

Majority-Minority Districts, Co-Ethnic Candidates, and Mobilization Effects¹

Gary M. Segura
University of Washington

Nathan D. Woods
Welch Consulting

In part as a response to litigation brought under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) and in part because of review of redistricting plans pursuant to Section 5 of the VRA, creating majority-minority districts has become the standard method for securing minority representation in legislative institutions.² Creation of such districts increased markedly after the 1990 census.³ Most scholars would agree that the establishment of these districts was remarkably successful at securing descriptive representation, i.e., the representation of citizens of a racial or ethnic group by a co-ethnic. These districts generally did result in the election of an increasing number of African Americans and Latinos to public office.

¹ Prepared for presentation to the University of California, Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity, and Diversity Conference, February 9, 2006, Washington, D.C. Authors' names are in alphabetical order. The authors wish to express their thanks to Matt Barreto of the University of Washington for his feedback, and to the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute for providing the original California data.

² Majority-minority districts simply refer to electoral districts drawn with a sufficient minority population so that the minority population can elect a candidate of choice. Candidate of like race or ethnicity is typically used as a proxy for candidate of choice. What constitutes "sufficient" population size is a source of some debate, but typically ranges between 55% and 65%. See a recent exchange between Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran (1996); Cameron, Epstein and O'Halloran (1999); and Lublin (1999) for a thorough review of this discussion.

³ Largely as a function of minority geographic population concentration and segregation, there were majority-minority districts in existence prior to the 1991 redistricting process.

Less certain, however, is the impact of these districts on the political behavior of citizens residing in them. Some scholars suggest that majority-minority districts or jurisdictions mobilize minority electorates and find modest support for this theory at the mayoral level in majority-minority cities (Bobo and Gilliam 1990, Lublin and Tate 1992). They argue that creating majority-minority districts provides minority voters with a new-found opportunity to elect candidates of choice, thus empowering previously excluded groups and increasing their incentives to vote. Others have taken a more skeptical view. The preponderance of early research reported no meaningful change in minority voter turnout rates in mayoral and local legislative elections (Brace et al. 1995, Gaddie and Bullock 1995). More ominously, Lani Guinier (1994) and others have suggested that low levels of competition in majority-minority districts, coupled with disappointment in the lack of perceived policy effects from increased descriptive representation, serve as disincentives to participation. Any gains in turnout, they suggest, will be quickly eroded by the irrelevance of voter participation.

We suggest that the question of effect on voter behavior is of pivotal importance in any effort to evaluate the net minority representation effect of majority-minority districting under the Voting Rights Act. In particular, how majority-minority districts influence the mobilization of minority electorates is of tremendous relevance to the outcome of up-ballot races, that is, races for larger legislative districts and statewide contests. If minority voting is enhanced by majority-minority districts, then minorities are not disadvantaged in shaping outcomes in statewide races and ballot initiatives, and their use as a solution to minority underrepresentation does not impose negative externalities on other electoral contests. By contrast, if these districts result in suppressed voter turnout among minority constituents, they could have profound and detrimental effects by diminishing the impact of minority voices and interests on up-ballot races where the outcome is less certain than in smaller majority-minority electoral districts.

To date, there have been two broad-based efforts to answer this question. In the first, Claudine Gay (2001) used ecological inference to examine congressional elections in majority-black districts. She concluded that majority-black districts had a negligible effect on African-American voter turnout, having found only modest evidence of increased participation. By contrast, she did find significant declines in turnout among non-Hispanic whites in these districts.

The second effort was ours (Barreto, Segura, and Woods 2004). In that work, we set out to determine whether living in majority-minority districts helped mobilize Latinos, and whether the effects of district composition could be better estimated by considering the larger electoral context, that is, the partisan and racial nature of other legislative races. We focused exclusively on legislative elections and analyzed turnout data at the individual level. Specifically, we estimated the influence of both single and overlapping majority-minority districts⁴ on individual-

⁴ Overlapping majority-minority districts occur when more than one of the legislative districts in which a voter resides is majority-minority, including the lower and/or upper houses of the state legislature, and/or the U.S. House.

level minority voter turnout, comparing the actual turnout of voters over multiple elections. We found a consistently positive effect on Latino turnout. That is, majority-minority districts and co-ethnic representation at every level—state lower house, state Senate, and U.S. House—increased the likelihood that a Latino voter would turn out on election-day. Having the opportunity to elect a candidate of your choosing appears to be a consistently empowering circumstance. Latinos vote more when in a majority-Latino district, contrary to the expectations of those who expected or feared minority demobilization. Moreover, we found that the larger electoral context played an important role in establishing the incentives or disincentives to vote. That is, Latino voters living where the legislative districts at two or more levels of government were majority Latino vote more frequently than those who live in only one majority-Latino electoral district. By contrast, non-Hispanics living in Latino majority districts appear disempowered by Latino representation and are less likely to go to the polls on election day. Like Gay, we found that non-Hispanic whites in majority-Latino districts appear to vote less.

Our previous findings would initially appear to close the book on the question of majority-minority districts and voter turnout, at least for Latinos. They do, however, conflict with Gay's findings on African Americans, and this difference, along with a number of other nagging and important questions, suggests the need for significant further inquiry.

At least one important motivation for reexamining this question is a recent development in the jurisprudence of majority-minority districting. After the 2000 census and accompanying redistricting, *Georgia v. Ashcroft* further complicated the calculus of minority districts. Among the central elements in this case was the question of whether reducing minority voting strength in a district, as favored by a large majority of black legislators voting on the redistricting plan in question, could be acceptable under VRA Section 5's "no retrogression" standard for pre-clearance. The Supreme Court found that reducing minority voter concentration in these districts was, in fact, acceptable. While the so-called *Ashcroft* standard was addressed in the 2006 reauthorization of the VRA, it may continue to be an issue in future court challenges to the VRA.

The *Ashcroft* decision was, and is, controversial among advocates of minority voting rights. On the one hand, growing concentrations of minority voters in majority-minority districts may, in fact, be undermining minority representation by raising the numbers of minority legislators at the cost of reducing the overall impact minority voters have on the behavior and actions of a broader range of legislators. On the other hand, co-ethnic representation has repeatedly proven to be the most reliable means to represent directly the interests of minority voters. Thus, advocates of minority representation tend to view any diminution of the security provided by majority-minority districts suspiciously. Knowing exactly how many minority voters are "enough" to secure a district, then, is of critical importance both for those hoping to reduce the apparent trade-off between descriptive and substantive representation and for the evolving interpretations of "no retrogression" and Section 5 compliance.

More importantly, especially for our purposes, the decision in *Georgia v. Ashcroft* suggests that we move beyond the categorical measure of majority-minority districting used in our earlier work. Since it, as well as the 2006 reauthorization of the VRA, permit, under Section 5, the unpacking of minority districts when the political opportunity to elect first-choice candidates is not diminished, we need a more exacting and nuanced understanding of how minority population share translates into political impact.

Anticipating the Impact of Minority Majority and Influence Districts

In drawing majority-minority districts, the guiding goal is to enable previously marginalized subgroups of the electorate to have a meaningful opportunity to elect first-choice candidates to public office. A district meets this purpose when the target population has a reasonable expectation of electing like-minded representation. We have often simplified this calculation to one driven by population, hence the popular moniker “majority-minority.” As a practical matter, however, the potential to elect first-choice candidates is the product of four distinct factors, only one of which is the jurisdiction’s or district’s demography. The additional influences, described below, are voter turnout, the level of political unity of the target population, and the extent to which the nontarget population acts as a racially polarized voting bloc that votes against the interests of the target population.

