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A Candidate by Any Other Name: Religious Identity and Electoral Outcomes

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A CANDIDATE BY ANY OTHER NAME: RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND ELECTORAL OUTCOMES

Max Yanowitz

Mentor: Justin Fox

Voters use myriad information cues when making decisions. I explore the role of candidate religion and electoral outcomes via an original survey experiment. In the U.S., Protestants are typically viewed as conservative while Jews are perceived to be a liberal group. I manipulate a candidate's religion (no religious cue, Protestant, Jewish) as well as their last name (Smith, Cohen) to form six candidate profiles. While the direct religion cues are explicit, the name cue of Cohen, a traditionally Jewish name, allows for a subtler cue, which is less likely to tip off respondents. I find that respondents perceive both Protestant candidates as more conservative than the control (no religious cue, Smith), the religiously un-cued Cohen candidate as more liberal, and both explicitly Jewish candidates as ideologically the same. I then demonstrate that these induced perceptions impact feelings of favorability towards the candidate, and that these effects differ between conservative and liberal respondents. I hypothesize that respondent self-monitoring muted partisan reactions or adverse responses to the Jewish candidates, then comment on the broader implications of stereotypes in politics.