

RACE AND RACIAL ATTITUDES A DECADE AFTER THE 1992 LOS ANGELES RIOTS

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A decade after the 1992 Los Angeles riots, half of residents surveyed report they anticipate another riot. Pessimism concerning the prospect of future riots is associated with negative assessments of life in Los Angeles—most notably negative perceptions of racial issues in the city. Demographic attributes including income, educational attainment, and duration of residency in Los Angeles are also associated with expectations of future riots. Racial or ethnic identity, however, have no appreciable direct or mediating impact on expectations of future riots, a striking finding in light of the central place race occupies in social science research and public discourse.

Keywords: race; ethnicity; riots; Los Angeles; public opinion

On April 29, 1992, following the acquittal of four White police officers charged in the videotaped beating of African American motorist Rodney King and weeks after a Korean American shopkeeper received five years' probation in the shooting death of a Black teen, Los Angeles erupted in one of the most lethal civil disturbances in U.S. history. The riots had a profound impact on the perceptions and actions of locals and outsiders. Some subscribed to the view that the riots were a "display of justified social rage," (West 1993, 1) a population's "bitter and pained insistence on visibility"

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(Valle and Torres 2000, 9). Indeed, in the riot's aftermath, activists fought for and received increased civilian control of the police department and forged improved relations between the city's ethnic group leaders (Sonenshein 1993, 221-25; Regalado 1994). However, the events that left 50 dead, destroyed nearly \$1 billion in property, and cost 20,000 jobs caused Los Angeles to catapult ahead of other major cities "as the national poster child for urban dysfunction" (Kotkin 1997, 29). Heightened fear and distrust in the wake of the riots contributed to a spike in gun purchasing, passage of anti-immigrant and anti-affirmative action ballot initiatives, and an exodus of Whites from Los Angeles (Valle and Torres 2000; Allen and Turner 2002). As these consequences attest, the way people think and feel about a location as a place to live, work, and invest influences collective behavior.

A public opinion survey marking the 10th anniversary of the riots found a staggering 50% of Los Angeles residents believe similar riots are likely to occur within the next five years. That so many expect another riot does not make such an event more likely to occur. Nor does anticipating another riot make a resident more likely to engage in one. Perceptions of social stability may, however, impact where a resident chooses to live, how he or she relates to his neighbors, how he or she votes, and a host of other behaviors and actions. In short, mass public opinion can profoundly impact the social climate.

This article examines the attitudinal and demographic attributes of residents who share the expectation that additional riots are likely. Those anticipating future riots have negative perceptions of factors generally blamed for creating tinderbox conditions in 1992—poor ethnic relations, a fraying social fabric, and poor civic leadership. Significantly, the respondent's ethnicity has no appreciable direct or mediating impact on his or her expectations of future riots. This finding is robust—withstanding multivariate analysis that treats the respondent's ethnicity as an independent variable in combination with several other opinion variables. Rodney King, Latasha Harlins, and O. J. Simpson may have made Los Angeles a symbol throughout the United States of racial and ethnic discord during the 1990s, but this survey finding is consistent with recent scholarship suggesting that racial conflict in Los Angeles has been overstated by the media and other analysts (Valle and Torres 2000; Hunt 1997). Notably, although racial and ethnic identity does not influence expectations of riots, opinions concerning ethnic relations in Los Angeles and evaluations of African-American civic leaders do have a significant impact. Assessments of the city's general direction and about the impact of a poor economy are also related to expectations of future riots. Demographic characteristics such as educational attainment, income, and duration of residency in Los Angeles are also important (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: How Likely or Unlikely Is It That Riots Like Those in 1992 Will Occur in Los Angeles in the Next Five Years (in percentages)?

