Partisanship, Expertise, or Connections? A Conjoint Survey Experiment on Lobbyist Hiring Decisions*

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Abstract

Lobbyists are important agents of organized interests. While prior studies have investigated the observed hiring patterns of interest groups, conclusions about the demand for lobbyist characteristics may be confounded by the availability of lobbyists with certain characteristics. To assess the demand for lobbyists with expertise, connections, and who share groupsâ preferences, we use a conjoint survey experiment to examine the hiring preferences for lobbyists. We find that organized interests prefer lobbyists with policy-specific expertise and the necessary connections to get access to decision-makers, but find little evidence that connections are more valuable than expertise. We also find that organized interests prefer lobbyists who share their political ideology, but that this preference diminishes when the hiring organization is not aligned ideologically with the party in unified control of government. Overall, our study paints a more nuanced picture of the role of preferences and connections in lobbying than many would expect.

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While studies of organized interests[1] typically conceptualize of them as unitary actors who seek to influence the policymaking process, policy advocacy work is conducted by the individual lobbyists employed by the interest group. Because most interests lack lobbying expertise, they rely in large part on their lobbyists to shape and execute their advocacy strategies (Drutman 2015; Kersh 2002). Subsequently, lobbyists' knowledge and experiences enable them to serve as gatekeepers for interests who want to influence resource-constrained decision-makers through persuasion, providing information, and conveying subsidies (Hall and Deardorff 2006; Hirsch et al. 2021; LaPira and Thomas 2017; Pereira 2022). Thus, understanding *what* lobbyists are hired for reveals substantial information about the policy and representational impacts of lobbying generally.

Though vast quantities of ink have been spent on the activities lobbyists conduct, the representativeness of their preferences, and lobbyists' ability to influence public policy (Ban and You 2019; Baumgartner et al. 2009; Haeder and Yackee 2015; Grose et al. 2022; Boräng and Naurin 2022), scholars have markedly less insight on why organized interests select types of certain lobbyists to represent them. In a recent innovation, some observational studies have started to use the amount of revenue lobbyists generate to explore how lobbyists' individual traits affect the "value" special interests ascribe to them (e.g., Furnas, Heaney, and LaPira 2019; McCrain 2018; Strickland 2020). However, while lobbyist characteristics such as substantive expertise and political connections are found to make them more attractive for interests, few studies attempt to discern the *relative* value these characteristics and others afford lobbyists. Those that do examine the relative value of traits argue that lobbyists' connections to policymakers are their most coveted assets (Ban, Palmer, and Schneer 2019; Belli and Beyers 2023; Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi 2014; Blanes i Vidal, Draca, and Fons-Rosen 2012; but see Shepherd and You 2020; Coen and Vannoni 2016 for the opposite perspective).

[1]For brevity, we will use 'interests' to denote (special) interest groups and organized interests in the remainder of the text.

While these observational studies have been highly innovative in a number of ways, they remain vulnerable to several inferential challenges that may lead to mistaken conclusions about the *demand* for lobbyists. First, since we only observe realized lobbying contracts between interests and persons who enter into lobbying, and because the revenue a lobbyist generates is determined jointly by the the supply and demand for her skills and experience, it is difficult to determine whether certain lobbyist characteristics command large premiums because interests highly value those traits or because few lobbyists possess those traits. While congressional staffers-turned-lobbyists are typically the subject of the political economy research, they represent roughly only 10% of the population of registered lobbyists in our time period (Shepherd and You 2020). There is little prior knowledge about when these lobbyists are in more or less demand relative to other potential hires that are also in small supply, such as directors of policy institutes or think tanks, and individuals with unique policy expertise. Second, because the lobbyist characteristics hypothesized to be valuable to interests tend to be correlated (e.g., revolving door lobbyists whose government experience provides both expertise and connections), it can be difficult to disentangle their independent effects on interests' prioritization of various lobbyist traits using observational data alone.

Clarifying the relative value interests assign to lobbyists' characteristics is important because it fundamentally shapes the normative assessment of the lobbying industry. For instance, if interests prioritize lobbyists' connections to policymakers, we may fear that well-resourced interests, who typically represent the preferences of business and the upper-class and can afford to retain the best-networked lobbyists (Grossmann, Mahmood, and Isaac 2021), are uniquely advantaged to exert access and influence through lobbying. While interests may consider myriad factors when hiring lobbyists, we focus on four characteristics previous studies identify as central to the labor market value interests assign to lobbyists: expertise in the substantive policy areas relevant to interests; expertise in the policymaking process (LaPira and Thomas 2017; Salisbury et al. 1989); connections to policymakers (Belli and Bursens 2023; Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi 2014; Blanes i Vidal, Draca, and Fons-Rosen 2012;

Furnas, Heaney, and LaPira 2019); and the alignment of lobbyists' ideological preferences to those of the interest (Hirsch et al. 2021).

One approach to resolving the inferential challenges we identify is an experiment that manipulates the characteristics of the lobbyists an interest may choose from. We execute such a pre-registered conjoint experiment[2] experiment embedded in a survey of political elites with intimate knowledge of and experience with this hiring process—United States federal lobbyists and policy advocates.[3] Our experiment simulates the hiring process by presenting respondents with job applicant profiles whose randomly-generated characteristics convey information about the applicants' expertise, connections, and preferences (i.e., partisanship, ideology) and asking them to indicate which applicant they would prefer to interview. Crucially, by randomly manipulating the backgrounds of the applicants our respondents can choose from, we hold constant the supply of lobbyists with various characteristics, allowing us to isolate the preference for certain traits over others. Thereby we remove the confounding effect of lobbyist supply, which threatens inferences about the (relative) value of lobbyist characteristics in existing observational work. Further, unlike previous research which has focused on observed outcomes, our approach enables us to identify the relative demand interests have for each lobbyist characteristic.

Our results indicate that interests' hiring decisions are influenced by each of the four characteristics we identify, though some are more central in shaping organized interests' hiring decisions than others. First, we find that interests place substantial weight on lobbyists' substantive and procedural expertise and their connections to people in government. However, counter to much of the existing research, which emphasizes political connections as the most

[2]An anonymized pre-registriation plan is attached as an appendix along with this submission.

[3]As we note in our Research Design section, over 80% of our respondents indicated they were "sometimes," "often," or "always" involved in the hiring process when their organization recruits new lobbyists.

important trait among lobbyists (Blanes i Vidal, Draca, and Fons-Rosen 2012; Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi 2014), we find that the demand for substantive policy expertise is equal to that associated with connections. Second, we find that organized interests avoid hiring lobbyists with opposing ideological preferences. This effect, however, is substantively small and only manifests when the interest is aligned with the party in control of Congress and the White House. Given the smaller magnitude and context-specific nature of this effect, questions of ideological and partisan faithfulness appear secondary to the human capital of lobbyists.

This paper adds to our understanding of how organized interests navigate to shape policy outcomes in two ways. First, existing research paints a normatively troubling picture of the role of political connections in lobbying wherein connections most benefit interests representing business and the upper-class who can most easily afford them (Blanes i Vidal, Draca, and Fons-Rosen 2012; Luechinger and Moser 2020). However, to make such a normative judgement, we need to benchmark the demand for connections against other important lobbyist characteristics. Our findings show that while connections are important, they do not dominate expertise. Further, by assessing the relative value of these traits in an experimental setting unique to this literature, we facilitate direct comparisons and alleviate concerns that typically plague observational studies of lobbying, such as unobserved lobbyist ability (De Figueiredo and Richter 2014). This design also demonstrates some particular features of the lobbying labor market, including a relatively low demand for prior lobbying experience (compared to other traits) and, at least in the initial hiring, an interesting unimportant value in partisan alignment. While this study focuses on the United States lobbying context, largely due to availability of contact information of lobbyists, we suggest that its theoretical underpinnings and, thus, conclusions apply to a much more general set of cases (e.g. Belli and Beyers 2023; Belli and Bursens 2023; Luechinger and Moser 2020)

Hiring Effective Lobbyists

The critical role that lobbyists play in democratic politics stems from the gatekeeping function they perform. Organized interests hire them to convey policy preferences to policymakers, who in turn meet with lobbyists, because they offer resources needed to legislate effectively (Hirsch et al. 2021; Grossman and Helpman 2001; Hall and Deardorff 2006; Rasmussen and Reher 2023).

To lobby successfully, organized interests have to construct high quality, workable policy proposals that solve issues facing decision-makers, gain access to those decision-makers to deliver the input, and to help steer the proposal through the legislative process. Extant studies identify four lobbyist characteristics organized interests can use to reach their goals: 1) procedural and 2) substantive expertise, 3) connections to policymakers, and 4) ideological and partisan alignment with policymakers. We describe the importance of each of these characteristics and our expectations concerning how they affect hiring decisions in turn.[4]

Expertise

If organized interests want to maximize their capacity to deliver high quality input for policymakers, they will want to hire lobbyists who possess the requisite expertise to navigate the policymaking process. Such expertise includes proficiency in the policies in specific issue domains—substantive expertise—as well as mastery of the how the policymaking process works—procedural expertise (LaPira and Thomas 2017). In the former case, lobbying in a given issue area requires understanding how status quo policies work, what policy alternatives exist, and how policy changes are expected to affect policy outcomes. These details vary widely across issue areas; for instance, understanding how federal infrastructure funding

[4]Our expectations reflect pre-registered hypotheses, though they utilize more generic language than used in the pre-registration document (available at [redeacted]) for ease of exposition.

formulas work provides little insight on how companies secure oil exploration permits. Because resource-constrained legislators who lack deep understanding of many issues often rely on lobbyists and the interests they represent to discern the state of the world (Grossman and Helpman 2001; Pereira 2022) and to design policy that advances their legislative goals (Hall and Deardorff 2006), interests can make themselves valuable to legislators and enhance the likelihood their preferred policies will succeed by employing lobbyists with deep substantive policy expertise.

In the latter case, while many organized interests may have broad policy visions, they often lack the ability to translate them into workable policy proposals and to leverage the arcane policymaking process to manifest them. Lobbyists with procedural expertise of how the policymaking process works can help interests refine these abstract visions into concrete policy actions that enable them to pursue their preferences and guard against actions adverse to their preferences (Drutman 2015). Thus, to promote their policy priorities and understand policy consequences, interests must also retain lobbyists who understand how policy is made and unmade (Belli and Beyers 2023; LaPira and Thomas 2017; Salisbury et al. 1989). Thus, we expect that interests are more likely to pursue lobbyists who possess higher levels of substantive and procedural expertise.

Connections

While valuable in its own right, expertise is of limited value without a way for lobbyists to apply that expertise to policymakers. Accordingly, across policymaking venues, both policymakers and interests routinely report that access to policymakers is critical for interests to advance their preferences (Baumgartner et al. 2009; Levine 2009; Schlozman and Tierney 1986). However, interests can have difficulty securing access, such as direct contacts with policymakers, because policymakers are inundated with requests for their time from competing interests and have difficulty discerning which interests are credible and worthy of their attention (Grossman and Helpman 2001; Hall and Deardorff 2006).

Interpersonal connections play a key role in reducing the transaction costs policymakers face in trying to assess the credibility and validate the information interests present. While these connections can be built through repeated professional interactions wherein lobbyists demonstrate their credibility over time, they are often associated with shared experiences between policymakers and lobbyists such as lobbyists' prior service in the same or a closely related governmental unit (Belli and Bursens 2023; Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi 2014; Blanes i Vidal, Draca, and Fons-Rosen 2012; McCrain 2018). Because these shared experiences can provide policymakers additional information about the trustworthiness of connected lobbyists, they can facilitate the transmission of information between organized interests and policy-makers by lowering transaction costs (Austen-Smith 1993). Consequently, we expect that interests will be more likely to hire lobbyists who have interpersonal connections to government officials who exercise power over the policymaking process.

Faithful Agents

While the preferences of organized interests often take precedence in academic studies of lobbying, lobbyists, too, have ideological and partisan preferences of their own which can create agency problems (Stephenson and Jackson 2010). If the lobbyists an interest hires share its preferences, those lobbyists are likely to faithfully pursue the interest's policy goals. However, if the preferences of the interest and its lobbyists diverge, the interest runs the risk that its lobbyists' own preferences will impede their faithful representation of the interest's aims. Lobbyists' motivation to develop reputations as honest brokers may constrain the impulse to allow their own ideological or partisan proclivities to affect their representation of clients (Heinz et al. 1993; Rosenthal 2000). On the other hand, information asymmetries emerging from lobbyists' substantial knowledge and information advantages over their clients and lobbying targets creates ample room for lobbyists to deviate from clients' preferences without clients realizing it (Drutman 2015; Kersh 2000; Stephenson and Jackson 2010). Thus, we expect interests to try to minimize agency loss at the selection stage by hiring lobbyists

whose ideological and partisan preferences align with their own.

Yet, interests may sometimes find themselves in political contexts where this risk of agency loss is outweighted by potential benefits like access to influential policymakers and their networks. One such often-changing contextual detail is the correspondence between the interest's ideological and partisan allegiances and the partisan balance of power in government. When an interest is aligned with the party in control of government (e.g., an environmental interest and an environmental-friendly parliamentary coalition), the interest likely anticipates a friendly audience for its entreaties and expects little benefit from retaining lobbyists aligned with the minority party. However, because policymakers are typically more receptive to lobbyists who share their preferences (Furnas, Heaney, and LaPira 2019; Hirsch et al. 2021), interests may be incentivized to hire lobbyists whose preferences differ from their own but are aligned with the majority party in expectation that potential agency loss can be offset by those lobbyists' ability to gain the time and attention of the interest's political opponents in government. Therefore, we also expect that when interests are not aligned with the party in control of government, they will be more likely to trade agency loss to gain some access and influence with majority party policymakers by hiring lobbyists whose ideological and partisan persuasions match those of the majority party but diverge from their own.

Research Design

Discerning what characteristics make lobbyists more desirable to organized interests is difficult for several reasons. First, systematic information about lobbyists' characteristics is often difficult to amass; while the United States' Lobbying Disclosure Act (LDA) requires organizations to report some information about their lobbyists, such as their names and previous government service, information about other characteristics central to our hypotheses,

such as the lobbyists' areas of policy expertise, is absent.[5] Second, given the multiplicity of actors involved in any single policymaking effort, from members of Congress and their staffs to executive branch officials and other organizations and their lobbyists, it is difficult to isolate the effect that any single lobbyist might have on outcomes. To be sure, some studies have tried to isolate such lobbyist-level effects using the proportion of an organization's lobbying expenditures allocated for each lobbyist (Blanes i Vidal, Draca, and Fons-Rosen 2012; McCrain 2018), but doing so requires strong assumptions about how well organizations' aggregate lobbying expenditures reflect the demand for individual lobbyists. Third, studies relying on lobbyists registered through LDA reports alone to discern the importance of those lobbyists' characteristics contend with selection bias concerns because they observe only the characteristics of those who become registered lobbyists rather than the characteristics of the broader population of persons from which lobbyists are drawn.

