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How Local Media Coverage of Voter Fraud
Influences Partisan Perceptions in the U.S.

Adriano Udani
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
University of Missouri – St. Louis
udania@umsl.edu

David C. Kimball
Professor
Department of Political Science
University of Missouri – St. Louis
kimballd@umsl.edu

Brian Fogarty
Lecturer in Quantitative Social Science
School of Social & Political Sciences
University of Glasgow
Brian.Fogarty@glasgow.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

Extant findings show that voter fraud is extremely rare and difficult to prove in the United States. Voter's knowledge about voter fraud allegations likely comes through the media, who tend to sensationalize the issue. In this study, we argue that the more voters are exposed to media coverage of voter fraud allegations, the more likely that they will perceive that voter fraud is a frequent problem. We merge the 2012 Survey of Performance of American Elections with state-level media coverage of voter fraud leading up to the 2012 election. Our results show that media coverage of voter fraud is associated with public beliefs about voter fraud. In states where fraud was more frequently featured in local media outlets, public concerns about voter fraud were heightened. In particular, we find that press attention to voter fraud has a larger influence on Republicans than Democrats and Independents. We further find that media coverage of voter fraud does not further polarize partisan perceptions of voter fraud. Rather, political interest moderates state media coverage on voter fraud beliefs only among Republicans. Lastly, our results provide no support that demographic changes, approval of election administration, or information concerning actual reported voting irregularities have any discernable effects on partisan perceptions.

INTRODUCTION

Extensive research has shown that voter fraud is extremely rare and difficult to prove in the U.S. (Minnite 2010; Ahlquist, Mayer and Jackman 2014; Ansolabehere, Luks, and Schaffner 2015). Before recent major state elections, some Republican election officials have alleged that thousands of illegal voters are registered to vote. Subsequent investigations, though, reveal a much smaller number of voting irregularities and an even lesser number of actual cases that showed intent (Minnite 2010). Voters typically hear about voter fraud allegations in the media, which scholars have shown tends to sensationalize some issues at times while also having a powerful influence over who should be blamed for public dilemmas (Callaghan and Schnell 2001; Cook 1998; Hamilton 2004). This raises a concerning trend in democratic politics and contemporary election reforms, as some have pointed out, partisans can easily insert allegations of voter fraud into public discourse as well as the congressional record and portray those allegations as "facts" (Minnite, 2010, pg 10).

To date, minimal research has shown the extent to which media coverage of voter fraud allegations affects public perceptions of how widespread voter fraud is in U.S. elections. Extant scholarship has often relied on contextual factors such as party control of state legislatures, the enactment of voter restrictions (Bowler and Donavan 2016), and the performance of election administrators. Other attitudinal studies suggest that demographic shifts in the foreign-born population (Udani and Kimball 2017) and black population (Wilson and Brewer 2013) may trigger white native-born animosity toward racial minority voters and raise anxiety of diminishing political influence. In this study, we pose an alternative and untested explanation of the reasons that the public perceives that voter fraud is rampant in U.S. elections. That is, voters who live in states with a higher incidence of news stories on voter fraud are more likely to think that voter fraud occurs more frequently in U.S. elections than those who live in state with a lower incidence of new stories.

Merging data from the 2012 Survey of the Performance of American Elections (SPAE) with a novel dataset of local media coverage of voter fraud allegations in the 2012 election, we test

dominant theoretical frameworks that might explain the reasons for which one's political contextual environments influence voter fraud perceptions. We find that media coverage of voter fraud is associated with public beliefs about voter fraud. In states where voter fraud was more frequently featured in local media outlets, public concerns about voter fraud were heightened. Our results provide the strongest evidence that Republicans with more political interest – which has been shown as a motivator to learn about politics, acquire political knowledge, and recognize party differences on issues (Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995; Luskin 1990; Hetherington 2001; Levendusky 2010) – are more likely to perceive that voter fraud occurs frequently in U.S. elections. While we also find that Republican control of the state legislature assuages politically interested Republicans perceptions of voter fraud, our results provide no support that state-level demographic changes, approval of election administration, or information concerning actual reported voting irregularities have any discernable effects on public perceptions of voter fraud.

We organize the paper as follows. First, we derive and propose testable hypotheses from relevant scholarship on how contextual environments shape political attitudes. After discussing the data and methods used to test our hypotheses, we present our main findings and then offer a discussion of other relevant results. Finally, we conclude the paper with closing remarks.

CONTEXTUAL SOURCES OF VOTER FRAUD PERCEPTIONS

Previous research indicates that several political predispositions are associated with public beliefs about voter fraud. Elite policy debates about voter fraud and proposed voting restrictions in the United States are highly partisan, with Republicans generally favoring and Democrats opposing stricter voter identification policies (Hasen 2012; Dreier and Martin 2010; Hicks et al. 2015). The public seems to have internalized these debates, as Republicans and conservatives tend to believe that voter fraud occurs more frequently than Democrats and liberals (Wilson and Brewer 2013; Bowler et al. 2015). Voter fraud beliefs are also associated with broader orientations toward the political system. For example, voters and people with higher levels of political efficacy and trust in government tend

to be more sanguine about election integrity (Gronke 2014; Wolak 2014; Uscinski and Parent 2014). Similarly, those with higher levels of education and political knowledge tend to hold more optimistic views about voter confidence and election fraud (Bowler et al. 2015; Wolak 2014), while others show that beliefs about voter fraud are also shaped by attitudes toward racial and ethnic minorities (Udani and Kimball 2017; Wilson and Brewer 2013).

Few studies, though, have attended to the information contexts in which people formulate attitudes toward voter fraud. As Atkeson (2014) notes, the vast majority of people do not witness or experience voter fraud directly, but they learn about it through the news media. Voter fraud allegations are often sufficiently lurid to grab and hold headlines (Levitt 2007). News coverage of voter fraud varies substantially from one state to the next (Fogarty et al. 2015). In addition, reporting on alleged voter fraud is heaviest during the weeks leading up to a major election, particularly in electorally competitive states, suggesting that voter fraud allegations are used as a voter mobilization strategy (Fogarty et al. 2015).

As the public is quite susceptible to allegations and rumors of election fraud (Beaulieu 2014), contextual information such as news coverage of voter fraud allegations can shape public beliefs about election integrity. Given that much of the rhetoric of voter fraud is coming from Republican and conservative elites (Hasen 2012; Minnite 2010; Dreier and Martin 2010; Ellis 2014), not all members of the public will be equally receptive of these messages (Zaller 1992). We expect that news coverage of voter fraud in a state will have more of an effect on the perceptions of Republicans than Democrats (H_1).

In addition, we also anticipate that media coverage of voter fraud will not have the same effects on all Republican identifiers. Higher levels of political interest – which is viewed as a precursor to political knowledge and activism – contribute to more awareness of party differences (Luskin 1990; Hetherington 2001; Levendusky 2010). Other studies suggest that politically interested partisans are motivated to learn about politics and provide answers that are consistent with partisan

elite positions (Nadeau and Niemi 1995; Prior and Lupia 2008; Prior 2010; but see Dancey and Sheagley 2013). Thus, politically interested Republicans should view voter fraud allegations in line with party elite rhetoric on voter fraud. We expect that political interest will moderate the effects of local media coverage on Republican perceptions of voter fraud (H₂).

Aside from media effects on political attitudes, there are contextual factors that may also influence voter fraud perceptions. However, we argue, and find, that none are more influential than the role of the media and its coverage of voter fraud. Following is a discussing of four dominant competing hypotheses.

