Electoral Reform and Minority Representation
Electoral Reform and Minority Representation: Local Experiments with Alternative Elections

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Minority Representation and Electoral System Reform

In May of 2000 the city of Amarillo, Texas, held an election for its school board. Although the 24 percent of city residents are minority, only one minority candidate (a Latino) had ever been elected to its school board. On the morning of May 8 the local newspaper, the Globe-News, highlighted the election of two members in particular—James Allen and Rita Sandoval, the board’s first African American and Latina members. The newspaper report continued:

While Allen stopped short of crediting the school district’s new voting system for his victory, Alphonso Vaughn, president of the Amarillo chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said it is clear that minority voters used the system.

“I think you have to say cumulative voting was a plus,” Vaughn said. “It’s the first time in the history of this area that two minorities were elected to the school board. That has never happened before, and I think cumulative voting had an effect on that.” (Amarillo Globe-News, May 8, 2000)

Not only that, but voter turnout was higher than in previous years:

Of the 96,716 registered voters in AISD, 12,280 (or 12.7 percent) cast ballots in this election. By comparison, only 3.4 percent of the registered voters turned out for the May 1998 election. (Amarillo Globe-News, May 8, 2000)

The main question posed by this project is a simple one: how general are these claims? Did the adoption of a new electoral system produce these outcomes—increased minority representation and higher turnout—or was it something specific to the city and Amarillo in that time and that place?

In an era of changing demographics and low participation, if the switch to a
new electoral system can really produce greater diversity in representation and higher turnout, then there might be something to be said for it. Moreover, the election was held in a census year—a year during which some of the redistricting battles spawned by the previous census had yet to be resolved (Engstrom 2000). If electoral reform could end some of these long and expensive legal battles, that, too, would be a plus.

A number of scholars, most notably, perhaps, Lani Guinier, could have said, on seeing the results from Amarillo, “I told you so.” Over the years a number of advocates, including Guinier, have made the case in favor of electoral reform as a remedy for minority underrepresentation. In fact, many of the major arguments in favor of cumulative voting (CV) as a remedy have been known since the nineteenth century. In writings and speeches of U.S. Senator Charles Buckalew (1872), in nineteenth-century English school board elections, in the Illinois state legislature elections, or, even earlier, in elections for legislatures in Britain’s Cape Colonies, CV was seen as a means to address minority rights; whether the relevant minority was partisan, religious, or a different nationality.

The modern context of minority representation in the United States means, of course, the representation of nonwhite Americans. According to the U.S. Census, in 1992 the nonwhite population of the United States was 25.2 percent. By 2000 it had reached 28.2 percent—12.2 percent African American, 11.4 percent Hispanic origin, and 3.9 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Some minority groups have had relative success in gaining representation in large cities, in some state legislatures, and in Congress. In the mid-1990s, for example, after the use of race to draw safe minority districts, 14 percent of U.S. House members were nonwhite. These gains, however, detract from the fact that descriptive representation of minorities is lower at the local level. Of 419,716 local elected officials recorded by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in 1992, only 2.7 percent were black, and only 1.3 percent were Hispanic. In most of the nation’s representative bodies, minorities are largely shut out.

It is hardly surprising, then, to find that several commentators and scholars have advocated electoral reform—typically either “majority-minority” districts or variants of proportional representation (PR)—as solutions to the underrepresentation of minorities on local councils and legislatures. And as we see below, some reformers have expectations for new election rules that go beyond simply achieving descriptive representation.

But reforms do not always live up to the claims of their advocates. Although advocates of a particular institutional reform—whether that reform is term limits, a balanced-budget amendment, or even, as in this case, electoral system reform—are quick to claim advantages of a given reform proposal, the disadvantages are often downplayed and the advantages often asserted rather than shown. This is especially the case with electoral system reform. Electoral
engineers, and would-be electoral engineers, are often confident in their claims about the effects of systems, often on the basis of only one or two examples. After all, electoral reform, at least at the national level, remains a relatively rare event, so examples of change are often few and far between. To be sure, the study of electoral system design is one of the most advanced literatures in political science. Even so, claims concerning the efficacy of institutional reforms, such as changing the electoral system, may be overstated or mistaken.

In this project we put to test, for the first time, the claims made on behalf of CV in relation to minority representation. In doing so, we present one of the few studies of the impact of any electoral system reform that is based on scores rather than on a handful of cases. Consequently, we are able to state our conclusions with a greater degree of confidence than previous studies on the topic.

