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ORIGINAL PAPER

Are Voters Mobilized by a 'Friend-and-Neighbor' on the Ballot? Evidence from a Field Experiment

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Abstract In his seminal work on Southern politics, V.O. Key observed that voters disproportionately support local candidates at the ballot box. While empirical analyses have confirmed "friends-and-neighbors" voting across numerous electoral contexts, no one has directly examined voter turnout as the mechanism linking place of residence to vote choice. We argue that place of residence is a social identity that incentivizes citizens to turn out to vote on behalf of the local candidate. We test this mobilization mechanism using a randomized field experiment conducted during a 2014 state legislative primary election. Our results show that county ties between candidates and voters likely boost turnout. Our findings contribute to our understanding of the importance of place identity for turnout decisions in low-information elections.

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In *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, V.O. Key (1949) challenged the perception that the American South was a region that voted in relative harmony for Democratic candidates. Rather, he argued that in the absence of a formal two-party structure, Southern voters in the early 1900s drew divisions along geographic lines in lieu of significant policy differences among candidates for office. Voters supported the local favorite and candidates were elected on the basis of residency. Key (1949, 37) observed that, "candidates for governor tend to poll overwhelming majorities in their home counties and to draw heavy support in adjacent counties," coining the term "friends-and-neighbors" voting—or "localism"—to describe this phenomenon.

Following Key's work, numerous scholars extended the concept of "friends-and-neighbors" voting beyond southern Democratic primaries to general election contests elsewhere. Lewis-Beck and Rice (1983), for example, find that most presidential candidates receive up to four additional percentage points in their home states (see also Dudley and Rapoport 1989; Garand 1988; Holbrook 1991; Mixon and Tyrone 2004). Other studies provide strong support for "friends-and-neighbors" voting in congressional, statewide, and local elections in the United States (Aspin and Hall 1987; Brunk et al. 1988; Kjar and Laband 2002; Meredith 2013b; Rice and Macht 1987a, b; Tatalovich 1975). These effects have also been found in parliamentary and local elections in Brazil, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom (Ames 1995; Arzheimer and Evans 2012; Cunningham 1971; Johnston 1974; Parker 1982). Indeed, across national and electoral contexts, voters disproportionately support local candidates.[1]

Scholars have identified persuasion and mobilization as two possible mechanisms which could account for "friends-and-neighbors" voting effects. A persuasion mechanism suggests that the presence of a local candidate changes the vote calculus of voters such that voters of the opposition party or candidate do not support their otherwise favored candidate but instead cross the aisle to support the local favorite. The aggregate consequence of this shifting behavior would be an increased vote share in a candidate's home locale.

A mobilization mechanism suggests that local candidates fare better because they mobilize (supportive) local citizens who would otherwise not vote. Unlike the persuasion mechanism, mobilization does not assume that "friends-and-neighbors" voting patterns are independent of the decision to vote. That is, persuasion explanations assume that the level of turnout is independent of the vote choice outcome associated with "friends-and-neighbors" voting. The turnout mechanism suggests that citizens who favor the local candidate will have greater incentives to vote, resulting in higher support for local candidates.

[1] The exception is vice-presidential candidates. The literature shows no statistically significant increase in vote share in the home state of the vice-presidential candidate (Dudley and Rapoport 1989; Garand 1988; Holbrook 1991; but see Heersink and Peterson 2016).

The few studies to examine these mechanisms point toward the greater importance of persuasion, rather than mobilization, relatively speaking, as the mechanism linking local candidates and voter support (e.g., Meredith 2013a, b; Rice and Macht 1987b). But the evidence on this point is mixed, indirect, and in some instances, speculative. We focus on the voter mobilization mechanism for "friends-and-neighbors" voting and make three central contributions. First, we expand theoretically on the mobilization mechanism, proposing a social identity explanation for the effects of localism on voter turnout. Second, we offer the first direct empirical evidence on the question of whether having a "friend-and-neighbor" on the ballot mobilizes individuals to vote. And, third, we consider the distinctive effects of counties and towns as localities (i.e., place) conditioning "friends-and-neighbors" turnout effects. We situate our work in the context of a primary election, as did Key, where the policy differences between candidates are likely small and candidate residency is a potentially strong motivator for individuals' decisions to vote.

Why Do Voters Support Local Candidates? Localism as a Social Identity

"Friends-and-neighbors" voting effects have been consistently detected across a diverse array of electoral contexts, suggesting that shared geography reflects a fundamental aspect of citizens' decision-making calculus. Yet, *why* local candidates receive disproportionate support is not especially clear. Key, studying Democratic gubernatorial primaries in the South, and Lewis-Beck and Rice (1983), studying presidential elections from 1884 to 1980, suggest that voters may believe that they will receive distributional benefits from local representation in the form of funding for local (i.e. county or state) projects and the like. The argument is consistent with evidence showing that voters reward legislators at the ballot box for allocating funding to their districts (e.g., Ferejohn 1974; Grimmer et al. 2012).

