Voter Response to Hispanic Sounding Names: Evidence from Down Ballot Statewide Elections

Suzanne K. Barth   Nikolas Mittag   Kyung H. Park*
Wellesley College   CERGE-EI   Wellesley College

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Abstract

The study of how voters respond to ethnic heuristics is complicated by the possibility that candidates differ along other dimensions that affect voter choice. This paper focuses on down ballot statewide elections in which voters are plausibly ill-informed about candidates but can still infer race and ethnicity via the informational content in their names. Using nearly two decades of election results from the state of Texas, we find evidence of voters switching party support when their party's candidate has a distinctively Hispanic name. This result is more pronounced in counties that are expected to have higher levels of racial animosity. These findings are important since holding lower statewide office is a valuable stepping stone for minority politicians who aspire to higher offices.

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Despite recent gains in minority representation in state and federal legislatures, minority groups remain underrepresented across various U.S. elected offices. For example, a 2015 study conducted by the National Conference of State Legislatures finds that the fraction of Hispanic and African-American state lawmakers is 5 and 9%, respectively, which falls far short of their respective population shares.[1] The limited diversity is important given a growing body of evidence that shows minority representatives choose policies that allocate resources more equitably across groups (Anwar et al. (2012), Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004), Page (2007), Pande (2003)). These studies imply that descriptive representation reinforces substantive representation, and in turn, suggests that barriers to minority representation could have first-order implications for inequality in economic and social outcomes. This paper focuses on one such factor – how voters respond to ethnic heuristics – and its potential role in the electability of minority candidates.

A fundamental issue in the study of voter response to candidate ethnicity is that minority and non-minority candidates are not identical in all ways except race. Different policy positions and non-policy related attributes between minority and non-minority candidates raise the possibility that disparities in vote share could reflect other characteristics besides race. One approach is to focus the analysis on a subset of elections in which voters are plausibly less informed of candidate-specific attributes (McDermott (1997), McDermott (1998), Squire and Smith (1988)). As Squire and Smith (1988) write in their study of the California State Supreme Court elections, "We can expect that most voters did not know the names of the four justices on the ballot, much less anything substantive about their records." [page 171] This motivates why we analyze county-level voting records on the universe of elections from the state of Texas held during 1992 to 2010, and in particular, restrict attention to *down ballot statewide* elections including contests for Attorney General, State Treasurer, Railroad Commissioner, Comptroller of Public Accounts, Commissioner of Agriculture, and State Supreme Court Justices to name a few.

In these elections, voters are expected to rely more on the informational shortcuts on the ballot

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[1]For the full report, see http://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/who-we-elect.aspx

in lieu of substantive knowledge about candidate records. Consider, for example, the 1996 general election for the Railroad Commissioner in which Hector Uribe ran as the Democratic party's nominee. In Texas, ballots supply party labels and candidate names, and thus, voters with no knowledge of Uribe's actual policy positions could nonetheless ascribe to him the ideological preferences of the average Democratic candidate. Further, voters have access to additional information since Hector Uribe is a distinctly Hispanic sounding name.[2] *A priori*, it is unclear how these cues affect voter choice. One possibility is that voters stick to party lines and ignore the ethnic cue entirely. Alternatively, Democratic voters could respond to Uribe's distinctly Hispanic name by supporting the Republican candidate instead. In other elections, Republican voters could switch in kind when their party's candidate has a distinctly ethnic name. This would imply a willingness to exchange ideological proximity for candidate ethnicity.

Our empirical results are consistent with the latter and show that, in down ballot statewide elections, county-level vote share for the Democratic and Republican candidate decreases by roughly 5.1 and 5.8 percentage points, respectively, when the candidate has a distinctly Hispanic surname in comparison with elections in which neither candidate has a distinctively ethnic name. These findings are not explained by differences in incumbency status and are robust to including county, election, and year fixed effects. Thus, persistent differences across county-level attributes, such as proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border, differential sorting of minority candidates across statewide offices, and general trends in turnout or polarization cannot explain our results. Graphical evidence shows that the results are not driven by a few outlier counties. An interesting pattern is that the ethnic heuristic has pronounced effect in Presidential versus midterm election years when turnout surges among voters who tend to exhibit less political interest (Campbell (1960)), and thus, plausibly rely more on informational cues.

We then examine potential mechanisms as to *why* voters respond to distinctly Hispanic names. We construct a county-level measure of racial prejudice based on Stephens-Davidowitz (2012) and

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[2]U.S. Census Genealogy records show that 92.71% of all persons with the surname Uribe self-identify as Hispanic.

find that the voter response to the ethnic heuristic is more pronounced in counties associated with higher levels of predicted prejudice. This pattern holds in a separate analysis that focuses on the Railroad Commission which regulates Texas' energy sector. Because of the Commission's narrow policy domain, it is unlikely that concerns over taxes, gun control, school finance, or other unrelated policy considerations drive this result. In addition, we find no evidence that the ethnic heuristic has differential impact in counties whose local economies are directly affected by the policies chosen by the Railroad Commission. Together, these results are inconsistent with the idea that voters respond negatively to the ethnic cue because of concerns regarding the policy preferences of Hispanic candidates. However, we emphasize that our results should be interpreted as suggestive rather than definitive evidence of racial resentment since our proxy could very well correlate with other unobserved factors that affect voter choice.

Our analysis contributes to existing literature in two additional ways. First, although there is extensive work on the role of candidate race and ethnicity, statewide elections that appear further down the ballot receive relatively less attention.[3] This is true even though holding lower statewide office can serve as a valuable stepping stone to higher statewide office, and in turn, provide a potential pathway into national office. In fact, former U.S. Senator Edward W. Brooke and former Virginia Governor L. Douglas Wilder, two trailblazers, strongly advise aspiring black politicians to first serve in lower statewide office because "doing so gives black candidates a perceived political legitimacy; their apprenticeship makes them qualified in the eyes of the media and the electorate" (Jeffries (1999)). In addition, there are methodological advantages associated with the study of lower statewide offices. In local elections, minority candidates can strategically run in districts with higher shares of minority voters which dampens the impact of bias to the extent that voters exhibit preference for co-ethnic representation. Thus, for substantive and methodological reasons, the

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[3]Sonenshein (1990) writes, "Are black statewide victories virtually unattainable? Attempting to answer this question highlights how little research has been devoted to the problem. Perhaps the lack of success has discouraged exploration, or perhaps it is also the lack of terms of reference for undertaking the inquiry ... There is no real literature on the statewide black candidacy." [page 220] Although this was written in 1990, the literature on voter bias in statewide elections is still relatively sparse and especially so in regards to down ballot statewide contests.

study of voter response to ethnic heuristics in down ballot statewide elections seems long-overdue.

Second, although there are numerous studies that examine how voters respond to Hispanic candidates (Kam (2007), McConnaughy et al. (2010), Sigelman et al. (1995), Visalvanich (2017)), Hispanic candidates tend to receive less attention in the literature overall. For example, in a recent review article on the political effects of racial prejudice (Huddy and Feldman (2009)), the words black or blacks appears roughly 76 times more than Hispanic or Hispanics and Asian or Asians are not mentioned at all. Although this asymmetry naturally reflects our nation's long history of voter suppression of African-American citizens, a multiplicity of factors have pushed the Hispanic community towards the center of American politics including recent changes in immigration policy (Alsan and Yang (2018), Chavez (2013)) and demographic trends that show Hispanics now constitute the largest ethnic minority group in the United States. Moreover, the demographic changes fuel further interest in how Hispanics vote as well as insecurity on whether or not the growth in the Hispanic community constitutes a significant threat to American values.[4] Our paper contributes to this discourse by characterizing how voters respond to candidates with Hispanic sounding names.

Research Design

Our paper is motivated, in part, by the considerable ambiguity on the effect of candidate race and ethnicity in democratic elections despite the voluminous academic research on this topic.[5] A contributing factor is that the study of voter discrimination requires the researcher to make numerous methodological choices and studies differ vastly in their analytical approach. There is vigorous debate, for example, over how to measure racial prejudice. Survey responses to survey questions designed to measure racial prejudice are often inaccurate due to social-desirability bias (Berinsky (1999), Kuklinski et al. (1997), Kuklinski et al. (1997)). Even when respondents are

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[4]See, for example, Samuel Huntington's article in *Foreign Affairs* entitled "The Hispanic Challenge".

[5]For example, Huddy and Feldman (2009) write, "Despite considerable effort by numerous researchers over several decades, there is still no widely accepted answer as to whether or not prejudice against blacks remains a potent factor within American politics." [page 424] In addition, Garcia and Arce (1988) argues that there is no consensus on whether or not voters respond to candidate ethnicity in a review of studies Chicano voting behavior.

truthful, oft-used survey questions such as "Do you support affirmative action?" could very well capture individualism or other race-neutral ideological views (Sears et al. (2000), Sniderman and Tetlock (1986), Kinder and Sanders (1996)). There are, however, other important research design considerations that receive less attention.

One example is *selective entry.* Irrespective of race, potential entrants are more likely to declare candidacy when the prospect of winning is high (Black (1972), Brace (1984), Jacobson (1989)). For prospective minority candidates, an especially vital consideration in the entry decision is the share of minority voters in the electorate.[6] While there is vigorous academic and legal debate as to precisely what fraction is optimal for minority candidates to win,[7] there is no disagreement that the odds of winning strongly depends on the share of minority voters (Bositis (1998), Bullock III and Dunn (1999)). This implies a strategic benefit for minority candidates who enter election contests in districts with a greater share of minority voters who tend to prefer co-ethnic candidates. Thus, candidate selection could explain why some studies find that candidate race and ethnicity have no impact on voter choice.

