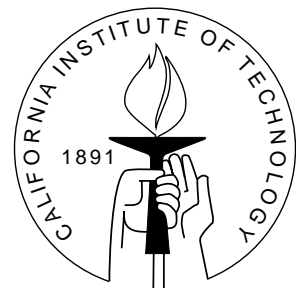DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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THE IMPACT OF RACE AND IDEOLOGY ON VOTING: DOES RACE
STILL MATTER?

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SOCIAL SCIENCE WORKING PAPER 1283

March 2008

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Abstract

Why do barriers to minority legislative representation persist? This paper asks to what extent low levels of black office-holding are attributable to purely candidate race alone, as opposed to candidate ideology. Using a unique data set that contains information on candidates' ideological positions coupled with extensive individual voting data, the paper tests whether candidate race exerts an independent and significant influence on vote choice that cannot be explained away by candidate ideology. Estimating a model of individual vote choice, I find that candidate race is largely irrelevant for most white voters when the effects of candidate ideology are taken into account. This is especially the case when the ideological distance between two candidates is large. It implies that when candidates are ideologically distinct, voters are unlikely to cross their party line to support a candidate whom they would not normally support, regardless of their willingness to vote for a black candidate. However, when candidates are ideologically close, white voters are more likely to vote for a white candidate who is pitted against a black candidate. Similarly, I find that the race of candidates works as a strong negative cue for white voters with no party affiliations. This suggests that white voters are likely to use candidate race as a voting cue when the party cue is absent or weak.

The Impact of Race and Ideology on Voting: Does Race Still Matter? [*]

Michiko Ueda

After years of advancement towards an egalitarian ideal, candidate race still continues to shape the contours of elections in the United States. African-Americans are so seldom elected to the Senate that Barack Obama's election to the Senate generated national attention in 2004. In spite of dramatic improvement over the years, African-Americans are still underrepresented in Congress and in state legislatures across the country, and the number of black non-incumbents elected from majority-white districts remains abysmally low (Canon 1999).[1]

Why do barriers to black office-holding persist? Racially polarized voting allegedly underlies such outcomes, but why do white voters tend to choose a white candidate over a black candidate? One potential explanation is discriminatory racial attitudes of white voters toward black candidates. Race of minority candidates is often claimed to contain negative information and to arouse stereotypes among non-minority voters. Some experimental as well as some empirical studies suggest, albeit with mixed evidence, that white voters associate black candidates with a less-favorable image (see, e.g. Terkildsen 1993; Sigelman, et. al. 1995; Reeves 1997; McDermott 1998). Beyond just invoking a negative image, the racial cue can also shape the behavior of white voters. Some authors claim that candidate race negatively influences the voting decisions of white voters (e.g. Swain 1993; Voss and Lublin 2001; but also see Citrin, Green and Sears 1990; Highton 2004) or that white voters are more likely to turnout when minority candidates are on the ballot in order to ensure the victory of white candidates (Washington 2006).

Another potential explanation for the rare electoral success of black candidates is candidate ideology. Because black candidates tend to be more liberal than their white counterparts, it may

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[1] According to the 2000 Census, African Americans constitute 12.3% of the entire U.S. population. As of 2002, there were 37 African American members serving in the U.S. House. Before the election of Barack Obama to the U.S. Senate, there were only two popularly elected African American Senators (Edward William Brooke III [MA, served 1967-1979] and Carol Moseley-Braun [IL, 1993-1999]). In state legislatures, 442 and 142 African Americans are serving in state houses and senates, respectively (accounting for 8.1% and 7.2% of the total membership)(Bositis 2003). According to Canon (1999, p.10), "[I]n the 6,667 House elections in white majority districts between 1966 and 1996 (including special elections), only 35 (0.52 percent) were won by blacks."

well be that they are simply too liberal for some white voters. While this possibility has been acknowledged in the past, a solid empirical test of this claim has been sparse (Swain 1993; Hutchings and Valentino 2004).[2] The fundamental difficulty in testing this second possibility lies in the fact that race and ideology are highly correlated in the United States, thus making it hard to distinguish whether race itself or ideological factors correlated with race cause racially distinct voting patterns. If a certain minority group tends to have distinct ideological positions, then racially distinct voting behavior can either reflect racial animosity by the majority group or racial groups' divergent political and partisan preferences. But in the absence of detailed information on the ideological positions of both voters and candidates, separating out the two factors can prove to be nearly impossible.

The goal of this paper is to disentangle the two confounding factors discussed above in order to better understand the cause of low levels of minority legislative representation. This paper asks to what extent racially polarized voting patterns are attributable to purely candidate race alone, as opposed to candidate ideology. Using a unique data set that contains information on candidates' ideological positions coupled with extensive individual voting data, the paper tests whether candidate race exerts an independent and significant influence on vote choice that cannot be explained away by candidate ideology. Moreover, I ask in this paper under what conditions race matters. According to the spatial model of voting, in which ideological positions of candidates determine vote choice, other factors such as race should be relevant only when two candidates are similar in their issue positions. Thus, this paper not only attempts to identify the relative importance of race and ideology but also examines the conditions under which race exerts a more prominent influence on vote decisions.

