

Representing Latinos: Examining Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Congress

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Abstract

Using an original data set of roll call votes and bill co-sponsorships across three high salience issues (immigration, labor, and education) and one low salience issue (social security), this article analyzes the 111th Congress to assess representation of Latinos. Partisanship is the key determinant in member behavior on voting, not the member's race or ethnicity or constituent demographics. For bill co-sponsorships, Latino members are only more active on high salience issue areas compared with non-Latino members. Increases in Latino population do not influence behavior. The results also indicate that African American and Democratic legislators offer Latinos considerable amounts of substantive representation.

Keywords

representation, Latino politics, legislative behavior, U.S. Congress

The representation of marginalized racial and ethnic groups has been central to the study of democracy. Considerable debate exists in the literature over the value of descriptive representation—that citizens are best served by legislators who share similar attributes to them, such as race, ethnicity, or gender—and whether this leads to the substantive representation of the group's interests. A considerable amount of research on descriptive representation has demonstrated a strong link between descriptive and substantive representation (e.g. Canon 1999; Lublin 1997; Tate 2003), suggesting minority legislators' political activity is substantively different from their white counterparts (Gonzalez Juenke and Preuhs 2012; Minta 2009). Traditionally, scholars have focused on legislative voting behavior and only more recently begun to branch out to non-roll call activity (Grose 2011; Minta 2011; Rocca and Sanchez 2008). Most of the work in this area has focused on African Americans, and Latino representation is particularly understudied in the context of the U.S. Congress and non-roll call behavior. Given the demographic shifts in the country with the Latino population growing to become the largest minority group in the United States (Census 2010), in addition to their underrepresentation in Congress, it is important to examine whether legislators are responsive to issues important to the Latino community. This article asks how does the race and ethnicity of legislators, party, and district demographics influence member behavior in the substantive representation of Latinos.

I assess representation of Latinos across four public policy areas in the context of the 111th Congress of the U.S. House of Representatives, which was held from January 3, 2009, to January 3, 2011, by evaluating roll call votes and bill co-sponsorships. The results indicate Latino, Black, and Democratic legislators are the most active in policy areas of high salience to the Latino community. On low salience issues, Latino members are no different from non-Latinos, and party largely accounts for much of the variation in member behavior. Furthermore, non-Latino members who serve districts with significant Latino populations are not more responsive to Latino interests. The findings contribute to the existing literature by demonstrating that the race and ethnicity of legislators matter, activity beyond roll votes is important, and district demographics do not directly influence the substantive representation of Latinos.

Race, Ethnicity, and Representation

From 2000 to 2010, the Census estimates that 50 percent of the rise in the national population was accounted for by growth in the Latino population (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, and

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Albert 2011), which is approximately 50.5 million people. Given their increasing size, scholars have examined the potential strength and influence of the Latino vote (Alvarez and Abrajano 2012; Barreto et al. 2008; DeSipio 1998; Wallace 2012). Latinos are also increasingly geographically dispersed across congressional districts. Of the 435 districts in the 111th Congress (2009–2010), 139, or roughly 32 percent, are composed of at least 15 percent Latinos. However, the number of Latino representatives, twenty-three in this Congress, which is roughly 5 percent of U.S. House members, is significantly less than their national population of over 16 percent. District context in terms of race and ethnicity can play a key role in influencing member behavior (Lublin 1997). Yet others contend that, independent of district demographics, minority legislators, including Latino legislators, are a distinctly different type of representative resulting in different legislative behavior (Gonzalez Juenke and Preuhs 2012). The significant presence of Latinos in almost one-third of congressional districts necessitates a fuller investigation as to whether all Members of Congress (MCs) are responsive to Latino policy concerns or only certain types of members, the degree to which legislators represent Latino interests, and the impact of Latino MCs.

Descriptive representation assumes there are essential characteristics or experiences shared between people who are of the same gender, race, or ethnicity (Mansbridge 1999), while critics contend this view implies that members of a group can only be adequately represented by legislators drawn from that same group (Swain 1993). Even if descriptive representation does not result in a better policy or more passed legislation, it can still have other important benefits, such as citizens contacting their members of Congress more frequently than they would otherwise (Gay 2002). Descriptive representation has also been found to increase individual sentiments of political efficacy (Emig, Hesse, and Fisher 1996; Sanchez and Morin 2011), strengthen *de facto* legitimacy (Gunier 1994), and result in a more positive overall view of their representative (Gay 2002; Tate 2003). Assessing whether Latino legislators substantively affect legislative actions is important in its own right, but previous work also suggests their presence in the legislature is critical because of the other positive benefits for their Latino constituents as a result of descriptive representation.

A substantial amount of the research on Latino representation has focused on ideology and state legislatures. The reason for the focus on ideology is in part driven by the widespread availability of ideology scores. State legislatures have a greater number of Latino legislators and allow for comparison across states. The earliest work in this area focused on whether Latino MCs acted in a more liberal fashion than non-Latino members (Welch and Hibbing 1984), whereas later work found that Latino

MCs with more liberal ideological scores did not act differently from non-Latino representatives (Hero and Tolbert 1995). Griffin and Newman (2007) have found greater ideological distance between Latino constituents and representatives, whereas Casellas (2011) finds Latino legislators have more liberal ideology scores than non-Latinos. Rouse (2013) finds the effect of ethnicity of state legislators matters at some of stages of the legislative process but is not always consistent within a setting or across states. Other work has demonstrated that Latino state legislators offer significant amounts of substantive representation (Gonzalez Juenke and Preuhs 2012). The role of Black representatives in representing Latino substantive interests is also understudied, though recent work finds little evidence of conflict between Latino and Black political elites at the national level (Hero and Preuhs 2013), thus providing an interesting avenue of inquiry.

