

THE ELECTION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS AND LATINOS TO THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 1972-1994

DAVID LUBLIN
University of South Carolina

Past studies have shown that racially polarized voting results in African American and Latino congressional candidates rarely winning election outside of majority-minority districts. Analyzing U.S. House of Representatives elections from 1972 through 1994 confirms these findings and shows that race, rather than socioeconomic factors highly correlated with race, accounts for racial polarization in congressional elections. Nonracial district characteristics bear virtually no relationship to the race of a district's representative. Even if socioeconomic differences among African Americans, Latinos, and Whites decline substantially, race will continue to play an important role in American elections. If the Supreme Court's decisions in *Shaw v. Reno* and its progeny reduce the number of majority-minority districts, then the number of minority representatives probably will decline as well.

Political scientists have clashed over whether significant numbers of African Americans or Latinos can win election from districts with non-Hispanic White majorities. This empirical question has important legal implications. In a series of decisions beginning with *Shaw v. Reno* (1993), a narrow majority of the Supreme Court signaled a halt to efforts to advance minority representation through the creation of ever greater numbers of majority-minority districts under the Voting Rights Act. The decisions focused on the legality and morality of racial redistricting, but they reflect a further fierce debate about its necessity. In writing for the majority in *Miller v. Johnson*, Justice Kennedy declares that

it does not follow . . . that individuals of the same race share a single political interest. The view that they do is "based on the demeaning

Author's Note: The author would like to thank James Garand, Gary King, and Katherine Tate for their comments on earlier versions of this article.

AMERICAN POLITICS QUARTERLY, Vol. 25 No. 3, July 1997 269-286
© 1997 Sage Publications, Inc.

notion that members of the defined racial groups ascribe to certain 'minority views' that must be different from those of other citizens."¹

In her stinging dissent from the majority opinion in *Miller*, Justice Ginsburg notes that redistricting plans inherently treat people as groups rather than as individuals. Justice Stevens points out that racially polarized voting may persist even if individuals have political beliefs at odds with the majority of their racial group.

Grofman and Handley (1989; see also Handley and Grofman 1994) have argued repeatedly that the creation of majority-minority districts is vital to the election of African Americans to Congress. After studying the racial composition and election results of congressional districts in 1982, 1984, and 1986, they conclude that African Americans win election from majority-minority districts in which African Americans outnumber Latinos (Grofman and Handley 1989). Grofman and Handley (1989) have an even gloomier outlook on prospects for Latino representation:

In general, except in New Mexico and California, Hispanics are not elected to Congress in districts that are less than 63% combined minority (Black plus Hispanic). Including California and New Mexico, it would seem that a clear Hispanic plurality and a combined minority population above 55% give a substantial likelihood, although not certainty, of Hispanic success. To achieve actual certainty, a clear Hispanic plurality and a combined minority population near 70% seem necessary. (p. 441)

Other scholars have reached similar conclusions (see, e.g., Parker 1990). Much of the voting rights literature simply assumes that majority-minority districts are vital to the election of minority officials in substantial numbers (see, e.g., Fraga 1992; Kousser 1992; Lawson 1985; McDonald 1992). Many think that racial polarization remains high enough to preclude minorities from winning election from White majority districts even if some Whites vote for Blacks and Latinos.

Swain (1993) and Thernstrom (1987) are leading proponents of the opposing point of view. Thernstrom argues that the racial polarization justifying racial gerrymandering no longer exists. She contends that Blacks living in White majority districts can both influence which White candidate gains election and occasionally elect one of their own to office. Thernstrom relies exclusively on anecdotal evidence to support her claims.

