Friendly Fire:
Electoral Discrimination and Ethnic Minority Candidates

It has been widely demonstrated that ethnic minority candidates face discrimination, and a common presumption is that they suffer electorally as a result. Surprisingly, many studies show mixed or null findings and no doubt many more null findings lie unpublished. The proposed explanation is that discrimination disproportionately affects ethnic minority candidates for parties of the right, while ethnic minority candidates of the left are insulated from discrimination. This is because voters with anti-minority attitudes tend to be concentrated on the right, and counter-stereotypical attributes have stronger effects. The study uses two methods, a candidate experiment, and a difference-in-difference approach using candidate demographic data merged with aggregate election results, and demonstrates that only ethnic minority candidates of right-wing parties suffer from electoral discrimination.

Prepared for the 2016 CPSA Conference
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Introduction

Despite the continuing influence of racism in society and public opinion, there is less evidence for electoral discrimination against ethnic minority candidates by ethnic majority voters than might be expected. While there are numerous studies linking discriminatory attitudes and candidates, including experimental data, many studies examining whether ethnic minority candidates do worse in real elections produce mixed or null findings. This study proposes a new explanation: parties condition the effect of discrimination on ethnic minority candidates.

The incorporation of ethnic diversity issues into the left-right spectrum means that right-wing party supporters are more likely to discriminate. That is, voters with negative attitudes toward ethnic minority groups are more likely to support right-wing parties. Crucially, some right-wing voters will defect or at least stay home rather than support a ethnic minority candidate, but left-wing voters are not willing to cross party lines to support a ethnic minority candidate. The result, it is argued, is that ethnic minority candidates for right-wing parties bear the brunt of discrimination at the ballot box, since their own party supporters desert them. Conversely, ethnic minority candidates of left-wing parties are shielded from the effects of discrimination. However, these effects is conditional on ethnic minority candidates actually running for parties on the right. Where there are no ethnic minority candidates on the right, then the electoral effects of discrimination will be much smaller or non-existent.

Ethnic minority candidates of right-wing parties function as a kind of wedge politics issue (Hillygus and Shields 2014), splitting off members of their party coalition, while parties of the left are affected less or not at all. Moreover, these effects are stronger on the right because ethnic minority candidates are counter-stereotypical – they do not conform to preconceptions about a party’s candidates. Since ethnic minority candidates for right-wing parties are “unexpected”, they are likely to have stronger effects than those of left-wing parties (Maheswaran and Chaiken 1991).

In some places, where the structuring of attitudes by party is deep and well known – like the American South - minority candidates may simply not run for right-wing parties, either by choice or because the party will not nominate them. In those circumstances there may be no electoral effects of discrimination at all. However, when party structures attitudes on race but there ethnic minority candidates do run for right-wing parties, they will suffer a disproportionately large loss of support.

To test this theory, this study draws on both experimental and aggregate election data from Canada. This is an excellent case to test the theory, since attitudes on race are polarized by party, but a substantial number of ethnic minority candidates run for all parties. The experimental test includes manipulations of candidate ethnic minority status and party affiliation, demonstrating that the causal effect of candidate ethnic minority status holds only for the right-wing Conservative Party, and is driven by desertion by Conservative Party supporters. The aggregate election data test uses a difference-in-difference design, linking candidate demographic data to real election data in four federal elections. This provide important external
validity, showing that the same dynamics occur in real elections: ethnic minority Conservative party candidates receive fewer votes while ethnic minority candidates of other parties suffer no such penalty.

These results support the theory that electoral discrimination is often “friendly fire” – inflicted on ethnic minority candidate of right-wing parties by their own party supporters. Notably, this is the first evidence of electoral discrimination against ethnic minority candidates in Canada. The results may also explain at least some of the apparent discrepancy between findings of negative attitudes toward ethnic minority groups but null effects on election results, given that discrimination is concentrated on the right, where there are sometimes very few ethnic minority candidates.

**Ethnic Minority Candidates and Electoral Discrimination**

Given widespread evidence of negative attitudes toward ethnic minority groups in countries around the world, it is widely assumed that ethnic minority candidates must suffer electorally - that they receive less votes, are less likely to win elections. The bulk of this research focuses on African-American candidates, such as experimental studies showing that White voters\(^1\) are more likely evaluate African-American candidates more negatively (Moskowitz and Stroh 1994), and to support White candidates rather than African-American candidates (Terkildsen1993). Similarly, the election of Barak Obama led to multiple studies linking racial attitudes to attitudes toward Obama and his policies (e.g. Greenwald et al. 2009, Berinsky et al. 2011).

On the other hand, Obama's victory - and notably, it was a victory and not a loss despite his ethnic minority status - was a historic election for a chief executive office, and so it is less clear if these findings are generalizable to lower profile candidates, or subsequent less historical candidacies. Experimental studies emphasize the candidates’ race, and indeed, would likely fail a manipulation check if respondents were not aware of the candidates’ race. Of course, this is very important for establishing causal effects but does not represent the conditions of many elections where voters often know little about candidates other than party leaders.

