

We Shall Overcome:

The Impact of November School Board Elections on
Black and Latino Representation

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The deficiency of minority representation, namely that of African-Americans and Latinos, is often noted in reference to assemblies such as the United States House of Representatives and the Senate. However, it has not been as widely documented with respect to school boards across the United States. Hence, the ways in which an increase of minority school board members can be achieved (or inhibited), particularly through November elections, has never been brought to the forefront. Using American school districts, I discuss why school boards fail to comprise a significant minority presence, how an increase in black and Latino officials can be achieved, and the potential effects that this newfound representation could produce. My findings suggest that November elections, regardless of region, are not significant in improving black representation; however, they positively influence Hispanic representation throughout the United States. Nevertheless, this study seeks to transcend the trend of seemingly inadequate attention that has been designated to the representation of minorities on school boards across the country.

Section 1: Introduction

During the late 1980s, the New York City School Board garnered exceedingly low voter turnout during school board elections¹. Democratic Party district leader on Manhattan's West Side and a professional educator, Janice W. Shorenstein, was disheartened by this lack of involvement throughout the community and felt that its people were “simply unaware of the important responsibilities that community school boards have in educating our young people” (*New York Times* 1989). The first and most important reform, she stated, would be to “change the date of the school board elections to Election Day. Having the school board elections in early May, with only school board candidates on the ballot, guarantees that most voters will *not* show up at the polls” (*New York Times* 1989). Shorenstein goes on to state that, “there is no rational reason why the elections are not held at the same time that we elect our other public officials. This change alone would insure a rise in voter turnout by at least 300 percent” (*New York Times* 1989).

¹ The actual percentage of voter turnout was not discussed in this article.

These reforms were created under the likely assumption that November school board elections would bring a rise to voter turnout because they were being held at the same time as the nation's highest elective offices.

The potential impact of holding school board elections in November has clearly been an overlooked facet in education. While this previously mentioned narrative of Janice Shorenstein illustrates the potential outcome of November elections in New York during the 1980s, the possible outcome of moving all school board elections in the United States to the eleventh month of the year does *not* present blacks the opportunity to competitively vie for seats on school boards and increase their representation.

The subsequent sections in this research design will seek to provide one with a greater understanding of the contrasting impact holding school board elections in November will provide the minority electorate. The second section, the literature review, will present previous schools of thought regarding education and representation as well as what various authors have addressed in their literary work with respect to how minority representation can be acquired. Section 3 denotes my hypotheses and the role I feel November school board elections will play in determining representation for African-Americans and Latinos on school boards. While I was not able to measure the potential substantive policies that would come from their elections, I nonetheless move beyond the realm of November elections and seek to theorize the influence minority representation has on policy². The data used for this study and the models they produced will be defined and thoroughly discussed while the conclusion addresses what my findings signify with regards to policy and civic concerns.

² My theories will be based on literature discussed Section 2.

Section 2: Literature Review

Representation, through elected bodies, illustrates how political power is vested in the hands of a small subset of the members for a specified time period in order to represent a designated constituency. Representation generally refers to representative democracies, where elected officials speak on behalf of their constituents (Patterson 2006). It can also, more broadly, be interpreted as one's ability to influence the political process and public policies. Elected representatives are selected by acquiring a numerical majority of votes over their opponent(s) in an election and are responsible for aligning themselves with the interests of the people.

