

TRUE COLORS WHITE CONSERVATIVE SUPPORT FOR MINORITY REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES

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Abstract Although the vast majority of minority candidates run under the Democratic label and minority voters are more supportive of the Democratic Party, in recent years a nontrivial number of minority candidates have won Republican Party nominations in high-profile elections (i.e., governor and US Senate). In this study, we assess the level of support that white conservative voters give to minority Republican candidates. We are interested in seeing whether these voters are less supportive of the Grand Old Party (GOP) standard-bearer when the candidate is not white, since the vast majority of Republican candidates and Republican identifiers are non-Hispanic whites. Our data come from the 2006, 2010, and 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) surveys—election years with minority Republican nominees for governor and US Senate. Controlling for various factors, we consistently find that white conservatives are either more supportive of minority Republicans or just as likely to vote for a minority as they are a white Republican (a null result). Although we hesitate to dismiss the presence of racial prejudice in voting behavior, in the case of white conservatives our analyses suggest that the base of the GOP does not discriminate against minority nominees in high-profile contemporary general elections. At a minimum, the level of ideological polarization in American politics masks racially prejudiced voting behavior, and at a maximum, it renders it inoperable, because white conservatives view recent minority Republican nominees as at least as conservative as white GOP nominees and their level of support reflects this.

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On November 6, 2012, Americans reelected the nation's only minority president in the history of the United States. According to the national exit poll, 93 percent of African Americans, 71 percent of Hispanics, and 73 percent of Asians voted for Democratic President Barack Obama. While earning landslide vote shares from the three largest minority groups, Obama lost the non-Latino white (Anglo) vote to his Republican challenger Mitt Romney by 39 to 59 percent.¹ Thus, a multiracial coalition of voters granted President Obama a second term. The reaffirmation of the historic 2008 victory was perhaps all the more impressive because in 2012, short-term political conditions, particularly the slow climb out of the Great Recession, arguably favored the Republican opposition.²

The stinging defeat in 2012 prompted Republicans to face the stark reality that their minority problem had become their major impediment to winning the greatest prize in American politics. Shortly after the election, the Republican National Committee issued a detailed report ("Growth and Opportunity Project") that bluntly discussed the structural problems with the GOP brand. Contrasting the differential rates of success in contemporary presidential versus gubernatorial elections, under the second section of the report titled "America Looks Different," the Republican authors write:

America is changing demographically, and unless Republicans are able to grow our appeal the way GOP governors have done, the changes tilt the playing field even more in the Democratic direction. (Barbour et al. 2012, 7)

It remains to be seen whether Republicans can find a way to increase their appeal and support among minority voters,³ but the party has clearly confronted the fact that Anglos are declining as a portion of the electorate while the growing minority population continues to shift in favor of Democrats. And yet, amid the daunting reality of being rendered a national minority party due to the growth of minority voters who align overwhelmingly with the Democratic

1. In addition, for those voters who failed to claim a race/ethnicity and thus were categorized as "other" (2 percent of the survey sample), 58 percent voted for Obama and 38 percent for Romney. Percentage splits by party do not equal 100 percent because of the small portion of voters preferring non-major-party candidates. The exit poll results can be found on the CNN website www.cnn.com/election/2012/results/race/president.

2. We qualify this statement because economic indicators were pointing in a positive direction as Election Day neared. Also, President Obama's response to Hurricane Sandy, particularly the demonstration of bipartisan unity generated from his appearances with New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, was a credible display of crisis leadership that most likely won some votes late in the election season.

3. Active recruitment of minority candidates suggests the GOP believes this is a means to attract crossover voters, specifically, minority voters inclined to vote Democratic but willing to defect because of the appeal of descriptive representation on the basis of race/ethnicity. This strategy may be rendered moot when the Democratic nominee is of the same race/ethnicity as the minority Republican opponent, but it could yield positive results when the Democrat is white and faces a minority Republican, a realistic scenario and one worthy of empirical testing (we revisit this question in the concluding section).

Party, the GOP has curiously found a way to expand its portfolio of minority candidates and officeholders in the highest elected statewide contests: governor and US Senate. The notable disconnect between the paucity of minority Republican voters, on the one hand, with the recent uptick in the number of minority Republican candidates securing party nominations and some subsequently winning election, on the other hand, raises numerous questions.⁴

In this study, we examine the political behavior of individuals faced with the opportunity to vote for a minority Republican candidate in a high-profile statewide contest. Given the racial divide in partisan vote choice, we want to assess whether white loyalty to GOP candidates is essentially colorblind. In other words, after controlling for numerous confounding factors, are Anglo voters as supportive of minority Republicans as they are of white Republican nominees? The prevalent stereotype that minority candidates will be more liberal in their policy positions is often entangled with the obvious fact that most run as Democrats—affiliating with the more liberal party. Not surprisingly, the base of the Republican Party, white conservatives, may be most likely to embrace this stereotype, but how do they vote when the GOP fields a minority nominee? All things constant, do white conservatives demonstrate impartial support for Republican candidates, regardless of their racial/ethnic profile? If the answer is yes (a null finding), then ideology may be trumping racial prejudice. If the answer is no (a significant difference in favor of greater support for Anglo Republican nominees), then one of the fundamental problems with the GOP's electoral positioning may stem from its base of supporters actively resisting greater racial diversity.

Our data consist of Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) surveys conducted in 2006, 2010, and 2012—elections that included minority Republican nominees (African American, Asian American, or Latino) vying to become governor or US senator. With the CCES data, we pool across election years and conduct multiple regressions comparing white conservative support for Anglo Republican nominees versus minority Republican candidates in order to determine whether these voters exhibit the same level of support for Republican candidates irrespective of their racial/ethnic profile.

Previous Research

Most of the previous research that examines white support of minority candidates represents the converse of this study—analyzing white voting in biracial

4. For instance, on the supply side, is the GOP actively recruiting minority candidates to deflect attention from their minority voter problem and hopefully to increase minority support from those who share the candidate's racial/ethnic profile? Are the win-loss records of minority Republicans markedly worse than their Anglo counterparts, and if so, are most running as sacrificial lambs in hopeless contests? Is there a considerable amount of good old-fashioned political ambition driving some of these qualified minority Republican candidates, who behave strategically by recognizing the glut of minority Democrats seeking public office (on this point, see [Greenblatt \[2012\]](#))?

contests (white candidate versus minority candidate) where the minority candidate is a Democrat. And this is the most prevalent scenario, whether the biracial contest is a primary matchup or a general election. This reality is mainly grounded in the fact that a notable minority presence in contesting and winning high-profile positions under the Republican label is a very recent development. With rare exceptions outside the Reconstruction era (circa 1865–1877), like the election of African American Republican Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts in 1966 (see [Becker and Heaton 1967](#)), few minority candidates have captured GOP nominations or even sought the party's nomination in statewide races until around the past decade.

