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## California Journal of Politics and Policy

### Title

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### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9kq704cf>

### Journal

California Journal of Politics and Policy, 10(2)

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### Publication Date

2018

### DOI

10.5070/P2cjpp10241253

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## **Candidate Ethnicity and Latino Voting in Co-Partisan Elections**

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### **Abstract**

The adoption of the top two primary system in California is resulting in a rising number of general elections in which candidates from the same party compete. Incidentally, California is also home to a large and diverse Latino community. When party identification is no longer a reliable cue, do Latino voters turn to the race or ethnicity of a candidate in selecting whom to support? We examine co-partisan Republican general elections in California's state assembly from 2012–2016. Using surname-matched precinct-level voter data, we conduct ecological inference analysis to estimate support for candidates based on the ethnicity of voters. Taking the case of Latino voters, we find a strong level of support for Latino Republican candidates, suggesting that a candidate's ethnicity may inform voters' strategic decision making in partisan elections.

### **Introduction**

In the largely agricultural region of Inyo and Tulare counties lies the predominantly Republican twenty-sixth assembly district. In 2014, two Republicans—Devon Mathis and Rudy Mendoza—advanced to the district's general election under California's top two primary system, in which the two candidates who receive the greatest number of votes in the open primary advance to the general election. California's bold transition to a top two primary system has inspired significant scholarly debate about the potential moderating effect on policymaking (Gerber and Morton 1998; McGhee et al. 2014; Grose 2014; Ahler, Citrin, and Lenz 2016), the strategies candidates use to distinguish themselves in co-partisan elections (Alvarez and Sinclair 2015, Sinclair 2015) and the calculus of voters when faced with candidates from the same party (Alvarez and Nagler 2002, Nagler 2015, Sinclair and Wray 2015). Largely overlooked by these studies, however, is an explicit consideration of the way that race and ethnicity may powerfully influence the behavior of both candidates and voters from diverse communities. In this study we present the argument that in the absence of an explicit partisan cue voters will use shared ethnicity as a second-best option in order to determine their vote choice. More specifically, when faced with two Republican candidates, like in the twenty-sixth assembly district, do Latino Democrats support co-ethnic candidates?

We examine Latino candidates in state assembly general election races in California. California's top two primary provides an ideal opportunity to study Latino voter behavior. Since the

reform went into effect in 2012, 44 assembly-level general elections have featured candidates from the same party, or co-partisan elections. These co-partisan competitions allow for an examination of voting behavior when partisanship of the candidate is no longer a reliable cue. To examine co-ethnicity, we turn to two districts where the top two primary resulted in two Republicans on the ballot featuring at least one Latino candidate—the 2014 election of Devon Mathis in district 26 and the 2012 election of Rocky Chavez in district 76. An analysis of these elections provides insights on the extent to which Latino voters may use the race or ethnicity of a candidate to inform their vote choice. Scholars have long identified a relationship between Latino candidates and voters (Arvizu and Garcia 1996, Hero 1992, Barreto, Segura and Woods 2004, Fraga 2016) and this study contributes to the literature by examining vote choice under the institutional constraint of a co-partisan election combined with the significant ethnic diversity of the districts. This combination of factors allows for a novel assessment of voting behavior when the cue of partisanship is no longer present. Using ecological inference, the method mandated by courts in Voting Rights Act cases, we examine surname-matched vote returns in the districts and find that Latino voters—particularly Latino Democrats—converge around co-ethnic candidates.

