

# Racial Change, Racial Threat, and Minority Representation in Cities

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## Abstract

As the racial complexion of cities has shifted over the last 20 years, the struggles for political power have become more complex. Some cities, like Ferguson, Missouri, have seen their Black population grow substantially, but their descriptive representation stall. Others, like Compton, California, have moved from predominantly Black to predominantly Latino, and are asking themselves if the two racial minorities can govern together. Building upon theories of racial threat, in this project, I examine explicitly the independent effects of racial change on the likelihood of Black and Latino representation across cities in the United States between 1981 and 2011, and the likelihood of minority candidate emergence in California between 1995 and 2010. Using three demographic profiles as a frame—majority White, majority–minority, and multiracial cities—the results suggest the intersections between racial context and shifting political and racial landscapes have important consequences of minority political power for the future.

## Keywords

minority representation, mayors, racial threat, racial demographics

## Introduction

The power of demographics in attaining political representation remains true today, but with important caveats. Immigration, White flight, and Black

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migration have worked in tandem to change the racial makeup of cities across the United States. For many places, this has resulted in dramatic shifts of the majority population, and the growth of transitioning multiracial cities. The demographic transformation, however, often happens more quickly than the political incorporation, and as Hero (1998, p. 80) long ago noted, “the larger the minority population, the greater the degree of underrepresentation.” At some point, the minority population starts pushing for elected representation, and this process can often be contentious.

There are a number of prominent recent examples of the lag between social diversity and political representation. For example, as Compton, California, has moved from predominantly Black to predominantly Latino (65% according to the 2010 Census), Latinos are asking for political representation, and long-standing African-Americans in the City Council and community are resisting (El Nasser 2013). The question of why cities like Ferguson, Missouri, predominantly Black, lacked political representation was highlighted after Michael Brown was killed in 2013 (Shanton 2014). At the same time, cities that have long had majority–minority populations have recently begun electing their “firsts,” often 10 to 15 years after the new majorities started running for office.

The spotlight on places like Compton and Ferguson motivates my research question: How do *changes* in racial contexts impact the likelihood of minority mayors in cities? Almost all studies to date have looked at representation statically, at one point in time or during one election, and, thus, our understanding of how population size and composition impact minority descriptive representation is limited to current population demographics within a city. Moreover, the research that has looked at changing racial dynamics and elected officials has focused on Black–White relations, particularly in the South (Key 1949), and, hence, the impact of Latino immigration and Black migration across the country on representation is relatively unknown.

Theoretically, the effects of racial change on representation are grounded in the psychology of racial threat (Blalock 1967; Blumer 1958; Key 1949) and perspectives on growing social diversity (Hero 1998; Putnam 2007). I develop a number of hypotheses as to how changes in the composition of a city may influence the likelihood of minority representation. Specifically, I examine three demographic profiles that posit different possible “out-groups” and “in-groups.” The first is *Majority White* places, which continue to comprise the lion’s share of cities and towns in the United States. There are few instances of Black and Latino city leadership in majority White places,<sup>1</sup> but overall these are where classical understandings of racial threat seem to hold most true. And as Ferguson illustrates, relinquishing power in the face of an influx of a minority population is a slow process.

The second profile is *Majority–Minority* places, or jurisdictions where one or more racial or ethnic minority groups comprise at least 50% of the population, and are, therefore, assumed to hold considerable electoral power that may translate to political leadership. Scholarship on descriptive representation of racial minorities has long noted the importance of majority Black or majority Latino places in electing racial minorities, and this relationship seems to hold for both Black and Latino representation (Leal, Martinez-Ebers, and Meier 2004; Rocha 2007; Shah 2010). However, minority representation remains a novelty, and the underrepresentation (with the benchmark of parity) is often more stark in places with higher minority diversity (Hero 1998). Despite this earlier research, less clear is how these population shifts influence representation or how racial threat operates when the “in-group” and “out-group” are racial minorities.

The third profile is *Multiracial Places*, or what previous research has called highly bifurcated places (Hero 1998) or no-majority cities (Farrell and Lee 2016). By definition, these are places in which a number of racial or ethnic groups reside but where none constitutes a majority. Thus, no racial or ethnic group is large enough to rely solely on its own population to sway electoral politics, and coalition building between racial minorities and/or Whites is essential to minority representation (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984; Marschall and Ruhil 2006; Marschall, Ruhil, and Shah 2010; McClain 1993; Meier and Stewart 1991; Rocha 2007). The concepts of “in-group” and “out-group” are perhaps most fuzzy in these cities, as power may shift more readily among different groups.

What are the implications for racial representation in demographically transforming cities, and are these the same for Black and Latino political incorporation? Below, I examine this question for mayoral representation using a large multicity dataset that spans 25 years. The focus on city leadership is appropriate, given, first, the rise of minority mayors over the last 25 years across the United States (Perry 2013). Indeed, race and ethnicity are no longer seen as barriers to the highest municipal office. Second, cities are at the forefront of the racial and ethnic change that may lead to new political struggles, and, thus, an examination of mayoral elections may provide a looking glass into the future of minority representation (Marschall et al. 2010).<sup>2</sup> I find that changes in demographic context often act independently of current racial composition, and can be a more powerful force in determining minority representation.

I next turn to the implications of demographic change for minority candidate emergence, and examine where White, Black, Latino, and Asian candidates choose to run for the mayor’s office in California. The results clearly show that the newly evolving multiracial places prominent in California offer additional

opportunities for some, but not all, racial minorities. Together, the findings from this study conclude that cities undergoing rapid shifts in their populations have perhaps a higher bar to overcome in finding political inclusion.

## Racial Change, Racial Threat, and Minority Representation

A central tenet of racial threat can be found in Blumer's (1958, p. 4) group position model, which defines one racial group vis-à-vis another:

The feeling of superiority places the subordinate people *below*; the feeling of alienation places them *beyond*; the feeling of proprietary claim excludes them from the prerogatives of position; and the feel of encroachment is an emotional recoil from the endangering of group position (emphasis in original).

That is, groups who have "always" held power see their position as natural, and find they have little in common with the nondominant racial group. Similarly, social identity theory predicts an influx of minority group members into an area will accentuate in-group biases and out-group hostility. In both cases, perceptions of changes in power arrangements will be met with hostility and contempt, and according to Blumer, will lead to prejudicial beliefs and behaviors.

Notions of encroachment, thus, become the basis for the racial threat hypothesis: Larger Black populations lead White voters to feel threatened by potential interracial competition over social, economic, and political resources (Blalock 1967). A large body of research finds support for the racial threat hypothesis, including the effects on voter turnout (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999), policy support (Hopkins 2010), racial attitudes (Oliver 2010), and social capital (Putnam 2007). More nuanced analyses suggest the composition of the racial group matters. Rocha and Matsubayashi (2012), for example, concluded that a growing Latino noncitizen population leads to greater policy inequity with Anglos, all else equal.