Recently, scholars studying Latino representation have begun to investigate non-roll call behavior, such as committee hearings, bill introductions, and co-sponsorship instead of the prior focus on voting behavior. Minta (2009) examines oversight via congressional committee hearings and finds minority legislators, including Latino MCs, are more likely to participate in racial and social welfare hearings compared to white legislators. Rouse (2013) also examines the committee process and finds Latino state legislators in some states are more active on Latino interest legislation being deliberated. Rocca and Sanchez (2008) find that minority legislators on average introduce and co-sponsor less legislation than their white counterparts, though this effect is conditional upon party control of Congress. The work in this area offers conflicting conclusions about the role of Latino representatives and does not compare non-voting behavior with voting behavior.

The literature lacks a clear answer about whether Latino representatives in Congress offer strong substantive representation to Latinos across issues and different types of legislative behavior. Work examining bills introduced and co-sponsored often aggregates the total number of actions when inferring the level of representation, rather than taking into account the substantive nature of the actions, or examining issues highly salient in the Latino community. For example, Wilson (2010) focuses primarily on bills that directly mention or affect the minority group, in terms of Latino or African American interests in the statutory language of the bill, without considering broader issues that may be salient to Latinos. This article seeks to overcome the limitations of existing approaches by focusing on Congress to analyze votes in addition to co-sponsorships across a number of policy areas, while assessing the directionality of those actions and factoring in the salience of different issue areas.

Measuring Representation

Delimiting the boundaries of what should count as representation is based not only on what is theoretically important and significant but also frequently the type of method used to analyze representation. Roll call votes in the U.S. Congress are readily available, easily converted for use in statistical analysis, and ideological scores or ratings such as NOMINATE (Poole and Rosenthal 1996) use these votes to devise their composite indices. The justification for limiting the analysis to voting behavior is rooted in the beliefs that only policy outcomes are what matters, and voting is the only strong signal of a member's position. Despite the plethora of evidence that members devote valuable time to activities not directly tied to floor votes and make careful considerations on how actively to participate (Hall 1996), an overwhelming proportion of the literature focuses on voting behavior (Fiorina 1974; Kingdon 1989; Lublin 1997; Swain 1993; Whitby 1997). In addition, while constituent interests play a role in how members cast their votes (Fiorina 1974), the influence of the party as a main explanatory factor in their voting behavior cannot be understated (Cox and McCubbins 1993). If party can often account for differences in member voting behavior, then the role of other factors in influencing members' decisions may be obscured.

Areas of legislative activity that have increasingly garnered more scholarly attention are those of bill introduction, bill co-sponsorship, and committee behavior in Congress (Hall 1996; Minta 2011; Rocca and Sanchez 2008; Swers 2003). These activities can be valuable because they represent important steps in the deliberation process. Although bill co-sponsorship is not as costly a form of behavior in terms of time investment compared with bill introduction, it still serves many of the same signaling functions and provides needed support to a bill (Kessler and Krehbiel 1996). Bills that receive a large number of co-sponsors are more likely to get pushed faster through the committee process and come up for a floor vote because of higher perceived salience among members (Adler and Wilkerson 2005). Bill introduction and co-sponsorship can also help members achieve their goal of re-election via position taking (Koger 2003; Mayhew 1974). A frequent critique of non-roll call activity is we do not know if a given bill will actually become public law, or is merely symbolic. This critique is only relevant to the analysis here if minority legislators are less effective than non-minority members. Recent work indicates that minority MCs are at least as likely as white MCs to eventually pass bills into public law but are also equally likely to have their bills pass at the committee stage and through the House (Rocca and Sanchez 2011). This evidence mitigates concerns that minority members might be more

active on Latino issues but less able to pass the bills they sponsor and co-sponsor than white MCs.

MCs also face different constraints in voting compared with non-voting behavior; thus, this analysis directly examines both types of activity. Influential variables may play a key role in one type of behavior and not in the other. Given the effects co-sponsorship on the success of bills, importance for constituents, and the resources devoted to engaging in this behavior, I argue it should be viewed as a vital component for measuring representation.

Hypotheses

This article seeks to test several hypotheses concerning race and ethnicity of the legislator, district demographics, type of legislative activity, and issue area. If the argument for descriptive representation holds, then Latino members should be more responsive on those issues salient to Latinos compared with their non-Latino counterparts. Given that congressional votes are consistently either nearly unanimous or split across party lines, I theorize that the difference between Latino and non-Latino MCs will be most evident in non-roll call activity. I contend that Latino MCs are connected to their Latino constituents via shared ethnicity, group consciousness, and linked fate given the evidence that Latinos do possess strong feelings of shared group identity and consciousness (Masuoka 2008; Sanchez 2006) and these feelings motivate a strong desire for descriptive representatives (Schildkraut 2013; Wallace 2014). I theorize the relationship between ethnicity of the member and representation as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Latino representatives will engage in more legislative activity on high salience issues than non-Latino representatives.

Hypothesis 1a (H1a): The difference between Latinos and non-Latinos MCs will be most evident in non-roll call activity.

Conversely, on issues of lower salience to Latino constituents, Latino members' actions may not differ much from non-Latinos. I do not expect race or ethnicity of the MC to affect actions on a low salience issue. I expect the following relationship:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): There will be no substantive difference between Latino and non-Latino representatives' legislative activity on issues of lower salience to the Latino community.