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[2]A notable exception is Abrajano, Nagler, and Alvarez (2005). Exploiting unique candidate ethnicity/ideology combinations in the 2001 Los Angeles City elections, the authors separate out the impact of candidates' ethnicity and race (Hispanic and white) on vote choice from that of candidates' ideology. This study focuses on black candidates, who are more likely to be subject to discrimination than Hispanic candidates.

To answer these questions, I merge exit poll data from the 1996 and 1998 congressional elections with a data set that contains information on the ideological positions of candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives. The advantage of this candidate ideology data set lies in its abundant information on non-incumbents. While roll-call records are readily available to measure policy preferences of incumbents, such records are simply unavailable for those who have never been elected to Congress. Using this data set, I estimate a model of individual vote choice and find that candidate race is largely irrelevant for most white voters when the effects of candidate ideology are taken into account. This is especially the case when the ideological distance between two candidates is large. It implies that when candidates are ideologically distinct, voters are unlikely to cross their party line to support a candidate that they would not normally support, regardless of their willingness to vote for a black candidate. However, when candidates are ideologically close, white voters are more likely to vote for a white candidate who is pitted against a black candidate. I also find that for white voters with no party affiliations, the race of candidates works as a strong negative cue. This suggests that voters are likely to use race as a voting cue when the party cue is absent or weak.

These results are not based on the assumption that voters know the exact ideological positions of candidates. The only assumption that I make is that voters roughly know the ideological orientation of candidates (e.g., extremely liberal). However, one might still argue that even this assumption is too stringent. In addition, one can also claim that what should matter is a subjective assessment of candidates' positioning, not an objective measure of their ideological orientation, such as the one employed here. In order to address these issues, I also estimate another model of vote choice using a subjective measure of candidate ideology, reported by voters in survey data. For this part of the analysis, I turn to the American National Election Studies data for the period of 1978 to 2004. The

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analysis based on this alternative specification confirms the first set of results. For white voters who are ideologically closer to one of the candidates, candidate race does not affect their voting decisions. However, when white voters are ideologically indifferent between candidates, they are less likely to vote for a black candidate. Thus, candidate race matters when the impact of issue positions or ideology is minimal.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the data for this study. Section 3 explains research design and specifications. Section 4 presents estimation results, and Section 5 checks the robustness of the main results. The final section offers discussions and concluding remarks.

The Data

I merge three sets of data to create the data set for the main analysis of this study: data on candidates' ideological positions, exit polls, and data on the race of candidates. The units of analysis are individual voters and the data set covers the House elections of 1996 and 1998.

The candidate positioning data were developed by Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001a, 2001b) and they contain estimated policy positions of House candidates in the elections of 1996 and 1998. The estimation of candidate positions is based on two series of National Political Awareness Test (NPAT) surveys by Project Vote Smart conducted before the general elections in 1996 and 1998. Project Vote Smart asked all congressional candidates more than 200 questions on a wide range of policy areas, varying from economic issues to social issues such as abortion. Based on their responses to the survey questions, Ansolabehere, et. al. constructed measures of candidates' ideological positions using principal components factor analysis. Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001b) provide a detailed description of the method. The first dimension of the scores — hereafter the NPAT scores — corresponds to the "left-right" ideology, and the score is normalized so that it

ranges from 0 (most liberal) to 1 (most conservative). In the following analysis, only districts in which two major party candidates answered the NPAT survey are included. Unopposed races are excluded from the analysis. In addition, cases that involved more than two candidates, those that included a third party candidate, and those in which candidates from the same party ran against each other are omitted.

For the voter side, I use the 1996 and 1998 Voter News Service exit poll data. The data cover 42 states and contain more than 27,000 voters in the sample over the two years. Sampling was done at the precinct level, and the weights are always used in the subsequent analysis. The exit poll data in each year were then merged with the NPAT data by Congressional district information.

As a final step, the information on the candidates' race is added to the merged data set.[3] Districts with Hispanic candidates are excluded from the analysis. The final sample with all the necessary information contains 235 Congressional districts for the 1996 and 1998 periods.

Table 1 reports the distribution of NPAT scores by party. Aside from a clear pattern of nonconvergence in policy positions between the two major parties, the Table also shows a large variation in the scores across different racial groups of candidates, especially among Democrats. Compared to white Democratic candidates whose average score is 0.298, black Democratic candidates are much more liberal on average with the score of 0.147. This pattern also holds true among Republican candidates, with white Republican candidates leaning to more conservative positions than do black Republican candidates.

To provide an initial look at the impact of candidate race on voting, Table 2 compares the voting patterns of white and black voters across different types of contests, categorized by candidate race. Table 2 shows the fraction of voters who voted for the Democratic candidate. The denominator

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[3]— graciously provided me with the data.

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used to calculate the fraction is the number of voters who voted for one of the two major party candidates. Column (1) reports the fraction of those voted for the Democratic candidate when both candidates are white, and column (2) reports the fraction when a black Democratic candidate is running against a white Republican candidate. There are 13 contests between a black Democrat and a white Republican and 388 white voters and 418 black voters cast their ballots in these races. If voting along racial lines is prominent, we should see distinct voting patterns across columns (1) and (2). In particular, we should see white voters voting less for the Democratic candidate when the Democratic candidate is black — therefore, smaller fractions in column (2) than in column (1). The reverse should be true for black voters.

