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The Political Logic of a Downsian Space

Abstract

Anthony Downs (1957) applied the concept of spatial voting to understand electoral competition. His paradigm is the dominant frame for formal analysis of the strategic decisions of candidates, although its central implication—that candidates will converge on the median voter—is often at odds with facts. Ensuing behavioral and formal scholarship offers rationales for this apparent shortcoming.

Limitations of standard surveys, however, have impeded the dialogue between these two promising lines of research. We introduce an experimental survey that overcomes these limitations, allowing analysis of insights culled from each perspective.

Substantively, we focus on how parties' policy reputations interact with the people's partisan ties to condition their spatial judgements. We find that partisan biases distort spatial choices in accord with insights of the *American Voter* (Campbell, et. al. 1960). Contrary to the *American Voter*, however, we also find that partisan ties appear rooted in parties' policy reputations; reputations that, in turn, place limits on the freedom of politicians to exploit the biases of their partisan supporters. Overall, though, the constraints of the median voter are less stringent than often supposed, leaving candidates with underappreciated freedom to maneuver.

I. Introduction

In 1957, Anthony Downs applied the concept of spatial voting to understand electoral competition between political parties. Within a decade, Downs' and the "Michigan" approach (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960) were on equal footing when it came to understanding people's voting decisions. Downs' paradigm, however, has become the dominant frame for the analysis of the strategic decisions of candidates and, hence, the electoral connection.

The decision rule for voters in a Downsian space is to choose the candidate whose position is closest to their own. The median voter theorem, which flows from this modeling assumption combined with a uni-dimensional policy space, has proven to be a powerful tool for understanding politics. But it has also generated a deep puzzle. The theorem suggests that political parties should moderate their positions in two-party systems. Yet, in the American case at least, the positions of parties and candidates periodically polarize (Fiorina 1974; Alesina and Rosenthal 1995; Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart 2001). Why is a central implication of Downs' perspective—that candidates will converge on the median voter—so often at odds with facts?

Rational choice modelers have offered a variety of formal explanations for the limitations of Downs' original analysis, often focusing on how candidate divergence can be sustained. Some of their models assess alternative electoral structures, others consider alternative informational or spatial environments, and a third group integrates alternative motivations of elite actors, including their policy preferences. (For a review see Grofman 2004). All of these approaches take as given the reliance of voters on Downs' rule of

choosing the closest candidate. Yet, from its beginnings, research into political behavior has offered reason to question the relevance of the spatial framework to voters, instead drawing attention to decision rules driven by partisan ties or alternative candidate features (Campbell, et al. 1960). The purpose of this paper is to investigate the basis of voter choice through a survey experiment that allows a credible integration of these two traditions. Our overarching hypothesis is that there is a political logic to Downsian spaces precisely because voters' support for candidates is systematically biased by their own political views and perceptions of political parties.

Relying on a new experimental survey procedure that overcomes the endogeneity of voters' own policy preferences and their perceptions of candidate positions, we find strong evidence that voters' partisan biases do distort their spatial choices. One might anticipate this distortion, but its magnitude is quite staggering, particularly when candidates take positions that are typical of their parties. However, we also find that voters' partisan biases appear rooted in party reputations, reputations that, in turn, place limits on the freedom of politicians to exploit the biases of their partisan supporters. Our results point to a revised understanding of the interplay of strategic positioning, party reputation, and electoral choice. They suggest that the constraints of the median voter are less stringent than they have been supposed and that partisan elites have more—although not limitless—freedom of maneuver than has been appreciated.

II. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Empirical shortcomings of the Downs model have been apparent from the start, including the failure of candidates to converge reliably on the position of the median

voter. Downs himself considered several possible explanatory culprits for this anomaly, focusing primarily on abstention by extremist voters facing a choice between moderate candidates (1957, 118-119).¹ Donald Stokes (1963) issued a more general call to incorporate growing knowledge about the bases of voter choice into the spatial framework proposed by Downs. He raised questions about the assumption that voters perceive a common, single dimension of political competition over which they have diverse preferences. Far from rejecting the utility of spatial logic, his call was for a dialogue between our understanding of how voters make decisions in different contexts and our formal models of political competition.²

In the ensuing decades modelers have productively explored the logical implications of altering the postulates of Downs. Much of the relevant formal research takes as given the basic assumptions about voter choice in the spatial model and focuses on the implications of electoral institutions and elite behavior (Aldrich 1983; Wittman 1983; Palfrey 1984; Calvert 1984; Romer 2001; Grofman 2004).³ These and other

¹ A variety of empirical regularities about public opinion and participation that became increasingly evident in the decade after Downs wrote render this explanation for divergence unsatisfying. Downs' development suggests that abstention-induced candidate extremism will be evident primarily in societies with bimodal preferences on a fundamental ideological dimension. Survey evidence casts doubt on the relevance of this claim with respect to the American electorate. More troublesome for Downs' rationale for partisan divergence, however, is that short-term political factors seem to have little effect on the propensity of voters to show up at the polls (Campbell, et al. 1960, p. 93). These behavioral facts have directed the attention of scholars away from the role of rational abstention in the spatial framework.

² In the end, he suggested that "[t]he conclusion to be drawn from all this is not that the spatial model should be rejected root-and-branch, but rather that we should treat as explicit variables the *cognitive phenomena* that the prevailing model removes from the discussion by assumption."

³ Changes in the structure of the basic electoral game posited by Downs have substantial consequences. Palfrey (1984), for example, proves that divergence between the positions of established parties can be induced by the entry of third parties. Aldrich (1983) has shown how divergence can be induced by the participation decisions of potential party activists, and a variety of scholars point to the potential of primary elections to induce divergence (see Grofman 2004).

Another approach, initiated by Wittman (1983) and Calvert (1985) has focused on the information available to candidates and their personal policy preferences. These models share an assumption that candidates know the probable rather than the precise location of the median voter. In this context,

models have advanced our understanding of how candidate competition might proceed—and generate divergent outcomes—when voters satisfy the basic behavioral assumptions of Downs. In our view, however, much progress can be made by empirically investigating the central behavioral postulate of Downs rather than altering structural features of the basic spatial model. In particular, both formal and behavioral approaches suggest that we would profit from examining how party identification and party reputations define the limits of voters as Downsian spatial choosers.

The behavioral conception of party identification focuses on the foundational role of parties in electoral choice. In the classic simile, becoming identified with a political party is like being born into a religion: a loyalty acquired early in life; indeed, handed down from parent to child, and maintained, more often than not, through life; a loyalty which imparts a sense of identity and supplies an integrated set of basic principles and action proposals (Campbell, et. al. 1960). Most fundamentally, party identification provides an anchor for the perception and evaluation of political objects. In the classic formulation of the *American Voter*:

If party identification deeply influences the *partisan* character of a field of psychological forces, it also will have marked effects on the internal *consistency* of the field. Our conception of the role of partisan loyalties leads us to expect this

candidates that so desire can espouse positions that diverge from the most likely location of the median voter yet achieve office with positive probability. Romer (2001) offers an elaboration of this motivation *plus* uncertainty approach, further exploring implications of party elites with diverse desires and of various conceptions of uncertainty.