Elections are often solely associated with the executive and legislative branches at the state and federal levels; but they are also common when determining the members of a school board. A school board is a group of individuals elected (and occasionally appointed) in a local school system to make decisions regarding educational policy for the schools in which they represent. Frederick M. Wirt and Michael W. Kirst state in *The Political Dynamics of American Education* that, "Although eight-five percent of local school boards in this country are elective; the politics of these elections was a great unknown until the 1970s." What was once known about school boards brought about more questions than it settled. One clear point remains that board elections have little voter turnout, even less than that for other government offices (Wirt and Kirst 1997). The reasons are not clear; is it because of the nonpartisan myth of school politics or because school boards are held in off years and at primary dates

when turnout is low for all contests (Wirt and Kirst 1997)? While Wirt and Kirst observe the nature of school board elections in an inquisitive manner, Hess affirms that, “While school board elections generally have extremely low voter turnout, turnout is substantially higher when board elections are held at the same time as elections for state, federal, or general municipal offices in November” (Hess 2002). Hess goes on to note that November school board elections draw voters to the polls in higher percentages than any other month because elections for the president and Congress are often taking place simultaneously³.

In the long history of the United States, minorities have not been represented equally in elected bodies. *FairVote*⁴, a program for representative government, states in a recent article that, “At present, communities of color are under-represented in government in the United States. Although African Americans make up over twelve percent of the population of America, there are only forty-two black Delegates in the U.S. House, and only one black Senator. This pattern is repeated for other ethnic and racial groups and on a state and local level.” While there are many reasons for the underrepresentation of people of color in America, winner-take-all election systems do nothing to help. Under winner-take-all, 50.1% of the population can control one hundred percent of seats, leaving minority groups without any representation (*FairVote*). In places with a history of racially polarized voting, this has often resulted in white voters swamping the votes of other communities leading to legislatures which do not reflect the demographic composition of those they represent (*FairVote*).

³ Hess presents no statistical data for this particular finding.

⁴ Understanding that solutions only come after successfully defining problems, *FairVote* pursues innovative research into local, state, federal, and international elections to demonstrate and explain flaws in America’s electoral rules.

School boards are less racially diverse than is the nation as a whole, but more ethnically diverse than most state and national elective bodies (Hess 2002) due to the format (date) of their elections. Minority representation on school boards is more common in the makeup of urban school boards. On the other hand, minority representation in small districts is less racially heterogeneous (Hess 2002).

Political scientists distinguished between two forms of representation. *Descriptive representation* is the concept that candidates in democratic elections should be elected to represent ethnic and gender electorates, as well as other minority interest groups, rather than the population at large. According to this idea, an elected body should resemble a representative sample of the voters they are meant to represent concerning outward characteristics. In *Race, Class, and Education*, Meier, Stewart, and England note that there are five prime factors that influence black descriptive representation—black political resources, district political structure, social class, region, and black access to other decision making positions. This representation, for instance, can be seen where districts with a large percentage of black school board members are more likely to employ a larger number of black school administrators (Meier, Stewart, England 1989). Conversely, *substantive representation* describes the tendency for representatives to advocate for certain groups⁵ through policy initiatives. Although many analysts argue that the later is most essential, the two forms of representation are linked in noteworthy ways. In particular, if features of the political system prevent one demographic group from achieving descriptive representation, then it may be highly

⁵ These “groups” tend to based on race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, or other identity labels.

unlikely that the group will be able to achieve substantive representation of its interests (Gerber Morton, Rietz 1998).

In observing school board elections and representation, it is important to also note the same features in similar body—city councils. Studies show that at-large elections and small city councils appear to adversely affect the equity of the minority group representation on city councils (Taebel 1978). When single-districts/wards are applied to city council elections, the increased results for minority representation are evident. Therefore, when racial minorities are numerical minorities in school districts, they tend to compete better in elections that are structured around small single-member districts or wards (Howell 2005). Despite the positive results of single-member districts for minorities, representation has often been effected by electoral policies that are not believed to aid the minority communities. For instance, “When Progressive reforms to nonpartisanship in school matters began across the nation after 1900, the large-working-class membership by the 1920s had almost disappeared from school boards, and white middle-class members dominated everywhere” (Wirt and Kirst 1997). These reforms created biased school board electorates across the nation subsequently leading to decreases in minority representation. However, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 combated such reforms by providing for federal registration of voters in areas that had less than 50% of eligible minority voters registered or who voted in the previous election. The Act also provided for Department of Justice oversight to registration and the Department's approval for any change in voting law in districts that had used a "device" to limit voting. Since 1991, the continuation of the civil rights movement has increased its pressure to improve minority representation through district/ward

elections—at least one hundred school systems have switched to district elections since 1994 (Wirt and Kirst 1997).

