

## Why Whites Favor Restrictive Voting Laws

In addition to winning the Electoral College in a landslide, I won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally.

President Donald Trump on Twitter, November 27, 2016

Allegations of voter fraud have been a consistent theme of Donald Trump's communications since before his election. In October 2016, he tweeted multiple times that the election was going to be stolen from him through voter fraud. On November 27, 2016, after the election, he tweeted,

Serious fraud in Virginia, New Hampshire, and California so why isn't the media reporting on this? Serious bias big problem!

The next day he tweeted at two reporters, "You have no sufficient evidence that Donald Trump did not suffer from voter fraud, shame! Bad Reporter." and "There is NO QUESTION THAT #voterfraud did take place, and in favor of #CorruptHillary !" Early in his administration, he created a commission to examine the prevalence of voter fraud in America.

While his tweets hit the highlights of President Trump's claims, they do not necessarily provide much in the way of the nature of this fraud. Scholars and experts disagree with the empirical claims about the amount of voter fraud, but there is a clear consensus that voter fraud is normatively bad and that the country has an interest in making sure elections are fair and accurate. It could be that President Trump has been motivated by this general concern of electoral security. This has been the dominant frame in coverage of voter identification laws (Conover and Miller, 2018).

His rhetoric, however, makes it clear that this is not the only cause of his concerns about voter fraud. To be clear, President Trump has addressed a variety of types of fraud. He has claimed, with no evidence, that millions of voters cast multiple ballots. The consistent theme throughout his communications is not only that voter fraud is widespread, but that it has a partisan slant. He contends that he was hurt in the 2016 election and Hillary Clinton was helped. He believes that voter fraud is dangerous, not only because it challenges the fairness of our elections but because it creates a challenge to the legitimacy of his presidency. Additionally, part of President Trump's arguments about immigration is explicitly about the electoral implications for Republicans. Democrats, he argues, support permissive immigration policies because the large number of Latina/o, particularly Mexican, immigrants will eventually be Democratic voters. In September 2016, Trump said

I think this will be the last election that the Republicans have a chance of winning because you're going to have people flowing across the border, you're going to have illegal immigrants coming in and they're going to be legalized and they're going to be able to vote and once that all happens you can forget it. You're not going to have one Republican vote. And it's already a hard number. Already the path is much more difficult for the Republicans. You just have to look at the maps.<sup>1</sup>

Trump is not the first Republican to make these strategic claims. Much of the 2008 controversy over the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) was due to allegations that they were engaging in widespread voter fraud. John McCain claimed that ACORN "is on the verge of maybe perpetrating one of the greatest frauds in voter history in this country, maybe destroying the fabric of democracy."<sup>2</sup> Sometimes, Republicans have even been remarkably blunt about the strategic choices. Laws requiring photo identification when voting are held up as tools to help prevent voter fraud and to help Republican electoral fortunes. William Wan of the *Washington Post* quotes North Carolina Republican consultant Carter Wrenn making the point very clearly: "Of course it's political. Why else would you do it? Look, if African Americans voted overwhelmingly Republican, they would have kept early voting right where it was. It wasn't about

<sup>1</sup> [www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/09/11/the-gops-hispanic-problem-will-grow-whether-or-not-trumps-citizenship-warning-becomes-reality/?utm\\_term=](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/09/11/the-gops-hispanic-problem-will-grow-whether-or-not-trumps-citizenship-warning-becomes-reality/?utm_term=)

<sup>2</sup> Friedman, Brad. "John McCain: "One of the Greatest Frauds in Voter History."" *HuffPost*, November 16, 2008, available at [www.huffpost.com/entry/john-mccain-one-of-the-gr\\_b\\_135460](http://www.huffpost.com/entry/john-mccain-one-of-the-gr_b_135460).

discriminating against African Americans. They just ended up in the middle of it because they vote Democrat.”<sup>3</sup>

Wrenn’s quote provides an alternative explanation for attitudes about voter identification laws, there is a second motivation: attitudes about race and ethnicity. While President Trump may suggest that immigration is bad strategically for Republicans in some instances, his rhetoric is frequently much more hostile toward Latinos in general. Even if Republicans claim that their motivations are based on electoral strategy, the racial and ethnic overtones could easily send signals to voters about how Latina/o racism-ethnicism (LRE) connects to attitudes about voter fraud and policies designed to prevent fraud. In this chapter, we explore the sources of voters’ attitudes about voter fraud and laws to prevent fraud, comparing how the strategic implications of fraud and LRE contribute to these opinions.

We demonstrate that LRE shapes Whites’ attitudes about policies that are less clearly connected to Latinos, specifically support for voter identification laws and ballot access. In particular, we are focusing on this policy area because while the policy has implications for Latinos, the dominant frames in the discussions are often about other aspects of the policies. The dominant frame for voter identification laws has clearly been preventing voter fraud (Conover and Miller, 2018). Finding a strong effect of LRE on attitudes about voter identification helps illustrate the pervasiveness of LRE in Whites’ attitudes about American politics. Moreover, as noted, there is a clear alternate explanation for how and why Whites might respond to the implications of voter identification laws for Latinos. Instead of being motivated by beliefs about failed Latina/o assimilation and violation of Anglo-American norms, Whites, particularly Republican Whites, might be motivated by beliefs about the partisan leanings of Latinos instead of LRE. Testing whether LRE or this realistic group conflict is responsible for Whites’ support of voter identification laws helps us to understand the potential limits of LRE in shaping policy choices in a domain where the racial and ethnic implications might be less clear.

## 6.1 THE CONTROVERSY OVER VOTER IDENTIFICATION LAWS

Access to the ballot is one of the foundational tenets of American democracy, but the systematic restrictions on enfranchisement is widely

<sup>3</sup> [www.washingtonpost.com/politics/courts\\_law/inside-the-republican-creation-of-the-north-carolina-voting-bill-dubbed-the-monster-law/2016/09/01/79162398-6adf-11e6-8225-fbb8a6fc65bc\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/courts_law/inside-the-republican-creation-of-the-north-carolina-voting-bill-dubbed-the-monster-law/2016/09/01/79162398-6adf-11e6-8225-fbb8a6fc65bc_story.html).

seen as a stain on our history. Constitutional amendments that have expanded the vote are widely seen as corrective steps in American history. The 15th Amendment's guarantee of the right to vote regardless of race, the 19th Amendment's guarantee of the right to vote regardless of sex, the 24th Amendment's abolishment of poll taxes, and the 26th Amendment's lowering of the voting age to 18 now seem to most citizens like obvious improvements to the US voting system. Each of these advancements in protections of the franchise were, at the time, controversial and the debate over restrictions of the vote continues in contemporary politics. Instead of debating specific restrictions on a class of citizens, contemporary debates tend to either focus on the disenfranchisement of those who are undeserving because they have been convicted of crimes, or on providing safeguards on the electoral process by attempting to prevent voter fraud. The role of voter identification requirements, in particular, has become a central concern in the debate over access to the polls.

The expansion and retraction of voting rights runs throughout American history. As more and more tools for disenfranchising voters have been removed, efforts to limit voter access have evolved. In 1950, South Carolina became the first state to request that voters provide some form of identification when they went to the polls to vote. This initial law did not require a photo identification, merely some document with the voter's name on it. For twenty years, South Carolina remained the only state with this request on the books, until Hawaii adopted similar legislation in 1970. By the end of 1980, only five states had passed legislation that required identification to be able to vote.

In the next twenty years, voter ID laws began to diffuse across the country, but did so with little controversy or much partisan divide. By 2000, another nine states had adopted some form of voter identification law, but there was little systematic pattern in which states adopted these laws. The laws were passed, seemingly due to the idiosyncratic experiences of the states. The legislatures that passed the bills had both Republican and Democratic majorities. Voter identification laws were seen as one of many different electoral reforms that were being experimented with by various states.

This changed with the 2000 presidential election. The chaos that ensued during the controversial counting of ballots in Florida focused on how we administer and regulate our elections. Moreover, the clear partisan divide over how the votes in Florida were counted started to cleave the parties further. In 2002, the Republican Congress passed, and President George W. Bush signed, the Help America Vote Act (HAVA).

HAVA was intended to limit the possibility of a repeat of the 2000 Florida fiasco. The law created funding for states to improve their electoral systems by increasing the accessibility of voting places and systems, computerizing and updating the registration rolls, requiring provisional ballots for those suspected of being ineligible, funding the purchase of voting machines, and setting out requirements for all voting systems. The law also, however, created a new identification requirement. All voters who registered and had not previously voted in a federal election were required to provide photo identification.

