An Iterative Conjoint Framework for Studying Political Judgment: Tracing Identity-Based Anchoring in Candidate Evaluation

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Abstract

Conjoint experiments are widely used to study the determinants of individual political choices and preferences. However, their one-shot nature limits their ability to capture how political judgments evolve as new information arrives. In this paper, we begin by discussing settings in which the sequence of information is theoretically important, where not only which attributes shape evaluations matter, but also when they matter and whether their influence persists as additional information becomes available. We then develop a new dynamic framework, which we call the *iterative conjoint design*. In this setup, respondents receive attributes sequentially, with the order of information randomized, and evaluate the same profile after each new piece of information. We apply this design to examine whether early racial cues anchor Black Democrats' evaluations of political candidates and use White Democrats and White Republicans as empirical benchmarks. Our results suggest that candidate race shapes Black Democrats' initial evaluations but does not constrain updating as additional political information becomes available. The effects of both race and party decline as new information unfolds, while issue positions remain persistent. White Democrats show a very similar pattern. However, for White Republicans, information about party matters the most in candidate evaluations over time. This application enables us to provide preliminary evidence for the utility of iterative conjoint framework as a way to study not only which considerations matter for political judgment, but also how their influence changes as individuals encounter new information over time.

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Introduction

Conjoint experiments have become widely used tools for assessing the determinants of individual political choice and preferences in political science (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014; Bansak et al. 2021). These experiments typically ask participants to evaluate candidate profiles that feature a randomized set of attributes depending on the research question – such as demographic characteristics (e.g., race, gender, occupation), partisan or ideological identity, and issue positions. With repeated measurements and large sample sizes, conjoint designs allow researchers to estimate the relative importance of each attribute in shaping choices and preferences.

Despite their strengths, conjoint designs have traditionally been designed with a static structure: candidate profiles are presented in full, all at once, and evaluated in a single moment. This reflects a reasonable simplification, but it rests on an implicit cognitive assumption: that individuals process political information simultaneously and arrive at evaluations based on fully formed profiles. Yet in real-world political contexts, political judgements typically unfold incrementally, as individuals encounter new information in a piecemeal fashion, whether through campaign messaging, media coverage, or interpersonal discussions. Individuals often form and revise their impressions over time, integrating or resisting new information depending on prior beliefs, affective attachments, and the sequence in which content is encountered. By presenting candidate profiles all at once and eliciting a single evaluation, traditional conjoint designs set aside this dynamic dimension of political cognition. This raises important questions about what they can and cannot tell us about how political judgments actually form and evolve.

A large body of research in political psychology and cognitive science shows that individuals rarely process political information in a neutral, linear fashion. Instead, they overweight early information, engage in motivated reasoning, and update beliefs in ways that are highly path-dependent (Tversky and Kahneman 1974; Lodge and Taber 2013; Lau and Redlawsk 2006).[1] Yet the dominant experimental paradigm in political science, including conventional conjoint

1. Dynamic process tracing methodology (Lau and Redlawsk 2006) stems from a similar effort to ours, assessing the dynamic effects of information. We explain the difference of our design from theirs in Appendix A1 of the Supplementary Material.

experiments, presents treatment information at a single point in time and measures respondents' judgments after exposure, rather than directly observing how those judgments evolve as information arrives sequentially. Our design aims to explicitly model political decision-making as a dynamic process in a controlled setting.

In this paper, building on these insights, we propose a new experimental design, which we call the *iterative conjoint design*. This design builds on and extends traditional conjoint approaches by incorporating dynamic information flow into the conjoint framework. In standard conjoint experiments, respondents evaluate fully formed candidate profiles, a design well-suited for estimating attribute weights but not for capturing the dynamic nature of political decision-making. This static presentation may overlook a fundamental feature of political information processing: that each new piece of information is filtered through whatever impressions have already been formed. Our iterative conjoint design gradually reveals candidate attributes one at a time, prompting participants to evaluate the candidate after each new piece of information. The order of information is randomized across participants, allowing us to assess not only the marginal impact of each attribute but also how that impact varies depending on when it is introduced. In doing so, we shift from a static, one-shot framework to a dynamic, multi-round design capable of capturing preference updating, information-ordering effects, whether prior context constrains the processing of subsequent cues.

We apply this design to a core question in the study of identity politics, political representation, and democratic accountability in American elections: to what extent do early impressions grounded in racial identity-driven considerations anchor Black Americans' evaluations of political candidates? In political contexts where racial identity often serves as a key cue for group representation and trust (Dawson 1994; Gay 2002), we examine whether exposure to racial identity cues early in a candidate profile establishes enduring evaluative frames, or whether later exposure to partisan, ideological, or issue-based information reshapes those judgments.

Our theoretical focus is on Black Democrats, for whom the literature provides strong reasons to expect co-racial candidate cues to carry representational meaning. We use White Democrats and White Republicans as empirical benchmarks. White Democrats provide the closest comparison

by holding respondent partisanship constant while varying race, while White Republicans offer a secondary contrast in which both race and partisanship differ, allowing us to assess whether the relative influence of racial, partisan, and issue cues follows a different pattern across the information sequence. The White sample also permits an additional comparison between White Democrats and White Republicans, providing leverage for examining how sequential updating varies by partisanship within the racial majority. By tracking evaluations across multiple rounds and across these groups, we can assess whether the dynamics observed among Black Democrats reflect a distinctive identity-based process or more general features of political information processing.

We find that racial identity matters strongly at the outset but does not lock Black Democrats into their initial judgments. Among Black Democrats, learning that a candidate is Black produces a favorable initial update relative to learning that the candidate is White, and this response grows stronger with Black racial group identification. Yet as additional political information accumulates, the effects of both candidate race and party attenuate, while issue positions remain comparatively durable across the sequence. White Democrats show a similar updating pattern: party cues weaken as additional information becomes available and issue positions remain the most consequential source of information, although candidate race has little effect from the outset. White Republicans provide a contrasting case, with evaluations structured more consistently by party across the information sequence. Together, these results suggest that co-racial identity operates as an adaptive early heuristic for Black Democrats rather than as a fixed commitment that constraints subsequent updating, while also demonstrating how the iterative conjoint reveals temporal patterns that standard pooled conjoint estimates obscure.

Modeling Political Judgment as a Dynamic Process

Classic models of opinion formation have long emphasized the importance of information flow over time. Zaller's (1992) Receive-Accept-Sample (RAS) model, for instance, posits that individuals first encounter political information, then decide whether to accept it based on their predispositions,

and finally sample from the most accessible considerations when expressing opinions. Crucially, the considerations people "sample" at any given moment are not static. They are shaped by the order in which information is received and the recency of exposure. While Zaller (1992) offers a foundational framework for understanding dynamic opinion change, his model remains theoretical and is typically tested with cross-sectional or one-shot survey designs that do not directly capture temporal information processing.

Bayesian models of belief updating offer a more formally dynamic account by treating belief formation as the integration of prior beliefs with new evidence over time. These models offer a normative and temporally sensitive account of how opinions might evolve in light of sequential information. However, they generally rest on strong assumptions of unbounded rationality, assuming that individuals weigh all incoming information consistently and without cognitive or emotional distortion. As a result, while Bayesian updating captures the logic of dynamic information flow, it often fails to account for the psychological processes that shape actual political learning. A more psychologically grounded alternative is the concept of bounded rationality (Simon 1955), which recognizes that individuals operate under cognitive, informational, and time constraints that preclude fully optimal information processing. Within this tradition, individuals are adaptive decision-makers who rely on simplified strategies to navigate complex information environments. Gigerenzer, Czerlinski, and Martignon (2002) and Gigerenzer (2004) formalize this through the concept of adaptive heuristics — context-sensitive rules that allow for updating and adjustment in response to new information, differing from simple rules of thumb precisely in their capacity to react and adapt. Lodge and Taber's (2013) online processing model extends this logic into the affective domain, suggesting that political evaluations are continuously updated through an affect-driven tallying process rather than deliberate recalculation. From this perspective, political judgment does not conform to normative Bayesian ideals; instead, it unfolds through sequential, heuristic-driven processes that reflect the realities of human cognition under constraint

A recent political science-oriented approach that advances this dynamic orientation is Lau and Redlawsk's (2006) dynamic information board design. Their process-tracing methodology

models political learning as an evolving and selective process in which individuals actively acquire information, exhibit affective and identity-based reactions, and update their judgments in ways shaped by attention, motivation, and cognitive constraints. This design explicitly mimics the temporal and contingent nature of real-world political environments such as political campaigns. Lau and Redlawsk's approach has inspired a growing body of studies that incorporate dynamic information flow into their designs (e.g., Ditonto, Hamilton, and Redlawsk 2014; Kleinberg and Lau 2016; Ditonto 2017; Andersen and Ditonto 2018), offering rich insight into how voters actually reason through unfolding streams of political information. Building on these insights, we develop our theoretical framework for the iterative conjoint design, which we introduce in the following section.

The Iterative Conjoint Design

Conjoint experiments present respondents with profiles composed of randomly varied attributes – such as race, gender, party affiliation, or policy positions. A key advantage of conjoint experiments is their ability to estimate the Average Marginal Component Effect (AMCE), which captures how much the probability of choosing a candidate changes, on average, when one attribute switches levels. In political science, AMCEs are widely used to evaluate how various candidate characteristics influence individual political choices and preferences. One of the core strengths of conjoint experiments is their ability to decompose treatment effects and isolate the relative influence of individual treatment components. As Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto (2014) emphasize, most treatments in traditional survey experiments are composites of multiple attributes that are "aliased," making it impossible to identify which specific components are influential. Traditional designs can identify the causal effect of the entire manipulation but cannot disentangle which elements drive the observed effects. Conjoint analysis addresses this problem by randomizing individual attributes and estimating the marginal effect of each – thus providing researchers with a powerful tool to determine which elements of a multidimensional stimulus actually drive respondent choices.

Since the foundational work of Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto (2014), the use of conjoint experiments in political science has expanded rapidly. Scholars have refined the design in several important ways, especially along two dimensions. First, researchers distinguish between choice-based and rating-based outcomes, and between one-profile and two-profile designs. The first distinction concerns the outcome variable. In choice-based conjoint analysis (also called "forced-choice" or "candidate-choice" experiments), respondents are shown two or more alternatives and asked to choose the one they prefer most. The most common design is the forced-choice, two-profile experiment (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014; Miller and Ziegler 2024). For example, in a standard forced-choice design, each respondent chooses between two candidate profiles, each composed of randomly assigned attribute levels. To increase statistical power, respondents typically complete multiple randomly generated tasks. In contrast, rating-based conjoint analysis presents profiles to respondents and asks them to assign numerical ratings (e.g. feeling thermometers, trust ratings) representing their preferences. Many studies employ both types of outcomes within a single design. The second distinction concerns whether respondents compare profiles or evaluate them independently. Most conjoint experiments in political science use two-profile designs asking respondents to compare between two candidates. However, since conjoint analysis is a variant of factorial survey design, a one-profile design – where respondents evaluate a single profile at a time – is also valid and increasingly common (Horiuchi and Johnson 2025); for examples of one-profile conjoint designs, see Abascal et al. (2025), Costa (2021), Hanson (2021), Jung and Clifford (2025), Kao and Revkin (2023), Lust and Benstead (2024), and Sen (2017). Importantly, key estimands like the AMCE do not require comparison between two profiles.

Given the dramatic growth in the use of conjoint designs, there has been important methodological work refining and extending the approach. Some scholars have raised interpretive concerns about the AMCE itself (Abramson, Koçak, and Magazinnik 2022). Others have focused on external validity, arguing that the balanced distribution of attribute levels in conjoint designs can produce misleading population inferences (de la Cuesta, Egami, and Imai 2022), or that presenting profiles as text tables differs from how voters encounter candidates (Vecchiato and Munger 2025).

Building on this foundation, the iterative conjoint design builds on and extends the conjoint framework by introducing dynamic information flow — a dimension only a handful of studies have focused on. Our approach complements recent work by Jenke et al. (2021), who use eye-tracking data to study how respondents process conjoint profiles, with the aim of understanding the cognitive processes underlying political decision-making in conjoint designs, albeit from a different direction. While Jenke et al. (2021) examine *how* respondents read simultaneously presented profiles, our design goes further by asking *what happens* when attributes are revealed one at a time and evaluations are collected after each. Rather than evaluating a full profile at once, respondents are shown candidate attributes one at a time, in randomized order, and asked to rate the candidate after each new piece of information. This structure allows researchers to assess: 1) *preference updating*: how evaluations evolve across rounds; 2) *information-order effects*: whether the timing of an attribute matters; 3) *anchoring dynamics*: whether early cues shape the interpretation of later ones; and 4) *path-dependent effects*: whether sequential exposure produces diverging evaluative patterns. We summarize this logic in Figure 1, which contrasts the traditional conjoint design, where all information is presented simultaneously, with our iterative design, which has multiple rounds of exposure and collects evaluations after each attribute

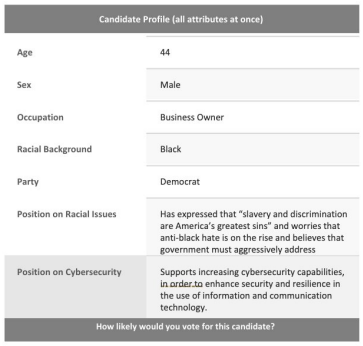
Application: Racial Identity, Political Representation, and Democratic Voting

Racial Identity-Driven Commitments and Black Americans' Decision Making

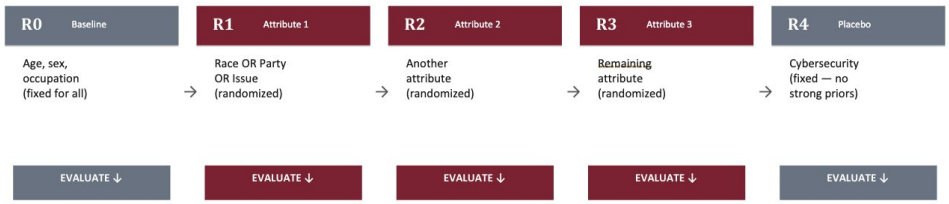
For American democracy, socially constructed identities such as race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality have been ever-ready tools for both elite and grassroots interest mobilization (Táíwò 2022). Thus, a central question for American democratic governance is, to what extent the "information" of identity in politics relate to representation outcomes and how might this information about identity constrain processes of citizens' decision-making.

Figure 1. Comparison of Traditional Conjoint Design vs. Iterative Conjoint Design

A. Traditional Conjoint Design



B. Iterative Conjoint Design



Note: Attributes are also randomized in the iterative conjoint design.

