Diversity and Power: Selection Method and Its Impacts on State Executive Descriptive Representation

SAGE

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Abstract

This article explores diversity within top leadership positions in state governments, specifically, the role that position selection method plays in promoting the inclusion of racial and ethnic minorities into positions of power. We hypothesize that minorities will be more likely to serve in appointed positions as governors consider diversity in making appointments and less likely to serve in elected positions due to the additional hurdles for candidates of color. Using an original data set of state executive leaders from 2001 to 2017 from all 50 states, we find evidence that institutional design influences levels of diversity among state executive leaders. Racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to be appointed than elected to state executive leadership positions. In addition, we find that Democratic governors are more likely than Republican governors to appoint minorities. Ultimately, this evidence is important for understanding how institutional design can have consequences for descriptive representation, specifically for groups that have been historically excluded from political life.

Keywords

representation, race and politics, state government, appointments, elections

In 2011, Brenda Cassellius became the first person of color to serve as Minnesota Education Commissioner (Weber 2011). During her tenure, one of Cassellius' top priorities was to reduce disparities between white students and students of color; in fact, she is credited with leading efforts that increased the graduation rate of students of

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color and created a new school performance grading system aimed at closing the achievement gap (Collins 2018; The Free Press, Mankato, Minn. 2018). Similarly, in 2019, New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir Grewal, whose parents immigrated from India (Sullivan 2018), introduced new standards for how law enforcement should report and investigate incidents of bias, including expanding the number of protected classes (Kaulessar 2019).

Both of these policymaking efforts are examples of how having racial and ethnic minorities in positions of power within state government can lead to substantive representation for communities of color. However, it remains uncommon for minorities, like Cassellius and Grewal, to hold such state executive leadership positions. While recent years have been record-setting for diversifying Congress and state legislatures in terms of the number of women and minorities elected to office, people of color continue to be underrepresented at all levels of government. This underrepresentation is particularly prevalent in top-level state executive leadership positions, which possess abundant powers to shape and implement state policies and programs (Fox and Oxley 2003; Sanbonmatsu 2015). This article explores diversity within state government and the institutional structures in place that influence the inclusion of minorities into politics. In particular, we explore whether partisan elections or gubernatorial appointments are more associated with promoting racial and ethnic minorities into positions of power in state government.

Using an original data set of more than 1,200 state executive leaders from 2001 to 2017, we find evidence that institutional design is related to levels of descriptive representation among racial and ethnic minorities in these positions. Specifically, we find that minorities are more likely to serve when these positions are appointed opposed to elected. We also find that partisanship plays a role in this process, such that Democratic governors are more likely than Republican governors to appoint people of color to these positions. Ultimately, these findings expose that institutional design can have consequences for descriptive representation, which likely has downstream effects on which policies are prioritized and how programs are implemented.

Minority Representation in Politics

The descriptive representation literature explores how well those in government reflect the characteristics of the publics they serve (Pitkin 1967). Having a government that reflects its constituencies is presumed to best serve the public's policy desires as well as promote trust and establish legitimacy in government (Bradbury and Kellough 2007; Mansbridge 1999; Selden 1997; Tate 2001). Having a diverse political body produces different policy outputs, particularly in addressing issues and policies that disproportionately impact minority populations. This difference is visible in the voting records of minority legislators as well as their constituency service and district projects, in contrast to their white colleagues (Broockman 2013; Brown 2014; Butler and Broockman 2011; Grose 2011; Whitby and Krause 2001). In addition, a diverse legislative body can boost minority voting turnout and increase communication between public officials and their constituents (Gay 2001; Griffin and Keane 2006). When

racial and ethnic minorities serve in high-profile statewide offices, not only do they serve as role models for future generations, they can also bring other minorities into government through political appointments and staffing decisions (Jeffries 1999).

As the United States' population grows increasingly more diverse, racial and ethnic minority groups are nevertheless underrepresented in politics. The 116th Congress opened as the most diverse Congress to date. Minorities occupied 22% of its seats and in the House of Representatives, some racial and ethnic groups, mainly blacks and Native Americans, were on par with their share of the total population; however, on the whole Congress, particularly the Senate, remains unrepresentative of the general population (Bialik 2019; Cohen, Rundlett, and Wellemeyer 2019). Moreover, a 2016 report found minority representation is even lower at the state level, with only 14% of state legislators identifying as minorities (Lee 2016). This trend is exacerbated at the top levels of political leadership with only a handful of minorities to have ever served as governor (Sparks 2018). This is a trend mimicked in the business world, such that minorities are underrepresented in upper management and as well as the board rooms of the country's most lucrative companies (Chin 2010; Olson 2019).

