Are There Winners and Losers? Race, Ethnicity, and California's Initiative Process

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Foreword

The emergent majority-minority population of California has changed the face of state politics. Or has it? Pundits, politicians, and pollsters alike are all trying to understand the most dramatic demographic transformation in American history. Thirty years ago, non-Hispanic whites were nearly 80 percent of the state's population. Today they are less than 50 percent, and demographers predict that whites will constitute roughly 30 percent of the total 30 years from now. Demographic swings of this magnitude are virtually unheard of, and no state of California's size and importance has undergone a population change of comparable scale. Once again, California is a trendsetter for the nation, and once again, the trends raise more questions than they answer.

Zoltan Hajnal and Hugh Louch tackle one of the most pressing questions for nonwhite groups in California: Is the initiative process delivering public policy decisions that are consistent with their preferences and interests? In *Are There Winners and Losers? Race, Ethnicity, and California's Initiative Process,* the authors assess whether whites have dominated the initiative process at the expense of Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans. This question is even more important in light of the popular belief that key public policy decisions are best left to voters and the initiative process than to elected representatives in Sacramento. The PPIC Statewide Survey shows that over 75 percent of the population surveyed prefers the initiative process to Sacramento decisionmakers—and that percentage holds true for Latinos as well. If many have embraced the initiative process, even with its faults, how well does that process serve everyone's interests?

The authors find that for all initiatives over the last 20 years, blacks, Latinos, and Asians have roughly the same probability as whites of voting on the "winning side" of an initiative. Given the higher voter participation rates for whites, this is a remarkable finding. To quote the

authors, "In general, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos have been successful when voting on initiatives . . . our data suggest that whites and nonwhites agree much more regularly than they disagree. Moreover, each racial and ethnic group is usually divided over which initiatives to support and which to oppose. Both of these patterns substantially reduce any bias in outcomes."

For initiatives that focus on race and ethnicity—including propositions dealing with undocumented immigrants, affirmative action, and bilingual education—the probabilities of winning change significantly. Latinos and Asian Americans had considerably lower chances than whites of voting on the winning side of these issues. What can we do about this pattern? The authors point out that raising the bar to require a supermajority for passing initiatives—thereby putting minority groups in a stronger position to block them—may well be counterproductive in instances where these groups wish to pass their own initiatives.

The authors mention, but do not dwell on, a related issue that may become more important in the near future. Among those eligible to vote, Latinos and Asian Americans in California have a history of lower voter participation rates than whites. Higher participation in the voting process might well provide the best antidote to initiatives that racial and ethnic minority groups find unfair or punitive. Whether through publicly supported programs or private campaigns, a "get-out-the-vote" strategy could increase civic participation and even offset initiatives that target minority groups. The encouraging news from this report is that the initiative process is working reasonably well with current voting patterns and participation rates. Higher turnout by nonwhite voters could take out some of the wrinkles that still remain.

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Summary

California relies heavily on direct democracy to make major policy decisions. Since 1970, the number of initiatives per ballot has almost tripled, and recently voters have used direct democracy to decide the fate of school vouchers, drug policy, property taxes, environmental regulation, and other important issues. Campaign spending on initiatives far outweighs spending on congressional elections in the state, and some observers have argued that direct democracy is quickly replacing the state legislature as the most important law-making institution in the state.

This growing reliance on direct democracy has raised concerns about the role of race and ethnicity in the initiative process. Although non-Hispanic whites are no longer a majority of California's population, they still constitute nearly two-thirds of the voters in initiative elections. The winner-take-all nature of these elections means that a white majority could pass major initiatives over the objections of other racial and ethnic groups. Critics point to initiatives on restricting bilingual education, ending affirmative action, and cutting services to illegal immigrants as a sign that the white electoral majority is using direct democracy to target the state's growing nonwhite population.

Given this increasing reliance on the initiative process and concerns about its biases, it is worth asking how the outcomes of direct democracy have reflected the preferences of voters across racial and ethnic groups. Who are the winners and losers in California's initiative elections?[1] Have whites dominated at the expense of Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans? In this report, we answer these and other questions by analyzing voting patterns in initiative elections over the last 20 years.

[1]Throughout the report, we use the term white to refer to non-Hispanic whites. Latino is used to indicate anyone of Hispanic origin. African American and black are used interchangeably. We use Asian American to refer to those who describe themselves as Asian American or Asian.

Specifically, we calculate the likelihood that voters from different racial, ethnic, and demographic groups voted for the winning side on all initiatives during that period. We also calculate the same likelihood on three subsets of initiatives:

- Those that directly target or focus on nonwhite groups,
- Those that feature issues that nonwhite voters say are important to them, and
- Those on which nonwhite groups have a clear preference.

Finally, we look for changes over time in the outcomes of direct democracy in California.

Beyond this focus on who wins and loses, this report also examines patterns underlying the vote. The initiative vote offers a unique opportunity to learn more about the major divisions and coalitions that exist within California's electorate. Using the vote, we measure not only the degree to which the interests of white and nonwhite voters differ but also the level of unity within each racial and ethnic group.

To measure interests and outcomes in direct democracy, we focus primarily on a series of 17 *Los Angeles Times* exit polls that queried voters on 45 initiatives between 1978 and 2000. The data contain over 170,000 person-votes over these two decades. We supplement this information with analysis of a series of pre-election polls conducted by the Field Institute. These polls asked respondents about their preferences on 131 propositions over the same period. To further test the accuracy of our data, we compare these results to analysis of actual voting records at the precinct level.

No single statement accurately encapsulates these outcomes. Rather, a series of distinct findings emerge from the analysis. First, we find little evidence of major bias against any group when we consider the entire array of initiatives during this period. Every racial, ethnic, and demographic group that we examine wound up on the winning side of direct democracy almost as often as every other group. Moreover, each group won regularly. Nonwhite voters were marginally less successful than whites, but the majority of each group voted for the winning side more often than not. The probability that blacks and Latinos voted for

the winning side was 59 percent. The comparable figures for Asian Americans and whites were 60 percent and 62 percent, respectively.

Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans also tended to obtain their preferred outcomes on the issues they say they cared about most. Whites, blacks, and Asian Americans were equally likely to vote for the winning side on these issues (59 percent), whereas Latinos were somewhat less successful, winning 52 percent of the time. Finally, all three nonwhite groups fared reasonably well when they voted as a group and had clear preferences. When they voted cohesively, the probability that blacks and Latinos won was about 60 percent; for Asian Americans and whites the comparable figure was almost 65 percent.

When race and ethnicity itself was an important part of an initiative, however, nonwhite voters fared poorly compared to whites. On minority-focused issues such as affirmative action, illegal immigration, and bilingual education, whites had a nearly 64 percent chance of voting for the winning side, whereas the comparable figure for Latinos was 32 percent. (African Americans had a 57 percent chance of voting for the winning side and Asian Americans a 48 percent chance on these same initiatives.)

Given that Latinos will likely continue to be a minority of the state's voters for decades to come, the gap between white and Latino success rates on minority-focused initiatives is unlikely to disappear in the near future. Trends over time are also somewhat disconcerting. Latinos voters have fared marginally worse in recent years than previously, and there is some evidence of a growing Latino-white divide in voting patterns and greater Latino unity over time. If these trends continue or accelerate, relations between the two groups could deteriorate.

The biggest change in initiative outcomes has less to do with race and ethnicity than with how the left and right of the political spectrum have fared. Liberals and Democrats have gone from being regular winners in the 1980s to disproportionate losers in the 1990s. Before 1990, Democrats and Republicans were equally likely to vote for the winning side (62 percent), but since then Democrats have been 2 percent less likely than Republicans to vote for the winning side, and self-identified liberals have slid 6 percentage points over the last two decades.

In the end, these results probably say more about the interests of and divisions among racial and ethnic groups than they do about direct democracy. In general, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos have been successful when voting on initiatives. In many cases, the key to this success has been agreement on the issues across racial and ethnic groups. Our data suggest that whites and nonwhites agree much more regularly than they disagree. Moreover, each racial and ethnic group is usually divided over which initiatives to support and which to oppose. Both of these patterns substantially reduce any bias in outcomes.

Given these mixed findings, it is difficult to offer clear policy prescriptions. Requiring a two-thirds majority to pass initiatives would effectively give nonwhites veto power, but this change would thwart even those initiatives favored by majorities within each group. As long as white and nonwhite voters continue to agree on most issues, it will be difficult to protect nonwhite voters on the few initiatives that target them without making it more difficult for these same voters to obtain their preferred outcomes on other initiatives.

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1. Introduction

Direct democracy plays a central role in the governance of the state of California. In virtually every statewide election, major policy decisions are made at the ballot box. In the last decade alone, California's voters used the initiative to help decide the fate of issues as meaningful and diverse as affirmative action, tax policy, educational resources, redistricting, and criminal sentencing. Overall in the 1990s, Californians voted on 62 initiatives and passed 24 of them. Both figures set records.

For proponents and opponents of these initiatives, all of this is very big business. Initiative campaign spending now far outweighs spending on congressional elections in the state. As Peter Schrag has noted, the initiative "has not just been integrated into the regular governmental-political system, but has begun to replace it" (1996, p. 2).

This heavy reliance on direct democracy raises some important concerns about how well racial and ethnic minorities fare in the system.[1] As the initiative grows in importance and Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans grow in number, it becomes more critical to determine exactly what effect the use of the initiative has on these often disadvantaged groups.

This question has raised a tremendous amount of debate but as of yet no clear answer. There are reasons to suspect that direct democracy hurts minority interests. The majoritarian, winner-take-all nature of the

[1]California has just become a majority-minority state, meaning that no single racial or ethnic group is a simple majority of the state's population. However, non-Hispanic whites still constitute the vast majority of voters in statewide elections. In this sense, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans are still minorities. Given the difference between the voting and actual population and the historical view of whites as the dominant majority group in American politics, we refer to blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans as minorities throughout the report. Throughout the report, we use the term white to refer to non-Hispanic whites. Latino is used to indicate anyone of Hispanic origin. African American and black are used interchangeably. We use Asian American to refer to those who describe themselves as Asian American or Asian.

initiative vote means that a white voting majority can pass initiatives over the objections of other racial and ethnic groups. Because Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans together constitute less than a third of registered voters in the state, they could all vote against an initiative and it could still pass (Guinier, 1994; Magleby, 1984; Gunn, 1981; Bell, 1978).

This concern with direct democracy can be traced back to the founding fathers. James Madison feared that policy would be "too often decided, not according to the rule of justice and the rights of the minor party but by the superior force of an interested and overbearing majority" (Hamilton et al., 1961, p. 77). These concerns have occasionally become reality. In 1920, California voters approved a constitutional amendment that effectively barred Japanese aliens from owning land. In 1946, Californians voted down Proposition 11, an initiative that would have prohibited discrimination in employment on the basis of "color, national origin and ancestry." The issue of employment was replaced by housing in 1964. That year, after a highly charged and heavily financed campaign, two-thirds of Californians voted to rescind a fair housing act that outlawed racial discrimination in the housing market. California's voters also repealed a measure that sought to achieve racial and ethnic integration in public schools in 1972.

In recent years, three highly controversial initiatives sparked widespread concern that racial and ethnic minorities are under attack (Schrag, 1998; Cain et al., 1996; Maharidge, 1996; Tolbert and Hero, 1996).[2] Proposition 187, which sought to reduce social services such as public education, welfare, and health services to illegal immigrants, passed in November 1994. Proposition 209 followed four years later, eliminating affirmative action programs in public education, government hiring, and contracting. In June 1998, California's voters passed Proposition 227, a measure designed to restrict bilingual education

[2]Several scholars have studied the effects of direct democracy on racial and ethnic minorities outside California. Gamble (1997) demonstrated that the civil rights of minorities have been regularly attacked through the initiative process in a number of American states. Yet others have found that the detrimental effects on minorities are much more limited (Gerber and Hug, 1999; Gerber, 1999b; Donovan and Bowler, 1998; Frey and Goette, 1998; Cronin, 1989). These studies focused almost exclusively on a small set of explicitly racial focused propositions and none used actual voting behavior to test whether racial and ethnic minorities had their preferences met.

programs in the state. Critics see these three initiatives as evidence that a white majority is using direct democracy to successfully target and overwhelm a growing nonwhite population.

At the same time, there are reasons to suspect that racial and ethnic minorities could use the initiative vote to their advantage. If racial and ethnic minorities vote as a bloc, there is a possibility that they will cast the deciding votes on initiatives that win or lose by narrow margins. Given that one-quarter of all initiatives pass or fail by less than 10 percent of the total vote, a large bloc of racial and ethnic minority voters could exert considerable influence (California Secretary of State, 1994). Minority voters could also use the initiative to set the policy agenda. By qualifying and putting forward their own initiatives, racial and ethnic minority groups could focus attention on policy arenas that would benefit them the most.[3]

Evidence of both possibilities has not been systematically assembled, but proponents of the initiative process can point to a number of progressive outcomes throughout the history of direct democracy in California and elsewhere. Among other things, the initiative has been used to raise the minimum wage, expand women's suffrage, and increase spending on public education.

Proponents of the initiative process can also point to widespread public support for direct democracy. Despite the debate surrounding direct democracy, most Californians believe strongly in the merits of the citizens' initiative process. When asked about the best way to address important problems facing the state today, over three-quarters of all Californians choose the initiative over the governor and the state legislature (see Table 1.1). And it is not just white Californians who like the system. Latinos and African Americans are more supportive of the initiative process than whites. California's racial and ethnic minorities readily admit that direct democracy has shortcomings, but little in their views makes us believe that direct democracy has hurt their interests.[4]

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[3]Some have made the criticism that a particular minority—that is, wealthy Californians—dominate this process (Broder, 2000; Berg and Holman, 1987).

[4]Most minorities (and whites) feel that many propositions are too complicated to understand and most agree that proposition outcomes tend to reflect the will of special interests more than of ordinary individuals. Most blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans

Table 1.1

Initiatives Are Popular with All Racial and Ethnic Groups

Best way to address California's problems?	White	Asian	Latino	Black
Citizen's initiatives	76	73	83	92
Governor/legislature	24	27	18	8

SOURCE: PPIC Statewide Survey, January 2000.

Initiatives: A Growing Concern

This debate is by no means an idle one. In each election, citizens make critical decisions on a wide variety of initiatives. Since direct democracy was enshrined in the state's constitution in 1911, Californians have decided the fate of 271 initiatives (and well over 1,000 propositions in total, including legislative constitutional amendments and bonds). Almost half of these statewide initiatives were placed on the ballot in the past 30 years. The 1990s alone account for almost a quarter of all of the initiatives Californians have ever voted on (see Figure 1.1).

There has also been an enormous increase in the amount of money spent on these campaigns. Average spending on state propositions more than doubled in the last three decades (Gerber, 1999a). In November 1998 alone, nearly $200 million was spent on proposition campaigns

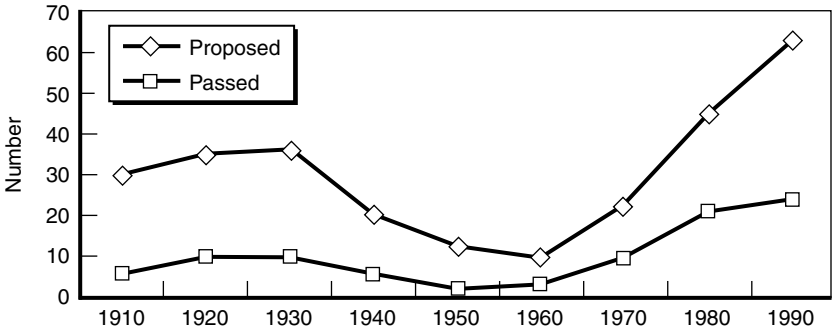

Figure 1.1—Initiatives Proposed and Passed, by Decade

would also support a move to a two-thirds majority vote requirement to pass initiatives, and most blacks and Latinos support a limit on the number of propositions per ballot (from analysis of Field Poll surveys in 1982 and 1997).

including one $89 million campaign on Indian gaming (Gerber, 1999b). A whole industry has developed around initiatives. Proposition supporters and opponents typically pay large firms to gather signatures to qualify initiatives, hire pollsters and media consultants to shape the campaigns, and shower huge sums of money on television stations and other media outlets to get their message across to the voters.