Behavioral political science research would confirm that voters do indeed use identities such as race and gender as proxies for issue/ideology representation when making political decisions (Dawson 1994; Barreto 2010; McDermott 1998; Philpot and Walton 2007; White 2007; McConnaughy et al. 2010; Sanchez and Masuoka 2010; but see Lerman and Sadin 2016 for an exception). The empirical evidence offered by this research would make 'heuristic co-racial voting' the dominant theoretical framework for understanding how voters make political decisions when faced with co-racial candidates, suggesting that a candidate's race evokes in the minds of voters' stereotypes about that individual's issue positions and ideology, via the groups they descriptively represent (Popkin 1991; Tate 1993; 2003; McConnaughy et al. 2010; Jacobsmeier 2014). In other words, when evaluating a Black candidate, voters (Black, White and otherwise) may assume that because Black Americans have a defined set of interest around issues such as economic redistribution and anti-discrimination policy that that candidate will be more likely to share the political beliefs of their

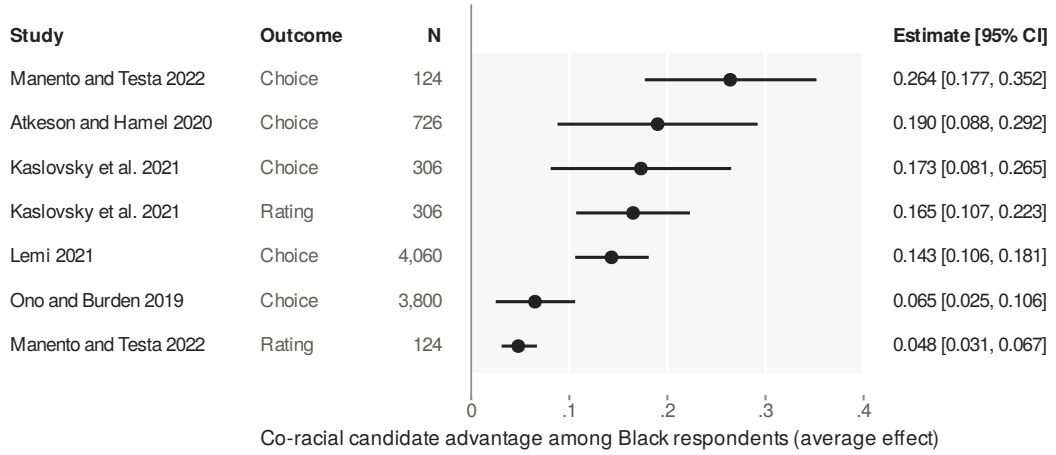
racial group, meaning they will likely be more liberal and supportive of issues that more directly affect Black Americans.

Critics of identity voting, however, contend that this assumption, that representatives who share descriptive characteristics with marginalized voters will necessarily represent those voters' individual or group interest, is quite often wrong and can and does result in misrepresentation of those voters' interest. In her 1993 book, *Black Faces, Black Interests: The Representation of African Americans in Congress* (Swain 1993), political scientist Carol Swain suggests that the commitment of Black voters to a racial identity politics can undermine their ability to effectively use voting as a tool for democratic accountability, enabling Black representatives to, as one Black member of Congress Swain interviewed put it, "get away with anything" (73). Although the research on race and representation clearly demonstrates that co-racial representatives often do, in fact, faithfully represent their co-racial constituents (e.g., Tate 2003; Grose 2011; Minta 2011; Minta and Brown 2014; Minta and Sinclair-Chapman 2013; Lowande, Ritchie, and Lauterbach 2019), it would nonetheless be concerning if initial identity driven commitments to poorly performing same race representatives impede voters' ability to update their support for these individuals. This concern has also been frequently raised by political scientist Adolph Reed, who has suggested that the tendency of Black leaders to appeal to racial authenticity has, at times, allowed them the ability to exploit the Black masses and distract Black voters away from policies and candidates that would more directly improve their material conditions (Reed 1986; 1999; 2019). Furthermore, research has shown that efforts to maximize Black representation in Congress can have significant negative knock-on effects for the representation of Black interest more broadly, because under certain conditions, it can reduce the number of non-Black representatives who are sympathetic to Black interest (Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran 1996). Thus, the question of to what extent does "information" of identity in politics constrains processes of citizens' decision making takes on additional importance if it works to impede democratic accountability and enable misrepresentation.

In a recent meta-analysis examining shared racial/ethnic identification, van Oosten, Mügge, and van der Pas (2024) investigated whether racial/ethnic minority voters evaluate candidates of

their own racial/ethnic group more favorably than they do majority-group candidates. Pooling 31 estimates from experiments that report respondents' race or ethnicity, the authors find that racial/ethnic minority respondents prefer in-group candidates by 7.9 percentage points more than majority candidates on average. In Figure 2, we present results by focusing on Black Americans. The results consistently point to positive in-group preferences. Across multiple studies, the average effect sizes for Black respondents range from roughly 5 to 26 percentage points, indicating a meaningful boost in support for co-racial candidates over majority candidates. For instance, Ono and Burden (2019) reports an effect size of 0.065, and Manento and Testa (2022) reports one of the strongest effects at 0.264. These findings reinforce the idea that Black voters not only recognize shared racial identity in candidates, but that this recognition is translated into higher candidate evaluations when compared to how they evaluate majority (White) candidates. This aligns with the broader literature on descriptive representation and suggests that racial identity can serve as a powerful cue in political judgment.

Figure 2. Shared Identification and Preference for Co-Racial Representatives (Black Respondents)



Note: Replication of van Oosten, Mügge, and van der Pas's (2024) figure, restricted to Black respondents. Studies: Atkeson and Hamel (2020), Kaslovsky, Rogowski, and Stone (2021), Lemi (2021), Manento and Testa (2022), and Ono and Burden (2019).

For many critics of identity politics, voting patterns, such as these, would be considered emblematic of the irrationality and illiberalness of identity based political decision making. These critics argue that such behaviors reflect a type of "tribalism" in which citizens blindly attempt to

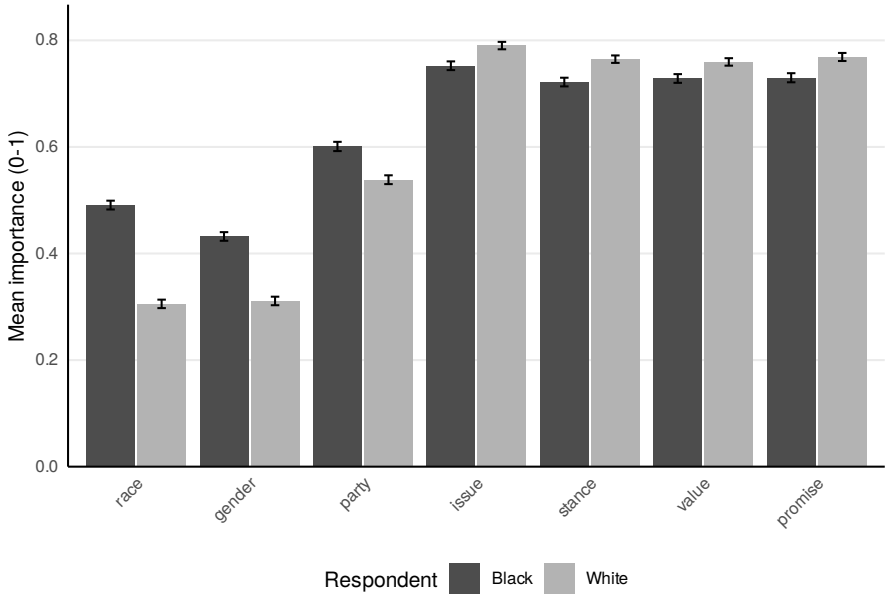
maximize symbolic group representation at the expense of ideas, policies or platforms that would more directly serve individual or some broader public interest (see Fukuyama 2018; Pinker 2022; Mounk 2023).

However, we argue that studies such as those presented in traditional conjoint designs – which examine cue-taking from co-racial politicians at a single time point – are insufficient for assessing the reasonableness or rationality of identity-based preferences. These studies capture what voters do at t1, but tell us little about what happens at t2, when citizens receive new information about a candidate's performance, ideology, or responsiveness. That is, they are unable to assess whether identity-based preferences are sticky, or whether voters are willing to update initial judgments when a candidate's actions, ideology, or policy record no longer align with the expectations suggested by shared identity. Without this temporal dimension, it is difficult to know whether identity voting truly reflects blind tribalism or whether it constitutes a context-sensitive heuristic that voters employ at early stages of the decision-making process and recalibrate over time.

Consider, for example, evidence from a more traditional survey that still reveals complexity in identity-based reasoning at t1. In the 2020 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey (CMPS), respondents were asked to rate the importance of various candidate characteristics when deciding how to vote in elections. These included candidate identity features (such as race, gender, and party) as well as issue-related and evaluative criteria (such as shared issues, stances, values, and promises). Figure 3 displays the average importance ratings of these characteristics by respondent race, disaggregating Black and White respondents.

As the figure shows, Black respondents rated racial congruence as significantly more important than White respondents, consistent with existing work on racial identity as a heuristic in political judgment. However, the figure also reveals a crucial qualification: although race matters more to Black voters than to White voters, it is not the most important criterion even for Black respondents. Instead, Black respondents assign the highest importance to substantive political alignment – such as whether a candidate believes the same issues are important (mean ~ 0.78), takes similar stances, or shares core values. These results suggest a nuanced pattern of identity-driven political reasoning:

Figure 3. Importance of Candidate Characteristics by Respondent Race



Note: 2020 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey (CMPS). Mean importance of each characteristic (rescaled 0–1) by respondent race, with 95% confidence intervals.

Black voters do not anchor their preferences solely in racial congruence but rather use racial identity in conjunction with and often secondary to policy and value alignment. The figure thus provides suggestive descriptive evidence for theories that view racial identity not as a cognitive shortcut in isolation, but as a framework through which voters interpret a candidate's representational value. Still, because this is a one-shot, cross-sectional survey, it is not possible to disentangle whether these identity-based evaluations are stable or subject to updating over time. As with traditional conjoint designs, the CMPS data capture preferences at a single point, making it difficult to assess whether voters would recalibrate their views in response to new or disconfirming information.

Anchored by Identity? Tracing Racial Considerations and Dynamic Candidate Evaluation in an Iterative Conjoint Experiment

As previously discussed, theoretical and empirical work on candidate evaluation and decision-making emphasizes the role of racial identity as a powerful heuristic, especially for Black Americans, for whom descriptive representation is often linked to perceptions of group interests and political

responsiveness. According to this view, early exposure to a candidate's racial background may anchor evaluative frames in ways that are difficult to override, even as new information about ideology, issue positions, or party affiliation becomes available. If this is the case, this dynamic has important implications for democratic accountability. On one hand, strong identity-based attachments may help historically marginalized groups identify candidates who are more likely to represent their interests by enhancing accountability. On the other hand, if identity cues crowd out disconfirming or policy-relevant information, they may constrain voters' capacity to update initial judgments, thereby undermining democratic responsiveness and deliberation.

Yet, much of this work treats candidate evaluation as a static, one-shot decision, capturing voter preferences at a single moment rather than as a process that unfolds over time. As a result, it often misses how identity-based considerations may evolve, persist, or be revised across different phases of the democratic process. This raises a deeper theoretical question: under what conditions do early identity cues continue to shape political judgment, and when do voters exhibit openness to new, potentially dissonant information over time?

In our substantive application, we use the iterative conjoint design to test the role of race in biasing information updating. Here, the dynamic nature of the design allows us the ability to test the ordering effects of political information. If race as information biases the uptake of new information about the potential for representation, as identity politics critics claim, then we would expect that Black study participants would be less willing to update their views about Black candidates (relative to White candidates) when the candidate is described as taking political positions unpopular with Black voters (i.e., conservative racial issue position or Republican Party identification). Our interest here is in whether initial political preferences formed on the basis of racial considerations, have a way of anchoring Black Americans political decisions such that they are slowed in their ability/willingness to update these racially derived preferences. Thus, we need a design that can account for the dynamics of exposure to new information and how that information shapes preference formation from t_1 to t_2.

Black Democrats remain the substantive case through which we evaluate whether an initially

meaningful co-racial cue becomes an anchor that constrains later updating. White respondents provide two empirical benchmarks against which that claim can be evaluated. Comparing Black Democrats with White Democrats provides the closest benchmark by holding respondent partisanship constant while varying race. Comparing Black Democrats with White Republicans provides a secondary contrast in which both respondent race and partisanship differ. With these benchmarks therefore, we aim to sharpen, rather than broaden, the paper's central theoretical test.

Design

We conducted an online survey experiment through the Forthright, with the Black sample fielded in September 2024 and the White sample fielded in November 2025. The primary iterative conjoint condition analyzed here includes 1,820 Black respondents and 1,444 White respondents. After giving consent and passing a screening question, participants were presented with a notice that they would evaluate a set of elected officials, all members of state legislatures, who were considering running for higher office such as governor or the U.S. Congress. All respondents evaluated four candidates, always in the same order (Avery Hill, Riley Jackson, Kris Davis, Jordan Reed) (see Figure 4 and Appendix A2 for a detailed illustration of the design). Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three versions of the task: a traditional conjoint in which each candidate's full profile is shown at once (probability 1/4), the iterative design with an evaluation after every round analyzed here (probability 1/2), and an iterative design with a single evaluation after the last round (probability 1/4). Demographics, partisanship, ideology, and the racial group identity measures were asked after the candidate evaluations (Appendix A2.6).