Wirt and Kirst believe that using elections to select unrepresentative school boards always creates uncertainty about validity of those elections. Thus, the ongoing criticism of the unrepresentational nature of school board membership just noted has entailed that without such ‘virtual representation’ the people cannot be suitably served. They go on to state that “A test between of the link between representation and possession of resources appears in the case of blacks. Their representation on the 1989 big-city school boards was smaller than their resources (i.e., numbers, money, organization); at-large systems effectively widened the gap between resources and board seats. In *Urban Reform and Its Consequences*, Susan Welch and Timothy Bledsoe pose a worthy question on behalf of minorities and their representation on school boards when they ask, “Which system provides for ‘better representation’: a system that forces representation from all parts of the community, or one that allows several, or even all representatives to come from the same part of town?” This very question raised many of the central issues of democratic representation and clearly a system that forced representation from *all* parts of the community can better represent *all* of its constituents.

The geographic location (or region) of school board elections, and elections in general, are believed to ultimately affect minority representation as well. In *Racial Redistricting and African-American Representation: A Critique of “Do Majority Minority Districts Maximize Substantive Black Representation in Congress?”*, David Lublin states

that, “Although [many] examine the North and South separately, they do not consider how regional differences in racial demographics and voting behavior of whites may effect the results.” He goes on to state that, “When these are taken into account, the tradeoff between descriptive and substantive representation is more acute in the South than in the North.” While Lublin applies this theory to the United States Congress, one could logically asses that region could potentially play a role in determining representation for minorities on other elective bodies—in this case, school boards.

The factors that increase voter participation for all elections at the local state and federal level have been noted. The premise is concise—November elections significantly increase voter turnout among all elective bodies nationwide. In noting school boards specifically, Wirt and Kirst adamantly assert that board elections have little voter turnout, even less than that for other governmental offices. Further, they present the belief that voter turnout in school board elections are low when elections are held in off years and on primary dates when turnout is low for all contests. As previously stated by Hess, “turnout is substantially higher when school board elections are held at the same time as elections for state, federal, or general municipal offices in November.” The personal testimony of Shorenstein, the Democratic Party’s district leader on the Manhattan School Board, further emphasizes the positive effects school board elections would have on voter turnout if held in November.

Minority representation is the major theme throughout this literature review. It is clear that minority representation in elected bodies is reasonably low. Gerber, Morton, and Reitz make it clear that if features of a political system prevent one group from

achieving descriptive representation, then it may be highly unlikely that the group will be able to achieve substantial representation of its interests. Indeed, elections which select unrepresentative school boards have generated many questions about the validity of these elections. Regardless of one's viewpoint, statistical data has overwhelmingly supported that case that minority representation on school boards could use a much-needed increase. While each of the previously noted authors adequately address the numerous approaches in which minority representation on school boards could increase, none propose the concept of the potential impact November elections could have on minority representation on school boards across the nation. If November elections bring about a potential increase in representation among *all* racial and ethnic groups, then an essential question must be raised—"What impact does November school board elections have on minority representation in particular?"

Section 3: Hypotheses

There is an abundance of literature and documentation on elections, school boards, and minority representation. In determining the effect of November school board elections, it is important to reiterate the facts in order to consolidate the vital information needed to present worthy hypotheses. Multiple social scientists and theorists have presented adequate research on the stated topics; however all fail merge these components to present data on the impact November school board elections would have on minority representation.