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>African-American</i>	<i>Latino</i>	<i>Asian</i>
Very likely	19	16	24	20	11
Somewhat likely	31	32	31	29	38
Somewhat unlikely	20	24	13	21	17
Very unlikely	21	19	21	22	29

The insignificance of racial and ethnic identity for gauging the prospect of future riots flies in the face of prevailing conceptions of race and ethnicity in social science research and public discourse. Recent scholarship, however, questions the “zero-sum picture of the great melodrama of ‘race relations’ in Los Angeles,” the orthodoxy portraying racial and ethnic groups as discrete, homogeneous, and at odds with one another (Valle and Torres 2000, 11). Reality may be more complex in ethnically heterogeneous contexts like Los Angeles, composed of large populations tracing their ancestries to regions across Latin America, Europe, and Asia as well as Africa and the Middle East (Allen and Turner 1997, 2000). In similarly diverse settings, it is possible that ethnic and racial identity may be less salient under normal circumstances (Hero 1998). Under the surface, ethnic interests may be pronounced and competitive, but a tenuous peace is maintained through the clear specification and neutral application of rules.¹ Cleavages based on social class or other factors may prove more salient in such contexts than ethnic or racial identity (Ong 1989; Ong and Valanzuela 1996; Pastor 1995; Valle and Torres 2000). Further research concerning how the level and type of ethnic diversity impacts local attitudes, politics, and public policy is warranted. However, the insignificance of racial and ethnic identity in the present study of public opinion is intriguing. A note regarding the survey methodology is in order before turning to the findings.

SURVEY AND ANALYSIS

During February and March 2002, interviews were conducted by telephone in English or Spanish with 1,600 randomly selected adult residents of the city of Los Angeles (Guerra and Marks 2002). Of the 1,600 respondents, 143 (8.9%) refused to hazard a guess about the likelihood of riots like the ones in 1992 occurring within the next five years. Eliminating those respondents left a sample of 1,457 people who expressed an opinion on the topic.

The dependent variable—the respondent’s assessment of the likelihood of riots—is categorical and takes on only four unique values: *very unlikely*, *somewhat unlikely*, *somewhat likely*, and *very likely*. Consequently, we used ordered probit analysis to test the strength of the relationship between a respondent’s attitudes and demographic profile and his or her opinion regarding the likelihood of more riots. Replication of the analyses using ordinary least squares regression yields no substantive differences in the significance or sign of any coefficients.² In combination with a postestimation analysis, the results of the probit analysis allows ready interpretation of the substantive impact of possible explanatory variables on the probability that a respondent believes a riot is likely to occur.

The academic consensus that emerged over the decade since the riots points to three interrelated conditions that created a tinderbox in which the acquittal of King’s assailants was merely a spark: interethnic discord heightened by dramatic demographic shifts, social polarization exacerbated by economic restructuring, and local and federal policy makers’ chronic neglect of low-income urban communities (Davis 1992; Keil 1998; Morrison and Lowry 1994; Pastor 1995; Petersilia and Abrahamse 1994; Soja 1996). These still-unfolding dynamics are part of the backdrop against which Angelenos formulate opinions. We therefore include four sets of independent variables in the analysis: (1) attitudes about racial and ethnic issues and the respondent’s ethnicity; (2) opinions relevant to social polarization and social capital in Los Angeles; (3) opinions toward Los Angeles civic leaders and institutions; and (4) demographic characteristics of the respondent including education, income, place of residence, and tenure in Los Angeles. Because the factors identified as underlying causes of the 1992 riots are interrelated, many of the independent variables overlap categories.³ In short, our categorization of independent variables is somewhat subjective, employed primarily for organizational purposes.