The end result is that direct democracy is playing an increasingly central role in public policy in the state. Over the past 85 years, Californians passed only 91 initiatives—a small number compared to the vast output of the legislature—but the bulk of those came in the last few decades. The 24 initiatives that Californians passed in the 1990s accounted for approximately one-quarter of changes to state laws and amendments to the constitution enacted by initiatives since direct democracy was introduced in California.

Goals of the Study

This report examines how racial and ethnic minority voters fare in direct democracy in California. To what extent does the white majority dominate outcomes at the expense of blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans? Have nonwhite voters been able to use the initiative to set the agenda and gain disproportionate influence? We answer these questions by looking systematically at voting across the whole array of issues addressed through direct democracy to see if there is a systematic bias in outcomes against any particular racial or ethnic group. In short, we analyze who wins and who loses and how often they win and lose.

Examining all types of initiatives on the ballot in California may cast too wide a net, however. Many initiatives on the ballot may be of marginal importance to racial and ethnic minority voters. In addition to analyzing all initiatives, we conduct analyses limited to initiatives on topics that matter most to Latinos, Asian Americans, or African Americans. We examine three subsets of initiatives in greater detail: (1) initiatives that directly target or focus on racial and ethnic minorities, (2) initiatives on issues that minority voters say are the most important to them, and (3) initiatives where racial and ethnic minorities vote with a clear preference.

Beyond this focus on who wins and loses, the study examines underlying patterns in the vote. The initiative vote offers an opportunity to learn more about the major divisions and coalitions that exist within California's electorate. We measure the extent to which the interests of white and nonwhite voters are opposed and assess divisions within each racial and ethnic group. Do Latinos, Asian Americans, African Americans, or whites vote as a cohesive group or are each of these racial and ethnic groups divided in their policy preferences? For each of these questions, we examine differences among issue areas and changes over time.

This study examines initiatives put on the ballot in California from 1978 to 2000. The data used for this study come primarily from a series of 15 *Los Angeles Times* exit polls taken during even-year primary and general elections. Each exit poll contains a representative sample of over 4,000 voters and provides a fairly accurate snapshot of the election results.

Format of the Report

The remainder of the report is organized as follows. Chapter 2 lays the groundwork for the subsequent analyses by showing how we translate individual votes on specific initiatives into a measure of a group's propensity to vote with the winning side across the range of initiatives. Chapter 3 reports success rates for each racial and ethnic group on minority-focused initiatives. Chapter 4 examines outcomes for racial and ethnic groups as well as for other demographic groups across all initiatives. It also focuses on two subsets of initiatives: (1) initiatives on issues of importance to minorities, and (2) initiatives where minorities indicate a clear preference. Chapter 5 gauges how much white and nonwhite voters disagree over policy and to what extent each racial and ethnic group votes as a bloc. Chapter 6 examines how outcomes have changed over time and probes possible changes we might expect in the future. The study concludes with a discussion of the implications of our results for understanding direct democracy in California and possible policy considerations.

2. Research Approach

California has just become the nation's first large majority-minority state, meaning that whites make up less than 50 percent of the population. By the year 2020, half of the state's population is expected to be Latino and Asian American.[1] By 2040, Latinos are expected to be nearly a majority of the state's population. Although these developments could radically alter voting outcomes in the state, they have yet to be reflected in the state's electorate.

At present, California's electorate does not accurately reflect the state's diversity. Despite being only about half of the state's population, whites make up 68 percent of the voters (Baldassare, 2000). [2] Latinos are well behind with only 19 percent of the electorate, and blacks and Asian Americans follow with 6 and 7 percent, respectively (Baldassare, 2000).[3]

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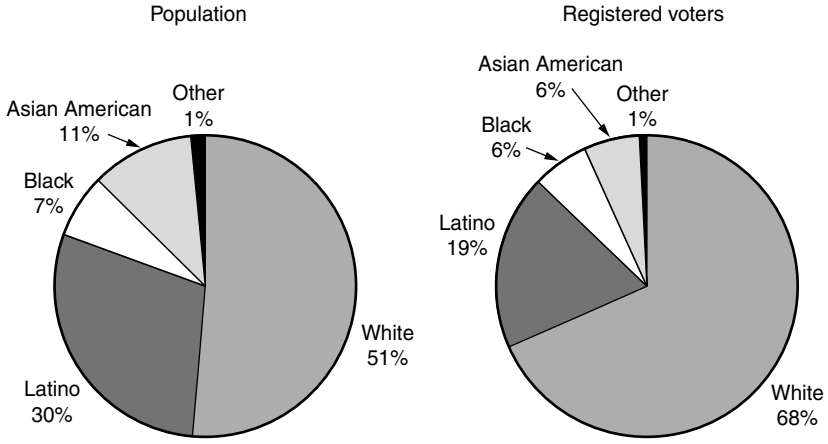
[1]Throughout the report, we use the term white to refer to non-Hispanic whites. Latino is used to indicate anyone of Hispanic origin. African American and black are used interchangeably. We use Asian American to refer to those who describe themselves as Asian American or Asian.

[2]Lack of citizenship, lower socioeconomic resources, and several other factors serve to greatly reduce nonwhite voter participation (Hajnal and Baldassare, 2001; Uhlaner et al., 1989). The large discrepancy between white voter turnout and nonwhite voter turnout has remained fairly constant over the last three decades with only minimal fluctuation from election to election. The black-white gap has hovered around 10 percentage points, whereas the Asian American–white and Latino-white gap has been closer to 20 percentage points (based on turnout of eligible population) (Reyes, 2001). In response to Proposition 187, Latino naturalization rates did, however, increase significantly in the state (Pantoja and Segura, 2000).

[3]California's electorate is skewed by other factors besides race. Voters are also disproportionately older and wealthier than the rest of the public. In 1998, those over 55 years of age made up 30 percent of all voters. In contrast, this age group was only 9 percent of the unregistered population. Similarly, those with incomes over $40,000 made up 58 percent of all voters and only 35 percent of the unregistered population (Baldassare, 2000). As Lee notes, "the vote on initiatives reflects the popular will of only a portion of the citizenry" (1997, p. 125).

Figure 2.1 shows the racial and ethnic breakdown of the population as a whole and of registered voters in 1998.[4]



SOURCE: Baldassare (2000).

Figure 2.1—Ethnic and Racial Composition of California's Population and Registered Voters

A Hypothetical Vote: Majority Control

This large white voting majority gives whites, at least theoretically, the ability to determine the outcome of each and every initiative on the ballot. The hypothetical vote displayed in Table 2.1 illustrates one possible scenario through which white voters could decide the outcome of the vote. If 80 percent of all white voters support an initiative, the initiative will pass regardless of minority preferences. Even if every member of all three major minority groups voted against the initiative, the white vote would be enough to approve the initiative by a margin of 54 percent to 46 percent.

This hypothetical vote is exactly what critics of the initiative process fear. They argue that direct democracy gives too much power to the majority and too little power to minorities. The winner-take-all nature

[4]Population and voting population numbers for Figure 2.1 are for 1998 and are taken from Reyes (2001).

Table 2.1

A Hypothetical Vote: Majority Tyranny

Race	% in Favor	Outcome
White	80	
Black	0	Passes with 54%
Latino	0	
Asian	0	

of the vote means that a white majority can trample the rights and interests of racial and ethnic minorities. As Patricia Gunn puts it, the initiative "often precludes meaningful participation by minority groups" (1981, p. 141).

Hypothetical Vote: Minority Control

Although we should be concerned that the white majority might trample the rights of minorities through direct democracy, the outcome in Table 2.1 is clearly an extreme example. Another possibility is illustrated in Table 2.2. Here white voters are evenly divided between support and opposition of a particular initiative. In this case, the minority vote determines the outcome. Even if only 51 percent of minority voters oppose the initiative, it will fail. This second hypothetical vote is just one of many middle-of-the-road scenarios, but it clearly illustrates that white tyranny is by no means an automatic outcome of direct democracy in California.

Table 2.2

A Hypothetical Vote: Minority Control

Race	% in Favor	Outcome
White	50	
Black	60	Passes with 53%
Latino	60	
Asian	60	

Necessary Conditions for Majority Control

Although most voters are white in any given election, two conditions are necessary for the white majority to control initiative elections. First,

whites must vote as a unified bloc. If whites are divided, then minorities can determine the outcome. Even if 60 percent of all white voters support an initiative, minority voters can still vote as a bloc and prevent that initiative from passing.[5]

Second, white and nonwhite voters must have opposing preferences. In the hypothetical votes outlined above, the interests of whites and nonwhites differed. But this need not be the case. If Latinos, blacks, and Asian Americans support the same kinds of policies that white voters prefer, no one group can be in control. Most members of every racial and ethnic group will simply prefer the outcome.

Even in California, with its skewed, largely white electorate, white majority control is far from automatic. How much whites win and how much Latinos, blacks, and Asian Americans lose will depend greatly on how unified the white vote is and how much white and nonwhites disagree over what policies to pursue.

Measuring Winners and Losers

One could think about measuring winners and losers in direct democracy in different ways. One might want to directly measure the economic, social, and psychological effect of a given initiative on a particular minority group. For example, if the median household income of Asian Americans goes up as a result of the passage of a particular initiative, then Asian Americans should be considered winners.

In practice, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to make these kinds of inferences. What effect, for example, did Proposition 13, the famous tax limitation initiative, have on the Asian American community? Initiatives are not passed in a static environment. Many factors, such as national economic conditions, affect Asian American income at the same time. Moreover, we might be concerned about the effects of this initiative on the educational achievement or quality of life of a particular group—factors that are even more difficult to calculate. Also, Asian Americans are an extremely diverse group. Japanese families who have

[5]The outcome also depends on how unified the nonwhite vote is. The more that Latinos, blacks, and Asian Americans can vote as a bloc, the more likely they will be to influence the outcome of the vote.

lived in California for generations often live in very different circumstances than newly arrived, poor Filipino families. Policies that benefit one segment of the Asian American community in one location might have negative consequences for another segment of the community in another location. This increases the difficulty of determining winners and losers in any straightforward way.

What we can do, however, is examine individual voting behavior. Does a particular individual from a particular group support or oppose a given initiative? With the vote, we have a measure of an individual's preference on each initiative. We can compare the individual vote with the actual outcome to determine who votes for the winning side of a given initiative. Did an individual vote in favor of an initiative that ultimately failed? If so, his or her preferences were not met and he or she clearly "lost" that vote. If the individual voted against an initiative that failed, however, his or her preferences were met and he or she can be considered a "winner." The starting point for this analysis is a simple calculation of whether each voter voted with the side that won on a given initiative.

Concerns with Using the Vote

By focusing on voting patterns in initiative ballot elections, we can accurately assess how well racial and ethnic minority voters have fared across a wide array of initiatives. However, this focus on the vote is not without its costs and concerns.

One concern is that voters may not know what is truly in their own best interests. Critics of the initiative process claim that voters often have very little knowledge about particular initiatives and are confused or manipulated by expensive media campaigns (California Commission on Campaign Finance, 1992). Moreover, initiatives can be extremely complicated and have unintended consequences.

Although there is truth to these claims, evidence suggests that voters are often able to use informational shortcuts to avoid many of these problems (Lupia, 1994). Voters need only know who is endorsing and opposing a particular initiative to decide whether they should vote for or against that initiative. Extensive analysis indicates that voters are able to

determine the side of the vote that best fulfills their interests (Bowler and Donovan, 1998).

Another concern is that certain voters, especially minority voters, may not be given a meaningful choice. The issues that actually make it to the statewide ballot may be totally unrelated to the issues that certain groups care about. Control over the initiative agenda by whites, the wealthy, or others would restrict the issues that arise and limit the options that voters have. This does not appear to be the case in California. Both the variety of groups that have sponsored initiatives in California and the wide array of issues put on the ballot suggest that access to the initiative process is not limited to the most wealthy segments of the state. It is certain, however, that wealth helps for qualifying ballot initiatives.

By looking directly at the outcome of the vote and at the question of who wins and who loses, we inevitably overlook other important elements of the initiative process. In particular, we have no way to assess the indirect effect of initiatives on minorities (see, especially, Gerber and Hug, 1999). It may be that the possibility of new initiatives encourages legislators to enact pro- or anti-minority policies that they would not otherwise put forward.

This research also puts aside the issue of nonimplementation (Gerber et al., 2000). Several of the high-profile anti-minority initiatives in California have been either overturned in the courts (i.e., Proposition 187) or not equally implemented across different jurisdictions (i.e., Proposition 227). Thus, actual policy outcomes may differ dramatically from the outcome anticipated at the time of the vote. If we focus solely on the vote, we have to ignore these other important elements of the initiative process.

Focusing on voters also ignores the preferences of nonvoters, which may differ markedly from those of voters. However, the vast majority of research on this subject suggests that nonvoters do not have substantially different preferences than voters (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). Our own analysis of a series of statewide surveys conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California between 1998 and 2000 suggests that nonvoters tend to be slightly more

liberal than voters on a number of subjects that emerge in direct democracy in California but these differences tend to be fairly small.

Finally, by focusing only on the initiative vote, we have no way to compare outcomes in the initiative process to outcomes in the state legislature. To fully gauge how well direct democracy serves minority interests, one might also want to compare outcomes in the legislature to outcomes from the initiative vote.

Data

We use data from a series of 17 *Los Angeles Times* exit polls taken during primary and general elections between 1978 and 2000. These polls queried voters on their views and votes on 45 initiatives over this period.

The *Los Angeles Times* polls asked respondents about one-third of the initiatives on the ballot. Although the polls tended to ask respondents about the more controversial or higher-profile initiatives on the ballot (e.g., Proposition 209 on affirmative action), we could find few significant differences between the *Los Angeles Times* sample and the complete set of initiatives on the ballot. The 45 *Los Angeles Times* poll initiatives do not appear to differ markedly either in terms of how popular they were or in terms of the type of issues they addressed.[6]

Each survey contains a representative sample of California's voters (average 4,145 respondents per survey) and generally includes a large enough sample of black, Latino, and Asian American voters to allow for analysis of each group. There are, on average, 284 black, 324 Latino, 128 Asian American, and 3,264 white respondents in each poll. The demographics of each racial and ethnic group in each poll closely match the demographics of the total population of each group in the state. These data include both a large number of minority respondents and a wide array of questions. In total, the aggregate data include over 170,000 votes on 45 initiatives. Because the sample sizes for racial and

[6]The average margin of victory in the *Los Angeles Times* initiatives was 22.4 percent as compared to 23.2 percent for all initiatives over this period. The *Los Angeles Times* data do, however, slightly overrepresent initiatives on education and slightly underrepresent initiatives on reform of government institutions.

ethnic minorities are significantly smaller in polls conducted before 1986, we reran all of the analysis excluding initiatives on the ballot before 1986. The results were almost identical to the findings presented in this report.

