

Earthquakes and Aftershocks: Race, Direct Democracy, and Partisan Change

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Although dramatic partisan change among the electorate is infrequent, the issue agendas of parties may produce large shifts. A major cause of such change is the politics of race. In a political environment charged with racially oriented issues, racial groups often align themselves with different parties (as witnessed most recently in the American South). Yet, if racial appeals violate norms of equality, these appeals may rebound on the party using them. Consequently, members of the (white) racial majority and racially targeted minority may both move away from the offending party. Using data from the California Field Poll, we find that racially charged ballot propositions sponsored by the Republican party during the 1990s in California reversed the trend among Latinos and Anglos toward identifying as Republican, ceteris paribus, by shifting party attachments toward the Democratic party. Our results raise serious questions about the long-term efficacy of racially divisive strategies for electoral gain.

Over the last decade, the Democratic share of the two-party vote in California has steadily increased, as has the Democratic share of the state's legislature and constitutional offices. With the recall election of Arnold Schwarzenegger as the obvious exception, Democrats have won virtually every statewide election since Pete Wilson was reelected as governor in 1994.¹ Further, although California voted Republican in every presidential election save one from the end of WWII through 1988, the Democrats have won the last four contests in the Golden State. The conventional wisdom regarding this change is that it was the product of a rapidly increasing and mobilizing Latino electorate that was energized and alienated from the GOP by the passage of Proposition 187, an initiative supported by Republicans that sought to restrict public benefits to illegal immigrants.

Although Proposition 187 was important, it is not the end of the story. Rather, we show that partisan change

among Latinos accumulated across a series of contentious ballot propositions that targeted Latinos. Furthermore, the effects of these propositions were not confined to Latinos. Although these ballot propositions helped Republicans electoral fortunes in the short-term (Nicholson 2005), the long-term consequence for white voters was a meaningful shift toward Democrats. Thus our analysis shows that not only can initiatives shape electoral agendas (Nicholson 2005), but their effects may endure by altering party allegiances.

Our research has important implications for understanding partisan change. At the most general level, our research suggests that the issue agendas of parties may substantially effect citizens' partisan attachments and do so in a sudden, dramatic fashion. Although the change we demonstrate happens over the course of a few election cycles, it is a swift change when compared to the slowly changing partisan attachments as found in the American

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¹The 2004 congressional and state legislative races suggest that the recall election was an aberration. The number of seats held by the Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. Congress (33 Dem-20 GOP), State Assembly (48 Dem-32 GOP), and State Senate (25 Dem-15 GOP) remained unchanged.

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south. And while partisan change in the American south and California stem from the politics of race, these are very different white voters at very different historical junctures. Furthermore, the California case demonstrates that racial groups do not necessarily move in opposite partisan directions. In contrast to the American South where African Americans and whites aligned themselves with different parties, Latinos and Anglos in California both moved away from the Republican Party because of racially polarizing ballot initiatives that, for some, appeared to be blatantly racist.

Given the nature of these questions we need to look beyond a single election or single proposition that either mask these trends or are simply unsuited to uncovering them. Using California Field Poll data pooled over a 23-year period, we demonstrate at the individual level of analysis that California's partisan shift represented more than a demographic transition from white Republicans to Latino Democrats.

Partisanship

The traditional view of partisan identification is one in which individuals seemingly inherit their partisan loyalties from their parents and retain these loyalties throughout life with the exception of major political upheavals such as those commonly associated with partisan realignments (Campbell et al. 1960). Not only does an individual maintain the same partisan affiliation throughout life, he or she uses partisan identification as a guide for later political learning and interpretation. Notably, Campbell and his colleagues argued that party identification guides a citizen's positions on policy issues rather than policy issues informing party identification (Campbell et al. 1960). There is much to this depiction of party identification. Citizens undoubtedly use party cues from party officials and leaders to help them figure out where they stand on the issues of the day (e.g., Zaller 1992). Yet, party identification is not entirely stable (e.g., Fiorina 1981; Mackuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1989). Many studies have shown that party identification changes in response to the political environment (Fiorina 1981; Franklin and Jackson 1983; Page and Jones 1979). For example, Fiorina (1981) demonstrated that party identification moved in response to economic evaluations and political circumstances. Indeed, an individual's opinions on policy issues may influence his or her party identification more than the reverse direction (Page and Jones 1979). More recently, scholars have noted that the increased polarization among partisans in government has produced a more party-polarized

electorate in California (Jacobson 2004) and nationally (Hetherington 2001; Jacobson 2000).

Since Fiorina's research, the cumulative picture that has emerged emphasizes partisan change over stability. Yet, the amount of change in partisan identification remains limited (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Miller 1991; Rice and Hilton 1996). Although partisan affiliation moves in response to economic and political circumstances, it typically shifts only minor amounts. That is, it is not all that uncommon for individuals' strength of attachment to a given party to wax and wane but it is uncommon for it to shift between parties. Whereas the individual who identifies him- or herself as a weak partisan and later a strong partisan makes frequent appearances in survey data, the citizen who identifies as a Democrat and later a Republican, or vice-versa, is far less common.

Race and Partisan Identification

Since the New Deal realignment, the changing partisan loyalties of racial groups have followed a pattern in which non-Hispanic whites have become more Republican and most racial and ethnic minorities have become more Democratic. For some, the racial group differences that distinguish the parties constitute the defining feature of the contemporary party system (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Sundquist 1983). Ushered in by the 1964 presidential contest between Goldwater and Johnson, the Democrats became the party of racial liberalism and the Republicans became the party of racial conservatism (Carmines and Stimson 1989). According to Carmines and Stimson (1989), changes in the parties' positions on racial policy issues best explain the partisanship of non-Hispanic whites and African Americans.