This explains why we focus on *statewide* rather than local elections. In statewide elections, minority candidates are less able to sort away from racially polarized voting due to sheer demographics.[8] For example, in Texas, a Hispanic candidate in a statewide contest will have to secure a

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[6]As noted in Hahn et al. (1976), "One of the most significant emerging trends in electoral politics is the increased appearance of minority candidates for public office, especially at the *local* level ... Yet, the emergence of black mayors can be attributed more to the growth of the black population in cities than to the approval or receptivity of white voters." [page 507, emphasis ours]

[7]For example, in the Supreme Court Case *Shaw v. Reno*, the Justices found in a 5-4 decision that the proposed 12th district violated the 14th amendment even though it would have likely led to the election of a minority representative, because as Justice O'Connor famously stated, the district "bears an uncomfortable resemblance to political apartheid." Academic scholars have pointed out an important trade-off in constructing majority-minority districts. In particular, increasing the share of minorities in one district necessarily decreases the minority share in another, which could reduce substantive representation in the latter districts. This motivates a large literature on optimal balance between descriptive and substantive representation (Cameron et al. (1996), Epstein and O'Halloran (1999), Grofman et al. (2000), Lublin (1999)).

[8]As reinforced in Sonenshein (1990), "Racial politics at the state level differs from the city setting in both demographics and the structure of party competition. While blacks comprise a high percentage of the population in many large cities, they represent a much smaller share in the states ... Without a large base of black voters, black statewide candidates must appeal to a mostly white electorate. The racial attitudes of the white majority can be expected to play a major role in any statewide black campaign, along with the style and issues offered by black candidates." [page 222]

nontrivial share of the non-Hispanic vote in order to win since non-Hispanic whites still represent the largest ethnic group in the state. To be clear, we are not arguing that future studies of voter discrimination should uniformly restrict attention to statewide elections. Numerous studies of local offices have shed light on group-based voting (Barreto (2007), Bullock III (1975), Highton (2004), Carsey (1995), Hajnal (2006), Hahn et al. (1976), Latimer (1979)). However, it is equally true that the literature overwhelmingly studies the effects of candidate race and ethnicity in the context of local rather than statewide elections even though racial attitudes can be expected to play a prominent role in statewide campaigns, and in local contests, there is greater selection on the basis of the very phenomena that we are trying to understand.

The nature of candidate selection in statewide elections provides additional benefits in terms of research design. Since racial attitudes are expected to play an important role in statewide contests, minorities who decide to run in them are more likely to be *infra-marginal* candidates. Sonenshein (1990) writes:

> By now, the political style most acceptable to white voters is well known. It is an approach in which the black candidate is highly qualified and middle-class, with a quiet and conciliating style. Bradley is a leading practitioner of the crossover black political style. California's relative success in black statewide candidacies may have been advanced by the presence of a large number of black politicians with this style.

This is especially important because an oft-cited explanation as to why voters might eschew minority candidates is that voters stereotype minority candidates as too liberal or overly concerned with racial equality (Sigelman et al. (1995), Williams (2017)). However, as indicated in the quote above, minority candidates in statewide contests are often associated with exceptional attributes that potentially offset a disadvantage associated with race and ethnicity.[9] Further, minority candidates that seek statewide office are more likely than not to avoid the topic of race relations in campaigns

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[9]In Jeffries (1999), a summary of interviews with former U.S. Senator Edward W. Brooke and former Virginia Governor L. Douglas Wilder, Brooke states "Sure there's a double standard but that's how it is. Black candidates are simply not afforded the luxury of having less than stellar qualifications." [page 584] And Wilder adds, "It is not only important for the black candidate to be as qualified as his white counterpart, but, as older generation blacks like to say, in most cases, you have to be twice as good as your white competitor if you hope to stand a chance." [page 585]

altogether or adopt more moderate policy stances that directly counter these stereotypes. Thus, candidate selection into statewide contests implies that racial stereotypes should be less influential in voter choice in these elections.

Even in statewide elections, though, there is a basic empirical problem of the *missing counterfactual*; the researcher never observes how a voter or a voting bloc would have voted if both candidates were white and all else were equal. There is still some disagreement, for example, regarding the impact of voter bias in Tom Bradley's 1982 gubernatorial campaign because it is infeasible for researchers to observe how voters would have voted if Tom Bradley was white and all else were the same (Citrin et al. (1990), Henry (1987), Pettigrew and Alston (1988)).[10] This requires researchers to formulate a viable proxy for this missing counterfactual. One approach is to use the outcomes of similar elections in which both candidates are white. For example, Citrin et al. (1990) uses California's 1982 U.S. Senate election between two white candidates Jerry Brown and Pete Wilson to provide a benchmark as to how voters might have voted in the gubernatorial election if Tom Bradley were white. The validity of this approach hinges on how closely the candidates resemble one another; ideally, there would be zero distance between Jerry Brown and Tom Bradley in terms of ideology, personal styles, policy positions, and more. In general, though, this condition may be easily violated given that candidates differ along numerous margins that affect voter choice.

This motivates our decision to focus on *down ballot* statewide elections. As Schaffner and Streb (2002) write:

> Indeed, two of the classic schools of voting do not find the American people to be avid consumers of politics. Citizens have an especially hard time when dealing with down-ballot contests (elections for offices that are listed at the bottom of the ballot) for which information may be more difficult to come by. However, research also shows that citizens can still make reasonable voting decisions by using party identification as a cue. [page 559]

This quote summarizes an important premise in our research design. There is a broad sentiment

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[10]Sonenshein (1990) writes, "The research on the Bradley campaign seems to be polarized between those who deny that racism played a major role and those who see race as a controlling factor beyond influence." [page 220]

that voters are generally ill-informed but especially so in down ballot elections. This improves the prospect of finding elections that can serve as a valid proxy for the counterfactual outcomes in elections with minority candidates. For example, actual differences between candidates in Attorney General versus Lieutenant Governor elections or in Attorney General elections in year t versus year t' matter little to the extent that most voters are unaware of what those differences are. At the same time, voters have access to informational heuristics such as the party label and ethnically distinct names which can signal a candidate's policy positions and race, respectively. In this sense, the focus on down ballot statewide elections can provide a close approximation to the ideal thought experiment in which voters are presented with hypothetical candidate profiles that differ only with respect to party affiliation and race (Moskowitz and Stroh (1994), Terkildsen (1993), Sigelman et al. (1995)).

We emphasize that none of the individual features of our research design are novel. Numerous papers examine the effects of racial and ethnic heuristics in low-informational elections (Kam (2007), McConnaughy et al. (2010), McDermott (1997), McDermott (1998), Broockman and Soltas (2018)). Others have thoroughly researched high profile statewide elections with minority candidates using the case study approach (Sonenshein (1990), Citrin et al. (1990), Henry (1987)). Our analysis of whether or not the racial attitudes of voters elevates the impact of candidate race and ethnicity is a common exercise in the literature. Yet, this study integrates key elements in a way that contributes fresh perspective. We provide evidence that voters respond to candidate ethnicity in down ballot statewide elections which are largely neglected in the literature despite the methodological advantages cited above and the fact that these positions serve as valuable stepping stones to higher level office.

In the Appendix, we present descriptive evidence that is strongly supportive of our design. First, we document that in local elections in Texas, the probability of observing a Hispanic candidate sharply increases when the share of the district's Hispanic voting population exceeds 0.5. In general, the literature focuses on whether or not minority candidates require a minority share greater than

0.5 in order to *win*. To our knowledge, these results provide the first visual evidence that clearly shows how sharply the 0.5 threshold affects the minority candidate's decision to *run*. Second, we show that the same analysis conducted on local elections yields vastly attenuated results in comparison with what we find in down ballot statewide contests. This is in lockstep with the idea that studies of local elections can understate the effects of candidate ethnicity because minority candidates are better able to sort on this dimension at the local level. Third, using ideal point estimates from Bonica (2014), we show that Democratic Hispanic candidates tend to be *more* moderate when they run in districts with a higher share of white voters. While the estimates are not statistically significant, they are sizable in magnitude and imply that voters should be *less* concerned that Democratic Hispanic candidates are too liberal in down ballot statewide contests. Thus, our research design is firmly grounded in both qualitative and quantitative evidence.

Data and Descriptive Statistics

Texas Elections Data

Our data consists of county-level election results from the universe of contests held during 1992 to 2010 in the state of Texas. There are several reasons why we choose to study Texas. First, it is relatively difficult to obtain county-level election results in down ballot statewide elections (Ansolabehere and Snyder Jr (2002)). However, Texas provides this information on-line in a format that is fairly accessible via web scraping techniques. The data elements include each candidate's vote total, incumbency status, political party, and full name as well as the total number of registered voters in the county. Second, Texas has the third largest Hispanic population in the contiguous United States which increases the odds that we will have a sufficient number of elections with minority candidates in order to draw meaningful inferences. Finally, Texas has the most chapters of the Ku Klux Klan in the country and is one of only six states that holds elections for Railroad Commissioner which is a statewide office with a fairly narrow policy domain. These features allow

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for a more detailed examination of the potential mechanisms.

Candidate Race/Ethnicity

We assign each candidate to a racial or ethnic group by merging information from the U.S. Census Genealogy records which includes (i) the frequency of a surname and (ii) the probability that persons with a given surname identify with a specific racial or ethnic group. We denote these two as $P(surname)$ and $P(race|surname)$, respectively. We assign candidates using a simple threshold rule. All candidates are initially defined as white. However, if more than 80% of persons with the given surname self-identify with a specific minority group, then all candidates with this surname are re-categorized to this said group. As an example, according to the U.S. Genealogy records, 95.93% of persons with the surname of Nguyen self-identify as Asian, and thus, any candidate with the surname Nguyen is re-categorized from white to Asian due to their distinctly Asian surname.[11] None of our findings are sensitive to the specific 80% cutoff; in the Appendix, we show that the results are highly robust to different threshold values. The reason is that candidate surnames that are associated with Hispanics are very distinct; for example, there are no candidate surnames in which the $P(Hispanic|surname)$ lies between 0.50 and 0.80.

