

# DISCOVERY: Georgia State Honors College Undergraduate Research Journal

---

Volume 4

Article 1

---

2017

## Party Identity and the Evaluation of Political Candidates

Anna M. Zabinski  
*Georgia State University*

Toby Bolsen  
*Georgia State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/discovery>



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Zabinski, Anna M. and Bolsen, Toby (2017) "Party Identity and the Evaluation of Political Candidates," *DISCOVERY: Georgia State Honors College Undergraduate Research Journal*. Vol. 4 , Article 1.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31922/disc4.1>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/discovery/vol4/iss1/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in DISCOVERY: Georgia State Honors College Undergraduate Research Journal by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@gsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@gsu.edu).

## Party Identity and the Evaluation of Political Candidates

Anna M. Zabinski (Georgia State University) and Toby Bolsen (Georgia State University)

Political parties are a fundamental aspect of American democracy. Individuals regularly express their voices through these organizations by participating in politics at the local, state, and national levels. Through the political socialization process, exposure to partisan symbols and arguments in policy debates, and the participatory process itself, individuals come to develop a *partisan identity*. It shapes how they form opinions in competitive rhetorical contexts, respond to political arguments and communications, and make decisions such as for whom to vote. Partisan identity is conceptualized as an enduring and affectively laden psychological attachment to a party and its constituent elements (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960). Partisanship and voter behavior initially gained attention in the 1960s with the introduction of Campbell et al.'s *The American Voter*. Since then, partisanship as a phenomenon has gained traction both in academia as well as in the public sphere. We know that partisanship acts as a lens through which we see the world (Greene, 2002; Theodoridis, 2015). We also know that partisan polarization is on the rise (Iyengar & Westwood, 2014). We propose the use of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) from social psychology as a viable theoretical framework to expand upon the current knowledge regarding partisanship and voter behavior. This will contribute to the growing body of research on partisanship and political behavior by explaining the social and psychological function of party identity. Furthermore, the theory can be used to explain individual behavior as a reflection of group identity. In this study, we test the application of Social Identity Theory as a framework to explain candidate preference using partisanship.

## **Attitudes & Party Identity**

Our attitudes and beliefs shape our perceptions of the world and our choices. An attitude is an evaluation (positive, negative, or neutral) towards an object, such as a political party or a particular candidate running for office (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). Partisanship, defined as a long-term affective attachment and identification with a party, is a central piece of many people's political beliefs, preferences, and actions (Campbell, et al., 1960; Green, Palmquist, & Shickler, 2002). Thus, it acts as an identity-defining group commitment and shapes our views towards people, issues, and objects. Partisanship is stable and relatively unchanging over time (Greene, 2002). Partisan identity is as important to understand as other group identities because it behaves in a similar way. Racial, ethnic, and religious identities all tie individuals to a group just like partisan identity does. Partisan identity allows for individuals to distort perceptions of their in-group compared to the out-group due to identity-based motivated reasoning; in this case, partisan motivated reasoning – a form of identity-protective cognition – causes individuals to process political information in a way that bolsters one's existing group commitments and cultural worldviews (Kahan, Jenkins-Smith, & Braman, 2011). It also can lead individuals to reject information that challenges their identity-defining beliefs and seek out information that denigrates out-groups. This leads individuals to form more favorable perceptions of their in-group and negative perceptions of the out-group due to identity-protective forms of cognition and attitude formation.

Iyengar and Westwood (2014) replicated a study originally conducted fifty years ago where individuals were asked to evaluate and select an applicant for a job. The resumes presented were identical except that one person was affiliated with the Republican party and the other with the Democratic party. The results in the original study showed little difference in evaluations of the two applicants based on party affiliation, but the follow up study found that

80% of participants favored the applicant affiliated with the same party as the participant (Iyengar & Westwood, 2014). The increase in polarization and animosity between political parties has been growing since the 1960s (Haidt & Hetherington, 2012; Iyengar et al., 2012). This trend is partially due to technological changes and the rise of new forms of media, such as the growth of partisan media, allowing individuals to act out confirmation bias, seeking information that confirms their beliefs and tuning out information that does not (Iyengar et al., 2012; Prior, 2007).

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) (SIT) is a framework that within a political context helps explain party identity (Greene, 2004; Greene, 2005). SIT explains how an individual's self-concept is tied to his or her perceived group membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Thus, SIT provides an explanation for the preference for in-group members and strong animosity towards out-group members. In addition, SIT states that individuals place an emotional value on these group memberships, explaining in-group bias. Although SIT is rooted within social psychology, there is a great advantage to applying it towards political science, as is evidenced from the large amount of research in recent years on identity-based motivated reasoning in the formation of political opinions. Using SIT as a model for partisan identity provides a rich theoretical background to explain the psychological attachment and group belongingness associated with partisanship (Greene, 2002; Theodoridis, 2015). In addition, it can provide an explanation for individual behavior as it relates to party group attachment, and is a predictor for individual behavior (Greene, 2002). SIT explains the bipolarity within American politics, the us-versus-them attitude commonly seen between Republican and Democratic Party members. Importantly, SIT is not intended to replace current theories, discussed below, but only to expand upon them in order to provide a more comprehensive theoretical framework. In short,

SIT can be used to explain the preference for in-group members who share a political identity and the even stronger dislike for out-group members who do not.

