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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Plural Governance: Race, Ethnicity, and Within-District Representation in the United States

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Political Science

by

Liesel I. Spangler

Committee in charge:

Professor Marisa Abrajano, Chair

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Professor Gary Jacobson

Professor Thad Kousser

Professor John Skrentny

2020

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Chair

University of California San Diego

2020

DEDICATION

For Rayshard Brooks, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Atatiana Jefferson, Stephon Clark, Botham Jean, Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, and the heartbreaking number of others who were killed by racial inequality, racism, and police brutality. Say their names.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is a testament to the immense support I have received over the course of my time at UCSD. First and foremost, I want to thank my husband and partner, Francisco. Your unwavering belief in me has been my lifeblood. You have stood by my side, holding my hand, through a lifetime of ordeals and tribulations compressed into the last five years. You have sacrificed so much to keep Lilly happy and thriving while I finished my dissertation. Lilly, I am forever indebted to you for your sharp line edits as I finalized my research.

I would also like to thank the the rest of my family. My mother, my tireless editor and sounding board. You are the strongest and most resolute person I know. Your strength of will and character, especially over the last ten years, continues to inspire me. My father is the source of my pertinacity. The silver lining to the trials of his final years was that his faults showed me my own strengths. Dan, thank you for always giving me the reality check that I need. Tracie, I am constantly inspired by your ability to navigate ambition and motherhood with grace. Thank you for normalizing my experiences as I have navigated motherhood while working full-time and finishing my dissertation during a global pandemic.

Undoubtedly, I would not have not finished this dissertation without the support of my chair, Marisa Abrajano. Words cannot fully express my gratitude for your unending patience, encouragement, generosity, and mentorship. I want to thank my committee, Zoli Hajnal, Thad Kousser, Gary Jacobson, John Skrentny, and Christian Grose for believing in my project and being available when I would crawl out from under my rock to reach out for support. Thank you for your insightful feedback and guidance, and not letting me shy away from the big questions. Additionally, I would like to thank Dan Butler for his generous financial support that allowed me to complete my fieldwork, as well as field multiple surveys.

Finally, I want to thank my friends and colleagues who have provided innumerable instances of

feedback, encouragement, intellectual exchanges, and advice– Dang Do, John Kuk, Zoe Nemerever, John Porten, and so many others. I have learned so much from each and every one of you. To Haleh Yazdi, my first friend in San Diego, you have been an amazing listener and normalized so many of my grad school experiences. To Julia Clark, your friendship and judgement-free support mean more to me than I can ever put into words. Nazita Lajevardi, you are, by far, my biggest cheerleader. I cannot thank you enough for your unshakeable and enduring confidence in me when I lacked confidence in myself. Last, but certainly not least, Taylor Carlson, Lauren Ferry, and Heidi Hall, from methodological issues to cookie recipes to wedding planning and diaper changes, your advice, is always exactly what I need when I need it. I am forever grateful that I can call you dear friends.

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PUBLICATIONS

Marisa Abrajano, Lisa García Bedolla, and Liesel I. Spangler. "English Language Learners." In *Immigrant California: Understanding the Past, Present, and Future of U.S. Policy*, edited by David Scott FitzGerald and John D. Skrentny, 147-173. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2021.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Plural Governance: Race, Ethnicity, and Within-District Representation in the United States

by

Liesel I. Spangler

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California San Diego, 2020

Professor Marisa Abrajano, Chair

In this dissertation, I explore the consequences of the current racial and ethnic demographic shift that is occurring in the United States by examining exceptionally diverse electoral districts with no racial or ethnic majority group, which I call plurality districts. According to the 2015 American Community Survey estimates, there were eighty-six plurality districts, outnumbering black-majority districts and Latino-majority districts. These districts present new opportunities and challenges for

the representation of racial and ethnic groups in the United States. In my dissertation, I ask: how do U.S. House members change their within-district representation strategies and behaviors as their constituencies' compositions transition from those with racial/ethnic majority groups to plurality districts?

To answer this question, I present the overarching theory of racial trust and cultural competence in Chapter 1. Legislators of plurality districts must create inter-racial/ethnic electoral coalitions to win reelection. However, they are presented with the challenge that they do not descriptively represent the majority of their constituents and may struggle to credibly appeal to multiple groups simultaneously. To overcome these challenges, I argue that they should engage in behaviors that demonstrate their knowledge of the group's interests and their ability to represent out-groups effectively.

Chapter 2 explores whether and how legislators alter their strategies of political communication as their districts transition from majority-type districts to plurality districts. I argue that legislators of plurality districts are able to use their online presence and brand in an effort to communicate responsiveness and cultural competence to build rapport with various racial/ethnic groups within the district. I find that legislators alter the topics and racial/ethnic groups referenced in their social media messages as they transition from serving majority-type districts to plurality districts, albeit these changes are slow.

Chapter 3 examines whether and how legislators alter the racial/ethnic compositions of their staffers as they transition from serving majority-type districts to serving plurality districts. I argue that a legislator is better able to be responsive to their constituency when the racial/ethnic composition of their staff mirrors the district. I find evidence of partisan differences in the way that legislators hire before and after redistricting. I find that Democrats of newly transitioned plurality districts increase the racial/ethnic diversity of their management staffs, while Republicans of newly transitioned plurality districts increase the racial/ethnic diversity of their constituency services staffs.

Chapter 4 analyzes whether and how the types and amounts of discretionary funds are changed as legislators transition from serving majority-type districts to serving plurality districts. I specifically look at contract awards that are flagged as serving various non-white racial/ethnic communities. I argue that these contract awards offer legislators an opportunity to bring back important funding to the district, but also an opportunity to work with various groups within their district during the application process for these awards. I find no evidence to suggest that legislators acquire more or different types of minority-interest funding for their district after they transition to a plurality district compared to when they served a majority-type district.

Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation with a discussion of the important contributions made by this dissertation, particularly as the research relates to the political representation and engagement of racially and ethnically historically marginalized communities. This chapter also discusses the unanswered questions that have emerged from this research.

1

Introduction

”What is the purpose of a nation if not to empower human beings to live better together than they could individually? When government fails to meet the basic needs of humanity for food, shelter, clothing, and even more important the room to grow and evolve the people will begin to rely on one another, to pool their resources and rise above the artificial limitations of tradition or law. Each of us has something significant to contribute to society be it physical, material, intellectual, emotional, or spiritual.”

– U.S. Representative John Lewis, *Across That Bridge* (p. 11)

The California 13th Congressional District located in Northern California is a true majority-minority district. The district serves both Oakland and Berkeley, as well as several other communities, and has no racial majority—it is approximately 35% white, 17% Black, 20% Asian, and 22% Latinx (as of 2015¹). Barbara Lee— a Black congresswoman— has served this area in Congress since 1998 and as a California State Assemblywoman from 1990-1996. Although she has been a champion of the Black community while in office, she must appeal to a wider racial audience to be elected because her district is only 17% Black, down from the almost 32% Black in 1999 around the time

¹Estimates from the 2015 American Community Survey

she was first elected.² Her actions in office reflect the diversity of her district. As expected, she spoke out on issues important to her coethnics— most recently the repeal of key provisions of the Voting Rights Act.³ However, she also advocates for comprehensive immigration reform that keeps families together— an issue that is important to her Latinx and Asian constituents.⁴ On March 23, 2016, she cosponsored House Bill 4857 that supports the funding of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, as well as House Resolution 662 that recognizes March 31st as “Cesar Chavez Day,” commemorating the contributions and achievements of Cesar Chavez. Would Barbara Lee advocate for the interests of Latinx community in the same way if she were representing a majority-Black district? How do representatives of similar districts balance the competing interests of their diverse constituencies?

My dissertation paints a story about diversity and representation: legislators respond to the heterogeneity of their district and find ways to please a majority of constituents to gain reelection. Research on how elites cope with diversity is not new (Dahl 1961, Fenno (1978), Fiorina (1974)). However, racial and ethnic heterogeneity poses different sets of challenges for legislators than other forms of heterogeneity. The shadow of slavery, the persistence of discrimination, and the very structure of American society imbue race and ethnicity with a unique weight that is not present in other forms of heterogeneity (e.g., partisan, economic, geographic). How do individuals from historically racially and ethnically marginalized groups trust the system that has been used to oppress, exclude, and dehumanize them?

More recently, many in white America have been confronted with reality that these events are not just in the past. Repeatedly, representatives of federal, state, and local governments have highlighted that issues of racial equity are very much still relevant in the present day. The national dialog is permeated with recurrent reminders of racialized police brutality since the mass protests in Ferguson, Missouri following the shooting of Michael Brown in 2014, the national discussions of racialized voting exclusion with the advent of voter ID laws after the Supreme Court’s decision to strike

²See Tate 2003, p. 67

³See <https://lee.house.gov/issues/civil-rights>

⁴See <https://lee.house.gov/issues/immigration>

crucial sections of the Voting Rights Act with *Shelby vs. Holder*, and numerous racist statements of President Donald Trump, such as his view of Mexican immigrants as rapists, drug dealers, and criminals.⁵

These actualities serve as *mise en scène* in which legislators need to build rapport with their constituents. Legislators serving racially and ethnically diverse constituencies contend with these grim truths in order to provide effective representation, particularly when they represent non-coethnic constituents (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Gay 2002; Grose 2011). The majority of new plurality districts are served by legislators who have transitioned from white-majority districts. This history of serving a white-majority may foster suspicion among constituents of color regarding the ability of the legislator to serve their interests, particularly when and where those interests diverge from the interests of the white constituents in the district.

I ask in this dissertation whether and how legislators of new plurality districts are able to adjust their representation strategies to meet the needs of their new constituency? Are legislators able to build sufficient racial trust with their constituents, particularly those who are non-coethnics, in order to provide effective representation? I theorize that the reliance on multiple racial and ethnic groups for reelection creates a racial trust dilemma in which the representative must display sufficient cultural competence to garner the support of non-coethnic/coracial groups. I argue that within-district forms of representation— political communications, constituency services, and district funding— help to solve the racial trust dilemma by offering opportunities for the legislator to signal cultural competence to non-coethnic constituents, as well as opportunities for direct interaction between the legislator and his/her constituents. I present a research design that analyzes the changes in representation outcomes as districts transition from majority-type districts to plurality districts. Through these analyses, the dissertation explains the ways in which representatives rely on a mix of strategies to represent their racially and ethnically diverse districts.

⁵Michelle Ye Hee Lee, “Donald Trump’s false comments connecting Mexican immigrants and crime”, The Washington Post, July 8, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/07/08/donald-trumps-false-comments-connecting-mexican-immigrants-and-crime/>

1.1 Describing plurality districts

Districts with no racial or ethnic majority, which I call plurality districts, are growing at great rates in the US. These districts are the future of minority representation. Figure 1.1 shows the change in district types from 2000 to 2010. In the ten year period, twenty-two additional plurality districts were added, whereas Latinx-majority districts only increased by two districts and Black-majority districts did not demonstrate any net change, making plurality districts the fastest growing type of district in the US. These districts are located in both red and blue states and represented by Democratic and Republican legislators of multiple racial/ethnic groups. As Figure 1.1 shows, plurality districts currently outnumber Black-majority districts and Latinx-majority districts combined.

Importantly, legislators of plurality districts represent more people of color than do the other types of majority-minority districts combined. In 2015, 39% of the non-white population over the age of 18 lived in plurality districts— more than 37 million individuals. In comparison, Black-majority districts serve 7% of the over 18 population— 6.6 million individuals, and Latinx- majority districts serve 6%— 6 million individuals.⁶

I will use majority-minority district as an umbrella term to describe any district where the population of color exceeds 50.0 percent. Thus, majority-minority districts will include the majority-Black districts, majority-Latinx districts, majority-Asian districts, and plurality districts. Majority-Black, majority-Latinx, and majority-Asian American/Pacific Islander (henceforth, AAPI) districts are districts where more than 50.0 percent of the population is Black, Latinx, and Asian American/Pacific Islander respectively. Plurality districts, those districts where no ethnic or racial groups make up a majority of the population, are the main focus of my paper, and I will be comparing plurality districts to the majority-type districts (i.e., majority-Black, majority-Latinx, majority-AAPI, and majority-white districts).

These districts are understandably located in the areas of the country that are more racially and ethnically diverse. Figure 1.2 shows that these districts exist in the coastal areas and in the south of

⁶These estimates were calculated using the American Community Survey 5 year estimates for 2015.

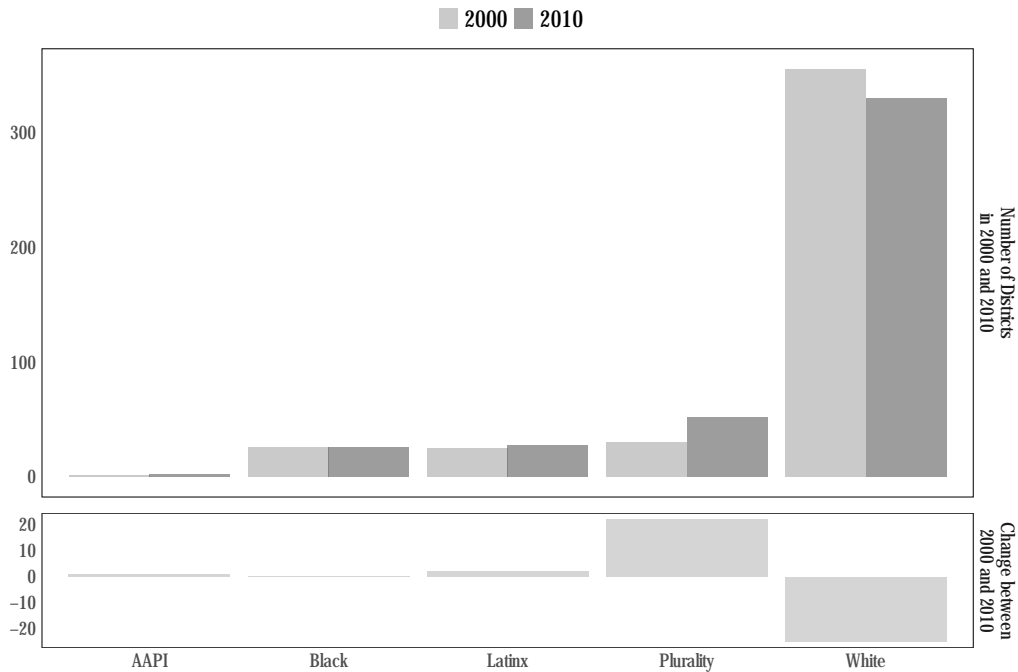


Figure 1.1: Change in the district racial/ethnic classifications between 2000 and 2010

the United States. These districts are mostly located in urban areas like San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York City, Houston, etc. Examples of these districts are New York’s 16th Congressional District represented by Democrat Eliot Engel in the Bronx borough of New York City, Florida’s 23rd Congressional District represented by Democrat Debbie Wasserman Schultz located outside of Miami, California’s 12th Congressional District represented by Democrat Nancy Pelosi in San Francisco, Texas’s 22nd Congressional District represented by Republican Pete Olson in Houston.

I treat plurality districts in this paper as a single type of district for parsimony’s sake. However, like other district types, there is a great deal heterogeneity among plurality districts, both in terms of the district composition, as well as who represents the districts. Of the 86 plurality districts in 2015, the modal plurality district had no influentially sized racial or ethnic group in the district that equalled or exceeded 40% of the population. There were 33 of these non-influence plurality districts. There were 29 white-influence plurality districts where the white population equaled or exceeded 40% of the district, and 25 of these 29 districts did not have another equally sized racial or ethnic majority group. There were 15 Latinx-majority districts, 13 of which the Latinx population was the only group that surpassed the 40% threshold. There were 13 Black influence districts, and in 11

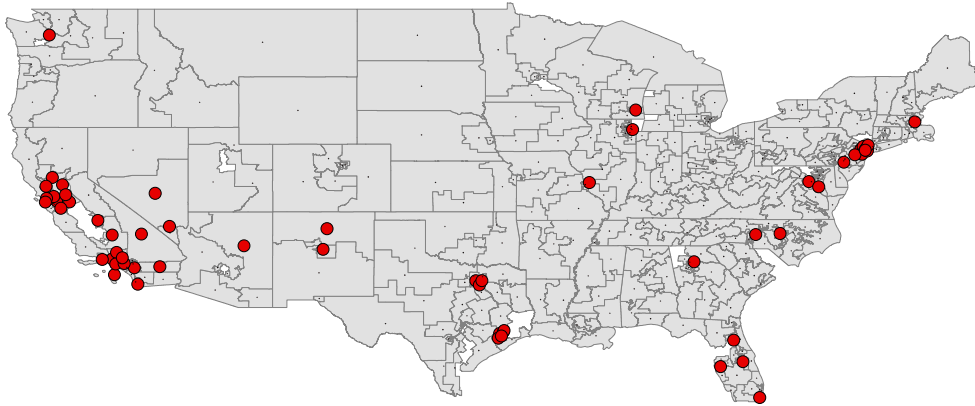


Figure 1.2: The distribution of plurality districts in 2015 (114th Congress)

of those districts, the Black population was the only influentially sized racial/ethnic group in the district. What ties these diverse distributions is that there are no racial or ethnic majority groups in these districts, which places extra constraints on the legislators that serve plurality districts, which will be discussed in further detail in the next section.

In addition to the heterogeneity of the demographic compositions of plurality districts, there is also heterogeneity among the legislators who serve these communities. The majority of these districts are served by Democrats, but there are more than a handful of Republican legislators who serve plurality districts. Many of the legislators serving newly transitioned plurality districts are electorally vulnerable due to the ideological diversity within the districts.

The modal legislator of a plurality district is white; however, the majority of legislators of plurality districts are non-white. In the 114th Congress, there were 33 white legislators, 21 Black legislators, 23 Hispanic legislators, and 6 AAPI legislators serving plurality districts. Figure 1.3 shows the changes in the distributions of the racial/ethnic identifications of plurality legislators across the three congresses that span from 2011 to 2017. The largest increases from the 112th Congress (2011-2013) to the 114th (2015-2017) are among the white and Latinx/Hispanic legislators.

There is also heterogeneity in the history and urbanicity of plurality districts. Most plurality districts fall into one of three groups: legacy urban plurality districts, new urban plurality districts, suburban/agricultural plurality districts. Legacy urban plurality districts are established diverse

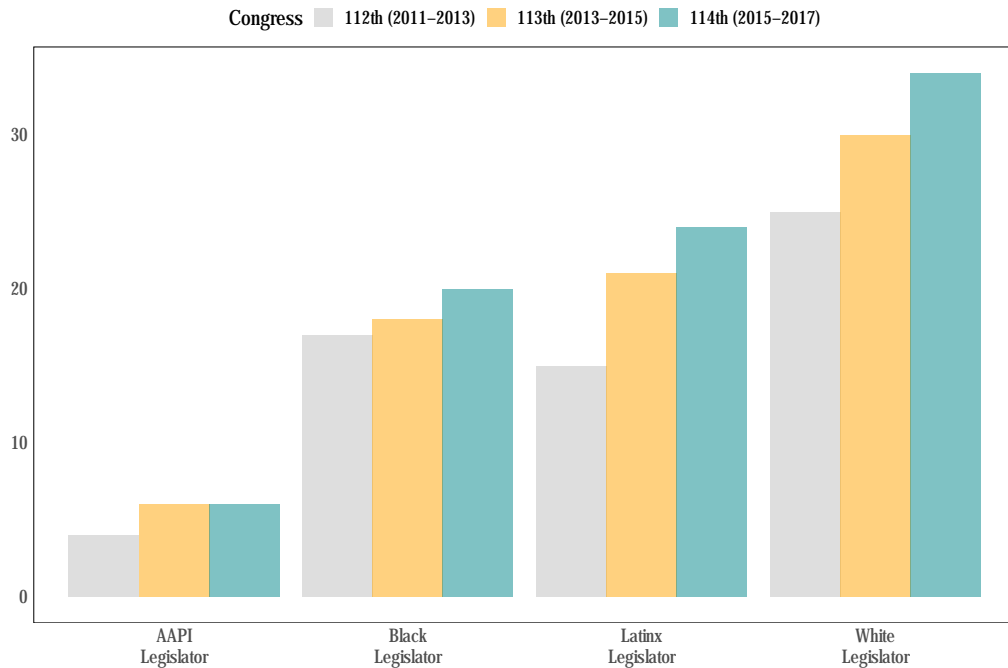


Figure 1.3: Racial/ethnic composition of plurality district legislators during 112th-114th Congresses (2011-2017)

constituencies, such as Doris Matsui’s constituency currently found in California’s 6th congressional district in Sacramento and Nydia Velazquez’s constituency currently found in New York’s 7th congressional district in New York City. These plurality districts are found in areas that are historically racially/ethnically diverse. New urban plurality districts are recently plurality districts that have recently transitioned to having no racial/ethnic majority group, such as those that changed from majority-AAPI, majority-Black, majority-Latinx, and majority-white districts with the congressional redistricting following the 2010 census. These districts include John Culberson’s constituency in Texas’ 7th congressional district in Houston (formerly a white-majority district), Blake Farenthold’s constituency in Texas’ 27th congressional district, which serves Corpus Christi and Victoria. Finally, there are plurality districts that each contain a mix of suburban and agricultural areas, such as Jeff Denham’s constituency in California’s 10th congressional district in the Central Valley.

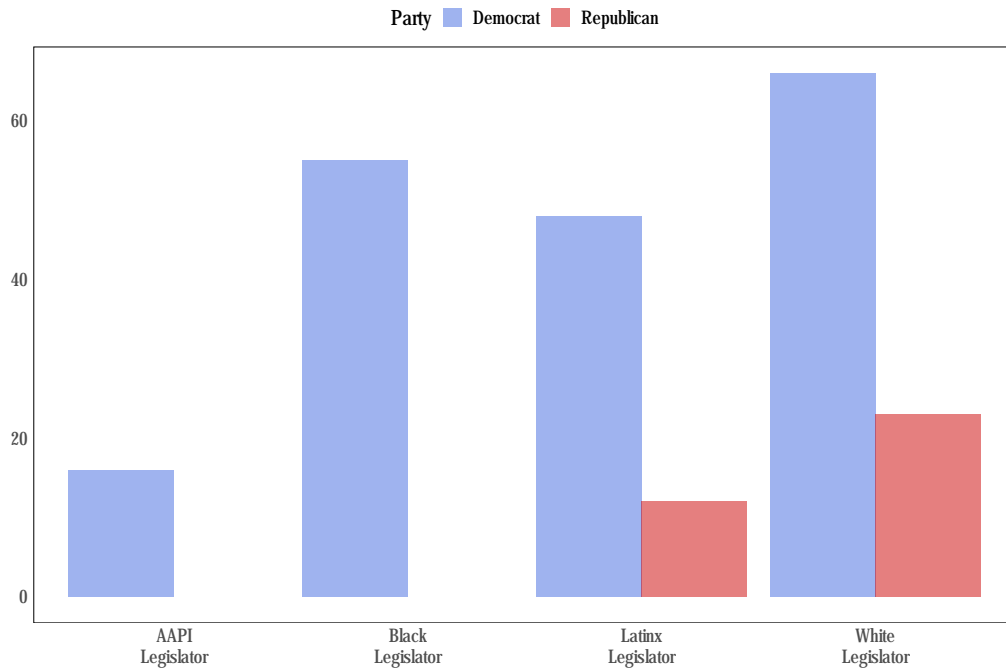


Figure 1.4: Race and ethnicity of plurality district legislators

1.2 The effects of majority-minority districts on representation

The extant literature demonstrates that the ethnic and racial composition of a district affects the substantive and descriptive representation of racial and ethnic groups. The empirical examination of the geographic distribution of racial and ethnic minorities has largely focused on whether majority-minority districts help or hinder the representation of racial and ethnic minorities. Overall, the literature suggests that the distribution of racial and ethnic minorities across districts can affect a) descriptive representation via minority candidate emergence and b) substantive representation outcomes via policy outcomes and constituency services. However, there has been no direct exploration of how representation is provided in districts where there is no racial/ethnic majority group.

The minority representation literature focuses primarily on majority-Black and majority-Latinx districts. Many works operationalize majority-type districts as districts where the population of Black or Latinx residents exceeds 50 percent (Canon 1999; Gay 2007; Grose 2011; Henderson, Sekhon, and Titiunik 2015; Lublin 1997); however, others operationalize majority-type districts as districts

of the voting age population of Black or Latinx residents exceeds 50 percent (Cameron, Epstein, and O’Halloran 1996). The literature also defines Black-influence districts and Latinx-influence districts, which are districts with large populations of Black or Latinx residents whose populations within the district do not exceed 50 percent. The lower bound for Black-influence and Latinx-influence districts vary from author to author: 30 to 50 percent (Canon 1999), 40 to 50 percent (Grose 2011; Lublin 1997).⁷ The literature is divided as to whether which district racial/ethnic composition is ideal for representation outcomes—some supporting influence districts (Cameron, Epstein, and O’Halloran 1996; Grose 2011; Swain 1993) and others supporting the use of majority districts (Canon 1999; Lublin 1997). Among these scholars, only Lublin (1999) considers the presence of multiple racial and ethnic groups for the representation outcomes of one group. For example, he includes the size of a district’s Latinx population when analyzing the representation of Black constituents in the said district. That being the case, more research examining how intradistrict heterogeneity affects representation outcomes is needed.

Numerous studies demonstrate effects of the size of the Black or Latinx population in an electoral district on both descriptive and substantive representation outcomes. As the percentage of Black or Latinx residents in a district increases, the probability of a Black or Latinx candidate (respectively) running increases (Branton 2009; Casellas 2008). Cameron, Epstein, and O’Halloran (1996) find that different regions of the country provide different equal-opportunity thresholds (or a 50% probability that a Black candidate will be elected) that range from 28.3% in the Northeast to 47.3% in the Northwest. Lublin (1997) finds that the presence of Latinx individuals in a largely Black district can lower the threshold required to reach the equal probability of electing a Black candidate and a white candidate, indicative of a racial coalition among Black and Latinx voters. Conversely, Casellas (2008) finds that there is no evidence for such coalitions. He finds no evidence that increasing the percentage of one ethnic group will increase the probability of a legislator of the other ethnic group being elected.

It is also possible that majority-minority districts increase substantive representation outcomes.

⁷N.B., Grose (2011) calls these districts “Black-decisive districts”

Early research found a positive relationship between the ethnic composition of the district and substantive representation outcomes, but the research did not consider the race of the legislator in the analyses (Black 1978; Bullock 1981; Combs, Hibbing, and Welch 1984; Whitby 1985, 1987). Taking race of legislator into account, Cameron, Epstein, and O’Halloran (1996) argue that majority-Black districts are not necessary to realize minority-interest policy preferences. They argue that overall, a 47% Black voting age population in a district is optimal to achieve substantive representation; however, there are regional differences that can lower the required BVAP (e.g., being in the northeast). Lublin (1997) includes the percentage of Latinx residents into the equation, arguing that the inclusion of Latinx residents can augment the Black constituency in working towards minority-interest policy. However, Lublin’s work presumes that a) Latinx voters have the same policy concerns/goals as Black voters (Epstein and O’Halloran 1999) and b) African Americans are being elected in these coalition districts.

When substantive representation is measured as the ideological distance between the legislator and the constituent, having “influence” or “threat” districts (a minority population between 40-50 percent of the district) may hurt substantive representation outcomes. Griffin and Newman (2007) study the ideological distance between white and Latinx constituents and their representatives and finds that having a Latinx population comprise 40-50% of the district actually increases the ideological distance between the legislator and the Latinx constituents, which the authors claim is evidence for a white backlash against the Latinx population.

When representation is viewed more broadly than the fruition of a group’s policy agenda, more nuance appears with regard to the representation of different racial and ethnic groups. The growing work on the multidimensionality of representation considers how legislators split their limited resources across legislative goals, district funding and allocation, constituency services, and symbolic representation given constituent preferences (Eulau and Karps 1977; Griffin and Flavin 2011; Harden 2016; Lapinski et al. 2016). Part of this research finds that racial and ethnic groups place different values on each of the forms of representation. Constituency services tend to be more important for Black voters than white voters (Grose 2011; Harden 2016). And while white voters

favor policy responsiveness (Griffin and Flavin 2011; Lapinski et al. 2016), Black and Latinx voters place less emphasis on a legislator's votes and more emphasis on her ability to acquire funds for the district (Griffin and Flavin 2011).

These studies suggest that the racial and ethnic composition of the district do impact descriptive and substantive representation outcomes. The literature has so far focused primarily on the effects of majority-Black districts and more recently on majority-Latinx districts. However, the literature does not fully address the interaction of multiple ethnic groups in the same district and its impact on substantive and descriptive representation. Only a few works consider the effect of the presence of more than one racial and ethnic minority group on representation outcomes (see Lublin (1999); Griffin and Newman (2008)). As such, an examination of the effect of having no racial majority in a district is needed in order to understand the political effects of increasing diversity within the American electorate.

1.3 The importance of racial trust and cultural competence in representing plurality districts

1.3.1 Just another type of majority-minority district?

At first glance, it is unclear whether plurality districts will be just another form of majority-minority district or whether the absence of an racial/ethnic minority group will make them different from majority-Black and majority-Latinx districts. To begin, it is important to clarify why plurality districts present unique representation challenges that their legislators must overcome. Representatives of plurality districts face different sets of constraints compared to representatives of districts with racial/ethnic majority groups.

The first constraint is the requirement of a representative to build an electoral coalition of two or more racial groups because, by definition, no racial majority exists in a plurality district. In order for representatives to be (re)elected in these districts, they need to credibly appeal to a diverse

constituency. A legislator's ability to credibly appeal to voters of multiple racial/ethnic groups relies on their ability to create trust with their non-coethnic constituents. Paraphrasing Fenno (1978), trust is central to the representative-constituent relationship. Fenno (1978) asserts that constituents must trust their representatives because a constituent's monitoring costs are so high. While Fenno discusses the relationship between representatives and their constituents more generally, a representative of plurality districts has the added challenge and requirement of cultivating interracial trust with non-coethnics in order to maintain his electoral coalition.

The second constraint builds off of the first: establishing sufficient interracial/ethnic trust with non-coethnic constituents is difficult task. Building racial trust between a legislator and his or her non-coethnic constituents is difficult because many racial and ethnic minority groups often have existed outside of the center of American politics. The history of limited participation and responsiveness, even repression, have led many racial and ethnic minority individuals to distrust government, particularly during Republican administrations (Public Trust in Government: 1958-2015 2015), worsening the problem.

Barriers to Trust

Legislators of plurality districts will not descriptively represent the majority of the constituents by definition, unless the legislator identifies with two or more racial/ethnic groups. This is not necessarily the case for other majority-minority districts, in that it is up to the voters of the district to elect someone who does or does not descriptively represent the majority racial/ethnic group within the district.

Hannah Pitkin (1967) stated that with descriptive representation “[t]he representative does not act for others; he ‘stands for’ them, by virtue of a correspondence or connection between them, a resemblance or reflection” (p. 61). Empirical research supports the importance of descriptive representation across a variety of political domains. It has been associated with changes in roll-call votes (Canon 1999; Lublin 1997; Whitby 1997), political deliberation (Mansbridge 1999), the legislative agenda (Canon 1999), political participation and engagement of racial/ethnic minorities

(Banducci, Donovan, and Karp 2004; Barreto, Segura, and Woods 2004; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Fraga 2016; Gay 2002; Washington 2006), feelings of political alienation (Pantoja and Segura 2003), alignment of preferences between representatives and constituents (Tate 2003), among others. Descriptive representation enjoins the presence of shared experience between the representative and his/her constituents (Mansbridge 1999). However, this shared experience is not always guaranteed and can often remain purely a presupposition or assumption. Mansbridge writes, “[b]eing one of us’ is assumed to promote loyalty to ‘our’ interests.”(p. 629, 1999). While descriptive representation does not necessarily ensure substantive representation, it does serve an important role in trust between legislators and constituents.

