Dissecting Voting Patterns in the González-Danielson
Supreme Court Contest in Washington State

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I.   SUMMARY

In Central Washington, the most successful candidate of the August 7th primaries was not
Rob McKenna the Republican gubernatorial hopeful. Nor was it Michael Baumgartner,
Maria Cantwell's Republican challenger for the U.S. Senate. It was Bruce Danielson, the
Kitsap County attorney challenging Justice Steve González for a spot on the State Supreme
Court. While González spent more than $300,000 on his campaign, made campaign stops in
Yakima, and was endorsed by the Yakima Herald, his opponent Danielson beat him 64% to
36% in Yakima County. Yet Danielson raised and spent $0 on his campaign and made no
visits to Yakima. What's more, Yakima County – like almost all counties – did not print a
voter guide with candidate statements or information for voters to review. So how did
Danielson win 64% of the vote when he made no appearances and spent no money? After
all, McKenna, the Republican candidate for Governor who campaigned vigorously in Central
Washington won just 50% of the vote in Yakima County.

Subsequent statistical analysis of the August primary election results strongly supports the
hypothesis that racial voting bias distorted the González-Danielson race in certain
Washington counties. Even when controlling for an ideological split, voters in Yakima, Grant
and many counties across the state who were not provided an informational pamphlet, greatly
preferred Danielson over González.

II.   SOURCE OF DATA AND METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Examining racially polarized voting requires comparing precinct demographics with precinct
vote results, to determine if minority candidates received more or less votes in heavily White
precincts. We also wish to compare how White candidates with a minority opponent did,
compared to White candidates running against other White opponents, also comparing
precinct-by-precinct election results.

For the analysis of the González-Danielson contest in the August 2012 primary, precinct-by-
precinct certified election results were downloaded from each county auditor website.[1] For
comparability, we also downloaded election results for the gubernatorial election and U.S.
Senate election. Data for the voter demographics of each precinct was obtained from the
Secretary of State's Voters Registration Database ("VRDB") August 31, 2012 release.[2]
Using the U.S. Census Spanish surname database, we identified the percentage of voters in
each precinct who are likely to be Latino. These demographic distributions for each precinct
were then merged with the certified election results. Finally, using common statistics
software, we conducted ecological regression analysis and created graphical scatterplots.
The analysis undertaken is consistent with the methods proscribed by state and federal courts
when attempting to determine whether or not racial bloc voting has occurred or not.

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[1] Available at https://wei.sos.wa.gov/agency/osos/en/Pages/countyauditorsofwashingtonstate.aspx
[2] Available for purchase at https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/vrdb_order.aspx.

III. FINDINGS

As a starting point, it is important to examine the González-Danielson contest in a broader context of other candidates who were on the ballot in the August primary, to get an overall sense of the voting patterns. What might be most relevant is that González' received 35.7 percent of the overall vote in Yakima, but in a similar election for Supreme Court Justice Position 2, Susan Owens received 60.5 percent of the vote. Owens, often described as center-left in her ideology received 71 percent of the vote in King County. So in two similar Supreme Court contests that both featured a sitting Supreme Court Justice who each raised and spent considerable campaign money, running against opponents who raised no money at all and did no actual campaigning, we have two very different results. In one contest the incumbent received 60 percent of the vote (Owens), and in the other contest the incumbent received just 36 percent of the vote (González). With no voter pamphlet provided to voters, how did Justice Owens do 24 points better than Justice González in Yakima County?

Using Goodman's weighted ecological regression we analyzed voting patterns across the state, and focus here on three Central Washington counties. The results reveal a statistically significant, and certain, correlation between race and candidate preference in the González-Danielson contest.

In Yakima County, the regression estimates that across all precincts 68.6 percent of Latinos voted for González while just 25.1 percent of non-Latinos voted for Gonzalez – a 43 point voting differential between Latinos and non-Latinos. Analyzing Grant County results yields very similar trends. Based on the data across precincts, the model estimates that González received 68.7 percent of the Latino vote and 29.5 percent of the non-Latino vote – a 39 point gap.

The overall trend in these two counties is unmistakable and readily modeled by a regression line. Heavily Latino precincts are found to overwhelmingly prefer the Latino candidate while heavily non-Latino precincts prefer the white candidate, and those in between, split according to the demographics.

Given that State Supreme Court Justices running for election state no party preference, the Democratic or Republican affiliation of the candidates and voters should not account for the election results. Ideological preference does not accurately explain the outcome either. Comparing the vote results in the González-Danielson contest to those of Cantwell-Baumgartner and Inslee-McKenna shows that Danielson significantly outperformed the other conservative candidates. In Yakima and Grant Counties, Danielson received 74.9 and 70.4 percent of the vote respectively. McKenna earned a more modest 56.6 and 58.3 percent, while Baumgartner carried 43.7 and 42.6 percent. A closer look at the results reveals the true disproportionality of this outcome.

Danielson, who raised no money and did not campaign at all, outperformed Baumgartner in every single precinct in Yakima County. Not only did Danielson do better but he outperformed Baumgartner by 20 points or more in 75 percent of all precincts. Results from Grant County paint a similar picture. Danielson received more votes than Baumgartner in 92 percent of all precincts and held at least a 20-point advantage in 67 percent of them.