Table 1 shows the top 20 surnames among all candidates separately by each racial and ethnic group ranked according to their joint probability of race and surname. All of the top 20 candidate surnames that we categorize as Hispanic or Asian are surnames that voters could conceivably perceive to be distinctly Hispanic or Asian sounding names. In contrast, our measure undercounts the number of African-American candidates because surnames provide a weaker signal for African-Americans than first names. Although this raises the possibility that we code candidates with

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[11]The idea is that if 95.93% of persons in the U.S. with the surname Nguyen self-identify as Asian, then voters are likely to perceive candidates with the surname Nguyen as Asian as well. Although the U.S. Census genealogy records do not include first names, it is possible that mixed heritage names due to first names (e.g. Ted Cruz) could be perceived differently by voters to the extent that they signal closer proximity to Whiteness than traditional names (e.g. Raphael Cruz). In the Appendix, we show that the presence of mixed heritage names should have the effect of attenuating our estimates which suggests that the true Hispanic penalty could be even larger than what our results imply.

distinctly African-American first names as white, we emphasize that this source of bias should push us towards finding that Hispanic candidates outperform whites rather than the other way around. This is because the candidates coded as whites would include some that voters actually perceive to be African-American and the literature finds that non-Hispanic white voters respond negatively to distinctly African-American names. In the data, there is actually a dearth of distinctly African-American first names which significantly diminishes this concern. Furthermore, the absence of distinctively African-American first names is interesting because there are studies that show distinctively African-American first names are more common among those with lower socio-economic status (Fryer Jr and Levitt (2004)). Thus, our data is consistent with the idea that minority candidates in lower statewide elections are *positively* selected.[12]

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[12] Fryer Jr and Levitt (2004) provide examples of distinctively African-American first names which include Tyrone, DeShawn, Reginald, Shanice, Precious, Kiara, and Deja. An inspection of candidate names suggest that none of the candidates in down ballot statewide elections have distinctly African-American first names.

Table 1: Candidate Surnames as a Signal of Race and Ethnicity

Rank	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Unmatched
1	Smith	Washington	Garcia	Nguyen	Greytok
2	Johnson	Muldrow	Rodriguez	Tran	Hinckson
3	Miller	Grays	Martinez	Chen	Kohlhausen
4	Brown	Beckles	Hernandez	Wong	Magnis
5	Harper	Winkfield	Lopez	Le	Worldpeace
6	Jones	Amadi	Gonzalez	Liu	Yokie
7	Williams		Perez	Vu	Nuchia
8	Davis		Sanchez	Cheng	Malazzo
9	Anderson		Ramirez	Vo	Naishtat
10	Wilson		Torres	Hoang	Touzel
11	Martin		Flores	Chow	Cranberg
12	Taylor		Rivera	Yoo	Sarpalius
13	Moore		Gomez	Yao	Arashvand
14	Thompson		Diaz	Yau	Dorrycott
15	White		Reyes	Hsiao	Morovich
16	Clark		Morales	Sinha	Berriozabal
17	Thomas		Cruz	Chae	Alverez
18	Hall		Ortiz	Sakai	Fastuca
19	Holm		Gutierrez	Mahajan	Markantonis
20	Baker		Chavez	Shinoda	Deotte

Note: Census Genealogy records show both 1) the prevalence of a given surname $P(surname)$ and 2) the distinctiveness of the surname $P(race|surname)$. A candidate is categorized as the race r group if $P(r|surname) > 0.80$. All other surnames are categorized as Whites. Names are ranked according to $P(r, surname)$. Among the surnames that are not matched to the Census Genealogy records, a random subset are shown in the column labeled as Unmatched.

Table 2 describes the variation in candidate race and ethnicity in general elections by the type of elected office. We organize the data into elected office type-by-year cells and count the number of candidate observations for each racial and ethnic group. The table shows that the variation in candidate race and ethnicity is predominantly driven by candidates with distinctly Hispanic names. Importantly, there is considerable variation in candidate race and ethnicity in down ballot statewide contests which is the focal point of our main analysis. For example, candidates with Hispanic sounding names constitute roughly 21% of all the candidate-year cells in elections for Railroad Commissioner. There are only three statewide offices, Commissioner of Agriculture, State Trea-

surer, and Supreme Court Chief Justice, that never include candidates with distinctively Hispanic surnames. In the Appendix, we show that there are strong partisan differences between Hispanic and white candidates across all election types. For example, in down ballot statewide elections, we are roughly three times more likely to observe a Democratic Hispanic than a Republican Hispanic candidate. This is consistent with poll results, voting records, and studies that show the Hispanic community tends to, on average, lean strongly Democratic (DeSipio (1996), Uhlaner and Garcia (2005)).

Table 2: Counts of Candidates with Distinctly Ethnic Surnames by Election Type

Election Type:					
High Information Elections	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Fraction Hispanic
President	47	0	0	0	0.000
U.S. Senator	43	0	3	0	0.065
U.S. Representative	834	1	124	3	0.129
Governor	22	0	1	1	0.042
Statewide Down Ballot Elections					
Attorney General	14	0	2	0	0.125
Lieutenant Governor	12	0	4	0	0.250
State Treasurer	2	0	0	0	0.000
Railroad Commissioner	27	0	7	0	0.206
Comptroller of Public Accounts	13	0	2	0	0.133
Commissioner of the General Land Office	12	0	3	1	0.188
Commissioner of Agriculture	17	0	0	0	0.000
Court of Criminal Appeals Presiding Judge	4	0	1	0	0.200
Court of Criminal Appeals Judge	56	0	4	0	0.067
Supreme Court Chief Justice	12	0	0	0	0.000
Supreme Court Justice	67	0	7	0	0.095
Local Down Ballot Elections					
State Senator	381	0	39	0	0.093
State Representative	2266	2	311	11	0.120
District Attorney	431	0	44	0	0.093
Criminal District Attorney	268	0	10	0	0.036
District Judge	2098	1	282	4	0.118
Family District Judge	199	0	22	1	0.099
Court of Appeals Chief Justice	66	0	7	0	0.096
Court of Appeals Judge	319	0	38	2	0.106
Member, State Board of Education	144	0	22	0	0.133
Criminal District Judge	70	0	5	1	0.066

Note: Census Genealogy records show both 1) the prevalence of a given surname $P(surname)$ and 2) the distinctiveness of the surname $P(race|surname)$. A candidate is categorized as the race r group if $P(r|surname) > 0.80$. All other surnames are categorized as Whites. The table shows counts of racial groups across all general election-by-year cells.

Informativeness in Down-ballot Statewide Elections

A common narrative is that voters are relatively less informed in down ballot elections, and thus rely more on informational heuristics such as party affiliation or ethnic cues embedded in names (Schaffner and Streb (2002)). In this section, we provide descriptive evidence that is strongly consistent with this characterization. Although voters can receive news through multiple forms of
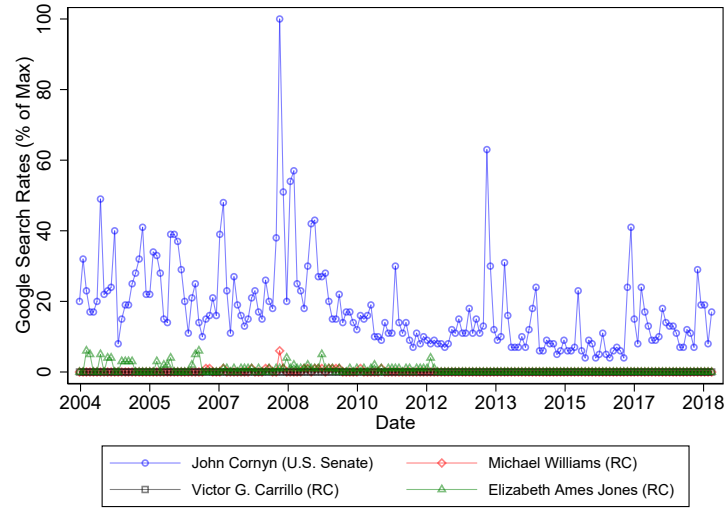
media, we focus on Google search rates due to the well-known decline in newspaper circulation and the concurrent increase in reliance on on-line news sources during this time period.

Panel A of Figure 1 shows the monthly time series of Google search rates (as a % of the maximum search rate) for John Cornyn, a U.S. Senator from Texas, and three Railroad Commissioners. The plot clearly shows that the Google search rates are substantially higher for the U.S. Senator in comparison with the Railroad Commissioners throughout the entire 2004 to 2019 period. This pattern is consistent with voters acquiring less information about candidates who run for statewide offices that appear further down the ballot to the extent that on-line search rates reflect aggregate demand for information. It is worth noting that this figure includes search trends for a limited number of candidates because the Google Trends application allows users to compare search trends for only a handful of search terms at a time. However, these candidates are chosen in a way that severely understates the difference in search rates between election types. For example, including search trends for former Governors George Bush and Rick Perry would substantially increase the difference in Google search rates between candidates who appear further up- versus down-ballot because of their respective high profile Presidential campaigns.[13]
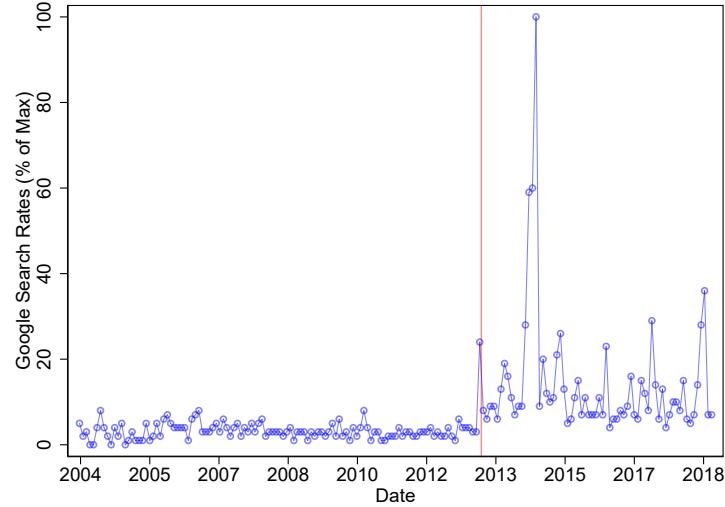
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[13]Google Trends provides the monthly time series of search rates as a share of the maximum search rate over a specified time horizon. A value of 0 does not imply that no searches are conducted for a given search term. If the search rate does not exceed a certain threshold, Google reports the search rates as zero.