Federal efforts regarding voter ID laws continued. In addition to passing HAVA, the federal government established the Commission on Federal Election Reform, otherwise known as the Carter–Baker Commission. In 2004, the Carter–Baker Commission was charged with addressing the lack of faith many Americans had in our electoral systems as a result of the 2000 election. Among the many recommendations from the commission was a call for voters to be required to provide photo identification before voting. The commission explicitly noted, “[t]here is no evidence of fraud in US elections or of multiple voting, but both occur, and it could affect the outcome of a close election. The electoral system cannot inspire public confidence if no safeguards exist to deter or detect fraud or to confirm the identity of voters.”<sup>4</sup> Noting that the disparate requirements of acceptable ID could create impediments to voting, the commission called for the creation of “REAL ID” cards for voting.

During this time, the states continued to propose, pass, and implement different voter ID requirements. By 2005, twenty-four states had passed some form of a voter ID law. These laws differed in two dimensions. First, they are considered to be “strict” or “non-strict.” Non-strict laws instruct election officials to request an identification from the voter. In 2004, Arizona passed Proposition 2000, which created the first strict ID law, *requiring* voters to provide some form of identification. The second key dimension is whether the identification must include a photograph. In 2005, Georgia and Indiana became the first states to enact strict photo identification laws. After this point, more states took up the issue. By mid-2018, thirty-three states had some form of voter ID law.

Early (prior to 2000) adoption of voter ID laws were haphazard and not related to the partisanship of state government, but that has

<sup>4</sup> *Building Confidence in U.S. Elections: Report of the Commission on Federal Election Reform*. September 2005. Washington, DC: Center for Democracy and Election Management, American University, 18. [www.eac.gov/assets/1/6/Exhibit%20M.PDF](http://www.eac.gov/assets/1/6/Exhibit%20M.PDF).

fundamentally changed. In their analysis of state policy adoption of photo identification laws, Rocha and Matsubayashi (2014) find that if a state has unified Republican control, it is sixteen times more likely to adopt a photo ID law than if the Democrats control any part of state government. The relationship with the racial and ethnic composition of the state is more complicated. While there is no main effect from the diversity of the state, in times of Republican control, the higher the percentage of African Americans and Latinos, the higher the probability of the state adopting a photo identification law. After the Supreme Court limited the application of the Voting Rights Act in *Shelby County v. Holder*, several states with large minority populations immediately enacted new voter identification laws. Alabama, in fact, had previously passed the law, but waited for implementation until the *Shelby County* decision. Texas announced their decision to immediately implement their voter identification law within two hours of the release of the *Shelby County* decision.

Other literature on state voter identification policy reaffirms the link with race and ethnicity. Banks and Hicks (2016) find a strong link between the percentage of non-Whites in the state and the likelihood that a restrictive voter ID bill will be introduced in the legislature, although it is a weaker link to the probability of passing the legislation. In their analysis of individual legislator votes, Hicks et al. (2015) find a similar pattern to Rocha and Matsubayashi (2014): Democratic legislators are less likely to vote in favor of voter identification laws when they have more African-American voters in their district. Republican legislators show the opposite pattern. Where there are more African Americans in the Republican legislator's district, he or she is more likely to support strict voter identification laws.

This connection to the Voting Rights Act illustrates the perceived link between voter identification laws and its possible differential effects on African Americans and Latinos. While many states allow for a set of identifications, the modal piece of identification used by voters is their drivers licenses. There are substantial differences in the likelihood of being a licensed driver by race and ethnicity. As a result, these identification laws have a disproportionate impact on Latina/o and African-American communities. The previously mentioned Texas law, for instance, had been struck down in federal court for discrimination. In *Veasy v. Perry*, the court held that "SB 14 creates an unconstitutional burden on the right to vote, has an impermissible discriminatory effect against Hispanic and African American [i.e., they comprise a disproportionate share of the more than 600,000 registered voters and one million eligible voters who

lack the requisite photo ID], and was imposed with an unconstitutional discriminatory purpose.”

While the courts have held that the laws have a discriminatory impact, there are two other clear reasons for elites to support voter identification laws aside from racial or ethnic animus. First, it is plausible that the disagreement over the priority of fundamental values results in the simple disagreement between the parties. Debate over voter identification requirements result from the trade-off between preventing voting fraud, either through ineligible voters casting ballots or eligible voters voting more than once, and access to the polls for eligible voters. The stricter the rules for identification, the more difficult it is to commit fraud, but the more likely it is that some voters who would otherwise be eligible and willing to vote would be disenfranchised. Neither party openly advocates for either fraud or for denying the vote to eligible citizens. The preference for the strength of voter identification laws could simply be a differential weighting of the two competing concerns. This is normal politics. Some policy creates trade-offs over fundamental principles and the parties chose opposite sides.

The second possible explanation for the divide between the parties is more strategic and crassly political. Voter ID laws are not believed to be electorally neutral. Some citizens could be disproportionately burdened by the requirements. If the modal identification used by voters is a drivers license, then voters who do not have one, or at least a license with a current address, may face a higher hurdle than those who do. There is some evidence that seniors, young adults (particularly college students), African Americans, and Latinos are disproportionately likely to either not have a drivers license at all or to not have one with their current address. It should not be surprising that the party that tends to get a larger share of these voters, the Democrats, are the party who resist these laws. The expectation is that their supporters will be disproportionately affected by these requirements, costing them voters. Thus, support and opposition to voter ID laws, at the elite level at least, may simply be the manifestation of political conflict.

The evidence for the disproportionate impact of voter ID laws on, particularly, minority voters is mixed (see, for instance, the debate between Hajnal et al. (2017) and Grimmer et al. (2018)). While the logic of the argument that certain voters may be dissuaded or prevented from voting is persuasive, the empirical evidence is less clear. Part of the inconclusive evidence is, potentially, the reaction of the parties and others to the laws. If turnout among a group of voters is expected to be minimized,

political actors who rely on that support may redouble their efforts to get these groups to vote. Regardless of the actual partisan effect of these laws, however, if legislators believe that these laws will advantage one party, they are likely to support or oppose them based on this strategic consideration.

## 6.2 MASS POLARIZATION OR RACE?

A partisan divide over voter ID laws among elites is undeniable. The same degree of polarization, however, does not appear to occur among the masses (Daprile, 2015). Voter ID laws are popular and all polling on the topic show that mass levels are less polarized. While partisanship predicts support or opposition to voter ID laws, there is a sizable amount of support for the laws, even among Democrats. This should not be surprising. For most voters, being asked to provide a photo identification for voting is nothing different from providing an ID for getting on a plane or cashing a check. A Brennan Center poll in 2006 found that 89 percent of respondents have some form of government identification (Wilson and Brewer, 2016). For these citizens, the idea that people should have to prove their identity to vote might seem quite intuitive.

The popularity of these laws, then, should not be too surprising. The pro arguments are relatively easy (Carmines and Stimson, 1980). People have to show identification for many things. Giving the concerns about electoral security, this seems like a relatively simple step that, for most voters, will not create much of a burden. The con arguments are more complicated. These are, essentially, appeals to equality and the applications of abstract rights. The large literature on tolerance (see, for instance, Marcus et al., 1995) reliably demonstrate that Americans are bad at making these connections on their own. Moreover, the potential discriminatory effects of voter ID laws require voters to actually care about discrimination. If he or she does not mind if others are hindered, or if he or she actively wants specific others to be deterred from voting, then the discriminatory effects will not persuade him or her to oppose the law.

Additionally, the political elites in favor of voter identification have won the “framing war.” The framing of the debate about voter ID laws is potentially quite powerful (Atkeson et al., 2014) and the voter fraud frame is likely to be the more powerful one (Conover and Miller, 2018). The result is that, despite the low levels of reported voter fraud, voters tend to automatically view voter identification as a question of fraud prevention and need to be primed to think of it in other terms.



Much of the evidence on the determinants of voter identification laws shows that attitudes might be quite weak and not well formed. Take the example of Minnesota's proposed constitutional amendment to require voters to show photo identification when voting. As Wilson and Brewer (2016) document, polling about the amendment before the campaign began showed that it was quite popular, with around 80 percent of Minnesotans supporting the amendment. As late as June 2012, five months before the campaign, polling still showed the amendment as popular, with 58 percent indicating they would vote for it. As the election neared, there were concerted efforts by organizations that opposed the amendment to articulate to voters the difficulties this proposal would create. The campaign to oppose the amendment persuaded voters that the amendment would create burdens for elderly, college-aged voters, African Americans, and Latinos. On election day, Minnesota became the first state to vote against a photo identification constitutional amendment or initiative. The lesson from this campaign is that while the voter identification laws are popular, providing information about the potential implications of the laws can reduce their support.

