

ARMIES AND INFLUENCE: PUBLIC DEFERENCE TO FOREIGN POLICY ELITES

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ABSTRACT: When is the public more likely to defer to elites on foreign policy? Existing research suggests the public takes its cues from co-partisans, but what happens when co-partisans disagree? Bridging the gap between theories of public opinion, bureaucratic politics, and civil-military relations, we argue that the public prioritizes information from advisers who signal expertise through prior experience. However, differing social standing of government institutions means the public values some types of prior experience more than others. Using a conjoint experiment, we show that the American public heavily defers to military credentials when adjudicating between conflicting information from cabinet advisers, even on non-military issues; we replicate our findings in a second conjoint experiment showing that the same dynamics hold when considering possible candidates for cabinet positions. The results have important implications for the study of public opinion, bureaucratic politics, and civil-military relations.

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In January 2017, three nominees for senior positions in the Trump administration—James Mattis, Rex Tillerson, and Mike Pompeo—publicly testified before Congress. On issues ranging from the Iran deal, to the ban on immigrants from a set of Muslim-majority countries, to US defense policy toward Russia, nominees offered policy assessments and recommendations that not only differed from President Trump, but also from one another.¹ Long after these confirmation hearings completed, commentators continue to note that the Trump cabinet has been filled with an array of dissenting voices. Yet the “pulling and hauling” of the Trump administration is not unique in this regard: whether through public statements or resignation letters, senior foreign policy advisers routinely present competing and conflicting information to the public (Allison, 1971; Kaarbo, 1998; Marsh, 2014).

A prominent tradition in political science argues that these types of signals from elites play an important role in public opinion, particularly for foreign policy issues, in which senior officials may possess private (oftentimes classified) information and technical expertise, prompting the public to give elites “the benefit of the doubt” (Zaller, 1992; Colaresi, 2007; Baum and Groeling, 2009; Berinsky, 2009; Guisinger and Saunders, 2017). Yet, existing literature offers surprisingly little insight into how the public adjudicates between co-partisan elites when they disagree. Why does the public defer to some elites more than others?

In this article, we attempt to shed light on this question, integrating the study of public opinion in foreign policy with work on expertise and bureaucratic politics. We argue that domestic audiences use elites’ characteristics—such as their institutional affiliations and experiences—as heuristics to determine the relative credibility of elite information. Drawing on research on institutional trust (Carpenter, 2001; Gibson and Nelson, 2015), however, we posit that audiences will weight prior experiences differently based upon the reputation of the institution with which elites are affiliated. Public attitudes on foreign policy are more likely to be swayed when cue-givers’ traits signal both expertise and social standing. In a country like the United States, where the military enjoys uniquely high levels of standing—both

¹Jennifer Steinhauer, “Latest to Disagree With Donald Trump: His Cabinet Nominees,” *The New York Times*, January 12, 2017.

compared to other institutions within the United States, and compared to other industrialized democracies around the world—this has important implications: Americans will defer to military credentials even in non-military domains.

To test these intuitions, we field two conjoint experiments embedded in a national survey of 2,599 American adults in the fall of 2018. In our first experiment, we show that rather than looking solely to partisan status, the public privileges recommendations provided by credentialed advisers. However, the American public disproportionately looks to military credentials, even when considering policy issues outside the realm of national defense. Importantly, this pattern holds across a number of respondent-level characteristics, including party identification and attitudes toward the use of force. We then replicate our results with a second conjoint experiment, where we show these findings also hold when evaluating appointments to cabinet positions: Americans defer to military experience even for non-military roles.

These results have important implications for at least four areas of political science. First, it builds on a burgeoning research agenda on the social context of elite cues (Klar, 2014; Kertzer and Zeitzoff, 2017), showing that rather than simply passively responding to trusted partisan elites, the public may be more discerning in who it chooses to listen to in foreign policy issues. Indeed, our experiments show that even in an era of profound partisan polarization (Mason, 2018), there are some contexts in which Americans actually prefer the policy recommendations of nonpartisan elites. Second, it extends the intuitions of recent research on how actors use leader experiences as heuristics in interstate signaling (Bak and Palmer, 2010; Kertzer, Renshon and Yarhi-Milo, forthcoming; Horowitz et al., 2018), showing that these same heuristics also matter in domestic politics as well. Third, we seek to place the study of civil-military relations in a more comparative context, empirically testing how deference to the military differs from patterns of deference to other specialized foreign policy institutions. Our findings therefore both extend and challenge aspects of recent scholarly work on how public deference toward the US military shapes political outcomes (Recchia,

2015; Golby, Feaver and Dropp, 2018; Kenwick and Maxey, 2018; Brooks, 2019). Finally, the article echoes recent work attempting to bring together the study of public opinion and bureaucratic politics, showing how elite advisers shape public opinion about foreign policy (Saunders, 2017, 2018).

1 Elites, Publics, and Heuristics for Credibility

A prominent tradition both in international relations and political science more generally posits that elites play a powerful role in shaping public opinion on political issues (Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock, 1991; Lupia and McCubbins, 2000; Kreps, 2010; Lenz, 2013; Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus, 2013). In complex political environments, information search and processing is costly. In turn, the public relies upon informational shortcuts or rules of thumb — cues or heuristics — that reduce their cognitive burden, and may prove superior strategies to address ill-defined problems to which optimal solutions are elusive (Gigerenzer and Gaissmaier, 2011). This is particularly true for foreign policy issues, which are not only relatively far-removed from many citizens’ daily lives (Kertzer, 2013), but frequently involve questions where citizens may lack access to the classified information that inform elite assessments (Colaresi, 2007; Carson, 2018).

There is considerable debate, however, about which elite cues matter and why. Amongst proponents of elite-driven theories of public opinion, the traditional explanation has been that partisanship dominates. When Republicans and Democrats disagree on foreign policy, the public prioritizes information from their co-partisans (Zaller, 1992; Berinsky, 2007; Baum and Groeling, 2010). Republican voters, for example, need only know Donald Trump’s position on the US drawdown of military forces in Syria to form an opinion mirroring the leader’s.² Quite naturally, this body of work prioritizes the role of elected officials, such as the president and Congress, in shaping public opinion (Baum and Groeling, 2009; Reeves

²See also Gilens and Murakawa (2002) on the “dissuasive” effects of cues from outparty elites, as well as the literature on negative partisanship, e.g. Iyengar and Westwood, 2015; Abramowitz and Webster, 2016.

and Rogowski, 2018).

Yet theories of partisan cue-taking in foreign policy have their limits. Empirically, there is mixed evidence in support of these models (Gelpi, 2010; Guisinger and Saunders, 2017). Elite cues matter because they are important sources of information, but partisan elites are not the only information sources to which citizens can turn (Downs, 1957; Hayes and Guardino, 2011; Grieco et al., 2011; Kertzer and Zeitzoff, 2017). More generally, partisan elite cue-taking theories have difficulty capturing the intra-party debate and contestation characteristic of many administrations. Foreign policy deliberations within the executive branch are commonly characterized by conflicting information and recommendations from defense, foreign policy, and intelligence advisers—even though most are appointed by the president. Indeed, many presidents intentionally craft their advisory teams to include competing perspectives (George, 1972), perhaps due to the strategic benefits of permitting deliberation between advisers (Krishna and Morgan, 2001; Saunders, 2017).

This contestation creates a cacophony of conceivably credible cues for citizens to consider. Recent history is replete with examples of elite policy disagreements spilling over into the public through leaks, public statements, and Congressional testimony (Saunders, 2018). Media coverage of the 2003 invasion of Iraq described disagreement between the Departments of State and Defense within the George W. Bush administration. Similarly, media coverage of Barack Obama’s decision-making on force levels in Afghanistan similarly described dissent between the Vice President and senior military officials. However, partisan cue theories offer few predictions as to which cue the public will prioritize under these circumstances. As Kertzer and Zeitzoff (2017, p. 544) note, “how publics weigh competing cues from multiple cue-givers remains an unanswered question.” Baum and Groeling (2009) show that the public finds intra-party criticism more informative than in-party praise or out-party criticism, but how do members of the public decide who to listen to when co-partisans disagree with one another?

Finally, much of the recent debate about partisan cue theories has perhaps inadvertently

led to an awkward theoretical framework in which the public chooses to pay attention either to objective facts, such as the number of battlefield casualties, or to their trusted co-partisans. If the public cares about getting the facts right (Mueller, 1973; Gartner and Segura, 1998; Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler, 2006), the crux of the debate is really about *who the public trusts to deliver unbiased information*. While party identification may be one dimension by which the public weights the credibility of foreign policy information, it need not be the only or even the most salient heuristic they use (Bullock, 2011; Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus, 2013). Druckman and Lupia (2016, p. 16) note that “party labels are not the only commonly used cues”, while Lau and Redlawsk (2001, p. 958) find that, in addition to partisanship and ideology, nearly all participants in their study relied on other heuristics, such as group endorsements, appearance, and polls (see also Lau and Redlawsk, 2006). Put differently, it is rather implausible that all elites are equally positioned to persuade even fellow partisans.

BEYOND PARTISANSHIP: EXPERTISE AND INSTITUTIONAL TRUST

Instead of assuming trust comes exclusively from party affiliation, we instead build on two intuitions from the political behavior literature. First, in order to be credible, cue-givers must possess relevant knowledge and be trusted to reveal that information (Lupia, 2000). For example, Druckman (2001) shows that some elite endorsements (Colin Powell) are more persuasive than others (Jerry Springer), but only within the area of the elite’s substantive expertise. Chong and Druckman (2007) similarly show in an experiment that information coming from credible news sources (major local newspapers) prompts greater change in political preferences than from non-credible news sources (a high school newspaper).³

Based on these findings, we argue that the public assesses the credibility of elite information in part based upon the source’s expertise. Because expertise is domain-specific (McGraw and Pinney, 1990), by this logic, the public would distinguish between elites whose position and prior experience intersect with the issue being considered. A Nobel-winning economist

³See also Ladd (2011).

might prove persuasive in endorsing a tax policy than a cultural policy. In the context of foreign policy, this would imply that senior advisers inside the White House (e.g., the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, Central Intelligence Agency Director, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) would be more persuasive than, for example, one of the president’s political advisers. The more experience possessed, the more trustworthy the public should deem the adviser to be.⁴

Yet we also argue that source credibility is in part socially bestowed, meaning that the public values certain types of experience and affiliation over others.⁵ As [Druckman and Lupia \(2016, 24\)](#) describe, a source is credible when “an audience *perceives* a communicator as someone whose words or interpretation they would benefit from believing.” In particular, the public is more likely to defer to elites affiliated with institutions in which they have diffuse institutional trust or support. Whereas specific trust denotes satisfaction with the performance of an institution, diffuse support for an institution is the “reservoir of favorable attitudes or good will that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed or the effects of which they see as damaging to their wants” ([Easton, 1965, 273](#)). Diffuse trust has been applied widely to the study of judicial institutions both in the United States ([Gibson, 2007](#); [Gibson and Nelson, 2015](#)) and cross-nationally ([Gibson, Caldeira and Baird, 1998](#)). As [Gibson, Caldeira and Spence \(2003, p. 356\)](#) argue, “the most important attitudes ordinary citizens hold toward institutions like the Supreme Court have to do with institutional loyalty. Institutions like courts need leeway to be able to go against public opinion [...] Thus, a crucial attribute of judicial institutions is the degree to which they enjoy the *loyalty* of their constituents.”

Diffuse support shapes the public’s perceptions of credible information. Institutions with

⁴Note that our explanation differs somewhat from [Saunders \(2018, p. 2125\)](#), who proposes an alternate model in which cues from elite advisers gain “institutional credibility from their position on the president’s team.”

⁵Note that although it draws on psychological frameworks, there is nothing “irrational” about our theory, which ultimately argues that individuals are more likely to defer to elites that they trust — we simply show that the military appears to have a larger reservoir of trust than other institutions. On the relationship between psychology and rationality, see [Mercer \(2005\)](#); [Kertzer and Tingley \(2018\)](#).

diffuse support can leverage those reserves to persuade or compete against those with smaller reserves. For example, scholars have long argued that institutional trust “cushions the effect of unpopular decisions” of the US Supreme Court (Gibson, 1989) and experimental designs provide empirical support for these theoretical intuitions (Gibson, Caldeira and Spence, 2005). Carpenter (2014, p. 46-7) similarly finds that US bureaucratic agencies gain power from their organizational reputations for technical ability, moral authority, performance, and procedures.⁶ Past empirical work finds that favorable reputations allow bureaucratic organizations to sway the policy decisions of elected officials (Carpenter, 2001) and secure greater administrative discretion (MacDonald, 2010).

We argue that institutional trust exerts similar effects on public perceptions of foreign policy information—particularly because of public attitudes toward the military. As illustrated by multiple longitudinal surveys summarized in Figure 1, the modern US military is consistently one of the most trusted institutions in the United States—surpassing public schools, higher education, the police, the press, organized religion, the Supreme Court, and Congress (Gronke and Feaver, 2001).⁷ Brooks (2019, 10) similarly notes that Americans “(blindly) revere” the military, even though they know relatively little about it. Such high levels of public confidence suggests that we should observe particularly strong rates of deference to elites with military affiliations.

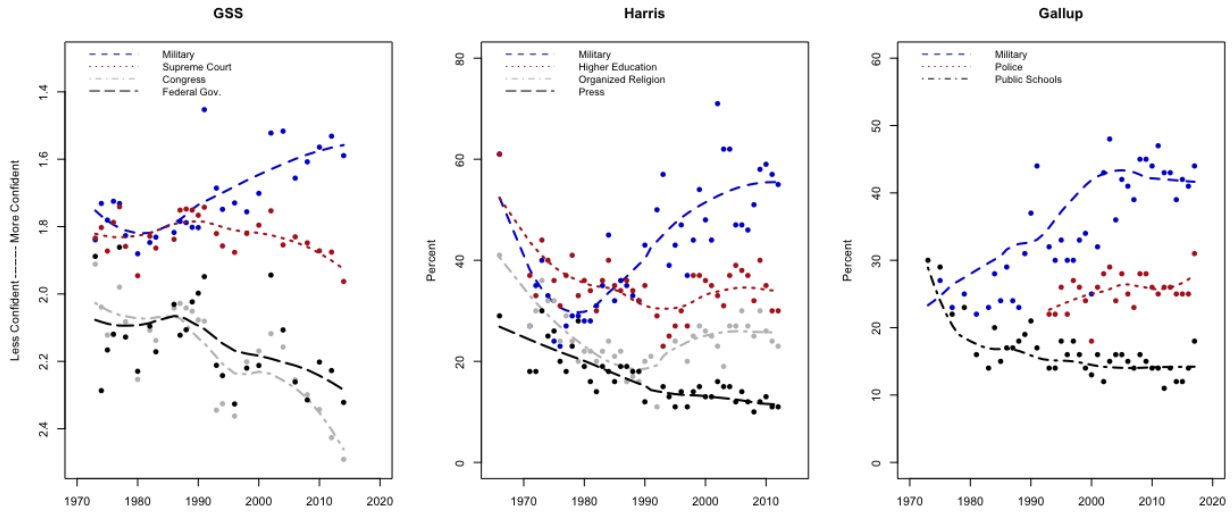
Indeed, the idea of deference has motivated many of the central research questions in the civil-military relations literature. However, most existing studies treat deference (or delegation) as an explanatory variable. That is: civilians *choose* whether or not to defer, which in turn either improves (Huntington, 1957; Desch, 2007) or degrades (Cohen, 2002; Feaver, 2009) the effectiveness of defense strategies, and the norm of civilian control.⁸ The

⁶Organizational reputations are “a set of beliefs about an organization’s capacities, intentions, history, and mission that are embedded in a network of multiple audiences” (Carpenter and Krause, 2012, p. 26).

⁷For a detailed comparison of changes of public attitudes in recent decades, see Golby, Cohn and Feaver (2016); Burbach (2019). Golby, Cohn and Feaver (2016) find that respondents were increasingly likely to believe that “politicians should essentially let military leaders run the foreign policy show” and that “the president should basically follow the advice of the generals, though the question wording is slightly different” (p. 110-5).

⁸See also Nielsen (2005). In this literature, “civilians” are almost always modeled as civilian policymakers,

Figure 1: Confidence in US Institutions



Note: Harris data indicates the percent of respondents reporting “a great deal of confidence” in the *leaders* of the institutions. Gallup data indicates the percent of respondents reporting “a great deal of confidence” in the institutions themselves. The GSS data indicate the mean respondent confidence score for a given year.

implication is that civilians rationally calibrate their deference to military leaders as best suits their strategic aims, such that deference is a strategic choice to achieve a fixed set of preferences—not a function of prior beliefs about the institution’s trustworthiness.

While these assumptions are both analytically fruitful and oftentimes realistic in the American context, a broader literature in comparative politics draws attention to varying levels of influence enjoyed by the military in different political environments (Geddes, Frantz and Wright, 2014). For example, militaries in many states gain independent political power through, for example, cabinet representation (Sechser, 2004; Weeks, 2008; White, 2017), the threat of coups (Narang and Talmadge, 2018), institutional design (Avant, 1994), patterns of appointment (Betts, 1977), and independent economic wealth (Nawaz, 2008).

We posit that the political influence of foreign policy bureaucracies generally, and the

who are presumably less affected by the passions of institutional trust. We question this assumption. For example, after the Bay of Pigs, John F. Kennedy described his military advisers as “those sons of bitches *with all the fruit salad* just sat there nodding, saying it would work” (Caro, 2012, p. 183). Fruit salad is jargon for the ceremonial decorations on military uniforms. However, even if civilian elites do not hold such beliefs, however, they are electorally accountable to publics that do.

military in particular, is also differentiated by their relative standing in society. Social trust in institutions offers an alternative and less explored pathway to deference. As Brooks (2008, p. 30) describes, “militaries that enjoy substantial prestige within society are often formidable political forces,” but influence wanes when the military “loses the esteem of the population.” This logic helps to explain the rise of military influence not only in autocracies (Geddes and Zaller, 1989, p. 329-30), democracies (Brooks, 2009).⁹

Some existing work has already begun to explore how military leaders sway over public opinion may engender political influence (Recchia, 2015; Golby, Feaver and Dropp, 2018; Kenwick and Maxey, 2018). For example, Golby and Karlin (2018) argue that public military advice may act “more like an ultimatum than a recommendation,” raising costs for elected officials who fail to heed military leaders. Other extensions of the argument posit that deference may be partially responsible for a “militarist culture” in the United States (Bacevich, 2013).

