

WHAT ARE VOTERS REALLY THINKING?: A LENS MODEL APPROACH TO
VOTING BEHAVIOR

by

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(Under the Direction of ROB MAHAN)

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to get a better look at what information people look for and how they utilize it when voting for public office. Policy capturing was used to go beyond participants' inaccurate insight as to what cues mattered when they were making voting decisions about "paper" candidates. Gender and ethnic biases were investigated as well as several other corollary variables to explain particular voting policies. Statistical analysis revealed numerous patterns in what cues matter to voters and how that information was utilized by the sample of 299 undergraduate students. In addition, implications of these patterns are discussed in light of the future of politics in America.

INDEX WORDS: Voting behavior, Bradley effect, lens model, policy capturing, politics, ethnicity, gender, political sophistication, political decision making

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B.S., Juniata College, 2006

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2009

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August 2009

DEDICATION

I would like to thank all those who have believed in me along the way. You are the reason I have made it this far. Thank to all of the UGA Accidentals past and present. Without you I would have gone crazy a long time ago. Special thanks go to Eric Drucker and Kiley Dorton for their work on the program that collected data for this study. You guys saved thousands of innocent trees with your work and I am so appreciative of the hard work you both did to help me complete this.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Lens Model.....	2
General Model of Voting Policies.....	4
Demographic vs. Policy Cues Used	5
Election Cues.....	7
Other Cues of Interest.....	17
In Search of a Common Voting Policy	20
Implications	23
2 METHODS	25
Measures.....	25
Lens Model Analysis.....	28
Procedure.....	30
3 RESULTS	33
General Analysis	33
Tests of Hypotheses.....	34
4 DISCUSSION.....	44

Discussion of Findings	44
Caveats and Future Research	51
Implications	53
REFERENCES	55
APPENDICES	64
A Political sophistication index adapted from Carpini & Keeter (1993).	65
B List of Cue Values and Corresponding Characteristics of Paper Candidates....	66

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of R^2 Values	33
Table 2: Zero-order Correlation Matrix of Study Variables	34
Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of $Z_{\text{difference}}$ Scores	50

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Formal Depiction of the Lens Model (From Mahan et al., 1998).	3
Figure 2: Template of Paper Candidate.	31

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The mountains of literature on voting behavior could have never prepared the United States for the 2008 voting season. For the first time in history, the final two major candidates of the DNC that are battling for the chance to be their party's Presidential nominee for the general election were not White males. This heated battle has raised questions about the electability of minorities and women in a general election. While many people would never admit that prejudice drives their vote, that prejudice may bias the performance of either candidate at the polls. This study seeks to better understand how people come to their decisions when they pull the lever for a candidate in a more multicultural election, as well as develop a model of voting behavior using methods that have not, to date, been used in research on voting behavior.

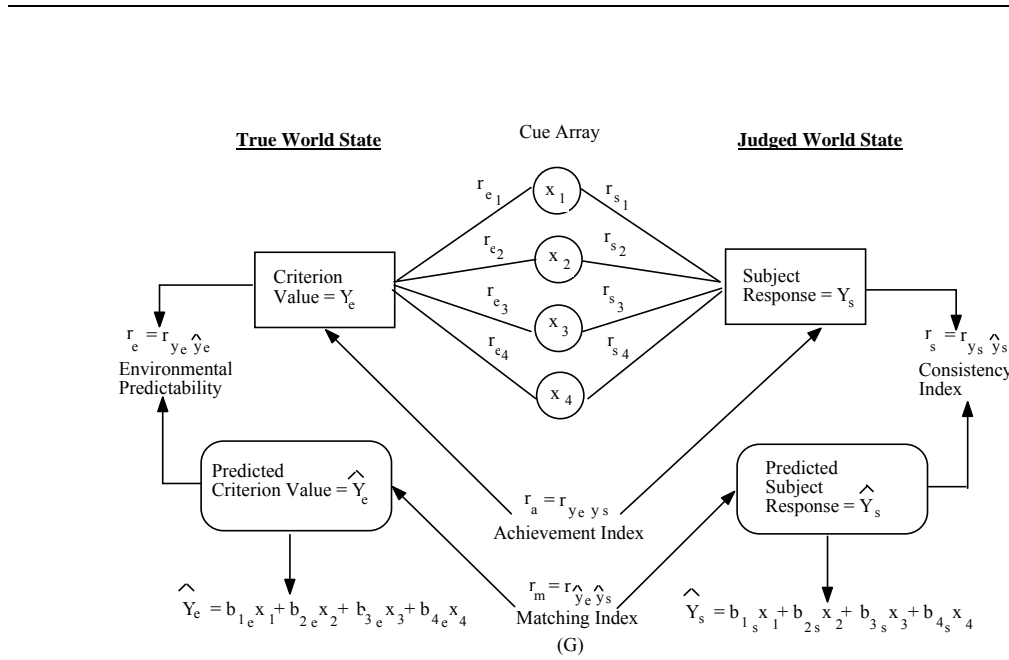
Much of the research in voting behavior is done post-hoc. These studies look at voting records and exit polls to find trends, correlates, and patterns that can predict future voting. While this method of using the past to predict the future is useful and quite effective at predicting voting patterns and trends in the short term, often the findings do not hold up over the long-term. This study seeks to give a greater understanding to the cognitive aspects of voter decision making rather than focus on the outcomes of the decisions as post-hoc studies do. In addition, the focus of this study is not on what specific political issues matter to individuals, per say, but on comparing the utilization of surface cues (ethnicity, gender, etc.) versus general policy cues (political ideology). The use of Brunswik's Lens Model (Brunswik, Hammond, & Stewart, 2000) will allow for a unique view of what cues voters use and how they use them in making voting decisions.

Lens Model

The modeling framework used in this study was developed by an Austrian-American psychologist, Egon Brunswik, to model human judgment. The idea behind the model is that humans cannot make direct contact with objects and events in the world outside us. Humans perceive these things indirectly via our sense organs through a ‘lens’ of information that mediates between external events and internal perceptions. The term ‘lens’ refers to the idea that humans view the world through a myopic lens that is biased because the cues that are used to make judgments do not perfectly predict any particular criterion. Cues are inter-correlated and this creates uncertainty in judgment environments. The lens model considers the context that judgments are made, in addition to the judgments themselves. The idea is that judges (in this case, voters) are trying to see some distal ‘true’ state of the world (who is the “true” best candidate). However, they can only do so through a proximal lens of information or cues (information about the candidates, either observed or from memory) that are available at the time of judgment (Hastie & Dawes, 2000).

A depiction of the general form of the lens model is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Formal Depiction of the Lens Model (From Mahan et al., 1998).



The center of the model represents the “cue array,” which is the list of each cue (x_i) that is potentially used in making a particular judgment. In this study, these include the information about each candidate on the “paper” candidates. The right side represents the “judged world state.” This side gives the judgment (Y_s) made by the judge and the weights, or “cue utilizations” (r_{si}) that were given to each of the cues in making that judgment. The pattern of weights and cues on this side make up a person’s decision *policy*. The left side of the lens represents the “true world state” that is beyond a judge’s direct access. The judgment on this side is the true to-be-judged state of the world, or criterion (Y_e). The weights or “ecological validities” on the left represent the true weights (r_{ei}) that each cue has in relation to the criterion (Hastie & Dawes, 2000).

The lens model is a meta-theory that represents how judges interact with their ecologies. It is a formal model that can be adapted to fit in many contexts. In the current

study, not all of the parts of the model will be utilized. The type of lens modeling the current study will utilize has been termed a *single system*, or *policy capturing* model. This type of model lacks a feasible ecological criterion and true ecological validities (Cooksey, 1996). Since there is no way of knowing what the *best* candidate choice is, there is no value for the left side criterion. In addition, the ecological validities are not necessarily the true weights that are beyond the judge's access in the strict sense. In the case of this study, the ecological validities are represented by the weights that the individual says or *thinks* they give each cue. In this way, the left side will represent decisions in a real world social context. In comparison, the right side represents the weights derived from the lens model analysis. These are reflective of the cognitive weights that a person gives each cue outside of the influences of the social context of the left side.

This modeling makes a clear distinction between what a person says matters when making a decision and cognitively, what they are actually using to make decisions. This is important in the current context because people can make political decisions and by either lying or not actually knowing, give inaccurate reasoning for why they made a particular decision. In this way, the current study will get beyond the limitations of previous research to account for self-monitoring, lying, and lack of awareness of why decisions are made.

General Model of Voting Policies

One of the major contributions of this study is to see what a voter's decision policy looks like and to show what variables that correlate with certain voting decision

policies. No literature was identified that had specifically modeled the cues and cue utilization of individual voters via the use of policy capturing.

Decision Patterns

In the many years of judgment and decision making research, several patterns have been found. While this is not a claim they generalize to all situations and judgments, they have been robust and may come in to play in voting decisions. One pattern is that judges tend to only utilize a few (usually 3-5) cues to make their decisions (Hastie & Dawes, 2000). This is significant in the voting context since there is tons of information that voters are bombarded with from campaigns, media, church, etc.

Another trend in decision making research is that judges often lack the insight to know their true policies (Hastie & Dawes, 2000). This is the reason for using policy capturing modeling in the current study. Often polls ask people why they voted in the manner they did or what mattered to them most when they voted. If these polls influence other voters decisions or how a candidate campaigns, they could be basing their decisions on very inaccurate data. The policy capturing model can compare a judge's stated policy to their actual policy. In addition to finding out if judges know their policy, this study's design will allow for insight into how people distort their stated policies to appear non-biased in social contexts.

