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From 1994 to 2011: Are San Francisco Commissions More Representative?

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Background

In 1994, an analysis of the City and County of San Francisco Commissions was conducted to determine the extent to which the gender, ethnicity, and stated sexual orientation of its members reflected the demographics of their constituents (Martinez, 1994). The purpose of this analysis was to determine if and where disparities existed in the seats that were filled and which commissions had empty seats. Advocates from San Francisco's communities of color and the Lesbian/ Gay/ Bisexual/ Transgender (LGBT) community intended to use these findings to put forth candidates who would increase the cultural, gender, and ethnic representation (otherwise known as descriptive representation) of these governing bodies.

Commissions and their members' responsibilities are outlined in the City and County of San Francisco's Charter, which serves essentially as the City's constitution. Most commissioners are appointed by the Mayor; however, some seats are appointed by other governing bodies such as the Board of Supervisors. Commissioners hold hearings and take testimony, develop and oversee city department budgets, administer strategic planning, and develop policies with the directors of the departments they represent.

As City officials, commissioners influence how public funds and initiatives are prioritized throughout the City and County of San Francisco. Thus, their role in those determinations is of extreme importance for otherwise disenfranchised communities.

Banducci, Donovan and Karp (2004) found that representation increases links, encourages political participation of people of color, and fosters positive attitudes toward government. According to the empowerment theory, descriptive representation has positive effects. Visible political leadership by people of one's own ethnicity or gender increases trust in government, efficacy, group pride, and participation. Historically marginalized groups benefit greatly from seeing members of their community in positions of power, and this descriptive representation is necessary to compensate for past and continued injustices (Sanchez and Morrin, 2011).

In 1994, Martinez found that few vacant seats existed in the 32 commissions ($n=13$ or 5.2%). However, within the 243 seats that were filled, there was disparity in the gender and ethnic make-up as compared to the general population (Table 1). Other key findings included:

- Two of the 32 commissions were 100% White
- 21 commissions were over 50% White
- 18 commissions had no Latinos
- 24 commissions were comprised of less than 50% women.
- 93% of the gay men commissioners were White
- No American Indians held a commission seat

The appearance of disparity found in the 1994 study¹ convinced members of the Committee to Reform the San Francisco Charter to embed safeguards in their proposed Charter language. In 1996, voters passed the proposed City Charter which included language mandating that commissions are to “be broadly representative of the communities of interest, neighborhoods, and the diversity in ethnicity, race, age, and sexual orientation of the City and County and have representation of both sexes” (CCSF Charter art III. §3.10).

In 2007, the Board of Supervisors perceived that imbalances continued to exist and strengthened the Charter language with the passage of Proposition D (June, 2008). The Charter amendment added disabilities to the list of diversities and underscored the mandate “in the strongest terms (that) all City officers and agencies involved in nominating, appointing or confirming members of those appointive boards, commissions, or advisory bodies to consider and as appropriate support the nomination, appointment or confirmation of female, minority, and disabled candidates to fill seats on those bodies” (CCSF Charter art IV. §4.101).²

Purpose of Study

This exploratory, descriptive study was conducted to reevaluate the ethnic and gender representation of San Francisco Commissions in 2011.

In 1996, the Board of Supervisors responded to the inequities between the compositions of the commissions as compared to the City, and again in 2008, by proposing legislative changes to the Charter of San Francisco.

Since 1994, there have been a variety of changes in San Francisco. Factors that might have affected the composition of the commissions include the election of more progressive, then more moderate Board of Supervisors, and the election of the first African American mayor (1996-2004).

The purpose of this study was to statistically determine how effective San Francisco has been in creating more representative commissions since the 1996 Charter reform.