Partisan identity can play a powerful role in attitude formation and opinion expression due to partisan motivated reasoning – that is, processing information and forming evaluations with a goal of upholding existing beliefs, identities and cultural worldviews (Kunda, 1990; Kahan et al., 2011). When people engage in partisan motivated reasoning, they tend to give more weight to evidence that is consistent with existing beliefs, identities (e.g., partisan loyalties) or cultural worldviews when forming an evaluation (i.e., confirmation bias). They also tend to dismiss information that is inconsistent with existing views or group loyalties (i.e., disconfirmation bias), and evaluate evidence and arguments as stronger when they are consistent with one’s beliefs or identities (i.e., a prior attitude effect). Confirmation bias, disconfirmation bias, and attitude formation all serve as identity-protective forces in directionally motivated reasoning. Politically Motivated Reasoning (PMR) specifically serves as a psychological explanation for political polarization (Lodge & Taber, 2013). PMR causes people to interpret the same information differently depending on their political identity and the partisan affiliation of the information presented. In other words, political identity as a type of social identity drives PMR, which serves to protect a preexisting political identity and group attachment (Kahan, 2016; Bolsen et al., 2014).

### **Power of the Party Label**

Many voters rely on cognitive shortcuts in order to quickly identify which candidate they prefer. One of these shortcuts is attractiveness. First impressions are very important and images of politicians’ faces have been studied in order to identify what features are more desirable in a

candidate (Budesheim & DePaolo, 1994; Hellweg, Pfau, & Brydon, 1992; Rosenberg, et al, 1986; Keating, et al, 1999). Interestingly, some studies have shown that individuals can identify out-group members simply from a photograph with greater accuracy than would simply be expected due to chance (Olivola & Todorov, 2010; Samochowiec, Wanke, & Fiedler, 2010). Wanke, Samochowiec, and Landwehr (2013) suggest that this hypersensitivity to out-group members has an evolutionary basis; it is more dangerous to trust someone who can harm us than distrusting someone who is harmless. In the American political context, the two major parties have become so polarized the past few decades that two separate cultures now exist. Iyengar and Westwood (2014) found that out-group animosity and distrust in the political sphere has become ingrained and automatic. All of these studies provide support for attractiveness as a shortcut and support for identifying out-group members; however, research on the effects party labels on opinion formation is even more compelling.

There is evidence to suggest that when presented with minimal information, people rely on party labels to make evaluations. In an interesting study by Kaplan et al. (2007), participants were shown pictures of members of their political party (in-group members) as well as opposing political party members (out-group members) while undergoing an fMRI. When shown pictures of out-group members, there were significantly different neural signals occurring in both the cognitive and emotional regions of the brain than when pictures of in-group members were presented. This study captured, on a neurological level, the emotional and biological responses to expressing positive feelings towards in-group members and negative feelings towards out-group members. In addition, Young, Ratner, and Fazio (2013) found that individuals remember the faces of out-group politicians as less attractive than those of in-group politicians. Similarly, Ratner et al (2014) found that in-group faces were rated as more trustworthy in an economic

game and were rated as more trusting, caring, intelligent, and attractive overall. Duck et al. (1995) found in-group members perceived themselves as less vulnerable to media propaganda than out-group members. Moreover, in-group members felt that out-group members were less likely to listen to messages that countered their views and would only listen to messages that supported their existing political belief (Duck, et al., 1995). Bolsen, Druckman, and Cook (2014) find that individual support for an energy law in the U.S. depended on whether it had the endorsement of the in-group or out-group party (also see, Cohen, 2003). Thus, political identity drives PMR such that the party label itself can play a powerful role in shaping opinions towards candidates and policies.

Given the literature on using SIT as a framework and the research supporting that political attitudes can color perceptions, a person's political identity can affect the evaluation of a candidate when only an image is presented. We conducted an experiment to test whether or not party affiliation affects the evaluation of a candidate's image and whether people view candidates more favorably if they are from the same party (in-group) versus an opposing party (out-group). Since SIT states that individuals prefer in-group members and strongly dislike out-group members, in conjunction with the literature on PMR, we hypothesized that (H1) Democrat and Republican respondents would evaluate an in-party candidate more favorably than an out-party candidate; (H2) independent respondents would evaluate both Republican and Democrat candidates less favorably relative to a no-label control group.