However, scholars have sought to examine the positive effects of racial change. Allport's (1954) racial contact hypothesis, for example, purports that greater contact with out-group members will reduce racial animosity and facilitate cooperation. Welch et al. (2001) concluded from their study of Detroit that residential integration promotes interracial contact and reduces interracial hostility. Similarly, Oliver and Wong (2003) found that close proximity out-groups correspond with less racial antagonism.

I extend Blumer's racial threat hypothesis along two dimensions. First, I examine how *change*, rather than static racial composition, plays into racial threat. Recent research stresses the importance of change in information

gathering (Kahneman and Tversky 1979), and finds evidence that demographic changes influence how individuals perceive their community and understand its identity. For example, Hopkins (2010) found that hostile political reactions to neighboring immigrants are most likely when communities undergo sudden influxes of immigrants. Similarly, Green, Strolovitch, and Wong (1998) concluded that ethnic and racial change was a key determinant of interethnic violence in New York City. Barreto, Gonzalez, and Sanchez (2013) found that as the number of Blacks in Latinos' Census blocks increases, the more likely they are to regard Blacks as competitors. Most recently, Craig and Richeson (2014) demonstrated that even exposure to the possibility of changing demographics evokes the expression of greater explicit and implicit bias against racial minority groups from Whites. Together, this research leads me to hypothesize that changes in racial demographics will have a large and independent effect on likelihood of minority representation.

A second extension of racial threat is to go beyond the Black/White relationship, and examine perceptions of threat and competition in the three racial profiles detailed above. Can any racial/ethnic group be threatening? Are some more threatening than others? The extant literature concluded that the answer to these questions is not straightforward. Carey et al. (2016), for example, found support for the racial threat hypothesis, where Latinos express greater perceived competition with African-Americans when in greater contact with them, but only when this is coupled with economic vulnerability. Similarly, Oliver and Wong (2003) concluded that geographic unit plays an important mediating role between changing racial context and racial attitudes. In their study of four large metropolitan areas, neighborhood racial isolation (segregation) leads to greater racial resentment at the neighborhood level, but less racial resentment at the metropolitan level. Campbell et al. (2006) found that the most prevalent effect on White racial attitudes is political context, not racial context. In other words, the fear of minority political mobilization drives White racial attitudes independently of the racial context. The question of how these processes manifest in different racial contexts will be explored here.

### *Representation in Majority White Places*

V.O. Key's (1949) seminal work on southern politics provides the first clues as to what may happen when population dynamics lead to major fluctuations in predominantly White cities. Since Key's writing in 1949, researchers have included variables to capture the size of the White population and determine how this impacts Black representation (see, for example, Karnig 1979; Marschall and Ruhil 2006; Welch 1990), and have concluded large White

population generally depress the chances of minority leadership in the mayor's office. Fundamentally missing from much of this work, however, is a measure of racial change, and, thus, we know White population size is negatively related to Black representation, but do not know if this effect is attenuated as the size of the Black population shifts, or the parameters of this relationship in places outside of the South (Lublin 1997).

In addition, the majority of shifts in population patterns between 1980 and 2010 have resulted because Latinos are moving into new destinations and traditional Black strongholds, requiring a reexamination of Key's hypothesis. What happens in majority White cities that experience fluctuations in the Latino population? Studies of White, Latino, and Black attitudes suggest a number of different dynamics may be in play. Scholars have concluded that Whites tend to feel greater affinity for Latinos than Blacks because moderate Whites see their socioeconomic and political interests to be more in line with Latino interests than Black interests (Kaufmann 2004; Meier and Stewart 1991). Thus, increases in the Latino population may lead to less threat-based behavior than increases in the Black population, and particularly so in majority White cities.

### *Representation in Majority–Minority Places*

Given the growth of minority representation particularly in places with greater than 50% minority populations, these cities provide an important counterpoint to majority White places. Within these contexts, racial minorities simultaneously represent the dominant power and the incoming threat (i.e., Compton, California). In total, the scant research on majority–minority places and representation suggest that racial threat will work similarly here as in majority White cities. In other words, the dominant group should see itself as superior and deserving of power, and find newcomers threatening. And there is some research to support this mechanism. In cities where African-Americans have enjoyed political power, studies have found more regular conflict over city council and school-board seats as the Latino population grows (Kaufmann 2004; Rocha 2007) with an end result of African-American loss of political power to Latinos. As Morris and Gimpel (2007) outlined, the shifts are a result of population change, demand for representation, and the scenario in which the old guard (i.e., African-Americans) retires and is replaced by Latino challengers.

### *Representation in Multiracial Places*

Power in multiracial cities presents a dilemma—with no one group necessarily dominant, the roles of the in-group and out-group may be less defined,

and, thus, the fluctuations in power may be less easy to predict. In one of the few analyses explicitly examining multiracial cities, Shah and Marschall (2014) found that not all multiracial cities are equal, and while some may remain stable, many cities categorized as multiracial are more likely transitioning to majority–minority. The changing demographics of these cities suggest more volatile politics, and in their analysis of California, Shah and Marschall (2014) concluded that these cities continue to see more political power retained by the once-predominant group. In other words, White candidates remain more likely to win in places like Ferguson, and Black candidates remain more likely to win in places like Compton.

## Hypotheses

Together, these scenarios have important implications for the dynamics of minority representation in different racial contexts when populations change. Beginning with cities in which racial groups can most likely rely solely on co-ethnic voters, and given that co-ethnic/co-racial size of the population is consistently related to minority descriptive representation, I expect a positive relationship between changed Black (Latino) population and Black (Latino) mayor in majority Black (Latino) places (*Co-ethnic/racial Voting Strength Hypothesis*).

In addition, I posit changing racial dynamics will lead to *Racial Threat*: Following Key's logic of power and threat, I expect increased Black and Latino populations in majority White places to reduce the likelihood of a Black or Latino mayor, and these effects to be greater for cities with large changes in Black populations. And I hypothesize a similar mechanism to effect the chances of Latino mayors in majority Black cities, and Black mayors in majority Latino cities: Increases in the “out-group” population will negatively impact their representation.