Voters may also support local candidates because local candidates are more familiar to them (Bowler et al. 1993), have greater name recognition (Lawless 2012), or are likely to be trusted more than non-local candidates (Gimpel et al. 2008). More broadly, Lewis-Beck and Rice (1983) argue that voters receive psychological identity-based benefits from voting for a candidate who shares their place of residence. In these ways, localism may function much like gender, race, candidate appearance, and other characteristics on which voters routinely rely as information shortcuts and which have been shown to affect both voter turnout and vote choice, especially in low-information elections (Banducci et al. 2008; Barreto 2007, 2010; Matson and Fine 2006; McDermott 1998; McKee et al. 2012; Popkin 1991).

We argue that these various explanations can be understood by recognizing that place of residence is a social identity (i.e., a sense of belonging to a particular group) that is made salient when local candidates are on the ballot. Such an attachment leads to the development of in-group biases, wherein individuals positively distinguish their group from other groups and tend to view these out-

groups negatively, or at least, not positively (e.g., Huddy 2001; Tajfel 1981; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Turner et al. 1987). Importantly, in-group members—in order to maintain their identity and its positive distinctiveness—seek to advance the goals of the group.

Political scientists have used social identity theory to develop new models of party identification (e.g., Green et al. 2002; Greene 1999). Research suggests that partisans are very much willing to ascribe negative traits to the opposition party and that in-group party cues have an impact on both political and nonpolitical judgements (e.g., Iyengar et al. 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015). Importantly, Huddy et al. (2015) argue that partisanship is a social identity relevant to political participation, where the decision to engage in politics is a by-product of the desire to defeat the opposition.

The effects of in-group vs. out-group identities have also been documented with respect to race. Barreto (2007, 2010) assesses the link between Latino candidates and Latino voting behavior and demonstrates that Latino voters are more likely to vote when there is a Latino candidate on the ballot, suggesting that ethnic identity has the power to stimulate participation. Tate (1991, 1161) offers a similar argument with respect to black voters, arguing that "blacks turn out and vote in greater numbers when a black is competing for elective office because of group loyalty, pride, and increased interest" (also see Lublin and Tate 1995; Tate 1994; Washington 2006).

We argue that place of residence cues can operate much like party, race or other heuristics or cues with respect to voting behavior. Voters maintain attachments to their place of residence, value these attachments, and use these attachments in motivating political behavior and evaluating candidates. Imagine a voter born and raised in a particular locale, who then worked and raised their own family in this same locale. It is hard to imagine that this individual would not feel a particular attachment to the community. We argue that, as with partisan and racial identities, place identity offers citizens a way to differentiate candidates. In a context with two candidates each residing in different areas of a given state or district, voters could rely on such a cue. And like party and race, the decision to turn out to vote and/or cast a ballot for the local candidate is a reflection of in-group bias, where in-group members are motivated to advance the interests of the group and its members. In this case, this means supporting the electoral efforts of local candidates.

To be sure, we are not suggesting that place as a social identity rivals party identification or race as a driver of political behavior. It is likely not the case that voters go to the ballot box with home county, rather than partisanship, in mind first and foremost. We propose instead that place identity might factor into a voter's decision-making calculus in instances in which other attributes or identities, such as party and race, may not allow for the differentiation of candidates—an assumption that is consistent with Key's original work on where we should expect "friends-and-neighbors" effects to be strongest.

Social Identity and Voter Mobilization

Understanding "friends-and-neighbors" voting as a reflection of social identity is useful whether one considers either persuasion or mobilization as the linkage mechanism at work. Indeed, we should expect that the desire to support the in-group candidate and beat the out-group candidate should provide greater incentives to turn out to vote and to drive the decision to do so on behalf of the local candidate. To date, three studies have examined both the persuasion and mobilization linkages. Rice and Macht (1987b) use county-level data from 24 gubernatorial elections between 1978 and 1982 and find support for both hypotheses, reporting an average turnout increase of 1.1% in home counties and a conversion effect of 1.94%. In two papers, Meredith (2013a, b) uses county-level data to examine the relative importance of persuasion vs. mobilization and concludes in both cases that persuasion (or "conversion") is likely the stronger mechanism.

Despite the use of creative research designs, none of these studies provides an optimal assessment of the persuasion and mobilization mechanisms, and they are especially weak with respect to assessing the mobilization mechanism we are interested in. Meredith's (2013a) primary analysis compares localism effects in a set of elections in which turnout varies to a set in which turnout is held constant and speculates that if turnout is an important factor, then these "friends-and-neighbors" effects should differ. While informative, these comparisons are speculative and do not speak directly to how the presence of a local candidate changes the incentive to vote.