These explanations have, in fact, left us with a surplus of plausible explanations for divergence within a modified Downsian framework—a surplus that makes empirical judgments about the real world roots of polarization difficult. To evaluate the accuracy of these various models, scholars often assume that candidates comprehend and respond to the incentives the electorate provides. After adopting this assumption, they draw specific hypotheses from their models and test them by examining the (presumably) strategic choices of candidates in varying circumstances. These efforts often enhance the plausibility of the basic assumptions and logical development of the models they are meant to evaluate (e.g. Groseclose 2001). Typically, however, one can imagine—or identify another scholar who has already imagined—a set of alternative assumptions that could produce identical patterns of candidate competition. This limits the confidence we can have that assumptions and conclusions of such models capture reality.

result. Identification with a party raises a perceptual screen through which the individual tends to see what is favorable to his partisan orientation. The stronger the party bond, the more exaggerated the process of selection and perceptual distortion will be. (Campbell, et. al. 1960, p. 132-3).

In short, party identification is an affective tie of varying depth that can define and even distort perceptions of where candidates stand on the issues of the day.

A growing body of formal analysis has considered how partisan biases of this nature would condition spatial choice. This work is an outgrowth of models that consider elections in the presence of what Stokes terms valence dimensions (Wittman 1983, Groseclose 2001). Building on the probabilistic voting framework (Wittman 1983, Calvert 1985), these models incorporate the assumption that one candidate has a natural advantage due to a non-policy characteristic. Candidates can hold a valence advantage for a variety of reasons, including their incumbency status, charisma, competence, or, to stretch the concept of valence, party affiliation. It may seem questionable to conceptualize candidates' partisan labels as valence issues because they are not valued positively by all voters as competence or charm might be. However, the relatively stable partisan biases held by many citizens combined with electoral jurisdictions that herd citizens with shared biases allow the rough analogy.

Wittman plainly adopts this analogy, and in his formulation it is easy to show that valence-advantaged candidates can exploit their non-policy edges to diverge from the median and still gain office.⁴ A related perspective that suggests similar conclusions is

⁴ Groseclose's analysis supports this basic finding, but adds the qualification that when the ideal point of the median voter is uncertain, a candidate with a valence advantage can best ensure election by minimizing policy discrepancies with her opponent. This places some limits on divergence by rational policy oriented candidates. Groseclose also proves that the presence of a candidate who enjoys a valence advantage will not only allow divergence by candidates that care about policy, but will actually create incentives for divergence by candidates who do not care about policy. This work confirms Stokes' expectation that accounting for valence issues can fundamentally alter the expected outcomes of spatial competition.

offered by Adams, Merrill, and Grofman (2004), who conceive of partisan affect as a central non-policy factor in building a more general theory of party competition. We believe that these attempts to meld the traditional affect-centered conception of party identification with the spatial framework of Downs capture an important and common electoral dynamic. At the behavioral level, these models imply that the more strongly people identify with a party, the more likely they are to act as if they perceive candidates of the party as holding their preferred position—even when the candidates do not. At the systemic level, these models identify electoral contexts in which candidates can gain office without adopting the position of the median voter.

However, there is reason to suspect the story is more complicated. Parties play a dual role. They are the primary focus of voter loyalties. But they are also the primary organizational medium for selecting candidates and bundling policy choices. Recognition of the role of parties as bundling policies leads us to a second strand of the theoretical literature, the emerging conceptualization of parties as reputational vessels or brand names guided by ambitious politicians (e.g. Cox and McCubbins 1993; Aldrich 1995; Snyder and Ting 2001). This body of work takes us beyond conceiving people's partisan biases as reflexive attachments largely unrelated to policy, and carries potentially profound implications for voter behavior and electoral competition.

Two theories that address parties, information, and candidate credibility are particularly relevant for our inquiry. Alesina (1988) and Alesina and Rosenthal (1995) build from a simple premise that candidates are unable to diverge credibly from the positions of their parties. If these spatial reputations are the basis of voter loyalty then candidates will gain little by adopting atypical positions meant to appeal to loyalists of

the other party—voters simply won't believe their advances. Snyder and Ting (2001), offer a different account in which people are willing to support candidates whose positions they are certain about over candidates whose positions they are less certain about. Their intuition is that voters will sometimes choose a candidate with a clear reputation for favoring policies that diverge from their ideal over a candidate who is likely to pursue a policy closer to their ideal but is less predictable. Unlike the affective bias of non-policy party loyalists, this bias is rooted in the policy concerns of voters. Voters, in Snyder and Ting's view, give the benefit of the doubt to candidates of their favored brands because they present reliable and credible, if sometimes imperfect, policies. In turn, this gives candidates that share a party label a collective incentive to take consistent and distinct positions.

These theoretical approaches beg the question of what would happen if candidates were to take positions that lead voters to question whether they are reliable and credible standard bearers of their party. Would loyalists flee? We suspect the answer is yes, at least if it is truly the case that loyalties are rooted in policy concerns. Consider contemporary American politics. Parties have clear policy-related political reputations (e.g. Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001). The brand of the Democratic party signals a liberal program; that of the Republican, a conservative one. To the extent that this is so, then a voter in Downsian space presented with party-denominated candidates receives two policy-related signals—the issue positions of the candidates and the brand names of the parties. Typically, the two signals are concordant. Candidates for different offices, at different times, and in different regions, take varying positions on the ideological spectrum, but the Democrat is regularly to the left of the

Republican. But what if the signal is discordant and the Democrat is to the right of the Republican? In atypical situations like this we anticipate that the distinctive consequences of the policy-based reputational roots of party loyalty come to the fore.

More specifically, when the positions of the candidates are roughly in concordance with expectations, more and less sophisticated respondents alike have reason to rely on party reputations rather than pure spatial reasoning. But if candidates take positions that diminish the credibility of the signal sent by their party label, then the more politically sophisticated respondents are more likely to recognize when party labels don't fit the candidates' positions. Their own attitudes are more crystallized and accessible and their positions on policies are more coherently organized (e.g. Converse 1964; Zaller 1992). Thus, one might anticipate that in cases where candidate and party signals are in discord, more sophisticated respondents will tend to attach less weight to partisan labels and more weight to the issue positions of candidates in their decisions. They will approximate true Downsians in this unusual circumstance. Conversely, the less politically sophisticated respondents will be more likely to continue to rely on their partisan loyalties for guidance, loyalties that approximate the affective and instinctive ones described in the *American Voter*.

In sum, both behavioral research on partisan attachments and formal research on party reputations direct our attention to basic concerns about how voters make choices that undergird models of strategic decisions by candidates. Understanding these building blocks of electoral competition seems more fundamental and logically prior to elaborating the structural assumptions of Downs' basic model. To make progress on this front, we address below three central questions flowing from the behavioral and formal

literature: How and to what extent do partisan attachments distort spatial choice? Do partisan biases appear to be rooted in fixed affective attachments or in more malleable policy-based party reputations? How does political sophistication condition the effect of party ties and party reputations?

III. Methods

Survey research has been an invaluable tool for understanding many aspects of voter choice. Unfortunately, typical survey instruments face formidable obstacles in investigating how voters respond to the spatial locations of candidates. The two most troublesome inferential problems arise, ironically, because surveys capture voter choices in the context of real-world elections. The first problem emerges from the fact that we tend to observe the choices of people only when candidates have adopted equilibrium positions. For example, if Downs' classic formulation holds, then candidates converge on policy issues and leave voters to make judgments on grounds other than spatial proximity. So far as this is so, the effect is to increase the apparent importance of partisanship, incumbency, or any number of other ancillary considerations, even though spatial competition remains the linchpin of voter choice. One could discount the relevance of this particular concern because there is plentiful evidence that candidates do indeed diverge from each other on a variety of issues relevant to voters. The more general point, however, is that the dynamics of electoral competition may well prevent us from using election surveys to explore the roots of voter choice.

