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DOES POLITICAL INCORPORATION MATTER?
The Impact of Minority Mayors over Time

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The authors assess the effects of minority political incorporation in large cities. An interrupted time-series research design is used to determine whether the election of a city's first minority mayor has any short-term or long-term impact on fiscal policies. The authors examined six cities that elected black or Latino mayors and six cities with white mayors from 1972 to 1992. In general, they find that minority political incorporation did not significantly change fiscal policies in different ways from that which occurred in cities without minority incorporation.

As minority mayors have assumed power in America's cities, scholarly research has attempted to determine if this level of political incorporation (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984) increases the level of responsiveness to the needs of minority citizens. Such responsiveness may take the form of greater expenditures for minority communities, alterations in city revenue and spending policies, and changes in other public policies that benefit minority groups. Many mayors are severely constrained in their ability to alter city spending and revenue patterns by economic circumstances and mandates placed on them by federal and state authorities—regardless of their racial or ethnic background (Peterson 1981). Many minority mayors have

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had the misfortune of assuming power when these constraints were intensified by mounting economic pressures and dwindling intergovernmental assistance, particularly from federal sources (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1997; Keller 1978). Hence, the likelihood of significant change in city policy following the election of a minority mayor may be quite limited.

In this article, we assess the impact of minority mayors more systematically than past research by applying a quasi-experimental pooled time-series research design to the question of whether a minority mayor who succeeds a white mayor has any short-term or long-term impact on city revenue and expenditure patterns. We examine six cities that elected black or Latino mayors and six comparison cities with white mayors between 1972 and 1992. Our purpose is to answer the following question: Does political incorporation matter over time?

POLITICAL INCORPORATION

The minority political incorporation model of Browning, Marshall, and Tabb (1984) has served as a theoretical benchmark for research on minority politics for more than a decade. The model holds that for a minority community to witness an effective response to its needs, minority leaders must come to occupy positions of governmental authority. By extension, the election of minorities to the offices of city council member or mayor should result in greater responsiveness to minority public policy concerns (see also Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1997).

Studies addressing potential policy changes following elections of minority mayors suggested that new black or Latino leaders were expected to meet the standards (both real and imagined) of their white predecessors and to assume office and improve the living standards of even their poorest constituents, in spite of severe institutional and economic constraints (Preston 1976; Bullock 1975; Nelson 1972). Recent research on difficulties facing minority mayors who attempted to assemble an effective governing coalition supports these findings (Reed 1986; Bennett 1993). Empirical studies of the subject, however, have found little difference in levels of fiscal policies by white and black mayors (Keller 1978; Nelson 1978). In contrast, Karnig and Welch (1980) provided evidence showing that over time, the presence of a black mayor led to significantly greater welfare expenditures; lower spending on city services such as parks, libraries, and fire protection; and more federal aid.

The latest research on mayoral change in cities over time (Wolman, Strate, and Melchior 1996) has looked at policy change following a change in mayoral administration. Using a time-series design, the authors compared cities

that changed mayors to a "control" group of cities that kept incumbents in office from 1974 to 1985. They found that changing mayors led to differences in expenditure policies when compared to cities that maintained incumbents. However, this study did not examine minority mayors replacing whites and the policy changes following this political transition.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Karnig and Welch (1980) looked at potential policy consequences of black mayoral leadership over time. Their study is instructive, but it analyzed a period (1968-1975) in which black public officials were only beginning to make inroads into mayors' offices throughout the country. Wolman, Strate, and Melchior (1996) examined mayoral change over time but did not focus on change to minority leadership in cities. Our research combines both approaches by presenting a portrait of six large minority-led cities and their fiscal policies over time and compares these to similarly situated cities governed by white mayors during the same period. Both the effects of change and racial change can be examined in such a model.

Following Campbell and Stanley (1966), a quasi-experimental time-series design is employed to test for potential policy effects of the ascension of minority mayors to power in six major U.S. cities. These cities elected minority mayors to succeed white administrations in the 1970s and 1980s, and they serve as the experimental cases in this analysis. Thus, the election of a minority mayor functions as the interruption (X) in the following time-series design:

$$O_1 \, O_2 \, O_3 \, O_4 \ldots O_{tn} \, X \, O_{tn+1} \, O_{tn+2} \, O_{tn+3} \, O_{tn+4} \ldots O_{21}.$$

For the sake of comparison, six cities that consistently had white mayors were selected as matches. The following criteria guided the matching of cities: (1) all cities are mayor-council in form,[1] (2) populations of paired cities are roughly comparable,[2] and (3) whenever possible, experimental cities are paired with cities in the same state to ensure uniformity in functional responsibilities. However, where in-state matching is not feasible, cities are paired by regional proximity, and responsibilities for funding education and public welfare services are the same as their experimental match.