Moreover, there are multiple studies which find mixed or null effects in real elections. Citrin et al. (1990), for example, found no effect of race on support for a Black candidate for governor. Other studies like Bullock and Dunn (1999) and Voss and Lublin, (2001), using aggregate data and ecological inference, find little evidence of White backlash against Black candidates. To be sure, they do not argue that prejudice does not exist, but rather, as Voss and Lublin (2001, p. 173) put it, “southern Whites avoid most Democrats”, referring to the Republican domination of the South. The subtext is that almost Black candidates are Democratic, so race adds nothing more to the equation. Similarly, Highton (2004), using exit poll data linked to congressional candidate demographic data, shows that voters are no less likely to support Black candidates, though he argues this is due to the fact that those likely to discriminate are the

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1 In most research discussed here the majority group is White voters, though the relevant analytical category is really the ethnic majority group. While it is possible that there is discrimination between ethnic minorities groups, this seems to not always be the case (see Besco 2015), so I set aside that issue here.
least likely to know a candidate’s race. Perhaps most surprisingly, using Cooperative Commonwealth Election Study Data Hood and Mckee (2015) find no evidence that even White conservative voters are less likely to vote for minority Senate and Gubernatorial candidates.

Results for other ethnic groups and in other countries are similarly mixed. For example, Absoch et al. 2007 conclude that these is clear evidence of block voting against Latino candidates in California, but Abrajano et al. 2005 argue this is primarily the result of ideological perceptions, and in fact White voters do support some Latino candidates. Zingher and Farrar (2014) find no evidence White voters are less likely to support ethnic minority candidates in Australia, but do find discrimination in the UK. While Fisher et al. (2014) report that British voters discriminate against Muslim candidates, but they find no evidence of discrimination against other Black or Asian candidates. Street (2014) in Germany found no evidence that ethnic minority candidates receive fewer votes, and (Black and Erickson 2006) reports similar null findings in Canada.

In sum, there is certainly some evidence that ethnic minority candidates suffer from electoral discrimination from ethnic majority voters, but other studies that come to the opposite conclusion or argue that finding of discrimination have been overstated. This ambivalence is all the more striking given the well-known publication bias against null findings – no doubt many more papers showing no evidence of discrimination remain in filing drawers around the world. Why do studies of racial attitudes find clear evidence of racism in studies of attitudes, but much less so in the study of electoral results? An important but overlooked factor, I argue, is the structure of party coalitions.

Ethnic Minority Candidates and Party Affiliation

Parties and coalitions of supporters around the world are, to a large degree, organized along a left-right axis, and negative attitudes toward ethnic minority groups, immigration, multiculturalism, and related issues are almost always positioned on the right. The result, I propose, is that party affiliation powerfully conditions the effect of discriminatory attitudes on ethnic minority candidates. Specifically, effects are concentrated on ethnic minority candidates on the right, while ethnic minority candidates on the left are insulated. This theoretical framework draws on two important strands of research: wedge politics and counter-stereotypical behaviour.

Wedge politics is generally defined as an issue which divides one party, and pushes some supporters toward another party. The classic example is the Republican “southern strategy” in the American south. During the 1960s, civil rights for African-Americans was a wedge issue that split the Democratic Party, with some supporters in favour, and others opposed. When this issue was made salient, it drove those opposed to civil rights away from the Democratic Party, and toward the Republican Party. While the southern strategy was a major historical shift in the party system, wedge issues can also less influential or temporary, and related to smaller portions of the population (Hillygus and Shields 2014).
A key feature of wedge issues is their asymmetrical effect: they divide one party, but not the other(s) because of the way the opinion on the issue is distributed. In this case, parties of the right include supporters who have negative attitudes toward ethnic minority groups, and those who do not, while parties on the left, relatively speaking, have more consistent (positive) attitudes. To be clear, certainly not all supporters of right-wing parties, or even a majority of them, have negative attitudes toward ethnic minority groups – but if they have proportionally more so than those of left-wing parties then these effects will still manifest.

What happens when right-wing parties nominate ethnic minority candidates? Given the concentration of negative attitudes toward ethnic minority groups in parties of the right, nominating an ethnic minority candidate will be perceived negatively by a sizeable number of party supporters. The nomination of an ethnic minority candidate is both a sort of position taking, and increases the salience of attitudes toward ethnic minority groups. We usually think of wedge issues as something parties use against their opponents, while the nomination of ethnic minority candidates is not a tactic by the opposition party but rather a “self-inflicted” wedge issue. Nonetheless, it should function in the same way – just because a party has nominated a candidate does not mean they receive unanimous, or even broad, support from their party. Therefore, when right-wing parties nominate ethnic minority candidates, this is a wedge which pushes away some of their supporters. When left-wing parties nominate ethnic minority candidates the same effect might occur – but since less of their supporters have negative attitudes toward ethnic minority groups, the effect will be smaller for parties of the left than those on the right.

It may be surprising to think of ethnic minority issues as a wedge issue on the right – usually these are portrayed as a problem for the left. The divisions among southern Democrats in the United States are the most well-known example, but Sniderman and Hagendoorn described similar “right shock” effects in the Netherlands (Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007), and the anti-immigrant parties like the United Kingdom Independence Party (Lynch 2012) and the Front National in France (Shields 2012) draw a substantial amount of its support from working class voters who otherwise lean left. Yet, this argument suggests that when right-wing parties adopt a notionally “left-wing position”, by nominating an ethnic minority candidate, they also pay a price.

