

# Partisan Cues and Vote Choice in New Multiparty Systems

Comparative Political Studies

2016, Vol. 49(1) 3–35

© The Author(s) 2015

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0010414015603015

cps.sagepub.com



Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz<sup>1</sup>, Devra C. Moehler<sup>2</sup>,  
and Rosario Aguilar<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

There are numerous studies of the effects of partisan cues in established party systems, but almost none on how they affect voting in new party systems. This lacuna might stem from untested assumptions that partisan cues are un-influential where parties lack multigenerational psychological bonds with citizens and long-standing records. Alternatively, we theorize that even in new party systems, voters use partisan cues to assess candidates' capabilities, preferences, and electoral viability. We test this theory through an experiment in which we varied inclusion of party identifiers on mock ballots in Uganda, where the multiparty system was only 5 years old. We find that partisan cues increased selection of major-party candidates over independents, casting of straight-ticket ballots, and votes for copartisans. Our results challenge the common assumption that partisan labels are irrelevant in new party systems. Partisan cues can influence political decision making, even when party systems are young.

## Keywords

political parties, elections, public opinion and voting behavior, African politics, experimental research

---

<sup>1</sup>Michigan State University, East Lansing, USA

<sup>2</sup>University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA

<sup>3</sup>Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, Mexico City, Mexico

## Corresponding Author:

Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz, Department of Political Science, Michigan State University, S303 South Kedzie Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824, USA.

Email: conroyk6@msu.edu

Cues play important roles in individuals' political decision making, affecting how they vote, form issue attitudes, and process information. These cues can take a range of forms, including partisan and ideological labels, referent endorsements, and candidate demographics. Partisan cues have received much attention in research on countries with long-standing party systems, such as the United States (Downs, 1957; Huckfeldt, Levine, Morgan, & Sprague, 1999; Kam, 2005; Lau & Redlawsk, 2001; Rahn, 1993). In these settings, voters use such cues to determine candidates' policy stances, or they support copartisans based on psychological bonds to parties that are often passed down across generations (Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002).

Do voters in countries with newer party systems also use partisan cues in their political decision making? Following the U.S.-based literature, partisan cues might seem to have limited impact in such settings because parties may be too young to provide useful heuristics about policy or performance, and too evanescent to be the objects of psychological attachments. As such, voters are presumed to focus more heavily on other attributes, such as distributional practices (Keefer & Vlaicu, 2008), ethnicity or other ascriptive identities (Birnie, 2007; Chandra, 2004; Ferree, 2011; Posner, 2005), or endorsements from key societal figures, such as traditional elites (Baldwin, 2013; Koter, 2013).

Scholars have overlooked the potential importance of partisan cues in electoral decision making in systems with new parties (Bullock, 2011; Samuels & Zucco, 2014). Our article is the first to examine this aspect. We present a theory that, even in systems in which major parties are young, voters may use partisan cues to assess candidates on a range of topics, such as ability to produce desirable economic or security outcomes, preferences in areas such as distribution and democracy, and electoral viability. Notably, partisan labels can serve these functions even when few voters have established strong psychological bonds to young parties, and when parties' platforms are vague. In short, partisan cues could be meaningful to voters, even in systems in which some parties are still in their infancy.

We seek to fill this gap by examining the effects of partisan cues on vote choice in a context where such effects are especially unlikely: Uganda's 2011 general election. Three factors bias against our finding significant partisan cue effects here. First, our outcome of interest is vote choice for real candidates, rather than support for unfamiliar policies or fictitious candidates. In most studies of partisan cues, subjects have limited knowledge and weak attitudes about the object of the inquiry, and party label is often the only heuristic available. In our study, subjects were asked to make a meaningful choice between familiar candidates in an environment where there were numerous alternate decision-making cues.

Second, the precise timing of our study—after a months-long campaign and just days before an election—biased against the finding of significant partisan cue effects because many subjects had already decided on their favored candidates. Partisan cues are likely to have real-world implications if they can affect vote choice at the end of a campaign. Third, the current system in Uganda was introduced in 2006, making the 2011 elections only the second time that candidates had run under party banners. To our knowledge, no study of party cue effects has focused on a system as young as Uganda's. If partisan cue effects are identifiable in Uganda, then such heuristics are probably meaningful to voters in a much broader range of contexts than previously considered.

We conducted an experiment in which we varied Ugandans' exposure to partisan cues via an important, yet overlooked medium for the transmittal of cues: electoral ballots. Subjects were assigned to treatment conditions where they were given mock ballots that included or excluded partisan identifiers, and then asked to mark their preferred candidates in presidential, parliamentary, and local contests. This design enhances external validity, in that it used real candidates; was conducted in close proximity to an actual election; and administered treatments using a medium that often transmits partisan cues (i.e., ballots).

Our findings indicate that partisan cues did affect vote choice in Uganda. Subjects whose ballots contained partisan cues were more likely to vote for major parties, less likely to support independent candidates, more likely to cast straight-ticket votes, and more likely to match their votes with their self-reported partisan identity. These effects were substantively as well as statistically significant; for example, the predicted probability of straight-ticket voting is 16% higher for those subjects who saw partisan cues compared with those who did not. These strong effects challenge the conventional view that partisan cues are less consequential in nascent party systems (Brader, Tucker, & Duell, 2013; Bullock, 2011; Greene, 2011; Magaloni, 2006; Merolla, Stephenson, & Zechmeister, 2008) and suggest a need to broaden our conceptualization of the mechanisms through which partisan cues might affect electoral decision making.

## **A Theory on the Utility of Partisan Cues for Voting in New Party Systems**

Research on partisan cues has focused almost exclusively on well-established party systems. Scholars of the United States, in particular, have examined the effect of partisan cues on vote choice, opinion formation, information processing, and affective responses (Chaiken, 1980; Goren, 2005; Goren, Federico, &

Kittilson, 2009; Kam, 2005; Lau, Andersen, & Redlawsk, 2008; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Rahn, 1993). In these contexts, well-established parties are more likely to have stable reputations and programmatic cores from which their elites do not deviate significantly (Snyder & Ting, 2002), while voters themselves are socialized, through cross-generational communications, to internalize identification with parties (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Converse, 1969; Downs, 1957; Fowler & Kam, 2007; Gerber & Green, 1998; Green et al., 2002; Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009). Party labels are deemed influential because they act as information shortcuts or because they activate long-standing psychological attachments.

In contrast, studies of newer party systems have generally avoided examining the importance of partisan cues (Samuels & Zucco, 2014). Given that individuals often use heuristics when information is scarce or costly (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), we might expect that cues would be especially influential in newer party systems, where paucity of political information and non-habituated political behavior make landscapes harder to navigate. However, scholars have focused on other types of heuristics—such as ascriptive identity (Birnie, 2007; Chandra, 2004; Conroy-Krutz, 2013; Ferree, 2011; Posner, 2005) and clientelistic distribution (Keefer & Vlaicu, 2008)—and eschewed study of partisan cues. Partisan cues are presumed to hold limited utility where parties avoid taking policy positions or are ideologically incoherent (Bleck & van de Walle, 2011, 2013; Brader et al., 2013; Conroy-Krutz & Lewis, 2011) and have yet to establish reputations based on previous terms in office (Greene, 2011).<sup>1</sup> In short, one might presume that citizens do not know or care about parties in such cases, and thus partisan cues will have minimal or no effects.

We theorize that partisan cues could affect voters' decision making in new party systems by affecting perceptions of candidates' abilities, preferences, and viability. First, party labels can signal which candidate has more capacity to deliver favorable outcomes. If a candidate is identified as sharing partisanship with a well-regarded national executive, that candidate is likely to benefit, *vis-à-vis* an opposition-affiliated or independent competitor. On the contrary, a candidate who shares partisanship with a president whose performance is judged to be lacking is likely to be harmed, *vis-à-vis* opponents, by the inclusion of labels.<sup>2</sup> In addition, candidates whose partisan labels indicate they have access to nationally (or, in some cases, locally)<sup>3</sup> powerful actors might be viewed as possessing greater capacity to deliver patronage.

Second, partisan cues can affect citizens' expectations about candidates' preferences in key areas, such as patronage and democracy. Party leaders' regional or ascriptive identities might signal the distributional preferences (i.e., who should be targeted) of the party as a whole (Chandra, 2004).

Furthermore, the delivery of largess in campaigns, during which party symbols and colors are displayed, might be interpreted as an indication of the party's future commitment to recipients. In addition, in systems emerging from authoritarianism, even new parties may indicate distinct democratic credentials based on events before, during, and after the transition. Parties often develop reputations as advocates for democracy and human rights, perpetrators of authoritarian abuses, or harbingers of (dis)order during the period immediately preceding or following the establishment of new regimes. In short, voters can use partisan labels to assess candidates' preferences, even when parties themselves have vague, indistinguishable platforms.

Finally, partisan cues can provide insight about candidates' electoral viability. If party labels indicate that a candidate is a member of a party that has recently performed well, that candidate is more likely to be seen as viable, and therefore more worthy of the voter's consideration. Conversely, affiliates of poorly performing parties and political independents (in many contexts) will be viewed as less viable, and likely harmed by the inclusion of labels.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, voters might assume that the party label will attract other partisan-minded voters. Thus, party affiliation might signal the top contenders and deter sincere voting for low-viability candidates (McKelvey & Ordeshook, 1972).