Swain (1993) makes a pragmatic case for departing from the strategy of drawing majority-minority districts. She rightly points out that the upper limit on Black representation from majority Black districts is being reached quickly. African Americans won all but one of the existing Black majority districts in the 1992 and 1994 congressional elections. The 1990 redistricting came close to creating the maximum possible number of Black majority districts. The Supreme Court's decisions in *Shaw* and its progeny will substantially reduce the ability of the Department of Justice to pressure states to create noncompact majority-minority districts. Swain contends that White majority districts provide more fertile ground for future Black representation. Like Thernstrom (1987), Swain (1993) believes that proponents of majority Black districts overestimate White racism and ignore breakthrough elections such as those of Alan Wheat in Missouri and Doug Wilder in Virginia. Swain readily concedes that African Americans find it more difficult to win election from majority White districts but argues that, with a concerted effort, Blacks can make substantial gains in White majority districts. She fears that concentrating Blacks into majority Black districts causes African Americans to forgo opportunities to influence electoral outcomes and elect Black representatives in White majority districts.

Swain's (1993) and Thernstrom's (1987) analyses can be extended to Latinos without too much difficulty. Although Whites still represent several majority Latino districts, Latino majority districts conceivably could limit Latino representation over the long run.² Proponents of the view that race and ethnicity do not play major roles in Latino campaigns for elective office might cite the successful gubernatorial campaigns of Robert Martinez in Florida and of Tony Anaya in New Mexico. Concentrating Latinos in Latino majority districts may force Latinos to relinquish opportunities to influence elections in several districts.

In this study, I provide more definitive evidence that minority representatives find it exceedingly difficult to win election from majority White districts. The data set used in this study contains a much larger set of elections over a greater range of years than those used in past studies. The inclusion of all congressional elections from 1972 through 1994 makes it possible to demonstrate that African Americans and Latinos almost never win election from White majority

districts and that White support for minority candidates has not grown over the past two decades.

The study further demonstrates that race, rather than other factors associated with race, explains the persistence of racially polarized voting. Past studies have exclusively examined the two key variables of the racial composition of the district and the race of the representative. This limitation prevents these studies from assessing whether race alone explains racially polarized voting. The justification for the intentional creation of majority-minority districts rests on the premise that Whites usually vote for other Whites over minority candidates. Racial polarization, however, conceivably reflects the differences between minority and White populations on a range of nonracial demographic characteristics that are due to the large residual effects of racial discrimination. If demographic differences, rather than race, explain current levels of racial polarization, then racial redistricting gradually may become unnecessary to ensure the election of African Americans and Latinos as demographic differences between minorities and Whites narrow. This study shows that race overshadows all nonracial demographic characteristics and thus provides powerful evidence that race remains an enduring feature of congressional elections and is not merely an artifact of past discrimination. Racial redistricting will remain necessary over the long term to ensure that more than token numbers of African Americans and Latinos win election to Congress.

THEORY AND MODEL SPECIFICATION

This section outlines the theoretical basis behind the models of the election of African Americans and Latinos. *Black representative*, a dummy variable coded 1 for Blacks and 0 otherwise, serves as the dependent variable for all models of the election of African Americans. *Latino representative*, a dummy variable coded 1 for Latinos and 0 otherwise, similarly functions as the dependent variable for models of the election of Latinos. The dichotomous nature of the dependent variables makes logistic regression an appropriate means of estimating the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

The independent variables measure the impact of both racial and nonracial demographic characteristics of districts on the election of

minority representatives. The model additionally includes variables that control for incumbency, region, and time. The remainder of this section outlines the expected relation between the independent and dependent variables.

Proportion Black and *proportion Latino* measure the impact of the racial composition of a district on the election of Blacks and Latinos. The continuing salience of race in American politics and past findings of racially polarized voting suggest that these variables should have large coefficients and *t* statistics. African Americans probably support Black candidates at a higher rate than they do Latinos, so *proportion Black* should have a larger coefficient than *proportion Latino* in models of the election of Black representatives. The reverse relationship should hold true for models of the election of Latino representatives. Repeated victories by Black candidates in mixed majority-minority districts suggest that the presence of Latinos should aid the election of African American representatives. The presence of Blacks may not similarly aid Latino candidates. Relatively low levels of participation by Latinos cause Latino candidates to lose elections from mixed majority-minority districts unless Latinos outnumber Blacks substantially.