The first set of independent variables incorporated in the multivariate analysis includes the respondent’s ethnicity and responses to questions concerning racial issues. The first variable is a measure of the importance of improving ethnic relations in Los Angeles: *extremely important*, *very important*, *somewhat important*, or *not at all important*. The second variable measures the respondent’s opinion about whether progress toward improving race relations has been made since 1992. This variable is coded so that it represents whether the respondent believes no progress has been made. The third variable in this category taps whether the respondent considers the lack of an ethnic majority to be a good thing or a bad thing or whether the lack of a majority group makes no difference. This variable is coded to register

whether the respondent considers the lack of a single ethnic majority to be a bad thing for Los Angeles. The fourth variable measures whether the respondent believes immigrants are a benefit to Los Angeles because of their hard work or a burden because they use public services. This variable is coded to register whether the respondent views immigrants as a burden.⁴ This first category of independent variables also includes a measure of support for the reappointment of the city's African-American chief of police to a second term. Survey interviews were being conducted just as a headline-grabbing controversy was unfolding over the decision of the city's White mayor not to reappoint the chief to a second term, despite the fact that the mayor had won election against his Latino rival largely on the strength of African-American support. Because African-American civic leaders charged that the mayor's decision amounted to a betrayal of the Black community, this measure may serve as a proxy for African-Americans' perceptions of ethnic relations. Four dichotomous variables for ethnicity are also included in this first category of independent variables: Asian, Black, Latino, and White. Although Table 1 indicates that opinions about the likelihood of future riots were remarkably uniform across ethnic groups, interethnic differences may become apparent when we control for other independent variables. Taken together, this first set of variables attempts to isolate underlying racial and ethnic tension that may lead respondents to believe riots are probable in the future. We expect each variable in this first set to be positively related to expectations of riots occurring.

Our second set of independent variables reflects how social polarization and poor social capital influences expectations of riots. Taken as a whole, these attitudinal variables tap respondents' optimism or pessimism regarding the general state of the city. The first variable measures whether respondents strongly or somewhat agree or disagree that Los Angeles is moving in the right direction. We coded this variable to represent whether the respondent agrees that the city is moving in the wrong direction. The second variable measures whether respondents strongly or somewhat agree or disagree that neighborhood councils will improve the responsiveness of city government to neighborhood issues. This variable is coded to tap whether respondents are dubious that neighborhood councils will make government more responsive. Third, we consider whether respondents strongly or somewhat agree or disagree that the economic slowdown will harm Los Angeles. We code this variable so that it represents whether respondents are pessimistic that the poor economy will negatively impact the city. Fourth, we consider if respondents believe reducing crime in Los Angeles is very or somewhat important as opposed to very or somewhat unimportant. As with the first set of variables

concerning racial issues and ethnic identity, we expect this second set of measures concerning general pessimism about the Los Angeles social setting to be positively related to expectations of future riots.

The third set of independent variables taps attitudes toward civic leaders and institutions. First, our index of faith in institutions includes general impressions of the city council, city attorney, county board, police department, state government, and religious institutions. Respondents were asked to rate these institutions on a scale of 1 to 4 ranging from *very unfavorable* to *very favorable*. Based on the sum of respondents' rankings, we created an average faith in institutions index. Second, respondents were asked to provide their assessments of African-American, Asian, and Latino civic leaders. We code each assessment as a dummy variable taking on a value of 1 for a very or somewhat unfavorable rating or a value of 0 for a very or somewhat favorable rating. Third, in the wake of the Rodney King beating and revelations of police corruption in the department's Rampart division, we consider whether respondents believe the police department is doing a poor or very poor job. We expect to find negative perceptions of civic leaders and institutions to be positively associated with expectations of future riots.

The final set of independent variables includes demographic control variables: educational attainment, a categorical measure scaled from 1 to 8; income, categorical dummy variables for various income ranges; age, a categorical measure scaled from 1 to 6; gender, coded as 1 for female and 0 for male; and an indicator of residence in the San Fernando Valley, with valley residents coded as 1 and residents of other parts of the city coded as 0. The dummy variable for San Fernando Valley residence is included to ascertain if residents where a campaign to secede from Los Angeles was under way had significantly different expectations about future riots compared to residents of other parts of the city. Additionally, we include two measures of ties to the Los Angeles area: a dummy variable for homeownership status and a dummy variable for whether the respondent lived in Los Angeles during the 1992 riots. We have mixed expectations concerning the impact of these "community ties" variables. Previous polls have found homeowners to be more optimistic than renters about the direction of their communities (Guerra and Marks 2001), but homeowners may also be more wary of potential threats to their investment in real estate. For their part, residents who experienced the riots in 1992—and even the Watts riots of 1965—may be more fearful of additional riots. Then again, these residents may be less apt to cry wolf and predict additional riots unless they perceive the specific dangerous conditions that they experienced in the past.