The second problem caused by our dependence on real world election surveys is that we cannot reliably know where individual respondents stand relative to candidates.

Scholars interested in the ability of voters to make decisions based on policy considerations have long recognized this problem of endogeneity. When voters are the source of estimates of both their positions on issues and those of the candidates, it is not possible with the standard surveys to determine if one is also the source of the other, and if so, which is cause and which effect.

Page and Brody (1972) expose both of the inadequacies of standard surveys in their investigation of issue voting on Vietnam in the 1968 presidential election. They analyze presidential candidates' avowed positions on Vietnam and find the differences to be minimal. Little surprise, therefore, attaches to their finding that the Vietnam preferences of voters had only a moderate relationship to their voting decisions, although more than half of them identified it as the most important problem for the "government in Washington." Moreover, the limited evidence of policy voting Page and Brody find seems to be an artifact of voter projection of candidate locations. They conclude, for example, that, "Among Republicans, who mostly favored Nixon, extreme hawks thought that Nixon was an extreme hawk; extreme doves thought he was an extreme dove; and those in the middle thought that Nixon stood in the middle!" (Page and Brody 1972, p. 986). Thus, we have reason to suspect that candidate preference led to perceptions of issue proximity, not the converse. This study illustrates well the twin empirical quandaries of using survey evidence as a basis for evaluating formal models of candidate competition. Vietnam was an issue of overwhelming importance to the electorate, leading the major party candidates to converge and forestalling the prospect of widespread issue

voting. Nevertheless, issue voting was detectable, though it appeared to be an artifact of projection of candidate positions by voters with biases unrelated to the issue at hand.⁵

Randomized assignment of the positions of candidates is a way around the problem of endogeneity. It ensures that the issue position assigned to a candidate is not conditional on a respondent's issue position. And it guarantees that respondents can encounter candidates with divergent policy positions. The specific design we develop relies on Knowledge Networks' web-based technology. The sample is a representative sample of the adult population (N=7086).⁶ To gauge respondent policy opinions we employ standard National Election Study seven-point scales.⁷ We present these scales horizontally on the screen and ask respondents to indicate their position by clicking on a point (see Appendix for examples). The ends of the scales are visually anchored by short descriptions of the positions they represent. To facilitate comparability with previous research, we focus on the responses to the standard *American National Election Study* question about the appropriate level of government services and spending. The respondents who placed themselves on this scale were slightly more likely to favor increased spending and more services than reductions in both, with a mean self-

⁵ Markus and Converse (1979) use a richer set of survey evidence in an effort to identify the independent effects of issue voting, partisanship, and candidate personality in directing people's votes. Exploiting the 1972-76 NES panel and a model designed to account for various possible causal routes, they find significant evidence of endogenous projection of candidate positions as well as genuine policy voting. Jackson (1975) also estimates a structural equation model and concludes that issue voting is a central feature of elections even in the presence of partisan electorate. Despite these advances, there is reason to believe that analysis of standard surveys fall short of offering a reliable foundation for advancing our understanding of the dynamics of electoral competition. A notable exception is the work of Crewe, Sarlvik, and Alt (1997) on partisan attachments in Britain.

⁶ Detailed characterization of the sample is available at <citation omitted>.

⁷ We collected respondent opinions on seven issue scales, although we only analyze one here.

placement of 4.48 on the scale.⁸ We commonly refer to the self-location question as the reference item.

To separate the respondents' evaluations of where they stand on this issue and their choices between the positions of two competing candidates, we proceed to ask them twenty-nine questions about their views on other issues, their partisanship, their political values, and their political knowledge. After asking these questions we return to the government services and spending item and present respondents with two candidates visually located on a scale identical to the one on which the respondents self-located earlier. We randomly manipulated two characteristics of the candidates: their location on the issue scale and whether or not they are affiliated with parties.⁹ One third of the sample was presented with candidates labeled "A" and "B", while the other two-thirds were presented with Democratic and Republican candidates.¹⁰ We provided the respondents with no other information about the candidates.

While respondents were viewing the spatial location of the two candidates we asked, "[w]hich candidate represents your position on the issue?" They can choose "Democrat" (or "Candidate A" in the non-partisan condition), "Republican" (or "Candidate B"), "Neither," or "Don't Know." We refer to this question as the target item. We considered a number of different formulations for this item. One alternative is

⁸ 7,086 respondents placed themselves on this scale, 447 others either refused to answer or answered don't know.

⁹ The only restriction we place on location is that the candidates cannot occupy the same point on the scale. Otherwise we completely randomized their location. For example, in the partisan condition we presented some respondents with a Democratic candidate that favored lower spending and services than the Republican candidate – a manipulation we will investigate later.

¹⁰ Of the respondents who placed themselves on the government services and spending issue scale, 2,325 receive the non-partisan target item and 4,719 received the partisan target item.

to ask respondents which candidate is closest to their position on the issue. However, this would not allow them to express the type of dissatisfaction with both candidates that our target item allows. Another possibility is to ask people which candidate they would vote for and explicitly offer them an opportunity to abstain. One concern is that this formulation would encourage people to ignore the issue-specific information and instead “vote” based on positions they infer the candidates hold on other issues due to the partisan identities of the candidates. A different concern is that asking respondents to “vote” with knowledge of only a single issue position of candidates is not realistic.¹¹ Fortunately, a large body of research suggests that the judgment most proximate to vote choice is candidate evaluation, allowing loose analogy between responses to our target item and vote choice (Campbell, et. al. 1960; Markus and Converse 1979).

In sum, our approach allows us to manipulate candidate locations and partisan identities, and to evaluate voter reactions to these manipulations. Our explicit control of candidate location allows us to minimize the problems that the endogenous relationship between candidate and respondent locations create for evaluations of spatial voting in standard surveys. Full randomization also offers us leverage to explore electoral circumstances that are unlikely to occur in the real world due to the pressure of electoral competition. Most importantly for our purposes, we can identify when respondents choose to discount or fail to perceive spatial cues due to partisan considerations instead of relying on their ability to comprehend and their willingness to admit when they have done so.

¹¹ Offering respondents candidate positions on a more general ideological spectrum is one possible response to these problems. However, respondents unfamiliar or uncomfortable with distilling politics into such a dimension might discount spatial cues cast in this abstract and artificial way.

IV. Findings

A. Partisan Biases

We first address the baseline question of how and to what extent partisan attachments distort people's spatial choices. To evaluate this we construct a variable to capture the basic Downsian decision rule of selecting the more proximate candidate. It is coded -1 if the Democratic candidate (or candidate A) is closer to a respondent than the Republican candidate (or candidate B), 1 in the opposite circumstance, and 0 if the two candidates are equidistant from the respondent.¹² We also construct a variable that mirrors the ANES party identification measure, which takes values between 1 for strong Democrats and 7 for strong Republicans.