Black district and *Latino district* are dummy variables that serve as alternative measures of the racial composition of districts. *Latino district* is coded 1 for Latino majority districts and 0 otherwise. *Black district* equals 1 when four conditions that correspond roughly to Grofman and Handley's (1989) conditions for the election of a Black representative are met. First, the percentage Black plus the percentage Latino in the population must equal at least 50%. Second, the Latino percentage of the population must not exceed 50% given that Latinos usually win in Latino majority districts. Third, the Latino percentage of the population can surpass the Black percentage of the population by no more than 15%. Blacks tend to win mixed majority-minority districts even when the Latino population slightly outnumbers the Black population. This is the only condition that departs substantially from Grofman and Handley's (1989) findings. Grofman and Handley argue that Blacks win only mixed majority-minority districts in which the Black population forms a plurality. Finally, because even African American candidates need a Black base in mixed majority-minority

districts, only districts in which the Black population exceeds 30% are coded 1.

Proportion resident in the state for at least 5 years is the first of seven nonracial demographic variables. This variable effectively functions as a proxy for citizenship. Low citizenship rates hamper Latino efforts to translate population into votes in many parts of the country. The probability of a district electing a Latino should decline as the proportion of long-term residents shrinks. All models of the election of Latino representatives contain *proportion resident in the state for at least 5 years* and an interaction term between it and *proportion Latino* as independent variables to control for this barrier to Latino representation.

Except for the Haitian and Jamaican immigrant communities, most African Americans hold American citizenship. These communities constitute only a small share of the African American population, so low citizenship rates may make it easier for Blacks to win election. Low citizenship rates indicate that a non-Black group cannot mobilize its population at the polls and thus may give Black candidates a competitive advantage. *Proportion resident in the state for at least 5 years* consequently should have a negative coefficient in models of the election of Black representatives.

Racial prejudice weakens with education, so the probability of a district electing an African American or a Latino candidate should rise with the *proportion high school graduates*. After controlling for education, districts should become less likely to elect minority representatives as their *mean real family income* levels rise. African Americans and Latinos tend to represent low-income districts. Racial and income housing segregation reduces the number of affluent Whites living in districts with significant numbers of minorities and thus minority candidates. Affluent Americans, moreover, support the liberal social welfare policies espoused by most Black candidates at a lower rate than do other Americans because these policies tend to result in higher taxes and redistribute the benefits to other income groups.

Urban areas tend to attract and contain more diverse populations. African American and Latino candidates disproportionately represent urban districts. Higher levels of tolerance in urban areas may make it easier for minority candidates to win election as the *proportion urban* rises. Districts with high *proportion foreign born* populations may

elect minority representatives at a lower rate than will districts with relatively high native-born populations. Recent immigrants often feel a high sense of group identity and competition with members of other groups that may decrease their willingness to vote for outgroup candidates (Hirsch 1983).

Voters socialized prior to the civil rights movement may support African American and Latino candidates at a lower rate than will other voters. Formal legal equality and the public unacceptability of overt racism during the formative years of younger Americans may make them more willing than their elders to support minority candidates. *Proportion age 65 years or over* should have a negative coefficient if districts with relatively high shares of elderly residents send minority representatives to Washington, D.C., at a lower rate than do other districts.

Districts with large numbers of government workers may elect minority candidates more often than will other districts. African Americans and Latinos represent districts containing disproportionate numbers of government workers compared to other districts. Minority representatives vote for liberal policies that employ large numbers of government workers more often than do nonminority candidates, so residents of districts dependent on government employment may be particularly partial to minority candidates. *Proportion government workers in the labor force* will have a positive coefficient if districts with high numbers of government workers elect African American and Latino candidates more often than do other districts.