Additionally, in all three studies, it should be noted that the evidence is based on general election contexts in which voting decisions are likely dominated by partisan considerations. This is a substantial departure from Key's seminal work, in which the presence of "friends-and-neighbors" voting was derived entirely from the Democratic South, and the empirical patterns he detailed were drawn from primary elections. Key's theory rests on the assumption that in a primary election, policy stances between candidates will be indistinguishable. Given the lack of policy disagreement, voters have little information to use in guiding their vote choice, and a candidate's county of origin may become more important in the voter's decision-making calculus. Indeed, research indicates that even a small amount of information can dramatically alter preferences in primary elections (Alvarez 1997). We argue that testing the mechanism that can account for "friends-and-neighbors" voting requires returning to the original argument and assessing the evidence where other voting cues are muted.

Another limitation of the existing studies is that each relies on aggregate-level data to test individual-level theories about the type of information individuals use in deciding whether to vote. Thus, the few available studies of "friends-and-neighbors" voting cannot speak to the more direct question of whether individuals are more likely to vote when a local candidate is on the ballot. Our study takes into account these two limitations and offers original evidence about whether having a "local" candidate on the ballot increases individuals' likelihood of voting. Answering this question using individual-level evidence in the appropriate political

context is critical to evaluating mobilization as an explanation for "friends-and-neighbors" voting.

We also take advantage of this study to more deeply consider the geographical bases of "friends-and-neighbors" voting. Key's initial analyses, as well most all subsequent studies, focus on the county as the relevant geographical unit. We recognize that this is likely due to the availability of election returns at the county level. Theoretically, however, we do not know whether the county is the relevant—or the only relevant—reference locale for voters in today's increasingly urbanized environment. Indeed, voters could have many place identities—city, county, state, country—and the extent to which these identities matter for political behavior will almost certainly vary across electoral contexts. We explore these variations by testing both the town and the county as possible geographic reference contexts relevant to "friends-and-neighbors" turnout effects.

Our expectations regarding (potential) differences in the effectiveness of "friends-and-neighbors" voter mobilization at the county and town levels are mixed. One could imagine that the town is the most important geographical identity—and as such, a more potent motivator for the decision to vote—because it is the closest geographic unit to the individual. Yet, this potency may be muted in practice by citizens' prior information about town-level candidate ties. That is, priming voters with a town identity may not provide voters with new information that modifies the calculus of voting. If voters are less aware of shared county ties with candidates, providing information about county ties may be more likely to activate a latent place identity that modifies the calculus of voting. As a result, lower level of knowledge about county ties might suggest that the learning impact of that knowledge on citizens is greater at the county, rather than, the town, level.[2]

In addition to this cognitive model of behavior, we also note that campaign dynamics are always observed in unique social contexts, and that individuals' decision-making often reflects aspects of their social networks (e.g., Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Sinclair 2012; Sokhey and McClurg 2012). As a result, we expect that another distinctive aspect of town and county differences in the mobilization effects of place might reflect unique aspects of the social flow of information. This expectation is generally consistent with Granovetter's (1973) argument that the exchange of new information is likeliest among large and diffuse networks. Granovetter's pioneering work on social ties argues that weak ties—those ties characterized as casual acquaintances—are important because they lead to widespread diffusion of information, whereas strong ties—those ties characterized by close friendship, with greater time investments, intensity and intimacy than weak ties—only recirculate information among a small group of individuals. Weak ties allow for information diffusion as they provide "bridges" between networks of

[2] We also note that the relative importance of town vs. county could vary given both information levels about candidate ties *and* the electoral context. In a local election, we would anticipate that voters are more aware of candidate ties and that these ties are of relatively more importance in the decision whether to vote and for whom to vote. In an election for a highly salient office, such as Governor, however, geographic ties might be less known and behavioral decisions might be more likely to be driven by policy considerations (e.g., the state of the economy) or the like. In the discussion section below, we expand on these possibilities further.

stronger ties. As they bridge these networks, they allow for new information to be introduced into networks.[3]

While the extension of this argument from social networks to campaign voter mobilization activities is imperfect, it nonetheless points to another possibility as to differences regarding the effectiveness of identifying candidates' towns, vs. counties, in mobilizing voters. Both the level of prior information about the candidates as well as the salience of a particular place identity would be expected to vary based on the place of residence, with more intimate ties being evidenced at the town, rather than county, level. If the town is identified as a "strong tie," and the county as a "weak tie," we would expect "friends-and-neighbors" mobilization to be evidenced less in the candidate's hometown (where the candidate and the voter are more likely prior to the campaign to be a part of the same social network) than in the candidate's home county. The greater mobilization effect occurs in counties because, at least in part, the "friends-and-neighbors" cue as a formal campaign strategy conveys new information in the broader context (with weaker ties).[4]

Study Design and Results: Massachusetts Primary Election

We approach our question using a randomized field experiment, which allows us to use individual-level data with advantages for establishing the causal relationships at work. Because previous work has relied on aggregate-level observational data, our approach is particularly innovative and valuable.