Beyond these observations from a single campaign, there is more systematic evidence about why some voters are more supportive of voter identification laws than others. Wilson and Brewer (2016) were the first to document the general patterns behind support for or opposition to voter ID laws. Not surprisingly, they find a strong connection between the perceptions of voter fraud and the need for voter identification laws. They also find that political predispositions, particularly partisanship and ideology, play a key role. Democrats and liberals are more likely to oppose these laws than are Republicans and conservatives. They also find a strong link to attitudes about African Americans. Voters who harbor higher levels of racial resentment toward African Americans are more supportive of voter identification laws. Finally, they also demonstrate that informing voters that these laws may keep eligible voters from being able to cast a ballot does decrease support for the laws.

Banks and Hicks (2016) show that fear and racial attitudes interact such that when Whites who hold more racist attitudes are made to feel fearful (as opposed to relaxed or angry), they become more supportive of voter identification laws. Similarly, Valentino and Neuner (2017) demonstrate that the possible disenfranchising effects of voter identification, particularly for African Americans, can produce anger at the law, resulting in higher levels of participation among the groups most likely to be disenfranchised. More recent work systematically shows that there are clear

racial and ethnocentric bases of public support for voter identification laws (Udani and Kimball, 2018).

The racialization of voter identification might be a relatively recent occurrence. Appleby and Federico (2017) argue that the election of Barack Obama pushed racially conservative Whites to be less likely to perceive the elections as conducted fairly. This was particularly true for Republicans and conservatives. Prior to 2008, however, there was no discernible link between racial resentment and perceptions of electoral fairness. Given the realities of the 2016 election and the politics of the Trump administration, it is unlikely that these effects have dissipated since the last presidential election.

Unfortunately, most work on the racialization of voter identification attitudes focuses exclusively on the ways in which attitudes about African Americans predict attitudes about voter identification laws. While the link between the two is robust and undeniable, it is somewhat surprising that there has been little attention to how Whites attitudes about Latinos matters (but see Udani and Kimball, 2019). First, the potential disenfranchising effects of these laws are greater for Latinos than for African Americans. For a variety of social and economic reasons, the strict voter identification requirement is likely to have a larger effect on Latino voters than African Americans (Hajnal et al., 2017).

Second, the dominant frame in support of voter identification laws is to prevent fraud, particularly preventing ineligible voters from casting ballots. While the racial disparities in crime and felon disenfranchisement laws do result in African Americans being disproportionately likely to be ineligible voters, this is not the fraud that most elites focus on. Instead, much of the fraud debate focuses on immigrants who are barred from voting casting ballots. This is sometimes merely code language. At other times it is quite explicit, as when Tucker Carlson, defending President Trump after his Helsinki press conference with Vladimir Putin said on Fox News' *The Five*, "I think of course [Russia is] trying to interfere in our affairs. They have for a long time. Many countries do, some more successfully than Russia. Like Mexico, which is routinely interfering in our elections by packing our electorate."

As noted earlier, President Trump has consistently made claims about undocumented and fraudulent voting. He has claimed that Democrats are supportive of expansive immigration policies because these policies will eventually result in more Democratic voters as the Latina/o immigrants become citizens (or as undocumented immigrants illegally cast ballots). His and other Republicans recent emphasis on voter fraud has

focused much more on the supposed fraud perpetuated by immigrants, particularly Latina/o immigrants. The ACORN scandal of 2008 may have framed the debate over fraud as being tied to African-American organizations, but the frame appears to have shifted over the past several years to focus on ineligible Latina/o voters.

Given this newfound focus on Latinos, we suspect that beliefs about Latinos might have a role in how Whites think about voting identification laws and voting rights. Given the evidence presented in previous chapters, we should expect that Whites who are higher in LRE should be more likely to support voter identification laws. It is likely not the case that all Whites approve of voter identification laws simply to restrict Latina/o voting, but only those who harbor LRE that prefer to do so – and most likely only in cases when the Latina/o frame is accessible. Moreover, these beliefs are probably not the only consideration of importance in shaping attitudes toward voting rights. People are also inundated with concerns over realistic group conflict and partisan strategies. Thus, we must devise a means to tease out how LRE contributes to support for restrictions on voting rights beyond these other factors.

### 6.3 LRE AND VOTER IDENTIFICATION LAWS

To compare the effect of beliefs about LRE and the partisan group conflict on attitudes about voter identification, we rely on a survey experiment. Survey experiments combine the general approach of survey research – drawing a representative sample of respondents and presenting them with a series of questions – but add a randomized experiment into the body of the survey. In randomly assigning respondents to one of many conditions, the expectation is that this experimental randomization will allow the researcher to have the ability to make stronger causal statements. If there are differences between the experimental conditions and the conditions are randomly assigned, then the only explanation for the differences should be the differences in the conditions.

Our initial study took place in April 2018. The survey was administered via Qualtrics. They solicited a nationwide sample of 1,000 Americans over the age of 18, representative of the US population. The survey had three parts. First, respondents were asked a relatively standard set of social and political questions, including our four-item battery measuring LRE. This section also included standard measures of partisanship, ideology, age, sex, education, and income. The one unique measure is our attempt to operationalize the partisan and strategic implications of the

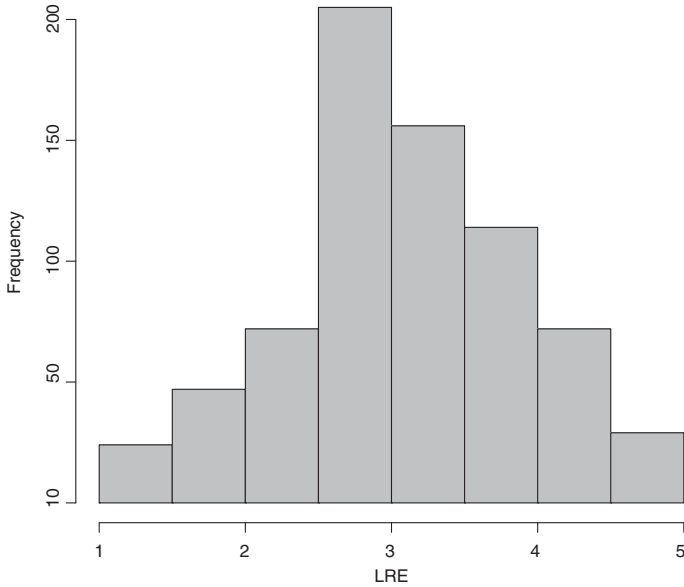


FIGURE 6.1 Distribution of LRE, 2018

voter identification laws. Respondents were presented with a list of groups in America and were asked: “Different groups in America are more or less likely to support each political party. What percentage of each of the following groups do you think vote for the Democratic candidates (as opposed to the Republican candidates)?” The response options for each group was a slider that ranged from 0 (“more likely to vote for Republicans”) to 100 (“more likely to vote for Democrats”). Included in this list were Latinos, and seeing Latinos as more likely to vote for the other party serves as our measure of perceptions of realistic (partisan) group conflict.

Figure 6.1 presents the plot of our measure of LRE in the 2018 Qualtrics sample. As we saw with our other samples, the distribution is relatively balanced, with the mean at the midpoint of the scale, but higher levels of animus than commonly reported using measures of Latino stereotypes or feeling thermometers. Figure 6.2 present the histogram of the perceived partisanship of Latinos. The spike in the middle is the midpoint representing respondents who think that Latina/o voting is roughly evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans. This (incorrect) answer is the most frequent response, but the majority of respondents did indicate that Latinos are more likely to vote for

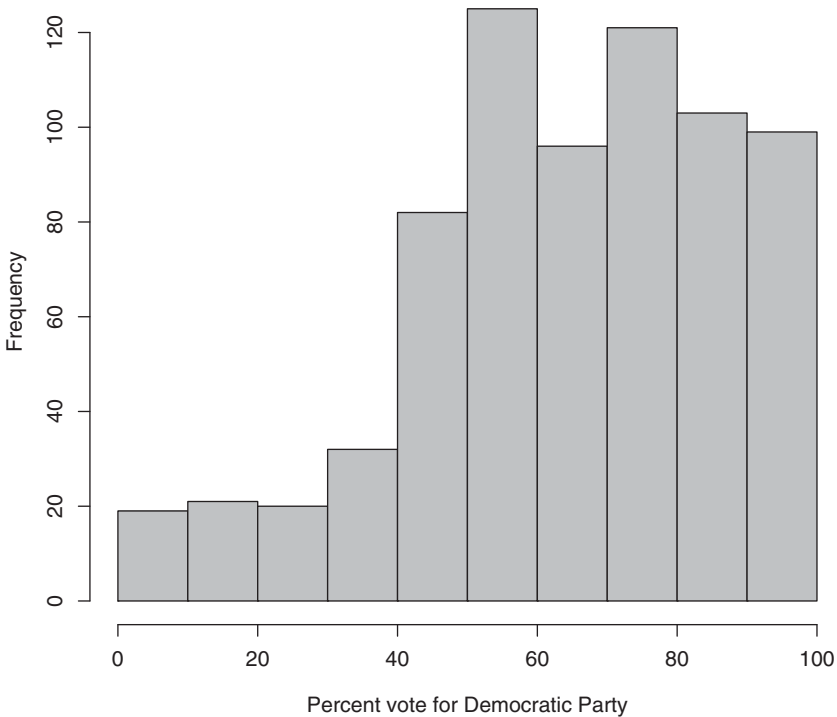


FIGURE 6.2 Perceptions of the percentage of Latinos that vote for the Democratic Party

Democrats than Republicans, with the median response being that 65 percent of Latinos voted for Democrats. Interestingly, the correlation between this measure and our measure of LRE is essentially zero (0.08). Not only do these two things tap different concepts, but the concepts themselves appear to be unrelated.