The GOP's outreach to minority candidates and the increase in minorities choosing to run as Republicans appear a positive development because they combat the palpable suspicion of the party holding antagonistic positions toward minorities. Indeed, this current study would not have been possible even 10 years ago because of a dearth of minority candidates running, let alone winning GOP nominations in statewide contests. By contrast, the Democratic Party's long-standing status as the refuge for minority candidates goes back to at least the 1964 presidential election ([Carmines and Stimson 1989](#)), when the national parties' permanent reversal on civil rights made the GOP anathema to voters of color, who came to view Republicans as opposing, if not actively undermining, racial and ethnic equality.

And even though the Democratic Party established itself as the vehicle promoting and defending civil rights, growing its appeal and broadening its coalition outside the American South during the New Deal era in various northern states (see [Feinstein and Schickler 2008](#)), the overall record of the major parties in electing minority candidates to high office is rather abysmal. Indeed, spanning the history of the United States, fewer than 40 minority candidates (African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics) have been elected to serve as a US senator or governor of a state.⁵ And among this select group of elected minorities, most are concentrated within those states where their minority group has a substantial presence; for example, Latinos in California and New Mexico, Asians in Hawaii, and African Americans in southern states during Reconstruction and decidedly outside the South in contemporary politics.

One of the obvious reasons a significantly smaller number of racial minorities are elected to these high offices is a matter of supply. A disproportionately lower number of minorities seek public office, and since politics is a profession with established norms for moving up the career path, fewer and fewer individuals (irrespective of race) have the requisite skills and ambition to progress up the electoral ladder to such desirable positions as governor or US senator ([Schlesinger 1966](#)). But another common explanation, and a question

5. Hardly any Native Americans have won high office (US Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell [1993–2005] of Colorado being an exception; he was a Democrat until switching to the GOP in 1995), and for the period of our study no Native Americans won Republican nominations for governor or US Senator.

guiding this research, is racial prejudice. The comparatively lower number of successful minority candidates is frequently attributed to racial prejudice on the part of white voters.

Studies assessing white prejudice against minority candidates in biracial contests display mixed results, particularly in terms of whether racial prejudice reaches a level great enough to be decisive (Highton 2004; Reeves 1997). Further, most studies have examined contests where the minority candidate was African American, but this has changed more recently with the contemporary electoral successes of Asian and Latino candidates in high-profile offices (Bejarano and Segura 2007; Knuckey 2010). Finally, the methods for analysis have varied considerably, including aggregate data, surveys, and experimental approaches.

Perhaps the most famous evidence of racial prejudice in biracial contests stems from the 1982 California gubernatorial election, which gave us the well-known term the “Bradley effect.” Named after Los Angeles mayor and black Democratic gubernatorial candidate Tom Bradley, this effect happens when a minority candidate exhibits greater support than the white opponent throughout the duration of the contest, but on Election Day, the minority candidate either loses, or wins by a much narrower margin, because a nontrivial share of whites (a representative sample of whom presumably displayed greater support for the minority candidate in polling done prior to the election) end up voting for the white candidate. Bradley was in fact leading prior to the election (albeit by a small margin as Election Day neared) and did end up losing to his white opponent (Republican George Deukmejian). Nonetheless, some contend that it was more a bout of lackluster campaigning by Bradley that led to his defeat (see Citrin, Green, and Sears 1990) and not racial prejudice that did him in (for the opposing view, see Sonenshein [1990]).

Later in the decade, the Bradley effect was given another examination in the 1989 Virginia gubernatorial race, which elected the first African American governor (L. Douglas Wilder) in the nation’s history. Democratic Lieutenant Governor Doug Wilder was leading Republican J. Marshall Coleman throughout the campaign and, contrary to the pre-election polling, had a margin of victory notably narrower than what the survey data suggested. Indeed, a post-election autopsy of the leading exit-poll data reveals that instead of the natural tightening of a close race (as partisans supposedly “come home,” as first articulated by Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee [1954]), racial prejudice was the most credible explanation for why the Wilder/Coleman contest ended up being so close (Traugott and Price 1992).

In a more recent study of white voter preferences toward African American candidates in the 1996 and 1998 general elections for the US House, Highton’s (2004) examination of exit-poll data finds no statistically significant difference in the likelihood of voting for House nominees on the basis of their race. The primary finding is that: “African American Democratic candidates were

neither favored nor discriminated against by white voters. The same conclusion appears warranted for African American Republican candidates” (2004, 11).⁶

But, given possible complications due to social desirability accounting for higher expressed levels of support for minority candidates in biracial contests, experimental designs have been conducted in creative ways to detect a more accurate degree of racial prejudice. Unobtrusive survey methods under experimental designs reveal significantly more racial prejudice toward minority candidates. For instance, not only does prejudice exist toward African American candidates, but it is even more severe in the case of those with darker complexions—a more nuanced analysis that goes beyond the simple reality of racial distinctions (Terkildsen 1993). Challenging the notion of a more colorblind “New South,” Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens (1997)⁷ employ an unobtrusive survey list experiment and find that racial prejudice among southern whites is very high vis-à-vis their northern counterparts and especially among white southern males (a pillar of support for the contemporary GOP). Finally, Reeves (1997) uses an experimental survey to conclude that although some whites are not bold enough to express their disapproval of an African American candidate that they otherwise are expected to support, cueing a racial issue (affirmative action) leads to a large increase in the number of undecided white voters, and this is interpreted as racial prejudice. In other words, most of these white voters are not really undecided, but they just do not want to admit they oppose the black candidate (see Highton [2004] for opposing this interpretation).

Despite scholarly prescriptions of how black candidates can minimize the likelihood of being caricatured in a manner unacceptable in the eyes of prejudiced white voters (see Sonenshein 1990; Strickland and Whicker 1992), Moskowitz and Stroh (1994) contend that their experimental evidence reveals a psychological component of racial prejudice that cannot be overcome by even the most convincing candidate presentations intended to combat deeply held racial stereotypes. Hence, although prejudice is a learned attitude, for some people it appears an impossibility to overcome once the belief is ingrained.

The latest research has moved from the more typical black/white biracial contest to look at other minority candidate pairings to see if racial prejudice contributed to the outcome. For example, parish-level and survey data on the 2003 Louisiana gubernatorial election reveals evidence of racial prejudice contributing to Indian American Republican Bobby Jindal’s defeat by white Democrat Kathleen Babineaux Blanco (Skinner and Klinkner 2004; Bejarano

6. The discussion section of the same article does point to an interesting qualification to Highton’s general finding when the party identification of a white voter interacts with the race of the candidate. White Democratic voters were more supportive of black Democratic candidates than white Democratic candidates, whereas white Republicans were less supportive of black Democratic candidates as compared to white Democratic candidates (a decline of four to five percentage points; Highton [2004], 16).

7. The Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens study examines racial prejudice in the broadest sense and not in the context of candidates running for elective office.

and Segura 2007). And even though Jindal was victorious in the open contest in 2007, racial backlash accounted for a lower level of white support compared to white Republican candidates who ran in other high-profile statewide Louisiana races since the 1980s (Knuckey 2010). These Louisiana studies come closest to the approach we take in this article because we are also interested in white voting behavior in the context of elections where the minority candidate is a Republican.