With three variables, I control for political, regional, and temporal influences on the election of minority candidates. African Americans and Latinos may find it easier to win election from *open seats*, coded 1 for open seats and 0 otherwise, because they do not have to overcome the formidable resources at the disposal of most incumbents. African Americans may experience fewer successes in the *South*, coded 1 for the 11 southern states and 0 otherwise, due to the region's long history of legally entrenched racial discrimination.³ African Americans and Latinos may gain election at a higher rate as time passes due to generational replacement of Americans raised prior to the civil rights movements by new voters who grew up during an era of legal equality and greater tolerance. *Congress* (93rd = 0, 94th = 1, . . . 104th = 11) controls for changes over time due to generational replacement.⁴

RESULTS FOR BLACK REPRESENTATIVES

In column 1 of Table 1, I report the results for the model outlined in the previous section. The sizable t statistics on proportion Black and proportion Latino indicate that the racial composition of a district has a large and regularly predictable effect on the probability of a district electing a Black representative to Congress. Estimating a second logit model of Black representative on Black district and the same set of nonracial demographic variables helps determine whether these variables have any impact on the election of Black representatives. Column 2 of Table 1 presents the results of this second logit analysis. The large coefficient and tiny standard error on Black district indicate that the presence of a Black district has an enormous positive effect on the election of a Black representative. Most of the coefficients and standard errors of the nonracial demographic variables change dramatically between the first and second logit models. This sharp shift probably indicates the absence of strong or stable relationships between a district's nonracial demographic characteristics and the race of the district's representative. All but two of the coefficients shifted more than 2 standard errors between the two logit models.

The Black district variable was set equal to 0 and the demographic variables are varied over their entire actual ranges under past districting schemes in an attempt to discover the real probability of each variable influencing the election of a Black representative. All seats were treated as open, outside the South, and up for election in 1994 to maximize the probability of electing a Black representative from a non-Black district. Varying the nonracial demographic variables does not cause the probability of electing a Black representative to rise to even 1%. The election of an African American from a non-majority-minority district is an incredibly unlikely event.

THRESHOLD FOR ELECTION: THE 65% RULE IS WRONG

The question of how high a percentage of Blacks a district requires to elect an African American to Congress has important legal ramifications under the Voting Rights Act. In *Kirksey v. Board of Supervisors of Hinds County* (1977), the district court ruled that the minority share

TABLE 1
Logit Analysis of Black Representative with
Black Representative as Dependent Variable (Black = 1)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>(1)</i>	<i>(2)</i>	<i>(3)</i>
Intercept	-11.65*** (3.61)	-14.68*** (-5.12)	-8.01*** (-22.49)
Proportion Black	24.95*** (12.81)	—	16.52*** (20.31)
Proportion Latino	9.11*** (3.79)	—	3.96*** (4.92)
Black district	—	6.87*** (14.68)	—
Proportion resident in state for at least 5 years	-7.22** (-2.27)	0.98 (0.38)	—
Proportion high school graduates	12.76*** (5.14)	4.95** (2.27)	—
Median real family income (thousands of dollars)	0.06 (1.26)	-0.07** (-1.87)	—
Proportion urban	0.18 (0.13)	6.29*** (5.52)	—
Proportion foreign born	-3.91 (-1.36)	-4.77** (-2.27)	—
Proportion age 65 years or over	12.31** (2.09)	7.91** (1.85)	—
Proportion government workers in labor force	-12.45*** (-3.03)	9.53*** (2.99)	—
Open seat	0.92*** (2.56)	0.89*** (2.79)	—
South (South = 1)	-1.34*** (-3.37)	-0.18 (-0.46)	—
Congress (93rd = 0, 94th = 1, . . . 104th = 11)	-0.15* (-1.94)	0.03 (0.36)	—
Number of observations	4,843	4,843	4,843
Log likelihood	-199.18	-239.23	-261.38
Percentage predicted correctly	98.39	98.72	98.02
Percentage improvement over null model	70.89	76.85	64.20
Corrected Aldrich-Nelson pseudo- R^2	.55	.53	.53

NOTE: Black district = 1 only if four conditions are met: (1) proportion Black + proportion Latino > 50%, (2) proportion Black - proportion Latino > -15%, (3) proportion Black > 30%, and (4) proportion Latino < 50%. *t* statistics are in parentheses. See Hagle and Mitchell (1992) for information on the corrected Aldrich-Nelson pseudo- R^2 .