Voter turnout among racial and ethnic minorities generally lags behind that of whites. Additionally, our earlier work (Barreto, Segura, and Woods 2004) suggested that turnout is endogenous to the district’s demography itself and will vary between majority-white and majority-minority jurisdictions. Given the potential for partially unpacking majority-minority districts, however, we need to understand what the turnout effects would be at various levels of minority-group representation in the electorate. While we are certain that solidly Latino districts are both empowering to voters and successful at securing descriptive representation, we know far less about how marginal or influence districts—that is, districts where minority voters represent a large but not majority share of the electorate—might affect turnout, a critical question in the face of potentially reducing the minority-voter share in some districts.

A related concern is whether the relationship between minority-voter turnout and minority-group share of a district’s electorate is linear. We have good reason to believe that it is not, even though our earlier findings suggest that turnout propensity grows with a majority or supermajority minority population share. It seems likely that this relationship flattens out at very high levels of minority population, where additional population share does little to ensure electoral success, and drops precipitously at lower levels, where there are too few minority voices to have an effect. To evaluate the effects of districts’ minority population on turnout, espe-

cially when considering influence districts as an alternative, we need a clearer specification of the functional form of that relationship. Specifically, at what population share does minority participation increase, and at what share does it decrease?

Beyond population share and turnout, a third intrinsically important factor is the level of political unity among the target population. Because scholarly concerns regarding representation have historically focused on the African-American experience, the level of group unity has seldom been considered beyond meeting the *Gingles* standard's threshold.⁵ African Americans regularly exhibit 90%+ political unity. Latinos, on the other hand, are a far more politically diverse group and their political unity lags considerably behind that of African Americans, particularly on partisan matters. Lower levels of target group unity suggest the need for higher population concentrations to translate population shares into political power.

A fourth consideration is the degree to which the nontarget population manifests racially polarized bloc voting. Creating majority-minority districts to remedy minority-vote dilution is based on the recognition that, in many electoral environments, Anglos have been reluctant to vote for candidates of color, sometimes alarmingly so. Nevertheless, there is certainly variation in the degree to which this is the case, across both time and location. In some places, 90% or more of whites may exhibit racially polarized voting, necessitating a higher population share for minority voters to exercise political control effectively. In other environments, the level of white racial polarization may only be 70% (that is, as many as 30% of whites may vote for candidates of color). In such an environment, the size of the minority population share necessary for exercising political control—to have a realistic opportunity to elect first-choice candidates—would be significantly lower.

While Section 5 may now allow decreasing minority-vote share in majority-minority districts, the key question in determining whether such decreases in population are retrogressive is whether minority voters in the district are still able to elect their candidates of choice. Accordingly, individual districts must be analyzed to determine the effect of reducing minority population because reducing minority-vote share from, for example, 60% to 45% will have different effects in different environments. In places where the level of white unity and opposition to minority candidates is high, such a decrease is very likely to be retrogressive, since the unity in the new white majority is sufficient to poll 50% of the votes. However, in places where white unity and opposition to minority candidates is somewhat lower, the same decrease might not preclude minority voters from electing their candidate of choice and thus not be retrogressive. Moreover, the decrease of

⁵ The “Gingles” standard is the result of *Thornburgh v. Gingles* (1986), where the United States Supreme Court imposed a three-pronged test for evaluating whether an at-large electoral system diluted minority vote. The three criteria included (1) sufficient size and geographic concentration of minority electorate, (2) evidence that the minority group in question was politically cohesive, and (3) evidence of racially polarized white bloc voting.

minority population in the one district, coupled with corresponding increases in minority population in neighboring districts, could conceivably increase the minority voice by securing the election of friendly politicians in two or more districts rather than just one.⁶

Data and Design

In this chapter, we examine the question of how specific minority-population distributions affect minority turnout, and how the two jointly interact with distributions of majority and minority preferences to produce political outcomes. Specifically, we intend to estimate the effects of district demography on voter turnout. We test four specific contentions. First, revising previous work on California (Barreto et al. 2004) with the inclusion of a continuous measure, we expect to replicate our finding that Latino voters are more likely to turn out in majority-minority environments. Second, that relationship between district composition and turnout is very likely to be curvilinear in nature. Third, the augmenting effect of minority population concentrations on turnout can be found in other jurisdictions (namely, New York City), but there will be important differences in functional form of that relationship as a consequence of important contextual variation. Finally, variations in the relationship between turnout and minority-population density necessarily imply similar variations in the level of minority- and majority-population shares and unity necessary to produce an effective political voice for the minority population in question.

To test these contentions, we analyze the Registrar of Voters' records for all registered voters from five counties in southern California (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura)⁷ as well as records of all registered voters in the five boroughs of New York City. Specifically, we examine data on general elections from 1996 to 2002. Our dependent variables are constructed using the actual record of whether or not individual registered voters turned out for a particular election.

Our unit of analysis is the individual, consistent with our earlier paper and a departure from previous work. The use of aggregate turnout numbers can often

⁶ The danger in *Georgia v. Ashcroft* was that it specifically allowed districting plans to be judged on a jurisdictionwide basis, rather than on a district-by-district basis. That is, tradeoffs in district percentages—the reduction of minority votes and impact in one district offset by the increase in another—were to be allowed across a jurisdiction. Such tradeoffs, however, would be a fool's bargain if we failed to consider the preferences of the nonminority voters who would be newly districted into minority "influence" districts.

⁷ With the exception of registered voters in assembly districts 67, 70, and 73 in the 1996 and 1998 election and district 73 in the 2000 election. Due to errors by Riverside County in collecting and recording vote history data, these data are not available. Fortunately, these areas are not within Latino-majority jurisdictions.

mask what is really happening at the level of individual choice. The universe of analysis is all registered voters in each jurisdiction.

This approach—individual level examination of actual election data—provides us with two advantages and one potential disadvantage. Unlike polling data, our analyses do not require inferences from samples of populations. In addition, since registrars' records do not rely on self-reporting, overreporting due to a social-acceptability bias is not a problem. On the other hand, since our measure of turnout is, of necessity, only among registered voters, it is very likely that we may underestimate the empowering or demobilizing effect of living in a majority-minority electoral district since at least part of that effect will occur at the voter registration stage and not exclusively during the actual election day decision to vote. In that sense, some of the variance that can be explained by minority-district vote share has already been lost, but since this loss makes sustaining our hypotheses more difficult, it should raise our confidence in any significant findings.

We estimate the effect of living in an assembly district with varying shares of Latino voters in the electorate on the likelihood that a Latino citizen turns out to vote, controlling for other well-recognized determinants of behavior. We examine individual voter turnout in each general election. For each individual election, the dependent variable is Voted, and is coded one (1) if the registered voter signed into the polls on election day and zero (0) if s/he did not.

Identification of Latino voters is accomplished through the use of the U.S. Census Bureau's Spanish surname list, which flags those registrants with commonly occurring Hispanic surnames.⁸ We identify Latino registered voters with the variable Latino, which is coded one (1) if the voter's surname indicates Hispanic origin. Given long-standing findings on the lower rates of turnout among all minority voters, *ceteris paribus*, we expect the coefficient on this variable to be negative, though in light of some more recent findings about Latino mobilization in California, we must exercise caution with regard to these expectations (Barreto and Woods 2000).

In estimating the principal effect of minority population concentration on turnout, we measure the share of the registered voter pool in each Assembly district that is Latino. The resulting variable, Latino Percent, can theoretically vary between zero and 100%. We also include a squared version of this term (Latino Percent²) to allow for the effect we estimate to be nonlinear, as we previously suggested.