Our study was conducted in the context of the Norfolk, Bristol, and Middlesex State Senate Democratic primary election that took place on September 9, 2014 in Massachusetts.[5] The election featured two candidates for the nomination: Dylan Hayre, a resident of Natick (Middlesex County), and Sara Lynn Reynolds, a resident of Attleboro (Bristol County).

Figure 1 below illustrates the geography of the legislative district, highlighting candidates' hometowns and counties. As of July 1, 2015, Attleboro and Natick were the two largest cities in the Senate district, with populations of 44,284 and 36,262,

[3] Granovetter's hypothesis has been confirmed by other sociologists who show that, by building weak ties, individuals in a network accrue information they could not gather through their own network of strong ties (Constant et al. 1996; Cross and Cummings 2004; Levin and Cross 2004; Morrison 2002). Moreover, political scientists have subsequently adapted this framework to explain mobilization, lobbying and policy change, and congressional voting behavior (Carpenter et al. 1998; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Kirkland 2011).

[4] Note that this expectation is independent of the candidate's ability to directly mobilize friends (in either the town or county). The mobilization literature emphasizes the importance of neighbor, rather than stranger, driven get-out-the-vote operations. Our argument, however, focuses on the information flow of networks, rather than the dynamics of voter mobilization efforts. We do not claim that "more distant" mobilization efforts are more effective, but that the transmission of information is larger among more dispersed communities.

[5] Massachusetts has a modified closed primary system, where only those registered as Democrats, Republicans, or as Unenrolled may participate. For the purposes of our experiment, we restrict the sample to registered Democrats in order to test our theory in a true primary election, while minimizing the likelihood that Republican-leaning, Unenrolled voters could respond negatively to information about a Democratic primary.

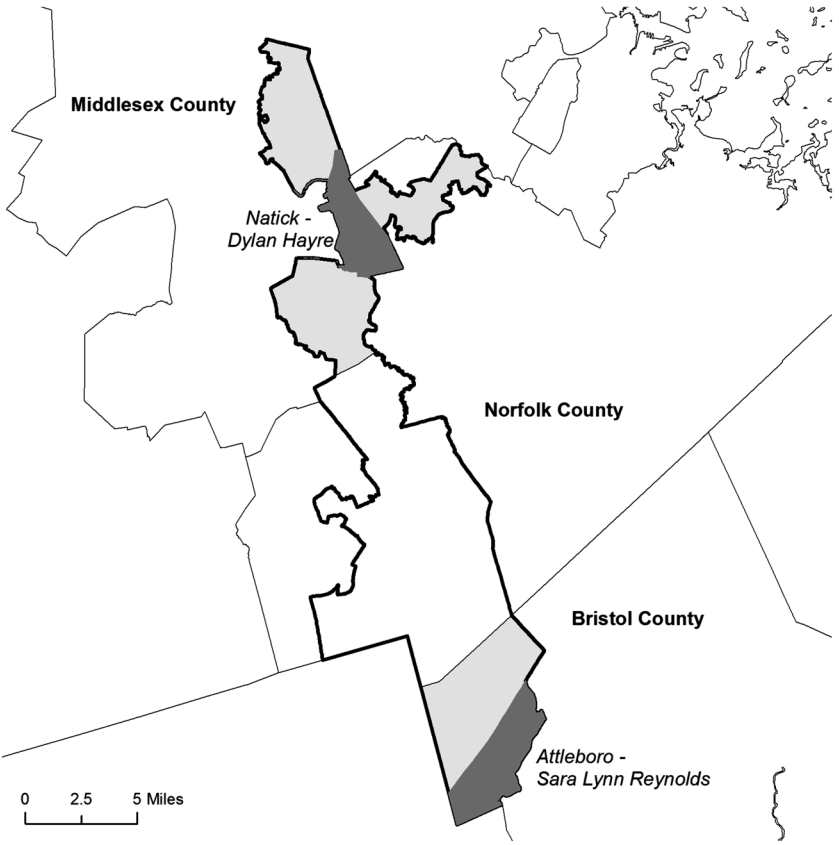

Fig. 1 District Map. The line boundary (*in bold*) designates the legislative district. Counties included in the experiment are designated with *light gray shading*. Candidates' hometowns within those counties are designated with *dark gray shading*

respectively. Middlesex County (where Natick is located) was the largest in Massachusetts, with a population of more than 1.5 million. Bristol County, on the other hand, was much smaller, with a population of about half a million. Thus, each of the towns and counties that were included in the field experiment were of significant size, particularly relative to the surrounding towns and counties within the legislative district.

Both candidates were active in their towns prior to running for the state legislature. Hayre was a local attorney, Chair of the Natick Council on Aging, and a member of the Natick Town Meeting, while Reynolds concurrently served as an at-large City Councilor. As a result, we expect that both candidates had high name recognition within their hometown. Hayre won the primary with 52% of the vote.[6] Notably, the primary was largely decided based on geography (Hand 2014). Hayre carried Natick

[6] Richard Ross, the Republican incumbent, did not face a primary challenge, and eventually went on to easily defeat Hayre in the general election, 61–39%.

by a margin of 896 (59%) to 336 (22%), and Reynolds won Attleboro by a margin of 608 (69%) to 174 (20%).[7] Similar results obtained across precincts in each town.

