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Take One for the Team?

Limits of Shared Ethnicity and Candidate Preferences

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This study tests the theory of politicized ethnic identity's shaping Latino political behavior. The authors consider whether candidate quality moderates the effects of political ethnic attachments on co-ethnic candidate preferences. Ordered logistic regression models are developed to predict Latino voter preferences for co-ethnic candidates with varied degrees of qualification. Candidate quality significantly mitigates collective ethnic political behavior, yet the authors find Latinos with strong ethnic attachments remain inclined to prefer a co-ethnic even when less qualified than a non-Latino candidate. Political ethnic identity theory is useful in explaining minority political behavior, but there are boundaries to collective identity's shaping political preferences.

Keywords: *gender; race; ethnicity; identity; politics*

While scholars debate the merits and effects of descriptive representation on diverse populations, voters consistently demonstrate their support for co-ethnic candidates. A significant body of scholarly research highlights election return patterns whereby the majority of voters, when given a choice, cast ballots for candidates of shared ethnicity (Barreto 2007; Barreto, Villarreal, and Woods 2005; Tate 2003; Kaufmann 2003a; Hill, Moreno, and Cue 2001; Terkildsen 1993). Debate ensues regarding the causal factors for this empirical regularity that is typically attributed to either co-ethnic affinity or partisanship, with little attention to other potentially mitigating variables. Minority candidates appear on the ballot most frequently in elections in which partisanship is neutralized, in either local nonpartisan races or primary contests. This reality coupled with the general rise in candidate-centered campaigns (Wattenberg 1991) calls for a more careful evaluation of minority political behavior. Theories of ethnic politics hold that collective group consciousness fosters a sense of community loyalty that extends into the political environment (Wolfinger 1965; Gurin, Miller, and Gurin 1980; Garcia 2003). We test this theory by asking whether ethnic group politics is mitigated by candidate quality, an important variable in the political behavior literature that has heretofore been omitted from the minority political behavior

research. Pointed survey items are used to test the influence of ethnic group consciousness on individual voter preferences when faced with candidates of varied quality and ethnicity. This study advances the research in racial and ethnic politics by exploring the boundaries of ethnic attachments and incorporating the role of candidate quality on vote choice.

Data from the 2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Participation, conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center and the Kaiser Family Foundation,¹ affords the opportunity to explore Latino voter preferences in different scenarios: (1) when a Latino candidate and a non-Latino challenger are equally qualified and (2) when a Latino candidate is less qualified than a non-Latino opponent. Candidate preferences in these different contexts are modeled as function of group identity to test the extent to which ethnic consciousness and ethnic attachments account for co-ethnic candidate support. Including candidate quality in the theoretical conceptualization and empirical models offers a more complete interpretation of minority

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political behavior than most studies have presented. The analysis shows the effects of ethnic politics are significantly tempered by candidate quality such that Latinos will support a stronger non-Latino candidate over a weaker co-ethnic. Even so, theories of politicized ethnic identity remain relevant as we find that Latino voters with the strongest levels of group consciousness and attachment place a premium on descriptive representation and remain supportive of even less-qualified co-ethnic candidates. For most Latinos, qualifications matter; thus, candidates of all backgrounds must establish their credibility, not merely their ethnic ties, to win the support of Latino voters.

Linking Ethnic Identity and Political Behavior

Studies on politicized ethnic and racial identity reach similar conclusions about Latinos and African Americans: it is not race or ethnicity per se but rather associated group consciousness and ethnic attachments that shape political attitudes and decisions. Ethnic identity becomes politicized for Latinos and African Americans as a function of minority group consciousness, wherein an individual is aware of the minority group's disadvantaged socioeconomic condition and out-group status in the United States (Gurin, Miller, and Gurin 1980; Shingles 1981; Padilla 1985; DeFrancesco de Soto 2006). Group consciousness sharpens when individuals compare their ethnic or racial group situation to that of other groups, particularly whites, wherein actual and perceived differences as well as quantifiable disparities are evident (Dawson 1994). Similarly, ethnic attachment links individual identity with a larger minority group identity via specific traits that group members have in common (such as language ability). In combination, group consciousness and ethnic attachment reinforce a sense of belonging to a minority group and foster community loyalty that extends to the political environment. Studies consistently find heightened ethnic attachment and group consciousness are significantly associated with distinctive racial group political behavior including increased participation, support for specific policies, and preferences for multiracial coalitions (Miller et al. 1981; Uhlaner 1991; Kaufmann 2003b; Stokes 2003; Sanchez 2006b). Group consciousness can be indicative of sentiments of belonging, affiliation, and solidarity that yield measureable outcomes. For instance, minority voters represented by co-ethnics display

more positive dispositions toward politics and a willingness to participate. Higher levels of political trust, interest, and efficacy are found among African Americans represented by another African American (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Tate 2001). For Latinos, political alienation significantly diminishes as descriptive representation increases (Pantoja and Segura 2003), and both African American and Latino voters turn out in significantly larger proportions when a co-ethnic is on the ballot (Barreto 2007; Barreto, Villarreal, and Woods 2005; Barreto, Segura, and Woods 2004; Bobo and Gilliam 1990). At the same time, there is a dimension of Latino group identity is specifically shaped by negative experiences with American society and institutions. An enduring history of systematic discrimination against Mexican Americans solidified group consciousness and identity for generations, producing a politically unified group (Rosales 1993). The personal experience of discrimination and the perception that other Latinos experience discrimination diminishes trust in government but also enhances group attachments and political cohesiveness (Uhlaner 1991; Michelson 2003).

