

Examining Latino Support for Descriptive Representation: The Role of Identity and Discrimination*

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Objectives. To determine the role of linked fate, cultural factors, and experiences with discrimination on support for descriptive representation among Latinos. *Methods.* Utilizing data from the Latino National Survey (2006) and ordered logistic regression this article analyzes the impact of Latino-linked fate, cultural factors, and personal and group experiences with discrimination on desire for Latino representation. *Results.* A higher sense of attachment to Latino-linked fate and Spanish results in a greater desire for Latino representatives. Similarly, Latinos who believed Latinos suffered from group discrimination were in greater support of Latino representatives. *Conclusions.* By examining descriptive representation from the perspective of how Latinos feel, this investigation improves our understanding of how attachment to a linked fate, language, and experiences with discrimination work to influence support for Latino representatives.

One of the primary steps in examining minority representation is determining the extent of public support for candidates of the same race and ethnicity. Do minority group members want members of Congress (MOC) who look like them, and if so what factors influence their support? Tate (2003) and Gay (2002) examined black support for black representatives; however, this area has been overlooked with regards to Latino constituents' attitudes toward Latino legislators. This article focuses on Latinos and examines whether Latinos want Latino candidates, and which factors lead to a greater desire for Latino representatives. This question is particularly important if the goal is to increase the total number of Latino legislators, since Latino candidates often need Latino voters' support to win electorally (Casellas, 2009) and Latino identity influences Latino political behavior (Barreto, 2006; Sanchez, 2006). The U.S. Census in 2010 indicates there are 50.5 million Latinos, which is 16.3 percent of the total population, and reifies Latinos as the largest minority group in the United States.¹ This increase in total population has been accompanied by the geographic dispersion of Latinos across many different states in the United States, as well as many individual congressional districts.

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¹See (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>) for more information.

In over one-quarter of the congressional districts in the United States, Latinos are 15 percent of the constituency.

Despite the burgeoning Latino population, the total number of Latino representatives in the U.S. Congress has not grown in a corresponding fashion. In 1988, there were 10 Latino U.S. House members and at the start of 113th session in 2013, the number of representatives will have more than doubled to 28 members. Despite notable gains, these figures reveal the disjuncture between the size of the Latino population and the number of Latino representatives. Latinos comprise more than 16 percent of the U.S. population, but Latino representatives make up only about 6 percent of the total members of the House of Representatives.² Parity between the Latino population size and number of representatives would translate into approximately 69 Latino members of the 435 House members. The considerable underrepresentation of Latinos in the Congress provokes three different types of important scholarly questions. First, why are there so few Latino representatives? Do Latino members of Congress behave differently than other legislators? Finally, do Latinos want to have Latino representatives, and what individual constituent characteristics and experiences affect this desire, which is the exclusive focus of this article.

This article investigates the relationship between Latinos' individual beliefs and experiences about discrimination, linked fate, and language, and their consequences on the desire for descriptive representation. Specifically, this analysis attempts to determine whether stronger attachments and belief in Latino-linked fate and preserving Spanish, as well as perceptions and experiences with personal and group discrimination lead to a higher desire for Latino representatives. The findings indicate that Latinos who possess strong feelings of linked fate and attachment to Spanish are more likely to believe that having Latino candidates is very important. The effect of linked fate and desire to keep Spanish on Latinos is not only statistically significant, but also demonstrates considerable substantive effects. Perceptions that personal experience with discrimination occurred due to being Latino, and the belief that Latinos as a group are subjected to discrimination, also have effects on support for Latino candidates, though the effects are much smaller compared to linked fate and language preservation.