Although this story explains much about the party loyalties of many African American and non-Hispanic white voters, it does not travel far in explaining the partisan loyalties of Latinos, who now comprise the nation's largest minority group. Although the majority of Latinos and African Americans identify as Democrats, they do so for different reasons. Indeed, though the majority of non-Hispanic whites do not share the same partisan orientations of the (vast) majority of African Americans, the partisan leanings of both of these groups are rooted in a common history that minimizes the importance of the political environment. Even though Anglos' partisan affiliations vary, the change is often minimal, taking the form of minor variations in the degree to which an individual identifies with a party (e.g., strong and weak identifier) rather than major shifts between Republican and Democratic identification or vice-versa (Miller 1991; Rice

and Hilton 1996). African Americans apparently exhibit even less partisan change as they are the most consistently loyal groups of Democratic Party identifiers and voters.

Latinos, on the other hand, may exhibit greater partisan change since the foundations of their partisanship are more explicitly political (Alvarez and Garcia-Bedolla 2003; Nicholson and Segura 2005; Uhlaner and Garcia 2005). Whereas African Americans and non-Hispanic whites have been socialized in the United States, many Latinos have not. Latinos, then, may exhibit much larger changes in partisan identification as the political environment changes. Using cross-sectional data from the 2000 presidential election, Alvarez and Garcia-Bedolla (2003) demonstrate that Latino party identification has a strong political foundation. In contrast to Anglos, whom they characterize as a group in which sociological variables play a larger role in defining partisan loyalties, the authors find that Latino partisan identification, especially those born outside the United States, has an explicitly political flavor. Similarly, Nicholson and Segura (2005) and Uhlaner and Garcia (2005) find that policy issues play a major role in defining Latinos' partisan affiliations.

This should not be surprising. Students of mass partisanship have long known that there are significant cohort effects surrounding the time of political socialization (e.g., the unusually large percentages of young voters of the New Deal era entering the electorate as Democrats). These cohort effects have life-long impact and, while they do not prevent swings in individual partisan identity, they surely damp the magnitude of such swings. By contrast, foreign-born Latinos may, in fact, be entering the electorate as middle-aged or even elderly adults, subsequent to naturalization. We reason that their partisan sentiments are far more likely to reflect the political sentiments at their time of naturalization. If naturalization was motivated by—and undertaken for—political reasons, as some have recently suggested (Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001), we would clearly expect that current political circumstances would have a huge effect on the party identification of new voters.

The above research shows that partisan change happens frequently but not dramatically. Yet, partisan loyalties have undergone major changes over the last 50 years (Carmines and Stimson 1989), especially in the South (Black and Black 1987; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002, chap. 6; Petrocik 1987). Many scholars argue that race is the defining issue of the contemporary party system (Black and Black 2002; Carmines and Stimson 1989; Sundquist 1983). Carmines and Stimson (1989), for example, trace how differences in racial attitudes became the major distinction separating Repub-

licans from Democrats after the parties began to take distinctive stands on racial issues. Yet, despite how the Democratic and Republican parties consist of relatively distinct racial groups, the evidence for racial attitudes distinguishing Democrat from Republican at the individual level is missing. Abramowitz (1994), for example, finds that racial attitudes do not affect the party orientations of non-Hispanic whites. Rather, he shows that opinions about the scope of the welfare state and national security play a larger role. Similarly, Spence (2000) finds that racial resentment does not have a significant effect on partisan identification.

Resolving the apparent paradox between macro and microlevel accounts of racial attitudes and partisan identification is beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, the concept of "racial threat" may shed some light on this puzzle since it explicitly calls for racial effects to vary across political environments. In *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, Key (1949) asserts that the significance of race in Southern politics varies according to the density of African Americans living in an area. High concentrations of African Americans will heighten perceptions of racial threat among non-Hispanic whites thus producing voting decisions hostile to black interests. Later research by Giles and colleagues (Giles and Buckner 1993; Giles and Hertz 1994) and Huckfeldt and Kohfeldt (1989) suggest that greater concentrations of African Americans move non-Hispanic white voters into the arms of Republican candidates. Voting patterns for the three propositions we examine suggest that racial threat played a significant role in explaining Anglo support. Studies of voting on all three initiatives demonstrate that non-Hispanic white voter support for these initiatives was greatest in areas with the highest concentrations of Latino voters (Tolbert and Grummel 2003; Tolbert and Hero 1996, 2001).

Racial threat, however, extends beyond looking at the behavior of non-Hispanic whites living among racial or ethnic minorities. Although the above literature considers racial context, it does not consider the *political information environment*. Nor does it consider *minority* group behavior in the face of racial threat. Using California as a test case, we examine how ballot propositions with strong racial dimensions shaped California's electoral environment and moved Latinos and a segment of Anglos toward the Democratic party.

Ballot Initiatives and the Political Environment

During the 1990's, three ballot initiatives defined California's electoral landscape. In November of 1994,

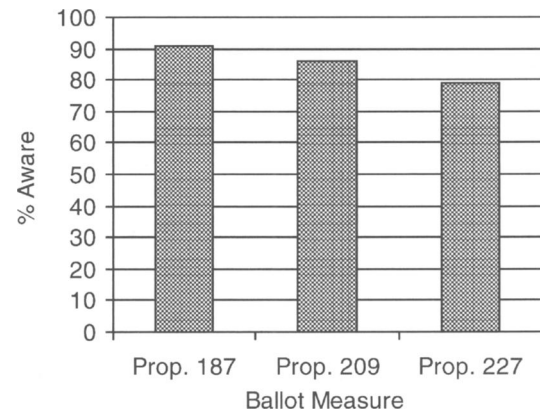
Proposition 187 sought to deny state services to undocumented aliens—it won with 59% of the vote. The focus of the campaign for Proposition 187 clearly targeted Latino immigrants (Nicholson 2005). Two years later, in November of 1996, Proposition 209 sought to prohibit the use of affirmative action by institutions of state government (public education, public employment and public contracting). This initiative was more broadly about racial preferences and the campaigns for and against it were fought as such (Chavez 1998; Nicholson 2005). It passed with 55% of the vote. Finally, Proposition 227, an initiative that sought to end bilingual education programs and replace them with English immersion programs, appeared on the 1998 June primary ballot. This initiative won with 61% of the vote.² As with Proposition 187, Latinos were the primary group targeted by Proposition 227.

