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The Role of Group Consciousness in Political Participation Among Latinos in the United States

Gabriel R. Sanchez

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There are approximately 40 million Latinos living in the United States, which represents 13.7% of the U.S. population. Despite the growing attention the newly titled largest minority group has yielded, there is still a large question of whether this community can translate demographics into political influence. This study attempts to add to this literature by testing dominant theories of political participation in conjunction with the concept of group consciousness utilizing the 1999 Kaiser/Post National Survey of Latinos. Through the use of measures for all dimensions of group consciousness across multiple Latino subgroups, this analysis helps to clarify the role of group consciousness in Latino political behavior. Through an examination of the relationship between group consciousness and political participation across both voting and Latino-specific activities, this study suggests that group consciousness is more meaningful in the context of political activities that are directly tied to the Latino community.

Keywords: *group consciousness; Latino; political participation; voting; elections; identity*

Currently there are approximately 40 million Latinos living in the United States, which represents 13.7% of the U.S. population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2004). The continued flow of migration, coupled with the younger median age and higher birth rates of Latinos, has contributed to this group being recognized as the largest minority group in the United States. It is not just the sheer magnitude of this emergence of Latinos as an influential constituency but that Latinos are concentrated in several states with a tremendous impact on national elections (Suro & Singer, 2002). The salience of Latinos in American politics is reflected in the attention they have received from the two major political parties who have both taken major steps to increase mobilization of the Latino community (Segal, 2004) and from scholars who have recently increased their focus on the Latino-origin popu-

lation. Despite the growing attention the newly titled largest minority group has yielded, there is still a large question of whether the visibility and size of the Latino population will result in a degree of political influence that their numbers command.

Although scholars have not ignored the question of whether the Latino population strength will translate to political prowess, this study attempts to add to this literature by testing dominant theories of political participation in conjunction with the concept of group consciousness utilizing the 1999 Kaiser/Post National Survey of Latinos. This analysis makes a contribution to our knowledge of the role of group consciousness in Latino political participation in two important ways. First, this analysis utilizes multiple measures to capture the full range of the multidimensional concept of group consciousness. And second, this is the first attempt to empirically explore the differential impact of group consciousness across various modes of participation. Through an examination of the relationship between group consciousness and political participation across both voting and Latino-specific activities, this study suggests that group consciousness is more meaningful in the context of political activities that are directly tied to the Latino community. This differential impact contributes to the growing debate regarding the relevance of group consciousness in minority political participation by suggesting that group consciousness does increase Latino participation when the political activities are directly tied to the Latino community. Recent demographic trends provide the context for increased Latino group consciousness, providing greater motivation to understand the role of group consciousness in the political participation of this community.

Political participation is generally defined as a set of activities citizens utilize to influence the structure of government, the selection of government officials, or the policies of government (Conway, 2001). Although voting is the most common and most analyzed political act, there are many different methods of participating in politics. Therefore, in this study, I investigate the impact of group consciousness on not only voting but also Latino-specific activities (donating money and/or working for Latino candidates and attending Latino-based meetings or demonstrations). Group consciousness is defined as instances when a group maintains a sense of affinity and group identification with other members of the group, which leads to a collective orientation to become more politically active (Garcia, 2003). Testing competing theories of Latino political participation within one model permits clarification of the influence group consciousness has on voting and Latino-specific participation. Fundamentally, testing the impact of group consciousness on both voting and Latino-specific political activities will uncover any differential impact of the concept on political participation.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The study of political involvement has a long-standing and rich history in the social sciences. Scholars have developed several theories intended to explain why some individuals participate in American politics whereas others do not. Within this vast literature pertaining to political participation is a growing interest in racial/ethnic differences in political activity, particularly those between Whites and African Americans (Conway, 2001; Leighley & Vedlitz, 1999; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). It is my intent here to briefly summarize the standard model of political participation that will be tested against the group consciousness model of participation in this analysis, along with several other key factors that scholars of minority political participation have found to be pertinent to investigations of Latino political activity.

The standard model of political participation to which I refer in this study is composed of some of the dominant factors that have maintained support from scholars to be significant contributors to political activity.¹ These factors include socioeconomic status (SES; Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1978) and the political attitudes or orientations (Almond & Verba, 1963; Verba et al., 1995). Verba and Nie (1972) contend that persons with higher levels of schooling, particularly postsecondary, and those positioned in professional or managerial positions earning above median income levels are more likely to be politically involved. These general findings from early proponents of the SES model have been supported by a plethora of other studies that have found that SES, measured individually or collectively, is a strong predictor of political participation (Kenny, 1992; Leighley, 1990; Verba et al., 1995). Therefore, measures for education, income, and work status are included in this analysis of Latino political participation. The study of political involvement has also indicated that political attitudes or orientations are also correlated with political participation. The political attitudes model of participation holds that political efficacy, trust, and engagement affect political involvement (Almond & Verba, 1963; Verba et al., 1995). Engagement, which is typically measured by the general interest an individual has in political affairs, has been shown to be positively correlated with political participation and is the foundation for other political attitudes including political efficacy, political interest, and trust (Liu, 2001; Verba et al., 1995). Given the attention paid to political orientations in the extant research, I include measures for political interest, internal and external efficacy, and acculturation and assimilation in this study.