Yet, we still have much to learn about how the broader array of foreign policy advisers affects public opinion. To our knowledge, no existing study has measured deference to other relevant bureaucracies, such as the Department of State or Central Intelligence Agency—much less examined the relative effects of their cues. In addition, there is more to learn about *how* military elites affect public opinion on foreign policy. For example, our discussion above implies that military cues could change preferences either through expert or organizational reputation. Such differences fundamentally change our understanding of the origins of political heuristics. In addition, previous studies assume that military deference should only apply in defense policy—an assumption that need not hold if our understanding of institutional trust is correct. Finally, we simply have no insight into how expert cues, military or otherwise, compare to those from other co-partisans. Do certain expert cues count more than others? Does the public value expert cues as well as cues from their own party?

⁹Specifically, Geddes and Zaller (1989) finds that in the early 1970s, “the military stood out [...] as the one institution in the country which enjoyed extraordinary public confidence,” even higher than that of the Roman Catholic Church. 41% of respondents were “completely in favor” of “military involvement in national politics.”

One alternative interpretation is if cues from foreign policy advisers are actually partisan cues in disguise (Golby et al., 2012). For example, scholars of civil-military relations have shown that after the United States transitioned from conscription in 1973, a greater share of military officers began to identify as Republican rather than independent. As Liebert and Golby (2017, p. 119) note, 67% of senior officers identified as Republicans in 1996, as opposed to only 36% in 1976.¹⁰ Congruent with this hypothesis, recent surveys find that roughly one third of respondents believed that most of the military is Republican, while less than ten per cent believe that most is Democrat (Liebert and Golby, 2017, p. 120).

Yet even if institutional affiliation may signal party identification for some voters, the relative weight of co-partisanship and expertise is largely an empirical question—and experimental evidence, perhaps the most direct methodological approach for isolating causal effects, provides only mixed support for the partisanship hypothesis. For example, Teigen (2013, p. 422-7) find that voters perceive political candidates with prior military experience as better prepared to handle national security affairs once in office, *regardless* of the party identity of either the survey respondent or the candidate in the survey vignette. In addition, Golby, Feaver and Dropp (2018, p. 55) find that while military endorsements may be more influential among Republicans, “factors beyond party identification” are also important. In the appointments experiment that follows, we therefore take care to manipulate both partisanship and types of expertise separately, thereby ensuring our results are not an artifact of experimental confounding (Dafoe, Zhang and Caughey, 2018).

2 Research Design

We design two conjoint experiments to assess if and when the public defers to different types of foreign policy elites (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2014), fielded on a national sample of 2599 American adults through Dynata (formerly Survey Sampling International

¹⁰For original data, see Holsti (1999). See also Urban (2010).

(SSI) in November-December 2018.¹¹ To minimize respondent fatigue and limit spillover effects, each respondent was randomly assigned to only one of the two conjoint experiments.¹²

In the first experiment, which we call the RECOMMENDATIONS experiment, we present respondents with randomly generated profiles of two foreign policy elites, one supporting and one opposing a foreign policy proposal. The profile of each of the foreign policy advisers (from their demographic characteristics, to their institutional affiliation, to the justification they offer for their recommendation) was randomly generated along multiple dimensions, in a manner described in detail below. Each respondent was then asked whether they support or oppose the policy being proposed. In this way, the experiment lets us determine the types of expertise and institutional affiliations to which the American public is most deferential—the first evidence of its kind to be introduced to the study of public opinion on foreign policy.

This design offers a number of advantages. The first is causal identification. Foreign policy advisers are strategic actors: not only is their advice not randomly given, but a non-random subset of it reaches the public (Saunders, 2015). Thus, even if sufficiently granular and systematic public opinion polls existed for the questions we are interested in, drawing causal inferences about public reactions to foreign policy elites' signals is extremely difficult, since the signals are inevitably confounded with advisers' reasons for signaling. Experiments are extremely helpful in this regard. The second involves the virtues of conjoint experiments in particular, which afford greater statistical power, allowing us to consider a relatively large number of treatment conditions. Our design parallels a growing body of work applying conjoint methods for purposes of analyzing how individuals process information when there are a large number of potential indicators to consider (Kertzer, Renshon and Yarhi-Milo,

¹¹The sample was stratified on age, gender, ethnicity, and census region. See Table S1 in Appendix §4 for sample characteristics. For examples of recent published experimental work in political science fielded on SSI, see Brutger and Kertzer (2018); Ryan (2017).

¹²1,313 subjects were assigned to the first experiment (appointments) and 1,286 were assigned to the second (recommendations). To ensure data quality, we employed Burleigh, Kennedy and Clifford's (2019) protocol for screening out respondents using Virtual Private Servers (VPS) or located outside the United States.

forthcoming; Huff and Kertzer, 2018). Conjoint experiments offer the best approach for the question in which we are theoretically interested: when presented with a plenitude of elite attributes, which ones capture the public’s attention?

We replicate our findings in a second conjoint experiment, which we call the APPOINTMENTS experiment, examining Americans’ preferences about appointments to senior cabinet positions. We ask participants to choose between two candidates for a senior foreign policy position, whose attributes are again randomly generated on a large number of dimensions. We explicitly focus on cabinet positions whose functional position relates to national security (the Secretary of Defense), as well as two positions concerned with broader foreign policy issues (the Secretary of State and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency). In this second experiment, we widen the analytical aperture to include information about the appointee’s party identification, allowing us to examine the interplay between expertise and partisan affiliation. Robustness tests showing the experiments meet the standard conjoint experiment assumptions are presented in Appendix §.1.1.

Pairing these two experiments together allows us to illuminate two interconnected facets of public opinion and international security. On the one hand, we are interested in what types of elites the public defers to when structuring its foreign policy preferences. On the other hand, many of the the particulars of foreign policy decision-making itself is executed by presidents, under the counsel of a team of advisers. Our approach allows us to empirically investigate whether the public trusts some elites to advise the president but trusts others to inform their own beliefs.

3 Experiment I: Recommendations

The RECOMMENDATIONS experiment asked respondents to consider a hypothetical scenario in which two presidential advisers disagreed about foreign policy. Respondents were told that they would be provided with information on two advisers, as well as a foreign policy

(A) <i>Policy</i>	The United States is currently deciding whether or not to conduct a... (1) ...military strike against a foreign adversary (2) ...military exercise to demonstrate resolve to a foreign adversary (3) ...diplomatic summit with a foreign adversary (4) ...diplomatic summit with an ally
(B) <i>Position</i>	(1) Senior Political Adviser to the President (2) Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (3) Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (4) Secretary of State (5) Secretary of Defense
(C) <i>Recommendation</i>	(1) Supports (2) Opposes
(D) <i>Justification for Recommendation</i>	(1) US public opinion (2) US national security interests (3) US diplomatic interests
(E) <i>Age</i>	48 to 56
(F) <i>Education</i>	(1) Bachelors Degree (2) Masters Degree (3) Doctorate Degree
(G) <i>Prior Experience</i>	Primary experience is... (1) ...outside government... (2) ...inside government...
· <i>Diplomatic</i>	...with [level] diplomatic experience in the State Department (1) none (2) some (3) extensive
· <i>Intelligence</i>	...with [level] intelligence experience in the CIA (1) none (2) some (3) extensive
· <i>Defense</i>	...with [level] defense experience in the Defense Department (1) none (2) some (3) extensive
(H) <i>Military Status</i>	(1) Military general... (2) Retired general... (3) Retired military officer... (4) No prior military experience...
(I) <i>Combat Experience</i>	...with... (1) ...combat experience (2) ...no combat experience

Table 1: Conjoint Study Treatments (Experiment I: RECOMMENDATIONS)

initiative they either support or oppose, and that subjects would be asked to determine which recommendation they support. Respondents then proceeded to the first task, in which they were provided with 12 pieces of information about the policy under consideration, the recommendations and justifications of the advisers, as well as characteristics of the advisers' themselves. A full list of treatment conditions is provided in Table 1 and an example scenario is detailed in Table 2.

Several points about the experimental design are important to note. First, the policy proposals were randomly assigned for each round of the experiment, and ranged in nature from a diplomatic summit with an ally to a military strike against an adversary. By presenting respondents with competing recommendations from foreign policy advisers with randomly assigned attributes, we can determine what types of advisers' recommendations are found to be the most persuasive for each type of policy. Second, as is standard in conjoint experiments (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2014) we impose randomization constraints to avoid logically inconsistent treatment combinations (all Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs, for example, must be an active general; all generals must have had military experience; Secretaries of Defense and State cannot be active military officers, and so on); we also use a weighted randomization procedure as a result to ensure sufficient statistical power for our quantities of interest. Third, following Kertzer, Renshon and Yarhi-Milo (forthcoming), we employ a hybrid randomization structure, in which the order of each treatment in the grid was randomized at the respondent-level to avoid order effects, but some treatments were always presented together in order to bolster readability and external validity (thus, for example, information about military and combat experience were always presented together).

Finally, while the experiment is relatively information-rich compared to traditional experiments in IR that manipulate a small handful of factors at a time, this richness not only sets up a harder and more realistic test for our theory (how much does military experience matter given the myriad potential considerations that could determine which foreign policy advisers the public is most likely to defer to?), but also lets us make relative comparisons:

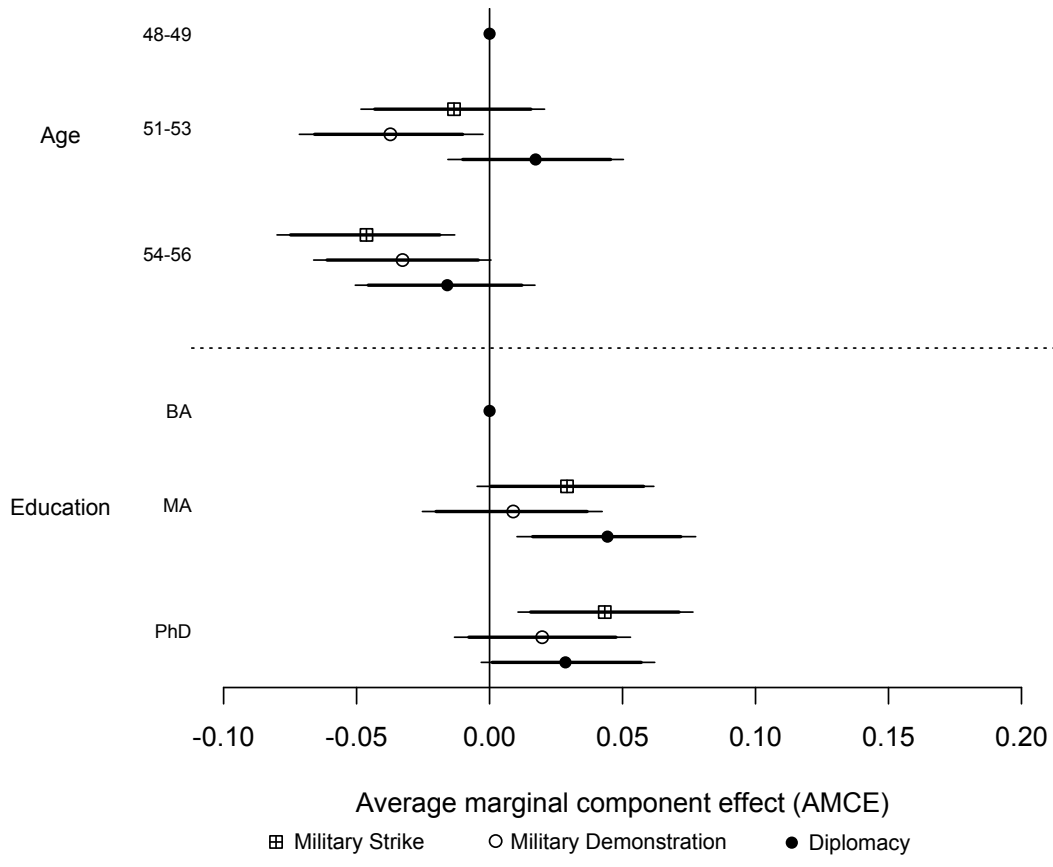
we can determine not just whether a factor matters, but how much it matters compared to a set of theoretically-motivated alternatives. Moreover, many of these factors are also helpful to include to avoid potential confounding in the interpretation of our results: if we didn't include information about advisers' age, for example, respondents might draw inferences about age from respondents' levels of prior experience or military rank. Each respondent completed eight scenarios in total, such that the analysis below is based on 10288 choice tasks (each of which involved two randomly generated foreign policy advisers, so 20576 advisers in total) from 1286 respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As Table 1 notes, respondents were randomly presented with a series of randomly assigned policy scenarios (in which the United States was deciding whether to conduct a military strike against a foreign adversary, considering a military exercise to demonstrate resolve, entertaining a diplomatic summit with a foreign adversary, or contemplating a diplomatic summit with an ally). In the appendix, we estimate the Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) separately for each type of policy scenario. The analysis in Appendix §1.4 shows that respondents gave very similar answers for each type of diplomatic scenario, but displayed more systematically different patterns of results between the military strike and military demonstration. To streamline the results in the main analysis below, then, we pool the two diplomatic scenarios together, and present our results in three phases, beginning with the effects of the basic demographic variables, before turning to the effects of the advisers' position and justification, and concluding with the effects of their previous experience.

Figure 2 estimates the AMCEs for the basic demographic variables (age, and education), presenting separate results for each scenario type. To simplify the presentation, we trichotomize the age variable, although similar results obtain if we estimate the effects of age for each year. Importantly, the figure shows weak and largely insignificant effects. Respondents do not seem to be more likely to agree with advice presented by older advisers —

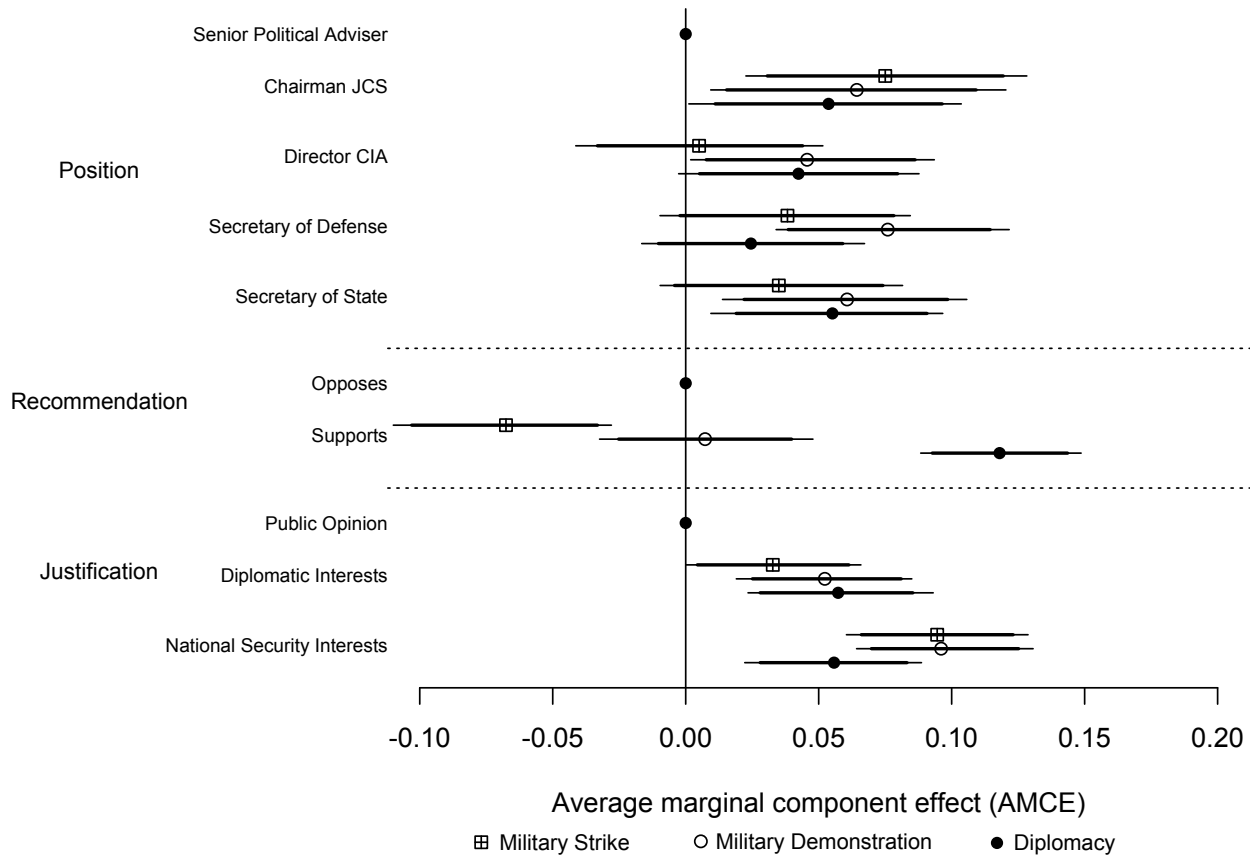
Figure 2: Recommendation AMCEs: Demographics



Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. The figure shows advisers' age and education have little effect on whether respondents support their recommendation.

and, if anything, appear *less* likely to agree with older advisers calling for military options. Similarly, formal education displays a relatively weak though positive effect: advisers with PhDs are less than 5% more likely to be seen as credible than advisers with a bachelors' degree.

