

4-24-2021

The Electoral Success and Representation of Minorities: Different Cost of Voting Scenarios

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
The Electoral Success and Representation of Minorities:
Different Cost of Voting Scenarios
A Capstone Submitted to the
University Honors Program
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree
With Honors
Department Of
Political Science
By
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June 6, 2021

HONORS CAPSTONE ABSTRACT

This research tests whether minorities are underrepresented in state legislatures due to restrictive state election laws that hinder voting. Some states like Oregon make it easier for citizens to vote and other states like Texas make it more difficult. The Cost of Voting Index (COVI) is a measurement of the electoral/institutional restrictiveness of each state and values are available for presidential election years from 1996 to 2020. Previous research has revealed that the amount of voting restrictions that citizens face makes it harder for them to vote (Li, Pomante Schraufnagel, 2018). What is less understood is whether restrictions hurt Blacks and Latinos running for statewide offices. This research will test whether the COVI can help predict voting margins, which in turn will reveal how successful minority candidates will be in states that are less restrictive or more restrictive. Broadly, the purpose of this research is to understand the electoral success of minorities and how the COVI helps to explain their success. Most specifically, the research question I examine is, does the restrictiveness of each state's electoral/institutional climate help explain the relative underrepresentation of minorities in government? In other words, can the restrictiveness of state election laws help explain a lack of representation of Blacks and Latinos in elected offices?

Introduction

Aside from voter turnout, at either the aggregate or individual level, I look to examine the electoral success of minority candidates who run for public office. What are the possibilities that minority candidates will win when they run? But I am also looking into whether lower election margins connect to being a minority candidate? In attempting to address these questions with state-wide election Cost of Voting Index (COVI) values, there are limitations. For instance, I do not have the values for individual House districts in the United States. However, when candidates run for a US House seat in an at-large race, or when the entire state is a single House district, I can use COVI values to efficiently measure minority electoral achievement¹. There are also other statewide offices, such as Governor and Senator, where the electoral constituency is the entire state, which is convenient. These offices, along with other statewide elected offices, serve as my primary testing grounds.

Nevertheless, the COVI values can be used in numerous ways to test how they may influence minority political representation in state legislatures. For instance, I can test how each state legislature in the country stacks up when it comes to representing minority citizens, descriptively. Is it true that states with lower COVI values have a higher proportion of minorities in their chambers? It is reasonable to assume that states with more inclusive electoral systems would produce state lawmakers who look more like their state residents. I am aware that some state assemblies are more amateur or part-time affairs, and that these chambers are more elite bodies with lower descriptive representation (Squire 1992). What about the state's electoral and institutional climate? After controlling for legislative professionalism, can COVI values help explain variations in the descriptive representation of state legislatures? In answering this

¹ In 2021, there are seven at large House districts. A single representative in the US House of Representatives is elected from Alaska, Delaware, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming.

question, I also have the opportunity to test for a relationship between state COVI values and the proportional representation of women, another subpopulation that is notably underrepresented in state elected offices throughout the United States (Squire 1992).

Minorities, the COVI, and Electoral Success

In all, I have several different ways to test each state's electoral and institutional climate against minority electoral success. In the first set of tests, I examine candidates running for statewide offices. In certain states, using packing as a gerrymandering tactic has improved minority candidate electoral success. Especially when gerrymandering has resulted in majority-minority districts (Nelson 2019). However, the COVI values differentiate between states rather than legislative districts within a state. To address this modeling issue, I must limit my analysis of electoral performance to minority candidates running for statewide offices. I have specifically collected statistics on all minorities who run for governor, senator, lieutenant governor (when running alone), at-large House races, and other offices within the plural executive of state governments such as attorney general, treasurer, and secretary of state. I also examine all statewide races from 1996 to 2020 and include only minorities who run as candidates of one of the two major political parties. Third-party candidates are already at a disadvantage (Schraufnagel 2011) and including them in the analysis would confuse the test of minority electoral success.

Primarily, I have three unique dependent variables that test the electoral success of minority candidates who run for statewide office. The first component is a dummy variable that is scored "1" if a minority candidate *Won Office* and "0" if the candidate loses the statewide election. I expect a higher state COVI value to be associated with zeros, so the logistical

regression I run is expected to have a negative coefficient.² Second, I examine whether COVI values, along with other control variables, can predict a minority candidate's *Own Percentage* or the percentage of total votes earned. Third, I use the same model except this time the *Election Margin* is the dependent variable. Candidates who do not win will now obtain a negative value.

All three factors are linked, and the last two may appear to be perfectly correlated. However, not all statewide elections have just two candidates, so the third test takes this into account by testing the difference in vote percentages for the winning major party candidate and the major party minority candidate. Assuming a minority candidate wins 40% of the vote but loses, in one instance, the winning candidate would have won 60% of the vote, and the minority candidate's election margin would be -20% (40 – 60). In another instance, the winner might have received 45 percent of the vote, with the minority candidate receiving 40 percent and a third-party candidate receiving 15 percent. The minority election margin is now -5 percent. (40 - 45). The assumption is that the minority candidate did better in the second case than they did in the first example presented.

Consider Kamala Harris (D), a Black woman who ran for Attorney General of California against Steve Cooley (R) in 2010. This exemplifies the three measurement strategies. Four minor party candidates ran in this election as well. Mr. Cooley received 45.21% of the vote, while Ms. Harris received 46.05% of the vote. Ms. Harris is clearly given a "1" in the first model since she won. In the second model, she gets a score of "46.05," which represents her vote percentage. In the third case, she earns a score of ".84" (46.05% - 45.21%), which is equivalent to her winning vote margin. In the first example, Harris' vote percentage would show a loss of 7.9%, which is

² Logistical regression is most appropriate when the dependent variable is dichotomous or only takes on two unique values such as "0" and "1." The idea is to convert the "0's" and "1's" to odds ratios and then to use calculus to convert these further, using the constant "e," to create an interval level measure that can then be used in a regression model (Menard,2011).

not accurate because she won. I anticipate a negative correlation between state COVI values and each of the three dependent variables, or measures of minority electoral support. I conducted the three experiments in the spirit of empirical inquiry, which aims to understand how stable a relationship between two concepts is and to determine if a statistical relationship can withstand several model specifications. Each model run reflects at least one, if not more, distinct assumptions.