The Role of Group Consciousness in Political Participation

The group consciousness model of participation is the basis for this analysis and is tested against the standard model of participation in a multivariate model. Theories based on Verba and Nie's (1972) application of group consciousness in a larger model of participation have been used to explain political behavior among minority groups. Group consciousness is a multidimensional concept developed when members of a group recognize their status as being part of a deprived group (Miller, Gurin, Gurin, & Malanchuk, 1981). It is this sense of commonality and shared circumstances that encourages groups to become involved politically, partially explaining relatively high rates of political participation among disadvantaged groups (Olsen, 1970; Verba & Nie, 1972). There has been literature analyzing the relationship between group consciousness and political participation for some time (Gurin, Miller, & Gurin, 1980; Miller et al., 1981; Olsen, 1970; Verba & Nie, 1972), but not until recently has this work moved beyond a focus on African Americans. The early literature in this area found that when SES is controlled, African Americans tend to participate at higher rates than Whites across several modes of participation (Olsen, 1970; Verba & Nie, 1972). The concept of group consciousness has been suggested as the explanation for this empirical trend.

There has been some debate within the minority political behavior literature as to the impact of group consciousness on minority political participation. Research in the discipline of political science has provided evidence that the related concepts of group consciousness, cohesion, or linked fate are associated with increased levels of political participation (McClain & Stewart, 2003; Miller et al., 1981; Stokes, 2003).² Those in this camp argue that group consciousness involves recognizing a shared marginalized status with others in your group and motivates individuals to act collectively to gain access to political resources. Miller et al. (1981) find that although group consciousness has the strongest impact on political participation for African Americans, it is also evident for women and the poor. Furthermore, Stokes (2003) finds that group consciousness increases Latino political participation but in varying manners across the various Latino subgroups.

Despite convincing evidence that group consciousness does motivate political participation, others disagree. Verba et al. (1995) found that group consciousness does not have an impact on political participation when other factors are included within a multivariate context. In addition, Wilcox and Gomez (1990) found that group consciousness is not a strong predictor of participation for African Americans, whereas Leighley and Vedlitz (1999) find that group consciousness fails to account for political engagement

among several racial and ethnic groups. Finally, scholars of political psychology have argued that disadvantaged groups often accept the status quo at even greater levels than do dominant groups (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003; Overbeck, Jost, Mosso, & Flizik, 2004). In fact, Jost et al. (2003) found that low-income Latinos were more likely to trust government officials and believe that government works for the benefit of all than were high-income Latinos. This contradicts the general notion that group consciousness motivates collective action among minority groups in an attempt to overcome disadvantaged status.

I believe that at least some of this debate is a result of ambiguity in measurement and limited definition of participation. Previous literature on group consciousness has indicated that group consciousness is multidimensional with three distinct components: group identity, recognition of disadvantaged status, and desire for collective action to overcome that status (Garcia, 2003; Miller et al., 1981). Many studies constrain their measurement of group consciousness to group identity, only one aspect of the complex concept.³ For example, Uhlaner (1989) measured group consciousness using membership in American ethnic or nonethnic organizations and social groups. Similarly, Olsen (1970) focused on African Americans who had identified themselves as members of an ethnic minority versus those who did not. Verba and Nie (1972) used an index that summed the number of times African American respondents referred to race in responses to several open-ended questions. Group identification is only a measure of one dimension of consciousness. Individuals may develop an overall sense of belonging to a group because of economic or social circumstances; however, they may lack conscious loyalty to the group because they do not perceive that the group lacks access to resources when compared to other groups (Wong, Lien, & Conway, 2005). In another example, although also constricting measurement of group consciousness to one dimension, Masuoka (2004) uses a measure of perceived Latino collective action to assess the concept.

Fortunately, there are a couple of studies that have incorporated the multidimensional nature of the concept (Lien, 1994; Stokes, 2003). Although these studies have made steps in the right direction, there remains room for improvement. For example, the Lien (1994) piece only includes Mexicans in the analysis. Although Mexicans are the largest Latino subgroup, a study based on Latino group consciousness is more meaningful if it taps into the pan-ethnic nature of the Latino population. The Stokes (2003) piece is particularly promising because of the inclusion of multiple Latino nationality groups. However, the data used in the study (1989 Latino National Political Survey), although containing very comprehensive group consciousness measures, are somewhat dated. Given the huge immigration shifts in the

1990s and migration of Latinos into new regions of the country, it is likely that factors within the Latino community, particularly in regard to group consciousness, have changed somewhat.

This analysis intends to shed light on this subject by testing the impact of all dimensions of group consciousness on multiple forms of Latino political participation with contemporary data. This advancement provides the opportunity to determine whether the influence of group consciousness on participation is greater when the political activities are directly tied to the Latino community.

Latino Cultural Factors That Affect Political Participation

Studies of Latino political participation suggest that there are several cultural factors, in addition to the standard model of participation, that must be accounted for when analyzing the political activity of Latinos. Citizenship status and nativity are two factors that have been suggested to have a significant impact on Latino political participation (de la Garza & DeSipio, 1997; Hero, 1992; Uhlaner, 1989). Scholars have also indicated that Latinos with longer residence in the United States are more likely to participate in U.S. politics (Highton & Burris, 2002; Uhlaner, 1989). With greater time spent in the United States, the assumption is that individuals will be more familiar with the American political system and therefore more likely to participate. This is reflected in Highton and Burris's (2002) results that indicate voter turnout among foreign-born Mexican Americans who have lived in the United States for the longest period outpace that of native-born Mexican Americans. Finally, language has been consistently identified as a dominant influencing factor of Latino political participation, as English-speaking Latinos have greater access to the resources necessary to participate (de la Garza & DeSipio, 1997; Uhlaner, 1989).