These factors suggest that party labels may influence voting even in new party systems. Importantly, our theory about how party labels can affect vote choice does not depend on citizens' development of psychological attachments to parties<sup>5</sup> or on parties having clear and distinct platforms. If party labels carry meaning, then partisan cues could alter citizen choices by providing new information about candidates' affiliations, which could in turn help voters assess candidates' abilities, preferences, and viability. Furthermore, partisan cues could prime citizens to consider candidates' partisanship, rather than candidates' personal attributes, when assessing electoral options. In theory, either mechanism—learning or priming—could increase party-based voting.<sup>6</sup>

Although there are many studies on the development of party systems (for a review, see Ferree, Powell, & Scheiner, 2014),<sup>7</sup> few have examined whether partisan affiliation is meaningful to voters' decision making. We know of only a few studies specifically on the effects of partisan cues in newer party systems, most of which examine how cues affect policy preference, rather than vote choice (Brader & Tucker, 2012; Brader et al., 2013; Merolla et al., 2008; Samuels & Zucco, 2014). We are aware of only one study that examines the effects of cues on party-based voting: an experiment testing varying electronic voting designs in Argentina (Calvo, Escolar, & Pomares, 2009; Katz, Alvarez, Escolar, & Pomares, 2011). In this study, however, party names and logos

were equally apparent across all treatment conditions, while the prominence and accessibility of candidate names, among other things, varied across treatments. In other words, the study evaluates whether the presence of candidate cues, rather than partisan cues, affects party-based voting.<sup>8</sup> We know of no research specifically on how partisan cues affect vote choice in new party systems.<sup>9</sup>

## Research Design

To adjudicate between the expectation of no effect and our hypothesis that partisan cues increase party-based voting, we conduct an experiment testing the effects of partisan cues on vote choice in a party system that was, at the time of our study, only 5 years old: Uganda. The experiment was conducted using mock ballots and held just days before Uganda's 2011 general election. Subjects were assigned to one of five ballot types; these ballots contained varying combinations of visual and textual elements, such as party names, party symbols, and candidate photographs. Our theory predicts that subjects who received ballots containing partisan cues (i.e., party names or symbols) would be more likely to vote based on candidate partisan affiliation than their counterparts who received ballots including no such cues.

In this section, we discuss our use of mock ballots for administration of treatments, the selection of the Ugandan case and the research site, the experimental design, and subject recruitment.

### *Ballots and Partisan Cues*

Ballots are an important—and understudied—potential source of cues affecting voters' decision making. Policymakers often suggest that ballots include myriad textual and visual elements to facilitate informed and autonomous voting. These elements can include information about candidates, such as their photographs or occupations, or about parties, such as their names or symbols. Visual elements, such as photographs and symbols, are especially recommended for countries where voters have less education, information, and voting experience (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, 2011; Reynolds & Steenbergen, 2006; Smith, Laskowski, & Lowry, 2009).

Despite widespread use of such identifiers, we lack systematic evidence about their effects on voting, particularly outside of established democracies (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, 2007; Katz et al., 2011; Reynolds & Steenbergen, 2006).<sup>10</sup> Although proponents of the inclusion of such elements argue that doing so encourages participation and reduces voter error, such recommendations fail to consider that they could themselves affect voter

preferences. Candidate photographs could, for example, shift support in favor of more attractive contenders, or to those who appear to be coethnics of the voter (Conroy-Krutz & Moehler, 2015). Moreover, as we suggest in this article, partisan cues could affect voter preferences, even in countries with new party systems. Ballots provide the last stimuli that might affect voters' decision-making processes and could therefore have sizable effects on vote outcomes, even though cue effects are often ephemeral. In the experiment described below, we assigned subjects to mock ballots containing different textual and visual elements, and thus measure these elements'—and, more specifically, partisan cues'—effects on voting.

### *Case Selection: Uganda*

Two considerations guided our selection of Uganda as the experimental site: its recent history of including variable textual and visual elements on ballots, and its status as a country with a new party system. On the first count, the fact that Ugandan ballots have changed across recent elections means that conditions that included or excluded various elements would all be plausible conditions for most voters, thus increasing the experiment's external validity. Candidates' photographs, for example, appeared on ballots starting in the 1994 Constituent Assembly elections, whereas party names and symbols were not included until 2006.

The absence of partisan labels from Ugandan ballots prior to 2006 stems from the fact that parties had long been prohibited from electioneering in the country. Upon seizing power in 1986, President Yoweri Museveni established a unique “no-party democracy,” ostensibly to diminish the ethnicization of politics (Museveni, 1997). Multiparty competition was not restored until 2006, following the public's approval in a referendum the previous year, meaning that 2011 marked only the second election under Uganda's current multiparty regime. The main parties have been Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) and the opposition Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), which was founded in 2004 as a breakaway from the NRM. Together these two main parties won 96.7% of the presidential vote in the election preceding our experiment (2006).<sup>11</sup> Ugandans have had limited time to develop psychological attachments to parties, and parties' identities are still in flux.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the unlikelihood of strong, psychological attachments to parties of the type often passed down over generations in countries like the United States, we expected that partisan labels would affect Ugandans' assessments of candidates' abilities, preferences, and viability—and thus their electoral choices. First, politics in Uganda are centered on a strong, personalistic leader

(Carbone, 2008; Rubongoya, 2007; Tripp, 2010), and elections are seen by some as referenda on President Museveni's perceived leadership in economics, security, and resource distributions (Conroy-Krutz & Logan, 2012). When candidates' partisan affiliations are highlighted, voters who are dissatisfied with recent government performance will be more likely to punish candidates attached to Museveni's NRM, determining that they, too, will be less capable. Conversely, those pleased with Museveni will be more likely to favor his copartisans. Furthermore, candidates not affiliated with the NRM, which distributes significant patronage nationally (Carbone, 2008; Izama & Wilkerson, 2011; Tripp, 2010), might be deemed less able to deliver goods.<sup>13</sup>

Second, partisan labels can signal candidate preferences, in areas such as resource distributions and democratic development. Voters in Uganda's Northern Region, for example, have long felt marginalized by the Western-dominated government; NRM affiliation might signal a candidate's disinterest in providing patronage to such voters, whereas an FDC label might signal interest in changing the distributional status quo. And, voters who prefer a strong leader—despite (or perhaps because of) undemocratic tendencies such as cracking down on media houses and stacking the Electoral Commission (EC) with ruling-party loyalists (Izama & Wilkerson, 2011; Mwenda & Tangri, 2005; Tripp, 2010)—may be more likely to support candidates identified as copartisans of the president. Those uncomfortable with such practices will be more attracted to those identified with the opposition.

Finally, partisan cues likely signal candidate viability in Uganda. The NRM is clearly a dominant party, having won 59.3% of the presidential vote in 2006, and in most circumstances a candidate for parliamentary or local office is likely to seem more viable when identified as an NRM partisan, given the party's electoral popularity in many regions and its significant resource advantages. However, the FDC has claimed substantial support as well, winning 37.4% of the 2006 vote. In addition, in areas where the FDC is popular,<sup>14</sup> an FDC label likely signals viability. However, minor-party candidates and independents will likely be seen as less electable. The most-established minor parties—the Democratic Party (DP) and Uganda People's Congress (UPC)—won a combined 2.4% of the 2006 presidential vote and only claimed pluralities at a combined seven polling stations in the entire country. Independents, who are present in many races and who often have formerly been affiliated with a major party, are usually disadvantaged by a lack of access to parties' organizational and resource capacities. While pluralities of candidates for various important offices were independents, only a small number of winners were.<sup>15</sup> When partisan labels are present, minor-party and independent candidates are more likely to be overlooked in favor of second-best choices deemed more likely to win.

In summary, Uganda was an ideal site for research, because of its history of varying ballot design and the youth of its party system. Like in most of Africa, and in new party systems elsewhere, political competition in Uganda takes place on an uneven playing field,<sup>16</sup> dominated by a single powerful leader, whereby numerous subsidiary political actors vie for support (van de Walle, 2003). As in other young party systems, there are a number of potential candidate-centric characteristics that might affect vote choice (e.g., ethnicity, region of origin, status, past performance, and resource endowments). We posit that, when cued, partisan affiliation becomes more likely to play an important role.

The experiment was conducted in one parliamentary constituency—Soroti County, which is a rural area in the country’s northeast. Soroti was selected for logistical reasons—an author was already collecting data there—and because its demographics and ethnically diverse candidate pools facilitated study of the effects of ballot design on ethnic voting, as well (as reported in Conroy-Krutz & Moehler, 2015).