Ballot propositions are often not well known. Indeed, much of the research on voters and direct democracy has investigated the role of cues and heuristics as a means to solve problems associated with sparse information on complex propositions (Bowler and Donovan 1998; Lupia 1994). For example, Lupia's (1994) study of auto insurance reform initiatives in California's 1988 election shows that voters lacking "encyclopedic" knowledge of the initiatives relied on information shortcuts to make informed decisions. Precisely for this reason, one might argue that the large partisan shifts that we attribute to these initiatives are unlikely.

However, the initiatives we examine are decidedly less complex and easier to understand. The difference between the auto insurance initiatives and the initiatives on illegal immigration, affirmative action, and bilingual education follows Carmines and Stimson's (1980) typology of "hard" and "easy" issues. Hard issues are technical (e.g., an auto insurance initiative) whereas easy issues are symbolic (e.g., affirmative action). Despite the fact that easy issues may involve complexity, voters make decisions about them with "gut responses." For Carmines and Stimson, race is the quintessential easy issue. Although policy wonks understand the complexity behind issues such as illegal immigration, affirmative action and bilingual education, politicians find them easy to communicate and voters find them easy to understand. Not surprisingly, issues such as these are more likely to heighten voter awareness (Nicholson 2003).

The large percentages of voters aware of the initiatives depicted in Figure 1 help illustrate how unusually prominent a part of California's political landscape

FIGURE 1 Californians' Awareness of Propositions 187, 209, and 227



Sources: California Polls 9407, October 21–30, 1994; 9607, October–November 1996; 9804, May 20–26, 1998.

they were. Remarkably, Propositions 187 and 209 witnessed 91% and 86% of Californians reporting awareness, respectively. In addition, Proposition 227 was known by 79% of Californians. Over and above simple awareness, recent work demonstrates that Propositions 187 and 209, especially the former, powerfully shaped the broader electoral agenda boosting the fortunes of Republican candidates (Nicholson 2005). For example, Proposition 187 played a crucial role in reelecting Pete Wilson, the Republican gubernatorial candidate, as well as helping California's House and Senate Republican candidates win votes (Nicholson 2005, chap. 6). These initiatives also increased Latino voter participation and levels of political knowledge (Barreto and Woods 2005; Pantoja and Segura 2003; Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001).

Voting for the initiatives had strong racial and partisan dimensions, further underscoring their salience and widespread voter understanding. Support for all three propositions divided clearly along racial group lines (Alvarez and Butterfield 2000; Alvarez and Garcia-Bedolla 2004; Tolbert and Grummel 2003; Tolbert and Hero 1996, 2001). Indeed, Tolbert and Hero (2001) demonstrate that racial group support for Propositions 187, 209, and 227 is very similar, a finding they argue stems from antiminority sentiment. This research is further evidence that it is likely the cumulative effect of the initiatives that has played an important role moving white and Latino partisanship. Given that race and party are strongly interrelated, it is not surprising that these initiatives also had a strong partisan dimension. For example, as a result of the Republican Party's strong ties to these initiatives through both GOP sponsorship and leader endorsements, partisan

² Although far fewer votes than either of the other two measures, as a consequence of its appearance on a primary ballot, rather than a general election.

identification was the most important predictor of voting on these propositions (Smith and Tolbert 2001). In all, within six years the California initiative process had exposed California voters to three racially divisive issues that had strong partisan dimensions.

For all these reasons, we expect these three ballot initiatives to have moved California's Latino population. But perhaps more surprisingly, we shall argue below that at least some of California's Anglo population also moved in the direction of the Democratic Party as a consequence of these issues.

Ballot Initiatives, Race, and California Partisanship

It has become conventional wisdom to note the importance of a growing Latino population with Democratic Party identification in shifting the partisan balance in the state. But this may be too simple a story for several reasons. Although Latinos make up a large share of the state's population—perhaps as much as 26% of the state's adult population and about a third of the total population by 2000, they comprise a much smaller share of the electorate, perhaps 14% of the voting population, up from approximately 9% at the beginning of the decade (Citrin and Highton 2002, 17). It is not clear, then, whether the Latino shift alone is sufficient to move the whole state to the left. Nor does this explain why Latinos are necessarily Democratic. The impact of the highly charged, ethnically and racially identified ballot initiatives in California addressing illegal immigration, affirmative action, and bilingual education may be overstated if all they did was to make an already Democratic group of voters even more determinedly Democratic (Alvarez and Butterfield 2000; Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001; Segura, Falcon, and Pachon 1997). We believe that the partisan effects of these initiatives are misunderstood and more complex than the simple story of alienated Latino voters.

First, we argue that like much of the country, Latinos in California had been drifting toward the GOP in the period prior to the initiatives. The GOP had experienced substantial gains in voter identification during the 1980s in California (Jacobson 2004), and these dynamics were visible among Latinos as well, perhaps as a result of the GOP's role in proposing and ultimately passing the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, among other factors. If we are correct in this contention, then these propositions did not merely make a Democratic constituency more Democratic, but rather, reversed a trend that had been drawing larger numbers of Latino voters into the GOP fold.

