IMMIGRATION, RACE, AND RIOT: THE 1992 LOS ANGELES UPRISING*

Albert Bergesen
University of Arizona

Max Herman
University of Arizona

We test the hypothesis that the 1992 Los Angeles race riot represents backlash violence in response to recent Latino and Asian immigration into African American neighborhoods. We propose a variant of ethnic competition theory that links residential ethnic succession with propensities for riot violence. We depart from previous research on riots by comparing census tracts rather than cities, and we find that, controlling for economic conditions and racial/ethnic composition, there is a significant association between ethnic succession in neighborhoods (Latino and Asian in-migration and black outmigration) and riot violence.

At 3:00 P.M. on April 29, 1992, the acquittal verdict of four white Los Angeles police officers charged with the beating of the African American motorist Rodney King was announced by a jury in Simi Valley, California (see Jacobs 1996). Almost immediately, crowds gathered in South Central Los Angeles to protest the verdict. By 4:15 P.M. there were reports of looting at the intersection of Florence Boulevard and Normandie Avenue, and by 5:45 there were reports of motorists being assaulted. At 8:15 P.M. the first fatality was reported, and in the next six days of rioting 2,383 people were injured, 8,000 were arrested, 51 were killed, and over 700 businesses were burned. Property damage was estimated at over 1 billion dollars (Webster 1992:23). The hardest hit areas were South Central Los Angeles and Koreatown. It was the largest outbreak of racial violence since the riots of the 1960s.

Previous explanations of the 1992 riot have been based on interpretations of employment, poverty, and immigration statistics (Baldassare 1994; Chang and Leong 1994; Gooding-Williams 1993; Hazen 1992; Morrison and Lowry 1994; Oliver, Johnson, and Farrell 1993), but these studies do not systematically test hypotheses purporting to explain the riot's underlying dynamics. In this paper we formally test a variant of ethnic competition theory (Olzak 1992) as an explanatory model of the L.A. riot. Previous empirical research has primarily used city-level aggregations of economic, political, and demographic data (Lieberson and Silverman 1965; Myers 1997; Olzak and Shanahan 1996; Olzak, Shanahan, and McEneaney 1996; Spilerman 1970, 1971, 1976). While such studies have made important contributions to understanding city-level differences in the frequency and severity of rioting, this high level of aggregation may not fully capture the ecological dynamics of group contact that have been hypothesized to underlie the L.A. riot (Davis 1993a, 1993b; Miles 1992; Oliver, Johnson, and Farrell 1993; Olzak et al. 1996). For example, research has shown that people tend to engage in riot activity close to where they live (Capeci and Wilkerson 1991; Porter and Dunn 1984; Webster 1992:134), making the estimation of economic and demographic characteristics of local neighborhoods central to any explanation of why and where rioting takes place. Therefore, we use census tracts rather than cities as our basic unit of analysis. Although the census tract is not a perfect approximation of the social construct of "neighborhood," it should provide a reasonable approximation of local conditions.

* Direct all correspondence to Albert Bergesen, Department of Sociology, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona 85721 (albert@u.arizona.edu).
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ETHNIC COMPETITION THEORY

Olzak and her colleagues have advanced a theory explaining race riots that emphasizes competition among ethnic groups over boundaries and identities rather than emphasizing simple economic conditions. Generalizing ecological ideas of Barth (1969) on niche overlap and resultant conflictual competition, they generate the counterintuitive hypothesis that desegregation heightens competition among ethnic groups, which in turn can result in ethnic violence that includes riots (Olzak 1992; Olzak and Shanahan 1996; Olzak et al. 1996). "In contrast to models emphasizing that segregation of ethnic and racial populations causes ethnic conflict, competition arguments hold that desegregation causes ethnic conflict. A core hypothesis . . . is that desegregation of labor markets intensifies ethnic competition, which in turn raises the rate of ethnic collective action." (Olzak 1992:3). Efforts by a dominant residential ethnic group to exclude in-migrants are also considered part of the competition process (Olzak et. al. 1996).

A recent analysis of riots from 1960 through 1993 that includes the 1992 L.A. riot proposes to "examine a new hypothesis—urban settings that experience increases in interracial contact (defined as increasing residential exposure of Blacks and Whites) will experience more unrest . . . " (Olzak et al. 1996:591). A backlash by whites against blacks migrating into their neighborhoods appears to explain the racial violence of the early twentieth century, such as the 1917 East St. Louis, 1919 Chicago, and 1921 Tulsa riots (Grimshaw 1960; Janowitz 1969; Lieberson 1980; Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1978). But increasing residential exposure of blacks and whites was not an issue in the 1992 Los Angeles riot, the 1980 Miami riot (Bergesen 1982; Portes and Stepick 1993), or in any of the riots that broke out during the 1960s.

Competition models may be misspecified when African Americans are considered the only minority population. Although African Americans are minorities at the national level and in many cities, they are not always minorities in the local neighborhood level. In theoretical models assuming society-wide processes, specifying blacks as minorities is the correct model specification. But for Barthian ethnic competition models in which the hypothesized dynamics operate at the neighborhood or census tract level, the correct specification—at least since the 1960s in most major U.S. cities—will have African Americans as the inner-city majority.

This assumption is particularly important for ethnic competition theory, as its central proposition hypothesizes exclusionary violence by dominant ethnic groups in reaction to the intrusion of in-migrating minorities. In this regard, South Central Los Angeles, the epicenter of the riot, is 60.4 percent black, and a correctly specified competition model should treat African Americans as the majority, not the minority, population. With African Americans now correctly identified as the inner-city majority, Mexican, Central American, and Korean immigrants constitute the relevant in-migrant minority. In such a correctly specified competition model, the hypothesis that "desegregation following initially high levels of segregation sparks racial tensions that lead to rioting" (Olzak et. al. 1996:592) fits the racial situation in Los Angeles. Note, however, that it isn't the desegregation of white neighborhoods, but the desegregation of black neighborhoods that is hypothesized to be associated with riot violence. The great demographic shift in Los Angeles during the decade preceding the 1992 riot involved an out-migration of blacks and an in-migration of Latinos/Asians. This produced a classic ethnic succession process, or what could be called the "desegregation" of black neighborhoods in South Central Los Angeles. In sum, desegregation may lead to ethnic violence, but the ethnic group whose neighborhood is being desegregated must be correctly identified: In 1992 it was the black neighborhoods of South Central Los Angeles.

