Puzzled and Prejudiced Partisans:
The Impact of Party Cues on Voter Behavior in Local Elections

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Introduction

Instead of simply being one criterion among many, political party affiliation is now the ultimate criterion used by voters when evaluating candidates and making sense of the world. As Lilliana Mason describes in *Uncivil Agreement*, this phenomenon is a result of increasing party homogeneity in terms of ideology, race, class, geography, and religion. The in-group/out-group bias engendered by a lack of diversity within parties made “partisans on both sides feel increasingly connected to the groups that divided them,” (Mason 2018, 40). Soon, party became a dominant social identity among Americans, especially among those with other aligned social identities that didn’t cross the party divide (Mason 2018). The emergence of this partisan uber-identity has spurred what scholars call affective polarization, or animosity towards members of one party from members of another, simply because they belong to the other party (Iyengar et al. 2019). Combined with increasing ideological polarization, affective polarization is worsening partisanship at the national level. Given these developments, nonpartisan elections are seen as a way to reduce polarization in the American political system (Berman 2016). In nonpartisan elections, a candidate’s name appears on the ballot without any label that identifies which political party they belong to. So theoretically, nonpartisan elections force voters to rely on other cues when choosing their candidates.

But do nonpartisan elections actually encourage voters to look at a broader array of factors than they would in partisan elections? There is significant disagreement about how effective nonpartisan elections are in preventing voters from relying on party cues. Typically, nonpartisan elections happen on the local level (in cities, towns, counties), and a few are held on the state level. In recent years, advocates have sought to make more state legislative elections nonpartisan and eliminate party primaries in these races. Proponents of nonpartisan elections cite
more productive legislative sessions in nonpartisan states such as Nebraska, which are supposedly engendered by a lack of hyper-partisanship (Berman 2015). Others disagree and argue that nonpartisan elections are often ineffective in practice because of their failure to fully guard against partisan influences. Bonneau and Cann find that partisan information easily infiltrates nonpartisan elections—thereby enabling voters to discern candidate party affiliation and behave like partisans (Bonneau and Cann 2015). Some scholars also argue that voters find ways to substitute for party; they use candidate attributes like race and gender as proxies for political ideology (McDermott 1998).

The dichotomy between partisan and nonpartisan elections offers a window into how voters make choices in polarized societies. Therefore, my thesis seeks to answer the broader question of: How does the presence and absence of party cues affect voter thinking and behavior? More specifically: Do voters’ considerations and subsequent electoral choices differ significantly with the presence or absence of a party cue? In the literature review, I examine heuristics, or cues voters use as cognitive shortcuts when deciding who to vote for. Given that multiple heuristics have yet to be integrated effectively in current research, this thesis will compare how voter emphasis on certain heuristics is likely to change based on electoral context.

I then attempt to understand how voters make decisions about candidates by conducting a conjoint survey experiment, where respondents vote for fictional candidates and are provided with attributes that can help them decide who to vote for. These attributes reflect a range of heuristics, such as race, gender, occupation, incumbency status, and political party. The conjoint analysis reveals the degree to which the party cue influences voter reliance on the other cues. Since the survey collected demographic information on each respondent, my findings also illustrate the effect of certain nonpartisan heuristics by respondent party affiliation. I initially
hypothesize that voter reliance on nonpartisan heuristics will increase in absence of a party cue, due to the unavailability of candidate party affiliation information. Similarly, reliance on the same nonpartisan heuristics will drop significantly in the presence of a party cue.

I found that, contrary to my initial expectations, partisanship plays a significant role in how people evaluate candidates—it promotes the stereotyping of candidates. In the partisan conjoint, there was greater reliance among respondents on nonpartisan heuristics like candidate identity and occupation, whereas reliance on the same heuristics was limited in the nonpartisan conjoint. This was surprising given my initial expectation that the absence of a party cue would encourage respondents to wield nonpartisan cues instead. Some effects were also more pronounced based on respondent party affiliation. Democrats in the partisan conjoint, for example, were significantly more likely to support candidates with a legal background.

The question of whether it is worth keeping nonpartisan elections on the local level and expanding them to the state level leads to important policy implications. According to my findings, voters are less prone to stereotyping candidates without a party cue—making a compelling case for nonpartisan elections. However, the cognitive challenges that voters face when party labels are removed, and subsequent issues related to depressed turnout must be addressed. A full-throated embrace of nonpartisan elections should be qualified with necessary reforms that enable them to fulfill their promise without turning away voters accustomed to a party-centric world.

**Literature Review**

To develop hypotheses for how partisan and nonpartisan cues affect voter behavior and by extension, candidate selection, I first review relevant literature to understand broader theories
on voter decision-making and information-seeking processes. Then, I turn to scholarly perspectives on different types of voter heuristics. A heuristic is a cue that a voter uses to decide who to vote for—it’s a kind of cognitive shortcut. For example, a voter who wants less government intervention in the economy may use candidate party affiliation as a heuristic and vote for a Republican candidate over a Democratic one. Instead of extensively researching each candidate running for office, voters can make voting decisions based on candidate experience, identity, incumbency status, etc.—sometimes solely through reading the ballot. Heuristics enable voters to save time and evaluate candidates relatively quickly, because they don’t have to do their own research and then sift through so much information on candidates.

The academic literature on how voters deploy heuristics in elections is contradictory. At the macro level, there is disagreement among scholars about whether voters are able to discern candidate party affiliation in nonpartisan elections and use it effectively as a heuristic when choosing candidates. At the micro level, among scholars who agree that voters do not use party as a heuristic in nonpartisan elections, there is debate over which nonpartisan heuristics voters place the greatest emphasis on. There is also wide variation in the analysis of specific nonpartisan heuristics, and few models integrate multiple nonpartisan heuristics effectively, as scholars tend to focus on individual heuristics in isolation. Thus, current research on nonpartisan elections fails to account for how voters perceive candidates with a range of attributes. It also fails to examine how heuristics influence the types of decision-making frameworks that voters rely on in elections.

**Voter Decision-Making Mechanisms**

According to scholars, voters employ one of four decision-making models when deciding who to vote for: rational choice, confirmatory, fast-and-frugal, and intuitive. Each of the models
is based on different voter values. The fourth model of decision-making, the intuitive approach, applies when voters obtain enough information on candidates to make decisions; but the definition of what constitutes as ‘enough information’ varies from voter to voter (Lau et al. 2006). Voter attempts at selecting candidates using heuristics—which enable them to make relatively informed decisions when they lack substantive information—are forms of intuitive decision-making.