Figure 3: Recommendation AMCEs: Position, Recommendation, and Justification



Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. The figure shows that regardless of who proposes the policy, recommendations in favor of diplomacy are always significantly more popular than recommendations for military strikes. Yet regardless of the scenario, all policy recommendations are more persuasive to the public when justified on the grounds of national security interests, or when coming from the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

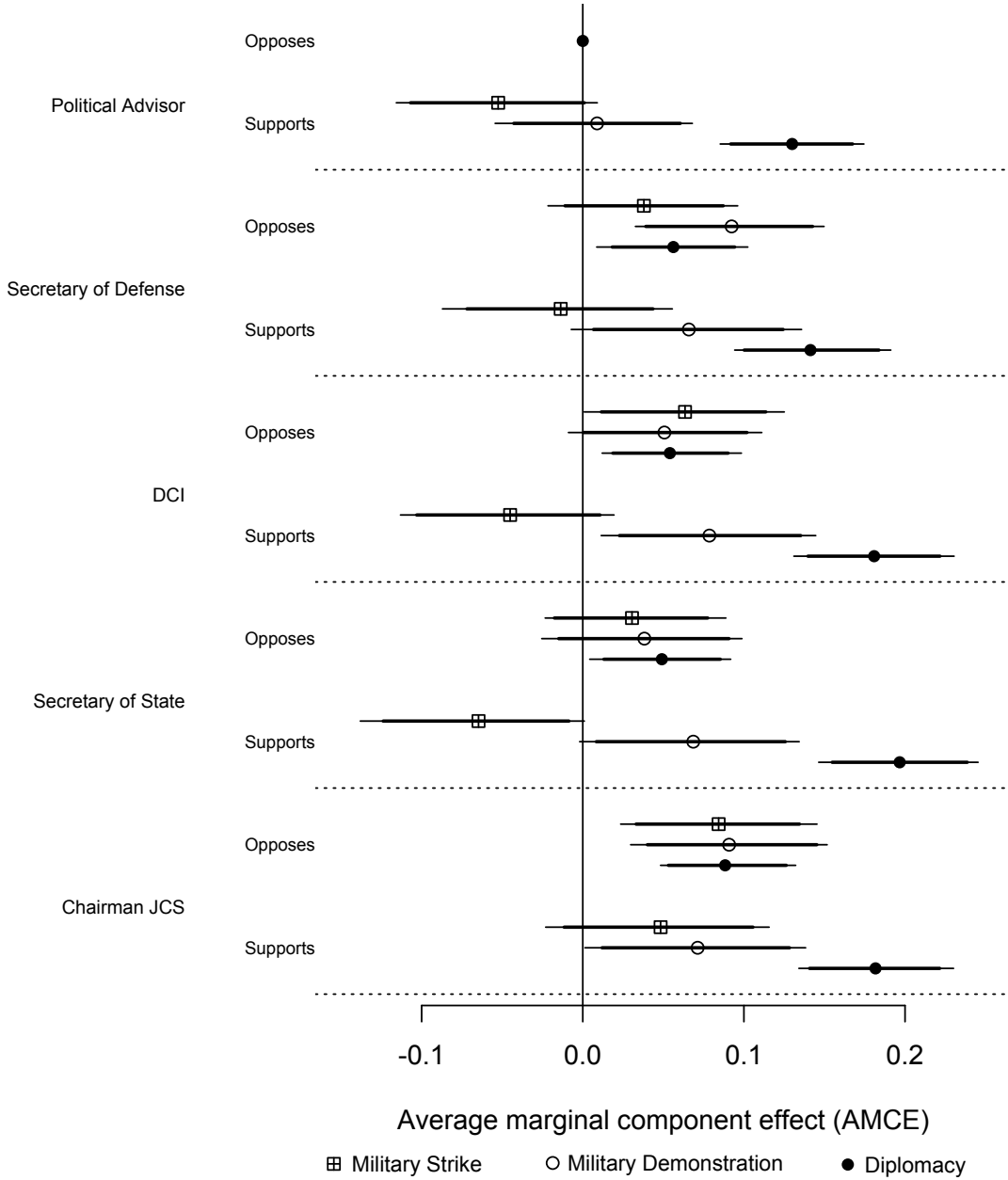
We see somewhat larger effects in Figure 3, which examines the average effects of advisers' position, recommendations, and justifications for their recommendation. Our largest effect comes from the policy recommendations themselves: respondents are significantly more supportive of recommendations for diplomatic activities, and significantly less supportive of military strikes, regardless of who was advocating on their behalf. In general, then, these

results are consistent with public opinion research showing that the public is less interested in costly uses of force (Jentleson, 1992), as well as with bottom-up theories of public opinion about foreign policy more generally, which argue publics have more stable preferences than purely top-down theories of public opinion might suggest (Kertzer and Zeitzoff, 2017). Consistent with the predictions of securitization theory (Buzan, Wæver and De Wilde, 1998), we also see that regardless of the scenario, all policy recommendations are more persuasive to the public when justified on the grounds of national security interests: policies justified on security interest grounds are up to 10% more likely to be endorsed than policies justified on the grounds of domestic political considerations, our reference category. Policies justified on the grounds of diplomatic interests are also more credible than those justified on domestic political grounds, but at a smaller effect size, of up to 5%.

We see similar effects in regard to advisers' positions themselves: regardless of whether the scenario is military or diplomatic in nature, policies endorsed by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are significantly more likely to be supported by our respondents compared to our reference category of senior political advisers; this is the only position that exerts a significant effect across all scenario types in our experiment. And, in general, consistent with our expectations, respondents tend to view foreign policy advisers as more credible cue-givers than partisan political advisers, although the pattern of results varies based on the scenario: the director of the CIA and Secretary of Defense are more credible than political advisers in regard to signaling resolve using a military demonstration, but not in exercising a military strike, while the Secretary of State is a more credible adviser both in regard to diplomatic efforts and military demonstrations.

The above analysis raises the possibility that certain types of recommendations are more persuasive when coming from certain types of advisers. Figure 4 tests this proposition directly. While all advisers are more likely to be deferred to when supporting a diplomatic effort, and the least likely to be deferred to when supporting a military strike, there is also considerable heterogeneity across positions. When the Secretary of State or Director of the

Figure 4: Recommendation AMCEs: Position x Recommendation x Scenario



Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. The figure re-estimates the quantities of interest from Figure 3, but interacted with one another, thereby letting the effect of recommendations vary based on the adviser and policy at hand. Thus, when the Secretary of State or Director of the CIA argue for military strikes, they are significantly less credible than when the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs does so.

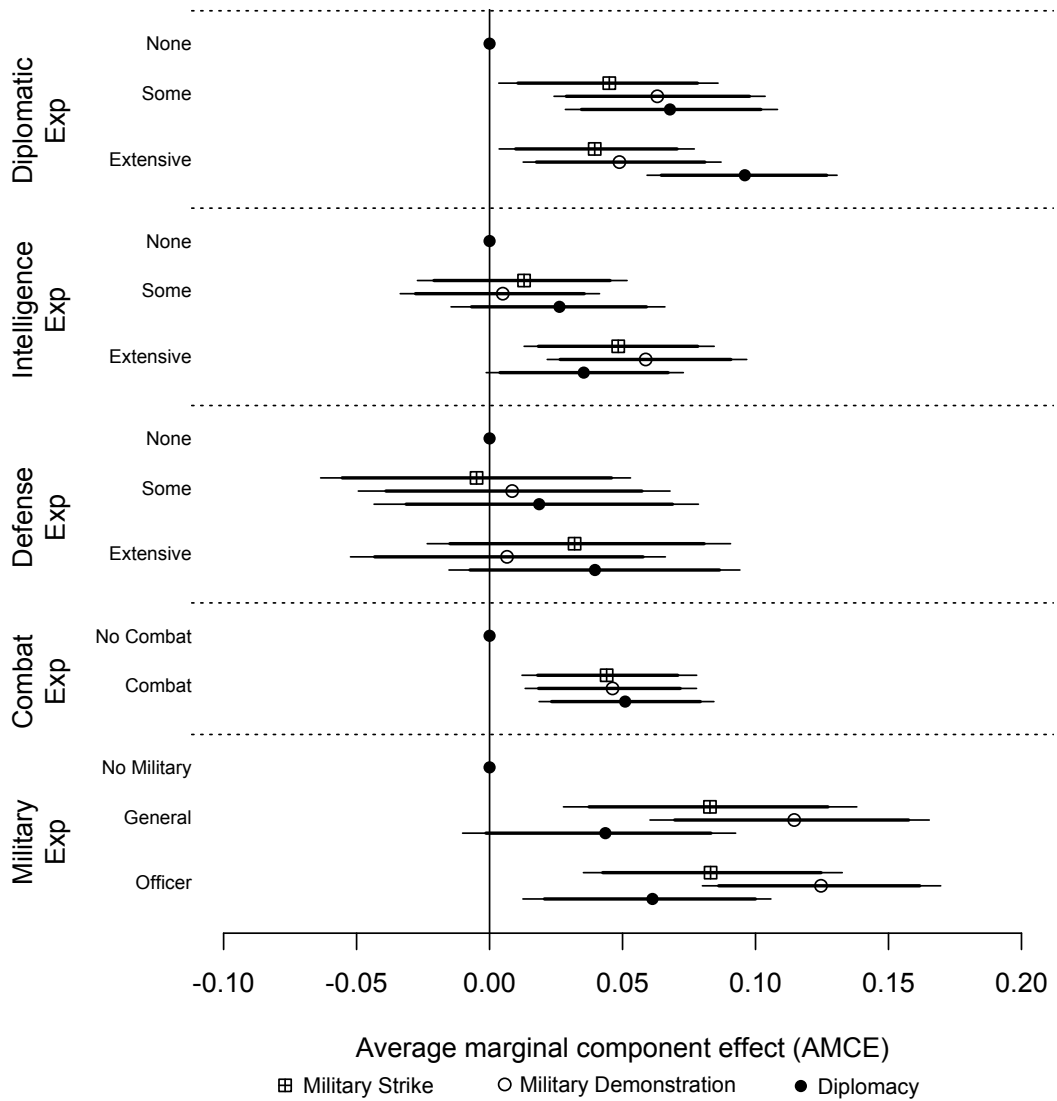
CIA argues for military strikes, they are seen as significantly less credible than when the Chairman of Joint Chiefs does so, for example. And, contrary to arguments about “against type” effects (Trager and Vavreck, 2011; Kreps, Saunders and Schultz, 2018; Mattes and Weeks, 2019), we find little evidence that advisers in traditionally hawkish positions are seen as more credible when they support dovish policies, and vice versa. Finally, like in Figure 3, Figure 4 shows that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs appears to have credibility advantages that the Secretary of Defense does not. One possibility is that this is because the former definitionally possesses military experience that the latter does not, a factor we turn to next.

Figure 5 turns to the effects of previous experience, which we operationalize in five different ways. The first three refer to the adviser’s level of prior experience (none, some, or extensive) in the diplomatic, intelligence, and defense communities, indicating the extent to which the adviser had previous experience in each of the three major foreign policy bureaucracies. The final two refer to combat experience and military rank (either no military service, achieved the rank of officer, or achieved the rank of general).¹³ Two points are noteworthy here. First, we present information about both military *and* combat experience, since not all individuals with military experience have seen active combat (Horowitz and Stam, 2014). Second, we randomize military experience and experience in the defense community separately: individuals can work in the Pentagon without being military officers, for example. This distinction lets us capture the variety of different ways in which military affiliations can manifest themselves on foreign policy advisory teams.

The plot shows in general, the public is more likely to defer to advisers with greater experience, but not all experience is created equal. Some types of experience have largely domain-specific effects: individuals with extensive diplomatic experience, for example, are more likely to be deferred to on diplomatic issues than individuals with extensive intelligence or defense experience, for example. Yet other types of experience seem to cross domains.

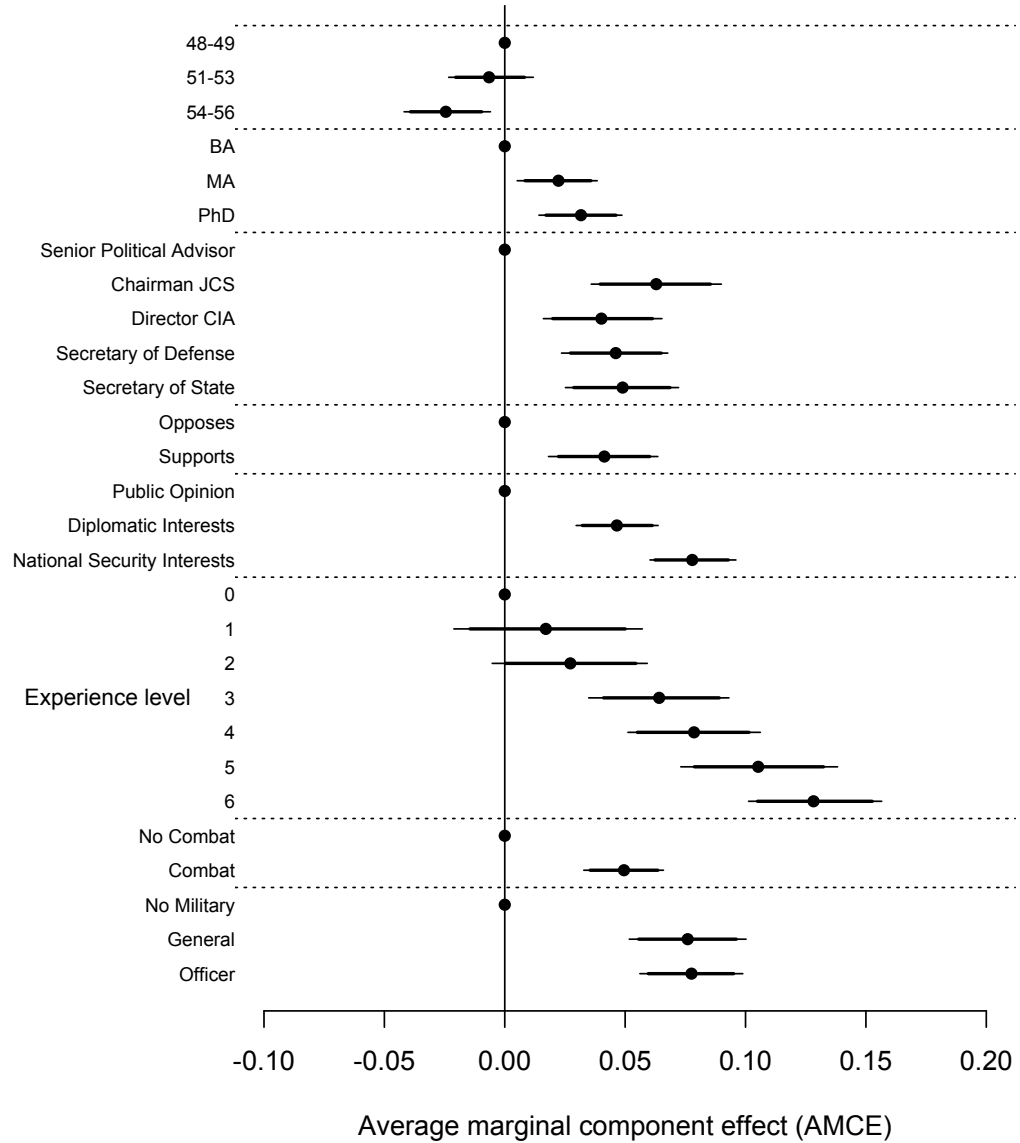
¹³Among individuals with military service, the experiment varied whether they had retired from the rank in question, or were still active, but to streamline the analysis below we group these factors together.

Figure 5: Recommendation AMCEs: Experience (I)



Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. The figure shows that the public is more likely to agree with recommendations offered by advisers with more experience, but not all experience is created equal. In particular, the public is significantly more likely to defer to advisers with combat and (especially) military experience, even on non-military issues.

Figure 6: Recommendation AMCEs: Experience (II)



Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. The figure shows the results for all of the study treatments, pooling across policy proposals. It also showcases the importance of experience, represented here with an additive score ranging from 0 (for an adviser with no previous experience in any of the three foreign policy bureaucracies) to 6 (for an adviser with extensive experience in all three).

Regardless of whether the policy proposal is diplomatic or military in scope, for example, Americans are more likely to defer to Americans with combat experience. And, the systematically largest effects belong to military service. While the public doesn't appear to differentiate between generals and military officers, advisers with military service are seen as significantly more credible, regardless of the policy under consideration.

Finally, Figure 6 depicts the effects of experience another way. Recall that for the types of bureaucratic experience in the dataset (in the diplomatic, intelligence, and defense communities), each adviser was randomly assigned to have either no, some, or extensive experience. We can therefore create an experience score, in which a respondent who has no experience in any of these three bureaucracies has a score of 0, a respondent who has some experience in one community has a score of 1, a respondent who has extensive experience in one community has a score of 2, and so on, producing an additive bureaucratic experience measure ranging from 0-6. Figure 6 presents the AMCEs for our experience score, along with the other factors in the experiment, pooling the results across the policy proposals for presentational purposes. The plot both reiterates the conclusions drawn from the previous results (demographic characteristics have relatively weak effects; foreign policy advisers are more credible cuegivers than political advisers, with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs the most credible of all; security justifications are more persuasive than justifications based on public opinion or diplomatic interests), while also showcasing the importance of experience. In particular, the experience score displays a strong linear effect: the more experience advisers have across different government bureaucracies, the more the public defers to their judgment. And, as before, even controlling for experience levels, individuals with military service are seen as significantly more credible than those without.

Experiment II: Appointments

If the first experiment investigates which types of policy advisers Americans are more likely to listen to on foreign policy issues, the second asks what types of individuals Americans want

to see fill those roles in the first place. The APPOINTMENTS experiment asked respondents to consider which types of individuals they preferred to serve as cabinet appointees responsible for advising the president and managing executive bureaucracies. As in the first experiment, respondents were directed to an introductory screen that told subjects that they would be presented with information about pairs of hypothetical candidates and asked to choose which they preferred. Respondents then proceeded to the first task, in which they were given 12 pieces of information, including the cabinet position the candidates were being considered for (either the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, or CIA Director), along with the candidates' demographic, partisan, and experiential characteristics. Table 3 provides a full list of treatment conditions and an example scenario is detailed in Table 4.

The overall structure of the experiment is similar to its predecessor (a choice-based conjoint, with eight rounds per respondent, randomization constraints to avoid implausible treatment combinations, order randomizations at the respondent-level, a weighted randomization structure to bolster statistical power, and so on). However, as Table 3 shows, the study also lets us randomize factors not manipulated in the previous experiment, such as the candidate's gender, partisanship, and reputation. The analysis below is based on 10504 choice tasks (each of which involved two randomly generated candidates, for 21008 candidates in total) from 1313 respondents.

