tested. In this paper, we assess the validity of the priming mechanism and the consequences for electoral change of individual concern over immigration using the German Socioeconomic Panel and media content analysis. Our results confirm the priming issue ownership effect among previous non-identifiers and supporters of the issue owner, but not among previous supporters of other parties.

Keywords: issue ownership, electoral change, immigration, priming, longitudinal analysis, content analysis.