

Did the 2010 New York City Council Represent the City?

Descriptive Representation and 2010 New York City

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Abstract

This paper looks at the 2010 New York City Council to determine if it was descriptively representative of the city's population at the time. After essential descriptors were discovered they were examined, along with other non-essential descriptors, and then extracted from the data sources. The paper uses descriptive statistics taken from the 2010 New York City Council website and the 2010 United States Census to determine if the council was descriptively representative of the city's population. The research found that the council was not descriptively representative when compared to the city's population in 2010. The paper discusses future areas of study and the limitations of the study. Finally, it concludes with recommendations for achieving a more descriptively representative governing body.

Introduction

From the inception of our government, a debate has continued about the makeup of our representative bodies. When we speak about representation we automatically think of being represented by people who appeal to our understandings of ourselves. This helps us identify with the representative. This paper deals with two ways of establishing this kind of identification with our representatives. The first is based on the outward appearance of the representative, and the second is based on what the representative says or speaks for. These two types of representation have been referred to as descriptive and substantive representation (Pitkin, 1967). For different groups this perception of representativeness differs. This paper will examine whether or not the 2010 New York City Council descriptively represented the city's population in 2010. The paper found that the 2010 New York City did not descriptively represent the city's population.

Statement of the Problem

Currently there is no study that looks to determine if the city council descriptively represents the city's population. Research has shown that descriptive representation is important for minority groups' (Mansbridge, 1999) and women's (Rosenthal, 1995) perceptions of how well their representatives represent their best interests. Descriptive representation has also been shown to increase feelings of government legitimacy amongst Blacks in the court system (Scherer and Curry, 2010) and reduce feelings of alienation amongst Latinos (Pantoja and Segura, 2003). While there have been studies showing the importance of descriptive representation, there have not been any studies that look at a local representative body and determine to what extent it is descriptively representative of the people it has been chosen to represent.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how the 2010 New York City council descriptively compared to the 2010 New York City population.

Significance of the Study

The study's significance lies in the importance of descriptive representation. If descriptive representation is a goal, for those seeking greater diversity in New York City politics, then the study will shed light on how much must be done to achieve this goal. This insight can be used to design programs that can continue to break down barriers that prevent qualified candidates from entering the political realm throughout New York City.

Definition of Terms

This paper will use two forms of representation exclusively. One is *descriptive representation* and the other is *substantive representation*. These two forms of representation were introduced by Hanna Pitkin in her 1967 book *The Concept of Representation*. Descriptors are needed to help determine what characteristics increase feelings of representativeness for constituents. To aid the reader the definitions of the terms appear below:

Descriptors

These are physical features that can be described or self-identified.

Descriptive Representation

This is based on the belief that representatives must look like or resemble their constituents in order to understand and accurately represent their interests in the governing body.

Substantive Representation

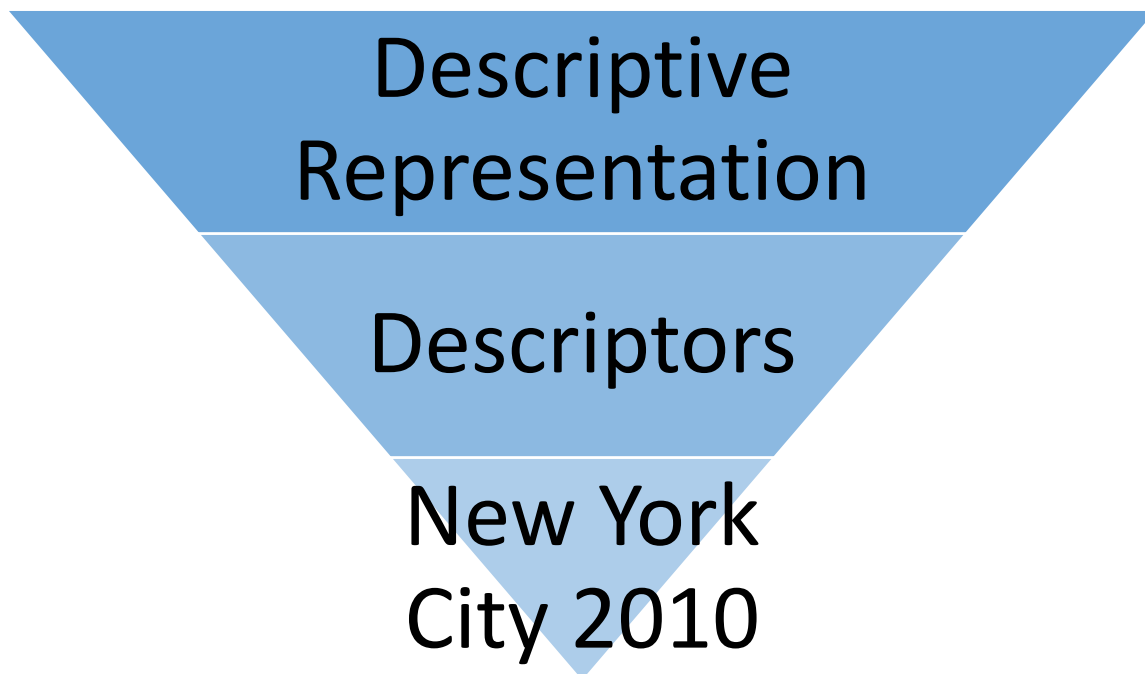
This is based on the belief that representatives need only to speak for, to stand for, or to act for their constituents.

Both forms of representation can be used singularly or combined with each other.

Theoretical Framework

Descriptive representation has been touted to play an important role in shaping the perceptions citizens have of their governments. After identifying the descriptors that affect descriptive representation, these descriptors were applied to the 2010 New York City Council and the 2010 New York City population. The data was then compared to test for descriptive representation.

Model



Research Question

The paper will answer the following question:

“Did the 2010 New York City Council descriptively represent the 2010 New York City population?”

Limitations

The study has the following limitations:

1. The study uses 2010 United States Census data which is self-reported by the citizens or the persons filling the information out for them. This information does not take into account biases or variations in people’s feelings about how they perceive themselves. For example, some people reject the social classifications of the United States Census. There are also segments of the population that do not identify with the “labels” they feel are arbitrarily assigned to categorize people.
2. It does not take into account people who live in New York City, but vote elsewhere and the opposite.
3. Some of the information on the city council members was not easily accessible, so some council members’ ages were not included in the study.
4. Limiting the scope of the expose to one moment in time.
5. Time limited how much research could be conducted. If I had more time I would have liked to survey the city’s population to try to get a better understanding of what representation means to them. I would have tried to get more qualitative information from the mouths of the people to see if they have seen a benefit from descriptive representation.

6. There is a lack of information about how the New York City population felt about the representation they received at the time. This would be important to see if the literature purporting the benefits of descriptive representation apply to New York City's population.

Delimitations

This paper uses delimitations to accurately represent the issues of working with large data sets and comparing them to smaller sets. The first issue is that the census data had to be restricted to the five boroughs. The second was limiting the descriptors to descriptors that were previously proven to be significant. The literature shows that Race and Gender are the most impactful, but it would have been helpful to see how religion and education affects descriptive representation in New York City.

Assumptions

This paper included the following assumptions: (a) the census data was completed accurately and the respondent's perceptions of themselves are in line with descriptors used in the census and commonly used in society; (b) the city council members' races are accurate; and (c) the data collected was accurate.

Organization of Study

The research study is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, theoretical framework, research questions, limitation, delimitations, and the assumptions of the study.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature, which provides the historical context and previous research that guides the study as well as the limitations of descriptive representation. Chapter 3 presents the methodology used in the paper. It includes an explanation of the descriptors, the description of the data, and the data analysis.

