Party, policy, and democracy: What do voters value in candidates?
Pre-analysis plan

[This pre-analysis plan is a modified version of 20181003AA reflecting the shift in platform from Mechanical Turk and changes to the instrument and hypotheses described below.]

<u>Background and explanation of rationale</u>

In recent years, scholars have argued that public support for democracy and elite commitment to democratic values are on the decline. However, this research typically focuses on measuring abstract notions of support for democracy or ratings of democratic performance. As a result, few studies have considered voters' commitment to democracy in practice *relative* to other important considerations. Building on Graham and Svolik (2018) and Svolik (2018), we use fully randomized conjoint analysis to explore the strength of Americans' commitment to democratic values in a series of hypothetical election scenarios. Our main interest is to determine whether and to what extent voters oppose candidates who do not uphold democratic values. We test a series of competing expectations regarding popular opposition to democratic norm violations versus popular support for voter ID laws, the involvement of legislators in law enforcement investigations, unwillingness to compromise with partisan opponents, and deference to judicial authority. We also investigate (1) which specific democratic values and policy positions are most strongly related to vote choice and how those effects compare; (2) whether voters are more likely to forgive transgressions against democratic values by co-partisan candidates than opposition party candidates (and how that relationship varies by approval of Donald Trump); and (3) whether the effects of candidates acting undemocratically vary by education, political knowledge, political interest, and/or age. Answers to these questions will help us better understand the strength of Americans' commitment to democracy and how it operates in the context of competitive partisan elections.

<u>What are the hypotheses to be tested?</u>

Main effects

Our first hypotheses concern voters' commitment to candidates who violate democratic norms. We offer a series of competing hypotheses about the effects of democratic norm transgressions vs. stances that defend democracy on voters' support of candidates.

H1a. Respondents are less likely to choose a candidate who said elected officials should supervise investigations than one who said investigations should be free from partisan influence.
- H1b. Respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who said elected officials should supervise investigations than one who said investigations should be free from partisan influence.

H2a. Respondents are less likely to choose a candidate who supports voter ID laws than one who opposes such laws.
- H2b. Respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who supports voter ID laws than one who opposes such laws.

H3a. Respondents are less likely to choose a candidate who promises to stand up to the other party than one who promises to work for compromise.
- H3b. Respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who promises to stand up to the other party than one who promises to work for compromise.

H4a. Respondents are less likely to choose a candidate who said elected officials should not be bound by court decisions they regard as politicized than one who said elected officials must obey the courts even when they think that the decisions are wrong.
- H4b. Respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who said elected officials should not be bound by court decisions they regard as politicized than one who said elected officials must obey the courts even when they think that the decisions are wrong.

(new; not present in 20181003AA)

Theory: A wide body of literature suggests that Americans are opposed to democratic norm violations. Drutman, Diamond, and Goldman (2018b) find that large majorities of Americans do not agree with the statements that Congress shouldn't oversee the president, that the media shouldn't scrutinize the president, and that the president should not be bound by the laws or courts. However, the effect of undemocratic platforms on vote choice may be small. Drutman, Diamond, and Goldman (2018b) find that only 54% of Americans are supportive of all five metrics of democracy presented to them in a survey. In a conjoint experiment, Graham and Svolik (2018) find that when a candidate adopts an undemocratic platform, they lose about ~10% of the overall vote share.

On the other hand, some literature suggests that there is popular support for platforms that experts regard as democratic norm transgressions. A Gallup poll found that 80% of Americans support voter ID laws, which suggests that they are not widely regarded as a democratic transgression among the American people (McCarthy 2016). Claims that elected officials can or should be involved in law enforcement investigations have been increasingly widespread in the context of Robert Mueller's investigation of Russian involvement in the 2016 election (Holland, Mason, and Oliphant 2018), and around 30% of Americans supported Trump's decision to fire FBI director James Comey (Shepard 2017). Finally, a 2018 Pew study found that over half of Americans prefer politicians who stick to their positions while 44% prefer politicians who make compromises (prior to 2018, the majority of the public preferred compromise).

Differences in marginal effects between attributes

We also test how partisanship and two policy positions (regarding cultural conservatism and limited government) impact candidate support. We propose three (non-competing) hypotheses

regarding the effect of each on support of a candidate, relative to the effects of platforms related to democratic values.