Next we construct a dependent variable based on respondents that actually express a preference for a candidate. We exclude those who answer "neither" or "don't know" to target items. The resulting variable is coded 1 when the respondent selects the Democrat (or candidate A) and 0 when the respondent selects the Republican (or candidate B). We narrow our focus to respondents who take a position because this approach best fits our loose analogy between candidate preferences and people's voting

¹² Our survey method would admit further investigation into whether respondents abstain as a result of the considerations that Downs identifies, but we put such analysis aside and focus our attention on respondents who express a preference. We also considered introducing further assumptions about the shape of voters' preference curves (for example that they are quadratic) and adopting an assumption that voters make their choices probabilistically after evaluating the utility of each candidates' position. We opted for our blunt operationalization because we find its assumptions less troublesome for testing our basic hypotheses. Moreover, it leads to identical substantive conclusions about the relative importance of partisanship and spatial decision criteria as the most obvious alternative specification—one which incorporates a measure of the difference in the absolute relative distance of the two candidate from a respondent. It is worth noting, however, that our method allows for evaluation of additional assumptions about voter preference functions in contrast to methods that rely on voter self-reports. These assumptions often drive formal treatments of candidate competition and bear further evaluation. See Macdonald and Rabinowitz (1989) and Groseclose (2001) for treatments that are explicit about the role of such assumptions.

decisions. Our exclusion of respondents who fail to express a preference is equivalent to treating them as if they abstain—a treatment consistent with Downs’ hypothesis that indifference or indecision are preconditions for rational abstention.¹³

We separately estimate the following logistic regression model of candidate choice for respondents in the partisan and non-partisan conditions:

$$\Pr(\textit{Democrat or A}) = \alpha + \beta_1(\textit{Party ID}) + \beta_2(\textit{Republican or B closer}) + \epsilon$$

Our simple expectation, drawing both from the classic conception of party identification and our brand name elaborations, is that citizen partisanship will have a substantial influence in the partisan condition and no influence in the non-partisan condition. We are also interested in the relative importance of the spatial and partisan factors in the partisan condition. Table 1 presents the estimates.

--Insert Table 1 around here--

In the partisan condition both the partisanship of respondents and the identity of the nearest candidate are estimated to be highly significant determinants of choice. The negative coefficient for party identification indicates that Republican identifiers are less likely to select the Democratic candidate than Democratic identifiers. Similarly, the negative coefficient for the trichotomous proximity variable indicates that respondents are less likely to select the Democratic candidate when their self-location is closer to that of the Republican. In the non-partisan condition the effect of respondent partisanship declines below traditional levels of statistical significance, while the proximity variable

¹³ We estimated multinomial logistic models that included respondents who answered “don’t know” and “neither” to the target items. The findings we present are entirely consistent with the findings of these models.

becomes slightly more significant.¹⁴ Figure 1 displays a substantive interpretation of these estimates.

--Insert Figure 1 around here--

The lines plot the probability a person will choose the Democratic candidate (or candidate A) conditional on which candidate is more proximate to the person and conditional on the person's partisan ties. To take one example, our estimates indicate that strong Democrats will pick the Democratic candidate 94% of the time when the Democratic candidate is closer to them than the Republican. If the Republican candidate is the Downsian choice, however, strong Democrats will still pick the Democratic candidate 58% of the time. The thirty-six percentage point difference between these two estimates, or more generally the distance between the two associated lines, is the expected impact of becoming the Downsian favorite in the partisan condition.

The slope of the lines indicates the effect of respondent partisanship conditional on a specified spatial favorite. To continue the example, the estimates indicate that a strong Republican will pick the Democratic candidate less than 38% of the time even when the Democratic candidate is closer to the respondent than the Republican candidate. Conditional on the Democratic candidate being the Downsian favorite, therefore, a strong Republican respondent is fifty-six percentage points less likely than a strong Democrat to select the Democratic candidate. In sum, our estimates indicate that respondent

¹⁴ Respondents have a slight preference for candidate B in the non-partisan condition. Moreover, this preference is somewhat stronger among Republicans. We are not certain why this is the case, although it disappears if we included dummy variables for each potential self-placement. Otherwise, however, the addition of dummy variables does not alter these results we present, leading us to present the simple model above.

partisanship has a more substantial impact on candidate choice than Downsian spatial cues.

Turning our attention to the non-partisan condition further verifies that partisanship leads a substantial proportion of people to make choices different than the ones that they would have made in a purely spatial context. The shaded areas labeled “1” in the figure indicate the estimated proportion of people who make an incorrect spatial choice in the partisan condition relative to the choice they would have made in the non-partisan condition. As discussed above, we find that strong Democrats pick the Democratic candidate 58% of the time even when the Republican candidate is located closer to them. In the analogous setting in the non-partisan condition, strong Democrats would choose Candidate A only 15% of the time based on our estimates. In other words, over 40% of strong Democrats would make a different decision when choosing between partisan candidates when their partisan favorite is a Downsian loser than they would if choosing between non-partisan candidates. As the strength of respondent partisanship declines so does this size of discrepancy, nevertheless the addition of partisan cues alters the spatial choices of a substantial portion of our sample.

The cross-hatched areas labeled “2” in the figure highlight a further effect of partisanship. These areas indicate our estimate of the proportion of people who make a correct spatial decision in the partisan context, who would have made a spatial mistake in the non-partisan context. Consider again strong Democrats. In the partisan condition we estimate that these respondents will choose a Democratic candidate who is the spatial favorite well over 90% of the time. Thus, they very rarely make the mistake of choosing a Republican who is also a Downsian loser. On the other hand, in the non-partisan

condition they mistakenly choose candidate B almost 25% of the time when candidate A is the spatial favorite.

Figure 1 thus presents evidence of a substantial bias in spatial choice induced by partisan labels. Partisanship, in fact, leads respondents to judge the position of the candidate of their party as closer to their position even when of the candidate of the opposing party is objectively closer. There are two potential sources of this bias. It may be that respondents are willing to opine that the candidate of their favored party represents them better on this issue even though they recognize the spatial misfit between their views and the position of the candidate. They simply discount the spatial information in favor of the party reputation. On the other hand, it may be that respondents implicitly adjust where they stand after they know where the candidate of their favored party stands. In effect, they are persuaded by the brand name of the candidate.

In either case, our experiment probably understates the extent to which partisan biases distort spatial choice in actual elections. In the context of real elections, people may be more uncertain about where candidates stand, making them less likely to perceive the explicit representational tradeoffs presented by our method. In other words, if a portion of respondents let their biases override explicit spatial cues, one could expect an even larger portion would do so if the spatial cues were more difficult to divine. Further, in the context of real elections people are rarely required to consider and adopt positions on the issues at hand before making candidate choices as they are in our survey. Thus, if a portion of respondents implicitly relocate themselves in response to the positions of the candidates in our survey, one could expect an even larger portion to implicitly relocate in

the real world. After all, in the real world people do not need to engage in the work of reevaluating their considered opinion. In short, partisan loyalties appear fundamentally to alter spatial competition in a way consistent with classical or brand name perspectives.

B. Party Reputations and Responsiveness to Party Cues

In this section, we investigate whether the influence of partisan ties depends on candidates adopting positions that accord with their parties' general reputations. As discussed above, we expect that the ability of partisan cues to sway respondents will decline when candidate positions are at odds with those attentive citizens anticipate. To test this hypothesis we separate respondents who received partisan target items into two groups. The first group encountered a choice between a Democratic candidate that preferred more spending and services than the Republican competitor. We refer to this as the *concordant* condition, because the positions of the candidates relative to each other match those typically endorsed by the two parties. The *discordant* condition includes cases in which the Republican candidate is more liberal on the issues than the Democratic candidate.¹⁵ To examine how partisanship affects choice in the two settings we estimated the basic model introduced above separately for respondents who encountered the two different candidate orderings. Table 2 presents the estimates.