However, scholars argue that voters’ information search practices, and their subsequent reliance on certain heuristics—vary based on the availability of partisan information. In “Can Voters Tame The Information Tide?” Seib hypothesizes that voters in nonpartisan elections will rely more heavily on candidates’ endorsements as a direct proxy for party, and then conducts a dynamic information board experiment (where participants vote for fictional candidates) to test this idea. Though Seib finds that nonpartisan ‘voters’ did not appear to significantly rely on candidate endorsements, these ‘voters’ spent more time comparing information about candidates (i.e. personal background and professional experience) than the partisan ‘voters’ (Seib 2010). Therefore, when presented with an array information about candidates, voters in nonpartisan elections attempt to make informed decisions by actively seeking out information on candidates.

In “Candidate Perception in an Ambiguous World: Campaigns, Cues, and Inference Processes”, Conover and Feldman examine how voters perceive candidates’ stances on issues in a low-information electoral environment. Conover and Feldman use the 1976 presidential election as a case study, and find that voters draw on prior knowledge they have in order to determine where candidates stand (Conover and Feldman 1989). Specifically, voters rely on ideological/party cues—even if the candidates themselves are not initially perceived as strong partisans. Conover and Feldman’s work is not necessarily generalizable because their case study
is outdated (from a time when we weren’t as polarized) and it focuses on the dynamics of a presidential election. However, their findings are still relevant to our study of voter decision-making strategies and how party cues function in local elections (which are often low-information environments). It follows that voters in partisan elections are reliant on party cues and less likely to seek out new information on candidates. In the next section of the literature review, I will examine how voter reliance on different types of heuristics varies based on the availability of partisan information.

**Party Affiliation Heuristic**

The scholars who argue that municipal voters rely on the candidate party affiliation heuristic above all others contend that nonpartisan elections can never truly isolate party politics. This is due to the inevitable leakage of partisan information into the nonpartisan electoral context. However, many of the studies that make claims about local elections being partisan focus exclusively on judicial elections. In “The Impact of High-Visibility Contests for U.S. State Court Judgeships”, Rock and Baum attempt to determine whether there is a relationship between campaign spending, media attention, and partisan voting. The authors analyze two decades-worth of survey responses from nonpartisan judicial election voters in Ohio and find that partisan voting was higher across the board in three “high visibility” elections—that is, elections with both a high amount of campaign spending and extensive media coverage.

Their findings reveal that the effects of greater campaign spending on partisan voting were heavily concentrated among voters who had greater political knowledge, indicating that already educated/politically-active voters were seeking out partisan information on candidates (Rock and Baum 2010, 388). The increasing involvement of outside interest groups and big donors in traditionally nonpartisan judicial elections renders them increasingly politicized and
significant in the national context. This is not necessarily the case for a smaller town council or mayoral election. Therefore, Rock and Baum’s findings must be contextualized accordingly—they may not be applicable to non-judicial elections and other types of low-visibility elections.

Similarly, Bonneau and Cann analyze data from a national survey of judicial election voters and conduct a controlled survey experiment in “Party Identification and Vote Choice in Partisan and Nonpartisan Elections”. The authors find that voters’ personal party affiliation or ideological beliefs have a strong effect on vote choice, and there is no “statistically significant difference across partisan and nonpartisan ballots” in terms of the degree of that effect (Bonneau and Cann 2015, 51). That is, voters find ways to successfully bring partisan information to bear in both partisan and nonpartisan elections. They were equally likely to infer candidate party affiliation from the information provided to them on each candidate’s legal background, qualifications, and views on several issues—which the researchers developed using statements made in real judicial elections about family values, individual liberty, etc.; (Bonneau and Cann 2015). Bonneau and Cann’s incorporation of campaign intensity and ideological polarization as independent variables in the model makes the work seem more generalizable beyond judicial elections, as the information environments and existing degrees of partisanship in each locality is highly variable.

Unlike Bonneau and Cann, Squire and Smith analyze data from a poll taken on the eve of the 1982 California State Supreme Court election. The scholars attempt to understand how voters’ decisions to keep or remove incumbent justices change with the presence of partisan information. The authors find that the presence of information on which Governor (party affiliation and name) appointed the justices “results in much greater opposition to confirmation” irrespective of what party the appointing Governor belonged to (Squire and Smith 1988, 172).
These findings are interesting because the election they analyze is a retention election—one where candidates simply vote to remove or keep an incumbent, rather than choose between and incumbent and a challenger. This feature could have influenced their findings because incumbents enjoy significant advantages in elections due to two factors: (1) the perception that they are better quality than other candidates, and (2) the resources that their elected office provides them with that can be used to get more votes (Ban, Llaudet, and Snyder 2016). However, Squire and Smith’s work is still compelling because it illustrates voters’ sensitivities to indirect partisan information (e.g., the party affiliation of a Governor who appointed a judge).

**Nonpartisan Heuristics**

The scholars who argue that municipal voters rely primarily on nonpartisan heuristics lean on the notion that municipal voters are the model citizens heralded by classical democratic theorists (Oliver, Ha, and Callen 2012, 151). In theory, the predominance of model citizen-voters in the municipal electorate is due to the fact that the nonpartisan ballot is effective in keeping candidate party affiliation out of voters’ choices and thus insulates localities from national party politics. But how can the nonpartisan ballot be effective in a hyper-partisan national political climate? According to the authors of “Local Elections and the Politics of Small-Scale Democracy” variations in municipal politics across the country must be analyzed through a broad lens. Specifically, such variations can be attributed to the size, scope (amount of power vested in local office), and bias (how resources are distributed) of municipal governments. The ideological schism of liberal vs. conservative is therefore less pronounced, and political conflict centers around seemingly trivial local issues. These factors mean that, based on this model, voters in local elections must rely on a more specific set of heuristics compared to voters in national elections (Oliver, Ha, and Callen 2012). Therefore, voters in local elections are arguably
better-informed than voters who only vote in national elections and rely solely on more general heuristics like party. The following section examines the demographics of the municipal electorate and how nonpartisan elections influence its composition.

*Local Electorate*

Because some nonpartisan heuristics are not evident from simply looking at a physical ballot in the way that the political party heuristic is, voters would need to grasp for some external information (from media coverage or candidate campaign materials) in order to wield any nonpartisan heuristic effectively. In “The More You Know: Voter Heuristics and the Information Search”, Bernhard and Freeder examine voters’ information search strategies (which can determine the types of nonpartisan heuristics that they can use) in nonpartisan, low-information elections. The authors find that voters’ information search strategies vary based on their political sophistication and education levels—the more sophisticated rely less on personalistic concerns like candidate identity when searching for information about candidates and more on relevant, verifiable and specific finds like candidate policy positions (Bernhard and Freeder 2020). This means that nonpartisan elections are more likely to be dominated by voters with the time to search for specific information about candidates, given the lack of clear cues like candidate party affiliation. Trying to choose a candidate in a nonpartisan election would be more cognitively taxing for a voter without prior knowledge of the candidates.