Table 1: 1994 Commissions and 1994 Census Population by Gender and Ethnicity

1994		Count	%
Male	Commission	136	57.1%
	Population	375,400	50.5%
Female	Commission	102	42.9%
	Population	367,933	49.5%
American Indian	Commission	-	0.0%
	Population	4,142	0.6%
Latino/a	Commission	16	6.7%
	Population	103,981	14.0%
Asian Pacific Islander	Commission	44	18.5%
	Population	225,119	30.3%
African American	Commission	35	14.7%
	Population	70,416	9.5%
White	Commission	143	60.1%
	Population	339,675	45.7%
Total	Commission	238	100.0%
	Population	743,333	100.0%
LGBT	Commission	25	10.5%
	Population	unavl	unavl

Table 2: 2011 Commissions and 2010 Census Population by Gender and Ethnicity

2011		Count	%
Male	Commission	169	52.5%
	Population	420,605	52.8%
Female	Commission	154	47.8%
	Population	367,933	46.2%
American Indian	Commission	-	0.0%
	Population	2,858	0.4%
Latino/a	Commission	30	9.3%
	Population	110,072	13.8%
Asian Pacific Islander	Commission	82	25.5%
	Population	258,496	32.5%
African American	Commission	50	15.5%
	Population	53,759	6.8%
White	Commission	160	49.7%
	Population	371,040	46.6%
Total	Commission	322	100.0%
	Population	796,225	100.0%
LGBT	Commission	unavl	unavl
	Population	unavl	unavl

¹ The 1994 study did not use statistical analysis to determine if the differences were significant.

² Since 2008, the Commission on the Status of Women has been formally charged with analyzing and monitoring representativeness of commission appointments on a bi-annual basis and published gender analyses of all commissions and boards in 2007, 2009, and 2011.

Methodology

Our approach was to compare the degree to which the 1994 commission make-up was congruent with the 1994 census, and similarly the 2011 commissions with the 2010 census. We would then determine if gains in descriptive representation have been made.

We obtained commission demographic data from the 1994 Martinez study. For the 2011 data, we contacted various offices at the City and County of San Francisco who solicit demographic data on a voluntary basis from its commissioners. Both 1994 and 2010 census data were retrieved from the State of California, Department of Finance website (California Department of Finance: California State Data Center, 2011).

Demographic data were limited to gender and ethnicity. Gender categories include male and female. Transgender data were not available. Ethnicity categories include American Indian, African American, Latino/a, Asian Pacific Islander, and White. Multi-ethnic data were available only in the 2010 census ($n=21,938$), thus this count was omitted from the study. Although the 1994 Martinez study delineated the commissioners' "stated" sexual orientation, this information was not available from the census for either year or from the City and County of San Francisco, thus sexual orientation comparisons were not included in this study.

The 1994 Martinez study covered 32 commissions. By 2011, nine commissions had been added. Of the current 41 commissions, 29 (71%) are entirely appointed by the Mayor of San Francisco. The remaining twelve are appointed by various bodies, primarily the Board of Supervisors. This study did not analyze seats based upon who made the appointments, but rather each commission's composition as a whole.

To identify if the San Francisco commissioners represented the San Francisco population on the basis of gender and ethnicity for the two time periods, we compared the 1994 and 2011 sum of each demographic category for all commissioners to San Francisco's 1994 and 2010 census data, respectively. To assess the differences between commissioners and population we used the Chi Square Test of Homogeneity and decided to reject or accept the null hypothesis at the .05 probability level.

In addition, for each time period, we calculated the relationship between the observed and expected values and developed a "Representation Rate" ($fo/fe-1$) for each gender and each ethnicity, with zero representing exact representation. If the observed value was higher than that of the expected value (positive), we concluded over-representation. If the observed value was lower than that of the expected value (negative), we concluded under-representation.

To determine whether representation in 2011 had changed since 1994, we compared the Representation Rates for the two time periods. If the 2011 rate was closer to zero than the 1994 rate (with zero reflecting a match between commission make-up and the population), we concluded that improvement was made.

Finally, we ranked individual commissions by their degree of over-representation of males and Whites to identify outliers and analyzed those commissions with greater than \$10 million

budgets to determine if the distribution of representation changed based upon budget authority (CCSF, 2012).

Findings on Gender Representation

Using the Chi Square Test of Homogeneity, males were found to be over-represented in San Francisco commissions in 1994, $X = 4.197$, $df = 1$, p less than .05. Males comprised 57.1% of the commission members compared to 50.5% males in the general population (see Table 1).