Election administration

Public beliefs about election integrity may be influenced by actual instances of voter fraud. It is plausible that the number of cases of voter fraud would influence Republicans more than Democrats, particularly politically interested Republicans who are expected to be tuned into their party's line on election integrity. To date, there is little evidence that the frequency of voter fraud incidents is associated with beliefs about election fairness. For example, research has found that state media coverage of voter fraud allegations is unrelated to the actual number of fraud cases in a state (Fogarty et al. 2015). Highlighting the rare occurrence of verifiable fraudulent voting is likely to not matter for many voters who, as research and public discourse has shown, understand the issue of voter fraud as synonymous with partisanship (Ansolabehere and Persily 2008; Bowler and Donovan 2016; Wilson and Brewer 2013). Other findings further suggest that public beliefs about voter fraud is not based heavily on objective evidence of fraud, as supporters of winning candidates (regardless of party) express more confidence in election integrity than supporters of losing candidates (Sances and Stewart 2014; Beaulieu 2014; Wolak 2014; Uscinski and Parent 2014).

There is lesser evidence that state election laws influence public concerns about election integrity. Proposals to require voters to show photo identification have been the most contentious state election reforms in recent years. Conventional wisdom suggests that living in a state with higher

levels of public confidence in elections or more restrictive voter ID requirements should assuage voter fraud perceptions among Republicans as well as Republicans with higher political interest. While the adoption of photo ID laws polarizes confidence in state elections (Bowler and Donovan 2016), public concerns about voter fraud do not seem to have diminished in states that have passed strict photo ID laws (Ansolabehere and Persily 2008; Bowler et al. 2015; Bowler and Donovan 2016).

Other studies indicate that poorly administered elections can foster pessimism of election integrity in a state. There is some evidence that public confidence in elections is associated with the performance of election administrators at the state level (Bowler et al. 2015) and at the local level (Atkeson and Saunders 2007; Hall, Monson, and Patterson 2009; Gronke 2014). When registration and voting procedures operate smoothly the public is more likely to believe in the fairness of elections. Hence, we expect that public confidence in elections within a state will have more of an impact on Republicans than Democrats. Further, in states with lower levels of public confidence in elections, politically interested Republicans are more likely than uninterested ones to believe that voter fraud occurs more frequently.

Partisan control of state legislature

Partisan control of government institutions may also influence public beliefs about voter fraud. Studies show that fears about voter fraud are pushed almost exclusively by conservative activists and Republican Party elites, while liberal groups and Democratic Party elites spread concerns that voting restrictions may disenfranchise some voters (Hasen 2012; Dreier and Martin 2010). These competing and divergent partisan elite stances on voter fraud and election reforms have filtered down to voters, whose opinions have largely become divided across major party lines (Bowler and Donovan 2016; Bowler and Donovan 2013). Due to the rare occurrence of voter fraud and the public's limited understanding of the complexity in detecting actual intent (Levitt 2007), voters search for their own respective party's position as well as its successes and failures to inform their own

perceptions of voter fraud. This may involve actively searching for elites' positions via websites and Twitter, or more passively through the news media.

Response to election outcomes

Although voter fraud may be a more prominent issue in states with Republican-controlled state government, there is strong evidence of a "sore loser" effect, with supporters of winning candidates offering more positive assessments of election integrity than supporters of losing candidates (Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn 2008; Sances and Stewart 2015; Wolak 2014; Beaulieu 2014). More generally, election winners tend to report higher levels of support for democratic institutions and processes than losers (e.g., Nadeau and Blais 1993; Norris 1999; Anderson et al. 2005; Craig et al. 2006). Thus, we expect partisans of the governing majority will provide more upbeat evaluations of election integrity (i.e., presence of voter fraud) than members of the minority party.

Racial and Acculturation Threat Theory

Political rhetoric about voter fraud frequently incorporates elements of an immigrant threat narrative, including hostile language and fears about crime and loss of political power (Schildkraut 2011; Abrajano and Hajnal 2015). Many voter fraud allegations depict immigrants in a negative light. Not only do the allegations presume that undocumented immigrants are to blame, but that instances of noncitizen "voting" are intentional acts of breaking the law and not due to administrative lapses in registration or inherent human error by poll workers (Udani and Kimball 2017). For example, President Trump made repeated claims about illegal voting by immigrants before and after the 2016 general election, including his unsubstantiated claim that he lost the popular vote in the 2016 election because three to five million undocumented immigrants participated illegally in the election (House and Dennis 2017). In congressional testimony, Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach alleged that "the problem of aliens registering to vote is a massive one, nationwide" (Kobach 2015). In ordering a statewide effort to remove immigrants from the voter rolls, Florida Governor Rick Scott (R-FL) warned about the votes of American citizens being "diluted" by non-citizens (Mishak 2013). The

recent increase in immigration, combined with elite rhetoric and media coverage that stereotype non-citizens as criminals, prime attitudes toward immigrants when Americans think about voter fraud (Udani and Kimball 2017).

The public should perceive voter fraud as very common in racially and ethnically homogenous areas where immigrants have historically been absent (Alexseev 2006; Green et al. 1998). As the foreign-born population in the United States has grown at an increasing rate over the last 50 years, studies have also shown an increase in population dispersion across the country, as immigrants settle in "new destination" states, cities and rural areas that have not experienced much immigration since the 1960s (Marrow, 2005; Singer, 2004). Traditional destination states – such as New York, Illinois, California, Texas, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Florida – continue to receive large numbers of foreign-born; however, in primarily southern and midwestern states, the population of the foreign born grew by 49 percent or more, twice the national rate between 2000 and 2009 (Terrazas 2011; Passel and Cohn 2011).[1] Estimates derived by Robert Warren and John Warren (2013) show that many of the new destination states also experienced the highest growth rates in the undocumented population between 1990 and 2010.

It is plausible that people who are predisposed to believing that voter fraud is rampant in U.S. elections are also sensitive to foreign-born population growth within their state. Newman and colleagues (2012) show that larger proportionate changes in state foreign-born populations produce intensive sociocultural changes that represent a challenge to a state's ethnic and cultural status quo, while generating a higher degree of anti-immigrant sentiment. Studies shows that a considerable portion of U.S. voters feel that increased numbers of immigrants contribute to declines in employment prospects, safety, and "American" values (Branton et al. 2011; Schildkraut 2005). Others show that anti-immigrant rhetoric of political elites are especially influential in areas with higher

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[1] These states are: South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Delaware, Arkansas, South Dakota, Nevada, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Wyoming, Idaho, Indiana, and Mississippi.

foreign-born growth rates (Hopkins 2010). One piece of circumstantial evidence is that states with a higher share of minority voters are more likely to introduce legislation with restrictive voting policies, like photo ID requirements (Bentele and O'Brien 2013; Hicks et al. 2015).

As many U.S. citizens are socialized to think of participating in elections as an American civic duty and right, acculturation threat theory anticipates that people are more likely to believe that voter fraud is more common in states that experience higher than lower immigration growth. Furthermore, it is likely that some mass publics are more threatened by demographic changes, either perceived or real. Republicans are more predisposed to oppose immigration and are thus disproportionately affected by elite rhetoric on the issue (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014). Studies also show that information about threats from immigration galvanize opposition to immigration among Republicans but not among Democrats (Albertson and Gadarian 2012; Hopkins 2014; Knoll, Redlawk and Sanborn 2011; Haynes, Merolla and Ramakrishnan 2016). As such, a state's immigration growth is more likely to influence Republican voter fraud perceptions than Democrats.