By examining white conservative support for minority Republican nominees for governor and senator, we pursue a new angle on the old question of white voter preferences in the context of a minority candidate running for a high-profile office. To be sure, we acknowledge that there may be variation in the perception and attendant vote choice of white conservatives depending on the specific race/ethnicity of the minority GOP nominee (African American, Asian, or Latino).⁸ But due to data limitations, primarily grounded in the fact that there simply are not yet enough cases of minority Republican gubernatorial and senatorial nominees representing each of the aforementioned racial/ethnic categories, in this study we assess the broader question of white conservative vote choice when the GOP nominee is either Anglo or a minority.

The recency of minority Republicans seeking and winning gubernatorial and senatorial nominations may signal a notable shift in the relative importance of race and ideology in contemporary American elections. For instance, we know from various opinion polls that younger generations of Americans are markedly more tolerant with respect to racial issues (e.g., interracial marriage). At the same time, and unfolding for at least the past three decades, the major political parties and their supporters have become increasingly ideologically polarized (Hetherington 2001; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Jacobson 2007; Theriault 2008). These two trends in American opinions suggest that the ability

8. We thank an anonymous reviewer for pressing us on this point. In our attempt to discover literature that can speak more directly to the question of variation in white support for minority candidates, not surprisingly we found that almost all of this work examines the question in the context of the minority candidate running under the Democratic label. In contrast, we have strong reasons to expect that perceptions and voting behavior are much different in the case where a minority candidate is a Republican. For example, Sigelman et al. (1995, 248), in an experiment of Anglo voting behavior, hypothesize that “[a] conservative Anglo voter would presumably judge a conservative Hispanic or black candidate more positively than an equally conservative Anglo candidate.” Their results lend some support to this expectation based on the assumption that similar to most whites in the American electorate, their experimental subjects (conservative Anglos) “take a dim view of affirmative action on behalf of minority groups and therefore see minority candidates who reject it as attractive individuals who positively violate their expectancies” (Sigelman et al. 1995, 261). Likewise, we expect that in the minds of conservative white voters, by representing the Republican Party, minority nominees do indeed “positively violate” their general predisposition that minority candidates are more liberal. Nonetheless, we concede that there may be variation in conservative white support for minority Republican nominees on the basis of their specific race/ethnicity, but it remains an open question, and one certainly worthy of future investigation, as to whether such variation is statistically significant and electorally consequential, given the overriding importance of ideology in contemporary American politics.

of minority candidates to emerge victorious in more polarized Republican primary contests and several subsequently winning general elections means that the relative significance of race as a factor influencing vote choice is diminishing in comparison to the rising importance of ideology.

In an age of extremely ideologically polarized political parties, the simple fact that a minority candidate affiliates with the GOP almost always elicits information that he or she is more conservative than the Democratic opponent, regardless of the latter's race. We assess the voting behavior of conservative white voters across multiple elections in order to compare their support for Republican nominees in gubernatorial and senatorial contests when the party standard-bearer is either white or a minority (African American, Asian, or Hispanic). Simply put, the ideological distance between Democratic and Republican nominees for the most coveted elective offices leads us to empirically test the expectation that the base of the Republican Party, white conservatives,⁹ will be colorblind in their preferences for contemporary GOP nominees running for governor and US Senate.

Data and Methods

The Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) surveys conducted in 2006, 2010, and 2012 (Ansolabehere 2006, 2010; Ansolabehere and Schaffner 2012) serve as the basis for our examination of white conservative support for minority Republican candidates.¹⁰ As mentioned, there were no

9. Data from the 2012 CCES indicate that among white conservatives casting a major-party presidential vote, 94.6 percent chose Republican Mitt Romney, and Romney garnered 99.1 percent in the case of those labeled "very conservative" (228 out of 230 respondents).

10. The 2006 midterm was the first year that the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) undertook a large-scale assessment of the opinions of the American electorate. These wholly web-based surveys are administered by YouGov/Polimetrix and are constructed/designed and funded in collaboration with various university research teams that pay a fee to have their questions administered by YouGov/Polimetrix. Each team is allocated a set number of questions unique to their research agenda along with a set of questions that every respondent is asked (the Common Content). Each team pays for the completion of a 1,000-person sample that is demographically representative of the general population. Because each research team asks questions that are common to every team's survey, the Common Content data (which we rely on in this study) have a sample size equal to the completion rate for the sum of all the individual research team surveys. All of the surveys were conducted in two waves: The first occurred shortly before the upcoming election (in October) and the second shortly thereafter (in November). The surveys designed for each CCES data set we examine (2006, 2010, 2012) comprise a panel of respondents who are asked a larger number of questions before the election and then a smaller number after the election takes place. The sample size for the Common Content we analyze in this study, based on completed surveys (in the pre- and postelection waves of these panels), are as follows: $N = 36,421$ for the 2006 CCES; $N = 55,400$ for the 2010 CCES; and $N = 54,535$ for the 2012 CCES. The CCES is a nonprobability sample that is administered via the Internet. The samples for these surveys are drawn through a multistep process designed to ensure a completed data set that is demographically representative of the American population. YouGov/Polimetrix has a larger business model that is based on surveying consumers to get feedback on their opinions on a range of topics. Specifically, "advertisements for these short surveys are placed on banners of popular web

minority Republican nominees for governor and senator in 2008, and thus this election cycle is excluded from our analyses. There are two clear benefits from using CCES data. First, for each election year, all regularly scheduled gubernatorial and senatorial contests are included in these surveys. Second, the CCES samples are very large, and thus even though the total number of minority Republican candidates may appear modest, statistical power is considerable because the number of respondents casting a vote in each contest is substantial.

Table 1 displays the universe of minority Republican nominees who ran for governor and senator in 2006, 2010, and 2012. As shown, a total of 11 minority Republicans secured their party's nomination over these three election cycles. Seven ran in gubernatorial contests and four in senatorial races. There were four African Americans (three for governor and one for senator), four Hispanics (two for governor and two for senator), and three Asians (two for governor and one for senator). All four African Americans were defeated, while all four Hispanics were victorious and one of the three Asians won (Nikki Haley won the South Carolina governorship in 2010). These are the minority Republicans whose support from white conservatives will be compared against the level of support these voters give to Anglo Republican nominees running for governor and senator for the same election years.

pages and people surfing the Internet click on the banner because they want to share their thoughts on exercise or Harry Potter or gardening" (Vavreck and Rivers 2008, 360). Primarily through this method of recruitment, individuals are given the opportunity to opt in to what YouGov/Polimetrix calls its *PollingPoint Panel*. Once individuals consent to be part of the *PollingPoint Panel*, they make their e-mails available and provide a battery of demographic and political information so that they are available to participate in future surveys. Based on the thousands of individuals who comprise the *PollingPoint Panel*, a CCES data set is then constructed from the demographic profile of participants who are surveyed by the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) (this is a probability sample, and according to Vavreck and Rivers [2008, 361] the 2004 ACS had a "sample of size 1,194,354 with a response rate of 93.1%"). On the basis of the most recent ACS conducted before the election under study (i.e., 2004 for the 2006 election), and according to a set of characteristics in this sample (i.e., stratified by age, education, gender, and race), YouGov/Polimetrix then selects its own random sample of respondents from the ACS. After generating the random YouGov/Polimetrix-drawn ACS sample, each respondent is then matched with an "active Polimetrix panelist...selected using a weighted absolute distance measure on four Census variables—age, race, gender, and education, plus on imputed values of partisanship and ideology" (Vavreck and Rivers 2008, 361). Additionally, the opt-in *PollingPoint Panel* respondents are matched geographically in terms of census region and metropolitan area (metro or non-metro; see Ansolabehere and Schaffner [2013], 16–17). In this manner, across a range of demographic characteristics, this matching procedure allows for YouGov/Polimetrix to draw a demographically representative sample of the general population despite starting with a database of participants who self-select into the *PollingPoint Panel*. Stephen Ansolabehere was the Principal Investigator (PI) for the 2006, 2010, and 2012 CCES surveys. More details (including cooperation rates) on the survey methodology employed can be found at <http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/cces>.