The Volume of Minority Candidates.

Before I begin, the tests of the electoral success of minority candidates who run for statewide office, I would like to see if minorities are less likely to run for public office in general. Given the long history of White male domination in electoral politics in the United States, I suspect that many capable minority individuals would simply not run for public office. Recognizing that the country's electoral climate is not favorable to electoral success, especially in certain states, many reasonable individuals would simply refuse to run. This degree of demobilization is especially concerning because it reflects a level of political alienation, that would almost certainly result in less minority representation in elected political offices.

To assess minority demobilization, I simply calculated the number of times a minority candidate might have ran in a governor's election, a US Senate race, or an at-large House race between 1996 to 2020. In total, 870 opportunities were available, with 59 minority candidates running during this time period. Alternatively, 6.78 % (59/870) of all candidates for public office represent one of the two largest minority groups in America. This is significantly less than the proportion of those two populations in any year between 1996 to 2020. Based on the estimated data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 28% of the U.S. population was either black or Latinx. That is why I get around a 21% difference (28-6.78). This generally suggests that minorities are

descriptively under-represented in US politics even before any elections are held, because there are simply fewer minority candidates. However, I believe that this is the case in some states rather than others, and I can test this. For this reason, I want to know in particular the role played by a restrictive electoral state climate or higher COVI values.

I know the average education and income of members of the two largest minority groups in the U.S. is lower than other Americans. I have noticed, in particular, that when controlling for education and income the voter turnout of Blacks is in fact higher than the voter turnout of Whites. One could imagine that lack of minorities in public office can be justified by an educational attainment or income level on average. The possible disadvantages experienced by minorities in seeking to achieve similar political standing in a predominantly white country are in a large way responsible for this lack of opportunities. However, when minorities surpass these lower socio-economic barriers, become voters, and then run for public office, how will they perform? I am now going well beyond the total reduced number of minority candidates in the state legislature, and I am trying to ascertain the role that the cost of voting plays in the electoral success of the minority candidates running.

More precisely, I measure whether a more restrictive state/institutional structure can help me understand the lack the electoral success of minority candidates better. As in the whole monograph, I begin by looking at bivariate relationships. In comparison with the state *COVI Ranks*, intensity and movement are seen in the relationship between each of the three dependent variables. I use COVI ranks as my main explanatory variable because it normalizes state outputs over 25 years. I use the state rank in the presidential election cycle prior or concurrent with the relevant statewide race in particular. Therefore, for elections in 2006, I used the state's 2004 COVI rankings. If the statewide election takes place at the same time as a presidential election, I

use that year's state COVI value. For example, I use Alabama's 2008 state rank for the 2008 Alabama Senate election, between Jeff Sessions (R) and Vivian Davis Figures (D). During the time period studied, I identified 182 minority candidates running as a representative of one of the two main political parties in a state-wide race.³ The bivariate relations between the COVI Ranks by state and the three measurements of election achievement are shown in the Table 1.

Table 1.
The Electoral Success of Minority Candidates Running for Statewide Offices and COVI Rank: 1996-2020

	COVI Rank	Won Office	Own Percent	Election Margin
COVI Rank	1			
Won Office	-.27 ($p < .001$) n = 182	1		
Own Percent	-.23 ($p < .001$) n = 182	.71 ($p < .001$) n = 182	1	
Election Margin	-.25 ($p < .001$) n = 182	.77 ($p < .001$) n = 182	.94 ($p < .001$) n = 182	1

The three indicators for the election achievement of minority candidates are all negatively associated to the COVI Rank in the first column of Table 1. In states with higher COVI rank, minorities on average perform poorly. Costs of voting in states with the higher COVI Rank, compared to other states, are higher. In other words, the electoral success of minority candidates continues to diminish as the state rank increases to the 50th position. Moreover, given the three measures, the statistical importance of the relationships cannot be denied. The bivariate relations between the two dependent variables (Columns 2 and 3) indicate that they are not exactly the same, so I really get three specific tests of the role played by COVI in depressing the electoral success of minorities.

³ I do not include the 23 minority candidates who ran for Lieutenant Governor on the same ticket with a gubernatorial candidate.

Bivariate relationships are not the whole story, and I must control for other considerations. In states with large minority populations, for example, I expect minority candidates to perform better. I know that it is more likely that minority people, especially African American voters, would support the Democratic Party. If the Republican Party is represented by disproportionate amount of the minority candidates, I suspect this could make it difficult to explain for Black candidates' poor electoral performance. In addition, I will now describe the modelling assumptions that I make and the operations or measurements for each of the control variables.

Control Variables. The candidate's party is the first variable I control for. I mark this consideration as *Democrat* and rate all candidates running for the statewide office of Democrats with a "1" and *Republicans* with a "0." The research excludes the minority candidates from third parties. I expect a positive correlation between being a Democratic Party candidate and electoral success. In other words, on average, I expect minority Democrats to be given more electoral support. In this case, though, it is important to recognize that in certain cases a Republican minority candidate might be seen as less risky for the majority of white voters, which could result in greater support for the candidate. This could be particularly true if the cost of voting is kept constant, and I will look at the electoral process of a few minority Republican candidates in detail.