Finally, in terms of substantive representation, district racial and ethnic demographics should influence the

legislative behavior of MCs. Independent of the race or ethnicity of the MC, members should be more responsive to Latino interests when a substantial amount of their district is Latino, given the findings that district context often affects member behavior (Lublin 1997). Similar to Hypothesis 1, I anticipate that this difference will be observed most for non-roll call activity. I theorize this relationship in the last hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Representatives with larger Latino constituencies will engage in more activity on high salience issues than representatives with smaller Latino constituencies, irrespective of the race or ethnicity of the representative.

Hypothesis 3 (H3a): The difference between representatives with larger Latino constituencies and those with smaller constituencies will be most evident in non-roll call activity.

In sum, the literature on race, ethnicity, and representation has indicated that there are significant benefits from descriptive representation. Building on recent work examining non-roll call behavior, I adopt a broader definition of legislative activity in this study. I focus on bill co-sponsorship in addition to roll call votes to theorize that ethnicity matters in terms of representing Latinos.

Issue Areas

To test the hypotheses, I examine four issue areas. The selection of immigration, education, labor, and social security policies stems from the choice to analyze salient policy areas among Latinos, and one policy area that is considered less salient as a basis for comparison.¹ Traditionally, scholars have equated salience with the importance of an issue (Wlezien 2005). A salient issue in this analysis is defined as a policy area that ranks as an important issue to the group being studied. Selecting three salient issues, and determining pro-education, pro-immigration, and pro-labor positions reflected by representatives, is rooted in public opinion data on Latino attitudes.²

The identification of these three issues as salient is very similar to Rouse's (2013) discussion of Latino interests, with the key exception being the relative importance of immigration compared with other issues. Rouse acknowledges immigration is important, however, casts doubt on its ranking as the top issue. Rouse defines the top priorities of Latino legislators as education, health care, jobs, housing, and immigration. Using American National Election Survey (ANES 2008) data, she defines Latinos interests among the Latino public as focused around specific policies within education, health care, public services, and immigration (Rouse 2013, 32).

Immigration is a critical issue to examine given its direct impact on the Latino community. This article contends that immigration has long been an important issue facing the Latino community, as evidenced by numerous polls, and its salience has increased over time. The time period of study for this analysis is 2009–2011. Recent public opinion data, in particular from frequent polls from Latino Decisions, shed light on the rising salience of the issue. For instance, in June 2011, 51 percent of Latino voters ranked immigration as the most important issue (Latino Decisions 2011). Debates over the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM), Act in 2010, the rise in the number of deportations post 2008 under President Obama, the potential for Comprehensive Immigration reform, and passage of state legislation aimed at undocumented immigrants like Arizona's SB 1070 combine to make immigration not only an important issue but also one that is highly personal and affects the daily lives of many Latinos (Wallace 2012). Moreover, salience of the issue among Latinos was demonstrated by their mass mobilization during the immigrant rights marches of spring 2006 in response to federal immigration legislation (Barreto et al. 2009; Lavariega-Monforti 2008; Zepeda-Millán 2011; Zepeda-Millán, forthcoming).

One possible reason Rouse (2013) finds that Latino state legislators she interviewed did not rank the issue of immigration as one of their highest legislative priorities (top three as opposed to top five) may be in part because of context. Despite state legislatures' attempts to regulate this area, the primary right to regulate in this domain, particularly immigration status of individuals, lies with the federal government. In contrast, education policy can be substantially influenced at the state and local levels of government, which may indicate why Latino state legislators ranked education at the very top of their lists.

Education policy is included as an issue given its consistency as the most or second most important issue ranked by Latinos in national public opinion surveys (LNPS 1989; LNS 2006; Martinez-Ebers et al. 2000). Rouse (2013, 27) also finds strong evidence to support not only the importance of education as an issue but also government spending on public schools. Similarly, labor issues concerning availability of jobs, treatment of workers, and labor rights are often cited as a top concern among Latinos (Pew 2008). In the same June 2011 Latino Decisions poll cited earlier, many Latino voters indicated the most important issue today was (1) creating more jobs/unemployment (18%) and (2) Education Reform/schools (18%), thus providing substantial support for including education and labor as high salience issues among Latinos.

When comparing Latino salient issues with those issues among the general public, there are some significant

differences. It does not mean that immigration, education, and labor are not important to the broader American public or to whites. Rather, the likely difference is on the importance of the issues to different groups. In a national Pew Poll (2011) of the general population, eleven other issues ranked above immigration in terms of importance. Similarly, Rouse (2013, 33) argues that Latinos and whites share similar policy concerns, but their relative attachment to these issues is different, creating unique political agendas for Latinos versus whites.

Social Security was selected because it is an issue that affects most constituents in all districts given their likelihood of contributions to and eventual receipt of Social Security funds post retirement. In theory, this should mean most MCs should be concerned about the issue and there is likely a range of activity across legislators, independent of race or ethnicity of the MC. According to Latino public opinion data ranking issue importance, Social Security ranks close to the bottom (Pew 2008). This is not to say that Latinos do not care about Social Security, but rather compared with other issues such as immigration, education, and labor, it is considerably less salient. The inclusion of Social Security in addition to the other three policy areas offers a chance to compare legislators' activity on high salience Latino issues to less salient issues for Latinos. This design allows an assessment of whether there are substantive differences between non-Latino and Latino MC's legislative behavior and whether Latino representatives are more active on all issues irrespective of the salience. However, if Latino MCs do not differ significantly from other MCs in their behavior on Social Security, then this suggests they are only more active in a selective manner on issues that are important to the Latino community.