Table 1. Minority Republican Nominees for Governor and Senator in 2006, 2010, and 2012

Candidate	Race/ethnicity	Office	State	Win?	Election
Ken Blackwell	African American	Governor	Ohio	No	2006
Lynn Swann	African American	Governor	Pennsylvania	No	2006
James Aiona	Asian	Governor	Hawaii	No	2010
Brian Sandoval	Hispanic	Governor	Nevada	Yes	2010
Susana Martinez	Hispanic	Governor	New Mexico	Yes	2010
Nikki Haley	Asian	Governor	South Carolina	Yes	2010
Randy Brock	African American	Governor	Vermont	No	2012
Jan Ting	Asian	Senator	Delaware	No	2006
Michael Steele	African American	Senator	Maryland	No	2006
Marco Rubio	Hispanic	Senator	Florida	Yes	2010
Ted Cruz	Hispanic	Senator	Texas	Yes	2012

NOTE.—In 2008, there were no minority Republican nominees for governor or senator.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

In all of our models, the dependent variable equals 1 for a Republican vote and 0 for a candidate of another affiliation.¹¹ Although the results are not statistically or substantively different if we limit the choice to the major parties so that 0 is a Democratic vote, in some races there are viable/credible third-party/independent candidates (like Charlie Crist in the 2010 Florida Senate election) who may be more appealing to many white voters in comparison to the Democratic option.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES OF INTEREST

Minority Republican is a dummy equal to 1 if the GOP nominee is a minority (African American, Asian, or Hispanic) and 0 otherwise. Respondent ideological self-identification (*Ideology*) is measured on a five-point scale (1 = very liberal, 2 = liberal, 3 = moderate, 4 = conservative, 5 = very conservative). The primary independent variable of interest is an interaction constructed from these two measures: *Minority Republican* * *Ideology*. Including the component parts of the interaction and controlling for various factors expected to influence vote choice, we test whether the noted covariate generates a null result or is statistically significant. If the coefficient is insignificant, then white conservatives vote at comparable rates for Republican nominees regardless of their racial/ethnic profile. If the interaction is positive and significant, then white conservatives are more supportive of minority Republicans than their Anglo Republican peers. And if the interaction is negative and statistically significant, then white conservatives are more supportive of Anglo Republicans than their minority Republican counterparts, suggesting evidence of racially prejudiced voting.

CONTROL VARIABLES

In addition to our primary variables of interest, we control for a number of individual-level factors expected to influence voter preferences. Demographic controls include *Age* (in years); *Education* (1 = no high school, 2 = high school grad, 3 = some college, 4 = 2-year, 5 = 4-year, 6 = post-college grad); *Female* (1 = female, 0 = male); *Married* (1 = married, 0 = otherwise); and *Union member* (1 = member of a union, 0 = otherwise). We also include *Party identification* (1 = strong Democrat, 2 = weak Democrat, 3 = independent leaning Democrat, 4 = independent, 5 = independent leaning Republican, 6 = weak Republican, 7 = strong Republican) and *Church attendance* (1 = seldom or never, 2 = a few times a year, 3 = once or twice a month, 4 = once a week or more).

11. For obvious reasons, we omit uncontested races (Indiana 2006 Senate and South Dakota 2010 Senate) except in the case of a strong third-party/independent candidate like Bernie Sanders (see footnote 12).

We have also added the following contextual variables germane to the gubernatorial and Senate contests under study: *Republican incumbent* and *Open contest* (the excluded base category are races that feature a Democratic incumbent); *Republican experience* (1 = previous elective office-holding, 0 = otherwise); *Democratic experience* (1 = previous elective office-holding, 0 = otherwise); and *Republican spending* (the percentage of total spending accounted for by the Republican candidate in a two-party race or in a multiple candidate contest when a third-party/independent candidate is credible).¹² In the models that pool the 2006, 2010, and 2012 elections, we add election-year dummies for 2010 and 2012, using 2006 as the omitted comparison year.

Finally, because of the importance of a host of racially imbued issues as well as a leading hot-button issue (*Abortion*) that has mobilized conservatives, we present the results for models that include five additional controls that can only be run for the 2010 and 2012 election cycles.¹³ For these models, we add the following two racial-resentment variables: *Racial resentment A*: “The Irish, Italians, Jews, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors” (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = strongly agree); *Racial resentment B*: “Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class” (1 = strongly agree, 2 = somewhat agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = somewhat disagree, 5 = strongly disagree); *Abortion* (1 = By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion, 2 = The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, 3 = The law should permit abortion only in case of rape, incest, 4 = By law, abortion should never be permitted); *Affirmative action* (1 = strongly support, 2 = somewhat support, 3 = somewhat oppose, 4 = strongly oppose); and *Tea Party favorability*: “What is your view of the Tea Party movement?” (1 = very negative, 2 = somewhat negative, 3 = neutral, 4 = somewhat positive, 5 = very positive). For models utilizing these variables, we have included a 2010 election-year dummy.

12. The spending data for the US Senate were compiled from *The Almanac of American Politics* (Barone and Cohen 2007; Barone and McCutcheon 2011) for the 2006 and 2010 elections. In 2012, the US Senate spending data were compiled from OpenSecrets’ online website (www.opensecrets.org). For all of the gubernatorial elections (2006, 2010, and 2012), the spending data are from FollowTheMoney’s online website (www.followthemoney.org). Races where there were three formidable candidates and thus the total percentage of Republican spending is split three ways include the 2010 gubernatorial races in Colorado, Maine, and Rhode Island, and the 2010 Senate races in Alaska and Florida. Throughout, Bernie Sanders of Vermont is treated as a Democratic candidate even though he runs in the general Senate election as an independent (there is no Democratic nominee in the Senate general election in 2006 and 2012, the two years when Sanders won the election).

13. These additional variables were either not available in the 2006 CCES or the coding of the question in the 2006 survey was not compatible with later years.

