

## Gender, Ethnicity, and Support for Bilingual Education: Will Just Any Woman or Latino Do? A Contingent “No”

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*Among the most well-established consequences of the election of minorities to public office is an increase in the degree to which minority interests are substantively represented. Recent work argued that minorities also benefit from the presence of female legislators; however, it remains unclear whether minorities can expect to benefit from the presence of all women or solely women of color. Susan Dovi has argued that descriptive representatives are more likely to be effective if they possess strong mutual relationships with disposed subgroups of historically disadvantaged groups. In this piece, we argued that one implication of Dovi's argument is that women of color will be more effective descriptive representatives than their male counterparts. We examined this hypothesis by focusing on the effect of Latino/a school board members on education policies in Texas school districts. The results suggested that while the presence of Latinos on school boards is associated with increased district financial and institutional support for bilingual education, the presence of Latina board members results in much more substantial levels of support. We found no evidence for the notion that the substantive representation of Latino/as is facilitated by the presence of non-Latina women on the board.*

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**KEY WORDS:** Latino/a politics, education policy, bilingual education, representation

Among the most well-established consequences of the election of racial and ethnic minorities to positions in local government is an increase in the degree to which such governments produce policies that are viewed as in line with minority interests. The most straightforward interpretation of this relationship advanced by scholars is that minority public officials use their offices to actively represent minority interests (Bratton & Haynie, 1999; Meier, Stewart, & England, 1989; Mladenka, 1989a). Alternatively, others argue that the presence of minorities in government can alter public policies by changing the behavior of nonminority-elected officials (Hawkesworth, 2003; Preuhs, 2006). Yet another view holds that minority interests are regularly advanced by other traditionally disadvantaged groups, such as women, even if they are not co-ethnics (Poggione, 2004; Thomas & Welch, 1991). More recently, an argument has been put forward that suggests that some minority officials are more desirable, and perhaps more effective, representatives than others (Dovi, 2002).

In this article, we attempt to examine these competing views of the representational process. We begin by reviewing the literature on minority descriptive and substantive representation in elected institutions. For a variety of reasons that we discuss in detail later, we test our hypotheses on a sample of Texas school districts, focusing on various measures of district support for bilingual education and other measures of educational equity as our indicators of Latino/a substantive representation. The implications of our findings for further theoretical and empirical studies of minority representation are also discussed.

### **The Descriptive and Substantive Representation of Minorities in the United States**

Pitkin (1967) makes a useful and regularly cited distinction between descriptive and substantive representation. Mansbridge (1999, p. 629) wrote that representatives are “descriptive” when they are “in their own persons and lives in some sense typical or the larger class of person whom they represent.” Another, somewhat simpler, definition is that groups are descriptively represented when they share some kind of attribute with their public official.

Creating contexts and mechanisms that promote the descriptive representation of traditionally disenfranchised groups has been a prominent theme within American politics. Political theorists have identified several reasons why the descriptive representation of such groups may be beneficial in and of itself. Philips (1998) argued that creation of a “politics of presence” can work to revitalize democracy by boosting the legitimacy of democratic institutions and increasing political participation. Mansbridge (1999) likewise stated that descriptive representation increases a polity’s *de facto* legitimacy in contexts of past discrimination, such as those that exist throughout much of the United States.

Descriptive representation is also valued because it facilitates the substantive representation of the group in question. A group is said to be substantively represented when policies or other governmental action is advanced that is in a group’s interest. Minority representatives are thought to be more fervent advocates of issues and policies that concern minorities. This may manifest either in voting patterns or in the deliberative activities that precede votes (Gamble, 2007).

The translation of descriptive representation into substantive representation has been consistently established for local governments, such as school boards and city councils (Campbell & Feagin, 1975; Chandler & Gely, 1995; Dye & Renick, 1981; Eisinger, 1982a, 1982b; Kerr & Mladenka, 1994; Leal, Martinez-Ebers, & Meier, 2004; Marschall, 2005; Meier & England, 1984; Meier, Gonzalez Juenke, Wrinkle, & Polinard, 2005; Mladenka, 1989a, 1989b; Polinard, Wrinkle, Longoria, & Binder, 1994; Robinson & Dye, 1978; Robinson & England, 1981; Saltztein, 1989; Stein, 1986). However, Preuhs (2006) observed that the notion that increased minority representation in elected office leads to policies that are in the interest of minorities does not import in a straightforward manner to other forms of government in the United States.

At the federal level, several scholars have questioned whether the election of minorities to Congress, usually achieved through the creation of majority–minority

districts (Cameron, Epstein, & O'Halloran, 1996; Lublin, 1997; Swain, 1993), promotes the substantive representation of minorities. At the state level, Owens (2005) found that increased African-American representation is associated with greater responsiveness to African-American interests. This observation is at odds with other work that suggests that the relationship is nonexistent or perhaps even negative (Critzler & Rai, 1998; Hawkesworth, 2003; Nelson, 1991). Mixed findings may be expected given that state legislatures are more institutionally complicated than most forms of local government. Preuhs (2006) argued that party control is a key determinant of the translation of descriptive representation into substantive representation in the states. Haynie's (2001) emphasis on the importance of institutional position likewise speaks to this point. Together, these findings suggest that distinct processes underlie the minority representation at differing levels of government.

