**Desperately Seeking Sonia?:**
**Latino Heterogeneity and Geographic Variation in**
**Web Searches for Judge Sonia Sotomayor**

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**Abstract**

Linguistic heritage, cultural similarities, and experiences as ethnic minorities link Latinos in the United States, but distinctions on national origin, nativity, and geographic distribution may yield political differences. Previous investigations of Latino heterogeneity as a catalyst for unity or division are limited to narrow issue domains and the set of elections characterized by within-group diversity. It remains unclear whether Latinos will respond cohesively to co-ethnic cues in national politics. Using data state-level web search volumes related to Sonia Sotomayor's nomination to the Supreme Court, we assess the extent to which Latino national origin within the states corresponds to expressed interest in her. We find the relative size of Puerto Rican population predicts interest in Sotomayor's nomination above the positive effects predicted by panethnic Latino population. The results indicate heterogeneity in Latino political orientations, and simultaneously show differential responses to co-ethnic cues among Latinos may be reinforcing rather than oppositional.

The growth of the Latino population in the United States during the last two decades and its projected increase through the next half century constitute one of the most radical demographic changes in American history. Today 16% of the American population identifies as Latino, making them the largest minority group in the country, and over the next forty years Latinos are expected to account for nearly 30% of the population (US Census 2010; Passel and Cohn 2008). Of course demographic change of this magnitude has political implications, particularly as Latinos enter the electorate in increasingly large numbers. The Latino share of the national electorate reached 9% in the 2008 presidential election, and since 2000 presidential candidates have spent well over 30 million dollars in Latino specific campaign advertising and mobilization efforts (Segal 2004, 2008).

A wealth of research on Latino's political participation and political orientations, however, indicates that the long-term outlook for Latino politics is riddled with uncertainty. Strategic mobilization efforts, barriers to participation, and in-group diversity make it difficult to project the extent to which Latinos will cohesively engage in national electoral politics (Leighley 2001, Garcia 2003, Ramakrishnan 2005). A complicating factor is that as the Latino population grows, its composite parts change. Who Latinos are, especially in terms of nativity and national origin, is not static. Latinos share broad cultural traits and ethnic minority experience in the United States, yet salient differences (like national origin, religion, and economic status) provide additional bases of political identification, interests, and preferences. It is plausible that panethnic Latino attachments may unify the diverse group's members and catalyze a political homogeneity. Conversely, it is also plausible that dimensions of heterogeneity among Latinos may catalyze political differences between various segments within the population. This raises a

critical puzzle for scholars of Latino politics and American national elections: To what extent will heterogeneity among Latinos translate into distinctive patterns of political behavior?

President Barack Obama's nomination of Judge Sonia Sotomayor to the United States Supreme Court provides a useful opportunity to examine the political manifestations of Latino heterogeneity at the national level. Media accounts of Judge Sotomayor's background included attention to her family life, education, and professional experience, yet her ethnic heritage may have been the most widely noted aspect of her biography. As the first Latina nominee to the Court, her ethnicity was highlighted in the President's introductory remarks and her own statement to the media. The fact that she is Latina, specifically of Puerto Rican heritage, and a native of the Bronx, New York are distinctive traits and ubiquitous features in media accounts of her nomination and confirmation hearings. Judge Sotomayor's background simultaneously links her with the panethnic Latino community, and differentiates her from those that reside outside the East Coast, have more recent immigrant ties, or different national origins. It is unclear *a priori* to what extent her distinctive demographic profile will attenuate Latino interest in their first co-ethnic nominee to the Court.

Testing an identity-based account of interest in then-Judge Sotomayor against several theoretical alternatives, we examine whether state-level interest in her nomination is associated with the size of the state's Latino and Puerto Rican populations.[1] Interest in the Sotomayor nomination is measured using state-level data on Google search volume aggregated by Google's Insights for Search web service. The results show a strong correspondence between the

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[1] We refer to Justice Sotomayor by her current title to reference her present and future political situation. However, we refer to her as "Judge Sotomayor" to indicate her identity during the nomination and confirmation process.

composition of state populations and web search volume related to Judge Sotomayor. In particular, larger Latino and Puerto Rican populations are associated with greater web search volume related to Judge Sotomayor at the state level. This suggests that both panethnic identity and origin-specific affect had positive and reinforcing influence on individual-level interest in Judge Sotomayor. These results point to the salience of ethnic cues in motivating political interest that can cut across in-group demographic differences. Moreover, the results show significant in-group differences among Latinos may be complementary, not oppositional.

**Latino Identity Politics**

It is well known that racial and ethnic identity influences political attitudes and behaviors across groups (Hutchings and Valentino 2004, de la Garza 2004, Lien et al 2004, Kinder and Sanders 1996, Dawson 1994). Politicized ethnic identity is a function of common experiences that are specific to group members, which yield varying degrees of cohesive political dispositions. Latinos residing in the United States are linked by in-group traits and their out-group status as an ethnic minorities in American society. As Barreto (2007) notes, panethnic Latino identity is rooted in Latin American heritage and culture distinguished by the prevalence of Spanish, immigrant experience, and continued discrimination against Latinos. Additional attributes including national origin, religion, and English language proficiency further refine ethnic identity and attachment (Garcia 2003).

At the same time heterogeneity in terms of national origin, nativity, and geographic distribution delineate salient, more specific political identity among Latinos. Given the option, Latinos tend to self-identify first in terms of national origin (e.g. Mexican, Salvadoran, Puerto Rican, etc.) and second with panethnic labels such as Latino and Latina, though this trend is less pronounced among younger cohorts (de la Garza et al 1992, Fraga et al 2006, Passel and Taylor

2009). Homeland ties and time in the United States also varies widely, for example less than 5% of Puerto Ricans are born outside the mainland US, compared to 37% of Mexican origin and 60% of Cuban Americans (Pew Hispanic Center 2010). Moreover, Puerto Ricans are born US citizens, a highly consequential distinction from other Latino groups. Residential patterns also facilitate national origin specific attachment and identity. The three largest Latino groups—Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican—are not geographically proximate to each other. Recent estimates indicate that more than two-thirds of all Cuban Americans (69%) reside in Florida, while half of the mainland Puerto Rican population is concentrated in the greater New York City tri-state area (New York, New Jersey and Connecticut), though also experiencing large growth in Central and South Florida (Pew Hispanic Center 2009, Duany and Matos Rodriguez 2006). The Mexican-origin population remains concentrated in the Southwest, where California and Texas are home to 62% of all Mexican origin Latinos residing in the US, though their presence in the South and Midwest has grown substantially in the past decade (Pew Hispanic Center 2009). With respect to political orientations, Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Central American origin groups have voted more heavily Democratic and identified as more liberal relative to Cuban Americans, who have been a loyal Republican constituency (Leal 2007, de la Garza 2004). These are among the many reasons scholars warn against treating Latinos as a monolithic group.