Although economic competition supposedly results from desegregation (Olzak 1992; Olzak and Shanahan 1966; Olzak et. al. 1966), there is little evidence of economic competition among blacks, Latinos, and Koreans that could produce exclusionary violence such as a race riot. Espenshade and Goodis (1985), for instance, report that variation in the number of immigrants had no effect on unemployment rates for blacks across 247 SMSAs, and Bean, Lindsay, and

Taylor (1988) find only small effects of undocumented Mexican immigration on the average wage of black, white, and native Latinos in a study of 47 southwestern metropolitan areas. A study of relations between blacks and new immigrants concludes: "The case for displacement would have to rest on a finding that immigrants pushed African-Americans out of jobs that the latter once held; evidence of that sort, however, is hard to find" (Waldinger 1996:314). Several studies have examined the effects of immigration on wages and unemployment for blacks (Borjas 1990; Fix and Passel 1994; Lewis 1994; Simon 1989). A review of these studies concludes ". . . that variation in the number of immigrants produced little effect on either unemployment or wages of the native population as a whole" (Heer 1996:187). With regard to the question of black/Latino niche overlap and economic competition for jobs, Heer concludes, "[N]one of the studies reviewed so far provide evidence of harm to blacks in California due to high levels of immigration from Mexico" (Heer 1996:187). Similarly, Wilson concludes that there is not "the kind of interracial competition and conflict that has traditionally plagued the labor market . . . [such that] theories which associate labor-market conflicts with racial antagonisms have little application to the present period of modern industrial race relations" (Wilson 1978:16).

HYPER-ETHNIC SUCCESSION THEORY

We propose an ethnic competition model similar to Olzak's. Our formulation differs from Olzak's version, however, by acknowledging African Americans as the majority population when the neighborhood is the relevant level of analysis. We also propose that the key element is not so much labor market competition, but the arrival of new racial/ethnic immigrants into residential areas with a different racial/ethnic majority already established. In Los Angeles, this means the rapid in-migration of Latinos and Asians in the 1980s into neighborhoods that were predominantly African American. In such a situation, we hypothesize defensive backlash violence from African Americans in those neighborhoods in which the rate of in-migration by nonblack minorities is increasing. Our model differs from Olzak's in that we predict riot violence from rates of residential in-migration rather than from competition for housing or jobs. We argue that housing and job competition are secondary processes such that by the time a neighborhood has become desegregated enough to foster political and economic competition, the high rates of in-migration already will have had their effect.

What could be called hyper-ethnic succession, then, represents demographic situations in which a rapid in-migration of new ethnic groups alters the ethnic composition and produces resentment that fuels defensive backlash violence by a residential area's dominant racial/ethnic group. This hypothesis resembles those proposed in studies that find an association between prejudice and reactionary collective violence by groups displaced through rapid social change (Bergesen 1977, 1980; Hofstadter 1955; Olzak 1992; Tilly 1969, 1978) and the resistance of a dominant group to rising minorities (Blalock 1967; Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Quillian 1995; Vanneman and Pettigrew 1972).

A clear example of collective violence in reaction to such hyper-ethnic succession is the 1900–1920 wave of race riots that Janowitz (1969:393) called the "communal riot," which represented "an interracial clash, an ecologically based struggle at the boundaries of the expanding black neighborhoods."

> During the years immediately preceding its race riot each city experienced large increases in Negro population primarily because of the influx from the South. Between 1910 and 1917 the East St. Louis community grew from nearly 6,000 to perhaps as many as 13,000. In Chicago there were nearly 110,000 Negroes in 1920 compared to 44,000 a decade earlier. Detroit in 1940 had about 160,000 Negro residents, but three years later there were an estimated 220,100 Negroes. (Rudwick, as quoted in Wilson 1978:75)

The racial/ethnic groups engaged in such communal violence have changed since the 1900–1920 period, but we argue that the underlying sociological process remains the same. During the 1980s, immigration was at its highest since 1900–1910 as some 8.6 million immigrants entered the United States

(Webster 1992). In Los Angeles in the 1980s the relevant wave of immigrants came largely from Mexico, Central America, and Asia, and it infringed upon black residential areas. As of the 1990 census, there were more foreign-born residents in Los Angeles County than in any other SMSA (Heer 1996:185), and the ethnic composition of the city was rapidly changing. In 1980, Los Angeles was 28 percent Latino and 48 percent white, but by 1990 it was 40 percent Latino and only 37 percent white. Furthermore, during this same period the African American share of the city's population declined from 17 to 13 percent, and the Asian share grew from 7 to 13 percent (Webster 1992:36). The ethnic transformation of Los Angeles was underway, and as Morrison and Lowry (1994) note, "[T]he pattern of ethnic succession in this part of Los Angeles County reveals . . . potential underlying tensions between groups. . . . The black community of South Central Los Angeles may regard the incursion of Hispanics as 'threatening'" (p. 32). While this link between ethnic succession and riot violence has been suggested elsewhere (Baldassare 1994; Miles 1992; Oliver, Johnson, and Farrell 1993) it has not yet been formally tested.

TESTING HYPER-ETHNIC SUCCESSION THEORY

To test the hypothesis that hyper-ethnic succession leads to collective violence we gather data at the census-tract level on riot violence, ethnic population change, and economic conditions (to control for the competing hypothesis that poverty and economic deprivation are the causal factors). Our population consists of all census tracts in Los Angeles County. Along with citywide analyses, we more closely examine South Central Los Angeles, the contiguous city of Compton, and the region that encompasses the areas of Koreatown and Pico Union.[1] Together these areas account for 80 percent of the fatalities.