Models and Data

To determine if Latino members represent Latino interests more actively than non-Latino members, I created a new data set of member actions from the 111th Congress of the U.S. House of Representatives (January 2009–January 2011). This term is appropriate for several reasons. Regarding immigration, this Congress occurs after the 2006 marches that demonstrated the salience of immigration among Latinos. During this time period, the U.S. Congress was also considering significant immigration reform, the DREAM Act (2010), with activists once again mobilized. Second, this term is after the economic crash of 2008, which had a significant impact on Latinos. Labor as an issue became very important because native- and foreign-born Latinos experienced high unemployment rates of 12.9 percent and 11 percent in 2009, respectively, compared with the national rate of 9.2 percent (Kochhar, Espinoza, and Hinze-Pieffer 2010). As a

component of economic recovery programs under President Obama, a national agenda of education policies were ushered in, including the "Race to the Top" program, and these were directly relevant to Latinos given the well-documented Latino education attainment gap (Hugo Lopez 2009). While the 111th Congress is only one term to examine, the time period provides an excellent lens for analyzing the representation of Latino interests on these three highly salient policy issues.

Using the Congressional Record online from THOMAS,³ I gathered all roll call votes and bill co-sponsorships across the four policy areas.⁴ The inclusion of roll call activity in addition to non-roll call activity allows for a cross-comparison of member behavior in addition to assessing whether non-voting activity is an area more ripe for members to differentiate themselves on issues salient to Latinos. I identified 70 bills for labor, 117 for immigration, 140 for education, and 53 on Social Security that were used in the statistical analysis of bill co-sponsorship. In contrast, there were very few actual votes on any of these bills. Immigration had two roll call votes, education four votes, labor four votes, and Social Security one vote. These figures illustrate that a relatively small proportion of member behavior is spent on roll call votes, thus the need to examine other forms of participation to obtain a clearer view of Latino representation. Although the total number of bills may appear small when compared with the broad coding schemes used in the Policy Agendas Project (PAP) or the Congressional Bills Project,⁵ which adopts the topics coding scheme from PAP, there are several reasons why this coding scheme was not adopted in this analysis.⁶ PAP broadly defines general policy areas and co-mingles an issue across major topics and within various subtopics. Another critical reason to re-read all bills to code for appropriate issue area is to be confident to include all relevant bills and avoid missing bills because they are coded under unusual subtopics per the PAP coding scheme. This project aims to define issue areas that are broad enough to encapsulate the general policy domain but narrow enough as to not include irrelevant bills. Thus, in this analysis, I engaged in a direct reading of all bills in the 111th Congress for all 435 members to code the appropriate topic for each bill and ensure all relevant bills are included.

For the purposes of this analysis, immigration policy is defined as all bills specifically referring to visas and naturalization, deportation, penalties for crossings without legal authorization, border control, and the treatment of immigrants during border crossing and/or immigration proceedings.⁷ Education policy included all bills dealing with teacher requirements, funding and appropriations, support of programs such as Head Start, and student loan forgiveness, and curriculum. Labor policy was narrowly defined to include bills that directly affected workers'

rights, unemployment benefits, working conditions, wages, unions, and worker protections. General economic bills such as trade agreements were not included under labor policy. Social Security included almost all bills listed under the keyword Social Security in the legislative record online on THOMAS, with the exception of bills related to State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) or Medicare. Because these bills are very closely related to health care, they were excluded. Social Security bills also included bills related to public retirement, disability, survivors, supplemental security income (SSI), as well as access to these benefits and information about them. Overall, the aim in determining appropriate boundaries was to include bills most directly relevant to each policy area and avoid confounding two policy areas.

To measure the amount of substantive representation, I coded the legislative actions of all 435 members in the four policy areas and summed the total actions to construct an aggregate measure of member behavior in each issue area. There are two different sets of dependent variables. The first measures the total number of roll call votes in each policy area. The second dependent variable measures the total number of member actions in bill co-sponsorship. To identify all bills co-sponsored by a given member for a two-year Congress, one must look at the entire list of bills in each one-year session for all members. For many members, this is over five hundred bills and is organized in a searchable database numerically by bill number or keyword. However, bills are frequently listed under different keywords despite being in the same policy area, thus it was necessary to examine each member's entire record during the 111th Congress.

When identifying the relevant pieces of legislation, one must read the specific text of each bill to determine if it should be included and the directionality of the bill's content. For roll call activity, member actions were coded as +1 if the vote supported immigration, education, labor, or social security, and coded -1 if the vote espoused a position against the relevant policy area. For example, bills that called for harsh criminal and fiscal penalties for crossing the border were coded as negative, anti-immigrant bills. If a member voted against a bill that was positive, a score of -1 was assigned, and the converse for a negative bill. For bill co-sponsorships, the same coding scheme was applied; however, members were only assigned scores for purposeful activity.⁸ For example, if a member co-sponsored 10 bills in favor of immigration, the total actions were summed together for a score of 10. If a member did not introduce or co-sponsor any bills in an issue area, then the member is assigned a zero value. If the bills are negative, such as anti-immigrant bills, then a score of -1 is assigned for each bill.