### 6.3.1 The Voter Identification Experiment

The experiment was included in the second part of the survey. Respondents were presented with and asked to read an article about voter identification laws. This is where the random assignment occurred. There were three different versions of this article. In all three conditions, respondents read a brief introduction to voter identification laws and a paragraph from an advocate of the laws explaining that they are needed to prevent fraud. In the control condition, the article's final paragraph presented the argument that these laws would create an unnecessary burden for voters

who do not own cars. The picture presented at the top of the article was a simple picture of voting booths with no people in it. In the second condition, we changed the final paragraph to argue that the voter identification laws were likely to disenfranchise Latinos and replaced the picture with one featuring “Latino Vote USA,” three Latinos, and the phrase “Your Vote is Your Voice” in English and Spanish (“Su Voto Es Su Voz”). In the third condition, we replaced the final paragraph with one arguing that the laws disproportionately disenfranchise African Americans and the photo has several African-American voters at the polls.

After reading the news article, respondents were asked,

As you may know, there have been efforts in some states to require voters to show a photo identification card to vote. Some people say this is needed to prevent people from voting who are not eligible to vote. Other people say such efforts can actually prevent people who are eligible to vote from voting. What do you think – do you support or oppose efforts to require voters to show a photo?

Response options for this question range on a five-point scale from “strongly support” to “strongly oppose.”<sup>5</sup>

We have several expectations for what should explain responses to this question. First, the common minority suppression hypothesis would suggest that respondents who receive either the Latina/o or African-American treatments will be more supportive of requiring a photo identification at the polls. Second, the partisan strategy hypothesis predicts that Republicans who perceive Latinos as a monolithic voting block (in support of Democratic Party candidates) will be more likely to support requiring a photo identification prior to voting. Third, the LRE hypothesis expects that those who harbor higher levels of LRE will be more likely to support voter identification laws in the presence of Latina/o voters. This could either take the form of a direct effect if we assume that Latinos are already an accessible belief in how people who harbor LRE think about voting laws or an interaction between LRE and the Latina/o treatment if citizens need additional help linking their racism-ethnicism to the policy. Similarly, to the extent that there is an effect of the partisan conflict due to the partisan nature of Latina/o voting patterns, this should also be stronger among respondents who receive the Latina/o treatment.

Figure 6.3 presents the percent of respondents who gave each response to the question about support for a voter identification law. As is the case

<sup>5</sup> A manipulation check asking respondents to confirm which story was read was also used to ensure compliance with the treatment.

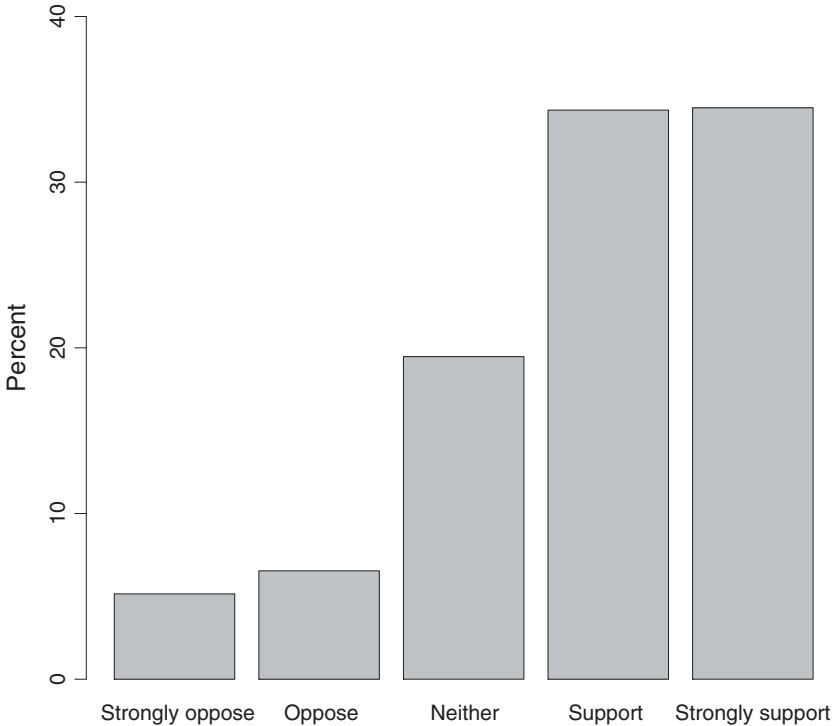


FIGURE 6.3 Support for a strict voter identification law

with essentially all surveys about voter identification laws, the policy was quite popular with respondents. The modal or most frequent response was the highest possible, with 35 percent of respondents indicating that they “strongly support” a law requiring voters to show a photo identification. Only a little more than 11 percent of the respondents expressed any opposition to the law.

Our primary expectation is that the LRE will explain why some respondents support or oppose voter identification laws. Our test of this includes several of the standard predictors of support for voter identification laws. The model includes measures of partisanship (coded so that higher values are more Republican), ideology (higher values are more conservative), sex (male = 1), age in years, education, and income. We also include our measures of realistic (partisan) group conflict, and LRE. This initial specification ignores the experimental component of the survey, but presents a simple observational model of what explains support for voter identification laws. We then turn to the experimental results for comparison.

TABLE 6.1 *Estimates of LRE and realistic group conflict on public support for a voter identification law*

	Model 1		Model 2	
LRE	0.51*	(0.05)	0.51*	(0.05)
Perceived % of Latinos voting Democrat	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
Sex	-0.16*	(0.08)	-0.17*	(0.08)
Age	0.00*	(0.00)	0.01*	(0.00)
Education	-0.08*	(0.04)	-0.08*	(0.04)
Income	0.03	(0.02)	0.03	(0.02)
Partisanship	0.11*	(0.02)	0.11*	(0.02)
Ideology	0.07*	(0.03)	0.07*	(0.03)
Latino condition	-	-	0.18*	(0.08)
African-American condition	-	-	0.10	(0.08)
Constant	1.19*	(0.19)	1.10*	(0.20)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.38		0.38	
N	671		671	

\* $p < 0.05$ . Coefficients represent ordinary least square estimates with standard errors in parentheses. Data from the 2018 Qualtrics sample. White respondents only.

The results from our regression model are summarized in the first column in Table 6.1. These results are largely consistent with the extant literature. Republicans and conservatives are more likely to support voter identification laws, as are older respondents. Education is, as usual, negatively related, with higher-educated respondents more opposed to the voter identification laws. There is no evidence of a link between the perception of Latinos as more Democratic and the respondents' attitude about voter identification laws. In contrast, there is clear evidence that LRE is related to attitudes about voter identification laws. As expected, respondents who express more LRE are much more likely to express support for voter identification laws.

This initial model pools the experimental conditions. The second column in Table 6.1 takes that initial model and adds indicators for being in either the Latina/o or the African-American conditions. These results are quite similar to the first column. The patterns of significance and the substantive effects of the variables do not really change. Which condition the respondent is in does seem to predict their support for voter identification laws. Respondents in the Latina/o condition were more likely to support voter identification laws than respondents in the control condition. We should note that being in the African-American condition did not create a significant difference in support for voter identification laws when compared to either the control or the Latina/o condition. Thus,



TABLE 6.2 *Estimates of partisanship and perception of Latino voting on support for a voter identification law*

	Model	
LRE	0.51*	(0.05)
Perceived % of Latinos voting Democrat	0.00	(0.00)
Perceived % of Latinos voting Democrat × Partisanship	0.00	(0.00)
Sex	-0.17*	(0.08)
Age	0.01*	(0.00)
Education	-0.08*	(0.04)
Income	0.03	(0.02)
Partisanship	0.10*	(0.05)
Ideology	0.07*	(0.03)
Latino condition	0.18*	(0.08)
African-American condition	0.10	(0.08)
Constant	1.10*	(0.31)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.38	
N	671	

\* $p < 0.05$ . Coefficients represent ordinary least square estimates with standard errors in parentheses. Data from the 2018 Qualtrics sample. White respondents only.

there is some suggestive evidence in these data that the debate over voter identification is or has shifted from being about African Americans to being about Latinos.