On average, the municipal electorate is likely older, whiter, and wealthier than the national electorate (Jurjevich et al. 2016). So, nonpartisan voters’ reliance on a range of heuristics could be attributed to privilege—having the time and resources to seek out information on candidates that is less discernable. For example, there is research that indicates the municipal electorate is dominated by homeowners, who are relatively more affluent than renters. This
research assesses the validity of the ‘homevoter hypothesis’, coined by economist William Fischel, which asserts that there is a link between homeownership and involvement in local politics (Fischel 2001). According to Yoder in “Does Property Ownership Lead to Participation in Local Politics? Evidence from Property Records and Meeting Minutes”, being a homeowner does increase one’s political activity (defined in terms of voting regularly and contributing to local political candidates). In Yoder’s two case studies (California and Texas) property ownership leads to a nearly 3 percentage point increase in local voter turnout, even when controlling for zip code (Yoder 2020). Unlike renters, this constituency would be acutely concerned with property taxes—which are always under local jurisdiction.

Additionally, the lack of party labels in nonpartisan local elections can depress voter turnout among people of color, as illustrated in “‘The Letter after Your Name’: Party Labels on Virginia Ballots”. Here, Garlick examines the relationship between roll-off, or voters choosing not to vote for any candidates running for a certain position, and party labels. He finds that roll-off reduced in down-ballot races after the inclusion of party labels on Virginia state election ballots (Garlick 2015)—especially in precincts with high numbers of Black voters. Because it takes more time to make sense of the political world without a party cue, people will not vote as consistently in nonpartisan elections as they do in partisan elections. Garlick’s findings lend credence to the argument that the heuristics voters are able to use varies based on the availability of party cues. The next section describes some of these heuristics. Though scholars examine a range of nonpartisan heuristics, three categories are repeatedly emphasized: experience (in terms of occupation), incumbency status, and identity (in terms of race and gender).
Experience

One nonpartisan heuristic that scholars analyze is candidate experience, because some states actually include candidates’ occupations alongside their names on the ballot. The term experience is vague, but in “Candidate Choice Without Party Labels”, Kirkland and Coppock do a good job of defining it. The authors split candidate experience into two categories (job experience and political experience) and find that in a conjoint survey experiment where candidate biographical information is presented to participants, voters in nonpartisan elections generally give greater weight to candidate experience if party labels are absent. However, the types of experience that matter to voters in these elections depends on their personal party affiliation. Democrats place greater emphasis on candidate political experience, while Republicans place greater emphasis on candidate job experience (Kirkland and Coppock 2018).

Other scholars have different definitions. In “Fit for the Job: Candidate Qualifications and Vote Choice in Low Information Elections”, Atkeson and Hamel only look at candidate experience in terms of candidates’ specific occupations. The authors argue that when voters perceive a clear connection between candidate experience and a particular elected office, they will be sensitive to small differences among candidates in search of the most functionally competent one (Atkeson and Hamel 2020). This means, for example, that even if two candidates running for school board have experience in education, voters will be biased toward the one that has more direct experience with students. A principal will likely earn more votes than a policy specialist. However, it is unclear how much experience matters in comparison to other heuristics.

Existing scholarship indicates that candidate experience influences voter behavior because people tend to hold stereotypes about occupations and thereby see them as having innate characteristics. For example, Americans favor the idea of government being run like a
business—they view “successful businesspeople as capable, competent, and efficient, and unlikely to waste taxpayer money,” (Coffé and Theiss-Morse 2016, 56). At the same time, skepticism toward career politicians has increased—indicating that candidates with only political experience may be at a disadvantage compared to those with robust job experience. In the municipal context, perceived efficiency and competence are particularly significant because local leaders are often responsible for managing direct services such as trash pickup and public safety provision. In “The effect of political candidates’ occupational background on voters’ perceptions of and support of candidates”, Coffé and Theiss-Morse survey students in the United States and New Zealand. They find that both groups see businesspeople candidates as more competent in handling economic policy issues, and educator candidates as more competent in handling human services policy issues; compared to candidates with just political experience (Coffé and Theiss-Morse 2016). Though these findings indicate that voters associate candidate occupation with competency in specific policy arenas, Coffé and Theiss-Morse only assess voter perceptions of candidates in the non-ideological context. It is unclear whether voters stereotype candidate occupations ideologically and if so, how that influences candidate selection.

**Incumbency Status**

Another nonpartisan heuristic that scholars examine is candidate incumbency status because the presence of an incumbency advantage in most elections is broadly accepted. In “Teams without Uniforms: The Nonpartisan Ballot in State and Local Elections” Schaffner et al. do find that voters in nonpartisan elections rely on incumbency status more than those in partisan elections. The scholars arrive at this conclusion based on their analysis of precinct-level data from three nonpartisan municipalities (Champaign, IL, Urbana, IL, and Asheville, NC) and three nonpartisan states (Kansas, Nebraska, and Minnesota)—which lends their work greater external
validity in comparison to other scholars’ survey experiments (Schaffner, Streb, and Wright 2001). This preference among voters for incumbents is confirmed in an empirical study by Jessica Trounstine. In “Evidence of a Local Incumbency Advantage”, she finds that incumbents in city council races are 32 points more likely to run and win their elections, based on a regression analysis of council elections in four U.S. cities over a 70-year period (Trounstine 2011, 271). Subsequent work from Trounstine reveals that the incumbency advantage is exacerbated in low-turnout environments, where only highly engaged subgroups of voters turn out to vote (Trounstine 2013). However, the mechanism through which voters discern incumbency is unclear and Trounstine’s research does not directly examine how the incumbency advantage varies between partisan and nonpartisan elections. Additionally, it is unclear if party cues influence perceptions of incumbent candidates.

*Identity*

A third nonpartisan heuristic that scholars examine is candidate identity status. Because identity politics is so significant in the national political context, it is unsurprising that scholars would seek to study the impact of race and gender in the local electoral context. It is also easier for voters to discern or perceive candidate race or gender because candidate names on the ballot are often racialized or gendered. In “Gender, Ethnicity, and Ballot Information: Ballot Cues in Low-Information Elections” Matson and Fine study voter heuristics in a 1996 election for the Miami-Dade County community boards. The authors find that gender, ethnicity, and name recognition (a proxy for candidate spending) were cues local voters relied on in a nonpartisan election. Specifically, female candidates, Latinx candidates, and higher campaign spenders received higher percentages of the total vote share in the election (Matson and Fine 2006). Though Matson and Fine’s work is extremely specific to the socio-political context of their case
study, I believe it could be applicable to other minority communities. This means that voters in nonpartisan elections will rely on nonpartisan cues such as candidate race and gender, along with external factors like name recognition, in the absence of a party cue.