CORRELATES OF PESSIMISM

To delve into the question of why so many respondents view riots as probable, we report five different estimates of expectations of future riots. Previous scholarship provides reason to expect all four sets of independent variables described above to have an important impact on respondents' expectations of future riots. However, the prominent place scholars have given to race and ethnicity as a major "American dilemma" (see Hero 1998) leads us to expect that the respondent's ethnicity and opinions regarding racial issues would be most significantly and robustly related to expectations of future riots. Surprised by insubstantial differences in expectations of future riots among ethnic groups (see Table 1), we wondered if a respondent's ethnicity, in combination with his or her opinions on various topics, might have a significant impact on their expectations of future riots. Table 2 presents the results of a basic model, and Table 3 includes the results of four models that incorporate interaction effects between a respondent's ethnicity and several of the attitudinal and demographic variables included in the basic model.

Ordered probit coefficients are not directly interpretable beyond sign and significance. To make the coefficients contained in Table 2 more readily interpretable, we calculate changes in predicted probabilities. Holding all other independent variables at their means, these estimates allow for a direct interpretation of the substantive impact of a particular independent variable on the probability of believing riots are likely to occur (see Long and Freese 2001; Long 1997). We report the average change in the likelihood of expecting riots that is associated with the independent variable and the predicted probability associated with moving the dependent variable from its minimum value to its maximum value (represented in Table 2 by "Min→Max" and recorded to the right of the ordered probit results).

The findings for our first set of variables indicate a strong relationship between attitudes on racial issues and expectations of riots but no relationship between the respondent's ethnicity and expectations of riots. Whites, African-Americans, Latinos, and Asians are indistinguishable in this regard. However, respondents who believe improving ethnic relations is a high priority, that no progress has been made on race relations since 1992, or that a lack of an ethnic majority is bad for the city are significantly more likely to report that Los Angeles is likely to face another riot within the next few years.

These opinions concerning racial issues have a substantial impact on expectations of future riots. Residents who believe improving ethnic rela-

TABLE 2: Basic Models Ordered Probit and Postestimation Analysis

	<i>Coefficient</i>	(SE)	<i>Average Change</i>	<i>Min→Max</i>
Racial and ethnic attitudes and identity				
Ethnic relations need to be improved	.0808	(.0386)**	.0480	.1409
No progress on race relations	.2409	(.0672)****	.0472	.1403
No majority population is bad	.3753	(.1074)****	.0715	.2180
Immigrants are a burden	.0426	(.0725)	.0084	.0248
Positive opinion of Chief Parks	.0005	(.0652)	.0001	.0003
Latino	-.1189	(.1854)	.0235	-.0693
African-American	-.0637	(.1979)	.0126	-.0371
Asian-American	-.2161	(.2131)	.0430	-.1254
White	-.0455	(.1867)	.0090	-.0265
Social polarization and social capital				
City moving in wrong direction	.1613	(.0721)**	.0317	.0940
Dubious about neighborhood councils	.1388	(.0792)*	.0273	.0809
Negative economic outlook	.1067	(.0377)***	.0633	.1861
City needs to reduce crime	.0680	(.0497)	.0406	.1186
Civic leaders and institutions				
Faith in civic institutions	-.0046	(.0185)	.0055	-.0162
Negative opinion of Latino leaders	.0341	(.1161)	.0067	.0199
Negative opinion of Black leaders	.2571	(.1133)**	.0498	.1497
Negative opinion of Asian leaders	.0379	(.1128)	.0075	.0221
Los Angeles Police Department is doing bad job	.0458	(.0444)	.0271	.0800
Demographic control variables				
Education	-.0371	(.0183)**	.0512	-.1511
Income less than \$40,000	-.0573	(.1131)	.0113	-.0334
Income \$40,001 to \$70,000	-.3153	(.1200)***	.0626	-.1828
Income \$100,001 to \$150,000	.0497	(.1595)	.0098	.0290
Income greater than \$150,001	-.1342	(.2050)	.0267	-.0780
Income data missing	-.2719	(.1195)**	.0540	-.1579
Age	-.0012	(.0212)	.0012	-.0035
Female	.0771	(.0626)	.0152	.0449
San Fernando Valley	-.0443	(.0808)	.0088	-.0258
Homeowner	-.0192	(.0693)	.0038	-.0112
Lived in L.A. in 1992	-.2254	(.0811)***	.0440	-.1313
Cut 1	-.3023	(.3415)		
Cut 2	.2977	(.3417)		
Cut 3	1.2811	(.3427)		