Chapter 4 discusses the paper's findings including the descriptive findings from the 2010 New York City Council and the 2010 United States Census New York City population data and comparisons of the two groups that test for descriptive representation, thus answering the research question. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the entire paper, discusses the findings, provides implications for theory and practice, recommendations for further study, and conclusions.

Literature Review

The review will discuss the foundations of descriptive representation. It will look at how the view has evolved over time. There will be a discussion of two common theories of political representation. Then a discussion of the benefits of descriptive representation and its limitations will follow. Finally, a summary of the key points will be included.

The conversation about what our representatives should look like has been a point of contention for centuries. Some of the earliest discussions have revolved around the idea that those who represent the people should “resemble those they represent; they should be a true picture of the people; possess the knowledge of their circumstances and their wants; sympathize in all their distresses, and be disposed to seek their true interests.” (Smith, 1788) At

that time, the thoughts were simply based on the economic interests of the constituency because race was not a major factor in the political discourse. With the inclusion of women and minorities into the American political process, the lack of substantive representation has led to a belief that underrepresented groups can only be represented by candidates who have come from within the group (Mansbridge, 1999).

Theories of Representation

In her 1967 book **The Concept of Representation**, Hannah Pitkin advances the term “descriptive representation” as an expression of the view that underrepresented groups should only represent themselves. In some cases, descriptive representation has led to greater representation of the needs of the group. Mansbridge (1999) argues that descriptive representation provides a seat at the table. This seat provides access to deliberation, which in turn gives a voice to the underrepresented. This provides the group with someone who speaks for them. Pitkin (1967) calls this “substantive representation,” which simply states that the representative must speak for the people he or she represents. A contemporary look at this topic describes public representation as “standing for, acting for, and/or speaking for” someone or some group (Pettit, 2009). For many underrepresented groups, descriptive representation gives them the impetus to participate in the democratic process.

Importance of Descriptive Representation

Atkeson and Carrillo (2007), have found that higher numbers of women in government promote higher levels of efficacy for women. The authors believe that this translates into a better democracy due to the stabilizing effects of efficacy. Efficacy in this case describes power or inherent value for women. This means that providing women with political power and

promoting the value of their inputs creates stability in a democracy. In the LGBTQ community it has been found that greater descriptive representation has led to greater substantive representation (Haider-Markel, 2007). For example, an increase in LGBTQ descriptive representation has led to an increase in legislation. This has led to new legislation that provides domestic partner benefits and recently sweeping jurisprudence, essentially making gay marriage legal (Reynolds, 2013).

Mansbridge (1999) has argued that underrepresented groups, such as women and Blacks, should represent themselves. She argues that giving these groups the “ability to rule” provides legitimacy to the government, which helps increase the underrepresented group’s trust in the government and enhances substantive representation through deliberation with other representatives. In this respect, descriptive representation is important in giving the underrepresented a voice.

According to Pantoja and Segura (2003), a study of Latino voters in Texas and California showed that descriptive representation lowers political alienation. Political alienation in this case refers to levels of participation in the political process, making people feel included. Another study found that minority descriptive representation provides some political influence, but only within the context of party politics, ultimately promoting candidates that provide substantive representation (Preuhs, 2006). This study showed that the minority groups gain access to candidates through the political parties and then help those candidates speak to minority issues in the legislature. Descriptive representation in the United States Court System has been proven to increase institutional legitimacy among African Americans (Scherer and Curry, 2010). A 2015 study by Casellas and Wallace (2015), found that Blacks and non-

Republican Latinos place high importance on descriptive representation, meaning that they prefer or believe that their representatives should look like them. According to the same study, only Latino Republicans placed less emphasis on descriptive representation.

With respect to gender, studies have shown that women tend to be more “gender conscious than men in their evaluation of a candidate or preferred candidate.” (Rosenthal, 1995 p. 599) Rosenthal’s study also showed that conservative political platforms may deter some women from supporting women in politics and showed that some women prefer representatives of the same gender more so than their male counterparts (Rosenthal, 1995). A study on gender related political knowledge showed that women have less knowledge about the number of women representatives in Congress and when they lack this information they tend to overestimate the number of women in politics (Sanbonmatsu, 2003). This was problematic because this assumption led some women to think that the number of women in politics was already adequate. The same study also found that women were more supportive of more women in government than their male counterparts.

Negative Effects

Michael R. James (2011) has argued that descriptive representation is flawed because it does not focus on creating a “racial constituency.” This limits the ability to explain why underrepresented groups often elect representatives that do not look like them (James, 2011). He also argues that the descriptive view is flawed because it does not take into account racial perspectives.

Others have attempted to show that descriptive representation can have negative effects on accountability. Specifically, that Black voters have more difficulty obtaining

information on voting records for their representatives, as a whole, and even more so when their representatives look like them, but Blacks are more informed than White voters when their representatives do not look like them (Griffin and Flavin, 2007). This disparity in information makes it more difficult for Black voters to hold their representatives, who look like them, accountable.

Studies on descriptive representation for LGBTQ constituents has shown that an increase in LGBTQ descriptive representation has led to an increase in anti-LGBTQ legislation (Haider-Markel, 2007). Increased descriptive representation has also been shown to decrease support among conservative Whites and conservative Blacks. In some cases, this was due to a belief that diversity is a “liberal” goal (Scherer and Curry, 2010).

Summary

Descriptive representation has been shown to be an important factor in making our democracy more inclusive. While it does have its limitations, it has been shown to have substantial positive benefits for society by providing a greater sense of government legitimacy for African Americans (Scherer and Curry, 2010), a reduction in alienation among Latinos (Pantoja and Segura, 2003), an increase in efficacy for Women (Atkeson and Carrillo 2007), and provides representation for the LGBTQ community (Haider-Markel, 2007). Given these benefits, evaluating the descriptive representation of the New York City Council can provide some insight into how well the council promoted an inclusive government.

Methodology

The goal of this study was to test whether the 2010 New York City Council was descriptively representative of the city’s population at that time. The methodology used to test

the research question will be explained in this section. The section will discuss the descriptive factors used and not used in the study, the data used to determine if the 2010 New York City Council was descriptively representative of the population of the city in 2010, and the data analysis used.

Descriptive Factors

Looking at the most common descriptive factors used in the literature; this paper uses Race, Gender, and Education as its primary descriptors. These were selected because they are easily defined in the data and are easily identified by the constituents. Race and Gender were also chosen because the literature on descriptive representation has shown that these descriptors are important. Education was chosen out of curiosity, even though they were not shown to influence the public's perception of descriptive representation. These descriptors are also available to the public through the New York Campaign Finance Board voter guides.

Race was chosen because it has been found to affect the constituents' view of descriptive representation (Casellas & Wallace, 2015). Gender was shown to be a factor for women's perception of descriptive representation (Atkenson & Carrillo, 2007), so it was chosen as a descriptor as well. Education was chosen out of curiosity.

Concurrently, some descriptors were not chosen. Income was not used because the city council incomes are flat, in the sense that the amounts are legislatively set. To compare the incomes of the city council members to the incomes of the entire New York City population would not have provided any profound insight into descriptive representation. Also the New York City Campaign Finance Board makes it possible for low income candidates to run for

elections without the need for great amounts of personal funds. This is a factor that is unique to New York City.

Religion was not included as well. For some groups in New York City, religion does affect their impressions of descriptive representation, for example Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods have historically elected Jewish representatives, but it happens on such a small scale that it would not be useful to extend it beyond the known examples. Housing information was also not included as it has been shown to have a bigger effect on substantive representation. Political party was also not included because New York City has very small pockets of Republican voters.

