Voting Patterns by Race in Recent Mount Pleasant Township Elections

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I. Scope of Project and Summary Conclusions

Because the voting patterns of minority and white voters is relevant to a claim of minority vote dilution under the NY John Lewis Voting Rights Act, I was retained to conduct an analysis of voting patterns by race/ethnicity in recent Mount Pleasant Township elections. I analyzed all recent contested town elections using the standard, court-accepted statistical techniques for this type of inquiry. Based on my analysis, I have concluded that voting is racially/ethnically polarized: Hispanic voters and Non-Hispanic White voters consistently support different candidates and the candidates supported by non-Hispanic White voters usually prevail in Mount Pleasant elections. The following describes the data and statistical techniques I used to conduct the analysis, reports the estimates of the percentage of Hispanic and non-Hispanic voters that supported each of the candidates in the election contests I analyzed, and provides my conclusions regarding each of these election contests.

II. Analyzing Voting Patterns by Race/Ethnicity

An analysis of voting patterns by race/ethnicity is needed to determine if voting is racially polarized. The results of the analysis indicate whether the minority group is politically cohesive in support of its preferred candidates and whether White voters are voting sufficiently as a bloc to usually defeat the candidates preferred by minority voters. The voting patterns of White and minority voters must be estimated using statistical techniques because direct information regarding the race of the voters is not, of course, available on the ballots cast. At the table at the end of this report, I list estimates of the percentage of Hispanic and non-Hispanic voters supporting each of the candidates in the elections I analyzed.

Database To carry out an analysis of voting patterns by race, an aggregate level database must be constructed employing election precincts (referred to as election districts, or EDs, in New York) as the units of observation. Information relating to the demographic composition of these precincts and the results of recent elections in these precincts is collected, merged and

statistically analyzed to determine if there is a relationship between the demographic composition and support for specific candidates across the precincts.

In New York – a state that does not collect voter registration or turnout by race – voting age population as supplied by the decennial census is used to denote the demographic composition of the precincts. I obtained the racial/ethnic make-up of Mount Pleasant precincts from the New York State Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment (LATFOR) website.[1] The precinct level results for Mount Pleasant elections are reported on the Westchester County Board of Elections website in PDF format.[2] I manually entered this data into an excel table and matched with the precinct demographic information obtained from LATFOR.

Racial/Ethnic groups analyzed The racial/ethnic composition of Mount Pleasant, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, is:

Racial/Ethnic Group	**Percent of Total Population**
Non-Hispanic White	68.7
Hispanic	18.9
Black (single race)	5.2
Asian (single race)	4.6

Because the Black and Asian population is small, reliable estimates of voting patterns could only be derived for Hispanic and non-Hispanic White voters.

Standard Statistical Techniques Several statistical techniques have been developed over time to estimate vote choices by race/ethnicity. These techniques are briefly described in the appendix to this report. I used three standard statistical techniques to derive estimates of the percentage of Hispanic and non-Hispanic White voters supporting each of the candidates: ecological inference rxc (column labeled "EI rxc" in the summary table), King's EI (column labeled "EI 2x2" in the summary table), and ecological regression (column labeled "ER" in the

[1] https://www.latfor.state.ny.us/.

2 https://citizenparticipation.westchestergov.com/election-dates-and-calendars/enrollment-figures-and-election-results.

summary table). These are the statistical methods routinely accepted by the courts for analyzing voting patterns by race.

Elections examined I analyzed all recent Mount Pleasant contested general elections for township offices: supervisor, councilmember, and the only other township office that was recently contested, that of town justice in 2019. None of these elections included Hispanic candidates – Hispanic candidates have not competed for township office, at least in recent years.[3] The reason for going back in time only until 2015 was that the demographic data I have relates to the 2020 census. Earlier elections would require 2010 census data for all of the Mount Pleasant precincts.

III. Voting Patterns in Recent Mount Pleasant Elections

The summary table at the end of this report provides the estimates of the percentages of Hispanic and non-Hispanic White voters who voted for each of the candidates in the six township election contests analyzed. The following is a description of the voting patterns in each of these elections.

2021 Supervisor Two candidates competed for this office: Joseph Bonanno (Democrat) and Carl Fulgenzi (Republican). According to the EI rxc estimate, 62.9% of the non-Hispanic White voters supported Fulgenzi (the other two estimates indicate the percentage may have been higher). Hispanic voters strongly supported his opponent: according to the EI rxc estimate, 77.3% of Hispanic voters cast their votes for Bonanno. Fulgenzi won the elections with 54.9% of the vote.

2021 Councilmember Four candidates competed for the two council seats up for election: Democrats Francesca Hagadus-McHale and Evan Echenthal, and Republicans Laurie Rogers-Smalley and Thomas Sialiano. The percentage estimates reported in the summary table are the percentages of the total votes cast. White voters supported the two Republicans and Hispanic voters supported the two Democrats. The two Republicans won the seats.

2019 Town Justice Two candidates competed for this office: Elizabeth Smith (Democrat) and Robert Ponzini (Republican). According to the EI rxc estimate, 60.3% of the non-Hispanic White voters supported Ponzini. Hispanic voters strongly favored his opponent: according to the EI rxc estimate, 81.8% of Hispanic voters cast their votes for Smith. Ponzini won the election.