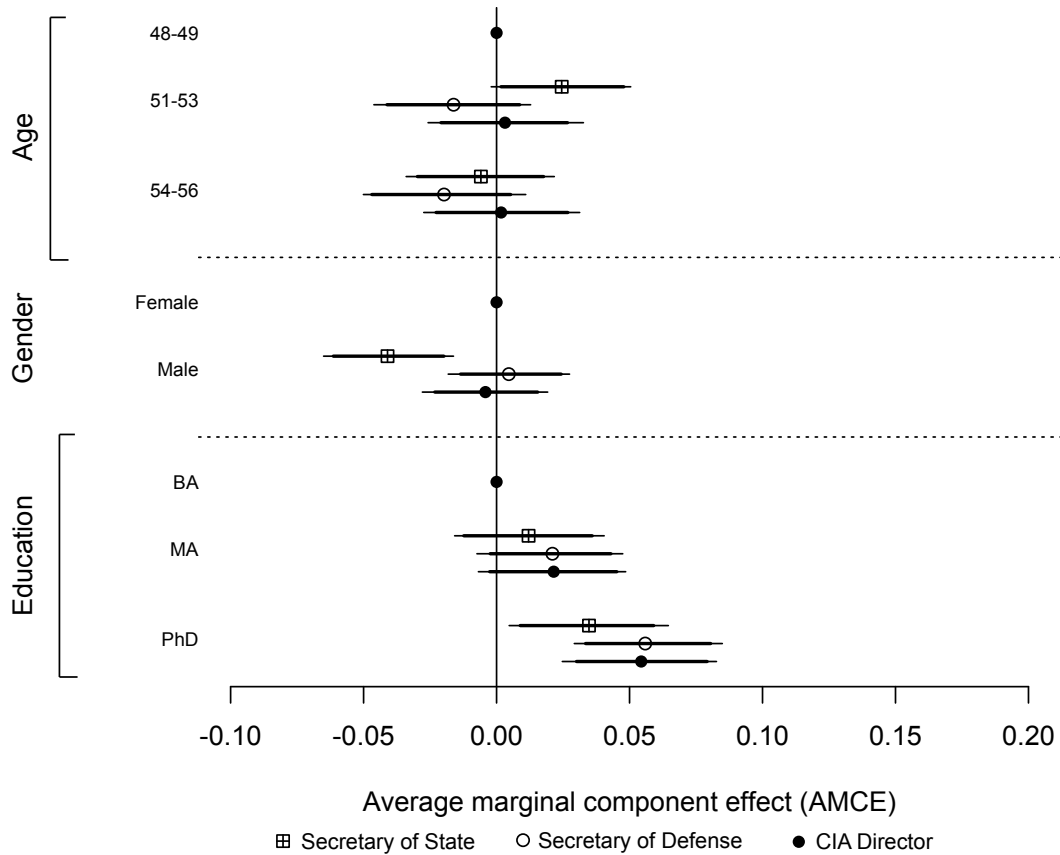
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As with the previous experiment, we begin by simply looking at the effects of basic demographics, in Figure 7. As in the recommendation experiment, the effects of demographics are relatively weak. Age exerts no significant effects, and there's some evidence that respondents slightly preferred female candidates for Secretary of State, but these variables are generally of less importance, especially when compared with some of the factors presented below. The strongest effects in Figure 7 belong to education: for all three positions, respondents significantly prefer candidates with a PhD to those with a BA.

(A) <i>Position</i>	The United States is considering appointing a new... (1) ...Secretary of State (2) ...Secretary of Defense (3) ...Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
(B) <i>Age</i>	48 to 56
(C) <i>Education</i>	(1) Bachelors Degree (2) Masters Degree (3) Doctorate Degree
(D) <i>Gender</i>	(1) He (2) She
(E) <i>Reputation</i>	...has a reputation for being... (1) ...an expert in his/her field (2) ...a loyal adviser
(F) <i>Party Affiliation</i>	(1) Independent... (2) Republican... (3) Democrat...
(G) <i>Administration Type</i>	...with prior experience... (1) ...under both Republican and Democratic administrations (2) ...under Republican administrations (3) ...under Democratic administrations
(H) <i>Prior Experience</i>	Primary experience is... (1) ...outside government... (2) ...inside government...
· <i>Diplomatic</i>	...with [level] diplomatic experience in the State Department... (1) none (2) some (3) extensive
· <i>Intelligence</i>	...with [level] intelligence experience in the CIA... (1) none (2) some (3) extensive
· <i>Defense</i>	...with [level] defense experience in the Defense Department... (1) none (2) some (3) extensive
(I) <i>Military Status</i>	(1) Retired general... (2) Retired military officer... (3) No prior military experience...
(J) <i>Combat Experience</i>	...with... (1) combat experience (2) no combat experience

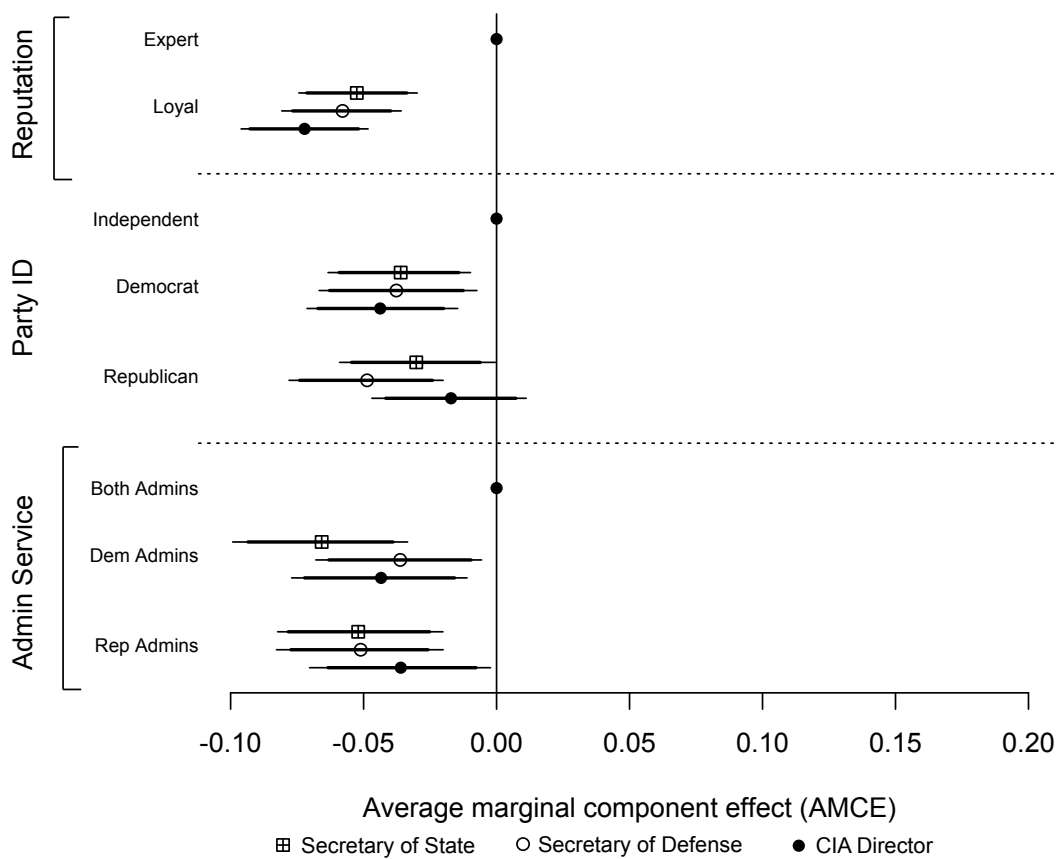
Table 3: Conjoint Study Treatments (Experiment II: APPOINTMENTS)

Figure 7: Appointment AMCEs: Demographics



Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. The figure shows candidates' age, gender and education have little effect on whether respondents support their appointment, although education's effect is positive and statistically significant.

Figure 8: Appointment AMCEs: Partisanship



Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. The figure shows that in the aggregate, Americans dislike signs of partisanship amongst appointees: they prefer candidates with reputations for expertise rather than for loyalty, prefer independents over Democrats or Republicans, and prefer candidates who have served under both parties.

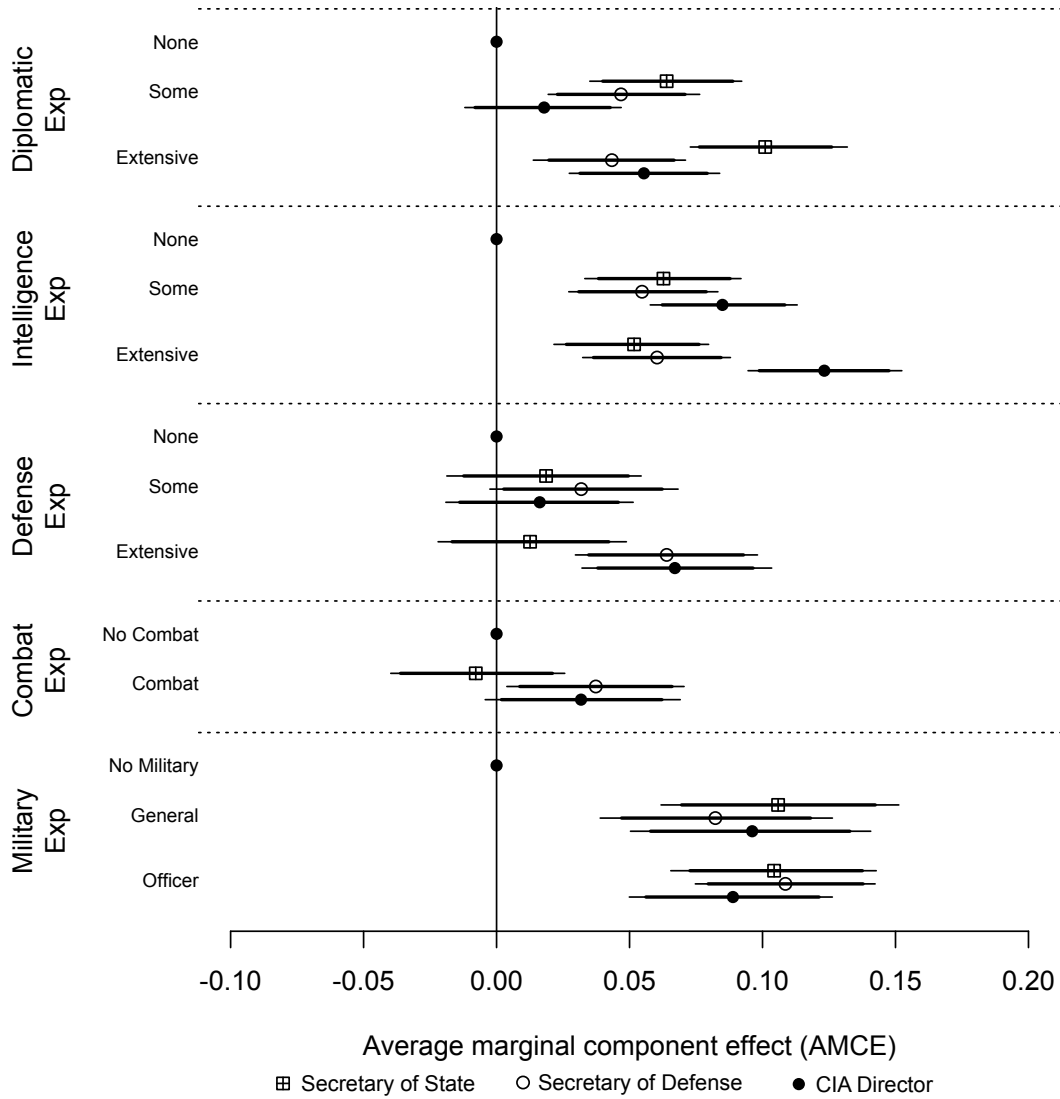
Figure 8 presents the results for considerations relating to partisanship. Regardless of whether Americans take cues from partisan elites, it is clear that in aggregate they feel less comfortable having partisan players in advisory positions. They prefer candidates with reputations for expertise over those with reputations for loyalty; they prefer independents over Democrats and Republicans, and they prefer candidates who have served under administrations of both parties. Two points are relevant here. First, as we show in Appendix §1.2, these results partially mask respondent-level heterogeneity: Republicans prefer Republican appointees, and Democrats prefer Democratic ones.¹⁴ Yet even here, Republicans do not significantly prefer candidates who served in Republican administrations, nor Democrats in Democratic ones. Second, since we control for candidates' age, and a variety of other measures of experience, we can assume that the preference for candidates who have served under both Republicans and Democrats indicates a genuine appreciation for bipartisanship, rather than an artifact of respondents assuming that candidates who served under both types of administrations have more experience under their belt.

Figure 9 turns to the effects of experience. We find, as in the previous experiment, that experience plays large and important roles in the types of appointees Americans prefer. Some of this experience is domain-specific: extensive intelligence experience is highly valued for potential CIA directors, and extensive diplomatic experience for potential Secretaries of State. But, as before, we see strong preferences for candidates with military experience, regardless of the position. And, as before, we see that it is military experience, rather than combat experience, that is the most consequential, and that the mere presence of military experience matters more than the rank attained.

Figure 10 replicates Figure 6, presenting additive experience scores (ranging from 0, for an adviser with no previous experience in any of the three foreign policy bureaucracies, to 6, for an adviser with extensive experience in all three) along with the AMCEs for all of the other

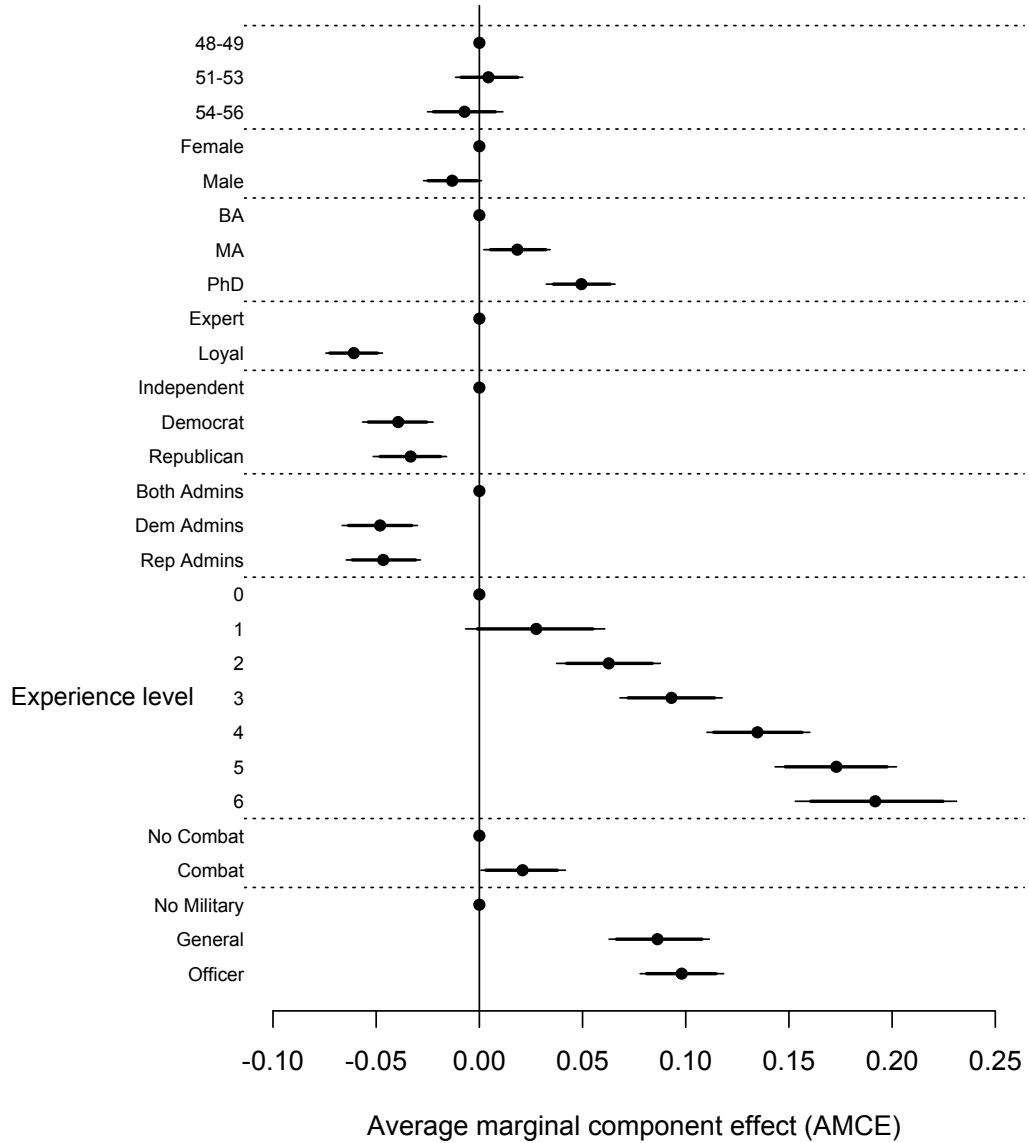
¹⁴The partisan preferences here are consistent with negative partisanship: it is less that Democrats have strong preferences for Democratic candidates, or Republicans have strong preferences for Republican candidates, than that Democrats are strongly opposed to Republican candidates and Republicans strongly opposed to Democratic candidates.

Figure 9: Appointment AMCEs: Experience (I)



Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. The figure shows that the public is more likely to want to appoint advisers with more experience, but not all experience is created equal. In particular, the public is significantly more likely to prefer advisers with military experience, even for non-military positions.

Figure 10: Appointment AMCEs: Experience (II)



Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. The figure shows the results for all of the study treatments, pooling across appointment types. It also showcases the importance of experience, represented here with an additive score ranging from 0 (for an adviser with no previous experience in any of the three foreign policy bureaucracies) to 6 (for an adviser with extensive experience in all three).

treatments in the experiment, pooling the results across appointment types for presentational purposes. The plot reiterates the conclusions drawn from the previous results (demographic characteristics have relatively weak effects; military experience has more important effects, Americans like advisers who show signs of expertise and bipartisanship, and so on), while once again showcasing the importance of experience. Just as in the previous experiment, the experience score displays a strong linear effect: the more experience advisers have across different government bureaucracies, the more the public prefers their appointment. And, as before, even controlling for experience levels, individuals with military service are given significantly more deference than those without.

Putting Deference to the Military in a Comparative Perspective

There are at least two potential interpretations for the experience results presented above. One is that Americans simply defer to experience in general, of which military experience is merely one type; the other is that Americans uniquely defer to military experience, due to the military’s higher social standing in the United States. To adjudicate between the two, we re-analyze the results from the appointments and recommendations experiments, but focusing on two new quantities of interest. The first has to do with the rate at which deference decays as one moves beyond the elite’s area of expertise: the extent, for example, to which Americans listen to military voices on non-military questions, compared to on military ones. We call this the *decay effect*. The second has to do with the expertise premium afforded to an elite in their own domain: the extent, for example, to which Americans listen to military voices on military questions more than they listen to non-military voices on those same questions. We call this the *expertise premium*.¹⁵ Calculating these quantities of interest

¹⁵More formally, let B_{ij} represent the average marginal component effect (AMCE) of expertise type $i = \{0, 1, \dots, N - 1\}$ in domain $j = \{0, 1, \dots, N - 1\}$; if $i = j$, it refers to the effect of in-domain expertise, whereas if $i \neq j$ it refers to the effect of out-domain expertise. In a world with $N = 2$ types of expertise, and two domains, the *decay effect* of expertise type $i = 1$ is $100(1 - \frac{B_{10}}{B_{11}})$, while the *expertise premium* of expertise type $i = 1$ is $100(\frac{B_{11}}{B_{01}})$. The decay effect therefore tells us how much less the public defers to a type of expert outside the expert’s domain, while the expertise premium tells us how much more the public defers to a type of expert inside their domain than they do other types of experts.

formally is useful because it allows us to put questions of deference in civil-military relations into a comparative perspective: if public deference to military experience extends beyond the battlefield, but no more than public deference to diplomats extends beyond summitry, for example, it leads us to a very different conclusion than if there is a difference in deference in regards to the two types of elites.