Hypotheses and Anticipated Findings

Investigation of the relevance of group consciousness among the Latino community creates a theoretical framework that is based on a differential impact of group consciousness on voting and Latino-specific political activity. Several hypotheses naturally develop from this investigation. I hypothesize that the three dimensions of group consciousness will be positively correlated with both forms of political participation; however, the impact of group consciousness will be greater in the context of Latino-specific participation. Given the nature of engaging in political activities that directly improve the status of the Latino community, I anticipate that group con-

sciousness will prove to be more meaningful in the context of Latino-specific participation. In addition to the role of group consciousness, I hypothesize that SES will be positively correlated with political participation across both models consistent with the dominant model of political participation. And finally, I anticipate that the Latino cultural factors of nativity, English proficiency, and citizenship status will all be positively correlated with political participation. Therefore, I hypothesize that Latinos who are more integrated into the American political system participate at greater levels than do those who are not.

Conceptualization and Measurement Strategy

My general discussion of the participation literature has identified several factors that may affect political participation. This array of factors is grouped into five clusters representing the different perspectives attempting to explain Latino participation. These clusters are group consciousness (Latino commonality, shared political interests, perceived discrimination), SES or demographic factors (income, education, work status, gender, age), political orientations (assimilation, acculturation, efficacy, political interest), cultural factors (nativity, language, length of time in the United States, and citizenship status), and national origin (Cuban, Puerto Rican, Central or South American, Caribbean). Given the citizenship requirement for voting, non-citizens are not included in the sample population for the voting model, and the citizenship status variable is excluded from the voting model. A discussion of the dependent variable construction along with the primary explanatory variable cluster of group consciousness will provide a background for the statistical analysis. The survey items utilized to construct the remaining independent variables are included in the appendix.⁴

Political participation is defined in this study as voting in national elections and Latino-specific participation. The dependent variable for the voting model is operationalized through a scaled measure of voter registration and voting. The values and distribution for this variable are 0 (not registered, 342), 1 (registered and nonvoter, 165), 2 (registered and have voted in the past, 363), and 3 (frequent voter, 664).⁵ Frequent voters are those respondents who are currently registered, who voted in the 1996 presidential election and the 1998 congressional election, and who are thus likely to vote in future elections. It is important to note that citizenship status is not included in the voting model as noncitizens are not able to register to vote.

The dependent variable for the Latino-specific model is a Latino-specific index based on a cumulative score among the Latino respondents regarding

their participation or not in three Latino-specific political activities within the past 10 years: working for a Latino candidate, attending a demonstration or meeting based on Latino issues, or contributing money to a Latino candidate.⁶ The values of this variable and distributions consist of 0 (participation in none of these activities, 1,583), 1 (participation in one activity, 536), 2 (participation in two activities, 212), and 3 (participation in all three activities, 86).

Group Consciousness Cluster

The concept of group consciousness suggests that the effects of group affinity and collective orientations are felt within Latino subgroups (Puerto Rican, Columbian, Mexican, etc.) and the broader pan-ethnic grouping of Latino. I agree with Miller et al. (1981) that proper conceptualization of group consciousness requires the employment of multiple measures to tap into the main dimensions of group consciousness. Past literature suggests that there are three general dimensions of group consciousness: general identification with a group, an awareness of that group's relative position in society, and the desire to engage in collective activity that focuses on improving the situation of that group (Garcia, 2003; Gurin et al., 1980; Padilla, 1985). Fortunately, the *Washington Post* survey provides the opportunity to capture all three aspects of group consciousness for Latinos.

A group commonality index was created using a battery of questions asking respondents how much they felt in common with other Latino subgroups.⁷ Respondents were given a score based on their response to the set of questions. For example, a response of a lot in common received +2 points, a fair amount in common +1, only a little in common -1, and nothing in common -2. These scores were used to construct an index that consists of seven values running from no sense of Latino commonality to a strong sense of commonality with all Latino subgroups (Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Central or South American). There is significant variation in this measure, as just less than 10% of respondents are in the two highest commonality categories, although approximately 30% are within the two lowest categories.

In addition to general commonality, a measure of Latino political commonality is also included in the group consciousness cluster. The political commonality measure was based on responses to the following survey question: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Latinos in the United States share FEW political interests and goals?" The two values for this variable are 0 (no commonality, agree) and 1 (commonality, disagree). The addition of the measure tapping into the extent of common political

interest among the Latino population allows for the distinction to be made between social and political commonality, an advantage over other studies of group consciousness.

Beyond notions of commonality, group consciousness requires that individuals recognize that their group shares a disadvantaged position in society. I employ a measure of perceived discrimination to capture this component of group consciousness based on responses to the following survey questions: "Is discrimination against Latinos in our society today a problem or not? And, is it a big problem or not such a big problem?" A 3-point scale is used as a measure of discrimination with the following values: 0 (*those individuals who believe discrimination is not a problem*), 1 (*those who indicate that discrimination is a problem for Latinos but not a big problem*), and 2 (*those who believe that it is a big problem for Latinos*).

The final component of group consciousness is the desire to improve the disadvantaged societal position of one's group through collective action. I use the following survey question as an indicator of one's belief that collective action can improve the group's position in society: "Do you think that if various Latinos groups worked together politically Latinos would be better off, worse off, or wouldn't make much difference?" The values of this final component of group consciousness are 0 (*worse off*), 1 (*no difference*), and 2 (*better off*).⁸ The inclusion of these four measures effectively captures all dimensions of group consciousness, an advantage over most other studies interested in the relationship between group consciousness and political participation.