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

of the population must be sufficient to provide members of the minority groups a "realistic opportunity to elect officials of their choice" (p. 150). Civil rights advocates strongly endorse the 65% rule (Parker 1990), but Grofman and Handley's (1989) research indicates that a majority-minority population is sufficient to guarantee the election of a Black representative. Swain (1993) agrees that the 65% threshold is much too high and argues that White majority districts may elect African Americans.

Conducting a logit analysis of Black representative on proportion Black and proportion Latino makes it possible to calculate the probability of Black candidates emerging victorious in districts with various proportions of Blacks and Latinos. Column 3 of Table 1 displays the results of the logit analysis, and Table 2 shows the probabilities of a district sending a Black representative to Congress for various percentages of Blacks and Latinos. The probability of a district sending an African American to Congress rises dramatically between 45% and 55% for a district with no Latino residents. A district with a bare majority of Black residents has a 60% chance of electing a Black to the U.S. House of Representatives. Raising the Black percentage of the district's population by a mere 5% increases the probability of electing a Black to 86%—a 26% increase. For most areas of the country, a 55% Black majority should ensure that a district's Black residents can elect a Black representative if they so choose. Even if these narrowly Black majority districts lack a Black majority in the voting population, Black candidates can attract enough White votes to win election in these districts. Raising the Black percentage in a district much higher than 55% wastes Black votes. Once the Black percentage in a district rises above 60%, the increase in the probability of electing a Black member is more than offset by the loss of influence in surrounding districts. "Packing" has long been a strategy used by Whites wanting to minimize Black influence over the political process (Parker 1990).

A district with a 45% Black population has a 28% chance of sending a Black representative to Washington. Black candidates apparently can attract enough White liberal support to win election even without a Black majority in some congressional districts. Nevertheless, a district

TABLE 2
Probabilities of a Black Representative

		<i>Percentage Black</i>							
		25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60
<i>Percentage Latino</i>	0	<.01	<.01	.01	.08	.28	.60	.86	.97
	10	<.01	<.01	.03	.16	.43	.74	.93	.99
	20	<.01	.01	.08	.27	.59	.85	.97	>.99
	30	<.01	.03	.15	.42	.73	.93	.99	>.99
	40	.01	.07	.26	.57	.84	.97	>.99	>.99

NOTE: Probabilities presented in this table derive from the logit results in column 3 of Table 1.

under 45% Black has almost no chance of sending a Black representative to Washington. Most Black candidates do not seek election from solid White majority districts because they find the prospect of attracting enough White votes to form a winning biracial coalition too daunting. The few Black candidates who make the attempt almost invariably fail.

Several factors can change the threshold at which a Black becomes likely to win election: the proportion of Latinos in the district, the level of racial polarization, and differences between Whites and Blacks in the rates of voter registration and turnout. Table 2 indicates that the percentage of Blacks needed to make probable the election of an African American falls as the percentage of Latinos in a district rises. In a 45% Black district, raising the proportion of Latinos from 0% to 10% increases the probability of electing an African American from 28% to 43%.

Instituting a uniform national percentage Black for the creation of a Black district would ignore crucial differences between localities in the level of racial polarization and the racial gaps in voter registration and turnout. Nominally Black majority districts may have White voting-age majorities because fewer Blacks than Whites are of voting age. Lower levels of education among Blacks may result in relatively low levels of registration and turnout among Blacks (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Local differences in the intensity of racial polarization can further help or hinder African American congressional bids.

RESULTS FOR LATINO REPRESENTATIVES

The relationship between proportion Latino in a congressional district and the election of a Latino representative parallels the link between proportion Black and a victorious Black candidacy. Column 1 of Table 3 reports the results of estimating a logit model of Latino representative on the variables outlined in the section on theory and model specification. Increasing the proportion of African Americans in a district does not substantially aid the election of Latinos, but the proportion of citizens, as gauged by the proportion resident in the state for at least 5 years, plays an important role in determining whether Latinos win election.