Latino ethnic attachments are complicated by the group's heterogeneity. There is wide variation at the individual level on the exact traits that link Latinos as a group. Commonalities or differences in national origin, immigrant generation, citizenship status, and language ability can delineate more specific salient identities and within-group attachments. Language fluency is an especially powerful variable in delineating group attachment because it sets social and formal parameters of interaction. There is evidence that language ability sets a line of demarcation for Latino incorporation with respect to acculturation, political participation, and social mobility (DeSipio 1996; Garcia Bedolla 2003; Ramakrishnan 2005). The composition of social networks and personal relationships also influences the degree of ethnic group attachment. Latinos with more co-ethnic friends, neighbors, and coworkers have heightened degrees of cultural knowledge and ethnic identification (Keefe and Padilla 1987; Ricourt and Danta 2003; Garcia 2003). Given the in-group differences, it is more accurate to think of Latino group attachment in terms of a scale rather than a dichotomous variable, wherein individuals have varied degrees of group consciousness, depending on a combination of life experiences and ascribed characteristics. Extent of ethnic attachment is not always a matter of individual choice for Latinos; strong group attachment may simply be a function of individual traits such as recency of

immigration or language ability. In other instances, Latino identity is deliberate and asserted, wherein individuals choose to embrace group-specific norms and behaviors including bilingualism and maintaining co-ethnic social networks.

As the number of Latino candidates and voters has increased, more studies have tested the extent to which politicized ethnic identity may determine Latino bloc voting and specific candidate preferences. Researchers have asked whether political preferences trump ethnicity, in effect considering some possible limits to ethnic attachment and candidate choices. Some have found no direct effect of ethnicity on candidate choice, concluding instead that Latino ethnicity has only an indirect effect on vote choice via partisanship and issue positions but no effect on candidate evaluation (Graves and Lee 2000; Cain and Kiewiet 1984). Michelson's (2005) recent study documents a California congressional election in which the vast majority of Latinos favored a white Democrat over a Latino Republican. Certainly Latino preferences for Democratic candidates, and the Cuban American exception to this trend, are well known and documented (Garcia 2003; Moreno 2002; Uhlaner and Garcia 2002), but what can explain Latinos' voting against their traditional partisan preferences? Barreto (2007) analyzed five recent mayoral elections in which large majorities of Latinos voted contrary to their partisan affiliation to support co-ethnic candidates. Similar outcomes were found in a study of Miami mayoral elections in which "ethnicity was an overwhelmingly more powerful predictor than partisanship" (Hill, Moreno, and Cue 2001, 291). Experimental research conducted by DeFrancesco de Soto (2006) also finds ethnic attachments weigh more heavily than partisanship in Latino voter decisions. Latinos are most frequently candidates in local elections devoid of overt partisan cues on the ballot, so the effects of political ethnic identity should factor more heavily in these contexts since partisanship, ideology, and policy preferences are not easily visible cues in this electoral context.

Candidate Quality

A relevant point in the Graves and Lee (2000) study is an unexpected nonfinding, that Latino ethnicity was not directly related to candidate evaluation. Specifically, Latino voters did not distinguish between the white and Latino candidate in terms of desirable qualities including intelligence, leadership,

and "cares about people like you." This suggests that Latinos do not blindly impose favorable traits on co-ethnic candidates and consider factors beyond ethnicity when making candidate evaluations. Voters increasingly consider candidate traits that are more personal rather than political in nature (Rosenberg et al. 1986). Components of overall candidate quality, including evaluations of competence, empathy, integrity, and leadership, have been strong predictors of vote choice (Funk 1999). The rise in candidate-centered campaigns has made these personal, nonpartisan cues even more accessible to voters (Wattenberg 1991). Latino voters should not be immune to the importance of candidate quality when making their vote decisions, even if this means voting against a co-ethnic. Does candidate quality present a challenge to identity group politics theory that would predict co-ethnic candidate preferences? This is where the research in candidate quality and ethnic group politics meet, and there is something of a gap. Studies have overlooked the role that candidate quality may have in shaping minority group members' vote choices. It is unclear whether ethnic group attachment necessarily translates into political behaviors that favor any Latino candidate.

Voters evaluate candidates based on candidates' personal traits as well as voters' perceptions of political ability. In most cases, information about candidates' personal and professional attributes is readily accessible, and voters base part of their decision on this information. The personal vote, as Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina (1987) explained, is "that portion of a candidate's electoral support which originates in his or her personal qualities, qualifications, activities, and record" (p. 9). There is evidence that the personal vote, especially perceptions of competence and experience, is critical in assessing candidate quality and determining vote choice (Kulisheck and Mondak 1996; Luttbeg 1992; McCurley and Mondak 1995). Experience frequently distinguishes winners and losers in open-seat races and can give challengers an edge over incumbent candidates. Candidates develop name recognition, political organization, and fund-raising and campaigning skills via prior political and other experience that requires a visible public profile. Scholars have also pointed out that it is not only rational but natural for voters to attend to personal information about candidates, including prior political experience (McCurley and Mondak 1995; Popkin 1991; Sullivan et al. 1990).