Demographic versus Policy Cues Used

Numerous studies have shown that voters utilize demographic cues such as gender, ethnicity, etc. as cues in making their decisions (Bendyna & Lake, 1994; Cook, 1994; Cutler, 2002; Dolan, 1998; Grofman, 1993; Huddy, 1994; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Plutzer & Zipp, 1996; Popkin, 1991; Rubinfeld, 1991; Sigelman et al., 1995; Tam,

1995; Tate, 1993; Terkildsen, 1993; Tolleson Rinehard, 1992; Vanderleeuw, 1990). The belief is that voters, especially those that lack policy information of candidates or those who have no strong opinions, use demographic characteristics as short-cuts or proxies for the policy information when voting (Cutler, 2002; Popkin, 1991). It is not a surprise that many voters typically do not follow all of the issues in an election and may not know a great deal of information about where a particular candidate stands on every issue. Thus, they may prefer candidates or leaders that are most demographically similar to themselves. In line with research suggesting that individuals rely on only a few cues when making decisions, voters may rely on only a few demographic cues as short-cuts to compensate for the lack of cognitive processing capacity.

Preferences for those who are demographically similar have been shown frequently in voting research. Women have been shown to be more likely to vote for female candidates (Bendyna & Lake, 1994; Cook, 1994; Cutler, 2002; Dolan, 1998; Huddy, 1994; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Plutzer & Zipp, 1996; Tolleson Rinehard, 1992). Similarly, Black candidates have been shown to receive stronger support from Black voters (Cutler, 2002; Sigelman et al., 1995; Tate, 1993; Terkildsen, 1993). In addition, several ethnic groups have shown preferences to vote along ethnic lines. Asian, Black, Caucasian, and Hispanic Americans show tendencies to vote for male candidates who are of the same race as the voter (Grofman, 1993; Rubinfeld, 1991; Tam, 1995; Vanderleeuw, 1990). The effect of ethnicity has not only been shown in the lab, but in ecological contexts as well. The finding that the majority of Black elected officials represent districts where African Americans and other minority groups represent the

majority is a sign that voters may utilize ethnicity and other demographic cues to make their voting decisions (Pettigrew & Alston, 1988).

These findings are supported by several theories on voting. Two models, the “Impression-Driven Model of Candidate Appraisal” (Lodge, McGraw, & Stroh, 1989) and the “Political Information Processing” model (Wyer & Ottati, 1993) support the idea that voters’ initial evaluation of a candidate are based on categorization of the candidate on their socio-demographic characteristics. Voters who become more informed and seek out more information update these initial evaluations “on-line” as more information is obtained. One would expect these initial categorizations, or stereotypes, to become less influential as more information is obtained (Hastie & Park, 1986). However, at least one study has shown that socio-demographic cues still have significant effects for these more informed ‘policy’ voters (Cutler, 2002).

However, many voters do not seek out more information and are left at the voting booth with their initial views of the candidates. This study will shed light onto how much weight voters of different types give socio-demographic characteristics as opposed to policy cues.

- **Hypothesis 1:** *Voters will utilize socio-demographic characteristics like gender and ethnicity as significant cues in their voting decisions.*

Election Cues

Ethnicity

The application of the lens model to voting behavior can shed light on the prevalence and causes of several voting patterns and phenomena that have been seen at the polls in the past 25 years. While there are a greater number of African-Americans in

public office than they were 50 years ago, most are elected in districts where the majority of the population is of minority status (Darden, 1984, Pettigrew & Alston, 1988). Several studies have already shown the detrimental effects that racial prejudice can have on support for a Black candidate (Becker & Heaton, 1967; Sears, Citrin, & Kosterman, 1987; Terkildsen, 1993). These findings of the negative effects of racism in voting could be the cause of voting patterns seen in more recent elections.

One of the phenomena that this study seeks to better understand is something that has been called the “Bradley” or “Wilder” Effect. In 1982, African-American Mayor of Los Angeles, Tom Bradley, was projected to be the winner of the race for governor of California. He narrowly lost this election. A similar pattern was seen in the 1989 race for governor of Virginia when Douglas Wilder squeaked by with a win after having a very comfortable lead in the weeks before the election based on polling data (Cose, 2006). This same pattern has occurred in several other races since Bradley’s 1982 bid. The cause of this is believed to deal with the desire of White voters to appear non-racially biased. In so, they tell pollsters they are going to vote for the minority candidate, but in the privacy of the voting booth, they do not.

As mentioned above, voters tend to use stereotypes to categorize candidates. Devine (1989) has suggested that it is individual levels of racial tolerance that may lead to controlled processing of racial information and, ultimately, how that information is used in decision making. The Bradley effect may be a form of what Gaertner and Dovidio (1986) have called, “aversive racism.” Aversive racism, or modern racism, is a modern form of racism that is indicative of Whites who endorse egalitarian values and consider themselves non-prejudiced. These people do not overtly show their prejudice,

but do it in subtle ways that do not threaten their non-prejudiced self-image. Their often unconscious prejudices manifest themselves in situations where discrimination can be rationalized away via other factors. This may be the cause of political occurrences like the Bradley effect. Outwardly to pollsters, White voters do not want to say they will not vote for the minority candidate to protect their non-prejudice self-image. However, when they are in the privacy of the voting booth, their unconscious prejudice can have its real effect. This is a good example of Devine's (1989) belief that racial tolerance is a predictor of how racial information is processed and incorporated in decision making.

Numerous studies have looked at polling data compared to actual results and have shown low correlations between pre-election estimates and final vote tallies for Black candidates in bi-racial contests (Bergholz, 1982; Clymer, 1989; Finkel, Guterbock, & Borg, 1991; Pettigrew & Alston, 1988; Sussman, 1985). While the 2008 Presidential election did not show this trend (possibly due to the larger scale of the election, among other things), other contests at local and state levels may still exhibit this type of occurrence.

It is not just the ethnicity of the candidate that affects voters. The effects are partially dependent on the ethnicity of the voter themselves. Numerous studies have shown that voters vote along racial-ethnic lines when candidates are male (Grofman, 1993; Rubinfeld, 1994; Vanderleeuw, 1990). However, there may be a general bias against non-White candidates based on stereotypes and heuristic processing. Since there has never been a non-White President in the United States, people may unconsciously associate the position with White males and thus hold a bias against minority candidates.

However, this bias may not apply equally to all groups. It would be expected that White voters would be the most likely to hold a bias against voting for a minority candidate. Research has shown that Anglos have a tendency to stereotype minority candidates as unsuited to hold office (Williams, 1990). It is not known if this bias will hold for minority voters, especially when they share the same ethnicity with the candidate. Minority groups may be more likely to vote for minority candidates because of an assumption that voting a minority into office would lead to the minority candidate advocating for minority groups. In support of this idea, it has been shown that people with a certain socio-demographic characteristic, such as ethnicity, prefer candidates with the same characteristics (Sigelman, et al., 1995; Tate, 1993; Terkildsen, 1993).

One caveat to the general support of a candidate based on socio-demographic similarity is that Black voters have been one of the most reliable voting blocs for Democrats for decades (Welch & Foster, 1992). In addition to polling and voting trends, empirical studies have shown that Black voters are not as willing to cross party lines to vote for a Republican, even if that candidate is Black (Kidd, Diggs, Farooq, & Murray, 2007). This may be due to what many consider the progressive nature of the Democratic Party in civil rights legislation and support of equality. This does suggest a potential interaction between ethnicity and party affiliation.

The above leads to the following hypotheses:

- **Hypothesis 2:** *Voters high in modern racism will give low or no weight to ethnicity as a cue in their stated policy, but will give significant weight to ethnicity in their actual policy.*

- **Hypothesis 3:** *Black voters will give more weight to party affiliation of the candidate than they give to the ethnicity of the candidate.*

Gender

The gender voting bloc gets a great deal of consideration during every election. If you look at an exit poll from just about any election, a gender breakdown of voting will be one of the first polls listed. Since the majority of political positions being voted on are races between men, it is of particular interest to understand how women vote when they have the choice to pick a female candidate for political office.

Not only has the position of the President of the United States always been held by a White person, it has always been filled by a male as well. In the same way White voters can show unconscious bias at the polls, male voters can say they are willing to vote for a female and not do it because of a gender bias. Some research has supported this reluctance to vote for female candidates. Fox and Smith (1998) used hypothetical questions about potential candidates and uncovered such a gender bias.

Similar to aversive racism, a modern form of sexism has been shown to exist as well. Swim et al. (1995) found support for a different type of sexism referred to as, “modern sexism.” This is much like aversive racism in that it is characterized by the denial of continued discrimination against women. Modern sexism is also characterized by antagonism towards women’s demands and a lack of support for programs and policies that are aimed at helping advance women’s rights. By not supporting these programs and policies, they are not necessarily being overtly sexist, but their covert sexist views still have their desired effect.

In addition to the effects of sexism on voting, there are other ways that women may be victim to stereotyping in elections. Women are seen as more liberal than men running for office (Brians, 2005; McDermott, 1997, 1998). Also, voters tend to infer the stereotypical female traits in female candidates. Women are seen as more honest and as supportive of issues that are more “feminine,” such as education, the arts, and health care (Leeper, 1991). Kaid, Myers, Pipp, and Hunter (1984) found that women candidates in mock TV ads were seen as more sophisticated, honest, attractive, aggressive, strong, and active than male candidates. However, all these seemingly positive traits do not translate into votes. Women candidates are most often not preferred over male candidates by voters (Fox & Smith, 1998).

Generally, a voter with a particular characteristic will prefer a candidate with the same characteristic. Women voters have also been shown to support female candidates far more than male voters (Bendyna & Lake, 2004; Brians, 2005; Dolan, 1998; 2004; Fox, 1997; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Plutzer & Zipp, 1996; Tolleson Rinehard, 1992). In addition, Canadian voters are less likely to support a party whose leader was of the opposite sex (Cutler, 2002). However, this finding does have its contexts. While this finding may suggest that gender may trump party affiliation for female voters, Brians (2005) found that Republican women were willing to cross party lines to vote for a Democratic female candidate, but Democratic female voters would not do the same for a Republican female candidate.