Description of Data

To determine if the 2010 New York City Council descriptively represented the New York City population at that time, two primary sources of data were used. The first data source was the New York City Council information website. This site provided information on the 51 representatives who were sworn into office on January 1, 2010. The information included in this data set was compiled in an Excel spreadsheet. The data included the Names, Gender, Start Date, District, Borough, and Political Party. This information was supplemented by the New York City Campaign Finance Board Voter Guide from 2009. The voter guide provided information on the educational backgrounds of the candidates and was produced to provide substantive material to help the voters determine what views the candidates held prior to the election.

The second source was the New York City portion of the 2010 United States Census. The census provided information on the population demographics at the time the representatives

were in office. The section used was the American Community Survey, which collected information about the Race, Gender, Education, and Age of the population at the time. This data was retrieved using the New York City Department of Planning website. The site captures the census data and produces reports that are used to guide planning activities and create estimates that shed light on the city's future populations. This data showed that the New York City Population was 8,175,133 people in 2010.

Data Analysis

The data was compiled into spreadsheets using Microsoft Excel. The New York City council information was retrieved from the city council website. It provided the names and gender of the fifty-one New York City council members who were sworn in on January 1, 2010. This data was expanded to include the ages of the members in 2010. That information was gathered from biographical information found on the city council website. Pivot Charts and Tables were used to quickly analyze the data and create visual representations of the data. These were then compared to determine the results.

As percentages were determined for Race and Gender, they were translated into pie charts to make comparing the values easier. Educational attainment was displayed in a pie chart to make the comparison easier to see as well.

Summary

To determine whether or not the 2010 New York City Council was descriptively representative of the city's population at the time, descriptors had to be chosen to determine what measures of representation were important. Reviewing the literature on descriptive representation shed light on the descriptors that would be most important. The descriptors

chosen for this paper were Race, Gender, and Education. The first two were chosen based on the evidence in the literature, which proves that race and gender do have an effect on perceptions of descriptive representation. Education was chosen out of curiosity to see how the educational attainment between the council members and the population vary. The data was then transferred into charts and graphs to make the comparisons easier to visualize.

Findings

This section will discuss the findings from the methodology and will address whether the 2010 New York City Council was descriptively representative of the city's population in 2010. Race, Gender, and Education will be examined to determine how the two groups compare. Special attention will be paid to race and gender as the literature has shown that those two areas contribute to the overall perceptions of descriptive representation. The findings for education will be discussed to show which level of education was most prevalent in 2010 New York City. This section will explain the findings, discuss how the findings relate to the research question, and summarize the findings.

Descriptive Statistics

To determine if the 2010 New York City council was descriptively representative of the city's population at the time of the 2010 United States Census, descriptive statistics of each group had to be collected.

2010 New York City Council Findings

The information about the city council members appears in the figure below (figure 1):

Name	Age (2010)	Sex	Educational Attainment	Race	District	Title	Borough	Political Party
Albert Vann	76	M	MA	Black	District 36	Council Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Annabel Palma	37	F	BA	Latino	District 18	Council Member	Bronx	Democrat
Brad S. Lander	40	M	BA	White	District 39	Council Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Charles Barron	60	M	BA	Black	District 42	Council Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Christine C. Quinn	46	F	BA	White	District 03	Speaker	Manhattan	Democrat
Daniel Dromm	56	M	MA	White	District 25	Council Member	Queens	Democrat
Daniel J. Halloran III	38	M	JD	White	District 19	Council Member	Queens	Republican
Daniel R. Garodnick	38	M	JD	White	District 04	Council Member	Manhattan	Democrat
Darlene Mealy		F	AA	Black	District 41	Council Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Deborah L. Rose		F	BA	Black	District 49	Council Member	Staten Island	Democrat
Diana Reyna	36	F	BA	Latino	District 34	Council Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Domenic M. Recchia, Jr.	51	M	JD	White	District 47	Council Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Elizabeth S. Crowley	33	F	MS	White	District 30	Council Member	Queens	Democrat
Eric A. Ulrich	25	M	BA	White	District 32	Council Member	Queens	Republican
Erik Martin Dilan	36	M	AS	Latino/Black	District 37	Council Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Fernando Cabrera	46	M	PhD	Latino	District 14	Council Member	Bronx	Democrat
G. Oliver Koppell	70	M	JD	White	District 11	Council Member	Bronx	Democrat
Gale A. Brewer	59	F	MPA	White	District 06	Council Member	Manhattan	Democrat
Helen D. Foster		F	JD	Black	District 16	Council Member	Bronx	Democrat
Inez E. Dickens	61	F	BA	Black	District 09	Council Member	Manhattan	Democrat
James F. Gennaro	53	M	MS	White	District 24	Council Member	Queens	Democrat
James G. Van Bramer	41	M	BS	White	District 26	Council Member	Queens	Democrat
James S. Oddo	44	M	JD	White	District 50	Council Member	Staten Island	Republican
James Sanders, Jr.	53	M	BA	Black	District 31	Council Member	Queens	Democrat
James Vacca	55	M	MA	White	District 13	Council Member	Bronx	Democrat
Jessica S. Lappin	35	F	BA	White	District 05	Council Member	Manhattan	Democrat

Joel Rivera	32	M	N/A	Latino	District 15	Council Member	Bronx	Democrat
Julissa Ferreras-Copeland	34	F	BA	Latino	District 21	Council Member	Queens	Democrat
Jumaane D. Williams	34	M	MA	Black	District 45	Council Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Karen Koslowitz	68	F	HS	White	District 29	Council Member	Queens	Democrat
Larry B. Seabrook	58	M	JD	Black	District 12	Council Member	Bronx	Democrat
Leroy G. Comrie, Jr.	49	M	BA	Black	District 27	Council Member	Queens	Democrat
Letitia James	52	F	JD	Black	District 35	Committee Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Lewis A. Fidler	54	M	JD	White	District 46	Council Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Margaret S. Chin	56	F	BS	Asian	District 01	Council Member	Manhattan	Democrat
Maria Del Carmen Arroyo		F	MPA	Latino	District 17	Council Member	Bronx	Democrat
Mark S. Weprin	49	M	JD	White	District 23	Council Member	Queens	Democrat
Mathieu Eugene	57	M	MD	Black	District 40	Council Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Melissa Mark-Viverito	41	F	MPA	Latino	District 08	Council Member	Manhattan	Democrat
Michael C. Nelson	65	M	BS	White	District 48	Council Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Peter A. Koo	58	M	DPh	Asian	District 20	Council Member	Queens	Democrat
Peter F. Vallone, Jr.	49	M	JD	White	District 22	Council Member	Queens	Democrat
Robert Jackson		M	BA	Black	District 07	Committee Member	Manhattan	Democrat
Rosie Mendez	47	F	JD	Latino	District 02	Council Member	Manhattan	Democrat
Sara M. Gonzalez	61	F	MBA	Latino	District 38	Council Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Simcha Felder	49	M	MBA	White	District 44	Council Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Stephen T. Levin	29	M	BA	White	District 33	Council Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Thomas White, Jr.	71	M	MSW	Black	District 28	Council Member	Queens	Democrat
Vincent Ignizio	36	M	BA	White	District 51	Council Member	Staten Island	Republican
Vincent J. Gentile	51	M	JD	White	District 43	Council Member	Brooklyn	Democrat
Ydanis A. Rodriguez	45	M	MA	Latino	District 10	Council Member	Manhattan	Democrat

Figure 1

The chart provides information on the name, age, gender, educational attainment, race, district, title, borough, and political party for all fifty-one city council members who started their terms on January 1, 2010. The average age of the city council members was 48.6 years of age. The youngest council member was 25 years old and the oldest was 76 years old. The age group represented most was between the ages of 49 and 61 (Figure 1.2). The next age groups represented were ages 37 to 49 and ages 25 to 37. The median age was 49. The ages for four council members could not be found.