Like Matson and Fine, McDermott uses an intersectional approach to examine the effects of identity heuristics in local elections. In “Race and Gender Cues in Low-Information Elections”, she finds that voters stereotype candidates based on identity. First, they stereotype female candidates as more liberal than male candidates. Second, they stereotype Black candidates as more liberal and concerned with helping the poor than white candidates. This in turn means that voters either gravitate toward or away from candidates based on their personal ideological preferences. That is, liberal voters are more likely to favor Black and/or female candidates compared to conservative voters (McDermott 1998). Though McDermott’s work relies almost exclusively on polling data from the LA Times, it illustrates how identity heuristics can come to serve as proxies for candidate party affiliation.

Other scholars examine gender and racial heuristics more broadly. In “Winners and Losers: Sex Differences in Municipal Elections”, Merritt finds that, based on a survey of male and female municipal candidates in suburban Illinois, there are gender differences in what makes local candidates successful. For men “…success in suburban politics is dependent upon demonstration of skills through social contacts with political influentials, whereas for women, success is more closely related to formal demonstration of skills through non-elective and volunteer political activities,” (Merritt 1977, 742). This research takes an intersectional approach to examining heuristics. An identity heuristic like gender can interact with the experience heuristic to the benefit or detriment of candidates. For example, per Merritt’s findings, a female mayoral candidate could garner more support for being a teacher, while a male mayoral
candidate in the same election could lose support among voters for lacking political experience—due to a perceived lack of demonstrated skills.

**Integrating Multiple Heuristics**

The intuitive model of voter decision-making theorizes that voters obtain just enough information they need to make decisions about who to vote for. So, examining different heuristics in isolation might not provide a complete picture of why voters choose certain candidates—especially in the nonpartisan context. Therefore, multiple heuristics should be integrated to examine how voter emphasis on certain heuristics varies based on electoral context. How do voters evaluate which nonpartisan heuristics are most important to them? Additionally, how does voter reliance on certain nonpartisan heuristics change with the inclusion of candidate party affiliation on the ballot? Based on the literature review, voters rely on the experience heuristic to find the most competent candidate, are biased toward incumbents, and use the identity heuristic as a proxy for ideology—when the party cue is absent. But when the party cue is present, it trumps every other heuristic. Therefore, I hypothesize that:

**H:** Voter reliance on nonpartisan heuristics will increase in the absence of a party cue, while reliance on the same nonpartisan heuristics will decrease in the presence of a party cue.

**Research Design**

In order to understand how voters make decisions in the presence and absence of partisan cues, I decided that my research design would consist of an experimental survey (see Appendix). In the survey, participants were presented with 6 election scenarios (tasks) where they chose between 2 fictional candidate profiles. To simulate the local electoral context, I listed the office that the candidates were running for (mayor) in each scenario—as most towns or cities have
some kind of elected executive. The participants were then provided with information about each candidate, or attributes, in tabular form that corresponded to the following nonpartisan heuristics: candidate job experience, incumbency status/name recognition, racial identity, and gender. Of the 6 tasks, 3 included 5 attributes (one being party cue) and 3 included 4 attributes (none of them being party cue). Because my experiment was fully randomized, I will be able to make causal claims about how my independent variables (the heuristics) affected my dependent variable (vote choice). In order to see if there was any correlation between respondents’ candidate selection choices and their personal background, I also asked them to indicate their party affiliation and respond to some additional demographic questions (such as their income, voter registration status, and voter behavior) at the end of the survey. I asked for this information at the end of the survey to avoid priming participants before they ran through the tasks.

**Conjoint Analysis**

The specific type of survey experiment that I conduct is a conjoint analysis. Initially used in marketing research, conjoint analyses are becoming increasingly popular among political scientists because they enable researchers to “estimate respondents’ preferences given their overall evaluations of alternative profiles that vary across multiple attributes” (Bansak et al. 2019, 21). That is, conjoint designs allow researchers to account for how various factors impact candidate selection. There are two types of conjoints—ratings-based and choice-based. The former asks subjects to evaluate options, while the latter asks subjects to choose between several alternatives—there are differences in the number of alternatives or options presented, number of attributes, and analytical methods used (Rao 2014). Because choice-based conjoints simulate real elections and are favored by political scientists, I run a choice-based conjoint.
Some considerations involved in designing a conjoint analysis are (1) the number of tasks, (2) the number of profiles, (3) the number of attributes, and (4) the randomization of attribute levels and ordering. Each task “presents the respondent with a number of profiles and the respondent selects their most preferred alternative… profiles are comprised of some number of attributes corresponding to particular characteristics of the profiles, and attributes can take on one of a set of discrete and pre-defined levels,” (Strezhnev et al. 2022, 2). In order to create the survey, I used the Conjoint Survey Design Tool software developed by Srezhnev et al. The SDT allowed me to manipulate the survey based on the four considerations mentioned above and then export it into Qualtrics to edit/subsequently disseminate. As described in the previous section, I presented 6 tasks to the participants—3 in the nonpartisan context and 3 in the partisan context. I also chose to uniformly randomize all of the attribute levels, meaning that it was equally likely that respondents would be presented with any of the attribute levels. I decided to use a paired-profile design (2 candidates in each task), as some findings indicate that they tend to have greater external validity than single-profile designs (Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Yamamoto 2015).

Limitations

As described by political scientist Dan Hopkins, a key problem when including too few attributes in a conjoint analysis is masking. Masking is when “respondents use one attribute because of perceived correlation with an unobserved attribute” (Hopkins 2015). For example, if an attribute table doesn’t include candidate issue positions, but includes candidate party affiliation, the effect of partisanship can be inflated. On the other hand, including too many attributes can cause another problem called survey satisficing. Satisficing is when respondents “revert to simple heuristics when presented with too many attributes because the task becomes more cognitively taxing for them,” (Hopkins 2015). I included 4 or 5 attributes in each profile.
and created two levels for each attribute—except for candidate experience, which had 4 levels. I did not randomize the order in which partisan or nonpartisan tasks were presented to participants but did randomize the order in which attributes were presented to respondents in each of the tasks. Because I’m only presenting 4-5 attributes to survey participants, I face potential issues with masking rather than satisficing. This is still defensible though, given that most published conjoint experiments include between 4-6 attributes with 2-4 levels each.