[3] The courts have indicated that elections that include minority candidates are more probative than contests in which all of the candidates are White because it is not sufficient for minority voters to be able to elect their candidates of choice only if these candidates are White.

2019 Councilmember Four candidates competed for the two seats up for election: Democrats Francesca Hagadus-McHale and Laura Divenere, and Republicans Danielle Zaino and Jerome Schulman. The percentage estimates reported in the summary table are the percentages of the total votes cast. White voters supported the two Republicans and Hispanic voters strongly supported the two Democrats. The two Republicans won the seats.

2018 Councilmember Two candidates competed for the vacated council seat: Democrat Francesca Hagadus-McHale and Republican Anthony Amiano. A slight majority of White voters supported the Republican and Hispanic voters strongly supported (84.5% according to the EI rxc estimate) the Democrat. In this election, Hagadus-McHale prevailed with 55.4% of the vote. The reason for the success of the Democrat was twofold: higher White support than usual for a Democratic candidate, and much higher turnout on the part of both Whites and Hispanics. (This election was held at the same time as the gubernatorial election.) As noted above, Hagadus-McHale lost her seat the following year despite being an incumbent.

2015 Councilmember Three candidates competed for the two council seats up for election in 2015: Democrat Wayne McPartland and Republicans Mark Rubeo and Nicholas Dipaolo. The percentage estimates reported in the summary table are the percentages of the total votes cast. White voters supported the two Republicans to a nearly equal degree while Hispanic voters strongly supported McPartland and if they cast their second vote, they divided these votes between the two Republicans. The two Republicans won the two seats.

IV. Conclusion

All six of the recent Mount Pleasant elections I analyzed were racially/ethnically polarized, with Hispanic and non-Hispanic voters consistently supporting different candidates. The candidates preferred by Hispanic voters won only one of the six polarized contests.

Summary Table of Racial Bloc Voting Analysis

Mount Pleasant Town Elections	Race	Party	Votes	Estimates of Voting Patterns by Race in Recent Statewide Elections							
				Non-Hispanic White Voters				Hispanic Voters			
				EI rxc	95% confidence interval	ER	EI 2x2	EI rxc	95% confidence interval	ER	EI 2x2
2021 General											
Supervisor											
Joseph Bonanno, Jr.	W	D	45.1	37.1	33.2, 42.0	32.3	33.7	77.3	61.9, 90.1	83.8	85.4
Carl Fulgenzi	W	R	**54.9**	62.9	58.0, 66.8	67.8	66.2	22.7	9.9, 38.1	15.9	14.4
turnout						*45.2*	*43.5*			*-3.7*	*3.5*
Councilmember											
Francesca Hagadus-McHale	W	D	22.5	18.8	15.7, 22.1	15.4	16.4	38.6	28.2, 49.4	44.1	48.2
Evan Echenthal	W	D	20.8	17.1	14.0, 20.0	14.4	15.4	35.3	25.2, 45.7	39.3	42.4
Laurie Rogers-Smalley	W	R, C	**28.9**	32.7	30.1, 34.9	35.5	34.3	13.6	6.5, 22.6	9.2	9.7
Thomas Sialiano	W	R, C	**27.8**	31.5	28.9, 33.7	34.6	33.6	12.5	5.7, 21.0	7.3	8.2
2019 General											
Town Justice											
Elizabeth Smith		D	48.2	39.7	35.8, 44.3	33.1	35.6	81.8	66.7, 93.4	89.9	87.7
Robert Ponzini	W	R, C, I, S	**51.8**	60.3	55.7, 64.2	66.7	64.5	18.2	6.6, 33.3	9.7	12.3
turnout						*36.6*	*35.8*			*0.7*	*5.8*
Councilmember											
Francesca Hagadus-McHale	W	D	24.1	20.3	16.9, 23.5	16.2	17.2	40.8	30.5, 51.4	46.7	52.5
Laura Divenere		D	23.1	18.4	15.1, 21.8	15.2	16.2	40.4	30.1, 50.7	46.2	51.3
Danielle Zaino	W	R, C, I	**26.2**	30.3	27.8, 32.3	34.0	32.7	9.8	4.2, 17.1	4.0	5.6
Jerome Schulman		R, C, I	**26.6**	31.0	28.6, 33.0	34.6	33.1	9.0	3.7, 16.3	3.2	5.0
2018 General											
Councilmember											
Francesca Hagadus-McHale	W	D	**55.4**	47.6	44.0, 51.8	38.5	43.3	84.5	72.9, 93.3	93.2	91.2
Anthony Amiano	W	R, C, I, R	44.6	52.4	48.2, 56.1	61.6	56.6	15.5	6.7, 27.1	6.4	8.9
turnout						*65.8*	*64.5*			*14.1*	*20.1*
2015 General											
Councilmember											
Wayne McPartland		D	24.0	19.5	16.5, 22.5	14.2	16.3	46.1	33.6, 58.9	62.2	59.5
Mark Rubeo		R, C, Re	**37.4**	39.7	35.8, 43.2	42.3	42.6	25.7	13.3, 39.5	17.3	17.3
Nicholas Dipaolo		R, C, Re	**38.7**	40.9	37.1, 44.6	43.4	43.6	28.2	15.6, 42.5	20.4	19.5

Appendix:

Standard Statistical Techniques for Analyzing Voting Pattern by Race/Ethnicity

The voting patterns of White and minority voters must be estimated using statistical techniques because direct information regarding the race of the voters is not, of course, available on the ballots cast. Using an aggregate level (precinct level) database that merges demographic information with election results, a statistical analysis is conducted to determine if there is a relationship between the demographic composition and support for specific candidates across the precincts.