Overall, the United States is characterized by racially polarized voting behavior which explains why minority candidates are most likely to come from majority–minority districts, as minority voters are the strongest supporters of minority candidates (Branton 2009; Casellas 2009; Grofman and Handley 1989; Marschall, Ruhil, and Shah 2010; Reeves 1997). One explanation as to why minority candidates continue to be underrepresented in elected office is that white voters are less likely to support minorities compared with white candidates (Bullock and Dunn 1999; Hajnal 2006; Jeffries and Wavro 2011). Indeed, past research finds that black voters are more supportive of black candidates than are white voters (Sigelman and Welch 1984), white candidates are more likely to be supported by white voters in Senate elections (Tokeshi, forthcoming), and in some cases, white voters are unwilling to support black candidates in statewide races (Jeffries 1999). Observational and experimental research finds white voters are less likely to vote for minorities because black and Latino candidates are stereotyped as more ideologically extreme and less competent than white candidates (McDermott 1998; Philpot and Walton 2007, Sigelman et al. 1995; Visalvanich 2017). Moreover, voters evaluate black candidates both more negatively and more harshly compared to white candidates (Berinsky et al. 2011; Terkildsen 1993). This disadvantage minority candidates have among white voters is particularly problematic for statewide office, where candidates typically have to appeal to a majority white voting base (Johnson, Oppenheimer, and Selin 2012; Sonenshein 1990). White voters are less likely to vote for black candidates, especially for offices they perceive as powerful (Williams 1990). Many African American candidates often find it difficult to appeal to traditional ethnic and liberal voters without alienating the large bloc of voters necessary to win a statewide race (Frederick and Jeffries 2009).

Comparable to the challenges minorities face in statewide office elections, evidence in the urban politics literature highlights a similar obstacle for minority candidates. Early research on the structure of city council elections and minorities found

that at-large elections, compared with single-member or ward elections, hinder the selection of racial and ethnic minorities because candidates have to appeal to a larger voting population that often includes more white voters (Davidson and Korbel 1981; Karnig and Welch 1982; Taebel 1978). However, over time, this trend has weakened, and at-large districts are now less detrimental to minority representation than they once were (Welch 1990).

The slow advancement of minorities into politics may also be explained through differences in candidate political ambition. Most of the political ambition literature has explored gender differences, finding that men are more likely to have considered running for public office than women (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2013; Fox and Lawless 2004; Lawless and Fox 2010). However, the limited research on race and political ambition is mixed. Some find blacks have lower political ambition than whites while others find no racial difference in political ambition (Fox and Lawless 2005; Shah 2015). From an intersectionality approach, women of color are less likely to consider running for office than their same-race male counterparts (Holman and Schneider 2018). In addition, candidates of color are much less likely to run in majority white districts, thus limiting the number of opportunities for the success of minority candidates (Shah, Scott, and Gonzalez Juenke 2019).

Selection Method

A number of scholars have explored how selection mechanisms impact the quality and diversity of those serving in government, most commonly exploring differences between elected and appointed individuals. Looking at the impact of selection method on bureaucrats, elected bureaucrats are more likely to promote policies that are congruent with public opinion, but appointed bureaucrats tend to be more accurate and evaluated higher for their work (Krause, Lewis, and Douglas 2006; Lewis 2007; Miller 2012). In addition, in the case of state supreme courts, elected courts are viewed by citizens as more legitimate than appointed ones (Woodson 2017).

Across various federal, state, and local positions, findings have been mostly supportive of the notion that appointments lead to increased representation of women and minorities in government, but a small subset of studies find that selection method has no influence on levels of descriptive representation. Much of this research focuses on state courts, such that appointments increase the diversity of judges more so than elected positions (Bratton and Spill 2002; Esterling and Andersen 1999; Graham 1990; Martin and Pyle 2002). However, this relationship between selection method and diversity may be conditional on the party of the governor making the appointments or the state's ideological leanings (Goelzhauser 2011; Holmes and Emrey 2006). In addition, this relationship may only be present in the early stages of diversifying a court, such as the first woman or minority to make it on the court (Bratton and Spill 2002). However, other work finds that selection method does not relate to more black state judges (Alozie 1988). Research beyond state courts finds selection method is associated with increased diversity for school boards, mayors, and lieutenant governors (Alexander 2011; Berkman 2005; Hennings and Urbatsch 2016). This article seeks to

expand on this literature to state executive leadership positions and the role of selection method in elevating minorities to positions of power in state government.

Theoretical Expectations

Having laid out the significance of descriptive representation in government, we turn to our theoretical expectations for the role of selection method in promoting diversity among state executive leaders. In making appointment decisions, governors are not unlike presidents filling positions in the federal government, and when presidents make cabinet appointments, they consider diversity among other things such as loyalty, competency, and abilities (Lewis 2012; Patterson and Pfiffner 2001). For example, President Bill Clinton was vocal about his goal for a demographically diverse executive branch (Weko 1995). However, it is likely not all governors are personally invested in promoting diversity in making their appointment decisions. But we still expect diversity to be an overarching consideration by most governors in making appointments as they face pressure and potential negative criticism from outside organizations, the media, and members of their political network to highlight diversity in their appointments.