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

TABLE 3: Race/Ethnicity Interaction Models Ordered Probit

	White		Black		Latino		Asian	
	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)
Racial and ethnic attitudes and identity								
Ethnic relations need to be improved	.0999	(.0457)**	.0703	(.0408)*	.0353	(.0515)	.0827	(.0400)**
Race × Ethnic Relations	-.0665	(.0800)	.0805	(.1140)	.1003	(.0739)	-.0456	(.1389)
No progress on race relations	.2180	(.0801)**	.2194	(.0725)**	.3294	(.0921)**	.2343	(.0690)**
Race × No Progress	.0735	(.1439)	.1541	(.1904)	-.1898	(.1331)	.2058	(.2958)
No majority population is bad	.3724	(.1176)**	.4040	(.1179)**	.2837	(.1561)*	.4268	(.1119)**
Race × No Majority	.0474	(.2761)	-.1170	(.2792)	.1671	(.2118)	-.7376	(.4260)*
Immigrants are a burden	.0398	(.0729)	.0410	(.0731)	.0368	(.0730)	.0320	(.0729)
Positive opinion of Chief Parks	-.0023	(.0654)	.0028	(.0653)	.0010	(.0653)	.0021	(.0654)
Latino	-.1185	(.1856)	-.1200	(.1855)	-.3514	(.3787)	-.1236	(.1855)
African-American	-.0621	(.1982)	-.3822	(.5420)	-.0468	(.1988)	-.0658	(.1980)
Asian-American	-.2305	(.2138)	-.2115	(.2132)	-.2095	(.2138)	-.0524	(.7073)
White	.1483	(.3959)	-.0430	(.1868)	-.0396	(.1871)	-.0379	(.1867)
Social polarization and social capital								
City moving in wrong direction	.1588	(.0722)**	.1598	(.0721)**	.1668	(.0723)**	.1661	(.0723)**
Dubious about neighborhood councils	.1386	(.0794)*	.1376	(.0793)*	.1372	(.0795)*	.1252	(.0797)
Negative economic outlook	.1079	(.0377)**	.1059	(.0377)**	.1052	(.0378)**	.1031	(.0377)**
City needs to reduce crime	.0679	(.0499)	.0636	(.0498)	.0661	(.0498)	.0701	(.0498)
Civic leaders and institutions								
Faith in civic institutions	-.0051	(.0185)	-.0036	(.0186)	-.0044	(.0185)	-.0040	(.0185)
Negative opinion of Latino leaders	.0342	(.1163)	.0375	(.1164)	.0336	(.1162)	.0358	(.1164)

(continued)

TABLE 3: (continued)