In adjacent towns, Hayre did not fare as well, receiving 41% of the vote in Sherborn and 51% in Wellesley. Reynolds, however, replicated her performance in Attleboro in nearby North Attleborough (67%) and Plainville (59%). Similar results appeared throughout the district. Hayre won each town in the district in Middlesex County (his home county), while Reynolds carried all of Bristol County (her home county), as well as a number of other localities in the Attleboro area (her hometown). What is clear from these aggregate vote returns is that primary voters favored the more local candidate.

Next, we examine whether voter mobilization may have factored into these "friends-and-neighbors" effects. Blocking within the two residential towns (Attleboro and Natick), we randomly assigned a total of 2031 registered Democratic voters residing in single-voter households with roughly equal probability to one of four experimental groups. The subjects were randomly assigned to receive one of three versions of a postcard mailing informing them about the upcoming election and urging them to vote, or to a fourth (control) group that was assigned not to receive any mail. In the first treatment condition, the names of the two candidates, along with their corresponding residential towns were mentioned; in a second treatment condition, the names of the candidates and their corresponding, residential counties (but not the town names) were referenced.

In a final treatment condition, only the names of the two candidates were provided with no mention of either the residential towns or counties. This treatment version was included as an additional baseline condition, or placebo, against which to evaluate the effects of the key interventions. Comparisons relative to the placebo condition permit us to isolate the effects of mentioning either the candidates' residential towns or counties without confounding these effects with generic information effects or the effect of receiving a postcard reminder in general.

Our experimental design, thus, is designed to prime the shared place identity between candidates and voters. Our expectation is that these treatments will prime the salience of place location for voters, activating in-group vs. out-group considerations relating to their candidate choices and increasing their likelihood of voting. In this way, our design seeks to mimic the kind of behavior that we expect candidate campaigns to participate in, where candidates might seek to convey to local voters their connections to their community and its interests.

To ensure that random assignment generated treatment and control groups that were balanced in terms of observable characteristics, we conducted a series of randomization checks. Table 1 below provides the results of these checks, with details about the distributions of age, gender, and prior voting (in the November 2012 general election) by block/experimental location. As shown in Table 1, our experimental design/randomization exercise yielded experimental groups that were balanced with respect to these background attributes. The F-statistics indicate that there are no significant differences in these attributes across conditions.

[7] Note that the within-town percentages do not add up to 100% because there were also 293 blank votes (20%) in Natick and 99 blank/other votes (11%) in Attleboro.

Table 1 Balance statistics

Location/block	Treatment	Male (%)	Age (years)	2012 Turnout (%)
Attleboro	Names + Towns	40.3	51.4	69.8
	Names + Counties	37.1	52.3	66.7
	Names Only	35.2	52.4	62.9
	Control	31.5	52.7	70.5
	Prob > F	*.31*	*.88*	*.24*
Natick	Names + Towns	33.9	55.0	81.2
	Names + Counties	30.8	54.8	80.4
	Names Only	35.5	54.4	83.6
	Control	26.5	55.0	84.0
	Prob > F	*.16*	*.97*	*.66*

Subjects assigned to the three treatment conditions were mailed simple, $4'' \times 6''$ white postcards that mentioned only the names and residence details of both of the Democratic contenders. The messages were "nonpartisan" in the sense that they did not advocate on behalf of a specific party or candidate. The pure control group in Attleboro was comprised of 146 subjects, while 308 voters were randomly assigned to receive the placebo postcard that mentioned only the candidates' names, 291 to the condition that added the candidates' home counties, and 278 to the mailing that mentioned the candidates' home towns. In Natick, 219 voters were assigned to the control group, 268 to the placebo (names only) condition, 250 to the "Names + Counties" condition, and 271 to the "Names + Towns" condition. The mailing was arranged so that subjects would receive the postcards approximately 3 to 7 days prior to the election.

Following the September 9, 2014 primary election, we obtained validated voter turnout data from election officials in each jurisdiction. Table 2 below reports the basic turnout rates for the group of subjects assigned to each treatment condition within blocks (towns). We discuss the results separately for each town and use meta-analysis to integrate findings. We also pool the data and analyze the findings overall.

In Attleboro, voters in the control group voted at a rate of 13%. Turnout among voters assigned to receive the version of the postcard that mentioned only the candidates' names was slightly lower, 11.7%, suggesting a turnout drop of 1.3% points relative to the control condition. Among registered Democratic voters assigned to receive the postcard that mentioned the candidates' names as well as their residential counties, turnout was 16.5%, indicating an average intent-to-treat effect of 3.5% points relative to the control condition. Those subjects who were assigned to receive postcards that mentioned the names along with the residential towns voted at a somewhat lower rate of only 11.5%; given the effects were statistically insignificant at conventional levels, we conclude the effects were null.[8]

[8] We acknowledge that some subjects assigned to be treated may not have been successfully contacted, but reliable estimates of contact rates for direct mailings are unavailable. Thus, we report intent-to-treat effects throughout, noting these are likely conservative estimates of the treatment effects. Taking contact rates into account would only magnify the treatment effects we report.