Column 2 of Table 3 presents the results of repeating the logistic regression of Latino representative with Latino district replacing proportion Latino as an independent variable. As in the models of the election of Black representatives, the coefficients on many of the nonracial demographic variables changed from the first to the second logit. These swings most likely suggest the absence of stable relationships between these variables and Latino representative. Varying any of the demographic variables while holding the other variables constant at their means fails to raise the probability of electing a Latino to even .01 for non-Latino majority districts.

Proportion Latino and proportion citizens interact to predict the election of a Latino representative. Increasing the proportion of Latinos in a district provides a more amenable political environment for Latino candidates. Latino candidates, however, cannot win Latino votes if these Latinos are not citizens. The low voter turnouts in many Latino majority districts reflect the large immigrant population unable to register to vote. An astoundingly low 13% of the voting-age population voted in the contested 1992 congressional election in the 84% Latino 33rd district in California. As the proportion of long-term residents, and therefore citizens, rises in districts with large numbers of Latinos, the probability of electing a Latino representative also increases.

TABLE 3
Logit Analysis of Latino Representative with Latino Representative as Dependent Variable (Latino = 1)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>(1)</i>	<i>(2)</i>	<i>(3)</i>
Intercept	-12.67* (-1.47)	-0.82 (-0.27)	-4.81 (-0.71)
Proportion Latino	-8.22 (0.44)	—	-8.22 (-0.50)
Proportion Black	0.49 (0.19)	—	—
Latino district (Latino majority district = 1)	—	-20.66*** (-3.19)	—
Proportion resident in state for at least 5 years	2.18 (0.24)	-0.22 (-0.08)	-3.85 (-0.49)
Proportion Latino × proportion resident in state for at least 5 years	32.85* (1.50)	—	29.09* (1.50)
Latino district × proportion resident in state for at least 5 years	—	28.94*** (3.79)	—
Proportion high school graduates	1.88 (0.52)	0.16 (0.07)	—
Mean real family income (thousands of dollars)	0.04 (0.51)	-0.17*** (-3.88)	—
Proportion urban	-2.54 (-1.13)	0.53 (0.55)	—
Proportion foreign born	0.92 (0.33)	8.91*** (5.05)	—
Proportion age 65 years or over	3.95 (0.62)	-22.83*** (-4.46)	—
Proportion government workers in labor force	12.90** (1.93)	12.45*** (3.82)	—
Open seat	0.54 (1.09)	0.13 (0.29)	—
Congress (93rd = 0, 94th = 1, . . . 104th = 11)	-0.17* (-1.70)	-0.07 (-0.91)	—
Number of observations	4,843	4,843	4,843
Log likelihood	-121.75	-208.87	-134.59
Percentage predicted correctly	99.11	98.80	99.03
Percentage improvement over null model	63.22	50.41	59.92
Aldrich-Nelson pseudo- R^2	.32	.28	.32

NOTE: *t* statistics are in parentheses. See Hagle and Mitchell (1992) for information on the corrected Aldrich-Nelson pseudo- R^2 .

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

**THRESHOLD FOR ELECTION DEPENDS
ON THE PROPORTION OF CITIZENS**

Column 3 of Table 3 shows the results of estimating a logit model of Latino representative on proportion Latino, proportion resident in the state for at least 5 years, and interaction of these two variables. Table 4 presents the probability of a district sending a Latino to Congress for different proportions of Latinos and long-term residents. Assuming that all of a district's residents are long-term residents and thus that a high proportion of Latinos are citizens, a Latino candidate has a higher probability of winning election to Congress than does a Black candidate for comparable percentages of Latinos and African Americans. Whereas there is a 38% chance that a 40% Latino district will have a Latino representative, a 40% Black district has only an 8% chance of having a Black representative. If all Latinos were citizens, then Latinos would find it easier to overcome the electoral barrier than do African Americans.