H5a: Among each partisan group, the partisanship attribute has a larger impact on respondents' likelihood of choosing a candidate than any of the four democracy attributes.

H5b: Among each partisan group, each of the policy attributes has a larger impact on respondents' likelihood of choosing a candidate than any of the four democracy attributes. (revised from 20181003AA)

Theory: Graham and Svolik (2018) find that the (relative) weight of upholding democratic values is about 7.6%, compared to 92.4% that is given to partisan and policy considerations. Notably, however, they are unable to discern whether partisanship or specific economic and social policies drive vote choice. Svolik (2018) finds that Venezuelan voters are willing to support candidates with an undemocratic platform when the candidate's economic policies appeal to their interests.

Heterogeneous effects

Voters may be more likely to forgive transgressions against democratic values by co-partisan candidates than opposition party candidates. However, popular support for voter ID laws and American attitudes towards compromise in particular suggest that some of the democracy platforms that experts regard as norm transgressions may be perceived favorably by the general public. We specify three sets of competing hypotheses testing the general claim that the effect of democracy platform positions on candidate support will be greater for candidates from the other party than for co-partisans.

H6a: Among each partisan group, the impact of supporting voter ID laws (relative to opposing voter ID laws) is larger for opposition party candidates than for co-partisan candidates.
- H6b: Among each partisan group, the impact of supporting voter ID laws (relative to opposing voter ID laws) is smaller for opposition party candidates than for co-partisan candidates.

H7a: Among each partisan group, the impact of supporting elected officials' supervision of investigations (relative to supporting elections that are free from partisan influence) is larger for opposition party candidates than for co-partisan candidates.
- H7b: Among each partisan group, the impact of supporting elected officials' supervision of investigations (relative to supporting investigations that are free from partisan influence) is smaller for opposition party candidates than for co-partisan candidates.

H8a: Among each partisan group, the impact of standing up to the other party (relative to working for compromise) is larger for opposition party candidates than for co-partisan candidates.

- H8b: Among each partisan group, the impact of standing up to the other party (relative to working for compromise) is smaller for opposition party candidates than for co-partisan candidates.

H9a: Among each partisan group, the impact of saying elected officials should not be bound by court decisions they regard as politicized (relative to saying elected officials must obey the courts even when they think their decisions are wrong) is larger for opposition party candidates than for co-partisan candidates.
- H9b: Among each partisan group, the impact of saying elected officials should not be bound by court decisions they regard as politicized (relative to saying elected officials must obey the courts even when they think their decisions are wrong) is smaller for opposition party candidates than for co-partisan candidates.

(new; not present in 20181003AA)

Theory: Graham and Svolik (2018) find that Americans are unlikely to prioritize democratic platforms when doing so goes against their partisan, ideological, or policy preferences; specifically, they are more likely to choose a proximate candidate (in terms of party, ideology, or policy preferences) with an undemocratic platform than a more distant candidate with a democratic platform. They also find that voters punish undemocratic candidates more severely when the candidates are from the opposing party. Svolik (2018) finds similar results in a conjoint experiment conducted in Venezuela. More broadly, literature on partisan motivated reasoning suggests that people interpret new information through the lens of their partisan identity (e.g., Bolsen, Druckman, and Cook 2014; Lavine, Johnson, and Steenberg 2012). Our experiment's prime on partisanship may stimulate partisan motivated reasoning. Still, Bullock (2011) finds that although party cues are influential determinants of policy preferences, partisans are often affected as least as much (or more) by policy information; even if partisanship attenuates the effects of undemocratic platforms, they may not be completely disregarded.

We also test whether responses to democratic transgressions differ among members of one party over another. Specifically, we offer three non-competing hypotheses regarding Republicans' vs. Democrats' views toward candidates who transgress democratic values:

H10a: Republicans/Trump approvers are more likely to choose a candidate who supports voter ID laws (relative to one who opposes such laws) than Democrats/Trump disapprovers.

H10b: Republicans/Trump approvers are more likely to choose a candidate who said elected officials should supervise investigations (relative to one who said investigations should be free from partisan influence) than Democrats/Trump disapprovers.