Legislators of plurality districts may have fewer interactions with non-coethnic/coracial constituents, which makes it difficult to gather and understand the political needs of non-coethnic/coracial groups and provide effective representation. Research shows that racial/ethnic minority individuals, particularly those of Hispanic and Asian-American descent, are less likely to politically participate (Jang 2009; Lien 1994; Shaw, De la Garza, and Lee 2000; Wong et al. 2011), though nativity and citizenship status moderate participation rates (DeSipio 1996; Hero and Campbell 1996; Lien 2004). The inability of plurality legislators to descriptively represent the majority of their constituents may, in fact, make it harder to reach the majority of their constituents, compared to legislators who descriptively represent the majority of their district.

Moreover, general distrust of government often exhibited by racial/ethnic minorities, particularly during Republican administrations (Public Trust in Government: 1958-2015 2015), may make it difficult for racial and ethnic minorities to trust their elected officials. This issue is not unique to plurality districts but relevant for all majority-minority district types. Trust between two parties is relevant when there is potential for defection from the initial tacit or spoken agreement or arrangement, combined with the incomplete information about the true motivations of the party being trusted (Giddens 1990; Misztal 1996). As Smith (2010) writes, “The greater trusters’ ignorance about trustees’ motivations and intentions, the greater is trusters’ risk” (p. 454). The long history of societal and institutional marginalization, discrimination, and repression, which recently has shown

up in the forms of racial profiling, disproportionate contact of Black and Latinx individuals with the police, police brutality, and mass incarceration (Alexander 2012; Lerman and Weaver 2014; Weaver and Lerman 2010) significantly raises the risks of trusting government and elected officials. This has led many racial and ethnic minority individuals to distrust government, particularly during Republican administrations (Public Trust in Government: 1958-2015 2015). Overarching distrust in government complicates the plurality legislator's ability to engage with his/her constituents, particularly when he or she is not a coethnic/coracial of those constituents.

The literature examining the representation of African Americans points to a trust deficit between Black constituents and non-coethnic legislators within several indicators of trust. Black constituents are less likely to reach out to white legislators (Banducci, Donovan, and Karp 2004; Broockman 2013; Gay 2002; Grose 2011). Black constituents are less likely to rate their white legislators as favorably as Black constituents do their Black legislators (Tate 2001). Swain (1993) finds in her interviews that white legislators of Black-majority districts were required to prove their loyalty in ways that Black legislators did not. Presumably, the preference for same-race or same-ethnicity representatives is not unique to the Black community. Gay (2002) finds that white constituents are also more likely to contact white legislators than Black legislators. She also finds that white constituents hold unfavorable views of Black legislators. Whether these findings apply to other racial groups has yet to be evaluated. However, these findings collectively suggest that legislators may experience additional barriers to building rapport with their non-coethnic constituents. This distrust may affect how willing constituents are to communicate with legislators not of their racial/ethnic group. Constituents with non-coethnic/coracial legislators do not contact their legislators as much as when they have coethnic/coracial legislators (Broockman 2013; Grose 2011).

Constituents may expect their non-coethnic legislator to ignore or discount their preferences and concerns, creating a self-fulfilling cycle that contributes to political marginalization. Strategic legislators and their offices will be well-informed as to which groups participate in politics and which groups do not. Additionally, the potential for implicit biases among legislative offices regarding the political sophistication of their constituents may dissuade these constituents to engage with the

office. This is demonstrated by an interview with a staffer working for a Republican House Member serving a plurality district in a red state. The staffer acknowledged that the non-white constituents in the district “might not understand the process.”⁸ Taking inspiration from the stereotype threat literature in Social Psychology (Steele and Aronson 1995), the management of biases of the staffers in district offices, particularly in cases where the staffers are non-coethnics, places an extra burden on a constituent to participate, which may tip the scales towards non-participation. In this context, constituents’ beliefs about a legislator’s expectations of their group’s political participation and sophistication may lead constituents to self-select out of the political system.

Moreover, this political marginalization is worsened when legislators and interest groups do not ask low propensity voters to politically engage, even though there is evidence that asking low propensity voters to participate does increase participation rates (Abrajano and Panagopoulos 2011; Michelson 2003, 2005, 2006; Panagopoulos and Green 2011; Ramírez 2005). If constituents expect legislators to ask them to participate and the legislators do not, constituents may believe that participation is not worth the effort and resources. This is especially relevant given the evidence that white individuals are likely to use racial and ethnic stereotypes (particularly among whites) in policy preference formation (Hurwitz and Peffley 1997; Weber et al. 2014).

Finally, constituents may not believe that a non-coethnic legislator is equally able and willing to represent multiple racial and ethnic groups. This may be particularly relevant in areas where interracial distrust between racial and ethnic groups is strong. This distrust is most evident between white communities and other racial/ethnic communities. Most recently, this distrust is illustrated by the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement and the protests related to racialized excessive use of force by police and law enforcement. However, strong interracial distrust is not limited to distrust between white communities and historically racially marginalized communities; there are examples of distrust between the Black and Korean communities that have culminated in violence in the Red

⁸Interview with a district office staffer of a Republican House Member in a red state, conducted on April 10, 2018. Name of staffer and legislator are not provided by request of staffer and the University of California, San Diego Institutional Review Board.

Apple boycott in New York City from 1990-1991,⁹ as well as during the L.A. race riots in 1992. The strains associated with divided communities can bleed into the politics of local government (Kaufmann 2003; McClain and Karnig 1990; McClain and Tauber 1998), as well as shape the policy preferences of the electorate (Enos, Kaufman, and Sands 2019).

In cases where there is conflict or distrust among the racial/ethnic minority groups within the community, legislators must signal that despite the conflict between groups, that each group is important to the legislator and that the conflict will not affect their ability to represent both groups. The potential distrust and conflict between racial/ethnic groups complicate a legislator's ability to build a stable inter-racial/ethnic electoral coalition and to convincingly provide representation to all salient groups. This reality can lead plurality districts to appear different than other types of majority-minority districts.

Still, it might not take intense racial and ethnic violence to instill doubt in the minds of constituents. Even in communities without acute racial/ethnic conflict, balancing the interests of any diverse constituency requires calculating the costs and benefits of pursuing certain legislative goals, particularly when group-level preferences conflict. Fiorina (1974) models legislator behavior under a spectrum of district-level political heterogeneity. He finds that when district political heterogeneity is high, representatives will inevitably experience electoral losses when voting on salient issues. While Fiorina (1974) focuses on legislative action, his intuitions can be applied to the constraints facing legislators of plurality districts. Particularly in districts with large white populations, the preferences of the district will be more diverse because white constituents have distinct preferences from constituents of color, particularly in the racialized issue areas of immigration, civil rights, poverty, and criminal justice (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Canon 1999; Gilliam Jr and Whitby 1989; Kinder and Winter 2001; Tate 2003; Whitby and Krause 2001). In reality, not all plurality districts hold diverse preferences. For example, there is evidence to suggest that individuals who identify as Latinx and Black may prefer somewhat different solutions to social problems (Barreto and Segura 2014); but when these preferences are dichotomized into a legislative vote, they will

⁹See Kim (2003) for an analysis of the Red Apple boycott.

most likely support the same position. However, racial and ethnic politics is more nuanced than roll-call votes. For example, in the aggregate, people who identify as Latinx and Black consider education and public assistance to be salient issues (Gilliam Jr and Whitby 1989; Kinder and Winter 2001; Rouse 2013), but people who identify as Black favor more government intervention than do people who identify as Latinx (Barreto and Segura 2014) indicating potential disagreement on how to solve these areas of policy concern. A legislator's ability to understand these nuances and consider their implications on his or her representation style may help to build interracial/ethnic trust with non-coethnic constituents.

1.3.2 Building inter-racial/ethnic trust

I suggest that inter-racial/ethnic trust between a non-coethnic/coracial plurality legislator and a constituent is built on a few interlocking pieces. First, she needs to demonstrate that she understands the history and culture of the person or group. Awareness of the history of struggle and marginalization that has created a complex system of inequality is the first step to dismantling the system. Additionally, she must have knowledge of the cultural symbols, events, figures, etc. that influence the group's values and ethos, because those features often shape how individuals and groups interpret events and messages.

Second, she needs to demonstrate that she understands the current condition of the person or group. What inter-racial/ethnic disparities persist? How is the racial/ethnic hierarchy playing out in modern events? Is the racial/ethnic hierarchy shifting in a way that creates new marginalized and problems? Without this knowledge of the history and current state of a group, it would be difficult for a representative to understand the political/social needs, preferences, and agenda of a group.

Third, the non-coethnic/coracial plurality legislator needs to demonstrate that she has the person or group's best interests at heart. Based on her understanding of historical and modern problems, and the political agenda of a group, she must also internalize its interests and signal that those interests matter to her. Fourth, the non-coethnic/coracial plurality legislator must demonstrate that she is willing to act on the person or group's behalf. The actions taken must be meaningful to the group

and visible.

To accomplish this enormous task of building inter-racial/ethnic trust and proving themselves, legislators of plurality districts can benefit from taking visible actions to prove that they care about the traditionally marginalized racial/ethnic groups within the district. I argue that to ameliorate these trust issues, whether they stem from distrust of the legislator himself/herself or distrust of the legislator's ability to represent multiple groups simultaneously, legislators must demonstrate *cultural competence*. Legislators can demonstrate *cultural competence* by signaling knowledge of or taking actions based on any of the above elements. To signal *cultural competence*, elected officials can engage in a variety of behaviors, such as symbolic messaging, symbolic legislation honoring a group, meaningful policy that affects a specific racial/ethnic group, public events that highlight cultural knowledge, or diverse staffs that match the demographics of the district. By signaling *cultural competence*, legislators indicate that they are aware of the demographic composition of their constituency and attuned to the needs of an racial/ethnic group, thus fostering rapport between themselves and their non-coethnic/coracial constituents.

As such, I argue that legislators must find ways to convince their constituents that they understand more than the superficialities extant within the diversity of their constituency. One potential solution is for legislators to signal cultural competence, which can be defined as an elected official's ability to display recognition of the issues, events, traditions, and other facets of the group's experiences in the United States that are salient to a racial or ethnic group. It signals responsiveness, empathy, and awareness that builds rapport with non-coethnic/racial constituents.

1.4 Preview of dissertation

This dissertation explores three areas of within-district representation that offer legislators of plurality districts opportunities to build interracial trust and engage with their diverse constituencies. I provide three different sets of tests to see if and how legislators alter their representation strategies as their constituencies change from majority-type districts to plurality districts. Each chapter employs

the same pre/post-redistricting research design. This design measures the changes in three different outcome constructs— communication, staffing, and funding—across the congressional redistricting following the 2010 census. The outcome variables each represent the difference in representation outcomes from the 114th congress (2015-2017) and the representation outcomes from the 112th congress (2011-2013). Legislators transitioned to their new districts at the start of the 113th congress in January of 2013. The structure of the research design allows legislators time to adjust to their new districts during the 113th congress (2013-2015).

This pre/post-redistricting designs allows the opportunity to measure the changes in representation while holding the legislator constant. This design highlights an important scope consideration in that the results presented in the dissertation refer to the changes in representation conditional on being reelected in the 114th congress, and as such the legislators included in these analyses are only those that are in office during the 112th and the 114th Congresses. To some degree, this represents a hard test insofar as it weeds out legislators who were not able to build sufficient support within their district to be reelected. This methodological choice crucially removes the legislator as a confounding variable when trying to explain the change in representation. Moreover, because U.S. House members ostensibly do not have control over the districts to which they are redistricted, this research design brings a degree of causal identification to this observational institutional research.

Using this design, Chapter 2 explores whether and how legislators alter their strategies of political communication as their districts transition from majority-type districts to plurality districts. I argue that legislators of plurality districts are able to use their online presence and brand in an effort to communicate responsiveness and cultural competence to build rapport with various racial/ethnic groups within the district. I find that legislators alter the topics and racial/ethnic groups referenced in their social media messages as they transition from serving majority-type districts to plurality districts, albeit these changes are slow.

Chapter 3 examines whether and how legislators alter the racial/ethnic compositions of their staffers as they transition from serving majority-type districts to serving plurality districts. I argue that legislators are better able to be responsive to their constituency when the racial/ethnic composition of

their staffs mirror the district. I find evidence of partisan differences in the way that legislators hire before and after redistricting. I find that Democrats of newly transitioned plurality districts increase the racial/ethnic diversity of their management staffs, while Republicans of newly transitioned plurality districts increase the racial/ethnic diversity of their constituency services staffs.

Chapter 4 analyzes whether and how the types and amounts of discretionary funds are changed as legislators transition from serving majority-type districts to serving plurality districts. I specifically look at contract awards that are flagged as serving various non-white racial/ethnic communities. I argue that these contract awards offer legislators an opportunity to bring back important funding to the district, but also an opportunity to work with various groups within their district during the application process for these awards. I find no evidence to suggest that legislators acquire more or different types of minority-interest funding for their district after they transition to a plurality district compared to when they served a majority-type district.

Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation with a discussion of the important contributions made by this dissertation, particularly as the research relates to the political representation and engagement of racially and ethnically historically marginalized communities. This chapter also discusses the unanswered questions that have emerged from this research.

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2

Culturally Competent Political Communication

The persistent and increasing forms of inequality present in the United States raise concerns regarding the quality of responsiveness among elected officials. Recent work in responsiveness has focused on policy responsiveness (Butler 2011; Erickson, Wright, and McIver 1993; Lax and Phillips 2011; Rouse 2013) and direct constituency requests (Broockman 2013; Butler and Broockman 2011; Lajevardi 2018). This chapter explores the use of elite communications as an additional measure of responsiveness.

The work that has focused on elite communications as a means of representation focuses primarily on self-branding. Legislators use their messaging strategies to shape the way they are perceived by their constituents and the larger public (Grimmer 2013; Grimmer, Westwood, and Messing 2015). These impression generating exercises through elite communications can be useful for the legislators, but messaging strategies can also be viewed from a different lens— responsiveness. Strategic legislators can use their public communications to signal that they understand the needs of the community and the issues that are salient to their constituents as a means of showing their responsiveness.

This article leverages the 2013 U.S. House redistricting to examine legislators' responsiveness

through the medium of elite communications. I compare legislator messaging strategies before and after the changes in racial and ethnic demographic composition of a legislator's constituency via redistricting. The transition of a legislator from a majority-white, majority-Black, majority-Latinx, or majority-Asian American district to serving a district where there is no racial or ethnic majority group (here, called a plurality district) offers an opportunity to see the changes in the legislator's messaging as a measure of responsiveness. In theory, as the racial/ethnic compositions of constituencies change, a responsive legislator will adjust the ways in which she uses her means of communicating to her constituents to reflect the new needs of her constituents. These changes in racial/ethnic district types should prompt strategic legislators to alter the character of their public communications regarding salient racial/ethnic groups, issues, policies, and needs in the U.S. In measuring the changes before and after redistricting I am able to assess the evolution of messaging strategies in response to the change in district type.

Moreover, the observation of messaging modifications as legislators transition from serving a constituency composed of one majority racial/ethnic group to serving a racially/ethnically plural constituencies presents an important contribution to the representation of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States. The focus on plurality districts represents the reality of reality of racial and ethnic changes in redistricting over the last decade or more. Plurality districts are the most rapidly increasing type of majority-minority district in the United States. However, they have been largely neglected by the extant literature in favor of focus on majority-Black and majority-Latinx districts. More people of color live in plurality districts than all other majority-minority districts combined. While the majority of people of color lived in white-majority districts during the 114th Congress (January 2015- January 2017), 39% of people of color lived in plurality districts, compared to the 13% of people of color lived in Black-majority districts and Latinx-majority districts.

I use a variety of natural language processing techniques to evaluate if and how U.S. House members change their messaging strategies on Twitter as their districts change in terms of racial/ethnic composition before and after the 2013 redistricting in the United States. I employ a pre-/post-redistricting design to measure the effect of transitioning to a plurality district on a legislator's

responsiveness in messaging. To assess responsiveness, I analyze the evolution of a legislator's use of explicitly and implicitly racialized tweets along of variety of dimensions— counts, proportions, and the diversity of groups mentioned. I also use topic modeling to explore more deeply into the differences between district types in the distribution of racially and ethnically explicit and implicit messages.

Crucially, engagement in discussions of race and ethnicity shifts as their districts change. As legislators transition to serving plurality districts, they increase and diversify their discussions of race and ethnicity online, particularly in the form of implicit messages focusing on high priority issues for their constituents. However, they seem to do so with hesitancy. I find that legislators are engaging in discussions of race and ethnicity on a limited basis. They are more likely to engage in implicit mentions of race and ethnicity than explicit references to groups; though, the overall proportion of any type of mention is still quite small as a percentage of the overall corpus of tweets.

This chapter demonstrates that despite the increasing salience of issues pertaining to race and ethnicity on the social media platform, House members are cautiously and hesitantly increasing their engagement. The imbalance between the salience of the groups and the issues that are important to them and the proportion that these messages make up in the corpus indicates a possible gap in representation.

2.1 Culturally competent communication in building racial trust with non-coethnic constituents

The fundamental problem discussed in this dissertation is the racial trust dilemma. Legislators who transition to plurality districts need to foster relationships with non-coethnic constituents to be reelected, but they do so in a context where there is little trust between historically racially and ethnically marginalized communities and government. Moreover, many of these legislators previously served white-majority districts and are white themselves, which may be correlated with a lack of experience or even cultural literacy that is required to effectively engage these communities

and provide representation.

I argue that as the communities they serve change, legislators of plurality districts are presented a challenge of convincing their constituents that they can effectively and simultaneously represent multiple racial and ethnic groups in the community and their diverse political interests and agenda. Demonstrating cultural competence is important to building racial trust because it conveys understanding, attention, and consideration to non-coethnic groups, especially in any cases where non-coethnic constituents do not anticipate a legislator's desire or need to directly engage with their community, as might be the case in plurality districts.

I contend that strategic legislators can communicate cultural competence by acknowledging the specific communities in their constituency, as well as the salient issues and common lived experiences among members of these communities. Social media represents one of many tools that legislators can use to build these lines of communications. The speed and easy of communications via social media allow legislators to signal responsiveness to their constituents despite the reality that most of these legislators are not coethnics with the majority of their constituents. It is within this context that I expect that strategic legislators of plurality districts will change the nature of their political communications in an effort to respond to their changing district.

The online presence and persona curated by a legislator and his/her staff offers an opportunity to communicate responsiveness and cultural competence to build interracial/ethnic trust. As a form of what Fenno (1978) described as "presentation of self," social media supplies a platform to advertise his availability and approachability to non-coethnic constituents. Using social media as a mode of political communication allows legislators to curate their public image to their constituents in platforms that many of their constituents already use. It is through this presentation of self or curation of public image that legislators can purposefully/intentionally/strategically highlight groups and issues that are important to the residents of the district. A representative demonstrates attentiveness and empathy when featuring racially and ethnically relevant topics, communicating to his/her constituents, "You can trust me because- although I am not one of you- I understand you." (p. 60). These forms of symbolic representation have the power to foster trust and rapport with racial

and ethnic minorities (Tate 2001).

Signaling attentiveness is low cost but has the power to alleviate the racial trust deficits that interrupt the relationship building between legislators and their non-coethnic constituent groups. In essence, political communications serve as a form of elemental responsiveness. For politically marginalized groups that have been systematically and repeatedly devalued, these messages impart/indicate the political worth and importance of a group. Moreover, messages and signals of political value/importance can invite participation from groups with a lower likelihood of political engagement. Invitations to engage can lead to increased participation rates among low-propensity voters (Abrajano and Panagopoulos 2011; Michelson 2003, 2005, 2006; Panagopoulos and Green 2011; Ramírez 2005). In this way, social media networks such as Twitter or Facebook can be modalities used to invite the members of a non-coethnic/racial community to be involved in an event, mobilization campaign, or election. Such direct bids are not a panacea, as they are not personal invitations. Still, it is conceivable that specific public requests of a non-coethnic group might reduce the barriers to participation discussed earlier, like stereotype threat or implicit bias, for some of the group members.

Public communications via social media sites are also opportunities to discuss the issues that are relevant to the non-coethnic groups with which the legislator is trying to build trust. Addressing the social, economic, and political concerns crucially displays the cultural competence of the legislator by publicly acknowledging the lived experiences and quotidian considerations that collectively represent an understanding of the group and its needs. Furthermore, beyond signaling cultural competence, a legislator candidly taking a stand on salient issues demonstrates some level of willingness to take a leadership position on the topic and ownership of the solution.

I argue that legislators of plurality districts will change their messaging strategies in response to the changing racial and ethnic demographics of their district. The new types of political communications will be aimed at fostering trust, building rapport, and conveying cultural competence to their non-coethnic constituents in order to stimulate their political support.

Altogether, I expect that when legislators transition from a majority-type district to a plurality

district will increase the number of explicit racial and ethnic group mentions in the form of panethnic, ethnic, and racial labels in their political communications. For example, a legislator transitioning from a white-majority district to a plurality district with a larger Asian-American population will increase the number of times he/she uses the words “Asian American”, “Japanese American”, etc. I also expect to observe an increase in the discussions of racially/ethnically salient issues, topics, or concerns that implicitly engage the targeted communities to increase as the legislator transitions from a majority-type district to a plurality district. For example, discussions of immigration reform, criminal justice reform, and other racialized issues that do not explicitly name a racial/ethnic group. These implicitly racialized messages draw in non-coethnic constituents when the topics are central to the collective political agenda.

2.2 Research design

To test these hypotheses, I analyze a near universe of U.S. House members’ tweets from Jan 3, 2011 to Jan 3, 2017 (112, 113th, and 114th Congresses).¹ I used Crimson Hexagon to capture the historical tweets. However, the subscription service only allows the user to download the complete corpus of tweets from a handle from 2013 and after. To circumvent this limitation, I used a list of stop words and generic symbols to collect as many of the House Members’ tweets as possible from all three congresses. My net produced a corpus of 1,289,717 tweets.

The tweets were then processed using pattern matching to identify racialized tweets that would attract interest to non-white constituents in particular. These include both explicit and specific mentions of the variations of the panethnic, ethnic, and racial names (e.g., African American, Latino/Hispanic, Asian American, Mexican American, etc.) and implicit mentions in the form of racialized or racially salient issue areas (e.g., immigration, criminal justice system, public assistance, etc.).

Figure 2.1 shows the distribution of explicit and implicit racial and ethnic tweets every day over

¹Deleted tweets were not available for download via Crimson Hexagon.

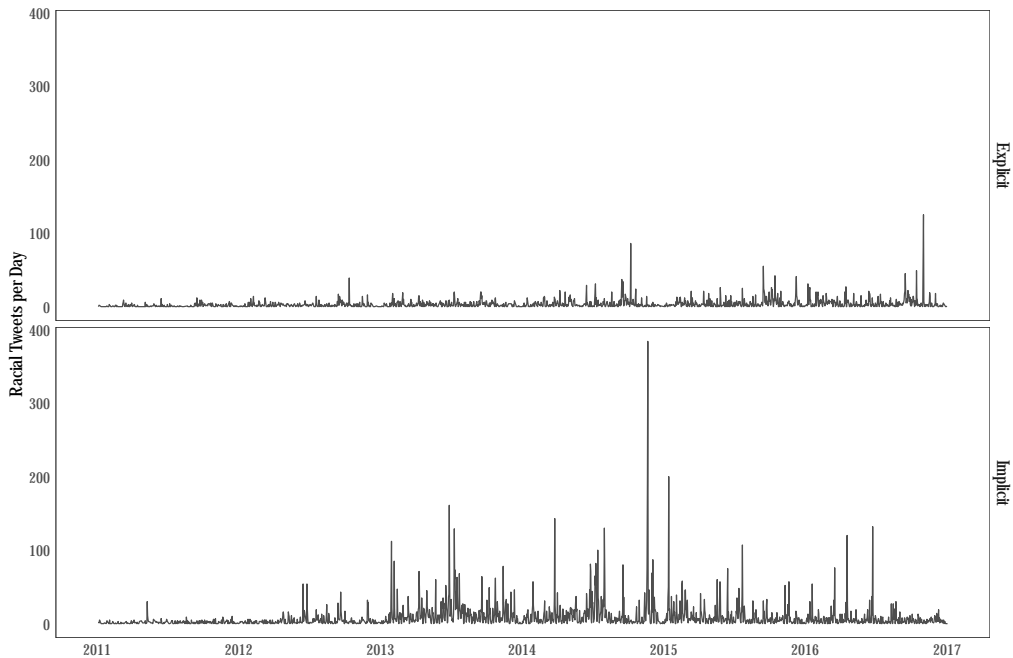


Figure 2.1: Distribution of implicit & explicit racial/ethnic tweets over time

the three congresses. It demonstrates that the number of explicitly racial/ethnic tweets gradually increases over time. This pattern indicates that legislators are slowly becoming more willing or find it more necessary to explicitly mention racial and ethnic groups in their tweets. There are also periodic spikes. For example, on November 11, 2016, there were 127 tweets that included either an explicit group mention. On this day, #LatinaEqualPay was a trending topic among the legislators who tweeted with an explicit group mention, amounting to 119 out of the 127 tweets. All of these 117 tweets came from Democratic legislators serving all district types. The next most popular topic that day honored African American veterans for their service.

Figure 2.1 also shows the distribution of the implicitly racial/ethnic tweets over time, again by the day. Unlike the explicit messages, the distribution of the implicitly racial and ethnic tweets does not seem to gradually increase over the three congresses but rather ebbs and flows over the time frame, presumably as racialized political and social issues enter the national dialogue. For example, on November 21, 2014, there were 385 tweets with an implicit racial/ethnic message. All of the 385 tweets were in response to President Obama’s Immigration Accountability Executive Action that was announced the day before and the dialogue that followed the announcement.

”Today is #LatinaEqualPay! I support closing the wage gap and will advocate for #trabajadoras.”
- Rep. Sam Farr (D-California)

”CA has the 3rd largest Latina wage gap in the nation-Latinas in CA earn just \$30k on average compared to \$70k for white men. #LatinaEqualPay”
- Rep. Barbara Lee (D-California)

”No #LatinaEqualPay means less money for necessities like groceries & rent. Latina women can’t wait any longer to close the #wagegap.”
- Rep. Hank Johnson (D-Georgia)

Figure 2.2: Examples of Explicit Tweets on November 11, 2016 Regarding Equal Pay for Latinas

”Obama wants amnesty for millions of #illegalaliens & to usurp authority. No change to #immigration w/o secure borders”
- Rep. Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyoming)

”Too many families live under the constant threat of deportation. Ignoring their fears run counter to our nation’s values. #ImmigrationAction”
- Rep. Eliot Engel (D-New York)

”We are a nation that values family and the President’s #ImmigrationAction truly reflects that.”
- Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-California)

”I agree with the president’s goals. I disagree with how he’s ignoring the will of the people to achieve them. #ImmigrationReform”
- Rep. Jeff Denham (R-California)

Figure 2.3: Examples of Implicit Tweets on November 21, 2014 Regarding President Obama’s Immigration Accountability Executive Action

The explicit and implicit racial/ethnic tweets were then tallied for each legislator in each congress. Using these tallies for each legislator, I measure the changes in the legislator’s messaging behavior before and after the 2010 redistricting that went into effect in 2013 with the start of the 113th Congress. By doing so, I keep the legislator constant and gaining some leverage on causal identification. I compare legislator behavior from the 112th Congress (January 3, 2011 to January 3, 2013) to the 114th Congress (January 3, 2015 to January 3, 2017). The dependent variables are the change in the number of ethnic tweets and the change in the proportion of ethnic tweets for both explicit and implicit racial/ethnic tweets. The primary independent variable is an indicator variable of whether the legislator transitioned from a majority-type district (i.e., majority-white, majority-Latinx, majority-Black districts) to a plurality district.² The comparison group here is all of the legislators whose district types remained constant during this time period.

In these models, I control for the change in the number of tweets sent, the change in education levels and income in the district, and the change in the Republican vote margin, and the race/ethnicity of the legislator. The education and income levels in the district are taken from the American Community Survey data, the Republican vote margin from the CQ Voting and Elections Collection, and the race/ethnicity of the legislator is from the CQ Member Profiles in the Congress Collection.

I also explore the descriptive changes in the types and topics of the implicit and explicit messages. This will provide additional insights regarding the attributes of any shifts in communication strategies to supplement the primary analysis.

2.3 Examining the changes in explicit and implicit messaging strategies

Figures 2.4 and 2.5 show the mean number of explicit and implicit racial/ethnic messages sent by legislators serving each district type.³ These plots indicate legislators of Latinx-majority

²District types were classified using the citizen voting age population.