We draw upon both the institutional literature on primaries and the burgeoning Latino politics literature to argue that Latinos are *sincere voters*, who cast their vote for the candidate they prefer over all other alternatives (Alvarez and Nagler 2002, Nagler 2015). Like other voters, many Latinos are partisans, who seek to support candidates who advance an agenda aligned with their individual beliefs and convictions. However as a minority community, Latinos have generally been found to also have a desire for descriptive representatives (Baik, Lavariega-Monforti, and McGlynn 2009; Schildkraut 2013; Wallace 2014; Casellas and Wallace 2015), or to see co-ethnics elected to office. When faced with a general election with the choice between two candidates from an opposing party, the majority of Latinos who turn out to vote, we argue, will support a co-ethnic candidate. Underlying this argument is a well-established assumption that racial and ethnic identification is associated with voting behavior, particularly in localized elections (Baretto 2010, Brown 2014, Hajnal and Trounstein 2014). Distinct from studies that have examined whether co-ethnic candidates have a mobilizing effect on voter turnout (Gay 2001; Barreto, Segura, and Woods 2004; Barreto 2007; Fraga 2016), our contribution asserts that having a candidate of the same ethnicity influences the vote choice of co-ethnic voters. Research by Casellas and Wallace (2015) is especially pertinent, as they find that Latino Democrats are more likely than Latino Republicans to believe that co-ethnic representation is desirable. The cases examined in this study—California’s 26th and 76th Assembly districts—allow the opportunity to test this finding as Latino Democrats were faced with the choice between a Latino Republican and an Anglo Republican. Using ecological inference, a statistical tool that estimates who Latino voters supported in these two assembly elections, we find that Latino Democratic voters overwhelmingly supported Latino Republican candidates when no Democratic candidate was available.

## **Innovation in California and Latino Voting Behavior**

In 2010, California voters approved Proposition 14, the *Top Two Primaries Act*, requiring all candidates to run in a single primary, open to all registered voters. The two candidates who emerge as the frontrunners advance to the general election. Numerous studies have examined whether primary institution type can lead to either legislator polarization or moderation. Early assessments found open primaries lead to the election of more moderate candidates (Gerber and

Morton 1998). More recent evaluations, however, have yielded mixed results. In a nationwide assessment, McGhee et al (2014) do not find a meaningful or systematic moderating effect. Specific to California, Alvarez and Sinclair (2015) argue the top two does produce more moderate winners in some highly competitive districts while Grose (2014) finds moderation to occur in assembly elections, but not in congressional elections. Additional studies in this arena consider the consequences of primary type on representational quality (Ahler, Citrin, and Lenz 2016; T. Kousser, Phillips, and Shor 2016), the behavior of voters as strategic actors (Nagler 2015, Alvarez and Nagler 2002, Leighley and Nagler 2013), and the changes in voters' information seeking behavior (B. Sinclair and Wray 2015).

A prominent emphasis of this literature is the examination of crossover voting, which occurs when a voter opts to support a candidate of the other party. Traditionally, crossover voting referred to voters opting to participate in another party's primary rather than their own due to different incentives related to the partisan competitiveness of the district (Alvarez and Nagler 2002; Sides, Cohen, and Citrin 2002; Bullock and Clinton 2011). Yet, as Nagler (2015) notes, this literature does not necessarily apply to California's top two, which forces all candidates regardless of a party to run on one ballot with the top vote-getters advancing to the general election. In his examination of California voters in 2012, Nagler (2015), instead, hypothesizes that voters from disadvantaged parties will opt to cast ballots for the dominant party's candidate(s) in the all-candidate primary to strategically impact who advances to the general election competition. His theory emerges from Alvarez and Nagler's (2002) typology of strategic voters in an open primary. Drawing upon survey data, Nagler concludes, much like Sides et al. (2002), that strategic voting is generally not occurring and that most voters are *sincere* voters who cast their ballots for the candidate they genuinely find most appealing.<sup>1</sup> Highton, Huckfelt, and Hale's (2016) review of the consequences of California's top two primary help build on Nagler's study of primary voting behavior by focusing on general election competitions. Relying on district level surveys from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study, they find that a voter's partisan and ideological preferences significantly structure their ballot choices in co-partisan general elections, albeit at a lower rate than interparty general elections. Highton et al. question why ideological and partisan polarization occurs among voters even though members of the disadvantaged party do not have a co-partisan in the race.