### **Are Some Representatives "Better" than Others?**

While much of the work discussed thus far considers how institutional arrangements affect the translation of descriptive representation into substantive outcomes, another body of literature focuses on what types of representatives are most likely to actively or effectively promote the interests of their group members. As mentioned earlier, empirical and normative works argue that the substantive representation of minorities is facilitated by the election of minority officials. However, questions remain regarding whether minorities can expect to be substantively represented by members of other racial/ethnic groups (Rocha & Hawes, 2009). More recently, scholars have also begun to ask whether certain minorities might be more effective representatives than others.

In their study, Leal and Hess (2000) found that school district expenditures on bilingual education programs increase with the percentage of Latino/a and Asian-American board members. While this result is expected given the literature on minority representation in local bodies, Leal and Hess (2000) also suggested that the presence of more female board members results in greater support for bilingual education. This finding corresponds with previous work that argues that the representation of women in elected bodies produces bills concerning issues of importance to women, children, and families (Thomas, 1991; Thomas & Welch, 1991). Poggione (2004), for example, observed that female legislators express more liberal preferences regarding welfare policy. While welfare is a policy area that is strongly associated with children and families, it is also one that other scholars have used to study the substantive representation of minority groups (e.g., Fording, 1997, 2001; Haynie, 2001; Keller, 1978; King-Meadows & Schaller, 2006; Owens, 2005; Preuhs, 2006, 2007).

Moving beyond issues of social welfare, Kathlene (1995) found that gender can influence criminal justice policy decisions, with female legislators being more likely than their male counterparts to view criminals as operating within the context of limited societal opportunities. Scholars have traditionally conceived of criminal justice as an issue that is of particular concern for minorities (Fording, 2001; Yates & Fording, 2005), while criminal justice liberalism is not regularly championed as a stance that maximizes the interests of women and children. In short, these findings

suggest that the substantive representation of racial and ethnic minorities is facilitated by election of women to legislative bodies.

One interesting question that remains unanswered in the literature is whether minorities can expect to benefit from the presence of all women or solely women of color. If, as some suggest, minorities can expect to benefit from the election of women (regardless of their racial/ethnic status), is it possible that women of color will be more effective representatives of minority interests than Anglo women because of their multiple identities? Moreover, if female legislators are generally more supportive of minority interests, then how might we expect women of color to differ from African-American or Latino men? The preceding discussion would imply that women of color are more supportive of minority issues than minority men and therefore are more likely to be effective substantive representatives.

Women of color may also interact with the political system in a manner distinct from their male counterparts. Jones-Correa's (1998) study of immigrant political socialization found that Latinas do not accept widely held feelings of ambivalence toward politics within the immigrant community. Rather, they are more likely to become civically engaged as evidenced by higher rates of naturalization and political participation.

Tate's (2003) work offers additional reasons to believe that gender might affect the nature of substantive representation in minority communities. She found that minority women members of Congress were more likely to have served in local offices prior to being elected to federal positions, suggesting that levels of political ambition may differ for women of color. Polinard et al. (1994) also noted that Mexican-American women serving on school boards and city councils in Texas differ from male and Anglo office holders when asked about their reasons for seeking local office. Mexican-American women were more likely to cite "to serve my neighborhood" and "because of a strong concern I had about some specific issue" as a motivation to serving on local legislative bodies. In contrast to Tate (2003), Polinard et al. (1994) also reported that Latinas are less likely to use their experience in order to seek high political office. Together, these studies suggest that women of color may represent minority communities differently for a variety of reasons, including unique policy preferences, priorities, and a heightened desire to use public office in order to change policy outcomes.

This argument may also be supported by Dovi's (2002) recent work where she articulated characteristics of individuals whom, she argued, will be preferable descriptive representatives. This represents a profound departure from previous works that Dovi (2002, p. 729) noted have placed their emphasis on "establishing the need for the presence of descriptive representatives, not on investigating the criteria for identifying preferable descriptive representatives." In the end, Dovi (2002) concluded that representatives are best when they hold strong mutual relationships with dispossessed subgroups of historically disadvantaged groups. Dovi's (2002) mutuality clause requires representatives to recognize and possess a unique and interactive relationship with their group and vice versa.

In this vein, several studies have found evidence to support the contention that the relationship between minority constituents and their representative differs when

the representative is a minority (Banducci, Donova, & Karp, 2005; Gay, 2002; Marschall, 2005; Tate, 2003; Tate & Harsh, 2005). African-Americans who are descriptively represented are more likely to contact their congressional representative and tend to be more approving of their representative (Gay, 2002; Tate, 2003). Marschall (2005) noted that minorities who are descriptively represented on school boards make more favorable assessments of local school quality (Marschall, 2005; Tate, 2003). Fenno's (2003) intensive interviews with African-American representatives offered evidence that these relationships are indeed mutual. He wrote, "(black representatives) connect with ordinary black constituents in ways that no white representative could duplicate" (Fenno, 2003, p. 260).