Overall, the exit poll data are very accurate, correctly predicting the winning side in 44 of the 45 initiatives. The actual vote and the estimated vote based on exit poll data differ by an average of only 1.6 percentage points (with a standard deviation of 2.3). Detailed data on the initiatives in the analysis are presented in Appendix A.

As a secondary test of the outcomes of direct democracy, we analyzed statewide surveys conducted by the Field Institute between 1970 and 1998. This California poll series has the advantages that it has existed for a longer time than the *Los Angeles Times* poll and asks about voter preferences on a much larger set of propositions (131). However, because it is a pre-election poll and has fewer respondents per poll, it is significantly less accurate, correctly predicting the outcome of 106 of 131 propositions and misestimating the actual vote by an average of 8.2 percentage points. In almost all cases, both datasets produce roughly equivalent results. Any cases where the conclusions differ significantly from those derived from the *Los Angeles Times* data are discussed in the report. Further description of the California poll data is presented in Appendix B.

To further test the accuracy of our data, we derived statewide estimates of the vote by race and ethnicity from the actual vote total at the precinct level.[7] To do this, we employed ecological inference (King, 1997), combining the vote and Census data on racial demographics for each precinct. Ecological inference employs a complex statistical procedure to derive estimates of a particular group's behavior in a

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[7]Although precinct data are a record of the actual votes, they are subject to many of the same problems as other data. For example, it is impossible to connect absentee ballots to demographic information, since absentee ballots are collected at the county, not precinct, level. Given that as many as 20 to 25 percent of ballots have been cast absentee in recent years, this is a potentially serious omission. Unless absentee ballots come from a fairly random cross-section of the population, we cannot be sure that these are the most accurate results. In fact, given that we use available weights for the *Los Angeles Times* data, we might better expect these data to represent how people actually voted in California.

particular precinct based on the actual outcome for that precinct as a whole and on patterns of behavior across the thousands of precincts in the state. Using ecological inference, we arrived at estimates of the statewide vote by race on each of the 13 initiatives that overlap with the *Los Angeles Times* data. The estimates of the white, black, and Latino vote that we get from ecological inference using the actual vote largely support the estimates derived from the *Los Angeles Times* exit polls, with an overall correlation of 0.91. The pattern of who wins and who loses is nearly identical. Appendix B presents a more detailed comparison of the datasets as well as a description of ecological inference methodology. The precinct data were provided by the Statewide Database at the Institute of Governmental Studies and the University of California, Berkeley.

This report focuses on initiatives put forward by citizens, not propositions put on the ballot by the state legislature. Most of the objections to direct democracy stem from the possibility that citizens are using the initiative process to target certain minority groups. The legislature is generally not deemed to be central in this process. Further, the *Los Angeles Times* dataset includes only six propositions put on the ballot by the legislature—not enough to warrant separate analysis.

None of the three sources of data is broken down by ethnic origin. This is less of a problem in the case of Latinos, since the vast majority of Latinos in California are Mexican Americans, but it is a severe restriction when it comes to analyzing Asian Americans. California's Asian American population is fairly evenly divided among Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, and Japanese Americans (Nakanishi, 1998). Moreover, existing research suggests that the views and politics of these different Asian American subgroups often differ significantly (Tam, 1995). Comparing the votes of all Asian Americans to other races limits our ability to determine how well different Asian American subgroups have fared in the initiative process.

Methodology

Because we are interested in how well racial and ethnic minorities fared as well as in how groups with different class, regional, or political backgrounds fared, we ran logistic regressions to help predict which types

of voters were the most likely to vote for the winning side. We pooled the individual respondents' votes from every *Los Angeles Times* exit poll for the initiative elections relevant to a particular set of analyses. Included in the model were measures of race and ethnicity, age, income, gender, education, region, political ideology, and party identification. A more detailed description of the regression model and the results are included in Appendix A. We used the King, Tomz, and Wittenberg simulation procedure to convert the logit coefficients to expected probabilities (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King, 1999), which we report in the text. For each set of initiatives analyzed, we measure the probability that a member of a particular group will vote for the winning or losing side of a given initiative.

Regressions control for an array of factors, relating any individual factor (i.e., race) to an outcome while holding all other factors constant. However, we might also want to know how each group fared without controlling for other factors. In this case, measuring how well a group is doing simply means adding up how many times voters from a particular group voted for the winning side and comparing that to other groups. Throughout the analysis, we compare the multivariate results to these simple percentages. In almost every case, these percentages closely follow the results from the regression analysis.

Summary

To measure how well racial and ethnic minorities fare in direct democracy, we examine the vote by race and ethnicity across an array of initiatives between 1978 and 2000. Although not without disadvantages, this method allows us to accurately assess how likely it is for members of each demographic group to vote for the winning side of initiative elections. Our primary dataset is a series of *Los Angeles Times* exit polls. We also confirm our findings with an analysis of Field Institute polls and an analysis of precinct-level voting patterns.

3. Minority-Focused Initiatives

Most of the concern about how direct democracy affects Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans stems from a small number of initiatives that focus on members of these minority groups. It is here, critics say, that the full "demagogic potential of the initiative" has been reached (Schrag, 1998, p. 226). When white voters consciously and explicitly target these groups through the initiative process, critics claim that they are essentially helpless. They do not have enough votes to overcome the white majority and affect the outcome of the vote. In this sense, whites can use the initiative as "democracy's barrier to racial equality" (Bell, 1978, p. 1).

To test this claim systematically, we identified every initiative in California since 1970 that directly focused on racial and ethnic minorities.[1] Eight initiatives fit into this category. Between the *Los Angeles Times* exit polls and the California polls, we have data for six of these initiatives.[2] These six initiatives deal with several policy issues that are especially sensitive to minorities: eliminating attempts to integrate schools through school busing (Proposition 21 in 1972), mandating English-only ballots (Proposition 38 in 1984), proclaiming English as the official language of the state (Proposition 63 in 1986), eliminating services for illegal immigrants (Proposition 187 in 1994), ending

[1]In theory, it is difficult to devise criteria to separate out minority-focused from nonminority–focused initiatives. Initiatives focused on immigration, for example, could be directed at both white and nonwhite immigrants. In practice, there is fairly widespread agreement about the initiatives that should or should not fit into this category. Proposition 187, for example, would have affected both white and nonwhite immigrants. However, the vast majority of discussion surrounding the initiative focused clearly on race and ethnicity.

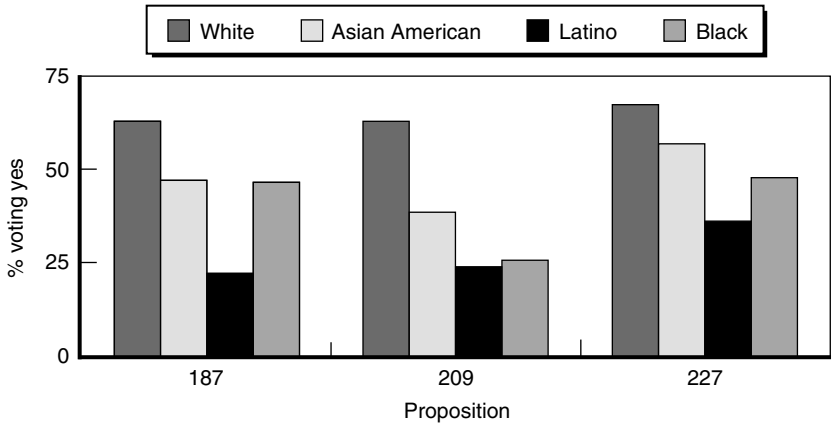
[2]The two excluded propositions are Proposition 4 (1976), which sought to prohibit admission decisions to the University of California on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, or gender, and Proposition 1 (1979), a constitutional amendment that made clear that nothing in the California Constitution mandated school busing programs to integrate public schools.

affirmative action (Proposition 209 in 1996), and ending bilingual education (Proposition 227 in 1998).

The Big Three

Of these six minority-focused initiatives, three stand out. The passage of Propositions 187, 209, and 227 are most frequently cited as a sign that white voters in California feel threatened by changes in the racial composition of the state and are using the initiative process to target racial and ethnic minorities (Tolbert et al., 1999; Alvarez and Butterfield, 1998; Maharidge, 1996; Cain et al., 1996). In Figure 3.1, we display the vote by race on each of these initiatives.

Proposition 187 was the first and perhaps the most controversial of the three. The primary goal of the "Save our State" initiative was to deny public education, social services, and health services to illegal aliens. In addition, the initiative required that state and local workers report suspected illegal aliens to state and federal authorities. Opponents saw it as an outright attack on the Latino community and argued that every Latino resident would now be under suspicion. Supporters countered that the law would save the state $5 billion a year, that it would prevent



SOURCES: The *Los Angeles Times* exit polls, 1978–1998.

Figure 3.1—Minority-Focused Initiatives

illegal immigrants from continuing to take jobs from legal residents, and that it would ultimately lead to better services for legal residents.

Racial and ethnic divisions were a distinguishing feature of the vote. The white majority won out over the objections of the majority of Asian American, black, and Latino voters (Figure 3.1). Almost 80 percent of Latino voters opposed the initiative. They were joined by 53 percent of all black and Asian American voters. Nevertheless, strong white support (63 percent in favor) overwhelmed the minority vote, and the initiative passed. The battle did not end at that point, however. The initiative was quickly embroiled in a series of legal battles, and by 1998, all of its major components had been declared unconstitutional. Perhaps the one lasting consequence of the initiative was widespread resentment among the Latino community and a significant increase in Latino voter registration and turnout in subsequent elections (Pantoja and Segura, 2000).

Two years later, Proposition 209 heightened racial and ethnic tensions in the state. Just as he had on Proposition 187, Governor Pete Wilson helped lead the battle to pass 209. The measure, originally titled the Civil Rights Initiative, called for an end to affirmative action by the state and other public entities. Supporters, including presidential candidate Robert Dole, claimed that the initiative "would reject racial prejudice" and argued that it represented "America's best principles" (quoted in Allswang, 2000, p. 209). Opponents countered that minorities were being targeted by a fearful and resentful white majority.

The vote on 209 was even more racially divided than the 187 vote (Figure 3.1). All three racial and ethnic minority groups were unified in their opposition to the initiative. Proposition 209 was opposed by 76 percent of Latino voters, 74 percent of black voters, and 61 percent of Asian American voters. But once again, strong white support (63 percent in favor) meant that the initiative passed.

Proposition 209 was also taken immediately to the courts, but unlike Proposition 187, it survived litigation and was enforced a year after its passage. Available data suggest that Proposition 209 led to dramatic declines in both minority applications and minority acceptances at the University of California in the first year after its passage but appeared to have smaller effects on both applications and acceptances in subsequent years (Traub, 1999).

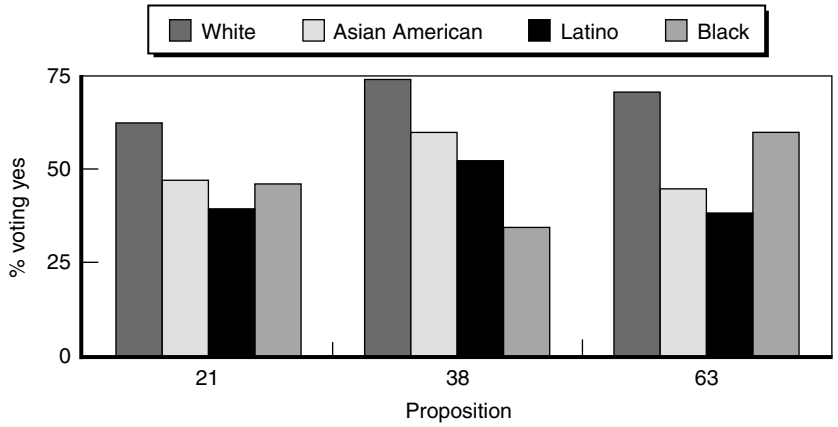
The debate over Proposition 227, although not as acrimonious as that over Proposition 187, once again ignited racial and ethnic tensions in the state. Developed and sponsored by Silicon Valley businessman Ron Unz, the measure sought to end the state's program of bilingual education and replace it with an intensive one-year "English immersion" program. Supporters claimed that the current system was a failure and that drastic measures were required to cut through the entrenched bilingual education bureaucracy. Opponents argued that one year of immersion was not enough time to learn English and that immigrant children whose English skills were inadequate eventually would drop out of mainstream English programs. Believing that Proposition 227, like its predecessors, was discriminatory, some Latino groups immediately challenged the initiative in the courts. Once again, racial divisions were present in the vote. Most blacks and Latinos opposed the initiative but it passed in large part because of the support of 67 percent of white voters in the state. Since then, early accounts suggest that the new immersion program may have marginally improved test scores (Steinberg, 2000).

A fairly clear pattern emerges from these three initiative elections. An initiative is proposed; it sparks racial and ethnic tensions in the state; in the end, a white majority wins out over the often heated opposition of one or more racial and ethnic minority groups. In short, these data lend strong support to critics of the initiative process who fear that the initiative process is "only marginally respectful of minority rights and interests" (Schrag, 1998, p. 21).

Other Minority-Focused Initiatives

The pattern of white dominance is less clear for the three remaining initiatives. Figure 3.2 displays the support, by race, for these three initiatives. Once again, we see that in every case, the majority of white voters supports the initiative and in every case the initiative passes. What is less clear is whether minority interests were marginalized or ignored.

Proposition 21 of 1972, which repealed existing efforts to achieve racial and ethnic integration in public schools, passed despite majority opposition from black, Latino, and Asian American voters. But on the other two initiatives, at least one minority group sided with the white majority. On Proposition 38, which called for English-only ballots, a



SOURCES: Field Institute California Poll (21, 38) and the *Los Angeles Times* exit poll (63).

Figure 3.2—Other Minority-Focused Initiatives

slim majority of Latino voters sided with the white majority and against the black majority. On Proposition 63, an initiative that declared English as the official language of the state, blacks voted with the white majority and against the majority of Latinos and Asian Americans.

Mixed Results

A close inspection of Figures 3.1 and 3.2 shows two important deviations from simple control of the initiative process by the white majority. First, although whites are fairly unified on these minority-focused initiatives (66 percent of white voters voted for the "white" side on average across these six initiatives), large portions of the white community sided with racial and ethnic minority voters on all but two initiatives (Propositions 38 and 63). Clearly not all whites opposed minority interests.[3]

Second, the two figures also reveal some important divisions among blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans. On several initiatives, at least one

[3]Minority voters were slightly less cohesive than whites on these minority-focused initiatives. On average, 63 percent of blacks, 64 percent of Latinos, and 55 percent of Asian Americans voted for their group's preferred position on these six initiatives.

nonwhite group voted with the white majority. Most Asian American voters sided with the white majority on Propositions 38 and 227; most blacks voted with the white majority on Proposition 38. Over half of Latino voters sided with the white majority on Proposition 63. In short, there was no consistent "minority" position that might have prevented the passage of several of these initiatives.