One possible explanation for this puzzle that we explore here is that co-ethnic bonds between voters and candidates may contribute to levels of competition in co-partisan elections and on the vote choice of minority voters. Largely missing from the aforementioned studies is an explicit theory of how racial and ethnic dynamics, either related to a desire to see a co-ethnic elected to office (Wolfinger 1965, Simien 2015) or ethnic-oriented targeted campaign strategies (Leighley 2001, Fraga 2016), might influence the behavior of minority voters under the constraint of the top two primary. Sinclair and Wray (2015) find that in the absence of an explicit partisan cue, voters engaged in information-seeking behavior following the primary to help them make a decision in the general election. We contend that ethnic minority voters, such as Latino Democrats, turn to the heuristic of shared ethnicity, at least partly, to fill in as a cue of who might better represent them and who might be more ideologically aligned with them. While those scholars find that voters turn to Google searches in order to determine how to vote, other research finds that

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<sup>1</sup> However, Nagler (2015) does find that 20 percent of partisan voters do crossover. For example, he finds that ideology and college education influence Republican crossover voters while conservative ideology is important for Democrats.

voters utilize candidate ascriptive characteristics, like gender, race and age, in order to help determine their vote choice in the absence of an explicit partisan cue (Jackman and Vavreck 2010; Norrander 1986; Stone, Rappaport, and Abramowitz 1992). Ascriptive characteristics have generally been measured as a function of racial attitudes (Jackman and Vavreck 2010) or ethnic attachment (DeFrancesca Soto 2007) and group consciousness (McClain et al. 2009).<sup>2</sup> We contend that ethnic minority voters, such as Latino Democrats, turn to the obvious cue of shared ethnicity, at least partly, to fill in as a cue of who might better represent them.

Prior research finds that shared ethnicity is related to Latino vote choice (Hill, Moreno, and Cue 2001; Baretto 2007). Latino ethnicity can have a more direct effect on vote choice for Latinos when social group considerations are cued and the individuals possess a strong ethnic or racial consciousness (Stokes-Brown 2006; Sanchez and Masuoka 2010, Manzano and Sanchez 2010; Collingwood et al. 2014). Yet, the top two primary design gives us a chance to explore the possibility that ethnicity instead serves as a cue for who might better represent them in the legislature. The prior studies mentioned did not take into account what happens when the partisan cue is removed entirely and Latino *partisan* voters are left to determine who among the candidates of the opposing party are more ideologically aligned with them.

More specifically, we theorize that observable Latino voting behavior constitutes sincere voting because the shared ethnicity of the candidate is the second-best, low-cost cue for voters *after* the party label. Shared ethnicity serves as a heuristic for voters to determine *who* might be more responsive to them. The extant literature finds that minority communities tend to receive cues from co-ethnic candidates—be it their appearance, campaign cues, or symbolic gestures—that they will be more responsive to their needs (Bobo and Gilliam 1990, Tate 1991). Shared ethnicity has been found to serve such a function for Latino voters as well (Pantoja and Segura 2003; McConaughy, White, Leal, and Casellas 2010), with the effects of descriptive representation being strongest among the politically informed and those who believe that a co-ethnic representative will address the political interests of the group. Therefore, Latino voters would take the ethnicity of a Latino Republican candidate as a cue that they are closer to them ideologically than a non-Latino Republican candidate.

Moreover, in this study we contend that the existing institutional design literature examining the top two primary should explicitly theorize the role of race and ethnicity in an examination of electoral outcomes. The primary design allows for opportunities to study voter behavior when partisanship is no longer a cue. While much research has suggested that candidates facing co-partisan elections may moderate their positions to appeal to a wider array of a district's electorate, an alternative view that we present here, is that voters may rely upon co-ethnicity as a basis for choosing whom to support at the ballot box. We posit that the two Assembly race case studies examined here demonstrate that ethnic cues can influence the vote choice of Latino Democrats.

## **California's Latino Republicans and Co-Partisan Races**

To examine Latino voter behavior through the lens of ethnicity and not partisanship or incumbency, this paper examines California State Assembly races that feature an open-seat, co-partisan Republican election with at least one Latino Republican on the general election ballot.

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<sup>2</sup> Group consciousness refers to an individual's acknowledgement of a minority group's disadvantaged and out-group status in society (Gurin, Miller, and Gurin 1980; McClain et al. 2009).