The six pairs of cities included in the analysis are reported in Table 1 along with the year in which a new minority mayor came to power. Spending and revenue trends are compared using the new mayor's second year in power as the intervention.[3] Comparisons between groups of cities are made on three fiscal dependent variables reported annually in U.S. Bureau of the Census

sources:[4] general revenue per capita, intergovernmental revenue per capita, and general expenditures per capita.[5]

Modeling past research (Morgan and Pelissero 1980; Meier 1980), three independent variables are included in the analysis to detect the impact, if any, of the newly elected minority mayor: first, a counter, coded 1, 2, 3, . . . n, to assess any overall trend in the annual values of the dependent variables (yearly trend); second, a term for the slope, coded 0 before the interruption and 1 thereafter, to measure any short-term or immediate effect of the new mayor; and third, a term for the postinterruption change in slope, coded 0 before the intervention and 1, 2, 3, . . . n thereafter, to measure any long-term policy impact of the new minority mayor.

The method used in this analysis is feasible generalized least squares (FGLS), appropriate for cases in which observations are pooled across time and space.[6] FGLS accounts for serial correlation common to time-series applications and heteroscedasticity across panels common to cross-sectional analysis. Furthermore, because our cross-sectional units are not randomly selected households but cities with arbitrarily drawn boundaries, we do not expect the panels to be mutually independent. Rather, we allow for correlation between the error terms of the separate panels (Kmenta 1997, 622).[7] A separate pooled analysis is performed for the experimental cities and the comparison cities (i.e., those cities electing a minority mayor to succeed a white mayor and those cities electing white mayors throughout the time period). For each case (city), the same 21-year time period is analyzed: 1972 through 1992. We assume that cities experienced similar forces as their match, such as the same changes in intergovernmental relations or federal aid.

Table 1 displays the name of the first minority mayor selected in each city, along with their year of assuming office. The results for each group are compared for differences in the effect of mayoral change on the independent fiscal measures. The intervention is measured one year following the election year because new mayors must work with their predecessors' budgets in their first year in office. The intervention year for an experimental city is the same one used for its matched comparison city.

Our expectation, based on previous research, is that the election of a minority mayor will not have a significant effect on fiscal policies over time.

FINDINGS

The analysis begins with an examination of the effects of mayoral change on general revenues over time. Table 2 shows that among the experimental cities—those that elected a minority candidate to succeed a white mayor—

TABLE 1: Experimental and Comparison Cities

Experimental Cities	Mayor	Elected/Appointed	Comparison Cities
Chicago	H. Washington	1983	Milwaukee
Philadelphia	W. Goode	1983	Pittsburgh[a]
Baltimore	C. Burns	1986[b]	Boston
New Orleans	E. Morial	1977	Baton Rouge
Denver	F. Pena	1983	Albuquerque[c]
Birmingham	R. Arrington	1979	Montgomery[d]

a. Richard S. Caliguiri became interim mayor of Pittsburgh in April 1977, then won election to that post in the following November.
b. Clarence H. Burns became mayor by virtue of succession when William Donald Schaefer left the office to become governor of Maryland. Kurt L. Schmoke then defeated Burns in the Democratic primary and became mayor of Baltimore in November 1987.
c. Harry Kinney was elected to his second nonconsecutive term as mayor in November 1981. He first served as mayor from 1974 to 1977.
d. Emory Folmar became mayor after winning a special election to replace James Robinson, who resigned the mayoralty. Folmar was reelected in 1979.

the yearly trend in general revenue per capita was positive and significant. Likewise, the yearly trend in comparison cities with white mayoral administrations was that of significant growth but less than the rate in minority-led cities. Per capita general revenues increased $57 each year in cities electing a new minority mayor, as opposed to $37 in comparison cities. This trend appears to be unrelated to the election of a minority mayor because the matched cities had a similar, significant growth in revenue. The election of a new minority mayor demonstrated no significant short-term or long-term effects on general revenues. Each model was significant and demonstrated that there were no differences between the two groups of cities on changes in general revenue policy.

The effects of mayoral change on per capita intergovernmental revenues are also shown in Table 2. The results were similar to those for general revenues. The yearly trend in intergovernmental revenue per capita was positive and significant for both the experimental and comparison groups. Cities electing minority mayors added $18 in intergovernmental revenue per capita, whereas cities with white mayors over the time period added $20. Mayoral change demonstrated no significant short-term effects on intergovernmental revenue. The long-term effect of mayoral change was negative and significant in experimental cities, with a decrease of $12.50 per capita. But a similar long-term effect was shown in the comparison cities, with a $13.40 decrease. Both models were significant and show that there were no statistically significant differences in intergovernmental revenue per capita between cities that elected minority mayors and those that did not.