Second, we believe that the shifts that have become apparent occurred as a cumulative result of these initiatives and should not be attributed to a single event. Rather than Proposition 187 alienating Latinos, it was the cumulative effect of repeated efforts that made the pro-Democratic shift so sizable (see Tolbert and Hero 2001).

Third, the effects of these initiatives were visited on more than just Latinos in California. In contrast to most studies of racial threat, we expect both the racial minority and majority to move in the same partisan direction. In addition to providing a racial threat to Latinos, we believe that Californians across multiple racial subgroups perceived these initiatives as racialized appeals and generally antiminority. Although the initiatives did not threaten Anglos, a substantial number of non-Hispanic whites likely perceived them as explicitly racial and perhaps a violation of the norm of racial equality. Mendelberg (2001) argues that racial appeals succeed only when campaign messages are implicit because most white voters reject blatantly racial appeals. If white voters perceive campaign messages as blatantly racist, these messages do not activate antiminority stereotypes or racial resentment but rather violate deeply held egalitarian norms. Coupling this with the highly partisan nature of these initiatives, we expect these ballot propositions to have a substantial effect on partisan loyalties. Thus, we expect movement of both Latinos *and* Anglos into the Democratic Party.

Data and Analysis

Data for our analysis come from pooling 23 California Field Polls over the period 1980–2002, taking the latest poll in each year and confining our analysis to registered voters.³ As with other studies that track partisan change at the individual level, we acknowledge the inherent limitations of looking at repeated cross-sectional data rather than panel data (e.g., Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). Despite the limitations of such an approach, we are able to track individual level partisan identification across groups in the electorate.

The dependent variable is whether respondents identified themselves as Democrat, Independent, or Republican (valued 1, 2, and 3, respectively). The trichotomous

³In some instances, we were forced to use the second to last poll if the last poll either did not have the variables present in most other surveys or were exit polls as opposed to traditional phone surveying. Comparison of a different sample of polls from 1993 to 1998—a crucial period from our study—showed the same pattern held regardless of the data used. Our results, then, do not hinge on the selection of surveys. Full information on the Field Polls may be found <http://field.com/fieldpoll/>.

nature of the variable requires us to use ordered probit analysis.⁴ Given how most studies of partisan change find movement across a 7-point scale (e.g., between strong and weak Democrat) but little change across the broad categories of Democrat, Independent, and Republican, our analysis offers a conservative test of partisan change.

The variables of greatest interest, of course, include measures of race and ethnicity, and of the ballot propositions introduced. We break down race and ethnicity into three groups: African American, Latino, and Anglo.⁵ Dummy variables for each of these groups are included in the model for all respondents. Our research design, however, means that we have sufficient sample sizes of minority voters to be able to conduct analyses by subgroup—and in particular for Latino and African Americans—and compare results from this model to those obtained from modeling opinions of Anglos from within the same state and time period.

The three ballot propositions of interest—Propositions 187, 209, and 227—were introduced and passed within a few years of each other. Our cumulative measure *Propositions* takes the value of 0 prior to the passage of Proposition 187, from the passage of this proposition in 1994 until the passage of 209 in 1996, the measure takes the value ‘1.’ From the passage of 209 until the passage of 227 in 1998, the measure takes the value ‘2,’ and thereafter the measure takes the value ‘3.’ This measure of propositions represents a likely cumulative effect of these propositions: while one proposition may not be consequential on something as enduring as party attachment, the cumulative impact of several may well be.

In addition, we also create dummy variables for each proposition, with the variable taking the value of one after the election year in which that proposition was on the ballot and subsequently adopted, and zero otherwise. By coding for each proposition separately, we are further able to assess whether specific propositions had greater or lesser effects among specific populations.

Our control variables consist of the standard political, economic, and demographic variables long associated with research on partisan identification. For demographic

variables, we include measures of age (in years), gender (1 = female, 0 = male), education (in years), and income (measured in quartiles). For economic conditions, we include a measure of the change in state-wide unemployment, the hypothesis being that as employment prospects worsen so should the chance of identifying as Republican and hence should produce a negatively signed coefficient.⁶

Finally, ideology (1 = liberal, 2 = middle of the road/not think of self in those terms, 3 = conservative) is included as a control variable for two reasons. First, the significant ideological shift to the right of the national GOP, reflected in the ascension of Newt Gingrich and colleagues, may well have had a significant effect on partisanship in California, where Republican identity and “conservatism” had been less associated with fundamentalist Christianity. Any fallout from this shift should be accounted for through the inclusion of ideology. Second, Miller and Shanks (1996), among others, use ideology as a proxy for a variety of policy positions and suggest the need to control for “all policy-related preferences when we assess the relevance of other explanatory themes” (354) when modeling partisan identification. Ideology, then, is a proxy for opinions on policy issues, an important ingredient to explaining partisan identification among revisionist accounts (Fiorina 1981; Franklin and Jackson 1983). Ideally, following Fiorina (1981), we would have liked to include a battery of policy issue questions. Unfortunately, the Field Poll does not include a consistent set of questions about policy issues across time as each survey focuses on contemporary California politics. As such, following Miller and Shanks, we include ideology as a next best indicator for issues as a means for controlling for this important source of partisan movement.⁷

Results

Table 1 displays results from an ordered probit estimation containing the variables described above. The columns of this table display results—coefficients and robust standard errors clustered by survey year—of the model run for all respondents and broken out by the three ethnic/racial subsamples: Anglos, Latinos, and African Americans.

⁴Since partisanship is usually, although not always, conceptualized as a single dimension, ordered probit is an appropriate model. Some suggest that partisanship may be two-dimensional, our results are robust to changes in estimation procedure that explores this possibility. Estimating these models with multinomial logit produces the same substantive patterns.