Additionally, conjoint analyses lack external validity. First, they present candidates to survey respondents as bundles of attributes. In the real world, voters see candidates as whole people, and external circumstances such as media coverage and candidate name-recognition can also influence vote choices. Second, conjoint analyses cannot be used to study the entire electoral process—they only attempt to replicate what happens when voters show up to the ballot box. Thus, my study is confined to this part of the process and also assumes that voters have some basic knowledge of candidates (e.g., their previous experience and whether they are running for reelection) beyond what can be gleaned from looking at names on the ballot. There is still great value in running a conjoint because it enables researchers to examine how changes in one variable (the political party cue, in my case) can alter voter behavior—without the interference of external factors like economic conditions or campaign spending. Also, conjoints help researchers understand how much value or emphasis respondents place on particular attributes.

Aside from the limitations of conjoint analyses, I also faced other limitations associated with fielding a survey. I could not control for whether participants were able to ‘figure out’ the goal of my experiment. (That is, whether they could clearly identify the differences between the nonpartisan/partisan conjoint tasks and temper their candidate selections accordingly.) I also could not control for whether participants understood the questions that were posed to them.
Though my contact information was listed on the IRB consent form, it was not easy for participants to contact me if they had any concerns or were unable to comprehend any of the questions while taking the survey. Finally, it should be noted that I likely had some sample bias. Scholars have found that MTurk workers tend to be disproportionately younger and located in urban areas (Huff and Tingley 2015). Others note that “MTurk samples [are] less racially and ethnically diverse, and more liberal and Democratic,” compared to American National Election Survey (ANES) Internet samples (Levay, Freese, and Druckman 2016, 6). I performed the preliminary analysis of my sample’s demographic makeup using the dplyr, dslabs, and ggplot2 packages in RStudio (see Appendix). I describe the sample in greater detail in my results section.

Methodology

To obtain a nationally representative convenience sample, I uploaded the survey to Amazon’s Mechanical Turk as a Human Intelligence Task (HIT) on March 4, 2022. MTurk enables researchers, or requesters, to find workers who can perform specific tasks like as taking surveys. HITs are assignments that requesters post on the platform for workers to complete—my survey, for example, counted as an individual HIT for a worker. I received 514 responses within 3 hours. Each survey participant, or worker, was paid $0.50 for their time, as the survey took about 2-3 minutes to complete. I determined this amount by dividing an hourly minimum wage ($15) by the estimated survey completion time. Since MTurk allows requesters to set qualifications for the workers who are eligible complete their assignments, I dictated that eligible workers must have a HIT approval rate greater than or equal to 96% and at least 500 approved HITs; per the best practices outlined by scholars who use MTurk for research (Abreu 2020). Once the workers completed my survey and pasted their completion code into MTurk, I had to
review and approve their submitted HITs and before they were automatically paid from funds loaded into my Amazon Web Services account.

For the purposes of my analysis, I excluded any survey responses with less than a 95% completion rate (meaning that the respondent exited the survey halfway through and did not complete all of the conjoint tasks), and any responses where the respondent failed a simple attention check question posed between the nonpartisan/partisan conjoint tasks. I was left with 493 responses to analyze. To perform the conjoint analyses in RStudio, I used the cjoint package developed by Barari et al. (2018) and the cregg package developed by Leeper and Barnfield (2020) (see Appendix). In total, I ran three separate analyses—one for the nonpartisan conjoint, one for the partisan conjoint, and one for the respondent political party subgroup analysis.

Quantitative Analysis

Findings

As part of the preliminary analysis, I examined the demographic makeup of my survey sample. The sample was disproportionately white and male. 83.16% of the sample was white, and 64.5% identified as male. In comparison, 67% of the national electorate was white in 2018 (Igielnik and Budiman 2020). This figure has likely changed as demographic shifts in the United States accelerate and the electorate becomes increasingly nonwhite. Though there is less data on the racial composition of local electorates, the share of non-Hispanic white voters declined in all 50 states (Igielnik and Budiman 2020). Additionally, the gender bias in the sample doesn’t mirror national data on gender and voter turnout. During the 2016 presidential election, 63% of eligible female voters voted, while only 59% of eligible male voters did (Igielnik 2020). It is unclear whether these findings extend to the state and local level, but they still help orient us.
Interestingly, my survey respondents also reported being quite politically active. Almost 95.33% of the sample was registered to vote and 60.85% were very likely to vote in a local election. This is unusual given that nationally, only about 27% of eligible voters vote in municipal elections (Hajnal 2018). About 50.51% of respondents considered themselves to be Democrats, while 26.37% and 22.11% considered themselves to be Republicans and Independents respectively. Also, about 23.73% of respondents could be described as middle-income, with 2021 household incomes between $40,001-$60,000. Thus, my subsequent conjoint analysis results could be biased because of how the sample was skewed.

*Interpreting Conjoint Analyses*

In order to make sense of the conjoint analyses, I first interpreted the Average Marginal Component Effect (AMCE) for each attribute and its corresponding levels. The AMCE is understood as “the average change in the probability that a profile will win support when it includes the listed attribute value instead of the baseline attribute value,” (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014, 19). To find the AMCE, researchers look at the proportion of respondents voting for a candidate with a certain attribute and compare it to the proportion voting for another candidate of the same attribute but a different level—while ignoring all other attribute categories. This attribute of a different level is referred to as the baseline. Because of the comparative way in which AMCEs are descriptively reported, they are subject to change in an attribute category if the baseline attribute value also changes (Bansak et al. 2019). For example, compared to the baseline of banker candidates, electrician candidates were about 5% more likely to garner support from voters in the nonpartisan conjoint (*Figure 1*). But if the baseline were electrician candidates, then banker candidates would be 5% less likely to garner support and AMCE would shift accordingly. It must be noted that the baseline attribute levels for both conjoints are female,
challenger, banker, Black, and Democrat. These baselines were randomly selected by the cjoint package, which I used to conduct my analyses. It is important to note that the AMCE averages the effects of different candidate attributes across all survey respondents; meaning that the effect of any particular attribute may be more pronounced on certain respondents compared to others.

The AMCE’s value is represented by the circle in the center of each confidence interval. To determine the AMCE, one must look at the conjoint output graph and determine where each circle is located. An AMCE between 0.0 and 0.1 would correspond to a certain candidate being 0-10% more likely to gain support, compared to the baseline. An AMCE between 0.0 and -0.1 would correspond to a certain candidate being 0-10% less likely to gain support, compared to the baseline. A confidence interval represents the likelihood of obtaining the same results if the experiment were repeated 100 times. The cjoint package automatically set confidence intervals at 95%. If any confidence interval crosses zero, the results must be interpreted more cautiously—it cannot be said that they are significant for a particular attribute level. For example, if a confidence interval does not cross 0, the result could be understood as significant.