TABLE 2:   **Effects of Change in Mayors on City Government Finances, 1972-1992 ($n = 126$)**

Independent Variables	General Revenue Per Capita		Intergovernmental Revenue Per Capita		General Expenditures Per Capita	
	Experi-mental	Com-parison	Experi-mental	Com-parison	Experi-mental	Com-parison
Time (counter)	57.35***	36.62***	18.24***	20.01***	53.11***	39.11***
SE	5.78	3.83	3.49	2.95	8.21	5.82
Short term	−29.64	−24.19	−6.15	−4.22	−52.77	26.98
SE	19.17	16.85	12.70	14.94	29.23	31.24
Long term	12.75	−0.15	−12.49**	−13.39**	16.19	−5.09
SE	• 8.97	5.88	5.10	4.58	12.68	10.04
Intercept	264.37***	220.24***	54.47	50.37*	266.82**	149.69**
SE	80.20	47.62	36.64	23.10	87.20	49.19
Log likelihood	−619.05	−611.47	−559.56	−599.19	−673.59	−724.89
Wald chi	232.79***	245.07***	35.94***	77.76***	138.85***	141.48***

$*p \leq .05. **p \leq .01. ***p \leq .001.$

The final column in Table 2 shows the effect of mayoral change on general expenditures per capita. For both groups of cities—those changing to minority administrations and those maintaining white administrations—the yearly trend in general expenditures per capita showed positive and significantly higher spending. Expenditures per capita increased by $53 in experimental cities and by $39 in the matched group of cities. Neither the short-term nor the long-term effects on spending were significant in either group of cities. Both models of expenditures were significant and showed that minority-led cities' spending patterns were not statistically different from spending in similar cities over the same time period.

We analyzed several functional areas of city spending too. Our pooled time-series analysis of per capita spending on police, fire, parks and recreation, and housing and community development did not reveal any statistically significant differences in minority-led cities.

DISCUSSION

After nearly 30 years of witnessing minority candidates succeeding white mayors in big cities, the following question has lingered: What differences in fiscal policy result from the election of a minority mayor? Does minority political incorporation really matter in fiscal policy areas? Having

successfully established a winning electoral coalition, do minority mayors act differently in policy making than their white counterparts?

We have examined these questions over time in 12 cities—6 cities electing blacks or Latinos as mayor and a comparable group of 6 cities that did not change to minority administrations. We studied the short-term and long-term effects of mayoral change and did so across two sets of fiscal policy areas, revenues and expenditures. From these findings, we may conclude that electoral change that produces minority political incorporation may not dramatically change policies. Revenue policies per capita do not seem to be altered following minority incorporation.

Wolman, Strate, and Melchior (1996) found that changing mayors in mayor council cities led to higher real per capita spending. What our findings suggest is that changing to a minority mayor may not produce similar growth. Minority mayors may develop an effective governing coalition or urban regime after some time in office that gives them the leverage needed to redirect some key spending areas. But it appears that newly elected minority mayors, unlike their white counterparts who are either incumbents or newly elected, may still face obstacles that prevent them from having a significant impact on the city budget (Bennett 1993).

This research suggests that there are limitations to the normative expectations of fiscal policy changes with minority political incorporation. Significant changes in city revenues and spending per capita were not apparent in our 21-year study. The actual policy impacts of political incorporation over time may be much more modest than proponents would expect.

NOTES

1. One of the comparison cities, Montgomery, was a commission government that changed to mayor council in 1979.

2. The greatest disparity in population exists in the Chicago-Milwaukee match. Chicago's population outstrips Milwaukee's by more than 2 million persons over the course of this analysis. Similarly, Philadelphia consistently has over 1 million more inhabitants than Pittsburgh. The population difference between the rest of the pairs averages about 250,000.

3. The interruption is lagged one year under the assumption that any mayor's policy impact will not be felt in his or her first year when operating under the outgoing administration's budget.

4. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, *City Government Finances* (various years).

5. City population changes between census years were evenly distributed across the years (e.g., a population gain of 100,000 between 1970 and 1980 would result in an increase of 10,000 to a city population in each year from 1971 to 1980).

6. Specifically, we use the "xtgls" command in Stata 6.0.

7. Following Beck and Katz (1995), we also estimated the models in this analysis using panel-corrected standard errors. However, regardless of method—feasible generalized least squares (FGLS) or ordinary least squares with panel-corrected standard errors—our substantive conclusions do not change. Thus, we report only the FGLS estimates.

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