	White		Black		Latino		Asian	
	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)
Negative opinion of Black leaders	.2966	(.1367)**	.2337	(.1186)**	.2504	(.1420)*	.2662	(.1156)**
Race × Black Leaders	-.1323	(.2031)	.1878	(.3493)	.0071	(.2021)	-.2644	(.3849)
Negative opinion of Asian leaders	.0413	(.1130)	.0412	(.1136)	.0494	(.1133)	.0529	(.1141)
Los Angeles Police Department is doing bad job	.0565	(.0499)	.0344	(.0480)	.0579	(.0631)	.0387	(.0456)
Race × Los Angeles Police Department	-.0626	(.1028)	.0820	(.1161)	-.0272	(.0850)	.0896	(.1921)
Demographic control variables								
Education	-.0350	(.0184)*	-.0373	(.0184)**	-.0375	(.0184)**	-.0373	(.0183)**
Income less than \$40,000	-.0592	(.1133)	-.0504	(.1133)	-.0639	(.1135)	-.0510	(.1134)
Income \$40,001 to \$70,000	-.3168	(.1204)**	-.3097	(.1202)**	-.3198	(.1205)**	-.3121	(.1202)**
Income \$100,001 to \$150,000	.0463	(.1606)	.0584	(.1599)	.0362	(.1602)	.0466	(.1596)
Income greater than \$150,001	-.1304	(.2060)	-.1312	(.2055)	-.1386	(.2060)	-.1374	(.2054)
Income data missing	-.2669	(.1200)**	-.2633	(.1198)**	-.2694	(.1200)**	-.2715	(.1197)**
Age	-.0021	(.0213)	.0001	(.0212)	-.0011	(.0214)	-.0010	(.0212)
Female	.0784	(.0629)	.0786	(.0628)	.0776	(.0628)	.0754	(.0628)
San Fernando Valley	-.0576	(.0818)	-.0488	(.0812)	-.0543	(.0812)	-.0513	(.0811)
Homeowner	-.0234	(.0695)	-.0165	(.0697)	-.0107	(.0695)	-.0210	(.0694)
Lived in L.A. in 1992	-.2748	(.0981)**	-.2057	(.0857)**	-.2471	(.1051)**	-.1905	(.0854)**
Race × Lived in L.A. in 1992	.1671	(.1659)	-.2043	(.2487)	.0454	(.1606)	-.2995	(.2514)
Cut 1	-.2662	(.3636)	-.3519	(.3467)	-.4130	(.3703)	-.2806	(.3441)
Cut 2	.3344	(.3639)	.2484	(.3468)	.1875	(.3705)	.3203	(.3443)
Cut 3	1.3188	(.3649)	1.2333	(.3477)	1.1729	(.3713)	1.3066	(.3453)

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

tions is a top priority or that no progress has been made on improving race relations since 1992 are 14% more likely to believe additional riots are likely. Those who fret about the lack of an ethnic majority in Los Angeles are 22% more likely to believe additional riots are likely. No relationship at all was found between attitudes towards immigrants⁵ and expectations of riots, despite the fact that 80% of Latinos arrested in the 1992 riots were recently arrived immigrants and despite a peak in anti-immigrant fervor in the mid-to-late 1990s (Valle and Torres 2000, 47, 55). Interestingly, support for re-appointing the city's then-police chief, an African-American, has no apparent relationship to expectations of future riots, although negative opinions of Black civic leaders in general is related to expectations of future riots (see below).

In sum, negative outlooks on racial issues are significantly and substantively related to pessimism concerning future riots. Ethnic or racial identity has no discernable impact on predictions of future riots.

Our second category includes a series of social polarization and social capital measures. Residents who believe Los Angeles is moving in the wrong direction and residents who doubt that neighborhood councils will make city government more responsive to neighborhood concerns are more likely to anticipate future riots. Respondents who are worried about the impact of a sluggish economy on Los Angeles are also significantly more likely to anticipate a future riot. Perceiving crime reduction as an important priority is positively related to anticipating future riots, but the relationship is not statistically significant.

