Chapter 1

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Representation of Minority Interests

The basic idea of representative democracy is that officeholders will respond to, promote, and protect the interests of their constituents. At the same time, we know that race and ethnicity play significant roles in politics. An important area of research has developed regarding how various political divides within minority communities as well as between whites and various peoples of color affect the representation of African American and Latino interests. These divides are especially important in the local arena where schools, public safety, and other close-to-home issues are so central.

Existing research shows that policy decisions vary with the racial composition of local governing bodies, but many questions remain unanswered. How does region of the country enter the picture? Does the politics of race play out differently in the cities in the North from the way it works in the South? Is the Northeast with its closer ties to traditional and unreformed politics different from the reformed municipal politics of California cities? An especially interesting question concerns how white officeholders, in both elected and appointed positions, understand and act upon the interests of their minority constituents. What channels of communication operate and with what consequences?

Several factors may affect the degree to which elected officials understand and respond to their constituents. Some are political in a straightforward way. For example, at least since V.O. Key's *Southern Politics*, two-party competitive politics is regarded as a better guarantee of responsiveness than is one-party dominance.[1] District elections may influence the quality of representation residents receive because they provide a closer connection between officeholder and constituent than at-large elections.

Size of the minority voting age population can exert varying effects on white leaders' responsiveness to minority concerns.[2] One possibility is that a large minority electorate encourages white leaders to understand and react to African American and Latino interests. Another suggests that white leaders view a large minority voting age population as a threat to their control over city government thereby increasing their hostility to African American and Latino concerns.

Socioeconomic context also offers contrasting scenarios. Conventional wisdom suggests that places with large numbers of working class whites resist minority populations to a great degree. Leaders may be the most likely to respond to minority interests in cities with many residents of high socioeconomic status because they possess the financial resources to address African American and Latino concerns. A third possibility is that nonaffluent whites and minorities coalesce around similar interests whereas wealthy white officials cannot identify with the concerns of African Americans or Latinos.

Responsiveness to minority interests may exist beyond conventional channels or socioeconomic status. African Americans and Latinos may use unconventional resources, namely community-based organizations and neighborhood groups, to illuminate minority interests and assist in the governance of the city.[3] These traits of unconventional channels may increase white leaders' awareness of and receptiveness to minority interests.

When the Civil Rights movement spread beyond the South, responsiveness of public officials to racial and ethnic minorities became a matter of heightened interest. In the post-Civil Rights movement period, many scholars and racial and ethnic minorities concentrated upon conventional channels, namely electoral politics, office-holding, and political party competition, as means through which African Americans and Latinos secured policy gains.[4] Despite this focus, debate continues over factors that influence the representation of racial and ethnic minority concerns. In addition, African Americans and Latinos still struggle to achieve governmental responsiveness to issues that concern them. Because of this continuing debate and struggle, this book examines conditions under which government responds to policy concerns of African Americans and Latinos.

CONVENTIONAL CHANNELS AND RESPONSIVENESS TO MINORITY INTERESTS

Many scholars find that conventional channels affect the representation of African American and Latino concerns. Studies of the South and West indicate that African Americans and Latinos use electoral channels to

achieve receptiveness to their concerns. In Northern California cities, Browning, Marshall, and Tabb found that government effectively represents minorities when African Americans and Latinos form active electoral coalitions, win elected office, and make up part of a dominant, liberal coalition.[5] These three conditions facilitated the creation of civilian review boards of the police, increased minority presence on boards and commissions and in municipal employment, and expanded the number of city contracts awarded to African Americans and Latinos. In parts of Florida that represent the Old and New South, Button concluded that African American electoral politics and elected representatives improved the fire and police services and road and park conditions in African American communities and led to the hiring of more African Americans in the public sector.[6]