Discussion of Data Utilized in Analysis

All data introduced in this article originate from the 1999 survey of Latinos conducted by *The Washington Post*, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University. This survey on Latinos in America consists of 4,614 adults, with 2,417 Latinos in the sample. The study includes interviews with 818 Mexicans, 318 Puerto Ricans, 312 Cubans, and 593 Central or South Americans. The final results were weighted to the national Latino population as estimated by the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. This survey was conducted by telephone between June 30 and August 30, 1999, by International Communications Research. Survey respondents were selected at random, and the margin of sampling error for respondents is 2% for Latino respondents. My analysis is only concerned with the Latino respondents to this survey; therefore, the non-Latino respondents were excluded from the models.

The Impact of Contributing Factors on Voting

The first step of the data analysis is to investigate the impact that the group consciousness cluster has on political participation in terms of voting. Given the categorical and unordered nature of the dependent voting, variable multinomial logit (MNL) is used to specify the voting model. MNL is preferred here because of its ability to allow the effects of the independent variables to differ for each outcome of the dependent variable and is the most commonly used approach for nominal categorical variables (Long & Freese, 2003). Within the MNL approach, I have set those who are nonregistered as the baseline category. Therefore, all results are interpreted in comparison to nonparticipants. Throughout the analysis, more attention will be focused on the frequent voting category as individuals who have voted in the previous two elections are most likely to participate in future elections.

Table 1 indicates that only three variables are significantly related to voter registration: commonality, internal efficacy, and length of time spent in the United States. I begin the discussion with general Latino commonality, which is positively related to voter registration. As perceptions of commonality increase among Latinos, the odds of individuals becoming registered to vote also increases. Therefore, Latinos who have greater levels of attachment to other Latinos are more likely to become registered to vote. In addition, internal efficacy is positively correlated with voter registration, indicating that those who believe that they can have an impact on politics are more likely to be registered voters. Within the cultural factors variable cluster, consistent with my hypotheses, as length of time in the United States increases, the odds of individuals being registered also increases.

Turning now to the impact of the full model on the propensity to vote, again there are only three factors that are significantly correlated with voting. Most important to this study, none of the group consciousness measures are significantly related to voting when compared to the base category of nonregistered. Being employed significantly increases the likelihood that an individual will have voted in his or her lifetime in a national election, as does being interested in politics. National origin is relevant here, as Caribbean Latinos (Puerto Rican, Dominican) are more likely than are other Latinos to indicate that they have voted in a national election.⁹

The final column of Table 1 is of primary interest to the analysis of voting, as this section of the table depicts the impact of all contributing factors on frequent voting relative to nonparticipation. Among the dimensions of group consciousness, perceived discrimination is significantly and positively related to frequent voting. Therefore, as Latinos perceive greater levels of discrimination directed toward their community, their odds of becoming fre-

Table 1
The Effect of the Full Model on Voting (Multinomial Logit Results)

| | Voter Registration | | | Infrequent Voting | | | Frequent Voting | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|------|------------|-------------------|------|------------|-----------------|------|------------|
| | B | SE | Odds Ratio | B | SE | Odds Ratio | B | SE | Odds Ratio |
| Group consciousness | | | | | | | | | |
| Commonality | .213** | .080 | 1.23 | .067 | .064 | 1.06 | .090 | .062 | 1.09 |
| Political commonality | .118 | .248 | 1.12 | -.182 | .191 | 0.833 | .194 | .188 | 1.21 |
| Perceived discrimination | .109 | .158 | 1.11 | .134 | .124 | 1.14 | .218* | .120 | 1.24 |
| Collective action | -.415 | .275 | 0.659 | -.278 | .228 | 0.756 | -.167 | .228 | 0.845 |
| Socioeconomic status, demographics | | | | | | | | | |
| Income | -.045 | .073 | 0.955 | .046 | .057 | 1.04 | .070 | .056 | 1.07 |
| Education | -.129 | .085 | 0.878 | .058 | .065 | 1.05 | .353*** | .065 | 1.44 |
| Work status | -.053 | .471 | 0.947 | .356** | .124 | 1.23 | 1.02** | .409 | 2.77 |
| Gender | .257 | .244 | 1.29 | -.142 | .187 | 0.869 | -.234 | .182 | 0.791 |
| Age | -.008 | .019 | 0.991 | .010 | .013 | 1.01 | .033** | .012 | 1.03 |
| Political orientations | | | | | | | | | |
| Assimilation | -.174 | .120 | 0.839 | -.017 | .082 | 0.982 | -.119 | .082 | 0.887 |
| Acculturation | .020 | .122 | 1.02 | -.022 | .096 | 0.978 | -.095 | .097 | 0.908 |
| Internal efficacy | .200* | .115 | 1.12 | .140 | .089 | 1.15 | .057 | .087 | 1.05 |
| External efficacy | -.080 | .164 | 0.922 | -.124 | .090 | 0.976 | -.003 | .087 | 0.996 |
| Political interest | -.056 | .162 | 0.945 | .450*** | .125 | 1.56 | .680*** | .124 | 1.97 |