The second condition that Dovi (2002) presented states that mutual relationships must also exist with some dispossessed subgroup within the historically disadvantaged group. She offered several possible candidates based upon class, sexual orientation, and religion, among others. We argue that the unique situation in which women of color find themselves results in dual marginalization (Gay & Tate, 1988; Hardy-Fanta, 1998; Prindeville, 2004; Sierra & Sosa-Riddell, 1994) and makes them a prime example of a disposed subgroup. Thus, Dovi's (2002) argument leads to the conclusion that women of color may, at times, be preferable descriptive representatives.

But might they also be more *effective* representatives? Considering the evidence that women do regularly support issues viewed as in the interests of minority groups in the legislative arena, might the compounded identity of women of color exacerbate the established relationship between the descriptive representation of minorities in local legislative bodies and the substantive representation of minority interests?

We first hypothesize that greater levels of descriptive representation of minorities in local governing bodies will result in a greater substantive representation of minority interests. This will be true for male and female representatives. However, we also hypothesize that *the substantive impact of minority female representation will be greater than that of minority male representation*. Lastly, we hypothesize that the substantive representation of minority interests will be furthered by the presence of Anglo women on local governing bodies, but we also argue that the substantive impact of Anglo women will be less than that of women of color.

### Data and Research Design

Examining the way in which race and gender work together and separately to influence the substantive representation of minorities poses several challenges. The foremost of these concerns is what type of governing body should be studied. The hypotheses we wish to examine are predicated upon the assumption that there is a direct relationship between minority descriptive and substantive representation. Preuhs (2006) noted that empirical support for this relationship, which he termed "the presence model," is based largely on studies of local governing bodies, such as school boards. Institutional factors, such as seniority and committee structure, greatly complicate this relationship at the state level (Haynie, 2001). There continues

to be a serious debate about whether a positive relationship between descriptive and substantive representation even exists at the federal level because of complicating conditions produced by majority–minority districts (Cameron et al., 1996; Lublin, 1997; Swain, 1993).

For this reason, our data are drawn from the approximately 1,000 school districts located in Texas. School districts in the United States are generally independent local governments with their own taxing powers; all districts in the sample are organized in this way. Texas operates a relatively decentralized system, with most authority residing with local districts. Each district determines its own curriculum and makes all its own personnel decisions. Approximately one of every 14 districts in the United States is located in Texas. This sample provides a good base upon which to build inferences about the impact of ethnicity and gender on district support for educational policies that benefit minority group members. We pooled eight years (1995–2002) of data on policy outcomes and other control variables to produce a total of approximately seven thousand cases for analysis.

The National Association of Latino Elected Officials provides annual rosters of all Latino/as serving on school boards. Most other data on the characteristics of school districts used in this analysis come from the Texas Education Agency. Should our results provide empirical support for our hypotheses, we see their extension to state-level analysis as a natural next step but one that is beyond the scope of this particular study. One additional reason why we chose to focus on school boards instead of municipal governments concerns our need to accurately operationalize substantive representation, a subject we discuss in greater detail later.

We also chose to examine school boards because of their substantive importance for minority communities. As Meier et al. (1989, p. 10) argued, “education is the single most important area in terms of racial discrimination.” Sustaining this statement is the pervasiveness of disparate treatment for African-Americans and Latinos throughout the history of American education (Clotfelter, 2004; Howe, 1997; Kozol, 1991; Meier et al., 1989; Moses, 2002; Oakes, 1985; Orfield and Eaton, 1996; San Miguel, 1986, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999) and the negative and long-lasting consequences that result from receiving an inadequate education. Denying individuals that right to a quality education affects every other aspect of their life, and minority activists have thus made equality within the educational system a high priority (San Miguel, 1986).

We focus on school district support for bilingual education as a measure of the substantive representation of Latino/as. By focusing on bilingual education, we are able to construct policy output indicators that are of direct concern to Latino/as. While bilingual education is something that affects the education of all language minorities, our sample of Texas school districts limits the extent to which groups such as Asian-Americans influence the process.<sup>1</sup>

Public opinion on bilingual education tends to be divided on the basis of ethnicity. Skerry’s (1993) review of the literature found that bilingual education programs enjoy widespread support among Mexican-Americans. While several media reports highlighted strong Anglo and Latino/a support for the passage of proposition 227 in California, which sought to end bilingual education programs in the state and replace them with English immersion programs, a majority of Latino/as voted

against the proposition on election day (Tolbert & Hero, 2001). Huddy and Sears (1995) argued that Anglo opposition to bilingual education is motivated by prejudice as well as realistic interests, a finding that the campaign surrounding the passage of proposition 227 served to highlight. Spatial proximity to the border also affects support for bilingual education (Branton, Dillingham, Dunaway, & Miller, 2011), further speaking to the ethnic nature of this issue.