We limit our analysis to open seat elections to observe voter behavior without the limitation of incumbency advantage. We rely on co-partisan Republican elections in order to observe the behavior of Latino Democratic voters and determine whether a co-ethnic relationship is present. Two elections meet this criterion: the 76th district in 2012 and the 26th district in 2014.

The 76th assembly district is a Republican stronghold with registered Republicans accounting for nearly 40 percent of district voters and with no Democratic candidates vying for the open seat on the primary ballot in 2012. Democrats comprise 30 percent of the district's registered voters, while independents make up an additional 25 percent. Rocky Chavez was seen as a moderate candidate with great appeal due to his military background, extensive statewide experience as the top official in the Department of Veterans Affairs for Gov. Schwarzenegger, and Latino heritage (Livingston 2018). The San Diego area district, which includes Camp Pendleton, Carlsbad, Encinitas, and Oceanside, is a majority white district (57.89 percent non-Hispanic white) with a sizable Latino population (29.33 percent). Chavez defeated the preferred candidate of the local Republican Party, legislative aide Sherry Hodges, in the general election, 58.2 percent to 41.8 percent according to certified results from the California Secretary of State. In the same election, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney received 49 percent of the district vote, only narrowly defeating Democrat Barack Obama, who received 48.8 percent of votes. In 2012, Latinos accounted for 11.9 percent of the total vote, according to surname matching data available from the Statewide Database, with 40 percent of Latino voters in the district registered as Democrats and an even share (27 percent) of Latinos registered as Republican and Independent. There is some evidence that Chavez's campaign sought to make specific appeals to Latino voters (Walker 2012). Thus our study seeks to identify the extent to which Latino voters may have rallied behind their co-ethnic candidate Rocky Chavez.

The 26th Assembly District is an inland, primarily agricultural district that encompasses nearly all of Tulare and Inyo Counties, and a small section of Kern County. In 2014, then Assembly Republican Minority Leader Connie Conway was termed out and endorsed Mayor Rudy Mendoza of Woodlake to succeed her. Mendoza had worked as an aide for Republican Congress Member Devin Nunes and garnered the support of local Republican Party leaders and elected officials. The 26th District is solidly Republican territory as registered Republicans outpaced registered Democrats by 14 percentage points, and Republican candidates took nearly 70 percent of votes in the crowded June 2014 primary which featured four Republican and three Democratic candidates. Mendoza was seen as the frontrunner and finished first in the all candidate primary with 40.3 percent of the vote against second-place finisher, Devon Mathis, a white Republican, with 20.5 percent of the vote according to certified results from the secretary of state's office.

In a surprising development, Mathis ended up defeating Mendoza in the general election, 53.6 to 46.4 percent. In the nonpresidential election year, turnout was relatively low. While more than 70 percent of Latinos turned out in 2012 to support Chavez in district 76, only 31 percent of registered Latinos cast a ballot in 2014 in the 26th assembly district, according to surname matching data. Mendoza's poor showing caught him and the Republican Party by surprise. Mendoza had raised substantially more money and had been the clear front-runner, but Mathis's military background and work on behalf of veteran's issues may have propelled him among district voters.

Both cases demonstrate two unique candidates in two different kinds of districts. Chavez was considered a political moderate in a less conservative district where both candidates sought to reach out to Democrats and Independents (Jenkins 2012). Mendoza ran in a far more conservative district where his Latino heritage did not seem to be part of his campaign (Griswold 2014).

**Table 1. General Election Results—California Assembly District 76 (2012) and 26 (2014)**

Assembly District 76 – San Diego County (2012)	Sherry Hodges (Rep)	63,526	41.8%
	Rocky Chavez (Rep)	88,295	58.2%
Assembly District 26 – Inyo, Kern, Tulare Counties (2014)	Devon Matthis (Rep)	34,683	53.6%
	Rudy Mendoza (Rep)	29,991	46.4%

Vote tallies certified by the California Secretary of State.

