

DERACIALIZATION AND URBAN RACIAL CONTEXTS

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Building on previous literature of deracialization and white voting behavior, the author empirically tests whether the effectiveness of deracialization, measured by white crossover vote, may be conditional, dependent on urban racial contexts. The author examined 81 black candidates' white votes in New Orleans biracial elections between 1977 and 1998. The results of ordinary least squares multiple regressions show that the differences in white crossover voting in New Orleans during the past two decades were related to black candidates' strength. The relatively larger effect of newspaper endorsement on white crossover voting, compared to that of black incumbency, confirms previous findings regarding the powerful influence of news media on biracial elections in general and the deracialization strategy in particular. The most important finding of this research, however, is that the deracialization strategy was most effective when white voters were no longer the majority in the urban elections.

Keywords: deracialization; white voting behavior; urban election; biracial elections

Many studies have shown that Americans often cast their votes along racial lines (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 208-28; Dawson 1994, 131-58; Engstrom 1985, 13-41). Yet white voters do on occasion cross over and vote for a black candidate. White crossover voting was instrumental, for example, in several black victories in the mayoral elections of major cities during the 1970s and 1980s. Tom Bradley's victory in Los Angeles in 1973 reportedly "set a record for major American cities, winning more than one-third of the white vote" (Sonenshein 1997, 45). Wilson Goode was elected in Philadelphia in 1983 with "about 18 percent of the white vote in the primary and 23 percent in the general election" (Keiser 1997, 77). David Dinkins's white crossover vote included "nearly 30 percent of the Jewish vote, one-quarter

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of the white Catholic vote, and more than 40 percent of the liberal white vote” in his successful mayoral election in New York City in 1989 (Thompson 1997, 65).

White electoral support for black candidates may be short-lived, however. In the 1990s, Wilson Goode and David Dinkins were defeated for reelection by white opponents in Philadelphia and New York. In Chicago, according to the New York Times/WBBN-TV poll, more than three-quarters of the whites who had voted for a black candidate, Harold Washington, in 1983 voted for a white candidate, Richard M. Daley, over a black candidate in 1989.

The recent white victories in these major cities have raised concerns regarding the uncertainty of white electoral support for black candidates in biracial elections. Under what conditions are white voters willing to vote for black candidates? Previous studies have offered different, if not conflicting, answers.

EXPLAINING WHITE CROSSOVER VOTING

Traditionally, the study of white crossover voting concerns differences among white voters. For example, it has been suggested that socioeconomic status may influence the willingness of whites to vote for blacks. Lower-class whites are more likely to be hostile to blacks and to form an antiblack voting bloc because “the white working class is in more direct competition with blacks for jobs and admissions to schools, and in bad economic times, the working class is hurt more by unemployment and inflation” (Howell 1994, 193). An effective and stable biracial electoral coalition between working-class whites and blacks, however, is also possible because of the mutual benefits received by the coalition partners, according to Davidson (1972). Sonenshein (1997) argued that white support for black candidates is related to both interest and ideology. He found that liberal whites were the core supporters of Thomas Bradley in the 1973 Los Angeles mayoral election.

Although the voter-centered explanation of white crossover voting has been used in many racial studies, an alternative approach has also been adopted by researchers. This approach concerns either personal characteristics of *candidates* in biracial elections or their campaign-related activities. The basic assumption is that election outcomes largely depend on the performance of candidates who have the resources and ability to influence voters, and as with white candidates, black office seekers need to have certain personal and professional qualifications to appeal to white voters (Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997, 295-97).

Incumbency has been suggested as a measure of black candidates' strength (Voss and Lublin 2001). Incumbents generally have more resources through which to influence election outcomes. It has been found that a black incumbent may draw more support from white voters than a black nonincumbent (Swain 1993, 116-40; Bullock 1985, 199), and a black nonincumbent candidate may have a better chance to increase his or her white crossover vote if he or she does not face a white incumbent (Llorens, Parsons, and Perry 1996, 110).

An effective campaign may produce a high level of crossover voting. Bullock (1985), in his study of black-white electoral competition in the Atlanta area during 1970 to 1982, found that white crossover voting was influenced by newspaper endorsements in addition to incumbent status. This is because endorsement by a white-controlled newspaper may provide white voters with "important voting cues as to the candidates' qualifications and political acceptability" (Lieske 1989, 154). Candidates may receive different rates of crossover voting because they run for different offices. For example, citywide elections such as mayor and councilmen at-large were found to be more racially divided in Atlanta than district elections. Moreover, "crossover voting is lower in runoffs than in primaries for both races" (Bullock 1985, 195).