The research on candidate evaluations demonstrates that voters can and do evaluate several dimensions of candidate quality to inform their political

decisions. What is not evident from these studies is whether evaluations of candidate qualification can influence the propensity of voters to support a co-ethnic candidate. Even though there is not much in the way of academic research on this question, there are several recent elections that serve as good case studies on this topic. In each of these contests, substantial qualitative differences distinguished the viable, known Latino candidates and their non-Latino opponents. Competitive mayoral elections in Los Angeles (2001 and 2005), Houston (2001 and 2003), and San Antonio (2001 and 2005) exemplify the context in which two candidates, one Latino and another non-Latino, were generally considered strong, viable, quality candidates. Conversely, the 2002 Texas gubernatorial election, 2003 California recall election, and 2006 New Mexico congressional district race illustrate the case wherein Latino candidates having less experience were widely considered less competitive than their non-Latino opponents. Barreto's (2007) analysis finds extraordinary support for co-ethnic candidates in the 2001 Los Angeles and Houston elections.² The Latino candidates in these contests, Antonio Villaraigosa and Orlando Sanchez, had experience on the city council and support from high-profile business and community organizations. As a result, both were considered viable and enjoyed a high public profile prior to running for mayor; their campaigns also generated extensive media coverage. In both cities, Latino voter turnout spiked, and co-ethnic voting exceeded 75 percent.

Latino support for co-ethnic candidates is not consistently cohesive though. We take a look at general trends in several elections to illustrate this point in Table 1. The table shows Latino and other racial group voter support for candidates in four elections in which the strength of the Latino and non-Latino candidates varied.³ In each of these elections, SurveyUSA conducted preelection polling near election day, thus avoiding the well-documented bandwagon effects found in exit polls (McAllister and Studlar 1991; Goidel and Shields 1994; Atkeson 1999; Wright 1990). SurveyUSA's results accurately projected the outcomes within the margin of error in each of the elections presented in the table.

The 2001 open-seat San Antonio mayoral race was crowded with eleven candidates, including two city councilmen, Ed Garza and Tim Bannwolf, and political newcomer Art Hall. Of the Latino voters polled, 75 percent indicated support for Garza, an overwhelming show of support. Garza was widely considered the frontrunner during the course of the

Table 1
Co-ethnic Vote in Select Elections
(in Percentages)

	Latino	White	Black
2001 San Antonio			
Garza	75	41	45
Bannwolf	12	40	12
Hall	6	11	31
2005 San Antonio			
Castro	69	21	60
Hardberger	29	78	34
2002 Texas governor			
Sanchez (Democrat)	60	29	80
Perry (Republican)	37	67	16
2006 New Mexico House			
Madrid (Democrat)	56	43	
Wilson (Republican)	40	55	

Source: SurveyUSA.

campaign; the fact that he won the election outright and avoided a runoff in such a large field of candidates was also indicative of the strength of his candidacy. Another Latino, Julian Castro, ran for mayor in the subsequent open-seat race for the office in 2005. His opponent was former federal judge Phil Hardberger, a strong candidate with support from the business community, Democratic Party leaders, and the Latino political elite (Rodriguez 2005). Castro's long-standing family ties in city affairs as well as his recent tenure on the council made him a formidable contender (Schiller 2005). Latino voters again supported the viable co-ethnic candidate in this race by a four-to-one margin, although he lost in a close election, garnering 49 percent of the citywide vote.

The last two contests reported in Table 1 are cases in which the Latino candidates on the ballot were not as competitive as their non-Latino challengers. In 2002, Texas Democratic gubernatorial candidate Tony Sanchez mustered 60 percent of the Latino vote in the election. It is notable that Republican Governor Rick Perry won more than one-third of Latino votes in the election, quite contrary to theories of ethnic voting behavior. He was a strong candidate by many measures though; he enjoyed the endorsement of a then popular former governor, George W. Bush, and had name recognition that had been cultivated during his sixteen years in elected office. The statewide race was Sanchez's first foray into politics, and as such, he had very limited name recognition beyond his hometown of Laredo. Although Sanchez was quite successful in his industry, owning the largest Latino-owned bank in the United States, his south Texas

base of support was outmatched by Perry's support from the state's metropolitan economic and political power centers. Sanchez relied less on party infrastructure and used his substantial wealth to fund his campaign. The distinction between the experience and political quality of the candidates was a consistent thread in the state's largest newspapers, including the *Houston Chronicle*, *Dallas Morning News*, *San Antonio Express News*, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, and *El Paso Times*, which all endorsed Perry.

The 2006 race for New Mexico's First Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives pitted Democrat Patricia Madrid against incumbent Republican Heather Wilson. Despite eight years as New Mexico's attorney general, Madrid was viewed as being less experienced for the congressional seat compared to the incumbent Wilson. This perception was exacerbated by her poor performance in a televised debate and her handling of the press (Roybal 2006). Polling just days before the November 2006 election showed her support among Latino voters eroded from a high of 63 percent in September to 56 percent by election day. This lack of strong support from Latinos in the majority-Democratic district could account for her loss in a close race that took place in a year that strongly favored Democratic candidates around the country (Jones and Coleman 2006). It is interesting to note that the Texas gubernatorial and New Mexico House races show Latino co-ethnic support was higher in nonpartisan elections.

Public perceptions of Latino candidates as either strong and viable contenders or relative newcomers with limited experience were known variables in each of these elections. These cases are instructive, offering some insight into overall trends in co-ethnic voting in relationship to candidate quality. Latino turnout and support for high-quality co-ethnic candidates are evident, as is their tempered enthusiasm for less-qualified co-ethnics. We are interested in testing whether the quantitative data comport with these case studies that show candidate quality conditions the strength of ethnic voting.