Comparing Race to Other Factors

Looking at each initiative individually gives us some information about how individual minority groups fared. However, we want to explore differences between whites and minority groups, as well as differences among minority groups, more systematically. Further, we wish to control for other factors, such as education and class, that might alter the picture presented here. We therefore use multiple regression analysis to determine whether race and ethnicity are more strongly related to who won and lost or if other demographic factors provide a better explanation. The regressions control for several factors including socioeconomic status, party affiliation, and political ideology. Details of the regression analyses can be found in Appendix A. Figure 3.3 shows

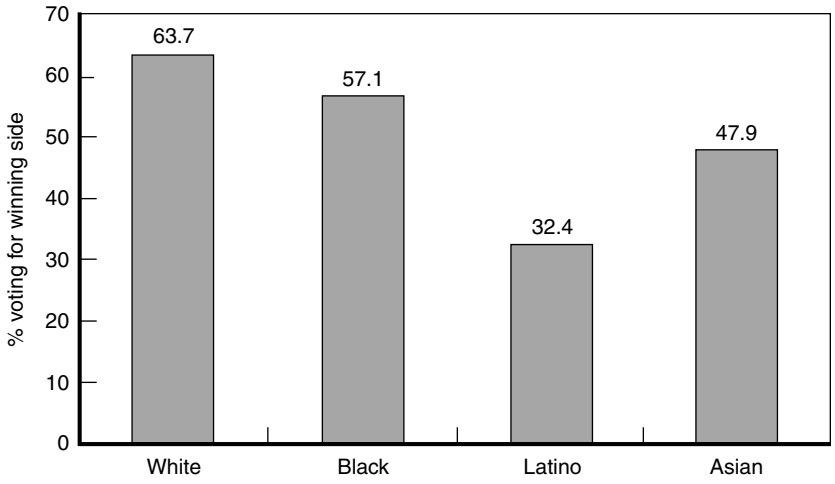


Figure 3.3—Probability of Voting for the Winning Side: Minority-Focused Initiatives

the probability that a voter from a given racial or ethnic group voted for the winning side.

On one hand, this evidence confirms much of the criticism of direct democracy. Whites are much more likely to vote for the winning side than are racial and ethnic minorities. Overall, white voters have about a 64 percent chance of voting for the winning side, compared to 47 percent for nonwhites. Whites are clearly winning and setting policy at the expense of racial and ethnic minority voters.[4]

Figure 3.3 also reveals interesting differences among Latinos, Asian Americans, and blacks. Contrary to expectations, we find that African American voters are not losing regularly on minority-targeted initiatives. Black voters are almost as successful as white voters. The average black voter has a 57 percent probability of voting for the winning side. Asian Americans vote for the winning side nearly half of the time. For these two groups, direct democracy should not be seen as a major barrier to achieving their political goals, even on these explicitly racial initiatives.

Latinos present a different story, however. On these minority-focused initiatives, Latinos consistently lose out.[5] In fact, Latino voters have only a 32 percent chance of voting for the winning side.[6] This pattern suggests that Latinos have recently been the primary target of white fears and frustrations (Alvarez and Butterfield, 1998).

Given that several of these initiatives were on subjects of fundamental importance to the Latino community, this situation cannot be ignored. Furthermore, it may get worse before it gets better. As the state's fastest growing population, Latinos are an increasingly visible and

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[4]As an alternative test, we simply added up how many times individual voters from a particular racial or ethnic group voted for the winning side and compared that number to the number of times voters from that group voted for the losing side to create a simple measure of the percentage of times voters from a particular group won or lost. The results were quite similar to the analysis using regressions, although racial and ethnic minorities fare somewhat more poorly when not controlling for other factors.

[5]The other big losers on minority-targeted initiatives are liberals and Democrats. The probability that self-identified liberals and Democrats are on the winning side of the vote is 42.9 percent and 48.6 percent, respectively.

[6]Analysis of the California poll data on minority-targeted initiatives leads to nearly identical results. The only difference is that Asian Americans are not significantly ($p < 0.05$) less likely to be winners then whites are.

potentially powerful community.[7] This, some critics argue, represents a real and growing threat to the heretofore white majority (Tolbert and Hero, 1999; Gimpel and Skerry, 1999; Maharidge, 1996; Cain et al., 1996). As the Latino presence and influence continue to grow, there is a real concern that whites will regularly target Latinos through direct democracy.

In contrast, the prospects may not be as severe for blacks and Asian Americans. Whites may perceive that blacks—a much smaller population that has not grown markedly—pose less of an economic, political, or social threat to the white population. There may be less cause to single them out with statewide initiatives. Regardless of the reason, the minority-focused initiatives we analyze here are more often supported by blacks than by Latinos. Finally, as a growing but significantly smaller and often less politically visible population, Asian Americans fall somewhere in between.

Summary

The initiatives analyzed here do show differences in who wins and loses on issues that directly target minority groups. In several cases, a white majority has overwhelmed a united minority. One of the conditions for a tyranny of the majority is clearly present—the preferences of the white majority are in opposition to the preferences of most racial and ethnic minority voters, especially Latinos. This is a cause for real concern. If these kinds of racial and ethnic divisions continue to crop up in initiative voting, racial and ethnic tensions could rise in the state.

However, the story is not simply one of the white majority trampling the nonwhite minority. Many white voters sided with racial and ethnic minority voters. And on several of these initiatives, racial and ethnic minorities were themselves somewhat divided. The end result is that only one racial and ethnic group regularly loses out. More than any

[7]To provide one example, the number of Latino elected officials in California has almost doubled in the last 15 years. In 1998, there were 789 Latino elected officials across the state. Asian American and African American elected officials numbered 503 and 255, respectively (Reyes, 2001).

other minority group, Latinos tended to have views completely divergent from whites. As a result, they voted for the losing side much more regularly than African Americans and Asian Americans.

Most of the concern over direct democracy has been on these few initiatives that deal directly with minority issues. Although we have substantiated some of the concerns here, we have not fully tested for more widespread control of the initiative process by the majority. The next chapter addresses the same concerns for a broader set of initiatives, paying special attention to issues that minorities claim to care about the most and to initiatives they favor or oppose by large margins.

4. Outcomes Across Direct Democracy

The last chapter examined outcomes in direct democracy on a small number of minority-focused initiatives. It revealed that racial and ethnic minorities, particularly Latinos, fare poorly on these minority-focused initiatives. Yet these initiatives represent only a tiny fraction of the issues on the ballot. This chapter shifts attention to the entire array of issues addressed by direct democracy in California.

Minority-focused initiatives are clearly important to the well-being of the black, Latino, and Asian American population, but they constitute only 5 percent of all of the propositions put before the people of California in the last 30 years. Ignoring the other 95 percent is a potentially serious omission. Ostensibly nonracial initiatives can affect racial and ethnic minorities in dramatic ways. Take education for example. Blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans all see education as the state's most pressing problem, as do whites (Hajnal and Baldassare, 2001). Furthermore, the majority of public school students in the state of California are black, Latino, or Asian American (Betts et al., 2000). Any initiative dealing with education policy will matter greatly to racial and ethnic minority groups and, good or bad, will likely have a disproportionate effect on these groups.

One can tell a similar story about a host of the other supposedly nonracial issues that have been the subject of the direct democracy. Efforts to restrict the development of public housing (Proposition 15, 1974), initiatives to curb welfare benefits (Proposition 165, 1992), or even plans to improve environmental quality (Proposition 180, 1994) are not racially focused but nevertheless address issues of prime importance to minorities. Indeed, it is not clear whether initiatives that directly target particular racial groups, such as Proposition 187 of 1994, will necessarily have a greater effect on members of California's black,

Latino, and Asian American communities than ostensibly race-neutral initiatives, such as Proposition 184 of 1994 (which imposed severe penalties for repeat criminal offenders) or Proposition 21 of 2000 (which significantly increased punishment for gang-related activities). Similarly, Proposition 13 of 1978, California's famous property tax initiative, probably did more than any other initiative to affect racial and ethnic minority well-being by impeding the ability of local jurisdictions to provide public services (Schrag, 1996).

To properly understand how racial and ethnic minorities fare in the initiative process, we need to examine a broader range of initiatives. In this chapter, we begin by reviewing the array of issues addressed by direct democracy in California in recent years. This review helps establish whether there is systemwide bias against one group or another. We then assess outcomes on initiatives for racial and ethnic minorities that these groups identify as important to them. Finally, we examine outcomes for initiatives that a given minority group overwhelmingly supports. These three investigations round out the analysis of how minorities fare in direct legislation elections.

Systemwide Results: No Major Racial Bias

The numbers in Table 4.1 show the probability that voters from different demographic groups voted for the winning side across the 45 initiatives in the *Los Angeles Times* dataset. The figures are derived from a logistic regression that is presented in Appendix Table A.2.

As the table indicates there are only small differences in how well different racial and ethnic groups fared across the entire array of initiative elections in California. When we include all types of initiatives, we find little evidence of a major systemwide bias against any group we examined.[1] White voters, who are the most successful racial or ethnic group, have a 62 percent probability of voting for the winning side. Asian Americans fall in the middle, with a 60 percent probability of voting for the winning side. The average Latino and black voters fared marginally worse—voting for the winning side roughly 59 percent of the time.

[1]This conclusion is mirrored in the analysis of the larger California poll series.

Table 4.1

Probability of Voting for the Winning Side: All Propositions

Group	%
White	61.5
Black	59.0
Latino	59.0
Asian	60.1
Upper income	61.5
Lower income	60.4
College degree	60.0
No high school diploma	60.9
Under age 30	60.8
Over age 65	60.8
Bay Area	60.3
Central Valley	60.8
Los Angeles	60.8
Republican	61.8
Democrat	60.5
Conservative	62.9
Liberal	59.1

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from the *Los Angeles Times* exit polls.

Aside from race, several other factors had significant, but small, effects on the likelihood of voting with the winning side. Conservatives were the most successful group with a probability of winning at 63 percent. In contrast, liberals achieved their preferred outcome only 59 percent of the time. A similar divide exists between Republicans and Democrats. Republicans were slightly over 1 percent more likely to wind up winners than were Democrats. Wealthier voters fared somewhat better than poorer voters. Finally, Bay Area voters were slightly less successful than either voters from the Central Valley or Los Angeles County .

All Groups Win Regularly

These differences are all substantively quite small. The most successful group, conservatives, had only a 4 percent higher probability of winning than the least successful groups, blacks and Latinos. Differences across income, age, region, and education categories amounted to 1 percent or less. Race and political ideology, the two most important factors in predicting who would win and lose, both affect the probability of winning by less than 4 percent. These limited effects indicate that few major systemwide biases occur across every arena of the initiative vote.

Equally important is the fact that every group we looked at voted for the winning side most of the time. Latinos and blacks, who were the two least successful groups, still had a 59 percent probability of voting for the winning side. This pattern suggests that racial and ethnic minorities (and indeed, all groups we examined) were usually able to use direct democracy to advance their interests. In short, all groups can be considered "winners" of a sort across the whole array of issues addressed by direct democracy in California.[2]

Patterns Are Repeated Without Controls

The results in Table 4.1 are important but they tell only one version of the story. Race and ethnicity may not matter that much by itself but might matter more in combination with other factors, such as education and income. For example, because Latinos tend to be poorer and less educated than other Californians, controlling for income and education may hide how poorly Latino voters fared.[3] Table 4.2 displays the raw

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[2]It is interesting to note that these results differ somewhat if we separate propositions that passed from propositions that failed. On propositions that pass, Latinos and Democrats tend to do somewhat worse than others. On propositions that fail, blacks, Asian Americans, and Republicans tend to do worse than others. These differences are somewhat muted if we exclude Propositions 187, 209, and 227, the three most infamous minority-focused propositions, but they do not disappear entirely. In short, there does appear to be a slightly different dynamic for initiatives that pass.

[3]We also tested a series of interaction effects to see if certain segments of each racial and ethnic group were more or less advantaged than others. In only one case were there clear and significant effects. Low-income Latino voters voted for the losing side more

Table 4.2

Percentage Voting for the Winning Side: All Propositions, Raw Numbers

Group	%
White	60.8
Black	55.6
Latino	56.3
Asian	56.1
Upper income	60.1
Lower income	59.2
College degree	58.5
No high school diploma	58.0
Under age 30	59.2
Over age 65	60.3
Bay Area	58.0
Central Valley	60.8
Los Angeles	59.1
Republican	63.2
Democrat	58.8
Conservative	62.9
Liberal	54.7

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from the *Los Angeles Times* exit polls.

percentage of voters of a given group who voted for the winning side, with no adjustments for any of the other demographic attributes.

This analysis confirms our earlier results. Once again, there are some small differences in outcomes and race does matter. White voters vote for the winning side roughly 5 percent more often than Latinos, Asian Americans, and blacks. The same patterns across income and region also reappear. One interesting difference between these results and those derived from regressions is that voters on the right side of the political spectrum (Republicans and conservatives) vote for the winning side

often than any other group, whereas high-income Latinos voted for the winning side as often as whites.

much more frequently. The difference grew to between 4 and 8 percent more often than voters from the left (Democrats and liberals).

Underlying these patterns are two important conclusions about race and direct democracy. First, none of the differences in Table 4.2 is large. Although dropping the controls does increase differences in success rates across groups in some cases, the overall conclusion is still clear. There is little indication of a large systemwide bias in the outcomes of direct democracy elections. The most successful group winds up on the winning side of the vote only 8 percent more often than the least successful group.

Moreover, Table 4.2 once again shows that all groups fare reasonably well across the array of initiatives put forward in direct democracy in California. More than half of the members of every group we looked at wound up on the winning side of the vote. Even though nonwhite voters were slightly less successful than white voters, they still wound up winners most of the time. Given that white voters could decide the outcome of each vote in their favor, blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans are somewhat surprisingly successful. The fact that over half of black, Latino, and Asian American voters had their preferences met contradicts the notion that the initiative is only "marginally respectful of minority rights and interests" (Schrag, 1998).

Initiatives Relevant to Minorities

This initial analysis shows that most of the time, minority groups are not harmed by direct democracy in the sense of systematically losing important policy battles. However, it is possible that including numerous initiatives of marginal importance to particular racial and ethnic groups masks the effects of the measures that do matter. For example, does it really matter if most blacks are on the winning or losing side of an initiative to ban the sale of horsemeat for human consumption (Proposition 6, 1998)? We therefore reexamine those initiatives that are, by various measures, important to racial and ethnic minorities. We focus on two subsets of initiatives from our data:

- Initiatives dealing with issues minorities identify as the most important to them, and

- Initiatives where racial and ethnic minorities express a clear preference by voting cohesively.[4]

Issues Minorities Consider Most Important

Over the past three years, statewide polls have repeatedly asked Californians the following open-ended question: "What do you think is the *most* important public policy issue facing California today?" Although the order differs for each group, the top five issues for blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans are education, crime, economy/jobs, immigration, and poverty.[5] We therefore isolated the initiatives in our dataset that directly addressed at least one of these issues.[6] Once again, we looked to see which factors helped to predict whether an individual voted for the winning or the losing side of a given initiative.

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[4]As a final test, we reviewed existing public opinion research to identify subject areas where each racial and ethnic group has traditionally expressed preferences that are distinct from the white voting majority. Once we identified these subject areas, we then looked to see how voters from each racial and ethnic group fared on propositions that fit into these subject areas. For African Americans, we focused on initiatives on welfare, public housing, government spending on social services, labor regulations, and taxes on upper-income groups (see Kinder and Sanders, 1996; *The Public Perspective*, 1996; and Dawson et al., 1999, for detailed analyses of black public opinion). For Latinos, we focused on initiatives on immigration, education, health care, labor regulation, language issues, and affirmative action (see Hajnal and Baldassare, 2001; Uhlaner, 1996; and Garcia, 1997). And for Asian Americans, we focused on education, immigration, and criminal sentencing (see Hajnal and Baldassare, 2001; Lee, 2000; APALC, 1996; and Cain, 1988). This analysis corroborates our other results. Blacks and Asian Americans did as well as whites, and Latinos fared marginally worse.

[5]Answers are based on the mean from 10 statewide surveys conducted between May 1998 and September 2000 by the Public Policy Institute of California. Answers were coded into categories. Racial issues were ranked 7th most important by Latinos but only 15th and 17th most important by blacks and Asian Americans, respectively. This ordering should not be taken as a definitive ranking of issues for each racial and ethnic group, however. Results are complicated by the fact that respondents could mention only one issue when they might have felt that two or more issues were of utmost importance. These rankings are also likely to vary over time as circumstances change and different issues come to the fore.

