

# The Distorting Effects of Racial Animus on Proximity Voting in the 2016 Elections

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## Abstract

While the use of racial appeals by the 2016 Trump campaign is indisputable, researchers are actively debating their precise role in influencing voter behavior in the election. We seek to expand upon existing research which finds that racial animus electorally benefited the Trump campaign. We examine to what extent those benefits redounded to GOP candidates down-ballot and whether racial animus distorted ideological proximity voting in the 2016 election. We find that racial animus among voters helped Republicans at multiple ballot levels and that higher levels of racial animus distorted correct proximity voting among voters ideologically closest to the Democratic candidate. Our findings suggest that high salience campaign appeals on race at the presidential level can influence elections for the House and Senate. We also provide evidence that the process of racial partisan realignment is incomplete, as some white voters still vote incongruously with their ideology due to racial animus.

Key words: racial animus, proximity voting, presidential elections, congressional elections

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