This study, then, combines two elements—a question concerning how one may demonstrate the effects of electoral system reform with a concern for one of the major, substantive political problems facing the United States in the new century—minority representation. We compare how minorities fare under local majoritarian systems (at large and districting) versus under “alternative” electoral systems. At issue here is how “alternative” election rules such as CV and limited voting (LV) might resolve problems involved with the representation of minorities in the United States.

In the chapters that follow, we demonstrate that local experiments with these “new” electoral systems have produced more minority representation in the United States than the majoritarian systems they replace. More importantly, however, we assess how CV and LV affect the process of elections and possibly produce minority representation differently—in ways that might be seen as normatively better than the standard local election methods used in the United States (at large or districting). We find that local elections contested under CV differ in important ways from those held under the rules they replace. Not only are more minorities elected, but CV elections may be more competitive, campaigns may be subtly more active, and turnout may be higher under CV than under majoritarian rules (including districting). The Amarillo case, it seems, may be a general example of how CV might change local politics after all.

Minority Representation in the United States

Minority representation is one of the thornier issues of democracy. At its simplest, democracy is a system of majority rule. Yet, if democracy is reduced to this single element it cannot survive. In practice, a functioning democracy must provide some institutionalized protections for minorities if it is to thrive. To recognize this, however, is to raise a series of questions: What role should minorities have in a democracy predicated on majority rule? Which minorities are at
issue? How should their interests be incorporated in decision making? Most critically, how should the answers to these questions be institutionalized into the rules that structure the political system?

Constitutional engineers and political theorists have provided a variety of answers to such questions. In much of continental Europe, democratic systems have evolved what Arend Lijphart (1984) called “consensual” models of democracy, in which institutional rules (including PR) make it difficult for minority voices to be ignored at key points in the political process. Democracies that are heirs to the British system, however, have built institutions that are decidedly more “majoritarian” in the sense that agendas are built upon “winner-take-all” rules and are more easily dominated by a small number of broadly based parties or groups. One key difference between consensual and majoritarian systems is how electoral rules provide minority interests with influence.

For all the potential advantages of majoritarian electoral systems such as those in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, the representation of minorities remains problematic. This is a particularly important issue for the United States, given the increasingly multicultural and multiracial nature of society. African Americans held about a 12 percent share of the population for much of the twentieth century. At the century’s end, a highly diverse mix of Latinos claimed (nearly) as large a share, with an increasing number and equally diverse mix of Asians. Even in states where they have been concentrated for centuries (California, Florida, New York, Texas, and states in the South), it has been difficult for blacks and Latinos to win elections.

One of the primary barriers to representation for these groups is electoral rules. Under majoritarian rules, if white voters resist supporting nonwhite candidates (Reeves 1997), and nonwhite candidates run where most voters are white, the chances of a nonwhite’s being elected are slim. In Amarillo, minority candidates had managed to get to the runoff stage several times in the previous “at-large” majoritarian system. Once there, however, they could rarely win (Rausch 2001).

Recognition of this problem led to the creation of homogeneous, “majority-minority” districts designed so that most residents come from a single racial or ethnic minority group (Grofman and Davidson 1992; Lublin 1997). Federal legislation and court rulings accelerated the process of creating such districts for the 1990 congressional reapportionment, leading to a large influx of minority representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives by 1992. Earlier challenges to plurality “at-large” rules common at the local level led to districting that also produced dramatic increases in minority representation in the 1970s and 1980s in cities with sizable minority populations (Welch 1990; Engstrom and McDonald 1981). In 1986, in *Thornburg v. Gingles*, the Court ruled that “at-large” elections could present an unconstitutional dilution of minority vote
strength in many situations. Thus, the remedy to vote dilution in local and federal elections has been to segregate racial and ethnic groups in homogeneous electorates where they may form a majority.

However, as we shall see in chapter 2, districting on the basis of race has come under increased criticism from U.S. courts. The Shaw v. Reno decision (1993)\(^6\) criticized “bizarre”-shaped districts that can result from such efforts. When race is found to be the “predominant factor” in districting, the contemporary Supreme Court will make it extremely difficult for state and local governments to establish a compelling interest in adopting such districts.

In addition, observers note the practical and political issues associated with creating homogeneous districts in communities that are increasingly multicultural (Guinier 1994; Valadez 2001). Districting solutions become even more problematic when a jurisdiction’s minority populations are spatially dispersed (which is more common outside of the South). In 1980, 14 percent of U.S. cities with over 100,000 residents had two or more nonwhite racial/ethnic groups that each made up at least 10 percent of the population. By 1990, 23 percent of cities had at least two nonwhite groups (including Asians, Hispanics, or blacks) making up at least 10 percent of the population (MacManus 1995, 42). It is highly likely that even more U.S. cities and towns became multicultural through the year 2000.