This issue has, as of recent, become a campaign talking point for several gubernatorial candidates, promising to promote diversity through appointments in state government. For example, while campaigning for Ohio governor in 2018, Mike DeWine (R) promised a diverse cabinet, which in 2019 led to the appointment of one of the most diverse cabinets in state history, in which DeWine designated several women and African Americans to leadership positions (Borchardt 2019). In addition, when New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy (D) took office in 2018, he filled his cabinet with individuals he said reflect, "the rich diversity of backgrounds and experiences of New Jerseyans," including the first-ever Sikh to hold the position of state attorney general in American history (King 2017). In fact, Governor Murphy's appointments were even praised by the New Jersey Latino Task Force, which is a partnership between several organizations whose goal is to promote Latino representation in the administration and public boards and commissions (New Jersey Latino Task Force 2017).

Reversely, failing to appoint women or people of color may have consequences for governors, such as negative media coverage and ultimately electoral risks. For example, in 2017, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan received a bout of media attention critical of his failure to appoint more minorities to a school board which represented a notably diverse student population (Tooten 2017). Similarly, in 2018, the Florida State Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) criticized Governor Rick Scott and the Florida Supreme Court Judicial Nominating Commission for producing a slate of judicial candidates that did not reflect Florida's diversity and demanded the judicial nominating commission reconvene to fully consider black applicants (NAACP Florida State Conference 2018). Moreover, they called on then Governor-elect Ron DeSantis to make appointments to state agencies and boards that ensure minorities are represented at all levels of his administration and announced they would monitor his future appointments. While

some governors are personally invested in increasing diversity in state government, these examples reveal that even if governors are not personally committed to this goal, they are likely to consider the overall composition of their appointments to include historically underrepresented groups to avoid negative coverage.

In comparison to appointments, voters do not act in the same strategic fashion that governors may, such that voters cannot be expected to look at their ballot and strive for descriptive representation in the same way a governor can in making appointments. Even if voters are motivated by promoting diversity in government, they are limited by the candidates willing to run. Historically, minority candidates are less likely to run, especially in majority white districts (Shah, Scott, and Gonzalez Juenke 2019). In addition, voters, especially conservative voters, may be less likely to vote for minority candidates because they are perceived as being more liberal than white candidates (McDermott 1998; Sigelman et al. 1995). Furthermore, by the time of the general election, voters' choices are reduced even further. If minority candidates emerge in only one party's primary and fail to advance to the general election, a large segment of voters will never even have the chance to vote for greater diversity in government, even if they value descriptive representation. Finally, when minorities do run for office, they often have a tougher path to their party's nomination because their presence often attracts more competition in primary elections (Branton 2009). The combination of governors' decision-making process in making appointments and the obstacles in elections for minority candidates, leads to our first hypothesis.

> **Hypothesis 1:** Racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to serve in state executive leadership positions when they are appointed rather than elected.

While recent examples seem to support the theoretical explanation we just presented, it is worth considering the alternative, that selection method has no influence on the diversity of state executive branches. It could be that despite the potential for criticism from the media and organized interests, governors are not interested in promoting diversity or that they do not view failing to promote diversity as a serious electoral risk. Since many appointments take place at the beginning of a governor's term, it is possible that even if voters are displeased by a lack of diversity among appointments, the saliency of this issue will decline by the time a governor needs to seek reelection. Moreover, if a governor faces term limits, they may never have to face the electorate again. In comparison to Senate elections, gubernatorial elections typically receive more news coverage (Kahn 1995). This means that any individual piece of information voters have about a candidate, in this case whether a gubernatorial candidate is committed to or already has made diverse appointments, becomes less meaningful to the overall outcome of the election. However, compared with Senate elections, coverage of gubernatorial elections is more likely to be about issues, particularly social issues, than the horserace, which means there is a real chance a candidate's position on diversity comes up during the campaign. Ultimately, as the country continues to become more diverse, we believe that governors will have a harder time ignoring calls for a more diverse government.

Although we expect minorities to be better represented in appointed positions, this relationship is likely conditional on the characteristics of the governor making the appointment, specifically party differences. Minority groups, in particularly African Americans, are much more likely to identity with the Democratic Party (Dawson 1995; Zingher 2014). Therefore, minorities that are potential candidates for political appointment are more likely to engage in the same social and political circles of Democratic governors as compared with Republican governors.

In addition, differing party cultures may explain variations in the diversity of appointments. The Democratic Party of today is more closely aligned with promoting equal rights, whereas the political behavior of Republican voters is more likely to be motivated by racial resentment (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Setzler and Yanus 2018; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018). Furthermore, looking at party members and donors, those in the Democratic Party report being more motivated by descriptive representation concerns than Republicans (Crowder-Meyer and Cooperman 2018; Thomsen and Swers 2017). Because of these party differences, our second hypothesis is as follows.