The main explanatory variables are the racial and ethnic demographics of the district and the race or ethnicity

of the representative. For racial and ethnic district demographics, I coded the percentage of Latinos, Blacks, and Asians in the district, where whites is treated as the baseline category. In terms of the representative's race or ethnicity, I coded whether the member was Asian, Latino, Cuban, Black, where white MCs again represent the baseline category. I separate Cuban MCs from other Latino MCs because unlike most other Latinos, Cubans are significantly more likely to be Republican (García Bedolla 2009).⁹ At the time of this study, all the non-Cuban Latinos were Democrats, in contrast to Cuban representatives. Cuban representatives may not only be more likely to vote Republican because of party loyalty but also might adopt different immigration positions because of the special policies for Cubans who make it to American soil. The inclusion of the racial and ethnic categories allows an assessment of the relationship between the number of substantive acts and the member's race or ethnicity. The purpose is not merely to test white legislator behavior compared with Latino member behavior but to determine if other minority group legislators offer equal substantive representation of Latinos compared with Latino MCs. This finding would provide support for racial coalitions and the creation of mixed majority-minority districts.

The models also include a variety of control variables.¹⁰ First, party is included to assess whether Latino representatives are simply reflecting their party's positions and partisan ideologies, or whether they are in fact acting differently from representatives who are their fellow partisans. It is coded 1 if a member is a Democrat, and 0 otherwise. The number of years in office is another important control because incumbency has a variety of advantages, including more resources, better committee assignments, and closer relations with other members (Jacobson 2001).

Members who feel more secure about re-election may be more likely to deviate from the the party position and might also be more willing to move away from the views of their constituents. Age of the MC is included because older members may be more conservative than younger colleagues, where conservatism is in the opposite direction of Latino viewpoints examined in this study.

Gender is included to examine potential differences in the frequency and type of actions between men and women. Women legislators have a higher propensity to introduce bills related to gender (Swers 2003) and may be more attentive to other minority groups within their district such as Latinos, given a shared experience of marginalization. Gender is coded as 1 if respondents are male, whereas women are coded as 0. The percentage of each district that is urban is also relevant because recent immigrants are often geographically concentrated in urban areas and may lead members in these districts to be

Table 1. Roll Call Votes in the 111th Congress.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Immigration	Education	Labor	Social security
Party	1.710** (0.0873)	4.956** (0.133)	5.073** (0.180)	0.0880** (0.0317)
Latino representatives	0.226 (0.269)	0.547 (0.409)	0.713 (0.555)	-0.0526 (0.0978)
Cuban representatives	1.409** (0.448)	2.172** (0.681)	3.114** (0.925)	0.0478 (0.163)
Black representatives	0.345 (0.218)	0.0649 (0.332)	0.544 (0.451)	-0.113 (0.0794)
Asian representatives	0.491 (0.303)	0.723 (0.460)	1.109 [†] (0.625)	0.0758 (0.110)
Latino %	0.00612 (0.00393)	-0.00278 (0.00597)	-0.00362 (0.00811)	0.000227 (0.00143)
Black %	0.000607 (0.00450)	0.000666 (0.00684)	-0.00702 (0.00929)	0.00150 (0.00164)
Asian %	-0.00993 (0.00900)	-0.0159 (0.0137)	-0.0135 (0.0186)	-0.00495 (0.00327)
Urban %	0.00526 [†] (0.00310)	0.00326 (0.00471)	0.00557 (0.00640)	0.000843 (0.00113)
Years in office	0.00338 (0.00550)	0.00897 (0.00836)	0.0323** (0.0114)	0.001000 (0.00200)
Age	0.000424 (0.00494)	-0.00290 (0.00751)	-0.00857 (0.0102)	-0.000660 (0.00180)
Male	-0.224* (0.111)	-0.0901 (0.169)	-0.306 (0.230)	-0.0433 (0.0405)
Income (median)	0.00000777 [†] (0.00000433)	0.0000105 (0.00000659)	0.00000568 (0.00000894)	-0.000000438 (0.00000158)
Constant	-0.974** (0.352)	-1.881** (0.536)	-2.048** (0.727)	0.913** (0.128)
Observations	435	435	435	435
R ²	.588	.802	.709	.034

Standard errors in parentheses.

[†] $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

more attentive to Latino issues. Median income is included because it may influence the member's level of responsiveness to economic concerns. Median income is also a proxy for class, and both the Congressional Black and Hispanic Caucuses openly state that they are committed not only to the representation of people of their respective minority groups but also the poor.

Results

The statistical analysis uses ordinary least squares (OLS) regression¹¹ because the dependent variables are approximately interval level and measure the sum of roll call votes and co-sponsorships, respectively, in a given policy area.¹² For each of the four issues in roll call and non-roll call activity, I ran separate models to examine differences across policy areas. Moreover, given the four areas

represent a mix of low salience and high salience issues, combining them would obscure whether Latino members are only more active on high salience issues to the Latino community.¹³ The results for each of the roll call activity models are presented in Table 1.¹⁴

Across all four issues on voting behavior, party is the dominant predictor of member behavior and results in substantial effects in Models 1–3. MCs who are Democrats are more likely to vote in favor of bills promoting immigration, education, labor, and social security. Latino representative is not significant in any of the models, nor is black representative. The effect of an Asian representative is significant at the 10 percent level on labor; however, the substantive effects are small with a coefficient of 1.4. Cuban representative is significant and positive across the three high salience issue area. The finding regarding Cuban representatives may be explained in part by Cuban