Dependent Variable

Indicators of *riot violence* can include arrests, injuries, property damage, and fatalities. Each has specific biases. For example, many arrests were for curfew violations, and as such these arrests may include persons who were not actual riot participants. It also has been suggested "that police and federal agencies used the time of civil unrest to round up and deport people who they believed to be undocumented (American Civil Liberties Union 1992:1), which may bias the percentage of Latinos arrested (Pastor 1993). Injured persons may choose not go to the hospital, or if the nearby hospital is full they may go to another hospital. Thus, injuries may be underreported and subject to selection bias. Property damage is also subject to selection bias, and estimates of damage costs may be inflated for insurance purposes.[2]

We focus primarily on *riot fatalities*, which as a measure of riot violence also has its limitations. Fatalities are relatively rare. Because most riot-related deaths in Los Angeles resulted from gunshot wounds, their perpetrators are usually unknown (Webster 1992). Yet for our purposes fatality data are less biased than other indicators: Although the number of riot deaths is small, their number is fairly accurate, specification of the neighborhood is likely to be accurate, and

[1] Within the city of Los Angeles these areas are defined as follows: South Central is bounded on the north by the Santa Monica Freeway, on the west by Van Ness Boulevard, on the south by Imperial Highway, and on the east by Central Avenue. Compton includes the city of Compton and parts of Lynwood and South Gate. Koreatown is bounded on the north by Sunset Boulevard, on the west by Crenshaw Boulevard, on the south by the Santa Monica Freeway, and on the east by Hoover Avenue. Pico Union is bounded on the north by Sunset Boulevard, on the west by Hoover Avenue, on the south by the Santa Monica Freeway, and on the east by the Harbor Freeway. Because South Central L.A./Compton and Koreatown/Pico Union are geographically contiguous and share demographic similarities, they are combined in some of the analyses. South Central L.A. and Compton are 60.4 and 54.2 percent black, respectively, whereas Koreatown and Pico Union are only 15.2 and 6.1 percent black. Koreatown and Pico Union are 19.7 and 16.1 percent Asian, respectively, and South Central and Compton are only 2.9 and 2.3 percent Asian, respectively.

[2] In a separate analysis, we plotted addresses of reported property damage on a Los Angeles census tract map shaded for racial/ethnic composition (see Figure 3). We acknowledge the assistance of Mike Ridland of Environmental Systems Resources Institute for providing data on the locations of reported property damage.

Table 1. Selected Population Characteristics of Different Regions of Los Angeles County, 1990

Characteristics	Region					
	Los Angeles County	South Central Los Angeles	Koreatown	Pico Union	Compton	Other Los Angeles County Areas
Percent black	11.7	60.4	15.2	6.1	54.2	7.7
Percent foreign-born	30.8	28.4	58.6	63.6	26.0	29.1
Percent Hispanic	34.1	35.0	49.0	65.8	41.2	32.5
Percent Asian	10.6	2.9	19.7	16.1	2.3	10.7
Percent white	58.6	10.9	36.6	33.1	12.9	64.1
Percent unemployed	7.6	13.4	10.7	11.0	15.9	6.8
Median household income (in 1990 dollars)	38,109	20,766	22,060	17,368	24,683	40,551
Number of riot fatalities	51	15	10	6	10	10

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990).

there is less bias in how data were gathered (less, for example, than police bias in arresting Latinos). We decided on riot fatalities as our measure because they are a clear and unambiguous indicator of serious racial violence. They also meet an important requirement for this ecological research—a fairly unambiguous and unbiased specification of where the violence occurred (i.e., the nearest street intersection where a body was found). We employ several statistical techniques, including Poisson regression, designed to model rare events.

Thus the dependent variable in this analysis is the presence or absence of a riot fatality in a Los Angeles census tract. The nearest street intersection for each of the 51 reported riot fatalities was identified from police reports (Webster 1992, app. 9-3:5; *Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 1992, p. A8). Using this information, we located these intersections on a map of census tracts for the Los Angeles– Long Beach SMSA. Census tracts were then coded according to whether they had a riot fatality (yes = 1; no = 0).[3] The majority of fatalities occurred at street intersections that were also the defining border of two or more census tracts. Because in these cases we could not be sure in which tract the fatality occurred, we assigned a 1 to each tract whose boundary was also the street intersection where a riot fatality occurred.

Independent Variables

The ethnic transition process has two parts: an established residential group is moving out and an immigrant group is moving in. Our empirical analysis to test our theoretical model required estimating the rates of Latino and Asian in-migration and African American out-migration. To do this we looked at the changing population of African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and the general census category of "foreign-born," for each census tract during the decade prior to the riot (1980–1990). For each tract we also compiled data on its racial/ethnic composition, the percent and proportion of the labor force unemployed, and the median household income in both 1980 and 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1980, 1990). Table 1 presents summary statistics for the neighborhoods included in the analysis.

Analysis

As a preliminary exploration of the ethnic succession hypothesis, we employ a difference-of-means test (t-test) that compares tracts with and without a fatality on each of our independent variables. We expect that tracts with a fatality will have higher rates of

[3] There are 1,637 census tracts in Los Angeles County, and 92 were coded as having a fatality. Of the 129 tracts in South Central L.A./Compton, 44 were coded as having a fatality, and of 99 tracts in Koreatown/Pico Union, 24 were coded as having a fatality.