Wedge issues are primarily negative “push” effects, rather than positive “pull” effects. While it is possible that nominating a ethnic minority candidate might attract support of voters with positive attitudes toward ethnic minority groups, this effect is probably weaker and less likely. In part, this is because voters probably know about the candidates of the party they are supporting, then about candidates of other parties. More generally, reactions to negative stimuli are stronger then to positive stimuli, which has been demonstrated across a wide range of political situations (Soroka 2014). Finally, voters are more likely to reject messages or appears from an opposing party, thus persuasion across party lines is quite difficult (Nelson and Garst 2005). This applies to all parties, but it makes it difficult for ethnic minority candidates on the right to replace the support they lose by attracting pro-diversity supporters on the left.
Research on counter-stereotypical behaviour also suggests that the effects of nominating ethnic minority candidates should be stronger for right-wing parties than left-wing parties. Counter-stereotypical behaviour - positive or negative - is likely to have stronger effects because it is unexpected, and therefore people pay more attention to it. In the language of the heuristic-systematic psychological model, people are more likely to process messages systematically (i.e. to think more about it) when the message are incongruent (Maheswaran and Chaiken 1991). For example, politicians are punished worse for scandals that run counter to their ideological stereotypes (Bhatti et al 2013), and candidates are judged more on traits that are counter to gender stereotypes (Johns and Shephard 2007). Given the low levels of knowledge about local candidates (or indeed, much of politics), this increased level of attention might be quite important. Since in many countries parties of the left are stereotypically associated with ethnic minority groups and parties of the right are associate with the ethnic majority (e.g. Whites, Green et al. 2007), then nominating a ethnic minority candidate will be seen as counter-stereotypical for parties of the right, and the effects will therefore be stronger.

Not only does this dynamic explain why ethnic minority candidates of right-wing parties suffer more from discrimination, it also explains why, under some circumstances, the overall level of discrimination would be lower. If supporters of parties of the right dislike ethnic minorities, it would hardly be surprising if ethnic minority candidates were less likely to run for those parties. Thus we have variation on two dimensions – the polarization of voters and distribution of ethnic minority candidates. This is what produces the effect described by Bullock and Dunn (1999) and Street (2014). Since racist voters support the right-wing parties, but all ethnic minority candidates run for left-wing parties, the ethnic minority candidates do not receive less votes than a majority candidate would. Of course, there is likely to be both some voters and candidates who do not follow this pattern, but the dynamic may still be responsible for the null findings discussed above. If, for example, only a small number of ethnic minority candidates of right-wing parties lose votes, the small sample size may still produce a null finding. Similarly, the small effect size for discrimination for left-wing parties might produce the same effect.

This theoretical framework, I argue, is broadly generalizable to countries where ethnic minority issues map onto the right-wing side of the left-right spectrum. The degree to which parties are polarized on ethnic minority issues varies greatly across countries, but the positions of the left and right are quite standardized – perhaps due to the influence of psychological factors like openness as a personality type linking many similar issues (e.g. Gerber et al. 2010).

Table 1 uses the party manifestos project for selected countries to show that right-wing party platforms have fewer positive references to multiculturalism than left-wing parties. Of course, this is just illustrative – many countries refer to racialized issues using other terms, and party manifestos might not reflect true party positions – but the point here is that the polarization on racial issues explored here functions similarly in the party systems of many countries.
### Table 1: Multiculturalism in Party Manifestos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Right</th>
<th>Left</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada 2011 (Conservatives, Liberals)</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic (Civic Democrats, Social Democrats,)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France 2012 (UMP, Socialists)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden 2010 (Moderates, Social Democrats)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain 2010 (Conservatives, Labour)</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States 2012 (Republicans, Democrats)</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Positive references to multiculturalism. Largest left and right parties in national lower house listed. Data from the Manifesto Project.

One objection that deserves consideration is that while nearly all anti-immigrant parties are on the right, not all right-wing parties are anti-immigrant. Some socially conservative parties (23%, according to Cochrane 2013) are actually left of center regarding immigration. It may be that the dynamics discussed here do not apply to these parties. On the other hand, most of these parties are quite small, generally receiving around 5% of the vote. For example, this includes Denmark Christian People’s Party, Finland's Christian Democrats, Netherlands’ Christian Union, Italy’s Unione di Centro, and Switzerland’s Evangelical People’s Party. One exception is Belgium’s Christian Democratic & Flemish Party, which is a large party often winning 10-20% of the vote. Another exception is Italy’s La Magarita Party, but it only lasted four years before merging with the Democratic Party. While the Canadian Progressive Conservative Party is also included in this group of right-wing pro-immigrant parties, this data was coded in 2002-2003, a period in which the right was split into two parties, the Progressive Conservative Party and the Canadian Alliance. Notably, at the time the Progressive Conservative Party was the smallest party in the House of Commons with only 12 seats. In 2004 the parties united into the Conservative Party of Canada, and returned to power in 2006. This suggests that there is a conceptual position on the right that is socially conservative and pro-immigrant, and a group of voters who support this position - but they are a decided minority. In electoral systems which punishes small parties, they are likely to merge with other right-wing parties. As a result, while the proposed theory of discrimination against ethnic minority candidates on the right may not apply to all right-wing parties, it should apply to many of them, including most large right-wing parties.