--Insert Table 2 around here--

¹⁵ There are a number of alternative ways to conceive of parties taking positions at odds with their reputations. We have explored some of these, including one that defines the condition as concordant only when the Democratic candidate takes a position at the middle or to the liberal side of the continuum and the Republican candidate does the opposite. The definition we use above retains more cases and seems to have similar effects. In addition, there are electoral settings in which we would expect both parties to be to one side of the services and spending issue continuum, so we would not want to categorize all situations in which this occurred as discordant.

Our estimates of the effects of partisanship and spatial proximity far exceed conventional levels of statistical significance in both the concordant and discordant conditions. Respondent behavior, however, appears much more predictable in the concordant condition judging from the comparative ability of the two models to explain variation (pseudo r-squared of .52 vs. .11). This difference seems to stem from the fact that partisanship, which plays a dominant role in the concordant setting, is less strongly related to candidate choice in the unfamiliar partisan context. Figure 2 presents a substantive interpretation of the models.

--Insert Figure 2 around here--

Figure 2 can be read in the same manner as the Figure 1. The steeper slope of the lines in the concordant condition relative to those in the discordant condition indicates the much stronger influence of partisanship when the order of the parties is familiar. A striking comparison is provided by considering the choices of strong Democrats in the familiar and unfamiliar partisan contexts when they encounter a Republican who is the spatial favorite. In the discordant condition, strong Democrats facing this spatial choice will stick with the Democratic candidate only 43% of the time according to our estimates. They actually endorse the Republican 57% of the time. Given the same spatial context but a familiar relative location of the parties, we estimate that these respondents will support the Democrat nearly 83% of the time. In the most common real-world partisan context, therefore, party ties appear to overwhelm spatial choice. The deterioration of the relevance of these ties for respondent choices when the parties take positions at odds with their brand names fits with our premise that party loyalties and reputations interact with

spatial politics. A partisan electorate might be a boon to candidates of favored parties, but it appears to be an uneven and conditional one.

The weakening of this partisan effect in the unfamiliar discordant condition bears more examination because it offers a window into the mechanics of party reputation. We expect that the effects of an unfamiliar ordering of the partisan candidates will be most evident among sophisticated respondents. Presumably, they are both the most likely respondents to realize that the parties have transgressed the normal order of things and the most likely to be capable of an independent spatial judgment necessary for shopping in this unfamiliar political market. We suspect that less sophisticated respondents are more apt to stick with the brand they rely on even when it no longer suits their needs.

To explore these hypotheses we estimate our basic model conditional on the political knowledge of our respondents. To measure political knowledge we rely on eight factual questions about politics and government in the United States. Based on the percentage of these questions people answered correctly we divided them into three groups that each compose roughly a third of our sample.¹⁶ Then we estimated the concordant and discordant condition models separately for respondents at each level of knowledge. Table 3 presents the estimates of two of the six models for illustrative purposes.

--Insert Table 3 around here--

A glance at the table foreshadows our primary finding that, in comparison to their less knowledgeable counterparts, more politically knowledgeable people are indeed more likely to discount partisan cues when they encounter unfamiliar partisan terrain.

¹⁶ 28% of respondents answered 5 or fewer questions correctly, 40% of respondents answered 6 or 7 questions correctly, and 32% of respondents answered all 8 questions correctly.

However, contrary to our expectations political sophisticates do not appear to increase their reliance on spatial cues in absolute terms. In fact, the noticeably poorer fit of the model for high knowledge respondents (pseudo r-squared of .08 vs. .19) suggests that their clearer understanding of party reputations makes choice in the dissonant setting particularly difficult for them. A more informative comparison is offered by Figures 3 and 4, which summarize the substantive estimates of all six models.

--Insert Figure 3 around here--

The lines in Figure 3 represent our estimates of how much more likely strong Republicans are than strong Democrats to select the Republican candidate. To simulate these probabilities we held the spatial variable in the model at 0, which is the value it takes when the candidates are equidistant from the respondent. In the concordant condition, more knowledgeable strong partisans are slightly but significantly more likely to choose their partisan favorite than their less knowledgeable counterparts. The relationship between knowledge and reliance on partisan cues is in the opposite direction and quite strong when the candidate order is discordant. It is notable that low knowledge respondents appear nearly as likely to rely on partisan cues in the dissonant condition as in the consonant condition. In contrast, medium and high knowledge respondents' reliance on partisan cues declines abruptly in the dissonant condition. They seem to recognize that their typically reliable brand requires reevaluation. Our original hypothesis was that this recognition would lead to fall back on spatial cues, thereby increasing their efficacy.

--Insert Figure 4 around here--

Figure 4 displays the estimated increase in support for a Republican candidate who is a Downsian favorite over that of a Republican candidate who is a Downsian loser. To simulate these probabilities we held respondent partisanship constant at Independent. Low knowledge people react to spatial cues almost identically in both the concordant and discordant conditions. Thus, with respect to both partisan and spatial cues, an unfamiliar candidate order does little to alter the bases of judgment for the least sophisticated respondents. Conversely, we can be quite certain that the responsiveness of people with more political knowledge to spatial cues *and* partisan cues declines when candidate order becomes unfamiliar. This is not entirely consistent with our expectation that knowledgeable respondents rely more heavily on spatial cues when the partisan order drives them to discount partisanship. While their *relative* reliance on spatial cues vis-à-vis partisan cues increases, their *absolute* reliance on these cues declines. Our speculation is that the dissonant condition confuses these respondents, making their choices less predictable on both partisan and spatial grounds. Less knowledgeable people, on the other hand, appear to proceed unperturbed when treading on what should be unfamiliar terrain.

V. Qualifications and Conclusions

First some words of caution and qualification. The “Randomization of Candidate Positions” experiment is a new procedure. We have confidence in the robustness of our results. But confidence is not evidence. Replicating the experiment is necessary. Replicability is one thing, however; generalizability another. We have focused on one issue. This issue, government services and spending, is drawn from a particular domain

of policy—the social welfare agenda. It cannot be assumed that the dynamics of issues in other policy domains—for example, race or social issues—are the same. Further investigation is necessary.

In addition, our results are, in an important respect, crude (though no more so than other studies, we might add). The position that respondents assign themselves on the issue continuum is taken as their ideal point. In fact, it is a measure of their ideal point with an unknown degree of error. Moreover, some features of the experimental design may invite misleading interpretations. In particular, when the candidates are not differentiated by party—but are simply styled Candidate A and Candidate B—there may be a temptation to interpret responses as responses to candidates in a primary. After all, in a (closed) party primary, all candidates have the same party label: brand name effects, one may suppose, then cancel out. But all candidates having the same brand name is not the same as their having no brand name. Respondents are more likely to recognize that the position of the candidate is in fact closer to theirs when the candidates have party brand names than when they have no brand names of their own.

Furthermore, the experimental choice situations are hardly stimulus rich. All respondents know are the candidates' issue positions and, sometimes, their party affiliations. One potential concern, then, is that people use partisan criteria for their decisions more in our artificially simplified world than they would in the real world. Perhaps, but if there is a distortion, we believe it is just the other way around—an overly generous estimate of the likelihood of issue based judgments in actual elections. The candidate positions are made unmistakable in the experiment. So everyone is cognizant of them, including that substantial portion of the electorate that fails to perceive

differences between real candidates even when they exist. If respondents cannot realize or admit that partisan favorites do not represent them when we present them with explicit evidence to the contrary, they are unlikely to do so in the more ambiguous and complex setting of a real election.