However, there may be another side to a general female preference for female candidates. There is a great deal of research showing that both men and women prefer male bosses (Gallup, 1996; Rubner, 1991), experts, and leaders (Eagly & Karau, 1991;

Watson, 1988; Wright, 1976) to female ones. To elucidate these findings, it has been suggested that female authorities violate the traditional gender roles of career men and domestic women. This violation leads to preferring leaders, bosses, and so on, that fit typical gender roles (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000). It has been suggested that when gender is a cue to legitimacy, men are accorded more just because they are male (Berger, Fisek, Norman & Zelditch, 1977). The strength of the stereotype of men and authority over women and authority may lead to both men and women being biased against women candidates due to a negative view of female authority. Both women and men have shown more implicitly negative attitudes towards female authority (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000). Since men have controlled the White House for its history, men may be preferred over women in a Presidential election through sheer association with the position and preference for male authority.

However, these preferences have not always translated into similar findings in voting preferences (Burrell, 1994; Chaney & Sinclair, 1994; Ekstrand & Eckert, 1981; Leeper, 1991). One study that did find gender bias in voting suggested that there may be other variables not included in their study that may dictate how and when this bias appears (Fox & Smith, 1998).

Being a female voter may entail more than just supporting a female candidate. Brians (2005) and other prior research (McDermott, 1997, 1998) suggest women voters and politicians are typically more liberal than their male counterparts. This would suggest that women would prefer more liberal candidates. Indeed, much research has shown the disproportional support of Democratic candidates by women voters (Brians,

2005; Schlesinger & Heldman, 2001). This finding is expected to lead to significant weight given to party affiliation for female voters.

Clearly, modern forms of sexism, in addition to other stereotypes, have and may continue to play a role in voting behavior of individuals and, ultimately, play significant roles in the outcomes. However, voters may not realize they are biased or that they are expressing their biases in their decisions. Since modern sexism is often unconscious, voters may say these cues do not matter, but in making decisions they may show significant effects on the individual's decisions.

- **Hypothesis 4:** *Voters high in benevolent sexism will give low or no weight to gender as a cue in their stated policy, but will give significant weight to gender in their actual policy.*
- **Hypothesis 5:** *Female voters will give significant weight to both candidate gender and candidate political affiliation.*

Party Affiliation & Partisanship

Much like ethnicity and gender may act as cues to elicit heuristic-based or stereotype processing of candidates, party affiliation may also be a significant 'fall-back' cue that voters use. Candidate party affiliation has previously been shown to guide voters' decision making (Campbell, Converse, Miller & Stokes, 1960; Conover & Feldman, 1989; Cutler, 2002; McDermott, 2007). These studies have shown that party affiliation is used to categorize candidates. Categorization on party affiliation can help ease cognitive processing in that policy and issue positions are numerous and can be complex, but they most often are influenced by a candidate's political affiliation. Thus, a

voter can look at a candidate's party affiliation and infer a great deal of useful information about that candidate.

Candidate party affiliation is one of the most cited cues used by voters in decision making. Whether a voter supports a particular candidate is a product of how they feel about the stereotypes of the candidate's party's policies. This stereotyping is often referred to as the party affiliation heuristic (Wang, 2008). Use of this heuristic dictates that a voter will vote for the candidate who shares their party affiliation. Indeed, this heuristic has been shown to predict voter choice with great accuracy in simulated and real elections (Campbell et al., 1960; Lau & Redlawsk, 2006; Wang, 2008).

There are two sides to why party affiliation may predict voter choice so well. One involves political sophistication. Those who are less politically savvy may rely on political labels more to simplify the cognitive requirements of processing the mass amounts of campaign information they absorb throughout the voting season. These political labels lead to an initial categorization and stereotyping of the candidate. More politically sophisticated individuals can then adapt this categorization on-line as more information is gathered. However, both those high and low in political sophistication have been shown to use party affiliation as a cue for voter choice, with those higher in sophistication combining information in a "broader and deeper net" (p. 483) than lesser sophisticated voters (Cutler, 2002).

A second side to the use of political affiliation holds that affiliation is not just a source of information about the candidate's policy stands. This side views political affiliation and political ideology as two very different and distinct concepts. While the media frequently refer to candidates as conservative or Republican and as liberal or

Democrat interchangeably, these terms are not synonymous. A voter can be registered as a particular party, but not espouse all of the beliefs of that party. These beliefs represent a person's political ideology. Political affiliation is a categorical variable with several discrete values it can take (Republican, Democrat, Independent, Green, etc.). Political ideology is a continuous spectrum from conservative to liberal. While typically, the ideological spectrum parallels political affiliation, it provides for a much greater range of values in which a voter can fall.

Voters may be using party affiliation as a simpler proxy for political ideology, which better represents a candidate's actual policy and issues stands. A candidate's ideology is represented as a combination of where they stand on all the issues. To simplify the process, voters rely on a categorical variable that may or may not accurately express the candidate's actual ideology. In line with this distinction, political affiliation has not shown strong effects for those who have less partisan political ideologies (Lau & Redlawsk, 2006; Wang, 2008). Thus, people, while categorized as a member of a particular party, may vary in their actual attachment to the views of that party.

Greene (2004) used social identity theory as a foundation to show that people vary in their level of attachment to political parties. He found that levels of partisan social identity significantly predicted political party ratings, ideology and political activity. This research suggested that partisan social identity influences how one perceives his or her own party and their level of political ideology as well. A person's partisan social identity reflects his or her attachment to a particular party and the degree to which they view the political parties as bi-polar, in an *us* and *them* fashion. The more a voter identifies with a party, the more they will see non-party members as ideologically

different and same-party members as ideologically similar to themselves, even if these expectations are not really true.

To deal with the different outcomes that different measures of partisanship may have, this study uses several measures of ideological and party partisanship. General party registration, self-reported ideological placement, and partisan social identity will all be used to determine the differences that exist between the measures of partisanship as they relate to the use of information in voting decisions. However, no specific hypotheses are made in regards to what cues and how the cues will be used by groups formed based on these measures. A general hypothesis that will be tested is:

- **Hypothesis 6:** *More partisan voters will give more weight to candidates' political affiliation in their policies.*

Other Cues of Interest

Religion of the Candidate

Candidate's religion is a topic that has not been considered much in the literature. However, religion is increasingly becoming intertwined with politics. Churches frequently support stands on social and economic issues. This can lead to stereotyping of candidates of a particular religious group. This stereotyping has occurred in at least two presidential elections in recent times. John F. Kennedy was a Catholic presidential candidate in 1960. This was a time when Catholics were typically Democratic. His religion was made very salient during the election and he took a great deal of criticism for it. The public had a fear of Kennedy following church doctrine in office, allowing for church influence over political decisions (White, 1962). More recently, John Kerry, another presidential candidate, had similar issues with his faith during his campaign.

It makes sense that as religion “becomes more salient to politics, so, too, should candidates’ religious affiliations become more salient to voters” (McDermott, 2007, p.254).” Catholics specifically have shifted over the past 50 years in their political typology. In the 1980s, Catholics shifted from very liberal to a more conservative ideology. Since then, they are typically stereotyped as very conservative due to their strong opposition to social issues like abortion (McDermott, 2007). However, it is not clear what effect these stereotypes may have on voter decision making. Gallup polls in the past few years have suggested that being Catholic or being Jewish no longer matter to voters, but this could just be political correctness (Jones, 2007). This study will get beyond general political correctness and determine what effects the religion of the candidate has on voter decisions.

It is important to determine the effects a candidate’s religion can have on voting behavior. The past Presidential election was again riddled with questions about certain candidates’ religious backgrounds. Sen. Barack Obama had been criticized for his attending a Muslim school when growing up, despite that he proclaimed his Christian faith. If some voters hold stereotyped views of his Catholic or Muslim upbringing, religion may play a significant role in their decision making at the polls. However, since not much is known on the effects of candidate religion, this cue is purely exploratory in nature.

Experience

Candidate experience in public life and specifically, political office has not been considered in much of the literature on voting. However, all one has to do it type “candidate experience” in an internet search engine and hundreds of blogs discussing the

experience factor of the current presidential candidates will result. Candidates in the 2008 election cycle were criticized for their lack of extensive public office or governing experience. Senator Barack Obama, the Democratic nominee for President, only had eight years as an Illinois state Senator as his public office credentials. This seeming lack of experience is something that his competitors touted to attempt to discredit him. The same criticisms were used against former President John F. Kennedy. He was said to have charmed his way into office (Lizza, 2007). However, it is not known what effect experience really has in the mind of the voter.

To complicate things, experience has many sides. There are several types of experience that are used during political campaigns. Military experience and elected office experience are the major two types, but more specific experience is also touted when convenient. Things like serving on specific committees (e.g. Foreign relations, armed services, health care, etc.) is another type of experience that can be used by candidates. These specific types of experience have even less known about them than general experience in public office.

It would be intuitively expected that having more experience of any kind would make a candidate more attractive to a voter. This positive effect of experience has been shown in Senate elections for both challengers of incumbents and for open seat elections (Abramowitz, 1988). However, not all experience may be beneficial at certain times. For instance, some may see Senator John McCain's years of military service and experience as a POW as a positive thing, while others may see it as a liability with the current state of foreign relations and the War in Iraq. No study was found that looked at different types of experience. This study will be the first comprehensive look at what

effect military and public office experience has in the mind of the voter during a presidential election. No specific hypotheses were made about either type of experience considered.