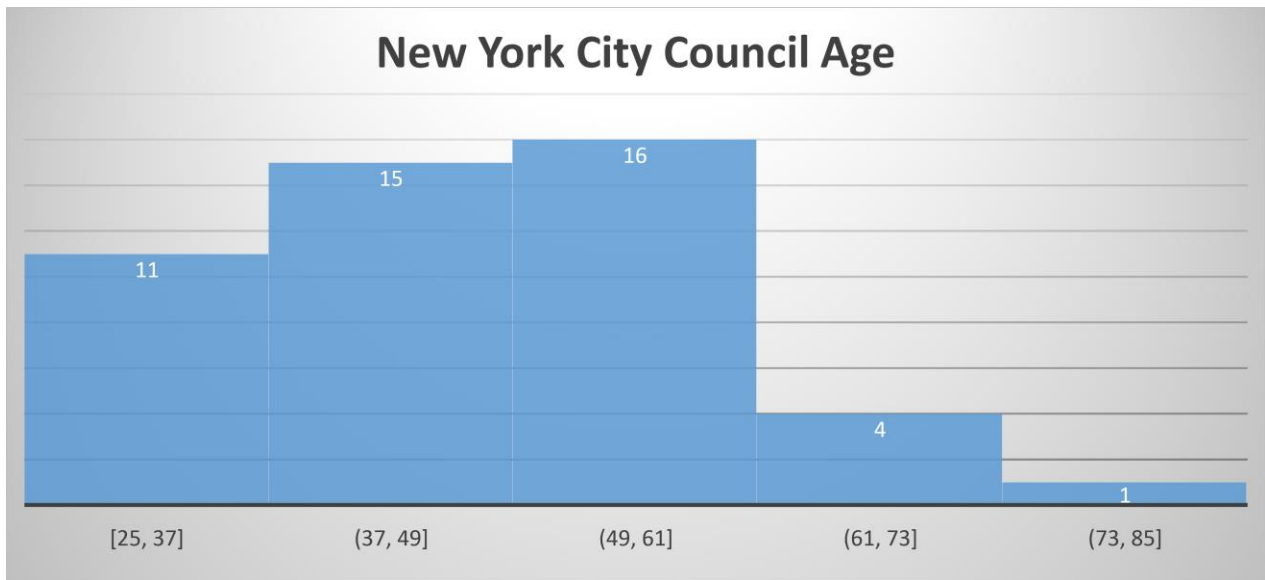


Figure 1.2

With respect to gender, the council had more Male members than Female members with 33 Males and 18 Females (Figure 1.3) representing a 65% to 35% Males to Females (Figure 1.4).

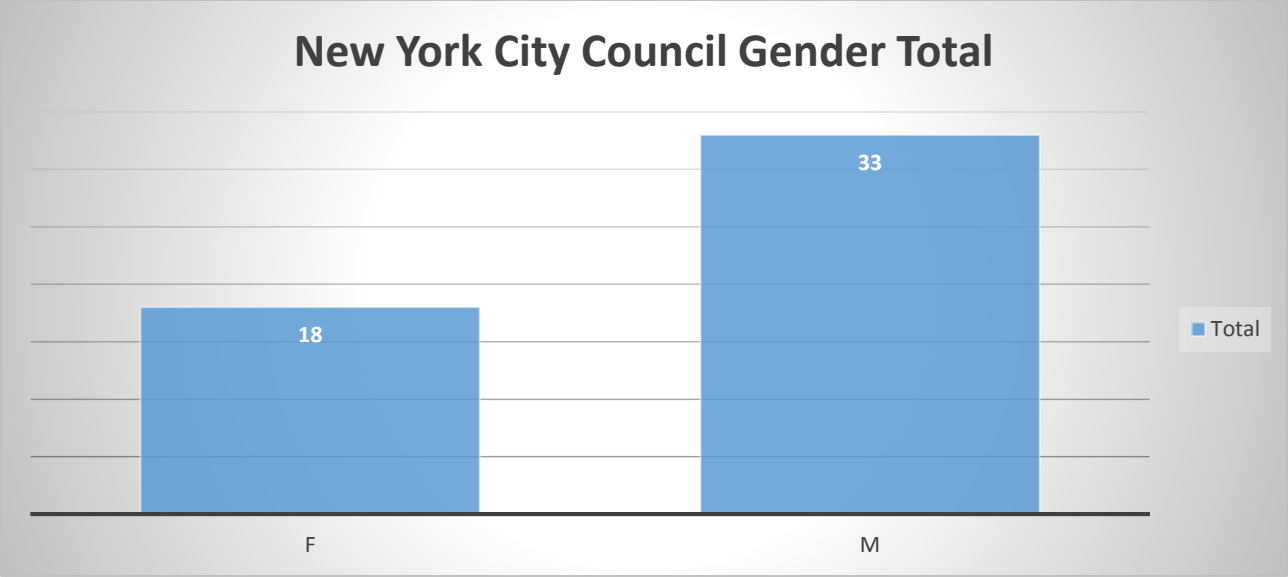


Figure 1.3

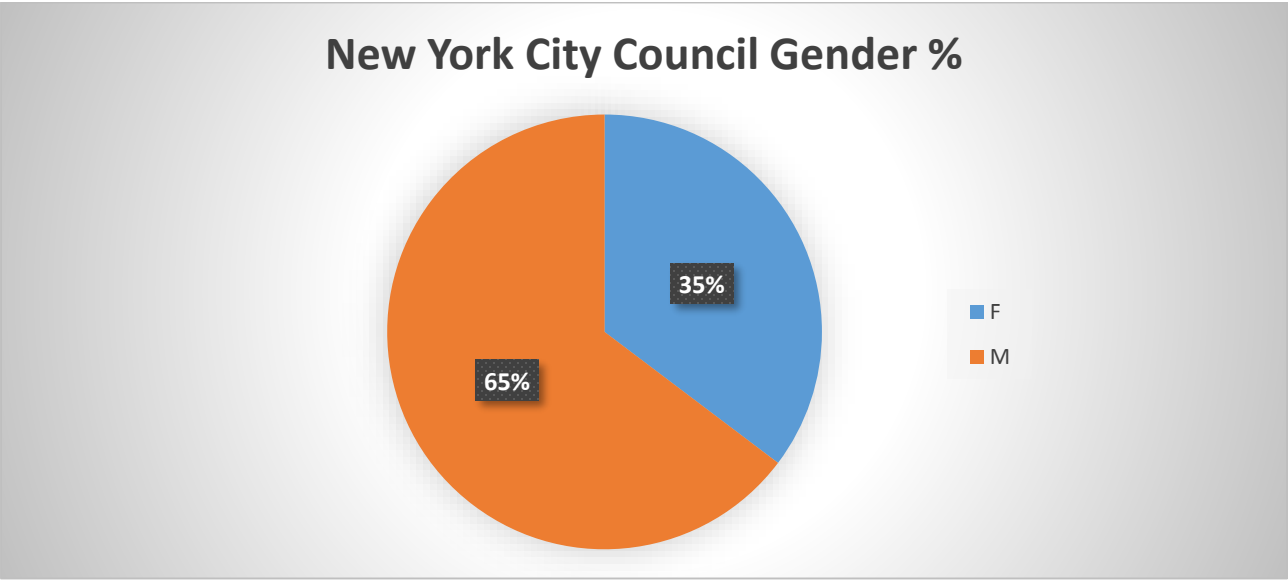


Figure 1.4

Educational attainment shows that most of the city council members have a Professional or Graduate degree, which represents 59% of the council members (Figure 1.5).