Table 2 Basic experimental results

Location/ block	Experimental condition	*N*	Turnout (%)	ITT versus Control	ITT versus Placebo
Attleboro	Names + Towns	278	11.5	−1.5	−0.2
	Names + Counties	291	16.5	+3.5	+4.8
	Names Only	308	11.7	−1.3	
	Control	146	13.0		
Natick	Names + Towns	271	23.6	+1.7	−5.9
	Names + Counties	250	30.8	+8.9	+1.3
	Names Only	268	29.5	+7.6	
	Control	219	21.9		
Pooled	Names + Towns	549	17.5	−0.9	−2.5
	Names + Counties	541	23.1	+4.7	+3.1
	Names Only	576	20.0	+1.6	
	Control	365	18.4		

Turnout in Natick was relatively higher overall, compared to Attleboro. The control group voted at a rate of 21.9%; 29.5% of those assigned to the placebo (names only) condition voted, implying a statistically significant ($p < .05$) average treatment effect of 7.6% points relative to the control condition. At 30.8%, average turnout in the "Names + Counties" condition was 8.9% points higher on average than in the control condition ($p < .05$) and 1.3% points higher than in the placebo condition. In the "Names + Towns" condition, 23.6% of subjects voted, representing an average intent-to-treat effect of 1.7% points (n.s.) relative to the control condition, but the rate of electoral participation amongst voters in this group was actually 5.9% points lower on average than in the placebo condition.

For more rigorous analysis of the experimental results, we employ multiple regression (OLS) to obtain estimates of the treatment effects. This approach permits the inclusion of control variables to correct for imbalances between experimental groups due to chance. We estimate two models separately within each experimental block and also a pooled analysis. First, we model individual voter turnout as a linear function of the experimental treatment conditions. The results of a linear regression in which voter turnout (Y_i) for individual i is regressed on dummy variables $\{D_{1i}, D_{2i} \ldots D_{ti}\}$ denoting each of the treatments (three treatments; the reference category is the control group) are presented in the first column of Table 3. This analysis restricts the sample to voters residing in Attleboro. This model may be written simply as:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{1i} + \ldots + \beta_t D_{ti} + u_i, \quad (1)$$

where u_i represents an unobserved disturbance term.

We also embellish the model to include a battery of available covariates, which included age, gender, and whether the individual voted in 2012. The inclusion of covariates is optional, but it may reduce the disturbance variance and improve the statistical precision of the estimated treatment effects. The model may be written as:

Table 3 Experimental results

	Attleboro		Natick		Pooled	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Names + Towns	−.015	−.017	.017	.023	.017	.020
	(.034)	(.033)	(.038)	(.037)	(.038)	(.037)
Names + Counties	.035	.037	.089**	.099***	.089**	.096***
	(.035)	(.034)	(.040)	(.039)	(.040)	(.038)
Names Only	−.013	.0001	.076**	.079**	.076**	.077**
	(.033)	(.032)	(.039)	(.038)	(.039)	(.038)
Attleboro					−.089**	−.054*
					(.039)	(.039)
Attleboro × Names + Towns					−.032	−.034
					(.051)	(.049)
Attleboro × Names + Counties					−.054	−.057
					(.054)	(.052)
Attleboro × Names Only					−.089**	−.074*
					(.052)	(.050)
Intercept	.130***	−.163***	.219***	−.291***	.219***	−.179***
	(.028)	(.038)	(.028)	(.049)	(.028)	(.036)
N	1023	1015	1008	1003	2031	2018
Covariates	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
RMSE	.338	.321	.441	.420	.393	.375

The outcome variable is voter turnout in the primary election (1 = voted, 0 = abstained). Coefficients represent ordinary least squares estimates with robust standard errors in parentheses. Covariates include age, gender, and voter turnout in the November 2012 election

* $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$, one-tailed

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{1i} + \ldots + \beta_t D_{ti} + \lambda_1 V_{1i} + \ldots + \lambda_t V_{ti} + u_i, \quad (2)$$

where (λ)'s represent parameters associated with each covariate (V), and u_i represents an unobserved disturbance term.

The estimates for this model are presented in the second column of Table 3. Parallel analyses are conducted and reported for Natick (Table 3, columns 3 and 4) and aggregated in a set of pooled analyses (Table 3, columns 5 and 6). The pooled analyses also include a dummy variable to account for blocks (towns) along with any corresponding interactions between the town blocks and each of the treatments.