While plaintiffs were advancing minority representation via race-based districting, a few jurisdictions facing vote dilution lawsuits took a different tack. In the 1980s, Latino plaintiffs used the Supreme Court’s Gingles criteria to successfully challenge the at-large election rules of Alamogordo, New Mexico. For various reasons—including a dispersed Latino population that made it difficult to draw majority Latino districts—plaintiffs and the city agreed to experiment with CV. Peoria, Illinois, also adopted CV in 1991 to allow African Americans to secure council seats in that city. By the 1990s, dozens of additional cities, towns, counties, school districts, and special districts in Alabama, Arizona, North Carolina, South Dakota, and Texas had conducted their own experiments with “alternatives” to districting. As we will see, under certain conditions, CV and a related system, LV, provide for minority representation at levels that rival those obtained via districting.\(^7\) These “alternative” systems might be seen as halfway points between “winner-take-all” majoritarian rules and the proportional rules that are the basis of “consensual” democracies.

These relatively recent local innovations provide an opportunity to assess a number of critical questions, including how to bring about descriptive representation of minority voters. In crude terms, descriptive representation concerns how closely elected representatives look like the underlying population. One debate over minority representation in the United States concerns how many African American and Latino/Latina minorities should serve on elected bodies.
given the demographic makeup of an area. Important as this emphasis on descriptive accuracy is, it may not constitute the full range of concerns about what we expect from elections and, by extension, what we expect about representation. A singular emphasis on descriptive representation carries with it a concern for outcomes of elections almost to the exclusion of concerns about the process of elections. As we argue below, elections and electoral systems can have important effects on how candidates behave when they seek office and on how voters behave in response to this. Electoral system reform may change not only descriptive representation but also the conduct of elections, and this, too, ought to be considered.

Local experiments with these alternative electoral regimes allow us to look at more than just how different election rules produce different levels of minority representation. They also allow us to assess how different elections create incentives that affect whether candidates seek office, whether they will campaign actively, and how much they need to mobilize voters. In studying these local elections, then, we are able to ask important questions about the democratic process. Some of these raise practical issues about descriptive representation, while others take up conceptual questions about the importance of process in debates over representation. It is important to remember that how a community chooses its representatives may be just as important as who the representatives are.

Using Local Elections to Assess the Effects of Electoral Reform

These alternative attempts at providing minority representation give us an opportunity to look at the effects of electoral institutions in an ideal setting—U.S. local elections. Most research on electoral systems draws from national-level electoral experience in the major Western democracies. Local elections are generally regarded as “second-order” elections, mere sideshows to the main national elections. There are, however, important reasons to use these local elections to help us develop an understanding of electoral institutions and what they do.

Local elections are the most common kinds of elections that are held in the United States, yet we know very little about them. The fact that there are a large number of them means that they provide an ideal laboratory for the study of institutional change. Changes in electoral regime at the local level allow us to examine the effects of reform with better evidence (or, at least, more cases) than at the national level, where election rules rarely change. In the rare cases where established democracies do alter their elections, as with Italy (Katz 1996), New Zealand (Vowles et al. 1998; Banducci, Donovan, and Karp 1999), and Japan
(Christensen and Johnson 1995), a “before and after” comparison is possible. This single-case approach typically yields rich detail about the effects of reforms in each place. But inferences concerning the general effects of a reform are difficult to draw on the basis of just one or two examples.

There have been a series of studies that compare politics at a fixed point in time across nations that have been categorized by their electoral regime (e.g., Rae 1971; Lijphart 1994; Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Blais and Carty 1990; Jackman 1987; Powell 1986; Anderson and Guillory 1997). One theme to emerge from these studies is that proportional election rules provide greater representation of minorities, yield higher turnout, and may produce more positive attitudes about democratic politics.

As valuable as this work has been, the findings are essentially based upon the same set of twenty or so nations whose experiences and social fabric vary in many different ways. Some of that variation—social, cultural, historical—is highly correlated with their election system. Differences in politics between each set of nations might flow from elections or from cultural differences that affect how trusting people are, their propensity to join civic associations, or their political socialization. With differences in elections and culture so closely linked, statistics alone cannot neatly resolve if one (or both) are the causal force generating observed differences.