⁵Asian-Americans are excluded from the analysis. The sample sizes for Asian-Americans were extremely small and, hence, problematic for separate analysis. Their inclusion in the white population would have made interpretation less clear.

⁶The association of unemployment with a reduced chance of voting for, or identifying with, the GOP is for two reasons. First, this association is well documented. Second, for much of the period under study the GOP occupied the Governor’s mansion and so can be seen to be the rascals to be thrown out. Our results are robust to the inclusion and exclusion of this independent variable.

⁷Our results are robust to the inclusion and exclusion of ideology as an independent variable.

TABLE 1 Ordered Probit Estimates of Republican Party Identification in California, 1980–2002: The Cumulative Effect of Propositions 187, 209, and 227

	All Respondents	Non-Hispanic Whites	Latinos	African Americans
<i>Propositions</i>	−0.075*** (0.022)	−0.057* (0.028)	−0.193*** (0.044)	0.089* (0.049)
<i>Unemployment</i>	−0.005 (0.014)	−0.004 (0.016)	−0.049* (0.030)	0.026 (0.029)
<i>Ideology</i>	0.882*** (0.019)	1.008*** (0.027)	0.495*** (0.038)	0.336*** (0.065)
<i>Age</i>	−0.003*** (0.001)	−0.003*** (0.001)	−0.008*** (0.002)	−0.012*** (0.004)
<i>Education</i>	0.005 (0.004)	−0.002 (0.005)	0.039*** (0.013)	0.075** (0.026)
<i>Latino</i>	−0.475*** (0.048)			
<i>African American</i>	−0.995*** (0.046)			
<i>Woman</i>	−0.142*** (0.018)	−0.121*** (0.021)	−0.229*** (0.059)	−0.300*** (0.092)
<i>Income (quartile)</i>	0.083*** (0.011)	0.079*** (0.012)	0.103** (0.038)	−0.002 (0.041)
<i>Time</i>	0.011** (0.004)	0.010* (0.005)	0.025** (0.010)	−0.011 (0.008)
Cut 1	1.521 (.052)	1.741 (.049)	1.248 (.149)	0.933 (.250)
Cut 2	2.338 (.055)	2.569 (.059)	1.961 (.144)	2.043 (.235)
Log-Likelihood	−16,226.687	−12,241.499	−1975.816	−679.198
Chi-Square	5231.71	4601.58	421.82	65.13
Chi-significance	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000
N	17390	13208	2077	990

Cell entries are unstandardized ordered-probit coefficients with robust standard errors clustered by year in parentheses.

One-tailed significance: †p ≤ .075; *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001.

Data Source: California Field Polls Numbers 8006, 8104, 8206, 8303, 8405, 8504, 8606, 8704, 8806, 8905, 9005, 9103, 9207, 9304, 9406, 9503, 9607, 9704, 9807, 9903, 0006, 0104, 0204.

Since our data consist of pooled observations across multiple years, we use robust standard errors clustered by year for all analyses. The reason for doing so is that respondents across survey years were exposed to different political information environments thus violating the assumption of independence of observations. By clustering robust standard errors by survey year, we are able to relax this assumption and produce unbiased standard errors (see Steenbergen and Jones 2002).⁸

⁸We thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion. All substantive results reported are present when standard errors are not clustered, as well.

In some important respects, the underlying model of partisanship for Latinos and Anglos works in similar ways. Female and older respondents, for example, are generally more Democratic, while identifying as a conservative is naturally associated with Republican identification.⁹ Yet, some of the demographic factors vary in interesting ways across the racial and ethnic groups. For example, increasing levels of income are associated for both Latinos and Anglos with being Republican, in some contrast to the

⁹If we interact ideology with the post-1994 period (after the passage of the first proposition), the interaction is positive and significant, suggesting increasing ideological polarization in the structure of partisanship.

pattern for African Americans whose partisanship seems invariant to income. The impact of education on partisanship varies in direction across groups as well, with more educated nonwhite respondents significantly more likely to be Republicans, an effect missing among whites.

Turning to our variables of interest, the racially charged propositions we identified had a pronounced impact on partisan identification. As we argued, the propositions collectively appear to push Latinos and non-Hispanic whites as a group toward being Democratic. In both instances, the ballot propositions had the effect of lowering the probability that either a white or Latino voter identified as a Republican. To be sure, the effect on Latino voters is stronger, but the anti-GOP shift among whites, as a consequence of these initiatives, is significant. Once again, African Americans are an exception, showing a positive (i.e., pro-Republican) effect of the propositions.¹⁰

The presence of three ballot propositions raises the question of whether one had an impact disproportionate to others, and if this uneven effect varied by group. Modeling the impact of each individual proposition illustrates some nuances to these patterns in a number of ways. Again, we model the effect of each proposition by defining each dummy variable as 0 up until the year of the proposition and '1' from the year after passage until the end of the series. The results are presented in Table 2.

Breaking out the propositions individually has no effect on the other variables in the model and clarifies the dynamics at work. The results suggest that Anglos were, if anything, moved toward the Democrats by Proposition 187 and Proposition 227. This stands in sharp contrast to the expectation that the GOP would benefit in the long run from raising the salience of issues like immigration and bilingual education. With respect to Latinos, the shift is generally in the expected direction. However, contrary to most of the scholarly and media related discussions, the impact among Latinos may not have been primarily associated with Proposition 187, but rather spread across both Proposition 187 and 209. Note, again, that there appear to be no significant effects among African Americans. These results suggest that the effects of these propositions varied across groups and across initiatives.