This article proceeds as follows. The next section examines the race and representation literature and the benefits of descriptive representation. Then, it turns toward the theory and hypotheses with a discussion of how linked fate,

²However, some scholars may argue that this overrepresents the disparity, since a large proportion of Latinos are not eligible to vote due to citizenship status. However, congressional district boundaries are drawn using Census figures based on total U.S. population, and representation is not constrained to only citizens or, more specifically, voting citizens. Many members of Congress devote considerable amounts of their casework to immigration issues, and are thus working on behalf of people who cannot yet legally vote. Even if we consider the Latino proportion of the voting electorate in the 2008 election was 9 percent and recent estimates suggest 10 percent for 2012, this would still roughly translate into 43 Latino representatives in the House of Representatives.

language, and discrimination operate to influence desire for Latino representation. The subsequent section discusses the data, methods, and the findings from the models. Finally, it concludes with a discussion of the implications for Latino public opinion and representation.

Race, Ethnicity, and Representation

Considerable debate exists in the literature over the value of descriptive representation. Pitkin (1967) discussed the notion of descriptive representation whereby people are represented by those who share similar attributes to them, such as race, ethnicity, or gender. Scholars of representation have examined various questions concerning the value of representation and whether it leads to better overall representation for members of a given group. In essence, does descriptive representation lead to better substantive representation? The extant literature on race and representation has largely been answered with a resounding yes and found that representatives who share the racial and ethnic traits of a minority group do offer greater substantive representation to members of that group (Mansbridge, 1999; Whitby, 1997; Cannon, 1999; Lublin, 1997; Tate, 2003; Casellas, 2010; Grose, 2011). Substantive representation refers to the actual acts and behaviors of the legislator that are beneficial to constituents. The most commonly utilized metric assesses the degree to which the representative has acted in ways consistent with individual and group interests and policy preferences. The underlying assumption of descriptive representation is that there is something intrinsic about the shared characteristics that lead the legislator to act differently than a member who does not share those attributes. The actual mechanism by which these representatives are motivated to behave differently has been speculated to include shared group consciousness (Tate, 2003), linked fate (Minta, 2011), and electoral concerns (Grose, 2011).

A substantial amount of scholarly work has provided ample evidence of the multitude of positive goods that can be gained from descriptive representation, thus, making it a desirable outcome for minority group members. For example, black representatives are more likely to vote in favor of bills that are congruent with black public opinion or promote concerns of the black community (Cannon, 1999; Tate, 2003). Moreover, there is a growing body of research indicating that representatives of color engage in nonvoting legislative behavior that also increases substantive representation, such as bill introductions, bill co-sponsorships, or oversight hearings (Gamble, 2007; Sanchez and Rocca, 2008; Rouse, 2008; Wallace, 2010; Grose, 2011; Minta, 2011). Some scholars might question the actual benefit of nonvoting activity, since these actions may not turn into enacted legislation given the small percentage of bills introduced that successfully navigate the legislative process (Davidson et al., 2008). However, even putting this issue aside, scholars have found support for other tangible benefits of descriptive representation. For example, descriptive representation can lead to greater feelings of self-efficacy and trust in

government (Pantoja and Segura, 2003; Sanchez and Morin, 2011). Moreover, the presence of Latino candidates can increase Latino voter mobilization (Barreto, 2007). Living in a majority-minority district, whose aim is for descriptive representation, can lead members of that group to achieve higher rates of political participation (Gay, 2001). Additionally, constituents may be more likely to seek help from their representatives or contact them more frequently (Tate, 2003). The presence of minority group members in Congress can dramatically change the ways in which constituents feel or interact with members, and the type of legislative activity in which their member engages.

Given the positive outcomes gained with minority representation, one can conclude that members of minority groups might place greater importance on candidates and hence representatives of their own group. However, Latino and black views of representatives, or what leads them to support having a member from their own group, remains largely understudied. Additionally, whether minority groups evaluate minority group representatives in a more positive fashion than members from a different group has not been examined widely with the exception of Tate (2003), who finds evidence that blacks do evaluate black representatives more positively than white representatives. Tate argues that these constituents are aware that black members of Congress have been more active and consistent in championing black interests than white members, and consequently have a high desire for black representatives (2003:155). Regarding Latino desire for Latino representatives, Schildkraut (2012) found that Latinos who are less acculturated and those who do not primarily identify as American are more likely to desire Latino representatives. For Latinos to obtain all the benefits from descriptive representation, Latinos need to be elected in the first place. This article seeks to address the initial step of the determinants of Latino support for descriptive representation. It examines Latino desire for Latino representatives by investigating the relationship between discrimination, linked fate, attachment to Spanish, and consequent desires for descriptive representation of Latinos.