Soroti is an opposition-supporting area in a country with a dominant party. Majorities there have supported the FDC in recent presidential elections, and the party has had great success recently claiming parliamentary seats and district chairmanships. Many residents have evinced displeasure with the president’s performance in terms of the economy,<sup>17</sup> democracy,<sup>18</sup> and security.<sup>19</sup> Although President Museveni was expected to win handily in 2011, non-NRM candidates for Soroti’s down-ballot races had credible chances of winning office.<sup>20</sup>

Our thesis should apply equally to pro-opposition areas as to pro-government areas, and equally to individuals who support the opposition or government. Party labels will help voters assess candidates’ abilities, preferences, and viability regardless of which party is more popular. The main difference will be in which party benefits the most from the partisan cues. In pro-opposition areas and among opposition supporters, party cues should benefit the opposition. In pro-government areas and among government supporters, partisan cues should benefit the government. Thus, we would expect that the FDC would be the main benefactor in Soroti, but not uniformly across all voters.<sup>21</sup> In sum, we expect that voters in Soroti will use partisan cues to assess candidates, even though the locally dominant party is quite young.

### *Experimental Design*

Subjects were assigned to one of five treatments, which varied according to the inclusion or exclusion of partisan cues, as well as a cross-cutting candidate photograph treatment.<sup>22</sup> All five include candidates’ names. Treatment 1 (the

1		2		3		4		5				
Samuel Anyolo		Samuel Anyolo	Independent	Samuel Anyolo	Independent		Samuel Anyolo		Samuel Anyolo	Independent		
Simon Peter Ebara		Simon Peter Ebara	Independent	Simon Peter Ebara	Independent		Simon Peter Ebara		Simon Peter Ebara	Independent		
Vincent I. Ezama		Vincent I. Ezama	National Resistance Movement (NRM)	Vincent I. Ezama	National Resistance Movement (NRM)		Vincent I. Ezama		Vincent I. Ezama	National Resistance Movement (NRM)		
John Lule		John Lule	Independent	John Lule	Independent		John Lule		John Lule	Independent		
Engirof Lawrence Okwa		Engirof Lawrence Okwa	Uganda People's Congress (UPC)	Engirof Lawrence Okwa	Uganda People's Congress (UPC)		Engirof Lawrence Okwa		Engirof Lawrence Okwa	Uganda People's Congress (UPC)		
Raphael Otasepo		Raphael Otasepo	Democratic Party (DP)	Raphael Otasepo	Democratic Party (DP)		Raphael Otasepo		Raphael Otasepo	Democratic Party (DP)		
Peter Omoso		Peter Omoso	Forum for Democratic Change (FDC)	Peter Omoso	Forum for Democratic Change (FDC)		Peter Omoso		Peter Omoso	Forum for Democratic Change (FDC)		
William Opi		William Opi	Independent	William Opi	Independent		William Opi		William Opi	Independent		
Jimmy Otalobi		Jimmy Otalobi	People's Progressive Party (PPP)	Jimmy Otalobi	People's Progressive Party (PPP)		Jimmy Otalobi		Jimmy Otalobi	People's Progressive Party (PPP)		

**Figure 1.** Images of treatment features for MP contest.  
MP = Member of Parliament.

control) included no other information. Treatment 2 included party names, whereas Treatment 3 included party names and symbols.<sup>23</sup> Treatment 4 included photographs, and Treatment 5 included all elements: party names and symbols, and candidate photographs. For each treatment, the information provided accurately portrays the actual candidates. Treatment 5 most closely mimics real Ugandan ballots.<sup>24</sup> Images of mock ballots are available in Figure 1.

After demographic data were collected, subjects were asked to mark one mock ballot for each of four real-world contests: president, Member of Parliament, district women’s Member of Parliament,<sup>25</sup> and district chairperson.<sup>26</sup> Candidates from the two major parties, at least one from a minor party, and several independents contested each race.<sup>27</sup> Each subject received the same type of ballot for each contest. Subjects marked ballots in private, without assistance from research staff or others, and placed their ballots in an envelope.<sup>28</sup> Following this, subjects were asked a series of additional questions.

**Subject Recruitment**

Subjects were selected via multistage sampling. Enumeration Areas (EAs), as delineated by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, were first randomly selected,

with EAs' likelihood of selection proportionate to their population as of the last census (2002). Enumerators then selected households via a random-walk pattern, and individuals within selected households were recruited using a Kish grid.<sup>29</sup> Subjects had to be at least 18 years old, Ugandan citizens, and able to communicate in at least one of the three survey languages (English, Iteso, and Kumam); they did not have to be registered voters or literate. Most selected gave consent and completed the survey (93.5%).

Balance checks suggest that our generated samples were statistically equivalent on selected observables across treatments. These checks were conducted with variables that we expected would not be affected by the treatments, but which could theoretically affect party-based voting, including demographics (sex, age, wealth, ethnicity, education), 2006 presidential vote, need for assistance when casting ballots in the previous election, political knowledge, and access to news (via radio, newspaper, television).<sup>30</sup> Online Appendix D reports results for these checks. The only variables for which there are significant differences across treatments are sex and newspaper readership; however, there is no statistically significant difference on either variable when comparing treatments that contained partisan cues with those that did not. These checks suggest that observed differences in outcomes between groups are attributable to the treatments, rather than potential confounders.

### *External Validity*

Our case selection and research design enhance external validity in four respects. First, as previously discussed, most Ugandans have cast ballots with and without partisan identifiers; this means that ballots of either type would be within the realm of most subjects' real-world experiences. Second, our ballots included real-world candidates then campaigning for office. Studies utilizing hypothetical candidates might be biased toward finding larger cue effects, given that subjects will have very little information about the candidates other than the available cues. Third, we conducted the experiment just days prior to the actual elections. Presidential and parliamentary elections were held on February 18, while local elections were held 5 days later; our experiment was conducted between February 10 and 17. Again, conducting the study earlier in, or even prior to, the campaign would likely bias effects upward, because subjects would have had less information about candidates and have to rely more on ballot-provided cues. The number of undecided voters, who are more easily swayed, is also likely higher early in a campaign. Any study attempting to determine whether partisan cues affect voting, then, should ideally be held as close to the election as possible. Finally, our

subjects filled out their mock ballots in secret and used separate papers for each of the contests studied, a procedure similar to the one that Ugandans actually face at polling stations. This design represents a particularly hard test of the hypothesis that partisan cues can affect vote choice in new party systems, given that we are evaluating support for real-world candidates at the end of a campaign in a young party system.

## Measurement

To test the effect of partisan cues on voting, we compare the votes recorded on our mock ballots for those treatments that contain both party name and symbol (3 and 5) against those that do not contain any information about parties (1 and 4).<sup>31</sup> We cannot directly observe whether voters considered party affiliation when marking ballots, so we look for observable implications of decision-making criteria. We operationalize party-based voting in three ways: (a) increased voting for major-party candidates and decreased voting for minor-party candidates and independents, (b) straight-ticket voting, and (c) voting in accordance with party identification.<sup>32</sup> For each, we code the dependent variables to indicate the dimensions of vote choice we wish to test based on the attributes of the candidates selected by each subject.<sup>33</sup>

We first posit that major-party candidates benefit from decision making that weights party considerations more heavily, whereas minor-party candidates and independents lose votes. Major parties have more adherents, so they gain support when voters consider party. Furthermore, when party is emphasized, strategic voters are more wary of wasting votes on minor-party candidates and independents. Schaffner, Streb, and Wright (2007), working in the two-party U.S. system, find that the majority party benefits from partisan elections, and Katz et al. (2011), working in Argentina, find that minor parties benefited from candidate-centric displays. In sum, we expect that partisan cues increase voting for major-party candidates and decrease voting for minor-party candidates and independents. This first operationalization requires three measures: *Major Parties*, *Minor Parties*, and *Independents* measure the total number of votes for major-party, minor-party, and independent candidates, respectively.<sup>34</sup> All range from 0 to 4.

Our second expectation is that party-based decision making manifests in higher rates of straight-ticket voting (Kimball, 2003). Partisan cues should generate greater consistency, such that more voters choose candidates from the same party for all contests. Voters may choose candidates from a previously favored party for all contests, or the party affiliation of a single favored candidate in a salient contest may anchor decisions for less-salient ones.

*Straight-Ticket* is a binary variable coded 1 if a subject voted for candidates from the same party in all four contests, and 0 otherwise.

Third, we expect that voter partisan identification exerts a stronger influence on vote choice when partisan considerations are emphasized. Partisan cues might provoke partisans to “come home,” therefore increasing the match between the partisan identification of voters and the partisanship of the candidates they select. *Party-ID Match* measures the total votes for candidates from a subject’s preferred party. Our main formulation of this measure includes only those subjects who identified a party to which they “feel close.” The measure sums across the four contests and ranges from 0 to 4.

Collectively, these three measurement approaches provide a methodologically and theoretically sound basis for evaluating whether partisan cues increase party-based voting. The third operationalization is the most common conception of party-based voting, whereas the first two are strongest with respect to causal inference. The first two are based solely on how subjects marked the ballots, and we can feel confident that differences between groups reflect differences in voting. The third has advantages with respect to construct validity, but it requires a post-treatment measure of partisan identification, which makes interpretation of causal effects more difficult.<sup>35</sup> Consistent results across the three approaches strengthen our conclusions about the causal effects of partisan cues on party-based voting.