To win as many white votes as possible, a "deracialization" strategy sometimes is not only necessary but also effective if used properly by black candidates (Perry 1996). In the 1990s, given that blacks won most black majority elections, a more pragmatic campaign strategy for many black politicians would be a deracialization strategy targeted at white voters in white majority districts (Persons 1993). *Deracialization* can be defined as

conducting a campaign in a stylistic fashion that defuses the polarizing effects of race by avoiding explicit reference to race-specific issues, while at the same time emphasizing those issues that are perceived as racially transcendent, thus mobilizing a broad segment of the electorate for purposes of capturing or maintaining public office. (McCormick and Jones 1993, 76)

Deracialization strategies are considered to have been the key to such electoral victories as that of the first black elected governor, L. Douglas Wilder of Virginia (Jones and Clemons 1993, 128-46); the first African American woman elected to the U.S. Senate, Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois (Oden 1996, 47); and the first black mayor in New York City, David Dinkins (Thompson, 1997, 65-81; for a further list of black and Latino candidates who had effectively used the deracialization strategy to win elections, see Ross and Levine 2001, 121; Pierannunzi and Hutcheson 1991; Perry 1996).

Certain white candidates' campaign activities may have a negative impact on white crossover voting, however. Reeves (1997, 24) suggests that the "political mobilization of race as a fear appeal" by white candidates arouses white voters' hostile racial sentiments, which then reduce white crossover voting. Furthermore, according to Reeves's analyses of the 1989 New York and Seattle mayoral races, "the media tend to be handmaidens to such campaign strategies and tactics" (Reeves 1997, 45; also see Terkildsen and Damore 1999 for a further discussion of the media coverage in biracial congressional elections).

In short, the candidate-centered explanations of white voting behavior provide an important theoretic perspective to study the white crossover voting patterns across elections. One limitation of previous candidate-centered studies, however, is that they did not test whether the effect of black candidate characteristics on white crossover voting may be enhanced or reduced by other factors. The positive impact of black incumbency and newspaper endorsement, as demonstrated in the following pages, may be conditional, depending on racial contexts. Furthermore, previous research of deracialization has been mainly based on in-depth case studies with limited statistical testing.

HYPOTHESES

This study offers four hypotheses to test the effect of black candidates' characteristics and campaign activities on white crossover voting. Based on the candidate-centered explanations, the level of white crossover voting is related to the strength of black candidates, which may be measured by the resources and level of publicity of the candidates. The first measure of black candidates' strength is incumbency status. Black incumbents have already run successfully for the office at issue and are likely to have more opportunities to engage in credit-taking activities and to have resources through which to attract white support than nonincumbent black office seekers. Therefore, the first hypothesis of this study is as follows:

Hypothesis 1: A black incumbent should receive a higher level of white crossover voting than a black nonincumbent.

Although it is very difficult to directly measure the deracialization strategy used by a black candidate, it is reasonable to suggest that an endorsement of a local white-controlled newspaper for a black candidate is a manifestation of that black candidate's campaigning effort to defuse the polarizing effects

of race. The importance of the press in biracial elections has been extensively noted by many political scientists (among them, e.g., see Reeves 1997; Perry 1997; Bullock 1985). The media, especially white-run newspapers, are potentially a major cue giver in biracial elections, and no cue is more explicit than a newspaper's endorsement. Thus, the second hypothesis is the following:

Hypothesis 2: A black candidate with an endorsement from a major white-controlled local newspaper should receive a higher level of white crossover voting than do those black candidates without such an endorsement.

The impact of racial contexts, measured by the percentage of the black population (or registered voters) within a geographic area, on white racial attitude and political behavior has been a research focus for more than five decades. The most famous hypothesis, suggested originally by V. O. Key in 1949, assumes that racial contexts may influence how whites perceive the levels of black threat to white interests. To be more specific, when the black density within a certain geographic area is increased to such a level that white dominance is in question, white hostility toward blacks tends to increase. Applied to white crossover voting, this hypothesis expects a decline in white crossover voting when the racial context of a geographic area is undergoing a racial transition from white dominant to black dominant (see, e.g., Tolbert and Hero 2001, 571-604; Glaser 1994, 21-41; Herring and Forbes 1994, 431-45; Giles and Buckner 1993, 702-13).

More recently, this black threat hypothesis has been challenged by new findings related to white crossover voting. For example, Carsey (1995), using the data about New York City and Chicago mayoral elections, suggests that black density may positively affect white crossover voting because a higher level of black density may increase the level of racial interaction, which may enhance racial tolerance among white voters. Voss (1996) discovered that black density was negatively related to white support for David Duke in three Louisiana elections. Liu (2001a) argues that the positive effect of black density on white crossover voting found in urban elections can be better explained by the white strategic voting for the least threatening black candidates when the demographic changes in cities limited the chance to elect white candidates.