To differentiate the overall effect of Latino vote share on Latinos from the effect on non-Latinos, we interact both the Latino Percent and Latino Percent² with

⁸ The Spanish surname list is based on the 1990 census and is constructed by tabulating the responses to the Hispanic origin question. Each surname is categorized by the percent of individuals that identified themselves as "Hispanic." Though the use of this instrument results in a modest underestimate, given the presence of Latinos with non-Hispanic surnames, the Census Bureau estimates this captures 93.6% of all Hispanics, and less than 5% of those identified are false. For a full explanation on the methodology of the list see Word and Perkins (1996).

the variable Latino. This allows us to estimate different effects of Latino vote share on Latinos and non-Latinos, consistent with our hypotheses. In order to estimate effects for Latino voters, we would need to sum the effects on the direct effect variables with those of the interaction terms (in much the same way as the intercept for Latinos requires us to sum the constant with the dummy variable for Latinos).

African-American voters have similarly demonstrated a lower propensity to turn out. Unfortunately, it is not possible to identify which registrants are African Americans. To control for this effect, we code Probability Black to capture the probability that a given voter is African American, inferred from the proportion of non-Hispanic and non-Asian residents in census tracts within each district that are black, ranging from zero (0) to one (1). This variable is set to zero when the registrant is coded as either Asian⁹ (in California only) or Latino (since their probability of being African American is known). While this estimate is of limited use for inferential purposes, it is helpful in separating out the potentially different effects of living in majority-Latino districts on African Americans and non-Hispanic whites. We would expect the coefficient to be consistently negative.

We also control for party identification. In California we control for partisan effects with a dummy variable GOP, with all other registrants captured in the unexpressed category. In New York, we control for both GOP and DEM, with third-party members and independents captured in the unexpressed category. Female is a dichotomous variable. Determination of gender is coded directly from Registrar of Voters' records. Age is also coded from records. Since younger citizens have been consistently found to vote less often, we would expect a positive coefficient, meaning higher values of age are associated with greater likelihood of voting. We include a squared-term to allow the effect of age to flatten at higher levels. We expect a negative coefficient on this term meaning that the positive effect of age diminishes at higher values, that is, the marginal increase in voter turnout for each additional year of age gets smaller.

In addition to these individual level effects (or proxies, as in the case of Probability Black), we include a battery of contextual effects to control for other well-recognized factors influencing turnout that are not part of the registrars' data-base and, hence, not available for each individual registrant. Each variable is coded using the census tract as the unit of analysis, and the data are drawn from the 1990 census, with the exception of Probability Black, which is drawn from the 2000 census.

Income and education are the obvious necessary controls. For New York, income is coded by category, with the percent of households in each tract with income below \$25,000 (capturing the poor) and above \$60,000 (capturing the more

⁹ The Asian surname list identifies six different national origin groups: Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Indian, and Filipino. Please see Lauderdale and Kesterbaum (2000) who developed the Asian surname list used here.

affluent), and all other voters as the unexpressed category.¹⁰ For California, the value of the income variable represents the median income at the census-tract level of aggregation. Percent College captures the percent of residents in the tract with a college education or better. Both college education and higher income should be strongly and positively associated with turnout, while the low-income measure should be negatively associated with turnout. Finally, Percent Foreign Born (available for the California models) should evidence a negative influence on the probability of turning out.

Results of the Analysis

We present the results of probit analyses from the California counties studied (all in metropolitan Los Angeles) in Tables 6.1a–6.1c, and the City of New York in Tables 6.2a–6.2d. Each table represents results at the Assembly district level, which we use because of a larger N and greater variation in the percent Latino at that level. (Results are roughly consistent across estimations for the state Senate and U.S. House.) We look at three elections in California and four in New York. In each case, the dependent variable is whether the respondent voted (signed in at the polls on election day or submitted an absentee ballot). Our central question is the relationship between district Latino population share and the turnout of both Latinos and non-Latinos. Though the specifications vary slightly as a function of the data sets, the models are roughly comparable.

First, we evaluate whether the evidence supports our first hypothesis, that a continuous quadratic estimation for the California data will yield results consistent with those in our previous work. The data clearly suggest that this is the case. While Latinos are, *ceteris paribus*, less likely to vote than Anglos, the effect of living in districts with greater Latino population is mobilizing for Latinos and demobilizing for Anglos and results in higher levels of turnout for Latinos than Anglos in heavily Latino districts. Moreover, for both Latinos and non-Latinos, the relationship is curvilinear. The predicted probabilities generated by each model are illustrated in Figure 6.1.

Our second query concerned the consistency of these effects across geographic region. Tables 6.2a–6.2d report results from the estimations of New York State Assembly districts within New York City's five boroughs.

These results are, in part, consistent with those from California, but they also depart in important ways. Latinos are again disadvantaged *vis-à-vis* whites. And again, importantly, as the share of Latino registered voters climbs, the effect is empowering for Latinos leading to increased voting rates, as compared to Anglos. But the effect of Latino vote share is not necessarily positive at lower values, as it was in California. As the illustration of predicted probabilities in Figure 6.2 suggest, for the lowest values of Latino vote share, the likelihood that

¹⁰ At the time of this writing, for New York in 2002, census data paralleling the earlier year models was not available.

Table 6.1a. California Assembly 1996

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error
Latino	-.0584***	.0068
Latino Percent	.0048***	.0003
Latino*Latino Percent	.0041***	.0005
Latino Percent ²	-.053e-05***	4.55e-06
Latino*Latino Percent ²	-1.42e-05*	6.55e-06
GOP	.1079***	.0017
Age	.0497***	.0002
Age ²	-.0004***	2.33e-06
Female	.0406***	.0015
Percent College	.5368***	.0116
Median Income	1.30e-06***	8.68e-08
Percent Foreign Born	-.3325***	.0079
Asian	-.1874***	.0036
Probability Black	-.1044***	.0043
Los Angeles County	-.0785***	.0030
Orange County	-.4304***	.0032
San Bernardino County	-1.4976***	.0039
Riverside County	-.4955***	.0040
Constant	-.8602***	.0083
<i>Chi Square</i>	434666.48***	
<i>N</i>	3,391,123	
<i>PPC</i>	.708	
<i>PRE</i>	.147	

*** p<=.001, ** p<=.01, * p<=.05

a Latino registered voter turns out actually declines as vote share increases. The curvilinear effect, however, suggests that this effect turns positive between 40% and 55%, and since most Latino registered voters live in the higher concentration districts, the overall net effect is also positive.

Results on control variables are generally as predicted and consistent across geographic region and election year. Higher income and higher median education are both positively associated with the likelihood of a registered voter turning out on election day. Similarly, older voters turn out more, though the negative coefficient on the squared term suggests that the effect flattens out above a certain threshold. Female registered voters turn out in greater numbers than males.¹¹ In California, Republican voters turn out more than others, in contrast to

¹¹ Of course, if women register at lower rates, then total participation may still be higher for males, a question beyond the scope of this chapter or these data.

Table 6.1b. California Assembly 1998

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error
Latino	-.0860***	.0057
Latino Percent	.0007***	.0003
Latino*Latino Percent	.0052***	.0004
Latino Percent ²	-.0001***	3.92e-06
Latino*Latino Percent ²	-8.17e-06***	5.51e-06
GOP	.0867***	.0015
Age	.0730***	.0002
Age ²	-.0005***	1.91e-06
Female	.0199***	.0013
Percent College	.2605***	.0098
Median Income	1.35e-06***	7.32e-08
Percent Foreign Born	-.2394***	.0067
Asian	-.1619***	.0031
Probability Black	-.1696***	.0038
Los Angeles County	-.0325***	.0025
Orange County	-.2815***	.0027
San Bernardino County	-.0369***	.0031
Riverside County	.1317***	.0034
Constant	-1.899***	.0070
<i>Chi Square</i>	398175.82***	
<i>N</i>	4,317,827	
<i>PPC</i>	.640	
<i>PRE</i>	.182	

*** p<=.001, ** p<=.01, * p<=.05

New York, where registered Democrats appear to turnout more, though the specification makes it difficult to assess whether this difference is significant. In a future iteration, we will use identical modeling approaches to see whether this anomaly disappears. Probability black, which we use as a proxy for the probability that a voter is black, is consistently negatively related to turnout, a result consistent with the long-established finding that African Americans vote less than Anglos.