The final qualification is possibly the most important. We have analyzed respondents' judgments as to whether a candidate shares their positions on an issue, not their judgments as to which candidate they prefer. It is logically possible that our findings on the role of political parties hold only for the former, not the latter. However, this is not theoretically plausible given that recognizing spatial proximity is a key precursor to casting a spatial vote. The heart of our analysis has been the identification of conditions under which people violate a critical premise of the Downs model—that is, identify a candidate as sharing their position even though the competing candidate in fact is closer to their point of view; and the center of conditions under which people violate Downs' rule are the political parties. It therefore is all the more important to observe that perhaps the chief points of difference between choice in the real world of electoral politics and choice in the artificial world of our experiment is that political parties and partisanship are more salient, and the issue positions of candidates more obscure, in the former than in the latter.

Qualifications noted, we believe our results throw new light on spatial competition. In a Downsian world people choose the candidate whose position is closer to theirs—hence the pressure on candidates to adopt positions that correspond to those of the median voter. But in the real world of politics, it is not the correspondence between a candidate's position and the voter's that is crucial. It is the *perceived* correspondence.

The two may differ. Yet if the voter perceives a candidate's position to be the same as his, the effect is the same as if it actually is the same.

Our results show that large numbers do prefer the candidate whose position is actually closer to their own. Our findings thus lend support to Downs' insight into spatial competition. But our results also show a systematic and predictable "partisan bias" in perceptions of candidate positions. The more strongly people identify with one or the other political party, the more likely they are to judge that the candidate of their party represents their position on the issue—even when the candidate does not.

This finding of partisan bias dovetails with the fundamental claim of *The American Voter*. "The stronger the party bond, the more exaggerated the process of selection and perceptual distortion will be." (Campbell, et. al. 1960, p. 132-3.) But the totality of our results adds a fundamental qualification to *The American Voter* conceptualization of party identification. In its canonical conceptualization party identification comprises a subjective bond between a voter and a party, emotional in nature, and characteristically acquired more or less unreflectively through parental socialization, much as one acquires an attachment to a religion. Thereafter, people see politics in the light of this emotional attachment, evaluating and responding more positively to leaders of their party, more negatively to leaders of opposing parties. And so it is for many voters.

Our results, however, argue for a more political and less purely psychological conception of party attachments. In addition to (and sometimes independent of) serving as an object of emotional attachment, political parties operate as political brand names. In an era of ideological polarization they give a distinctive stamp to the positions taken

by those who campaign in their names. Their identification with a policy is a major source of information for people as to what broadly is being attempted and how, again broadly, it will be attempted. The party name itself of course has a valence, positive for its adherents, negative for the adherents of the opposing party. But parties are not just names, they are brand names. Know a candidate's party affiliation and you know a good deal about what he stands for; or, rather, what he *should* stand for. Our findings show that people recognize when candidates have positioned themselves in a way that is at odds with the policy commitments of the two parties, and it makes a difference to the choices they make. The more politically knowledgeable they are, the better Downsians they are likely to be. Partisanship does not operate in a vacuum and it should not be conceived as just an attribute of an individual unconnected from policy considerations in day to day politics.

Our findings thus point to a political logic of spatial competition. This logic is a function of the interplay of positions parties have come to stand for and the positions that candidates running under their banner have chosen to take. We emphasize interplay because the advantage that party affiliation confers on candidates is partly endogenous to the policies that candidates of a party and their competitors choose to espouse. This interplay might open up strategic alternatives for candidates in the short run. To take one example, candidates who want to reduce the reliance of voters on partisan cues may have an incentive to take positions that are atypical. Candidates with a partisan advantage might respond to this threat by adopting relatively extreme positions that are difficult for their opponents to outflank. Over the longer term, the electoral consequences of party reputations may provide incentives for parties to screen and discipline candidates to

guard established reputations. At the same time, reputations might police themselves by constricting the strategic options available to candidates of either party.

Our fundamental concern has been to establish how people make spatial choices in a partisan context. What light does our finding of the interplay of partisan bias and party reputations throw on the dynamics of party polarization? The whole thrust of our findings is to underline the freedom of partisan elites to move toward the poles of their parties. Provided a Democratic candidate keeps his Republican opponent to her right, and a Republican candidate stays to the right of her Democratic opponent, they can diverge from the position of the median voter in their constituency without appearing to diverge. Moreover, just how far they can diverge, without appearing to diverge, is conditional not on the position of the median voter in their constituency but on the distribution of strength of partisanship and political knowledge in their specific constituency. What this suggests, in turn, is that partisan polarization at the elite level can be a matter of elite choice rather than electoral dictates.

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Appendix – Survey Items

A. Self-location item.

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window titled "Knowledge Networks - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar is empty, and the menu bar includes "File", "Edit", "View", "Favorites", "Tools", and "Help". The main content area has a black background with white text. The text reads: "The next issue is **government services and spending**. Some people think the government should provide fewer services even in areas such as health and education in order to reduce spending. They are at 1. Other people feel it is important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending. They are at 7. And other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2,3,4,5, or 6. Where would you place yourself on this scale or haven't you thought much about this? Please indicate your location by clicking on the button below the appropriate number." Below the text, there are two columns of text. The left column says "Fewer services even in areas such as health and education to reduce spending" with a downward arrow pointing to a scale. The right column says "Important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending." with a downward arrow pointing to the same scale. The scale consists of seven radio buttons labeled 1 through 7. Below the scale is a checkbox labeled "Haven't thought much about this." At the bottom right of the content area is a "Next Question" button. The browser's status bar at the bottom shows "Done" and "Internet".

The next issue is **government services and spending. Some people think the government should provide fewer services even in areas such as health and education in order to reduce spending. They are at 1.**

Other people feel it is important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending. They are at 7.

And other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2,3,4,5, or 6.

Where would you place yourself on this scale or haven't you thought much about this? Please indicate your location by clicking on the button below the appropriate number.

Fewer services even in areas such as health and education to reduce spending	↓	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	↓	Important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending.
		<input type="radio"/>								

Haven't thought much about this.

Next Question

B. Non-partisan target item.

http://nq9.intersurvey.com - Knowledge Networks - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Here are the positions two candidates take on the appropriate level of **government services and spending**.

B A

↓ ↓

Fewer services even in areas such as health and education to reduce spending	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending
--	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Which candidate represents your position on the issue?

- Candidate A
- Candidate B
- Neither Candidate
- Can't say or don't know

Next Question

Done Internet

C. Partisan target item.

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window titled "Knowledge Networks - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar is empty. The menu bar includes "File", "Edit", "View", "Favorites", "Tools", and "Help". The main content area has a dark background with white and yellow text. The text reads: "Here are the positions two candidates -- a Democrat (D) and Republican (R) -- take on the appropriate level of **government services and spending**." Below this text is a horizontal scale from 1 to 7. Above the scale, "R" is positioned above 1 and "D" is positioned above 6, with downward-pointing arrows. The text "Fewer services even in areas such as health and education to reduce spending" is aligned with the number 1, and "Important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending" is aligned with the number 6. Below the scale is a question: "Which candidate represents your position on the issue?" followed by four radio button options: "Democrat", "Republican", "Neither Candidate", and "Can't say or don't know". A "Next Question" button is located at the bottom right of the content area. The browser's status bar at the bottom shows "Done" and "Internet".

Knowledge Networks - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Here are the positions two candidates -- a Democrat (D) and Republican (R) -- take on the appropriate level of **government services and spending**.

R D

↓ ↓

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Fewer services even in areas such as health and education to reduce spending

Important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending

Which candidate represents your position on the issue?