Three standard statistical techniques have been developed over time to estimate vote choices by race: homogeneous precinct analysis, ecological regression, and ecological inference.[4] Two of these analytic procedures – homogeneous precinct analysis and ecological regression – were employed by the plaintiffs' expert in *Thornburg v. Gingles*,[5] have the benefit of the Supreme Court's approval in that case, and have been used in most subsequent voting rights cases. The third technique, ecological inference, was developed after *Gingles* was decided and was designed, in part, to address some of the disadvantages associated with ecological regression analysis. Ecological inference analysis has been introduced and accepted in numerous district court proceedings and is generally accepted as the most accurate method for estimating voting patterns by race.

Because there are no precincts with Hispanic voting age populations of at least 90% and only precinct in which the non-Hispanic White voting age population exceeds 90%, the statistical technique referred to as homogeneous precinct analysis could not be used.[6]

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[4] For a detailed explanation of homogeneous precinct analysis and ecological regression see Bernard Grofman, Lisa Handley and Richard Niemi, *Minority Representation and the Quest for Voting Equality* (Cambridge University Press, 1992). See Gary King, *A Solution to the Ecological Inference Problem* (Princeton University Press, 1997) for a more detailed explanation of ecological inference.

[5] 478 U.S. 30.

[6] *Homogeneous precinct* analysis is the simplest statistical technique for analyzing voting patterns by race. It involves comparing the percentage of votes received by each of the candidates in precincts that are racially or ethnically homogeneous. The general practice is to label a precinct as homogeneous if at least 90 percent of the voters or voting age population is composed of a single race. In fact, the homogeneous results reported are not estimates – they are the actual precinct results. However, most voters do not reside in homogeneous precincts and voters who do reside in homogeneous precincts may not be representative

Ecological regression (ER) uses information from all of the precincts in the jurisdiction, in this case Mount Pleasant township, to derive estimates of the voting behavior of minorities and Whites. If there is a strong linear relationship across precincts between the percentage of minorities (or Whites) and the percentage of votes cast for a given candidate, this relationship can be used to estimate the percentage of minority (or White) voters supporting the candidate.

Ecological inference (EI 2x2) was developed by Professor Gary King. This approach also uses information from all precincts but, unlike ecological regression, it does not rely on an assumption of linearity. Instead, it incorporates maximum likelihood statistics to produce estimates of voting patterns by race. In addition, it utilizes the method of bounds, which uses more of the available information from the precinct election returns than ecological regression.[7] Unlike ecological regression, which can produce percentage estimates of less than 0 or more than 100 percent, ecological inference was designed to produce only estimates that fall within the possible limits. However, EI does not guarantee that the estimates for all of the candidates add to 100 percent for each of the racial groups examined.

In conducting my analysis of voting patterns by race/ethnicity in recent elections in Mount Pleasant, I also used a more recently developed version of ecological inference, which I have labeled "EI RxC" in the summary table found at the end of this report. Unlike the other methods discussed, this approach permits the analysis of more than two groups simultaneously. More importantly, from the perspective of the data available to conduct the analysis in Mount Pleasant, the analysis can be used to take into account the differences in the turnout rates of the age-eligible Hispanic and non-Hispanic White population. In the summary table I list estimates for the two groups of interest, Hispanic voters and non-Hispanic White voters, but all voters (as well as non-voters) are taken into account in the statistical analyses. Another advantage of EI RxC is that it produces generally accepted confidence intervals for each of the reported

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of voters who live in more racially diverse precincts. For this reason, I refer to these percentages as estimates.

[7]The following is an example of how the method of bounds works: if a given precinct has 100 voters, of whom 75 are Hispanic and 25 are White, and the Hispanic candidate received 80 votes, then at least 55 of the Hispanic voters voted for the Hispanic candidate and at most all 75 did. (The method of bounds is less useful for calculating estimates for White voters, as anywhere between five of the White voters and all of the White voters could have voted for the Hispanic candidate.)

estimates.[8] I include the 95% confidence intervals for each of the EI RxC estimates listed in the summary table.

[8] The 95% confidence intervals reported in the summary table indicate that 95% of the simulated estimates produced via EI RxC fell within the range specified. The larger the confidence interval, the more uncertainty associated with the reported estimate. Factors that influence the size of the confidence interval include the number of precincts included in the analysis and the variation in the percentage of Hispanic and non-Hispanic White voters across the precincts in the area under investigation.