It has been established that while school board elections generally have extremely low voter turnout, turnout is substantially higher when board elections are held at the same time as elections for state, federal, or general municipal offices in

November (Hess 2002). Frederick Hess declares this statement to be factual and it is important for this point to be reasserted and used as a building block to further exemplify the validity of the my subsequent points. The fact that voter turnout for school boards increases in November should come as no surprise. Voters in November elections are, for the most part, not necessarily interested in determining the outcome of a school board seat. Rather, they race to the polls to vote in a presidential race or other more “highly regarded” offices and happen to vote in a school board election in the process. This “race” to the polls usually occurs in November—the month for general elections. Americans' ho-hum attitude about primaries doesn't necessarily mean they will stay away from the polls in the fall (*USA Today* 2007). Curtis Gans of *American University's Center for the Study of the American Electorate* states that, “In any given year, primary turnout will not predict general-election turnout” (*USA Today* 2007). In reference to the 2006 elections, Gans expects a “close to a record low turnout for this year's primaries but thinks it will be *comparatively* high in the fall” (*USA Today* 2007). This is a general trend in all elections—voter turnout in primaries is significantly low compared to turnout in general elections. Gans’ statement presents an increase in voter turnout for the general population. So, considering that the minority population comprises a smaller percentage of individuals in any electorate (as entailed by the label “minority”), it takes less voters to raise the percentage of voter turnout than it would for non-minorities. Therefore:

H1: Voter turnout amongst minorities will increase more than non-minorities if school board elections are held in November.

With this first hypothesis in mind, the net-gain in percentage of minorities rushing to the polls would increase more so than voting non-minorities⁶. The net-gain in voter turnout for minorities is particularly crucial because of the current state of their representation, or lack thereof. Those who turn out to vote will likely have a significant impact on the electorate's descriptive representation. Hence:

H2: Descriptive representation for minorities will rise if school board elections are held in November.

For instance, this trend can already be seen in urban areas where minority representation on school boards is more common. Overall, the national school boards representation is 85.5 percent white, 7.8 percent African-American and 3.8 percent Hispanic. In large districts, which tend to be more urban and more racially heterogeneous, the figures are 78.9 percent white, 13.0 percent African-American, and 7.5 percent Hispanic (Hess 2002). Clearly, urban areas have a high populace of black and Latino citizens which naturally produces a higher percentage of minority officials on school boards (Hess 2002) and other elective offices.

The tendency for school board elections in large urban districts to be competitive is an advantage for competing minorities who are more likely to initiate significant policies for blacks and Latinos if elected (substantive representation). As stated, minorities traditionally have a difficult time obtaining elective offices compared to non-

⁶ Considering that the minority population comprises a smaller percentage of individuals in any electorate (as entailed by the label "minority"), it takes less voters to raise the percentage of voter turnout than it would for non-minorities.

minorities. However, when minorities do obtain descriptive representation one could argue over the ultimate effect they would have upon substantive representation. Therefore, it is coherent to assert that:

H3: The increases in descriptive representation on school boards will lead to an increase in substantive representation for minorities.

Substantive representation describes the advocacy for an elected official to promote and produce desired legislation for their constituents. By noting positive black and Latino substantive outcomes in the educational sphere in the past, it becomes clearer that single-member districts will improve the effectiveness of minority representatives (Meier, Juenke, Wrinkle, Polinard 2005). While an elected official's area of support is occasionally in contrast to their background (i.e. race, gender, socio-economic status), it is more likely for a constituency to receive their preferred policy implementation from one with a similar background (Meier, Stewart, England 1989). If a demographic group achieves descriptive representation, it is probable that the group will receive substantive representation of its liking. Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize that if there is an increase of descriptive representation on school boards, it will translate to substantive representation of the electorate's preference. This hypothesis requires me to examine the execution of policies on various school boards and to note the demographic make-up of boards which initiate worthy courses of action as well as those who fail to administrate to former.