Electability and the Translation of Population Share into Political Power

Having estimated the empirical relationship between the Latino share of a district's voters and the propensity of voters to turn out, we want to take the next

Table 6.1c. California Assembly 1998

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error
Latino	-.0932***	.0044
Latino Percent	-.0005***	.0002
Latino*Latino Percent	.0009***	.0003
Latino Percent ²	-.0000***	3.27e-06
Latino*Latino Percent ²	.0001***	4.45e-06
GOP	.1460***	.0012
Age	.0640***	.0015
Age ²	-.0001***	1.50e-06
Female	.0707***	.0010
Percent College	.1382***	.0078
Median Income	3.66e-06***	6.19e-08
Percent Foreign Born	-.2983***	.0055
Asian	-.1812***	.0024
Probability Black	-.3422***	.0032
Los Angeles County	-.0052***	.0023
Orange County	.0944***	.0023
San Bernardino County	-.0351***	.0027
Riverside County	.1002***	.0030
Constant		
<i>Chi Square</i>	509677.01***	
<i>N</i>	6,660,566	
<i>PPC</i>	.679	
<i>PRE</i>	.043	

*** p<=.001, ** p<=.01, * p<=.05

step and illustrate the political consequences of these differences. First and most obviously, turnout differentials between minority voters and Anglos have long been considered important when attempting to solve minority-vote dilution problems. Effective minority control, for example, was often hypothesized to require supermajorities of 55%, 60%, or even 65% in the face of intransigent white opposition.

Earlier, we suggested that an important second step would be to incorporate additional evidence on the distribution of minority and nonminority preferences, which we suggested are likely to vary considerably across electoral environments and time. Ecological regression has long been used in the voting rights arena to estimate the degree of racial polarization in voting, so estimates of majority and minority unity should be relatively straightforward to predict in most environments.

Table 6.2a. New York Assembly, 1996

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error
Latino	-.2170***	.0077
Latino Percent	-.0108***	.0003
Latino*Latino Percent	.0030***	.0006
Latino Percent ²	.0001***	5.69e-06
Latino*Latino Percent ²	-.0000***	9.97e-06
DEM	.3399***	.0026
GOP	.2214***	.0034
Age	.0145***	.0000
Age ²	-7.19e-06	2.95e-08
Female	.1104***	.0019
Income<\$25,000	-.1876***	.0104
Income>\$60,000	.0339***	.0119
Percent College	.0769***	.0089
Probability Black	-.1222***	.0036
Bronx	.0907***	.0038
Kings	-.1281***	.0032
Queens	.0298***	.0035
Staten Island	-.0841***	.0045
Constant	-.3793***	.0094
<i>Chi Square</i>	127203.56***	
<i>N</i>	1,951,838	
<i>PPC</i>	.653	
<i>PRE</i>	.072	

*** p<=.001, ** p<=.01, * p<=.05

In this section, we illustrate two things. First, we will demonstrate that the relationship between turnout and district demography will have meaningful effects on the share of the electorate that minority voters could meaningfully hope to comprise on election day. Second, we will use varying assumptions regarding the level of minority and majority group unity to illustrate how this factor has political consequences on minorities' opportunity to elect first-choice candidates. In so doing, we will offer an evidentiary basis for our overarching concern that, without careful consideration of varying political contexts, decreasing minority voters pursuant to *Georgia v. Ashcroft* could quite easily result in occasional or even frequent retrogression.

Table 6.2b. New York Assembly, 1998

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error
Latino	-.2942***	.0074
Latino Percent	-.0085***	.0003
Latino*Latino Percent	.0016**	.0006
Latino Percent ²	3.96e-05***	5.20e-06
Latino*Latino Percent ²	2.37e-05**	9.36e-06
DEM	.4131***	.0024
GOP	.2820***	.0032
Age	.0188***	5.4e-05
Age ²	-9.21-06***	.69-08
Female	.0095***	.0018
Income<\$25,000	-.1199***	.0097
Income>\$60,000	.0459***	.0110
Percent College	.0956***	.0083
Probability Black	-.1180***	.0033
Bronx	.0102***	.0035
Kings	-.1221***	.0030
Queens	-.0696***	.0032
Staten Island	-.1638***	.0042
Constant	-.9635***	.0088
<i>Chi Square</i>	213667.32***	
<i>N</i>	2,214,173	
<i>PPC</i>	.637	
<i>PRE</i>	.247	

*** p<=.001, ** p<=.01, * p<=.05

Turnout and Vote Share

We have estimated the effect of district demography on the turnout propensities of Latino voters. In order to assess the electoral effect of these relationships, we need to see how that turnout translates into vote share. Figures 6.3 and 6.4 illustrate the estimated relationship between demography and turnout for both regions in 1996. Each also estimates what the resulting Latino vote share would be by multiplying the predicted rate of turnout among registered Latinos by the share of the district's registered voters who are, in fact, Latino.

Given important variation across regions in the relationship between demography and voter turnout, the net effects on the distribution of the voting electorate also vary. Table 6.3 reports the anticipated Latino share of the turned out vote based on the relationships estimated in Tables 6.1 and 6.2 and illus-

Table 6.2c. New York Assembly, 1998

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error
Latino	-.2719***	.0068
Latino Percent	-.0142***	.0003
Latino*Latino Percent	.0041***	.0054
Latino Percent ²	.0001***	4.90e-06
Latino*Latino Percent ²	-.0000***	8.75e-06
DEM	.3376***	.0021
GOP	.2262***	.0029
Age	.0085***	.0000
Age ²	-4.26e-06***	2.43e-08
Female	.1137***	.0016
Income<\$25,000	-.1533***	.0089
Income>\$60,000	.0078***	.0103
Percent College	-.1492***	.0077
Probability Black	-.1104***	.0031
Bronx	.0619***	.0032
Kings	-.1400***	.0027
Queens	-.0299***	.0029
Staten Island	-.1438***	.0039
Constant	-.0658***	.0080
<i>Chi Square</i>	119237.66***	
<i>N</i>	2,603,249	
<i>PPC</i>	.644	
<i>PRE</i>	.047	

*** p<=.001, ** p<=.01, * p<=.05

trated in Figures 6.3 and 6.4. It is immediately evident that regional differences impact Latino vote share. Holding Latino share of the registered voters constant, Latinos in southern California, on average, will comprise about 3.5% more of the electorate than Latinos in New York City. Moreover, the size of the difference is not constant, but rather, varies across levels of Latino registration in a curvilinear fashion, reflecting the functional forms found in the estimations of Tables 6.1 and 6.2.