DATA AND METHODS

To test our hypotheses, we use the 2012 Survey on the Performance of American Elections (SPAE). The survey utilizes samples of 200 registered voters from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, which is designed to produce representative samples of each state's electorate (Stewart 2013). The survey design is ideal for examining the relationship between state context and public opinion toward election administration. After the 2012 elections, Polimetrix administered the SPAE online and surveyed a total of 10,200 adults.

Dependent Variable

We measure our main dependent variable using a three-item scale of election fraud beliefs, similar to Bowler and Donovan (2016). Respondents are asked how often the following illegal practices occur in elections: 1) voters pretending to be someone else; 2) casting a ballot more than once; and, 3) people voting who are not U.S. citizens. In each question, we recode responses such

that higher numeric values signify stronger beliefs that election fraud occurs: 1) It almost never occurs; 2) It occurs infrequently; 3) It occurs occasionally; and, 4) It is very common. We create the scale by averaging responses to these three items. Our election fraud scale is highly reliable (α = 0.90).[2]

Contextual variables

Our main variable of interest is local media coverage of voter fraud stories. Using data from Fogarty et al. (2015), we include the number of voter fraud stories featured in each state's most prominent and/or newspaper with the largest circulation from August 1, 2012 through to January 31, 2013. As Fogarty et al. (2015) argues, "this time frame incorporates the heart of the traditional campaign season and allows examination of coverage not just before the election, but also after the election when actual vote fraud challenges are likely to occur." The authors find a total of 680 articles, with 74% of coverage coming before Election Day. For our analyses in this study, we use stories that were published before the election. The Fogarty et al. (2015) dataset also offers the number of voter fraud cases that were initiated in 2012 within each state, which provides a proxy for an objective number of voting irregularities that are under investigation.

We use two proxies for a state's politics surrounding election administrative reforms. We use data from a recent initiative that rates each state's administration of elections based on several indicators (Pew Charitable Trusts 2016). The summary rating, called the Election Performance Index (EPI), serves as a measure of state election administration in 2012. Higher scores indicate better performance, so we expect EPI to be negatively associated with public concerns about voter fraud. In addition, we control for the strictness of voter ID laws in a state, as much rhetoric is focused on how voter ID laws are supposed to restore public faith in election administration; in spite of research that suggests otherwise. We use data on voter identification laws from the National Council on State

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[2] By excluding the 'don't know' responses, we exclude 1,365 respondents (13%) to the items in the voter fraud scale. We verify our results with models that use the full sample and present our results in the online appendix of this study.

Legislatures (NCSL). Similar to the Bowler and Donovan (2016) study, we categorize states into five categories ranging from requiring the least to most restrictive forms of identification: 1) No voter restrictions; 2) Non-strict non-photo ID; 3) Non-strict photo ID; 4) Strict non-photo ID; and 5) Strict photo ID.

We also measure state party politics with two indicators. We include a dummy variable for battleground states in the 2012 election (CO, FL, IA, NV, NH, NC, OH, VA, WI) to test whether exposure to the heaviest competition in the presidential campaign produces more positive assessments of electoral fairness (Wolak 2014). To control for additional partisan factors that others have shown to influence voter fraud rhetoric and voter identification laws (Hicks et al. 2015), we measure the percentage of Republicans in a state legislature.[3]

Lastly, to measure perceived threat associated with the U.S. foreign-born population, we use three separate population growth indicators from 1990 to 2010. As fraudulently voting in U.S. elections with intent is considered a crime (Levitt 2007; Minnite 2010), we measure the growth of undocumented immigrants, who are often portrayed as criminals and having socially dysfunctional behaviors not fit for mainstream America (Haynes, Merolla and Ramakrishnan 2016). The undocumented immigrant population estimates are derived by Warren and Warren (2013) using U.S. Census data. As other studies show that political elites and pundits often construct Latinos as the stereotypical immigrant in American popular culture (Brader, Valentino and Suhay 2008; Chavez 2013), we also measure the growth of non-white Latinos in a state using 5-year estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS) of the U.S. Census. Lastly, using the same ACS data, we measure the growth of a general foreign-born noncitizen population in a state. We use each of the three population indicators in separate models to check for robustness, with undocumented immigrant growth in the main models. In light of evidence that shows a strong relationship between

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[3] According to Ballotpedia, 71% of Nebraska state legislators identify as a Republican. Rather than excluding Nebraska from our analysis, we impute this percentage for each Nebraska resident. Retrieved at: https://ballotpedia.org/Nebraska_State_Senate_elections,_2016

black resentment and support for voter identification requirements (Wilson and Brewer 2013), we also control for the growth of a state's black population from 1990 to 2010.

Individual-level variables

       We measure party identification on a 3-point scale where 1 indicates a Democrat, 2 indicates an Independent, and 3 indicates a Republican.[4] Ideology is measured on a 5-point scale, where 1 indicates a liberal and a 5 indicates a conservative. Respondents are asked for their interest level in news and public affairs, with 1 equal to "hardly at all" and 4 equal to "mostly all the time".[5] Since, the SPAE does not offer factual questions about party control of political institutions to construct a traditional measure of political knowledge, we use education as a proxy of political sophistication. Educational attainment is measured with six categories, ranging from people having no high school degree to those with a graduate degree. We also control for one's voting experience and whether a person voted by mail or absentee ballot in the 2012 election. Voting experience has been shown to moderate partisan perceptions of election administration (Bowler and Donovan 2016). To this end, we control for whether a voter reported that he or she showed a form of identification before casting a ballot. We use respondent's sex, age, education, and race as additional control variables.[6]

       Our statistical models assume that the attitudes of voters are influenced in part by the communities in which they are nested. Due to the multilevel structure of the data, we use multilevel mixed models to compute unbiased standard errors for model coefficients (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Steenbergen and Jones 2002). More specifically, we use a random effects model that estimates separate intercepts for each state, which are permitted to vary. We also employ SPAE survey weights to obtain our results. We provide a more in-depth description of our statistical models in the online

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[4] 'Not Sure' responses to party identification, which comprises of 2% of the sample – are included with Independents. Respondents who are not sure (n=677, 6.4% of sample) to the ideology question are categorized with moderates.

[5] Don't know responses (1.75% of sample) are excluded.

[6] We make an effort to retain all eight categories with which respondents are offered to identify. We combined categories of Native American (80), Other (151), and Middle Eastern (13) to avoid a small number of observations that could adversely affect the regression models.

appendix.

RESULTS

We employ several multilevel models of voter fraud and show the results in the online

supplemental materials. Effects are expressed as OLS regression coefficients, with a positive sign

indicating beliefs that voter fraud is very common and a negative sign indicating beliefs that voter

fraud does not occur at all. To investigate the variation among like-minded voters, we run separate

multilevel models on respondents based on their party affiliation. This approach fits with evidence

and modeling assumptions that voter fraud debates are largely understood in partisan and polarized

terms (Bowler and Donovan 2016; Wolak 2014). We first present our baseline results before moving

on to our key findings on the cross-level interactions with political interest.

Baseline Results

Table A-1 in the online appendix presents our results from our baseline regression model.

We find that state-level factors are able to explain relatively more variation (three times as much) in

voter fraud perceptions among Independents and Republicans than Democrats; though, most of the

variation in voter fraud perceptions still exists at the individual-level. Across all three groups, more

ideologically conservative Democrats, Independents, and Republicans have significantly higher voter

fraud perceptions than more ideologically liberal ones.

Two individual-level determinants are specific to Republican voters. Consistent with Bowler

and Donovan (2016), Republicans who said that they did not show identification at their precincts

perceived that voter fraud occurs more frequently than others who did show identification. Politically

interested Republicans are more likely than uninterested ones to believe that voter fraud is very

common. This suggests that politically interested Republicans may be more susceptible to political

discourse on voter fraud allegations.