Last, although the effects in multiracial places are more complicated, this is where the likelihood of coalition building is strongest. However, there is some evidence to support Browning, Marshall, and Tabb's (1984) “rainbow” coalition thesis, where Blacks and Latinos come together and cooperate to gain seats. Early case studies of mayoral elections supported this hypothesis for Black mayors (Kaufmann 2003; Sonenshein 1993) but more recent large-*n* analyses have reported no support for the rainbow thesis (Marschall and Ruhil 2006, 2007). Moreover, scholars have noted the opposite relationship for Latinos running for office (Marschall, Ruhil, and Shah 2010; Rocha 2007; Shah 2010), finding the likelihood of Latino representation on city councils and school boards to diminish as the size of the Black population increased. These results lead to my last hypothesis, which I posit to occur in multiracial

places that require groups to work together. Specifically, I hypothesize that increases in the Black voting age population will improve the likelihood of Black representation, and increases in the Latino population will lead to improved odds of both Latino and Black representation (*Asymmetric Coalition Hypothesis*).

## Data, Modeling Strategy, and Measures

To test these hypotheses, I created an original city-level dataset, merging interpolated decennial Census data with the 1981, 1996, 1991, 1996, 2001, and 2006 International City Manager Association's (ICMA) Form of Government Surveys.<sup>3</sup> Restricting the sample to those cities with at least 1% Black voting age and 1% Latino voting age populations for the majority White contexts yields a total sample of 18,203 cities over a 25-year period.<sup>4</sup> Mayoral race is captured from the National Roster of Black Elected Officials for Blacks, and the National Directory of Latino Elected Officials for Latinos.<sup>5</sup>

To date, the vast majority of studies examining minority representation have restricted their analysis to a binary outcome: Black/Latino mayor, or White mayor. As the descriptive data show, in any given setting, there is a greater than zero probability of a Black, Latino, or White mayor prevailing at the polls. I, therefore, conceptualize the dependent variable as a series of categories—for any given city, a Black or Latino or White mayor may be in office—and, therefore, the most appropriate model is multinomial logit.<sup>6</sup>

My expectation that racial context conditions minority representation leads me to examine the likelihood of observing a minority mayor under four different demographic contexts: majority White (with at least 1% Black and 1% Latino voting age populations), majority Black (greater than 50% Black voting age populations), majority Latino (greater than 50% Latino voting age populations), and multiracial (less than 50% Black, Latino, or White voting age populations). To measure racial change, I include an indicator that measures the actual change in population between the 5-year panels: *Change in Black Population*, *Change in Latino Population*. For example, I subtract the proportion Black in 1991 from 1996 to calculate the change; positive numbers indicate growth in the population, negative numbers indicate a decline in the population, and zero would indicate no change. Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for these analyses, and as is evident, the change in any five-year period tends to be small, although my sample includes cities that experienced up to a 4% increase in its Black or Latino population.

In addition, the models include a number of factors that are related to minority representation. First, I include measures of the racial bloc voting strength in the city (*Proportion Black Voting Age Population*, *Proportion*



**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics.

	Majority White		Majority Black		Majority Latino		Multiracial	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Black VAP	0.065	0.093	0.594	0.053	0.029	0.050	0.214	0.150
Latino VAP	0.057	0.068	0.031	0.053	0.529	0.146	0.230	0.123
Δ Black VAP	0.003	0.015	-0.013	0.046	-0.002	0.012	-0.012	0.032
Δ Latino VAP	0.007	0.014	0.003	0.013	-0.041	0.089	-0.013	0.037
White BA	0.292	0.312	0.561	0.262	0.556	0.323	0.554	0.266
Foreign Born	0.039	0.060	0.023	0.057	0.144	0.174	0.079	0.118
Black-Latino Educational Advantage	0.111	0.160	0.334	0.171	0.299	0.200	0.138	0.107
Mayor Directly Elected	0.777	0.415	0.884	0.320	0.632	0.482	0.762	0.425
Total Population (Logged)	9.233	1.192	9.043	1.195	9.596	1.303	9.989	1.455
<i>n</i>	16,041		750		771		641	
Distribution of dependent variable								
White Mayor	15,775		593		532		576	
Black Mayor	73		157		0		38	
Latino Mayor	93		0		239		27	

Note. VAP = voting age population.

*Latino Voting Age Population*). Following convention (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984; Marschall, Ruhil, and Shah 2010; Sonenshein and Drayse 2006; Sonenshein and Pinkus 2005), I include a measure of educated Whites as a proxy of White liberalism in a city (*Proportion White with BA*). To control for the population that is ineligible to vote, I also include the *Proportion Foreign Born*, with the expectation that this population will diminish the likelihood of Latino representation.<sup>7</sup>

Recent work examining coalition building between African-Americans and Latinos has pointed to the issue of material inequities and intense racial competition for valued resources and status (Kaufmann 2006; McClain and Karnig 1990; McClain and Tauber 1998, 2001). Kaufmann (2006), for example, found 61% of Blacks in Los Angeles believe that availability of more good jobs for Latinos means fewer good jobs for Blacks, whereas only 35% of Latinos believe the reverse to be true. Similarly, Gay (2006) concluded that differences in income adversely impact perceptions of commonality:

Blacks who live in neighborhoods where they are better off financially than Latinos are less likely to hold negative stereotypes of Latinos. Given the role material inequities play in determining affinity between Blacks and Latinos, I also control for *Black Educational Advantage*, with the expectation that positive differences lead to greater Black representation, and negative differences lead to greater Latino representation.<sup>8</sup> Last, I control for how the mayor is elected (*Mayor Elected Directly*), size of the city (*City Size(logged)*), and *Time* (0 = 1981; 1 = 1986; 2 = 1991; 3 = 1996; 4 = 2001; 5 = 2006).

Table 1 provides the summary statistics by racial context, and the distribution of the dependent variables by racial context. Immediately apparent in the distribution figures is the very small likelihood of a minority mayor, regardless of context. In other words, even in places with large minority populations, the modal category is a White mayor. In addition, the dataset does not include any majority Black cities with a Latino mayor, or majority Latino cities with a Black mayor. Thus, for these contexts, I will only be estimating results for two outcomes: White mayor or co-ethnic/racial mayor.

## Empirical Analysis and Interpretations

Table 2 presents the multinomial logit estimates for the relationship between changing racial demographics across four racial contexts—majority White, majority Black, majority Latino, and multiracial.<sup>9</sup> For ease of interpretation, in Figure 1, I plot the marginal effects of the main explanatory variables, by city type. Beginning with majority White cities, the results support the previous research that finds current population size is crucial in minority representation. Yet, the substantive effects are small, reinforcing the rarity of minority representation in majority White cities. Specifically, a one standard deviation increase in the Black voting age population improves the chances of a Black mayor 0.005 (0.015–0.020), and similarly, a one standard deviation increase in the Latino voting age population improves the likelihood of a Latino mayor by 0.005 (0.006–0.011).