According to Table 2, there does not seem to be a great deal of race-based voting among either Democratic or Republican white voters. However, white Independent voters exhibit different voting patterns depending on candidate race. Comparing columns (1) and (2) of the top panel, white independent voters are less likely to vote for the Democratic candidate when they are presented with a black Democratic candidate (34.2%) as compared to when they are deciding between two white candidates (45.7%). The difference between columns (1) and (2) is 11.5 percentage points, indicating that white Independent voters are much less likely to vote for the Democratic Party when a black candidate is running from the party, as compared to when a white candidate is on the ballot. However, without information on candidate positioning, it is hard to tell whether we should attribute such voting patterns to the voters' discriminatory stance against black candidates. Because black Democratic candidates typically take liberal positions (see Table 1), it could well be that they are simply too liberal for some white Independent voters.

Table 2 also shows that black voters are more likely to defect from their party when a candidate of their race is running on the ticket of a party that the voters normally do not support. According

to the bottom panel of Table 2, black Republicans are more likely to cross party lines to vote along racial lines when they are presented with a black Democratic candidate (a defection rate of 59.6%). In contrast, when they must choose between two white candidates – that is, when there is no issue of candidate race – black Republicans are more likely to support a candidate of their customary party with much smaller defection rate of 21.0%.

Research Design and Specifications

Descriptive statistics in the previous section suggests that candidate race influences the voting decisions of some voters. However, voters do not make decisions based on candidate race alone. Other factors, such as incumbency status of candidates and voter characteristics, are also important determinants of vote choice. In this section, I control for these confounding factors and estimate more complete models of vote choice.

As noted at the outset, the fundamental difficulty in detecting race-based voting lies in a high degree of correlation between race and ideology. In order to abstract from the effects of ideology on voting, I explicitly control for candidates' ideology and test if distinct voting patterns exist in elections that include a black candidate. More specifically, I first categorize candidate pairs into groups based on their ideological positions. An example would be a group that contains pairs of an extremely liberal Democratic candidate and an extremely conservative Republican candidate. Within this group, all the Democratic candidates take extremely liberal positions and every Republican candidate is very conservative, but some pairs consist of two white candidates while others include a black candidate. Because candidates' ideological configurations are quite similar within this group, candidate ideology should *not* explain variations in election outcomes across districts. Then if distinct voting patterns are found among white voters in biracial contests – compared to when they are deciding between two white candidates – at least we know that

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the distinct voting patterns are not due to candidates' ideology. If such distinct patterns persist even after controlling for the effects of other factors, such as candidate and voter characteristics, it will suggest candidate race, not candidate ideology, should be attributed to such distinct voting patterns.

Because most of the black Democratic candidates take relatively liberal positions compared to other Democratic candidates (see Table 1), I limit my analysis to the pairs that contain a Democratic candidate with a relatively liberal policy position. The subsample includes Democratic candidates whose NPAT scores are less than the 40th percentile of the distribution of Democratic candidates' NPAT scores. There are 70 white candidates and 11 black Democratic candidates that satisfy this condition. Changing the threshold to less than the 30th percentile does not change any of the substantive results presented below. The mean of the NPAT scores in this subsample is 0.159 for white Democratic candidates and 0.124 for black Democratic candidates.

Depending on the positions of Republican candidates running against these liberal Democratic candidates, there are three types of contests. The first possibility is a contest between a liberal Democratic candidate and a Republican candidate who takes an "average" ideological position relative to other Republican candidates. I call this type of contest "Case 1." Republican candidates are said to have "average" positions when their NPAT scores lie between the 40th percentile and the 70th percentile of the Republican NPAT score distribution. The second case ("Case 2") is a contest in which a liberal Democratic candidate is pitted against a conservative Republican candidate. In this case, Republican candidates have NPAT scores of greater than the 80th percentile of the distribution. Finally, "Case 3" is defined as a case where a moderate Republican candidate is running against a liberal Democratic candidate. In Case 3, the ideological positions of Republican candidates are less than the 40th percentile of the distribution. To check if my results are sensitive

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to the way that I set these thresholds, I tried various cutoff points by varying the thresholds by up to 10th percentiles. None of the results were affected by such modifications. In Case 1, the average NPAT score of Republican candidates is around 0.76. In Case 2, in which Republican candidates are conservative, the average score is closer to 0.9, whereas in Case 3, the average score of Republican candidates is around 0.5.

The main equation to be estimated is as follows:

$$y_{ijt} = \beta \mathbb{D}_j^B + \gamma [BlackVoter]_i + \delta \mathbb{D}_j^B * [BlackVoter]_i + \boldsymbol{\beta}_0 \mathbf{x}_{jt} + \boldsymbol{\phi}_0 \mathbf{z}_{it} + \epsilon_{ijt}.$$

The dependent variable, y_{ijt} is a dummy variable that takes 1 if voter i voted for the Democratic House candidate in district j in year t and 0 if she voted for the Republican candidate. Those who did not cast their ballots in the House election are not included in the analysis. $\mathbb{D}_j^B$ is a dummy variable that equals 1 if the Democratic candidate in district j is black, -1 if the Republican candidate is black, and 0 if otherwise. Black Republican candidates appear only in Case 3, in which the Republican candidate takes a relatively moderate position. Excluding black Republican candidates from the analysis does not change any of the substantive results below. $[BlackVoter]_i$ equals 1 if voter i is black. $\mathbf{x}_{jt}$ and $\mathbf{z}_{it}$ are vectors that contain candidate and voter characteristics, respectively. I estimate the model for each of the three cases described above. This means that candidates' ideological positions are taken into account in each case.