Hypothesis 2: Democratic governors will be more likely than Republican governors to appoint racial and ethnic minorities to state executive leadership positions.

Data

To test our hypotheses, and more broadly our theory of how institutional design corresponds to levels of descriptive representation in state government, we collected original data on state executive leaders across all 50 states from 2001 to 2017.[1] Specifically, in the following analysis, we examine the selection of leaders to seven high-ranking, state executive leadership positions: commissioner of agriculture, attorney general, superintendent of education, insurance commissioner, secretary of state, treasurer, and chair of the public utilities commission. We selected these offices because they are the highest ranking leadership position within their respective state executive agency or department. In addition, out of all similar state executive leadership positions, these are the only seven positions that exist in all 50 states, where at least 10% of states elect their leaders and at least 10% of states appoint their leaders.

Figure 1 displays a map of the United States, on which the darkest states elect all seven positions and the lightest states appoint all seven positions. Most states fall between these two extremes and rely on both selection methods, depending on the office. When looking at what variables correlate with selection method, state partisanship does not predict selection method; however, we do find state political culture is related to selection method decisions (Elazar 1994). We find traditionalistic states are more likely to elect these positions while moralistic states are more likely to appoint (see online appendix for full model). In addition, we find that states in the Midwest and West are more likely to elect these positions than are Southern states, but Deep South states, as defined by Bullock and Rozell (2017), are more likely to elect. Overall, this contrast in selection method paired with our considerable time period gives us enough variation across both position and time to effectively evaluate our theory.
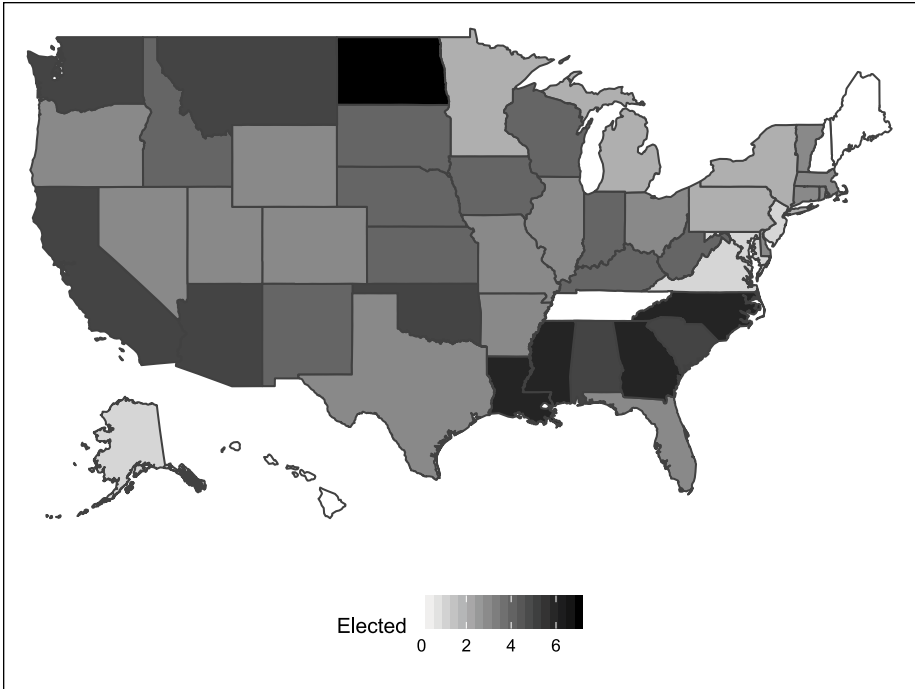
Figure 1. Number of elected positions by state.
Note. This map displays each state's selection method for the seven state executive leadership positions included in our data set. The darkest states elect all seven positions while the lightest states appoint all seven positions.

    Our dependent variable in this analysis is a binary measure of whether or not each officeholder is a racial or ethnic minority. To identify all of the individuals who served in each of these seven executive leadership positions across our time period and determine each officeholder's race or ethnicity, we used a variety of different sources including, but not limited to, Ballotpedia, Vote Smart, Wikipedia, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), official state government websites, obituaries, social media accounts, and online news stories.[2] Despite this, it is possible that we could have failed to identify someone as a minority officeholder if information was limited or unclear. To reduce the likelihood of this occurring, we used the *wru* package in R, which predicts an individual's race by using their surname and U.S. Census data and outputs the probability that an individual is black, Hispanic, Asian, or other nonwhite race (Imai and Khanna 2016), as a way of validating our data. After subjecting our complete list of officeholders to the *wru* package, we conducted additional research on all individuals whose name had at least a 30% probability of being black, Hispanic, Asian, or other nonwhite race. If we could find additional evidence to support the package's prediction, we changed our initial code. In total, we found six additional minority officeholders through our use of the *wru* package.