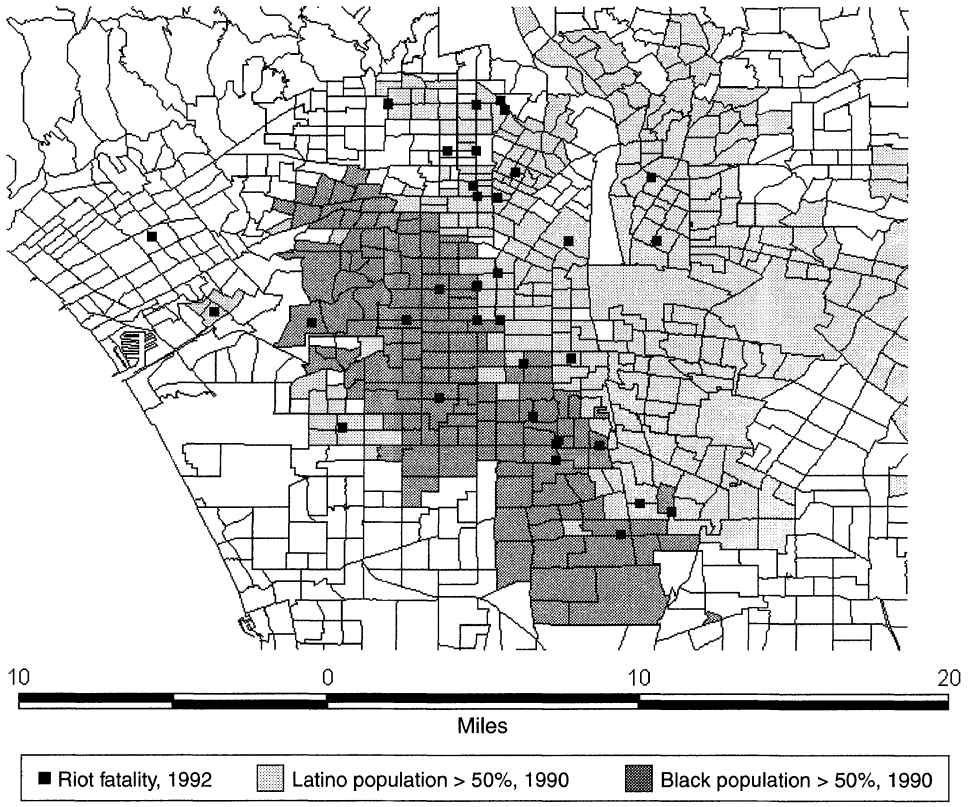

Figure 1. Riot Fatalities and Ethnic/Racial Composition: Los Angeles County Census Tracts, 1990

black out-migration and Latino and Asian in-migration then do tracts without a fatality. Next, we perform a logistic regression analysis on the likelihood of riot fatalities occurring in a tract while controlling for the effects of changes in ethnic in- and out-migration, economic deprivation, and relative size of the host and immigrant racial/ethnic populations.[4]

RESULTS

We begin with a visual representation of areas of ethnic succession and riot fatalities. Figure 1 plots the street locations of riot fatalities and census tracts that are at least 50 percent African American or at least 50 percent Latino.[5] The lighter shaded tracts on the right-hand side of Figure 1 represent more heavily Latino neighborhoods, such as East Los Angeles; the darker shaded tracts on the left-hand side represent more heavily African American neighborhoods. Most of the dots representing riot fatalities cluster along the border between the more heavily African American and Latino census tracts.

Figure 2 presents another perspective. If we imagine a Venn diagram of two circles, with one being heavily Latino and the other heavily African American, the overlap area will be the zone that has a high proportion of both Latinos and African Americans. This could be considered a "contact zone," or what has been referred to in earlier riots as a "contested area" (Grimshaw 1960). Figure 2 plots fatalities on a map where the shaded census tracts contain at least 40 percent African Americans and at least 40 percent Latinos. This "contact zone" has the largest

[4] Because riot deaths are rare events, we also ran our logistic models with Poisson regression. Results were comparable to those of the logistic regression analysis.

[5] Asian Americans account for only 3.4 percent of the population in South Central Los Angeles, so their presence is not indicated on these maps.

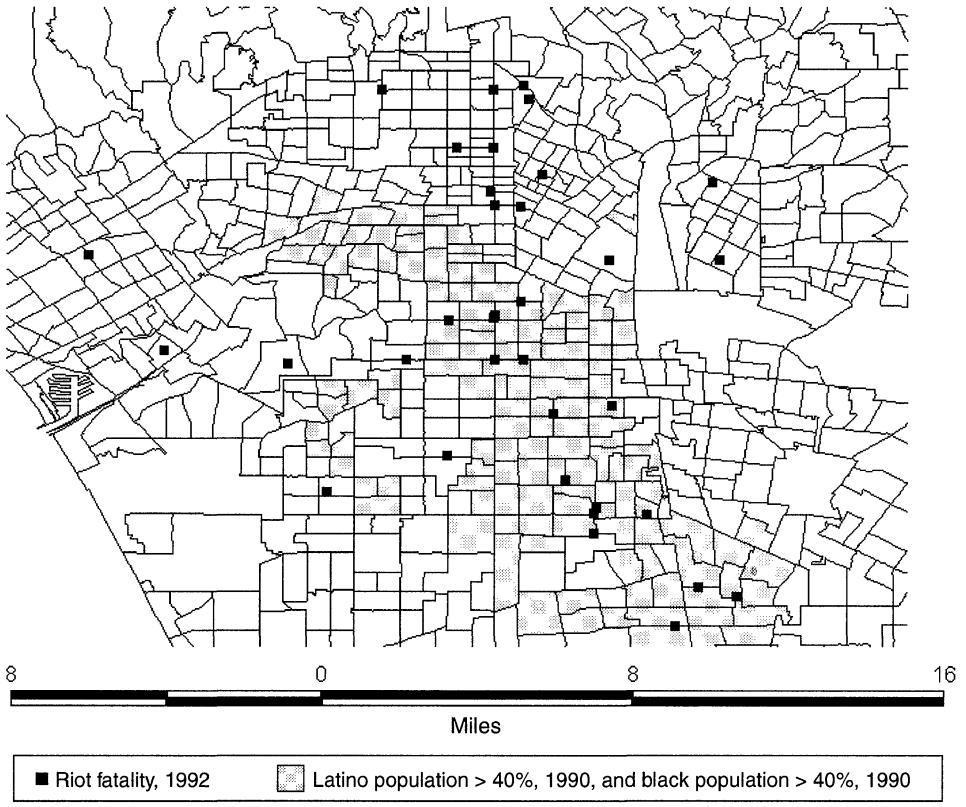

Figure 2. Riot Fatalities in Areas of Ethnic/Racial Overlap: Los Angeles County Census Tracts, 1990

cluster of riot fatalities: The rest of the fatalities are scattered around Los Angeles, except for a smaller cluster in the Koreatown/Pico Union area (just north of the shaded area in Figure 2).