## Method

### Participants

We recruited a sample of 246 participants from introductory classes at a large southeastern university in the fall of 2015.<sup>1</sup> We recruited participants for the study via the Political Science Research Pool (PSRP), a human subjects pool in which students taking introductory political science courses sign up to participate in research opportunities offered by faculty, graduate and undergraduate students. The sample included 164 females and 66 males. 143 participants identified as Democrats, 28 as Republicans, and 56 as Independents. The age of the participants ranged from 18-56. It was a racially diverse sample. In order to take part in the study, participants had to be registered with the Political Science SONA system and also had to be over the age of 18. Refer to *Appendix A* for material used to recruit participants for the study. The survey was administered via Qualtrics and could be taken anywhere with Internet access on a PC, tablet, or smart phone. Participants chose to participate in this study from a list of studies for course extra credit.

### Procedure

We conducted a survey experiment to test the hypotheses stated above. In this study participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (control/no label, Republican, Democrat) and completed a Qualtrics survey online. Participants were informed that the study focused on the influence of first impressions on the character of a political candidate. Participants first completed a series of questions measuring demographic and political characteristics. Next, participants viewed an image of a political candidate and were told that he

---

<sup>1</sup> We exclude from the analyses 17 participants who did not complete the survey.



was a Republican, a Democrat, or there was no party affiliation listed. Participants then evaluated the character of the candidate. The survey consisted of four parts: demographic questions, participant party identification, candidate evaluation (either a control, republican, or democrat condition), and debriefing. At the completion of the survey, participants were debriefed and informed that the focus of the study was the impact of party affiliation on candidate evaluations – i.e., not about the first impressions of a candidate’s character on the basis of an image (see *Appendix B*). This was a between subjects research design. A breakdown of participant demographics within each condition is listed in *Table 1*.

## **Measures**

We measured party identification on a 7-point scale with Independents coded at the midpoint, Democrats on the left, and Republicans on the right side. We also used a scale measuring political ideology on a 7-point scale with moderate coded at the midpoint, liberal on the left, and conservative on the right. These are commonly used scales to measure party identification and ideology (Bolsen, Druckman, & Cook, 2014). Previous research has shown that there is little difference between weak partisan leaners and strong partisans’ attachment to the group (Greene, 1999), so during data analysis, the 7-point scales for political identity and ideology were collapsed so that weak, moderate, and strong partisanship were in the same group.<sup>2</sup> The evaluation of the candidate was measured using 7-point bipolar scales to assess character attributions taken from Keating et al. (1999): submissive-dominant, weak-strong, unattractive-attractive, naïve-cunning, dishonest-honest, and heartless-compassionate. In addition, an unlikely-likely-to-vote dimension was added to that scale. The image used to depict

---

<sup>2</sup> All results are robust if we use the full continuous scale and we do this to simplify and clarify the presentation of our results.

the political candidate was Senator Martin Heinrich of New Mexico. Previous research found race and gender influence candidate evaluations when little information is presented (McDermott, 1997; McDermott, 1998). Therefore, Senator Heinrich was chosen because he is an average-looking white, male senator. See *Appendix B. Conditions & Wording* for each condition's survey in its entirety.

## Results

A manipulation check revealed 83% of participants in the Republican condition and 93% of participants in the Democrat condition correctly identified the partisanship of the candidate presented. Thus, the manipulation of the candidate's political label was effective. We conducted difference of means t-tests to compare candidate evaluations for individuals who share a party identification, but were randomly assigned to different experimental conditions in order to test hypothesis 1: Democrat and Republican<sup>3</sup> respondents will evaluate an in-party candidate more favorably than an out-party candidate. To test hypothesis 1 the mean score for each character attribute between Democrats were compared via difference between means t-tests, see *Tables 2-3*. When compared to Democrats in the Democrat condition, Democrats in the Republican condition found the candidate to be less cunning ( $t=5.33, p<.01$ ), less honest ( $t=5.39, p<.01$ ), less compassionate ( $t=4.35, P<.01$ ), less attractive ( $t=3.71, p<.01$ ), less dominant ( $t=5.06, p<.05$ ), and were less likely to vote for him ( $t=2.65, p<.01$ ), see *Table 2*. This offers clear support for hypothesis 1.

Additional testing for hypothesis 1 was conducted comparing character attribution means for Democrats in the Democrat condition to Democrats in the control. This revealed that in-

---

<sup>3</sup> The Republican participants' data was analyzed, but removed from the manuscript for clarity because there were no significant differences at an alpha level of .05. This can be explained by the small Republican sample size in the Democrat and Republican conditions,  $n=8$  and  $n=11$ , respectively. We expect that samples of comparable sizes to the Democrat samples would produce similar results to findings in the Democrat samples.

group ratings were significantly higher for the following character attributions: cunning ( $t=4.56$ ,  $p<.05$ ), honest ( $t=3.53$ ,  $p<.01$ ), compassion ( $t=3.49$ ,  $p<.01$ ), attractive ( $t=3.24$ ,  $p<.01$ ), and likelihood to vote ( $t=3.58$ ,  $p<.05$ ), *see Table 3*. The trend between in-group and out-group evaluations for Democrat participants support hypothesis 1: in-group party member evaluations are more favorable.