The main coefficient of interest is β. Because the baseline group is white voters (Hispanic and Asian voters are excluded), it measures whether white voters are more or less likely to support the Democratic candidate when the candidate is black as compared to when deciding between two white candidates. In the following analysis, I focus on the sign of the coefficient instead of its magnitude. γ measures whether black voters are more likely to vote for the Democratic candidate

when they are faced with two white candidates. δ captures whether black voters are more likely to vote for the Democratic candidate if the candidate is black.

To control for the effects of other confounding factors, $\mathbf{x}_{jt}$ contains the following standard control variables: party identification, age, income level, gender, and ideology of voters. $\mathbf{z}_{it}$ includes the incumbency status of candidates and a variable that measures the quality of challengers. The *Income* variable takes four values, with higher values meaning higher income level. The *Age* variable equals 1 if a voter is 65 years or older. Ideally, one should control for voters' education level, but because of the large number of non-reporting, the variable is dropped from the analysis. To make sure that the decision to omit the variable is not biasing the results, I also estimate the model for a subset of voters who reported their education level. The substantive results remain the same.

The *Incumbent* variable is 1 if the Democratic candidate is an incumbent, 0 if no incumbent is running, -1 if the Republican candidate is an incumbent. The *Party Identification* variable takes 1 if a voter is a Democrat, -1 if a Republican, 0 if he or she describes themselves as being "Independent" or "something else." Similarly, the *Liberal* variable is 1 if a voter is liberal, 0 if moderate, -1 if conservative. I also include a dummy variable for the South to capture potentially different voting patterns across regions. While it would be interesting to learn if Southern voters exhibit different reactions when faced with black candidates, the sample size of Southern voters is too small to allow me to test this possibility. Finally, the *Non-Incumbent Candidate Quality* variable takes a value of 1 if the Democratic challenger has previously held a public political office. It also equals 1 if only the Democratic candidate held a public political office in an open election. The variable equals -1 in an opposite case. The variable equals zero in any other cases.

Results

Table 3 reports the baseline probit estimation results of the model. Recall that all the Demo-

cratic candidates — both white and black — in the subsample take more liberal positions than the average Democratic candidate. Column (1) reports estimation results in cases where Republican candidates take "average" positions (relative to other Republican candidates); in column (2), the positions of Republican candidates are conservative; and in column (3), Republican candidates are relatively "moderate."

In Case 1, the estimated coefficient on the *Black Candidate* dummy is negative and statistically significant. This suggests that white voters are less likely to vote for the Democratic candidate if the candidate is black compared to when the candidate is white. Note that in this subsample, the Republican candidate is always white. The positive coefficient on the *Black Voter* variable implies that black voters are more likely to vote for white Democratic candidates. They are even more likely to support the Democratic party if a black candidate is running from the party, as indicated by the positive coefficients on the *Black Voter × Black Candidate* term.

When the Republican candidate is conservative (Case 2), therefore the distance between the Democratic and Republican candidates is greater, then candidate race does not seem to affect the vote choice of white voters. In column (2), the coefficient on the *Black Candidate* variable is negative, but the size is smaller than in column (1) and the coefficient is statistically indistinguishable from zero. This suggests that when the Republican candidate is extremely conservative, Democratic or independent voters would not support the Republican candidate regardless of their willingness to vote for a black Democratic candidate. Another possibility is that white voters are less likely to participate in House elections when the party that they normally support nominates a black candidate. I will address this possibility in the next section.

Finally, when the Republican candidate takes a relatively moderate position (Case 3, column (3)), the coefficients on the *Black Candidate* variable is positive, suggesting that the probability of

white voters supporting a black Democratic candidate is estimated to be higher than their probability of voting for a white Democrat running against a similarly moderate Republican candidate.

This final result is possibly due to two factors. The first is the nature of white Democratic candidates in this group. Among white Democratic candidates in Case 3 (N=22), 17 of them are challengers and only 5 ran as incumbents.[4] Of the 17 challengers, only 8 held public political offices in the past and the average vote share of the 15 white Democratic challengers who lost to incumbents was 0.372. By contrast, black Democratic candidates in this group are comprised of 1 incumbent and 2 open-seat candidates (both of them classified as candidates of "quality"). The vote share of the two open-seat candidates was 54.1% (Julia Carson, IN) and 82.8% (Barbara Lee, CA). Although I control for incumbency status and candidate quality in the model, it is possible that there are other types of candidate quality that are not captured by these variables.

The second factor is the characteristics of districts. In Case 3, districts with a black candidate are heavily Democratic (the average two-party Democratic vote shares were around 74% to 77% in the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections) and 100% urban, whereas districts with two white candidates are 80% urban, and leaning less Democratic (the Democratic vote shares around 55% to 59%). Thus, the districts that contain black candidates are more likely to vote for Democratic candidates to begin with. It is worth noting that the same can be said about Case 1; Districts where black candidates ran are much more Democratic.[5] Therefore, negative coefficient on the *Black Candidate* variable in column (1) is likely to be underestimated, meaning that the underlying coefficients could even be more negative.

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[4]In Case 1, among 28 white Democratic candidates, 12 of them were incumbents, 15 of them were challengers and 1 was in an open-seat race. Four of the black Democratic candidates in this group were incumbents and the rest were open-seat candidates.