Figure 1: Google Trend Searches by Election Type 2004-Present

(A) U.S. Senate vs Railroad Commissioner

(B) Greg Abbott: Before and After Announcement for Gubernatorial Candidacy

Notes: In both panels, we plot the time-series of Google search rates which Google Trends provides as a share of the maximum search rate from 2004 to 2019. In Panel A, we compare the search rates between John Cornyn, U.S. Senator from 2002 to present with three randomly chosen Railroad Commissioners. In Panel B, we plot search rates for Greg Abbott. The red vertical line is located on July 14, 2013 which is the date when Greg Abbott announces his candidacy for the Gubernatorial election. Abbott would win the election and was sworn in as the Governor of Texas in January of 2015. Before then, Abbott served as the Attorney General of Texas from 2002 to 2015.

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In the data, there are some candidates who hold different types of offices over time, and in particular, transition from "low" to "high" information office and vice versa. Panel B of Figure 1 plots the Google search trends for Greg Abbott, who in the earlier part of his career, served as a Texas Supreme Court Justice and the state's Attorney General. The vertical line is located on July 2013 which is when Abbott announced that he would run for Governor. Abbott would eventually win the general election by a margin of 21 percentage points. The Figure shows that search trends for Greg Abbott are close to zero prior to his announcement, spikes modestly at his announcement, and then dramatically increases in the months leading up to the general election. It is rather interesting that the rise in search rates for Greg Abbott coincides precisely when he transitions from lower to higher level statewide office. In the Appendix, we show similar patterns for Kay Bailey Hutchison and Ted Cruz; Hutchison's search rates decrease as she leaves the U.S. Senate whereas Cruz's increase as he enters it. This *within-candidate* variation is especially compelling since it cannot be driven by time-invariant candidate-specific attributes. Overall, this pattern is strongly consistent with the idea that voters are relatively less informed about candidates who run in down ballot statewide elections.

Finally, we provide a quote from an interview with Ryan Sitton who was elected to the Texas Railroad Commission in 2014.[14] When asked why it is so difficult to change the name of the Railroad Commission to something that more accurately reflects the agency's function, Sitton replied:

> We have 27 million Texans, probably less than a million of them actually know really what the Railroad Commission does. It's a time now when we're in information overload all the time. This agency is not named for the oil business folks like me. It's named for the public, and that's why we need to change it.

While we are loath to put too much stock into one interview, it is interesting that an actual Railroad Commissioner, who has first-hand experience and knowledge, describes voters as being fairly uninformed in regards to the Railroad Commission due to "information overload". At face value, the quote is well-aligned with the notion that it is precisely in these down-ballot elections

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[14]The full transcript can be found here: http://ryansitton.com/railroad-commissioner-sitton-plays-by-own-rules/

that ethnic heuristics could play an important role in voter choice. We detail the empirical models used to assess this possibility next.

Empirical Model

A fundamental challenge in identifying the effects of candidate race/ethnicity is that we never observe how the voter would have cast her ballot if the minority candidate was, in fact, white. While we never observe the missing counterfactual, our empirical approach exploits the idea that we can approximate how voters would have voted if a minority candidate was white since the modal election involves candidates that are, in fact, both white. Suppose, for example, that in a given county, the Democratic candidate receives an average of 45% of the vote in elections in which both candidates are white, but receives only 40% of the vote in an election in which the Democratic candidate has a Hispanic sounding name. In this case, the Democratic Hispanic candidate receives less vote share than what is expected based on results from election contests in which both candidates are white. This implies that some fraction of voters would rather vote for a white Republican candidate than a minority Democratic candidate even though they typically vote for the Democratic candidate when racial and ethnic cues are absent. Our objective is to quantify this willingness to exchange ideological proximity for candidate ethnicity.

The following regression model captures this response to candidate race/ethnicity:

$$Demvs_{cet} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 DemHisp_{et} + \beta_2 RepHisp_{et}$$
$$+ \beta_3 DemInc_{et} + \beta_4 RepInc_{et} + \delta_c + \gamma_e + \eta_t + \epsilon_{cet} \quad (1)$$

The c, e, and t subscripts reflect that the election data are organized at the county, elected office, and year level. The sample is restricted to contested down ballot statewide elections which include offices for Attorney General, Lieutenant Governor, State Treasurer, Railroad Commissioner, Comptroller of Public Accounts, Commissioner of General Land Office, Commissioner of Agri-

culture, Court of Criminal Appeals, and Supreme Court Justice. $Demvs_{cet}$ is the share of total votes in county c for the Democratic candidate running for elected office e in year t. $DemHisp_{et}$ and $RepHisp_{et}$ are indicator variables for whether the Democratic or Republican candidate has a distinctly Hispanic surname and $DemInc_{et}$ and $RepInc_{et}$ are indicator variables for whether the Democratic or Republican candidate is an incumbent, respectively. It is possible to estimate the incumbency variables because there are open seat election contests. We cluster standard errors at the election-year level.

The β_0 parameter describes the average vote share for the Democratic candidate in elections in which *both* the Democratic and Republican candidates are white. The key parameters of interest are β_1 and β_2. The β_1 parameter conveys the expected difference in the Democratic candidate's vote share between elections in which *both* the Democratic and Republican candidates are white versus elections with a Democratic Hispanic candidate and a white Republican candidate.[15] The β_2 parameter has a similar interpretation and conveys the expected difference in the Democratic candidate's vote share between elections with two white candidates versus elections with a white Democratic candidate and a Republican Hispanic candidate. If candidate race/ethnicity has no impact on vote choice, then we expect estimates of both parameters, β_1 and β_2, to be close to zero. However, if voters disfavor Hispanic candidates, then we would expect vote share for the Democratic candidate to fall (e.g. $\hat{\beta}_1 < 0$) when the Democratic candidate is Hispanic and to rise (e.g. $\hat{\beta}_2 > 0$) when the Republican candidate is Hispanic in comparison to elections in which both candidates are white.

The δ_c, γ_e, and η_t represent a set of county, elected office, and year fixed effects, respectively. The county fixed effects ensure that our estimates of β_1 and β_2 reflect how voters behave differently in elections with versus without a Hispanic candidate holding fixed the county, or in other words, controls for all time-invariant differences across counties such as the county's distance to the U.S.-

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[15]In general, the effect of *DemHisp* should be independent of *RepHisp* because there is no interaction between these two terms in equation (1). However, in this particular setting, our interpretation is valid because there are no down ballot statewide elections in which both the Democratic and Republican candidate have distinctly Hispanic surnames. In the Appendix, we show this in greater detail.

Mexico border. The elected office fixed effects account for potential biases that could arise if minority candidates are more likely to seek elected office in positions that are highly polarized; for example, if Democratic Hispanic candidates are more likely to run for Treasurer and voters strongly prefer Republican Treasurers. The elected office fixed effects would correct for this potential source of bias. The year effects flexibly control for changes in the broader political landscape over time. For example, fluctuation in voter turnout across election years cannot explain our results once we include year fixed effects.[16]

The coefficients associated with incumbency status, β_3 and β_4, convey how the Democratic candidate's vote share varies with incumbency status. Because existing literature finds strong evidence of an incumbency advantage (Ansolabehere and Snyder Jr (2002)), we expect the Democratic candidate's vote share to rise when the Democratic candidate is an incumbent (i.e. $\hat{\beta}_3 > 0$) and fall when the Republican candidate is an incumbent (i.e. $\hat{\beta}_4 < 0$). However, we reiterate that we restrict attention to down ballot statewide elections in which voters are expected to have less information on actual candidate attributes that are absent on the ballot. Because incumbency status does not appear on the ballot, it is possible that a large share of the electorate does not know which down ballot statewide candidate is the challenger. In this case, incumbency status should not structure vote choice and $\hat{\beta}_3$ and $\hat{\beta}_4$ could both be close to zero. Instead, uninformed voters could rely more on informational shortcuts such as the ethnic heuristic embedded in Hispanic sounding names. In this case, we expect the effects of candidate race/ethnicity, β_1 and β_2, to be larger (in absolute value) than the effects of incumbency status, β_3 and β_4.

Finally, we will present regression results that augment equation (1) by allowing for *differential* effects across elections that take place during midterm versus Presidential years. This is motivated by an extensive literature that shows the "surge and decline" in turnout between Presidential and midterm years is not random and instead tied to political interest (Campbell (1960)). Our

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[16]In the Appendix, we also show results from specifications that include county-by-year fixed effects and replace the county fixed effects with time-varying county-level demographics in order to control for differences in county-specific trends. The estimates are stable across these different specifications.

expectation is that racial and ethnic cues are more likely to be salient among "peripheral" voters who turn out largely to participate in the Presidential election rather than in the statewide contests that appear further down the ballot. If "peripheral" voters are less attuned and less vested in down ballot elections, then they may exhibit a different willingness than "core" voters to support the opposing party's candidate when their preferred party's candidate has a distinctively Hispanic name. Running the model separately for midterm and Presidential years will allow us to assess this possibility. Hereafter, we will drop the quotes attached to "core" and "peripheral" voters.