To test hypothesis 2, that Independent respondents will evaluate both Republican and Democrat candidates less favorably when compared to a control, the following out-groups' means across candidate character evaluations were compared to Independents in the no label control: Independents in the Democrat condition and Independents in the Republican condition. Independents in the Democrat condition found the candidate to be more compassionate relative to Independents in the control ( $t=4.26$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Independents in the Republican condition found the candidate to be less honest ( $t=3.5$ ,  $p<.05$ ) relative to Independents in the control condition, *see Table 4*. This is in mix support of hypothesis 2.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether or not people view candidates more favorably if they are from the same party (in-group), thus supporting the use of SIT, which posits that evaluations are tied to group membership, as a working framework within political science. The hypotheses were (1) Democrat and Republican respondents would evaluate an in-party candidate more favorably than an out-party candidate and (2) Independent respondents would evaluate both Republican and Democrat candidates less favorably when compared to a control. The results provide clear support for hypothesis 1 and mixed support for hypothesis 2.

There was ample evidence supporting hypothesis 1 suggesting that the in-group candidate was viewed more favorably when compared to a partisan control baseline. Most differences in

character attribution across conditions were in cunningness, honesty, perceived attractiveness, compassion, and likelihood to vote. Notably, the trend to give negative ratings to the out-group politician was mirrored with a trend to give positive ratings for the in-group candidate. This was clearly seen within the Democrat participants. Democrats in the Republican condition gave more negative ratings for six out of the seven character attributions measured when compared to Democrats in the Democrat condition, see *Table 2*. In addition, Democrats in the Democrat condition gave more positive ratings for five out of seven character attributions when compared to Democrats in the control conditions, see *Table 3*. This supports Social Identity Theory and is consistent with the literature.

To test hypothesis 2, the means from the Independent respondents in the Republican and Democrat conditions were compared to the Independents in the control condition, see *Table 4*. In mixed support of the hypothesis, Independents viewed the Republican less favorably in terms of honesty and the Democrat candidate more favorably in terms of compassion when compared to Independents in the control condition. This is conflicting with our hypothesis that Independents will view both candidates more negatively because they are both out-group members, non-Independents. In addition, there were only two significant differences across the character attributes and the two experimental conditions, honesty and compassion. Combined with the mixed results previously discussed, this may suggest that SIT is not a good explanation for how Independents view out-group members. One rationalization for this is that Independents are not as strongly formed of a group with a deep culture and identity like the Republican or Democratic parties. Thus, perhaps the identity of being an Independent is not fully formed and so in-group and out-group membership is not perceived as intensely. Another reason for this finding is the relatively small sample size. On average there were less than half as many Independent

participants in each condition compared to Democrat participants. A larger sample size of Independents in a future study can confirm whether or not this was the case.

As was found in previous studies, the party label can play a powerful role in candidate evaluations and impressions. One implication of this finding may be that party polarization has become so intense in American politics that the power of the label is stronger than the actual platform of a candidate. Of course, this is beyond the scope of the present study, which provided an image and label associated with a candidate in the absence of specific policy information or a party platform. As with every study, there are limitations that should be addressed. The sample consisted of undergraduate students and although the university from which this sample was derived from provides a diverse sample in ethnic background with some variation in age, most participants were between 18 and 20 years old. Furthermore, the sample was largely Democratic and thus offers an asymmetric test of the key hypotheses. Additional research is necessary to replicate the results we demonstrate on different samples to bolster the external validity of the findings.

The current study examines Social Identity Theory's tie to partisanship, as well as Politically Motivated Reasoning as driving factors in the evaluation of political candidates. The present study demonstrates that even a limited amount of information that associates a candidate with one of the two major political parties in the U.S. can have a powerful effect on individuals' evaluation. This may be driven by effortful cognitive processes whereby learning the party label of a candidate generates additional considerations that may drive evaluations, or it may be driven by the party label offering a "cognitive shortcut" as a way to avoid any additional effortful cognition in the candidate evaluation process. Future research should be directed towards examining the impact PMR has in the evolution of issue/policy-based voters versus

partisanship/identity-based voters, as well as platform-driven candidates versus identity-driven candidates. The results from this study, as well as findings from Bolsen, Druckman, & Cook (2014) and Iyengar & Westwood (2014), would suggest that the latter of the two pairings would be more relevant compared to even fifty years ago. Is there a way to overcome PMR or alter the current trajectory of partisan rivalry? Another line of research would be to examine Independents as a group. Independents are commonly left out of data analysis because they represent a smaller percentage of American politics; however, with the growing polarization of the Republican and Democratic parties, it is possible the number of Independents may grow as more Americans become distrustful of the two current major parties. It would be interesting to explore whether or not SIT can be applied to explain the behavior of individuals who identify as an Independent. It is possible that the group's identity is not as strongly developed as the Republicans and Democrats, but it would be worthy of an investigation.