The next group holds a Bachelor degree (35%), then Associate degree (4%), and finally High School diploma (2%).

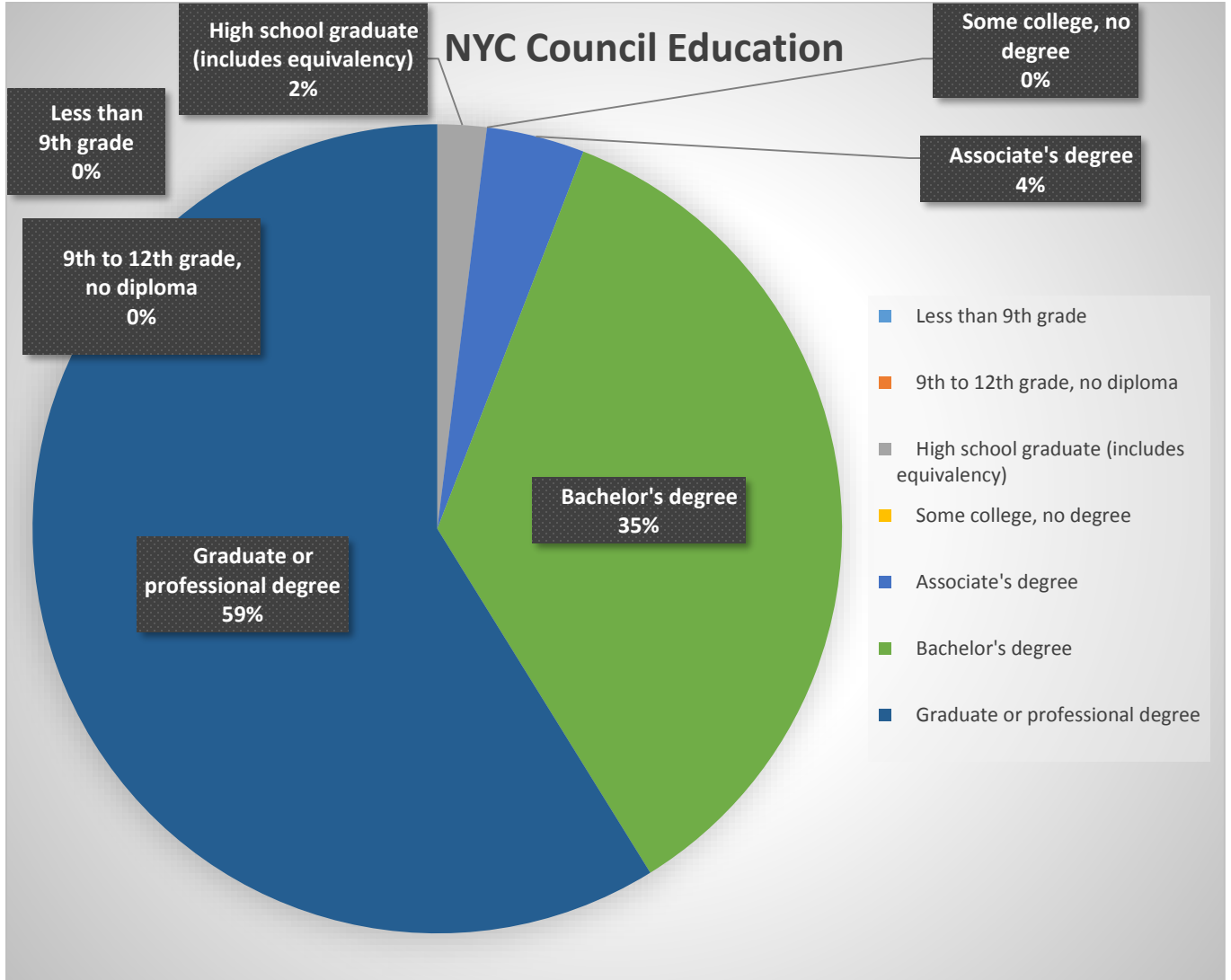


Figure 1.5

Turning the attention to race, the 2010 city council members were 47% White, 27% Black, 20% Latino, 4% Asian, and 2% Latino/Black (Figure 1.6).

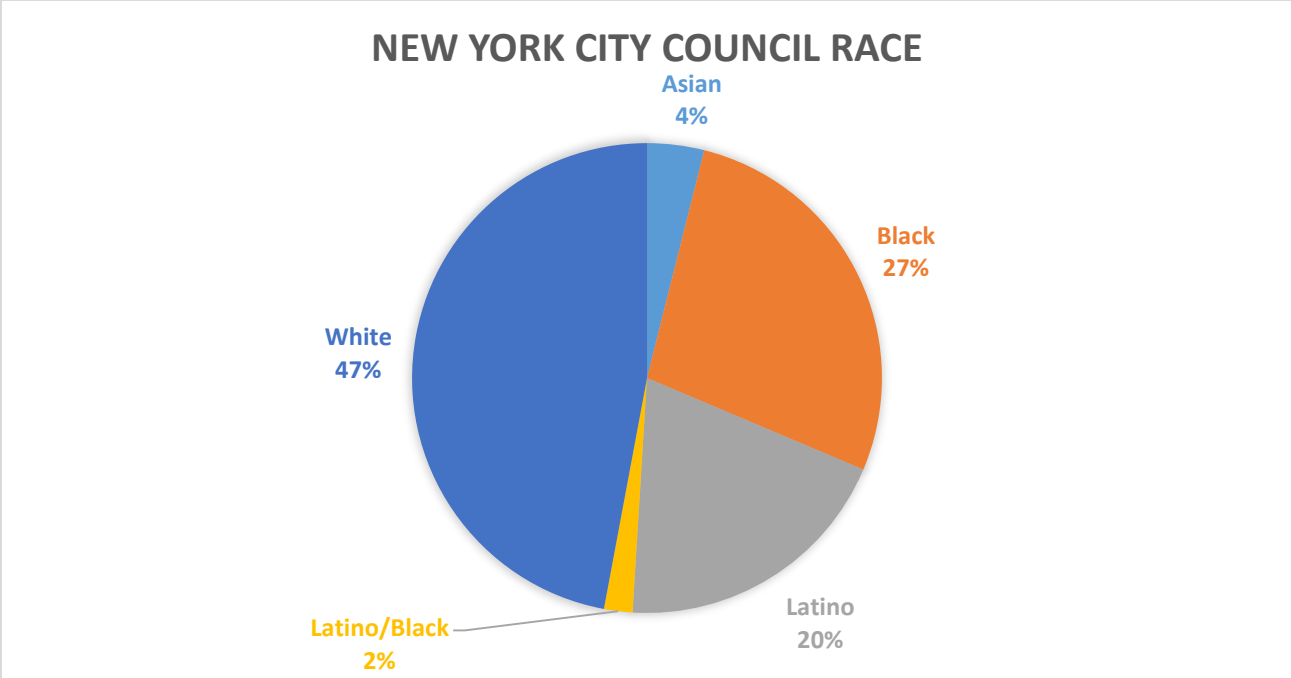


Figure 1.6

The districts were indicative of the council members’ home district. The titles refer to the different positions held within the structure of the city council. For example, Christine Quinn was the Speaker of the City Council during the term beginning on January 1, 2010. The borough column expresses which borough the representatives’ districts are in. And finally, political party shows four Republicans and forty-seven Democrats on the city council in 2010.