National origin and other demographic differences should not automatically be construed as categories that predict fixed oppositional preferences. Despite variation in composition, partisanship and ideology, opinions tend to converge on wide range of domestic policy issues. Cohesiveness is most apparent on topics that underscore Latino commonality including opposition to official English, favoring an immigration policy that provides a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, and funding for bilingual education (Fraga et al. 2006,

Leal 2007). A consequential byproduct of aforementioned concentrated national origin group geographic distribution is that these different groups are rarely in political competition as voting blocs or candidates. In cases when this does occur though, ethnic solidarity emerges in electoral politics where Spanish surnamed candidates perform exceedingly well with fellow Latinos regardless of partisan affiliation (Barreto 2007, Stokes-Brown 2006, Hill et al 2001). Studies also find Latino attention to and participation in politics increases when co-ethnic candidates, elected officials and issues are involved (de la Garza et al 1994, Pantoja et al 2001, Pantoja and Segura 2003, Barreto et al 2004).

**The Case of Judge Sotomayor**

The nomination of Judge Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court of the United States creates an unprecedented context to evaluate how Latino identity politics manifests in a national political setting. We consider the extent to which national origin heterogeneity within the Latino community translates into political heterogeneity in terms of affective attachments to political figures and events. In this case, Judge Sotomayor's Puerto Rican heritage and her strong identification with New York City distinguish her from the majority of Latino Americans of different ancestries, immigrant experiences and regional residences. Thus, while Judge Sotomayor shares linguistic heritage and experiences as an ethnic minority that are common to the panethnic Latino community, her island heritage and regional ties distinguish her from much of that same community.

In the context of the literature on Latino identity politics, Judge Sotomayor's nomination to the Supreme Court suggests two competing hypotheses about identity-based attachment to the nominee. One stream of literature suggests interest in the nomination should be relatively consistent across the larger Latino community in the US. The second suggests shared origin-

specific attachments to Judge Sotomayor should catalyze greater interest in the nomination among Puerto Ricans compared to other Latino origin groups.

**Evaluating National Origin Heterogeneity in Attachment to Judge Sotomayor**

Gauging the effects of in-group heterogeneity on Latino political behavior is a critical task for understanding the implications of the growing Latino presence in the United States. Yet, there are exceptionally limited opportunities to empirically evaluate competing theoretical claims regarding the relative pull of origin-specific and panethnic identities on individual-level Latino political behavior. In the first place, mass surveys typically include only a small number of Latino respondents, so it is difficult to generalize about the behavior of Latinos as a group, let alone make inferences about within-group political heterogeneity. Occasional surveys including Latino oversamples offer improved prospects for making inferences about the Latino community as a whole. Still, these approaches do not usually permit detailed within-group analysis because national origin variation is limited and sample sizes are too small, unaccounted for or both.

Surveys of the Latino community *per se* offer the best hope for such inquiries, but these data sources are few and far between. The logistical difficulty and costs of accurate sampling and bilingual interviewing requires long planning and often focuses on attitudes toward a limited set of issues like immigration and language policy where Latinos likely have common cause (e.g. Pew 2002, 2004, 2007). The absence of Latinos with nationally recognized political stature is a reality that has made it impossible to test the salience of Latino co-ethnicity in national politics beyond policy preferences (e.g. Sanchez 2006; Branton 2007) or hypothetical electoral scenarios (e.g. Manzano and Sanchez 2010). In short, opportunities to directly evaluate the impact of national origin heterogeneity, especially in association with co-ethnic candidates and cues, are exceedingly rare and somewhat limited to domains likely to emphasize panethnic Latino unity.

Attempting to evaluate national origin group differences in attachment to Judge Sotomayor's nomination therefore requires a departure from the comfortable confines of the analysis of individual-level data and, instead, making the best inferences possible from available data at other, larger units of analysis. Though such ecological inferences may be problematic, they are often the best available mode of gaining insight into the dynamics of the politics of minority populations in the United States. (Voss 2004, Gay 2001).

**Assessing National Origin Interest in the Nomination of Judge Sonia Sotomayor**

Competing theoretical orientations about Latino national origin heterogeneity suggest competing hypotheses about affective orientations toward Judge Sonia Sotomayor and her nomination to the US Supreme Court. Under the umbrella of affective orientations, psychic quantities such as support or closeness are obviously of the most politically salient manifestations of positivity toward Judge Sotomayor. However, these are difficult to measure in absence of reliable individual-level survey data and, perhaps more importantly, not the only salient political-cognitive manifestations of affective orientations toward a political object.

Instead, we turn our attention to interest as an indicator of affective attachment. As an extensive literature in educational psychology indicates, interest in a subject is a strong predictor of learning behaviors with respect to that object (Ainley et al. 2002, Hidi and Renninger 2006, Silva 2006). In other words, a positive disposition toward something motivates individuals to seek out additional information or understanding about the subject. Thus, we may take observed efforts to seek information about a subject as some indicator of a positive affective orientation toward the subject. More specifically, we take evidence of searches for information about Judge Sonia Sotomayor to reflect some positive affective disposition toward her as a political object.

*Measuring Interest in Judge Sotomayor*

Leveraging interest as a proxy for positive affect allows us to utilize publicly available data on state-level web search volumes to explore the relationship between population composition and orientations towards Judge Sotomayor. Here we measure interest in Sotomayor's nomination by the relative volume of web searches in each state involving the term "Sotomayor" using data provided by Google's Insights service. Google Insights tracks web searches that use the company's search engine and provides users with comparative data on the relative volume of searches involving designated terms by city, U.S. state, or country (Google Insights for Search 2009). The system eliminates repeated queries from a single user over a short period of time, so that the level of interest is not artificially influenced by these searches. Geographical units are assigned search term-specific search density scores which theoretically range from zero to one hundred. The unit with the highest search volume for a designated term— relative to the volume of all Google searches, in all languages—is assigned a score of 100. Other units receive scores that reflect their relative search volumes proportionally to the observed maximum. So, a score of 50 indicates that a geographical unit produced half as many Google searches for a specified term than the unit with the greatest search volume relative to the number of total searches in each unit.