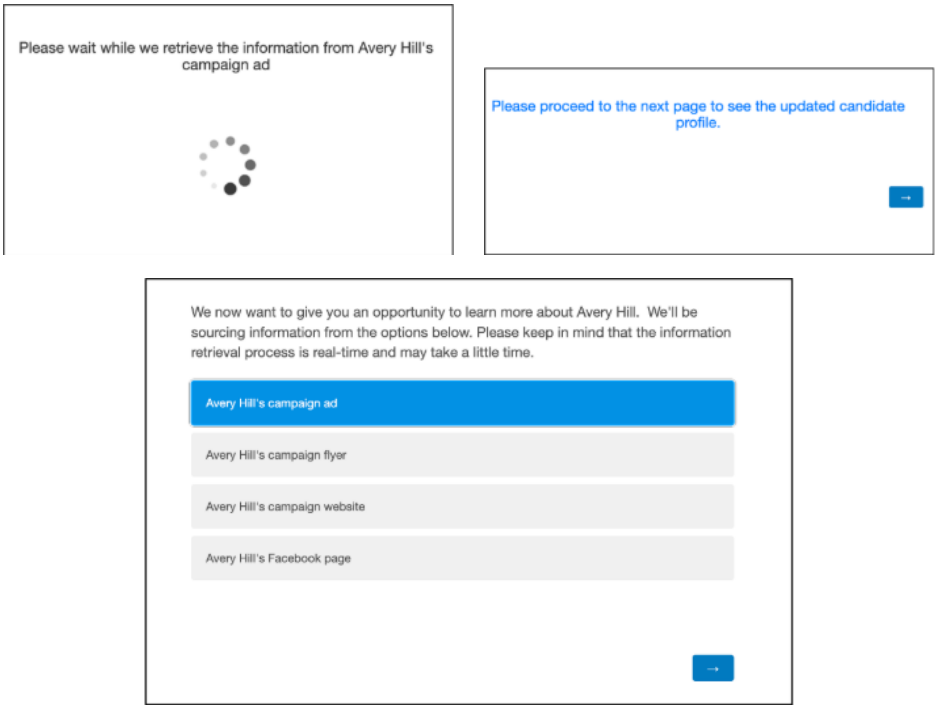
To make the experience more realistic, we informed study participants that in order to proceed from round to round, they would have to select a source from which to get new information about the candidate. Before each round, study participants were presented with a list of sources from which they could get this information. The sources included the candidate's campaign website, news sources and other campaign communications. Upon selecting a source, the study participant then saw an updated candidate profile which featured the new, randomly assigned, information of

Figure 4. Introductory Language

> We would like you to help us evaluate a set of elected officials who are considering running for higher office [e.g. Governor/US Congress].
>
> These individuals are all members of state legislatures from different US states. We want to know how you would evaluate their performance and their potential for holding higher office.
>
> Information about these individuals will be sourced from various sources in real-time including their campaign websites, Facebook pages and campaign ads. After seeing each profile, we will ask you a series of questions. Please answer the questions as if you are a voter evaluating a potential candidate running for higher office.

party, racial background or issue position along with any candidate information seen in previous rounds (Round 0 to Round 3) (See Figure 5).

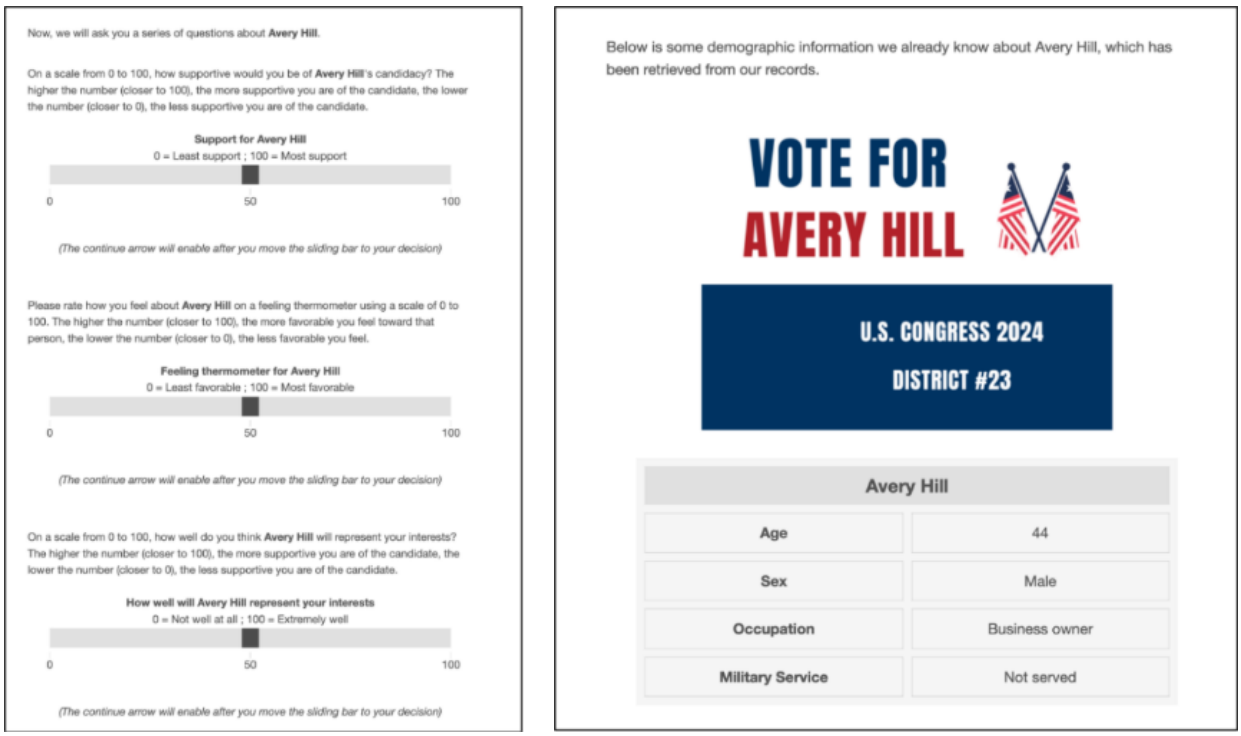
Figure 5. Information Search & Retrieval



The iterative conjoint experiment begins (Round 0) by exposing study participants to a fixed demographic profile of a candidate that is described as considering running for the U.S. House of Representatives in the 2024 election. In Round 0 all study participants saw a candidate profile describing the candidate's age, gender, occupation, and military service, and were asked to evaluate the candidate on a composite scale comprising 3 measures, each ranging from 0–100. These

measures captured candidate support, affect, and perception of interest representation (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Baseline (Round 0) Candidate Assessment



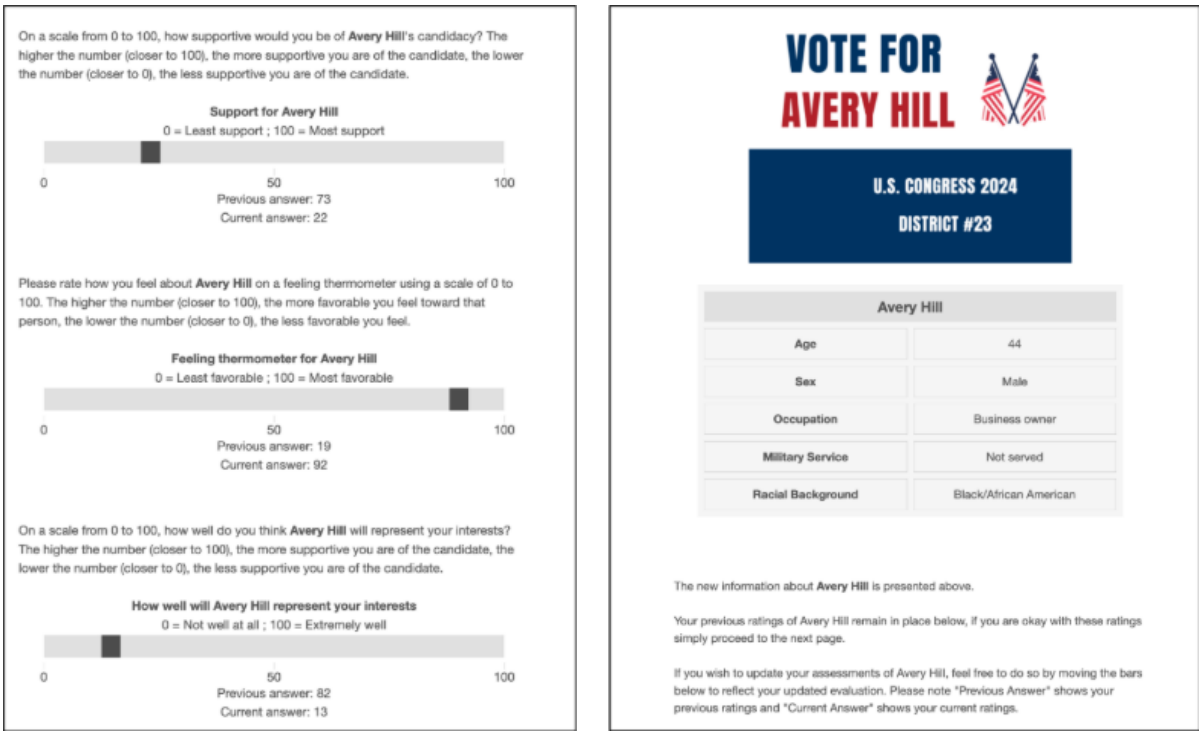
Note: Respondents always see age, sex, occupation and military service in Round 0, which we treat as the "baseline" round.

This R0 information was fixed across all study participants meaning everyone sees the exact same profile with the exact same characteristics. The four candidates had different baseline profiles (all men, aged 38 to 47, with different occupations and no military service~~; Appendix A2.6~~). They were then asked to evaluate that individual based simply on that information. This gives us a baseline assessment of the candidate for each study participant. In the following rounds (Round 1, Round 2, Round 3) study participants were randomly assigned to see, one at a time, information about the candidate's: party, racial background, and candidate's issue positions concerned with racial/economic issues (See Figure 7). Not only was the order in which this information appeared to the study participants randomized (each of the six possible orders equally likely, drawn separately for each candidate), but each bit of information seen by the participants had one of two randomly assigned values. For party, candidates were described as either Democrats or Republicans, for race they were described as either Black or White and for issue positions candidates were described as

having voted for or against a state senate bill, followed by the candidate's explanation of the vote. The issue domain was fixed by candidate: a bill restricting instruction on the historical oppression of racial groups for Avery Hill and Kris Davis, and a bill expanding food stamp (SNAP) benefits for Riley Jackson and Jordan Reed (see Appendix A3 for the full wording). We also included a Round 4, where subjects were exposed to fixed information about an issue for which voters do not have well defined positions. The issue differed by candidate: cybersecurity (Avery Hill), trade with the European Union (Riley Jackson), infrastructure investment (Kris Davis), and free trade agreements (Jordan Reed). Because this information carries no clear partisan or racial signal, Round 4 provides a benchmark for how evaluations move when new but uninformative information arrives. Evaluations in fact rise slightly in this round, by 1.3 to 2.6 points depending on the respondent group, and this increase is largely common to all candidates: the parts that depend on the candidate's race, party, or issue position are at most about one point (Appendix A6.1). We therefore do not treat Round 4 as a condition with no change. Instead, we interpret round-to-round changes relative to this general drift, and our main quantities compare updating across randomly assigned attribute levels, which removes any drift common to both levels.

Again, the key innovation of this design is that study participants were asked to evaluate the candidate after exposure to each bit of information in each Round, such that they are able to update their views (or not) based on whatever new information they are exposed to. Thus, given that we know exactly what round each bit of new information appears to the study participant, all we need to do is take the difference in the evaluation score of that round from the evaluation score in the previous round to know how the new information influences updating of candidate evaluations. Because the level of each attribute revealed in a given round is randomly assigned, comparing this change across levels (for example, candidates revealed to be Black versus White in the same round) identifies the effect of that information on updating, net of any change that would have occurred anyway.

Figure 7. Illustration of the Dynamic Nature of Revealing New Information



Note: Respondents were able to see their previous answer at the bottom of the slider. In Round 0 each slider started at 50 and had to be moved before respondents could continue. From Round 1 onward the sliders started at the respondent's previous answer, and respondents could continue without moving them.

Results

We organize the results around the central theoretical question that motivates our application. We assess whether racial identity anchors Black Democrats' evaluation of candidates, while using White Democrats and White Republicans as empirical benchmarks. We begin by examining how different types of information shape initial updating from Round 0 to Round 1. In Figure 8, we report changes in candidate evaluations separately for Black Democrats, White Democrats, and White Republicans after learning the candidate's race, party, or issue position. The comparison reveals a clear hierarchy in the information respondents use.

Among Black Democrats (Panel A), learning that a candidate is Black raises evaluations by 6.3 points more than learning that the candidate is White (95% CI [5.2, 7.4]). Party and issue information produce considerably larger differences: 19.8 points between Democratic and Republican candidates and 23.3 points between liberal and conservative issue positions. The White Democratic benchmark

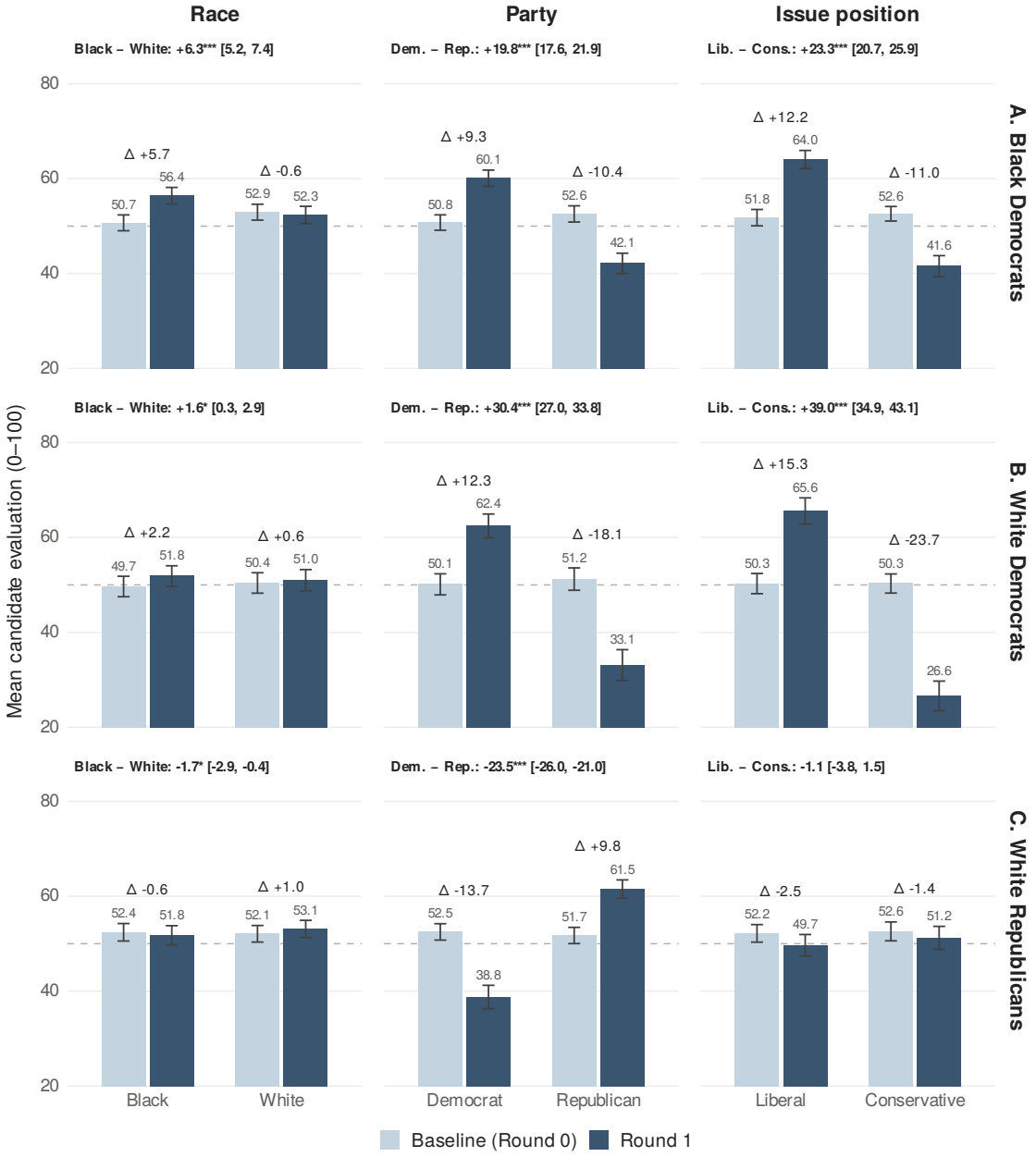
shows a much smaller race difference (1.6 points [0.3, 2.9]) but larger differences for party (30.4 points) and issue positions (39.0 points). Among White Republicans (Panel C), party is the clearest early cue: evaluations of Republican candidates rise by 23.5 points more than evaluations of Democratic candidates. Issue positions make no detectable difference for this group, and learning that a candidate is Black lowers evaluations slightly relative to a White candidate (-1.7 points [-2.9, -0.4]). Because evaluations drift upward somewhat even when uninformative information is revealed, we focus on these differences between randomly assigned attribute levels, which net out that drift; the changes within each level (the Δ values in Figure 8) are shown for description.