This study attempted to link the party a candidate runs under to evaluations about the candidate's character traits. The data obtained from this study assessed the impact that party labels have on candidate evaluations. The significant differences between the evaluations of the candidate's character based solely upon the party label attests to the power of partisanship in the American political context. Participants favor candidates who are members of their in-group, but not as much as they dislike members of the out-group. Thus, these results support the use of Social Identity Theory as a working model within political science.

## References

- Bolsen, T., Druckman, J. N., & Cook, F. L. (2014). The influence of partisan motivated reasoning on public opinion. *Political Behavior*, 36(2), 235-262. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-013-9238-0>.
- Budesheim, T. & DePaolo, S. (1994). Beauty or the beast? The effects of appearance, personality, and issue information on evaluations of political candidates. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20, 339-348. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167294204001>.
- Campbell, A., Converse, P., Miller, W., and Stokes, D. (1960). *The American Voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cohen, G. L. (2003). Party over policy: The dominating impact of group influence on political beliefs. *Journal of Personality And Social Psychology*, 85(5), 808-822. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.5.808>.
- Duck, Julie, Hogg, Michael, and Terry, Deborah (1995). Me, us and them: political identification and the third-person effect in the (1993) Australian federal election. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 25, 195–215. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420250206>.
- Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (2007). The advantages of an inclusive definition of attitude. *Social Cognition*, 25(5), 582-602. <https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.2007.25.5.582>.
- Greene, S. (1999). Understanding party identification: A social identity approach. *Political Psychology*, 20(2), 393-403. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00150>.
- Greene, S. (2002). The social-psychological measurement of partisanship. *Political Behavior*, 24(3), 171-197. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021859907145>.
- Greene, S. (2004). Social identity theory and party identification. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85(1), 136-153. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2004.08501010.x>.
- Greene, S. (2005). The structure of partisan attitudes: Reexamining partisan dimensionality and ambivalence. *Political Psychology*, 26(5), 809-822. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2005.00445.x>.
- Green, D. P., Palmquist, B., & Schickler, E. (2002). *Partisan hearts and minds: Political parties and the social identities of voters*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Haidt, J. & Hetherington, M. (2012, September 17). Look how far we've come apart. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from [https://campaignstops.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/17/look-how-far-weve-come-apart/?\\_r=0](https://campaignstops.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/17/look-how-far-weve-come-apart/?_r=0).
- Hellweg, S., Pfau, M., & Brydon, S. (1992). *Televised presidential debates: Advocacy in contemporary America*. New York: Praeger.

- Iyengar, S., Sood, G., & Lelkes, Y. (2012). Affect, not ideology: A social identity perspective on polarization. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 76(3), 405-431.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfs038>.
- Iyengar, S. & Westwood, S. J. (2014). Fear and loathing across party lines: New evidence on group polarization. *American Journal of Political Science*, 69(3), 690-707.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12152>.
- Kahan, D. M. (2016). The politically motivated reasoning paradigm, part 1: What politically motivated reasoning is and how to measure it. *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences: An Interdisciplinary, Searchable, and Linkable Resource*. 1–16.  
DOI: 10.1002/9781118900772.etrds0417
- Kahan, D.M., Jenkins-Smith, H., & Braman, D. (2011). Cultural cognition of scientific consensus. *Journal of Risk Research*, 14, 147–174.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13669877.2010.511246>.
- Kaplan, J. T., Freedman, J., & Iacoboni, M. (2007). Us versus them: Political attitudes and party affiliation influence neural response to faces of presidential candidates. *Neuropsychologia*, 45, 55-64. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2006.04.024>.
- Kunda, Z. (1990). The case for motivated reasoning. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(3), 480-498.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.108.3.480>.
- Lodge, M., & Taber, C. S. (2013). *The rationalizing voter*. Cambridge; New York : Cambridge University Press.
- McDermott, M. (1997). Voting cues in low-information elections: Candidate gender as a social information variable in contemporary United States elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, 41, 270-283. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111716>.
- McDermott, M. (1998). Race and gender cues in low-information elections. *Political Research Quarterly*, 51, 895-918. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591299805100403>.
- Olivola, C. Y., & Todorov, A. (2010). Elected in 100 milliseconds: Appearance-based trait inferences and voting. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 34, 83-110.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10919-009-0082-1>.
- Prior, M. (2013). Media and political polarization. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 16101.  
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-100711-135242>.
- Ratner, K. G., Dotsch, R. Wigboldus, D. H. J., van Knippenberg, A. & Amodio, D. M. (2014). Visualizing minimal ingroup and outgroup faces: Implications for impressions, attitudes, and behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 106(6), 897-911.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036498>.