Similarly, Danielson received more votes than Republican Rob McKenna in 94 percent of all Yakima County precincts, beating McKenna by at least 20 points in 36 percent of them. In Grant County, Danielson outperformed McKenna in 79 percent of all precincts and held at least a 20-point advantage in 17 percent of them. However, in both counties Justice Susan Owens defeated her leading conservative opponent Douglas McQuaid by large margins.

Not all Washington counties followed these trends. Snohomish County, for example, showed little evidence of racially polarized voting. Our Goodman's weighted ecological regression estimates that a majority of non-Latinos, 55.9 percent voted for González. When the County's election results are plotted on a scatterplot correlating the González vote to the demographic breakdown of the precinct, no clear pattern emerges and no regression line can be "fit" to this pattern like in Yakima or Grant. Instead, the best fitting model for the data is a flat line suggesting no racial bloc voting exists. Given the centralization of the data points and the lack of slope, no clear correlation between voter preference and race can be drawn.
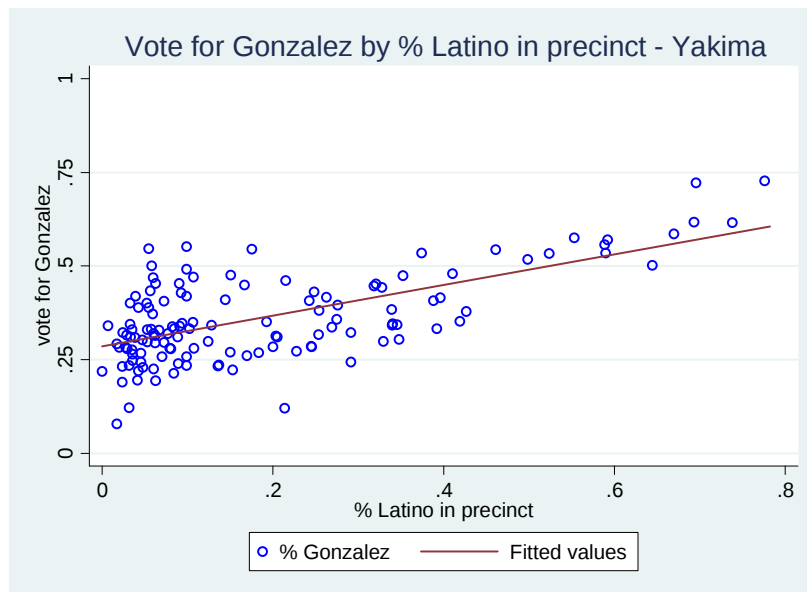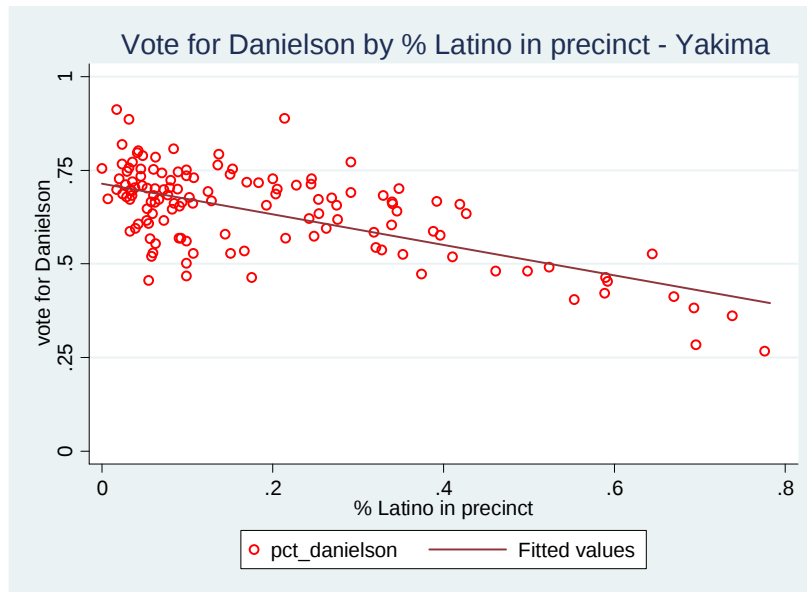
Furthermore, Danielson did not disproportionately outperform the other conservative candidates in Snohomish County. Danielson received 44.1 percent of the non-Latino vote, while McKenna, 44.8 percent and Baumgartner, 31.7 percent. And unlike Yakima and Grant where Justice Susan Owens won a majority while González lost, in Snohomish their vote totals closely matched with Owens gaining 58 percent countywide and González gaining 61 percent. And distinct from most other counties in the state, Snohomish County did print a voter information guide that was mailed to all registered voters with information about the candidates.