Racial contexts may conceptually fall into three categories: black-dominant context, black/white competitive context, and white-dominant context, which can be measured, for example, by the percentage of black registered voters in an election unit (Liu and Vanderleeuw 2001). It is reasonable to suggest that an election unit with more than 55% registered voters being black is a black-dominant context. In the black-dominant context, the chance of

electing a white candidate is limited because blacks are very likely to be the most powerful political force in the electoral arena. A black incumbent, with few or no strong white opponents, may have a good chance to persuade white voters that if he or she is reelected, white group interests will be protected. In the meantime, the media may endorse black candidates when there are few or no strong white candidates. We, therefore, may expect a strong effect of black candidates' qualifications on white crossover voting in this type of racial context.

In the white/black competitive context (i.e., both white and black registered voters are close to 50% of the electorate), the high level of competition between whites and blacks can increase the racial sensitivities of both black and white voters. A black candidate, who is an incumbent or has a newspaper endorsement, may be regarded by whites as a threat to white interests if he or she runs in this racial context. Thus, the positive effect of black incumbency and newspaper endorsement in this context should be smaller than in the black-dominant context.

In the white-dominant context (i.e., white registered voters are more than 55% of the electorate), black incumbents or black candidates with newspaper endorsement may also face strong white opponents because whites are still the dominant force in the biracial elections. As a result, the positive effect of black incumbency and newspaper endorsement in this context, if any, should also be very small.

Thus, the hypotheses concerning the effects of black candidates' qualifications on white crossover voting across the three different racial contexts can be stated as follows:

Hypothesis 3: The positive impact of black incumbency on white crossover voting is greater in the black-dominant context than those in which blacks are not dominant.

Hypothesis 4: The positive impact of newspaper endorsement on white crossover voting is greater in the black-dominant context than those in which blacks are not dominant.

DATA AND MEASUREMENTS

To test the hypotheses, this study examines the white crossover votes received by 81 black candidates in biracial municipal elections in New Orleans between 1977 and 1998. New Orleans data have three important advantages. First, the city of New Orleans has undergone a racial transition from white-dominant to black-dominant contexts, which is ideal for testing

TABLE 1: Racial Composition in the City of New Orleans: 1970-1998

<i>Year</i>	<i>% Population (Black)</i>	<i>% Registered Voters (Black)^a</i>
1970	45.0	30.8
1977	—	42.0
1980	55.3	44.7
1982	—	45.2
1986	—	51.3
1990	62.1	54.4
1994	—	56.0
1998	—	63.2

SOURCE: The population data came from U.S. Bureau of the Census figures. The registered voters data were provided by the Registrar of Voters for the Parish of New Orleans.

NOTE: Dashes indicate not available from the census database.

a. The registration figures are based on the months in which councilmanic elections were held.

our hypotheses (see Table 1). Second, New Orleans's registration law requires voters to be registered by race before election. This requirement provides an important opportunity to estimate our dependent variable, white crossover voting (discussed below). Third, both black and white candidates have been active in New Orleans local elections, which provides enough biracial elections to allow us to examine how white voters vote when they have a chance to vote for candidates from both races.

New Orleans elected Ernest "Dutch" Morial as the first black mayor in 1977, and black candidates have won all of the mayoral elections thereafter, despite a strong white challenge in the 1994 mayoral election. The increasing political power of blacks in the city has been reflected by a black majority on the city council since 1986 and on the school board since 1988 (Liu 2001b; Perry 1997; Engstrom and Caridas 1991, 175). White support for black candidates in New Orleans's biracial elections was instrumental in several black victories. In the 1977 mayoral runoff, for instance, it is estimated by this study that 19.9% of the white voters voted for Ernest Morial, who won the election with 51.8% of the total votes cast and became the first black mayor of New Orleans (see below for a discussion of white crossover measurement). Sidney Barthelemy, the second black mayor, effectively used the deracialization campaign strategy to beat his major black competitor, William Jefferson, in the 1986 mayoral election; Barthelemy's 42.1% white crossover vote was even larger than his white opponents' white vote. With strong white support, Barthelemy was able to win his reelection in 1990 (Perry 1991). One more example of the use of the deracialization strategy was Troy Carter's 1994 district C primary election, in which he obtained the

crucial 18.8% of the white vote and defeated a white incumbent by a margin of less than one-half percent of the vote.

White crossover voting in some New Orleans's biracial elections, however, was extremely low. In the 1994 mayoral election, for example, only 9.2% of the white voters voted for a black candidate in the primary and 7.0% in the runoff. In district A councilmanic elections, white crossover voting has never been more than 1.0% in the past two decades. Indeed, New Orleans elections provide us with variation in white crossover voting, which allows us to discover conditions under which whites are willing to vote for black candidate(s).