## Analysis and Results

Across all three dimensions, the results indicate that partisan cues affect vote choice. Table 1 displays the results of regression analyses of the effect of partisan cues (Treatments 3 and 5) compared with no partisan cues (Treatments 1 and 4), controlling for the cross-cutting feature (candidate photos). We use logistic analysis for the binary measure of straight-ticket voting and ordered logistic analysis for others, where outcomes range from 0 to 4. Figure 2 graphs the means and 95% confidence intervals for subjects who were and were not exposed to partisan cues. The estimated effects of partisan cues on voting are strong and consistent.

First, partisan cues significantly increased votes for major-party candidates and significantly decreased votes for independent candidates, as expected. The substantive size of the effects is notable, especially for a new party system (Bullock, 2011). The estimates indicate that the probability of voting for major-party candidates in all contests increased by 13% when subjects were exposed to partisan cues. We do not see the expected decline in support for minor parties, probably because of a floor effect. There were no viable minor-party candidates in the down-ballot contests,<sup>36</sup> so there was

**Table 1.** Effects of Partisan Cues on Voting.

	(1)			(2)	(3)
	Major party	Minor party	Independent	Straight ticket	Party-ID match
Partisan cues	0.60*** (0.18)	0.03 (0.27)	-0.71*** (0.19)	0.87*** (0.25)	0.63** (0.20)
Photographs	-0.10 (0.17)	-0.49 (0.28)	0.31 (0.19)	-0.69** (0.25)	-0.21 (0.19)
Constant				-1.55*** (0.22)	
Cut points	-1.80*** (0.19)	1.56*** (0.22)	-0.21 (0.16)		-1.45*** (0.19)
	-1.26*** (0.17)	3.44*** (0.35)	1.52*** (0.18)		-0.65*** (0.18)
	-0.33* (0.15)	4.76*** (0.60)	3.83*** (0.38)		0.33 (0.17)
	1.02*** (0.16)	5.87*** (1.02)	5.93*** (1.01)		1.53*** (0.19)
<i>n</i>	429	429	429	429	340
Model	ologit	ologit	ologit	logit	ologit

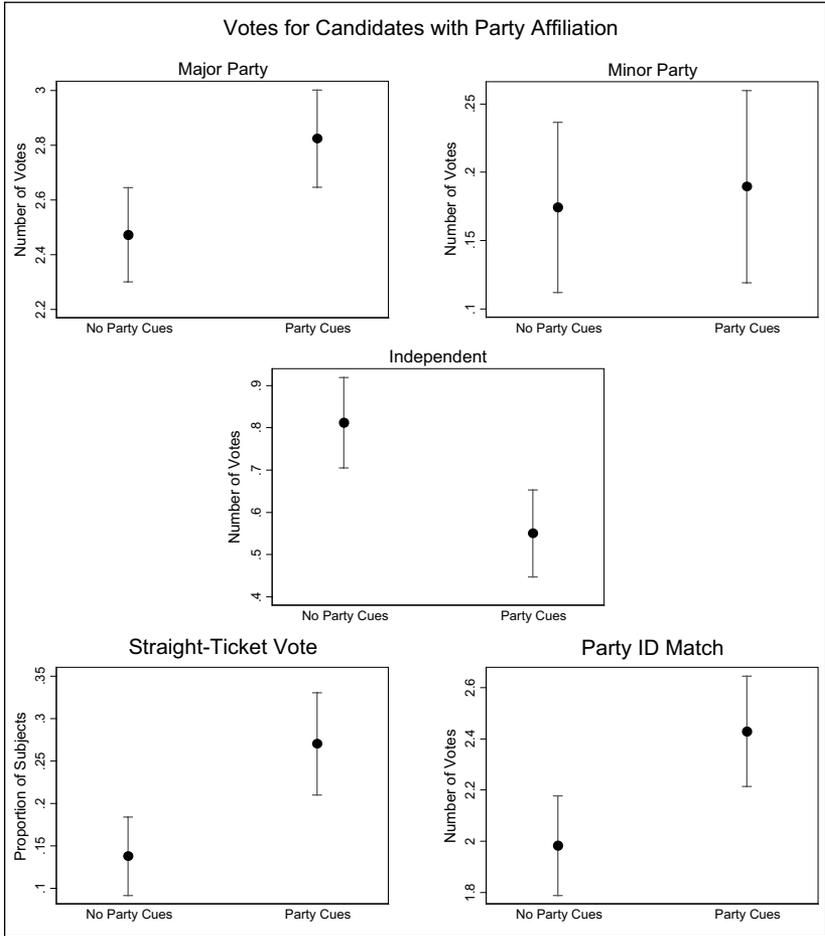
Cell entries represent coefficient estimates followed by standard errors in parentheses. Outcome variables are total votes for major-party, minor-party, and independent candidates, straight-ticket voting, and total votes for candidates from favored party. The outcomes include votes in the presidential, MP, women MP, and chair contests. Models 1 and 2 include all subjects. Model 3 includes only partisans.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ , based on two-tailed tests.

little room for loss of votes due to the inclusion of party identifiers. Instead, the evidence suggests that the inclusion of partisan cues discouraged subjects from voting for independent candidates. Partisan cues decreased the probability of voting for any number of independent candidates by 18%. Partisan cues seem to have induced subjects to vote for major-party candidates instead of independents.

Second, considerably more voters expressed consistent party preferences when partisan identifiers were on the ballot. Subjects who saw partisan cues were 16% more likely to vote straight ticket than those who did not.

Third, self-identified partisans were significantly more likely to vote for copartisan candidates in the presence of partisan cues. The probability that a subject voted for all the candidates from his or her preferred party was 11% higher when partisan cues were included on the ballot than when they were



**Figure 2.** Means and 95% confidence intervals for vote outcomes by exposure to partisan cues.

Dots represent mean number of votes, or proportion of votes, by ballot types. Lines represent 95% confidence intervals. The outcomes include votes in the presidential, MP, women MP, and chair contests. Major party, minor party, and independents are the sums of votes for each type of candidate; the measures range from 0 to 4. Straight-ticket vote is a binary outcome coded 1 if subject voted for candidates from the same party and 0 otherwise. Party-ID match is the mean number of votes for candidates from a subject's preferred party; the measure ranges from 0 to 4.

not. These results suggest that party attachments exert greater influence on vote choice when partisan cues are present.

In sum, there is considerable evidence that partisan cues affect voting, even in a party system as young as Uganda's. The results shown in Table 1 are robust to an alternate methodological approach; Online Appendix F shows comparison of means test results conducted separately for Treatment 1 versus 3 (those without photographs) and for Treatment 4 versus 5 (those with photographs).<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, these results are robust to different coding decisions and alternate specifications of the model (see Online Appendix G).<sup>38</sup> Our results are not due to a selection bias based on who chose to vote. The treatment has no effect on subjects' willingness to mark the ballot or on the total number of contests marked. In addition, our coding rule for missing votes does not affect our conclusions. The foregoing analyses include all possible responses from all subjects, with missing ballot choices coded as zero, but the results do not change notably if we drop subjects who failed to mark their ballots at all, or if we drop subjects who failed to mark one or more contests.

Our findings remain unchanged when we examine alternate formulations of the outcome variables. For major-party voting, the key results remain significant if we include only the most popular party in Soroti (the FDC) instead of the two most popular parties. For straight-ticket voting, the results hold if we create a more nuanced measure. We summed the total number of down-ballot vote choices with the same partisan affiliation as the presidential vote choice.<sup>39</sup> Partisan cues significantly predict the degree of party matching between presidential and down-ballot votes. Furthermore, the results for straight-ticket voting are the same if we include only those subjects who *could* vote straight ticket based on their presidential pick. Only the FDC, NRM, and UPC fielded candidates in all four contests. Among only those subjects who voted for the FDC, NRM, or UPC presidential candidates, partisan cues significantly increased straight-ticket voting. The results also hold for party-ID voting if we restrict our sample to those who could vote for copartisans in all four contests (i.e., FDC, NRM, or UPC partisans). Finally, disaggregating our analyses to evaluate the presidential, MP, women MP, and chairperson contests separately shows that our results are not driven by just one contest. Interestingly, we find that the partisan cues have no effect on the presidential race and that cue effects are stronger if we consider only the three down-ballot contests.<sup>40</sup>

In sum, we find strong and robust evidence that the inclusion of partisan cues on ballots increased party-based voting. The strong effects of partisan cues on vote choice are striking given the newness of the party system in Uganda.

## Discussion

In this section, we provide suggestive evidence about the nature of the change in voting and the possible mechanism motivating the increase in party-based voting. Our goal here is to use available evidence to probe the nature of the processes that might be generating the observed effects on vote choice.<sup>41</sup>

### *Partisan Cues Decrease Votes for Former Copartisans and for Coethnics*

The results of additional analyses suggest that partisan cues led subjects to switch votes in predictable ways, namely, they privileged (a) their party's current candidates over independents who were formerly copartisans and (b) copartisan ties over coethnic bonds. First, as noted above, partisan cues resulted in significantly higher support for major-party candidates, and lower support for independents. The types of independents most often abandoned by subjects in the presence of partisan cues were those who were formerly copartisans of the subject. Nearly all independent candidates in Soroti were previously affiliated with a major party (Online Appendix A). Results from an ordered logit model (Table 2, column 1) indicate that partisan cues significantly decreased the number of former copartisan independents supported ( $b = -.84$ ,  $SE = 0.25$ ,  $p = .00$ ). In other words, partisan cues increased subjects' likelihood of voting for the current flag-bearer of their favored party over former affiliates of their favored party.