The regression analyses reported in Table 3 parallel the findings described above. Overall, we find virtually no evidence that informing voters about the candidates' hometowns influenced voting in either of the experimental locations. By contrast, there is stronger evidence that referencing candidates' home *counties* did result in positive and (in Natick) statistically significant boosts to turnout. These effects were also obtained when compared to the placebo version of the treatment that provided voters only with the candidates' names, although the statistical precision of these effects is blunted by limited power.

The pooled results presented in columns 5 and 6 of Table 3 largely confirm these initial results. Though the difference is not statistically significant at conventional levels (CI = [− 0.08, 0.12] at the 95% level), we find suggestive evidence that the average effect of the "Names + Counties" condition is larger than the average effect of the placebo condition, a sign that information about county ties likely boosts turnout above and beyond the effect of general information about an election with an invitation to vote. The interactions suggest the average effects of the placebo and the "Names + Counties" treatments were likely lower in Attleboro, compared to Natick, but there appear to be no significant differences in the effect of the "Names + Towns" message, which did not influence turnout in either location. Thus, these results confirm a turnout effect of identifying candidates' home counties in primary elections, but suggest that such an effect is absent in the case of candidates' hometowns.

As an alternative, one can also use fixed effects meta-analysis to integrate the findings of the two experimental tests, one in each jurisdiction. The results imply that both the treatment that mentioned the candidates' hometowns (effect size = −0.10, s.e. = 2.5) as well as the placebo (effect size = 2.4, s.e. = 2.5) exerted null effects on average, but that the version of the treatment that mentioned candidates' home counties raised turnout by 5.8% points (s.e. = 2.6), overall on average, an effect that is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level (two-tailed), relative to the control condition.

Discussion and Conclusion

V.O. Key's seminal work on Southern politics established a conventional wisdom within American politics: friends-and-neighbors provide "local" candidates—especially those running in a primary election—with an advantage. Others have altered and extended Key's argument and have found evidence for this local effect across electoral contexts, including in general elections. Our findings generally confirm Key's insightful observations about the importance of "place" to individuals' political decisions.

Despite the clarity within the literature on the role of local roots in vote choice, there has been little scholarly consensus on what precisely is driving the observed increase in local vote share. The relative importance of the two broad explanations—persuasion and mobilization—has been rarely explored and has produced indirect, aggregate-level evidence at best.

In this paper, we provide the first direct test of whether having a candidate from the same local place mobilizes voters. We report the results of a nonpartisan study designed to examine "friends-and-neighbors" voting using randomized field experiments in two Massachusetts towns during a September 2014 Democratic primary election for State Senate. The results overall present some striking patterns.

We provide strong evidence that identifying candidates' home *counties* enhances participation. We are struck by the magnitude of the average turnout effects we observe. Effects in the 6-percentage point range have rarely been observed in related field experimental studies; if true, such an effect would be about 12 times more

powerful than a generic mailer (Green and Gerber 2012). If such boosts in effectiveness can be achieved simply by providing some basic information about candidates' counties, this is of enormous consequence for both theoretical and practical reasons.

We do not, however, find that indicating candidates' *hometowns*, along with their names, on blandishments to vote causes citizens to vote at higher rates. Why do we detect effects at the county, but not town, level? We again note the possibility that voters were already relatively well-informed, prior to our experimental manipulation, that the candidate was residing in their hometown. Given the background of each candidate, this seems to be a plausible explanation. If true, providing information about town-based ties in contexts where the candidate has had a relatively high level of town-level political exposure is unlikely to change a voter's decision-making calculus. In such cases, these considerations were likely already a part of the decision. Even though our experimental design stipulates that living in the same town and living in the same county must be mutually inclusive events, it is possible that voters simply do not think much in county terms, and that reminding them of these ties can stimulate behavior.

Our findings also suggest that studies examining the linkage between place identities and voter mobilization should consider more fully the potentially distinctive nature of the flow of information across place units. Our evidence is broadly consistent with what we expected based on Granovetter's concepts of strong and weak ties, but it was not designed to test or incorporate this information flow directly. Future research should explore these network possibilities by replicating our research with a design that includes voters living outside of the candidate's hometown or county. Doing so would allow for a more precise test of how information diffuses across geographic contexts.

In addition to the intriguing possibilities of the town vs. county effects, we are left to wonder how the effects we observe could differ in alternative contexts. Do the results generalize to Republican primaries, for instance? Would they operate similarly in other electoral settings, including general elections and races for higher office, such as U.S. Senate? On this latter point, we would expect there to be an interaction between information levels and the elective office. That is, in a general election for U.S. Senate, place identity should play less of a role in driving turnout than in races for lower offices in the state. In more highly salient and relatively high information contests, it is less likely that shared geography identity can turn a non-voter into a voter. Instead, the intensity of party identification, policy considerations, or simply the high-profile nature of the election should drive behavior. In a local contest, however, we should expect that information levels overall should be lower. As a result, ceteris paribus, we should expect "friends-and-neighbors" turnout effects will be greater in local contests than in races with national or statewide implications.