Table 2. Bill Co-sponsorship in the 111th Congress.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Immigration	Education	Labor	Social security
Party	4.923** (0.335)	5.368** (0.625)	7.647** (0.479)	1.214** (0.176)
Latino representatives	2.125* (1.034)	3.744 [†] (1.925)	3.946** (1.475)	0.169 (0.542)
Cuban representatives	3.351 [†] (1.723)	5.311 [†] (3.208)	3.270 (2.458)	0.728 (0.903)
Black representatives	3.603** (0.839)	5.126** (1.562)	4.746** (1.197)	0.0201 (0.440)
Asian representatives	3.801** (1.164)	9.355** (2.168)	2.643 (1.661)	-0.0181 (0.610)
Latino %	0.0309* (0.0151)	-0.0221 (0.0281)	-0.0446* (0.0215)	-0.0123 (0.00792)
Black %	-0.0285 (0.0173)	-0.0517 (0.0322)	-0.0525* (0.0247)	-0.00972 (0.00907)
Asian %	0.0739* (0.0346)	-0.0587 (0.0644)	0.0241 (0.0494)	-0.0315 [†] (0.0181)
Urban %	0.0305* (0.0119)	0.0665** (0.0222)	0.0771** (0.0170)	0.00794 (0.00624)
Years in office	0.0652** (0.0211)	-0.0570 (0.0394)	0.0527 [†] (0.0302)	-0.00738 (0.0111)
Age	-0.0250 (0.0190)	0.0475 (0.0353)	0.0232 (0.0271)	0.0110 (0.00995)
Male	-0.104 (0.428)	-0.127 (0.797)	-1.756** (0.611)	0.136 (0.224)
Income (median)	-3.56E-06 (1.67E-05)	2.7E-05 (3.1E-05)	-3.36E-06 (2.38E-05)	-2.32E-06 (8.73E-06)
Constant	-4.187** (1.354)	-5.000* (2.522)	-5.726** (1.932)	0.641 (0.710)
Observations	435	435	435	435
R ²	.564	.316	.559	.120

Standard errors in parentheses.

[†] $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

representatives often voting with Democrats on issues that matter to Latinos despite being Republican. Overall, with the exception of Cuban representative (which is four MCs), the race or ethnicity of the member is not an influential factor across the policy domains. It is not clear that the roll call models provide any evidence that non-Cuban Latino representatives result in a substantial difference in voting behavior across these issues. Thus, the link between descriptive and substantive representation on roll call voting seems weak at best.

Turning to the results of the co-sponsorship models in Table 2, a different pattern emerges. The results for immigration in Model 1 indicate several important variables for understanding legislative action. Similar to the roll call models, the effect of a Democrat is statistically significant for the total number of bills co-sponsored. The

effect of party is substantial because Democrats are associated with an increase of nearly five actions. The effect of party is not surprising given the orientation of the Democratic Party toward immigration as an issue.

When turning to the racial and ethnic demographics of the legislators, several interesting findings emerge. Latino representative is significant and has a positive effect on immigration activity and is associated with two additional actions. However, the size of the effect is smaller than that of party. The effect of a Black MC and an Asian MC is also significant and positive with slightly larger effects of three additional actions. With regard to Asian MCs, the total number of Asian representatives is very small at only eight members, and this result is quite sensitive to the omission of two especially active members.¹⁵ Regarding district racial and ethnic demographics, both

the percentage of Latinos and Asians are positive and statistically significant; however, their substantive effects are quite small with coefficients of 0.03 and 0.07, respectively. For instance, it would take over a 30 percent increase in the proportion of Latinos in a district to result in a single increase in legislative action. This suggests district characteristics have little bearing on member behavior in this area. When turning to the control variables, the percent urban and years in office are positive and significant but have little substantive effect. For immigration, the results indicate the main explanatory variables to account for legislative behavior in favor of immigration are partisan affiliation and the race and ethnicity of members rather than district demographics.

In Model 2 on education, the results are very similar to immigration. Being a Democrat is once again a strong predictor of the amount of activity with large substantive effects of five actions, which is also comparable with the effect of Black MC. Asian MC is also positive and significant and demonstrates considerable substantive effects with nine actions but is highly sensitive to the inclusion of two members. Latino MC is significant at the 10 percent level; however, the *p* value of .052 is just outside of the conventional 5 percent cutoff. The findings for Cuban representative are positive and sizable in the co-sponsorship models on immigration and education but just beyond traditional levels of significance at the 10 percent level. This may be in part due to the small number of Cuban representatives, making it more difficult to reach a higher level of significance. By contrast, district racial and ethnic demographic variables do not have a statistically significant impact on legislative activity for education.

Turning to the last salient public policy area of labor in Model 3, the results are nearly identical to the two previous areas. The effect of party remains strong, positive, and significant. Both Latino and Black MCs are significant and positive; however, the effect of an Asian MC is not significant. Latino and black district demographics are significant; however, the size of each coefficient is quite small and negative. Taken together, the results suggest relatively little support for the role of the racial and ethnic demographics of the district on greater legislative action in favor of Latino constituents. Their effect is either not statistically significant or it is inconsistent across models because it changes in directionality, thus providing little evidence for H3 and H3a.