Main Results

Our discussion will focus first on the effects of candidate ethnicity and then shift attention to the incumbency effects thereafter. Table 3 shows regression results from the baseline model. Column (1) shows estimates from the specification that pools together elections in both midterm and Presidential years. The coefficients associated with Democratic Hispanic and Republican Hispanic imply that, on average, Democratic and Republican candidates lose 3.3 and 1.2 percentage points in vote share, respectively, in down ballot statewide elections when they have a distinctively Hispanic name in comparison with elections in which both candidates are white, *ceteris paribus*. In percent terms, these estimates imply a 9.5% and 1.8% decrease in vote share for Democratic and Republican Hispanics, respectively, because the average county-level Democratic vote share is 0.347. The estimate for Republican Hispanic candidates is not statistically significant. The 2.1 percentage point difference in the effect between Democratic and Republican Hispanic candidates is statistically significant which implies that a distinctly Hispanic surname has greater impact for Democrats versus Republicans. The next column will show that this asymmetry is largely because this specification pools elections held in midterm and Presidential years.

Table 3: Voter Response to Hispanic Candidates in Down Ballot Statewide Elections

Dep Var: Democratic Candidate Vote Share

		Election Years:	
	All Elections	Midterm Years	Presidential Years
Candidate Ethnicity	(1)	(2)	(3)
Democratic Hispanic	-0.033***	-0.020	-0.051***
	(0.012)	(0.014)	(0.011)
Republican Hispanic	0.012	-0.004	0.058**
	(0.013)	(0.011)	(0.023)
Incumbency Status			
Democratic Incumbent	0.054**	0.080***	-0.007
	(0.021)	(0.025)	(0.005)
Republican Incumbent	-0.027***	-0.030***	-0.003
	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.015)
County FE	Y	Y	Y
Elected Office FE	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y
Observations	20,065	13,716	6,349
R-squared	0.860	0.870	0.876

Note: The mean of the dependent variable is 0.347. These regressions restricts the sample to statewide low information elections which include elections for Attorney General, Lieutenant Governor, State Treasurer, Railroad Commissioner, Comptroller of Public Accounts, Commissioner of General Land Office, Commissioner of Agriculture, Court of Criminal Appeals, Supreme Court Justice. Elected office, county, and year fixed effects are included in all specifications. Standard errors are clustered at the elected office-by-year level.

Column (2) restricts the sample to elections held in midterm years. The estimates associated with Democratic Hispanic and Republican Hispanic imply that, on average, Democratic and Republican candidates lose 2.0 and 0.4 percentage points in vote share, respectively, in down ballot statewide elections when their candidate has a distinctively Hispanic surname, *ceteris paribus*. However, neither of these coefficients are statistically significant at all conventional levels. The difference in the two coefficients is also not statistically significant. Overall, these estimates suggest that in midterm elections, voters are not responsive to the ethnic heuristic associated with Hispanic sounding surnames. This finding is consistent with the narrative that core voters are more vested in election outcomes including those that appear further down ballot, and as a result, are less willing

to switch their support to the opposing party's candidate on the basis of candidate ethnicity.

In column (3), we restrict the sample to elections held in Presidential years. The estimates associated with Democratic Hispanic and Republican Hispanic imply that Democratic and Republican candidates lose 5.1 and 5.8 percentage points in vote share, respectively, in down ballot statewide elections when their candidate has a distinctly Hispanic name in comparison with elections in which both candidates are white, *ceteris paribus*. We can reject the null hypothesis that each estimate is zero at the conventional 5% level. In percent terms, the estimates represent roughly a 15% and 9% decline in vote share for Democratic and Republican Hispanic candidates, respectively. One potential explanation as to why the Hispanic penalty differs modestly along party lines is that voters could perceive Democratic Hispanic candidates to be more ideologically extreme than Republican Hispanic candidates. It is worth noting that other studies have found even starker contrast in how voters respond to minority candidates by political party. For example, Washington (2006) finds that voter turnout only increases when there are more black Democratic candidates on the ticket. In contrast, our estimates show a Hispanic penalty for both parties albeit with a modestly larger effect (in percent terms) for Democratic versus Republican Hispanic candidates.[17]

It is interesting that the results differ sharply between midterm and Presidential years because voter composition is known to differ between the two types of elections. Studies show that peripheral voters are more likely to be women, younger, supporters of the Democratic party, racial and ethnic minorities, and have lower socio-economic status than core voters. *A priori*, it is unclear how this amalgam of characteristics affect minority candidates in the aggregate. And there are no studies (to our knowledge) that ask whether or not peripheral and core voters respond differently to ethnic heuristics. Our results imply that peripheral voters exhibit a stronger willingness to vote for the opposing party's candidate when their preferred party's candidate has a distinctly Hispanic

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[17]In our data, Hispanic candidates who run as Republicans are rare (as shown in Table A3 of the Appendix), and thus, depart from the statistical norm that Hispanic candidates run with the Democratic party. Thus, another potential reason for the modest difference in the effect sizes between Democratic Hispanic versus Republican Hispanic candidates (in percent terms) could be that Democratic Hispanic candidates reinforce stereotypes whereas Republican candidates counter them (Mendelberg (2001), Porter and Wood (2016)).
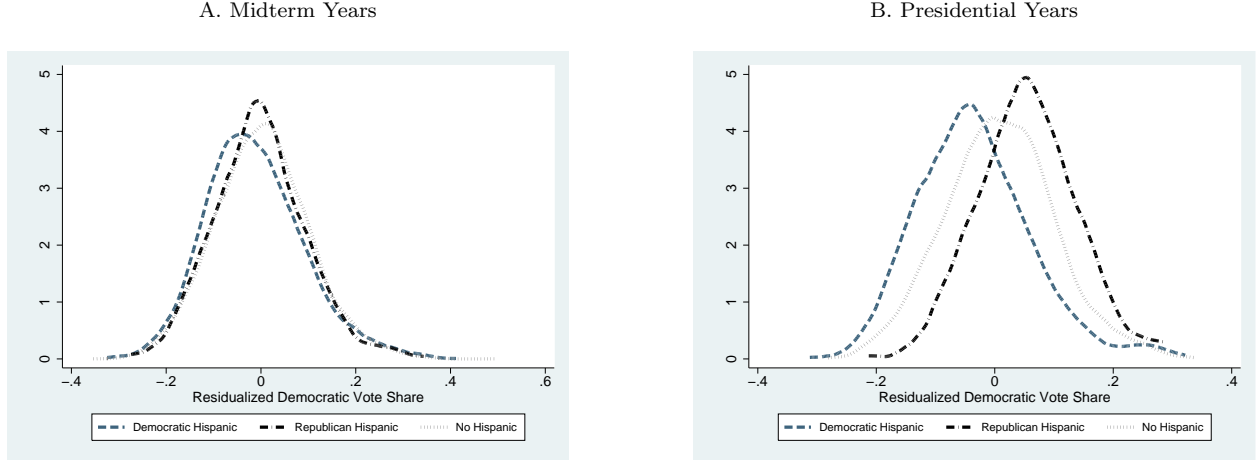
surname than core voters in down ballot statewide elections.[18] This finding is strongly consistent with Campbell (1960) who identifies political interest as the most salient distinction between the two groups. Core voters may be more vested in the policy outcomes of all elections including those that appear further down the ballot, and thus, place relatively more weight on ideological heuristics, such as party labels, than racial and ethnic cues.

To visualize these results, Figure 2 shows the county-level distribution in the residual Democratic vote share separately for elections with and without candidates with distinctively Hispanic names and separately for elections held in midterm and Presidential years. The residual variation is obtained from a regression of Democratic vote share on incumbency status, county, elected office, and year fixed effects but excludes candidate ethnicity. Panel A shows that, in midterm elections, the distributions are fairly similar regardless of whether or not a Hispanic candidate runs for office. This is consistent with our earlier finding that voters are unresponsive to candidate ethnicity in midterm years. However, in Presidential years, Panel B shows notable shifts in the distributions depending on candidate ethnicity. As a baseline, the line labeled "No Hispanic" shows the distribution of county-level vote share for the Democratic candidate in election contests in which both candidates are white. In elections with a Democratic Hispanic candidate, the distribution shifts to the left signifying a decline in support for the Democratic party. In elections with a Republican Hispanic candidate, the distribution shifts to the right which reflects a gain in support for the Democratic party. Thus, our regression estimates are not driven by a handful of outlier counties but instead reflect a broad response to Hispanic sounding names.[19]

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[18]In the section entitled *Peripheral and Core Voters* in the Appendix, we conduct additional analysis that quantifies the difference in the response to candidate race/ethnicity between peripheral versus core voters.

[19]Partisanship and race/ethnicity are not the only two heuristics present on the ballot as names can signal candidate gender as well. For example, almost all persons in the United States with the first name "Linda" self-identify as female. Thus, voters can infer the candidate gender's when the candidate has a distinctively female first name. In the Appendix, we show that there is no evidence that candidate gender is driving the negative response to the ethnic cue.

Figure 2: Distribution of County-level Residualized Democratic Vote Share

A. Midterm Years

B. Presidential Years

Notes: These figures plot the distribution of residual county-level Democratic vote share from regressions of Democratic vote share on incumbency status, county-level characteristics, office and year fixed effects or in other words, equation 1 without the race indicators.