The interests of minorities appear to receive the highest degree of responsiveness when African Americans and Latinos constitute the electoral majority, occupy the mayor's office, or control the city council.[7] If racial and ethnic minority communities constitute an electoral minority but lack control of the office of mayor and a majority on the city council, then the degree to which government responds to their interests remains highly uncertain. Whites' antagonism may intensify toward minority groups as the numbers of African Americans and Latinos increase to sizes that threaten white leaders' control over the city's finances, contracts, and jobs.[8] By contrast, higher percentages of African American and Latino voters may serve as a mechanism that replaces resistant leaders with more racially tolerant officials thereby increasing responsiveness to minority interests. Members of the United States House of Representatives increase responsiveness to minorities when African Americans and Latinos constitute at least 35 percent of their districts.[9]

POLITICAL-PARTY COMPETITION

Key, Dahl, and others claim that party competition leads political leaders to court all groups, thereby increasing responsiveness to traditionally excluded groups.[10] According to Key, the political uncertainty surrounding competitive jurisdictions makes politics and policy more open to minority input and increases responsiveness to groups that traditionally receive limited attention from government.[11] In places without party competition, leaders do not critically discuss issues with their constituents and traditionally excluded groups lack input in the political process. The absence of competitive parties also discourages traditionally excluded groups from participating politically. If Key

is correct, then responsiveness to historical and electoral minorities increases as political-party competition intensifies.[12]

BEYOND CONVENTIONAL CHANNELS

Despite this focus on conventional forms of participation, debate exists over factors that influence the representation of racial and ethnic minority interests. For example, elements of socioeconomic status may shape intergroup relations and responsiveness to African American and Latino concerns. Places with large numbers of working class whites may resist minority groups to a great degree.[13] Lower socioeconomic status whites, who feel threatened by perceived competition with African Americans and Latinos, tend to support a conservative political agenda that minimizes a distribution of resources to racial and ethnic minorities. By contrast, wealthier and more liberal populations may engender more positive interminority relations and increase receptiveness to African American and Latino interests.

Socioeconomic status may not only affect the representation of traditionally excluded groups because it conditions resident ideology and determines who feels vulnerable or threatened. Responsiveness to minority interests may also depend upon whether a locality's wealth base enables the city to fund policies that support African American and Latino concerns. Dye found that states with larger percentages of wealthier citizens responded to traditionally excluded groups (e.g., those in poverty) whereas poorer states neglected interests of the poor.[14] Cities with residents of high socioeconomic status may respond to minority interests to the greatest degree because their government leaders possess the financial resources to address African American and Latino policy preferences.

UNCONVENTIONAL RESOURCES

Ferman argues that political science and the study of urban governance pay too much attention to electoral politics without enough consideration of so-called alternative systems of representation.[15] She finds that community groups represent interests under the umbrella of Pittsburgh's civic arena. Ferman's work encourages scholars to examine the effect of unconventional channels such as neighborhood and community groups on minority interest representation.

Neighborhood and community groups and social service organizations perform many functions that may increase the likelihood that city leaders will represent the interests of groups that possess these resources. To heighten

awareness of and responsiveness to their concerns, neighborhood groups operate as advocates or political activists.[16] Civic groups educate political leaders about their interests because they operate as a channel through which residents communicate with city hall and vice versa.[17] Community organizations also use the media to make their interests more visible and to encourage more residents to mobilize in support of a particular issue.[18] They connect government and the community, entities that often lack an understanding of each other.

Political leaders often turn to neighborhood organizations for help because these groups facilitate decision-making in a complex policy-making world. For instance, elected officials deferred to neighborhood groups to avoid making difficult political decisions in Baltimore.[19] Political leaders' deference to neighborhood groups helps form a reciprocal relationship between government and the community. In turn, reciprocity can strengthen the connection between political and community leaders.

Leaders of neighborhood and community organizations know the political system, and these groups often connect residents to government entities that can help address citizen concerns.[20] A large and dedicated membership that shares interests often commands government attention.[21] Government intimidates and confuses many citizens, and community organizations can make it less daunting and more understandable.