Once every four years, New Orleans elects its mayor and seven city council members (two elected at-large and five from single-member districts). According to the Louisiana law, all candidates compete together in a single primary election regardless of their party affiliation. This study will focus on the 81 black candidates who competed in the biracial mayoral and city council district elections during 1977 through 1998.

The unit of analysis of this study is black candidates. The dependent variable is the level of white crossover voting (%) received by a black candidate in a given biracial election. Because voters cast their votes secretly, it is impossible to know the exact number of crossover votes in a precinct unless that precinct is composed of only white voters. The same is true for an election unit like a district. Previous research has used either survey data or aggregate election outcomes to measure racial voting. A survey may ask respondents how they voted in elections (e.g., Carsey, 1995). Studies based on survey data, however, may not be accurate in racially sensitive contexts because many voters may not respond truthfully to survey items (see Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens 1997; Traugott and Price 1992). Furthermore, it is difficult to test contextual hypotheses because the individual-level data usually do not have the necessary variation in the contextual variable or because there is not an adequate number of individuals sampled at the various levels of the contextual variables (Giles 1996, 70).

On the basis of the analysis of aggregate (e.g., precinct-level) data, some scholars examined racially homogeneous precincts to estimate crossover voting at a higher level (e.g., at a city level) (see Herring and Forbes 1994). Certainly, this method excludes many racially mixed precincts and therefore does not provide an adequate basis for testing contextual effects. To include as much information as possible, King (1997) proposed a new ecological inference (EI) method for estimating individual-level behavior through aggregate data. Taking advantage of the deterministic method of bounds incorporated with maximum likelihood probabilities, King designed an estimation procedure that provides more accurate estimates of racial/cross-racial

TABLE 2: White Crossover Voting and Black Incumbency (N = 81)

	<i>Equation 1</i>		<i>Equation 2</i>		<i>Equation 3</i>	
	b	<i>Robust SE</i>	b	<i>Robust SE</i>	b	<i>Robust SE</i>
Black incumbency ^a	25.64	6.06***	25.44	5.36***	11.05	2.77***
Context ^b			4.58	2.23*	2.43	2.23
Black Incumbency × Context					25.35	5.64***
Intercept	6.96		4.55		5.68	
R ²	.33		.37		.45	

a. Black incumbent = 1, 0 otherwise.

b. Black-dominant context (i.e., black percentage of registered voters ≥ 55) = 1, 0 otherwise.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

voting than previous methods. The EI procedure has been used in court cases as well as academic research (e.g., Liu 2001b; Tolbert and Hero 2001; Voss 1998; Voss and Lublin 2001; Schuessler 1999; Palmquist 1999; Burden and Kimball 1998). This study uses this EI procedure to estimate white crossover voting for 81 black candidates.¹

FINDINGS

THE EFFECT OF BLACK INCUMBENCY

Between 1977 and 1998, the 81 black candidates received an average of 8.7% of the white votes in a biracial election. The mean of the white crossover vote for the 7 black incumbents (see below) was 32.6, and the mean for the 74 nonincumbent black candidates was 7.0. Table 2 contains three equations. Equation 1 simply regresses white crossover voting on black incumbency (coded as 1 if the black candidate is an incumbent, 0 otherwise). The regression coefficient is a statistically significant 25.64, and the *R*-squared is .33. This suggests that incumbency status is positively related to white crossover voting, which supports our hypothesis 1. (Among the 7 black incumbents, 4 ran in biracial elections in the black-dominant context and 3 in the competitive context. There was not a black incumbent who ran in a biracial election in the white-dominant context. Therefore, the findings based on hypothesis 1 can only be applied to the black-dominant context and the competitive context.)

Equation 2 adds context (coded as 1 if the election unit is black dominant, 0 otherwise) to the regression. Although the regression coefficient for context

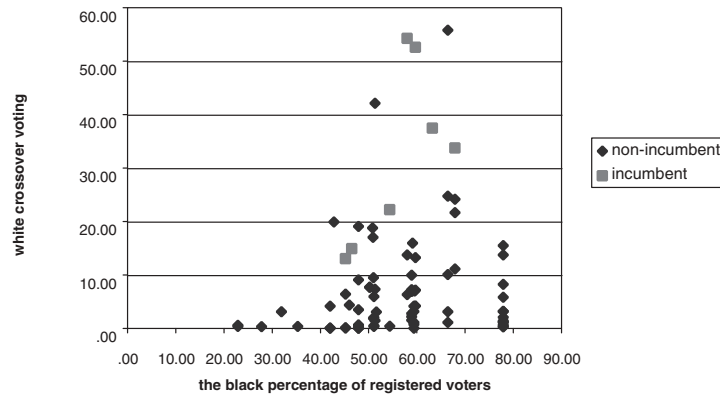


Figure 1: White Crossover Voting and Black Incumbency Status

is positive and statistically significant ($b = 4.58$), the regression coefficient for black incumbency only changes slightly ($b = 25.44$) and remains statistically significant. Furthermore, the R -squared is .37, only 4 percentage points larger than that for equation 1.