IV.   CONCLUSION
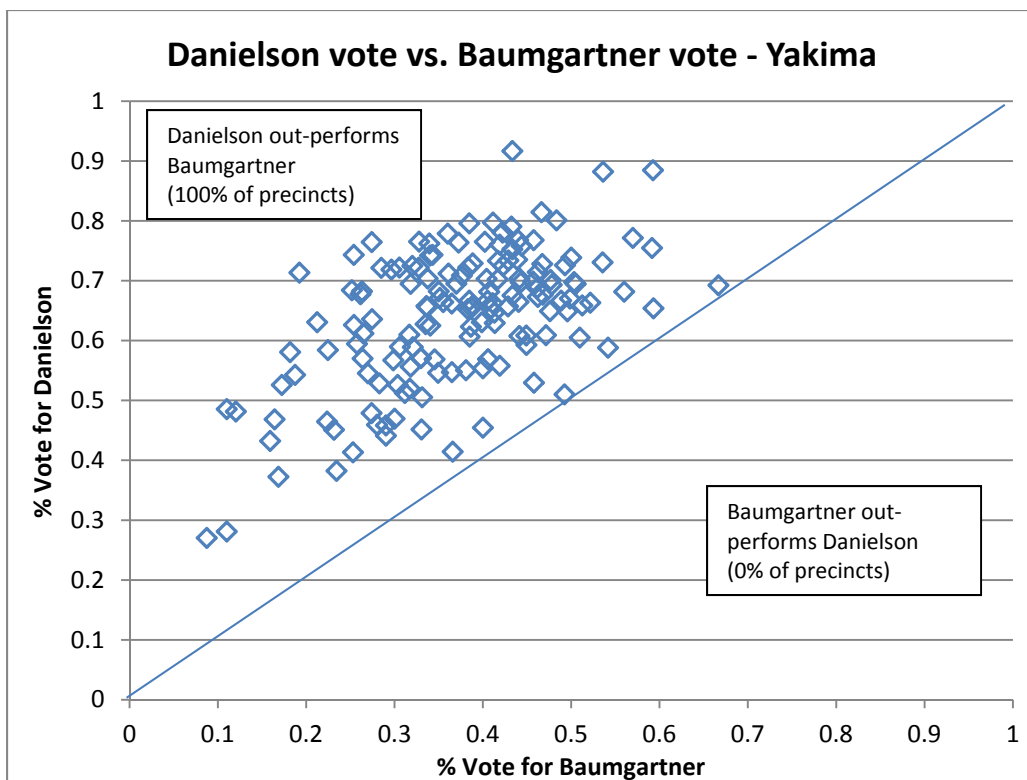
The Yakima and Grant County results indicate that racially polarized voting exists in Central Washington and crosses party and ideological lines. While voters in these counties have consistently voted for more conservative candidates in most recent elections, Danielson outperformed all other candidates, and by very large margins. This is remarkable considering he did not campaign at all. In a similar Supreme Court election, conservative candidate Douglas McQuaid, who also did not campaign at all, received only 28 percent of the vote in Yakima, compared to 64 percent going for Danielson. Not only did Danielson significantly outperform McQuaid, but he also won more votes than the leading Republican candidates for U.S. Senate and Washington Governor who both campaigned vigorously during the election. The data show that Danielson received votes from the same precincts who preferred Cantwell to Baumgartner and Inslee to McKenna. This is in spite of Danielson raising no money, holding no campaign events, making no public statements, and receiving no meaningful endorsements. Voters in Central Washington, who were not provided a voter's pamphlet, preferred Danielson to González in a party-neutral contest. This patterns revealed here a are textbook definition of racially polarized voting.

Table 1
Goodman's ecological regression vote estimates
2012 Primary Election – Yakima County Precincts

	Non-Latino voters	Latino voters
Baumgartner	43.7	11.5
Cantwell	33.7	70.4
McKenna	56.6	16.3
Inslee	29.2	57.3
Danielson	74.9	31.4
Gonzalez	25.1	68.6

Vote for Danielson by % Latino in precinct - Yakima

Vote for Gonzalez by % Latino in precinct - Yakima

Danielson vote vs. Baumgartner vote - Yakima

75% of precincts in Yakima Co. Danielson out-performs Baumgartner by 20 points or more

Danielson out-performs Baumgartner (100% of precincts)

Baumgartner out-performs Danielson (0% of precincts)

% Vote for Danielson

% Vote for Baumgartner

Danielson vote vs. McKenna vote - Yakima

36% of precincts in Yakima Co. Danielson out-performs McKenna by 20 points or more

Danielson out-performs McKenna (94% of precincts)

McKenna out-performs Danielson (6% of precincts)