Why does this matter? In attempting to engineer effective political influence for heretofore marginalized groups, one must accurately estimate actual voter impact. The results presented in Figures 6.3 and 6.4 and Table 6.3 help illustrate two things: first, that the Latino share of the vote effects are dependent on the relationship between demography and turnout, and second, that important geographic differences make generalized assumptions about the necessary level of Latino population inappropriate. For example, in the California counties exam-

Table 6.2d. New York Assembly, 2002

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error
Latino	-.2404***	.0063
Latino Percent	-.0052***	.0002
Latino*Latino Percent	-.0025***	.0005
Latino Percent ²	-6.95e-06***	3.88e-06
Latino*Latino Percent ²	.0001***	7.73e-06
DEM	.3729***	.0019
GOP	.3192***	.0026
Age	.0148***	.0000
Age ²	-7.26e-06***	2.10e-08
Female	.0089***	.0014
Bronx	.0203***	.0025
Kings	-.1152***	.0019
Queens	-.0782***	.0020
Staten Island	-.0898***	.0033
Constant	-1.1197***	.0035

Chi Square 225721.52***

N 3,429,653

PPC .637

PRE .040

*** p<=.001, ** p<=.01, * p<=.05

ined, the high levels of Latino mobilization mean that turnout among Latino registered voters consistently exceeds their population share, whereas in the New York counties, vote share lags behind eligible population share. Thus, if, for example, we assume that the proportion of Latinos registered in a district to elect their candidate of choice was 50%, Latinos in California would comprise over 51% of those voting, whereas in New York, a 50% Latino share of registrants would yield a Latino share of the electorate less than 48%. Accordingly, a 50% Latino registration district may be sufficient to ensure election of Latino candidates of choice in California, but not in New York. While the enumerated difference might seem small, it is of crucial importance if Section 5 is interpreted to allow reducing minority populations to the lowest level necessary to elect minority candidates of choice.

Electing First-Choice Candidates

Among the principal goals of majority-minority districting is the election of first-choice candidates, often assumed to be co-ethnic candidates of color. We

Figure 6.1. Predicted Turnout Percentages for Latinos and Non-Latinos in Southern California Assembly Elections, 1996–2000

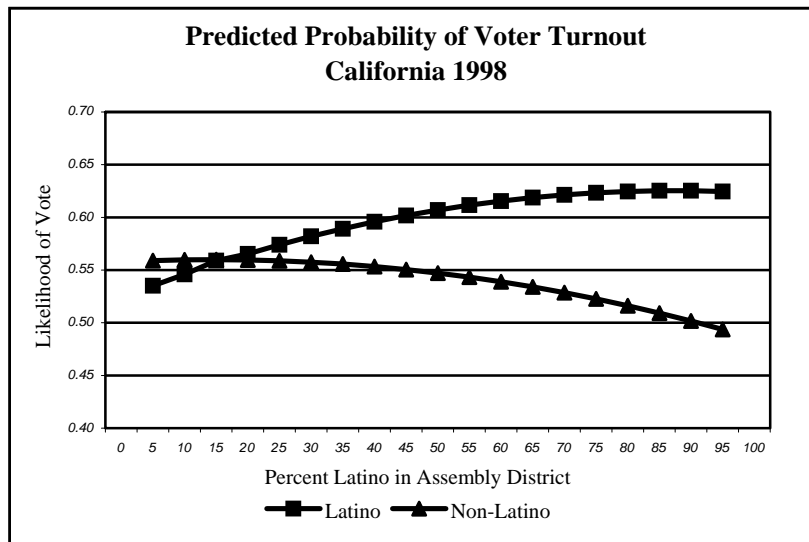
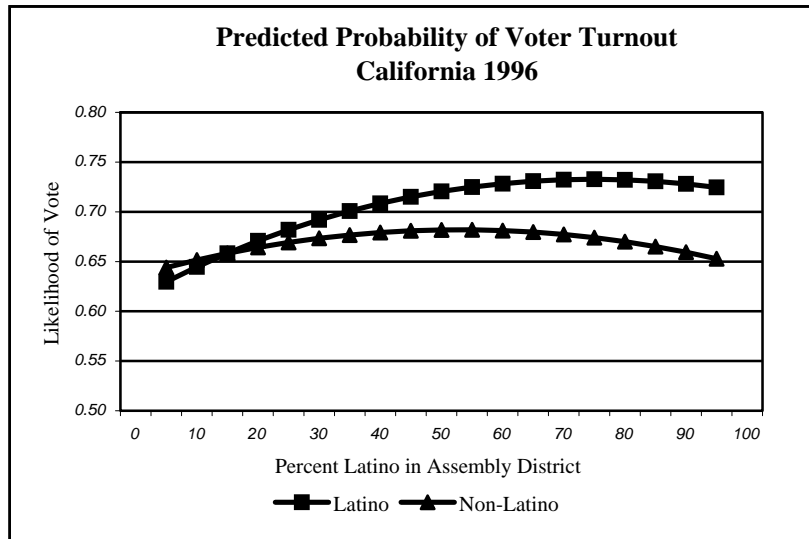


Figure 6.1. cont.

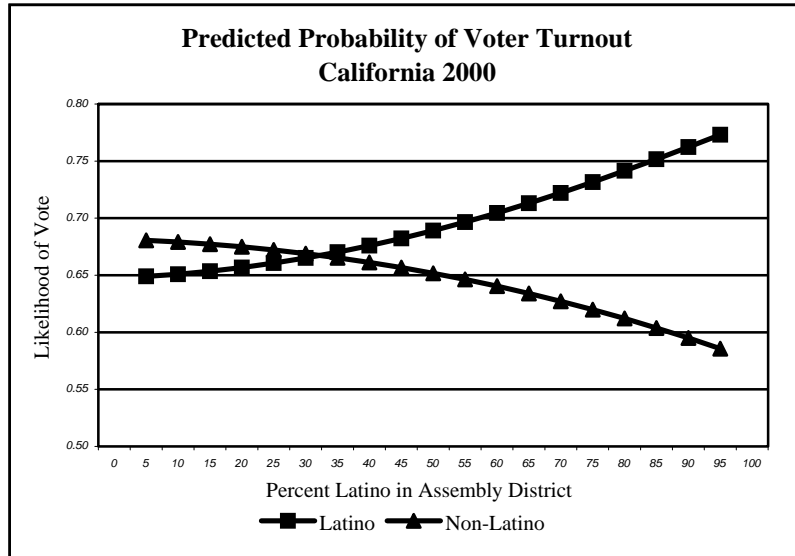


Figure 6.2. Predicted Turnout Percentages for Latinos and Non-Latinos in New York City Assembly Elections, 1996–2002

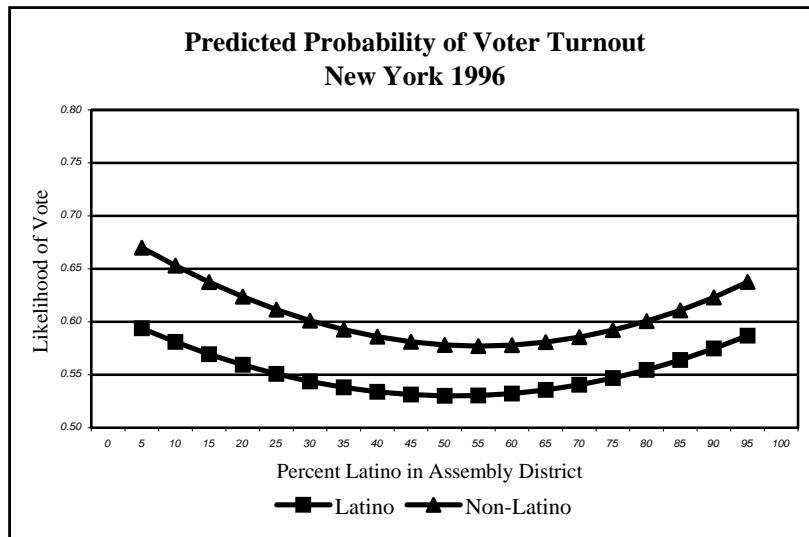


Figure 6.2. cont.