Following that, I control for the extent of *Electoral Competition*. For instance, I am not using a competitive electoral environment to determine the 'benefits' of voting. Rather, when electoral races are tougher, I am concerned about how voters will not risk voting for a minority candidate out of fear of wasting their vote. Previous research has shown that voters do not want to "waste" their vote on candidates who have no fair chance of winning (McMurray,2015). If the

average voter believes that a minority candidate is disadvantaged systematically and wants to vote in favor of the eventual winner, they could choose the White candidate. I measure electoral competition as the difference in voting percentages between the two major party candidates at the top of the ticket (governor, senator, or president) in either the current or previous election cycle. For odd-year statewide elections, I also use the previous election cycle value. For example, in 2001, I used the competition at the top of the tickets in the 2000 Virginia Presidential Election Cycle for Donald McEachin, a Black Democrat running for Attorney General. I expect that a greater margin will be associated with more minority candidates help and support, indicating lower election competitiveness. Lower competitiveness is therefore equivalent to greater support of minority candidates and is predicted to produce a negative coefficient in the regressions.

After that, I measure whether the minority candidate's gender has a bearing on electoral success. This variable is labeled *Female*, and I anticipate that minority females would be particularly disadvantaged. Although research shows that women are generally matching males if they have a similar background and campaign resources (Thomsen and Swers 2017). I know that in the area of socio-economic mobility, minority women are particularly disadvantaged. As a result, there could be lower electoral support. If women in society as a whole are marginalized, it is expected that it will be difficult for minority women to win statewide elected office. I expect negative coefficients in the regression analyses once more.

The *Percent Black Population* and *Percent Latinx Population* are the fourth and fifth control variables. I use the data of the U.S. Census Bureau in any case, using 1990 values for election 1996-1999 along with 2000 census figures used for 2000-2004 elections. The 2005 population estimates were provided for election in 2005-2009. The 2010 values are used for

elections from 2010-2013. Also, the 2014 values (population estimates) are used in the elections from 2014-2018. The 2019 (population estimates) are used for the 2019-2020 elections. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the three dependent variables, our main explanatory variable (COVI Rank), and each of the control variables.

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics of Variables used to Test Minority Candidate Electoral Success in Statewide Races: 1996-2020

	Min. Value	Max. Value	Mean Value	Std. Dev.
<i>Dependent Variables</i>				
Won Office	0	1	.24	.43
Own Percent Election Margin	-63.88	43.53	-11.06	19.02
<i>Key Explanatory Variable</i>				
COVI Rank	2	50	28.66	13.06
<i>Control Variables</i>				
Democrat	0	1	.77	.42
Electoral Competition	.06	51.41	14.55	9.45
Female	0	1	.32	.47
Percent Black Population	.5	37.8	15.33	10.73
Percent Latinx Population	.9	49.3	13.75	13.26
n		182		

In light of the descriptive statistics, the mean value of .24 for the Won Office consideration can be easily interpreted. In particular, the value suggests that the candidates from minorities who run for a state-wide office, within the period studied, won approximately 24 percent of the time. That is 44 out of the 182 minority candidates won and 138 minority candidates lost. Moving on to the third dependent variable, Election Margin, I learn that the lowest value is obtained by Ed Lopez, a Latino Republican who lost the Secretary of State race in Rhode Island in 1998, and the highest value is obtained by Jesse White, a Black Democrat who easily won the 2010 Secretary of State race in Illinois. A COVI rank of “2” indicates that no minority candidates ran for statewide office in a state that was rated as the easiest to vote in

during the time span examined (usually Oregon). The variable's mean of .32 for Female shows that approximately 32 percent (58/182) of minority candidates for state office during the course of the study were women. I run three regression models, one for each of the three dependent variables, using the variables in Table 2, and report the results in Table 3. The main concern was the relative cost of voting or the restrictiveness of the electoral environment in each state.

Table 3.
Minority Electoral Success when Running for Statewide Office and the COVI

Models: Logit Regression/Ordinary Least Squares (OLS)Regression/OLS Regression

<i>Key Explanatory Variable</i>	Won Office	Own Percent	Election Margin
	Coefficient (s.e.)	Coefficient (s.e.)	Coefficient (s.e.)
COVI Rank	-.053 (.019) *	-.227 (.080) *	-.454 (.158) *
<i>Control Variables</i>			
Democrat	.939 (.592)	5.233 (2.633) *	9.502 (4.649) *
Electoral Competition	-.004 (.020)	-.222 (.077) *	-.397 (.145) *
Female	-.215 (.620)	.373 (1.986)	-2.126 (3.835)
Percent Black Population	-.013 (.025)	-.014 (.097)	.002 (.161)
Percent Latinx Population	.016 (.017)	.113 (.060) †	.220 (.113) †
Constant	-.43 (.66)	47.53 (3.09) *	-1.98 (5.90)
Wald Chi ² /F-Statistic/F-Statistic	10.39 *	2.99 *	3.13 *
Pseudo R ² /R ² /R ²	.10	.16	.16
N	182	182	182

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed test); † $p < .05$ (one-tailed test)

Taking the "Won Office" model into account, findings in the first column shows that the COVI rank is statistically associated with the fact that the minority candidate has actually won a state-wide election. However, after testing the state electoral climate, the test of whether the minority candidate was a Democrat and the test of state electoral competition climate both show signs in the hypothesized correct direction that are not statistically significant. The following two models statistically relates all variables to the electoral minority achievement. I am therefore pleased to say that all these considerations are significant.

The significance of the COVI as a whole amazed me at this stage. According to the logit coefficient, the chance of a minority candidate winning in a 2nd-ranked state is higher than 58 %. In a state ranked 50th, this chance drops to a little more than 4%. During the time span analyzed, a standard deviation in COVI Rank was about 13 places. To further highlight the statistical importance of COVI Ranks, consider a decrease from 12th to 25th position in state ranks. In this case, the chances of winning are reduced from approximately 46 percent to 30 percent. I think the lack of electoral success for minorities and consequently descriptive representation is a very meaningful and significant reason.

With regards to the other two models, as noted, I now have some proof that being a Democrat benefits a candidate who is a minority on average. More importantly, minority candidates perform worse in statewide elections when the Electoral Competition in a state is higher. According to one explanation of this result, voters are less inclined to support a minority candidate if they believe their vote would be “wasted”. In accordance with Racial Threat Theory, White voters could be more inclined to vote for a minority candidate in a race where the minority candidate has a lower chance of winning, in part because the state has fewer two-party electoral competition.