[6]The *Los Angeles Times* exit polls include 13 propositions that deal with these five issue areas—six for education, five for the economy, three for crime, two for immigration, and one for poverty. Four of these 13 initiatives deal with more than one of the issue areas, which is why there are more than 10 total listed.

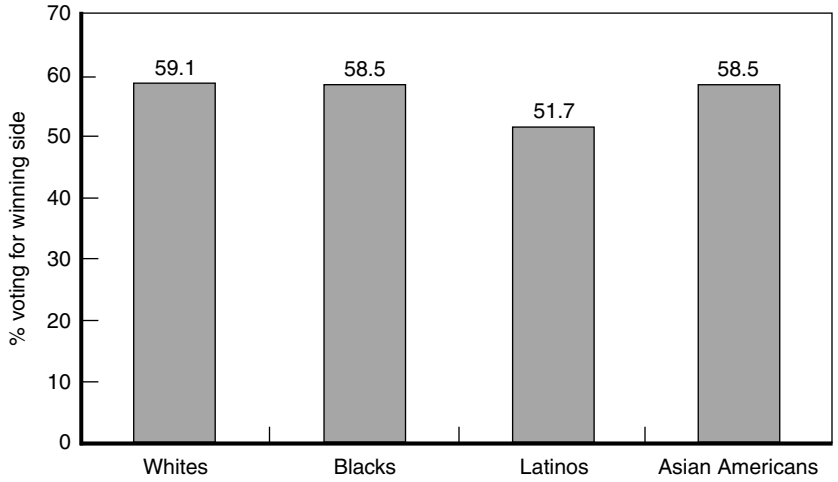

Figure 4.1—Probability of Voting for the Winning Side on Issues Minorities View as Important

Overall, our results echo the analysis across the broad range of initiatives, with one important exception. On these initiatives, Latinos are clearly the least successful racial or ethnic group. Latino voters are roughly 7 percent less likely to vote for the winning side than white, black, and Asian American voters. While Latinos are clearly disadvantaged, these results suggest that a slight majority of the time Latino voters wind up winners. Approximately 52 percent of Latino voters were on the winning side of these 13 initiatives.[7] As before, whites do well, with just over 59 percent voting for the winning side. Asian Americans and blacks are just behind, with a little less than 59 percent ending up on the winning side of these initiatives. These findings work against the notion that racial and ethnic minority voters are regularly losing out on the issues they care most about.

As an alternative test, we divided all the initiatives into several broad subject categories identified by the California Secretary of State (1994): education; health, welfare, and housing; environment and resources;

[7]The set of 10 propositions includes Propositions 187 and 227 of the minority-focused propositions, which clearly contributed to the limited success of Latino voters.

taxes; business and professional regulation; and elections. Generally, there were few large differences in outcomes across subject areas. However, we did find that blacks fared somewhat worse than other racial and ethic groups on initiatives dealing with taxes or reform of government elections procedures. In contrast, Latinos fared somewhat worse on educational measures but did well on environmental initiatives and initiatives addressing regulatory issues or professional groups. The full range of outcomes by race and subject area are displayed in Appendix Table A.6.

When Minorities Have a Clear Preference

Another way to identify initiatives that are important to minorities is to single out initiatives where a large majority of blacks, Latinos, or Asian Americans voted in the same direction. Presumably, if the vast majority of black voters approves or disapproves of a particular initiative, it matters to the black community as a whole whether or not that initiative passes.[8]

We identify a group's vote as cohesive when over 60 percent of the members of that group support or oppose a given initiative.[9] Overall, each group was cohesive on a similar number of initiatives—29 for whites, 30 for blacks, 32 for Latinos, and 24 for Asian Americans. Although some overlap exists, each racial and ethnic group voted cohesively on a distinct set of initiatives, yielding different analyses for each group.

Blacks tended to be more cohesive on initiatives that focused on business regulation, housing, and the environment. Blacks were not always cohesive on minority-focused initiatives, especially those dealing with non-English-speaking minorities or on taxation initiatives. Latinos were more cohesive on minority-focused and environmental initiatives and least cohesive on taxation initiatives. Asian Americans voted cohesively on initiatives dealing with the environment. They appeared to be more

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[8]There may be cases where a group voted unanimously on something of minor importance. However, a closer look at the content of the propositions that fit into this category suggests that this is generally not the case.

[9]Alternative tests of higher levels of cohesive voting lead to very similar results.

divided over business regulation and criminal justice and were not cohesive on initiatives concerned with non-English-speaking minorities.

How does cohesive voting on the part of each racial and ethnic group change the outcomes of direct democracy? When racial and ethnic minorities voted cohesively, they at least marginally improved their odds of voting for the winning side than for the entire range of propositions. The improvement for blacks and Latinos is minimal—around 1 percent. For whites and Asian Americans, it is much more substantial, increasing approximately 4 percent.

Although each minority group votes for the winning side more often when voting cohesively, this pattern masks a significant trend. Both blacks and Latinos are among the least successful groups when they vote cohesively. Whites routinely vote for the winning side more often than all minority groups when those minorities vote cohesively. Even more surprising is the fact that other minority groups vote for the winning side more often than Latinos and blacks when these two groups vote cohesively. The only exception to this pattern is that Asian Americans

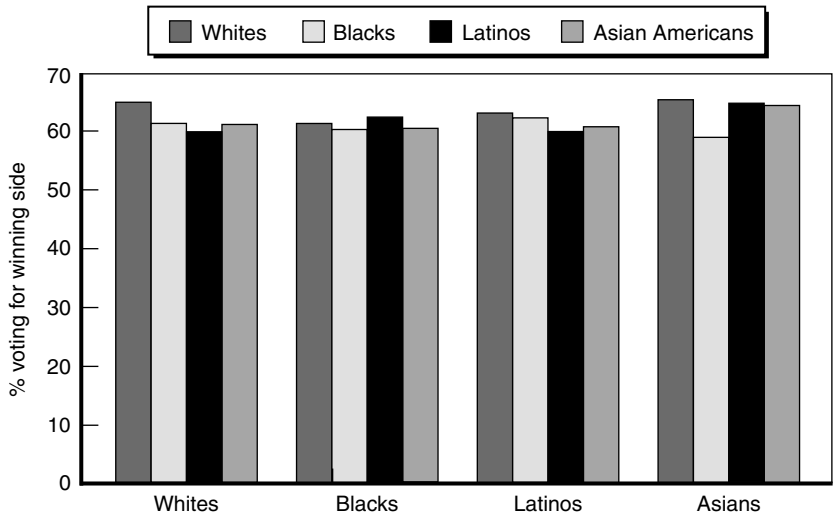

Figure 4.2—Probability of Voting for the Winning Side When Groups Vote Cohesively

vote for the winning side less often than blacks do when blacks vote cohesively.[10]

Critics and minority advocates will see these results as disappointing. Even when minority groups vote cohesively, their chance of voting for the winning side does not increase markedly. In every case, whites vote for the winning side more often. On the other hand, these results can be seen as encouraging. Minorities vote for the winning side most of the time. On issues where racial and ethnic minorities have a clear preference, they are more likely than not to end up on the winning side of the vote.

One caveat to consider is the effect of the high-profile minority-focused initiatives discussed in Chapter 3. Removing these initiatives from the analysis indicates a much more balanced view, with minorities faring substantially better than when they are included.

Summary

Across the broad range of California initiatives, all racial and ethnic minorities have fared reasonably well. Each minority group voted for the winning side more often than not. Compared to the handful of initiatives that focus directly on minorities, we see few indications of bias against minorities in the use of the initiative process to date.

There is one important exception to this pattern. When initiatives deal with issues that minorities claim to care about, Latinos are, as a group, significantly less successful than black, Asian American, and white voters. On these initiatives, only a bare majority of Latinos vote for the winning side.

These mixed findings suggest that we should be careful in evaluating direct democracy. The ways in which the outcomes of direct democracy favor or do not favor minorities depend greatly on which sets of initiatives we consider and which group we examine.

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[10]An analysis of the raw percentages of racial and ethnic groups that vote for the winning side reveals very similar patterns to those presented here.

5. Underlying Patterns in the Vote: Explaining Minority Success and Failure

Two findings emerge from the previous analyses. On the one hand, there is little systemwide bias against racial and ethnic minorities in most initiative elections. Racial and ethnic minorities vote for the winning side as often or nearly as often as white voters. On the other hand, on a number of minority-focused initiatives, racial and ethnic minorities, most notably Latinos, are voting for the losing side regularly. When the initiative is directly linked to race and ethnicity, whites dominate outcomes often at the expense of nonwhite voters.

In this chapter, we analyze patterns underlying the vote to provide an understanding of these two, somewhat conflicting findings. Two questions emerge. First, why are nonwhite voters relatively successful across the array of initiatives addressed in direct democracy? And second, why have outcomes favored white voters and gone against large segments of minority voters on these important minority-focused initiatives?

Explaining Minority Success

In some ways, it is striking that whites do not dominate racial and ethnic minorities in the initiative process. After all, whites make up the clear majority of voters in all of the direct legislation elections examined here. Even if blacks, Asian Americans, and Latinos voted in the same direction on a given initiative, a substantial majority of whites could control the outcome. Yet we do not see this pattern occurring often in our data.

As noted in Chapter 2, whites constitute a substantial majority of voters in the state, but two additional conditions are necessary for a tyranny of the white majority to exist. First, the interests of white and

nonwhite voters must be opposed. If most members of most racial or ethnic groups agree on policy issues, there is no tyranny of the white majority. Second, whites must vote as a unified bloc. If whites are divided, nonwhites will likely decide the outcomes of initiative elections. In the California initiative elections we examine here, neither of these conditions is regularly present.

Divisions in the Vote

Overall, nonwhite voters are more apt to agree with white voters than to disagree. Table 5.1 presents a measure of the average divide between minorities, as well as other groups, in initiative elections. The table shows the average difference in the percentage voting yes of various racial, demographic, and political groups across the 45 initiatives in the *Los Angeles Times* exit polls. Larger numbers indicate greater divisions between the two groups.

As the table indicates, differences between white and nonwhite voters do exist. The white vote differs from the black vote by an average of 12 percentage points. The white-Latino divide and the white–Asian

Table 5.1

Divisions in Initiative Voting

Group	Average Difference in the Yes Vote
White-black	12.2
White-Hispanic	9.8
White-Asian	8.9
Black-Hispanic	7.1
Black-Asian	12.1
Hispanic-Asian	9.7
Democrat-Republican	21.1
Liberal-conservative	26.5
Men-women	4.6
No high school diploma-college degree	9.5
Low income-high income	6.4

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from the *Los Angeles Times* exit polls.

American divide are a little smaller, averaging about 10 and 9 percentage points, respectively. None of these numbers suggests a huge divide. For example, if 70 percent of white voters favored a initiative, one might see 60 percent Latino support, 61 percent Asian American support, and 58 percent black support for the same initiative.

It is interesting to note that divisions among the three nonwhite groups are roughly similar to the divide between whites and nonwhites. The average black-Asian American divide is 12 points. For Latinos and Asian Americans, it is nearly 10 points. Blacks and Latinos tend to vote more similarly (a difference of 7 points) than any other racial and ethnic groups.

One way to gauge the magnitude of these numbers is to compare them to divisions among other important demographic and political groups. Racial and ethnic divisions are, in fact, dwarfed by divisions between the political groups that we examine. The liberal-conservative divide (26 percent) and the Democrat-Republican divide (21 percent) are roughly twice as large as the divide between white and nonwhite voters. Table 5.1 also reveals that race and ethnicity divide voters just slightly more than education and still more than income. The divide between whites and nonwhites is more than twice as large as the gender gap.

Put another way, initiatives that are popular among whites also tend to be popular among blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans. Initiatives that passed with 60 percent or more of the vote received an average of 64.5 percent white support, 62.3 percent Asian American support, 61.8 percent black support, and 60.6 percent Latino support. Similarly, initiatives that whites opposed were also largely opposed by nonwhites.[1] Overall, there is a fair amount of agreement among all racial and ethnic groups.[2]

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[1]The white vote is most closely correlated with the Asian American vote ($r = 0.66$, $p < 0.01$) but whites also regularly agree with Latinos ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$) and African-Americans ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$).

[2]This finding conforms well with research on public attitudes in California that suggest that differences of opinion between racial and ethnic groups are not that pronounced on most public policy issues (Hajnal and Baldassare, 2001).

Group Cohesion

The other condition for a tyranny of the white voting majority is that whites vote as a bloc. A substantial majority of whites must vote together to completely control the outcomes of initiatives. This does not happen very often. For the average initiative, 61 percent of white voters vote in the same direction. That means that in the typical case, 39 percent of the white electorate disagrees with the majority white position.

By this measure, whites vote cohesively about as often as other racial and ethnic groups, although considerably less often than political groups. Table 5.2 presents the level of cohesiveness for several important voting groups in California. Among racial and ethnic groups, whites and Asian Americans are slightly less cohesive than other groups. Given the diverse backgrounds of Asian Americans in California, it is probably not

Table 5.2

Voting Cohesiveness

Group	Percentage Voting for the Same Side
All respondents	61.2
White	61.1
Black	62.4
Latino	62.6
Asian	60.1
Democrat	62.9
Republican	66.7
Liberal	65.0
Conservative	66.5
Under age 30	60.8
Age 65 or older	61.7
No high school diploma	61.2
College degree	59.9
Low income	60.8
Medium income	60.4
High income	61.2

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from the *Los Angeles Times* exit polls.

surprising that just over 60 percent of Asian American voters support their group's preferred position in the average case. By contrast, blacks and Latinos tend to vote in a more unified fashion. On average, almost 63 percent of Latino voters support the majority Latino position. Blacks are close behind with 62 percent voting for the same side.

Other major demographic groups in the state are as cohesive as whites. Men and women, high- and low-income voters, older and younger voters, and those with a little or much education all vote at about the same level of unity as whites. In fact, there are almost no notable differences among these groups.

Of all the groups we examined, only politically defined groups tend to vote together regularly. Republicans, conservatives, and liberals were the three most unified groups. In each case, roughly 66 percent of the members of the group supported the group's preferred position on average. Democrats were not far behind with an average of 63 percent supporting the group's preferred position.

These findings suggest that the conditions that would create white majority control of the initiative process are not present in California. Across the issues addressed through direct democracy in the state, there is both a general agreement between white and nonwhite voters and relatively limited cohesion within the white voting population. Black, Latino, and Asian American voters are as successful as they are because their interests tend not to collide with white voters and because white voters are not cohesive enough to dominate all other groups.

Explaining Minority Failure

If the conditions necessary for white dominance through direct democracy are generally not present in California, why do racial and ethnic minorities, and especially Latinos, fare so poorly on minority-focused initiatives? The answer is that these initiatives are distinctive. On this small number of initiatives, racial and ethnic divisions are more pronounced and intra-group cohesion is much higher, yielding different outcomes for minorities.