Second, partisan cues also seem to affect ethnic voting. Soroti County is an ethnically divided constituency, with 69.1% identifying as Iteso and 29.1% as Kumam (2002 census). If partisan cues increase party-based voting, we should expect the presence of such cues to increase willingness to support candidates from another ethnic group in instances in which copartisanship and coethnicity cross-cut. The district chairperson contest provides an excellent opportunity to test this expectation, given that the two major-party candidates came from different ethnic groups.<sup>42</sup> In that contest, George Michael Egunyu, a Kumam, was the NRM candidate, whereas Daniel Ediau of the Iteso group stood for the FDC. Logistic regression analyses indicate that partisan cues increased voting for non-coethnic candidates when including our entire subject population ( $b = .47$ ,  $SE = 0.20$ ,  $p = .02$ ; column 2, Table 2), as well as when the analysis is limited to voters who were cross-pressured, such that they could either vote for a copartisan or a coethnic major-party candidate, but not both ( $b = .64$ ,  $SE = 0.32$ ,  $p = .04$ ; column 3, Table 2). Although we cannot be certain that these changes in ethnic voting

**Table 2.** Nature of Vote Choice and Knowledge as a Possible Mechanism.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Vote for independents who had been copartisans	All subjects Vote for non-coethnic in chairperson contest	Cross-pressured subjects Vote for non-coethnic in chairperson contest	Know partisan affiliation of all candidates	Know partisan affiliation of vote choices
Party cues	-0.84*** (0.25)	0.47* (0.20)	0.64* (0.32)	-0.29 (0.59)	0.09 (0.18)
Photos	0.26 (0.25)	-0.15 (0.20)	-0.30 (0.32)	-0.47 (0.59)	-0.14 (0.18)
Constant		-0.67*** (0.17)	0.04 (0.27)	10.23*** (0.50)	
Cut points	0.66*** (0.20) 2.70*** (0.29)				-1.35*** (0.17) -0.64*** (0.16) 0.36* (0.16)
<i>n</i>	324	424	167	429	429
Model	ologit	logit	logit	OLS	ologit

Cell entries represent coefficient estimates followed by standard errors in parentheses. Outcomes are (1) total votes for independent candidates who previously were members of the subject's favored party in the MP, women MP, and chair contests; (2 and 3) vote for a non-coethnic chairperson candidate; (4) total number of candidates whose partisan affiliation the subject correctly identified from all 23 candidates in the MP, women MP, and chair contests; and (5) total number of candidates whose partisan affiliation the subject correctly identified from only those candidates for whom the subject voted in the MP, women MP, and chair contests. Model 1 includes only partisans. Model 2 includes all Iteso and Kumam subjects. Model 3 includes only subjects who could vote for either a coethnic or a copartisan chairperson, but not both. Models 4 and 5 include all subjects. OLS = ordinary least squares. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ , based on two-tailed tests.

are due to vote switching between major-party candidates, the results suggest that subjects were more likely to consider party, and less likely to consider other possible heuristics, when partisan cues were present. We are hesitant to generalize on the basis of findings from this particular election, but these results are intriguing and suggest a need for further research on how partisan cues affect ethnic voting.

## Causal Processes: Priming, Not Learning

What causal process might be responsible for the strong effects of partisan cues? Much of the literature, especially on new party systems, suggests that cues are influential because they provide voters with novel information about candidates (Birnie, 2007; Chandra, 2004; Conroy-Krutz, 2013; Ferree, 2011; Posner, 2005). Voters might care about, but be unaware of, candidates' partisan affiliations. Partisan cues could thus provide voters with actionable new information to deploy when deciding their vote.

Priming is an alternate causal mechanism to learning (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Lenz, 2009). Partisan cues might increase the salience of party characteristics over candidate characteristics, and affect vote choice accordingly. Voters might be reminded of the importance of parties in securing and distributing resources, and coordinating to achieve favorable economic and security outcomes. They also might be more likely to consider how officials tend to govern as part of organized groups, rather than as individuals. For example, a voter who would have supported a coethnic candidate, if left to focus on candidate traits, might instead vote for someone whose partisan label vividly signals his or her stance for or against President Museveni. Or, as another example, a voter who would have selected the best educated administrator for local office might be provoked by partisan cues to prioritize candidates' relationships with those who control party and state coffers. In addition, partisan cues might remind voters that party is a significant determinant of whether individual candidates are viable, thus leading them to vote strategically, even if individual-level traits suggest the candidate should be popular.

Our evidence suggests that information is *not* the causal mechanism generating the partisan cue effects we find. A priming mechanism is far more consistent with the evidence.<sup>43</sup> To evaluate whether certain ballot cues increased subjects' knowledge of candidate partisanship, thus affecting their vote choices, we asked subjects to identify the partisanship of all 23 candidates running for MP, women MP, or district chair. After marking their ballot and putting it in an envelope, subjects were shown unmarked ballots of the type matching their treatment condition and asked about the partisanship of the candidates. In other words, subjects did not have to recall information from when they marked the ballot because they were looking at the assigned ballot treatment while answering the questions. The variable *Know Partisanship All* totals the number of candidates whose party affiliation was correctly identified. Regression analysis of partisan cues' effects on knowledge of candidate partisanship yields insignificant results ( $b = -.29$ ,  $SE = 0.59$ ,  $p = .62$ ; column 4, Table 2).<sup>44</sup>

Although we expect that partisan cues do improve voter knowledge in some contexts and under some conditions, the evidence suggests that they did not do so here. Even though we presume that most voters are aware that the bus and the key are the symbols of the NRM and FDC, respectively, given the ubiquity of those parties' paraphernalia, voters were probably already significantly knowledgeable about major-party candidates by the time of our study, at the end of a long campaign. On average, subjects in the control identified the affiliation of 4.4 out of 6 (73%) major-party candidates, suggesting a ceiling effect. Although knowledge of independents' and minor-party candidates' affiliations was much lower—on average, 6.3 out of 17 (37%)—matching English-language words and symbols to party names requires certain skills and prior knowledge that our subjects might not have possessed. Perhaps subjects were unable to make sense of the symbols and labels for independent and minor-party candidates, especially given that most symbols were selected just prior to official campaigning. Subjects might not have known, for example, that a soccer ball or radio signifies that the candidate is an independent, rather than a member of some obscure party seeking to appeal to youth or music lovers, or that the lantern represents the tiny Progressive People's Party.

Analysis of an additional treatment provides further support for the idea that partisan cues affect voting through a priming, rather than learning, mechanism. In Treatment 2, we included only the name of the party, but not the party symbol. This allows us to examine whether the effect of partisan cues is mostly due to the provision of written information or the visual imagery of the party symbol. For this analysis, we restrict our sample to those who have at least some formal education, because we want to be confident that the English-language party names and acronyms could be understood. If learning is the primary mechanism, then we expect the full effect of the partisan cues to be evident when we add the party name, and there should be no additional influence from also including the symbol. If priming is the mechanism, then the insignia and colors of the party symbol could be influential, even when they provide no novel information, because visual images are more attention grabbing and stimulating than text (Graber, 1996; Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Schill, 2012; Zillmann, 2006).

The evidence most clearly supports priming, not learning (Online Appendix J). A comparison of Treatments 1 (control) and 2 (party name) for each of the five outcomes shows that providing textual information had no significant effect on voting, even though we feel confident that those included in the analysis could read the party acronyms, if not the names. However, when comparing Treatments 2 (party name) and 3 (party name and symbol), we find that there was a significant effect just from adding the visual image,

even though subjects in both treatments could presumably read the party name. Those who saw the symbol were significantly more likely to vote for major parties ( $p = .01$ ), less likely to vote for independents ( $p = .03$ ), and more likely to vote in line with their party ID ( $p = .01$ ). They were also more likely to vote straight ticket, but not significantly so ( $p = .23$ ). It seems that even in the presence of complete information, the party symbols altered vote choice, most likely by increasing the salience of party affiliation. Furthermore, the changes are nearly identical in magnitude to those found in the tests of the partisan cues together, suggesting that the full effect of the partisan cues comes from the symbols.

Our findings with regard to causal mechanism have important implications. We do not intend to argue based on this experiment that learning is never a cause of partisan cue effects. Instead, we hope to encourage scholars to reconsider their assumptions about causal mechanisms underlying cue effects. Scholars of the developing world in particular have too often assumed that cue effects are due to information acquisition without considering information-processing theories. Direct empirical tests of learning, priming, or alternate mechanisms underlying cue effects are extremely rare (Lenz, 2009). Our results suggest scholars should be attentive to a broader range of mechanisms through which partisan cues alter attitudes and behaviors, and should seek to evaluate theorized processes empirically.

Importantly, the policy and normative implications are quite different if the behavioral changes from partisan cues are the result of what people learn as opposed to how they decide (Lenz, 2009). Practitioners recommend including ballot information (especially visual images like party symbols and candidate photos) under the assumption that this helps voters overcome knowledge deficits and select preferred candidates (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, 2011; Reynolds & Steenbergen, 2006; Smith et al., 2009). We find no evidence that partisan cues altered voting by facilitating informed choice. Instead, cues may themselves shape preferences through priming. Given the proximity of exposure to ballots and vote choice, subtle cues on ballots can have large effects on vote outcomes, even if their influence on attitudes is ephemeral.