Ideally, we would want to run separate analyses for different racial and ethnic groups; however, due to the overall limited number of minorities serving in these positions, we combine leaders across racial and ethnic backgrounds to make this analysis feasible.

Our main independent variable of theoretical interest is a binary measure of whether each state leader was elected or appointed to office.[3] Each state's decision to either elect or appoint individuals to each office is fairly stable across our time frame.[4] By far the most common selection methods were either a partisan election or a gubernatorial appointment; however, in some cases, officeholders were also selected by either the state legislature or a state board or commission. Because this article is focused on the difference between elected positions and those appointed by a governor, positions filled by another means were excluded from the analysis. In addition, to test our second hypothesis, that Democratic governors, compared with Republican governors, are more likely to appoint minority leaders, we code the party of the governor who made the appointment or was in office at the time the leader came into office.[5]

Finally, we also collected data pertaining to several other factors that may influence the likelihood of a minority holding a state executive leadership position. First, we control for each officeholder's start year, with the expectation that diversity in government may have increased over time.[6] Second, we control for each officeholder's partisanship, or lack thereof if they hold a nonpartisan position, since we expect Democratic officeholders to be more diverse regardless of the office.[7] A majority, 79%, of appointed positions in our data set were labeled as nonpartisan. In addition, to account for the ideological leaning of each state, we control for each state's Democratic vote share in the most recent presidential election to the leader's state year. Similarly, we expect states with more diverse populations are more likely to have diverse state governments. As a result, we control for each state's nonwhite population according to the U.S. Census.[8] Finally, we use Elazar's (1994) measure of political culture to classify each state as being either traditionalistic, individualistic, or moralistic, since state political culture likely played a role in each state's underlying decisions about which selection method they prefer.

Descriptive Findings

We begin the discussion of our findings with a descriptive look at how and when minorities are most likely to be selected for state leadership positions. Overall, 114 racial or ethnic minorities served in one of our seven state executive leadership positions from 2001 to 2017, which accounts for about 9% of all officeholders during this time period. Figure 2 displays the percentage of all officeholders who were racial or ethnic minorities broken down by position. We find minorities are most likely to serve as secretary of state or chair of the public utilities commission, although, even in these positions, minorities comprise less than 13% of all officeholders. Racial and ethnic minorities are least likely to serve as commissioner of agriculture, where they make up less than 5% of all officeholders.

Figure 3, which displays the percentage of racial and ethnic minorities serving in state leadership positions broken down by party and selection method, provides some
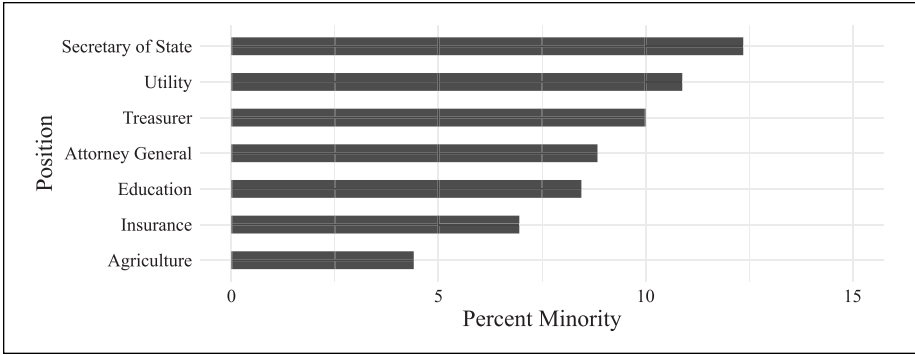
Figure 2. Minorities in state executive leadership positions, 2001–2017.
Note. This figure displays the percentage of racial and ethnic minorities in seven state executive leadership positions across all 50 states from 2001 to 2017.
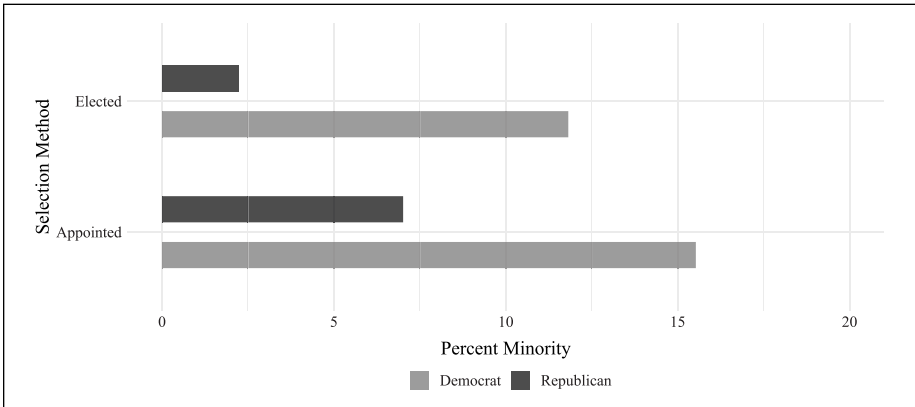
Figure 3. Minorities as state executive leaders by political party.
Note. This figure displays the percentage of racial and ethnic minorities in elected and appointed state executive leadership positions by the party of the officeholder or the party of the governor who appointed the officeholder. Typically, positions appointed by a governor are labeled nonpartisan, but there are some appointed officers that are partisan.