The partisan models further show racial differences in perceptions, though the mechanism

involved is unclear. Compared to white voters within their own party, Black Democrats, mixed-race

Independents, and Independent and Republican voters who are Middle-Eastern, Native-American, or identified as 'Other' all perceived that voter fraud occurs more frequently. Some studies suggest that higher perceptions of fraud may be tied to feelings of being overlooked by party leaders (Frymer 2010; Frymer and Skrentny 1998). Our results may also reflect Black Democrats, who have served as targets of voter fraud allegations, picking up elite rhetoric and espousing attitudes that the electoral process is a sham. More research is needed to understand the voter fraud perceptions of racial and ethnic minority voters who are often the target of elite voter fraud allegations and the extent to which they are internalizing those messages.

Finally, we find minimal evidence that local demographic conditions that theoretically instigate perceived racial and acculturation threat matter for voter fraud perceptions. We use alternative growth indicators of the foreign-born noncitizen and Latino populations in a state, but still find no evidence of any cross-level interactions. Further, as demonstrated in Table 1 below, our results show that the growth of undocumented immigration did not moderate perceptions among politically interested Republicans, who are theoretically the most aware of voter fraud and undocumented immigration.

Key Findings

A key component of our argument is that political interest can have a moderating effect on voter fraud beliefs, particularly for Republicans. In Table 1, we provide a summary of the cross-level interactions involving political interest and state contextual indicators from a series of separate regression models (see Tables A-2 through A-11 in the online appendix).

[Insert Table 1 About Here]

Consistent with our hypotheses, we find that state media coverage has more influence on Republicans than Democrats. Across all models, more ideologically conservative Democrats, Independents, and Republicans have significantly higher voter fraud perceptions than more ideologically liberal ones. Further, politically interested Republicans are more likely than uninterested

ones to believe that voter fraud is very common, suggesting that politically interested Republicans are more likely susceptible to political discourse on voter fraud. Across all models of Democratic and Independent voters, in contrast, political interest is unrelated to voter fraud beliefs. Our results provide strong evidence that media coverage of voter fraud has a larger influence on Republicans than Democrats and Independents. Figure 1 compares the marginal effects of news stories on voter fraud on perceptions by political interest and party affiliation. Voter fraud perceptions among politically interested Republicans increase by 15 percent while decreasing by 21 percent among the politically uninterested. Comparatively, we find lesser differences among Democrats and Independents. This suggests that Republicans who are less apt to follow the news and politics (at least in 2012) are less likely to align their views with the party line on voter fraud and perceive that it is rampant in U.S. elections.

[Insert Figure 1 About Here]

The models also provide strong evidence that Republican perceptions of voter fraud are influenced by political conditions that signal that their party has less control of the legislative process. Party control, though, only matters for Republicans with higher levels of political interest. In states with legislatures under Republican control, politically interested Republican voters believe that voter fraud is less common than uninterested ones (b = -0.40, s.e. = 0.13, p < 0.01), decreasing by 32 percent. This also means, as Figure 2 shows, that politically interested Republicans perceive that voter fraud occurs more frequently in states where less Republican legislators are elected to office. As such, the results indicate that political interest is an important factor that not only polarizes perceptions between Republicans and Democrats, but also among Republicans.

[Insert Figure 2 About Here]

Further analysis, though, provides stronger evidence that Republicans, who live in states under Democratic Party control, are likely responding to local coverage of voter fraud. Figure 3 plots each state according to the proportion of Republicans in the state legislature and voter fraud stories

in local media outlets. For reference, we draw a line on the x axis, which indicates equal representation between Democrats and Republicans in a legislature. We draw another reference line on the y axis, which indicates the median number of voter fraud stories in 2012. The quadrant that has the least number of states is the bottom-left: eight Democratic-controlled states have fewer voter fraud stories than the median. Eleven states under Democratic Party control (58 percent) have more stories than the median. Republican-controlled states are more evenly distributed above (14 states) and below (16 states) the median. When taken together, the results suggest that media coverage of voter fraud stories in Republican-controlled states are influential on voter fraud perceptions among Republican voters, above and beyond which party controls the state legislative apparatus that can be used to perpetuate the voter fraud narrative.

[Insert Figure 3 About Here]

Conclusion

Over the past few years, researchers have begun to investigate the origins, nature, and effects of voter fraud allegations in U.S. elections. With the increase in elite conservative rhetoric on voter fraud and the increasingly punitive response of state legislatures to perceived threats to democracy, further study is needed. This study provides a novel and important contribution to our understanding through examining the effect the media has on voters' perceptions of voter fraud. Studying the information environment is critical to understanding the apparent disconnect between facts and the public's beliefs about voter fraud.

In this paper, we demonstrate that increased media coverage of voter fraud is associated with heightened public concerns of its prevalence. Supporting anecdotal evidence, we find that Republicans are more susceptible to media messaging on fraud than Democrats or independents. Further, political interest moderates Republicans' perceptions – political interested Republicans are more likely to believe in the prevalence of voter fraud than others. However, Republican-controlled state legislatures appear to mitigated these individuals' concerns; perhaps suggesting the belief that

the prevalence of voter fraud in the state can be curtailed by the legislature. Lastly, our results lend

no support that demographic changes, actual cases of fraud, or the approval of election

administration on the state-level have discernible effects on voter fraud perceptions. In sum, this

paper demonstrates the important role the media play in voters' beliefs of the existence and

prevalence of voter fraud.

While this study focuses exclusively on the 2012 elections, widespread voter fraud allegations

during the 2016 elections makes understanding the information environment even more germane.

Trump's unprecedented claims of fraud and election rigging before and after the elections altered the

prominence of elite rhetoric on the issue. Instead of fringe Republican and conservatives making

voter fraud allegations, as seen in the past, 2016 was the first time in modern history that a major

party presidential candidate was making claims and stoking rhetoric. Further research into the

information environment surrounding the 2016 election and the polarizing effect of Trump –

particularly as a non-traditional Republican candidate – is needed to update and update our

knowledge of the role of voter fraud in US elections.