If we look first at inter-group divisions and compare voting patterns across different sets of initiatives, it becomes clear that minority-focused initiatives are unlike all other initiatives. Table 5.3 shows the average

Table 5.3

Divisions in Initiative Voting, by Type

Group	Average Difference in the Yes Vote	
	All Propositions	Minority-Focused
White-black	12.2	20.7
White-Latino	9.8	35.4
White-Asian	8.9	18.7
Black-Latino	7.1	14.7
Black-Asian	12.1	9.3
Latino-Asian	9.7	16.7
Democrat-Republican	21.1	36.6
Liberal-conservative	26.5	43.9
Men-women	4.6	6.7
No high achool diploma-college degree	9.5	9.3
Low income-high income	6.4	7.3

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from the *Los Angeles Times* exit polls.

absolute difference between the yes vote of different racial and ethnic groups for the subset of minority-focused initiatives as well as all initiatives together. The table illustrates that white and nonwhite voters are much more divided on these minority-focused initiatives than they are generally. In fact, the divide between white and nonwhite voters basically doubles on these minority-focused initiatives. The white-Latino divide more than triples on minority-focused initiatives, growing from only 10 percentage points on all initiatives to 35 percentage points for minority-focused initiatives. In short, there is a major difference of opinion between white voters and other racial and ethnic groups on matters of race and ethnicity.

The divisions among minority groups are also much larger for these initiatives. The black-Latino divide more than doubles (from 7 to 15) and the Latino–Asian American divide also grows measurably (from 10 to 17). Only the black–Asian American divide does not increase. One reason individual minority groups have a more difficult time getting their preferences met on these high-profile initiatives is that these initiatives tend to exacerbate inter-group tensions amongst minority voters.

These minority-focused initiatives also differ markedly in terms of intra-group cohesion. Table 5.4 indicates that white cohesion increases from 61 percent to 66 percent on minority-focused initiatives. Latino unity jumps from 63 percent on all initiatives to 70 percent on minority-focused initiatives. For blacks and Asian Americans, minority-focused initiatives actually spur less cohesive voting. Black cohesion is usually high (62.4 percent for all initiatives) but decreases to 59.7 percent on minority-focused initiatives. Similarly, for Asian Americans, cohesion declines from 60.1 percent on all initiatives to 56.6 percent on minority-focused initiatives.

These two patterns on minority-focused initiatives—greater division between white and nonwhite voters and greater cohesion within most

Table 5.4

Voting Cohesiveness, by Type

	Percentage Voting for the Same Side	
Group	All Propositions	Minority-Focused
All respondents	61.2	61.9
White	61.1	65.8
Black	62.4	59.7
Latino	62.6	69.6
Asian	60.1	56.6
Democrat	62.9	60.5
Republican	66.7	78.9
Liberal	65.0	65.7
Conservative	66.5	78.2
Under age 30	60.8	53.7
Age 65 or older	61.7	66.8
No high school diploma	61.2	60.4
College degree	59.9	56.2
Low income	60.8	57.7
Medium income	60.4	61.0
High income	61.2	62.7

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from the *Los Angeles Times* exit polls.

racial and ethnic groups—explain why outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities are significantly worse on these initiatives. For Latinos, both patterns are amplified and the outcomes, as a result, are even worse. Because minority-focused initiatives tend to pit a unified Latino vote against a fairly unified white vote, the consequences are inevitable. Latinos wind up regular losers on these crucial initiative votes.

Summary

Latinos, blacks, and Asian Americans have been able to achieve relative success via direct democracy not because the system prevents whites from dominating the nonwhite voting minority. At present, whites could choose to regularly target and defeat nonwhites. Rather, the success of such minority groups is a function of widespread agreement on policy that cuts across racial and ethnic boundaries. For most issues, white and nonwhite voters tend to agree on the kinds of policies they prefer and those they dislike. This is an important factor that should not be overlooked in discussions of race, ethnicity, and direct democracy.

When this consensus breaks down, as it often does on minority-focused initiatives, the consequences are clear. Nonwhite voters, especially Latinos, lose out. Despite the fact that Latinos tend to vote cohesively on these minority-focused initiatives, larger numbers of white voters mean that Latinos, as a group, vote for the losing side of these ballot elections.

6. Trends over Time and Prospects for the Future

Chapter 4 showed that, between 1978 and 2000, there was little systemwide bias against racial and ethnic minorities in the outcomes of direct democracy in California. This overall pattern could mask significant changes that occurred over this period, however. Given that a number of the most controversial minority-focused initiatives were put on the ballot in the 1990s, there is reason to suspect that outcomes are becoming more anti-minority over time. Indeed, some observers believe that rapid growth in the state's nonwhite population is spawning "growing hostility toward nonwhites," and that this hostility is becoming more and more evident in the initiative process (Maharidge, 1996, p. 7).

In this chapter, we look at how outcomes have varied over time and assess prospects for the future of the initiative process. We are especially interested in two questions:

- How might voting outcomes change as the state's white voting majority gives way to multi-racial coalitions?
- How might these outcomes be affected by reforming the initiative process?

For this chapter, the initiatives themselves are the unit of analysis instead of the voter. We use aggregate voting statistics derived from the individual exit polls instead of a single individual vote.

Trends in Minority-Focused Initiatives

Are racial and ethnic minorities increasingly becoming the focus of direct democracy in California? Despite the considerable attention paid to Propositions 187, 209, and 227 in recent years, there has actually been no increase in the number of minority-focused initiatives in the 1990s. In each of the last three decades, there were roughly the same number of

initiatives focusing on these minority groups and their rights. The 1990s had only three: Propositions 187, 209, and 227. There were two in the 1980s: Proposition 63 (1986), an initiative that declared English as the official language of the state, and Proposition 38 (1984), an initiative that called for English-only ballots. In the 1970s, three propositions fit into this category: Proposition 1 (1979), a constitutional amendment that explicitly stated that nothing in the California constitution mandated school busing programs to integrate public schools; Proposition 21 (1972), which repealed existing efforts to achieve racial and ethnic integration in public schools; and Proposition 4 (1976), which sought to ensure that admission to the University of California would not be denied on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, or gender.

If one takes a broader view of minorities and includes initiatives that focused on the rights of homosexuals and other groups who have traditionally suffered from discrimination, there is still no trend toward greater targeting of minorities over time. Under this broader definition, there were five propositions in the 1970s and seven each in the 1980s and 1990s.[1]

Throughout its history, direct democracy has been used occasionally as a forum to target minority groups and benefit others. As far back as 1920, California's voters passed a constitutional amendment barring Japanese aliens from owning land. At least in terms of the issues that have been addressed in direct democracy in California, there is little evidence that minorities are more likely to be targets today than they have been in the past.

Trends in the Vote

Although the number of initiatives focusing on minority groups has not increased dramatically, that does not guarantee that the outcomes of direct democracy have remained stable over time. Given the rather dramatic changes in the demographics of the state in the last decade, it is

[1]However, there have been important changes in the issues put on the ballot in California. Between 1970 and 2000, there was a sharp decline in propositions on questions of government finance or organization and a sharp increase in propositions on criminal safety, moral questions, and business regulation.

still possible that outcomes have become more biased against racial and ethnic minorities. To test this possibility, we compare outcomes during the 1990s with outcomes in the previous decade. Table 6.1 replicates Table 4.1 with separate results for each decade.[2]

There are only limited changes over time in how well racial and ethnic minorities fare in direct democracy. And contrary to the perceptions of many observers, some of the change that does occur is positive. In the 1990s, Asian American voters were no longer significantly more likely than whites to be on the losing side of the initiative vote. For blacks, time made little difference. In both decades, blacks were more

Table 6.1

Probability of Voting for the Winning Side, by Decade

Group	1980s[a]	1990s[b]
White	62.1	60.3
Black	58.3	59.5
Latino	59.8	57.8
Asian	57.2	60.8
High income	62.1	60.1
Low income	60.3	59.4
College degree	61.2	58.4
No high school diploma	60.6	60.4
Under age 30	61.3	59.1
Age 65 or older	61.1	59.7
Democrat	61.5	58.9
Republican	61.6	61.0
Liberal	61.3	57.0
Conservative	61.8	62.6

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from the *Los Angeles Times* exit polls.

[a]Includes 1978 elections.

[b]Includes 2000 elections.

[2]Technically, we split the data into two equal time periods—1978–1988 and 1990–2000—each of which is slightly longer than a decade.

likely than whites to vote for the losing side, although in both cases the difference in the probability of voting for the losing side is quite small.[3]

Latinos have shown a marginal decline in their success rate in recent years, dropping 2 percentage points to 58 percent in the 1990s. Although not a drastic change, it is disconcerting given that this decline in Latino fortunes corresponds with rapid growth in the Latino population. Closer analysis reveals that this difference is almost entirely a function of Proposition 187. If we exclude Proposition 187 from the 1990 analysis, we find no differences in how Latinos fared in the two decades.

Table 6.1 indicates one interesting change in who wins and who loses in the initiative process. In the 1980s, partisan identity and ideology had little effect on the likelihood of voting for the winning side. Both liberals and conservatives and Republicans and Democrats voted for the winning side in relatively equal numbers—around 61 percent of voters. In the 1990s, however, conservatives and Republicans became more likely to control the outcome of direct legislation elections. In the 1990s, conservatives were almost 6 percent more likely than liberals to vote for the winning side and Republicans were 2 percent more likely than Democrats to do so. Direct democracy in California has not become markedly more anti-minority, but it has become somewhat more conservative. This change in outcomes suggests that direct democracy does not inherently target any specific group (Gerber and Hug, 1999). Rather, direct democracy amplifies the preferences of the majority on the issues that happen to draw interest at a given time.[4]

Trends in Racial and Ethnic Divisions and Intra-Group Cohesion

Another way to look for increasing racial and ethnic tensions in direct democracy is to look at divisions across groups and unity within groups. If white voters feel threatened by the growing minority

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[3]This is one case where the California poll data differ significantly from the *Los Angeles Times* data. In the California poll, no racial or ethnic group is significantly more likely to be on the losing side in the 1980s. We suspect that this is caused by the increasingly small minority sample in earlier years of the California poll.

[4]Analysis of changes over time in the California poll data also indicates that conservative and Republican voters were more successful in the 1990s.

population of the state, this feeling should be reflected in both the average difference between white and nonwhite voters and the relative unity of the white vote.

Over this time period, there is some evidence that racial and ethnic divisions are on the rise. Table 6.2 presents the average distance between the yes vote of white voters and the yes vote of each racial and ethnic minority group for the 1980s and then again for the 1990s. By this measure, the divide between white and Latino voters almost doubles in the 1990s. In the 1980s, the Latino vote and the white vote differ by only 7 percent on average. In the 1990s, this increased to 12 percent. The white-black divide increases almost as much (from 11 percent to 14 percent). The white–Asian American divide is the only one that does not increase markedly over this time—it decreases from 10 percent to 8 percent.[5]

Table 6.2

Divisions in Proposition Voting, by Decade

Group	1980s	1990s
White-black	10.5	13.9
White-Latino	7.4	12.1
White-Asian	10.0	7.9
Black-Latino	6.9	7.3
Black-Asian	13.0	11.1
Latino-Asian	9.7	9.6
Democrat-Republican	15.1	28.2
Liberal-conservative	21.6	31.3
Men-women	4.0	5.2
No high school diploma-college degree	11.9	7.8
Low income-high income	6.0	6.7

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from the *Los Angeles Times* exit polls.

[5]Another way to test for changes over time is to see if inter-group divisions are correlated with the year of the election. The division between the white vote and the Latino vote is significantly related to the year of the election ($r = 0.25$, $p < 0.10$). In other words, the white-Latino divide does increase over time. Whether the white-black divide increases over time is less clear. There is a positive correlation between the white-black divide and the year of the election ($r = 0.17$) but the relationship is not quite significant ($p = 0.24$). This same test shows a major decrease in the white–Asian American divide over time ($r = -0.31$, $p < 0.05$).

At the same time, divisions among most other demographic groups also grew in the 1990s. The divisions between Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, and men and women were significantly larger in the 1990s than before. Only education and income did not increasingly divide California's voters. Although it looks as though black and Latino voters moved further away from white voters, it is unclear whether this is a purely racial or ethnic change or whether other factors such as party, ideology, and gender played the primary role in this change.

What about intra-group cohesion? If racial and ethnic tensions are increasing, one might expect each group to vote in an increasingly unified fashion. This is not the case for white voters. On the average initiative in the 1980s, 61 percent of whites voted in the same direction. In the 1990s, the figure is again 61 percent. Whites are not becoming more cohesive over time.

As Table 6.3 shows, there does appear to be an increase in the cohesiveness of racial and ethnic minority voters. In the 1980s, 61 percent of Latino voters voted for the "Latino" side on the average initiative. In the 1990s, that figure increases to 65 percent. There is a similar increase for African Americans. Black cohesion was 61 percent in the 1980s and grew to 63 percent in the 1990s. These changes are certainly not large but they do at least hint at the possibility that blacks and Latinos are becoming more unified over time. There is almost no change in the cohesion of the Asian American vote.

Again, racial and ethnic groups were not the only groups whose voting tendencies changed in the 1990s. Political parties and ideologies produced more cohesive voting during this decade. At the same time, there was little increase in the extent of cohesive voting by gender, educational attainment, or income.

Prospects for the Future

Gauging the future of the initiative process in California is a difficult undertaking. As new issues bubble to the surface and different groups and actors mobilize to bring their issues to the ballot, we will likely see

Table 6.3

Voting Cohesiveness, by Decade

Group	Percentage Voting for the Same Side	
	1980s	1990s
White	61.1	61.2
Black	61.2	63.4
Latino	60.6	64.6
Asian	59.5	60.7
Democrat	59.9	66.3
Republican	64.1	69.7
Liberal	63.0	66.9
Conservative	64.2	68.7
Men	61.0	60.7
Women	60.9	62.4
No high school diploma	61.1	61.3
College degree	60.8	59.3
Low income	60.6	60.9
High income	61.1	61.3

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from the *Los Angeles Times* exit polls.

unpredictable changes. Nevertheless, changes in the composition of California's population could alter the outcomes of future initiatives in systematic ways, and it is important to establish some sense of what these future trends might look like.

Perhaps the trend most likely to alter the nature of direct democracy in California is the state's growing numbers of Latinos and Asian Americans. By 2020, half of the state's population is expected to be Latino and Asian American. By 2040, the Latino and Asian American populations are expected to double in size, and Latinos alone will constitute half of the population (see Figure 6.1). Whites, on the other hand, may fall to only one-third of the population of California by 2040 (Reyes, 2001). Because Latinos and Asian Americans vote at much lower rates than whites and African Americans, these changes will not be

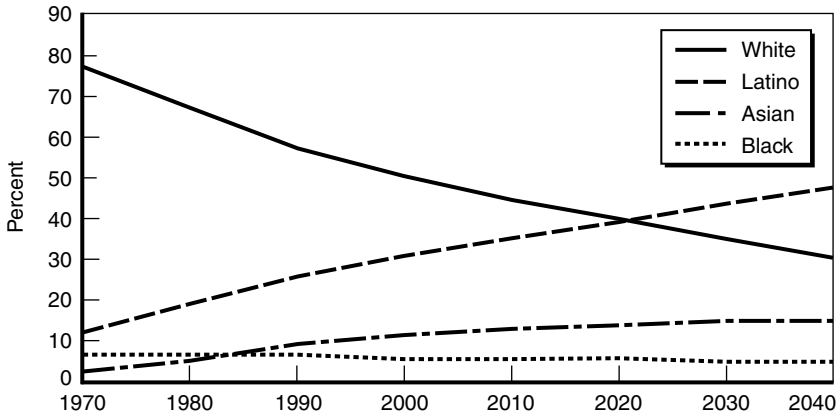

Figure 6.1—California's Changing Racial and Ethnic Demographics, 1970–2040

reflected immediately in the state's electorate.[6] Indeed, despite these changes in the population, whites could still constitute close to a majority of the voters in 2040.[7] Nevertheless, these are developments that could alter the balance of power in direct democracy in California.