In sum, party coalitions and the structure of public opinion – that supporters of right-wing parties are more likely to have negative attitudes toward ethnic minority groups than supporters of left-wing parties – condition the effect of discrimination on ethnic minority candidates. This is a form of wedge politics, splitting off supporters of right-wing parties, but not of left-wing parties. Moreover, the effect is stronger for right-wing parties, because ethnic minority candidates are seen as counter to party stereotypes. Where there are few or no ethnic minority candidates for right-wing parties, the result is small or null estimates of the electoral effects of discrimination. Where ethnic minority candidates do run for right-wing parties, the result is that
the electoral effects of discrimination are concentrated against ethnic minority candidates of right-wing parties, since their own supporters abandon them. Conversely, ethnic minority candidates of left-wing parties are insulated from discrimination, because many of those who would discriminate them already were voting against them because of their party affiliation.

The Canadian Case
The Canadian case makes a useful test of this theory in that it meets the required conditions, and should provide conservative estimates. Crucially, there is polarization on ethnic minority issues. As Table 2 illustrates, Conservative voters are clearly less likely than those of other parties to think that more should be done for racial minorities – for example, 15% less Conservative supporters than Liberal Party supporters think that more should be done for racial minorities. Of course, not thinking that more should be done for racial minorities is not necessarily a sign of hostility towards them, and there is surely some social desirability effects. The key point is the distribution between the parties. In addition, the right-wing Conservative party nominates many ethnic minority candidates. In the 2011 election 12% of Conservative Party candidates were ethnic minority, slightly more than the center-left Liberal Party and left-wing NDP. Therefore, in Canada voters who dislike ethnic minority candidates are concentrated on the right, and they have the opportunity to discriminate against ethnic minority candidates.

Table 2: “How Much Should be Done for Racial Minorities” by Vote Choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>More</th>
<th>Less</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cell entries are percentage of total respondents. Combines “Much” and “Somewhat” responses. Other categories not shown. Data from the 2011 Canadian Election Study.

There are also three reasons to think that the effect of a ethnic minority candidate is relatively small in Canada. First, local candidate effects Canada are generally considered to be smaller than in other countries, which is often attributed to very tight party discipline and strict spending rules. For example, in terms of incentives to develop a personal vote, (Carey and Shugart 1995) rank Canada at the very bottom. Second, during the elections used in the analysis below (2004-2011) ethnic minority issues were not especially high-profile – compared to, for example, multiculturalism in the 1990’s, and the niqab and refugees in the most recent 2015 election. Since discrimination is likely to be lower when ethnic minority issues are less salient, these estimates are likely to be conservative. Finally, the level of antipathy toward ethnic minority groups is relatively low in Canada, compared to many countries. As Table 3 shows, Canadians have more favourable attitudes toward both immigrants and people of a different race than many counties. This suggests that if we find discrimination against ethnic minority candidates here,

2 Analysis by author. For more detailed discussion see Black (2013), but note that Black excludes Latin American candidates.
they are likely to be larger in places where the mean voter has more negative attitudes toward ethnic minority groups.

Table 3: Would Not Like to Have as Neighbours:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Different Race</th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data from the World Values Survey, 1999-2000. All respondents included.

The key structural factors, a polarization of party support on racial issues and the presence of ethnic minority candidates for the right-wing party, are both present in Canada. This makes it possible to test the theory described above. Moreover, the size of the effect is likely to be smaller in Canada than elsewhere, because candidate effects in general are small, ethnic minority issues were not salient, and attitudes toward ethnic minority groups are less negative than in many countries. This makes Canada during this period a good place to test the theory.

Experimental Data

To test the relationship between discrimination against ethnic minority candidates and party affiliation, two methods are used: an experiment, and a difference-in-difference analysis using aggregate election data. The experiment was part of a larger cooperative online survey conducted in English, with no respondents from Quebec (details on other questions and treatments available from author) and the manipulations analysis here applied to 296 ethnic majority (White) respondents, which are the focus of this analysis. While the demographics are for the most part similar to population data, as is usual with samples of this kind the sample has a somewhat higher than average level of education. Given the normal negative correlation between education and discrimination suggests these estimates are conservative. The experiment presented respondents with short biographies of two candidates and asked which they would vote for. Using two candidates, rather than evaluations of a single candidate, is both a more realistic design, and less obtrusive - it allows respondents to express prejudice by voting for the ethnic majority candidate without obviously rejecting or making a negative statement about the ethnic minority candidate. Details of the candidate biographies are available in the appendix.