initial support for our theoretical expectations. Overall, racial minorities serving in these positions are more likely to be Democrats compared to Republicans. Broken down by selection method, we find initial support for Hypothesis 1, as minorities are more likely to serve in a state leadership position when they are appointed compared to elected in both parties.

Overall, this relationship persists when the data are aggregated. Figure 4 displays the results of a difference of means test examining the relationship between selection method and racial and ethnic minorities holding a state leadership position. We find minorities are significantly more likely to serve in appointed positions, 10.6%,
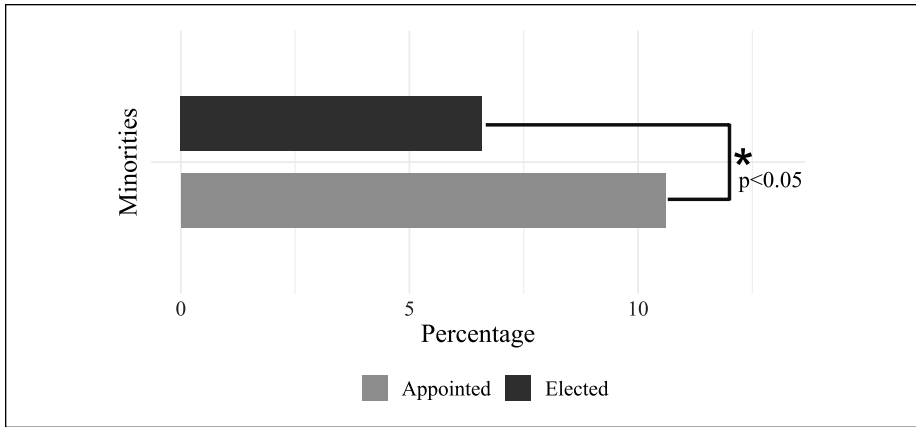
Figure 4. *T* test of minorities by selection method.

than in elected positions, 6.6% ($p < .05$). Collectively, the descriptive results support our theoretical expectations; however, it is likely that other factors, which have not been accounted for in our descriptive analysis, play a role in the selection of racial and ethnic minority state leaders. As a result, we now turn to a more systematic analysis of our theory.

Results

Because we have a binary dependent variable, whether or not each state leader is a racial or ethnic minority, we use a logit model to test our hypotheses with the standard errors clustered by state. Table 1 displays the results of four logit models, estimating the likelihood of having a minority officeholder by selection method, for which we find support for both of our hypotheses. In Table 1, Model 1 includes a variable for state political culture, and Model 2 is the same model with the addition of two interaction terms between selection method and the officeholder's party and the governor's party. In Model 3, rather than state political culture, we incorporate state fixed effects. In Model 4, we incorporate position fixed effects.

Across our various specifications of our models, we find that minorities are significantly more likely to serve in appointed positions compared with elected positions, consistent with our first hypothesis. However, when including state fixed effects, this finding is only significant at the 0.1 level. Second, we find that political party plays an important role in the selection of racial and ethnic minorities to state leadership positions. In support of Hypothesis 2, we find that Republican governors are significantly less likely than Democratic governors to appoint people of color to these positions. Although this finding is not present in our model that incorporates an interaction term between Republican governors and selection method. Another interesting finding in our model is that minorities in these positions are significantly

Table 1. Minorities in State Executive Leadership Positions.

|	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Appointed	0.97* (0.37)	1.01* (0.41)	0.79† (0.44)	0.86* (0.34)
Start year	0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.04 (0.03)	−0.00 (0.02)
Republican governor	−0.56* (0.27)	−0.16 (0.34)	−0.75* (0.29)	−0.60* (0.28)
Minority governor	−0.20 (0.36)	−0.21 (0.35)	−1.02 (0.84)	−0.30 (0.36)
(Ref=Democrat)				
Republican	−1.31* (0.41)	−1.71* (0.51)	−1.30* (0.43)	−1.33* (0.41)
Nonpartisan	−1.18* (0.43)	−0.58 (1.43)	−1.13† (0.58)	−0.84* (0.42)
State Democratic vote share	0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	−0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)
Nonwhite state population	0.06* (0.01)	0.06* (0.01)	−0.01 (0.05)	0.06* (0.01)
(Ref=Traditionalistic)				
Individualistic	0.23 (0.36)	0.24 (0.37)		0.28 (0.37)
Moralistic	−0.15 (0.36)	−0.18 (0.36)		−0.09 (0.36)
Appointed × Republican Governor		−0.70 (0.52)		
Appointed × Republican		0.89 (0.81)		
Appointed × Nonpartisan		−0.40 (1.36)		
State fixed effects			✓	
Position fixed effects				✓
Intercept	−6.49 (32.78)	−10.82 (33.60)	−85.27 (53.01)	−1.17 (34.69)
N	1,265	1,265	1,265	1,265
AIC	645.66	648.82	661.86	647.17
BIC	871.94	936.82	1,855.00	996.88
log L	−278.83	−268.41	−98.93	−255.59