H10c: Republicans/Trump approvers are more likely to choose a candidate who promises to stand up to the other party (relative to one who promises to work for compromise) than Democrats/Trump disapprovers.

H10d: Republicans/Trump approvers are more likely to choose a candidate who said elected officials should not be bound by court decisions they regard as politicized (relative to one who said elected officials must obey the courts even when they think their decisions are wrong) than Democrats/Trump disapprovers.
(new; not present in 20181003AA)

Theory: Drutman, Diamond, and Goldman (2018a) find that support for a strong leader is significantly higher among conservatives than liberals, and conservatives show higher agreement with the statement that democracy is not always preferable. This is particularly true among cultural conservatives. They also find that people who supported Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential primaries are most open to authoritarian political systems, including strong leaders and army rule. Drutman, Diamond, and Goldman (2018b) find that Trump approvers are much more likely to show preferences for less accountability and oversight.

We now turn to heterogeneous effects according to other respondent characteristics. We offer a series of hypotheses about differences in candidate preferences by education level and political knowledge, and by political interest:

H11a: Less educated respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who supports voter ID laws (relative to one who opposes such laws) than more educated respondents.

H11b: Less educated respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who said elected officials should supervise investigations (relative to one who said investigations should be free from partisan influence) than more educated respondents.

H11c: Less educated respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who promises to stand up to the other party (relative to one who promises to work for compromise) than more educated respondents.

H11d: Less educated respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who said elected officials should not be bound by court decisions they regard as politicized (relative to one who said elected officials must obey the courts even when they think their decisions are wrong) than more educated respondents.
(new; not present in 20181003AA)

H12a: Low political knowledge respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who supports voter ID laws (relative to one who opposes such laws) than high political knowledge respondents.

H12b: Low political knowledge respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who said elected officials should supervise investigations (relative to one who said investigations should be free from partisan influence) than high political knowledge respondents.

H12c: Low political knowledge respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who promises to stand up to the other party (relative to one who promises to work for compromise) than high political knowledge respondents.

H12d: Low political knowledge respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who said elected officials should not be bound by court decisions they regard as politicized (relative to one who said elected officials must obey the courts even when they think their decisions are wrong) than high political knowledge respondents.
(new; not present in 20181003AA)

Theory: Drutman, Diamond, and Goldman (2018a) find that support for democracy is weakest among the least educated. Specifically, more education is associated with lower support for a "strong leader" and lower agreement with the statement that "democracy is not always preferable." Drutman, Diamond, and Goldman (2018b) find that among Trump approvers, more educated people express lower agreement with the statements that Congress shouldn't oversee the president, that the media shouldn't scrutinize the president, and that the president should not be bound by the laws or courts. Twenge, Carter, and Campbell (2015) find that higher education is associated with greater tolerance.

H13a: Less politically interested respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who supports voter ID laws (relative to one who opposes such laws) than more politically interested respondents.

H13b: Less politically interested respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who said elected officials should supervise investigations (relative to one who said investigations should be free from partisan influence) than more politically interested respondents.

H13c: Less politically interested respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who promises to stand up to the other party (relative to one who promises to work for compromise) than more politically interested respondents.

H13d: Less politically interested respondents are more likely to choose a candidate who said elected officials should not be bound by court decisions they regard as politicized (relative to one who said elected officials must obey the courts even when they think their decisions are wrong) than more politically interested respondents.
(new; not present in 20181003AA)

Theory: Drutman, Diamond, and Goldman (2018a) also find that support for democracy is weakest among the least politically interested. High politically interested people are less supportive of a strong leader and express stronger preferences for democracy. Drutman, Diamond, and Goldman (2018b) find that among Trump approvers, high politically interested people express lower agreement with the statements that Congress shouldn't oversee the

president, that the media shouldn't scrutinize the president, and that the president should not be bound by the laws or courts.

Next, we offer a series of research questions about how "cross-pressured partisans" (i.e., Democrats who approve of Donald Trump or Republicans who disapprove of Donald Trump) react to specific democratic transgressions.

RQ1a: Are Republicans who disapprove of Donald Trump less likely to choose a candidate who supports voter ID laws (relative to one who opposes such laws) than Republicans who approve of Donald Trump?