Having shown how different types of information shape initial updating among Black Democrats, and that candidate race produces a meaningful difference in initial updating, we now focus specifically on candidate race and examine whether this update varies with respondents' racial group identification. To do this, we construct a candidate evaluation change score by subtracting the preceding-round evaluation from the subsequent-round evaluation and estimate how the initial update following the revelation of candidate race varies with racial group identification.[2] Figure 9 presents these relationships for Black Democrats, White Democrats, and White Republicans.

Black Democrats (Panel A) show the clearest evidence that the initial co-racial response varies with racial group identification. As Black racial group identification increases, learning that the candidate is Black becomes substantially more important (13.8 points per unit of the 0–1 scale, SE = 3.6; the mean update rises from 3.5 to 5.5 to 8.2 points across terciles of the scale, Figure A6.4.1), while the corresponding response to a White candidate declines slightly, a slope that is not statistically distinguishable from zero (-2.4, SE = 2.2). Because racial group identification is measured rather than randomly assigned, these patterns describe how responses differ across respondents, not the causal effect of identity. Here, the White benchmarks are informative precisely

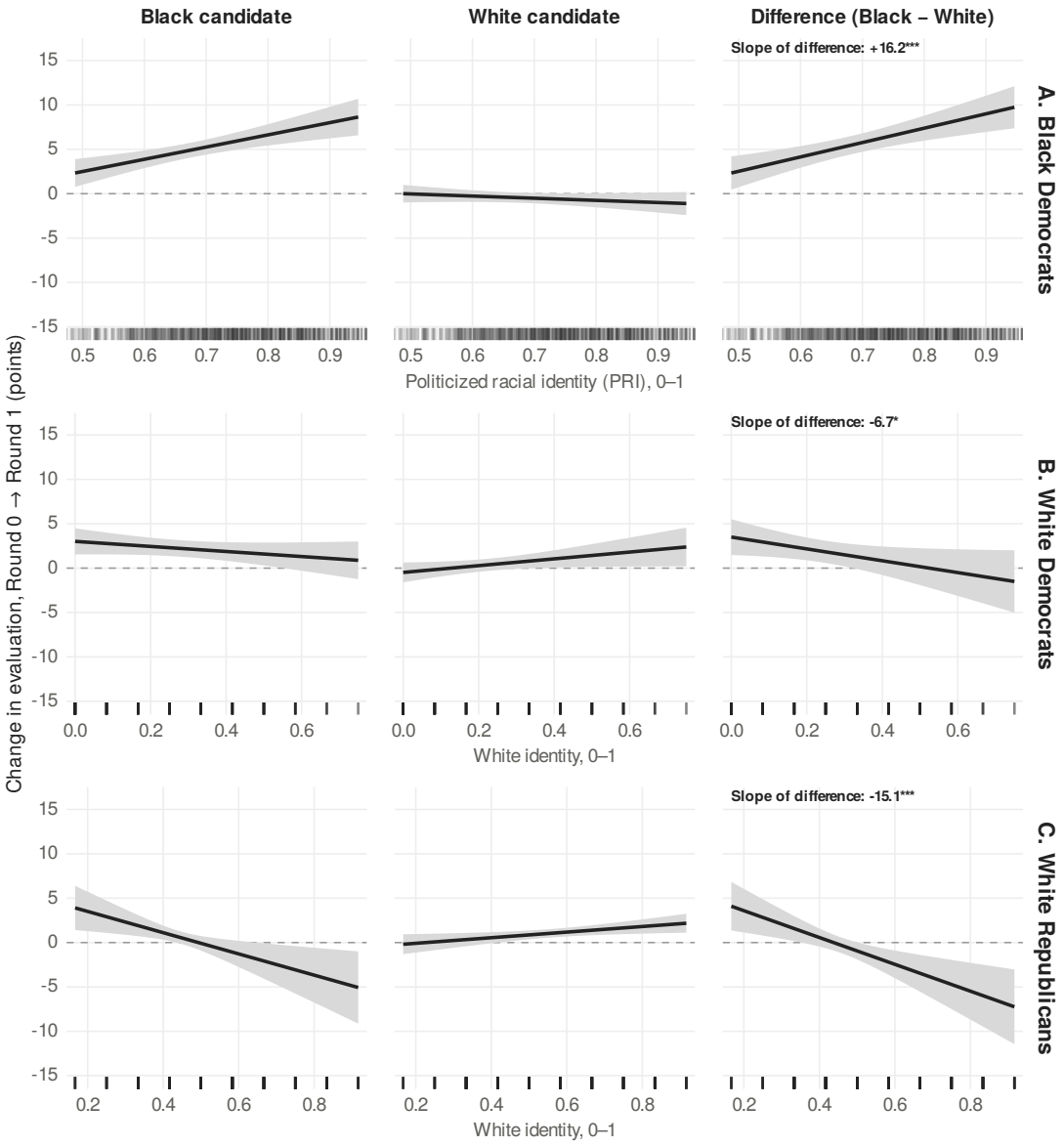
2. Racial group identity is measured separately by respondent race. For Black respondents, the scale consists of 12 items (Table A4.1) drawing on Stephens-Dougan et al. (2026): linked fate, identity importance, a feeling thermometer toward Black Americans, perceived discrimination against Blacks, two racial resentment items, the centrality of being Black to one's self-description, racial pride, anger over the treatment of Black people, the seriousness of racism today, structural racism, and the importance of co-racial representation (Cronbach's α = .80). For White respondents, it consists of 3 items from Jardina (2019): identity importance, perceived job displacement by minority hiring, and the importance of Whites working together to change unfair laws (Cronbach's α = .71).

Figure 8. Initial Updating by Respondent Group and Information Type



Note: Bars show mean evaluations at baseline (R0) and after Round 1 for candidates whose race, party, or issue position was revealed in Round 1; error bars are 95% confidence intervals from regressions with standard errors clustered by respondent. The Δ values are the mean change within each attribute level and are descriptive. Rows are respondent groups (Panels A–C). The difference in update printed at the top of each panel (e.g., Black $-$ White) is the difference in the R0-to-R1 change between the two randomly assigned attribute levels, estimated by OLS with standard errors clustered by respondent, with its 95% confidence interval. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 9. Racial Group Identification and Initial Updating by Respondent Group



Note: Rows are respondent groups (Panels A–C); the first two columns show candidates revealed as Black or White in Round 1, and the third shows the difference between them (Black − White) with the slope of that difference, i.e., the interaction in Table A6.2(* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$). Estimates show predicted changes in candidate evaluation as racial group identification increases. Shaded areas show 95% confidence intervals. Lines are predictions from OLS of the R0-to-R1 change on candidate race interacted with racial group identification and with ideology (standard errors clustered by respondent; ideology held at its group mean). Each row has its own horizontal axis, covering the 5th to 95th percentiles of the identification scale in that group. Mean changes within terciles of the scale, which check the linear fit, are shown in Figure A6.4.1.

because they show that racial identification can shape updating outside Black voters as well, but not in an identical way. The relationship is comparatively muted among White Democrats (Panel B), whereas stronger White identity among White Republicans (Panel C) is associated with a clearer divergence between reactions to Black and White candidates (difference in slopes: -6.7, SE = 3.3, for White Democrats and -15.1, SE = 4.6, for White Republicans; Appendix A6.4).

We now turn from the formation of these identity-based preferences to its durability as new information arrives. Here, are specifically interested in understanding whether an early co-racial advantage becomes an anchor that limits later democratic accountability for Black Democrats. If it does, then the effect of learning that a candidate is Black should remain large even when race appears only after respondents have already learned the candidate's party or issue position. If race instead functions as an adaptive heuristic, its marginal influence should decline as more diagnostic information accumulates. Again, the benchmark groups help distinguish that specific pattern from a generic tendency for all respondents simply to become less responsive to later information.

Because race, party, and issue information are revealed in a randomized sequence, the iterative conjoint allows us to compare the evaluative change generated by the same cue depending on when it enters the information stream. Figure 10 therefore plots the round-to-round change associated with each information type. For Black Democrats, our key quantity of interest is whether the effect of candidate race attenuates across rounds while party or issue information continues to move evaluations. We then place that pattern beside the White Democratic and White Republican benchmarks.

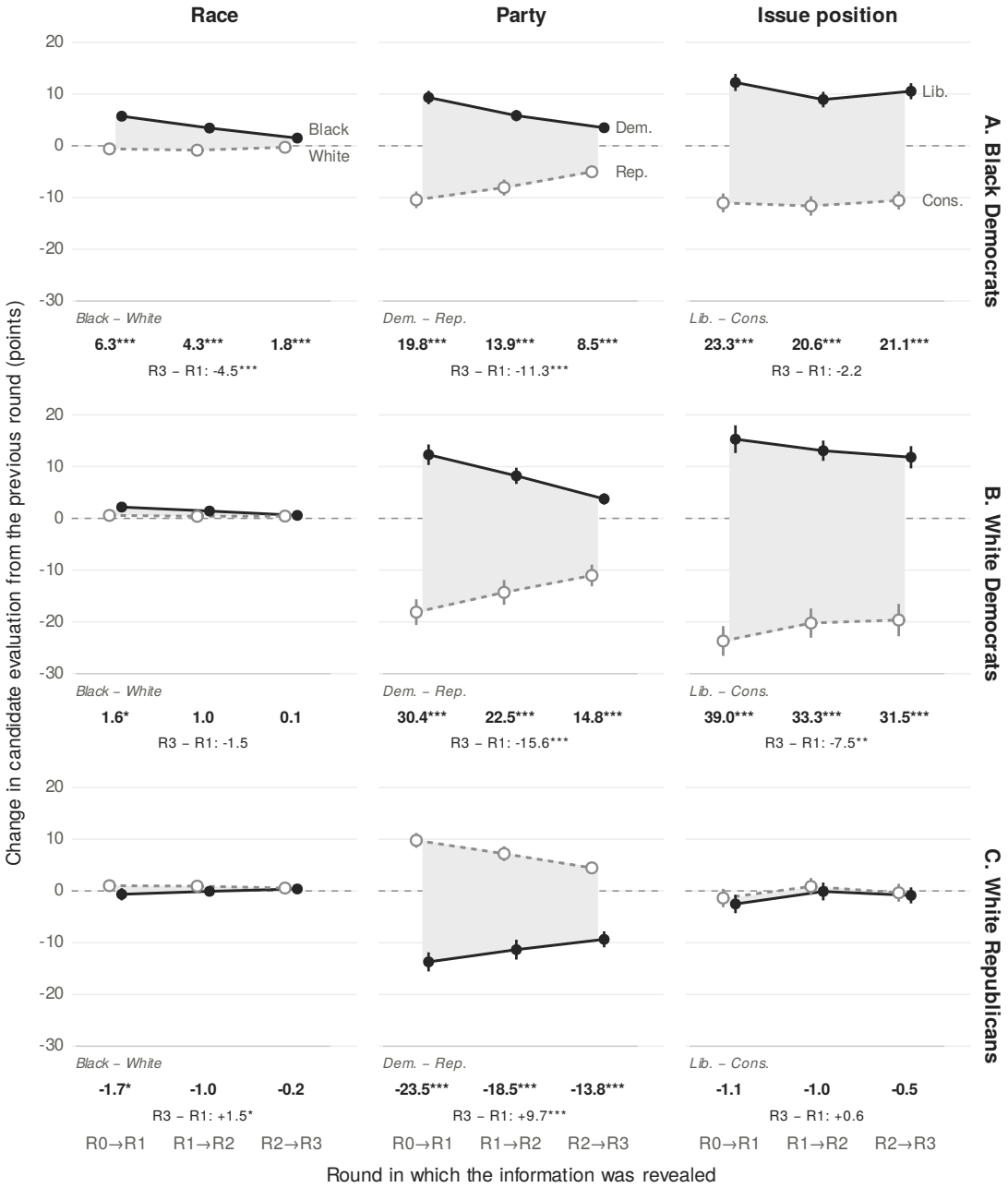
Our iterative framework enables us to distinguish anchoring from updating. If candidate race anchors Black Democrats' evaluations, learning that a candidate is Black should produce a similarly strong positive update regardless of whether that information appears early or later in the sequence. If respondents instead continue to update as new information accumulates, the effect of candidate race should become weaker when it is revealed in later rounds.