These issues are particularly problematic because one explanation of higher rates of voter participation is that some nations have distinctive “political cultures” that affect their citizens’ “subjective orientation to politics” (Verba 1965, 513). If election rules covary with place-specific factors like culture, cross-national studies cannot be seen as definitive demonstrations of election rule effects. Ideally, we would test for the effect of election rules where political culture and social demographics are largely held constant.

Since nearly 100 U.S. jurisdictions have adopted CV and LV elections, we can expand the number of cases in our analysis well beyond the number of industrialized democracies. Moreover, we can compare the politics of these communities to other U.S. places that are nearly identical on a range of demographics—most notably ethnic composition, region, median education, and income levels. Our careful method of case selection allows us to compare places that have been “treated” with CV election rules (e.g., Peoria, Illinois) to “control” jurisdictions using majoritarian rules that are virtually identical on all other accounts (e.g., Rockford, Illinois). The major difference between each set of communities is that one uses “alternative” election rules while the other uses “winner-take-all” rules.

This is not to deny the differences that exist between places like Peoria and Rockford, Illinois. But demographic and cultural differences between two cities within the same region of a state are likely to be much shallower than
differences across nations. This is not to say that the cross-national literature is wrong or misguided. Rather, we argue that our approach means that the findings of electoral system effects are less susceptible to the rival claims of “cultural effects” than findings from cross-national studies.

The practical electoral experiments going on in these U.S. communities thus provide us with a unique opportunity for conducting political research. We are in a position here to observe the effect of new institutions in a large number of places. The local setting also allows us the opportunity to compare what we observe in these places to a very similar set of cases that maintain different institutions. Short of being able to invent and clone a large number of polities where social and cultural factors are made constant across all cases, this is about as close to an experimental research setting as social scientists might hope to find for those who study the effects of election rules.

Looking beyond Outcomes to the Effects of Process

As noted above, we examine how various election processes might produce outcomes differently, if not produce the same outcomes “better.” One assumption behind this line of inquiry is that institutional processes shape how candidates and voters behave.

Existing studies of electoral systems have not really examined how institutions affect individual-level behavior. To some extent there may be little need to pay too much attention to the micro-level effects of election rules. After all, one of the main findings of election systems research is that election rules can shape outcomes in ways that are not necessarily dependent on how candidates or voters behave. One example is the link between proportionality and district magnitude: where more seats are elected, outcomes are more proportionate. This relationship may depend as much on simple arithmetic as on voter behavior or candidate action. Yet, it may also be the case that many “mechanical” outcomes we attribute to election rules, such as fractionalization and turnout levels, are brought about by elite and voter responses to the rules that structure how campaigns are conducted (e.g., Gunther 1989; Cox 1997).

We know, for example, that electoral processes and outcomes shape voter attitudes. Citizens in PR systems feel more efficacious than those in places with majoritarian systems (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Banducci, Karp, and Donovan 1997), and there is evidence that minority citizens are more politically efficacious when they are “empowered” by the presence of a minority elected official (Bobo and Gilliam 1990).

Election rules also shape the incentives of political elites. These elites should, in principle, change or modify their behavior in line with incentives associated with various electoral arrangements (Cox 1997). It is this elite behavior that, in
many instances, affects voter behavior and mediates the impact of electoral arrangements. That is, voters may respond not just to the immediate incentives of a particular system—such as the prospects that it might produce descriptive representation of their group—but also to the activities of parties, political organizations, and candidates who respond to the opportunities that election rules create. Although electoral systems can be engineered to produce different sorts of outcomes, they do so by altering underlying political processes—namely, the incentives that affect decisions elites make about contesting elections, campaigning for office, and responding to constituents (Bowler, Farrell, and McAllister 1996; Studlar and McAllister 1994; Bean 1990; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1984).

To assume, for example, that PR or CV leads directly to greater efficacy or higher mass participation would suggest a sort of invisible hand that guides citizens to a realization of the potential outcomes that election rules create. But there is no invisible hand. Rather, elections show the very visible hand of groups, parties, and candidates at work, and changes in election rules affect how they mobilize and contest elections (Donovan 2001). This in turn affects how campaigns will be conducted, which in turn affects how voters might be mobilized by a campaign. Hence, we look at how (or if) candidates contest elections under various rules and what their campaigns are like.