For all of our models, we employ probit regression, limit the respondents to non-Hispanic white voters, include the weight variable provided for each CCES survey, and cluster standard errors by election contest. In the next section, we present first the results for the gubernatorial models, then our estimates of voting preferences in US Senate races.¹⁴

Results

GUBERNATORIAL CONTESTS

Table 2 presents the results for our models of gubernatorial vote choice. Models 1 and 2 cover the 2006, 2010, and 2012 election cycles. Model 1 is a baseline model that contains an additive term for the presence of a minority GOP candidate. Of note, the coefficient for *Minority Republican* is signed in a positive direction, but not significant—an indication that white voters are no more likely to vote for minority Republican candidates as compared to Anglo GOP candidates. The interaction term in model 2 is positive and significant. As white voters become increasingly conservative, they are more likely to support minority GOP gubernatorial candidates as compared to white Republican candidates. This finding is robust even controlling for a number of other individual and contest-specific factors. Among these, party identification, conservatism, church attendance, and being married are all significant predictors of voting for the Republican gubernatorial candidate, while education level is inversely related. Relative increases in campaign expenditures by GOP candidates and experienced Republican candidates are both positively related to the probability of casting a Republican ballot.

In figure 1, we translate the findings from model 2 into a set of predicted probabilities with 95 percent confidence bands. In this case, we plot the probability of *conservative* and *very conservative* respondents to vote for white and minority GOP gubernatorial candidates. To produce these estimates, we utilize the *observed value* approach outlined in Hanmer and Kalkan (2012), which relies on the observed values for each case, manipulates particular covariates of interest, and then calculates a simulated probability measure by averaging across all cases in the analysis.¹⁵

For those in the self-identified conservative category, the probability of voting for a white GOP candidate is .60, compared with .66 for a minority GOP candidate. Although there is a difference of .06 between these point estimates, the

14. We excluded respondent income due to the number of cases with missing values for this variable. It should be noted that including an income measure for the models presented does not alter any of the substantive findings.

15. Estimates presented are simulated probabilities and corresponding standard errors produced using Stata 11.

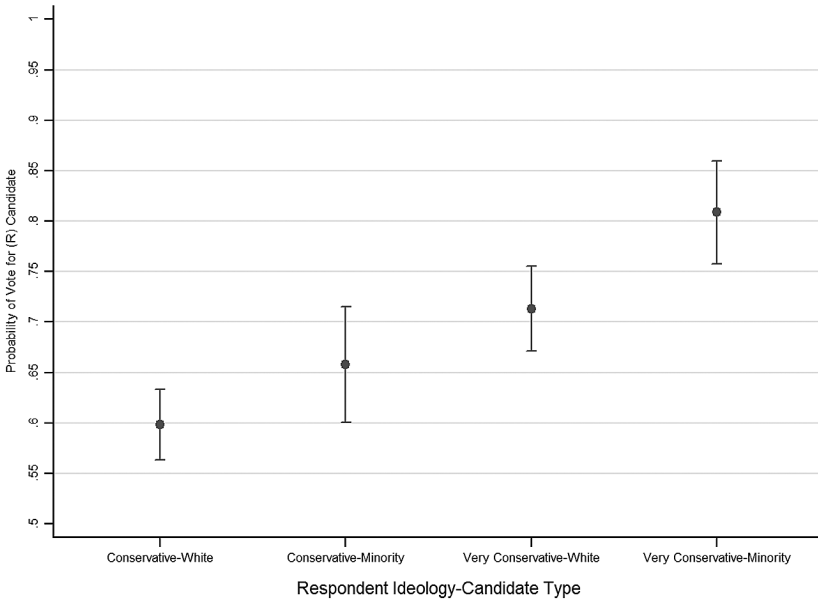


Figure 1. Probability of Anglo Vote Choice by Ideology and Candidate Type: Gubernatorial Elections, 2006–2012.

confidence intervals do overlap. The probability of a very conservative respondent voting for a white Republican candidate is .71, and .81 for a minority Republican nominee. In the case of these probability estimates, one can state that they are significantly different from a statistical standpoint since the 95 percent confidence intervals do not overlap with each other. There is both a sizable and statistical difference, then, in the support that white conservatives display for minority GOP gubernatorial candidates over candidates from their own racial group.

The second set of models in [table 2](#) include a number of additional controls and, as mentioned previously, include races from only the 2010 and 2012 election cycles. Even with these alterations, our primary findings of interest remain unchanged. In model 3, *Minority Republican* is positive but statistically insignificant. Again, minority GOP candidates are essentially no better or worse off compared with Republican gubernatorial candidates who are white. Model 4, which includes the same interactive term described previously, once again shows that as white respondents become more conservative, they are also more likely to support minority GOP candidates. This effect is statistically significant. Of the additional covariates included in the model, both measures of racial resentment, opinion on abortion, and support for the Tea Party (increasing values on these indicators are coded to align with conservative positions) are all positively associated with the probability of voting for a Republican gubernatorial candidate.

Table 2. Predicting Republican Voting in Gubernatorial Contests

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Minority Republican candidate	0.1110 (0.1407)	-0.6435** (0.2482)	0.1785 (0.1753)	-1.0161** (0.3574)
Minority Republican * ideology	-	0.2246*** (0.0624)	-	0.3618*** (0.0659)
Age	-0.0003 (0.0013)	-0.0003 (0.0013)	-0.0008 (0.0020)	-0.0009 (0.0020)
Education	-0.0469*** (0.0097)	-0.0470*** (0.0010)	0.0194 (0.0137)	0.0189 (0.0138)
Female	0.0010 (0.0202)	0.0009 (0.0203)	0.0064 (0.0329)	0.0066 (0.0329)
Party ID	0.4414*** (0.0125)	0.4417*** (0.0124)	0.3244*** (0.0208)	0.3241*** (0.0208)
Ideology	0.5208*** (0.0318)	0.5072*** (0.0317)	0.2225*** (0.0345)	0.2148*** (0.0341)
Married	0.0715*** (0.0211)	0.0724*** (0.0211)	0.0590 (0.0302)	0.0585 (0.0301)
Union	-0.0157 (0.0308)	-0.0167 (0.0310)	-0.0646 (0.0655)	-0.0631 (0.0656)
Church attendance	0.0480*** (0.0127)	0.0481*** (0.0128)	-0.0016 (0.0171)	-0.0014 (0.0171)
(R) Incumbent	-0.1175 (0.2259)	-0.1138 (0.2244)	-0.2387 (0.1304)	-0.2364 (0.1300)
Open seat	-0.0601 (0.0984)	-0.0566 (0.0976)	-0.2185 (0.1316)	-0.2174 (0.1307)
(R) Candidate experience	0.3587*** (0.0813)	0.3611*** (0.0814)	0.4023*** (0.1190)	0.4013*** (0.1183)
(D) Candidate experience	0.0540 (0.1136)	0.0556 (0.1129)	0.0624 (0.1566)	0.0625 (0.1559)
(R) Spending	1.3581*** (0.3714)	1.3507*** (0.3686)	1.9016*** (0.4739)	1.8948*** (0.4718)
Racial resentment-A	-	-	0.0627* (0.0255)	0.0630* (0.0255)
Racial resentment-B	-	-	0.0521*** (0.0163)	0.0520** (0.0164)
Abortion	-	-	0.1171*** (0.0212)	0.1167*** (0.0211)
Affirmative action	-	-	0.0686 (0.0402)	0.0692 (0.0401)
Tea Party	-	-	0.3983*** (0.0223)	0.3975*** (0.0225)
2010	0.16489 (0.1193)	0.1676 (0.1187)	-0.2458* (0.1034)	-0.2438* (0.1030)