New York City Population

United States Census data was used to compile the information about the overall population of New York City in 2010. The demographic information shows a total population number of 8,175,133 people (Figure 2). The most populous borough is Brooklyn with 2,504,700 people; followed by Queens with 2,230,722 people; then Manhattan with 1,585,873; then the Bronx with 1,385,108; and finally Staten Island with 468,730.

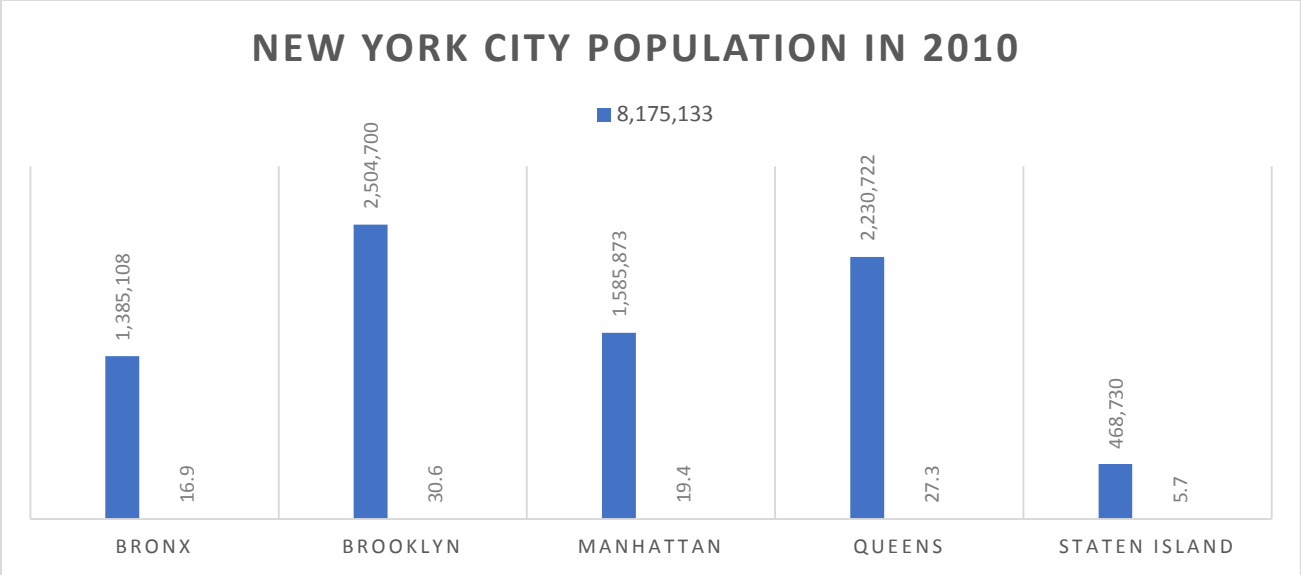


Figure 2

In terms of gender, Women outnumbered Men with 4,292,712 Women and 3,882,421 Men Figure (2.1). These numbers represent 53% Women and 47% Men (Figure 2.2).

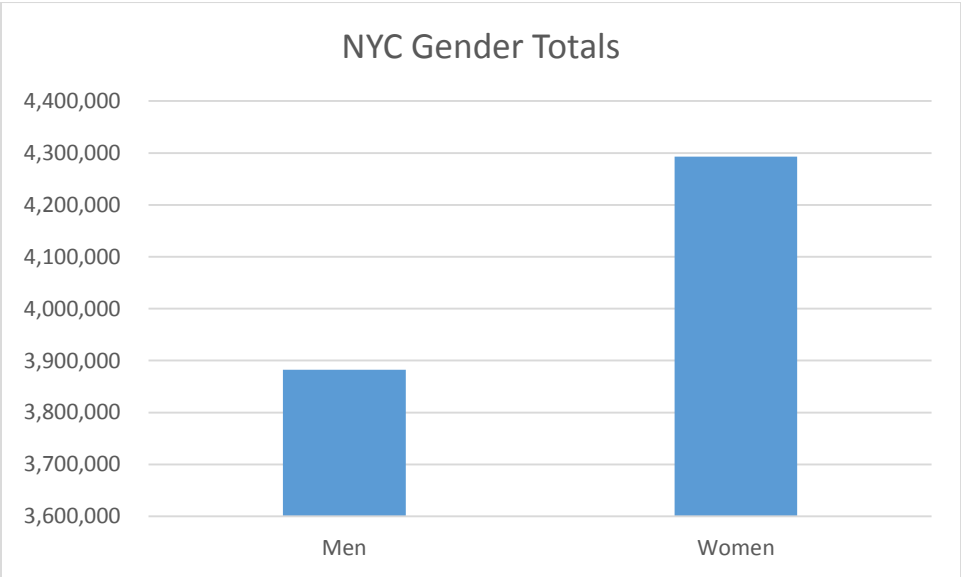


Figure 2.1

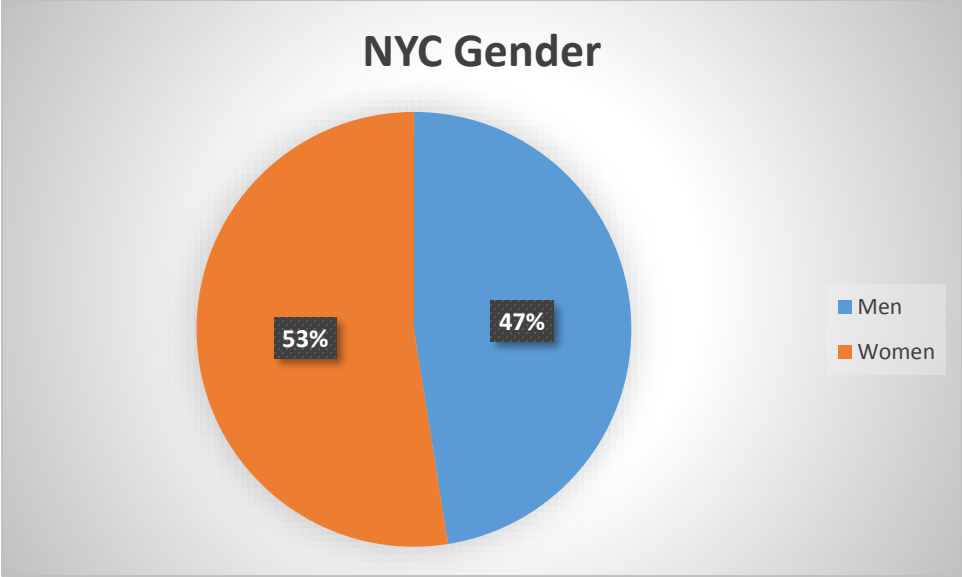


Figure 2.2

Turning to race, the population of New York City in 2010 was 33% White, 28% Hispanic, 23% Black, and 13% Asian. The remaining categories were 2% Two or More races Non-Hispanic, 1% Some other Race Non-Hispanic, and 0.7% American Indian & Alaskan Native Non-Hispanic (Figure 2.3).