What about changes in population? To fully examine the effects of changing racial compositions in a city, in Figure 2, I plot the probability of a Black, Latino, and White mayor over a 20% decrease and 20% increase in the minority population. I hypothesized fluctuations in the minority voting age population in majority White cities would confirm Key's racial threat model, reducing the likelihood of minority representation, and the results support this prediction. For example, majority White cities that experience a 10% increase in their Black population over a five-year period decreased their odds of a Black mayor fourfold (from 0.071 to 0.017). That same level of Latino population growth diminished the likelihood of a Latino mayor as

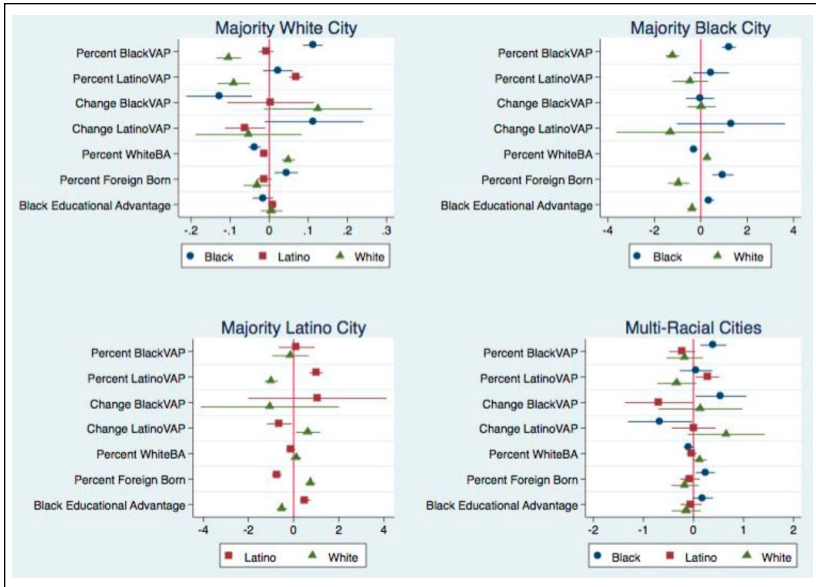
**Table 2.** Effects of Changing Racial Dynamics, by Racial Context, on Likelihood of Minority Mayor.

	Majority White		Majority Black	Majority Latino	Multiracial	
	Black Mayor	Latino Mayor	Black Mayor	Latino Mayor	Black Mayor	Latino Mayor
	<i>b</i> /( <i>SE</i> )	<i>b</i> /( <i>SE</i> )	<i>b</i> /( <i>SE</i> )	<i>b</i> /( <i>SE</i> )	<i>b</i> /( <i>SE</i> )	<i>b</i> /( <i>SE</i> )
Black VAP	10.932*** (1.065)	-1.311 (1.782)	11.047*** (1.496)	0.895 (2.518)	8.724** (2.925)	-5.850 (3.517)
Latino VAP	2.281 (1.907)	12.434*** (1.079)	4.108 (3.582)	6.116*** (1.024)	1.318 (3.662)	7.496* (3.167)
Δ Black VAP	-12.610** (4.150)	0.496 (10.281)	-0.302 (2.828)	6.453 (9.617)	11.843* (5.762)	-18.264* (9.066)
Δ Latino VAP	11.131 (6.304)	-11.015* (4.718)	11.876 (10.842)	-3.913* (1.723)	-14.688* (7.299)	-0.089 (6.032)
White BA	-3.676*** (0.765)	-2.173** (0.682)	-2.604*** (0.771)	-0.737 (0.640)	-2.027 (1.128)	-1.022 (1.367)
Foreign Born	4.251** (1.473)	-2.153 (1.715)	8.687*** (2.230)	-4.593*** (0.762)	5.200* (2.127)	-1.650 (2.692)
Black-Latino Educational Advantage	-1.570 (1.323)	1.838* (0.818)	3.352** (1.036)	3.178*** (0.744)	4.116 (2.328)	-1.141 (2.931)
Mayor Directly Elected	-0.080 (0.199)	-0.502* (0.225)	0.652 (0.394)	0.137 (0.202)	0.732 (0.607)	0.074 (0.506)
Total Population (Logged)	0.359*** (0.062)	0.379*** (0.087)	0.358*** (0.098)	0.227** (0.077)	0.305* (0.129)	0.360* (0.156)
Time	-0.170* (0.086)	0.039 (0.117)	-0.321* (0.139)	-0.298 (0.171)	-0.174 (0.202)	0.191 (0.375)
Constant	-8.145*** (0.691)	-9.170*** (0.966)	-10.950*** (1.482)	-5.205*** (1.125)	-8.853*** (2.227)	-8.648** (2.744)
<i>n</i>	16,041		750	771	641	

Note. VAP = voting age population.  
 \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

well, from 0.006 to 0.002. Together, these results suggest it is, indeed, *change*, and not current voting age population, that is particularly detrimental to minority success in majority White places, although as apparent from Figure 2, the likelihood of minority success in these cities is extremely low.

Contrary to expectations of a “liberal” White population improving the odds of minority representation, I find that in majority White cities, larger

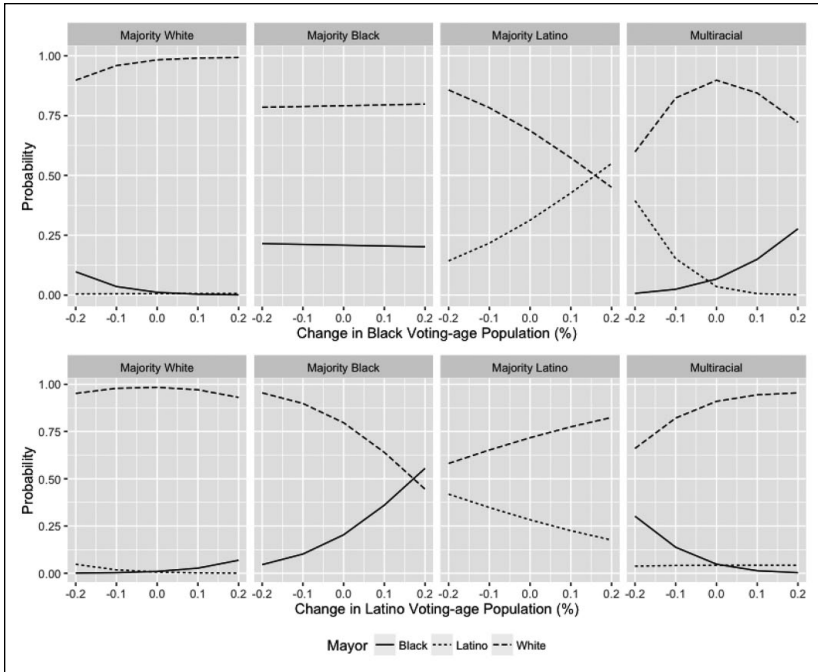


**Figure 1.** Average marginal effects with 95% CI, by racial context.  
 Note. CI = confidence interval; VAP = voting age population.

proportions of the White population with a bachelor’s degree results in a reduced likelihood of Black or Latino mayoral representation. These findings contradict earlier work that argued that liberal Whites saw minority candidates as a symbol of racial harmony (Sonenshein 1993), and, thus, may speak to changes in how the educated White population votes when in the majority. These findings may also highlight changes in political contexts because theories of minority coalition building with White voters was a necessary step for minority representation (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984).