We contend that in the absence of a co-partisan in the general election, Latino Democrats had an ethnic cue that might have influenced their vote choice. Thus, we hypothesize: *Of the registered Latino Democrats who voted in the general election, a majority will support a co-ethnic candidate in a co-partisan election regardless of the candidate being from an opposing party.*

### **Research Design & Methodology**

The units of analysis in this study are aggregated precincts within each of the two assembly districts. Data was procured from the publicly available Statewide Database (SWDB), held at the UC Berkeley School of Law. Identified as California’s official redistricting database, this dataset pulls vote returns from all California counties, standardizes variables across counties, and conducts surname-matching analysis of voter data. While surname matching is not a perfect science, it allows researchers to identify voters based on ethnic and typical surname. The SWDB uses two surname dictionaries compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau to identify Latino voters (Lauderdale and Kestenbaum 2000). To conduct our analysis, two unique data files for each election were merged. These include (1) the *Statement of Vote*, which reports final vote tallies for each candidate from all counties and certified by the secretary of state and (2) the *Voters* file which reports the final vote with surname matching.

#### **Method of Analysis**

We estimate support for a candidate by race and ethnicity of voters using ecological inference, a statistical method of inferring individual behavior from aggregate data. Because the United States operates under a secret ballot system, we have no way of knowing for certain how individuals vote. Surveys and exit polls sufficiently capture results in national or statewide elections, but rarely capture enough localized data to be informative in state and local elections, and often are not adequately representative of minority communities (Arvizu and Garcia 1996, Tate 1991, Lien 2004). In the 1950s Goodman (1953; 1959) identified a basic bivariate regression he termed “ecological regression” for the use of “ecological data,” or variables that describe groups such as race. Goodman’s bivariate ecological regression uses the method of bounds to estimate voting by ethnic group by asking how precincts that were 100 percent non-Asian or 100 percent Asian would have voted, on average (Kousser 2001). The analysis is an ordinary least squares model that takes the simple, linear form  $Y=a + bX + e$ , where  $Y$ , the dependent variable, is the percentage of the total vote that a particular candidate receives; and  $X$ , the independent variable, is the percentage of Latino voters. The variable  $a$ , or the point at which the regression line intercepts

the left vertical axis, estimates the percentage of the non-Latinos who voted for a candidate. The variable  $b$  is the slope of the regression line and  $e$  represents a margin of error. The sum of  $a + b$  is used as the estimate of the percentage of Latinos who voted for a particular candidate. Using this method, we plot the percentage of the vote for each candidate against the percentage of the voters in the precinct who had Latino surnames. Across the elections, the graphs indicate that as the percentage of Latino voters increased, the percentage of the vote for the Latino candidate also increased. The critiques of ecological regression are well documented in the literature. Robinson (1950) argued that relying on aggregate data to infer individual behavior may be misleading, one of the most obvious deficiencies being some vote estimates that fall beyond 100 percent of the vote (Ferree 2004, Herron and Shotts 2003). Nonetheless, ecological regression has been the hallmark method of analysis of *Voting Rights* cases in the courts throughout the 1970s, '80s and '90s to identify levels of racially polarized voting and vote dilution among minority communities (Grofman 1991, 1992).

Since that time, significant improvements have been made to both the statistical logic of the method and advancements in computing technology. In response to criticism of the method's unreliability, Gary King (1997) advanced an ecological inference (EI) solution building off an assumption of data being distributed not on a normal curve, but instead a "truncated normal distribution" (King 1997, Cho 1998, J. M. Kousser 2001). Whereas the parameters of a normal distribution can range from plus infinity to minus infinity—thereby creating estimates that fall beyond 100 percent of a vote—King's truncated distribution limits vote estimations to the 0–100 range. In addition, King's procedure takes into account demographic bounds not at the district level, but at the precinct level, improving the precision of estimation at each and every precinct. King et al. (1999) and Rosen et al. (2001) extended the ecological inference solution using a hierarchical Bayesian "rows by columns" (R x C) approach that could better accommodate multiple candidates, races and ethnicities. Today, ecological inference no longer requires supercomputing, making it a more accessible approach for researchers. We employ the *eiCompare* R package advanced by Collingwood, Oskooii, Garcia-Rios, and Barreto (2016), which computes and compares estimates using all three approaches.