In Search of a Common Voting Policy

Political Sophistication

Arguably, one of the most researched individual difference variables in the voting behavior literature is political sophistication. This construct represents the level of expertise of individuals in the domain of politics. This includes things such as factual knowledge and cognitions, involvement in political activities, personal interest in politics, and amount of time spent discussing and researching politics (Lau & Redlawsk, 2006). Sophistication is a complex construct that has been shown to influence how voters process information and make decisions.

Political sophistication has shown many effects on how voters make decisions. Research suggests that those higher in sophistication evaluate candidates more on the basis of their issue stands than partisan cues in response to open-ended questions (Jacoby, 1986; Knight, 1985). Also, Macdonald, Prothro, Rabinowitz, and Brown (1988) showed in a student sample, that those high in sophistication used fewer partisan cues in contrast to ideological or issue cues than those with lower sophistication. The same finding did not generalize to a national sample. However, both groups did utilize partisan cues to some extent. This study also showed that those higher in sophistication from the national sample have more consistent and stable cue usage. This did not hold for the student sample. In line with some of the findings from this study, Lau and Redlawsk (2006)

found that more sophisticated voters looked at information pertaining to candidate issue stands and endorsements more than novices.

One surprising finding in the light of the above mentioned use of partisan cues by those lower in sophistication is that individuals high in sophistication tend to be more partisan. Seemingly, as people become more interested in politics, they identify with a particular ideology or party more, but this does not lead to greater use of partisan cues. It is those lower in sophistication that most often use partisan cues like political affiliation when making decisions (Lau & Redlawsk, 2006).

All of this may suggest that those lower in political expertise may rely on the use of heuristics, short-cuts, or partisan cues to help make up for their lack of knowledge when making decisions. Indeed, structural aspects not related to information about the candidates, such as name-order effects have been shown to be stronger among those with lower sophistication (Miller & Krosnick, 1998). In line with this idea, Barker and Hansen (2005) tried to induce systematic processing (a more involved, deeper processing than heuristic based processing) among voters when considering vote choice. Those lower in political expertise still relied on heuristic processing (based on party identification) when making their choices and did not systematically process the added information they received in a consistent manner. Those higher in sophistication, when induced to systematically process information showed weaker vote preferences, partisan/ideological consistency and vote predictability. This suggests that both novices and experts use heuristic processing, but those lower in sophistication may not consider information received after they make their gut-level choice.

- **Hypothesis 7:** *Those higher in political sophistication will give more weight to policy cues than those lower in sophistication.*
- **Hypothesis 8:** *Those higher in political sophistication will give less weight to partisan cues (i.e. party affiliation) than those lower in sophistication.*

Self-Monitoring

The previously mentioned modern and more covert forms of discrimination may play a role in voting. However, Sigelman et al. (1995) failed to support the adverse effect of aversive racism on voting for a Black candidate in a hypothetical U.S. Senate race. This suggests that there may be other variables that could explain political patterns like the Bradley Effect. One such variable that has been looked at is self-monitoring.

Self-monitoring is the phenomenon of using self-observation and self-control to guide one's behavior in social situations. Those high in self-monitoring are well versed in social norms and can guide their behavior in line with what is socially acceptable or desirable in a particular situation. These people show low correlations between actual attitudes and behavior. Those low in self-monitoring are very aware of their own beliefs and standards and guide their behavior in line with them. These people show high correlations between their attitudes and behaviors (Terkildsen, 1993).

Based on the findings on self-monitoring, one could argue that those who are high in self-monitoring would be more likely to tell a pollster they are going to vote for the minority candidate to appear less biased in the social context, but may not vote that way when in the private context of the voting booth. In addition, those low in self-monitoring

may be more willing to espouse their true voting intentions. This leads to the hypothesis that:

- **Hypothesis 9:** *Those high in self-monitoring will show greater differences between their stated and actual policies than those low in self-monitoring.*

Implications

The current study seeks to identify the cues that voters use and obtain the weights that reflect how voters are using each cue in their voting decisions. While previous research has modeled voting in many ways, this study takes into consideration the changing political scene. Presidential elections will no longer be choosing between two White, male candidates. The more diverse the election process gets, the more complicated voting behavior will get. Thus, looking at how people break down their choices in a mock multicultural election will give a good view of what to expect from voters in the future and will highlight areas that candidates and parties can focus on changing to gain votes from certain populations.

This study will also highlight the effects of certain types of privilege in voting. Countless types of privileges have been uncovered in research (McIntosh, 1992). The election process exemplifies several of these including male privilege, White privilege, and what could be termed, ‘non-Muslim’ privilege. This study will see how prevalent these privileges are and what effect they have on voting decisions.

The use of the lens model moves the focus of analysis from groups or individuals, to the individual judgments made by each participant. This, unlike previous studies, will allow for hidden biases that may unconsciously affect how voters process information to be seen in a clearer light. Also, it will shed light on how aware voters are about why they

make the choices they make. In addition, it is hoped that the use of the lens model will encourage others to utilize its ability to understand and map out decision making in other areas of political research.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

Participants

Participants in this study were undergraduate students at the University of Georgia. All students were registered voters in the United States and participated in the study for 1.5 research credit hours towards a class requirement. The sample consisted of 299 students with an average age of 19.37 (SD=1.52). The majority of the sample was comprised of female (78.9%) and Caucasian (83.3%) participants. The sample was fairly representative of the region with regards to political affiliation with the majority of participants identifying themselves as Republicans (54.92%), while 30.5% identified themselves as Democrats.

Measures

Independent Variables

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996)

To measure modern forms of sexism, Glick and Fiske's (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory was used. This is a 22-item measure that taps two components of sexism, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. Hostile sexism represents the more typical forms of prejudice against women. Benevolent Sexism is the more subtle and covert form of sexism. It deals with attitudes that hold women in stereotypical and restricted roles, but are subjectively positive in tone. This scale has shown high reliability with alphas ranging from .68-.89 for the hostile scale and .54-.84 for the benevolent scale (Glick et al., 2000). The scale is scored on a 5 point Likert scale (0 =

disagree strongly; 1 = disagree somewhat; 2 = disagree slightly; 3 = agree slightly; 4 = agree somewhat; 5 = agree strongly). The scale is scored by adding up the item responses after reverse scoring 6 items, then averaging the scores.

Modern Racism Scale

A modified version of McConahay's (1986) modern racism scale from Nail et al, (2003) was given to assess each participant's level of aversive racism. This scale included both the "old-fashioned" and "modern" racism scales. Items were scored along a 5-point Likert scale (*1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree*). The old-fashioned scale was 7 items and the modern scale was 8 items. The scales have shown high reliabilities at $\alpha=.86$. Scoring of the scale involved adding and averaging the responses to each item after reverse coding those items that required it. The average represented the participants' position on each dimension ranging from 1-5, with lower scores representing lower levels of racism.

Political Sophistication

To measure political sophistication, the 5-items index developed by Carpini and Keeter (1993) was used. Since this measure was specifically designed to be used in studies using National Election Study data and was not specifically recommended or validated for use in experimental research, several questions from a longer index that Carpini and Keeter (1993) looked at in their study were added to the original index. In addition, a question was added about the current Presidential campaign. Also, the index they propose is designed for an interview. Most questions were left open-ended and adapted to fit a scale style instead of an interview style. The index is scored by giving the participant a 1 if they got the item correct and a 0 if they answered incorrectly or did not

know the item. Their total score was the sum of all the items answered correctly. The original index showed good reliability at 0.71. The original and new items can be found in Appendix A.

Partisan Social Identity and partisanship measures (self-report ideology and party membership)

To measure the partisanship and ideology of participants, several measures were employed. To assess political party affiliation, each participant was asked “Regardless of how you might have recently voted, do you generally consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, an independent or something else?” To get a measure of each participants self-reported political ideology, each was asked “I would describe my political ideology as...” with answer ranging from *A=Strongly Liberal* to *G= Strongly Conservative*. Finally, to get a measure of how strong their identification with their chosen political party is, Mael and Tetrick’s (1992) Identification with a Psychological Group (IDPG) scale was used. This scale consists of 10 items that assess the respondents’ perceptions of shared identity and shared experiences with the particular group. Each participant completed the scale with their chosen political party as the referent. Participants indicated how much they agreed with each statement on a scale from *0=Strongly Disagree* to *3=Strongly Agree*. Scoring of this measure was done by giving each participant their mean score on all 10 items from 0 to 3, with higher scores indicating greater social identity with the group. This scale has shown high reliability of 0.85 (Greene, 2004).

Self-Monitoring Scale

To assess each participant's level of self-monitoring, Snyder's (1974) Self-Monitoring scale was given to each participant. This 25-item scale measures the degree to which a person shows self-control and self-observation in their expressive behavior and the extent to which the behavior is guided by situational cues and social appropriateness. The scale is scored based on high self-monitors in a true/false format. If the participant's answer matched the answer of a self-monitor, they received a 1. If they chose the opposite answer, they received a 0. Scores are then added up to form a composite score for the scale. The scale has shown decent Kuder-Richardson 20 reliability of .70.

Demographic Variables

In addition to the scales above, each participant was asked for several socio-demographic variables. These included ethnicity, age, gender, socio-economic status of primary caregiver, home state, political party affiliation, and religious affiliation.

Dependent Variable

The main dependant variable of interest was whether or not a person would vote for each paper candidate in a Presidential election ("electability"). The question asked to each participant for each paper person was: "Given the information presented, how likely would you be to vote for this candidate in an actual Presidential election?" This was scored on a 10-point Likert scale ranging from *Not Likely* to *Very Likely*.