Finally, Figure 3 displays the relationship between mixed ethnic composition and property damage in the 1992 L.A. riot. The shaded areas again represent tracts that are at least 40 percent African American and 40 percent Latino—the zone where the two populations overlap. The dots represent addresses of buildings that sustained property damage.[6] Figure 3 shows that the preponderance of property damage occurred in the shaded overlap zone. Riot fatalities and property damage, then, were not concentrated in areas that were overwhelmingly African American. This suggests that rioting is not a simple function of segregation; rather, violence occurs in areas of mixed racial/ethnic composition.

Difference-of-Means Test

The hyper-ethnic succession hypothesis argues that backlash violence is more likely to occur in areas where rates of in- and out-migration are high. To examine this, we statistically compare rates of in- and out-migration for those census tracts that had a fatality with those that did not have a fatality. If the hyper-ethnic succession hypothesis is supported, those tracts with fatalities should have significantly higher rates of in- and out-migration. Table 2 presents data that support this hypothesis. For Los Angeles census tracts with fatalities, the mean increase in Latino and Asian population between 1980 and 1990 is significantly greater than the increase for tracts without fatalities. Similarly, Los Angeles County tracts with fatalities

[6] Reported by the Civil Disorder Damage Survey and compiled by the City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, revised October 23, 1992. Data file obtained from Mike Ridland of Environmental Systems Resources Institute, Inc.

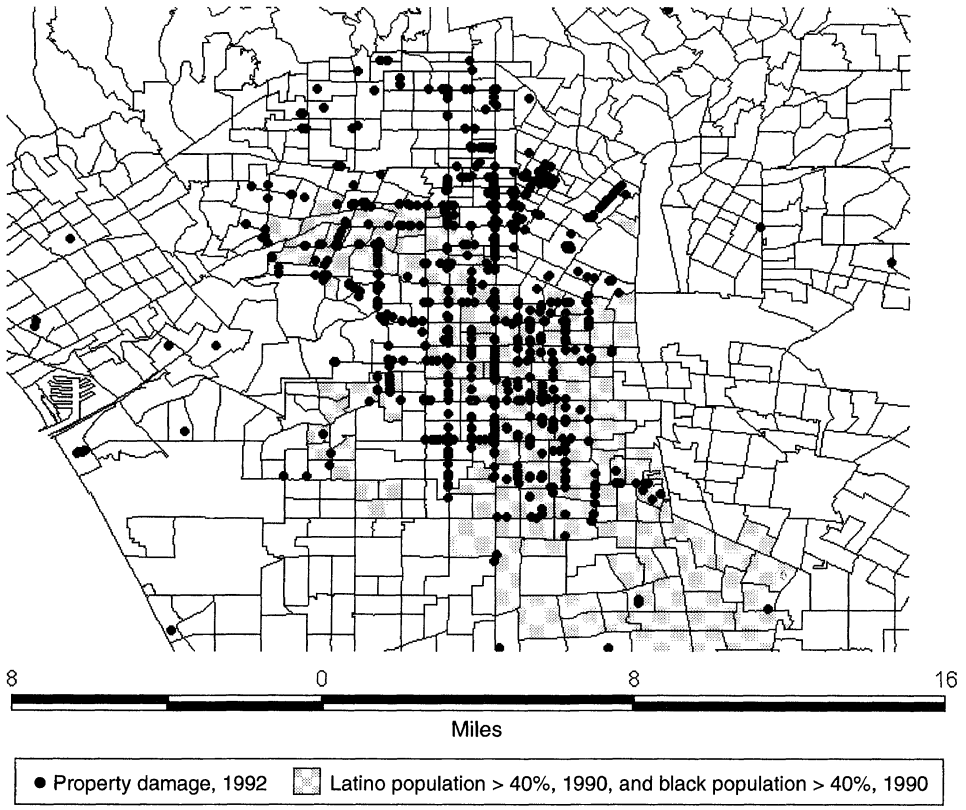

Figure 3. Reported Riot Property Damage in Areas of Ethnic/Racial Overlap: Los Angeles County Census Tracts, 1990

have a significantly higher rate of black out-migration in this period than do tracts with no riot fatalities. In sum, tracts with riot fatalities have higher rates of ethnic succession than do tracts with no fatalities.

Examining the two clusters of violence shown in Figure 2 emphasizes the same significant relationship of higher rates of Latino in-migration and black out-migration for the South Central Los Angeles/Compton tracts with fatalities compared to tracts in this area with no fatalities. Rates of Asian in-migration into South Central L.A./Compton, though, are not significantly associated with fatalities, perhaps because the area is only 1 percent Asian—there was not enough Asian in-migration to generate backlash violence. For tracts harboring the second cluster of fatalities, Koreatown/Pico Union (which has a much smaller black population than South Central L.A./Compton), tracts with fatalities do not differ significantly from tracts with no fatalities in terms of rates of Latino and Asian in-migration or African American out-migration.