As Figure 10 shows, for Black Democrats (Panel A), candidate race has its greatest impact when it is encountered early and becomes progressively less consequential when it appears after other

political information. The difference between Black and White candidates falls from 6.3 points when race is revealed in Round 1 to 4.3 in Round 2 and 1.8 in Round 3. In a model that pools the three rounds and clusters standard errors by respondent, the Round 3 difference is 4.5 points smaller than the Round 1 difference (SE = 0.8, $p < .001\}$). By the later rounds, learning that a candidate is Black leads to only a small additional change in evaluation. We don't observe this type of attenuation for issue information, which remains highly constraining for Black Democrats (23.3, 20.6, and 21.1 points; the change is not statistically significant). White Democrats (Panel B) show little race-based updating across the sequence, while party and issue information continue to shape their evaluations. In contrast, for White Republicans (Panel C), partisan information remains especially powerful, whereas candidate race and issue information are less influential. For White Democrats, the race difference is small throughout and does not change significantly across rounds, while the party and issue differences decline. For White Republicans, the party difference shrinks from 23.5 to 13.8 points, and the small race difference moves toward zero

These contrasts make the pattern for Black Democrats substantively distinctive. Black Democrats begin with a meaningful co-racial preference that is strongest among those with high racial group identification, but this does not limit their update of new information. As information accumulates, issue and performance cues increasingly govern candidate evaluations. In this sense, the results are more consistent with racial identity operating as an adaptive early heuristic than as a fixed commitment that prevents subsequent updating.

Figure 10. Sequential Updating by Information Type and Respondent Group



Note: Rows are respondent groups (Panels A–C); columns show updating when the candidate's race, party, or issue position is revealed in Round 1, 2, or 3. Points are the mean change in evaluation from the previous round within each attribute level (black, filled: Black, Democrat, or liberal; grey, open: White, Republican, or conservative), with 95% confidence intervals from standard errors clustered by respondent; they are descriptive. The shaded area is the gap between the two levels, the difference in updating caused by the information. Its value in each round is printed at the bottom of each panel (level 1 minus level 0), from OLS with standard errors clustered by respondent: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. OLS that pools the three rounds, with standard errors clustered by respondent.

Conclusion

In this paper, we introduce the iterative conjoint design that integrates dynamic information flow into the traditional conjoint framework. Our main motivation in developing this design is to address questions for which the process of formation of judgements is theoretically important. Traditional conjoint designs remain well suited for estimating average attribute effects, but their simultaneous presentation of information makes it difficult to observe these sequential dynamics directly.

We then apply this design to study a core question at the intersection of co-racial voting and democratic accountability, examining whether and to what extent Black voters' preferences are shaped by identity-driven commitments. Three findings stand out in our study. First, Black Democrats make a meaningful initial updating when candidate race is revealed. As we show, when Black Democrats learn that a candidate is Black, their evaluation rises by about 6 points more than when they learn that the candidate is White, and the magnitude of this response increases with Black racial group identification. Second, this preference for co-racial candidates is not durable in the sense implied by critiques of identity politics. The effect of learning that a candidate is Black declines as respondents learn party or issue information, whereas issue information continues to move evaluations even when encountered later in the sequence. Third, the White benchmarks show that different groups organize the same stream of information differently. For White Democrats, candidate race matters less, but issue information also matters. In contrast to both Black and White Democrats, White Republicans are especially constrained by party.

These findings also demonstrate the utility of the iterative conjoint design. A conventional pooled estimate could show that race, party, and issue position each matter on average, but it would obscure whether their influence is concentrated early or remains durable across an information sequence. By recovering order-conditional effects, the iterative design enables us to demonstrate that the same attribute can play different roles at different stages of judgment. In other words, a cue may be useful for forming an initial impression without becoming a lasting anchor.

There are important limitations to our current implementation. First, the design is limited to single-profile candidate evaluations rather than two-profile candidate comparisons, which may

constrain the kinds of inference it supports in its current form. Second, because each respondent must complete multiple rounds of evaluation, the sample size required to achieve adequate power, especially for detecting subtle effects or subgroup variation , is higher than in traditional conjoint designs. Finally, this approach is best suited for a particular set of research questions, those that aim to model learning, preference updating, or sequencing effects. For studies without a strong theoretical interest in these dynamics, traditional conjoint designs may be more appropriate.

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Supplementary Material

An Iterative Conjoint Framework for Studying Political Judgment:
Racial Identity, Information, and Candidate Evaluation

Contents

A1 Dynamic Process Tracing 2
A2 Experimental Design and the Detailed Illustration of the Experiment 2
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A4 Measures of Racial Group Identity 8
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A1 Dynamic Process Tracing

The motivation of dynamic process tracing methodology stems from a similar effort to ours. Therefore, we briefly highlight the similarities and differences between the dynamic process tracing methodology's "dynamic information board design" and our *iterative conjoint design*. Lau and Redlawsk (2006) adopt the dynamic information board design as a modification to the traditional static information board that is considered among traditional process-tracing techniques. The main shortcoming of the static information board, as they point out, is its inability to mimic the dynamic, ever-changing nature of voting as a dynamic process. Similarly, we adopt a "iterative conjoint design" as a modification to the traditional conjoint designs. One shortcoming of conjoint designs, as we have previously argued, is that their one-shot nature limits their ability to evaluate the kinds of dynamic choices and information ordering effects that are common in real world political campaigns. However, there are several differences between Lau and Redlawsk (2006) and our dynamic approach. The first major difference between what we do and Lau and Redlawsk (2006) do is related to the difference in how respondents retrieve information. In a dynamic information board design both the amount of information and type of information available varies in a dynamic manner where information scrolls down a computer screen, rather than remaining fixed in place. The decision maker selects the information that they want to learn by clicking on a particular cell of the matrix with the computer's mouse. Respondents can open only one cell of the matrix at a time and information comes and goes in a dynamic manner. In our iterative conjoint design, however, respondents do not select any information, instead they are randomly assigned not only to a specific type of political information, such as candidate race or party, but also variation within each of these types of information (Black, White, Democrat or Republican). In other words, this is a truly dynamic design with complete randomization. Unlike Lau and Redlawsk (2006), we do not allow respondents to actually select information. We only allow respondents to select sources for retrieving information. We think this helps us better isolate the causal effect of exposure to new information on candidate evaluation and avoids some of the issues of selection. We can also do this while maintaining our ability to observe and track every action taken by the voter in a controlled setting. Moreover, Lau and Redlawsk's (2006) candidate evaluation is one-shot, and they ask decision makers to evaluate candidates after seeing different types of selected information. Our iterative conjoint design, on the other hand, asks respondents to evaluate candidates after they see each bit of information. We believe this is one of the main virtues of our study as it enables us to assess *how* each bit of information affects candidate evaluation.

A2 Experimental Design and the Detailed Illustration of the Experiment

Note: The following link contains a video recording of the experiment: Link

1. First, participants give consent and answer a screening question (selecting the number shown in a box). Demographic questions, partisanship, ideology, an attention check, and the racial group identity measures are asked after the candidate evaluations (Appendix A2.6).

2. Next, participants are presented with a notice that they will evaluate a set of elected officials, all members of state legislatures, who are considering running for higher office. Respondents evaluate four of them, always in the same order.

Figure A2.1. Introductory Language

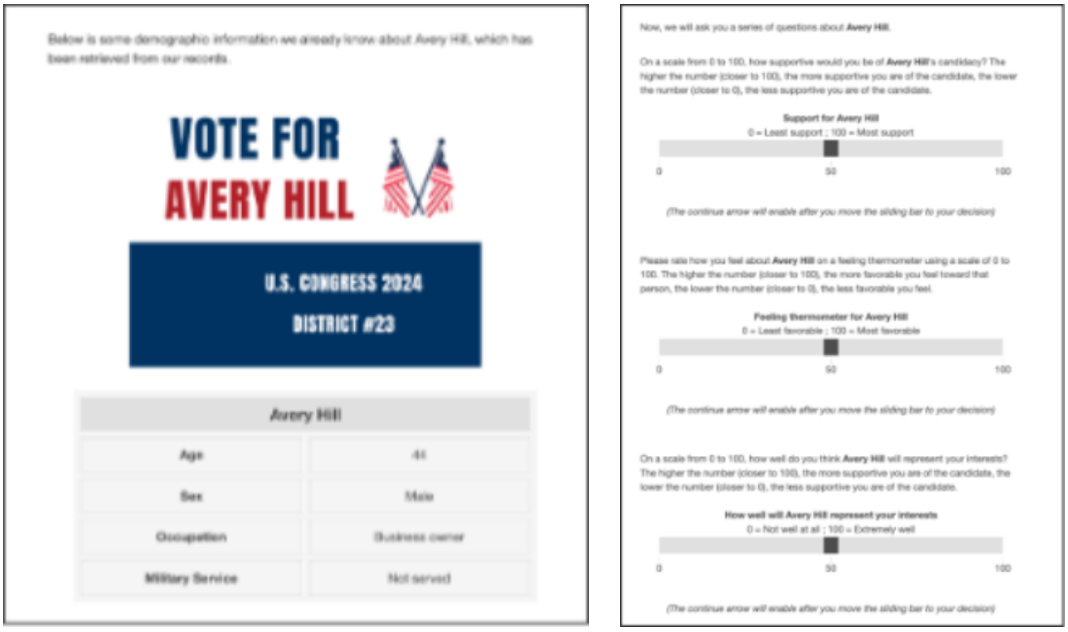
> *We would like you to help us evaluate a set of elected officials who are considering running for higher office [e.g. Governor/US Congress].*
>
> *These individuals are all members of state legislatures from different US states. We want to know how you would evaluate their performance and their potential for holding higher office.*
>
> *Information about these individuals will be sourced from various sources in real-time including their campaign websites, Facebook pages and campaign ads. After seeing each profile, we will ask you a series of questions. Please answer the questions as if you are a voter evaluating a potential candidate running for higher office.*

3. For each state senator, respondents will be randomly assigned one of three information types: party, racial background, and a vote on a racial or economic state senate bill (the domain is fixed for each candidate). Each of these info types will also have randomly assigned values, e.g. party can be Democrat or Republican. The key component of the design is that respondents will not be assigned the same information they see in the later rounds. To proceed to the next round, respondents will be asked to select a source to learn more about the candidate. After the end of each round respondents will be asked to evaluate the candidate with three questions.

4. In Round 0 all study participants will see an individual's profile describing their age, sex, occupation, and military service. This information is fixed across all study participants meaning everyone sees the exact same profile with the exact same characteristics. They are then asked to evaluate that individual based simply on that information. This gives us a baseline assessment of the legislator for each study participant.

5. After Round 0, respondents will evaluate the candidate with three questions.

Figure A2.2. Baseline Candidate Assessment



6. To add realism to the reasoning behind showing information incrementally, respondents are told that the information is retrieved from various sources. Here, to add realism, we also ask respondents to select the source and ask them to wait while we retrieve the information.

Figure A2.3. Information Search & Retrieval



7. In the following rounds (Round 1, Round 2, Round 3) study participants will be randomly assigned to see, one at a time, information about the legislator's: party, either racial/gender/ethnic background (depending on study), and vote/position on racial, ethnic or gender legislation (depending on the study).

Figure A2.4. Round 1 Candidate Assessment

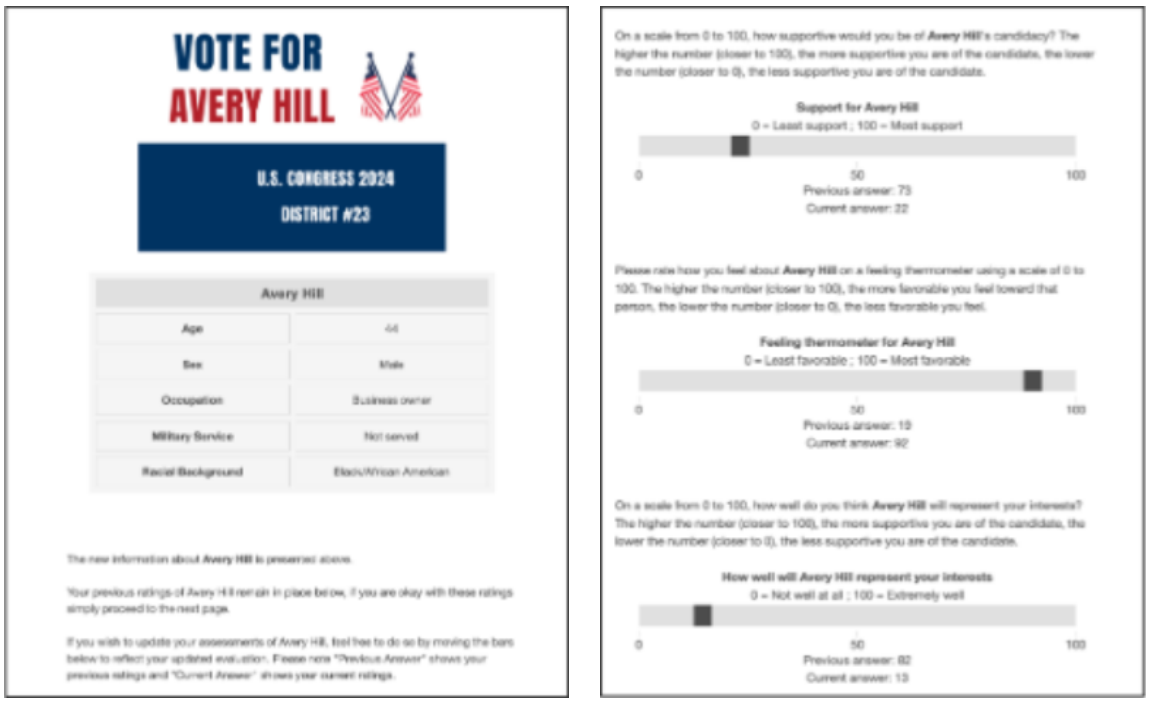
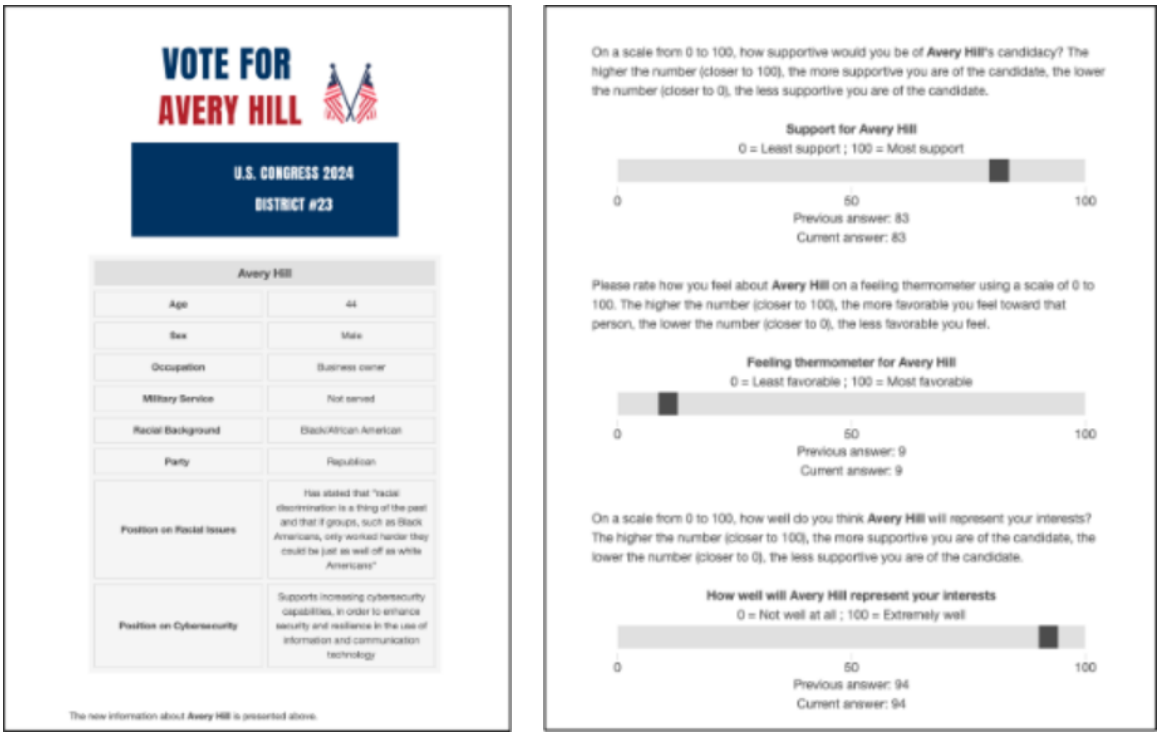


Figure A2.5. Round 4 Candidate Assessment



Note:

A2.6 Survey Flow, Randomization, and Question Wording

This section documents the survey as programmed in the Qualtrics survey files for the two samples. The Black and White versions are identical except for the sample screen and the group identity items.