Data on internet search volumes are increasingly used by social scientists in fields such as public health and economics to investigate phenomena for which standard survey data may not feasibly be collected (Askitas and Zimmerman 2009). Internet search volumes for relevant search terms have been found to correspond to disease prevalence, home sales, auto sales, and unemployment (see Goel et al 2010 for a review). For example, Choi and Varian (2009) have found a correspondence between Google search values for terms such as "jobs" and

"unemployment & benefits" are strongly associated with claims for initial unemployment benefits. This research suggests real-world events, such as a spike in unemployment or the nomination of a Supreme Court justice, produce some predictable or equilibrium level of web search volume among the internet-using population. Our claim is that variance in relative web search volumes related to the Sotomayor nomination across geographical units is an indicator of differential interest in and attachment to her elevation to the Supreme Court. To the extent that this variance is positively associated with the relative sizes Latino and Puerto Rican populations (controlling for other factors related to web searches related to the Sotomayor nomination), we may infer that Judge Sotomayor's ethnicity and national origin primed heightened affective responses among co-ethnics.

We retrieved Google Insights scores for the fifty U.S. states and the District of Columbia for searches using the term "Sotomayor" between May 26, 2009, the date of Judge Sotomayor's nomination, and June 1, 2009, one week later. This one-week time period was selected to capture the public's initial period of acquaintance with Judge Sotomayor when media coverage and commentary was most directly focused on her rather than other personalities or ancillary issues arising during the more protracted time period between her nomination by President Obama and later confirmation by the Senate.[2] In this window, the District of Columbia received a score of

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[2] This window of time also avoids the period of peak public attention to Judge Sotomayor's well-known "wise Latina" comment. Google Insights indicates that searches for the term "Wise Latina" peaked in mid-July during her confirmation hearings, several weeks after our data collection. By focusing on the period of time before media attention evolved to pejoratively racialize Judge Sotomayor's nomination—by focusing on the role of affirmative action in her career, her history of student activism, her record on discrimination cases, and repeated usage of

100, indicating that computers in the national capital generated the highest proportion of searches for "Sotomayor" in the United States.

Figure 1 illustrates the scores for all fifty states and Washington, D.C. It is immediately evident that states with dense Puerto Rican population (those in the greater New York area, Illinois, and Florida, for example) are coincident with high levels of web searching for Judge Sotomayor. However, these regions are also home to large Latino populations of other national origin (such as Dominicans in New York and Cubans in Florida, for example). Similarly, other states with large Latino communities that are principally of Mexican descent, such as Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, also score highly on the Google Insights Index. Together these quick observations lend preliminary support to notions of both heightened panethnic and national-origin specific interest in Judge Sotomayor.

**Figure 1 About Here**

*Measuring State Ethnic Composition*

State-level data for various demographic indicators and political preferences allow us to test theoretical factors accounting for variation in political interest. To measure theoretically relevant heterogeneity in this case, we identify the percent Latino and percent Puerto Rican

the now infamous phrase "wise Latina" (Savage 2009)—we capture mass responses based on more immediate and perhaps more natural responses to a salient political personality. Of course, media frames critically define almost all political objects in the public mind, but by focusing on web searches before a consensus media narrative and treatment of Judge Sotomayor emerged, we ensure (as much as possible) that the natural experiment we observed focuses on variance in responses to her objective biography rather than differences in responses to a more constructed image.

population within each state. These data capture the extent to which panethnic and origin specific attachments influence interest in the co-ethnic's nomination. Data on states' Latino populations are drawn from the US Census Bureau as reported in the Statistical Abstract of the United States (2008).

The most reliable data on the Puerto Rican population in the fifty states was collected in the 2000 decennial census. Since Puerto Rican migration to and within the United States is relatively stable, the 2000 census data provide a reasonably accurate picture of current Puerto Rican populations in the states, though other population characteristics may have shifted. To estimate the relative size of state Puerto Rican population, and address any concerns about population change since 2000, we compute the percentage of each state's population with Puerto Rican ancestry using the 2000 Census counts of individuals in each state who reported "Puerto Rican" as their "Latino type" relative to 2008 estimates of total state populations.

*Controls*

In addition to the variables of most immediate substantive interest, we recognize interest in Judge Sotomayor's nomination is influenced by a variety of factors. Thus, we have identified a number of alternative explanations for variance in state-level web search volume related to Judge Sotomayor including political sophistication, religion, state media environments, partisan political context, and states' racial profiles. Below, we briefly discuss the alternatives and identify relevant data included as statistical controls in our estimated models.

 First, there is a well-established association between political sophistication and political knowledge; so much so, that indicators of the latter are often used as indicators of the former (e.g. Luskin 1990). Thus, it is reasonable to suspect that political sophistication is positively associated with the impulse to seek information about salient political objects, including Judge

Sotomayor, at the individual level and, by extension, that higher average levels of political sophistication at the state level will be positively associated with higher web search volumes related to Judge Sotomayor's nomination.

Political sophistication is a critical concept in contemporary political science, but it is notoriously difficult to operationalize. While political knowledge tests may be the most widely used measure of individual-level sophistication, relevant data are often unavailable. Thus, scholars often turn to various proxies for more direct measures of political sophistication. In particular, formal education may be especially useful in this regard. Education represents a primary way that individuals become informed and interested in politics, and is especially important for structuring the quantity and quality of citizens' political cognition (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). High levels of formal education are important in their own right, and are also strongly associated with high levels of other concepts of interest (political sophistication and knowledge) that lead to enhanced ability to receive and process political information (e.g. Abrajano 2005, Ura and Ellis 2008). Given the strong association between education and political sophistication, indicators of formal education are useful indicators of political sophistication. With this in mind, we utilize the percentage of state residents who have earned a four-year college degree as our measure of state-level political sophistication reported in the 2008 SAUS.