These interactions are also likely to be shaped by the phase of the election. In a *primary* election, we should expect to find effects similar to those reported in the current study, where shared identity in a low information environment that lacks policy cues might just be enough to stimulate voter turnout. Taken together, these considerations suggest that context could matter a great deal. We recognize that our

results might be an artifact of the local, low-information, primary electoral context in which they are situated. To confront these uncertainties, the next step would be to undertake a replication effort over a diverse array of contexts. Such an effort would offer the opportunity to better explain the scope conditions under which local ties can motivate voter turnout.

Such questions about the external validity of the findings can only be addressed through subsequent experimentation, replication, and extension. The current study provides the first direct test of mobilization as a mechanism accounting for "friends-and-neighbors" voting and it provides consistent evidence that county ties matter for the decision to vote. In addition, this paper provides some guidance and a reproducible experimental protocol that will allow scholars to refine our understanding of this phenomenon, and ideally, to further explain when, where, and why voters are mobilized by a "friend-and-neighbor" on the ballot.

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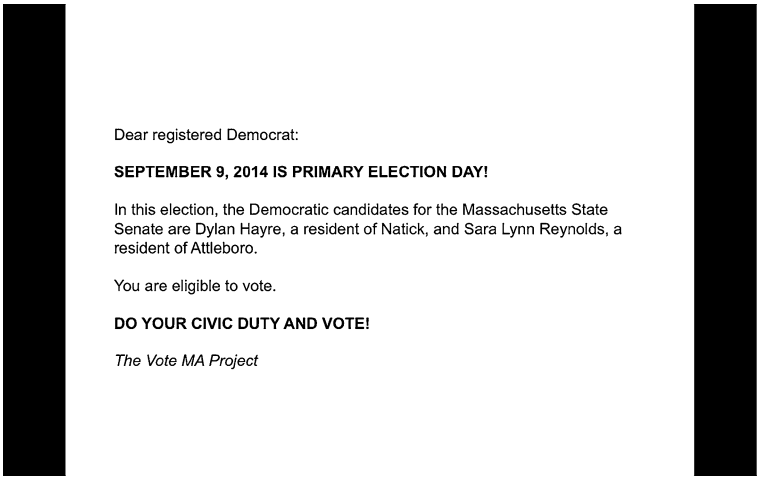
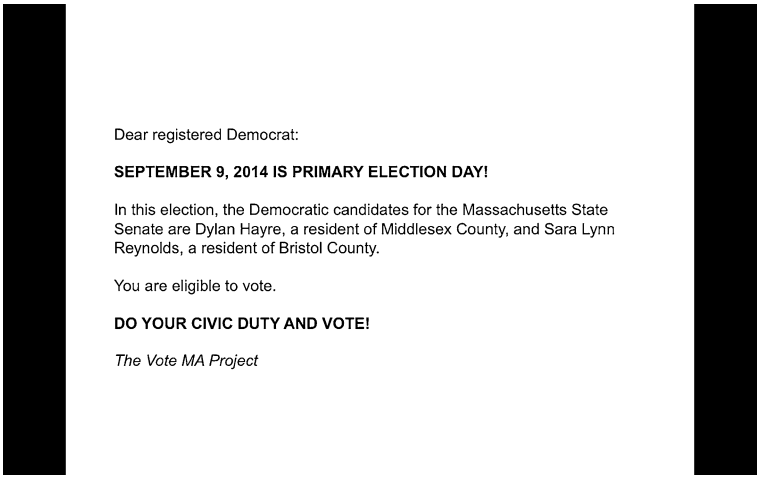
Appendix: Treatment Versions

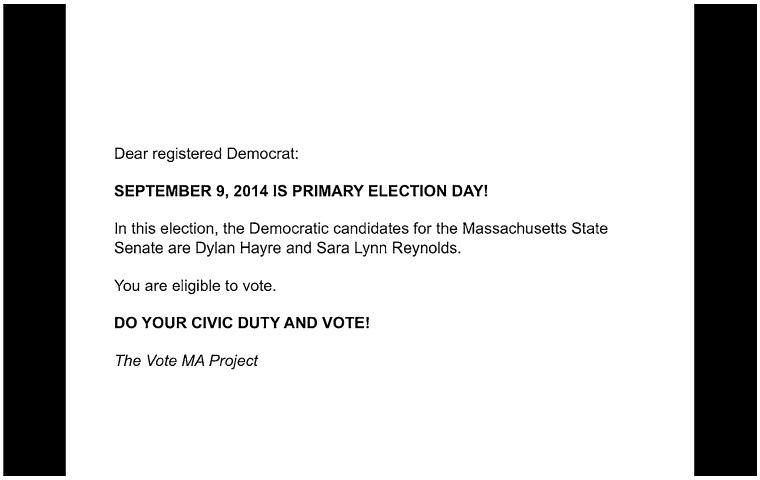
Names + Towns:



Names + Counties:



Names Only:



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