Order of the survey.

1. Consent (the survey ends if consent is not given).
2. Screening question: select the number shown in a box (the survey ends otherwise).
3. Introduction to the task (Figure A2.1).
4. Random assignment to one version of the task (below) and evaluation of the four candidates.
5. Demographics: birth year, sex, state, zip code, education, race, Hispanic origin, marital status, and income. Respondents who do not select the sample's racial group (Black or African American; White) are screened out at this point.
6. Party identification (with follow-ups for strength and leaning), ideology, an attention check ("Please select the color red"), and the importance of co-racial representation.
7. Racial group identity and related items (Appendix A4).
8. Three political knowledge questions.
9. "Did you take a survey similar to this survey before?" Respondents answering "Yes" are screened out.

Randomization of the information. For each candidate, the information type shown in Round 1 is drawn with equal probability from party, racial background, and the bill vote; the Round 2 type is drawn with equal probability from the two remaining types; the last type is shown in Round 3. Each type's value is drawn with equal probability from its two levels (Democrat/Republican; White/Black or African American; liberal/conservative vote). Draws are made separately for each candidate and round, so a respondent's information about one candidate is independent of the information about the others. Information revealed in earlier rounds stays on the profile in later rounds.

Evaluations. After each round respondents answer three 0–100 sliders: support for the candidacy (0 = least support, 100 = most support), a feeling thermometer (0 = least favorable, 100 = most favorable), and how well the candidate would represent the respondent's interests (0 = not well at all, 100 = extremely well). The evaluation score is their mean. In Round 0 each slider starts at 50 and the continue button is enabled only after all three sliders have been moved. From Round 1 onward each slider starts at the respondent's previous answer, which is also marked on the scale as "Previous answer," and respondents may continue without moving it. An unchanged rating in Rounds 1–4 therefore means that the respondent left the slider where it was. In the groups analyzed, 6 to 13% of Round 0 evaluations have all three sliders at exactly 50.

Source selection. Before each of Rounds 1–4, respondents choose where to get the new information (the candidate's campaign flyer, website, Facebook page, or campaign ad; options in random order). A waiting page then says the information is being retrieved from the chosen source, and the continue button appears after five seconds. The choice of source does not affect what information is shown.

A3 Racial and Economic Issue Positions

Table A3.1. Issue Information as Fielded

In Rounds 1–3 the issue row of the profile was labeled with the bill and a one-sentence description; the value gave the vote and the senator's explanation.

	Liberal	Conservative
Row label for Avery Hill and Kris Davis: Vote on the Senate Bill 167: Anti-Black History Bill. *The bill seeks to prohibit public school teachers from proving [sic] instruction that discusses the historical oppression of racial groups.*		
Avery Hill	The senator voted **in opposition to the bill**. In explaining their vote, the senator expressed that "slavery and discrimination are America's greatest sins" and worries that anti-black hate is on the rise and believes that government must aggressively address problems of racial injustice and actively invest in black communities.	The senator voted **in favor of the bill**. In explaining their vote, the senator stated that "racial discrimination is a thing of the past and that if groups, such as Black Americans, only worked harder they could be just as well off as white Americans."
Kris Davis	The senator voted **in opposition to the bill**. In explaining their vote, the senator expressed concern that anti-Black racism is reemerging in the United States. The senator views anti-discrimination programs and targeted efforts to help black communities as essential tools for bringing about racial justice.	The senator voted **in favor of the bill**. In explaining their vote, the senator expressed that "anti-black racism uncommon today." The senator also suggested that that anti-discrimination programs create a reliance on the government, destroying the individual ambition of black Americans.
Row label for Riley Jackson and Jordan Reed: Vote on the Senate Bill 336: Food Stamp Program Bill. *The bill seeks to expand access to food stamp (SNAP) benefits to cover a larger number of low income families.*		
Riley Jackson and Jordan Reed (same text)	The senator voted **in favor of the bill**. In explaining their vote, the senator expressed that that government should do more to alleviate the effects of poverty and rising prices. The senator supports expanding social welfare programs by increasing taxes on wealthy Americans.	The senator voted **in opposition of the bill**. In explaining their vote, the senator stated that "if the poor worked harder they would not have to depend so much on government assistance." The senator thinks that rising prices should be the real concern for government and that cutting taxes on wealthy Americans is the only way to keep the economy growing.

A4 Measures of Racial Group Identity

Table A4.1. Items of Politicized Racial Identity (PRI)

Item	Label	Item description	Response choices
Item 1	Black linked fate	"How much do you think that what happens generally to Black people in this country will affect what happens in your life?"	Not very much, Somewhat, A lot

Item	Label	Item description	Response choices
Item 2	Black identity	"How important is being Black or African American to your identity?"	Extremely important, Very important, Moderately important, A little important, Not at all important
Item 3	Feeling thermometer	"Black Americans – feeling thermometer"	0–100
Item 4	Discrimination [Blacks]	How much, if any, discrimination or unfair treatment do you think each of the following groups face in the U.S.? [Blacks]	A great deal, A lot, A moderate amount, A little, None at all
Item 5	Racial resentment I	"Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Blacks to work their way out of the lower class"	Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree
Item 6	Racial resentment II	"Over the past few years, Blacks have gotten less than they deserve."	Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree
Item 7	Blackness	Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: "If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first things that I would say is that I'm Black."	Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree
Item 8	Pride	How often do you find yourself feeling a sense of pride as a Black person in the accomplishments of Black people? Is it a lot, fairly often, once in a while, or hardly ever?	A lot, Fairly often, Once in a while, Hardly ever
Item 9	Anger	How often do you find yourself feeling angry about the way Black people are treated in society? Is it a lot, fairly often, once in a while, or hardly ever?	A lot, Fairly often, Once in a while, Hardly ever
Item 10	Racism	How much of a problem is racism today in the United States?	
Item 11	Structural racism	Some people say it is more important to use all available government resources to eliminate structural racism. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others believe that structural racism only plays a minor role in determining the current position of Black people. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. (And, of course, some 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?	1: Use all government resources to eliminate structural racism; 2–6; 7: Structural racism only plays a minor role in determining the current position of Black people

Item	Label	Item description	Response choices
Item 12	Co-racial representation	How important is it to you that you are represented by people who share your racial background?	Extremely important, Very important, Moderately important, A little important, Not at all important

Note: Each item is coded so that higher values indicate stronger identity, rescaled to 0–1, and averaged over the 12 items (Cronbach's α = .80 in the evaluate-every-round version). All items are asked after the candidate evaluations.

Table A4.2. Items of White Identity

Item	Label	Item description	Response choices
Item 1	White identity	"How important is being White to your identity?"	Extremely important, Very important, Moderately important, A little important, Not at all important
Item 2	Job displacement	"How likely is it that White people are unable to find a job because employers are hiring minorities instead?"	Extremely likely, Very likely, Neither likely nor unlikely, Somewhat unlikely, Extremely unlikely
Item 3	Working together	"How important is it that White people work together to change laws that are unfair to Whites?"	Extremely important, Very important, Moderately important, Slightly important, Not at all important

Note: Items from Jardina (2019). Each item is coded so that higher values indicate stronger identity, rescaled to 0–1, and averaged. All items are asked after the candidate evaluations.

A5 Descriptive Statistics

Table A5.1. Descriptive Statistics (Black Respondents)

	Overall Mean (SD)	Traditional Mean (SD)	Iterative+Eval Mean (SD)	Iterative-NoEval Mean (SD)
Female (%)	0.54 (0.50)	0.55 (0.50)	0.54 (0.50)	0.52 (0.50)
Age	42.93 (15.00)	43.43 (14.92)	42.65 (14.99)	42.88 (15.11)
Ideology (0 = Con., 1 = Lib.)	0.58 (0.25)	0.59 (0.26)	0.58 (0.25)	0.58 (0.24)
Democrat (incl. leaners)	0.83 (0.38)	0.82 (0.39)	0.83 (0.38)	0.84 (0.37)
Strong partisan	0.70 (0.46)	0.71 (0.45)	0.70 (0.46)	0.69 (0.46)
Racial group identity (RGI)	0.71 (0.16)	0.70 (0.16)	0.71 (0.16)	0.71 (0.16)
Political knowledge (0–1)	0.39 (0.34)	0.40 (0.34)	0.39 (0.33)	0.39 (0.33)
Income (1–9 brackets)	4.31 (2.28)	4.32 (2.26)	4.35 (2.25)	4.24 (2.34)
Education (1–8 brackets)	4.26 (1.52)	4.24 (1.53)	4.30 (1.50)	4.22 (1.53)
Survey duration (mins)	65.82 (458.94)	51.92 (445.67)	53.65 (302.11)	102.20 (658.94)
N	3,930	1,086	1,820	1,024

Note: One row per respondent. Each statistic uses all respondents with a non-missing value. Income excludes "prefer not to say." Ideology is rescaled to 0–1 (1 = most liberal). RGI is the 12-item racial group identity scale (0–1).

A6 Additional Analyses (In Progress, Tentative)

A6.1 The Placebo Round (Round 4)

In Round 4, each candidate is described with a fixed position on a low-salience issue, identical for all respondents but different for each candidate: cybersecurity (Avery Hill), trade with the European Union (Riley Jackson), infrastructure investment (Kris Davis), and free trade agreements (Jordan Reed). Panel A reports the mean change in evaluations from Round 3 to Round 4 in each group; Panel B regresses that change on the candidate's race, party, and issue position, all revealed by Round 3. Evaluations rise by 1.3 to 2.6 points on average. The parts of this change that depend on the candidate's attributes are small (at most about one point), although they are jointly distinguishable from zero in each group. Most of the Round 4 change is therefore a general upward drift, which is why the main analyses compare updating across randomly assigned attribute levels rather than against zero. The size of the drift also differs by candidate, which is expected because each candidate's Round 4 position is different: among Black Democrats, for example, the mean change is 0.6 points for Avery Hill, 0.2 for Riley Jackson, 2.4 for Kris Davis, and 2.0 for Jordan Reed.

Table A6.1. Change in Evaluations in the Placebo Round

Panel A. Change in evaluation, Round 3 → Round 4

	Mean change	95% CI	Share unchanged	Candidates
Black Democrats	1.30	[0.99, 1.61]	0.57	5,088
White Democrats	2.63	[2.22, 3.04]	0.53	1,996
White Republicans	2.32	[1.97, 2.66]	0.48	3,216

Panel B. Does the change depend on the candidate's attributes?

	Black	Democrat	Liberal	Joint F
Black Democrats	0.10 (0.28)	0.65 (0.29)*	0.57 (0.29)*	3.10 (p = 0.03)
White Democrats	0.61 (0.36)	0.42 (0.36)	0.61 (0.36)	2.86 (p = 0.04)
White Republicans	0.59 (0.33)	-1.08 (0.33)**	-0.17 (0.31)	4.23 (p = 0.01)

Note: Iterative arm with evaluations after every round. Panel A: mean change with 95% confidence intervals from OLS with standard errors clustered by respondent; "share unchanged" is the proportion of candidates whose rating did not move. Panel B: coefficients (clustered standard errors) from OLS of the Round 3 to Round 4 change on indicators for a Black, Democratic, and liberal candidate; the joint F-test is that all three are zero. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

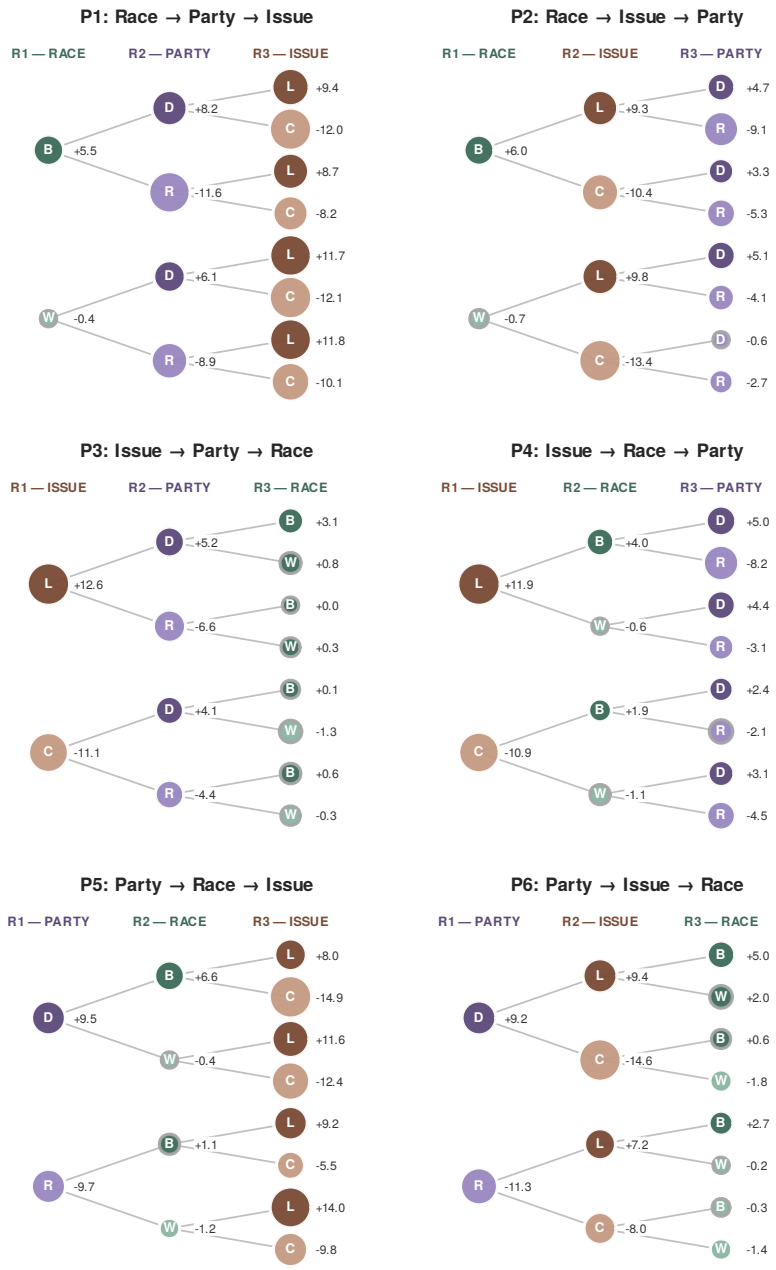
A6.2 Branching Analysis

The dynamic element of the design can be understood as a permutation of three distinct information types: *Race, Party*, *and Issue Position*. Each of these elements can occupy a unique position in the sequence, leading to a total of 3! permutations. Thus, there are 6 distinct ways to order information types.