Next, the Supreme Court's prominent role in settling constitutional disputes related to salient social issues such as abortion, the death penalty, and gay rights, leads us to expect that Evangelical Christians and Catholics should be more likely to seek information to manage inherent cognitive threat circumstances. To measure the size of Evangelical and Catholic populations in the states, we use the percentage of each state population who are Catholic or

evangelical or "born again" Christians. Percent Catholic in the states are figures reported by the

National Conference of Catholic Bishops. These may slightly underestimate the number of

Catholic identifiers in each state since data are limited to registered parishioners only. The

percent of evangelical Christians per state is reported in The 2008 US Religious Landscape

Survey conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, which included a sample of

over 35,000 respondents across the states.

There is also much evidence that public interest or attention to various issues is positively

associated with media attention to those issues (e.g. Behr and Iyengar 1995; McCombs and Shaw

1972; Neumann 1990). We therefore expect that aggregate levels of interest in Sonia Sotomayor

surrounding her nomination will be positively associated with state-level media attention to her

nomination. To measure state-level media attention to the Sotomayor nomination, we count the

number of articles (including news reports, editorials, and letters to the editor) which include the

term "Sonia Sotomayor" published between May 26 and June 1, 2009 in the largest circulating

daily newspaper in each state between archived in the Lexis-Nexis database. Forty states and the

District of Columbia's largest circulating daily newspapers are archived the Lexis-Nexis

database.[3] To manage the resulting missing data problem, we generate multiple imputations (ten)

of the unobserved state media coverage using the Gaussian normal regression imputation method

implemented in Stata 11 (see e.g. Schaeffer and Graham 2002).

State partisan context may also matter in at least two ways for information seeking

behavior. On the one hand, we might suspect that the most strongly partisan states have the

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[3]A list of the newspapers from which the story counts were drawn and their circulations is

included in the online appendix to this manuscript, which is available at http://[Author's Harvard

University Dataverse Archive].

greatest interest and attachment to political objects on average and, therefore, express the most aggregate information demand. Conversely, we can speculate that competitive electoral environments spark more frequent, aggressive, and high profile political campaigns, which prime and subsidize demand for political information in general. Therefore, we would expect the most closely divided states to express the greatest interest in Judge Sotomayor's nomination.

In the absence of recent and comparable state-level survey data for all fifty states and the District of Columbia on the distribution of partisan identification, we turn to 2008 election returns as a measure of state partisanship. Vote choice and overall partisanship signal the extent to which a given state should possess more baseline affinity for the Sotomayor nomination compared to other states. Specifically, we measure the percent of the popular vote in each state captured by Barack Obama. And because we expect interest in Judge Sotomayor to be a quadratic function of partisan strength, we also utilize the squared value of the Obama's vote share as a predictor.

We also note the importance of traditionalistic political culture and historical patterns of racial discrimination in shaping political dynamics in the South. While it is unclear precisely how the unique cultural and historical status of the South might be manifest in this particular case, we nonetheless wish to allow our model to take account of whatever variance in state-level interest in Judge Sotomayor's nomination that may correspond with this unique regional political heritage. Thus, we include a control variable coded one for the eleven states of the old Confederacy and zero for all other states.

We consider the possibility that the states covered by the second federal judicial circuit (New York, Connecticut, and Vermont) and the District of Columbia may systematically exhibit different levels of interest in Judge Sotomayor. The states of the second judicial circuit may

exhibit particular interest in a judge from their region nominated to the Supreme Court and seek out information about Judge Sotomayor at higher rates than other states; alternatively, prior familiarity with Judge Sotomayor may depress web search volumes in the states. Thus, we include a dummy variable indicating the three relevant states in our model. We also include a dummy variable for the District of Columbia. Since Google Insights index scores are based on the physical location of computer internet connections, it is reasonable to hypothesize that internet users in the District of Columbia have, on average, greater professional incentives and personal motives to seek out information about Judge Sotomayor.

Finally, we also expect that African-Americans may have elevated interest in or attachment to the Sotomayor nomination. These may stem from African-Americans' relatively strong connections to the actions of President Obama, strong Democratic partisanship, or a variety of other reinforcing political and social forces. We therefore identify the percentage of each state's population that identify as African-American using data from the Census Bureau's Statistical Abstract of the United States (2008).

**Model Estimation**

With these data in hand, we estimate a model of state Google Insights search volume scores for the term "Sotomayor" using ordinary least squares. More precisely, since we have generated multiple imputations of the missing values of state-level news coverage of Sonia Sotomayor's nomination, we have estimated model parameters from each of the five imputed datasets and combined these estimates by the method proposed by Rubin (1987, p. 77), which adjusts the unified model coefficients and their variance estimates for variability among the imputed data.

These analyses were implemented in Stata 11. Table 1 reports the combined model estimates and their robust standard errors.[4]

<center>** Table 1 About Here **</center>

**Results and Analysis**

The model estimates indicate two important patterns with respect to Latino interest in the nomination of Judge Sonia Sotomayor. First, we find the proportion of Latinos in a state's population is positively and significantly related to the relative proportion of web search volume related to Judge Sotomayor. Specifically, each percentage point increase in a state's Latino population predicts an increase of 0.54 points in the Google Insights search volume index. This corresponds to a predicted increase 0f 5.38 points in the Google Insights index due to a one standard deviation increase (9.97%) in the size of a state's Latino population, roughly the difference between Arizona (30.09% Latino) and Colorado (20.19%) or between Illinois (15.25%) and Wisconsin (5.08%). Similarly, a change from the smallest observed Latino population (West Virginia, 1.34%) to the observed maximum (New Mexico, 44.09%) predicts an increase of 23.09 points. Assuming that this increased search volume is driven by Latinos themselves rather than members of other ethnic groups influenced by contact with Latinos (see discussion in the following section, Supporting the Ecological Inference: Additional State and Local Evidence) the correspondence between state Latino population and aggregate web search volume related to Judge Sotomayor, indicates that Latinos, as a group, responded to the ethnic cue inherent in her nomination to the Supreme Court—and heavily emphasized in media

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[4]All data necessary to replicate the quantitative analyses reported here are available online at http://[Author's Harvard University Dataverse Page].

coverage of the historic event—by pursuing web-based information about the nominee with greater frequency than whites.