Theory and Hypotheses

Given that empirical studies have demonstrated descriptive representation often leads to better representation of the substantive interests of minority groups, in addition to other tangible benefits of descriptive representation, I assume that descriptive representation would likely be favored by the majority of Latinos. However, I do not assume that support is uniform across all Latinos, but instead expect that individual characteristics and beliefs will affect the relative level of desire for Latino representation. This analysis focuses on Latino-linked fate, cultural factors such as attitudes about language, and perceptions of discrimination as the primary independent variables of interest in influencing support for descriptive representation.

Group identity, an attachment to a larger group label that includes both social and political elements, has been characterized as a political resource that can potentially be used for minority group mobilization (Dawson, 1994; Marquez, 2003). Dawson (1994) proposed the concept of linked fate that holds that those with strong perceptions of linked fate believe that outcomes of their individual fates are related to outcomes of other members of their racial or ethnic group. For Latinos, the application of linked fate has often been met with skepticism given the heterogeneity of Latinos in terms of national origin groups, immigration histories, generation status, and doubts over attachment to a Latino panethnic label. Scholars have found evidence of strong attachment to national origin group by Latinos (Jones-Correa and Leal, 1996; de la Garza et al., 1992), but more recent work has attempted to ascertain the degree to which Latinos also identify with a larger panethnic label rather than simply their national origin group (Masuoka, 2006). Empirical evidence points to a growing notion of panethnic identity (Fraga et al., 2010) with some arguing that the strength of Latino-linked fate is particularly dependent on social integration (Sanchez and Masuoka, 2010).

I argue that people with the strongest beliefs in Latino-linked fate will be the most likely to place a high importance on desiring a Latino candidate. The logic being that if respondents feel that outcomes of the group are related to their own success, they would be more likely to trust a Latino representative who would best serve their interests since their fates are related. This leads to the first hypothesis to be tested in this analysis.

H₁: Latinos with a stronger sense of Latino-linked fate will place higher importance on a Latino candidate than those with weaker sense of Latino-linked fate.

Some scholars have argued that another component of creating or increasing Latino panethnic identity may be commonly shared factors, such as the Spanish language (Sanchez, 2006; Lopez and Espiritu, 1990). Spanish is an important cultural symbol that unifies Latinos as a group since it is a commonly shared trait (Schildkraut, 2003; Huntington, 2004). Usage of Spanish has also been demonstrated to be positively associated with increased Latino panethnic consciousness (Masuoka, 2008). Those who are Spanish dominant and believe Spanish is important to retain may be more likely to want Latino representatives because culturally they feel Latino representatives are the most similar to themselves. This leads to two additional hypotheses.

H₂: Latinos with a strong desire to maintain the ability to speak Spanish will place a higher importance on a Latino candidate than those with a weaker attachment to Spanish.

H₃: Latinos who take the survey instrument in Spanish will place a higher importance on a Latino candidate.

In addition to linked fate and cultural factors regarding language, experiences and beliefs about discrimination are also likely to influence desires for a Latino candidate. Discrimination can operate in a multitude of ways to affect

political behavior and attitudes. Perceptions of discrimination can lead to increased engagement in political activity (Duncan, 1999; Miller et al., 1981). However, experiences with discrimination can lead to negative political attitudes, such as lower levels of trust in government (Schildkraut, 2005). There is evidence of a phenomenon of personal-group discrepancy, where individuals tend to underreport their personal experiences with discrimination and instead report discrimination against their group as a whole (Crosby, 1984; Taylor, 1990). Respondents may be more likely to distance themselves from their own personal experiences with discrimination and report these experiences as group discrimination. Consequently, this analysis tests both personal and group perceptions of discrimination independently to assess if there are differences in the reported impact of each type of discrimination on support for Latino representatives. Personal experiences with discrimination and belief that discrimination occurs because people are Latino may cause respondents to strictly prefer members of their in-group and reject or be less trustful of members of out-groups. Thus, experiences and perceptions of discrimination may lead to a greater desire for descriptive representation. This leads to the fourth and fifth hypotheses.