Finally, in the last public policy area of Social Security in Model 4, the only significant variables are party and percent of the district that is Asian (at the 10% level). The effect of party is positive and significant; however, the substantive effect is small compared with the other three areas. The motivation for including this issue was to assess whether Latino members are more active on all issues, or whether they are selectively active only on highly salience

issues to the Latino community. The results for this model provide support for H2, that Latino MCs are only more active on high salience issues. If Latinos were simply more active on co-sponsorship across all issue areas, then a significant effect in this model for Latino representative should have been observed.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this analysis have implications for the study of race, ethnicity, and representation, and more broadly for how best to measure legislative activity. The primary avenue of investigation was to determine the effect of district demographics, and race and ethnicity of the member on legislative activity of varying salience to Latinos. The analysis provides five main findings. First, when examining representation on the three areas most salient to the Latino public, Latino members had a substantial impact on the amount of bills co-sponsored. While the effect of party remained strong, the ethnicity of the representative is also critical in determining the total number of actions across immigration, education, and labor bills. Substantively this is important given that the current race and representation literature fails to offer a clear answer to whether Latinos make a difference in terms of representing Latino interests in Congress. This work provides a resounding yes to the question of whether it matters to have Latino representatives in terms of non-roll call activity. This finding also builds on the work of Gonzalez Juenke and Preuhs (2012) by arguing that race and ethnicity of the member are critical in offering substantive representation. The results may provide further justification for additional Latino majority–minority districts if they result in more Latinos elected to office.

Second and somewhat unexpectedly, the results provide strong evidence that African American MCs often substantively reflect the positions and priorities of Latinos. One possible explanation for this finding is general overlap of issues of interest to both Black and Latino constituencies, such as education and labor (Canon 1999; Lublin 1997). However, this does not explain why African American representatives are also very active on immigration policy. When examining the district composition of the thirty-nine African American representatives, in only thirteen instances did their districts contain more than 15 percent Latinos. Thus, this result is not easily explained by shared ethnicity or Latino district demographics. One potential explanation is the growing Black foreign-born population, which now totals roughly 10 percent of the Black population according to 2010 Census data.

Grose (2011, 182) notes that Black legislators in Black-minority districts with a majority of minorities can more easily win. He raises the question of whether Black representatives in these districts would represent Latinos

substantively and suggests future research should look more closely at this question. The findings from this article suggest that Black MCs offer significant amount of substantive representation independent of Latino district demographics. These findings also contribute to Minta's (2011, 117) findings that Black and Latino MCs worked together on issue areas affecting both Latino and Black communities. Similarly, it extends Hero and Preuhs (2013, 145), which finds little to no conflict between Black and Latino representatives on roll call votes, to non-roll activity such as bill co-sponsorship. These results have implications for how we think about minority representation and the creation of majority–minority districts. Lublin (1997) suggests racial and ethnic minorities may be better off with Democrat MCs rather than minority members elected via majority–minority districts due to the effects on surrounding districts. These results may indicate that Latinos could be well served by Latino and Black MCs.

Third, the racial and ethnic composition of the district does not appear to substantively affect the amount of activity on immigration, education, and labor actions engaged in by MCs. These findings build on the work of Casellas and Leal (2013) who found that district demographics did not affect voting behavior on immigration bills in the 109th and 110th Congresses by incorporating additional issue areas and non-voting activity such as bill co-sponsorship. The roll call models here also provide confirmation their results extend to a variety of issues in the 111th Congress. A commonly held assumption in the literature on race and representation is that members will become more responsive to minority groups if the size of those groups is significant, independent of the racial or ethnic background of the representative. However, the findings of this investigation dispute that assumption and in fact find that for legislative behavior in this area, it appears to be more important to examine the attributes of the MC than that of their constituency.¹⁶

Fourth, the design of the analysis allowed for the comparison of member behavior across three high salience issues and one low salience issue. Although only one low salience issue is examined in this analysis, it is important to note that the Social Security findings could reasonably be extended to other low salience issue areas.¹⁷ It is an ideal test case of a lower salience issue due to the universal nature of Social Security potentially affecting nearly all constituents in every district. The similarity in legislative behavior on Social Security independent of race or ethnicity of the MC provides additional strength to my argument that Latino representatives are not simply more active in all areas but rather selectively active on high salience issues. This result builds on existing work by Rocca and Sanchez (2008) who find minority group members are more active when Congress is Democratically controlled, by

adding further nuance concerning the effect of issue salience on MCs level of activity.

Finally, the justification for examining representation beyond roll call voting is bolstered by the results of this study. An analysis based on solely roll call votes would muddy and greatly limit claims that descriptive representation matters for Latinos in terms of substantive representation. The bill co-sponsorship findings indicate that this type of legislative activity is where legislators are less constrained by party and more able to directly serve Latino interests through deliberative action to move forward bills on salient policy issues. An examination of the legislative record indicates that a considerable amount of member action is spent on non-roll call legislative activity. The results reveal meaningful differences in member behavior on non-roll call activity, whereas roll call analysis for Latino representation often showed party to be the only significant variable.

Future work should probe deeper into explaining why these differences between Latino and non-Latinos MCs are observed including the role of other minority legislators in representing Latino interests. This analysis focused on the 111th Congress; however, the findings are not necessarily limited to this particular term. The salience of immigration, education, and labor among Latinos was demonstrated in public opinion polls before and after this legislative term. A considerable amount of legislative activity, both votes and co-sponsorships, on these issues occurred in the 110th and 112th Congresses. Nevertheless, future work should examine additional Congresses and assess how dynamics across members in terms of coordination on policy areas may affect whether the findings from this analysis are applicable.

Future studies should also examine whether the findings are consistent across more high salience and low salience policy areas, as well as other types of legislative activity. When assessing representation, it is critical to embrace a broader conception that moves beyond roll call votes to examine a wider range of legislative activity. Ultimately, this analysis attempts to elucidate the effect of descriptive representation on substantive representation for Latinos and makes a plea for studying non-roll call behavior when analyzing legislative behavior and minority group interests.