Secondly, we find aggregate search Sotomayor web search volume is positively and significantly associated with the proportion of a state's population of Puerto Rican ancestry, over and above the effect associated with the size of a state's panethnic Latino community. Indeed, the size of a state's Puerto Rican population corresponds very strongly with web search volume relating to Judge Sotomayor. Each percentage point increase in a state's Puerto Rican population predicts a 3.55 point increase in its Google Insights index score for searches involving the term "Sotomayor." This unit change effect predicts an increase of 2.80 points in the Google Insights index for each standard deviation's increase (0.79%) in a state's Puerto Rican population, roughly the difference between Florida (2.63% Puerto Rican) and Pennsylvania (1.84%). This corresponds to a predicted effect of 19.42 points for a change from the size of smallest observed Puerto Rican community (Mississippi, 0.08%) to the size of the largest Puerto Rican community (Connecticut, 5.55%). The sizeable, positive correspondence between Puerto Rican population and aggregate web-based attention to Judge Sotomayor indicates Americans of Puerto Rican ancestry demonstrated especially high levels of interest in Judge Sotomayor following her nomination to the Supreme Court.

Together, these results show the importance of both panethnic and national origin specific attachments in motivating political behavior. In this case, state-level interest in Judge Sonia Sotomayor is positively predicted by the relative sizes of states' general Latino populations and their Puerto Rican communities. The model estimates show Latinos generated relatively high levels of interest in President Obama's nominee compared to other groups.

However, within the multinational heritage Latino community, Judge Sotomayor's fellow Puerto Ricans demonstrated even greater levels of interest in her following the nomination.

While these effects are convergent with existing literature showing Latino participation and attitudes are enhanced by shared ethnicity and national origin, the results here indicate Latinos with panethnic attachments are not necessarily oppositionally situated from co-ethnics with strong incentive to identify with national origin group politics. In this case, Judge Sotomayor's Latina identity seems to have generated elevated interest from the Latino community in general, in addition to especially high levels of interest among the Puerto Rican community that shares the most in common with the nominee. Thus, while ethnic identity and national original are often portrayed as countervailing forces in the political behavior literature, and indeed may sometimes genuinely cross-pressure Latinos, these forces may, in fact, be reinforcing in some (if not many or most) political contexts.

In addition to these core results, estimates of effects for our control variables also yield some interesting insight into the processes catalyzing state-level variance in interest in Judge Sotomayor. Among these, the size of a state's African-American population positively and significantly predicts Google Insights index scores for searches involving the term "Sotomayor." This may correspond to special interest in the Supreme Court among the black community, interest in the actions of President Obama, or a variety of other factors. Again, it is important to remember that Justice Sotomayor's nomination was an important first on many dimensions: President Obama's first Supreme Court nominee, the first Supreme Court nomination by an African-American president, and the first Supreme Court nomination by a Democratic President in fifteen years, when Bill Clinton tapped Stephen Breyer in 1994.

We also find evidence that individual-level political sophistication may aggregate up into state-level web search volume on salient political topics, at least in this case. Levels of educational attainment in the states are positively and significantly associated with state-level interest in Judge Sotomayor. In contrast, there is little evidence that religious composition in the states motivated aggregate interest in Judge Sotomayor. Neither the percentage of Catholics nor the percentage of Evangelical Christians in state populations are significant predictors of web search volume associated with the term "Sotomayor."

There is also evidence of a significant quadratic effect associated with political competition. The proportion of popular votes cast for Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential election is positively and significantly associated with "Sotomayor" web search volume while the squared Obama vote is negatively and significantly associated with aggregate interest in the Supreme Court nominee. Moreover, the absolute value of the effects are nearly identical (|5.76| and |−5.65|, respectively) and statistically indistinguishable. This pair of results indicates that, all else held constant, the most strongly pro-Obama and anti-Obama states, in fact, expressed the least aggregate interest in Judge Sotomayor. As states become more competitive, the model predicts higher web search volume associated with Judge Sotomayor, peaking, essentially, in states with evenly divided electorates.

Additionally, we find at least some effects associated with idiosyncratic interest in politics. In particular, we find that the District of Columbia had significantly higher levels of "Sotomayor" search volume than the fifty states, even in the presence of extensive statistical controls. Since Google Insights search scores are based on the location of computers, this result should not be surprising. Indeed, the nation's capital is associated with the maximum Google Insights score for "Sotomayor" search volume in the observed period (100). However, we do not

observe similar effects for a dummy variable indicating the three states of the second federal judicial circuit (New York, Connecticut, and Vermont). These states do not exhibit levels of web search volume associated with Judge Sotomayor that are statistically distinguishable from those of other states holding all else constant. Finally, we find no evidence that state-level news coverage of the Sotomayor nomination influenced aggregate search volumes.

**Supporting the Ecological Inference: Additional State and Local Evidence**

The substantive conclusions presented above hinge on insight into individual behavior derived from the analysis of data aggregated at the state level. Ecological inferences of this type are especially problematic in general, and our particular analysis is not immune. In the present case, we have shown that there is a positive association between the size of Latino and Puerto Rican communities in the states and relative web search volumes related to Judge Sotomayor following her nomination to the Supreme Court. We have argued that identity ethnic theory explains the association that emerges from the heightened interest of Latinos and Puerto Ricans in a co-ethnic political figure. Even so, the results are also consistent with an alternative claim that non-Latino residents in the states are driving the higher levels of Sotomayor web searches. Non-Latinos of all groups that reside in Latino populous regions may have a greater awareness and interest in Latino politics for any number of reasons, among them of course are political and cultural threat. Indeed, state-level analysis cannot adjudicate between these two claims nor are individual-level data available to weigh them. However, the availability of Google Insights search index scores for various major metropolitan areas does provide some leverage to assess these two claims. As we discuss below, these city-level data support for our heightened Latino interest interpretation of the data against its rival.

*Comparing Searches for Roberts, Alito, and Sotomayor*

A motivation in this study is to assess the unique national political context where there is an actual condition where shared ethnicity may stimulate interest in Latino identity politics. A position on the Court would give Latinos unprecedented descriptive representation in the most selective institution. It is not surprising that the Latino public quickly became familiar with her in a manner that other prominent Latino political figures never quite achieved[5]. Sotomayor's nomination is truly the first opportunity to evaluate empirically the salience of shared ethnicity in national politics. Comparing trends in online searches at the state and local level for the three most recent Supreme Court allows us to establish whether interest in Sotomayor is distinct from others, and if this distinction is driven by co-ethnic interest. If Sotomayor is especially salient to Latinos, online searches for the three nominees should emerge from notably different cities and states because we know where the Latino population is heavily clustered. These patterns will provide some evidence to support one of these two hypotheses (ethnic identity attachments in politics versus non-Latino interest in Sotomayor).