RQ1b: Are Democrats who approve of Donald Trump more likely to choose a candidate who said elected officials should supervise investigations (relative to one who said investigations should be free from partisan influence) than Democrats who disapprove of Donald Trump?

RQ1c: Are Democrats who approve of Donald Trump more likely to choose a candidate who promises to stand up to the other party (relative to one who promises to work for compromise) than Democrats who disapprove of Donald Trump?

Theory: The investigations attribute is a personal cue to Donald Trump. Outside this context, there may not be an inherently partisan difference on how much people value the independence of investigations. Both sets of 'cross-pressured partisans' may differ from their co-partisans on investigations, with Trump-disapproving-Republicans supporting independence (relative to other Republicans) and Trump-approving-Democrats to oppose independence (relative to other Democrats). With regard to the elections attribute, to the extent that Trump-approving-Democrats fit the narrative as lower-educated, economically vulnerable, white working class, 'traditional' Democratic voters, they might be less opposed to racially targeted voter suppression laws than is the party mainstream.

Finally, we have three research questions about how preferences regarding democratic values vary by respondents' age.

RQ2a: Are older respondents less likely to choose a candidate who supports voter ID laws (relative to one who opposes such laws) than younger respondents?

RQ2b: Are older respondents less likely to choose a candidate who said elected officials should supervise investigations (relative to one who said investigations should be free from partisan influence) than younger respondents?

RQ2c: Are older respondents less likely to choose a candidate who promises to stand up to the other party (relative to one who promises to work for compromise) than younger respondents?

RQ2d: Are older respondents less likely to choose a candidate who said elected officials should not be bound by court decisions they regard as politicized (relative to one who said elected officials must obey the courts even when they think their decisions are wrong)?
(new; not present in 20181003AA)

Theory: Foa and Mounk (2016) find that millennials are more cynical about the value of democracy as a political system, less hopeful that anything they do might influence public policy, and more willing to express support for authoritarian alternatives. Voeten (2017) argues that American millennials are somewhat more skeptical of democracy than young people were twenty years ago, but also shows that older generations have less faith in American democratic institutions. Drutman, Diamond, and Goldman (2018a) find that young respondents are less likely than older ones to say they prefer democracy, but they also show weaker preferences for a "strong leader." In a separate vein of research on tolerance, Tweng, Carter, and Campbell find that Americans have become more tolerant over time, but people born in the late 1940s (Boomers) were the most tolerant when age and time period were controlled.

How will the hypotheses be tested?

Our experiment employs fully randomized conjoint analysis to determine the extent to which Americans prioritize democratic values, policy positions, partisanship, and other attributes in hypothetical election scenarios. We conduct an online survey experiment with a sample of approximately 2000 respondents recruited from YouGov. Drawing theoretical inspiration from Graham and Svolik (2018) and Svolik (2018), we present respondents with 10 pairs of hypothetical candidates in an election who randomly vary on eight attributes: name, partisanship, two policy platforms, and four "democracy" platforms. The policy platforms concern attitudes toward limited government and cultural conservatism, and the democracy platforms concern voting rights, investigations, legislative compromise, and the courts. A complete list of the attributes and levels in our experiment is included at the end of this document.

All candidate attribute-levels are randomly selected from a predetermined set of levels. Specifically, candidate names are randomly chosen from a set of 123 names used in Butler and Homola (2017) as signals of race/ethnicity and gender. In our analysis, we will pool names into race/ethnicity and gender categories (i.e., white female, Hispanic male, black female, etc.) and estimate the AMCEs for each category, using the "white male" category as a baseline. Note that we opt to use names rather than individual attributes for race/ethnicity and gender to (1) increase the realism of the candidate profiles and (2) use fewer total attributes in the conjoint tables. All other attributes have just two levels; partisanship is randomly selected to be Democrat or Republican, each policy platform is randomly chosen to correspond to a conservative (e.g., "Wants to lower taxes on everyone, including the wealthy") or liberal (e.g., "Wants to raise taxes on the wealthy") stance, and each democracy platform is randomly chosen to correspond to a democratic norm (e.g., "Said law enforcement investigations of politicians and their associates should be free of partisan influence.") or a democratic norm transgression (e.g., "Said elected officials should supervise law enforcement investigations of

politicians and their associates"). The name and partisanship attributes appear first in the table, in that order, but the order of all other attributes is randomized across respondents.