Lens Model Analysis

The lens model utilizes multiple-regression techniques to acquire the cue weights. Each participant makes numerous judgments (in this case, about likelihood of voting for

the candidate). Each of these m judgments serves as a dependant variable (Y_s) where the k cues (X_i) serve as independent variables or predictors of the judgments. In this way, the analysis is done at an idiographic level. Each judgment is based on a unique set of cues. In this study, the cues were randomly generated. Each cue had a set number of values that could be generated. Each cue was given one of its values randomly. Each value corresponded to a particular narrative or entry into the paper candidate's description.

The multiple regression is run by regressing the dependent variable on each cue simultaneously. The resulting equation that represents each judge's policy is:

$$Y_s = [b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_kX_k] + e,$$

where " $[b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_kX_k]$ " represents the predicted judgment model (\hat{Y}_s). e in this equation represents model error, or the extent to which the model of each judge misses the actual value for Y_s that it is trying to predict. These b values represent the weight that each judge gives each cue given all other cues are held constant (Cooksey, 1996).

The cue weights form a judge's policy. These policies can be used to make predicted judgments (\hat{Y}_s) based on the cue set of each paper candidate. These predictions are correlated with the actual subject response to form what is called the Consistency Index:

$$r_s = \text{corr}\left(r_{Y_s}, r_{\hat{Y}_s}\right).$$

This represents the ability of the subjects to control the execution of their knowledge regarding the judgment task (Cooksey, 1996).

Procedure

This was a web-based study where participants completed all of the parts of the experiment online. The data generated from each participant were in no way connected to the participant's identity. The first page of the web survey was the informed consent. After consent was given, each participant was given the 35 "paper" candidates to evaluate. Each paper candidate was formed out of the randomly generated cue values. The random generation of these values ensures the cues will remain orthogonal to aid in interpretation. The narratives corresponding to these cue values were combined to form each of 35 'paper' candidates. A template example of a paper candidate can be found in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Template of Paper Candidate.

<u>Candidate A</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male • African-American • Democrat • Christian • 8 years of public office experience • 4 years of military service • This candidate fully supports gay marriage and all the rights and privileges that go along with marriage. This candidate opposes any Constitutional amendment outlawing gay marriage at the federal level. • This candidate strongly supports amnesty for illegal immigrants already living in the United States. The borders should be more open. This is the land of opportunity and people from other countries should be allowed their opportunity. • This candidate strongly supports government intervention in the economy to protect the public from market forces. The minimum wage should be increased and people should be granted living wages. Taxes should be higher on the wealthy. • This candidate believes the best way to achieve national security is to be respected abroad. This can be done by fully supporting NATO and the United Nations, as well as allowing US soldiers to be subject to international criminal charges in the International Criminal Court. The US should withdraw from Afghanistan and Iraq immediately. • This candidate believes that businesses and individuals should be taxed to cover environmental costs. Protect the environment now and ask economic questions later. Supports governmental regulations on increasing fuel economy in vehicles and believes it is important to find alternative sources of energy. Strongly supports the taxing of polluters and oil profits.

The cue values and corresponding characteristics used to create each paper candidate can be found in Appendix B. The policy cues were created based on the general view of each ideological political position based on five issues, including gay marriage, immigration,

economic policy, environmental policy, and national security. The participants rated each paper candidate on electability, as well as several other variables not included in this paper.

After completing 35 paper candidates, each participant was asked to respond to several questionnaires and scales. A demographic questionnaire was given, as well as the modern sexism scale, aversive racism scale, political sophistication index, self-monitoring scale, and partisanship measure. Following completion of the scales, each participant was asked to give self-reports of how much each of the cues used in the study matter to them when making voting decisions. They were asked to distribute 100 points across the seven cues based on their importance to their personal voting decision making.

Following completion of all questionnaires and scales, they were taken to a page that was not attached to the data given in any way. This page was to be printed out and returned to the psychology building to receive credit for participation.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix of All Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Rsq_MilitaryExp.							
2 Rsq_OfficeExp.	0.07						
3 Rsq_Religion	-0.09	0.01					
4 Rsq_Ethnicity	-0.07	0.02	0.09				
5 Rsq_Party	-0.04	0.02	-0.02	0.07			
6 Rsq_Gender	0.07	0.03	-0.08	0.08	-0.03		
7 Rsq_Ideology	-0.03	-0.20**	-0.23**	-.17**	-.21**	-.18**	
8 Self Monitor	-0.13*	-0.02	0.02	0.04	0.00	-0.03	0.08
9 Racism	-0.02	0.09	-0.02	-0.01	-0.06	-0.04	.15*
10 Sexism	0.10	0.02	0.00	0.05	-0.07	0.09	-.16**
11 IDGP	0.09	0.00	-0.04	-0.04	0.05	0.05	-0.08
12 Partisanship	0.03	0.00	-0.01	0.05	.15*	-0.08	0.02
13 Sophistication	-0.05	-0.11	-0.11	-.19**	-0.09	-0.07	.32**

<i>M</i>	0.030	0.055	0.175	0.072	0.076	0.039	0.464
<i>SD</i>	0.038	0.075	0.138	0.079	0.092	0.072	0.306

	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Rsq_MilitaryExp.						
2 Rsq_OfficeExp.						
3 Rsq_Religion						
4 Rsq_Ethnicity						
5 Rsq_Party						
6 Rsq_Gender						
7 Rsq_Ideology						
8 Self Monitor						
9 Racism	-0.10					
10 Sexism	-.21**	-0.06				
11 IDGP	-0.05	-.13*	-.19**			
12 Partisanship	-0.02	0.03	0.02	0.08		
13 Sophistication	-0.03	0.04	-0.01	0.02	0.08	

<i>M</i>	12.480	3.490	2.360	1.490	1.400	7.570
<i>SD</i>	3.724	0.733	0.470	0.456	0.859	2.078

Note. Sample sizes range from 272-299; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Tests of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Voters will utilize socio-demographic characteristics like gender and ethnicity as significant cues in their voting decisions.

For this hypothesis, gender and ethnicity of each paper candidate were entered as predictors in the regression predicting electability. Two ethnicity contrasts were created

to account for the three categories of ethnicity. The first contrast (E1) compared White candidates (White=-2) with minority candidates (Black=1, Hispanic=1). The second contrast (E2) compared the two minority groups (Black=1, Hispanic=-1, White=0). The $R^2_{Y,Gender,E1,E2}$ was computed and the significance (based on $p < 0.05$) of the resulting regression coefficients were saved for each participant. If either ethnicity coefficient was significant, it was taken as ethnicity being a significant predictor. A chi-square test was run to see if the number of participants displaying significance for either variable was greater than the expected type 1 error rate ($N * 0.05$). The resulting test for gender was significant with $\chi^2(1, N = 272) = 18.356, p < 0.001$. The test of ethnicity was also significant with $\chi^2(1, N = 272) = 86.344, p < 0.001$. These tests support the hypothesis that gender and ethnicity are significant predictors of electability in voting decision making.

Ethnicity

Hypothesis 2: *Voters high in modern racism will give low or no weight to ethnicity as a cue in their stated policy, but will give significant weight to ethnicity in their actual policy.*

The overall aversive racism scores were used in this analysis. The overall score was used because the old-fashioned ($M = 3.94, SD = 0.907$), and aversive racism ($M = 3.10, SD = 0.728$), portions of the scale were highly and significantly correlated, $r(282) = 0.646, p < 0.001$. Using the same contrast as the analysis for hypothesis 1, electability was regressed on ethnicity to obtain $R^2_{Y,E1,E2}$. The aversive racism scale total scores for each participant were correlated with these $R^2_{Y,E1,E2}$ values (actual policy). Next, each participant's stated policy coefficient for ethnicity was correlated with the same racism scores. These correlations were input into Lisrel v. 8.8 and two models were run. The first model allowed the correlations between stated and actual policy with aversive racism

to be freely estimated. This model fixed the factor loadings to 1.0 and disturbances to 0, while allowing the latent factor correlations in phi matrix to be freely estimated. The second model held these two correlations to be equal by constraining the two latent correlations in phi to be equal. A chi-square difference test between these two models showed that the correlations are significantly different, $\Delta\chi^2(1, N = 284) = 20.58, p < 0.001$. The correlation between aversive racism and stated policy, $r(274) = -0.325, p < 0.001$, was significantly larger than that of aversive racism and actual policy, $r(256) = -0.009, p = 0.880$. Looking closer at these correlations, those higher in aversive racism were less likely to state that ethnicity was a significant part of their decision on electability. Conversely, there was no significant relationship between aversive racism scores and actual policy weighting of ethnicity. This does not directly support the hypothesis that those high in racism would give low or no weight to ethnicity in their stated policy, but give significant weight to ethnicity in their actual policy. However, one can interpret these results as supporting the idea that more racist people will try to cover-up their racism by saying ethnicity does not matter to their decision making. In addition to this, the non-significant correlation between actual policy and racism simply means more racist people did not consistently use ethnicity in their actual vote decision making.

However, based on the mean of $R^2_{Y.E1,E2}$ ($M = 0.072, SD = 0.079$), being low, ethnicity was not a big predictor of electability for the majority of our participants' actual policies or stated policies ($M = 0.048, SD = 0.072$). Thus it should be noted, in general, participants did not put a great deal of stock in ethnicity, either in stated or actual policy, as a cue in Presidential election decision making.

Hypothesis 3: *Black voters will give more weight to party affiliation of the candidate than they give to the ethnicity of the candidate.*

To test this hypothesis, two R^2 values were computed. The $R^2_{Y,E1,E2}$ was used from hypothesis 2 and the $R^2_{Y,PA1,PA2}$ was created using two contrasts. The first contrast (PA1) compared Independents (Independent=-1) and the majority parties (Democrat=1, Republican=1). The second contrast (PA2) compared the two majority parties (Democrat=-1, Republican=1, Independent=0). Only Black participants ($N = 23$) were selected for further analysis. A t-test was done to compare the means of the two R^2 values to see if there was a difference in weight given to party affiliation and ethnicity. The t-test showed no significant difference between importance of party affiliation ($M = 0.0863$, $SD = 0.1126$) and ethnicity ($M = 0.0832$, $SD = 0.1089$), $t(22) = -0.138$, $p = 0.892$ (two-tailed). However, these results can not be considered conclusive due to the small sample of Black participants in this study.