[5]In districts with a black Democratic candidate, the average two-party Democratic vote shares in the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections were 70.4% and 72%, respectively. The equivalent statistics for districts with white candidates were 50.9% and 53.1%.

The previous specification assumes that the impact of candidate race on voting is the same regardless of their partisanship. Next, in order to detect different voting patterns across partisan groups, I estimate the same model separately for Democratic, Republican, and Independent voters. As in Table 3, I estimate the model for each of the three ideological configurations, but this time separately for white and black voters. The basic specification remains the same as in Table 3, but because I estimate the model separately for each racial group, the *Black Voter* term and the associated interaction term (as well as the *Party ID* variable) are dropped from the model.

Panel A of Table 4 presents estimation results for white voters. The control variables are included in all specifications but their estimated coefficients not reported. The top row reports estimated coefficients on the *Black Candidate* dummy in Case 1, in which white Republican candidates with "average" issue positions run against liberal Democratic candidates. These coefficients reveal the source of the negative reaction against black candidates found in Table 3. The estimated coefficients are negative and statistically different from zero for white Independent and Republican voters (the coefficient for Democratic voters is also negative but statistically indistinguishable from zero). In particular, this suggests that the race of candidates negatively influences the voting decisions of white independent voters. The estimation result is consistent with the descriptive statistics in Table 2, in which I find that white independent voters are much less likely to vote for a black Democratic candidate than for a white Democratic candidate. However, such negative attitudes among white Independent voters can be found only in Case 1. In Case 2, in which Republican candidates are more conservative than the average Republican candidate, candidate race is largely irrelevant for white Independent voters. In Case 3, white voters in all three groups exhibit positive reactions to black Democratic candidates. Again, this could be due to the factors that are not captured in the model.

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Next, I estimate the same model for black voters. In this set of analyses, I am particularly interested in finding out whether black Republican voters are more likely to cross party lines when they are presented with a white Republican candidate and a black Democratic candidate. Because the number of black voters in the data set is quite small, I estimate the model by grouping all three cases into one instead of estimating it for each of the three ideological configurations. Therefore, the ideological positions of Republican candidates are not restricted.

According to Panel B of Table 4, black Republican voters are more likely to vote for the Democratic candidate when the Democratic candidate is black (column (3)) compared to when candidates are both white. Column (1) in Panel B shows that black Democratic voters are more likely to vote for the Democratic candidate if the candidate is black.

Robustness

The empirical results presented above uses an objective measure of candidate positioning. The specification is based on the assumption that voters *roughly* know the actual ideological orientations of House candidates.[6] This assumption should remain valid even if voters make mistakes, as long as there is no systematic tendency for voters to under- or overestimate candidate positions for a particular racial group of candidates. However, it is possible that white voters tend to evaluate black candidates as being more liberal than they actually are. This is especially a concern when there is a stereotype among white voters that black candidates are liberal and when voters use candidate demographic cues to infer candidate positions (McDermott 1998). Some experimental and empirical studies showing that the gender of candidates systematically affects voters' perceptions of candidate positions are suggestive here (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Koch 2000, 2002). This line of research

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[6]Note that I put candidates into three broad categories — extremely liberal (or moderate), average, extremely conservative — based on their ideological positions. Therefore, the only requirement for the above specification to be valid is that voters know whether their candidates take extreme positions or average positions.

suggests that we should also take into account how voters actually perceive candidates' ideological positions. This subsection checks the robustness of the results presented above using data on voters' subjective evaluation of candidate issue orientations.

In addition, I test whether race-based voting becomes more prominent when voters do not know candidates' ideological orientations. Because voters are more likely to rely on candidate demographic cues — such as race and gender — in low-information elections (Terkildsen 1993; Huddy and Terkidsen 1993; Siegelman, et. al. 1995; McDermott 1998), if voters are uncertain of issue positions of the candidates, the impact of candidate race on voting decisions may become more prominent. Thus, the goal of this subsection is twofold. The first is to test if the estimation results in the previous section are still valid even if subjective measures of candidate positions are used instead. Second, I examine whether voters are more likely to engage in race-based voting if they do not know candidates' ideological positions.

This requires survey data that contain measures of voters' perceptions of candidates' ideological positions. Because the VNS exit polls do not ask voters to evaluate candidate positions, I use a series of the American National Election Studies (ANES) in this part of the analysis. Ten studies of the ANES contain questions on voters' evaluation of candidate ideological positions, in which voters are asked to place House candidates on a 7-point liberal-conservative ideology scale (ranging from Extremely Liberal to Extremely Conservative).[7] In addition, voters are asked to place themselves on the same 7-point scale.

For this set of analysis, the race of House candidates first needs to be identified. For 2004, the ANES contextual data that contain information on the race of candidates are readily available. For other years, I consult various sources to determine the race of candidates.[8] The information on the

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[7]The available ANES are those of 1978, 1980, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, and 2004.

[8]Data for 1996 and 1998 are provided by —.

race of incumbents are taken from Martin (2001). Because there are no systematic records, finding out the race of non-incumbents is particularly challenging. I mainly obtain the information by consulting publications from the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies as well as various issues of *The Almanac of American Politics*.[9] The information on candidate race is then merged with the ANES data. Because the sample size for black voters is small, the analysis is limited to white voters.