Section 4: Data and Expectations

To test my hypothetical arguments, I utilized the National Superintendent of School Surveys from the Project of Equity, Representation, and Governance (PERG) at Texas A&M University. This data, concerning school districts across the United States, includes over fifteen hundred school districts as well as a numerous measurements that asses their composition such as: enrolments of school system, number of members on the school board, racial make-up of the school board, and the month of the year in which a school board holds their elections. This survey also includes questions regarding whether minorities are elected by ward/single-member districts or at an at-large basis—measurements that are essential to this study.

The first two models represent black representation on school boards with respect to the southern and northern regions of the United States, respectively⁷. The southern region in the United States has had a history of racial discrimination which carried over to the political arena. Essentially, the south is likely to negatively impact black representation on school boards. On the other hand, the variable which signifies elections held in the north are likely to aid African-Americans in representation. The northern region of the United States has historically been less favorable to racial discrimination and thus more likely to elect black school board officials. The third and final model evaluates the prime factors in determining Hispanic representation on

⁷ In distinguishing between representation in the north and south, I can more accurately gauge how region may play a distinct role in determining black representation. Rather than using the “north” and “south” as actual variables, I created the first model so that “south = 1” which subsequently provided the results for the south. I set the next model to “south = 0” to represent the northern school boards.

United States school boards⁸. The variables selected, such as Hispanic population and election by ward, are expected to increase Latino representation.

Models 1 and 2 (Black Representation)

Dependent Variable

Clearly, minority representation has been one of the main focuses of this study. As stated, acquiring black representation is dependent upon many factors such as political resources, district political structures, social class, region, and black access to other decision making positions (Meier, Stewart, and England 1989). Welch and Bledsoe state that “a system that allows several or even all representatives to come from the same part of town [effectively decreases black representation].” Each of these variables are influential in obtaining the goal of increased representation for African-Americans on school boards. Therefore, it was vital that I utilize some of the aforementioned factors as our independent variables that are probable in increasing black representation nationwide.

Independent Variables

Many of the independent variables in the first two models are those in which I believe will increase black representation on school boards across the United States. There are numerous variables that could potentially produce an increase in representation for blacks; therefore it was important for me to initially test the variables

⁸ One model will be used to assess how Hispanics can garner representation because creating regressions based on the northern and southern regions would not prove beneficial to an observer of this study.

that were widely acknowledged as being influential in previous literary work⁹. I would subsequently test variables that had not been previously assessed—such as the “November elections” variable—and merge them with previous findings.

One of the first independent variables I utilized “black population.” The logic behind this application of this variable was that in order black representation to be possible, members of the black race must be present in an electorate. This goes hand in hand with previous literature which suggests that African-Americans are more likely to competitively vie for a spot in any elected body if the election is being contested in “urban arenas” which constitute high percentages of the black population throughout the U.S. (Wirt and Kirst). Simply stated, minority representation is more common in the make-up of urban school boards (Hess 2002).

Whether elections are being held in urban areas or small towns, elections by ward/single-members districts is believed to have a positive impact on representation. As stated in the literature review, at-large elections appear to adversely affect the equity of minority representation on city councils (Taebel 1978). If this holds true, the same can be said for school districts which comprise a strikingly similar make-up in terms of the size of the electorate, at-large or single member districts, and the varying dates in which elections are usually held.

Income and education amongst African-Americans are other independent variables that are seen as indicators that could potentially determine black representation. There has been ambiguity over the notion that African-Americans who have obtained higher education and garner higher yearly incomes are not only more like

⁹ Previous work on minority representation on school board has utilized variables that denote: region, at-large vs. ward/single member districts, black population, etc.

to vote, but will likely support fellow African-Americans when voting. Nevertheless, African-Americans income and education are seen as potential factors in affecting black representation.

A variable applied to these models that will likely inhibit an increase black representation is the white population. It comes as no surprise that whites are seen as an obstacle for the black race when seeking any elected office. One could reason that an instance when whites have major influence on the potential election of blacks is when elections are held at an at-large basis. Adding the variable of “white population” to this model adds collinearly and may reflect excluded categories in this study.