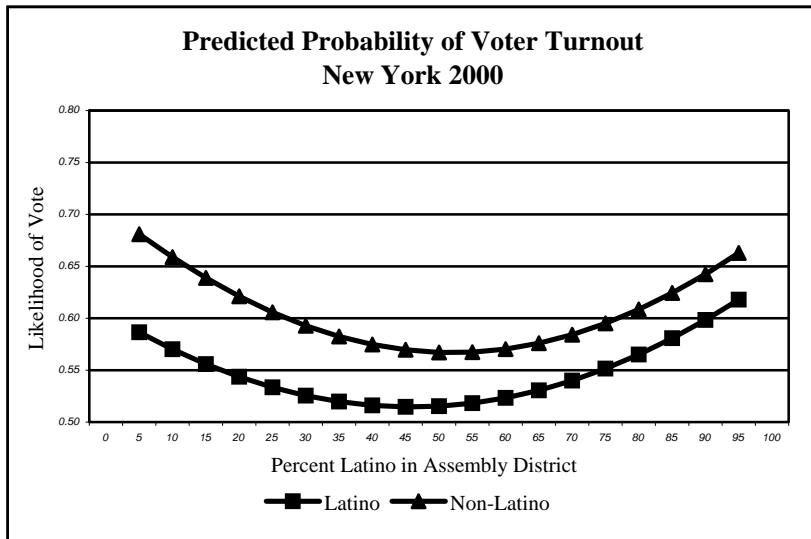
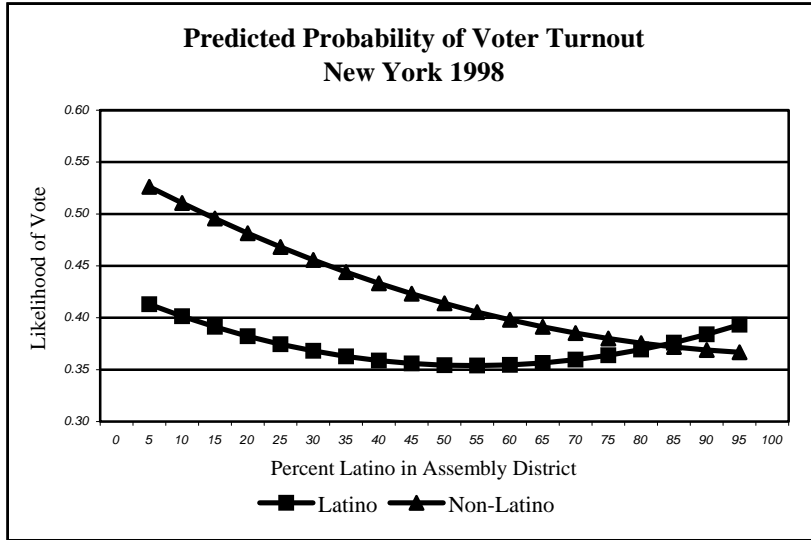
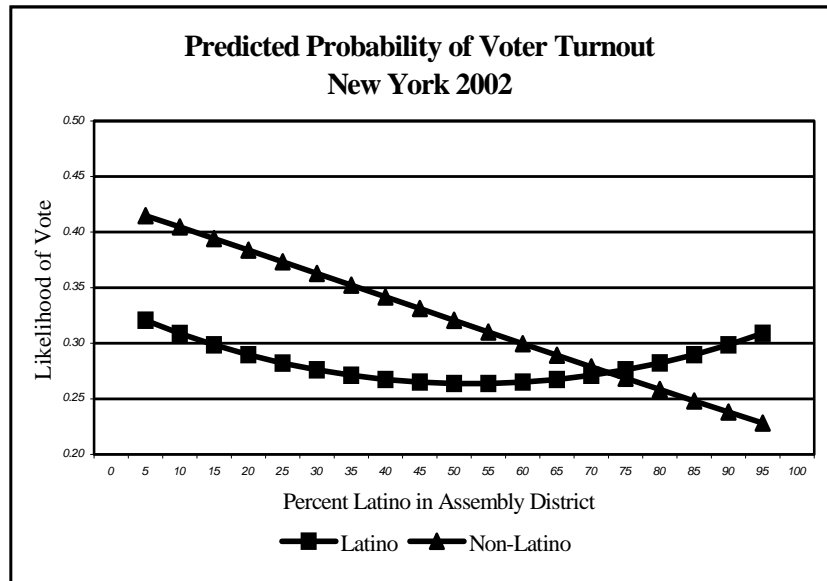


Figure 6.2. cont.



have suggested that this opportunity is conditional on four factors, only two of which we have discussed so far: district demography and voter-turnout rates. We would be remiss, however, to assume either that minorities vote in 100% blocs or that nonminorities are invariably united against minority candidates. While racial bloc voting certainly does occur, it seldom occurs at rates approaching 100% on either side. Rather, minority communities can vary in their level of unity, as a consequence of partisan differences, competing candidates of color, or other factors. Furthermore, while a majority of whites may remain committed to racially polarized bloc voting, some share of white liberals may reliably support candidates of color.

We can estimate varying levels of minority unity and white bloc voting, and indeed this is often done for litigation regarding minority-vote dilution claims. For our purposes here, we want to illustrate how varying levels of white and minority unity will produce thresholds of political control that vary across the estimated relationships between demography and turnout.

Figures 6.5 and 6.6 illustrate the relationship between minority population share and the share of votes received by the first-choice candidate or candidate of color, based on the estimations reported in Tables 6.1 and 6.2 and under varying assumptions regarding white and Latino unity. For ease of interpretation, we also report in Table 6.4 the share of Latino registered voters when the resulting line crosses the 50% threshold.

Figure 6.3. Latino Turnout Among Registered Voters and Latino Share of the Total Electorate in Southern California Assembly Elections, 1996

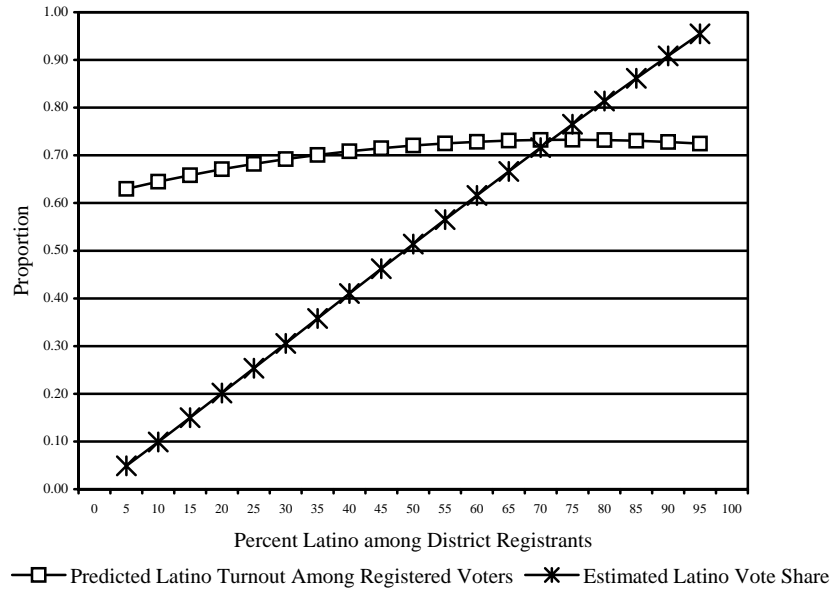


Table 6.4 illustrates how the levels of Latino and white unity have a serious impact on the levels of minority population necessary to exercise effective political control. Under the most restrictive assumptions about the exercise of minority voting power, with only 75% Latino unity and a 90% racially polarized white bloc, Latinos would need to comprise almost 60% of the registered voters in southern California and about 63.5% in New York to have a chance of electing first-choice candidates. If, however, we look at the least restrictive assumptions about minority voter influence, with 85% Latino unity and only a 70% white bloc, Latinos would need only about 35.5% in southern California and 38.5% in New York. It is worth noting that while the regional differences remain, they narrow somewhat. This narrowing is a reflection of the functional form estimated in the original equations presented in Tables 6.1 and 6.2.