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

| | Voter Registration | | | Infrequent Voting | | | Frequent Voting | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|------|------------|-------------------|------|------------|-----------------|------|------------|
| | B | SE | Odds Ratio | B | SE | Odds Ratio | B | SE | Odds Ratio |
| Cultural factors | | | | | | | | | |
| Nativity | .688 | .447 | 1.99 | .065 | .315 | 1.06 | -.365 | .303 | 0.693 |
| English proficiency | .227 | .206 | 1.25 | .134 | .153 | 1.14 | .156 | .154 | 1.16 |
| Length of time in United States | .047** | .023 | 1.47 | .003 | .015 | 1.00 | .044** | .014 | 1.04 |
| National origin | | | | | | | | | |
| Cuban | .081 | .444 | 1.08 | .296 | .332 | 1.34 | .751** | .306 | 2.12 |
| Central or South American | .543 | .348 | 1.72 | .358 | .278 | 1.43 | -.092 | .282 | 0.911 |
| Caribbean Latinos | .187 | .315 | 1.20 | .460** | .240 | 1.58 | .287 | .236 | 1.33 |
| N | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Likelihood ratio χ^2 | | | | | | | | | |
| Pseudo R^2 | | | | | | | | | |

* $p < .10$, two-tailed. ** $p < .05$, two-tailed. *** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

quent voters is significantly greater. To assess the marginal impact of perceived discrimination on frequent voting, predicted probabilities were computed. By allowing the perceived discrimination variable to run its full range of values while holding the other variables at their means, I was able to determine that the predicted probability of becoming a frequent voter increases from .289 for those who believe discrimination is not a problem for Latinos to .388 for those who believe that discrimination is a major problem for Latinos. Although the marginal impact of perceived discrimination is not tremendous, it is clear that this dimension of group consciousness does have a meaningful impact on voting for Latinos.

In addition to the group consciousness cluster, variables from all four remaining variable clusters are significantly correlated with frequent voting. Consistent with my hypotheses and previous research, the SES and demographics cluster has a major impact on political participation in the form of voting, as education, work status, and age are all positively correlated with frequent voting. In addition, political interest has a tremendous impact on whether an individual will become a frequent voter, as this variable has the largest odds ratio of any variable in all three voting models. Interestingly, neither assimilation nor acculturation has a statistically significant impact on any category of the voting variable. These results are consistent with those of Barreto and Munoz (2003), who found that social incorporation, including assimilation, does not influence political participation among Mexican-origin Latinos.

Within the cultural factor cluster, length of time in the United States is significant and positive, suggesting that the odds of being a frequent voter are greater as the length of time an individual lives in the United States increases. Consistent with the integration hypothesis, this suggests that Latinos who have been in the United States for a significant period of time are more likely to have voted in the previous two elections than their counterparts who have been here for fewer years. And finally, confirming previous results relating to Latino national origin, Cubans are more likely to be frequent voters than are non-Cubans (de le Garza, DeSipio, Garcia, Garcia, & Falcon, 1993; Garcia & Sanchez, 2004; Highton & Burris, 2002).

The Impact of Group Consciousness on Latino-Specific Participation

With the interpretation of the voting models completed, I turn now to the role of group consciousness in Latino-specific participation. The dependent variable for Latino-specific participation is a count variable that tallies the

number of Latino-specific political activities respondents have engaged in and has four categories: participation in no activities, participation in one activity, participation in two activities, and participation in all three activities. Count variables, or those that indicate how many times something has happened, require models specifically designed for count outcomes (Long & Freese, 2003). The negative binomial regression model is one of those models and is preferred here because unlike the commonly used Poisson regression model, it does not assume that events accumulating during the observation period are independent and have a constant rate of occurrence (King, 1998). It is likely that participation in one Latino-specific activity is related to participation in multiple activities and is likely that participation in these activities is greater during elections, thus suggesting that these assumptions of the Poisson model would be violated.¹⁰ Similar to MNL, predicted probabilities are computed for the primary variables of interest for greater interpretation.

Table 2 reflects the impact of all explanatory variables on the propensity of Latinos to participate in Latino-specific activities. In all, nine variables have a statistically significant impact on Latino participation in Latino-specific activities. Consistent with the main hypothesis driving this analysis, group consciousness has a greater impact on Latino-specific participation than does voting, as all three dimensions of group consciousness influence greater participation in this context. Specifically, Latino commonality increases the rate of participation in Latino-specific activities by .025 for each unit increase in the Latino commonality measure. Furthermore, as perceived discrimination increases, so do the odds that a respondent will participate in Latino-specific activities. The marginal effects of the perceived discrimination variable suggest that with all variables held at their means, a standard deviation increase in the perceived discrimination variable increases the Latino-specific participation rate by .10.

The impact associated with these two variables is more apparent through the percentage change coefficients that are presented in Figures 1 and 2. When all other variables are held to their means, the rate of participation in Latino-specific activities increases by approximately 5.5% for each unit increase in the Latino commonality measure. Therefore, an individual who believes that he or she has a lot in common with Latinos from all subgroups participates in 33% more Latino-specific activities than does an individual who does not believe he or she has much in common with any other Latinos. The percentage change associated with perceived discrimination is just less than 10%, accounting for nearly a 20% increase in Latino-specific participation across the range of that variable.