Most importantly, studies show that bilingual education is strongly supported by the parents and students affected by such programs (Lee, 2006; Shin & Gribbons, 1996). Studies within education also find that bilingual education programs do, in fact, increase the educational attainment of Latino students (see Greene, 1998). Shin and Gribbons (1996) surveyed school principals and found widespread agreement regarding the importance of using a first language to provide background knowledge to students. Most principals also felt that that literacy transfers across languages, and many respondents to Shin and Gribbons' surveys embraced the educational theory underlying continuing bilingual education. Thus, regardless of how bilingual education may be perceived by the public at large, we have reason to believe that Latino/a parents and students support such programs.<sup>2</sup>

The history of bilingual education programs in Texas, the state our study focuses on, is unique. Support for bilingual education during the 1960s and 1970s was fostered by a pattern of discrimination against Spanish-speaking students (Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974). The punishment of students who spoke Spanish in public schools led many prominent Latino/as (including school superintendent, League of United Latin American Citizens president, and Texas resident George I. Sanchez) to campaign for the expansion of bilingual programs within the state. The cause was also adopted by the Mexican American Youth Organization, which encouraged student-led protests demanding bilingual and bicultural education programs. Blanton (2004, p. 132) summarized this history well:

The state of Texas pioneered the modern bilingual education movement. After the passage of the National Bilingual Education Act late in 1967, Texas soon legitimized bilingual education through legislative action and local initiative . . . bilingual education in Texas quickly became a charged political issue for Chicano student activists during the school walkouts of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Speaking about contemporary attitudes toward bilingual education among Latino/as in Texas, Manzano (2007, p. 7) noted that "Bilingual programs are highly attractive to parents as 58 percent of Latinos in Texas indicate that their child is enrolled in this type of curriculum, and a somewhat surprising 38 percent of U.S.-born Latinos chose to enroll their children in a bilingual orientated program." Her findings are based on responses to the 2006 Latino National Survey. This survey, which offers the most recent representative state satisfied sample in the field of Latino politics, also found that respondents rank education as the second most important issue facing Latinos behind immigration.

Our focus on bilingual education also allows us to compare our findings with previous work that concludes that district support for bilingual education may

increase with the number of females on the board irrespective of their race or ethnicity (Leal & Hess, 2000). This leads us to develop the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1: District support for bilingual education programs will be higher in districts where the descriptive representation of Latino/as is greater. However, the substantive impact of Latina representation will be larger than that of Latino representation.*

*Hypothesis 2: District support for bilingual education programs will be higher in districts where the descriptive representation of non-Latina females is greater.*

We measure district support for bilingual education in a variety of ways. First, we replicate past studies that have focused on the percentage of district expenditures devoted to such programs (Leal & Hess, 2000, used a similar expenditure-based measure). We replicate our models with a second dependent variable, the percentage of district teachers who are assigned to bilingual programs. Thus, we allow for amount of district resources directed to bilingual programs to manifest themselves monetarily or through personnel.<sup>3</sup> The mean percentage of district expenditures on bilingual education is 1.3 with a standard deviation of 2.6. The mean percentage of district teachers who are assigned to bilingual programs is 2.5 with a standard deviation of 5.4. As a further check on the robustness of our results, we also measure district support for bilingual education as per pupil expenditures on bilingual education divided by per capita income. This allows us to measure the effort districts are making to support bilingual education in light of their financial and revenue constraints.

Finally, we consider the possibility that the effects of gender and ethnicity on substantive representation may influence a host of issues within education beyond bilingual programs. We look at three alternative measures: the percentage of Latino/a teachers within a district, the disproportionate underplacement of Latino/a students in Gifted and Talented programs, and the disproportionate issuing of suspensions to Latino/a students.

Borrowing from a long tradition within urban politics, scholars of education politics have repeatedly demonstrated that increased descriptive representation for minority groups on local school boards results in a greater share of administrative and teaching positions within a district (Meier et al., 1989; Polinard, Wrinkle, & Longoria, 1990; Wright, Hirlinger, & England, 1998) similar to the way in which representation on city councils has been found to increase the percentage of minority municipal employees (Kerr & Mladenka, 1994; Mladenka 1989a, 1989b). Most boards only directly hire the district superintendent, but they can put forward formal policies or informal pressure to encourage the hiring of additional minority employees.

We also focus on the use of academic grouping and discipline in a discriminatory manner. Such practices largely have been viewed as a response to the school integration movement of the late 1960s (Harry & Anderson, 1994; Wright et al., 1998). Facing the racial integration of schools within districts, academic grouping provides a way to separate racial groups while remaining in fully "integrated" schools. Once excluded from classes that correspond to their ability, studies show that student

performance begins to drop steadily below what one would predict given past achievement and a student's demographic background (Braddock & Dawkins, 1993; Lee & Bryk, 1988; Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996; Oakes, 1985). Likewise, the application of discipline measures, whether in the form of corporal punishment, suspension, or expulsion without total cessation of educational services, lowers achievement and encourages dropouts (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986; Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

Academic grouping and discipline policy outcomes are measured via an "odds ratio," which takes account of the relative odds of some group being disproportionately grouped or disciplined. These ratios, employed in most other studies of grouping and discipline (e.g., Finn, 1982; Meier & Stewart, 1991; Meier et al., 1989; Polinard et al., 1990; Wright et al., 1998), measure Latino/a grouping in Gifted and Talented programs and suspension rates. To illustrate the odds index, let us calculate the odds of Latino/a students being disproportionately excluded from Gifted and Talented programs. The index is calculated in the following manner:<sup>4</sup>

$$\frac{(\text{Number of Latino/a students classified in gifted programs} / \text{number of Latino/a students})}{(\text{Total number of students classified in gifted programs} / \text{total number of students})}$$

Thus, a value of 1 suggests parity, that is, Latino/a students are classified as gifted at the same rate as any other student in the district. Alternatively, values below 1 indicate Latino/as have a lower likelihood of being enrolled in such programs. Data on academic grouping and discipline were gathered by the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR). These data are not available for all districts for each year of our study. In 2000, the OCR conducted a census of U.S. public school districts, including each district in Texas. We rely on this census of Texas school districts in 2000.