Figure 6.4. Latino Turnout Among Registered Voters and Latino Share of the Total Electorate in New York Assembly Elections, 1996

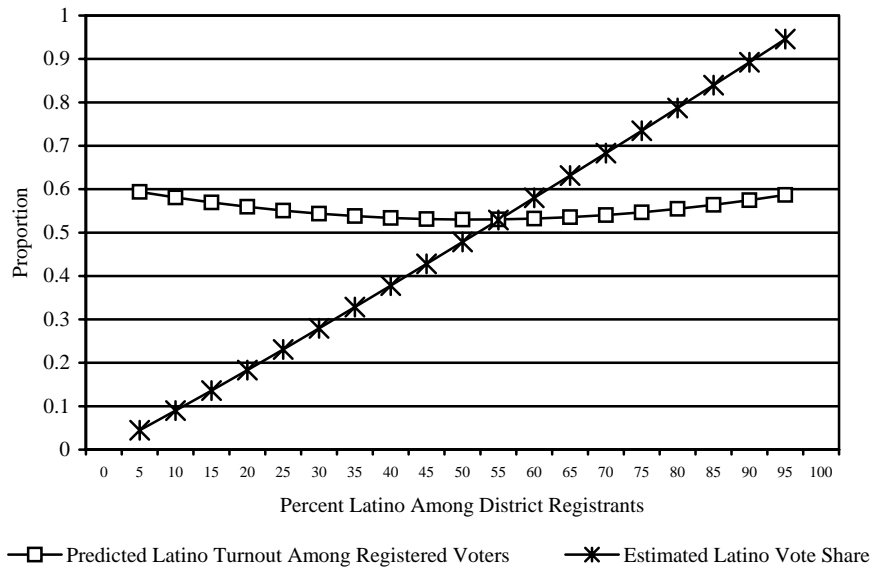
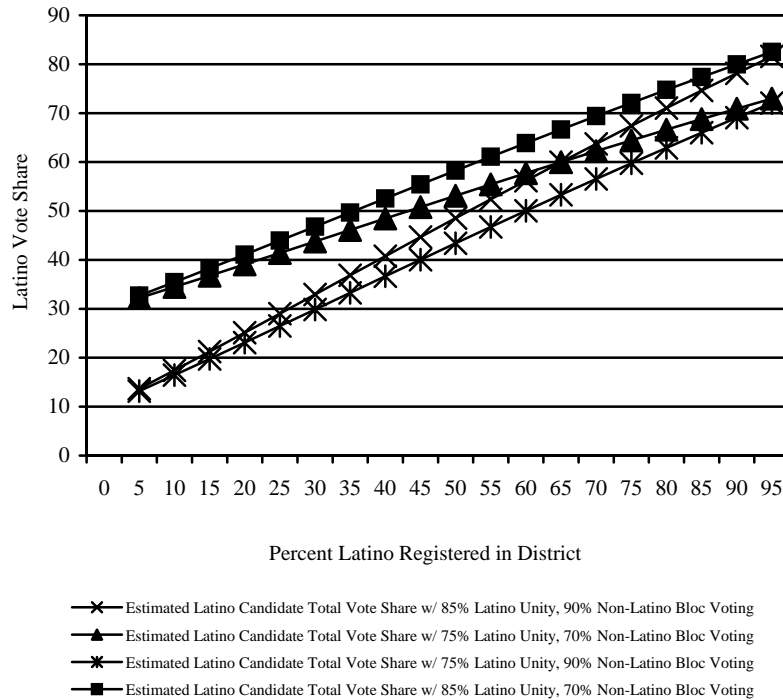


Table 6.3. Predicted Turnout of Latinos as a Share of All Voters Across Varying Percentages of Latino Registrants in a District, 1996

Latino Share of Registered Voters	Latino Share of Voters Who Turnout ¹		Difference
	Southern California	New York City	
35	35.80	32.83	2.97
40	41.01	37.79	3.22
45	46.21	42.79	3.42
50	51.38	47.83	3.55
55	56.51	52.90	3.61
60	61.60	58.00	3.60
65	66.63	63.14	3.49

¹ Figures in these columns represent the predicted share of the total turned-out electorate, obtained by multiplying the predicted turnout rate from the estimations above with the associated level of Latinos in the registered voter pool.

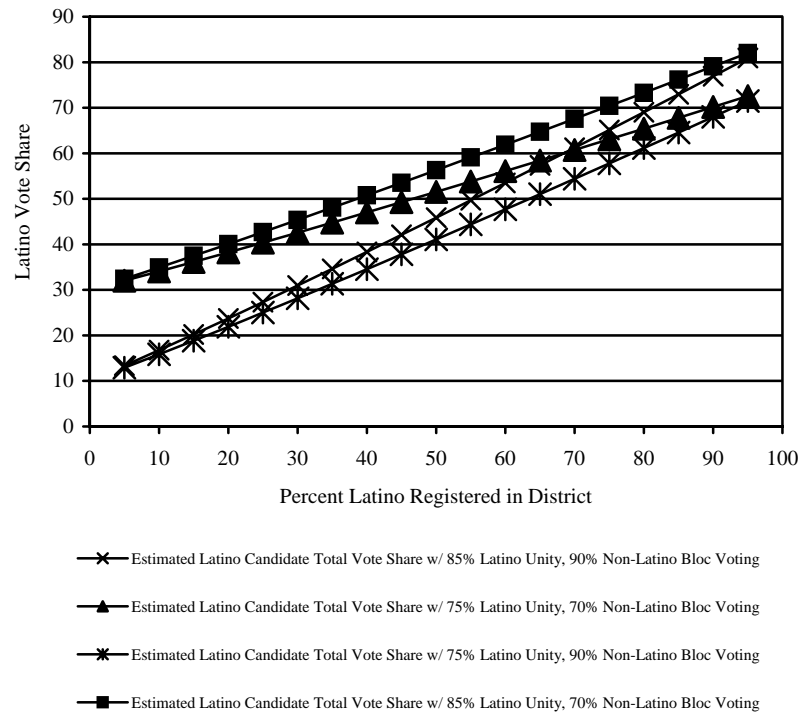
Figure 6.5. Vote Share Simulations for Southern California Assembly Elections under Varying Assumptions over Preferences, 1996



Again, it is neither surprising nor new to suggest that the distribution of preferences among minorities and nonminorities will matter for minority chances of electing first-choice candidates. The important thing here, however, is the recognition that, in terms of minority share of registered voters, how much minority unity and white cross-over voting is enough is endogenous to the relationship between demography and turnout, which is complex and varies across geographic locales. For illustrative purposes, we have assumed varying levels of bloc voting. However, in further studies, we could similarly plug in estimates drawn from ecological regression and arrive at region-specific and even district-specific estimates of racial composition needed for effective political control.¹²

¹² It is worth noting that the distribution of preferences could, itself, be endogenous to the demography of this district, something beyond the scope of this chapter but part of our larger undertaking.