Acknowledging these challenges, we test our expectations using a conjoint experiment completed by political elites with intimate knowledge of what lobbyist characteristics are valued by organized interests—federal US lobbyists and policy advocates working for those interests (henceforth "lobbyists"). Through this framework, we avoid issues posed by data and measurement limitations, instead utilizing treatments tailored to measure our characteristics of interest. Further, whereas the natural correlation of some lobbyist characteristics, such as their substantive expertise and political connections, can make it difficult to determine the importance of any one characteristic, the conjoint design allows us to isolate the independent effects of our characteristics of interest.[6]

[5]Further, even the scant information lobbyists are required to report about themselves in LDA filings, such as their previous government service, is often presented inaccurately (LaPira and Thomas 2014).

[6]Additionally, our design allows us to move beyond simply testing the impact of political experience. Therefore, we also examine the impact of a number of lobbyist traits that would be difficult to measure in an observational design (Halpin and Lotric 2023).

Our survey sampling frame takes advantage of publicly posted LDA reports, which requires organizations filing reports to list the names of their points of contact and lobbyists. We collect the names and email addresses of these individuals listed on LDA reports filed between the first quarter of 2019 and the third quarter of 2020.[7] Of the 11,341 persons in our sampling frame, 888 participated in our experiment for an overall response rate of 7.8%, which compares favorably to those in other survey experiments of American political elites (see Hassell, Holbein, and Miles 2020; Miller 2021).[8]

While agents of interests themselves, lobbyists are a favorable respondent sample for learning about interests' hiring choices for two reasons. First, interests themselves are generally naive about the the details of lobbying, hence their reliance on lobbyists to perform the work necessary to promote their preferences—including selecting agents to perform that work (e.g., Drutman 2015; Kersh 2002). Second, most of our lobbyist respondents reported that they are typically involved in the hiring process when their employer seeks new lobbyists; 508 respondents (57.2%) indicated that they are "always" involved in the process, and another 244 (27.5%) indicated that they are "sometimes" or "often" involved (see Table A4). Thus, our respondents have the requisite knowledge and experience with the hiring process to shed light on interests' preferences over lobbyists' characteristics.

After answering pre-treatment questions, respondents were asked to complete two conjoint tasks. In brief explanatory prompts offered before these tasks, respondents were randomly assigned to imagine that they are completing the tasks during a period of unified Democratic or Republican control of Congress and the White House. Then, respondents complete the tasks sequentially. In each task, respondents were first asked to imagine working for an organization that specializes in a particular policy area and that they have been asked to

[7]Our research was approved by the IRBs at [redacted], and informed consent was obtained by all participants who participated voluntarily in the survey.

[8]Please see Online Appendix Section B for more information on LDA reporting requirements and our sampling procedure and response rate.

assist in the hiring process. These vignettes included three pieces of randomized information about the organization: its structure as a lobbying firm or a national association, the policy area on which it focuses, and its ideological inclination.[9,10]

Next, respondents were provided with summaries of the resumes of three applicants the organization has received for the position.[11] Each summary included levels for six attributes: the applicant's gender, race/ethnicity, languages spoken, community involvement, previous lobbying employment, and previous political employment.[12] The final two attributes—previous lobbying employment and previous political employment—contained the applicant characteristics necessary to evaluate our expectations, and we recoded information included in them to parse apart applicants' expertise, connections, and partisan alignment

[9]All respondents see one task where the organization specializes in real estate policy and another where it specializes in tax policy. The variation in policy content and the organization's structure encourages respondents to consider each task independently as required by the stability and no carryover effects assumption (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014). We use the organization's randomly assigned ideological inclination to determine whether applicants' partisan affiliation (if any) align with the organization's ideological inclination.

[10]We considered that Republican (Democratic) respondents may not appropriately assume the preferences of liberal (conservative) firms. Accordingly, we conducted additional analyses that excluded instances when respondents were asked to evaluate hiring preferences for organizations that did not align with their political predispositions (see Table A10). Those results are substantively similar to those presented here, but with reduced statistical power.

[11]While conjoint experiments often include only two profiles per task, we utilize three profiles per task to increase our number of observations. Jenke et al. (N.d.) show that unbiased average marginal component effects can be estimated when tasks include more than two profiles.

[12]See Table A1 for a full description of the attribute-levels included in the resume summaries.

with the hiring organization as described in the next subsection. After reviewing these resume summaries, respondents were asked to indicate their interest in interviewing each applicant on a five-point ordinal scale and to select the applicant they would most like to interview. Overall, respondents completed 1741 choice tasks with 3 profiles each, yielding 5,223 observations.

A potential concern could be that some respondents want to give the impression that a given characteristic is more important for hiring decisions than it actually is. However, recent methodological research suggests that such demand effects seldom manifest in survey experiments because it would require respondents to correctly infer the experimenter's intent (Mummolo and Peterson 2019). For demand effects to drive our results, not only would the respondents have to successfully delineate the intent of our research, they would also have to correctly identify the attributes that we use as indicators of expertise, connections, and preference alignment. In that regard, it is important to note the conjoint design helps us to mask the intent with our experiment by providing many attributes to justify hiring decisions (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014). Since we use multiple non-obvious proxies for expertise, connections, and partisan alignment, the risk of demand effects should be low.

Disentangling Expertise, Connections, and Partisan Alignment

Our expectations concern four lobbyist characteristics: procedural expertise, substantive expertise, connections, and their partisan alignment with the hiring organization. To convey information about these characteristics to our respondents in a natural format, we presented respondents with levels of the previous lobbying experience and previous government experience attributes that bundled some of the characteristics. To disentangle these bundled characteristics, we separated the information embedded in these attributes into levels of four new attributes. We explain how we transformed each of the two original attributes in turn.

Previous Lobbying Experience

The levels of our previous lobbying experience attribute conveyed two pieces of information about the applicant: 1) the number of years the applicant has worked as a lobbyist and 2) the policy area in which they have lobbying experience. In recoding our attributes and consequent levels, we separated these pieces of information into *lobbying experience* and *policy experience* attributes. Our lobbying experience attribute can take on one of four levels: None; Less than 5 years; 5 to 10 years; and More than 10 years. Levels of this attribute likely convey information about more than one of our characteristics of interest; for instance, applicants with more years of experience likely have more knowledge of how the policymaking process works and have more relationships with policymakers. Thus, we expect respondents to prefer applicants with more years of experience in lobbying, but the levels of this attribute cannot isolate the importance of any one characteristic.

Differently, our *policy experience* attribute is tailored to focus on the effect of a single characteristic—substantive expertise. Among applicants who have some lobbying experience, we also provided information about the policy area in which the applicants have experience such that half of these applicants had previously worked in the policy area in which the organization specializes while the other half had previously worked in an unrelated policy area.[13] For our analysis, we then recoded this information to indicate that the applicant's area of policy expertise is a "match" with the organization's policy focus. Through this

[13]Some lobbying organizations employ individuals with different areas of substantive expertise. Our design choice – focusing on organizations with a substantive policy area – ensures that it will be clear to respondents what policy expertise is relevant to the specific job to be filled. Insofar as individual hires will have specific policy area focus, or lobbyists within organizations are assigned to contracts based on their expertise, our results will be generalizable. However, there may be limits to external validity, if organizations without a substantive focus value expertise less.

manipulation, we are able to gain insight on the level of importance interests assign to lobbyists' experience with the policy issues relevant to the organization.

Previous Political Experience

The levels of our previous political experience attribute also provided two pieces of information about the applicant: 1) the type of political job the applicant held and 2) the ideological/partisan affiliation of the applicant's previous employer. In recoding this attribute level, we split these two qualities into separate attributes. The first attribute—the *type of political job*—can take on one of five levels: None; Domestic policy director for a think tank; Communications director for a member of the House of Representatives; Legislative director for a House member; and Professional staffer for the House Ways and Means Committee. All of these jobs furnish applicants with some degree of substantive expertise, procedural expertise, and connections, so we expect applicants with past experience in these jobs to be more desirable than applicants who did not previously hold a political job. However, while each of these jobs are indicative of some degree of all of these characteristics, extant work on revolving door lobbying and a separate survey of lobbyists we conducted to validate our understanding of these job types indicate that some provide applicants more of a given characteristic than others.[14] Thus, we can use our knowledge of which jobs are indicative of higher levels of each characteristic to assess their relative importance.

Unlike with our policy experience attribute, none of these political jobs are directly tied to a specific issue area; thus, the degree of expertise substantive policy area of relevance for the hiring organization is not straightforward. However, three of the jobs—think tank policy director, legislative director, and committee staffer—are clearly connected to work in

[14]Our sampling frame for this follow-up survey is the same as used in our original survey. This survey was distributed on February 22, 2022, a little over a year after the main survey results. Only one invitation to participate was sent. The 610 responses for this follow-up survey represent a 5.4% response rate.

policymaking, while the fourth—communications director—indicates less direct experience with policy details. When we asked lobbyists in our follow-up survey how much expertise they would expect holders of each of the four political jobs to have in the two substantive policy areas our hiring organizations focused on—real estate and tax policy—we found that communications directors were perceived as having dramatically lower amounts of substantive expertise than the other job types (see Figure A1). For instance, when asked to express each job type's expertise in real estate policy on a 0 to 10 scale ("no expertise" to "extensive expertise"), the mean level of expertise for communications directors was 2.55, while the mean levels of expertise for the other job types were roughly twice as large (between 4.59 and 5.55). We find a similar relationship when dealing with tax policy where lobbyists expect communications directors to have significantly lower levels of expertise in that field compared to the other positions.[15] Thus, to the extent interests value lobbyists' substantive expertise, applicants with experience as congressional communications directors should be deemed less desirable than those with policy-oriented political jobs.

Turning to procedural expertise, studies of revolving door lobbying argue that previous experience in government most effectively conveys an understanding of how institutions work and policy is made (LaPira and Thomas 2017). However, not all forms of government experience cultivate such expertise, as some positions require persons to engage more closely in the policymaking process than others. Of our three attribute-levels indicative of previous congressional experience, two—legislative director and committee staffer—describe roles that are intimately involved with the work of drafting legislation, pushing bills and amendments through the legislative process, and conducting oversight, and are thus suggestive of high levels of procedural expertise. Further, committee staffers, who are entrenched in a pivotal stage of the legislative process and learn the fine details of how to push or impede legislation through the committee stage, likely develop even more procedural expertise than legislative

[15]With regards to tax policy, we find that committee staffers were also viewed as having slightly more expertise than legislative directors and think tank policy directors.

directors, who must attend to a wide variety of bills across issue areas and incorporate their member's political calculations in to their work. Conversely, because communications directors' job responsibilities focus on presenting their members to the press and the public, not policymaking, they are unlikely to develop considerable procedural expertise. Respondents in our follow-up survey validated these assumptions: of our four type of political job attribute-levels, committee staffers were deemed to have the highest level of procedural expertise (8.45 on a 0 to 10 scale), followed closely by legislative directors (7.87), while think tank policy directors and communications directors were perceived to have much lower levels of procedural expertise (5.37 and 4.70, respectively). Therefore, if interests prioritize procedural expertise, they should prefer committee staff and, to a slightly lesser extent, legislative directors, to think tank policy directors and communications directors.

To capture applicants' connections to policymakers, we follow extant literature on revolving door lobbying by leveraging variation in how well-connected persons holding each type of political job are to important decision-makers (LaPira and Thomas 2017; McCrain 2018; Blanes i Vidal, Draca, and Fons-Rosen 2012; Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi 2014; Salisbury et al. 1989). Our measurement strategy recognizes that a staffer forms multiple valuable connections while working on Capitol Hill. This includes their immediate superior (as has been the focus of much of the existing literature (Blanes i Vidal, Draca, and Fons-Rosen 2012)), but also their colleagues in the office they work in. Additionally, staffers will form relationships with persons in other offices as a natural part of their work. Existing research documents that these staff-to-staff connections are highly valuable, and can even yield a higher premium than connections to legislators (McCrain 2018). Because all potentially valuable connections would not be listed in a resume, a candidate's political connections to decision-makers are best captured with a relatively broad categorization of the applicant's political work experience. In particular, the categorization we describe previously supplies information on whether an applicant has any political work experience, and if so, which type of job they held. This implies that the respondents will draw on their knowledge of

how well-connected a staffer with a given background normally is. This also implies that we will capture the demand for a 'typical' staffer who seeks to become a lobbyist. While this measurement strategy does not allow us to examine heterogeneous demand for former staffers with above or below average connections, it allows us to capture demand for the most common staffers-turned-lobbyists on K Street.

We do not believe that it is an overly strong assumption that the respondents will know and rely on this information. McCrain (2018) shows that even ten years after taking their first lobbying job, the typical staffer-turned-lobbyist retains connections to multiple people currently working on Capitol Hill, distributed across several congressional offices. As this will be known to the interests when they hire lobbyists, it provides a sense of what information the lobbyist-respondents are using to make their decision about which candidate to interview. To validate this assumption, in Appendix C, we use the responses to an open-ended question about whether we are missing salient aspects the respondents typically look for in job applicants. We show that when respondents are shown a profile with a background on Capitol Hill, they are much less likely to emphasize political relationships as something they look for, but we have not included. This suggests that the respondents feel equipped to evaluate the applicants' political connections based on the information we provide.

All connections are not equal, however, and some political backgrounds will come with more valuable relationships than others. Because previous service in Congress provides persons with natural opportunities to build relationships with others working on Capitol Hill, applicants with previous congressional experience should be perceived as having more connections than think tank policy directors. However, the value of each type of congressional staffer's connections hinges on the volume of those connections and how involved the persons with whom the connections exist are in the policymaking process (McCrain 2018). Because communications directors' connections are likely to emphasize other congressional personnel who focus on communications, their connections are likely to be of limited value to organized interests who want to influence the policymaking process. By contrast, the connections forged

by legislative directors and committee staffers, whose jobs require working closely with other persons engaged in policymaking, are of more value interests. Further, whereas legislative directors may exhibit substantial variation in how broad their connections reach as a function of how much they and their members collaborate with others, committee staffers by necessity acquire bonds with a wide range of members and staffers who serve on or have business before their committees.