³Appendix Figures 2.10 and 2.11 show the monthly tallies of explicit and implicit tweets broken down by district type. Figure 2.10 demonstrates that more explicit group mentions come from legislators of plurality districts than any

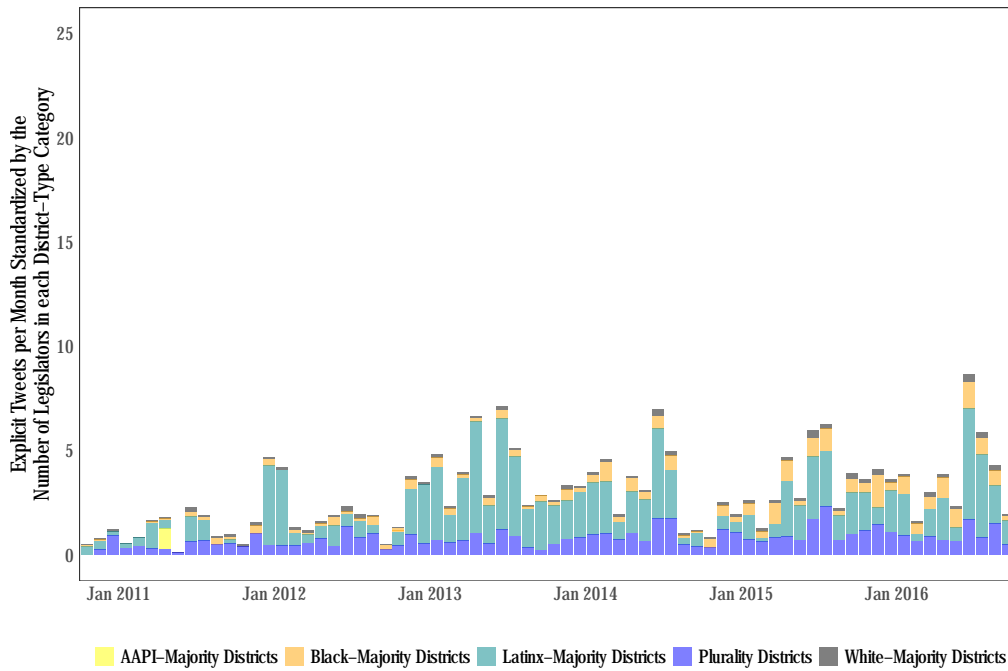


Figure 2.4: Mean monthly explicit racial/ethnic tweets sent

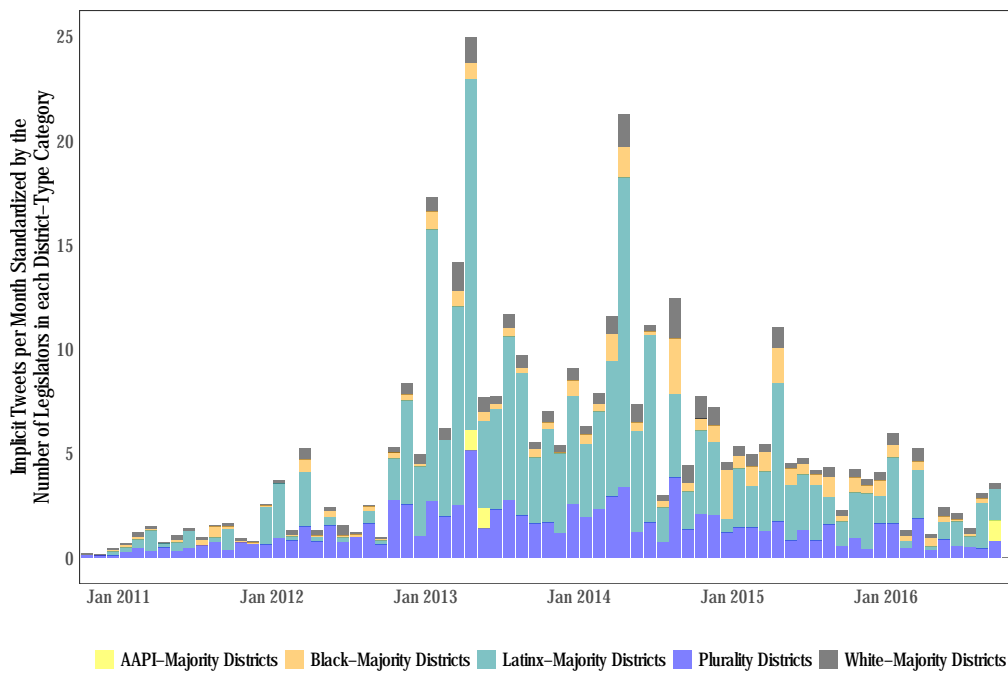


Figure 2.5: Mean monthly implicit racial/ethnic tweets sent

districts send more tweets on average than legislators of the other district types, while legislators of white-majority districts send the fewest. Over most months in the dataset, legislators of plurality districts send the second-most number of explicit group mentions, which only in since late 2015 have legislators of Black-majority districts started to catch up. When analyzing implicit issue based messages, legislator of Latinx-majority districts again send the most number of tweets on average, with legislators of plurality districts coming in second. Both the unstandardized and standardized plots indicate that legislators of plurality districts are sending many of the explicit and implicit messages.

In the rest of this section, I review the results of the pre/post-redistricting models. To preview some of the highlights from these analyses, I find that legislators who transition to plurality districts are more likely to send implicit messages than explicit group mentions and democrats who transition to plurality districts are more likely to send explicit mentions than republican counterparts. While Black legislators are more likely to send explicit and implicit messages compared to their white counterparts, Black legislators who transition to plurality districts do not increase the number of tweets when they transition compared to those legislators who do not make the transition. However, white legislators who transition to plurality districts increase the number of explicit and implicit tweets.

However, underlying all of these trends is the reality that legislators across the board do not discuss issues of race and ethnicity frequently. Altogether, these findings suggest that legislators who transition to plurality districts, particularly Democratic and white legislators, are altering their communication strategies to a degree but these changes are slow.

Table 2.1 shows the results of the pre/post-redistricting analysis for the explicit messages. Models 1 and 2 demonstrate the total count difference of explicit racial, ethnic, and panethnic group mentions between the 112th and 114th Congresses (2011-2013 and 2015-2017 respectively). Model 1 shows that legislators who transition to plurality districts on average sent 6 additional explicit racial, ethnic, and panethnic group mentions after the transition to a plurality district than before. However, as

other district type.

Table 2.1: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district on the total number of explicit racial/ethnic tweets using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Total Difference		Proportional Difference	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	6.46** (2.43)	9.14** (3.15)	0.001 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
Republican legislator	-0.96 (2.09)	-0.65 (2.19)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Republican leg.		-7.79 (4.65)		-0.03 (0.03)
Constant	-0.20 (1.64)	-0.43 (1.71)	-0.002 (0.01)	-0.003 (0.01)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	258	258	258	258
Adjusted R ²	0.25	0.24	-0.02	-0.02
Residual Std. Error	17.84	17.87	0.19	0.19

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 2.2: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district on the total number of implicit racial/ethnic tweets using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Total Difference		Proportional Difference	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	36.72** (11.72)	47.05** (15.39)	0.07* (0.03)	0.07 (0.04)
Republican legislator	7.09 (5.36)	8.28 (5.59)	0.002 (0.02)	0.001 (0.02)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Republican leg.		-29.92 (16.81)		0.02 (0.07)
Constant	-2.17 (4.38)	-3.05 (4.55)	0.002 (0.01)	0.003 (0.01)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	258	258	258	258
Adjusted R ²	0.16	0.17	-0.02	-0.02
Residual Std. Error	36.92	36.90	0.20	0.20

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Model 2 shows, this effect is largely driven by the Democrats who transition to plurality districts who on average send an additional 9 explicit group mentions after the redistricting compared to those Democrats who do not transition. In this model, there is no evidence that Republicans who transition to plurality districts alter the number of explicit racial, ethnic, and panethnic group mentions after the redistricting. Models 3 and 4 in Table 2.1 show this difference in the number of tweets with explicit racial/ethnic mentions as a proportion of the total number of tweets sent. These models indicate that the increases in explicit group mentions found in Models 1 and 2 do not represent meaningful increases when considering the total number of tweets sent by a legislator. A forgiving interpretation of these results could indicate an extremely slow transition to discussing race and ethnicity in an explicit manner. However, it is more likely that these increases are simply be a function of the increases in Twitter activity between the two Congresses.

Table 2.2 provides the results for the implicitly racialized issue tweets. As with the explicit models in Table 2.1, Models 1 and 2 demonstrate the total difference, and Models 3 and 4 show the proportional difference in the number of implicit racial/ethnic tweets sent between the two congresses. Model 1 indicates that on average, a legislator who transitions to a plurality district can be expected to send around 37 additional implicit mentions of race and ethnicity, which translates into a 7 percent increase as a proportion of the total number of tweets (Model 3). Model 4 is suggestive that there is a heterogenous treatment effect for Democrats who transition to plurality districts ($p=0.054$). It is possible that this conservative analysis is simply underpowered. In sum, these results for the implicit pre-post redistricting analyses suggest that legislators increase the number of tweets discussing issues and topics salient to the majority of their constituents. Though, whether a three percent increase in the proportion of the total number of tweets is a sufficiently meaningful increase in representation is debatable.

These two sets of analyses control for the race/ethnicity of the legislator; however, they do not examine how legislators differentially alter messaging strategies based on their race or ethnicity. Tables 2.3 and 2.4 show the interaction effects of the race/ethnicity of the legislator and transitioning from a majority-type district to a plurality district on the changes in messaging strategies before

Table 2.3: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district and race of legislator on the total number of explicit racial/ethnic tweets using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Change in Raw Count		Proportional Change	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	6.46** (2.43)	7.27** (2.68)	0.001 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Black leg.		-6.55 (5.49)		0.07 (0.06)
Black legislator	12.06** (3.76)	12.28** (3.89)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)
Latinx legislator	-1.45 (11.50)	-1.38 (11.53)	-0.09 (0.13)	-0.09 (0.13)
AAPI legislator	11.03 (5.83)	11.02 (5.78)	0.04 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Native American legislator	-3.10 (2.05)	-3.01 (2.07)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Leg. race not specified	1.36 (1.56)	1.44 (1.58)	0.004 (0.01)	0.003 (0.01)
Constant	-0.20 (1.64)	-0.31 (1.66)	-0.002 (0.01)	-0.001 (0.01)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	258	258	258	258
Adjusted R ²	0.25	0.24	-0.02	-0.02
Residual Std. Error	17.84	17.87	0.19	0.19

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 2.4: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district and race of legislator on the total number of implicit racial/ethnic tweets using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Change in Raw Count		Proportional Change	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	36.72** (11.72)	26.22** (7.98)	0.07* (0.03)	0.06 (0.03)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Black leg		84.66*** (10.02)		0.10 (0.09)
Black legislator	11.34* (5.12)	8.52 (4.60)	-0.06 (0.08)	-0.06 (0.08)
Latinx legislator	-10.59 (24.27)	-11.47 (24.31)	0.01 (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)
AAPI legislator	22.20 (14.62)	22.32 (15.52)	0.04 (0.03)	0.04 (0.04)
Native American legislator	-11.35* (5.14)	-12.48* (5.00)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)
Legislator race not specified	0.25 (2.80)	-0.71 (2.71)	0.01 (0.01)	0.004 (0.01)
Constant	-2.17 (4.38)	-0.87 (4.23)	0.002 (0.01)	0.004 (0.01)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	258	258	258	258
Adjusted R ²	0.16	0.18	-0.02	-0.02
Residual Std. Error	36.92	36.67	0.20	0.20

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

and after the redistricting period. This interaction shows that white legislators who transition from majority-type to plurality districts increase the raw count of explicit racial/ethnic messages compared to their white counterparts who remain in the same type of district; however, there is no evidence that the increase in explicit racial/ethnic messages translates into a proportional increase of explicit racial/ethnic messages (as shown in Table 2.3 Models 2 and 4). This indicates that all legislators were sending more explicit racial/ethnic messages.

Black legislators who transition from serving majority-type districts to plurality districts do not appear to have a statistically-significant change in either the raw counts or proportion of explicit racial/ethnic messages between the pre- and post-redistricting periods compared to their white counterparts. While Black legislators regardless of the district type they serve are more likely to increase the number of explicit racial/ethnic messages in the post-redistricting period than in the pre-redistricting period (as shown in Model 1), these raw count increases in explicit racial/ethnic messages do not translate into a proportional increase in this message type (as shown in Model 3).⁴

The changes in implicit racial/ethnic messages over the redistricting period, as shown in Table 2.4, indicate that both white and Black legislators that transition from majority-type districts to plurality districts increase the number of implicit racial/ethnic messages compared to white legislators who continue to serve the same district type. White legislators who transition to plurality districts on average sent an additional 26 implicit tweets after redistricting than before compared to white legislators who continued serving the same type of district, this translates into a 6 percent increase in implicit racial/ethnic messages with 90% confidence ($p=0.06$). While Black legislators who transition from majority-type districts to plurality districts send approximately 85 additional implicit racial/ethnic messages after redistricting compared to their white counterparts, this does not translate into a statistically-significant increase in the proportion of implicit racial/ethnic messages to messages overall. This indicates that the average legislator increased the number of implicit racial/ethnic

⁴Legislators that transitioned from majority-type districts to plurality districts identified as either white or African American. There were no legislators who made this transition who are identified as Latinx/Hispanic, Asian American, Native American or did not specify a race or ethnicity. Please see Figure 2.9 in the Appendix for the distribution of the race/ethnicity and party of transitioning legislators.

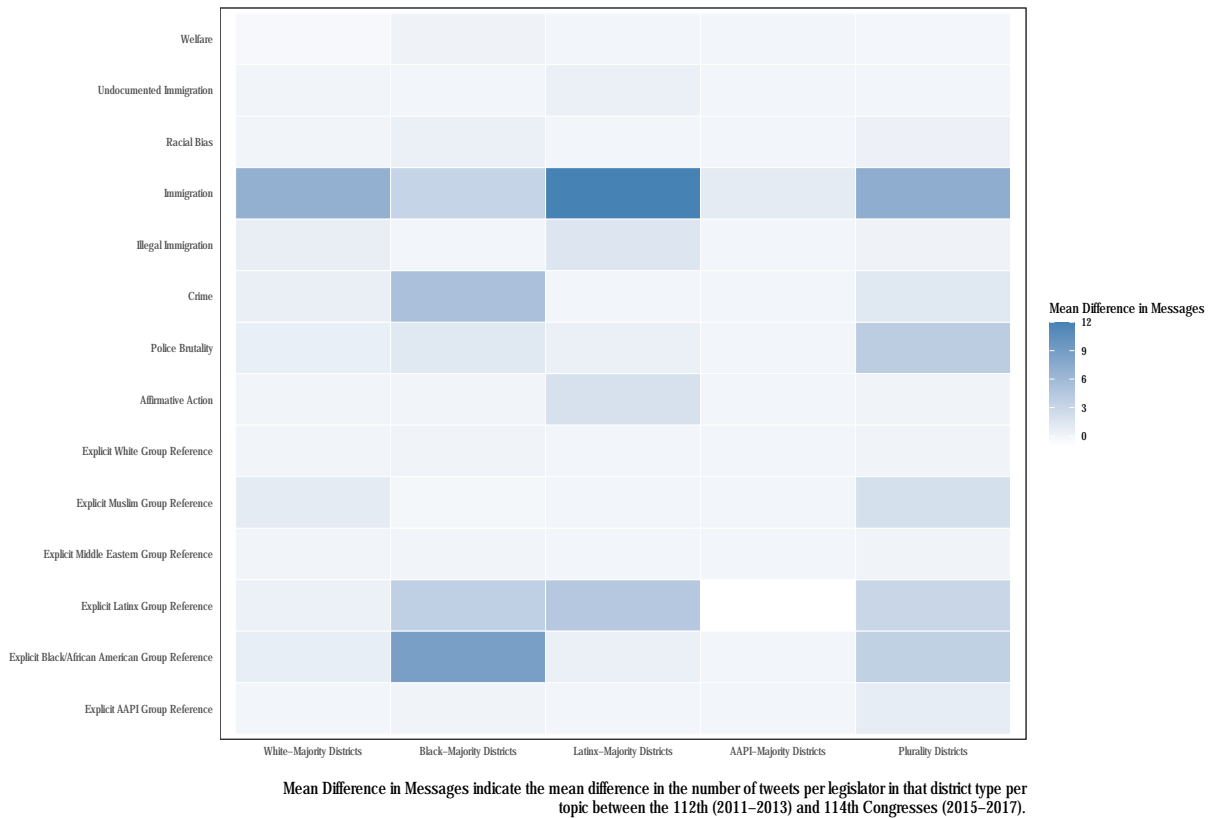


Figure 2.6: Exploring the standardized changes in the frequency of topics between 112th and 114th Congresses

messages sent.

The pre/post-redistricting regression analysis suggest that legislators do alter their responsiveness via their messaging behavior as they transition from majority-type districts to plurality districts and that these changes are affected by the legislators partisanship and race/ethnicity. However, these results do not provide much information about the changes in the content of the tweets. The following section explores the changes in the topics of the tweets.

2.4 Examining the content of the changing messages

The previous section examined whether or not legislators change the number of and proportion of explicit and implicit racial messages as they transition from a majority-type district to a plurality district. This section builds on that core finding by exploring how the content of the explicit and



Figure 2.7: Most common topics before transitioning to plurality districts



Figure 2.8: Most common topics after transitioning to plurality districts

implicit messages changed more specifically. I will present evidence that legislators of plurality districts increase the diversity of their messages after they transition to plurality districts.

Figure 2.6 shows the mean average change in the coded topics after the redistricting compared to before the redistricting, where darker shades demonstrate a larger change over the period. Unsurprisingly, immigration represents an important discussion topic across all district types. For plurality districts, immigration is the topic that experiences the largest change over the redistricting period. What is important to note is legislators of plurality districts demonstrate increases more evenly across the topics than legislators of any other district type and that these topics are relevant to a wider array of racial/ethnic groups. This suggests that legislators of plurality districts find utility in more diverse messaging strategies.

To further elucidate these changes, Figures 2.7 and 2.8, demonstrate the changes in topics among districts that transition to plurality districts before and after the redistricting. Legislators of districts that would eventually transition from a majority-type district to a plurality district largely only discussed the contributions of the Latinx community and the importance of immigration reform, shown by Figure 2.7. Once those same legislators transitioned to serving plurality districts, the topics expanded to reach a more diverse constituency. This is illustrated by the explicit racial/ethnic group mentions. Legislators of plurality districts increased the specific racial/ethnic group references more evenly across multiple racial and ethnic groups than legislators of other district types, indicating that legislators of plurality districts do see some utility in targeting messages towards a diverse constituency.

Ferguson and the Black Lives Matter movement naturally was an important topic, and this was demonstrated by the increases across the board within the police brutality topic show in Figure 2.6. However, combining the findings of Figures 2.6 and 2.8 indicate that legislators of plurality districts, including those who transitioned to serving plurality districts during this period, were able to increase representation and responsiveness to their constituents needs via their political communications. Relatedly, the larger issue of crime and criminal justice reform also increased at a larger rate in plurality districts than any other district type except Black-majority districts.

Immigration related topics remained important; however, the specificity of the tweets pertaining to the issues (e.g., DACA, sanctuary cities) involved increased as the legislators moved to more racially and ethnically diverse districts (Figure 2.8), compared to when those same legislators served majority-type districts (Figure 2.7).

2.5 Discussion

As the United States transitions to become a majority-minority nation, plurality districts will likely to continue to increase in number. Increasing numbers of legislators will face the electoral constraints of needing to appeal to a racially and ethnically diverse constituency. Increasing numbers of constituents will rely on these legislators to balance any competing political interests that exist between the groups in order to achieve equity in representation and responsiveness. The findings of this chapter indicate that while legislators do alter their communication behaviors to a point as they transition from majority-type districts to plurality districts, whether these changes translate into meaningful increases in responsiveness and representation remains to be seen.

Legislators of all district types are seemingly reticent to discuss issues of race and ethnicity in their communications on Twitter. This is an interesting descriptive finding insofar as publishing a message on Twitter seems fairly low cost vis-à-vis alternative communication strategies. However, if publishing tweets that mention specific racial, ethnic, and panethnic groups or the issues that these groups care about was in fact low cost, we should see more of these messages than we do.

So why might legislators and their offices struggle to take a position on these issues? One possibility is that it is still difficult to discuss race and ethnicity in many parts of the United States without making people uncomfortable. The historical focus on “color blindness” and the feigned meritocracy of the American Dream might have created a conversational inertia among many legislators that obstructs their willingness to engage in dialogue. Alternatively, it is possible that legislators with diverse constituencies want to publicly acknowledge the changes occurring in their district but fear backlash from other groups. This would be more likely to affect discussions of

the salient issues like immigration and public assistance; however, the House members in this study published more implicit tweets than explicit group mentions. Ultimately, more research is needed to fully understand the attitudes and behaviors regarding race, ethnicity and elite political communication, particularly in contexts like plurality districts.

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Appendix A: Additional figures and tables referenced in main text

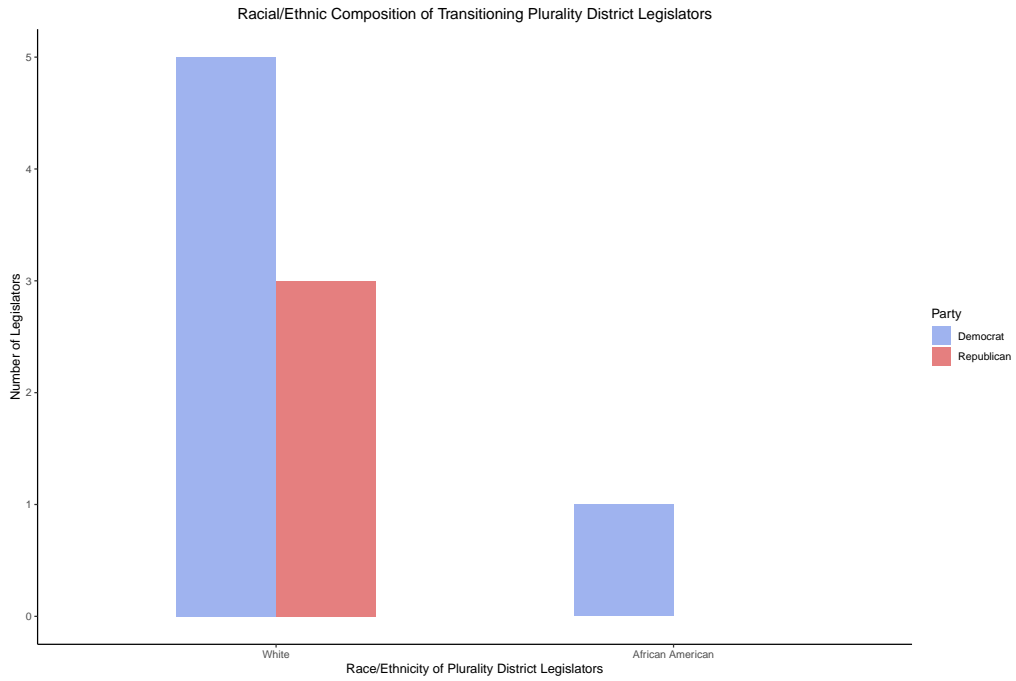


Figure 2.9: Racial and ethnic composition of transitioning plurality district legislators

Table 2.5: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district on the total number of explicit racial/ethnic tweets using pre/post-redistricting design — full regression table

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Total Difference		Proportional Difference	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	6.46** (2.43)	9.14** (3.15)	0.001 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
Republican leg.	-0.96 (2.09)	-0.65 (2.19)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Republican leg.	12.06** (3.76)	12.21** (3.77)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)
Black legislator	-1.45 (11.50)	-1.31 (11.48)	-0.09 (0.13)	-0.09 (0.13)
AAPI legislator	11.03 (5.83)	11.19 (5.86)	0.04 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Native American legislator	-3.10 (2.05)	-3.45 (2.16)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Leg. race not specified	1.36 (1.56)	1.17 (1.60)	0.004 (0.01)	0.003 (0.01)
Change in total tweets	0.01*** (0.001)	0.01*** (0.001)	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)
District-level change in education	0.0001 (0.0000)	0.0001 (0.0001)	-0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0000 (0.0000)
District-level change in median household income	0.0002 (0.0002)	0.0003 (0.0002)	-0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0000 (0.0000)
District-level change in republican vote margin	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.0003 (0.0002)	-0.0003 (0.0002)
Leg. trans. to plurality * Republican leg.		-7.79 (4.65)		-0.03 (0.03)
Constant	-0.20 (1.64)	-0.43 (1.71)	-0.002 (0.01)	-0.003 (0.01)
Observations	258	258	258	258
Adjusted R ²	0.25	0.24	-0.02	-0.02
Residual Std. Error	17.84	17.87	0.19	0.19

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 2.6: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district on the total number of implicit racial/ethnic tweets using pre/post-redistricting design — full regression table

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Total Difference		Proportional Difference	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	36.72** (11.72)	47.05** (15.39)	0.07* (0.03)	0.07 (0.04)
Republican legislator	7.09 (5.36)	8.28 (5.59)	0.002 (0.02)	0.001 (0.02)
Black legislator	11.34* (5.12)	11.91* (5.09)	-0.06 (0.08)	-0.06 (0.08)
Latinx legislator	-10.59 (24.27)	-10.05 (24.23)	0.01 (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)
AAPI legislator	22.20 (14.62)	22.83 (14.87)	0.04 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Native American legislator	-11.35* (5.14)	-12.67* (5.28)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)
Legislator race not specified	0.25 (2.80)	-0.50 (2.74)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Change in total tweets	0.01*** (0.002)	0.01*** (0.002)	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)
District-level change in education	0.0002 (0.0001)	0.0002 (0.0001)	-0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0000 (0.0000)
District-level change in median household income	-0.0003 (0.0004)	-0.0002 (0.0004)	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)
District-level change in republican vote margin	-0.06 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.0004 (0.0002)	-0.0004 (0.0003)
Leg. trans. to plurality * Republican leg.		-29.92 (16.81)		0.02 (0.07)
Constant	-2.17 (4.38)	-3.05 (4.55)	0.002 (0.01)	0.003 (0.01)
Observations	258	258	258	258
Adjusted R ²	0.16	0.17	-0.02	-0.02
Residual Std. Error	36.92	36.90	0.20	0.20

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

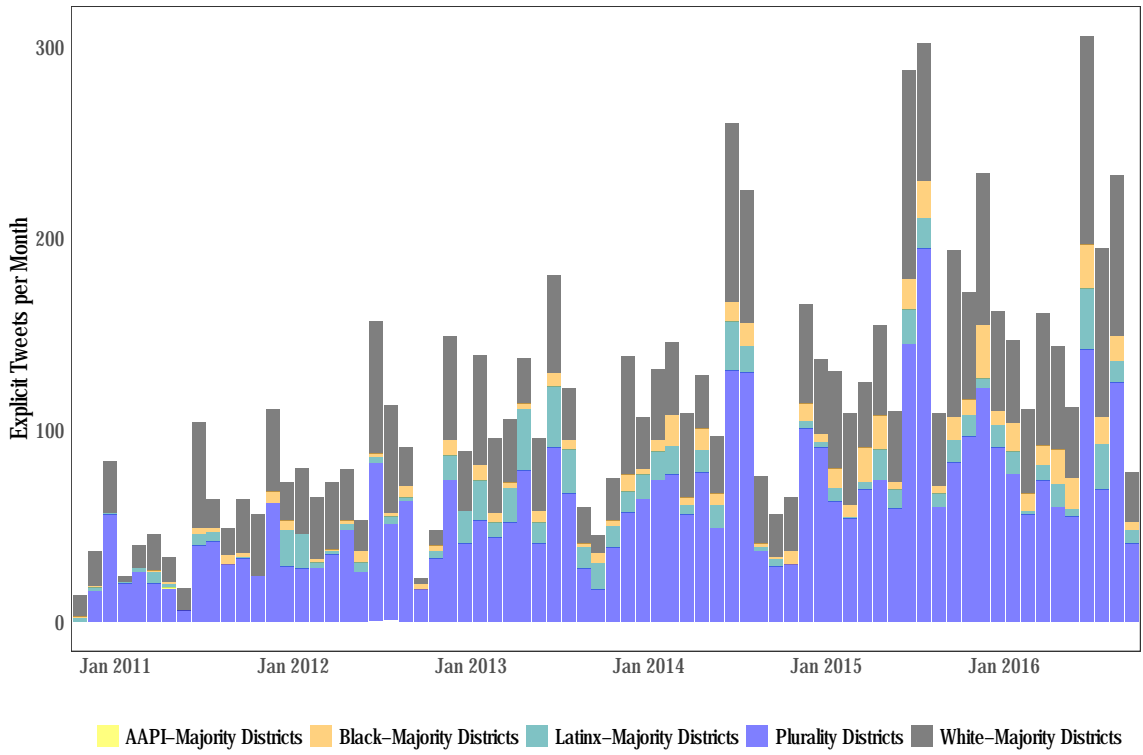


Figure 2.10: Explicit racial/ethnic tweets over time

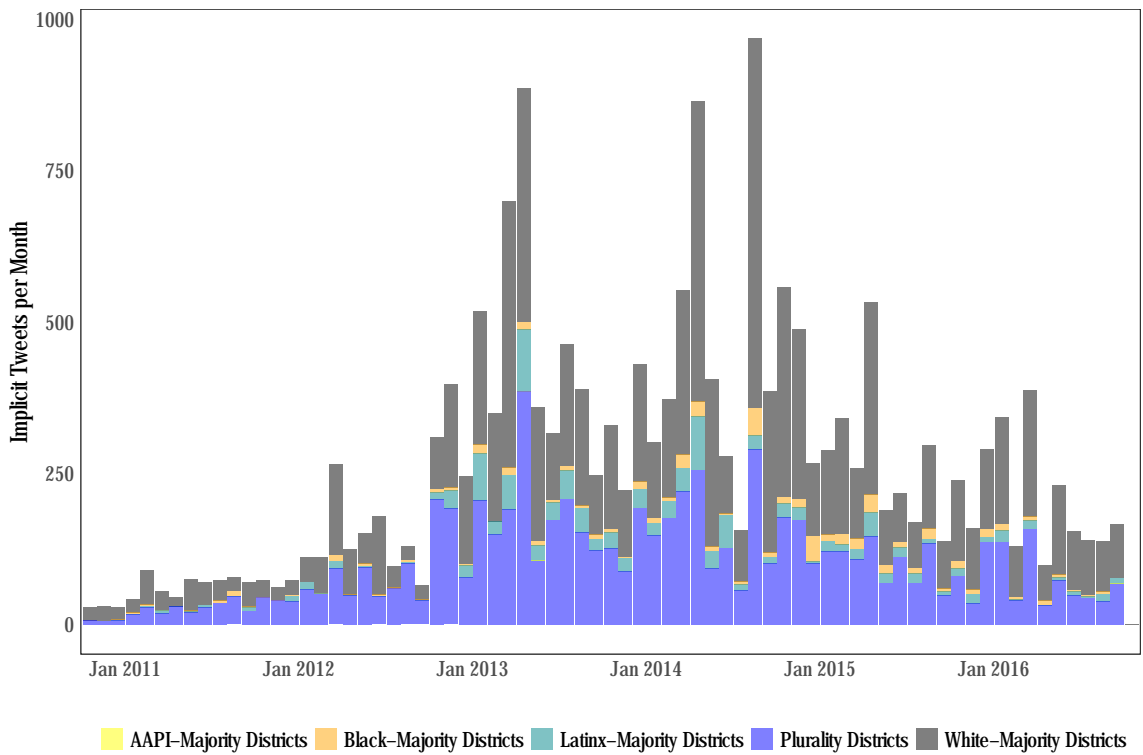


Figure 2.11: Implicit racial/ethnic tweets over time

Appendix B: Expected topic proportion plots

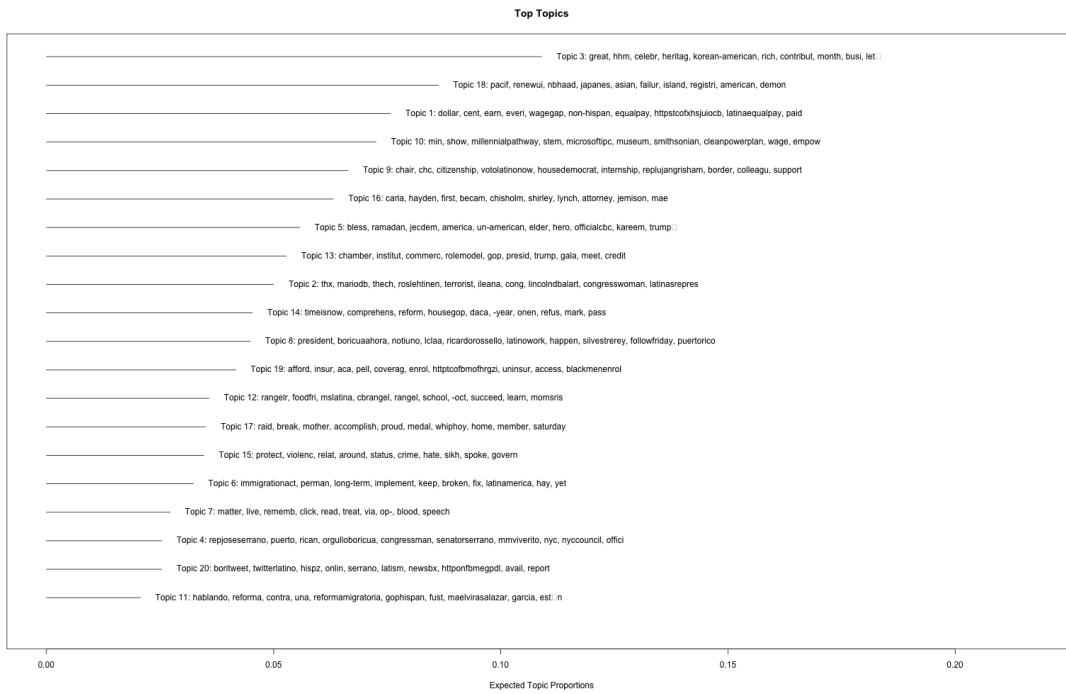


Figure 2.12: Explicit racial/ethnic tweets top topics — legislators of plurality districts