(Continued)

Table 2. Continued

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
2012	0.1683 (0.1686)	0.1697 (0.1674)	—	—
Constant	-4.611*** (0.2820)	-4.5720*** (0.2793)	-5.2156*** (0.4018)	-5.1836*** (0.4000)
<i>N</i>	46,524	46,524	25,875	25,875

NOTE.—Entries are probit coefficients with standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by gubernatorial contest.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Figure 2 transposes the coefficients from model 4 into predicted probabilities by manipulating values for respondent ideology, type of GOP candidate, and the corresponding interaction term. The graphic indicates that conservative support for white GOP nominees is .56, compared to .62 for minority Republican candidates. The .06 difference between these two estimates, however, is not statistically significant because the confidence bands overlap. For very conservative whites, the probability of voting for a Republican from their racial group is .59. For this same group, the predicted support level for a minority GOP candidate jumps a statistically significant 11 points to .70. Even controlling for additional factors, the same pattern persists across the model specifications in table 2—a significant increase in support for minority GOP candidates is associated with greater levels of conservatism among white respondents.

SENATE CONTESTS

The results of our models designed to examine voting patterns in US Senate elections are displayed in table 3. In terms of setup, these regressions mirror the gubernatorial election models. Models 1 and 2 cover contests from the 2006, 2010, and 2012 election cycles. The *Minority Republican* coefficient in model 1 is negative but insignificant. Much like the corresponding gubernatorial models, this is again an indication that white support for minority GOP candidates is no different, in a statistical sense, from that for white candidates. The interaction term in model 2 is positive and statistically significant. For white respondents, increasing levels of conservatism are associated with higher support levels for minority Republican candidates, as compared with white GOP candidates. Other significant and positive predictors include party identification, conservatism, marriage, church attendance, and relative increases in Republican campaign spending. Education level is negatively related to GOP support, as is the presence of an experienced Democratic Senate candidate.

Translating the results of model 2 into a more understandable format, figure 3 displays predicted probabilities for various categories of interest. White conservatives actually display a slightly lower level of support for

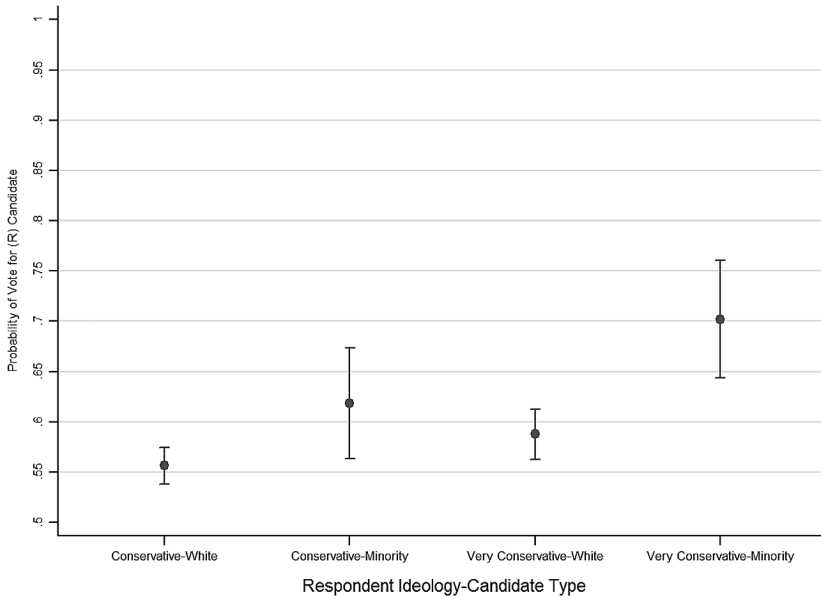


Figure 2. Probability of Anglo Vote Choice by Ideology and Candidate Type: Gubernatorial Elections, 2010–2012.

minority GOP Senate candidates as compared to white Republican nominees, .59 versus .61. These estimates, however, are statistically indistinguishable from each other, as the entire confidence interval for the latter completely falls within the range of the confidence band for the former. The estimates produced for those in the *very conservative* category are essentially the same as those just described for *conservatives*. Support for white GOP candidates is estimated to be .74 compared to .73 for minority Republicans. This very small differential, again, cannot be classified as a statistically significant gap. Unlike the results from our models of gubernatorial voting, these US Senate models reveal a pattern of essentially commensurate levels of support among white conservatives for either minority or white Republican candidates.

Our final set of models adds the additional controls previously discussed, but in so doing our sample of minority GOP candidates is also constricted to just two contests, one respectively in each of the 2010 and 2012 election cycles. Again, the dummy variable for minority Republican candidate in model 3 is negative but insignificant. Support for these types of GOP Senate candidates is indistinguishable from that for white Republican candidates. In model 4, the interaction term of interest is positive but not statistically significant. So, for this subset of US Senate elections with additional controls, increasing levels of conservatism among respondents is not associated with greater support for minority GOP candidates. On the flipside, ideological conservatism is not associated with lower levels of support for minority Republican nominees. Even

Table 3. Predicting Republican Voting in US Senate Contests

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Minority Republican candidate	-0.1643 (0.1549)	-0.4203* (0.1924)	-0.2520 (0.1442)	-0.4587 (0.2359)
Minority Republican * ideology	-	0.0751* (0.0374)	-	0.0597 (0.0390)
Age	0.0006 (0.0010)	0.0006 (0.0010)	0.0005 (0.0013)	0.0005 (0.0013)
Education	-0.0274* (0.0112)	-0.0275* (0.0112)	0.0548*** (0.0131)	0.0547*** (0.0131)
Female	-0.0351 (0.0233)	-0.0350 (0.0233)	0.0067 (0.0277)	0.0067 (0.0277)
Party ID	0.5052*** (0.0138)	0.5053*** (0.0138)	0.3711*** (0.0162)	0.3712*** (0.0162)
Ideology	0.6169*** (0.0283)	0.6112*** (0.0301)	0.2589*** (0.0305)	0.2537*** (0.0327)
Married	0.1401*** (0.0233)	0.1403*** (0.0233)	0.1234*** (0.0350)	0.1237*** (0.0350)
Union	-0.0125 (0.0237)	-0.0123 (0.0238)	-0.0772* (0.0374)	-0.0771* (0.0374)
Church attendance	0.0684*** (0.0101)	0.0685*** (0.0101)	0.0327* (0.0149)	0.0328* (0.0149)
(R) Incumbent	-0.0365 (0.1274)	-0.0368 (0.1270)	0.0510 (0.1280)	0.0505 (0.1276)
Open seat	-0.1533 (0.1220)	-0.1534 (0.1217)	-0.0156 (0.0825)	-0.0161 (0.0824)
(R) Candidate experience	0.0421 (0.0816)	0.0415 (0.0816)	0.0007 (0.1143)	0.0001 (0.1144)
(D) Candidate experience	-0.2579** (0.0864)	-0.2569** (0.0863)	-0.4428*** (0.1225)	-0.4415*** (0.1223)
(R) Spending	0.8027*** (0.2118)	0.8036*** (0.2121)	0.6179*** (0.1849)	0.6196*** (0.1856)
Racial resentment-A	-	-	0.0535** (0.0181)	0.0535** (0.0181)
Racial resentment-B	-	-	0.0704*** (0.0139)	0.0704*** (0.0139)
Abortion	-	-	0.0917*** (0.0230)	0.0917*** (0.0230)
Affirmative action	-	-	0.1749*** (0.0232)	0.1753*** (0.0232)
Tea Party	-	-	0.4663*** (0.0225)	0.4663*** (0.0225)
2010	0.3238*** (0.0584)	0.3230*** (0.0583)	-0.0987 (0.0592)	-0.0992 (0.0595)