## Conclusion

Numerous studies indicate that voters in countries with established party systems rely on partisan cues to streamline their electoral decision making. However, only a handful of scholars have examined the effects of partisan cues in new party systems, and none have studied vote choice as outcomes. The paucity of scholarship on partisan cues in such settings is likely

attributable to researchers' expectation that partisan affiliation is of limited utility in new party systems. Voters there are assumed to utilize other cues, such as candidates' ascriptive identity or regional ties.

We theorize that, even in new party systems without historical legacies, partisan cues can influence voters because they affect judgments about candidates' capabilities, preferences, and viability. First, voters can use partisan cues to assess candidates' capabilities in areas such as economic development and physical security. When labels emphasize candidates as copartisans of a ruler, those satisfied with that leader's performance are more likely to assess his or her copartisans as similarly capable. Dissatisfied citizens, however, are likely to punish candidates when cues highlight that they are copartisans of the incumbent. Moreover, voters might conclude that candidates whose partisan identity suggests that they are connected to powerful individuals have greater capacity to deliver patronage. Second, voters can use partisan cues to discern candidates' preferences in areas such as goods distribution and democratic development. Namely, partisan labels can help voters discern which candidates share a well-known leader's general preferences, and which do not. Third, partisan cues might signal candidate viability. Therefore, partisan labels can affect vote preferences even when parties are too young to establish psychological ties with voters or offer distinct party platforms. In sum, parties might become meaningful to voters, and partisan cues can affect political decision making, very soon after the establishment of new party systems.

We tested the effects of partisan cues on voting in Uganda when multi-party political competition was only 5 years old, and partisan cue effects would seem especially unlikely. Subjects were asked to indicate their support for real-world national- and local-level candidates on mock ballots that included (or excluded) party identifiers. The experiment was conducted just days prior to the actual election using procedures similar to those used at actual polling stations, thus enhancing the external validity of the study. The study provides an extremely rigorous test of the partisan cue thesis given that we examine the influence of a subtle cue on vote choice for real candidates at the end of a campaign in a multiparty system that had been in existence for such a short time.

Our experiment demonstrates that voters in new party systems do, in fact, use partisan cues in their electoral decision making; the presence of partisan identifiers increased party-based voting. Subjects who received ballots with party names and symbols were more likely to (a) vote for major parties, (b) avoid voting for independents, (c) cast straight-ticket ballots, and (d) vote for copartisans. Furthermore, the presence of partisan cues did not help subjects accurately identify the partisanship of candidates, and the party names

alone did not affect vote choice, which suggests that effects are not due to learning. Instead, the visual images of the party symbols altered voting, likely because they primed partisan considerations. These results challenge the assumption that cue effects in new party systems mainly occur through information provision, rather than through the activation of alternate decision-making criteria.

Party experts need to broaden their considerations of where, how, and why partisan cues affect outcomes such as vote choice. The literature established through examination primarily of the United States provides insights into the types of cues that voters in myriad types of environments use, but the mechanisms at work are likely different in newer party systems than they are in established ones such as the United States. Our findings suggest a need for further research into the magnitude of partisan cue effects on attitudinal formation and behavior, and the mechanisms through which these effects occur, in a broader range of contexts.

### **Authors' Note**

The authors take credit for all remaining errors and omissions.

### **Acknowledgments**

The authors thank Diana Mutz, Robin Pemantle, John Bullock, Guy Grossman, Gina Lambright, Nahomi Ichino, three anonymous reviewers, and participants at the Harvard Ash Center Seminar Series, the Experiments in Governance and Politics meeting, Michigan State University, the Midwest Group on African Political Economy meeting, the American Political Science Association annual meeting, and the International Communication Association annual conference for their helpful suggestions and insights. They also thank John Kavuma, James Odongo, Jin Woo Kim, and Douglas Allen for their assistance with the research. Data collection was conducted by Synovate Uganda (now Ipsos Uganda), and the authors thank all enumerators, team and project managers, translators, and data-entry staff for their hard work.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **Funding**

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School provided financial support for this study, while Dr. Conroy-Krutz acknowledges support for fieldwork from the National Science Foundation (SES-1024031).

## Notes

1. For a review of these arguments, see Lupu and Stokes (2010).
2. Even in situations of information scarcity, most citizens are likely to have formed an opinion on the president's performance. Moreover, voters should be able to make these assessments even if the president has only been in power for a short period of time. For example, research on economic voting finds citizens focus primarily on election-year performance, suggesting that they do not rely on long periods of time to assess incumbent competence (Achen & Bartels, 2004; Alesina, Cohen, & Roubini, 1993; Fair, 1978; Healy & Lenz, 2014; Kiewiet, 1983; Kramer, 1971).
3. In situations in which local officials play significant roles in determining patronage distributions, the voter might consider it advantageous to elect a local representative who shares the partisanship of whatever party is dominant locally. Note that this party might not match the party dominant nationally.
4. Here, the party's performance at the relevant level is important. For example, in assessing a candidate's viability for a legislative seat, the voter will likely consider how the candidate's party performed locally, rather than nationally.
5. It is possible that voters in such settings will have psychological attachments to certain elites, and vote for associated parties accordingly. In fact, we expect that sentiments toward elites, many of whom were politically or socially important prior to forming a party, constitute the basis for party-citizen connections in many countries with nascent party systems. This mechanism, however, is distinct from that proposed in the U.S.-based literature, which focuses on psychological attachments to *parties*, rather than to leaders who hold central positions in them. We discuss this mechanism further with regard to the Ugandan case.
6. We return to this point in the discussion.
7. Studies have focused on Africa (Arriola, 2013; Brambor, Clark, & Golder, 2007; Elischer, 2013; Kuenzi & Lambright, 2001; LeBas, 2011; Lindberg, 2007; Mozaffar, Scarritt, & Galaich, 2003; Riedl, 2014), Eastern Europe (Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, & Toka, 1999; Moser, 1999), Latin America (Mainwaring & Scully, 1995; Roberts & Wibbels, 1999), and Asia (Chhibber & Kollman, 1998; Hicken & Kuhonta, 2014).
8. The treatments' complexity also makes it difficult to isolate the potential effects of cues on decision-making processes from mechanical effects of different vote technologies on ballot marking. The treatments varied considerably in the logistical challenges that subjects faced when trying to locate their favored candidate from more than 70 candidates and 24 parties.
9. In addition, the party system in our case, Uganda, is younger than those studied by others, including Mexico (Merolla, Stephenson, & Zechmeister, 2008), Brazil (Samuels & Zucco, 2014), Argentina (Calvo, Escolar, & Pomares, 2009; Katz, Alvarez, Escolar, & Pomares, 2011), and former Communist systems of Russia and Poland (Brader & Tucker, 2012; Brader, Tucker, & Duell, 2013).
10. For observational analyses of partisan cues on ballots in established democracies, see Meredith and Grissom (2010); Schaffner and Streb (2002); Schaffner,

- Streb, and Wright (2007); and Welch and Bledsoe (1986). For experimental studies, see Buckley, Collins, and Reidy (2007), Klein and Baum (2001), and Reynolds and Steenbergen (2006).
11. Two parties that field candidates pre-date the current multiparty era—the Democratic Party (DP), founded in the mid-1950s, and the Uganda People’s Congress (UPC), founded in 1960—but neither enjoys significant support.
  12. Furthermore, parties in Uganda are not simply coterminous with ethnic identities. The respective leaders of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) and Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) in recent elections, Museveni and Dr. Kizza Besigye, are both from closely related ethnic groups in the Western Region, and both parties draw significant electoral support from all regions of the country (save the Western Region, where the NRM is overwhelmingly dominant).
  13. Alternatively, voters might consider candidates’ abilities to access resources from local governments, which have some ability to affect distributions (Lambright, 2011). Parties other than the NRM control some local governments, especially in urban areas and regions such as the North.
  14. The FDC won a plurality of presidential votes at 6,699 polling stations (33.9% of the total) in 2006.
  15. Independents constituted 41.8% of candidates for Parliament and 40.7% for district chairmanships, but they won only 12.6% of parliamentary seats and 12.5% of district chairmanships.
  16. In 2011, Uganda was among 46% of the sub-Saharan countries ranked as partly free, according to Freedom House’s evaluation. Only 19% of the countries in the region were considered free at that time, whereas 35% were considered not free at all (Freedom House, 2011).
  17. In a pre-election survey conducted by Afrobarometer (January 2011), 44% of Soroti County respondents said that the country’s economy was “very” or “fairly bad.” Thirty-five percent of Ugandans responded similarly.
  18. Fifty-six percent of Soroti respondents in the Afrobarometer said that they were dissatisfied with democracy in Uganda (vs. 28% country-wide).
  19. The NRM saw its fortunes in Soroti decline significantly between elections in 2001—when Museveni won a near plurality (43.5%) and the party took the local parliamentary seat—and 2006. This decline is likely attributable, at least in part, to a Lord’s Resistance Army attack on Soroti in 2003, which left many residents with a sense that the central government was not offering them adequate protection. Overall, 50% of Soroti residents in the Afrobarometer said they were dissatisfied with Museveni’s performance (vs. 18% nationally).
  20. We cannot determine whether a vote for an FDC candidate in a down-ballot race is expressive or strategic. Few likely believed that the FDC would win a parliamentary majority. However, most citizens are concerned with constituency services rather than lawmaking. It is not clear whether voters would believe that electing NRM or FDC candidates in down-ballot races would be more likely to generate office holders capable of distributing resources. On one hand, NRM-affiliated officials likely have more access to the party’s substantial largess,

while, on the other hand, FDC-affiliated officials might have more access to resources available to local government, in which the opposition has a much more substantial presence.