State and city level interest in Samuel Alito, John Roberts and Sonia Sotomayor are reported in Tables 2 and 3, these data were also culled from the Google Insights application. The data reflect searches for the terms "Alito", "Sotomayor" and "John Roberts" (Roberts searches

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[5] To illustrate this point, when Bill Richardson (who is Latino) announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination, he noted that his name recognition among Latinos was a mere 10%; and a few months prior to the Nevada Primary, *The Washington Post* reported 30% of Latino voters in the state had never heard of Richardson (Prickler 2007, Hennessey 2007). Yet, within five days of her nomination, a Qunnipiac Poll (inclusive of a Latino oversample) showed only 18% of Latinos didn't know Sotomayor.

include full name to hedge against the common surname) for a two month period inclusive of the month of their nomination and one following. Coincidentally, all three nominations occurred late in the month (Roberts July 19, 2005, Alito October 31, 2005, and Sotomayor May 26, 2009) thus the two month window captures a comparable amount of time to elicit information on public interest in nominations.

** Table 2 About Here**

The first table lists the ten states with the most searches for each of the Court nominees. Not surprisingly, Washington DC ranks first for all three. Some states appear common across all cases, yet differ in rank order, most searches for all the Justices came from capital area and East Coast states. The rank orders distinguish the states in common, suggesting demographic differences are at play. For example, New York registers second for Sotomayor, but in sixth and seventh place for Roberts and Alito, respectively. Alito is a New Jersey native and, Sotomayor a New Yorker, explaining interest from their home states and close neighbor states. It is notable that Roberts' home state of Indiana ranks fourth, showing the most interest in his nomination outside of the DC area. Iowa and Virginia rank high for Roberts and Alito, but not Sotomayor. The fact New Mexico ranks eighth on the Sotomayor list is striking. Sotomayor has no direct ties to the Southwest and her Puerto Rican ancestry is certainly different from the distinctively Mexican origin population that accounts for 45% of state residents, many tracing their origins to Spain.

** Table 3 About Here**

To probe the relationship between ethnicity and attention to Supreme Court nominees a bit more, regional trends are also presented in three cases: New York, Texas, and Arizona-New Mexico. Since there are few large cities in either Arizona or New Mexico, the two are considered

one unit only for purposes of metro-level analysis. The Latino population is concentrated in specific areas within these states, so to the extent that search volume is related to ethnicity, it should be observable in these states. In all three states the trends are consistent: metro areas with large Latino populations demonstrate substantially more interest in Sotomayor compared to the Roberts and Alito. New York City, home to the largest metropolitan Puerto Rican population in the United States ranks first for Sotomayor, but second for Alito and a distant fourth for Roberts. In Texas, Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston register the highest search volume in the Roberts and Alito nominations. Yet Sotomayor's search volume is driven by interest from residents in Austin, El Paso and San Antonio. Latinos comprise 80% of the El Paso and 61% of the San Antonio population. Texas Latinos are mostly Mexican origin (84%), illustrating the salience of Spanish surname and ethnic cues in mobilizing political interest. Finally, the Arizona-New Mexico metro areas reinforce these trends with the stark outcome that shows only the Phoenix area registered enough queries for both Alito and Roberts to meet the threshold for Google Insights to assign any score at all. In this same two-state region, Albuquerque, Tucson and Phoenix ranked first, second and third in Sotomayor searches, mirroring their regional rank order in percent Latino population. It remains possible that non-Latinos in El Paso and Albuquerque fueled online searches for Sotomayor in the same way that Latinos in Syracuse and Albany could be responsible for spikes in Alito and Roberts search trends; but we think not. While these data are merely descriptive in nature, they offer a consistent pattern that supports the reasonable and theoretically sound interpretation that Latinos were interested in the Sotomayor nomination in a manner that distinguished their interested from prior nominations, and that their interest in her nomination fueled higher numbers of web searches registered by Google Insights.

**Conclusions: Latino Homogeneity and Heterogeneity**

We began by identifying a critical puzzle in the study of Latino politics in the United States: though a common linguistic heritage and broad cultural patterns provide the foundation of a relatively homogenous, panethnic Latino political and social identity, differences national origin, nativity, and geographic among Latinos may be sources of political heterogeneity, as well. Though scholars have already made a number of important efforts to assess the relative influence of these potentially competing influences on the political behavior of Latinos, empirical investigations of the issue almost inevitably focus on hypothetical electoral contests or on salient political issues (such as immigration) in which political unity among Latinos may be especially likely to emerge. In part, the tendency to rely on these research designs arises from the (as yet) very limited number of truly national Latino political figures and the logistical difficulties of quickly assessing Latino public opinion in light of novel political issues or events.

In an effort to bring evidence from a "real-time" political event, involving one of the first Latino political figures on a national stage, to bear on the puzzle of the extent Latino heterogeneity, we examined state-level variance in relative web search volumes for Google searches involving the term "Sotomayor" in the week following Judge Sonia Sotomayor's nomination to the Supreme Court. Though it is obviously perilous to generalize from state-level data to individuals or from Google search statistics to the general population, observed patterns of web searches involving the term "Sotomayor" in the days following Judge Sonia Sotomayor's nomination to the Supreme Court can provide useful insight into the effects of ethnic heterogeneity for Latino politics in the United States as well as other dynamics that govern active information searches and, not least of all, the idiosyncratic politics of the Sotomayor nomination itself. This allowed us to assess the rival hypotheses that aggregate evidence of affective

attachment to Judge Sotomayor, demonstrated by active interest in her and her nomination, corresponds to the respective sizes of the panethnic Latino community and Puerto Rican community in each state. Our analysis shows evidence of both politically important homogeneity and heterogeneity within the Latino community.

On the one hand, there is evidence that interest in Judge Sotomayor is associated with panethnic Latino identity. The data show that the relative size of a state's Latino community positively predicts the volume of Google searches relating to Judge Sotomayor. On the other hand, there is evidence that Latinos of Puerto Rican ancestry are especially interested in Judge Sotomayor's nomination to the Supreme Court. The size of state Puerto Rican communities positively predicts the volume of Google searches related to Judge Sotomayor, over and above the effects predicted by the size of states' panethnic Latino communities. Thus, we are able to conclude that Judge Sotomayor's Latina identity, evident in her surname and a ubiquitous feature of public biographies, cued panethnic interest among Latinos with seemingly less in common with the nominee, as evidenced in places like El Paso, Texas and Albuquerque, New Mexico. Specific Puerto Rican identity triggered the most pronounced attention to the event, indicative of the enduring salience and attachments to particularized national origin groups.