The probability of a district having a Latino representative drops dramatically as the proportion of long-term residents declines. Fully 85% of the residents of the average congressional district have lived in their current states of residence for at least 5 years. It is interesting that, at this level, the probability of a Latino representing a district for any given percentage of Latinos in the district corresponds to the probability of an African American representing a district with the same percentage of Black constituents.⁵ At 55%, the proportion of Latinos needed to ensure the election of a Latino corresponds to the percentage of Blacks needed to ensure the victory of an African American. These results provide more long-term hope for the election of greater numbers of Latinos than for African Americans. As the proportion of Latinos rises and as greater numbers of Latinos gain American citizenship, the number of Latinos elected to Congress should increase, particularly if the Voting Rights Act forces states to create more Latino majority districts. The increase in the African American proportion of the population is much slower, and Blacks cannot look forward to substantial gains based on increases in citizenship rates.

TABLE 4
Probabilities of a Latino Representative

	<i>Percentage Latino</i>											
	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	
<i>Percentage living in state for at least 5 years</i>												
60	<.01	<.01	<.01	<.01	.02	.06	.13	.26	.42	.60	.77	
65	<.01	<.01	<.01	.02	.08	.18	.36	.57	.76	.89	.96	
70	<.01	<.01	.02	.08	.20	.41	.65	.84	.95	.99	>.99	
75	<.01	.01	.06	.18	.41	.68	.87	.97	.99	>.99	>.99	
80	<.01	.03	.13	.36	.65	.87	.97	>.99	>.99	>.99	>.99	
85	.01	.07	.26	.57	.84	.97	>.99	>.99	>.99	>.99	>.99	
90	.02	.14	.42	.76	.95	.99	>.99	>.99	>.99	>.99	>.99	
95	.05	.24	.61	.89	.99	>.99	>.99	>.99	>.99	>.99	>.99	

NOTE: Probabilities presented in this table derive from the logit results in column 3 of Table 3.

IMPLICATIONS

Due to broad interpretation of the Voting Rights Act, the number of majority-minority congressional districts has increased substantially over the past 25 years. The dramatic increase in African American and Latino congressional representation in Congress has rested entirely on vastly improved access to the ballot combined with the creation of new majority-minority districts. Race will continue to play a major role in congressional elections even if socioeconomic differences among African Americans, Latinos, and Whites gradually fade. Nonracial demographic variables often exhibit a strong bivariate correlation with the race of a representative. The link between these variables and the election of a minority representative rests entirely on the strong relation between the racial composition of the district and other demographic characteristics. African Americans and Latinos differ substantially from Whites on a number of demographic measures, so Black and Latino majority districts differ as well. If the Supreme Court's decisions in *Shaw* and its progeny result in a reduction in the number of majority-minority districts, then the number of African American and Latino representatives will decline as well.

Although majority-minority districts play a crucial role in the election of minority representatives, the percentage of minority residents needed to ensure their election is lower than the 65% threshold articulated by some advocates of minority representation. Assuming a district has no Latino residents, a 50% Black district has a 60% chance of electing an African American to the House. Raising the percentage of African Americans in the district to 55% increases the probability of having a Black representative to 86%. The presence of Latinos lowers the threshold needed to ensure the election of an African American representative.

The average district with a bare Latino majority has a 57% chance of sending a Latino to Congress. Increasing the Latino percentage to 55% raises the probability of having a Latino representative to 84%. Variation in the proportion of long-term residents, and therefore citizens, in the population has a major effect on the probability of a district electing a Latino to the House. As more Latinos become citizens and the Latino population continues to increase, more Latinos should gain election to the House. Even more significantly, the threshold for the election of Latinos should decline as the proportion of Latino citizens rises.

POSTSCRIPT: THE 1996 ELECTIONS

Court decisions eliminated two of three Black majority districts in Georgia, one of two Black majority districts in Louisiana, and one of three Black majority districts in Florida prior to the 1996 elections. The number of Black representatives from Louisiana declined from two to one after incumbent Democrat Cleo Fields decided not to seek reelection from a majority White district. Opponents of racial redistricting no doubt will be encouraged by the reelection of Corrine Brown in Florida and of Sanford Bishop and Cynthia McKinney in Georgia, all of whom won despite the reconfiguration of their districts. The incumbency advantage explains their victories, which provide no new evidence that nonincumbent African Americans can win election from White majority districts. African Americans lost one seat and gained another outside the South. Gary Franks lost his bid for a fourth

term in Connecticut, leaving Oklahoman J. C. Watts as the sole Black member of the Republican Caucus. Democrat Julia Carson of Indiana won election from an open 30% Black district. Carson's election provides welcome evidence that Blacks can occasionally win election from White majority districts. Unless it is part of a new trend, this one case cannot counter the overwhelming evidence that Blacks almost never win election from White majority districts.