In 2002, a Black Democrat named Stephen Benjamin ran for Attorney General in South Carolina and earned a higher percentage of the state’s vote than Al Gore won in the South Carolina presidential election in 2000. The number of votes of Benjamin were 2.63% higher than Gore. South Carolina is deemed as a Republican Party stronghold, and a vote for a minority Democrat can seem less concerning to majority White voters because they know he would not win. In fact, he does lose. Another example is former football player Damon Dunn, a Black Republican who ran in for California Secretary of State in 2010, surpassed the 2008 presidential

California performance of John McCain. Dunn was not a danger in winning in a Democratic Party stronghold, but he outperformed his political party in the state. Moreover, I will better understand why minorities perform worse in states where elections are closer on average if these events are systemic. Using the COVI Rank test and minority candidates' Own Percentage, I obtain a coefficient of .227. Remember, the COVI Rank has one standard deviation of about 13 units. With a one standard deviation shift in state rank, multiplying the coefficient by 13 predicts a 3% decrease in electoral support. The full spectrum of COVI Rank can account for around an 11% drop-in support for minority candidates ($.227 * 49$), which is clearly significant enough to warrant a difference between winning and losing.

The electoral margin coefficient is equivalent to -454. Now, a one-standard decline in COVI Rank has led to an increase in the electoral margin of nearly six percent ($-454 * 13$). Take, for example, Marquita Bradshaw's 2020 Senate run in Tennessee. The Democratic Party's candidate was defeated by Bill Haggerty(R) by a margin of 27.3%. Tennessee was ranked 46th or had the 46th most restrictive electoral climate in 2020. North Carolina was ranked 33rd in 2020 and was one standard deviation higher than Tennessee. Yvonne Lewis Holley, another Black Democrat, who ran for Lieutenant Governor received just 3.26% of the vote. According to this study, the difference in COVI rankings between Tennessee and North Carolina can account for around 6% of the difference in the electoral performance of the two Black females running for statewide office in 2020.

Scenarios of Minorities Performance

I now turn to the underrepresentation of minorities and women in state legislatures, testing if the COVI can help us better understand variation in the demographic representation of these subpopulations. Black and Latino populations have been underrepresented within

American politics ever since black men got the right to vote with the passing of the 15th Amendment in 1860s. At no time in American history that Blacks and Latinos have ever been given representation in public offices, equal to the members in the population. Yet, we know that there are Blacks and Latinos who have won state-wide office. For instance, Barack Obama was elected State Senator for Illinois. Bill Richardson became the Governor of New Mexico. So, this research attempts to better understand why under certain circumstances do Black and Latino politicians win, but often they lose. Why are Black and Latinos underrepresented? Does the restrictiveness of each state's electoral/institutional climate help explain the relative underrepresentation of minorities in government?

Well, underrepresentation of Blacks and Latinos means that they are more likely to be persecuted. Blacks and Latinos throughout American history have been met with discrimination and are disadvantaged. Racial discrimination has created barriers and obstacles that does much harm than good for them. It has not only been used by individual against Blacks and Latinos, but it has also been embedded into our institutions. They tend to lack in certain areas that other groups have more of. In looking at the discrimination that Blacks and Latinos face, these two ethnic and racial groups within our American population have lacked resources in areas such as in housing, education, and healthcare. Most importantly, the constant bias that blacks and Latinos endure makes it even harder for individuals apart of this groups. The constant negative attitudes towards Blacks and Latinos have also endured the brutal attacks from our criminal justice system that continuously mistreats them. Mass incarceration has caused a lot of Blacks and Latinos to be barred from voting making them disenfranchised.

So, when looking at Blacks and Latinos who run for statewide office, what is it to say that they too have experience these types of discrimination and biases that Blacks and Latinos

voters experience daily. It is to this point that the certain circumstances that Blacks and Latinos have been put under can have a lasting effect on Black and Latino within the political arena statewide. There are Black and Latinos that have overperformed in statewide election, but there are some that underperform in them as well. This research is essential to see how Black and Latino politicians who do run in states that make it harder to vote are met with challenges, whether they win or lose. Moreover, I know that some states are more restrictive than other states that make it easier for individuals to vote in. So, I expect that Black and Latinos will get more votes or do well if they have a good education. Most importantly, we expect that Blacks and Latinos will do well if they have previous experience in political office.

Furthermore, the state of Illinois is one of the states that makes it easier for individuals to vote in. Based on Cost of Voting Index (COVI), Illinois is considered to be a less restrictive state because Illinois is progressive. In 2004, Barack Obama won the Democratic elections for US. Senate for Illinois. He was an Illinois state senator in 1996 before becoming U.S. Senator (Drupal, 2018). He also was very educated and had a lot of experience in working within the Chicago community. He studied at Columbia University in New York City, majoring in Political Science for his undergraduate degree in 1991 (Drupal, 2018). After graduating from Columbia University, he spent some time in Chicago helping disadvantaged poor people on the South side of Chicago (Drupal, 2018). He helped to restore the living condition of those poor residents as well. Barack Obama graduated Harvard Law School with “magna cum laude” and “became the first Black student to become the “president of the Harvard Law Review” from 1990-1991(Drupal, 2018). After looking at his background, Obama in 2004 outperformed his own party in the previous president election by 14.49 percent, garnishing 70 percent in the votes in Illinois.