The results in Table 6.1 may not be a completely fair test of the realistic group conflict measure. It is intuitive that the effect of perceiving Latinos to be more Democrat should depend on the respondents' partisanship. Suppressing the Latina/o vote only has a political benefit to Whites if they think that Latinos are voting for the other party. To test for this effect, we add an interaction between the respondents partisanship and their perception of the percent of Latinos who vote for Democrats. Table 6.2 presents these results. While interactions can sometimes be a little tricky to interpret, in this case the results are clear. There is no link between partisanship and the effect of the perception of Latina/o voting patterns. Respondents' attitudes about voter identification laws appears to be unrelated to the strategic partisan implications of the laws.

An additional possible role for the effect of realistic group conflict is that it has an amplifying effect on LRE. Our test for this is to add an interaction between the measure of LRE and the perceived percentage of Latinos who vote for the Democratic party. The results of this model, presented in Table 6.3 provide no evidence that these two concepts work in tandem. Perceptions of the voting patterns of Latinos still has no effect

TABLE 6.3 *Estimates of Latina/o treatment and realistic group conflict on public support for a voter identification law*

	Model	
LRE	0.38*	(0.14)
Perceived % of Latinos voting Democrat	-0.00	(0.00)
Perceived % of Latinos voting Democrat × LRE	0.00	(0.00)
Sex	-0.18*	(0.08)
Age	0.01*	(0.00)
Education	-0.08*	(0.04)
Income	0.03	(0.02)
Partisanship	0.10*	(0.02)
Ideology	0.07*	(0.03)
Latino condition	0.18*	(0.08)
African-American condition	0.10	(0.08)
Constant	1.54*	(0.48)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.38	
N	671	

\* $p < 0.05$ . Coefficients represent ordinary least square estimates with standard errors in parentheses. Data from the 2018 Qualtrics sample. White respondents only.

on attitudes about voter identification laws and LRE has, essentially, the same relationship at all levels of the perceived voting measure. This relationship holds when examining only Republican respondents.

The final expectation we had about the role of LRE is that the relationship between it and the attitude about voter identification laws should vary across the experimental conditions. In particular, we expected that the relationship would be stronger among the respondents who are randomly assigned to the Latino condition, particularly compared to the control condition. This is hypothesized to be a framing effect. One way to think about framing is that a policy like voter identification has numerous different aspects to it and it can be defined as being “about” these differences aspects. The law could be about fraud, or the burdens it places on different groups in society, or the logistics of enforcement, or the costs of acquiring identification. Information, like that presented in our experimental treatment, helps make different aspects more relevant as the respondent thinks about the policy in that way. If these kinds of framing effects occurred in our experiment, then LRE should have a stronger relationship in the Latino condition.

The test for this is to interact the LRE measure with an indicator of being in the Latino condition. If the framing effects occurred, then this interaction term should be positive and significant. Table 6.4 presents the

TABLE 6.4 *Estimating LRE across treatments on public support for a voter identification law*

	Model	
LRE	0.52*	(0.06)
LRE × Latino condition	0.00	(0.00)
Perceived % of Latinos voting Democrat	0.00	(0.00)
Sex	-0.17*	(0.08)
Age	0.01*	(0.00)
Education	-0.08*	(0.04)
Income	0.03	(0.02)
Partisanship	0.10*	(0.02)
Ideology	0.07*	(0.03)
Latino condition	0.32	(0.29)
African-American condition	0.09	(0.08)
Constant	1.05*	(0.22)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.38	
N	671	

\* $p < 0.05$ . Coefficients represent ordinary least square estimates with standard errors in parentheses. Data from the 2018 Qualtrics sample. White respondents only.

results of this test. There is no evidence that the effect of LRE is any different in the Latina/o condition than it is in the other conditions. If we limit the comparison to just the control condition or just the African-American condition, we get the same null result. Our experimental treatments had no effect on the relationship between LRE and support for voter identification laws. One possible explanation for this finding is that Latinos are already a salient feature of the debate for those harboring LRE, making our treatments unnecessary for these voters.

Overall, these results suggest that LRE plays a strong role in attitudes about voter identification laws. Whites who harbor beliefs that Latinos have not properly assimilated into White-American culture and that Latinos violate norms are much more likely to support these laws. This effect is statistically constant across our conditions and dwarfs the effect of two of the otherwise dominant forces in American politics: partisanship and ideology. Even though the dominant frame around these laws is merely the prevention of voter fraud, this is, apparently for many Whites, tainted by their LRE. Thus, we find partial support for the minority suppression hypothesis and support for the LRE hypothesis.

### 6.3.2 Estimating Concern about Fraudulent Voting

We have shown a consistent relationship between LRE and support for voter identification laws. However, it remains unclear whether LRE

shapes the precursors to people's policy preferences such as their concern about voting fraud. Emotions about voting fraud are an important component to people's policy opinions about voter identification laws (Valentino and Neuner, 2017). The political participation of foreign-born citizens, particularly Latinos, might shape these latter concerns about fraud rather than people's policy preferences toward a voter identification law. This is especially likely, given that support for voter identification laws is widespread, potentially having reached a threshold of support among the public.

In addition, we still need to ensure that people's beliefs in this domain are about Latinos and are not simply a substitute for reservations about out-groups in general. Specifically, we need to observe that concerns about voter fraud occur in the presence of Latinos, but not citizens of other racial or ethnic groups. Of course, the significance of the Latina/o treatment effect (but not the African-American treatment) in the previous study provide some evidence that this is the case, at least in regard to voter identification laws.

In order to provide additional evidence regarding the role of LRE on how White Americans think about voting rights, we conducted a laboratory experiment at a large research university in the Southwest. A total of 296 White undergraduate students were recruited from several political science courses as part of a course requirement. These subjects were told that we were interested in their reactions to commercials and other news programming. Students completed a short survey asking about their personality traits, feelings toward different out-groups, and political preferences including the LRE scale.

Subjects then watched a series of advertisements (i.e., Coca-Cola, Duracell batteries) before being exposed to the treatment. The treatment was a 30-second human interest commercial about a foreign-born US citizen who was expressing his joy to be within the United States, as well as his eagerness to participate in the US political system. All aspects (visual, audio, text) were identical across all conditions with the exception of the stated country of origin of the person of interest in the commercial. The commercial clearly stated (both verbally and in text at the bottom of the screen) that the person of interest had migrated into the United States from either France, Mexico, or Syria prior to becoming a US citizen.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The multiracial person in the commercial is identical across treatments, minimizing concerns about physical appearance and skin tones in adding to the treatment. A

After listening to the commercials, respondents were asked how likely they were to use some of the products advertised in the commercials. This provided a distraction from the human interest advertisement. Respondents were then asked to answer some questions about politics. To measure concerns about voting fraud, we asked,

How worried are you about people committing voter fraud? – Fraudulent voting makes you ...

Responses range on a 0- to 100-point sliding scale, from extremely worried (100) to not worried at all (0).

Although we had a range of expectations about the findings across the different country of origin treatments, we focus on those most relevant to the role of Latinos and LRE in shaping concerns about fraudulent voting. First, we expect that exposure to a Mexican American participating in politics will increase concern about voter fraud more so than a French American with White-European ancestry who is participating in politics. It is unclear how exposure to a Syrian American will shape concerns about voter fraud. Subjects might be concerned about all non-Whites participating in US politics or be strictly concerned about Latinos. Second, we expect that LRE will have a direct correlation with concern about voter fraud, even after controlling for feelings toward African Americans and ethnocentrism. The data contain measures of both, allowing us to test whether LRE is simply a substitute for antipathy toward other racial and ethnic groups. Third, we expect that LRE will moderate the Mexican-American participation treatment on concern about voting fraud. Subjects high in LRE should be more sensitive to the Mexican-American treatment, with their Latina/o-specific animus strengthening when primed by that particular treatment.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) shows that subjects who received the French-American treatment were less concerned about voting fraud ( $M = 23$ ,  $SE = 4.7$ ) than were subjects who received the Mexican-American treatment ( $M = 36$ ,  $SE = 5.4$ ),  $F_{df=94} = 3.33$ ,  $p < 0.07$ . In order to determine whether the treatment effect was due to a Latina/o or could be the result of aversion to any minority, we examined the difference between the French-American and Syrian-American conditions.

manipulation check indicates accurate perceptions of the person's country of origin. We pretested the images to determine whether respondents would believe the stated country of origin story and found clear evidence that the person depicted in the story could pass as a originating from all three countries.

