**Reading Notes:**

**Levine, Kenneth J. 2005. “Voter Decision Making: The Tensions of Personal Identity, Personal Ethics,**

**and Personal Benefit.” The American Behavioral Scientist; Thousand Oaks 49 (1): 63–77.**

Important to understand more about follower characteristics in democratic society

Paper will measure the three casual influences – personal benefit, personal ethics, and personal identity – on the voting behaviors of young adults.

Q Do voters look inward o personal ethics and beliefs or outward toward personal benefit and personal identity when deciding which candidate to elect? Q

Merrill and Grofman support personal benefit as primary influence

Payne, Bettman, and Johnson also find that voters will choose option most personally rewarding, so vote for personal benefit

Beach and Mitchell, image theory of decision making, suggests that principles or ethics are most important

Social psychological perspective from Greene states that group membership (political party) is most important, therefore personal identity most important

Technology makes personal identity even more important as people can now identify with a much wider range of groups that really match their identity

Hypothesis 1: Individuals who believe in personal values over universal moral rules (subjectivists) will vote for the candidate who is the most qualified, regardless of the situation.

* Simple choice between qualified or popular
* 91% for qualified, 9% for popular
* Qualified: important to have someone who can get the job done
* Popular: important to have someone who can work with others
* Hypothesis confirmed

Hypothesis 2: Individuals who believe that ethics are controlled by the situation (situationalists) will vote for the candidate who will benefit themselves, regardless of the situation.

* Candidate can see who voted for them
* 20 change vote to popular
* Qualified: The right this isn’t always easy
* Popular: We have important friendship
* Not confirmed

Hypothesis 3: Individuals who are looking for personal benefit will vote for the candidate who will most benefit themselves, regardless of the other candidate’s qualifications.

* Job offered if candidate you vote for wins
* 65 voters change from qualified to popular
* Qualified: benefit of having good leader greater than me getting this job
* Popular: Important to consider how this affects my future, sometimes I have to be selfish
* confirmed

Hypothesis 4: Individuals who believe that it is important to be a part of a prospective in-group will vote for the candidate who they believe will be successful.

* Based on BIRG (Basking in Prospective Glory)
* confirmed

Hypothesis 5: Individuals who wish to reduce cognitive dissonance will revert to their initial candidate choice.

* Based on theory of cognitive dissonance
* Voter tells qualified candidate that they are most qualified but then sits with popular candidate in election meeting
* 36 change to popular candidate, 19 change to qualified candidate
* Qualified Candidate: still most qualified
* Popular Candidate: Still want the job
* confirmed

Study subjects: 143 undergraduate and graduate students (62 male 81 female)

Used ethics scale developed by Forsyth

* Maybe I could look into using this for my research

Of the 9% who voted for the popular candidate the first time, they continued to vote for that candidate throughout

* What about “popular” or “populist” candidates makes their followers behave this way

Promise of personal benefit is most powerful force to change vote to less qualified candidate

Ethics only predicted voter decision in first scenario. Universalists vote for qualified candidate. Situationalists less likely too.

Concluding thoughts: personal benefits just barely beats out “ethics” but ethical voting in this case simply means choosing the more qualified candidate.

* The impact of personal benefits on voter decision is relevant to my thesis question, but the conception of ethical voting in this paper is not quite what I’m thinking. While I see that voting for the qualified candidate can be the ethical thing to do, for me it’s more about voting for personal benefit versus voting for larger social or environmental issues, such as for a candidate that recognizes climate change, or who supports comprehensive immigration reform.