Logistic Regression Analysis

The previous analysis was conducted without control variables. The significant differences observed between tracts with and without fatalities could disappear after we control for the relative sizes of the black, Latino, and Asian populations and for the level of economic deprivation. Table 3 presents results of a logistic regression analysis in which we enter variables for unemployment and median household income along with the ethnic composition variables. In this analysis, the census category "foreign-born" serves as a general indicator of immigrant population. For Los Angeles County (columns 1 and 2) Table 3 shows a significant relationship between fatalities and the out-migration of blacks and the in-migration of foreign-born, while controlling for changes

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Census Tracts with and without a Riot Fatality, by Region: Los Angeles County, 1980 and 1990

Characteristic	Los Angeles County		South Central L.A./ Compton		Koreatown/ Pico Union		Other Areas	
	Tracts with a Fatality	Tracts with No Fatality	Tracts with a Fatality	Tracts with No Fatality	Tracts with a Fatality	Tracts with No Fatality	Tracts with a Fatality	Tracts with No Fatality
Percent Change, 1980–1990								
Black	–11.7 †††	–1.2	–21.1 ††	–13.6	–2.0	–3.1	–4.1 †	.0
Foreign-born	13.7 †††	8.8	16.5 ††	11.8	11.7	10.3	10.6	8.7
Latino/Hispanic	17.8 †††	7.5	23.9 †††	17.3	13.2	11.5	11.2	6.7
Asian	1.9 †	4.8	–.1	.4	3.4	3.5	5.2	4.0
White	–4.6	–10.5	.5	–2.1	–13.7	–9.6	–4.8 †	–11.0
Mean Percent, 1990								
Black	31.5 †††	10.5	55.7	58.2	6.6	14.0	12.1	7.7
Foreign-born	44.2 †††	30.0	30.7 †	25.4	58.2	66.7	46.6 †††	28.8
Latino/Hispanic	53.6 †††	33.0	43.9 †	35.0	52.8	60.0	64.7 †††	31.9
Asian	8.3 †	10.7	1.1 †	3.4	21.2	17.6	8.5	10.7
White	26.0 †††	60.5	10.2	12.9	36.5	35.1	44.6 †††	64.5
Mean household income (in 1990 dollars)	21,800 †††	39,080	19,958	24,134	19,343	20,722	26,527 †††	40,791
Percent unemployed	13.6 †††	7.3	16.6 †	13.6	10.4	10.9	11.1 †††	6.7
Number of census tracts	92	1,501	44	85	24	75	24	1,397

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1980, 1990).

†$p < .05$ ††$p < .01$ †††$p < .001$ (t-tests for difference between means)

in income, unemployment, and the relative sizes of the black and foreign-born populations. This important finding runs counter to Spilerman's (1970, 1971) well-known finding of an association between the size of the black population and the frequency/severity of rioting. Although Spilerman compared cities, we compare census tracts. Both, however, are defined areas in which riot violence occurred. More important, in the 1960s riots the principal correlate of racial violence was the size of the black population, but in this 1992 riot the correlate is a declining black population, even when a number of control variables are added to the equation.[7] This suggests a re-thinking of the generalizability of the 1960s model of racial violence.

We now conduct a logistic regression analysis for the epicenter of the riot, South Central L.A./Compton. Table 3 (columns 3 and 4) shows that the succession variables—change in proportion black and change in proportion foreign-born—remain significant after adding the control variables for income, unemployment, and the relative sizes of the black and foreign-born populations. In South Central L.A./Compton, the control variables for economic deprivation and relative sizes of the black and foreign-born populations are no longer significant. These findings suggest that the ethnic transition hypothesis is strongly supported in the neighborhoods of

[7] Blalock's (1967) power/threat hypothesis suggests a curvilinear relationship between the size of the minority population and violence. In separate analyses, we found no curvilinear effect for either the percent black or percent Latino and the presence of riot fatalities.

Table 3. Logistic Regression of Riot Fatalities on Change in Racial/Ethnic Composition and Economic Characteristics, by Region: Los Angeles County 1990 Census Tracts

	Los Angeles County		South Central L.A./ Compton		Koreatown/ Pico Union	
Independent Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Racial/Ethnic Composition						
Change in proportion black, 1980–1990	–3.904** (1.031)	—	–6.617** (2.200)	—	–7.797 (9.108)	—
Change in proportion foreign-born, 1980–1990	—	2.625* (1.325)	—	7.122* (3.186)	—	3.036 (3.655)
Proportion black, 1990	.948 (.505)	—	.454 (1.068)	—	–9.384 (5.409)	—
Proportion foreign-born, 1990	—	1.927*** (.674)	—	.692 (1.760)	—	5.171* (2.439)
Economic Characteristics						
Change in proportion unemployed, 1980–1990	–.862 (2.534)	–.601 (2.709)	.893 (3.445)	1.365 (3.495)	–6.268 (6.881)	–8.886 (6.625)
Change in median household income, 1980–1990 (in $1,000s) [a]	–.150*** (.024)	–.170*** (.025)	.004 (.049)	.002 (.049)	.010 (.025)	.024 (.029)
Constant	1.075** (.351)	–1.542** (.493)	–2.290* (1.066)	–2.029* (.862)	–.140 (.621)	–5.029* (2.098)
Chi-square	140.207***	122.905***	12.217*	9.975*	10.183*	9.806**
Degrees of freedom	4	4	4	4	4	4
Number of census tracts	1,591	1,591	129	129	97	97

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1980, 1990).

[a] Estimates and standard errors shown for change in median household income are multiplied times 1,000.

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

South Central Los Angeles and the city of Compton. For the Koreatown/Pico Union area (columns 5 and 6) results show that only proportion foreign-born is significantly associated with fatalities.

Rates of Racial/Ethnic Change

The hypothesis linking hyper-ethnic succession with riot violence suggests it is not just the changing proportion of racial/ethnic groups, but the *rate of change in relative group sizes* that triggers racial violence. Table 4 enters variables for the rate of change in the proportion of black and foreign-born residents from 1980 to 1990 along with the control variables. For Los Angeles County column 1 shows a statistically significant negative association between the rate of change in proportion black and riot fatalities: The more rapid the decline in the black population, the more likely are fatalities. Again, this is the opposite of Spilerman's (1970, 1971) finding for the 1960s riots of a significant association between the size of the black population and riot violence. Column 2 of Table 4 shows a significantly positive association in Los Angeles County between rate of change in the foreign-born population and fatalities: The more rapid the in-migration the more likely are fatalities. Both of these findings remain statistically significant when control variables for economic deprivation and the relative size of the black and foreign-born populations are in the equation.