These results synthesize two competing claims on political homogeneity and heterogeneity among Latinos. In general, scholars claim either that Latinos are politically homogenous and are therefore apt to unify around particular candidates or issue positions or that Latinos are politically heterogeneous and are apt to be at odds with one another across cleavages based on national origin, nativity, etc. However, our evidence suggests that national origin may provide a basis for significant differences in behavior among Latinos but that such differences need not pull the Latino community apart or set it against itself. Indeed, variance in responses to

Judge Sotomayor's nomination also illustrates the point that such difference does not necessarily imply conflict nor is it necessarily oppositional. Instead, we find evidence of elevated interest in Judge Sotomayor among all Latinos, relative to non-Latino whites. Thus, in this case, ethnic cues seem to have pulled the entire Latino community toward President Obama's Supreme Court nominee, even though such cues may have pulled hardest on individuals her shared her Puerto Rican identity, as well. So, while political heterogeneity among Latinos is real, the tendency of social cleavages to be politically divisive or not will be heavily context dependent.

Latino identity differs from and may confound conventional theories of racial politics built on dichotomous racial categories. There are multiple salient identities (race, ethnicity and national origin) that may be specifically activated and mobilized by political contexts. The evidence here shows these varied national origin identities are complementary, not oppositional in nature, in political contexts where ethnicity is highly salient. Looking forward, public evaluations of emerging Latino national political figures, like Senator Marco Rubio a Cuban American GOP rising star, may be governed by dynamics similar to those found in our study. The Sotomayor nomination may offer a preview of what Latino identity politics in future national political contests: Latino candidates deriving elevated support from the panethnic Latino community as well as especially high levels of support from those sharing the candidates' identity in terms of national origin.

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**Table 1: A Model of State-Level Web Search Volume for Judge Sonia "Sotomayor"**

| Predictors (Predicted Sign) | Effects |
|---|---|
| Percent Latino (+/-) | 0.54* |
| | (0.16) |
| Percent Puerto Rican (+/-) | 3.55* |
| | (1.94) |
| Percent African-American (+/-) | 0.97* |
| | (0.40) |
| Obama Vote Proportion (+/-) | 5.76* |
| | (2.18) |
| Obama Vote Proportion Squared (+/-) | -5.65* |
| | (2.24) |
| Percent Four Year Degree (+) | 1.32* |
| | (0.69) |
| Percent Catholic (+) | 0.01 |
| | (0.21) |
| Percent Evangelical (+) | 0.22 |
| | (0.28) |
| South (+/-) | -0.10 |
| | (.07) |
| Second Circuit (+) | 0.01 |
| | (0.09) |
| District of Columbia (+) | 0.94* |
| | (0.51) |
| News (+) | 0.00 |
| | (0.00) |
| Constant | -1.73* |
| | (0.59) |
| Mean $R^2$ | 0.72 |
| $\sqrt{MSE}$ | 0.12 |
| N | 51 |

Note: Coefficients are OLS estimates (robust standard errors in parentheses).
*$p<0.05$; one tailed tests where unidirectional hypothesis noted, two-tailed tests otherwise.

**Table 2. Top States by Search Volume for Supreme Court Nominee Nomination Year Latino Population Parentheses**

| Rank | Roberts (2005) | Alito (2005) | Sotomayor (2009) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Washington DC (8.6) | Washington DC (8.6) | Washington DC (8.8) |
| 2. | Maryland (5.7) | Maryland (5.7) | New York (16.8) |
| 3. | Virginia (6.0) | Virginia (6.0) | Maryland (7.2) |
| 4. | Indiana (5.2) | Connecticut (11.1) | Connecticut (12.3) |
| 5. | Louisiana (2.9) | Massachusetts (7.9) | Massachusetts (8.8) |
| 6. | New York (16.2) | New Jersey (15.4) | Vermont (1.5) |
| 7. | Kansas (8.2) | New York (16.2) | New Jersey (16.7) |
| 8. | Ohio (2.3) | Iowa (3.6) | New Mexico (45.6) |
| 9. | Pennsylvania (4.1) | Pennsylvania (4.1) | Delaware (7.2) |
| 10. | Massachusetts (7.9) | Missouri (2.7) | Rhode Island (12.1) |

Percent Latino Population Estimates: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2005 and 2009.

**Table 3: Search Volume by City in Select Regions**
**Percent Latino Population in Parentheses**

| Region | Roberts | Alito | Sotomayor |
|---|---|---|---|
| **New York** | | | |
| 1. | Syracuse (6.2) | Albany (6.5) | New York City (27.4) |
| 2. | Buffalo (8.2) | New York City (27.4) | Burlington (1.6) |
| 3. | Rochester (13.5) | | Albany (6.5) |
| 4. | New York City (27.4) | | Syracuse (6.2) |
| **Texas** | | | |
| 1. | Austin (34.6) | Austin (34.6) | Austin (34.6) |
| 2. | Dallas-Fort Worth (38) | Dallas-Fort Worth (38) | El Paso (80) |
| 3. | Houston (41) | Houston (41) | San Antonio (61) |
| **Arizona-New Mexico** | | | |
| 1. | Phoenix (42) | Phoenix (42) | Albuquerque (44) |
| 2. | | | Tucson (40) |
| 3. | | | Phoenix (42) |

Percent Latino Population Estimates: US Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey.