- Democrat
- Republican
- Neither Candidate
- Can't say or don't know

Next Question

Done Internet

**TABLE 1. LOGIT ESTIMATES OF CANDIDATE CHOICE IN THE
PARTISAN AND NON-PARTISAN CONDITIONS**

<u>PARTISAN CONDITION</u>			
	<u>β</u>	<u>s.e.</u>	<u>z - ratio</u>
Party Identification	-0.53	0.02	-23.68
Republican Closer	-1.18	0.05	-24.07
Constant	2.05	0.10	21.47
N	3367		
Log Likelihood	-1644		
LR Chi ²	1378		
Prob > Chi ²	0.00		
Pseudo R ²	0.29		
<u>NON-PARTISAN CONDITION</u>			
	<u>β</u>	<u>s.e.</u>	<u>z - ratio</u>
Party Identification	-0.05	0.03	1.80
Candidate B Closer	-1.30	0.06	-20.71
Constant	-0.44	0.13	-3.54
N	1656		
Log Likelihood	-876		
LR Chi ²	532		
Prob > Chi ²	0.00		
Pseudo R ²	0.23		

Note: The dependent variable is coded as 1 when the respondent selects a Democrat and 0 when the respondent selects the Republican.

TABLE 2. LOGIT ESTIMATES OF CANDIDATE CHOICE IN THE CONCORDANT AND DISCORDANT PARTISAN CONDITIONS

<u>CONCORDANT CONDITION</u>			
	<u>β</u>	<u>s.e.</u>	<u>z - ratio</u>
Party Identification	-0.90	0.04	-20.97
Republican Candidate Closer	-1.24	0.08	-14.69
Constant	3.71	0.19	19.81
N	1752		
Log Likelihood	-576		
LR Chi ²	1238		
Prob > Chi ²	0.00		
Pseudo R ²	0.52		
<u>DISCORDANT CONDITION</u>			
	<u>β</u>	<u>s.e.</u>	<u>z - ratio</u>
Party Identification	-0.27	0.03	-9.60
Republican Candidate Closer	-0.90	0.06	-13.86
Constant	0.90	0.12	7.27
N	1615		
Log Likelihood	-976		
LR Chi ²	252		
Prob > Chi ²	0.00		
Pseudo R ²	0.11		

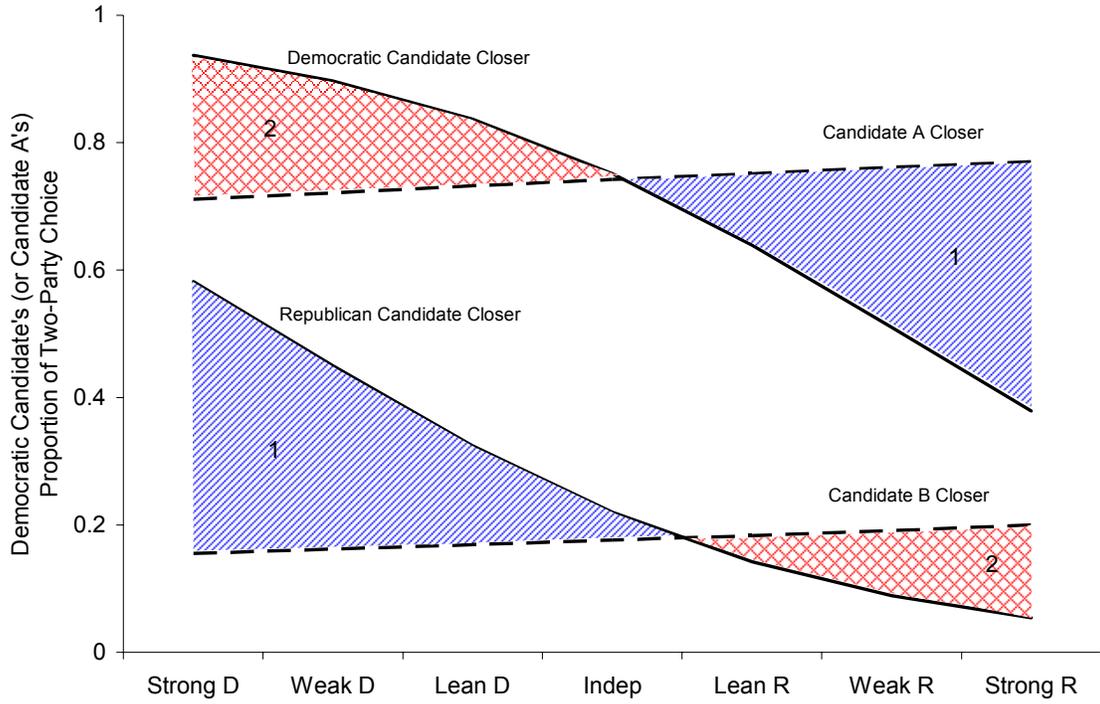
Note: The concordant condition is when the Democratic candidate favors more services and spending than the Republican candidate. The discordant condition is the opposite.

TABLE 3. LOGIT ESTIMATES OF CANDIDATE CHOICE IN THE DISCORDANT PARTISAN CONDITION FOR HIGH AND LOW KNOWLEDGE RESPONDENTS

<u>LOW KNOWLEDGE</u>			
	<u>β</u>	<u>s.e.</u>	<u>z - ratio</u>
Party Identification	-0.61	0.08	-7.83
Republican Candidate Closer	-0.82	0.15	-5.39
Constant	1.80	0.28	6.41
<i>N</i>	368		
Log Likelihood	-200		
LR Chi ²	96		
Prob > Chi ²	0.00		
Pseudo R ²	0.19		
<u>HIGH KNOWLEDGE</u>			
	<u>β</u>	<u>s.e.</u>	<u>z - ratio</u>
Party Identification	-0.09	0.04	-2.15
Republican Candidate Closer	-0.80	0.10	-7.79
Constant	0.24	0.20	1.17
<i>N</i>	559		
Log Likelihood	-351		
LR Chi ²	67		
Prob > Chi ²	0.00		
Pseudo R ²	0.08		

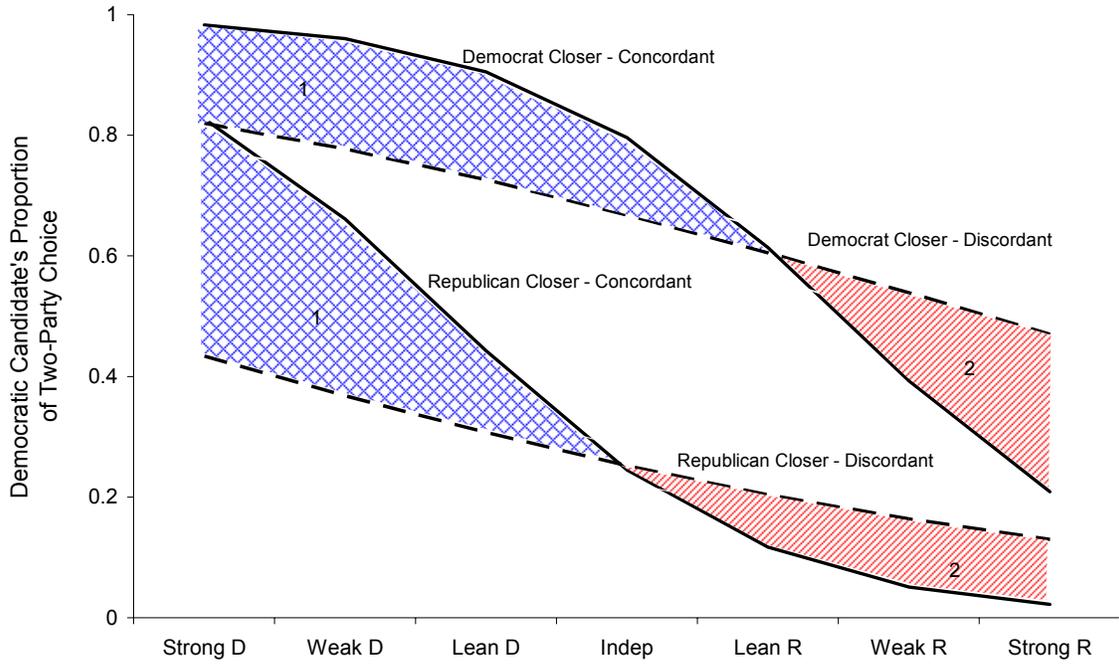
Note: The discordant condition is when the Democratic candidate favors less services and spending than the Republican candidate. Political knowledge is defined by the correct responses to a battery of ten factual questions. It is divided into a trichotomous variable for the purposes of this analysis. The dependent variable is coded as 1 when the respondent selects the Democratic Candidate and 0 when the respondent selects the Republican Candidate.