Of course, districts also operate within a series of constraints that limit their ability to promote bilingual programs and educational equity. The primary nonpolitical determinant of financial and institutional support for bilingual programs is likely to be districts' need for such programs. Accordingly, we control for the percentage of limited English proficiency (LEP) students in each district.<sup>5</sup> We also control for the percentage of a district's budget, which comes from state or federal aid. This provides us with an indicator of the amount of resources available to each district. Lastly, when attempting to explain our first dependent variable (the percentage of district expenditures devoted to bilingual programs), we also control for the total amount of expenditures made by a district.

Residents of certain districts also may be more apt to support bilingual education programs. Berkman and Plutzer (2005) showed that districts are responsive to public attitudes about school financing. Accordingly, districts with more liberal populations may be more supportive of bilingual education programs. We control for the percentage of votes received by the Democratic presidential candidate in the previous election in the county where the district is located as a proxy for district liberalism. Table 1 offers descriptive statistics for the variables used in the study.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

| Variable  | Mean<br>(Standard Deviation) |
|---|------------------------------|
| % District expenditures on bilingual education                              | 1.3 (2.6)                    |
| % Teachers in bilingual programs  | 2.5 (5.4)                    |
| Per pupil expenditures on bilingual education/per capita income (thousands) | 103.1 (156.9)                |
| % Latina/o teachers   | 7.6 (17.4)                   |
| Latino Gifted and Talented ratio  | 0.3 (0.5)                    |
| Latino suspension ratio   | 1.5 (3.2)                    |
| % Latino board member   | 8.2 (18.2)                   |
| % Latina board members  | 2.3 (7.9)                    |
| % Non-Latina female board members   | 20.5 (16.7)                  |
| % Limited English proficiency students                                      | 5.7 (9.2)                    |
| % State aid   | 52.4 (22.3)                  |
| % Federal aid   | 4.1 (3.5)                    |
| Total expenditures (in millions)  | 21.5 (65.7)                  |

Table 2. Ethnicity, Gender, and District Expenditures on Bilingual Education

|  | OLS Estimates      |                    |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
|  | Model 1A           | Model 1B           |
| % Latino/a board members               | 0.0098*** (0.0016) |                    |
| % Latino board member                  |                    | 0.0084*** (0.0018) |
| % Latina board members                 |                    | 0.0161*** (0.0036) |
| % Female board members                 | 0.0018 (0.0015)    |                    |
| % Non-Latina female board members      |                    | 0.0010 (0.0016)    |
| % Limited English proficiency students | 0.1347*** (0.0038) | 0.1345*** (0.0036) |
| % Democratic vote                      | 0.0153*** (0.0029) | 0.0156*** (0.0030) |
| State aid                              | 0.0055*** (0.0011) | 0.0055*** (0.0011) |
| Federal aid                            | 0.0204** (0.0090)  | 0.0207** (0.0089)  |
| Total expenditures (in millions)       | 0.0074*** (0.0003) | 0.0074*** (0.0003) |
| Constant                               | 1.069*** (0.1261)  | 1.096*** (0.1273)  |
| N                                      | 7,155              | 7,155              |
| R <sup>2</sup>                         | 0.33               | 0.34               |

\* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Coefficients for individual years not shown.

Standard errors in parentheses.

Dependent variable = % district expenditures on bilingual education.

## Findings

Table 2 presents the results for our first set of models, which examine the causes of district expenditures on bilingual education. Not surprisingly, there is a statistically significant relationship between the percentage of LEP students and district expenditures on bilingual programs. A one-percentage point increase in the percentage of LEP students is associated with approximately a 0.13-point increase in the percentage of a district's budget devoted to bilingual education. Districts receiving greater amounts of state/federal aid and those spending more in terms of total expenditures also tend to spend more on bilingual education. More Democratic districts are likewise more apt to support increased spending in this area.

Models 1A and 1B confirm what Preuhs refers to as the “presence model.” That is, an increase in the percentage of Latino/a board members boosts the substantive representation of Latino/a interests (bilingual education). This finding comports with most previous studies of minority representation in local governing bodies (e.g., Meier & England, 1984; Meier et al., 2005; Mladenka, 1989a). Parallels can also be drawn to Leal and Hess’ (2000) study, which similarly found that the districts’ level of financial support for bilingual education rises in accordance with the percentage of Latino/a board members.

Leal and Hess (2000) also suggested that support for bilingual education is higher in districts with higher proportions of female board members. Our analysis does not support this hypothesis, with the percentage of female board members being unrelated to district expenditures on bilingual education.