When a Democratic candidate ran in a state that was harder to vote in, we see a different outcome. In 2018, Stacey Abrams ran in the Georgia gubernatorial election against Republican candidate Brian Kemp and lost (ballotpedia.org, n.d). Based on COVI, Georgia is one of the few states that is more restrictive, with a COVI ranking of 38 in 2018. Abrams was able to get over 48.8 percent of the votes, which she outperforms her own party by 1.46 percent. It is very interesting to see how Abrams lost in the General elections even though she had more education and held multiple political positions. Stacey Abrams received her bachelor's degree at Spellman, an all-female HBCU in 1995(ballotpedia.org). She also got her graduate degree at the University of Texas, Austin in 1998 and her law degree at Yale Law School in 1999(ballotpedia.org, n.d). Prior to running for Governor, Stacey was elected Georgia House of Representative of District 89 in 2007 to 2017(ballotpedia.org, n.d). When Abrams saw that there was a significant number of mismanaged votes from the Secretary of State in Georgia, Abrams started the "fairfight" to make sure that all eligible voters were able to vote (Fair Fight, n.d). Democratic typically do not do well in the state of Georgia and it is a conservative state that Republican win. It is very clear based on this data presented that the state of Georgia residents is underrepresented because there is over 30.7 percent of Blacks in the state of Georgia and Abrams only got 48.8 percent of the votes during the 2018 elections.

There have been individuals that have won in states that are restrictive. In 2002, Bill Richardson won in the gubernatorial election in New Mexico. In 2002 he outperformed his own party that ran in that state in 2000 by 5.47 percent, receiving 55.5 percent of the votes in New Mexico. Even though Bill Richardson won in a state that is restrictive according to COVI, he is a popular person on all levels in government. Bill Richardson held numerous amounts of political position prior to becoming the Governor of New Mexico. Richardson was a U.S senator from

1982 to 1996(Bill Richardson, n.d). He held distinguished political position serving as the United States Ambassador to the United Nations and Secretary of Energy under Bill Clinton in 1998 to 2000(Bill Richardson, n.d). He received his bachelor's degree at Tufts University in 1970 as well as his J.D. at Tufts University Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1971(ballotpedia.org, n.d).

Additionally, in looking at how Black and Latino Republican candidate perform in states that are restrictive. In 2015, Jenean Hampton was elected the 57th Republican Lieutenant Governor of Kentucky, being the first African American women to do so (ballotpedia.org, n.d). The gubernational candidate that Hampton ran on a joint ticket with was Matt Bevin. Hampton had a good education instead of having experience in a political office. Hampton received her bachelor's degree in science, studying industrial engineering from Wayne State University in 1985(ballotpedia.org, n.d). She later received her M.B.A. at the University of Rochester (ballotpedia.org, n.d). Hampton also served in the United States Air Force for over seven years (ballotpedia.org, n.d). This is the first political position she has held and has more experience in managing packaging companies (ballotpedia.org, n.d). But she was able to get 52.5 percent of the votes in Kentucky compared to her party's performance during the presidential election in 2012, where Mitch McConnell received 61.54 percent of the votes. So, she underperformed in her party by -9.04 percent.

So, when Republican go to states that are easier to vote in, we see a different outcome. In 2004 Randy Brock Randy ran in elections for Comptroller in Vermont and won. Brock outperformed his party in this state in receiving 52.1 percent compared to the 34.81 percent in Vermont. The state of Vermont is an easier state to vote in and is ranked number 9 on the COVI scale as less restrictive. Brock had a good education and experience in He received his bachelor's

degree at Middlebury College and later received his master's degree from Yale University (Vermont General Assembly, n.d). Brock served in the United States Army as a Captain of the Military Corps and fought in the Vietnam War (Vermont General Assembly, n.d).

Finally, in 2019, Ralph Alvarado ran for lieutenant governor of Kentucky and lost in the general elections. Alvarado did not perform well in Kentucky, only getting 48.6 percent of the votes in 2015 compared to the 61.54 percent that his party got during the presidential election back in 2012. Alvarado earned his bachelor's degree in biology as well as his Medical degree in internal medicine and pediatrics from Loma Linda University in California (ballotpedia.org, n.d). He also did his residency at the University of Kentucky (ballotpedia.org, n.d). Alvarado has served as a state senator of Kentucky in 2014 as well (ballotpedia.org, n.d). He also was on many medical commission boards and was elected the first Hispanic to serve on Kentucky state General Assembly.

The Underrepresentation of Minorities and Women in State Legislatures

In particular, I wanted to know if higher COVI values, which indicate a more restricted state electoral climate, would lead to underperformance by minority candidates for state office. Since I only have one COVI value for each state in each of the seven election cycles, I concentrated on statewide races. Furthermore, I am aware that in some states, the establishment of majority-minority districts greatly enhances the likelihood of minority representation. But what about minority representation in state legislatures as a whole? Is it possible that certain states will support majority-minority districts more than others, and/or that certain states will use this approach to maximize minority votes in one district while reducing minority voting capacity in adjacent or neighboring districts? In either case, I am interested in knowing whether states

with higher COVI values have more or less minority representation within state legislatures. I could also look into the demographics of women in state legislatures to test this.

To rephrase the research question, do higher COVI values, indicating a more restrictive state electoral climate, result in fewer minority and female state legislative seats? Although I have not generally looked at gender, here I have examined if there are fewer women in the state legislatures when the cost of voting in a state is higher, since the data are widely available. Also, this is yet another category which is underrepresented in political positions in the United States. Racial Threat Theory's rationale, which leads to higher COVI values and demobilization of minorities, could actively harm women. I focus on the underrepresentation of minorities and women in 2021 and use the 2020 COVI values as my primary variable.

Since I conducted my tests in a single year, raw COVI values compared to the COVI rank are now sufficient for standardized COVI values for multi-election cycling tests. Once again, I try to analyze it in many ways to ensure that my results are not just the outcome of a specific strategic measurement. First, I measure the gap between the percentage in the minority of each state and the percentage of women in state legislatures in those groupings. In Mississippi, for example, the 2019 Census Bureau population estimates about 37.8 percent of state residents identifying as Black or African American. In 2021, Blacks held just 31.03 percent of the seats in the state legislature (40/122 in the House and 14/52 in the Senate). So, Mississippi has a 6.77 % gap in black representation. Can the COVI help us better understand these state gaps, systematically?