Table 2
The Effect of the Full Model on Participation in Latino-specific Activities

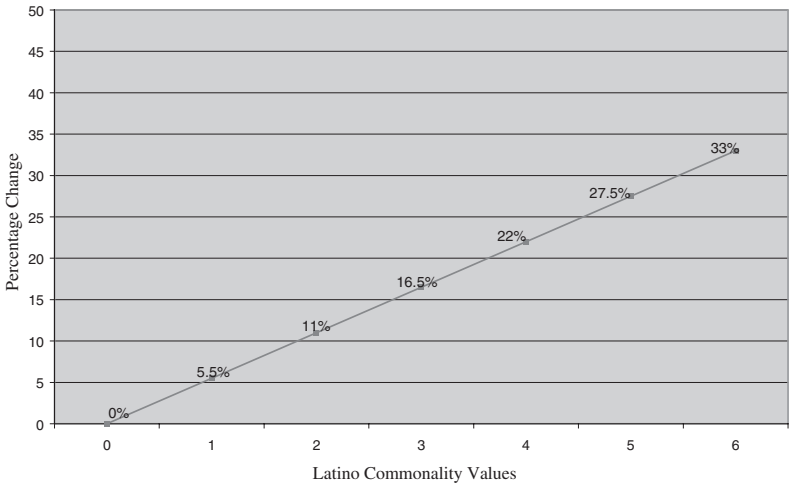
| | Negative Binomial Regression Results | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------|
| | B | SE | Marginal Effects ^a |
| Group consciousness | | | |
| Commonality | .054** | .024 | .025 |
| Political commonality | .090 | .077 | .043 |
| Perceived discrimination | .215*** | .051 | .103 |
| Collective action | .200** | .200 | .096 |
| Socioeconomic status, demographics | | | |
| Income | .047** | .022 | .022 |
| Education | .060** | .025 | .029 |
| Work status | .005 | .171 | .002 |
| Gender | .130* | .074 | .062 |
| Age | -.007 | .004 | -.003 |
| Political orientations | | | |
| Assimilation | -.028 | .038 | -.013 |
| Acculturation | .153** | .048 | .073 |
| Internal efficacy | .005 | .034 | .003 |
| External efficacy | .034 | .035 | -.016 |
| Political interest | .261*** | .050 | .125 |
| Cultural factors | | | |
| Nativity | .129 | .129 | .062 |
| English proficiency | .004 | .061 | .001 |
| Length of time in United States | .010* | .005 | .004 |
| Citizenship status | -.038 | .122 | -.018 |
| National origin | | | |
| Cuban | .034 | .114 | .016 |
| Central or South American | -.133 | .101 | -.061 |
| Caribbean Latinos | .074 | .098 | .036 |
| <i>N</i> | 1,576 | | |
| Pseudo <i>R</i> ² | .2742 | | |
| Likelihood ratio χ^2 | 239.40 | | |

a. Marginal effects are the marginal changes associated with an increase in each unit of the explanatory variable with all other explanatory variables held to their means. Marginal effects for binary variables are the discrete change from 0 to 1.

* $p < .10$, two-tailed. ** $p < .05$, two-tailed. *** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

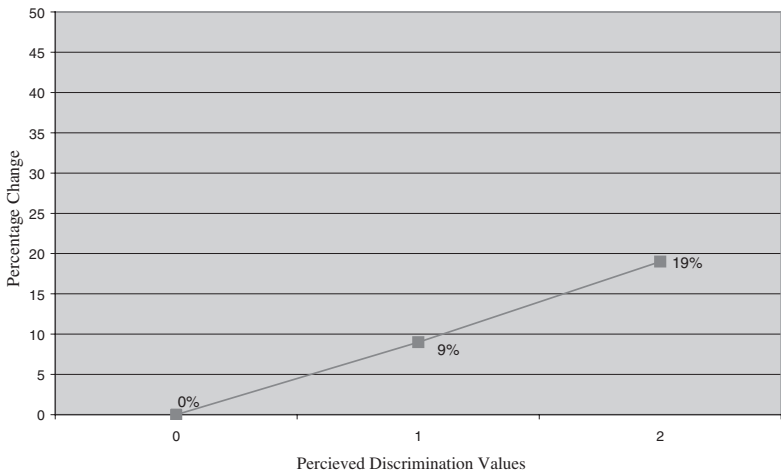
The third dimension of group consciousness, recognizing the benefits of Latino collective action, also increases Latino-specific participation. The marginal effect associated with a unit increase in collective action is .096, and each unit increase in the collective action measure yields a 22% increase in Latino-specific participation. As depicted in Figure 3, the percentage

Figure 1
The Impact of Latino Commonality on Latino-Specific Participation



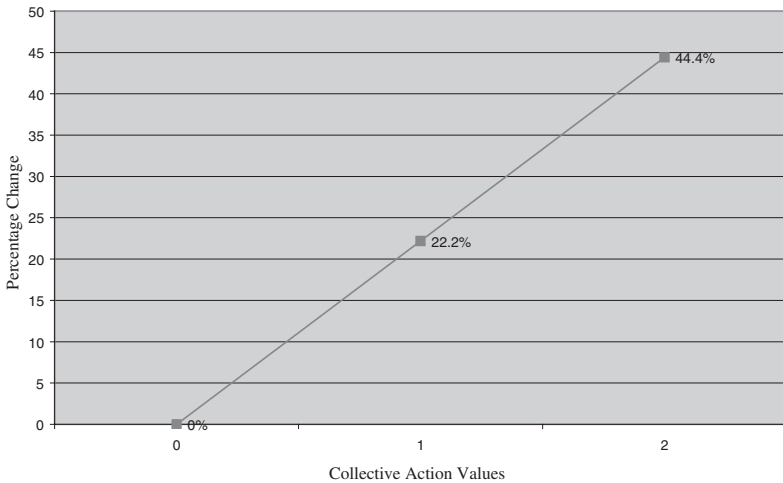
Note: Commonality ranges from 0 (perceiving no commonality with any Latino subgroups) to 6 (perceiving commonality with all Latino subgroups).

Figure 2
The Impact of Perceived Discrimination on Latino-Specific Participation



Note: Perceived discrimination values are 1 (discrimination is not a problem for Latinos), 2 (discrimination is a problem for Latinos), and 3 (discrimination is a big problem for Latinos).