(Continued)

Table 3. Continued

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
2012	0.1628 (0.0765)	0.16284 ^a (0.0763)	–	–
Constant	–4.5582 ^{***} (0.1769)	–4.5403 ^{***} (0.1733)	–5.0829 ^{***} (0.1975)	–5.0679 ^{***} (0.1960)
<i>N</i>	60,889	60,889	39,821	39,821

NOTE.—Entries are probit coefficients with standard errors (in parentheses) clustered by Senate contest.

^a*p* < .05; ^{**}*p* < .01; ^{***}*p* < .001

controlling for racial resentment, attitudes on abortion and affirmative action, and support for the Tea Party movement (all of which are statistically significant predictors of Republican voting), white conservatives support minority Republican candidates at comparable levels to those for white GOP candidates.

This finding is borne out in the set of predicted probabilities plotted in figure 4. Here, we see nominal differences in support by level of conservatism and candidate type. The probability of a conservative voting for a white Republican Senate candidate is .56, compared to a slightly lower but statistically indistinguishable .53 for minority GOP candidates. Likewise, among those labeled very conservative, there is a statistically insignificant .03 differential between these two types of candidates (.59 versus .56).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study has investigated a question that until now would have been relegated to conjecture, since several minorities have only very recently managed to obtain gubernatorial and senatorial Republican nominations. With use of multiple Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) surveys (2006, 2010, and 2012) during which a minority Republican candidate ran for governor or senator, we found that either white conservative voters support these candidates at a significantly higher rate than Anglo Republican nominees (in gubernatorial contests) or there is no difference in their level of support based on the race of the GOP candidate. We expected that an empirical assessment of white conservative voting for Republican standard-bearers in these high-profile contests would appear colorblind. What we did not anticipate is that in three out of our four models testing the interaction between minority Republican nominee and ideology, conservative whites were even more likely to vote for the minority GOP contender.

Conversely, not once do we find that white conservatives are more supportive of Anglo Republicans vis-à-vis minority Republicans. We suspect this

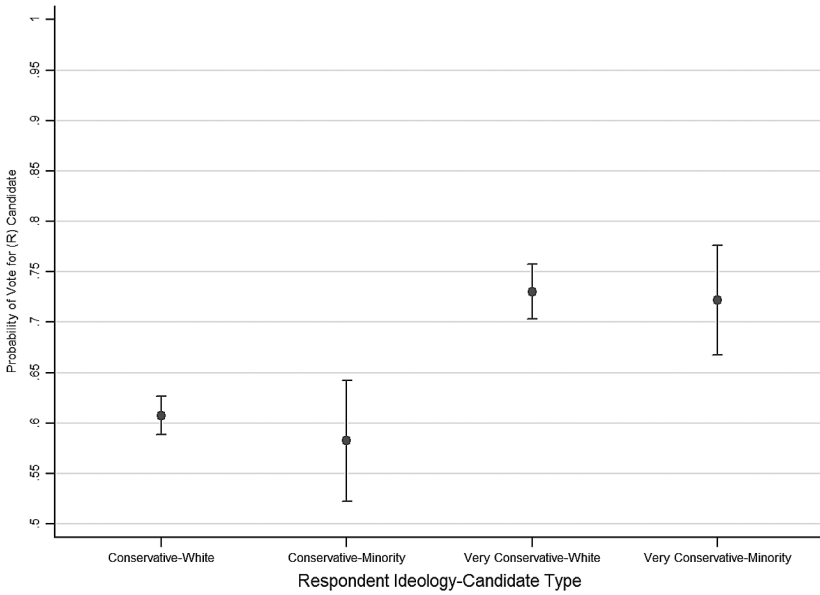


Figure 3. Probability of Anglo Vote Choice by Ideology and Candidate Type: Senate Elections, 2006–2012.

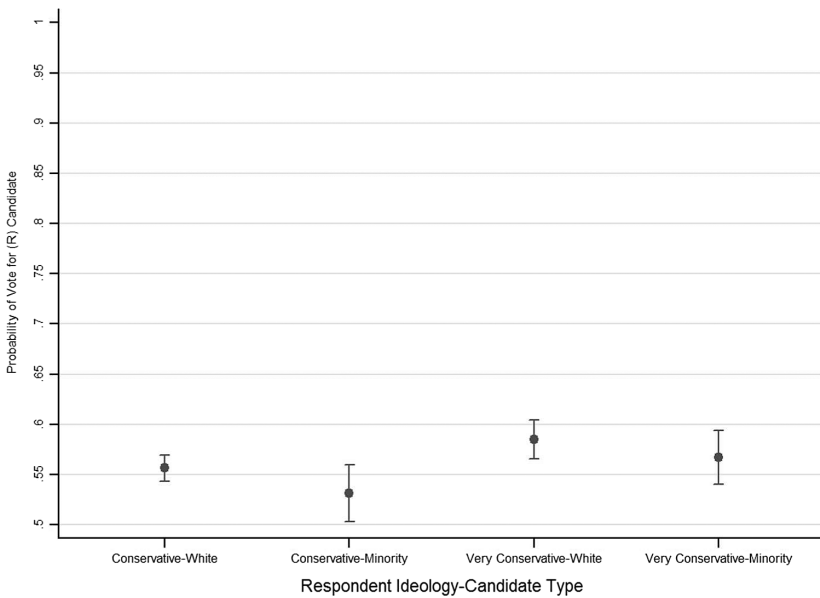


Figure 4. Probability of Anglo Vote Choice by Ideology and Candidate Type: Senate Elections, 2010–2012.

null finding is a strong statement regarding the historically high rate of partisan polarization in contemporary American politics. When African American Republican Edward Brooke was elected to the US Senate in Massachusetts, he was politically liberal¹⁶ and was not considered much of an outlier when juxtaposed against his Republican peers hailing from the Northeast, the extant bastion of the GOP (Reiter and Stonecash 2011). Since then, the modern Republican Party has completed its transformation into a far-right conservative redoubt with little room for moderation, particularly in the case of those who seek elective office. There is no place for Edward Brooke in today's version of the GOP. Now, Republican candidates, regardless of their racial profile, must exhibit conservative bona fides if they stand any chance of securing the party's nomination.