Gender

Hypothesis 4: *Voters high in benevolent sexism will give low or no weight to gender as a cue in their stated policy, but will give significant weight to gender in their actual policy.*

The analyses were done separately for each portion of the sexism scale. The overall score was not used because while the hostile ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 0.633$), and benevolent sexism ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 0.542$), portions of the scale were significantly correlated, $r(270) = 0.277$, $p < 0.001$, the correlation was low. Electability was regressed on gender to obtain $R^2_{Y,G}$. Both sexism scale scores for each participant were correlated with these $R^2_{Y,G}$ values (actual policy). Next, each participant's stated policy coefficient for gender was correlated with the same sexism scores. These correlations were input into Lisrel v. 8.8 and two models were run. The first model allowed the correlations between stated and actual policy with sexism to be freely estimated. This model fixed the factor loadings to 1.0 and disturbances to 0, while allowing the latent factor correlations

in phi matrix to be freely estimated. The second model held these two correlations to be equal by constraining the two latent correlations in phi to be equal. This analysis was done with only male participants ($N = 57$) so the large female sample size would not have an effect on the results due to the nature of the sexism scale. For the test of hostile sexism, the correlations were not found to be significantly different, $\Delta\chi^2(1, N = 57) = 0.50, p > 0.10$. Similarly for the test of benevolent sexism, the correlations were not found to be significantly different, $\Delta\chi^2(1, N = 57) = 1.91, p > 0.10$.

However, similar to hypothesis 2 for ethnicity, it should be noted that the amount of variance gender accounted for in participants actual ($M = 0.039, SD = 0.072$), and stated policies ($M = 0.049, SD = 0.064$), was very low. Also of note, while those who held hostile sexist beliefs tried to cover up their sexism, those higher in benevolent sexism did not try to cover up their sexist decision making in their stated policy. The correlations between sexism (hostile and benevolent) and stated policy were positive, $r(57) = 0.314, p = 0.014, r(57) = 0.022, p = 0.869$, respectively. This is what one would expect based on social desirability. Hostile sexism is most often viewed as oppressive and discriminatory, while the more modern form of sexism, benevolent sexism, often is seen as justified by the sexist individual. In all, it appears that the gender of the candidate did not matter to participants when making voting decisions.

Hypothesis 5: Female voters will give significant weight to both candidate gender and candidate political affiliation.

For this hypothesis, gender and party affiliation of each candidate were entered as predictors in the regression predicting electability. The party affiliation contrasts from hypothesis 2 were used. Only female participants were used in this analysis ($N = 210$). The $R^2_{Y.Gender.PA1, PA2}$ was computed and the significance (based on $p < 0.05$) of the

resulting regression coefficients were saved for each participant. If either party affiliation coefficient was significant, it was taken as party affiliation being a significant predictor. A chi-square test was run to see if the number of participants displaying significance for either variable was greater than the expected type 1 error rate ($N*0.05$). The resulting test for gender was significant with $\chi^2(1, N = 210) = 11.053, p < 0.001$. The test of party affiliation was also significant with $\chi^2(1, N = 210) = 105.89, p < 0.001$. These tests support the hypothesis that gender and party affiliation are significant predictors of electability for females in voting decision making.

Partisanship

Hypothesis 6: *More partisan voters will give more weight to candidates' political affiliation in their policies.*

The $R^2_{Y.PA1,PA2}$ values from hypothesis 3 were used to represent the amount political party of the candidate mattered to each participant when deciding electability. These values were correlated with the two measures of partisanship. Both measures of partisanship were significantly correlated, $r(293) = 0.117, p = 0.046$. First, $R^2_{Y.PA1,PA2}$ was correlated with the identification with a group measure ($M = 1.48, SD = 0.458$), which measured how much the participant identified themselves with the political party they were a member of. This correlation was non-significant, $r(266) = 0.048, p = 0.434$. Second, the self-reported political ideology on a 7-point Likert scale was converted to represent distance from the middle (completely moderate). The farther the participant scored from the moderate value of 3, the higher value they were given, meaning they were more partisan in either direction (conservative or liberal). Values for this new variable ranged from 0-3 ($M = 1.40, SD = 0.859$). $R^2_{Y.PA1,PA2}$ was correlated with this distance variable and the correlation was significant, $r(264) = 0.152, p = 0.013$.

These correlations do tell a mixed story. The more direct measure of partisanship, the distance measure, suggests that those who are more partisan do give more weight to party affiliation of a candidate when voting, supporting hypothesis 6. However, the IDGP measure does not support this same conclusion. As before, it should be noted that party affiliation did not account for a great deal of variance in electability, on average only accounting for 7.68% of the variance ($M = 0.077$, $SD = 0.093$).

Religion and Experience

Two variables were considered in this study as exploratory in nature. Religion and experience were cues given to participants as characteristics of the candidates they evaluated. Religion required four contrasts to account for the five categories it could take. The first contrast compared Catholic and Protestant (both coded -1) with Islam and Judaism (both coded 1, atheist = 0). The second contrast compared Catholics (-1) and Protestants (1, Islam, Judaism, Atheist = 0). The third contrast compared Islam (1) and Judaism (-1, Catholic, Protestant, Atheist = 0). The final contrast compared Atheist (4) with the other four religions (all coded -1). These four contrasts were used as predictors of electability. Religion turned out to be a relatively important predictor of electability accounting for 17.5% of the variance in electability ($M = 0.175$, $SD = 0.138$).

Experience was broken up into military and public office experience. Both were given as random continuous variables between 0 and 30 years as characteristics of each candidate. These were each individually used as predictors of electability to see how much experience mattered to participants. Neither accounted for much variance in electability with office experience ($M = 0.055$, $SD = 0.075$) being slightly more important

than military experience ($M = 0.03$, $SD = 0.038$). In all, religion was an important cue used by participants while experience in both its forms was not.

Political Sophistication

Hypothesis 7: *Those higher in political sophistication will give more weight to policy cues than those lower in sophistication.*

For this hypothesis, political sophistication scores were calculated for each participant ($M = 7.58$, $SD = 2.08$). Political ideology required three contrasts to account for its four possible outcomes (very and moderately liberal/conservative). The first contrast (P1) compared liberals (both coded -1) and conservatives (both coded 1). The second (P2) contrast compared very liberal candidates (1) with moderately liberal ones (-1), both conservative categories = 0). The final contrast (P3) compared very conservative candidates (1) with moderately conservative ones (-1, both liberal categories = 0).

Electability was regressed on these three contrasts and the resulting $R^2_{Y.P1,P2,P3}$ was correlated with political sophistication. The correlation confirms the hypothesis that those higher in political sophistication do give more weight to policy/ideology cues than those lower in sophistication, $r(270) = 0.318$, $p < 0.001$. In addition, looking at the mean across all participants, the policy/ideology information of the candidates did matter to participants accounting for 46.4% of the variance in electability ($M = 0.464$, $SD = 0.306$).

Hypothesis 8: *Those higher in political sophistication will give less weight to partisan cues (i.e. party affiliation) than those lower in sophistication.*

The $R^2_{Y.PA1,PA2}$ was used from hypothesis 6 and correlated with political sophistication to determine how politically sophisticated participants weighted partisan cues such as party affiliation. This correlation was negative, as would be expected by the hypothesis, but was non-significant, $r(270) = -0.091$, $p = 0.133$. While this does not support the hypothesis that less politically sophisticated participants would fall back on

surface cues of partisanship like party affiliation, it should be noted again that party affiliation did not account for much variance across the sample ($M = 0.077$, $SD = 0.093$). This suggests party affiliation was not a very salient cue for most of the participants, regardless of how politically savvy they were.

Self-monitoring

Hypothesis 9: *Those high in self-monitoring will show greater differences between their stated and actual policies than those low in self-monitoring.*

To test the final hypothesis, the R^2 values were computed for each cue included in the regression equations individually. All R^2 values used in previous hypotheses were used to test hypothesis 9. Next, the stated values of how much each participant thought each cue mattered to their decision process was entered and put in percentage form. Following this, both actual (R^2) and stated (percentages) were transformed using the standard z-score transformation. This put both in the same metric and allowed for further comparisons. A $Z_{\text{difference}}$ score was computed by subtracting the Z_{actual} from the Z_{stated} for each cue individually. Finally, the $Z_{\text{difference}}$ scores were each correlated with self-monitoring scores. No significant correlations were found in this analysis. All correlations were small ranging from -0.063 to 0.085 and none approaching a significant level.

While using the above difference scores gives the raw differences allowing directional interpretation, the $Z_{\text{difference}}$ scores were also squared to determine an absolute difference score. These $Z_{\text{difference}}^2$ scores were also correlated with self-monitoring scores. In this analysis, only one correlation (military experience) was significant $r(264) = -0.134$, $p = 0.029$. This can be interpreted as those who were high in self-monitoring had a lesser absolute difference between their stated and actual policy values for military

experience. However, since there is no literature to back up this correlation, it is most likely due to type I error. All this combined with the above run counter to the hypothesis that higher self-monitors would display larger differences between their stated and actual policies. Thus, hypothesis 9 was not confirmed.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Discussion of Findings

This study was aimed at getting a better look at what information people look for and how they utilize it when voting for public office. Policy capturing was used to go beyond participants' inaccurate insight as to what cues mattered when they were making voting decisions about "paper" candidates. Cues were designed to be orthogonal to one another. This allowed for a clear look into what information participants look at when viewing candidates for office. Through the use of multiple regression, this study was able to shed light on to what pieces of information available to voters really matter and how this information is combined into a final decision on electability of a candidate.