The specification is similar to the one in the previous section. The main difference is that I introduce four voter categories. I categorize voters into four mutually exclusive and exhaustive groups to create dummy variables for each group: ideologically closer to the Democratic candidate, ideologically closer to the Republican candidate, equal distance from two candidates, and no evaluation on candidates' ideological positions.[10] Voters who evaluated only one candidate are first excluded from the analysis but later incorporated in the first two categories. I am interested in testing if different reactions against black candidates exist across these four different types of voters. To capture this, the previously introduced variable *Black Candidate* is interacted with each of the four categorical variables. *Black Candidate* is 1 if the Democratic candidate is black, 0 if non-black, -1 if the Republican candidate is black.[11]

Table 5 reports the estimation results. *Ideologically Closer to D* is a dummy variable that takes 1 if $|V_i - R_i| - |V_i - D_i|$ is greater than 0, where V_i is voter i's placement of his own ideology on the 7-point liberal-conservative ideological scale (1= Extremely Liberal, 7= Extremely Conservative)

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[9]Particularly useful sources of information are Bositis (1992, 1994, 1998, 2000) and monthly *Focus* magazines issued by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. They often contain lists of African-American major-party nominees. In some cases, I consult newspaper articles to find out candidate race information. Terkildsen and Damore (1999) contain candidate race information for a subset of biracial elections in 1990 and 1992. For 1982, I also check the accuracy of my coding (for a subset of districts) by candidate race information provided by —.

[10]Unopposed races and contests that involve a third party candidate are excluded from the analysis. Voters in the fourth category answered "Don't know" to the questions.

[11]In the previous section, I make a distinction between white non-Hispanic and Hispanic candidates. However, mainly due to data limitations, I cannot make such a distinction in this set of analyses.

and D_i and R_i are voter i's placement of House candidates on the same scale. *Ideologically Closer to R* is similarly defined.

The main independent variable of interest is the interaction term of *Ideologically Closer to D* (also *Ideologically Closer to R*) and *Black Candidate*. A negative coefficient on the interaction term indicates that white voters are less likely to vote for a black candidate even if the candidate is ideologically closer to their ideologies. Other variables of interests are the interaction term of *Ideologically Equal Distance from Both Candidates* and *Black Candidate*. Here, the effect of candidate issue positions is minimal – the voter is ideologically located exactly in the middle of two candidates. The results in the previous section suggest that these types of voters are less likely to vote for a black candidate. Finally, the coefficient on the interaction term of *Did Not Scale Candidates* × *Black Candidate* captures whether the role of race becomes more prominent when voters do not know anything about candidates' issue positions.

In column (1) of Table 5, voters who placed only one House candidate on the liberal-conservative 7-point scale are excluded from the estimation, but they are included the estimation reported in column (2). Accordingly, in column (2), *Ideologically Closer to D* means either that (a) the voter evaluated both candidates and is ideologically closer to the Democratic candidate, or (b) the voter evaluated only the Democratic candidate and $V_i = D_i$. The *Ideologically Closer to R* variable in column (2) is similarly defined. Note that in both cases, voters are categorized into four mutually exclusive and exhaustive groups because voters who evaluate only one candidate are excluded from the analysis in column (1).

According to Table 5, both in columns (1) and (2), the race of candidates does not influence their voting decisions as long as voters perceive candidates to be closer to their ideological positions. The estimated coefficients on the interaction terms *Ideologically Closer to D* × *Black Candidate* and

Ideologically Closer to R × Black Candidate are negative in both columns, but they are statistically indistinguishable from zero.

In contrast, voters who placed themselves exactly in the middle of two candidates are much less likely to vote for a black candidate. The estimated coefficients on *Ideologically Equal Distance from Both Candidates* are almost zero, which imply that voters are equally likely to vote for either of the candidates when voters are ideologically the same distance from both candidates. The negative interaction term with the *Black Candidate* variable indicates that they change their voting behavior when a black candidate is involved. Finally, it is interesting to note that there is no evidence that voters engage in race-based voting when they do not know the candidates' ideological orientations. The coefficient on the interaction term *Did Not Scale Candidates × Black Candidate* is estimated to be negative but statistically indistinguishable from zero. Thus, it it not necessarily the case that voters who lack knowledge on candidate positioning cast their ballots based on a simple racial cue.

In this subsection, I examine the influence of candidate race on voting decisions by explicitly taking into account voters' perceptions of candidates' issue positions. The results in this subsection confirm the previously obtained results. As long as white voters perceive black candidates to be ideologically close to their positions, there is no evidence that they react negatively against black candidates. However, when ideology plays no role – when voters are ideologically indifferent between two candidates – white voters are much less likely to vote for a party with a African American nominee. Thus, the race of candidates negatively affects voting decisions of white voters only when the influence of partisan or ideological factors is minimal.

Another check is to see if there is any selection bias among the electorate. One may be concerned that white voters who are averse to black candidates would choose not to participate in the House election when a black candidate is running on the ticket of the party that they normally support.

In other words, the non-negative reactions found in Table 3 and Table 5 may reflect the tendency that only those who are willing to vote for a black candidate voted in the House elections. If this is the case, the non-negative coefficients found earlier are due to a selection bias rather than neutral racial attitudes. To check this possibility, Table 6 reports the frequencies of roll-offs using the VNS exit polls in 1996 for each of the candidate race combinations.