Equation 3 adds an interactive term between context and black incumbency status into the regression. The R -square increases to .45. The interactive term is positive ($b = 25.35$) and statistically significant, meaning that black incumbents in the black-dominant context received 36 percentage points ($11.05 + 25.35$) more white crossover than those black nonincumbents in the same elections. The regression coefficient for black incumbency in the other contexts drops dramatically, to 11.05, and is statistically significant. The regression coefficient for context also drops, to 2.43, but it is no longer statistically significant. These findings, then, suggest that although black incumbency status increases the level of white crossover voting in both the black-dominant context and the competitive context, the positive effect of incumbency on white crossover is greater in the black-dominant context.²

More detail is provided in Figure 1, a scatterplot between black percentage registered voters and the white crossover votes received by black incumbents and black nonincumbents. There were four cases in which black incumbents received more than 30% of the white crossover vote, and all were in the black-dominant context. These four cases were Jim Singleton in the 1982 and 1990 district B primary elections (white crossover voting = 52.6 and 33.8, respectively), Lambert Boissiere in the 1982 district D primary (white crossover voting = 54.3), and Marc Morial in the 1998 mayoral primary (white crossover voting = 37.5). All of these black incumbents won their respective elections.

TABLE 3: White Crossover Voting and Newspaper Endorsement (N = 81)

	<i>Equation 1</i>		<i>Equation 2</i>		<i>Equation 3</i>	
	b	Robust SE	b	Robust SE	b	Robust SE
Endorsement ^a	24.63	5.41***	25.16	4.92***	15.88	3.65***
Context ^b			5.99	1.97**	3.29	1.97
Endorsement × Context					19.90	5.34***
Intercept	5.83		2.58		4.05	
R ²	.46		.52		.59	

a. Black candidate endorsed by the local newspaper = 1, 0 otherwise.

b. Black-dominant context = 1, 0 otherwise.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

In the competitive contexts, the only office contested by black incumbents was that of mayor. Voters responded to Ernest Morial twice in the 1982 mayoral election, once in the primary, in which the white crossover vote was 13.1%, and again in the runoff, in which Morial received 14.9% of the votes cast by whites. Another black mayoral incumbent in the competitive context was Sidney Barthelemy, who won his reelection in the 1990 mayoral primary with 22.2% of the white votes.

THE EFFECT OF NEWSPAPER ENDORSEMENT

Among the 81 black candidates, 11 had an endorsement from the *Times-Picayune*. The mean of white crossover voting for these 11 black candidates was 30.5, whereas the mean of white crossover voting for the other 70 black candidates was only 5.8. Table 3 contains three equations. The first equation regresses white crossover on endorsement (coded 1 if the candidate is endorsed, 0 otherwise). The regression coefficient is 24.63 and statistically significant, and the *R*-squared is .46. This result suggests that the newspaper endorsement of black candidates did influence their white crossover support in biracial elections, which confirms our hypothesis 2.

Equation 2, again, adds a dummy variable, context (coded as 1 if the election unit is black dominant, 0 otherwise), to the equation. Among the 11 black candidates with an endorsement from the *Times-Picayune*, 5 ran in the black-dominant context and 5 in the competitive context. Only one of them ran in the white-dominant context.

According to equation 2, the regression coefficient for context is a statistically significant 5.99, but it has no effect on the impact of endorsements, which is 25.16 and remains statistically significant. The *R*-squared is

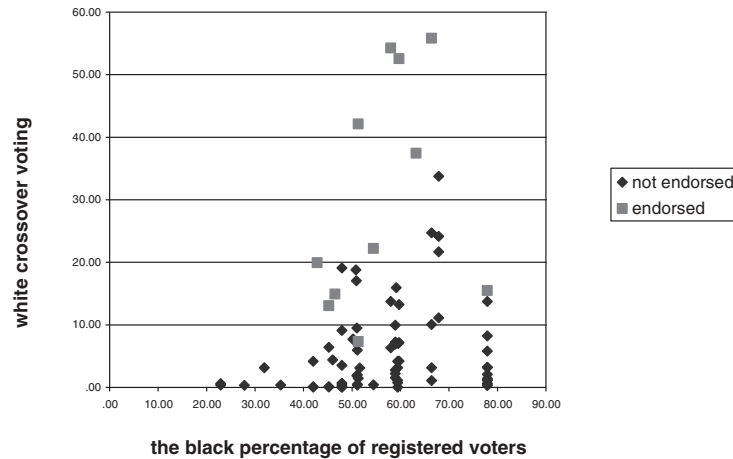


Figure 2: White Crossover Voting and Newspaper Endorsement

increased by .06, to .52. The third equation adds context and newspaper endorsement as an interactive term. The interaction is positive and statistically significant ($b = 19.90$). Context is no longer statistically significant when the interactive term is added, and the regression coefficient for the endorsement variable drops, to 15.88, but remains statistically significant. Thus, the *Times-Picayune's* endorsement does positively influence white crossover voting in both the black-dominant context and the other contexts, but this positive impact of endorsement on white crossover voting is greater in the black-dominant contexts than in those in which blacks are not dominant. Overall, according to the R -squared, the model explains 59% of the variance in white crossover voting, which is 7 percentage points larger than that for equation 2.