Partisan Conjoint

Figure 1 shows estimated AMCEs for each of the 5 attributes included in my partisan conjoint with their 95% confidence intervals, whereby candidate selection measures the outcome variables. As part of the conjoint, I also generated p-values for all of the attribute levels. The p-values represent the probability that the conjoint analysis is statistically significant across different attribute categories and attribute levels. A p-value that is less than 0.05 is statistically significant. The attribute levels with the lowest p-values—male, lawyer, and Republican—also had confidence intervals that did not cross 0 (Table 1). Thus, their reported AMCEs were significant. In the partisan conjoint, being male reduces the probability that a candidate wins
support from voters by about 5%— an interesting finding given the significant gender discrepancies noted in politics (Figure 1). Compared to the baseline, Republican candidates were about 6% less likely to gain support (Figure 1). Finally, being a truck driver reduces support by 6%, and being a lawyer increases support by 9%, in comparison to the baseline (Figure 1). Though the confidence interval for the truck driver attribute level brushes against 0, I still consider it significant because my small sample size likely influenced confidence intervals.

The attribute levels with p-values greater than 0.05—incumbent, truck driver, and white— had confidence intervals that did cross 0 (Table 1). Thus, it cannot be said that their reported AMCEs are significant. Compared to the baseline, incumbent candidates were about 1% less likely to gain support (Figure 1). In this conjoint, being an electrician increases support for a candidate by 8%, in comparison to the baseline (Figure 1). Also, compared to the baseline, being white results in a slight reduction in the probability that a candidate wins support (Figure 1).

| Level         | Estimate | Std. Err | z value | Pr(>|z|)   |
|---------------|----------|----------|---------|-----------|
| Male          | -0.052793569 | 0.01776996 | -2.9709443 | 0.002968856 ** |
| Incumbent     | -0.013255370 | 0.01919125 | -0.6906986 | 0.489755000 |
| Electrician   | 0.022043363 | 0.02867565 | 0.7687136 | 0.442063334 |
| Lawyer        | 0.088809507 | 0.02636397 | 3.3685934 | 0.000755528 *** |
| Truck Driver  | -0.053447297 | 0.02848422 | -1.8763826 | 0.060602757 |
| Republican    | -0.063366123 | 0.02201125 | -2.8785841 | 0.003994648 ** |
| White         | -0.007985909 | 0.01956398 | -0.4081944 | 0.683130975 |

Table 1: Some attribute levels in the partisan conjoint, and their corresponding p-values. Note that the asterisk(s) indicate the significance of an attribute level.
Figure 1: Results from the partisan conjoint.

Nonpartisan Conjoint

Figure 2 shows estimated AMCEs for each of the 4 attributes included in my nonpartisan conjoint with their 95% confidence intervals, whereby candidate selection measures the outcome variables. As part of the conjoint, I also generated p-values for all of the attribute levels. There were no attribute levels with p-values less than 0.05 (Table 2). Thus, it cannot be stated than any of the AMCEs were clearly significant. In addition, all of the attribute level confidence intervals in this conjoint crossed zero, further indicating that no definitive statements can be made about the significance of my results. In the nonpartisan conjoint, compared to the baseline, being an incumbent reduces the probability that a candidate is chosen by about 2% (Figure 2).

Compared to the baseline attribute of banker, electrician candidates were 2.5% more likely to gain support, truck driver candidates were about 2% less likely to gain support, and lawyer candidates were about 0.5% more likely to gain support. Being white results in a slight
increase in the probability that a candidate wins support, compared to the baseline (*Figure 2*).

Being male, on the other hand, does not seem to affect a candidate’s likelihood of garnering support from voters compared to the baseline of female (*Figure 2*). Taken together, both conjoints illustrate “…the relative weight voters place on various criteria,” (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014, 19) and how that changes between electoral contexts.

| Level                    | Estimate | Std. Err | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|---------|---------|
| Male                     | 0.001594678 | 0.01838126 | 0.08675564 | 0.9308657 |
| Incumbent                | -0.013987152 | 0.01929901 | -0.72476003 | 0.4685993 |
| Electrician              | 0.026149856  | 0.02642311 | 0.98965850 | 0.3223411 |
| Lawyer                   | 0.005718288  | 0.02549445 | 0.22429535 | 0.8225275 |
| Truck Driver             | -0.019524140 | 0.02540592 | -0.76848775 | 0.4421975 |
| White                    | 0.011336574  | 0.01855933 | 0.61082872 | 0.5413130 |

*Table 2:* Some attribute levels in the nonpartisan conjoint, and their corresponding p-values.

Note that the asterisk(s) indicate the significance of an attribute level.

*Figure 2:* Results from the nonpartisan conjoint.
Interpreting Subgroup Analyses

It is surprising that candidate gender and experience have a more significant effect on voters in the partisan conjoint. This runs counter to my initial assumptions that these two heuristics would be more significant in the nonpartisan conjoint, where candidate party affiliation is unclear, and voters are attempting to ascertain candidates’ ideological/policy positions by wielding nonpartisan heuristics. A subgroup analysis that accounts for respondent political party in both conjoints and teases out more nuance is thus necessary. Instead of relying on AMCEs to interpret the subgroup analyses, I used marginal means (MMs). The MM, which Leeper et al. argue is a better measurement tool, “describes the level of favorability toward profiles that have a particular feature level, marginalizing across all other features,” (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020, 210). Unlike the AMCE, there is no baseline attribute level that the MM is measured against. For the AMCE, the reference category chosen as a baseline affects subsequent interpretations of the results—especially for subgroup analysis, where AMCEs are recalculated separately by subgroup (called conditional AMCEs) and then compared. Thus, the MM helps researchers interpret conjoint subgroup analyses more carefully than the AMCE and provides clearer descriptive summaries of respondent choices.

For example, in the partisan conjoint, we see that the effect of switching a candidate’s occupation from the baseline of banker to lawyer is greater compared to the nonpartisan conjoint. But it is unclear where this difference is coming from—it cannot be descriptively stated that respondents in the partisan conjoint support lawyers more than respondents in the nonpartisan conjoint. It could be that the nonpartisan conjoint respondents support bankers less than lawyers. To make descriptive observations, one must look at the MM. The MM is interpreted like the AMCE—its value is represented by the circle in the center of each confidence interval. To
determine the MM, one must look at the conjoint output graph and determine where each circle is located. An MM between 0.5 and 0.6 would correspond to a certain candidate being 0-10% more likely to gain support. An AMCE between 0.5 and 0.4 would correspond to a certain candidate being 0-10% less likely to gain support. The MM is reported descriptively in a similar manner to the AMCE but without being compared to a baseline attribute level.

Before conducting the subgroup analysis, I excluded any respondents who identified as Independents or Something else. Other scholars similarly limit the scope of their analysis. In their conjoint analysis that examines the impact of candidate occupation on voters, Kirkland and Coppock only report the conditional AMCEs for Democrats and Republicans in their sample, not the Independents (Kirkland and Coppock 2018). I conducted two subgroup analyses—one for the partisan conjoint and one for the nonpartisan conjoint.