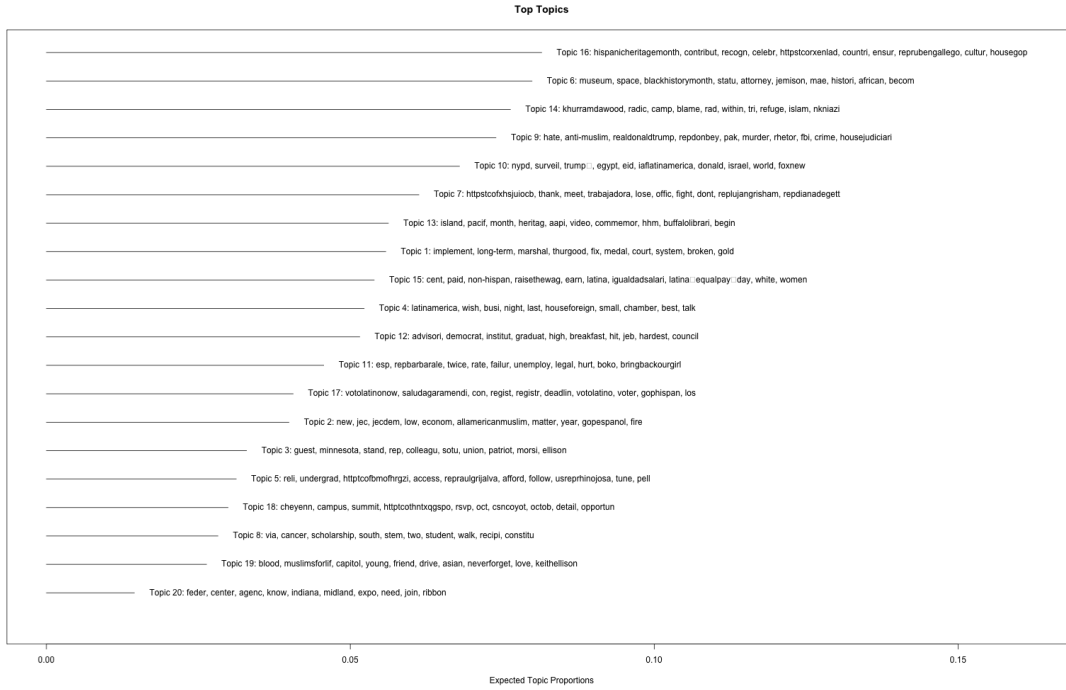


Figure 2.13: Explicit racial/ethnic tweets top topics — legislators of white-majority districts

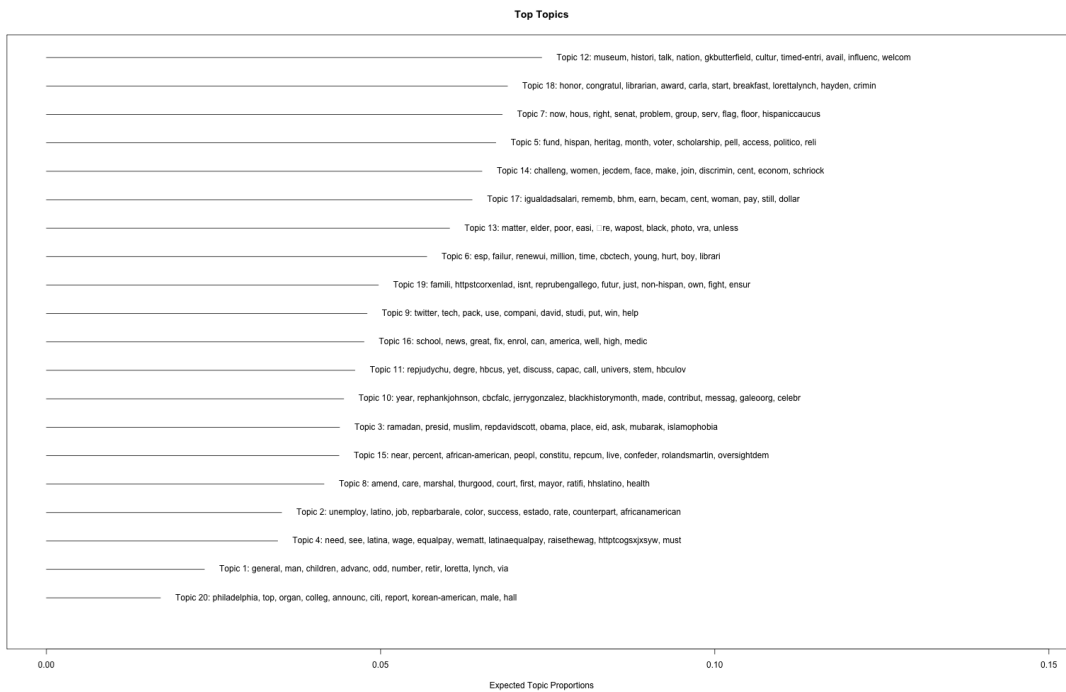


Figure 2.14: Explicit racial/ethnic tweets top topics — legislators of Black-majority districts

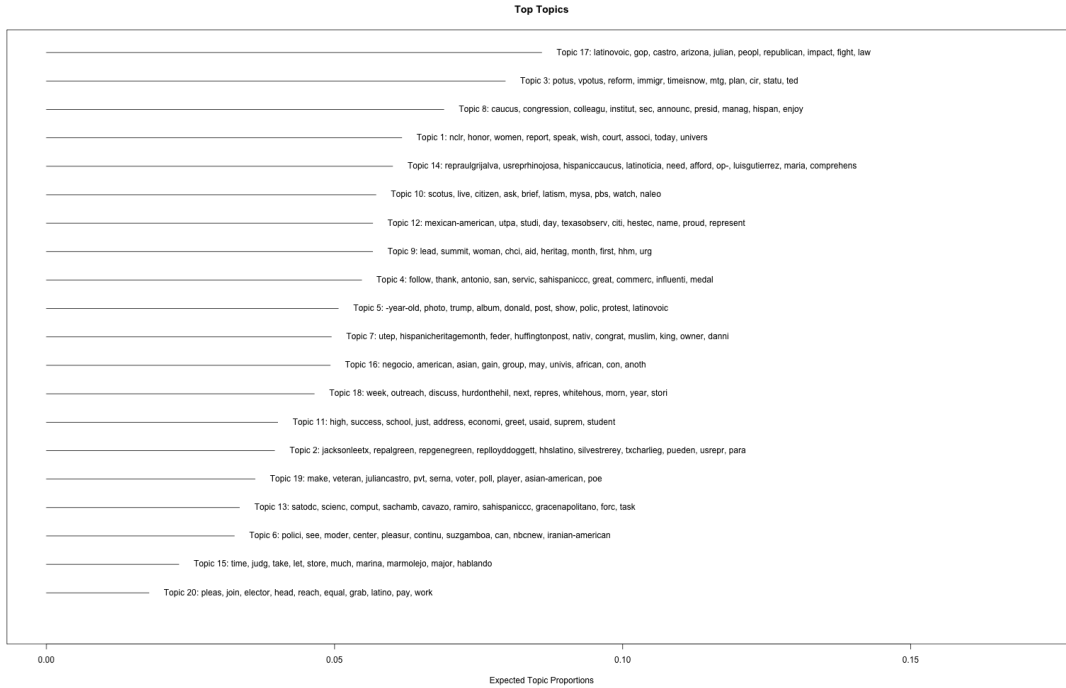


Figure 2.15: Explicit racial/ethnic tweets top topics — legislators of Latinx-majority districts

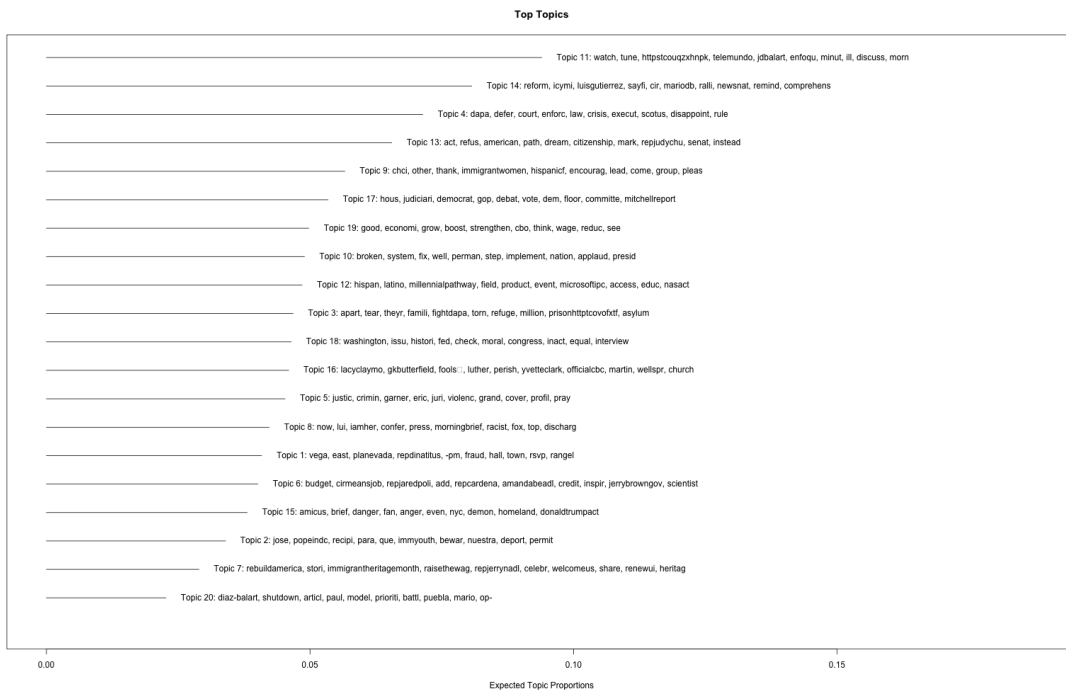


Figure 2.16: Implicit racial/ethnic tweets top topics — legislators of plurality districts

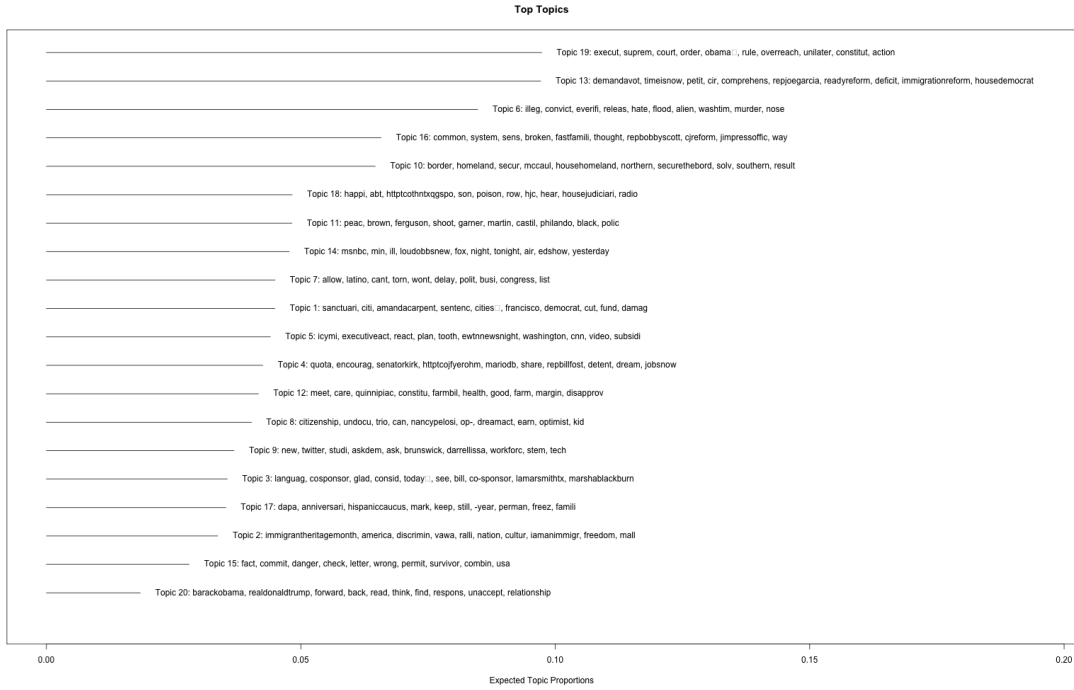


Figure 2.17: Implicit racial/ethnic tweets top topics — legislators of white-majority districts

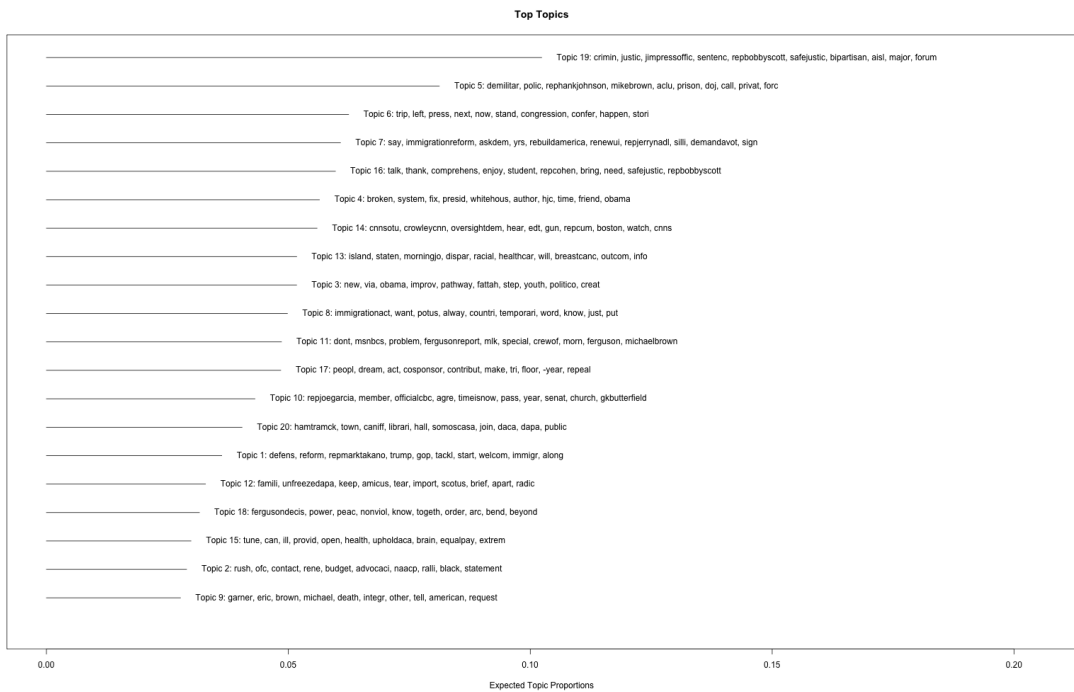


Figure 2.18: Implicit racial/ethnic tweets top topics — legislators of Black-majority districts

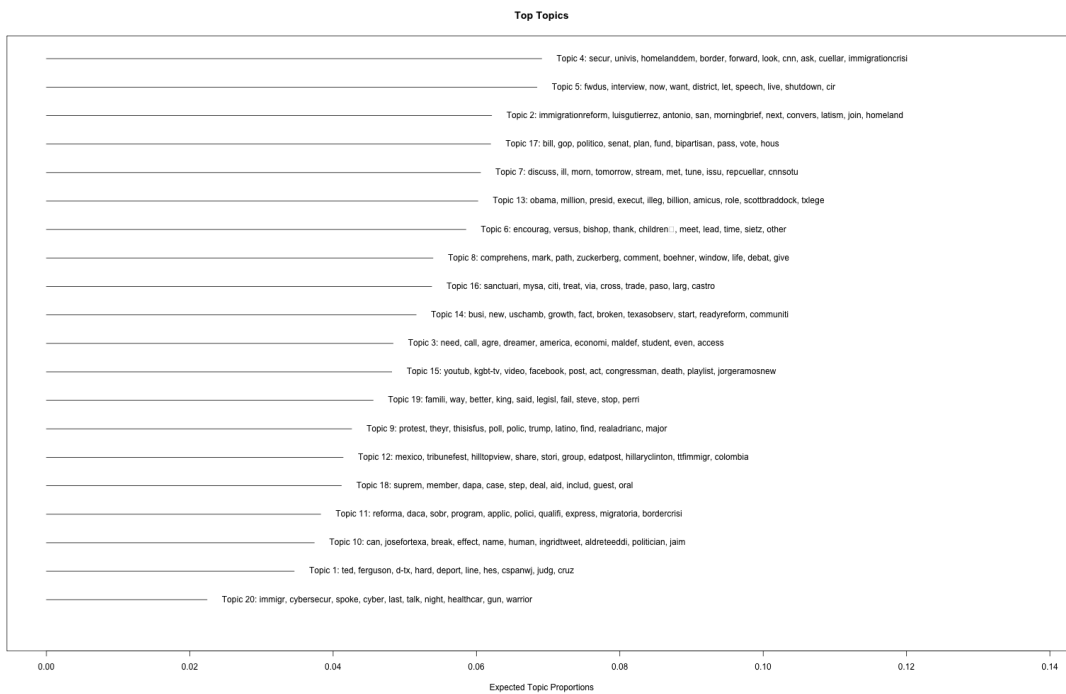


Figure 2.19: Implicit racial/ethnic tweets top topics — legislators of Latinx-majority districts

3

Racial/ethnic Diversity of the Congressional Staffers

3.1 Introduction

Pew estimates that by 2055 the United States will be a majority-minority country.¹ The increasing racial/ethnic diversity of the United States, as well as the consequences of power disparities on the basis of race and ethnicity, have become a more prominent feature of the national dialogue. Movements both promoting the rights of unprivileged minority groups (e.g., Black Lives Matter), as well as a public resurgence of white supremacy groups (e.g., the Alt-Right), among others, have brought the issue of racial and ethnic diversity to the forefront to American politics once again. These discussions and tensions are likely to persist as the country's demographics shift rapidly in the coming decades.

As the nation diversifies, so do its congressional districts. Plurality districts, those in which there is no racial/ethnic majority group, are currently the most common type of majority-minority district in the United States. In the 114th Congress, there were eighty-six plurality districts,² compared to

¹http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2015/09/2015-09-28_modern-immigration-wave_REPORT.pdf

²Based on the citizen voting age population. If we use the general population as the measure of district composition, there were fifty-eight plurality districts, twenty-five Black-majority districts, thirty-four Latinx-majority districts, and

only eighteen Black-majority districts and six Latinx-majority districts. Plurality districts are most often located in areas along the coasts and in the southern region of the United States. They are represented by both Democrats and Republicans and are situated in red states and blue states. While they are generally clustered around metropolitan areas, not all of the districts feature large urban populations. Plurality districts can be generally characterized into a few district types: 1) legacy plurality districts—historically diverse areas usually in major cities like Los Angeles and New York City (e.g., CA-6, CA-13, CA-43, NY-6, TX-18), 2) newer, high-skilled immigration-related plurality districts—areas becoming diverse with influxes of highly skilled immigrants working in STEM fields (e.g., TX-2, TX-7), 3) agricultural plurality districts—areas that rely on racial/ethnic minorities to support the agricultural sector in the district (e.g., CA-9, CA-10).

The bulk of the extant research examining the effects of racial/ethnic districting has evaluated the effect of majority-Black and majority-Latinx districts on candidate selection (Branton 2009; Canon 1999; Epstein and O’Halloran 1999; Grofman et al. 2001; Lublin 1997), political participation (Barreto, Segura, and Woods 2004; Brace et al. 1995; Fraga 2016, 2018; Henderson, Sekhon, and Titiunik 2017), and substantive representation (Grose 2005, 2011; Swain 1993). While some of the research acknowledges hyperdiverse districts,³ to my knowledge, only Swain (1993) addresses the district-type as a distinct phenomenon in terms of the representation of Black interests through two case studies. However, again to my knowledge, there is no examination of plurality districts that provides evidence from a larger sample, for which plurality districts are the primary focus of theorization and empirical examination, and studies the independent effects of having no racial/ethnic majority group in the district on representation outcomes of all. Given that plurality districts currently outnumber Black-majority districts and Latinx-majority districts combined, this research fills a critical gap in the literature by examining the representation strategies used in racially/ethnically plural districts.

one Asian-Majority District

³For example, Claudine Gay’s 2007 piece includes majority-minority districts in which there are no racial/ethnic majority group; however, she does not have specific theoretical expectations of how representation should occur in those districts over other types of majority-minority districts, nor does she separate districts with no racial/ethnic majority group from the other types of majority-minority districts.

Legislators of plurality districts must create inter-racial/ethnic electoral coalitions to win reelection. However, they are presented with the challenge that they are unable to descriptively represent the majority of their constituents and may struggle to credibly appeal to multiple groups simultaneously. Research has shown that legislators who do not descriptively represent their constituents can face impediments to fostering trust and communicating with their constituents (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Broockman 2014; Gay 2002; Grose 2011). Lowered constituent trust and communication can impede the legislator's ability to understand the political needs and preferences of the communities they serve.⁴

While the lack of descriptive representation is not necessarily unique to legislators of plurality districts, what is unique is that by definition the race/ethnicity of the legislator will always be incongruent with the majority of his/her constituents.⁵ Legislators can use their staffs to help bridge the gap between the legislator and the non-coethnic/coracial majority of his/her constituents because the staffers perform both symbolic and practical functions. These two groups of functions work to send signals of *cultural competence* to the constituents and help to gather information for the legislator from the racial/ethnic groups in the district. Practically, staffs that look like the communities they serve can bring the required knowledge and skills to effectively reach out to groups within the constituency to aid in the groups' representation. In the district offices, staffers can provide cultural and linguistic support, as well as bring in and build community contacts to facilitate the engagement of various racial/ethnic groups in the district. Descriptive representation of staffers in management positions can inform the legislator as to the political agendas of the district's racial/ethnic groups to help the legislator prioritize representation considerations, as well as support the pipeline of people of color in political office. Symbolically, diversifying office staffs can encourage trust among constituents by visually demonstrating the importance of the group to the legislator and by enhancing the substantive representation provided as the legislator surrounds

⁴It should be noted that these challenges face any potential legislator of a plurality district, not just the incumbents. As will be discussed later, the only type of candidate or incumbent that might have an easier time credibly signaling to multiple racial/ethnic groups at once could be multiracial candidates and incumbents, though this is an empirical question.

⁵An exception would be the case of having a legislator with multiple racial/ethnic identities.

herself with knowledgeable staffers from the various racial/ethnic communities in the district. Thus, more diverse staffs can help legislators overcome the challenges that stem from diverse districts and cultivate inter-racial/ethnic electoral coalitions.

Given that legislators of plurality districts, by definition, are not coethnics with the majority of their constituents, this chapter seeks to answer the question: do legislators change the racial/ethnic diversity of their staffs as their districts transition from majority-type districts to plurality districts? To answer this question, I estimate the racial and ethnic diversity of U.S. House members managerial and constituency services staffs across three Congresses. I hypothesize that as legislators transition to serving plurality districts they will increase the diversity of both types of staffs. However, I also expect that party will moderate this relationship. I expect to see larger increases in diversity among Democrats than Republicans because at least since the 1960's, the Democratic Party attuned to the needs of racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States.

To measure the diversity of the staffs, I gather the names of all paid staffers from 2011 to 2017 using House expenditures data and then use Bayesian Improved Surname and Geocoding (BISG) method to identify the probabilistic race/ethnicity of all paid U.S. House staffers. I then calculate the ethnic fractionalization of the House constituency services and managerial staffs for the 112th, 113th, and 114th congresses. I estimate the causal effect of a legislator switching from a majority-type district to a plurality district on the ethnic and racial diversity of the legislator's staffs. The analyses show that Democratic and Republican legislators of new plurality districts respond differently to the added pressures of the increased racial/ethnic diversity in their districts. Consistent with my expectations, Democrats of newly transitioned plurality districts increase the racial/ethnic diversity of their managerial staffs, while there is weaker evidence that Republicans of newly transitioned plurality districts increase the racial/ethnic diversity of their constituency services staffs. I also demonstrate that these findings are largely driven by the legislators whose districts transition from white-majority districts to plurality districts.

This chapter makes multiple contributions to the existing research. First and most crucially, it presents plurality districts as a political community worthy of study. Legislators of plurality districts

face a unique set of barriers to their representation goals because they lack the immediate base of support of an racial/ethnic majority group on which they can rely for reelection. The rapid growth of plurality districts— twenty-three were added between 2000 and 2010— makes understanding the patterns of representation in these districts critical because plurality districts likely represent the future of racial/ethnic minority representation in the United States. Secondly, the chapter uses considerable more data points on which to analyze the racial/ethnic composition of congressional staffers. My research analyzes all paid congressional over three congresses (2011-2017), whereas previous studies have relied on small samples of congressional offices during one time period (Grose 2011; Grose, Mangum, and Martin 2007; Swain 1993).

Thirdly, the findings estimate the causal effect of a legislator transitioning to serve a plurality district on staffing decisions. It demonstrates that legislators of plurality districts respond to the changing demographics of their communities when they staff their offices and this relationship is moderated by partisanship. Ultimately, these staffing changes offer implications for the inclusion of people of color in politics through several mechanisms. Diverse staffs may encourage participation of low propensity participants, enhance opportunities for representation through the skills and knowledge added by having staffs that look like the district, and support the pipeline of people of color into the political system. As the Supreme Court continues to deal with the role of race and ethnicity in the redistricting process, my findings suggest that legislators can find solutions to effectively provide representation to racial/ethnic majority groups without the creation of majority-Black and majority-Latinx districts.

3.2 Role of descriptive representation of U.S. House staffers in overcoming trust challenges

In the introduction to the dissertation, I present why serving a plurality district presents unique challenges to legislators. I theorize that legislators serving plurality districts must overcome barriers to racial trust between the legislator and their non-coethnic constituents that are caused by a history

of political exclusion and oppression, as well as persistent systemic biases that make building relationships with non-coethnic constituents difficult. I argue that within-district representation offers opportunities to signal cultural competency, augment lines of communication, and build the relationships required for effective political representation.

In this chapter, I focus on one solution available to plurality legislators: hiring staffs that descriptively represent their districts. Plurality legislators can use their staffers as proxy descriptive representatives and can hire as many staffers as they need to descriptively represent the constituents of their districts. Hiring staffers from the district's racial/ethnic communities is one way to signal responsiveness, empathy, and understanding in a way that builds rapport with non-coethnic/racial groups.

In sum, legislators of plurality districts cannot, by definition, descriptively represent the majority of their constituents. In addition to the lack of descriptive representation, the presence of racial tensions, differential contact rates for non-coethnic/coracial constituents, and distrust in government complicate the provision of representation and may make it difficult for representatives in plurality districts to build effective inter-racial/ethnic coalitions of voters. Thus, plurality legislators will face racial trust hurdles that legislators of majority-minority districts may or may not face. The inability for plurality legislators to descriptively represent the majority of their constituents creates an interesting opportunity to study whether legislators can make up for this by surrounding themselves with staffers who are able to provide descriptive representation. While the descriptive representation of staffers is not a guarantee of improved substantive representation for the groups within the district, the presence of staffers who represent the makeup of the community can help to overcome the barriers to trust by serving several *symbolic* and *practical* functions.

Legislators of plurality districts face additional hurdles when representing their constituents because of their inability to descriptively represent the majority of their constituents. The lack of descriptive representation combined with the history of political discrimination and marginalization contribute to the cynicism and wariness that characterize the attitudes of many people of color when it comes to dealing with the government and politics. These attitudes can translate into a

reluctance to engage with political officials. Hiring staffers who reflect the communities found in the district is one way of surmounting these obstacles. Diverse staffs serve both symbolic and practical functions that allow legislators to show that they care about and understand the various racial/ethnic communities within the district, thus stimulating trust among non-coethnic/coracial constituents. The symbolic functions serve as visual reminders that the racial/ethnic groups are worthy of engagement in the political system, while the practical functions provide the necessary tools to produce better representation outcomes, both of which will be discussed in more detail below.

Symbolically, having a staff that looks like the community can send a signal of *cultural competence* to the community. When a legislator hires staffers who represent and come from the various communities of the district, a legislator is able to communicate that he/she understands and recognizes the diversity of the district. This is particularly important as districts transition to the plurality type, as it provides a visible representation of the legislator's awareness of the changing community. In all of my interviews with staffers serving newly transitioned plurality districts, regardless of whether staffer changes occurred, the office was able to expertly describe the district's demographic changes after redistricting. In response to these demographic changes, a plurality legislator can visibly showcase the importance of the various racial/ethnic communities by hiring staffers who reflect the district's racial/ethnic composition.

Moreover, when constituents interact with staffers who descriptively represent them at public events, town hall meetings, and in the offices, the staffers' bodies visually cue *cultural competence*. Thus, the staffers' physical appearances demonstrate that the legislator values the preferences and experiences of the community. This can be a powerful signal that may encourage participation and engagement with the office. The social identity research indicates that individuals often have more favorable perceptions of their in-group members than out-group members (Brewer 1999; Hewstone, Rubin, and Willis 2002). Similarly, political science research suggests that constituents prefer to interact with legislators who look like them (Broockman 2014; Grose 2011). Taken together, we might expect that the same trends apply to staffers. Applying the work of Tversky and Kahneman (1974) to this scenario, constituents may use the staffer's race and ethnicity as a heuristic to determine

the probabilities associated with whether or not the staffer is capable of helping them or amenable to hearing their experiences. Staffers coming from the racial/ethnic communities within the district may have similar lived experiences that help them relate to the constituents, as well as the necessary knowledge to appropriately help the constituents. For instance, for those racial/ethnic communities particularly plagued by the effects of the mass incarceration system, a staffer with proximity to the criminal justice system will be better able to help a constituent attempting to navigate the grotesque criminal justice bureaucracy. If constituents feel more comfortable discussing their political needs and preferences with coethnic/coracial staffers, then the legislator will be better positioned to effectively represent those constituents. Assuming that legislators desire to effectively represent all salient racial/ethnic groups within their district, having a more diverse staff can encourage non-coethnic/coracial constituent participation and engagement within the district, helping to break the cycle of distrust.

Furthermore, having staffers who reflect the communities that the office serves allows constituents to see their role and their community present in politics. Research has shown that racial and ethnic minority groups are less likely to be engaged in the political system. Latinx and Asian Americans are less likely to be registered to vote (Lien 2004; Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet 1989) and participate in elections than African Americans and whites (Krogstad and Lopez 2018; Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet 1989), let alone work within the political system. Indeed, some offices recognize these differential rates of political participation. One staffer of a newly transitioned plurality district served by a Republican in a red state indicated she suggested that the Hispanics in the district “might not understand the process” and therefore is a reason why they don’t vote. In response, staffers of the same racial/ethnic community can send potent engagement and mobilization messages to coethnic constituents, which will be discussed in more detail later.