One way to predict the future is simply to look at past initiative elections to see how outcomes would change if the racial and ethnic makeup of voters was altered to match predicted future levels. This is necessarily a tentative undertaking. Population estimates may be inaccurate. Voter turnout rates for each racial and ethnic group could rise or fall. The interests and voting tendencies of each group might change in the future. Finally, the issues put before the voters could be very different from those in past elections. Nevertheless, we can use population projections to derive an estimate of how outcomes might change in the future.

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[6]As noted in Chapter 2, the makeup of the population has changed dramatically, but the makeup of those who actually vote has changed much more slowly. Lack of citizenship, lower socioeconomic status, and other factors serve to greatly reduce nonwhite voter participation. These factors are likely to continue to reduce nonwhite voter participation well into the future and should mitigate some of the changes in the overall population.

[7]This is a rough estimate assuming that overall turnout rates among each racial and ethnic group remain constant.

Under the racial demographics predicted for the year 2020, several of the outcomes of direct democracy would be reversed. If the electorate changed to reflect population changes projected for the year 2020 (39 percent Latino, 14 percent Asian American, 6 percent black, and 40 percent white, assuming that everyone were to vote the same way and turn out at the same rates as they have in the past), outcomes for four of the 45 initiatives in the *Los Angeles Times* dataset would be reversed. With the racial and ethnic demographics projected for the year 2040, six of the 45 initiatives would have different outcomes (see Table 6.4).

Knowing exactly which initiatives would be blocked and which would now pass may be of more interest than the aggregate number that change outcomes. Under the scenarios we envision for 2020 and 2040, both Proposition 187 and Proposition 209 would not pass.[8] With a larger Latino and Asian American population, the two initiatives with possibly the most anti-minority outcomes would not pass. Moreover, a larger minority population would also mean that several initiatives that failed—Propositions 71 (1988), 128 (1990), and 26 (2000)—would now pass. These three initiatives dealt with government spending, the

Table 6.4

Initiative Outcomes That Might Have Been Reversed, Given Demographic Changes Expected in the Future

Proposition	Year	2020	2040
71	1988	No change	Won
128	1990	No change	Won
140	1990	Lost	Lost
187	1994	Lost	Lost
209	1996	Lost	Lost
26	2000	Won	Won

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from the *Los Angeles Times* polls and Reyes (2001).

NOTE: "Won" means that the proposition lost and would win; vice versa for "Lost."

[8]One other initiative that passed but would not in our scenarios was Proposition 140, the term limits initiative.

environment, and education, all issues of substantial interest to most minority voters.

One other way to try to gauge the growing influence that nonwhites might have in the future is to estimate the "pull' of the minority vote on the outcome of each initiative. By pull, we mean the difference between the white vote and the actual outcome. In the *Los Angeles Times* exit polls for 1978 to 2000, this average difference is under 3 percent. That is, if whites voted 61 percent in favor of an initiative, the final vote was likely to be between 58 and 64 in favor of the initiative.

This minority pull will likely increase in the future. Using estimates of racial demographics for 2020, the minority pull would increase to over 3 percent. Using demographic estimates for 2040, minority influence would increase to over 4 percent. Perhaps surprisingly, none of these numbers suggests radical changes in the outcomes of direct democracy in California. Even as whites become a smaller proportion of the population, we may well see the same sorts of outcomes we see today. Latino, Asian American, and African American voters may prevail on a few more initiatives, but a wholesale transfer of power is extremely unlikely.

The reason for this is twofold. First, Latinos and Asian Americans vote at lower rates than others. Whites are likely to continue to be a large fraction of the voting population well into the future. Second, and perhaps most important, racial and ethnic divisions are generally not that pronounced in the overall initiative vote. White and nonwhite voters tend to agree more than they disagree on policy matters. Moreover, no group votes regularly as a bloc; each group tends to have almost as many losers as winners on any given vote—no matter what the outcome of the vote.

Initiative Reforms

One other question we can address is what would happen to California's initiative process under proposed reforms.[9] Since the adoption of the initiative in California, over 300 bills have been

[9]For summaries of possible reforms see California Commission on Campaign Financing (1992) and Dubois and Feeney (1991).

introduced in the state legislature and a number of propositions designed to improve the initiative in some way have been put before voters (Simmons, 1997). Although most of these reforms cannot be assessed with our voting data, one widely cited reform, which would increase the margin required to pass a proposition, can be addressed. Some critics have proposed requiring two-thirds of the voters to support a proposition for it to pass (see Guinier, 1994, for a discussion of super majority vote requirements). According to its proponents this reform would give minorities a bigger say in direct democracy. With a higher threshold to pass initiatives, a small minority group could effectively block initiatives it opposed. Indeed, a recent poll indicates that a majority of Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans favor using a two-thirds majority voting requirement (Field Institute California Poll, August 1997).

To assess such a change, we look at what would have happened if this more stringent threshold had been applied to all of the propositions on the ballot in the last 30 years. To test a wider range of policy alternatives, we employ 60 and 55 percent thresholds as well. The obvious consequence of a two-thirds majority requirement is that fewer propositions would pass. Since 1970, 63 percent (261 of 416) of all propositions on the ballot and 58 percent of citizen-sponsored initiatives passed (82 of 141). Table 6.5 shows the percentage of initiatives that would pass under different scenarios. If a two-thirds requirement had been in place over this period, only 6 percent of initiatives would have passed (9 of 141).

Table 6.5

Passing Margins for All Propositions Since 1970

	Initiatives	% of Total
Did not pass	82	58.2
Receiving at least		
50 percent	17	12.1
55 percent of the vote	15	10.6
60 percent of the vote	18	12.8
Two-thirds of the vote	9	6.4
Total	141	100.0

Perhaps more important than the passage rate is the kind of propositions that would pass and fail under a new system. Of the three high-profile racially targeted initiatives that we discussed above—Propositions 187, 209, and 227—none would have passed under a two-thirds requirement. Indeed, none of the minority-focused initiatives in the past three decades would have passed. In this sense, a two-thirds majority requirement would effectively protect racial and ethnic minority interests insofar as it provided a kind of veto power for minorities.

A two-thirds majority might seem a rather blunt tool for a fine job. Numerous initiatives that minorities favored would also fail if a two-thirds vote were required. Likewise, a number of initiatives that all groups favored, but which none favored heavily, would also fail. Of the 45 initiatives in the *Los Angeles Times* data, which tend to be somewhat more controversial than the whole universe of propositions, only two passed with a two-thirds majority. One real consequence of a higher threshold would likely be policy paralysis and inertia. It is unclear whether and how much a higher threshold would benefit minority voters.

Summary

Overall, there is scant evidence pointing to a sea change in direct democracy over time. Racial and ethnic minorities have not been more likely to be the focus of propositions in recent years. Nor were blacks and Asian Americans more likely to vote for the losing side of initiative elections in the 1990s.

Nevertheless, there are some warning signs in the data. Although the data are not definitive, white and nonwhite voters seem to disagree over policy more frequently. There is also some indication of greater in-group cohesion over time among Latinos and possibly among African Americans. Moreover, there is a small but measurable increase in the likelihood that Latinos end up on the losing side of the vote in the 1990s. This is not evidence of a severe racial bias, but it may be a warning of trouble on the horizon.

California's demographic changes will no doubt lead to changes in electoral outcomes, although it is difficult to predict when these changes will occur or how large they will be. Lower minority turnout rates mean

that it may be years before minorities reach a true electoral majority in California. This lag may provide opportunities for a white backlash as whites see their absolute numbers decline but retain their existing electoral strength. However, nothing in our data necessarily points to that outcome. Our analysis suggests that if the voting preferences of each group do not change significantly, the outcomes of direct democracy will not change dramatically in the foreseeable future. However, it may become more difficult for whites to pass initiatives that directly target minority groups.

Last, as we consider possible reforms, it is important to assess their effects realistically. A two-thirds majority voting requirement might serve as a minority veto over new policies, but it would also prevent minorities from passing most of the initiatives they favor. More generally, it would prevent Californians from dealing with controversial issues through the ballot box. The initiative process in California was designed to give voters a voice that might well be lost in the political fray of Sacramento. Stringent passage requirements would quiet that voice significantly.

7. Conclusion

Who wins and who loses in direct democracy in California? This report reveals a system that occasionally tramples minority preferences but at the same time generally gives minorities a voice and more often than not leads to policies that most minorities favor. Nonwhite voters fare poorly when initiatives are directly linked to race and ethnicity. On affirmative action, illegal immigration, bilingual education, and other minority-focused issues, racial and ethnic minorities are much more apt than whites to vote for the losing side.

Of all the demographic and political groups we examine, Latinos fare the worst. Blacks and Asian Americans vote for the losing side of initiative elections slightly more often than white voters but Latinos are far and away the most likely to lose out, especially on minority-focused initiatives. Indeed, the majority of Latino voters vote for the losing side on minority-focused initiatives. If this pattern continues or is amplified, relations between Latinos and other racial and ethnic groups in the rest of the state could sour.

Although not pronounced, some evidence points to worsening trends for Latino voters, who fared marginally worse in the 1990s than in the 1980s. There is also some evidence of a growing Latino-white divide in voting patterns and greater Latino unity over time. Given that Latinos are the fastest growing racial or ethnic group in the state, these trends raise concerns about the future of direct democracy in the state.

At the same time, the outcomes of direct democracy usually follow the preferences of Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans. Systemwide, we find little evidence of a major bias against any group. When we focus on the whole array of initiatives addressed through direct democracy in the last 20 years, every racial, ethnic, and demographic group that we examine winds up on the winning side of the vote about as often as every other group. Moreover, every group wins regularly. Latinos, who are the least successful racial or ethnic group, still vote for

the winning side over 50 percent of the time. Even when we look at issue areas that Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans say they care most about, they do reasonably well in most initiative elections.

Moreover, the biggest changes over time do not concern racial and ethnic minorities but rather political parties and ideology. In particular, liberals and Democrats have gone from being regular winners in the 1980s to disproportionate losers in the 1990s.

Perhaps the most important set of findings concerns patterns underlying the vote. African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos often wind up on the winning side of direct democracy not because they outvote the white majority but because they usually agree with the majority of whites. The system we study in this report is not one defined by racial and ethnic divisions. Rather, whites and nonwhites are much more apt to agree than to disagree over matters of policy. And just as important, our analysis of the vote in direct democracy indicates that no racial or ethnic group is particularly unified. Each racial and ethnic group is fairly divided over which initiatives to support and which to oppose.

Both of these voting patterns are crucial to understanding outcomes in direct democracy in California. If the fairly widespread agreement across racial and ethnic groups and the fairly large divisions within each racial and ethnic group were to change, outcomes might also change, and the relative success of minority voters could become a thing of the past. The well-being of minorities in direct democracy is not assured but instead rests on a continued pattern of accord across groups.

Appendix A

Los Angeles Times Data

This appendix describes the *Los Angeles Times* data and presents the full regression analyses used in the report. The primary data for this study are a series of 15 *Los Angeles Times* exit polls taken during primary and general elections between 1978 and 1998. These polls queried voters on their votes on 45 different initiatives, listed in Table A.1.

Each *Los Angeles Times* poll asked about several propositions and a number of demographic factors. The factors we include in our regression models are race, education, income, age, gender, political party, ideology (liberal-conservative), and region of residence. Because the vast majority of respondents will be on the winning side of initiatives that are either very popular or very unpopular, we also include a variable measuring the margin of victory to control for this tendency.

For the most part, the questions are fairly consistent across the polls, with several important exceptions: One poll did not include data on the region of residence (1996 general), two polls did not ask about education (1980 and 1982 primaries), and one poll failed to ask about political party membership (1990 general). We ran a large number of different model configurations to look for differences when certain variables were excluded. There were no substantial differences when we used different configurations in the model. The analyses for Figures 3.3 and 4.1 exclude region as an independent variable, since inclusion of region would have eliminated one-quarter of the data from the model. All other regression analyses include all of the independent variables listed above.

We used a logistic regression model to analyze the data, since we have a binary variable—winner or loser on a given proposition. The description of the variables used is given in Table A.2. Because we often have data for several propositions on a given poll, we want to control for the clustering of votes that might result. Taking into account clustering of votes by the same respondent enables us to remove any individual-specific error from the results, improving their accuracy.

Table A.1

Los Angeles Times Exit Poll Propositions

Proposition	Year	Election	Yes Vote	Description
13	1978	Primary	**64.8**	Property tax limitation
5	1978	General	45.6	Regulation of smoking
6	1978	General	41.6	Required firing for homosexual activity
9	1980	Primary	39.2	Taxation income—indexing, business inventory exemption
10	1980	Primary	35.5	Rent control through local ordinance only
11	1980	Primary	44.2	10% energy business surtax
7	1982	Primary	**63.5**	Income tax indexing
8	1982	Primary	**56.4**	Criminal justice—"victims' bill of rights"
9	1982	Primary	37.3	Water facilities—Peripheral Canal
11	1982	General	44.1	Beverage containers
12	1982	General	**52.3**	Bilateral nuclear weapons freeze
13	1982	General	35.2	Water resources
15	1982	General	37.2	Handgun registration
51	1986	Primary	**62.1**	Multiple defendant tort liability
61	1986	General	34.1	Gann—compensation of public officials, employees, contractors
63	1986	General	**73.2**	English official state language
64	1986	General	28.9	AIDS reporting
65	1986	General	**62.6**	Safe drinking water
68	1988	Primary	**52.8**	Legislative campaigns—spending, contribution limits
71	1988	Primary	48.9	Government spending—appropriation limit adjustment
72	1988	Primary	38.5	Emergency reserve—dedication of certain taxes to transportation
73	1988	Primary	**58.1**	Campaign funding
128	1990	General	35.6	Environment, public health, bonds
131	1990	General	37.8	Limits on terms of office, ethics, campaign financing
134	1990	General	31.0	Alcohol surtax
140	1990	General	**52.2**	Limits on terms of office, legislators' retirement, operating costs
184	1994	General	**71.8**	Increased sentences, repeat offenders
186	1994	General	26.6	Health services., taxes
187	1994	General	**58.8**	Illegal aliens—ineligibility for public service
188	1994	General	29.3	Smoking—local preemption of statewide law
198	1996	Primary	**59.5**	Elections—open primary
200	1996	Primary	34.8	No fault motor vehicle insurance
201	1996	Primary	40.7	Attorneys fees—shareholders actions
202	1996	Primary	48.8	Attorneys—contingent fees limits
209	1996	General	**54.6**	Prohibition against discrimination or preferential treatment
211	1996	General	25.7	Attorney-client fee arrangements, securities fraud, lawsuits
215	1996	General	**55.6**	Medical use of marijuana
216	1996	General	38.8	Health care—consumer protection

Table A.1 (continued)

Proposition	Year	Election	Yes Vote	Description
226	1998	Primary	46.7	Political contributions by employees, union members, foreign entities
227	1998	Primary	**60.9**	English language in public schools
5	1998	General	**62.4**	Tribal casinos
22	2000	Primary	**61.4**	Limit on marriages
26	2000	Primary	48.7	Local school bonds, 50%
38	2000	General	29.5	School vouchers
39	2000	General	**53.3**	Local school bonds, 55%

NOTE: Descriptions are from Friedrich (2000) and the authors.

Table A.2

Variables Used in Logistic Regressions

Variable	Categories
Race	Black, Latino, Asian, and white
Age	Under 30, 30-65, over 65
Income	Relative distribution by survey, in thirds
Education	Less than high school diploma, high school diploma, some college, college degree or more
Party	Democrat, Republican, other
Political ideology	Liberal, middle of the road, conservative
Gender	Male, female
Region	Bay Area, Los Angeles, Southern California, Central Valley
Margin	Margin of victory/loss of proposition

NOTE: Region is excluded from the models for Figures 3.3 and 4.1.