Finally, independent variables which denote November elections and the interaction of November elections and black population are seen as factors that provide leverage in obtaining representation for black Americans. As mentioned in the hypotheses, I feel that November elections will result in a net-gain of higher turnout for African Americans. Consequently, coupling November elections and the black population will likely lead to astounding results with respect to an escalation in black members on boards of education. Interacting these models creates a more specified variable, adding greater validity to the study.

Model 3 (Hispanic Representation)

Dependent Variable

Hispanic representation plays as the dependent variable for the final model. Hispanic representation is similar to that of blacks on school boards in that they are underrepresented. Factors that are likely to increase their representation are the

Hispanic population, education, and income (just to mention a few). The independent variables utilized in this model will provide a clear picture of the variables that aid and deter the Hispanic race from obtaining a “voice” on American school boards.

Independent Variables

The Hispanic population will likely present a clear advantage for Hispanics to who seek a spot on a school board. Their presence in the electorate bodes well for Latino candidates who are seeking office. Latino’s share strong group identity when compared to other racial/ethnic groups and are likely to support a candidate of the same race for any elective office. Among this population, the percentage of Hispanics with college degrees and a higher per capita income will further assist Hispanics vying for seats of the board of education.

Election by ward/single member districts is essential in enhancing Latino representation like with African-Americans. This electoral structure is an advantage for Hispanics who are usually concentrated in the same areas within school districts. This allows the Hispanic candidate(s) to appeal to a designated constituency which is likely his/her fellow Latinos.

The white population is once again a variable that will more than likely inhibit Hispanic representation. Like its effect on African-Americans, whites are likely to impose a strong obstacle for Hispanics to overcome because they are more likely to support other whites than a minority in a school board election. On the contrary, November elections and the interaction of November elections and Hispanic representation can potentially produce advantages for Latino’s. As stated, board

elections have little voter turnout, even less than that for other governmental offices (Wirt and Kirst 1997). Therefore, holding these elections in November will likely bring out more Latinos to the polls. This will likely lead to an increase in Hispanic representation.

Section 5: Findings

Model One

The purpose of this model is to analyze the impact of multiple variables on black representation on school boards. This model accounts for districts which have implemented November school board elections, black population; election by ward/single member districts; per capita income among African-Americans; percentage of black college graduates; the white population; and the interaction of November elections and black population. This model includes school districts that are located in the southern region of the United States.

[Table 1 About Here]

It is clear in these findings that November elections are *not* significant in affecting black representation on school boards in the south. For example, simply holding school board elections at the same time as presidential elections (in November) will not achieve the objective of increasing representation for blacks according to this model. However, an increase in black population within a district increases black representation on school boards. This key finding magnifies a long-standing notion that an increase in population among a particular group increases their chances of obtaining greater representation in any elected body. This is particularly vital for African-Americans who

have high group identity and allegiance. In this instance, for every .99 unit increase in black population, black representation increases by one percent. Another noteworthy variable in this analysis is that election by ward/single member district is insignificant in affecting black representation. This finding contradicts previous literature in which it is believed that wards/single-member districts aid African-Americans in increasing their school board representation¹⁰. The white population plays a vital yet unexpected role in determining black representation. As the white population rises, as does black representation on school boards. The white population essentially aids African-Americans in seeking representation on school boards. This is likely, in this study, because whites who vote in at-large or single member districts which contain a high African-American populace are taken into account.

The interaction of November elections and black population, though combining two widely documented factors that presumably serve against decline in minority representation, plays no significant role in increasing black representation as indicated by this model. Also, income amongst African-Americans as well as black college graduates are other variables that fail to reach statistical significance when determining representation for blacks on school boards.

Model Two

This second model, like the first, comprises the variables of November school board elections; black population; election by ward/single member districts; per capita income among African-Americans; percentage of black college graduates; the white

¹⁰ i.e. Howell, Timothy G. Besieged: School Boards and the Future of Education Politics.

population; and the interaction of November elections and black population. However, this model denotes findings from the northern region of the United States

[Table 2 About Here]

Like the previous model, November elections are not significant in determining black representation on school boards. Other insignificant variables include: percentage of black college graduates, income of African-Americans, and interaction of November elections and black population.