Importantly, the perceptions of respondents in our follow-up survey support these assumptions: when asked how well-connected each of the four types of political job attribute-levels likely are to policymakers in Congress, committee staff were perceived to be most well-connected (8.37 on a 0 to 10 scale), followed by legislative directors (7.78), communications directors (6.15), and think tank directors (5.46). Thus, if interests value connections, they should prefer hiring former congressional staffers as lobbyists, and, among those staffers, most prefer committee staffers.

Finally, to assess the importance of the alignment of the hiring organization's preferences to those of the applicants, we provide in our previous political experience attribute-levels information about the ideological or partisan leanings of the applicant's previous political employer and compare that to the ideological inclinations of the hiring organization which are randomly assigned in the vignette above the conjoint profiles.[16] The resulting levels of the *preference alignment* attribute take on three values: Indeterminate; Aligned; and Misaligned. Specifically, we randomly designate applicants with previous political experience as having worked for a liberal or conservative think tank or a Democratic or Republican congressional office, as appropriate. We code applicants' level of preference alignment as aligned if the preferences of their political employer aligns with those of the hiring organization

[16]Our design makes the assumption that persons working in political jobs, like positions in congressional offices and think tanks, select into their places of employment in large part because their partisan and ideological inclinations align with those employers (e.g., Chewning et al. 2022; Fox and Hammond 1977).

(e.g., the applicant was a legislative director for a Democratic House member and the hiring organization is liberal), misaligned if the preferences of the previous employer is opposite that of the hiring organization (e.g., the applicant was a policy director for a liberal think tank and the hiring organization is conservative), and indeterminate if the hiring organization is designated as bipartisan, such that the applicant cannot be aligned or misaligned in terms of preferences.[17] With our preference alignment attribute, we can assess the extent to which interests value a lobbyist's alignment with their own preferences.

Estimation Strategy

We use respondents' forced choices to estimate average marginal component effects (AMCEs), which indicate "the marginal effect of [a given attribute] averaged over the joint distribution of the remaining attributes" (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014, 10).[18] Substantively, our AMCEs represent the change in probability that a respondent would select an applicant profile with a given attribute-level relative to another randomly generated profile with the baseline level of the same attribute.[19] For instance, the AMCE for the "Match" level of the

[17]Because applicants can only have a non-baseline level for this preference alignment attribute if they have previous political experience, the calculation of these AMCEs excludes profiles without such experience.

[18]Because the substantive results we obtain are substantively similar when using either the forced choice or ordinal rating outcomes, we present only those using the forced choice outcome. See Online Appendix Table A7 for our analyses using the ordinal ratings.

[19]Note that our estimation approach differs from that of discrete choice experiments (DCEs), which are also commonly used to estimate the effects of profile attributes on choice outcomes. See Online Appendix Section D for a discussion of how our approach differs from that of DCEs and an alternative analysis that apply a DCE approach to our experimental data; the results from that alternative analysis are substantively similar to those obtained when estimating AMCEs.

"Policy Experience" attribute represents the change in probability that a respondent would select an applicant profile whose policy experience *matches* the policy area for which the respondent has been asked to hire relative to a randomly generated profile with experience lobbying in a policy area that *does not match* the policy area of interest.

Following Proposition 2 in Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto (2014), we estimate our AMCEs using linear regression as implemented by the `cregg` package in `R` (Leeper 2020). The general form of our estimating equation is:

$$Y = X\beta + u$$

where Y is a vector whose entries indicate whether respondent i selected profile j in task k; X is a matrix where each column represents each unique non-baseline level d of each attribute l and entries for each row indicate whether the jth profile in task k completed by respondent i includes that attribute-level; β is a vector of AMCEs corresponding to each non-baseline attribute-level; and u is a vector of error terms associated with each respondent-profile-task observation (clustered on each i respondent).[20] Finally, In light of our large number of hypotheses, we implement Bonferroni corrections to account for multiple comparisons.[21]

Results

We begin by walking through the AMCEs for our full sample pertaining to each of the four attributes conveying information about our lobbyist characteristics of interest: years of lobbying experience, policy experience, previous political job, and preference alignment.

[20]See Online Appendix Section D for more detail on the estimation procedure.

[21]Our pre-registered hypotheses invoke 27 comparisons between specific attribute-levels and their baselines as well as between specific pairs of attribute-levels. Thus, we correct the α level used to evaluate our hypothesis tests and construct our confidence intervals to $\frac{0.05}{27} \approx 0.002$.

Then, we examine how the value interests ascribe to preference alignment varies depending on the interests' relationship with the party in control of government. Finally, we compare the magnitudes of the AMCEs concerning our lobbyist characteristics of interest to discern the relative importance interests place on each characteristic.[22]

The Importance of Expertise, Connections, and Alignment

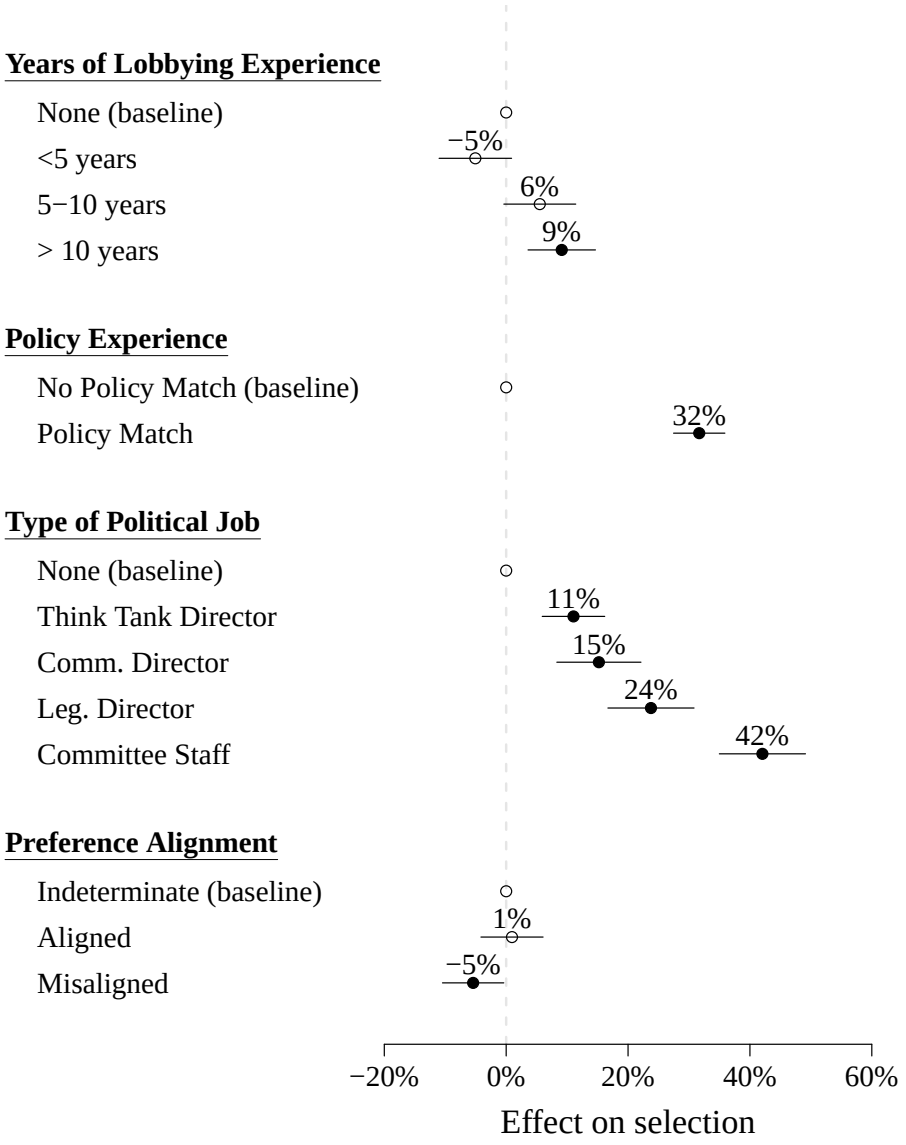
We present the AMCEs for the levels of our four attributes of interest in Figure 1. Importantly, while we can use this figure to compare the AMCE of any attribute-levels to the other levels of the same attribute, we cannot compare the AMCEs associated with any given attribute to those for other attributes because randomization restrictions create empty counterfactuals.[23] First, since more years of lobbying experience are indicative of higher levels of experience in the policymaking process and more connections to policymakers, we expected that applicants with more years of lobbying experience would be associated with a higher probability of selection for an interview. Our results, presented in the top-most set of points in Figure 1, support this expectation, as applicants with more than 10 years of lobbying experience were 9 percentage points more likely to be chosen for an interview relative to applicants with no lobbying experience. However, we do not find any significant effects for applicants with more limited experience relative to those with no experience.

Next, we turn to our expectation that applicants with expertise in the policy area that aligns with the policy need which the hiring organization seeks to fill are more likely to

[22]In supplemental analyses, we interacted several of our respondent characteristics, such as the respondents' own partisan identification and role as an in-house or firm lobbyist, with our attribute-levels to assess whether any of our AMCEs obscure important heterogeneous effects. We do not detect any consistent, substantively important interactive effects.

[23]For instance, because the AMCEs for lobbying experience are estimated using all profiles but those for policy experience are estimated using only those profiles with some years of lobbying experience, the AMCEs for these two attributes cannot be compared directly.

Figure 1: Interest in Potential Lobbyist Candidates by Experience, Connections, and Alignment



Note: Effects of political, policy, and lobbyist experience on the likelihood of being chosen to interview for lobbyist position. Solid (empty) points represent effects that are (are not) statistically distinguishable at the Bonferonni-corrected 95% level. Bars are Bonferroni corrected 95% confidence intervals. **Takeaway:** Policy expertise, political experience, and lobbying experience are all positively related to the likelihood an applicant will be selected by an organization as a potential lobbyist.

be chosen for an interview. The next set of points in Figure 1 indicate that candidates whose policy experience matches with the need of the hiring organization focuses are indeed 32 percentage points more likely to be chosen for an interview relative to candidates with

lobbying experience in a different area. This finding suggests that interests place substantial weight on lobbyists' substantive policy expertise when selecting agents to fill specific roles.

Our next set of points in Figure 1 provide the AMCEs associated with each level of the previous political job attribute. As explained above using evidence from our follow-up survey of lobbyists, each of these jobs communicate some bundle of our characteristics of interest, but the relative strength of these characteristics among the job types can help us evaluate our expectations concerning procedural and substantive expertise and connections. To summarize, the results from our follow-up survey outlined previously show that these job types imply the following blends of these traits:

- Those with experience as a think tank policy director provide moderate procedural and substantive expertise but few political connections.
- Those with experience as a communications director in a House member's office possess less procedural and substantive expertise, but stronger connections, relative to a think tank policy director.
- Individuals who served as legislative directors for a House member in the office of a member of the House of Representatives have stronger procedural and substantive expertise and better connections than think tank policy directors and communications directors.
- Lastly, those whose previous experience as a House Ways and Means committee staffer have even more favorable degrees of procedural and substantive expertise and connections than do legislative directors.

First, we see that applicants with any of these previous political jobs, and thus the bundle of traits that come with them, are between 11 and 42 percentage points more likely to be selected for an interview than those without such experience. Second, we see that the two job types associated with high levels of procedural and substantive expertise and connections

are significantly more desirable than the remaining two job types which possess substantial amounts of one of those traits but lower levels of the other traits. The AMCEs associated with think tank policy directors (11 percentage points) and communications directors (15 percentage points) are of similar magnitudes and are not statistically distinguishable at the Bonferroni-corrected 95% level, suggesting that while the connections provided by communications directors and the expertise provided by think tank policy directors have some value to interests, neither dominates the other. The AMCE for legislative directors (24 percentage points), who possess more of all of these characteristics, is substantively larger and significantly different from that for think tank policy directors, but not for that for communications directors, which implies that the combination of these characteristics rather than their existence in isolation is attractive to interests. Finally, the AMCE for committee staffers (42 percentage points), who have even higher levels of all of these characteristics, is nearly twice the size of that for legislative directors and is significantly larger than those for all other levels of this attribute, indicating that further increasing the levels of these characteristics leads to additional increases in the probability of selection for an interview. Thus, while this set of AMCEs indicates that procedural and substantive expertise and connections each provide some value to interests, the highest value is realized when all three characteristics are present in large quantities.

Our bottom-most set of points show the AMCEs related to the alignment of the applicant's ideological and partisan preferences to those of the hiring organization. Applicants who share the preferences of the hiring organization are only slightly more likely to be selected for an interview (1 percentage point) than when the organization is bipartisan and therefore does not consider preference alignment, and this difference is not statistically distinguishable. However, applicants whose preferences are contrary to those of the hiring organization (e.g., former staffers for Republican House members who applied to a liberal interest) are significantly less likely to be selected for an interview relative to when the organization is bipartisan (5 percentage points) or to an applicant who is aligned with the organization's preferences.