Figure 1. Party Loyalties Override Spatial Choice



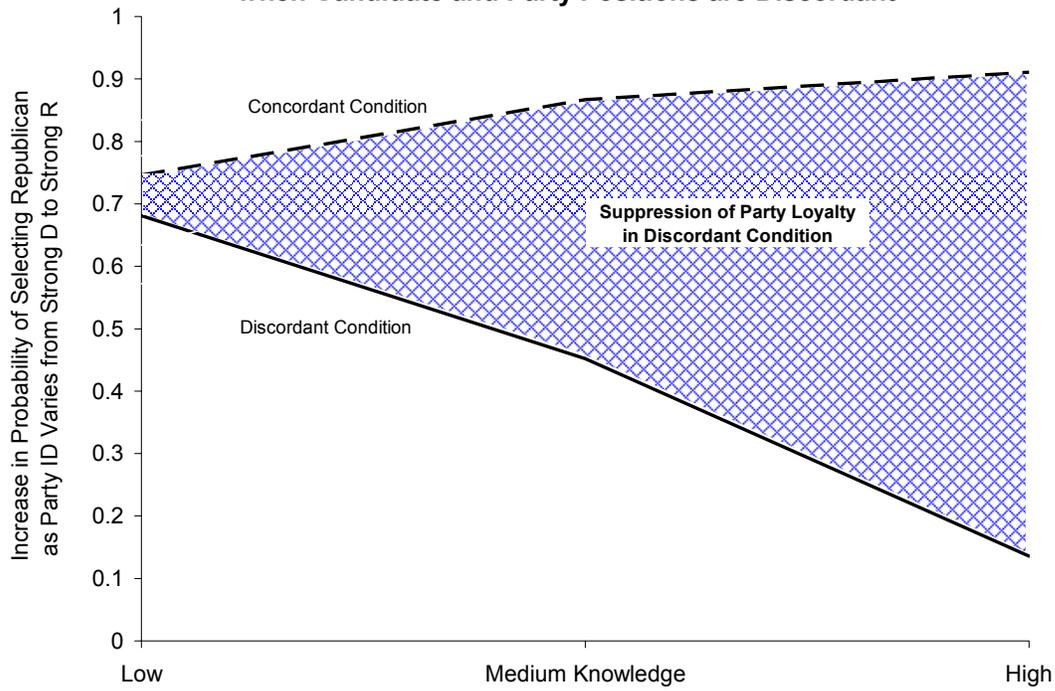
Note: The shaded areas labeled 1 highlight the proportion of people who make an incorrect spatial choice in the partisan condition but a correct spatial choice in the non-partisan condition. The shaded areas labeled 2 highlight the proportion of people who make the correct spatial choice in the partisan condition but an incorrect choice in the non-partisan condition.

Figure 2. Party Loyalties are Suppressed when Candidate and Party Positions are Discordant



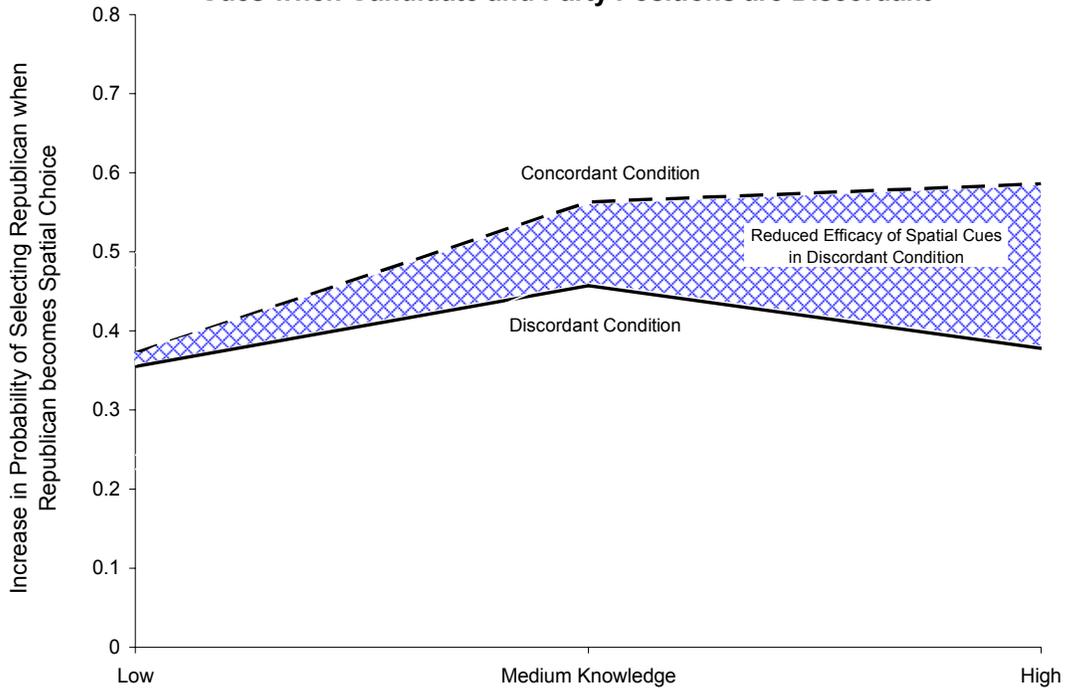
Note: Candidates and parties are "concordant" when the Democrat is more liberal than the Republican and "discordant" when the Democrat is more conservative than the Republican. The crosshatched areas (1) indicate the loss the Democratic candidate holds among Democratic loyalists when candidate and party positions are discordant. The shaded areas (2) indicate the gains the Democratic candidate enjoys among Republican loyalists when candidate and party positions are concordant.

Figure 3. Party Loyalties are Suppressed for the Most Sophisticated when Candidate and Party Positions are Discordant



Note: The lines represent the increase in the probability of selecting the Republican candidate as the Party ID of the respondent changes from "Strong Democrat" to "Strong Republican." "Discordant" means the Republican is more liberal than the Democrat, "concordant" means the opposite.

Figure 4. Political Sophistication Reduces the Efficacy of Spatial Cues when Candidate and Party Positions are Discordant



Note: This figure represents the increase in the probability of selecting a Republican candidate that is a spatial favorite over the probability of selecting a Republican candidate that is not a spatial favorite. "Discordant" means the Republican is more liberal than the Democrat, "concordant" means the opposite.