Interestingly, the proportion of foreign-born individuals in a majority White city had no effect on Latino representation, but increased Black representation (although the substantive effect is quite small). Recent work lends support for this result, finding that the emergence of a large foreign-born population in a city leads White voters to see themselves with greater affinity for Blacks than Latinos (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015). As Hajnal and Rivera (2014) concluded, immigration has become a central factor in the politics of White America, significantly changing perceptions of threatening “out-groups.”

Majority–minority cities provide a useful contrast with majority White places. I hypothesized, first, increasing co-ethnic populations would be beneficial for minority representation. The results reported in Table 2 and



**Figure 2.** Effects of changing Black VAP and Latino VAP on Pr(Mayor), by racial context.

Note. VAP = voting age population; Pr = probability.

depicted in Figure 1 support the strong relationship between population size and minority representation: Majority Black cities with a one standard deviation increase in the Black voting age population increases the likelihood of a Black mayor from 0.220 to 0.333, and a similar increase in the Latino voting age population in a majority Latino city results in a 0.062 increase in the likelihood of a Latino mayor (0.250–0.312).

The different effects of changing Black and changing Latino voting age populations are distinctly apparent in Figure 2. First, change in the Black population has no effect on mayoral outcomes in majority Black cities. Across the spectrum of change, the likelihood of a White mayor remains at around 75%, and the likelihood of a Black mayor remains around 25%. It appears that once a city has become majority Black, changes in the Black population are of little consequence for Black representation.

Second, increases in the Latino population have a substantial effect: A 10% increase moved the likelihood of a Black mayor 15%, and as is illustrated in Figure 2, at very high levels of change in the Latino population

(around 20% increase), the likelihood of a Black mayor eclipses that of a White mayor. Similarly, in majority Latino cities, an increase in the Black voting age population has a positive effect on Latino representation. Together, these findings provide some evidence to refute the racial threat argument in majority–minority places, and rather support the asymmetric coalition hypothesis of some minority populations working in tandem to ensure representation.

Examining the other variables in the model, I do find, as expected, that the foreign-born population hurts Latino representation, even in majority Latino cities. However, Black representation is, again, positively influenced by a growing foreign-born population. These results for both majority White and majority Black cities may provide some support for Rocha's (2007) reverse power thesis, where increased noncitizen Latino populations hurt Latino representation, but help Black representation. I also find that for majority–minority cities, the Black educational advantage in a city improves the odds of minority representation, both Latino and Black. Although Gay (2006) did not explicitly examine majority–minority places, these results again point to possibilities of coalition building between Latinos and African-Americans.

Last is the question of representation in multiracial places. Recall that in these cities, I hypothesized that the majority powers would work to retain their strength, even as the demographics of their cities would require cooperation for electoral success. To begin, I find that results presented in the final column of Table 2 mirror many of the earlier findings. For example, Black representation is more likely in those cities with larger Black populations, and Latino representation in cities with large Latino populations. In other words, the voter strength hypothesis is supported.

Changing population dynamics, however, are more complicated. As Figure 2 illustrates, a growing Black voting age population in multiracial cities simultaneously improves the likelihood of Black representation at the expense of Latino representation. Interestingly, the likelihood of a White mayor is greatest at zero change in Black population, suggesting that it is the fluctuations and shifts in demographics, either positive or negative, that are most detrimental to White power. Conversely, an increase in the Latino population diminishes Black representation, but has no effect on Latino representation. Indeed, in these cities, it is White representation that benefits from a growing Latino voting population. Together, these findings support the asymmetric coalition hypothesis, and suggest the coalition prospects in multiracial cities are not the same for Blacks, Latinos, and Whites.

## Racial Change and Candidate Emergence

Three seats on the Ferguson, Missouri, city council were elected in 2015, and there was a significant push to get more minority candidates to run, and more minority voters to vote. If racial context is important in determining the likelihood of minorities winning elections, how does it impact the likelihood of a minority candidate running for an election? To date, very little attention has been paid to the supply of minority candidates across the United States, although a number of scholars have noted the salience of this primary stage in determining minority descriptive representation (Juenke 2014; Shah 2014).

How would racial threat operate at this first stage of representation? I begin with the premise that all candidates for office are strategic (Schlesinger 1966), and, therefore, assess the likelihood of winning before deciding to run. Following the logic presented above, the impact of a growing minority population may follow one of two paths. If the growing minority population includes the growth of co-racial/co-ethnic voters, strategic candidates may assess their likelihood of winning to be more favorable. If, however, the growth is predominantly among racial or ethnic out-groups, candidates may assess their ability to garner enough votes as diminished. Together, then, I hypothesize that Latino candidates will most likely emerge in (1) majority Latino cities, and (2) cities with growing Latino populations, including multiracial cities. Black and Asian candidates are expected to follow similar patterns.

Strategic candidates may also assess their chances by examining previous representation in the city. Have Asian candidates run before, for example? In one of the few studies to explicitly examine the role of previous representation on the likelihood of current representation, Marschall and Ruhil (2006) included lagged Black mayor and Black council variables in their estimation of Black mayoralities, and found a positive effect of previous representation on the city council for Black mayors. Marschall, Ruhil, and Shah (2010) extended the conceptual understanding of the process of descriptive representation by decomposing it into its two parts: moving from no representation to at least one legislator, and moving toward population parity. Their analysis of the role of previous representation on the likelihood of Black council and school-board representation concluded that overcoming the initial “hurdle” of representation substantively lowers subsequent representation, and that this process is significantly aided by previous representation.

Hajnal’s (2006) information hypothesis provided additional clues as to how previous representation might matter. He argued that exposure to minority leadership may lead to improved White attitudes, and, thus, increase the likelihood of White cross-over voters in future elections. His analysis of

White racial attitudes confirms the information hypothesis; he concluded, “whites who live in cities governed by black mayors have significantly more positive racial attitudes than whites who live under white mayors” (p. 607), and that these effects increase over time (p. 608).