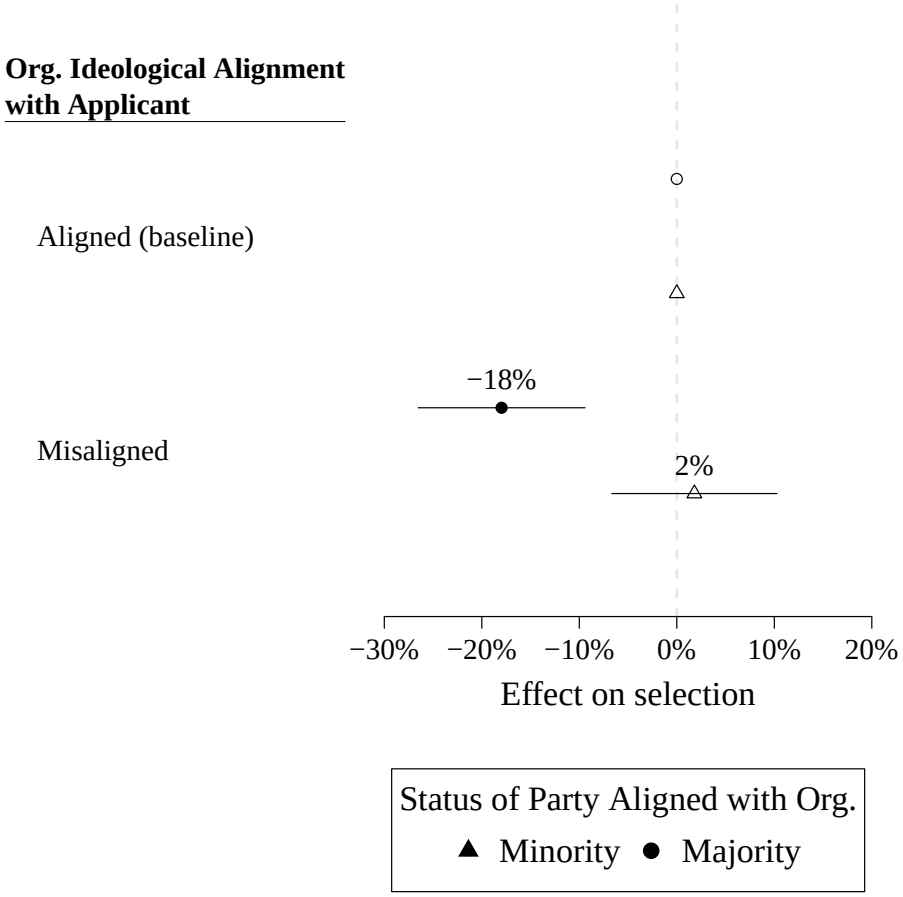
Thus, in selecting their agents, interests express a substantively small preference for those who share their ideological and partisan inclinations relative to those who hold opposing views.[24]

Partisan Alignment and Political Context

While we expected and found evidence that interests prefer lobbyists who share their ideological and partisan preferences, we also anticipated that the effect of preference alignment would vary given the political context in which interests must hire lobbyists. Specifically, we suggested above that interests would be more willing to hire lobbyists with divergent preferences when the party in control of government does not share the interests' preferences (e.g., a liberal interest when Republicans control the White House and Congress). To explore this expectation, we subset our data to include only profiles with some type of previous political experience (and thus some information provided about their preferences) evaluated in tasks where the hiring organization is designated as liberal or conservative. Then, we estimate the average component interaction effects (ACIEs) for Misaligned relative to Aligned conditioned

[24]In an exploratory analysis where we estimated AMCEs among respondents who identified as Democrats, Republicans, or Independents (Table A11), we found that Democrats and Republicans were less likely to select applicants whose preferences were not aligned with those of the hiring organization, but that Independents instead were more likely to select applicants whose preferences matched those of the hiring organization. This difference may suggest that partisan lobbyists perceive the dynamics of agents' preference alignment with the principal organization differently than Independents. However, we encourage readers to interpret this finding as preliminary, as the analysis was not pre-registered, respondents were told to imagine the hiring organization had a specific ideological inclination in the experimental vignette, and our sample included relatively few Independents (61, or 7.0%), and encourage researchers to consider how lobbyists' own partisan inclinations inform their understanding of principal-agent dynamics in future work.

Figure 2: Preferences for Lobbyist Preference Alignment by Party Control of Legislature



Note: Predicted probability of being chosen to interview for lobbyist position by ideological and partisan alignment with organization and with the party in control of the legislature. Solid (empty) points represent effects that are (are not) statistically distinguishable at the Bonferonni-corrected 95% level. Bars are Bonferroni corrected 95% confidence intervals. **Takeaway:** Preferences for lobbyists whose ideological and partisan preferences align with the organization is dependent on the organization's alignment with the party in the majority in government.

by whether the preferences of the party in control of government align with those of the organization. The resulting ACIEs represent the effect on the probability of selection for an applicant whose preferences diverge from the hiring organization when the preferences of the party in government align (circles) or do not align (triangles) with those of the organization.

We find that interests continue to penalize applicants who do not share their preferences when their preferences align with the party in control of government (a significant 18 percentage point decrease), but that this penalty dissipates when the interest's preferences

diverge from those of the party in power (a non-significant increase of 2 percentage points). Substantively, this set of ACIEs indicate that interests are more willing to hire agents who do not share their ideological or partisan preferences when doing so might help them gain access to and influence with the party in power who share those agents' preferences—a finding which supports the notion of lobbyists as screeners who use their partisan or ideological reputations to facilitate interactions between interests and policymakers (Hirsch et al. 2021).

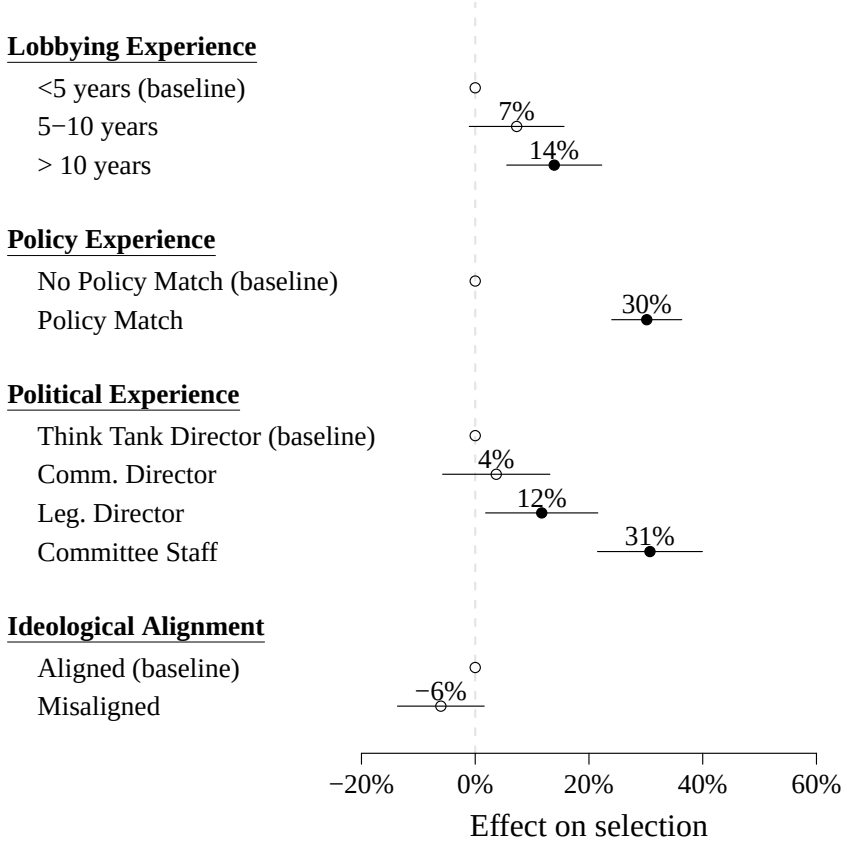
The Relative Value of Expertise, Connections, and Alignment

To this point, we have assessed whether and how each of our attributes and the lobbyist characteristics of interest they represent—substantive policy and procedural expertise, connections, and preference alignment—separately influence interests' hiring decisions. As we have argued, previous work that seeks to assess the relative importance of these attributes are likely confounded by a number of factors, including the distribution of characteristics in the full population of lobbyists. However, we can use our conjoint experiment to directly compare the relative importance of these attributes and their associated characteristics because we randomly constrain the applicants for the positions, and the effects of our attribute-levels are all measured on the same scale (the effect on the probability of selection). Thus, our work can help illuminate not only whether each of these characteristics influence interests' choice of agents, but can also add new knowledge on which of these characteristics provide more value to interests than others.

To make these direct comparisons, we subset our data to only observations whose profiles have non-baseline levels of the four attributes we featured in Figure 1.[25] The AMCEs computed from this subset are presented in Figure 3. To begin, we note that the effects associated with each of our attribute-levels resemble those in Figure 1, though one comparison—misaligned

[25]We subset to ensure we only compare profiles that could plausibly have taken on any of the levels of all of our attributes of interest (i.e., eliminate empty counterfactuals; see Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014, page 20).

Figure 3: The Relative Importance of Skill Sets and Connections



Note: Predicted probability of being chosen to interview for lobbyist position by potential lobbyist characteristics. Choices limited to individuals with political experience and policy experience. Solid (empty) points represent effects that are (are not) statistically distinguishable at the Bonferonni-corrected 95% level. Bars are Bonferroni corrected 95% confidence intervals. **Takeaway:** The policy expertise that lobbyists have is just as, or even more important than political connections.

versus aligned for ideological alignment—is no longer statistically significant at the Bonferroni-corrected 95% level.[26] Subsequently, we find that two attribute-levels—experience as a House Ways and Means Committee staffer and experience lobbying in the policy area targeted by the hiring organization—exhibit AMCEs that are of similar magnitude and are substantively and significantly larger than those associated with all other attribute-levels (31 and 30 percentage

[26]While this may represent a substantive difference from our initial analysis, this change may also stem from the reduction in sample size (5223 observations in the full sample versus 1548 in this subset).

points, respectively). While most extant work on the characteristics that make lobbyists valuable to interests emphasize the value of previous government experience and the expertise and connections that come with it, we find here that substantive expertise gained through lobbying in the policy area targeted by the interest is more highly valued than experience as a House communications or legislative director and holds roughly equal value to experience as a House Ways and Means Committee staffer. Since respondents in our follow-up survey deemed legislative directors to have considerable procedural expertise and connections to relevant policymakers that is only slightly surpassed by committee staff, it is noteworthy that its AMCE (12 percentage points) is overshadowed by that of substantive policy expertise alone (30 percentage points). Collectively, these findings suggest that while the procedural expertise and the connections government experience confer are valued by interests, lobbyists' substantive knowledge of the policy areas in which they work is of vital importance and cannot be substituted for by procedural skill and relationships to policymakers. This finding is striking: having the subject matter experience targeted by the hiring organization exhibits a value comparable to the entire bundle of characteristics possessed by the staffer type in highest demand as a lobbyist. This implies two things: *a*) substantive expertise matters when holding political connections constant, and *b*) that it matters as much as political connections.

We can contrast different types of political experience to further disentangle the relative effects of connections and expertise. First, contrasting legislative directors with think tank directors is illuminating, because our respondents view them as having almost identical levels of substantive expertise. However, legislative directors are viewed as being better connected and as stronger procedural experts. This implies that in situations where substantive expertise is held constant, there is an additional marginal effect of connections and procedural knowledge. This adds to the finding outlined above by showing that there is an independent marginal effect of political connections. Second, while communications directors are viewed as slightly better connected than think tank directors, we find very limited evidence that they are preferred as lobbyists. This suggests that substantive and procedural expertise – both of

which think tank directors have more of – can make up for a lack of political connections. It is worth noting, however, that think tank directors are viewed as *much* stronger experts, particularly when it comes to the substance. This implies that quite a lot of expertise may be needed to make up for a lack of connections.

Discussion and Conclusion

Empirically assessing how interests decide which lobbyists to retain is challenging, but not impossible. However, assessing the *relative* value of lobbyist traits is extremely difficult in any observational setting, leaving a number of problematic unobservables unaccounted for in empirical studies of lobbying (De Figueiredo and Richter 2014). Understanding the relative importance of whom or what you know in lobbying sheds light onto the role lobbyists have in the policy process (Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi 2014; Salisbury et al. 1989).

This paper pushes the literature forward by employing a conjoint experimental design on an elite population. This permits us to separate out the demand for different lobbying traits, previously not possible with the prevailing approach of observationally studying which lobbyists that work on contracts of higher value. We find that both connections and expertise are valuable, with higher relative value placed on backgrounds that are more associated with a combination of the two. Moreover, the strength of the preference for lobbyists with relevant policy expertise is particularly striking – they are in as high demand as former committee staffers, which is the staff type that is viewed as best connected and with most expertise in both procedural and substantive issues. Overall, our findings suggest that the value interests place on expertise may in some situations be similar to that they place on connections, contradicting seminal observational work on the topic (Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi 2014). However, our design did not allow us to disentangle the effect of *procedural* expertise. Therefore, while we are able to estimate the independent effects of substantive expertise and political connections as well as when the two are equal, more research is needed

to estimate the independent and relative effect of procedural expertise.

Discerning the relative value that the lobbying industry places on lobbyist characteristics has important representational and policy implications and sheds light onto the relationships between organizations and lobbyists. In this paper we have learned that lobbyists are primarily hired for their expertise and their connections, but that particular expertise and connections are more valuable – those to congressional policymakers. When presented with profiles of potential lobbyists with experience as a think tank director versus a congressional office's communications director, respondents were more likely to choose the latter. Such results emphasize the continued draw of lobbying industry among underpaid congressional staff, consistent with ongoing concerns among reformers interested in stronger retainment of these individuals in the public sector. The demand side of this revolving door, however, is something more difficult for reformers to address.

Our findings suggest an important avenue for future work on organized interests is to examine the *hiring* patterns of interests that employ lobbyists. Little is known about the political economy of the demand side of lobbying, which holds implications for better understanding who the people are that influence politics behind the scenes. Our findings also indicate that examining the demand side can challenge some of the conventional wisdom established in previous literature. For instance, previous research has highlighted in the observational importance of partisanship in the activity of lobbying firms. We find that partisanship is relatively undervalued when hiring lobbyists, especially relative to other traits. Similarly, our results suggest some peculiar nuances in this labor market, where the value of lobbying experience is also somewhat undervalued relative to other characteristics. Shedding additional light onto this labor market will facilitate understanding revolving door lobbying, particularly what motivates individuals to leave government for private sector roles, when, and why. A better understanding of these things is necessary for policy reformers seeking to decrease the draw of the revolving door and increase the retention of public institutions.

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Online Appendix for "Hiring Representative Agents or Skill Sets? Principal-Agent Problems in Lobbyist Hiring Decisions"

(Not intended for print publication)

Contents

A Conjoint Experiment Protocol

After providing consent and completing pre-treatment questions, respondents were provided with the following preface to the two conjoint tasks:

> The following two hypothetical scenarios will ask you to assume the role of a lobbyist working for a client or firm and to help organization hire a new lobbyist to join your team.
>
> For the purposes of these scenarios, assume that you are working in a context of unified government where [Democrats/Republicans] control the House, Senate, and the White House.