- Rosenberg, S., Bohan, L., McCafferty, P. & Harris, K. (1986). The image and the vote: The effect of candidate presentation on voter preference. *American Journal of Political Science*, 30, 108-127. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111296>.
- Samochowiec, J., Wanke, M., & Fiedler, K. (2010). Political ideology at face value. *Social Psychology and Personality Science*, 1, 206-213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550610372145>.
- Tajfel, Henri, and Turner, John C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In Stephen Worchel and William G. Austin (eds.), *Psychology of Inter- group Relations*, pp. 7–24. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Theodoridis, A. G. (2015). *It's my party: Partisan intensity through the lens of implicit identity*. Working paper. [https://voices.uchicago.edu/americanpol/files/2015/05/MyParty\\_IAT\\_Theodoridis.pdf](https://voices.uchicago.edu/americanpol/files/2015/05/MyParty_IAT_Theodoridis.pdf).
- Wanke, M., Samochowiec, J., & Landwehr, J. (2013). Facial politics: Political judgment based on looks. In J. P. Forgas, K. Fiedler & C. Sedikides (Eds.), *Social thinking and interpersonal behavior*. (pp. 143-160). New York, NY, US: Psychology Press.
- Young, A. I., Ratner, K. G., & Fazio, R. H. (2014). Political attitudes bias the mental representation of a presidential candidate's face. *Psychological Science*, 25(2), 503-510. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613510717>.

Table 1. *Sample Demographics Between Conditions*

This table shows the breakdown of demographics across conditions.

	<b>Democrat Condition</b> <i>n=76</i>	<b>Republican Condition</b> <i>n=77</i>	<b>Control</b> <i>n=76</i>
<b>Gender</b>	Female 53 Male 23 Prefer not to Answer –	Female 59 Male 17 Prefer not to Answer 1	Female 49 Male 26 Prefer not to Answer 1
<b>Age</b>	Mean 21.76 Median 19 Mode 18 Range 18-56	Mean 19.23 Median 19 Mode 18 Range 18-30	Mean 20.16 Median 19 Mode 18 Range 18-39
<b>Race/ Ethnicity</b>	Caucasian 13 African American 29 Latino/Hispanic 12 Asian 12 Middle Eastern - Native American/Pacific Islander 1 Other 7 Prefer not to Answer 2	Caucasian 16 African American 19 Latino/Hispanic 14 Asian 19 Middle Eastern 1 Native American/Pacific Islander - Other 6 Prefer not to Answer 2	Caucasian 12 African American 27 Latino/Hispanic 7 Asian 19 Middle Eastern 2 Native American/Pacific Islander - Other 8 Prefer not to Answer 1
<b>Party Identity</b>	Democrat 49 Republican 8 Independent 19	Democrat 48 Republican 11 Independent 16 Prefer not to answer- 2	Democrat 46 Republican 9 Independent 21

*General Note: Each number represents the number of participants in that condition.*

Table 2. *Means Between Democrats*

This table shows compares the means for each character attribution made by Democrats.

<b>Variable/ Treatment Group</b>	<b>Democrats in Democrat Condition <i>n=49</i></b>	<b>Democrats in Republican Condition <i>n=48</i></b>
<b>Strong</b>	4.86 (.82)	5.02 (.86)
<b>Cunning</b>	4.76 (.80)	5.33** (.97)
<b>Honest</b>	4.65 (1.30)	3.96** (1.53)
<b>Compassion</b>	4.88 (.90)	4.35** (1.26)
<b>Attractive</b>	4.78 (1.16)	3.71** (1.25)
<b>Dominant</b>	4.73 (.88)	5.06* (1.13)
<b>Vote</b>	4.04 (1.5)	2.65** (1.36)

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$ , one-tailed test.

*General Note: Standard deviations are listed in parenthesis below each mean. P-values indicate the significance level the means within the Democrat condition differ from means in the Republican condition based on difference of means t-tests. Higher means denote leanings towards the bolded character traits in the pairings (weak-**strong**, naive-**cunning**, dishonest-**honest**, heartless-**compassionate**, unattractive-**attractive**, submissive-**dominant**, and unlikely-**likely to vote**).*

Table 3. *Democrat Means Compared to Democrat Control*

This table shows compares the means for each character attribution made by Democrats in the Democrat condition and Democrats in the control.