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Notes

1. It should be noted that immigration, education, and labor are not the only salient Latino policy areas. In recent surveys, war, crime, and health care are other top priorities (Lopez and Minushkin 2008). See <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/90.pdf> for more details. The selection of labor, education, and immigration was due to both high salience among Latino voters and the regular presence of bills in these areas. Bills on crime and war are few and far between and rarely reach the floor for voting. Attitudes on the War in Iraq are also much more divided than some of the other issues, which makes it difficult to define directionality. Health care bills are numerous but are typically quite lengthy and contain many different provisions. Coding the directionality of this type of bill would be more difficult and subjective compared with the relatively straightforward and concise nature of education, immigration, and labor bills. Future work in the area would aim to cover additional high salience policy areas.
2. See Pew (2008), Pew NSL (2002), Pew NSL Education (2004), Pew NSL Civic Participation (2004), and LNS (2006). For an additional discussion of the coding of positions and directionality, see the "Selection and Coding of Issue Areas" section of the supplementary appendix (<http://prq.sagepub.com/supplemental/>).
3. See <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.php>.
4. Bill introductions in the four areas were also collected; however, 80 to 90 percent of MCs in each area would be assigned a 0 value, thus assessing a small amount of member behavior. When the models are run on only bill introductions, only party is statistically significant. Results are presented in the supplementary appendix.
5. <http://www.policyagendas.org> and <http://congressional-bills.org/>.
6. For a longer discussion of this coding and bill identification compared with Policy Agendas Project (PAP) or the Congressional Bills Project, see the supplementary appendix section "Coding Scheme Compared to PAP and Congressional Bills Project."
7. This is a more narrowly defined version of immigration policy that is embraced by policy experts in this area who discuss immigration and immigrant legislation together. Bills dealing with immigrants' access to services, such as Medicare or the education system, have not been included in this analysis because these issues are not primarily about immigration. Moreover, the number of bills in this category is small, totaling three additional bills in this term. The results do not differ if these bills are included in the analysis.
8. Most of the bills considered in this analysis contain only a few provisions, for example, increasing funds for science programs in schools and increasing math education. Very few bills in these policy areas are large omnibus bills. However, even when a bill contains multiple provisions, it is typically uniform in its directionality. For instance, a bill is unlikely to simultaneously raise minimum wage and greatly curtail the rights of workers to unionize. A bill with such varied directionality would be politically risky for the introducer in terms of probability of success but also create difficulty in obtaining co-sponsors, thus it is not a common occurrence. On occasion, large comprehensive bills are introduced and co-sponsored, and directionality is determined by the overall nature of the bill. For example, an immigration bill with five positive provisions and one enforcement component would still be coded as a positive bill. MCs decide to vote yes or no and/or decide to become a co-sponsor based on the entirety of the bill. Similarly, an MC is not likely to co-sponsor a host of bills that are anti-immigration and pro-immigration because MCs take a position on one side of the issue.
9. Critics may suggest that separating Latino legislators from Cubans is problematic. When both categories are collapsed into one Latino legislator variable, the results for all of the co-sponsorship models stay the same concerning Latino representative. In the roll call models, the effect of a Latino Representative is not consistent in significance across models, and the coefficients are very small. The results can be found in the supplementary appendix.
10. Variables coded using information from *The Almanac of American Politics* (Barone and Cohen 2009).
11. One alternative to ordinary least squares (OLS) could be a count model such as negative binomial regression. However, due to the coding of bills in terms of directionality, the values assume both positive and negative totals. Count models require that all values be at or above zero, thus OLS is more appropriate.
12. The dependent variable for immigration ranges from -12 to 19, for education -1 to 49, for labor -7 to 32, and for social security -1 to 11. Table S5 in the supplementary appendix contains descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables.
13. Salience within each policy area is not examined due to the wide range of bills and lack of public opinion data to support decisions regarding weighting within-issue salience. However, this would be a fruitful avenue of inquiry in future research.
14. All analysis conducted using Stata 13.
15. These are Representatives Judy Chu and Mike Honda.
16. Critics may suggest that the lack of finding in this area is a product of multicollinearity between racial and ethnic district demographics, and the racial and ethnic background of the members. While the correlation between non-Cuban Latino representatives and Latino percent in the district is 63 percent, Cuban representatives and Latino percent is 27 percent, and black representatives and percentage of African Americans in the district is 75 percent, the variation inflation factor (VIF) of each of the variables indicates the degree of multicollinearity is not severe. The largest value of VIF in the data set is for Latino percentage, and the VIF is 3 (black percentages is 2.88), which is well under the standard of a VIF below 10 or even the more stringent cutoff of 4 (O'Brien 2007). Moreover, an additional model specification without the racial and ethnic district demographics reveals the results for Latino and black representatives hold. See supplementary appendix, Table S1 for results.

17. The main argument of the article is that Latino representatives matter. The inclusion of an additional low salience issue will not undermine that argument because the models are run on each policy area independently. In other words, the findings on the salient issues will hold independent of the inclusion of additional low salience issues. Social Security is included to make a sub-argument that Latino representatives are only active on Latino issues. For it to be an outlier low salience issue, that would imply there is a strong theoretical reason to expect Social Security is an irregular case and assumes that Latino MCs are more active on all issues. Neither of these assumptions have strong theoretical grounding; however, future work should examine additional low salience issues.

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