When racial/ethnic minority constituents interact with staffers who look like themselves, this can send a powerful political signal of the space available for people of color in politics. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 removed all formal barriers to political participation for minority constituents in the United States. However, the participation rates of people of color in elected political offices

continue to lag behind that of the white population. The presence of staffers who are members of a district's various racial/ethnic groups can help to encourage a pipeline of racial/ethnic minorities to work in politics because their mere presence can fight against historical associations between race/ethnicity and the ruling class (Mansbridge 1999). In other words, seeing people from historically marginalized groups engage in the political system challenges the perceptions that people of color have no role or space within the system. As a result, this encourages people to see their own role in the political system which may lead to the increased political participation among communities of color, whether that be increasing interactions with political representatives, voting, or even working in or running for political office. More directly, hiring staffers of color can fill the pipeline by providing access to the political system and the necessary experience for a person to run for office in the future.

In addition to these symbolic functions, hiring diverse staffs can serve several practical functions as well. First, in the realm of constituency services, staffers who reflect the racial/ethnic demographics of the district can help provide language and cultural support. Hiring staffers who can communicate to constituents who do not speak English fluently is important when trying to engage community members particularly for legislators whose districts have newly transitioned to plurality districts. A staffer of a newly transitioned plurality district indicated to me that after the 2013 redistricting her office started to field more phone calls in Spanish and having a Spanish-speaker on hand was helpful. Having staffers who are cultural and linguistically competent may also encourage constituents to seek help from the office and reveal their true preferences. Asian-American and Latinx communities are those most in need of such linguistic support, but also exhibit lower rates of political engagement (Barreto and Segura 2014; Wong et al. 2011). Enhancing access to the political system in native languages can only help encourage higher rates of connection between non-English speaking constituents and their legislators.

Culturally, descriptive representation of staffers may be better equipped to understand the best ways to engage with the various racial/ethnic communities within the district. Because research demonstrates that Latinx voters are more receptive to mobilization requests and policy messages

from coethnics than non-coethnics (Barreto and Nuño 2011; De la Garza, Abrajano, and Cortina 2008; Michelson 2005), we might expect similar trends among engagement requests coming from coethnic staffers. However, based on my estimates, the vast majority of congressional staffers over the past few Congresses have been overwhelmingly white (see Figure 3.1). Strategically hiring more diverse staffers may then lead to more effective mobilization and engagement requests coming from the legislator's office. Not only does the potential for additional mobilization help the legislator, but it can also potentially improve participation rates among low propensity participants.

Relatedly, hiring individuals as proxy descriptive representatives allows the legislator to take advantage of the new staffer's contacts within the community. Evidence from my interviews with congressional staffers confirm this; one staffer from a newly transitioned plurality district indicated that community contacts were an essential part of reaching out to a variety of communities within the district, while another mentioned that a coworker was hired in part because of her contacts within the community. These "points of contact" are important for maintaining an "open line of communication" with the groups in the district, including the racial/ethnic minority groups, according to a staffer. These contacts play an important part in the offices' engagement efforts, especially considering the lowered rates of contact between constituents and non-coethnic/coracial legislators.

For these reasons, I expect that strategic legislators will change the composition of their staffs as their districts change from majority-type districts to plurality districts. Legislators will face new representation challenges as they incorporate new racial/ethnic minority groups into their district, or as certain racial/ethnic minority groups increase in electoral salience to the legislator. As a district's demographics change, so do the constituents' agendas, needs, languages, trust levels, behaviors, and engagement preferences. My interviews suggest that the offices want to adapt to the needs of their new constituents, if for no other reason than to be reelected. Taken together with the plurality legislator's need to create a multi-racial/ethnic electoral coalition, hiring staffers from the racial/ethnic communities that need to be coopted can increase the legislator's political engagement with the district's non-coethnic/coracial constituency. The benefits of hiring a staff who descriptively represent the district are reinforcing: not only does increasing the descriptive representation of

staffers help to support responsiveness to constituents, it reflects a form of responsiveness to the shifting demographics of a district in and of itself.

H₁: I expect that as a district changes from majority-type to plurality, the legislator will increase the diversity of the constituency services staffs, all else equal.

Hiring a more diverse staff in a diverse district can provide community contacts, language/cultural support, and signal *cultural competence*. As the constituent-facing side of the office, the constituency services staffs are those most visible to constituents. These staffers are responsible for helping constituents navigate the federal bureaucracy, as well as organizing community events to increase awareness of the district office's services. Sending coethnics and coracial staffers into the community can build the bridges necessary to overcome the racial trust gaps that face legislators who serve non-coethnic/coracial constituents.

H₂: I expect that as a district changes from a majority-type to plurality, the legislator will increase the diversity of staffers in management positions (e.g., Directors and Deputies), all else equal.

Having managers who represent the district's racial/ethnic demographics offers a voice to marginalized communities. In-group managers are generally in better positions to communicate a group's priorities and political agenda to the legislator than an out-group manager. Parity between the composition of managers and districts moves the inclusion of historically marginalized groups beyond tokenism, as more voices bring more ideas. This is probably most important in cases where there are "uncrystallized interests" (Mansbridge 1999), especially given a rapidly changing political context. As new issues and events unfold, staffers with relevant lived experiences can help a legislator navigate the political relationship with his constituents.⁶

Thus far, my base expectations ignore the relevance of party. However, party is an important

⁶In the aforementioned hypotheses, I focused on the diversity of the constituency services staffs, as well as the management staffs. There are other sets of staffers that I do not consider for practical reasons—namely legislative aids. I do not include legislative aids because they often work for different offices simultaneously and often do not come from the district, which makes my prediction of their race and ethnicity extremely difficult given the classification method that I use. Future work will work on classifying the race and ethnicity of the legislative aids, but for now, is out of the scope of the project.

moderating variable considering that since the defection of Southern Democrats to the Republican Party in the 1960s and 1970s over the issue of civil rights, the Democratic Party has been more willing than the Republican Party to take on the political plight of racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States (Carmines and Stimson 1989). This defection of white voters to the Republican Party has continued as immigration's salience has increased over time (M. Abrajano and Hajnal 2015). In an attempt to understand how race, ethnicity, and partisanship intersect, the literature has attempted to tease out the extent to which racial resentment is directly correlated with conservatism. Some authors argue that racial attitudes are often conflated with conservatism through value-based justifications of personal responsibility, limited government, etc. (Feldman and Huddy 2005; Sniderman and Carmines 1997; Sniderman, Crosby, and Howell 2000). Others argue that racial resentment is a distinct phenomenon of prejudice and can explain a variety of political outcomes: policy outcomes (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Tesler 2012), vote choice (Piston 2010), candidate evaluation (Tesler and Sears 2010). Whether the justifications are value driven or prejudice driven, Republican legislators will most likely see less utility in hiring on the basis of race or ethnicity than Democrats. Indeed, previous research has indicated that Republicans are less likely to hire Black staffers proportional to the group's population size in the district (Grose, Mangum, and Martin 2007). However, I do not expect that Republican legislators of plurality districts will ignore the utility in hiring staffers of color, even if they do not hire proportionally to the size of the nonwhite population in their district. Because Democrats increasingly rely on the nonwhite electorate (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Zingher 2018), Democrats should be more likely than Republicans to hire more diverse staffs. Thus,

H₃: I expect that Republican legislators will increase the diversity of their staffs at lower rates than Democratic legislators, all else equal.

3.3 Research design

To test these hypotheses, I analyze the racial and ethnic demographics of the staffs of U.S. House members' offices during 112th (January 2011-January 2013), 113th (January 2013-January 2015),

and 114th (January 2015-January 2017) Congresses. I use two sets of analyses to model the choices of legislators in how they staff their offices: a fixed effects model and a quasi-experiment using redistricting. Both approaches estimate the effect of a legislator switching to a plurality district on the diversity of their staff.

To construct my dependent variable, I gathered the names of the staffers using ProPublica's collection of the House Offices' Expenditure Data in csv format(ProPublica n.d.).⁷ I appended the data from 2011 to 2017 and then filtered the expenditures to only include payments listed as "PERSONNEL COMPENSATION". After cleaning the data, the dataset includes all of the paid staffers' names, the offices for which they worked, and the quarter during which they worked.

I predicted the race/ethnicity using the Bayesian Improved Surname and Geocoding (BSIG) method. This method calculates the probabilities for an individual's race given their last name and the demographics of their location using a Naive Bayes Classifier. This method of predicting the race/ethnicity of an individual has been used in Political Science (Imai and Khanna 2016), the health sciences literature (Adjaye-Gbewonyo et al. 2014; Elliott et al. 2008; Fiscella and Fremont 2006), and by the US government in determining the settlement of a lawsuit over discriminatory lending (Bureau 2014). To create the race/ethnicity estimations using BSIG, I used the 2010 U.S. Census's data on the racial/ethnic probabilities of surnames (U.S. Census 2010) and the 2011, 2013, and 2015 American Community Survey five year estimates of the racial/ethnic demographic data of the states (U.S. Census 2011, 2013, 2015).

Once I calculated the probabilities that the individual staffers were members of each racial/ethnic group, I assigned the individual's likely race as the racial/ethnic group with the highest probability. I was able to estimate race/ethnicity for 90.75% of the staffers. Figure 3.1 shows the predicted race/ethnicity of staffers by district type. This plot clearly shows that white staffers are the most represented group in congressional offices, even in the majority-minority district types. These gaps may be due to hiring discrimination, racial/ethnic bias in who applies for these positions, or both.

⁷These data were originally created by the Sunlight Foundation and was passed off to ProPublica in 2016. The data can be found here: <https://projects.propublica.org/represent/expenditures>

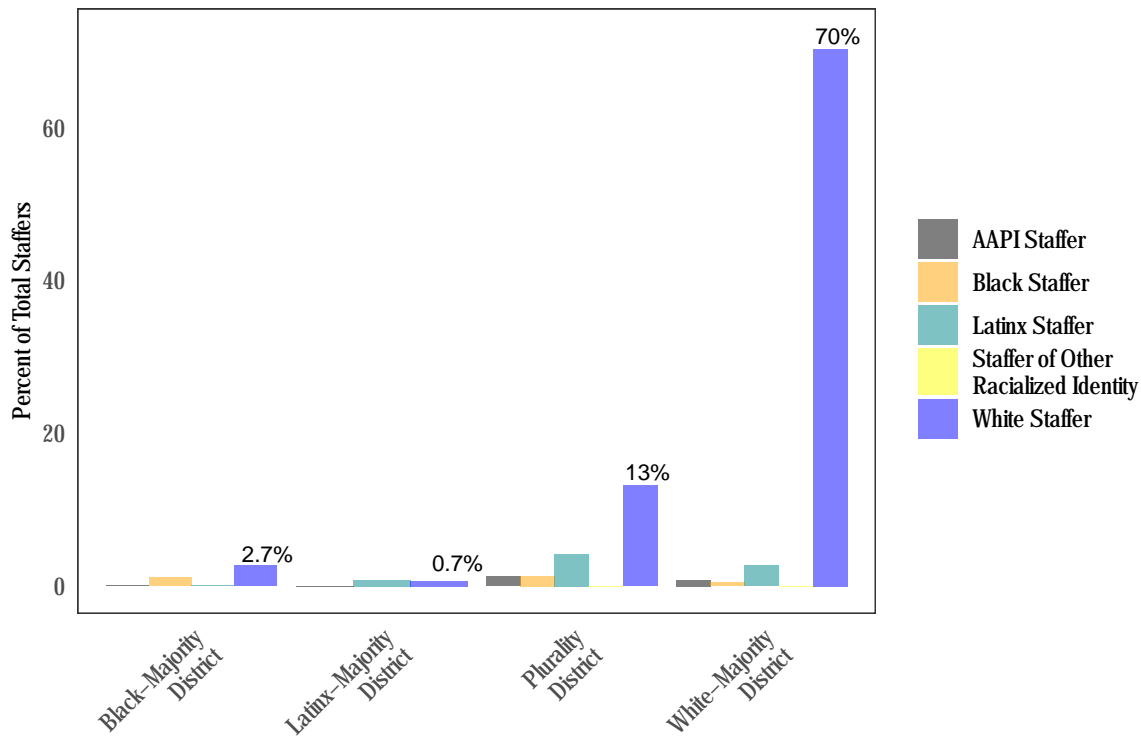


Figure 3.1: Estimated race/ethnicity of staffers by district type

With these predictions of race and ethnicity of the staffers, I aggregated the racial and ethnic demographics for each legislator-congress and then calculated the ethnic fractionalization of the staffs using 1-Herfindahl Index.⁸ The minimum value of the ethnic fractionalization measure is 0 which indicates that all staff members are of the same race/ethnicity, and the maximum value of the measure given my categorizations will be .8, which indicates that staff members are evenly divided between all five racial/ethnic group categorizations.⁹ Figure 3.2 shows box plots of the ethnic fractionalization of the offices by district type. This figure reveals that white-majority districts overall are the least diverse. The most diverse district type is Latinx-majority. Plurality districts staffs are the second most diverse district type on average, though there is more variation among

⁸The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index is a measure of market concentration that has been adapted to be used in the comparative literature as a measure of how racially/ethnically/linguistically diverse the society is, as well as to calculate the Effective Number of Parties measure. It is the same as the Simpson Diversity Index used in ecology. In this context, the Herfindahl Index represents the probability that two randomly selected individuals within an office staff are of the same racial/ethnic group. However, I have inverted taken one minus this probability to the scores more understandable—with lower values indicating lower levels of diversity and higher values indicating higher levels of diversity.

⁹ $1-(1/N)$ represents the maximum value. I have coded five racial categories: white, Black, Asian-American/Pacific Islander, Latinx, other. Thus, .8 equals $1-(1/5)$.

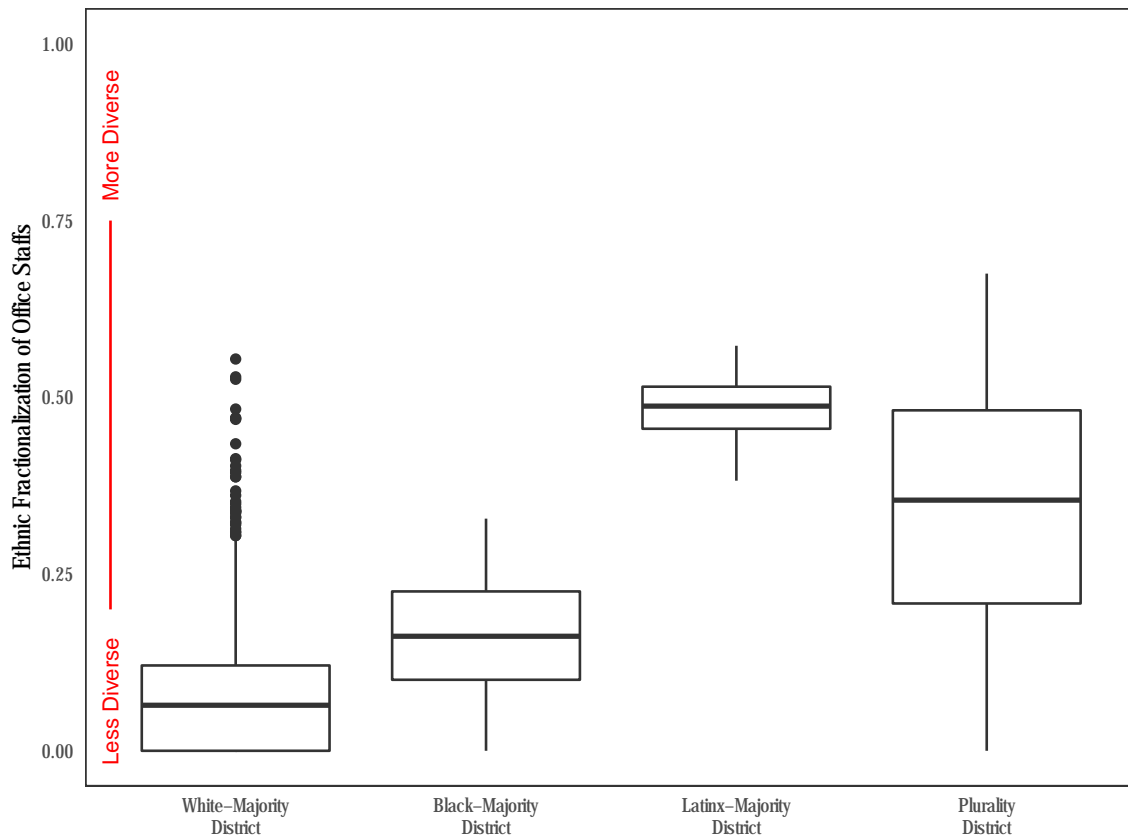


Figure 3.2: Ethnic fractionalization of staffs by district type

plurality districts than the other district types, particularly the other majority-minority district types. This variation could be due to partisan differences. Figure 3.3 presents the box plots broken down by district type and party. This figure indeed shows that there is partisan variation as to the racial and ethnic diversity. The median ethnic fractionalization of office staffs for Democrats serving plurality districts is much more diverse than that of the median Republican plurality staff.

Racial/ethnic fractionalization of constituency services staffers and management staffers will serve as the two primary dependent variables of this chapter. I identified constituency services staffers by using job titles in the “Purpose” section of the Federal Expenditure Data. Jobs that were identified as being constituency services jobs are those with some variation of the words “constituency services” in the title (e.g., “Constituency Services Rep”, “const.serv.”, “constituency serv.”, etc.). Management staffers were identified as having a title of management of within-office leadership, including the various chiefs, directors, and managers (e.g., District Director). Then, racial/ethnic fractionalization

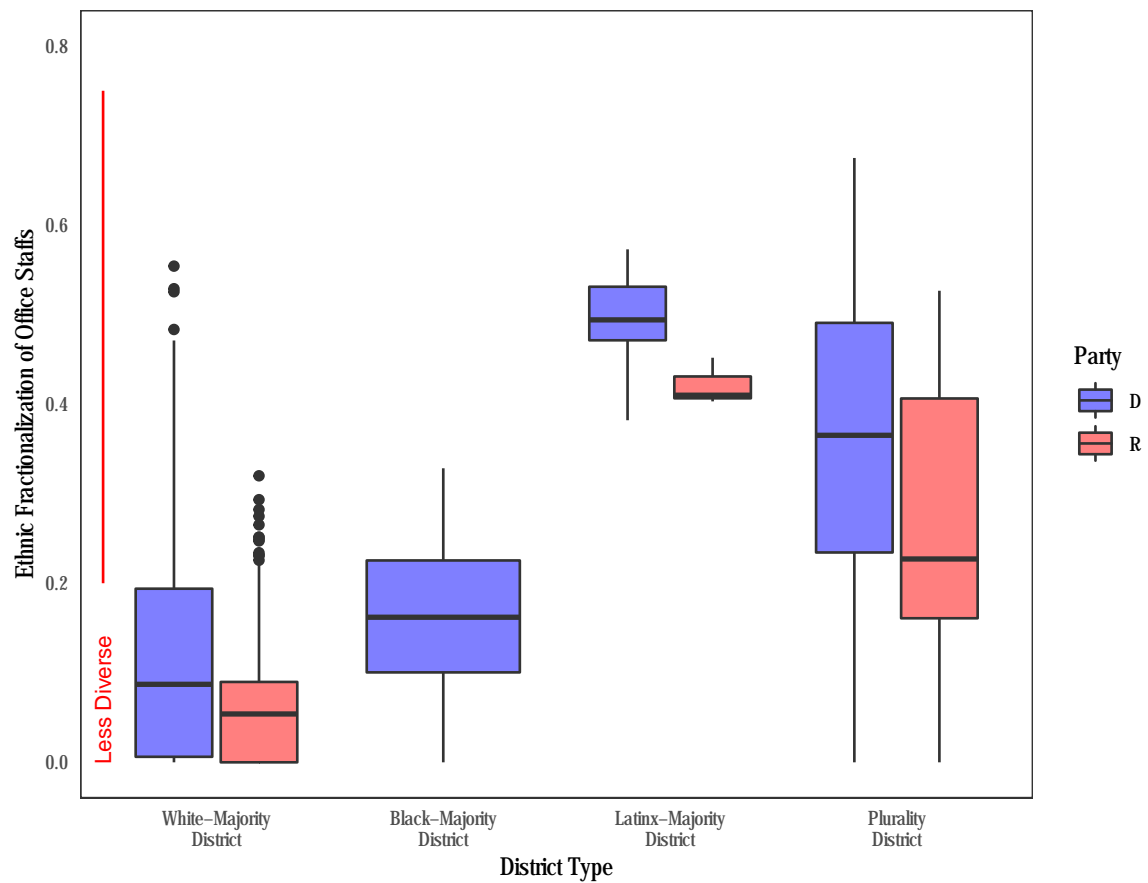


Figure 3.3: Ethnic fractionalization of staffs by district type and party

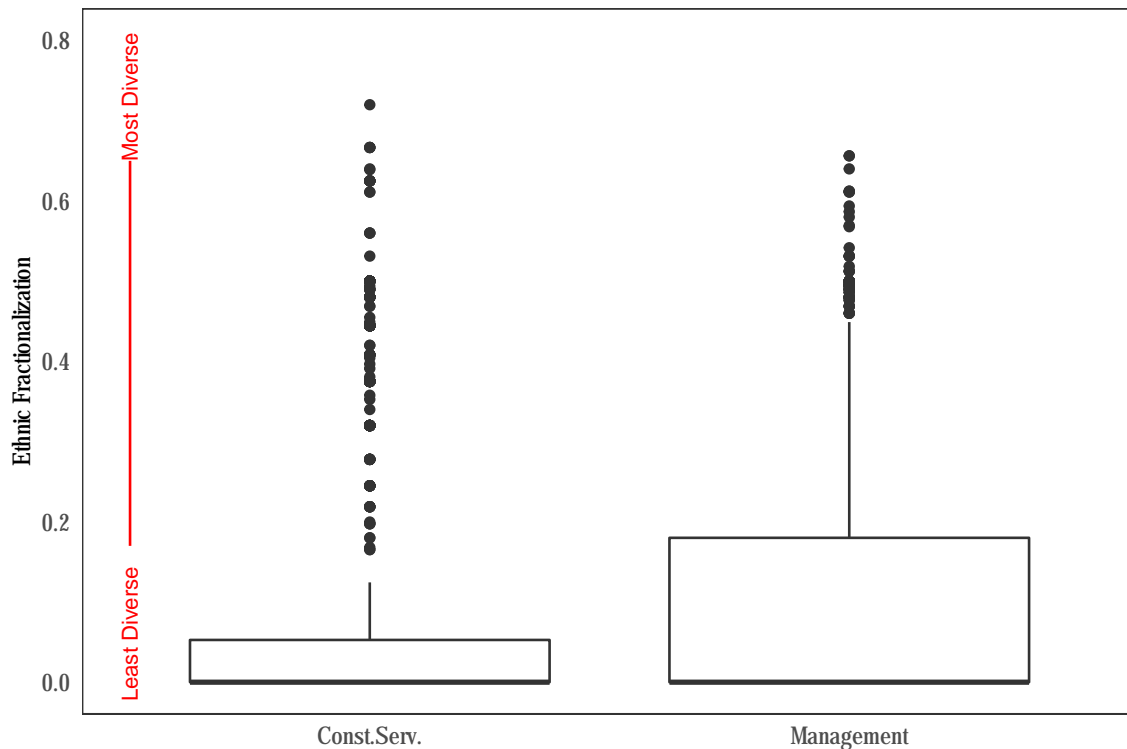


Figure 3.4: Distribution of ethnic fractionalization of constituency services staffers and management staffers

is computed for each group of staffers. Overall, the vast majority of legislators’ offices are not racially/ethnically diverse, as shown in Figure 3.4. The median racial/ethnic fractionalizations for both the constituency services staffers and management staffers are 0, indicating that all staffers in those districts belong to one racial/ethnic group. In reality, the districts at the low end of the ethnic fractionalization scale have all-white staffs.

To explain the diversity of legislative staffs, I look to the changing racial and ethnic demographics of the district. I classify districts into one of four types: white-majority, Latinx-majority, Black-majority, and plurality districts,¹⁰ based on the proportion of citizen voting age population in the district,¹¹ as shown in Table 3.1. Majority-type districts were coded as districts where one racial/ethnic group constitutes 50% or more of the congressional district’s population. Plurality

¹⁰Theoretically, there can also be Asian-majority districts, but there are none in my dataset.

¹¹I calculated by subtracting the non-citizen over 18 population estimates for each racial/ethnic group in each congressional district from the total over 18 population estimates for each racial/ethnic group in each congressional district.

districts were coded as districts where all racial/ethnic groups constitute less than 50% of the congressional district's population; thus, plurality districts have no racial or ethnic majority group. These plurality districts are the key district type of interest in this chapter because of the lack of racial/ethnic majority group, which, as discussed before, creates a set of theoretically interesting set of constraints on representation outcomes.

3.3.1 Modeling racial/ethnic diversity of congressional staffs

The chapter uses two different analyses to evaluate the effect of transitioning to a plurality district on the racial and ethnic diversity of staffs. The first analysis uses a within-estimator model with legislator and congress fixed effects, which leverages the within-unit switches in district types across the three Congresses. It estimates the effect of changing district types on the ethnic fractionalization of staffs. In other words, I am able to evaluate the changes in the diversity of staffs as legislators switch to a particular district type. This design also allows me to evaluate the changes in the diversity of staffs over time while holding the legislator constant, greatly reducing the risk of omitted variable bias.

The fixed effects models eliminate the risk of time-invariant factors leading to omitted variable bias. They also allow me to work towards a causally-identified model by measuring the effect of switching to a plurality district. However, a better test of causal identification will be demonstrated in the next set of models. The downside of using a fixed-effects regression is that it only analyzes the within-unit variation; thus, one is not able to utilize all of the available variation. This model also does not allow me to estimate the overall differences in racial/ethnic fractionalization between the district-types, only the effect of switching to that district type; however, I present the estimates of OLS models without legislator fixed effects in the appendix, which show similar patterns.

In the fixed-effects models, my primary independent variables of interest are whether the legislator switched to a plurality district and the interaction of whether the legislator switched to a plurality district and whether that legislator is a Republican. For the fixed effects models, time-invariant legislator-related variables are captured by the legislator fixed effects, which includes factors like the

racial/ethnic group and sex of the legislator. Thus, I include as controls time-varying legislator and locality related variables that are likely correlated with staffer diversity and the district's transition to a plurality district. In these models, I control for the Republican vote margin as a measure of competitiveness, median household income in the legislator's district, and the percent of people within the district over the age of 25 with a bachelor's degree. Finally, I use robust standard errors to account for heteroskedasticity.

The second set of analyses use a pre/post-redistricting design data to estimate a clearer causal effect than I am able to do in the fixed effect regressions. To do so, I measure the change in racial/ethnic diversity between the 112th (2011-2013) and 114th Congresses (2015-2017). I use the 114th Congress because the redistricting goes into effect at the beginning of the 113th Congress (2013-2015), and it allows time for the legislators to adjust to their new district before measuring the effect of the switch to a new district type. This operationalization alters the observations included in the analysis; only legislators that were in both the 112th and 114th Congresses are included, anyone voted in or out of office is excluded.

My primary independent variables are indicators for legislators whose districts transitioned from a majority-type to plurality districts and those legislators whose districts transitioned to plurality districts and who are Republicans. I control for a given district's change in Republican vote margin in the district, change in median household income in the district, and change in the percent over twenty-five years of age with a bachelor's degree. Again, I use robust standard errors.

I then subset the data to create an appropriate comparison group, those legislators whose districts stayed the same type.¹² Thus, in the pre/post-redistricting analyses, I only include legislators whose districts either a) transitioned to a plurality district or b) stayed the same type. Legislators whose districts transitioned to a white-majority, Black-majority, or Latinx-majority type over the time period are excluded from the analysis. In other words, the comparison group in these analyses are legislators whose districts stayed a white-majority, Black-majority, or Latinx-majority district throughout the time period. This subsetting and the fact that legislators are voted in and out of office

¹²Results are consistent regardless if I subset or not.

during the time period leaves me with 288 legislators.

This pre/post-redistricting analysis serves several empirical purposes. First, it serves as a natural experiment. Federal legislators have no control of how the district lines are redrawn, so they must adapt to these new lines. Second, this analysis eliminates any concern for serial correlation of the racial/ethnic diversity of the staffs over time. Staffers persist throughout the data set which causes a lag in the racial and ethnic diversity over time.¹³ With these two considerations in mind, this extremely conservative test will demonstrate the closest estimate of a causal effect of how legislators respond to a serving a plurality district in the domain of the diversity of their staffs.

3.4 Panel data results: the effect of transitioning to a plurality district on ethnic fractionalization

Table 3.2 demonstrates the results from the various fixed effects/within estimator models explaining the racial/ethnic fractionalization of the constituency services and management staffers. Models 1 and 3 show the basic relationship between the district types and staffer diversity while still including the Congress and legislator fixed effects. Models 2 and 4 are the more rigorous models and include the interaction of district type and party on staffer diversity, as well as the additional control variables, Congress and legislator fixed effects.

The fixed-effect regression estimates show no support for my first hypothesis; as legislators transition to serving plurality districts, it is unclear whether or not they adjust the racial/ethnic diversity of their constituency staffers. Model 3 shows no support for my second hypothesis that as legislators transition to serving plurality district they increase the diversity of their management staffs. However, when potential heterogeneous effects of party are taken into consideration, I find that as Democratic legislators transition to serving plurality districts, they increase the diversity of their management staffs by 0.07, which represents approximately half of a standard deviation increase in ethnic fractionalization. Republican legislators who transition to serving plurality districts decrease

¹³See the appendix for ACF and PACF plots demonstrating this lag.

Table 3.1: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district on staffer diversity

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	EF of Const.Staffers		EF of Management Staffers	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. of Black-majority district	0.09 (0.09)	0.07 (0.09)	0.03 (0.03)	0.06** (0.03)
Leg. of Latinx-majority district	0.20 (0.22)	0.29 (0.26)	0.39*** (0.10)	0.28** (0.12)
Leg. of plurality district	0.05 (0.06)	0.03 (0.06)	0.04 (0.03)	0.07** (0.03)
Republican legislator		-0.29 (0.21)		0.09 (0.08)
District-level median household income		-0.0000 (0.0000)		-0.0000 (0.0000)
District-level education		-0.06 (0.26)		0.16 (0.18)
District-level republican vote margin		0.0003 (0.0002)		0.0001 (0.0002)
Leg. of plurality district * Rep. leg.		0.11 (0.15)		-0.14* (0.08)
Constant	0.39*** (0.06)	0.49*** (0.14)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.08 (0.08)
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,244	1,228	1,416	1,393
R ²	0.82	0.82	0.89	0.89
Adjusted R ²	0.68	0.68	0.80	0.80
Residual Std. Error	0.11	0.11	0.07	0.07
F Statistic	5.88***	5.92***	10.51***	10.62***

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

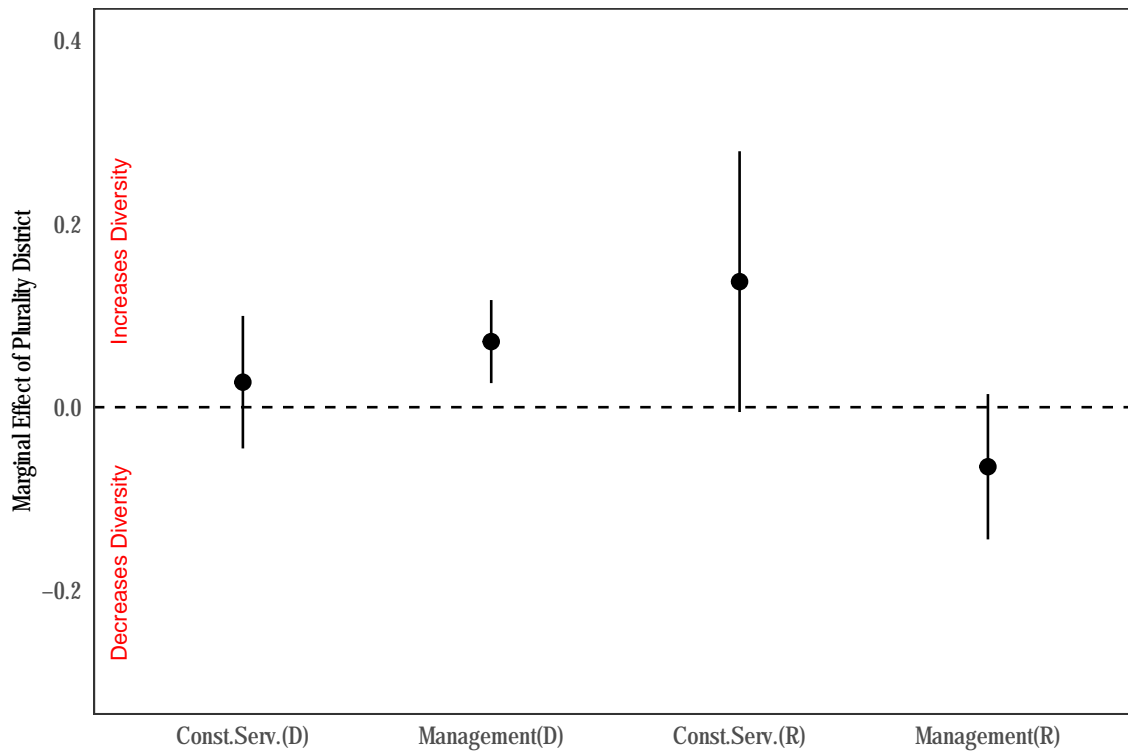


Figure 3.5: Fixed effects models: marginal effects transitioning to plurality district by party on racial/ethnic fractionalization of staffs

the diversity of their management staffs by 0.15, which is one standard deviation decrease in the diversity of the management staffs. These findings provide evidence that Democratic and Republican legislators react very differently when faced with the new burdens of serving more racially/ethnically diverse constituencies.