Note that in this preface, respondents were randomly assigned to imagine that either Democrats or Republicans had unified control of the federal government and that this randomization was fixed across both of respondents' tasks. We included this randomization to encourage respondents to abstract away from the real-world political context that existed at the time and idiosyncratic features that might inform their decisionmaking in an actual hiring process, and instead to draw on their general evaluations of the job candidates we presented to them Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk (i.e., pre-treatment; see 2007).[27]

[27]Our survey was fielded between December 1, 2020 and January 3, 2021. During this period lame duck period of the 116th Congress, Democrats held the House of Representatives while Republicans held the White House and the Senate. Prior to the outcome of the Senate elections in Georgia held on January 3, 2021 and not called until after response collection ceased, it was unknown whether the 117th Congress would see a unified Democratic government or a divided government where Democrats controlled the House and the White House but Republicans controlled the Senate. Our abstraction was intended to draw respondents away from thinking about this particular moment in American politics and how it might influence their hiring decisions and instead consider how they utilize information about job candidates

A1 Conjoint Vignette and Randomization Details

Each conjoint task presented respondents with the following text, followed by three applicant profiles with randomly assigned levels for each attribute:

> Imagine that you work as a lobbyist for a [**lobbying firm/national association**] that focuses on [**real estate/tax**] policy. Your organization is generally considered to be [**liberal/conservative/bipartisan**].
>
> Your organization is hiring a new lobbyist to join your team, and you have been asked to participate in the hiring process. Your organization wants the new hire to help analyze new legislation and regulations affecting [**real estate/tax**] policy and lobby members of Congress on its behalf.
>
> You are currently screening applicant resumes to decide which applicants you would like to personally interview for the position. Below are the summaries of 3 resumes you are considering.

Note that in addition to the profile attribute-levels, this text randomizes three other facets.

- First, the substantive policy focus of the organization featured in each task was randomly assigned to be either real estate or tax policy. In order to encourage respondents to consider each task independently and to account for potential task-ordering effects, each respondent completed one task with each substantive policy focus and the order in which policy focuses were presented was randomized for each respondent.

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to make hiring decisions in a general sense. For instance, our abstraction precludes the possibility that a respondent might have an expectation about which member of Congress was likely to hold a committee chair relevant for the issues area we identified in our experiments in the upcoming 117th Congress and thus chose a specific job candidate profile because they thought that type of candidate would be best able to lobby that member of Congress.

- Second, the structure of organization featured in each task was randomly assigned to be either a national association or a lobbying firm. This randomization occurred at the task-level, such that respondents could have completed two tasks in which they were asked to imagine themselves employed by a national association or by a lobbying firm, or one task in which they were asked to imagine themselves employed by an association and another in which they were asked to imagine themselves employed by a firm.

- Third, the organization's ideological leanings expressed in each task was randomly assigned to be liberal, conservative or bipartisan. Like the structure of the organization, this randomization occurred at the task-level.

Each applicant profile was populated with the attribute-levels provided in Table A1. To mitigate potential attribute-ordering effects, we randomized the order in which attributes appeared for each task (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014). For analysis, we recoded the attribute-levels as shown in Table A2. In order for the non-restricted attribute-levels in Table A2 to appear with equal probability and for the restricted attribute-levels to appear with equal probability within their applicable strata, the attribute-levels in provided in Table A1 appeared in profiles with the following probabilities:

- The unique levels of the applicant's gender, race/ethnicity, and community involvement appeared in the profiles with equal probability.

- For the languages spoken attribute, applicants were assigned "English" with a probability of $\frac{1}{2}$ and one of the three bilingual options with a probability of $\frac{1}{6}$ each. Thus, at the analysis stage, half of the applicants are identified as monolingual and half are identified as bilingual.

- For previous lobbying employment, applicants were assigned "None" with a probability of $\frac{1}{3}$ and "Less than 5 years in [real estate/tax] policy", "5-10 years in [real estate/-tax] policy", "More than 10 years in [real estate/tax] policy", "Less than 5 years in

[defense/education] policy", "5-10 years in [defense/education] policy", and "More than 10 years in [defense/education] policy" with a probability of $\frac{1}{9}$ each. Thus, at the analysis stage for policy expertise, $\frac{1}{3}$ of applicant have no lobbying experience, $\frac{1}{3}$ of applicants have experience in the organization's substantive field of expertise, and $\frac{1}{3}$ of applicants have experience in a substantive field other than that of the organization's expertise. Further, at the analysis stage for length of time of lobbying experience, $\frac{1}{3}$ of applicants have no experience, $\frac{2}{9}$ have less than 5 years of experience, $\frac{2}{9}$ have 5-10 years of experience, and $\frac{2}{9}$ have more than 10 years of experience.

- For the previous political employment attribute, applicants were assigned "None" with a probability of $\frac{1}{3}$, "Director of Domestic Policy for a Liberal Think Tank" or "Director of Domestic Policy for a Conservative Think Tank" with a probability of $\frac{1}{6}$ each, and "Legislative Director for a Democratic House Member," "Communications Director for a Democratic House Member," "Professional Staffer for House Ways and Means Committee Democrats," "Legislative Director for a Republican House Member," "Communications Director for a Republican House Member," and "Professional Staffer for House Ways and Means Committee Republicans" with a probability of $\frac{1}{18}$ each. Thus, at the analysis stage, $\frac{1}{3}$ of applicants have no previous political employment, $\frac{1}{3}$ have experience at a think tank, and $\frac{1}{3}$ have experience in one of the three congressional staff roles (with equal probability in each role), and applicants with think tank or congressional experience have an equal probability of being associated with Democrats/liberals or Republicans/conservatives.

Table A1: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels

Attribute	Levels	Restrictions?
Gender	Male (baseline)	None
	Female	None
Race/Ethnicity	White (baseline)	None
	Black	None
	Hispanic/Latino	None
	Asian	None
Languages Spoken	English (baseline)	None
	English, [Spanish, Portuguese]	None
	English, [French, German]	None
	English, [Chinese, Japanese]	None
Community Involvement	None (baseline)	None
	Volunteer at local food bank	None
	Docent at local museum	None
	Youth sports coach	None
Previous Lobbying Employment	None (baseline)	None
	Less than 5 years in [real estate/tax] policy	None
	5-10 years in [real estate/tax] policy	None
	More than 15 years in [real estate/tax] policy	None
	Less than 5 years in [defense/education] policy	None
	5-10 years in [defense/education] policy	None
	More than 15 years in [defense/education] policy	None
Previous Political Employment	None (baseline)	None
	Director of Domestic Policy for a Conservative Think Tank	None
	Director of Domestic Policy for a Liberal Think Tank	None
	Legislative Director for a Republican House member	None
	Legislative Director for a Democratic House member	None
	Communications Director for a Republican House member	None
	Communications Director for a Democratic House member	None
	Professional Staffer for House Ways and Means Committee Republicans	None
	Professional Staffer for House Ways and Means Committee Democrats	None

Table presents the attributes, attribute-levels, and attribute-level restrictions for each of the six characteristics included in the applicants' resume summaries used in the conjoint experiment tasks. In each task, respondents are presented with three profiles which consist of randomly assigned levels for each of the six attributes; unless otherwise noted in the table, attribute-level assignments are completely randomized (i.e. no restrictions conditional on assignment of other attribute-levels). The ordering of the attributes is also randomized across respondents and tasks. Where elements of attribute-levels appear in brackets, the first element in brackets can appear when the policy specialty of the hiring organization is real estate policy, and the second element in brackets can appear when the policy specialty of the hiring organization is tax policy.

Table A2: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels (Recoded)

Attribute	Levels	Restrictions?
Gender	Male (baseline)	None
	Female	None
Race/Ethnicity	White (baseline)	None
	Black	None
	Hispanic/Latino	None
	Asian	None
Languages Spoken	English Only (baseline)	None
	Bilingual	None
Community Involvement	None (baseline)	None
	Volunteer at local food bank	None
	Docent at local museum	None
	Youth sports coach	None
Years of Lobbying Experience	None (baseline)	None
	<5 years	None
	5-10 years	None
	>15 years	None
Policy-Relevant Lobbying Experience	No	None
	Yes	Years of Lobbying Exp. must not be "None"
Previous Political Employment	None (baseline)	None
	Think tank	None
	Legislative director	None
	Communications director	None
	Committee staff	None
Ideological/Partisan Alignment of Applicant/Organization	Indeterminate	Prev. Pol. Emp. must be "None"
	Match	Prev. Pol. Emp. must not be "None"
	Mismatch	Prev. Pol. Emp. must not be "None"

Table presents the attributes, attribute-levels, and attribute-level restrictions for each of the ten characteristics extracted from the applicants' resume summaries present in the conjoint experiment tasks. Unless otherwise noted in the table, attribute-level assignments are completely randomized (i.e. no restrictions conditional on assignment of other attribute-levels). For the original codings of attribute-levels, please see Table A1.

A2 Pre-Treatment Questions

- What is your gender?
  - Male
  - Female
  - Other (please specify)
  - Prefer not to say
- How old are you?
  - 18-29
  - 30-49
  - 50-64
  - 65 and over
- How much school or college have you completed?
  - Some high school or less
  - High school graduate or GED
  - Some college, no 4-year degree
  - College graduate
  - Post-graduate degree
- Which best describes your household income?
  - Less than $25,000
  - $25,000-$50,000
  - $50,000-$75,000
  - $75,000-$100,000
  - $100,000-$200,000
  - $200,000 or more
- Which best describes your race?

  - American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Asian
  - Black or African-American
  - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
  - White
  - Other (please specify)

- Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino?
  - Yes
  - No

- When it comes to politics, would you describe yourself as liberal, conservative, or neither liberal nor conservative?
  - Very liberal
  - Somewhat liberal
  - Slightly liberal
  - Moderate
  - Slightly conservative
  - Somewhat conservative
  - Very conservative

- Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or what?
  - Democrat (subsequent questions to distinguish between "strong" and "not so strong")
  - Republican (subsequent questions to distinguish between "strong" and "not so strong")
  - Independent (subsequent questions to assess whether "closer to Democratic Party," "closer to Republican Party," or "neither")

  - Other

- How many years have you worked in lobbying, government relations, policy advocacy, or a related field? Please do not include any time during which you worked for the federal government.
  - Less than 5 years
  - 5 to 10 years
  - 10 to 15 years
  - 15 to 20 years
  - More than 20 years
- Have you ever worked or served in the federal government in any of the following capacities? Select all that apply.
  - Member of Congress
  - Staffer of a member of Congress or congressional committee
  - Presidential appointee in a federal agency
  - Employee of the Executive Office of the President
  - Civil servant in a federal agency (outside the Executive Office of the President)
  - Other (please specify)
- Which of the following best describes your role in working for your current client(s)?
  - Lobbyist or government relations/policy advocacy professional
  - Executive officer with ultimate responsibility for lobbying/government relations/policy advocacy
  - Executive officer without ultimate responsibility for lobbying/government relations/policy advocacy
  - Other (please specify)
- When your employer hires new lobbyists or government relations/policy advocacy professionals, how often are you involved in the hiring process?

  - Never
  - Rarely
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Always

A3 Post-Treatment Questions

- How interested would you be in interviewing each of these applicants? (*Asked separately for each applicant*)
  - Not at all interested
  - Slightly interested
  - Somewhat interested
  - Very interested
  - Extremely interested
- If you could only interview one of these applicants, which applicant would you prefer to interview?
  - Applicant 1
  - Applicant 2
  - Applicant 3
- Are there any additional pieces of information typically provided in applicants' resumes that you use when making hiring decisions that were not included in the previous tasks? [PRESENTED ON A SEPARATE SCREEN ONCE BOTH TASKS ARE COMPLETED]
  - No
  - Yes (please describe) [TEXT BOX PROVIDED]

B Sampling Procedure and Descriptive Statistics

Under the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 (LDA) and subsequent amendments, individuals who meet the thresholds for designation as a lobbyist must complete and submit a quarterly report, known as an LD-2 form, for each of their clients detailing their lobbying activities on behalf of the client. The sampling frame for our survey is the full universe of individuals listed as 1) lobbyists 2) or points of contact on quarterly LD-2 reports from the first quarter of 2019 through the third quarter of 2020.

- **Registered Lobbyists** Under the LDA, a lobbyist is an individual who, in working on behalf of a client, makes a "lobbying contact," or an "oral, written, or electronic communication" regarding the conduct of public policy, with more than one "covered official," which includes most members of the executive and legislative branches—include the president, vice-president, and members of Congress—and spends 20 percent or more of her time working for the client on lobbying activities within a quarterly period. As of January 2017, a lobbyist employed directly by a client that spends $13,000 or more, or a lobbyist contracted by a client that spends $3,000 or more on lobbying activities in a given quarter, is required to file an LD-2 report (or be listed as a lobbyist on their organization's LD-2 form) for that quarter.

- **Points of contact** Each LD-2 report identifies a point of contact for the lobbyist or for the organization employing the lobbyist, or the registrant. While this point of contact can be an individual who is not a registered lobbyist under the LDA, the vast majority of points of contact are LDA lobbyists, and those individuals who are not LDA lobbyists often perform government relations or policy advocacy functions and are familiar with lobbying activity (see Miller 2021).

For each individual, his or her most recent appearance on a report was selected so as to obtain the most up-to-date contact and employment information; in cases where the same

individual appeared on more than one LD-2 report in a given quarter, one report on which that individual appeared as the point of contact was randomly sampled to be associated with that individual.

While each LD-2 report provides an email address for the designated point of contact, it does not provide email addresses for the registered lobbyists listed on that LD-2 report who are not the point of contact.[28] To expand the size of our sample and to include more potential respondents who are themselves registered lobbyists, we assumed that the email addresses of the lobbyists followed the same format as the email address provided for the point of contact and imputed for those lobbyists email addresses following the organization's apparent format; for instance, if the point of contact's email address was "`[first name].[last name]@[organization name].com`," we assumed that the lobbyists' email addresses were similar in structure and used the names provided to impute email addresses of the same pattern. After combining the email addresses imputed for lobbyists with those provided on LD-2 forms for points of contact and de-duplicating the list of individuals and email addresses, our final sampling frame consisted of 14,404 lobbyists and points of contact.

Initial survey invitations were distributed to all 14,404 unique recipients on December 1, 2021 and reminders were sent to all persons who had not yet completed the survey on December 10, December 21, and between December 27 and January 3 . The email addresses for 3,063 intended recipients were deemed invalid when initial invitations were sent, leaving a sampling frame of 11,341 lobbyists and points of contact and an overall response rate of 7.8% $\frac{888}{11341}$. This response rate compares favorably to those achieved in other survey experiments of

[28]While most email addresses provided for points of contact are unique, some lobbying firms provide generic email addresses for all reports they file (e.g., LDA@Venable.com). To minimize email bounces and improve response rates, we identified instances in which generic email addresses were used and made every effort was made to obtain a unique email address for that individual (searching the organization website, LinkedIn, other social media platforms, etc.).