1. Race → Party → Issue Position (Path 1)
2. Race → Issue Position → Party (Path 2)
3. Issue Position → Party → Race (Path 3)
4. Issue Position → Race → Party (Path 4)
5. Party → Race → Issue Position (Path 5)
6. Party → Issue Position → Race (Path 6)

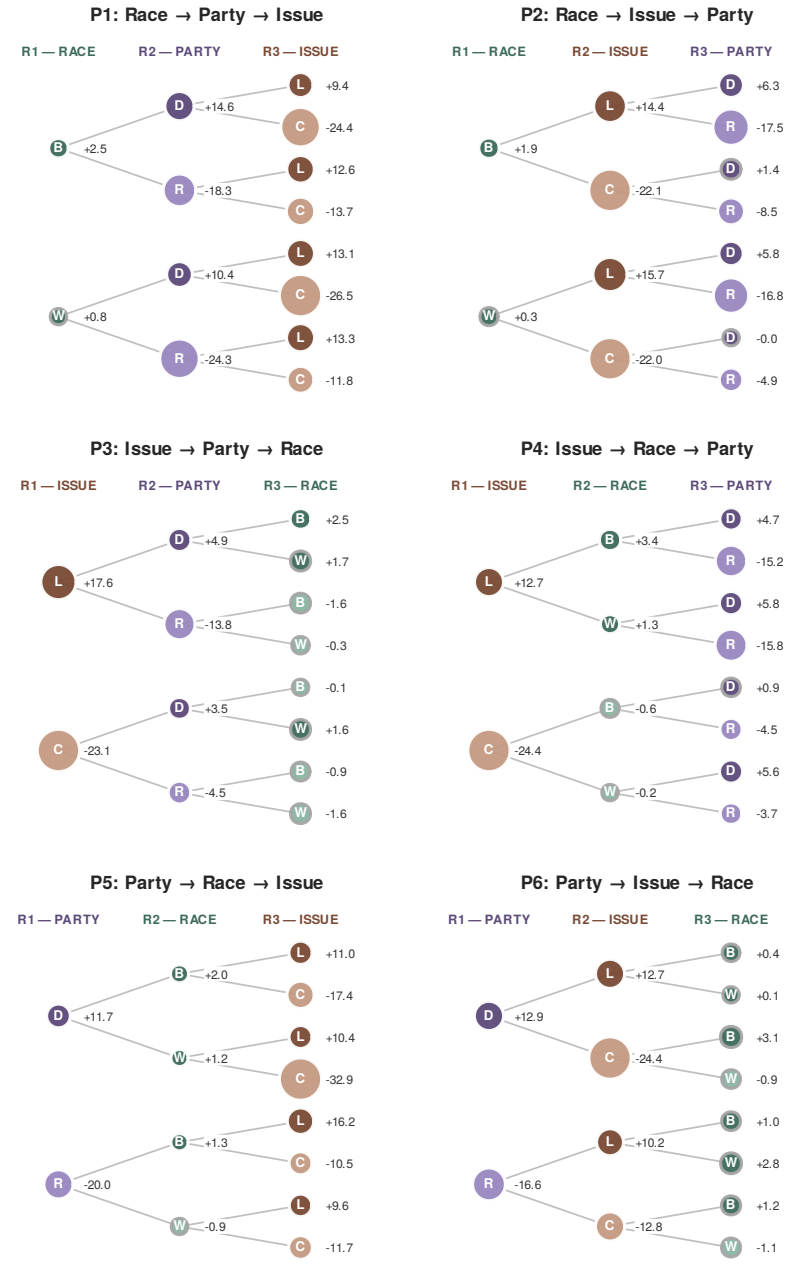
Figures A6.2.1–A6.2.3 show, for each respondent group and each of the six orders, the mean change in evaluation at every node of the sequence: the letter in a node is the attribute level revealed in that round, and the number is the mean change from the previous round. Node size grows with the size of the change, lighter fill marks a negative change, and a grey border marks a 95% confidence interval (clustered by respondent) that includes zero. The placebo round is not shown; it is reported in Table A6.1.

Figure A6.2.1. Branching Analysis: Black Democrats



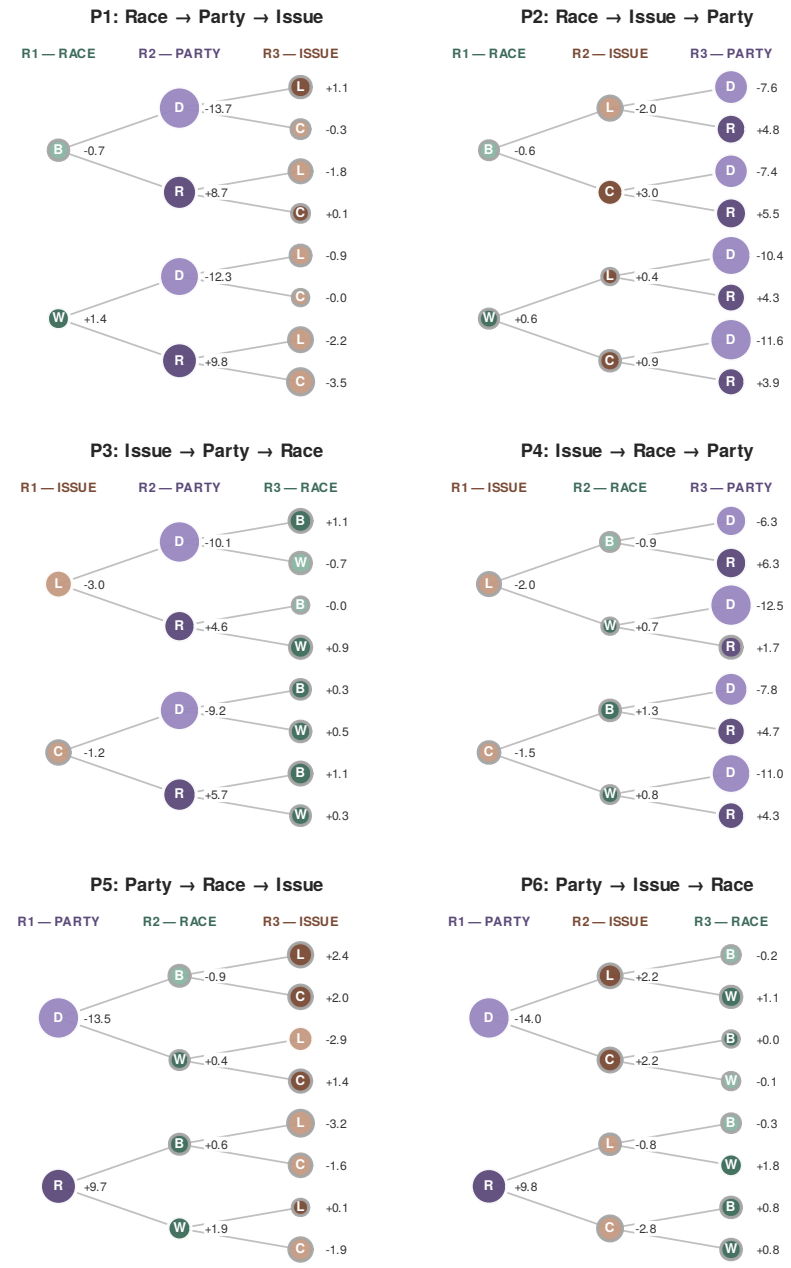
Letters: attribute level revealed (B/W race; D/R party; L/C issue).
Numbers: mean change in evaluation from the previous round (points). Node size grows with the size of the change; lighter fill = negative change; grey border = 95% CI (clustered by respondent) includes 0.

Figure A6.2.2. Branching Analysis: White Democrats



Letters: attribute level revealed (B/W race; D/R party; L/C issue).
Numbers: mean change in evaluation from the previous round (points). Node size grows with the size of the change; lighter fill = negative change; grey border = 95% CI (clustered by respondent) includes 0.

Figure A6.2.3. Branching Analysis: White Republicans

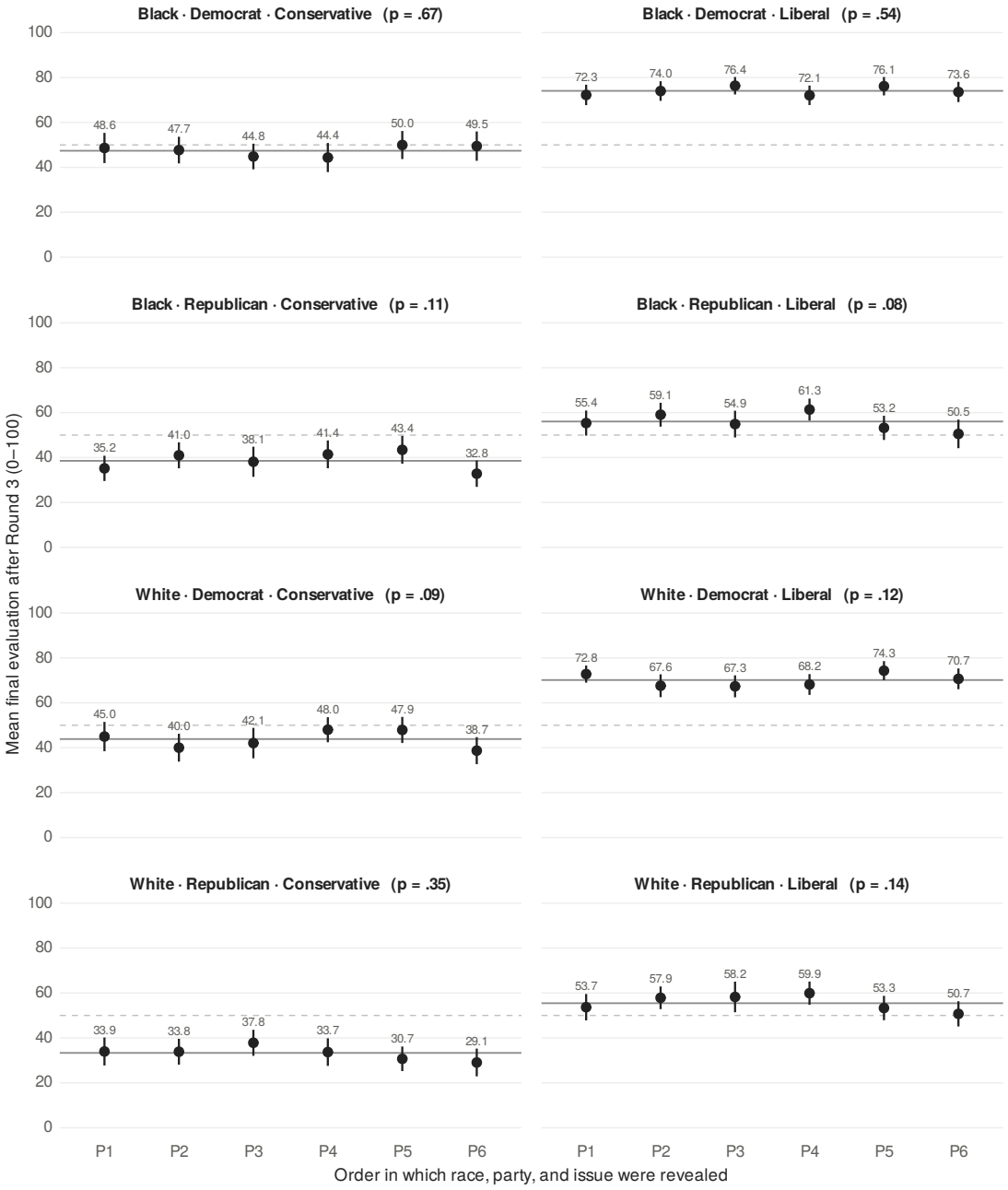


Letters: attribute level revealed (B/W race; D/R party; L/C issue).
Numbers: mean change in evaluation from the previous round (points). Node size grows with the size of the change; lighter fill = negative change; grey border = 95% CI (clustered by respondent) includes 0.