Figure 3.5 shows the marginal effects of party on the racial/ethnic fractionalization of the two groups of staffers for legislators who transition to serving plurality districts and some interesting patterns emerge. The overall trends demonstrate that Democratic legislators who transition to serving plurality districts appear to focus their diversification among the management positions, whereas their Republican counterparts seem to focus on increasing the racial/ethnic diversity of their constituency services positions. If Republicans start off with less diverse staffers overall, especially those in lower positions (e.g., constituency services staffs), Republican legislators may not have adequate personnel in their employment pipelines to increase the diversity of their management staffs as their districts transition to plurality districts. Similarly, given that Democrats typically start out with higher levels

of diversity, they may not need to increase the racial/ethnic diversity of their constituency services staffs, and instead focus on increasing the diversity of their management staffs as their districts transition to plurality districts.

Moreover, simple t-tests show that Democrats on average have more diverse staffs than Republican legislators. Table 3.3 shows the variety of differences between the racial/ethnic fractionalization of Democratic versus Republican legislators, as well as the statistical significance of those differences. Across the board, Democrats employ more diverse staffs than Republicans. However, the differences between Democrats and Republicans are larger among constituency services staffers than management staffers, which is consistent with my argument as to why the diverging trends between Democratic and Republican legislators who transition to serving plurality districts. Democrats across the board have less diversity in their management positions than their constituency services positions.

Table 3.2: Difference in means: ethnic fractionalization of constituency staffers and management staffers

EF of Const. Serv. Staffs				
Comparison	Dem Mean	Rep Mean	Difference	p-value
All Democrats v. All Republicans	0.17	0.05	0.12	0.000
Dem. v Rep. in Plurality Districts	0.29	0.17	0.12	0.005
Dem. v Rep. in White Majority Districts	0.10	0.05	0.06	0.000
EF of Management Staffs				
Comparison	Dem Mean	Rep Mean	Difference	p-value
All Democrats v. All Republicans	0.16	0.05	0.10	0.000
Dem. v. Rep. in Plurality Districts	0.27	0.2	0.07	0.040
Dem. v. Rep. in White Majority Districts	0.08	0.04	0.03	0.000

Ethnic Fractionalization values listed range from 0 to .8, where 0 indicates that all members of the staff are from the same racial/ethnic group and .8 indicates that staff members are equally divided between the five racial/ethnic groups coded: white, Black, Latinx, Asian, and one category for all other racial/ethnic groups.

3.4.1 Pre/post-redistricting findings

To calculate a better estimate of the causal effect of transitioning to a plurality district on the racial and ethnic diversity of the staffers, the next set of models capture the difference in staffer diversity before and after the 2013 congressional redistricting. As mentioned before, the dependent

variable measures the change in the diversity of the office staffs between the two congresses.

The results in Table 3.4 indicate that the patterns shown in Table 3.2 are consistent with the pre/post-redistricting models. Models 1 and 2 demonstrate that legislators who transition to plurality districts do not change the racial/ethnic diversity of their staffs in a statistically significant manner. Models 3 and 4 demonstrate that the relationship between a legislator's transition to a plurality district and the racial/ethnic diversity of the staff is conditional on party. Democrats who transition to plurality districts on average experience a positive change of 0.09 units across the time period, which represents three-quarters of a standard deviation positive change in diversity. Republicans who transition to plurality districts on average experience a negative change of 0.2 units across the time period, which represents almost a two standard deviation negative change. Figure 3.6 shows the marginal effects plot for the pre/post-redistricting analyses, which again show that Democrat and Republican efforts to diversify their staffs are occurring in different positions; Democratic legislators focusing more on staffers, while there is some evidence that Republicans may focus on the constituency staffers.

3.4.2 Considering previous district type

Of the thirteen districts that switched from a majority-type district to a plurality district, ten of those districts were previously white-majority districts, while three were previously majority-minority districts. It is possible that the original district type may shape the staff diversification patterns. I have no theoretical expectations about whether legislators transitioning from white-majority or majority-minority districts will be more inclined to increase the diversity of their staffs. It is possible that legislators transitioning from majority-white districts to plurality districts will behave differently than legislators who transition to plurality districts from other types of majority-minority districts. Plurality legislators of previously white-majority districts may compensate for their lack of experience with racial/ethnic minority groups and hire very diverse staffs. Alternatively, they may remain ignorant of the needs of the new communities in their district and not alter the staffs. Plurality legislators of previously majority-minority districts may continue to focus on representing

Table 3.3: Pre/post-redistricting: the effect of transitioning to a plurality district on staffer diversity

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Delta EF of		Delta EF of	
	Constituency Staffers		Management Staffers	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality dist.	0.03 (0.11)	-0.08 (0.10)	0.02 (0.05)	0.09** (0.04)
Republican legislator		-0.04 (0.03)		0.02 (0.02)
District-level change in median household income		-0.0000 (0.0000)		-0.0000 (0.0000)
District-level change in education		-0.01 (0.33)		0.34 (0.31)
District-level change in republican vote margin		0.001 (0.0005)		0.0001 (0.0003)
Leg. trans. to plurality * Republican leg.		0.30 (0.27)		-0.20* (0.10)
Constant	0.02* (0.01)	0.06* (0.03)	0.001 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	241	238	293	288
R ²	0.001	0.03	0.001	0.04
Adjusted R ²	-0.003	0.01	-0.003	0.02
Residual Std. Error	0.19	0.19	0.13	0.12
F Statistic	0.19	1.38	0.23	2.02*

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

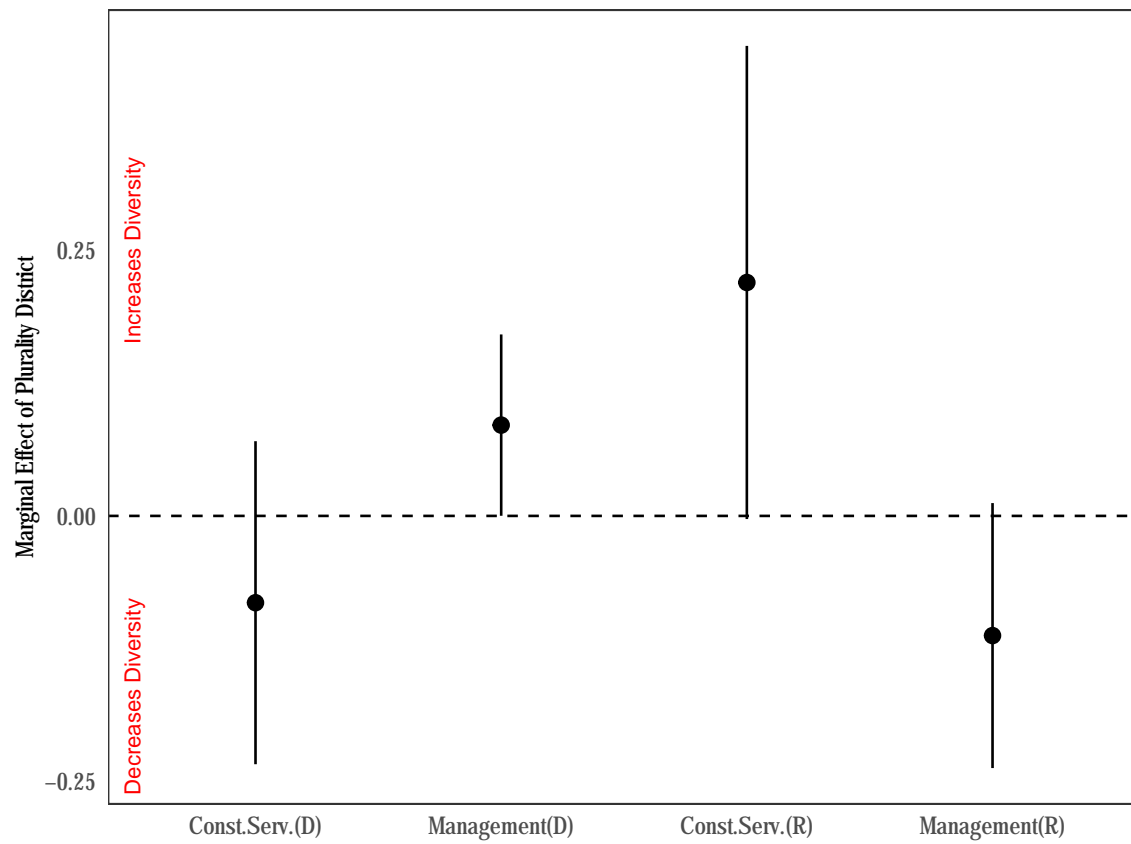


Figure 3.6: Pre/post-redistricting models: marginal effects of a legislator transitioning to plurality district by party on racial/ethnic fractionalization of staffs

their own group, or perhaps their experience serving a majority-minority district will provide the insight to hire staffers that mirror the racial/ethnic composition of the district.

In this additional analysis, I use the same models as the pre/post-redistricting analyses with a modification to the explanatory variables. Here, I disaggregate the indicator for those legislators that transitioned to plurality districts shown in the main pre/post-redistricting analysis and include indicator variables for 1) those legislators who transitioned from a white-majority district to a plurality district 2) those legislators who transitioned from a majority-minority district to a plurality district, 3) the interactions of these two indicator variables with an indicator for whether the legislator is a Republican. For clarity of interpretation, I examine these two sets of independent variables separately— models for those districts that were majority-white before the redistricting and models for those districts that were majority-minority before the redistricting. The outcome variables remain the same— the racial/ethnic fractionalization of constituency services staffs and the racial/ethnic fractionalization of the managerial staffs.

Models 1 and 2 show the results for the racial/ethnic fractionalization of constituency services staffs. Model 1 shows no evidence that Democrats transitioning from white-majority districts to plurality districts alter the racial/ethnic fractionalization of their constituency services staffs relative to their counterparts that remained white-majority districts. Republicans who transitioned from majority-white districts to plurality districts increased the diversity of their constituency services staffs relative to Democrats who remained white-majority districts. There is no evidence that Republican legislators of districts that remain white-majority districts are different than Democratic legislators that remain white-majority districts.

The results of Model 2 are hard to interpret because of the statistically-insignificant F-statistic, likely caused by the small sample size. The coefficients suggest that Democrats who transitioned from other types of majority-minority districts to plurality districts decrease the diversity of their constituency services staffs relative to the Democrats that remained the same majority-minority type. There is no evidence that Republicans who transitioned from a majority-minority district to a plurality district altered overall diversity of their constituency services staffs. More concrete results of what

happens among plurality districts that were previously majority-minority districts may be available if the number of district switches with redistricting increases in the future as the country continues to diversify. For the managerial staffs, Model 3 shows evidence that Democrats transitioning from white-majority districts to plurality districts increase the diversity of their managerial staffs relative to their Democratic counterparts that continued to serve majority-white districts. Models 3 and 4 demonstrate evidence that Republican legislators serving plurality districts that transition from both white-majority districts and majority-minority districts decrease the diversity of their managerial staffs relative to their Democrats who serve districts that remain white-majority and the same majority-minority type.

To better interpret these results, Figures 3.7 and 3.8 show the marginal effect of transitioning from a majority-white or majority-minority district to a plurality district. Figure 3.7 shows the same patterns as the original fixed effects regression and pre-/post-redistricting results. The marginal effect of a Democratic legislator whose district transitions from majority-white to plurality on the diversity of the managerial staffs is positive, indicating that Democrats who make the transition from majority-white districts to plurality districts increase the diversity of their managerial staffs. There is no evidence of a marginal effect for the same transition on the diversity of the constituency services staffs among Democrats. As the previous analyses demonstrate, there is a positive marginal effect of a Republican transitioning from a white-majority district to a plurality district on the diversity of the constituency services staffs, but no evidence of a marginal effect for the same transition on the diversity of the managerial staffs.

Figure 3.8 does not conclusively show whether there is any marginal effect of transitioning from a majority-minority district to a plurality district on the diversity of either the Democratic or Republican constituency services staffs. There is a negative marginal effect of a Republican transitioning from a majority-minority district to a plurality district on the diversity in the managerial staffs, indicating a reduction in diversity.

Ultimately, these marginal effect plots suggest that the changes in the aggregated analyses are driven largely by white-majority districts transitioning to plurality districts. This is an important

nuance to note because the transition of legislators from white-majority districts to plurality districts is likely to become more frequent as the U.S. continues to diversify. These results suggest that as the United States transitions to a majority-minority country, Congressional staffs are likely to diversify as well. As discussed in the theory section, this increase in staffer diversity is likely to support the substantive representation of racial/ethnic minority groups, as well as help to populate the pipeline for future elected officials.

Table 3.4: Pre/post-redistricting: considering the effect of legislator’s original district type and transitioning to plurality district on staffer diversity

	Delta EF of		Delta EF of	
	Constituency Staffers		Management Staffers	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. trans. from white-maj to plurality dist.	-0.05 (0.11)		0.11** (0.05)	
Leg. trans. from maj-min to plurality dist.		-0.15** (0.07)		0.06 (0.04)
Republican legislator	-0.004 (0.04)	-0.004 (0.21)	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.09)
District-level change in median household income	0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)
District-level change in education	-0.48 (0.32)	0.51 (1.30)	0.35 (0.40)	0.13 (0.59)
District-level change in republican vote margin	0.0001 (0.0004)	0.003* (0.002)	0.001** (0.0003)	-0.001 (0.001)
Leg. trans. from white-maj to plurality * Rep. leg.	0.54*** (0.14)		-0.10* (0.06)	
Leg. trans. from maj-min to plurality * Rep. leg.		-0.27 (0.18)		-0.47*** (0.10)
Constant	0.02 (0.04)	0.13** (0.06)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)
Observations	186	52	219	69
R ²	0.12	0.15	0.07	0.16
Adjusted R ²	0.09	0.04	0.05	0.08
Residual Std. Error	0.15	0.28	0.11	0.15
F Statistic	3.88***	1.34	2.82**	2.02*

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

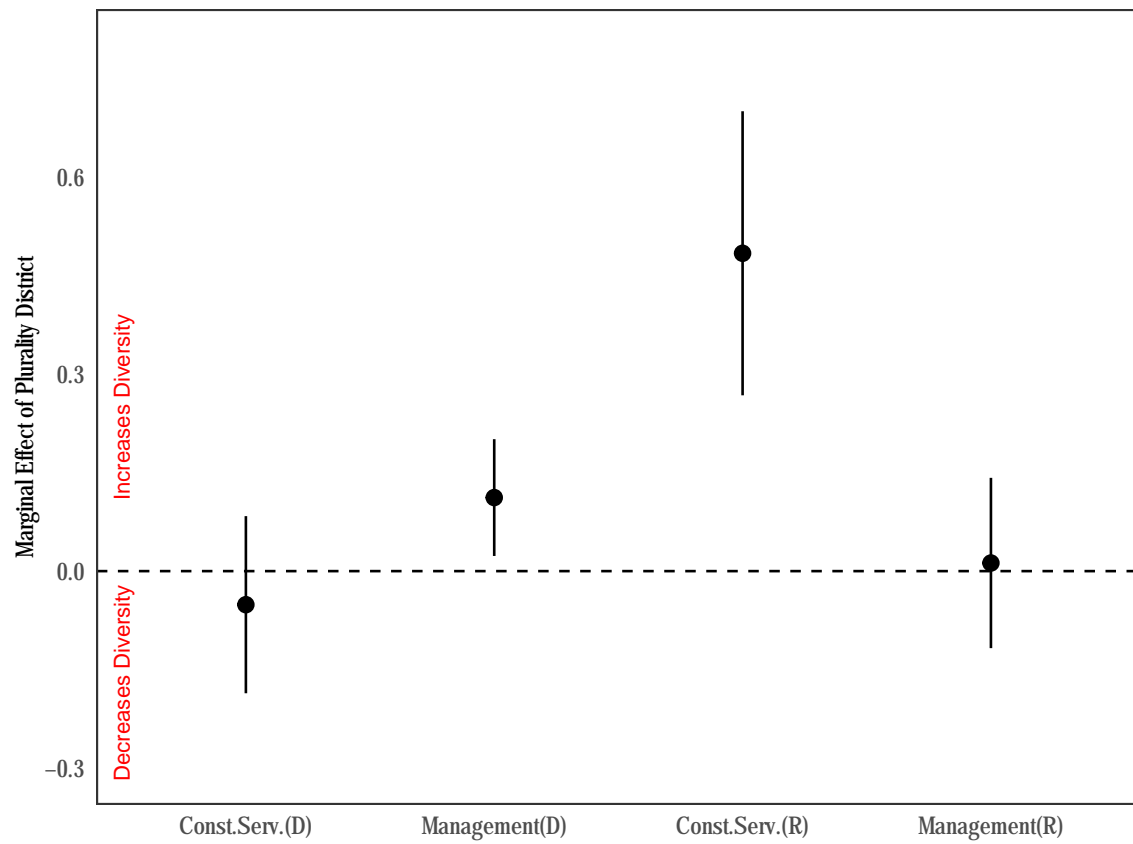


Figure 3.7: Pre/post-redistricting models: marginal effects transitioning from majority-white to plurality district by party on racial/ethnic fractionalization of staffs

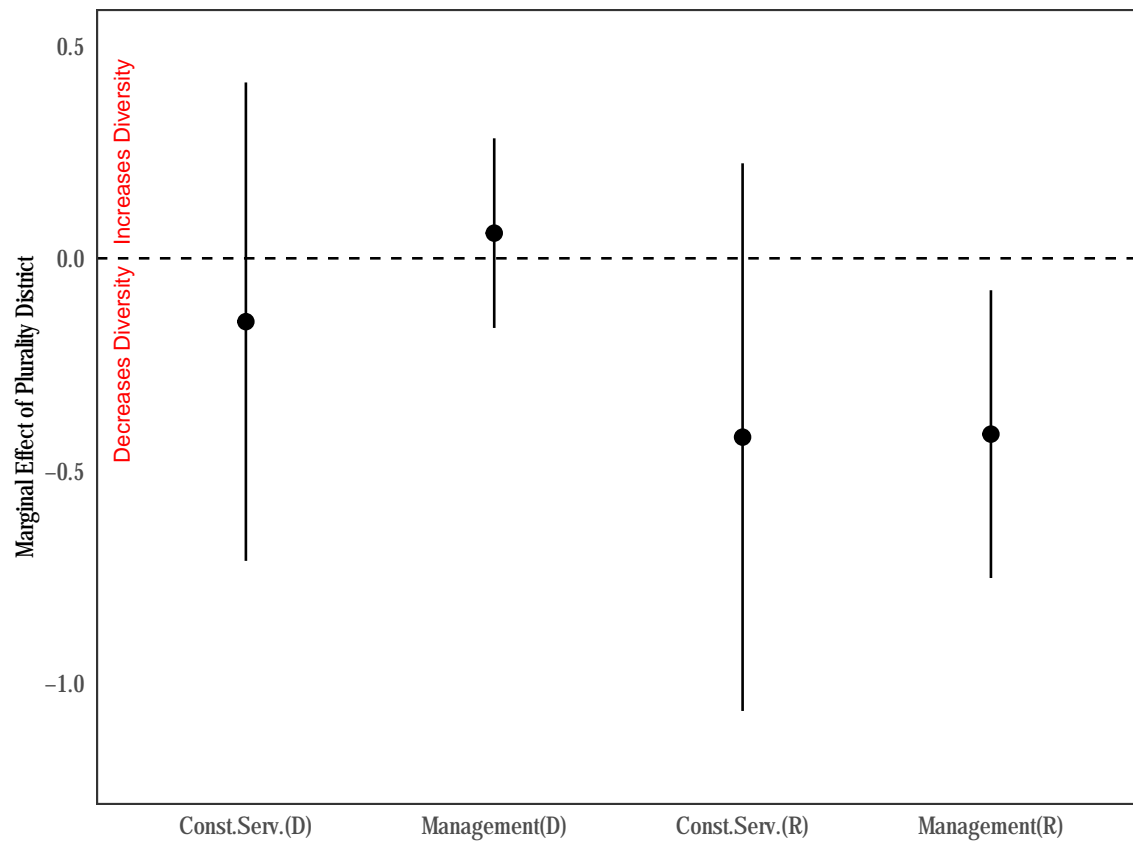


Figure 3.8: Pre/post-redistricting models: marginal effects transitioning from majority-minority to plurality district by party on racial/ethnic fractionalization of staffs

3.4.3 Robustness check: alternative specification of the model

Table 3.5 presents an alternative model specification to demonstrate that transitioning to a plurality district has an independent effect on the diversity of the staffs even when controlling for the percentage of different racial/ethnic groups in the district. In this model, I include an indicator variable for legislators who transitioned to plurality districts, as well as an interaction for Republican legislators who transitioned to a plurality district. In these models, I control for the relative sizes of the white, Black, Latinx, Asian, and other racial groups in the district. Legislator and Congress fixed effects are included and the standard errors are clustered by the legislator. These findings are consistent with the previous analyses, though the coefficients are slightly smaller.

The results thus far show that Democrats increase the diversity of their management staffs as their district type changes from majority-type to plurality district. An implication of this finding is that Democratic legislators of new plurality districts, with more diverse management staffs, are in a better position to hear the needs and preferences of their non-coethnic constituents. Increasing the diversity of the management staffs also helps to improve the pipeline to political office for people of color. However, the findings also suggest that fewer changes are occurring in areas that are most visible to constituents in Democratic offices. There is no evidence that Democrats who transition to plurality districts increase the diversity of their constituency services staffs; however, they are also more likely to start off with more diverse constituency services staffs than Republicans. The marginal effects plots suggest Republicans increase the diversity of their constituency services staffs. I also find demonstrate that these findings are largely driven by the transition of white-majority districts to plurality districts. The overall findings clearly suggest that how legislators react to the diversification of their constituencies is moderated by party.

3.5 Discussion

I make several important contributions to the literature with this research. I present the first systematic piece of literature to my knowledge that analyzes the direct effects of plurality majority-

Table 3.5: Alternative specification: the effect of transitioning to a plurality district on staffer diversity

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	EF of Const.Staffers		EF of Const.Staffers	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. of plurality district	0.01 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)
Republican legislator		-0.25*** (0.09)		0.10*** (0.04)
Percent white in district	0.63** (0.31)	0.58* (0.31)	-0.29* (0.17)	-0.38** (0.17)
Percent Black in district	0.41 (0.32)	0.37 (0.31)	-0.47** (0.20)	-0.55*** (0.20)
Percent Latinx in district	0.78 (0.56)	0.79 (0.57)	0.28 (0.25)	0.005 (0.24)
Percent AAPI in district	1.93*** (0.61)	1.93*** (0.61)	0.17 (0.33)	-0.13 (0.31)
Percent other in district	0.81 (0.61)	0.69 (0.60)	-1.97*** (0.36)	-1.94*** (0.36)
Median household income	-0.0000** (0.0000)	-0.0000** (0.0000)	-0.0000** (0.0000)	-0.0000* (0.0000)
Education	-0.06 (0.15)	-0.07 (0.15)	0.02 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.09)
Republican vote margin	0.0002** (0.0001)	0.0003** (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0001)
Trans. to plurality district * Rep. leg.		0.09 (0.07)		-0.16*** (0.03)
Constant	-0.05 (0.27)	-0.01 (0.27)	0.26* (0.15)	0.33** (0.14)
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,228	1,228	1,393	1,393
R ²	0.82	0.82	0.89	0.89
Adjusted R ²	0.68	0.68	0.80	0.80
Residual Std. Error	0.11	0.11	0.07	0.07
F Statistic	5.86***	5.89***	10.50***	10.65***

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

minority districts on within-district representation outcomes. The majority of the extant literature focuses on Black-majority districts and Latinx-majority districts despite the reality that plurality districts are the most rapidly increasing type of district as the country becomes more racially/ethnically diverse. These plurality districts are the future of racial/ethnic representation in the United States. Plurality districts are likely to become more common as the country becomes more diverse. Theoretically, there are differences between plurality districts and other types of majority-minority districts, such as the inability to elect a representative who descriptively represents the majority of the constituents, which increases difficulties connecting to non-coethnic/coracial constituents. This makes the provision of representation more difficult.

I analyze the race/ethnicity of congressional staffers with data for all members during multiple Congresses, whereas the previous work has relied on smaller samples (Grose 2011; Grose, Mangum, and Martin 2007; Swain 1993). I demonstrate that legislators, particularly Democrats, are responding to the changing demographics of their districts when they are hiring staffers, though these changes are occurring slowly. Democratic legislators whose districts change from majority-type to plurality increase the diversity of their management staffs between a half to three-quarters of a standard deviation when they make the transition. It is likely that the diversification process will continue the longer that the legislator serves a plurality district. Furthermore, I show evidence that these findings are largely driven by legislators whose districts transition from white-majority districts to plurality districts.

I argue that having a more diverse staff is likely to also improve substantive representation. Diverse staffs can serve symbolic and practical roles to help plurality legislators build trust with their non-coethnic/coracial constituents. Symbolically, staffers who reflect the communities they serve send signals with their bodies to the racial/ethnic groups that the groups are important to the legislator, which may, in turn, lead to increased constituent participation. Practically, hiring staffers from the communities they serve can ensure having the skills and expertise necessary to represent the community, such as language support, community contacts, and an understanding of an racial/ethnic group's political needs and preferences. Additionally, hiring more staffers of color

increases the amount of political experience that can translate into a steadier flow of high-quality political candidates of color running for political office. Moreover, I provide evidence that the relationship between transitioning to a plurality district and hiring a more diverse staff is causal using both fixed effects regressions and redistricting as a natural experiment.

On the larger scale, the evidence I present here demonstrates a gross disparity between the racial and ethnic demographics of the United States and those of the Congressional staffers. According to the 2015 American Community Survey/Census national estimates, the non-Latinx white population made up almost 63% of U.S. residents, while Figure 3.1 shows that non-Latinx white individuals constitute approximately 86% of the congressional staffers. While it is unclear whether this is due to outright discrimination or a slow supply of potential staffers of color, the resulting disparity of the descriptive representation of Congressional staffs compounds the disproportionately low number of non-white members of Congress (Bialik and Krogstad 2017).

Normalizing racial/ethnic diversity of staffers might have further implications for the engagement of racial/ethnic minorities in politics overall. Descriptive representation in mayoral positions translates into increased minority participation as citizens change their perceptions of the costs and benefits of voting (Bobo and Gilliam 1990). To the extent that Bobo & Gilliam's findings apply to a wider variety of positions, increasing staffer diversity may encourage broader racial/ethnic minority engagement in politics.

My findings may also help to inform the literature about the effect of majority-minority districts on the representation of racial/ethnic minority individuals and communities. The ideal distribution of racial/ethnic minority populations across electoral districts is debated both in the literature and U.S. case law. Research on the topic is divided as to whether majority-Black and majority-Latinx districts are necessary to ensure descriptive and substantive representation outcomes for those communities (Canon 1999; Lublin 1997) or whether minority-influence districts, that is those with anywhere from 35%-50% of the district, will maximize descriptive and substantive representation outcomes (Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran 1996; Grose 2011; Swain 1993). In practice, some reapportionment plans, particularly those of North Carolina and Texas, have created electoral districts

“so highly irregular that, on its face, it rationally cannot be understood as anything other than an effort to ‘segregat[e] . . . voters’ on the basis of race.”(States 1993). As a result, the Supreme Court has grappled with the role that race and ethnicity should play in the construction of electoral districts in terms of compliance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA). With *Shaw v. Reno* (1993), the court decided that using race in redistricting must be held to a standard of strict scrutiny under the Equal Protection Clause; thus race could not play a predominant factor in the construction of districts; however, race could not be ignored for compliance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965.¹⁴ *Thornburg v. Gingles* (1986) and *Bartlett v. Strickland* (2009) examined the extent to which the VRA compels reapportionment commissions to prevent racial/ethnic minority vote dilution and maximize the group’s chances of electing a coethnic/coracial representative. In this context of academic uncertainty and legal debate, my research contributes a piece of evidence suggesting that legislators in districts with no racial/ethnic majority group, many which fall under the category of minority-influence or minority-opportunity districts, can provide elements of descriptive representation despite not having a coethnic/coracial legislator.

One important consideration for the continuation of this research is the necessary validation of the use of the racial/ethnic classifier in this context. Steps towards this validation have already started. Several research assistants have worked to find online profiles for these staffers and use textual and photographic evidence to guess the race/ethnicity of the staffer. Each staffer in the data set was assigned to multiple research assistants. I need to continue and expand this validation in order to make strong conclusions regarding the racial/ethnic composition of the congressional staffers. An additional means of classifier validation might be to look at the states that report the race and ethnicity of voters in the voter file (such as Florida) and attempt to match the names of the district office staffers in those states to the voter files. The ultimate analytical goal would be to combine these validation approaches and find the optimal classifier for this problem.

More broadly, another important consideration is how and whether these methodological tech-

¹⁴The standard of strict scrutiny has been upheld by subsequent cases, such as *Shaw v. Hunt* (1996, an appeal of *Shaw v. Reno*), *Miller v. Johnson* (1995), *Bush v. Vera* (1996), and *Cooper v. Harris* (2017).

niques in probabilistically classifying race and ethnicity are subjected to ethical deliberation. As mentioned earlier, these techniques have come under scrutiny for their misuse. Such attention and review are justified given the long history of the exploitation of members of historically marginalized groups in the United States for the purposes of scientific research. (Infamous examples include Henrietta Lacks' coerced contributions to cellular research emanating from the still used line of cells created without her consent from biopsy tissue and the Tuskegee Syphilis Study where Black men were given syphilis without their consent for the explicit purpose of studying untreated syphilis across a lifetime.)