With the CCES data, we can display the extreme ideological polarization of Democratic and Republican nominees from the vantage of white conservatives. In the case of ideological placement for gubernatorial nominees, the CCES provides these data only for 2006, which includes two of our minority Republicans in the analysis (Ken Blackwell and Lynn Swann; see table 1). Fortunately, for US Senate nominees, their ideological placement is asked in all three CCES surveys (2006, 2010, and 2012), and thus all four of our minority Republican candidates are evaluated.¹⁷

Figure 5 clearly demonstrates just how wide the ideological chasm is between Democratic and Republican gubernatorial and senatorial nominees in the minds of white conservatives. On the 100-point ideological scale, the gap for Democratic and Republican gubernatorial nominees is roughly 45 points. The distance is even wider in the case of the US Senate—a remarkable 52-point difference—with Democratic Senate nominees viewed as considerably more liberal than their Democratic counterparts running for governor. Of course, the key finding is that white conservatives place minority Republican nominees as the most conservative candidates running for either office. This finding comports nicely with what we expected, since white conservatives are either more supportive or just as supportive of minority Republicans in the multivariate models.

In sum, we have provided convincing evidence that white conservatives are stalwart in their support of Republican nominees, irrespective of their racial/ethnic profile, and sometimes even more supportive of minority Republicans who are viewed as the most conservative candidates to secure gubernatorial and senatorial nominations over the past decade.

16. According to the liberal political-interest group Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), in 1968, Brooke's ADA score, which runs from 0 to 100 with 100 being the most liberal, was 86, and in the same year Democrat Ted Kennedy scored a 71 (www.adaction.org/pages/publications/voting-records.php).

17. Consistent with our five-point ideology scale for the multivariate models, white conservatives are designated by placing themselves as either a 4 (conservative) or 5 (extremely conservative). Because the 2006 data employ a 100-point ideological scale for candidate placement, we rescale the subsequent seven-point ideological scales in the 2010 and 2012 CCES surveys to this 100-point measure.

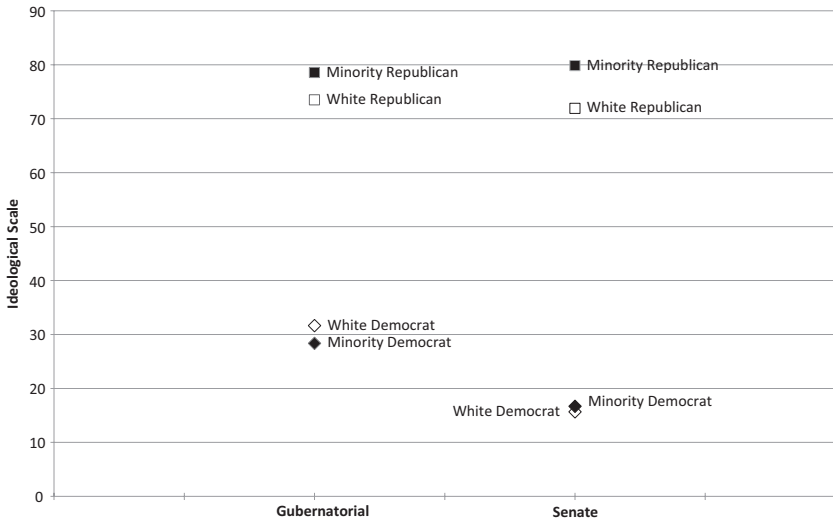


Figure 5. Mean Ideological Placements of Statewide Candidates.

But what does this mean with respect to electoral viability? Have these minority Republicans placed themselves too far to the right to win office? As a collective, the answer is clearly no. What, then, makes for a winner when it comes to minority Republican candidates running for statewide office? From our small sample of 11 candidates, few patterns related to candidate characteristics appear to leap out. The type of office being sought or prior elective experience appear to matter little in terms of being able to differentiate winners from losers. However, two patterns of note include the fact that no African American Republican candidates in our sample won their respective elections¹⁸ and no minority Republican candidates were successful in the 2006 election cycle (three out of four black candidates ran during the 2006 election cycle).

Perhaps winning, however, is more context than candidate dependent.¹⁹ The 2006 cycle clearly favored the Democrats nationally, as a large partisan

18. US Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) broke this pattern in the 2014 general election, when he won election for the remainder of the term to which he was initially appointed in 2012. Speaking directly to ideology eclipsing race as the primary factor in the career advancement of Senator Scott, he previously represented the majority white First Congressional District of South Carolina. In winning this district in the 2010 midterm, Scott first had to win a crowded open Republican primary that included nine contestants and one with a very familiar surname. Paul Thurmond, a son of the legendary, notorious, and perhaps most influential politician in South Carolina history, J. Strom Thurmond, finished second to Scott in the first round, and because Scott was held to under a majority of the vote, a runoff ensued. In the runoff, Scott dominated Thurmond, taking 68 percent of the vote (<http://elections.nytimes.com/2010/results/primaries/south-carolina/runoff>).

19. Sonenshein (1990) makes this point in his discussion of black candidates running for statewide office.

tide delivered control of the US House and Senate. And electoral defeats of minority GOP candidates more often than not occurred in Democratic or Democratic-leaning states. The four black candidates in our sample were running in Maryland, Vermont, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. If this observation is correct, then success may hinge more on the partisan makeup of the overall electorate, as opposed to the characteristics of the candidates themselves.

At this juncture, the ability, or inability, of minority Republican candidates to attract crossover support among minority voters predisposed to vote Democratic must also be considered. While this issue is not the subject of the current research endeavor under discussion, it is quite possible that the electoral success of minority GOP candidates, especially in blue states, may be linked to attracting some share of minority Democratic voters to the Republican side of the ledger. The inability to attract more than token crossover minority support may also spell electoral defeat in a state where there is no sizable pool of conservative white voters to make up for the overall partisan distribution in the state.

One must also ask if the nomination of some minority candidates actually undermines the stated national Republican strategy of making inroads with minority voters. In other words, might the goal of winning minority voters actually be hampered by the selection of minority nominees? For instance, the candidacy of E. W. Jackson, an African American and Tea Party favorite running for Virginia lieutenant governor, seemed to backfire in terms of garnering minority support. African Americans were significantly less likely to vote for this black Republican nominee (Hood, Kidd, and Morris 2014). It appears the premium placed on ideological purity, irrespective of a candidate's race, highlights the overriding importance of the alignment of party with ideology, whereas the race of a candidate plays a secondary and typically minor role.

The passage of time itself may be the principal contextual factor related to the electoral success of minority GOP candidates, as demonstrated by the number of wins in more recent elections. Time may represent a generational change manifest in a more racially tolerant electorate, especially among white conservatives. A decade ago, the topic of this manuscript would be bereft of empirical analysis for a lack of minority Republican nominees for governor and senator. Hence, the willingness of white conservatives to support minority Republican candidates is a recent phenomenon in American politics. This noted trend toward greater racial acceptance has not concomitantly reflected itself in ideological diversity. To the contrary, the general trend of ideological polarization has replaced the previous litmus test over candidate race. Just as liberal Democrats are likely to favor the most left-leaning candidate available, conservative Republicans are likely to support the most right-leaning candidate in the contest, regardless of their race or ethnicity. To summarize, the present story demonstrates that for white conservatives, ideological purity trumps candidate race.

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