% Vote for Danielson

% Vote for McKenna
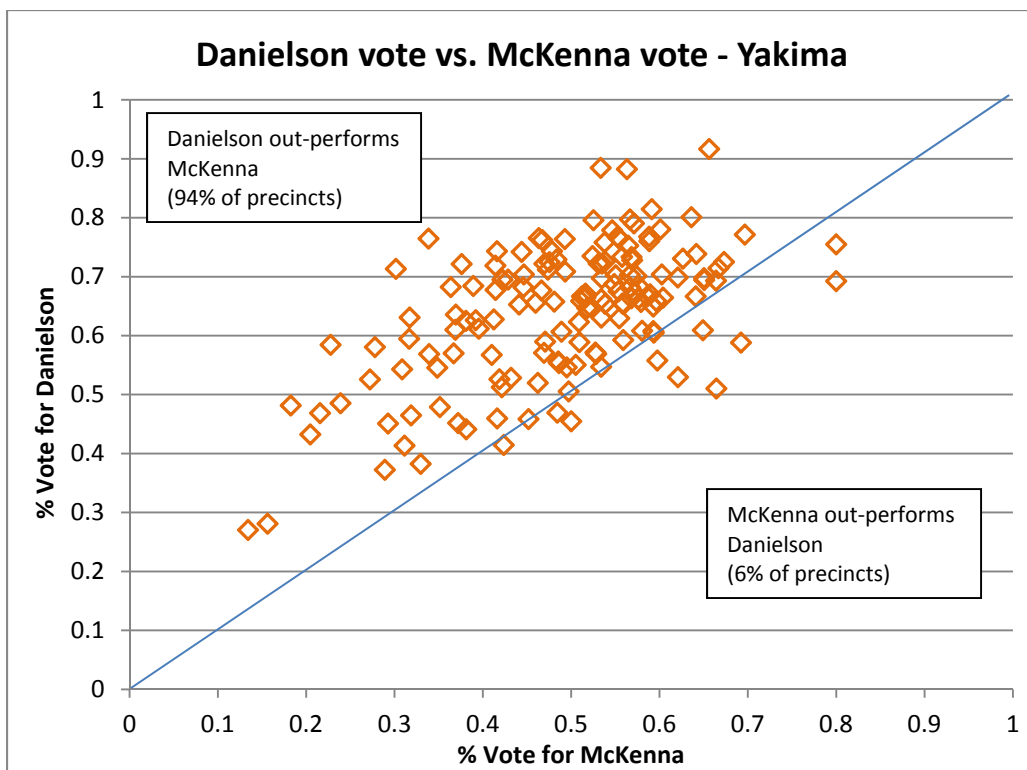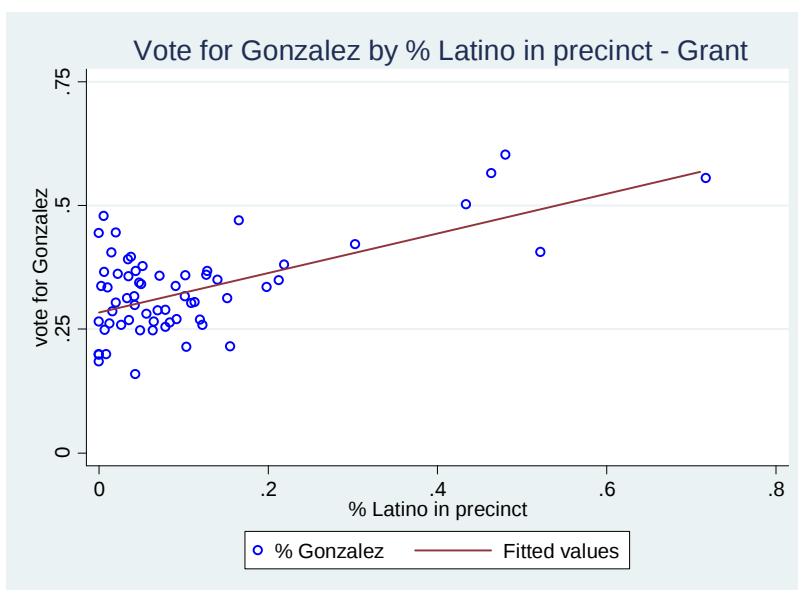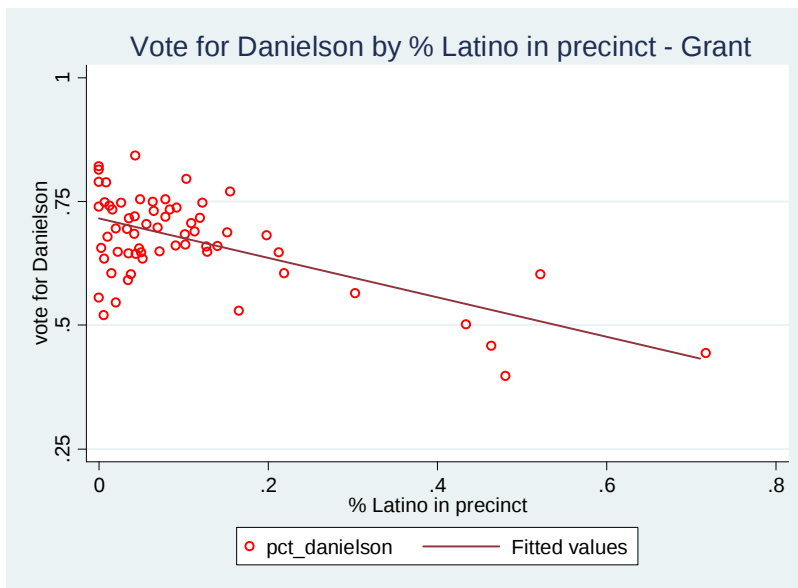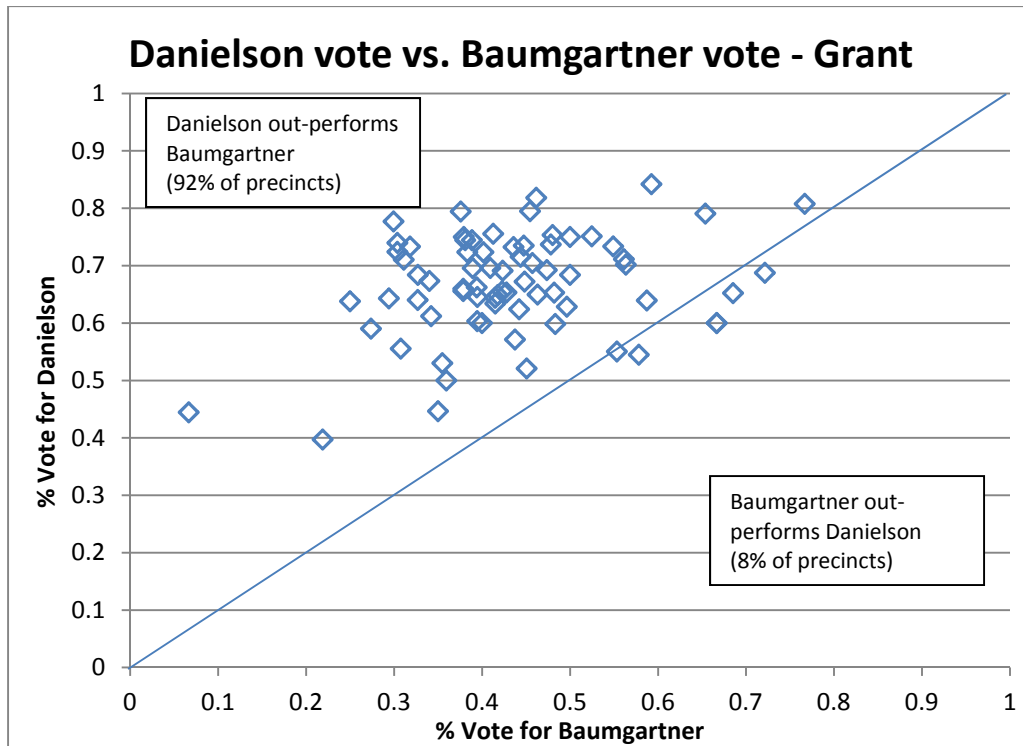
Table 2
### Goodman's ecological regression vote estimates
2012 Primary Election – Grant County Precincts