Hypotheses and Data

There is good reason to expect that candidate quality will matter for any segment of the voting population, including Latinos. At the same time, there is a litany of research that finds ethnicity remains a strong predictor of several types of political behavior. We test the theory of ethnic political behavior by

examining the extent to which candidate quality influences Latino voter preferences for co-ethnic candidates.

Theoretically, ethnic group attachment and consciousness should yield collective political behavior for two reasons. First, minority voters assume a degree of shared political and policy preferences with a co-ethnic candidate because of their common background. Second, these voters are influenced by the symbolic meaning associated with having a co-ethnic elected to office. Minority voters hold distinctive group identities and consciousness that produce affinity for in-group members such that a victory for one is viewed as a collective accomplishment. These group attachments act as a heuristic, providing cues to voters that are the underlying causal components of the pattern of co-ethnic voting. Yet as we note in the earlier case study discussion, there are several instances when substantial proportions of the Latino electorate support a non-Latino candidate. We expect that ethnic attachments will influence support for both co-ethnic and crossover voting, dependent on candidate quality.

Support for co-ethnic candidates is tested with two dependent variables: (1) support for an equally qualified Latino candidate and (2) support for a less-qualified Latino candidate. It should be the case that group attachments lead Latinos to prefer co-ethnic candidates when the Latino and non-Latino candidates are determined to have equal qualifications. The relationship between shared ethnicity and co-ethnic preference should significantly diminish, however, if the Latino candidate is deemed less qualified than the non-Latino opponent.

Support for Descriptive Candidate Hypothesis:

Latino preference for co-ethnic candidates will vary, wherein support will be significantly stronger for equally qualified Latino candidates than for lesser-qualified Latino candidates.

Because group consciousness is associated with collective political action and a preference for descriptive representation, we expect Latinos with strong ethnic group attachments to maintain a preference for a Latino candidate when he or she is challenged by a more-qualified non-Latino. Latinos with the strongest ethnic attachments should display the most cohesive support for a co-ethnic candidate in either qualification context.

Ethnic Group Attachment Hypothesis: Ethnic group attachment increases support for both

equally qualified and lesser-qualified Latino candidates.

The data source for the analysis is the 2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Participation, sponsored by the Pew Hispanic Center and the Kaiser Family Foundation. The survey includes a nationally representative, randomly selected sample of 2,228 Latino adults, including 1,166 registered voters. The sample design employed a highly stratified, disproportionate, random-digit-dial sample of the forty-eight contiguous states; results are weighted to represent the actual distribution of adults throughout the United States. The weighted data are used in this analysis because they are proportional to the actual distribution of Latinos in the United States. In terms of national origin groups, there are 1,110 Mexicans, 282 Puerto Ricans, and 421 Cubans, as well as a significant number of Central and South Americans. Telephone interviews were conducted by ICR/International Communications Research between April 21 and June 9, 2004. All respondents were given the opportunity to conduct the interview in Spanish or English.

The first dependent variable measures support for an equally qualified co-ethnic candidate. It is constructed from the following item: "Please tell me whether you agree with this statement: I am more likely to vote for a Hispanic/Latino candidate instead of a non-Hispanic/Latino running for the same office if they have the same qualifications." The second dependent variable measures support for less-qualified Latino candidates. Respondents were asked, "Please tell me whether you agree with this statement: I will usually pick a Hispanic/Latino candidate even if there is a better-qualified non-Hispanic/Latino running for the same office." Response options are *agree strongly*, *agree*, *disagree*, and *disagree strongly*. Because responses are categorical, ordered logistic regression is employed for empirical testing.

Consistent with most work in voting behavior, our analysis is limited to U.S. citizens who are registered voters. Among Latinos, foreign-born voters are a rapidly growing proportion of the active electorate. They have been especially responsive to political climate and mobilization efforts, to the extent that they have turned out to vote at higher rates than their U.S.-born counterparts in recent California elections (Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001; Barreto 2005). In terms of substantive implications, it makes sense to focus on the preferences of Latino voters because campaigns and politicians pay more attention to vot-

ers than nonvoters due to electoral ties, both in initial elections and in reelections (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Griffin and Newman 2005). Research in this field typically relies on aggregate data from the Census Bureau and local precinct officials to estimate the salience of ethnicity and candidate preferences using ecological inference techniques (e.g., Liu 2006; Gay 2002; Barreto, Segura, and Woods 2004). In other cases, preelection or exit polls are employed to study the relationship between voter demographics and candidate preferences (Graves and Lee 2000; Hill, Moreno, and Cue 2001). While these studies have advanced the literature and research in American politics, they lack direct measures of individual consideration of ethnicity in their decision making. The survey data employed in this project pointedly ask Latinos how qualifications and ethnicity are absorbed in their voting calculus. Analysis of these unique responses adds a valuable dimension to the study of ethnic politics using individual-level data on co-ethnic candidate preferences in relation to candidate quality.