Table 3: 2011 Commissions With 70%+ Seats = Male

2011 Commission Name	% Male
Bldg Inspection	86%
Relocation Appeals Board	75%
Historic Preservation	71%
Parking & Traffic	71%
Retirement System Board	71%
Veterans' Affairs	71%
25 of 41 Commissions have > 50% Males Seated	

Applying the same statistical tests to compare 2011 gender make-up of commissioners to the 2010 general population, we found gender differences to not be significantly different, $X = 0.134$, $df = 1$, p less than .05. Males comprised 52.5% of the commission members compared to 52.8% males in the general population (see Table 2).

Appointments reflected in the 2011 commissioners eliminated the disparities for women, in general, however, there are six commissions where they comprise less than 30% of the seats (see Table 3). While the majority of the commissions (25) are comprised of over 50% males, the overall disparity between men and women is much smaller than it was in 1994, with men totaling 169 of the commissioners, and women 154. There have clearly been substantial gains for women in terms of representation since 1994, though their representation is still not entirely equitable to that of men in certain commissions.

Findings on Ethnic Representation

With regards to ethnic composition in 1994, the Chi Square Test of Homogeneity was also statistically significant at the .05 level, $X = 38.933$, $df = 4$. Table 1 indicates that Latinos, Asian Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans were under represented on commissions relative to their populations in San Francisco, and African Americans and Whites were over-represented.

Differences in the ethnic composition in 2011, using the Chi Square Test of Homogeneity, remained statistically significant at the .05 level, $X = 48.179$, $df = 4$. Table 2 indicates that Latinos, Asian Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans remain under represented on commissions relative to their populations in San Francisco, and Whites and African Americans remain over-represented.

While gains have been made in terms of ethnic representation, the difference between ethnic representation of the commissions and the San Francisco population remains statistically significant (see Charts 1 and 2).

As in 1994, there continues to be no American Indian commissioners, and although American Indians make-up less than one percent of the general population, this represents at least one commissioner.

In 2011, Latino commissioners comprise 9.3% of all commissioners, which is an improvement from 1994 (6.7%), but still less representative than Latinos in the community (13.8%).

The same is true of Asian Pacific Islander commissioners. While there is less disparity than what existed in 1994, they make-up 25.5% of the commissioners as compared to 32.5% of the general population.

In 2011, African American commissioners comprise a much higher percentage (15.5%) than that of African American community members living in San Francisco (6.8%). Although African American commissioners rose in numbers from 35 in 1994 to 50 in 2011, the increased variance is partially due to the decrease in the African American presence in San Francisco (from 9.5% in 1994 to 6.8% in 2010).

The percentage of White commissioners (49.5%) is now much closer to the White population of the City, which is 46.6%. However, there are six commissions where Whites constitute more than 70% representation (see Table 4).