TABLE 6.5 *Estimates of student concern about voter fraud*

	Model 1		Model 2	
LRE × Latina/o treatment	–	–	6.21*	(3.09)
LRE	6.71*	(1.80)	5.33*	(2.10)
Treatment (Latina/o treatment)	8.94*	(4.30)	7.89*	(4.41)
Feeling toward African Americans	–0.09	(0.09)	–0.09	(0.09)
Ethnocentrism	9.67*	(3.89)	11.75*	(4.27)
Constant	–10.08	(12.39)	2.25	(12.68)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.45		0.42	
N	284		286	

\* $p < 0.05$ . Coefficients represent ordinary least square estimates with robust standard errors in parentheses. Data from the 2017 student sample. Models control for partisanship, ideology, sex, realistic group conflict, preference for Anglo-American culture, economic optimism, and change in household income.

An ANOVA shows that subjects who received the French-American treatment had no statistically distinguishable difference in concern about voting fraud ( $M = 23$ ,  $SE = 4.7$ ) than subjects who received the Syrian-American treatment ( $M = 30$ ,  $SE = 4.6$ ),  $F_{df=95} = 1.23$ ,  $p < 0.27$ .

Next, we examined the role of LRE on beliefs about voting fraud and sought to determine whether any effect of LRE on beliefs about fraud are merely a substitute for animus toward other racial and ethnic groups. We regressed the concern about voter fraud variable on LRE, a feeling thermometer toward African Americans, ethnocentrism, partisanship, ideology, a measure of realistic group conflict related to if immigrant voting will help the Democratic Party, a preference for Anglo-American culture, and subject demographics.

We summarize the result, in Table 6.5, focusing on the variables related to race and ethnicity. In model 1, we observe that receiving the Latino-voter treatment is related to an 8.9-point increase in concern about voting fraud. This is consistent with the earlier ANOVA estimate. LRE has a direct effect on concern about voting fraud. A 1-point shift in LRE is related to a 6.7-point shift in concern about voting fraud on the 100-point scale. Negative feelings toward African Americans fails to show a statistically significant relationship with concern about voting fraud. Although the desire to implement strict voting requirements has been shown to be related to beliefs about African Americans, racial beliefs toward African Americans do not appear to be related to concerns about voting fraud. Such a concern seems to be related to Latinos and other ethnic groups. The ethnocentrism variable is related to concern about

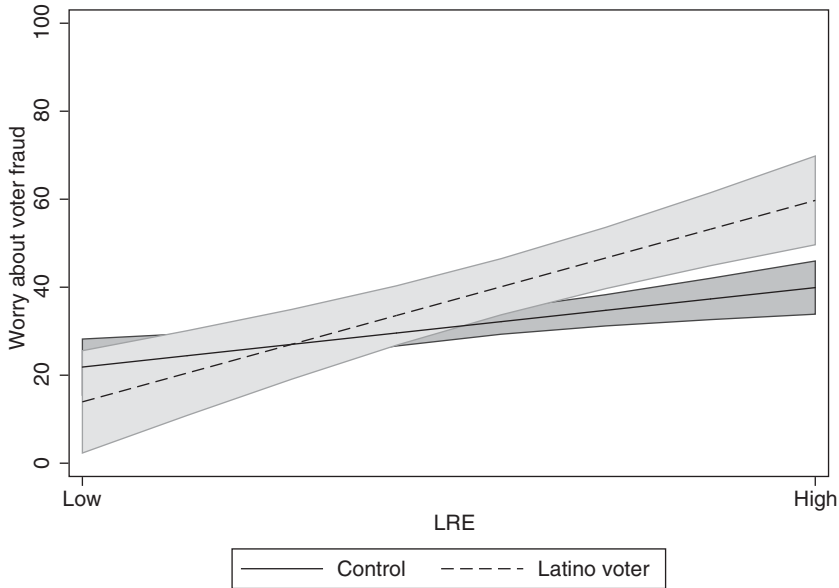


FIGURE 6.4 Effect of exposure to a Latina/o voter on concern about voter fraud across levels of LRE

voting fraud, indicating that people who dislike ethnic out-groups are also more likely to be concerned about fraudulent voting. Perhaps support for stricter voting laws are related to animus toward African Americans (as a means to restrict their vote), but support for stricter voting laws when framed about concerns of fraud (as the case with our previous experiment) makes animus toward Latinos the salient belief. Consistent with the findings here, Udani and Kimball (2018) find that immigrant resentment is a stronger predictor of concerns about the frequency of voter fraud than is resentment toward African Americans.

Model 2 in Table 6.5 reestimates the same model with an interaction between LRE and the Latina/o-treatment variable. We expect that exposure to a Latina/o who is participating in politics might activate LRE and agitate concern about fraudulent voting. The results confirm these expectations. Figure 6.4 provides a visualization of the interaction effect. LRE increases concern about voting fraud for all respondents, but the effect is slightly accentuated for those exposed to a Latina/o participating in politics. We fail to find any similar interactions between LRE and the French-American or Syrian-American treatments. This suggests that LRE is measuring beliefs about Latinos and not a general out-group hostility.

#### 6.4 VOTER REGISTRATION PURGES

So far we have examined the association between LRE and support for voter identification laws as well as concerns about voting fraud. We now turn toward an issue that is perhaps more controversial among the public, but is increasing in its adoption by state governments – the practice of purging voter registration rolls. Voter registration rolls are a necessary precursor to voting. Voting registration rolls are lists of eligible and affirmed voters that are intended to ensure that those who do vote are eligible to vote. Thus, registration rolls are often seen as the first line of defense against voter fraud.<sup>7</sup>

The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) allows states and local election officials to remove, or purge, citizens from voter registration rolls if the voter moves, dies, becomes mentally incapacitated, is convicted of a felony, or asks to be removed. States and local election officials vary in their process of identifying and removing citizens from registration rolls – a process that has been controversial in recent years.

Most notable is the case of Larry Harmon, a software engineer and US Navy veteran who was purged from the registration rolls in Ohio. Harmon registered and voted in the 2004 and 2008 elections. He did not vote in the 2010 midterm election, which under Ohio law led to a registration confirmation card being mailed to his residency. Harmon failed to receive or return the card. Under Ohio law, failure to return the card *and* abstaining from voting in the next four years results in an automatic purge. Harmon sat out the 2012 president election because he did not find either of the presidential candidates worthy of his vote. He then abstained from voting in the 2014 midterms, which led to his removal from Ohio's voter registration rolls. When Harmon showed up in 2015 to vote against a marijuana initiative, he found he was ineligible to vote after being removed from the registration rolls.

Ohio's process of purging voters from registration rolls was challenged on the basis of violating the NVRA. The case, *Husted v. A. Philip Randolph Institute*, was ultimately decided by the US Supreme Court in a 5-4 split decision in favor of Ohio, allowing similar practices to continue across the country. The decision was championed by those who believe that purging is necessary to prevent voter fraud. However, opponents suggest that such laws are little more than attempts by Republican-

<sup>7</sup> All states except for North Dakota require citizens to register to vote prior to actually voting.



controlled state governments to make it more difficult for citizens to vote – a policy that many assume will hurt the Democratic Party more than the Republican Party.

In contrast to voter identification laws, we suspect that purging voters from the registration rolls is less popular and more controversial. We also expect that the public should be more supportive of such laws when they target socially marginalized groups such as felons and minorities. The popular image of the persons or groups whose voting rights will be removed by the policy is likely to serve as a powerful symbol or cue that guides people's choices on this issue. This applies to groups with a negative social construction, such as felons. We expect that in this instance a large number of citizens will favor purging felons from registration rolls. However, we also suspect those with animus toward a group will support purging members of that group from the registration rolls. For instance, a person who harbors LRE should be more likely to support registration purges when the person being purged is Latina/o.

#### 6.4.1 **The Conjoint Experiment**

We test our expectations using a choice-based conjoint experiment of 2,498 White US citizens over the age of 18. Conjoint analysis is common in marketing research and has recently been applied to study various political choices (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2015; Hainmueller et al., 2014). Conjoint experiments are particularly useful when a scholar is interested in testing the causal effects of differences in multiple dimensions of a choice. In a standard experimental design, such as the ones we have used in previous chapters, the researcher identifies one or two dimensions that he or she theorizes are important in the choice the respondent faces. The researcher then randomly assigns respondents to one of two or more conditions that manipulate those dimensions of the choice.