We repeated this analysis for South Central L.A./Compton (columns 3 and 4). The rate of

Table 4. Logistic Regression of Riot Fatalities on Rate of Change in Racial/Ethnic Composition and Economic Characteristics, by Region: Los Angeles County 1990 Census Tracts

	Los Angeles County		South Central L.A./ Compton		Koreatown/ Pico Union	
Independent Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Racial/Ethnic Composition						
Rate of change in proportion Black, 1980–1990	–7.066** (1.680)	—	–8.547** (2.78)	—	–.699 (.565)	—
Rate of change in proportion foreign-born, 1980–1990	—	.358** (.102)	—	.167* (.100)	—	–.126 (.976)
Proportion black, 1990	.971* (.490)	—	3.751* (1.74)	—	–6.476 (3.559)	—
Proportion foreign-born, 1990	—	3.208** (.741)	—	3.321 (1.546)	—	4.832 (2.573)
Economic Characteristics						
Change in proportion unemployed, 1980–1990	–.812 (2.526)	–1.116 (2.756)	.971 (3.465)	.164 (3.439)	–.594 (6.821)	–8.940 (6.666)
Change in median household income, 1980–1990 (in $1,000s) [a]	–.150** (.024)	–.150*** (.026)	–.014 (.052)	–.006* (.048)	–.010 (.036)	–.031 (.045)
Constant	–2.081* (.699)	–2.294** (.569)	–5.248** (1.899)	–1.995* (.867)	–.301 (.492)	–4.236* (2.087)
Chi-square	144.075	135.509**	14.709**	8.469	11.201*	9.083
Degrees of freedom	4	4	4	4	4	4
Number of census tracts	1,591	1,591	129	129	97	97

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1980, 1990).

[a] Estimates and standard errors shown for rate of change in median household income are multiplied times 1,000.

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ (two-tailed tests)

decline of the black population and the rate of increase in the foreign-born population is significantly associated with fatalities, controlling for economic deprivation and the relative sizes of the black and foreign-born populations. These relationships are not significant for Koreatown/Pico Union.

These results support our hypothesis linking changing rates of in- and out-migration with fatalities in Los Angeles. The analysis for the Koreatown/Pico Union neighborhoods, though, did not show the same association. Hayes-Bautista, Hayes-Bautista, and Schink (1993) and Davis (1993a, 1993b) suggest that while the rioting in South Central L.A./Compton is associated with rates of ethnic succession, the rioting in Koreatown/Pico Union may represent opportunistic looting that occurred after the riot had begun in South Central L.A. and then spread northward. The marginally significant association between percent foreign-born and fatalities in Koreatown/Pico Union may indicate the presence of poor Salvadoran immigrants who, along with others, engaged in extensive looting once the riot began (Morrison and Lowry 1994:29). In this regard, the largest group of immigrants into Koreatown/Pico Union are ethnically similar to the residentially dominant ethnic group (i.e., Latino immigrants are moving into neighborhoods already dominated by Latinos). This may produce a conflict between new and established immigrant groups of the same ethnicity (Miles 1992), thus, along with black/Latino/Korean tensions, there also may be tensions

Table 5. Logistic Regression of Riot Fatalities on Interethnic Contact, Racial/Ethnic Composition, and Economic Characteristics, by Region: Los Angeles County 1990 Census Tracts

	Los Angeles County		South Central L.A./ Compton		Koreatown/ Pico Union	
Independent Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Racial/Ethnic Composition						
Interethnic contact measure[a]	7.936*	8.003**	14.506	15.782**	7.817	1.775
	(3.173)	(2.724)	(7.572)	(5.677)	(11.487)	(6.175)
Proportion black, 1990	3.981**	4.764**	5.622	5.905*	–2.673	–1.230
	(1.143)	(.955)	(7.443)	(3.338)	(3.281)	(3.182)
Proportion Mexican, 1990[b]	2.298	—	4.747	—	–3.732	—
	(1.252)		(8.314)		(4.289)	
Proportion non-Mexican Hispanic, 1990[c]	7.288**	—	10.352	—	4.523	—
	(1.649)		(7.490)		(3.508)	
Proportion Asian, 1990	3.284*	—	–10.406	—	.853	—
	(1.589)		(15.706)		(2.819)	
Proportion foreign-born, 1990	—	6.775**	—	8.822*	—	3.419
		(1.501)		(5.141)		(3.263)
Economic Characteristics						
Proportion unemployed, 1990	4.243	4.317	3.103	4.237	–7.746	–7.934
	(3.036)	(3.016)	(4.475)	(4.662)	(9.357)	(8.745)
Median household income, 1990 (in $1,000s)[d]	–.02	–.009	.02	.015	–.004	.006
	(.02)	(.02)	(.05)	(.049)	(.035)	(.033)
Constant	–6.277**	–7.436**	–9.307	–9.878*	–1.514	–2.648
	(1.434)	(1.468)	(7.695)	(4.654)	(2.292)	(2.590)
–2 log–likelihood	216.773**	215.101**	23.599**	22.456**	12.066	6.383
Degrees of freedom	7	5	7	5	7	5
Number of tracts	1,589	1,589	123	123	97	97

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1980, 1990).

[a] Black, Mexican, other Hispanic, Asian.

[b] Spanish-speaking persons of Mexican heritage.

[c] Spanish-speaking persons not of Mexican heritage.

[d] Estimates and standard errors shown for median household income are multiplied times 1,000.