These issues are often major concerns when electoral rules are reformed. Prominent examples include the adoption of race-conscious districting in the United States, the recommendation by the New Zealand Royal Commission on Electoral Reform (1986) of changes that led to the adoption of a mixed-member proportional (MMP) system, and the recommendations produced by the Jenkins Report (1998) in England about increasing the proportionality of plurality elections. Although the New Zealand study in particular includes discussion of how new rules might improve civic life, the impetus for reforms and the concerns of politicians who accept reforms obviously center on who wins and who loses under new rules.

The answer to the question “Who won?” clearly matters, especially when it involves questions of fairness. We take up this question in chapter 8. But democratic theorists also value participation in and of itself. This was especially important to Pateman (1970) and, even earlier, to John Stuart Mill. Current scholarship on deliberative democracy also views taking part in discussion and argument as a central component of the democratic process (Fishkin 1991). Pitkin (1967) and Birch (1971) noted the importance of process alongside the importance of outcome. As we shall see in this book, different election rules can produce very similar results in terms of outcomes yet provide very distinct effects on civic life. Thus, we need to ask not only “Who won?” but also “How did they win?”
Elections and Descriptive Representation of Minorities

In the chapters that follow, we provide a chain of presentation that links election rules, candidates, and voters to election outcomes—namely, the descriptive representation of ethnic and racial minorities. Descriptive representation means that “representatives are in their own persons and lives in some sense typical of the larger class of persons whom they represent. Black legislators represent Black constituents, women legislators represent women constituents, and so on” (Mansbridge 1999, 629).

Discussions of descriptive representation in empirical literature tend to pay little attention to the complexities hidden underneath this sweeping term. Yet a whole series of practical and conceptual problems underpin the idea of descriptive representation. For example, which groups need “describing” is often assumed by electoral engineers rather than arrived at by voters themselves. Deciding which groups are to be represented may be no easy matter to decide—numbers alone may not be a criterion.11 Mansbridge (1999) noted that descriptive representation is a complex idea that is best applied in specific historic contexts—particularly those where institutional rules and political processes have at some point denied a minority group access to participation or representation.

In the United States, such denial of access includes racially polarized voting, barriers to registration, and at-large local elections that allow whites to sweep all seats. As noted, majority-minority districting is the main tool used in the United States to compensate for some of these barriers. Many nations use tools that are equally if not more explicit in their aims. Some set aside seats for specific religious, ethnic, occupational, or linguistic groups. Some maintain exclusive voting rolls for the election of indigenous people. Some nation’s parties place quotas in party rules regarding the distribution of places on the party’s candidate lists.

However, institutionalized electoral arrangements that advantage one group rather than another can have little ability to respond to changing demographics. Immigration, social and economic change, differential birth rates, and a host of other forces can lead to new claims from groups seeking descriptive representation. Single-member districts (SMDs), furthermore, can make it difficult for voters to express preferences for a “descriptive” representative when they have multiple interests (e.g., being a minority and a woman, or a Latina environmentalist).

Descriptive representation predetermined by election rules also raises a set of uncomfortably complicated practical questions and issues that are not easy to resolve. As Lani Guinier and other observers have asked: Will such elections be competitive? Will citizens be mobilized to participate? Can it be assumed that demographic traits (e.g., race) covary with political interests and values? In the
chapters that follow, we answer some of these questions directly and some indi-
rectly. We do this by studying both elite and mass behavior in the United States
under different election systems and under different forms of representation.
Since elite behavior constitutes a large part of the process of representation, our
study of the effects of election rules has implications for normative ideas of rep-
resentation. It is important, for example, to know if candidates campaign more
actively under one system or another, as this might reflect how they perceive
their constituents. Yet few discussions of electoral systems consider these kinds
of trade-offs.

Plan of the Book

Figure 1.1 sums up the overall argument of the book. It maps, from left to right,
the order that we examine the effects of election systems. The figure illustrates
that election outcomes occur after the end of a chain of important events and that
outcomes depend, in part, on how rules affect what candidates and groups do be-
fore votes are cast. Figure 1.1 does not represent a causal model that we plan on
estimating in a single grand equation. Rather, it can be seen as a delineation of
the ways in which election rules shape political life. Our purpose is to establish
the relationships depicted at each stage of the process and to see how they are
linked to the use of a specific electoral system.