We turn our attention to incumbency status. In column (1), the estimates imply that, on average, the vote share for the Democratic and Republican candidate will increase by 5.4 and 2.7 percentage points, respectively, when the candidate is an incumbent versus a challenger, *ceteris paribus*. This result is unsurprising given the extensive evidence that documents the incumbency advantage as a persistent feature in U.S. politics even in statewide elections (Ansolabehere and Snyder Jr (2002)). More interesting is that Democratic incumbents have twice the advantage than Republicans both in percentage points and in percent terms. One potential explanation could be related to the fact that Texas has heavily favored candidates from the Republican party during this time period; for example, the last time a Democratic presidential nominee won Texas was Jimmy Carter in 1976. As a result, it could be that a Democratic candidate is unlikely to win unless that candidate exhibits higher quality or valence than the average Republican candidate. This would lead to Democratic incumbents being more positively selected than Republican incumbents, and in turn, explain the stronger incumbency advantage for Democrats. This is consistent with an extensive literature that argues the incumbency advantage reflects, in part, a quality advantage

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over potential challengers (Ashworth and De Mesquita (2008)).

Columns (2) and (3) show the incumbency advantage in down ballot statewide elections in midterm and Presidential years, respectively. Two patterns are worth noting here. First, in column (2), the estimates imply that, in midterm years, a Democratic and Republican incumbent should expect an 8 and 3 percentage point increase in vote share, respectively, and as before, the incumbency advantage is stronger for Democratic versus Republican candidates. In sharp contrast, the incumbency advantage vanishes in Presidential years as shown in column (3). In column (3), the estimates imply that neither the Democratic nor the Republican candidate benefits from being an incumbent in down ballot statewide elections in Presidential years. One possible explanation could be tied to fact that, in Texas, incumbency status does not appear on the ballot, and thus, peripheral voters, whose participation is primarily motivated by the Presidential election, are less likely to know this information when they arrive at the polls. In this case, it is unsurprising that incumbency status is less influential in down ballot statewide elections that take place in Presidential years. Voters must know who the incumbents are in order for incumbency status to affect voter choice.[20]

Second, in both columns (2) and (3), there is a notable difference between the estimated effects of the ethnic cue versus incumbency status. In column (2), the candidate's race/ethnicity has virtually no impact on vote share, irrespective of political party, whereas incumbency status is an important determinant of the candidate's vote share in midterm years. In column (3), this pattern reverses such that candidate race/ethnicity now has a sizable negative impact on vote share for both Democratic and Republican candidates whereas incumbency status now has a negligible impact in Presidential years. This pattern is interesting because it implies that for core voters incumbency status is a more influential factor than the ethnic cue. In contrast, the ethnic cue has more salience

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[20]In the Appendix, we show that in midterm years, Democratic Hispanic incumbents are expected to gain rather than lose vote share in comparison with elections in which both candidates are white, *ceteris paribus*. We speculate that one reason for this result could be tied to the idea that Democratic Hispanic incumbents who are able to overcome the Hispanic penalty *and* win election for statewide office in Texas, a state that is strongly Republican, are associated with exceptional attributes.

for peripheral voters perhaps because they are less likely to know which candidate is the incumbent in these elections. An open question, though, is why peripheral voters penalize candidates with distinctively Hispanic names? Although peripheral voters may harbor more racial resentment, an alternative explanation is that they are concerned that minority candidates support less desirable policies. We examine this next.
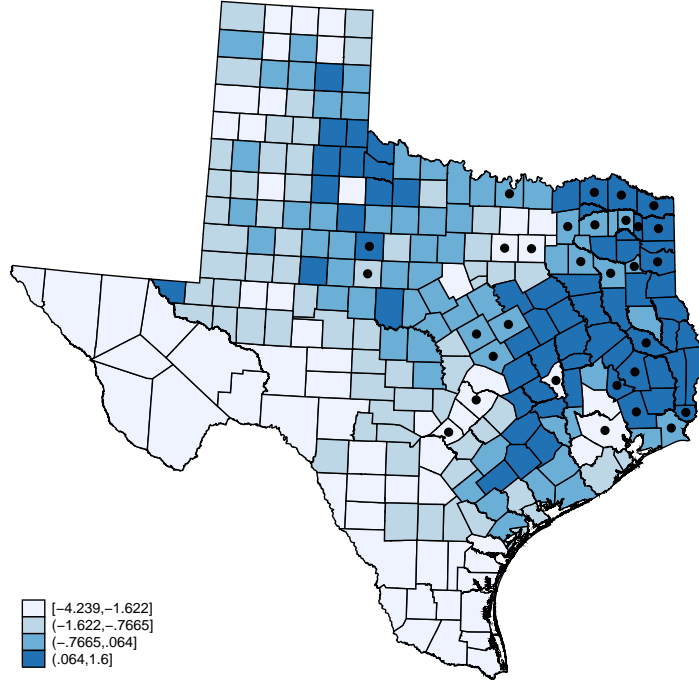
Potential Mechanisms

Racial Resentment

One explanation for why candidates with distinctively Hispanic names under-perform is that voters harbor racial resentment towards minority candidates. To assess this possibility, we construct a proxy of racial prejudice and then examine whether or not the Hispanic penalty is more or less pronounced in counties that are associated with higher levels of predicted prejudice. Our proxy is based on Stephens-Davidowitz (2012) (hereafter SD) who uses Google search rates for racial epithets as a measure of racial animus.[21] SD notes that common searches include the terms "I hate [N-word]" and "[N-word] jokes" which ping websites that are extremely derogatory towards African-Americans. An advantage of this approach is that Google searches are less vulnerable to social desirability bias because they are conducted in private. However, an important limitation is that the Google search rates are unavailable at the county-level, and thus, we construct our measure by taking a weighted average of county-level demographic characteristics that are strong predictors of racial prejudice (i.e. age, education, race, and ethnicity). Although our proxy is expected to reflect racial resentment, we cannot rule out that it also co-varies with other factors that affect voter choice. Thus, we cautiously interpret the following results as suggestive evidence on the role of racial resentment.

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[21]One issue is that the Google search rates are available at the Designated Market Area (DMA) rather than county-level. To construct a county-level measure, we take a weighted average of county-level demographic characteristics (i.e. age, education, race, and ethnicity) in which the weights are coefficients from a regression in SD (column (3) of Table 3) of Google search rates on these demographic characteristics. See the Appendix for more details.

Figure 3: Spatial Patterns of Predicted Racial Animus

Notes: We construct a measure of predicted prejudice by taking a weighted average of the share of population older than 65, share with a bachelor's degree, fraction Hispanic, and fraction black. The weights are point estimates from regressions of Google search rates of racially insensitive terms on these covariates which are in Stephens-Davidowitz (2012). The black dots in Panel (b) are counties that are known to have active chapters of the Ku Klux Klan.

Before we turn to our analysis, we provide additional corroboration that our proxy correlates with racial resentment. In particular, we examine the spatial correlation between our county-level proxy of prejudice and known locations of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Our expectation is that the KKK is more likely to find success both in recruiting prospective members and in deflecting potential backlash in places where residents tolerate or perhaps espouse similar views. In this case, we should observe that hate groups are disproportionately located in counties associated with high levels of predicted prejudice.[22] Figure 3 shows a county-level map of Texas and darker shaded

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[22]We compile data on the location of KKK chapters from various sources including the United White Knights of

counties are expected to have higher levels of racial resentment than those with lighter shade. The circular dots indicate whether or not the county is home to a known chapter of the KKK. The map confirms that counties with active KKK chapters are also the ones that tend to have darker shades of blue, and thus, are expected to have above average levels of racial resentment. The few exceptions are almost all in the most populous metropolitan areas – San Antonio, Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Houston – where white supremacy is unlikely to represent the modal attitude towards race.

Next, we assess whether the voter response to distinctly Hispanic names varies with our measure of racial resentment. We run an augmented version of the regression model (1) in which we fully-interact all variables with indicators for the quartiles of predicted prejudice.[23] Although the set of controls still include incumbency status, office, and year fixed effects, we replace the county fixed effects with a rich set of time-varying county-level demographics. These include fraction Hispanic, unemployment rate, total population, quadratic in median household income, fraction urban, population density, and share of foreign born persons. The model also includes the main effects of the quartiles of predicted prejudice. We restrict attention to down ballot statewide elections in Presidential years since these are the election contests in which the ethnic heuristic affects voter choice. In our results, we will present the sum of the main effect of candidate ethnicity and the interaction between candidate ethnicity and the quartile of predicted prejudice which yields the Hispanic penalty separately for each specific quartile. We will also present results from a joint significant test in which the null hypothesis is that the voter response to Hispanic candidates is the same across the four quartiles.

If racial resentment is not driving our results, then we expect the voter response to Hispanic

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the Ku Klux Klan website, Southern Poverty Law Center, and case law involving the KKK. As an example, *State of Texas v. Knights of Ku Klux Klan* is a case in which the KKK argues that the Texas Department of Transportation infringed on their right to free speech by denying their application to adopt a highway. The KKK's intent was to adopt a portion of a highway that passed by a housing complex mostly populated by African-Americans as a means of intimidation.

[23]This specification does not mask more interesting dynamics at different points in the predicted prejudice distribution. In the Appendix, we show qualitatively similar results when we categorize counties into deciles of predicted prejudice. Thus, quartiles convey the same pattern with the added benefit of increased precision since deciles use more degrees of freedom.

sounding names to be independent with respect to the quartiles of predicted prejudice. Table 4 shows the results. The estimates in column (1) imply that in the least prejudiced counties (i.e. those in the bottom quartile of predicted prejudice), Democratic and Republican Hispanic candidates both lose 2 percentage points in vote share in comparison with elections in which both candidates are white, *ceteris paribus*. However, the coefficient for Republican Hispanic candidates is not statistically significant at all conventional levels. The estimates in columns (2) to (4) show that the Hispanic penalty is more pronounced in counties associated with higher levels of predicted prejudice. For example, in the most prejudicial counties (i.e. those in the top quartile of predicted prejudice), the Hispanic penalty is roughly 3 to 3.5 times larger in comparison with the least prejudiced counties for both Democratic and Republican Hispanic candidates. The p-values associated with tests of joint significance soundly reject that the voter response is equal across the four quartiles. Overall, these patterns suggest that racial resentment could be an important mechanism underlying our results.[24]

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[24]It is interesting that the response to the ethnic heuristic is similar at higher percentile points in the predicted prejudice distribution. One possible explanation could be related to the idea that the response to the ethnic heuristic reflects quick decisions driven by implicit associations that even voters themselves are not consciously aware of when the ballot is cast (Bertrand et al. (2005)). In this case, extreme prejudice could generate similar behavior as moderate prejudice to the extent that only a moderate amount of prejudice is sufficient to activate the subconscious response to the ethnic heuristic.