The question of how previous representation influences candidate emergence, however, has not been examined. In other words, it may be that White voters in majority White settings *need* more “information” about minority leadership than Whites in majority–minority or multiracial settings. Similarly, in multiracial contexts, it is quite plausible that the Black or Latino populations have had similarly little prior experience with minority leadership, and, thus, again need more information before they cross over for a minority candidate. Moreover, information about the “in-group’s” leadership might positively impact the “out-group’s” perceptions. In other words, experience with Black leadership may mitigate the negative Latino attitudes discussed earlier. Thus, my second hypothesis is that minority candidates will be more likely to run in places with previous co-racial/ethnic candidates running.

### *Data and Method*

Unfortunately, a nationally representative sample of cities equivalent to the ICMA dataset that includes candidate information is not available. For this analysis, I turn to the *Local Elections in America Project* (LEAP) database (Marschall and Shah 2017), and California. California is a good test of theories related to racial change for a number of reasons. First, the country’s most populous state is home to many diverse communities, including Latinos, Asians, and Blacks. Second, the state has witnessed a number of significant demographic shifts. Table 3 examines the shifts in California demographics between 1980 and 2010. As the data in this table indicate, the racial/ethnic landscape of California cities has changed dramatically over the past four decades. Whereas more than 80% of California cities were majority White in 1980, by 2010 less than half were. This change was driven in part by the significant increase in the number of majority Latino cities in California—from 45 to 120 between 1980 and 2010 (a 166% change). By 2010, majority Latino cities represented a quarter of all California cities. Even more remarkable, however, has been the increase in the number of Asian majority and multiracial cities. And although California witnessed early success in electing Black mayors (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984), they have done so without the benefit of a majority population.

Key for this analysis, the California LEAP data include the names of mayoral candidates. Racial/ethnic identifiers are not provided, however, and, thus, I utilize a Bayesian geocoding/surname method to code the race of



**Table 3.** Number (%) of California Cities by Racial/Ethnic Context, 1980–2010.

	1980	1990	2000	2010
Majority Black cities	2 (0.5%)	2 (0.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Majority Latino cities	45 (10.7%)	65 (14.3%)	89 (18.8%)	120 (24.9%)
Majority Asian cities	0 (0%)	1 (0.2%)	5 (1.1%)	15 (3.1%)
Majority White cities	347 (82.2%)	337 (73.9%)	284 (60.0%)	236 (49.0%)
Multiracial cities	28 (6.6%)	51 (11.2%)	96 (20.3%)	111 (23.0%)
No. of total California cities	422	456	474	482

the candidates. Specifically, following Enos (2016), I calculate the conditional distributions of the posterior probability  $g_i$  that a candidate with a given surname  $S$  is of one of the following racial groups  $G$ : White (non-Hispanic), Black/African-American, Hispanic (not White or Black), Asian, or Native American.

$$\Pr(g_i|S) = \frac{\Pr(S|g_i) p_i}{\sum_{j \in G} \Pr(S|g_j) p_j}.$$

Using the Census surname list, I can identify  $\Pr(S|g_j)$ , the probability that any given individual from racial group  $g_j$  has the name  $S$ . This gives me a “prior” understanding of the probability of a candidate’s race, to which I can then apply a conditional probability. The Census also supplies the conditional probability ( $p_i$ ) that any given individual of racial group  $g_i$  is living within a unique Census place (either county, school district, or municipality). Together, I now have a posterior probability of a candidate’s race based on  $\Pr(g_i|S)$ , the probability that any given candidate belongs to racial group  $g_i$  given their name, and the racial composition of the Census place in which they run for office. The candidate’s race was “fixed” to the racial category with the highest probability. Given problems with this method in capturing African-Americans, particularly when using a large geographic area like city (see Shah and Davis 2017 for more information), I also merged information about mayoral winners in California from the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Black Elected Officials Rosters for 1991, 1993, 1996, and 2001.

To these data, I merged interpolated Census data from 1990, 2000, and 2010. Between 1995 and 2010, 2,244 candidates ran for mayor in California. Before modeling the likelihood of a minority candidate emerging in the different racial contexts, I explore the data from California in more detail. In Table 4, I look at the kinds of cities in which minority candidates emerge. Much like

**Table 4.** Number (%) of Candidates Running, by Candidate Race and City Type.

Race of Candidate (n Between 1995 and 2010)	Majority White City (n = 1,202)	Majority Latino City (n = 403)	Majority Asian City (n = 6)	Multiracial City (n = 633)
Asian (29)	12	6	0	11
Black (54)	3	10	0	41
Latino (438)	88	203	0	147
White (1,723)	1,099	184	6	434

the national sample, I find that White candidates dominate the field of mayoral candidates, comprising 76% of the total sample. And while the vast majority of them run in majority White places, there are some who run in majority–minority and multiracial places. The disappearance of majority Black cities has meant that we find Black candidates most often in multiracial cities. Asian candidates are, surprisingly, not running in majority Asian cities, but are found in majority White and multiracial cities. Last, Latino candidates continue to be predominantly found in majority Latino cities, although a nontrivial number also run in majority White and multiracial cities.

Previous work on candidate emergence suggests that candidates are strategic in their decision to enter the race (Juenke 2014; Shah 2014). Considering the hypotheses posed above, I expect many of the same mechanisms that assess voter strength and likelihood of vote choice to explain racial/ethnic minority candidate emergence in California. For example, I would expect the *Co-racial/Ethnic Voting Strength Hypothesis* to operate in a similar fashion: Cities with large Black populations, for example, are more likely to see a Black candidate on the ballot.

The effects of changing racial dynamics, however, might be more nuanced. On one hand, strategic candidates may see rising “out-group” voters to decrease their likelihood of winning, and, thus, reduce their desire to run. Here, the *expectation* of racial threat may dampen candidate emergence. On the other hand, these demographic shifts might open up opportunities for coalition building, following Browning, Marshall, and Tabb’s (1984) early analysis of California. Again, it would be the expectation of building coalitions of voters from underrepresented groups that might lead strategic candidates to run for the mayor’s office.

Given the small cell sizes, I restrict my analysis to *t* tests of the demographic variables of interest, reported in Table 5. To begin, I find evidence for the co-racial/co-ethnic voting strength hypothesis—across the three

**Table 5.** Summary of Racial Demographics, by Racial Context, on Minority Candidate Emergence in California, 1995–2010.