Among this second set of variables, pessimism regarding the poor economy has the largest impact on the expectation of riots. Holding the other variables constant, a respondent who strongly agrees that a sluggish economy will harm Los Angeles is 18.6% more likely to anticipate another riot than a respondent who strongly disagrees that the economy will harm the city. Skepticism about neighborhood councils and negative perceptions of the direction of the city exert smaller impacts, although both attitudes are significantly related to believing riots are likely.

The third set of independent variables focuses on views of civic leaders and institutions. The first of these, our faith in institutions index, is not significantly related to expectations of riots. This finding is interesting because well-functioning governmental and civic institutions should mitigate the very conditions that could foment another riot. This third set of variables also includes an assessment of the police department's job performance. Despite a highly publicized corruption scandal involving the Rampart police division that came to light during the past decade, assessments of the police department have no impact on expectations of riots. Similarly, assessments of local

ethnic group leaders have no impact on expectations of future riots—with the exception of assessments of African-American civic leaders. Recall that these measures capture the degree to which respondents hold a negative view of the job performance of minority group leaders. Interestingly, holding a negative perception of the job performance of Latino and Asian leaders has no relationship to the expectation of riots, whereas those who give low marks to African-American leaders are significantly more likely to anticipate riots. Perhaps this relationship was driven by unusually high media coverage of Black civic leadership during the time the survey was conducted. Much of this media coverage was negative in context—featuring African-American civic leaders blasting the mayor's decision not to reappoint the Black chief of police and tearing up banner-sized facsimiles of checks from the mayor's office to African-American churches and other organizations. Possessing negative views of African-American leaders increases the probability that a respondent expects future riots by about 15%. None of the other civic leadership and institutions variables included in the model have a significant or substantial effect on predictions of additional riots, neither causing residents to expect more riots nor mitigating against that expectation.

Our fourth category of independent variables includes demographic controls. Those in the middle-class income range of \$40,000 to \$70,000 are less likely to anticipate another riot in Los Angeles. More highly educated respondents are also less likely to anticipate future riots. Interestingly, residents who lived in Los Angeles during the 1992 riots are significantly less likely to expect another riot, whereas residents who chose to relocate to Los Angeles since 1992 (and did not experience the previous riot firsthand) are more likely to expect additional riots. The influence of having moved to Los Angeles within the past 10 years amounts to a change of 13% in the expectation of a future riot, one of the most substantively important variables included in the model. The heightened media attention of the 1992 riots outside of Los Angeles may have provided a skewed image of the scope and context of this event. Because residents who moved to Los Angeles after the 1992 riots are unable to compare the social climate in 2002 at the time of the survey to that in 1992, they may be more apt to misjudge the likelihood of a future riot based on the media accounts to which they were exposed.

By contrast, residency in the San Fernando Valley makes no significant impact on expectations of riots. Notwithstanding the campaign unfolding in that area to break away from the rest of the city, San Fernando Valley respondents are no different from respondents in other parts of Los Angeles in their perception of the likelihood of riots. In addition, homeowners and renters are indistinguishable in their expectations of future riots—an important finding in a city with one of the lowest rates of homeownership in the United States.

The most intriguing result of this analysis is that although opinions and perceptions of racial issues have a significant impact, the respondent's ethnicity has no bearing on expectations of future riots. It is plausible that ethnicity plays a subtle role in driving expectations of riots, working in combination with other independent variables to condition expectations of riots. The evidence displayed in Table 3, however, shows no such indirect effect.

The results displayed in Table 3 verify the negligible effects of the respondent's ethnicity on his or her assessment of the likelihood of future riots. Four estimates are presented—one each for White, Black, Latino, and Asian interaction variables. The model reported in Table 2 has been reestimated, adding interaction variables for each ethnic group.⁶ The substantive results are largely consistent across the two types of models. The group-by-group interaction models are presented in Table 3 largely because they clarify the interpretation, they do not exhaust as many degrees of freedom, and they do not introduce additional colinearity into the model.