The following figures show the results for each subpopulation I consider. Please keep in mind that the difference in representation of African Americans with the COVI values in 2021 has been strongly positive in Figure 1. This relation is statistically relevant and shows that, in

states with higher COVI values, blacks on average are mainly under-represented. It can also be seen in the figure that there are eight American states where Black people in state legislatures are overrepresented. The 8 states are all under the horizontal line zero (0) are, Colorado, Illinois, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, and Washington. Notably, on average, six of the eight states have negative COVI values or make voting less restrictive. On the other hand, Blacks are underrepresented in the other 42 state legislatures. Arkansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, and Mississippi have more than a 5% gap. Massachusetts has a negative COVI value among those four states and remaining three states are more difficult to vote in.

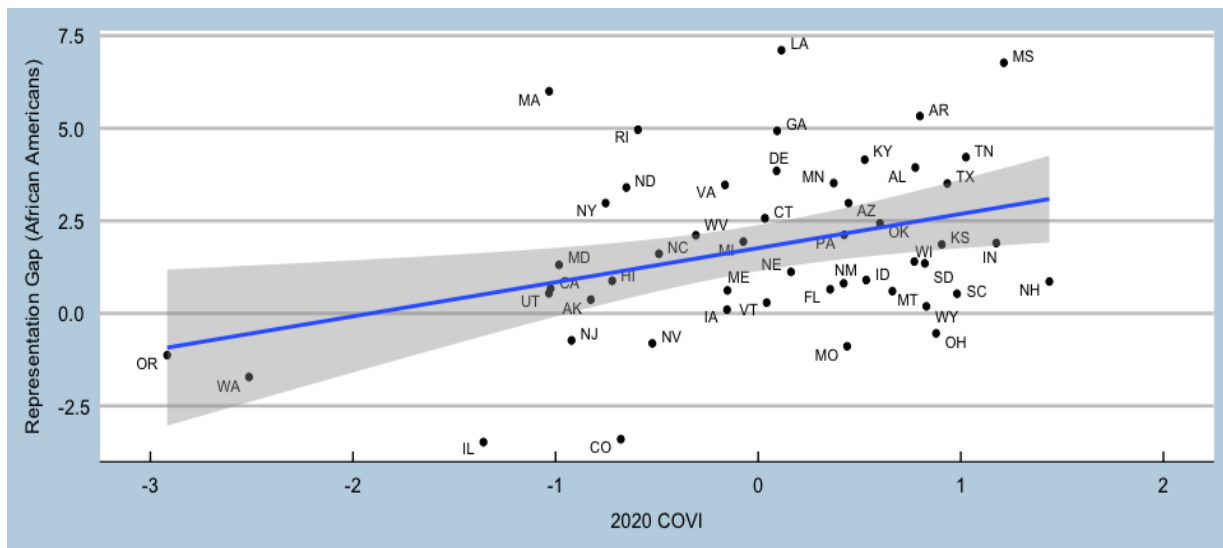


Figure 1. The 2020 COVI and the Gap between % Blacks in State Legislatures and State Black Populations in 2021

Considering the gap in Latinx representation, in Figure 1, I notice that all states are above the zero-horizontal line (0). In other words, there are no States with over-represented Latinx populations in a state legislature. The closest State is West Virginia, where only 1.7% of the citizens of the state identify as Latin American or Hispanic. About 1.49% of the state legislators (2 out of 134 total legislators) identified as Latin American or Hispanic. Particularly, West Virginia is a conservative state that has voted for the Republican Party presidential nominee in

each of the last six presidential election cycles (2000-2020), but has a negative COVI value in 2020, meaning it does have a more inclusive state electoral/institutional climate.

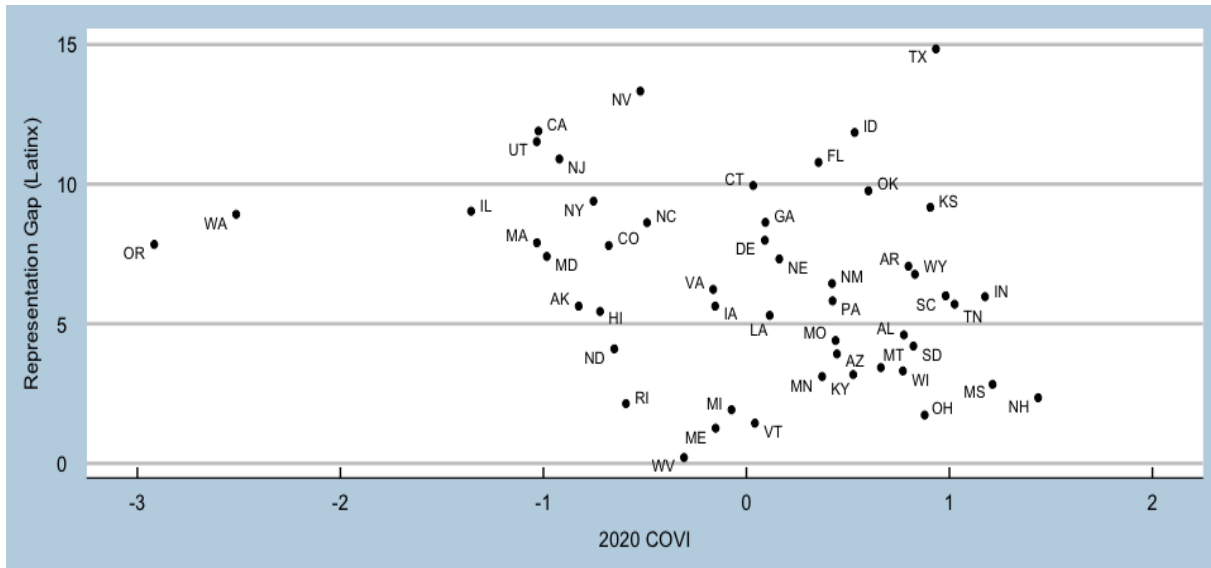


Figure 2. The 2020 COVI and the Gap between % Latinx in State Legislature and State Latinx Population in 2021

In general, there is no connection between COVI values and the Latinx representation gap. This is undeniably clarified in part by the variation in the size of state Latinx populations. In 2019, the proportion of Latinx people in each state ranges from 1.7% in West Virginia to 49.3% in New Mexico. In addition, 39.4 percent of the population in California, which is one of the easiest states to vote in, identifies as Latinx. Despite the fact that the state legislature is tiny, with just 120 seats, 33 Latinx state legislators make up 27.5 percent of the two chambers (22/80 in the state House and 11/40 in the state Senate). According to the data, there is nearly a 12-percentage-point difference (39.4 – 27.5) in representation in the state ranked sixth easiest to vote in during the 2020 election cycle. This result by itself indicates that it could be harder to close the Latinx representation gap in States with larger populations, regardless of cost of voting. Furthermore, I will exclude states with the greatest population of Latinx in order to get a better understanding of how higher costs voting compromise Latinx representation. However, as seen in Figure 2, the

state of Texas does meet the expectations. It holds the largest gap, which is has one of the higher COVI values in 2020.