A6.3 Final Evaluations by Revelation Order

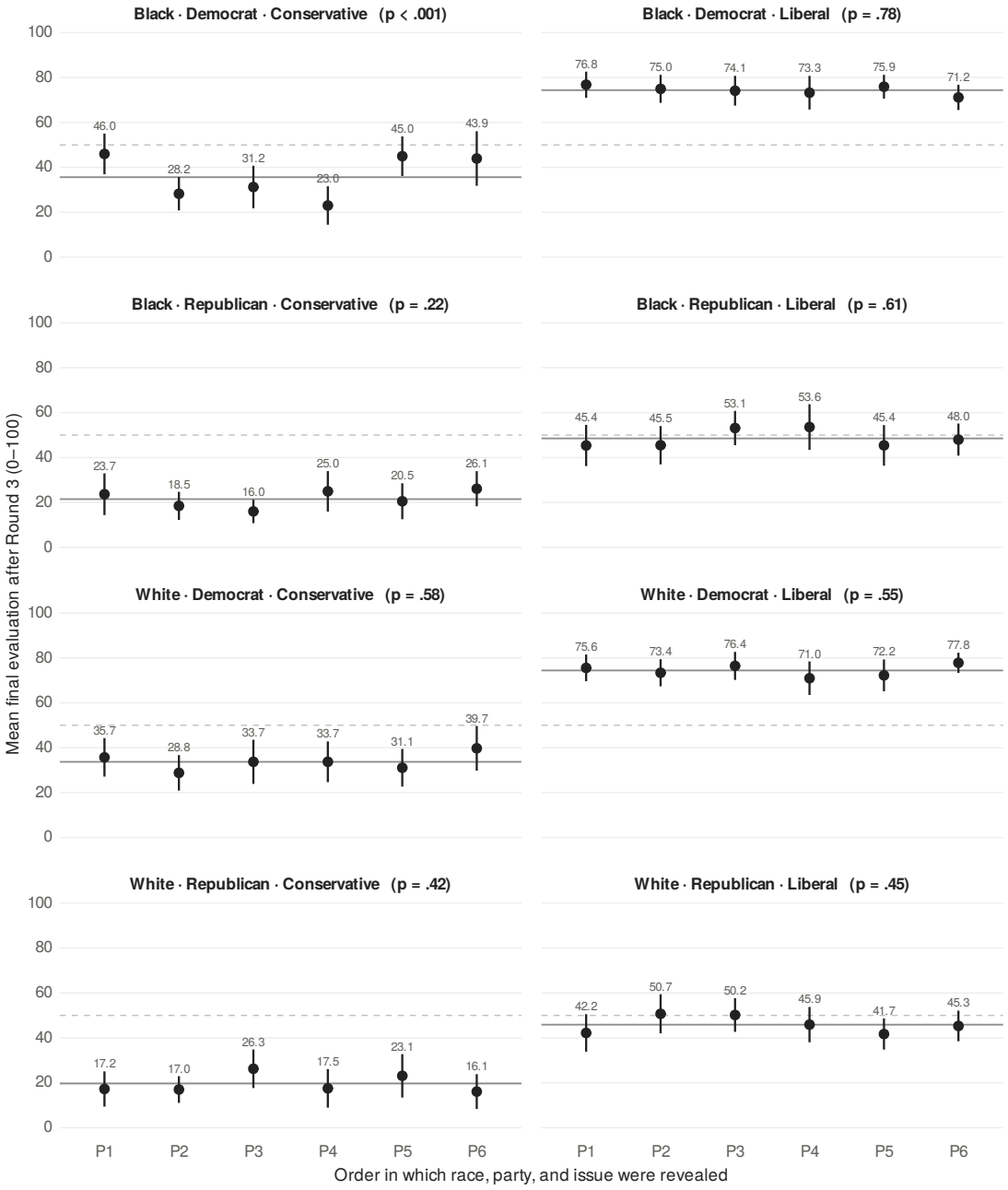
Figures A6.3.1–A6.3.3 hold the revealed values of race, party, and issue position fixed (one panel per combination) and compare the mean final evaluation, after Round 3, across the six orders in which those values were revealed. If the final evaluation depends only on what respondents learned and not on the order, the six points in each panel should be equal up to sampling error. Each panel reports an F-test that the six order means are equal, and the note to each figure reports a joint test across all eight panels (standard errors clustered by respondent). The joint test rejects equal means for Black Democrats ($p = .015$) and White Republicans ($p < .001$) but not for White Democrats ($p = .063$); three of the 24 panel-level tests fall below .05. Final evaluations are therefore not fully independent of the order in which information arrived.

Figure A6.3.1. Final Evaluation by Revelation Order: Black Democrats



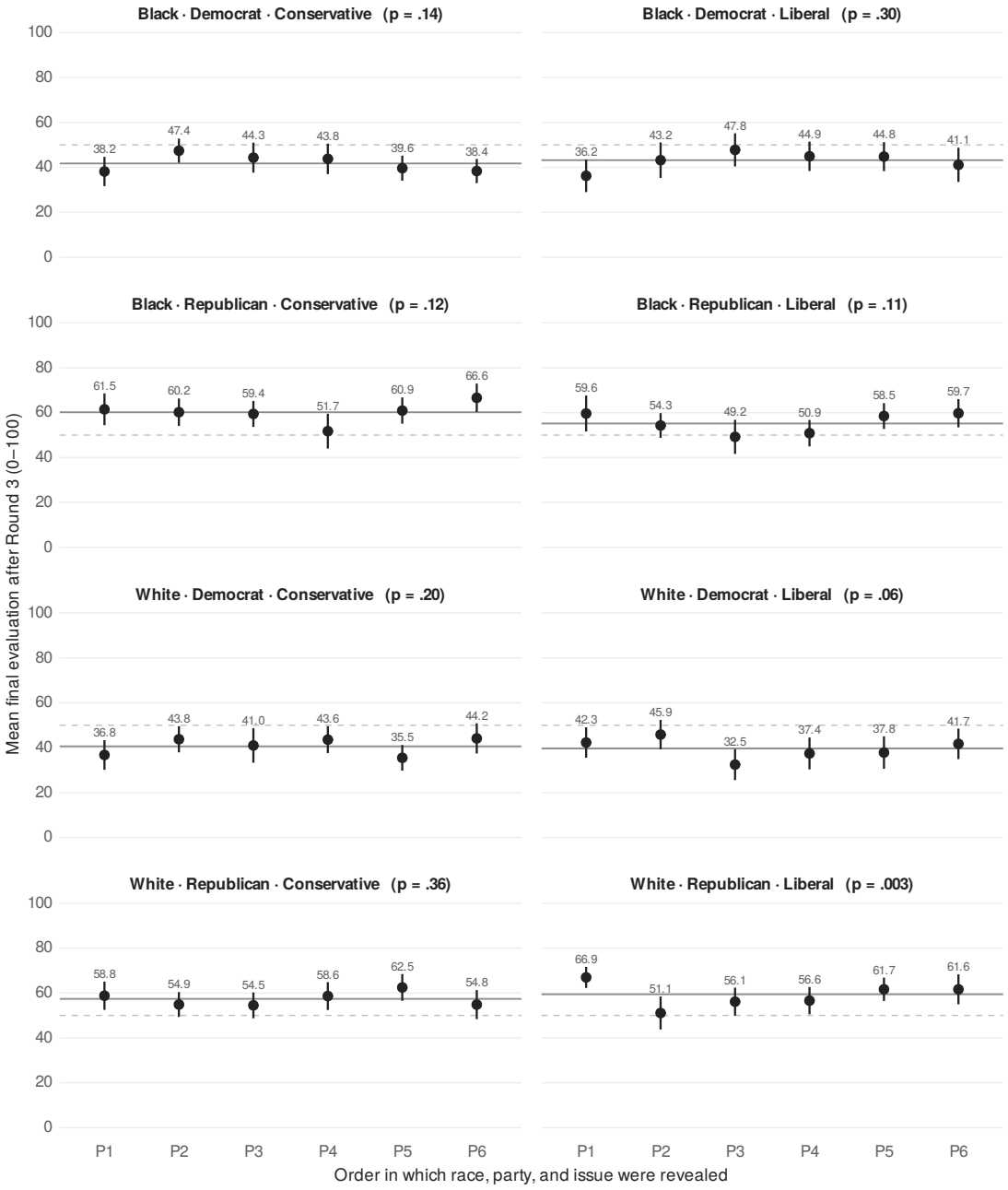
Joint test across all eight panels: F(40) = 1.55, p = 0.015.
p in each panel: F-test that the six orders have equal means (SEs clustered by respondent).
P1 race→party→issue; P2 race→issue→party; P3 issue→party→race; P4 issue→race→party;
P5 party→race→issue; P6 party→issue→race. Points: cell mean with 95% CI; solid grey line: mean across the six orders.

Figure A6.3.2. Final Evaluation by Revelation Order: White Democrats



Joint test across all eight panels: F(40) = 1.37, p = 0.063.
p in each panel: F-test that the six orders have equal means (SEs clustered by respondent).
P1 race→party→issue; P2 race→issue→party; P3 issue→party→race; P4 issue→race→party;
P5 party→race→issue; P6 party→issue→race. Points: cell mean with 95% CI; solid grey line: mean across the six orders.

Figure A6.3.3. Final Evaluation by Revelation Order: White Republicans



Joint test across all eight panels: F(40) = 1.88, p = 0.001.
p in each panel: F-test that the six orders have equal means (SEs clustered by respondent).
P1 race→party→issue; P2 race→issue→party; P3 issue→party→race; P4 issue→race→party;
P5 party→race→issue; P6 party→issue→race. Points: cell mean with 95% CI; solid grey line: mean across the six orders.

A6.4 Racial Group Identification and Initial Updating

Slopes of the R0-to-R1 update on racial group identification (0–1 scale) from the models plotted in Figure 9, separately for Black and White candidates, and the difference between them (the interaction). Because identification is measured rather than randomized, these are descriptive differences across respondents.

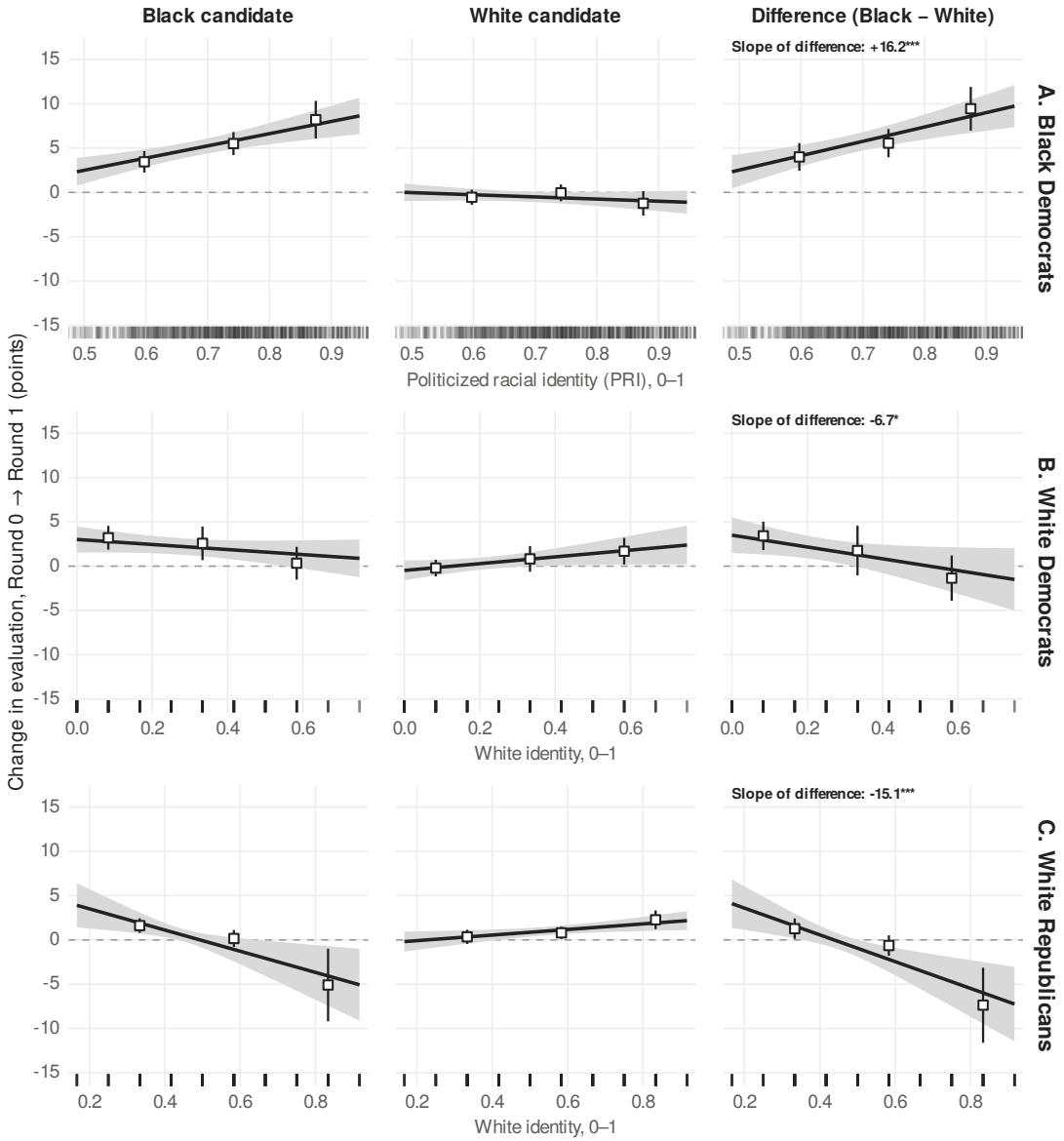
Table A6.2. Slopes of Initial Updating on Racial Group Identification

	Slope of R0→R1 update on identity			Plotted range	
Group	Black candidate	White candidate	Difference	(5th–95th pct.)	Respondents
Black Democrats	13.77 (3.56)***	-2.43 (2.21)	16.19 (4.11)***	[0.49, 0.95]	1,046
White Democrats	-2.84 (2.07)	3.82 (2.00)	-6.67 (3.30)*	[0.00, 0.75]	399
White Republicans	-11.96 (4.35)**	3.15 (1.33)*	-15.11 (4.56)***	[0.17, 0.92]	636

Note: OLS of the R0-to-R1 change on candidate race × identification and candidate race × ideology, standard errors clustered by respondent. Identification is Black politicized racial identity for Black Democrats and White identity for White respondents. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure A6.4.1 repeats Figure 9 and adds the mean change within terciles of the identification scale in each group (squares, plotted at each tercile's median, with 95% confidence intervals clustered by respondent). The tercile means lie close to the fitted lines, so the patterns in Figure 9 do not depend on the linear specification.

Figure A6.4.1. Racial Group Identification and Initial Updating, with Tercile Means



References

Jardina, Ashley. 2019. *White Identity Politics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lau, Richard R., and David P. Redlawsk. 2006. *How Voters Decide: Information Processing in Election Campaigns.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.