Figure 3
The Impact of Support for Latino Collective Action on Latino-Specific Participation



Note: Collective action values are 0 (Latino collective action leads to a worse situation for Latinos), 1 (Latino collective action leads to no change), and 2 (Latino collective action leads to positive benefits for Latinos).

change associated with collective action implies that Latinos who believe Latino collective action leads to positive benefits participate in 44% more Latino-specific activities than do those who believe collective action produces a worse situation for Latinos. It is clear that group consciousness has a much greater impact on political activities directly tied to the Latino community than a more general mode of participation such as voting. Although Latino political commonality has no impact on political participation, all three dimensions of group consciousness influence Latino-specific participation.

In addition to group consciousness, the socioeconomic factors of education and income both have a positive impact on participation in Latino-specific activities. Consistent with my hypotheses and previous literature noting the role of SES (Verba et al., 1995; Verba & Nie, 1972), Latinos with higher incomes and educational attainment participate in a greater number of Latino-specific activities. Men also participate in more Latino-specific activities than do women among Latinos, however, the marginal effect of the gender variable is not very robust. Furthermore, although assimilation remains statistically insignificant, acculturation is positively correlated with

Latino-specific participation. Therefore, individuals who believe that it is important for Latinos to maintain aspects of their culture are more likely to participate in political activities directly tied to the Latino community. Political interest remains relevant, as those more interested in politics participate in a greater number of Latino political activities. Finally, among cultural factors length of time in the United States has a positive impact on Latino-specific participation. The marginal effect of this variable is .004, suggesting that the rate of participation in Latino political activities increases slightly for each year lived in the United States among Latinos.

Conclusion and Discussion

This article began by highlighting the changing American political landscape and the increasingly pivotal impact that Latinos will continue to play in electoral politics. In the aftermath of the 2002 midterm election and 2004 presidential election, it is clear that Latinos as candidates and voters played a critical role. This is reflected in two Latino U.S. Senators being elected in 2004, New Mexico electing a Latino governor in 2002, and the achievement of the most Latino Congresspeople in history. Furthermore, both the Democratic and Republican parties spent record amounts of money on courting the Latino vote during the campaign for the 2004 presidential election (Segal, 2004). Finally, the recent election of Antonio Villaraigosa as mayor of Los Angeles marks the first time the Latino stronghold of Los Angeles has had a Latino mayor in longer than a century. Given these political victories and the steady growth of the Latino population, a systematic examination of the factors that contribute to political participation among Latinos is extremely valuable.

The core question of this analysis is whether or not group consciousness motivates political participation for Latinos. Results from both the voting and Latino-specific participation models indicate that there is a positive relationship between group consciousness and political participation; however, the impact varies depending on the dimension of group consciousness and mode of political participation. Among the three general dimensions of group consciousness defined by the literature, commonality and perceived discrimination consistently had the greatest impact on political participation across the two models. This is supported by the inability of collective action to influence voter registration or voting for Latinos. It is also important to note that the investigation of the differential impact of general and political commonality revealed that a general or cultural sense of commonality is more meaningful to political participation than is a sense of political com-

monality. Therefore, the current conceptualization of group consciousness (Garcia, 2003) consisting of three dimensions—group identification or cultural commonality, perceived discrimination, and desire for collective action—is supported by this analysis.

The investigation of the potential differential impact of group consciousness on type and context of political participation revealed some interesting results. As expected, the group consciousness cluster had greater influence on Latino-specific participation compared to voting, as all three dimensions of group consciousness motivate greater participation in Latino-specific political activities. Group consciousness is based on a notion of collective action directed toward improving the status of one's group. This analysis suggests that group consciousness motivates Latinos to direct their collective efforts toward political activities that directly affect the status of the Latino community rather than the indirect activity of voting. This contributes to the debate regarding the relevance of group consciousness in political participation by suggesting the impact of the concept depends on the context of participation. It is clear from this analysis that individuals who have a strong sense of group consciousness are more likely to attend meetings or demonstrations based on Latino issues and donate money to and work on campaigns of Latinos running for office.

Although this analysis significantly adds to our general understanding of group consciousness and its impact on Latino political participation, there remains room for further study. In particular, it would be beneficial to determine whether group consciousness motivates other aspects of Latino political behavior, mainly vote choice, partisanship, and policy preferences. Furthermore, given the general premise that group consciousness is greater among African Americans than other minority groups, it would be interesting to construct and analyze data reflecting the role of group consciousness in political behavior among both Latinos and African Americans. This would allow for a direct comparison of what motivates group consciousness formation among both groups. Finally, although this analysis suggests that group consciousness does not have a large impact on voting for Latinos, it would be interesting to investigate this relationship when Latino voters have the opportunity to vote for a Latino candidate. The results from the Latino-specific participation model suggest that group consciousness would be more meaningful in that context. Although some important questions remain unanswered, this analysis has clearly added to our collective knowledge of Latino political participation and has opened the door for continued analysis seeking to determine the role of group consciousness in minority political behavior.

Appendix

Presentation of Survey Items and Independent Variable Measures

Socioeconomic status, demographics

Household income

“What is your total household income from all sources, before taxes?”

The values of the income measure are on a 9-point income scale ranging from < \$20,000 to > \$100,000.

Education

“What is the last grade that you completed in school?”

The values of the education variable are 0 (< 9th grade), 1 (some high school), 2 (high school graduate), 3 (business, technical, or vocational training after high school), 4 (some college), 5 (college graduate), and 6 (postgraduate training).