Table 5: Putting deference to military expertise in comparative perspective

	Appointments		Recommendations	
	Decay Effect (%)	Expertise Premium (%)	Decay Effect (%)	Expertise Premium (%)
Intelligence	54.67	68.19		
Diplomatic	50.74	26.58	40.99	7.34
Military (Officer)	11.09	111.19	38.92	132.72
Military (General)	-21.19	60.95	21.42	120.92

Note: the larger the decay effect, the *less* a type of experience is valued outside of its original domain. The larger the expertise premium, the *more* a type of experience is valued within its own domain than alternative forms of experience are. Both quantities are expressed as percentages.

The first two columns of Table 5 estimate these quantities for the appointments conjoint; the last two columns for the recommendations. The first column shows that deference to intelligence experience decays by nearly 55% once we move from appointing a director of the CIA to appointing candidates for other positions. Deference to diplomatic experience displays a similar decay effect, of nearly 51%. In contrast, military experience displays a decay effect of a much smaller magnitude: the public defers to appointees with experience as a military officer only 11% less outside of defense appointments; the deference decay effect for appointees with experience as a general is actually negative, such that the public refers to generals *more* in non-defense appointments! The second column demonstrates a similar asymmetry between military and diplomatic experience: Americans defer to diplomats only 27% more than non-diplomats on appointments for Secretary of State, whereas they defer to former military officers 111% more than individuals without military experience on appointments for Secretary of Defense. Decay effects are more consistent across experience

types in the recommendations experiment (though deference to recommendations from former generals decays only 21%), but the expertise premiums are even starker than in the appointments experiment. Recommendations from individuals with extensive diplomatic experience are deferred to only 7% more on diplomatic issues than recommendations from elites with military experience, whereas recommendations from former military officers are deferred to 133% more, and recommendations from former military generals are deferred to 121% more, on military issues than recommendations from elites with diplomatic experience are. In other words, military experience displays both a weaker decay effect and a stronger expertise premium; military experience is seen as traveling to other domains in a way that non-military forms of experience are not, consistent with our argument about the military's unique social standing within the United States.¹⁶

4 Conclusion

In the wake of the behavioral revolution in international relations (Hafner-Burton et al., 2017), the field is devoting increased attention not only to leaders (Horowitz and Stam, 2014; Colgan and Weeks, 2015) but also to their senior foreign policy advisers (Hafner-Burton, Hughes and Victor, 2013; Saunders, 2015). Yet, political scientists are only beginning to understand how advisers derive their political influence. While partisan cue theories suggest advisers should primarily gain their persuasive power through partisan affiliation, these theoretical frameworks offer few predictions for how individuals adjudicate information between co-partisans. Given that US presidents typically pick their foreign policy team from a party bench,¹⁷ as well as the rate at which elite disagreement leaks in the US system,

¹⁶Importantly, these results are unlikely to be the artifact of respondents presuming that individuals with military experience also have more diplomatic or intelligence experience, since our experiments control for multiple types of experience simultaneously.

¹⁷Of course, exceptions to this rule exist. For example, Robert Gates served as Secretary of Defense under both George W. Bush and Barack Obama. However, consistent with the results from the Appointments experiment, we note that one reason Gates may have been an appealing candidate for a Democratic administration was his career experience in the Central Intelligence Agency, serving under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

existing research yields few intuitions about how the public adjudicates between cues from dueling co-partisans.

Our study pushes this debate forward in four ways. First, we demonstrate how advisers are not equally persuasive — or, by extension, politically powerful. Even with similar informational advantages stemming from senior cabinet positions, experienced advisers are more persuasive than inexperienced counterparts. Secretaries of State and CIA Directors are differentiated by the credentials they bring with them to office. While perhaps an imminently intuitive finding, it nevertheless contradicts much of what has been traditionally posited about bureaucratic power (Bendor and Hammond, 1992), which often treats agents as fungible. Our study thus reconciles contradictory assumptions made between the study of public opinion and that of bureaucratic politics. Moreover, while our findings in part buttresses recent work by Saunders (2017) on how experience differentiates between presidents and advisers shape decision-making, our study puts a markedly different spin on the theoretical framework. For Saunders, the focus remains primarily on the ability to monitor agents, which increases with the *president's* prior experience. Our findings point to an additional causal mechanism: experienced advisers might simply be more influential because they are better equipped to persuade the public. In the court of public opinion, not all advisers are equal.

While our focus in this paper is patterns of deference to different types of foreign policy elites among the mass public rather than within elite circles, our finding has potential implications for the study of group decision-making as well: it may be that some advisers are better positioned to persuade the president than others. That is, Rex Tillerson's ability to “pull and haul” the decision-making process may be quite different from Hillary Clinton's. While more research is needed on how the distribution of experience in elite groups affects foreign policy outcomes, our findings suggest that scholars might begin to examine adviser backgrounds in ways parallel to scholarship on head of state experience. The social traits of elite groups may turn out to play an important role in how information and preferences are

aggregated. [Lupton \(2017\)](#) shows that members of congress with military experience have distinctive voting patterns; future research should explore whether they exercise influence on fellow legislators in systematically different ways.

Second, drawing attention to adviser characteristics contributes to our understanding of how the public forms foreign policy opinions, particularly in environments characteristics by in-party contestation. Existing scholarship posits that, faced with in-party fighting, the public shuts down and withdraws support. We show that the public is perhaps more discerning, even in a politicized environment. The public seems to have more heuristics for credibility in its toolkit than party affiliation alone.

Third, our study shows that the public values some types of prior experience more than others. This finding builds on groundbreaking scholarship on public deference toward the contemporary US military ([Kenwick and Maxey, 2018](#); [Golby and Karlin, 2018](#)), but shows that scope conditions posited in past work may in fact be too conservative: the public defers to military leaders in *multiple* foreign policy domains—not simply on whether or not to use military force. To our knowledge, this is the first study to empirically demonstrate that public deference extends beyond the battlefield. While our interest here was in studying these effects in the context of foreign policy questions — debates in which the cuegivers we study here are most likely to weigh in — future scholarship should examine whether the same patterns of deference also extend to domestic political issues.

Fourth, by situating this empirical finding in the broader literature on political behavior and institutional trust, we add theoretical clarity to why this deference occurs in the first place, shedding new light on debates about “democratic militarism” ([Caverley, 2014](#)). Despite all the institutional trappings of a democratic state, socially esteemed militaries are quite politically powerful; military influence does not end when the threat of coup dissipates. Many of the dynamics of civil-military relations emphasized by the recent literature ([Kohn, 1994](#); [Gronke and Feaver, 2001](#); [Golby et al., 2012](#); [Cohn, Coletta and Feaver, 2018](#)) may in fact have much in common with how other government institutions gain credibility and

power more generally. Future research might explore how much trust in the military mirrors other institutions, such as the US Supreme Court.

At the same time, while military influence over broader US foreign policy is striking, widening the analytical aperture to other senior advisory positions may temper concerns about military clout, in that our findings also demonstrate the public values voices with diplomatic and intelligence experience. On many policy issues, the public sees the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, and CIA Director as more credible than political advisers—even if the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff remains the most persuasive when recommending the use of military force. This finding suggests that the field’s focus on *military* advisers may in part obscure our understanding of public deference to foreign policy expertise writ large. More research is needed to understand public trust in diplomatic and intelligence organizations, leveraging intuitions from civil-military relations but connecting both to the study of bureaucracy and institutions (Allison, 1971; Carpenter and Krause, 2012).

Finally, our findings suggest that even in the era characterized by societal spurning of expertise (Kertzer and Zeitzoff, 2017), the public has not completely lost confidence in the foreign policy establishment. Congruent with Guisinger and Saunders (2017), the public seems to listen to more experienced and more expert voices in forming foreign policy opinions—and prefers that the president similarly stack the cabinet with experts as opposed to political loyalists.

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University Press.

ARMIES AND INFLUENCE
Supplementary Appendix
September 24, 2019

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1 Supplementary analysis

1.1 Robustness checks

As [Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto \(2014\)](#) note, conjoint experiments rely a number of assumptions, all of which can be subject to direct empirical testing. The first is the stability and carryover effects assumption, which holds that potential outcomes remain stable across experimental rounds. This is also a valuable diagnostic for demand effects, as would be the case if participants changed their behavior over the course of the study as they became more familiar with the study's purpose. [Figure 1](#) shows the results of the stability and carryover effects assumption for the recommendations and appointments conjoints (panels (a) and (b), respectively), showing that the results remain largely consistent across rounds: it is not the case, for example, that considerations that receive a large amount of weight in the first round of the experiment are no longer seen as important by the last round.

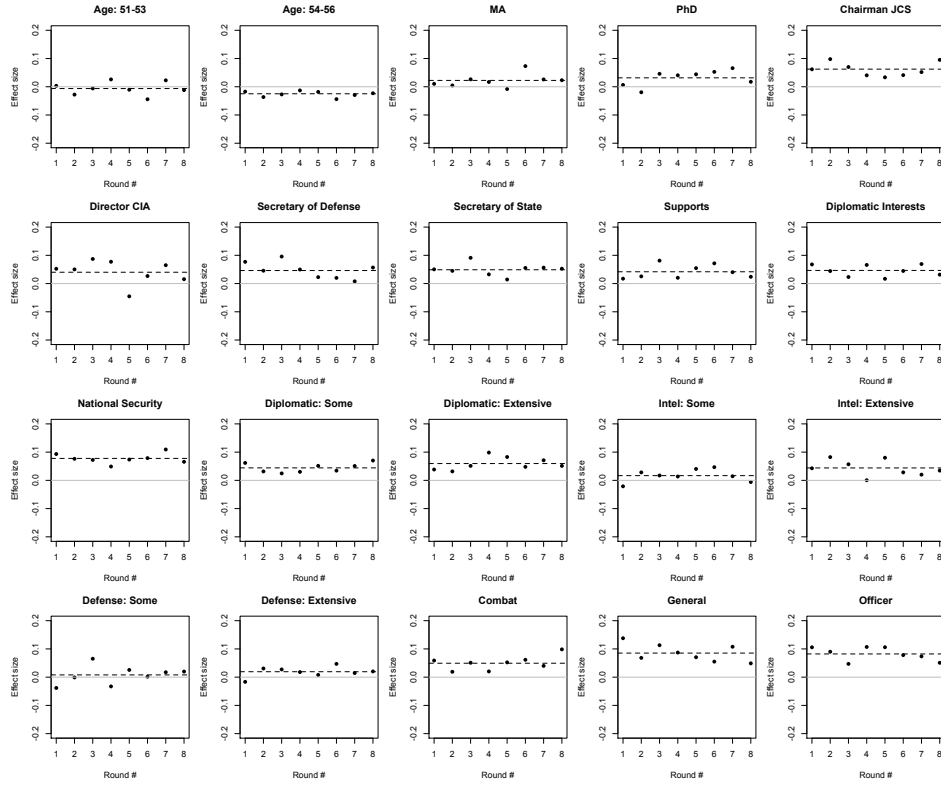
Second is the no profile order assumption, which holds that respondents' choices are not a function of the order in which the two profiles are presented within each pairing (in the recommendations experiment, whether the recommendation is offered by adviser A rather than adviser B; in the appointments experiment, where the candidate is appointee A or appointee B). [Figure 2](#) visualizes the diagnostic results; panel (a) presents the results for the recommendations conjoint, and panel (b) for the appointments conjoint. Although some results differ slightly (the partisanship of the recommender appears to matter more when coming from adviser A rather than from adviser B, for example), there do not appear to be any systematic differences.

Third is the attribute order assumption, which tests whether effect sizes are a function of the order in which the characteristics were presented to respondents, which we visualize in [Figures 3 - 4](#).

Next, [Tables 1-2](#) present the results from the randomization checks, showing that randomization was successful. Finally, it is worth noting that as [Abramson, Koçak and Magazinnik \(2019\)](#) note, because the AMCE as a quantity of interest averages over both the direction and intensity of preferences, the results reported in the main text should not be interpreted as predictions about the behavior of the median voter; for this reason, the main text explicitly avoids making reference to electoral contests or precepts from social choice theory.

Figure 1: Stability and carryover effects

(a) Recommendations conjoint



(b) Appointments conjoint

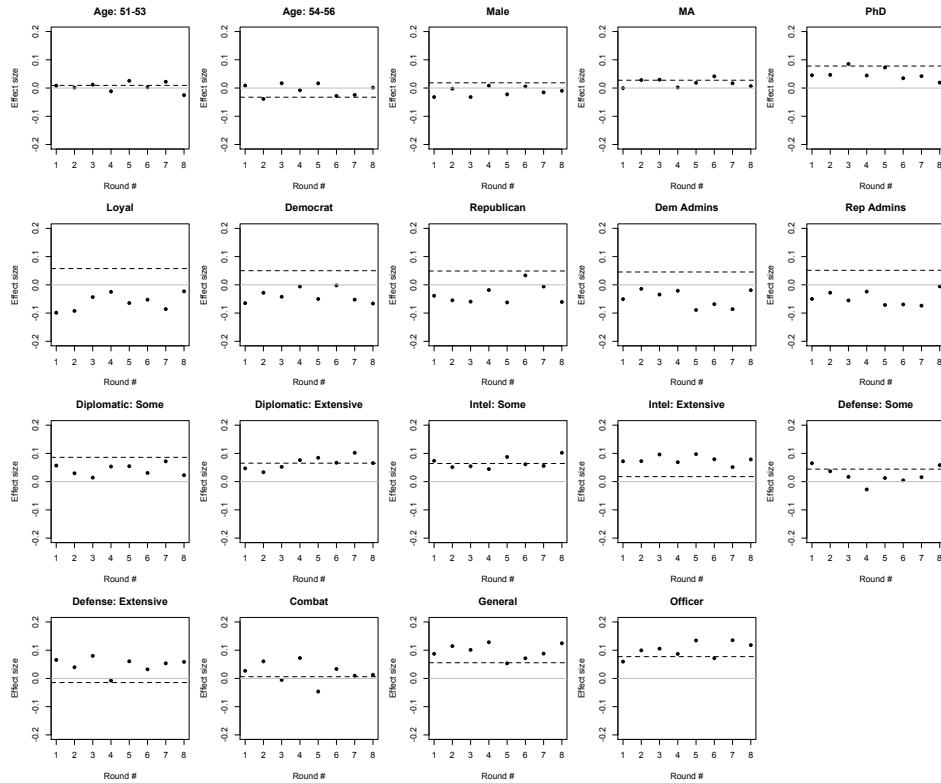
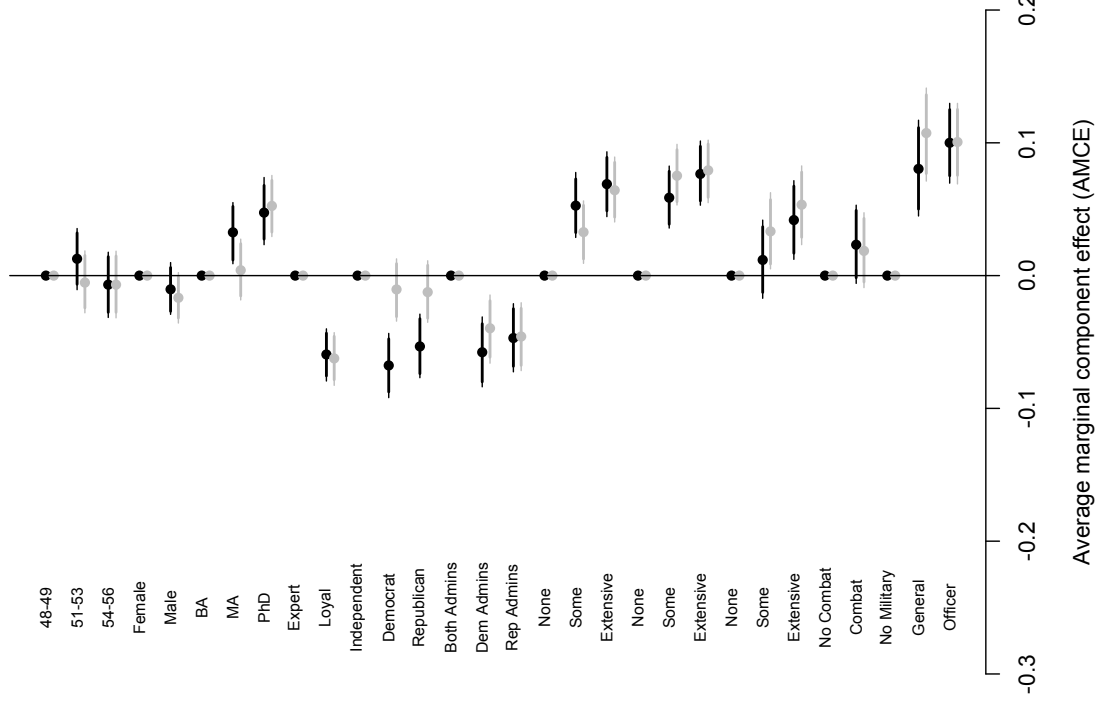
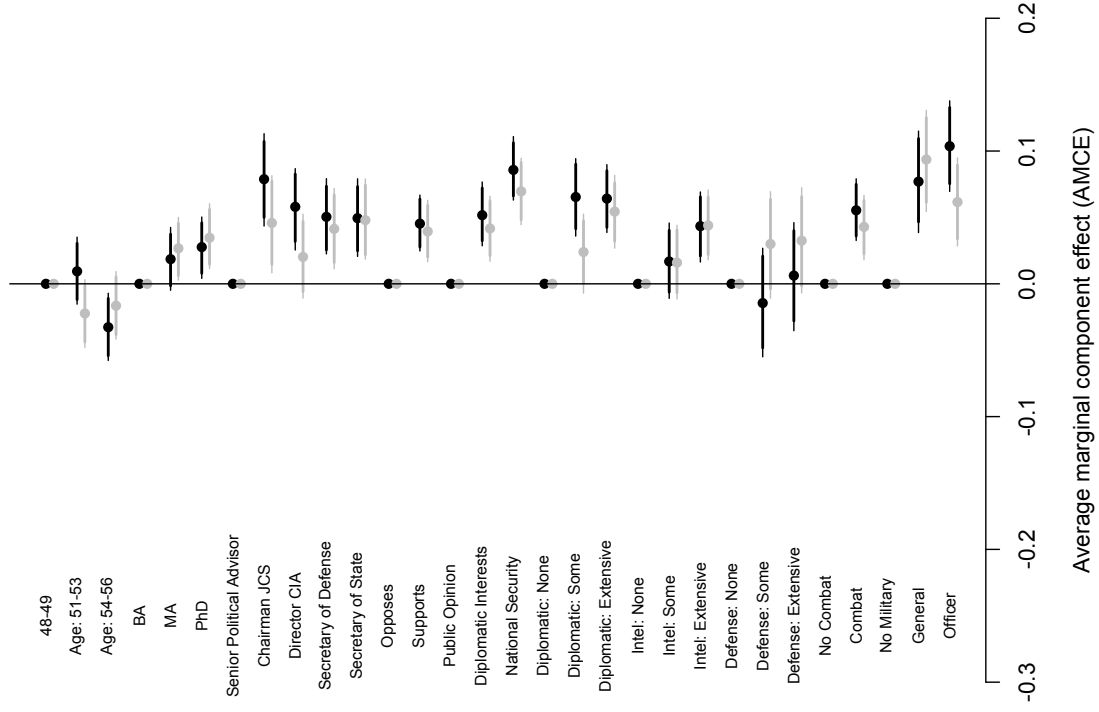


Figure 2: Profile order tests

(a) Recommendations conjoint



(b) Appointments conjoint



Note: In panel (a), adviser A in black and adviser B in grey; in panel (b), appointee A in black and appointee B in grey.