In addressing the proportion of women's representation in state legislatures, as shown in Figure 3, I noticed the same trend as for African Americans. Again, a statistically relevant positive correlation is evident. In other words, the gap in the representation of women is growing as COVI values become positive. It is interesting to know that only one state within the Union has women overrepresented in a state legislature—Nevada. In 2021, 37 out of 63 in Nevada's state legislators (27/42 House and 10/21 Senate) were women. In addition, in Colorado, Maine, Oregon, Rhode Island and Washington the representation gap is less than 10 percent, which makes voting easier on average. States like Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, South Carolina, and Wyoming, which make it difficult to vote in, have among the largest gap of representation for females.

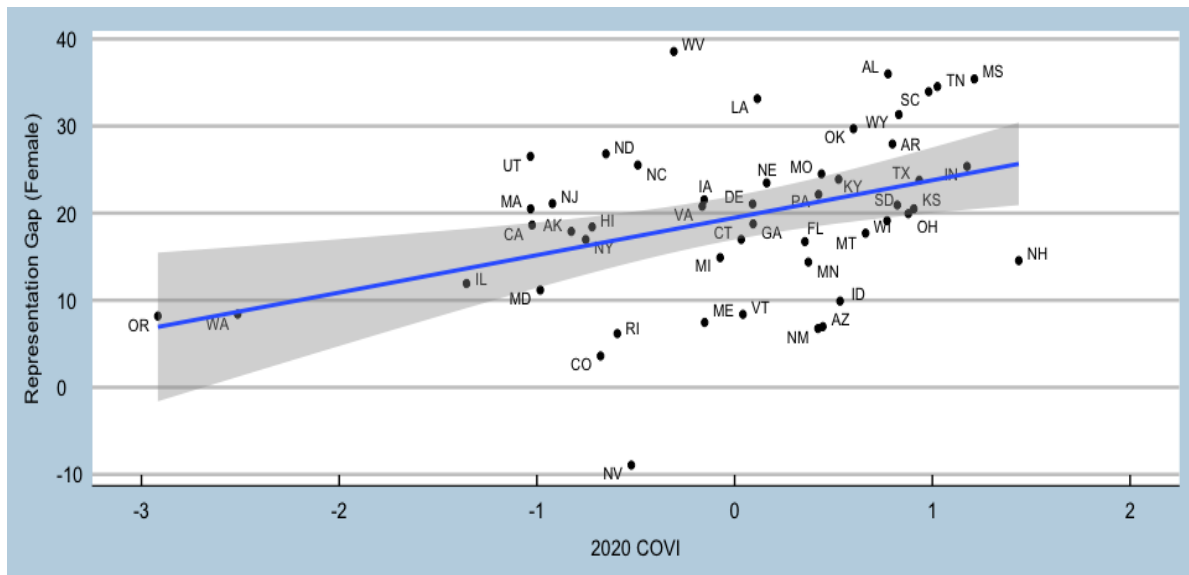


Figure 3. The 2020 COVI and Gap between the Percent Females in State Legislature and State Female Population in 2021

The scatterplots are interesting and tell an important story. However, I also want to look at the effect the cost of voting has on the raw number of representatives in state legislature when

I control for the size of minority and female population size in each state. I use the proportional size of the Black, Latinx, and Female delegation in each legislature in 2021. I combine the representatives from the two chambers, add the two chamber sizes, and do the division to obtain the proportion of each group and then multiple by 100 to obtain *% Black Legislators*, *% Latinx Legislators*, and *%Female Legislators*. These become my three dependent variables. My key explanatory variable is each state's 2020 COVI value. I use the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 population estimates for each group as an important control variable. I expect that as the state's *Black Population* and *Latinx Population* rises as a percentage of all state residents, so will their representation in the state legislature. Although there are some variations in *female populations*, I do not foresee enough variation to establish a statistically significant relation in this case.⁴

In these models, I also account for the Squire Index, a measure of legislative professionalism. Since I am just doing a cross-sectional analysis and not comparing it over time, I can use the raw index values in this case. Greater legislative professionalism is correlated with higher raw scores. I therefore expect a more positive association and a better representation of minorities and women. I use Squire Index values for 2015 in particular (Squire 2017). As a substitute or surrogate for the state culture, I have used legislative professionalism. Regardless of the cost of voting, I assume that more elite-led amateur legislatures would have less minorities and women. I learned that more traditional state cultures, indicated by higher Squire Index ranks, help explain COVI values. So, to ensure that the COVI does not pick up any of the explanatory power of legislative professionalism, I include this variable in the models.

According to the findings in Table 4, the COVI is statistically relevant in both the African American and Female models. I obtain a coefficient of $-.736$ in the first model, which examines

⁴ The state, in 2019, with the largest female population is Alabama where 51.7% of residents are women and the state with the lowest percentage of women is Alaska with 47.9%.

the impact of the cost of voting on Black representation in state legislatures. The COVI range for 2020 is between -2.92 to -1.44 or 4.36. Taking that into account, I see a decrease of more than 3 percent of the Black representation in the entire COVI range. The decline for females (Column 3) is slightly more than one percent ($-.251 * 4.36$). However, when I look at the central model that tries to clarify the representation of Latinx in state legislatures, COVI does not affect or depress the percentage of Latinx state legislators. The sizes of the African American and Latin American population of each state explains a significant difference in the representation of legislators from each group. For example, these states are not electing minority lawmakers, in states like Maine, Vermont or Wyoming, where minority populations are very little. Other states with higher minority populations have a higher percentage of minorities in the state legislature as predicted.