Partisan Conjoint by Respondent Political Party

Figure 3 shows estimated MMs for the 5 attributes included in my partisan conjoint, separated in each category by respondent political party. The attribute levels truck driver-Republican, truck driver-Democrat, lawyer-Democrat, white-Democrat, Black-Democrat, male-Democrat, female-Democrat, political party-Democrat, and political party-Republican, had confidence intervals that did not cross 0, indicating that their reported MMs are significant (Table 2). In this conjoint, lawyer candidates receive more support from Democrats (at nearly 12%) compared to Republicans (Figure 3). However, being a truck driver reduces support for a candidate among Republicans by 8% and Democrats by 11% (Figure 3). In terms of the race and gender attributes, female candidates receive around 5% more support from Democrats and black candidates receive about 3% more support from this same group (Figure 3). Unsurprisingly, Democratic candidates were 15% more likely to garner support from Democrats and Republican
candidates were 13% more likely to garner support from Republicans. The amount of support that respondents from one party gave to candidates of the other party dropped precipitously and indicated blatant partisanship (*Figure 3*).

The attribute levels incumbent-Republican, incumbent-Democrat, challenger-Republican, challenger-Democrat, lawyer-Republican, electrician-Republican, electrician-Democrat, banker-Republican, banker-Democrat, white-Republican, Black-Republican, female-Republican, male-Republican had confidence intervals that did cross 0 (*Table 2*). Thus, it cannot be stated that their reported MMs are significant. Being an incumbent increases support for a candidate among Republican respondents by about 2%, while being a challenger decreases support among this group by the same percentage (*Figure 3*). Among Democrats, it’s flipped (where incumbents receive less support than challengers), but with a 1% margin of support instead of 2% (*Figure 3*). Being an electrician in the partisan conjoint means that a candidate will receive more support from Republicans (4%) compared to Democrats—where they face a 1% reduction in support (*Figure 3*). Being a banker increases support for a candidate by 1% among Republicans and decreases support for a candidate by 2.5% among Democrats (*Figure 3*). Though being a lawyer has a significant effect on support for a candidate among Democrats, the same cannot be said for Republicans where the effect is almost 0. In terms of the race and gender attributes, white candidates are 3.5% more likely to gain support among Republicans than Black candidates, and male candidates are 2% more likely to gain support from this same group compared to female candidates (*Figure 3*). Though these findings related to candidate identity were the opposite of what Democratic respondents did, they are less significant.
**Figure 3:** A subgroup analysis of the partisan conjoint (by respondent party affiliation).

**Nonpartisan Conjoint by Respondent Political Party**

*Figure 4* shows estimated MMs for the 4 attributes included in my nonpartisan conjoint, separated in each category by respondent political party. All of the attribute levels had confidence intervals that crossed 0 (*Table 2*). Thus, it cannot be stated that their reported MMs are significant. In the nonpartisan conjoint, being an incumbent reduces support for a candidate among Republican respondents by about 4%, while being a challenger increases support among this group by the same percentage (*Figure 4*). This is perhaps indicative of the burgeoning anti-establishment sentiments among conservatives that become more salient in the absence of a clear party cue indicating a candidate’s ideology. Though among Democrats, incumbent candidates are not any likelier to gain their support than challenger candidates (*Figure 4*). Regarding the identity attributes, Democratic support for candidates of both genders and races is constant. It appears that these respondents have no clear preference for male or female candidates, or for...
Black or white candidates (*Figure 4*). This is not the case for Republican respondents, who still overwhelmingly favor white and male candidates in the nonpartisan conjoint like they do in the partisan conjoint.

The most interesting findings in this subgroup analysis pertain to candidate experience. In the nonpartisan conjoint, candidates who are lawyers receive about the same levels of support from Republicans and Democrats (~2% less)—in sharp contrast to the partisan conjoint (*Figure 4*). Being a banker reduces support for a candidate by 4.5% among Republicans and increases support for a candidate by 3.5% among Democrats (*Figure 4*). Turning to the blue-collar professions, the lack of support among Democratic respondents for truck driver candidates remains almost the same between the two conjoints. However, being a truck driver increases support for a candidate among Republican respondents by 2% in the nonpartisan conjoint. Being an electrician increases support for a candidate among Democrats and Republicans by 2% and 3% respectively (*Figure 4*).

*Figure 4*: A subgroup analysis of the nonpartisan conjoint (by respondent party affiliation).
Discussion

The findings detailed above suggest that voter emphasis on nonpartisan heuristics does change based on electoral context, thus supporting my original hypothesis. However, the directionality of this change is unexpected and contradictory to my hypothesis. I initially anticipated greater respondent reliance on nonpartisan heuristics in my nonpartisan conjoint because the lack of a party cue would theoretically compel respondents to latch onto other types of cues. Nevertheless, in the partisan conjoint, it is clear that some nonpartisan heuristics (especially those pertaining to candidate identity and experience) are more significant to respondents than they are in the nonpartisan conjoint. For example, male and female candidates receive about the same levels of support in nonpartisan conjoint. But the probability of male candidates receiving support from respondents actually drops in the partisan conjoint. The subgroup analysis further illuminates the trend of respondent reliance on identity heuristics in the partisan electoral context. Though Republican opposition to Black and female candidates remains about the same across both conjoints, Democratic support for Black candidates and female candidates increases in the partisan conjoint.

It must be noted that the findings pertaining to the candidate experience heuristic in both conjoints are less clear-cut, indicating that other factors could be influencing differential levels of support for candidates. However, the subgroup analysis of the partisan conjoint illustrates that lawyer candidates are significantly more likely to garner support among Democrats. This could reflect growing anti-elite bias among the Republican base and perceptions among the Democratic base that lawyers are inherently more liberal. Additionally, truck driver candidates are less likely to gain support among respondents of both parties. The broad reduction in support for truck drivers could be attributed to the media coverage at the time I fielded my survey. In March 2022,
news about convoys of truckers leading anti-pandemic restriction protests in North America dominated headlines (Ngo, Bednar, and Ray 2022). This could have given truck driver profession a distinctly conservative ideological connotation in the minds of my survey respondents. It appears then, that in the presence of a party cue, candidate job experience is a more significant heuristic for Democrats than it is for Republicans. This is perhaps indicative of Democrats using candidate occupation to further label or stereotype candidates ideologically – e.g., whether they are moderate or progressive—if a party cue is already provided. Interactions between perceived candidate competence and political party should be explored in greater detail. Because my confidence intervals were quite wide across all attributes, conducting more conjoint analyses with larger sample sizes is necessary in order to qualify my findings.