21. We cannot directly test the effect of partisan cues in pro-government areas given our data. However, our evidence from Soroti is suggestive in that the total vote for the NRM is unaffected by partisan cues for our sample as a whole, but NRM candidates did gain votes from NRM supporters when partisan cues were present.
22. We designed the experiment to examine the effects of photos on voting in addition to testing the effects of partisan cues (see Conroy-Krutz & Moehler, 2015). In regression analyses here, we control for the photo treatment.
23. The Electoral Commission (EC) requires that independent candidates select an object from a pre-designated list, on a first-come, first-served basis. Independent presidential candidates can design their own symbols, subject to EC approval. The object appears on the ballot in the same location as would a party symbol. We include (or exclude) the object (e.g., soccer ball, chair, etc.) in the same way that we include (or exclude) party symbols.
24. The experimental ballots were similar in size, shape, and design to official ballots, although they were also clearly marked as samples and lacked the EC logo that appears on official ballots. In addition, subjects were reminded before the ballot exercise and at the end of the survey that the ballots they had “cast” were not official, and those wishing to vote would have to go to the appropriate polling station on designated election days.
25. Uganda is divided into 112 districts, each of which elects one woman MP.
26. Each district elects a chairperson, which is the highest local-government position. All offices, with the exception of president, are elected by plurality in single-member districts. The president is elected by majority, though no presidential election has ever required a second round.
27. The minimum number of candidates in a contest was six (district chair) and the maximum was nine (MP). See Online Appendix A for a list of candidates from each contest, including their current and former partisan affiliation, ethnicity, and percent of support among subjects in the control.
28. These envelopes contained no identifying information about the subject but were marked with a serial number that allowed later matching to the subject’s completed questionnaire.
29. Questionnaire numbers were used to select subjects ( $N = 897$ ) based on Kish grid requirements, as well as to assign treatment conditions. An unanticipated interaction occurred, whereby some positions on the Kish grid did not have equal probabilities of being assigned to each treatment. A detailed description of the issue and our strategies for addressing it are available in Online Appendix B. For all analyses in this article, we include only subjects from positions on the Kish grid that had an equal probability of being assigned to comparison conditions ( $N = 529$ ). This maintains the experimental design, but does cost considerable statistical power and limits external validity, in that the analysis population is not representative of the population at the within-household level. The results hold

- when using an alternate strategy of including all subjects (and thus a representative sample) and controlling for factors associated with subject selection and treatment assignment (Online Appendix C).
30. Details on these variables and the reasons for their inclusion in balance checks are reported in Online Appendix D.
  31. We discuss additional analyses involving Treatment 2 in the “Discussion” section.
  32. The descriptive statistics, coding rules, and question wording for the outcome measures described in this section can be found in Online Appendix E.
  33. Alternate approaches, such as use of interaction terms, would be unwieldy given that there are 31 candidates across the four races; seven parties, plus independent candidates; and multiple outcome measures of interest. The primary models presented here include all four races, and code all unmarked ballot contests as zero.
  34. Minor parties included the DP, UPC, People’s Development Party, People’s Progressive Party, and Uganda Federal Alliance. The most popular of the minor parties in 2011, the UPC, received just 1.3% of the presidential vote in Soroti.
  35. A closer match between vote choice and party ID in partisan cue conditions could be because cues caused partisans to vote according to their partisan preferences, or because cues caused subjects to report feeling close to the party of their favored candidates. Theoretically, the former is more likely, but we cannot rule out the latter. We opted for a post-treatment measure of party ID because a pre-test mentioning parties may have biased how subjects marked their ballots.
  36. Among subjects assigned to the control, only 6% of votes in the women MP race, 11% the MP race, and 3% in the chairperson race were for minor-party candidates.
  37. The results are consistent with only one exception: The difference of means between Treatments 4 and 5 for party-ID match is not significant ( $p = .14$ ). Online Appendix F also shows the means and standard deviations for each treatment.
  38. The descriptive statistics, coding rules, and question wording for the robustness checks can be found in Online Appendix H.
  39. An individual coded as 3 would have voted for candidates from the same party in all races. One coded as 2 would have voted for a candidate for one down-ballot race whose partisanship did not match his or her presidential pick, etc.
  40. This between-race variation is consistent with literature suggesting that cues are less influential in contests of the highest salience (Nicholson, 2012), but with only four races, we are unable to test effects of contest-level characteristics such as salience.
  41. The descriptive statistics, coding rules, and question wording for these analyses can be found in Online Appendix I.
  42. In the MP race, both major-party candidates were Kumam, whereas all candidates in the district women’s MP race were Iteso. None of our subjects had coethnic presidential candidates.
  43. Evaluating causal mechanisms is a difficult task with respect to causal inference (Green, Ha, & Bullock, 2010). We provide suggestive evidence by

examining whether our experimental treatments are associated with the hypothesized mechanism.

44. Because subjects might ignore information about candidates who are not of interest, we also evaluate a less-demanding criterion for learning. *Know Partisanship Voted* totals the number of correctly identified party affiliations only for the three candidates that the subject marked on the ballots. The results here are also insignificant ( $b = -.09$ ,  $SE = 0.18$ ,  $p = .62$ ; column 5, Table 2). Our findings for both outcomes are not sensitive to the coding of non-responses. Moreover, we see no evidence that the partisan identifiers increased knowledge about former partisans who are now independents ( $b = -.08$ ,  $SE = 0.34$ ,  $p = .81$ ).

## References

- ACE Electoral Knowledge Network. (2007). *Photographs and icons on ballot papers*. Retrieved from <http://aceproject.org/electoral-advice/archive/questions/replies/705395426>
- ACE Electoral Knowledge Network. (2011). *Ballot paper design*. Retrieved from <http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/vo/voc/voc02/voc02a>
- Achen, C., & Bartels, L. (2004, September). *Musical chairs: Pocketbook voting and the limits of democratic accountability*. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, IL.
- Alesina, A., Cohen, G., & Roubini, N. (1993). Electoral business cycles in industrial democracies. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 9, 1-24.
- Arriola, L. (2013). *Multiethnic coalitions in Africa*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Baldwin, K. (2013). Why vote with the chief? *American Journal of Political Science*, 57, 794-809.
- Birmir, J. (2007). *Ethnicity and electoral politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Bleck, J., & van de Walle, N. (2011). Parties and issues in francophone West Africa. *Democratization*, 18, 1125-1145.
- Bleck, J., & van de Walle, N. (2013). Valence issues in African elections. *Comparative Political Studies*, 46, 1394-1421.
- Brader, T., & Tucker, J. (2012). Following the party's lead. *Comparative Politics*, 44, 403-420.
- Brader, T., Tucker, J., & Duell, D. (2013). Which parties can lead opinion? *Comparative Political Studies*, 46, 1485-1517.
- Brambor, T., Clark, W., & Golder, M. (2007). Are African party systems different? *Electoral Studies*, 26, 315-323.
- Buckley, F., Collins, N., & Reidy, T. (2007). Ballot paper photographs and low-information elections. *Politics*, 27, 174-181.
- Bullock, J. (2011). Elite influence on public opinion in an informed electorate. *American Political Science Review*, 105, 496-515.
- Calvo, E., Escolar, M., & Pomares, J. (2009). Ballot design and split ticket voting in multiparty systems. *Electoral Studies*, 28, 218-231.