Some scholars question the extent to which neighborhood groups make a difference in urban politics. Peterson referred to city politics as groupless politics, and Jones and Bachelor found that neighborhood groups lacked influence over city governance.[22] Another potential drawback to the utility of neighborhood groups and other kinds of social movements is governmental cooptation of community organizations through the distribution of financial resources.[23]

Scholars debate the extent to which minorities use community groups to gain representation. Some contend that affluent citizens are most likely to organize and use neighborhood groups.[24] Furthermore, early community groups often organized specifically to maintain segregated neighborhoods.[25]

Other scholars assert that traditionally excluded groups use neighborhood organizations to gain attention and services from and access to government.[26] Cruz and Skerry conclude that organizational resources empowered racial and ethnic minorities.[27] More specifically, Cruz found that the Puerto Rican Political Action Committee of Connecticut (PRPAC) positively influenced governmental receptivity toward Puerto Ricans in Hartford whereas Mexican Americans used Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS), and United Neighborhoods Organization (UNO) to facilitate the representation of their interests in San Antonio. According to Rabrenovic, neighborhood organizations strive "to find a place for the urban poor and minority groups—themselves—in decision making."[28]

Responsiveness to Minority Interests in Nonreform, Northeastern Cities

Studies of jurisdictions in the West and South conclude that electoral politics strongly affects minority interest representation. However, they do not allow us to fully understand conditions under which minorities gain substantive representation because the South and West employ vastly different political structures and maintain far different political traditions from the Midwest and Northeast.[29]

The West and South tend to use aspects of good government reform. Many cities in the West "are in the progressive, reform tradition, with non-partisan elections, city managers, and professional civil service systems."[30] The South utilized at-large elections and city managers to minimize the voting capacity of African Americans. The West in general, and California in particular, reformed their governments in the early 1900s partly because this region's political tradition lacked the strength to resist the force of the Progressive Movement.[31] Machine-style politics, strong mayor-council forms of government, district elections, and a rich and entrenched political history characterize many Northeastern and Midwestern cities. The robust political traditions in the Northeast and Midwest allowed cities to refuse to accept progressive reforms in these areas.

A region's political style in general, and the structures places employ in particular, shape political outcomes. Machine-style politics in New York, Boston, New Haven, Newark, Chicago, and other Northeastern and Midwestern cities produced political results far different from the reform governments in California and other Pacific Coast states.[32] Patronage politics characterizes nonreform cities whereas nonpartisan bureaucratic practices and policy-oriented debates maintain much more prevalence in reform settings.

How does the lack of reform-government structures affect the representation of minorities? Hero found that Denver's nonreform government produced higher levels of minority political incorporation than Pueblo, a city that used reform structures.[33] Hero concluded,

> The Browning, Marshall, and Tabb study was quite cognizant of the potential impact of governmental structure but was unable to systematically or extensively examine its impact; the ten cities they studied were basically 'reformed'; thus, there simply was not sufficient variation for purposes of analysis. It is therefore notable that in Denver, with its unreformed structure, including a strong mayor system—and minority mayors since 1983—political representation, incorporation, and responsiveness are so much greater than in the northern California cities [examined by Browning, Marshall, and Tabb] and in Pueblo.[34]

Cruz also concluded that at-large elections, a progressive reform, limited Latino political incorporation in Springfield, Massachusetts.[35]

In studying responsiveness to African Americans and Latinos in New York City, Mollenkopf found that Browning, Marshall, and Tabb's theoretical framework lacked applicability in this nonreform setting.[36] He believed a more complex set of factors influences responsiveness to minority interests in nonreform cities than in urban areas that utilize good government reforms. Based on these differences, he encourages scholars to develop a greater understanding of conditions that affect responsiveness to minority interests in older, non-reform cities in the Northeast.

This book examines conditions that heighten awareness of and responsiveness to the interests and concerns of minorities in older, nonreform cities in the Northeast. Within this different research context, I test a wider set of considerations than did Browning, Marshall, and Tabb. Chapter 2 provides a comparative analysis of four Connecticut cities that typify the political tradition, nonreform government characteristics, and socioeconomic traits of the Northeast. These cities—Bridgeport, Waterbury, Stamford, and Hartford—have long political traditions, and most exhibit characteristics consistent with nonreform governments. The variation among these Northeastern cities allows for an investigation of the extent to which electoral politics, socioeconomic status, and unconventional resources affect city leaders' awareness of African-American and Latino concerns. The relatively same size of these urban areas ensures comparability.