What is most striking about the results in Table 3 is that for each ethnic group, the respondent's ethnicity has no meaningful role in predicting expectations of riots, even in a mediating capacity. The insignificance of ethnicity holds true across nearly all the interactions and across nearly all four ethnic groups. All but one of the interaction terms fails to attain statistical significance. In large measure, the inclusion of the interaction terms does not change the relative importance of any of the other included variables in a meaningful way. The single exception is that those Asians who perceive the lack of a single ethnic majority in Los Angeles as problematic are significantly less likely to expect another riot. This result is anomalous and contrary to any of our expectations. With this sole exception, including interaction terms for ethnicity in the model does not alter our previous results: Individual ethnic identity plays an insignificant role in shaping expectations of additional riots. Thus, with the exception noted above, we found no significant difference in the expectation of additional riots among those Whites, African-Americans, Latinos, or Asians who believe ethnic relations need to be improved, who believe insufficient progress on race relations has been made, who believe the lack of an ethnic majority is bad for Los Angeles, who rate Black civic leaders negatively, or who believe the police department is doing a poor job. Furthermore, we interacted the respondent's ethnicity with his or her opinion about reappointing the city's Black police chief and with his or her opinion concerning whether immigrants are a burden to Los Angeles. Again, no significant results were found.

URBAN CONTEXT AND RACIAL IDENTITY

Many of the factors anticipated to be important in driving expectations of riots do in fact exert a positive and significant influence. These factors include negative assessments of racial issues and negative assessments of the city's social fabric. Less compelling were the variables included in our third category, which focus primarily on faith in institutions and evaluations of civic leaders and institutions. The insignificance of ethnic and racial identity in driving expectations of future riots remains our most surprising and intriguing finding.

Further research is warranted to examine the impact of racial and ethnic identity on public opinion, politics, and public policy in cities with a range of levels and types of diversity: ethnically homogeneous cities, ethnically heterogeneous cities, and ethnically bifurcated cities (Hero 1998). The research presented here suggests, at least in some urban settings, that racial and ethnic identity may be more peripheral than prevailing scholarship assumes and that instead, attitudes on racial and ethnic issues are better predictors of pessimism.

NOTES

1. Professor Martin Saiz of California State University, Northridge, offered this perspective in several discussions with the authors.

2. We also estimated the ordered probit models using maximum-likelihood multinomial logit in which each value of the dependent variable is estimated separately. For the "riots very likely" estimates (where the dependent variable = 3), the significance and signs of the coefficients are consistent with ordered probit model. These additional results are available from authors upon request.

3. For example, we classify our faith in institutions measure as an indicator of attitudes toward civic leadership and institutions, although it could reasonably be considered an indicator of accumulated social capital. Similarly, we classify support for the reappointment of the former African-American police chief as a racial attitude, but it could reasonably be viewed as a perception of civic leadership.

4. The incorporation of immigrants constitutes an ongoing controversy in Los Angeles. Although the sole focus of this article is to explain attitudes about future riots in Los Angeles, in other work, we examine attitudes toward immigrants and immigration.

5. Despite the prevailing belief that immigration is a wedge issue in California (Pantoja and Segura 2003), we do not find any evidence that it is a wedge issue in Los Angeles. In preliminary iterations of our models, the immigrant attitudes variable is never statistically significant, even when different control measures are included. Thus, we conclude that negative attitudes toward immigrants do not carry over into perceptions about the likelihood of a riot in Los Angeles. Instead, these negative attitudes may have an indirect effect by influencing perceptions about jobs and the economy.

6. Interacting the race dummy variables with each of the racial attitude variables, we conducted the analysis in two ways for each ethnic group—with all interactions included in a single model and with only one set of group interactions at a time. Specifically, the different ethnicity columns represent the probit regression models where the relevant ethnic group dummy variable was interacted with other independent variables.

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