H₄: Latinos who believe Latinos as a group have faced discrimination will be more likely to want a Latino candidate than those who have limited beliefs in group discrimination.

H₅: Latinos who have experienced personal discrimination will be more likely to want a Latino candidate than those who have not had discriminatory experiences.

Data and Methods

To analyze the effect of linked fate, cultural factors focused on language, and discrimination in support for descriptive representation, the statistical models utilize data from the Latino National Survey (2006). The survey was conducted from the fall of 2005 through the summer of 2006 via telephone. It included 8,634 respondents across 15 states and the District of Columbia. Respondents were greeted in both Spanish and English and then given the option to take the survey in the language they preferred.

The dependent variable measures desire for Latino descriptive representation. While it would have been ideal to measure both desire for a Latino representative and beliefs about whether that representative has helped Latinos, only the former was asked in the survey instrument given to the whole sample. The Colorado subsample of 400 respondents was specifically asked to evaluate whether the 2004 election of Ken Salazar to the Senate, and John Salazar to the U.S. House, led to better representation for Latinos. It is worth noting that in this subsample of the larger sample, approximately 56.9 percent of respondents felt there was some significant improvement in representation

for Latinos. However, the focus here is on support for descriptive representation, though examining attitudes toward substantive representation in an area worthy of future study.

This analysis employs the following question to assess desire for a Latino representative. The interviewer asked: "People can prefer a candidate for a variety of reasons. How important is it for you that a candidate is Latino?" Respondents were offered a three-point answer scale: not important at all, somewhat important, or very important. While the baseline assumption might be that distribution across answers would be limited because all members of the minority group would strongly prefer a representative from their own group, this is not evident from the data. Roughly half of the respondents indicate it was very important (49.6 percent) to have a Latino candidate, while less than a third believed it was not important at all (26.8 percent). Combining the responses of somewhat important and very important indicate a widespread, though by no means universal, desire for descriptive representation for Latinos of around 70 percent across all respondents.

To assess which characteristics influenced support for Latino candidates, the statistical models include three different broad categories of independent variables—identity-based variables, discrimination variables, and demographic controls. To measure the role of various identity-related variables, several different components of the survey were used. The instrument contained a direct self-identification question asking "whether you considered yourself Hispanic or Latino" and fully 100 percent of respondents indicated affirmatively. The lack of variation in response rendered this question inappropriate for this analysis. One way to conceptualize identity is to use measures that capture respondents' attitudes toward Latinos as a group. One critical component of conceptualizing minority group identity is the role of linked fate (Dawson, 1994). The model utilizes a specific question on linked fate that asked respondents: "How much does your doing well depend on other Latinos doing well?" The models also incorporate a question on perceptions of Latino racialized identity, asking "whether Latinos are a distinct racial group."³ This measure is included in addition to linked fate since scholars have argued that racial identity is a component of Latino group identity (Masuoka, 2008).

Another avenue for exploring Latino identity⁴ utilized in this study is attachment to Spanish. Spanish is an important cultural symbol that both unifies Latinos as a group, and also can polarize the white community against Latinos (Schildkraut, 2003; Huntington, 2004). I theorize that respondents who wanted to conduct the interview in Spanish likely had a strong attachment to Spanish. Additionally, respondents who felt it was important to retain

³The text of the main identity and discrimination variables is contained in Appendix 1 in the replication materials.

⁴The use of linked fate, racial identity, and attachment and use of Spanish are not meant to be an exhaustive list of all variables that could be categorized as identity variables. Rather, this analysis focuses on these variables since they are the most likely to influence the desire for Latino candidates.

Spanish-language fluency either for themselves or their family could also be characterized as people with strong attachment to shared Latino cultural factors. All of the identity variables operate such that we should expect those with stronger attachment to Spanish and linked fate to be more likely to desire a Latino candidate because they perceive Latino candidates as having greater factors in common and may be more likely to better represent them because their fates are linked.