After viewing each pair of profiles, respondents are asked to select which candidate they would be more likely to support. They repeat this exercise a total of ten times for each candidate pair. The survey also includes a battery of demographic and attitudinal questions, a series of questions on political knowledge, and an opportunity for respondents to provide written feedback.

For our main analysis, we will calculate the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) for each level of each attribute included in the conjoint. AMCEs correspond to the average effect of changing each hypothetical candidate attribute on respondents' preferences for one candidate over another, relative to a baseline level. Following Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014), we will calculate the AMCEs based on a dichotomous outcome measure indicating whether or not a given candidate was selected (the candidate rating outcome measures that were tested in 20181003AA are omitted). The treatment variables in our analysis are sets of dichotomous variables for each attribute, wherein if a given attribute has *k* levels, we include *k - 1* dichotomous variables in our model. We estimate clustered standard errors in which each cluster is a respondent.

For our analysis of heterogeneous treatment effects among respondent subgroups, we will first divide respondents into two groups using a predetermined set of criteria for each moderator (i.e., partisanship, Trump approval, political interest, political knowledge, education level, and age; see below). We will then calculate the AMCEs for each group separately and take the difference between the two subgroups for each level of each attribute. The following criteria specify how we create each subgroup:

- Partisanship: Our question for partisanship asks respondents to identify whether they call themselves a Democrat, a Republican, an independent, or something else. Democrats and Republicans then identify whether they are a very strong or not very strong Democrat or Republican, and those who chose independent or something else are asked if they feel closer to the Democratic or Republican party. Independent or something else leaners are grouped with their respective party.
- Trump approval: Respondents who "somewhat" or "strongly" approve of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president as coded as Trump approvers; those who "somewhat" or "strongly" disapprove are coded as Trump disapprovers.
- Political interest: Respondents who are "very interested" or "somewhat interested" in politics are coded as high political interest; those who are "not very interested" or "not at all interested" are coded as low political interest.
- Political knowledge: Respondents who score above the median an additive political knowledge scale are coded as high political knowledge. Respondents who score below the median are coded as low political knowledge.
- Education level: Respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher are coded as higher education level. Respondents with less than a bachelor's degree are coded as lower

education level. We may also conduct analyses using a binary variable that classifies respondents with a some college or higher as the higher education level (using some college or greater as a moderator was not pre-registered in 20181003AA due to higher education levels among Mechanical Turk respondents).
- Age: Respondents whose age is above the median in our sample are coded as older; respondents whose age is below the median are coded as younger.

Finally, we include a question in our survey that asks respondents how often they provide humorous or insincere responses to survey questions, and exclude respondents who report that they do so "most of the time" or "always."

Notes:

- For expositional purposes, we may alter which baseline levels we use in our model for the partisanship, policy, and democracy attributes. Since these attributes can take on only two levels, baseline selection will not change our results.
- The order of hypotheses and analyses in the final manuscript may be altered for expositional clarity.
- We will compute and report descriptive/summary statistics for our data to summarize sample characteristics, response variable distributions, etc. We will also collect and may report response timing data as a proxy for respondent attention.

List of attributes and levels:

Democracy

Equal voting rights
- Opposes new legislation to require voters to show state-issued ID at the polls.
- Supports new legislation to require voters to show state-issued ID at the polls.

Investigations
- Said law enforcement investigations of politicians and their associates should be free of partisan influence.
- Said elected officials should supervise law enforcement investigations of politicians and their associates.

Compromise
- Promises to work for compromise across party lines.
- Promises to stand up to the other party.

Courts (new; not included in 20181003AA)
- Said elected officials should not be bound by court decisions they regard as politicized.

- Said elected officials must obey the courts even when they think that the decisions are wrong.

Policy

Cultural conservatism (revised from 20181003AA)
- Believes the government should do more to prevent discrimination against racial minorities.
- Believes discrimination against racial minorities is less of a problem now than in the past.

Limited government (revised from 20181003AA)
- Wants to raise taxes on the wealthy.
- Wants to lower taxes on everyone, including the wealthy.

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