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Figure 1. Marginal Effects of Media Coverage of Voter Fraud Across Political Interest and Partisanship
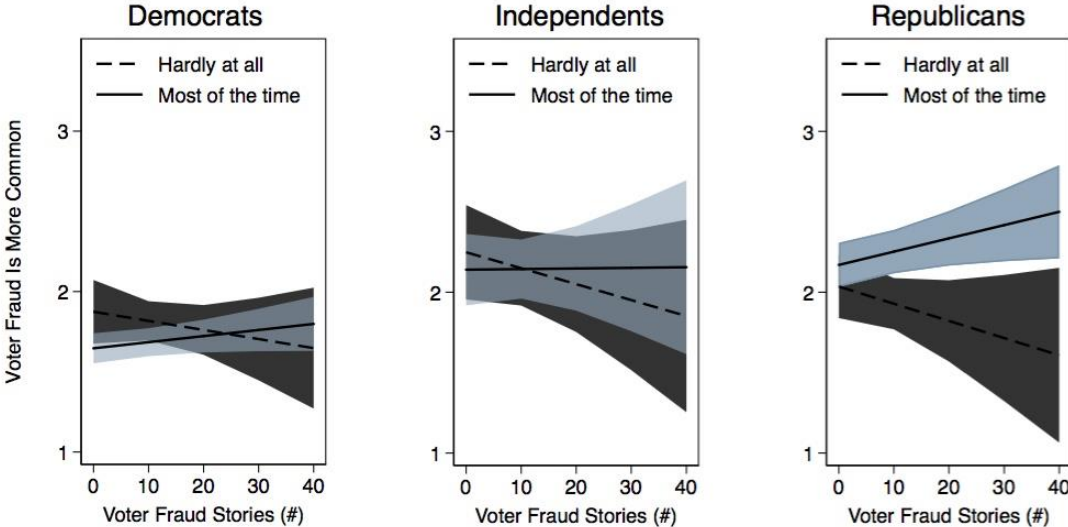
Source: 2012 Survey of Performance of American Elections (SPAE). Note: Larger values on y-axis indicate perception of voter fraud occurring more frequently. All other values held at mean and median values. Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 2. Marginal Effects of Party Legislative Control on Voter Fraud Perceptions Across Political Interest Among Republicans
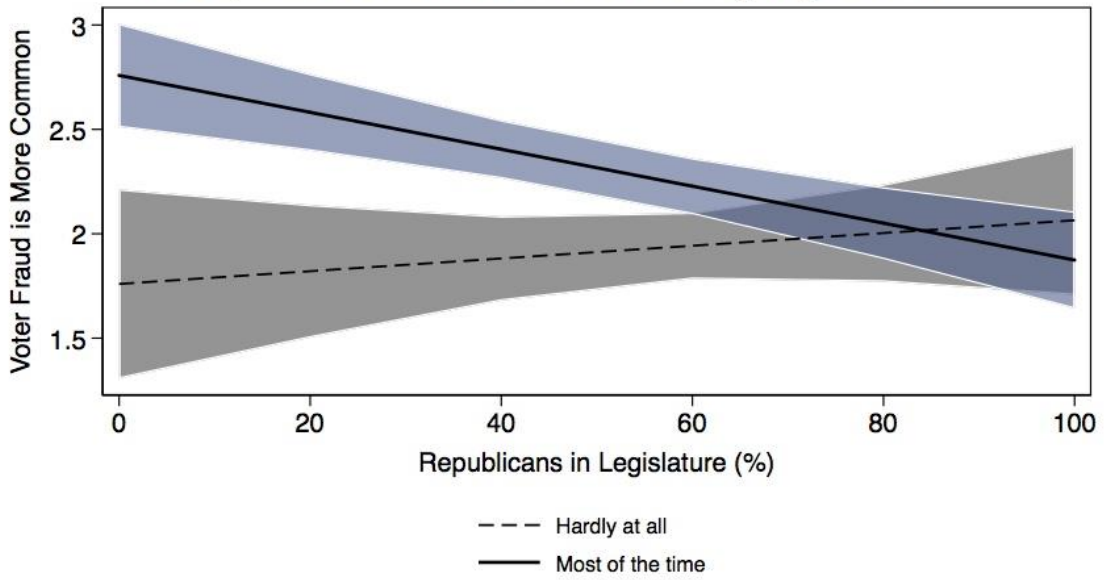
Sources: State voter fraud perceptions obtained from 2012 Survey of Performance of American Elections. Partisan control of state legislatures obtained from University of Kentucky Center for Poverty Research National Welfare Data, 1980-2015.

Figure 3. Local Media Coverage of Voter Fraud Across Partisan Control of State Legislature
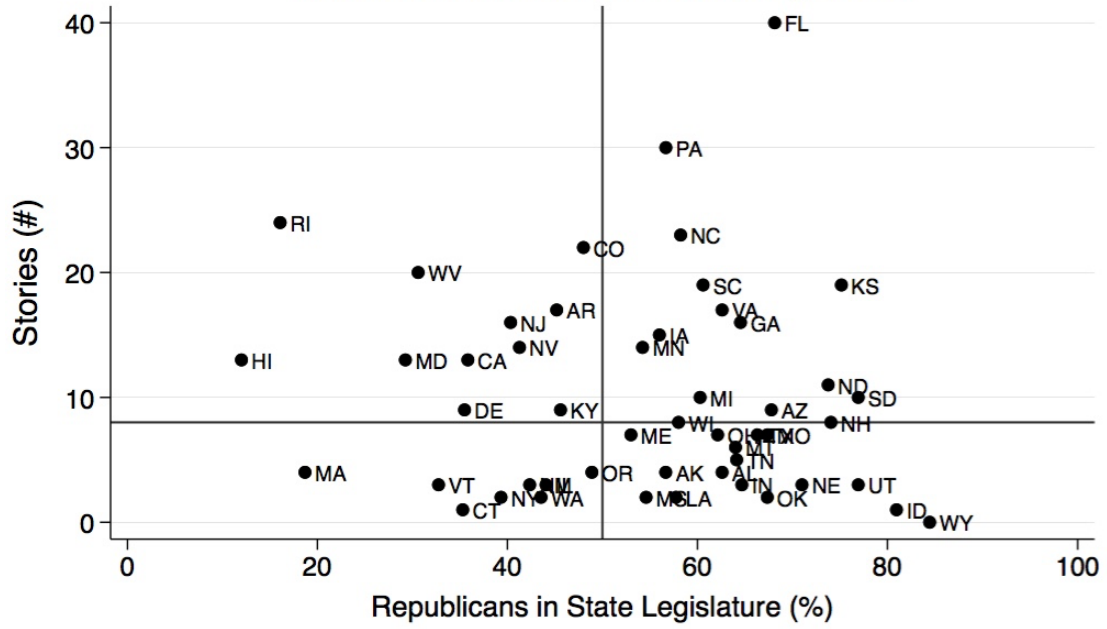
Table 1. Coefficients of Cross-Level Interactive Terms
with Political Interest Across Party Affiliation

Political interest interacted with:	Democrats coef. (s.e.)	Independents coef. (s.e.)	Republicans coef. (s.e.)
Voter Fraud Stories	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.002)**
% R Legislature	-0.03 (0.11)	-0.01 (0.21)	-0.40 (0.13)**
Battleground State	-0.02 (0.05)	0.15 (0.13)	0.05 (0.05)
Voter ID Laws	0.02 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)
EPI Index	-0.16 (0.29)	0.47 (0.47)	-0.21 (0.34)
Alleged Voter Fraud Cases	-0.00 (0.01)	0.04 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.01)
Undoc. Pop. Growth	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)
Foreign-Born Noncitizen Growth	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.02)
Latino Growth	0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
Black Pop. Growth	0.06 (0.03)*	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.03)

Source: 2012 Survey of Performance of American Elections. Note: Standard errors in parentheses. State-level data are merged from Fogarty et al. (2015), Warren and Warren (2013), and U.S. Census ACS data. Each row represents a separate model with the proposed cross-level interaction term. $^{*} p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$

METHODS

Effects are expressed as OLS regression coefficients, with a positive sign indicating beliefs that voter fraud is very common and a negative sign indicating beliefs that voter fraud does not occur at all. To investigate the variation among like-minded voters, we run separate multilevel models on respondents based on their party affiliation. This approach fits with evidence and modeling assumptions that voter fraud debates are largely understood in partisan and polarized terms (Bowler and Donovan 2016; Wolak 2014).