American political elites (see Miller 2021)

It is difficult to assess the representativeness of our respondents to the lobbyists and points of contact in the sampling frame because scant systematic information is available regarding them and the clients for which they work; unlike more publicly visible political actors in Washington, DC, such as members of Congress, whose personal information is collated in the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress and can be systematically coded for inclusion in research, no central repository for similar personal information, such as partisanship and career history, exist for lobbyists and policy advocates. However, four pieces of information about the lobbyists and points of contact and their clients can be gleaned from their LDA filings and the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP), which cleans and aggregates the LDA filings: the client's quarterly lobbying expenditures with that lobbyist or point of contact's employer (i.e. the client's own expenditures if the lobbyist or point of contact is employed directly, or the client's expenditures with a given firm if the lobbyist or point of contact is a contract employee); whether the filer is the client or a lobbying firm contracted by a client; the client's sector coding, as assigned by CRP; and whether the person, if a point of contact, is also a registered lobbyist under the LDA.[29] Table A3 compares the distribution of these four characteristics in both the full sampling frame and the sample of respondents who took part in the experiment. These comparisons reveal differences for two of the four characteristics (Lobbying Expenditures and CRP Category) that are substantively small but

[29]The first three of these pieces of information are easily observable from CRP's aggregated LDA filings, but the fourth can only be determined by assessing whether points of contact listed on LD-2 forms are also listed as registered lobbyists. To determine whether each point of contact is also a registered lobbyist, I used approximate matching techniques to compare the name of the point of contact on each LDA filing to the names of all of the registered lobbyists also appearing on the filing, and visually inspected the best match for each LDA form to determine if the point of contact was also listed as a registered lobbyist.

statistically distinguishable at the $p < 0.05$ level.[30] Thus, while the sample of respondents differs from the sampling frame, it contains a sizable number of respondents with each unique level of these characteristics.[31]

Finally, Table A4 provides information on the descriptive characteristics of the individuals who completed conjoint experiment tasks. This descriptive information was collected as part of the survey, and thus only provides information about respondents. The high proportions of respondents who report education levels of "post-graduate degree" (68.1%), income levels of "$200,000 or more" (58.1%), experience levels of "more than 20 years" (41.1%), and professional roles as "lobbyists" or "executive officers responsible for lobbying" (88.6%) suggest that most survey respondents were themselves members of the population of interest—political elites who play a substantive role in lobbying and policy advocacy—rather than low-level employees who may respond to emails but lack significant lobbying experience. Further, that the majority of respondents indicated that they are "Always" involved in their organization's hiring of new lobbyists (508 respondents, or 57.2%), and that most respondents reported being "Sometimes," "Often," or "Always" involved in hiring (752 respondents, or 84.7%), indicates that our respondents have the requisite knowledge and expertise to complete our conjoint hiring tasks.

[30]The $|t|$ and χ^2 test statistics from the difference in means and χ^2 tests are: $|t| = 1.00$ for Lobbyist Employer; $\chi^2_3 = 61.33$ for Lobbying Expenditures; $\chi^2_{13} = 51.33$ for CRP Category; and $|t| = 1.96$ for Registered Lobbyist.

[31]To account for these differences between our sample and the sampling frame, we also replicated our analyses by weighting our observations to mirror the distribution of these four characteristics in the sampling frame. These analyses (not shown) are substantively similar; the point estimates closely resemble those presented here, though the confidence intervals widen and decrease our statistical power in a few cases.

A1 Sample Descriptive Statistics

Table A3: Comparison of Respondents with Sampling Frame

Characteristic	% of Respondents (N)	% of Sampling Frame (N)
Employer Type		
Client	54.4% (483)	56.0% (6350)
Firm	45.6% (405)	44.0% (4991)
Lobbying Expenditures		
First Quartile	32.4% (288)	25.0% (2836)
Second Quartile	29.3% (260)	25.0% (2835)
Third Quartile	22.1% (196)	25.0% (2835)
Fourth Quartile	16.2% (144)	25.0% (2835)
CRP Category		
Agribusiness	5.1% (45)	4.1% (468)
Communications and Electronics	6.5% (58)	7.5% (853)
Construction	1.0% (9)	2.0% (231)
Defense	0.9% (8)	1.8% (199)
Energy and Natural Resources	6.0% (53)	7.1% (807)
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	7.2% (64)	10.6% (1198)
Health	19.4% (172)	19.6% (2218)
Ideological and Single-Issue	12.6% (112)	10.0% (1132)
Labor	2.6% (23)	2.2% (247)
Lawyers and Lobbyists	1.4% (12)	0.6% (69)
Misc Business	11.5% (102)	12.7% (1445)
Other	6.9% (61)	5.7% (642)
Transportation	7.4% (66)	7.1% (807)
Unknown	11.6% (103)	9.0% (1025)
Registered Lobbyist		
Yes	77.9% (692)	75.3% (8540)
No	22.1% (196)	24.7% (2801)

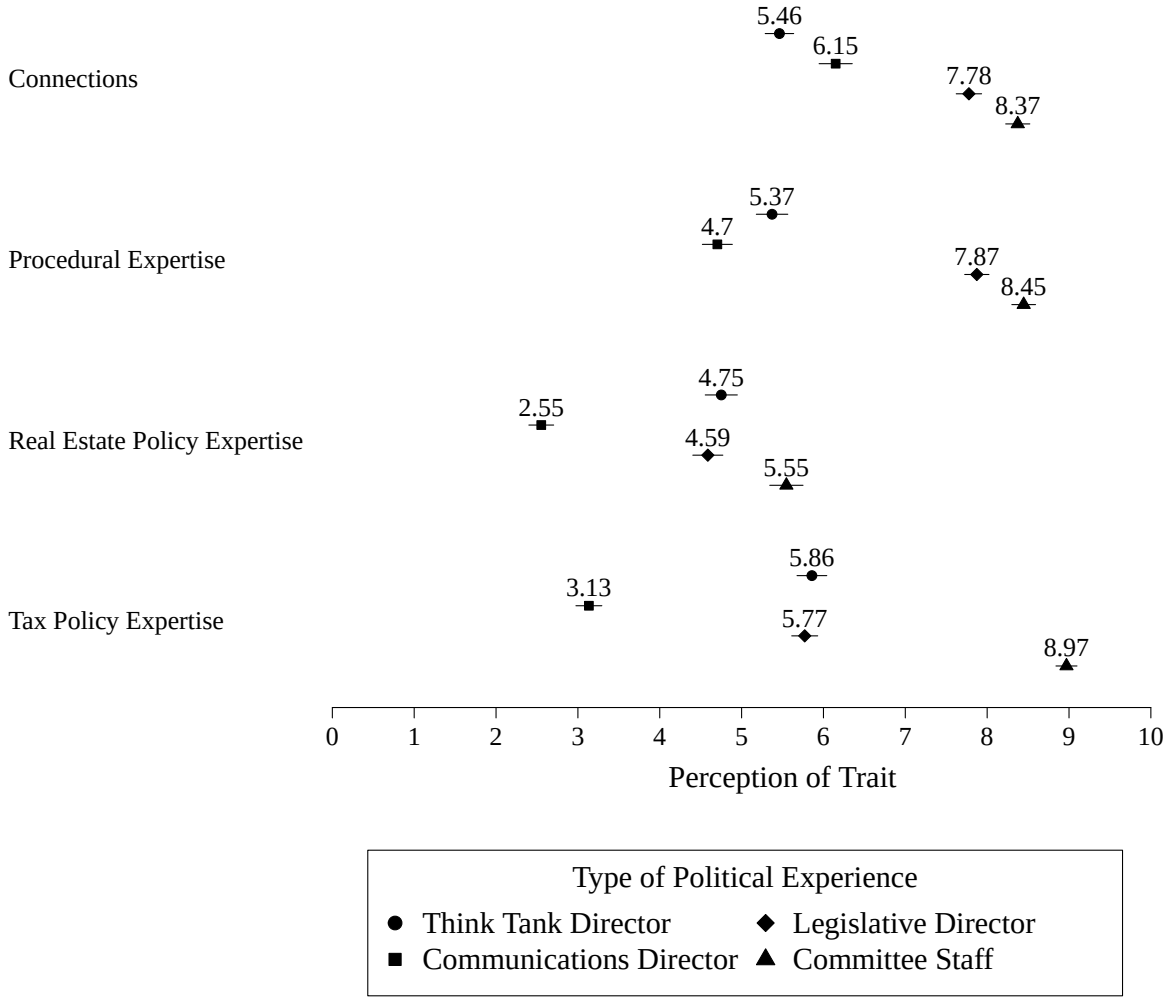
Table A4: Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

Characteristic	% of Respondents (N)
Gender	
Female	32.4% (288)
Male	67.5% (599)
NA	0.1% (1)
Age	
18-29	7.2% (64)
30-49	39.2% (348)
50-64	38.0% (337)
65 or over	15.3% (136)
NA	0.3% (3)
Education	
Some college, no 4-year degree	1.5% (13)
College graduate	35.0% (311)
Post-graduate degree	63.4% (563)
NA	0.1% (1)
Race	
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.2% (2)
Asian	1.6% (14)
Black or African-American	3.0% (27)
White	91.6% (813)
Other	3.0% (27)
NA	0.6% (5)
Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino?	
Yes	3.6% (32)
No	95.4% (847)
NA	1.0% (9)
Income	
Less than $25,000	0.1% (1)
$25,000-$49,999	0.3% (3)
$50,000-$74,999	4.5% (40)
$75,000-$99,999	4.4% (39)

Characteristic	% of Respondents (N)
$100,000-$199,999	21.1% (187)
$200,000 or more	67.2% (597)
NA	2.4% (21)
Ideology	
Very liberal	14.0% (124)
Somewhat liberal	26.7% (237)
Slightly liberal	14.9% (132)
Neither liberal nor conservative	12.5% (111)
Slightly conservative	10.9% (97)
Somewhat conservative	15.2% (135)
Very conservative	5.3% (47)
NA	0.6% (5)
Party Identification	
Strong Democrat	44.6% (396)
Not a very strong Democrat	9.8% (87)
Lean Democrat	7.0% (62)
Independent	6.9% (61)
Lean Republican	4.8% (43)
Not a very strong Republican	9.7% (86)
Strong Republican	14.5% (129)
Other	2.4% (21)
NA	0.3% (3)
Lobbying Experience	
Less than 5 years	11.6% (103)
5-10 years	18.8% (167)
11-15 years	17.3% (154)
16-20 years	14.6% (130)
More than 20 years	37.5% (333)
NA	0.1% (1)
Past Government Experience	
Member of Congress	4.8% (43)
Congressional staffer	47.3% (420)
Presidential appointee	8.7% (77)

Characteristic	% of Respondents (N)
EOP staffer	4.2% (37)
Civil servant	12.3% (109)
Other	10.8% (96)
No experience	31.9% (283)
Current Role with Client	
Lobbyist	68.5% (608)
Executive officer responsible for lobbying	23.1% (205)
Executive officer not responsible for lobbying	3.3% (29)
Other	4.4% (39)
NA	0.8% (7)
Frequency of Involvment in Hiring Lobbyists	
Never	6.9% (61)
Rarely	5.6% (50)
Sometimes	13.2% (117)
Often	14.3% (127)
Always	57.2% (508)
NA	2.8% (25)

Figure A1: Follow-up Survey Respondent Perceptions of Traits Associated with Types of Political Experience



Note: Mean levels of connections, procedural expertise, real estate policy expertise, and tax policy expertise respondents in our follow-up survey perceived individuals with each of the four types of experience indicated to possess. Bars are 95% confidence intervals.

C Validating the Measure of Political Connections

We can think about the validity of our measure of connections along the intensive and extensive margins – respectively, whether we capture connections meaningfully, and whether our ranking of staffer types comports with how well connected each type is. In the main paper, we use a follow-up survey of the lobbyists in our sample to show that we correctly rank the types of staffers in terms of their connections.

However, one could worry that we do not capture connections exhaustively along the extensive margin. While it is clear that having a background as a congressional staffer endows a person with political connections, it could miss important aspects of connectedness, e.g. whether the member they worked for still holds office. The assumption underlying our measure is that the respondent will use their knowledge about the average staffer-turned-lobbyists' stock of connections. This will inform their evaluations of the job applicants. This assumption allows us to simplify the measure at the extensive margin and focus on ensuring that the types of staffers correctly capture the various types of expertise and connections we are interested in. We additionally point the reader to the appendix of McCrain (2018) which demonstrates that staffers-as-lobbyists maintain a deep network of connections beyond their former legislator. For instance, McCrain finds staffers are connected to, on average, over 6 different legislative offices (through their staff-to-staff network), and maintain dozens of connections to their former staff colleagues even 5 to 10 years after they leave Capitol Hill.