	Non-Latino voters	Latino voters
Baumgartner	42.6	20.6
Cantwell	34.6	57.5
McKenna	58.3	30.8
Inslee	28.7	45.6
Danielson	70.4	31.2
Gonzalez	29.5	68.7

Vote for Danielson by % Latino in precinct - Grant

Vote for Gonzalez by % Latino in precinct - Grant

Danielson vote vs. Baumgartner vote - Grant

67% of precincts in Grant Co. Danielson out-performs Baumgartner by 20 points or more

Danielson out-performs Baumgartner (92% of precincts)

Baumgartner out-performs Danielson (8% of precincts)

% Vote for Danielson

% Vote for Baumgartner

Danielson vote vs. McKenna vote - Grant

17% of precincts in Grant Co. Danielson out-performs McKenna by 20 points or more

Danielson out-performs McKenna (79% of precincts)

McKenna out-performs Danielson (21% of precincts)

% Vote for Danielson

% Vote for McKenna
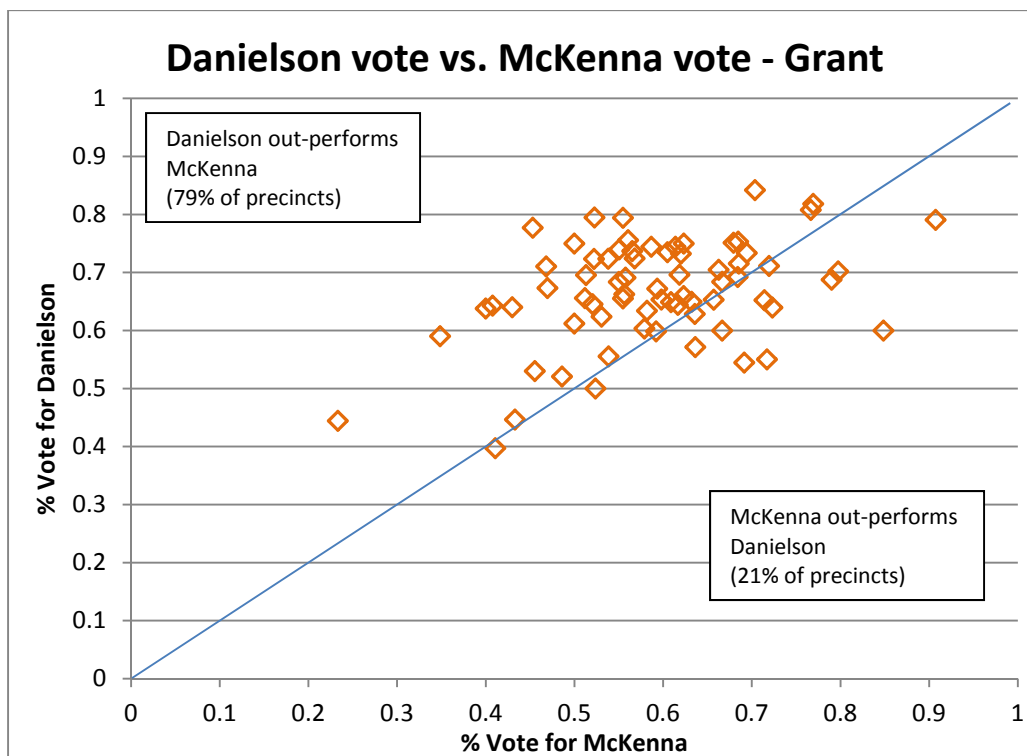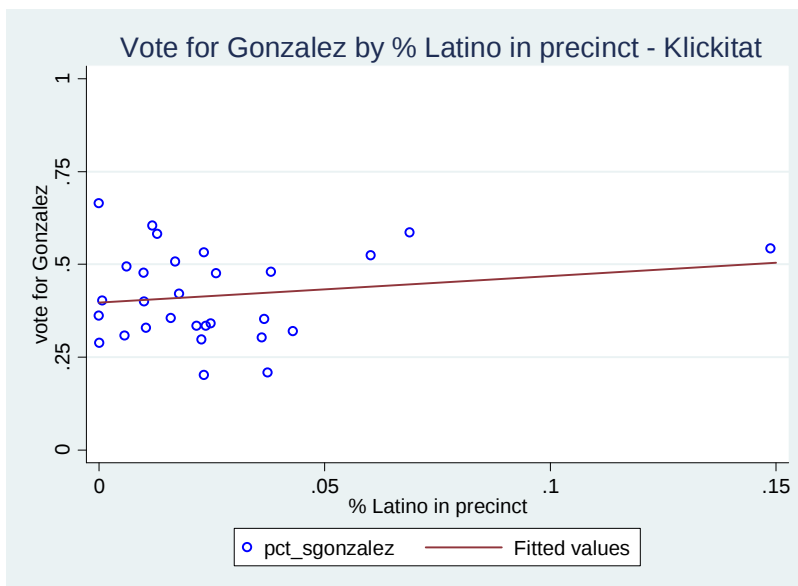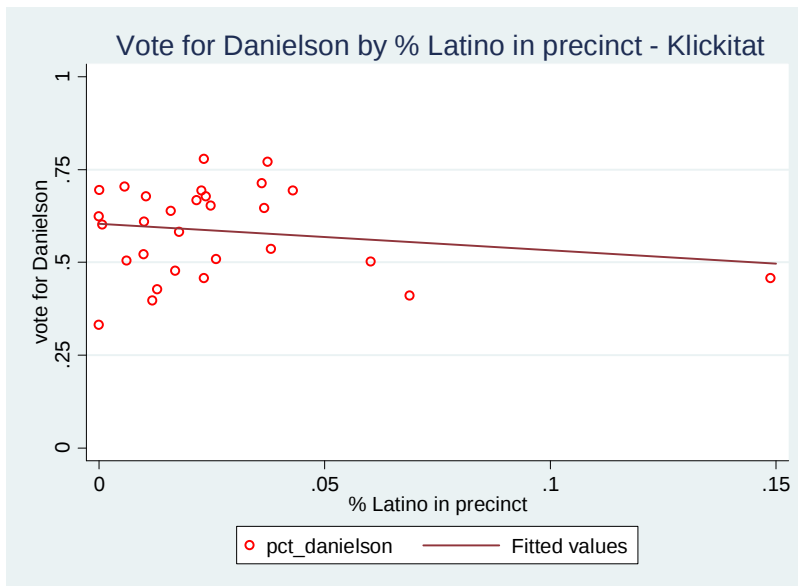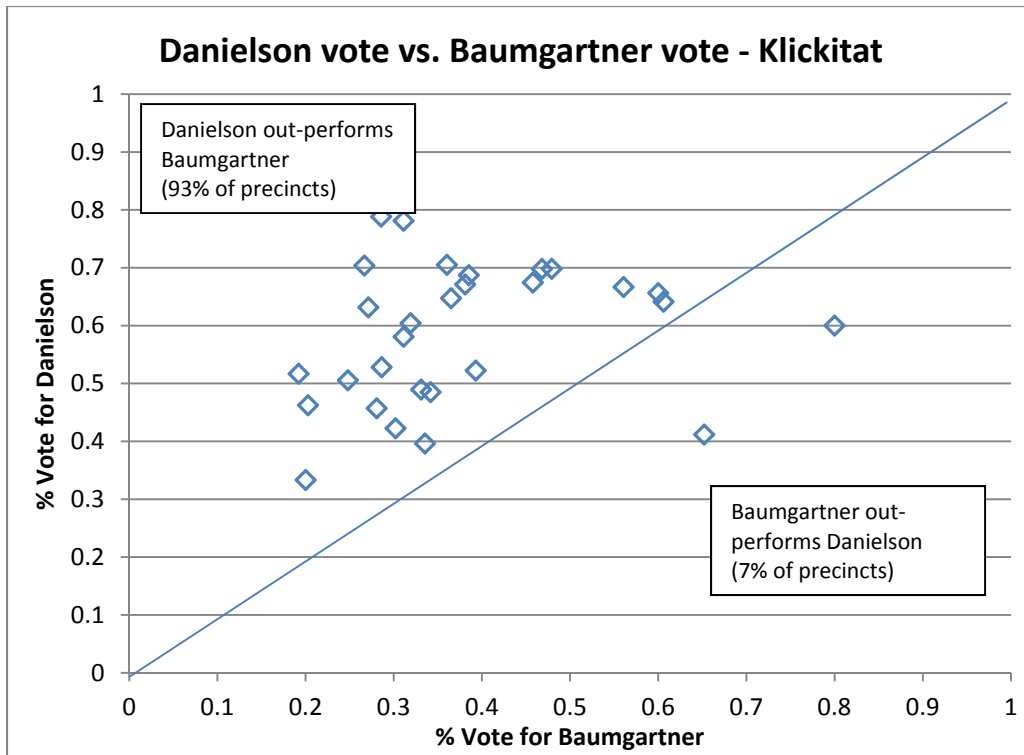
Table 3
Goodman's ecological regression vote estimates
2012 Primary Election – Klickitat County Precincts