Our statistical models assume that the attitudes of voters are influenced in part by the communities in which they are nested. Due to the multilevel structure of the data, we use multilevel mixed models to compute unbiased standard errors for model coefficients (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Steenbergen and Jones 2002). We also employ SPAE survey weights to obtain our results. Following the notation of Rudolph and Rahn (2005) For each partisan group, our proposed level-1 statistical model is expressed generally as:

$$\text{Voter fraud beliefs}_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} \cdot \text{Political Interest}_{ij} + \beta_{2j} \cdot \text{Ideology}_{ij}$$

$$\beta_{3j} \cdot \text{ShowID}_{ij} + \beta_{4j} \cdot \text{Education}_{ij} + \beta_{5j} \cdot \text{Age}_{ij} +$$

$$\beta_{6j} \cdot \text{Female}_{ij} + \beta_{7j} \cdot \text{Black}_{ij} + \beta_{8j} \cdot \text{Hispanic}_{ij} +$$

$$\beta_{9j} \cdot \text{Asian}_{ij} + \beta_{10j} \cdot \text{NA/ME/Other}_{ij} + \beta_{11j} \cdot \text{Mixed}_{ij} + r_{ij} \qquad [1]$$

where β_{kj} represents the individual-level effect associated with a proposed indepdent variable, β_{0j} is an intercept, and r_{ij} is an individual disturbance term. Voter fraud beliefs$_{ij}$ then represents the extent to which an ith respondent living in the jth state believes that voter fraud occurs in U.S. elections. The effects of state-level conditions are expressed as a level-2 model of the intercept:

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \cdot \text{Undoc. Pop. Growth}_j + \gamma_{02} \cdot \text{Black Growth}_j +$$

$$\gamma_{03} \cdot \text{EPI Index}_j + \gamma_{04} \cdot \text{State Voter ID Score}_j +$$

$$\gamma_{05} \cdot \%\text{Republican}_j + \gamma_{06} \cdot \text{Battleground}_j +$$

$$\gamma_{07} \cdot \text{Voter Fraud Stories}_j + \gamma_{08} \cdot \text{Voter Fraud Cases}_j + u_{0j} \qquad [2]$$

where β_{0j} represents the mean level of voter fraud beliefs in state j, γ_{00} represents the average intercept across all states, each γ represents a state fixed-effect, and u_{0j} is a level-2 disturbance term.

We also theorize that each proposed contextual factor will moderate the effect of political interst on voter fraud perceptions. We test cross-level interactions involving political interest by modeling the slope of political interest (β_{1j}) as:

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11} \cdot \text{Undoc. Pop. Growth}_j \qquad [3]$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{12} \cdot \text{Black Growth}_j \qquad [4]$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{13} \cdot \text{EPI Index}_j \qquad [5]$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{14} \cdot \text{State Voter ID}_j \qquad [6]$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{15} \cdot \text{Republican \% Legislatire}_j \qquad [7]$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{16} \cdot \text{Battleground}_j \qquad [8]$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{17} \cdot \text{Voter Fraud Stories}_j \qquad [9]$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{18} \cdot \text{Voter Fraud Cases}_j \qquad [10]$$

After substituting each equation from 3 to 10 into equation 1, we estimate the full model using a multilevel model using OLS regression.

Table A-1. Results from Base Multilevel Models of Voter Fraud Perceptions

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)
Individual-Level			
Ideology	0.20 (0.04)***	0.27 (0.07)***	0.12 (0.05)*
Political Interest	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.04)	0.11 (0.03)***
Show ID	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.16 (0.05)**
Education	-0.07 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.01)***
Age	-0.01 (0.00)***	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)*
Female	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.04)
Black	0.14 (0.06)*	-0.14 (0.13)	-0.17 (0.18)
Hispanic	0.03 (0.08)	-0.09 (0.16)	0.01 (0.16)
Asian	0.03 (0.11)	0.07 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.23)
NA/ME/Other	-0.05 (0.10)	0.30 (0.14)*	0.29 (0.13)*
Mixed	-0.05 (0.09)	0.28 (0.12)*	0.07 (0.13)
State-Level			
Battleground	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.10)	0.12 (0.07)
Voter Fraud Stories	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)
Undoc. Pop. Growth	0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Black pop.	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.19 (0.08)*	-0.07 (0.06)
Voter ID	0.01 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
% R Legislature	-0.37 (0.12)**	0.29 (0.31)	-0.69 (0.20)***
EPI Index	-0.09 (0.21)	0.04 (0.54)	0.41 (0.57)
Alleged Voter Fraud Cases	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
_cons	2.29 (0.17)***	1.86 (0.39)***	2.11 (0.46)***
Level-1 Obs.	3909	1047	3575
Level-2 Obs.	50	50	50
Wald X^2	526.17***	80.00***	94.08***
Variation Explained by Level-1	99%	96%	96%

Standard errors in parentheses
$^*p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$

Table A-2. Results from Multilevel Models of Voter Fraud Beliefs with Cross-Level Interaction Between Political Interest and State Media Coverage of Voter Fraud

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)
Cross-Level Interaction			
Pol. Interest X Voter Fraud Stories	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.002)**
Individual-Level			
Ideology	0.20 (0.04)***	0.27 (0.06)***	0.12 (0.05)*
Political Interest	-0.08 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.06)	0.04 (0.03)
Show ID	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.08)	-0.17 (0.05)***
Education	-0.07 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.01)***
Age	-0.01 (0.00)***	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)*
Female	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.05)
Black	0.14 (0.06)*	-0.14 (0.13)	-0.16 (0.17)
Hispanic	0.03 (0.08)	-0.10 (0.17)	0.02 (0.16)
Asian	0.03 (0.11)	0.08 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.23)
NA/ME/Other	-0.06 (0.10)	0.30 (0.15)*	0.30 (0.14)*
Mixed	-0.05 (0.09)	0.28 (0.12)*	0.07 (0.13)
State-Level			
Battleground	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.10)	0.12 (0.07)
Voter Fraud Stories	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)
Undoc. Pop. Growth	0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Black pop.	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.19 (0.08)*	-0.07 (0.06)
Voter ID	0.01 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
% R Legislature	-0.38 (0.12)**	0.30 (0.32)	-0.70 (0.20)***
EPI Index	-0.09 (0.21)	0.05 (0.53)	0.43 (0.57)
Alleged Voter Fraud Cases	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
_cons	2.40 (0.20)***	1.95 (0.42)***	2.32 (0.46)***
Level-1 Obs.	3909	1047	3575
Level-2 Obs.	50	50	50
Wald X^2	556.67 ***	95.40 ***	111.01***

Standard errors in parentheses

$^*p < 0.05,$ $^{**}p < 0.01,$ $^{***}p < 0.001$

Table A-3. Results from Multilevel Models of Voter Fraud Beliefs with Cross-Level Interaction Between Political Interest and Electoral Competition in 2012

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)
Cross-Level Interaction			
Pol. Interest X Battleground	-0.02 (0.05)	0.15 (0.13)	0.05 (0.05)
Individual-Level			
Ideology	0.20 (0.04)***	0.27 (0.06)***	0.12 (0.05)*
Political Interest	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.10 (0.03)***
Show ID	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.16 (0.05)**
Education	-0.07 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.01)***
Age	-0.01 (0.00)***	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)*
Female	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.04)
Black	0.13 (0.06)*	-0.15 (0.13)	-0.17 (0.18)
Hispanic	0.03 (0.08)	-0.07 (0.16)	0.01 (0.16)
Asian	0.03 (0.11)	0.09 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.23)
NA/ME/Other	-0.05 (0.10)	0.30 (0.14)*	0.29 (0.14)*
Mixed	-0.05 (0.09)	0.29 (0.12)*	0.08 (0.13)
State-Level			
Battleground	0.07 (0.15)	-0.51 (0.38)	-0.05 (0.18)
Voter Fraud Stories	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)
Undoc. Pop. Growth	0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Black pop.	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.19 (0.08)*	-0.07 (0.06)
Voter ID	0.01 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
% R Legislature	-0.37 (0.12)**	0.29 (0.31)	-0.69 (0.20)***
EPI Index	-0.09 (0.22)	0.04 (0.53)	0.42 (0.57)
Alleged Voter Fraud Cases	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
_cons	2.27 (0.17)***	1.93 (0.39)***	2.14 (0.46)***
Level-1 Obs.	3909	1047	3575
Level-2 Obs.	50	50	50
Wald X^2	556.27 ***	101.85 ***	95.82 ***