Findings

In both surveys and elections, voters consistently exhibit strong preferences for co-ethnic candidates compared to those of another background. It is worth considering how firm ethnic support is for any Latino candidate; are ethnic attachments the most salient consideration? Table 2 presents the basic distribution of Latino voter preferences for a co-ethnic candidate of varied qualification. A Latino candidate perceived to be evenly matched with a non-Latino candidate would do quite well with co-ethnic voters. A total of 63 percent are more likely to vote for a co-ethnic in this scenario; 40 percent strongly agree they are more inclined to vote for a fellow Latino. Even so, a little more than one-third of Latinos, 37 percent, disagree with the premise that they would be more inclined to vote for another Latino who was evenly matched against a non-Latino. This should not be interpreted as opposition to the Latino candidate; rather, the voters are making the point that they would not be moved to support one candidate over the other based on ethnicity alone.

The less-qualified Latino candidate receives substantially less support from the ethnic community; only 22 percent of Latinos will vote for the co-ethnic candidate in a race against a better-qualified non-Latino. More than two-thirds of Latino voters

Table 2
Support for Latino Candidates Based
on Quality (in Percentages)

	Equally Qualified Compared to Non-Latino	Less Qualified than Non-Latino
Agree strongly	40	14
Agree	23	8
Disagree	18	18
Disagree strongly	19	60

Note: $N = 974$.

disagree, and 60 percent “strongly disagree” with the notion of voting for a poorly qualified Latino candidate. The interpretation of this “disagree” response indicates the voters would not support the Latino candidate, an important difference from the previous item. As we expect, Latino support for descriptive representation is largely mediated by candidate qualifications. Still, one in five Latinos remain supportive of the less-qualified co-ethnic despite the social desirability bias to answering in the affirmative to this question. This is particularly interesting given the nature of our data, as registered voters tend to be more informed and interested in politics than the nonregistered population. We expect that the degree of ethnic attachments and group consciousness will explain the support for these two scenarios.

The next step in this analysis tests factors that motivate greater support for Latino candidates. Table 3 presents the results from two ordered logistic regression models that utilize the equal and less-qualified dependent variables.⁴ The independent variables are organized in four conceptual clusters. Details on the survey items and coding for each covariate are presented in the appendix. The first series of variables are measures of ethnic group attachments, which are the most theoretically compelling to this study. They include Latino racial group identification, perceptions of discrimination, orientation toward collective action, and language usage. Our measures for ethnic group attachment are consistent with those contending group consciousness is a three-dimensional concept consisting of general identification with a group, an awareness of the group’s relative position in society (generally measured by perceived discrimination), and the desire to engage in collective activity that focuses on improving the situation of that group (Gurin, Miller, and Gurin 1980; Padilla 1985; Sanchez 2006a; Kaufmann 2003b; Stokes 2003). Theoretically, language ability is another

appropriate measure of ethnic group attachment because using Spanish with more frequency places one in a more ethnic context where group identity and consciousness are accentuated.

The next set of variables measures several aspects of political orientation such as partisanship, co-ethnic representation, and policy attitudes. These are included as a counter to the ethnic attachment theoretical test because, as we note in the earlier discussion, studies have found co-ethnic voting is significantly associated with descriptive representation, partisanship, and other factors included in this rubric. Socioeconomic and demographic traits are also included in the models.

Looking at the two models, there are five variables that significantly influence Latino support for an equally qualified co-ethnic candidate and seven variables that significantly influence support for a less-qualified Latino candidate. As expected, ethnic group attachment has a substantive and significant impact on Latino support for co-ethnics in either quality context. The first set of coefficients, standard errors and odds ratios, measures the relationship between ethnic attachment and preferences for candidates of equal quality. Those that use a Latino racial identification and sense that discrimination is a problem in the Latino community are more likely to support Latino candidates.

To assess the marginal impact of perceived discrimination on ethnic voting, predicted probabilities were calculated and plotted (see Figure 1).⁵ The perceived discrimination variable runs the full range of values while holding the other variables at their means or modes.⁶ Figure 1 illustrates that the likelihood of supporting both an equally qualified and a lesser-qualified Latino candidate increases with greater levels of perceived discrimination. Co-ethnic candidate support is highest among those with strong ethnic attachments as hypothesized. The language and collective action variables do not influence Latino preferences for candidates who are equally matched. Of the demographic variables included, gender is significant, suggesting that women are more likely than men to support equally qualified Latino candidates. Rural is also marginally significant, implying that Latinos living in urban areas are more likely to support co-ethnic candidates perceived to be equally qualified. National origin is a significant predictor for Cubans, who are actually less likely to consider ethnicity in a contest between equally qualified candidates. It is interesting to note that the socioeconomic and political orientation variables that have predicted vote choice in prior studies are all insignificant in this model that highlights group attachments and candidate quality.

Table 3
Ethnic Group Attachment and Co-ethnic Candidate Support (Ordered Logit Coefficients)