The factor structure is two by two, with treatments for candidate ethnicity and party affiliation. Candidate ethnic minority status was manipulated by stereotypically European names: John Hawkes (Candidate 1) and Arthur Dorre (Candidate 2), and a traditionally Chinese name (Jun Zhang) or South Asian name (Satveer Chaudhary) name. Since there are no clear differences in effects, in the analysis that follows the Chinese and South Asian conditions are
merged into a single ethnic minority candidate treatment to maximize statistical power. Photos were not used, both to avoid confounding on the basis of attractiveness, and to reflect the reality of local elections in Canada where signs tend to have names, but not photos (the exception is Quebec, but as noted above there are no respondents from Quebec). Party affiliation is manipulated by a statement that the ethnic minority candidate is either a Liberal candidate, or a Conservative candidate. These are currently the two largest parties in federal Canadian politics, and the only parties that have won elections at the federal level. The other candidate is given the alternate party label, thus there are no Liberal/Liberal or Conservative/Conservative pairs. These manipulations allow testing of interactions between ethnic minority status and specific parties.

To examine the effect of candidate ethnicity across different party label conditions, we begin with simple crosstabs. Table 1 shows the percentage of ethnic majority respondents who supported the candidates in each of the three party conditions. Note that the percentages are reported for the ethnic majority and minority versions of Candidate 2, hence they do not add to 100%.

The results of the experiment show that when Candidate 2 is Conservative, the ethnic minority candidate version receives 22 percentage points less support than the identical ethnic majority candidate version. Conversely, when Candidate 2 is Liberal, the difference is only 3 percentage points. Model 1 repeats this analysis with logistic regression, (details in Appendix), and the predicted values show that the difference in support for the majority and minority version of the candidates is statistically significant for the Conservative candidate (p=.03) but not the Liberal candidate (p=.76). This suggests an important interaction between specific parties and ethnic minority candidate support: voters appear to react quite differently to ethnic minority candidates depending on which party they belong to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Status</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Majority</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Minority</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cells are support for Candidate 2. n=298

To better explore the behaviour of voters, Model 2 includes an interaction with party support. Here, the expectation is that the Conservative candidate suffers because their own party supporters desert them. The dependant variable is votes for Candidate 2. The independent variables are candidate racial status (majority/minority) and the candidate party affiliation (Conservative/Liberal), and a party support variable – if they respondent reported voting for the Conservative Party in 2011 (at the time, the most recent federal election). Party support (vote choice) rather than partisan identification is used so that it matches the aggregate analysis which follows, and also because those with weak partisan ties are those most likely to affected by local candidates (Roy and Alcantara 2015). In addition, using supporters rather than partisans
increases the cell size and statistical power. These three key independent variables - candidate ethnic minority status, candidate party version, and respondent party support - are interacted, and all constituent interactions are included.

The predicted probabilities are detailed in Figure 2 (detailed model results in the appendix), and the treatment effect is negative, large, and statistically significant for Conservative party supporters who see the ethnic minority Conservative Candidate 2. No effect is observed, however, under any of the other conditions. The ethnic minority Conservative candidate receives 32 percentage points less support than the ethnic majority Conservative candidate (p=.02). Conversely, the Liberal ethnic minority candidate does not suffer from electoral discrimination – in fact, none of the other combinations show statistically significant effects. This demonstrates that it is Conservative supporters who defect - they are much less likely to support a ethnic minority Conservative candidate than a majority Conservative candidate, but other voters (who may have more favourable attitudes toward ethnic minority groups) do not change their vote to support the ethnic minority candidate. A ethnic minority Liberal party candidate, conversely, does not receive less support.

Aggregate Election Data
The ethnic minority status of Conservative candidates clearly affects their support in the experimental test, which establishes that it is the ethnic minority status itself that effects candidate support, and not some confounding variable such as support for the Conservative Party in urban areas, or the quality of candidates. However, while experiments are excellent at determining the causal mechanism, the artificial context could make generalization to real
elections questionable. In particular, the size of the effects is probably different. Moreover, the cell sizes here are modest, and there has been some debate about the results of experiments with small sample sizes even given statistical significance (e.g. Button et al. 2013). To establish these effects in real elections, and to provide a greater level of certainty in the results, after the experiment was analyzed data on candidate demographics was collected and linked to district level election results.

The electoral data is provided by Elections Canada. Four elections are covered, 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2011. This time-period offers a unique advantage: redistricting changes electoral district boundaries with every 10-year census and so usually only two elections are conducted with the same districts, but during this time period a series of minority governments allows comparison across four elections with the same districts. The candidate data was gathered from candidate websites and media reports, similar to Black (2012) and Tossutti and Najam (2002). This data is coded using the Statistics Canada definition of Visible Minorities: all non-White or non-European individuals, except indigenous people. This research does not include indigenous candidates, both because their social position is quite different from ethnic minority immigrants, and to provide a better comparison to the experimental evidence above. Data on candidates of the four major parties was collected: the Conservatives, Liberals, New Democratic Party, and Bloc Quebecois. Minor parties and independents are not included, even when they won seats, since they often have no relevant comparator across elections. The Bloc Quebecois only runs candidates in the province of Quebec, and so they have 60 candidates in each election, while the other parties usually have 308. The “difference” variables cannot be computed for the first election, and for a small number of cases in which parties did not run candidates. This produces a total n of 2993.