More detail is provided in Figure 2, a scatterplot between newspaper endorsements and black percentage registered voters, in which the endorsed candidates are distinguished from the others. As shown in the figure, overall the 11 black candidates with an endorsement from the *Times-Picayune* benefited from a higher level of white crossover voting than the other black candidates. Moreover, the black candidates with the newspaper endorsement generally had a higher level of white support in the black-dominant context than did the endorsed black candidates in the non-black-dominant contexts.

In the 29 biracial elections under investigation, six of the seven black incumbents were endorsed by the *Times-Picayune* in their respective elections. This suggests that there is a strong relationship between incumbency and endorsement. Based on Yule's Q , these two variables are highly

TABLE 4: Multiple Ordinary Least Squares Regression for White Crossover Voting (N = 81)

	<i>Equation 1</i>		<i>Equation 2</i>		<i>Equation 3</i>	
	b	Robust SE	b	Robust SE	b	Robust SE
Endorsement ^a	21.93	8.09**			20.49	35.78
Black incumbency	10.57	8.79	26.37	5.97***	-96.45	30.29**
Black % voters ^b	0.19	.13	0.18	0.12	-0.01	0.11
Black % candidates ^c	-4.16	7.36	-1.37	6.83	5.49	5.90
White incumbency ^d	2.90	2.75	3.11	2.89	1.03	3.20
Time ^e	-0.25	.49	-0.33	0.52	-0.08	0.51
Primary ^f	-2.89	4.08	-5.04	4.05	-5.37	3.21*
Mayoral	-7.28	2.41**	-3.44	2.95	-5.60	1.61***
Black % Voters × Black Incumbency					1.85	0.47***
Black % Voters × Endorsement					0.07	0.62
Intercept	2.91		4.35		9.07	
R ²	.58		.39		.67	

a. Black candidate endorsed by the local newspaper = 1, 0 otherwise.

b. The percentage of black voters in the black candidate's district.

c. The percentage of black candidates in the race.

d. Black candidate competed with a white incumbent = 1, 0 otherwise.

e. There were eight different election years. Thus, the value of time variable ranges from 1 to 8.

f. The election is a primary = 1, 0 otherwise.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

correlated (Yule's $Q = .98$; $p < .01$). It is therefore difficult to disentangle the separate effects of incumbency and endorsement on white crossover voting.

The data reveal that endorsement is very likely to be a better predictor of white crossover voting than is incumbency. For example, the only case that a black incumbent failed to receive the endorsement was Jim Singleton in the 1990 district B primary. Although the white crossover voting for Singleton in that election was 33.8, the highest among the four black candidates of that election, it was substantially lower than his own white crossover votes in the 1982 primary in that district (52.6), in which he was endorsed by the *Times-Picayune*.

The importance of endorsement is also reflected by a common characteristic for all three contexts: The highest level of white crossover voting within each context was received by a *nonincumbent* and yet an *endorsed* candidate.³ In short, the findings concerning hypotheses 3 and 4 not only indicate that the effect of black candidate strength on white crossover voting is conditional, dependent on context, but also show that newspaper endorsement appears to

be a better predictor of white crossover voting than black incumbency status, although the two variables are very highly associated.

Table 4 lists three more multiple regressions. Equation 1 regresses white crossover voting on both incumbency and endorsement while controlling six more independent variables. The whole model explains about 58% of the variance in the dependent variable. The regression coefficient for endorsement, again as hypothesized, is positive (21.93) and statistically significant. Black incumbency is not statistically significant, but this result is very likely due to the multicollinearity problem. As stated above, there is a very high level of association between endorsement and black incumbency. Indeed, when endorsement is dropped from the equation (equation 2), black incumbency becomes statistically significant. It should be noted, however, that *R*-squared dropped 19 percentage points to 39% after we eliminated endorsement from the model. This again indicates the importance of newspaper endorsement in explaining white crossover voting.⁴

In equations 1 and 2, five of the six controlling variables (the black percentage of registered voters, the black percentage of candidates, white incumbency, time of the election, and primary variables) are not statistically significant. According to equation 1, a black candidate in a mayoral race received a lower level of white crossover than did those in city council elections ($b = -7.28$). This same dummy variable measuring the difference between mayoral and city council elections, however, is no longer statistically significant in equation 2.