Table 4: Voter Response to Hispanic Names by Quartiles of Predicted Prejudice

Dep Var: Democratic Candidate Vote Share

| | Quartile of Predicted Racial Prejudice | | | |
	Bottom	2nd	3rd	Top
Democratic Hispanic	-0.020**	-0.058***	-0.062***	-0.061***
	(0.008)	(0.013)	(0.011)	(0.009)
Republican Hispanic	0.020	0.073***	0.067**	0.073***
	(0.018)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)
Joint Significance Test (p-value)				
Democratic Hispanic			0.000	
Republican Hispanic			0.000	

Note: n = 6,349 and $R^2 = 0.769$. The sample is restricted to down-ballot statewide elections held in Presidential years. These include elections for Attorney General, Lieutenant Governor, State Treasurer, Railroad Commissioner, Comptroller of Public Accounts, Commissioner of General Land Office, Commissioner of Agriculture, Court of Criminal Appeals, Supreme Court Justice. The estimates are from a fully saturated model that interactions all variables with indicators for the quartiles of predicted prejudice. The controls include incumbency status, office fixed effects, year fixed effects, fraction Hispanic, unemployment rate, total population, quadratic in median household income, fraction urban, population density, and share of foreign born persons. Standard errors are clustered at the elected office-by-year level.

A prime concern is that our estimates could be driven by rural rather than racial resentment which Cramer (2016) describes as a strong belief among rural constituents that legislators consistently prioritize urban areas in the allocation of resources at the heavy expense of rural areas. In this case, rural counties could disfavor Hispanic candidates due to concerns that they would tilt the distribution of resources towards urban areas even more. Another potential issue is that the Hispanic penalty could reflect attitudes towards immigration rather than racial resentment. In this case, voters with negative attitudes towards immigrants could prefer white candidates because they perceive Hispanic candidates to be more ideologically distant on this issue. However, it is worth noting that our results hold even though we include flexible controls for the rural-urban divide as well as the county's share of foreign born persons. The latter is relevant in light of studies that show inter-group contact is a strong correlate of exclusionary attitudes towards immigrants.[25]

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[25]An additional concern is that the counties near the border with Mexico have very high shares of foreign born persons which could lead to unique dynamics that are not representative of attitudes towards immigrants in the rest

Nonetheless, it remains possible that other factors, such as concerns over tax policy or gun control, could drive our results. We turn to this issue next.

Additional Policy Concerns

In this section, we focus on the elections for Railroad Commissioner as an alternative way of assessing the relative importance of additional policy concerns. Because the Railroad Commission is responsible for regulating Texas' oil and gas industry, it seems unlikely that voters would prefer white versus Hispanic Railroad Commissioners due to ideological concerns over tax policy, gun control, school finance, or other orthogonal issues. Instead, the Commission's policy choices have targeted impact on local economies that rely heavily on the energy sector. Consider the following excerpt from the Commission's website in regards to the Texas Oilfield Relief Initiative:[26]

> "With the current industry downturn, at stake is the survival of the state's small producers and the oil industry's many marginal wells, which make up 85 percent of total U.S. oil wells and 18 percent of the nation's total oil output," said Judy Stark, Panhandle Producers and Royalty Owners Association Executive Vice President. "During this critical time, Commissioner Craddick's initiative will provide relief to Texas' independent producers, the backbone of both our state and nations oil industry. For that, PPROA's members are truly grateful."

In general, candidates grapple with questions of how to efficiently promote energy sector growth while maintaining environmental safeguards. Job protection also appears to be a salient talking point. For example, the online biography of Christi Craddick, the current Chairwoman, touts that "[Craddick] has fought against Washington's one-size-fits-all environmental policies that would *kill jobs* and stifle energy production growth."[27] [Emphasis ours.]

The nature of the policy work implies that, unlike the other down ballot statewide offices such as the Attorney General, Lieutenant Governor, State Treasurer, and Comptroller of Public Accounts

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of Texas (Chavez (2013)). In the Appendix, we show that our results also hold when we exclude counties that are in close proximity of the border with Mexico. We also provide a more detailed discussion of rural resentment in the Appendix.
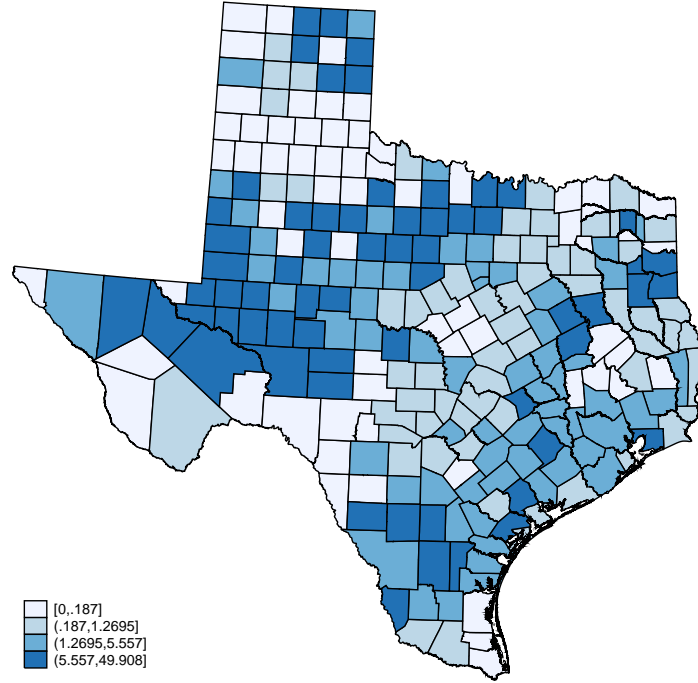
[26]See http://www.rrc.state.tx.us/all-news/080916a/

[27]See http://www.rrc.state.tx.us/media/19567/craddickbio.pdf

to name a few, the Railroad Commission is an office for which we can plausibly identify a subset of counties that potentially have elevated interest in the election outcomes. To illustrate, Figure 4 maps the county-level variation in oil and gas employees per-capita which we collect from the U.S. Census Annual County and Business Patterns series. The map shows that the counties with more oil and gas employees per-capita (denoted by darker shades of blue) are located precisely in the Eagle Ford Shale and Permian Basin regions where oil and gas production is heavily concentrated. It is worth noting that this spatial variation is driven entirely by geological factors in the formation of oil and gas reserves. If our main results reflect voter concerns over the policy preferences of Hispanic candidates rather than racial resentment, then we might expect to see especially larger losses in vote share for Hispanic candidates in the darker-shaded counties whose local economies are more dependent on the oil and gas sector.[28]

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[28]There is ample qualitative evidence that suggests a tight link between the energy sector and local economies across Texas. Consider the opening lines from a May 1, 2018 Reuters news article, "In West Texas, rising oil prices are fueling a sharp economic upswing, lifting employment and pay to records, driving up spending at hotels, restaurants, and car dealerships, and raising the cost of housing and other essentials. This parched patch of land, under which lies the largest oil-producing rock formations in the United States, is the epicenter of a growth binge that shows just how tight the link remains between low unemployment, rising wages, and upward pricing pressure." See https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-oil-record-economy-analysis/boom-time-comes-early-to-west-texas-oil-patch-idUSKBN1I22TF for the full article. Moreover, there is an extensive literature that finds a robust relationship between economic variables and voter choice. See Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier (2000) for a review.

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Figure 4: Oil and Gas Employees Per Capita by County

[0,.187]
(.187,1.2695]
(1.2695,5.557]
(5.557,49.908]

Notes: Data on oil and gas employees by county are from the U.S. Census Annual County and Business Patterns series.

To examine this possibility, we run an augmented version of the regression model in equation (1) that fully interacts all variables with quartiles of county-level per capita energy sector workers. The sample is restricted to Railroad Commissioner elections but includes both midterm and Presidential years because there is insufficient variation in candidate ethnicity otherwise. Panel A of Table 5 presents the effects of a distinctively Hispanic name separately for each quartile. The coefficients on Republican Hispanic are very stable across the remaining quartiles and lie within a tight range from 4.7 to 5.3 percentage points. For Democratic Hispanic candidates, the estimates show a penalty associated with Hispanic sounding names in all quartiles albeit with more variability. For example, there is a 4.2 percentage point difference in the estimates between the 2nd and top quartiles for Democratic Hispanic candidates. However, there is no evidence that the effects are

systematically more pronounced in counties whose labor force is more dependent on the energy sector. For example, the penalty for Democratic Hispanic candidates is similar for counties in the bottom versus top quartile at 9.8 and 10.8 percentage points, respectively. On the whole, this pattern is not consistent with the Hispanic penalty being driven primarily by concerns over the policy preferences of Hispanic candidates.