The following analysis links electoral district level election results to data on candidate ethnicity and uses a difference-in-difference method. This method is common in economics, and has been used by a number of political science studies using aggregate election data (e.g. Morgan-Collins, Street 2014). The difference-in-difference method compares results for the same electoral district and party across elections, which eliminates the effect of all time-invariant factors, such as the composition of the electorate. While the characteristics of geographic areas do change over time, the change in, for example, the average education level of a particular electoral district is probably small over the short time-periods considered here. This eliminates many confounding variables, and avoids the need for a long list of statistical controls. This is a major advantage compared to cross-sectional designs which compare aggregate results between different electoral districts in the same election (e.g. Black and Erickson 2006) or different individuals in different districts (e.g. Fisher et al. 2014, Highton 2004). A second major advantage of using real election data avoids problems with social desirability bias, which is a major issue in both experimental and cross-sectional research on discrimination. Rather than ask voters what they think of candidates, this data allows us to analyze their actual behavior in a real election.
The “treatment” is a change in candidate ethnic minority status, and so the analysis compares the change in vote totals for a party in electoral districts where the ethnicity of the candidate changed, to those where it did not. The basic form of the equation is below, where $\Delta Y$ is the change in votes from the previous election, $\Delta X_1$ is the change in ethnic minority status of the candidate from the previous election, $X_2$ is party, and $V$ is a set of control variables.

$$
\Delta Y = \alpha + \Delta X_1 + X_2 + \Delta X_1 X_2 + V
$$

The comparison is change between elections, and so the dependant variable is the change in ballots cast for a given party in a given electoral district. There are two ways to measure this – as a proportion of eligible voters (change in votes), and as a proportion of total ballots (change in vote share). The former has the advantage of being unaffected by changes in other parties’ turnout, while the latter is the key in determining the winner, so models are estimated for both. Unfortunately, it is not possible to model the change in elected status directly, simply because there are too few cases where both the ethnic minority status of the candidate and the elected status changes for the same party in the same electoral district. Note that this is consequence of using a difference-in-difference method, rather than a cross-sectional analysis – it is a data problem, not evidence against the hypothesis.

The two key independent variables are the change in candidate ethnic minority status, and party. Candidate ethnic minority status has three values: minority-to-majority (127 cases), no change (2717 cases), or majority-to-minority (149 cases). Since it is possible that these have different effects, this is included as a set of dummy variables. Dummy variables for party (Conservative/Other)\(^3\) are also included, as well as interactions between the candidate and party variables. While the difference-difference design automatically controls for all time-invariant variables, additional models include some other control variables. The margin of victory is included, since discrimination might be lower in close races because party supporters might prefer victory over their dislike of ethnic minority candidate. Candidate incumbency is also included, since they might receive more votes, and naturally do not change ethnic minority status. Although the percentage of the electoral that is ethnic minority should be controlled by the difference in difference design, this might be highly influential and so it is also included as a control variable. Finally, if the other parties also nominate other ethnic minority candidates, this reduces the ability of discriminatory voters to defect to an ethnic majority candidate, and so there is a variable for other ethnic minority candidates in the district.

Four models are estimated using OLS regression, using vote share (Model 3 and 4) and number of votes (Model 5 and 6), with and without controls respectively. The central expectation is Conservative ethnic minority candidates will receive less support than ethnic majority Conservative candidates, but this effect will not hold for other parties. As Table 4 shows, the interaction between the Conservative Party and majority-to-minority variable are negative and

\(^3\) Since the hypothesis is that the Conservative party will show discrimination but all other (non-right) parties will not, the other parties are merged. Repeating the analyses with dummy variables for each party does not change the results.
Table 3: Difference-in-Difference Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vote Share</td>
<td>Vote Share w/ Controls</td>
<td>Votes</td>
<td>Votes w/ Controls</td>
<td>Placebo Vote Share</td>
<td>Placebo Votes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority to Majority</td>
<td>0.004 (0.009)</td>
<td>0.014 (0.009)</td>
<td>0.007 (0.016)</td>
<td>0.024 (0.016)</td>
<td>-318.091 (444.758)</td>
<td>-0.006 (0.010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority to Minority</td>
<td>0.005 (0.009)</td>
<td>0.014 (0.009)</td>
<td>0.006 (0.015)</td>
<td>0.023 (0.015)</td>
<td>-82.717 (423.353)</td>
<td>-0.001 (0.009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>0.073*** (0.004)</td>
<td>0.071*** (0.004)</td>
<td>0.121*** (0.006)</td>
<td>0.118*** (0.006)</td>
<td>2,865.154*** (181.400)</td>
<td>0.061*** (0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority to Majority*Conservative</td>
<td>-0.010 (0.018)</td>
<td>-0.008 (0.018)</td>
<td>-0.014 (0.031)</td>
<td>-0.010 (0.031)</td>
<td>-1,167.110 (872.057)</td>
<td>-0.024 (0.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority to Minority*Conservative</td>
<td>-0.044*** (0.016)</td>
<td>-0.042** (0.016)</td>
<td>-0.068** (0.031)</td>
<td>-0.064** (0.031)</td>
<td>-480.977 (765.956)</td>
<td>-0.007 (0.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent Candidate</td>
<td>0.022*** (0.003)</td>
<td>0.039*** (0.006)</td>
<td>497.806*** (169.062)</td>
<td>0.011*** (0.004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Minority Candidate</td>
<td>-0.003 (0.004)</td>
<td>-0.006 (0.007)</td>
<td>446.222** (200.591)</td>
<td>0.010** (0.004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margin</td>
<td>-0.004 (0.010)</td>
<td>-0.008 (0.017)</td>
<td>-833.312* (503.102)</td>
<td>-0.011 (0.011)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.017*** (0.002)</td>
<td>-0.025*** (0.003)</td>
<td>-0.030*** (0.003)</td>
<td>-0.044*** (0.006)</td>
<td>-971.330*** (170.020)</td>
<td>-0.023*** (0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>2,993</td>
<td>2,993</td>
<td>2,993</td>
<td>2,993</td>
<td>1,994</td>
<td>1,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.121</td>
<td>0.134</td>
<td>0.117</td>
<td>0.130</td>
<td>0.133</td>
<td>0.127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OLS Regression. Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
statistically significant in all models\(^4\). The majority-to-minority interaction is not statistically significant because the effect is the same for both Conservative and non-Conservative candidates.