We estimate the magnitude of these effects by calculating changes in predicted probabilities (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2001; Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2003). We calculated the change in the probability that the respondent identifies as Republican (and the standard errors) resulting from the variation in a single independent variable, holding all other variables at their means (for interval variables) or modal categories (for dichotomous variables). The results are reported in Table 3. The passage of Proposition 187 reduced the probability of identifying as a Republican by 5.1% for non-Hispanic whites and 11.4% for Latinos. The passage of 209 further reduced Latino probabilities of GOP identity by another 7.3% while 227 reduced the Anglo probability by an additional 2.7%. These, of course, represent meaningful shifts in partisan self-identification, especially since we are examining changes across partisan categories rather than merely gradations of partisan strength.

The effect of these shifts on the overall probabilities is best observed in Table 4. Table 4 reports the predicted probabilities of each outcome, varying across the passage of the three propositions and controlling for the rest of the independent variables (setting them equal to their means or modes). Prior to 187, Republicans had an 8-point advantage among Anglos, with the predicted probability of being a Republican equal to .38, while the predicted probability of identifying as a Democrat was .30, *ceteris paribus*. After the passage of the three propositions, Democrats had reversed the situation, holding a 6-point advantage over Republicans, .37 to .31, a notable change. Consistent with the analysis, the largest shifts among whites occurred after 187 and 227.

For Latinos, the shift is even greater. Prior to the initiatives, the data indicate a partisan breakdown that favored Democrats .38 to .34, with a substantial number of Independents which, the evidence suggests, regularly voted Democratic. In the wake of these initiatives, the Democratic advantage grew to 51 percentage points. The post-227 predicted probabilities favor the Democrats .63 to .12.

Among the other effects evident in Table 2 is the apparent shift that had been taking place outside of the politics of the ballot initiatives. Consistent with our discussion about the movement of the California electorate toward the Republican party, the coefficient on Time for both Latinos and Anglos was positive and significant, suggesting that—apart from the effects of the initiatives—the general trend in both groups had been pro-Republican.

Just how substantial was this shift? Looking at the changes reported in Table 3, over the 22 years there is

¹⁰It is worth noting the African American sample sizes are very small in Field polls. Even though pooling them gives us a very useful N of just under 1000, if the initial samples are bad, pooling them will not diminish the effect of the bias. While we have no priors regarding the quality of the black samples, we are less confident on these findings.

TABLE 2 Ordered Probit Estimates of Republican Party Identification in California, 1980–2002: The Individual Effects of Propositions 187, 209, and 227

	All Respondents	Non-Hispanic Whites	Latinos	African Americans
<i>Proposition 187</i>	−0.168*** (0.047)	−0.139** (0.058)	−0.346* (0.171)	−0.043 (0.116)
<i>Proposition 209</i>	−0.024† (0.016)	0.012 (0.037)	−0.263* (0.159)	0.231† (0.154)
<i>Proposition 227</i>	−0.066** (0.028)	−0.072† (0.049)	−0.029 (0.069)	0.037 (0.164)
<i>Unemployment</i>	−0.011 (0.012)	−0.008 (0.015)	−0.071** (0.024)	0.024 (0.027)
<i>Ideology</i>	0.882*** (0.019)	1.009*** (0.027)	0.497*** (0.039)	0.334*** (0.072)
<i>Age</i>	−0.003*** (0.001)	−0.003*** (0.001)	−0.008*** (0.002)	−0.012*** (0.004)
<i>Education</i>	0.005 (0.004)	−0.001 (0.005)	0.042*** (0.012)	0.077** (0.026)
<i>Latino</i>	−0.474*** (0.048)			
<i>African American</i>	−0.995*** (0.046)			
<i>Woman</i>	−0.143*** (0.018)	−0.121*** (0.021)	−0.231*** (0.061)	−0.302*** (0.093)
<i>Income (quartile)</i>	0.083*** (0.009)	0.078*** (0.012)	0.098** (0.038)	−0.004 (0.041)
<i>Time</i>	0.014*** (0.005)	0.012* (0.005)	0.032*** (0.007)	−0.008 (0.008)
Cut 1	1.536 (.057)	1.753 (.050)	1.286 (.138)	.941 (.248)
Cut 2	2.353 (.060)	2.581 (.061)	2.001 (.127)	2.053 (.235)
Log-Likelihood	−16,223.855	−12,239.793	−1973.397	−678.932
Chi-Square	7186.19	5176.59	421.31	74.09
Chi-significance	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000
N	17390	13208	2077	990

Cell entries are unstandardized ordered-probit coefficients with robust standard errors clustered by years in parentheses.

One-tailed significance: †p ≤ .075; *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001.

Data Source: California Field Polls Numbers 8006, 8104, 8206, 8303, 8405, 8504, 8606, 8704, 8806, 8905, 9005, 9103, 9207, 9304, 9406, 9503, 9607, 9704, 9807, 9903, 0006, 0104, 0204.

almost a 18% gain in the probability of a Latino respondent thinking of him- or herself as a Republican, *ceteris paribus*. The comparable number for Anglos is 9.1%.¹¹ Whatever else was happening during the 1980s and early

part of the 1990s in California, the state GOP was making sizeable gains among Latinos and to a lesser extent Anglos, in the electorate. While, on average, Latinos remained Democratic, the Republicans were making significant inroads among that vote bloc.

This trend, of course, makes the results for the ballot initiatives all that more important. The cumulative effect of the three initiatives, as seen in Table 3, is a 7.4% decline in Republican identification among whites and 19.5% among Latinos. These shifts in probability would

¹¹ These pro-GOP shifts occur largely prior to 187. In results not presented, we reestimated all models, dividing the sample with the passage of the first ballot initiative in November 1994. The coefficient on Time is positive for the earlier period in the models of both Anglos and Latinos, but is insignificantly different from zero in the latter period.