Table 2 reports the number of Latino and Asian-American surname matched voters who cast a ballot in the elections of interest. In this study we assess all Latino voters and a disaggregated group of Latino Democrats. We use a threshold of ten thousand voters to conduct the analysis. As the majority of Latinos in both districts are registered as Democrats, we focus our analysis on the behavior of this subset of Latinos, as the analysis of Latino Republicans alone is insufficient for statistical estimation. We also estimate a broad "other" category, which includes all other voters in the district. Surname matching within the Statewide Database provides an estimate of six subgroups of Asian Americans: Chinese, Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, and Filipino. While California has a large and diverse population of Asian-American communities, the total number of Asian-American voters in the two selected districts is relatively small and thus included within the category of "other" voters.

## Results

The results of the ecological inference estimations for support for candidates are presented in Table 3. They show that under the constraint of a partisan election in which candidates from the same party compete, thereby eliminating a differentiated partisan cue, a majority of Latino, espe-



**Table 2. Total Latino and Asian American Voters Identified by Surnaming Matching**

		Republican	Democrat	Independent	Other	Total Votes	Percent of Total Electorate
<b>District 76:</b>	Latino	5,657	10,179	5,065	925	21,826	11.9
Chavez-		(25.9%)	(46.6%)	(23.2%)	(4%)		
Hodges	Asian	2,133	2,278	2,017	309	6,794	3.7
(2012)		(31.4%)	(33.5%)	(29.7%)	(4%)		
<b>District 26:</b>	Latino	4,634	10,297	2,659	562	18,152	21.5
Mathis-		(25.5%)	(56.7%)	(14.6%)	(3%)		
Mendoza	Asian	806	683	314	62	1,865	2.0
(2014)		(43.2%)	(36.6%)	(16.8%)	(3%)		

Source: University of California Berkeley School of Law's Statewide Database.

**Table 3. Support for Latino Republican Assembly Candidates in Open Seat and Partisan Elections by Race or Ethnicity**

Year	District	Candidates	Latino	Other	Latino Democrats
2012	76	Rocky Chavez	<b>90.9</b> (6.83)	53.6 (1.01)	<b>99.8</b> (0.14)
		Sherry Hodges	9.02 (6.86)	46.4 (1.01)	0.11 (0.11)
2014	26	Devin Mathis	27.7 (2.79)	60.8 (1.11)	10.6 (9.28)
		Rudy Mendoza	<b>72.3</b> (2.82)	39.2 (1.12)	<b>89.2</b> (9.51)

Notes: (1) Standard errors in parentheses; (2) Data publicly available from UC Berkeley School of Law's Statewide Database; (3) Method: Estimations were generated using King's solution to Ecological Inference using eiCompare R package; (4) Candidates in the top position of the cell won the election.

cially Latino Democrats, rally behind a Latino Republican candidate in both of the observe elections, providing support for the hypothesis. In 2012, in district 76, 90.9 percent of all Latino voters supported Latino candidate Rocky Chavez. Among Latino Democrats, nearly 100 percent of those who cast a ballot are estimated to have supported Chavez. Among all other voters, Chavez also received strong support (53.6 percent) over Hodges. In 2014, in district 26, Rudy Mendoza received an estimated 72.3 percent of support from all Latino voters. While this level represents a significant majority of Latino support, it is relatively less than what Chavez was able to garner. Reports from *The Fresno Bee*, a local newspaper covering the district suggest a tense relationship between Mendoza and district Latinos, as well as a possible backlash from whites. The chair of the Tulare Democratic Party, Ruben Macareno, remarked that Latinos did not show up for Mendoza en masse because Mendoza made it clear he was "not a 'Latino candidate.'" In addition, California political expert Allen Hoffenblum of California's Political Targetbook opined that Mendoza's Spanish surname

might have hurt him with non-Hispanic district voters (Griswold 2014). Despite this, we find a higher percentage of Latino Democrats (89.2 percent) lent their support to Mendoza, providing credence to Casellas and Wallace's finding that Latino Democrats have a stronger preference for co-ethnic descriptive representatives.