The rate of roll-off is defined as the percent of voters who voted in the presidential election of 1996 but did not vote in the House election of the same year. If the low participation story is true, there should be a significant jump in the rate of roll-offs when a black candidate is on the ballot. The main focus is a comparison between case (a) where candidates are both white, and case (b) where only the Democratic candidate is black. According to the first column, there is no evidence that white voters are less likely to participate in congressional elections when the ballot includes a black candidate. About 9% of white voters who voted in the Presidential election did not participate in the House elections of 1996 (row (a)). By contrast, the roll-off rate is merely 7.5% in districts where black candidates were running (row (b)). Therefore, white voters are *more* likely to participate in congressional elections when a black candidate is running.[12] This is opposite of what we would expect under the low participation story. Thus, it is unlikely that the non-negative reactions among white voters found in the previous section are due to selection bias.[13]

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[12]Obviously, in order to fully make a valid comparison, we should take into account other factors such as the competitiveness of congressional races.

[13]However, note that candidate race affects the participation rate of white voters in different types of contests. According to Table 6, in case (d), where two black voters are running against each other, almost 13% of white voters chose not to participate in the House elections. The rate of roll-off is 4 percentage points higher than the cases in which there are two white candidates on the ballot. Therefore, candidate race clearly affects participation patterns of white voters in some cases. As for black voters, the participation rate on the House elections is consistently higher when a black candidate – from either party – is running in a congressional election (Table 6, second column).

Conclusion

Using a unique data set containing information on candidates' ideological positions along with extensive individual voting data, this paper attempts to disentangle the impact of candidate race from that of ideology on voting decisions. In particular, the paper tests whether the liberal ideological positions of African American candidates hinder their electability to legislatures. It finds that when the impact of candidate ideology is explicitly taken into account, there is not much evidence to suggest that white voters are less likely to vote for a black candidate. This is especially the case when they consider themselves as Democrats or Republicans. Similarly, when white voters find one of the candidates to be ideologically closer to them, the race of candidates does not seem to affect their voting decisions. However, when white voters with no party affiliation are deciding between ideologically similar candidates, candidate race has a negative impact on voting decisions. In this case, they are much less likely to vote for a black candidate than for a white candidate with a similar policy position. I also find that white voters who are ideologically indifferent between two candidates are less likely to support an African American candidate. The findings are robust to various ways of categorizing candidates' ideological positions. The results also hold regardless of whether I use an objective or subjective measure of candidate ideology for the analysis.

The paper also finds that the estimated probability of black voters voting for a black Democratic candidate is significantly higher than their probability of voting for a white Democratic candidate who has a similar ideological position. It seems that black voters overwhelmingly prefer to vote for candidates of their own race, even if the ideological positions of candidates are not necessarily congruent with the voters' own issue positions.

This set of results implies that candidate race is largely irrelevant for white voters in the presence of a party cue. However, absent partisan and ideological cues, a black candidate's race negatively

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affects the voting decisions of white voters. Thus, a negative reaction to black candidates still exists among certain electorates, suggesting that it may be too early to adopt a completely color-blind approach in designing electoral institutions. The findings of this paper also suggest that it is not just the racial composition of electoral districts, but also the ideological configuration of districts that matters. In particular, the number of white Independent voters in a district may be a crucial factor affecting the likelihood of electing African American candidates.

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Table 1
Descriptive Statistics:
Ideological Positions of House Candidates, 1996-1998

NPAT Scores by Party and Candidate Race

	N	Average	S.D.	Min	Max
Democrats					
Overall	244	0.283	0.146	0.024	0.762
White	215	0.298	0.141	0.029	0.762
Black	22	0.147	0.113	0.024	0.469
Hispanic	6	0.247	0.183	0.054	0.499
Republicans					
Overall	244	0.725	0.142	0.175	1.000
White	226	0.735	0.138	0.175	1.000
Black	15	0.592	0.150	0.258	0.827
Hispanic	3	0.657	0.068	0.606	0.734

Note: The NPAT score data are by Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001). The scores range from 0 (most liberal) to 1 (most conservative). Unopposed races and contests that involve more than two candidates are excluded. The number of Democratic candidates does not add up because of one Native American candidate.

Table 2

Vote Choice by Voter Race, Party ID, and Candidate Race

Fraction: Voting for the Democratic House Candidate

	(1)	(2)	
	Both White	Black D	Difference: (2)-(1)
White Voters			
Overall	0.439	0.476	0.037
Democrats	0.843	0.902	0.059
Independent	0.457	0.342	-0.115
Republicans	0.093	0.083	-0.010
Black Voters			
Overall	0.791	0.914	0.123
Democrats	0.928	0.960	0.032
Independent	0.682	0.791	0.109
Republicans	0.210	0.596	0.386

Notes: Weighted sample. Column (1) reports the fraction of voters who voted for the Democratic House candidate when candidates of both parties are white. Column (2) reports the fraction when the Democratic candidate is black and the Republican candidate is white. Column (3) reports the difference between columns (2) and (1).

Sources: Voter News Service National Exit Polls 1996 and 1998.