This model has election in wards/single member districts as a significant value; however, they negatively impact black representation in the north. This finding, like numerous others, likely contradicts previous findings concerning the impact of elections by ward/single member district because the “north” has, historically, been more conducive to minority representation on all elective bodies. Therefore, at-large districts *may* actually play as beneficial in increasing black representation on northern regions school boards.

While the white population carries no significance, the black population is once again instrumental in positively affecting their own representation for the same reasons as mentioned in the findings of the previous model.

Model Three

The third model predicts Hispanic representation on school boards by examining November elections; per capita income amongst Hispanics, Hispanic college degrees; elections by wards/single member districts; Hispanic college graduation percentage;

Hispanic population; white population; as well as the interaction between November elections and Hispanic population.

[Table 3 About Here]

Unlike the previous model, school board elections being held in the month of November have great significance in increasing Hispanic representation on school boards across the United States. This is a tremendous inroad towards overcoming underrepresentation. Hispanics chances of not only vying, but winning a spot on a school board escalates when elections are held during the eleventh month of the year. November elections as well as elections by ward or single member districts greater aids Latino's ability to garner representation. As the amount of single member districts rises, Hispanic representation also rises. As expected, the Latino population is highly significant in determining their representation on school boards. The percentage of Hispanics with college degrees, and interaction of November election and Hispanic population are the two final variables that hold significance in affecting representation for Latinos, but impose their influence in dissimilar fashions. As the Hispanic college graduate percentage increases, so does Hispanic representation. This notion confirms documentation of how education impacts representation for Hispanics. On the other hand, the interaction of November elections and Hispanic population leads to a steep decline of their representation on school boards.

The white population's impact on Hispanic representation is not seen as a statistically significant factor in determining the outcome. Per capita income amongst Hispanics and Hispanic college degrees follow the same trend as the white population in that they carry no significance with respect to this model.

Hypotheses/Findings Analysis

In comparing and contrasting my hypotheses with the findings, the aspect of this study that became increasingly evident was that the data utilized was only sufficient in answering a limited amount of my concerns. While it was clear what affect November school board elections would have on blacks and Hispanics, I was not able to measure the potential substantive policies that would come from their elections. Nevertheless, the National Superintendent of Schools Surveys would provide me with implications that are equally remarkable for minorities as they seek to obtain representation on boards that effect education policy for their constituents.

My first hypothesis was that “voter turnout amongst minorities will increase more than non-minorities if school board elections are held in November.” While this assertion posed a legit hypothesis, the data utilized did not present conclusive evidence. I was unable to measure voter turnout among minorities and non-minorities because the data I acquired was not sufficient with respect to this particular hypothesis.

The second premise of this study proclaimed that “descriptive representation for minorities will rise if school board elections are held in November.” While one may believe that the same trend would hold true for both blacks and Latinos, this was not the case. For African-Americans, November elections had no significance in determining their representation in Model One and Model Two. For Hispanics, however, November elections play a key role in that they are both significant and positively affect their representation. We have sufficient enough evidence to prove that descriptive representation for Hispanics will rise if school board elections are held in November.

Coupling this newfound inroad with election by ward/single-member districts, Hispanic college graduates, and a high Latino population virtually guarantees an increase in descriptive representation for this underrepresented race.

My final hypothesis in this study is that “the increases in descriptive representation on school boards will lead to an increase in substantive representation for minorities.” Unfortunately, this hypothesis cannot be proved in this study beyond a reasonable doubt with the data utilized.