Table 1: Randomization check: recommendations conjoint

	Age (51-53)	Age (54-56)	Education (MA)	Education (PhD)	Position (CJCS)
(Intercept)	[0.332, 0.651]	[0.235, 0.542]	[-0.224, 0.094]	[-0.206, 0.104]	[-0.17, 0.199]
Male	[-0.068, 0.085]	[-0.064, 0.085]	[-0.005, 0.141]	[-0.034, 0.109]	[-0.119, 0.041]
Age	[-0.004, 0.001]	[-0.002, 0.003]	[-0.001, 0.003]	[-0.001, 0.004]	[-0.002, 0.003]
Education	[-0.225, 0.044]	[-0.206, 0.065]	[-0.152, 0.102]	[-0.101, 0.153]	[-0.161, 0.131]
Party ID	[-0.047, 0.192]	[-0.021, 0.214]	[-0.115, 0.112]	[-0.207, 0.018]	[-0.175, 0.068]
Media	[-0.131, 0.108]	[-0.128, 0.115]	[-0.156, 0.073]	[-0.195, 0.039]	[-0.09, 0.151]
	Position (DCI)	Position (SecDef)	Position (SecState)	Diplomatic Just.	Nat. Security Just.
(Intercept)	[-0.09, 0.22]	[-0.158, 0.197]	[-0.118, 0.217]	[-0.13, 0.172]	[-0.111, 0.202]
Male	[-0.071, 0.089]	[-0.116, 0.061]	[-0.074, 0.086]	[-0.078, 0.066]	[-0.042, 0.107]
Age	[-0.003, 0.002]	[-0.001, 0.004]	[-0.002, 0.003]	[-0.005, 0]	[-0.003, 0.001]
Education	[-0.172, 0.105]	[-0.25, 0.038]	[-0.24, 0.05]	[-0.011, 0.227]	[-0.169, 0.087]
Party ID	[-0.196, 0.041]	[-0.216, 0.044]	[-0.211, 0.03]	[-0.094, 0.136]	[-0.048, 0.182]
Media	[-0.082, 0.171]	[-0.092, 0.168]	[-0.04, 0.221]	[-0.108, 0.112]	[-0.163, 0.071]
	Diplomatic: Some	Diplomatic: Extensive	Intel: Some	Intel: Extensive	Defense: Some
(Intercept)	[-0.596, -0.255]	[0.223, 0.518]	[-0.577, -0.205]	[0.193, 0.515]	[-0.255, 0.183]
Male	[-0.056, 0.123]	[-0.088, 0.057]	[-0.03, 0.135]	[-0.101, 0.038]	[-0.096, 0.119]
Age	[-0.001, 0.004]	[-0.002, 0.002]	[-0.002, 0.003]	[-0.003, 0.002]	[-0.005, 0.001]
Education	[-0.036, 0.26]	[-0.047, 0.198]	[-0.072, 0.207]	[-0.12, 0.13]	[-0.258, 0.102]
Party ID	[-0.182, 0.056]	[-0.08, 0.131]	[-0.207, 0.038]	[-0.1, 0.124]	[-0.127, 0.173]
Media	[-0.189, 0.062]	[-0.171, 0.061]	[-0.138, 0.121]	[-0.069, 0.162]	[-0.076, 0.238]
	Defense: Extensive	Combat	Officer	General	
(Intercept)	[1.019, 1.37]	[-0.73, -0.487]	[-0.016, 0.259]	[-0.32, -0.003]	
Male	[-0.092, 0.067]	[-0.08, 0.05]	[-0.111, 0.023]	[-0.096, 0.056]	
Age	[-0.002, 0.003]	[-0.004, 0]	[-0.002, 0.003]	[-0.002, 0.003]	
Education	[-0.122, 0.147]	[-0.137, 0.085]	[-0.069, 0.169]	[-0.114, 0.145]	
Party ID	[-0.077, 0.161]	[0.005, 0.203]	[0.026, 0.23]	[-0.027, 0.205]	
Media	[-0.085, 0.168]	[-0.068, 0.132]	[-0.136, 0.081]	[-0.16, 0.081]	

Table 2: Randomization check: appointments conjoint

	Age (51-53)	Age (54-56)	Male	Education (MA)	Education (PhD)
(Intercept)	[0.17, 0.499]	[0.258, 0.593]	[-0.077, 0.169]	[-0.21, 0.102]	[-0.223, 0.117]
Male	[-0.05, 0.103]	[-0.068, 0.078]	[-0.078, 0.033]	[-0.098, 0.047]	[-0.088, 0.063]
Age	[-0.001, 0.003]	[-0.002, 0.003]	[-0.002, 0.002]	[-0.003, 0.002]	[-0.002, 0.003]
Education	[-0.124, 0.144]	[-0.218, 0.067]	[-0.144, 0.06]	[-0.095, 0.149]	[-0.121, 0.127]
Party ID	[-0.074, 0.141]	[-0.135, 0.097]	[-0.076, 0.093]	[-0.075, 0.132]	[-0.166, 0.039]
Media	[-0.152, 0.084]	[-0.117, 0.117]	[-0.082, 0.099]	[0.015, 0.23]	[-0.063, 0.155]
	Expert	Democrat	Republican	Dem Admin	Rep Admin
(Intercept)	[-0.167, 0.079]	[-0.023, 0.305]	[-0.102, 0.191]	[-0.703, -0.38]	[-0.805, -0.491]
Male	[-0.07, 0.046]	[-0.107, 0.035]	[-0.084, 0.061]	[-0.044, 0.102]	[-0.095, 0.049]
Age	[-0.002, 0.001]	[-0.003, 0.001]	[-0.003, 0.001]	[-0.003, 0.002]	[0, 0.004]
Education	[0.01, 0.208]	[-0.155, 0.091]	[-0.083, 0.173]	[-0.145, 0.097]	[-0.11, 0.136]
Party ID	[-0.023, 0.138]	[-0.119, 0.079]	[-0.097, 0.123]	[-0.152, 0.065]	[-0.183, 0.026]
Media	[-0.105, 0.075]	[-0.155, 0.069]	[-0.117, 0.077]	[-0.116, 0.093]	[-0.086, 0.124]
	Diplomatic: Some	Diplomatic: Extensive	Intel: Some	Intel: Extensive	Defense: Some
(Intercept)	[-0.431, -0.12]	[-0.372, -0.058]	[-0.494, -0.18]	[-0.444, -0.137]	[-0.004, 0.359]
Male	[-0.129, 0.005]	[-0.115, 0.02]	[-0.129, 0.006]	[-0.099, 0.034]	[-0.106, 0.057]
Age	[-0.003, 0.001]	[-0.003, 0.002]	[-0.003, 0.001]	[-0.002, 0.003]	[-0.004, 0.001]
Education	[-0.236, 0.01]	[-0.117, 0.134]	[-0.132, 0.125]	[-0.134, 0.106]	[-0.17, 0.118]
Party ID	[0.041, 0.246]	[-0.035, 0.179]	[-0.088, 0.109]	[-0.134, 0.068]	[-0.123, 0.109]
Media	[-0.052, 0.162]	[-0.114, 0.081]	[-0.094, 0.147]	[-0.125, 0.079]	[-0.178, 0.06]
	Defense: Experience	Combat	Officer	General	
(Intercept)	[0.428, 0.751]	[-1.375, -1.059]	[-1.242, -0.912]	[-1.034, -0.723]	
Male	[-0.122, 0.013]	[-0.081, 0.06]	[-0.082, 0.072]	[-0.122, 0.014]	
Age	[-0.003, 0.001]	[-0.003, 0.001]	[-0.001, 0.004]	[-0.002, 0.002]	
Education	[-0.194, 0.055]	[-0.098, 0.163]	[-0.181, 0.081]	[-0.033, 0.22]	
Party ID	[-0.042, 0.161]	[-0.127, 0.081]	[-0.049, 0.175]	[-0.065, 0.142]	
Media	[-0.088, 0.119]	[-0.154, 0.047]	[-0.097, 0.119]	[-0.163, 0.042]	

Figure 3: Attribute order tests: recommendations conjoint

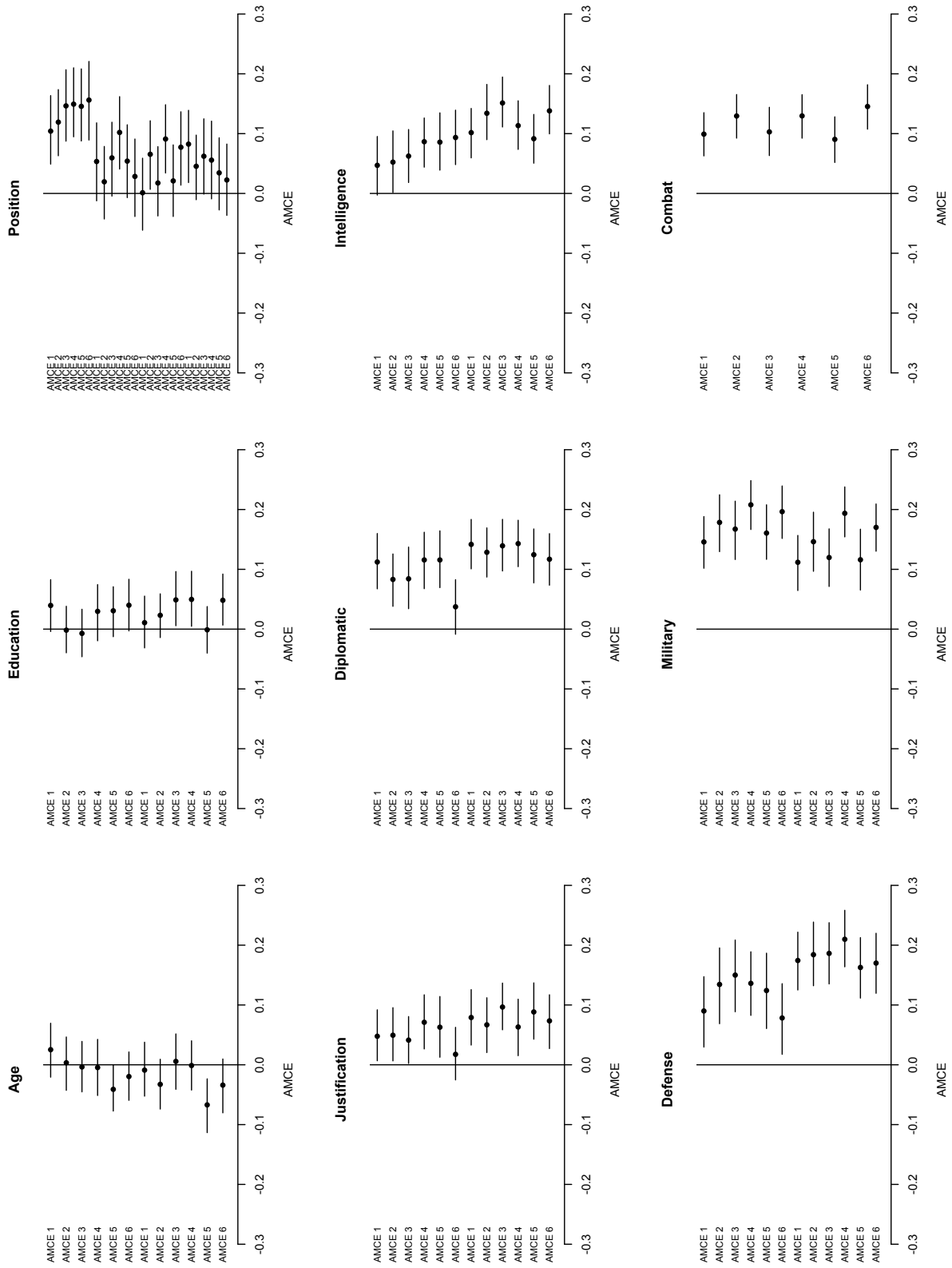
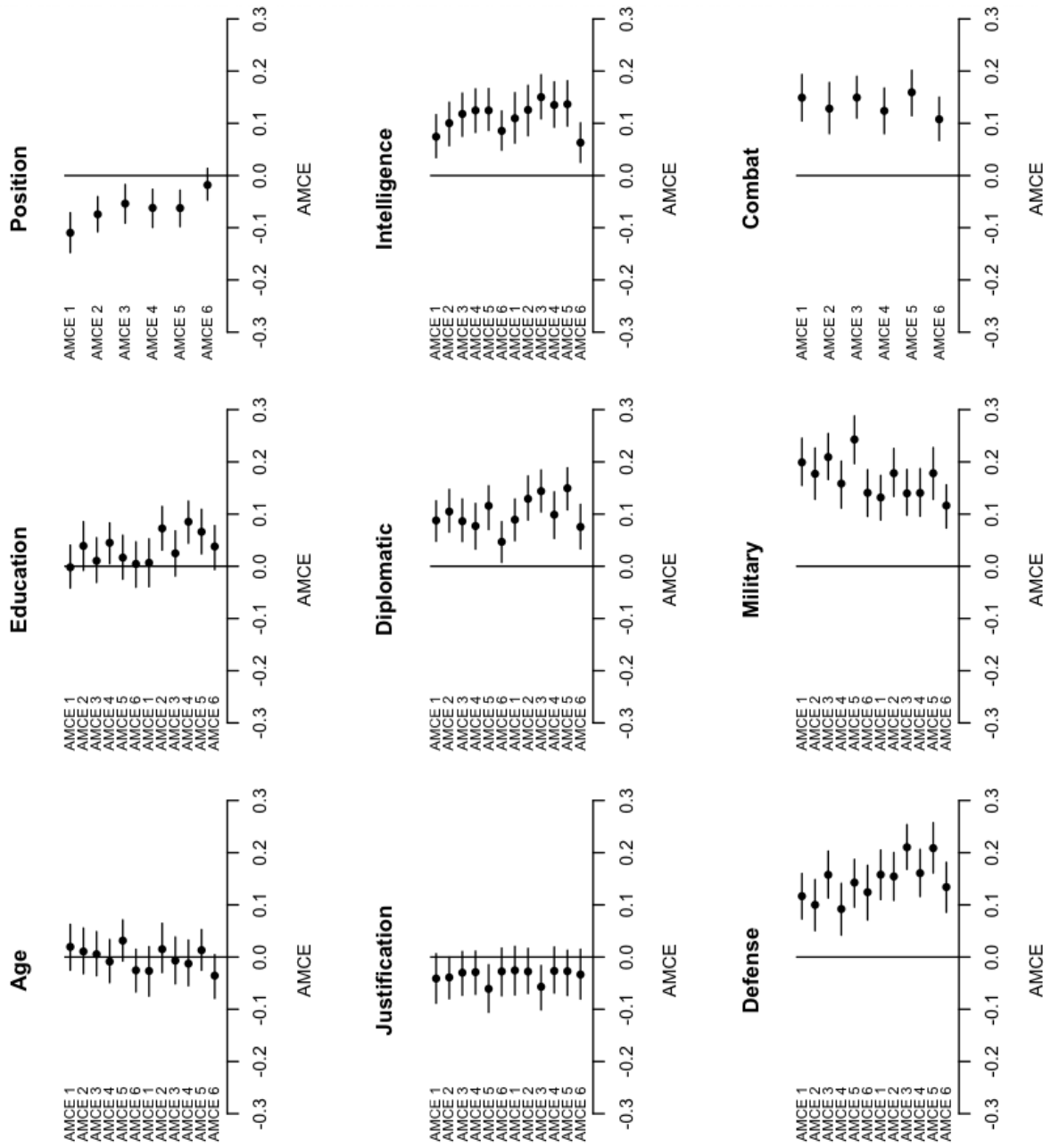
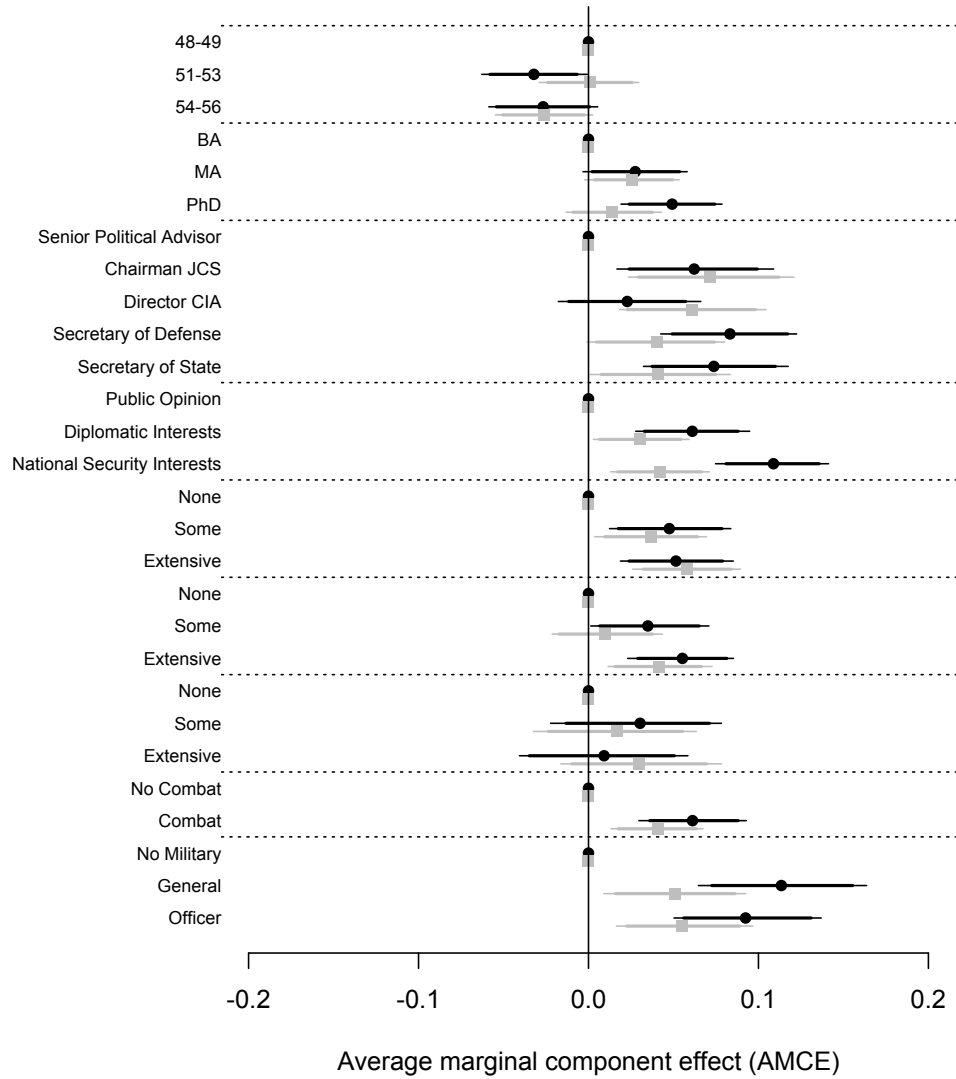