Charts 1 and 2: 1994 and 2011 Commission Comparisons to Census

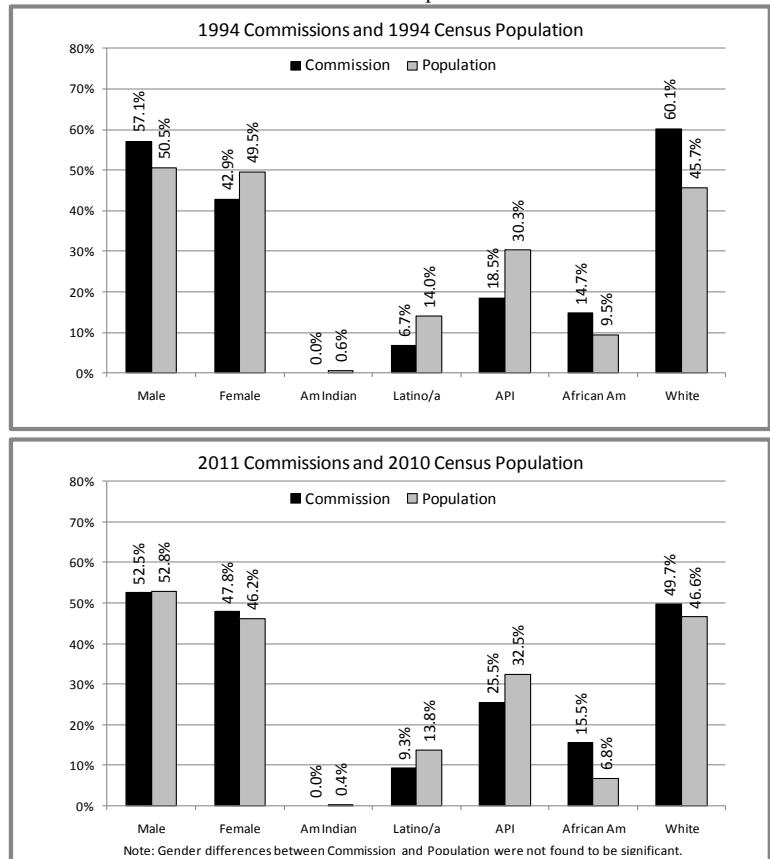


Table 4: 2011 Commissions With 70%+ Seats = White

2011 Commission Name	% White
War Memorial	91%
Retirement System Board	86%
Small Business	83%
Airport	80%
Historic Preservation	71%
GGPark Concourse Authority (MTA)	71%
18 of 41 Commissions have > 50% Whites Seated	

Findings on Representation based upon Budget Authority

Table 5 shows the 20 San Francisco commissions with budget authority greater than \$10 million. The yellow highlighted cells represent those commissions where male and White members constitute more than 50% of the filled seats. 15 of the 20 Commissions have over 50% males, and 9 have over 50% Whites.

Table 5: Commissions with Total Budgets over \$10,000,000

Rank	Commission	FY1112 Proposed Budget	Gender		Ethnicity					% Males	% Whites
			M	F	AI	LAT	API	AA	WH		
1	Health (Public Health)	1,573,367,275	4	3	-	2	2	1	2	57%	29%
2	Public Utilities (Water)	824,028,814	3	2	-	2			3	60%	60%
3	MTA (GGPark & Pkg/Traffic)	780,567,111	9	5	-	1	4	1	8	64%	57%
4	Airport	755,749,681	3	2	-			1	4	60%	80%
5	Human Services Agy (+Aging)	690,359,191	3	2	-	1	1	1	2	60%	40%
6	Police	460,348,234	4	3	-	1	1	2	3	57%	43%
7	Fire	302,081,641	3	2	-		2	2	1	60%	20%
8	Redevelopment Agency	286,108,000	4	3	-	2	2	2	1	57%	14%
9	Rec and Park	127,921,216	4	3	-	1	1	1	4	57%	57%
10	Library	86,814,022	4	3	-		3	1	3	57%	43%
11	Port Authority	77,886,579	1	4	-		1	1	3	20%	60%
12	Bldg Inspection	48,911,896	6	1	-	1	3		3	86%	43%
13	Juvenile Probation	33,842,940	3	4	-	1	2	2	2	43%	29%
14	First 5 San Francisco	32,029,191	1	7	-		3	1	4	13%	50%
15	Planning	24,453,040	4	3	-	1	2	1	3	57%	43%
16	Retirement System Board	19,705,181	5	2	-			1	6	71%	86%
17	Environment	17,861,003	4	3	-		2	1	4	57%	57%
18	Elections	15,374,577	3	4	-	2	1	2	2	43%	29%
19	War Memorial	12,233,535	6	5	-			1	10	55%	91%
20	Arts	10,291,940	6	8	-	1	3	1	9	43%	64%

Further Study

This research project was an exploratory study, and as such, not a true experiment. As previously noted, a number of factors might have occurred between 1994 and 2011 that could have accounted for the change in ethnic and gender representativeness aside from the noted Charter language enacted in 1996 and amended in 2008.

Further investigation could be done about shifting ethnic patterns in the city and increased engagement and advocacy among communities of interest and their effects on descriptive representation. This study did not examine the representation of the LGBT community, which might also yield valuable information about community representation in the City’s commissions. Additionally, the trend for African Americans to be over-represented is unique, and should be a topic for further study.

Along with more closely analyzing the more powerful commissions, it would be worthwhile to review the demographic make-up of the presidents of the commissions to determine representation in their leadership.

Another study could review representation on each commission; for example, the juvenile justice system disproportionately affects Latino and African American youth, thus representation more in line with the population served by the commission’s department (as opposed to that of the general population) might be more important to achieve.