	Majority White City				Majority Latino City				Multiracial City			
	White Candidate (n = 1,068)	Black Candidate (n = 3)	Latino Candidate (n = 84)	Asian Candidate (n = 12)	White Candidate (n = 179)	Black Candidate (n = 10)	Latino Candidate (n = 194)	Asian Candidate (n = 6)	White Candidate (n = 389)	Black Candidate (n = 35)	Latino Candidate (n = 131)	Asian Candidate (n = 11)
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
% White	68.1 (11.8)	60.1 (10.4)	62.3 (11.1)	62.7 (11.7)	33.1 (8.8)	5.0** (4.0)	28.3 (11.2)	26.7 (4.8)	41.0 (9.1)	21.7* (14.7)	40.1 (8.9)	41.5 (9.2)
% Black	4.2 (4.3)	8.8** (7.1)	4.6 (4.6)	2.2 (1.8)	5.5 (5.6)	38.2** (3.1)	5.6 (8.9)	0.4 (0.3)	13.6 (10.9)	34.5* (12.6)	12.7 (10.1)	7.1 (8.1)
% Latino	23.8 (10.6)	29.2 (11.7)	29.1 (10.6)	24.3 (13.2)	58.7 (7.4)	56.3 (1.8)	63.5 (11.3)	66.4 (6.9)	37.0 (8.6)	41.0 (6.4)	39.3 (7.8)	29.7 (9.5)
% Asian	3.7 (4.4)	1.7 (0.8)	3.8 (5.1)	10.6** (12.8)	2.6 (2.2)	0.3 (0.2)	2.5 (3.1)	6.4* (2.3)	8.2 (8.4)	2.7 (3.1)	7.7 (6.2)	21.5* (14.8)
Δ % White	-2.0 (3.9)	-4.3 (4.5)	-2.2 (3.5)	-3.0 (10.3)	-0.9 (9.0)	1.9 (5.1)	3.5 (10.5)	12.3* (10.7)	-1.8 (5.5)	0.7 (4.0)	-0.2 (5.7)	-4.1* (9.6)
Δ % Black	0.13 (1.1)	0.70 (1.0)	0.06 (1.3)	-0.08 (0.28)	-0.4 (1.8)	-6.8* (0.1)	-0.6 (1.9)	0.1 (0.1)	-0.5 (2.8)	-2.4 (3.3)	-0.5 (3.0)	-0.8 (2.6)
Δ % Latino	2.3 (3.7)	5.8* (3.5)	2.4 (4.6)	1.3 (5.9)	2.0 (10.8)	5.3 (5.4)	-2.6 (12.8)	-14.2** (16.7)	1.6 (7.4)	3.3 (5.0)	0.3 (8.3)	-0.2 (9.7)
Δ % Asian	-0.51 (4.4)	-2.1 (2.1)	-0.2 (4.1)	1.8* (13.1)	-0.6 (3.2)	-0.5 (0.3)	-0.2 (3.4)	1.8* (6.1)	0.8 (8.8)	-1.6 (4.3)	0.4 (8.2)	5.1* (17.9)
Previous White Candidate	1 (0)	1 (0)	0.983 (0.130)	0.833 (0.408)	1 (0)	0.222** (0.441)	0.605 (0.490)	0.666 (0.516)	1 (0)	1 (0)	0.988 (0.105)	0.875 (0.353)
Previous Black Candidate	0.007 (0.087)	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.008 (0.093)	1 (0)	0.078* (0.270)	0 (0)	0.160 (0.367)	1 (0)	0.112 (0.317)	0 (0)
Previous Latino Candidate	0.052 (0.223)	0 (0)	0.355* (0.482)	0 (0)	0.315 (0.466)	0.333 (0.500)	0.710** (0.455)	0.333 (0.516)	0.189 (0.392)	0.100 (0.305)	0.382* (0.488)	0.250 (0.462)
Previous Asian Candidate	0 (0.155)	0 (0)	0.033 (0.182)	1 (0)	0.008 (0.009)	0 (0)	0.035 (0.184)	1 (0)	0.058 (0.234)	0 (0)	0.056 (0.231)	1 (0)
% White Candidate Won	94.2** (23.2)	66.6 (57.7)	61.2 (48.8)	25.0 (45.2)	67.5** (46.9)	30.0 (52.2)	18.5 (38.9)	33.3 (51.6)	86.9 (31.1)	94.2 (23.5)	71.7 (45.1)	72.7 (46.7)
% Black Candidate Won	0.28 (5.3)	33.3** (57.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	70.0** (48.3)	2.5 (15.8)	0 (0)	2.8 (16.5)	22.8** (42.6)	1.5 (12.3)	0 (0)
% Latino Candidate Won	1.6 (12.5)	0 (0)	15.4** (36.3)	8.3 (28.8)	7.2 (26.0)	0 (0)	39.7** (49.0)	16.6 (40.8)	4.3 (20.4)	0 (0)	10.6** (31.0)	0 (0)
% Asian Candidate Won	0.84 (9.1)	0 (0)	1.2 (10.9)	58.3** (51.4)	1.1 (10.5)	0 (0)	1.5 (12.3)	33.3** (51.6)	1.0 (10.1)	0 (0)	2.3 (15.0)	27.7** (46.7)

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001.

demographic profiles,<sup>1</sup> current racial populations are positively related to the emergence of a minority candidate, and most often, the co-ethnic/racial population is greatest in the elections in which a co-ethnic candidate emerged. For example, the average percentage Asian in cities where an Asian candidate ran for mayor was 10.6%, much higher than in cities where White, Latino, or Black candidates emerged. Similar dynamics were found for Black and Asian candidates across all three demographic profiles. Interestingly, White and Latino candidates are on ballots in very similar cities, highlighting the growth of Latino political power in California elections.

Examining the effects of racial change, a number of patterns are apparent. For example, the emergence of minority candidates is often accompanied with a decline in the White population in the city. Minority candidate emergence is also often accompanied by a growth in the co-ethnic population, suggesting that strategic candidates may weigh the changing racial dynamics in their favor. An interesting outlier to this rule is Black candidates for mayor in majority Latino cities. Although speculative given the small sample size, here, I find that these cities are notably losing their Black population, although they are quite strongly biracial Latino-Black. Here, it may be more apt to argue that in these cities, Black candidates are looking to Latino coalition partners as their voting bloc. Together, these findings may suggest that Black candidates are coming from more established populations within a city, rather than incoming groups.