Equation 3 is used to test the conditional effects of newspaper endorsement and black incumbency. The previous analyses (Tables 2 and 3) have confirmed hypotheses 3 and 4, in that the positive impacts of black incumbency and newspaper endorsement on white crossover voting are indeed greater in the black-dominant context than those in which blacks are not dominant. But the measure of racial contexts in Tables 2 and 3 is a dichotomous one (i.e., the black percentage of registered voters in the election ≥ 55 , or not) rather than a continuous measure.⁵ In equation 3 of Table 4, therefore, the racial context is measured by the percentage of black voters in the election, a continuous variable. The two interactive terms testing the conditional effects of black incumbency and newspaper endorsement are included in the regression.

The *R*-squared is increased to 67%, an increase of 9 percentage points based on the equation without these interactive terms (see equation 1). This indicates the effectiveness of adding the conditional effects of black incumbency and newspaper endorsement. The regression coefficient for the conditional effect of black incumbency is positive and statistically significant (1.85), suggesting that the relationship between black incumbency and white

crossover is multiplicative rather than simply additive, even if the racial context is measured by a continuous variable.

The regression coefficient for the conditional effect of newspaper endorsement is also positive (.07) but not statistically significant. Again, this is very likely due to the high level of multicollinearity in the equation: The original variables (black incumbency and newspaper endorsement) are themselves highly intercorrelated, and consequently the assessment of particular interactive terms may be too risky (see Blalock 1979, 293). A simpler regression with only three independent variables (endorsement, the percentage of black voters in elections, and the interactive term between these two variables) indeed indicates that the interactive term is positive and statistically significant.⁶

DERACIALIZATION AND AMERICAN POLITICAL INCREMENTALISM

The U.S. census data have repeatedly shown the increases in minority populations across the country, especially in urban areas. What is the political implication of this demographic change on minority candidates? This study has examined 81 black candidates' white crossover voting in New Orleans's 29 biracial elections. Four hypotheses were derived from the general assumptions of the candidate-centered approach and other studies regarding the effects of racial context on white voting behavior. The findings do indicate that white crossover voting may be affected by the strength of black candidates, measured by incumbency status and newspaper endorsements. Furthermore, the relationships between black candidate strength and white crossover voting are conditional, dependent on racial contexts.

The reason the black incumbent advantage in attracting white support is greater in the black-dominant context than in the competitive context may be that whites realize that black incumbents are more likely to win reelection in the black-dominant context, given the importance of the racial makeup of an election unit. Therefore, whites in the black-dominant context may be more likely to make a strategic voting decision to get on the winning side in these elections.

The positive impact of newspaper endorsement on white crossover voting also exists in all racial contexts, although this positive effect is greater in the black-dominant context. Although this finding again indicates that whites are more likely to vote for a black candidate in the black-dominant context, it shows the importance of newspaper endorsement in influencing whites' decision to vote for a black candidate. The relatively larger effect of newspaper

endorsement on white crossover voting, compared to that of black incumbency, also confirms previous findings regarding the powerful influence of news media on American biracial elections (Terkildsen and Damore 1999; Reeves 1997).

Given the fact that African-Americans have been elected in most black-dominant elections (Persons 1993), to win biracial elections in non-black-dominant contexts, black candidates must receive media support. Perhaps newspaper endorsement of black candidates enhances the level of white crossover voting because it may “legitimate or bestow group and institutional approval” on the candidate endorsed (Lieske 1989, 153). It is also reasonable to argue that the endorsement of the white-controlled newspaper may reduce white voters’ “cost” of finding a friendly and viable black candidate.

In sum, this study has shown that the differences in white crossover voting in New Orleans during the past two decades are related to black candidates’ strength and racial contexts in which biracial elections take place. This finding indeed indicates the importance of contextual analysis in white voting research; it does not mean, however, that the traditional individual-level analysis of white voting behavior is in any sense not useful. To be sure, the findings of this study should be further tested by using available individual-level data.

With respect to the influential black threat hypothesis, which expects a negative relationship between black density and white crossover (Key 1949), the overall conditional relationship between white crossover voting and black candidate strength, discovered in this study, suggests that the increasing black population in urban areas has been beneficial to black incumbents in maintaining their white support (see Carsey 1995; Voss 1996; Liu 2001a, 2001b). More important, a deracialization strategy designed to attract white voters through the power of media was indeed effective. Many white voters in New Orleans had followed the *Times-Picayune* to make their crossover decision. This was particularly true when those white voters had lost their majority status in the city of New Orleans. Thus, the empirical evidence of this study also reveals a dilemma that future minority candidates will have to face: Although it is especially important for minority candidates to use the deracialization strategy to win white majority elections (Persons 1993), the deracialization strategy itself, nevertheless, is most effective when whites are not the majority any more.