The predicted values in Figure 2 make the interpretation of the models clearer. A downward slope to the right shows discrimination, which is evident for the Conservative candidates but not the other parties (controls set to their means). Using one-tailed tests, the predicted values for switching from a Conservative ethnic minority candidate to an ethnic majority candidate are negative and statistically significant in all models: ethnic minority an ethnic minority candidate receives, compared to a previous majority candidate, also declines, by 6 percentage points (p=.003) in Model 5, and 4 percentage points (p=.05) in Model 6. While switching from a Conservative ethnic minority candidate to an ethnic majority candidate is signed as expected, the coefficients are all smaller and not statistically significant. The reasons for this is not obvious, but perhaps once supporters have deserted for another candidate they tend to continue to support that candidate. This would explain why the initial desertion due to a ethnic minority candidate does not fully rebound even when the ethnic minority candidate is later replaced by an ethnic majority candidate. For the other parties, all effects in all models are not statistically significant.

![Figure 2: Change in Votes and Vote Share](image)

Interestingly, the effect sizes of the Change in Votes models are larger than in the Vote Share models, which might reflect the effect of lower turnout. Since the dependant variable in the Change in Votes models is the votes a party received relative to total eligible voters, rather than relative to the ballots cast, the larger effect suggests that when Conservative voters are faced

\(^4\) In one sense statistical significance tests are not required – these are not sample data, they are population data for both candidates and votes. We might regard these as a kind of sample of all elections, or of all recent elections in Canada, but certainly they are not a random sample. Nonetheless, these statistics are often reported for conventional reasons, so they are included here.
with a ethnic minority candidate a significant number may simply stay home, rather than switch to another party. This is a possible link to Zingher and Farrer’s (2014) finding of discrimination against ethnic minority candidates in the UK but not in Australia – they suggest this could be a product of Australia’s compulsory voting rules, which prevent voters from staying home as a form of discrimination, and here a considerable amount of the discrimination effect is seems to be due to a lower turnout of supporters.

Finally, one possible problem with difference-different models is a violation of the common trend assumption; that without the change in candidate ethnic minority status, the “treatment” and control groups would have had the same time-trend. In this case, perhaps parties switched to ethnic minority candidates in ridings which they were already going to do worse in. To test this, a placebo regression is performed, which uses the prior election change in votes. In other words, if a vote change in 2004-2006 is correlated with a change in ethnic minority candidate status in 2006-2008, this would violate the common trend assumption. As Table 4 shows (and predicted probabilities, not shown), the placebo estimates for the key coefficients are not statistically significant, or signed in the wrong direction. This suggests that the common trends assumption is not violated, and the difference-in-difference inferences are valid.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

The experimental evidence shows that the ethnic minority candidates of the right-wing Conservative party received less votes than an otherwise identical majority candidate, demonstrating electoral discrimination. Conversely, the left-wing Liberal candidate suffered no such penalty, with no evidence that ethnic minority status affects their electoral support among ethnic majority voters. This, I argue, is because the broad structure of party coalitions affects the distribution of attitudes toward ethnic minority groups. Put simply, there are more voters with negative attitudes toward ethnic minority people among right-parties. Ironically, the electoral effect is the result of defections of Conservative party supporters: ethnic minority candidates are victims of “friendly fire”, they suffer discrimination primarily from supporters of their own party.