<b>Variable/ Treatment Group</b>	<b>Democrats in Democrat Condition</b> <i>n=49</i>	<b>Democrats in the Control Condition</b> <i>n=45</i>
<b>Strong</b>	4.86 (.82)	4.88 (.86)
<b>Cunning</b>	4.76 (.80)	4.56* (.78)
<b>Honest</b>	4.65 (1.30)	3.53** (1.14)
<b>Compassion</b>	4.88 (.90)	3.49** (1.01)
<b>Attractive</b>	4.78 (1.16)	3.24** (1.13)
<b>Dominant</b>	4.73 (.88)	4.91 (.85)
<b>Vote</b>	4.04 (1.5)	3.58* (1.53)

\* $p < .05$     \*\* $p < .01$ , one-tailed test.

*General Note: Standard deviations are listed in parenthesis below each mean. P-values indicate the significance level the means within conditions differ from the control means based on difference of means t-tests. Higher means denote leanings towards the bolded character traits in the pairings (weak-**strong**, naive-**cunning**, dishonest-**honest**, heartless-**compassionate**, unattractive-**attractive**, submissive-**dominant**, and unlikely-**likely to vote**).*

Table 4. *Independent Means Compared to Control*

This table lists the means for each character attribution compared to control means across conditions with Independent Participants. Higher means denote leanings towards the bolded character traits in the pairings (weak-**strong**, naive-**cunning**, dishonest-**honest**, heartless-**compassionate**, unattractive-**attractive**, submissive-**dominant**, and unlikely-**likely to vote**).

Variable / Treatment Group	Independents in Democrat Condition <i>n=19</i>	Independents in Republican Condition <i>n=18</i>	Independents in Control Condition <i>n=22</i>
<b>Strong</b>	4.53 (.61)	4.78 (.81)	4.36 (.58)
<b>Cunning</b>	4.68 (.82)	4.83 (1.38)	4.77 (.81)
<b>Honest</b>	4 (1.15)	3.5* (.86)	3.86 (0.83)
<b>Compassion</b>	4.26* (.99)	4.06 (1.06)	3.77 (.87)
<b>Attractive</b>	4.42 (1.12)	3.56 (1.04)	3.95 (1.50)
<b>Dominant</b>	4.84 (.76)	4.78 (.81)	4.63 (.73)
<b>Vote</b>	3.89 (.99)	3.61 (1.38)	3.68 (.89)

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$ , one-tailed test.

*General Note: Standard deviations are listed in parenthesis below each mean. P-values indicate the significance level the means within conditions differ from the control means based on difference of means t-tests.*

*Appendix A. SONA Recruitment Text*

This is the recruitment text as it appeared on SONA. This study was administered via SONA and students chose to participate from a list of available studies.

*Title: Party Identification and the Evaluation of Political Candidates*

*Principal Investigator: Dr. Toby Bolsen*

*Student Principal Investigator: Ms. Anna Zabinski*

*You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate the influence initial judgments of a political candidate have on evaluations of their character. You are invited to participate because you are a student over the age of 18 at Georgia State University taking a political science course. Up to 250 participants will be recruited for this study. Participation will require up to thirty minutes of your time over the course of one sitting. This study will be presented in a survey format and can be taken from any computer, tablet, or smartphone device with internet access.*

*Appendix B. Conditions & Wording*

These are the questions presented to participants via Qualtrics. The Political Identity and Candidate Confirmation & Conclusion questions were presented to everyone as well as the Debriefing statement.

\*Across all conditions, questions about the candidate’s character were randomized to control for order effects. *How likely are you to vote for the candidate?* was always presented last.

**Political Identity**

*Generally speaking, which of the options on the scale to the right best describes your party identification?*

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
<i>Strong Democrat</i>	<i>Weak Democrat</i>	<i>Independent Democrat</i>	<i>Independent Democrat</i>	<i>Independent Republican</i>	<i>Weak Republican</i>	<i>Strong Republican</i>

*How important is your party identification (or your identification as an Independent) to you?*

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
<i>Extremely Unimportant</i>	<i>Very Unimportant</i>	<i>Unimportant</i>	<i>Neither</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Extremely Important</i>

*Which point on this scale best describes your political views?*

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
<i>Very Liberal</i>	<i>Mostly Liberal</i>	<i>Somewhat Liberal</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Somewhat Conservative</i>	<i>Mostly Conservative</i>	<i>Very Conservative</i>

**Control Condition\***

*This is a political candidate running for office.*



Evaluate the candidate on the following scale:  
How submissive or dominant is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Submissive	Submissive	Slightly Submissive	Neither	Slightly Dominant	Dominant	Very Dominant

Evaluate the candidate on the following scale:  
How weak or strong is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Weak	Weak	Slightly Weak	Neither Weak nor Strong	Slightly Strong	Strong	Very Strong

Evaluate the candidate on the following scale:  
How naïve or cunning is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Naïve	Naïve	Slightly Naïve	Neither Naïve nor Cunning	Slightly Cunning	Cunning	Very Cunning