Conclusions

As compared to 1994, there is now greater descriptive representation and congruency between appointed commissioners, in general, and their constituents as indicated in Chart 3.

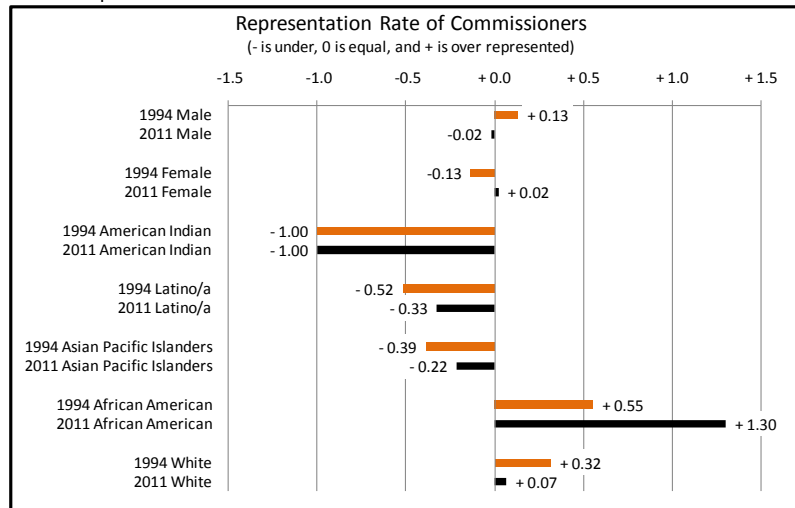
In terms of gender, representation in 2011 is nearly equal, reflected by a rate of -0.02 for Males and +0.02 for Females. The numbers of male and female commissioners more closely approximate that of the general San Francisco population than they did in 1994 when the rates were spread +0.13 for Males and -0.13for Females.

In terms of ethnicity, improvements have been realized in 2011 representation rates for Whites who are now much more in line with the general population (+0.07 in 2011 versus +0.32 in 1994).

Although they continue to be significantly under-represented, some gains have been made for Latinos (-0.33 in 2011 versus -0.52 in 1994) and Asian Pacific Islanders (-0.22 in 2011 versus -0.39 in 1994).

There has been an increased rate of over-representation for African Americans (+1.30 in 2011 versus +0.55 in 1994) due to the increase in seats that occurred during a period of decline in the overall population as already noted.

Chart 3: Representation Rate of Commissioners 1994 v 2011



In 2011, as in 1994, American Indians continue to be absent.

In addition, as shown in Table 6, the closer to power – as measured by size of budget authority – commission seats get, the more women and Asians lose ground.

	Gender		Ethnicity				
	M	F	AI	LAT	API	AA	WH
2010 Census Distribution CCSF	52.8%	46.2%	0.4%	13.8%	32.5%	6.8%	46.6%
2011 Seats for All Commissions	52.5%	47.8%	0.0%	9.3%	25.5%	15.5%	49.7%
Commissions with Budgets > \$10m	53.7%	46.3%	0.0%	10.7%	22.1%	15.4%	51.7%
Top 10 Commissions with Budgets > \$10m	59.4%	40.6%	0.0%	14.5%	23.2%	17.4%	44.9%

Descriptive representation does not insure substantive representation for marginalized communities, but it is proven to be effective for civic engagement. Studies have shown there are substantial benefits for groups when they are represented by those of the same ethnicity and gender. These benefits include stronger ethnic group identity, sense of inclusion, deeper engagement in politics, more positive attitudes towards politics, and greater trust in politicians. Additionally, the level of political alienation felt by women and people of color groups is greatly diminished as descriptive representation increases (Manzano and Sanchez, 2006).

In conclusion, we have demonstrated that equity in representation has been achieved for women in general and gains have been made for two of the five ethnic groups (Latinos and Asian Americans) since 1994. However, upon further scrutiny, there are certain commissions where disparities for women and people of color still exist. Although there can never be, nor maybe should there be, an exact science to appointing commissioners, there remains potential for improving the balance of voices in the governing bodies of the City and County of San Francisco.

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