Table 5: Heterogeneous Effects in Elections for Railroad Commissioner

Dep Var: Democratic Candidate Vote Share

Panel A: Effects by Political Interest

	Quartile of Per Capita Energy Workers			
	Bottom	2nd	3rd	Top
Democratic Hispanic	-0.098***	-0.066*	-0.088**	-0.108**
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.036)	(0.037)
Republican Hispanic	0.049	0.047	0.047	0.053
	(0.041)	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.046)

Panel B: Effects by Predicted Prejudice

	Quartile of Predicted Racial Prejudice			
	Bottom	2nd	3rd	Top
Democratic Hispanic	-0.040	-0.087**	-0.084*	-0.106***
	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.041)	(0.029)
Republican Hispanic	0.004	0.052	0.069	0.073
	(0.024)	(0.037)	(0.054)	(0.054)

Note: n=2,286. The sample is restricted to elections for Railroad Commissioner. These estimates are based on an augmented version of equation 1 that fully interacts all variables with respect to the quartiles for energy sector workers (in Panel A) and quartiles of predicted prejudice (in Panel B). The controls include incumbency status, fraction Hispanic, unemployment rate, total population, quadratic in median household income, fraction urban, population density, share of foreign born persons and main effects for the quartiles of per-capital energy sector employees (in Panel A) and main effects for the quartiles of predicted prejudice (in Panel B). Standard errors are clustered at the elected office-by-year level.

In Panel B, we continue to focus on elections for Railroad Commissioner elections but replace the quartiles of per capita energy sector workers with quartiles of predicted prejudice. As before, we show estimates separately for each quartile of predicted racial prejudice. In column (1), the

estimates imply that in counties with the lowest levels of predicted prejudice (i.e. the bottom quartile), Democratic and Republican Hispanic candidates for Railroad Commissioner lose 4 and 0.4 percentage points in vote share, respectively, in comparison with elections in which both candidates are white, *ceteris paribus*. Neither estimate is statistically different from 0. In contrast, the estimates in the remaining quartiles are much larger (in absolute value), and for the Democratic party, the effect of the ethnic heuristic is statistically significant. For example, in counties with the highest levels of predicted prejudice (i.e. the top quartile), the estimates imply that Democratic and Republican candidates lose roughly 10.6 and 7.3 percentage points, respectively, when they have distinctively Hispanic names. It is rather interesting that our measure of prejudice is a stronger predictor of the Hispanic penalty than our proxy of political interest in elections for the Railroad Commissioner.

One possible explanation is that per-capita energy sector workers may not be an appropriate measure of voter interest in Railroad Commission elections because the Commission's policies have implications for the environment as well. Thus, counties with few energy sector workers could also have strong interest in the Railroad Commissioner elections. In addition, our proxy of prejudice could systematically relate to environmental interest because our measure is based on demographic characteristics that could correlate with eco-friendliness. Although we are unaware of any studies that document such a relationship, there are other potential channels that could account for our results. For example, if Hispanic candidates raise fewer campaign contributions than white candidates and the funding advantage is used to campaign more aggressively in counties that have higher levels of predicted prejudice, then our results would reflect differences in funding rather than racial resentment. Because we cannot completely rule out this possibility or other idiosyncratic differences between Hispanic and white candidates, we interpret our results as suggestive rather than definitive evidence that racial resentment drives the Hispanic penalty that we observe.

Additional Discussion

It is interesting that our results depart from other studies that show more modest responses to ethnic cues (Kam (2007), McConnaughy et al. (2010)). For example, McConnaughy et al. (2010) finds that non-Hispanic white voters are unresponsive to distinctly Hispanic names because names constitute an explicit rather than implicit heuristic. The distinction between implicit versus explicit cues is important to the extent that voters have heightened awareness that group-based behavior violates egalitarian norms in the context of explicit cues (Mendelberg (2001)). Although there is mixed evidence on this theory (Huber and Lapinski (2006), Mendelberg (2008)), McConnaughy et al. (2010) shows that non-Hispanic white voters respond to ethnic cues only when socially acceptable negative group-based attitudes are activated. Kam (2007) also finds that non-Hispanic white voters are unaffected by ethnic cues when there is information about the candidate's partisan affiliation. Our results are inconsistent with the latter finding since we find a Hispanic penalty even though party labels are attached to candidate names on ballots in Texas.

One reason for this discrepancy could be due to substantive differences in research design. The modal study of racial or ethnic priming conducts lab experiments, often in university settings, to test the effects of ethnic cues. Although lab experiments can credibly induce experimental variation in the racial or ethnic heuristic, there is an active discussion as to whether or not lab results generalize well into the field (Levitt and List (2007), McDermott (2002)). In our setting, there are numerous factors, such as choice fatigue, that could lead to a wedge between the lab and field. For example, Augenblick and Nicholson (2015) finds that voter reliance on decision shortcuts increases with the number of decisions already made due to decision fatigue. Because we consider statewide contests that appear further down ballot, voters could rely more on implicit associations in our setting due to greater choice fatigue than in the lab where subjects are often presented with fewer choices. Thus, our results are not necessarily in conflict with lab results and are well-aligned with the social psychology literature that finds implicit prejudice affects voter choice (Arcuri et al. (2008), Payne et al. (2010)).

Our findings also relate to a literature that examines what determines partisanship among Hispanic voters. In a study of Latino voters, Alvarez and Bedolla (2003) finds that ideological views in public policy issues such as school choice, health insurance, gun control, and affirmative action are much stronger correlates of partisanship than either demographic characteristics or economic variables. McConnaughy et al. (2010) finds that co-ethnic voting is driven more by the belief that the electoral success of Hispanic candidates has tangible benefits to individual welfare. These studies imply that Hispanic voters respond positively to the ethnic cue because it provides a signal about the candidate's policy positions. However, our results are not wholly consistent with this view. In the Appendix, we show that counties with larger shares of Hispanic voters exhibit a preference for co-ethnic candidates regardless of their partisanship even though Democratic and Republican Hispanic candidates are plausibly distant in their respective ideological views. This finding is more consistent with the idea that co-ethnic voting can be driven, in part, by affinity towards candidates who share cultural similarities (Garcia and Arce (1988)).

Finally, although our effect sizes are comparable with what is found in other studies,[29] the magnitudes are such that only one outcome in down ballot statewide elections involving a Hispanic candidate could have plausibly been affected by the response to the ethnic heuristic. Nonetheless, our findings have substantive implications because racially polarized voting can impact policy outcomes in other ways. For example, a minority candidate may not advocate as forcefully for co-ethnic groups as they otherwise would in the absence of group-based voting in order to maintain proximity towards Whiteness. This sentiment is echoed in Ta-Nehisi Coates' writing on Barack Obama's Presidency, "But as our first black president, he has avoided mention of race almost entirely. In having to be "twice as good" and "half as black," Obama reveals the false promise and double standard of integration."[30] Even though the negative response to the ethnic heuristic does not swing many election outcomes in our data, it could very well contribute to why we see

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[29]For example, Stephens-Davidowitz (2012) finds that Obama lost roughly 4 percentage points in vote share due to racial considerations which is equivalent to the home-state advantage documented in Presidential elections (Lewis-Beck and Rice (1983)).

[30]From his article entitled "Fear of a Black President" in the September 2012 issue of *The Atlantic*.

more minority officials in local politics (as shown in the Appendix) and why minorities in high level offices tend to navigate issues of race with caution.

Conclusion

The study of how voters respond to racial and ethnic heuristics is complicated by the fact that candidates inevitably differ along other unobserved dimensions that affect voter choice. To circumvent this challenge, studies often rely on experimental designs in which participants are presented with fictitious candidate profiles that differ only with respect to race or ethnicity. The variation in candidate race or ethnicity is induced by changing the candidate's name from an indistinct to a distinctly ethnic name or skin tone from a lighter to darker shade. Our research design extends this idea to the field by studying actual election results from *down ballot* statewide contests in which voters are plausibly ill-informed with regard to candidate-specific attributes. For uninformed voters, opposing candidates are on equal footing except for the differences in heuristics available on the ballot. In this case, it is as though voters are presented with two candidate profiles that differ only in heuristics, such as the distinctiveness of their names, just as in the experimental design.

We find that both Democratic and Republican candidates with Hispanic sounding names lose 5 to 6 percentage points in vote share in Presidential years. There is no evidence that voters respond to ethnic heuristics in midterm years which is consistent with the idea that peripheral voters rely more on informational shortcuts than core voters. In addition, we find that these patterns are more pronounced in counties that are expected to have higher levels of racial prejudice. In Railroad Commissioner elections, we find no evidence that the Hispanic penalty is concentrated in counties most affected by the policies implemented by the Railroad Commission which suggests that our results are not driven by voter concerns over the policy preferences of Hispanic candidates. These findings imply that racial resentment can heighten the voter response to ethnic heuristics but we emphasize that they should not interpreted as conclusive evidence since our proxy of predicted

prejudice could correlate with other factors that affect voter choice. Nonetheless, these estimates are important because holding lower level *statewide* office can serve as a valuable stepping stone for minority candidates who aspire to higher level office (Jeffries (1999)).

A limitation of our analysis is related to issues of external validity. On the one hand, it is unclear as to whether or not our findings extend to other ethnic groups besides Hispanics, to other types of elections, or to other states beyond Texas. The fact that our analysis pertains to a small number of Hispanic candidates implies that we also cannot rule out that idiosyncratic differences such as the ability to raise funding, scandal, trustworthiness, or some other unobserved attribute between Hispanic and white candidates drives our results. On the other hand, it is interesting that similar patterns have emerged in different contexts. For example, in the 2016 Republican primary in Illinois, two of Donald Trump's delegates named Nabi Fakroddin and Raja Sadiq lost sizable vote share in comparison with other Trump delegates with more familiar names even though neither is a Hispanic sounding name.[31] The latter suggests that the voter response to ethnic heuristics that we document in this paper could very well extend to candidates of other ethnic groups, in different types of elections, and outside of Texas. We imagine that future research will be able to apply this research design to study other important questions in the politics of race and ethnicity more broadly.

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[31]See https://www.vox.com/2016/3/16/11244884/trump-delegates-muslim-fakroddin

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