In addition, California provides a unique opportunity to examine Asian candidates. Although a small number overall in the sample, I am able to report on the likelihood of Asian candidates in majority White, majority Latino, and multiracial places, and find the factors that influence candidate emergence to be different, particularly as they related to the White populations. First, in all three demographics, Asian candidates are more likely to be on the ballot in cities with relatively more Asian voters, and a growing Asian population. Second, they are often still very much in the minority numerically, suggesting a need to build coalitions with either the Latino or White voters (Wong et al. 2011). In two of the racial contexts—majority White and multiracial—it is a decreasing White population that characterizes Asian candidate emergence. An interesting exception to this rule is in majority Latino cities where an Asian candidate ran for mayor. Here, I find that it is growth of the White population and a decrease in the Latino population that characterize these cities. This finding supports earlier work on coalition building prospects among Latinos and Asians, and extends the arguments from policy to political representation (Kim and Lee 2001; Rim 2009).

Next, I examine how previous representation impacts the likelihood of running. First, regardless of racial context, previous representation is a strong indicator of running for office: Black, Latino, and Asian candidates are more

likely to run in places where a co-racial/ethnic candidate has run previously. This supports the argument that strategic candidates develop a calculus of likelihood of winning and support from voters, and use previous runs for office as a proxy for tolerance of a non-White candidate. There is also some evidence that previous candidacy of a non-co-ethnic minority has a positive effect in majority Latino and multiracial contexts. For example, Latino candidates are emerging in majority Latino places that have had previous Black and previous Latino candidates. Similarly, I find Asian candidates emerging in multiracial contexts where previous Latino and Asian candidates ran. To be sure, these findings are exploratory thus far, but they beg the question of how the politics of coalition building extend to candidate emergence.

Last, Table 5 provides the proportion of candidates who won in their mayoral race, by racial/ethnic group and context. Not surprisingly, White candidates fared very well, regardless of their competitor or the racial context. That said, when candidates of color run, they often win (Juenke and Shah 2015). Perhaps the most interesting finding is in multiracial contexts, where a Black candidate is running; here, the percent of White candidates winning is higher than expected. This finding may speak to the racial threat against African-American candidates in multiracial settings. Again, additional research is warranted.

## Conclusion

Political scientists have long noted the important role democratic inclusion can have in mitigating the social fractures that have emerged under conditions of political and economic inequality. Indeed, much of the push to get African-American voters to the polls in Compton and Ferguson was based on the ideals of representative democracy that is truly representative. As the country marches toward greater racial diversity, the question of how changes in the racial and political landscape will impact this democratic inclusion warrants attention. A number of conclusions can be drawn from this analysis.

The first is that the effects of the dramatic shifts in racial composition of cities on minority descriptive representation vary widely, depending on the racial context of cities. In majority White cities that are moving toward greater racial heterogeneity, Key's (1949) predictions of racial threat and backlash are supported. Indeed, much of the racial animosity and distrust of racial minorities Key described in 1940s southern cities continues to hold true in many U.S. cities. In cities like Ferguson, becoming majority–minority creates additional challenges to representation. Similarly, predominantly White cities experiencing growth in their Latino population are less likely to have Latino representation, although the racial threat appears to have less of an effect.

Second, the changes in immigration and migration patterns over the last 25 years also allow me to examine how the concepts of “in-group” and “out-group” manifest in majority–minority cities. In contrast with the proposed threat hypothesis, I find increasing Black populations in majority Latino cities to increase the likelihood of Latino representation, and similarly, increasing Latino populations in majority Black cities to improve the likelihood of Black representation. These findings counter some recent work that argues a “loss of black power” as immigration changes the face of traditional Black strongholds (Kaufmann 2006; Sonenshein and Drayse 2006). There may be more evidence of cooperative electoral behavior in majority–minority cities than majority White.

Third, the analysis of candidate emergence in California provides a direct answer to the question of why greater racial diversity within a city leads to greater underrepresentation: Candidates of color are not running. Perhaps more interesting, it is, indeed, the cities seeing the most flux in their populations—multiracial cities—in which we find minority candidates running for mayors.

Last, in specifically examining multiracial cities, this article also adds to the current discourse about how Blacks, Latinos, and Whites may work together in attaining minority representation. Race scholars have long been interested in how demography and demographic shifts relate to minority electoral alliances, but few have been able to examine this question in places where these alliances are necessary. The results represented here find that the fluid, unstable, and perhaps transitory nature of these cities can be beneficial for Black representation, but not for Latino representation. They also suggest that the conflict we see in places like Compton might reach a tipping point, as cities move from multiracial to majority–minority.

While we continue to be a nation governed largely by White (men), demographic pressures are slowly pushing toward parity in representation. As the racial complexion of cities has shifted over the last 20 years, however, the struggles for political power have become more complex. The results from this analysis suggest that regardless of race, “in-groups” are unlikely to give up power, and the political consequences of racial threat will continue to shape minority prospects for leadership. However, there is evidence of compromise where two racial minorities can coexist and perhaps govern together. The intersections between racial context and shifting political and racial landscapes will continue to have important consequences for minority political power.

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## Notes

1. For example, David Dinkens in New York City, Harold Washington in Chicago, Lee Brown in Houston, Ron Kirk in Dallas, Tom Bradley and Antonio Villaraigosa in Los Angeles, Sharon Sayles Belton in Minneapolis, Rice Norman in Seattle, Willie Brown in San Francisco.
2. In this article, I focus solely on mayors for a number of reasons, both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, mayoral leadership is seen as the pinnacle of gaining political voice within a city, and much of the research I refer to examines mayors exclusively. Thus, as this article adds to that discourse, a focus on mayors seems most comparable. Second, and more practically, examining city councilors would require information about the racial change occurring in wards within cities, and to date, a large dataset with this information is not available.
3. The 2011 Survey is currently available, but was not included in this analysis because concurrent information about mayor's race is not available for 2011.
4. International City Manager Association's (ICMA) Form of Government surveys are mailed to approximately 7,500 cities, and approximately 4,000 are returned for each survey cycle. Over the six panel years, 23,060 cities appear more than once, and 4,239 appear all six times. To maximize the number of majority-minority and multiracial cities, for this project, I include all observations, clustering the models on city. Census data and change variables are calculated for all cities and matched to the appropriate years.
5. No cities in the sample have an Asian mayor according to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Asian American Elected Officials Roster, and so mayors not identified as Latino or Black are set to White.
6. The multinomial logit model estimates coefficients for the independent variables with regard to each category in the dependent variable, while constraining them so that the summed probability of each category equals 1. Another option would be to create a series of dummy variables and estimate a series of logit model, but this would not constrain the cumulative probability to 1, and would, therefore, produce biased estimates (Long 1997).
7. I recognize that this is a weak proxy. Ideally, I would have data on citizen voting age population (CVAP) by race and ethnicity across the 25 years, but unfortunately, these data are not available until the 2000 Census.
8. I follow Gay's (2006) model: % Black high school – % Latino high school.
9. White mayor is the baseline category.

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