Two important factors to consider when assessing the ethical appropriateness of using these techniques are 1) whether one is interested in using this estimate as a predictor of behavior and 2) whether individual or group level information is of interest. Taken together, intense scrutiny is warranted anytime a specific individual's outcome is determined or impacted directly by these probabilistic classifications. In the case of this piece of research, I am not interested in using these estimates as predictors but rather as outcomes themselves. Furthermore, the unit of analysis is not individual staffers but offices. The conclusions that I draw from this research are not about the individuals themselves but the choices made by elected officials. Still, as this research develops, I will continue to interrogate the ethical and equity implications of this work, including but not limited to seeking outside input from experts and stakeholders.

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Appendix A: OLS estimates without legislator fixed Effects

Table 3.6: The effect of serving a plurality district on staffer diversity: without legislator fixed effects

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	EF of Const.Staffers		EF of Management Staffers	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. of Black-majority district	0.02 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.05*** (0.02)	0.04** (0.02)
Leg. of Latinx-majority district	0.29*** (0.04)	0.28*** (0.05)	0.37*** (0.03)	0.37*** (0.02)
Leg. of plurality district	0.20*** (0.02)	0.20*** (0.02)	0.20*** (0.01)	0.20*** (0.02)
Republican legislator		-0.04** (0.02)		-0.04*** (0.01)
Median household income		0.0000 (0.0000)		0.0000 (0.0000)
Education		0.14 (0.11)		-0.04 (0.07)
Republican vote margin		-0.0001 (0.0002)		0.0002 (0.0001)
Leg. of plurality district * Republican leg.		-0.09* (0.05)		-0.07** (0.04)
Leg. of Latinx-maj. district * Republican leg.	0.05*** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.02)
Congress FE	No	No	No	No
Legislator FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,244	1,228	1,416	1,393
R ²	0.20	0.24	0.29	0.31
Adjusted R ²	0.20	0.23	0.29	0.31
Residual Std. Error	0.17	0.17	0.13	0.13
F Statistic	61.42***	34.83***	116.56***	57.02***

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Appendix B: Using congressional district demographics in the Naive Bayes classifier

Table 3.7: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district on staffer diversity using congressional district demographics

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	EF of Const. Staffers		EF of Man. Staffers	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. of Black-majority district	0.09 (0.10)	0.05 (0.10)	0.06 (0.05)	0.11** (0.05)
Leg. of Latinx-majority district	0.18 (0.25)	0.22 (0.27)	0.39*** (0.10)	0.25** (0.12)
Leg. of plurality district	0.07 (0.07)	0.04 (0.08)	0.04 (0.03)	0.09*** (0.03)
Republican legislator		-0.26 (0.20)		-0.13 (0.09)
Median household income		-0.0000 (0.0000)		0.0000 (0.0000)
Education		0.01 (0.34)		-0.06 (0.21)
Republican vote margin		0.0001 (0.0003)		0.0003 (0.0002)
Leg. of plurality district * Rep. leg.		0.09 (0.13)		-0.21*** (0.08)
Constant	0.37*** (0.07)	0.57*** (0.17)	0.06* (0.03)	-0.04 (0.09)
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,160	1,144	1,324	1,301
R ²	0.80	0.80	0.87	0.88
Adjusted R ²	0.62	0.62	0.76	0.78
Residual Std. Error	0.12	0.13	0.09	0.08
F Statistic	4.48***	4.47***	8.07***	8.62***

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Appendix C: ACF and PACF plots

The ACF and PACF plots indicate the presence of an AR-1 process.

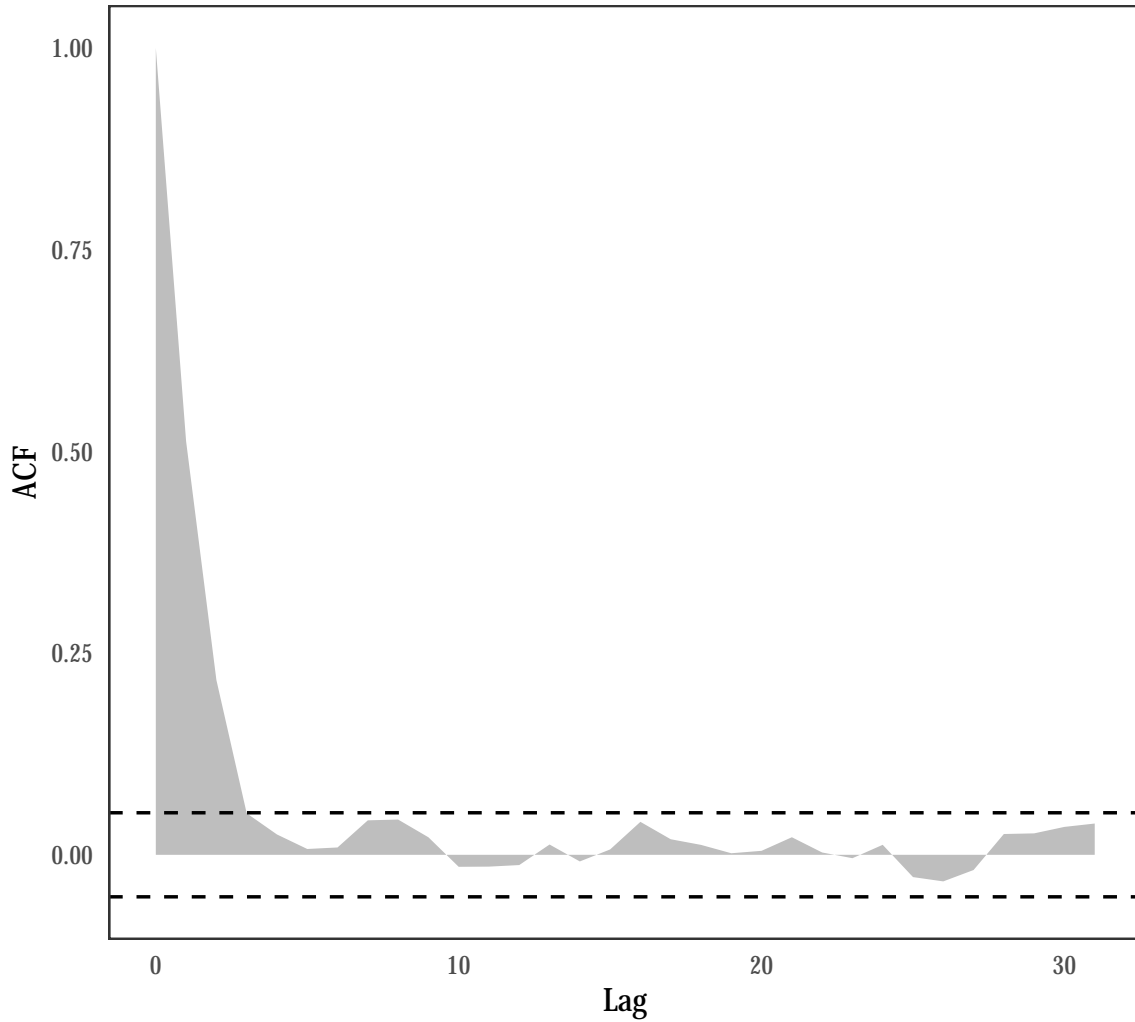


Figure 3.9: Autocorrelation function for racial/ethnic fractionalization of management positions

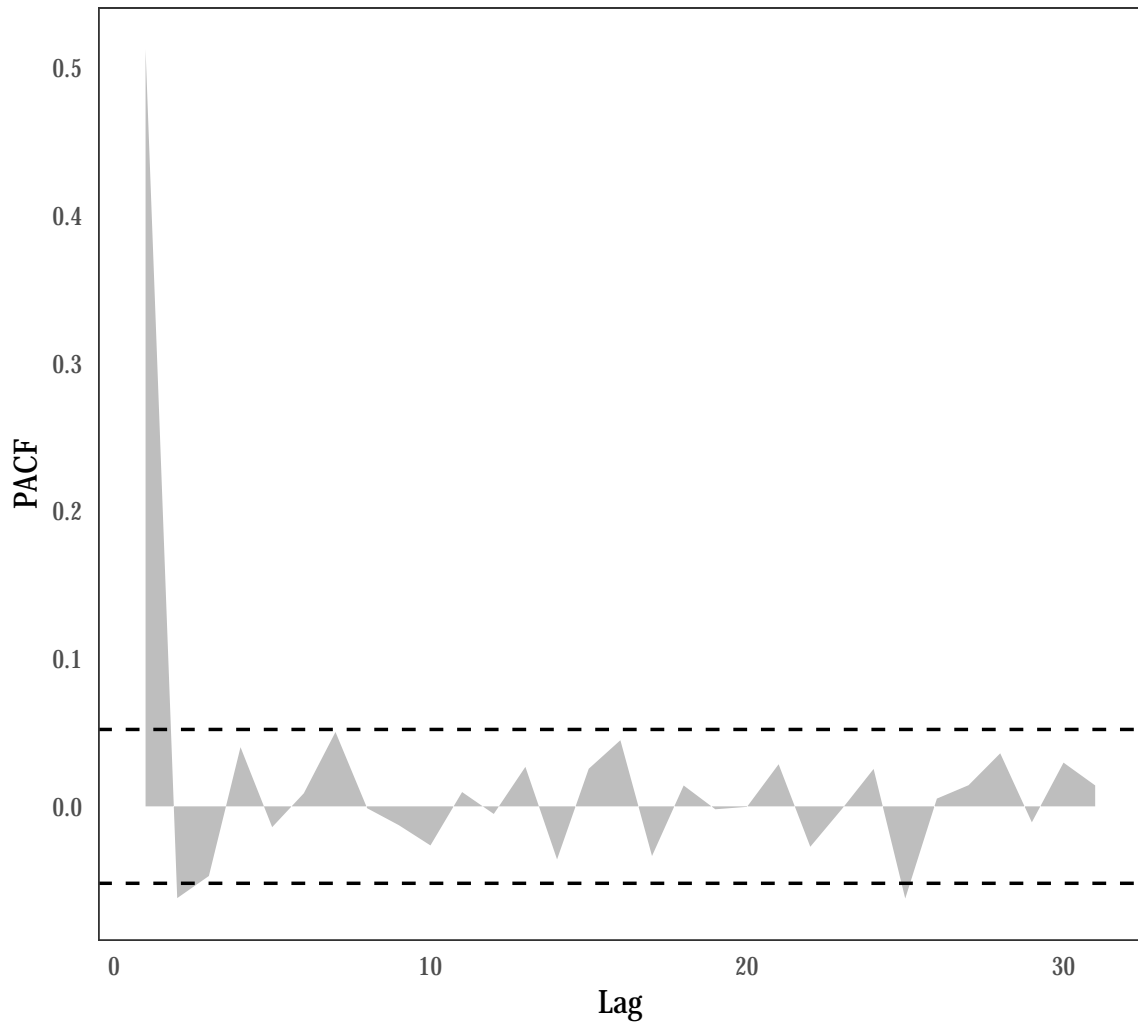


Figure 3.10: Partial autocorrelation function for racial/ethnic fractionalization of management positions

4

Federal Funding Benefiting Historically Racially and Ethnically Marginalized Communities

4.1 Introduction

U.S. federal funding is often approached from the perspective of pork– particularistic funding that is wasteful; a form of patronage that sidesteps programmatic distribution of resources. Notorious anecdotes support this view of distributive spending. The epitome of these projects was the plan for the Gravina Island Bridge in Alaska, infamously known as the “Bridge to Nowhere.” The Alaskan congressional delegation secured a \$223 earmark in 2005 to connect a small Alaskan city with its airport.¹ While these examples of excess have dwindled in number since the earmark moratorium, acquiring funding for districts is still an important function of U.S. House members’ and their offices.

District funding can also serve as a vital means of responsiveness and representation for legislators. This is most evident in the work that focuses on multidimensional representation, first presented by Eulau and Karps (1977). This research acknowledges that legislators have a portfolio of strategies

¹<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-alaska-bridge/alaskas-bridge-to-nowhere-plan-finally-scrapped-idUSKCN0SI00120151024>

from which to choose when representing their constituents. Moreover, the research highlights that not all constituents prefer the same types of representation (Eulau and Karps 1977; Griffin and Flavin 2011; Harden 2013, 2016; Lapinski et al. 2016). For instance, there is evidence that Latinx and Black constituents place a high value on funding for the district as a means of representation (Griffin and Flavin 2011; Tate 2003). Harden's (2016) research suggests that socioeconomic status correlates with whether they prefer particularistic funding or need-based allocation for their district.

Additionally, funding offers an opportunity to track the changes in the nature of the interactions between legislative district offices and their constituents. U.S. House member district offices have staffers whose responsibilities include helping constituents navigate the federal award process. Presumably, legislators who see exceptional value in helping to bring funds back to their districts will devote more resources to the acquisitions of these awards (such as staff-hours).

In this paper, I argue that distributive spending as a means of representation offers legislators a way to simultaneously bring needed projects to the district and to build relationships with their constituents. The tangible benefits accrued via the growth of infrastructure, education, and economic well-being can provide crucial opportunities for legislators to build trust, particularly with non-coethnic constituents. Assisting various community groups with their applications for these federal funds offer unique opportunities to get to know and build rapport with the communities within the district, in addition to supporting their material needs. Moreover, these funds are not inherently zero sum, multiple racial and ethnic groups within a district can benefit from the funds, and a U.S. House member's district office can aid multiple groups in the application for their awards. The ability to work with many groups simultaneously allows the legislator to assure the district's diverse constituency that the legislator is capable of representing all groups without playing favorites, including non-coethnic groups, laying the foundation for racial trust.

The need to build trust with various racial and ethnic groups within a district is clearly evident in cases where legislators are transitioning to districts from districts with racial/ethnic majorities to districts racially/ethnically plural districts. Here, I ask, do legislators acquire more minority-interest funding after their district changes from a majority-type district to a plurality district? I expect that

strategic legislators who transition to serving plurality districts will change their funding profile to mirror their new district to be responsive to their new constituency.

To answer this question, I examine the federal awards contracts associated with the activity of the 112th-114th congresses (fiscal years 2012-2017). The analysis follows the legislator across the redistricting period following the 2010 census and employs a pre/post-redistricting analysis, accounting for any time invariant legislator-specific variables that might be correlated with a legislator's propensity for acquiring funding. I specifically test whether legislators who transition from white-majority districts to racially/ethnically plural districts alter their strategies in obtaining federal awards contracts more than legislators whose district remains majority-white.

Overall, I find no evidence to suggest that legislators who transition from serving majority-white districts to plurality districts alter their funding patterns compared to their counterparts who continue serving majority-type districts. These null results are interesting given that the outcome is a proxy for responsiveness. Either, a) there is a responsiveness deficit, or b) the change in responsiveness is so small that it cannot be measured in this analysis or be substantively meaningful.² Any presence of under- or unresponsiveness on the part of the legislator contributes to the underfunding of non-white communities across the United States, which is arguably a critical piece for long-term power building in these communities.

This chapter is organized as follows: the first section presents theoretical explanation of why legislators of plurality districts might be more likely to pursue federal awards for their districts, as well as my hypotheses. The second section reviews the research design for the primary test of these hypotheses. Then, I present the empirical results from this test. Next, I explore potential alternative analyses to better understand the null results of the primary analysis. I finish with a discussion of the aggregate results.

²It is possible that they preempt the needs based on what they might expect their congressional district to look like, but there is no guarantee as to what their districts will look like, particularly because the states are in charge of the redistricting. Moreover, even if legislators did preempt, we would still expect to see legislators that increase their efforts once they know what their district's composition.

4.2 The role of culturally competent distributive spending

In the introduction to this dissertation, I explore why legislators of plurality districts face additional challenges unique to districts with no racial/ethnic majority groups. To summarize, legislators in plurality districts must maintain strong connections with and build trust within the non-coethnic communities within their constituency to create stable and long-lasting electoral coalitions. As with most relationships, trust is built over time through repeated positive interactions. These repeated interactions are especially important for constituents from historically racially-marginalized communities, who for the variety of reasons discussed in introduction, hold less faith in government than those from privileged communities. Distributive funding in the form of federal contract awards represents an opportunity for legislators and their offices to work with members of the community to facilitate the repeated interactions necessary to build trust.

In this chapter, I argue that legislators can use the advantages of providing tangible benefits in the form of distributive spending, particularly in preferred funding domains, to demonstrate responsiveness to the new demographics of their constituency. Acquiring more money and opportunities for one's district may help reduce pressure on legislator in the process of building a multiracial/ethnic electoral coalition from scratch and representing a diverse constituency.

However, the benefits of bringing funds to the district are not unique to legislators of racially and ethnically plural districts. These funds can serve as an electoral cushion for any legislator. Distributive spending has the power to increase the incumbent's vote share in the next election (Alvarez and Saving 1997; Chen 2013; Matsubayashi and Wu 2012; Stein and Bickers 1995). The potential benefits of distributive spending on vote share can operate in a couple of ways. Distributive spending can mobilize supporters that previously did not turn out (Nichter 2008) or sway non-supporters (Stokes 2005). Supporting the economic needs of local communities should logically have electoral benefits for representatives vis--vis approval ratings. Distributive spending also offers excellent opportunities for credit claiming and advertising (Mayhew 1974). Representatives use their own publicity sources (e.g., websites, social media accounts, newsletters etc.) and the local media

outlets to announce the new projects and sources of funding to the district. Ideally, this increases name recognition and publicizes the competence of the representative.

There are three theoretical ways in which acquiring district funding can help legislators of plurality districts overcome the racial trust dilemma with the majority of their non-coethnic constituents: opportunities to build direct relationships with constituents, tangible and diffuse financial assistance, and opportunities for credit claiming. These benefits complement each other in ways that should make this form of representation flexible to meet the unique needs of the district and the legislator. To preview, legislators have project staffers to help constituents navigate the federal bureaucracy and this includes project award applications. Legislators and their offices build relationships with local leaders directly through the process of the award applications, and these leaders may then be able to mobilize voters on behalf of the legislator come election day. The funds may be more readily experienced by the community if the projects are large enough. Otherwise, press releases, newspaper articles, social media posts, photo ops create credit claiming opportunities where legislators can signal their responsiveness to their constituents. In signaling their responsiveness they can also signal their attentiveness to the racial and ethnic communities within their district. Legislators advertise that they are working with community members to support local businesses, schools, and the local community more broadly in culturally competent ways through federal awards.

The relational process of award applications between the office and local leaders is a complement to the casework that the district offices do. Like casework, working with constituents to acquire funds for their businesses, schools, and communities is time intensive. However, time spent working directly in the communities is an excellent opportunity to understand the needs and preferences of the various communities within the district and to foster rapport with non-coethnic constituents and local leaders. Research has shown that legislators who do not descriptively represent their constituents have a more difficult time providing other forms of political representation to non-coethnic constituents particularly in terms of trust and communication (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Broockman 2014; Gay 2002; Grose 2011). Building relationships with local non-coethnic community leaders can cultivate the clout necessary to be perceived by those communities as credible representatives of their interests.

However, as a function of staffer-hours, the electoral benefits of acquiring district funds are likely higher than for casework. Helping a business gain the funding it needs to implement a new technology or help a school improve its infrastructure benefits more constituents than helping an individual claim their social security check. Casework is a vital function of the office and a highlight of working in a district office according to many of the congressional district staffers that I interviewed. Casework can confer electoral benefits, but constituent work is well known to be the costliest form of representation. In sum, working with constituents through the awards process provides similar relationship building opportunities as casework, but with a larger potential payoff.

The ability to reach multiple constituents through project awards is the second primary manner in which funding can theoretically provide electoral cushion for the legislator. In the context of racially/ethnically diverse districts, bringing federal spending to the district offers legislators a means of representation that can be widely distributed. The primary limiting factor for the number of awards that a legislator can help constituents secure is the amount of staffer-hours the legislator is willing to allot to it. This inclusivity of distributive spending can solve the racial trust dilemma by sending the signal that the representative wants to help the entire district, not just the representative's group. Providing diffuse benefits can signal responsiveness to multiple groups simultaneously, which is a benefit as many forms of representation are more likely to be zero-sum in nature or have more obvious opportunity costs (e.g., roll-call votes when preferences diverge, or even hiring a new staffer in the district office). Furthermore, in districts where race and socioeconomic status are tightly correlated, the economic benefits of projects within the district are likely to be felt more forcefully.

How broadly these awards reach within the district varies depending on the nature of the project. In cases where the award benefits fewer individuals, it is still possible for the legislator to spin these individual funds to reach a wider audience. The third manner in which legislators may benefit from funding is through credit claiming. Successful award applications stemming from the work with non-coethnic community members offer opportunities for culturally competent credit claiming, where legislators signal to their non-coethnic constituents that they are working to increase the prosperity and resources of these groups through the acquisition of awards contracts in ways that

matter to the non-coethnic communities.

This benefit is rooted in the findings of several areas of research. First, is the evidence that some historically racially marginalized groups have preferences for funding as a form of representation. There is growing evidence that voters want different types of representation when researchers take race/ethnicity, gender, class, education, and ideology into account (Griffin and Flavin 2011; Harden 2016; Lapinski et al. 2016). For instance, some evidence suggests that Latinos and Blacks prefer their representatives to acquire funds for their districts more than policy representation (Griffin and Flavin 2011). It is possible that these groups prefer the immediate gains of funding over policy for a variety of reasons, such as lack of trust in government/political process leads them to prefer more tangible benefits, and to the extent that socioeconomic status correlates with race/ethnicity, infrastructure within the community might be a higher priority than policy.

Second, there is evidence that racial and ethnic groups have clear and, in some cases, different issue preferences. (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Barreto and Segura 2014; Canon 1999; Gilliam Jr and Whitby 1989; Kinder and Winter 2001; Rouse 2013). Funding that touches on these issue priorities that are important to the racial and ethnic communities within the district serves as evidence of responsiveness to their constituency. Moreover, legislators have flexibility in whether to highlight the group or the issue area when the funding represents overlap in the issue priorities of the district's racial/ethnic communities. For example, if the legislator successfully assists an HBCU in obtaining a federal contract award, the legislator can spin it either as helping the Black community or as supporting education. The choice in how to spin the achievement would depend on the venue of the credit claiming and the particular electoral needs of the legislator.

A legislator supporting their constituents in the acquisition of federal discretionary funds for the district offers a flexible form of representation than can help support a multiracial/ethnic electoral coalition in a diverse district. The potential for diffuse and inclusive benefits, the tangible funds, opportunities for relationship building, and the credit claiming opportunities, are all reasons why a legislator might pursue this particular representation strategy as a means of solving the racial trust dilemma. Legislators who transition from majority-AAPI, majority-Black, majority-Latinx, or

majority-white districts to plurality districts in the wake of redistricting face the immediate need to not only credibly sell their capacity to represent multiple racial and ethnic groups simultaneously, but also their capability to represent non-coethnic constituents. I expect that one tool that these transitioning legislators will use is to help acquire funds for the district. As such, I expect that:

H_0 : All else equal, there will be no difference in the magnitude of change in funding benefiting communities of color for legislators whose districts change from majority white to plurality compared to their counterparts whose districts stay majority white over the redistricting period.

H_1 : All else equal, legislators whose districts change from majority white to plurality will amass larger increases in funding benefiting communities of color than those legislators whose districts stay majority-white over the redistricting period.

I also expect that party may impact whether a legislator pursues spending as a form of representation and what types of funding the legislator is willing to support. Traditionally, the legislators have railed against federal government spending. However, in recent years, Republican legislators have not executed on this value as much as one would expect given their rhetoric. The contrast between former US Speaker of the House Paul Ryan's expressed priorities and implemented outcomes serve as an example. Paul Ryan was well-known for his desire to reduce federal spending.³ However, the annual federal budget deficit almost doubled during his tenure as Speaker of the House (October 2015 to January 2019)—\$439 billion in fiscal year 2015 and \$779 billion in fiscal year 2018; the deficits steadily increasing over his term.⁴ It seems as though Republican congressional attitudes towards federal spending is serving as more of a rallying cry than a core priority during this time period.

Additionally, fighting federal spending within the budget might be viewed differently than already appropriated funds. It might not make strategic sense for Republican legislators to spurn the fiscal

³See: Roadmap for America's Future: <https://www.crfb.org/blogs/debating-revenue-under-paul-ryans-roadmap-america-future> <https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/111th-congress-2009-2010/reports/01-27-ryan-roadmap-letter.pdf>

⁴<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2018/07/25/when-paul-ryan-leaves-government-the-federal-deficit-will-be-1-2-trillion-higher-than-when-he-arrived/> <https://datalab.usaspending.gov/america-finance-guide/deficit/trends/>

opportunities provided by project awards when the funds will be spent regardless. For Republican legislators transitioning to plurality districts (who typically transition from white-majority districts) these funds would appear to be a way to provide specific representation to the various racial and ethnic groups within the district in a way that does not require explicit discussions of race and ethnicity, compared to minority-interest legislation or symbolic representation. However, acquisition of these awards may be tempered by the ability of the district offices to build relationships with their constituents given the whiteness of the Republican party (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Carmines and Stimson 1989; Frymer 1999).

H₃: All else equal, Republicans who transition to plurality districts from white-majority districts will amass modest increases in funding benefiting communities of color compared to Democrats who stay white-majority districts over the redistricting period.

On the other hand, Democrats are known for holding policy priorities that often rely on higher levels of federal spending than what the Republican party would prefer on average. Notably, there is traditionally strong support within the Democratic party for federal entitlement social spending—such as Medicare and Medicaid, SNAP, etc. (though these entitlements are not analyzed in the analysis as they are directly tied to local demographic changes). There is evidence that Democratic members of Congress larger electoral gains from distributive spending projects than do Republican members (Alvarez and Schousen 1993; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987; Lazarus and Reilly 2010; Sellers 1997; Stein and Bickers 1994).

For Democrats who transition to plurality districts, the increased racial and ethnic diversity within the district, particularly for those Democrats who transition from majority-white districts, will likely increase their efforts to acquire funding for their constituents of color. This will be most evident for Democrats transitioning from white-majority districts because of the increased demand for funds benefitting communities of color associated with the increase of constituents of color in the district.

H₄: All else equal, Democrats who transition to serving plurality districts from white-majority districts will amass larger increases in funding benefiting communities of color compared to their

Democratic counterparts who remain in white-majority districts over the redistricting period.

4.3 Research design

I test these hypotheses using a pre/post redistricting design, which tracks the changes in distributive representation provided by U.S. House members before and after the 2013 redistricting. The unit of analysis is the legislator not the congressional district, which serves multiple purposes. First, holding the legislator constant eliminates a source of confounding variation from the analysis, as some legislators may prioritize the acquisition of funding more than other legislators. From a more practical standpoint, district numbering rules regarding redistricting differ from state to state. Some states prioritize keeping the same number with the constituency (e.g., Pennsylvania); whereas, other states will renumber constituencies in order to keep the district numbers organized (e.g., California's north to south numbering). Tracking the districts would be difficult in cases where the district numbers change. This also means that the only legislators included in the analysis are those that are in office during the 112th and 114th Congresses.

I test these hypotheses using U.S. federal awards contract data as the outcome variable. The data from fiscal years 2012 to 2017 were downloaded from usaspending.gov to correlate with the legislative activities of the 112th, 113th, and 114th Congresses (2011-2017), totaling 49.8 million individual awards contracts over the time period.

Federal award contracts are defined by the U.S. government as “A legal instrument by which a non-Federal entity purchases property or services needed to carry out the project or program under a Federal award.”⁵ Note, that these contracts are distinct from federal contracts where the US federal government purchases goods or services from a non-Federal contractor.⁶ These federal award contracts are not formula based and thus not linked to the changes in the demographic characteristics of the congressional district.

These federal award contracts include flags for businesses and organizations associated with

⁵<https://www.grants.gov/learn-grants/grant-terminology.html>

⁶<https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/2/200.38>

historically racially marginalized groups (e.g., Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Servicing Institutions, Native American owned businesses, etc.).⁷ This allows me to identify funding that is directed to constituents of color within the electoral districts.

Contracts are aggregated to the legislator-congress level within each of these flags (i.e., a total number and funding amount of contracts with HBCUs for each legislator in each congress). The outcome variables will generally be operationalized as the U.S. federal awards contract data from 114th Congress minus funding from 112th Congress for the pre/post-redistricting design. Four different operationalizations of minority-interest funding will be explored: 1) the change in logged dollars of minority-interest awards contracts, 2) the change in the proportion of dollars of minority-interest awards contracts relative to the total dollars of all awards contracts, 3) the change in the number of minority-interest awards contracts, and 4) the change in the proportion of the number of minority-interest awards contracts relative to the total number of all awards contracts.

The primary explanatory variable is a variable that indicates whether the district transitioned in January of 2013 from a majority-AAPI, majority-Black, majority-Latinx, or majority-white district to a district where there is no racial/ethnic majority group, here called a plurality district. The demographic data that feed into this indicator variable come from the American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

The analyses also include a vector of covariates that are operationalized as the change that occurs within the variable between the 112th and 114th congresses. The analysis also includes district level controls: the change in district education levels measured by the percent of the district's population with a bachelor's degree, the change in household income in the district, the change in Republican party vote margin in the district, and the change in the population of the district. The income and education variables are calculated using the American Community Survey 5-year estimates. The vote margin variable is calculated using the CQ Press Voting and Elections Collection data.

⁷The more complete list of flags is as follows: Alaskan native servicing institution, American Indian owned business, Black American owned business, Historically Black college, Housing authorities public Tribal, Federally recognized Indian Tribe, minority institution, minority owned business, Native American owned business, Native Hawaiian owned organization, Native Hawaiian servicing institution, other minority owned business, Subcontinent Asian American owned business, tribal college, tribally owned firm, US tribal government.

Given the research design, only characteristics about the legislator that change over the congresses need to be control for in the analysis. The only time-variant legislator covariate suggested to be important by extant research relates to the committee leadership positions held by the legislator. The literature concerning the distribution of federal monies is mixed on whether committee leadership matters for the distribution of federal funds.⁸ It is possible that parties will offer committee leadership positions to legislators who transition to serving plurality districts to provide these legislators a selling point to solidify their electoral coalitions within their districts. The changes in committee leadership between the 112th and 114th congresses are represented by an indicator variable that takes the value of 1 for the net gain of committee leadership positions, 0 for no net change in committee leadership positions, and a -1 for a net loss of committee leadership positions.

Please note that majority-party membership and presidential co-partisans are not included as control variables because they do not vary across this particular time period. Republicans controlled the U.S. House of Representatives and Democratic President Barack Obama held the Presidency across these three congresses.

Finally, I subsetting the dataset to include only the legislators that were serving white-majority districts in 2011 and either continued serving white-majority districts in 2015 or transitioned to plurality districts in 2015. This leaves 207 legislators who were serving white-majority districts in 2011; 197 who remained serving white-majority districts, and 10 who transitioned to plurality districts.

4.4 Changes in minority-interest awards contracts

This section reviews the results of the primary analysis regarding whether or not the legislators seek additional minority-interest funding when they transition from white-majority districts to

⁸Research suggesting a theoretical or observed effects of committee leadership positions: Weingast and Marshall (1988); Shepsle and Weingast (1987); Lee (2003); Alvarez and Saving (1997); Balla et al. (2002); Heitshusen (2001); Lauderdale (2008); Lazarus (2009); Lazarus (2010); Lazarus and Steigerwalt (2009); Lee (2003). Research indicating committee leadership positions: Berry, Burden, and Howell (2010); Berry and Fowler (2016); Dynes and Huber (2015); Alexander, Berry, and Howell (2016); Lazarus (2010); Lazarus and Steigerwalt (2009).