TABLE 3 Changes in the Predicted Probability That a Voter Is a Republican

	All Voters	Non-Hispanic Whites	Latinos	African Americans
<i>Proposition 187</i>	-0.062	-0.051	-0.114	-0.002
0->1	(.017)	(.021)	(.056)	(.007)
<i>Proposition 209</i>	-0.009	0.004	-0.073	0.020
0->1	(.006)	(.014)	(.047)	(.015)
<i>Proposition 227</i>	-0.025	-0.027	-0.008	0.003
0->1	(.011)	(.019)	(.020)	(.011)
<i>Unemployment</i>	-0.018	-0.014	-0.092	0.007
Min->Max	(.021)	(.026)	(.032)	(.008)
<i>Ideology</i>	0.579	0.637	0.285	0.045
Min->Max	(.011)	(.013)	(.036)	(.014)
<i>Age</i>	-0.079	-0.073	-0.155	-0.044
Min->Max	(.015)	(.018)	(.035)	(.016)
<i>Education</i>	0.018	-0.005	0.115	0.048
Min->Max	(.015)	(.018)	(.038)	(.021)
<i>Latino</i>	-0.161			
0->1	(.015)			
<i>African American</i>	-0.279			
0->1	(.013)			
<i>Female</i>	-0.055	-0.047	-0.062	-0.024
0->1	(.007)	(.008)	(.015)	(.008)
<i>Income (quartiles)</i>	0.093	0.089	0.089	-3.5×10^{-4}
Min->Max	(.012)	(.013)	(.035)	(.009)
<i>Time</i>	0.106	0.091	0.179	-0.009
Min->Max	(.035)	(.040)	(.041)	(.010)

Cell entries are changes in the predicted probability that the dependent variable equals three (Republican) for a given change in the value of the independent variable, holding all others constant, as well as the standard error of that predicted change, estimated using CLARIFY. Data Source: California Field Polls Numbers 8006, 8104, 8206, 8303, 8405, 8504, 8606, 8704, 8806, 8905, 9005, 9103, 9207, 9304, 9406, 9503, 9607, 9704, 9807, 9903, 0006, 0104, 0204.

TABLE 4 Predicted Probabilities of Latino and Non-Hispanic White Partisan Outcomes with Respect to the Passage of Specific Propositions

	<i>Before Passage of 187, 209, and 227</i>	<i>After Passage of 187 but Before 209 & 227</i>	<i>After Passage of 187 & 209, but Before 227</i>	<i>After Passage of 187, 209, and 227</i>
Latinos				
Democrat	.38	.52	.62	.63
Independent	.28	.26	.23	.22
Republican	.34	.23	.15	.12
Non-Hispanic Whites				
Democrat	.30	.35	.34	.37
Independent	.32	.32	.32	.32
Republican	.38	.33	.33	.31

Cell entries are the predicted probabilities that the dependent variable takes on each value at each point in the timeline of these three initiatives, holding all other independent variables constant, estimated using CLARIFY.

Data Source: California Field Polls Numbers 8006, 8104, 8206, 8303, 8405, 8504, 8606, 8704, 8806, 8905, 9005, 9103, 9207, 9304, 9406, 9503, 9607, 9704, 9807, 9903, 0006, 0104, 0204.

seem to take away all of the GOP's gains among Latinos for that 22-year period. Perhaps more importantly, the effect among non-Hispanic whites, though smaller in magnitude, erases much of the rightward shift of the white population over the time period studied as well. In the results presented in Table 4, this time incorporating the effects of the entire model, the evidence suggests that both Latinos and non-Hispanic whites end the period substantially more likely to be Democrats, and less likely to be Republicans, than when they started.

While one could guess, without the aid of pooling data and maximum-likelihood estimation techniques, that Propositions 187, 209, and 227 made Latinos less receptive toward the GOP, what our approach shows are three points that are not quite so easily guessed. First, we see that the magnitude of the reversal is strikingly large. Second, it is of such a magnitude as to undercut all of the gains made by Republicans among Latino voters up until then. Third, the GOP does not seem to have been able to offset these losses by gains among Anglos. If anything, among Anglos, the impact of the propositions has been to move them toward the Democrats as well.

This last result is, without question, the most curious. Since majorities of whites voted for each proposition, the finding that the mean partisanship shifts Democratic as a result is, to say the least, counterintuitive. How can we reconcile our finding that these propositions moved the electorate, and especially the Anglo electorate, to the left with the passage of these propositions?

The answer, we believe, is the same for both Anglos and Latinos. New voters forming partisan attachments during this period perceived the Republicans as antiminority and thus moved toward the Democrats. The larger shift among Latinos was likely due to the fact that Latinos comprised a much smaller share of the electorate at the beginning of the 1990s than at the end. Estimates by Citrin and Highton (2002) put Latino voters at just 9% of the electorate in 1990, by 2000 this figure had climbed to 14% while the corresponding figures for Anglos was a decline from 80 to 70% of the electorate over the same period (Citrin and Highton 2002, 17). During the early 1990s, then, the state GOP still held the numerical advantage because they could pick up more of the Anglo vote—the largest vote bloc. In addition, registration figures from the Secretary of State bear this out: GOP registration in the state climbed until it peaked in the 1990s, declining almost monotonically since.

For Anglos, the shift was pronounced among younger voters: voters under 30 were markedly likely to show a drop in the probability of being Republican after the propositions passed. In results not presented, we find that the probability of Anglo identification with the GOP holds

relatively steady at around .376 for respondents over 30, but declines by five percentage points (from .415 to .365) among respondents under 30. Again, as the decade of the 90's progressed, generational replacement means that these people grow as a share of the electorate (indeed approximately half of the voters under 30 in 2000 were not even part of the electorate in 1994). This pattern of partisan change appears similar to what happened in the South. Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2002, chap. 6) show that the movement of white Southerners toward the Republican party rested heavily on new voters rather than the partisan conversion of established ones. The GOP mistake in California, then, was to fight the previous war: craft issue appeals to an electorate that was disappearing, not the one that was emerging.