Measurements of discrimination included both individual and group experiences and perceptions of discrimination. The LNS offers the ability to analyze perceptions of individual and group discrimination separately. This is a distinct advantage considering the evidence that individuals tend to underreport their personal experiences with discrimination and instead report group discrimination. To assess the impact of attitudes toward group discrimination, the models relied on a question asking respondents whether Latinos could get ahead if they worked hard. The instrument also contained several personal discrimination questions that were utilized to create a binary measure of personal experiences with discrimination. Questions on personal experiences asked whether respondents had been discriminated against in a range of settings, such as the workplace, housing, by police, and in restaurants or stores.⁵ Finally, an additional question asking if respondents felt their personal experiences were a result of being Latino was also included in the model.⁶ Together these measures provide an opportunity to evaluate how discrimination relates to support for a Latino representative.

Control variables on sociodemographic traits included party identification, gender, education, income, and age. Party identification is critical to include in the analysis since party often plays a dominant role in the candidate choice by voters. Moreover, in the case of Latinos, Democrat respondents may be more likely to favor Latino candidates given that over two of three of Latinos identify as Democrats (LNS, 2006). Additionally, with the exception of Cuban representatives, during the time the instrument was fielded, nearly all other Latino representatives were Democrats. Gender could potentially play a role in support for descriptive representation. In legislative politics, women are a vastly underrepresented group given their national population; Latina respondents may place even more importance on some form of descriptive representation and find the need for a Latino candidate to be quite high. Education and income could operate in ways such that those respondents on the lower end of each spectrum may feel that representation by members of their own group is more important than those with higher education and income

⁵The binary variable was coded as 1 if a respondent answered yes to any of the four personal discrimination questions. I also ran the models using a composite score of all personal discrimination measures to assess if more experiences with discrimination had a different effect than the binary measure. There were no substantive differences between the two models. See Appendix 1 online for details on question language.

⁶Respondents were coded as 1 if they answered that they were discriminated against because they were Latino and 0 for all other respondents.

levels. Finally, age may become relevant since individuals tend to become more conservative as they age. At the time the instrument was fielded, Latino candidates were overwhelmingly liberal and Democrats, thus leading to placing a lower importance for a Latino candidate for older and more conservative respondents.

Additionally, national origin groups were examined to assess potential differences between subgroups since attachment to country of origin has been demonstrated to be strong (Jones Correa and Leal, 1996), and political behavior among subgroups can vary substantially (Alvarez and García Bedolla, 2003; Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010). For example, Cubans are typically more conservative than other Latino groups; thus there could be meaningful differences in their levels of support for Latino candidates. The national origin groups included focused on the largest subgroups: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Dominican. The three categories of variables—identity, discrimination, and sociodemographic—were used to analyze support for Latino candidates. In the next section, I turn to a discussion of the analysis and empirical results.

Results

The models use ordered logistic regression due to the ordered nature of the dependent variable.⁷ Table 1 displays the results from the fully specified model containing all of the identity, discrimination, and demographic variables of interest. One of the primary hypothesis of this study was whether individuals with a stronger sense of Latino-linked fate would be more likely to desire descriptive representation. The models provide evidence to strongly support the role of linked fate. Concerning both the shared cultural factors measured based on Spanish language, both of these variables are also associated with greater support of Latino descriptive representation. Only one identity variable, whether respondents viewed Latino as a distinct racial group, failed to achieve standard levels of statistical significance. Three of the four identity-based variables are statistically significant and are positively associated with desires for a Latino representative. The models provide strong evidence in support of H_1 – H_3 .

The second set of independent variables of interest, which are used to test Hypotheses H_4 and H_5 , are those concerning personal and group experiences with discrimination. The results indicate one discrimination variable is strongly significant and another weakly significant. The measure of feelings of group discrimination is significant at the 1 percent level, thus providing strong support for H_4 . Respondents who had had personal experiences with

⁷I constructed four different model specifications to demonstrate the effects of identity and discrimination on Latino representation. In Appendix Table A1 (online), the results showing the three other various model specifications with different combinations of the main sets of explanatory variables are presented in order to demonstrate the stability of results across the models.