Work status

“What is your work status? Are you employed, unemployed, a homemaker, retired, or a student?”

The values of the work status variable are 0 (unemployed) or 1 (employed, student, homemaker, or retired).

Gender

“What is your gender?”

The values of the gender variable are 0 (female) or 1 (male).

Age

“What is your age?”

Age is continuous with the youngest respondent being 18 and the oldest being 90.

Political orientations

Assimilation

“How important is it for Latinos to change so that they blend into the larger society as in the idea of a melting pot?”

The values of the assimilation variable are 0 (not at all important), 1 (not too important), 2 (somewhat important), and 3 (very important).

Acculturation

“How important is it for Latinos to maintain their distinct cultures?”

The values of the acculturation variable are 0 (not at all important), 1 (not too important), 2 (somewhat important), and 3 (very important).

Internal efficacy

“Politics and government are so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what’s going on.”

The values of internal efficacy are 0 (strongly agree), 1 (agree somewhat), 2 (disagree somewhat), and 3 (disagree strongly).

External efficacy

“Political leaders do not care much what people like me think.”

The values of external efficacy are 0 (*strongly agree*), 1 (*agree somewhat*), 2 (*disagree somewhat*), and 3 (*disagree strongly*).

Political interest

“How much attention would you say you pay to politics and government?”

The values for the political interest variable are 0 (*none*), 1 (*not much*), 2 (*a fair amount*), and 3 (*a lot*).

Cultural factors

Citizenship status

“Now we would like to ask you about U.S. citizenship. Are you a U.S. citizen, currently applying, planning to apply, or not planning to become a U.S. citizen?”

The values of citizenship status are 0 (*noncitizen*) and 1 (*citizen*).

Nativity

“Were you born in the United States or another country?”

The values of nativity are 0 (*foreign born*) and 1 (*native born*).

English proficiency

This measure was created from the following survey questions:

“Would you say you can carry on a conversation in English?”

“Would you say you can read a newspaper or book in English?”

The English proficiency scale tunes from 0 (*nonproficient*) through 3 (*highly proficient*).

Time spent in the United States

“How many years have you lived in the United States?”

Time spent in the United States is continuous, with age used to maintain noncitizens in the analysis.

National origin

To account for national origin, dummy variables are constructed for Cubans, Central or South Americans, and Caribbean Latinos, with Mexicans serving as the comparison population. All variables were coded based on the following set of survey questions:

“Earlier you said you were Hispanic or Latino, what country did your family of ancestors come from?”

“Which country do you identify with more?”

Each dummy variable utilizes the same coding strategy, with 0 (*non-Cuban*) and 1 (*Cuban*), 0 (*non-Central or South American*) and 1 (*Central or South American*), and 0 (*non-Caribbean*) and 1 (*Caribbean*).

The Caribbean variable includes Latinos of both Puerto Rican and Dominican descent. The decision to combine these two populations is based on the proximity of those two countries and the regional concentration of those two communities in the United States.

Notes

1. The standard model of participation is not elaborated on here because of its general availability in most American politics textbooks. However, see Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (1995) for a good review of these dominant theories of political participation.

2. Scholars have utilized various terms to refer to collective identity, including linked fate (Dawson, 1994; Masuoka, 2004) and group cohesion (McClain & Stewart, 2003). However, measurement strategies are consistent with those I utilize for the three dimensions of group consciousness here.

3. See Stokes (2003) for a full discussion of these studies.

4. A correlation matrix was created to test for multicollinearity. The two explanatory variables with the greatest correlation in the analysis are citizenship status and nativity, with a Pearson coefficient of .61. These measures were tested individually and collectively through the use of a scaled measure with no change in statistical significance or direction in any of the models. No other variable combination approaches .6.

5. It is known that Latinos are likely to overestimate voter registration and turnout in self-reported contexts. However, this overestimation is more pervasive among the educated and efficacious and those with a greater sense of civic duty (Shaw, de la Garza, & Lee, 2000). Given that this study is not primarily concerned with these explanatory variables, nor are the coefficients for education or efficacy highly relevant, this potential overestimation is not of great concern here. Furthermore, there does not appear to be over-reporting of Latino-specific participation, as the distribution for this variable is heavily skewed toward nonparticipation and consistent with previous surveys of Latino political activity beyond voting (Verba et al., 1995).

6. Although the Cronbach's alpha of .562 does not reach the generally acceptable reliability threshold of .70 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998), this scaling method and alpha score is consistent with other studies interested in similar political activities (Garcia & Sanchez, 2004).

7. Respondents are asked, "How much do you have in common with the following groups: Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Central/South American?" The Cronbach's alpha of .876 indicates with great confidence that these survey questions can be scaled to create the Latino commonality variable.

8. It may be argued that an individual may think it is good for Latinos to work together politically but may score low on this measure as a result of not believing this effort would lead to positive results because of a lack of government responsiveness. However, the distribution on the collective action variable, in which the middle category *makes no difference* has less than 10% of the respondents, suggests that this is not an issue. To further test this, an interaction between the collective action variable and external efficacy was conducted. The lack of significance of this interaction provides more evidence in support of keeping the collective action measure in the models.

9. Interactions were conducted between the three group consciousness dimensions and national origin to test for potential interactive effects in both the voting and Latino-specific contexts. However, none of these interactions was statistically significant, and therefore the additive models are presented here.

10. In addition to the theoretical motivation to choose the negative binomial regression model, likelihood ratio tests of the Poisson regression model indicate that there is significant evidence of overdispersion in the Latino-specific Poisson model.

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