To establish these effects in real elections, a difference-in-difference analysis using candidate data and aggregate election results over four elections was performed, and showed similar effects: a switch from an ethnic majority Conservative candidate to a minority Conservative candidate lead to a decline in both supporter turnout and share of the vote. Importantly, while ethnic minority Conservative candidates are discriminated against, other parties show no comparable effects. These effects are modest in size, but more than enough to change election results. For example, 51 seats were decided with a margin of less than 5 percentage points in the 2011 Federal Election (analysis by author), and ethnic minority candidates are concentrated in hotly contested electoral districts (Marwah et al. 2012). In addition, change of the vote share can be magnified if the shift is primarily from one party to another - change among 3 percent of voters could actually produce a 6 percent swing, as one party gains and another loses.
The “friendly fire” hypothesis helps explain the apparent contradiction between strong evidence of discriminatory attitudes against ethnic minority groups but far weaker evidence of discrimination against candidates in real elections. Results such as Voss and Lublin, (2001), and Street (2014) are symptomatic of an extreme version of this dynamic – where right-wing voters would discriminate against ethnic minority candidates, but simply do not have the opportunity since no candidates run for right-wing parties. Even if a few candidates run for right-wing parties, this may result in null findings either due to small average effects, or small sample sizes. Disaggregating the effects by party as done here, however, shows that that the effects are much larger for candidates of right-wing parties, and therefore have a much larger effect on their likelihood of being elected.

These dynamics, it is argued, are broadly applicable to situations where attitudes on ethnic minority issues are polarized along party lines, and there are at least some candidates running for right-wing parties. As the party manifesto data suggests, at least the former condition seems to be widespread. Of course, there are many other factors which might be important, not least of which is the electoral system, which influences both the influence of candidate attributes, and how (or if) ethnic minority candidates are likely to be nominated. Nonetheless, the theoretical framework should be applicable to a wide range of countries, and would benefit from future cross-national tests.

There are, of course, many other potential explanations for null findings of electoral discrimination. One possibility is that partisan attachment is simply too strong. Certainty this is likely to dampen the effects of discrimination against ethnic minority candidates of the partisans own party, but it need not eliminate it. In any case, the effects are likely to be concentrated in weak partisans, “leaners”, and other supporter without strong partisan identities (Roy and Alcantara 2015). In addition, some might suggest that support from ethnic minority voters could counteract the effect of discrimination. There is indeed good evidence that ethnic minority voters are more likely to support ethnic minority candidates (Barretto 2007 Besco 2015, Fisher et al. 2014.). On the other hand, classic threat theory suggests that discrimination would rise with increasing number of ethnic minority voters in the area (e.g. Blalock 1967). Whether affinity or discrimination win out in any particular context is an open question, hinging on both the contextual effects of diversity and the geographic and political distribution of candidates and voters. These dynamics are best thought of playing an important role alongside the conditioning effect of party, rather than as an alternate explanation.

Some might interpret electoral discrimination is concentrated on ethnic minority right-wing candidates in a positive light, however reluctantly. After all, the polarization of party supporters does protect ethnic minority candidates on the left, to their benefit. Unfair though this might be, depending on the relative levels of discrimination and distribution of candidates, the result might actually be to elect more ethnic minority candidates then if ethnic minority candidates were equally disadvantaged in all parties.

However, the long term implications could be very negative. If ethnic minority candidates are unlikely to be elected as candidates of right-wing parties, this may produce a self-
reinforcing spiral. Cairns (1968) made this argument decades ago about parties and regionalism, and the same should hold for ethnic minority issues and voters. As ethnic minority candidates abandon right-wing parties, so too will right-wing voters, members and activists. This will reduce the pressure for policies important to these groups, which turns the screw yet again. The candidacy of Donald Trump is one example of how dangerous this phenomenon could be. Of course, the result need not be so serious. Parties can take a longer view, and appeal to groups outside of their current supporters, especially if party leaders are willing and able to do so. Similarly, moderate voters may view a party’s nomination of ethnic minority candidate as desirable. Sobolewska (2013) for example, argues that this informs party strategy in Britain. In any case, in the short run we should recognize that it is ethnic minority candidates of right-wing parties suffer the brunt of electoral discrimination, and in the long run hope that right-wing parties do not succumb to this self-reinforcing spiral.
References


## Appendix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Candidate</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>-2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.41)</td>
<td>(0.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority Candidate</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
<td>(0.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative*Ethnic minority Candidate</td>
<td>-0.68</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.51)</td>
<td>(0.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Voter</td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Voter*Candidate</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Voter*Ethnic minority Candidate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Voter<em>Ethnic minority Candidate</em>Conservative Candidate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td>(0.4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Logistic Regression. Coefficients reported, with standard errors in parentheses. Pseudo $r^2=0.0536$ Pseudo $r^2=0.1841$ n=296 n=296

Experiment Biographies, manipulated sections bolded.
Candidate 1
John Hawkes is an entrepreneur, and after being laid off twice he started the successful company, Allsort Inc. Despite a busy schedule Mr. Hawkes works with a number of organizations, including Kids Help Phone, and served as Vice Chair of the Municipal Safety Committee. John Hawkes is the Conservative/Liberal candidate.

Candidate 2
Arthur Dorre/Jun Zhang/Satveer Chaudhary is an active local businessman, who was recently honoured as “Businessman of the Year” for his many contributions. Mr. Dorre/Zhang/Chaudhary helps at the local community centre, and is the fundraising chair for the Hospital Foundation. A former provincial candidate, he lost in the most recent election. Arthur Dorre/Jun Zhang/Satveer Chaudhary is the Conservative/Liberal candidate.

Which candidate would you vote for?