TABLE 1

The Effect of Identity and Discrimination on Desire for a Latino Candidate

	(1)
Identity variables	
Latinos distinct racial group	0.0133 (0.0577)
Latino-linked fate	0.333*** (0.0244)
Interview in Spanish	1.402*** (0.0656)
Keep Spanish	0.442*** (0.0516)
Discrimination variables	
Group discrimination Latinos	0.0798** (0.0407)
Personal experience with discrimination	-0.0505 (0.0623)
Discrimination because Latino	0.174* (0.0919)
National origin group variables	
Mexican	0.0564 (0.0739)
Puerto Rican	-0.162 (0.105)
Cuban	-0.785*** (0.141)
Dominican	0.132 (0.155)
Demographic variables	
Education	-0.0507*** (0.0162)
Democrat	0.227*** (0.0591)
Republican	-0.0246 (0.0867)
Male	0.116** (0.0529)
Income	-0.120*** (0.0150)
Age	-0.00287 (0.00184)
Cutpoint 1 (τ_1)	1.949*** (0.284)
Cutpoint 2 (τ_2)	3.310*** (0.286)
Observations	6,204
Log likelihood	-5,550
Pseudo- R^2	0.148
Chi ²	1,931

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

discrimination and believed that that discrimination resulted because they were Latino was also significant but only at a level of 10 percent. The general measure for personal discrimination was not significant and its coefficient was in the opposite direction than expected. While the results do not provide clear-cut support for H₅, there is some evidence that personal experiences may affect respondents' attitudes toward the need for Latino representatives in certain contexts.⁸

Turning to the controls, several key demographic variables emerge. Education is highly significant and is in the negative direction, indicating that as education increases desire for a Latino candidate goes down. Income has the same relationship, with those who are more affluent being less likely to feel it is important to have representatives of the same ethnic group. Results for both education and income are statistically significant at the 1 percent level.⁹ Higher income and education may lead to greater beliefs that their representatives will act on their behalf, independent of ethnicity. This result is consistent with evidence that legislators consistently represent affluent constituents, while largely ignoring poorer constituents (Bartels, 2008), as well as the high correlation between socioeconomic status and education. The party variable shows Democratic respondents are more likely to desire Latino representatives. Gender is also significant, with male respondents actually having higher support for Latino representatives. One possible explanation for this result could be that Latinos and Latinas tend to engage the political system in different ways (Hardy-Fanta, 1993; García Bedolla, 2005). Latinas tend to engage in nonelectoral participation more frequently than Latinos, and are often more heavily involved in community organizing, while taking secondary roles in traditional electoral politics. Men, in contrast, are more likely to pursue voting and positions of leadership when active in politics (Hardy-Fanta, 1993). This may translate into Latinos placing a higher importance on Latino-elected officials since their conceptualization and engagement with politics tend to be at the more formal electoral level. In terms of national origin groups, being Cuban is the only significant finding. The relationship is negative, thus indicating that Cuban respondents are less likely to think it is very important to have Latino candidates even after controlling for party affiliation.

Given the difficulties in interpreting coefficients in ordered logit models, Table 2 provides a better sense of the substantive effects of each variable on support for descriptive representation. The values report the difference in

⁸It could be possible that discrimination has an effect on group identity. However, the statistical results indicate that the effects of discrimination are quite small in the stand-alone Model 3 in Appendix Table A1 (online), and remain small in the full model reported in Table 1. Two of the three discrimination variables remain significant in the fully specified model. Moreover, the effect of identity remains fairly consistent and strong across the models.

⁹For additional robustness, the model was also run without the inclusion of income given the number of missing values for respondents who refused to answer. The results for the other variables do not change substantially.