To validate this approach in the elite lobbying sample, we use the responses to an open-ended question we posed after the conjoint tasks, where we enquired about whether the applicant profile was missing salient characteristics the respondents would look for when seeking to fill a lobbyist position. If our measure of political connections misses critical aspects, the respondents would be likely to raise them in their responses. To illustrate this, Table A5 presents the open-ended input from ten lobbyists about salient characteristics they would be looking for when hiring. We split by whether the respondent was presented with

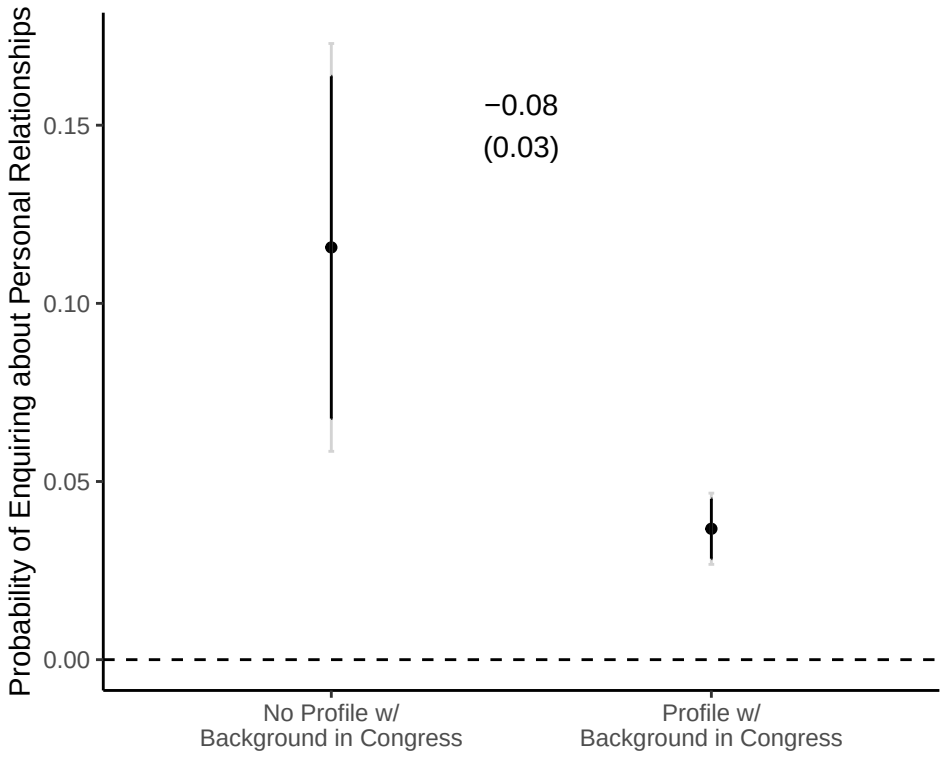
at least one profile that had a previous career as any type of congressional staffer. This highlights anecdotally that respondents that are *not* asked to evaluate a politically connected profile emphasize that we must be overlooking the importance of Capitol Hill experience. On the other hand, respondents that evaluate at least one applicant with a background as a staffer raise questions about, e.g., the applicants education, policy-making experience and references.

To formally test this notion, we create a simple but exhaustive dictionary of words that capture whether the respondent emphasizes political connections, relationships and congressional experience as something we have overlooked as important lobbyist characteristics. We have read through the open-ended input to identify the following words as indicative of emphasizing aspects of Capitol Hill connections that we are missing: Hill experience, congressional experience, Capitol Hill, Member of Congress, government, Senate, House, connection, relationship. We then examine whether respondents have a lower probability of highlighting these aspects as salient omitted factors in our hypothetical applicants, if they were presented with at least one candidate who had a background in politics. The results are presented in Figure A2. As we can see, the group treated with at least one applicant with a background in politics has an 8 percentage point lower probability of mentioning Members of Congress, connections, relationships (and other connection-related words) as aspects of applicants we have overlooked. This strongly suggests that respondents do not believe that we are missing anything crucial aspects of Capitol Hill connections in our measure, but that they are able to make inferences about the applicant's stock of Capitol Hill connections using their knowledge of whom the typical staffer will know.

Table A5: Examples of Questions by Treatment Condition

No Profile w/ Background in Congress	At Least One Profile w/ Background in Congress
A person's connection with specific Capitol Hill staff and/or agency officials. Who you know is as important as what you know.	education if the position is a young person.
Hill experience Hill relationships Policy expertise Lobbying experience	education/school
Lengthy Hill resume.	Policy knowledge and expertise
The first thing I look for is Hill experience- how long, what positions and what Members they worked for - none of the rest really matters	For the tax policy lobbyist, I'd want to know more about their seniority and number of years of public service. For both positions, I'd want to know more about their personalities, references and ability to work well with others.
Candidates need either 1) relevant policy experience or 2) relationships on the Hill. Both are preferred.	References

Figure A2: Importance of Connections and Job Applicants' Political Backgrounds.



Note: The graph is based on a dataset aggregated to the respondent-level. It shows the probabilities of emphasizing personal relationships to (Members of) Congress as important omitted factors among the applicants as a function of whether the respondent had evaluated at least one applicant with a staffer background. The difference-in-means is printed along with robust standard errors in parentheses. Solid lines are 95% (gray) and 90% (black) confidence intervals around the group means.

D Empirical Results

This section includes tabular summaries of the analyses presented in Figures 1, 2, and 3 of the main paper as well as alternative specifications mentioned therein, as well as further discussion of the estimation procedure for average marginal component effects (AMCEs) and how the AMCE framework relates to other approaches to choice-based experimental designs.

A1 Estimation of Average Marginal Component Effects

In choice-based experimental designs, researchers seek to understand how the attributes of an object of choice influence respondents' ultimate choices.[32] Our estimand of interest is the average marginal causal effect (AMCE), which represents "the marginal effect of [a given attribute] averaged over the joint distribution of the remaining attributes" on respondents' choice behavior (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014, 14). This estimand represents a causal effect of the presence of a specific level of a given attribute in an object of choice, or profile, on the probability a respondent will select that profile relative to a randomly-generated profile that has the baseline level of that attribute; accordingly, the objective for researchers when estimating AMCEs is to understand the causal effect that individual levels of each attribute, relative to other levels of the same attributes, play in respondents' choice behavior.

To estimate the AMCE for a given attribute-level, researchers first assess the difference in the probability that a profile with a specified level of a given attribute is selected relative to the probability that a profile with the baseline level of that attribute is selected within each stratum of profiles in which both the attribute-level of interest and its corresponding baseline can appear. Then, researchers take the weighted average of these differences, with the known distribution of the strata as weights, to arrive at the AMCEs (see Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014, 14).

While this procedure can be implemented using a subclassification estimator as described above, Proposition 2 in Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto (2014, 14-15) demonstrates that AMCEs can also be calculated using linear regression, wherein each non-baseline attribute level is included as a dichotomous indicator and each attribute-level involved in a design

[32] AMCEs can also be calculated for other outcome measures, such as ordinal ratings. However, for ease of exposition and to facilitate a dialogue with alternative estimation approaches in choice-based experiments, we restrict our discussion of AMCEs to the context of choice-based outcomes.

restriction (i.e., an attribute-level that can only appear alongside some other pre-specified attribute-levels) is also interacted with all other attribute-level dichotomous indicators. Once the linear regression is fitted, researchers can then calculate the AMCE for each attribute-level by taking the weighted average of the coefficients implicated by that attribute-level.

A2 Average Marginal Component Effects vs. Alternative Estimation Methods

As described above, the primary focus of the AMCE is to detect the causal effect of the presence of a given attribute-level on the probability that a profile is selected relative to a profile with the baseline level of that attribute. Additionally, the estimation procedures for the AMCE (subclassification or linear regression) are nonparametric and do not rely on assumptions about the functional form of the choice behavior modeled (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014, 14).

These features differ from estimation approaches used in discrete choice experiments (DCEs), which instead model the decisionmaking process of respondents holistically through the lens of random utility theory. Here, researchers express interest in not only the systematic component of respondents' utility function, but also the stochastic component, and in doing so employ estimation approaches that make assumptions about the form of that utility function, such as conditional logistic regression (Louviere, Flynn, and Carson 2010). Accounting for the stochastic component of respondents' utility function can be important when its magnitude relative to the systematic component is substantively large or small because, in those cases, the probability that any given profile is selected will be approximately equal to that of any other profile or may be close to one or zero, respectively (Louviere, Flynn, and Carson 2010, 66).

We focus on AMCEs in our main analysis for two reasons. First, whereas estimation approaches commonly used with DCEs do not or cannot identify causal effects, AMCEs communicate the causal effect of individual attribute-levels on respondents' choice behavior

(Liebe and Meyerhoff 2021, 8). Second, on a related point, because our experimental design includes restrictions (e.g., a profile that is ideologically aligned with the hiring organization must also have a level of "Previous Political Employment" other than "None"), estimation approaches commonly used with DCEs would estimate the effect of attribute-levels implicated in design restrictions, in part, by comparing profiles with the restricted attribute-levels to profiles that *can never* be identical to them with the exception of the one attribute-level of interest (i.e., "empty counterfactuals"; see Hainmueller et al., 2014, 11). As a concrete example, an estimation method commonly used with DCEs like conditional logit would estimate a coefficient for the "Match" level of the "Relevant Lobbying Experience" attribute, in part, by comparing the probability of selection of profiles whose substantive lobbying experience matches that of the hiring organization's needs to not only those profiles that have lobbying experience that is not a substantive match, but also to those profiles that lack lobbying experience altogether. Consequently, the estimates for those attribute-levels associated with design restrictions would represent not only the effect of the attribute-level on selection, but also a share of the other attribute-levels to which it is attached through the design restrictions, thus communicating a potentially misleading signal about the effect of that attribute-level itself.

However, to more clearly communicate our analysis to researchers more familiar with DCEs and to assess the robustness of our results to the modeling assumptions inherent in estimation methods used with DCEs, we repeat part of our analysis using conditional logistic regression. In light of the complications associated with our design restrictions explicated above, we do so only for the subset of observations where profiles have non-baseline levels of the "Lobbying Experience," "Policy Experience," "Political Experience," and "Ideological Alignment" attributes, as in the analysis presented in Figure 3 of the main paper. In doing so, we eliminate "empty counterfactuals" and compare the effects of our attribute-levels among only profiles that could plausibly take on any level of every attribute that appears in this subset of observations. This analysis, presented in Table A12, yields effects that are substantively

similar to the AMCEs we obtained in Figure 3 and its corresponding Table A8. The effects for high levels of lobbying experience, substantive lobbying experience matching the needs of the hiring organization, and previous experience as a congressional committee staffer are positive and statistically distinguishable from zero. The effect of previous experience as a legislative director is also again positive but falls just short of statistical distinguishability at our Bonferroni-corrected 95% confidence level of $p \approx 0.0018$. Additionally, the magnitude of substantive policy experience is larger than that of previous experience as a congressional committee staffer, though this difference is not statistically distinguishable.

Table A6: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels (Binary Choice, All Profiles)

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Gender		
Male (baseline)	-	-
Female	0.06* (0.01)	[0.02, 0.09]
Race		
White (baseline)	-	-
Black	0.08* (0.02)	[0.03, 0.13]
Hispanic	0.07* (0.02)	[0.02, 0.12]
Asian	0.01 (0.02)	[-0.04, 0.06]
Bilingual		
No (baseline)	-	-
Yes	-0.00 (0.01)	[-0.04, 0.03]
Community Involvement		
None (baseline)	-	-
Museum docent	0.02 (0.02)	[-0.03, 0.07]
Youth sports coach	0.03 (0.02)	[-0.02, 0.08]
Food bank volunteer	0.04 (0.02)	[-0.01, 0.09]
Years of Lobbying Experience		
None (baseline)	-	-
< 5 years	-0.05 (0.02)	[-0.11, 0.01]
5-10 years	0.06 (0.02)	[-0.00, 0.11]
> 10 years	0.09* (0.02)	[0.04, 0.15]
Policy Experience		
No policy match (baseline)	-	-
Policy match	0.32* (0.01)	[0.27, 0.36]
Ideological Alignment		
Indeterminate (baseline)	-	-
Aligned	0.01 (0.02)	[-0.04, 0.06]
Misaligned	-0.05^* (0.02)	[-0.10, -0.00]
Political Experience		
None (baseline)	-	-
Think Tank Director	0.11* (0.02)	[0.06, 0.16]

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Comms. Director	0.15* (0.02)	[0.08, 0.22]
Leg. Director	0.24* (0.02)	[0.17, 0.31]
Committee Staff	0.42* (0.02)	[0.35, 0.49]

Number of observations=5223 (888 unique respondents), model AIC = 5635.285. This table presents the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) presented in Figures 1 and 2 which indicate the effect of each of the applicant attribute-levels included in the conjoint experiment tasks on the probability of selection as as an interview candidate. AMCEs are estimated using linear regression (accounting for design restrictions). To account for multiple comparisons (27 comparisons collectively associated with our pre-registered hypotheses), a Bonferroni correction is implemented to conduct null hypothesis significance tests and to construct 95% confidence intervals ($\alpha = \frac{0.05}{27} = 0.0018$). Null hypothesis signficance tests and Bonferroni-corrected 95% confidence intervals utilize cluster robust standard errors (clustered on respondent). $^*p < 0.0018$.

Table A7: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels (Ordinal Rating, All Profiles)

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Gender		
Male (baseline)	-	-
Female	0.07 (0.03)	[-0.02, 0.17]
Race		
White (baseline)	-	-
Black	0.11 (0.04)	[-0.02, 0.25]
Hispanic	0.15* (0.05)	[0.01, 0.29]
Asian	0.00 (0.04)	[-0.13, 0.14]
Bilingual		
No (baseline)	-	-
Yes	0.01 (0.03)	[-0.09, 0.10]
Community Involvement		
None (baseline)	-	-
Museum docent	0.03 (0.04)	[-0.10, 0.17]
Youth sports coach	0.10 (0.04)	[-0.03, 0.24]
Food bank volunteer	0.09 (0.04)	[-0.05, 0.23]
Years of Lobbying Experience		
None (baseline)	-	-
< 5 years	-0.01 (0.06)	[-0.17, 0.15]
5-10 years	0.38* (0.06)	[0.22, 0.55]
> 10 years	0.41* (0.06)	[0.24, 0.58]
Policy Experience		
No policy match (baseline)	-	-
Policy match	0.97* (0.04)	[0.84, 1.09]
Ideological Alignment		
Indeterminate (baseline)	-	-
Aligned	0.12 (0.06)	[-0.04, 0.28]
Misaligned	-0.22^* (0.05)	[-0.38, -0.06]
Political Experience		
None (baseline)	-	-
Think Tank Director	0.61* (0.06)	[0.45, 0.78]

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Comms. Director	0.65* (0.07)	[0.45, 0.86]
Leg. Director	0.97* (0.07)	[0.76, 1.17]
Committee Staff	1.40* (0.07)	[1.20, 1.60]

Number of observations=5348 (902 unique respondents), model AIC =16395.17. This table presents the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) indicating the effect of each of the applicant attribute-levels included in the conjoint experiment tasks on respondents' five-point ordinal ratings of interview candidates. AMCEs are estimated using linear regression (accounting for design restrictions). To account for multiple comparisons (27 comparisons collectively associated with our pre-registered hypotheses), a Bonferroni correction is implemented to conduct null hypothesis significance tests and to construct 95% confidence intervals ($\alpha = \frac{0.05}{27} = 0.0018$). Null hypothesis signficance tests and Bonferroni-corrected 95% confidence intervals utilize cluster robust standard errors (clustered on respondent). $^*p < 0.0018$.