In our previous experiments, this design served us well. In each case, there is a well-established literature on the predictors of these attitudes and we could move the understanding forward by adding our manipulations and measure of LRE. This is not the situation we find ourselves in with understanding citizens' attitudes about purges of the voter rolls. To the best of our knowledge, there had been no real examination of public opinion on this question when we went into the field. Our motivation, then, is to not only test if Whites' LRE shapes this aspect of opinion on ballot access, but to also provide a more complete picture of what drives attitudes on this relatively new public debate.

To do this, we rely on the strengths of a conjoint analysis. Conjoint analyses have a long history in marketing research. Respondents are presented with repeated choices between two hypothetical profiles that have a list of attributes. The list of attributes are the same for each choice set, but the specific attributes are randomly assigned. For instance, if the respondent's hypothetical choice were to select between two people for some task, one of the attributes could be the sex of the two hypothetical people. For every set of two people the respondent chose from, each of the hypothetical people would be independently randomly assigned to be male or female. But this would be only one of the many attributes included in the list. The conjoint design asks the respondent to make repeated choices where the attributes are each independently randomized.

This design allows the researcher to test the causal effects of each of the randomized attributes and have become a go-to tool for experimental scholars. There are three other important advantages for our particular question. First, because the design offers a list of attributes, it is less obvious which one the researcher is interested in and it gives the respondent "coverage" for using what might be a socially unacceptable motivation like race and ethnicity (Wallander, 2009). Second, they provide an easy way to test for variation in the causal effect due to some observable feature of the subject. In our case, we are hypothesizing that LRE will moderate the effects of several features of the choice and there is a direct way to test this using a conjoint design. Finally, the conjoint design will let us compare the magnitude of the causal effects of multiple dimensions of the choice. Given the lack of existing scholarship on what explains voter's attitudes in this policy area, this allows us to benchmark the effects of the choice attributes and the moderating effect of LRE.

Our study asks respondents to image themselves as an election official who must decide which of two citizens they want to keep on the voter registration rolls and which they believe should be purged. Each respondent was given the following set of instructions:

**IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS:** Voter registration is the requirement that a person otherwise eligible to vote register on an electoral roll before they will be permitted to vote. This study considers a law in Ohio that allows election officials to keep or remove voters from voter registration rolls for a variety of reasons. For the next few minutes, we are going to ask you to act as if you are an election official. We will provide you with several pieces of information about people who might be kept or removed on the voter registration list. For each pair of people, please indicate which of the two people you would personally prefer to KEEP on the voter registration list. This exercise is purely hypothetical. Even if you are not entirely sure, please indicate which of the two people you prefer to KEEP on

Which of these citizens do you prefer to keep registered to vote?

	<b>Person 1</b>	<b>Person 2</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Female
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>	Hispanic	White
<b>Citizenship status</b>	U.S. citizen	U.S. citizen
<b>Past turnout</b>	voted in last election	voted in last election
<b>Valid state identification</b>	has state identification card	has state identification card
<b>Valid address</b>	address confirmed	address not confirmed
<b>Criminal status</b>	Is a convicted felon	No criminal record

FIGURE 6.5 Screenshot of options presented to respondents in the conjoint experiment

the voter registration list. Please type the word “keep” in the box below if you understand these instructions.

After reading these instructions, respondents were presented with the choice of two citizens who are hypothetical voters. Each is a US citizen who is currently on the registration rolls and is being considered for purging. The respondent viewed information about the two citizens that fully randomized the voters’ (1) sex (male or female), (2) race-ethnicity (White, African American, or Latino), (3) criminal background (no criminal history or convicted felon), (4) citizenship status (natural-born or foreign-born naturalized citizen), (5) voter history (voted in the last election or not), (6) address confirmed (the citizen’s address has been confirmed or not), and (7) state identification (valid state identification or no valid state identification). We measure each respondent’s choice across seven randomized matched pairs with the following question, “Which of these citizens do you prefer to keep registered to vote?”

Figure 6.5 shows the image of the profiles of two hypothetical voters as they were displayed to the respondents. While our main interest is the effect of race-ethnicity and citizenship status, the rest of the attributes are either central questions in the debate over ballot access or so obvious as to be noticeable by their absence (gender). Additionally, each of these are attributes that the state government is likely to know, even if the office in charge of maintaining the registration lists may not have access to the particular database.

We asked the respondent to indicate which of the two hypothetical citizens should be kept on the rolls. After making their first choice, the respondent was presented a second pair of hypothetical voters with new randomly generated attributes.<sup>8</sup> Each respondent was asked to make a total of seven choices between randomly generated hypothetical citizens.

While we are interested in the general patterns of effects of these attributes, we will focus mostly on the heterogeneous effects of two of the attributes due to the LRE of the respondents. In particular, we hypothesize that respondents who are high in LRE will be more sensitive to the race/ethnicity of the potential voter and whether or not the hypothetical voter is a natural-born or naturalized citizen. The expected effect of the ethnicity of the respondent should be fairly obvious. Respondents who score high on LRE should be less likely to prioritize the disenfranchisement of White or African-American voters over the disenfranchisement of Latino voters. The citizenship hypothesis is predicated on the assumption that for respondents, particularly respondents who score high on LRE, the image of a naturalized citizen is likely to be a Latina/o.<sup>9</sup>

The sample was obtained through the Lucid Fulcrum Exchange. Lucid partners with other companies to recruit a pool of nationally representative subjects for researchers. They work with various partners to ensure data quality and track IPs to prevent respondents from filling out surveys more than once. The Lucid Fulcrum Exchange compares favorability to a host of other possible sources of respondents (Coppock and McClellan, 2019).

Conjoint experiments are complicated, with each respondents making multiple choices and the attributes of the choices varying randomly. It is likely that no two of our respondents experienced the exact same set of hypothetical voters across their seven choices. The estimation of the causal effects of the assigned attributes, however, are relatively straightforward to estimate because each of the attributes is independently randomized. We report the marginal mean estimates from the conjoint analysis, which represent the mean outcome across all appearances of a

<sup>8</sup> The order of the attributes was randomized across respondents, but fixed within respondents. The first respondent, for instance, saw citizenship status as the top attribute for each of the choices he or she saw. The second respondent saw gender first for all of the choices. This randomization helps minimize the effect of order of attributes in calculating their causal effect.

<sup>9</sup> We confirm this assumption in a manipulation check.

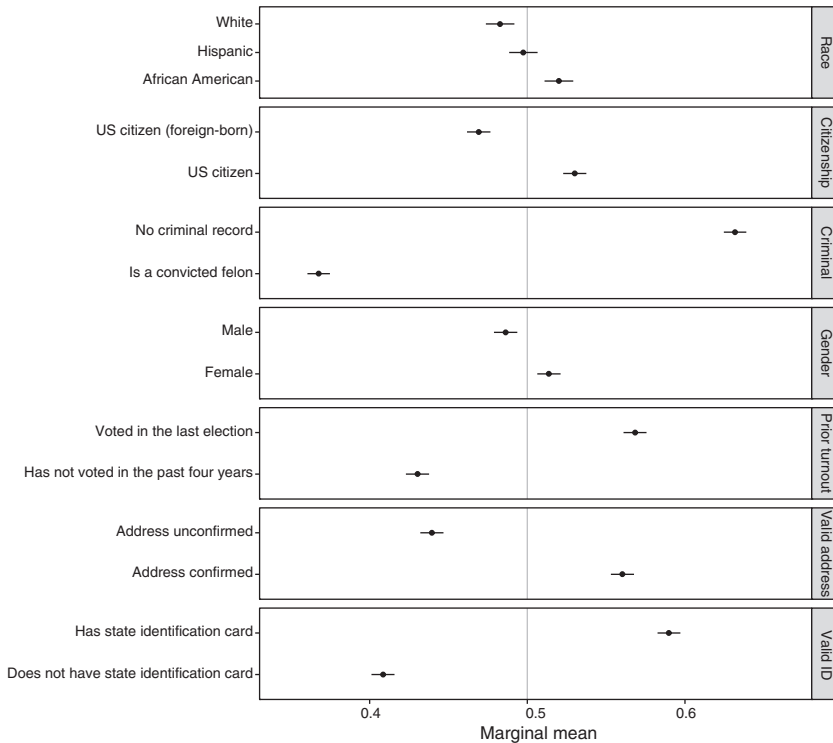


FIGURE 6.6 Marginal mean estimates from conjoint experiment on voter registration purges

particular conjoint attribute, averaging across all other attributes. Since the conjoint forces respondents to make a choice, marginal means average 0.5. Marginal means above 0.5 indicate respondents want to keep voters with that attribute from the registration rolls, while marginal means below 0.5 indicate respondents want to purge voters with that attribute from the registration rolls. For every attribute except race/ethnicity, the hypothetical voter had one of two options of each attribute, so the comparison is straightforward.