TABLE 2

Substantive Effects of Discrimination and Identity on Answering Very Important for Latino Candidate

Variable	Difference	
Latinos distinct group	0.003	(-0.02, 0.03)
Latino-linked fate	0.23	(0.19, 0.28)
Interview in Spanish	0.33	(0.31, 0.36)
Keep Spanish	0.24	(0.19, 0.28)
Group discrimination Latinos	0.06	(0.002, 0.11)
Personal experience with discrimination	-0.01	(-0.04, 0.02)
Discrimination because Latino	0.04	(0.0003, 0.08)
Mexican	0.01	(-0.02, 0.04)
Puerto Rican	-0.03	(-0.07, 0.01)
Cuban	-0.13	(-0.18, -0.08)
Dominican	0.03	(-0.03, 0.09)
Education	-0.07	(-0.11, -0.03)
Democrat	0.05	(0.02, 0.08)
Republican	-0.01	(-0.04, 0.03)
Male	0.02	(0.003, 0.05)
Income	-0.14	(-0.18, -0.11)
Age	-0.02	(-0.03, 0.002)

95 percent confidence interval in parentheses. All dichotomous variables set to 0 and categorical and continuous variables set to their means. Baseline probability is 0.29. For first differences, all variables are moved from their minimum to maximum values.

probability a respondent will answer that having a Latino candidate is “very important” when moving from the minimum to the maximum value for each variable while holding all other variables constant (95 percent confidence intervals are included in parentheses).¹⁰

The variables grouped under identity demonstrate the largest substantive effects of all the variables analyzed in this study. The effect of *Interview in Spanish*, *Keep Spanish*, and *Latino-Linked Fate* is associated with a 23–33 percent increase in the probability of believing that having a Latino candidate is extremely important, though the *Latinos Distinct Group* variable has no discernable effect. This provides strong evidence that linked fate and shared cultural factors are critical in support for Latino candidates.

The substantive effects of group and personal discrimination in support for Latino representatives are substantially smaller than those for the identity variables. For example, those who believed personal discrimination resulted from being Latino had a 4 percent increase in higher-level support for Latino candidates. Similarly, those strongly believing that Latinos are discriminated against as a group had a modest 6 percent increase in support for Latino candidates. Personal experiences with discrimination had the weakest effect of the three discrimination measures, resulting in only a 1 percent decrease in

¹⁰All simulations performed using Clarify (King et al., 2000).

support for Latino candidates, which is in the opposite than expected direction, and with a confidence interval including zero, or no apparent effect.

Several of the control variables also appear to have some effects on support for Latino candidates, but none come anywhere near the sizable effects seen with the identity variables. Moving from lower to higher levels of both education and income results in a 7 and 14 percent decline in support for a Latino candidate, respectively. Similarly, Cuban respondents are 13 percent less likely to believe it is very important to have a Latino candidate. On the other hand, respondents affiliated with the Democratic Party are 5 percent more likely to support having a Latino candidate. The remaining controls have more modest effects in support for a Latino candidate, and often fail to be significant. Taken together, the results confirm the key role of linked fate and cultural factors in support for descriptive representation, while providing more modest evidence for the role of discrimination beliefs alongside other sociodemographic traits.

Discussion and Conclusions

This article asks do Latinos want Latino representatives and which beliefs, experiences, and individual characteristics lead to a greater or lesser desire for such representatives? The survey results indicate that on the whole Latinos are very supportive of Latino descriptive representation, with over half of the respondents indicating it was very important, and another quarter believing that it was somewhat important. Despite widespread support for descriptive representation, variation is still evident since a quarter of respondents indicated having a Latino representative was not important. This study has sought to analyze the impact of Latino-linked fate, cultural factors, and discrimination on the level of support for descriptive representation. I hypothesized that Latinos who feel a strong sense of Latino-linked fate and a deeper attachment to Spanish would be more likely to feel it was important to have representatives who were Latino. The analysis suggests that not only is this relationship present but it is also quite strong. Three of the four Latino identity measures were statistically significant and demonstrated large substantive effects ranging from a one-quarter to one-third increase in the likelihood respondents rank having Latino candidates as very important. Whether Latinos feel connected to one another, and the degree to which they perceive their fates as connected, works to build a robust Latino identity, which in turn dramatically increases desire for representatives from their same group.