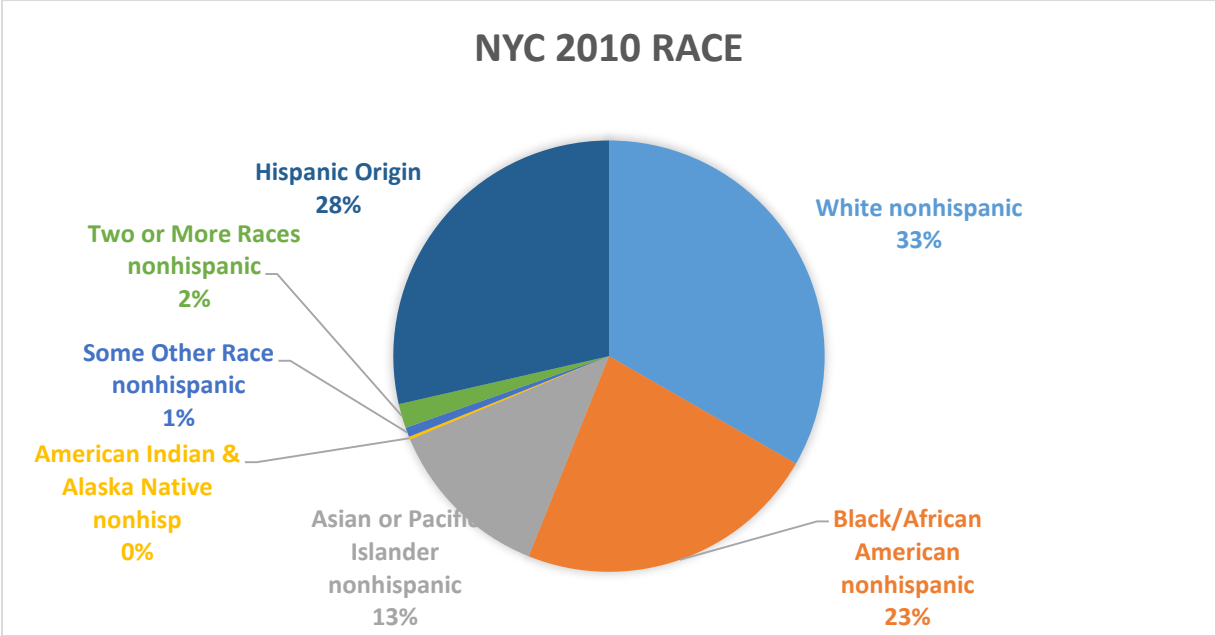


Figure 2.3

The total racial breakdown is shown in below (Figure 2.4).

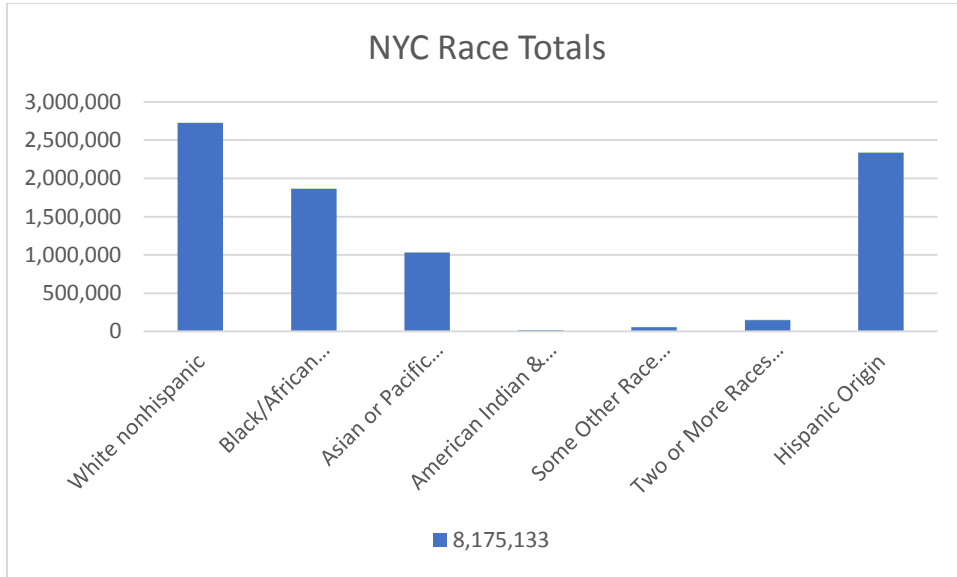


Figure 2.4

Looking at age, the city's population aged 25 and over is highest in the range of 65 years and over. The next group is 25 to 29 year olds, followed by 30 to 34 year olds. The median age for the total population, including people below the age of 25, is 35.5 years old. This data is shown below (Figure 2.5):

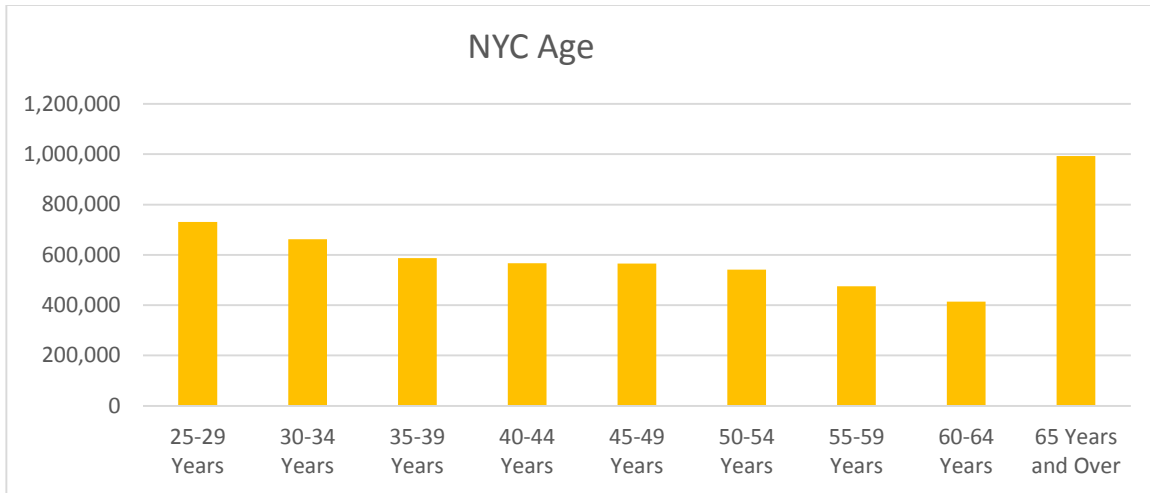


Figure 2.5

When examining the educational attainment of the city’s population 26% were high school graduates, 20% have a Bachelor’s degree, 14% have some college, but no degree, 13% have a Graduate or Professional degree, 11% have less than 9th grade, 10% have 9th to 12th grade with no diploma, and 6% have an Associate’s degree (Figure 2.6).