Note. Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by state. AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.
†$p < .10$. *$p < .05$.

more likely to be Democrats or nonpartisan and are more likely to serve in states that have a higher nonwhite population.

    To get a better understanding of the magnitude of these results, Figure 5 displays the predicted probability of a person of color leader by selection method and political party. As seen in Figure 5, Republican minorities have less than a 7% chance of being selected to a state leadership position regardless of whether their selection occurs through an appointment or an election. In contrast, Democratic minorities have about a 13% probability of being elected and a 27% probability of being appointed. Overall, Table 1 reveals that both party and selection method play a significant role in the selection of racial or ethnic minorities to state leadership positions, and Figure 5 indicates that the combination of these factors goes a long way in explaining the likelihood of a state selecting minorities to these positions.

    To further evaluate Hypothesis 2, which predicts that Democratic governors are more likely to appoint people of color compared to Republican governors, we run
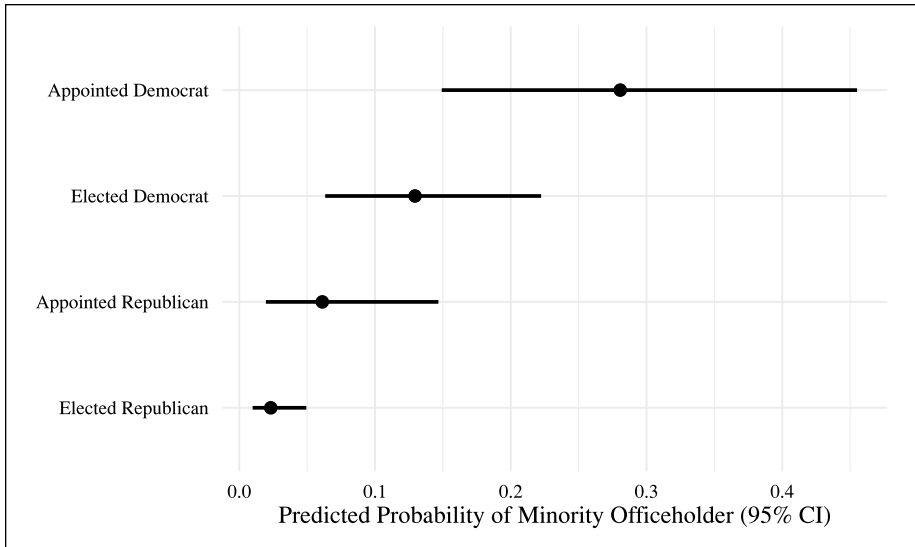
Figure 5. Predicted probability of minority officeholder.
Note. This figure displays the predicted probabilities of a minority officeholder by political party and selection method. In the case of a Democratic officeholder, the governor's party is also specified as Democratic and in the case of a Republican officeholder, the governor's party is also specified as Republican. All other variables are held as their mean or mode.

further analysis which subsets the data by selection method to just governor appointments. Table 2 displays the results of a logit model estimating the relationship between the presence of minority officeholders and the governor's political party. Once again, we find that Republican governors are less likely than Democratic governors to appoint racial or ethnic minorities to state executive leadership positions. In addition, we find minority state leaders are significantly more likely to be appointed in states with larger nonwhite populations. We do not find that more minorities have been appointed across time, nor do we find that minority governors appoint more minority leaders, although this may be due to the small number of minority governors in our data.

Table 3 displays the results of our final logit model, which examines the relationship between the presence of minority officeholders and their partisan affiliation among only leaders who were elected to their position. Similar to the aggregate model, we find that Republican minorities are less likely to be elected compared with Democratic minorities. In addition, we find elected minority state leaders are more common in states with larger nonwhite populations. While each officeholder's start year remains insignificant, meaning there appears to be little correlation between the diversity of state executive leaders and modern politics, a state's political culture seems to play a role in the election of more diverse state leaders. Specifically, racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to be elected to state leadership positions in individualistic states compared with traditionalistic states.

Table 2. Minorities Appointed to State Executive Leadership Positions.