These cities allow me to compare responsiveness to African American and Latino interests under varying conditions. Chapter 2 describes how these four cities vary according to the socioeconomic, political, and unconventional factors that may influence levels of responsiveness to African American and Latino interests. For nearly every independent variable category, the four Connecticut cities range from urban areas whose characteristics should positively influence minority interest representation to cities that possess traits that may negatively affect whether the majority represents African American and Latino concerns. In regard to the socioeconomic status of the citizenry, for example, a majority of the people possess extreme wealth in one city. In another city, most residents come from either the working class or the middle class. At least 18 percent of the residents live below the poverty live in the other cities.

To ensure comparability, the cities under investigation are of relatively similar size from the same Northeastern state. Because the population of each city ranges from 100,000 to 150,000, I also hold constant the complexity of the city. These cities exemplify more complexity than cities of 25,000 people but they illustrate less intricacy than urban areas with populations over one million. Because most of the research on African American

and Latino politics either focuses upon America's largest cities or does not differentiate by city size, an analysis of medium size cities enhances our understanding of the representation of minority interests.[37]

My study furthers Hardy-Fanta and Gerson's research, which focuses on Latino politics in Massachusetts.[38] In their edited volume, Hardy-Fanta and Gerson assert that scholars are starting to pay greater attention to Latino politics outside of the states with the largest percentages of Latinos in the population.[39] Hardy-Fanta and Gerson use previous scholarship to argue that Latinos affect politics to the greatest extent in small states. Furthermore, researchers know little about Latino politics at the state and local levels.

The urban areas under investigation are comparable cities that differ based upon key factors that previous research suggests affect attention to African American and Latino interests. As King, Keohane, and Verba note, a "disciplined comparison of even a small number of comparable case studies, yielding comparable observations, can sustain causal inference."[40] A comparative approach cannot prove that certain conditions encourage government to shift from low to high responsiveness to minorities, but it enables researchers to evaluate how differences in independent variables influence receptiveness to minority interests. It also helps build theory by clearly and thoroughly illustrating how socioeconomic, conventional, and unconventional characteristics exert differing effects on government's tendencies to respond to minority concerns.

To examine awareness of and responsiveness to minority interests, I interviewed more than two hundred white, African American, and Latino political and civic leaders in four Northeastern cities.[41] Chapter 3 provides a systematic comparison of white, African American, and Latino leaders' perceptions of African American and Latino interests. This analysis provides insight into factors that affect awareness of minority concerns.

Chapter 4 examines policy responsiveness to African American and Latino interests, particularly in the areas of education and public safety. In the past, studies used municipal appointments, employment, and contracts as measures of responsiveness, but these dependent variables may only measure access to patronage positions.[42] Instead, this book uses policy output to gauge responsiveness to African American and Latino concerns. It investigates the extent to which elected and appointed officials understand African American and Latino interests and develop and implement policies to address these concerns. This analysis focuses on education and public safety policies because these issue areas strongly affect traditionally excluded groups. Education helps any community secure improved status and treatment, better paying jobs, a good living, and social mobility. Historically, public safety represents a friction point between the majority and minorities.[43] Police brutality is a particularly critical issue in areas with high percentages of racial and ethnic minorities.

Public safety policies affect minorities and relations between the majority and racial and ethnic minorities.

Chapter 5 explains how unconventional channels work to gain policy responsiveness for African Americans and Latinos. More specifically, the chapter uses an examination of Bridgeport to illustrate how African Americans and Latinos can heighten awareness of and gain receptivity to their interests. At the end of the chapter, I provide a diagram that describes how certain resources work to produce substantive representation.

Chapter 6 examines why certain factors affect the substantive representation of African American and Latino concerns. This work's broader implications also form the basis of the final chapter. In the conclusion, I explain the ways in which this study's findings support and expand urban regime and social capital theories.