Latinos won two new seats in 1996. Democrat Silvestre Reyes won an open 70% Latino district in Texas. California Democrat Loretta Sanchez appears to have narrowly defeated incumbent Republican Bob Dornan in a 50% Latino district. Dornan disputes the results and claims that illegal immigrants cast the deciding votes.

NOTES

1. Justice Kennedy quotes his dissent in *Metro Broadcasting*, 497 U.S. 636.

2. To avoid repeated use of the awkward phrase *non-Latino Whites*, the term *Whites* refers exclusively to non-Latino Whites here, even though many Latinos classify themselves as White.

3. Estimating the logit analyses separately for the South and the non-South suggests that Blacks find it more difficult to win election in the South. The percentage of Blacks required to raise the probability of a district electing an African American about 50% is higher in the South. Closer investigation reveals that these results depend largely on the very small number of cases in which Black candidates won in White majority districts or in which White candidates won in Black majority districts.

4. Separate logistic regressions for each Congress indicate that the relationship between the percentage Black in a district and the probability of electing a Black representative has not changed significantly over the years. The coefficient on percentage Black for each Congress is within 1 standard error of the coefficient for each of the other Congresses.

5. Among districts at least 40% Latino, 85% of residents have lived in the state for at least 5 years. Because there is virtually no deviation from the total for all districts, the generalizations about all districts can be applied to the subset of Latino districts.

REFERENCES

- Fraga, Luis R. 1992. Latino political incorporation and the Voting Rights Act. In *Controversies in minority voting behavior: The Voting Rights Act in perspective*, edited by Bernard Grofman and Chandler Davidson. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Grofman, Bernard, and Lisa Handley. 1989. Minority population and Black and Hispanic congressional success in the 1970s and 1980s. *American Politics Quarterly* 17:436-45.

- Hagle, Timothy M., and Glenn E. Mitchell II. 1992. Goodness-of-fit measures for probit and logit. *American Journal of Political Science* 36:762-84.
- Handley, Lisa, and Bernard Grofman. 1994. The impact of the Voting Rights Act on minority representation: Black officeholding in southern state legislatures and congressional delegations. In *Quiet revolution in the South: The impact of the Voting Rights Act 1965-1990*, edited by Chandler Davidson and Bernard Grofman. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hirsch, Arnold R. 1983. *Making the second ghetto: Race and housing in Chicago 1940-1960*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kirksey v. Board of Supervisors of Hinds County, 554 F.2d 139 (1977).
- Kousser, J. Morgan. 1992. The Voting Rights Act and the two Reconstructions. In *Controversies in minority voting behavior: The Voting Rights Act in perspective*, edited by Bernard Grofman and Chandler Davidson. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Lawson, Steven F. 1985. *In pursuit of power: Southern Blacks and electoral politics, 1965-1969*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- McDonald, Laughlin. 1992. The 1982 amendments and section 2 and minority representation. In *Controversies in minority voting behavior: The Voting Rights Act in perspective*, edited by Bernard Grofman and Chandler Davidson. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Parker, Frank. 1990. *Black votes count: Political empowerment in Mississippi after 1965*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Shaw v. Reno, 113 S.Ct. 2816 (1993).
- Swain, Carol M. 1993. *Black faces, Black interests: The representation of African Americans in Congress*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Thernstrom, Abigail. 1987. *Whose votes count? Affirmative action and minority voting rights*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wolfinger, Raymond E., and Steven J. Rosenstone. 1980. *Who votes?* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

David Lublin is an assistant professor in the Department of Government and International Studies at the University of South Carolina.