Table A8: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels (Binary Choice, Head-to-Head Comparison)

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Gender		
Male (baseline)	-	-
Female	0.06* (0.02)	[-0.01, 0.14]
Race		
White (baseline)	-	-
Black	0.10* (0.03)	[0.00, 0.20]
Hispanic	0.09* (0.03)	[0.00, 0.20]
Asian	-0.01 (0.03)	[-0.11, 0.10]
Bilingual		
No (baseline)	-	-
Yes	-0.01 (0.02)	[-0.08, 0.06]
Community Involvement		
None (baseline)	-	-
Museum docent	0.02 (0.03)	[-0.08, 0.13]
Youth sports coach	0.01 (0.03)	[-0.09, 0.11]
Food bank volunteer	0.05 (0.03)	[-0.05, 0.15]
Years of Lobbying Experience		
$<$ 5 years (baseline)	-	-
5-10 years	0.07 (0.03)	[-0.01, 0.16]
$>$ 10 years	0.14* (0.03)	[0.06, 0.22]
Policy Experience		
No policy match (baseline)	-	-
Policy match	0.30* (0.02)	[0.24, 0.36]
Ideological Alignment		
Aligned (baseline)	-	-
Misaligned	-0.06 (0.03)	[-0.14, -0.02]
Political Experience		
Think Tank Director (baseline)	-	-
Comms. Director	0.04 (0.03)	[-0.06, 0.13]
Leg. Director	0.12* (0.03)	[0.02, 0.22]

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Committee Staff	0.31* (0.03)	[0.22, 0.40]

Number of observations=1548 (699 unique respondents), model AIC = 1971.247. This table presents the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) presented in Figure 3 which indicate the effect of each of the applicant attribute-levels included in the conjoint experiment tasks on the probability of selection as as an interview candidate, using only those profiles with lobbying experience and political experience and that were embedded in tasks where the hiring organization is identified as liberal or conservative. AMCEs are estimated using linear regression. To account for multiple comparisons (27 comparisons collectively associated with our pre-registered hypotheses), a Bonferroni correction is implemented to conduct null hypothesis significance tests and to construct 95% confidence intervals ($\alpha = \frac{0.05}{27} = 0.0018$). Null hypothesis signficance tests and Bonferroni-corrected 95% confidence intervals utilize cluster robust standard errors (clustered on respondent). $^{*}p < 0.0018$.

Table A9: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels (Binary Choice, Org. Ideology/Party Control Correspondence)

	In Minority		In Majority	
Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Gender				
Male (baseline)	-	-	-	-
Female	0.04 (0.03)	[-0.04, 0.12]	0.09* (0.03)	[0.01, 0.17]
Race				
White (baseline)	-	-	-	-
Black	0.08 (0.04)	[-0.04, 0.20]	0.05 (0.04)	[-0.06, 0.16]
Hispanic	0.06 (0.04)	[-0.06, 0.18]	0.11 (0.04)	[-0.00, 0.23]
Asian	-0.01 (0.04)	[-0.13, 0.10]	-0.01 (0.04)	[-0.12, 0.10]
Bilingual				
No (baseline)	-	-	-	-
Yes	0.00 (0.03)	[-0.08, 0.08]	-0.03 (0.03)	[-0.11, 0.06]
Community Involvement				
None (baseline)	-	-	-	-
Museum docent	0.07 (0.04)	[-0.05, 0.19]	0.00 (0.04)	[-0.11, 0.12]
Youth sports coach	0.07 (0.04)	[-0.04, 0.19]	-0.05 (0.03)	[-0.16, 0.06]
Food bank volunteer	0.12* (0.04)	[0.01, 0.23]	-0.04 (0.04)	[-0.15, 0.07]
Years of Lobbying Experience				
None (baseline)	-	-	-	-
< 5 years	-0.03 (0.05)	[-0.17, 0.10]	-0.09 (0.04)	[-0.22, 0.04]
5-10 years	0.03 (0.04)	[-0.10, 0.15]	-0.00 (0.05)	[-0.14, 0.13]
> 10 years	0.09 (0.04)	[-0.04, 0.21]	0.07 (0.04)	[-0.06, 0.20]
Policy Experience				
No policy match (baseline)	-	-		
Policy match	0.29* (0.03)	[0.20, 0.38]	0.30* (0.03)	[0.21, 0.39]
Ideological Alignment				
Aligned (baseline)	-	-	-	-
Misaligned	0.02 (0.03)	[-0.17, 0.10]	-0.18* (0.03)	[-0.27, -0.09]
Political Experience				
Think Tank Director (baseline)	-	-	-	-

	In Minority		In Majority	
Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Comms. Director	0.03 (0.04)	[-0.09, 0.14]	0.02 (0.04)	[-0.09, 0.14]
Leg. Director	0.11 (0.04)	[-0.00, 0.22]	0.11 (0.04)	[-0.01, 0.23]
Committee Staff	0.31* (0.04)	[0.19, 0.43]	0.31* (0.04)	[0.19, 0.43]

Number of observations=2274 (764 unique respondents), model AIC for "In Minority" subset= 1451.606, model AIC for "In Majority" subset=1314.656. This table presents the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) which indicate the effect of each of the applicant attribute-levels included in the conjoint experiment tasks on the probability of selection as as an interview candidate conditioned by the organization's alignment with the party in control of Congress, using only those profiles with political experience and that were embedded in tasks where the hiring organization is identified as liberal or conservative. AMCEs are estimated using linear regression (accounting for design restrictions). To account for multiple comparisons (27 comparisons collectively associated with our pre-registered hypotheses), a Bonferroni correction is implemented to conduct null hypothesis significance tests and to construct 95% confidence intervals ($\alpha = \frac{0.05}{27} = 0.0018$). Null hypothesis signficance tests and Bonferroni-corrected 95% confidence intervals utilize cluster robust standard errors (clustered on respondent). $^{*}p < 0.0018$.

Table A10: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels (Binary Choice, Only Profiles Evaluated by Respondents Whose Partisan Alignment Matches with the Hiring Organization)

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Gender		
Male (baseline)	-	-
Female	0.07* (0.02)	[0.01, 0.13]
Race		
White (baseline)	-	-
Black	0.05 (0.03)	[-0.03, 0.14]
Hispanic	0.08 (0.03)	[-0.01, 0.17]
Asian	0.01 (0.03)	[-0.08, 0.10]
Bilingual		
No (baseline)	-	-
Yes	0.01 (0.02)	[-0.05, 0.07]
Community Involvement		
None (baseline)	-	-
Museum docent	0.02 (0.03)	[-0.07, 0.11]
Youth sports coach	0.05 (0.03)	[-0.03, 0.14]
Food bank volunteer	0.06 (0.03)	[-0.02, 0.15]
Years of Lobbying Experience		
None (baseline)	-	-
< 5 years	-0.05 (0.04)	[-0.15, 0.06]
5-10 years	0.06 (0.04)	[-0.05, 0.16]
> 10 years	0.07 (0.03)	[-0.02, 0.16]
Policy Experience		
No policy match (baseline)	-	-
Policy match	0.32* (0.02)	[0.25, 0.39]
Ideological Alignment		
Indeterminate (baseline)	-	-
Aligned	0.10 (0.04)	[-0.00, 0.20]
Misaligned	0.06 (0.03)	[-0.04, 0.16]
Political Experience		
None (baseline)	-	-

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Think Tank Director	0.17 (0.07)	[-0.04, 0.38]
Comms. Director	0.16 (0.06)	[-0.01, 0.32]
Leg. Director	0.21* (0.06)	[0.03, 0.39]
Committee Staff	0.44* (0.05)	[0.29, 0.59]

Number of observations=1734 (479 unique respondents) , model AIC =5563.103. This table presents the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) presented in Figures 1 and 2 which indicate the effect of each of the applicant attribute-levels included in the conjoint experiment tasks on the probability of selection as as an interview candidate. AMCEs are estimated using linear regression (accounting for design restrictions). To account for multiple comparisons (27 comparisons collectively associated with our pre-registered hypotheses), a Bonferroni correction is implemented to conduct null hypothesis significance tests and to construct 95% confidence intervals ($\alpha = \frac{0.05}{27} = 0.0018$). Null hypothesis signficance tests and Bonferroni-corrected 95% confidence intervals utilize cluster robust standard errors (clustered on respondent). $^*p < 0.0018$.

Table A11: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels (Binary Choice, Conditioned by Respondent PID)

	Democrat		Independent		Republican	
Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI	Estimate (SE)	95% CI	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Gender						
Male (baseline)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Female	0.06* (0.01)	[0.02, 0.11]	0.08 (0.05)	[-0.07, 0.22]	0.04 (0.02)	[-0.02, 0.10]
Race						
White (baseline)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Black	0.10* (0.02)	[0.03, 0.16]	0.13 (0.05)	[-0.04, 0.30]	0.04 (0.03)	[-0.05, 0.13]
Hispanic	0.08* (0.02)	[0.02, 0.15]	0.15 (0.06)	[-0.04, 0.34]	0.03 (0.03)	[-0.07, 0.13]
Asian	0.02 (0.02)	[-0.05, 0.08]	0.03 (0.06)	[-0.15, 0.21]	0.00 (0.03)	[-0.09, 0.10]
Bilingual						
No (baseline)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Yes	-0.01 (0.01)	[-0.05, 0.04]	-0.01 (0.05)	[-0.16, 0.14]	0.00 (0.02)	[-0.07, 0.07]
Community Involvement						
None (baseline)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Museum docent	0.03 (0.02)	[-0.04, 0.09]	0.03 (0.07)	[-0.19, 0.24]	0.02 (0.03)	[-0.07, 0.10]
Youth sports coach	0.04 (0.02)	[-0.03, 0.10]	0.01 (0.07)	[-0.22, 0.23]	0.03 (0.03)	[-0.06, 0.13]
Food bank volunteer	0.04 (0.02)	[-0.03, 0.10]	0.01 (0.07)	[-0.22, 0.23]	0.06 (0.03)	[-0.04, 0.15]
Years of Lobbying Experience						
None (baseline)	-	-	-	-	-	-
< 5 years	-0.05 (0.03)	[-0.13, 0.03]	-0.05 (0.09)	[-0.31, 0.21]	-0.05 (0.03)	[-0.15, 0.05]
5-10 years	0.07 (0.03)	[-0.01, 0.14]	0.06 (0.08)	[-0.16, 0.29]	0.03 (0.04)	[-0.08, 0.15]

	Democrat		Independent		Republican	
Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI	Estimate (SE)	95% CI	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
$>$ 10 years	0.08* (0.02)	[0.01, 0.15]	0.10 (0.08)	[-0.12, 0.32]	0.10* (0.03)	[0.00, 0.20]
Policy Experience						
No policy match (baseline)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Policy match	0.33* (0.02)	[0.28, 0.38]	0.27* (0.05)	[0.13, 0.42]	0.30* (0.03)	[0.22, 0.37]
Ideological Alignment						
Indeterminate (baseline)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Aligned	0.00 (0.02)	[-0.06, 0.07]	0.19* (0.06)	[0.01, 0.36]	-0.04 (0.03)	[-0.13, 0.06]
Misaligned	-0.07 (0.02)	[-0.13, 0.00]	0.03 (0.06)	[-0.15, 0.20]	-0.07 (0.03)	[-0.16, 0.03]
Political Experience						
None (baseline)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Think Tank Director	0.12* (0.02)	[0.05, 0.18]	0.18 (0.09)	[-0.08, 0.43]	0.09 (0.03)	[-0.00, 0.19]
Comms. Director	0.17* (0.03)	[0.09, 0.26]	0.08 (0.10)	[-0.21, 0.37]	0.15* (0.04)	[0.02, 0.27]
Leg. Director	0.26* (0.03)	[0.17, 0.34]	0.15 (0.10)	[-0.14, 0.44]	0.23* (0.05)	[0.09, 0.36]
Committee Staff	0.43* (0.03)	[0.34, 0.52]	0.40* (0.10)	[0.10, 0.70]	0.41* (0.05)	[0.28, 0.54]

Number of observations=5079 (864 unique respondents), model AIC for Democratic subset= 3425.815, model AIC for Independent subset=430.8149, model AIC for Republican subset=1681.093. This table presents the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) which indicate the effect of each of the applicant attribute-levels included in the conjoint experiment tasks on the probability of selection as an interview candidate conditioned by the respondents party identification. AMCEs are estimated using linear regression (accounting for design restrictions). To account for multiple comparisons (27 comparisons collectively associated with our pre-registered hypotheses), a Bonferroni correction is implemented to conduct null hypothesis significance tests and to construct 95% confidence intervals ($\alpha = \frac{0.05}{27} = 0.0018$). Null hypothesis signficance tests and Bonferroni-corrected 95% confidence intervals utilize cluster robust standard errors (clustered on respondent). $^*p < 0.0018$.

Table A12: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels (Binary Choice, Conditional Logistic Regression, Head-to-Head Comparison)

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	Exp(Estimate)
Gender		
Male (baseline)	-	-
Female	0.26 (0.18)	1.30
Race		
White (baseline)	-	-
Black	0.86* (0.25)	2.37
Hispanic	0.58 (0.24)	1.78
Asian	-0.02 (0.24)	0.98
Bilingual		
No (baseline)	-	-
Yes	-0.02 (0.17)	0.98
Community Involvement		
None (baseline)	-	-
Museum docent	0.16 (0.23)	1.17
Youth sports coach	0.30 (0.24)	1.36
Food bank volunteer	0.47 (0.24)	1.60
Years of Lobbying Experience		
< 5 years (baseline)	-	-
5-10 years	0.40 (0.21)	1.49
> 10 years	0.72* (0.21)	2.06
Policy Experience		
No policy match (baseline)	-	-
Policy match	2.23* (0.22)	9.32
Ideological Alignment		
Aligned (baseline)	-	-
Misaligned	-0.47 (0.17)	0.63
Political Experience		
Think Tank Director (baseline)	-	-
Comms. Director	0.44 (0.23)	1.55
Leg. Director	0.56 (0.25)	1.75

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	Exp(Estimate)
Committee Staff	1.96* (0.27)	7.16

Number of observations=1548 (699 unique respondents), model AIC =491.8439. This table presents the estimates and standard errors from a conditional logistic regression model using only those profiles with lobbying experience and political experience and that were embedded in tasks where the hiring organization is identified as liberal or conservative. Model stratifies by each unique respondent-task dyad. To account for multiple comparisons (27 comparisons collectively associated with our pre-registered hypotheses), a Bonferroni correction is implemented to conduct null hypothesis significance tests and to construct 95% confidence intervals ($\alpha = \frac{0.05}{27} = 0.0018$).

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