Figure 4: Attribute order tests: appointments conjoint



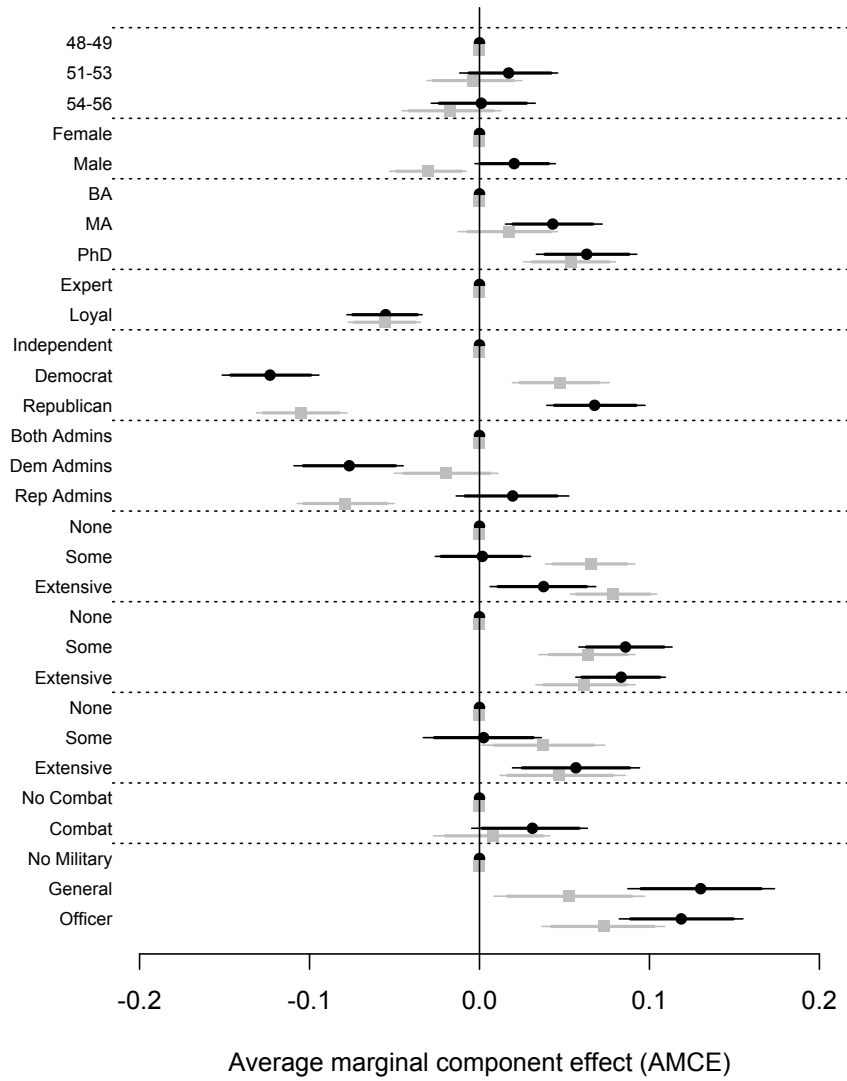
1.2 Estimated heterogeneous treatment effects

Figure 5: Recommendation AMCEs: Results by Party ID



Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. Results for Republicans are presented in black, and Democrats in gray. The results show Republicans are especially persuaded by national security justifications, and give additional deference to military experience, but these effects are also positive and significant among Democrats

Figure 6: Appointment AMCEs: Results by Party ID



Note: Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) presented with clustered bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. Results for Republicans are presented in black, and Democrats in gray.

Figure 7: Recommendation Marginal Means: Results by Party ID

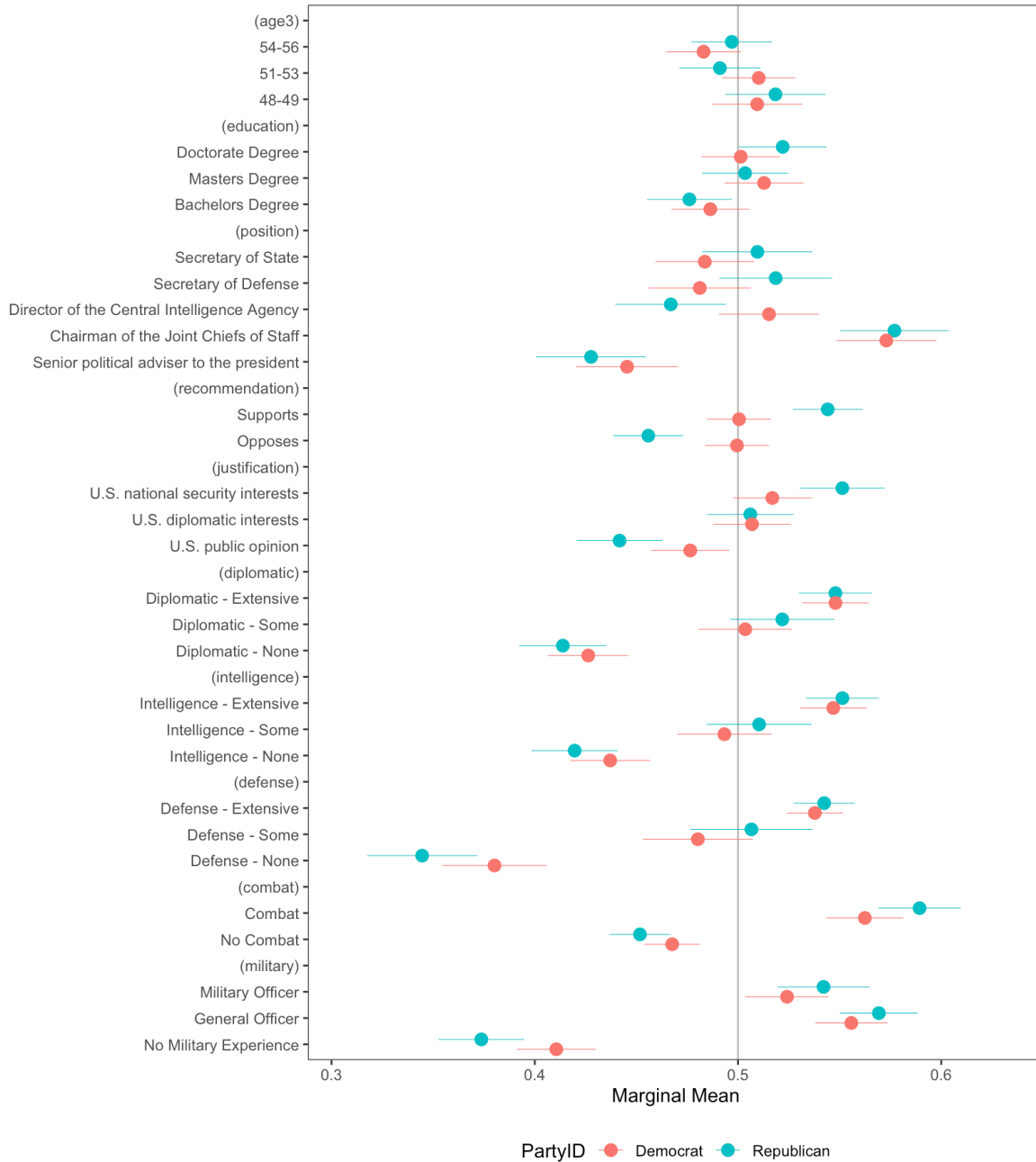
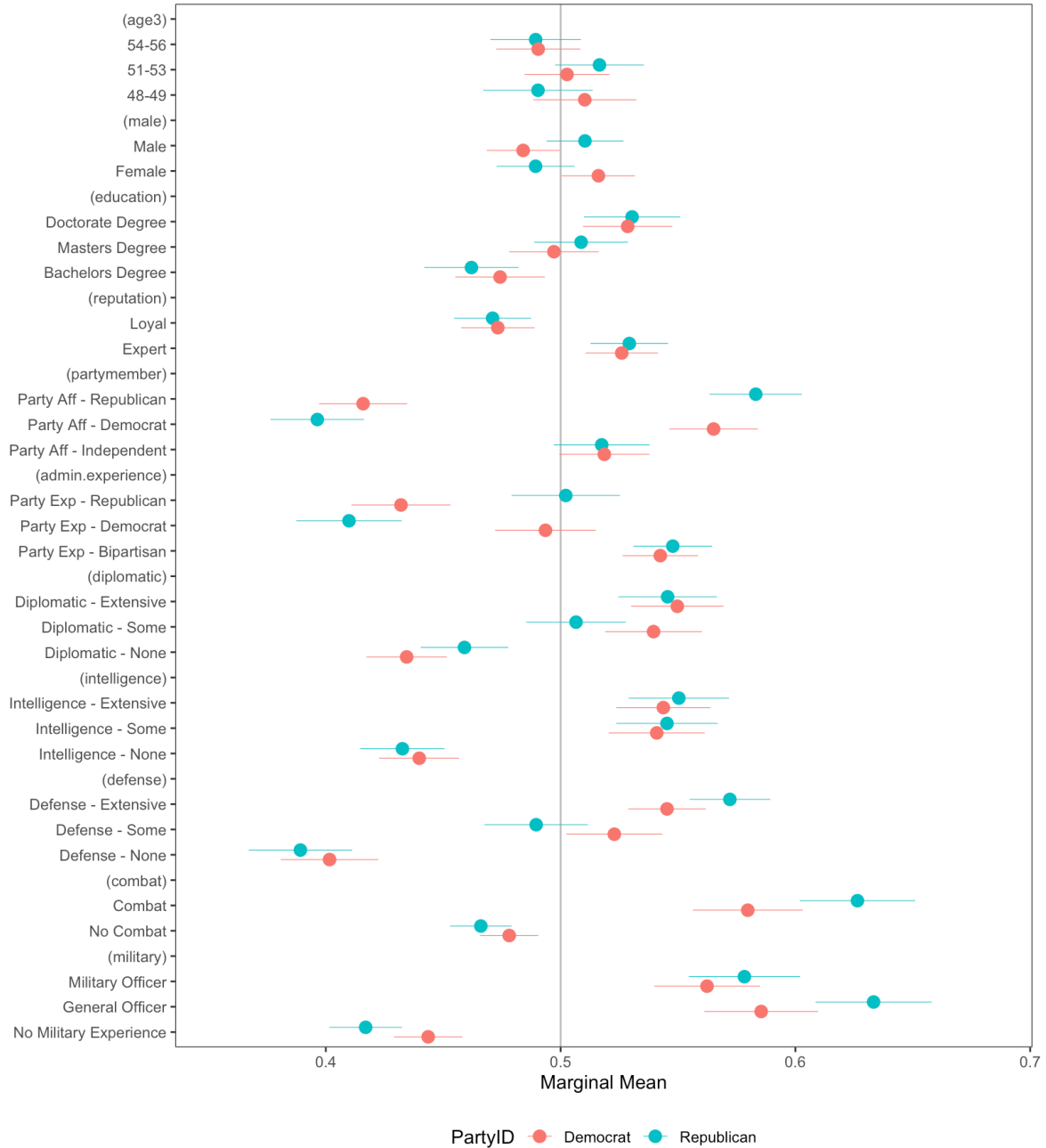


Figure 8: Appointment Marginal Means: Results by Party ID



1.3 Marginal mean results

While we present average marginal component effects (AMCEs) as our main quantity of interest in the main text, following [Leeper, Hobolt and Tilley \(2019\)](#), we also present the same results as marginal means, in [Figures 9 and 10](#) below. The interpretation of the marginal mean results are substantively similar to the AMCEs reported in the main text. The exception are for those treatments where there are randomization constraints (as listed in [Appendix §5](#)): for example, defense experience has a much larger effect in [Figures 9 and 10](#) than in the main text, because all military generals had extensive defense experience, and all military officers had at least some defense experience; once you estimate the effects of both sets of treatments simultaneously, it becomes clear that military experience, rather than defense experience, is doing the work.

Figure 9: Recommendations Conjoint: Marginal Means

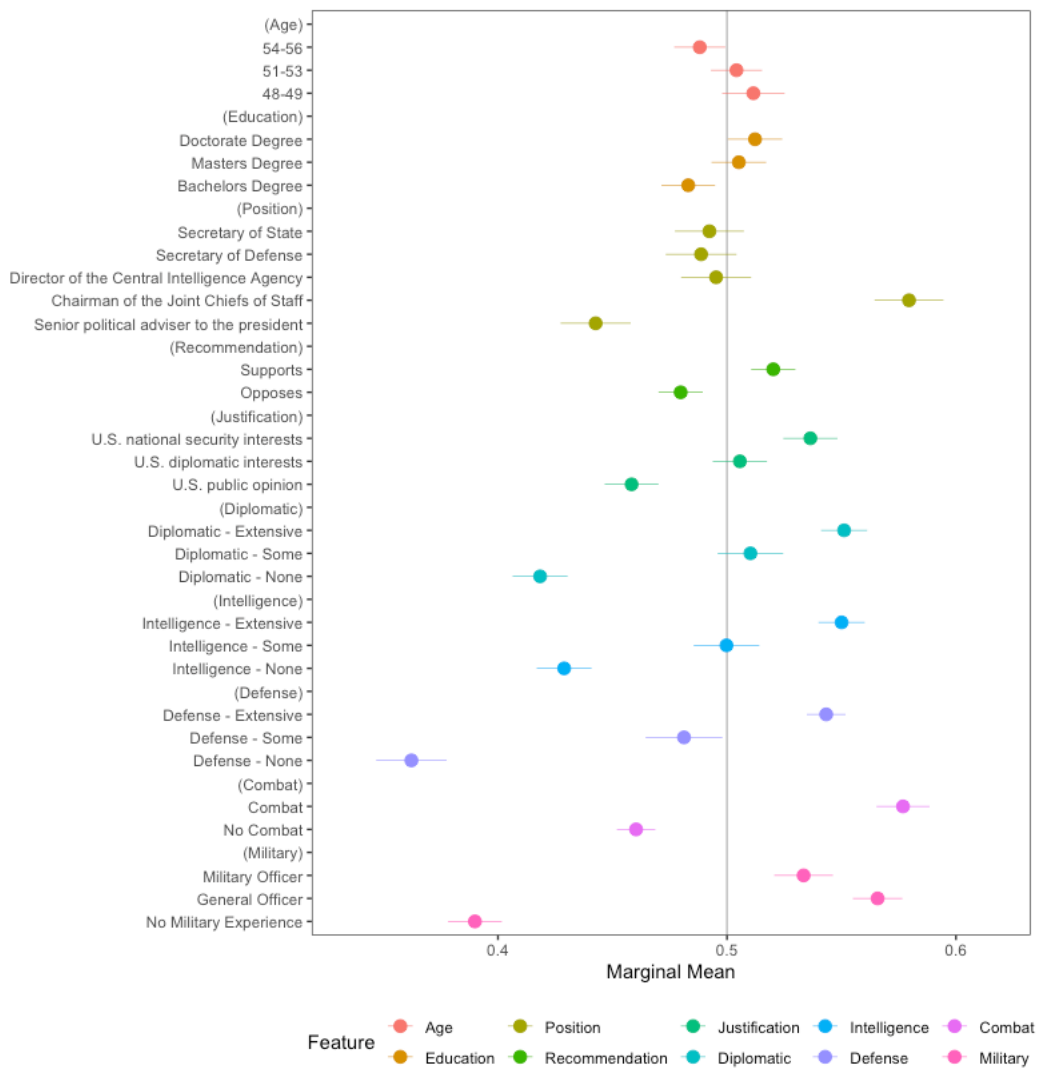
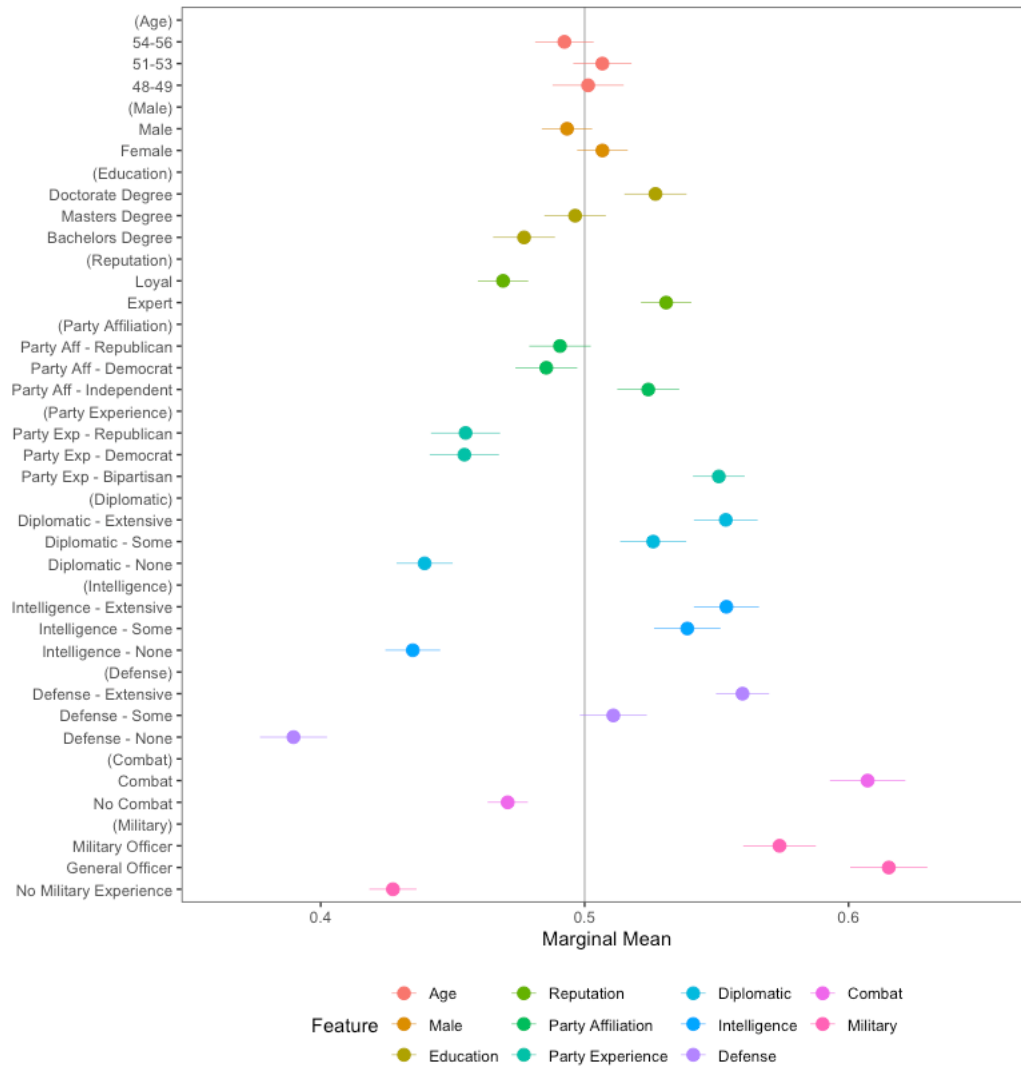