Discussion and Conclusion

The movement of California voters toward the Democratic party at the behest of ballot initiatives nurtured and supported by Republicans presents a story of unanticipated consequences. Large partisan shifts do not happen frequently because parties often successfully anticipate how their issue positions will affect partisan loyalties. In the 1990s, these initiatives, especially Proposition 187, helped GOP candidates in the short-term (see Nicholson 2005). Yet, many Republicans did not anticipate the long-term consequences of sponsoring these initiatives, a problem that has made them largely uncompetitive in the nations' largest state.

The use of these three ballot propositions by the California GOP to improve their electoral fortunes was unsuccessful in the long-run and, in fact, constituted a significant political error with three demonstrable effects. First, they had a very sizable effect on galvanizing the rapidly growing Latino vote and shifting it toward the Democratic Party in California. Second, this shift actually reversed a trend that had previously been favoring the GOP. That is, up until the propositions, this Latino bloc had been drifting slowly toward the Republican Party. Third, there seems to have been no counterbalancing gain in party supporters from other groups, particularly non-Hispanic whites. That is, GOP alienation of Latinos may have been politically acceptable if it attracted Anglos in greater numbers. The evidence from our results suggests that this did not happen. Despite high levels of white support for the propositions and the Republican candidates that championed them (Nicholson 2005), the evidence here suggests that this short-term GOP strategy alienated some

Anglos as well, as partisanship for younger whites also shifted toward the Democrats in the years following. At least for the current period, it would seem that the story of Propositions 187, 209, and 227 is one of “blowback” for the Republican Party, since they would seem to have had serious consequences for party loyalties.

Latinos already form America’s largest minority group and demography suggests that the Latino share of the electorate will only grow larger in coming years. How Latinos are brought into the political system thus has enormous consequences for the future of American electoral politics, and the experience of California Latinos provides an instructive and important example of how that process of inclusion may unfold.

As we have shown, citizens responded to the political environment in meaningful ways by changing their partisan identifications. We argued that the impetus for this change was highly racialized ballot propositions. But the limitations of our data do not allow us to isolate the effects of ballot initiatives vis-à-vis all other features of the political environment. For example, the national Republican Party came to increased prominence in 1994 by taking control of the Congress and the strong ideological conservatism espoused by its leader, Newt Gingrich, may not have been well received among some Californians. Although our subgroup analysis does not support the notion that liberal leaning Republicans or conservative leaning Democrats were the group responsible for the movement of Anglos away from the Republican Party (which is the group most likely to shift), we do not have any direct measures of whether perceptions of the national Republican party leadership played an important role.

In addition, although we established the racial character of the ballot initiatives on substantive grounds, we do not have any means of isolating the influence of racial attitudes vis-à-vis other political factors. Yet, scholarly accounts of the initiatives we investigate—to say nothing of exit poll estimates of voting on each—suggest that race was the defining characteristic (Alvarez and Garcia-Bedolla 2004; Chavez 1998; Tolbert and Grummel 2003; Tolbert and Hero 1996, 2001). We do, of course, control for macroeconomic performance by including the annual unemployment rate, yet our findings remain robust. In short, while other factors might have played some role in our findings, prior scholarship and our ability to control for some, but not all, rival explanations suggests a primary role for racial politics.

Regardless of the precise role that racial attitudes played in shaping partisan attachments, it is clear that direct democracy was the vessel that carried these issues to

the California electorate. This study thus furthers our understanding of the potential agenda-setting capabilities of initiatives. By achieving agenda status, Nicholson (2005) showed that initiatives prime voters’ choices of candidates through partisan stereotypes. In particular, initiative issues that advantaged a party (because they were perceived to better handle it) placed voters in a mindset favorable to that party’s candidates.¹² Here, we demonstrate that initiatives can have deeper and longer lasting electoral consequences. Absent these initiatives, California might very well be a red state.

The experience of the propositions has shown that partisanship is not merely a product of some combination of socialization and a running tally of economic evaluations, but can be endogenous to the issue advocacy of parties. Yet, the state-level realignment we have identified helps answer why partisan realignments are so rare. The California case suggests that there may be relatively few issues that have the capacity to shift voters away from long held party loyalties but race, whether in the post-segregation South or California in the 1990s, may be one of them. Perhaps more importantly, one of the lessons of this experience is how hard it is for parties to bring about an issue-based realignment in their favor. In fact, as this example shows, the Republican Party in California harmed its long-term electoral prospects in this process. Issue-based realignments may be rare not just because they are difficult to bring about but also because of the dangers of unintended consequences.

These unintended consequences suggest a friendly amendment to Mendelberg’s (2001) argument about the effect of racial issues. In her research, if the racial nature of a campaign message is made explicit, it will harm the messenger since blatantly racial appeals violate norms of racial equality. Few people want to be racist and the vast majority of people will not support a party if they believe it is playing the race card. In Mendelberg’s account, such learning appears to take place quickly. Yet, in California, each ballot proposition proved to be popular suggesting that for many voters the initial impression was not racist, at least not blatantly so. This impression changed over time for some voters, especially the young, as a series of initiatives, each of which had a common, racially oriented thrust, appeared on the ballot. Thus, although partisan change appeared relatively quickly in California, it was a more gradual, nuanced change than found in Mendelberg’s research.

¹²See Petrocik (1996) for the logic behind parties establishing reputations for handling issues.

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