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A-4. Results from Multilevel Models of Voter Fraud Beliefs with Cross-Level Interaction Between Political Interest and Percentage Growth of State Undocumented Immigrant Population

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)
Cross-Level Interaction			
Pol. Interest X Undoc. Pop. Growth	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)
Individual-Level			
Ideology	0.20 (0.04)***	0.27 (0.07)***	0.12 (0.05)*
Political Interest	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.06)	0.09 (0.03)**
Show ID	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.08)	-0.16 (0.05)***
Education	-0.07 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.01)***
Age	-0.01 (0.00)***	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)*
Female	-0.06 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.04)
Black	0.14 (0.06)*	-0.13 (0.13)	-0.17 (0.18)
Hispanic	0.03 (0.08)	-0.09 (0.16)	0.01 (0.16)
Asian	0.03 (0.11)	0.08 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.23)
NA/ME/Other	-0.05 (0.10)	0.30 (0.14)*	0.29 (0.13)*
Mixed	-0.05 (0.09)	0.28 (0.12)*	0.07 (0.13)
State-Level			
Battleground	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.10)	0.12 (0.07)
Voter Fraud Stories	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)
Undoc. Pop. Growth	0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.00 (0.02)
Black pop.	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.19 (0.08)*	-0.07 (0.06)
Voter ID	0.01 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
% R Legislature	-0.37 (0.12)**	0.29 (0.31)	-0.69 (0.20)***
EPI Index	-0.09 (0.22)	0.03 (0.54)	0.41 (0.58)
Alleged Voter Fraud Cases	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
_cons	2.30 (0.20)***	1.97 (0.42)***	2.17 (0.48)***
Level-1 Obs.	3909	1047	3575
Level-2 Obs.	50	50	50
Wald X^2	556.45 ***	80.97 ***	99.98 ***

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A-5. Results from Multilevel Models of Voter Fraud Beliefs with Cross-Level Interaction Between Political Interest and Percentage Growth of State Black Population

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)
Cross-Level Interaction			
Pol. Interest X Black Pop. Growth	0.06 (0.03)*	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.03)
Individual-Level			
Ideology	0.20 (0.04)***	0.28 (0.07)***	0.12 (0.05)*
Political Interest	-0.08 (0.03)**	0.06 (0.06)	0.15 (0.04)***
Show ID	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.08)	-0.16 (0.05)***
Education	-0.07 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.01)***
Age	-0.01 (0.00)***	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)*
Female	-0.06 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.05)
Black	0.13 (0.06)*	-0.14 (0.13)	-0.17 (0.18)
Hispanic	0.02 (0.08)	-0.07 (0.17)	0.01 (0.16)
Asian	0.02 (0.11)	0.07 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.23)
NA/ME/Other	-0.06 (0.10)	0.30 (0.14)*	0.29 (0.14)*
Mixed	-0.06 (0.09)	0.26 (0.12)*	0.08 (0.13)
State-Level			
Battleground	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.10)	0.13 (0.07)
Voter Fraud Stories	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)
Undoc. Pop. Growth	0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Black pop.	-0.22 (0.10)*	0.09 (0.18)	0.15 (0.14)
Voter ID	0.01 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
% R Legislature	-0.37 (0.12)**	0.30 (0.32)	-0.70 (0.20)***
EPI Index	-0.08 (0.22)	0.01 (0.54)	0.41 (0.58)
Alleged Voter Fraud Cases	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
_cons	2.40 (0.18)***	1.68 (0.42)***	1.97 (0.46)***
Level-1 Obs.	3909	1047	3575
Level-2 Obs.	50	50	50
Wald X^2	574.19 ***	81.99 ***	94.93 ***

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A-6. Results from Multilevel Models of Voter Fraud Beliefs with Cross-Level Interaction Between Political Interest and Voter ID Laws

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)
Cross-Level Interaction			
Pol. Interest X Voter ID Laws	0.02 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)
Individual-Level			
Ideology	0.20 (0.04)***	0.27 (0.07)***	0.12 (0.05)*
Political Interest	-0.09 (0.04)*	0.05 (0.09)	0.12 (0.05)*
Show ID	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.16 (0.05)**
Education	-0.07 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.01)***
Age	-0.01 (0.00)***	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)*
Female	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.05)
Black	0.14 (0.06)*	-0.14 (0.13)	-0.17 (0.18)
Hispanic	0.03 (0.08)	-0.06 (0.17)	0.01 (0.16)
Asian	0.03 (0.11)	0.08 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.23)
NA/ME/Other	-0.05 (0.10)	0.30 (0.15)*	0.29 (0.13)*
Mixed	-0.05 (0.09)	0.29 (0.12)*	0.08 (0.13)
State-Level			
Battleground	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.10)	0.12 (0.07)
Voter Fraud Stories	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)
Undoc. Pop. Growth	0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Black pop.	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.19 (0.08)*	-0.07 (0.06)
Voter ID	-0.06 (0.05)	0.05 (0.09)	0.04 (0.07)
% R Legislature	-0.38 (0.12)**	0.29 (0.31)	-0.69 (0.20)***
EPI Index	-0.07 (0.22)	0.01 (0.54)	0.42 (0.58)
Alleged Voter Fraud Cases	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
_cons	2.44 (0.20)***	1.72 (0.45)***	2.04 (0.48)***
Level-1 Obs.	3909	1047	3575
Level-2 Obs.	50	50	50
Wald X^2	554.79 ***	88.49 ***	95.16 ***

Standard errors in parentheses
 * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A-7. Results from Multilevel Models of Voter Fraud Beliefs with Cross-Level Interaction Between Political Interest and Percentage of Republicans in State Legislature

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)
Cross-Level Interaction			
Pol. Interest X % R Legislature	-0.03 (0.11)	-0.01 (0.21)	-0.40 (0.13)**
Individual-Level			
Ideology	0.20 (0.04)***	0.27 (0.07)***	0.12 (0.05)*
Political Interest	-0.03 (0.07)	0.00 (0.12)	0.33 (0.08)***
Show ID	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.16 (0.05)**
Education	-0.07 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.01)***
Age	-0.01 (0.00)***	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)*
Female	-0.06 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.04)
Black	0.13 (0.06)*	-0.14 (0.13)	-0.15 (0.18)
Hispanic	0.03 (0.08)	-0.09 (0.16)	0.00 (0.16)
Asian	0.03 (0.11)	0.07 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.22)
NA/ME/Other	-0.05 (0.10)	0.30 (0.14)*	0.29 (0.13)*
Mixed	-0.05 (0.09)	0.28 (0.12)*	0.10 (0.14)
State-Level			
Battleground	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.11)	0.12 (0.07)
Voter Fraud Stories	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)
Undoc. Pop. Growth	0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Black pop.	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.19 (0.08)*	-0.07 (0.06)
Voter ID	0.01 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
% R Legislature	-0.27 (0.38)	0.32 (0.64)	0.70 (0.50)
EPI Index	-0.09 (0.22)	0.04 (0.54)	0.43 (0.58)
Alleged Voter Fraud Cases	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
_cons	2.24 (0.25)***	1.85 (0.47)***	1.28 (0.49)**
Level-1 Obs.	3909	1047	3575
Level-2 Obs.	50	50	50
Wald X^2	517.57***	82.54 ***	94.48 ***