Figures 1 and 2 plot the percentage of the precinct vote for the candidates by the percentage of Latino Democratic voters in each precinct, with a fitted regression line. The figures present a positive relationship between the demographics of a precinct and the support for the Latino candidates. The graphs provide a visual interpretation that as the number of Latino Democratic voters increases in a precinct, support for the Latino candidate also increased.

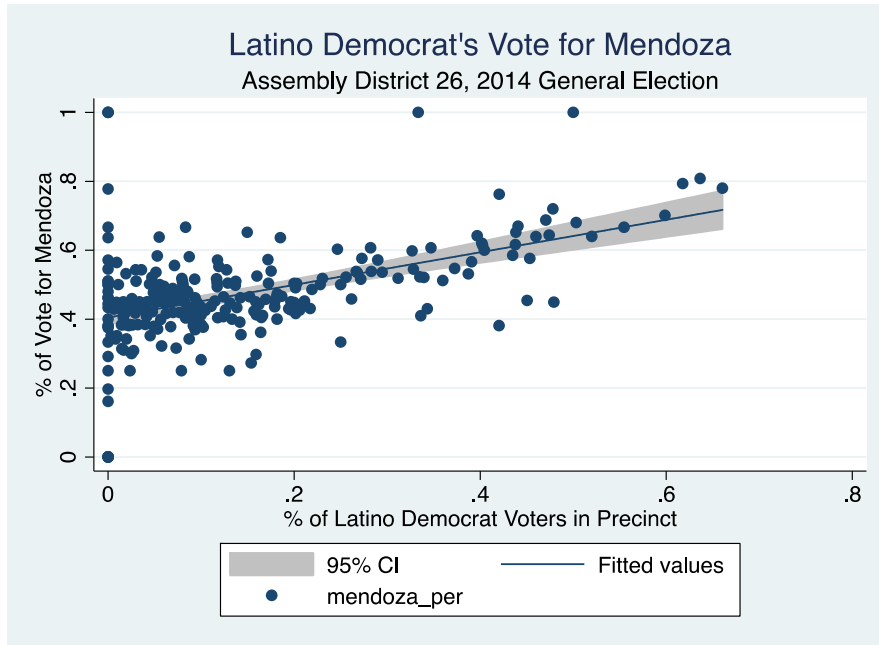
## Conclusion

The analysis provides evidence that Latino Democrats rallied their support for co-ethnics in co-partisan races that featured two Republicans and supports our claim that in the absence of an explicit partisan cue, voters will use shared ethnicity as a second-best option in order to determine their vote choice. The findings demonstrate that race and ethnicity need to be considered when studying vote choice under the constraint of California's top two primary system, given the state's unique position as a majority-minority state and that partisan attachments and relationships have consistently been found to operate differently for racial and ethnic minorities. While our analysis does not allow for an analysis of individual voter behavior or information seeking, it does present evidence that suggests ethnicity may be a salient factor in these elections by estimating how Latino Democrats voted through the ecological inference method. The method helps fill in the gaps for small electoral districts that most national surveys cannot accurately sample due to resource constraints. The aggregate level analysis finds that Latino Democratic voters overwhelmingly favored co-ethnic Latino Republicans over the white Republicans.