We present the marginal means of each of the attributes in Figure 6.6. The largest effects are the difference between a citizen who has a felony conviction and one who does not. The marginal mean of someone with a felony record is 0.37 – significantly lower than the marginal mean of someone without a criminal record, 0.63. Calculating the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) of the conjoint experiment captures the expected change in the probability of the respondent preferring a voter

with that attribute versus a voter with the baseline attribute.<sup>10</sup> Examining the AMCE, we find the probability that the respondent would choose to keep a voter on the rolls was more than 0.25 lower if the citizen had been convicted of a felony.

The marginal mean of having a valid state identification card is 0.59. Having a valid state identification increases the probability of being kept on the rolls in our experiment by 0.18. Being a voter and having a confirmed address had smaller effects, but, in both cases, the difference in probability was slightly more than 0.10. Respondents were less sensitive to the race, gender, and whether the citizen was natural-born or naturalized, but each of these effects is statistically significant. Surprisingly, respondents were more likely to keep voters who were African American than a hypothetical White or Hispanic voter.

These results illustrate the general patterns of which hypothetical voters gained the sympathy of our respondents, but not the key hypotheses about how LRE moderates the effect of these attributes. We test how LRE interacts with each attribute, with an expectation that attributes relating to the racialization of Latinos (race of voter, citizenship status, criminality) to be part of the decision-making calculus of people high in LRE. For this analysis, we consider respondents below the mean level of LRE in the sample to be low in their racism-ethnicism toward Latinos and respondents above the mean level of LRE to be high in their racism-ethnicism toward Latinos.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 6.7 presents the marginal mean estimates. Respondents high in LRE are shown in black. Respondents low in LRE are shown in lighter gray. The race of the respondent matters differently for those high in LRE relative to those low in LRE. Respondents who score low on the LRE measure prefer African Americans and Hispanics to be kept on the rolls over Whites. Among high levels of LRE, however, the effects are different. There is no longer a difference between the desire to keep Whites and African Americans. More importantly, these respondents are significantly less likely to keep a Hispanic voter on the registration rolls. In other words, LRE is associated with a flip in the effect of the ethnicity of the hypothetical voter. Those who have low levels want the system to be biased in favor of keeping Latina/o voters on the rolls. Those who are high on this measure seem to want the system to be biased *against* Latina/o voters.

<sup>10</sup> We follow the standard practice of clustering the standard errors by respondent.

<sup>11</sup> We find similar effects when we split the data in thirds along the LRE measure.

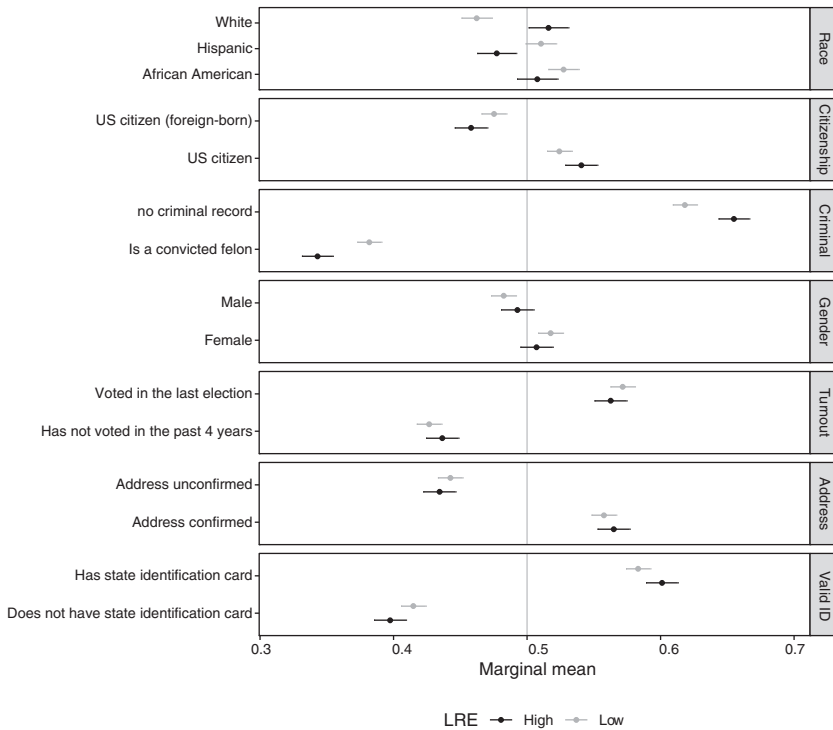


FIGURE 6.7 Moderating effect of LRE on voter registration purges

The moderating effect of LRE is less pronounced for the effect of being presented a hypothetical voter who is a foreign-born citizen instead of a natural-born citizen. Respondents prefer voters who are natural-born citizens, with those high in LRE slightly more likely to purge a foreign-born US citizen than those low in LRE. The slight difference observed in the marginal mean estimate is not statistically significant.

LRE does have a moderating effect on criminal status. All respondents prefer to purge a convicted felon from the voter rolls relative to a voter with no criminal background. However, respondents high in LRE are significantly more likely to want to purge a convicted felon than are respondents low in LRE. Equally important to these results is that LRE does not moderate any of the other attributes – it only moderates those attributes that have been theoretically connected to the racialization of Latinos.

It is important to note the relatively small magnitude of these effects. Our results do suggest that the race and ethnicity of a voter changes the

way in which respondents prioritize keeping them on the registration rolls. Fortunately, these effects are substantially smaller than the other attributes we provide (other than gender). Our respondents care more about being a good citizen through voting or not being convicted of a felony than they do about the race, gender, or how the person becomes a citizen. But even with these relatively small effects, LRE plays an important role in shaping how race, ethnicity, and type of citizenship matter to respondents.

## 6.5 CONCLUSION

Since 2000, the trend in state politics has been the adoption of more restrictive voting rules. Since Republicans took over unified control of over half the states in 2010, we have seen the roll back of early voting, the shrinking of the number of polling places, and an increase in the use of strict voter identification laws. At the elite level, support for these laws have a clear partisans and strategic motivation. Even if the empirical evidence is mixed, Republican state legislators and governors have systematically and efficiently limited access to the ballot, with the expectation that this would be good for Republicans in elections, and numerous commentators suggest that these changes have been consequential. Ken Mayer has gone so far as to claim that Wisconsin's voter identification law is responsible for Trump winning the state in 2016.<sup>12</sup>

If the laws had this strong an effect on elections, one would expect that opinion on them would be quite polarized among Whites, and there is a difference in the mean level of support for these laws between Democrats and Republicans. This difference, however, is nowhere near the magnitude of many other policies.

Voter identification laws have become a salient issue in both state and national politics. On one of the days this chapter was written, President Trump claimed, "You know, if you go out and you want to buy groceries, you need a picture on a card, you need ID." While this is clearly false, it illustrates the increasing role the policy is playing in national discourse. At times, the rhetoric of the debate touches on race and ethnicity. But, in the grocery speech, President Trump did not send any explicit cues about race or ethnicity. The role of LRE in explaining voters' attitudes about voter identification laws, however, does not seem to depend on these cues.

<sup>12</sup> [www.motherjones.com/politics/2017/10/voter-suppression-wisconsin-election-2016/](http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2017/10/voter-suppression-wisconsin-election-2016/).



They are an essential piece of them, regardless of what cues or frames they are given.

We think our results illustrate this. The relationship between LRE is clear. The more important result, we think, is the absence of a framing effect in our experiment. We hypothesized that the explicit cues that voter identification laws are “about” Latinos should make LRE a stronger predictor of support for the voter identification laws. It did not. There are a couple of different possibilities for this null effect. First, it could simply be that our manipulations were too weak to have an effect. We do not think this is the case. The design is similar to the other experiments that have focused on the role of attitudes about African Americans (Valentino and Neuner, 2017). In addition to having similar textual cues, our manipulation added an image that included a slogan in Spanish. If a framing effect were possible, this visual cue should have been enough.

The second possible explanation is the one we think is more likely. Framing effects only work if they *change* how respondents think about the issue. The evidence we have presented in this chapter suggests that respondents in the control condition already viewed this as an issue that was about their LRE. Even if we limit our analysis to the control condition, when we did not use a frame about Latinos, LRE is strongly related to attitudes about voter identification; again a stronger relationship than partisanship or ideology. Our experiment possibly failed in framing the issues as being about Latinos because our respondents came into the discussion of the issue already thinking about Latinos. Even when respondents are given no information, this issue is fundamentally one about who is believed to be voting fraudulently.

The implication of this result is that even issues that are ostensibly about something other than the status of Latinas/os in American society are to some extent about race and ethnicity. The absence of the framing effects, then, make a clear statement about the effect of LRE.