The first hypothesis was set up to be very general and see if voters would use socio-demographic surface cues in their decision making when voting. The two hypothesized surface cues, gender and ethnicity, were both significantly used by participants in their decisions on electability of candidates. This supports previous research suggesting this type of information is used by voters (Bendyna & Lake, 1994; Cook, 1994; Cutler, 2002; Dolan, 1998; Grofman, 1993; Huddy, 1994; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Plutzer & Zipp, 1996; Popkin, 1991; Rubinfeld, 1991; Sigelman et al., 1995; Tam, 1995; Tate, 1993; Terkildsen, 1993; Tolleson Rinehard, 1992; Vanderleeuw, 1990). Interestingly, as is shown in Table 1, on average, these cues together only accounted for about 11% of the variance in electability. While there is a great deal of research, including this study, suggesting that these characteristics of a candidate are of significant consideration to voters, they are by no means all that matter when voting. The

rest of the hypotheses looked deeper into these cues and others that may matter when voting.

Considering ethnicity of the candidate and of the voter, hypothesis 2 and 3 looked at the importance of this surface cue and what variables may relate to its use. No support was found for hypothesis 3 and only partial support was found for hypothesis 2. Those higher in aversive racism did say they used ethnicity less when voting than those lower in aversive racism. This is not surprising as racist people usually want to avoid appearing racist. This finding does give a possible explanation for political phenomena like the Bradley effect. Voters, when asked about bi-racial contests, will say they plan on voting for the minority candidate to cover up any racist attitudes.

Contrary to the positive correlation the above hypothesis would suggest, there was no significant correlation between aversive racism and actual policy based on the R^2 values of the multiple regression analysis. Taken together, this suggests that more racist people go farther to cover up their racism, but do not actually display racist voting patterns. This may be a good sign of the times. The sample included mostly young, White college students. As society moves farther from the racial tensions of the Civil Rights era, perhaps racial bias is becoming less significant when evaluating potential leaders. Along these lines, ethnicity only accounted for, on average, 7.2% of the variance in electability. Further evidence of this is the election of the United States first African-American President, Barack Obama, in 2008. While hypothesis 2 was not fully supported, its findings may suggest more positive findings than expected for the future of American politics.

The next two hypotheses looked at the effects of gender on voting decisions. It was believed that sexism would have similar effects as racism when voting. However, this was not found to be the case. While gender was a significant predictor of electability across the entire sample (as in H1), it only accounted for an average of 3.9% of the variance. Benevolent sexism did not lead to differences in stated and actual policy values for either the whole sample or the sub-sample of males tested. This suggests that those more sexist participants did not try to cover up their sexist policies. However, the low average of R^2 values suggests that gender, like ethnicity, was not the focus of participants' decisions.

While hypothesis 4 found no support, gender and political affiliation were both found as significant predictors of electability for female voters, as suggested by hypothesis 5. The caveat to the confirmation of this hypothesis is due to the use of R^2 values, direction cannot be determined. All that could be determined is that gender and political affiliation mattered to women, not what gender or affiliation was favored. Research suggests that women should have favored female candidates and more liberal candidates. All that can be determined from the test of this hypothesis is that these two cues mattered.

Much like ethnicity, gender did not account for much in decision policies. This is perhaps more good news for the political scene of the future. Young voters are not showing a huge bias against female candidates like is seen in much of the research on the glass ceiling that exists in America. With females like Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin becoming well-known political heavy-hitters, the findings of this study may support a decline in a political gender bias.

One of the three exploratory cues included in the study did show some interesting findings. Religion of the candidate was the second most important cue across the sample accounting for 17.5% of the variance in electability. This was not anticipated, but religion has been a significant issue in a few elections historically. Religion is often seen as a cue to the direction of a candidate's policies, specifically social policy decisions (abortion, gay marriage, death penalty, etc.). Religion may be seen as a better predictor of policy than partisan cues like affiliation, as the lines between the left and the right continue to become blurry on social issues.

Next, this study considered characteristics of the participants and how they influenced their voting patterns. Partisanship was the focus of hypothesis 6, in that those who were more partisan were believed to give greater weight to political affiliation of the candidates. Two measures of partisanship were used to test this hypothesis. One was the more traditional distance measure based on participants' self-reports of where they sit on the liberal-conservative spectrum. The other was the IDGP scale with the reference being on the political party chosen by each participant. The use of this scale was designed to introduce a measure with more variation to better represent people based on how partisan they are.

As it turned out, the direct measure of partisanship showed greater variation than the IDGP. This is of note because one measure confirmed the hypothesis and the other did not. The direct Likert measure of partisanship showed that more partisan voters gave more weight to party affiliation of the candidate than others. The IDGP scale did not show the same significant results. One consideration is the sample used in this study. These were younger undergraduate students that may not have as much experience in the

political realm as adults. College is often the place where students learn more about politics and realize the effects the political world has on them individually. These students may not have sufficient experience with the political world to truly identify with any one party very strongly, as would be evidenced by the lower variation in IDGP scale scores. Also, one would expect these two measures of partisanship to be moderately correlated. They only showed a low correlation that was barely significant, $r(293) = 0.117, p = 0.046$. Young college voters may not be able to identify with a party as well as they can identify their ideological beliefs. Also, of note again, party affiliation only accounted for an average of a little over 7% of the variance in electability. With the above caveats, hypothesis 6 is considered confirmed.

The next variable considered was political sophistication. This variable is one of the most used in political research and was of particular interest. Hypotheses 7 and 8 considered the effects of sophistication on voting patterns. Hypothesis 7 was confirmed suggesting that those higher in sophistication will weight ideological policy more than less politically savvy voters. This makes sense in that those who are politically savvy will more than likely follow a candidate's ideological policies rather than simply falling back on a categorical cue like party affiliation. In the consideration of how much, on average, cues mattered to the sample, political ideology accounted for 46.4% of the variance in electability and came out as the most important cue to the majority of participants.

Hypothesis 8 did not receive the same confirmation as the previous did. Party affiliation's importance did not correlate with political sophistication. This may be due to the nature of the ideology cue given. This lack of confirmation may be due to the limits

on ecological validity in this study. The ideology of the candidates, while in real politics is a continuum, was categorized as one of four categories. Due to the number of candidates each participant evaluated, it may have been possible for the categorical nature to be picked up on. If people were looking at ideology consistently and realized it was one of four possibilities, they could have treated the ideology as a categorical variable in place of looking at party affiliation. Despite these cues being unrelated (orthogonal), if participants went right to classifying a candidate's ideology, party affiliation may not be a significant cue. The lack of significant correlation does support a prior studies finding in a student sample where both politically sophisticated and non-sophisticated students used party as a cue in voting (Macdonald et al., 1988). This conclusion has some support in the low amount of variance accounted for by political affiliation on average (7.7%).

Another reason for lack of confirmation of hypothesis 8 may be a result of the web-based nature of the study and use of the political sophistication scale. No one was at the participants' homes supervising and one could easily search the web for the answers. Evidence for this is found in the high sophistication scores of the sample ($M = 7.58$, $SD = 2.08$). This could have compromised the sophistication scale's validity causing limitations to its use in the analysis.

Finally, self-monitoring was considered as a variable that may influence voting patterns. Hypothesis 9 said that self-monitoring of participants would lead to differences between their stated and actual policy. This was not confirmed for the majority of the cues. The only cue that self-monitoring was predictive of was the squared $Z_{\text{difference}}$ score for military experience. This was not expected and no previous research would support

this finding. Since the normal $Z_{\text{difference}}$ score, which represented directional difference, was not significant and the squared (absolute difference) was, it could be a case of Type I error where the military experience cue was found to be significant falsely.

The lack of confirmation of hypothesis 9 does not go without its interesting side. While the differences did not correlate with self-monitoring, they did show some interesting patterns. In Table 3, the non-squared $Z_{\text{difference}}$ scores represent directional differences.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of $Z_{\text{difference}}$ Scores

Cue	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Religion</i>	<i>Military Exp.</i>
$M_{Z_{\text{difference}}}$	0.005 (1.150)	0.014 (1.222)	-0.035 (1.050)	-0.007 (1.365)
$M_{Z_{\text{difference}}^2}$	1.317 (2.882)	1.488 (4.067)	1.098 (2.226)	1.857 (3.996)
N	265	266	266	266

Cue	<i>Office Exp.</i>	<i>Ideology</i>	<i>Party</i>
$M_{Z_{\text{difference}}}$	0.010 (1.312)	-0.007 (1.026)	-1.265 (0.590)
$M_{Z_{\text{difference}}^2}$	1.716 (4.280)	1.050 (1.642)	1.948 (2.113)
N	266	266	293

Note. Means with standard deviations in parentheses.

They were computed via *stated policy – actual policy*, meaning negative difference scores were due to under-estimation of significance and positive values were an over-estimation of significance. The four cues that were underestimated included policy ideology, party affiliation, religion, and military experience. Participants did not realize how much these cues actually mattered to their decision patterns. On the other side, participants over-estimated the use of gender, ethnicity, and office experience. This goes along with the previously discussed finding in regards to ethnicity with people minimizing their potential racism in their stated policy, but not actually displaying a

racist policy. Participants were more objective than they thought they were. Perhaps people still believe things like gender and ethnicity do matter in their decision making, while the numbers say they do not. While most of these differences were small (with the exception of party affiliation), the pattern displayed may tell a positive story for the future of political decision making whereby younger voters are moving towards policies that emphasize ideological policies over socio-demographic cues like gender and ethnicity.