Standard errors in parentheses
  * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A-8. Results from Multilevel Models of Voter Fraud Perceptions with Cross-Level Interaction Between Political Interest and State EPI Index

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)
Cross-Level Interaction			
Pol. Interest X EPI Index	-0.16 (0.29)	0.47 (0.47)	-0.21 (0.34)
Individual-Level			
Ideology	0.20 (0.04)***	0.27 (0.06)***	0.12 (0.05)*
Political Interest	0.07 (0.21)	-0.32 (0.31)	0.25 (0.23)
Show ID	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.16 (0.05)**
Education	-0.07 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.01)***
Age	-0.01 (0.00)***	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)*
Female	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.04)
Black	0.14 (0.06)*	-0.16 (0.13)	-0.17 (0.18)
Hispanic	0.03 (0.08)	-0.09 (0.16)	0.01 (0.16)
Asian	0.03 (0.11)	0.09 (0.16)	-0.11 (0.23)
NA/ME/Other	-0.05 (0.10)	0.30 (0.14)*	0.29 (0.13)*
Mixed	-0.05 (0.09)	0.28 (0.12)*	0.07 (0.14)
State-Level			
Battleground	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.10)	0.12 (0.07)
Voter Fraud Stories	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)
Undoc. Pop. Growth	0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Black pop.	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.19 (0.08)*	-0.07 (0.06)
Voter ID	0.01 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
% R Legislature	-0.37 (0.12)**	0.32 (0.31)	-0.69 (0.20)***
EPI Index	0.44 (0.98)	-1.35 (1.41)	1.14 (1.30)
Alleged Voter Fraud Cases	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
_cons	1.93 (0.67)**	2.79 (0.95)**	1.62 (0.90)
Level-1 Obs.	3909	1047	3575
Level-2 Obs.	50	50	50
Wald X^2	605.20***	82.87***	91.96***

Standard errors in parentheses
$^*p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$

Table A-9. Results from Multilevel Models of Voter Fraud Perceptions with Cross-Level Interaction Between Political Interest and Alleged Voter Fraud Cases in State

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)
Cross-Level Interaction			
Pol. Interest X Alleged Voter Fraud Cases	-0.00 (0.01)	0.04 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.01)
Individual-Level			
Ideology	0.20 (0.04)***	0.27 (0.07)***	0.12 (0.05)*
Political Interest	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.05)	0.11 (0.03)***
Show ID	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.08)	-0.16 (0.05)***
Education	-0.07 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.01)***
Age	-0.01 (0.00)***	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)*
Female	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.04)
Black	0.14 (0.06)*	-0.11 (0.14)	-0.17 (0.18)
Hispanic	0.03 (0.08)	-0.10 (0.16)	0.01 (0.16)
Asian	0.03 (0.11)	0.07 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.23)
NA/ME/Other	-0.05 (0.10)	0.30 (0.14)*	0.29 (0.13)*
Mixed	-0.05 (0.09)	0.27 (0.12)*	0.07 (0.13)
State-Level			
Battleground	-0.01 (0.05)	0.01 (0.10)	0.12 (0.07)
Voter Fraud Stories	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)
Undoc. Pop. Growth	0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Black pop.	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.19 (0.08)*	-0.07 (0.06)
Voter ID	0.01 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
% R Legislature	-0.37 (0.12)**	0.30 (0.32)	-0.69 (0.20)***
EPI Index	-0.09 (0.21)	-0.06 (0.56)	0.42 (0.57)
Alleged Voter Fraud Cases	0.01 (0.03)	-0.14 (0.09)	0.04 (0.03)
_cons	2.29 (0.17)***	2.00 (0.39)***	2.10 (0.46)***
Level-1 Obs.	3909	1047	3575
Level-2 Obs.	50	50	50
Wald X^2	760.70***	80.34***	95.98***

Standard errors in parentheses
  * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A-10. Results from Multilevel Models of Voter Fraud Beliefs with Cross-Level Interaction Between Political Interest and Percentage Growth of State Foreign-Born Noncitizen Population

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)
Cross-Level Interaction			
Pol. Interest X FB Noncitizen Growth	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.02)
Individual-Level			
Ideology	0.20 (0.04)***	0.27 (0.07)***	0.12 (0.05)*
Political Interest	-0.08 (0.04)*	-0.04 (0.07)	0.11 (0.05)*
Show ID	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.08)	-0.16 (0.05)**
Education	-0.07 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.01)***
Age	-0.01 (0.00)***	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)*
Female	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.04)
Black	0.14 (0.06)*	-0.12 (0.13)	-0.17 (0.18)
Hispanic	0.03 (0.08)	-0.09 (0.16)	0.00 (0.16)
Asian	0.02 (0.11)	0.07 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.23)
NA/ME/Other	-0.05 (0.10)	0.30 (0.14)*	0.29 (0.14)*
Mixed	-0.06 (0.09)	0.28 (0.12)*	0.07 (0.13)
State-Level			
Battleground	0.00 (0.04)	0.00 (0.10)	0.15 (0.07)*
Voter Fraud Stories	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)
Foreign-born Noncitizen Growth	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.07)	0.03 (0.05)
Black pop.	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.20 (0.07)**	-0.09 (0.07)
Voter ID	0.02 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
% R Legislature	-0.47 (0.12)***	0.27 (0.34)	-0.74 (0.22)***
EPI Index	-0.12 (0.21)	0.02 (0.54)	0.39 (0.57)
Alleged Voter Fraud Cases	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
_cons	2.46 (0.18)***	2.01 (0.43)***	2.16 (0.49)***
Level-1 Obs.	3909	1047	3575
Level-2 Obs.	50	50	50
Wald X^2	620.65***	88.76***	94.93***

Standard errors in parentheses
*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$

Table A-11. Results from Multilevel Models of Voter Fraud Beliefs with Cross-Level Interaction Between Political Interest and Percentage Growth of State Latino Population

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)	coef. (s.e.)
Cross-Level Interaction			
Pol. Interest X Latino Growth	0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
Individual-Level			
Ideology	0.20 (0.04)***	0.27 (0.07)***	0.12 (0.05)*
Political Interest	-0.07 (0.04)*	0.01 (0.06)	0.12 (0.04)**
Show ID	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.16 (0.05)**
Education	-0.07 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.01)***
Age	-0.01 (0.00)***	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)*
Female	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.04)
Black	0.14 (0.06)*	-0.13 (0.12)	-0.17 (0.18)
Hispanic	0.03 (0.08)	-0.10 (0.16)	0.00 (0.16)
Asian	0.02 (0.11)	0.07 (0.17)	-0.12 (0.23)
NA/ME/Other	-0.05 (0.10)	0.30 (0.14)*	0.28 (0.14)*
Mixed	-0.05 (0.09)	0.27 (0.12)*	0.07 (0.13)
State-Level			
Battleground	0.00 (0.05)	-0.00 (0.10)	0.15 (0.08)
Voter Fraud Stories	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)
Latino Growth	-0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
Black pop.	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.20 (0.07)**	-0.09 (0.07)
Voter ID	0.02 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
% R Legislature	-0.39 (0.12)**	0.34 (0.33)	-0.67 (0.22)**
EPI Index	-0.09 (0.21)	-0.01 (0.54)	0.37 (0.58)
Alleged Voter Fraud Cases	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)
_cons	2.41 (0.19)***	1.90 (0.41)***	2.15 (0.49)***
Level-1 Obs.	3909	1047	3575
Level-2 Obs.	50	50	50
Wald X^2	584.72***	87.65***	95.25***

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$