Figure 10: Appointments Conjoint: Marginal Means



1.4 Disaggregating recommendation scenarios

Figure 11: Recommendation AMCEs (I)

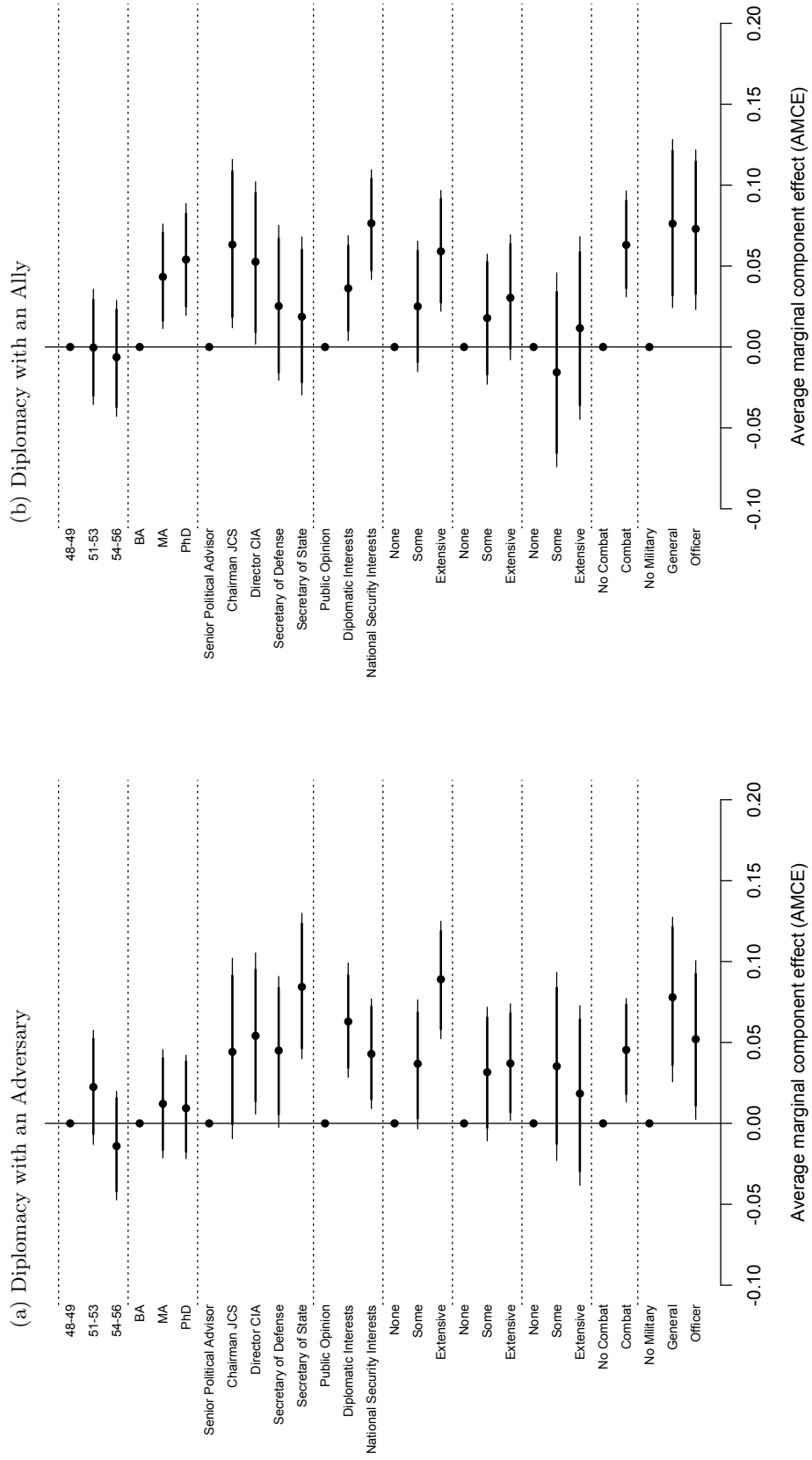


Figure 12: Recommendation AMCEs (II)

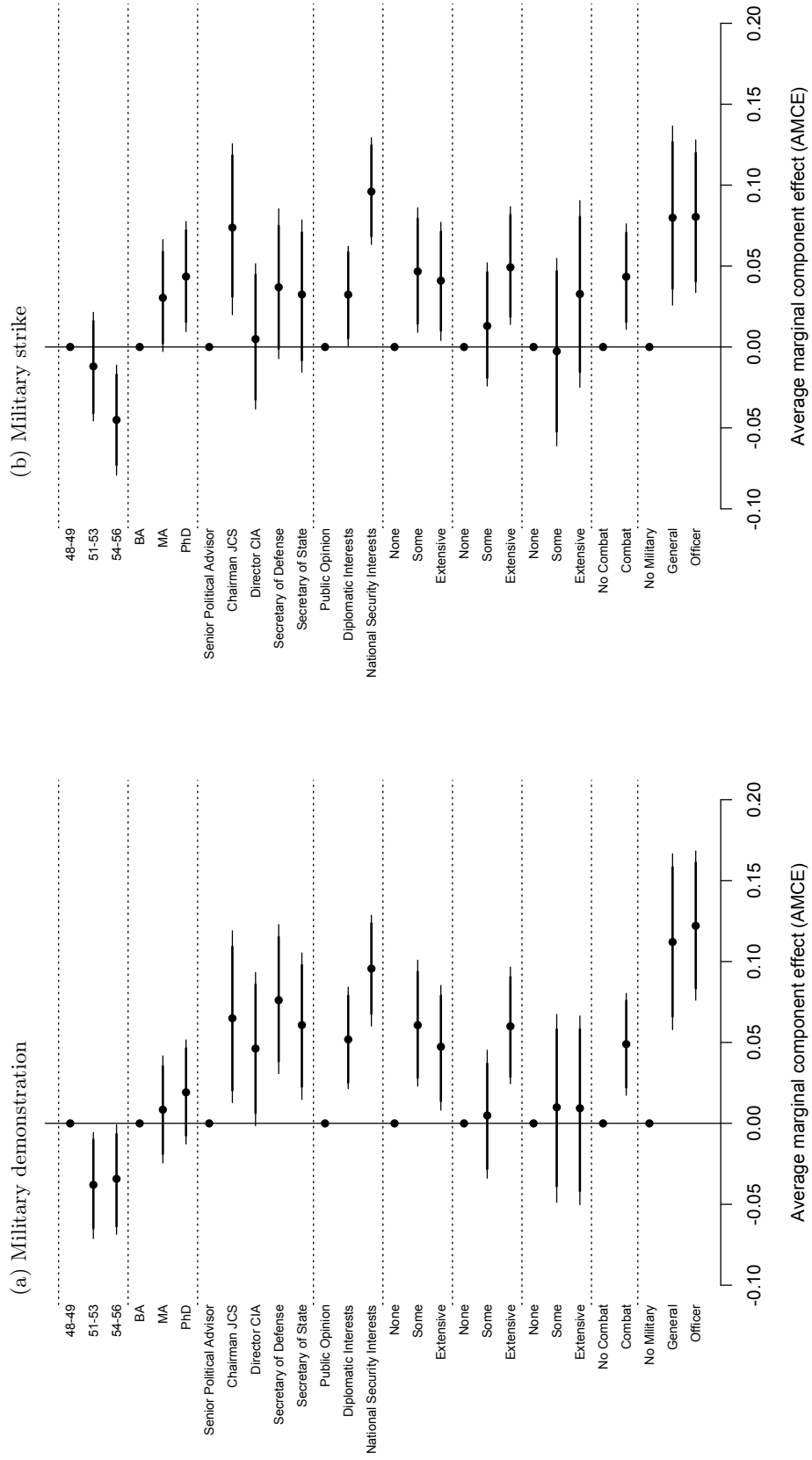
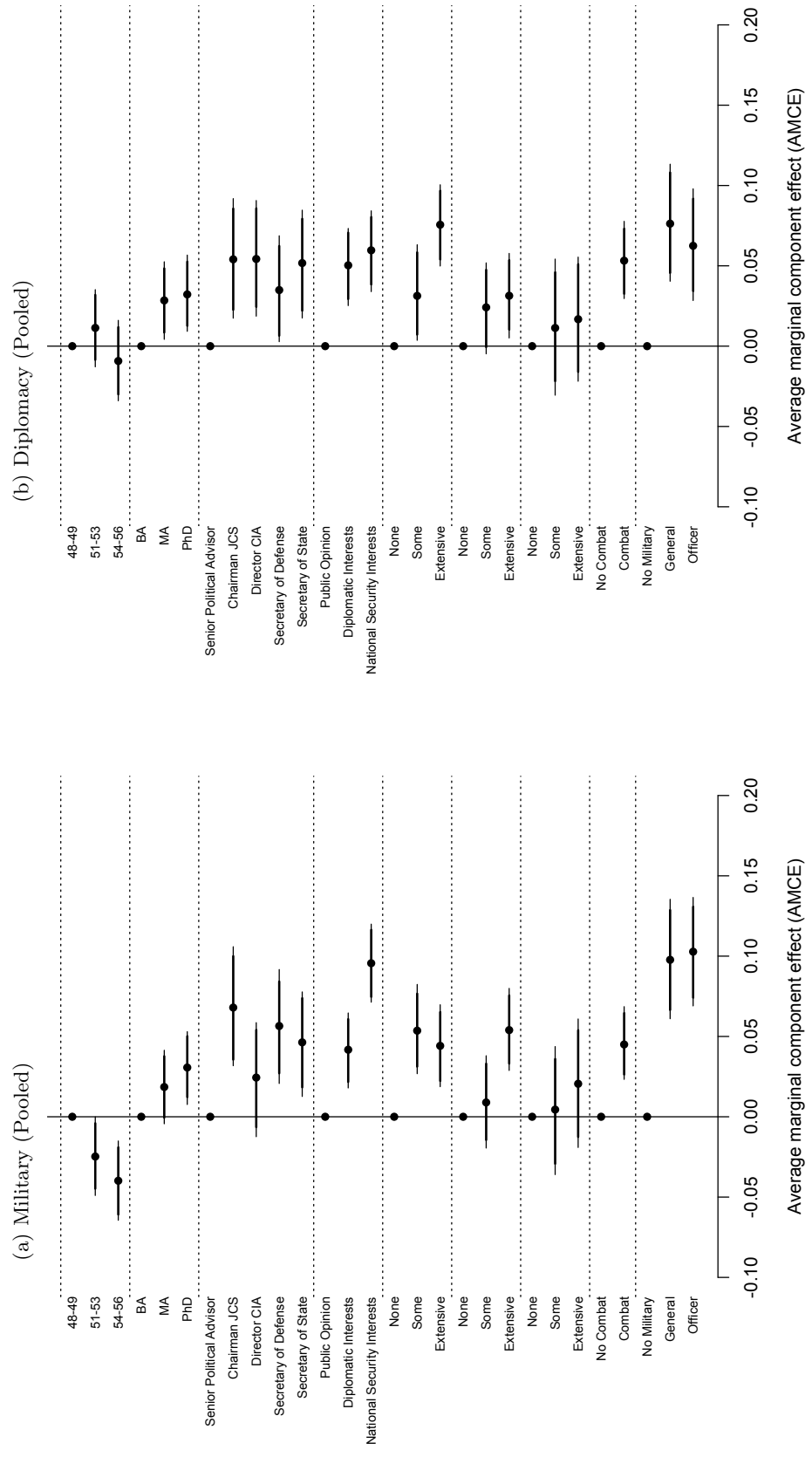


Figure 13: Recommendation AMCEs (III)



2 Dispositional Instrument

All respondents completed a battery of dispositional and demographic questions. In order to avoid potential spillover effects, all respondents dispositional battery *after* the conjoint experiment. Instrumentation is taken from public opinion work, such as [Kertzer and Zeitzoff \(2017\)](#).

2.1 Demographic Questions

1. In what year were you born (for example, 1978)?
2. What's your gender?
3. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as: [Strong Democrat / Democrat / Weak Democrat / Independent / Weak Republican / Republican / Strong Republican / Not Sure]
4. In general, how would you describe your own political viewpoint? [Very Liberal / Liberal / Moderate / Conservative / Very Conservative / Not Sure]
5. How frequently do you consume news media related to foreign affairs (online or print newspaper, radio, podcasts, television)? [At least once per day At least two to three times per week At least once per week At least once per month Not at all]
6. Thinking back over the past year, what was your household's income? [Less than \$29,999 / \$30,000 to \$59,999 \$60,000 to \$99,999 \$100,000 to \$249,999 \$250,000 or more Not Sure]
7. What racial or ethnic group best describes you? [White, Non-Hispanic Black or African-American Hispanic or Latino Asian or Asian-American Native American Middle Eastern Mixed Race Other (please specify)]
8. What is the highest level of education you have completed? [Did not graduate from high school High school graduate Some college, but no degree (yet) 2-year college degree 4-year college degree Postgraduate degree (MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, etc)]
9. In what zip code do you currently reside?

2.2 Militant Internationalism

1. Rather than simply countering our opponents' actions, it is necessary to strike at the heart of the opponents' power.
2. The US must demonstrate its resolve so that others do not take advantage of it.
3. The US should always do what is in its own interest, even if our allies object.
4. The US should take all steps including the use of force to prevent aggression by any expansionist power.

2.3 Nationalism

1. How superior is the United States compared to other nations?
2. How much better would the world be if people from other countries were more like the United States?
3. Americans should support their country even if they believe it is in the wrong.

2.4 Right Wing Authoritarianism

1. Although there are a number of qualities that people feel that children should have, every person thinks that some are more important than others.
 - Independence / respect for elders
 - Obedience / Self-reliance
2. If there were greater respect for authority in society generally, do you think it would be: [a good thing / a bad thing / don't mind either way]

3 Conjoint Instrument Screen

3.1 Recommendations

Presidents often face tough choices regarding who to appoint to senior positions in the U.S. government, such as the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, or Director of the Central Intelligence

Agency. These appointments are important not only because the individuals chosen are responsible for managing important government affairs, but also because they serve as advisers to the president.

In this section, we will show you a series of fictional candidates being considered for such positions in a hypothetical White House administration. We ask that you take a minute to think about each situation and tell us which candidate you prefer.

3.2 Appointments

Presidents often face tough choices regarding foreign policy. This is particularly true when their closest advisers disagree about what actions the United States should take.

In this portion of the study, we will present you with information about several hypothetical foreign policy initiatives under consideration by a hypothetical White House administration.

On each screen, we will present you with some information on the policy being debated. We will then provide you with a brief description about some fictional advisers, as well as whether they support or oppose the foreign policy initiative. We ask that you take a minute to think about each situation and tell us which adviser's recommendation you support.

4 Sample Information

Table 3: Sample characteristics

	Recommendations	Appointments
Gender		
Female	0.523	0.508
Male	0.477	0.492
Age		
18-29	0.153	0.147
30-44	0.262	0.252
45-64	0.381	0.373
65+	0.204	0.228
Education		
High school or below	0.198	0.181
Some college	0.189	0.175
College/university	0.373	0.371
Graduate/professional school	0.240	0.273
Race		
White	0.753	0.748

5 Randomization constraints

Consistent with best practices with conjoint experiments (e.g. [Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2014](#); [Kertzer, Renshon and Yarhi-Milo, forthcoming](#)), we included randomization constraints to avoid presenting respondents with illogical or implausible treatment combinations. Most of these combinations are associated with the types of prior experiences that some adviser types possess (for example, all military generals, by definition, have extensive defense experience), as well as legal restrictions on certain adviser appointments (for example, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff must be an active duty general). We list the restrictions for each experiment in bullet point form below. Because of these randomization constraints, we employ a weighted rather than uniform randomization scheme for the conjoint (see [de la Cuesta, Egami and Imai, 2019](#)).

- Recommendations Conjoint
 - Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff must be an active duty general officer
 - Active/retired military officers must have at least some defense experience
 - Active/retired general officers must have extensive defense experience
 - Secretary of State/Secretary of Defense/Senior Political Adviser cannot have active military status

- Appointments Conjoint
 - Retired military officers must have at least some defense experience
 - Retired general officers must have extensive defense experience
 - Retired general officers must have prior experience under both Democratic and Republican administrations

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