Caveats and Future Research

One caveat to this study that has been discussed previously is the use of R^2 values as the unit of analysis. Since there were too many variables to input into the regression equations of electability and maintain power if all were included at once, using the variance accounted for by each variable individually was the way importance of each cue was determined. The drawback to this is there is no way to determine direction from those R^2 values. It could only be determined that, for instance, ethnicity was a significant cue to individuals. Not having direction does not allow for more detailed descriptions of in what ways ethnicity was significant (i.e. Whites favored other Whites over minority candidates, etc.). Future research should design studies in ways to be able to obtain more detailed information about the direction of these types of effects.

Another caveat is one that has become fairly regular in applied and political research. The use of undergraduate college students does limit the generalizability of the findings. When differences have been found previously between student and national samples in this line of research (Macdonald et al., 1988), research should include a broader sample of voters. This is the case especially in the light of younger voters still

being a minority of the overall voting population. Also, most of this sample have been only voting for a few years and may not be as involved in the political world as they will be when governmental policy affects them more directly. This lack of strong political feelings and opinions may have effects on some of the questions asked in this study, ultimately putting some of the findings, confirmatory and null, in question.

However, this study does show some important trends about the future of voting. This sample will eventually be the largest part of the voting bloc in the upcoming years as they move from college, have families, and join the work force. If the trends this sample displayed in not showing a great deal of gender or ethnic discrimination in their actual policies continues, perhaps the American voting system will reach a point of greater equality for all candidates of any background.

Another caveat was in the creation of the ideological policy cues for each candidate. Each candidate was randomly given one of four possible policies between very liberal and very conservative. The downfall to this is that ideology is more a continuous spectrum than a categorical variable. However, with so many issues and variables that combine to make up a person's ideology, it is difficult to capture the continuous nature of political ideology in an experimental setting. Future research should look at new ways of accomplishing this.

The problem with ideology being one of four categories is the possibility for participants recognizing this pattern. Over a few trials they may be able to read the first few lines of ideology and end up treating it as a categorical variable like political affiliation and only tune to that when evaluating other candidates. This is especially daunting to decision making because, in this study, cues were set to be orthogonal by

randomly generating each value separate from each other. This reduced ecological validity, as there are inter-correlations between these cues in real politics. If participants were only looking at one part of the candidate profile and ignoring the rest, they may make assumptions about the rest of the cues based on the one they paid attention to. This can lead to decision making that is not optimal. Future research should look at new ways of displaying information as well as test combinations of cues that are not orthogonal and will be more ecologically valid.

Another area for future research is the inclusion of other variables that are becoming of interest in the political world. Sexual orientation has become a popular issue in politics of late. Between the debates over gay-marriage to several public office holders coming out of the closet, sexual orientation may be another variable that should be considered when researching voting behavior.

Finally, the political sophistication measure used is typically not used in an experimental setting. Also, this study was a web-based experiment. With the internet being available to participants during the experiment, there is the possibility for looking up answers to the sophistication questionnaire to appear more politically savvy. It is not known how often this occurred. However, it is a possibility that would leave results regarding the use of the sophistication questionnaire dubious.

Implications

This study investigated how people process information when making voting decisions. It utilized a policy capturing technique based on the Brunswikian lens model, which had not previously found a great deal of use in political research. Future research should use policy capturing to better understand how individuals and groups find,

process, and utilize information in complex contexts such as elections, where large amounts of information are being presented to people and processing capabilities are at a max. This will show what information is really used and how it affects the individual's decision making.

The findings of this study suggest a positive pattern emerging in the future of political decision making. Young voters seemingly displayed very little gender or ethnic based discrimination in their voting patterns. This may be a sign that as time moves farther away from the Civil Rights and Women's Rights movements, the glass ceiling for minorities and women in public office may be breaking down. Younger voters appear to care more about what the ideological stands of candidates are than what their surface socio-demographic characteristics are when deciding who they would vote for. This is a good sign for American politics and hopefully signals the increasing equality for everyone in the political realm.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. *Political sophistication index adapted from Carpini & Keeter (1993).*

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1. Do you happen to know what job or political office is now held by Dick Cheney? #
 2. Whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not... the President, the Congress, or the Supreme Court. #
 3. How much of a majority is required for the U.S. Senate and House to override a Presidential veto? #
 4. Do you happen to know which party had the most members in the House of Representatives in Washington before the election in November, 2008? #
 5. Would you say that one of the parties is more conservative than the other at the national level? If so, which party is more conservative? #
 6. What person currently holds the office of Speaker of the House of Representatives?
 7. What party has nominated John McCain for their 2008 Presidential nominee?
 8. How many times can a person be elected President of the United States?
 9. Who's job is it to nominate federal judges to the Supreme Court?
 10. What political entity can officially declare war....the President, the Congress, or the Supreme Court?

Note. # indicates items from the original index.

Appendix B. List of Cue Values and Corresponding Characteristics of Paper Candidates.

Gender

- 1=Male
- 2=Female

Ethnicity

- 1=African-American
- 2=Caucasian
- 3=Hispanic

Party Affiliation

- 1=Republican
- 2=Independent
- 3=Democrat

Experience-Public Office

- 1=Hi (16+ years of service)
- 2=Medium (9-16 years)
- 3=Low (0-8 years)

Experience-Military

- 1=Hi (16+ years of service)
- 2=Medium (9-16 years)
- 3=Low (0-8 years)

Religion

- 1=Catholic
- 2=Protestant
- 3=Islam
- 4= Jewish
- 5=Atheist

Policy Ideology

- 1=Very Liberal

- *This candidate fully supports gay marriage and all the rights and privileges that go along with marriage. This candidate opposes any Constitutional amendment outlawing gay marriage at the federal level.*
- *This candidate strongly supports amnesty for illegal immigrants already living in the United States. The borders should be more open. This is the land of opportunity and people from other countries should be allowed their opportunity.*
- *This candidate strongly supports government intervention in the economy to protect the public from market forces. The minimum wage should be increased and people should be granted living wages. Taxes should be higher on the wealthy.*
- *This candidate believes the best way to achieve national security is to be respected abroad. This can be done by fully supporting NATO and the United Nations, as well as allowing US soldiers to be subject to*

international criminal charges in the International Criminal Court. The US should withdraw from Afghanistan and Iraq immediately.

- *This candidate believes that businesses and individuals should be taxed to cover environmental costs. Protect the environment now and ask economic questions later. Supports governmental regulations on increasing fuel economy in vehicles and believes it is important to find alternative sources of energy. Strongly supports the taxing of polluters and oil profits.*

2=Moderately Liberal

- *This candidate does not support gay marriage, but strongly supports civil unions as an alternative to marriage. These civil unions would come with all the rights and privileges that typically are granted with marriage. This candidate does not support any Constitutional amendment outlawing gay marriage at the federal level.*
- *This candidate generally supports amnesty for illegal immigrants already in the United States. Immigrants already in the country should be given a path to obtain citizenship. Future immigration should be slowed or stopped by tightening our borders.*
- *This candidate supports government interventions in the economy. The minimum wage should be increased. Taxes should be increased, but only with sufficient justification. The middle class should get some tax relief, but we must do so while keeping the budget balanced.*
- *This candidate believes that being respected abroad is the key to having strong national security. The US should support NATO and the United Nations, but US soldiers should not be subject to the International Criminal Court. The US should withdraw from Iraq and focus on the war in Afghanistan.*
- *This candidate believes in a balance between the economy and the environment. The government should be willing to put regulations on businesses to help the environment. Supports research on alternative forms of energy that reduce the need to drill for oil. Global warming is a problem that must be dealt with.*

3=Moderately Conservative

- *This candidate opposes gay marriage, but supports civil unions or domestic partnerships for gay couples. They feel that civil unions or partnerships should not come with the same rights and privileges of heterosexual marriage. Any laws regarding outlawing gay marriage should be a state decision.*
- *This candidate supports a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants already in the United States, but further immigration should be stopped. Our borders need to be secured and future illegal immigrants should be deported.*
- *This candidate supports minimal government intervention in the economy. There should be a minimum wage, but does not support living wages. Does support lowering taxes, but would prefer to reduce overall federal spending as an alternative.*

- *This candidate believes that military strength is the key to national security. The US should support NATO. The United Nations should be given support with reservation. The International Criminal Court is not a legitimate body and our soldiers should not be subject to international criminal charges. Does support a timetabled withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan.*
- *This candidate believes in finding a balance between economics and the environment. Global warming is an issue, but businesses should only be taxed for environmental costs if absolutely necessary. Is not against finding alternative forms of energy or raising the fuel standards for vehicles.*

4=Very Conservative

- *This candidate strongly opposes gay marriage and civil unions and all the rights therein. There should be a legislative and Constitutional ban on gay marriage. It is not a state issue, it's a moral issue.*
 - *This candidate strongly opposes any form of amnesty for any illegal immigrants. Illegals should be deported and none of them should be given any chance at citizenship. The US borders should be tightened and patrolled by our military to prevent further illegal immigration.*
 - *This candidate believes the government should stay out of the economy as much as possible. The government should cut taxes and reduce spending. The budget should be balanced. There should be very little business or environmental regulation because it hurts the economy.*
 - *This candidate feels strongly that the only way to achieve national security is to have a strong military. The US should support NATO, but does not feel that the US should support the United Nations. The International Criminal Court is not a legitimate body and our soldiers should not be subject to international criminal charges. Iraq should be the central front in the Global War on Terrorism.*
 - *This candidate is generally supportive of things that help the environment, but do not hurt the economy. Fuel standards are fine where they are. There should be no taxing of oil profits or increased environmental regulations. The US should increase their drilling for oil and natural gas to deal with our energy problems.*
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