**Figure 1. Distribution Online Searches for Sotomayor – May 26-June 1, 2009**



**Google Search Volume for Sotomayor**

Low                                                   High
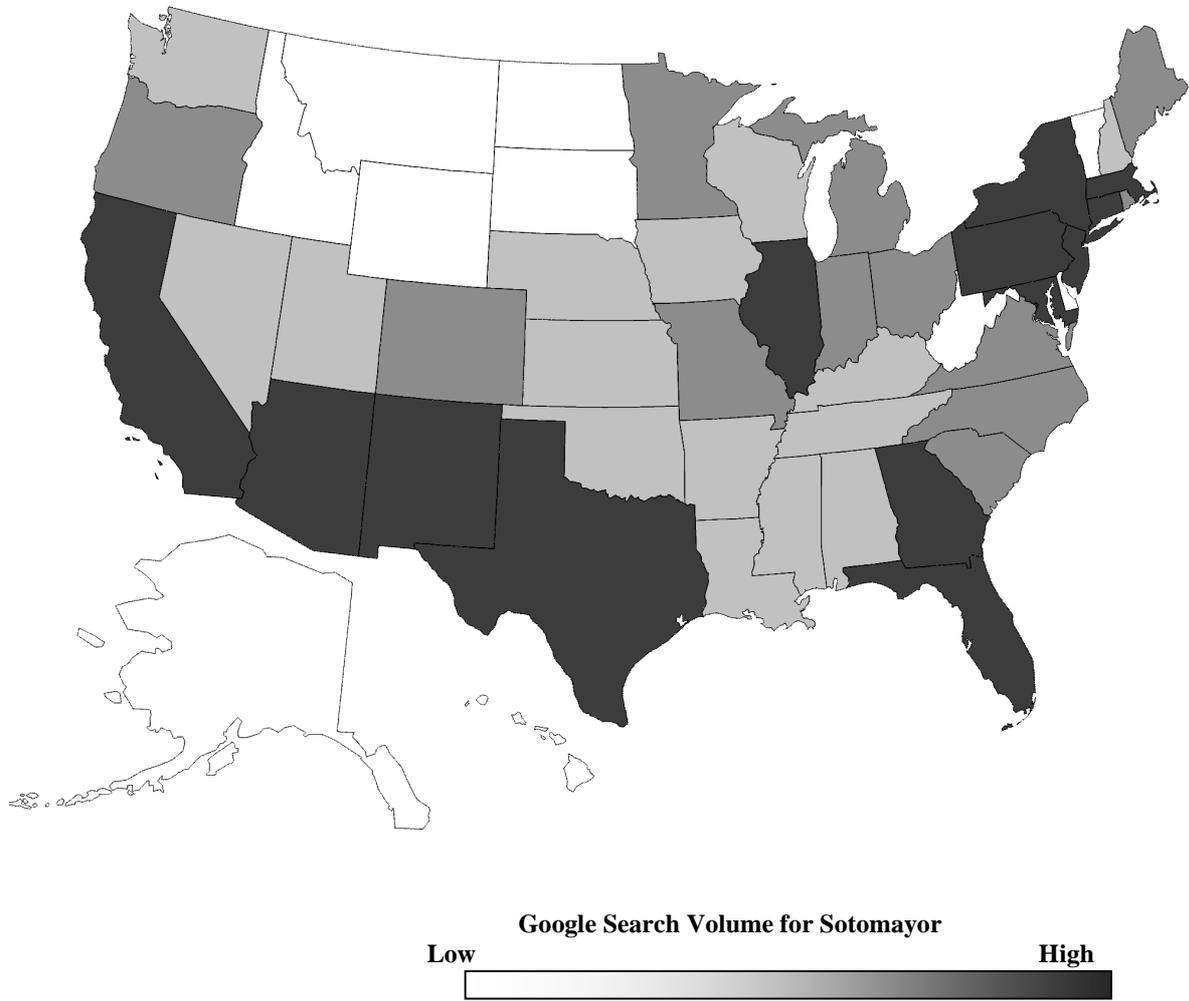
**Proposed Online Appendix: Highest Circulating Newspapers in Each State**

| State | Newspaper | Circulation |
|---|---|---|
| Alabama | Birmingham News | 109,727 |
| Alaska | Anchorage Daily News | 46,783 |
| Arizona | Arizona Republic | 308,973 |
| Arkansas | Arkansas Democrat-Gazette | 177,633 |
| California | Los Angeles Times | 600,449 |
| Colorado | Denver Post | 309,863 |
| Connecticut | Hartford Courant | 134,751 |
| Delaware | Delaware News Journal* | 87,138 |
| District of Columbia | USA Today | 1,830,594 |
| Florida | St. Petersburg Times | 239,684 |
| Georgia | Atlanta Journal-Constitution | 181,504 |
| Hawaii | Honolulu Star-Advertiser* | 135,210 |
| Idaho | Idaho Statesman | 49,672 |
| Illinois | Chicago Tribune | 441,506 |
| Indiana | Indianapolis Star | 182,933 |
| Iowa | Des Moines Register | 109,095 |
| Kansas | Wichita Eagle | 70,300 |
| Kentucky | Louisville Courier-Journal* | 159,275 |
| Louisiana | New Orleans Times-Picayune | 144,294 |
| Maine | Portland Press Herald | 54,818 |
| Maryland | Baltimore Sun | 178,692 |
| Massachusetts | Boston Globe | 222,683 |
| Michigan | Detroit Free Press | 245,326 |
| Minnesota | Minneapolis Star Tribune | 297,478 |
| Mississippi | Jackson Clarion Ledger* | 63,018 |
| Missouri | St Louis Post-Dispatch | 207,145 |
| Montana | Billings Gazette | 38,660 |
| Nebraska | Omaha World-Herald | 143,721 |
| Nevada | Las Vegas Review-Journal | 150,403 |
| New Hampshire | New Hampshire Union Leader | 48,342 |
| New Jersey | Newark Star-Ledger | 223,037 |
| New Mexico | Albuquerque Journal | 90,079 |
| New York | Wall Street Journal | 2,061,142 |
| North Carolina | Charlotte Observer | 155,995 |
| North Dakota | Forum of Fargo-Moorhead* | 48,183 |
| Ohio | Cleveland Plain Dealer | 252,608 |
| Oklahoma | Oklahoman | 138,493 |
| Oregon | Portland Oregonian | 239,071 |
| Pennsylvania | Philadelphia Inquirer | 342,361 |
| Rhode Island | Providence Journal | 96,595 |
| South Carolina | Charleston Post and Courier | 817,143 |
| South Dakota | Sioux Falls Argus Leader* | 35,893 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Tennessee | Nashville Tennessean* | 127,538 |
| Texas | Houston Chronicle | 343,952 |
| Utah | Salt Lake Tribune | 109,703 |
| Vermont | Burlington Free Press* | 32,405 |
| Virginia | Virginian-Pilot | 156,968 |
| Washington | Seattle Times | 251,697 |
| West Virginia | Charleston Gazette | 38,238 |
| Wisconsin | Milwaukee Journal Sentinel | 183,636 |
| Wyoming | Casper Star Tribune* | 24,121 |

*Indicates that newspaper is not archived in the available Lexis-Nexis database.