Figure 6.6. Vote Share Simulations for New York Assembly Elections under Varying Assumptions over Preferences, 1996



It is worth reemphasizing an important caveat regarding the analyses and simulations presented here: our data consist of the behavior of registered voters, which is a self-selected subgroup of the larger population. Since at least some of the effects we discussed at the start of this effort will be reflected in the rates of registration, these results generally *underestimate* the effect of population distributions on the propensity to vote and the subsequent political effects derived from this likelihood.¹³

¹³ If we could repeat this analysis looking at turnout propensities among all eligible citizens rather than just registered voters, the effects should be larger, since at least some of the mobilizing and demobilizing forces we discuss would be reflected in the decisions to register to vote in the first place. By contrast, no analysis with total VAP would be useful given the large number of noncitizens in high-density Latino jurisdictions.

Table 6.4. Latino Share of Registered Voters Necessary to Elect First-Choice Candidates under Varying Assumptions Regarding Levels of Latino and White Voter Unity

Assumed Preferences	Southern California*	New York City*	Difference
75% Latino Unity 90% White Bloc	59.94	63.44	3.50
85% Latino Unity 90% White Bloc	51.90	55.42	3.52
75% Latino Unity 70% White Bloc	43.30	46.64	3.34
85% Latino Unity 70% White Bloc	35.54	38.56	3.02

* Figures in these columns represent the level of Latino share of registered voters necessary such that the sum of the predicted share of turned out Latino and non-Latino voters, each multiplied by the proportion assumed to prefer Latino candidates for public office, exceeds 50%.

Conclusion

If we begin to draw down minority population shares with the hope of minimizing the tradeoff between descriptive and substantive representation, we will naturally find ourselves having to make specific estimates of the necessary and appropriate levels of minority population for achieving influence or electoral control. One of the difficulties with that task is our tendency as social scientists and statisticians to make homogenizing assumptions about context. This homogenization is both more likely and more risky as a consequence of *Georgia v. Ashcroft*, where the Court specifically abandoned single-district analysis and suggested that tradeoffs across different geographic regions of a state or other jurisdictions might be appropriate and not constitute retrogression.

We have demonstrated that effective political influence or control for minority populations is specifically the product of four factors, only one of which (population) is not endogenous to location. By demonstrating the endogeneity of turnout to population distributions, as well as important regional variation, we have shown that estimating the population share necessary to provide minority voters a chance at electing first-choice candidates is both essential and possible. Blanket assumptions regarding turnout and preference distributions are, we think, very likely to result in retrogressive districting plans and significant set-

backs in efforts to assure equitable representation and access to the policy-making institutions of our society for racial and ethnic minority citizens.

References

- Barreto, Matt, Rodolfo Espino, Adrian Pantoja, and Ricardo Ramirez. 2003. "Selective Recruitment or Empowered Communities? The Effects of Descriptive Representation on Latino Voter Mobilization." Presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. Philadelphia, Pa.
- Barreto, Matt A., Gary M. Segura, and Nathan D. Woods. 2004. "The Mobilizing Effect of Majority-Minority Districts on Latino Turnout." *American Political Science Review* 98(1): 65–76.
- Barreto, Matt A., and Nathan D. Woods. 2000. *Voting Patterns and the Dramatic Growth of the Latino Electorate in Los Angeles County, 1994–1998*. Claremont, Calif. The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute.
- Bobo, Lawrence, and Frank D. Gilliam. 1990. "Race, Sociopolitical Participation, and Black Empowerment." *American Political Science Review* 84: 377–94.
- Brace, Kimball, Lisa Handley, Richard G. Niemi, and Harold W. Stanley. "Minority Turnout and the Creation of Majority-Minority Districts." *American Politics Quarterly* 23(2): 190–203.
- Cameron, Charles, David Epstein, and Sharyn O'Halloran. 1996. "Do Majority-Minority Districts Maximize Substantive Black Representation in Congress?" *American Political Science Review* 90: 794–812.
- Gaddie, Ronald K., and Charles S. Bullock. 1994. "Voter Turnout and Candidate Participation Effects of Affirmative Action Districting." *Citadel Symposium on Southern Politics*. Charleston, S.C.
- Gay, Claudine. 2001. "The Effect of Black Congressional Representation on Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 95 (3): 589–602
- Grofman, Bernard, Lisa Handley, and David I. Lublin. 2001 "Drawing Effective Minority Districts: A Conceptual Framework and Some Empirical Evidence." *North Carolina Law Review* 79(5): 1383–1430.
- Guinier, Lani. 1994. *The Tyranny of the Majority: Fundamental Fairness in Representative Democracy*. New York: The Free Press.
- Haeberle, Steven H. 1997. "Exploring the Effects of Single Member Districts on an Urban Political System." *Urban Affairs Review* 33(2): 287–97.
- Huckfeldt, Robert, and John D. Sprague. 1995. *Citizens, Politics, and Social Communication: Information Influence in an Election Campaign*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jackman, Robert W. 1987. "Political Institutions and Voter Turnout in the Industrial Democracies." *American Political Science Review* 81(2): 405–24.
- King, Gary. 1997. *A Solution to the Ecological Inference Problem: Reconstructing Individual Behavior from Aggregate Data*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- King, Gary, Michael Tomz, and Jason Wittenburg. 2000. "Making the Most of Statistical Analyses: Improving Interpretation and Presentation." *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (2): 347–61.

- Lauderdale, Diane S., and Burt Kestenbaum. 2000. "Asian American Ethnic Identification by Surname." *Population Research and Policy Review* 19: 283–300.
- Leighley, Jan E. 2001. *Strength in Numbers*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Long, J. Scott. 1997. *Regression Model for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables*. Thousand Oaks, Calif. Sage Publications.
- Lublin, David. 1997. *The Paradox of Representation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Lublin, David. 1999. "Racial Redistricting and African-American Representation: A Critique of "Do Majority-Minority Districts Maximize Substantive Black Representation in Congress?" *American Political Science Review* 93(1): 183–86.
- Lublin, David I., and Katherine Tate. 1992. "Black Office Seeking and Voter Turnout in Mayoral Elections." Presented at the annual Meeting of the *American Political Science Association*. Chicago, Ill.
- Pantoja, Adrian D., and Gary M. Segura. 2003. "Does Ethnicity Matter? Descriptive Representation in Legislatures and Political Alienation Among Latinos." *Social Science Quarterly* 84: 441–60.
- Pantoja, Adrian D., Ricardo Ramirez, and Gary M. Segura. 2001. "Citizens by Choice, Voters by Necessity: Patterns in Political Mobilization by Naturalized Latinos." *Political Research Quarterly* 54(4): 729–50.
- Pantoja, Adrian D. and Nathan D. Woods. 1999. "Latino Voter Turnout in Los Angeles County: Did Interest Group Efforts Matter?" *American Review of Politics* 20: 141–62.
- Ramirez, Ricardo. 2002. "Getting Out the Vote: The Impact of Non-partisan Voter Mobilization Efforts in Low Turnout Latino Precincts." Presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. Boston, Mass.
- Tomz, Michael, Jason Wittenberg, and Gary King. 2001. CLARIFY: Software for Interpreting and Presenting Statistical Results. Version 2.0. Cambridge: Harvard University, June 1. <http://gking.harvard.edu>.
- Vanderleeuw, James M., and Glenn U. Utter. 1993. "Voter Roll-Off and the Electoral Context: A Test of Two Theses." *Social Science Quarterly* 74: 664–73.
- Word, David L., and R. Colby Perkins. 1996. *Building a Spanish Surname List for the 1990s—A New Approach to an Old Problem*. Technical Working Paper No. 13. Washington: U.S. Census Bureau.