Evaluate the candidate on the following scale:  
How honest or dishonest is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Honest	Honest	Slightly Honest	Neither Honest nor Dishonest	Slightly Dishonest	Dishonest	Very Dishonest

Evaluate the candidate on the following scale:  
How compassionate or heartless is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Compassionate	Compassionate	Slightly Compassionate	Neither Compassionate nor Heartless	Slightly Heartless	Heartless	Very Heartless



Evaluate the candidate on the following scale:  
How attractive or unattractive is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Attractive	Attractive	Slightly Attractive	Neither Attractive nor Unattractive	Slightly Unattractive	Unattractive	Very Unattractive

Evaluate the candidate on the following scale:  
How likely are you to vote for this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Slightly Unlikely	Neither Unlikely nor Likely	Slightly Likely	Likely	Very Likely

**Republican Condition\***

This is a Republican political candidate running for office.



Evaluate the Republican candidate on the following scale:  
How submissive or dominant is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Submissive	Submissive	Slightly Submissive	Neither	Slightly Dominant	Dominant	Very Dominant

Evaluate the Republican candidate on the following scale:  
How weak or strong is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Weak	Weak	Slightly Weak	Neither Weak nor Strong	Slightly Strong	Strong	Very Strong

Evaluate the Republican candidate on the following scale:  
How naïve or cunning is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Naïve	Naïve	Slightly Naive	Neither Naive nor Cunning	Slightly Cunning	Cunning	Very Cunning

Evaluate the Republican candidate on the following scale:  
How honest or dishonest is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Honest	Honest	Slightly Honest	Neither Honest nor Dishonest	Slightly Dishonest	Dishonest	Very Dishonest

Evaluate the Republican candidate on the following scale:  
How compassionate or heartless is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Compassionate	Compassionate	Slightly Compassionate	Neither Compassionate nor Heartless	Slightly Heartless	Heartless	Very Heartless

Evaluate the Republican candidate on the following scale:  
How attractive or unattractive is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Attractive	Attractive	Slightly Attractive	Neither Attractive nor Unattractive	Slightly Unattractive	Unattractive	Very Unattractive

Evaluate the Republican candidate on the following scale:  
How likely are you to vote for this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Slightly Unlikely	Neither Unlikely nor Likely	Slightly Likely	Likely	Very Likely

**Democrat Condition\***

This is a Democratic political candidate running for office.



Evaluate the Democratic candidate on the following scale:  
How submissive or dominant is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Submissive	Submissive	Slightly Submissive	Neither	Slightly Dominant	Dominant	Very Dominant

Evaluate the Democratic candidate on the following scale:  
How weak or strong is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Weak	Weak	Slightly Weak	Neither Weak nor Strong	Slightly Strong	Strong	Very Strong

Evaluate the Democratic candidate on the following scale:  
How naïve or cunning is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Naïve	Naïve	Slightly Naïve	Neither Naïve nor Cunning	Slightly Cunning	Cunning	Very Cunning

Evaluate the Democratic candidate on the following scale:  
How honest or dishonest is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Honest	Honest	Slightly Honest	Neither Honest nor Dishonest	Slightly Dishonest	Dishonest	Very Dishonest

Evaluate the Democratic candidate on the following scale:  
How compassionate or heartless is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Compassionate	Compassionate	Slightly Compassionate	Neither Compassionate nor Heartless	Slightly Heartless	Heartless	Very Heartless

Evaluate the Democratic candidate on the following scale:  
How attractive or unattractive is this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Attractive	Attractive	Slightly Attractive	Neither Attractive nor Unattractive	Slightly Unattractive	Unattractive	Very Unattractive

Evaluate the Democratic Candidate on the following scale:  
How likely are you to vote for this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Slightly Unlikely	Neither Unlikely nor Likely	Slightly Likely	Likely	Very Likely

**Candidate Confirmation and Conclusion**

*What political party was the candidate running under?*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Republican*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Democrat*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Unsure*

*Did you recognize the political candidate prior to completing this survey?*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Yes*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*No*

**Debriefing**

*Thank you for your participation in this study. As mentioned in the Consent form you agreed to upon continuing to completing this survey, not everything you were told in this study was true. Firstly, the political candidate pictured is a real Senator representing the state of New Mexico named Martin Heinrich and he is not currently running for office. Secondly, in the beginning of this study you were told this would be a study about first impressions. This study was actually about the influence party labels have on candidate evaluations. You were in one of three conditions; a control with no party label, a Republican party label, or Democrat party label. By altering the party Senator Heinrich was running for office under, we can better identify the impact that label has on the evaluation of his character. In reality Senator Heinrich is a Democrat.*

*Knowing what this study was truly about, can we still use your data?*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Yes*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*No*

*Appendix C. IRB Protocol Number*

This study was approved by Georgia State University's Institutional Review Board. IRB protocol number: H15658.