Does this relationship differ for Latina and non-Latina women? Our hypotheses state that Latinas will be more effective representatives than non-Latina females as well as Latinos. The findings presented in Model 1B confirm our argument. Although previous research generally finds that women are more likely to support liberal racial policies, such as increased welfare generosity, Latino/as can expect to receive no direct representation from non-Latina female board members in the realm of bilingual education. However, an increase in the percentage of Latina board members produces a substantive impact on bilingual education spending, which is nearly twice as large as that generated by Latino board members. In other words, having one Latina board member increases the financial commitment of districts toward bilingual education to the same degree as having two Latino board members. This result is illustrated in Figure 1. Note that the confidence intervals for the percentage of Latina and Latino board members do not intersect. The amount of substantive representation offered by Latina board

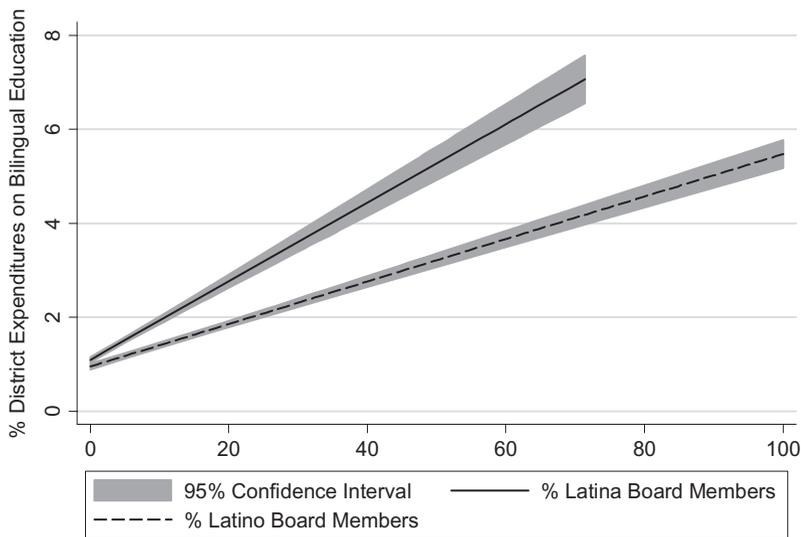


Figure 1. Ethnicity, Gender, and District Expenditures on Bilingual Education.

Table 3. Ethnicity, Gender, and Teachers in Bilingual Programs

|  | OLS Estimates      |                    |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
|  | Model 2A           | Model 2B           |
| % Latino/a board members               | 0.0278*** (0.0023) |                    |
| % Latino board member                  |                    | 0.0242*** (0.0026) |
| % Latina board members                 |                    | 0.0386*** (0.0054) |
| % Female board members                 | -0.0010 (0.0022)   |                    |
| % Non-Latina female board members      |                    | -0.0031 (0.0023)   |
| % Limited English proficiency students | 0.4160*** (0.0052) | 0.4157*** (0.0052) |
| % Democratic vote                      | 0.0088** (0.0044)  | 0.0080* (0.0044)   |
| State aid                              | 0.0065*** (0.0017) | 0.0065*** (0.0017) |
| Federal aid                            | 0.0441*** (0.0132) | 0.0450*** (0.0321) |
| Constant                               | -1.099*** (0.1862) | -1.030*** (0.1878) |
| N                                      | 7155               | 7155               |
| R <sup>2</sup>                         | 0.65               | 0.65               |

\* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Coefficients for individual years not shown.

Standard errors in parentheses.

Dependent Variable = % teachers in bilingual programs.

members does differ statistically from that offered by their male counterparts. Moreover, the effect of Latina representation is substantial even when compared with some of our other independent variables. Increasing the percentage of Latina board members has roughly the same effect as increasing the Democratic vote share within a district.

We next replicate our models using the percentage of teachers slated for bilingual education programs as our dependent variable. The results presented in Table 3 are remarkably consistent with those presented earlier. Again, need drives district support for bilingual education to a large extent. A one-point increase in the percentage of LEP students is associated with just over a 0.4-point increase in the percentage of teachers who are assigned to bilingual programs.

While the presence of Latino/a board members is associated with a greater percentage of teachers involved in bilingual programs, the presence of female board members is not. Once more, separating out the Latino/a board members variable by sex tells an interesting story. The presence of Latina board members is associated with substantially larger gains in districts' allocation of teachers to bilingual programs relative to the presence of Latino board members. This time, the effect of having a Latina representative is 1.6 times that of having a Latino representative. Figure 2 confirms that the differences in impact for Latina and Latino board members are statistically significant.