Scholars have examined descriptive representation both from the perspective of constituents and representatives. They have sought to assess whether individuals evaluate members of their own group differently than out-groups. Other research has tried to gauge how descriptive representation affects group members. A significant portion of the literature has focused on descriptive representation in terms of African Americans and women, thus comparatively much less is known about Latinos. While there is a growing

body of literature on Latino representation, little work has been done to analyze whether Latinos think having members of their own group is important and what factors influence their support. Preferences for a descriptive representative thus represent an important first step in electing more Latino elected officials. Feeling a strong sense of attachment to the group both in terms of language and linked fate does translate into a higher desire for members who share the same ethnic background. This improves our understanding of what factors contribute to support for descriptive representation.

The relationship between experiences with discrimination and support for Latino representation is weaker, though still present. In particular, perceptions of discrimination against Latinos as a group appear to have a modest effect on support for a Latino representative. Experiences with personal discrimination do not seem to have the same effect; however, the insignificance of these variables might be attributed to respondents disassociating with personal experiences and translating them into group discrimination as noted in the personal/group discrepancy phenomenon identified in the psychology literature.

While not the focus of interest in this study, the results of three control variables are thought-provoking, especially given the intermediate size of their effects. Education, income, and being Cuban were negatively related to support for a Latino candidate. In other words, those who were more educated, had higher incomes, or were Cuban were less likely to place a high importance on having Latino representatives. Should we draw the conclusion that individuals with higher education and higher income see less readily identifiable benefits of having a Latino representative, or are they just more likely to trust that representatives will act in their best interests independent of shared ethnicity? Moreover, Cubans are often seen as outliers in comparison to the larger Latino group due to their specific individual history with the United States and ability to come to this country. Does this change the way they view representation as a group? While the effects were not large, they were still present and call for further examination into why these factors matter for personal beliefs about representation.

One further implication of this study is what it means for conceptualizing descriptive representation. Scholars theorize that descriptive representation is important for a host of reasons, including heightened feelings of efficacy, increased political participation, and actual differences in member behavior. One of the main explanations for the empirical findings that descriptive representatives do act differently than legislators from the out-group is that there is something intrinsic to being a member of the group that binds the representative and constituents together. The results from this study demonstrate that Latino-linked fate likely also works in the same direction to mutually reinforce the constituent-representative connection. For example, respondents who had strong feelings of Latino-linked fate were 23 percent more likely to rank having Latino representation as very important compared to those with weak attachments to Latino-linked fate. Conversely, Latino members of

Congress also share a sense of Latino-linked fate by expressing connection to their Latino constituents and a desire to serve as a surrogate representative for all Latinos (Minta, 2011).

Finally, these findings contribute to the field of Latino political behavior. A long line of research has indicated that identity matters for Latino political attitudes, vote choice, and turnout (Barreto, Segura, and Woods, 2004; Barreto, 2007; Leighley, 2001). The results indicate Latinos place a high importance on having descriptive representatives as a result of linked fate and attachment to Spanish. Thus, the role of group identity is salient in influencing Latino attitudes on representation. These findings provide evidence that Latino identity also affects Latinos' political behavior in terms of their choices of who they want to be candidates and ultimately represent them. Moreover, additional research has demonstrated the role of perceptions of discrimination in affecting Latino political behavior (Stokes, 2003; Sanchez, 2006), and these findings provide some evidence that perceptions of discrimination also operate to influence Latino political behavior in terms of preferences over candidates.

Some scholars have questioned the motivations of individuals to desire members from their own group on the grounds that it does not always yield the best representation. However, scholars have increasingly found evidence that for Latino constituents, Latino representatives do appear to offer the most representation. Future research should investigate additional factors that influence Latino support for descriptive representation, the mechanisms by which Latino representatives act differently, and how Latino constituents evaluate those members. These questions are beyond the scope of this study, but will add greater depth to our understanding of Latinos and representation.

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