Table 3

**Probit Estimates of the Impact of Candidate Race on Voting Decisions
by Candidate Positions of Republican Candidate: 1996-1998
Districts with Liberal Democratic Candidates**

Dependent Variable: Vote for the Democratic Candidate

Republican Ideological Position	Case (1) Average	Case (2) Conservative	Case (3) Moderate
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Black Candidate	-0.715**	-0.169	0.825**
	(0.215)	(0.284)	(0.167)
Black Voter	0.713**	0.606**	0.225
	(0.168)	(0.225)	(0.156)
Black Voter × Black Candidate	0.852*	-0.254	0.499
	(0.333)	(0.411)	(0.478)
Income	-0.028	-0.027	-0.065*
	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.030)
Age	0.046	0.275	0.138
	(0.142)	(0.146)	(0.144)
Female	0.138	0.029	0.115
	(0.094)	(0.098)	(0.084)
Party ID	1.024**	0.916**	0.904**
	(0.059)	(0.062)	(0.057)
Liberal	0.567**	0.569**	0.377**
	(0.071)	(0.073)	(0.068)
Incumbency	0.370**	0.245**	0.576**
	(0.073)	(0.071)	(0.078)
Non-Incumbent Candidate Quality	0.032	-0.046	0.332**
	(0.086)	(0.104)	(0.097)
South	-0.077	-0.049	
	(0.112)	(0.128)	
Constant	0.013	0.074	0.456**
	(0.138)	(0.151)	(0.135)
Observations	1560	1213	1566

Notes: Weighted sample. Robust standard errors (clustered by state) in parentheses. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%. The observation is limited to cases in which the Democratic candidate is liberal.

Sources: Voter News Service National Exit Polls 1996 and 1998. The candidate positioning data are by Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart [2001a, 2001b].

Table 4

Probit Estimates of the Impact of Candidate Race on Vote Decisions
by Party ID: 1996-1998

Dependent Variable: Vote for the Democratic Candidate

		(1)	(2)	(3)
		Democrat	**Independent**	**Republican**
Panel A: White Voters				
Case (1)	Liberal D and Average R	-0.490	-0.963***	-0.775**
		(0.372)	(0.185)	(0.394)
		[416]	[340]	[502]
Case (2)	Liberal D and Conservative R	-0.847**	0.421	0.099
		(0.360)	(0.611)	(0.283)
		[372]	[250]	[422]
Case (3)	Liberal D and Moderate R	1.073***	0.867***	0.794*
		(0.251)	(0.267)	(0.439)
		[597]	[424]	[375]
Panel B: Black Voters				
Liberal D and All R		0.764**	0.001	1.032*
		(0.352)	(0.310)	(0.620)
		[485]	[88]	[66]

Notes: Weighted sample. Robust standard errors (clustered by state) in parentheses and the number of observations in square brackets. Estimated coefficients on the black candidate dummy are reported. Control variables listed in Table 3 are included in the estimation, but not reported. In Panel B, the ideological positions of the Republican candidate is not restricted. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.

Table 5
Estimated Impact of Candidate Race
on Voting Decisions of White Voters: 1978-2004
Dependent Variable: Vote for the Democratic candidate

	(1)	(2)
Ideologically Closer to D	0.610**	0.678**
	(0.091)	(0.067)
Ideologically Closer to R	-0.492**	-0.704**
	(0.085)	(0.065)
Ideologically Closer to D × Black Candidate	-0.570	-0.296
	(0.413)	(0.381)
Ideologically Closer to R × Black Candidate	-0.318	-0.376
	(0.641)	(0.639)
Ideologically Equal Distance from Both Candidates	0.031	0.017
	(0.096)	(0.091)
Ideologically Equal Distance from Both Candidates × Black Candidate	-1.481**	-1.532**
	(0.539)	(0.573)
Did not Scale Candidates × Black Candidate	-0.326	-0.370
	(0.281)	(0.312)
Incumbency Status	0.436**	0.668**
	(0.035)	(0.027)
Party ID	0.692**	0.697**
	(0.037)	(0.029)
Conservative	-0.140**	-0.127**
	(0.029)	(0.022)
Age	0.004*	0.004**
	(0.002)	(0.002)
Female	0.056	-0.022
	(0.064)	(0.050)
Income	-0.005	-0.017
	(0.024)	(0.018)
Education	-0.008	0.030
	(0.036)	(0.027)
South	-0.093	-0.058
	(0.083)	(0.065)
Constant	0.340	0.278
	(0.212)	(0.168)
Observations	2662	4702

Notes: Weighted sample. Probit estimates are reported. * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%. Data represent white voters who voted in the House elections of 1978, 1980, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, and 2004. In column (1), only voters who either placed two major-party House candidates on the liberal-conservative 7-point scale, or those who did not place any candidate are included in the estimation. In column (2), voters who placed only one of the major party candidates are also included in the estimation. Sources: American National Election Studies, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, and 2004.

Table 6
Roll-off by Type of Contests and Voter Race: 1996

	White Voters	Black Voters
(a) White D and White R	9.01%	10.46%
(b) Black D and White R	7.44%	7.55%
(c) White D and Black R	10.96%	–
(d) Black D and Black R	12.74%	7.00%

Notes: Weighted sample. Roll-off is defined as the percentage of voters who participated in the presidential election of 1996, but did not vote in the House election of the same year. N=9,832 (8,586 white and 1,246 black voters). The number of black voters in a district with type (c) contest is too small to report (N=17). Sources: Voter News Service National Exit Polls 1996.