Table 4 offers a test with our third measure of district support for bilingual education. This measure accounts for per pupil expenditures on bilingual education relative to per capita income. This allows us to gauge the amount of "effort" districts are putting into supporting bilingual education given the constraints of their potential revenue sources. Once again, the findings suggest that the election of Latina/o board members is associated with higher levels of support. When we estimate separate effects for Latina and Latino board members, we see that the substantive

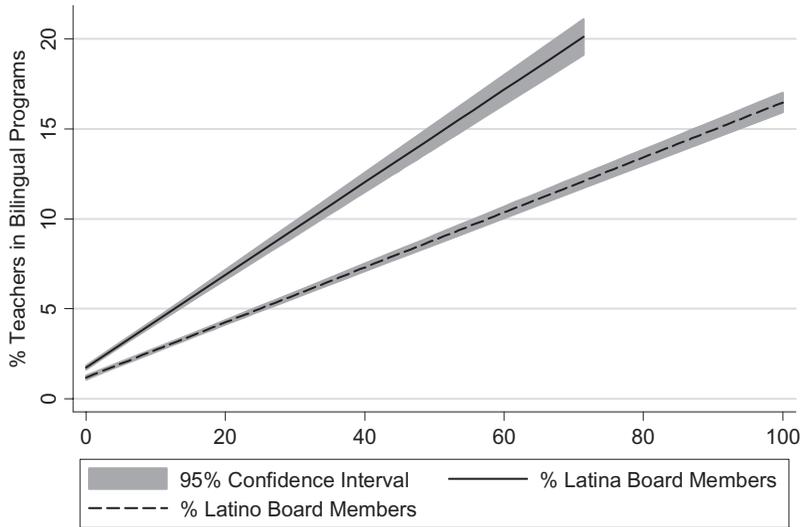


Figure 2. Ethnicity, Gender, and Teachers in Bilingual Programs.

Table 4. Ethnicity, Gender, and District Efforts to Support Bilingual Education

|                                   | OLS Estimates       |                     |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                                   | Model 3A            | Model 3B            |
| % Latino/a board members          | 98.91*** (1.181)    |                     |
| % Latino board member             |                     | 92.19*** (1.404)    |
| % Latina board members            |                     | 125.2*** (2.859)    |
| % Female board members            | 6.248 (12.44)       |                     |
| % Non-Latina female board members |                     | 2.579 (13.28)       |
| % Democratic vote                 | -0.6613*** (0.2476) | -0.6612*** (0.2482) |
| State aid                         | -0.5561*** (.1028)  | -0.5578*** (.1029)  |
| Federal aid                       | 0.1935 (0.8718)     | 0.1922 (0.8724)     |
| Constant                          | 144.7*** (10.73)    | 145.7*** (10.87)    |
| N                                 | 7,155               | 7,155               |
| R <sup>2</sup>                    | 0.24                | 0.24                |

\* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Coefficients for individual years not shown.

Standard errors in parentheses.

Dependent variable = per pupil expenditures on bilingual education/per capita income (thousands).

impact of Latina representation is greater than that offered by Latino representation and that this difference is statistically significant.

Lastly, Table 5 examines whether or not the differential effects we find regarding the descriptive representation of Latinas and Latinos on local school boards are confined to the domain of bilingual education. We examine three alternative measures of the substantive representation of Latino/as: the percentage of Latino/a teachers within a district, the disproportionate underplacement of Latino/a students in Gifted and Talented programs, and the disproportionate issuing of suspensions to Latino/a students. In line with the expectations set forth in the urban politics

**Table 5.** Ethnicity, Gender, and Alternative Measures of Latino Substantive Representation

| Dependent Variable                   | OLS Estimates       | Robust Regression<br>Estimates      | Robust Regression<br>Estimates |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|                                      | % Latina/o Teachers | Latina/o Gifted &<br>Talented Ratio | Latina/o Suspension<br>Ratio   |
| % Latino board members               | 33.01*** (0.7544)   | 0.1305*** (0.0268)                  | -0.1138*** (0.0253)            |
| % Latina board members               | 36.18*** (1.365)    | 0.2711** (0.1052)                   | -0.1194** (0.0570)             |
| % Non-Latina female board<br>members | -0.9201 (0.5096)    | 0.0641 (0.0406)                     | 0.4044 (0.2095)                |
| % Democratic vote                    | 0.4122*** (0.0098)  | 0.0023*** (0.0007)                  | -0.0128*** (0.0039)            |
| State aid                            | -0.0053 (0.0039)    | -0.0006** (0.0003)                  | -0.0068*** (0.0015)            |
| Federal aid                          | -0.1001*** (0.0314) | 0.0069** (0.0029)                   | 0.0058 (0.0167)                |
| % Latino population                  | 29.45*** (0.0063)   |                                     |                                |
| Constant                             | -17.82*** (0.4214)  | 0.1370*** (0.0303)                  | 1.535*** (0.1619)              |
| N                                    | 7,047               | 1,024                               | 814                            |

\* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Coefficients for individual years not shown.

Standard errors in parentheses.

literature, we find that the political incorporation of Latino/as on local school boards is associated with an increase in the number of Latino/as teachers employed by the district. Although the difference is not large in magnitude, the number of Latina board members continues to have a larger substantive effect than the number of Latino board members.

Before analyzing the effect of representation of disparate educational outcomes for Latino/a students, we recognize that our indexes are skewed by extreme variables—a typical problem when using an odds ratio in this setting (see Finn, 1982; Meier & Stewart, 1991; Meier et al., 1989; Polinard et al., 1990; Wright et al., 1998). Robust regressions therefore are used for estimation as extreme values can distort regression results by assigning too much weight to an outlying observation. Turning to the relative number of Latino/a students enrolled in Gifted and Talented programs, there is further confirmation that the benefits afforded by the election of Latinas outweigh that of their male counterparts. In this case, the substantive effect of Latina representation is estimated to be approximately twice that of Latino representation.