This finding certainly reveals a limitation of the deracialization strategy in increasing African-American office holding: Although some black candidates may expect to receive a high level of support from whites, one may quickly realize that these black candidates are running in a black-dominant racial context, in which an African-American being elected is fairly certain.

Other black candidates, who really need the white crossover vote the most to win elections because they are running in a white-dominant or a white/black competitive context, may have to face the harsh reality that the use of the deracialization strategy can only be translated into a slow improvement in getting the white votes (which certainly is not enough for a black electoral victory). These two scenarios in the two different urban contexts are likely to be the dual-track development of deracialization in the years to come. Overall, they are consonant with the dominance of incrementalism in American politics.

NOTES

1. The election outcome data at the precinct level were provided by the Orleans Parish Board of Supervisors. The EZI software was downloaded from King's Web site at <http://Gking.harvard.edu>. The first stage of EZI estimates white turnout rates at both election unit and precinct levels. To do this, three variables at the precinct level are needed. They are the total number of registered voters in each precinct, the proportion of registered voters that is black in each precinct, and the proportion of registered voters that signed in to vote in each precinct. The second stage (i.e., EI2), which needs an additional variable (the proportion of votes received by a black candidate in each precinct), will produce estimates of the proportions of white and black voters who voted for this black candidate at the two geographic levels.

Although the EI approach has invited scholarly scrutiny (see, e.g., Freedman et al. 1998), many scholars have used real election data to test the ecological inference (EI) model and suggested that this new method can provide better estimates than previously available statistical procedures (Schuessler 1999; Palmquist 1999; Voss 1998). All estimates of this research were checked for potential aggregation bias, according to King's recommendation (King 1997, esp. 199-234). The results showed that King's basic model was robust enough that no extended models substantially changed the white crossover estimates and regression outcomes reported in this article (see Liu 2001b for a further verification study of the EI approach by using New Orleans data).

2. One may argue that our ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models do not constitute a random sample of 81 observations, and the observations that come from the same election are not independent of each other. We, therefore, need estimates of the standard errors that are robust to the fact that the error term is not identically distributed. All of the following tables provide the Huber/White robust standard errors. In addition, all the regression models were also tested by the clusters measuring the same district or mayoral elections (or separating primary elections from runoffs), and no substantial differences from those reported in the tables were found.

3. To be more specific, in the white-dominant context, Ernest Morial, as a nonincumbent, was endorsed by the *Times-Picayune* in the 1977 mayoral runoff election, and his white crossover voting in that runoff was 19.9 (15.4 percentage points higher than his white crossover votes in the respective primary election, in which he was not endorsed). In the competitive context, the highest level of white crossover voting was 42.1, received by Sidney Barthelemy in the 1986 mayoral primary. Again, Barthelemy was not an incumbent at the time of the election but was endorsed by the *Times-Picayune*. Evidently, the high level of white crossover in the 1986 primary, compared to other biracial elections in the competitive context, can be partly explained by

the effect of newspaper endorsements. In the black-dominant context, the highest level of white crossover voting was 56.8, received by Oliver Thomas in the 1994 district B primary. Thomas likewise was not an incumbent, and he was endorsed by the *Times-Picayune* in that election.

4. It is worth noting that caution should be exercised when one concludes from our findings that newspaper endorsement is more important than incumbency status. This is because of the limited number of cases and the high level of correlation between endorsement and incumbency in this study.

5. Classifying racial contexts into different categories and then relying on dichotomous variables to measure these categories has been frequently used in political science literature and civil rights-related court cases (for a thorough discussion of this practice, see Lublin 1997, especially chaps. 3 and 5; also see Grofman and Handley 1989). The strength of using dichotomous measures to measure racial contexts is that it allows researchers to catch threshold effects of black densities. It is reasonable to assume, for example, that white voters do not always know exactly the percentage of black voters in their electoral districts; white voters may know, however, that blacks may become a dominant force once the makeup of their electoral district reaches the 55% black level. Although our dichotomous measure indeed very well catches the threshold effect of the black density at about 55% level on white crossover, it is true that a dichotomous variable carries less information than a continuous variable statistically. We, therefore, further test our hypotheses by using the continuous variable to measure racial contexts in Table 4.

6. The equation is as follows:

$$Y (\text{white crossover}) = -.33 + .11(\text{blk}\%) - 3.16(\text{endorsed}) + .50(\text{blk}\% \times \text{endorsed})$$

$$t = 1.35 \qquad t = -0.19 \qquad t = 1.76 (p < .05, \text{one-tailed})$$

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