	Minorities in office
Start year	0.02 (0.02)
Republican governor	−1.08* (0.29)
Minority governor	−0.35 (0.60)
Nonwhite state population	0.06* (0.01)
(Ref=Traditionalistic)	
Individualistic	−0.13 (0.32)
Moralistic	−0.39 (0.34)
Intercept	−34.19 (37.87)
N	764
AIC	451.31
BIC	581.19
log L	−197.66

Note. Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by state. AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.
†$p < .10$. *$p < .05$.

Table 3. Minorities Elected to State Executive Leadership Positions.

	Minorities in office
Start year	−0.05† (0.03)
(Ref=Democrat)	
Republican	−1.43* (0.62)
Nonpartisan	−0.46 (1.75)
State Democratic vote share	−0.01 (0.04)
Nonwhite state population	0.11* (0.02)
(Ref=Traditionalistic)	
Individualistic	1.90* (0.53)
Moralistic	0.21 (0.48)
Intercept	86.13 (53.01)
N	501
AIC	192.86
BIC	327.79
log L	−64.43

Note. Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by state. AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.
†$p < .10$. *$p < .05$.

Conclusion

This article set out to explore the representation of minorities in top-level state executive positions using an original data set of more than 1,200 officeholders in seven state

positions from 2001 to 2017. The evidence supports our theoretical expectations, such that both selection method and political party are important in understanding the advancement of minorities into positions of power in state government. We find that minorities are more likely to serve in leadership positions when they are appointed as opposed to elected. In addition, we find Democratic governors are more likely to appoint minorities than are Republican governors.

These findings are meaningful because diversity within these positions is influential on state politics as state executive leaders are critical players in the development and implementation of state policies and programs. This has become increasingly true in our modern era of heightened political polarization (Theriault 2008) as states push forward expansive policy agendas knowing the federal government is increasingly gridlocked (Pickerill and Bowling 2014). In addition, these state executive leadership positions often serve as a pipeline to higher office including running for governor and Congress. Examples of this include Senator Kamala Harris (D), who previously served as attorney general of California and Arizona Governor Doug Ducey (R), who once was state treasurer. This article highlights how consequences of institutional design, in this case whether a position is elected or appointed, can have long-term effects that impact the advancement of minorities into positions of power.

Future research should explore how governors make their appointments and what role descriptive representation concerns play in their decision-making process. In addition, the advancement of minorities into appointments could also be conditional on where governors look for quality candidates, whether that be from their own social circles or from recommendations from other groups, parties, or individuals. Finally, future work should explore what substantive impact minority executive officeholders have on which issues are priorities and policies pursued.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. Our data set does not include individuals who took office after May 2017. Some individuals held the same office more than once during our time period. In these instances, we only include the individual's first term in office.
2. Wherever possible, we relied on an explicit reference to the officeholder's race or ethnicity and avoided coding an officeholder's race based solely on a single source of information. The most commonly found references that indicated race or ethnicity came from biographies and news stories. For example, we found a news story that identified Connecticut State Treasurer Denise Nappier as the first African American women to be elected state treasurer in the United States (Keating 2018). In many cases, we were also able to find a photograph of each officeholder, but avoided using photographs as our sole source of coding race.
3. For observations in which, due to a vacancy, an individual was appointed by a governor to a traditionally elected position, these individuals were coded as appointed because this was how they originally came to serve in that position. In addition, many of these individuals chose to run in sequential elections; however, their appointed time in the position gave them experience and an incumbency advantage in future elections, which is especially valuable in these low-information elections.
4. However, the few examples of states switching selection method of a given position are reflected in our data.
5. There were too few third party or independent governors to run a meaningful analysis, so these governors were coded based on the party they had previously identified with.
6. In examining the tenures of state executive leaders, we find that number of people of color in these positions has not changed much over time. The number of minority officeholders in a given year in our data set ranges from 22 to 34, and the change over time does not consistently increase but rather fluctuates. Because there is little variation across time, we opt for a cross-sectional approach. However, this choice may be a limitation to understanding how this variation may change over time within selection mechanisms, and we encourage future research on the role of time in understanding the advancement of people of color into government leadership positions.
7. There were too few third party or independent officeholders to run a meaningful analysis, so they were coded as nonpartisan.
8. We also considered controlling for the percentage of nonwhite representatives in each state's legislature to account for a potential pool of qualified minority candidates in each state, but this measure presents several issues. First, counts of nonwhite state legislators are not readily available for our entire time periods. Second, even if data were available, the percentage of nonwhite legislators is highly correlated with the percentage of nonwhite state population; close to 0.95 for both Hispanic and black populations in each state using 2015 data from the National Conference on State Legislatures. Due to data availability and multicollinearity, we use the measure of nonwhite population. Theoretically, we argue this is an appropriate decision because serving in the state legislature does not necessarily qualify an individual to lead a state agency or department. For example, a school superintendent is likely viewed as more qualified to serve as education secretary than is a state legislator.

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