	Equally Qualified			Less Qualified		
	B	SE	OR	B	SE	OR
Ethnic group attachment						
Hispanic racial identification	.297**	.144	1.34	-.209	.162	.811
Perceived discrimination	.232***	.084	1.26	.246**	.095	1.27
Collective action	.074	.125	1.07	.449***	.138	1.56
Primary language	.163	.113	1.17	.649***	.126	1.91
Political orientation						
Partisanship	-.209	.143	.811	.090	.161	1.09
Political interest	.007	.079	1.00	-.118	.087	.888
Abortion attitude	.053	.060	1.05	-.026	.068	.973
Health reform support	-.058	.040	.942	-.047	.044	.953
Percentage Latino in state legislature	.002	.010	1.00	.015	.011	1.01
Socioeconomic status						
Income	.003	.002	1.00	.000	.002	1.00
Education	.031	.029	1.03	-.179***	.032	.835
Demographic						
Gender (female)	.247**	.126	1.28	-.201	.140	.817
Age	.004	.003	1.00	.007*	.004	1.01
Region (West)	-.029	.176	.970	-.057	.206	.943
Suburban	-.042	.189	.958	-.230	.216	.794
Rural	-.435*	.260	.647	-.234	.297	.790
Nativity	-.118	.166	.888	-.150	.181	.860
Religion (Catholic)	.155	.132	1.16	.327**	.150	1.38
Mexican	-.053	.180	.948	.239	.213	1.27
Cuban	-.519**	.227	.594	-.091	.257	.912
Puerto Rican	-.076	.221	.926	.427*	.250	1.53
<i>N</i>	902			<i>N</i>	926	
Chi-square	42.36			Chi-square	176.37	
Cut point 1	.114	.560		Cut point 1	-.984	1.21
Cut point 2	.981	.559		Cut point 2	-.115	2.07
Cut point 3	1.96	.563		Cut point 3	.860	3.06

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

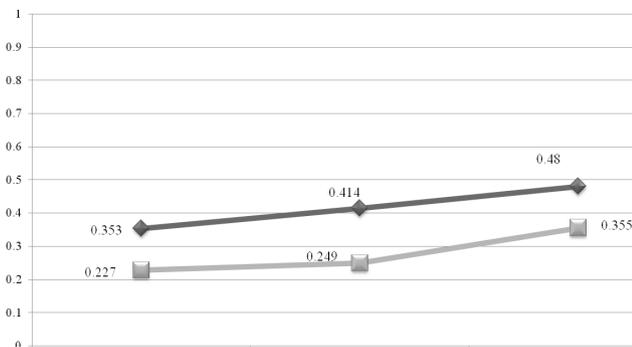
The second set of results in the right column of Table 3 presents coefficients, standard errors, and odds ratios for factors that predict support for less-qualified co-ethnic candidates. This is where we can best assess the boundaries of ethnic attachment given the expected importance of candidate quality in determining vote choice. Supporting a less-qualified co-ethnic is a clear indicator that descriptive representation is a highly salient political priority. Once again, ethnic group attachments are strong predictors of candidate choice. Those who rely on Spanish regularly, perceive discrimination as highly problematic for Latinos, and also think of Latinos as a collectively oriented group are all significantly more likely to support a co-ethnic who is less qualified than a non-Latino opponent. Racial identity is the only group

attachment variable that is not significant in this model.

Figures 2 and 3 further illustrate the substantive impact of the ethnic group attachment variables. The predicted probability of greater support for lesser-qualified Latino candidates increases with greater levels of perceived discrimination (see Figure 1), collective action (see Figure 2), and Spanish usage (see Figure 3).

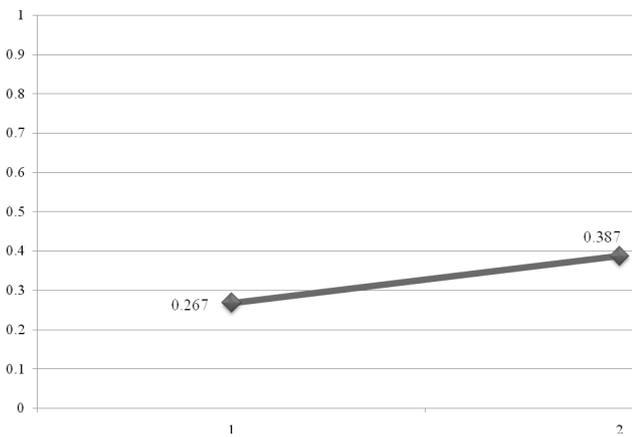
The substantive impact of language on support for descriptive representatives who are less qualified is apparent in the size of the coefficient and odds ratio for the language preference variable. Figure 3 provides further evidence that language is a determining factor, as the predicted probabilities associated with support for lesser-qualified Latino candidates increase

Figure 1
Predicted Probabilities: Perceived Discrimination
Influence on Support for Co-ethnic Candidates



Note: ◆ = impact on equally qualified candidates; ■ = impact on lesser-qualified candidates. X-axis perceived discrimination: 1 = discrimination not a problem for Latinos; 2 = discrimination minor problem for Latinos; 3 = discrimination major problem for Latinos.

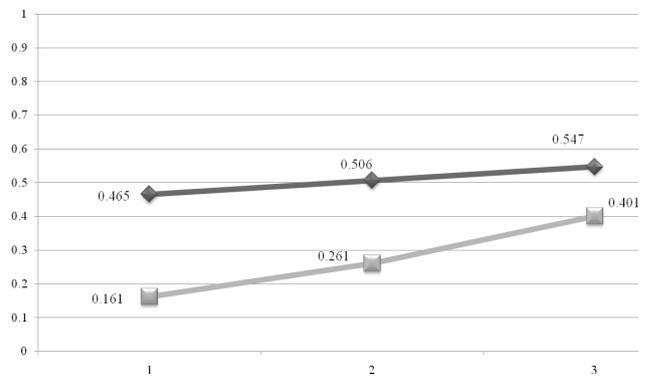
Figure 2
Predicted Probabilities: Collective Action
Influence on Support for Co-ethnic Candidates



Note: X-axis collective action attitudes: 1 = Latinos work together to achieve common political goals; 2 = Latinos are not working together.

rather dramatically as Spanish increases. Although language was not statistically significant in the equally qualified context, we plot the predicted probabilities to allow readers to gauge the overall relevance of language as well as the more pronounced impact in the less-qualified context. These results indicate group consciousness has a strong impact on

Figure 3
Predicted Probabilities: Language Preference
Influence on Support for Co-ethnic Candidates



Note: ◆ = impact on equally qualified candidates; ■ = impact on lesser-qualified candidates. X-axis primary language: 1 = English dominant; 2 = bilingual; 3 = Spanish dominant.

co-ethnic support in any quality context. This reinforces recent findings showing group consciousness motivates participation that is directly tied to Latino politics (Sanchez 2006a, 2006b).