Section 6: Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to find if the change in electoral policy of moving school board elections to November would increase minority representation. The amazing aspect of this analysis was that the findings provided inroads to aspects of increasing representation that I initially overlooked. For example, separating the models for black representation, according to region, was essential to this study. Without this facet, one may never learn of the potential impact regions have on black representation. Another astounding aspect of this documentation is how whites actually aid African-American in obtaining representation on school boards. This is contrary to popular belief and could possibly denote advances against racial tension in American electorates.

If conducting this study for a second time, I would search for data that would enable me to answer each of my hypotheses. I was unable to adequately address my first and third hypotheses, and although the findings were remarkable nonetheless, noting correlating findings of one’s hypotheses is the ultimate goal. Hence, this study

could have been enhanced if I was able to obtain data on if minority school board members actually implemented policies that would benefit minority constituents. This would determine if descriptive representation actually leads to substantive representation for blacks and Latinos as noted in the literature review. I would also be interested in statistics with regards to voter turnout to see if the primary reason November elections did not positively impact black representation was because their voter turnout did *not* exceed that of non-minorities. Conversely, I would like to see if Hispanic voters flocked the polls in higher numbers than non-minorities in November.

The versatility of this study allows for its findings to apply to elective bodies beyond school boards that lack minority representation. The impact of November elections could have the same significance on city councils, county commissions, or other bodies that comprise a similar make-up of boards of education¹¹.

The fact of the matter is that, based on this study, November elections may ultimately increase *all* minority representation if we do not neglect its potential. This could allow minorities to overcome their current state of underrepresentation. For Hispanics, November elections clearly provide pathways to increased representation. However, this representational increase will never occur if the findings are never tested—the difference between “potential policies” and “laws” is action. The same can apply for blacks even though this study suggests that November elections have no significance in determining their representation on school boards. If holding these elections during the eleventh month of the year has so-called “no significance,” then moving elections to November *cannot* hurt black American’s chances in vying for representation. I’m confident that moving school board elections to November is a risk

¹¹ This statement would hold true for Hispanics in particular.

that African-Americans from California to New York are willing to take because their representation can only improve beyond its current state. Simply neglecting the potential outcome of November elections would not move African-Americans beyond their current underrepresented state with regards to education. Though ambiguous, I strongly believe that November elections would benefit minorities in school board electorates tremendously. As stated, the key is moving this proposed theory into action and not neglecting the potential, and likely magnificent, outcome November elections could have on positively impacting Black and Latino representation for future generations.

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APPENDIX: Tables**Table One*****Relationship between November School Board Elections and Black Representation (in southern region)***

Variable	Slope	SE	t
November election	-.385	1.089	-.350
Black population in 2000	.989	.035	28.630
November election * black population	-.042	.055	-.770
election by ward	-.182	.111	-1.640
Black per capita income	1.314	2.848	.460
Black college graduate percentage in 2000	-.043	.035	-1.240
White population in 2000	0.060	.030	2.030
constant	-.046	.912	-.050

 N = 563

R-squared = .71

Table Two***Relationship between November School Board Elections and Black Representation (in northern region)***

Variable	Slope	SE	t
November election	-.438	.728	-.600
Black population in 2000	1.037	.031	32.990
November election * black population	-.036	.045	-.780
election by ward	-.231	.105	-2.200
Black per capita income	-2.957	6.668	-.440
Black college graduate percentage in 2000	-.030	.026	-1.150
White population in 2000	.066	.038	1.730
constant	1.350	.885	1.520

 N = 1037

R-squared = .67

Table Three***Relationship between November School Board Elections and Hispanic Representation***

Variable	Slope	SE	t
November election	0.132	0.050	2.620
Hispanic population in 2000	0.881	0.021	42.000
November election * Hispanic population	-0.022	.002	-9.320
Hispanic per capita income	-9.606	5.840	-1.640
Hispanic college degrees election by ward	-6.940	0	-0.090
	0.154	0.075	2.060
Hispanic college graduate percentage in 2000	0.127	0.024	5.210
White population in 2000	-0.006	0.028	-0.200
constant	-5.943	0.715	-8.310

N = 1616

R-squared = .70