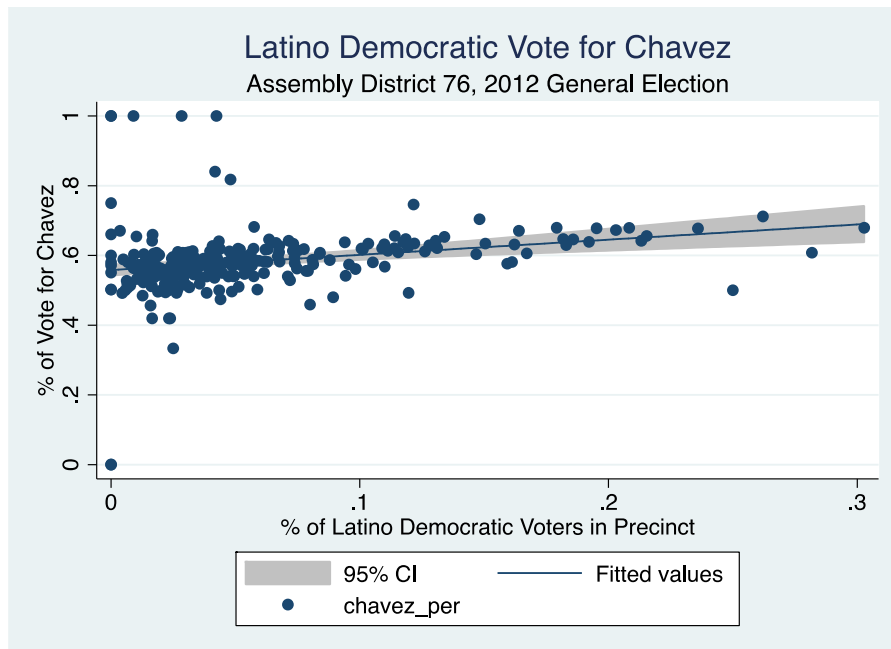
Unfortunately, the observation of vote returns and estimation of voting behavior cannot paint a complete picture of an election. It is also important to consider the relationship between the larger electoral context and elite strategy. It is critical to note, for example, that Rocky Chavez ran in a presidential year when Democratic and Latino turnout would be high, as compared to Rudy Mendoza who ran in a midterm election where minority groups typically have lower turnout (Gilliam 1985). It is also important to note that both candidates had different relationships with local Republican party leaders that may have influenced their campaign strategy (Ocampo 2018). Mendoza was the anointed candidate in his race, while Chavez was running against the preferred candidate of local leaders. Did this dynamic incentivize Chavez to make Latino voters, including Latino Democrats, an integral part of his electoral coalition, while leading Mendoza to ignore them? Qualitative studies that examine local contextual factors and actors could provide additional insights to these kinds of district cases.

While the majority of Latinos in California are registered Democrats, a co-ethnic Republican candidate on the ballot may influence them to vote as a bloc for a co-ethnic. Previous studies (Nagler 2015, Sides et al. 2002) indicate that strategic voting only occurs for a small share of the electorate. But Latino Democrats, who have been found to prefer descriptive representatives (Casellas and Wallace 2015), even from an opposing party (Baik et al. 2009), are behaving sincerely by voting for a co-ethnic Republican. Thus, our research suggests that ethnicity might be one of the reasons that Highton et al. (2016) observe party polarization in their data. While ascertaining the exact reasoning behind an individual's vote in a 2012 or 2014 assembly election would prove

**Figure 1. Scatterplot of Precinct Votes for Rudy Mendoza by Percent of Latino Democrats in Precinct and Fitted Regression Line**



**Figure 2. Scatterplot of Precinct Votes for Rocky Chavez by Percent of Latino Democratic Voters in Precinct & Fitted Regression Line**



challenging, localized surveys and interviews of Latino Democrats in these instances would be worthy of future study given the findings reported here. In addition, further research should investigate the extent to which cross-partisan, ethnic coalitions are a pathway to office for Latino Republicans and how demographics might influence the campaign strategies of minority Republicans.

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**Appendix A**  
**List of all Co-Partisan Elections in California 2012-2016**

**Table A1: Republican Assembly Co-Partisan General Elections**

<b>Year</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Candidate 1</b>	<b>Candidate 2</b>
2012	1	Brian Dahle	Rick Bosetti
	5	Frank Bigelow	Rico Oller
	6	Beth Gaines	Andy Pugno
	23	Bob Whalen	Jim Patterson
	67	Phil Paule	Melissa Mendoza
	72	Troy Edgar	Travis Allen
	76	<i>Sherry Hodges</i>	<i>Rocky Chavez</i>
2014	26	<i>Devon Mathis</i>	<i>Rudy Mendoza</i>
	71	Brian Jones	Tony Teora
	74	Keith Curry	Matthew Harper
	76	Rocky Chavez	Thomas Krouse
2016	12	Ken Vogel	Heath Flora
	23	Jim Patterson	Gwen Morris
	71	Randy Voepel	Leo Hamel