As one should expect, higher levels of education significantly depress support for less-qualified co-ethnics. This is intuitive, as those with advanced educations and associated political sophistication would probably have strong reservations about supporting underqualified candidates. Although marginally significant in a two-tailed test of significance, age is negatively correlated with support for less-qualified candidates, implying that younger Latino voters value ethnicity over qualifications in some political decisions. Latino Catholics are also significantly much more likely to express support for less-qualified co-ethnic candidates. Partisanship, descriptive representation, and other political orientation variables are not indicative of candidate support—an interesting nonfinding again due to the support these variables have found in other studies. One might expect strong partisanship or established policy positions would predict significantly less support for a lower-quality candidate, but that is not the case. These two models find that ethnic attachments are theoretically and empirically stronger predictors of vote choice given some contextual information about candidate quality.

The potential for a combined effect of language and group attachment was tested by running interaction effects for language preference, the three

Table 4
Predicted Probabilities: Impact of Ethnic Attachment on Candidate Support across Qualification Context

Primary Language	Perceived Discrimination		
	Discrimination Not a Problem	Discrimination a Minor Problem	Discrimination a Major Problem
Equally qualified candidate			
English dominant	.29	.34	.40
Bilingual	.34	.40	.48
Spanish dominant	.39	.50	.60
Less qualified candidate			
English dominant	.12	.16	.20
Bilingual	.21	.36	.32
Spanish dominant	.33	.40	.47
	Nativity		
Primary Language	U.S.-born	Foreign-born	
Equally qualified candidate			
English dominant	.31	.34	
Bilingual	.35	.38	
Spanish dominant	.39	.42	
Less qualified candidate			
English dominant	.04	.06	
Bilingual	.11	.14	
Spanish dominant	.22	.28	

measures of group consciousness, and nativity. Interactions with all three measures of group consciousness, language, and nativity were conducted, but only two of the multiplicative effects proved significant: (1) language preference and perceived discrimination and (2) language preference and nativity. Predicted probabilities were also computed for each possible interaction between primary language and perceived discrimination while holding all other variables at the mean or mode. The findings illustrated in Table 4 show ethnic attachments, especially perceptions about discrimination, have a strong substantive influence on Latino co-ethnic candidate support. Since Latinos whose primary language is Spanish are more likely to experience discrimination and reside in ethnic enclaves that reinforce ethnic group identity (Ricourt and Danta 2003), it stands to reason that bilingual and Spanish-speaking people will exhibit heightened support for Latino candidates. Still, qualifications do mitigate the relationship between ethnic attachments and candidate preferences. The probability of co-ethnic preference is substantially stronger when the Latino candidate matches qualifications with the non-Latino opponent. The predicted probability (.60) of co-ethnic support among Spanish speakers who perceive

discrimination as highly problematic is greater than the independent effects of these variables.

A similar trend emerges with the combined impact of nativity and language on candidate preference. The combined impact of nativity and language is considered due to the collinearity (.573) between the two variables. Since the interaction between nativity and language is statistically significant in the less-qualified model, a similar postestimation analysis was conducted by computing predicted probabilities for each possible interaction between these two measures. Although the impact of nativity combined with language is not as robust as perceived discrimination, there is a similar pattern in relationship to candidate preference. As Table 4 depicts, support for Latino candidates regardless of qualification is greatest among foreign-born people who are also Spanish dominant. Yet the likelihood of supporting a co-ethnic substantially diminishes when co-ethnics are viewed as less qualified, even among those with the strongest ethnic attachments in terms of language and nativity. The impact of ethnic attachment on this cohort of voters drops from .42 for the equally qualified co-ethnic to a mere .28 for the less-qualified Latino candidate. Similarly, U.S. born, English-dominant Latinos are more inclined to support a qualified

co-ethnic (.31) and hardly likely to support the less-qualified Latino (.04).

In a final test of the overall role of ethnic attachments on support for co-ethnic candidates, we used postestimation analysis to determine the full combined impact of the four ethnic attachment variables on Latino candidates across qualification levels. When setting the three dimensions of group consciousness to their maximum value and language to Spanish dominant (holding other factors at means or modes), the predicted probability of supporting an equally qualified co-ethnic candidate at the highest level in this scenario is a very robust .73. Consistent with results presented in Table 4, the predicted probability associated with support for a less-qualified co-ethnic candidate drops to .60 when all ethnic attachment variables are set to their highest levels. As expected, those with stronger group consciousness and ethnic attachments are significantly more inclined to prefer a descriptive representative even when less qualified. These findings contribute to larger discussions regarding ethnicity as a direct electoral cue, the salience of descriptive representation, and the variation of ethnic identity and attachments in a diverse electorate.