Tables A.3, A.4, A.5, and A.6 contain the actual regression results used to compute the probabilities given in the text. Table A.3 contains results from Figure 3.3, the four minority-focused initiatives; Table 4.1 contains results for all initiatives; and Table 4.2 has results for initiatives that minority groups claim to care about most. Table A.4 has results for the initiatives that produce cohesive voting patterns for each major racial groups. There is one model for each group. Finally, Table A.5 presents the results for Table 6.1, all initiatives by decade. Table A.6 presents the regressions for analyses by type of initiative.

Table A.3

Regression Results for Figures 3.3 and 4.1 and Table 4.1: Determinants of Voting for the Winning Side

	Figure 3.3, Minority-Focused Initiatives	Table 4.1, All Initiatives	Figure 4.1, Initiatives Most Important to Minorities
Black	–0.279**	–0.097**	0.121
	(3.16)	(2.95)	(1.69)
Latino	–1.299**	–0.109**	–0.253**
	(18.70)	(3.66)	(3.48)
Asian	–0.648**	–0.084**	–0.018
	(6.76)	(2.35)	(0.25)
Age—under 30	–0.112**	–0.019	0.115**
	(2.29)	(1.02)	(2.80)
Age—over 65	0.083	–0.027	–0.071
	(1.47)	(1.30)	(1.62)
Education—high school diploma	0.029	0.081**	0.008
	(0.28)	(2.37)	(0.11)
Education—some college	–0.049	0.054	–0.002
	(0.47)	(1.54)	(0.03)
Education—college degree	–0.481**	–0.035	–0.211**
	(4.76)	(1.03)	(2.78)
Income—medium	0.115**	0.059**	0.088**
	(2.53)	(3.16)	(2.27)
Income—high	0.137**	0.062**	0.148**
	(2.80)	(2.93)	(3.42)
Democrat	–0.998**	–0.048	–0.401**
	(17.79)	(1.49)	(4.66)
Other party	–0.468**	–0.02	–0.291**
	(7.32)	(0.69)	(5.05)
Liberal-conservative scale	0.641**	0.056**	0.147**
	(22.96)	(3.00)	(2.70)
Gender	–0.131**	0.04**	0.043
	(3.42)	(2.98)	(1.53)
Region—Bay Area		0.002	–0.057
		(0.08)	(0.80)
Region—Los Angeles		–0.006	0.07
		(0.29)	(1.32)
Region—Southern California		0.059**	0.131**
		(2.62)	(2.87)
Margin	0.041**	0.04**	0.045**
	(13.10)	(35.61)	(16.67)
Constant	–0.569**	–0.192**	–0.239
	(3.82)	(3.50)	(1.76)
No. of observations	15,931	118,477	27,183

NOTE: Robust z-statistics are in parentheses.

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

Table A.4

Regression Results for Figure 4.2: Determinants of Voting for the Winning Side with Cohesive Voting

	Latinos	Blacks	Asians	Whites
Black	–0.016	–0.045	–0.271**	–0.15**
	(0.39)	(0.92)	(6.00)	(3.83)
Latino	–0.129**	0.035	–0.034	–0.213**
	(3.86)	(0.89)	(0.89)	(6.23)
Asian	–0.094**	–0.052	–0.05	–0.152**
	(2.42)	(1.13)	(1.01)	(3.63)
Age—under 30	0.017	0.021	–0.01	–0.007
	(0.80)	(0.85)	(0.38)	(0.32)
Age—over 65	–0.06**	–0.056*	–0.069*	–0.047
	(2.53)	(1.98)	(2.30)	(1.78)
Education—high school diploma	0.086*	0.122**	0.101*	0.100**
	(2.11)	(2.66)	(2.08)	(2.48)
Education—some college	0.074	0.1*	0.086	0.106**
	(1.87)	(2.14)	(1.78)	(2.69)
Education—college degree	–0.033	–0.025	0.048	0.039
	(0.85)	(0.53)	(0.96)	(1.00)
Income—medium	0.081**	0.045*	0.118**	0.089**
	(4.06)	(2.01)	(4.74)	(4.17)
Income—high	0.082**	0.015	0.144**	0.134**
	(3.44)	(0.56)	(5.44)	(5.73)
Democrat	–0.062	0.135**	0.06	–0.196**
	(1.59)	(3.56)	(1.43)	(5.14)
Other party	–0.052	0.091**	0.009	–0.111**
	(1.61)	(2.69)	(0.22)	(3.07)
Liberal-conservative scale	0.069**	–0.028	–0.066**	0.073**
	(3.03)	(1.05)	(2.78)	(3.46)
Gender	0.037**	0.044**	0.09**	0.042**
	(2.38)	(2.45)	(4.49)	(2.72)
Margin	0.044**	0.044**	0.046**	0.046**
	(30.76)	(24.83)	(27.53)	(24.87)
Constant	–0.262**	–0.122	–0.131*	–0.299**
	(4.26)	(1.67)	(2.03)	(5.07)
No. of observations	96,340	76,911	60,758	84,181

NOTES: Robust z-statistics are in parentheses. This table includes initiatives where the given group voted either *60 percent in favor or 60 percent against a given initiative.*

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

Table A.5

Regression Results for Table 6.1: Determinants of Voting for the Winning Side, by Decade

	1980s	1990s
Black	–0.158**	–0.033
	(4.04)	(0.58)
Latino	–0.097**	–0.103**
	(2.60)	(2.37)
Asian	–0.202**	0.023
	(4.09)	(0.47)
Age—under 30	–0.013	–0.051
	(0.53)	(1.72)
Age—over 65	–0.025	–0.024
	(0.94)	(0.77)
Education—high school diploma	0.048	0.134*
	(1.18)	(2.24)
Education—some college	0.059	0.048
	(1.46)	(0.74)
Education—college degree	0.026	–0.082
	(0.65)	(1.38)
Income—medium	0.062**	0.051*
	(2.37)	(2.03)
Income—high	0.078**	0.029
	(2.99)	(0.89)
Democrat	–0.003	–0.089
	(0.12)	(1.44)
Other party	–0.019	–0.007
	(0.53)	(0.15)
Liberal-conservative scale	0.009	0.115**
	(0.61)	(3.20)
Gender	0.038**	0.051*
	(2.42)	(2.34)
Region—Bay Area	–0.03	0.041
	(0.97)	(0.97)
Region—Los Angeles	–0.019	0.017
	(0.69)	(0.49)
Region—Southern California	–0.004	0.128**
	(0.16)	(3.56)
Margin	0.040**	0.040**
	(25.38)	(23.44)
Constant	–0.095	–0.333**
	(1.63)	(3.24)
No. of observations	62,874	55,603

NOTE: Robust z-statistics are in parentheses.

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

Table A.6

Determinants of Voting for the Winning Side, by Initiative Type

	Education	Health, Welfare, Housing	Environment, Resources	Taxes	Business, Professional Regulation	Elections
Black	–0.12	–0.402**	0.16	–0.293**	–0.136	–0.458**
	(1.34)	(5.85)	(1.79)	(3.20)	(1.06)	(4.92)
Latino	–0.227*	–0.408**	0.25**	–0.023	0.056	0.135
	(2.19)	(7.57)	(2.48)	(0.30)	(0.58)	(1.38)
Asian	–0.145	–0.31**	0.016	–0.041	–0.073	0.073
	(1.45)	(4.77)	(0.10)	(0.40)	(0.78)	(0.62)
Age—under 30	0.191**	–0.064	–0.015	–0.074	–0.092	–0.088
	(3.36)	(1.59)	(0.24)	(1.10)	(1.41)	(1.64)
Age—over 65	–0.011	–0.015	–0.153*	0.026	0.087	–0.17**
	(0.22)	(0.36)	(1.99)	(0.49)	(1.00)	(2.80)
Education—high school diploma	–0.031	0.159*	–0.026	0.02	0.165	0.051
	(0.35)	(2.23)	(0.18)	(0.20)	(1.20)	(0.55)
Education—some college	0.08	0.118	–0.026	–0.211*	0.028	0.26**
	(0.80)	(1.62)	(0.19)	(2.03)	(0.19)	(2.71)
Education—college degree	–0.003	0.114	–0.324*	–0.399**	0.03	0.211*
	(0.03)	(1.61)	(2.34)	(3.96)	(0.23)	(2.26)
Income—medium	0.051	0.065*	–0.076	0.193**	–0.066	–0.158**
	(1.00)	(2.00)	(1.24)	(3.91)	(1.31)	(2.93)
Income—high	0.119*	0.236**	–0.202**	0.316**	–0.063	–0.234**
	(2.27)	(6.55)	(3.26)	(6.13)	(0.88)	(4.30)
Democrat	–0.055	–0.262**	0.18*	–0.472**	0.203*	0.474**
	(0.48)	(4.22)	(2.34)	(6.41)	(2.03)	(5.39)
Other party	0.019	–0.094	–0.101	–0.266**	0.034	0.622**
	(0.27)	(1.53)	(1.30)	(3.83)	(0.43)	(7.70)
Liberal-conservative scale	0.076	0.104**	–0.052	0.358**	–0.073	–0.183**
	(0.97)	(2.91)	(0.92)	(6.65)	(1.21)	4.38)
Gender	0.06	0.059*	–0.062	–0.015	0.206**	0.031
	(1.54)	(2.30)	(1.51)	(0.36)	(4.09)	(0.72)
Margin	0.042**	0.044**	0.050**	0.037**	0.040**	–0.016
	(12.06)	(20.06)	(7.79)	(17.26)	(12.44)	(1.30)
Constant	–0.377*	–0.305**	0.088	–0.365*	0.006	0.251
	(2.15)	(3.03)	(0.47)	(2.26)	(0.03)	(1.56)
No. of observations	13,599	26,434	9,529	16,190	13,877	12,283

NOTE: Robust z-statistics are in parentheses.

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

The results presented in the text are not the coefficients presented here. For our results to be more comparable to actual voting tallies—that is, to be able to say that a given percentage of a group voted for a particular side—we use a procedure designed to convert regression results to basic probabilities, or percentages. The technique involves conducting repeated simulations of a given model to estimate expected values and significance levels for a particular value for each variable. All variables, other than the variable of interest, are held at their mean level to calculate these probabilities and their significance levels. Readers interested in the details of this procedure should consult Tomz, Wittenberg, and King (1999).

Appendix B

California Poll Data and Ecological Inference

Finding accurate data on how members of a particular racial or ethnic group voted is a challenging task. Many of the issues addressed by initiatives are sensitive, impairing the collection of accurate data. Methodologically, there are also concerns about constructing an accurate sample of exiting voters from literally thousands of precincts over the course of a day. To ensure that the results from the *Los Angeles Times* poll analysis are accurate, we repeated our analysis with two additional datasets.

California Poll Data

As a secondary test of the outcomes of direct democracy, we analyzed statewide surveys conducted by the Field Institute between 1970 and 1998. This California poll series has the advantage that it has existed for a longer time span and asks about voter preferences on a much larger set of propositions (131). At the same time, the series has several limitations. Each survey has a significantly smaller sample size and thus often does not have enough cases to accurately assess the black, Latino, or Asian American vote. California poll surveys sampled on average only 570 white, 66 Latino, 38 African American, and 17 Asian American respondents. The total sampled does, however, contain over 60,000 votes on these 131 propositions. In addition, almost all California polls are pre-election polls. Although all of the polls we included were administered within two weeks of the primary or general election, voters still had some time to change their minds (see Magleby, 1984, and Bowler and Donavan, 1998, for accounts of opinion change over the course of initiative campaigns). As a result, the California poll data are less accurate, correctly predicting the outcome of 106 of 131

propositions and misestimating the actual vote by an average of 8.2 percentage points.

To analyze the California poll data, we use the same logistic regression model with the same list of control variables (race, education, income, age, gender, political party, liberal-conservative ideology, region of residence, and margin of victory). The results are generally almost identical. Any substantive differences between the two datasets are noted in the text of the report.

Ecological Inference

To further test the accuracy of our data, we analyzed the actual vote by precinct. We employed ecological inference (King, 1997) using the precinct vote and Census data on racial demographics for each precinct to estimate the statewide vote by race on 13 propositions that overlap with the *Los Angeles Times* data. Ecological inference is a very time-consuming procedure and gives estimates for only a single group (i.e., blacks or Latinos, or those with bachelor's degrees). These limitations make it more useful as a check on our data rather than as an independent data source.

Using ecological inference to measure the vote by race on a particular initiative is a two-stage process. The first stage applies a model of ecological inference to estimate the rates of Latino (or black, Asian American, and white) and non-Latino turnout for each precinct in the state. These rates are calculated on the basis of aggregate statistics on the voting age population for each precinct. Specifically, the model uses the total number of voting age residents of the precinct, the proportion of Latino (or other) voting age residents, and the actual turnout for each precinct. King's (1997) EI model then couples the deterministic method of bounds with the maximum likelihood approach to derive estimates of Latino turnout (and their standard errors) for each precinct. Stage two uses these turnout estimates and the actual vote on a given initiative for each precinct to derive estimates of the percentage of Latinos (or blacks, Asian Americans, or whites) voting in favor of that proposition (once again relying on the method of bounds and a maximum likelihood approach). See King (1997) for a detailed account of the procedure and its advantages over previous methods.

We have voting estimates derived from ecological inference for at least one race and for several with all races for every initiative that overlaps with the *Los Angeles Times* data (see Table B.1). All told, we have a total of 19 out of a possible 36 comparisons (seven Latino, seven black, and five white). We used ecological inference to derive vote estimates for whites, blacks, and Latinos. We purposely excluded Asian Americans because diagnostic tests on ecological inference estimates for Asian Americans revealed certain biases in the estimates and significantly

Table B.1

Estimates of Yes Vote by Race for Various Statewide Propositions: Comparing Ecological Inference to the *Los Angeles Times* Exit Polls

Proposition	Year	Race	Ecological Inference Estimate, %	Los Angeles Times Exit Poll Estimate, %	Absolute Difference, %
131	1990	Latino	29.5	45.9	16.5
134	1990	White	31.2	39.4	8.2
140	1990	Black	18.1	40.3	22.2
184	1994	Latino	79.6	74.3	5.3
184	1994	Black	47.1	61.9	14.8
184	1994	White	70.9	72.1	1.2
186	1994	Black	47.4	40.8	6.6
187	1994	Latino	29.9	22.5	7.4
187	1994	Black	44.4	46.8	2.4
187	1994	White	61.4	62.6	1.3
188	1994	Latino	47.6	36.9	10.7
209	1996	Latino	20.0	29.2	9.2
209	1996	Black	9.8	9.1	0.7
209	1996	White	60.1	59.0	1.0
211	1996	Latino	30.8	25.0	5.8
215	1996	White	56.8	53.5	3.4
216	1996	Black	54.4	55.0	0.5
5	1998	Latino	70.8	73.1	2.2
5	1998	Black	89.2	78.5	10.7

Average Difference	
Latino	8.2
Black	8.3
White	3.0
All	6.8

NOTE: All propositions are from general elections.

larger standard errors. Precinct voting records and Census demographics at the Census block level were merged into consolidated precincts by the Statewide Database at the Institute for Governmental Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

The estimates of the white, black, and Latino vote that we get from ecological inference using the actual vote largely support the estimates derived from the *Los Angeles Times* exit polls, with an overall correlation of 0.91. On average, the estimates of the two sets differ by almost 7 percentage points, however. Broken down by race, we see that this varies greatly. The two estimates for the white vote (by far the largest group and the best sample) are the closest, followed by the Latino estimates and then black estimates. The magnitude of differences does vary across these two datasets, but the pattern of responses does not.

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