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Dear Editors,

I am submitting my manuscript, “Municipal Annexations and the Changing Color Line After *Shelby v. Holder*,” for exclusive review by *Sociological Science*. This article contributes to theories and debates on racial segregation, political geography, and the effects of law changes in municipalities across the United States in the recent two decades. I argue that municipal annexations—the practice of expanding municipal boundaries into neighboring, unincorporated territory—are an understudied way that municipalities construct their desired racial composition. I support this argument through an analysis using block- and place-level shapefiles and demographic data from the US Census and the American Community Survey from 2000-2020, which allows me to follow municipalities’ boundaries over time, track their demographic characteristics, and how these changed after the key Supreme Court decision, *Shelby v. Holder*, released many municipalities from seeking federal pre-authorization prior to enacting these boundary changes in accordance with Section 4 (and by extension, Section 5) of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

I find that the ruling did not result in higher probabilities of conducting annexations or result in more annexations that reduce Black and non-Black minority population shares. However, evidence from the pre-*Shelby* period shows that the most likely explanation for these findings is the ineffectiveness of Section 5 even when it was in place, rather than a diffusion of norms upholding minority voting rights that renders it no longer necessary. My findings highlight that theories about between-place racial segregation should nevertheless pay attention to the contribution of municipal boundaries to ongoing spatial inequalities. Because the article addresses ongoing sociological discussions about racial segregation, spatial inequality, and the effectiveness of anti-exclusion laws, sociologists of law, demographers, and geographers would be qualified reviewers. Because I draw explicitly on the work of Daniel Lichter (Cornell University), Domenico Parisi (Mississippi State University), Robert Vargas (University of Chicago) and Noah Durst (Michigan State University) throughout the paper, they may be particularly appropriate reviewers for this manuscript.

The manuscript including the text, notes, and references is 41 pages and 11,629 words. Thank you for considering my manuscript for publication. Please do not hesitate to contact me ([ihzhang@stanford.edu](mailto:ihzhang@stanford.edu)) if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Iris H. Zhang, Ph.D. Candidate, Stanford University