- Campbell, A., Converse, P., Miller, W., & Stokes, D. (1960). *The American voter*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Carbone, G. (2008). *No-party democracy? Ugandan politics in comparative perspective*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Chaiken, S. (1980). Heuristic versus systematic information processing and the use of source versus message cues in persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *39*, 752-766.
- Chandra, K. (2004). *Why ethnic parties succeed*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Chhibber, P. K., & Kollman, K. (1998). Party aggregation and the number of parties in India and the United States. *American Political Science Review*, *92*, 329-342.
- Conroy-Krutz, J. (2013). Information and ethnic politics in Africa. *British Journal of Political Science*, *43*, 345-373.
- Conroy-Krutz, J., & Lewis, D. (2011). *Mapping ideologies in African landscapes* (Afrobarometer Working Paper Series No. 129). Retrieved from <http://afrobarometer.org/publications/wp129-mapping-ideologies-african-landscapes>
- Conroy-Krutz, J., & Logan, C. (2012). Museveni and the 2011 Ugandan election. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, *50*, 625-655.
- Conroy-Krutz, J., & Moehler, D. (2015). *Faces on the ballot: Priming effects and ethnic voting in the developing world*. Manuscript in preparation.
- Converse, P. (1969). Of time and partisan stability. *Comparative Political Studies*, *2*, 139-171.
- Downs, A. (1957). *An economic theory of democracy*. New York, NY: Harper.
- Elischer, S. (2013). *Political parties in Africa*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Fair, R. (1978). The effect of economic events on votes for president. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, *60*, 159-173.
- Ferree, K. (2011). *Framing the race in South Africa*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ferree, K., Powell, B., Jr., & Scheiner, E. (2014). Context, electoral rules, and party systems. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *17*, 421-439.
- Fowler, J., & Kam, C. (2007). Beyond the self. *Journal of Politics*, *69*, 811-825.
- Freedom House. (2011). Freedom in the world 2011 [Data file]. Retrieved from <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2011#.VJN-ikAEA>
- Gerber, A., & Green, D. (1998). Rational learning and partisan attitudes. *American Journal of Political Science*, *42*, 794-818.
- Goren, P. (2005). Party identification and core political values. *American Journal of Political Science*, *49*, 882-897.
- Goren, P., Federico, C., & Kittilson, M. (2009). Source cues, partisan identities, and political value expression. *American Journal of Political Science*, *53*, 805-820.
- Graber, D. (1996). Say it with pictures. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *546*, 85-96.

- Green, D., Ha, S., & Bullock, J. (2010). Enough already about “Black Box” experiments: Studying mediation is more difficult than most scholars suppose. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 628, 200-208.
- Green, D., Palmquist, B., & Schickler, E. (2002). *Partisan hearts and minds*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Greene, K. (2011). Campaign persuasion and nascent partisanship in Mexico’s new democracy. *American Journal of Political Science*, 55, 398-416.
- Healy, A., & Lenz, G. (2014). Substituting the end for the whole: Why voters respond primarily to the election-year economy. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58, 31-47.
- Hicken, A., & Kuhonta, E. (Eds.). (2014). *Party system institutionalization in Asia*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Huckfeldt, R., Levine, J., Morgan, W., & Sprague, J. (1999). Accessibility and the political utility of partisan and ideological orientations. *American Journal of Political Science*, 43, 888-911.
- Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. (1987). *News that matters*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Izama, A., & Wilkerson, M. (2011). Museveni’s triumph and weakness. *Journal of Democracy*, 22(3), 64-78.
- Jennings, M. K., Stoker, L., & Bowers, J. (2009). Politics across generations. *Journal of Politics*, 71, 782-799.
- Kam, C. (2005). Who toes the party line? *Political Behavior*, 27, 163-182.
- Katz, G., Alvarez, R., Escobar, M., & Pomares, J. (2011). Assessing the impact of alternative voting technologies on multi-party elections. *Political Behavior*, 33, 1-24.
- Keefer, P., & Vlaicu, R. (2008). Democracy, credibility, and clientelism. *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*, 24, 371-406.
- Kiewiet, D. (1983). *Macroeconomics and micropolitics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Kimball, D. (2003). Decline in ticket splitting and the increasing salience of party labels by models of voting in presidential elections. In H. Weisberg & C. Wilcox (Eds.), *Models of voting in presidential elections* (pp. 161-179). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Kitschelt, H., Mansfeldova, Z., Markowski, R., & Toka, G. (1999). *Post-communist party systems*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Klein, D., & Baum, L. (2001). Ballot information and voting decisions in judicial elections. *Political Research Quarterly*, 54, 709-728.
- Koter, D. (2013). King makers: Local leaders and ethnic politics in Africa. *World Politics*, 65, 187-232.
- Kramer, G. (1971). Short-term fluctuations in U.S. voting behavior. *American Political Science Review*, 65, 131-143.
- Kuenzi, M., & Lambright, G. (2001). Party system institutionalization in 30 African countries. *Party Politics*, 7, 437-468.
- Lambright, G. (2011). *Decentralization in Uganda*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

- Lau, R., Andersen, D., & Redlawsk, D. (2008). An exploration of correct voting in recent U.S. presidential elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, *52*, 395-411.
- Lau, R., & Redlawsk, D. (2001). Advantages and disadvantages of cognitive heuristics in political decision making. *American Journal of Political Science*, *45*, 951-971.
- LeBas, A. (2011). *From protest to parties*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Lenz, G. (2009). Learning and opinion change, not priming. *American Journal of Political Science*, *53*, 821-837.
- Lindberg, S. (2007). Institutionalization of party systems? *Government & Opposition*, *42*, 215-241.
- Lupu, N., & Stokes, S. (2010). Democracy, interrupted: Regime change and partisanship in twentieth-century Argentina. *Electoral Studies*, *29*, 91-104.
- Magaloni, B. (2006). *Voting for autocracy*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Mainwaring, S., & Scully, T. (1995). *Building democratic institutions*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- McKelvey, R., & Ordeshook, P. (1972). A general theory of the calculus of voting. In J. Herndon & J. Bernd (Eds.), *Mathematical applications in political science VI* (pp. 32-78). Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Meredith, M., & Grissom, J. A. (2010). *Partisanship in local elections: Regression discontinuity estimates from unconventional school board races*. Retrieved from <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~marcmere/workingpapers/MeredithGrissomPartisanship.pdf>
- Merolla, J., Stephenson, L., & Zechmeister, E. (2008). Can Canadians take a hint? The (in)effectiveness of party labels as information shortcuts in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique*, *41*, 673-696.
- Mitchell, A. A., & Olson, J. C. (1981). Are product attribute beliefs the only mediator of advertising effects on brand attitude? *Journal of Marketing Research*, *18*, 318-332.
- Moser, R. G. (1999). Electoral systems and the number of parties in postcommunist states. *World Politics*, *51*, 359-384.
- Mozaffar, S., Scarritt, J., & Galaich, G. (2003). Electoral institutions, ethnopolitical cleavages, and party systems in Africa's emerging democracies. *American Political Science Review*, *97*, 379-390.
- Museveni, Y. K. (1997). *Sowing the mustard seed*. London, England: Macmillan.
- Mwenda, A., & Tangri, R. (2005). Patronage politics, donor reforms, and regime consolidation in Uganda. *African Affairs*, *104*, 449-467.
- Nicholson, S. (2012). Polarizing cues. *American Journal of Political Science*, *56*, 52-66.
- Petty, R., & Cacioppo, T. (1986). *Communication and persuasion*. New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.
- Posner, D. (2005). *Institutions and ethnic politics in Africa*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Rahn, W. (1993). The role of partisan stereotypes in information processing about political candidates. *American Journal of Political Science*, 37, 472-496.
- Reynolds, A., & Steenbergen, M. (2006). How the world votes. *Electoral Studies*, 25, 570-598.
- Riedl, R. (2014). *Authoritarian origins of democratic party systems in Africa*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Roberts, K. M., & Wibbels, E. (1999). Party systems and electoral volatility in Latin America. *American Political Science Review*, 93, 575-590.
- Rubongoya, J. (2007). *Regime hegemony in Museveni's Uganda*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Samuels, D., & Zucco, C., Jr. (2014). The power of partisanship in Brazil. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58, 212-225.
- Schaffner, B., & Streb, M. (2002). The partisan heuristic in low-information elections. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 66, 559-581.
- Schaffner, B., Streb, M., & Wright, G. (2007). A new look at the republican advantage in nonpartisan elections. *Political Research Quarterly*, 60, 240-249.
- Schill, D. (2012). The visual image and the political image. *Review of Communication*, 12, 118-142.
- Smith, B., Laskowski, S., & Lowry, S. (2009). Implications of graphics on usability and accessibility for the voter. In P. Ryan & B. Schoenmakers (Eds.), *E-Voting and identity* (pp. 54-74). Berlin, Germany: Springer.
- Snyder, J., Jr., & Ting, M. (2002). An informational rationale for political parties. *American Journal of Political Science*, 46, 90-110.
- Tripp, A. M. (2010). *Museveni's Uganda*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment under uncertainty. *Science*, 185, 1124-1131.
- van de Walle, N. (2003). Presidentialism and clientelism in Africa's emerging party systems. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41, 297-321.
- Welch, S., & Bledsoe, T. (1986). The partisan consequences of nonpartisan elections and the changing nature of urban politics. *American Journal of Political Science*, 30, 128-139.
- Zillmann, D. (2006). Exemplification effects in the promotion of safety and health. *Journal of Communication*, 56(Suppl. 1), S221-S237.

## Author Biographies

**Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz** is an assistant professor of political science at Michigan State University. His research focuses on how individuals in sub-Saharan Africa make political decisions in various information environments. He also studies campaign effects, clientelism, and vote buying, and the development of mass media in the region.

**Devra C. Moehler** is an assistant professor in the Annenberg School for Communication at University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on how political communication affects democratic culture in countries undergoing political transitions. She studies

how the partisan content of messages affects group polarization, political engagement, and the perceived legitimacy of democratic institutions.

**Rosario Aguilar** is an assistant professor in political science at the Center for Research and Teaching in Economics (CIDE) in Mexico City. Her current research focuses on the effect of campaign communication and prejudice on voters' behavior and attitudes. Her work has been published in *Electoral Studies* and the *Latin American Research Review*.