Discipline outcomes, as measured by the relative number of Latino/a students suspended in 2000, diverge slightly from the trend established in the other models. Again, we see that the percentage of Latino/as on local school boards is associated with better outcomes for Latino/as students (lower relative rates of suspension), and the estimated effect of Latina representation is larger than that of Latino representation. However, the difference between the Latina and Latino board members is small in scale relative to the confidence intervals associated with each variable. In short, there is no statistically distinguishable difference in the effect of Latina and Latino board members in this case. The importance of ethnicity relative to other factors remains evident across these models, with the effect of increasing Latino/a representation offering greater benefits for Latino/a students than increasing political liberalness alone.

## Conclusion

Questions regarding how the election of minorities to public office is linked to policy outcomes are a major component of the study of minority politics and American politics more broadly. Scholars have argued that these relationships are often-times conditional. For example, at-large and nonpartisan systems produce minority officials who are less apt to represent minority interests in majority white contexts. Accounting for the complex manner in which race/ethnicity interacts with institutional conditions to affect policy outcomes has greatly added to our understanding of the minority politics.

Despite advances such as these, several other factors that may fundamentally alter the way in which minority interests are represented remain unexamined. Questions regarding the extent to which minority interests are advanced either by minorities themselves or by other disadvantaged groups are only now beginning to be asked and be seen as critical to the overall study of representation in the United States. Gender, similar to race and ethnicity, is a fundamental cleavage that divides American social and political life. Although several studies examine the way in which the presence of women in deliberative bodies changes the nature of policy-making, little work exists that examines how differences in the makeup of minority delegations on the basis of gender changes the effectiveness of activism for minority interests.

Political theorists, such as Susan Dovi, argue that some minority representatives are more preferable than others. She places specific importance on the presence of minorities who also come from other historically disadvantaged subgroups. Empirical evidence regarding this assertion is scant. We simply do not know whether any black or Latino/a "will do." This study has begun to shed light on this question. Our evidence suggests that at least within the domain of local education policy, the election of Latinas to district boards has a much greater substantive impact of policy outcomes than does the election of Latinos. The presence of other groups seen by scholars as sympathetic to issues of racial/ethnic policy equity, such as Anglo women, does not appear to produce the same effect.

We mostly establish these patterns in a policy area of great importance to Latinos: bilingual education. This policy area is closely connected to the Latino community. As such, it offers a useful avenue with which to explore the connection between descriptive and substantive representation. However, our emphasis remains on one state and one policy area. These findings may carry over to other venues, such as social welfare policy. However, the compounding effect of race/ethnicity and gender may be diminished in other policy areas that do not draw interest from multiple disadvantaged groups. Stricter criminal justice policies, for instance, may lead to cross-pressure on the part of women of color, although, even in this area, the effect of gender is likely to be complicated as women tend to support treatment-based rather than punitive-oriented correctional policies (Applegate, Cullen, & Fisher, 2002).

In addition to looking at other policy domains, future work should consider other forms of identity intersectionality. Gender and race offers a powerful form of

intersectionality, but other cleavages are likely to be important as well. Class, region, and nativity are forms of intersectionality that may change the nature of minority representation. Undoubtedly, many others exist. This study offers a first step toward understanding the role of intersectionality in minority representation and it, by no means, offers comprehensive treatments of this subject.

The link between descriptive representation and substantive representation is clearly more complex than much of the previous literature suggests. Dovi's argument concerning the connectivity of representatives to disadvantaged groups is an important and compelling element of this complexity. Our empirical evidence highlights the extent to which substantive representation varies in accordance with the criteria she set forth. To fully understand the "politics of presence," scholars need to give it careful consideration going forward.

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### Notes

1. While in states such as California Asian-Americans comprise 10.9 percent of the population, they make up only 2.7 percent of the population in Texas.
2. Meier and Stewart (1991) noted that academic grouping and discipline practices can be used as way to separate students on the basis of race or ethnicity in otherwise integrated schools, a pattern known as "second generation discrimination." Bilingual education programs likewise work to separate Latino and non-Latino students. Enrollment in such programs, however, is not linked to lower levels of educational attainment (Willig, 1985) and enjoys high levels of support among parents whose children utilize such programs (Shin & Gribbons, 1996). For these reasons, we treat bilingual education as distinct from other forms of academic grouping.
3. The percent of teachers who are assigned to bilingual programs is correlated with the percentage of district expenditures spent on bilingual programs at 0.55.
4. The index could calculate the number of Latino/a students in a program relative to non-Latino/a students (as opposed to all students). These measures are highly correlated and both produce results that are similar in terms of significant, direction, and substantive effect.
5. We also considered inserting a control for the percentage of Latino/a students within a district. However, the percentage of Latino/a students correlates with the percentage of LEP students at 0.71. Because LEP is a more accurate measure of the objective need for such programs, we chose to rely on that measure.

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