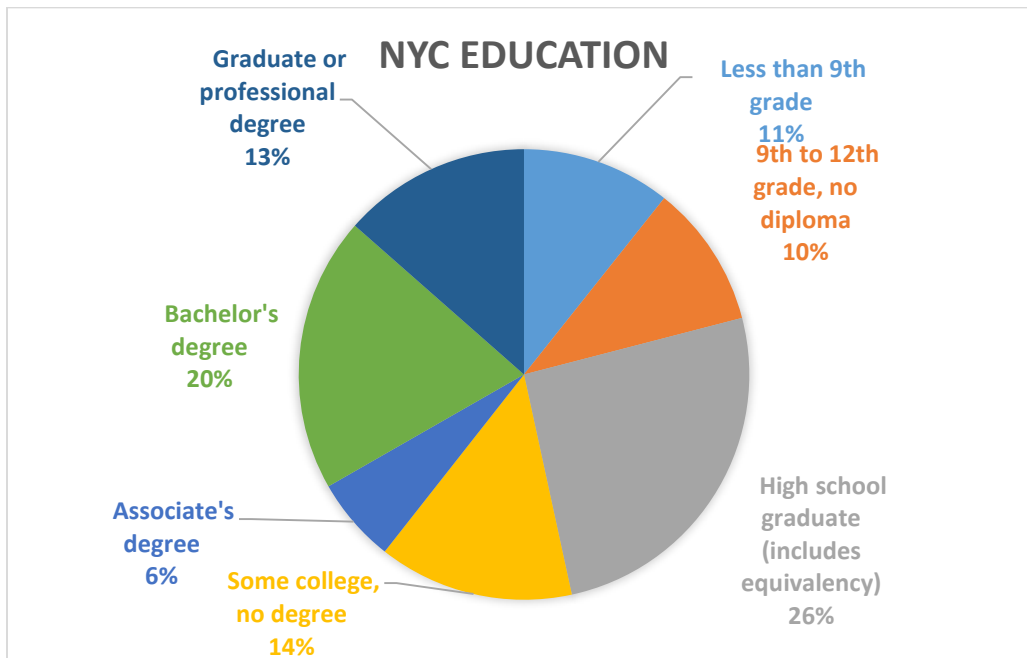


Figure 2.6

Comparing the Two Groups

To determine if the 2010 New York City Council was descriptively representative of the city's population in 2010 the descriptors had to be compared. The descriptors were Race, Gender, and Education.

Racial Comparisons

The racial comparisons showed that Whites made up 47% of the city council and accounted for 33% of the New York City population. Blacks made up 27% of the city council and accounted for 23% of the New York City population. Latinos made up 20% of the city council and accounted for 28% of the population. Asians made up 4% of the city council and accounted for 13% of the city's population. These comparisons show that the city council was not descriptively representative of the population of New York City when referring to race. If it were the differences would be within a few percentage points.

Gender Comparisons

Comparing gender showed that the New York City Council had more Men than Women at 65% Male to 35% Female. The city's population had more Women than Men at 53% Female and 47% Male. This comparison shows that the New York City Council was not descriptively representative of the city's population with respect to gender in 2010. Closer percentages between the city council members and the city's overall population would indicate descriptive representation.

Education Comparisons

The education comparison showed that the city council members had higher education levels than the population. Most notably, 59% of the council members had graduate or

professional degrees compared to 13% for the city's population. 35% of the council members had Bachelor's degrees compared to 20% of the city's population. 4% of the council members had Associate's degrees compared with 6% of the city's population. 2% of the council members had only a high school diploma compared to 26% for the city's population. The city council members did not have any members with some college, but no degree and also did not have any members with anything lower than a high school diploma. The closest groups are amongst those having bachelor's degrees, but this still does not meet a number comparable to represent descriptive representation.

Summary

This study compared the 2010 New York City Council to the 2010 US Census data to determine if the council descriptively representative of the city's population at the time. The findings show that the city council was did not descriptively represent the city's population at the time, specifically in the areas of race and gender which have been linked to perceptions of representation through descriptive representation.

Discussion

This section will provide a summary of the research, a recap of the findings, implementations for practice, recommendations for further research, and a conclusion. The purpose of this section is to provide insight into the questions proposed by the paper. This will seek to expand the knowledge base and propose solutions to the make the city council more representative of the population.

Summary of the Research

This research project looked at the 2010 United States Census and compared its demographic information to the demographic information of the 2010 New York City Council in order to determine if the New York City Council was descriptively representative of the city's population at the time. Reviewing the literature on descriptive representation showed that minority groups and women believe that their interests are represented well when their representatives "look" like them. These findings in the literature directed the selection of descriptors and provided the foundation for the research plan. Once the descriptors were determined they were determined the data was collected and compiled to gain an understanding of how these descriptors presented in both sets of data.

Discussion of the Findings

To answer the question, "Did the 2010 New York City Council descriptively represent the city's population in 2010?" The findings showed that the 2010 New York City Council did not reflect the overall population with respect to Race, Gender, and Educational Attainment. The 2010 New York City council was more White, more Male, and better Educated.

Implications for practice

Looking to the future, this paper has shed light on an interesting aspect of the concept of representation. It answers the question of whether or not the 2010 New York City Council was descriptively representative of the city's population at the time. The findings shed light on a misalignment of legislative power based on race and gender in the city.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research should look at the city councils past and present to determine if they are moving towards a more descriptive representation of the population, given that much

research has shown that increasing descriptive representation has a positive influence on marginalized segments of the population. A paper that takes a comparative look at improvements in perceptions of legitimacy, representation, and descriptive representation that incorporates a larger subset of the city's population may be beneficial to this area of study. Another area of study should look to see what effects the differences in race, gender, and education have on the citizens' perceptions of representation. It would be interesting to see if descriptive representation is worth attaining in New York City or does substantive representation fill the gaps in descriptive representation. Further research can also look to see how the New York City Campaign Finance Board has improved access to the ballot for minorities and women. Another possible future study can look to see what happens when there isn't enough descriptive representation in government for non-marginalized groups, this could yield a possible explanation for the "Trump Effect" currently sweeping through today's political scene.

Conclusion

The paper highlights a unique time in the legislative history of the New York City Council and asked, using descriptive representation, if the council reflected the population it was elected to represent. The findings show that when comparing descriptors deemed important by previous studies, the city council did not descriptively represent, or reflect, the city's population at the time. Based on these findings, I believe that the current representative model needs to be reevaluated.

Currently the New York City Council is comprised of fifty-one members representing fifty-one unique districts, which was last increased in 1989 from thirty-eight. The change would

not have come if the United States Supreme Court had not ruled that the New York City Board of Estimates as an unconstitutional body that did not fairly represent the citizens and violated the “one man, one vote” rule (Schwarz, Jr., 2013-2014). The Board of Estimates was a group made of the Mayor, Borough Presidents, City Comptroller, and the City Council President that had the power to set land use and budget for the city. The Mayor created a Charter Commission to remedy the unconstitutional ruling and the commission increased the number of council members to the current fifty-one members today. The goal of the Charter Commission was to make the legislative body more representative of the city’s population (Schwarz, Jr., 2013-2014). The commission has been instrumental in changing the city charter with approval from the community through public hearings to gain feedback on changes and referendums on the back of the ballots. In 1990, the city had a population of roughly 7 Million, the fifty-one representatives were not enough then and now with the population pushing 9 Million making the representative body larger would be beneficial to the city.

Increasing descriptive representation could be achieved if the district model of elections was replaced with a more inclusive proportional representation model that would ensure the candidate pool is reflective of the city’s population (Ritchie, 1998). This would also require voting that leads to a perfect percentage match of population. The legislature would be comprised of the top candidates from each racial and gender pool that would represent the interests of the constituents more proportionally. Prior research has shown that the district model has been used, through gerrymandering, to create designer districts and limit the effects of reaching full representation (Ritchie, 2004). Another consideration is that the limitation, regarding the use of self-reported census data, presented earlier in the paper would have to be

rectified if a plan like this was proposed. It would be impossible to get true percentages of the population without better census tracking and the inclusion of more descriptive options to encompass the realities of our population's diversity.

Another solution would be increasing the number of representatives to 102 members. This would require that each district have two representatives. The charter can be revised to require one male and one female member be elected from each district. This would automatically guarantee a 50/50 split of male and female members closing the gender gap in one election cycle. Mayor de Blasio has yet to appoint a Charter Revision Commission, but if he did these recommendations would help create a progressive and inclusive New York City. Investing in these changes and allowing the citizens to vote on them as referendums would allow the people to decide if more representation is needed and wanted at this time. I believe a larger and more descriptively representative governing body would make people participate more in their communities, therefore strengthening the voices of the people.

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