In the next chapter, we provide a full discussion of how CV and LV elections
work and offer an overview of their contemporary and historic use. In chapter 3,
we illustrate how these elections produce a set of incentives, or strategic bur-
dens, that candidates and groups must overcome in order to win. The material in
chapter 3 may seem a bit technical to some readers, who may wish to skip ahead
to the main empirical chapters. The major point of chapter 3 is that CV and LV
require substantial coordination of elite and mass activity in order to produce
proportional descriptive representation of minorities—more so than SMD plu-
rality rules and more than list-PR rules. Thus, even though in principle CV may

**FIGURE 1.1. A Model of Election System Effects**
offer promise to minorities, in practice representation can come only after the strategic burdens of these election systems are overcome. As we see in the empirical chapters, however, minority candidates and organizations respond to these burdens in ways that might subtly invigorate political life in jurisdictions that use CV or LV.

The main empirical section of the book begins with chapter 4, where we look at elite behavior and assess whether, and how, candidates or groups respond to incentives and demands created by CV. Since nearly all CV elections are nonpartisan, it would seem that the deck is stacked against having political organizations available that can solve the coordination problems. As we see, however, minority political organizations “learn” how to contest CV, even in small jurisdictions conducting low-salience elections. We demonstrate that the adoption of CV leads to recruitment of more candidates, and we find groups working on behalf of minority candidates to register voters for CV elections. These candidates and groups also attempt to coordinate mass behavior under CV and thus can be seen responding to the strategic demands associated with CV.

In chapter 5, we take advantage of our comparative design and begin to assess how campaign activity under CV compares to campaign activity in similar places using at-large and districted elections. To do this, we surveyed candidates seeking office in CV and highly similar non-CV elections. We find substantial differences in the level of campaign activity, and the type of campaign activities, that candidates practice under different election rules. When compared to candidates in districted places, CV candidates appear to campaign more actively and are more likely to have organizations of some sort assisting their campaigns.

Following this, we look at voter response to CV campaigns. We assess how voters respond to the demands of ordinal election rules in chapter 6 and examine whether the vote coordination strategies transmitted by campaigns reach voters. Since our argument is that the effect of electoral institutions on voting behavior is mediated by the behavior of elites, we need to be able to show that voters are able to respond to the demands of novel electoral systems such as CV. If voters are unable or unwilling to respond, this seriously undercuts the overall argument. Here we rely on results from several CV contests and exit poll data from one CV election to test whether voters adopt the vote dispersion strategies required to produce minority representation.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 thus provide assessments of the micro-level effects of CV elections on the process of campaigns and candidate activity. From here we examine the effects of CV election rules, and by implication CV campaigns, on the mobilization of voters. We ask if voters are more willing to turn out and vote under alternative electoral rules than under majoritarian rules. In chapter 7 we estimate how the adoption of new CV rules increases turnout in local U.S. elections. Moreover, we employ our comparative research design to illustrate how
turnout differs between CV places and similar jurisdictions using standard plurality elections. We find that CV is associated with a significant increase in turnout in local elections.

Given that these new election rules were introduced with the intent of producing descriptive representation of minorities, it seems sensible to see if the changes had the desired effect. That is, do more minorities get into office once CV is adopted? Our answer in chapter 8 is that yes, they do. We find that minorities can gain representation under CV and LV in places where majoritarian/plurality rules have historically prevented them from winning seats. We demonstrate that in many practical settings CV and LV elections can produce the same representation of racial minorities as SMD plans. The potential for minority representation, however, depends upon how CV plans are designed, and a crucial issue here is the question of district magnitude. CV can ensure minority representation, but this may be contingent upon the number of seats up for election. Many CV plans in the United States have been implemented with too few seats at stake in a single election. This limits opportunities for minority representation. Yet even with these limitations, we see an increase in the number of minorities running for office and also winning under CV.

In our concluding chapter, we discuss some of the subtle attitudinal benefits of minority representation generally. We then assess the specific advantages of using CV to allow minority representation in a multicultural society. As noted above, minority representation is expected to have positive effects on the political attitudes of those being represented. We find that this is the case. Using survey data, we look at how white and nonwhite citizens respond to descriptive representation of minorities in Congress. We find that African Americans represented by an African American feel that government is more responsive and are more likely to vote than African Americans who have a white representative. At the same time, whites show no negative reaction to representation by nonwhites. We argue that CV can offer this same effect while producing additional effects that contribute to a well-functioning democracy: contested elections, active campaigns, and a mobilized electorate. It does this, moreover, in a way that lets groups organize themselves politically on the basis of their self-perceived (rather than institutionalized) interests. To put things bluntly, CV elections seem to work rather well.

Before beginning our discussion of the empirical work that leads us to this conclusion, we provide an account of how conflicts over minority representation in the United States have inched toward experiments with alternative electoral arrangements. It is to this we turn in the next chapter.
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