Table 4.1: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district on the minority-interest awards contracts in \$100,000 dollars using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Diff. MI Contracts (\$100k)		Prop. of Diff. MI Contracts (\$)	
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	22,809.23 (16,201.41)	33,854.51 (22,449.94)	0.10 (0.10)	0.10 (0.14)
Republican legislator	-2,071.63 (1,709.31)	-10.28 (649.33)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Republican leg .		-34,846.87 (22,112.47)		-0.003 (0.16)
Constant	2,806.61* (1,297.31)	1,314.05 (786.22)	0.09 (0.06)	0.09 (0.06)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	207	207	207	207
Adjusted R ²	0.12	0.19	-0.03	-0.04
Residual Std. Error	12,287.83	11,816.77	0.30	0.30

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 4.2: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district on the number of minority-interest awards contracts using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Diff. MI (Contracts #)		Prop. of Diff. MI Contracts (#)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	5,185.90 (3,164.47)	7,929.05 (4,242.00)	0.12 (0.08)	0.18 (0.11)
Republican legislator	-788.77 (477.28)	-276.83 (371.87)	-0.004 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Republican leg.		-8,654.39* (4,201.94)		-0.17 (0.12)
Constant	1,427.54*** (388.71)	1,056.85** (338.66)	0.11** (0.04)	0.10** (0.04)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	207	207	207	207
Adjusted R ²	0.10	0.16	-0.01	-0.01
Residual Std. Error	3,267.72	3,159.86	0.29	0.29

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

plurality districts compared to those legislators who continue serving white-majority districts. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show the results of this analysis operationalizing minority-interest funding as the dollars of minority-interest awards contracts and the number of minority-interest awards contracts, respectively. The tables show both raw dollars and counts, as well as the proportions that those dollars and counts represent. These two tables show no evidence that legislators acquire more minority-interest funds after their district becomes majority minority compared to the legislators who remain serving a white-majority district.

Additionally, there is no strong evidence supporting differential effects by the party of the legislator. Table 4.2 does indicate that Republican legislators who transition to plurality districts may in fact receive fewer minority-interest awards contracts after they transition from majority-white to plurality districts. This finding is mirrored neither in the proportion of the number of minority-interest awards contracts to total number of awards contracts received nor the total dollar amount of minority-interest funds received by the district.

These null results are in fact interesting when viewed through the lens of responsiveness. There are a few potential explanations for these null results. First, legislators who transition to plurality districts may in fact alter their representation strategies and seek out more minority interest funds, but their efforts are unsuccessful.

Second, legislators who transition to plurality districts may garner additional minority-interest funds for their districts after they transition to serving plurality districts, but the increases are too small to observe. This in of itself could represent a deficit in representation assuming that their new constituency would prefer additional minority-interest funds.

Third, legislators do not alter their representation strategy as it concerns minority-interest funding. No change in minority-interest funding arguably indicates a clear responsiveness deficit. As their constituencies change, it is expected that the types of discretionary funding received by their districts should change accordingly.

Fourth, perhaps awards contracts are not the area in which legislators are focusing their efforts in terms of minority-interest funding. Remember that the awards contracts were chosen because of they

clearly identify funds that specifically benefit non-white constituents. However, it is possible that despite the clean measurement of minority-interest funding that award contracts offer the researcher, in practice these awards contracts are inferior forms of funding for the district in comparison to other forms of funding (e.g., non-formula project grants).

There is no way to adjudicate between the first three possibilities, but I can test the fourth possibility by altering the operationalization of minority-interest funding. Instead of measuring funding that benefits communities of color with federal contract awards, I explore whether there are changes in funding patterns among non-formula discretionary federal grants likely to benefit communities of color, as well as contract award and grant funding totals. I also consider explore whether legislators of color transitioning to plurality districts are more more responsive than their white counterparts. The next section explores these alternate operationalizations to see if perhaps legislators do alter their representation strategies in terms of funding, but outside of the federal awards contracts.

4.5 Exploration of alternate operationalizations and specifications

4.5.1 Minority-interest non-formula discretionary project grants

For this secondary measure of minority-interest funding, I also calculate the number of grants and the total sum of the grant dollars per legislator-congress. Discretionary grants are defined by the US federal government as “A grant (or cooperative agreement) for which the federal awarding agency generally may select the recipient from among all eligible recipients, may decide to make or not make an award based on the programmatic, technical, or scientific content of an application, and can decide the amount of funding to be awarded.”⁹ The non-formula discretionary grants are those discretionary grants that are not based on federal distribution formulas that often take into account

⁹<https://www.grants.gov/learn-grants/grant-terminology.html>

Table 4.3: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district on the minority-interest non-formula discretionary grants in \$100,000 dollars using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Diff. MI Grants (\$100k)		Prop. of Diff. MI Grants (\$)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Legislator transitioned to plurality district	-1,510.59 (1,388.27)	-989.30 (1,580.29)	0.55 (0.45)	0.67 (0.63)
Republican legislator	-612.64 (1,251.87)	-515.35 (1,293.54)	-0.43 (1.02)	-0.41 (1.03)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Republican leg.		-1,644.64 (2,179.92)		-0.39 (0.76)
Constant	811.15 (1,245.35)	740.71 (1,274.74)	-0.13 (0.33)	-0.14 (0.35)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	207	207	207	207
Adjusted R ²	-0.02	-0.03	-0.05	-0.05
Residual Std. Error	5,394.28	5,405.67	10.84	10.87

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 4.4: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district on the number of minority-interest non-formula discretionary grants using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Diff. MI (Grants #)		Prop. of Diff. MI Grants (#)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	-310.96 (207.07)	-247.69 (222.85)	-0.28 (0.37)	-0.42 (0.44)
Republican legislator	-34.47 (99.13)	-22.67 (98.98)	0.44 (0.37)	0.41 (0.40)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Republican leg.		-199.60 (466.84)		0.46 (0.55)
Constant	53.04 (107.09)	44.49 (108.35)	0.34 (0.21)	0.36 (0.22)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	207	207	207	207
Adjusted R ²	0.09	0.08	0.04	0.04
Residual Std. Error	497.29	498.17	2.67	2.67

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

characteristics and demographics of the recipient population, such as population size, poverty rates, and other demographic characteristics.¹⁰ The non-formula discretionary grants were chosen as an outcome variable because these are a source of federal funding that recipients must apply for and often require help from the office of US House members. Because they are non-formula, it represents a source of funding where the funding amount is not directly determined by the demographic changes occurring at the local level.

These non-formula discretionary grants have been aggregated to the legislator-congress level for each federal agency. Minority-interest non-formula discretionary grants have been calculated based on the agency or bureau, including the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as these agencies represent high priority policy areas for constituents of color (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Barreto and Segura 2014; Canon 1999; Gilliam Jr and Whitby 1989; Kinder and Winter 2001; Rouse 2013).

This is not an ideal measurement because of the lack of precision of measurement of minority interest. Sub-agency information would be a better means of measurement of minority-interest funding; however, the sub-agency desks with which the grants are associated are inconsistently entered in the dataset. Future work can perhaps focus on using the project titles and descriptions to better classify minority-interest grants compared to using the funding agencies. Despite the difficulties with identifying minority-interest grants, these funds are important for building the infrastructure of communities.

Tables 4.4 and 4.5 present the findings of the same models as Tables 4.1 and 4.2, but altering the dependent variable to minority-interest non-formula discretionary project grants in place of the minority-interest awards contracts. Like the findings for the minority-interest awards contracts, there is no evidence of a shift in the number, amount, or proportions of minority-interest non-formula discretionary project grants. Furthermore, the reduction in the minority-interest awards contracts for Republicans who transition to plurality districts over the time period relative to Democrats who stay

¹⁰<https://www.grants.gov/learn-grants/grant-terminology.html>

in white-majority districts is not mirrored in this analysis.

4.5.2 Exploring total funding amounts and numbers of awards contracts and grants

Table 4.5: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district on the total awards contracts using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Diff. Total Awards (\$100k)		Diff. Total Awards (#)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	43,821.06 (64,497.08)	32,931.71 (32,277.88)	-7,935.85 (4,123.35)	-442.36 (232.59)
Republican legislator	-2,851.53 (13,478.90)	2,838.53 (3,982.80)	-3,561.21 (3,027.57)	-148.52 (119.27)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Republican leg.		-46,843.76 (31,928.65)		-22.14 (498.53)
Constant	23,480.15 (13,267.99)	10,370.39*** (2,338.34)	5,766.58* (2,822.52)	197.75 (117.48)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	207	207	207	207
Adjusted R ²	-0.01	0.01	0.04	0.16
Residual Std. Error	79,473.24	27,948.72	18,097.32	610.34

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Another possibility is that legislators who transition from majority-white to plurality districts do not seek out minority-interest funding specifically, but funding amounts generally. In these analyses, I present the same model specifications as the previous analyses but swapping minority-interest funding for the total amount of grants and awards contracts. Non-formula discretionary grants and awards contracts will be analyzed separately as outcome variables and will be operationalized as the change in the total number and amounts of awards contracts and non-formula project grants received by a legislator's district.

Table 4.5 shows the results of this analysis, and like before there is no evidence of shifting representation strategies within the total funding amounts received after the legislator transitions

from a white-majority district to a plurality district.

I have included additional analyses in the appendix at the end of the chapter. These analyses include the ethnic fractionalization of contract awards (Appendix 1), and the models presented in the main body but analyzing an expanded set of legislators (Appendix 2). The results of these models are largely null and comport with the findings presented thus far.

4.5.3 Exploring race of legislator in the acquisition of minority interest awards contracts

Finally, it could be that white legislators who transition from majority-type districts to plurality districts alter their representation strategies differently than non-white legislators who transition to plurality districts. On average, we might expect white legislators who have previously served white-majority districts to experience increases in minority-interest funding across the redistricting period because prior to redistricting they neither had the personal lived experience nor the constituency demographics to stimulate the substantial and purposeful acquisition of minority-interest funding other than the baseline level of constituency demand for these funds.

In this analysis, I use an expanded subset of legislators than in the results presented earlier in this chapter because all of the legislators who transition from white-majority districts to plurality districts during this time period were white legislators. In this expanded subset, I include all of the legislators who remained in office over the redistricting period who either a) transitioned from a majority-type district to a plurality district or b) remained in the same type of majority-type district over the time period.¹¹

Here, the interaction between the race/ethnicity of the legislator and transitioning to a plurality district is the explanatory variable of interest. The results of this analysis for both awards contracts and non-formula grants are included and presented in Tables 4.6 and 4.7. Note that there are only Black and white legislators who transition from majority-white to plurality districts, which is why the

¹¹This excludes legislators whose districts change from one majority-type district to another classification of majority-type district.

Table 4.6: The effect of race/ethnicity of legislator and transitioning to a plurality district on the minority-interest awards contracts in \$100,000 dollars using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Diff. MI Contracts (\$100k)		Prop. of Diff. MI Contracts (\$)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	19,834.00 (13,283.50)	20,698.62 (14,802.90)	0.09 (0.08)	0.11 (0.09)
Republican legislator	-2,063.03 (1,687.11)	-1,971.23 (1,566.13)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)
Black legislator	-247.75 (1,893.12)	45.75 (1,543.95)	0.07 (0.07)	0.08 (0.07)
Latinx legislator	-1,775.26 (1,116.07)	-1,695.70 (1,015.05)	-0.12 (0.08)	-0.12 (0.08)
AAPI legislator	2,694.10 (3,785.60)	2,687.38 (3,803.64)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.07)
Native American legislator	23,058.43*** (1,407.89)	23,145.95*** (1,520.60)	0.46*** (0.04)	0.46*** (0.05)
Leg. race/ethnicity not specified	218.58 (1,464.89)	267.43 (1,541.22)	-0.07*** (0.02)	-0.07*** (0.02)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Black leg.		-9,282.47 (16,349.24)		-0.18 (0.11)
Constant	3,019.48* (1,454.39)	2,896.59* (1,290.64)	0.09 (0.05)	0.09 (0.05)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	278	278	278	278
Adjusted R ²	0.12	0.12	0.01	0.003
Residual Std. Error	10,827.76	10,835.26	0.29	0.29

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 4.7: The effect of race/ethnicity of legislator and transitioning to a plurality district on the number of minority-interest awards contracts using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Diff. MI Contracts (#)		Prop. of Diff MI Contracts (#)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	4,172.90 (2,629.95)	4,289.40 (2,935.37)	0.05 (0.06)	0.06 (0.07)
Republican legislator	-828.51 (463.05)	-816.14 (449.03)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)
Black legislator	434.70 (675.81)	474.25 (663.54)	0.005 (0.06)	0.01 (0.06)
Latinx legislator	-812.91* (377.95)	-802.19* (369.03)	-0.09 (0.07)	-0.09 (0.07)
AAPI legislator	4,016.01 (3,872.37)	4,015.11 (3,884.04)	0.16 (0.16)	0.16 (0.16)
Native American legislator	7,153.81*** (527.48)	7,165.60*** (543.83)	0.48*** (0.05)	0.48*** (0.05)
Leg. race/ethnicity not specified	-796.02* (392.49)	-789.44 (406.01)	-0.19*** (0.04)	-0.19*** (0.04)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Black leg.		-1,250.76 (3,333.62)		-0.10 (0.12)
Constant	1,664.25*** (445.07)	1,647.69*** (430.86)	0.16*** (0.04)	0.16*** (0.04)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	278	278	278	278
Adjusted R ²	0.08	0.07	-0.01	-0.01
Residual Std. Error	3,243.46	3,248.81	0.33	0.33

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

interactions for the other legislator races/ethnicities have been dropped. Moreover, there is only one Black legislator who transitions to a plurality district during this time period. The major source of variation relative to the previous models is the change in the reference group, which is comprised of those white legislators who continued serving a majority-Black, majority-Latinx, or majority-white district, and the one white legislator who transitioned from a majority-Latinx to a plurality district.

The results shown in Tables 4.6 and 4.7 provides no evidence that white legislators who transition from a majority-type district to a plurality district alter the amount or number of minority-interest awards contracts across the redistricting period compared to white legislators who continued serving majority-Black, majority-Latinx, or majority-white districts. These null findings are mirrored in the analyses of the minority-interest grants (See Appendix D).

Interestingly, the results presented in Tables 4.6 and 4.7 suggest that Native American legislators who remain in majority-type districts acquire additional awards contracts for their districts compared to their white counterparts, and for these Native American legislators this increase in the number of awards contracts leads to an increase in dollars received by the district compared to their white counterparts. Moreover, these increases represent 46% increases in the dollar amount and a 48% increase in the number of the awards contracts on average that legislators who identify as Native American bring back to their districts. Latinx legislators who remain in majority-type districts receive 800 fewer awards contracts in the 114th Congress than during the 112th Congress, but these decreases in the number of the awards contracts do not translate into reductions in the dollar amounts received by the districts. These reductions also don't translate into changes in the proportions of the number of overall awards contracts or the dollars received for Latinx legislators who serve majority-type districts across the redistricting period.

4.6 Discussion

The analyses presented in this chapter collectively suggest that while legislators of all district types are successful in bringing home a considerable amount of discretionary funds to their districts,

there is no evidence that legislators who transition from majority-white districts to plurality districts adjust the amount of minority-interest discretionary funding, or total discretionary funding over the redistricting period. There are a variety of potential reasons as to why there are no statistically-significant changes to the amount of minority-interest discretionary funds to the district.

These null results are notable because we are interested in representation and responsiveness as an outcome. One would naturally expect to see a natural increase of non-white businesses and schools receiving funding because of the changing demographics if the legislator and their office reach out to their new majority-minority constituency. Perhaps transitioning legislators and their offices do not know how to connect to their non-coethnic constituents to encourage and work with these constituents and groups to apply for the funding. This analysis acknowledges the adjustment period, which is why the 113th Congress has been removed from this analysis. Moreover, it is the duty of legislators to adapt to their changing constituency.

It is possible that white constituents apply for these funds at higher rates than non-white constituents likely due to lack of political knowledge and information. If this is the case, the important question is why this differential demand exists. This would be especially important given the evidence to suggest that non-white constituents may prefer funding as a form of substantive representation (Griffin and Flavin 2011). If the the evidence suggesting the preference for funding among non-white constituents is bona fide then a deficit in demand for the funds represents some sort of representational barrier, such as information disparities between white and non-white constituents regarding the existence of these awards or trust deficits between the legislator and their non-coethnic constituents.

Finally, the null results could indicate that the analysis does not have enough power to identify the result. If statistical power is the source of the null results, then it indicates that the effects are not large enough to identify, which may also point to a representation and responsiveness deficit. One would think that if legislators and their offices are truly responsive to their constituents and that these results are indicative of the true representation, then a pattern of responsiveness should emerge regardless of how standard errors are clustered or the exact model specification. Whether or not there

is a dearth of the statistical power to identify the results, the effects of the un- or under-responsiveness are the same: the limitation of power building within these communities by funneling money away from historically racially and ethnically marginalized communities.

Additional evidence is required before making any definitive conclusions regarding the presence of representational deficits within minority-interest in districts that transition from majority-white to plurality districts. Future research might look into other forms of minority-interest funding to identify whether or not the null results are an artifact of operationalizing minority-interest funding using the awards contracts. Additionally, the project titles and descriptions for the non-formula discretionary project grants can be combed using pattern matching and natural language processing techniques to better identify minority-interest non-formula discretionary grants. Any improvements in terms of the operationalization of minority-interest funding will help identify the magnitude of the potential representational deficit.

4.7 References

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Appendix A: Distribution of contract funds by district type

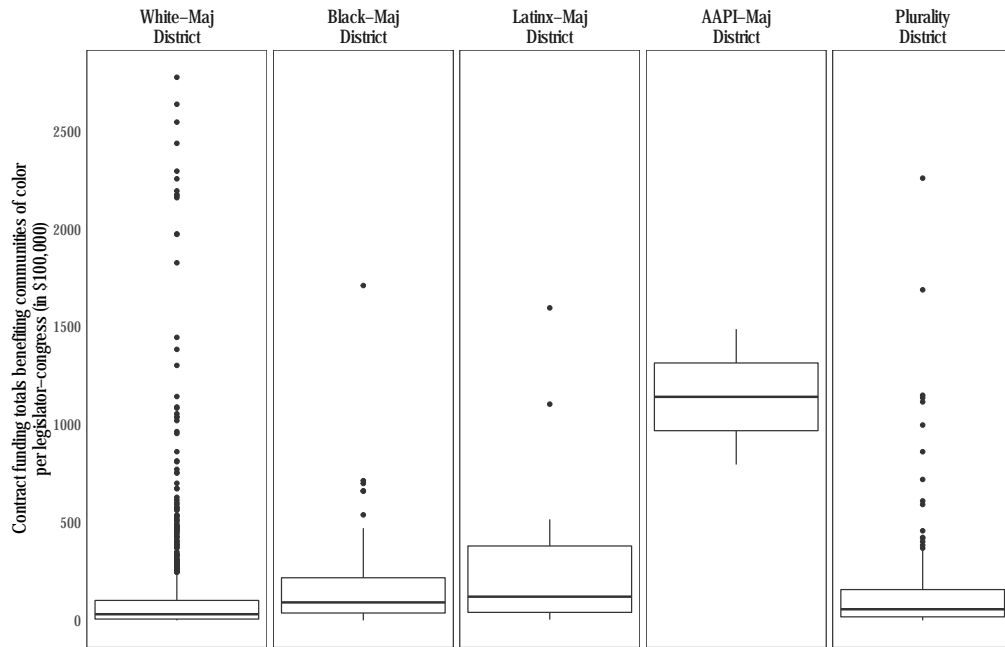


Figure 4.1: Distributions of contract award funds by district type

Appendix B: Ethnic fractionalization of contract awards

Table 4.8: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district on the change of the ethnic fractionalization of minority-interest contract awards using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Diff. Ethnic Fractionalization (#)	
Leg transitioned to plurality district	-0.04 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.09)
Republican legislator	0.03 (0.05)	0.04 (0.05)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Republican leg.		-0.17 (0.09)
Constant	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	164	164
Adjusted R ²	-0.05	-0.05
Residual Std. Error	0.21	0.21
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

Appendix C: Expanded subset

Table 4.9: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district on the minority-interest awards contracts in \$100,000 dollars using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Diff. MI Contracts (\$100k)		Prop. of Diff. MI Contracts (\$)	
Leg.transitioned to plurality district	19,834.00 (13,283.50)	30,571.88 (19,160.24)	0.09 (0.08)	0.08 (0.12)
Republican leg.	-2,063.03 (1,687.11)	-425.27 (795.86)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Rep. leg		-31,157.98 (18,753.79)		0.03 (0.14)
Constant	3,019.48* (1,454.39)	1,882.63* (919.70)	0.09 (0.05)	0.09 (0.05)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	278	278	278	278
Adjusted R ²	0.12	0.18	0.01	0.002
Residual Std. Error	10,827.76	10,420.68	0.29	0.29

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 4.10: The effect of legislator transitioning to a plurality district on the number of minority-interest awards contracts using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Diff. MI Contracts (#)		Prop. of Diff MI Contracts (#)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	4,172.90 (2,629.95)	6,975.94 (3,631.81)	0.05 (0.06)	0.10 (0.09)
Republican legislator	-828.51 (463.05)	-400.99 (368.06)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Rep. leg		-8,133.57* (3,545.96)		-0.13 (0.11)
Constant	1,664.25*** (445.07)	1,367.48*** (389.45)	0.16*** (0.04)	0.15*** (0.04)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	278	278	278	278
Adjusted R ²	0.08	0.13	-0.01	-0.01
Residual Std. Error	3,243.46	3,152.80	0.33	0.33

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Appendix D: Exploring race of legislator in the acquisition of minority interest non-formula grants

Table 4.11: The effect of race/ethnicity of legislator and transitioning to a plurality district on the minority-interest non-formula discretionary grants in \$100,000 dollars using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Diff. MI Grants (\$)		Prop. of Diff. MI Grants (\$)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	-171.79 (1,067.86)	-232.63 (1,235.43)	0.53 (2.84)	0.54 (0.39)
Republican legislator	95.99 (1,024.35)	89.53 (1,038.72)	-0.24 (1.46)	-0.24 (0.92)
Black legislator	460.82 (1,137.26)	440.17 (1,180.37)	0.40 (1.99)	0.40 (0.33)
Latinx legislator	-250.68 (1,095.45)	-256.28 (1,104.80)	0.81 (2.24)	0.81 (0.66)
AAPI legislator	-19,586.00 (15,304.09)	-19,585.53 (15,335.46)	-0.12 (5.63)	-0.12 (0.99)
Native American legislator	-455.41 (1,089.35)	-461.57 (1,105.01)	-0.34 (9.46)	-0.34 (0.49)
Leg. race/ethnicity not specified	688.24 (655.88)	684.81 (665.73)	1.81 (9.40)	1.81 (0.97)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Black leg.		653.20 (2,184.33)		-0.16 (0.72)
Constant	-163.54 (997.24)	-154.89 (1,017.04)	-0.20 (1.27)	-0.20 (0.34)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	278	278	278	278
Adjusted R ²	0.08	0.07	-0.04	-0.04
Residual Std. Error	5,975.81	5,987.00	9.35	9.37

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 4.12: The effect of race/ethnicity of legislator and transitioning to a plurality district on the number of minority-interest non-formula discretionary grants using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Diff. MI Grants (#)		Prop. of Diff. MI Grants (#)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.12 (0.33)	-0.08 (0.35)
Republican legislator	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.65 (0.44)	0.65 (0.44)
Black legislator	0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	0.61 (0.68)	0.63 (0.70)
Latinx legislator	-0.0005 (0.001)	-0.0005 (0.001)	0.30 (0.23)	0.30 (0.23)
AAPI legislator	-0.0003 (0.002)	-0.0003 (0.002)	0.15 (0.30)	0.15 (0.29)
Native American legislator	-0.002* (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)	8.10*** (0.46)	8.11*** (0.47)
Leg. race/ethnicity not specified	0.002*** (0.001)	0.002*** (0.001)	-0.64 (0.36)	-0.64 (0.36)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Black leg.		0.0000 (0.002)		-0.44 (0.73)
Constant	-0.0004 (0.001)	-0.0004 (0.001)	0.15 (0.27)	0.15 (0.27)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	278	278	278	278
Adjusted R ²	0.07	0.07	0.02	0.01
Residual Std. Error	0.01	0.01	2.84	2.85

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Appendix E: Models including a control for the total amounts and number of minority-interest awards contracts

Table 4.13: There is no evidence that transitioning to a plurality district alters the receipt of federal awards contracts in dollars.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Diff. MI Contracts (\$)		Diff. MI Contracts (#)	
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	19,120.62 (9,828.37)	28,018.81* (13,742.31)	4,330.70* (1,814.24)	6,582.14** (2,382.54)
Republican legislator	-1,831.60 (1,578.59)	-214.56 (1,081.01)	-733.12 (443.31)	-323.98 (395.04)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Rep. leg		-27,526.44* (13,167.41)		-6,964.80** (2,354.55)
Constant	830.18 (1,732.09)	-256.00 (1,673.88)	969.31* (436.88)	694.48 (422.81)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	207	207	207	207
Adjusted R ²	0.38	0.42	0.30	0.34
Residual Std. Error	10,333.80	9,991.52	2,883.59	2,806.67

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 4.14: The effect of race/ethnicity of legislator and transitioning to a plurality district on the minority-interest non-formula discretionary grants in \$100,000 dollars using pre/post-redistricting design

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Diff. MI Contracts (\$)		Diff. MI Contracts (#)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Leg. transitioned to plurality district	16,457.94 (13,283.50)	17,494.88 (14,802.90)	3,331.69* (1,549.89)	3,491.82* (1,756.87)
Republican legislator	-1,709.91 (1,687.11)	-1,598.19 (1,566.13)	-740.53 (408.61)	-723.27 (406.12)
Black legislator	147.43 (1,893.12)	502.95 (1,543.95)	533.17 (633.87)	588.07 (646.68)
Latinx legislator	-871.99 (1,116.07)	-773.81 (1,015.05)	-587.84 (346.50)	-572.68 (348.71)
AAPI legislator	10,482.93** (3,785.60)	10,492.57** (3,803.64)	5,956.74* (2,713.14)	5,958.23* (2,730.33)
Native American legislator	20,465.88*** (1,407.89)	20,565.72*** (1,520.60)	6,507.83*** (504.10)	6,523.25*** (507.51)
Leg. race/ethnicity not specified	447.80 (1,464.89)	507.34 (1,541.22)	-738.91* (362.15)	-729.72* (371.49)
Leg. trans. to plurality district * Black leg.		-11,215.15 (16,349.24)		-1,731.91 (2,452.02)
Constant	1,271.00 (1,454.39)	1,118.54 (1,290.64)	1,228.58** (404.16)	1,205.04** (414.18)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	278	278	278	278
Adjusted R ²	0.35	0.35	0.24	0.24
Residual Std. Error	9,309.25	9,304.78	2,938.34	2,942.25

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

5

Conclusion

“Sometimes I think leaders today don’t realize how people hang on their words. People don’t want a handout most of the time. They just want a little help. They want the people who represent them to use a little power and a little influence to help them solve some of the problems of their community.”

– U.S. Representative John Lewis, *Across That Bridge* (p. 99)

As many individuals in this nation grapple with re-defining and re-envisioning what it means to be an American, a growing portion of U.S. residents are members of historically racially and ethnically marginalized communities. And the majority of these individuals live in districts where their coethnics do not constitute a majority share of their electoral district. Increasingly, legislators have had to adjust to serving districts not only where the districts are composed of non-coethnic constituents, but also districts with no racial or ethnic majority group. This diversity within the district presents new challenges particularly to those legislators who transition from white-majority districts who may not have the cultural competence and fluency to navigate the process of representing a diverse constituency. In these cases, it is important to lean on their staffers and local leaders to provide, at a minimum, sufficient representation to gain reelection, and ideally, optimal representation

for all groups given the various political agenda in the district.

This dissertation has shown evidence that legislators who face this transition take tentative steps towards racial and ethnic political parity, but that there is much room for growth. It is unclear whether this hesitation is caused by uncertainty in managing the transition, equivocation, or a form of representational inertia related to the persistence of the status quo. The upcoming redistricting will present an interesting comparison that may shed light on this question. If legislators have become more adroit and comfortable with engaging with issues associated with racial and ethnic diversity, then we might expect to see a quicker or larger response to the changes in their constituencies.

Despite the broad strokes taken to measure the average effects of transitioning to a plurality district for Democrat and Republican House members, there are clear differences in the ways that legislators respond to their new constituencies. Interviews completed in the spring and summer of 2018 indicate that legislators and their offices are well aware of the changes occurring in their districts. However, the interviews indicated very different approaches taken to handling the demographic changes. For example, I interviewed two Republican U.S. House members in red states in the same metropolitan area who were both serving relatively new. One legislator's office made it a point to work directly with the new constituents on immigration concerns. The other legislator's office instead worked with the community leaders but throughout the interview seemed to underestimate their new constituency. The staffer interviewed indicated that the office doubted the political sophistication and agency of their new constituents. Moreover, the office's strategy to 'maintain an open line of communication' relied on 'points of contact' within the community. While there is nothing immediately wrong with this approach, it does require cultural knowledge of the communities with which they are trying to engage. Without that knowledge, the ability of the office to connect with the new constituency may be limited.

Which approach is more electorally effective cannot be assessed with the anecdotal evidence, which does present an additional question emerging out of this research project. It was beyond the scope of this dissertation to measure if there were electoral consequences of transitioning to a plurality district and whether certain representational behaviors moderate these effects. For instance,

are legislators who transition to plurality districts more electorally vulnerable than similar legislators who do not? If so, what factors either mitigate or exacerbate these effects?

Electoral outcomes, though, do not represent the paramount outcome of interest when thinking about the effects of representation. More importantly, the extent to which these representational behaviors facilitate community power building is an open question. For example, if the legislators' efforts to engage their new constituents via social media communication are not noticed or received by the desired recipients then they are unlikely to be associated with increases in power among historically racially and ethnically marginalized communities.

Whether and how constituents notice and respond to both the change in the demographics of the district, as well as the changes in representation behaviors, are arguably some of the more important questions that stem from this dissertation. It is possible that constituents change their political behavior and character of their interactions with their House Member's office as the community changes, perhaps becoming more or less engaged in the political process in response to the changes. As noted in the individual chapters, given the current research design, it is difficult to tease apart which parts of the findings are due to the changes in demographics themselves and which are due to the change in legislator behavior— particularly in the case of the staffer diversity and the acquisition of federal funds.

To begin exploring the constituent side of the effects of these demographic changes, I have fielded surveys to assess the awareness of constituents about the changing demographics of their communities and the efforts that legislators have made to reach out to multiple groups within the constituency. I have also included questions to assess the role of interracial/ethnic trust between the legislator and constituent on constituent attitudes and behaviors.

This project evidently presents more questions than it answers. I take this as a sign that one of the primary contributions of this dissertation is to present these racially and ethnically plural districts as a relevant and necessary topic of inquiry. If one assumes that the current trends continue both regarding the overall demographic evolution of the U.S., as well as the patterns of redistricting, more legislators will encounter the challenges described in this dissertation and many more. How

the legislators respond to these challenges will help determine the speed at which individuals and communities who have been historically marginalized realize political equity, and by extension, when the American public will grow in the next critical step in its realization of democracy.