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ (two-tailed tests)

between previous and current waves of Latino immigrants, particularly between recent arrivals from Central America and earlier arriving Mexican immigrants.[8]

To test for such intra-ethnic tension as an alternative hypothesis for the violence in Koreatown/Pico Union, we created a general indicator of interethnic contact by multiplying the population proportions of the two largest ethnic groups for each census tract. This measure reaches its peak when each group accounts for 50 percent of a tract's population. As the two ethnic groups both approach 50 percent of the tract population, there should be more conflict over residential space and neighborhood ethnic identity, and thus a greater chance for violence (Blalock 1967; Olzak et al. 1996). The groups included in this variable are African Americans, Mexicans, non-Mexican His-

[8] Hayes-Bautista et al. (1993) examined this issue and found little to support the idea that such intra-ethnic tension leads to rioting.

panics (largely Central Americans), and Asians.

Table 5 examines Blalock's hypothesis of ethnic conflict when ethnic groups share equally in the census tract population. There is no significant association between fatalities and the interethnic contact variable for tracts in Koreatown/Pico Union. The unemployment and household income variables also do not have a significant effect. Thus, both the economic deprivation and the intra-ethnic succession hypotheses are not supported in this region of Los Angeles.

The riot violence in Koreatown/Pico Union may represent a spillover or diffusion of the collective violence (Pitcher, Hamblin, and Miller 1978) that began the previous day in South Central L.A. Normandie and Vermont Avenues flow directly north from South Central L.A. into Koreatown, and the riot moved up these corridors. Some data suggest that many of those rioting in Koreatown were from South Central L.A. (Webster 1992, app. 8-15 to 8-17). For example, arrest records show, that only 37 percent of those arrested in the police bureau that includes Koreatown actually lived there and that 35 percent actually lived in the south and central police bureaus. In contrast, among those arrested in the south and central police bureaus, two-thirds were residents of the area and only 5 percent were from the police bureau that includes Koreatown. Thus it appears that rioters from South Central L.A. had moved up Vermont and Normandie Avenues into Koreatown and were arrested there, whereas most of those arrested in the south and central bureaus resided there.

DISCUSSION

We have shown that for Los Angeles County as a whole, changing percentages of blacks and immigrants in the decade prior to the 1992 Los Angeles riot are significantly associated with riot fatalities, controlling for the relative sizes of these groups and for measures of economic deprivation. This relationship also holds for the epicenter of the riot—South Central Los Angeles and the city of Compton—but not for the neighborhoods of Koreatown and Pico Union. These findings add support to the growing literature linking ethnic group boundaries, identities, and competition to racial prejudice and conflict (Olzak 1992; Olzak et al. 1996; Quillian 1995). However, these results also suggest some rethinking of traditionally held notions about the underlying causes of racial violence.

To begin with, the conceptual model of U.S. race relations—built on a black/white fulcrum—is incapable of handling the multicultural vectors of ethnic tension that we have shown to be associated with racial/ethnic violence. We second the call to develop explanatory models that move beyond the "prevailing bipolar black/white model of race relations" (Omi and Winant 1994:153) toward a multivalent model of race that recognizes the "technicolor complexity of ethnic and class conflict" (Davis, 1993b:34). As Waldinger (1996) notes, "[N]ow . . . that immigration has returned America's biggest cities to the diverse, multiethnic worlds they once were, analysis in black and white will no longer do" (pp. 300–301). Thus, variants of ethnic competition theory that specify only blacks as minorities when they are often majorities at the neighborhood level, continue to misspecify the dynamics of U.S. racial violence. African Americans react like any other residential majority to a rapid influx of new immigrants. Given rapid in-migration, whether during the period 1900–1920 or 1980–1990, a defensive reaction among the host residential majority may occur, whether that host group be white or black. Backlash violence is not limited to one group or one circumstance. This is not to say that resistance by whites to black in-migration has ended—residential segregation continues to be high (Massey and Denton 1993). But Latino or Asian in-migration into residential neighborhoods occupied by blacks can generate a backlash.

Second, and more generally, two characteristics of the 1992 L.A. riot suggest that we rethink the cause of racial/ethnic violence: the seeming reappearance of what Janowitz (1969) called the "communal riot," and our findings (which contradict Spilerman's 1960s results) that it is areas with a relative decline in black population that have riot violence. The "1960s model" of race riots as political protest against economic conditions and a struggle to gain political power may not be the current model. The riots of the

1960s may have been the exception rather than the rule, as these riots occurred when the black population was both politicized and mobilized (McAdam 1982). In Los Angeles we saw a major riot that better resembles the communal riots of the 1900–1920s than the riots of the 1960s. This suggests that defensive response to in-migration is part of the process of ethnic succession, particularly when succession occurs rapidly. Thus, hyper-ethnic succession can lead to collective violence. The succession process seems to be general—only the ethnic groups appear to change: Violence occurred against Irish immigrants in the 1840s, against the new arrivals from Europe at the turn of the century (Hofstadter 1955; Lieberson 1980; Olzak 1992), against black in-migrants from the South early in this century, and now against the newest wave of immigrants, Latinos and Asians. When African Americans are in-migrants into residential areas occupied by whites, as they were in the 1900–1920 period, African Americans are the targets of reactionary violence. But when African Americans comprise the residential majority and face in-migrants themselves, they may become the initiators of backlash violence.

Albert Bergesen *is Professor of Sociology at the University of Arizona. His research interests center on cultural sociology/cognitive science and world-system theory. Currently his work in this area focuses on creating a generative grammar of artistic style, the application of whose rules will yield the underlying visual structure of world art. He is presently completing an NSF grant to study the relationship of organizational form and rates of toxic emissions for a large sample of industrial plants.*

Max Herman *is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at the University of Arizona. His research interests include collective action in ethnically changing communities, GIS modeling of demographic change, and Jewish-Black relations. His dissertation involves a comparative study of four major twentieth-century race riots, examining the effects of ethnic succession on outbreaks of riot violence.*

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