Discussion

Our study tests the theory of politicized ethnic identity by examining Latino preference for co-ethnic candidates of varied quality. To this point, the research on Latino co-ethnic voting has asked whether these decisions are a function of ideological and party preferences or whether shared ethnicity is the most salient consideration; we move the research forward to include candidate evaluation, which we know to be an important factor in voter decisions. The pointed questions in this survey allowed us to evaluate candidate quality as a boundary of politicized ethnic identity in a unique manner. There are limitations to the ballot scenarios we analyze, however, in that they are hypothetical, attitudinal survey items. The case studies we explore from actual voting trends in California, Texas, and New Mexico elections indicate that our empirical findings seem well rooted in actual voter preferences and trends. The results of the survey data analysis comport with the case studies in which Latinos are highly supportive of strong, competitive Latino candidates but less enthusiastic about less-formidable co-ethnics on the ballot. Future work would benefit from similar

individual-level analysis of multiple elections wherein candidate quality and ethnicity are distinctive variables. The trending of all the data in this study indicates that when all things (candidates) are equal, ethnicity is a plus factor. Degrees of ethnic attachment influence candidate preferences in both qualification contexts, yet co-ethnic support remains strongest for qualified Latino candidates.

Latinos are clearly less supportive of less-qualified co-ethnic candidates, yet there are important and statistically significant gradations to this trend that merit further consideration. Those with strong ethnic attachments are more likely to vote for a co-ethnic even when less qualified than the non-Latino on the ballot. Among Spanish-fluent voters who perceive the highest levels of discrimination, candidate ethnicity weighed more heavily than qualifications. It is worth noting that only this one variable, perceptions of discrimination, increased support for both the qualified and less-qualified Latino candidate. Thus, a sense that all things are not equal in the United States enhances support for descriptive representation. This is a significant finding given the rise in seemingly acceptable anti-Latino, anti-immigrant affect that is commonly and publicly expressed in scholarly and more general audience outlets (e.g., Huntington 2004). It is plausible that co-ethnic voting may increase in racially contentious environments as a collective political response to experiences with discrimination. In total, these nuanced findings support a theory of politicized ethnic attachment such that those with heightened group awareness and consciousness engage in collective political behavior with the explicit goal of improving the group's social and political standing.

This study has both theoretical and substantive implications. Ethnic political affinity has boundaries, and other limitations to ethnic politics should be considered in related research, especially as candidates increasingly adopt ethnically targeted campaigns. This expands what we know about minority group political preferences beyond partisanship and offers a more complex understanding of how and when ethnicity can matter in vote choice. Ethnic minority immigrant populations are growing in the electorate, and their co-ethnics increasingly appear on the ballot. First-generation Latino voters, with strong ethnic attachments, have already demonstrated their political influence in several California elections as noted earlier. It is reasonable to expect Latino voters will have more opportunities to support high- (and low-) quality Latino candidates in the future. It is unclear how well political ethnic identity theory explains the

preferences of other heterogeneous minority groups or whether the boundaries of ethnic attachment vary across groups. Thus, it would be worthwhile to export this study to the increasing Asian and Arab American populations that share a heightened political ethnic identity and attachments via language, experiences with discrimination, and other factors. Since one group has been tested, the direct and conditional relationships that may exist across specific racial and ethnic groups are unknown at this juncture.

The spring of 2006 saw unprecedented political activism within the Latino community when approximately 3 million Latinos participated in protests to oppose pending immigration policies that would have had a substantial punitive effect on Latinos. Experiences with discrimination, group consciousness, and political ethnic identity were central themes to this new wave of political empowerment that cut across nativity, citizenship status, and national origin groups. Our analysis illustrates ethnic attachments have a direct, albeit limited, impact on political choices. For some, group attachments are the most salient consideration in the political calculus, and this too may be a well-thought-out choice based on experiences and identity with minority politics in the United States. Given the recent political activism in the Latino community, we think this is a particularly relevant finding. As the number of Latino voters continues to rise, candidates of any background will need to first establish their credibility as formidable candidates and then connect on ethnic politics to win the support of this large and influential group of voters.

Notes

1. The Pew Hispanic Center and the Kaiser Family Foundation bear no responsibility for the interpretations offered or conclusions made based on analysis of the Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation 2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Engagement data.

2. The Houston case was especially unusual because the overwhelming majority of the city's Latino voters are both Mexican Americans and Democrats. Even so, 79 percent of Latinos in Houston supported Orlando Sanchez, a Cuban American with established ties to the Republican Party.

3. All data in Table 1 are provided by SurveyUSA and are available at www.surveyusa.com. The number of respondents in the surveys are the following: 2001 San Antonio = 500, 2005 San Antonio = 632, 2002 Texas governor = 683, and 2006 New Mexico congressional = 688.

4. Both ordinal logit models passed tests for the proportional odds assumption, which holds that the probability curves are parallel as a consequence of the assumption that the β s are equal

for each equation. To test for the proportional odds assumption, we employed STATA's "omodel" function, which reports an approximate likelihood ratio test of whether the coefficients are equal across categories. In both cases, the chi-square indicates that the parallel regression assumption can be accepted.

5. Predicted probabilities were calculated using STATA's Clarify function. The variables of interest were allowed to run their full range of values while all other variables were held at their means.

6. Modes were utilized for nominal variables such as gender and region as well as for discrete ordinal variables such as partisanship.

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