**Conclusion**

This thesis was not initially focused on partisan identity in polarized societies. Going into the conjoint experiment, I expected that voter reliance on nonpartisan heuristics would increase in the absence of a party cue and decrease in its presence. But my results were the complete opposite. In the partisan conjoint, there was respondent overreliance on the candidate experience and identity heuristics compared to the nonpartisan conjoint. After disaggregating the data by respondent political party, it was evident that these findings were particularly pronounced among Democrats—they specifically favored Black candidates, female candidates, and candidates with legal backgrounds. The partisan priming process therefore made the survey respondents lean more heavily on nonpartisan cues they did not otherwise wield in the nonpartisan conjoint. Instead of attempting to discern candidate party affiliation by using the other heuristics (incumbency status, occupational experience, or racial/gender identity) as proxies for party, the
respondents seemed unable to immediately evaluate candidates in the nonpartisan conjoint. The bias for/against certain types of candidates associated with the presentation of a party cue has implications for how candidates should present themselves to voters. It is possible that the right kind of political advertising and messaging can help candidates overcome stereotypes about how their background supposedly informs their partisan beliefs.

Based on my findings, I argue that certain nonpartisan heuristics enable respondents to further stereotype candidates once the party cue activates their partisanship. Due to increased affective and ideological polarization, partisanship is now the dominant lens through which voters see the world and perceive others. For example, recent research indicates that more extreme affective polarization correlates with increased dehumanization of members of the opposing party (Martherus et al. 2019). Also, when people find out someone’s party affiliation, they immediately jump to a series of conclusions about them/their lifestyle that aren’t directly related to ideology. A prominent example of this phenomenon is the use of the ‘latte liberal’ moniker by conservatives to refer to liberals (Kelly 2014). But when left without clear information on party affiliation, respondents cannot be so prejudiced about candidates based on perceived links between identity, experience, and ideology. Therefore, the effects of these cues on a candidate’s likelihood of garnering support are less pronounced in the nonpartisan context.

This thesis underscores the centrality of party in voter-decision making, and how it can hamper voters’ abilities to think clearly or confront cognitive challenges posed by the lack of a party cue. It also raises further questions about voters’ priorities and candidate selection considerations in nonpartisan elections if they are not that reliant on any heuristics like race, gender, experience, and incumbency status. Do other factors like name recognition, media coverage, and positions on very specific issues matter more to voters in the nonpartisan context?
Perhaps other scholars can attempt to answer this question through a series of conjoint experiments.

Most importantly though, my thesis offers a compelling argument for the retention of nonpartisan elections at the local level and their expansion at the state/county level. Nonpartisan elections force voters to drop their partisan lenses and account for multiple factors when deciding who to vote for, rather than using political party to make sense of everything that makes a candidate unique. But the lack of a party cue means that it will take voters more time/effort to choose candidates—thereby diminishing participation. With initiatives in place to boost voter turnout (especially among marginalized groups) and disseminate more information about candidates, nonpartisan elections can be expanded effectively and fulfill their goal of de-centering partisanship. Nonpartisan elections can combat polarization, but only if they are coupled with plans to address the challenges voters face without any party cues to guide them.
Appendix

I. All code (for the preliminary sample analysis, conjoint analyses, and subgroup analyses) is available upon request.

II. Survey Questions (see the following page).
Informed Consent

This survey aims to collect data for a thesis that examines voter behavior in elections. You will be asked questions about your candidate preferences and personal background.

Please try to answer each question as accurately as possible. The survey should take about 2-3 minutes to complete, for which you will be paid $0.50. Your responses will be confidential and anonymous. There are processes in place to protect data confidentiality and privacy, but there is minimal risk of a breach in confidentiality. Any personal information collected during the survey will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. If you choose not to participate or change your mind during the survey, you will not face any penalties.

If you have further questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact Bharati Ganesh (bganesh@brynmawr.edu). You may also address any concerns to the chairperson of Haverford College's IRB (a committee with oversight over human subject research) via hc-irb@haverford.edu. Thank you!

*PLEASE PRINT A COPY OF THIS PAGE FOR YOUR RECORDS*

I CONSENT to participating in this survey.

Check the box to verify your identity.

☐ I'm not a robot

reCAPTCHA

Privacy · Terms
Part I

Please review the options detailed in the table below, then answer the question.

**Incumbent:** currently serving as mayor  
**Challenger:** running to be new mayor

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Which candidate would you vote for as mayor?

Candidate 1       Candidate 2

Please review the options detailed in the table below, then answer the question.

**Incumbent:** currently serving as mayor  
**Challenger:** running to be new mayor

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Which of candidate would you vote for as mayor?

Candidate 1       Candidate 2
Please review the options detailed in the table below, then answer the question.

**Incumbent:** currently serving as mayor  
**Challenger:** running to be new mayor

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Which candidate would you vote for as mayor?

Candidate 1  
Candidate 2

**Part II**

**In what month were you born? Regardless of the month, please select August.**

January  
February  
March  
April  
May  
June  
July  
August  
September  
October  
November  
December

Please review the options detailed in the table below, then answer the question.
Incumbent: currently serving as mayor
Challenger: running to be new mayor

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Which candidate would you vote for as mayor?

Candidate 1          Candidate 2

Please review the options detailed in the table below, then answer the question.
Incumbent: currently serving as mayor
Challenger: running to be new mayor

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Which candidate would you vote for as mayor?

Candidate 1          Candidate 2

Please review the options detailed in the table below, then answer the question.
Incumbent: currently serving as mayor
Challenger: running to be new mayor

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<tr>
<td>e://Field/F-3-1-5</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which candidate would you vote for as mayor?

Candidate 1
Candidate 2

Demographic Questions

Are you registered to vote?

Yes
No

How likely would you be to vote in a local election (e.g. for your town, city, or county)?

Very Unlikely
Unlikely
Likely
Very Likely
Don't Know

Do you usually consider yourself to be a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or something else?

Democrat
Republic
Independent
Something else

Do you think of yourself as a... ?

Strong Democrat
Not very strong Democrat

Do you think of yourself as a... ?

Strong Republican
Not very strong Republican

Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican party or to the Democratic party?

Closer to the Republican party
Closer to the Democratic party
Neither

Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

Yes
No

What is your racial identity?

Black or African-American
White
Asian
American Indian or Alaskan Native
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

How do you currently describe your gender identity?
Male
Female
Transgender
None of these

What was your total household income in 2021 (approximately)?

- Under $20,000
- $20,001-$40,000
- $40,001-$60,000
- $60,001-$80,000
- $80,001-$100,000
- Over $100,000

Is there anything you would like to share with the researcher?

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Here is your ID: ${e://Field(Random%20ID)}

Copy this value to paste into MTurk. Once you have copied the ID, please click the next button to submit your survey.
Works Cited