Table 4.
The 2020 COVI and the Percentage of Minorities and Female State Legislators in 2021

Model: Ordinary Least Squares Regression

	% African American Legislators	% Latinx Legislators	% Female Legislators
	Coefficient (s.e.)	Coefficient (s.e.)	Coefficient (s.e.)
2020 COVI	-.736 (.342) *	.637 (.458)	-.251 (.099) *
Black Population	.895 (.230) *		
Latinx Population		.806 (.039) *	
Female Population			-.849 (1.657)
Squire Index	.251 (2.927)	.690 (4.085)	2.344 (13.799)
Constant	-.641 (.754)	-4.280 (.996) *	79.854 (82.664)
F-Statistic	305.53 *	158.11 *	3.13
Adjusted R ²	.95	.91	.12
N	50	50	50

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed test)

It is important to note that the two minority groups are treated separately in this study.

There are states such as California and New Mexico that have larger Latinx population but

were far below the average African American populations. Other states such as Mississippi and Louisiana have relatively large populations of African Americans but very small populations within Latinx communities. The control variables return coefficients that are very high in comparison to the standard error (s.e.), implying a very close match or association between the population variables and the percent of legislators from each group. The Squire Index of legislative professionalism always returns a positive association, as expected, but it is not statistically significant. In looking at a simple bivariate relationship between the Squire index and my three dependent variables, it appears that there are more minorities and women in state legislatures with above-average professionalism ratings. The bivariate relationship is approaching statistical significance in the case of females, and it is statistically important in the case of Latinx in state legislatures (Pearson $R = .28$ $p < .05$, two-tailed, $n = 50$).

In order to further examine the relationship between COVI 2020 and Latin Americans and Hispanics in state legislatures, I exclude the relatively large Latinx populations. Over the last few decades, the growth of the Latinx community in the United States has been substantial (Passel, Cohn, and Lopez, 2011). A number of states have received a large number of new residents from Latin American countries, possibly because they were welcoming or even because there were more jobs. The Latinx population is much higher than normal and has grown even more recently in states like Colorado and Nevada. Latinx representation in these state legislatures, presumably, has not yet caught up. This may be particularly the case as a result of a delay in citizenship and the possibility of running for election. When I consider all 50 American states, states like Colorado and Nevada, which have both lower-than-average COVI values in 2020 and fewer Latinx state legislators, prevent the statistically negative relationship from materializing. But what if I consider a subset of states? When examining the inter-state

distribution of the Latinx population, a natural break occurs at 15%. Also, 38 states have less than 15% Latinx people and 12 states have more. I then examine the COVI's potential role in the 38 states where Latinx are a "truer" minority community.

The results are shown in Table 5. If I were given a one-tailed statistical test, the COVI 2020 it would now be negatively linked to the percentage of state legislative seats that Latinx people occupy. The entire COVI 2020 range is -1.44 (Oregon) - 2.91 (New Hampshire) or approximately 4.35. The 38 states with less than 15 percent of Latinx population are Oregon and New Hampshire. The 2020 COVI test as stated in Table 5 yields a factor of -.395. This means that, on average, New Hampshire is expected to have approximately 2% fewer Latinx representatives within their state legislature than Oregon (-.395 * 4.35), all the rest being equivalent. Furthermore, the Squire Index is now statistically related to higher representation in Latin American and Hispanic representation in state legislatures around the board and states with higher Latinx populations, and also has a large number of Latinx lawmakers in the state legislatures.

Table 5.
The Percentage of Latinx State Legislators and the COVI in 2021:
State Population Less than 15 Percent of the Total

Model: Ordinary Least Squares Regression

	% Latinx Legislators
	Coefficient (s.e.)
2020 COVI	-.395 (.228) ^t
Latinx Population	.215 (.058) *
Squire Index	4.448 (2.152) *
Constant	-.646 (.636)
F-Statistic	14.03
Adjusted R ²	.51
N	50

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed test); ^t $p < .05$ (one-tailed test)

Conclusion

In general, I searched for explanations for the increase in state election restrictions. I discovered that the role of Republican Party (GOP) control of the state legislature was not as obvious as first. In both chambers of State legislatures, there are some states (Montana, North Dakota, and Utah) with a comfortable Republican majority that are not on average correlated with increased electoral restrictions during the course of the study. However, I notice more restrictions when I combine GOP influence over state electoral laws within black communities and in the increasing Latinx community. I suspect certain variations of the Racial Threat Theory may clarify this finding. I found it, especially for Latin American and Asian Americans where barriers between language and culture are more evident. However, I have learned that in states where the Black population is rising the fastest, GOP control of the state legislature and being Black both serve to reduce reported voter turnout. In this report, I expand the review to explore the impact of COVI on minority candidates running for state offices, while also testing the gap in representation of state legislators of minorities and women. I have also found that the electoral climate has become more conservative in order to reduce the representation of these particularly underrepresented groups.

I evaluate the electoral performance of minority's candidates in three ways, and I found a more restrictive state electoral climates associated with lower minority electoral success. Moreover, not only is the decline in the likelihood of winning important statistically, but it is also really significant. Moving from the most difficult state to vote in to the easiest to state vote in, reduces the likelihood of winning from approximately 58 to 4 percent, according to this study. I also learn that in states with more conservative voting laws the representation deficit in the state

legislatures is wider, given that the state's population is less than 15% Latinx. Moreover, in a more restrictive electoral climate, I see that the representativeness gap for female representatives is even greater, and this is the case with state legislative professionalism, which allows others to understand the proportionate representation of women and minorities in state legislatures.

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