	Non-Latino voters	Latino voters
Baumgartner	41.2	7.7
Cantwell	38.9	48.3
McKenna	43.7	30.8
Inslee	30.8	45.6
Danielson	60.3	46.0
Gonzalez	39.7	54.0

Danielson vote vs. Baumgartner vote - Klickitat

59% of precincts in Klickitat Co. Danielson out-performs Baumgartner by 20 points or more

Danielson out-performs Baumgartner (93% of precincts)

Baumgartner out-performs Danielson (7% of precincts)

% Vote for Danielson (y-axis)

% Vote for Baumgartner (x-axis)

Danielson vote vs. McKenna vote - Klickitat

26% of precincts in Klickitat Co. Danielson out-performs McKenna by 20 points or more

Danielson out-performs McKenna (89% of precincts)

Baumgartner out-performs Danielson (11% of precincts)

% Vote for Danielson (y-axis)

% Vote for McKenna (x-axis)
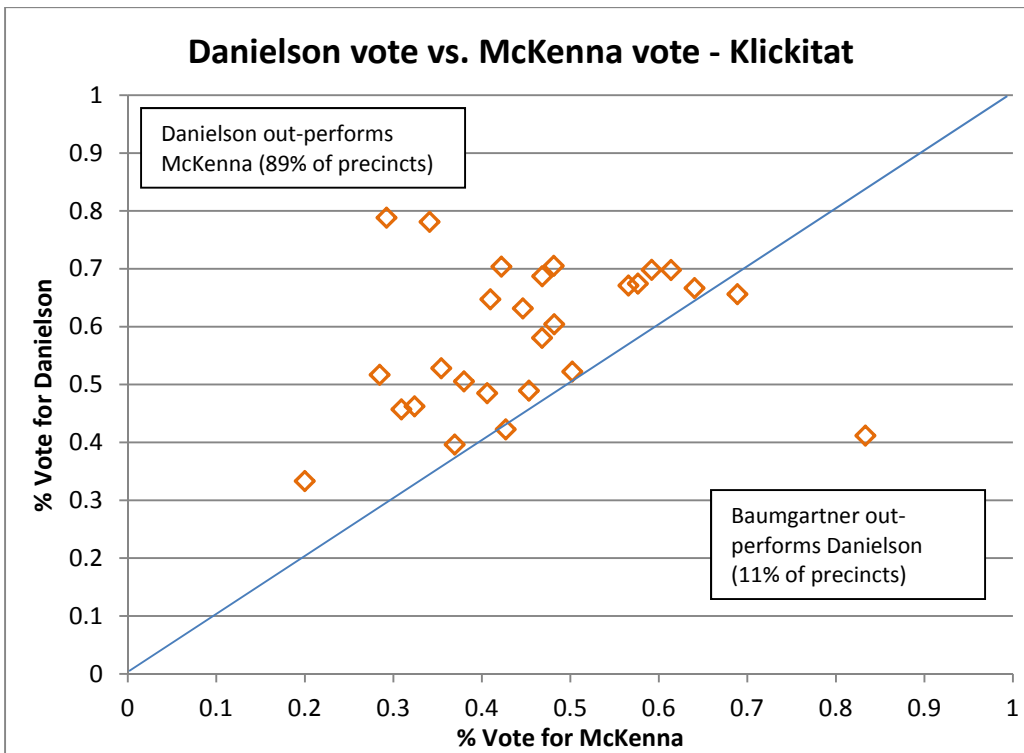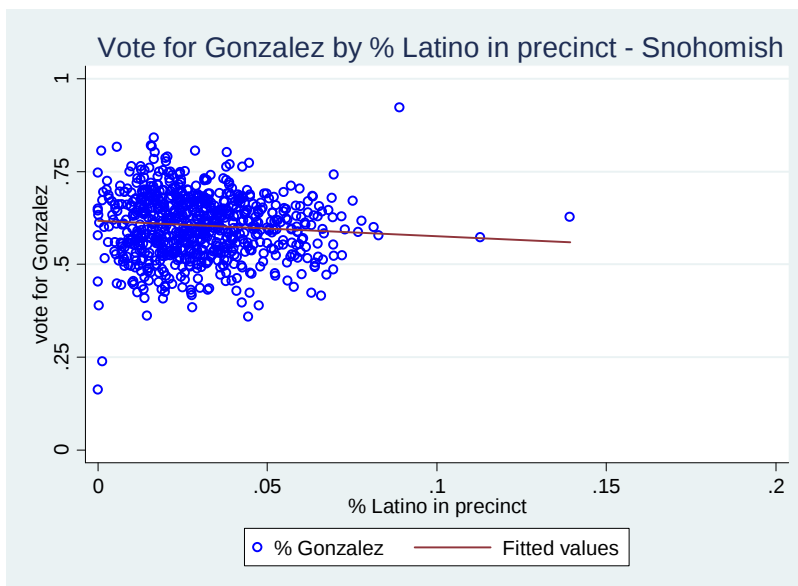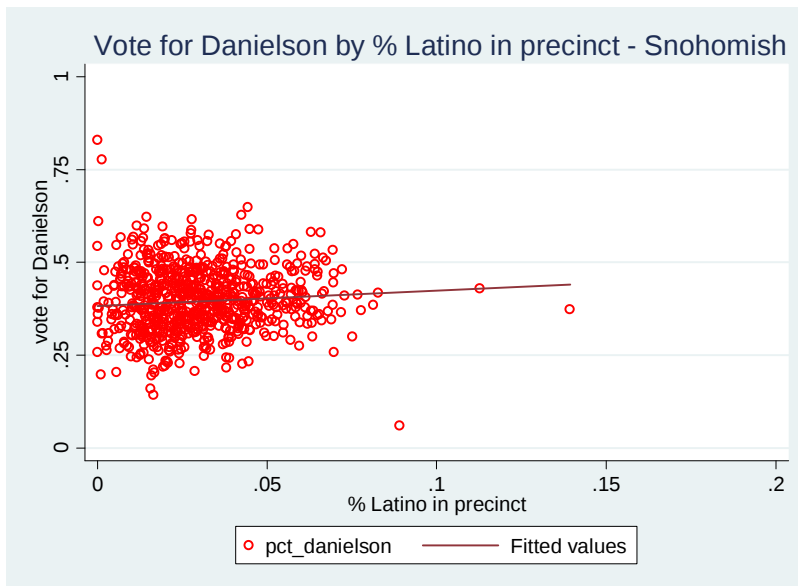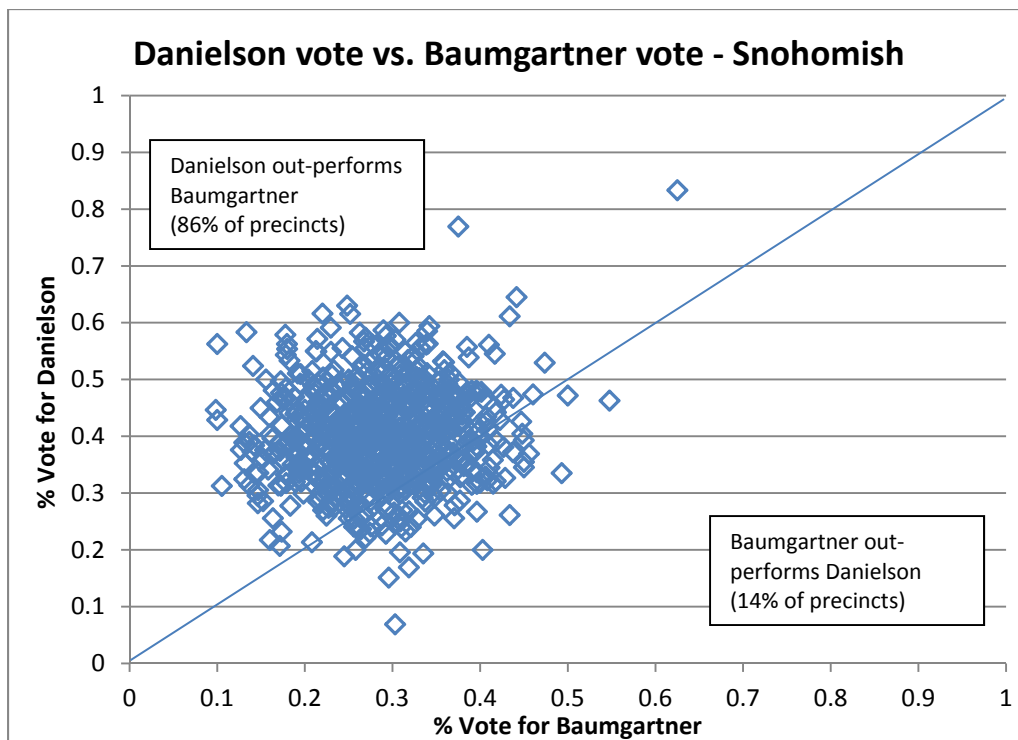
Table 4
Goodman's ecological regression vote estimates
2012 Primary Election – Snohomish County Precincts

	Non-Latino voters	Latino voters
Baumgartner	31.7	5.0
Cantwell	50.3	90.0
McKenna	44.8	5.0
Inslee	43.2	90.0
Danielson	44.1	5.0
Gonzalez	55.9	90.0

Vote for Danielson by % Latino in precinct - Snohomish

Vote for Gonzalez by % Latino in precinct - Snohomish

Danielson vote vs. Baumgartner vote - Snohomish

21% of precincts in Snohomish Co. Danielson out-performs Baumgartner by 20 points or more

% Vote for Danielson

Danielson out-performs Baumgartner (86% of precincts)

Baumgartner out-performs Danielson (14% of precincts)

% Vote for Baumgartner

Danielson vote vs. McKenna vote - Snohomish

3% of precincts in Snohomish Co. Danielson out-performs McKenna by 20 points or more

% Vote for Danielson

Danielson out-performs McKenna (44% of precincts)

McKenna out-performs Danielson (56% of precincts)

% Vote for McKenna